

THIRTY-EIGHT

It was close to dinner time as Moselyn stepped outside a moment to take in the stillness of the forest she found herself in and to gather her thoughts. She didn't have long to contemplate things as Saniel soon returned with both Blossom and Brave following as the three of them leapt onto the same large branch Moselyn had been sitting on. Brave froze when he saw Moselyn, staring at her. He snapped out of it after a moment and nervously approached her. He bowed to her and pulled his flatpanel off his back. He typed, "Blossom speak you do no...not understand Chitterspeak. I still learn Biggenspeak. Do my best for you, Moselyn. May I sniff you? It will help me be less afraid."

Moselyn replied, "Yes, of course. You're Brave, right? The squirrel Blossom helped in the hospital?"

Brave flicked his tail up and down once as he tucked his flatpanel onto his back, approached her, and sniffed her over. He got a bit closer than she expected as she felt his nose brush her fur quite a bit. He then pulled back from her and typed away. "Thank you, Moselyn. I," he hesitated a moment as he glanced at Blossom and started again. "I no have the words in Biggenspeak." He switched to chitterspeak and uttered a series of chits, chats, and chirs that made no sense to her. He then slightly curled around and hid his muzzle in his tail in embarrassment.

Blossom's eyes widened briefly at what she heard. She nuzzled him in reassurance. "Is ok," she chattered quietly to him. "Is big change for both you and her." She then turned to Moselyn and paraphrased what Brave had said. "Brave is embarrassed in admitting he finds you beautiful with your unusual fur pattern. He wished you were a smart squirrel like us as it would make it a lot easier for him. He would gladly accept you as another potential mate then. He's not so sure about having a biggen as a second potential mate, despite how beautiful you are in both appearance and scent. Part of his embarrassment is that he admitted that in front of me. I've reassured him it's alright."

Moselyn stared at her and then at Brave. "Potential mate?"

"It's the term smart squirrels use for boyfriend/girlfriend as it can lead to becoming mates among our kind," Blossom responded. "As I'm both Brave's and Saniel's girlfriend, and you are also Saniel's girlfriend, he's assuming you'll be trying to win him over as your second boyfriend."

Moselyn stared at her briefly while letting what she stated sink in. This concept was new to her. She was aware of the idea of multiple partners, but never dreamed she might wind up in one herself. Getting to date Saniel at the same time as he dated Blossom, yes, but it never occurred to her she'd wind-up with a second boyfriend. She then moved over to Brave who continued to hide his muzzle in his tail. She looked to Saniel and Blossom briefly, who nodded encouragement. She then gently nuzzled Brave's side to get his attention. He looked up at her, with his muzzle still half-hidden, his eyes so wide she could see he had brown eyes. "This is all new to me, too, Brave," she responded. "I will not force you to become my boyfriend. I'm happy to just be Saniel's." She shrugged. "Maybe things will change in time and we will decide to become

potential mates much like Saniel and Blossom. For now, we can just be friends without the whole potential mate thing. Is that alright with you?”

Brave relaxed as he sat up and nodded. He then opened his arms. She understood and embraced the smaller squirrel. He snuffled in her chest fur as they hugged. As they disengaged. He pulled his flatpanel off his back and typed, “Thank you, Moselyn. I,” he paused a moment trying to recall the word Blossom just used. “Em bar ist I can no...not get enough of your scent. I do no...not know why. It is so lovely. And your fur is so soft. I stunned. I accept friends for now. You need chitterspeak name like Saniel/Energy.” His tail slowly flicked back and forth. “First part of your name sound close to moss.” He stated it in chitterspeak before typing some more. “Would you accept that as your chitterspeak name?”

Moselyn thought about it for a moment.

“I find your fur is as soft as the moss I use in my summer drey,” Brave typed. “Is why I suggest name.”

Saniel and Blossom gigglechattered in near unison, not in a taunting way, but to imply that they agreed with the suggestion.

Moselyn nodded. “I accept.” Her stomach then growled loudly much to her embarrassment.

This time, Saniel’s gigglechitter was semi-taunting. He chattered, “Moss’s,” and switched back to Common, “stomach has spoken. It’s time we go eat.”