

Chapter 10

Word of Rick's chili had spread throughout the day. There were more WMSU students and alumni present than one would think. They started serving at 5:00 instead of 5:30 due to the line that had formed in the hallway. They had to let in the alumni and various friends into their hotel suite in shifts to enjoy chili and chitchat briefly. Forty-five minutes into the event, there was yet another knock at the door. Rick opened it and was taken aback to find the con chair, Sublime Green, standing in the doorway in a business suit.

"Come in, Sublime. Whether it's for good or ill, please join us and have a bowl of chili."

Sublime accepted the offered paper bowl and scooped some pred chili into it and then scooped some prey chili on top of it. He grabbed a plastic spoon and stirred the two together. Using tongs, he added some shredded cheese on top.

"If you have any staff who haven't had dinner yet, and they can pull themselves away from their station for a few minutes, send them up. It's the least we can do to thank you for putting on this event." Rick glanced into the two crock pots. "Or course, at the pace this is getting eaten, they'd best get up here soon."

Sublime had a spoonful of the chili and smiled. "This is excellent. Just the right amount of heat." He set it down on the counter long enough to pull out his phone and send a message through the staff channel on social media. "Consider it done and thank you." Before he could say more, Rick introduced him to the various WMSU alumni in the room. All thanked him for putting on the con. George and Liz did likewise with their friends. Sublime noticed the can marked 'donations to con charity' and that there were quite a few contributions in it.

"I appreciate the chili," Sublime finally stated. "I am here on business and can't stay long." He pulled Rick's business card out of his pocket and glanced at it briefly. "I wanted to come see you in particular, 'Mal/Pistachio/Rick Michaud,'" he pronounced it properly. "I'm not sure which name is best to use in this context. I heard about the incident with the mother and young boy this morning. After the encounter, she went to our security station and asked to see whoever was in charge." He paused a moment. "It didn't take me long to get there. She told me what happened. And it was collaborated by others. What you did was above and beyond what an attendee is expected to do in that sort of situation. That child was scared and somehow you quickly turned it around. The mother wanted to thank you, but you had already disappeared into the crowd after the high five session. That's why she sought me out, figuring I'd be able to find whoever it was that deescalated the situation before he could have a complete meltdown."

"You're welcome."

"I'm not done." He pulled a second business card out of his pocket and looked at it. "Her name is Melissa Sagenthrope. She's the chief news reporter for Burlington Public Radio. She has asked permission to do a news piece on our con. She asked to do so as a result of the positive encounter this morning. I've granted that request. She'll be spending time here tomorrow prior to and probably after the fursuit parade. She would like to interview you and others if you can spare the

Second Fur by Aldin Busheytail

time. We'll be giving our attendees notice about this at tonight's events and through our social media presence. I wanted to give you a personal heads-up as you're the reason it is happening."

Rick nodded. "If she finds me, I will talk to her."

"Also, this private little chili shindig boosted our day attendance figures. Registration reported a couple dozen or so people showed-up this morning as walk-in registrations because they graduated from White Mountain State and heard of the event through a post you made on social media last night. Thank you."

"You're welcome. It was a deal with my boss to get the weekend off. I needed to host an alumni event."

Sublime Green nodded. "Unfortunately, I can't stick around." He dug into his bowl of chili as he headed for the door.