

the branches they all three turned and glanced back at the farmer, where he stood by the water-trough shaking his fists at them in impotent and childish rage.

This audacious exploit seemed in some way to break up the little family. In some way, at this time, the two youngsters seemed to realize their capacity for complete independence and self-reliance; and at the same moment, as it were, the mother in some subtle fashion let slip the reins of her influence. All three became indifferent to each other; and without any misunderstanding or ill will each went his or her own way. As for Red Fox, with a certain bold confidence in his own craft, he turned his face back toward the old bank on the hillside, the old den behind the juniper-bush, and the little mouse-haunted meadow by the friendly brook.

As he neared the old home, with the memory of tragic events strong upon him, Red Fox went very circumspectly, as if he thought the dogs might still be frequenting the place. But he found it, of course, a bright solitude. The dry slope lay warm in the sun, the scattered juniper-bushes stood prickly and dark as of old, and unseen behind its screen of leafage the brook near by babbled pleasantly as of old