

ONE

Teacher, the forest's former Elder appeared on screen before his great grandpup, the current forest's Elder. He smiled at his great grandpup, wigwagging his tail in greeting.

"Great Grandsire."

"I see Biggen squirrel put tools up right. I can see and hear you, Great Grandpup."

"Yes, Biggen squirrel show me how to make Biggen viewer work. He asked me try tool. He is outside nest hollow. He too big to come in nest hollow."

"I no speak long, Great Grandpup. Biggen squirrel Kind need viewer for Biggen things."

"I understand. Biggen squirrel with no chitterspeak name wait outside." She leaned away from the flatpanel to look out of the hollow's opening. "Biggen viewer work good."

"Good," Giguere said from outside. "I leave now. You know how call me if need help."

She turned back to the image of her great grandsire. "I miss you, Great Grandsire. Being Elder is hard."

Teacher drooped his tail on screen. "Yes, is hard being Elder. You are good Elder. Call if you need me. I must go."

She nodded and ended the call. She flourished her tail in pride upon successfully ending the call on the first try.

Teacher wigwagged his tail in greeting when his great grandpup answered the call.

"Great Grandsire! Is snowing. I can no speak long. Snow cover flat tools on treetop."

Teacher flicked his tail up and down once to indicate he understood.

"I call back tomorrow."

Teacher wigwagged his tail in greeting when his great grandpup answered the call. She did likewise.

"Is good to see you, Great Grandsire."

“I always happy to see you, Elder Great Grandpup. Has snow stopped? Do you have time? I show you Biggen squirrel Kind’s nest he share with squirrels. Is big. Real big.”

“Snow stopped. I use tail, clear snow from flat tools top of tree. Is near sleep time here, Great Grandsire. I have time to see, then I sleep.”

“Good.” He slowly turned around holding his flatpanel, showing how big the lit-up room in the tree was. “Biggens have light tools in the hollows. This just one hollow. Biggens have many hollows in tree. This is where all squirrels come eat.”

She chattered appreciatively. “Is big.”

Teacher flicked his tail up and down once in the affirmative. “I go to next hollow, carry viewer on back. It stick to fur like sticky weed.” Teacher placed the small flatpanel on his back where it clung to his fur. He scampered out of the main chamber Jessophat/Kind and his family used as a combination dining/living space. The view showed the ceiling bouncing along as he scampered. Then the view changed to a vertical tunnel briefly before going dark. She could still here his claws scrabble along the edges of the vertical tunnel. The camera view changed again showing Teacher’s face barely visible. “As I speak before, Biggens have light tools in the hollows.” Teacher touched something on the wall and the hollow lit-up showing his face clearly again. He rotated around, showing sacks large as a cousin squirrel stacked floor to ceiling. “This one of many food middens. Kind speak true when say he can feed all squirrels here through winter.”

“Is as Dame warn me long ago about Biggens.”

Teacher flicked his tail up and down once in the affirmative. “Tassel and I speak alone with Kind and mate, Sunshine. They understand they must no overfeed squirrels. Must keep squirrels from depending on Biggens come spring. They understand. They no want squirrels depend on them. I show you sleeping hollow next.”

The view changed back to the ceiling and the bouncing view again, back to the vertical tunnel to black, then to another level with low light. His face appeared again on the viewer. “This is one of the hollows Kind give us for sleeping.” He slowly turned in a circle showing various piles of nesting material. “We all keep very warm here. No squirrel freeze die here.” Some other squirrels all with peppery gray fur and rounded ears are in the room. They see Teacher and wigwag their tails in greeting. One scampers over.

“Elder Teacher, who you speak to?”

“Great grandpup, Elder my old forest.” The view changed to show the other squirrel. “Great grandpup, this Tassel, this forest’s Elder.”

Both bowed slightly to each other through the screen and wigwagged their tails in greeting.

“I show great grandpup how big Biggen squirrel Kind’s nest is.”

“Is very, very big,” Tassel replied. “Teacher speak fondly of you, Elder.” A chattering racket in the background makes her glance off screen and droop her tail. “I must go. You Elder, you know what like.” The camera focused again on Teacher.

“Two squirrels argue, Tassel need settle argue. No good squirrels fight here. Biggen squirrel Kind give much food. Allow us share nest. Keep warm. No reason squirrels fight here.”

“No good squirrels fight ever,” his great grandpup replied.

“You wise Elder, Great Grandpup.”

“You teach me good, Great Grandsire.”

“I show you one more hollow.” Again, she watched the bouncing ceiling image followed by a tunnel, near darkness and then Teacher’s muzzle again after lights appear. He slowly rotated again showing a huge hollow like the initial one. “This is where Biggen visitors stay. Kind no get many Biggen visitors in winter. Snow too deep.” Again, briefly, she watched the bouncing ceiling and then saw Teacher again. “Biggens have many tools.” He rotated around showing a strange hollow with a smooth white trough in the floor. “This is where Biggen visitors make bad water and leave pellets. Squirrels here use this tool when too snowy or cold windy to go outdoors to make bad water and leave pellets. After use, water come through depression like fast moving stream and takes bad water/pellets away.”

Teacher hung the flatpanel on the wall. He demonstrated by straddling the trough and squatting a moment. The camera angle was such she could not see the pellets he defecated into the trough. He then stepped aside, and suddenly, there was a woosh of water, washing away his feces. “I no understand how it work, Great Grandpup.”

“Is strange, Great Grandsire Teacher. I see is useful tool. No pellets/bad water left in hollow in bad weather. Keep nest hollow clean. I understand why you fear squirrels learn Biggen tools like this.”

Teacher flicked his tail up and down once in agreement as he pulled the flatpanel back off the wall and held it closer to his muzzle.

“Where does it take bad water and pellets, Great Grandsire? If pellets no land on forest floor, how can insects/worms break down make into food for trees?”

Teacher drooped his tail. “I no know. I ask Kind later. I sign off now. I miss your scent, Great Grandpup. I miss sharing winter nest with you. Biggen tool let us see/hear each other, but no scent.”

“I miss you, Great Grandsire. Take care.”