

TWENTY-FOUR

(CHATTER!) “My territory! LEAVE!”

Aldin held his “ground” on the tree branch and the female wild squirrel chattered again. But she also didn’t give chase, especially, when there were two males she was trying to defend against.

“I no stay. I leave soon,” Aldin said. “Come smell. You no bite. I no bite. I no harm you. I no harm pups.”

The female cautiously moved towards him and sniffed. Her eyes shot wide as she leapt back. “Biggen!” She chattered her teeth in fear. Only the knowledge of her pups in the tree hollow nearby kept her from fleeing.

(affirmativeflick) “I small biggen. Biggens watch. Biggens know predator kill your mate. Biggens know you have pups. Biggens worried. Hard raise pups alone. Forest need more squirrels.” He pointed to Butternut’s grandson. “Small biggen raise him. He squirrel like you. He help raise pups. When they grow up if you no want him stay, he leave.”

She looked to the other squirrel. “He speak true?”

“He no lie. You share territory I help raise pups. When pups grow up you tell me leave, I leave.” He dropped his tail and looked down. “Predator kill my mate before pups come.”

She wasted no time. “We sniff.”

Aldin backed aside so the two could smell each other.

“Biggen and squirrel.”

“Yes, after mate die I live with biggens for,” he raised two claws on one paw trying to remember the word Butternut had used.

“Two,” Aldin said.

“Two days. I leave. I small pup dame warn me no depend on biggens or must stay with biggens.”

“My dame say same.” She glared at Aldin. “LEAVE!” (chatterspit!)

“I leave after you say he leave or he stay,” Aldin stated. “If you no want him, I take him to his territory. Either way I leave gift.” He pointed to a backpack he had set on the branch. “Biggen thing full of seed.”

“If I tell him leave?”

“I leave seed then we leave.”

The female wigwagged her tail slowly and then approached Butternut’s grandson again and slowly sniffed him over and invited him to do likewise. When they finished, she spoke again pointing to the grandson with her tail. “You help raise pups, you stay.” She glared at Aldin. “Small biggen leave!” She chittergrowled.

“He,” Aldin tailpointed to the grandson, “know how to use biggen seed holder. He carry where you say. I leave now.”

“Friend, tell Granddame I no forget,” Butternut’s grandson said as he wiggled into the knapsack as Aldin had shown him on the trip out to this location.

“I will.”