

TWENTY-FOUR

Moselyn wigwagged her tail nervously. She had allowed herself to give into the urge to wigwag her tail more thanks to Blossom. It was strongly discouraged in her family. It was so much easier to just let it happen than to try and control it as her parents expected.

“Are you sure?” She asked Saniel.

“Yes, the best way to learn to climb is to just do it. I will teach you just as my mother and father taught me. We will take it slow and easy at first. I’ll show you what I want you to do.” He lifted one rear leg and twisted his foot around 180 degrees and back a couple times and then did likewise with the other. “Your turn.”

“Really?” She lifted one rear leg and twisted her foot around like him. It was a bit stiff, but she was able to do it. “I don’t believe it!” She did likewise with the other rear foot.

“You’ve never done that before, have you?”

“I’ve never had a reason to. Maybe I did it when I was a young child and probably got scolded for it. My parents believe, ‘We’re above cousin squirrels and should not act like them.’” She stuck out her tongue briefly to show what she thought of that.

“So, learning to climb would upset them?”

“Yes, and they would have a fit to see that I’ve let my claws grow out. And you know what? I don’t care. They’d be upset with me wigwagging my tail too. Blossom and I have been roommates for a little over a month. It’s like she’s opened my eyes to how much I’ve missed out on.”

“Alright, do you know why I wanted you to twist your feet back and forth a few times like that?”

Moselyn shook her head in the negative.

“It’s to loosen up your ankles so that you can climb back down after climbing up.”

“Huh?”

“We can turn our ankles around that far so that when we climb a tree, we can face downward when we climb down.” Saniel demonstrated, going up the tree trunk two mits, turning around and coming most of the way back down. He pointed at his rear paws with his tail as they pointed upward. “Your rear paws will hold you up on the descent.” He let go of the trunk with both front paws and dangled there a moment. “See.” He grabbed back on and finished the descent. “I want you to try climbing, but don’t go as high as me. Go up maybe as high as you are tall, then turn around and pause a moment.”

“Okay.” Moselyn expressed surprise at how easy it was to climb the trunk using her claws. Her claws ached a little bit. She turned around and to her surprise, she was able to hold on to the trunk with all four paws facing downward. Her head was half her body length from the ground.

“Excellent. Now, I want you to do like I did and slowly let go of the trunk with your front handpaws. Let your feet hold you in place.”

Moselyn’s tail wigwagged nervously. “What if I lose my grip?”

“Why do you think I asked you to not climb too high? If you feel yourself slipping. Let go and tuck into a ball as you fall.”

Moselyn closed her eyes for a moment and forced her breathing to slow down. She then opened her eyes and let go of the trunk with her handpaws. To her amazement, she remained in place, dangling from her rear paws. Again, there was a small ache.

“Good. Now grab the tree again with your handpaws. Carefully scoot down your rear paws a little, then your front. Then your back, and so on until you’re on the ground again.”

She followed his directions and made it safely back to the ground and stood up. She then hugged him. “I did it!” She exclaimed.

“Yes, that was an excellent first try,” Sanial replied as she released him. “How are your paws and claws feeling?”

“I’m feeling a little bit of an ache from my claws.”

“Really? Let me take a look.” Sanial gently took her left handpaw in his and wiggled one claw at a time. “Does that ache or hurt as I try to wiggle them?”

“No.”

He hooked one of his claws into one of hers and gentle tugged.

“That aches a little,” she replied.

Sanial drooped his tail. “That’s not good. Probably because you’ve never climbed before. It shouldn’t ache unless you’ve been hanging for a long time. Do you want to climb some more or hold off?”

“Let’s try a little more.”

“Alright, follow me. We’ll go up and down a short distance. Then a little higher and higher. The more you practice, the easier it will become for you. I’m going to check on you each time we return to the ground. I want the truth. If your claws ache more than they do now, we should quit for the day.”

She nodded and followed him up two mits and back down.

“They ache the same.”

They repeated the process adding height to each trip. Several trips later, Saniel paused on a branch 12 mits up and Moselyn joined him. She looked down and almost felt dizzy.

“How are your claws?”

“They’re starting to ache a little more. I’m also starting to feel some aching in my legs and arms.”

“Then this is probably enough climbing for one day. The muscle ache is probably because you’re not used to climbing.”

She shook a little as she scooted back on the branch and into him. “I think we’ve climbed a little too high this time.”

He reached around her and held her for a moment from behind. “A squirrel afraid of heights?” He gigglechittered. “We’ll rest here for a few ceclicks and then descend. If you need a break on the trip down, remember, your claws will hold you in place. Do you want me to lead again?”

“Yes, please.”

“Just let me know when you’re ready.”

She leaned into him just enjoying the cuddle for a few ceclicks. She then indicated she was ready. Saniel took it slowly, leading her down the trunk. They both got down safely. She complained again about her claws and Saniel drooped his tail.

“I hope it’s simply because you have never climbed before. But I think we should take you to see the nurse just to make sure.”

She quickly hugged him, pecking him on the cheek. “Thank you, Saniel, for teaching me today. Let’s go see the nurse.”