

There were only a few days left in the extended break. Saniel and Moselyn planned to head back to school a couple days early to settle in. They were making the rounds saying goodbye to all their friends. Moselyn's flatpanel chirped. She looked at Saniel with a raised eyebrow as she answered the call. Carulin appeared on screen.

"Hello Carulin. Why the sudden call? We are planning to get back in about half a klick."

"You have visitors if you wish to see them," Carulin spoke quietly as she shifted the angle of her flatpanel to give Moselyn a glimpse of her parents who had their back to Carulin sitting on cushions chitchatting with Jessophat.

Moselyn gasped. "I'll be there shortly." She ended the call, looked at Saniel and darted out of the tree they were in. He followed. They quickly arrived at Saniel's family tree. A hovercraft was perched on the branch outside the entrance. She hesitated just past the hovercraft. Saniel caught up with her.

"Are you sure you want to face them?" He asked.

"Yes, I need closure, Saniel."

"I'm here for you and so are my folks if you need us," he replied.

"I know. Come on."

She led him in. "We're back, Carulin," she called-out, rounding the corner into the main living space.

Her parents stood up from the cushions they had been sitting on making small talk with Carulin and Jessophat. They looked at their daughter. She looked back at them. They came running up to her. They embraced each other affectionately. Her mother prattled about how awful it must have been to lose her roommate. Her father was just happy to see she was okay. Neither of them said anything about her claws. Once they pulled back, Moselyn introduced them to Saniel.

"Mom, Dad, this is my boyfriend, Saniel. Saniel these are my parents, Darry and Lusinda Pinette."

Saniel bowed. "I'm happy to meet you Mr. and Mrs. Pinette."

Darry offered his hand and Saniel firmly shook it. He then embraced Lusinda in a hug.

"Your boyfriend is quite strong," Lusinda quipped.

"Living this far off the ground is the ultimate work-out program, Mrs. Pinette," Saniel replied.

They made their way back into the living room and all sat on cushions.

Moselyn cut to the point. “What changed your minds, Mom and Dad? I know my mentor wouldn’t have allowed you to come otherwise. Or she would have warned me to stay away if you had fooled her into allowing you to come. Especially after you hung up on her.” Moselyn’s tail bristled a little.

“You never were one for small talk,” Darry replied. “Yes, in a foolish fit of anger we hung-up on Carulin. We then had a lengthy conversation with the Schoolmaster. And then conversations with other citizen squirrels who had embraced their cousin side. We then called Carulin back and apologized and asked if we could come see you.”

“We still don’t approve of this,” her mother, Lusinda, added. “But obviously, it’s what you want. You’re a young adult now.” She paused a moment. “And we don’t want to lose contact with our only child. We missed you so badly these past couple of weeks when you didn’t come home for the Solstice break.”

“Are you willing to come home for a few days before going back to school?” her father asked.

“Are you going to require me to trim my claws?”

“No,” Lucinda replied quickly glancing over at Saniel. “And I can see why you won’t. And if we made you do it, you’ll just grow them out again. Despite all those we’ve spoken to, I just can’t understand why anyone would do this. I was scared out of my fur when we stepped out of the hovercraft as I briefly looked down. But I’m not going to stop you if it means I won’t lose you.” She looked around the room. “I can’t get over how huge the trees are here. And this isn’t as primitive as I feared it would be. It’s sort of like home.”

“Accept we’re 15 mits above the forest floor,” Moselyn added. “And rely on solar panels and batteries for power as we’re too far from the nearest village to be within their power broadcast area.”

Her parents nodded.

“If I go home, can Saniel join us for those few days?”

That caught everyone off guard as they all glanced at each other.

“It’s only fair,” Moselyn continued. “His parents have hosted me for over two weeks. You can do likewise for a few days.”

“Where will he stay? We don’t have a spare room.”

“In my hammock, much as I’ve shared his hammock and nest since about a month into the fall semester.”

“Along with Blossom, and here with Blossom’s cousin squirrel boyfriend,” Saniel added and then his tail drooped. “At least until Blossom was taken from us.”

Her parents' jaws dropped for a moment.

"Snuggle sleep, I assure you," Moselyn added.

"No coupling?" Darry asked.

"Mr. Pinette," Saniel replied. "I have not coupled with your daughter."

"Though I will admit I tried to get him to do so once. He refused stating he wasn't ready for that step in our relationship." She looked down. "And as we are in a smart squirrel settlement, we must follow their laws. If we had coupled, we'd be married according to their laws."

Moselyn's parents looked at each other with shock clearly showing on their muzzles. After a moment, they spoke quietly back and forth.

"We grant permission for our son to go with you if you allow him to go," Jessophat stated.

Carulin nodded in agreement. "He will be on his best behavior," she added.

"Yes, of course!" Saniel agreed.

"Very well," Darry replied. "Go pack your stuff so we can get going. It's over a klick to get home."

Moselyn hugged her parents thanking them. She then hugged both Jessophat and Carulin thanking them profusely for hosting her. She followed Saniel to his room to gather their things.