

THIRTY-FOUR

Brave learned about Aldin's past on the flight. He was amazed as he never imagined there were other worlds out there. Aldin also taught him the name of the fox doctor after Brave asked him. The snow started to pick up in intensity as they neared Rock City.

"We may be early, but better than not making it at all," Aldin commented in Common as the hovercraft settled into the snow outside of the hospital.

Brave simply nodded and followed Aldin as quickly as he could through the snow and into the Biggen structure. Their empty hovercraft raced off as they approached the entrance. Inside the entry way, they both shook off the snow. Brave stuck close to Aldin as he led the younger squirrel over to an otter behind a table. He was scared because of all the Biggens. As Aldin showed no fear other than faint pawprints, Brave assumed it was safe, but that did little to help his fear.

"May I help you?" the otter asked.

Brave nervously wigwagged his tailtip as he pulled his flatpanel off his fur and typed and it read his text for him. "I am Brave from The Refuge. I have an appointment with Dr. Roxle."

The otter glanced at his flatpanel scrolling through it. "You're a bit early."

"We wanted to beat the snowstorm," Brave's flatpanel spoke for him.

The otter raised an eyebrow. "It's snowing again?"

Brave typed away. "You should see how much it has snowed at The Refuge. It's deeper than you are tall!"

The otter smiled at the comment as he tapped an icon on his flatpanel. "You're checked in. Please make yourself comfortable. You might be waiting a while since you're early."

Aldin led Brave over to a sitting cushion against a wall. The younger squirrel curled up on it. Aldin chitterspoke to him in a low voice. "I choose this spot next to wall so we no need to watch in all directions. We safe here, but I know instinct screams otherwise."

Brave nodded again as Aldin curled-up on a cushion next to him. Biggens came and went, but they kept a respectful distance from the two cousin squirrels. Nearly a klick went by as both snoozed a bit. Brave's name was called in chitterspeak by a male biggen squirrel nurse, startling him from his nap. He led Brave and Aldin into a room.

"My name no translate into chitterspeak," the nurse spoke drooping his tail.

Brave pulled up his flatpanel. “I begin learn biggenspeak, nurse. I can try and type-speak your name.”

The nurse’s face lit-up. “I am Muralan”

“Mue-ran-all” Brave typed and looked hopefully at the nurse as the flatpanel spoke the word.

The nurse smiled. “Close enough on your first try. I need to take your vital signs. Oh, sorry. Chitterspeak.” Muralan switched to chitterspeak. “I need check how warm you are and how well your blood flow in body.”

Brave held still while the biggen wrapped a device around his right forelimb.

“This feel tight briefly. Is alright.” Muralan checked Brave’s blood pressure and nodded at the numbers. “Normal. Is good.” He then pointed another tool at the underside spot where Brave’s forelimb met his torso. It beeped. Muralan looked at the number and nodded. “Normal. Come we go other room.”

Muralan switched to Common and addressed Aldin. “Embassador, I don’t know how to explain we need to take x-rays of his left forelimb and tail.”

“Show him to explain. I’ll explain the best that I can.”

Brave understood part of the conversation and patiently waited. Aldin turned to him and used mostly chitterspeak except for the nurse’s name. “Muralan is taking us to a special Biggen tool the looks inside your body to see your bones. They want to see how your forelimb and tail are healing.”

Brave nodded followed where he was led leaving wet paw prints as they went. Deep down he remained very scared, but as Aldin still showed no fear, he assumed he was safe despite the fear. There was a table in the room he was led into.

“Get up on table, sprawl out like when you try cool off on very hot summer day. Lay still until I speak you may move.” Muralan instructed in chitterspeak. “Table cold. I sorry.” Muralan drooped his tail. “This no take long.”

Brave climbed up onto the table and lay on his stomach, splooting. It was cold to the touch. He tried not to shiver. Muralan pointed a biggen tool hanging from the ceiling close to his left forelimb. He and Aldin slipped behind an alcove with a window in it. There was a brief hum. Muralan came back around and pointed the tool close to Brave’s tail. He retreated back into the alcove. There was another brief hum. He returned, lifted the device out of the way and indicated Brave could get off the table.

“You like your name. Very Brave. Come we go back to other room and wait for Dr. Roxle.”

Twenty ceclicks went by before the Biggen fox entered the room looking down at his flatpanel.

Brave's face lit up as he quickly typed away on his flatpanel and it read his text. "Hello Dr. Roxle. I start learn biggenspeak. I can no thank you enough for saving my life."

The fox was slightly startled, but smiled slightly remembering he shouldn't show many teeth to the small squirrel. "You are welcome, Brave. I will still run the translation program on my flatpanel." His flatpanel repeated the words in chitterspeak. "I want to listen to your heart with my um..." he paused a moment knowing there would be no chitterspeak word for stethoscope. "My heart listen tool here." He pointed to it. "If you want, after I let you listen to your heart too."

Brave sat up and held still for the fox. He was scared, but again, knew the fox healer would not hunt him. The device was cold against his fur just like last time.

"You're heart is racing a little. I'm scaring you, aren't I?"

"A little," Brave typed. "I know you no threat, but you still fox and cousin foxes hunt my kind. Instinct is telling me to flee."

Dr. Roxle nodded. "If there is something I can do to help calm the fear inside, let me know." He showed Brave how to use the stethoscope. Brave listened first to the biggen fox's heart than his own.

"Yours beat slower than mine," Brave typed.

"Smaller animals have faster heart rates." Dr. Roxle replied as he draped the stethoscope back over his neck and pulled his flatpanel off his hip. "I have something to show you." He tapped an icon on his flatpanel and the room darkened slightly as a larger flatpanel lit up on the wall. On the flatpanel were two x-rays. One showing a forelimb with a broken bone and one showing a forelimb with no broken bone. "The one on the left is how your forelimb looked when you first arrived here nearly dead last fall. On the right is how it looks now." The images changed to show how his tail had healed. "This means we can take the current casts off."

Brave's muzzle and eyes lit up with joy.

"However," Dr. Roxle continued as he brought the first set of images back up. "See here," he pointed to the healed bone where there was one spot slightly darkened. "You will need to wear a slip-on brace-cast on your forelimb for another 10 to 14 days." He started to flash his claws.

Brave replied in chitterspeak. "I know count words and understand number of days that is." He paused as the translation program repeated what he had said in Common. He then typed into his flatpanel. "What is a slip-on brace-cast?"

"It is a cast that you can put on and take-off as needed. You won't need to wear it at night when you sleep, but you should wear it whenever you are awake. If you aren't moving about you can take it off again until you're ready to move about again. As long as you remember to wear it when needed for the next 10 to 14 days, you won't need to see me again."

Muralan returned after having ducked out briefly. He wheeled in a tray with tools on it.

“What I need to use to cut off the cast will be noisy as you know from last time. You’ll need to stay perfectly still again. Put your flatpanel away. If you have questions we’ll rely on the translation program. Lie on this table like you did for the x-ray.” He paused a moment as the translation program asked for a different word for the term x-ray. “Bone image taker,” he tried. The translation program accepted that.

Brave did as he was told getting up on the table and splooting spread-eagle on it. It was cold like the other table, but not quite as cold and this one had a little more padding. He remained perfectly still as the fox used a tool that whined at a near uncomfortable pitch and cut off the cast on his forelimb. He then did the same for Brave’s tail.

“Sit-up.” Brave did so. “Slowly wigwag your tail.”

Brave did so and smiled. “I can move my tail again!” he chittered excitedly.

The fox nodded. “It’s not perfectly straight.”

“I no care! I still have it thanks to you.”

Dr. Roxle nodded. “You’re welcome. Now hold-out your left forelimb.” Brave did so. The fox gently took hold of it with both of his forepaws. He bent it at the joint this way and that way gently asking if anything hurt as he did so. Brave wigwagged his tail left to right in the negative each time and chitterspoke no.

Dr. Roxle then showed Brave the slip-on cast. It had two separate sections with a joint in between which would let him move his forelimb about more naturally.”

“I had something similar for a while,” Aldin stated trying to provide encouragement.

Once Brave showed he could put it on and take it off himself a few times, the fox asked him to scamper around the room. Brave easily did so. He felt joy and elation. If it weren’t for the slight pressure where the cast pinched against his fur, he wouldn’t have noticed he had it on at all.

Dr. Roxle pointed to the rough textured wall. “Try a little climbing.”

Brave quickly scurried up the wall, turned around and came back down. He came straight back to the fox and opened his arms. Dr. Roxle understood the gesture, scooted down and hugged the small squirrel.

“Thank you!” Brave chittered.