



*Mother from the clifftop*



*Her son on a scouting mission*



*That cow's getting a bit too curious*



*Time to hide*



*She of the hypnotic eyes*



*They're off*



*But at least she turned around to say goodbye*

managed to get hold of some drops which could be given mixed with food. Thankfully the medication worked and his eye gradually began to open. In the meantime it had obviously been irritating because he'd been rubbing away at the fur and ended up looking like he was wearing half a superhero mask! By the end of the month he had fully recovered, his facial fur re-grown and you would hardly have known there'd been a problem.

By this time they had moved a little further east because one of his cousins had appeared on their original patch. Given his vulnerability due to the eye infection, they were right to be cautious, but the interloper didn't seem to pose a problem. He may even have been on a scouting mission for his mother because a little later she decided to move her young cubs away from their former home on the clifftop below because she felt they weren't safe. People had a habit of disregarding restrictions, climbing over the fence onto the clifftop and





*That's an impressive set of gnashers you've got boy!*



*Lounging around with a stick!*



*Rolling and tumbling*



*Together*

successfully treated his eye infection and he seemed to be responding, but the recovery didn't last and the infection returned worse than before. During the next few weeks he was obviously in a great deal of pain and I have to admit there were times it got so bad I wondered whether I might ever see him again. Eventually I managed to procure some alternative, stronger, medication from a kind soul, and we embarked on another regime. Thankfully it worked, but it wasn't until the end of the second week in April that he actually showed any substantial signs of improvement. I should mention how significant it was during this time that our friendship had progressed to such an extent that, even when at his worst he still came out to see me so I was able to give him food that contained his meds and thankfully the infection didn't escalate to the point of no return. For two months he had been extremely vulnerable, so when I first saw him walk, then run on all fours again,





*Larking around on the edge of the cliff*



*Enjoying the sun*

to make any difference to them. As much as I could, I got to know their habits and they were familiar with mine. The weather remained chilly, the gorse was in flower, the grass dry and pale, and the foxes still hadn't quite shed their winter coats so looked a little scruffy and dark. After the stress of the previous two months everything was getting back to normal and by the start of May, that also seemed to be the case for us humans as our own restrictions eased a little after various lockdowns. At the end of a couple of nasty wet and windy weeks, the weather also started to ease and we ventured out more.

The beginning of June was sunny and warm and I took my first journey with them to the clifftop overlooking the sea on the south side of Fox Mountain. Unlike me, they have no fear of heights, which is just as well because behind them the steep chalk cliffs are well over 100m high which is why there's a mesh fence



*They've spotted something!*

cordoning off the area. The foxes don't let that deter them though - they leap through a gap of about 50cm wide by about 25cm deep and are safe where (generally) humans don't go. There they enjoyed larking around on the edge then turning towards me now and then to check I was still watching! I got the impression they liked performing for their human friend! The second time I went to the outer edge it was just me and the boy. She'd been limping for a couple of days, but had started to recover. She doesn't seem to be susceptible to injuries and is usually a much quicker healer than him, but it wasn't quite as warm as it had been so she'd wandered off to find shelter instead of continuing the journey. He stuck around so I wondered if he fancied another adventure.

This time I led the way at first - over the top towards the cliff on the far side. He then took over, leapt



*Our first visit*



*And the second - leaping through the fence*



*He's wondering why I'm not joining him on the clifftop*



*Teaching me what to do - first look both ways*



*Get ready to jump*



*See - it's easy - now you try!*





*Contentment*

100cm in length. They are very light and on average weigh between 5-7kg. To them, a human is gigantic and must appear extremely threatening. I expect it's also the unpredictability of our species that single us out as likely trouble makers. More surprising than is that he is happy to stand at my feet and walk in front of me!

It was obvious these two enjoyed each other's company. I don't know whether it's unusual for two foxes to be together like this from such a young age, and before mating, but it was a privilege to be a witness because by this time I felt as though I was totally accepted and perhaps actually considered part of their family. There were days when we just met and did very little other than enjoy being together, particularly when the weather was cold, wet, or too windy, but there were other days when there would be a spontaneous quest for adventure.

One such day was during the first week in July. It was windy, but fairly warm and sunny. They'd had



*Togetherness*



*Mmmmm - a flower good enough to eat*



*The ancient fox art of stick throwing*