

NINE

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

“Is good to see you, Great Grandsire Teacher.”

“Is good to see you, Great Grandpup. I very, very tired today. No speak long.”

She wigwagged her tail in concern. “You sick?”

Teacher gigglechittered. “I no sick. I tired. Pinecone bare four pups six days ago. Friend proud sire. Pups all strong, healthy.”

“Is good. Forest needs more squirrels.”

Teacher wigwagged his tail up and down once in the affirmative. “Yes, is good. Forest always needs more squirrels. After pups born, all other squirrels know can now try make pups. Pups no come until spring. I tired after I chase Tassel through trees, try make pups. Chase her again, try make pups, and again and again, last five days. Other males do same with mates. All tired.”

“And?”

Teacher wigwagged his tail a few times and puffed-up on screen. “Tassel speak at sunrise. Pups grow in her. I see ten and one winters and I sire pups again.” He smiled.

“Is good, Great Grandsire.”

“Yes, is good. Remember Grandpup of Butternut?”

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

“He show he very fast climber. Others suggest name, Nimble. He take name. Squirrel with black fur who arrive with him take name Shadow. The two female squirrels who eye them, they littermates. They choose both as mates.”

“Which one choose Nimble and which Shadow, Great Grandsire?”

He shook his head. “They no choose one over other. They choose/share both. Both Nimble and Shadow agree share. Shadow was very scared when first arrive. He raised by Biggen healer. Was like big pup when arrive. Nimble help him grow up. They agree be like littermates become mates to both females. Females no choose names yet. They share mates, all four. No fight. I hear such thing once long ago your forest before I elder. A squirrel lost her mate. Littermate and her mate take her in and she join them. Littermate’s mate then sire pups with both littermates.”

“What Elder Tassel speak on this?”

“She call Elder Council together and Friend. We speak on it. Learn some Biggens do same. Butternut and Curious try to get Friend join them as mate. Learn some Friend’s people do same. Friend say their head Elder once share mate with four other females. She no grow pups for that mate. I think I tired. I no know how that male keep up with five mates! After we speak on this, we allow. They no pups. They adults. If they choose share mates and no fight, why should we forbid? Forest needs more squirrels.”

“Elder council wise. Forest always needs more squirrels. I must go, Great Grandsire. Give Great Granddame Tassel my blessings.”

The forest Elder wigwagged her tail in greeting to her Great Grandsire on the Biggen viewer.

“Is good to see you, Great Grandpup. I see pups grow in you now.”

She patted her abdomen which was starting to show a bulge. “Pups will come ten and five to two tens more days, Great Grandsire. I feel five growing in me. They move about a lot.”

Teacher wigwagged his tail proudly. “Is good.” He then sighchittered drooping his tail. “I can no speak long, Great Grandpup. Friend need viewer soon. Martin try hunt/kill squirrels here yesterday.”

She chittered in concern, wigwagging her tail sideways. She knew that martins were scary predators who could climb up in the trees to hunt squirrels. You had to outrun a martin to live.

“Martin just miss one squirrel. Squirrel send out warning cry as it flee. Martin follow/chase squirrel. Kind respond to warning cry. Block martin from other squirrel. He fight martin. Martin almost big as Kind. Martin fight/hurt Kind. Kind fight/kill martin. Kind with Biggen healer. He live. Sunshine and Energy at healer nest with Kind. As I speak before, I can no speak long to keep viewer ready for Friend. He need viewer speak to Biggens sent from Biggen Elders. They come soon, search for other martins. Biggen Elders keep promise, help squirrels.”

“Is good. Take care, Great Grandsire.”