

Ahead appeared a big red barn, and Mouse wondered if he might find help there. As he approached the barn, he heard a flurry of excitement from somewhere behind it. It sounded like chickens making a great fuss about something.

Glancing about, Mouse thought for only a moment that he saw something red flash from behind some nearby bushes. But the commotion was coming from the backside of the barn, and Mouse was drawn to the noise.

Behind the barn, he found a large chicken coop with chickens running every which way, clucking and squawking. A hen ran right past him, shrieking,

“Danger, danger, danger, danger,
we are in the utmost danger.
Someone said they saw a stranger
who was out lurking hereabout.
So, we’re afraid now to go out.

Someone said they saw a tush
peeking from behind a bush.
And furthermore, they also said
that it was almost foxy red,
which means that it might be a fox.
Awwkk, Wok, Bok, Squawk, Bok, Bok, Wok, Squawk.”

“So that’s why they are so excited,” said Mouse. “They have seen a fox behind some bushes.”

“I saw it too,” said One Too Many, who was listening. “I saw it peaking over some scrub over there.”

The hysterical hen had finally stopped running and was cringing at one end of the chicken coop. Mouse went over to speak with her. “Don’t you have any protection from foxes?” he asked.

“All we have is a big chicken of a rooster,” said the hen.

“Whenever there’s a fox around,
our only rooster can’t be found.
Because he’s such an awful wuss,
he’s really not much use to us.

We so often get discouraged
'cause he has so little courage.
He's never willing to come out
whenever there's a fox about."

"I haven't seen any rooster," said Mouse. "Where is he?"

"Hiding in the hen house," said the hen.

"Let's go find that rooster," said One.

So, they went to look for the rooster. But they did not find him in the hen house.

"That's probably too easy," said One. "If he's the big chicken the hen says he is, he wouldn't hide there because he knows that's the first place a fox would look for him."

"So, where is he hiding?" asked Mouse.

"It's obvious," said One. "He's hiding under the hen house."

And that is where they found him. Mouse approached the frightened rooster.

"We just heard there was a fox about," said Mouse. "Did you know that?"

"Listen," said the rooster,

"Everybody reprimands me.
No one really understands me.
I am plagued by some condition
that bewilders my physician.

While I'm no hypochondriac,
I do take medications that
ward off most banes and pains and chills.
One cannot take too many pills.
I'm sure I need to take a lot
for all the problems that I've got.

I'm fearful of anemia
and could have emphysema.
I have a virus up my nose,
and just this morning, stubbed my toes.

Perhaps you think that I should crow,
but I must not because I know
if I'm exposed to any breeze,
crowing is sure to make me wheeze."

"Okay," said Mouse. "But what about the fox?"

"What?" said the rooster. "Did you say 'fox?' Oh my!

"There's something causing me to ail.
I think I'm turning awfully pale.
My temperature seems too high,
and I have something in my eye.
I feel upset. I don't know why,
and I am trying not to cry.
Life is such an awful stressor.
Do you have a tongue depressor?"

Hearing this, One, who had dealt with many such chickens in his time, spoke up, "Excuse me, Mr. Rooster, sir, but it's called 'courage.'

There may be moments in our lives
when we must pause and realize
that we have reached the bottom line
and our fate's become entwined
with the strength of our persistence.

But then, if we are insistent,
we will find we have the courage
to no longer be discouraged
and do whatever we might need
that will allow us to succeed.

You can do it. You can do it.
There is a way to get through it.
It's called 'courage.'"

Somehow, One's encouragements made a miraculous change in that rooster. As One would later explain to some of his friends,

"Then all those chickens close around
witnessed a change that was profound.
His swelling muscles gained three pounds.
He looked like something muscle-bound."

That rooster stood up, shook himself off, and led his followers out into the chicken yard, where he delivered a rousing speech from the peak of the hen house.

"I'm not afraid of anything;
bobcats or bears or wolverines
or anything that's in between
with claws or paws or jaws or wings.

When I am in the chicken pen,
no critter will dare to come in.
I will give those scary creatures
a new set of facial features.

I will grab them by their noses,
twist them into funny poses,
and I'll make my own corrections
to their former fine complexions.

Then I will take them by their snouts
and throw those worthless rascals out.
So, Mr. Fox, this is for you,
my cock-a-doodle-doodle-do."

While this was going on, Mouse had also seen the fox. But the creature he saw was stealing away, freighted, and discouraged. Realizing the fox had been driven away, the hen that had scorned the rooster earlier now stepped forward to praise him.

“Because you were so boisterous,
so wonderfully roisterous,
you scared that awful fox away.
He won’t be coming back today.

To show how we appreciate,
we elevate you to the state
of His High Highness Muck-a-muck
of whatever we’re inclined to cluck.

And as such, your special duties,
besides waiting on us cuties,
are just to keep us safe and sound
whenever there’s a fox around.”

Which made the rooster swell with pride. When all had calmed down a bit, Mouse approached the hen about finding his way home.