

SkyClan Epic

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1 - SkyClan

Chapter One

SkyClan

Wind rushed, the water twisted as if in its final death throws. The dark storm clouds shed tears of sorrow as thunder boomed angrily across the sky. Waves rose high, as their white crests swelled in size until they were thrown unto a lonely beach on a smallish sandy island. Pepper, a small gray black spotted she-cat, fought to stay above water her green and blue eyes looked to the sky hoping for her tiny paws to hit solid ground once more. She thought she heard her friend Birdie but couldn't see her. Coughing and spitting out water Pepper stretched out her paws and swam all the harder. Birdie! she screamed loudly. But the black cat was not there. Birdie! Bird where are you? she called once more, her rasping voice barely notable over the crash of the waves.

A wave crashed over her head, shoving Pepper down deep into the watery depths of darkness. Pepper struggled to the surface trying to get her breath, but completely unable to. Gasping for air Pepper was again thrown head over tail on a swell. Swimming to the surface the small gray she-cat took a desperate gasp of air, she was almost at her end, soon she would not be able to go on, not another paw stroke.

Time went on and on, Pepper reached out her paws each time expecting it to be the last. Time and time again she was thrown under water by a huge wave crashing in over top of her, but each time she somehow managed to stay afloat. Pepper looked up at the dark cloudy sky and breathed, Help me!

All of a sudden Pepper felt tiny bits of gravel under her paws. Overjoyed the small she-cat reached down again and began to push herself towards what she hoped was shore. As the water grew more shallow Pepper began to make out a beach, waving grasses, and tall trees whipping in the wind. Land! After hours in the cold water Pepper had made it! She had made it to land!

A final wave pushed her onto the shore. Exhausted all Pepper could do was crawl a little further on shore before collapsing gratefully down onto the ground she had thought she would never feel again. Pepper closed her eyes and tried to keep her breathing level, but could not. The throbbing in her paws had become worse ever since she had been ripped from the rocks of her seaside home where she had lived happily until now. Pepper shoved back the thoughts of home, and concentrated on trying to get to sleep. Taking a deep breath Pepper curled her small body up into a ball and although she was shivering and hurting slowly drifted into slumber.

Pepper had no idea where she was. Where Birdie was. Where her home was. Who lived here? What was there to eat? Fresh water. Shelter. All those things that back home had seemed unimportant now were the things that would mean the difference between life and death for this young cat.

Sunlight touched Pepper's sore and weary body. The sound of the waves were loud in her ears but yet she did not move.

Pepper! Pepper, wake up!

Pepper did not move.

Birdie gently poked Pepper.

Pepper moaned pitifully.

Come on Pepper, wake up!

Pepper twitched but made no reply.

Frustrated and worried, Birdie jumped on top of her friend.

Shocked and alarmed at being leaped upon, Pepper reacted accordingly and clawed her friend.

The two friends were soon fighting and playing, happy to be together again.

Birdie! Where were you? shouted Pepper as she lovingly nuzzled Birdie's head. I was so worried!

You were worried? You were the one that wouldn't wake up! Just imagine how I worried I was.

Pepper shrugged. In the storm I thought you drowned!

Well, we're okay now.

YEAH! But now what are we going to do?

I really have no idea.

There was a strong gust of wind, blowing the cat's fur back and roaring in their ears. Suddenly Pepper looked up. Birdie & she said quietly, her eyes fixed on a clump of grasses. I smelled something.

What do you think it is?

I don't know, said Pepper taking a step nearer. Let's go check it out!

Okay.

Slowly Pepper inched toward the outcrop of grass. I hope it is a snake!

Uh, I don't.

Maybe it's a mouse! I'm super hungry! said Pepper.

Do you even know how to catch a mouse?

I don't know, it shouldn't be too hard, I saw a lion catching zebras on TV last week. It didn't look that hard.

Yeah, but you're not a lion.

So, same concept!

Maybe, whatever.

Catching mice is hard, said a strange voice. Rabbits are even harder. I sprained my paw the last time I tried for one of those.

Birdie was stunned and surprised. h- Who're you?

Slowly two ginger colored ears emerged from the grass blades. No one.

YOU must be someone! piped up Pepper peering at the other cat horrendously.

But if it wasn't someone then it would be no one and nobody doesn't have a voice.

My& the cat paused, looking at Pepper and then back at Birdie. My name is IvyFoot& Who are you? he continued trying to sound brave.

Um, my name's Birdie and this is my very best friend Pepper.

You shouldn't be here! said IvyFoot loudly. A patrol could come by any time now!

Well, said Pepper. Where do you say we should go? Back in the sea with all the fishes and sharks?

No! I just& Don't know what to do with you. I mean you are on SkyClan land.

Wow! I don't know what that means.

You don't? asked IvyFoot amazed.

Uh, no not really

There are four Clans on this Island, said IvyFoot. SkyClan is my birth clan; there is ForestClan, MeadowClan, and NightClan. I can't believe you don't know that!

Well, we've never really been here before.

Yeah! said Pepper. We were blown here in a storm from where we live.

Where s that? asked IvyFoot.

I don t know exactly.

If you live on the mainland I guess you won t be getting back there anytime soon, Kittypets don t swim well I ve heard, and I guess that s what you are, so why don t you just stay here.

What are you talking about?

IvyFoot flipped back his ears infuriately. You are a Kittypet. I am a ClanCat. You live with two-legged. I live with SkyClan. You can t get back so I said that you can come back to Camp with me.

Ah.

I m asking you to join my Clan.

Really?

Yeah, don t sound grateful whatever you do! said IvyFoot exasperated.

Sorry, thank you so much!

IvyFoot snorted. WildStar may not let you in.

WildStar, who s he? asked Pepper.

Yeah, who s he?

WildStar is *only* the greatest leader ever, and the leader of SkyClan! said IvyFoot as he began to gather the plants he had been collecting. And if he doesn t like you& well let s just get going.

IvyFoot turned and leapt away. The two other cats hurriedly following him off through the tall waving grass. As they ran Birdie suddenly realized that her paw was hurting and she was having an extra difficult time keeping up.

Wait up! I hurt my paw! Birdie yelled ahead at Pepper and IvyFoot.

IvyFoot skidded to a stop and turned. Just like a Kittypet! He pushed a sympathetic Pepper aside to look at Birdie s injured paw. With a sigh he said, I can t do much about it here, do you think you can make it back to camp?

I don t know, how far is it?

Not too much father, I m the Medicine Cat s apprentice so after WildStar see s you I ll look you both

over. I m sure after spending all night out in that storm you both will get colds!

Thanks for the confidence in our health... AHHH-CHOOO!!!

Well, I guess I could make it. Thank you again.

IvyFoot shrugged and again started off through the forest his plants carried in his mouth. The tall trees looked down on them grimly making Pepper quiver. They were in a strange place, with this strange cat. Could she and Birdie really trust him? Was IvyFoot really telling them the truth?

"We're almost there!" called IvyFoot back at them. "I'll take you to see WildStar first then I'll take care of Birdie's Paw. How are you doing Birdie?"

"I feel like my paw's about to fall off," Birdie complained.

IvyFoot did not reply only kept walking with an added swiftness. The three cats reached a slight rise and began to jog up it, the forest trail under their paws making soft sounds as the old dry leaves broke and crumbled. Struggling along Birdie and Pepper worked their way up the hill panting and gasping for breath as cold wind blew in their faces. Then they were at the top.

"See I told you you'd make it!" said IvyFoot with a smile. "This is SkyClan Camp! Over there is the Medicine Cat Den, that's where I live, and over there the Warrior and Apprentice s Den as well as the nursery where the Queen's and Kits are. There's IceWind SkyClan's Deputy he'll know where WildStar is come on!"

Lightly IvyFoot leapt down the hill and into the grassy clearing that made up SkyClan Camp toward a very large gray tom.

"IceWind," said IvyFoot. "I found these two Kittypets on the beach, what should I do about them?"

Well, gee, are they all right? You better get them somewhere they can rest up. WildStar probably won t be very happy, but he just left to go somewhere and didn t tell me where he was going, just to look after the camp while he was gone, and I don t think he ll be back for a long time. I guess someone ought to get them something to eat, but I can t, I ll find someone to do that and after that you can tell me everything that happened and maybe after that we can -

I ll do that sir, interrupted IvyFoot loudly. I ll go take care of them now and come and tell you *all* about it later! Okay? Okay! Good bye Sir. I ll talk to you later.

Okay, well I ll go get someone to get some food, I wonder if there s any left from this morning, if there isn t who should I get? Maybe, LeafyFace and BramblePaw or FoxHunter and SkyPaw or

You do that. Wonderful! Great thinking! I ll go and take care of them now, said IvyFoot backing away from the deputy. So I ll see you later Sir! Then glancing at the two friends whispered, Quick, get going before he starts in again!

IceWind looked, unconcerned at the retreating cats and continued mumbling about whom to send

hunting as he walked away toward the Warrior s den.

Hey, IvyFoot is that you out there? You ve been gone much longer than I expected, HollyGaze the black and white Medicine Cat called.

Yeah, it s me, said IvyFoot leading the way into the welcoming Medicine Cat Den. I found two Kittypets on the beach and one of them is hurt.

AHHH-CHOOO!

And sick.

Well, we ll just need to fix that. IvyFoot get me poppy seeds and cobwebs. HollyGaze said, looking at the young cats. She continued to look them over and diagnose them with all sorts of little problems that were really not all too important, but took care of Birdie s paw and their colds with her medicines.

About midway though Birdie s cure a small tortoiseshell she-cat limped painfully into the mouth of den and sat down with a long dreadful sigh.

Goodness, what did you do now? HollyGaze asked irately.

The green-eyed she-cat looked up at them with tears in her eyes. I m not cutout to be a mentor! she said loudly, with a wailing quality to her voice.

HollyGaze sighed, Seriously, what happened?

Battle practice with BramblePaw, he beat me to a pulp in a matter of moments.

Well no wonder, laughed IvyFoot. He s so fat he could crush the greatest Warrior without even trying!

Well, you better let me have a look at you. Where does it hurt?

EVERYWHERE! screamed LeafyFace furiously. I don t care what you do with me! Leave me here to die alone! Just as long as I don t have to have anymore battle practice, death will be a great relief!

No need to get all, dramatic, you aren t going to die as long as I m around. said Holly Gaze. Now get over here, and Ivy foot, take these two Kittypets somewhere to sleep, it ll be much too loud in here and they re already falling asleep on their paws.

IvyFoot glanced at LeafyFace and tried his best NOT TO LAUGH at her, although event the mere sight of her made him want to fall to the ground and laugh very hard. Come on, he said flicking his tail at Pepper and Birdie. There s a nice spot just outside the Camp where you can sleep until WildStar gets back. I ll be right back to help you HollyGaze.

YOU DID WHAT?!?! exclaimed the very angry WildStar later that evening.

Well, they were sick, and IvyFoot brought them back to the camp anyway, and they just looked so pathetic and helpless. I figured since they were already there anyway I couldn't just get rid of them just like that, especially with everyone there watching and everything, I might as well help them at least until I came and found you since you obviously need to

Shut up IceWind! You had no right to even let them into the camp! What were you thinking?

Well, like I said they were already there when IvyFoot came and told me. I was busy and couldn't be watching every single cat that came into camp. In fact, I'm pretty sure I left someone in charge of that, oh, who was it, oh, yeah, I left NightPaw to do that. IceWind replied feeling much more sure of himself.

YOU'RE APPRENTICE?!?!?

IceWind cringed, all of his confidence leaving him. Well, everybody else was busy doing more important things and he's been a lot better about paying attention and doing his job lately, I thought it would be a good opportunity to test him.

WildStar rolled his eyes. By now NightPaw will be miles away from here playing with LightPaw and ThornPaw!

It wasn't my fault! It-it was IvyFoot's for bringing them here. *He* found them, *he* brought them here. I only told him that you'd have to see them and I *told* him you wouldn't like it, but he didn't seem to care, so I said just to take care of them till you got here and then we'd deal with the problem but then you got back and got all mad at me and I told you they were sick and you told me to shut up and I said I was busy and that NightPaw was watching the entrance and you got mad at me again and then I told you it wasn't my fault and that it was IvyFoot's and

Shut up! shouted WildStar walking quickly away from his deputy. Just shut up and tell me where they are in a **short, comprehensible**, sentence!

Outside camp, to the left.

Thank you! shouted WildStar as he ran off in that direction.

Birdie lay sleeping in the long grasses just outside SkyClan Camp, her black fur moving slightly in the light wind. Pepper lay awake, with her blue eyes just slits watching IvyFoot hunt around the grass clump for peppermint.

Hi IvyFoot, said Pepper.

Hi, IvyFoot said.

What are you doing? asked Pepper getting up to see what he was doing. Are you looking for something?

Yes, I am. Just another of HollyGaze s many missions for me to find some herb or plant for her.

Yeah, said Pepper unsure of what to say. That s nice.

IvyFoot couldn t think of anything to say, so he remained silent.

Thanks for saving us, said Pepper following IvyFoot closely.

Oh, yeah, really, you shouldn t be thanking me.

What do you mean? asked Pepper looking into IvyFoot s eyes. I don t understand.

I m sorry, but I couldn t help it, I felt bad for you out there, all alone, but seriously, you were probably better off out in the wilderness than you are here.

IvyFoot you re not making any sense, what are you talking about?

Look, I shouldn t have taken you here; I should have known it wouldn t work. I just acted on impulse I guess. But the point is, WildStar isn t going to be happy about this and you could easily be in a lot of danger here if he gets mad. Most Clan cats don t like Kittypets, especially WildStar.

Valiant speech IvyFoot, you can think on controlling further impulses while hunting for the Elders for a half moon!

WildStar!

Yes, I m back! Now go about your task!

Yes, sir, IvyFoot walked quickly, and worriedly away.

And now for you! snarled the large gray tom. I don t care who you are! Or where you came from! You don t belong here! And I will stop it!

Pepper s eyes got very large at the sight of the huge gray tom snarling at her she backed up and stepped very hard on Birdie. Birdie run! said Pepper loudly as her friend woke up very suddenly.

It won t do you any good! growled WildStar his eyes flashing with rage. Suddenly WildStar seemed to lose all track of all sanity, snarling the huge tom arched his back and began to move towards them. Frightened Pepper backed even farther running into Birdie and tripping on her. With one powerful movement WildStar had both Birdie and Pepper on their backs pined to the ground. Raising a huge paw with huge shining caws full extended.

Don t touch them! yelled IvyFoot, running between WildStar and Birdie and Pepper.

Get out of my way IvyFoot!

Suddenly HailStorm darted in front of everyone. WildStar stop! Just think for a second. Think what you're doing! The clan needs strength; this is not the time for something like this!

Get out of my way! You may be my brother HailStorm but I will not stand for the breaking of the Warrior Code!

The Clan itself is more important than the Code and you know it! The Clan could use young cats like them now. The other clans are growing greater than us; even today we dealt with invading patrols. You cannot do this.

I am the Leader and this is my Clan! shouted WildStar, beginning to tremble.

And the Leader should make decisions that help the Clan when it needs it, not pass up opportunities. Don't you see, just what we've needed has walked right into our camp?

WildStar backed up, breathing hard, the wild look in his sea blue eyes lessening until he was nearly gone. HailStorm? said WildStar confused. What are- why are you staring at me for?

WildStar why don't you go get some rest, you've had a busy day. Don't worry about these cats here; I'll take care of them. Just go, maybe have a lengthy conversation with IceWind, I'll take care of everything, said HailStorm.

Slowly WildStar backed away a paw step, unsure and very confused, as if he had almost not been there ready to kill Pepper and Birdie moments before. Alright, he said slowly regaining his confidence. Match these two with Mentors and have them ready tonight for the ceremony, he continued, completely back to himself once more, and without another word jogged off towards Camp.

Alright, acknowledged HailStorm, turning to the frightened young cats behind him, Hey, are you alright? I'm sorry about WildStar, don't tell him I said this, but he really loses it sometimes, as you've noticed. Oh, and by the way IvyFoot you'd better go tell HollyGaze about what happened here.

I'm supposed to hunt for the Elders, said IvyFoot, still recovering from the shock of actually doing something heroic.

Forget it, WildStar probably already has too anyway, said Hailstorm, Just go tell HollyGaze. Then, turning once again to face Birdie and Pepper as IvyFoot darted off, it's okay now, WildStar isn't going to hurt you, he wasn't himself back there. So, what are your names anyway?

I'm P-Pepper, said Pepper standing very slowly. And& and this is my friend, Birdie.

Hello, my name is HailStorm. I am to match you with Mentors so you can be trained to be Warriors, so I'll need you to talk to be a lot about yourselves so I can make a good match.

Many hours passed, while HailStorm slowly calmed the two cats down. After a time, HailStorm began to really know the two before him, Birdie's thoughtfulness and Pepper's boldness. Pepper was determined

and outgoing, while Birdie was kind and loving. Speaking softly HailStorm learned all about them and after the sun began to set had matched them with Mentors. As the first stars of night began to appear HailStorm stood and looked them both in the eye.

It is time, he said gently. This is the last day you will be known by your names you came to the Island with, you will be given new names and be given to a mentor to learn to be Warriors among us. Come, I hear WildStar's call.

The two young cats followed him through the long grass and into the clearing of SkyClan camp. Already almost the whole clan was there, circled around a largish rock protruding from the ground where WildStar stood. Among the cats Pepper picked out IvyFoot, his ginger and white coat standing out from the other darker cats. HailStorm leapt up onto the rock, and whispered in WildStar's ear, glancing at them from time to time. Nodding, WildStar sent his brother back among the other cats where he sat beside IceWind and HollyGaze. WildStar's gray coat shone in the moonlight, the true picture of a star, here on earth.

When all the cats had fallen silent WildStar spoke, Never before has SkyClan been in such great need before, even on this very day a NightClan patrol has been seen on our land, there has never been a time when SkyClan has been in greater need of young Warriors to carry on the fight. And so today we will name two young cats as SkyClan apprentices. They may be outsiders but none less able to fight for SkyClan.

Birdie, he said loudly, as the black she-cat stepped forwards. From this day forward, until you have earned your warrior name you will be called, EbonyPaw. You will be mentored by my brother, HailStorm.

Birdie raised her head high, and then as HailStorm came and stood beside her she dipped her head then, by instinct rather than being told EbonyPaw licked his shoulder.

Pepper, said WildStar turning his eyes upon her. From this day forwards, until you have earned your warrior name you will be called, PepperPaw. Your mentor will be WindRunner.

A black and white tom emerged from the crowd and stood beside the small gray she-cat and turned his kind green eyes upon her. Slowly Pepper touched her nose to his, breathing in his scent deeply, memorizing it in her mind. They were a part of SkyClan now.

2 - Hunting

Chapter Two

Hunting

Sun shone down upon SkyClan camp brightly, encouraging small spring flowers to render their petals and share their color with the world. The wind from the sea blew strongly, sending the smells of spring into every cat's nose, young kits ran outside their den, playing and laughing, while their mothers watched them closely. Warriors ran through the woods and along the beach on patrols, as those with apprentices battle practiced in the meadow outside the clan. IvyFoot and his mentor walked the woodland trails, looking for plants to restock their den.

PepperPaw and EbonyPaw were with their new mentors finding the scents of the other clans. HailStorm and WindRunner showed them the place where NightClan had been hunting the day before on SkyClan land and made them study the scents they found there. All the time they were around the Snake Rocks inspecting NightClan scent both HailStorm and WindRunner stayed on watch, constantly scenting the air for a possible NightClan attack. The danger they could possibly be in was lost upon PepperPaw and EbonyPaw, they didn't really understand the trouble their new Clan could be in.

When the sun was nearly at its zenith the four cats turned back to the forest walking along SkyClan border looking for game, HailStorm had spotted a woodland rabbit when EbonyPaw darted forwards and before HailStorm could even blink had captured the rabbit between her paws.

What do I do with it? she called back looking worriedly back at her mentor.

HailStorm laughed and stepped in and killed the rabbit for her. With a few words of praise urged her to continue on. PepperPaw tried her luck at catching a bird but ending up with a paw full of feathers. WindRunner laughed kindly at her and directed her on stalking; she tried but ended up waving her short tail in the air comically. For the rest of the day the new apprentices had hunting practice, EbonyPaw killed two more prey, while PepperPaw captured nothing..

Back at camp LeafyFace lay lazily in the sun, resting her battered body peacefully away from her apprentice and mocking *friends*. Feeling the warm sun on her dark fur LeafyFace turned over on her back and let the sun warm her belly.

What are you doing? asked a voice above her. Shouldn't you be out with BramblePaw?

Sleeping in the sun, Med Cat's orders, said LeafyFace opening her eyes. Is that you WildStar? I can't see you with the sun behind you like that.

Yes it is, said WildStar almost laughing. Mind if I sit down?

No, as long as you keep quiet, said LeafyFace curling up again for a nap.

I just saw your sister, she is doing very well.

I'm glad, muttered LeafyFace. I hope your kits look like you.

WildStar's eyes gleamed proudly. SpottedFur will do well I hope.

LeafyFace sighed. Uh huh.

Do you remember when you first became a Warrior?

I wish I could forget it, said LeafyFace loudly. You pestered me night and day.

I was in love.

With four other she-cats at the same time as me, muttered LeafyFace. I'm glad you settled on SpottedFur, she is very pretty.

You are right, said WildStar. But I still think about us.

That's nice, I'm going for a walk, said LeafyFace rising quickly.

Don't go, begged WildStar.

WildStar, there is no more *us*, so you can just forget it, said LeafyFace beginning to walk away. Why don't you take BramblePaw out for battle practice? He'd like that.

WildStar stood and was about to follow her, but stopped, she was right and he knew it. Turning he walked away to find BramblePaw it would be good to see how the young cat was doing.

Quickly LeafyFace ran down the trail and towards the beach. She just had to get away from WildStar and the Clan for a time, to be by herself just for awhile. Coming to the sandy beach wind whipped along the waters blowing back her fur from her face. Walking out into the sand LeafyFace began to walk along the shoreline looking out to sea and watching the sea birds sweep and dive at fish down below them.

Hello there, said a voice suddenly, LeafyFace started. I didn't mean to startle you, said the cat again.

Oh RobinHeart, said LeafyFace coming eye to eye with the handsome red tom. I didn't see you & am I on MeadowClan Land? she asked fearfully.

You are, said RobinHeart evenly.

I am so sorry, I'll leave.

You don't have to, said RobinHeart his white tipped tail twitching. Stay awhile, I don't mind.

Alright, said LeafyFace slowly. How is MeadowClan, I haven't been to a gathering in a few times.

It's alright, said RobinHeart, he was deputy of MeadowClan and his father, LionStar was the Leader. NightClan has been hunting on our land, I'm out patrolling.

With no one with you? asked LeafyFace shocked. Really RobinHeart, aren't you talking chances?

The tom shrugged. I can take just about anything I meet, he said, not in the least arrogantly. I like to patrol alone.

How is your apprentice?

AshPaw is alright, how is BramblePaw?

He beat me up yesterday, said LeafyFace laughing. WildStar went out with him today; it will be nice to see the results.

RobinHeart laughed, licking one of his white paws. Yeah, it will be.

For a time there was silence as they looked at each other.

Just over the rise WindRunner was watching as PepperPaw tried for the hundredth time to catch prey. When she missed, yet again, he showed a tight smile and said, Good try PepperPaw. Let's go over it again.

PepperPaw groaned. Not again, I know what to do it's just doing it!

HailStorm and EbonyPaw wandered up to the distraught apprentice and her mentor. Hey PepperPaw, said EbonyPaw. How come you haven't caught anything? I thought you were an expert at this, like the lions with the zebras, you thought it would be so easy and I didn't, but we seemed to be just the opposites.

Now EbonyPaw, you are doing remarkably well, but that doesn't mean you need to brag about it, reprimanded HailStorm.

Yeah, said PepperPaw loudly. I almost had that last one!

Uh huh, sure you did, said EbonyPaw sarcastically. You couldn't even catch your own tail!

Suddenly PepperPaw lost it and dove at EbonyPaw with all her might. Take it back! she snarled pinning EbonyPaw to the ground. TAKE IT BACK!

WindRunner and HailStorm were both taken by surprise by PepperPaw's sudden aggression. PepperPaw! exclaimed WindRunner. Killing your friend is not a nice thing to do!

WindRunner tried to pry PepperPaw from the top of EbonyPaw but couldn't. Help me HailStorm! called WindRunner as PepperPaw attacked him as well.

I m not getting any closer to that thing while she s like that!

Please PepperPaw, get off! I m sorry, you re a great hunter really, you just haven t caught anything yet, EbonyPaw pleaded loudly. The squirrels just don t appreciate your talent.

Stop PepperPaw! Right now! yelled WindRunner, as he tried to pin PepperPaw down. Hissing and snarling the young cat twisted from under his paws and stood back bristling. Stop PepperPaw, clam down! said WindRunner, rubbing a scratch PepperPaw had inflicted on his nose. Are you alright EbonyPaw?

Yeah, my paw s hurting a little again, but I ll be fine, EbonyPaw replied. Where did that come from PepperPaw? I ve never seen you fight like that before!

I never had to before, said PepperPaw letting her fur lay down. I m sorry. I was angry. My Family is just like that, she said quietly, ashamed of her anger.

In the future I believe both of you should try harder to control your actions *and* your words, HailStorm admonished evenly. Yes Sir, said the apprentices simultaneously.

Let s go back to camp, said WindRunner as he whipped the last bit of blood off his nose. Hey what s that?

What s what? said HailStorm.

I smell MeadowClan, said WindRunner gravely.

HailStorm sniffed the air. Over here, he said indicating the direction they should go. Quietly the four cats began creeping up the rise.

Lower your bottom PepperPaw, WindRunner whispered.

PepperPaw did as her mentor advised as they reached the top and looked down at the two cats below them.

What is *she* doing here with *him*? said HailStorm.

It looks like he s talking to her, said PepperPaw.

Quite, said WindRunner. Keep still and watch.

I should go, said LeafyFace below them, unaware she was being watched. It was nice to see you RobinHeart.

Why are you afraid? asked RobinHeart following her. Do you think WildStar will find us together?

Yes, and if he, or anyone else did I would be in for it! snapped LeafyFace. And besides I do need to

go.

Or are you afraid of me?

LeafyFace stopped. I'm not afraid of you RobinHeart. I saw you watching me the last time I was at a gathering.

I know, said RobinHeart sitting down gracefully. You were watching me back, if you don't remember.

LeafyFace blushed. I was. Do you mind?

No, I don't. Do you?

No& but I should.

I know, said RobinHeart. Since you were an apprentice I've watched you. You are a very nice cat LeafyFace, if you didn't know.

And what do you know about me? said LeafyFace lifting her chin.

Well, replied RobinHeart thoughtfully. You're kind, a good hunter, intelligent, good humored and above all loyal to your Clan.

You know all that about me? exclaimed LeafyFace.

And more, but I won't go into that, said RobinHeart his beautiful blue eyes shining. I have to go soon, a patrol should be by soon, continued RobinHeart standing up. His well-groomed coat glistened in the sunlight while, his fit body strong beneath it. Send WildStar MeadowClan's greeting. Good bye LeafyFace, it was very nice to see you again.

Good bye RobinHeart, said LeafyFace softly as he walked passed towards MeadowClan's camp. Good hunting to you and your Clan.

Thank you, said RobinHeart looking back at her one last time. The same to you& LeafyFace.

LeafyFace's big green eyes followed RobinHeart as he trotted across the beach and thought the short grass bordering it. As the last of his tail disappeared among the grass blades LeafyFace felt her heart quiver. She was beginning to fall for that handsome red tom with the sparkling blue eyes. I can't let myself feel like this! thought LeafyFace as she slowly walked back to Camp. I just can't start liking him, he's a MeadowClan cat, I'm from SkyClan, it won't work. It *can't* work. He is so nice though, very nice. Not looking back LeafyFace gathered herself and started to run down the path away from RobinHeart and her feelings for him. She would forget him in a day or two.

Well! exclaimed WindRunner standing up from behind the grasses. What do you think of that HailStorm?

"It looks like trouble, trouble we should forget we ever saw."

"Who was that big tom?" asked PepperPaw glancing at her mentor.

RobinHeart the deputy of MeadowClan," said WindRunner beginning to walk back towards camp. "His father, LionStar is the Leader of MeadowClan. He is a strong fighter and a noble deputy. HailStorm, I really think he meant no harm to LeafyFace."

"You're probably right, but I can't help feeling like something s not quite right. It's probably nothing. Let s go."

"Right," said WindRunner beginning to jog after HailStorm. "And you two say nothing of this to anyone."

Running along behind their mentors EbonyPaw and PepperPaw exchanged glances, both wondered about what they had seen, a Warrior from their new clan speaking with a cat from another, enemy clan. But both knew, despite all they did not know, was that this conversation between LeafyFace and RobinHeart must be kept to themselves.

The four cats entered camp a short while later.

"Can we go see IvyFoot?" EbonyPaw asked her mentor.

"Sure, go ahead," HailStorm replied. With that, the two apprentices dashed off towards the Medicine cat's glen.

"IvyFoot!" called PepperPaw loudly running across the camp to the cave mouth. "IvyFoot! We ve come to visit you!"

Hi! said IvyFoot, looking up from tending the woesomely wounded WildStar.

Shut up all of you! snapped HollyGaze glaring at them her green eyes shining in the dim light. Can t you see that WildStar is injured?

It s alright, said WildStar trying not to show how much BramblePaw s claws had hurt him. I m fine HollyGaze.

No you re not! snapped the black and white she-cat. Alright IvyFoot, quit giving me that sad look! Go outside and play with your friends! But be back before night fall!

Thank you, said EbonyPaw, Come on PepperPaw, let s go play with IvyFoot.

PepperPaw and IvyFoot followed EbonyPaw out of the Medicine Cat Den and out into the small patch of grass beyond the camp. Laughing and chattering the three friends darted through the grass playing and hunting each other. After awhile they grew tired of playing and all sat down in the grass to groom each other in the fading light.

I m so glad we came to SkyClan! said PepperPaw as she began to purr loudly.

Me too! said EbonyPaw.

I m glad you came too, said IvyFoot, looking at PepperPaw.

PepperPaw started to turn red, trying to hide her smile.

I m tired from all my *successful* hunting today, said EbonyPaw, I m going to rest and sleep.

Shut up you! snarled PepperPaw loudly, getting up to follow EbonyPaw to the Apprentice s den. I ll see you later IvyFoot!

Wait, I ll go with you! said IvyFoot, following quickly.

PepperPaw paused for a moment, waiting for IvyFoot and together ran after EbonyPaw. Darting across the dim camp PepperPaw saw HailStorm and some of the other Warriors talking over the days happenings. HailStorm was a very kind cat, and had the best in mind for his Clan at all times.

Hey SplashPaw, these are the new apprentices PepperPaw and EbonyPaw, said IvyFoot to a small gray tom sitting outside the apprentice den.

Hi, said SplashPaw glancing up at them. I saw you last night& but I& the whole Clan was there and&

He s kinda shy, said IvyFoot to PepperPaw and EbonyPaw.

EbonyPaw smiled kindly, Hi SplashPaw, it s nice to meet you.

Hi! said PepperPaw yawning. I m pretty tired; I think I ll go to bed. See you later IvyFoot.

EbonyPaw yawned too, Those yawns are contagious, I think I better be getting to sleep too.

Good night IvyFoot, said PepperPaw looking back at him. Good Night SplashPaw, it was nice to meet you.

Yeah, said SplashPaw smiling. Maybe tomorrow& ah& we could go& hunting?

I ll go hunting with you if I can, but if we brought PepperPaw along, she d be more of entertainment than any help actually catching anything. said EbonyPaw giggling.

Fine! Go without me! shouted PepperPaw her fur starting to rise. I don t care! I ll just stay here where I am wanted! I ll stay here with IvyFoot!

Fine! You d probably scare all the prey away anyway! EbonyPaw yelled back.

FINE!!

Fine!

Would the both of you just shut up? I thought you were so tired, said IvyFoot, loudly over the yelling PepperPaw and EbonyPaw.

Sorry, it was just a joke, said EbonyPaw.

Whatever! snapped PepperPaw her short tail twitching. I m still not hunting with you two!

SplashPaw, who had ducked down into the long grass during the fight, peered out from among the grass blades and said, I don t& I don t mind.

That s okay SplashPaw, I don t think she wants to come with us, said EbonyPaw.

I don t blame her, said IvyFoot.

With fire in her blue eyes PepperPaw turned and walked into the den to speak no more to her friend, at least for that night by the next day she would most likely forget her anger.

I ought to get back to HollyGaze now, said IvyFoot. Good night SplashPaw, good night EbonyPaw, see you guys tomorrow.

Good night, said EbonyPaw.

Sleep well, said SplashPaw his eyes following IvyFoot as he walked slowly back across camp to his home in the Medicine Cat Den. Sleep well EbonyPaw.

Sleep well, she answered smiling, and the two walked into the den to go to sleep.

It was morning. The sun shone on the clear waters of the sea, sending little shimmering waves over the beach in rushing patterns. The wind blew softly, making the grass dance gently. The waters of the Blue River were cool and crisp under the shadows of the forest bordering MeadowClan land.

RobinHeart was among those shadows. Watching the beach with his keen eyes for the only cat he loved, LeafyFace. He hoped she would come to the beach, like she did almost every morning; he loved to watch her playing in the water or walking along the sand. He still wondered why he had stepped from the shadows of his own Clan s land the day before, whether it was a thoughtless action or something he had been planning in his depths of his heart he did not know.

Suddenly a sweet sent touched his nose, his ears pricked and his breath came a little more quickly, it was LeafyFace. Carefully the red cat crept closer to the river bank, still staying in among the shadows RobinHeart set his mind to wondering as he watched LeafyFace running in and out of the crashing waves. He did love her, knew that it could never be, knew that everything was against them, but still he loved.

An hour past, the sun rose fully, watched by the lovely eyes of LeafyFace, standing upon the wet sand, her nose was pointed to the east, ever watching the sun rise above the dark horizon. Waves slowly slept in and out, their noise gentle and calming bringing peace to LeafyFace's restless mind. As large the large golden clouds began to turn white as the colorful sky paled to blue LeafyFace turned and walked slowly back to camp.

As her lovely sent drifted past RobinHeart's nose he slowly stood and stood on tip paw to even glimpse her fluffy tail waving as she walked down the path to SkyClan Camp. She was gone far too soon for RobinHeart; his eyes ached to see her, his paws hurting just to touch her, his heart braking to love her. Slowly the red tom walked from the shadows and leap across the river and into the grass leading up to the beach. Well into SkyClan land the MeadowClan deputy slowly walked along the beach towards where his love had been. Carefully he stood before her paw prints, looking out to the sky as she had been only moments before. He looked down to the sand, seeing those beautiful paw prints clear in the wet sand. Her sweet sent wafted up to his nose as he leaned down and gently placed his paw beside that of LeafyFace's print.

RobinHeart sighed, trying not to think of what could be. His heart was breaking inside, pleading to be released to show his affection, but he kept it back. He had to withhold his feeling for her for LeafyFace's sake, for her alone. Slowly RobinHeart took a deep breath of LeafyFace's fading sent and turned. Gathering himself the strong tom darted away and leapt back across the Blue River back to his own land, he had work to do.

Even as RobinHeart watched LeafyFace on the shore four other cats raced through the woodland on an expedition of their own. SplashPaw and EbonyPaw had successfully convinced their mentors to hunt together that morning.

"Hey," whispered EbonyPaw quietly SplashPaw, "I think I smell a rabbit." She easily stalked, chased, and captured her prey, carrying it back in her teeth.

"That was... so... so... so great!" exclaimed SplashPaw a mouse and small bird at his paws. "I could *never* get a rabbit like that EbonyPaw!"

"Really? Do you think so? I think you're doing great," replied EbonyPaw. "I don't really know why I seem to be so good at hunting, it just happens."

"Honestly HailStorm, you're definitely doing something right with that apprentice of yours, she's a natural," commented RedHawk.

SplashPaw smiled awkwardly. "Thanks for saying that about... about me. Thanks."

You're welcome SplashPaw," said EbonyPaw.

Suddenly SplashPaw's ears pricked. Looking towards the nearby beach he drew in a quick breath. "EbonyPaw, I... I think their seagulls on the beach..." then he looked to RedHawk, his mentor. "Maybe... maybe we could chase them?"

"Well, you have caught plenty of prey already," replied RedHawk, "I don't see why not."

"Thank you!" shouted EbonyPaw running off over the grassy rise with SplashPaw. Laughing and playing the two darted through the grass and over the beach. Chasing the white and gray gulls the two apprentices shouted and called to each other mocking the way the birds squawked and flew at the sight of them.

"This is so much fun!" shouted SplashPaw throwing back his head. "Come on I'll race you to the Blue River!"

"Wait!" EbonyPaw yelled ahead to SplashPaw, who had already taken off running. "Come back here and look at these in the sand!" SplashPaw dashed back to her as EbonyPaw pointed to something in the sand. As he got closer he saw that it was just paw prints.

"So? We ran all around here."

"They're not ours, smell them," EbonyPaw insisted.

Slowly SplashPaw bent down and sifted the large paw prints. "Your right..." whispered SplashPaw his face growing very pale. Slowly he raised his head his light blue eyes peering deeply into EbonyPaw's purple ones. "Their RobinHeart's..."

SplashPaw, can you keep a secret? asked EbonyPaw hesitantly.

I guess, he said slowly, backing away carefully. What about?

About this, she said, looking down at the paw prints again. Yesterday, when PepperPaw and I and our mentors were out hunting, we saw LeafyFace and RobinHeart talking. We thought it was just a chance meeting, but if they've been together again...

SplashPaw's eyes got very large. You're kidding me? I mean there together that I so so so wrong! What if? do you think? maybe there? I mean it could be-

Yeah, I know, but you can't tell anybody. I mean anybody. No one else can know, EbonyPaw said urgently.

Okay I'll keep it. I like you a lot EbonyPaw.

Oh thanks. I like you too.

SplashPaw smiled awkwardly then gently nuzzled her cheek. Thanks for being my friend!

SplashPaw! EbonyPaw! Come on now, we've got plenty other places to go today! shouted the distant voice of HailStorm.

SplashPaw glanced over at EbonyPaw and then turning ran off after her up the slope and through the

grass to their mentors. Racing along SplashPaw looked back, he wondered what would happen if WildStar found out about LeafyFace and felt fear for her. Somehow he hoped it would all work out for them, the lovers, LeafyFace and RobinHeart.

3 - Many Happenings

Chapter Three

Many Happenings

Wind raced along, howling loudly in IvyFoot's ears, sand was picked up and driven into his legs making them smart. Above him the sounds of the sea birds could be heard, screeching at the harsh wind. All was darkness around him, all was blackness, the sound and touch of things were the only sensation he seemed to have, and the light scent of the sea in the distance as its roaring grew stronger. Confused and frightened IvyFoot started to run, tripping over bent grasses and drift wood as he went. Feeling he could evade the darkness somehow IvyFoot gathered all his strength and bolted forwards, the sand under his paws flying up behind him as he ran. All of a sudden the ground beneath him gave way and he tumbled and fell down the slope to the beach. When he finally came to a stop IvyFoot slowly sat up, looking around him fearfully, totally confused and disoriented.

What are you running from? asked a voice before him.

IvyFoot looked harder and finally saw something, a light grey cat sat there. The darkness & Who are you? he asked, feeling more and more confused every second.

My name is MoonLeaf, said the strange cat. You are confused about the darkness young cat?

Well, yes, you & the darkness, you see it too?

MoonLeaf slowly stepped forwards and placed his paws upon IvyFoot's eyes. Fear it not little apprentice for it will not hurt you. Carefully MoonLeaf bent and touched his nose to IvyFoot's head, then backed away, leaving the Medicine Cat Apprentice his sight.

How did you do that? asked IvyFoot as the darkness faded and the world around him blurred back into focus.

The strange cat smiled. That is for me to know and you to find out, said MoonLeaf his black eyes dancing with fun. Now young cat, look out upon the waters, what do you see?

Our camp is being attacked! IvyFoot cried out in alarm. By, by NightClan cats. MoonLeaf nodded gravely. Once friend is enemy. Once brother is now traitor. Beware of your feelings, they will betray you. Clans will fight, but no blood will be spent. Words are your weapons keep your claws at bay. Gathering to speak anger will flare; keep the peace young one, or the price your clan will pay.

What? What does that mean? I don't understand, said IvyFoot.

Slowly the image of fighting cats faded away from the sea, turning it back into its deep blue waters. MoonLeaf looked to the sky then back down at IvyFoot. You will know in time. Now, I must go. Blessing go with you IvyFoot of SkyClan.

Slowly all around IvyFoot faded once again into darkness, but not like the first darkness. It was calm and peaceful, softer than the harsh darkness before, and restful.

IVYFOOT!

Huh, what? IvyFoot jerked awake suddenly.

Wake up sleepy head! snapped HollyGaze loudly, her green eyes shining in the morning light. Get up or I won't let you play with that PepperPaw anymore! She rattled the little brains you have I think!

But, wait, where'd he go? IvyFoot said, still half asleep.

Where did who go? asked HollyGaze, suddenly interested. Tell me what you're talking about!

The-the grey cat, um, MoonLeaf! That's his name! Yeah, said IvyFoot.

HollyGaze sat down right in front of her apprentice, her green eyes brilliant. You had a dream?

Oh, well, yeah, I suppose it was a dream... he trailed off.

Tell me, very slowly and in detail, what happened, said HollyGaze softly and almost gently. Don't be afraid.

Well& there was a grey cat who introduced himself as MoonLeaf, and we were by the sea, he told me to look out to sea and tell him what I saw. And our camp was being attacked by NightClan! Then he told me a bunch of confusing stuff about enemies and feelings and some confusing stuff about fighting without bloodshed and anger and something about the clan paying a price if I didn't keep peace. He said a lot and I don't understand most of it. IvyFoot explained, leaving out the part about the darkness. That was just strange, it wasn't really important... probably.

HollyGaze stared at him for a moment then glanced away. Is that everything? she asked solemnly. You must tell me everything, every detail is important.

First he said there was a friend who was really an enemy, a traitor, that's the first part, said IvyFoot as the words began to come back to him. Then he told me not to trust my feelings. Third he said there would be fighting without any blood being spent. Fourth he said to fight with words and not claws, and then that speaking anger would flare, and last what I mentioned before, about keeping peace, or the clan will pay the price, but once again he left out the darkness.

HollyGaze slowly looked back at him. You've done well IvyFoot, StarClan must be pleased with you to entrust you with this message. MoonLeaf was my mentor when I was small, she said slowly. He was a kind old soul when he died. It took me many, many moons to find an apprentice as it did him, but I do believe I have found a fine one. It was worth the wait. With a sigh HollyGaze stood up. Come now, we

must tell WildStar of your dream, then I think your little friend will want to play with you, after her patrol with WindRunner. Tonight is the gathering; I think it would be good for both of you to go.

Okay.

Far from the SkyClan Camp, near the far end of the island, there was a rocky place. Tall and cold looking, the Place of the Rock was the home of the island's biggest and most feared clan, NightClan. Led by a ruthless leader NightClan had risen far above the other Clans in the many past moons. BadgerStar had led NightClan to the uppermost reaches of power where even the good sized clan, ForestClan with their vast land and plentiful prey, had little influence among the clans. Then very suddenly, and rather mysteriously, BadgerStar passed on into the arms of StarPelt. After his very sudden death, BadgerStar's young daughter, SilverCloud, took the leadership from her father's deputy, TigerShadow. It had been nearly a moon now, since her father's death, and the young SilverStar was not about to let the power of her clan die with her father.

Standing outside of NightClan Camp the slender she-cat sat at a place known as Star-gazing rocks, looking out over the darkening lands below her, other Clan's lands, richer, more plentiful lands. Bitterly she sighed, thinking of her thin warriors, famished after a long hard winter, she herself was more skin and bone than anything else. Ignoring all that unpleasantness the Warrior Leader turned her face towards the wind and let it blow away her worries as the blue sky slowly turned pink under her ever watchful gaze.

Then tonight is the night SilverStar? hissed a tiger tom coming up behind her. We attack tonight?

The voice of her deputy brought SilverStar back to reality, her problems were real, and she had to deal with them. Yes, she replied.

The tiger tom slowly began to circle his leader, and then sat down beside her looking out at the gradually darkening sky. Do you really think this is the way to show our power to them?

If you think you have a better idea feel free to tell me, but I've thought about it, and this is the decision I have come to.

TigerShadow sighed and then bowed his head. If this is what it has come to I will prepare the Warriors. Who should we take? I was thinking SnowTrack and AspenFrost would be fine leaders among the Warriors.

AspenFrost will be good, but although SnowTrack has been exhibiting impressive skill, he is still young and I do not believe he is ready for such leadership. I will have StormyPelt lead with AspenFrost; she should handle the responsibility well.

TigerShadow snorted loudly. You think I know not my Warriors? I've lived among them many more moons than you!

SilverStar narrowed her eyes at her deputy, disregarding his reasoning, Do you doubt the judgment of

your leader?

No& he said, somewhat subdued. I doubt your experience as one.

I may not long have been leader, but I am leader nonetheless and I am such for a reason
TigerShadow, SilverStar replied sharply.

TigerShadow, with ears back and tail twitching, backed down. I apologize for my& *harsh* words. I do trust you completely SilverStar. Forgive my anger.

For your words I do forgive you, but you need not say things you do not mean, said SilverStar. Now go, and find AspenFrost and StormyPelt. Together, you may choose Warriors that will work best with them during the attack. I will meet you at the border of MeadowClan near the Fallen Oak.

Yes SilverStar, I will have them ready, said TigerShadow slipping away towards the camp. We will meet you there before darkness comes.

LionStar looked out from the grassy mound that over looked his camp, towards the setting sun. It was nearly time to assemble his warriors for trip to the Gathering Place. Flipping his golden ears back the Leader of MeadowClan closed his eyes and let the wind blow the smell of spring to him. The grass below him waved and billowed while the wind pushed it. Here and there the grass moved oddly, as the patrols came in slowly. LionStar sat up as he saw the patrol RobinHeart normally led. But as it dispersed into the Camp he did not see the red warrior he was looking for. Worriedly LionStar looked out over the meadows looking out for the red fur of the MeadowClan Deputy, but did not see it. Squinting LionStar saw RobinHeart s apprentice, AshPaw. The fluffy grey tom trotted along at the rear of his Mentor s patrol, his fur wet from river spray. He had the makings of a strong warrior, and would soon become one, but was still a little foolish and needed more training.

AshPaw! Come here! LionStar called to the strong apprentice. AshPaw hurriedly ran to his leader.

Yes LionStar? he asked respectfully.

RobinHeart has not returned yet. Do you know what is keeping him? asked LionStar anxiously.

I think he stopped near the Blue River just to take a quick look around, answered AshPaw.

His quick look is taking quite a while; go find him AshPaw, LionStar instructed.

Don t worry, I ll find him LionStar, said AshPaw as he darted off into the tall grasses to find his Mentor.

AshPaw trotted down the grassy hill. He liked LionStar little, his overpowering commands turning something inside him. RobinHeart and his father were completely different, LionStar ruling with all power while RobinHeart s quiet confidence influenced those under him quickly into obedience. Running back along the way he had just come AshPaw picked up RobinHeart s sent and followed it away from the main beaten trail towards the Blue River and SkyClan land. As he went he ran a little faster, LionStar

would be angry if he did not return fast enough.

Thinking of RobinHeart AshPaw smiled, he dearly loved his mentor, to AshPaw, RobinHeart was like a second father to him. They were very close. He has spent many seasons at the Deputy's side, learning from him and emulating his greatest hero. Nearing the Blue River AshPaw suddenly lost his Mentor's scent. Confused the apprentice looked around. RobinHeart? he called softly, unsure of himself.

There was a slight rustle in the grasses and the next thing AshPaw knew he was flat on his back eye to eye with RobinHeart. Hi there Ashy! exclaimed RobinHeart with a grin. Got you that time! he said laughing as his apprentice struggled beneath him.

Hey! shouted AshPaw as RobinHeart let him free. AshPaw jumped on his mentor playfully. They rolled around playing and pouncing on each other in the grass. Finally they stopped to breathe. When AshPaw had caught his breath he said, LionStar was actually looking for you. He seemed pretty upset. He sent me to find you.

RobinHeart turned over on his back, his white belly covered in grass bits and mud. Lately he's been upset whatever I do. I'm not surprised. Slowly RobinHeart looked up to the darkening sky. It is getting late. The Gathering is tonight& slowly the Deputy looked over at his apprentice. You'll be a Warrior soon.

Yeah, said AshPaw smiling. I'm excited, but I won't see you as much. I'll miss you RobinHeart, murmured AshPaw quietly. Creeping close to his mentor AshPaw laid his head next to RobinHeart's. I'll miss you, he repeated almost sad.

Hey, said RobinHeart with a smile, touched by AshPaw's affectionate words. You'll be at my side all the way! I will need a strong warrior like you in my patrol! Don't feel bad, or scared. I was afraid to become a Warrior when I was young, but look at me now, I'm a deputy! There is no real reason to be afraid of something new, only because it's new, just be excited.

Thank you RobinHeart. But oh! We completely forgot about LionStar, he's gonna be so mad that we're not back yet, said AshPaw suddenly.

RobinHeart leapt up. Come on then! I'll race you! shouted the deputy leaping off towards the camp. I'm going to beat you! he called back as AshPaw came running after him. Through the grass they ran, laughing and jumping happily. No worry existed for them as they ran and hunted each other. Coming nearer to the camp RobinHeart saw his father standing on the rise. Resentment rose in his heart at the sour expression on LionStar's face.

Go on and rest, said RobinHeart to AshPaw. I have to deal with my Father.

RobinHeart! called LionStar looking urgently for his increasingly wayward son. RobinHeart!

Then in among the grass LionStar saw the brilliant red fur of RobinHeart as he came late, yet again, home from his patrol. Hearing the sound of his father calling his name RobinHeart ran to meet him. Quickly he darted through the camp leaving AshPaw to rest among the other apprentices and onto the grass mound with a single leap.

Hello Dad& err LionStar& said RobinHeart, clearly distracted. How is everything& I mean with you?

Actually, I m getting awfully disturbed by how late you ve been coming in from patrol, lately. You are supposed to be *leading* your patrol, not following it back to camp after doing who knows what, LionStar scolded his son.

RobinHeart flipped back his ears angrily. I m not a kitten anymore!

Which is exactly what I m getting at, you have responsibility. If you don t want me to treat you like a kitten don t act like one.

What? Just because I m late a few times you re on me? I know my responsibilities! And I have always upheld it with honor! I have fulfilled my duties since the day you named me Deputy! I take my position seriously! And you treat me like some dumb apprentice and not like the strong Deputy I am!

RobinHeart, you don t need to overreact. I would like only two things, one to know where you ve been; and two; I d like to see you make more of an effort to show the Clan that you are this great deputy you speak of. You know you re doing your job, but you re not showing it to everyone else.

RobinHeart s fur bristled up with rage. I don t have to tell you anything!

As your father and your leader I do have the authority to demand that you tell me, answered LionStar sternly.

RobinHeart said nothing, but turned his back quickly upon his father. Breathing hard RobinHeart flashed his claws in and out.

RobinHeart, what have you done that you would feel the need to keep it such a secret?

I ve done *nothing!*

Then where have you been? Why do you keep coming in late and disappearing?

Don t you trust me? Don t you think I can handle myself?

I would trust you a lot more if you would answer my question. Now I want a straight answer; where were you?

RobinHeart whirled around to face his father, fury flashing in his blue eyes. Feeling cornered and ashamed RobinHeart tried to look LionStar in the eye, but couldn t bring himself to.

Well?

I& I was patrolling near the Blue River, confessed RobinHeart reluctantly. And& and&

And?

Turning his face away RobinHeart, shame clear in his face, broke. Yesterday I spoke with LeafyFace on the beach

So yesterday, and when else?

RobinHeart hesitated then with a long sigh said, We've never spoke until this point, I've been watching her since before I became Deputy.

Watching her?

How more plain can I say it? snapped RobinHeart. I'm a grown cat! I don't need your questioning on top of everything else slowly RobinHeart trailed off, his eyes looking past his father rather than at him.

On top of everything else what what are you looking at?

For a moment RobinHeart did not reply. Eyes fixed on the darkening Meadow's northeasterly edge, searching the grasses for the movement he thought he had seen. Suddenly RobinHeart picked out the movement, within moments he had counted them, and realized their origin. Dad he said his voice very urgent, yet calm. There is about to be an attack. I'll take my Patrol around behind them and sweep after them into SkyClan. NightClan is about to show their power, I hope you are ready for it.

Right, I'll go and gather the Clan, said LionStar, already running down the slope towards camp.

RobinHeart was a few leaps ahead of his father as his strong body tensed for warfare. His whiskers twitched and his ears were flung forwards to pick up the sounds of the approaching enemy.

Attack! screamed the deputy loudly coming to a hasty halt in the midst of the Camp. Patrol to me!

Cats from every direction ran to the center of camp, RobinHeart's patrol gathering around him calling out their presences. Looking over the many heads of MeadowClan Warrior's RobinHeart spotted the small gray body he was looking for. AshPaw! he shouted as his small apprentice pushed his way through the gathering clan to his side.

Yes RobinHeart? said AshPaw, looking up at his mentor expectantly.

You're not going to fight in his battle!

What? Why not? I can fight! argued the young cat.

Don't argue with me! snapped RobinHeart. Just do as I say! I want you to run as fast as you can to SkyClan's Camp and tell WildStar that NightClan is forming an attack and to be ready. Then I want you to take another apprentice with you and go to ForestClan and tell DawnStar the same thing. Wait for me there out of the way. Do I make myself clear?

Yes RobinHeart, said AshPaw somewhat reluctantly. At least RobinHeart had a good reason for not letting him fight.

Then GO! Run and run fast I have no time to tell you again& Patrol! Patrol, away with me! with those final words the red tom picked his white paws from the ground and flung himself away through the camp, not looking back. His Patrol, a good third of the Warriors of MeadowClan, picked up their paws and followed their leader unquestioningly. As RobinHeart ran through the camp he spotted LionStar gathering the rest of the warriors for battle.

Disappearing in among the grasses RobinHeart lead his Patrol east in a huge sweeping circle. Flat backed the Deputy leapt along streamlined and powerful, listening for the battle cries of NightClan, which he knew would come. When RobinHeart reached a point even with the attacking NightClan he slowed to a stop, freezing dead still among the grasses.

BarleyFace, whispered RobinHeart as his Patrol came to a stop beside him. Be ready as soon as we hear their war cry we are going forwards to drive them towards SkyClan, there the bigger clans can help us stop them.

Got it Red Leader!

You freak, muttered RobinHeart lowering himself to the ground. Smiling over at his best friend, a calico tom with odd eyes, RobinHeart tried not to laugh. BarleyFace was the strangest cat in MeadowClan, but a good friend. Ready Patrol? he whispered back at them.

Ready! called back the rest of the Patrol.

RobinHeart stiffened as the NightClan war cry rang through the meadow. Patrol& charge! screamed RobinHeart leaping from his hiding place. His Patrol leapt up as one body and charged after their Red Leader into the fight. Taking in a deep breath RobinHeart shouted out his war cry as he tackled the huge tiger tom he knew to be NightClan s deputy. Taken by surprise TigerShadow fell hard with RobinHeart on top of him. Hissing and snarling RobinHeart pressed his paws to the bigger and older cat s throat. Why are you attacking us? screamed RobinHeart fury in his eyes. TELL ME!

I do not have to tell you anything! snarled TigerShadow, his voice harsh and held back by RobinHeart s powerful paws.

Suddenly RobinHeart was knocked from the NightClan deputy.

SilverStar! gasped TigerShadow as the lean body of his leader appeared beside him.

Maybe I should have left you at camp instead of SnowTrack, SilverStar growled at her deputy as she leapt at RobinHeart.

As soon as he had been thrown off of his *prey* RobinHeart landed on his paws and turned to attack the pretty she-cat. Not taken by her beauty and controlled only by his rage RobinHeart gave the young leader no mercy as he met her attack head on. Colliding head on RobinHeart overpowered the smaller cat pushing her back and to the side. Landing lightly he dove after her, she met him head on, reaching out a powerful paw the red tom delivered each of his four claws to their mark, SilverStar s face. Screeching in pain the leader leapt back, and away from RobinHeart, then dove forwards and attacked

him. Landing hard on top of him she bit down hard on anything she could get her teeth into. Landing hard bites to his shoulder, several to his side, and one well aimed one to his paw, now dripping with her blood. Enraged, RobinHeart pushed up hard and flung Silver Star off of him. The blow knocked the wind out of her, and for a moment stood disorienting looking west towards SkyClan land. Unsure of what had happened she looked back and saw the wave of NightClan Cats running towards her, away from the MeadowClan Warriors. Among the leaders was TigerShadow RobinHeart on his trail.

They're too strong! shouted TigerShadow his speed gathering with each step. Run SilverStar! We'll make a hit with SkyClan!

What do you mean they're too strong? SkyClan has more Warriors than MeadowClan, what are you doing? said SilverStar, still not fully understanding what was happening.

MOVE! shouted TigerShadow running into her, pushing her forwards. Just keep going! SkyClan won't be expecting us! We'll make a strong hit there to make up for this one! MOVE!

LeafyFace trotted back from the beach where she had been sun bathing. Glad that spring was finally here the young she-cat picked up her pace a little, tonight was the Gathering, she desperately wanted to go & to see RobinHeart really. She smiled; she wanted to see RobinHeart very badly, ever since she had spoken with him the day before she had wanted to see him, now more than ever.

LeafyFace's thoughts were suddenly broken by a loud voice and a blur of gray fur rushing past her. The blur slowed down and doubled back as it realized it had passed someone. As it returned it nearly ran into her. LeafyFace! yelled the now recognizable AshPaw. LeafyFace! NightClan is attacking! And I have to go tell WildStar instead of help fight. NightClan is attacking!

Slow down! soothed LeafyFace gently. What about NightClan? Tell me slowly and calmly.

NightClan is attacking! Anger showed brightly in the young cat's eyes, It's my first battle; And I'm missing it!

Great StarClan! shouted LeafyFace. NightClan is attacking? Why? Oh come on tell me as we go! You've got to tell WildStar this!

As the two cats ran towards SkyClan Camp AshPaw said, I don't know, RobinHeart sent me to tell WildStar and said to go on to ForestClan with one of the apprentices and tell DawnStar too.

You really think they would attack all the clans? Never mind! Come on AshPaw, said LeafyFace as the two reached the rise overlooking SkyClan Camp. I'll come with you to see WildStar. IceWind! IceWind, have you seen WildStar? asked LeafyFace pausing at the Deputy's side.

Well, I don't know as a fact, but I have a good guess that he's in his den, because I saw HollyGaze and IvyFoot go in there a while ago and they haven't come out yet. I can't imagine what they'd be doing if WildStar wasn't in there too. That would probably be the first place I'd look, if he's not there, which, by the way, I don't think is very likely, I would look in the Medicine Cat's Den, he was looking pretty beat up

after fighting or training or whatever it was he was doing with that apprentice of yours, and if that wasn't the reason, I'd look there anyway, you never know, he may have gone there with HollyGaze and IvyFoot when I wasn't looking. If he's not there-

Thanks, said LeafyFace. Oh by the way NightClan is about to attack, you should get the Warriors ready to fight. See you later IceWind, most likely *after* the fighting is over.

What? NightClan? Attack? Here? but the two other cats were already long gone.

WildStar! shouted LeafyFace running into his den, without waiting. WildStar!

LeafyFace stopped in the gloom of the rocky cave inset into the rise overlooking the camp. Trying to see through the darkness she finally saw the fluffy shape of WildStar curled in his overstuffed nest with HollyGaze and IvyFoot standing before him.

LeafyFace? exclaimed WildStar, surprised. What's wrong& is that AshPaw? Young RobinHeart's apprentice?

Yes, said LeafyFace urgently. He was sent by RobinHeart to tell you that NightClan is attacking.

What?

I know. I told IceWind so he should be well clear by now. AshPaw is going on to ForestClan and one of our apprentices must go with him.

I'll go with him, IvyFoot said, thinking he'd do something useful since he wasn't the greatest warrior in the world.

Are you sure? asked HollyGaze standing to her paws. You could be attacked on the way you know!

If we took a northwest route it would be almost impossible to run into anyone from NightClan, said AshPaw, And whoever does come, we need to go soon.

Then go! said WildStar pushing his way out of his den. Go with my strength and honor. Run well and fast. Tell DawnStar of what is happening and make sure he is ready for us.

And be CAREFUL! added HollyGaze loudly as the two cats ran off through the woods towards forest clan. I hope he'll be alright& lamented HollyGaze.

There's no time for that now HollyGaze, snapped WildStar. LeafyFace, find HailStorm and have him gather the Clan! Hurry!

Yes WildStar! said LeafyFace running off to find the grey tom. LeafyFace ran across the Camp her eyes watching for HailStorm. She glimpsed WindRunner out of the corner of her eye but saw only the new grey apprentice with him. She stopped and looked back at them. The little grey cat might know. WindRunner, called LeafyFace taking a few steps towards him. Have you seen HailStorm& its important!

WindRunner shrugged. Can't help you LeafyFace. What's wrong?

Nothing but NightClan attacking! Shouted LeafyFace loudly. I have to find him! Tell the other warriors and have them gather in the center of camp for their orders.

Alright, consider it done! said WindRunner taking off for the warrior's den PepperPaw with him.

LeafyFace sighed unsure of what to do next, then suddenly she heard the quick talk and easy laughter of a returning hunting party. HailStorm? she called running to the bottom of the rise. Is that you?

Yeah, said HailStorm as he entered the camp, Is there something you needed?

Thank the heavenly stars it's you! shouted LeafyFace loudly, wanting to throw herself at him. NightClan is attacking MeadowClan and is headed this way! WildStar needs you like right now so& and he's gone& LeafyFace needed not to finish HailStorm left his Apprentice and ran for the center of camp. That was sudden& commented LeafyFace rather amazed. Oh, hi RedHawk, hi SplashPaw& and you are&. BlackPaw right? she asked looking puzzled at the black she-cat.

Actually, my name's EbonyPaw, EbonyPaw said, trying to hide her annoyance.

Oh& I was close anyway& muttered LeafyFace. Hi RedHawk& I already said that& sorry I'm just so FREAKED out! The battle and& everything& hey is that TigerShadow? WOW he's bigger than I remember& AHHHHHH!

Before LeafyFace realized who the *enemy* was the very large TigerShadow had her on her back with his claws pricking her chest.

I hate fighting! snarled LeafyFace diving up, aiming her teeth for his throat. Scratching and hissing the small Warrior was no match for TigerShadow's bulk.

RedHawk was about to attack when the Deputy spoke, Don't you touch me RedHawk! Or I'll kill her!

I really hate fighting! screamed LeafyFace. RedHawk do something! Don't just stand there like an idiot!

One moment TigerShadow was standing over her with claws ready to strike her& well dead& and the next he was flying off of her and right into RedHawk. Before LeafyFace had time to scream, yell, hiss, or do anything it was over and a handsome red tom was popping up from the brush.

Sorry RedHawk I didn't see you there, said RobinHeart leaping away as his Patrol shot by. Hope I didn't hurt you little buddy! he called, referring to EbonyPaw. Nice to see a new face! Patrol charge!!

Wow& that was unexpected& said LeafyFace standing up.

You can say that again, said RedHawk.

Well come on! said LeafyFace running after the departing Patrol. Since you re alright to make a sarcastic comment like that! You can show DarkPaw how to fight!

MY Name is EbonyPaw!

Close anyway! COME ON!

When LeafyFace, RedHawk, and *EbonyPaw* came to the rise the battle was in full swing, with MeadowClan and SkyClan cats fighting the powerful NightClan. From where she stood LeafyFace could see HollyGaze standing solidly before the Nursery, to protect the Queen and Kits, not a living cat dared come near the strong Medicine Cat. WildStar and SilverStar were locked in battle, fighting with everything they had. WildStar was much larger than the slender she-cat but she was powerful and quick. Excited LeafyFace dove off the rise and landed hard on a cat about to attack SunStorm, her friend, from behind.

Hi Sunny! shouted LeafyFace diving into battle. Some picnic huh?

Hi and thanks for that back there, SunStorm answered as she leapt upon another enemy.

Did you see WildStar? asked LeafyFace, hitting a NightClan she-cat with all four paws at once. He doesn t look so good!

No I didn t, but with all his fury, I m sure he ll be fine, said SunStorm, clawing at the cat beneath her.

I d better go, said LeafyFace as the cat she was fighting took off into the forest. From what I heard from RobinHeart s apprentice RobinHeart is going to push NightClan through into ForestClan to finish them off! AND I am going with him!

Alright, I ll go with you! letting the cat she was fighting with follow his clanmate into the woods.

LeafyFace leapt off through the fighting, avoiding battles as best she could, looking for RobinHeart. After a time she easily spotted him fighting with a big she-cat from NightClan, at his side was HailStorm. The two strong warriors stayed together through the fight, commanding their patrols with shouted words and quick calls over the noise of the battle.

Suddenly LeafyFace stopped. Horror crossed her face as she saw WildStar s limb body lying before SilverStar, TigerShadow beside her. Before she could stop herself LeafyFace had leapt over a few fighting cats and was racing towards them.

Get away from him! she screamed landing hard on top of SilverStar, knocking TigerShadow a few feet away. Snarling above the NightClan leader LeafyFace hand her teeth around the leader s throat before she could stop herself. SilverStar pushed her paws up against her neck, cutting of her breathing. Now it was a battle of endurance, skill, and time. Sooner or later one of them would give in, who it would be, neither of them knew.

LeafyFace& came WildStar s quiet voice. Let her go& I m alright&

Slowly LeafyFace released her grip on SilverStar and accordingly SilverStar let her paws slowly down. But she didn't stay back long; soon she was rushing at LeafyFace, clawing her in the face.

LeafyFace screeched and leapt back away from SilverStar, eyes burning with rage. Staring at SilverStar with her bright flaming green eyes LeafyFace's fur bristled. Her body shaking with rage the small she-cat tensed for attack. WildStar behind her tried to stand but fell back weakly.

He can't fight! thought LeafyFace gathering herself to pounce. *But I can!*

The battle raged on below the rising moon, the fighting cats unaware of its presence above them. A small frightened apprentice dodged around the fighting warriors searching for help and her mentor. Help HailStorm, where are you? called EbonyPaw, suddenly shouting in terror as huge snarling warrior leapt towards her. He landed on top of her, her back hitting the ground hard, Help! she cried desperately.

All of a sudden PepperPaw appeared out of nowhere, wild-eyed and panting the little grey she-cat plowed over a NightClan Warrior and pounced on the NightClan Cat on top of her friend. Beat it! she snarled attacking with the precision of an experienced Warrior twice her age. Snapping down hard on the other warrior's shoulder PepperPaw let it escape without further injury.

You alright? asked PepperPaw looking down on the rather shocked EbonyPaw. You look pretty bad!

EbonyPaw just stared at her friend. Yeah, I guess so. Wow, she said, slowly recovering from the attack. Well, yeah. You did that? she continued, still slightly confused.

Yes! I guess so! said PepperPaw slowly. Hey! Look those other cats are leaving!

Did you do *that* too? EbonyPaw asked slowly.

NO! snapped PepperPaw as she started after them. But by the end of this I will!

RobinHeart had already gathered his Patrol and with HailStorm and his SkyClan Patrol the two were leading the following attack after the departing NightClan. After the cries of the running cats had died away the Camp was silent. As EbonyPaw stood to her paws she saw HollyGaze come through the camp and towards WildStar's den. Slowly she walked towards them and saw WildStar sprawled out on the bloodied grasses, laying very still the Leader's chest was the only thing moving as he slowly breathed.

Hello EbonyPaw, said HollyGaze as the young Apprentice approached them. Don't be afraid. He'll be alright.

Really? EbonyPaw was skeptical, how could someone so beat up possibly be alright?

HollyGaze lay down by WildStar's head, resting her head next to his own. In a few moments he'll be alright. Come closer sweet one, something amazing is about to happen.

EbonyPaw did so and looked at WildStar wondering what HollyGaze was talking about.

Watch& whispered the Medicine Cat, her green eyes sparkling brightly.

WildStar's breathing slowly was growing more labored, the light in his eyes slowly dimming until little life was left in them. All of a sudden his weak body tensed and then relaxed as his lungs rendered their breath to the shining stars above. For several moments all around them there was a great calm, peace and amazing quiet. HollyGaze's eyes never left the seemingly lifeless form of WildStar, watching for what she knew would come. Suddenly WildStar took in a sharp breath and opened his eyes. Coughing and breathing quickly the Leader tried to rise, but HollyGaze stopped him.

Rest for a while, she said soothingly. You have to rest. Stay quite. HailStorm and RobinHeart are leading the attack; you don't have to worry about a thing. Slowly she stood. You don't have many more changes WildStar, so don't be so reckless& please& for the Clan's sake. Then she turned to EbonyPaw. Stay with him a while EbonyPaw, I have much work to do. I just hope IvyFoot got through alright.

IvyFoot and AshPaw ran through the deep woods of ForestClan. They went under ferns and darted around trees as they raced towards ForestClan Camp. Hey, do you smell that? asked IvyFoot, I think there's someone near.

You don't think it's NightClan after all do you? asked AshPaw.

No, it's definitely ForestClan, a she-cat I think, answered IvyFoot.

The two cats changed direction to follow the new scent. They came to a small glade of ivy where a ginger tabby sat, too lost in her own thoughts to notice the newcomers.

Excuse me, said IvyFoot, We have an urgent message for DawnStar, do you know where we can find him?

The pretty she-cat glanced up, meeting the green eyes of IvyFoot her own eyes growing wide with surprise. What are you doing here? she asked leaping up startled. Who are you?

NightClan has attacked MeadowClan and possibly SkyClan; we've come to warn DawnStar. This is AshPaw of MeadowClan, and I'm IvyFoot, the Medicine Cat Apprentice of SkyClan, answered IvyFoot.

Oh& said the she-cat slowly. I'll take you to him then. Carefully she stood, her delicate paws making little sound as she left the ivy patch. My name is GoldenFrost. I think DawnStar is with his new kits and mate by the pond.

As IvyFoot stepped forward to follow, the night and added darkness of the overshadowing trees seemed to be broken apart by a sudden shaft of light shining down before him; faces of cats flashed before him, glowing with the light radiating from above, a grey and white face, only for a moment then flashing to a small ginger one, which immediately changed to a new face of a young blue-eyed cat, but all the faces faded into the lasting and well-known face of HollyGaze.

Well IvyFoot are you coming or not? called AshPaw.

IvyFoot was suddenly pulled from his vision, the light seemed to melt away into a place he could not find or go and he was surrounded by forest again, AshPaw and the ForestClan she-cat a good distance ahead of him already. Yeah, I- I m coming, he called back; running to catch up with them, his mind trying to cling and hold on to the faces he d seen.

Are you alright? asked GoldenFrost, glancing at IvyFoot from the corner of her eyes. You look kind of worried.

I m fine, I just& never mind, let s just get going, said IvyFoot, obviously distracted.

If you say so, said GoldenFrost kindly. Come on, we re almost there.

They skirted the camp to get to the pond, which was to the north eastern side of it. They left the forest and came to a rocky bank that surrounded the large pond. The moon and stars shone through the tree branches, reflecting on the still surface of the pond. And just as GoldenFrost had predicted, DawnStar and FireFlower were there watching their four kits run and chase each other around. Hiding in shrubs and behind rocks, they scurried around and jumped on each other, playing and enjoying themselves.

As the three cats approached, DawnStar left his mate to watch the kits, and came over to meet them. GoldenFrost, what is going on? Who are these cats? asked the grey and black leader.

They are AshPaw of MeadowClan and IvyFoot the Medicine Cat Apprentice of SkyClan. NightClan has just attacked MeadowClan and may be headed this way through SkyClan. RobinHeart wants us to be ready for them.

GoldenFrost, go and tell BlackStripe to ready the Warriors for attack. And if you two would come with me I m sure FireFlower could use some help getting the kits to the nursery. GoldenFrost was already headed towards camp and DawnStar briefly spoke to his mate of what may come, leaving AshPaw and IvyFoot with FireFlower and the kits, so he could he could join his deputy preparing the clan for attack.

Hello IvyFoot and AshPaw. Thanks for your help, said FireFlower taking a fluffy white kit. They are a paw full.

AshPaw easily caught up with a tiny black kit, bringing it back towards its mother. IvyFoot was having a little more difficulty, the other two kits, who, oblivious to the world s troubles, were chasing each other around a rock and every time IvyFoot stepped in to stop them they turned and ran to another rock to continue their play. Eventually he managed to catch a small grey kit when it tripped over a pebble in the dark and he carried it back to its mother. The final kit, realizing it had no one else to play with followed them.

In the end they managed to round them all up and get them back to camp where everyone was busy doing something to prepare for the coming assault. Once the kits were safely hidden within the nursery AshPaw and IvyFoot stood about wondering what to do next.

A large dark tom, who was rushing around giving orders to the dispersing Warriors with DawnStar, came

up to them eyes shining with the anticipation of battle. You two, he said loudly, but not unkindly. Get hidden up on the ridge around camp, and prepare yourself for the attack.

I m just a Medicine Cat Apprentice, I don t know how to fight! exclaimed IvyFoot.

The cat looked at him oddly. Really?

Yeah, I ve never learned nor done fighting.

Well just go up there and keep out of the way! snapped the tom. QUICKLY both of you! NightClan has been spotted! Get moving!

AshPaw and IvyFoot climbed up the ridge overlooking ForestClan camp. I guess you re going to get that fight after all AshPaw, said IvyFoot nervously.

Yeah, I m glad too, I thought I was going to miss out.

I wish I *could* miss out, muttered IvyFoot quietly.

Hey look! said AshPaw his tail waving excitedly. Here comes NightClan! They are sure going to be surprised when all of ForestClan falls on them!

Yeah&

SilverStar with TigerShadow at her side, dashed into the completely deserted ForestClan Camp. Where is everyone? She asked to no one in particular.

Maybe they ve already left for the gathering! said TigerShadow looking around wildly. No it can t be that& he said trailing off as the rest of NightClan came up behind them.

Suddenly the confused NightClan cats heard the sound of battle cries as the ForestClan Warriors poured out on top of them. I think they knew we were coming, said SilverStar as she struggled to unpin herself from beneath DawnStar.

Duh!! shouted TigerShadow. Retreat!

No! Why? We could always regroup and attack again! said SilverStar desperately.

Too late! shouted TigerShadow, as he saw RobinHeart and HailStorm behind him. Here they come!

PepperPaw was growing very tired. She didn t know the way to the ForestClan Camp, and had long ago lost the other more motivated warriors from MeadowClan; all she had to go by was the strong smell of SkyClan around through the strange scent of MeadowClan. Running through the forest she wondered if

she was really doing the right thing, but as she came out onto a slight clearing with the battling clans before her, she knew she had done right.

With a loud hiss of pure excitement she threw herself into battle, attacking anything from NightClan that moved. The dark coats and strong bodies of NightClan could easily be pick out from the more slender frames of her own Clan and that of the other two clans. She saw SilverStar and DawnStar fighting and even thought she saw WindRunner a few times but after that she was fully lost in the battle. Blood rushed loudly in PepperPaw's ears as she gave herself to the pull of the battle. Fighting with all her strength the small she-cat took out all and every cat standing in her way. Hissing and mewing loud war cries PepperPaw knew little that surrounded her, taking on toms twice her size and defeating them only to go on to the next.

Meanwhile, up on the ridge, IvyFoot crept slowly from his hiding place, where the Warriors had left him minutes before, to peer cautiously down at the battle below him. DawnStar and SilverStar were fighting. The strong tom had the NightClan leader pinned beneath him, but SilverStar managed to throw him off somehow. She jumped on him and soon they were rolling in the dirt, biting and scratching each other.

Near the entrance of the camp HailStorm was fighting AspenFrost, they were pretty well matched, but it was obvious that the surprise attack from ForestClan had really thrown AspenFrost off balance. He aimed his claws at HailStorm's face, but HailStorm leapt up and raked AspenFrost's side with his own claws.

IvyFoot could not manage to miss RobinHeart's outstanding red fur among the warriors. RobinHeart was on top of TigerShadow. Two were fighting savagely, completely lost in their attack on each other. All around them, cats were fighting: clawing, biting, scratching, kicking; and for what? IvyFoot wondered. For power, show, control, defense, passion, bloodlust? How could they all be so caught up in this? If only there was some way for them to realize what they were really doing. When this was over nothing would be accomplished except for causing injury and destruction. Anger at all of them for being so stupid swept over him, he hated all this fighting; instinctively his fur bristled and his claws unsheathed themselves. He felt himself stepping closer to the edge of the ridge.

But as he did so he felt something holding him back; trying to tell him something. It distracted him enough to turn his mind from the battle below and wonder what this strange sensation was. As he did so, the feeling grew stronger, until it formed a voice whispering:

"Words are your weapons keep your claws at bay. Gathering to speak anger will flare; keep the peace young one, or the price your clan will pay.

Slowly, IvyFoot sheathed his claws. For with a sickening flash of knowledge, IvyFoot had suddenly realized what those words meant. There was a way that might make these warriors below him stop this fighting. He could go down there, tell them to stop.

But why should they listen to him? He didn't know about fighting, he was just a Medicine Cat Apprentice. IvyFoot suddenly thought of a million and one different things that could happen to him if he spoke up.

But what would happen if he didn't?

...or the price you clan will pay.

Fear gripped him, he knew in his heart it was the right thing to do, and he had to do it, no matter how this ended. IvyFoot took a deep breath, then, collecting his thoughts, he dashed down the slope into the midst of the battle and cried out as loud as possible.

"STOP!"

There was total silence. Cats stopped in mid swipe at the suddenness of IvyFoot's call. And all eyes were on him.

Say something you fool! Don't just stand there; this is your only chance, IvyFoot thought to himself. Trying not to sound as awkward as he felt he began:

"Why are you all fighting? Did anyone threaten your strength or your ability? Did you, NightClan, honestly believe that by attacking the other clans you would gain their *respect*?" IvyFoot turned and spoke to all the cats around him, "And why do you fight? Is it to defend yourselves or your clan, because you enjoy the fight, to make yourself look good, or so you can brag about your victories? Does no one see how pointless all this devastation is?"

These battles are a result of your anger, instead of talking out our problems, you let your hatred lead you to violence. And what do we have in the end? It doesn't solve the problem, it just destroys friendships, causes tension and distrust between the clans, and brings many injuries and wounds to all who fight them. All you are doing is hurting yourselves when you fight. Why do you continue this when you don't have to?

"We *can* talk these problems out, that's why we have Gatherings." As IvyFoot spoke those words suddenly every cat around him remembered that this was the night of the Gathering.

4 - The Gathering

Chapter Four

The Gathering

The full moon shone down upon a small group of SkyClan gathered behind a slight rise before the Gathering Place. Storm clouds were slowly gathering in the west and at times covered the moon for short periods. The wind had a foreboding tone to it as the storm gathered strength for an attack.

WildStar, are you alright? asked HollyGaze, her green eyes glowing in the moon light.

I m fine! snapped the leader as he limped to a more sheltered spot. Leave me alone! I m fine!

Who s the Medicine Cat? You or me?

You never should have let HailStorm and RobinHeart go into ForestClan like that!

I had little to say about it! growled HollyGaze eyes flashing with anger. Besides you shouldn t be out here at all.

After an attack it s important for the leaders to be united. Let s go down now, said WildStar painfully standing to his paws; No one else is here yet. LionStar will most likely be along shortly.

Slowly WildStar walked down the rise overlooking the Gathering Place. Down below them there was a clear pool into which a delicate waterfall fell. Near the pool there was a great stone by a wide grassy place which was sheltered by the surrounding forest.

Where are we? asked EbonyPaw, staring at the waterfall with excitement.

This is the gathering place, said HollyGaze looking down at the young apprentice. Every time the moon is full the Clans come together to talk.

Or fight, put in WildStar, glaring down at the waterfall.

All you think about is fighting! exclaimed HollyGaze. You came into leadership in battle, if you don t remember! I thought IvyFoot s dream would sober you up a bit but I see it hasn t! Maybe your lost life will! WildStar you have little time left, I suggest you use it wisely!

He s just an apprentice, HollyGaze, how much truth can be in his words? How does he know when StarClan is speaking to him? He s too young!

A true Medicine Cat knows the voice of StarClan. Let us speak no more of it and go down to the Gathering. I sense MeadowClan coming.

HollyGaze was right, soon there was the crashing sound of cats running through the brush and LionStar emerged at the top of the rise. He and a group of MeadowClan cats ran down to meet SkyClan.

Hello WildStar, are you okay? You aren't looking so good, said LionStar approaching the SkyClan leader.

Shut up! snarled WildStar Glaring at LionStar.

Okay! Gee, you don't have to be so grouchy about it! answered LionStar somewhat exasperatedly.

Where is your son? asked WildStar, avoiding the subject. I saw him in the battle before I& err& anyway he's grown into a fine Warrior, you must be so proud.

Oh, RobinHeart, Yeah, well, he is a great Warrior& I wonder when the other clans will get here? said LionStar, not wanting to think about this son.

WildStar smiled, despite his pain. Touchy subject huh?

Hey, we obviously both have some stuff to deal with right now, so let's just drop it! said LionStar irritated.

The grey tom lowered himself to the ground folding his paws under him. I'm not a father& yet, so I can't judge you.

Yet? Will you be soon? said LionStar, happy to change the subject.

WildStar sat proudly. Yes my mate, SpottedFur is just expecting!

Really? Do you think they will come soon?

No, said WildStar dejectedly. We just found out about it.

Oh, then you have the wait to get excited, said LionStar.

Suddenly WildStar stood up, pain clearly in his face. The Warriors are coming! he said hobbling towards the other side of the Clear Pool. As the two Warrior Patrols Gathered by the edge of the pool, WildStar saw HailStorm standing beside RobinHeart.

Do you see IvyFoot? asked Holly Gaze worriedly. He must be there! He's got to be alright!

He's there, said WildStar softly. Don't worry sis, he looks all in one piece to me.

Hey, where's PepperPaw? I can't see her anywhere! Said EbonyPaw panicked.

She's there as well, HailStorm has her, said HollyGaze comfortingly.

Is she going to be alright? Please, HollyGaze come help her! cried EbonyPaw, running towards her friend.

HollyGaze followed quickly, making eye contact with Hailstorm as she did, his eyes told her how desperate PepperPaw had need of her healing paws. Hailstorm was carrying the limp body of PepperPaw. Her eyes were closed and as HollyGaze drew nearer she could hear the sounds of the young apprentices breathing over the sounds of the rushing waterfall.

What happened? asked HollyGaze pushing HailStorm aside. IVYFOOT!

IvyFoot walked forwards to HollyGaze, Yes? he said making an effort not to speak too quietly.

I am going to **NEED** you! Very badly with so many hurt& are you alright?

I'm fine; do you need me to get anything for you? IvyFoot asked.

Settled down EbonyPaw! hissed HollyGaze starting to work on PepperPaw. She'll be **FINE!** Now stop hovering and go on with RobinHeart, HailStorm will tell me what happened.

RobinHeart got stiffly to his paws and started to walk around the clear pool. Come on EbonyPaw, he said as she slowly turned away from her friend. BarleyFace come with us.

With a will, without hesitation, and with a SPLASH! screamed BarleyFace as he darted past them, throwing himself head long into the water.

RobinHeart stopped dead in his tracks as a huge wave of water hit him. Slowly the soggy RobinHeart looked over at HailStorm. I don't know him&

Of course you don't, said HailStorm laughing.

Ha, ha, that's funny! said RobinHeart starting to limp away towards where his father and WildStar were sitting. Come on EbonyPaw, he said leaning into her comfortingly. My dad isn't that scary.

What's wrong with your leg? asked HollyGaze looking up. You should let me look at it!

No, I'm alright, said RobinHeart, not slowing down. The others are worse off.

As RobinHeart approached the two leaders he was suddenly stopped short by a laughing ball of wet fur leaping on top of him.

BarleyFace!

I'm sorry! Did I get you wet? asked BarleyFace sarcastically, not sorry at all.

Oh just a little, replied RobinHeart looking up into BarleyFace's odd eyes. Thanks.

Anytime! answered BarleyFace, getting off his friend.

I'd like to return the favor! exclaimed RobinHeart leaping on BarleyFace. Laughing and shouting RobinHeart pushed his friend into the water where they play fought happily pushing each other's heads under the water and swatting each other.

RobinHeart! yelled LionStar. Come out of that water right now, both of you!

RobinHeart froze and looked up, puzzled. Huh?

Get out of the water, said LionStar again.

The red tom's ears flipped back and he stood unmoving, unfortunately for BarleyFace, whose head was held under the water by RobinHeart's big paw.

BarleyFace bubbled something unintelligible from under the water as he struggled to move himself out from under RobinHeart.

Remembering BarleyFace, RobinHeart stepped off him and stalked through the water towards his father, his temper raised. Why? he spat out, eyes flashing.

Your acting li- but LionStar was interrupted by BarleyFace as he surfaced, spluttering water and gasping for air.

What happened? You forget I was down there already?

What did you say?! shouted RobinHeart ignoring BarleyFace.

Not realizing RobinHeart wasn't talking to him BarleyFace said loudly, I said: did you forget me?

Not you! snarled RobinHeart angrily.

Well *sorry*, Sir Grumpy Fur! said BarleyFace walking out of the water behind RobinHeart.

RobinHeart, you are not behaving as a deputy should, said LionStar, angry and embarrassed that something like this would happen in front of another Clan Leader.

As a deputy should? Repeated RobinHeart totally over taken by rage. I have just fought a long hard battle, would you rather I sit around and show my tiredness to my Patrol? Da- LionStar, not everything has to be so serious!

This is a Gathering, you shouldn't be playing. Now I'm not going to talk about it anymore, replied LionStar.

But I am! snarled RobinHeart.

Would you all stop arguing? I can hardly hear myself think! said DawnStar approaching the group; no one had heard ForestClan arrive over the sound of the argument.

My thoughts as well, said WildStar greeting DawnStar with a nod. What happened at the battle? Sorry I wasn't there I- was *delayed*.

Thanks to the warning provided by IvyFoot and AshPaw we were able to surprise NightClan. And with the MeadowClan and SkyClan patrols coming in from behind, NightClan was trapped in our camp. Even so, we were pretty well matched, not that we wouldn't have defeated NightClan. In fact, no one really won the battle, thanks to an interruption by your Medicine Cat Apprentice IvyFoot& DawnStar trailed off, unsure of how WildStar would take the news of IvyFoot's boldness.

Go on, said WildStar calmly.

Well, IvyFoot hadn't wanted to be part of the battle so I told him to stay up on the ridge above camp, but in the middle of the battle he came running down yelling at everyone to stop fighting and that we should try to talk out our differences at the Gathering. After that everyone just separated into the different groups to come here. To speak for myself, I didn't really *want* to fight anymore, and I didn't have to, DawnStar explained.

His actions saved much life, said RobinHeart quietly, slowly lowering his body to the ground.

I'm glad you finally decided to rest, said LionStar. That limp was starting to worry me RobinHeart.

I'm fine, muttered RobinHeart. I don't have much time to rest, he continued. I'll be looking over the patrols soon.

Still, it's good that you get some rest, at least, replied LionStar.

You should have HollyGaze look at your leg, said WildStar. I'll call her over.

Don't, said RobinHeart working his way to his paws. She's working with young PepperPaw; she seems in a bad way.

What happened to her? asked WildStar, worry clear on his face.

Fighting, said RobinHeart slowly limping towards where his patrol was gathering. I've never seen so young a cat so taken over by battle& then he stooped, looking back at WildStar with half a smile. She reminds me of you& come on BarleyFace!

Coming Red Leader! called BarleyFace as he followed RobinHeart.

That is a fine son you have LionStar, said WildStar lying back down.

Yes, I know, said LionStar almost sadly.

I guess NightClan isn't in too much of a hurry to get here, mentioned DawnStar.

I m not in any hurry for SilverStar to come.

Neither do I WildStar, but it s still a Gathering, nor it couldn t star without all the Clans, DawnStar reminded him.

WildStar shrugged. I know it. I do miss BadgerStar, he seemed to even out my wildness, your passive ways DawnStar, and your shyness LionStar. I just hope SilverStar can do as much.

She seems strong, but I have a feeling she doesn t think her decisions through, said LionStar.

She s young, said WildStar sighing. When I first became the leader of SkyClan I was as foolish as she.

Yes, I suppose we all were, said DawnStar.

Were? said LionStar.

WildStar glared over at LionStar. Watch it mouse brain! I may not be as young as I use to be but I m still younger than both of you! Put together!

RobinHeart walked painfully over to where his patrol was gathered. Among the MeadowClan cats he saw his sisters, YellowLeaf and OrangeSky sitting before a small grey shape. Puzzled RobinHeart limped over to them.

What is that? Somebody s hairball? asked BarleyFace.

RobinHeart stiffened, taking in a sharp breath; he knew what that small bloody shape was. AshPaw!

Pushing past BarleyFace RobinHeart ran the last few feet to his little apprentice. What happened? asked RobinHeart bending down next to AshPaw s head. YellowLeaf, tell me! he exclaimed looking up at her, tears in his eyes.

NightClan, she said simply.

DabbledFern was here, said OrangeSky. There was nothing he could do.

He s dying? asked RobinHeart bitter tears falling down his face.

OrangeSky didn t reply, only looked at him with her green eyes.

AshPaw twitched painfully. Hearing his mentor s voice he struggled to look at him. RobinHeart? he whispered weakly.

Hush, it s alright, everything will be alright, said RobinHeart laying his head down next to AshPaw s.

I m here Ashy.

I& I told them& AshPaw coughed and continued, Like you said& I warned them&

Well done, said RobinHeart pushing back his tears, for AshPaw s sake. You saved so many lives& AshPaw you have meant more to me than any apprentice I have ever had.

Thank you, said AshPaw quietly, letting his tired eyes drop shut, content with his mentor s approval and praise.

AshPaw, would you like to become a Warrior? asked RobinHeart unable to keep his sorrow back any longer. I will sit your watch for you& tonight.

Slowly AshPaw nodded.

For a moment RobinHeart thought then taking a deep shaky breath the red tom spoke. In StarClan s name, I RobinHeart Deputy of MeadowClan name you, AshPaw, a full Warrior of MeadowClan to serve and protect your Clan mates for long as you shall live. No longer shall you be known as AshPaw, from now on you will be called by your Warrior name& AshWhisker a mighty Warrior of& of Meadow&Clan& with those final words RobinHeart broke down, openly weeping before his sisters and apprentice.

Gently RobinHeart lay down is body over that of AshPaw s, providing both warmth and comfort as the dawn grew near. RobinHeart s two sisters stayed with him, over shadowing their brother with love and understanding. As the hour past RobinHeart heard the sounds of NightClan as they came into the clearing yet he did not move. AshPaw needed him more. Off in the distance he could hear his father calling him for the Gathering but the Gathering, his father, and even his duties as a deputy took a lesser place to that of AshPaw.

RobinHeart, muttered YellowLeaf close to his ear. Dad s coming.

RobinHeart rose up slightly, lifting his tear streaked face to see his father stamping angrily towards him.

RobinHeart! The Gathering is about to start. What are you doing?

Leave me alone! growled RobinHeart, laying his head back over AshPaw s neck.

You are deputy; you need to be at the Gathering. Now come on! said LionStar angrily.

I am fulfilling my duty as a Deputy and as a Mentor, said RobinHeart quietly, his voice filled with sorrow. Leave me alone!

Well fine then! I don t have time for this now, but I want to speak with you later about this& and other things, said LionStar as he turned and left to join the Gathering.

EbonyPaw had lost all track of RobinHeart. She wandered aimlessly around the Gathering place, hoping

to be invited into someone's group or conversation.

Hi RavenPaw& no& that's not it& whatever your name is, HI! exclaimed LeafyFace loudly.

Hi, said EbonyPaw, hiding her frustration. Of all these cats only one that would talk to her couldn't even remember her name. Mind if I join you?

LeafyFace looked over at her friend, SunStorm. I don't mind!

Come on over, *EbonyPaw*, said SunStorm, throwing a look at LeafyFace.

Thank you, a lot, I was supposed to be following the Deputy from MeadowClan somewhere, but he and his friend ended up in the water and I completely lost him, EbonyPaw said sitting down beside them.

You mean RobinHeart? asked LeafyFace, her eyebrows going up.

Yeah, that was his name, HollyGaze told me to follow him, said EbonyPaw. Why?

LeafyFace tried not to smile. No reason.

Sure there isn't, muttered SunStorm. So were you at the ForestClan battle? I didn't see you there.

No, I wasn't. I stayed behind with HollyGaze and, EbonyPaw paused, unsure if she should tell. Something really weird happened to WildStar.

LeafyFace looked away. Not again, she said slight panic in her voice.

What? Does this happen a lot? asked EbonyPaw.

Not a lot, but enough, said SunStorm.

Do you know what happened exactly? HollyGaze really didn't explain it. He just seemed to& stop living for awhile, it was very strange, said EbonyPaw.

LeafyFace sighed. I guess you don't know about this, but when a cat is made leader of a Clan they are given nine lives. When a leader dies they are given one of their lives by StarClan. That is how WildStar became leader; MidnightStar, our former leader, lost his last life in a battle with NightClan, WildHeart lead SkyClan into battle and to victory. That night HollyGaze and Hailstorm took him to become a leader because his injuries were so bad, that morning he lost his first life. He's lost one almost every season since then.

Wow, that's a lot then isn't it? said EbonyPaw.

Yes it is, and just between us I think he needs to stop being so risky with them, said SunStorm matter-of-factly.

LeafyFace nodded gravely. I'm worried he's coming to the end of his lives, if that happened I don't know

what SkyClan would do.

Yeah, he's a good leader. We certainly need him right now. And I don't know who would be leader if he& I mean our deputy, IceWind, is a great guy, but I can't say much for his leadership skills, you know? but in SunStorm.

Yeah& he talks& a lot! said EbonyPaw happily. These Warriors were so nice, she was glad to have someone around to talk to and take her mind off PepperPaw for awhile.

AND he's a coward, added LeafyFace laughing. But he's alright! You should see it when WildStar gets mad at him and he just keeps talking& it's funny& Thank StarClan he hasn't killed him yet! I would have *loooooong* ago!

Shut up LeafyFace! The Gathering is starting, said SunStorm. And sure enough, NightClan had finally arrived and the four Clan Leaders stood upon the great stone; ready to begin the Gathering.

DawnStar stood forward and addressed the cats as their attention was turned towards him, It has been an eventful night, but do not let the battle color the evening's talk.

WildStar flipped back his ears, eyes intent on SilverStar. Anger was clear in his stare as he glowered at her from across the rock. What are you talking about DawnStar? he snapped. SilverStar has betrayed our trust! How can I not let it color the evening's talk?

I will not be pushed around and taken advantage of! retorted SilverStar loudly. You think because I am a she-cat, and I am young that you can dominate over me, and I will not allow it!

Is a show of force really necessary? spat WildStar moving closer to his new found enemy, eyes flashing. Has one SkyClan cat stepped paw on your land? Huh? What about ForestClan? Are they stealing prey from your land? Or MeadowClan pushing their territory out into yours?

The pretty she-cat threw her head up defiantly. No, but it was only a matter of time! I am not as dim witted as you think WildStar! And you are not as strong as you think you are if you let a younger, smaller, weaker cat take you down!

WildStar bristled. Idiot! he hissed his wiry fur standing on end. Do you think your claws could hurt me? How foolish you really are! Not even your Father could take me down!

Then why are you out yet *another* life!

There was a general outburst of whispers here as WildStar stood before all of them, his face slandered and embarrassed. WildStar rose up his skin turning red beneath his fur. He felt humiliated, completely and utterly but was trying to control his anger, he could not fight her again he knew.

Your claws had little to do with that, he said evenly. I struck my head, you can see the gash yourself if you wish.

Would you stop bickering? The point is not who killed who. Instead we should be trying to figure out why

it all happened and fix the problem, DawnStar interrupted. Right LionStar?

What? Oh, sure, LionStar replied distractedly.

Thanks for the support LionStar, said DawnStar continuing: So, let s talk. What is the problem exactly from each Clan s point of view?

SilverStar invaded my territory! She attacked the clans for no good reason! shouted WildStar angrily.

No good reason! If it weren t for all you we never would have needed to attack! retorted SilverStar furiously.

SilverStar you must admit your decision to attack *all* the other clans was rash and not very beneficial to either you or anyone else. I do believe you owe us all a reasonable explanation for actions, DawnStar interjected calmly.

If there *is* one, muttered WildStar.

Of course there is, SilverStar hissed; I felt you all needed to see that just because I am a young she-cat and a new leader, that NightClan is not any less powerful than it was when BadgerStar was leader.

Well that was lame, said WildStar loudly. You do realize that you and your Warrior s were PULVERIZED!!

Look who s talking! At least / didn t lose any lives! SilverStar replied angrily.

Let s not get on that again! DawnStar cut in once again. I m sure at the time the strategy *seemed* much more logical than it does now. But still, I also agree that it was not well thought through. No one threatened you SilverStar. I certainly was not about to take advantage of your inexperience and I m sure the thought never occurred to anyone else either.

I for one *was* not at all interested in taking anything from you or NightClan, LionStar put in.

I couldn t take that chance! SilverStar defended herself.

Couldn t take that chance? What are you talking about? How can you feel threatened? MeadowClan is smaller than you! SkyClan hasn t attacked NightClan in *seasons*! And ForestClan has never attacked at all! exclaimed WildStar his voice more annoyed with each word.

I don t know how you or anyone could say something like *that*, fox-dung! SilverStar yelled savagely.

Fox dung! FOX DUNG! shouted WildStar rage taking over. You wretched piece of slime!

You re just a pathetic little sissy that leads a band of mouse-brained idiots! screamed SilverStar.

Then what does that make you! retorted WildStar. At least I have enough sense to stay on my own

land and mind my own business! You're a self-important, foolish child that shouldn't even be a WARRIOR let alone a leader!

For your information I happen to know what I'm doing. And maybe your dense little brain didn't hear, but I already told you why I attacked! said SilverStar.

Oh really? Stupid am I! I wasn't the one attacking *all* the Clans for NO REASON!!

It was not for no reason you& you-

Suddenly there was a huge flash of lighting as it ripped the dawn clouds in two. Each and every cat turned their heads, startled and then jumped at the following boom of thunder. Then without warning the skies opened up and poured down a deluge of rain. The wind howled the sky turned black. The trees bent to the fury of the storm screaming out its rage for the world to hear. The leaders looked at each other in horror, they had offended StarClan once again and each fearing for their lives called their clan to assemble. HollyGaze standing over the limp body of PepperPaw looked to the heavens as did IvyFoot. A sign& she murmured as HailStorm came running to them. From StarClan.