Unending Love

By PantherStorm

Submitted: July 2, 2006 Updated: July 2, 2006

WARNING: Do not read the following story unless you have read the original: The Calm before the Storm.

Some say love is a miracle... But for PantherStorm, it's no walk in the park. A tragic, heartbreaking story of forbidden love,

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http://www.fanart-central.net/stories/user/PantherStorm/36121/Unending-Love

Chapter 1 - Unending Love

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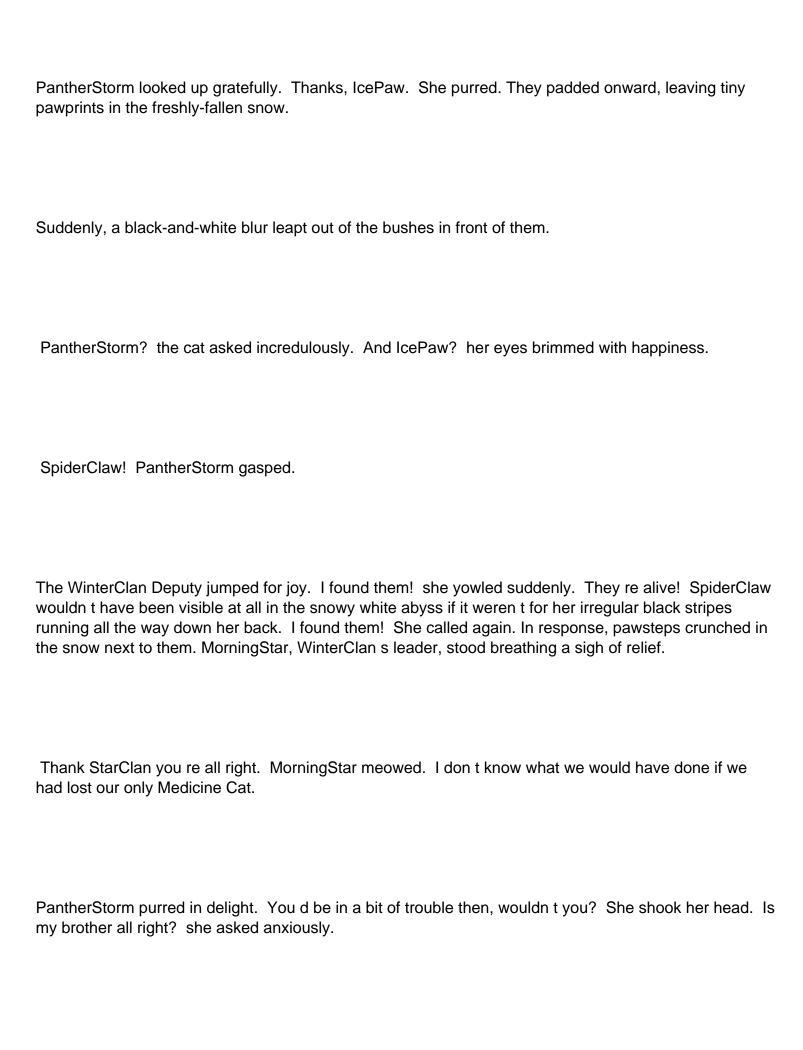
1 - Unending Love

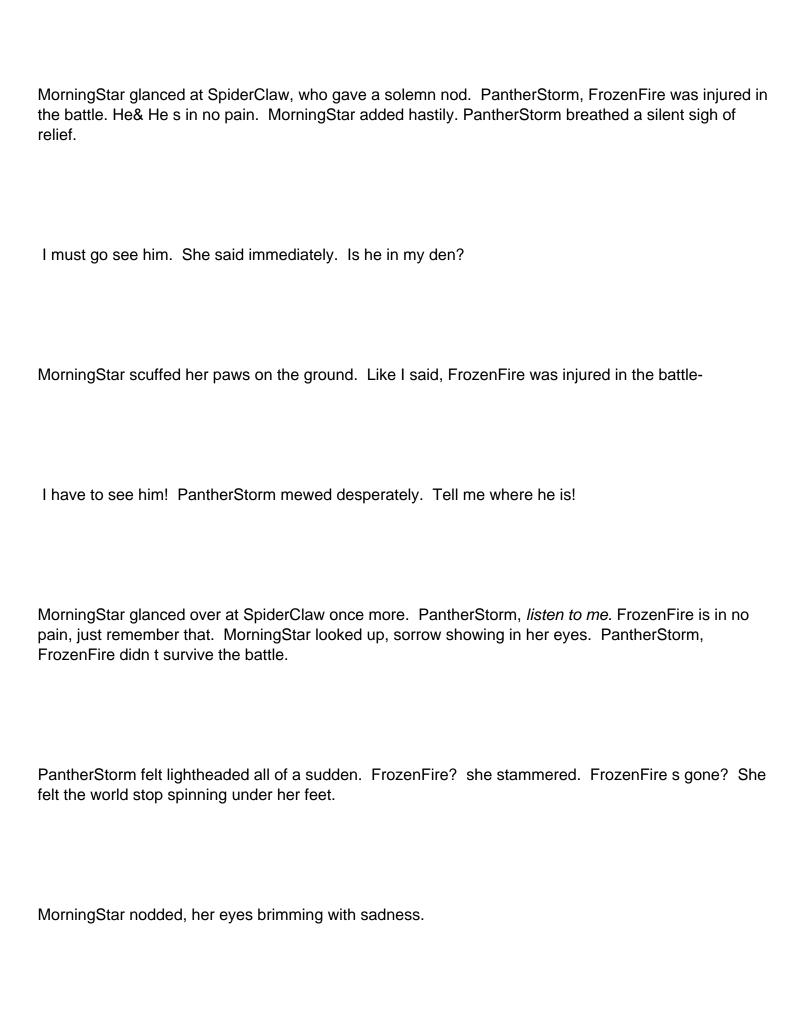
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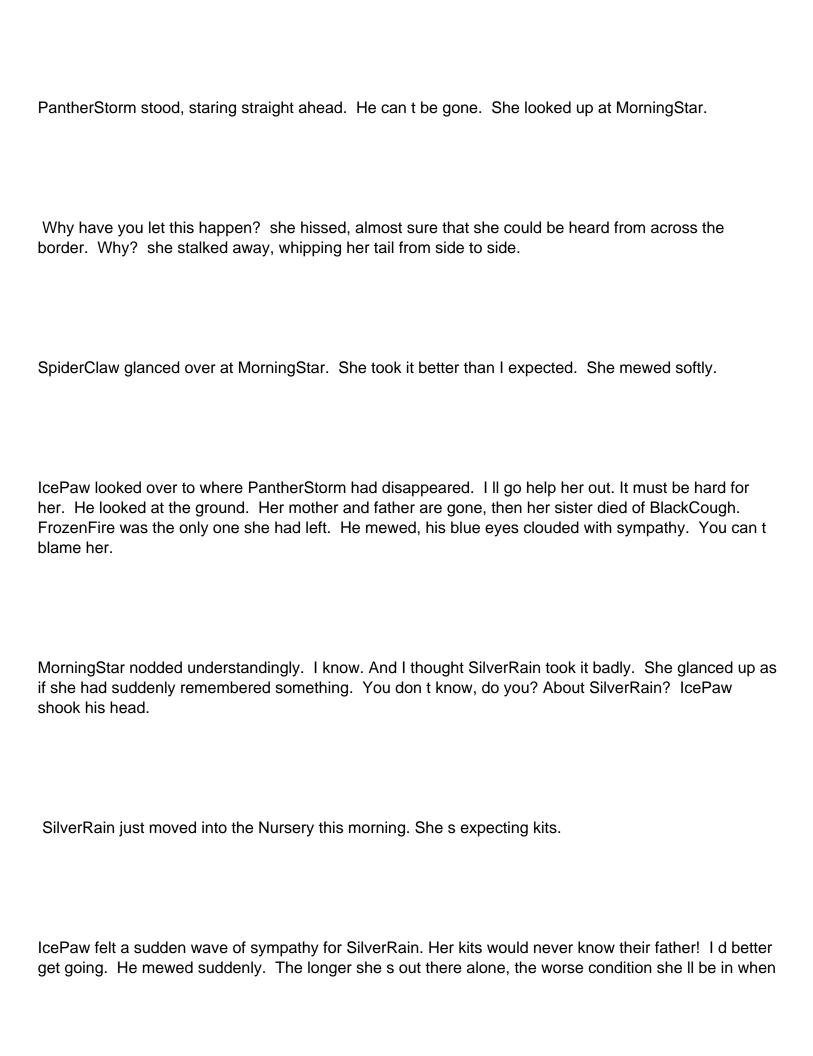
FINAL DRAFT II 4-10-06

Block 1

Snowflakes drifted silently down from the clouded gray sky, coating the forest with a blanket of pure white. Only the undersides of the trees remained untouched; but from their bare branches hung miniature icicles. Not a sound was being made; the silence broken only by the occasional bird-call. The tranquil scene was interrupted only by two cats making their way through the forest. A silver-gray tom, his fur touched white by the fallen flakes of snow, poked his head out from behind a cluster of snow-capped ferns. Shortly behind him, a slender black and white she-cat glanced warily over her shoulder.
Are you sure it s all right, IcePaw? the she-cat asked, her green eyes glittering in the dim light. Images from the battle that had taken place just moments ago flashed through her mind: The enormous dogs, the triumph of winning her first battle, and the strong love she felt for IcePaw, as he risked his life in attempt to save hers.
Never surer, PantherStorm. IcePaw replied. He brushed the tip of his tail along PantherStorm s flank. There II be nothing to worry about, you II see.
PantherStorm continued towards the camp, her fur still standing on edge.
I sure hope you re right. She murmured, glancing around again. I ve been through enough for today.
IcePaw nodded silently. You ve been through more in these past two days than most Medicine Cats go through in a lifetime. he mewed, pressing his nose to her shoulder to comfort her. I ll be here for you.





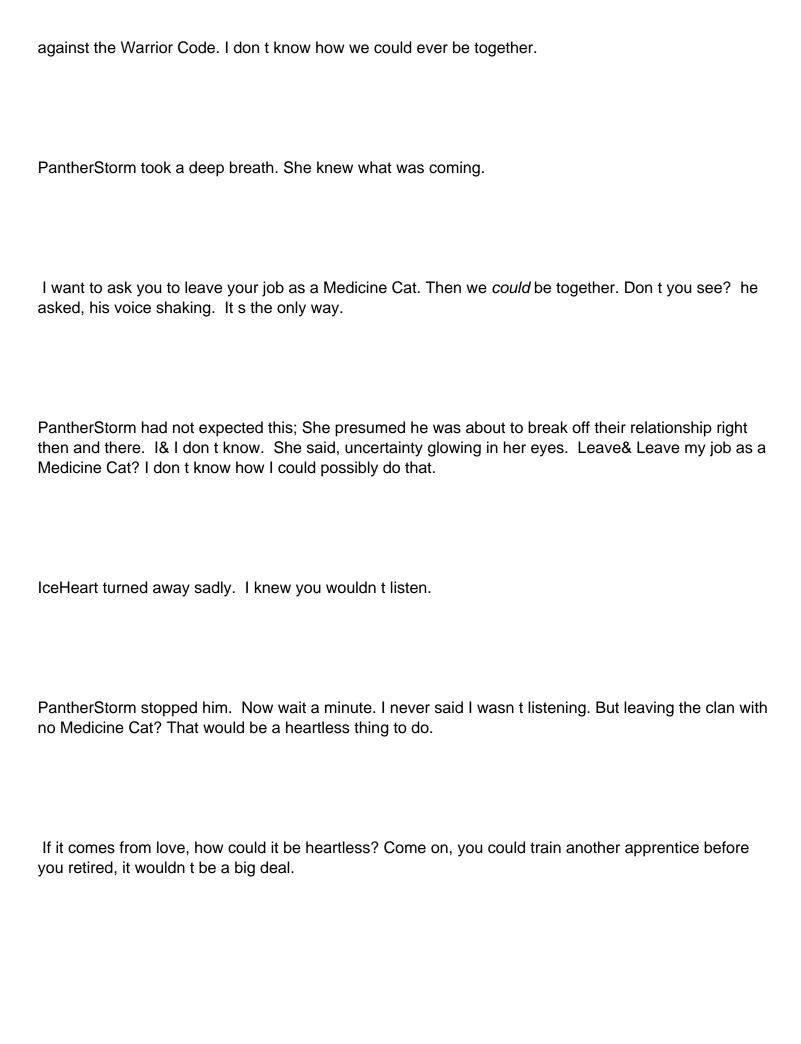


she gets back. You know PantherStorm. He sighed. I ll be back at camp in an hour or two. MorningStar flicked her tail as a signal of Good Luck as he vanished into the snow.
He really loves her, doesn t he? SpiderClaw asked MorningStar with a look of approval spreading over her face once IcePaw was out of earshot. MorningStar sighed. Sometimes I fear that PantherStorm may end up breaking the Warrior Code in order to be with him. Everyone knows that Medicine Cats can t have kits!
SpiderClaw shook the snowflakes off of her pelt. I know. She agreed. But love is love. Not even the Warrior Code can change that.
MorningStar said nothing, but turned back towards camp. We d better get back to camp. SpiderClaw, convinced that she had won their argument, trailed her leader back to WinterClan.



longer, you re going to freeze your fur off. Other cats were hurt in the battle. You re the only one in the clan who can heal. They need your help. He held his breath, wondering what her reaction would be.
PantherStorm glared up at him for a split second, fury glowing in her eyes, and then she seemed to give up. I m sorry, IcePaw. I didn t mean it, I really didn t mean it. IcePaw breathed a sigh of relief. Come on. He mewed. Let s get you back to camp.
* * * * *
It had stopped snowing by the time PantherStorm and IcePaw arrived back at the campsite, but the sun still remained hidden behind dismal gray clouds. PantherStorm had just settled down to a nice, plump fish from the river when she heard MorningStar call the clan together for a meeting. She sighed and stood up, wandering over to the center of the camp to see what she had called the meeting for.
I ask our Warrior ancestors to look down upon this apprentice. She called. PantherStorm strained to see who she was talking about, and eventually spotted IcePaw s silver pelt.







* * * *
As PantherStorm awakened the next morning, she immediately sensed that something was wrong. MorningStar stood in the center of camp with a worried expression on her face as she addressed the
two cats standing in front of her, who PantherStorm recognized as SpiderClaw, and her apprentice, NightPaw.
What s going on? PantherStorm asked as she got nearer to them. What s the matter?
SpiderClaw flashed her a sympathetic glance. It s IceHeart. She said, her expression unreadable.
IceHeart? PantherStorm continued cautiously. What s he done?



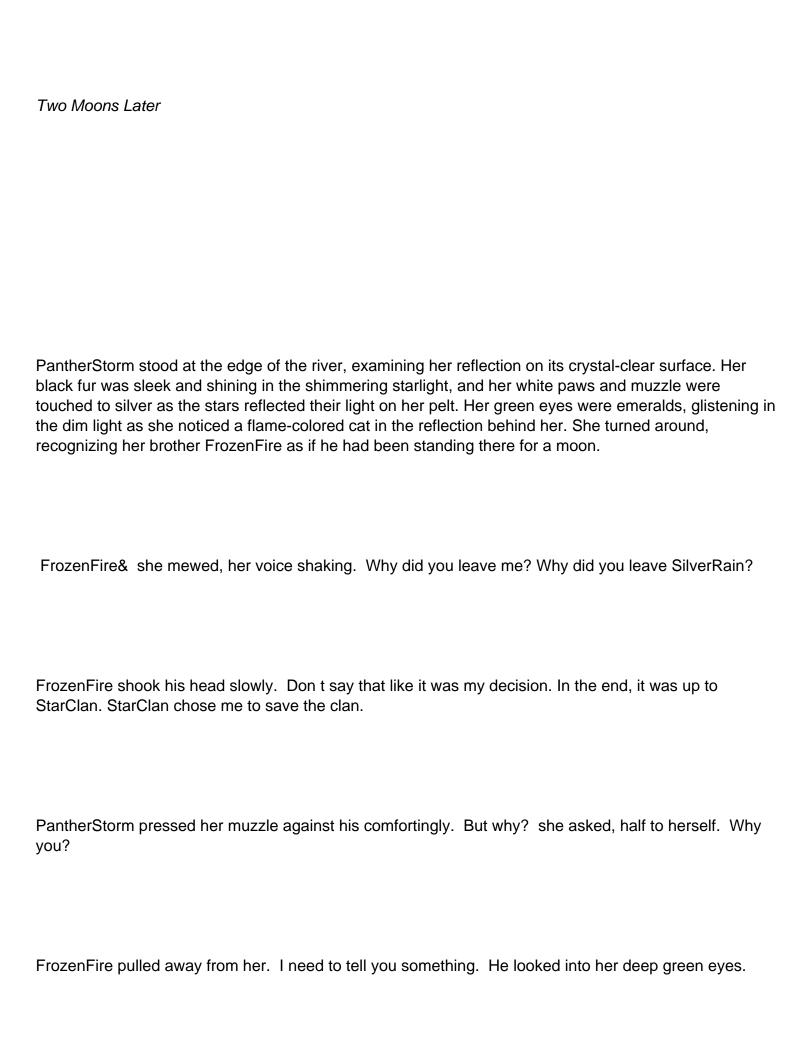
I have to retire. The thought suddenly crossed her mind. It s the only way. I know there s no way I can live without him. She stood up and shook herself briskly. She was going to get IceHeart back, one way or another. Although she wasn t entirely sure how she was going to pull it off, she knew it was necessary.
MorningStar, she called her leader over. I ve been having a hard time keeping up with everything that has been happening lately, and I need some help. I think I could use an apprentice&
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Okay. So what so far do you know?
Umm, I know that Poppy seeds are to dull the pain, and& Well, that s it. PebblePaw looked down at his paws sheepishly.

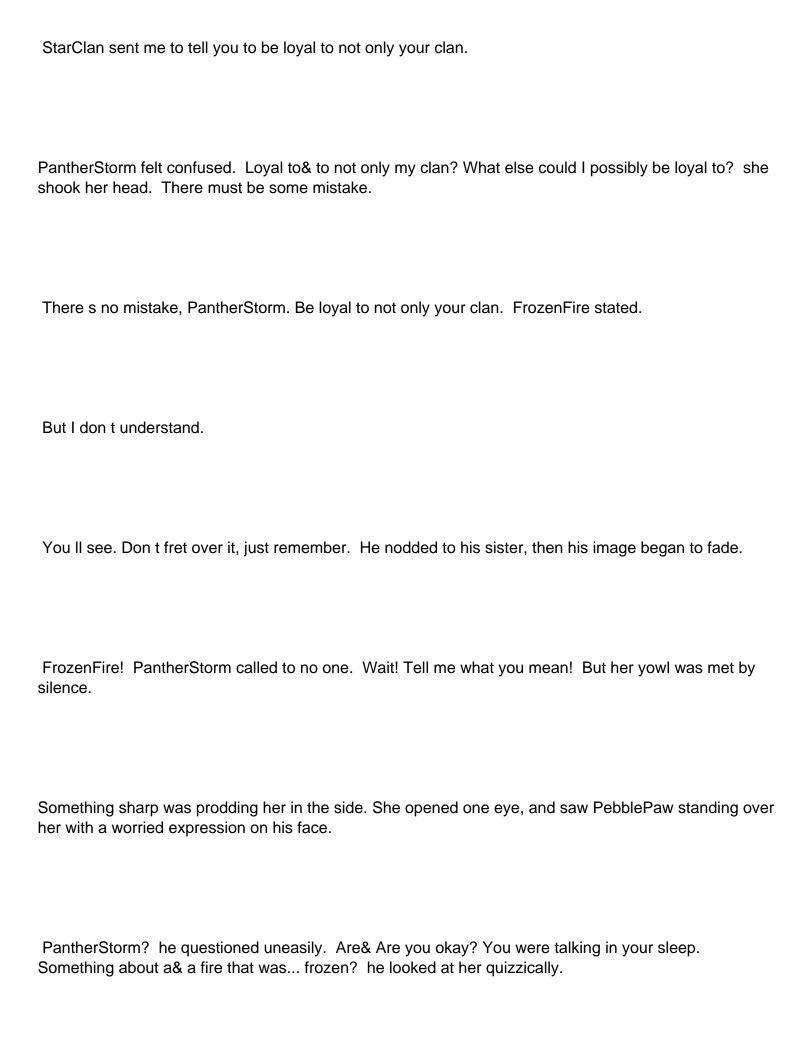
The ceremony for PantherStorm to receive her new apprentice had been held just a few hours ago, but PantherStorm was already training. The sooner PebblePaw became a full Medicine Cat, the sooner she could retire.

That s okay. PantherStorm responded. You II learn much more to come, you II see. She straightened up. You already know that Poppy Seeds are to dull pain. But even with poppy seeds, there s much more to know. She continued. She reached up and picked off a few poppy seeds from a shelf formed by the jagged edges of the rocks making up the Medicine Cats Den, and dropped them in front of PebblePaw.

When a cat is in pain, you give them these to swallow. If you give them too many, though, they Il fall into a deep sleep. Which isn t bad if they ve just come out of something very serious. She added. But even a very small amount can make a cat drowsy. That s why you have to be careful. She finished.

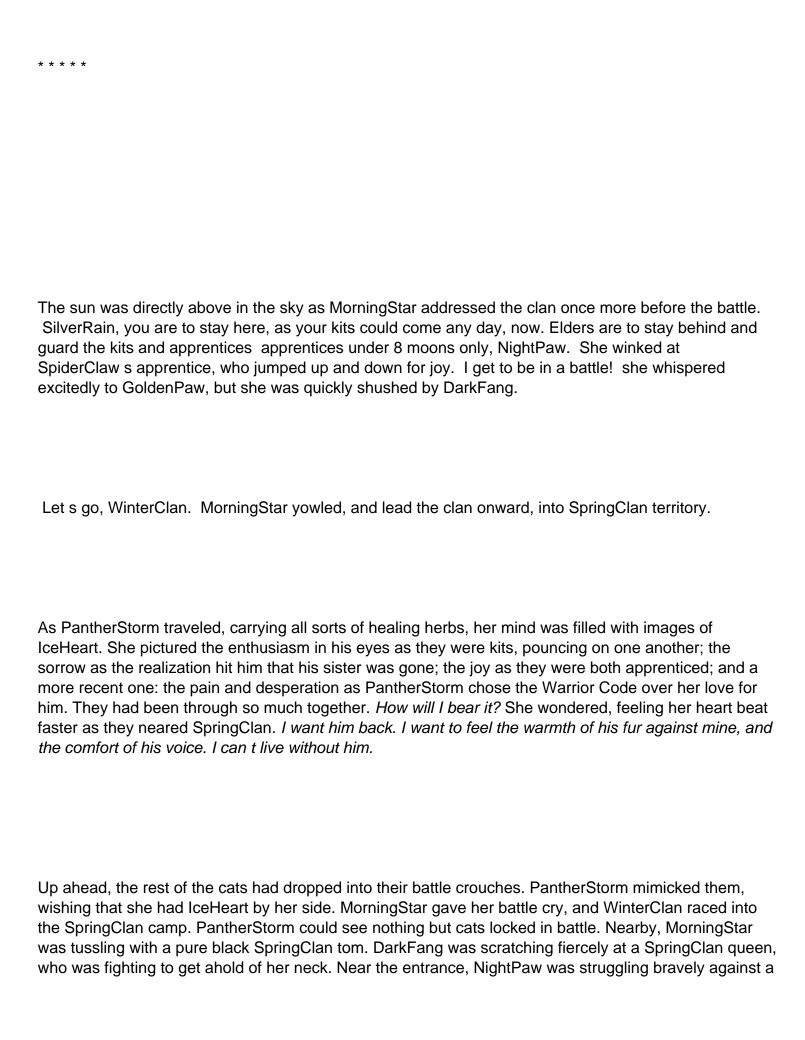
PebblePaw looked up enthusiastically. Cool! he mewed. PantherStorm chuckled softly. It was not long ago that she had been an apprentice herself, and she remembered the endless energy all apprentices had. Their training continued all throughout the day, PantherStorm only stopping once to take a rabbit from the fresh-kill pile. The sun was finally setting on a long, tiring day as PantherStorm ended the training and told PebblePaw to get some rest. As PantherStorm heard her new apprentice s breathing become regular, telling her that he was asleep, she reflected on that morning. *IceHeart is gone, but maybe, just maybe, things could change.* She thought to herself as she drifted off into her thoughts and let sleep claim her at last.





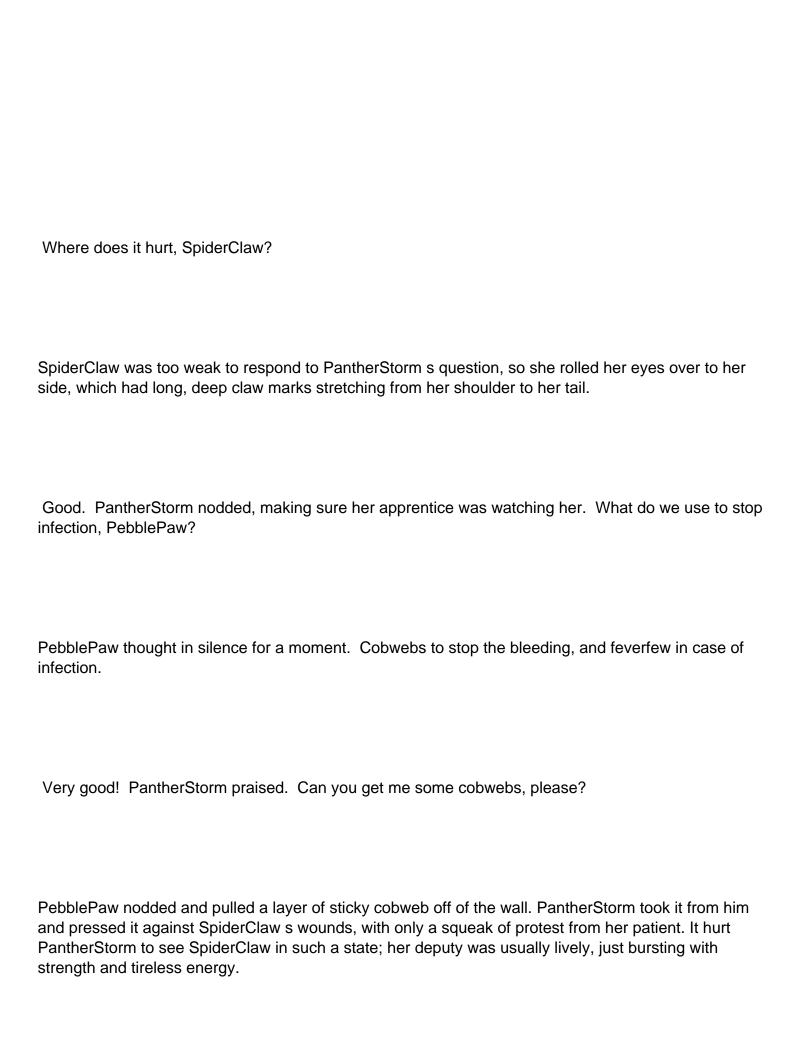
I m okay, PebblePaw. PantherStorm sighed. Just a dream, that s all. But in the back of her mind, she knew that it wasn t just a dream. FrozenFire was trying to tell me something. What did he say? She hung her head. He told me to do one simple thing: Remember. How could I have forgotten already?
PebblePaw mewed something, but it was barely audible. PantherStorm knew that he had gone back to sleep, but she also knew that there was no way she would be able to go back to sleep. She lay awake all through the night, thinking about her dream. He said something about loyalty. She recalled. I wonder if he was talking about IceHeart.
Her thoughts were interrupted by the first ray of sunshine streaming through her den, which seemed to coat both her and PebblePaw s pelts with gold. PantherStorm stood up and stretched. A new day was beginning, and it would be a perfect opportunity to do more training. It would be hard for PantherStorm with IceHeart no longer by her side, but she would survive. He would be back within a moon or two, PantherStorm was sure of it. The sooner she trained PebblePaw, the sooner he would come back; it was that simple.
Let all cats join here in the center of camp for a Clan meeting. MorningStar s words made her jump.
At this time of day? PantherStorm muttered under her breath. She must be mad.
MorningStar stood, gathering cats around her. Once everyone had come out of their dens, MorningStar started her announcement, SpiderClaw at her side.

SpiderClaw, NightPaw and I have found evidence of SpringClan cats hunting on our territory.
Oh, no. PantherStorm gazed, horrified, up at her leader. Not again.
As the third time this season, we reserve the right to openly attack SpringClan. They have brought this upon themselves; StarClan have mercy on their souls. Yowls of approval went up all around the camp. We will attack at sunhigh.
PantherStorm had to bite her tongue to stop herself from objecting out loud.
IceHeart is in SpringClan! She reminded herself. What will happen if it comes down to someone fighting him? She forced the image out of her mind and a shudder crawled down her spine. What if that someone is me?

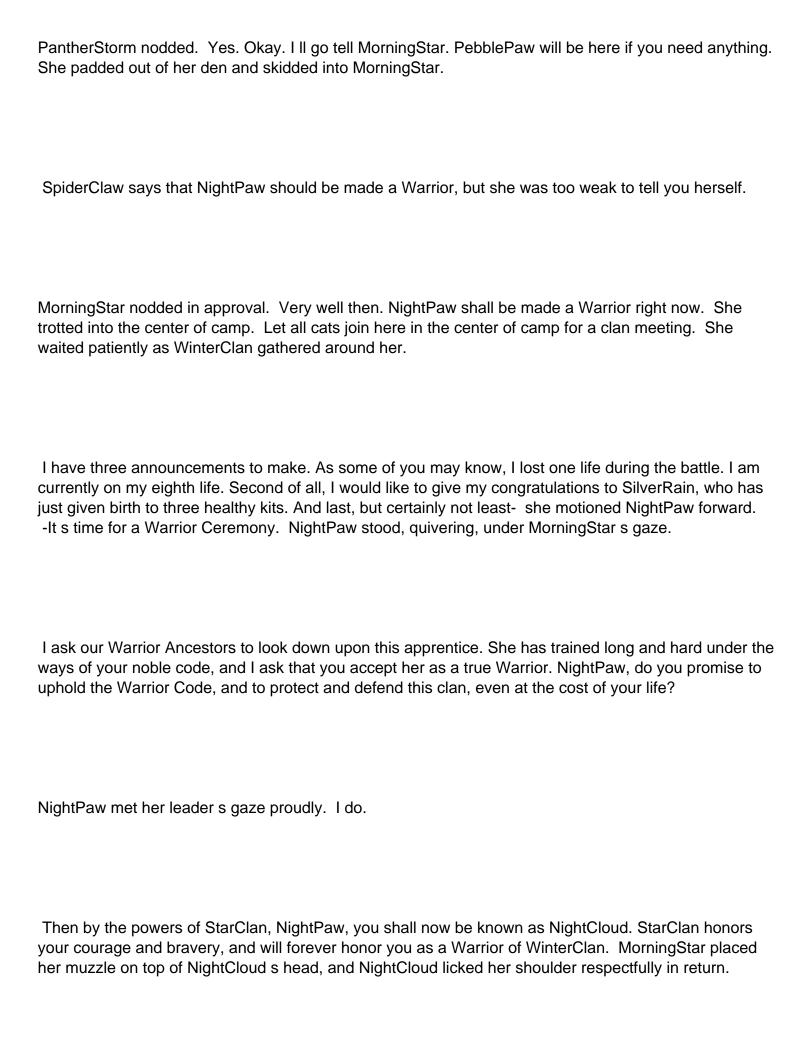




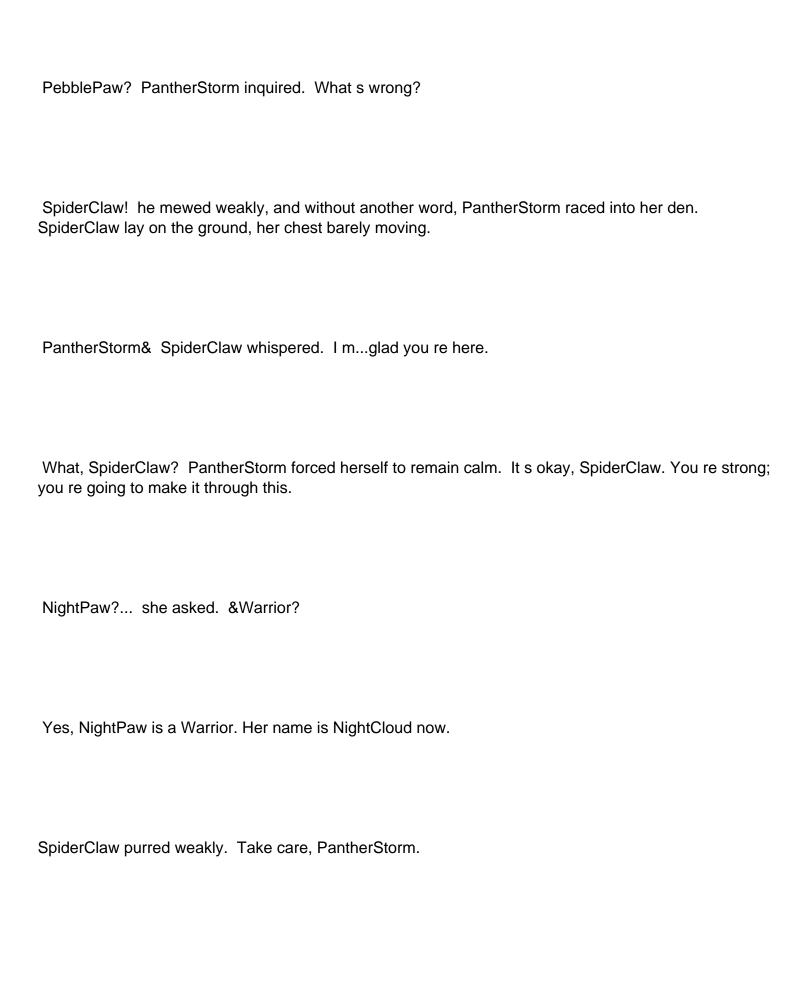
IceHeart sighed. You said so yourself. There s no way we could be together.
That s not true. PantherStorm objected. I ve started training another apprentice. As soon as he becomes a full Medicine Cat, I can retire. She looked at him with a mischievous glint in her eyes. It s no big deal.
IceHeart pricked his ears up. You would do that for me? he shook his head, as if it weren t a real offer. You chose the Warrior Code over me before.
I was being stupid, okay? she cried. I didn t know what I had until it was gone. Think of it as punishment for ruining the best thing that ever happened to me.
PantherStorm heard her name being called, and saw SpiderClaw, who had deep scratch marks all along her side. I have to go. She whispered, and dashed off to help SpiderClaw, leaving IceHeart standing there, watching her leave him once more.
* * * *



The battle had ended only a few minutes ago, and WinterClan had won. PantherStorm was thrilled that IceHeart had not been injured, even though she wasn t supposed to be rooting for the other team.
Okay, now do you remember what feverfew looks like? It s the little white flower with the yellow center. Can you pull off one of the leaves and bring it to me please?
PebblePaw leapt up and tore of a few feverfew leaves, then dropped them at PantherStorm s paws. Thanks, PebblePaw. She chewed up the leaf in her mouth, then placed the remedy on SpiderClaw s gashes.
Now all we can do is wait. She told PebblePaw, but suddenly noticed that SpiderClaw was trying to say something.
What is it, SpiderClaw? she asked worriedly. Is something the matter?
SpiderClaw looked up at PantherStorm, happiness in her blue eyes. NightPaw& NightPaw&should be& made a Warrior& she whispered softly. Please& let it be granted& my final wish.

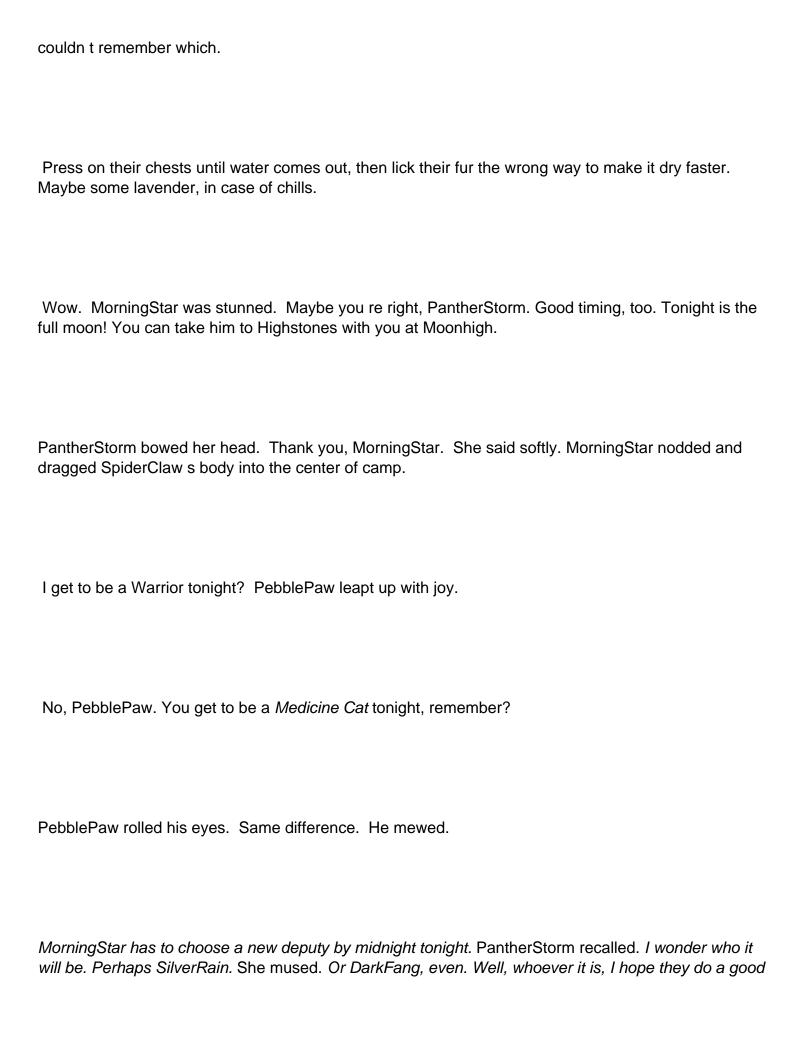


NightCloud! PantherStorm called happily. A pang of sadness suddenly hit her when she remembered that the last Warrior to be named lceHeart had left the clan.
PantherStorm twitched her whiskers happily, and made her way over to the nursery to see SilverRain, her best friend and half-sister. She squeezed through the narrow entrance, and immediately saw SilverRain nursing three beautiful kits. Two of the kits had silver pelts, just like their mother s, one darker than the other. The third kit was bright orange, and reminded PantherStorm distinctly of their father.
Oh, hello, PantherStorm. Murmured SilverRain. Come to see the kits?
Of course! PantherStorm said softly, and knelt down next to her. They re absolutely adorable. She said happily. Have you picked out names yet?
Yes, actually. The dark gray tom is ShadowKit. The light gray she-kit is FrostKit and the one& she broke off. The she-kit that looks like FrozenFire is AmberKit.
PantherStorm gazed at the kits with an unreadable expression on her face. Beautiful names. PantherStorm commented. I m so happy for you. FrozenFire would be proud. With that, she turned and squeezed herself back out of the Nursery. She was about to go pick up some fresh-kill when a worried mew sounded from beside her, and she looked down and saw PebblePaw.



No, SpiderClaw. Don t talk like that. You re going to make it through this, remember?
Tell MorningStar I m& sorry. She mewed, her voice barely audible. That I didn t& serve her& longer&
PantherStorm shook her head. SpiderClaw, listen. You will serve her longer. You re going to make it through this, and live a full, happy, content life with a mate, and lots of kits, and& she took a deep breath as she realized that SpiderClaw was no longer breathing. PantherStorm placed her head on her paws. She had been unable to save her Deputy.
MorningStar! she called as she noticed her leader s tan pelt just outside her den. MorningStar, come ir here. She sighed as her leader made her way into the Medicine Cat s den. SpiderClaw has passed. Her wounds were apparently fatal. She hesitated before continuing. I also think that PebblePaw is ready to become a full Medicine cat.
What? That s ridiculous! MorningStar objected. You only received him as your apprentice two moons ago!
Yes, but he s a fast learner. I ve taught him everything there is to know, and he remembers every bit of it! she was determined to win this argument.
PebblePaw, what do we use for rat bites?

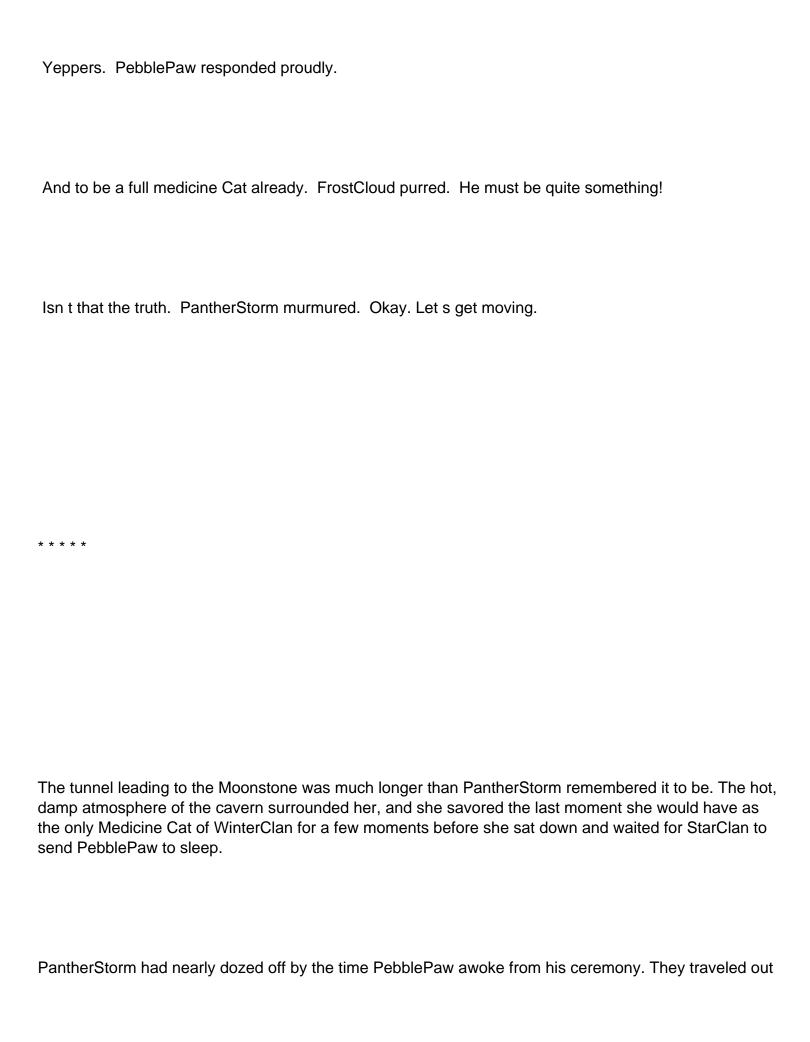
Burdock root, and garlic if it gets infected.
Very good! PantherStorm felt truly amazed at her apprentice s skills. Now, what if a cat swallows poison?
Yarrow - it II make them sick.
Excellent! Hmm&
She was interrupted by MorningStar. Mind if I try?
No problem! PantherStorm mewed confidently.
MorningStar thought for a moment. What if a cat falls into the river?
PantherStorm froze. She had either gone over that, or planned on going over that, PantherStorm



job.
And with that, she trotted out of her den to pay her respects to SpiderClaw one final time.
* * * * *
It s time to go, PantherStorm! PebblePaw pranced around his mentor excitedly. Let s go, let s go! Okay, I m coming! PantherStorm sighed. Are you ready? I was <i>kidding!</i> she added, at a disbelieving
look from PebblePaw. It was a joke! she shook her head. Let s go. We ve got to meet the other Medicine Cats. Okay! PebblePaw bounced up and stood waiting at the Den s entrance.
Okay: FebbleFaw bounced up and stood waiting at the Den's entrance.

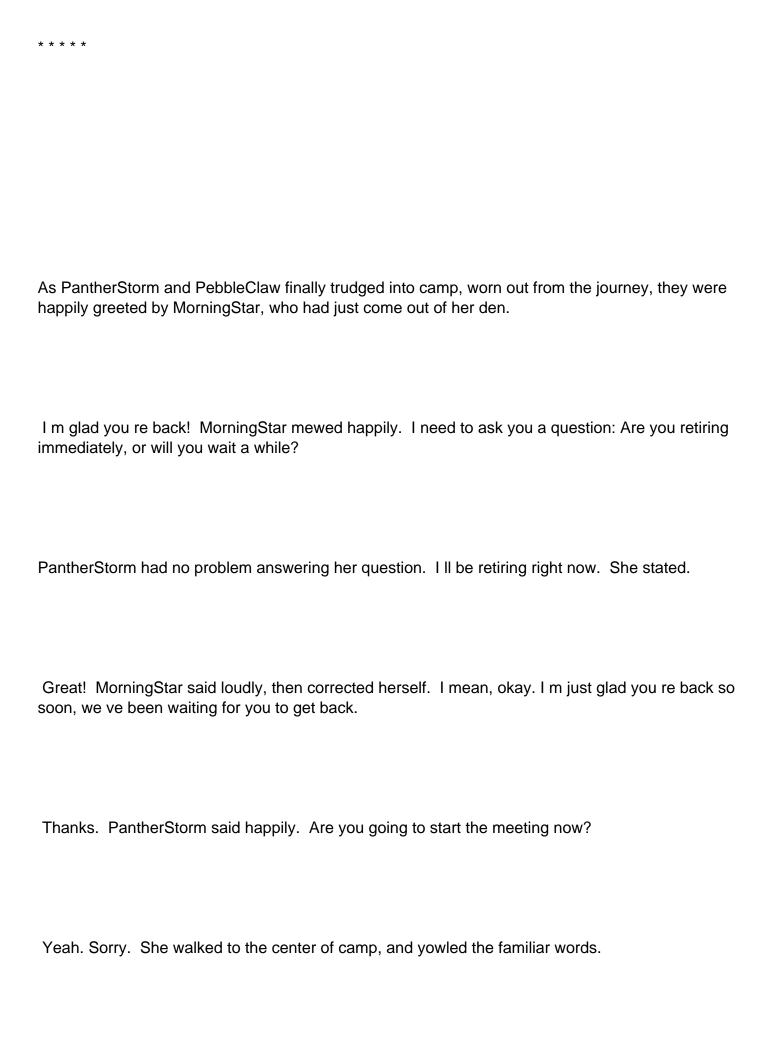
PantherStorm rolled her eyes and followed, remembering the last time that she had traveled to the Moonstone. It seemed like it had taken place just yesterday; and yet here she was, bringing her apprentice to become a full Medicine Cat. Sorrow struck her as she realized that she would have to retire soon, but she knew that it was for the best. Who knew what lay in store for her?
The heather bushes in front of the camp parted, and PantherStorm stepped through, with PebblePaw right behind her. Okay. Do you remember which way it is to Fourtrees?
Fourtrees? PebblePaw asked, confused. I thought we were going to the Moonstone!
Of course we re going to the Moonstone, you stupid furball.
But you said-
We re going to Fourtrees first to meet with the other Medicine Cats! She yowled. Great StarClan, are you deaf? I told you that already.
Okay, sorry.

They continued in silence for a while, and finally come upon Fourtrees. PantherStorm sighed and looked on, watching the SummerClan Medicine Cats making their way towards Fourtrees. The AutumnClan and SpringClan Medicine Cats, however, were already there waiting.
It s a shame our clans had to fight each other. Meowed CloudFur, the SpringClan Medicine Cat, as PantherStorm and PebbleClaw arrived. I hear you lost a valuable member of your clan?
Yes, SpiderClaw died of fatal wounds. I was unable to save her. PantherStorm responded. Has SunPelt retired already? SunPelt had been the former SpringClan Medicine Cat, and he and BlackClaw the former WinterClan Medicine Cat had been close friends.
Yes, the rule is unfortunate, isn t it? CloudFur shook his head as he spoke. Once a Medicine Cat fully trains an apprentice, he must retire within a moon of their apprentice s becoming a full Medicine Cat?
Not for me it isn t. PantherStorm thought, but she didn t dare say that in front of the other Medicine Cats Yes, terribly unfortunate. PantherStorm responded softly.
Okay. So, PebblePaw, is it? PantherStorm looked up to see that the SummerClan cats had made it.





PebbleClaw. PantherStorm said softly. How is your life going right now?
PebbleClaw took no time in replying. A perfect ten, no doubt. PantherStorm nodded, as if something had just made perfect sense to her.
When I went with MorningStar MorningFlower then to receive her nine lives and become MorningStar, she told me that it only snows when a cat s life is as perfect as it can get. I thought it was just an old she-cat s tale at first, but then when we won the battle against the dogs, I felt like my life was perfect, and it started snowing. I guess it really is true.
PebbleClaw looked up in amazement at the falling snowflakes. I suppose you re right. He murmured, gazing up at the pale blue sky. I feel like my life couldn't possibly get any better.
Well, let s just get back to camp and spread all that happiness. Come on. PantherStorm motioned with a flick of her tail for PebbleClaw to follow her as she trotted back to camp.



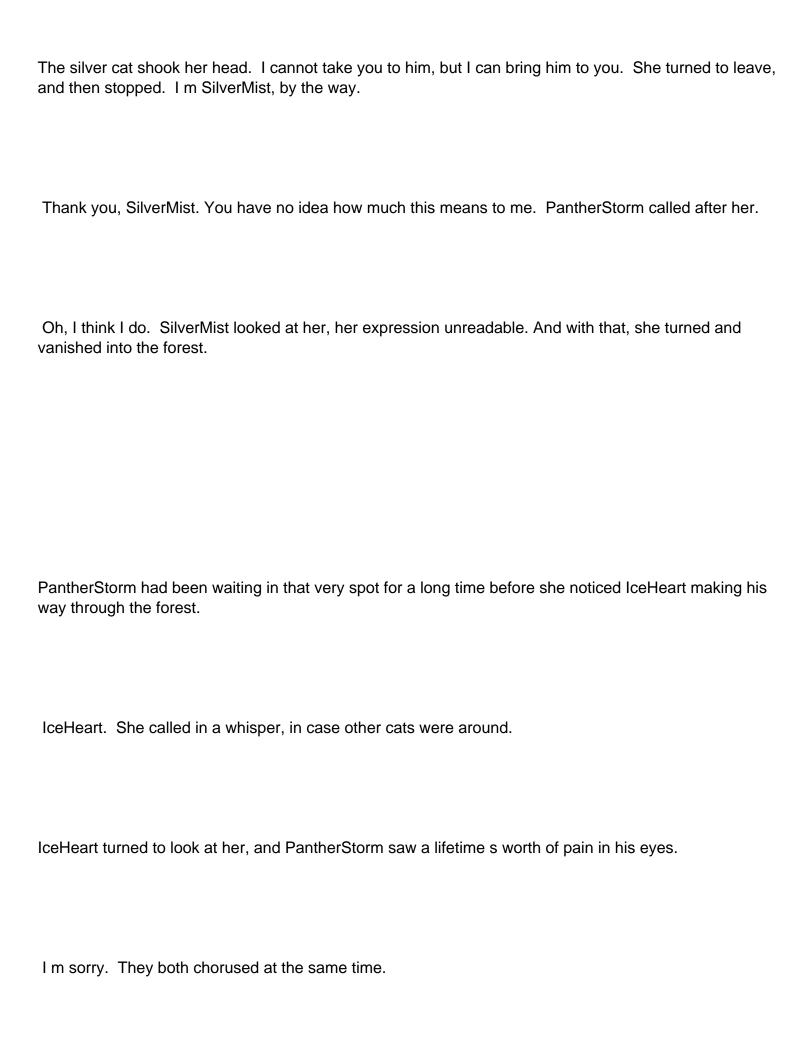
Let all cats join here in the center of camp for a clan meeting! Within a few moments, all cats had joined PantherStorm and PebbleClaw in front of MorningStar.
As you may already know, PantherStorm traveled with PebblePaw to become a full Medicine Cat. We have a New Medicine Cat now& she leaned over to PebbleClaw. What was it again?
PebbleClaw. He whispered.
PebbleClaw! she finished. And now that PebbleClaw is a full Medicine Cat, PantherStorm has decided to retire immediately. And with that, our Deputy must be chosen. PantherStorm could feel everyone tense up around her.
A new deputy must be chosen. She repeated. I say these words before the body of SpiderClaw, that her spirit may hear and approve my choice.
SilverRain! PantherStorm cheered silently. Oh, I hope it s SilverRain!
PantherStorm will be the new deputy of WinterClan. PantherStorm felt dizzy all of a sudden. She was to be Deputy?

But I m a& well, I was a Medicine Cat. PantherStorm finished quickly.
Now that PantherStorm is no longer the Medicine Cat, she is eligible to take on the roles of a Deputy. MorningStar announced.
PantherStorm! a voice behind her mewed. Congratulations, PantherStorm!
PantherStorm turned to see SilverRain, with a proud expression on her face.
Thanks, SilverRain! PantherStorm purred happily. And here I was, rooting for you!
Oh, I m <i>glad</i> I didn t get picked. SilverRain said with an edge to her voice. If I had to be Deputy <i>and</i> take care of my kits, I don t know how I would manage.
Well, I don t feel guilty anymore, then. PantherStorm commented.

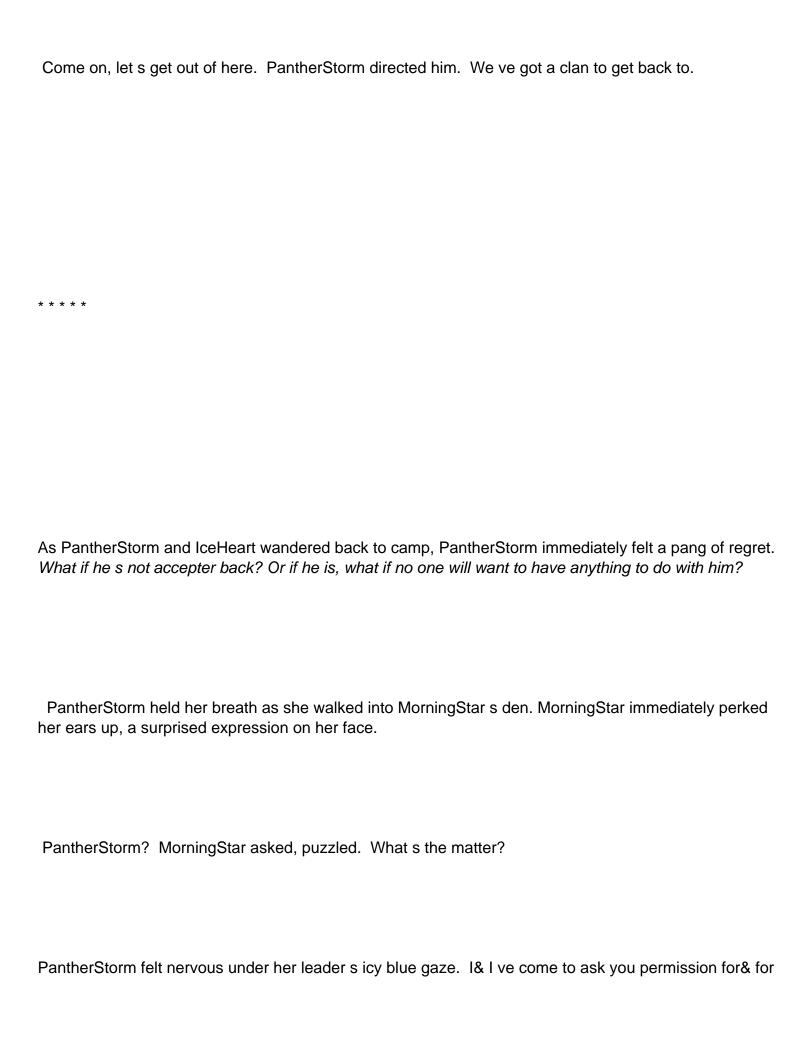
In that case, I m glad, because- She was cut off by the sound of mewling coming from the nursery
Sorry. SilverRain sighed. I have to go. That little AmberKit is a whiner, I tell you.
And with that, she vanished back into the Nursery.
I m not a Medicine Cat anymore. PantherStorm reminded herself. It s time.
PantherStorm had been waiting for this moment for a long time, but now that it was finally here, she dreaded having to do this: She had to find IceHeart.

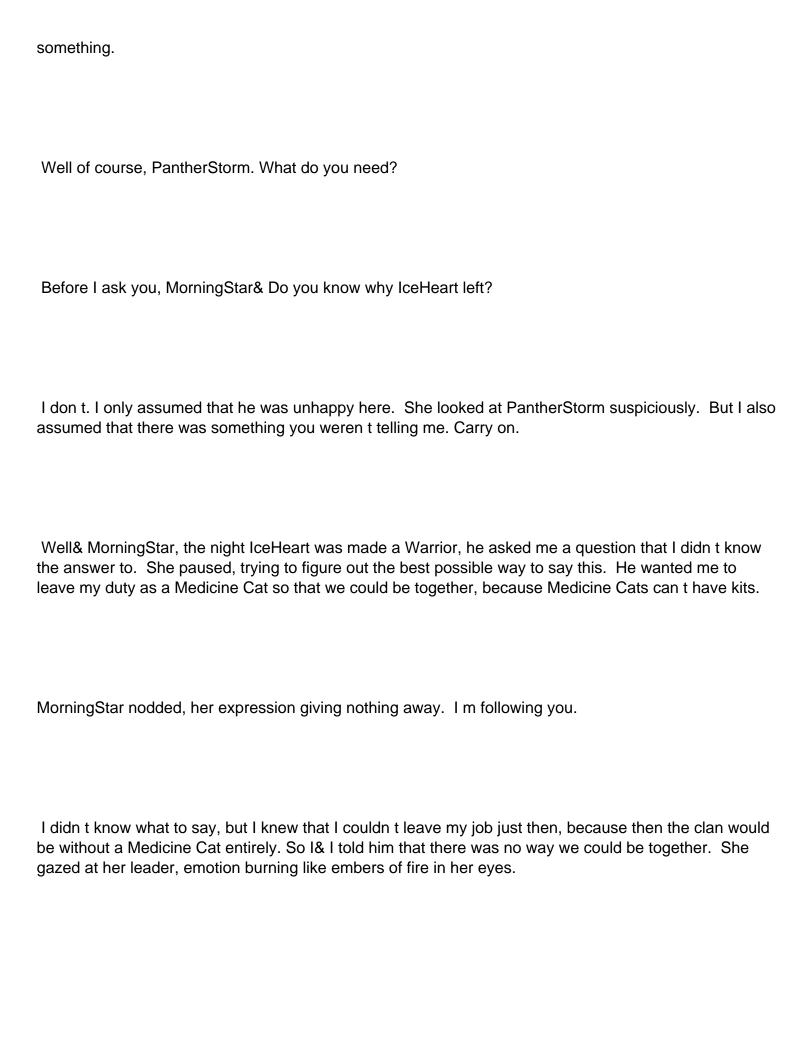






Don t be. IceHeart interrupted, before PantherStorm could say anything else. This never would have happened if I had been thinking straight. I was such an idiot.
Not nearly as much as I was. PantherStorm stopped him. I miss you, IceHeart.
I miss you, too. IceHeart said softly. I only wish the circumstances could be different.
Come back to WinterClan. PantherStorm pleaded. Please, I can t last another day without you.
I would if I could. Oh, believe me, I would. He sighed. But there s no way I II be accepted back.
Of course there is! PantherStorm objected. As the Clan Deputy, MorningStar II have to listen to me!
You re Clan Deputy now? That s great! IceHeart congratulated her, happiness shining in his eyes.





So he left, because he no longer had anyone in WinterClan. MorningStar concluded. I see.
Exactly. PantherStorm said, her voice becoming louder and louder. So do you see how& How it was my fault? Do you think you could help me correct my mistake by& by letting him come back?
MorningStar took a deep breath. PantherStorm, I see how this is partially related to you. But it was his decision to leave. She shook her head slowly, sadness and sympathy shining in her eyes. It was his choice to leave; therefore he must live with his decision. I m sorry, PantherStorm. Please escort IceHeart off of WinterClan territory.
PantherStorm was in shock. He& He can t come back?
I m sorry. But no. MorningStar sighed. Please escort him back to SpringClan.
PantherStorm trudged back out of her leader s den, her tail dragging and ears drooping.
I take it that s a no? IceHeart asked sadly. It s okay. I II go.
No, wait. PantherStorm caught up with him. MorningStar told me to escort you back. We can be

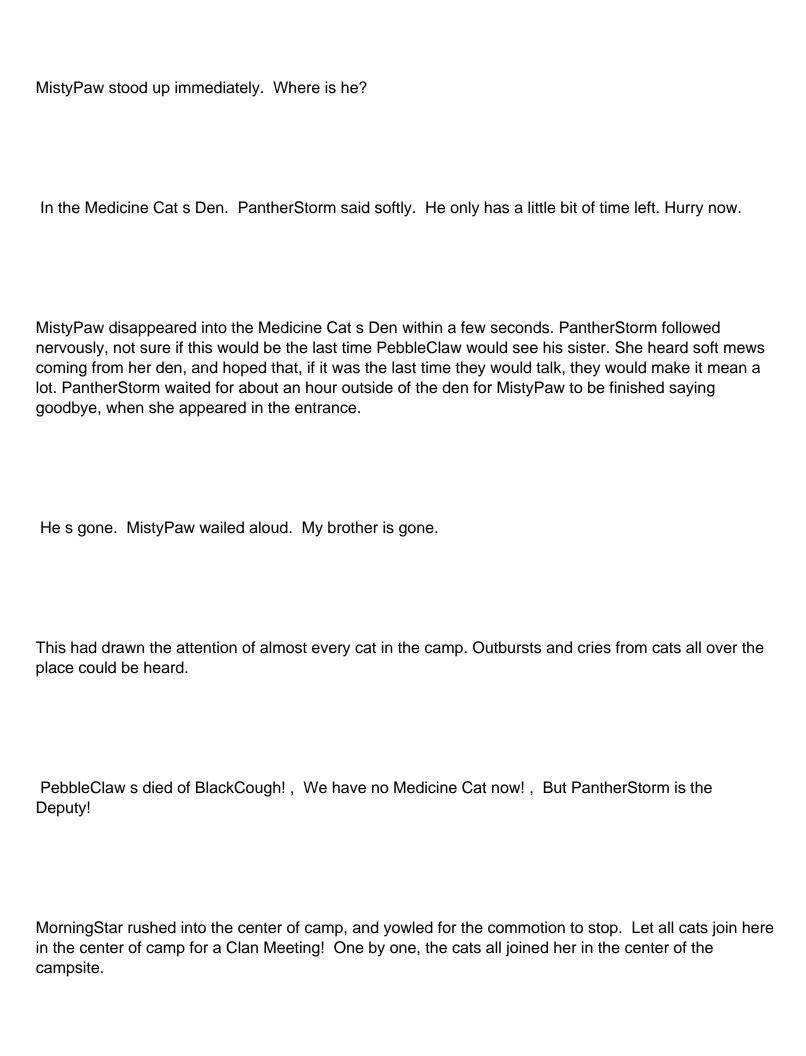
together, for a few more minutes.
They traveled in silence for about 5 minutes. Each were trying to think of something to say, to brighten up the sky, or let the blossoms come back into bloom, but the sky remained a gloomy, cloudy gray, and the trees stayed bare. And the silence in the forest just added to the sadness of the two friends as they said separated one more time.
* * * * *
Are you asleep, PantherStorm?
Yes. Please leave your message after the beep.
PantherStorm, I m serious.

PantherStorm groggily raised her head, only to see PebbleClaw, with a worried expression on his face. What do you want? she asked, still half-asleep.
I don t feel good. PebbleClaw said anxiously. You never told me what to use for a combination of coughs and stomach pains.
Sounds like a fever. Try some water mint, and if that doesn t work, maybe some borage leaves. But go easy on the water mint, too much will give you a headache.
Okay. Thanks, PantherStorm. PebbleClaw added as he disappeared from the Deputy s den.
Sounded like he s having a rough day, she thought. I hope he feels better once he gets some water mint.
PantherStorm, who was wide awake at this point, stood up and stretched. It was almost dawn; the stars still shone dimly in the sky, despite the sunlight tinting the horizon red. Today would be a long day, PantherStorm could already tell. IceHeart was still in SpringClan, and at this point, nothing was going to change that. She had to move on.



PebbleClaw nodded weakly. I tried, but the pain just got worse. And& Oh, PantherStorm, I feel terrible.
I know, PebbleClaw. It II be okay. But even in the back of her mind, she knew that it would not be okay. BlackCough was incurable, and the final result to all cases had been death. Try some catnip; it II soothe your stomach. Some honey might help your throat. She added thoughtfully. I think it s on the top; I II get some for you. She pounced upwards, almost losing her balance on the narrow ledge, but she pressed her fur against the wall of the den so that she wouldn t fall. A small pool of sticky honey gathered into a small puddle in an indentation on the shelf. She dabbed her paw in and took a little taste. The sugary, sweet taste of the honey soon alerted her senses, and she dipped her paw in again.
It s up here. She called to PebbleClaw, who mewed in relief. I m coming down, watch out.
She leapt down and coaxed the honey into his open mouth. Once he had swallowed the sweet remedy, he gazed up at PantherStorm.
PantherStorm. He mewed softly. You taught me all about BlackCough. You said that it usually comes during winter, and I have all of the symptoms. He shook his head. Tell me the truth, PantherStorm. Am I& Am I going to die?
PantherStorm felt choked with emotion. Yes. She hung her head. I m sorry, PebbleClaw. But yes.

Thank you. That s what I wanted to know. He gazed longingly over to the Apprentices Den. Can you bring my sister in here? he pleaded. I have to say goodbye.
Of course. She mewed sadly. I ll go get her. She padded silently towards the Apprentices Den, and poked her head in.
MistyPaw. She glanced around at the four apprentices, finally spotting MistyPaw s gray pelt. MistyPaw. She hissed, trying not to wake the others. MistyPaw lifted her head, and spotted PantherStorm.
PantherStorm? She asked, confused. What s wrong?
PebbleClaw. PantherStorm whispered simply.
PebbleClaw? Is he hurt? MistyPaw asked anxiously.
He s& well, he s sick. He wants to see you.



As you all know already, PebbleClaw is the victim of our first case of BlackCough this winter. Unfortunately, we have no Medicine Cat now. PantherStorm, who is a retired Medicine Cat, will carry on the roles of a deputy. However, we are in desperate need of a Medicine Cat, as a long, cold winter faces us. PantherStorm, in addition to being the Deputy, will go back to being a Medicine Cat. And with that, she padded silently into her den. PantherStorm followed her, directly on her tail.
MorningStar, PantherStorm asked nervously. It has never happened in the history of the clans, that a cat is Deputy <i>and</i> Medicine Cat! It s just unheard of!
MorningStar gave her a long, hard stare. And would you rather leave the clan without a Medicine Cat?
Well, no, but& Well&
Precisely. You will continue the roles of a Deputy, and return to be a Medicine Cat.
PantherStorm knew that it was pointless to argue. Yes, MorningStar. She dipped her head and backed out of her leader s den.



As PantherStorm watched IceHeart walk away, she realized that her life would be completely different without him. Her life would never be the same, but this was a chance for her to start over. It was the sunshine at the end of a rainy day, the pieces of a completed puzzle scattered everywhere. And, one by one, those pieces would fit together, ultimately creating a new beginning.