

Warriors Of The Second Prophecy: A New Darkness

By Hawkfrost

Submitted: December 7, 2006

Updated: December 27, 2006

So you wish to continue the quests of the clans? Then read the sequel to The Second Prophecy!

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0 - Prologue

Warriors Of The Second Prophecy:

A New Darkness

Prologue As the cool breeze sifted through the fallen leaf loam that lay upon the ground at Fourtrees, deep in the Gathering hollow sat a large crowd of starlight covered cats. Several stood on Great Rock, the honoured few. Upon that rock stood two clashing white leaders, a white and black leader, a chocolate brown leader, two blue and gray cats and a rusty coloured tom with a sixth claw on each paw. So it has come to this, then, a calm, silky smooth baritone cooed. Most eyes turned to Fallingstar, who stood rigid upon the stone. His chocolate brown frame lifted as he added with a glance around, All the cats that stand here now know that my death was not due to this Eternal Leafbare. But my grandson, Claytoe, must endure this suffering as does the rest of WindClan.

With an outraged hiss, the black and white she-cat snarled with a haughty air, Do not speak of WindClan s hardships as though we had nothing better to do then sympathize them, Fallingstar. ThunderClan s prey is running low, and are still trying to rebuild after the treachery they had faced.

With a snarl, the chocolate brown leader retorted, scrunching his face in a sneer, I never spoke a word that WindClan were the only suffering! I pitied my former clan! And though ThunderClan s source of prey is scarce, at least they have shelter. WindClan live on- but he was quickly cut off by an outraged spit from the two white leaders, Wildstar and Flashstar.

The tom spoke first; standing so all could see him, Fallingstar and the disputing she-cat upon Great Roc, while the others stood back a touch to allow room. Stop your relentless and hopeless disputing, Twostar and Fallingstar. Do not deny it; all the clans are in mortal danger. For six moons blizzards have ranged far and wide throughout their territories. He bad news is that it seems to get worse each sunhigh. I fear that there will be a greenleaf nevermore.

Total silence reigned after his striking speech, and he backed away, seating himself at the base of the rock where those not currently speaking were. Flashstar nodded her approval and agreement, as did several others nearby.

Sighing, the two leaders that stood at the front of the rock let the dispute crumble to dust for a moment before Twostar continued, Wildstar is correct. Something is going wrong in our forest. Something terrible. I fear that the only solution is to seek shelter in a separate place for a while, then return when it has subsided.

Finally, one of the blue and gray cats stepped forth, standing on the left side of the brown leader, imbetween Twostar and Fallingstar. / say, he began, sniffing airily as though he owned the entire forest around them, that we simply wait it out. Twostar s condemnation would send us to our deaths. To make an example- where would we go? How do we hunt in places unknown? Where would the boundaries be? Would the kits survive? With a silent but submissive nod, Twostar allowed her idea to disintegrate

into nothingness.

And, the blue and gray leader continued, gazing around ruefully as though the cats before him were nothing to his power, I say that if the four former leaders of each clan sent a message to them about something or another that may be to their advantage, the forest will be saved. Quite proud of himself, he stepped back, but not to the base. He was still there to jump for the speaker's spot for a confrontation should there be any.

With a jerk of their heads, many of the cats below nodded agreement or began to murmur amongst themselves. As the consent came from the gathering of cats, Fallingstar stepped up and meowed, Then so it is finished. Four leaders of the four clans shall go and tell one cat of their choice about a message or prophecy-though we must find just what it could clue to be. Search our hardest. While we think, this is who shall go: Twostar for ThunderClan, Flashstar for RiverClan, as she had led longer, he looked to Wildstar for any reaction, and it was only a dip of his head in acceptance. Ragingstar for ShadowClan, and my- he was cut off as the blue and gray tom leapt forth, yowling, And myself for WindClan. Azurestar. With a hiss of rage, Fallingstar shoved him back and growled threateningly, I led for three entire turns of all four seasons. Do not speak for yourself when your predecessor had been around longer than you. Look at Wildstar nothing but sheer acceptance. You-a kit's actions.

Turning away, he did not care about the glare that the emerald eyes gave to him, but he noticed with a flick of his ears that he had leapt off Great Rock and stalked stiffly away from the conference until he made it to the heavens. Nodding curtly, he added, And myself, Fallingstar, for WindClan.

Tilting his head to the skies, he yowled, Now we must figure out just what message to send for their notice. Let you all begone; the leaders need talk of their new responsibility.

In the blink of an eye, all the starlit cats were gone. Nodding consequentially, Fallingstar sat in the small circle formed by the four chosen leaders as they conferred their choices and the words to speak.

1 - Chapter 1: Eternal Leafbare

ThunderClan Leader: Downstar- a handsome black-and-white tom **Deputy: Gorsepelt**- wise black tom; sturdy and thickset **Medicine Cat: Dapplenight**- A small tortoiseshell she-cat with hot amber eyes **Hailfur**- A pale gray tom with blue eyes **Warriors: Lunarmoon**- A dark, hazy brown she-cat with a large disc of pale yellow on her face, amber eyes **Owlfeather**-An ivory tom with glassy blue eyes **Smokeypelt** - A large, smokey black tom with fierce storm-gray eyes **Ebonpaw**- A small black tom with golden eyes **Crimsongale**-a deep orange tom with piercing aqua eyes; only has one ear and one eye due to battle. **Abyssaldream**- A gray she-cat with yellow eyes **Wolfheart**-A large blue and gray tom with a large patch of calico on his right forepaw; half of his left ear is torn off and his right eye is permanently squinted because of the loss of an eye **Tornadowind**- A blue and gray tom with storm gray eyes **Dreamwave**- A small, gray tortoiseshell she-cat, an odd colour, mixture of gray and white splotches with storm gray eyes **Manglepelt**-a gray and blue mottled furred she-cat; her body is permanently cracked to one side **Queens: Truesoul**-A medium length blue and gray she-cat with yellow eyes; going to birth **Elders: Tenorvoice**- A large and sturdy white tom with equally white eyes **Crippledjaw**-a white, strained she-cat whose back has a cripple, only Crippledjaw also suffers from a permanently dislocated jaw

ShadowClan Leader: Boldstar- An elderly she-cat; completely black pelt with one white, splotchy stripe going down her back **Deputy: Dangletail**- a large gray pelted tom with blue eyes **Medicine Cat: Stormsky**- A dark, almost black tom with hazel brown eyes **Warriors: Frisklegs**- a black tom with white ears and white on the tail **Pouncepelt**- a sleek, brown tom with large hind legs **Embercloud**- a tom with a black pelt, and his right foreleg engulfed in a fiery-looking auburn sock, he has golden eyes **Shellheart** - A pale gray she-cat with blue eyes **Lilypad**- A gorgeous yellow tabby she-cat with white socks, golden eyes **Russetfur**-A tawny coloured she-cat with yellow eyes **Queens: Everwind**- A dark brown she-cat with a tan hue on her face. Amber eyes; going to birth **Elders:**

WindClan- Leader: Blinkstar-a shy and generous white she-cat with two black paws **Cliffpaw**-A small golden tom with green eyes **Deputy: Claytoe**-a sturdy black tom with one white paw **Medicine Cat: Fuzzpelt**- a golden she-cat **Bristlepaw**-A medium sized she-cat with beige fur, emerald eyes **Warriors: Spiraltail**- A small, tabby she-cat; the last out of three other brothers and sisters, she has golden eyes **Ripclaw**- a large tortoiseshell tom **Deerpaw**-A small copper tom with deep, blue eyes **Queens: Elders:**

RiverClan- Leader: Foreststar-A wise orange tom with white eyes **Deputy: Demonwing**-a gorgeous silver tom with darker speckles and amber eyes **Medicine Cat: Rabbitleaf**- a quick-witted, old golden furred cat, forest green eyes **Warriors: Glasseyes**-A small and adventurous she-cat; black and brown **Cattail**- wise and young she-cat tortoiseshell with a dark brown colour on the end of her tail **Redspeck**- a roan tom **Caimanclaw**-a young but determined black warrior **Queens: Elders:**

Chapter 1: Eternal Leafbare

The cold, cruel wind blistered through the various, iced trunks of the lifeless trees in the forest. The snow that flurried between the dead tree limbs whipped throughout the territory, relentless and cold.

The blizzard of Leafbare had not led up for two weeks in a row-the winter never ceasing.

A rustle in what little uncovered leaf loam and undergrowth there was indicated life. The bristling fur was spread apart by the wind, the creature's ears flattened. The fur was a beautiful copper colour, with October gold on the tips. A single pool made of the coolest aqua glinted, blinking as it focused on something ahead. Where the other eye should have been was an empty socket. Only one and a half ears lay on his head.

The tom raised his mouth to the air, opening his jaws to taste the scent of what scarce prey there was. The snow blasted against him, and he was buffeted over by an inch.

Crimsongale lowered himself down again, making sure he was well hidden in the snow. Unfortunately, as he leapt, his fur glowed like a fiery beacon against the white background, giving him away. The red squirrel he had been stalking let up a terrible chattering above the gale and sped away into the snow-covered trees.

Sighing as he stood, Crimsongale began a swift but sorrowful descent down the ravine that led to ThunderClan's camp. As he went through the gorse tunnel, he slowed to a walk.

Before him stood the magnificent camp, encrusted with white snow. A tom, the darkest of all ebonies, turned his head to where Crimsongale was as he walked by, blinking a welcome with golden eyes. Gorsepelt. The copper tom replied, his gesture a kindly dip of the head.

To his right was the nursery in the far off corner, apprentice's den nearer. In front of the apprentice's den were three cats. Two younger ones scuffling while a blue and gray tom watched with interest, letting out some shouts of encouragement to one or the other.

Crimsongale stalked stiffly over to the blue and gray tom's side, seating himself adjacent to him to watch the apprentices. Wolfheart looked over his shoulder at Crimsongale, single blue eye shining in the cool rays of sunlight. Both had one eye and half an ear due to battles in the past.

How goes the hunting?

Crimsongale winced and shook his head with frustration and regret before replying, Leafbare stakes all its energy into depleting our food sources-and cats.

Understanding that the tom had a fruitless search, he motioned with his tail towards the apprentices, a moderate play fight in progress. Do not fret. ThunderClan are stronger than ever after recovering from Past problems. With one new Medicine Cat apprentice named and one more heading for warriorship, we shall thrive.

With a kindly smirk, Crimsongale nodded, adding as the black tom looked to hear their conversation, And fine warriors they ll be. The tom smiled and went back to playfighting, and Crimsongale continued, Tornadowind has proved strong and worthy a hundred times over as a warrior. He spoke those words to praise the newly made warrior, across the clearing with his sister, Abyssal dream, and to Wolfheart; he had trained Tornadowind as his first apprentice.

As Crimsongale stood with a silent respect, walking away, Wolfheart gazed around him in an uneasy, yet calm air at the dazzling white that blanketed the forest.

For once, he murmured to himself, though acting as though it were directed as someone close, it seems that it may be greenleaf nevermore.

With that, he stood and walked away, his pace as slow as possible to think on things, before returning to the world of reality and into the next hunting patrol with his deputy and Tornadowind.

If one looked closely enough, where the tom had recently sat, was a new scuffle of snow. And in the scuffle, a light hue of violet outlined the faint form of a she-cat. Her pelt was a blue and gray shade, her eyes watching all the while whilst Wolfheart loped out.

You are correct, my son. She mewed under her breath, then vanished, though not forever. Gloryheart had missed the chance to speak with Wolfheart, but yet again she would try.

2 - Battle At Sunningrocks

ThunderClan Leader: Downystar- a handsome black-and-white tom **Deputy: Gorsepelt**- wise black tom; sturdy and thickset **Medicine Cat: Dapplenight**- A small tortoiseshell she-cat with hot amber eyes **Hailfur**- A pale gray tom with blue eyes **Warriors: Lunarmoon**- A dark, hazy brown she-cat with a large disc of pale yellow on her face, amber eyes **Owlfeather**-An ivory tom with glassy blue eyes **Smokeypelt** - A large, smokey black tom with fierce storm-gray eyes **Ebonpaw**- A small black tom with golden eyes **Crimsongale**-a deep orange tom with piercing aqua eyes; only has one ear and one eye due to battle; senior warrior **Abyssaldream**- A gray she-cat with yellow eyes **Wolfheart**-A large blue and gray tom with a large patch of calico on his right forepaw; half of his left ear is torn off and his right eye is permanently squinted because of the loss of an eye **Tornadowind**- A blue and gray tom with storm gray eyes **Dreamwave**- A small, gray tortoiseshell she-cat, an odd colour, mixture of gray and white splotches with storm gray eyes **Manglepelt**-a gray and blue mottled furred she-cat; her body is permanently cracked to one side; senior warrior **Queens: Truesoul**-A medium length blue and gray she-cat with yellow eyes; going to birth **Elders: Tenorvoice**- A large and sturdy white tom with equally white eyes **Crippledjaw**-a white, strained she-cat whose back has a cripple, only Crippledjaw also suffers from a permanently dislocated jaw

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Elders:

Chapter 2: Battle At Sunningrocks

A cold shift of wind ruffled through the dens of the many sleeping cats, their light breathing creating a lull in the entire clearing. In the center of that camp sat a tall, magnificent black and white tom. His emerald eyes looked to the skies with a hungry, searching look in them. His right ear flicked absently as he acknowledged a small tortoiseshell she-cat approach him. If it had been any other warrior, he would have sent them back to their dens, but this one he trusted. The Medicine Cat, Dapplenight, was his deputy's child, as was Truesoul and Wolfheart. The three were a highly trusted bunch of siblings, and they had been honoured again and again for countless feats. Dapplenight was the most calm and reserved of the three, though. And so, that was why he trusted her as his Medicine Cat to help with all problems.

The wind blows cold tonight. She spoke the words quiet but clear, sitting beside him and following his gaze to Silverpelt. The greeting she issued was a new, but formal passage from Medicine Cat to Leader. The proper reply was in Downystar's response, Ah, but Silverpelt shines bright.

Nodding in agreement, Dapplenight watched the skies for signs from StarClan, but none came. She sighed bitterly, casting her eyes upon the ground in frustration that was beyond her normal, silent and revering attitude, StarClan has abandoned my trail; I stalk the world alone in my path as Medicine Cat.

You know you are not alone, Dapplenight- her leader began, but she cut him off with a hastily placed wording, You do not understand, Downystar. Though I am indeed surrounded by many cats in our Clan, I am alone. You should know this, as respectable leader for nearly fifteen moons.

With a submissive nod, he went silent. Quietly picking itself through the snow that still enveloped the ground was a pale gray tom. His ice blue eyes glinted uncertainly, and he hesitated near the edge of the warrior's den he had to pass from his Medicine Cat's den to the middle of the clearing. Sensing him before the paw steps even sounded, Downystar spoke calmly without even turning to look at him, Come along, Hailfur. Medicine Cats are always welcome.

The pale gray tom raced across the white powder, hastily seating himself beside his mentor, Dapplenight, and murmured self-consciously, I know& But& It's just so& Different. I mean my brothers and sister all just act normal defending the Clan while I& I am out of place. I can't tussle or play fight with them. I can't go to a training practice in Sandy Hollow nor go on patrol through Tallpines. I'm stuck with

things I don't understand. StarClan speaks not to me.

His eyes wavered, their cloudy blue gaze dropping to his toes as though his outburst shamed him. With a flick of her tail, his mentor replied sternly but kindly, Now, now, Hailfur, think not like that. I know the duties and practices of Medicine Cats may seem daunting, unpredictable and for many, boring, but we have the most important job of the Clan. Healing and speaking words of wisdom. Medicine Cats are looked to more than even leaders for words of encouragement or assurance. You will be a great Medicine Cat for ThunderClan one day.

The tom sighed, dipping his head in passive agreement, looking to the skies. He and his siblings were now eleven moons old. Two of them had passed into warriorship a moon before now, one remaining stubbornly behind. Hailfur worried for his runty, first born brother Ebonpaw. The black apprentice had been goading others lately and very fierce and rude. He even made it futile to try and make him to train and hunt. *A thing I would give anything to do is just thrown away by my mouse-brained idiot of a brother.* He thought haughtily.

Before any more thoughts could be reached into the three cats' minds, a furious yowl sounded through the forest, and a sudden echo of angry, battle-hungry cats came after. Invaded! We're being attacked! The leader stood up and shot through the Clan camp, warning cats with frustrated and anxious shouts and hisses.

Once everyone stood out, dazed, nervous and angry at whoever dared raid their territory, Downystar yowled clearly, I must take a battle party. It is clear that the voice came from Foreststar that young fool. RiverClan are trying to take Sunningrocks, and I will not have it. Those whom I will bring shall be Gorsepelt, Crimsongale, Owlfeather, Wolfheart, Smokeypelt, and Ebonpaw.

Furious shouts of dismay and anger lashed at his decisions; Tornadowind was in upset because he was left behind though he was a new warrior, Lunarmoon and Dreamwave were jealous for they were never taken to battle and several others shouted out.

The leader silenced them and growled assertively, You shall all protect the camp should RiverClan win. I leave Manglepelt in charge being a senior warrior. The blue and gray she-cat dipped her head and the battle party rushed off in excitement.

Wolfheart, now a veteran warrior, felt only sheer determination and exhilaration as he thought of tearing through the inexperienced RiverClan leader's orange pelt. His claws grabbed at the snow underneath his feet in anticipation.

As soon as they reached Sunningrocks, hisses and yowls of loathing and aggravation sounded about, and he was hit in the side heavily by a powerful roan tom. Unfortunately for him, Wolfheart was double his size and the blue and gray cat shoved him off. Wolfheart recognized the senior warrior as Redspeck, and it made him all the angrier. Surely the tom wouldn't have wanted to fight, but much like him, they had to at times for they could not disobey orders.

The other tom was surprisingly swift and ran around to Wolfheart's back, leaping upon him. Wolfheart was ready, and flipped over so he did a massive shoulder roll. He made a satisfactory grunt as he heard the breath heave out of the attacker's mouth. But the tom sprang back and latched his left front paw

claws into the hind left leg of the blue and gray tom. Yowling in agony, Wolfheart reached back and cracked his head right into Redspeck's angled nose. Blood splattered everywhere as he heard a bone crack. Redspeck's jaw was broken, and in a wailing fleet of paws, he disappeared into the river, heading for camp.

All around him was a flurry of claws, fur and hisses, each cat locked in combat over the rocks that were hidden underneath a layer of snow. *Odd time to be fighting for it.* He thought, though it lasted not much longer. He spotted Crimsongale grappling with an equally large gray tom whose pelt was flecked with darker spots of gray. Demonwing! he snarled, and leapt into the fray. Just in time he sliced his claws into the middle of the RiverClan deputy's back, when he had Crimsongale pinned to the ground after an enormous struggle over power. Blood sprayed from the back and the tom shrieked in agony, but Wolfheart continued to nip his haunches and attack him wherever.

Turning on him, the gray tom hurled his entire body weight upon the tom that was a third larger than himself. Wolfheart parried the attack by sliding to the right, dodging it, and batting the tom over the head with his long claws unsheathed. Demonwing stumbled forwards and landed hard on a flat-topped rock. He did not get up again.

Crimsongale nodded appreciatively towards him and they both stopped dead as they saw both leaders mauling one another, hurrying to gain the upper hand in the fight. Downystar made it to the top of Foreststar, leaving the younger tom's belly unprotected. Unfortunately, the tom flung Downystar off with a quick thrust of his back legs and hurtled towards the fallen ThunderClan leader. Before either could move, Gorsepelt leapt forth and grabbed Foreststar's scruff between his teeth none too gently.

Hissing and spitting in ill-concealed rage, the orange tom whirled around and whacked the ThunderClan deputy across the face with claws unsheathed, sending Gorsepelt flying into a nearby rock. He staggered in pain, and then collapsed, breathing heavily. Growling in anger he hadn't felt since facing Eaglestar that fateful day as an apprentice, Wolfheart snarled to Crimsongale, Take Gorsepelt back to camp. Let me finish this.

Nodding, Crimsongale raced to Gorsepelt's side and urged him up and forwards, out of battle. As Wolfheart pelted towards the leader that held a claw raised above his head, ready to deal the death blow for Downystar, who cowered beneath him, he noticed that only two enemy cats other than Foreststar remained: Cattail and Caimanclaw. For Cattail he felt pure hatred and disgust; she had once been in ThunderClan, WindClan and now RiverClan, fighting for them all the same. Yet now she fought the Clan once devoted to her. He growled but did not change course, for her battle with Owlfeather was careening towards the nearby river. Owlfeather would deal with her. He landed upon his target with a menacing growl, and Foreststar let out a shocked yowl of fear and apprehension, dropping his claw so it sliced Downystar on the tail, missing where it was previously aimed. As Wolfheart's weight brought the puny leader down, he spat and lunged at Wolfheart, catching him on the front right shoulder. Yelping out in pain, Wolfheart swatted him over the head in retaliation, clipping him over the ear and sending him sprawling. Humiliated, the orange tom attacked hopelessly again, and again he was sent flying by a devastating blow from the much larger warrior. Finally, when the leader was pinned down, Wolfheart snagged the tom's ear painfully slow and tore a long, W-shaped nick in it. *Remember me by that, and never try to get Sunningrocks again.* He whispered in the tom's ear. At last, he stood up from the tom, which was screeching in agony, and watched as Foreststar practically soared over the rocks and into the river, paddling speedily for his Clan territory. Seeing their leader flee, Cattail and Caimanclaw raced

away, not noticing the motionless gray warrior lying upon the ground. Walking towards Wolfheart with awe and admiration in his eyes, Downystar meowed in a calm but shaky meow so all cats could hear, You& You saved my life. He nearly killed me, but you& You came.

With an embarrassed flick of his ears, Wolfheart covered up for himself, Well, of course I came. You told me to.

But Owlfeather walked forth, and normally being the spiteful brother of his equally rude sibling, Smokeypelt, Wolfheart was surprised to hear his words, I saw you save Crimsongale too. He was pinned flat by Demonwing, but you tore him off and& he gestured with his tail towards the body laying bloody on the ground, wounds still freshly oozing.

Nodding appreciatively, Downystar added with a finishing touch to ensure Wolfheart was to be highly praised, And he chased away a veteran member of RiverClan-Redspeck. All cats blinked their agreement. Wolfheart turned towards Demonwing's body, which lay motionless in the gravel. He blinked away a tear. You know, he was not a bad tom. He was only obeying his leader's orders.

Murmurs of agreement swept through the party, as they all looked sadly upon his still frame. We should give him to RiverClan somehow.

A glitter of an idea appeared in Ebonpaw's golden eye. The Medicine Cats! They have nothing against us and ours against them. Get Dapplenight to meet with Rabbitleaf to get the body.

Wolfheart nodded approval, as did Downystar, and they all returned to camp, sighing. Where is Gorsepelt? he meowed at one point, and Wolfheart told him about the tragedy. The pace picked up as the leader became silent and steady in his lope.

The snow around them turned red from their cuts, welts, bites and bruises as they sped down the ravine. As they crashed into the gorse tunnel, the cats erupted into a rage of meows, wailing and hisses. They wondered what had happened and were eager to see one another again. Downystar went right to where his deputy lay, in front of Highrock, still as ever. The tom breathed ever so slightly, and as Dapplenight and Hailfur crouched over him, he knew they were doing their best. Yet he had to see for himself. Wolfheart walked up and matched him step for step, until they both halted at the deputy's black furred side. Your father was as good a deputy as ever there could be, Downystar murmured, glancing briefly at the blue and gray tom. Just like you are as a warrior. The compliment was not heeded as the single blue eye gazed gloomily down at his fallen father.

Would Gorsepelt get better? Only time will tell.

3 - A New Deputy

ThunderClan Leader: Downystar- a handsome black-and-white tom **Deputy: Crimsongale**-a deep orange tom with piercing aqua eyes; only has one ear and one eye due to battle; senior warrior **Medicine Cat: Dapplenight**- A small tortoiseshell she-cat with hot amber eyes **Hailfur**- A pale gray tom with blue eyes **Warriors: Lunarmoon**- A dark, hazy brown she-cat with a large disc of pale yellow on her face, amber eyes **Owlfeather**-An ivory tom with glassy blue eyes **Smokeypelt**- A large, smokey black tom with fierce storm-gray eyes **Abyssaldream**- A gray she-cat with yellow eyes **Wolfheart**-A large blue and gray tom with a large patch of calico on his right forepaw; half of his left ear is torn off and his right eye is permanently squinted because of the loss of an eye **Tornadowind**- A blue and gray tom with storm gray eyes **Dreamwave**- A small, gray tortoiseshell she-cat, an odd colour, mixture of gray and white splotches with storm gray eyes

Ebonfur- A small black tom with golden eyes

Manglepelt-a gray and blue mottled furred she-cat; her body is permanently cracked to one side; senior warrior **Queens: Truesoul**-A medium length blue and gray she-cat with yellow eyes; nursing two kits
Truesoul s Kits

Galekit-A white she-cat with medium length fur; blue flecks in her pelt. Golden eyes

Turtlekit-A gray and white tortoiseshell tom with blue eyes

Elders-

Gorsepelt-A black, sturdy and thickset tom with golden eyes; retired early due to crippling wounds

Tenorvoice- A large and sturdy white tom with equally white eyes **Crippledjaw**-a white, strained she-cat whose back has a cripple, only Crippledjaw also suffers from a permanently dislocated jaw

ShadowClan Leader: Boldstar- An elderly she-cat; completely black pelt with one white, splotchy stripe going down her back

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Everwind s Kits-

Sightkit-A small chestnut coloured tom with white ears and golden eyes; he is mute **Elders:**

WindClan- Leader: Blinkstar-a shy and generous white she-cat with two black paws **Cliffpaw**-A small golden tom with green eyes

Deputy: Claytoe-a sturdy black tom with one white paw

Medicine Cat: Fuzzpelt- a golden she-cat **Bristlepaw**-A medium sized she-cat with beige fur, emerald eyes **Warriors: Spiraltail**- A small, tabby she-cat; the last out of three other brothers and sisters, she

has golden eyes **Ripclaw**- a large tortoiseshell tom; senior warrior **Deerpaw**-A small copper tom with deep, blue eyes **Queens: Elders:**

RiverClan- Leader: Foreststar-A wise orange tom with white eyes **Deputy: Shatteredjaw**- a roan tom; senior warrior; formerly named Redspeck

Medicine Cat: Rabbitleaf- a quick-witted, old golden furred cat, forest green eyes **Warriors:**

Glasseyes-A small and adventurous she-cat; black and brown **Cattail**- wise and young she-cat

tortoiseshell with a dark brown colour on the end of her tail **Caimanclaw**-a young but determined black warrior; senior warrior **Queens: Elders:**

Chapter 3: A New Deputy

As the gathering of cats surrounded the deputy, they faintly heard a murmur of defeat, whispering, I failed& Downystar dead& No way for Brandedsprit to get in& Wolfheart flicked his ears at the unfamiliar name, but thought to himself *He s just at a loss of blood and proper consciousness&* yet something nagged him. Brandedsprit? Who or what was this? Another warrior from an enemy Clan? His neck fur bristled, though he angrily reconsidered that his father was one of the most loyal cats to this Clan. Perhaps a Loner&

Taking his mind off the matter, he meowed calmly, raising his single blue eye to the crowd of cats, Leave him; he needs air to breathe. Crimsongale, Downystar, and the Medicine Cats can stay. With a slightly ashamed flick of his ears, he overheard Owlfeather, who had only moments before praised him, speaking to his brother haughtily as they stalked away. &Acting as though he s leader&

Crimsongale, the copper tom, was watching him with one sympathetic aqua eye. He walked over and stood beside him, watching the black tom. He was one great warrior. I hope he returns to us soon. Unconsciousness brings terrible things. Nodding absently, Wolfheart brought up the name his father spoke a few minutes ago. Crimsongale was as much at a loss as he was himself. Suddenly he heard Gorsepelt meow almost too quiet to hear, Resign from deputy. I am resigning. Can t see in one eye& Stomach hurts like carrion smells.

The deputy lay still, but raised his head a touch above the ground with weakness. He looked to his leader, glaring in frustration. I said let me resign. The black and white tortoiseshell looked dumbfounded, staring disbelievingly at his deputy. N-No! he replied at last, shaking his head in a panic.

I can't! You're the best deputy one could ever wish for. With a mirthless chuckle, Gorsepelt interrupted with such calm confidence that it scared Wolfheart, You never had to wish, Downystar. The cat you've needed has been sitting under your nose the entire time. For an instant, Gorsepelt's eyes, one seeing, one not, flicked to Wolfheart, then surpassed him to Crimsongale. You have always known in your heart that Crimsongale was the most experienced and rightful deputy of this Clan.

All three cats were so shocked; Wolfheart went rigid with fury and shattered feelings, while Crimsongale blinked in pride but surprise. Downystar merely nodded in acceptance after a while. And what of you, Gorsepelt? he said submissively, betraying his normally commanding tones for a softer one. You won't go to join before he could finish the sentence of StarClan's ranks, Gorsepelt chuckled and shook his head stiffly, No, no. I shall head to the Elder's den with these marks. You and your new deputy shall go to the Gathering. The look of confusion that crossed the leader's face made Gorsepelt blink. You didn't forget it was tonight, did you? the leader coughed and replied almost sheepishly, Well& Yes I did. But I suppose we have time. It is nearly sunhigh now, so we have time.

Nodding reluctantly, he drew away. Wolfheart stood stiffly and glared hatefully towards Crimsongale, who only flashed a look of confusion and misunderstanding back. Before he could speak up of what that look was for, Wolfheart had stalked away, tail flagging in the air. Gorsepelt, noting this, sighed dejectedly. It was because I suggested you for deputy and not him. He thinks I will give him my rank and everything I had once before to him because he is my son. I do not blame him for wanting deputyship though; after all, look what he did for ThunderClan. For the whole forest. Eaglestar is now dead. But strength, skill and knowledge are not all one needs to be a leader nor deputy. At the wondering look Crimsongale gave him, he continued, You need heart. The first three attributes are good enough for a warrior and lead to definite power, but in order to be righteous and good for any Clan you need heart. It is what makes you fierce as a tiger yet loving as a tiger cub. Eventually, the crimson-copper tom dipped his head in understanding, and mewed feebly, But I never wanted to have a rift between us. We have been the greatest of friends and now it seems to have gone nowhere.

Before the weakened tom could reply, Dapplenight snapped impatiently, I appreciate your care for our deputy but if you want him to be prancing around trying to please everyone anytime soon, please leave us. Besides, she added with a sly smile, blinking up behind Crimsongale, Downystar is calling a meeting.

Crimsongale sighed and dipped his head respectfully towards the Medicine Cat, then turned away to see that his leader indeed was on top of Highrock with the normal air of command in his very presence. Admiration glowed through Crimsongale's eyes as he watched the muscular tortoiseshell yowl out with dignity and experience, Let all those cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the Highrock for a Clan Meeting. As the Clan cats began to usher around the stone, Crimsongale found himself near the front, seated beside the greatly praised white elder, Tenorvoice. He was admired for his size and wisdom, always speaking out to no one in particular. Some believed it to be his old friend, Ringpelt, as they had been friends since they were two moon old kits. His normally clouded eyes, however, stood out and shone like glittering golden balls of fire. His elderly form and bedraggled appearance of age was gone, and he looked like a full warrior once again. *Heart*. The words echoed through the tom's mind as he looked at this once very ancient tom who had given enough heart to become a strong ThunderClan cat one last time, before giving in to the warm touch of StarClan. *It is what makes you fierce as a tiger yet loving as a tiger cub*. Yes& he muttered to himself, though when he looked away, he saw Wolfheart across the clearing, slouched with his back turned from the Highrock.

The she-cat that showed obvious affection for him, Lunarmoon, was seated with him, speaking words of comfort he could not hear. *But wouldn't it sound better if it was what makes you fierce as a wolf yet loving as a wolf pup?* He thought bitterly. Wolfheart was greatly praised and many apprentices had stopped mid-sentence to look in awe at his sheer size and musculature as he walked by during Gatherings. They would start arguing over who would grow to be his size one day, or when he would become leader. His thoughts were soon cut short as his leader spoke, ThunderClan cats, you all know and have no doubt heard of the fierce battle for Sunningrocks. I am pleased to say that ThunderClan rose victorious in the fight. He halted as cheers of happiness swelled throughout the clearing. As he looked around, Downystar saw him blink in wonder as he spotted Wolfheart slouched over across the clearing, but said nothing of it. He continued, looking back to the main body of cats, There were, however, some very major losses. The worst was for RiverClan; their wise and cherished deputy, Demonwing, was killed in accidental happening. He was young, and so we will remember the noble tom for facing up to us like that. The second worst was our own deputy-Gorsepelt. As he spoke, he craned his neck to see over the heads of his cats to see Gorsepelt laying still. The Medicine Cats were working on him steadily, though one could easily see he was unconscious. Sadly, he was nearly killed by the foolish young leader Foreststar. I dare not say he was weak though; he nearly had me by the throat when Wolfheart came and attacked. He sent the leader scurrying for home, as well as Redspeck, one of their senior warriors. After the praise, other casualties were listed, but Crimsongale's ears were pointed towards the direction of Lunarmoon and Wolfheart, He suddenly saw Wolfheart's head shoot up in excitement, single blue eye gleaming with new hope. Crimsongale caught the same words from the she-cat's mouth, & I bear your kits now, Wolfheart.

Crimsongale smiled a bit; that would keep his friend happy. He was glad for Wolfheart. So much had happened that there was little time for anyone to think of kitting-that was why Truesoul's birthing was great deal. He listened in again, and caught the words, &Has resigned. Gorsepelt himself appointed a new deputy, and I say these words before him so that StarClan may approve my choice, he looked proudly at the senior warrior, and Crimsongale felt all eyes burn into his fur. He shuffled his feet with unease, as the words finally came out, Crimsongale will be the new deputy. Instead of the dead silence or jeers of anger Crimsongale had expected, cheers and shouts of approval reached his ears. E shrank at first, but as the cats came to crowd around him, touching him with their noses and congratulating him, he swelled with dignity. One tom, a deep blue and gray, came up and nudged him so heartily he nearly toppled over. He keened when he noticed it was Wolfheart, only he noticed the tom was grinning with a new respect. Congratulations, Crimsongale. Deputy. Quite a title. Pretending he had not heard the tom's conversation with Lunarmoon, so a snot to be rude, Crimsongale asked, Why so cheerful all of the sudden?

With a noble flick of his tail, he replied steadily, and all the cats around him gasped with excitement as the words left his mouth, Lunarmoon shall bear my kits within two moons.

All cats smiled as they watched an older apprentice stalk forth through the crowd that was still assembled at Highrock. Smokeypelt, the dark gray tom who mentored the apprentice, was walking with him, his eyes blank but his chest swelled with pride. The black tom continued on while Smokeypelt sat down at the front. Finally, he came to a halt at the Highrock base and waited for Downystar to walk forwards, a gleam in his eye. Ebonpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend this Clan, even at the cost of your life?

The solemn response came, I do.

Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name, the excitement shivered visibly through the black tom's body—he was long overdue to be a warrior. Ebonpaw, from now on you shall be known as Ebonfur. StarClan are proud of your courage and determination and we welcome you as a warrior in your turn.

Downystar rested his chin atop the warrior's head and Ebonfur formally licked the leader's shoulder in a sign of respect. Then all the cats came around him and soon he was engulfed in congratulations and smiles. The top two warriors that bombarded him with scuffling and loving were his brother and sister, Tornadowind and Abyssaldream.

Because there is a Gathering this moonhigh, your vigil shall be held on the next moonhigh. Came the confident words.

4 - The Last Gathering

ThunderClan Leader: Downystar- a handsome black-and-white tom **Deputy: Crimsongale**-a deep orange tom with piercing aqua eyes; only has one ear and one eye due to battle; senior warrior **Medicine Cat: Dapplenight**- A small tortoiseshell she-cat with hot amber eyes **Hailfur**- A pale gray tom with blue eyes **Warriors: Owlfeather**-An ivory tom with glassy blue eyes **Smokeypelt**- A large, smokey black tom with fierce storm-gray eyes **Abyssaldream**- A gray she-cat with yellow eyes **Wolfheart**-A large blue and gray tom with a large patch of calico on his right forepaw; half of his left ear is torn off and his right eye is permanently squinted because of the loss of an eye **Tornadowind**- A blue and gray tom with storm gray eyes **Dreamwave**- A small, gray tortoiseshell she-cat, an odd colour, mixture of gray and white splotches with storm gray eyes

Ebonfur- A small black tom with golden eyes

Manglepelt-a gray and blue mottled furred she-cat; her body is permanently cracked to one side; senior warrior **Queens:**

Lunarmoon- A dark, hazy brown she-cat with a large disc of pale yellow on her face, amber eyes; expecting kits **Truesoul**-A medium length blue and gray she-cat with yellow eyes; nursing two kits-Owlfeather's mate

Truesoul's Kits

Galekit-A white she-cat with medium length fur; blue flecks in her pelt. Golden eyes

Turtlekit-A gray and white tortoiseshell tom with blue eyes

Elders:

Gorsepelt-A black, sturdy and thickset tom with golden eyes; retired early due to crippling wounds

Tenorvoice- A large and sturdy white tom with equally white eyes **Crippledjaw**-a white, strained she-cat whose back has a cripple, only Crippledjaw also suffers from a permanently dislocated jaw

ShadowClan Leader: Boldstar- An elderly she-cat; completely black pelt with one white, splotchy stripe going down her back **Deputy: Dangletail**- a large gray pelted tom with blue eyes **Medicine Cat:**

Stormsky- A dark, almost black tom with hazel brown eyes **Warriors- Frisklegs**- a black tom with white ears and white on the tail; senior warrior **Pouncepelt**- a sleek, brown tom with large hind legs; senior warrior **Embercloud**- a tom with a black pelt, and his right foreleg engulfed in a fiery-looking auburn sock, he has golden eyes **Lilypad**- A gorgeous yellow tabby she-cat with white socks, golden eyes

Russetfur-A tawny coloured she-cat with yellow eyes **Queens:**

Shellheart- A pale gray she-cat with blue eyes; going to birth **Everwind**- A dark brown she-cat with a tan hue on her face. Amber eyes; nursing one kit-Frisklegs

Everwind's Kits

Sightkit-A small chestnut coloured tom with white ears and golden eyes; he is mute **Elders:**

WindClan- Leader: Blinkstar-a shy and generous white she-cat with two black paws **Cliffpaw**-A small golden tom with green eyes

Deputy: Claytoe-a sturdy black tom with one white paw

Medicine Cat: Fuzzpelt- a golden she-cat **Bristlepaw**-A medium sized she-cat with beige fur, emerald eyes **Warriors: Spiraltail**- A small, tabby she-cat; the last out of three other brothers and sisters, she has golden eyes

Ripclaw- a large tortoiseshell tom; senior warrior **Deerpaw**-A small copper tom with deep, blue eyes **Queens: Elders:**

RiverClan- Leader: Foreststar-A wise orange tom with white eyes **Deputy: Shatteredjaw**- a roan tom; senior warrior; formerly named Redspeck

Medicine Cat: Rabbitleaf- a quick-witted, old golden furred cat, forest green eyes **Warriors:**

Glasseyes-A small and adventurous she-cat; black and brown **Cattail**- wise and young she-cat tortoiseshell with a dark brown colour on the end of her tail **Caimanclaw**-a young but determined black warrior; senior warrior **Queens: Elders:**

Chapter 4: The Last Gathering

As the moon slowly rose to its zenith in the hazy blue night sky, an impatient hiss was sounded through the Clan camp. A small assembly of ThunderClan cats sat in the center of the clearing, watching worriedly as their leader paced back and forth between them in frustration. All they had to do was go and take Demonwing's body to RiverClan then come back. Have RiverClan broken the oath of Medicine Cats and attacked? Or are they just taking their jolly old time?

The crimson tom blinked nervously as he watched his leader pace, then leapt up and pressed his pelt against his leaders, stopping the walking. I am sure they're on their way now, Downystar.

From the entrance to the camp came a calm, serene voice laden with wisdom beyond the age of the cat that made it, Well spoken, my deputy. With a sigh, Downystar discarded his former mood and returned to his normal air of command, Right, so we have Crimsongale, Dapplenight, Hailfur, Ebonfur, Smokeypelt, Owlfeather, Wolfheart and Tenorvoice from the elders. Let us go, then.

With that they took off single file through the gorse tunnel entrance, and became a lined up formation of cats as they climbed up the rocky ravine. As soon as they came up to the ledge of the hollow to Fourtrees, Downystar slowed down, and so the rest of his Clan followed suit. Once they all crouched low at the rim of the Gathering place, Downystar murmured to Crimsongale, who stood beside him, Looks safe. ShadowClan and WindClan are there. I'll hate to see what RiverClan will have to say.

With a spike of anger, Crimsongale replied confidently, They attacked us, Downystar. They should be nervous to see what we'll have to say to *them*.

Apparently not heeding his words, the tom signaled with a flick of his tail and the ThunderClan cats raced down the slopes, crashing through the snow that surrounded the clearing and meeting instantly with the rumble of cat voices. Crimsongale watched his leader immediately walk over to where the elders and some senior warriors of ShadowClan and WindClan sat, and decided not to follow him. Crimsongale walked up to a small ring of three cats. The tom talking was a large gray pelted cat with blue eyes. The two listening were a tortoiseshell and a tabby. The tabby, a she-cat, blinked in amazement to the ShadowClan tom's tale.

As he neared, the ShadowClan cat meowed a welcome and Crimsongale came in closer, watching as he dipped his head to him as though he were a lesser cat. *This must be Dangletail, the deputy of ShadowClan you fool!* He badgered himself, before dipping his head meaningfully that indicated a greeting between equals. Surprised, the gray tom apologized hastily, I am sorry. I did not know you had been named deputy.

With a nod of acceptance, Crimsongale sat down to his left, beside the tortoiseshell and responded, Nor I you.

The tortoiseshell he recognized as Ripclaw, a very old warrior from WindClan, and the she-cat tabby smelt of WindClan, so he assumed her to be the apprentice Spiralpaw. Greetings Spiralpaw. He began, ready to make conversation. With a glint of amusement in her eye, she cut him off with, It's Spiraltail now, Crimsongale.

With a defeated shake of his head, he growled in worry, It's so hard coping with my new duties, it seems I am getting everyone mixed up or wrong. With a short chuckle, Dangletail replied, After a little bit of time things seem to work themselves out. Don't worry; you're not nearly as bad as me. Once I dipped my head to a leader as though he were a warrior! A good amount of berating that gained me.

As the words carried on, Crimsongale smiled and joined in with words of surprise and began telling tales of his own battles; how he lost his eye, how his ear was torn, how he fought Eaglestar, and then the previous battle with RiverClan. As most cats will do, he exaggerated the tale a touch, making it sound a little bit more to his liking, but no one seemed to care. They all were fascinated with the story. He left out the part about Wolfheart taking Demonwing's life as well as Gorsepelt having to be retired early due to heavy damage, lest any cat get offended, but he made sure they all heard how Wolfheart sent Foreststar yowling out of sight.

Suddenly, from the opposite side of the clearing came a rustle of snow falling and out burst a few RiverClan cats. He recognized some from the battle, others from sheer memory. Foreststar, Redspeck and Rabbitleaf were all that appeared, and they all headed towards Great Rock. *He must have left Caimanclaw and Cattail to defend the camp alone.*

The orange tom leapt up onto Great Rock and yowled for the cats to gather. This sparked a pang of annoyance through Crimsongale as many cats were still introducing themselves. He spotted Downystar picking his way through the crowd to the rock, as well as the black and white she-cat leaders. He jumped when he saw Dangletail heading the same direction. He bounced to his feet and caught up with the tom,

matching him step for step. They reached Great Rock and sat right in front of it. Dipping his head to Claytoe, the black tom with one white paw, who was WindClan deputy, he noted a look of sudden frailness in him. He was skinny. The bones showed through his fur. He looked around, astonished, and noted that all the WindClan cats looked as such. Before he could ask Dangletail what their problem was, he nearly cried out in disgust when he saw Redspeck sitting on the other side of the ShadowClan deputy. The tom suddenly caught his eye and kept him staring, glaring fiercely. I loathe you ThunderClan cats. All you have ever caused us was suffering. Eaglestar took nearly every cat we had and slew them; then he brought Wildstar down. Not to mention you killed our deputies and past warriors. Then you take two of our kits-and last but not least, you kill our deputy and break my jaw.

Shocked, Crimsongale replied in feeble worry, Redspeck, I- with a growl, Redspeck leapt up and hissed in his face, I am not Redspeck anymore! I am Shatteredjaw! the few cats close by began murmuring in curiosity, before everything was hushed down. The tom turned away and deliberately sat on the opposite side of Claytoe, further away.

Downystar walked slowly up to the front and began, ThunderClan have- before he could say more, Foreststar shoved his way up and shouldered the black and white tom aside with an arrogant snort. Then he shouted with a great amount of distaste, ThunderClan murdered my deputy Demonwing and broke one of my senior warriors jaws, they also broke my Clan. There are so few of us now that a mouse could take us down! Never have I- Before he could say more, Boldstar walked up and brushed her tail across his mouth. Calmly but not in a friendly tone, she asked Downystar with a glint in her eye, Downystar, is this true?

The tortoiseshell replied with assertive baritones, Unfortunately, it is, but it is not as it seems. Last moonhigh, during our sleeping hour, we heard battle cries. So we ran to Sunningrocks where they were issued from and RiverClan attacked. It was a battle over territory. Demonwing was killed in battle, not murdered, and Redspeck s-sorry, Shatteredjaw s jaw was broken in combat as well. Plus, you should not blame ThunderClan when it was RiverClan who called the battle.

With nods of agreement through the crowd, they meows of acceptance overpowered the single yowl of anger that came from the red tom beneath Great Rock, Shatteredjaw. Rabbitleaf stayed out of it, for she was a Medicine Cat.

Also, Downystar continued when he had every cat s attention, My deputy Gorsepelt was taken down by Foreststar and retired to the Elders early due to the heavy damage you gave. And so, my new deputy is Crimsongale. Shivering when al eyes turned to him, the crimson tom lowered his gaze solemnly. Many other Clan cats meowed in shock and distaste, for some had liked him. He heard voices of contempt throughout the Clans as well, though they were not directed in any obvious way.

Foreststar snarled and carried on, apparently wanting to leave the subject behind, Shatteredjaw is my new deputy. Other than the battle, we have nothing else to report. Smugly, he backed off, a shadow flicking in his eyes as he turned away. Downystar seemed not to notice, but Crimsongale did. He also noted that Dangletail had a very suspicious thought about the leader, because his eyes were glaring straight at the orange pelt. ThunderClan have two new healthy kits born to Owlfeather and Truesoul. The queen could not come for she must nurse them, but Owlfeather has come along with us. The ivory tom near the middle of the crowd dipped his head to the respectful silence. Downystar continued on, As I said before, Crimsongale has succeeded Gorsepelt as deputy. Other than that casualty there have

been no other serious injuries. I am also proud to say that we have a new warrior with us-formerly named Ebonpaw. He is now Ebonfur. He nodded at the black tom gazing gladly up to the leader. He returned the gesture without the normal, arrogant air on him. ShadowClan's leader stepped up, surpassing Downystar as he backed off. ShadowClan too have been lucky to receive a kitting. However, the kit is mute. That will not stop him from becoming a great warrior though, she flashed a meaningful glance to all the cats, including her fellow leaders before adding, The mother is Everwind. Father is the most senior warrior of my Clan, Frisklegs.

Blinkstar, the white leader with two black paws, strutted past Boldstar who backed up to the base of the rock. She stood at the edge, gazing around in her steady, warm gaze and said the most surprising thing in the forest, WindClan are leaving.

Downystar chuckled and walked up to stand beside her, as did the other two leaders. There was concern on his face but his voice was joking when he meowed, Surely you don't mean the forest, right? I mean-

No, Downystar. Even you should know that I never make jokes. You've been leader long enough. He flinched to the insult of his leadership, but made no comment. Boldstar then spoke up in her very elderly, cracked voice, Why would you want to leave? And if you do, where would you go? A hoarse chuckle of frustration and fury racked the skinny leader's back before she replied coldly, While ThunderClan stuff themselves with forest prey and RiverClan gorges themselves on fish in the river, we sit and eat what few berries we can uncover in this never-ending Leafbare. That is why we need to leave. We're starving. And it is not if we go, but when. As for where we'll go& she looked around, craning her neck as though trying to look over the trees before replying with suddenly a very exhausted voice, We'll have to go wherever StarClan take us, like our ancestors did so many years ago when they came here.

There was a dead silence that evaded the camp. No cat dared break the cold essence of quiet, as this was not a speaking matter. The three leaders that stood beside her just looked blankly at one another. Coughing rigidly, Foreststar confessed, slightly ashamed, Err& RiverClan have been hunting whatever little voles come upon our island, and eat carrion fish. There is no food through the frozen river. Even ThunderClan should have seen by now that the forest is frozen through-hard enough to sleep on.

The white and black tortoiseshell tom nodded in agreement, grunting, Yes, we have. And the prey we've hunted have all migrated somewhere else. We eat stray squirrels or the mice that burrow beneath the ground.

Boldstar was obviously reluctant to reveal her own Clans rather disturbing secrets, but eventually allowed some to spill, ShadowClan's marshes are no longer swampy and are hard like a Thunderpath beneath our feet. The crows and mice we hunted are gone, and other fresh-kill have died in the everlasting Leafbare.

But as every cat looked around, most of them were fairly lean and broad-shouldered, hiding their skeletal frames. Some were as large and plump as before the winter came down upon them. However, the ones who suffered most were the WindClan cats. WindClan have made our decision, Downystar, Boldstar, Foreststar. We'll give you all but two moonhighs to see whether or not you'll accompany us. Eight moons of thick white Leafbare is much too dangerous for WindClan to cope with when we live in very little sheltered areas and no food.

Before anyone could speak, she leapt off of the Great Rock, sending fluffy white snow flying as she landed hard on the ground. Raising her tail, she signaled for her cats to follow. Crimsongale watched curiously as the tortoiseshell tom and tabby she-cat he had spoken to earlier trotted after their leader with a copper apprentice following suit. Behind them ran the graceful Fuzzpelt and her apprentice, a beige she-cat. Claytoe ran alongside his leader, talking to her quietly until the Clan disappeared into the whiteness. Crimsongale looked up; the moon was nearly setting. A cold gust of wind blew past him, making his spine prickle uncomfortably as snowflakes blasted past him. Boldstar consulted Downystar about the events before both separated and leapt off the Great Rock, leaving Foreststar. He was gazing to the sky, and Crimsongale heard him whisper with great sorrow, Oh, Flashstar, my mother, what would you do now? he watched intently for any sign of the she-cat in StarClan showing, but nothing came. Clearly nothing happened for Foreststar either, for he sighed dejectedly and turned to jump off the rock. Though when he glimpsed Crimsongale seated there watching him, he halted. Your Clan has departed already, young ThunderClanner. His voice was calm and derisive. Snorting in unconcealed contempt, he replied in outrage, Watch who you call youth, Foreststar. You have to be at least six moons younger than me. You may be my better from another Clan, but I am your elder.

Cracking a smirk, he nodded and leapt off Great Rock, blinking towards Rabbitleaf and Shatteredjaw that they could start returning to camp. Shatteredjaw hesitated, clearly reluctant to leave his leader's side with a ThunderClan cat all alone in the hollow, but he finished, Go, now.

Finally the two were alone. Crimsongale, do you know what your leader is planning to do? his voice was silky smooth, slightly luring. Crimsongale caught onto the trap immediately. I am no traitor to my Clan! I would never give you any information. Acting offended, the leader hissed, I wasn't asking that! No, I want to know because your leader is more experienced than me. If ThunderClan leave, I have to know ahead of time to make my decision.

With a knowing flick of his tail, Crimsongale cut him off with a hateful snort, Liar! You only want to know if ThunderClan are leaving so you can take over our Clan territory when we leave!

Not waiting to pass insults nor bribes with him anymore, the deputy spun around and raced over the trampled snow, heading to his Clan territory. Behind him, through the gale, he heard a harsh cry, You'll come back to me, you'll see! He did not stop running until he made it to the ravine that led to the Clan camp. Panting heavily, he thought with a great nagging of doubt on his neck *Will I?*