

THIRTY-ONE

Moselyn, Saniel, Blossom, Drexle, and Hersah, as a group decided to go have pizza at Jochen's that evening, something they did every couple of weeks. While they waited for their meal, Moselyn discussed her parent problems with the rest, her closest friends.

"May I talk about what your mother told me, Saniel, in front of you? She said I could speak about it in front of others, but I wasn't sure how you'd feel about that."

He reached over and squeezed her paw reassuringly. "About her parents, right? Of course. Would you feel more comfortable if I give an overview first."

"Please."

He turned to the others. "My mother had serious parent problems too, while attending our senior school. Like Moselyn's folks, they disapproved of her growing her claws out and learning to climb. They barred her from coming home until she trimmed her claws and ceased 'acting like a feral cousin'." Saniel paused a moment and then continued. "She never went home again. Dad's folks took her in during school breaks. Grammie and Grandpie didn't climb, but they supported Dad's choice to learn. By her third year here, Mom had to cut herself off from any communications with her folks as every time prior to that when she tried to reach out to them all they would do is harp about her needing to trim her claws. I've never met them." He paused again. "It is also why I don't have a family name. She dropped it when she cut ties with her parents. As it is tradition among squirrels for the male to adopt the female's family name upon marriage, Dad dropped his family name in support of her and with the approval of Grammie and Grandpie. Mom told him he didn't need to, but she appreciated that he did so."

Drexle and Hersah gasped in shock. Blossom already knew and didn't react.

"It worked out for Dad and Mom. Grammie's father passed and his will included an interesting twist in it. Among his possessions was the butternut tree forest we now live in. The will stated it would go to whichever of his descendants was ready to live in that forest to tend to the trees."

"That part I wasn't aware of," Blossom piped in. "I never knew how they got that forest."

"Thank you, Saniel," Moselyn replied. "Your mother went into a lot of detail about the trauma she experienced to try and reassure me that she knows what I'm feeling. She has offered to take me in as your father's folks took her in. Apparently, Schoolmaster Pekan is older than I thought. He was schoolmaster even back then. He still remembers what she went through and appreciates her offer. If I accept the offer, I'll be required to keep a journal and write a report on my observation and experiences of cousin squirrel lifestyle."

Hersah blinked her eyes a few times. "Wait? Cousin squirrel lifestyle? Is that in reference to the parental agreement? I thought that clause was just for exploring gay/bi/trans lifestyles."

“So did I,” Moselyn replied. “But it also applies to ‘cousin’ lifestyles. Say a fox student hasn’t been taught how to hunt. They would be taken off to some remote forest and taught to hunt. They would then spend time out there surviving by hunting. Upon returning they need to write a report on it just as I’ll be required to do if I choose to go to The Refuge.” She sighed. “I love my parents. So, I’m torn between obeying them or risking never seeing them again.”

Blossom and Saniel each reached over and touched one of her paws. They glanced at each other trying to figure out who should speak their thoughts. Finally, Saniel broke the silence.

“You will always have our respect regardless of what you decide, Moselyn.”

Before they could say more, their pizza was brought to their table. Blossom’s slices had small rodent sausage slices on them. No one asked her about it knowing why she tended to order that on hers.