FOX PAWS

By: McKenna Collman

The silver sky shone in the atmosphere, the sun hidden behind a blanket of clouds. The grass was dripping with the fresh dew of the morning rain. It was quiet... unusually quiet, as I lay on the muddy dirt, my pelt making me look like a black panther.

I closed my eyes slightly and I strained my ears, searching for any source of noise. I could suddenly hear something; footsteps in the distance told me someone was near. Someone with big feet but a light step; as light as pixie dust.

I dashed into the shelter of the trees, hearing not a single noise but the sound of my heartbeat. The extra moisture was dripping from the tree leaves, changing my black fur to its signature orange fox color. The steps are getting closer. I thought.

Suddenly, I could feel them in the dark shadow of the trees. They stopped and turned towards me. By the look of their shoes, those slick, black shoes, I could tell they were hunters. I didn’t breathe. It seemed as if one little breath could make the world topple over. Out of nowhere, there was a scream. I recognized that scream as a poor, innocent animal just trying to survive in this dark mess of a forest.

The hunter turned and started walking away. I need to get out of here. I thought. I tried backing away, but I was so scared that I didn’t notice the jungle of branches behind me. “SNAP!” The hunter froze and I started running. “SNAP, SNAP, SNAP!” I could feel the footsteps of at least four hunters chasing me. Sweat started slithering through my fur and the thorns of the bramble thickets scraped my face, releasing streams of blood.
Finally, escaping the pain of the forest, I came out into a wide grassland area. The grass was softer here than it was under the trees, moist with the rain that had fallen a few hours earlier. I let everything go and just ran. All I thought about was the soft touch of my callused paws to the slick, velvety grass. The hunters always came after a rain because that’s when all the forest’s animals come out to enjoy the cool mist. That’s when we were most vulnerable.

My head became woozy with tiredness, so I shook it and kept running. “GET IT!!” One hunter shouted behind me. They were gaining fast. “HURRY!!” He shouted again. Suddenly, I heard a loud boom and the dirt beside me flew up, choking me, but I kept going. In front of me at least six yards out was a hedge. I knew the hunters couldn’t get through the hedge so I ran as hard as I can. My legs burned with the sensation of running. I had never run this fast before! Well, I had never been chased by hunters either.

Then it struck me. My mother!! She must be so worried. Her, my father and my brothers and sisters are probably in our very protective home in a tree trunk. It all started when eagle flew over head in an “O” pattern and we knew the hunters were coming. My sister, Angeline, spotted the eagle first and we ran. My parents were so caught up in trying to get to the tree that they didn’t notice that I stumbled over a log. That’s when I heard the hunter’s footsteps.

Suddenly, everything turned a dark shade of green and pain flashed through my pelt. I finally made it out of the thick hedge and kept on running, slower this time because I had a huge gash in my leg. Thankfully, I wasn’t shot; the wound was from the hedge.
The ground behind me turned bright red with fresh blood, slowly making my chances of surviving smaller. I turned to glance back at the hedge to see if the hunters were able to make it through, and didn’t notice the drop a few feet in front of me. I stumbled over the edge and my legs gave away. It wasn’t very steep though. It was kind of like “Jack and Jill,” kind of hill.

I reached the bottom and laid in the autumn leaves in silence. I heard nothing but the soft twitter of the birds. Birds? Why were there birds? All of the birds would be hiding in the trees. I opened my eyes and looked up at the opening in the leafy covering and the saw the sun glinting on the bright, blue sky.

My first thought was, I’m dead, but the excruciating pain in my leg told me I wasn’t. I moved my head ever so slightly, and glanced around at my surroundings.

It didn’t look like my forest.

I didn’t look like anywhere I’ve been before.