

TWO

“Hello?” Jessophat stared at the screen still half-asleep. “Who’s calling?”

Teacher’s Great Grandpup stared a moment at the screen not understanding the Biggenspeak. “I call for Great Grandsire Teacher,” she chittered. “You Biggen squirrel Kind?”

Jessophat smiled at the image on his flatpanel and switched to Chitterspeak. “Yes, I Kind. You Elder forest Teacher come from, his Great Grandpup. He proud of you.” He yawned. “Did Teacher explain time different here?” He glanced to one side briefly. “Sun no rise for four...pawspans, here.”

Teacher’s Great Grandpup’s eyes widened as she drooped her tail. “I so sorry. I forget. No mean wake Kind.”

“Is alright, Elder of far forest,” Jessophat reassured her. “After sunrise here, I tell Teacher you call. Ask him call you back.”

She bowed in thanks and ended the call. Jessophat shook his head in amusement, set the flatpanel down and crawled back into the nesting area he shared with his mate, curled back around her, and was quickly back asleep. Unlike other ‘Biggens’, he and his mate had found they preferred a wild cousin’s kind of natural materials bedding nest over a hammock bed.

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. Kind speak you call last night.”

His great grandpup drooped her tail. “Yes, I excited want share news. I forget sunrise here before sunrise in your forest. No mean wake Kind.”

“What news you share?”

She chittered off screen and a second squirrel came into view. He nuzzled Teacher’s Great Grandpup and she did likewise.

“Elder to sunset and I now mates, Great Grandsire.”

Teacher smiled wigwagging his tail in appreciation. “Good,” he stated. “I watch Elder to sunset our territory try catch you attention before I break tooth, Great Grandpup. I wonder when you choose him.”

“You approve?”

“You no pup, you no need me approve. You choose who you choose. You ask, I answer. You wise, make good choose. He good sire with old mate. He make good sire to you/his pups.”

His great grandpup’s new mate bowed to the image on screen in thanks. “Old Elder kind. Still wise Elder.”

“May you have many, many pups, enjoy many winters together,” Teacher stated.

“I move to his nest hollow, Great Grandsire. Close to center our combined territory. When pups come, no want pups near Biggen viewer tool.”

Teacher nodded. “Wise choose, Great Grandpup.” He paused a moment. “We pick time future calls. Must no wake Biggen squirrel Kind at night again.”

“Agreed. Call again,” she held-up seven claws, “days at this time?”

Teacher flicked his tail up and down once in agreement. “Small Biggen Friend speak that seven,” he held up seven claws. “I sad how much chitterspeak we lose. Is good learn more chitterspeak from Friend.”

His great grandpup flicked her tail up and down once in agreement. “Seven. I like that, easier. I call again seven days. If snowing, call day after that.”

“Agreed.” Teacher paused a moment and then held up one claw at a time and gave the chitterspeak word for each number as Friend had taught him. His great grandpup and her new mate were delighted to have names for each number. Both agreed the names were easier to use.

“You choose good name, Elder Teacher,” her mate praised him.

Teacher bowed in thanks. “Before end call, Kind’s dame visit two days ago. Most squirrels scared of strange Biggen. She more like other Biggens than big squirrel. I brave and meet Kind’s dame. Tell her how helpful Kind is to squirrels. She smiled. We hug. She visit because Biggens hold ceremony mark shortest day of winter. Is strange what Biggens do sometimes. She give gifts to Kind, mate, and pup. She give gift to Pinecone and Friend. Butternuts covered dried honey for Pinecone. She share with others. Sweet and tasty. Friend’s gift strange. Covering like some Biggens use over fur, like I speak when we bring news of Biggen Elders’ new rules. This covering, long, narrow, red color. Use covering to wrap around neck, keep warm in cold weather. Ends work like Biggen viewer, clings to fur so no trip over ends. Biggen viewer capture Friend wearing covering. I show.”

Teacher’s face was replaced with a still shot of Aldin wearing a red scarf, holding a candied butternut in his forepaws, and smiling for the camera.

“Is strange what some Biggens do,” his Great Grandpup and her mate both commented.

Teacher's face reappeared. He flicked his tail up and down once in the affirmative. "Agreed, is strange. Friend speak he will wear red thing if winter when he go to speak to Biggens. I ask him why. He speak it make Kind's Dame happy. He speak sometimes, must do strange things to make Biggens happy, keep peace."

"Friend wise Elder Voice. Try make Biggens happy. Biggens help squirrels good trade if must wear strange cover thing make Biggens happy. We must go, Great Grandsire."

"Take care."

"And you, Great Grandsire."