

Chapter 17

“I’m not giving up until we find him,” Sheila stated as she continued to search through the splintered and smoldering remains of the tree that Pistachio’s nesting hollow had been in.

“Look at what that lightning bolt did to his tree, Sheila,” Cantaloupe implored. “Nothing could have surviv..” he trailed off in mid-sentence as the blue folf nudged aside a pile of splintered wood and branches to reveal the body of their Eurasian red squirrel friend.

The squirrel’s fur was badly scorched where he still had fur. His body slowly heaved up and down as he breathed shallowly.

“Oh, Spirit!” Cantaloupe exclaimed. He bent down and gently touch Pistachio.

Pistachio’s eyes slowly opened. They had a glazed look to them. “I knew you’d come,” he rasped. “Just put me...” he inhaled and exhaled slowly, “out of my misery.” He glanced towards the folf. “I’m already cooked...” he again inhaled and exhaled slowly. “Don’t let my body go to waste. Sheila can eat me.”

“No! Never!” Sheila exclaimed fighting back tears. “As I’ve said time and again, I don’t eat friends. And I’m not giving up on you.” She turned to Cantaloupe. “Put him on my back, we’ll take him back to our den and nurse him back to health.” Cantaloupe didn’t argue with her though he felt it was hopeless. He lifted the squirrel and gently set him on her back.

It was a slow trot back to Sheila’s and Cantaloupe’s shared den to ensure Pistachio didn’t slide off Sheila’s back. Cantaloupe made-up a nest for Pistachio out of pine needles and leaves and then gently set him in it. He left the den. Sheila gently licked Pistachio’s burns. Most of the singed fur came off as she licked. The tears fell freely from her face. Cantaloupe returned with a gourd filled with water. Sheila rinsed her mouth with a little of the water. Cantaloupe then drizzled some in Pistachio’s mouth until he licked at it.

Pistachio’s tail wigwagged slightly. “Please, put me out of my misery.” he started, weakly wigwagging his tail.

“Hush,” Sheila chided. “Rest. You will heal.” To her relief, Pistachio closed his eyes and seemed to breathe more soundly. She turned to Cantaloupe. “Come. I’ll need your help to gather certain herbs we’ll need.”