Name _____ Date _____

The Fox Cub

The writer was born in Russia. This true story took place during his childhood. At that time he and his family lived in a small village at the edge of a forest.

Once some shepherd caught a fox cub and brought him to us. We put the little animal in an empty storehouse. The baby fox was gray, except for a dark muzzle and a white tip on his tail. He hid in a far corner of the storehouse and looked around. He was so frightened that he didn't even bite when we stroked him. He just pressed his ears close to his head and trembled.

Mama poured some milk into a bowl and set it beside him, but the frightened little animal wouldn't drink the milk. Then papa suggested that we should leave the cub alone, so that he could look around and get used to the storehouse. I didn't want to leave, but papa locked the storehouse door and we went home.

That night I was awakened by a puppy's yelping somewhere nearby. Where did he come from, I wondered. Outside, it was becoming light. From the window I could see the storehouse where the fox cub was. That's who's yelping like a puppy, I thought. Suddenly I saw a fox jump out of the forest right behind the storehouse. It stopped, listened, then crept stealthily up to the storehouse. The yelping stopped at once. Then I heard the joyful whine of the cub greeting his mother.

I woke up my parents, and we all looked out the window. The fox was running around the storehouse, trying to dig up the earth next to the building. She couldn't do anything, since the foundation was made of stone. Pretty soon the fox cub started yelping again. I wanted to stay up and watch for the mother fox, but papa said she wouldn't return. I went back to sleep.

I woke up late and dresses quickly. Then I hurried to the storehouse to visit the fox cub. As I reached the door I saw something. It was a small dead rabbit. I ran and brought papa back. "Well, what do you know!" said papa. "The mother fox returned and brought food for her cub. She couldn't get inside, so she left the food outside. What a thoughtful mother!"

That day mama and I went into the storehouse twice to feed the cub. The rest of the tine I hung around the storehouse looking through the cracks in the walls. That night I couldn't fall asleep. I kept jumping out of bed and looking out the window to see if the mother fox had returned. Mama was angry because I kept jumping out of bed. She hung a dark curtain over the window, then I had to go to sleep.

I woke up at daybreak and rushed to the storehouse. This time there was a neighbor's smothered hen at the door of the storehouse. The mother fox had come again in the night to visit her cub. She probably hadn't been able to catch game in the forest, so she had entered our neighbor's chicken house, killed a hen and brought it to her young one.

Well, papa had to pay for the hen that the mother fox had killed. Our neighbor spoke to us angrily. "Take that fox cub away!" he shouted. "Or else that mother fox will destroy all our chickens!" There was nothing else to do. Papa put the fox cub into a bag. Then he carried the cub back into the forest and turned him loose near some fox dens.

After that we didn't see a fox near the village again.