

WHISPERS OF CHANGE  
**WARRIORS**  
Fever Visions



# Warriors: Whispers of Change

Book 2: Fever Visions

## Allegiances:

### ThunderClan

**Leader:** Bramblestar·dark brown tabby tom with amber eyes

**Deputy:** Squirrelflight· dark ginger she-cat with green eyes and one white paw

**Medicine Cats:** Jayfeather· gray tabby tom with blind, blue eyes

Honeyfrost· white she-cat with yellow splotches

Apprentice, Eaglepaw (orange tabby she-cat)

#### Warriors:

Whitewing· white she-cat with green eyes

Birchfall· light brown tabby tom

Berrynose· cream coloured tom with a stump for a tail

Apprentice, Stoatpaw (white tom with black ears and tail-tip)

Mousewhisker· gray-and-white tom

Apprentice, Hawkpaw (silver tabby tom)

Poppyfrost· pale tortoiseshell-and-white she-cat

Apprentice, Bristlepaw (pale gray she-cat)

Lionblaze·golden tabby tom with amber eyes

Stemleaf· white-and-orange tom

Lilyheart· small, dark tabby she-cat with white patches and blue eyes

Bumblestripe· very pale gray tom with black stripes

Cherryfall· ginger she cat

Molewhisker· brown-and-cream tom

Cinderheart· gray tabby she-cat

Blossomfall· tortoiseshell-and-white she-cat with petal-shaped white patches

Ivypool· silver-and-white tabby she-cat with dark blue eyes

Dewnose· gray-and-white tom  
Apprentice, Ravenpaw (black-and-white tom)  
Stormcloud· gray tabby tom  
Hollytuft· black she-cat  
Fernsong· yellow tabby tom  
Twigbranch· gray she-cat with green eyes  
Apprentice, Bramblepaw (brown tabby she-cat)  
Finleap· brown tom  
Shellfur· tortoiseshell tom  
Plumstone· black-and-ginger she-cat  
Leafshade· tortoiseshell she-cat  
Apprentice, Rosepaw (copper-colored she-cat)

#### **Queens:**

Daisy· cream long-furred cat from the horseplace  
Sorrelstripe· dark brown she-cat (mother to Ashkit, a gray tabby tom, and Tinykit, a  
black-and-white tom)  
Sparkpelt· orange tabby she-cat (mother to Ratkit, a calico she-kit, and Sorrelkit, a tortoiseshell  
tabby with a white underbelly)

#### **Elders:**

Graystripe· long-haired gray tom  
Brightheart· white she-cat with ginger patches  
Brackenfur· golden-brown tabby tom  
Thornclaw· golden-brown tabby tom

### **ShadowClan**

**Leader:** Tigerstar· dark brown tabby tom

**Deputy:** Cloverfoot· gray tabby she-cat

**Medicine Cats:** Puddleshine· brown tom with white patches

Apprentice, Shadowpaw (gray tabby tom)

Warriors:

Dovewing· pale gray she-cat with green eyes

Stonewing· white tom

Scorchfur· dark gray tom with slashed ears

Apprentice, Flaxpaw (brown tabby tom)

Sparrowtail· large brown tabby tom

Berryheart· black and white she-cat

Grassheart· pale brown tabby she-cat

Whorlpelt· gray-and-white tom

Apprentice, Hoppaw (calico she-cat)

Antfur· tom with a brown-and-black splotched pelt

Blazefire· white-and-ginger tom

Cinnamontail· brown tabby she-cat with white paws

Flowerstem· silver she-cat

Snaketooth· honey-colored tabby she-cat

Slatefur· sleek gray tom

Ravenheart· black tom with white flecks

Lightleap· brown tabby she-cat

Conefoot· white-and-gray tom

Gullswoop· white she-cat

Spireclaw· black-and-white tom

Hollowspring· black tom

Sunbeam· brown·and·white tabby she·cat

## **SkyClan**

**Leader:** Hawkstar· dark gray tom with yellow eyes

**Deputy:** Sagenose· pale gray tom

Apprentice, Kitepaw (reddish brown tom)

**Medicine cat(s):** Frecklewish· mottled light brown tabby she·cat with spotted legs

Fidgetflake· black·and·white tom

Alderheart· dark ginger tom with amber eyes

**Mediator:** Tree·yellow tom with amber eyes

### **Warriors:**

Macgyver· black and white tom

Dewspring· sturdy gray tom

Apprentice, Rootpaw (yellow tom)

Harrybrook· gray tom

Blossomheart· ginger·and·white she·cat

Apprentice, Turtlepaw (tortoiseshell she·cat)

Sandynose· stocky light brown tom with ginger legs

Rabbitleap· brown tom

Redclaw· small pale tabby she·cat

Apprentice, Needlepaw (black·and·white she·cat)

Mintfur· gray tabby she·cat with blue eyes

Nettlesplash· pale brown tom

Nectarsong· brown she·cat

Quailfeather· white tom with crow·black ears

Pigeonfoot· gray·and·white she·cat

Fringewhisker· white she-cat with brown splotches

Gravelnose· tan tom

Sunnypelt· ginger she-cat

Violetshine· black-and-white she-cat with yellow eyes

**Queens:**

Bellaleaf· pale orange she-cat with green eyes (mother to Wrenkit, a golden tabby she-kit)

**Elders:**

Fallowfern· pale brown she-cat who has lost her hearing

**WindClan**

**Leader:** Harestar· brown-and-white tom

**Deputy:** Crowfeather· dark gray tom

**Medicine cat:** Kestrelflight· mottled gray tom with white splotches like kestrel feathers

**Warriors:**

Heathertail· light brown tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Brindlewing· mottled brown she-cat

Apprentice, Applepaw (yellow tabby she-kit)

Leaftail· dark tabby tom with amber eyes

Emberfoot· gray tom with two dark paws

Smokehaze· gray she-cat

Breezepelt· black tom with amber eyes

Crouchfoot· ginger tom

Larkwing· pale brown tabby she-cat

Sedgewhisker· light brown tabby she-cat

Slightfoot· black tom with white flash on his chest

Oatclaw· pale brown tabby tom

Fernstripe· gray tabby she-cat

**Queens:**

Featherpelt· gray tabby she-cat (mother to Oatclaw's kits: Whistlekit, a gray tabby she-kit; and

Flutterkit, a brown-and-white tom)

**RiverClan**

**Leader:** Mistystar· gray she-cat with blue eyes

**Deputy:** Minnowtail· dark gray-and-white she-cat

**Medicine cat:** Willowshine· gray tabby she-cat

**Warriors:**

Mallownose· light brown tabby tom

Beetlewhisker· brown-and-white tabby tom

Shimmerpelt· silver she-cat

Lizardtail· light brown tom

Sneezecloud· gray-and-white tom

Jayclaw· gray tom

Owlnose· brown tabby tom

Icewing· white she-cat with blue eyes

Softpelt· gray she-cat

Gorseclaw· white tom with gray ears

Nightsky· dark gray she-cat with blue eyes

Harelight· white tom

Breezeheart· brown-and-white she-cat

Dappletuft· gray-and-white tom

**Queens:**

Curlfeather· pale brown she-cat

Havenpelt black-and-white she-cat (mother to Sneezecloud's kits: Fogkit, a gray-and-white she-kit,  
and Leechkit, a brown tabby tom)

**Elders:**

Mospelt tortoiseshell-and-white she-cat











## Prologue

A black she-cat lapped water in a small pool. She quite liked it in StarClan. The water was always present and clear, and prey always ran well. Sometimes the she-cat wondered if StarClan was like the Dark Forest for prey. She shuddered. *I am glad the stars had mercy on me. I would never want to step foot in the Place of No Stars.*

The she-cat looked at her reflection, at her green eyes that contrasted her black pelt like a flame in the night. But another pair of eyes soon revealed themselves. “Mother?”

A light brown tabby purred at the sight of her daughter. “How are things going?” she asked.

“Well. I’m glad we have peace here, and in the lake,” the daughter replied.

“Yes, but times are changing. The peace won’t be for long, but for leaf-bare, it will remain.”

“I fear the worst,” the daughter squeaked. “We’ve already had so many join us due to the Great Freeze, I fret that more may be on the way.”

The mother sighed, and wrapped her tail around her daughter's. "And there will be," she started. "There always are. Sometimes more than others. But it will bring peace for you to see some cats you have been watching over. It's bittersweet."

"Oh, I should know," the daughter said. "It has felt lonely before you've come. Yes, I got to reunite with friends, but when you came, I felt we could reconnect. We... needed that."

"Yes," the mother trilled. "And one day, you will truly be able to be together with your brothers."

*My brothers.* The black cat's mind was filled with memories of the adventures her brothers went on, the trails they had blazed with and without her. That they were still blazing... "I can't believe one has another litter of kits now!"

"I've sensed that you would love to meet them," The mother mewed.

"One, I have already been in her dreams sometimes. Another, I have no interest in, unless I could help her move onto the right path."

"And the third?"

"The third, I've yet to speak to."

The mother nuzzled her daughter. "The day when you get to meet her is coming up. It's sooner than you know. And trust me, you will get to spend a lot of time with her."

## Chapter 1

Eaglepaw crouched alongside the other medicine cats, waiting for the gathering to begin. A lot had changed in the past two moons, for better or for worse. *So many losses in ThunderClan...* The medicine cats felt them too. Mothwing of RiverClan gave up her warm den for the well-being of the Clan elders, who gained a hole in theirs during a blizzard. She and Reedwhisker had tried so hard to fix it in the night, and to keep everyone warm, that they were found dead the next morning in the coldest quarter moon in the memory of even StarClan.

ThunderClan also lost their fair share of cats as well. At the beginning of leaf-bare, Millie succumbed to her age, but during the Great Freeze, Eaglewing and Rosepetal were killed by the cold while guarding camp, and poor Cloudtail, despite his thick pelt, couldn't take it. Eaglepaw, along with her Clanmates, were devastated, but continued on. Jayfeather had told Eaglepaw that she would soon be desensitised to death, and this tragedy proved that.

The dynamic of the gathering was somber. This was the first meeting since the Great Freeze, and every single Clan had lost several cats: some elders, some healthy warriors, and even a tiny kit were all victims of the nasty weather.

“Cats of all Clans! We begin the Gathering tonight with ThunderClan’s report!”

Bramblestar’s yowl rang across the clearing, and the whispers of gossip soon eased.

“Prey is still steady. They seemed to be still going despite the bad weather we’ve had. Sadly, we have lost two elders, Millie and Cloudtail; and two warriors, Rosepetal and Eaglewing; to the Great Freeze. Poor Bristlepaw has received Poppyfrost as a new mentor, and her training is going splendidly. Our apprentices are learning well, and we hope to report some new warriors soon!”

Cats clamoured Bristlepaw’s name. It was nice to see the gathering be so encouraging to cats that have gone through so much. Perhaps the tragedy was bringing the Clans closer together. Eaglepaw liked that idea. She really hoped that the Clans could one day live in total peace, like on this day.

Mistystar then started her speech after whispering with Bramblestar. Eaglepaw always wondered how the leaders coordinated when to speak, if at all. “We have had to resort to land prey during the Freeze due to our water sources turning to ice. Luckily the ice is melting and we can soon go back to fishing! We have lost Duskmour, Podlight, and Brackenpelt to the Great Freeze, and RiverClan deeply mourns the loss of Mothwing and Reedwhisker, who died serving our weakest cats. Willowshine is adjusting well to being the sole medicine cat, and Minnowtail is the new deputy!”

“WILLOWSHINE! MINNOWTAIL! WILLOWSHINE! MINNOWTAIL!” Eaglepaw saw Willowshine lick her chest fur. With that much attention, Eaglepaw would probably do the

same. Eaglepaw walked carefully towards the pale tabby and put her tail around the appreciative she-cat with support. Willowshine was so kind, it was the least Eaglepaw could do.

“ShadowClan has also lost many cats, including my mother,” Tigerstar said solemnly. “We also mourn Oakfur, Snowbird, Strikestone, and Yarrowleaf’s losses. But in good news, Lightleap and Ravenheart have been doing well as warriors, and have successfully taken down a fox!”

Eaglepaw cheered along with Shadowpaw. She thought that she was going to get a sore throat. Eaglepaw knew that Shadowpaw would earn his name soon.. *It must be hard to earn your name after your littermates. I hope my name won’t be earned too long after Bramblepaw and Rosepaw’s.*

## Chapter 2

“Hawkpaw, move out of the way! I can’t see!” Bramblepaw quietly growled.

“My bad,” Hawkpaw replied, a bit too loud. A ShadowClan warrior gave him a sharp glare.

“Must be hard to sit next to each other,” Stoatpaw remarked. “Hawkpaw is big and fluffy. Bramblepaw, you are small and fluffy. Like a gopher.”

“For the last time, *I. AM. NOT. A. GOPHER.*” Bramblepaw had been the victim of Stoatpaw’s gopher “comparisons” for what felt like moons. Every time she asked him to stop, he would go on about how Bramblepaw shouldn’t be upset. *I swear, one more moon of training with this cat will drive me mad.*

“As some of you have heard from my journey to the Moonpool, Leafstar gave her life protecting her Clan from the Great Freeze,” Hawkstar started. Bramblepaw knew that he was very confident and strong. *SkyClan could use a leader like him.* “I chose Sagenose to serve as deputy. He has mentored two great warriors, and I am sure he will do amazing. SkyClan has lost several more

cats to the freeze, though. We still mourn for Sparrowpelt, Tinycloud, Plumwillow, and Palesky. In better news, though, two new apprentices will be made in the coming moons. Prey is running well despite the season.”

Cats cheered loudly for Hawkstar and Sagenose. Bramblepaw saw Twigbranch puff her chest in pride. Her mentor was the daughter of Hawkstar, and stayed in SkyClan for a few days to help him out. Bramblepaw was very happy for her mentor.

“Hey, if I become leader, there could be two Hawkstars! Wouldn’t that be something!” Hawkpaw giggled. *That was a horrible joke.* And once more, Hawkpaw got shushed, this time by Twigbranch herself.

Last to make his announcement was Harestar of WindClan. “We have lost Nightcloud, Whiskernose, Gorsetail, Hootwhisker, and, most tragically, Songkit. We are healing well from this, and are anticipating a smooth leaf-bare ahead, despite the tragedy.”

The gathering wrapped up, and Bramblepaw went to say good-bye to the other apprentices she was sitting with. Leechpaw of RiverClan had started to become her gathering friend, and he had recently introduced her to Ravenheart of ShadowClan, who seemed nice but was quite shy. *He reminds me of Eaglepaw.*

When the Clan was heading back home, Bramblepaw walked with Eaglepaw. The two sisters were getting along very well. “What are you going to tell Bristlepaw?” Eaglepaw asked.

“That the Clans cheered for her. She’s been going through a lot, she needs the encouragement,” Bramblepaw said.

“That’s good,” Eaglepaw purred.

The Clan continued to walk home, going through WindClan territory into their own. And that was when Bramblepaw noticed that Stemleaf started to cough.

### Chapter 3

Eaglepaw dug through the fallen snow for some catmint at the abandoned Twoleg nest. It was just a day after the Gathering, and Stemleaf, Brightheart, and Daisy caught whitecough. Jayfeather had ordered catmint to be gathered because Daisy's condition was getting worse, and it could quickly advance into greencough.

Bramblepaw and Twigbranch joined Eaglepaw on the patrol. Despite the relative peace at the Gathering, some of the senior warriors were concerned that, like most leaf-bares, tensions would rise with emptier bellies. Plus, other animals like rabbits would be hungry, and any prey would be appreciated with the spreading sickness.

"Eaglepaw, you are getting really good at foraging!" Twigbranch complemented. "Maybe you can join us in looking for mouse dens!"

"Is that going to be on the assessment?" Bramblepaw asked nervously. It was later that day. If Eaglepaw was in this position, she too would do anything to distract herself from the pressure and anxiety.

“You’ll see,” Twigbranch chirped, whiskers twitching.

All of a sudden, sounds of shattering ice from the frozen undergrowth pierced Eaglepaw’s ears. *Maybe it is a hunting patrol? Or perhaps it was a bird or something.* But then the scent of cats filled her nose. *SkyClan.*

Eaglepaw saw Bramblepaw tense up as three SkyClan warriors appeared. She believed that they were Sandynose, Reedclaw, and Macgyver. Bramblepaw’s fur bristled as she asked what the enemy warriors were doing on the wrong side of the border.

“We were hunting and got lost,” Reedclaw explained. “This is our first leaf-bare with the new borders, we are sorry!”

Sandynose and Twigbranch touched noses. He had been her SkyClan mentor. “How is your apprentice?” The two got lost in conversation about training methods and assessments, but Eaglepaw and Bramblepaw just stood there with the rest of the patrol.

“It was an accident, huh?” Eaglepaw awkwardly said, trying to make small-talk.

“Yes...?” Macgyver replied. “Like Reedclaw said, we aren;t used to these new borders.”

“We just had a border patrol go by,” Bramblepaw replied. “Something isn’t adding up...”

Twigbranch turned to Bramblepaw upon hearing her comment. “Well, maybe they were distracted by hunting!”

“Don’t you use scent to hunt?” Bramblepaw mewed. Eaglepaw nodded; her sister made a good point. If SkyClan was scenting for prey, then how come they didn’t scent ThunderClan’s markers?

Twigbranch paused to think, then narrowed her eyes. “My apprentice is correct. Although I love SkyClan, I have no tolerance for trespassing. I must respectfully ask you to leave our territory, or else I will report this to Bramblestar!”

Sandynose flicked his tail for the patrol to leave. “We’re just desperate,” he murmured.

“Desperation does not excuse this!” Twigbranch snapped. “I will give you a pass, but don’t let this happen again.”

With that, Twigbranch escorted the SkyClan patrol back to their territory, while the apprentices continued foraging for catmint. Despite the snow, Eaglepaw managed to forage enough catmint for the sick cats. *If any more cats get sick, we may be in trouble.* The herb patrol then returned to camp, and Eaglepaw wished Bramblepaw luck on the assessment.

## Chapter 4

Bramblepaw stood along with Rosepaw and Stoatpaw, waiting for the first task of their assessment. *These have got to be the hardest cats to work with, and of course they are in my age group.* Bramblepaw was hoping for no quarrels today. She hoped that she shared the same interest with the other apprentices– get the assessment done, hopefully pass, and move on. *The one good thing about being a warrior is that there is a bigger pool of cats to work with!*

Berrynose began. “Hello, apprentices! Welcome to your final assessment. This will test all the important skills you need to know to thrive as a warrior. If you pass, well, think of this as your last training session. If you fail...”

“Don’t freak them out!” Leafshade interrupted. “You will do great!”

“Your first task is to hunt two pieces of prey,” Twigbranch explained. “Bramblepaw will get to go near the Sky Oak, Rosepaw will go to the clearing, and Stoatpaw will hunt near the abandoned Twoleg nest. Remember, we will be watching, and so will some other warriors. So don’t dilly-dally or lay around!”

Bramblepaw started her hunting. She would try to catch a bird first. Twigbranch had taught her a lot of climbing tips from her time in SkyClan, and since ThunderClan also dabbled in tree hunting, they were very useful for quelling Bramblepaw's mild fear of heights.

Even though Bramblepaw was quite good at climbing now, she specifically avoided the Sky Oak, since her mother Cinderheart had broken her leg there as an apprentice. But Cinderheart didn't want her accident to define her daughter, so she wanted Bramblepaw to at least try to hunt on it. *Maybe she asked Twigbranch to send me here!*

Bramblepaw secured her claws into the trunk, noticing that for some reason, they ached. *That's strange, I haven't used them a whole lot.* She shook it off. For now, she needed to complete her assessment. Upon reaching a branch, Bramblepaw noticed a squirrel leaving its nest. *I won't hunt anything in it, but this one would feed the Clan nicely!* Bramblepaw crouched and carefully stalked on the branch, and managed to catch the squirrel with a small pounce. It wasn't the most graceful due to the ice on the branch, but it worked. *Thank you for the food for the Clan!*

Bramblepaw left the squirrel near the trunk— it wasn't going to snow, so she didn't have to worry about it getting buried. Now she was going to try some ground prey. Before she set the trail, she saw a set of eyes watching. Bramblepaw scented the ground, before following a trail to a vole nest. She dug into it, finding a skinny vole, catching it by surprise and catching it. She placed the vole next to the squirrel. *Those are my two!*

The next and last task was grouping with a warrior for battle. Bramblepaw was paired with Molewhisker. He was large, while Bramblepaw was small. This would be a challenge for sure. Molewhisker started by lunging at Bramblepaw, claws sheathed. Bramblepaw countered the attack

by blocking and leaping atop of him. Unfortunately, Molewhisker wasn't pinned, so he rose up. Bramblepaw held her weight and balanced on the tom, who shook her off. Unfortunately, Bramblepaw hit a rock, which scratched her back. "Sorry," Molewhisker meowed. "Are you okay?" Bramblepaw nodded. Molewhisker pinned Bramblepaw to the ground, and she responded by using her back claws to kick him off, like a rabbit.

"That was an interesting move," Molewhisker commented. "I was trained to use my front paws."

"Well, what if my front paws aren't free?" Bramblepaw asked.

\* \* \* \* \*

Bramblepaw walked back to camp, head held high with happiness and pride. Bristlepaw and Hawkpaw came running towards her. "Did you pass?" Hawkpaw demanded.

"Yes, I did!" Bramblepaw chirped. "I'm going to be made a warrior!"

"I am, too, maybe!" Bristlepaw squeaked. "I was on a patrol, and I rescued a SkyClan apprentice. His name is Rootpaw and he just became one! He's tiny!"

"What happened?" Bramblepaw gasped.

"He fell into a pond. Kitepaw and Turtlepaw made him," Bristlepaw replied. *No wonder they did that. They hang with Rosepaw and Stoatpaw quite a bit. Those two are no good.*

“Then she saved him and Bramblestar is so happy, that he will make her do an assessment tomorrow and earn her name!” Hawkpaw blurted.

“I was going to say that!” Bristlepaw mewed. “Anyways, Bramblestar is going to delay the ceremony by a day or two so that I can earn my name with you!”

Bramblepaw purred. “A day or two is worth it to sit vigil with my best friend!” A pang of weakness wormed its way into Bramblepaw. *What is going on?* “I need to tell Eaglepaw about what’s going on. With the ceremony. Yes, bye!”

## Chapter 5

“Eaglepaw, give me something”

While Bramblepaw was being assessed, Eaglepaw was getting tested on her patience. Daisy and Brightheart developed greencough, and so many more cats caught the nasty disease. Honeyfrost had it too, and Jayfeather tasked Eaglepaw to take care of her, along with many other cats.

“Coming!” Eaglepaw called. She prepared a bundle of tansy and catmint before giving it to her mentor. Honeyfrost ate the herbs, grumbling something about dawdling apprentices. Eaglepaw walked to Jayfeather.

“I gave herbs to everyone on my watch,” she told him. “I think that Daisy is getting worse.”

“Good job. I saw Bramblepaw get back from her assessment, why don’t you?”

Bramblepaw walked into the den, slower and more tired than usual. “Hi!”

“Did you pass?” Eaglepaw asked. “If you did, then you’ll be earning your name tonight, yes?”

“I did,” Bramblepaw explained. “And Bristlepaw is getting her assessment done early, so I have to wait a bit. But at least—”

“Are you okay?” Jayfeather asked. He started to sniff Bramblepaw and examine her. “I think you’ve caught whitecough. We don’t want it to spread, so can you stay here tonight?”

“If I do, will I be able to earn my name?” Bramblepaw asked.

Eaglepaw pondered. She knew that with almost every infected cat, that wasn’t the case, as their illnesses kept on worsening. But she didn’t want to disappoint her sister, and wanted to give her hope. “Well, if you rest, maybe. No guarantees.”

Jayfeather ordered Bramblepaw to stay in the den. “Come with me,” he ordered Eaglepaw. “We need to speak with your parents.”

Eaglepaw and Jayfeather walked towards Lionblaze and Cinderheart. They were chatting to Finleap and Leafshade, who were also looking sick.

“I think I need to get checked out,” Leafshade commented. Jayfeather examined them and asked both cats to go to the medicine den to receive treatment shortly.

“Leafshade told me that Rosepaw did great, although Berrynose was in charge of watching. He and Finleap watched Bramblepaw– I don’t want her to catch greencough!” Cinderheart fretted. “With all she went through as a kit–”

“Bramblepaw passed the assessment, and I can tell that they are so proud,” Jayfeather commented. “But when she told Eaglepaw, I– I could tell she had whitecough.”

Eaglepaw wanted to crumble when Cinderheart screamed. Bramblepaw always seemed to catch everything that went around, and this was no different. Eaglepaw put her tail on her mother. “I will make sure Bramblepaw is okay and earns her name,” she assured.

“No,” Lionblaze said firmly. “You don’t need to go through this. Jayfeather, I would like *you* to take charge of her care. I trust you more than any cat, and I don’t want Eaglepaw to have the pressure of her sister’s well-being.”

Jayfeather nodded. Cinderheart whimpered a bit more about visiting Bramblepaw, and Jayfeather urged against it. Eventually, a compromise arose that Cinderheart could visit, but not Lionblaze. Cinderheart could help with her own knowledge of herbs.

Eaglepaw went back to the medicine den with her mother while Jayfeather stood back to talk with Lionblaze. *This will be amazing, to work with my own mother!*

## Chapter 6

Bramblepaw managed to fall asleep after a while, and woke up to Stoatpaw looking over her.

“Hi, Bramblepaw!”

“What are you doing?” she croaked. “I have my mother here to dote over me.”

“Well, Bristlepaw passed her assessment, and we are getting our names tonight, but...”

Stoatpaw trailed off.

“But what?”

“I hear that Bramblestar wants to push your’s back...” Stoatpaw said in a strangely sing-song voice.

Bramblepaw winced. This couldn’t happen! *I’ve worked so hard on my training, and I can’t even earn my name with the other apprentices?* Bramblepaw stood up. *I need to show them that I am strong enough!*

After stumbling out of the den, Bramblepaw decided to go out and collect catmint. She needed time to process what was going on. Plus, she figured that some fresh air would help, and not the stuffy smell of illness. But before she could do that, Eaglepaw stopped her.

“Why are you out here? You should be resting!” Eaglepaw yowled.

“I need to help,” Bramblepaw explained. “Stoatpaw told me that I won’t be earning my name with the rest of the apprentices, and— and I just can’t let that happen!”

Eaglepaw sat down closer to Bramblepaw. “It wasn’t Bramblestar’s choice,” she explained. “Cinderheart asked him to. Besides, you are in no condition to go up there. You were panting just leaving the medicine den! And we don’t want to spread the sickness any more. Bramblestar is coughing as is, and he is choosing not to have his shoulder licked.”

Bramblepaw’s head whirled. She didn’t want to be selfish, and the Clan had suffered so much. But she couldn’t help but be sad. *Why did this have to happen at the worst time?*

Later that day, Bramblepaw watched outside the medicine den as Bramblestar called a Clan meeting. She was supervised with Jayfeather, who insisted on bringing her back in if she started feeling bad. In the short while since she left camp, Bramblepaw had started having coughing fits and was not doing well. But she *had* to witness the ceremony, even though Cinderheart advised against it. She couldn’t miss Bristlepaw’s moment, and Rosepaw’s too— they were still sisters, though.

“I am proud to announce three new warriors for our Clan! These three cats have shown exceptional skill as apprentices. Rosepaw is good at hunting and fighting, and is very smart. Stoatpaw defied the odds and caught up to the other apprentices despite coming from another Clan, proving his loyalty. And Bristlepaw showed the virtue of a true warrior by rescuing a young apprentice.” Bramblestar stood proudly on the Highledge. “Even though I cannot provide them the correct rite at this moment, this ceremony is as important as any other.”

Bramblepaw watched as Rosepaw puffed her chest with pride, while Bristlepaw licked hers. Stoatpaw just stood there with no emotion.

Bramblestar cleared his throat and began the ceremony. “I, Bramblestar, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as a warrior in their turn. Stoatpaw, Rosepaw, and Bristlepaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even with your lives?”

“I do,” the three apprentices mewed simultaneously.

“Then by the powers of StarClan,” Bramblestar said with a crackled voice, “I give you your warrior names. Stoatpaw, from this day forward you shall be known as Stoattail. StarClan honours your loyalty and intelligence. Rosepaw, from this day forward you shall be known as Rosecloud. StarClan honours your strength and relentlessness. Bristlepaw, from this day forward you shall be known as Bristlefrost. StarClan honours your skill and determination. We welcome you all as full warriors of ThunderClan.”

“STOATTAIL! ROSECLOUD! BRISTLEFROST!” The Clan cheered loudly.  
Bramblepaw tried to as well, but it ended in deep coughing.

“Let’s get you back to the medicine den,” Jayfeather said curtly.

## Chapter 7

“Hello, I’d like to visit Bramblepaw, please,” Stoattail mewed. Eaglepaw noticed that the white tom had licked his chest so that his fur stuck out for the entire vigil into the next morning. She thought that was ridiculous. *Shouldn’t he be resting after staying up last night?*

“She’s sleeping,” Eaglepaw growled. Bramblepaw was actually awake, but not too alert. And Eaglepaw knew that Stoattail was not appreciated at this time. *Every chance he gets, he wants to be around her. And not even in a friendly way, more so creepy.*

“Oh, okay. I’m going on my first dusk patrol tonight as a *warrior*. Just wanted to spread the news!” Stoattail limped out of the den. Eaglepaw was glad she didn’t let Stoattail see Bramblepaw. He just wanted to subtly brag.

“EAGLEPAW!” The orange tabby ran towards Jayfeather, whose eyes were clouded in exhaustion. Brightheart and Cinderheart were helpful, but with so many cats sick, including the helpers now, it wasn’t enough. “I need to watch Finleap. He’s not doing well. Can you give the rest

of the cats their medicine? I already gave some to Bramblepaw and Birchfall. Also, Stemleaf seems to be doing better, you can let him sleep in the warrior's den tonight."

*That's... a lot..* "Sure!" Eaglepaw meowed. She went to the nest of every untreated cat, prodded them awake, and prompted them to eat some catmint and tansy. She then went to Stemleaf, who was washing himself. *That's a good sign.* All the other cats were too sick to do so. Their pelts were matted and smelled of illness. *Stemleaf seems to be recovering well. It'll do him no good to stay here. He will get better rest with his fellow warriors.*

Eaglepaw approached Stemleaf, who perked his ears up. "Giving me some more medicine?" He asked. His voice was still a bit raspy; it hadn't had the time to recover from the coughing and irritation that greencough was notorious for.

"Quite the opposite," Eaglepaw trilled. "Jayfeather says you can go back to your den tonight!"

"Well, I'm flattered that Jayfeather wants me out of here," Stemleaf giggled. "But what do you think?"

"I think you're ready. You are washing well and are very alert," Eaglepaw replied. "Plus, we need more room here. But you should come for tansy. It will help your voice."

Stemleaf nodded. He left the den and bounded for the fresh-kill pile. With so many cats sick, the healthy warriors had to work double, but it still wasn't enough during the harsh leaf-bare. *The elders say it is the worst they've seen. And they've lived for many leaf-bares.*

Eaglepaw padded back to Jayfeather. "I finished my work," she announced on her way. "Stemleaf has left, too. I can tell he's happy."

"Not now," Jayfeather hissed. Eaglepaw winced. Yes, Jayfeather was always a very curt cat, but this seemed like something *really* bad. Eaglepaw could tell that Jayfeather felt genuine fear. She padded to the senior medicine cat, and what greeted her was an awful sight.

Finleap and Hollytuft were dead.

## Chapter 8

“The Clan mourns the loss of these four cats,” Bramblestar said, his usually confident and projected voice sounding more like gasps for breath between coughs. “Hollytuft and Finleap were young, promising warriors, whose lives were taken so early.”

Eaglepaw felt her throat close in dread. Hollytuft was her older sister. She was cool, albeit judgemental sometimes. But Hollytuft was always fun to hang out with. When Bramblepaw and Eaglepaw first became apprenticed, Hollytuft showed them the best places in the territory to relax and watch patrols go by in their free time. And Finleap, he was her mentor! Finleap was ever-so patient and just liked having a cat around to absorb his teachings and to have a good time with. He even still helped Eaglepaw out with fighting moves after she became a medicine cat apprentice, so she could defend herself in any emergency. But now they were *gone*.

“Brightheart and Brackenfur also succumbed to the illness this evening,” Bramblestar continued. They have served the Clan for countless moons, and I am glad they got a few moons of rest before joining StarClan.”

Eaglepaw saw Poppyfrost sob, with Berrynose's paw on hers, comforting her. Dewnose and Whitewing observed from the medicine den, eyes glazed with sadness.

Bramblestar sighed, coughed, and went on. "But it was what StarClan willed. We usually sit vigil, but with this deadly greencough strain, we can't risk any more infection. I will bury the dead along with Squirrelflight. I can't risk infecting Graystripe or Thornclaw. They are the only elders left..."

"But how will we honour the dead?" Thornclaw snarled, angered by his grief. "We must sit vigil. It's basic decency and respect!"

"If no, *when* this blows over," Squirrelflight rasped, voice coated with illness, "we will sit vigil for all of the dead."

Eaglepaw's mouth felt dry. She knew that Squirrelflight was hinting at more cats dying, which was inevitable. Bramblestar had already lost two lives, not accepting treatment that could save cats with only one life. He was bound to lose more. He only had four left. And with young warriors dying from the illness, any cat who caught the illness was in danger. *Even Bramblepaw and Cinderheart!*

"Eaglepaw?" Bristlefrost mewed, interrupting her thoughts. "I'm sorry about the death. It must be hard."

"Thanks, Bristlefrost, that means a lot," Eaglepaw said, dipping her head.

“Thank you again for helping. Stemleaf is happy. We’re we’re mates now,” Bristlefrost announced.

“That’s great! I’m so happy,” Eaglepaw chirped. “It’s always good to see some good things happening. It makes me hopeful.”

“Hope is important,” Bristlefrost agreed. “Can you do me a favour? I told Hawkpaw, but I don’t want to disturb the ill cats. Can you tell my parents? And Ravenpaw?”

“Of course!”

\* \* \* \* \*

Ivypool and Fernsong were super glad to hear the news. Ivypool said she couldn’t wait to share prey with Stemleaf. Fernsong said that he was glad Bristlefrost was happy, and was very proud. Eaglepaw was now telling Ravenpaw the news.

“That’s awesome,” Ravenpaw sniffled as he squeaked. “It’s so cool that she knew who she loved. I don’t know about me, or Hawkpaw.”

“There’s always some cat out there. You just have to look,” Eaglepaw replied. “Besides, you’re such a kind and thoughtful cat. A cat would be silly not to like you!”

The two apprentices giggled for several moments. *Ravenpaw is such a good friend.*

## Chapter 9

“Wake up, Bramblepaw!”

Bramblepaw opened her heavy eyes. She felt so awful, she thought that she could sleep for the rest of leaf-bare. Her vision focused and she saw Jayfeather. The blind medicine cat still had the same look of concern that he had had every day since Bramblepaw got ill.

“It’s time for me to check you over,” Jayfeather grunted.

It had been the same routine for ages. Dawn, sunhigh, and dusk, Jayfeather and Eaglepaw checked on every cat. They assessed their breathing, checked for fever, helped the cats wash, and gave them food, water, and medicine. This repeated every day for a half moon. And Bramblepaw wasn’t getting any better. In fact, she was getting much, much worse. She developed a fever that hadn’t broken at all, only gradually getting higher since it had begun.

“Breathe as deep as you can,” Jayfeather instructed, placing his paw gently on Bramblepaw’s flank. She breathed in and out, in and out. This had happened so many times now that Bramblepaw

was pretty much an expert at check-ups. It was hard. Bramblepaw couldn't get her lungs full. When she did, it was followed by coughing. She could only wheeze as Jayfeather checked her up.

"Still blocked up a lot." Jayfeather frowned. "And I can tell from here that your fever hasn't broken, either."

"Am I going to die?" Bramblepaw's eyes widened. So much death. Since Bramblestar postponed the vigil for the first four deaths, more deaths occurred as predicted. Daisy and Cherryfall were lost to the stars now. Leafshade was also fading away quickly. *He is a young and strong cat. If he dies, what does that mean for an apprentice like me? Or Ravenpaw?*

"Not if I can help it," Jayfeather mewed. "Here's a vole. I put some catmint and juniper in it. I know you love vole."

"Yes, I do!" Bramblepaw squeaked. Or, pathetically tried to. "Why juniper?"

"It will help your breathing with your blocked lungs," Jayfeather explained. He watched Bramblepaw take a bite of the vole. "It's okay if you can't eat it all. I can eat the side without the medicine. Vole's my favourite, too."

"You're really good," Bramblepaw purred. "If I get better, I will catch you all the voles!"

"You will be better," Jayfeather repeated. "Just focus on that for now."

Bramblepaw lapped water out of some moss as Jayfeather cleaned her neck and back fluff, matted from the nest. She was too weak to do so, like the other sick cats. Jayfeather and Eaglepaw always helped clean the ill cats' fur, because the worst feeling is being sick and feeling dirty.

She felt her eyes droop as she returned to sleep, letting the darkness of it take over.

## Chapter 10

The half moon glimmered in the sky. Eaglepaw had to go to the medicine cat meeting by herself. Jayfeather had his paws full treating every cat. She travelled cautiously through the woods, and ran to the clearing where she noticed the glowing eyes of the medicine cats under the moonlight.

“Hello, Eaglepaw!” Shadowpaw mewed, tail raised in happiness.

“Greetings,” Alderheart mewed. The red medicine cat looked around. “Where’s Jayfeather and Honeyfrost?”

“ThunderClan is having a greencough outbreak,” Eaglepaw explained. “Honeyfrost is ill, and Jayfeather is busy caring for everyone.”

“So, you’re here by yourself?” Shadowpaw asked.

“Yeah, I am,” Eaglepaw responded. “I know, it’s a bit odd, but ThunderClan needs answers.”

“You can sit near me,” Alderheart offered. “Come, our meeting must begin.”

Eaglepaw sat next to Alderheart. It felt so odd to be at the Moonpool alone, especially as a young apprentice! But the SkyClan medicine cat was so welcoming and helpful. It eased Eaglepaw’s anxiety.

“It is time to share any news or concerns we may have,” Frecklewish began. She was the most senior medicine cat, and although she hadn’t lived at the Lake for long, still led the other traditions in the meetings, and provided wisdom to the other cats. “Is there anything you’d like to share, Eaglepaw?”

“I told Alderheart and Shadowpaw, but but I should tell everyone, yes?” Eaglepaw stammered nervously. “Our Clan is going through greencough right now. This time, it’s bad *really* bad. So many cats died!”

“Eaglepaw says that Jayfeather and Honeyfrost are unable to come due to the sickness,” Alderheart added. “This is why she is alone.”

“That’s very brave of you to do, Eaglepaw,” Willowshine trilled. “Is there anything your Clan needs help with? Is there enough catmint?”

“We have just barely enough,” Eaglepaw replied. “We’re able to give cats reasonable doses. We could always use more, of course, but... but I don’t want to take anyone else’s!”

“We have catmint to spare,” Puddleshine mewed. “We are able to harvest from the nearby Twolegplace. We are happy to provide some, just let Jayfeather know!”

“Thanks!” Eaglepaw squeaked. “That’s... that’s all for ThunderClan.”

“ShadowClan is doing well,” Puddleshine announced. “Shadowpaw is doing a great job at healing his Clan. I think he will get his Clan name next half-moon” The medicine cats smiled, and Eaglepaw saw Shadowpaw beam.

“SkyClan is recovering from Leafstar’s loss, but we are healthy and happy,” Fidgetflake mewed.

“Harestar lost a life a few days ago,” Kestrelflight announced. “He was hunting when he got covered by snow. We found him, but he had suffocated. He is recovering and is returning to his duties.” Cats murmured their sorrow and well-wishes to the WindClan medicine cat, who dipped his head gratefully.

Willowshine took a deep breath. “I’m finally adjusting to being RiverClan’s sole medicine cat. Curlfeather is expecting kits, and they’re about due. It’ll be my first delivery completely alone.”

“You’ll do well,” Kestrelflight chirped. “Mothwing was gifted and kind, and you have all those traits as well. Have faith in your instincts. It took me a while to adjust after Barkface died.”

Frecklewish flicked her tail, and the cats crouched down. Eaglepaw lapped the water. Usually it felt jarringly cold, but with this leaf-bare being so harsh, it merely felt the same way as

Eaglepaw's tongue did after a wash. During the Great Freeze, the Moonpool was frozen completely— something that had never happened before. The medicine cats couldn't speak with StarClan, but after the water melted, the connection was restored. This was the second meeting after the Moonpool melted, and the medicine cats hoped that the Moonpool would never freeze again.

Eaglepaw closed her eyes, and let the cats of StarClan into her thoughts.

## Chapter 11

Eaglepaw opened her eyes. She was in StarClan territory. The night sky was surrounded by stars. Even though Eaglepaw had visited many times, she was still stunned by its beauty every time she entered. The forest was bright, the moon was always full, and the energy was very peaceful.

“Hello?” Eaglepaw called out. “Does anyone want to speak with me?”

Nothing. Eaglepaw padded through the undergrowth. There were no thorns in StarClan to get into a cat’s pads, she needed not to be overly cautious. Her ears twitched, picking up any noise. A scurry of a squirrel startled the orange apprentice as it bounded past her. *Prey is plentiful. And it’s warm. It is true when Jayfeather says StarClan never experiences leaf-bare!*

A scent filled Eaglepaw’s nostrils. She looked, and a bright shape appeared. As it got closer, Eaglepaw recognised a cat. “Hello?” she yowled again. “I came from the Moonpool. I-I think I’m lost!”

“Eaglepaw!” The cat mewed. Thank goodness you’re here. I was late. We have an issue.”  
The cat was a brown tabby, with the same pattern as Bramblepaw, but lighter. Her amber eyes shone with concern. *She’s beautiful!*

“You don’t recognise me, do you?” The tabby asked. Eaglepaw shook her head. Was she supposed to know this cat? The tabby continued. “I am Leafpool. Lionblaze’s mother.”

“Yes, I know of you! You were our medicine cat. You.. you died when I was a small apprentice. I don’t remember you that well. But I heard you were very nice!”

“Well, that is one of the best things to be remembered for,” Leafpool chuckled. “But to be serious, I need your help. There is a cat here, she wandered away from our borders. She is lost, like you. We’ve tried to call her name, but she seems afraid. I think a living spirit needs to find her. One she may recognise.”

“Recognise?” Eaglepaw echoed. “Do I know this cat?”

“This does not matter right now,” Leafpool responded. “What matters now is that we save her before she gets too far. She needs to be here.”

Leafpool led Eaglepaw through the forest. She explained to Eaglepaw that the territory in StarClan is similar to the Old Forest. While walking, many cats greeted the two cats.

“Hi, Leafpool!” A calico mewed. Is that Eaglepaw?”

“Yes, it is, Sorreltail,” said Leafpool.

“Oh, hello! I am Cinderheart’s mother. It’s very good to see you!” Sorreltail nuzzled Eaglepaw. Sorreltail’s pelt was soft, like Cinderheart’s. Leafpool murmured a few words and continued on with Eaglepaw.

At last they reached what Eaglepaw assumed was the border. A group of cats were watching. Leafpool introduced Eaglepaw to the cats: Oakheart, Skystar, Flametail, and Moskit.

“What happened?” Eaglepaw asked.

“I was playing with Oakheart,” Moskit started. Eaglepaw winced at the size of the small kit. She was much smaller than the kits under her care. Moskit continued, her voice sounding as mature as a wise warrior. “I saw a cat who I’ve never seen before! I told Oakheart, asked if she could play, but then he started looking afraid!”

Oakheart continued. “I haven’t seen this cat before either. Not in StarClan. I gathered Skystar– he knows a lot of cats here– and Flametail. They told me that I was right, this cat was never in StarClan.”

“The apprentice,” Skystar said, “is living. Eaglepaw, you need to help guide her back. She seems scared of us.”

“I wouldn’t blame her,” Flametail remarked. “Seeing a bunch of cats you don’t know would be stressful.”

“I will help,” Eaglepaw told the starry cats. Oakheart pointed to the cat with his tail. Eaglepaw walked. The beautiful forest became less and less clear, until Eaglepaw found herself in a starry void. She approached the apprentice, but stopped and stared in utter shock.

*What is Bramblepaw doing here?*

## Chapter 12

Bramblepaw looked around the starry void. *How am I not falling? Why am I here?* The last thing Bramblepaw remembered was Jayfeather begging for her to stay awake, and putting a wet mossball with cold water. And then... she was in a forest, with lots of strange cats. *I can't be dead!* Bramblepaw had ran and ran, trying to get home, but she had ended up in a void. Now, she couldn't find her way back. The void was everywhere, she couldn't remember where she had come from.

Then, Bramblepaw saw dazzling green eyes before Eaglepaw came closer and closer. "BRAMBLEPAW! BRAMBLEPAW!" Bramblepaw heard her sister's screams, getting louder and louder. She ran to Eaglepaw, but she felt like she was underwater. After what felt like seasons, Bramblepaw made it to her sister.

"What are you doing here?" Eaglepaw hissed. "You could have been lost forever!"

Bramblepaw told her sister everything. About Jayfeather's muffled concerned meows. About how she didn't know what was happening, other than having to stay awake. About how she ended up in a forest, and how she was scared.

“Calm down, Bramblepaw. You were in StarClan,” Eaglepaw started.

“StarClan?? Am I not dead, am I?” Bramblepaw’s eyes widened until they looked like two blue moons.

“No, you’re not. But if what I remember is true, this is what happens when a cat is between life and death. You need to come back, or you will die and be trapped,” Eaglepaw wrapped Bramblepaw with her tail. “I know the way back.”

Bramblepaw followed Eaglepaw. The faded image of the forest came back in all of its vibrancy. She instantly felt a weight in her soul, something she had never noticed was there when she got lost, was gone.

“She’s back! And with the new cat, too!” A gray-and-white kit bounded up. “I’m Moskit. Can we play?”

“I need to get back home!” Bramblepaw whimpered.

“Hush, Moskit. Bramblepaw is just confused,” a cat that Bramblepaw remembered to be Leafpool soothed the tiny cat. “Perhaps she can play later.”

“Young Bramblepaw,” a reddish-brown tom meowed. “You are between life and death. Do you remember when Squirrelflight came back with that message to your Clan?”

Bramblepaw nodded. Half a moon before Eaglepaw became a medicine cat apprentice, SkyClan had to move to their new camp. There was a large conflict that resulted in Leafpool's death and Squirrelflight spending a lot of time in StarClan. Bramblepaw was not totally aware of what was happening, as she was busy with her training, and did not get to participate in the battle.

"A similar thing is happening to you," the tom finished. "You will be staying here for the time being. You may go back if you are able, but if not, you must stay here."

"What of her trial?" a light gray tom mewed. "Oakheart, if she does not pass, she won't stay here! Don't give this young cat false hope!"

"A trial? Wait- am I going to the Dark Forest?" Bramblepaw's eyes widened again.

"No, I'm sure you won't," Leafpool murmured. "If you follow us to warm-rocks, we can speak to the cats who assessed your trial."

Leafpool walked with Bramblepaw and Eaglepaw to warm-rocks. Bramblepaw felt swifter on her feet than in the void. At warm-rocks, Bramblepaw recognised some of the cats that died in the Great Freeze and of greencough- Brightheart, Leafshade, and Rosepetal.

A black she-cat walked up towards the group. She was thick-furred, like Bramblepaw. Initially, she thought that this cat was Hollytuft, but she smelled different. "Hi, Leafpool," she chirped. "I assume you're Eaglepaw? We've chatted a bit before." Eaglepaw nodded quickly. "And are you Bramblepaw?"

“I am,” Bramblepaw meowed. “I’m staying here awhile. We’re seeing if my trial happened.”

“It did, I think. Why don’t you follow Oakheart? He’s going to Crookedstar, and he is usually present at trials, or at least knows cats who are.” Hollyleaf asked. “But for now, you should say bye to Eaglepaw. She has to go home.”

“Not before I know Bramblepaw’s fate!” Eaglepaw said. The two apprentices went to Crookedstar. He was huge, and lived up to his name, his jaw twisted.

“Ah, these cats are why I’m late for our meal,” Oakheart said, licking his chest fur. *Even StarClan cats can be anxious!* “I saw these two apprentices speak to Hollyleaf. I think they want to hear about Bramblepaw’s trial. ”

“You smell alive,” Crookedstar remarked. “And yes, Bramblepaw, there was a trial. Some StarClan cats decided if you can stay here if you aren’t to return to the Lake.”

“What is the verdict, Crookedstar?” Bramblepaw asked timidly. Things were so *casual* here. She couldn’t imagine talking to Bramblestar like she could here.

“They decided that you can stay. You are very brave. You tried to act for the good of your Clan,” Crookedstar replied.

“Who was there?” Eaglepaw asked curiously.

“Thunderstar, Firestar, Longtail, Sandstorm, Sagewhisker, Brightheart, and Redtail, if I remember correctly. It varies from cat to cat,” Crookedstar explained.

“So I’m in StarClan for who knows how long?” Bramblepaw whimpered. “I need to get home!”

“You will,” Eaglepaw assured. “When I return to camp, I will do *everything* I can with Jayfeather to get you home.”

### Chapter 13

Eaglepaw woke up from her dream. She was sure she'd be the last cat awake, but surprisingly, everyone else was starting to stir as well. Perhaps they too had long conversations with their ancestors. But that didn't matter now.

The medicine cats started to share tongues, as was the usual practice before everyone returned home. Shadowpaw went up to Eaglepaw, asking if there was anything else her Clan needed. Usually Eaglepaw shared tongues with him; he was the only other apprentice. But Eaglepaw made an excuse about not wanting to spread the sickness. She said good-bye to everyone before running as fast as she could back to camp.

When she got to the entrance, she was greeted by Bristlefrost and Stemleaf, who was standing guard. "You look like you're in a rush," the new warrior commented. "Is everything okay?"

"I got a sign from StarClan about Bramblepaw," Eaglepaw confessed. Bristlefrost and Bramblepaw were best friends, and cared deeply for each other. "I need to talk to Jayfeather."

Bristlefrost's aqua eyes started to shine with worry. "I hope she's okay. If there's anything Stemleaf or I can do—" Eaglepaw looked at Stemleaf. He was staring at nothing, eyes glazed. "Stemleaf is just tired, don't worry," Bristlefrost added. "He did extra hunting today to make sure the kits were fed!"

Eaglepaw let out a purr, but was still concerned about the tom. She gave a trill to the two cats, and bounded towards the medicine den. There, she saw Jayfeather frantically trying to treat Bramblepaw. Honeyfrost was also helping. The yellow-and-white medicine cat was starting to recover.

"What did I miss?" Eaglepaw panted, catching her breath.

"Well, Twigbranch, Dewnose, and Ivypool have moved back to their den. Fernsong and Ravenpaw are well on their way. Things are looking up for most of the cats," Jayfeather grunted. His milky, unseeing eyes darkened. "But things are looking down for Bramblepaw. She won't wake up. Her fever is too high. I'm doing everything I can. Luckily Honeyfrost is able to work again."

"I know you and Cinderheart aren't letting me help, but I need to! She's my sister. I—"

Cinderheart looked up groggily from her nest. "Eaglepaw, you don't need to. Let Jayfeather take care of this." Eaglepaw winced at the sound of her mother's voice. It was so *weak*, nowhere near as soothing yet strong it was usually.

"Cinderheart, I just can't. I-I saw her in StarClan. She's teetering on the edge of life!" Eaglepaw yelped desperately.

“Eaglepaw is correct.” Jayfeather piped up. “She is a medicine cat. Her duty is to help, no matter what. Someday, when Honeyfrost and I are gone, she will need to heal *everyone*. But Eaglepaw, you need to rest. I cannot let an apprentice overwork herself to death.”

Jayfeather could read Eaglepaw’s mind, it felt. She didn’t need to think twice. She went into her nest, curled up, and fell asleep quicker than she could ever remember.

*Eaglepaw found herself once more in the void where she had rescued Bramblepaw. Meeting her there was—Moth Flight!*

*“Why am I back here?” Eaglepaw asked the ancient medicine cat. “Surely—”*

*“Young Eaglepaw, I have come to deliver a message just for you,” Moth Flight murmured softly. “A loss is coming. One that will change your life forever. But stick to those close to you. They will help you fulfil your destiny.”*

*Eaglepaw’s mouth gaped. “Is Bramblepaw going to die?”*

*“Even we don’t know,” Moth Flight whispered.*

“HELP!” Eaglepaw awoke and instantly stood up. She recognised the voice of Bristlefrost. Was ShadowClan coming to get the herbs? Oh, she didn’t have a chance to tell Jayfeather. No wonder the Clan thinks there is an invasion!

When Eaglepaw arrived at the camp entrance, she saw Bristlefrost’s eyes shining in a deep fear. “It’s Stemleaf,” Bristlefrost gasped between ragged, panicked breaths. “I was trying to tell him that it was time to rest, but he didn’t wake up!”

Eaglepaw looked at Stemleaf. The tom was still crouched, but was completely limp. Eaglepaw put her nose on his flank. The body was cold, and was not breathing. Eaglepaw examined Stemleaf some more. She opened his jaws and saw fluid running down his throat. *He must have caught it again, but didn't want to tell anyone.*

“Bristlefrost, I'm sorry, but he's with StarClan,” Eaglepaw murmured. “He must have overexerted himself hunting. I've been told that sometimes, cats who catch a terrible case like he did can never return to warrior duties.”

“He- he can't be dead!” Bristlefrost wailed. “He was just fine last night. He didn't talk, but I thought he was- oh, StarClan, I should have known!”

Eaglepaw licked Bristlefrost's forehead in comfort. “You couldn't have known at all. It was StarClan's will.”

“But how could StarClan will for such a thing? Now I'm alone, and the kits-” Bristlefrost growled. Her tone dropped to a somber cry. “Jayfeather had told me last night that I was expecting Stemleaf's kits! I didn't get to tell him. I didn't know what to say!”

“He knows,” Eaglepaw assured the distressed warrior. “Now he will always be with his family.”

Eaglepaw sat with Bristlefrost for a while, sharing in grief. Stemleaf had been an older apprentice when Eaglepaw started training. He was eager to have new denmates and loved teaching new things to the younger cats. *He would have made a great mentor.*

Afterwards, Eaglepaw notified the medicine cats about Stemleaf's death and condition. They gathered the recovered cats, intensively checking if they had developed any complications. It turns out that several of the older cats who had fallen ill had. They had the choice to do reduced duties or retire.

*Is this the loss Moth Flight was telling me about?*

## Chapter 14

The warmth of a sunbeam woke Bramblepaw. She was sleeping under an ash tree. Hollyleaf had taken Bramblepaw under her wing, and showed off her favourite spots in StarClan's hunting grounds. Not that it mattered, Hollyleaf had remarked. Every patch of grass and rock in StarClan were the most comfortable a cat could ever imagine.

Bramblepaw stretched. She was greeted by some other apprentices. Some were her age, some younger.

"Hi, Bramblepaw!" A black-and-white apprentice chirped. "Would you like to hunt with us?"

"This is such a great time for hunting, or just frolicking around!" another apprentice added. This one was a small brown cat. A third apprentice, this one ginger-and-white, nodded excitedly.

"Okay," Bramblepaw squeaked.

“I’m Swiftpaw,” the black-and-white apprentice mewed happily. This one,” Swiftpaw pointed his tail to the brown apprentice, “is Brownpaw. And this one is Gorsepaw!” The ginger-and-white cat gave a happy squeal when his name was said.

“Should we invite anyone else?” Gorsepaw asked.

“Duskpaw and Shrewpaw are learning fishing from Pine Needle.” Brownpaw explained. “And I think the rest are staying somewhere else for now.”

“Then it’s just us, then!” Swiftpaw mewed. “Who should lead the patrol?”

“I can!” Brownpaw squealed happily.

Bramblepaw joined the three apprentices as they bounded through the forest. Bramblepaw was surprised by the amount of prey in the forest. It was more plentiful than in greenleaf! She managed to easily catch a sparrow. Brownpaw caught two mice, while Gorsepaw and Swiftpaw took down a rabbit.

“Should we go back? Give this prey to any kits or anyone?” Bramblepaw asked to the chattering spirits.

“We don’t need to,” Brownpaw explained. “Prey is always plentiful in StarClan. The older cats teach the kits how to hunt. And even then, we don’t get hungry. We just eat and hunt for fun and the taste!”

“But prey should only be killed to be eaten!” Bramblepaw exclaimed. “That’s what the warrior code says.”

“In StarClan, we are able to eat whenever we want,” Gorsepaw chirped. “Since prey is never scarce, we do not need to worry about overhunting. Here, we are rewarded for following the code in life. There aren’t borders here, either. We’re all from different Clans!”

Bramblepaw thought for a while. She took in Gorsepaw’s words, and realised that it made sense. Following the rules in life gave cats a laid-back afterlife. Bramblepaw had always been one to respect rules and follow them. Lionblaze often compared her to Hollyleaf in that sense. To Bramblepaw, rules were implemented for a reason, and to keep the Clans stable. Breaking the rules would be disrespectful to others around her. In StarClan, there were less rules, since there was no reason to have them. This made Bramblepaw even more content with her rule-oriented views.

The four apprentices shared their prey, letting each other take bites of their catches. They then ran around the forest, pretending it was an obstacle course. Afterwards, Swiftpaw led the group to warm-rocks, where they laid in perfectly warm sunbeams with other StarClan cats.

“Swiftpaw,” a dark gray cat trilled. “I see you went on another hunting patrol. And is that a new friend?”

“Yes, Cinderpelt. This is Bramblepaw. She’s staying for a bit,” Swiftpaw responded.

“Oh, you’re Cinderheart’s daughter,” Cinderpelt smiled. “I’ve been watching over her, and her kits.” Bramblepaw remembered hearing stories about Cinderpelt. Cinderpelt defended Sorreltail

and Brackenfur when her mother was born, and died doing so. Cinderpelt was given a second chance by staying in the newborn Cinderheart's body for many moons. Cinderheart had gained Cinderpelt's memories and served as a medicine cat, before Lionblaze freed Cinderpelt's spirit, and Cinderheart was able to follow her own path.

Hollyleaf nodded. "She's my best friend. We trained together. I watch over her from time to time. But I hope that I can speak to her again."

"I think that is already happening," a voice came from behind. Bramblepaw turned around to see her own mother, and gasped in horror.

## Chapter 15

“I think this outbreak is coming to an end,” Eaglepaw mewed while changing Bramblestar’s nest. “Many cats have recovered, to the best of their ability, and Stemleaf was the last cat who died. That was two days ago.”

“That’s good,” Bramblestar murmured. Eaglepaw knew that the leader had a lot on his mind. He watched as so many clanmates suffered and died. It was hard enough seeing that as a medicine cat, but Eaglepaw couldn’t imagine what a Clan leader would feel about the loss. Bramblestar himself was recovering from his own sickness. He had lost five lives to greencough, all because he denied catmint. Bramblestar had said that he had lives to spare, but his Clanmates did not. Jayfeather tried to veto as a medicine cat, but Bramblestar refused to listen, stating that he was Clan leader.

Among the cats with lingering effects, though, was Squirrelflight, the Clan deputy and Bramblestar’s mate. Although she could still technically do duties like organising patrols and executing Bramblestar’s orders, Squirrelflight was not able to travel far for diplomatic missions and

Gatherings. When the Clan recovered, and meetings could resume, Squirrelflight could retire from her role. Until then, Bramblestar thought hard about any potential candidates for a new deputy.

“The only cats still seriously ill are Bramblepaw and Cinderheart,” Eaglepaw reported. The medicine den was so empty now compared to even a quarter-moon ago. All of the moss was disposed of to avoid spreading illness. Lionblaze had been plucking feathers from prey to put in the sick cats’ nest. He still did so, and now there were plenty of feathers to spare. Eaglepaw snuck some of them in her leaders’ nest. *You should at least be comfy when you think.*

“Those feathers are nice,” Bramblestar mewed. “Tell your father that I thank him. Say, why don’t we talk about what’s been on my mind?”

Eaglepaw shifted her paws. “Why me? I’m only an apprentice! I’m sure that Graystripe or Thornclaw— any senior warrior, too— would be better qualified!”

“Has Jayfeather forgotten to teach you a lesson?” Bramblestar flicked his ears light-heartedly. “Part of a medicine cat’s duty is to advise the leader. Besides, Eaglepaw, you are wise beyond your moons. You’ve come so far since the assessment, and you have healed nearly every cat in the Clan. I can tell that cats like to talk to you. You are very kind and approachable.”

Eaglepaw dipped her head in thanks. “Do you want my opinion on the new deputy?” Bramblestar nodded. “The most senior warriors are going to retire. Although I think Whitewing would be an excellent choice, she can’t serve anymore. Birchfall, too. Lionblaze and Ivypool are our best fighters, but my father can be brash. Ivypool is smart, but very paws-on. She would rather be on the patrols than organising them.”

“Berrynose has been an acting deputy since Squirrelflight got sick,” Bramblestar murmured. “He is headstrong, and although he can be bossy, he is confident with his choices. ThunderClan needs a deputy that does not second guess. Especially in these times.”

“That would be an interesting statement,” Eaglepaw replied. “Berrynose is an outsider. He is also missing half of his tail. When I was training as a warrior, Finleap told me he looked up to Berrynose. Perhaps his story could be inspiring.”

“Berrynose also was an excellent mentor to Stoatpaw,” Bramblestar pointed out. “He would be good, but I don’t know.”

“Trust your instincts,” Eaglepaw replied. “That’s what Jayfeather tells me. I’ve got to go. Jayfeather will claw my fur off if I am late.” Bramblestar touched noses with Eaglepaw, and the apprentice left to join her mentors in the medicine den.

“Oh, hello, you took your time,” Jayfeather grunted. “Honeyfrost is leaving to collect juniper. So many cats have sore paws from not using them for so long. Would you like to give some treatment while I sort herbs?”

“Yes, I can,” Eaglepaw chirped. “And Bramblestar wanted to speak with me about Clan business. That’s why I’m late.”

“You must be becoming an experienced medicine cat if Bramblestar yammers at you for a moon.” Jayfeather joked nonchalantly.

Eaglepaw started with giving treatment to her sister. She grinded catmint, tansy, and feverfew into a pulp, then opened Bramblepaw's jaws. She made sure the brown apprentice swallowed the treatment, along with some water. During this whole time, Eaglepaw noticed that Bramblepaw was completely limp. But when she moved on to Cinderheart, Eaglepaw noticed what she thought was a twitch of her sister's flank.

When Eaglepaw started to work on her mother, she noticed an all-too familiar scent. Eaglepaw's mouth went dry. *That's the scent of death.* Was it leftover from the other patients? No, it couldn't be. Eaglepaw was ordered to spread rosemary around the den to get rid of the scent of death. "Jayfeather, c-can you come h-here?" Eaglepaw felt her legs tremble in anxiety. "Something's wrong, very, *very* wrong."

Jayfeather ran towards Eaglepaw, tapping his paw on Cinderheart's flank. "Eaglepaw, I'm sorry. She's gone. Your mother is in StarClan now."

## Chapter 16

Bramblepaw looked, eyes widened in shock. “Why are you here, Cinderheart?”

“Like you,” Leafpool explained, emerging from a bush, “She is a whisker away from death. She has passed her trial if she is to stay.”

“That’s why Bramblepaw won’t wake up?” Cinderheart fretted. “She must have been here for a while. Is she going to die?”

“Not if Jayfeather can do anything,” Hollyleaf mewed. She nuzzled her best friend, and sat next to her.

“Nor if *I* can do anything,” Cinderheart hissed. “I am willing to stay here, if it means Bramblepaw could live.”

The StarClan cats murmured amongst themselves. Then, Leafpool turned to Cinderheart. “If this is what you choose, we will be able to return Bramblepaw to ThunderClan, but your body will be dead. But only if she agrees, too.”

“Mother!” Bramblepaw wailed. “You can’t do this. You will die!”

“I have served my Clan for countless moons. Raised the most beautiful kits a mother could ask. But it’s my time. I’m choosing to do this because it is not yours. You have a whole life ahead of you— I can see it now! You have been my little warrior since the day you were born.”

“But what about Eaglepaw, Rosecloud, and me? We won’t have a mother!” Bramblepaw sobbed.

“You still will,” Cinderheart murmured as she licked her daughter. “I will always be your mother, even from the stars. It is my time to leave, but I will never leave you. Now go, live your life. I will always be with you, my sweet, brave daughter.”

Bramblepaw closed her eyes. She couldn’t say no to her mother. She nodded at Leafpool. The starry world blurred around her and disappeared.

\* \* \* \* \*

“I saw Bramblepaw twitch,” the faint voice of Eaglepaw tickled Bramblepaw’s ears. It worked. She was back home! But Cinderheart was gone. Bramblepaw blinked open her eyes, and rasped, voice hoarse from disuse.

“Thank StarClan you’re back!” Jayfeather licked Bramblepaw. Lionblaze wrapped his tail over Bramblepaw, guiding her up.

Lionblaze sighed. “Bramblepaw, I’m sorry to tell you this so soon, but...”

“I know,” Bramblepaw whimpered, nearly inaudible. “I saw her in StarClan. She’s happy there. She she stayed there so I could live.”

“That is something she would do,” Lionblaze mewed. “She cared for you and your siblings more than a leader cares for their Clan.” Lionblaze beckoned Eaglepaw to come to him. The two sisters layed down, heads on Lionblaze’s huge paws, as he started to lick his daughters in comfort.

“How are you feeling?” Jayfeather asked.

“Better than ever. I’m so hungry, I could eat a fox!”

## Chapter 17

The Clan was somber as the moon lightened the camp in its light. A mass vigil was being held for all the dead.

“Cats of ThunderClan,” Bramblestar started. “Tonight, we mourn the deaths of our beloved Clanmates. We mourn the losses of Brightheart and Brackenfur, two cats who have served our Clan for many moons, and provided their wisdom for many more. Daisy was a mother to nearly all the cats of the Clan. Cherryfall and Lilyheart were strong cats who proved themselves as senior warriors. Hollytuft, Leafshade, Stemleaf, and Finleap were promising young warriors who provided for the apprentices. Although Stemleaf wasn’t yet a mentor, I would have given him one of the kits as an apprentice. He deserved that. And Cinderheart was such a well-respected and resilient senior warrior. She was a good hunter, mentor, and most importantly, mother. She instilled very good values into her kits, especially the new litter. One helped maintain the health of the Clan during this horrid season. Another is a young warrior who made sure the ill cats were well fed. And the third, we all thought was dead, but defied the odds and is recovering well.”

The ThunderClan cats let out yowls to the stars. They then huddled around the bodies of Stemleaf and Cinderheart, the only dead that hadn't yet been buried.

The bodies were decorated with rosemary and branches showing the first buds of Newleaf. Lionblaze had found a rose to put near Cinderheart. He decorated her fur with berries, leaves, and branches of holly. Lionblaze had helped Bristlefrost decorate Stemleaf's body. His had yew, a symbol of death, yet also for new life. Most of the ThunderClan cats assumed it was for a new life in StarClan, but only Eaglepaw, Bramblepaw, and Bristlefrost knew its real purpose: the new life that Stemleaf would never get to meet.

Bristlefrost sat between the bodies with Bramblepaw and Eaglepaw. "Did you see them in StarClan?" she asked in a small voice.

"I saw Cinderheart, but I'm sure Stemleaf is there too. There were so many cats and lots of room for them," Bramblepaw mewed.

Eaglepaw looked down at her paws with sadness. She noticed something. Despite the snow not being close to melting, Eaglepaw saw something sticking out. A thick stem, along with three thinner ones, poked out of the snow. Eaglepaw looked up at Bristlefrost. "He is there," she meowed. "I saw an omen. He is watching over you, along with your kits."

"Was it from him?" Bristlefrost asked.

"I think so. And your kits, all three of them, will be okay, too." Eaglepaw looked down at her sign. It was gone.

“Three?!” Bristlefrost squeaked. “Did he tell you that, too?”

“Yes,” Eaglepaw mewed. “Stemleaf will do anything he can to make sure they are strong.”

## Chapter 18

“I passed!” Ravenpaw dashed into camp. It was the day after the vigil, and the Clan was bursting with newfound energy now that the outbreak was behind them. Ravenpaw and Hawkpaw were being assessed to be warriors.

“I did, too,” Hawkpaw trilled. “I wonder what our names would be!”

“Maybe I could be Raventalon!” Ravenpaw chirped. “I’m good at catching prey with my claws.”

“Nah,” Bristlefrost giggled. “You’d be Ravenbrain, seeing how you’re so wise.”

“Then I guess Hawkpaw should be called Birdbrain!” Ravenpaw squealed. Bramblepaw giggled with her friends. It was the first time she was truly happy since losing her mother.

“I’m obviously going to be named Hawkeye,” Hawkpaw remarked. “Since I’m good at seeing my enemies.”

“Said the cat who bumped into a tree!” Bramblepaw retorted.

“Say,” Bristlefrost mewed. “Now that you’re better, you’ll be getting your Clan name, too! What would you like yours to be?”

Bramblepaw thought hard. She thought about her future, but not the details. So many apprentices dreamed about having a cool, fierce name. Bramblepaw didn’t pay mind. It was not her place. “I don’t know. Whatever Bramblestar gives me, I’ll be happy with.”

“Well, we know Bramblestar is taken!” Hawkpaw meowed loudly.

“Apprentices! What are you doing?” Squirrelflight chuffed. “Fantasising about your names? I’d have to go tell Bramblestar so he has some ideas!”

“He doesn’t know what we will be called?” Bramblepaw gasped.

“Every cat knows he makes them up on the spot!” Ravenpaw winked.

“We’re pulling your tail, Bramblepaw. I’ve talked to Bramblestar about naming. I always do.” Squirrelflight mewed. This was her last day as official deputy before Bramblestar appointed a new one.

“Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather under the Highledge for a Clan meeting!” Bramblestar’s voice rang throughout the camp. Cats started gathering, with Bramblepaw and her friends in the front of the group.

Ivypool weaved through the cats to be with her sons. “Honestly, can’t he give you time to wash?” She helped Hawkpaw and Ravenpaw wash, then turned to Bramblepaw, giving her a head wash.

“Yesterday, we mourned. But today, we celebrate,” Bramblestar yowled. “Five cats have decided to retire to the elders’ den due to their greencough complications.” *Four?* Eaglepaw was surprised. Squirrelflight had declined the opportunity of becoming an elder. She preferred to be a permanent queen, filling the void that Daisy left, and using her feisty personality to raise the youngest ThunderClan cats into eager individuals.

“Whitewing, Birchfall, Mousewhisker, and Honeyfrost, please come forward.” Bramblepaw saw her sister gasp. Honeyfrost had some complications, yes, but Jayfeather said that they weren’t severe enough to impact her duties. *Maybe she had enough of being a medicine cat.* The four cats stepped forward. Bramblestar continued the ceremony. “Is it your wish to give up the names of warrior and medicine cat and to go join the elders?”

“I do,” the cats stated simultaneously.

“Your Clan honours you and all the service you have given to us. I call upon StarClan to give you many moons of rest,” Bramblestar finished.

“WHITEWING! BIRCHFALL! MOUSEWHISKER! HONEYFROST!” the Clan cheered as the new elders moved back into the crowd.

“We also are supporting Squirrelflight as she steps down as Clan deputy in favour of raising our Clan’s young.” Bramblestar announced. “ Squirrelflight, please step forward.” The dark ginger she-cat did so. “Squirrelflight, is it your wish to give up the name of Clan deputy and to serve as a permanent queen?”

“I do,” Squirrelflight said confidently.

“Your Clan honours you and all the service you have given us. May many cats be touched by your role in raising them.” Bramblestar mewed, giving his mate a nuzzle.

“SQUIRRELFIGHT! SQUIRRELFIGHT!” Bramblepaw noticed some of the Clan’s voices getting hoarse. *They need to exercise their voices.*

“With this,” Bramblestar called. “ThunderClan is in need of a new deputy. I say these words before StarClan, so that the spirits of our warrior ancestors may hear and approve of my choice. The new deputy of ThunderClan shall be Berrynose. He has proven himself a worthy and respected warrior despite the setbacks of his non-Clan heritage and subsequent prejudices; while also proving that half a tail can still make a cat fully as strong. Berrynose was a wonderful mentor to Stoattail, who became a warrior very quickly after joining the Clan.”

“BERRYNOSE! BERRYNOSE!” The clan yowled once more.

“Thank you, Bramblestar,” Berrynose mewed. “You have taught me everything I know as a warrior. I hope that I can continue learning from you as ThunderClan’s deputy.”

Bramblestar nodded. “Lastly, we have three new warriors to make. Ravenpaw, Hawkpaw, and Bramblepaw, please step forward.” Bramblepaw bounded up with her two friends. *It’s finally happening. I will be a warrior of ThunderClan!* “I, Bramblestar, leader of ThunderClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these three apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as warriors in your turn.” Bramblestar turned his gaze down to the three cats. “Bramblepaw, Hawkpaw, and Ravenpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your lives?”

“I do,” Ravenpaw said, bowing his head.

“I do,” Hawkpaw murmured. Bramblepaw could almost hear a twinge of excitement that the gray cat was trying, and failing, to suppress.

“I do,” Bramblepaw said last, gazing at her leader.

“Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior names. Ravenpaw, from this moment forward, you shall be known as Ravenwing. StarClan honours your patience and loyalty. Hawkpaw, from this moment forward, you shall be known as Hawkfeather. StarClan honours your enthusiasm and strength. And Bramblepaw, from this moment forward, you shall be known as Brambleheart. StarClan honours your kindness and resiliency.” The three apprentices, single file, went and licked Bramblestar’s shoulder while he rested his muzzle on their heads.

“RAVENWING! HAWKFEATHER! BRAMBLEHEART!” The Clan shouted. Brambleheart looked at her Clanmates that she swore to protect. Her heart pounded strongly, thinking of the new responsibility ahead of her. Brambleheart’s gaze caught Lionblaze. He was sitting next to Jayfeather. The two brothers were cheering the loudest.

Brambleheart went towards them. “I’m so proud of you!” Lionblaze trilled, nuzzling Brambleheart’s cheek. “Your mother is, as well.”

“If I see Cinderheart tonight at the Moonpool, I will be sure to deliver any message she gives,” Jayfeather murmured. “But for now, eat. You have a long vigil ahead of you.” Brambleheart brushed Jayfeather with her tail, and hurried to see the rest of her Clan.

“Guess I’m the only apprentice,” Eaglepaw joked. “Well, only for tonight. Congratulations!”

Sorrelstripe’s kits weaved around the new warriors. “Well, we should be apprentices *now*, then!” Ashkit mewed. “Maybe one of you can mentor me!”

“You have another moon yet,” Sorrelstripe purred. *Five moons old already? Where is the time going?* “Besides, it’s sunhigh. It is time for your naps.”

“But we’re too old for that!” Tinykit protested. “When I’m an apprentice, I will never take a nap again!”

“In that case, I should probably take one before my vigil,” Brambleheart said, excusing herself. She entered the warrior’s den, where Twigbranch was lying, heartbroken.

“Hi, Twigbranch. Is everything alright?” Brambleheart crouched to her former mentor.

“I see you’re resting before the vigil,” Twigbranch commented. “I suppose you’ll need a nest. I was just sitting next to Finleap’s. I can still smell the leftover fur.”

“I’m really sorry,” Brambleheart mewed. “I’m sure he’s proud of you in StarClan.”

“Thanks,” Twigbranch said. “You can use his nest, if you’d like.”

Brambleheart settled into her new nest, curled up into a ball. The last thing she saw before falling asleep was Twigbranch’s faint smile.

## Chapter 19

“Hurry up!” Jayfeather shouted. “You don’t want to be late for this big meeting!”

Eaglepaw bounded toward her mentor. “Sorry, I was just saying bye to Brambleheart!” The three newest warriors were sitting a silent vigil all night while guarding the camp. This meant that they were the last cats to send her and Jayfeather off on their walk to the Moonpool.

The two cats walked, taking their normal path. They started talking about what it would be like without Honeyfrost helping, and how much more work they now had since there were no more apprentices tending to the elders.

“It’s almost like Bramblestar purposefully makes new warriors at the worst time to make me suffer,” Jayfeather remarked. “Thornclaw gets so angry with me, even when other cats are taking care of him!”

Upon reaching the Moonpool, Jayfeather was greeted by all the medicine cats swarming him, asking for news on the Clan and giving their thanks to StarClan that he had never gotten infected. The cats gathered around the pool, sharing their news.

“ShadowClan has a new medicine cat to name,” Puddleshine mewed. *Shadowpaw is getting his name too!* “I, Puddleshine, medicine cat of ShadowClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice. He has trained hard to learn the ways of a medicine cat, and with your help he will serve his Clan for many moons. Shadowpaw, do you promise to uphold the ways of a medicine cat, to stand apart from rivalry between Clans, and to protect all cats equally, even at the cost of your life?”

“I do,” Shadowpaw mewed.

“Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your true name as a medicine cat. Shadowpaw, from this moment on you shall be known as Shadowsight. StarClan honours your insight, your courage, and your kindness, and we welcome you as a full medicine cat of ShadowClan!”

The medicine cats opened their mouths to cheer before Jayfeather silenced them with a lash of his tail. “ThunderClan has a new medicine cat to name *as well.*” He gave Puddleshine an irritated glance, as if the brown-and-white medicine cat was trying to steal Jayfeather’s thunder. *He isn’t. Shadowpaw and I are just equal now in experience.*

“Eaglepaw learned the way of a medicine cat as well. She did a very thorough and good job at handling the Great Freeze and the subsequent greencough outbreak. I, Jayfeather, medicine cat of ThunderClan, call upon *my* warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice. She has trained hard

to learn the ways of a medicine cat, and with your help she will serve his Clan for many moons. Eaglepaw, do you promise to uphold the ways of a medicine cat, to stand apart from rivalry between Clans, and to protect all cats equally, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do," Eaglepaw murmured, watching the stars reflect on the pool, forming the shapes of two cats.

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your true name as a medicine cat. Eaglepaw, from this moment on you shall be known as Eagleheart, after your mother. StarClan honours your wisdom, your intelligence, and your empathy, and we welcome you as a full medicine cat of ThunderClan!"

"SHADOWSIGHT! EAGLEHEART!" The medicine cats cheered.

"Does anyone else have an apprentice to name?" Kestrelflight huffed. Fidgetflake pointed his tail to Alderheart jokingly.

"Let's share with StarClan," Frecklewish said, licking the pool.

Eagleheart licked the chilly water and closed her eyes, to be greeted by Cinderheart and Hollyleaf, the two cats watching her in the Moonpool's reflection. "We're very proud," Cinderheart said. "We will be with you, always."

Eagleheart touched noses with her kin, who then faded away. A new cat, Moth Flight, returned. "My message has come true," she told Eagleheart. *Yes, it had.* Cinderheart had died, and

Eagleheart and Brambleheart stuck together. Now they were becoming full members of the Clan, ready to protect it and keep it strong. Moth Flight interrupted Eagleheart's thoughts. "Thank you for listening. But the storm isn't over yet. The sky isn't clear when two clouds block the sun."

## Chapter 20

“Your vigil is over!” Twigbranch gave Brambleheart a lick. “Go, be with your Clan, and rest if you can.”

The first thing Brambleheart did was to visit with her sister. The orange tabby had earned her name last night, too. But Brambleheart didn’t get a chance to speak with her yet.

Luckily, she was padding out of the medicine den. “Hello, Brambleheart! Have you finished your vigil?”

“Yep!” Brambleheart flicked her tail. “We can talk now.”

“I’ve earned my name, Eagleheart. Jayfeather named me after our mother,” Eagleheart announced.

“I wonder if Bramblestar had that idea,” Brambleheart mewed.

“Nope,” Lionblaze chuffed, padding to his daughters. “They both consulted me about your names. Jayfeather wanted to name Eagleheart after Cinderheart. But Bramblestar had the same name, but for a different reason.”

“What was that?” Brambleheart asked.

“He wanted to honour the fact that your heart has grown stronger after the outbreak, the loss, and from accepting Eagleheart’s destiny. And for the fact that you have a kind and shining spirit,” Lionblaze purred.

Berrynose interrupted the conversation. “Lionblaze, mind leading a patrol? Or are you too busy being sentimental?”

Lionblaze scoffed at the deputy, who Brambleheart remembered was also her father’s biggest rival in the Clan. “Of course I can. Border or hunting?”

“Border,” Berrynose sniffed. “Shellfur smelled WindClan scent in our land. Bring Bristlefrost, Poppyfrost, and Molewhisker. If you need to, *teach them a lesson.*” Lionblaze licked Brambleheart and Eagleheart goodbye, and set off to gather his cats. “As for you two,” Berrynose meowed, “you’re off today. Dewnose caught a mouse while on Shellfur’s patrol, and you two can share it.”

Brambleheart dipped her head at the Clan deputy and hurried to grab it from the fresh-kill-pile. She ate it with Eagleheart, licking her chops as it was the first plump one she had eaten since before the Great Freeze. Its fur was wet with snowmelt from the sunbeam that it was being eaten in.

Newleaf was coming, and with it, the beginning of a new era of Brambleheart, Eagleheart, and Rosecloud's lives.

## Epilogue

Stoattail snuck out of the camp. Today, of all the days, was the hardest to do his tasks. Brambleheart, Hawkfeather, and Ravenwing were all sitting vigil, and would not let any cat enter or leave, except for the medicine cats, who had a meeting that night, as well.

Luckily, Stoattail lived up to the name of a sneaky creature. He made it out of camp undetected. It was pretty easy, he'd say, since he rolled in the dried herbs that Jayfeather had taken to dispose of in the dirtplace. Now his scent would smell like a medicine cat gone astray.

Stoattail dashed through the undergrowth, quick and nimble despite his double limp. He was running late! He finally made it to the stream, and sat there patiently, panting. Every time a noise of a squirrel or bird sounded, Stoattail looked around. *Can the medicine cats see me?* Surely not; they had to be dreaming now.

The sound of a patrol made Stoattail jump, even knowing that no patrol dared go out this late unless they were of ShadowClan origin. But the scent confirmed that they were the cats he was meeting with.

“Hello,” Breezepelt mewed. “Why do you smell like the medicine den?”

“Warriors sitting vigil,” Stoattail explained. “Medicine cats are out, too. Why did you want to meet now?”

“Since Leaf-bare is ending, I’d like to know if ThunderClan has been weakened,” Breezepelt explained.

“Yes, they are,” Stoattail replied. “There was a greencough outbreak, causing a lot of deaths. ThunderClan has fewer warriors now. But they still pose a threat.”

Breezepelt sniffed. “Any new developments?”

“None that I know. Though, there is a cat I can get to our side. She is full of envy and hate toward her Clan. She would make a good candidate for an ally.”

“Good,” Breezepelt nodded. “I will tell our allies right away.”

Turn the page for a bonus scene!

## Chapter 1

*Fox-dung!*

Ravenheart had woken up to a cool camp. *Maybe it's just because it's still not even dawn,* he had thought. But it wasn't. Ravenheart was leading his first patrol, with senior warrior Tawnypelt, and fellow newer warrior, Hollowspring. As the cats gathered and were assigned a place to hunt, the temperature dropped even more.

"Are you sure we should go out in this?" Hollowspring asked Cloverfoot. "I overheard Oakfur say that he's never felt this cold before!"

"It's fine," Cloverfoot assured. "But I don't know how cold it will be. Please be back when the sun has risen. If we need to shelter, we'll need to be fed."

Ravenheart nodded. He flicked his tail, inviting his patrol to join. They had been assigned to hunt at the lakeshore, not too far from camp. The patrol trudged through the thick snow tediously until they made it to the hunting ground.

“Do you scent anything?” Ravenheart asked his patrol. “Cloverfoot says we need to be back by morning.”

“My nose is too cold to smell!” Hollowspring complained. “It just closes in on itself!”

Ravenheart shuddered, both from the cold and unease. ShadowClan needed all the prey it could get, with this harsh leaf-bare and the risk of a large freeze confining cats to the camp. Not only that, but if Ravenheart disappointed his Clan on the first patrol he was in charge of, no cat would ever trust him. *What if they never let me lead again? Will I really be a true warrior?*

“Just try your best,” Ravenheart said timidly.

Ravenheart trudged through the snow. Sometimes he would catch an eye on a mouse or a chickadee, but the snow was so loud that it never helped. The prey always ran away. Ravenheart tried for so long, that it took a while for him to notice that his steps were making a different noise. *A quieter noise!*

“Come here, I think I have an idea!” The black tom called. Hollowspring made his way eagerly, while Tawnypelt slowly walked, occasionally scanning for prey. “The ice is quieter than the snow. And it’s very thick, too, thanks to the cold.”

“What kind of prey would run on the ice?” Hollowspring teased. “Must be a city thing.”

Ravenheart flinched. Just because he was raised in the city didn't mean he was a mouse-brain! Before he was born, his father, Tigerstar, and his mother, Dovewing, left the lake to venture into a city where they met the Guardian Cats, who sheltered them and helped raise Ravenheart and his littermates. But when he was a few moons old, he returned to the Clans. Although Ravenheart was born in leaf-bare, it was way milder than in the wild. Hollowspring always seemed to poke at that insecurity.

"It's not mouse-brained, it's called innovation!" Ravenheart growled. "Now are we going to try hunting or not?"

"What do you want us to do?" Tawnypelt asked. It was the first time she spoke since leaving camp.

"Try to make the prey run on the ice," Ravenheart explained. "It will have no place to burrow, and we will catch it!"

"Wouldn't it notice our shadows and run back?" Hollowspring asked condescendingly.

"Not if we work together. If we unsettle it with a shadow, it will panic, and either freeze, or make a mad dash," Ravenheart replied.

Both cats nodded before setting out on their assigned role: Tawnypelt corralling prey to the ice, Hollowspring spooking it with his shadow, and Ravenheart catching it. If it ran back towards the snow, Hollowspring was to catch it, or let it go back to Tawnypelt to start the cycle again.

Ravenheart also felt a breeze. It felt really cool, chilling his bones. The farther he got into the lake, the heavier the wind got. *Something is off here.*

## Chapter 2

“It’s on the ice!”

After a while, it looked hopeless. Prey would run a different direction, or not panic over a shadow. But finally, *finally*, Tawnypelt had gotten a mouse on the ice. Hollowspring hovered over the mouse, barring its entry to the shore. The tiny creature looked terrified! *But StarClan is giving it to us for food. It is a necessary sacrifice.*

The mouse, as expected, ran further onto the ice. Ravenheart slid on the ice to chase it. Whenever he ran on the ice, Ravenheart always landed on his belly, so he learned to slide using his paws. He got closer and closer to the mouse before pouncing on it. The impact of the pounce made an impression on the ice, and when Ravenheart looked at it, he realised that a cat was staring back at him from underwater. “Tawnypelt!”

The senior warrior rushed towards Ravenheart. She was looking pale, as if the cold air drained her energy. To Ravenheart’s surprise, Tawnypelt saw the cat, too. “F·Flametail? Is that you?”

“Who is Flametail?” Ravenheart asked.

“Flametail was your father’s littermate,” Tawnypelt explained. “He was a medicine cat, and a good one, too.”

“Did he teach Puddleshine?” Ravenheart asked. Puddleshine was an excellent healer, and was passing down his knowledge to Shadowpaw, who was Ravenheart’s brother.

“No, Littlecloud taught him. He... he died before Puddleshine was born,” Tawnypelt murmured.

“How did he die?” Ravenheart asked.

“He was playing on the ice... the same area we are hunting in now,” Tawnypelt said sadly. “He found a thin area, and he fell and drowned.”

“Is it here?” Ravenheart asked.

“Yes, it is,” Tawnypelt sobbed. “I think that is his spirit trying to speak to me.”

“What is he saying?”

“Probably that this is a mouse-brained idea,” Tawnypelt chuffed.

“Yeah, it is,” Ravenheart agreed. “I was just trying to help,” Ravenheart flicked his tail, leading his patrol back from the icy water of the lake. “The sun is poking up. We should go home.”

On the way home, Ravenheart’s tail was drooped. He was failing his Clan, and his kin! How was the Clan ever going to respect him after bringing back a measly mouse? Ravenheart’s thoughts were disturbed by Hollowspring.

“Look!” Hollowspring mewed quietly. “I think this squirrel is trying to find a pinecone!”

“So, it is,” Ravenheart replied. He crouched down and stalked the squirrel. It was so deep into the hole that in the time it took to get near it enough to pounce, the squirrel was still struggling its way out. Ravenheart nipped the squirrel’s neck, and gave it to Hollowspring. “You found it, you get to carry it.”

“This gets more fur in my mouth than any lizard would,” Hollowspring complained, voice muffled by the catch.

The trek back to camp continued, only getting longer and longer by the cold, harsh wind that the patrol had to endure. At last, Ravenheart saw the camp entrance. Only a tre-length and two and they were home! Ravenheart looked back to his patrol, and only saw Hollowspring.

“Hollowspring!” Ravenheart yelled. Despite the wind being loud, it was carrying sound towards Hollowspring. “Where’s Tawnypelt?”

Hollowspring's eyes widened in panic. The two black toms called Tawnypelt's name, and found her trapped in some packed snow.

"Snow fell off of a tree," Tawnypelt said weakly, teeth chattering.

"We need to get you out," Ravenheart meowed. He and Hollowspring used their paws to start digging the snow, eventually freeing Tawnypelt. The senior warrior stumbled out and slumped to the ground.

"Tawnypelt! Come on! We're not far from camp now," Ravenpaw mewed, nudging Tawnypelt's paws.

"My legs, they- they can't move. Too.. too cold..." Tawnypelt groaned.

"We can drag you back," Hollowspring affirmed.

"The prey..."

"We can get the prey later!" Hollowspring yowled. "What matters is that you're safe."

"What matters is that the Clan is fed!" Tawnypelt growled. "Bring the prey back and get me later!"

Ravenheart and Hollowspring looked at each other. Ravenheart could tell that Hollowspring also knew that there was no use arguing with Tawnypelt. Ravenheart gave her a lick on the head before heading to camp as fast as he could.

### Chapter 3

“Thank StarClan you’re back!” Dovewing and Berryheart both circled their respective kits. Dovewing started licking Ravenheart profusely. “With the weather getting so cold, we thought you’ve turned into ice!”

Cats gathered around. Ravenheart’s patrol wasn’t the only hunting patrol out. The fresh-kill pile was small, but enough to keep the Clan fed. The mouse and squirrel were welcome additions. Ravenheart dropped the mouse, and Hollowspring did the same with the squirrel.

“Where’s Tawnypelt?” Whorlpelt asked, looking around.

“She needs our help,” Ravenheart confessed, speaking quickly. “We were on our way back home when Tawnypelt got stuck in a pile of snow that fell from a tree. We managed to get her out but— but she was too weak to walk back.”

“YOU LEFT TAWNYPELT BEHIND??” Oakfur, an elder, hissed. Ravenheart couldn’t blame the old tom’s reaction; Oakfur had been mentor to Tawnypelt.

“She told us to! She said that the prey was more important!” Ravenheart panted.

“That is something my mother would do,” Tigerstar said while exiting his den. “I will find her myself.”

By the time Tigerstar had gotten back, Tawnypelt was dead. By then, the weather got so cold that the ShadowClan cats huddled in their dens. Poor Oakfur, the sole elder, had died. Snowbird did as well, trying to find and help Tigerstar. Strikestone and Yarrowleaf were guarding the camp, and they also froze. All in all, ShadowClan cats were confined to their dens for an entire day before the weather became possible to survive once outside.

“Cats of ShadowClan,” Tigerstar called. “This Great Freeze was a tragedy. I am sure cats across the lake have felt its cruelty. But now, we mourn five cats who this Freeze has taken. Oakfur, an elder for many moons, will now live in eternal youth in StarClan. Snowbird will be reunited with her lost kits. Strikestone and Yarrowleaf will join their lost peers. And Tawnypelt will be able to walk with Rowanclaw once more.”

Cats murmured their sorrows. This was the most cats ShadowClan had lost since Darktail wreaked havoc on the lake, before Ravenheart was even born. *And all in two days!*

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After the vigil, Tigerstar and Dovewing watched their kits tumble around in the snow. Ravenheart was teaching Shadowpaw some attack moves. Lightleap was giggling at Shadowpaw's struggles to understand them.

"Tigerstar, do you think Tawnypelt made it to StarClan?" Ravenheart asked his father.

"Of course! If she was too cold, I'm sure some cat helped her," the Clan leader replied.

"I know she is there," Shadowpaw piped up. "I can feel it. And Flametail, too. He told me that he was making sure your patrol was okay, Ravenheart. He told me he guided Tawnypelt to StarClan."

"That's very kind of Flametail," Tigerstar mewed. Ravenheart saw his father get taken aback by Shadowpaw's comment. He had never talked about his brother, which was why Tawnypelt did at the lake.

Dovewing purred. "StarClan is truly watching over our kits."