

“Stop being such a secretive cloaca!” Jessop shouted.

“There are plenty of things *you* do not know.” Harbeshi’s stern rebuke silenced Jessop. “Edge has the social graces not to rudely call them to your attention. Apologize!”

Jessop lowered his eyes and recited a formal Avian apology in a toneless voice.

“I admit my fault, and I will honor what I have learned today,” he muttered.

After agreeing to visit the treehouse the next day, the Avians departed. As soon as they were out of sight, Edge confronted her mother.

“What is Marrow? Where are we *from*? Do I have a *father*?”

“We need to go home,” answered Mana. “It’s getting late, and you know it isn’t a good idea for us to talk while we fly through the woods. It’ll be night soon.” Mana’s voice was calm, but her heart was breaking.

“What *am* I?” Edge snarled, stamping her foot. “I don’t *care* how dangerous it is in the woods!”

Mana knelt in front of Edge, her eyes full of tears.

“I’m sorry, Edge. You have every right to be angry with me. I promise I’ll explain everything when we get home. But let’s get home safely.”

The standoff, though tense, was brief. Edge knew her mother was right.

Together they leapt into the chilly night air and flew home. The forest was peaceful and still, but Edge’s mind roared with unanswered questions.

*Who am I? she wondered. Are there others like me? Why didn’t my mother tell me that we aren’t alone?*

Tears streamed from her eyes, froze on her fur, and burst into a trail of glittering dust behind her.