

TWO

About 15 mits up, the wild cousin lay spread-out on a branch, staring down at the “biggens” and then nervously watched the intruder squirrel as it joined it. It gave out a small danger chirp as it sat out a ways on the branch.

Aldin kept his distance from the wild squirrel on a separate branch close by. He calmed first, but it was difficult as the other gave out a danger chirp every couple of ceklicks. He gazed at it seeing it was slightly smaller than him, grayish in color similar to his pelt, but with tasseled ears. Aldin spent the next 15 ceklicks occasionally looking at it and down at Karle and Giguere. The first couple of times, Aldin couldn't resist and also chirped in danger. He did his best to get his instincts under control, but every time he was close to trying to say something, the other squirrel chirped again, causing his own tail to flash its warning. Internally, he was very frustrated. The next time Aldin glanced down, Karle was alone. *Where did Giguere go?*

The wild squirrel had finally started to calm down a bit. “Biggens no stay. Biggens leave. You leave,” it stated in chitterspeak, pointing to Aldin with its tail.

Aldin nodded slowly realizing the wild squirrel was female. He spoke slowly in chitterspeak as hers sounded strange to him. “I not know you claim this territory. This one leave with,” he hesitated briefly as he tried out the unfamiliar chitterspeak word, “biggens. Biggens my friends.” Aldin pointed to himself with his tail. “Biggens no hunt you.” He pointed his tail at the other squirrel.

She stared at him and his strange sounding chitterspeak, then glanced slightly downward and froze as her eyes widened enough for Aldin to see her whites.

“Hello Giguere,” Aldin stated in Common as he glanced down at the larger squirrel making his way towards the two of them. “Please back-off, I'll be down soon.”

“Are you alright, Aldin?”

“I am for the moment, unless your arrival sets-off her danger cry again.”

“Her?”

(affirmativeflick) “Yes, this wild cousin is female.”

The wild squirrel stared as Aldin spoke to Giguere. “You speak biggen?”

(affirmativeflick)

“I caught part of that. But what was the last word she said?” Giguere asked.

“Just a moment, Giguere,” Aldin replied. He then turned to the wild squirrel. “I speak biggen. Biggen squirrel speak little chitterspeak. I speak both.” He pointed between them as she continued to stare. He turned back to Giguere switching to Common. “That last word is what she calls you and Karle, much as you refer to her as a wild cousin. After hearing it a few times, I think it’s whatever passes for local dialect in chitterspeak for ‘big one,’ which makes sense in a way. You are bigger.”

The wild squirrel’s tail started to wigwag again and she quietly chirped, “Danger.”

“No, you safe,” Aldin tried to reassure the wild squirrel. “Biggen not predator. Biggen my friend. Look at biggen. Biggen big squirrel. Squirrel no hunt squirrel.”

“We really should leave, Aldin,” Giguere stated in Common. “We shouldn’t disturb wild cousins. This one isn’t in the database as far as I know and if it...”

“She.”

“Yes, you said that before. Sorry. If she is, she was tagged somewhere else and not here. Karle is checking the equipment. She was close enough when she chased you into the hovercraft that we might have been able to get a reading if she is tagged.”

Aldin (gigglechittered) “Kind of too late to not disturb her. I will be along as quickly as I can. I need to make amends first if possible.” He turned back to the wild squirrel. “Biggen leave. I leave soon.”

Giguere nodded, turned around, and climbed back down the way he had come. Aldin was impressed with how far along Giguere’s climbing abilities had come. He was slow and cautious, but he had the technique right. He turned back to the wild squirrel. She was now staring at him. Her tail continued to wigwag in a danger warning.

“Biggen obey! You,” it added something Aldin didn’t understand. It continued to stare at him and took a couple backwards steps on the branch, continuing to wigwag her tail.

“I, what?” (curiousflick) “You fear me? Why? I no harm you.”

She repeated what she said before slowly. “You, seer.” (submissiveflick) “I no...” again she trailed off with something Aldin didn’t understand.

Seer?! Is that what she said? Spirit! I’m not making this worse instead of better, Aldin thought to himself. (negativeflick) “I no elder,” Aldin countered as that word sounded similar to her seer and he didn’t want to use the term she used. “I different. Hard explain.” Aldin paused a moment. “I look like you.” He pointed to himself and to her with his tail. “Up here,” he pointed to his

head, “like biggen. My people...different.” He struggled for a moment for a way to explain as he could tell she didn’t understand most of his words. “I small biggen. Come, smell, you see.”

She hesitated and then slowly, very cautiously made her way to Aldin wigwagging her tail fearfully. He held still not wanting to startle her as she sniffed over him. She flinched away as she found the camera.

“Biggen thing.”

“Yes. Hard explain. It no hurt you.”

She cautiously moved over to him again and sniffed over the rest of him. When she was finished, she backed up a couple steps.

“Smell,” she paused, “Smell squirrel and biggen.” Her tail wagged about in confusion. “No right.”

Aldin relaxed slightly not realizing he had been tense. “Yes, I different. I small biggen. I and biggens leave.”

“No,” she replied as she seemed to get over her initial fear. “No leave. You stay.” She scooted back over sniffing him again. “You smell no right.” She sniffed some more. “Squirrel and biggen,” she chittered something rapidly he didn’t understand. “You strong male.” She (chitterpurred) and started to groom him. “Make strong pups.” She wrapped her tail around him. “Pups speak biggen.” She skittered past him to the trunk of the tree. “Biggens no hunt pups.” Her tail tip caressed him under the chin and she took a couple of steps up the tree, looked back at him and flicked her tail.

SHIT!!! Aldin cursed to himself as his eyes shot wide. ***Mid-Winter! Same time as back home! Spirit! What am I thinking being up here! And I invited her to inspect me!***

She chittered softly at him again, flicking her tail suggestively. He fought down the instincts she was drawing to the surface. He hoped the microphone was still working. “Karle, Giguere! I need help!” Aldin cried out as he turned his back on the wild squirrel and fled through the trees. She was quickly in hot pursuit.