



## THE FOX FAMILY

There is no perfect family. This is a universal truth, but if the imagination of a pair of mischievous minds is mixed with reality, the result can be an explosive combination that shuts the door to normalcy.

Sonia and William's marriage is an example of how patience can be extended to the absolute limits. After all, parental love can only tolerate so much nonsense from the ingenuity of their sons, especially when they happen to be Julian and Nicholas Fox.

This outlandish story begins with the crazy end of a pleasant vacation. The two brothers, Julian and Nicholas, were enjoying the afternoon heat near the banks of the river that crossed their ranch. They lay in the shade of an enormous tree listening to the torrent of water as if it were a magical lullaby.

Julian, the eldest, was twenty-one years old. He had just completed his university studies, and the memories of the experiences with his classmates were still fresh in his mind. Nicholas, the youngest of the two sons, was twenty years old and still studying.

They stayed silent for several minutes with their eyes closed, hoping that a miracle would occur and the family vacation would

continue for a while longer. But, resigned to return home in just two days, they decided to make the most of nature's sweetness.

Nicholas broke the peaceful silence to make an interesting proposal to his brother. "Hey, Jul! What do you think about staying another week? We just convince Mom and that's it. You know that Dad will take our side."

A slight smile crossed Julian's lips before he gave his opinion. "Sounds good to me, Nico, but when you talk to Mom, even though I support you, I'd rather stay at a safe distance in case she decides to give you one of her maternal speeches about missing classes."

Nicholas opened his eyes and sought some kind of solidarity in Julian's face, but Julian was resting peacefully. Annoyed by this, Nicholas closed his eyes in surrender, and told his brother, "You're right, I would suffer an eternal telling off. But, who could blame me? I even think we've regained our sanity here. We're almost like angels—no fighting, no insults, and no jokes or pranks."

Nicholas quieted immediately and bit his lip, feeling sorry for what he had said, but it was too late. Julian's beautiful gray eyes had become large and full of rage.

Nicholas's last remark felt like an unpunished mocking memory. Julian's heart raced and started running toward the inevitable. He felt like demanding they forget about this shameful situation, and even more so, requiring a fair rematch to Nicholas's last prank. Shrewdly, Julian cautioned self-control to his heart to avoid hinting its intentions to his recently condemned brother. He mastered his instincts and decided to wait. The gray gems hid again, and a slight sideways smirk appeared on his lips, presaging the beginning of a new battle between the brothers.

Nicholas closed his eyes so Julian wouldn't see the nervousness erupting in them. He knew he had awakened a sleeping monster and that, from that moment on, he should be careful.

## Julian Fox, The Dream Guardian

The heat calmed their moods and invited them to take a refreshing respite in the river before returning home. The brothers rose from the grass to stretch their impressive figures, shake off the laziness, and summon a second wind. Julian was the first to take off his clothes, exposing the golden beauty of his skin. He looked at the river and drew a sweet smile, which contrasted with his toned muscles; they were admirable and demanded respect. His hands picked out small, dry leaves, which seemed to have nested in his black hair.

He walked slowly toward the bank and submerged his feet. He kept moving forward among the stones until the water became deep enough to dive and he could become part of the river's magic. Nicholas followed behind his brother, keeping a prudent distance, but his tension soon dissolved itself in the fresh waters and he also ended up surrendering his beauty to the river. Time perpetuated their senses and gave them a few hours of happiness and tranquility.

Julian emerged from the water and stopped being a playful mirage in the river's immensity. He gave his skin to the sun, which dried the drops of water running down his body one by one. When he was dry enough, he put on his pants and sneakers and enjoyed the pleasure of his back exposed to the air. Then, he sat on a rock to wait for Nicholas.

On the way back home, the two brothers walked along a path adorned by leafy trees of various species. Some offered them the scent of their fruit, which was enjoyed by countless birds. Others, more glamorous, exhibited the beauty and color of their wildflowers, many of which lay in the grass, delighting the senses with their beautiful multicolored tapestry.

The evening flirted between a more intense pink and deeper blue when they arrived at the house, Julian laughing at Nicholas's jokes. The imposing ranch, full of history and ancient beauty, had been remodeled and transformed into the Foxes' family refuge. Its

other shades gave it a natural appearance in the landscape. Hidden amid thick vegetation, it seemed like a treasure the brothers rediscovered every time they came back to visit. It was decorated with trees of differing colors, making it calm and pleasant.

At the entrance, a stately porch preceded the enormous front door and welcomed its guests. The light visited the house throughout the day, warming the walls and filling the rooms with joy. The windows, always open, allowed constant contact with Mother Nature's colorful art. The interior was decorated with country chairs and other expensive furniture. In several areas of the house, hammocks lent the home a simple grace along with hanging ferns, reflecting an interesting mix of natural freshness and the poise of elegance and good taste. That enchanting paradise had been made reality so that the Foxes could offer their two sons a world of light, clean air, and tranquility, although the latter had been lost years ago, thanks to the brothers' constant lunacy.

The brothers found their parents seated in one of the hammocks, cuddling. The love of William Fox and Sonia Florit had overcome cultural barriers and languages. They had met when they were very young and had been together ever since. William came from an aristocratic English family, and Sonia from an extravagant and intellectual French one. Although the story of their courtship was very short, the intensity of their love continued to be worthy of admiration.

Their story went thusly: a handsome young Englishman, very shy and big-hearted, decided to spend his summer vacation in Paris. The Louvre Museum showed him many wonders, among them Sonia's beautiful face with attractive gray eyes. They got to know each other through signs, since she spoke no English and he only knew ten words in French, so they let the universal language of love take its course. Shortly after, they got married, their brief separation to their respective countries having submerged them in nostalgia. Paris welcomed the newlyweds, and later two children

were born to fill their lives with happiness. Years later, they decided to find a middle ground where both could build their own world and reconcile their cultural differences. The answer was offered to them by the state of Florida, with its warmth and the kindness of its people.

This was how the Fox family began to grow across multiple languages and customs, reaching a mutual agreement that English would become the neutral language, although their respective accents were tinged by their cultural backgrounds. The children took in the languages of their parents with ease, and even the one of their grandparents: German.

Nicholas interrupted his parents' romantic moment with one of his smart-aleck comments.

"Dad, for God's sake, that's my mother. Let go of her before it traumatizes me."

Julian, in solidarity with his brother's mischievous comments, added, "Mother! Father! I'm not going to be able to sleep tonight . . ."

As insulted love sometimes demands compensation, an exasperated William sprang over to his tactless sons, and the floor became a fighting arena as hilarious laughs and threats rolled across the floor. Once again, Sonia's scolding and warnings could neither put an end to the clash nor calm the spirits, so, just like always, she resignedly went to the kitchen to get the spray bottle of cold water especially prepared for these "special occasions."

Cristina, the housekeeper and a family friend for many years, saw her enter the elegant kitchen. The din in the living room and the threats in three languages made her understand that the Foxes were no longer on vacation, and she could expect to witness any sort of madness.

Having retrieved the spray bottle, Sonia rejoined the three men who were having a great time and, without saying another word, sprayed them mercilessly until the cold water became stronger than