

THREE

Karle cursed as he watched what was happening from both Aldin's perspective and the drone. Apparently, the wild cousin hadn't noticed the drone. The drone kept up with the chase in the tree tops.

Giguere headed back towards the nearest tree.

"Don't go, Giguere," Karle called out. "They're way too nimble. You'll never keep up. Sooner or later, he'll flee toward us."

Giguere thrashed his tail about in frustration, but took Karle's advice.

"No pups!" Aldin chattered at the female chasing him. "I small biggen! Biggen elders no allow!"

Up and down, branch to branch, leaping, Aldin lead her around in a circle trying to work his way back to the hovercraft. She was quicker and more nimble than him. And he was at the disadvantage as this was her territory and she knew every branch and twig. It was obvious she could end this chase at any time she chose. The whole time he tried to reason with her. She, being a wild squirrel, didn't understand most of his chatter. It only seemed to encourage her more.

"Strange male! You chase me!" she cried out, passing him and now leading the chase. Aldin, quickly turned the other way and she turned about to chase after him again.

In his frenzy to get away, Aldin darted sideways on a branch and leapt. He didn't see the drone crossing his path until mid-leap, too late to avoid a collision. "SCREE!!!" He screamed just before impact, knocking off his shoulder-mounted camera. He scrabbled to hold onto the drone's smooth surface as it quickly descended with his added weight on it. He continued to scree out in panic the entire way to the ground. He and the drone landed hard, knocking the wind out of him, never mind whatever damage he may have inflicted on the drone buried in the snow beneath him. Before he could catch his breath, he was bowled over by the female.

She nuzzled him, doing all she could to win him over. "You chase me." She chittered softly in his ear, "make pups." Deep down a part of him wanted to give in. He was drowning in her scent. She had chosen him. Why should he resist her? Suddenly he was snapped out of the siren call of instinct as she chattered an alarm and wigwagged her tail in warning. However she remained entangled with him, obviously not willing to let go of her prize.

“Hello again, Giguere,” Aldin called out, his voice muffled with the female’s tail wrapped around his muzzle.

“It looks like you could use some help.”

“Yes, but do not get too close. She might attack you rather than run away.”

As if in agreement, she (chittergrowled). A sound that wasn’t that intimidating to hear, but a clear warning. “Biggen leave! No hunt mate!”

“And if she runs away, I may not be able to resist any longer, follow and then...” he shuddered.

“No need to worry about me getting too close,” Giguere stated as he tapped an icon on his flatpanel. “Any closer and it would affect me too. I only got this close to ensure you were still close to the drone. I’m sorry to do this to you also, Ambassador.” Aldin heard gas emit from the drone below him. Before he could react, he quickly fell asleep, as did his ‘mate’ snuggled up to him.