

TWENTY

A click or so later and another bowl of pine nuts demolished, Aldin was starting to feel better, though he knew he had a way to go yet. It must have been a shift change for the otter bid his fair well and a female sheep took his place. The ewe refilled his water dish as Dr. Hanter and Dr. Territan entered. They checked him over.

"I'm amazed," Dr. Hanter stated.

"Dr. Kaynoble explained it well based on how much he's studied wild cousins," Dr. Territan responded.

"Explained what?"

"How your body reacted to fighting the virus. Much like a wild cousin squirrel will slip into a near hibernation state during a long snow storm, you slept in a similar state while you healed. Except, in your case, the 'storm' was ragging inside of you."

They signaled to the nurse to remove the tubes from his arm.

"Dr. Hanter is handing your care off to me," Dr. Territan stated.

Aldin looked to the elder rabbit.

"I was within days of retiring when a strange wild cousin-like squirrel with a broken arm was wheeled into my clinic last summer. Again, I was getting ready to retire roughly a week ago when you were rushed into this hospital. Now that you're on the mend, call me selfish, but I don't want to delay that retirement any longer. Dr. Territan knows more than I do about wild cousin-like squirrel physiology thanks to his work with Dr. Butternut Gowandle. You'll be in good paws."

"Thank you for all you've done for me, Dr. Hanter," was all Aldin could think of and then added, "Enjoy your retirement." They shook paws and the elderly rabbit departed. Aldin turned to the hedgehog gauging him.

Dr. Territan scrolled through something on his flatpanel. "I know it can be tough to switch doctors, Ambassador, but I'll try to make things as smooth as I can. Looking at this, I want to keep you another couple of nights. If your vitals continue to look this good, you'll be allowed to leave then."

"Thank you, Doctor." Aldin's stomach rumbled again. "I don't suppose I can have something a little more filling than pine nuts?"

Dr. Territan chuckled and signaled the nurse with a paw gesture. “He’s clear to order a meal appropriate for his species from the kitchen.”

“Does the kitchen have any butternuts?”

They did to his delight. As he finished his meal, there was a brief knock on the door and a fox poked his muzzle through the door.

“May I speak to you a moment, Ambassador?”

“Come in,” he looked at the fox with a puzzled look. “Do I know you?”

“No, not yet. I am Daon,” the fox bowed, “Representative for the Northeastern Hills Region for the current 807th Parliament. Parliament is in session. When word reached us of your illness, the members of parliament were greatly concerned. I have been asked to see you personally, once you were well enough to have visitors. It is good to see you appear to be on the mend.”

“You have 25 ceklicks, Representative,” the nurse butted in. “Doctor’s orders.” She turned to Aldin. “Page me if you need me.” She set a cushion down for Daon and left the room.

Daon made himself comfortable. “I won’t take much of your time, Ambassador. I know you need more time to recover.” He paused a moment at the look Aldin was giving him. He looked around and then back at Aldin. “What?”

“Oh, I am sorry, Representative. I’m just amused. What are the chances of a fox being this region’s representative in two of the past three sessions? I hope they aren’t trying to make you Chancellor on my account.” He gigglechittered.

Daon blinked a moment puzzling that over and then laughed. “No. I’m only a Representative. Once you have recovered and you have been discharged, Ambassador, the Parliament requests your presence at the session in progress. Normally, you would have just received a message with the request, but considering your recent illness, it was deemed better to have someone give it to you in person.”

“I will be there as soon as I can, Representative Daon. If I had not had this set back, I would have contacted,” Aldin paused, “well, I’m not sure who. I guess whoever provides admin support to Parliament to see if I needed to be there in person for the session. The rules seem a little vague about foreign representatives and when they need to be present.”

Daon nodded. “Usually, the presence of a foreign representative is only requested if there are issues to be discussed with the foreign government or issues concerning the representative.”

Aldin drooped his tail. “Unless you have found some way to contact my people, then I assume it is issues dealing with me.”

Daon smirked. “It’s not as bad as you may fear, Ambassador. However, I’m not authorized to say more. Please show up as soon as you can.”

“You can let Parliament know that provided I am discharged on time; I should be able to attend by the end of the week or the first of next week at the latest.