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Moonlight Bridge

Basil jumped out of the bushes, Ashen walked out a few seconds after him. Basil's gray fur has a few burs in it that Ashen picked out and threw to the side.

"What did the butcher give you today?" Basil asked.

"Not sure," Ashen responded, "salmon maybe?" They crossed the creaky old wooden bridge to the other side of the river. Just as they reached the other side, another cat ran to them.

"There you guys are! There's a fight, you gotta come see!" They looked at each other, then ran after the cat who led them to the scene.

A scrawny gray alley cat was scratching and clawing at a brown house cat, and the brown cat was hurt bad. A ring of house cats and stray cats surrounded them, cheering on their own member.

The leader of the house cats ran into the fight and pushed the gray cat off the brown cat. He was a big black and orange cat who easily held the gray cat on the ground.

"What are you doing to him!" he screamed at the gray cat. The large cat let up on the gray cat who scampered away. Commander Orien runs up to the black and orange cat, the leader of the strays, he has a large frame and gray and black striped fur with bent and snapped whiskers.

"Don't yell at her," he scolds him.

"Maybe if you kept your mange rats away from them I wouldn't," He spat in his face. Suddenly, the cat smirks to himself and says, "Orien, come here, is it a fight you want?" He said, suddenly cool. "Bring them all tomorrow, fight us one last time."

Everyone stares into each other as rain slams them. Basil stands ready right next to Ashen. Both are dwarfed by other cats as they're both barely 8 months old. A large tiger cat is staring right at Ashen. Some domestic cat charges and the fight breaks out. Ashen instantly loses Basil in the chaos and the tiger runs to him.

He slams into Ashen who instantly falls back. The tiger approaches and Ashen bites his leg. He screams in anguish as Ashen scurries away. The tiger catches up and knocks him onto his side and holds him down. He doesn't even speak as he leans down to Ashen's throat and opens his mouth to bite. Ashen closes his eyes, only to feel the tiger's weight come off of him. Basil had come in and attacked the tiger. He brutally clawed at the tiger as Ashen stood low and watched him. Basil was too small to do much to him.

The tiger had gotten Basil to the ground as easily he did with Ashen. Ashen was completely frozen and watched his friend struggle under the cat. Basil writhed under the large cat, screaming for Ashen to help, the tiger leaned over Basil's neck. All Ashen could do was watch as he bit down, and Basil's tail fell limp.

Commander Orion was suddenly at his side, "Come on!" he yelled, "we've basically lost, weren't you watching!" Commander Orion drags him up. Them and the other cats run away to a small clearing under some pine trees. Commander Orion turns to Ashen

"You let Basil die!" he screamed at him.

"I swear Commander I didn't mean to-" Ashen said.

"He died because of you!" That hung in the air. Ashen bowed his head to the floor. All the others stared at him, shaking their heads and looking at each other. Whispering, He let him die? Basil is who died? Ashen basically killed him, left him to die! How could he?

Commander Orion turned around and left, the others following him, some staring at Ashen and saying harsh words to each other. He sat and waited for Commander to leave to cry.

For a month, Ashen was the center of misery. Everyone blamed him, random cats yelled at him for it. Some blocked him out of places to sleep, some ignored him and some even attacked him.

Ashen would wander the streets and ask anyone for a place to stay as it rained more and more throughout the month. Every time they turned him away. They would just shut the door, or yell or scowl and turn away. Some even attacked, but Ashen always got away.

"Please, just for a night?" he once asked a very old cat under a porch, "It's raining and I'm so tired."

"You?" the orange cat said, "You're the one who let Basil die that night, right? You let your true friend die? You know that used to bring me food sometimes when I felt too tired to go out and he wasn't with, you," he hesitated when he said you, "You let someone like that die?" Ashen stood down and stepped away.

He walked far, to a place the other strays often aren't, and it slowly stopped raining as he went. He finally came across the old small wooden bridge he and Basil walked across to get to town. The moon bathed his black fur in its dim light. He looked up to the moon, then down to its reflection in the water. Without thinking twice, he walked in, and the water enclosed him in seconds. The cold crushed him and he let it. He heard a small sound that sounded like a shout before passing out.

Ashen woke to many cats surrounding him, all of which he knew.

"Is he ok?"

"Did he wake up?"

"He's breathing!"

"Thank goodness!"

"Y'know if you were feeling that bad, you could've told us?" a gentle-looking tabby said, "We could've helped you if you were smart enough to ask!" Someone helped him up. He looked around at all

the cats who harassed him for weeks, all suddenly caring and concerned. "Let's go back," she said. Ashen took one last look at the river and moon as he walked back with them.