

Rising Waters: A Flood Short Story
By Rosefern

Chapter 1

"Lake, do you swear to pledge your allegiance to the Shadows, fear nothing, and—"

"You're saying it wrong! I blurted out. "It's do you swear to pledge your allegiance to the Shadows and me as your leader, fight without hesitation, fear nothing, and give up your life for us if it comes down to it."

"Whatever," Jay mewed. "I'm not actually going to be leader. I'm going to be a Shadow so I can fight in battles!"

"Leaders fight in battles too," I pointed out. "And they were all Shadows once as well."

"You're such a know-it-all," Jay growled. "Your Shadow name is going to be Wasp, because you're always flying into other people's business."

That remark stung but I tried not to show it.

"Yours will be Hornet because you're always stinging people," I retorted.

"Alright, alright," my and Jay's mother Waterfall came into the den, a mouse in her jaws. "Groupmates need to learn to work together, not squabble."

She sat down and wrapped her tail around me. "Lake, being a Shadow isn't just about memorizing words. It's about fighting for what you know is right. One day, if rogue cats attack, or you have a horrible leader or traitorous groupmate, the exact words Poison uses to make someone a Shadow will be the least of your worries."

"I know that," I mewed softly. "I'm going to be the best Shadow our group has ever seen!"

Chapter 2

"Lake, do you swear to pledge your allegiance to the Shadows and me as your leader, to fight without hesitation, fear nothing, and give up your life for us if it comes down to it?" Singe's meow rang through the clearing. I stood proudly before him, after having passed my Shadow tests, I felt ready.

"I do."

"Well then, Lake, your new name as a Shadow will be..." he paused for a moment, probably thinking of a good Shadow name. I remembered what Jay had said to me all those moons ago when we were kits, and I really hoped it wasn't going to be Wasp. Then I remembered he wasn't here, he had left to join one of those silly Clans. WindClan maybe, or ShadowClan. What would he think if he could see me now?

He had asked me once if I wanted to join him, but of course I had said no. I had a group to fight for.

For a moment then my mother's words had come back to me: "Being a Shadow is about fighting for what you know is right." But I had brushed them away. So what if I hadn't thought we needed the Clans' territory? So what if I had felt a twinge of guilt at almost killing Shimmerdawn? The Clan cats were pretty annoying, and I was supposed to be loyal to the Shadows, which meant fighting with them, even if I didn't fully agree.

"Flood!" Singe announced, jolting me out of my thoughts. "Welcome to the Shadows!"

I was really happy that, after all my training as a Slasher, after the battle with the Clans and my best friend, Sage, running away to become a softcat, I was finally a Shadow, and it was all worth it. But I still felt that twinge: was it right of me to fight the Clans? If I lost my friends and those I truly cared about? What was being part of a group if all everyone did was suck up to the leader? I had seen what had happened to Echo when she had spoken out, now she was gone too. I never liked her all that much but still, was it really ok for her to be kicked out simply because she wanted to keep her birth name? I didn't know the answers to any of those questions. But I was going to find out.

Chapter 3

Staring longingly at Breeze's tail as she left the Shadows was what truly made me realize.

I had seen Terror almost kill Breeze just before and Suffocate and I were still staring at the entrance where she had fled.

"You two can leave as well if you love her that much," Terror growled.

I didn't know what to do, standing there, frozen in shock and fear. Was I going to be exiled?

Then I remembered what Waterfall had said. She was long gone by now but her words still remained with me. I was now faced with a bad leader: Terror, just like she said I might be. And I was going to do something. "It's about fighting for what you know is right," my mother had said.

I finally turned around and faced the leader. He was still standing there.

"You really shouldn't have exiled Breeze," I said.

"She was a good Shadow. She was loyal and wasn't afraid to fight for what was right. I think a group should be about working together, not one cat controlling everything and killing anyone who disagrees."

For a moment I worried Terror was going to snarl at me, or even say something, or kill me like he'd killed so many other cats, but instead he just growled low in his throat.

"Thank you for your input," he growled, "but I don't need it."

"I'll be right here if you change your mind," I snapped. "Meanwhile, I would like to take care of my kits, and make sure they do not fight in any of your battles."

Terror unsheathed his claws and growled.

"You can go now," he growled. "I'll let you stay a Shadow for now, but if you put one claw out of line—" he scratched the dirt hard with his claws. "You won't like it."

My whole life had been building up to this moment.

In that split second I knew, whatever came next, I was not going to fight for Terror or the New Shadows, I was going to fight for what I knew was right, even if it wasn't what the leader said.

And that's my story. If you saw me on the sidelines while reading *Smoldering Embers* and *Growing Flames*, now you know what I was thinking. I know I haven't been the most popular character, but I at least hope you don't hate me anymore.