

THIRTY-TWO

Brave arrived in Jessophat's and Carulin's nest tree a clawspan early for that day's Elder lesson. Tassel arrived soon afterward. She tapped an icon on her small flatpanel and Brave's mother, Hope, appeared on the larger flatpanel on the wall. The other two elders were to her left and right.

All three on screen wigwagged their tails in greeting. Hope, turned to the one on her left nodding to her.

"Greetings, Elder Tassel and Brave. I chose name. I am Grace."

The other one now leaned forward. "And I chose name. I am Charity."

Tassel and Brave bowed to them. "Is good names," Tassel replied. Brave flicked his tail up and down once in agreement.

"What we learn today?" Hope asked as her tail raised briefly in a curl on screen.

"We wait," Tassel replied. "More Elders to join us."

As she finished stating this, the larger screen split into smaller segments as the squirrel elders of the other three forests near Rock City appeared in the other segments.

Hope's, Grace's, and Charity's eyes briefly grew big enough to see their iris colors, brown, blue and brown in surprise at who had joined them. All three of them wigwagged their tails nervously.

"Has a Grand Council been called?" Hope squeaked with fear in her voice as her muzzle filled the whole screen briefly.

Tassel wigwagged her tail in the negative. "No," she reassured Hope. "These other Elders were invited to join in on this lesson." She glanced over her shoulder as Jessophat entered the room from the hallway. "Today's lesson is no normal Elder lesson. It will be taught by Elder Kind."

Jessophat bowed to the squirrels on screen and to Tassel and Kind. "I am humbled to be asked to speak to you as I am no smart squirrel."

"We see you, your mate, and pup, as more big smart squirrels than biggen squirrels, Elder Kind," Tassel replied. "Who better explain about Biggens than you?"

Jessophat flicked his tail up and down once. "I will speak best I can. Biggens complicated. I know you are here because you live near Biggens," he gestured on screen, "or with us." He nodded to Tassel and Brave. "As you live near or with us, you need better understand us."

Jessophat spent the next two clicks/pawspans of time giving an overview of how Biggens were different from smart squirrels and how they lived compared to smart squirrels. The others in attendance had many questions, including a few from Tassel and Brave. Those that listened were amazed at what Jessophat spoke about from reproduction, which he hesitated on a bit, explaining Biggens kept that private for some reason, to how they traded food/goods for other food/goods. All those on screen were shocked to learn Biggen squirrel front teeth did not continuously grow like smart squirrels and that Biggen skunks could not spray like cousin ones could. He answered all he could and promised to follow up with answers to the few he could not answer.

When he finished, those on screen bowed in thanks.

“You give us much to think on, Elder Kind. I see why smart squirrels in your forest make you Elder though you Biggen,” one of the Elders from the forest north of Rock City stated. “You show the patience an Elder needs as we asked you many questions.”

The others agreed. One by one, the other groups ended the calls at their end until it was just Jessophat, Tassel, and Brave in the room and Hope, Charity, and Grace on screen.

Tassel turned to Jessophat and offered to hug him, which he did.

“Thank you, Kind. I now have another lesson to teach these others. You welcome to stay.”

Jessophat drooped his tail. “I cannot. I have other things I must do to support our colony, Tassel.”

She nodded and turned back to the screen and glanced at Brave. “I know what Kind speak on is a lot to think on already. My lesson will be short.”