

## THE WARNER TREE: STORY #2

She seized her little brother by the nape of his neck and pulled him close.

*--Learn some social skills. You're embarrassing us. I need to prove to daddy and to everyone else I can do this very important job some day. How am I supposed to do that if my future second in command acts so vacant and deranged around very important people.*

She let him go and went off to do all this very important work of showing people how well she can potentially do very important work some day; her little brother sat and continued to act vacant and deranged; he tried obeying his sister but that just made matters worse; he had wanted to say something to her the moment she seized him though, which he never did. So he folded his roots securely into the ground, opened his book and began to read.

Moments later, his sister came floating back.

*--Well at least you don't look crazy. What are you reading?*

He looked up, a bit brightened by her approval.

*--More about the humans! You know they are mostly water, like us? But they look nothing like us. Why is that?*

She always liked him best when his face was lit up by this kind of curiosity; she was at that point of intoxication which made her see the whole world with caring eyes, and she was anxious for another drink.

*--That's a good boy, learn all you can. You will be a very good right hand minister someday.*

A smile besieged his face. She could be so kind, sometimes, his sister.

*--I can't wait to meet them. Even make a friend or two!*

At this his sister sobered a bit.

*--Father says its important not to form intimate relationships with the humans.*

Her little brother felt brave now.

*--Why? I read they need affection as much as we do.*

Now he was just being combative, so she had to show him who was boss.

*--They can get affection with their own kind. As we do. All we need from them is their carbon dioxide, and all they need from us is our oxygen. Treaties are about business, not intimacy. Best not to become emotionally involved with those who are here and gone in an instant. Our ancestors learned that the hard way so that we don't have to.*

He wanted to test his limits; so he continued,

*--But they live on in each other! As we do! Just because one of them dies doesn't mean that they are gone.*

She had to make her word final now.

*--Little brother, these things are beyond you. They are not things you can learn from a book. Now stay quiet and occupied so I don't have to come back here and keep checking on you.*

She held his gaze, to see if she had indeed made her word final.

She did; he dipped his thin branches back into his book.

She floated away exhibiting the usual mercurialness.

He looked up again;

He was happy knowing there was someone so wise to look after him.

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