

# Before The War

(Based on *Wings Of Fire* by Tui T. Sutherland)

“Shut up, Blaze!” Burn snarled. “Why in the *world* do you think you’re going to be queen?”

“Everyone wants me to be queen.” Blaze batted her eyelashes and smiled. “Because I’m beautiful and much friendlier than either of you two.”

Burn snorted. “You can’t just become queen. You have to fight and kill Queen Oasis.”

Blaze frowned. “Er...well...*maybe* I could do that. I mean...I do have this.” She waved her deadly tail in the air.

“So does *every* Sandwing.” Blister scoffed. “And trust me, mother would destroy you if you dared challenge her.” She ran her tail through the sand. “*Me*, on the other hand...”

“As if!” Burn snapped. She adjusted a rattlesnake scarf around her neck. “I’d make a much better queen, and I can fight, too!”

Blister snarled. “Then fight me.”

Burn looked a bit surprised.

“What’s wrong?” Blister hissed. “I thought you said you could fight.”

“I can!” Burn raised her tail above her head and struck the sand with it. “And next time that will be you!”

“Guys!” Blaze whined. “Cut it out! The only fight that matters is the one with mother, right?”

Blister bared her teeth. “Yeah, but it would be so much fun to destroy Burn right now.”

“Why?” Burn teased. “Because you’re a coward? Don’t want anyone to get in your way of the throne?” She laughed unkindly. “You’re too *scared* to let me live?”

Blister roared, lunging at Burn’s throat. She gave a startled yelp as Blister knocked her into the sand and stopped, the tip of her tail an inch away from Burn’s chest. She got off, dragging her claws across Burn’s snout instead.

Three red streaks ran across her muzzle.

“You actually *hurt* her?” Blaze gaped. “Why?”

Blister glared at her sister. “Could you *be* more stupid?” She snapped. Shaking sand off of her wings, she said, “Anyways, it’s just a scratch. It’ll heal. If I thought either of you were a threat to my throne you would already have been dead.”

Blaze shivered.

Burn had one paw pressed against her bloodied snout. Her eyes were burning with anger. “You’d better not do that again.” She snarled. “’Cause if you try, I will kill you and keep your scales as a reminder that I am a better fighter than you...”

She continued to talk, but Blister was distracted by something moving across a faraway sand dune. What was it? It most definitely was not a dragon...

“Blister?” Blaze asked. “What is it?”

“Nothing.” Blister shook her wings.

Burn growled. “Can we get back to the part where I kill you?”

“Like you could do that.” Blister snorted.

Blaze was gaping at Burn in horror. “You wouldn’t actually *do* that. I mean...with the scales? Why would you *want* to do that? It’s so *gross!*” She glanced at the rattlesnake scarf. “I mean...so is that...but I mean, a *dragon?*”

Suddenly, a loud shriek echoed across the desert. Blaze flapped her wings anxiously. “That was coming from the Sandwing Stronghold!” She gasped.

Burn took off, Blaze and Blister trailing behind. They landed inside the stronghold, and what had happened was fairly clear. A spear stuck out of Queen Oasis’s side, and a scavenger knelt on the floor, gathering pieces of scattered gold.

Burn roared and lunged at the scavenger. It squeaked in terror and made a run for it, barely dodging the venomous tail. She roared again in pure fury once the scavenger got away. Queen Oasis lay bloody and limp on the floor.

“How horrible!” Blaze breathed. “That thing...killed her.” She sighed and her wings drooped. “But...wait...how do we know who’s queen now?”

Blister and Burn exchanged glances.

“I am!” Burn demanded. “I chased the scavenger off after all.”

Blister flicked her tail. “But I’m smarter than you. Much smarter. I’d be able to fight off our enemies *and* actually kill them.”

“I could be queen!” Blaze said suggested ecstatically. “Then you two won’t have to kill each other!”

Burn and Blister weren’t listening. They lunged at each other, clawing and biting.

Blister let out a pain-filled hiss as Burn sunk her tail into Blister's back. Burn shoved Blister off and stepped up to the throne. She turned around and faced her sisters, teeth bared.

“Get. Out. *NOW!*”

Blaze yelped, spun, and ran.

Blister, dazed from the venom, simply glared at her sister. “This isn't over.” She growled through gritted teeth. “I *will* be back, and I *will* rule the kingdom.”