A man tricks a young fox into believing that he will give him a chicken. The fox gets trapped, but through ingenuity and perseverance he manages to escape.

This is one of a series of illustrated books for the young written by the Afghan author Idries Shah, whose collections of narratives and Teaching-Stories™ have captivated the hearts and minds of people from all walks of life. It belongs to a rich tradition of storytelling from Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Middle East that is more than a thousand years old.

Teaching-Stories are designed specifically to foster thinking skills and perception. They suggest, in their structure and in the movement of their characters, ways of looking at difficulties that can help solve problems. The story of this young fox can inspire children to face challenges, to overcome and, sometimes, to make use of obstacles in their path.

*These Teaching-Stories can be experienced on many levels. A child may simply enjoy hearing them, an adult may analyze them in a more sophisticated way. Both may eventually benefit from the lessons within.*

Lynn Neary
“*All Things Considered,*”
To Alex and Marco, the two clever foxes next door, and to jkandsr with thanks - SM

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ONCE UPON A TIME, when the moon grew on a tree and ants were fond of pickles, there was a lovely brown fox.
He had soft fur, beautiful whiskers,
and a fine, bushy tail.
This fox, whose name was Rowba, was sitting beside a road one day, combing his whiskers with his claws, when a man came along.

“May you never be tired!” said the man.

“May you always be happy!” replied Rowba.
“I’m feeling generous today,” said the man. “Is there anything you would like?”

“I would like a chicken,” said Rowba, because foxes love to eat chickens.
“Come along with me, then, and I’ll give you one!” replied the man. “I have chickens at my house. We’ll go there, and you’ll have your chicken in no time at all.”

“How marvelous!” said Rowba.

And he trotted down the road beside the man.

When they got to the man’s house, the man said, “Wait outside. I’ll go to the yard in the back and get you one of my birds.”
So Rowba sat down to wait and the man went into his house.
Then the man took a sack and put some stones into it. You see, he was going to pretend there was a chicken in the sack. He wasn’t really going to give a chicken to the fox at all!
When the man came out again, he handed Rowba the sack and said, “Here you are, there’s a chicken in this sack.”

“How wonderful!” said Rowba, and he was just about to open the sack to eat the chicken when the man said:

“No! Don’t open it here!”

“Why not?” asked Rowba.

“Well,” said the man, “the farmers around here can see us, and they won’t like my giving a chicken to a fox.”

Of course, that wasn’t true at all. The man just didn’t want the fox to see that there were only stones in the sack.
“What shall I do, then?” asked Rowba.

“Do you see those bushes up there?” asked the man, pointing. “Take the sack there and open it. Nobody will see you, and you can eat your chicken in peace.”

“That’s a good idea,” said Rowba. “Thank you very much!”

And he trotted all the way to the bushes carrying the sack in his mouth.
As soon as Rowba crawled under the bushes, he opened the sack and saw the stones inside.

“Strange!” he muttered to himself. “What kind of a funny joke is this?”

When he peeked out of the bushes, he saw that a net had fallen over him. It was a trap! Some hunters had put a net there to catch any fox that went into the bushes to hide.
At first Rowba was worried because he thought he might not get out of the net. But he was very clever.

Foxes are very, very clever, you know. He searched through the stones in the sack and found one with a sharp edge. With this, he began to cut the net.
He cut a hole big enough for his left front paw to fit through.

He cut some more, and soon the hole was big enough for his left and his right front paws to fit through.
He cut still more, and soon the hole was big enough for his two front paws and his nose to fit through.

He kept on cutting, and soon the hole was big enough for his front paws, his nose and the rest of his head to fit through.
Then he pushed and wiggled just a bit more. And finally …

Rowba escaped!
As Rowba ran off down the road, he laughed and laughed and laughed.

"Men may think they are clever," he said to himself, "but foxes are cleverer still!"
Now, all foxes know the story of Rowba and the man who promised him a chicken. And that is the reason why, whenever you see a fox, if you ask him to come for a walk with you, he won’t.

And that is why it is very, very difficult to catch foxes and why they live such a free and happy life.