



# A Fox Tale

By Sam Neno

Near the mouth of the inlet into Cayuga Lake in Myers, north along the creek bed, a red fox raised a cub. Once, when a fisherman came down the creek, casting a lure in search of trout, the cub followed in the tall grass. He watched the man cast and retrieve his line. He also saw a shiny button on the man's vest and a small bag around his waist, and he could smell tuna fish. When the fisherman drew near enough, the cub leaped at the bag. The man swung around and, waving his arms, fell back into the water with a cry that brought the mother fox out of the den where she'd been sleeping.

She told her son not to go out in daylight again or he might be harmed by man. The cub, like most young fellows, didn't really believe his mother, so the next day when his mother was sleeping, he slipped out of the den and waited near the creek for a fisherman. No fishermen appeared, so he ventured closer to the lake and soon was at the edge of the campground in the park. He smelled hotdogs on a grill and followed the smell to a small red tent with a grill near it. Two young women sat beside the grill. Once when he couldn't take the smell any longer, he yipped. The women looked over and became quieter. One touched the other's arm, and they came over slowly. They giggled and crouched down as they came.

"They don't seem so dangerous," the cub thought. But he didn't let them get very close.

"I bet he smells the dogs," one of the women said and went back to the grill. She came back toward him and tossed a hotdog at him. He let it fall in the grass and sniffed it; then he grabbed it and ran.

His mother was waiting for him when he returned to the den. She smelled his mouth. "I thought so," she said. "I told you not to go near men."

He told her she'd been wrong about them.

She looked up at the sun and then at the

leaves on the trees. One of the smaller ones had begun to change color. "I won't be looking after you much longer," she said. "You've got to learn on your own, I suppose."

Not many days later, she told him he must go. Head down, he trotted into the moonlight.

One night several months later the mother fox was hunting when she heard the familiar bark of a young male fox near the park. She worked her way there, slipping along the edge of the stream, just out of sight of the tents and trailers. She heard the bark again, deeper in the park. Suddenly there was shouting and the crack of a gun.

"I'll get you this time, you thief!"

She ducked low on the bank and watched in the moonlight as a fox dashed between the campers toward the creek bank.

"Over here!" she called.

"There's two of them!" someone in the middle of the park hollered. Light flashed around the two foxes.

"This way," she shouted and ran down the creek bank to a low place in the water, skittered across the islands to the other bank and into the brush.

When she stopped and turned, she found her grown cub right behind her. One of his front feet was swollen.

"Are you all right?" she whispered,

"Yes, Mother," he said. He licked himself a little. He was shivering. "There's easy food in there, but the people don't like my being there. I was caught in a trap a couple of nights ago but managed to get loose." He sat on his haunches and put his head down.

She drew close to him to warm him.

"Can I stay with you a few days?" he asked.

She told him he could for a few days, but then he must go out on his own, like his father and his grandfather and his great-grandfather had done before him. So he slept with his mother watching over him and a full moon watching over them both.

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