

# A New Evil Rises

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Submitted: March 1, 2008  
Updated: September 2, 2008

*This is the story of TaintedClan.*

*The rise and fall of Spiderstar's power.*

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## 1 - Prolouge

Darkness hovered above the forest, the stars twinkling and the moon spreading dapples of silver light on the ground. Reeds rustled near the edge of a silvery river, a fuzzy muzzle pushing its way from the shore's vegetation. Out came a small black cat, its eyes a bright yellow in the night. The soft breeze ran along its sleek coat, highlighting the petite size of the tom. He moved quietly and quickly down the sandy shore and crouched by the log. Ears pricked, it launched itself atop it and hurried across, belly fur close to the ancient bark. A shout made him stop as he dropped to the ground on the other side. Two figures stood silhouetted against the horizon. "Stop! You go no further, rouge!"

## 2 - Settling In

Wind whispered across his fur. He looked down the bank and crouched as the figures approached. "What are you doing on our territory?" the bigger one growled, towering over the black scrap of fur. He yellow eyes looked up at the tom, big and wide. "I...I was just...p-passing by. I needed a place to...to rest."

The smaller one, a she-cat, shoved herself forward. "Stop being so mean, will you, Skullface?" she spat. Her eyes softened when she looked at the cowering tom. "Sorry about him. My name is Fernwing. You've stumbled upon SwampClan land."

"Have I entered Clan territory?" the rouge asked, standing up and looking worried. "Oh dear, I didn't mean to. Honest."

Fernwing, a kindly young gray tabby, nodded. "Don't worry. It's alright. We'll take you to our camp, you can find shelter there."

"Th-thank you!"

"Wait, Fernwing." Skullface, a burly black tom and a pure white face, growled. "What is your name?"

"Oh." the rouge mewed, looking at him. "I am terribly sorry for my manners! I am Spider."

"Spider...Alright, come along." Skullface turned around and headed back down the shore. Fernwing glanced happily at Spider and bounced off after the older warrior. Her youth left her oblivious to Spider's smirk. He bore it across his face and looked around the dark forest. A bright green pair of eyes sparkled at him from the opposite side of the river. In a flash, however, they were gone. Had he imagined them?

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Spider sat under the Highrock, looking eagerly up at the leader, Tricklestar. She leaped down, and he got up and licked her shoulder. Spider had just become a fully-named warrior, and would now live under the name Spiderarrow, in honor of his arrowhead-sharp claws.

"Spiderarrow! Spiderarrow!" the Clan chanted. All except one, Skullface. He sat on the fringe of the mob of cats, his dark amber eyes watching Spiderarrow with menace. He scowled and turned away when Spiderarrow looked up.

Fernwing leaped over. "Oh, Spiderarrow! How great is this?!"

Spiderarrow looked at her and purred. /Oh yes...How lovely. My plan is working well, I'm afraid./

As the sun was setting, she purred as well and padded away to sleep. Spiderarrow sat in the middle of the camp to keep a silent vigil. The others also left, and soon he was alone in the clearing. The breeze ruffled his fur and carried a faint scent of darker things on it. He looked up, ears pricked. The ferns at the edge of the camp rustled behind him. He whirled around and saw a deep brown-black tom slip from the foliage and pad over to join him. "Have they accepted you?"

"Yes, Venom." Spiderarrow whispered, matching this newcomer's serious gaze with his own. "I assure you, this plan is going accordingly so far."

"It better keep going as we've planned, brother."

"It will." Spiderarrow's meow had a soft growl in it, angry with his brother's own harsh tone.

Venom locked gazes with him again. They stood there, nose to nose, for a few moments before Venom snorted and looked away. "Good then. Tomorrow?"

Spiderarrow nodded. "As soon as I can slip off."

### 3 - Hidden

The moon began to rise high in the sky as Spiderarrow watched his brother leave again. His tail twitched as he reviewed the last few moons. He had come to the Clan knowing how to fight and hunt. (He wasn't very young.) However, Tricklestar and her senior warriors had decided it was best for him to train for a while, learning the lay of the land and the warrior code. However, the black warrior had no regard for it anyway. He turned his head to see yellow eyes staring at him, and his fur bristled. How much had Skullface seen?

He relaxed when the cat moved and it ended up just being Fernwing. She trotted out of the den and came up to him, brushing her tail along his flank. "Thought you might want some company," she mewed. Spiderarrow looked at the gray she-cat as if she was crazy.

"I'll only stay a moment!" Fernwing purred. Her wide, yellow eyes shone, and Spiderarrow knew she had seen nothing. She flicked her tail across his shoulders as she got up. "See you in the morning! We'll go hunting."

The black cat nodded and she left. He let out an exasperated sigh when he was alone once more. When would that she-cat leave him alone?

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The sun rose just above the horizon when Skullface trotted out to meet Spiderarrow. "You can speak now," he mewed in a gruff tone. "Go get some sleep," he added.

Spiderarrow nodded his thanks, a yawn escaping him. He got to his paws and trotted off, feeling the senior warrior's stare on his back as he slipped into the warriors' den. He nodded to Fernwing, who was leaving, and dropped into an empty, non-smelling nest. He curled up and went to sleep.

When he awoke, the sun was high above the sky, and its light trickled into the warriors' den. The black tom got to his paws and stretched. He recoiled quickly, a hiss escaping from his mouth as Fernwing appeared in front of him. "Ready to go?" she mewed, seemingly bursting with endless energy. Spiderarrow shook his fur out, and nodded. "Yes, I'm ready," he mewed. His eyes were slightly narrowed as he watched Fernwing leave. He raised a paw, about to take a step forward when his fur prickled along his spine. He turned and looked behind him, but all he saw was an empty den. He hurried outside and after the bubbly she-cat, mind reeling. Who had been watching him? Or was he simply just imagining things?

Spiderarrow and Fernwing trotted into the heart of SwampClan. He realized now why the Clan cats all had dull-colored pelts: to blend in easily with the browns, grays and greens of the swamp. The warrior disliked the feeling of goo in between his toes, but he gritted his teeth and trekked after Fernwing. When they reached solid ground again, his hunting companion seemed amused. "Having trouble in the muck?" she teased.

Spiderarrow all but glared at her. "No," he hissed. "I'm just not used to it."

Fernwing's ears flattened and she turned away, hurt. She kept walking forward, and Spiderarrow gave her no sympathy. "Hey, I'm going off that way. I'll meet you back at Mossrock."

Fernwing looked back at the black tom and nodded. Her gaze drifted to the large rock behind them that was covered in green moss. When she turned back, Spiderarrow was bounding off towards the patch of trees.