

The **LAST** **FIREHAWK**

The Shadow Returns



by
Katrina Charman

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For Brick, Piper, and Riley. And for Ethan Baskettt. –KC

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A SURPRISE VISITOR

A dark cloud twisted and curled in the sky above Valor Wood. Tag and Skyla watched lightning flash through the darkness.

“The Shadow made it through the portal!” Tag cried. “It’s here in Valor Wood!”

Tag's heart raced as he swooped down from the branch of his tree. Skyla quickly followed, leaping through the branches.

TA-RAAA! TA-RAAA!

The Owls of Valor alarm sounded through the forest.

Tag landed in the center of camp with Skyla close behind. They joined Grey and Maximus.



Grey's eyes narrowed. "The Shadow must have entered into Perodia with Skull and his rats," he said.

“Owls of Valor! Prepare to attack!” Maximus ordered.

Tag and Skyla joined the Owls of Valor, and rushed to put on their armor and grab their weapons. When they were ready, they lined up in rows facing Maximus. They waited for his next command.

Tag’s wing shook, but he held his dagger steady. Beside him, Skyla breathed hard, ready with her slingshot.



There was a sudden rustle in the trees behind them. Tag spun around, dagger raised.

“Tag! Skyla!” Blaze called.

Tag lowered his weapon, relieved.

Blaze hurried over with her mother Talia, the leader of the firehawks, and Claw.

“The Shadow has returned!” Claw said.

Blaze’s head drooped. “Our portal failed,” she said.

“No!” Talia said.

“The portal worked.

Most of Skull’s army

is trapped in the

Underland. Skull and

The Shadow can’t

fight us and win.

There are too many

of us.”

Claw nodded.

Tag glanced around. Talia was right.

There were many Owls of Valor, and there

was no sign of Skull and his rat army.



Tag continued to watch The Shadow, but it didn't come any closer. Then it slowly disappeared into the clouds.

"Why did The Shadow disappear?" Skyla growled.

"I think that was a warning," Claw said.

Grey stood beside Tag, and he nodded.

"I fear Claw may be right. The Shadow is teasing us with the fight that is to come," Grey said. "Skull has only ten rats with him now, but we saw what The Shadow could do when it joined up with Thorn. With Skull's help, The Shadow can build a new army of spies here in Perodia. We must warn our friends."



“I can help,” Claw said.

“I need to return to the firehawks,” Talia said. “Now that there is a permanent portal open between here and the Land of the Firehawks, they must be ready in case Skull or The Shadow attack.”

Blaze looked at Tag and Skylia, then to Talia. “I will stay here with my friends,” she said. “Tag and Skylia need me, and we still have to find a way to rescue Bod.”



Talia smiled and hugged Blaze. “I am so proud of you!” she said.

Skylia turned to Tag. “What do you think The Shadow is planning?” she asked quietly.

Tag sighed. “I don’t know. But whatever it is, it’s nothing good.”