The Little Foxes
For many years the foxes had been living at the bottom of the hill near the river. No one except the fox family knew their exact address, so they had lots of space and a very well kept garden that little foxes were very proud of. The little foxes did all the work in the garden while big foxes did the cooking and cleaning and organising.

The garden was very important in the fox family because it was where all the fruit and vegetables grew, where the flowers sat for the bees and where the chilis and herbs popped their heads out of the ground just in time for dinner.

The garden was a popular place for visitors and little foxes could often be found playing with little cats, little dogs, little hedgehogs and little snails. Sometimes the little foxes forgot how sharp their little teeth and little claws were and sometimes, little hedgehogs forgot how sharp their little spikes were, but when they said “Oooooowwwww”, they remembered. Sometimes they ran around chasing little bees or little wasps and sometimes they curled up and rolled down the little hill and sometimes they went for little swims in the river until they got too cold and had to come out and shake off to dry in the sun.

The little foxes spent all their days playing in the garden and down by the river and finding sticks and twigs and worms and frogs and eating and lying in the sun. When it was winter and really cold, the little foxes spent their days building fires in the woods and huddling together to keep warm and curling up together in the dens they dug and sleeping. Sometimes, when they all curled up together, the little foxes all had the same dream and they would meet up, running through the woods, looking for their favourite snacks. Sometimes they would all go flower picking and bring back big bunches of dock leaves and cornflower and king cups. The little foxes would bring the flowers home and the big foxes would put them in a vase and the family would all breathe in the beautiful scents of the wild forest and fall asleep in front of the fire, dreaming of more outings together.
Honeysuckle
Scientific name: Lonicera

Columbine
Scientific name: Aquilegia

Water aven
Scientific name: Geum rivale

Forget-me-not
Scientific name: Myosotis

Scarlet pimpernel
Scientific name: Anagallis arvensis
Ragged robin
Scientific name: Lychnis

The little foxes were all different sizes of little. There was the very little one. His name was Flynn. Flynn Fox loved football and his favourite food was falafel.

The next little one was Floella. Floella loved fishing (although she never kept the fish out of water and only ever used a net, not a hook). Floella loved fritters and anything fried.

The next little one was Ferdinand. Ferdinand loved playing the flute and his favourite food was favela beans. No one else liked them, so he had to do his own cooking sometimes.
The next little one was Frances and Frances loved foraging. She would often come home after a day in the woods with pockets full of fungi and forget-me-not. Everyone knew Frances ate too many figs, but she just couldn’t stop and the poor old fig tree was a bit frightened of her.

The biggest little one was Frederica. Frederica spoke fluent French and played the fiddle and had a terrible memory, so was always saying “I forgot”. Frederica was very funny and always had lots of friends.

The five little foxes were all different shapes and sizes and colours and they all had different sounds—

Flynn was a very little sound that was a bit like a baby crying.
Floella was a bit more like a cat meowing.

Ferdinand was like a horse naying.

Frances was more like a bird singing.
The little foxes were all very close and they spent nearly all day every day together. Sometimes they hung about in one big little group, and sometimes they would split up into a two or a three and swap around.

And then at the end of every day, they would all come back to the garden, into the warmest den and have something to eat together. The big foxes always insisted they all sit at the table and Flynn had a special chair so he could reach and they would all tell stories about what had happened while they’d been apart.

One evening as they sat down to dinner, the big foxes looked worried and said they needed the little foxes to listen very carefully because they had something very important to tell them.

The little foxes were all a bit frightened. Flynn looked at Floella, Floella looked at Ferdinand, Ferdinand looked at Frances and Frances looked at Frederica. Frederica looked at the little ones and said “It’s ok, let’s wait and hear what they say. It might be something good”. Frederica smiled and each little one in turn smiled back, Ferdinand smiled at Frances, Frances smiled at at Floella, Floella smiled at Flynn and Flynn smiled at the big foxes and everyone was waiting.

One of the big foxes, Femi, cleared his throat. It sounded like a big ship leaving a port and the little foxes flinched a little bit.
“Little foxes” said Femi. “We have some news and we know it will sound like a difficult thing, but we all want you to know everything is going to be ok. All of us big foxes have spent a long time preparing for this and what we are going to tell you now may sound like a shock, but we have a plan and we want you to help us put that plan into action”.

Femi stopped speaking and each little fox looked at the next little one to them. Flynn looked at Floella, Floella looked at Ferdinand, Ferdinand looked at Frances and Frances looked at Frederica. Frederica looked at the big foxes and said “What is it? What do you need to tell us?” and she looked at all the little foxes and said “It’s ok, let’s hear what they say, it might be something good”.

And each little fox smiled, and everyone waited.

The next big fox was Fionne. Fionne cleared her throat and it sounded like a wave crashing on the sand and all the little foxes liked the sound and wanted her to do it again. So she did. And then she said,

“Little foxes, we are going to move. We are going to pack up all our things and take all our stuff and go to another place to live.”

All the little foxes were very afraid at these words and they each looked to the next little fox. Flynn had tears in his eyes as he looked at Floella. Floella was panicking as she looked at Ferdinand. Ferdinand had a knot in his tummy as he looked at Frances. Frances was in shock as she looked at Frederica and Frederica tried not to cry. When she spoke, it sounded like she had a very sore throat. “Moving to where?” was all she managed to say. “Leaving the garden? Where will we go, what about our marigolds and our carrots and our tomato plants?” Then she looked at the other little foxes and said

“Let’s wait and hear where we’re going. Perhaps there will be something good in what they say”.

And the little foxes didn’t smile, but they all looked at the big foxes and everyone waited.

“We’re going to move into the forest” said the biggest of all the foxes. Finton was so big he hardly fit in his chair and all the foxes knew he was the oldest, fattest, cleverest, kindest fox of all and when Finton spoke, it sounded like he was singing and everyone loved to listen to him.
“None of us want to leave here”, he said, “we all love it and some of us have lived here all our lives.” No one moved a muscle. Even Flynn who was usually a fidget, sat very still.

“Recently the big foxes met with the big badgers and the big rabbits. They told us that the big people are planning to come to the river and build big houses with big gardens and big drives for their big cars. The big people need new towns because their old towns are getting too full and some big people want more space.”

“But what about us?” said Floella and it sounded like a cat meowing in a very bad mood. “Well, that’s what we’re telling you”, said Fionne. “We think we’ve found a way to make a new home for ourselves and to move now before the big people come and force us out”. Flynn started to cry and it sounded just like a baby wailing and everyone looked at him because really, he was crying for all of them.

They waited for a while and then Floella said “I want to stay here. I want to stay until they come and tell them they can’t have this place, it’s ours and we’re not going anywhere so they can build around us. We’re only little, why can’t we all live together?” And when she spoke, it sounded like a little lion instead of a cat meowing or a little fox. “We thought of that”, said Finton “and we like your idea. We wish we could stay too. Big people don’t want to share with us. It is better for us all to move now. We’ve found a lovely new home to go to and we want you to help us pack up now and take stuff there. We can all have dinner in our new house tonight.”
Each member of the fox family helped to pack boxes and load each other up with things to take to the new place.

The little foxes went around the den and said goodbye to each part of their home.

They went to the garden and spoke to each plant in turn.

To the potatoes they said “Thank you for feeding us, potatoes. We’re taking one of you with us and we’ll always remember how kind you were and how you always arrived in time for Sunday dinner. You have been very round and fat and smooth and we have enjoyed growing you.”

To the tomato plants they said “Thank you tomatoes, you have grown tall here and we will take some of you with us. You have always been sweet and very generous and you have helped us make so many meals. We have enjoyed growing you.”

To the chillies and the basil and the coriander and the parsley they said “Thank you herbs for being so loyal and for always coming back each year. You have added so much flavour to so many meals and we are taking some of you with us. We have enjoyed growing you”.

And so they went and spoke to every flower, every vegetable and every little seedling, taking one of everything and making sure to say thank each and every plant before they went. And so they packed up their precious garden, ready to plant it again in their new place.

They went to the river and said “Thank you river for all your constance. You have never stopped flowing and we have loved jumping over you and swimming in you and fishing here. We will take a bit of you with us and we hope we can come back from our new home to see you.” And each little fox threw a little pebble from the river side into the water and made a little wish.
Flynn wished for a lovely new home with a garden.

Floella wished to be able to stay where they lived now.

Frances wished for all the other little foxes to be ok.

Ferdinand wished for the big people to change their mind and not to come and live here.

Frederica wished for the big foxes to be ok and for the new house to be as lovely as the old house.

She knew everyone loved the garden and she was a bit worried it would be hard to leave. As they lined up to start walking away, Flynn burst into very loud tears and it sounded like a baby crying and everyone waited and listened because they all wanted to cry but they let Flynn do it for them.

And they set off and they followed in line from the most little in the front to the biggest at the back. Flynn was followed by Floella who went in front of Ferdinand who was behind Frances who was in front of Frederica who was in front of Femi who was in front of Fionne who was just in front of Finton.

The foxes walked through the field and down by the river and across the little gulley and down the little hill and up the little steps and over the little sty and down the little path into the forest. They walked under the Oak tree and the Sycamore tree and the Laurel tree and the Ash trees and the Acer trees and the Birch and the Holly branches bent down to say “hello” and the Hawthorn branches stepped back so they didn’t scratch and the little foxes thought how friendly it was here.
Ash leaves

Sycamore seeds

Oak leaf and acorn

Sycamore leaf

Hawthorn berries
They could smell the Rowan and the Pine and the little foxes thought how delicious it was here.

They could feel the warmth of the sun through the branches and the leaves of the trees above them and they could feel the softness of the earth and the moss and the grasses under their feet and the little foxes thought how comfortable it was here.

And then, from the back of the line, they heard Finton shout in his sing-song voice, “Stop!” And Flynn stopped and Floella bumped into him and they fell over and Ferdinand tried to stop in a hurry but the weight of his backpack meant he fell over too and Frances and Frederica just managed to avoid landing on top of him. Femi and Fionne and Finton all laughed and in turn, sounding like a lion and a cat and a bird and a baby, all the little foxes laughed too and they helped each other up and they stood still and waited.
Finton came to the front of the line and one by one they all looked at him. They could hear the birds and the branches and the wind and the smells and the warmth and the colours and the taste of the berries they had been eating on the way all made them feel very fat and round and heavy and rooted in the ground where they stood. “Look at this” said Finton as he lifted up a huge fern leaf. One by one the little foxes all approached and what they saw made them each make a new sound.

Flynn let out a little shriek of joy.

Floella clapped her hands and whooped.

Frances jumped up and down and kept saying “Wow”.

Ferdinand looked under the fern that Finton held up and let out a long fat whistle.

Frederica put her hands up in the air and laughed and laughed and laughed until everyone was laughing and wowing and whooping and whistling and shrieking.
When Finton lifted up the fern, what the little foxes saw was a beautiful sight. The big foxes had been planning the move for a very long time because they knew the little foxes would be sad and they were sad too and they didn’t want the new place to be anything less than perfect for the family.

Underneath the fern was the most beautiful den any of the little foxes had ever seen. There was a big living room, bigger than the old one and with a fireplace just like where they used to sit. There was a kitchen with a view over the longest, widest, greenest garden and in that garden, the big foxes had already planted one of every plant from home. So what the little foxes saw was a new home that was not only as lovely as the old home, but even lovelier.

The little foxes ran down the earth holes and into the den and Flynn and Floella started playing in the sand box at the end of the garden and Ferdinand walked around the whole place saying “hello” to the new spaces in the den and putting bits of what he had brought from home down where he thought it should go.
Frances and Frederica took off their backpacks and started to introduce the little seedlings they had brought with them, into the ground, each one next to its neighbour for company. The little tomato went next to the tomato plant, the coriander next to the coriander and so on, until all the plants were reunited and the flowers and herbs and vegetables were all together again.

And each little fox smiled and Flynn looked at Floella and Floella looked at Ferdinand and Ferdinand looked at Frances and Frances looked at Frederica and they all waited. One by one they smiled and laughed and smiled and laughed and waited.

And Frederica said “We were all worried it would be a bad thing” and she smiled and before she could continue, Flynn and Floella and Ferdinand Frances all said together, “but you were right, Frederica, it was a good thing after all”.