“Gentlemen, gentlemen—and ladies, of course,” she nodded to Teroch. “Please, there’s no need for violence.”

None of the Dark Jedi surrounding her did, in fact, lower their lightsabers, blasters, other objects of the pointy, threatening variety, or, in one particular Etti’s case, tree branches. Atyiru gave an exasperated sigh, still smiling.

“Oh, come now. I know you’re all very happy to see me—heh, hehe—but there’s no need for such a messy welcome party—”

“Can it, Entar,” snapped Teroch, holding his tangerine blade to her neck in a very convincing fashion. “None of your *o’sik.* Why the frak are you here strolling through the damn front door?”

“You’re so cute when you’re threatening. Like a kitten trying to roar. Except it’s less *rwwwoohhar* and more *mew,*” she pantomimed the appropriate animal sounds, not seeming the least bit concerned with looking foolish. “Er, a very handsome kitten, of course. Maybe one named Regal. Fluffy and black. Maybe a tiny pink scarf. How lovely does that sound?”

A few inches of skin being singed off her throat were a very expressive answer.

“Teroch, control yourself. You are an Arconae,” a familiar, dispassionate voice commanded. Timeros swept smoothly into the small crowd like oil through water, carrying his frigid cloak of blood-paling terror with him.

“But—”

“Arms away. She may be a diplomat.”

Teroch growled but complied as the older Arconae stared him down. Atyiru exhaled in relief as her brother approached.

“Why are you here, Atyiru?”

“Finally, someone asks a little more politely,” the Miraluka sniffed, but dropped her teasing tone when her mentor flared his aura. “Look, Timmy, dearest, I didn’t come to attack, and I’m not here as an official diplomat, as you say. I was actually assigned a mission to infiltrate your side, but I turned it down. I came for me. To tell you something.”

Some mutters came from the crowd. Her brother simply raised an eyebrow, not that she could see it.

“You know that nothing you say, nor your presence here, will be taken with any sort of confidence. Leave. Go back to your Quaestors.”

“All I wanted to say,” Atyiru insisted quickly, raising her hands. “Is that...is that,” she sighed, turned her face away, and shrugged dejectedly. “Is that it’s too bad none of your mothers swallowed, because now *we’re* going to have to abort you.”

Atyiru dove under Ood’s floating chair and ran, laughing, a grin splitting her face. Teroch roared and charged, nearly removing her from her pesky head from her shoulders, only to crash into a black-cloaked, masked figure and collapse in a tangle of limbs. Snarling, he tore away and sprinted supernaturally after the giggling girl. The crowd roused and ran after them.

Timeros simply sighed, turned, and walked away.