

**Russell the Resilient Fox**

**Russell the Resilient Fox is a 'sticker'.** He doesn't give up. He likes to be challenged and is up for anything! That doesn't mean he is a brain box, he just sticks at his learning and tries very hard. Russell the Resilient Fox doesn't get distracted because he has learnt to block-out things that would distract him. He also has eagle eyes and notices everything!

'Dad, pleeeeeeeeeeease! I'll collect so much food we'll feast for weeks. I can do it, I promise. Just give me a chance!' Ronnie looked at his son. From the moment Russell the Resilient Fox was born, he had proved himself to be a determined little fox – he mastered walking sooner than his sister, he always worked hard at Forest School and he almost always got his own way. Russell was up for anything, and Ronnie loved that about him. But he was the youngest cub of the family and going alone across the hills to collect the food for the family was a big responsibility. Roxie, the eldest cub, pleaded with her father. 'Dad, he will be fine. He knows most of the animals across the wood and he knows the way. Besides, we need to be here building a new den. We can't face another night in the freezing cold.'

Normally, Ronnie would either go himself or send one of the girls, but they had a new home to build. Theirs was destroyed in the horrific autumn storm. Ronnie needed as many paws on deck as possible.

The old fox sighed. 'Okay, Russell you're on. But stick to the path, ask the badgers if you need any help, and for goodness sake, be careful! You're a lot younger than you like to think you are.'

'YES! Thanks Dad, and thanks Roxie. I won't let you down, I promise. Any special orders? Do you want me to bring back some of those extra crunchy acorns for you, Rox?'

Russell bounded excitedly around his sister.

Roxie laughed, 'Oh, go on then. But don't go eating them all on the way home!'

'Wait! Russell, don't forget the bag to carry the food back in!' Ronnie handed over the faded navy blue, rectangular bag to his son with a heavy heart. Rebecca had found it one day on the side of Manby Road. Once they'd taken out the books, there was plenty of room for food, although it did have an odd logo and human words on it. His friend Rory once told him the words said 'Malvern Parish CofE Primary School,' whatever that meant.

With a toothy grin, a swish of his bushy tail and with the bag on his back, Russell was off. He knew the way well, having lived and explored the Malvern Hills his whole life - it was up to Midsummer, down the other side of the British Camp and across The Beacon Hill. Waiting for him there would be a huge blackberry bush, and a cluster of elderberry trees. Along the way he'd find the crunchy acorns for Roxie

and, if he was really lucky, some mushrooms. Halfway up the climb to the Beacon, Russell stopped for a rest. He was just admiring the view across Worcestershire, when suddenly; a very excitable, rather high-pitched voice interrupted his thoughts.

'Hi Russell! How are you? What are you doing? Do you want to know what I've learnt today? Did you know that the Beacon is 1,394ft above sea level?! How amazing is that! I just love learning new things, don't you Russell?' Rosie chuckled:

'Hi Rosie, remember to breathe...' He barely finished his sentence before she was off again, telling him all the facts she'd learnt that morning about the hills.

Rosie the Resourceful Squirrel was in Russell's class in Forest School. With such a thirst for knowledge, she was forever questioning, learning and talking. Russell's dad said she could talk for England!

'Rosie, I'm sorry but I can't stay and chat. I can't be distracted. I'm on a food-collecting mission for my family.' With that, Russell trotted off leaving Rosie shouting facts after him.

As he ventured over the top of the 1,394ft hill and towards British Camp, he stumbled across a scattering of crunchy acorns. He collected as many as he could, put them in his blue bag and thought happily of Roxie's face when he gave them to her. It was just after that thought when he hit a snag in his adventure.

Blocking the path, just a few yards away, was a huge, uprooted tree. It had been torn from the ground during the storm a few days ago, and it was now blocking Russell's way. Now, any other fox might have simply turned around and attempted a different path, but not Russell. No, Russell knew that if he tried another path, he might get lost and his family would go hungry. So, with eagle-like eyes, he scanned the area. Within minutes, he spotted a solution. Hanging off a tree, just left of the blocked path, was an old swing. Russell had seen the human children swinging happily during the summer and knew that, with the right force, it could fly very high.

He climbed up onto the seat and began pushing himself back and forth. It wasn't as easy as the children had made it look – he had four legs, not two, and couldn't sit down properly – but with the thought of his family in his mind, he kept trying and trying and trying.

Soon, the swing had enough momentum and Russell was flying up and down, up and down. When the opportune moment came, the small fox leapt from the swing, over the fallen tree and landed with a bump on the other side.

'YES!' Russell's shouts of joy echoed around the hills.

With adrenaline pumping through his furry body, he bounded over to the blackberry bushes and elderberry trees. He picked every last fruit from the branches, stowing it all away safely in the now bulging bag.

Happy with the amount of food he'd managed to collect, but still keeping an eye out for any mushrooms, Russell made the leap over the tree and headed for home. It was on the descent from The Beacon that he stood on something sharp.

'Ouch!' he cried.

'Ouch to you! You just stood on my head!' Holly the Hedgehog unrolled herself and shook out her spikes.

'Oh Holly, I'm so sorry! Are you all right?' Russell looked at his friend with concern. 'Haha, I'm only joking Russell! The other hedgehogs and I are playing hide and seek, come and join us! Pleeeeeeease! You can be on my team!'

'I can't Holly, I'm sorry. I have to get this food back to my family.' With that, Russell took off, determined to make it back as soon as possible.

As his descent ended, and he was back on flat ground, Russell spotted something out of the corner of his eye. A huge patch of mushrooms! He gathered as many as possible, stuffed them in his bag and dreamt happily of the mushroom soup they'd have for dinner that night.

'Dad, Roxie! I'm back! Look what I've got!' Russell emptied the bag out, proudly showing off his hoard of food to his dad and sister.

'Wow Russell! There's loads here! You must have had an easy journey to manage to bring back so much food and so quickly!' Ronnie looked at his son proudly.

'Well, actually Dad I didn't. There was a fallen down tree blocking my way, and I bumped into Rosie and Holly, and well, you know how much they like to talk and talk and talk.' Roxie laughed:

'How did you manage it then, Russ?'

'I just remembered what we've always been taught – when things are really hard, keep trying and trying and you'll succeed in the end,' said Russell.