



## Little Foxes

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"Catch us the foxes, the little foxes, that ruin the vineyards for our vineyards are in blossom" (Song of Solomon 2:15; NRSV).

Solomon in his second chapter depicts two young lovers, nubile and feeling aloft with the heady emotions they have for one another. It is the time of life when nothing seems more perfect, more wonderful than the love one feels for the significant other. Solomon's song of passionate love for another is heartfelt and earnest. The longing his words display are rarely encountered in our daily lives. They demonstrate a yearning for "the other", a yearning which entwines one's heartstrings with that of another human being, that revels in the beautifully simple pleasure of even just thinking upon that one (let alone sharing time in person with them). But after this introduction of the two lovers, and a request of the young man to the young lady to basically "come away" with him (perhaps on a country lane walk, enjoying the beauty of the season?), a snippet of hard wisdom - almost seemingly out of place here - is inserted: "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes, that ruin our vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom."

This subtle little bit of imagery is dropped in the midst of Solomon's poem like a tissue by the side of the road: small, delicate, liable to be lost shortly in the lush upgrowth around itself. And yet, its function is eminently more important (and lasting) than a disposable hanky. Might it be that Solomon self-medicates here (as well as writing out a prescription for his lady-friend) because he has already noticed that even in the midst of seeming perfection and bliss, there are still those things that tend to detract from the truly amazing experience, marring it ever so slightly, sucking out some of the pleasure that would otherwise be experienced uninterrupted? Thus, "the little foxes".

Homer Simpson has become well-known for the phrase "Why you little..." whenever he loses his cool with his son, Bart (with it usually leading to some kind of violence being inflicted on the boy). The point is: even when an antagonist is small, it may still cause us a great deal of frustration, so much so that our otherwise "perfect day" ends up being ruined (or at least left with a slightly off-putting memory attached).

**IF YOU THINK  
YOU ARE  
TOO SMALL  
TO MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE, TRY  
SLEEPING WITH  
A MOSQUITO**

When it comes to relationships, it is often the "little things" that begin to wear away at the relationship. The frustrations not shared, the annoyances never discussed and worked through. It is these kinds of things which "nip" and ruin the otherwise wonderful crop of fruit that might bring delight to the harvesters. And it is exactly these little things that need to be "caught"/"trapped," and dealt with in an appropriate fashion. In other words, we need to nip the nippers in the bud. This kind of "flower", if allowed to survive, will only bear poisonous shoots, thorns that prick, and roots that tend to dig deep, resist much, and give little.

But foxes are crafty, and won't just usually go away if you shake a fist, boot, or pellet gun at them. In fact, they tend to proliferate madly, if allowed the chance (I live in England. I know firsthand what I'm talking about here). Thus, if you're going to take them down, you had better be quite deliberate about it. It will take work. Determined effort. But if you and your beloved are willing to work on it together, you can be quite sure that those little annoying critters trying to sneak into your pristine shared garden will have a much harder time doing so with the both of you "on-duty" and being watchful.