

## **Repercussions of Curiosity**

**By Gavyn Osborn**

In a small village that rested at the foot of a mountain, an ambitious man dreamt of reaching the top. The curiosity of the natural wonders of the mountain flooded his mind every waking moment, and he let his feet guide him to the base of the mountain. He stared longingly at the mound of land before running back towards his home. He spontaneously packed a small bag filled to the brim with rations, clothes, and quilts. He threw on an old pair of boots, and with childish giddy, he scurried up the mountain.

Soon enough, the amateur explorer was overcome by a wave of tiredness after the high of discovery wore off. He sat on a nearby rock, resting his forehead in his palms, trying to regain strength and motivation.

*Crack*

The snap of a twig made him on high-alert, scanning the area for danger even in a state of delirium. A small fox jumped out of the bushes behind the hiker. He let out a sigh of relief.

“Oh thank goodness! I thought some bear was going to come attack me!” he breathily explained to the fox.

Of course, the fox did not respond. It blinked a few times then pranced closer to the strange new man, sniffing him gently. The man let out an airy laugh.

*Tip tap*

“You’re a friendly little guy, aren’t ‘cha?” the man watched as the fox waltzed around him and started sniffing his bags.

The man moved his things away from the fox’s prying nose.

*Clank, clunk*

“No, no, little fox. My food and weapons are in here; I can’t have you getting into those.”

The fox tilted its head as if to ask what those things were. The man pulled out an axe and dagger to show the fox.

“See? With this axe, I can chop down trees, and I can protect myself with the dagger,” the man smiled at the fox, who looked increasingly intrigued about human possessions. “I don’t think that some of the other animals on this mountain are going to be as welcoming as you.”

The fox again failed to respond. The man let out a melancholy sigh.

“Maybe I’m going insane,” he mumbled.

He looked up at the sky, hoping that God might have mercy on him and grant easy passage back to the village. Instead, he was greeted by the darkening sky. He stood up from the rock, and sluggishly started walking in a random direction in hopes of finding an empty cave to rest in. The fox weaved between the man’s legs, as if trying to tell him something. The man looked down at the orange creature.

“Huh?” he blurted in a daze.

Once the fox had hold of the human’s attention, he ran in front of the man and disappeared into the forest.

*Tip tap, crack snap, tip tap*

“Hey! Wait!” cried out the man.

This fox was his only chance of survival, and he knew it. He sprinted after the fox, his bags clanged and clunked about on his back.

*Clunk, clang, tip tap, snap*

After a few minutes of charging after the fox, the man, now out of breath, leaned all of his body weight against a tree.

*Creaaaaak*

“C-curse you, fox...” the man wheezed out.

He closed his eyes as he tried to regain his breath. The rascal of a fox revealed itself from the shadowy forest. It looked at the man with a mischievous glint in its eye, and urged the man to follow it just a few steps away.

“You!” exclaimed the man.

His face was red from the mix of frustration and tiredness in his body. He bent down to try and catch the fox, but it swiftly dodged him and started dashing into a cave. The man gritted his teeth and pushed his aching legs to run again, the pure fury in his mind re-energizing his body.

He chased after the fox into the dark and musty cave. Unfortunately, he forgot to bring an oil lamp, so the man was lost in the darkness of the cave. The only light was from the moon at the opening of the cave. The dripping of the water on the stalactites was the only thing he could hear.

*Drip, drip*

As his eyes adjusted to the lack of light, he thought he saw movement of the fox.

*Drip, drip*

He beelined to the direction of the fox, desperate to catch the small mammal who tricked him. He slowly grabbed his dagger out from his bag.

*Drip, drip*

Before he could catch the fox, the man heard something moving behind him.

*Drip, drip*

He fearfully whipped his body around, his dagger falling from his grasp.

*Drip, drip*

His eyes fell on a boulder that slowly rolled in front of the cave.

*Drip, drip, rumble*

His eyes widened and he scurried to try to escape the cave before it was too late.

*Drip, clank, drip*

He stumbled across stalagmites and tripped over rocks, only to feel his legs getting heavier and heavier.

*Drip, thump, drip*

His legs felt rooted to the ground. He screamed out in fear and anger. He felt idiotic and gullible. He threw his bag at the boulder as hard as he could in hopes that it could stop it.

*Clunk, clank, thump, drip*

It did nothing. He wailed in agony as he realized how foolish he truly was.

*Drip, tip tap, drip*

He felt his waist getting solid and cold. Why would he try to climb a mountain without having any experience? Why didn't he just make his own fort instead of following a stupid fox? Why didn't he just stay home?

*Tip tap, drip, drip, drip, drip*

Tears left his eyes as the darkness engulfed him.

"You truly are a fool, aren't you?" The man's head shot up as he searched for the source of the gravelly voice.

He tried to turn his body to see who was talking, but he couldn't move his waist to turn.

"Who's there? Who are you?" the man tried to sound authoritative and menacing, but his voice came out small and shaky.

*Tip tap*

"I'm sure your intentions when trekking this monument were not evil or mischievous, but I cannot risk having a human discover this land," the

seemingly unembodied voice was getting closer, “We have had to eradicate many explorers, from amateurs like yourself to people who have dedicated their entire lives to figuring out the mystery of my home. If we let people from the village freely roam up here, the animals and plants of this mountain will be killed and overused for resources.”

*Tip tap*

“That’s why you feel so cold, and that’s why you can’t move.” The voice was solemn as it Spoke. “Any humans who I lead into this cave are cursed to become a part of it. Why do you think there’s so many rocky figures everywhere?”

The man was gobsmacked.

“You’re the fox! I can’t believe this! You must be kidding, there’s no way you’re being serious!” the man bellowed. He tried to move his arms, only to feel them seemingly glued to his sides. His breathing felt restricted, “Please just let me go! I won’t tell anyone about this! I swear on my life!” The man pleaded desperately with the apparently enchanted fox.

“I know you swear on your life. You’re giving it to me,” coldly announced the fox.

The man tried to speak, but his lips were fixed together. He felt his eyes getting solid, agonizingly slowly. It felt like someone was pouring cement in his eyes.

*Rumble, drip, drip*

The boulder slowly moved away from the cave, the man’s bag now smushed and flat against the ground.

The fox quietly padded out of the cave, looking back at the man once more. The moonlight illuminated his now gray and jagged body, his face permanently painted with a traumatized expression.

*Drip, drip*