The fox is a majestic little creature, seen widely throughout the world not just as a symbol of cunning, but also of elegance. Where the fox lacks the power of a lion, or the speed of a cheetah, they make up for it in pure *wit.* Such can be seen in many a fable – like that of the fox and the crow.

The fox, wandering around the forest on the look-out for breakfast, stumbled upon a crow, sitting atop a branch. What caught his attention, however, wasn’t the animal itself, but what was in her beak – a lovely bite of cheese. So, the fox approached the crow, praising her feathers, her form, her wings and, most importantly, her *voice.* Oh, how he wished to hear the crow’s voice, even if only once, so he could hail it the queen of birds, as he need only hear confirmation that her song was beautiful as the rest of her! The crow, hoping to prove herself, opens her beak to sing, dropping the cheese right into the fox’ mouth, who promptly wanders off, noting that the crow surely had a voice – but wondering simultaneously where its wings are.

A textbook case of a fox’ deviousness. In some cultures, however, the fox is seen as more than an impish creature, gaining its desires in any way it can – the fox isn’t looked at as *shrewd but shifty*; instead, it’s simply *wise.* More than that, it is also a *keeper of knowledge,* one who will bring thee to the *wisdom* one desires.

But why all this talk about *foxes,* huh?

Well, as one is (hopefully) aware by now, all agents of the Ghostbusters Inc (temporary name) are inarbitrarily assigned an *animal code name*: the Bat, the Chameleon (<- that’s me), the Leopard, so on, so forth – and so too, is there a Fox.

Now, as I mentioned, these names are not given randomly – it is, largely, based on the traits of the agent. I, for example, have my *special ability* to go *unseen*: therefore, the Chameleon.

Which brings us to the subject of this monologue: the Fox. Why is the woman who goes by the name of the Fox, named the Fox?

For one, it is because the Fox is somewhat of a repository; someone who knows everything. Rather than *someone who knows everything* (she’d curse me out if she heard me call her that, I’m sure), it might be more accurate to put it this way:

If you don’t know something, ask someone who does.   
If you don’t know someone who does, search for them.   
If you can’t find them, ask the Fox.  
If the Fox doesn’t know, give up.

Quite frankly, for any agent like me, it could be called the modus operandi. If you can’t figure things out, no matter what, go to the Fox. You may be asking, then, why not go the Fox to begin with? Skip the first few steps and go straight to the Fox?

Well, that’s where a bit of that *foxiness* comes in. You see, The Fox knows full wellthat she’s a last resort, for when *no one else* knows – which is why she charges the rates of someone that *knows* they’re irreplaceable.

Consulting the Fox could very well run you the month’s rent, if you’re unlucky – which is why the Fox will always remain a *last resort.* Unless, of course, you *are* lucky – in which case, you may be able to convince the Fox to help you, trading for *something* *else;* although *lucky* may not be the best way to put it. You never know what the Fox might ask in return.

In addition, the Fox is incredibly mysterious. No one knows where she’s really from, or who she really is, or even *what she wants* – something she uses to her advantage, as, without knowing her intentions, it’s almost impossible *not* to be deceived.

All that said, allow me to present a simple case studyto illustrate *–* although simple may not be the best word.

I stride confidently into the lobby of the Ghostbusters Inc Headquarters (temporary name), to be greeted, much to my surprise, by a certain woman laying down on the sofa.

“Hello, Lazzy ol’ boy,” she says, cranking her head towards the opened door. “It’s been a while.”

Immediately, I’m met with a sense of unease. Firstly, because spotting *the Fox* in the wild is the easiest way to know one is getting involved in something they don’t want to be involved in.

Secondly, because she just called me by name.

“Policy clearly states agents should use each other’s code names at all times,” I remind her. “And also, more importantly, how the hell do you know my name?”

“Oh, that’s your name? I didn’t realise – my bad, my bad. I won’t do it again.”

“You’re dodging the question, Fox,” I call her out, as I take a seat on the lounge chair, sat opposite of the sofa. “How do you know my name?”

“Know is a strong word. But, if you insist on asking *how*, I suppose I can offer an explanation.”

“Please.”

“Then, allow me to pose a hypothetical: say you had an appointment, on a certain day – but, being the *hoodlum* you are, you find yourself with nothing to do at all. As a result, you head to the location of the appointment ahead of time. However, having arrived, you now find yourself incredibly bored, as you were before heading out. As such, you wander around a bit, killing time. Then, having wandered around, you suddenly realise paying attention to the passing of time has entirely slipped your mind and you are now, quite possibly, on the verge of being late. So, you take a quick glance at your watch, and find out you’re still barely on time; only a couple minutes until the meeting is planned.”

I sigh.

The Fox’ patented *roundabout explanation*™. Heaving another sigh – this time, extra theatrical – I decide to give her the time of day, at least.

“Alright then. So I look at my hypothetical watch (I have a phone, why would I?). Then what? What’s your point?” I ask.

“Well, you know the time now, obviously, as you’ve looked at your watch,” she states. “Wouldn’t you agree?”

“I suppose I would.”

“See, Chameleon, the punchline here is that, in reality, your watch had frozen the day before, without you realising at all. So, the time you *knew* was based on a clock that hadn’t moved in a day. Would you then still say that you *knew*?”

“No, I guess not,” I answer, still a bit befuddled as to where this whole story is going.

“Right? But, not knowing your watch was frozen, you run over to your appointment, and – would you look at that – your date is right there! So you run up to them, checking the time once more to see if you aren’t tardy, to then find out the watch was wrong all along.”

“What a fool, I am.”

“Indeed, indeed – that is true. But, as you walk up to apologise to your *date,* they respond, ‘Oh, XXX? You’re just on time!’”

“Wasn’t the clock wrong?” I wonder.

“No, no, no, you misunderstand – the clock had stopped *exactly* a day before. Meaning, in that moment when you checked it, it was actually *correct.*”

“Hm,” I half-heartedly interject. “I suppose even a broken clock is right twice a day.”

“Indeed – however, that’s not the important part of this story. The important part comes in the question I asked earlier, as well: at that moment when you first checked your watch, would you say you knew the time?”

“Well, since my alleged date confirmed it, I suppose so.”

“That’s right. So, if you were to ask me *how I know your name,* then my answer could only be as follows:” she says, while dramatically pointing her finger at me, “it’s because you told me.”

*Bullshit,* I instinctively think. At the same time, I know full well how pointless it is to argue with *the Fox* when she goes into *full* *bullshitting mode,* so I give up pre-emptively.

“I feel like you could’ve said that without the whole story,” I simply note.

“Ah!” she shouts out, as if she only just realised that fact. “That’s true, that’s true! You’re right – why didn’t I think of that?” she mockingly lets out.

*Overdone,* is the only word I can use to describe it, as she sits up, leaning her elbow on the armrest, and her head on the hand connected to it. As always, her face seems to say that she considers herself far above this juvenile discussion – even though she’s the one who always starts it.

“Well, that aside, I have a more important question:” she segues, as if me asking her how she got my personal information isn’t *at all* relevant. “How’ve you been doing on that little *task* I gave you, back when we first talked?”

“What task?” I wonder.

I am immediately met with a death glare, signalling that was not the correct answer.

“During our first meeting, I gave you a *task*. Although I suppose you could view it more as a *mantra* to live your life by.” She shakes her head, disapprovingly. “Really, I would’ve figured you’d remember, considering the fact I *did* save your life back then.”

“Did you? I mean, I appreciate your efforts and all, but, realistically speaking, all you did was save those around me. All you did for me, was bury me in a mountain of debt.”

“First off, I’d like to remind you that debt has nothing to do with me – that’s all on Erica.”

“Erica was just being fair. That isn’t her fault.”

“Yeah, yeah,” the Fox says, shrugging the comment off. “Think what you like. However, if you think you would’ve have gotten out of that room alive if I hadn’t freed you, you’re out of your mind.”

“They wouldn’t have—” I start, before thinking it over. Would those at the head of *Ghostbusters Inc* (temporary name) really have let a haunted man go, risking the lives of anyone he contacts, rather than squashing him while they have the chance?

…

Surely not, I conclude, as my eyes meet the Fox’, who adopts her trademark *smug, know-it-all* look.

“Do you perhaps mean,” I say, deciding I’d hate nothing more than to admit her correctness, “when you told me tolive for myself or whatever?”

“Yes, yes,” she responds, seemingly elated, even if it’s doubtless naught but fraudful, “That’s right; exactly that one.”

“Well, I sure am glad you asked!” I lie. “It’s been going great. Yes, just great – absolutely phenomenal. Couldn’t be better, that’s how good it’s been going – truly.”

“Good, good; I’m very glad to hear that,” she responds, with another uninterpretable smile. You could almost call it a smirk, even, as suggested by her scrutinising gaze.

I may not have properly comprehended the deepness of the shit I’m in.

“The thing is, you see,” she continues, contrary to her statement from moments ago, “rumour around these parts has it that you aren’t doing so at all. Rather, from what has reached my ears – and they’re quite keen, I remind you – it seems you’re throwing yourself into job after job, with reckless abandon – or something along those lines. Which, as you may understand, has given me the impression that you’ve been neglecting my *task* – which, I remind you, I gave you for *your own sake*, and no one else’s.”

She looks almost offended as she gives this spiel. *Almost.*

“Who’d you hear that from?” I ask, in turn.

“Erica,” she immediately admits, without a moment’s doubt.

Erica.  
*Erica.*  
I should’ve known it’d be *Erica.*

Erica, of course, is the de-facto leader of the *Ghostbusters* (temporary name)*,* who I have the great fortune of reporting directly to when it comes to receiving jobs, as well as announcing their completion.

When I say *great fortune,* in this case, that’s not sarcastic at all – being given the opportunity to interact (and feast my eyes upon) the one and only *Erica,* widely known as *the perfect woman,* truly does make me feel fortunate, to the point where I start to question my own fidelity, despite being wholly, completely, 100% dedicated to my lovely girlfriend, who I’d never, not even for a second, consider betraying.

In fact, despite the fact that Erica ratted me out to the Fox in concern to my disconcern for the *task* I had been given by the Fox (which, if that was not already clear, Erica was present to witness), I don’t feel angry at her at all. Rather, when I think that Erica had given out this information willingly, my only thought is that she must’ve had her reasons, no doubt noble, and I shouldn’t question that – a thought which is, in all likelihood, born from Erica’s special *condition,* but I suppose that’s a story for another day. Right now, I’ve got other things on my mind.

Looking at the Fox, however, I realise this may not be so tough a situation after all. If I simply take a page out of *her* book, I’m sure I’ll be perfectly alright.

The first step to that would be disabling my *bullshit* filter – allowing me to spout as much crap as I could ever want, allowing me to easily dodge the situation; exactly as *the Fox* would.

At least, *I would* disable it–if I had one.

“Well, I suppose I can understand thinking, from an outside perspective, that I’m not *prioritising myself* - as you’d call it – when doing these jobs. However, if you’d look a layer deeper, I’m sure you’ll find that it’s quite different.”

“Is that how it is?” she says, as she lies down again, as if preparing for a show. “Then, please enlighten me,” she finishes, as she motions for me to continue.

“Consider the following situation,” I say, having not come up with a following situation. “Imagine you have two men,” I improvise, “laying on their deathbed – neither having achieved some grander purpose in their life, yet one is perfectly content in his last moments, while the other looks back bitterly. What do you think is the chief difference in their experiences of their lives?”

“Oh? We’re looking quite deeply for this *simple conversation*, are we not?” she questions, as my mind runs overtime attempting to find a continuation for whatever I’d come up with on the spot. “Go on then,” she continues, “tell me – what *is* the determining factor in this little *thought experiment* of yours?”

“It lies, of course, in the way the two *lived* those lives. One pursued some greater ambition, and, in his failure, realised he’d wasted his life chasing ghosts, while the other never bothered, finding a simple satisfaction in a day-to-day life surrounded by friends and family.”

“Oh? Very interesting,” she comments. “But what is your point? How do these two relate to your situation?”

“Well, obviously, it concerns the *method* I have chosen for *prioritising myself,* as you call it. While you may have intended to say I should consider my own health and safety before acting, I have decided that the best way to do the *task* you gave me, would be to chase that simple life, surrounded by simple happiness, over any greater ambitions.” As my head spins from my rambling, I realise I have been frighteningly coherent in my speech. I may be some kind of genius, I think, as I see the Fox nod along, seeing the conclusion within reach.

“As such,” I continue after the short reprieve, stemming from my mind catching up to my words, “throwing myself at my jobs with what another may see as *reckless abandon,* can actually be interpreted differently as *prioritising myself,* exactly as you had said. Ridding myself of my debts as fast as possible, allowing myself a quiet life with my lovely girlfriend, *that* isthe crowning example of *prioritising myself,* as that is *precisely* where my happiness stems from. Does that make sense?”

“Hm,” she mutters cockily, as she rests her head on her hand, still laying sprawled out on the sofa, like a roman emperor eating grapes – despite the absolute lack of any fruit in the bare-bones lobby of the Ghostbusters Inc Headquarters (temporary name). “I suppose I can accept that explanation, however scrambled it may be. Yes, yes, indeed, I will let you off with that – largely as it made for very entertaining conversation.”

I wouldn’t quite call something as one-sided as that *conversation,* but I won’t put myself in harm’s way by calling that out. We sit in silence for a while (thank God), although I find myself to be far too tensed up to truly relax. Once I finally muster up the courage to summon my phone, despite the constant watching eye of the Fox boring holes into me, she immediately speaks up, as if to be intentionally obtuse to my goal of *not talking to her*, as one can only really lose in that situation.

“Would you,” she says, “like to play a little game while we wait? It may be a while, after all.”

*No*, I immediately think.

“Why not?” I say, however, as defying the Fox might be even worse of a sentence than having to deal with her in the first place.

“It’s not a game so much as it is a little thought exercise, I suppose. The idea is, I will allow you to guess three *facts* about me, pertaining to the way I view the world. When you’re guess is correct, I shall further clarify.”

I raise an eyebrow.

“Pray tell – why, exactly, should I want to take part in this?”

“Is it not obvious?” she asks, with another cocky smile, which I respond to by shaking my head no.

“Firstly,” she says, with a tinge of disappointment, “this little *game* will help keep the mind active, rather than allowing it to stagnate. And, more importantly,” she adds, “there’s not many who get a chance to hear about me, personally, you know? You should feel blessed at the opportunity.”

I’m so honoured. Really, I can scarcely contain my excitement.

“Very well – let us play then,” I respond, doing my best to not let my reluctance shine through, although I don’t think it would ever pass *the Fox* by. “I would like to hear a bit more detail about *what* I’m supposed to be guessing before we begin – a bit of clarification would be agreeable.”

“We’re getting to that,” she says, as she sits up. “Three things, pertaining to the way I view the world, as I had said earlier. What I mean by that, more precisely, is how someone may call themselves an *optimist,* or a *stoic* – that kind of thing. Capisce?”

“Sure?” I hesitantly respond. “But how am I supposed to guess with only that much knowledge? Aren’t there a million possibilities at that point?”

“If I were a random person, possibly. But, you know me, do you not? Surely, your own knowledge of my conduct should narrow things down more than enough?” she responds, in her usual condescending style.

“Didn’t you say that not many people get the opportunity to learn about you? How should I know what goes on in your mind?”

“Haha,” she says out loud, “I suppose that’s a fair point. Very well then: to offset your foolishness, I will gift upon you three hints - one per *fact.* Will that be satisfactory?”

She didn’t have to call me stupid, but then, I guess my foolishness *is* an established fact, so I won’t protest too much.

Not *too much.*

“I question your motive for this *gift* of yours,” I sneak in, “but I’ll gladly take it.”

“Then,” she says, “this will be your first hint: this *fact* pertains to my views on the human morality.”

The human morality? What is that even supposed to mean? Some crap about like, the inner good or lack thereof in a human?

I look helplessly into her eyes, which she responds to by simply motioning towards me, as if to say, ‘go on then.’

Prick.

“Then, a realist?” I say, presenting what is, quite frankly, basically a non-answer. Who wouldn’t call themselves a realist?

“A realist?” She laughs, boisterously. “I would never, *ever,* call myself a realist.”  
…

“What, you don’t think your beliefs are the truth?”

“Of course I don’t,” she matter-of-factly responds. “To presume my truth is truer than yours would be presumptuous indeed – frankly, calling oneself a realist is cocky at best. Wouldn’t you agree? Or do you think your beliefs *are* the truth?”

“Hardly. I have no real beliefs – none that I’d swear by, at the very least.”

My pathetic attempt at deflecting any inquiries to my own thoughts seems to have the opposite effect.

“Is that so?” she asks, her interest piqued. “You claim to have no view on the inherent nature of humanity?”

“Not really,” I respond, realising my mistake. Offering up some useless viewpoint would have been more effective – I’ll keep that in mind for next time.

“I see,” she responds, nodding along. “So if we take a hypothetical person and presented them with a hypothetical choice, what would you say this person would do? If, for example, they encountered a kitten lying outside in a rainstorm – would they help it, or simply leave it be. What would you say they’d do? Nothing in particular?”

Sigh. Time to talk myself out of another self-dug hole.

“I’d argue the question is skewed from the beginning. This hypothetical person has no prescribed traits, so attempting to determine what he would or wouldn’t do is futile at best.”

“Interesting. Care to elaborate,” she simply responds to my next attempt at deflecting.

I really should say less intriguing stuff. Maybe if I say something boring, she’ll let off on the interrogation?

I immediately abandon the thought with only as much a glance in *the Fox’* direction – it’s much too late for that.

“Well, for example, if this *hypothetical person* were to be running to catch the train, to make it to a once-in-a-lifetime interview for the job of their dreams, they’d surely pass the kitten by without a second thought – they might not even notice it. Similarly, a rich person may easily provide it with help, whereas a person without a penny to spare,” as I say this, I can almost hear her think *like you?* But I continue nonetheless, “may leave it due to simple necessity – so on, so forth, the traits of the particular person are the deciding factor, and as such, no *inner morality* can be ascribed to them.”

“A most intriguing thought,” she comments, a bit of honesty seeming to seep through into her smile, for whatever reason.

Or maybe that’s just my imagination.

“Then, allow me to ask you a different question,” she continues. “Have you ever heard of *the trolley test?”*

“The trolley test? You mean with the people tied to the track?”

“No, no, different trolley. A shopping cart is what you’d call it.”

Odd.

“You’ll have to excuse me for that – it is a remnant of prior living arrangements.”