

WHISPERS OF CHANGE
WARRIORS
Twisting Paths



Warriors: Whispers of Change

Book One: Twisting Paths

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

Warriors:

Thornclaw· golden·brown tabby tom

Whitewing· white she-cat with green eyes

Birchfall· light brown tabby tom

Berrynose· cream coloured tom with a stump for a tail

Mousewhisker· gray·and·white tom

Apprentice, Hawkpaw (silver tabby tom)

Poppyfrost· pale tortoiseshell·and·white she-cat

Lionblaze·golden tabby tom with amber eyes

Rosepetal· dark cream she-cat

Apprentice, Bristlepaw (pale gray she-cat)

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

Eaglewing· ginger she-cat

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
Apprentice, Eaglepaw (orange tabby she-cat)
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
Millie· silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes
Cloudtail· long-haired white tom with blue eyes
Brightheart· white she-cat with ginger patches
Brackenfur· 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:

Tawnypelt· tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes

Dovewing· pale gray she-cat with green eyes

Strikestone· brown tabby tom

Stonewing· white tom

Apprentice, Lightpaw (brown tabby she-cat)

Scorchfur· dark gray tom with slashed ears

Apprentice, Flaxpaw (brown tabby tom)

Sparrowtail· large brown tabby tom

Snowbird· pure white she-cat with green eyes

Apprentice, Ravenpaw (black tom with white flecks)

Yarrowleaf· ginger she-cat with yellow eyes

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

Conefoot· white-and-gray tom

Fronwhisker· gray tabby she-cat

Gullswoop· white she-cat

Spireclaw· black-and-white tom

Hollowspring· black tom

Sunbeam· brown-and-white tabby she-cat

Elders:

Oakfur·small brown tom

SkyClan

Leader: Leafstar· brown·and·cream tabby she·cat with amber eyes

Deputy: Hawkwing· dark gray tom with yellow eyes

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:

Sparrowpelt· dark brown tabby tom

Macgyver· black and white tom

Dewspring· sturdy gray tom

Plumwillow· dark gray she·cat

Sagenose· pale gray tom

Apprentice, Kitepaw (reddish brown 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

Reedclaw· small pale tabby she·cat

Mintfur· gray tabby she·cat with blue eyes

Nettlesplash· pale brown tom

Tinycloud· small white she·cat

Palesky· black·and·white she·cat

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

Queens:

Violetshine· black-and-white she-cat with yellow eyes (mother to Rootkit, a yellow tom, and

Needlekit, a black-and-white she-kit)

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:

Nightcloud· black she-cat

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

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

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

Hootwhisker· dark gray tom

Fernstripe· gray tabby she-cat

Queens:

Featherpelt· gray tabby she-cat (mother to Oatclaw's kits: Whistlekit, a gray tabby she-kit; Songkit, a tortoiseshell she-kit; and Flutterkit, a brown-and-white tom)

Elders:

Whiskernose· light brown tom

Gorsetail· very pale gray-and-white she-cat with blue eyes

RiverClan

Leader: Mistystar· gray she-cat with blue eyes

Deputy: Reedwhisker· black tom

Medicine cats: Mothwing· dappled golden she-cat

Willowshine· gray tabby she-cat

Warriors:

Duskfur· brown tabby she-cat

Minnowtail· dark gray-and-white she-cat

Mallownose· light brown tabby tom

Beetlewhisker· brown-and-white tabby tom

Podlight· gray-and-white tom

Shimmerpelt· silver she-cat

Lizardtail· light brown tom

Sneezecloud· gray-and-white tom

Brackenpelt· tortoiseshell she-cat

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:

Mossbelt· tortoiseshell-and-white she-cat

Prologue

Starlight shone on the eyes of the apprentice. She wasn't like most apprentices. Unlike most of the medicine cats of the Clans, she had been a great and skilled warrior before she chose this new path; when she got injured in a rockslide. The yellow-and-white she-cat chose this not due to the injury, rather than a new passion she discovered in healing.

"Hurry up!" The voice of the irritated mentor sounded ahead. The short-legged apprentice ran up to her mentor, and looked into his blind eyes in apology.

"Sorry, Jayfeather! I was just scanning for herbs on the way to the Moonpool!" It was true, as leaf-fall was coming soon, the season when medicine cats needed to stock up herbs for leaf-bare.

"Herbs can wait. StarClan cannot. You do want to become a full medicine cat, don't you?" Jayfeather snorted.

"Of course!"

An awkward silence followed for a few moments before the two cats entered a clearing. In that clearing was a pool with the moonlight bouncing off of the water, The apprentice

padded towards the other medicine cats and sat near Alderheart, the small, dark ginger SkyClan medicine cat.

Jayfeather silently padded after the yellow-and-white she-cat and sat near her and Alderheart. The gray tabby nodded towards Alderheart. "I am glad you feel comfortable with your new home. You remember Honeyfur?" Alderheart nodded. "She is now my apprentice and is becoming a full medicine cat tonight."

"That is wonderful! And yes-SkyClan is my true home now. even after Twigbranch left us moons ago. How is she?" Alderheart came to SkyClan with Twigbranch, but after she left and SkyClan's original medicine cats returned, he remained there, as he felt more welcome. "Also, where is Leafpool?" Alderheart asked.

This time Honeyfur answered instead of her mentor. "She stayed behind to care for Millie. She is getting frail."

"Oh," responded Alderheart. "May StarClan help her get through this."

"Speaking of StarClan..." Jayfeather grumbled. All of the medicine cats, as if Jayfeather gave them instruction, lay down as he continued. "I, Jayfeather, medicine cat of ThunderClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this cat. Honeyfur has worked hard to understand the ways of the medicine cat, and I commend her to receiving her full rank in her turn. Honeyfur, do you promise to stand apart in Clan rivalries and heal all cats, even at the cost of your life?"

Honeyfur looked up at the stars as she replied. "I do."

"Then by the powers of StarClan I make you a full medicine cat of ThunderClan. StarClan honours your duty and dedication. I welcome you as--"

"Jayfeather," Honeyfur interrupted, "If it is alright with you~with StarClan~I would like a new name. To separate my new self from the past."

"WHY? If StarClan really wants this, then you can take it up with them!" Jayfeather looked angry, but his raised fur flatten and he said calmly, "Go share with your ancestors."

Honeyfur crouched down and closed her eyes as ice cold water splashed at her muzzle. The whole world plunged into darkness as the starry world took form.

Honeyfur looked up to see her father Snowbush, who was killed in the same rockslide that changed her life. She instantly felt regret.

"I'm sorry! I just wanted a new name to mark my new path in medicine, and~"

"I understand. I have come to give you your new name: Honeyfrost. But with that name, comes a new warning, as well. The world is changing. Talons and thorns will tear their hearts into the stars." Honeyfrost's eyes widened when her father stated the prophecy, as it was her first prophecy as a medicine cat. She wanted to know more, but as if he read her mind, Snowbush went on.

"Now go, daughter. We need you."

Chapter 1

Bramblepaw was hunting near the Sky Oak, with her mentor, Twigbranch, and her sister, Eaglepaw. She saw a vole—a fat one too. Bramblepaw knew that Leaf-fall had just begun, so hunting was getting harder. Plus, with the new elders this season: Cloudtail, Brackenfur and Brightheart, the apprentices spent more time than what Bramblepaw thought was possible hunting.

Twigbranch had told Bramblepaw that the Clan didn't need them to master hunting, as it was a matter of gaining experience before she and Eaglepaw became warriors in two moons' time. Bramblepaw didn't believe that was so, and that a good warrior should also have skill. After all, her mother, Cinderheart, was made a warrior late because of an injury that resulted in her re-learning warrior skills.

Bramblepaw crouched down and started to stalk the vole. She took a few more steps and paused, getting ready to pounce on her prey. *Great. It didn't even notice! I'm getting good at stalking...* For the first few moons of her apprenticeship, it was a learning curve for Bramblepaw to master stalking. Bramblepaw leapt, cupping her paws and unsheathing her claws to catch the vole. Each moment stretched into many, it was now or never. *Time to—*

"Bramblepaw! Hey! Guess what!"

It was Eaglepaw.. Bramblepaw looked up at her sister, who had a small mouse dangling in her jaws. "Look what I caught!"

"Eaglepaw!" Bramblepaw turned to her sister angrily. "I was about to catch that vole!" The vole had already scuttled away to a hole, which meant that it was too late. Bramblepaw had missed her catch. *Twigbranch probably won't approve, even if I did do good stalking.*

"What's all that ruckus? You'd have both scared all the prey from here to the island!" Finleap, Eaglepaw's mentor, meowed sternly.

"I caught a mouse!" Eaglepaw showed Finleap the small, limp scrap of prey dangling from her jaws, as pride glimmered in her eyes like tiny stars. Bramblepaw felt for her sister. She had been having even more trouble than her when it came to warrior skills.

"You could have caught that mouse if you were a two-moon-old kit! Twigbranch looked expectantly at Finleap as she shouted. Finleap gazed sympathetically at Eaglepaw. Sometimes it felt like Twigbranch and Finleap were both mentoring both apprentices simultaneously. Twigbranch would act like Finleap wasn't able to properly teach anyone, and she would yell and snap at Bramblepaw and Eaglepaw a lot. Finleap was more gentle and encouraging to both.

"Eaglepaw, I know that mouse is tiny. but, it's the first piece of prey you caught in a moon. I am proud of you for that." Finleap turned back to his mate, who had anger glowing in her eyes.

"First prey in a MOON? How do you train your apprentice?! She won't be a warrior for another four seasons at this rate!" Twigbranch growled.

Bramblepaw felt uncomfortable. After a while of arguing between the adults, she asked Finleap if she and Eaglepaw could leave. Finleap agreed, and the two apprentices started to go back to camp.

"I think Twigbranch hates you," Bramblepaw mewed quietly while going around a large stump. "Just listen to how she talks about you to Finleap. And they are MATES, for StarClan's sake!"

"It's not that she hates me," replied Eaglepaw. "I am just behind on my training. And didn't you tell me she does it about you, too?"

"And look at Rosepaw!" Bramblepaw continued, hardly acknowledging her sister's comment in anger. "She's perfect! Even better than me, who Twigbranch always compares you to. It's not fair! It isn't your fault that you need more help!" Bramblepaw started to feel jealous of Rosepaw. Twigbranch had told Bramblepaw to not listen to Rosepaw, as her sister could be arrogant. But still, Bramblepaw couldn't help but feel jealous towards her.

Just then, Rosepaw and her mentor, Leafshade, came beside them. Rosepaw was carrying a huge wren that almost dominated her front paws. *Rosepaw looks as if she's half bird!*

"Hi Rosepaw! Wow, that's a huge catch!" Bramblepaw tried to sound eager, but she was mad. Why couldn't she catch prey that well? She was the only one of her siblings who didn't catch anything!

"Sorry," Rosepaw replied in a mocking and arrogant voice. "I can't talk right now. I have a precious catch in my mouth, unlike you!" Bramblepaw's tail puffed up in anger. Rosepaw was able to talk and she knew it! Bramblepaw shook her head as Leafshade started to scold Rosepaw.

"Rosepaw! You should be nicer to your sister. Just because Bramblepaw didn't catch any prey doesn't make her any less capable of being a strong apprentice than you." Leafshade glanced apologetically at Bramblepaw. "I'm sorry. I don't know what has gotten into your sister. But I did see you try to catch that vole. Everyone misses catches; it's just bad luck."

Bad luck, and a bit of Eaglepaw.

Bramblepaw did love Eaglepaw, and the two were closer littermates than either of them were to Rosepaw, but sometimes, Eaglepaw could be a pain in the tail.

Luckily, the three apprentices arrived at camp, just in time to see their parents in the clearing, chatting to the other senior warriors about the weather and whatever older cats liked to talk about.

"Hey, Lionblaze! Cinderheart! Look what I caught!" Eaglepaw ran towards them, breaking the conversation. Bramblepaw and Rosepaw ran after their sister, who was practically shaking with excitement. "It's a mouse!"

"Well, I caught a wren! It's SUPER big, and could feed more cats!" Rosepaw smiled as she put her head up high to show off her catch. "And what did YOU catch, Bramblepaw?"

Bramblepaw started to panic. She didn't want to tell her parents that Eaglepaw scared away her catch, but didn't want to seem like the worst apprentice, either. "Bad luck," she murmured quietly after stumbling extremely nervously.

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As the sun started to go down, Bristlepaw and her littermates Hawkpaw and Ravenpaw came back from their battle training. Ravenpaw was also carrying a sparrow. He and

Bristlepaw were some of the best hunters among the apprentices, but lacked in battle skills, which Hawkpaw made up for.

"Guess what?" Hawkpaw asked Bramblepaw and Eaglepaw, who were sharing a vole. "Ravenpaw beat Bristlepaw in training. She got mad and scared a sparrow, and Ravenpaw caught it in midair!"

"Twigbranch would have said that he used a SkyClan tactic." Bramblepaw purred. "What did you do?"

"I had to pretend to be a badger. It was fun. I just stood there and slashed them every once in a while. I felt more like a log than anything. Who would want to fight a log?" Hawkpaw could be a furball sometimes, which some warriors thought was annoying, but Bramblepaw found it funny.

Eaglepaw stood up and started sniffing Hawkpaw. "You smell like blood. Do you think you should see Jayfeather?"

Hawkpaw padded towards the medicine den, where Jayfeather was already standing outside of. His eyes and ears were locked on Eaglepaw, which Bramblepaw found odd.

It's probably nothing. Jayfeather can be a bit strange sometimes. But he is a good medicine cat, and my father's brother. He was probably watching us talk about our training. I hope he's proud...

"Bramblepaw, why is Jayfeather staring at me?" Eaglepaw noticed as well.

"I don't know. Let's go to our den. It's getting dark, and we have battle training with Lionblaze AND Berrynose tomorrow. Let's go."

Chapter 2

Eaglepaw was standing in a field, with starlight surrounding her in all directions. The long grass looked almost silver as it brushed against his perked whiskers. Eaglepaw noticed that she was the only cat in this endless place.

Where am I?

One of the particularly bright stars started to take shape near Eaglepaw's eyes. It started to get larger and brighter until it took the form of a small, pale-white she-cat. Eaglepaw noticed that she could almost see through the spirit - or whatever it was - and the grass that normally cats like Bramblepaw would block the view of.

Who are you? Why am I here?

As if the mysterious she-cat could read Eaglepaw's thoughts, she let out a faint murmur, voice strong as her green eyes glowed with pride. "Eaglepaw, you've come."

"Eaglepaw!"

Eaglepaw slowly blinked herself awake from her sister's yowl. "What?" she meowed groggily as he stretched into a yawn. She was quite relieved that the cat was just in a dream. Cats had dreams all the time, and Eaglepaw couldn't be the only one with strange ones.

"Don't you remember? Twigbranch and Finleap are battle training with us!" Eaglepaw noted that her sister was far more eager to fight than to hunt, probably because of the faster nature. *Or maybe she is still upset about yesterday.* Eaglepaw, on the other hand, preferred slower, less chaotic parts of life, such as hunting and gathering moss for the elders. *If only I were good at it...*

Eaglepaw followed her sister out of the den and saw her mentor standing next to Twigbranch, with his tail between his legs as if Twigbranch had just had a stern talk with him about the day's training, which Eaglepaw decided was probably the case.

"Good morning, you two are finally up!" Finleap meowed cheerfully. "Today we are going to meet Leafshade and Rosepaw so you can battle train."

Eaglepaw was disappointed. It seemed that she and Bramblepaw were always paired up with their mean sister. It was almost as if the mentors were forcing them to get along, which would never happen, unless hedgehogs could fly.

After a short trek through the forest, the four cats made it to the meet-up place, where Leafshade and Rosepaw were sitting while discussing the day's activities, or at least that's what Eaglepaw thought.

"Hey, look, Bramblepaw and Eaglepaw are here!" Rosepaw meowed cheerfully. *Maybe she won't be a pain in the tail today.*

"Hello," Leafshade meowed. Today you three will be battle training, but we aren't teaching you any moves. Because you are almost warriors, you must learn how to rear a battle on your own, and improvise. We will be watching to make sure none of you are hurt, but other than that, you are on your own."

Eaglepaw's stomach churned. "Is this an assessment?" she whimpered nervously.

"No. But this is to prepare you for your final leg of training where we wean you off of your dependence on us." Twigbranch explained.

"Any more questions?" Finleap asked. When no cat responded, he spoke again. "The battle starts... NOW!"

Eaglepaw started to get defensive as soon as Bramblepaw leaped on her. She tried to bat her sister but Bramblepaw had her pinned to the ground. Eaglepaw's thoughts raced in panic, back to the dream.

Eaglepaw, you've come.

What do you mean?

"Eaglepaw, what are you doing?!" Finleap rushed to the side of the sparring cats. "You're laying there like a dead rabbit!"

It was true. Eaglepaw realized that Bramblepaw had let her go to fight Rosepaw. She had been so sucked into his dream that she let go of reality for a bit. *How strange.*

Eaglepaw got back up to her paws and silently snuck towards Rosepaw. The copper she-cat had no idea that Eaglepaw was behind her, and didn't miss a beat when she pounced on her.

Rosepaw smacked Eaglepaw's head, then Eaglepaw pinned her to the ground. The pin, however, wasn't strong enough, despite Eaglepaw's best efforts. Rosepaw gave Eaglepaw the belly rake, and knocked her over to the ground. Mildly shaken and frustrated, Eaglepaw just wanted to lie on the ground forever.

This cycle repeated for a few more times - Eaglepaw lost count - until Finleap lost his calm temper. "This is it, Eaglepaw. You've lost every battle today, and you are to be a warrior in two

moons! Twigbanch was right - I'll be an elder by the time you become a warrior. We will be talking to Bramblestar about this. NOW."

* * * * *

Eaglepaw followed her mentor into the leader's den, shame clinging to her pelt, along with anger. It wasn't *her* fault that she couldn't fight when she was trying her best! Finleap proceeded to explain to Bramblestar the issue, and with every word Eaglepaw wanted more and more to shrink into the ground.

"I see," Bramblestar meowed with a bit of shame and concern coating his tone. "I have an idea."

"What is it?" Eaglepaw whimpered. She was anxious. What if Bramblestar exiled her?

"I will give Eaglepaw a special assessment. It will be to see where she is in his training. We will figure out what to do from there."

Finleap and Eaglepaw agreed, and before she knew it, Eaglepaw was being assessed in the forest by Bramblestar himself.

First it was hunting. Eaglepaw was to catch two pieces of prey. Not that hard, she caught a huge catch the previous day. Eaglepaw spotted a vole and snuck into the hunter's crouch. She stalked the prey, clumsily yet successfully, but before she could pounce, she heard a whistle of a bird. It distracted Eaglepaw, making her step onto a twig, scaring the vole and the bird away.

Next was the battle assessment. Eaglepaw had to pin her leader down to the ground. She thought it was rude, but after she voiced her concern, Bramblestar told an amusing story of having to do that same thing to Firestar, and that he understood. He also commented that the concern made Eaglepaw loyal, which both cats were proud of.

Eaglepaw tried and tried, but to no avail. She was too horrible at fighting. After what seemed like ages, Bramblestar ended the fighting with three small words that left Eaglepaw feeling as small as an ant.

"Eaglepaw, you failed."

Chapter 3

Bramblepaw sighed. While Eaglepaw was doing StarClan knows what, Bramblepaw was stuck with moss gathering, something any apprentice could do, like Hawkpaw or Bristlepaw. On top of this, she had to be with Rosepaw again.

Bramblepaw was quite annoyed by that, but Twigbranch was one of those mentors that believed that the best way to help deal with conflict was to have the two apprentices learn to work together on their own, which was basically every day. Bramblepaw thought it was a load of rabbit droppings.

Rosepaw took a mouthful of moss that she gathered and beckoned her tail for Bramblepaw annoyingly. Bramblepaw then picked up her moss and followed her sister back to camp. The apprentices weren't far from there, as recent tensions with WindClan have led to Bramblestar making sure that mentors kept their apprentices safe.

"You work better than I thought," Rosepaw said coldly. "I'm surprised."

Who is she to say that? She's not Twigbranch!

"Thanks," Bramblepaw replied awkwardly. She had no idea what else to say in this situation and turned back towards the elder's den to focus on the task ahead.

But that wasn't the last that Rosepaw had to say. "It's probably all the time you spend with Eaglepaw. She's so bad that he's making you worse."

Bramblepaw tried to ignore Rosepaw's comment, but once she put her moss down, she couldn't help but let anger pulse through her. "Who are you to say that?! Eaglepaw needs more time. That's what Finleap says, and he's her mentor! He knows best."

"Ahh. Apprentice fights." The voice of Graystripe made Bramblepaw turn towards him. "I remember those days."

"Nobody cares..." Rosepaw muttered just loud enough for Bramblepaw to hear.

Graystripe didn't seem to pick up on that comment and continued on. "I remember when I was young, a little older than you, in fact. I remember it as clear as day. Firestar and I had just become warriors, and I was in love with a cat named Silverstream."

Bramblepaw remembered hearing about Silverstream in Graystripe's stories. She was a RiverClan she-cat who died giving birth to his kits. She was also very beautiful, apparently.

The gray elder went on. "Firestar didn't like the fact that I was sneaking out and started getting angry. We ended up fighting in front of the entire Clan!"

"Firestar did THAT?" Rosepaw said, genuinely surprised for once. "But he was..."

"The point is that everyone has fights with those close to them. Even warriors and leaders. But a good warrior always makes up with those close to them, because you never know when you may need them."

"And about Eaglepaw," Millie added with a croak. "She has a spirit that ThunderClan needs. Not every warrior is born a natural. Some were born with another path for them in the Clan."

* * * * *

After what seemed like ages, Bramblepaw and Rosepaw finished their duties. They got to hunt for a while after, and returned to camp for the rest of the day. It seemed like Eaglepaw was planned to finish around the same time, as she was waiting for them gloomily.

"Eaglepaw! What's wrong?" Bramblepaw asked, concerned for her sister.

"Can we talk in private?" Eaglepaw requested, as she flicked her tail, implicitly pointing to Rosepaw.

"Of course." Eaglepaw and Bramblepaw padded towards the other side of camp, near the medicine den.

"What is it?"

"I-I failed the assessment." Eaglepaw said sadly.

It took a bit for Bramblepaw to realize what he was talking about. What Eaglepaw had to do wasn't special training, but an assessment, one that would determine her progress. But it was little to nothing. "I'm so sorry. What will happen?" Bramblepaw felt a rush of anxiety for her sister.

Almost instantly after, Honeyfrost, the young medicine cat, exited her den. "I heard the bad news, Eaglepaw, and I'm sorry as well. I just want you to know that ThunderClan has a place for everyone, like Daisy, Millie, Stormcloud, and even me."

"You?" Eaglepaw echoed.

"Yes. Before you were born, there was a mudslide in the camp. It killed my father and injured me. I wasn't ready to be a warrior, even though I was perfectly able. It bore too much after my loss. But, I learned the skills of a medicine cat during my time with Jayfeather, and he let me be his apprentice. If that's what you need, I'll do the same for you."

"But... I want to be a warrior!" Eaglepaw wailed.

And I do too. If she becomes a medicine cat, I'll be stuck with Rosepaw, and she'll tease Eaglepaw too, as she thinks medicine cats are weak.

As if Bramblepaw's mind was read, Rosepaw made a rude comment to Eaglepaw. Bramblepaw was too focused on her worries to make it out, and only heard the word "fox-dung". Bramblepaw decided she had enough and went to the apprentice's den and curled up in her nest, wanting the day to be over.

Chapter 4

"Come with me," Jayfeather said, beckoning his tail towards Eaglepaw.

Eaglepaw watched as Bramblepaw padded towards their den, upset. Eaglepaw was upset as well, not only because she failed her assessment, but because now Jayfeather was forcing her to be a medicine cat. Still, she reluctantly followed the blind tom.

In the short time it took to walk to the den, Eaglepaw watched Ravenpaw playfight with his littermates. Ravenpaw was Eaglepaw's best friend, and they would often do things together when Bramblepaw was busy on her own.

In the den, Honeyfrost was there, and she greeted the two cats. "Eaglepaw," she added. "It's so wonderful that you came to help out! Would you like to help me sort herbs?" *It's not like I chose to come here. And anyways, why can't Jayfeather help? He's right here!*

"Oh, all right," Eaglepaw muttered.

Honeyfrost spent the next while letting Eaglepaw smell the different herbs, which in her eyes all smelled exactly the same: strong and yucky. Eaglepaw could be in the forest, smelling the tracks of prey, but instead she was stuck in a musky old cave smelling plants. She could think of nothing more boring.

"I have to go and take these to the forest," Honeyfrost said when finished, pointing her tail to the dried up herbs that they had sorted. "You did well. Jayfeather will take over now." Eaglepaw just wanted out of there.

Jayfeather went into more detail about the herbs and was actually better to work with than Honeyfrost, who seemed like she didn't want to do this work anymore than Eaglepaw.

"Smell this herb. What do you think it is?" Jayfeather prompted.

Eaglepaw gave the herb a big sniff. "It smells like, um, mint. I remember scenting this one time when Finleap took me hunting at the abandoned Twoleg nest. He caught a big rabbit, and --" Eaglepaw was interrupted by Jayfeather's annoyed glare, and she licked her chest fur in embarrassment.

"Yes, it is mint - Catmint. And it does grow at the Twoleg nest, you seem to have a good scent memory, like I do. It'll do you well when you become a medicine cat." *When?*

"Now can you find the marigold?" Jayfeather asked. "Honeyfrost showed it to you earlier, remember," he added, as if it would instantly make Eaglepaw find it. "It helps with wound infections."

Eaglepaw did remember the marigold. It was orange, like her, and it smelled a bit like - what was it - tansy? Eaglepaw went with her gut feeling and chose the orange flower, while keeping her other paw on the tansy just in case she was wrong.

Jayfeather gave an approving nod. "Good job."

Honeyfrost came in from her trip to the forest, and saw what Eaglepaw had in her other paw. "Is that tansy? We need that for Millie. Along with juniper."

"What's wrong with Millie?" Eaglepaw asked, eyes wide with anxiety.

"Millie is getting quite old," Jayfeather explained. "Her health is declining, like how she has trouble hearing, and she needs these herbs to keep her strength up."

"Will she die?" Eaglepaw wailed. Millie was one of the kindest, non-judgemental cats in the Clan. Eaglepaw remembered that Millie's daughter Briarlight died when she was a kit, and that Millie really missed her. Eaglepaw did too. Briarlight was fun to play with, and always was kind to Bramblepaw during her many stays in the medicine den as a kit.

"We don't know," Honeyfrost said. "But us medicine cats can give herbs to help make sure she doesn't anytime soon. That's what we do. We can't always prevent death but we try our best."

Something about what Honeyfrost told Eaglepaw made something connect in her head. As a warrior, cats were trained to harm and hunt, but as a medicine cat, cats could do the opposite and save many more lives, and Eaglepaw liked that.

Eaglepaw's thoughts were broken when Ravenpaw limped into the den with a nasty scratch on his leg.

"What's wrong?" asked Honeyfrost.

"Hawkpaw and I were playfighting and... he scratched me by accident," Ravenpaw whimpered.

"You need marigold!" Eaglepaw meowed, still concerned for her best friend.

"Yes, that's right," Jayfeather praised her. He chewed up the marigold and gave it to Ravenpaw's scratch and asked Honeyfrost for a cobweb. "It helps stop bleeding," he explained. Once Ravenpaw's scratch was healed, he thanked Eaglepaw.

"Now, you can still train, but come back tomorrow so we check if it's infected," Honeyfrost instructed. Ravenpaw nodded and scampered out of the den to meet his littermates.

Once Ravenpaw was gone, Jayfeather turned towards Eaglepaw. "You did well," he praised, "But I have to ask you something. Would you like to train as a medicine cat apprentice? If you do, you can help cats like you just did for the rest of your life, but you can never be a warrior."

Eaglepaw was stunned by this question. She never saw herself being a medicine cat, but what she did, she loved doing so much.

The voice from her dream that last night suddenly came back to her, as if telling her a message.

Find your destiny.

Eaglepaw thought she found it. She wanted to be a medicine cat, but that meant she would never train with Bramblepaw ever again, which would make both of them lonely and upset, especially with Rosepaw bullying them both. But if Eaglepaw trained as a warrior, she would never get anywhere, unlike in the medicine den, where she learned so much.

She also remembered the games that she and Bramblepaw would play as kits. Bramblepaw would be leader and Eaglepaw would be deputy. It was their mouse-brained dream, but as a

medicine cat it could come true, with Eaglepaw having a much more important role than deputy, in her eyes. After what seemed like moons, Eaglepaw finally came to a decision.

"I want to be a medicine cat."

Jayfeather looked at her happily. "I was hoping you'd choose that. You progressed so much more here than you did with three moons of warrior training. You will be a valuable medicine cat."

"Congratulations," Honeyfrost added. "I will tell Bramblestar, and it'll be official."

Eaglepaw started to contemplate her decision a bit as Honeyfrost left the den once more.

I have found my destiny, but what if I'm wrong? What if I'm not cut out to be a medicine cat either?

Chapter 5

Bramblepaw waited at the apprentice den for Eaglepaw to return from the medicine den. She would watch cats go by but no one paid attention, just thinking that Bramblepaw was resting in the sunbeam. Eventually the setting sun disappeared into the night, and Bramblepaw decided to go to sleep, assuming that Eaglepaw would return sometime between then and sunrise for training.

But she was wrong. When Bramblepaw woke up the next morning, refreshed, Eaglepaw was nowhere to be seen.

Where is she? It's not like Eaglepaw to run away... or did she actually do that?

As she started worrying, Bramblepaw didn't notice that she bumped into Hollytuft, her older sister.

"Watch out!" Hollytuft purred cheerfully. "You'd better get to training," Hollytuft gave a mrow of amusement.

"Actually, there is no training today," Squirrelflight mewed as she padded towards Bramblepaw and Hollytuft. "Bramblestar and I are starting a new strategy where we let the apprentices help out warriors to teach them how to be productive on their own."

"Oh, that sounds cool!" Hollytuft squeaked to cheer up Bramblepaw. "I am going to mark the WindClan border with Stemleaf and Finleap. Would you like to come with us?"

"Yes!" Bramblepaw chirped. "Can Bristlepaw come too?" Bristlepaw was Bramblepaw's best friend, and would do anything to be on a patrol with her crush, Stemleaf.

"Okay, why don't you get her?" Squirrelflight asked. "I see this is going well. I love seeing apprentices working together, it brings hope to the Clan," she added to Hollytuft, who nodded in agreement.

Bramblepaw tracked down Bristlepaw, who was play-fighting with Hawkpaw and Ravenpaw, who stunk of cobweb and poultice on her leg. Bramblepaw asked for Bristlepaw, who, just as she predicted, was head over paws to be with Stemleaf.

After they met Finleap and Stemleaf at the camp entrance, the patrol set off towards the WindClan border. While Bristlepaw stuck with Stemleaf, and Hollytuft led the patrol, Bramblepaw decided to talk to Finleap about training.

Eventually, the question popped out of Bramblepaw. "Do you know where Eaglepaw is?"

Finleap sighed. "Well, remember how she failed the assessment? I saw her tell you." Bramblepaw nodded, and Finleap went on. "Eaglepaw is doing special tasks to help the Clan. You will see later, I promise."

As Finleap finished explaining, Bramblepaw saw the stream that was the border between ThunderClan and WindClan, and the forest from the other side that slowly transformed into the open fields of the moor. From that forest a WindClan patrol ran towards the stream, including an apprentice that seemed the same age as Bramblepaw.

As the cats met Bramblepaw's patrol, they exchanged peaceful greetings. The apprentice decided to pipe up. "I am Stoatpaw, by the way. What is your name?" He sounded unnaturally formal, as if he assumed every cat he spoke to had authority, or he was just trying to sound smarter than every other cat around him, and Bramblepaw feared it was the latter.

"Hey, Stoatpaw, I'm Bramblepaw..." Bramblepaw said awkwardly. She didn't want to speak to this cat, and as if her thoughts were answered, Hollytuft called for the patrol to return to camp after the borders were marked.

"Bramblepaw, it seems that you have a new friend," Hollytuft murmured teasingly.

"He's not my friend, and I don't want him to be," Bramblepaw huffed.

"Well, at least you have someone to talk to at gatherings," Bristlepaw added.

As the patrol trekked through the forest to the camp, Bramblepaw decided to continue her conversation with the ever-patient Finleap. He was a good cat to open up to, and Bramblepaw appreciated having someone to fulfill that, unlike Twigbranch, who was always too stressed to talk to.

"Finleap, I need to talk to you about Rosepaw," Bramblepaw started.

"Yes? I know you two don't get along that well, but you can tell me anything," Finleap replied.

"It's just... she's so arrogant, and makes Eaglepaw and I feel super bad about ourselves," Bramblepaw sighed.

"I know, I know," Finleap reassured. "Rosepaw may be a pain in the tail now, but in time she will learn that a good warrior is humble, and if you'd like, I could always have a word with Leafshade about this."

"Yes, please," Bramblepaw said, relief filling her body like sunshine. But deep down she knew it wouldn't work. Leafshade was a good warrior and mentor, but even she couldn't stop Rosepaw.

The patrol entered the camp to see the Clan out sharing tongues. Hollytuft went to join Eaglewing and Lilyheart to eat a mouse, while Bristlepaw went with Ravenpaw. Bramblepaw still didn't find Eaglepaw, even though she scanned the camp many times. So, she got a finch from the fresh-kill pile and ate alone. Hawkpaw saw this and decided to eat with Bramblepaw and share the finch.

"Hey Bramblepaw, what's wrong?" Hawkpaw asked.

"Nothing, I just don't know where Eaglepaw is," Bramblepaw mewed.

"Well, maybe she grew wings." Hawkpaw guessed. Bramblepaw chuckled. Hawkpaw was so funny. He knew exactly how to quell Bramblepaw's unease.

All of a sudden, the two apprentices watched as Bramblestar jumped up onto the Highledge and called out. "Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather for a Clan meeting!"

Clan meeting? But there are no kits that are six moons old, and all of the apprentices are the same age and are too young to be warriors! Is something wrong?

Still, the Clan gathered around obediently and waited for Bramblestar to speak again. Bramblepaw decided to go with her parents, who were standing next to Mousewhisker and Poppyfrost.

"Hello, Bramblepaw!" Poppyfrost said as she gave Bramblepaw room to stand.

Bramblestar continued his calling. "Today, one apprentice has decided to change her pathway in the Clan to become a medicine cat. I am proud of her decision, and hope for the Clan to support her through this twisting path. Eaglepaw, please stand forward."

Eaglepaw? She is becoming a medicine cat? But we train together all the time, and ~

Bramblepaw didn't realize that her mouth was gaped open until Cinderheart snapped at her. "Be supportive of your sister!"

Bramblepaw tried to be supportive, but she felt betrayal stab her like the sharp claws of the strongest warrior. Eaglepaw was her sister, and they did everything together, but now they would do nothing. Eaglepaw abandoned her, and although it may have been the right decision for her, it was terrible for Bramblepaw.

"Eaglepaw, is it your wish to become a medicine cat apprentice?" Bramblestar asked.

Bramblepaw prayed to StarClan that Eaglepaw would change her mind. She knew this was bad, but she couldn't bear to be alone.

"It is." Eaglepaw whispered as if a hedgehog had magically flown over her head. Bramblestar assigned Honeyfrost as Eaglepaw's mentor and Lionblaze, with Cinderheart, Hollytuft, Sorrelstripe and Fernsong, went to congratulate him.

Bramblepaw did as well after them, but she was not nearly as enthusiastic about this as any other cat was. "Congratulations."

"Er-thanks. Don't worry, though, I can still gather herbs with you!" Eaglepaw said to reassure Bramblepaw.

Lionblaze tried to, as well. "I know how it feels to pursue a different path than your siblings. I felt that twice." He proceeded to tell the story of how he, Hollyleaf and Jayfeather were as apprentices, and that they had each other no matter what. It was a heart-warming story, yes, but it didn't help.

Nothing helped. Bramblepaw was robbed of her sister, but no cat would understand.

Not even Eaglepaw herself.

Chapter 6

"Eaglepaw! Come here," Honeyfrost called out from the medicine den.

Eaglepaw scampered from the Highledge to follow her mentor. The sun was setting, and soon, it would be her first day as a medicine cat apprentice! When she entered her new den, the scent of herbs once again filled her mind with the magical feeling that made her become a medicine cat apprentice in the first place.

Jayfeather showed Eaglepaw to her new nest, where she curled up and closed her eyes into sleep.

Eaglepaw opened her eyes again to see a shape of a cat. It was the same cat from that dream just a few nights before, the same small, white figure that flickered in the starlight.

"Who are you?" Eaglepaw asked shyly.

The white she-cat brought her gaze to Eaglepaw as she padded closer towards her. "I am Moth Flight."

"Moth Flight? I heard of you before ~ you were the first medicine cat, right?" Eaglepaw squeaked like a kit who just came out of the nursery, and started licking her chest fur in embarrassment.

"Yes, I was, and I've come to you to tell you that you have a great destiny ahead of you. You and your sister, Bramblepaw, will change the fate of the Clans forever."

"I wish -- but Bramblepaw doesn't seem to appreciate my change.. and Rosepaw hates my bones!" Eaglepaw exclaimed. "I can't change the Clans if nobody likes me!"

"Yes, you can. Bramblepaw is just shocked. It'll take time, like everything does," Moth Flight murmured softly. "Everything takes time..."

"For StarClan's sake, Eaglepaw! Wake up!"

Eaglepaw heard Jayfeather's irritated voice and jolted awake.

"Good. Now, sort the herbs," Jayfeather said curtly. Eaglepaw nodded and went towards the stores with her mentor, Honeyfrost. There, Honeyfrost gave her some flowers, probably marigold, and taught Eaglepaw how to sort them.

"It's like what Jayfeather did yesterday. You just find the dry leaves or flowers and separate them. Easy. Now do it," Honeyfrost explained.

Eaglepaw did it, although with some difficulty. Sometimes she had to ask Honeyfrost whether a herb was too dry or not, but got the job done nonetheless with one herb after the other. Eventually, that sunhigh, Honeyfrost finally let her have a break to eat some fresh-kill. There, she was greeted by Lionblaze, who was discussing her progress with Jayfeather.

She grabbed a vole and sat near Bristlepaw, who was sharing a pigeon with Bramblepaw.

"Hello, Eaglepaw, come sit near us. I caught a pigeon, and it tastes delicious!" Bristlepaw chirped. Eaglepaw accepted the offer and chatted with Bristlepaw about medicine cat stuff and how she loved it very much.

Bristlepaw was very happy for him, but Bramblepaw didn't say a word. She just silently chewed the pigeon, and when Eaglepaw got to the part where she said that healing was amazing, Bramblepaw gave a very exasperated "Good for you."

After Eaglepaw finished her vole, she padded back to the medicine den where she surprisingly saw Ravenpaw waiting for her there. He explained that he was back for the check of his paw, and Eaglepaw waited awkwardly for more instruction from Jayfeather or Honeyfrost. Eventually, instruction was given for Eaglepaw to check for a strange smell, which wasn't there. Eaglepaw proclaimed that Ravenpaw was fully healed and could leave.

"Good job, Eaglepaw. You did very well," Jayfeather, who was helping her, praised. Honeyfrost simply nodded in agreement as she sat near the other side of the den, acting oddly distant.

Honeyfrost did speak up to Jayfeather. "You are doing so much for Eaglepaw, it's like she's your own apprentice!"

"I am not. Medicine cats must work together to train, and you know that!" Jayfeather snapped.

"Come on, let's go," Ravenpaw mewed quietly to Eaglepaw. The two apprentices padded outside the medicine den to go behind it. "You did well. And guess what? I was hunting with Rosepaw and she actually missed her prey!"

Eaglepaw wheezed in laughter. Rosepaw was the perfect cat, who always made the perfect catch, but she actually missed her prey! Eaglepaw would make sure that she would never live that down.

The rest of that day consisted of more herb sorting and lessons. Eaglepaw noticed that there was a strange tension between Honeyfrost and Jayfeather but shrugged it off, as it was none of her business anyways.

That night Eaglepaw tried once more to talk to Bramblepaw, but it was met with Bramblepaw saying that she had dawn patrol the next day and needed rest. Eaglepaw sadly went back to her den, thinking of Moth Flight's words:

Everything takes time.

Chapter 7

The sun was setting on the crisp leaf-fall day, and a slight breeze rushed through the trees as Bramblepaw finished a mouse from the fresh-kill pile. A moon had passed since Eaglepaw had switched her role in the Clan, and Bramblepaw had to admit that she was lonely. Bristlepaw, Hawkpaw and Ravenpaw were kind, yes, but nothing felt the same as training with a littermate. Rosepaw, however, hadn't been training with Bramblepaw as much either, after a day of battle training in which Rosepaw had kept her claws unsheathed for the latest of many times. That was alright with Bramblepaw, as Rosepaw wouldn't be bullying any other apprentice if she trained alone.

As Bramblepaw watched the sun set, more of the clan came to join her to wait for Bramblestar to come out. That night was a full moon, which meant that the Gathering was happening. Bramblepaw had gone to a Gathering before, but not as much as Bristlepaw or her siblings have.

After an awkward bit of time, Bramblestar came out of his den along with Squirrelflight. He jumped up onto the Highledge, and yowled for the Clan to pay attention. "Cats of ThunderClan! Tonight is the full moon, and that means that Squirrelflight and I have chosen the cats to go to tonight's Gathering!"

Murmurs of interest went through the Clan. ThunderClan was the largest Clan, so ever since Mistystar of RiverClan had concerns about an inequality at Gatherings, Bramblestar and Squirrelflight had been cutting down the number of cats allowed to go to each Gathering.

"Here are the cats: Squirrelflight and I, of course, along with the medicine cats, as we have to announce Eaglepaw to the Clans. Birchfall, Mousewhisker, Lionblaze, Poppyfrost, Molewhisker, Lilyheart, Hollytuft, Fernsong, Ivypool, Leafshade, Daisy, Brightheart and Brackenfur will go."

"What about the apprentices?" Hawkpaw spoke up.

"Oh yes. Since you are so eager, Hawkpaw, you will be going, along with Bramblepaw, Eaglepaw, and Bristlepaw. Ravenpaw got to go to the past two Gatherings, so she will stay, and Rosepaw, too," Bramblestar meowed.

"But my mentor is going!" Rosepaw wailed.

"YOU weren't behaving during training," Leafshade curtly mewed as a warning to Rosepaw not to drag on the meeting.

"Very well..." Bramblestar said. "We will go now!"

The cats set on, sticking to the shores of the lake. Bramblepaw heard the waves lapping, and felt at peace with it, giving a break from the excitement that had almost overwhelmed her. But that peace stopped as soon as it started when Hawkpaw came over. "Hey, Bramblepaw. The waves are loud tonight, aren't they?"

"Er · I guess. Aren't you excited for the Gathering?" Bramblepaw squeaked to change the awkward subject.

"Yeah, I guess." Hawkpaw replied. "You know that this may be your last gathering as an apprentice, right? So it'd better be special."

"I think I've one more left. But poor Ravenpaw couldn't go." Bramblepaw mewed. "We should tell him all about it!"

"Yeah..."

Hawkpaw and Bramblepaw padded along their Clan, and as they reached the tree-bridge, they could hear the hustling and bustling of the other Clans on the Island. Bramblepaw carefully walked across the bridge, thinking about how scared she was to do so after falling into the water during her first Gathering. *What an awful first impression!*

After Bramblepaw safely reached the Island, she was greeted by Shadowpaw, the ShadowClan medicine cat apprentice. She and Shadowpaw were friends, but after Eaglepaw's new path would be revealed, Bramblepaw felt that Shadowpaw would stop talking to her.

"Hey, Bramblepaw! How is your training going?" He asked.

"It's going well. I should be getting my name once leaf-bare begins!" Bramblepaw replied.

"That's nice! Where is Eaglepaw? Oh... there she is. I've heard she became a medicine cat! You must be proud," Shadowpaw meowed.

"Yes... I am..."

I totally forgot about the Moonpool meetings!

Eaglepaw had missed her first Moonpool meeting due to a kitting. Honeyfrost thought that the births of Sorrelstripe's kits, Ashkit and Tinykit, were way more important than a sacred

meeting. Despite the tensions with her sister, Bramblepaw couldn't help but feel bad for Eaglepaw that day.

But the pleasant conversation with Shadowpaw got interrupted by another apprentice scampering towards Bramblepaw. It was Stoatpaw, the annoying apprentice from WindClan.

"Hey, Bramblepaw. Want to sit with me? I found a nice place near the front, you know, since I know you are small."

Stop it, Stoatpaw! I may be small, but I can think for myself!

"That's a great idea! I'll go find Eaglepaw, and you two enjoy the Gathering!" Shadowpaw said as he saw the beckoning of his mentor, Puddleshine. Bramblepaw went with the sleek WindClan tom to the spot.

Almost instantly after, Bramblestar jumped onto the Great Oak, and after a quick greeting to the four other leaders, yowled out the commencement:

"Let the Gathering begin!"

Chapter 8

As Bramblestar called out towards the Gathering, the cats on the island went from their bustling conversations and gossip to silence as mysterious as the night. Eaglepaw finished settling into her spot near the other medicine cats.

"I will start reporting about ThunderClan. In the past moon, Sorrelstripe has given birth to two healthy kits, and they were delivered by our new medicine cat apprentice, Eaglepaw!" Eaglepaw stared self consciously as cats from not just ThunderClan, but all four of the other Clans as well yowled praise. She blinked, trying to make it stop, but the cheering died down as soon as it had begun.

"Congratulations, Eaglepaw!" Willowshine mewed softly to cheer her up. "I am excited to see you at the Moonpool!"

"Thanks," Eaglepaw replied.

"ThunderClan's prey is running well. We are hoping for our Clan to continue thriving through Leaf-fall into Leaf-bare," Bramblestar finished.

"Good for you," Harestar meowed dryly. "WindClan is doing well. We have no new kits or apprentices, but that doesn't mean that our Clan isn't getting stronger!"

Eaglepaw suddenly felt the concern of the other Clans pool into her. Was Harestar's statement a threat, or just his way of sharing his Clan's state? Most of the cats, along with her, shrugged everything off as Harestar beckoned for the next leader to speak.

That leader was Mistystar. "RiverClan is pleased to report a new litter of kits, and now that Leaf-fall is in its peak, the Twolegs have left, leaving our streams calm once again." Some RiverClan warriors started murmuring agreement to their leader, and a tabby who looked like the father of the new litter gazed proudly to the Great Oak.

Leafstar had nothing much to report, but Tigerstar revealed the names of two new ShadowClan warriors: Lightleap and Ravenheart, who were Shadowpaw's littermates. Shadowpaw cheered loudly, and Eaglepaw joined her friend. Bramblepaw cheered as well, and Stoatpaw just stared at the new warriors as if he was waiting for them to say or do something.

The leaders started talking once more amongst themselves as the rest of the cats went towards their friends to gossip and chat. Eaglepaw decided to congratulate Ravenheart and Lightleap once more, and then sat with Bramblepaw and Stoatpaw.

"Hey, you two. Mind if I join you?" Eaglepaw mewed casually.

"Um... sure," Bramblepaw said. Even though their squabble from Eaglepaw's ceremony was long ago, it wasn't behind Bramblepaw, who, although Eaglepaw knew she wanted to make amends, still awkwardly avoided it. Eaglepaw could understand why, especially with the distance between their training most of the time.

Stoatpaw also spoke up. "So, I heard a great deal about you..."

"Me too," replied Eaglepaw. Although she hadn't met Stoatpaw personally yet, she knew that he was a WindClan apprentice that often bothered Bramblepaw at the border, and seemed to be doing the same at the Gathering.

"Well, since I haven't formally introduced myself, I am Stoatpaw of WindClan," Stoatpaw said. *I can see why Bramblepaw dislikes him, having to sound SO much better than others... but maybe that's just how he introduces himself.*

"Cool... I'm Eaglepaw. How is your training?" she tried to change the subject.

"Well, I am going to be a warrior in half a moon! My ceremony got postponed due to a leg injury a few moons ago, but I am getting better every day. Apparently I am the best at catching squirrels!"

"So WindClan is hunting in the trees now..." Bramblepaw snorted.

"Well, in Leaf-bare, we don't have a lot of rabbits, so the apprentices are being trained to hunt in the undergrowth. Harestar's orders," Stoatpaw explained.

That's oddly similar to what we do. Hopefully this isn't a secret...

Almost as if Stoatpaw heard Eaglepaw's thoughts, he said in an awkward speed, "Err... I've told you too much! Got to go!" Then, he disappeared into the crowd of WindClan cats as Harestar jumped off the Great Oak and dismissed the gathering.

What an annoying cat... I'm glad he's not in my Clan!

Chapter 9

Bramblepaw padded into the camp. The gathering was over, and she and her Clanmates had returned home. The familiar scents of the camp wafted in Bramblepaw's nose, bringing to her more comfort than the strange and overwhelming scents of the Gathering.

"You're back!" Ravenpaw scampered up to Bramblepaw and the other apprentices, hyper as a small kit leaving the nursery for the first time, followed by Rosepaw, who looked a bit less amused. "What happened?" he asked curiously.

"Oh, the usual. The leaders announced that prey was running well, there wasn't any drama," Bristlepaw replied.

"Yeah, it was kind of boring..." Hawkpaw added.

"But Lightpaw and Pouncepaw did earn their warrior names! They are Lightleap and Pouncestep now!" Bramblepaw squeaked.

Ravenpaw let out a purr for his friends, as they were his kin as well. Rosepaw, however, wasn't celebrating as much. Hawkpaw seemed to have noticed this, and jokingly asked, "Why the long face?"

Rosepaw wasn't amused by the joke. "I still am at a loss of words. How come Bramblepaw got to go to the Gathering and not ME? I'm a better hunter and fighter!"

Leafshade took Rosepaw aside to scold her, while Twigbranch ordered the rest of the apprentices to rest so as to not wake the kits. In the apprentice den, the gossip continued, but Bramblepaw was too exhausted to take part in it, and she eventually fell asleep. It did take a while due to all the squeaks and chirps of the other cats.

Bramblepaw opened her eyes. She was in a den, but not her own. The den was in a cave, with lichen growing in it. Outside was a sandy hollow in the crevice of a ravine, with stars shining as bright as the sun. Bramblepaw padded towards the exit to the den, where a starry figure descended down, revealing itself to be a cat with fur as bright and powerful as the strongest flame.

"Greetings, Bramblepaw," the tom murmured. "I am Firestar, the leader before your own."

"Firestar? I've heard so many stories about you! We're kin," Bramblepaw mewed excitedly before licking her chest fur in embarrassment in front of the great leader.

"Yes, we share blood. And blood ties together in more ways than you may think, young one," Firestar said ominously.

"What do you mean?" Bramblepaw asked, confused.

"Few cats know the power of kin. You have so much potential for a great destiny, but none of it can be reached," Firestar replied. "Kin share more than blood. They share an everlasting loyalty stronger than anything, no matter what."

Eaglepaw!

Bramblepaw thought of her sister, who she had been so cruel to. She knew that she had to make it up, but the question that remained was how to do so...

Chapter 10

“Are you ready, Eaglepaw?”

Eaglepaw turned to see Jayfeather standing next to her. His sightless blue eyes shone in pride for the young cat, and for good reason, too. Since Eaglepaw’s training was going very well, he and Honeyfrost decided to have her take the lead in healing for the day as a sort of assessment. Eaglepaw was nervous ~ she didn’t want to blow her first day with real responsibility!

“Y-yes, I am,” Eaglepaw replied timidly.

“Don’t be scared. This is just a way to see how you are doing. There is no shame if you need help, every cat does on their first few times! Don’t be afraid to learn new things,” Jayfeather assured Eaglepaw after he probably smelled her fear.

“But please don’t whine like a kit if you need help,” Honeyfrost said dismissively.

“I got this,” Eaglepaw told her mentors, but also admittedly to himself. Jayfeather walked Eaglepaw out of the den and called out to the Clan:

“Cats of ThunderClan, I am letting you know that Eaglepaw is taking the lead in medicine for the first time today! If you need anything, do not hesitate to ask her for help, and please be patient,”

Cinderheart padded towards Eaglepaw. "Oh, I am so proud of you! My precious kits are growing up so fast... your father will be so proud to hear of this once he gets back from patrol!"

Eaglepaw decided to check on the kits at the nursery. Tinykit and Ashkit were growing up so fast, but so were Sparkpelt's kits, Sorrelkit and Ratkit, who were only three quarters of a moon older. Eaglepaw felt an obligation to these kits, as she had witnessed the delivery of Sparkpelt's litter, while Sorrelstripe's was the first one she actually took part in. Not to mention that Sorrelstripe was Eaglepaw's sister, making these kits her kin as well as his Clanmates.

"Oh, Eaglepaw, thank StarClan you're here! I was just about to get you. It's Tinykit!" Sorrelstripe meowed.

"He has been wheezing sometimes when he was playing. I know some kits do that since they are still small, but this is concerning," Daisy added in a tone coated with worry.

"Let me watch him play," Eaglepaw suggested.

"That would be great," Sorrelstripe said happily. "Ashkit, Tinykit! It's a lovely day, why don't you play outside?"

The two kits squealed in innocent excitement, and bounded outside of the den. Eaglepaw flashed back to when she was young, and playing with her littermates without a care in the world or stress of responsibility. She and Bramblepaw were inseparable, and would often annoy some of the older cats.

I wish these kits could understand the precious time left in their paws.

Ashkit and Tinykit tumbled around the camp, chasing each other and pretending to be warriors in a battle. Everything seemed normal, but soon Tinykit stopped. Eaglepaw decided not to interfere just yet, but to see what would follow.

“Tinykit! Come on! I’ll let you be the warrior this time,” Ashkit mewed kindly. “It is your turn.”

Tinykit took a while to catch his breath. “I-I think I need to wait.”

“Are you tired?” Ashkit mewed. The poor scrap of fur didn’t understand what was going on with his brother.

“Um” Tinykit was interrupted by an instinctive gasp of air before collapsing on the ground. Eaglepaw came running to see if the kit was okay. He was still conscious, but struggling to breathe.

“Help! I need juniper!” Eaglepaw yowled. She didn’t want to leave the suffering Tinykit alone, and luckily, Daisy managed to run and get some.

Eaglepaw fed the kit the medicine and the shallow, gasping breaths became clearer, but still not the best. Sorrelstripe picked up her son and brought him back to the nursery, tail wrapped protectively around him.

“Thank you,” Sorrelstripe purred.

“But I still don’t know why it happened! And it didn’t fully help, and it may happen again and-” Eaglepaw was scared for Tinykit, the thoughts whirling in her mind like a tidal wave of anxiety.

“But that doesn’t matter right now,” Daisy soothed her. “You saved Tinykit today. He gets to play around, suckle his mother, and be alive and a kit for another day thanks to you. Any mother would be grateful, and if Tinykit could understand, he would be too. I think Jayfeather and Honeyfrost would be proud to have such a talented and mature apprentice like you.”

“Thanks,” Eaglepaw sighed calmly. After giving a nod of farewell, she left the nursery to go back to the medicine den. To her surprise, the sun was starting to set, and her mentors were waiting for him.

When Eaglepaw arrived at the medicine den, Jayfeather came towards her, tail high in pride. “You did well,” he praised. “I’ve heard you had Daisy gather herbs. You made a good choice to comfort Tinykit, and Sorrelstripe is grateful. You are well on your way to becoming a gifted medicine cat.”

“Yes, but you could have gotten the herbs yourself,” growled Honeyfrost. “Daisy could have comforted Tinykit. What if she had gotten the wrong herb? Tinykit could have died!”

Eaglepaw stared at her paws. Her mentors were arguing about her again! What was she supposed to think about herself?

Am I going to be useful in this path?

Chapter 11

Bramblepaw padded through the woods, occasionally stopping to talk with the other members of her patrol: Twigbranch, Dewnose, Leafshade, Rosepaw and Poppyfrost. The patrol was for her assessment on border marking—if Bramblepaw could mark the WindClan border successfully, she would pass on to her final level of training before her warrior ceremony. Bramblepaw was towards the back of the group of cats with Dewnose, while Twigbranch and Poppyfrost were at the front talking about the crisp weather of the day.

Dewnose walked nervously. This was one of his first times out of camp since the births of his kits half a moon before. Squirrelflight had decided that due to the amount of warriors in the Clan, that kit fathers could take time off for some time before continuing with their duties. Dewnose, however, took some more time off to help care for Sparkpelt's older kits, who had lost their father and brother due to a sickness when they were born.

“Hey, Dewnose, how are the kits?” Bramblepaw asked. Due to her training, Bramblepaw was really only able to see the kits when she was supposed to be cleaning out the nursery, and couldn't properly visit them.

“They are doing well, and growing up so fast!” Dewnose meowed proudly. “Sorrelstripe is a bit worried about Tinykit, though, as he has a cough... but Eaglepaw knows how to help him out now!” Bramblepaw remembered watching Eaglepaw bravely help Tinykit a few days earlier. Now

the black and white kit could scamper around with his brother all he wanted, and if he had a coughing fit, Sorrelstripe would get a medicine cat to help.

Twigbranch looked back at Bramblepaw and meowed, "You can have the day off of duties to visit the kits after your assessment! You worked hard; you deserve to spend time with your kin."

"You, too, Rosepaw," Leafshade added, "if you want to, at least..."

Eventually, the patrol caught sight of the bubbling stream that separated their Clan from the moors of WindClan. Bramblepaw and Rosepaw were instructed to correctly mark the border together. After a small squabble, the two littermates put their opinions aside for once and set off to mark the borders.

"I'll do the side closer to the Moonpool," Bramblepaw informed.

"Um... fine," Rosepaw responded.

Bramblepaw decided to mark the borders twice over, as the scents were quite stale. She went towards the neutral Moonpool territory before coming back. It seemed that Rosepaw had the same idea, albeit for probably a more aggressive notion, before the two met again in the middle of their split markings.

Suddenly, before one of the cats could say anything, Bramblepaw froze as she smelled a familiar scent.

Stoatpaw!

The black and white apprentice was across the stream, looking at Bramblepaw with a sort of a knowing gleam in his eyes, one that was up to... something.

“INTRUDER!!” Rosepaw yowled. Ears back and hackles raised, the copper coloured she-cat was ready to attack with no mercy.

Bramblepaw, however, was more cautious. Not to the point where she was biased, but willing to use words instead of her claws, as Bramblepaw hated to cause harm. “Did you even scent our markings?” she muttered.

Rosepaw looked surprisingly at the peaceful Bramblepaw as if she was disgusted by the peace. “What are you DOING?” she hissed. “There is a WindClan cat! We must deal with him.”

Twigbranch and the other warriors padded up to see the commotion. They were surprised to see Stoatpaw. “Look! It’s your first intruder. This assessment is going well!” Poppyfrost remarked.

“I see you caught a WindClan cat. Is he your friend from the Gatherings?” Twigbranch mewed thoughtfully.

“No,” Rosepaw snarled matter-of-factly. “He will be the victim of my claws if he doesn’t run back to his parents!”

Stoatpaw decided to speak up. “The deputy of WindClan is my kin. Therefore, you wouldn’t want me getting him involved.”

Bramblepaw closed her eyes irritably. She couldn't believe that her assessment came to driving this furball out, let alone doing it with another furball! "Let's not fight," she said to Rosepaw. "The last thing we need before leaf-bare is a Clan war. Stoatpaw, can you go home?"

Before Stoatpaw could respond, Rosepaw snarled again, this time to Bramblepaw. "Come ON! Stoatbrain would be gone a lot faster if we did it my way!"

Bramblepaw watched in horror as her sister pounced on her, toppling over. Bramblepaw tried to escape, but simply couldn't escape the pain of Rosepaw's unsheathed claws. It took Dewnose getting involved to break up the fighting, and Poppyfrost exchanging stern looks to not provoke Rosepaw's violence.

Twigbranch and Leafshade spoke to each other before turning back to Rosepaw and the wounded Bramblepaw.

"We are disappointed in you," Leafshade started, looking at Rosepaw. "Rosepaw had no right to attack a Clanmate, let alone her own littermate over an intruder!"

"And Bramblepaw," Twigbranch continued, "although you did well on your diplomacy, you should leave your squabbles with Rosepaw in the camp. As punishment, Rosepaw will have to clean out the elder's den, while Bramblepaw cleans out the nursery."

Rosepaw winced. "That's not fair! Bramblepaw wanted to go to the nursery!"

"Well, you started the fight," Dewnose hissed.

Twigbranch looked at Bramblepaw apologetically, as if she had no other choice than to hand out the unfair punishment. Poppyfrost led the cats back towards camp, and as they hurried back, they completely forgot about Stoatpaw.

Before entering the nursery, Bramblepaw needed to get her scratches checked. Eaglepaw was unavailable, but Jayfeather was. He licked her scratches and proceeded to apply poultices on them. Each time a new poultice was applied, Bramblepaw would flinch in mild pain. *These sting!*

“I know these hurt, but can you please stand still?” Jayfeather asked impatiently. After a few more accidental flinches, he meowed. “Maybe talking will get your mind off of things.”

“What is there to talk about?” Bramblepaw murmured.

“I’ve noticed you’ve been struggling with changes,” Jayfeather started. “I see a lot of myself in you, you know. Ever since you were a kit. You’re prone to keeping grudges and holding things in until the last minute.”

“I guess I am...”

“I know it’s hard, but I don’t want you to end up like me. You already have added one more stubborn cat in the Clan by existing. But unlike me, you’re kind, and eager. Don’t let that go. If you need anything, you can talk to me.”

“Why—why are you saying this? You’d never say that to any other cat, so why suddenly me?”

“Because I am your medicine cat. And along with healing you from physical ailments, I also need to make sure you are okay in every other aspect. And besides, I care for you more anyways, like all of my kin. Lionblaze would kill me if not.”

Bramblepaw purred. She was proud to have Jayfeather as her kin. He was really kind underneath all of his prickliness. *If only everyone else can see that.*

Chapter 12

Eaglepaw beamed with excitement. It was the half moon! Since there were no pressing concerns with the health of ThunderClan, Honeyfrost had no reason but to let her go. Eaglepaw tried to stay calm as she was shown the abandoned Twoleg nest and checked the health of the elders, but the day seemed to last a lifetime.

At last, though, Eaglepaw's eternal waiting was put to an end when Jayfeather greeted her. "It's time to go to the Moonpool,"

Eaglepaw was about to shake in happiness. She had missed the last meeting because she had to help Sorrelstripe have her kits, and needed the experience. She was stricken by that, but understood. Now was Eaglepaw's first chance to properly talk to StarClan!

Jayfeather and Eaglepaw left the medicine den and were greeted by Lionblaze, who had just finished sharing a mouse with Birchfall. Lionblaze saw his brother and son and ran up. "Jayfeather, are you taking Eaglepaw to the Moonpool?"

"Yes," Jayfeather replied. "We had to finish up some work, and Honeyfrost already left, so we must meet her,"

Eaglepaw saw her father's eyes light up. "I'm so glad you found your place in the Clan," Lionblaze mewed. "I won't let you be too long."

Jayfeather motioned for Eaglepaw to go ahead so she could talk to Lionblaze privately. Once Eaglepaw went to the exit of the camp, she looked back to see Lionblaze and Jayfeather sharing tongues before Jayfeather left to follow her.

Jayfeather is very close to Lionblaze, despite their different paths. I wonder if I will be like that with any of my littermates.

Eaglepaw's thought was stopped when Jayfeather caught up, and trekked with her to the Moonpool. Eaglepaw couldn't help but to feel a little nervous, as it was her first time going to personally speak to his ancestors. But she felt confident that if anything was to happen, Jayfeather and Honeyfrost would be at her side.

The two cats were almost at the Moonpool when Eaglepaw saw Jayfeather's ears perk up. "What's wrong?" Eaglepaw mewed, tone coated with concern.

"I smell WindClan," Jayfeather squeaked. "And it seems they crossed the border." Eaglepaw sniffed herself, but could only vaguely scent the rival Clan. Still, she didn't question the blind cat, as he could use his other senses much better than any other cat in the Clan.

"I heard that Bramblepaw's patrol was going near there," Eaglepaw reassured. "She and the warriors probably drove them out." Eaglepaw knew that Jayfeather had a rather unpleasant experience with Breezepelt many moons ago which led to his scar. Luckily, Jayfeather calmed down, thanked Eaglepaw, and went on to lead her to the other medicine cats.

Honeyfrost was the first to greet them, followed by Alderheart. "You must be Eaglepaw!" the red tom meowed, clearly friendly. "I remember tending to your mother before you were born, you are so big now!"

"Heh, heh, thanks..." Eaglepaw said shyly. There were so many strange cats at the Moonpool, it was crazy! Eaglepaw knew that soon she would be comfortable among her fellow medicine cats, but for now, she was super timid. It was what Shadowpaw had told her at the Gathering.

Eaglepaw stuck with her friend while the older medicine cats caught up. Honeyfrost was speaking to the SkyClan medicine cats about herbs they needed from their new territory. Puddleshine was discussing watermint with Mothwing and Willowshine, and Jayfeather was pondering the WindClan scent with Kestrelflight, who seemed equally puzzled.

Soon the chatter stopped and the meeting began. Honeyfrost was the first to speak. "I have to announce my apprentice, Eaglepaw. Eaglepaw, do you wish to enter the mysteries of StarClan as a medicine cat?"

Eaglepaw stammered. "It-it is."

"Then come forward," Honeyfrost beckoned.

"Warriors of StarClan, I present to you with this apprentice. Grant her your wisdom and insight so that she may understand your ways and heal her Clan in accordance to your will."

"EAGLEPAW! EAGLEPAW!" The medicine cats cheered. Eaglepaw felt a strong sense of belonging, stronger than any feeling she had ever felt. With instruction from Honeyfrost, she bent over and touched her nose to the pool, and felt her eyes close into comforting darkness.

“Eaglepaw.”

A voice roared in Eaglepaw’s ears. She knew exactly who it was.

Moth Flight!

“Hello, wow, this is cool!” Eaglepaw beamed as she looked at the starry surroundings. Moth Flight gave an amused purr.

“Most apprentices think the same in their first time,” the ancient cat murmured. “But there is something I must tell you, something that will be important the moment you wake up from this dream.”

Eaglepaw gasped. She really was a true medicine cat now! She nodded, ears perked in attention.

“A stranger will arrive, one who will change your fate. The time has come for you to unite with your sister. But beware the danger that lies within, and keep your minds clear...”

Eaglepaw opened her mouth to ask questions, but the spirit world started to whirl and fade away. She blinked, opened her eyes and was back in the real world as quickly as she had left it.

“How was it?” Shadowpaw asked.

“Great! I saw~”

“SHH!” Honeyfrost hissed. “Talking about your dreams is FORBIDDEN!”

Eaglepaw apologized, as Shadowpaw said: “My bad, I didn’t tell you.”

The medicine cats said their goodbyes and parted ways. Honeyfrost tagged along with Eaglepaw and Jayfeather this time. Jayfeather still claimed he scented WindClan, but this time Eaglepaw could scent it too, and—was that blood?

“I think there is a hurt cat,” she deduced. “May I investigate?” Her mentors gave their permission and Eaglepaw continued tracking, and found the cat, an apprentice to be specific, near a hollow. As she was assessing the severity of the injury, a familiar scent flared up in her nose. As Eaglepaw recognized the cat, horror and disbelief clouded her feelings.

The cat was Stoatpaw.

Chapter 13

“Bet you can’t catch me!”

“Yes I can! You just watch!”

Bramblepaw took a break from her nursery chores to watch Ratkit and Ashkit tumble across the nursery, messing up the cleaning she worked so hard on. Bramblepaw didn’t care, though. The longer she was away from Rosepaw, the better. Sparkpelt glanced up at the mischievous kits and scolded them, before apologizing.

“I have no idea what has gotten into them lately. It seems as if the first snow has given them energy.”

“Kits will be kits,” Daisy mewed. “It’s as if they have all the energy in the Clan. If only the older cats could have that gift...” Bramblepaw winced at that comment. Daisy? Old?

I do notice that her muzzle is getting a bit gray. But she has the energy to deal with kits!

Bramblepaw finished scooping out the moss and brought it to the dirtplace before gathering the drying moss from beside the nursery. As she lined the nests of the kits, Bramblepaw felt the soft feeling of Sorrelstripe's tail on her pelt.

"You seem upset," Sorrelstripe murmured. "Twigbranch did explain that something was up with Rosepaw. I get it, she isn't nice. Do you think something may be happening to her?"

"I tried asking, and seeing! I-I guess she is happy being friends with Shellfur. But nothing bad is happening," Bramblepaw hissed frantically. "She is passing all of her assessments. She is living a great life, she isn't lonely, she has it all *perfect*. Yet she still has to be mean to Eaglepaw and I for NO REASON!"

"What it sounds like is that she is making you feel insecure," Sorrelstripe meowed. "I have noticed that you have felt pretty lonely lately. Maybe Rosepaw's jabs are hitting you harder."

"I'm not, though! I have Bristlepaw, Hawkpaw, Ravenpaw too sometimes, but he hangs with Eaglepaw more..."

"But what about Eaglepaw? You two have been close since you've opened your eyes!"

"I-I guess we haven't spent that much time together since she became a medicine cat," Bramblepaw reflected. "It's just that— we were so close and dreamed of serving our Clan alongside each other, but now it seems like we can't!"

"You feel like you've lost someone, and a dream," Daisy interjected, "but you haven't. Look at your father and Jayfeather. They are still very close and work together to help the Clan! Jayfeather may have become a medicine cat, but that doesn't change the fact that they are brothers and have always stuck together!"

“Things can change, too!” Sparkpelt added. “I remember Alderheart REALLY wanted to be a warrior, but when he became a medicine cat, I supported him, even when he went to SkyClan. I miss him, but he’s still the same old Alderheart!”

“See?” Sorrelstripe concluded. “Things change all the time, but you shouldn’t think all is lost!”

Bramblepaw did some thinking. The queens were right– Eaglepaw was still the same cat and needed her sister. Bramblepaw decided she wanted to make things right when Eaglepaw would get home from the Moonpool.

“Thank you for the advice!” Bramblepaw said. “I’ll have to go now.”

“Don’t leave!” A mewl sounded. It was little Ashkit, who put his tiny paw on Bramblepaw. “I want to play!!”

“I can play with you later, Ashkit. I need to go on a night patrol now,” Bramblepaw mewed. She gave him a lick, nodded good-bye, and left to go on patrol.

Chapter 14

“Jayfeather! Kestrelflight! Come quick, something’s wrong!” Eaglepaw yowled from the bushes. Stoatpaw was bleeding heavily on his leg. He was lucky that Eaglepaw was good at tracking—the only thing she really excelled in during warrior training.

The gray medicine cats rushed towards the scene and asked Eaglepaw what the problem was. She reported that there was a deep gash and that the bone was visible. The bone appeared to have a crack in it, but wasn’t broken. And was that a scar near the wound? Perhaps whatever had hurt Stoatpaw re-injured his old wound. Jayfeather thanked Eaglepaw and turned to Kestrelflight to plan what to do.

“He can’t cross the stream, it’d be too much to carry him,” Kestrelflight fretted. “Besides, where he is, your camp is closer. How could he have gone this far into the territory?”

Eaglepaw spoke up. “I heard that Bramblepaw saw him accidentally trespass. Perhaps he got lost trying to find his way back!”

“Apprentices can be feather-brains,” Jayfeather muttered in agreement. “Tell Harestar that Stoa

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paw will be sent to our camp. He will stay there until he has recovered. Then, he will be escorted home by ThunderClan and WindClan warriors.”

Kestrelflight agreed. He also agreed to help bring Stoa

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paw to camp, to help out, and to learn the way for when he went to camp with WindClan to pick the apprentice up. With that, the three cats, along with Honeyfrost, left the Moonpool area.

* * * * *

“What is the meaning of this?” Thornclaw hissed. It was very frustrating that the cat who happened to be guarding the camp that night was the most skeptical of any cats that weren’t of ThunderClan origin.

“This apprentice is injured, *as you can see*,” Jayfeather explained exasperatedly. “It is too dangerous for him to cross the stream back to his Clan, so he is going to stay here until he is able to go home.”

“You’re going to need to bring that up to Bramblestar,” Thornclaw grunted.

“That is a matter for the morning,” Jayfeather snapped back. He signaled the cats into camp, much to Thornclaw’s apparent disgust, and headed to the medicine den. Most cats were asleep, but there were a few who were awake, shocked, confused, and concerned. One of those cats was Bramblepaw.

“Eaglepaw,” his sister said. “Um er I want to tell you something, but... but you seem busy. I’ll tell you when you are done!” The small tabby rushed back into the apprentice’s den. *What’s wrong with her?*

It didn't matter. Eaglepaw padded into the medicine den to see what she needed to do to help. *Do they need me, though? There are three of them!* She watched as Jayfeather chewed poultices, Honeyfrost cleaned the wound, and Kestrelflight prepared cobwebs. The productiveness lasted for a while, and then stopped.

"Er, Jayfeather? We need more cobwebs... is there another store?" Kestrelflight asked.

"Fox-dung!" Jayfeather hissed. "I was going to gather more tomorrow. But we need them now." Jayfeather blindly stared around the den, eventually turning to speak to Eaglepaw. "Listen, I need you to get some cobwebs. You remember where to find them, right?"

"Yes..." Eaglepaw said while nodding nervously. "But it's night. Shouldn't someone go with me?"

Kestrelflight spoke up. "That would be wise. I don't know your stretch of woods but I do know that something could be lurking. Maybe don't wake up everyone, but see if anyone is awake and able to guard you."

Eaglepaw left the den. She scanned the camp for anyone. The only awake cats were the elders, and Thornclaw. *He'd never want to collect herbs for a rival cat!* But Eaglepaw remembered that Bramblepaw was awake. *But she went to the den to rest, right? No! She never sleeps this fast, especially when something like this is going on.*

The apprentice's den was quiet. Eaglepaw tried her best to make sure she didn't wake up anyone. He padded by Bristlepaw and Ravenpaw, who were curled up in their nests, and Hawkpaw, who just *had* to spread out as far as possible—maybe farther. *Good thing I don't have to deal with that anymore!* At last he found Bramblepaw, tightly and tensely curled up due to the crisp

weather. "Hey, Bramblepaw, you awake?" Eaglepaw asked her, quietly so if she was asleep she wouldn't be startled.

Bramblepaw blinked and looked up, clearly tired. "What is it? Is everything okay?"

"If you need to rest, I can get someone else—" Eaglepaw stammered.

"Nope. I'm coming." Bramblepaw got up, stretched, and walked out of the den. Eaglepaw followed her.

"I need to get cobwebs. We've run out, and someone needs to come with me. Can you?" Eaglepaw asked.

"Sure!" Bramblepaw said. She was more enthusiastic about this than if Eaglepaw were to ask even a few days ago. Maybe she had come around after all. The two cats notified Thornclaw of why they were leaving camp and exited into the dark, moonlit territory.

Chapter 15

Bramblepaw was nervous. She had gone on night patrols before, but never without an adult cat. Now she was on her own, and because Eaglepaw was a medicine cat, she was the only line of defense. *Calm down! You are close to being a warrior. You've got this!* Despite her self-talk, unease still flowed through Bramblepaw. Another cat depended on her. Two cats, actually. No *many* cats, because Bramblepaw feared that if anything happened to Stoatpaw, Clan war may break out.

But it wasn't just the night. Bramblepaw also had to confront the fact that she treated her sister horribly. She never meant to—but what if Eaglepaw didn't understand? What if she didn't want anything to do with Bramblepaw? *I've made a huge mistake.*

“Bramblepaw, look!” Eaglepaw broke her thoughts by pointing her tail towards a sapling. The branches were bare and leafless, and Bramblepaw could make out a line of glistening moonlight reflecting off of a large cobweb. She nodded, and they both ran towards it.

The web was high up the tree. Bramblepaw saw her sister struggle to climb. It was another one of her weak points as a warrior apprentice. “I've got it!” she told her. Bramblepaw scrambled up the tree. Climbing was hard for her too, since she was small, but she had managed to learn thanks to Squirrelflight, another small cat, taking pity. Bramblepaw unsheathed her claws to carefully remove

the web from the tree. She succeeded, and leapt down to give the web to Eaglepaw. However, Bramblepaw landed awkwardly, and gave a yelp not of pain, but of surprise.

“Thanks,” Eaglepaw mewed as she received the web. “Are you alright?” Bramblepaw nodded. They started to head back to camp, but not a moment passed before Bramblepaw heard something.

SCREEEEE!!

Bramblepaw turned around to see a large gray animal. It was only slightly bigger than her father, and had a ringed tail as bushy as Squirrelflight’s. Its face was white with black patches around its eyes, and tufts of fur on its cheeks that pointed out like jagged, puffy whiskers. *What is this beast?* Bramblepaw deduced that this creature must have had a den near the sapling and was startled awake by her yelp.

“Eaglepaw, hide somewhere!” Bramblepaw cried. “I’ve got this.” Eaglepaw scurried away and hid in an abandoned rabbit warren. The beast had its glowing yellow eyes set on Bramblepaw, and started running towards her.

Bramblepaw puffed out her fur. Perhaps if she puffed her tail really hard, she may be mistaken for another one of them. But it didn’t work, she guessed, because she probably looked like a tiny, sad excuse for one. As the beast came closer, Bramblepaw let out a growl and a hiss. She swatted her paws, claws unsheathed, at its face. The beast let out a scream, and swiftly pinned Bramblepaw to the ground with a grip as hard as stone. No matter how hard she tried to escape, she was stuck.

“Eaglepaw! Help!”

Eaglepaw carefully emerged from the bushes and saw what was happening. She flicked her dark tail as a signal and hid back in. Bramblepaw could faintly hear the rustling of dried leaves as Eaglepaw ran, presumably for help.

Not a few moments after, a flurry of green glowing eyes and an orange blur surrounded Bramblepaw and the creature. The gray beast looked around, confused, and slowly released its grip. Bramblepaw freed herself, and saw Eaglepaw running around. But the beast was smart and started to lunge at the ginger cat. *No. It can't do that! Not with me here!*

Bramblepaw chased the beast. Due to Eaglepaw running around in circles, it was running slowly towards her. Bramblepaw jumped and landed on its back, scratching it. The beast was startled and ran away. *Wow, I didn't hurt it that much, and it's already running away.*

Eaglepaw joined her sister, and the two caught their breaths. Bramblepaw saw that throughout the whole ordeal, Eaglepaw still had the cobwebs still intact. How she managed to do that, Bramblepaw didn't know.

"You saved me," Eaglepaw breathed.

"*You saved me,*" Bramblepaw replied. "Listen, I know I haven't been the kindest to you. It's just I'm scared that we'll drift. I'm scared to deal with the world alone, without each other. When we were kits, we thought it was two littermates against the world. It was really hard having to take on training alone. But all the reasons in the world don't excuse me avoiding you. I'm sorry."

"I know it'd be hard for both of us," Eaglepaw meowed. "And knowing you, it would take time. But just because we do different things doesn't mean we can't be alone. We can go on patrols like this, and still hang out."

“Do you forgive me? You’re not mad?”

“Of course not! It’d be a shock to me too. And besides, I needed alone time to catch up.” Eaglepaw gave Bramblepaw a nuzzle, and sniffed her over. “And now I have an excuse for fussing over your health.” Bramblepaw’s whiskers twitched in amusement.

“From now on, I’ll do my best to be there.”

Chapter 16

Eaglepaw rushed back to the medicine den, a newfound shine in her eyes. Was it the shock from the battle, or relief from having a heart-to-heart conversation? *Probably both.* She dropped the cobweb for the older cats to use.

“Wow, that’s a big one!” Kestrelflight chirped.

“Took long enough...” muttered Jayfeather. “Is the forest *that* devoid of spiders?”

“Yeah, what *took* that long? If I were up to this task, then I’d have brought back twice the amount of webs in half the time!” Honeyfrost snapped. “Don’t you know we have an active case? You’re lucky the wound isn’t worse!”

“I’m sorry!” Eaglepaw squeaked. “We got attacked by a big gray creature. It had a ringed tail—and it pinned Bramblepaw—”

“A raccoon.” Kestrelflight sighed. “Yeah, they have grips stronger than any other thing I’ve come across.”

“Are you okay?” Jayfeather asked, concerned. Eaglepaw nodded and told him that he looked over the wounds himself. She also told the other medicine cats how she managed to protect the cobweb. They all chuckled.

Eaglepaw was allowed to place the cobweb she had worked so hard for on Stoatpaw’s wound. It was perfect. Now the wound just needed to heal and not get infected. Kestrelflight bid farewell to the medicine cats and headed to WindClan territory. He had agreed to meet in two days at the border for an update on Stoatpaw’s condition.

“Bramblepaw! The sun is rising! Aren’t you exhausted?” Eaglepaw heard Jayfeather say, making her notice his sister still awake.

“I needed to see what would happen,” She replied.

“The cobweb was the perfect size. It managed to wrap around the poultice and protect the wound. If it wasn’t for you two working together, I wouldn’t be as confident as I am that he won’t get an infection.” Jayfeather let out a smirk. “I assume that you two have worked things out?”

Both cats nodded. Jayfeather gave a nod, and before turning to the medicine den, gave a wink to Bramblepaw. *I should follow Jayfeather. It’s been a long day.*

Eaglepaw first went to her sister. “Jayfeather’s right. We worked together, and things ended up better than if any of us did it ourselves. It can still be two littermates against the world... but a medicine cat instead of a deputy?” Bramblepaw smirked in amusement. “And he’s also right about it being late. I’m sure he will give Twigbranch a good yell if she has anything planned tomorrow! Now go to your den. You’ll probably have it all to yourself, you lucky cat!”

Bramblepaw touched noses with Eaglepaw and left for the apprentice's den. Eaglepaw went to her own den, curled up into her nest, and fell into a restful sleep with no worries for what the next day would bring.

Chapter 17

Two days had passed since the incident with Stoatpaw. He was still resting, and too unwell to return to WindClan, but Kestrelflight had agreed to come to check on the apprentice. A patrol was going to the WindClan border to intercept the medicine cat and escort him to camp. It just so happened that Bramblepaw was chosen to come so she could practice border diplomacy. There was only one adult with them, that cat being Squirrelflight. Bramblepaw tried to be on her best, tip-top behaviour. She wanted the deputy to be proud!

Bramblepaw and Eaglepaw stayed behind, letting the older cat take the lead. The walk was kind of long, so the two littermates chatted while walking.

“Hey! Look—a tree kit!” Eaglepaw squeaked. Sure enough, the tiniest tree was sprouted up, a single tiny leaf turning orange.

“It’s so tiny! It must be brand new. Last one to the tree kit is a piece of crow-food!”
Bramblepaw mewed.

The two apprentices raced to the tree kit. They had WindClan blood, so they were quite fast. Well, Eaglepaw was. Bramblepaw often trailed behind. The brown tabby ran as fast as her legs

could carry her, even faster still. She managed to get to the tree a split second before Eaglepaw, but not before Squirrelflight.

“I forgot how much I like patrolling with apprentices,” the deputy mewed while panting slightly. “It makes me feel young again.”

“You’re not old!” Bramblepaw protested.

“But it has been many moons since I was your age...” Squirrelflight sighed with what Bramblepaw could only describe as longing. “Do you remember Leafpool? She died when you first became apprentices.”

“Yes. I remember she was nice. She always made sure I wasn’t scared whenever I got sick, and she let me stay in the medicine den when I was too scared to sleep in the nursery.” It was true. Rosepaw kept on putting thorns and fire ants to the point where Bramblepaw couldn’t sleep at all in the nursery.

“Leafpool and I were close. As close as you and Eaglepaw are. At one point we could even communicate with each other via our thoughts and senses.”

“Really? We can’t even do that!”

“It was a gift. I think StarClan rewarded us for our bond. The point is, I’ve never seen a closer bond between littermates since.”

“What about with Lionblaze and his siblings?”

“They were close, yes. I suppose they make the list, too. But that’s it.” Squirrelflight’s whiskers twitched in humour. “It must run in the family. What I’m trying to say is that I can see

great things happening. You two are growing into fine cats and I can't wait to see what you do with the excellent heads you have grown on your shoulders."

"Do trees have littermates?" Bramblepaw asked. "This one looks lonely!"

"Trees aren't like us," Squirrelflight replied. They have many littermates but they are spread throughout the lake and beyond. But it isn't lonely. The other trees are like a Clan. They take care of it."

"You are wise," Eaglepaw piped up after washing her face.

Squirrelflight purred. Bramblepaw loved the deputy, and she knew that the deputy loved her. Squirrelflight had raised Lionblaze, after all, and she felt a soft spot for her kin. *Maybe one day I can feel that way about all of my kin.*

Bramblepaw heard pawsteps and saw Kestrelflight emerge. But it wasn't just him. Harestar and Crowfeather emerged as well. Why were they there?

"Greetings, Squirrelflight," Harestar said coldly. "We are here to speak about Stoatpaw..."

Chapter 18

“Why are you two here?” Bramblepaw mewed. “I thought it’d just be Kestrelflight.”

Eaglepaw tensed up. Her sister was right. If this was just for medicine cat affairs, then why were the leader and deputy there?

“We want to check up on him, too. It must be hard to stay at another Clan’s camp for so long.” Harestar replied quickly.

“And I came to see my kin,” Crowfeather said. “Nightcloud said I should.”

“Congratulations, two of them are right here,” Squirrelflight muttered. “But sure, let’s surprise the unsuspecting Clan with enemy cats!” She flicked her bushy tail and led everyone back to the camp.

* * * * *

“What is the meaning of this?!”

Eaglepaw watched as Bramblestar’s tail puffed up at the sight of Harestar and Crowfeather. Cats in the camp gathered around from their dens and watched as the tension started to increase.

“Don’t blame Crowfeather,” Harestar said. “It was going to be just me coming, but I let him come to see his kits. But I came here deliberately.”

“And... why?” Eaglepaw asked. She was surprised that her voice came out so easily. Usually she was much more passive and shy.

“Because, I don’t feel comfortable with a WindClan cat staying in ThunderClan for so long,” Harestar replied, with a clearly fake gentleness in his voice. Yes, Eaglepaw was an apprentice, but she wasn’t stupid! “What if he decides to stay there forever?”

“Do you really think we are stealing your apprentice?” Squirrelflight hissed. “Jayfeather specifically stated that he is unable to walk home. This was supposed to be a meeting to discuss *when* he will come. How does that sound like kidnapping?”

Harestar growled. “I want my apprentice back. My Clan misses him.”

Bramblestar flicked his tail. Immediately Mousewhisker, Thornclaw, and Berrynose gathered around, ready to defend their Clan. “I understand why you do,” the leader said. “But you are in *my* territory. You listen to *my* orders. And I order Stoatpaw to stay for a day or two longer, as Jayfeather has recommended, for his health and safety, which clearly his *own Clan* is ready to deny.”

“Hmrrrrrrrr,” Harestar sighed sharply. “We will come back *tomorrow*. Crowfeather will stay the night and meet me at the spot. Come on, Kestrelflight!”

Kestrelflight gazed sadly at Eaglepaw and the other medicine cats. It was clear that he had no intention of this to happen. In fact, he hadn’t said a word— Harestar was speaking for him. The rest of the Clan saw that gaze, and their glares were set on Harestar.

“Crowfeather may stay,” Squirrelflight hissed. “But only Kestrelflight can come next time. Doesn’t WindClan need some form of leadership anyways?”

Eaglepaw couldn’t handle this anymore. She ran back into the medicine den to help Honeyfrost sort herbs.

Chapter 19

Bramblepaw brought a mouse across camp. The sun was setting after a very chaotic day. Bramblepaw was tasked with bringing an evening meal to Stoatpaw. When she entered the medicine den, Eaglepaw was busy gathering moss. So it was just her, Stoatpaw, and... Crowfeather? Bramblepaw didn't want to interrupt, so she waited outside. But the conversation was barely audible.

"You really don't have to commit to this, Stoatpaw. I don't think this is right," Crowfeather whispered. "I can always make an excuse."

"But you may get punished! I cannot let that happen!" Stoatpaw whimpered.

"I can take it. ThunderClan doesn't deserve this. If ~~no~~ *when* something happens, they will feel betrayed. I don't want my kits to meet each other in battle"

"I'd rather do this," Stoatpaw said. "It's better to be helpful to the Clan. I want to be remembered as a brave warrior, not a coward."

“Just be careful.” Crowfeather stood up, stretched, and walked outside of the medicine den. The dark gray tom met his blue gaze to Bramblepaw. “Hello, Bramblepaw. Is that mouse for Stoatpaw?” Bramblepaw nodded. “Well then, you are kind. Go on.”

Bramblepaw put the mouse down to Stoatpaw, who started to eat it. “Mouse is good,” he said between gulps. “I’m happy that I’ll– nevermind.” Bramblepaw tilted her head. “Anyways,” Stoatpaw continued. “How is your training going?”

“Uh, fine?” Bramblepaw said, confused.

“Good,” Stoatpaw said matter-of-factly. “Well, you’d better get going, huh?”

“Um, yeah,” Bramblepaw chuckled awkwardly. She slinked out of the den, hoping that this would all be over. Crowfeather then greeted Bramblepaw once more.

“So, Bramblepaw, how are you and your sisters doing?” Crowfeather asked. Unlike Stoatpaw, this cat actually seemed to be asking out of genuine care.

“Alright, I guess,” Bramblepaw started. “I was a bit sad that Eaglepaw became a medicine cat apprentice, but I realised that it is the path she needs. So we’re both doing our own thing.”

“That’s nice. Eaglepaw is very gifted in healing. Kestrelflight has nothing but compliments. I’m sure she will become a full medicine cat soon. And I’m sure you and Rosepaw are going to earn your names together!”

“Yeah...” Bramblepaw suddenly felt a twinge of anxiety. Even though her apprenticeship was rocky, she felt attuned to her position in the Clan. Being a warrior would change things. A lot. Was she really ready for all that?

“You’ll do great. You already are,” Crowfeather rested his tail on Bramblepaw’s back, and walked to his temporary den for the night.

Chapter 20

Eaglepaw dipped her tail into a stream. It had herb juice on it, and Eaglepaw didn't want her tail to taste bad next time she groomed. After taking it out of the water, Eaglepaw wagged it dry. At last she was done with chores, and could go back to camp.

Last night was odd. Bramblepaw had told her about the strange things Stoatpaw had said. And after that, Eaglepaw had a heart-to-heart with Crowfeather, of all cats. In the past, Lionblaze had told Eaglepaw that it was hard for Crowfeather to open up, so that talk was odd. It was really the first time Crowfeather had a heart-to-heart with Eaglepaw. All other conversations were at gatherings and were along the lines of how fast she and her sisters were growing. The two cats talked about training and how Eaglepaw was gifted and a valuable cat for any Clan. It was nice, really.

Before Eaglepaw could start walking, she saw Harestar. It was sunhigh, and that was when he planned to come. But he also made it clear that no cat may intercept him for whatever reason. *Uh oh.*

"Hey you, what are you doing here? Didn't I make it clear?"

"Oh, I was just using the stream, that's all."

“Well, medicine cat, you’re coming with me anyways. We need to chat.”

Eaglepaw followed Harestar to camp, where Bramblestar, Squirrelflight, the medicine cats, and Stoatpaw were waiting.

Bramblestar seemed upset. “Shouldn’t Kestrelflight be here?”

“Oh, he had an emergency. Whistlekit has a bellyache, it’s bad enough to where he didn’t want to leave her,” Harestar explained sincerely. Cats murmured scepticism and then sympathy. “Ah, I see Stoatpaw is on his feet,” Harestar said upon settling into the camp under a sunbeam.

“Yeah, barely,” Jayfeather growled.

“Off to WindClan with him, huh?” Harestar asked.

“Sure,” Stoatpaw mewed sheepishly.

“Thank you for caring for Stoatpaw,” Harestar murmured. Now he can return to WindClan, where he belongs.”

Stoatpaw squirmed uneasily. “Harestar?” he mewed in a small voice. “Actually, I want to stay here.”

“WHAT?” Harestar, Bramblestar, and Crowfeather yowled in surprise simultaneously.

“We went through all this hassle and you want to stay here?!” Crowfeather gasped, exasperated.

“Did they get into your head, Stoatpaw? You are a WindClan cat.”

“Lionblaze is half WindClan. Tawnypelt is ThunderClan, but she lives in ShadowClan. Same with Dovewing. It’s not that strange anymore,” Stoatpaw stated.

“So? They had very good reasons to!” Harestar growled. “What is yours?”

“Well, after I got injured the first time, it was hard for me to run. I had to overcompensate. Now I fear I will never be as fast as I am normally. But I can stalk forest prey very well. I am more suited for life in the forest.”

Squirrelflight spoke up. “Let the poor cat stay! He wants to hunt and fight in the best way he can. Do you expect a fish to climb a tree? No, it needs the water.”

Cats murmured in agreement. Harestar sighed in defeat. “Stoatpaw has always been good at hunting in our stretch of woods. He would be a good asset to your Clan. He can stay is that is what he really wants.”

“Is that it?” Crowfeather stammered? Harestar flicked his tail and the two cats left camp, leaving Stoatpaw in his new home.

Chapter 21

“Bramblepaw, stop dilly-dallying!”

A few days had passed since Stoatpaw had chosen to stay in ThunderClan. Despite his wound being deep, it healed surprisingly quickly, and he received a mentor— Berrynose. Stoatpaw was getting a tour of the territory, and soon he would be assessed in his hunting skills. Berrynose was surprised by what Stoatpaw already knew. If he were to work extra hard, he would be made a warrior along with Bramblepaw and Rosepaw!

“I’m coming, I just wanted to scent prey,” Bramblepaw replied.

“That is a good idea,” Stoatpaw remarked. “When we go hunting by ourselves, I need you to guide me.” *Hunting by ourselves? I never said we’d be doing that!*

“Stoatpaw!” Berrynose yelled. “What can you hear?”

“A bird, leaves, you, my talking...” Stoatpaw listed.

While Stoatpaw was finding more things to squeeze in, Twigbranch took Bramblepaw back to camp. There, she bumped into Eaglepaw. “Hey, Eaglepaw!” Bramblepaw purred.

“How is Stoatpaw?” Eaglepaw asked.

“I have no idea how I am going to put up with him. He’s just- I don’t know,” Bramblepaw sighed with defeat.

“Between him and Rosepaw, you’ve got your paws full!” Eaglepaw giggled.

“Well, you have Honeyfrost and Jayfeather as mentors!” Bramblepaw shot back. “Hey, I’m done with training, do you want to gather herbs? I can protect you from any more beasts!” Eaglepaw nodded.

* * * * *

Bramblepaw and Eaglepaw were surprisingly speedy with their patrol, without derailing into sisterly chaos. Eaglepaw had to finish gathering moss for the nursery, so Bramblepaw dropped them off to the medicine den. There, Jayfeather was sorting his own nest.

“Hey, Jayfeather. Eaglepaw told me to give these herbs to you,” Bramblepaw mumbled.

“Oh, thanks,” Jayfeather said curtly.

“Are you busy?” Bramblepaw asked. “I don’t have any chores today, so I could help with Stoatpaw’s nest. You know, now that he’s sleeping in the apprentice den.”

“Nope, I don’t want that touched.” Jayfeather seemed strangely adamant about this. Bramblepaw shrugged it off. Perhaps he was using this to study Stoatpaw’s scent.

“Well, I’m going to leave,” Bramblepaw said.

“Thanks for the herbs,” Jayfeather said. Bramblepaw saw him go back to what he was doing, which was stranger than studying a scent. He was *examining* something...

Turn the page for a Bonus Scene!

Chapter 1

“Lionblaze, look! It’s darking!”

Lionblaze purred. His kits, only three quarters of a moon old, were just starting to speak and wander around camp. Bramblekit was amazed at the sunset. Eaglekit was so enthralled by the grass, and was pouncing on it a lot.

Being a father to one adult litter was hard enough, but now he had to carefully balance fathering his adult kits and his new ones, too. He did love this age when kits were exploring. It gave him a new perspective on things.

He then realised that Rosekit was missing. Where was she? After looking for a bit, he saw Rosepaw sitting near a small ant hill. The ants themselves weren’t at all dangerous, but what concerned Lionblaze was that Rosekit was using her little claw to squish every ant that came out of the hill.

“What are you doing?” Lionblaze asked.

“Bramblekit doesn’t want to play. So I’m making a fresh-kill pile,” Rosekit grinned.

“Why don’t you use leaves or something?” Lionblaze suggested.

“Okay,” Rosekit muttered. She muttered something else about how her getting yelled at was all Bramblekit and Eaglekit’s fault, but Lionblaze was too exhausted to say anything. It wouldn’t stick anyways. Despite Rosekit being named after a symbol of Lionblaze and Cinderheart’s love, a rose that he had given to her upon the announcement of this new litter, she seemed like a little ball of fury and vindictiveness.

Lionblaze was satisfied when he saw Rosekit play a more humane version of her game. Perhaps Lionblaze could steer his daughter towards a better path. Perhaps...

Chapter 2

Jayfeather stepped out of the den. It was a beautiful late leaf-fall evening. Jayfeather could scent the recent snowfall— perhaps the last small one for a while. Jayfeather always liked the change of seasons, because the transition of scents and sounds was very satisfying to him.

Ever since Briarlight's recent death, Jayfeather had been feeling down. But Leafpool encouraged him to spend time with Lionblaze and his new litter. Jayfeather could hear Rosekit's usually scowling, and Bramblekit and Eaglekit's fascination with the sunset and the snow.

Jayfeather padded towards the new kits. He felt a warm feeling of love towards them. These cats were his kin! He would do anything for Lionblaze, and his kits, too. Jayfeather had been really busy when Lionblaze's first litter was born. He hoped he could be more involved with this one.

"Who is that?" Bramblekit mewed.

"This is Jayfeather," Lionblaze explained happily. "He is my brother. And your kin. He helped to deliver you."

Jayfeather remembered that day. He felt so bad that he couldn't see them, but due to his ability to see in dreams, he could already picture them in his mind ever since Lionblaze described their pelt colours.

“I am a medicine cat,” Jayfeather explained. “I help sick cats feel better, and I speak to the stars.”

“When you were really little, Bramblekit, you got sick,” Lionblaze explained. “Jayfeather helped you.”

“You can speak to the stars? Like these ones up there?” Jayfeather assumed that Eaglekit was gesturing to the sky.

“Yes,” Jayfeather said. “Some say that each star is a fallen warrior, an ancestor. They can help provide wisdom to us.”

“Did they talk to you today?” Bramblekit asked.

“They did,” Jayfeather said. “They wanted to make sure I helped you stay big and strong.” He didn’t want to over-complicate things. But he knew that somewhere up there, Hollyleaf was hoping that outcome would happen.

Bramblekit let out a tiny sneeze. Jayfeather flinched in concern for the small kit. Sometimes kits felt sick due to a weather change, but Jayfeather didn’t want to take any chances.

Chapter 3

Leafpool was beginning to settle into her nest after a long day of medicine duty, when Jayfeather walked in carrying a mewling Bramblekit.

“Is everything okay?” Leafpool fretted.

“She was sneezing. I think it’s a weather change, but I don’t want to take any chances. I want her to stay the night,” Jayfeather explained. Bramblekit started crying. Leafpool’s heart ached, as she knew the poor scrap was probably terrified! But Leafpool saw Jayfeather whisper gently to the kit.

“Is everything okay?” Leafpool asked her son.

“Yes, she’s fine. But she’s scared to have her own nest. So I’m just going to stay here with her for a bit.”

Leafpool purred. Jayfeather seemed to take her advice after all. After a little while, she whispered to Jayfeather as to not bother the kit.

“Does this make you feel better?”

“I guess. I just really miss her!” Jayfeather whimpered.

“I saw you out there. Those kits really look up to you. I know Briarlight’s gone... but these kits mean a lot to you, I can see,” Leafpool mewed.

“I just want them to be safe, and have someone to be there. Bramblekit is already acting a bit different from other kits, and I want her to know she’s still valued in the Clan, as I was.”

Leafpool knew what Jayfeather was talking about. It took a bit for Bramblekit to talk and socialise with the other kits and Clanmates, and she just functioned a bit differently than other kits her age. The kit wasn’t aware of it yet, but soon she would be. Eaglekit was also like this, too, but in her own way. She was more reserved and didn’t want to interact with most other cats, either. Leafpool knew how Jayfeather felt about his differences. She was glad he would help.

“Jayfeather, I’m going to be honest, I’m glad you are developing a bond with these kits. I’m not going to be here forever, and it’s beautiful that you get to develop this with your new kin.”

It was true, and gnawing at Leafpool’s mind. When she was washing mouse bile off of her paws, she noticed some silver near her nose’s reflection. It wasn’t the water. At first she was a bit scared, but tonight, she was able to fall asleep easily knowing that her kits were going to be just fine.