

TWELVE

Butternut chittered to get everyone's attention and the pups quickly fell silent. "I need all of you to take one of these," she held-up a sitting pillow, "and pick a place to sit. See the lines on the floor? Line-up where you sit along them."

The pups and Elder Teacher did so. Many of the pups were awed that Elder Teacher was going to learn with them. Pinecone sat to one side with Mentor Hidget watching and waiting.

"I speak learn rules. Some like Elder Teacher's rules when he teach elder things. Some different. If you wish to learn Biggenspeak and Biggen things, you must arrive on time every day, grab a," she switched to Common for the next word while holding up one of the sitting pillows, "cushion and sit down. If you have a question or know an answer, raise your tail up. Only speak if I pick you. If you must make bad water or pellets, go to Biggen place in hollow below this and return. Do you understand?"

All flicked their tails up and down once.

"Good. Mentor, Elder Pinecone, Elder Teacher, and I will now give you each a Biggen viewer. We will go over how it works." As she spoke, flatpanels were handed out to the pups. "You must take good care of it. You will need it to Biggenspeak for you when time comes. We have just enough for all pups who wish to learn. If you lose or break yours you will need to ask a littermate to share theirs. That will slow down learning."

Again, all flicked the tails up and down once. Once the flatpanels were handed out, Butternut demonstrated how to turn it on and off. The large flatpanel on the wall projected what she demonstrated. Most of the pups quickly figured it out. Elder Teacher's flatpanel chirped and he drooped his tail as Butternut looked at him and then at the doorway. He nodded and bounded out. He returned in less than three ceclicks and raised his tail.

"What is it, Elder Teacher."

Teacher drooped his tail. "An urgent matter I must attend to as Eldest Elder, Teacher Butternut. I no know if I'll be able to return to class today."

"If you can make the one after midday, I will allow you to make up then. If no, you must work on own to make-up what you miss."

Teacher bowed. "If I see Tassel or Foxy, I ask them to take my place." He darted out the open window, hooking his flatpanel to his backfur as he went.

The pups saw what he did and each tried to do the same. They were thrilled when their flatpanels clung to their fur but were easily removed afterward.

“Yes, that was our next step, my pups.” Butternut called out to keep the class under control. “Biggen viewer will stick to your fur like burdock but come off without tugging your fur.”

“Now, to learn Biggenspeak, you need learn Biggenspeak symbols. I will speak them in Biggenspeak.” She pointed to each letter and pronounced them. She then tapped an icon on her flatpanel. Each letter appeared in turn on their flatpanels. “Touch each symbol as it appears and the Biggenviewer will speak it.” After they finished going through the alphabet she continued. “Good. You do real good. Now I want you to go through Biggenspeak symbols three more times.”

As they finished, Butternut praised them again and tapped another icon on her flatpanel. The larger panel now showed all the letters in the Common alphabet. “I’m going to speak a symbol. You choose the symbol I speak. We see how quick you learn symbols.”

Butternut did not allow any of the pups to get discouraged if they got the wrong letter, pointing out how some look similar to each other. “I no expect you to learn all quickly. But we must start somewhere.” She looked up as Tassel arrived at the open window.

“Enter, Elder Tassel. Take a sitting thing,” she pointed to the sitting pillows with her tail, “and the pups will show you where to sit.” As she settled into place, Butternut turned to the pups. “Who can speak learn rules to Elder Tassel?” Several tails shot-up. Butternut chose one and then another and so on, letting each pup speak one rule to Tassel. Butternut praised each in turn for remembering correctly.