

The wind swept down through the trees that day, bringing with it the cold of the impending snowfall. HowlingWind paused, crouched beneath a fir tree at the edge of the woods as he stalked a squirrel, anxious to finish hunting before the storm hit. He knew that a lot of the prey would be sheltering in trees or underground in their dens once the snow from the storm started falling. The squirrel seemed to be more occupied with gathering acorns and seeds fallen from the trees above though, so he took his chance and pounced, quickly dispatching it with a bite.

Now he just needed to find a place to wait out the storm blowing down from the mountains above the forest he called home. Bringing the squirrel with him, HowlingWind headed deeper into the trees, looking for an old den or some sort of shelter he could use. For a while, the only dens he came upon were claimed, a fox called one of them home currently. After some more searching however, he spotted a large hollowed out fallen oak log, thankfully with no current occupants.

Placing the squirrel inside the log, HowlingWind set about gathering fallen brush and leaves to make a nest inside the shelter of the fallen tree. Pine needles, leaves, anything to help him keep warm since his protective coat of black and gray fur was thin in certain areas. Once done, he settled down inside the log to eat as the snow began falling.

The snow had been coming down from above for a while when he heard the sound of rustling from outside his shelter. HowlingWind's ears perked up and he sniffed the air, trying to identify the source of the noise. The familiar scent of fox hit his nose, but he still couldn't see the other animal. Crouched inside the log, he watched for it, worried he might have to abandon his hiding place, and therefore his warmth from the storm, if the fox noticed him. Then, he finally spotted it beneath a pine tree in the distance. The white tipped brush of a reddish tail waved slowly as the fox sniffed the air. Then it suddenly turned toward his shelter.

Making a quick choice to hopefully avoid a fight with the larger animal, but maybe keep his den, HowlingWind emerged from the log, ears back and fur on end, hissing loudly at the red-furred intruder with teeth bared. It already knew he was there at this point, so perhaps he could scare it away by appearing larger and more difficult to handle. The fox yipped loudly, a high-pitched barking noise, and snapped at HowlingWind with its teeth, missing and closing only on cold air as the cat sprang back. It seemed like his attempt to scare it wasn't going to work, but he tried again anyway, hissing louder and swiping with claws extended. The blow connected with the fox's muzzle, eliciting a yelp from the larger animal. It snapped again, this time its teeth closing on HowlingWind's foreleg. The cat screeched, rearing back and swiping as hard as he could with his other paw at the fox whose jaws gripped his front leg. Thankfully, this time the trick worked and it released his leg, running off deeper into the woods, having decided that was enough. Panting, the cat licked his injury and headed back to the shelter of the log, tired from the unexpected fight.

The rest of the storm passed uneventfully, while HowlingWind curled up, protected from the cold and snow blowing down from the mountains above by the hollow log he had successfully guarded from the fox. His leg wound later healed and eventually the scars from the fox's teeth

faded, but the memory of the fight remained, along with a bit of pride at having succeeded in driving off the larger creature on his own.