Frost Clan's story

By Shadow_Dance

Submitted: June 13, 2006
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This is a Story about how all of the clans split up and eventually died out... according to belief! Follow Icepaw through his life as he learns new things about his ancestors and maybe finds a few friends along the way...

Provided by Fanart Central.

0 - Twistedrose

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A ginger tom peered through the tangled brambles of the forest, hackles rising slightly. The tom began to measure his opponent's strength as his fur fluffed from cold and anger. A thin she-cat stood in front of him dozing in the sunlight, not much of a match for him. He bunched his powerful muscles and pounced full force onto the she-cat. Knocking her over into the bushes, she began to hiss furiously, not that the tom cared.
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He yowled jubilantly, "Who are you? What are you doing on Frostclan territory?" she gazed at him; her brilliant blue eyes shimmered with defiance.
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Then they softened and she grinned a bit, "Well if you were wondering, I'm not a pet." He stepped away and helped her up. She turned to him and batted her eyelashes, "My name is Twistedrose." She shook her golden pelt sending dust into the cold air. Sunlight poked through the canopy of trees, shining on her fur and making it shimmer. The tom tried to look away but something inside him stirred when he looked at her. Who was this stranger walking away from him? His tail flicked as he glared at her furiously.
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"Where are you going?" he hissed catching up to her side.
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"Why do you care?" She mewed quickening her pace and looking away. The tom bounded in front of
Twistedrose and hissed.
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"You are coming with me."
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"I don't even know your name"
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He pushed her roughly toward the camp and smirked,
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"Emberfur."
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1 - Icepaw

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Frost filled the cold air on the peak on the cliff where Shortstar addressed his clan. "My fellow clan mates," He twitched his whiskers, "There has been some… trouble. As you know Earthblanket is coming and prey is scarce and we can't afford <i>any</i> trouble." The deputy, Snowstorm, was standing at the bottom of the ridge in the rock, staring out into the body of cats that was growing as they came out from the notches in the mountainside. Her intense blue eyes narrowed, making her coat seem brighter. "Our territory stretches into the far corners of the mountains." Shortstar paused, letting the suspense grow, "At one of the farthest sides, near Tallmeadow, to be exact a group of cats were sighted."
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"But how is that possible? Frostclan has been the only clan for many Earthblankets!" A cry rose from the crowd. The howl belonged to a small apprentice with green eyes. All of the other apprentices gathered closer to him nodding their heads and murmuring. The whole clan seemed dismayed as a nervous bunch of whispers broke out from the crowd.
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Shortstar's voice rang out and hushed the voices, "Yes, Icepaw, it is probably just a group of rouges."
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"Yes, dirty rouges have been around for ages," A hiss came from a ginger tom with a look of unhidden hatred shadowing his face, "They don't belong to a clan and they deserve not to!" yowls of agreement rose in waves from all of the clan cats, all except for one cat.
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Shortstar's sleek muscles rolled under his pelt as he stood up, "Emberfur, Silence!" The tom backed away and gave himself a few quick licks to calm himself, but his eyes betrayed his hatred.
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"They had a familiar smell…" added Snowstorm with a trying to change they subject, "I want to double patrols, and keep your eyes open!" As he began to order the warriors for the dawn patrol, the apprentices sneaked off to Bigoak, the largest tree near the camp.
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"So who do you think they are?" asked a small tortoise shell she-cat tilting her head and beginning to wash herself. Her tortoiseshell fur shown brilliantly against the dulling grass.
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" I don't know for sure Riverpaw, but who ever they are, my dad will make sure they think twice before attacking us!" yowled Smallpaw. (Shortstar's son) climbing to one of the lowest branches and waving his claws at the other two apprentices. Icepaw hopped onto the other side of the branch and pushed him off.
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"Not if I tell them off first!" he purred. Smallpaw leapt back onto the branch and started mock fighting with Icepaw. Riverpaw started into a laughing fit and rolled over.
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"What are you three up to?" a surprising purr came from Ashheart. Riverpaw, who was Ashheart's apprentice immediately stopped laughing and sat up. Icepaw gave Smallpaw a last playful cuff on the ear and said, "Just messing around."
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Ashheart leaned forward intently, "Well if you aren't to busy messing around then would you three like to come on dawn patrol? We are going to patrol near Tallmeadow."
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Smallpaw hopped off the branch and exclaimed, "Would we ever!" "Leadtail will come with us, are you ready to go?" Ashheart stood and began to cough and made a gagging noise, "I'm ok, just a bit hoarse, that's all." he said embarrassedly. The three apprentices exchanged silent glances as they followed behind him.
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As they set out, Leadtail joined them and stood close to Icepaw, his apprentice, who tried to stand tall. "Riverpaw, tell me what you can smell." Ashheart stifled a cough, and then glanced at his apprentice meaningfully. Riverpaw stopped and drank in the cold air.
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"I can smell other cats, they are unfamiliar." Riverpaw grinned as Ashheart nodded approvingly, "Is it fresh or stale?"
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She sniffed again, and then she wrinkled her nose and looked up in surprise, "Fresh!" his eyes widened as he looked up. A rustle came from in front of them in the extremely tall grass. Leadtail and Ashheart raised their hackles,
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"Come out, show yourselves." Commanded Leadail. A pair of yellow eyes appeared,

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"As you wish." A voice sneered. Icepaw's eyes widened as a group of four muscular, cats, bigger than any of them had ever seen, emerged from the shadows. The apprentices' hackles raised and the warriors' ears flattened. "Intruders!" he yowled as Leadtail lunged at the largest cat and Ashheart clawed the thinnest cat's legs. The other two creatures closed in on the apprentices, they seemed to think the other intruders could handle the two mentors.
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Hissing fiercly, Icepaw and Smallpaw bared their teeth. Icepaw, the largest of the three apprentices clawed his way up one of the cat's legs and hung on to his neck. Riverpaw and Smallpaw attacked the other cat. Icepaw felt his small teeth meet flesh as he bit into the neck of the full-grown cat. It yowled in fury and batted him off with one paw. Icepaw retaliated by racing up and jumping onto the cats back. It was quite easy for his nimble paws. The cat snarled and rolled over smashing him against the ground. Icepaw tasted the salty tang of blood as he unsheathed his claws into the cat's back, who winced and rolled over holding the apprentice with his forepaws. Icepaw battered his stomach with his back legs and sent him into the safety of Tallmeadow
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Riverpaw and Smallpaw who had already sent their cat home yowling raced around were fighting off a fifth cat that had appeared on the large smooth rock. Icepaw crept up behind him and sent him home with a savage bite on the ear.
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But the battle was not over yet. Leadtail was shaking blood off of himself. Ashheart, wheezing fiercely, was pinned onto the ground writhing and twisting under the weight of his opponent. Icepaw watched open mouthed as Leadtail just watched Ashheart struggling instead of helping him. The other apprentices didn't notice instead they ran up and attacked the cat. After Icepaw joined them the cat was overwhelmed and ran off into the long-grassed meadow after the others.
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"And stay out!" Yowled Riverpaw, she turned to the injured warrior and mewed, "Ashheart? Are you O.K.?" The warrior grunted, coughed and spat up, blood trickled down his side.
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Leadtail nonchalantly picked him up by his scruff and meowed in a muffled voice; "Lets go."
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"Please! Be careful not to drag him!" Riverpaw exclaimed. Fear filled her eyes when she looked at her unconscious mentor. Smallpaw and Icepaw exchanged worried glances. As they walked ahead, Icepaw looked back at Leadtail nervously. "Smallpaw, if I tell you something, will you promise not to tell anyone else?" Icepaw murmured quietly. Smallpaw looked at him and flicked his tail to sign `I promise', "not even your mentor?"
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"Yes!" he gave Icepaw a `do you think I would' look. "When we were fighting those other cats, well, I

looked over at Leadtail and he had finished fighting his opponent, he just stood there and watched Ashheart getting beaten!"
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Leadtail put down the lump of fur in his mouth to rest and meowed, "Did someone say my name?" he said suspiciously.
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"No sir!" yowled Smallpaw. Leadtail's sudden words had taken him by surprise.
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"Alright then," He said washing himself briefly. Then he lifted Ashheart so his feet didn't touch the ground, Riverpaw made sure of that, and began to walk again.
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"Nice cover." Icepaw rolled his eyes facetiously and bumped his friend into the bushes.
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"Well sorree!" Smallpaw hissed, "Look, Leadtail was probably just dazed from his finished fight." He finished thoughtfully. "Maybe you are right, he did seem a bit jumpy this morning."
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The cats began to cross an icy river near the camp; the cold water clutched their bellies and made Smallpaw shiver. The warrior bounded ahead and pushed off the muddy ground to swim across the river. As he and the apprentices finished paddling, Leadtail rested for a moment.
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Riverpaw mewed "Just hold on a bit longer Ashheart," then she turned to Leadtail with fire in her eyes and yowled, "can we go any faster?"
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Leadtail started walking again but turned his head and said, "Do you want to carry him?"
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Riverpaw looked at her paws. Then she bounded over to the two small toms and said, "I'm going to run ahead and let Nightfrost know to get his herbs ready." Smallpaw, not the brightest of cats turned to her and frowned,
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"How would Nightfrost know what herbs to get?" Icepaw purred with amusement,
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"He is the medicine cat silly! How could you of all cats forget?" Smallpaw's ears turned red and he said, "Well there should be an herb cat too." Icepaw and Riverpaw began to laugh.
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Then Riverpaw exclaimed, "Look there is the camp!" at first glance no cat would notice it, maybe not even at second glance. But there was a tree stump on the ground and in that tree stump there was a tunnel to the inside of the camp. The cats wouldn't need that much protection to be hidden that well would they, but mountain lions and hawks that could kill cats with a single swipe lived in the mountains too.
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<p><div name="Normal" align="left" style=" padding: 0.00mm 0.00mm 0.00mm 0.00mm; ">

<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Riverpaw hesitated looking back at her sodden mentor and then dove into the tunnel. Then Leadtail and Ashheart, and Icepaw and Smallpaw. "You should probably get your cuts treated too." Said Smallpaw licking a cut on Icepaw's shoulder tenderly,
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<p><div name="Normal" align="left" style=" padding: 0.00mm 0.00mm 0.00mm 0.00mm; ">

<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color:

White; ">
"Ashheart needs the attention first then we can go." Icepaw returned.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"I've got to go tell my Dad what happened, then we can have sunhigh-meal together." Icepaw nodded as Smallpaw bounded away. He started to lick his wounds when Leadtail padded up to him and grinned slightly,
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<p><div name="Normal" align="left" style=" padding: 0.00mm 0.00mm 0.00mm 0.00mm; ">

<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"You, Smallpaw, and Riverpaw fought like warriors today. I think you all should earn your warrior names," Icepaw raised his head proudly, "I will speak to Shortstar about it." He said standing up again.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Icepaw hastily added in as the warrior left "Thank you Leadtail" Leadtail smiled an odd smile, and walked away.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Hey, Icepaw!" Sparrowheart, a pretty warrior just assigned her warrior name one half-moon ago, trotted up to him with two small mice in her mouth. She dropped one at his feet and mewed as she sat down to eat,
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<p><div name="Normal" align="left" style=" padding: 0.00mm 0.00mm 0.00mm 0.00mm; ">

<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"I heard about the fight earlier, do you think you will become a warrior soon?" She licked her chest gracefully; then turned to him and smiled warmly,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Wow gossip spreads quickly doesn't it." He lowered his eyes haughtily. Then a voice came from behind him,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Of course we will!" Smallpaw walked up, beaming with a vole in his jaws. He dropped it and lied down next to them,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"I was telling my dad what happened and as I was leaving, Leadtail walked in and I heard him mention the ceremony." He took a bite of his kill.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Riverpaw will be glad to hear that!" Icepaw meowed. "I wonder how Ashheart is doing, he didn't seem so well last time we saw him." Nightfrost trotted out of the den to where Riverpaw sat fully alert.

Icepaw's gaze softened as he watched her talking to the medicine cat, she cared so much for Ashheart.
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<p><div name="Normal" align="left" style=" padding: 0.00mm 0.00mm 0.00mm 0.00mm; ">

<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
A call awakened him from his thoughts, "Smallpaw," Snowstorm the deputy, and Smallpaw's mentor, bounded over and sat in front of them. "Your father told me about your fight and I would like to evaluate your skills one last time before the ceremony tomarrow." Smallpaw gasped and puffed his chest up. Snowstorm twitched her whiskers as she looked at her apprentice with pride, "Well then, before you eat tonight, come to Bigoak and we will train one last time. Don't be late." she said as she walked back to the warrior's den.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Since Smallpaw's mother had died giving birth to him and none of the other kits had survived, Snowstorm was like a mother to him. She had raised him as one of her own kits. And now she was his mentor. Smallpaw got up and followed her; Sparrowheart stood up on her slender legs and took Icepaw's mouse bones to bury them. Icepaw, left alone in the clearing, stood up to look for Riverpaw.
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<p><div name="Normal" align="left" style=" padding: 0.00mm 0.00mm 0.00mm 0.00mm; ">

<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
He walked over to the pile of fresh kill and took a piece of fresh kill for her. He picked out a nice fat rabbit, which was her favorite, and looked around. He poked his head into the apprentices' den and there she was in her moss pad fast asleep. Her eyes were wet; he brushed away the tears and dropped the rabbit in front of her nose, hoping she would catch a whiff and wake up.
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Her whiskers twitched and she raised her head and twitched again, "I-Icepaw!" he tilted his head and mewed softly,
</p></div>

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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"How's Ashheart?" her face twisted into a grimace,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"You know ho he kept coughing earlier? Well it turns out that on top of is wounds he has Yellowcough."
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Oh no, Riverpaw, I'm so sorry." He said touching his tail to her shoulder and giving her a sympathetic look.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"It just won't be the same without him when I become a warrior!" Icepaw pulled away, he expected more from her,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color:

White; ">
"He is not going to die, in fact he will be better than ever when he recovers!" Riverpaw said,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"You really think so?"
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Of course" Icepaw mewled as he climbed out of the cavern, "Besides, the ceremony is tomorrow." He added optimistically.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Standing on top of a boulder, Icepaw drank in the cold Tree-bare air. Thinking about Ashheart made him feel like going down to get his wounds looked at. He climbed down the rocks, smoothed by generations of cats, and reached the ground.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
He padded up to the boulder and meowed "Hello!"
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Nightfrost's dark head poked out of the hole under the boulder, "What?" he sniffed grumpily.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"I just wanted to get my wounds checked out." Icepaw drew a paw over the wound on his head.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Yes, one moment." He smiled. A few moments later he popped out of the den with a few herbs in his mouth. As he examined Icepaw and put a cream on his major cuts. "Nothing major fortunately." He reported, then frowned disapprovingly, "Give this to any cat who has been near Ashheart, including yourself." Icepaw said a curt farewell and went to give a clump of the revolting herbs to Smallpaw and Riverpaw.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Riverpaw was talking to Smallpaw so he just dropped their bundles, explained hastily, and bounded away to get a drink at the river. He climbed out of the tunnel and walked through the undergrowth listening to the familiar crunching of the leaves underpaw. The river's rushing came later and he quickened his pace to get there. A long rock bridge lay across the river. The smooth grey expanse had something on it though; the silhouette of another cat was present in the mist. It was getting to be sundown, so it was hard to see anyway. The colors spread across the sky, and Icepaw drank in the scent of the other cat.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color:

White; ">
He smiled with recognition, "Windclaw," he beckoned to the elder softly as he sat beside her, "What are you doing out here this late?" His tail curled around his paws and his fur fluffed up to protect him from the growing cold. The she-cat looked up at him tiredly,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Oh I came out here around sun high, I didn't expect time to go so fast." She tilted her frail head, "will you escort me home?" she questioned.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Of course!" Icepaw helped her to hoist herself off the rock. And she groaned with effort,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"I'm not as strong as I used to be." She began walking at a slow pace. Icepaw dashed into the bushes for a moment and came out a few heartbeats later with a water vole,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"We'd better go" He meowed over his load of kill. Windclaw said tiredly,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"I hope that vole is for me." With a gleam in her eye, she looked at the vole hungrily.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Why yes it is in fact." Icepaw swiped his tongue around his powerful jaws as he dropped it. "You should probably eat some now you look exhausted."
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
She dropped warily on her haunches and started to ravenously tear at the vole, "Windclaw?" Icepaw shifted his paws uncomfortably on the soft leafy ground. The elder looked up for a moment from her prey in reply. "You know about the fight this morning, with those strange cats?" She nodded. "This is a silly question but…"
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"There is no such thing as a silly question child, only a silly answer." Windclaw looked up with great wisdom in her eyes.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Has there ever been another clan, beside Frostclan?" he finished clumsily, looking down at his paws.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
The air fell silent, as if the very mountains themselves were holding there breathe. Icepaw wished that he hadn't asked and his whiskers twitched nervously. "Yes, there were once four mighty clans, Moonclan, Fireclan, Lightclan, and Frostclan" She turned to meet Icepaw's steady gaze evenly.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Well, what happened to them?" He said with a puzzled look on his face. She stood up and began to stretch out her legs and set e slow pace,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"There was a battle, a big one and all of the clans were so angry they left," She scrambled over a log in the path, the gasping she meowed, "I guess they couldn't bare anymore killing." She decided. Icepaw frowned disdainfully and strode off the log.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Do you think it is another clan?" he squeaked like a frightened kit.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">

"Not now young one I am to tired, we can talk later."
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Icepaw nodded as they reached the clearing into the camp Windclaw disappeared down it, but Icepaw stood outside and thought. "Another clan?" he murmured softly. A rustle behind him startled the tom.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Quick as a fish he turned around, "Smallpaw" Icepaw breathed letting his fur lay flat again. "Hurry up! We don' want to be late for our last evaluation do we?" he inquired. "I forgot, come on!" Icepaw slipped down the tunnel remembering to cover the entrance with leaves as he left.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
The two apprentices sprinted straight across the camp, following each other step- for-step. As they reached the training valley Smallpaw called, "Hey Riverpaw, are we late?" She waited for them to come closer to her before she replied, "No, Shortstar isn't even here yet." Although her tone didn't show anything, her eyes glistened with hope and excitement, "I hope I do well." Panted Smallpaw as he and Icepaw came to a stop.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Hello" Ashheart's cheery, but hoarse, voice greeted them. The cats turned around and the three mentors and Shortstar walked into the tunnel. Ashheart looked old, and smelled sick, but he was looking a bit better. Riverpaw cheered up instantly, but she was careful not to touch him. Leadtail and Shortstar sat down as Snowstorm walked slowly up to her son and pressed her muzzle to his flank, she closed her

eyes for a moment and then they flashed open with a gleaming fire in them,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"For this test" she walked to the opposite side of the training arena, "You will have to defeat, or evenly match a warrior in strength and skill," Three warriors, Emberfur, Brightpelt, and Swiftwhisker trotted into the room.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Leadtail stood up and walked to one of the arenas as he spoke "Smallpaw will fight Brightpelt, Riverpaw will fight Swiftwhisker, and Icepaw will fight Emberfur." Emberfur's eyes narrowed as they met Icepaw's. The apprentice stared defiantly at the warrior with pride. "Each mentor will examine their own apprentice." Leadtail yowled pointing with her tail at the three arenas as she spoke. The cats knew what to do from there on the apprentices on one side, and the warriors on the other. Then a howl arose from Leadtail and Snowstorm's voice in unison,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Let the tests, begin!"
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Immediately, Emberfur sprang at Icepaw, claws unsheathed, without thinking, the apprentice dove under him dodging the attack, and he landed right where Icepaw had been a few heartbeats ago. He attacked the warrior's flank. Emberfur lashed out with a hind paw and hit Icepaw full throttle on the face. He stood up and shook his head, blood spattering the floor, and then gathering his strength into his haunches, he

leapt up, trying to land behind Emberfur, but Emberfur caught him in midair and rolled Icepaw onto his back. As he held the apprentice's hind and forepaws, Icepaw stretched his neck out as long as he could and bit hard into the ankle, he actually felt his teeth graze the bone briefly. Emberfur yowled in pain and reared up on his hind paws, giving Icepaw time to stand up. The warrior's belly was exposed and he bowled him over, standing on top of him, but he made sure not to leave his paws exposed. Emberfur's broad shoulders trembled as he writhed underneath the apprentice. Icepaw leaned down and bit savagely on his ears. Emberfur's paw broke free and slashed Icepaw's face. Icepaw yowled and scratched his stomach angrily with his hind paw. Then knowing he couldn't hold him much longer darted away.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
He glanced about him and saw, his friends fighting with all of their might and the mentors' eyes were fixed on them. A heavy weight knocked the air out of him; Emberfur was smothering him with his pelt. Icepaw reached out and raked his claws down his side with all of his might. He felt dizzy and began to breathe hard. But he knocked Emberfur over butting him with his head and brought his claws down on the soft underbelly. The warrior lay on the floor and then staggering and shaking his head, stood up.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
He vanished from the arena and out of the tunnel. Icepaw stared after him eyes wide. He had won the fight! He would get his warrior name tonight. He stumbled off of the arena and lay sprawled out on the ground, to tired to move. Then darkness washed over him. A few heartbeats later Icepaw opened his eyes to see Leadtail above him.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Good job," he mewed with little emotion, "now go and see Nightfrost, before you pass out again." Icepaw nodded and sat up, resisting the urge to lie back down. He glanced at Snowstorm nuzzling Smallpaw furiously, and Riverpaw who had just finished her fight, and blinked emotionally. Then he bounded into the tunnel and out into the fresh air.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Nightfrost came out without having to be asked and mewed happily, "You sure gave Emberfur some nasty cuts!" Then he lowered his voice, " Serves him right if you ask me." He purred with amusement and started to dab at Icepaw's wounds with water. After a while he put on a few dry leaves wrapped with ferns and grinned, "You know medicine cats can sometimes see the future?" Icepaw nodded and cocked his head, "Well I saw your name and it is wonderful." Nightfrost nodded the almost-warrior off as Smallpaw and Riverpaw approached.
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<p><div name="Normal" align="left" style=" padding: 0.00mm 0.00mm 0.00mm 0.00mm; ">

<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Terrific, you were brilliant!" He meowed to his friends as they passed, going to the medicine cat's den.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"You too!" They said in return. Icepaw wanted to curl up and sleep until full moon, but he had to stay up for the ceremony. After all three apprentices were done being examined by Nightfrost, Shortstar appeared on the ledge and yowled, "Will all cats old enough to catch their own prey come forth?" The apprentices stepped happily forward and stood underneath the rock while they watched the crowd grow. Icepaw's heart fluttered, and he shifted his weight shakily. What was so important about his name that Nightfrost saw it?
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Riverpaw, will you please step forward?" Riverpaw breathed in shakily and stepped onto the ledge. "Ashheart has taught you well, you have become a fine warrior," He turned his gaze on her, "you're warrior name shall be Riverhawk for your ability to seem to fly across the ground." She beamed with

pride as cats gathered around her calling her by her new name.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Smallpaw, please step foreword." Smallpaw advanced without hesitation, "Snowstorm passed her knowledge o you as well as I could have and you are fit to be a warrior," He looked over his son, "Your name shall be Smallfeather, for you hunting ability and knowledge." Smallfeather flaunted himself off as the clan chattered with excitement.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Icepaw, will you please step foreword?" Icepaw drew a breath and wondered if his paws would move, but soon enough he forced them to. "Leadtail has given you a fine gift, use it well." He now watched Icepaw carefully "Your new name shall be Icetalon, in honor of your fighting ability." She finished. The whole clan seemed to surround them; even the kits had wandered out of the nursery. But the three queens were quick to bring them back in, even though Twistedrose didn't have any kits yet.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
After the noise had quieted down and most of the cats were settling in for the night, the young warriors settled in front of the warriors' cavern, their new bed. "Wow I thought the warriors would cut us some slack!" Riverhawk mewed.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Icetalon looked down at his paws thinking about his name, "What's wrong Icetalon?" Smallfeather prompted gently.

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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Icetalon looked up thoughtfully, "Did Nightfrost mention your warrior names?" the apprentices exchanged glances
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"No," Smallfeather replied, "why?" he looked at his friend with a spark of curiosity in his eyes.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"No reason." Icetalon quickly cut in and added, "Boy I could sleep for a whole full moon!" Riverhawk stood up,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Yeah me to." Then all three of them turned and walked to the closest empty nests. "Good night." Sparrowheart said to Icetalon,
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"Night, Sparrowheart." He closed his eyes, feeling Riverhawk's warm fur on one side and Smallfeather's on the other, and the world slipped away.
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Icetalon smelled the air, full of prey scent, unusual for Tree-bare. He found himself at Tallmeadow again <i>how did I get here</i> he wondered to himself. Icetalon's sharp claws sunk into the soft mud as he watched a cat emerge from the grass. "Who are you?" he asked standing up and lashing his tail.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Sorry I didn't mean to startle you." A she-cat with the stench of the rogue-cats appeared, her eyes wide in wonder. Then, the ground began to rumble. Cats from his side of the valley that Tallmeadow was, and the rogue-cat's side thundered into the clearing and began to fight.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Icetalon? Wake up!" He felt a paw prodding him and gasped as he woke up, "You were mewling in your sleep." Smallfeather said washing himself on his side.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Sorry," he said jumping up, "I was just dreaming." He finished and licked his dry mouth.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Yeah, well it's dawn and I am going back to sleep." Icetalon leapt up onto the ridge and climbed out of the little cave, most of the warriors were still asleep; the only ones out of their nests except him were Gentlestep and Emberfur, probably on dawn patrol with some of the elders.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
He stretched out his long powerful legs and shook his head, remembering his dream. What did it mean, and who was the other cat? She didn't seem mean like the other rouges. He trotted out of the camp for a walk like he did every morning, Leadtail used to wake him up and they would go to Tallmeadow and back, He flicked his tail and began to walk. Maybe the walk would help him find out what the dream meant, especially to Tallmeadow. As he strode down the trail to the camp entrance, Riverhawk bounded up to him,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Wait up!" she hissed, before Icetalon could ask anything she said in a matter-of-factly way, "Smallfeather told me where you had left to. I thought I would come." Icetalon shrugged and mewed, as long "As we catch some prey on the way to Tallmeadow."
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
The two cats popped out of the tunnel and Riverhawk immediately hissed, "Why are you going to Tallmeadow?"
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Icetalon shrugged again and said, "I walk there every morning." She glared at him and quickened her pace to match his,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"But it isn't safe now, couldn't we walk to Foresttop instead?" He walked past her nonchalantly and meowed defiantly,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Your not scared are you?" She huffed angrily then spat back,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"No I'm just not stupid." He quickened his pace even more and looked over his shoulder,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"I'm going on if you are scared, go back." He padded onward and a few moments later grinned as he heard her pawsteps behind him.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
The ground felt cold underpaw, even the warm leaves. Such a beautiful day and as he trotted next to Riverhawk he felt a warm sensation about him. A gentle breeze blew across the undergrowth, picking up the scent of prey, Icetalon instinctively dropped into the hunter's crouch and felt Riverhawk drop behind him. He looked steadily around, the cats were near Tallmeadow now, and he spotted the squirrel to the left of him and turned slowly. He crept along the ground silently until he was only a few pawsteps away from it, the muscles in his haunches bunched as he prepared to spring. He leapt, feeling the air rush past him. And landed hard on the morsel, he let it die quickly with a swift bite.
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"Good catch." Riverhawk encouraged happily rubbing against his flank as se shivered. He took her warmth gratefully.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Merrroww!" a yowl from the bushes startled them. A cat knocked Riverhawk over entangling her in a bramble bush so she couldn't get up. But Riverhawk grasped her head in her fury.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color:

White; ">
"Rrrow!" Icetalon bounded over to the cat and scratched her a good bit before she could turn around.
She hit him in the face and raced behind him bowling him over, they rolled through a bunch of bushes
and down a hill where Riverhawk couldn't see them.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color:
White; ">
Holding him down, "What are you doing on our territory eating our prey!" she asked hypothetically,
Icetalon stopped struggling for a moment, the she-cat holding him was the one from his dream!
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color:
White; ">
He knocked her off and said with a surprising softness, "Your <i>territory</i>?" It sounded like a
Frostclan warrior talking.
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White; ">
She was confused, "Y-yes, ours." She lowered her hackles and backed away. He advanced on her and
she started to turn,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color:
White; ">
"No, don't leave, I won't hurt you." She stopped, her eyes were wild with fear and her fur bristled,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Do I know you?" she shrank away. Icetalon began to shake his head then corrected himself,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Meet me here tomorrow at moonrise," He whispered, "and don't tell anyone we met." She nodded solemnly and disappeared into the grass.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Icetalon turned around to see Riverhawk bounding out to him. She must have untangled herself. To convince her he yowled, "And stay out!"
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
She came up to him and hissed, "I told you it wasn't safe here, lets go before anyone else shows up!" They turned and sprinted over logs and across roots, remembering to pick up the squirrel along the way. As they came to the main clearing Icetalon turned to her and whispered, "Please don' tell anyone about the meeting."
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
She met his eyes and kept the gaze for a moment, "Why not?"
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Just please don't." he pleaded gently, giving her a weary, sorrowful look.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Oh alright, as long as you promise not to tell that I got stuck in the bush." He smiled and brushed his fur against hers.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Thank you." Just then, dawn patrol popped out of the bushes, Windclaw, the elder, and Gentlestep and Emberfur.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Hi!" Gentlestep said in a friendly way through a mouthful of prey. Soon enough, the crew of cats disappeared through the tunnel, including the two young warriors.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Shortstar greeted them at the entrance and angrily hissed, "Where have you been? The whole clan has

been worried!" Riverhawk looked at Icetalon uneasily.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"We went for a walk, like I always do in the morning." He mewed coolly; after all, it wasn't a lie. The sunlight dappled over Shortstar's white fur making it seem more harshly white.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Yes… be sure to tell someone where you are going next time." Shortstar eyed them suspiciously giving Icetalon both eyes for a moment then looking away.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Yes, sir." Riverhawk slipped in beginning to walk away.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Riverhawk scowled at Icetalon as he dropped the squirrel into the pitifully small prey pile. She trotted off and left to visit Ashheart in the medicine cat's den. He sighed inwardly, she was mad at him, again! "Icetalon!" he turned to look as Sparrowheart and Twistedrose ran across the clearing, Sparrowheart rubbed against his flank. "I was so worried, are you okay?" he pulled back a little and meowed, "Yes, of course I'm fine."
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"Good," she mewed, seeming to calm down. She licked her shoulder and meowed, "I just thought an eagle had gotten you and Riverhawk." She seemed distracted and turned away to see Riverhawk too.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Twistedrose turned to him, "Are you sure your okay?" she sniffed him daintily. He gave her a steady but nice gaze,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Yes I'm sure I'm fine." Ever since she had become pregnant with Emberfur as her mate, she had been a little hormonal. Twistedrose had come to Frostclan as a rogue or so she claimed. Icetalon was a little suspicious she was to well adapted to a lot of company. But whatever suspicions he had, he thought she might have a good reason for lying. She nodded and turned away to her Emberfur, her mate who nuzzled her and gently smiled.
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Icetalon turned and walked over to the Elders' den, a cave, with a bark door on it. Icetalon was wondering even more about the four clans and felt like talking to Windclaw. He walked into it and looked around, it was very dark; he took comfort in the warm soil under his paws. From a distance, he could hear the elders telling stories, but he only heard two voices, usually there were three. He quickened his pace, using his whiskers to lead him. Cheetahpelt and Darkwind, Where was Windclaw?
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Hello?" Icetalon's eyes adjusted to the dim light to see a scene that was startling if you hadn't expected it.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Yes?" a gruff voice answered. He stood in a crowded den with six cats, not just two. Cheetahpelt's hoarse voice came from a corner, "We were just telling these young kits about the dreaded, mountain lions." The four kits, Twigkit, Whitekit, Mousekit, and Pinekit turned to look at him. Whitekit watched him like he was an intruder cat wanting to kill them all, his red eyes penetrating Icetalon's gaze. Something about this almost-apprentice kit made him nervous. He shook his head and thought `<i>his eyes are probably just making me nervous'</i>
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Where is Windclaw?" The tom stood tall in front of the kits wondering eyes. Darkwind laughed, making him feel quite uneasy and mewed,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"She went to the pond for a drink." Yowling a curt thanks to the elders, he rushed out of the den. The sunlight blinded him for a moment. Windclaw alone with those rogues out there! He pelted out of the camp and through some low undergrowth. `<i>I hope she's okay!'</i> he thought. As he ran, he thought about the sundown the day before, she had been at the river. He skidded to a halt and raced the other way, he had been running the wrong way.
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"Windclaw?" he yowled as he got closer to the stream. "Hello?" he yowled louder this time. He leaned down and sniffed the earth, his nose pointed him foreword. A tangle of vines caught him and covered his eyes.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Icetalon began to pull free of them, but when he finally did he wished he hadn't. "Windclaw…" his voice trailed off and he fought tears. He took a shaky breath and surveyed the scene before him. A long trail of blood down the elder's side and a small cut on her throat. She smelled badly of rogues, but not like the cats he had smelled before, or the ones that had attacked him when he was an apprentice.
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A wail of grief rose from his throat, then a voice came, "Stop whining I'm not dead yet!" It was weak and frail, but determined. Dust sprinkled off of the ground where Windclaw breathed and her eye flashed open. It was dull and glazed in pain and horror, but still open.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
He felt faint with relief for a moment, "Don't worry I'll be right back." Icetalon pelted off faster than he had ever run before, over the logs and branches in a single bound and into the tunnel, across the camp in a flash.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color:

White; ">
Breathless he yowled "Nightfrost!" his head popped out of the medicine cat's den with a bundle of herbs in it. His ears pricked sensing the tension in the other tom's voice. "Windclaw's in trouble, she's bleeding badly."
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"Right," he merged with the darkness for a moment, then he leapt out and ran past Icetalon, "come on!" he meowed as he rushed past with a bundle of herbs in his mouth. Icetalon paused for a moment, breathless and trying to collect his thoughts. Then he took a sharp breath and pushed his legs onward. As he slipped aimlessly through the brambles, he could only see the tip of the medicine cat's dark tail disappearing. Soon the sound of the river thundered into Icetalon's ears. Nightfrost leapt into the clearing in a single leap and bunching his muscles, Icetalon came behind him soon after. Windclaw's eyes were closed, but he could see a slight rise and fall of her flank.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Nightfrost sat down and dropped his pack of herbs. He began inspecting her wounds carefully, and every once and a while he would shove mashed mouse bones into her mouth to kill the pain. Then he began to wash the cut on her side thoroughly, after a while, he wrapped a few dried leaves over her wound and carefully stuck it into place with a paste consisting of sterile soil and mashed and watered tree leaves. The she-cat twitched uncomfortably but made no sound.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Nightfrost shuddered, "What ever did this to her was big, it might have been a mountain lion." Icetalon looked up with fear in his eyes,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Will she be okay?" he murmured sniffing her side. "I don't know." Nightfrost replied sadly hanging his head.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"How will we get her back to the camp?" Icetalon inquired questioningly. His paws prickled with anticipation,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"You carry one side I'll carry the other, I don't think she has to many broken bones." He stated simply. Icetalon lifted her slowly and put her head and shoulders onto his, Nightfrost rested her haunches on his back. And together slowly they made their way back to the camp. The vines and burrs latched onto the toms' bellies relentlessly, but neither gave up. The ageing medicine cat matched the warrior step for step. By the time they got back to camp, it was quite dark, almost moonrise. As they dragged the elder through the tunnel to the camp, Icetalon saw the silhouetted figures of Smallfeather and Shortstar at the entrance.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Immediately, they took Windclaw to Nightfrost's den and laid her down carefully. Shortstar turned to Icetalon, "Get some sleep, we will talk in the morning." His eyes were stern as he suspiciously watched the warrior pad away. Icetalon fell into a crumpled heap as soon as he and Smallfeather got to their nests. Smallfeather lay down beside him, licking his side gently until Icetalon fell into a deep sleep.
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A vague figure of the rouge cat came into the clearing Icetalon found himself in, "Don't forget..." her voice drifted away into the darkness as she disappeared. He felt her warm scent leave on the gentle breeze.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Icetalon rose with a jerk, the rouge! He was supposed to meet her tonight. He felt his energy restore as he raced out of the sleeping hallow, belly low to the ground. Peering back every once in a while to make sure no cat was following him. The tom skirted the edge of the camp and dove into the dirt tunnel. He took a deep breath, raccoons, nothing too dangerous for a warrior. He raised his head proudly and trotted into the trail of undergrowth. After nearly killing four angry raccoons, he was wary of any movement. Finally at moonhigh, he reached the clearing at Tallmeadow. The cold stone felt harsh under his paws and his ears stood erect and alert. The tom's long, blue tinted tail swished unconsciously behind him. He suddenly felt very tired and weak as if his jolt of energy had run out suddenly. If he needed to fight would he have the strength?
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
He called softly into the clearing, a pair of vibrant green eyes appeared and a voice whispered, "You came!" the she-cat he had dreamt of so many times was standing in front of him.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
He felt his throat tighten, her brown glossy fur showed no sign of dulling from lack of food like his and it sparkled in the moonlight. Icetalon's paws prickled, "To start, what's your name?"
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2 - Maplewind

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The moon set slightly above the grass to where Icetalon could see, silvery streaks swept across the dark sky
</title>
</head>
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
The moon set slightly above the grass to where Icetalon could see, silvery streaks swept across the dark sky. Icetalon sighed as he looked at the graceful color swoop across the sky. Maplewind sat beside him silently as she watched with him.

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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Icetalon closed his eyes briefly and when he opened them again he laughed gently, "So you mean to tell me that one of the four clans has been living a few eagle flights away and we didn't notice?"
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"I guess, but I don't think its funny." She looked at him with concern clouding her eyes; "It could cause trouble for our clans."
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Icetalon drew a quick breath, "Then we don't tell anyone." She looked at him blankly. Then she blinked and gave a more understanding look,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Okay." She stood and mewed; "So I'll see you in two nights?" she tilted her head slightly, letting the moonlight spill over her shoulder that had been protected by shadows.
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White; ">
"Of course." He promised. With that the two cats turned and left. As he left Tallmeadow, he heard a rustling in the bushes, a cat! Icetalon tipped his head back and yowled a cry of warning. He saw Maplewind bounding back across the clearing. He clawed into the bushes brutally only to feel a tail. Then he dove into the undergrowth and latched onto a cat's side. A familiar yowl came and Icetalon instantly let go,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Smallfeather?" Maplewind stood at his side now, her fur bristling in alarm. Smallfeather stood up and spat, looking at him with a gaze as sharp as a dagger.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Yes it's me, and what is <i>Maplewind </i>as you call her, doing here?" Icetalon stared in dismay; Smallfeather gave Maplewind an intense look too.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"You were spying on us?" he began to feel a soft hiss crawling slowly into his throat and he began to tremble.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Calm down." Maplewind hushed him softly, calming him with a reassuring lick on the ear.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Why did you come here?" Icetalon hissed in a fiery tone, breathing in his friend's fear scent.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Well I saw you leaving the camp and I as wondering where you were going." He spat back angrily. Icetalon's hackles rose as he saw his friend's claws unsheathe.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"WILL YOU STOP?!?" yowled Maplewind. Icetalon's hackles immediately lowered and Smallfeather looked down at his paws. "You. Promise not to tell <i>anyone </i>about me, or the meeting!" She stared at him as frostily as the cold air. Smallfeather looked at her uncertainly,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"… Well as long as you tell me what you were talking about." He gave Icetalon a mischievous glance and added, "There was a nasty upwind so I couldn't hear a thing. I'm surprised you didn't scent me."
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Icetalon felt Maplewind's muscles relax and hastily added, "It's kind of late we should be going."

Maplewind looked at Smallfeather for a moment then she blushed,
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"Right… goodbye." As she sprinted off into the shadows she looked back and yowled, "Two moon rises." Icetalon nodded and turned away.
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Pinpricks of sunlight filtered through the opening of the cavern, Icetalon rolled over and batted Smallfeather on the ear,
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"Get up you fat stalker." Smallfeather grunted and opened one eye trying feebly to bat his ear back,
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"Why don't you, you lying fool." Then he sat up awkwardly and gave himself a quick wash. The hollow rock was empty; Icetalon stood up and stretched his legs out flexing his claws.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Should we tell Riverhawk?" his voice echoed, empty and tired. Icetalon mewed,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Don't tell her, if she found out she might tell." The two warriors trotted to the exit trying to stretch their muscles one last time before going outside,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Right, she is a girl after all." They began to laugh as the walked into the frosty outside air.
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"What's so funny?" Shortstar stared evenly as both of the warriors dipped their head respectfully. "Never mind, Icetalon, I need to talk to you." Icetalon's eyes shot open. Could he know about Maplewind? His stomach twisted as he made his way on silent paws to the leader's den leaving Smallfeather to stare after him.
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His eyes darted around the clearing and he caught a glimpse of all of Riverhawk who seemed to be in a good mood. She looked after him her jaws slightly parted and her head tilted. Icetalon mouthed, "I'll tell you later." As he disappeared into Shortstar's den.
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The leader strode onto his nest, the one for his mate left empty, "Have a seat." He gestured lazily with his tail towards a stone in the room. Icetalon sat down abruptly and licked his shoulders nervously.
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"I wanted to talk to you about last night." Icetalon's heart lurched, "Windclaw is in a horrible condition and well… frankly I'm not so uncertain her time has come." Icetalon closed his eyes and felt woozy for a moment. "I need to know if you had anything to do with this, excuse my humor, <i>cat</i>astrophe." Icetalon's eyes flashed open with a burning passion sparkling in them,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"I don't find this matter funny, and furthermore, I would never do anything to hurt anyone in this clan!" Icetalon was standing now, lashing his tail.

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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Shortstar hardened his gaze, "Sometimes you make me think otherwise."
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A shocked silence filled the room and seemed to shatter the air, "Wh… wha…" Icetalon looked embarrassedly at his shaking paws. What had he done that was so horrible that Shortstar would accuse him of hurting another clan mate?
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Now did you at least see anything?" the leader sighed resting slightly on his haunches.
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"No." he stated blandly turning to the opening in the cave, "May I go?" Shortstar smirked and glared at the warrior angrily,
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"Yes."
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As he left into the clearing, he felt his heart thud impatiently, trying to beak out of his chest. Suddenly his throat grew hot and tears welled into his eyes, blurring his surroundings. Icetalon staggered blindly toward the tunnel that lead out of the camp. His head popped out of the tunnel only to hear voices behind him calling his name.
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The tom rushed toward the most soothing place he could think of; Foresttop. He sprinted onto the high flat rock that barely stuck out of the top of the forest and latched on. The rock went straight up and his claws scaled the bare rock easily. At the top he collapsed and heaved a sigh, letting the warm sun heat his body. His eyes cleared and he relaxed, to see two cats climb up the rock and walk silently next to him.
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Riverhawk and Smallfeather shared a glance and lay down on opposite sides of their miserable friend. Riverhawk licked him gently on the face,
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"Now tell me what's wrong." Her tortoiseshell fur brushed against his blue-gray pelt. Icetalon looked up puzzled,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"What did I do?" he asked. Smallfeather looked puzzled as well and tilted his head feeling the cold heat surrounding him,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"What <i>did</i> you do?" Riverhawk glared at him for his insensitive words then glanced back at Icetalon, "I must've done something to make Shortstar angry, he said I…" he felt Smallfeather's fur bristle, "I was not loyal."
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Smallfeather stood up and lashed his tail angrily, "Are you mad? My father would never say anything like that!" Riverhawk stood also, but Smallfeather continued, "You did do something, you met Maplewind! You aren't loyal!" Icetalon stood up, the spell of peace broken. "You didn't tell him either, you weren't loyal!" he hissed angrily.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Maplewind?" a soft voice came from Riverhawk. "Oh no…" meowed Smallfeather, "I didn't mean to, I got so angry and it just…" Icetalon frowned and mewled, "I lost my temper I'm, sorry."
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Just tell me, who is Maplewind?" yowled Riverhawk. "Right," mewed Icetalon, "A while back I had a dream," the three friends sat down as Icetalon told his story, "It was about a she-cat." He glanced at Riverhawk.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Do you remember that intruder cat we met with?" Riverhawk's jaws parted slightly, "It was her wasn't it?" she asked in a sorrowful voice,
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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Yes, she and I met last night. It turns out that there is another clan!"
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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Do you mean to say that her clan is the clan that has been attacking ours?" Riverhawk said, tasting each word like it was a vile rat.
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Icetalon looked genuinely surprised, "It… might… have… been… but, Windclaw told me about two other clans."
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Smallfeather cut him off, "So that could mean one of the two other clans could have attacked us, and could still be near!"
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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Why didn't you tell me until now?!" Riverhawk rolled tiredly onto her back warming her pretty white underbelly.
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"I didn't think it mattered." Lied Icetalon. Riverhawk rolled back over and gave him a facetious look, "Ice, for a warrior who does an awful lot of lying, you're bad at it." Then she hopped up and batted both of his ears and rolled Smallfeather onto his back as a barrier between him and her.
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Smallfeather immediately hopped to his paws and began to be her cat shield. Icetalon pounced on him and Smallfeather couldn't get him off. Riverhawk dragged him off by his scruff and began to prance around him,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color:
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"Can't catch me!" Icetalon gave her an irritated look,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color:
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"You apprentice." And the three warriors took off down the rock.
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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color:
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"Will all cats old enough to catch their own food please step up?" as Shortstar began his speech,
Icetalon, Riverhawk, and Smallfeather mingled with the growing crowd of cats. Cold air nipped through
Icetalon's fluffed coat, he ended up next to Twistedrose, Emberfur, and fully recovered Ashheart.
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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Chilly night, eh?" smiled Ashheart shivering a little and giving Icetalon a playful look,
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Yes, those kits- I mean apprentices hopefully will not freeze before the ceremony."
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"Whitekit, Twigkit, Pinekit, and Mousekit, please step forward. Whitekit come here." the kit glanced around nervously with her blood red eyes. "Your mentor will be, Nightfrost." Everycat congratulated him heartily as Nightfrost stepped foreword and rubbed his pitch-black fur against Whitepaw's snow-white fur. This kit was chosen to be the medicine cat's apprentice.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Shortstar called, "Pinekit, you are now Pinepaw and your mentor will be Riverhawk." Icetalon gaped. Riverhawk gaped. Smallfeather gaped. Then Riverhawk caught herself and grinned giving obvious pleasure to her new apprentice.
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"Mousepaw," the apprentice's eyes gleamed, "Your new mentor is, Smallfeather." Smallfeather paused for a moment to thank his proud father and congratulated his new apprentice.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Twigkit, your new mentor will be," Shortstar paused and his crystal blue eyes stared at Icetalon for a moment skeptically. "Ashheart" he finished looking away to focus on the awestruck mentor beside Icetalon. He glanced at Icetalon uncomfortably the shouldered his way through the thick crowd to meet with his new apprentice who nuzzled him happily. Icetalon blinked, he looked up at the four new mentors to see Riverhawk and Smallfeather happily overlooking the crowd.
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A sudden cry of pain and distress broke from next to Icetalon making him jump up. Shocked whispers broke out and the cry came again, it was Twistedrose, she was about to have kits! Emberfur, who was at her side, yowled protectively standing over his beloved mate, "Nightfrost, come here, quickly!" Nightfrost began to make his way hastily through the crowd.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
He called to his apprentice, "Whitepaw, come, help Twistedrose to the nursery." He glanced at his apprentice as the young cat scurried to his mentor's side, "This will be your first lesson." Then Nightfrost disappeared into his den. Whitepaw helped the panting queen to the nursery, the other queens, Shadowface, never leaving their sides, and Dawnflower, preparing the nursery.
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The rest of the clan finished off the night with a meal, large, at least for Earthblanket. With Riverhawk and Smallfeather sharing night meal with their apprentices, Icetalon felt a loss at what to do. He sat next to Sparrowheart and began to eat a fat crow, but it was no use trying to talk, she was nervous to death about Twistedrose. She always got nervous when a queen gave birth. But as she jabbered on Icetalon

found his thoughts wandering. <i>Why didn't I get an apprentice?</i> He wondered. <i>And why is Shortstar so mad at me?</i>
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But his thoughts were interrupted as Nightfrost came out of the nursery, supporting Whitepaw at his side, who was looking petrified. "Four healthy kits and a healthy mother!" He called as Icetalon stood and trotted toward bed. He would see the kits tomorrow, he was too weary to even think straight now.
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Dark thoughts curled and mixed with light ones making Icetalon feel strangely feeble. Suddenly his eyes shot open, he was in a sweat and panting. <i>It must have been a bad dream… </i> He thought, trotting lightly and wearily out of the cavern. A Fluffy white sheet covered the ground by two whole mouse's bodies! It was defiantly Earthblanket, the most dangerous time of the year. Mountain lions came out more often because of their hunger and the lack of food.
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Icetalon stepped onto the snow letting his feet sink in and then taking a bite of the cold, watery ice for a drink. Then he glanced around to see two other cats in the clearing, "Good morning!" his voice echoed mercilessly across the field of snow.
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The two cats looked up cheerily and called back, "Good morning, Icetalon!" Icetalon soon recognized Riverhawk, and Smallfeather, who as never up so early. He began to trot towards the two cats, who

exchanged meaningful glances and looked up again quickly. The snow began to feel even colder as it collected on his broad shoulders. Then he shook and glared at them.
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"You two were talking about me weren't you?" Smallfeather's eyes grew big and round like two blooming flowers facing the sun, and shook his head vigorously.
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Riverhawk just gave Smallfeather an irritated look and coolly mewed to Icetalon, "No, we were talking about…"
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
Smallfeather half-yowled-half- bawled, "No we were talking about, err, umm, mice," He blurted out, trying for an innocent look, "They are <i>so</i> hard to catch these days!" Icetalon sighed, facilely looked him in the eyes and mewed.
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"I know you were talking about me."
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"SOOO? You don't know what we were talking about, about you!" Then Smallfeather gave a puzzled
look to Riverhawk.
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She whacked him upside the head and mewed, "Look, this was really important and it just, well
happened to be about… you!" Icetalon cocked his head slightly and began to speak.
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Smallfeather cut him off, "It was only about a few things, like, Maplewind and you not having an
apprentice for instance." Then he gave a quizzical look to Icetalon, "I guess you know what we were
talking about now." At this point, Riverhawk looked as if she would blow a fuse. Icetalon began to speak
again but Riverhawk cut him off.
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"I was wondering if I could come and meet Maplewind!" she mewed quietly. Icetalon sighed and began
to speak again, but Smallfeather put his tail to Icetalon's mouth to signal for him to be quiet as a few
more clan cats bounded into the clearing. "We'll talk later." Said Riverhawk, walking toward an
approaching cat in a casual way. Smallfeather stayed by his side and grinned uneasily scooting away on
his haunches. Icetalon's ears drooped and he trotted away to the nursery.
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White; ">
The tough, gnarly, cryophyte tunnel curled in sharply as Icetalon walked down the path, which he had not often been down. A fork in the road stopped him, <i>which way was it again? </i> He thought. Brashly he turned down the left way, hearing a few muffled mews from behind.
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The tom pricked his ears as he hid unnoticed in the shadows, "I will be the clan leader one day, and I should be now anyways."
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<p style="text-indent: 12.50mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Well, I… err." An unsure voice came from one of the two emerging cats. Then a cat's gleaming eyes turned the corner. Laughing uneasily the same cat's voice came, trying to change the subject, "Oh, umm… which way do we go?" suddenly the cats' scents drifted into Icetalon's nostrils as he parted his jaws. Leadtail and Emberfur the two were best friends as well as rivals for Twistedrose's attention, but since she had taken Emberfur as her mate, things had cooled off between them.
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A thought occurred to Icetalon; what if they chose the wrong way and found him spying on them? He closed his eyes, took a deep breath and stepped out in front of them, "Oh, hi! I went the wrong way, can you believe that?" Trying to sound cheery, he stepped off into the right tunnel, "Well, good day." He meowed as he walked seemingly happily down the walkway.
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"We were a little lost too, glad you came along." Emberfur's cheeriness sounded just as fake as Icetalon's.
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Leadtail's shoulders stiffened for a moment and then relaxed, "Yes, lead the way." He gave Icetalon an alarmingly happy gaze and nodded to the tunnel. After a silent walk, light suddenly broke into the path and the nursery sat before them.
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Twistedrose and Shadowface lay next to each other. Shadowface nodded a hello and whispered gently into the sleeping queen's ear. Twistedrose twitched and lifted her head; her face was full of exuberance at seeing the three visitors. Emberfur gave out a quiet purr and lay down next to her, thoroughly washing her and her kittens. Icetalon noticed that all of the kittens were striped ginger and orange like flames. That is, all except for one, one was grey, like Leadtail, but Leadtail showed no emotion at the kits or Twistedrose. Emberfur did not seem to notice, or if he did notice he didn't seem to care. As he watched the kittens mewl, searching for their mother's milk and kneading her belly in delight, he smiled softly, almost forgetting his predicament, "Do they have names yet?" he asked gently.
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Twistedrose shook her head unhappily and looked up at him tiredly, "I get to name them?" Icetalon gave a bewildered look to Emberfur who whispered something into her ear. She nodded her head understandingly and smiled, "Well then… maybe, well I never thought about it!" She gave a thorough look to each cat in the room, "Will you all help me?" she questioned hesitantly. Each cat nodded their head and began to look thoughtful.
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Icetalon, however was thinking about other matters, what was Leadtail talking about earlier, owning the clan? Why did Twistedrose not know about naming her kits? Then a thought rolled into his head like tumbleweed out of nowhere; was Twistedrose from another clan? Why couldn't it be? After all, there were four clans; maybe she was a spy from another clan! But then why would she have kits at this clan?
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Icetalon shook the thoughts from his head as Shadowface's voice drifted into his ears, "What about Moonkit? You are always talking about t he moon!"
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Twistedrose twitched her ears and mewed passionately, "The grey one will be Moonkit." Icetalon caught a secret glance between Leadtail and Twistedrose that left the tom's eyes sparkling. Then she glanced at Emberfur happily and meowed, "Right, sweetie?" Emberfur nodded and gave the oddball a quick lick on the head so that it bawled.
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"He likes it." Leadtail's deep voice surprised Icetalon; he hadn't spoken since entering the nursery.
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Shadowface mewed abruptly, "I think it is time for you cats to leave, It is time for moon-meal." Then she

cast a glance from her paws to the cats, "Get going then!" she urged them to the exit of the cave. Emberfur looked a little startled at Twistedrose's brash farewell, but got up soundlessly to follow the other toms.
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"Maplewind!" Icetalon bounded onto the stone slab in Tallmeadow, mewing his friend's name with a touch of satisfied purr at seeing her. When he reached her side he touched her nose with his politely and sat down next to her happily.
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She twitched her whiskers uneasily, "Umm, I don't know how to say this but…"
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Icetalon's happiness seemed to dissolve quickly and he gave an uneasy grin, "I have to tell you something too, you go first…"
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With that, Maplewind yowled an unfamiliar name, "Sparkpelt, Lilytail, come out!" Two shadowy silhouettes slipped from the grass on the far side of the meadow. They gave him an aggressive snarl.
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Icetalon half stood up and let his hackles raise, "Riverhawk, Smallfeather, come here!" he yowled; taking comfort in his two friend's aggressively raising their hackles too. Smallfeather's powerful muscles tensed and Riverhawk's mouth curled into a snarl, letting a nasty hiss escape her mouth. "There was only supposed to be one cat!" promised Icetalon in alarm, then he stepped forward, "Enough!" He gave each cat that had just come into the clearing an angry look. Riverhawk stayed as close to his side as she could, Smallfeather cast a shadowy glance across the row of cats,
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