

NINE

Butternut and Hidget were in the classroom testing the donated flatpanels, making three piles, those that were useable as is, those that either needed repairs or a little work, and those not worth repairing. They looked up as others arrived, scratching at the doorway before entering.

“Elders Teacher, Tassel, Foxy, and Pinecone,” Butternut greeted in chitterspeak. She and Hidget bowed slightly. “What brings you here?”

“After much discussion,” Tassel replied, “it decided Elders should learn hear Biggenspeak, learn Biggenspeak symbols, and use Biggen viewer like Pinecone to speak Biggenspeak.”

“We must speak to Biggens in our roles as Elders,” Teacher added. “Pinecone and Kind no always around. Elder Voice Friend is away a lot doing what he must for The Refuge.”

“May we attend your class with pups so we may learn?” Foxy asked.

Butternut turned to Pinecone. “You know Biggenspeak, why you here?”

“I offer to help teach what I know,” she replied.

Butternut turned to Hidget. “Do you have any objections, Mentor?”

Hidget wigwagged her tail left to right and back. “You lead teacher, Butternut. My role is to mentor as needed. Extra adult in class would be good.” She pulled out her flatpanel a moment and looked something up and switched to Common. “As long as at least one of them is present with us, we can increase the class size again. You would be able to go from three sessions to two based on the number of pups who wish to learn Biggen things.”

Butternut’s eye lit up as she nodded. She turned to the Elders. “Teacher, Tassel, and Foxy, so many pups want to learn Biggen things. I had planned to hold classes three times each day, morning, late morning close to midday and three pawspans before sunset. With you present, I can do morning and just past midday. I could teach each pup more in less days. You must decide who attend morning and midday session.”

They wigwagged their tails up and down once in agreement and looked at each other briefly.

“I will attend mornings,” Teacher respond.

“After midday,” Tassel and Foxy responded in near unison.

“Both to help,” Pinecone replied.

“Good. All except Pinecone I give you homework now.”

They looked at her with confusion clearly showing on their muzzles.

“Homework is learning that requires some planning on your part. I want you to think on this. Class start in two days. On first day, I will ask you to speak a short story about yourself to the pups in chitterspeak. After you learn enough Biggenspeak, you will have a Biggen viewer speak the same story for you again in front of the pups in Biggenspeak. As Biggenspeak have more words, the Biggenspeak version should use more words too.”

Tassel, Teacher, and Foxy nodded flicking their tails up and down once.

Butternut turned to Pinecone. “We still have five tens Biggen viewers to test.”

Pinecone wigwagged her tail up and down once. “Yes, I can help test.”

“Can you show them how to test them? I know Teacher knows how to turn one on and place a call to his great grandpup.”

Pinecone again wigwagged her tail up and down once. She and the other Elders were soon helping Butternut and Hidget test the remaining flatpanels.