

NINE

“The Government’s next witness is unable to travel here, but is in a court room in her home region,” stated the lemur representing the Government’s case against Enhray. She tapped a button on her flat panel. A three-dimensional hologram materialized in the witness circle showing a good rendition of Aouphril. Aldin was fascinated with the technology as he looked on. The image of Aouphril looked about. She looked off slightly to one side and stifled a yawn.

“This appears to be working at my end, but the flat panel in this room is to one side. So, when asked a question, I’ll be looking to one side. I’ll do my best to remember to look at the camera when answering questions, Counsel,” Aouphril stated. “My apologies if I look sleepy. It is the middle of the night in my time zone.”

The lemur nodded. She then started. “Please state who you are, where you are from, and your occupation.”

“I am Aouphril, mate of Orlan. I live in the Northeast Hills Region. I am a student in my final year at Nadowahoc College.”

“How long have you known the victim, Ms. Aouphril.”

“Since his arrival in our world approximately three months ago. I was the first citizen he encountered.”

“According to the records you spent time in quarantine with him.”

“That is correct, Counsel. Orlan and I both spent time in quarantine with Aldin. So did the doctor who tended to his broken arm and two orderlies who came into contact with him that first evening at the clinic.”

“While in quarantine, you watched the proceedings of Parliament?”

“Yes. Aldin was preparing to be questioned by Parliament. So, we watched the proceedings in preparation.”

“What did he say to you about that upcoming meeting?”

“Seeing some of the factions in the chamber, he feared he would be attacked. He warned me when it happened to be brave and do what I felt was necessary. I didn’t believe it would come to that, but it did.”

“There is video documentation of the resulting encounter,” the lemur stated. “However, I want to know what was going through your mind when the accused charged down on the floor.”

Aouphril lashed her tail back and forth. The tip blinked in and out of existence as it lashed out past the hologram sensors. “When Representative Enhray charged down on the floor and called

Aldin a ‘Tree Rodent’, I was highly insulted. I was raised to give proper respect to other species. If I had used a similar term for another species in the hearing of my mother, she’d have twerked my ear so hard it would be sore for a week.”

“How did the victim react?”

“He didn’t react, which surprised me, for I knew he knew what the two words by themselves were. Then he said it back to Representative Enhray as part of his name. Enhray snarled calling Aldin a ‘talking lunch’ and leapt at him. Aldin rolled backwards, kicked-upwards with his hind paws and Enhray crashed into the Chancellor’s podium. It happened so quickly that the fight was over as soon as it had begun. I was too shocked to react at that moment.”

“But you did react afterward, correct?”

“Yes. Aldin surrendered the visitor’s circle and was escorted out of the chamber. I immediately stepped into it recalling Aldin’s instructions to do what I felt needed to be done after the fight. Not if there was a fight in his words, but after the fight.”

“And what did you say to Parliament?”

“I called shame on them for their failure to stop Enhray. I told them how we’d now be at war with Aldin’s people if he had been an official representative sent by them to us.”

“Thank you. No further questions, your Honor.”

Judge Perraul looked to the ferret. “Your witness.”

The ferret did not pace in front of the hologram as he had done with face-to-face witnesses. “Ms. Aouphril, you’ve known the victim since his arrival on Earth, correct?”

“Yes.”

“And you assisted him in preparing to face Parliament?”

“Yes. I now know more about Parliamentary procedures than I’ll ever need to know unless my name comes up in the Lottery.”

“And he was one of the witnesses to your marriage to your mate...” the ferret glanced at his flatpanel a moment, “Orlan?”

“Yes.”

“And the victim has continued to live with you and your mate since that time until the present?”

“Yes.”

The ferret turned to the jury. "Please take note that this witness is very close to the victim and as such, her testimony may be influenced by that closeness."

Aouphril's fur bristled. The ferret raised his free hand briefly. "My apologies, Ms. Aouphril. I do not mean to insult you. But it is a fact you have been very close to the victim since his arrival and the jury needs to know that." The ferret brushed a finger upward on the flat panel, looking for something a moment and then nodded. "While in quarantine, what exactly did the victim say to you in regards to a potential fight in the Parliament chamber?"

"That he expected there would be a fight."

"Regardless of what he did?"

"Yes?"

"Did he make any indication that he might start said fight?"

Aouphril hesitated a moment and then answered softly, "yes."

"A little louder please."

"Yes. Aldin said he believed the only way to get the faction of Parliament that believed he was just a wild cousin who was taught a few tricks to see he was more than that would be if there was a fight. He believed one of them would attack him, but if necessary, he'd start a fight to prove his point."

"Per your testimony to Government Counsel, the victim knew what the terms 'Tree' and 'Rodent' were. Yet, he didn't seem to react to them as every other squirrel in the chamber did when they were said in combination."

"That is correct."

"Yet he did understand the term. Per his own testimony here and in the video documentation," the ferret tapped an icon on his flat panel and Aldin appeared on screen:

"I was fully aware he was trying to insult me with the term 'tree ro-dent' or as we say in English, 'tree rat'. I knew he would leap for me if I tossed the insult back at him in the way I did, playing in-no-sent and assuming the insult was part of his name."

"Members of the jury, the victim started the fight per his own testimony and that of Ms. Aouphril. He wanted the accused to attack him." He turned back to the holograph of Aouphril. "Thank you, Ms. Aouphril. I have no further questions."