

SIX

Teacher smiled on the flatpanel wigwagging his tail in greeting to his great grandpup.

“We see big snowstorm again. Snow three days. Snow deep like last storm. Wind move snow around. Snow now half up Kind’s nest tree. I show you in past how big Kind’s nest tree is.”

Teacher’s great grandpup chittered in amazement.

“Again, all stay in Kind’s nest through storm. I teach some of Elder things to others. Also, much talk about how long one lives. When I with Biggen healer I learn Biggens live long time. Great Grandpup, some see seven tens,” he held up all ten claws and repeated six more times rapidly to show what he meant, “winters.”

His great grandpup’s eyes grew big a moment and she shook her head in disbelief. “Make-up story. Can no be true.”

“Is true,” Teacher responded adamantly. “Biggen raccoon Curios see over three tens winters. Small Biggen Elder Butternut see same. You next see her, you ask. Is true. Biggens grow slow. Kind and Sunshine each see three tens winters this winter. Kind and Sunshine’s pup, Energy, see one and ten winters like me. He still pup for five more winters.”

“Is hard believe.”

“Yes, is hard believe. Is true. I no lie, Great Grandpup. Biggens grow slow, live long. Friend speak more about his people. His grandsire see four tens winters. Now we choose live like Friend’s people in colony, if live in colony good for squirrels, maybe we see more winters.”

“Biggens heal you, Great Grandsire Teacher. You see more winters thanks to Biggens. Is good. You like sire to me. It hurt much when Biggen squirrel no chitterspeak name take you away last summer. I feared I no see you again. I no ready lose you.”

“And you like pup to me, Great Grandpup. May we both see many more winters.”

She flicked her tail up and down once in the affirmative.

“Next time Biggen squirrel no chitterspeak name visit ask him to choose name in chitterspeak like Kind, his mate, and their pup did. Their Biggen names have no meaning chitterspeak. Pinecone give them names. They take names given to them.”

“Teacher, wise Elder. I will ask.” She nodded. “What else Friend speak about his people.”

“Only how long they live. He speak more on their Biggens. They have only two Biggens his world. One tall as bears, little fur like those in Biggen origin story. Is why I think his people are squirrels who flee fire in story. Other like rabbits mixed with large cats. Size Biggen rabbit with cat claws/sharp teeth. Hunt/kill other Biggens and squirrels. Both Biggens smart. Know many

things. Use many tools. He speak bad rabbits make his people smart squirrels. His grandsire one of those first made smart about four tens winters ago. Bad rabbits force his people dig tunnels or kill/eat them. They escape from bad rabbits, flee deep in forest, make friends with some of tall, little fur Biggens. Together they fight bad rabbits. Stop bad rabbits from hunt/kill.” Teacher shook his head. “Is hard understand and explain, Great Grandpup.”

“Sound strange, Great Grandsire.”

Teacher wigwagged his tail up and down once in the affirmative. “What he speak make me now believe this no his world. Am glad this no his world. Biggens they friends with very dangerous. Have many, many dangerous, scary tools. One scary tool can burn whole world like in story,” he paused a moment, wigwagging his tail nervously and lowered his voice. “And poison dirt, water, and air at same time. Kill/burn/poison all, no thing live if tool used. No safe even if hide in burrow like woodchuck. Why need tool that kill all? Why they make this tool I no understand. I no want such Biggens come here. Friend speak if he knew how speak his people, they would flee here to our world from both Biggens.”

His great grandpup shuddered at the thought of a tool that kill/burn/poison all. “Yes, is very scary. I no want Friend’s world Biggens come here.”

“I must go. Take care, Great Grandpup.”

“You take care, Great Grandsire.”