

TWENTY-EIGHT

Moselyn twitched an ear in her sleep. Something tickled it a second time and then lightly nuzzled the back of her head.

“Wake-up, Moselyn,” Saniel spoke quietly.

Moselyn stirred and opened her eyes. She looked at Saniel and Blossom and slowly sat up.

“You were on my tail again,” Blossom stated as she leapt out of the nest and headed for the door. Saniel snuggled down again behind her.

Moselyn laid back down and started to drift back to sleep. She then suddenly snapped awake grabbing her flatpanel and glancing at the time. “It’s a class day! Why did we sleep in? We’re late to class!”

“Look out the window,” Saniel stated. “Then check your school messages.”

Moselyn looked out the window in wonder. It, apparently, snowed heavily overnight. There were many students out in the snow throwing it at each other. She checked her messages and her eyes shot wide as Saniel watched her.

“Apparently, it is a school tradition to cancel classes after the first snowstorm. Something that goes back to a long time ago when most students had to travel here from home every day to attend. We let you sleep as long as we could. Blossom needed to use the bathroom. And somehow, you just keep rolling on top of her tail as we sleep.” Saniel giggled briefly.

Blossom returned and looked out the window. “It looks like most of our fellow students are out there.”

“Then perhaps we should go join them,” Saniel replied as he stretched, briefly nuzzled Moselyn, and got out of the nest. “Some cold air will do us good.” Saniel left the room.

Moselyn stretched. “Part of me just wants the two of you to come back into this nest rather than go out in the snow. But I know that’s not going to happen.” She got out of the nest, stretched again, and opened the door as Saniel returned. She pecked him on the cheek. “I’ll be right back.”

Saniel picked up a small brush and brushed Blossom’s back. She stretched out and chitterpurred through the attention. “If you haven’t done so yet, I suppose I’ll need to teach Brave this, huh?” he asked.

She flicked her tail up and down once.

As he put the brush back in its spot on a table, Moselyn returned. “I’m ready.”

The three of them made their way outdoors. Blossom paused just outside the door under the roof covering the entrance. She tentatively poked her left forepaw in the snow just past the entryway. It felt cold and wet. She shook it and gigglechattered.

Moselyn stared at her a moment before it occurred to her. She blurted out her thoughts. “Oh! This is your first-time experiencing snow!”

Blossom flicked her tail up and down once. “Yes, I was born midway through last winter. It was a few weeks after that before my eyes opened and my fur grew in. I didn’t venture out of the nest until several weeks after that. By then the last of the snow had melted and spring had arrived.” She suddenly leapt up and outward, arching like a fox and landed in the snow muzzle-first. Most of her body sunk in the snow with only her tail showing out of the hole. It vanished in the hole and she poked her head out and shook the snow off it, gigglechattering. “It’s cold, but I like it.” Where she sat, the snow was up to her neck. “I can see why we’re not supposed to go out in this alone back home. We would be easy targets for predators.” Her tail wigwagged back and forth. “I can’t imagine how much they got back home.”

Saniel nodded. “As The Refuge is two clicks north of here by hovercraft, and higher in elevation, the snow always tends to be fluffier and deeper than this.” He gathered a small amount in his paws and shaped it into a loose snowball. It was slightly sticky, just enough to hold together. “Last winter we got a lot of snow. It was nearly up to the entrance of my family’s nest tree.” He gently tossed it at Moselyn, who anticipated it coming and dodged it.

It took a moment for Saniel’s snow depth statement to sink in, but Moselyn quickly forgot about it as she returned fire. Soon, they were throwing snow back and forth at each other, not always succeeding at dodging. Blossom avoided more than them by simply ducking back down in the latest hole/depression she made in the snow as she had to leap up and forward and sink back down to move about in what was to her deep snow. Being smaller than them, her snowballs were, likewise, smaller, and she couldn’t throw them as far, the three of them laughing as they threw snow at each other.

They rounded the corner where the other students were. They were immediately pelted with snowballs from the others. They returned fire as best as they could, but seemed to be getting hit more than they could hit others. It was slow moving about in the slightly sticky snow that was up just past Moselyn and Saniel’s knees standing up on their hind legs. Poor Blossom remained up to her neck whenever she landed from a leap. She used the depressions she created in the snow and the two others as shields from the onslaught.

The snowballs flew back and forth for about a click before those who had been out in the snow and cold the longest started to make their way back to the school entrance. Eventually, Blossom, Saniel, and Moselyn followed them, brushing the snow out of their fur as best as they could before returning inside. They still needed to towel down as what was left in their fur melted. The unique scent of damp fur permeated the building.