

ELEVEN

Very slowly, Brave began to stir. He hurt all over. There were many strange sounds and scents around him, but one that was also very familiar. He felt someone gently grooming him on the back of the neck. Slowly, he opened his eyes and then closed them again due to the brightness. It was nearly like staring up at the sun in summer. Again, he half opened them and chattered nervously. Even that hurt to do. The squirrel he saw near him matched her scent. He couldn't believe it.

"Blossom?" he uttered. "So thirsty."

She nudged a dish of water where he could lap at it. He lapped for a long time. Once his thirst was sated, he looked at himself, though he couldn't move much. He had no concept to compare to much of what he saw. There were strange white things all over his body covering his wounds all of which ached. "Where are we?" he finally muttered. He tried to wigwag his tail but couldn't move it. He started to get scared. "Why can I no move my tail?"

"Hush and be calm, Brave. You safe here. This Biggen healing place. We, Energy, Biggen teaching Elder, and I, found you in forest badly injured and brought you here. You must go slow, Brave. You have many long, deep cuts healers bound. If you no move slow, wounds may reopen. She nudged the thing over his left forelimb. "Your forelimb is broken. This Biggen tool hold it in place to heal. Your tail was nearly bit off," she held out her paws about the third of the length of his tail, "that close to base of tail. Healers work long time on your tail and it should heal. It may no be straight when healed, but you will still have it. Like your forelimb it is bound in place to help it heal. Is why you no can move it."

"I thought I die on forest floor. So much blood. I smell fisher and hear it crash through bushes. Thought I hear Energy nearby. Then sleep until I wake here."

Blossom flicked her tail up and down once. "Teaching Elder is Biggen Fisher. You lose much blood, Brave. Almost die. Biggen healers speak if you wake, you live. I glad you wake. Healers speak you will need a long time to heal. Possibly a full season, my potential second mate."

"Potential second mate?" Brave felt joy in his heart despite the physical pain he felt.

"You lose much blood. Healers take blood from me and put in you. Is why you live. You need lot of blood. I too need time to recover. Elders my forest rule in past, this no count as mates as we no both choose to share blood. I give blood or you die. I could no let you die, Brave. I very tired. Sleep again. Healers speak I will be this way for two or three," she held up two and then three claws, "days as my body works to replace blood healers take for you. I give as much as I could give. Healers scared take that much. But you needed a lot." She snuggled up to him again, yawned, licked his cheek, and was quickly asleep.

Despite the pain and not being able to move much, Brave was soon asleep too with Blossom curled up next to him.

When Brave next opened his eyes, there was another squirrel nearby, laying there, quietly watching him. He wigwagged his tail in greeting, the tip missing. There was a small white Biggen-thing on his left forelimb. Blossom wasn't around.

"Hello, Brave, my son," Aldin greeted. "My people have more chitterspeak. That mean male pup."

There was confusion on Brave's muzzle. "You no my sire. My sire die when I pup."

Aldin drooped his tail. "I sorry, Brave, you lose sire when you pup." He paused a moment. "When I arrive, healers speak you need more blood. Blossom could give no more, but I could give some." He raised his forelimb with the white Biggen-thing on it. "I may no sire you, but my blood now is in you. My daughter, that is female pup, Blossom, speak she choose you as second potential mate. As far as I concern, that makes you like my son."

Before they could converse further, Blossom returned. She and Aldin nuzzled each other briefly before she snuggled down next to Brave.

"I need make bad water," Brave stated.

Aldin called out something in Biggenspeak and two Biggens, a squirrel and a beaver, arrived carrying a white biggen-thing. Aldin turned to Brave as Blossom moved to the side.

"They are going to lift you up and place you on Biggen thing. It will catch and hold bad water you make. If you need to leave pellets, do that too."

Brave was scared, but too weak to resist. The beaver gently lifted him up while the squirrel placed the Biggen thing under him. The beaver then set him carefully on top of it. It was cold to his paws. There was a gap in the thing between his legs.

"Go ahead," Aldin instructed. "Healers will have Biggen squirrel nearby at all times, Brave. If you need make bad water again after this, ask Biggen squirrel for help."

Brave urinated for a very long time. Before he was through, he took Aldin's advice and defecated several pellets that made a wet, echoing sound as they landed in the thing. When he finished, the beaver again lifted him up gently. The squirrel moved the Biggen thing out of the way and then took another Biggen thing, this one floppy, soft and with a strange smell. With it, he cleaned Brave's backend. It was damp against his fur and skin and smelled strange. The beaver then gently set him back on his hammock-bed.

Brave felt embarrassment over being cleaned like a pup. "It is as dame warn me when I pup. I now like pup-forever as I trust Biggens."

Blossom nuzzled him again trying to comfort him as she rejoined him on the hammock-bed.

“You fit name Energy give you, Brave. You did no try to struggle as they helped you. You must be patient. In time, as you heal, you will do more on own. Yes, for now, your injuries make you be like young pup. Is still better than being dead.”

“There is more we must speak, Brave, but no now. Healers no allow me speak long. They speak you need more rest.”

Blossom groomed the back of Brave’s neck briefly. “Yes, potential second mate, we both need more rest.” She snuggled down next to him and both were quickly asleep again.