

Chapter 42

“Normally, our group goes bowling every other month, Mrs. Dash. I know it’s only been roughly a month since the accident, but the bowling alley’s owner, Mr. Armstrong, invited us out for a free night to celebrate his reopening,” Sonja explained. “We greatly appreciate your willingness on short notice to drive us out.”

Abigail/‘Mrs. Dash,’ nodded as she drove the university van. “Is he aware about, Pistachio?”

“He asked for him personally if he was up to it. I can’t thank you both enough, first for you stepping up to fill-in for him as advisor, and for his willingness to join us.”

Pistachio tried to wigwag his tail, but it was wedge in the crack made by the pillows behind him on the seat he was belted to. “Did you expect me to pass up on free pizza?” He gigglechittered.

They soon after arrived at the small and packed parking lot. It was mostly locals, but there was also a news crew from Channel 9. No one, not even the camera crew tried to mob him. The furry group acted as a buffer just in case. Lois Sanchez slowly approached. “May I ask one question, Mr. Michaud?”

“It’s Pistachio, and I granted the only interview I plan to do at this time to Burlington Public Radio in collaboration with Vermont and New Hampshire Public Television.”

“I understand that, Mr. Mich..Pistachio and I want to apologize for scaring you at the hospital. I just want to ask one question. What are you looking forward to this evening?”

Pistachio nodded and thought a moment. “I’m looking forward to having fun with the students I advise and to enjoy a slice or two of the Canaan Bowl-o-Rama’s awesome pizza!”

The crowd cheered.

The place was packed. The pizza was superb as always. Pistachio had a hard time bowling at first, but eventually got the hang of it. He thought it was a silly thing to do as much as Rick had joked on his last outing to the alley, but it was still fun. He did not pretend the balls were giant nuts like Rick had done. He did do little silly dances whenever he successfully got a non-gutter ball. Others cheered him on. Many asked to get a photo with Pistachio. Only the children asked to pet him, which he would loudly decline, but then allow them a quick scritch as they hugged. The evening flew by quickly. Overall, it was a good evening out and Pistachio enjoyed himself. Maybe he was starting to get the hang of this human world thing. At the end of the evening, he quickly fell asleep in the van and slept all the way back to Groton. None of the students disturbed the giant sleeping squirrel.

Four days later, Pistachio remained in bed after Abigail got up. When she returned from taking a shower, she nudged him. “Hey, it’s not like my squirrel to sleep in. Are you alright?”

Second Fur by Aldin Busheytail

Pistachio barely stirred. “I don’t feel too good, Abbie. I think one of the kids at the bowling meet had a cold and I’ve caught it. Don’t be concerned.” Pistachio yawned. “I just need to sleep it off. It might be a couple days,” he mumbled as he curled up and went back to sleep.

When she returned home after her day’s lectures, she found him still asleep and feverishly warm to the touch. When she couldn’t wake him, she called for an ambulance.