

**BETSY  
BYARS**

# The Midnight Fox

By the author of the  
Newbery Medal-winning  
*The Summer of the Swans*



## *Bad News*

Sometimes at night when the rain is beating against the windows of my room, I think about that summer on the farm. It has been five years, but when I close my eyes I am once again by the creek watching the black fox come leaping over the green, green grass. She is as light and free as the wind, exactly as she was the first time I saw her.

Or sometimes it is that last terrible night, and I am standing beneath the oak tree with the rain beating against me. The lightning flashes, the world is turned white for a moment, and I see everything as it was—the broken lock, the empty cage, the small tracks disappearing into the rain. Then it seems to me that I can hear, as plainly as I heard it that August night, above the rain, beyond the years, the high, clear bark of the midnight fox.

To begin with, I did not want to go to the farm. I was perfectly happy at home. I remember I was sit-

ting at the desk in my room and I had a brand new \$1.98 Cessna 180 model. I was just taking off the cellophane when my mom came in. I was feeling good because I had the model, and all evening to work on it, and then my mom told me in an excited way that I was going to Aunt Millie's farm for two whole months. I felt terrible.

"I don't want to go to any farm for two months," I said.

"But, Tommy, why not?"

"Because I just don't want to."

"Maybe you don't *now*," my mom said, "but after you think about it for a bit, you will. It's just that I've taken you by surprise. I probably shouldn't have come bursting in like—"

"I will never want to go."

She looked at me with a puzzled shrug. "I thought you would be so pleased."

"Well, I'm not."

"What's wrong?"

"There's nothing wrong. I would just hate to stay on a farm, that's all."

"How do you know? You can't even remember Aunt Millie's farm. You don't know whether you'd like it now or not."

"I know. I knew I wasn't going to like camp, and I didn't. I knew I wasn't going to like figs, and I don't. I knew I wasn't—"

“The trouble with you, Tommy, is that you don’t *try* to like new things.”

“You shouldn’t have to *try* to like things. You should just very easily, without even thinking about it at all, *like* them.”

“All right,” she said, and her upper lip was beginning to get tight. “When I first saw this farm, I very easily, without thinking about it at all, *loved* it. It is the prettiest farm I ever saw. It’s in the hills and there are great big apple trees to climb and there are cows and horses and—”

“Animals hate me.”

“Tom, I have never heard anything so silly in my life. Animals do not hate you.”

“They do. How about that dog that came running up at about a hundred miles an hour and bit me for no reason? I suppose that dog loved me!”

“The lady explained that. The dog had a little ham bone and you stepped on it and the dog thought you were going to take it. Anyway,” she continued quickly, “just wait till you see the baby lambs. There is nothing dearer in the world. They are—”

“I’ll probably be the only kid in the world to be stampeded to death by a bunch of baby lambs.”

“Tom!”

“I tell you, animals don’t like me. Perfectly strange animals come charging at me all the time.”

**Tom hates having to spend the summer on a farm . . . until he discovers the midnight fox.**



**N**o one asked Tom how *he* felt about spending two months on his Aunt Millie's farm. For a city boy, the farm holds countless terrors—stampeding baby lambs, boy-chasing chickens, and worst of all, loneliness. But everything changes when Tom sees the midnight fox. He can spend hours watching the graceful black fox in the woods. And when her life—and that of her cub—is in danger, Tom knows exactly what he must do.

“An exceptional book.”

— *Booklist*

**A Library of Congress  
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