

Redsnow awoke to an icy wind rippling her pelt, and chilling the skin beneath, “Buur! Gonna be a nasty day.” Redsnow groaned softly and hauled herself out of her nest, padding out into the clearing.

She noticed a small pack of kits heading to the entrance of the camp, leading to a dark and misty forest.

“Hault! Where do you think you’re going?” She growled questioningly.

“Oh nooo, it’s the great Redsnow, I’m sooo scared.” A small reddish-orange she-kit scorned mockingly.

“Rowenkit,” Redsnow sighed softly and flicked the kits nose with her tail. Rowenkit sneezed and glared up at the red and white she-cat.

“Rowenkit, get back in the nursery!” A tall muscular red and pink tom growled.

“Yes sir, Redberry....” Rowenkit muttered solemnly and slowly padded to her destination.

Redsnow grinned at her brother, “She’s gonna be a handful for her mentor when she becomes old enough to be an apprentice.”

“Just like her mother,” Redberry sighed.

“Pff I remember when Brightsun was an apprentice, she never gave poor Brackenheart a break.” Redberry gave his sister a disapproving look and stalked away.

“Jeez..becoming deputy really changed him....” Redsnow sighed and walked to the leader’s den, “Squirrelstar? Are you in here?”

“Oh hello Redsnow, please come in,” Squirrelstar called from her nest, she was chewing on a small pigeon, that looked fresh, Redsnow’s stomach rumbled with hunger as she realized she hadn’t eaten yet.

“Would you like to share this with me?” Squirrelstar chuckled softly. Sharing prey with a leader was a great privilege, so Redsnow nodded her head and crouched down in front of the bird, taking a small bite, and chewing slowly on the warm meat, a smoky flavor taking over her taste buds.

“Delicious isn’t it? Rowenkit caught it for me, she’ll make a great hunter when she is an apprentice.”

“Hopefully...” Redsnow mumbled through a mouthful of pigeon.

“It’s a good thing you’re here, I was going to ask you to mentor her.”

Redsnow almost choked on her meal, “N- er...Of course I would..” She sputtered nervously, the last thing she needed was that little brat following her around.

“Great, we’ll have the ceremony this afternoon, finish eating while I go and tell her.”

Redsnow watched Squirrelstar pad out of the den and looked down at the half eaten pigeon, not feeling hungry anymore, so she decided to take it to Greystone, a wiry grey elder who had amazing stories about the past.

She picked the pigeon up in her mouth and sprinted to the elder’s den, slowing down at the entrance, poking her head through the thick curtain of honeysuckle.

“Greystone?”

“That you Redsnow? What’s that ya got, a pigeon, smells fresh.” Greystone looked up from his nest.

“It is, and it’s just for you, now I was wondering if you could tell me about Bloodclan again?” Redsnow handed him the pigeon, smiling at him as she did.

“Of course I can, just let me eat first.” Greystone bent his head down and started munching on the rest of the pigeon. Redsnow waited patiently as the grey tom finished the small morsel.

“That was a nice meal, now then, about Bloodclan,” Greystone settled himself in and began describing the bloody battle.

Redsnow listened, captivated at how quickly Scourge, the vicious leader of Bloodclan had taken out Tigerstar, not being able to hold back a strange feeling of disappointment as Greystone told her of how Firestar had ridded the forest of the Bloodclan leader, for some odd reason, she wished Scourge had won.

She stood up, dipped her head to the elder and padded out, stiffening as she heard Rowenkit’s obnoxious voice.

“This sucks, I got stuck with Redsnow as my mentor!”

“Rowenkit, Redsnow is your aunt and she is a great warrior.” Brightsun scolded the kit, “Now hold still, you have burrs in your fur.”

“Yeah, but not for long, you're pulling it all out!” Rowenkit snapped and crawled away from her mother, then began pulling burrs out of her fur.

I should probably groom myself too... Redsnow looked down at her paws, which were covered mud, doing only a half job cleaning them up, then she moved on to her pelt, cleaning it slowly. She stiffened as she heard Squirrelstar yowl, signaling that it was time for Rowenkit to become an apprentice. She trotted over to the leader den, watching Squirrelstar climb to the top. Rowenkit strolled over, head held high, tail in the air. Redsnow sighed and tucked her paws neatly beneath her tail. The ceremony went by in a blur, the truth was, Redsnow wasn't paying attention.

Rowenkit, now Rowenpaw stalked up to her new mentor and stood there. “What first oh great one?” She sneered.

“Go clean the elder's den.” Redsnow smirked softly. Rowenpaw glared and scurried of to the den, complaining the whole time.

Redsnow stiffened as an overwhelmingly strong Riverclan scent hit her nose hard.

“RAID, Prepare for battle!!” Redberry screeched as the Riverclan cats sprang through the camp.

Redsnow battered away a small brown tabby tom, slicing open his ear, she watched as he screeched and ran back in the blur of battle.

She was about to chase the tom, when she noticed Rowenpaw dash out the entrance, being chased by the deputy of Riverclan, Strongcurrent, Redsnow bit back a howl of rage and chased after the white tom, tackling him as Rowenpaw dashed up a tree.

Redsnow felt a searing pain in her spine as Strongcurrent dug his claws deep into her back, she hissed and sunk her teeth deep into his neck, feeling panic consume her as he fell limp in her jaws, she let go, watching in horror as he fell to the ground with a soft thud, blood pulsing out of the wound on his neck, a look of shock in his dead eyes.

She looked around and realized the battle had ceased, all eyes were on her, her gaze rested on Squirrelstar, who whipped around, growling at the Riverclan leader, who was still in shock from the sudden death of his deputy.

“Hailstar what is the meaning of this,” Squirrelstar hissed, voice full of pure hatred. “We’ve come to claim the river, that territory belongs to Riverclan,” Hailstar’s eyes had a hint of challenge as he glared at the Shadowclan leader.

“We will never give it to you, you mouse-brained fox-heart!” Squirrelstar spat and raked her claws over Hailstar shoulder, instantly drawing blood. Hailstar shrieked with rage and launched himself at her, digging his claws into her neck, ripping chunk of flesh.

All Shadowclan cats went rigid as they watched their leader take her last breath and fall to the ground lifeless.

Hailstar glared down at her body ruefully, then turned to the warriors, “You have a week to decide whether you will give up the river peacefully or face us in battle.” With that being said, the black and gray tom stalked off into the forest, his warriors following him, casting sneering looks at the shocked cats of Shadowclan.

“Oh Squirrelstar.....” Redsnow whispered, grief dropping in her heart like a brick as she rested her muzzle gently on her leaders head, wincing as all of the warmth was gone. Redsnow was only allowed to grieve for a few short moments before Rowenpaw yowled.

“They took Redberry!”

The clearing echoed with yowls and cries of dismay, now that Squirrelstar was dead, Redberry was supposed to take her place, now they had no leader, and without a leader, a clan would fall apart, but Redsnow wouldn’t allow that to happen.

“QUIET!” She snapped at her panicking clanmates, who instantly shut up and looked at her, waiting to hear what she had to say.

“I know we have no leader..” She started, making sure that every cat was listening, “But that gives us no right to fall apart, we are still warriors, and we shall still act like them, until we get Rederry back, we must put someone in charge of the camp..”

“I vote Redsnow,” Brightsun called out.

“As do I, no cat could lead us better during Redberry’s absence,” Greystone murmured.

Rowenpaw gave a small sigh and dipped her head to Redsnow, “I vote her too I guess...”

Redsnow’s eyes were big as almost every cat in the clan voted her for leader. “I-I..I couldn’t be more honored...but...”

“Then it’s settled,” Brightsun shot her a warning glance, daring her to refuse to be leader, “Redsnow will lead us until we get Redberry back.”

Redsnow sighed and jumped on top of the leader den, looking down at the cats of Shadowclan, “Tonight, we bury Squirrelstar then we get some rest, tomorrow, we will go and retrieve Redberry.” Rowenpaw gave her a look of anger, but bit her tongue and said nothing, Redsnow knew she wanted to go after her father, but right now, she could care less about what the brat wanted, Squirrelstar’s burial was much more important.

Redsnow hopped off of the leader den and watched as the elder’s groomed Squirrelstar’s pelt, then started rubbing it with mint and rosemary to mask the scent of death, this saddened Redsnow, as Squirrelstar’s familiar smell vanished. She joined her clanmates in digging their leader’s grave, then stepped back to let the elder’s lay her body neatly in the three foot hole they had dug. She walked forward and began pushing the dirt back into the grave, patting it down neatly when she was done, a flicker of orange caught Redsnow’s eye, she looked over to see Rowenpaw neatly place a few wild daisies on Squirrelstar’s grave.

Rowenpaw noticed her looking and sharply turned her head away, padding to the apprentices den where she went to rest, or so Redsnow thought. When it was time for rest, everyone insisted that Redsnow should sleep in the leader den, so that was what she did. She was awoken by a faint rustling noise in the undergrowth, she quickly jumped up, tensing as she could see a faint movement in the distance. *Rowenpaw. What is she up to..?*

Rowenpaw trotted into the forest, she didn’t care what Redsnow told every cat to do, that mouse-brain didn’t even know the first thing about being leader, and she was going to get her father back, no matter what. The apprentice kept walking and walking, little did she know that the Riverclan camp was two days away, and that the Riverclan cat’s were camping in the center of

the forest, right where she had been heading. Redsnow's heart thudded with panic, she had to find Rowenpaw before Riverclan did. She bounded through the forest, searching everywhere. Rowenpaw kept walking, ignoring the strange smell that made her nostrils flare with disgust, then a familiar scent hit her nose. *Redsnow*. Redsnow's eyes closed in on Rowenpaw as she picked the apprentice up by the scruff of her neck and threw her on the ground, glaring down at her. Rowenpaw spat out dirt and glare at Redsnow furiously.

Redsnow couldn't take anymore of this brat, she raked her paw over Rowenpaw's muzzle, forgetting to sheathe her claws, she tore open the tender flesh of the apprentice's nose. Rowenpaw howled with pain and stared up at Redsnow, wide eyed.

Redsnow felt guilt prick her heart like a thorn and sighed, gently wrapping her tail around Rowenpaw's shoulders, "I'm sorry..."

Rowenpaw sighed and looked up at Redsnow. "What's the plan?"

Redsnow thought for a moment, then replied, "We're much too far from camp to go back, we might as find a safe place to sleep and follow Riverclan."

Rowenpaw's eyes lit up with excitement, "Finally something we can agree on."

The two she-cat's found a safe place to sleep in a hollowed out log, Redsnow was snoring peacefully until Rowenpaw dug her tiny needle-sharp claws into her flank, "Get up sleepy head, Riverclan is on the move," Rowenpaw whispered excitedly. Redsnow groaned and got up, "Alright alright, I'm up," Redsnow felt her stomach growl, "Let's hunt before we follow them." Rowenpaw nodded and dropped into somewhat of a hunter's crouch, it looked so ridiculous, Redsnow held back a mrow of laughter.

"Let me show you the proper way, before you..."

Rowenpaw ignored her and hopped into a honeysuckle bush, fast as lightning she came back with an enormous brown rabbit. "I hunt just fine my way, so save your lessons for another day," She muttered through a mouthful of fur, "Come on, we can share it," she grinned and set the rabbit on the ground, then crouched down and took a bite out of the side.

Redsnow sat beside her and took a small bite out of the leg, a mouth watering flavor taking over her mouth, she gulped down half, then sat up, watching Rowenpaw trying to mimic her.

After the meal, the two set out after Riverclan, Redsnow quickly became annoyed, Rowenpaw kept stomping around in the bushes, at this rate, Riverclan would have them before they could get close enough to rescue Redberry.

“I wonder what my warrior name will be, oh I hope it will be Rowenheart, or Rowen-”

“Will you shut up and act like we’re on an important mission” Redsnow snapped at her apprentice, relieved when she actually listened. Rowenpaw came to a sudden halt, “Riverclan...” She whispered, tail tip twitching with excitement.

“Stay here, I’ll see if I can find Redberry,” Redsnow sighed in relief as Rowenpaw climbed into a tree, “I’ll watch for trouble,” She called down from the massive oak. Redsnow gave her a nod of approval, then turned towards the Riverclan camp, doing her best to stay out of view, but her pelt made it fairly hard, maybe she should have sent Rowenpaw to try to spot Redberry....

Oh what are you thinking, mouse-brain, that brat would blow our cover in no time.....

Redsnow stiffened as she scented Redberry, she hid behind a tree and peeked around it, rage boiling in her stomach as she saw how bad of shape her brother was in.

Redberry was covered in claw marks, his ear was completely shredded, his left eye was bruised and swollen shut, he was being guarded by Strongcurrent’s brother, Reedclaw.

Redsnow stopped herself from attacking him as an idea popped into her head, Reedclaw had no idea who Rowenpaw was, she snuck back to the oak tree and clawed her way up, joining Rowenpaw on a branch “I have a plan, and it involves you.”

Rowenpaw was so excited she nearly fell off the tree branch, “What’s the plan?”

Redsnow took a deep breath, “You will walk up to the cat guarding your father, his name is Reedclaw, I want you to tell him that Hailstar needs to talk to him, and that you were sent to take his place, then when he leaves, we’ll rescue Redberry and get him back to camp.

“Sound good to me,” Rowenpaw grinned and sprang down from the tree, then walked up to Reedclaw with such confidence that it was hard to tell she wasn’t a member of Riverclan.

“Hailstar wants to talk to you, I’m here to take your place.” Rowenpaw prayed that Redberry wouldn’t spoil it, and to her luck he said nothing, just gave her a dull look.

“Must be urgent if he sent an apprentice, I’ll be back, if the prisoner is gone when I return, you’ll be cleaning out the elder’s den instead of doing training for a full moon,” Reedclaw glared at Rowenpaw and stalked away. Once she was sure that he was gone, Redsnow dashed out into the clearing, helping Rowenpaw lift Redberry to his paws. The three only made three feet from the clearing before Reedclaw shrieked with rage and started running towards them. Redsnow lifted Redberry onto her back and started sprinting to the Shadowclan camp, Rowenpaw hard on her heels.

“HELP!!!!,” Redsnow yowled as they entered camp, the whole of Riverclan was right behind them.

“Riverclan, atta-,” Hailstar was cut off as Shadowclan cats started pouring out of the entrance, swarming over the Riverclan cats, the battle went by in a blur, one moment they were fighting, the next, Riverclan was fleeing back across the border, Rowenpaw seemed to be enjoying herself as she chased the last Riverclan cat into the river, “Never return fox-hearts!” She yelled triumphantly.

“That’ll do Rowenpaw, that’ll do,” Redsnow chuckled and lead her apprentice back to camp, strangely feeling proud to be her mentor. Redberry jumped on top of the leader den, waiting for his clanmates to gather around, which they did rather fast. Redsnow watched as her brother hesitated, then took a deep breath.

“My first duty as leader after Squirrelstar’s death, is to appoint a deputy,” his gaze rested on Redsnow, “Will you do me the honors my dear sister?”

“N- uh er....” Redsnow sputtered out.

“Just say yes you mouse-brain,” Rowenpaw mrowed with laughter. Redsnow took a deep breath. “I would be honored.”

