

Chapter 33

There was a knock on the door. Ross Delling peaked in. “You asked to see me, Pistachio?”

Pistachio nodded.

Ross started apologizing again as he entered and Pistachio stopped him. “I didn’t ask to see you to get you to apologize all over again. I already accepted your apology last time. I asked to see you because I have some more questions for you.” The squirrel paused a moment before looking intently at the human. “Do you still wish to write-off humanity and go through this,” Pistachio pointed to his furry body, “and flee to the forest to spend the rest of your life as a common squirrel?”

Ross stared at him a moment before answering, “Yes. Very much so, but I can’t.”

Pistachio wigwagged his tail. “Why not?”

“I watched what your body went through. The process takes longer than I thought it would. I’d never survive the transition.”

Pistachio nodded. “At least you wouldn’t without help you mean.”

Ross stared at Pistachio. “How could you help me? And why would you help me after what I did to you?”

Pistachio lifted a document from the rolling table next to his bed and handed it to Ross. “Take a look.”

Ross spent about a minute looking through the document and then stared at Pistachio.

“Yup, I’m as much your boss now as Nate. Ditto for my/Rick’s wife. It was a much better solution than suing Second Limb out of existence. It’s not like that would change me back to a human and bring Rick back for Abigail. Instead suing would have put a lot of good, hard working people out of work, including you, Ross. The only winners in that scenario would be the lawyers.” Pistachio paused as he pointed to the signature of Richard Michaud with his tail. “Of course, that scared/shocked me when I picked-up the pen and signed that name to it like it was second nature. Then again, that remains my legal name at the moment though I consider myself Pistachio and not Rick.”

“And you don’t plan to fire me?”

“No, provided you’re willing to cooperate a bit.”

Ross’ eyes narrowed. “How so?”

“Well, now that I’m a partner in the company, I have some influence. You want to be a squirrel? That’s fine and I don’t blame you. Now that I’ve gone through and processed all of Rick’s memories, I agree with what you told Nate as he passed onto me. Humanity can really suck. **But**, before you can become a squirrel, raccoon, skunk, otter, or whatever animal you’d like to be rather than human, you first need to teach others on our staff your secrets to the transformation process. If we don’t have staff who understand, we’ll hire some who will. Once you’re confident they completely comprehend the process with these nanobot thingies, they will oversee your two-week transformation in a safe, controlled hospital environment. We’ll then transport you to the forest and you can be on your way to your new life gathering nuts and dodging predators.” Pistachio paused. “In some ways I’m envious. I only had you stop the process in me for Abigail’s sake. She’s not ready to let go of Rick.”

Ross stared at Pistachio. “What’s in it for you?” he asked distrustfully.

The squirrel shrugged. “If you read through that entire document, you’ll see I don’t plan to keep a lot of any resulting profit. Most of it will go to charities.” Pistachio wigwagged his tail a bit. “What use does a squirrel have for money? The sales pitch my mate tossed to Nate to win him over was simple. If your process can change a human into another species and have that former human grow a tail, why can’t the same process be used to regrow a human’s severed limb?”

Ross stared at Pistachio a moment in thought and then his eyes went wide. “I never thought of that.”

The squirrel smiled, which didn’t look quite right on a squirrel. “Of course not, as you were so focused on finding a way to leave humanity without taking your own life.”

Ross stared at him.

“Forgive me if I’ve made the wrong assumption. And you don’t need to admit it if I’m right. Many contemplate suicide at some point in their life. Why? Well, again as you said to Nate, humanity sucks. But with your process, Ross, we can make it suck a little bit less, can’t we? I can see it going a step further than that.

“How many trans-folks out there do you think would jump at a chance to finally be the sex they feel their body should be without the need for hormone therapy or expensive top and bottom surgery? And without the stigmatism they experience as they try to make themselves look as deep down inside they feel they should look. As you have been able to change a human into a squirrel,” Pistachio pointed to himself with his tail, “how hard would it be to swap out an X for a Y chromosome or vice versa? Or perhaps this can lead to a cure to various genetic disorders. Of course, there will be those in the furry community who would want to be altered to look more like their character. Call it extreme body modification if you will.”

Ross nodded as the possibilities started to occur to him.

“Again, as you’ve said, and I totally agree with you on this, humanity sucks. It’s one of the reasons Rick was a summer camp counselor and has participated and the furry community. He

offered his ear to any youth or student having issues at camp or on campus. He warned every one of them he wasn't a shrink, but he'd still listen. Despite being a straight, white guy, he'd still lend them an ear. It was his way to try and make humanity suck a little less. Your invention here could also lead to making humanity suck less." He paused a moment to let that sink in as he reached for a couple of sheets of paper stapled together and offered it to Ross. "It's all right here in writing. In brief summary, you share all your nanite/nanobot secrets with Second Limb. In exchange, you receive a reasonable amount of the profits. And, when you decide you've had enough with humanity, we'll turn you into the squirrel or whatever other animal you wish to become and transport you to your new home. In addition, my mate will immediately drop all charges against you."

"What about you?"

"I haven't pressed any charges, Ross. Your process saved my life. I/Rick were electrocuted and severely burned as the Mal Fursuit shorted out and burned/melted into our flesh. The odds of our survival were slim at best without those nanobot thingies healing us. I'll admit Rick would probably think that these side effects are a bit extreme, but I'm/we're alive. And I'm not Rick. I'm Pistachio, a Eurasian red squirrel." He paused a moment, "though an awful huge one." He gigglechattered a moment. "Something just came to mind. Rick hated all those annoying pharmaceutical ads on television. And he wasn't afraid to mock them. Thinking on that now, I can just hear the disclaimer in the ad for this process."

Pistachio deepened his voice a little, "'Are you or a loved one suffering from severe third-degree burns? Ask your doctor if the Sciuridae™ Burn Treatment System is right for you.'" He switches back to his own voice briefly before going back to ad narrator voice, "I can see it. On screen a computer animated squirrel goes about human life routines like shopping and mowing the lawn. 'Those who have undergone the Sciuridae™ process reported quick, scar free healing of their burns after a single treatment. Side effects include fur growth, sprouting a long bushy tail,'" Pistachio wigwagged his tail, "'and a craving for acorns. Scuridea™ has been shown to cause rapid weight loss. Do not use Sciuridae™ if you are underweight. Do not undergo the Sciuridae™ process if you are allergic to any of its ingredients or have an allergy to tree nuts or pet dander. Those afraid of dogs should not use Sciuridae™. Remember, if you have suffered third-degree burns, the Sciuridae™ Burn Treatment System may be right for you.'" Pistachio trailed off gigglechattering.

It got the effect Pistachio was aiming for. Ross relaxed a bit and chuckled at his antics. The squirrel nodded. "Good. I'm glad I got you to lighten-up a little. Please seriously think about this offer before you decide. Feel free to have your lawyer look it over. I'm hoping you'll remain a member of our team, at least for now." He paused a moment. "And hopefully, I said all that the right way. Abigail wanted me to present this to you as she was," he paused again trying to think of the right words to say. "Well, let's just say she's still quite upset over this and didn't want to scare you off. This is very important to her just in case Rick is gone up here," Pistachio tapped his head with the tip of his tail, "for good. She wants what happened to him/me be studied to help others out there as a legacy to Rick."