

FOUR

“Hello?” Butternut stared at the screen a moment and blinked in disbelief at the obviously pregnant grey furred squirrel on her flatpanel. “Pinecone?”

Pinecone tapped away at the bottom edge of her flatpanel and the blind readers spoke her words. “Hello Butternut. I have not forgotten what we discussed the day after Twig died after Elder Teacher spoke to the two of us about Aldin.” Pinecone drooped her tail. “Things didn’t exactly turn out as planned. I don’t need to repeat what Aldin and I reported to you and the rest of Parliament.”

“It’s alright, Pinecone.”

“No, it’s not.” Pinecone typed away as she shook her head in the negative. “We had an agreement, and I’ve broken it. I feel like I stole him from you. I didn’t think I would be welcomed back in my home forest. I figured when we completed Parliament’s assignment, we’d return and together convince Raoul to a ‘foursome’.”

“No one expected the situation you faced at home, Pinecone. If you had arrived just a couple weeks later...” Butternut trailed off shuddering.

Pinecone also shuddered. “Yes, just a couple more weeks and there would have been no one left, except a very hungry owl. Which is why this forest needs more squirrels. As I was welcomed back, it is why Aldin and I have settled here and are doing our part.” She patted her tummy while drooping her tail. “I’m still willing to share him with you as we agreed.” She drooped her tail again. “That’s provided I can convince him to a long-distance relationship between two different mates.”

“Pinecone, no. Don’t try to talk him into it. It needs to be his choice. Thank you for offering to share him. It’s just not meant to be. May your pups all be healthy when they are born.”

“Thank you, Butternut.” Pinecone hesitated a moment. “If you change your mind, I have some suggestions that would help you win him over if you’re interested...”