



It feels like you have been asleep for a very long time. Your eyelids droop and your limbs are heavy. How long has it been you might wonder. How long since the before? You aren't even sure of what the before was. But you are here now, you are here. You feel your newfound pulse racing within you.

Exhale, inhale.

This body is your own, and you might want to examine it, see what interesting features it has to offer. Everything appears to be in order, but you can't help but be drawn to a glow just beneath your chin. You crane your neck, but no matter what angle you try, you cannot discover the source of the glowing. However, you are soon distracted again by your new found senses, the green world around you rustles, and your nose is assaulted by a flurry of new scents. Rich scents, sweet scents, bitter scents, you cannot keep track.

This space is impossibly green and so pleasantly warm, the air is clear and clean and it feels good to breathe it in. A warm amber light illuminates the space, helping you to clearly identify the world around you. The space you are inside is impossibly large, but when you look up you see a solid ceiling above your head, coated in thick soft moss. It is the same moss that coats the floor, covering most of the open space. Only the large-leaved ferns and pale closed flowers repel the moss' soft embrace. You realise that you too have been lying on the moss, but you are on your paws now.

Simon and Anatoli, when you turn your heads you see each other. You aren't sure how, but you know in some way that you are related to one another.

Nutmeg and Bayrull, you lay eyes on each other. You aren't sure how, but you know in some way that you are related to one another.

"Hello?"

You don't know where this voice is coming from, but it sounds gentle and timid.

"Are you safe? Are you unharmed?"

The voice trembles, but not out of fear. It sounds very far away, and the distortion suggests that they are finding it difficult to reach you.

The Voice cuts out. You hear it no longer.

Simon | Anatoli | Nutmeg | Bayrull

CHAPTER 1: LIFE 9

Start Date: 19th June, 2021 - End Date: 16th August, 2021

RULES

- Each post must be at least 300 words in length
- Ensure that your post includes: Character name, Pronouns, Post Number, and Word Count
- You cannot use tables to format, and text must be readable
- Images if used, can be no larger that 100x100 pixels
- Checkpoints are a week apart
- Actions must be **bolded**, and you must include a summary at the end of each post
- It might be a good idea to keep a Journal Record of the things you discover here in the garden. If you want to keep a journal, please link us to the file at the start of each post.
- [Art Link]



Simon

He/him ♦♦♦ Post 1/? ♦♦♦ Word Count: 684

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An ear twitched as the sounds of life, of wind and insects and shifting leaves, trickled in. Simon stirred, lifted from his peaceful slumber as he bid goodbye to whatever came before. He was here, now, blinking open his bright green eyes. For a few seconds, all he saw was a flare of colorful blurs, but quickly it cleared and for the first time ever he beheld a lush landscape. A storm of stimuli assaulted him in a bullrush: the moss under him, the flowers that varied in size, the buzzing, humming little flying beings called insects that zipped past his face. He had no basis for knowing any of this, but somehow he felt confident in these things being simply as they were.

He would likely have even more to see if he stood up, he reasoned. Propping himself up with his forelegs, Simon realized that everything was illuminated by countless lights above but also from a dimmer shine that seemed pressed against him. Craning his head down, he saw that his fur was long, wild and blue-gray, tinted with various lighter grays that were accentuated further by the yellow he

seemed to be emitting. But try as he might, he couldn't catch sight of the source. Maybe if he could find something else to shine against it... but first things first!

Simon opened his mouth and inhaled deeply. The clean air filtered in, and he did nothing to stop the clinking purr that was exchanged in return. The noise was pleasing, both out where he could hear it and inside where it rumbled in his throat. It was almost as nice as the stretch he pulled his body up into, shoulders hiked as his back legs flexed out to their limit until he felt a rather satisfying crack. Repeating the process, he let his mouth part in a loud, aching yawn. For a moment he forgot the world around him, luxuriating in the new but familiar motions, but soon enough he was casting his eyes about once more.

The first thing that stuck out to him was the other cats. Cats. He was a cat! He knew that! There were three, besides himself, sprawled out along the spongy floor at random. The nearest one was a similarly dark blue cat, with a long tail and much shorter fur than Simon's own. A bit further away lay a tiny blob of white, black and orange, the fur of the cat fluffier than the first of his companions. Finally, there was a skinny cat, fur sleek and thin all over except for the flowing tail. Anything else was too far away for Simon to make out, but he was just happy he wasn't alone.

Everything else could come in time.

Wait...no! There was something else! His own paw came up to rub at the column of his jaw and throat, feeling the same soft bubble that he could see extend from each of the others. That must be what's causing the light! Amazing!

Heaving himself up and to his paws, the pads of which he gleefully skimmed along the moss with delight, Simon took his first few steps. There was something about the nearest cat--the other, darker blue one. Like how Simon understood the meanings of some things around him, he also knew that he was connected to this cat. He just...didn't quite know how or why. Weird. But he liked weird, he decided with another jingling purr.

Letting his legs lead him past the others, his gaze scanned over the entire layout, curiously trying to see all he could.

His meandering was cut short though, as a noise--no, a voice, crackled into the space.

"Hello? Are you safe? Are you unharmed?"

"Hello?" He echoed right back, before pausing, ears pricked to full attention. He hadn't even thought about it and yet he spoke! "Hello, where are... you?" He spoke again, this time more to test his vocal chords further. It was deep and would be smooth, if not for the slightest crack at the end of his sentence. He liked it!



Summary:

Simon awakens and finds himself and a few others laying in the middle of a green wonderland. He spends some time entranced by literally everything before he notices the other cats and their odd glowing necks. Getting curious and antsy to move around, he doesn't hesitate to try and look around before a voice startles him into answering back. Which promptly distracts him as his own voice is new.

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦



As soon as he began to know he'd been sleeping, Bayrull began to know he was awake. Not only that, but the space around him, it seemed undeniably alive. He couldn't sit still, not with so much energy around him, and as soon as he could remember how to do so, he blinked his eyes open, shook the fog out of his ears, and took his first, delighted look around.

"Hello?" A voice somewhere called. His eyes snapped to the form in front of him-a white cat, long furred, his size. This one-this other cat? He'd never seen something like them before, but he just knew there was something important about them. They were close on some level beyond physically.

Well, he knew how to fix that.

"HELIO! I will—I am HERE! HeILO!" He stumbled up onto legs as shaky as a newborn fawn's. Stiff muscles quivered under the sudden need to move, but move they did as he stumbled towards the other cat.

Meanwhile, the world set itself about being a distraction. The moss curled between his toes, overwhelmingly textured. Everything moved, making its own tiny bit of noise to tickle his ears. A whole slew of smells drifted through the air, tempting him to go see their source. Which one came from this other cat, he wondered.

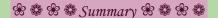
"Are you safe? Are you unharmed?" he heard as he stared down at his paws, trying to keep from walking on top of his own feet.

"Yeah, I am HERE! I am fine." He looked back up at the white cat. "Are You?" No longer minding his paws, they took the chance to trick him and trip him, sending him stumbling into the other cat's fur.

Spicey. That's what they smelled like.

"Hello?" another voice spoke, this one different from the first.

"Heiio!" he replied, now muffled by the fur of the other cat, very quickly realizing that opening his mouth this close let all that long white fur in. *That* was followed by learning that long fur was all kinds of sticky! Instinctively, he tried to set about grooming them, jaw going comically wide as he went in response to the strange fur in it.



Bayrull wakes up, and since he's a morning person he sets right about greeting his neighbor(nutmeg) and grooming them. What a polite young man.



* Anatoli *

He/Him • Post 1 • 363 Words

Journal

Comforted by the gentle embrace of the soft texture surrounding his prone form Anatoli grew more lucid as gentle light began filtering through his eyelids. Slowly his ears grew accustomed to the mumbled mishmash of noise and began to distinguish them more clearly. One sound in particular, that of nearby movement, caused the dark tom to spring up, his past sleepiness forgotten in an instant. His eyes were wide open in an attempt to locate the source of the sound. A sensation pulsed through his head and he felt unsteadiness grasp at his limbs for just a brief moment

His emerald eyes fixated on a scruffy looking silhouette in front of him waiting for another sign of life. He didn't need to wait long. Only a moment later the creature moved and Anatoli managed to get a better view of it and the sense of realization hit him. They were the same! Or not the same but similar. They were cats. He felt like this word meant nothing and everything at the same time. The other in front of him was covered in long gray fluff and even from the distance he could tell that they were taller than him. Their form felt massive compared to him. A strange light emanated from the throat of the other, basking the dark fur in gentle light. It seemed familiar as well. Before he could finish his thought another noise caught his attention.

"Hello? Are you safe? Are you unharmed?"

Like an echo the voice resonated within his ears. It felt so close yet so far away. He spun around in the spot he had just awoken from trying to find it's owner to no avail. "He-". He stopped himself at the croaky sound he just made as if something was stuck in his throat. "Hello?" he repeated. It felt weird yet very familiar. "Was this you?" he inquired, turning back towards the other cat. He still could not shake off that strange feeling of belonging when facing them. Did they know each other? No. How would that be? Where from? All these questions but yet he could not deny the familiarity. "Do I.. know you?"

* Summary *

Anatoli awakens in Dusk's Garden and quickly notices the existence of another cat nearby (Simon). He inspects the other tom before being interrupted by the mystery voice. Unsure of who had just spoken to them he asks the other cat if it had been him.

Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 1 | Words: 352

Something was brushing against her fur, nearly unnoticeable with how light and soft the tickling sensation was, but there all the same. Her eyes finally opened, blurry as they struggled to *see*, for what was only the first time ever in her new, sudden existence. She shifted in place, on whatever she was currently curled on, sticky foliage burying itself further into her thick pelt with each movement she made. Discomforted by the feeling, she finally pulled herself up, glancing up, down, and around herself in absolute awe. Her jaw dropped in wonder, so many scents and tastes filling her maw and flowing through her at the same time that her eyes grew to the size of boulders at it, trying to take in everything at once in a futile, child-like attempt.

Trees, bushes, so many plants, cats -

Cats! Other cats! That's what she was - she was a *cat*, and she was near other cats, and they were all together in this really green place, and she was about to look down to examine herself when -

"Hello?"

Nutmeg nearly jumped at the sudden, quiet voice, pacing in a quick circle to locate it, nearly tripping over loose earth in the process.

"Are you safe? Are you unharmed?"

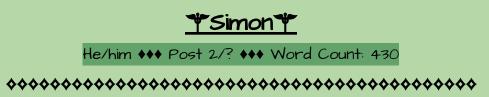
"Hel-" She tried, ready to mimic the voice's first word, when another sensation - nowhere quite as light, soft or tickling as her first one was - came barreling into her and falling into her fur, causing her to stop midway through her speech attempt and glance down curiously at whatever had touched her. It was another cat! White, like her, with brown coloring mixed in with it. They said something, muffled in her fur, and Nutmeg raised a cautious paw, moving to prod them when they began to remove some of the sticky moss from her fur, their jaw opening in a way that made her feel funny inside, like she was about to...

A small noise escaped her mouth, light, airy, and joyful - laughter.

"Hello?" She mewed to the other cat, finally able to fully voice her first word.

Summary

Nutmeg wakes up, experiences the joys of sight, scent and touch, is very happy and laughs at bayrull's funny attempts to groom the moss out of her fur!



Oh! It wasn't the first voice, but this new one joining in seemed to come from behind him. Whipping around so fast that his body stumbled, Simon locked gazes with the dark blue cat. The Other cats were coming alive like he had! Simon regained his balance and padded over to the fellow.

"Hello..." he greeted with his barely raspy voice. Words seemed to spill from him so naturally, he couldn't help but want to test it out more. "The first voice was not me, no, friend." For some reason, that word really resonated with him, already attributing it to all of these Others. It made him feel like he already knew them, even more so than the unexplainable notion he got when he looked at the dark-blue cat. It also rang nicely in his relaxed voice, giving him a happy feeling and making him hope that these new 'friends' would also feel so in knowing him.

"I am Simon. See-mon? Sigh-mon?" It wasn't until he spoke the words just now that he even realized his identity. He was Simon, no matter how you said it. "Eh," he shrugged good naturedly with a smile, "both sound nice. Either--aither? Either one works." He purred again, sitting down languidly and sweeping his tail across the moss. The more he spoke, the more he grew fascinated with bending the inflections around, just to see where they went.

In front of his new friend, Simon was able to confirm a few things. This close up, the light coming from the other's orb thing made it harder to see, making him squint slightly as he inspected the group. It hadn't really occurred to him until now, but it seemed like he was the largest of the entire crew--a glance to the side at the other pair verified that. He also seemed to be the fluffiest, based on the sheer volume of fur that erupted from him in every direction he looked. As he watched, the skinniest of their group tugged what looked like moss from the fourth cat-who gave a laugh at the other's antics. Oh, was moss sticky?

Yup, there was moss on his side and on his tail. Pawing at it absently, Simon quickly decided it wasn't a big deal and let it be. He had far more interesting things to learn, anyway.

"What...are you?" No, that didn't sound right, he frowned in contemplation as he leaned forward. Try again. "If I am Simon, you are...?" He extended a paw toward the dark blue friend cat for emphasis.



Summary:

Simon hears one of the other cats (Anatoli) and greets him, at the same time watching the other two (Nutmeg and Bayrull) off to the side in amusement. He discovers his new favorite word, 'friend', and introduces himself before he even realizes he has a name. Discoveries all around! After that, he asks Anatoli their own name.

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

At Nutmeg's curious pawing, Bayrull's tail flicked around, swinging into her face as it tried to move over where her paws were. Instead, it bounced back and flopped into the moss nearby, unnoticed by its owner.

Bayrull was more focused on continuing his unintentional, yet valiant attempt at grooming the neighbor. He'd managed to knock off a good many pieces of moss(though with the ground being coated in the stuff, it was likely to end up right back in that fur). A quick glimpse at himself showed he didn't have nearly as much moss stuck to him. Was his neighbor just that sticky? What a fun trait to have! Sticky.

Man, speaking of which, this fur was *clingy*! It was like every lick got more sticking to his tongue! Not to mention all the ground stuff was in the fur too. He paused for a moment, rolling a particularly large bit of moss between his teeth. It was...springy. And it didn't seem to stick as much. And...and...it was bitter!

Bayrull reared back, rolling onto his side as he brought up his paws to swipe at his mouth. "Ach-blech! t-gh-GR055!" he choked out, finally coordinating himself enough to fling the bitter moss away from himself.

Finally free from fur and moss, Bayrull took a deep sigh of relief. There was still a lingering bitterness, he noted as his tongue rasped against the roof of his mouth. Grimacing and smacking his lips, Bayrull rolled back up to stare his neighbor in the eyes, for this was deadly serious.

"Don't...eat the moss. It's nasty." He said, voice more firm than he even knew was possible.

He flicked his ear, feeling something itching against it. A long, dangling piece of moss was interfering with his attempt at looking serious. "AISO, YOU'RE STICKY." He added. That seemed like a good thing for them to know.

* * * Summary * * * *

Bayrull continues grooming Nutmeg for a moment, before lingering too long on a length of moss. He quickly learns that he *hates* the taste of moss. He advises Nutmeg not to make the same mistake.



* Anatoli *

He/Him • Post 2 • 475 Words

Journal

When the other cat whipped around, Anatoli took a step back, cautious of whether the other one was trustworthy or not. He watched as the taller cat stumbled from the velocity of his motion before regaining his balance.

Definitely didn't seem like much of a threat, he noted with a chuckle. Tolya's muscles relaxed a little as the clumsy tom approached him before opening his mouth "Hello... The first voice was not me, no, friend."

It was true. The voice sounded vastly different from the strange one before. Less echoey, less distant. But then who did it belong to? He wondered. He pulled his eyes away from the other cat, trusting that he would not randomly lunge at him. He would have had plenty of time to do so while he had been resting after all. His eyes began wandering, finally taking in the variety of plants taking over this seemingly endless space around them. Pushing himself up from his sitting position in order to get a better view of their immediate surroundings, Anatoli spotted two more lights nearby emanating a similar glow to that of - "I am Simon. See-mon? Sigh-mon?" "What?" He spun back around locking eyes with this Simon once more "Oh..! See-mon..." He let the strange sound repeat in his mind as he watched him perform a funny little dance pawing at something stuck in his gray fluff. It didn't quite feel like a word that had much meaning on its own.. But somehow he could not shake off the feeling that it was an important one for this Simon. "Anatoli" the words came out almost automatically at the question that followed. He hadn't really thought about it until now but that sure was him. There was no denying it.

Tolya stared at the paw stretched out towards him in confusion. Unsure of what to make of the gesture he hesitantly reached out a paw of his own and bumped it into that of Simon. When their paws touched he was overcome by the same sense of familiarity as earlier. "Strange.." he mumbled more to himself than anything else before averting his attention back towards the other two lights he had noticed previously. Two more cats like them but something was different. Their coats of fur much lighter than that of him or the other tom. They seemed busy with each other. Whatever it was that they were doing.

He brushed it aside for now, more interested in examining the area around them. "Where is this? No.. What? What is this place?" his voice seemed more confident with every word he spoke. The soft moss beneath his paws gave in slightly at every step he took looking around for a place that would serve them as a better vantage point to get an idea of what this place had to offer.

* Summary *

Growing more comfortable around Simon, confident that the other did not seem like a threat, Anatoli introduces himself as well. He notices two other cats (Bayrull & Nutmeg) but chooses not to engage for now. **Instead he searches for a better vantage point to get a better view of the area.**

Roll: 7

Anatoli is unable to find a good vantage point. However, he does notice a small lizard-like creature wandering around in the undergrowth



Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 2 | Words: 368

Nutmeg jumped when the cat's tail swung into her face, watching it curiously as it fell back to the ground, ignored by the strange cat as he continued to remove moss from her fur. He was doing a brilliant job of it, really, if the amount that had fallen to the ground was any indication, and Nutmeg was just content to watch and

study him as he went, her eyes trailing over his features and something, somewhere, was telling her that there was something about this cat. Something that made them special to her. This thought was immediately broken when they suddenly reared back without warning, swiping at their mouth with a paw in disgust.

"Ach-ыесh! It-9h-GROSS!" He flung the moss away from himself, and Nutmeg blinked, utterly perplexed, when he turned to her again with nothing short of advice. "Dan't...eat the mass. It's nasty."

His ear moved, and Nutmeg's attention was temporarily drawn to it when he spoke again, claiming her to be 'sticky'. Was she? She raised a paw and tentatively touched her own fur, noticing the feeling was primarily only in damper spots where the moss had clung to her before. Was this a bad thing? Being sticky? Should she be worried?

With concern in her heart, she reached forward and gently tapped at the cat's ear, fiddling with the ball of moss, knocking it from its place, allowing it to land harmlessly next to the rest of its kind.

"I was...in it, just now, so that's why..." She murmured, using her tail - which in hindsight, probably wasn't a good idea - to sweep the moss away from them, clearing the area around them.

"Thank you for helping me! I'm Nutmeg," She mewed, not really pausing to think on what she was saying as it spilled out, almost naturally. To emphasize her gratitude, a purr rose from her throat, clinking and metallic as it was, surprising even her with the unexpected noise. Was that normal? She felt around her throat, prodding gently at something just beneath her chin, and that's when she finally noticed the faint light emanating from her fur. She glanced at the other cat, noting that they had something similar there...

Summary

Nutmeg watches Bayrull groom her, realizing that there's something about him that connects them in some way. She cleans a moss piece off his ear, thanks him for helping her with the ones on herself, and introduces herself as Nutmeg. She also notices the curious light things connected to both of their throats.



"Anatoli."

"It is-it's nice to know you, Ana-toli. Tolly-Toli? Anatoli. I like that." He nodded decisively, continuing to enjoy rolling words around on his tongue. Both the glow from his throat and his expression brightened further as Anatoli bumped a paw to his, drawing his green gaze downward to their limbs. Even as Anatoli called it strange, he couldn't help but tap right back with his jingling purr still resonating aloud. It hadn't been what he meant in the gesture, honestly, but he figured that it was as good a response

the small contact seemed to solidify his presence and state of mind. "Strange... maybe, but it feels nice. Right. At least...to 1-me. To. Me." So many different ways to refer to himself without even thinking about it!

as any, when you don't know how these things go. To them, it was silly and didn't mean anything, but

Anything he might have said after that vanished with a slightly alarming squeal. One of the smaller cats had reared back and proceeded to flip-flop about on the mossy floor, sputtering in exaggerated distaste. He might have been alarmed enough to hurry over, had he not noticed the moss they were picking off of each other and how the fourth cat didn't seem too scared. He wondered what they were talking about...

"Where is this? No.. What? What is this place?" One conversation at a time, sadly.

"I-me-Simon-I have no idea. I only opened my eyes and was here. Nothing before that, I think. What...about you, Anatoli?" Seeing that the other duo were still entangled and preoccupied with whatever it was that caught their interest-- the moss, it looked like--, Simon just chuckled and shook his own fur out.

Simon rose back onto all fours and took a few steps after Anatoli. He-Anatoli- was looking around pointedly, like Simon had done before the others woke up. It only took a moment for the larger male to get the idea, and so he tilted his own head in a sweep of the land around them, absently saying, .

"See anything, 'Toli? Anatoli? Which?" He glanced back to Anatoli curiously. Would they mind him shortening their identity word like that?

Summary:

Simon tests out Anatoli's name and likes it, as well as the paw-bump they did. Momentarily distracted by Nutmeg and Bayrull, he nearly misses Anatoli getting up to search around. He then takes the que from Toli to look around as well while asking about the other's thoughts.



Bayrull worked his tongue around his mouth a few more times. It still tasted like bitter-moss in there, but only a little bit. Maybe he'd have to find a new taste somewhere around here. Something better than fur or moss.

The neighbor reached a paw out, just managing to swipe away the piece of moss on his head as he ducked away playfully.

"Thank you for helping me! I'm Nutmeg," the other cat-Nutmeg, said.

"I'm GAYrull!" he chirped in reply, tail swishing in response to hers doing so. Fortunately, with the moss already choosing her sticky fur, there wasn't much loose stuff left to linger in his locks.

"I think—" he paused, ears twitching as a new sound caught in them. Jingling, jangling, rattling noise coming from Nutmeg's beaming necklight. "Dood!" Bayrull trilled, a jingling purr rising in his own throat. "I like

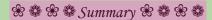
this—this—uh...What do you call these?" he asked, raising one paw to rub at the glowing space under his throat. It was warm, moreso than fur seemed to be.

"AAAAAhh~" he sang out in a single tone, feeling his throat with one paw. No jingling. Hm. "Hmmmm~" he hummed. That one vibrated in a tingly way against his paw. "Purrrrr~" he purred, perking up with delight at the unique feeling. "Haha! It's—feel it! It's all brrrrr" he rattled.

He bobbed his head up and down, making different noises at different angles to see what they felt like. The glowing orb brightened as he played with it-something he was surprised he hadn't noticed earlier.

Wait a minute. Wasn't he about to say something? "What was I saying?" he asked quickly, going still, brow furrowed as he thought really hard about it. "Oh yeah, I'm Cayrull! And uh....I THINK...we're...connected and one of the said in a very spooky voice.

"Or something like that. It's just this feeling I get!" he finished, blinking at Nutmeg expectantly.



Bayrull introduces himself to Nutmeg, and discovers he has a fun neck thing to play with. He plays with said neck thing, exploring all the ways he can make it feel and sound, before remembering he was introducing himself. He finishes that off by claiming to feel some connection to her.



* Anatoli *

He/Him • Post 3 • 506 Words

<u>Journal</u>

His ears perked up at the jingling sound coming from Simon after their paws had touched. Did his action cause? No, he had heard it before now that he thought about it. Before he woke up, there was the same strange sound. Or was it strange? He wasn't entirely sure. Looking at the other two cats Simon once more drew his attention when the longhaired cat raised his voice in response to his comment.

"Oh! Uh... You heard?" his voice seemed surprised "I just mean.. Hm." It felt hard to explain. "It's strange. You feel familiar. Like.. like a part of me? But not actually.. Like I know you but I don't? Like you and me are the same but different?" He let out a displeased sound at the lack of the right words to describe the feeling he experienced and his neck flickered a little at the mixture of emotions. He gave Simon an apologetic shrug hoping that the other would get the meaning of his rambling.

Moving onto his search he listened to the gentle voice behind him. "Neither. I woke up and saw you, Simon, and that is all I know." He admitted, continuing his search for anything that would be of interest to them and although his search for a vantage point seemed to be in vain for the time being he found himself quite interested in the foliage growing through the layer of moss. Tall plants, bigger than either of them and small ones barely the size of his paws. Some were green like the moss and some showed other colors he did not know how to describe.

Hearing his name without the first half of it felt strange. But he did not really mind. "Tolya?" He offered. Unsure of how that made sense but it felt right. Somehow. He hoped the other wouldn't mind. If he wanted to shorten his name then it would be on his terms. He nodded. That seemed fair.

Approaching one cluster of a particularly tall plant surrounded by smaller ones, a movement in the corner of his eye caught the blue cat's attention. He moved to find whatever he had spotted but only found stillness. "Something is here." He noted, moving around the plant. A small glow within the roots of it lured him in and when he finally laid eyes on the creature it was not what he expected. Although he wasn't sure what he had expected.

A small, scaly form looked at him with big eyes. Its green body was covered in a bunch of glowing specks. It seemed harmless sitting there, staring at him. Maybe in fear or maybe pretending like he would not see it if it did not move. Anatoli lowered his head to get a better view of the small lizard and noticed small but sharp teeth poking out from its mouth. Maybe not that harmless after all? He moved back a little so as to not scare it into attacking him. "Look at this, See-mon!" He called out.



* Summary

Anatoli attempts to explain the feeling of familiarity to Simon, lacking the right words to describe it, however. He offers him "Tolya" as a shortened version of his name and continues to explore the area. He spots a small glowing creature near some plants and **gets closer to investigate it further**. He also calls over Simon to look at it.

Roll: 10

Anatoli is able to approach the creature quietly. However, his voice startles it. The lizard-like creature raises its head and surveys Anatoli with caution.

Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 3 | Words: 312

Bayrull. Bayrull, "Bayrull!" Nutmeg chirped aloud in turn, acknowledging the name, loving how it rolled off her tongue so easily, despite her never actually saying it before. Her head tilted in warm curiosity as Bayrull repeated a similar sound to her own purr, reaching for the thing tucked beneath his chin and touching it. Hers felt warm to the touch, and she briefly wondered if his did too.

She giggled at his actions and noises, shyly copying him with another purr to hear the noise again - light, jittery, but soft in it's own way. She decided she liked the noise. She took the time to try and actually look at the thing - it probably looked the same as his, right? - but no matter which way she turned or bent or moved, she just couldn't see it, much to her disappointment. But she *did* get a good look at herself, and it wasn't that surprising to see why all that moss had clung to her earlier. She was *really* furry!

"What was I saying?"

Bayrulls' voice broke her out of her muse, and she glanced back at him with a questioning glance. She giggled, again, at his attempt to be eerie - but was more so interested in what he had to say. "Connected," She repeated, thinking. So he felt it too! "I understand! I have this - that, feeling too! I don't know why..." Her ears twisted in thought, whiskers twitching. Maybe because they were close together? She took a few experimental steps backwards, testing her simple theory, before padding back up to him, side-by-side, flanks brushing; though she wasn't discomforted by this at all. "Doesn't change when I go away." She mewed, and with her new view point, she could see the other two cats a ways off walking around their area.

"Maybe the other cats know?"

Summary

Nutmeg likes her new acquaintance's name, tries to get a look at herself while Bayrull tests out his new mechanic purring noise, and agrees with his feeling of connection. She tests a quick theory before suggesting that the other two in their party might know more about the feeling then they do.



"I have this - that, feeling too!" Nutmeg exclaimed, which was great!

"Yeah, You get it!" Bayrull responded, tail curling up in the air behind him cheerfully. "It's a reeeaal MY5tery." Luckily, it seemed Nutmeg had some idea of how to investigate it. She took a few steps back and Bayrull, remembering how she had mimicked his jvoice testing moment before, copied her. The two ended up a fair distance away from each other, but with no change to the feeling of familiarity.

She stepped forwards again, and Bayrull followed suit, lining up alongside her. "Hey, I think we're the same height!" he exclaimed, mouth agape. "MAYbe that's it..." he muttered, starting to wonder about their other similarities. "We IDTH have white furtoo...and neck thingies...Hmmm."

"Maybe the other cats know?"

"GOOD thinking. If we don't know, then they MIGHT know. Or maybe they DON'T know. We just don't know." He paused, looking quickly at Nutmeg, then looking where she was looking to finally spot a pair of dark shapes in the brush. "Wait a MINute...there's other CATS here!" The last part was shouted in a raised voice, limbs trembling with energy before sprinting in the direction of these new friends.

"HeILO! I'm GAYruII! Who are you?" he hollered, having a much better time handling his paws on the uneven moss now that everything was a little more used to being awake. The moss was still springy, and it curled under his toes just like it had before, but he wasn't having to stare at his paws quite so much. He must look downright graceful now.

As he approached, Bayrull got a much better look at the two new neighbors. They were both dark furred, unlike himself and Nutmeg. They were both digging around in the plants, unlike himself and Nutmeg. They were both over there, unlike himself and Nutmeg, but not for long!

"HELIO!" he said again as he finished his rapid approach. "I'm BAYrull! Who are you?"

* * * Summary * * * *

After testing out his connection with Nutmeg, Bayrull detects another pair of cats and runs straight for them, hooting and hollering the whole way. He wants to know who these guys are!



Simon

He/him ♦♦♦ Post 4/? ♦♦♦ Word Count: 426

"Toll-yah. Tolya. Alright. Tolya, then." Simon nodded, and let Anatoli focus on his exploration. Who knew what else there was to see, and he didn't want to interrupt the other two yet, they seemed busy still.

So he began his own wander around the area.

Well, he started to, until he heard his new companion call out to him excitedly, eyes locked onto something between some roots of a larger plant. "Look at this, See-mon!" That got his interest. Simon ambled on over, the long threads of fur on his paws brushing the ground in his wake. As he approached, he steered himself around the other side of the plant, even as Tolya backed away slightly, for a better look. He let out a small gasp at the starburst creature he saw, tail swinging up into a feathery arc over his back. Slowly blinking at him was a tiny lizard drenched in golden speckles, though it had yet to react to either of them. Simon couldn't even tell from this distance if the gold was from the light sources around them or part of the lizard's skin itself, but seeing Tolya back up gave him just enough pause to resist getting closer.

"...Do you think it can speak?" He mused, half to himself as he crouched lower. "Hello, tiny tiny friend," he spoke a bit softer, not looking so much for a reaction as trying not to startle the lizard. Crouching low so that his belly and light globule skimmed the ground, he found himself almost instinctively trying to lower himself to get level with it. Were there others around as well? Or other creatures?

"Hello! I'm BAYrull! Who are you?" Speaking of others! Simon lifted his head to look back at the approaching cat, the skinny one with the big ears that had been rolling around before. "Hello! I'm BAYrull! Who are you?" the cat-- Bayrull, repeated.

Not wanting to spook the lizard, Simon got back up and turned to face the incoming Bayrull with a jangling purr of greeting, ""Hello, friend Bayrull. Bay Rule...rull? Bayrull, excuse me." He chuckled, relaxed tenor contrasting his larger size by comparison as he extended a paw like he had with Tolya. This time, though, it was with purpose. "I am Simon, and this is Anatoli. Did you also just wake here?"

Over Bayrull's shoulder, he could see the fourth and final cat, and he gave her a kind nod as well.

"Looked like you were having some fun over there, we didn't want to break it up."

Summary:

Simon once more derails his own exploration to come and investigate the lizard that Anatoli found. Being conscious enough not to poke it, he marvels from a short distance before turning around to greet and meet Bayrull and nod to the yet unknown cat (Nutmeg). He then fails to worry if Anatoli would dislike him joking and/or speaking for him. Oops. But hey, he gets to try the paw-bump thing again!

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 4 | Words: 322

Nutmeg watched in surprise as Bayrull unexpectedly darted off, shouting loudly in greeting towards the other two cats he had seemingly only just noticed. Blinking off her surprise, she opted to trot after him, tail high in the air to mirror her happy mood as she caught up to him and looked to the other two cats to greet them - both larger than her, one much more so - but both sharing similar colors in their pelts. They both also had the glowing thing under their chins like her and Bayrull! They were *all* similar to each other!

The largest of them extended a paw forward towards Bayrull, and gave her a kind, quick nod in turn to which she tilted her head at; was this their way of greeting others? Should she bob her head too? Through her thoughts, the cat was already speaking again, so she decided to just keep listening instead.

Their name...Simon - or See-mon? Symon? Simon! That was their name - and the other was Ana..Anatoli. They were already fully introduced then! She just had to introduce herself next.

"Looked like you were having some fun over there, we didn't want to break it up."

"Fun?" She mewed, glancing back to where they'd come from. "We got lots of moss stucked...stuck, to us!

Not really fun, was weird and not great-feeling." She turned back, seeing the cat's still extended paw, and rose to meet it, tapping her much smaller one to his - was she supposed to do that? She hoped so.

"I'm Nutmeg!" She chirped, happy to give her name to the others at last, and pulled her paw away to sit close to them. "We also...uhm, wake...woke up here. Over there." She pointed in the direction they came with for emphasis. "What are you looking for?" She questioned, noticing that they had been prodding through bushes and plants before she and Bayrull had approached.

Summary

Nutmeg follows Bayrull as he darts off, observes Simon and Anatoli and discovers that they all have the glowy thing, how neat! She answers Simon's questions, touches her paw to his, and gives her name before asking what they were looking for before they approached.

@Wyvern || Simon

Roll: 2

When Simon approaches the lizard with Anatoli the lizard flares up. It bares its teeth in a warning hiss and then scuttles off into the undergrowth. There may be more if you choose to follow it.

* Anatoli *

He/Him • Post 4 • 384 Words

Journal

Emerald eyes fixated on the small creature his ears picked up on the sound of Simon closing in. The little lizard returned his gaze and although it did not seem dangerous due to its size the tiny array of pointy teeth gave Anatoli the impression he should not underestimate it. Maybe he was wrong, he couldn't quite tell.

His fixation on the lizard broke when Simon's gray face appeared on the opposite side of the foliage. The creature spun around when the other raised his voice, albeit gently, flaring up at him with a rather unintimidating hiss. It seemed about ready to flee the scene when another voice interrupted his thoughts.

"HeILO! I'm CAYruII! Who are you?" Who? He looked up and spotted one of the light cats barrelling towards them followed by the other in a much more.. relaxed manner. To Anatoli's surprise the new arrival managed to come to a sudden halt just in front of them without heading straight into the bushes behind them. "Watch out!" Anatoli hissed with a pressed voice. He gestured towards the spot where the lizard had been but in doing so realized that his warning had been in vain. It was gone. He was unsure whether it had been Simon or this 'Bayrull's fault but the result was the same nonetheless. While still contemplating pursuing the strange creature later Simon stepped in and already introduced both himself as well as Anatoli.

With the fourth, and last, one of their little group arriving he greeted both of them. "Stuck to you?" he questioned, checking his own body for any moss clinging to it. Luckily it did not seem like it. "How did you manage that? Are you like really sticky or something?" Tolya couldn't help but chuckle a little at the idea of a bunch of moss hanging from the long white fur of hers.

Nutmeg's next question piqued his interest again: "What are you looking for?" With the lizard gone there was no easy answer to that he feared. "There was this thing uh.. This creature? Small green body with lots of colors on top. Glowing a little!" Standing up on his haunches he used his front paws to try and visualize the size of the now gone animal. "It ran away though.." He added quietly.

* Summary *

Interrupted by Bayrull's approach, Anatoli doesn't notice the lizards departure caused by either him or Bayrull. He greets the new arrivals and explains what he had found hiding between the foliage to Nutmeg. After asking if she was sticky or something, of course.

"HeILO Simon! Anatoi!" Bayrull chirped, sidling over to the left to get a better look at what one of them was looking at. Which one was which again? He'd figure that out later.

"Watch out!" One of the new neighbors cried out, gesturing to the plants. Bayrull looked around, searching for what to look for, but it was hard to find exactly what he was trying to point out. The moss?

"OH, don't worry, I ALready know about the moss," he assured the dark cat. "No worries, I'VE learned MY lesson."

""Hello, Friend Bayrull. Bay Rule...rull? Bayrull, excuse me."

Bayrull responded in kind, breaking down their names in his own way. "NEIGHbors SiMON, Anatoli."

Output her sigh." he raised a paw to his head and heaved a sigh. "Their SIGHT of the signs! What will they see? " Another mystery for sure. "And he told me, Anatoli."

"When the SIGHTs bring sighs and HE told ME the toll he..." He rambled on, gaze wandering through the air as he mulled it over. "He became my NEW friend." he finished. At least, he hoped that's how it turned out!

Did you also just wake here?

"We also...uhm, wake...woke up here. Over there."

The conversation carried on as Bayrull meandered through his poetics, eventually circling around the group until the conversation returned to him. "I must have Woken here, for here I am! In the moss and the trees with THESE friends three."

Delicately, he bent his legs around each other in a somewhat experimental way of walking sideways towards Anatoli's patch of brush. The word dancing came to mind, though he wasn't quite sure what to do with it. It was just fun to move in a way that seemed to tempt his legs to tangle together.

"AnAtoli, so he told me?" he said, guessing that it was the short haired neighbor. "DIDn't he tell me...to watch out? WHAT are we watching? Are we out for more?" he asked, tilting his head at Anatoli.

"There was this thing uh.. This creature? Small green body with lots of colors on top. Glowing a little! It ran away though.."

"RAN away, you sadly say..." Bayrull paused, considering what might sound right. "Well /say...not

He hadn't been planning on it, but if that was what rhymed then that must be what he needed to do. Without any further concern, **Bayrull dove into the brush**, on the hunt for some kind of creature.

* * * Summary * * * *

Bayrull learns the names Anatoli and Simon. He plays with the sounds for a moment, and stumbles upon a most interesting rhyme during their conversation. If it sounds right, it must be right! **Bayrull takes his rhyme as a sign that he should hunt for more creatures.**



Simon

He/him ♦♦♦ Post 5/? ♦♦♦ Word Count: 516

Simon had turned just as the lizard flared up, so he wasn't aware of that or of the tiny creature scurrying off, aside from Anatoli hissing a short, "Watch out!" behind him as Bayrull stopped just short of them and introduced himself. The word 'whirlwind' seemed to fit the new-newcomer, despite Simon being unable to really conjure what that meant in his head. He supposed that it just meant 'Bayrull', for now. He'd figure it out later.

"Fun?" Ah, and here was the last one! Finally, they were all clumped together around this towering plant! Paw still out, he gave the new-new-newcomer his attention. "We got lots of moss stucked...stuck, to us! Not really fun, was weird and not great-feeling."

He paused, head cocking, to consider that, "well, can't fun be in anything? Like... in new...new experiences! Or not, I don't know much, honestly. I DO know what you mean, though. 'Bout the moss, haha." He gestured to his side, where the sparse bits of moss remained entangled in his mass of fur. Most had naturally fallen off as he walked about, but a few bits were stubborn, apparently. Tolya had managed to escape that fate, though...maybe it was just the long fur?

Upon, as she named herself just now, Nutmeg patting her tiny paw to his own, Simon's neck globule brightened even more, his eyes crinkling in delight. He paid it no mind that Bayrull had skipped right over the greeting, instead the biggest cat found himself rather entranced by the sheer verbal

waterfall the skinny one was spouting. "I must have WOKen here, for here I am! In the moss and the trees with THESE friends three."

"There was this thing uh.. This creature? Small green body with lots of colors on top. Glowing a little! It ran away though..." That got Simon turning back to the plant's roots, ears tilting back slightly as he too failed to spot the lizard again. Ah, what a shame. He'd been hoping to show Nutmeg and Bayrull... but that got him thinking... If there were four of them here, why couldn't there be more than one little buddy around for them to find?

Bayrull seemed to have the right idea, giving a lyrical, "RAN aWAY, you sady say... Well I say...not toDAY!" before gallivanting right past Simon and into the undergrowth, prompting the big cat to lean back on his hind legs in surprise that just as quickly settled into a relaxed sort of excitement.

Anatoli, Bayrull, Nutmeg. Three new friends and cats to learn about. And, while he didn't feel the same distinct relation toward the latter two that he did with Tolya, he immediately decided that he simply didn't care. He just wondered what they were going to do now... after finding their even tinier than Nutmeg-and-Bayrull, not cat, friend. "Guess I'm-1-hmmm yes I'm just happy. Got to meet all of you." He stepped forward, giving Anatoli a small pat with his giant plume of a tail and then a smaller sweep over Nutmeg as he purred, "let's go find it?"

Summary:

Simon finally cements all of their names in his mind, and decides off the bat that they are all special, not just Anatoli. Call it bias, but Simon's just got a good feeling inside about it. He does mourn losing the lizard, though, and watches Bayrull steamroll ahead before encouraging Anatoli and Nutmeg to come with him as they follow their 'whirlwind'. Who knows what they'll find!

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 5 | Words: 305

"Stuck to you?" Anatoli questioned, and she nodded in reply, her ears folding slightly at the word 'sticky' again.

Was that really bad? It was said to her a lot...maybe she should try harder to fix that, then. Being sticky was bad.

She'd have to do what Bayrull was doing earlier, maybe....

His kind, huffing noise he made after saying it calmed her nerves though, and she was able to temporarily forget about the matter as he began to answer her questions. At the mention of a small, glowing creature, her mind immediately went to the glowing thing under their chins, and she briefly wondered if it had any correlation as she drew closer, glancing at where it must've been near, seconds before she'd arrived.

She was contemplating on what to say next when Bayrull spoke first, diving into the brush, fully intent on finding the little creature that had run off. A little used to his rambunctious behavior by now, she was unperturbed by it and looked to the others to see what they would do before she followed. As much as she was beginning to like all of them, she still wanted to at least stay near Bayrull; that feeling was just very persistent. Hopefully they would all go together.

"Guess I'm-l-hmmm yes I'm just happy. Got to meet all of you." Simon purred, running his long tail over Anatoli and then her, and she didn't fight the urge to brush against it a little as she returned her own purrshe really liked Simon!

"I'm glad too! It will be fun to see everywhere...everything, together," She mewed, looking back towards where Bayrull had vanished into the brush. At Simon's gentle suggestion, she nodded giddily and followed after her first companion's trail, looking around herself to try and spot the run-away creature.

Summary

Nutmeg isn't very content with all the sticky comments and thinks it must be a really bad thing to be so. Oh well, a concern for later. She decides she really likes Simon and how nice he is, and takes his suggestion to follow after Bayrull and **looks around to try and spot the lizard.**

* Anatoli *

He/Him • Post 5 • 310 Words

Journal

With introductions out of the way, Anatoli allowed himself to study his new companions for a moment. He noticed the sack of light on Simon's neck light up further when Nutmeg touched his paw in a similar manner they had earlier. Only now he realized that the same thing happened before. There must be a connection somehow, he concluded with a nod. But what was it? He'd have to keep an eye on it.

A smile snuck its way onto his face, watching their little, somewhat chaotic, group. The companionship.. No? Friendship? Maybe. Either way. It felt nice to not be all alone in this strange place. His attempt to follow Simon and Nutmeg's conversation was futile when Tolya's thoughts were interrupted by the loud voice of the smaller tom behind him.

"Their SIGHT of the signs! What will they sEe? And he told me, Anatoli." What was he even saying? What a strange cat... Although there was not much to compare him to. So maybe it wasn't that strange. But maybe strange wasn't so bad anyways. Maybe they needed some strange energy to drive them forward! He lost himself in his thoughts for a moment before noticing Bayrull on the move again. Circling around his back in an equally strange manner "RAN away, you sadiy say..." Anatoli nodded, spinning around to follow Bayrull's movement "Well / say...not toDAY!" As soon as the words had left his mouth the restless tom jumped up and disappeared into the underbrush.

He exchanged a look with the other two. "I don't understand what's going on in that one's head." He laughed "But he has the right idea. Let's go!" Tolya had already planned to pursue his discovery after all. Might as well follow Bayrulls lead. Hoping the others would too follow he leapt after Bayrull to follow the trail of their mystery friend.

* Summary *

Anatoli notices the pocket of light under Simon's head brighten talking to Nutmeg. He wonders what the correlation between its brightness and their actions is. He gets distracted by Bayrull's rambling and grows more curious about the other cat. When Bayrull dives into the underbrush to follow the trail of the lizard, **Tolya decides**to follow him keeping his eyes open for anything of interest and hopes the others do so too.

Roll = 6

Anatoli startles the lizards. They do not run, but their teeth are on display. @DefectedCat

Roll = 12

Nutmeg hears a rustle in the bushes where the previous lizard disappeared. If she follows it then she will find a small colony of them. They look up when she approaches, tongues flicking cautiously.

Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 6 | Words: 304

Hearing Anatoli and what was also most likely Simon following up behind her, Nutmeg's gaze slowly went over the plant-filled area around her as she continued down where Bayrull had gone, doing her best to spot whatever it was that had run off - something glowy, small, and with multiple colors on top of it, according to Anatoli. She could hardly try to visualize it. At least the glowing factor would help, right? Even though everything already seemed so bright there.

To her immediate luck, she hears something off to the side, a rustle in the bushes nearby, and her head immediately snaps to locate the noise. Without barely a thought for caution - she was already far too comfortable in her current setting to be worried for herself now - she approached the noise, gently nudging through the shrubbery and peering in, and her eyes widened at what she saw.

A small group of the glowy little things, all glancing at her now that she'd spotted their little resting spot. But, wait...hadn't there only been *one* of them before?

"Here, look, look! I found it! Um, I found...them?" She mewed softly towards the cats behind her, looking back and forth excitedly amidst her discovery. The lizards stared at her, uncertain and definitely cautious as their tongues flicked out nervously, and she found herself drawn to their shiny, glowing colors and tiny little fangs.

She actually found them to be pretty cute!

That is, until they suddenly bared said fangs in the direction of Anatoli - he had startled them? But she hadn't? She frowned, confused, but looked back down at them with a little more caution than before. "Umm...Hello? Do you talk?" She spoke to the nearest tiny lizard of the group, her eyes wide as she wholeheartedly expected an answer from it.

Summary

Nutmeg follows the source of the rustling noise and is delighted to find a bunch of the cute little lizards! She's confused on why Anatoli had startled them and she didn't, but decides not to linger on it and instead **tries to**see if the lizards can talk!

Simon

He/him ♦♦♦ Post 6/? ♦♦♦ Word Count 455:

"I don't understand what's going on in that one's head," Anatoli said. He'd seemed a bit flustered by Bayrull's jig and words, but Tolya seemed to roll with the wind, giving a hearty, "but he has the right idea. Let's go!" before hurrying away. Feeling Nutmeg lean into the tail sweep, Simon was more than happy to follow. She was right, after all: He had literally just met them all, yet he couldn't fathom going off on his own now. This felt like the start of something-well, more than just his being. A start to what, he had no idea, but somehow that made Simon excited.

It was only a short stroll, but Simon found that his natural gait left him trailing behind the rest. Which, frankly, suited him just fine. It let him slowly grow more used to this body of his as he churned one leg and then the other. He even paused once the others seemed to stop up ahead to bend himself down into another stretch. It felt good, but there was some sort of strain in his hind le--

"Here, look, look! I found it! Um, I found...them?" Nutmeg whispered, Simon's ears swiveling forward. She found more? He came up behind Nutmeg, being tall enough to see just over her shoulder fur to peer at the cluster from a distance. She seemed to be trying to get the little beings to talk like he had before with the original one. Hopefully they wouldn't all scatter. At the moment, the cluster seemed stiff, seemingly aimless eyes locked on the party of interlopers, but they didn't look like they were about to make a dash for it. Then again, what would he and the other cats do if they did flee? Simon instead decided not to worry about that and to examine them while he could. They were each a little beacon of gold with a mish-mash of colors lurking beneath, and he wondered what their not-fur felt like. Their tiny fangs, the eyes and the long tail were all things they as felines had--so why wouldn't he assume they could talk?

"They really are pretty," He hummed as something stirred the lizards into emitting a chorus of hisses. Had one of them made the little beings, what was the word...angry? What an odd concept to have in his head but not have a memory to compare it to. Still, he wanted to try and help, so he spoke out softly, "I-me--we? We don't mean any hurt. We-I--we?" He looked to Tolya, Nutmeg and Bayrull, hoping that 'we' was right in meaning all of them. "We are sorry to... scare you? Yes, very sorry. No need to make those noises."



Summary:

Simon follows the rest of the kitties, taking a moment to streeeeeeetch his body. He almost notes something just slightly off about his rear legs when he extends them, but overhearing that Nutmeg

found more critters derailed that train of thought quickly. Oh well! Keeping back, Simon softly compliments the lizards' colors and apologizes for intruding.

@ Bay's Rule ●

Stumbling through the bushes. Bayrull hears a strange buzzing sound. If he chooses to follow it then he will discover a tall tree with a hive of bees hanging from it. The bees are busy and occupied with their work and do not pay him any notice

@DefectedCat
The Lizards cannot talk

"WHERE oh where could the CREAture be...I THINK we need to go and SEE~" Bayrull said lyrically, not quite singing to any particular tune. He felt like he could see so much more when he bounded around like this, paws springing over the moss in a way that just felt right. There was so much to this place! He'd looked at the moss earlier, but now it felt like everywhere he looked there was something new! The moss wasn't the only plant around. there were ferns and flowers and bushes and trees and-

"CREA tures!" he chirped, eyes catching on a flash of movement overhead. It wasn't cats this time, unless cats could be really tiny and fly. In fact, he was pretty sure they were "\$\mathcal{UuBS}\$!"

Said bug was tiny, but easy to see thanks to its bright glow. It reminded him a bit of the glow on their necks. "It's a-auh, a GLOW bug! A necky GLOWbug!" And not only that, it hummed and buzzed as it wandered through the air. How was it doing that? He couldn't fly, or at the very least, he didn't know how.

"Hmmm...." Bayrull hummed in thought, watching the bug meander through the air. He pitched his hum up a bit, getting it closer to the sound the bug made. He was certain he was about to work out the mysteries of flight when suddenly, the bug decided to leave!

"HEY-come BACK!" Bayrull yelled, stirring his paws back into action to follow the necky glowbug.

Fortunately, it didn't go far. The bug continued on its leisurely route home, flying higher and higher until it arrived at a huge clump of bees and stuff suspended on a tree branch.

"Ohhh..." Bayrull said in awe. Everyone needed to see this! "GUYS! Guys come LOOk! /found bugs!" he called back over his shoulder. It looked like they had fallen behind. He hoped they heard him.



Bayrull encounters a necky glowbug and watches it fly up to its hive. He calls for the others to join him in this new bug experience.



* Anatoli **

He/Him • Post 6 • 321 Words

Journal

Slipping through the underbrush at a brisk pace, Tolya had somewhat of a hard time keeping up with the nimble Bayrull and even lost sight of him a couple of times before the brown tip of his tail popped back up further ahead. He threw glances around once in a while to make sure they hadn't lost anyone between the lush plants.

After a while he heard Nutmeg's voice to the side of him. "Here, look, look! I found it! Um, I found...them?" Them? There had only been one earlier. He watched Bayrull disappear up ahead but decided to check on the others first. "You found it? Them?" he asked, sticking his head through a cluster of fern only to be greeted by a bunch of similar creatures bearing their teeth at him. "Oh" he whispered, lowering his head with his ears flat to make him appear smaller "I didn't mean to scare them.."

They all looked similar like the one he had found earlier but... he was sure the specific lizard from earlier wasn't one of them. "They are similar. But different from the one before." he noted quietly. Nutmeg spoke once more but not directed at them but the creatures instead followed by Simon doing the same. "I don't think they can speak.. But I'll leave you to it. I'm gonna check on... Bay-role. Shouldn't be far." He waited for a second before bounding off again.

"Where did he-"

"GUYS! Guys come LOOK! /found bugs!"

"Nevermind."

Trotting towards the voice he noticed a faint buzzing sound, growing louder and louder until... "Whoa.." He stopped next to Bayrull, staring up at the tree in front of them, taller than most of the trees they had seen so far. "What's that?" he looked at a glowing cluster of... something hanging between the branches of the tree with an abundance of bugs flocking around it. "Wonder what they're doing up there."

* Summary *

Anatoli joins Nutmeg and Simon in their investigation of the lizards but when they start talking to them, he decides to leave them to it and check on Bayrull who had run ahead on his own. He finds him and the beehive, staring at it in awe..

The bugs above seemed to love the tree, but more so than that, they loved what was hanging in its branches. They rounded the object as leisurely as anything else, often taking a moment's rest on its surface before taking off again. Or were those different bugs taking off? It was hard to tell from so far away.

"What's that?" Anatoli asked.

"Good question," Bayrull chirped, tilting his head and wondering for himself. "It's orange, it's still, and bugs seem to like it well. A riddle for sure."

"Wonder what they're doing up there."

"Inly one way to find out!" Bayrull said cheerfully, trotting forward towards the tree trunk. He'd never tried it before, but he was almost certain you could climb up these things if you used your claws right. "Come Anatoli, let's 90 see, I tell ye!"

Bayrull bobbed his head up and down a few times, gauging the distance to the lowest branch. His tail twitched behind him as he hunched down, paws tapping against the ground to be more sure of his footing.

Then, with one good thrust of his paws, he was briefly airborne, jumping up the trunk to get closest to the low branch. There was hardly a moment to think before he was at the trunk of the tree. He'd already started moving his paws, that was the main reason his claws got a grip on the bark and kept him from slamming face first into the tree.

As it was, it was still a clumsy first attempt, and it knocked the air right out of him. He coughed, took a deep breath, and started to make his way up the tree.

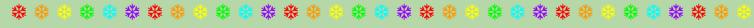
Shik! Crunch! Crack! went the bark as he pulled his claws from it and moved them higher.

Already he was getting a better look at the bug's destination. "Are they going in it?" he asked, before he realized the obvious solution. He could just ask the bugs.

"Hello bugs! I'm Bayrull. Are you going in there? Can I go in there? What's in there?" He had to know!



Bayrull climbs the tree to get a better look at the bugs and their hive. **He asks the bugs what's up** with the whole hive thing anyways.







CHECKPOINT #1

3rd July 2021

EDISCOVERIES;

As all four cats explore the Garden, ears perked and voices echoing softly through the air, they do not notice when the weather begins to change, or when the light begins to fade.

Fog - thick, rolling clouds of pinkish white - sink down from overhead, slowly enveloping their surroundings. There is the scent of dew and oncoming rain in the air, sweet and clean, and all around them flowers begin to open. Tall, bell shaped flower-heads unfurl, their red inner petals luminescent, brighter than the glowing white blossom scattered throughout the moss, or the huge clusters of pale gold flowers in the tree, up above.

The insects swarming around the branches of the tree grow more active as the Garden blooms, their fiery red bodies flitting from flower to flower, many more of them descending to the mossy floor. Other flying creatures linger up in the canopy of the tree that Bayrull has discovered, zipping about almost too fast to see, and leaving behind only the impression of beautiful green wings.

When the cats reach the foot of the tree, they will all notice the odd, rubbery texture of the bark, and the raised, copper coloured veins running up its trunk and all the way along its limbs.

Bayrull braves the climb, and in his haste to reach the hive, his claws scrabble at the slippery surface, scoring the veins and the bark deep enough to puncture. Copper liquid wells up in the furrows of the cuts and begins to slowly weep. Nutmeg will see this, and will find herself oddly tempted to clamber up and lick it - though the urge will very quickly fade.

Reaching the first bough, Bayrull is forced to stop climbing, winded from the effort. He will feel the need to cough in order to clear a strange itch from his throat. The bitter taste of the moss he'd accidentally consumed earlier lingers on his tongue, and through the excitement of his climb, he will feel a faint stirring of anxiety—

It is eclipsed, however, when he peers out into the Garden, and, through the descending fog, sees three things:

A wide, steady river - too wide, perhaps, to swim across without tiring.

Darkness encroaching in long, flickering shadows on the other side of the water, as though alive.

A shape - the body of another cat? - strewn out across a stretch of the opposite bank, their pale fur stained dark red, and... odd markings painted on the floor around them.

Bayrull's stomach will sink with a burgeoning sense of horror. Even as he watches, the moss near the body continues to crawl, edging towards it as though it wishes to consume it. Soon the cat will be buried alive by the stranglehold of the moss.

As if that thought is not horrifying enough, Simon, Anatoli and Nutmeg, below, will see the flickering shadows all around them, and in the depths of those shadows will catch a flash of glowing white eyes. Before they get a good look, those eyes are lost to the night - though the feeling of being watched does not vanish.

You must find a way to cross the river, before the moss consumes the stranger on the other side, or the shadows catch hold of you all.

Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 7 | Words: 599

Nutmeg glanced back towards Simon as the large cat peered over her shoulder at the gathered creatures beneath them, and turned back with her eyes alight in excitement and wonder as he spoke to the lizards as well, prompting them to answer. Anatoli had approached at some point and also stuck his head in to peer at them, though he seemed perturbed that he had frightened them in the process.

Nutmeg waited in the silence for the creatures to speak, but unfortunately, the creatures simply sat there silently, staring up at them dubiously despite their best attempts to communicate. She twisted her mouth in disappointment, but decided to back up and away from the lizards and glance behind her, towards where Anatoli had now gone to seek out Bayrull, who, right at that moment, broadcasted his newest discovery to the rest of the group.

"Bugs?" She mewed curiously, glancing at Simon to make sure she'd heard right. She thought for a moment, before running her tail against Simon's flank as she padded towards the other two, eager to share in their new discovery. Eventually, she arrived at the base of a large, beautiful tree that made her eyes widen and her jaw drop at it's appearance; it was so shiny! There was another thing up higher, too, tucked into a branch that was also shiny and glowing. As she gazed up, her eyes eventually landed on Bayrull who had climbed his way up the tree to commune with the 'bugs' he had discovered earlier.

She placed a paw on the tree, not too keen on trying to follow him up there, but wanting a better way to look up without craning her neck so much, when she flinched back from the texture of the tree beneath her paw. It felt...weird? She hadn't exactly touched any trees in her time there, but it still made her glance down in surprise, only then noting how strange, veiny lines ran their way up and down the tree's surface. Bayrull's clumsy ascent up the structure had left some marks in his wake, evident by a strange, coppery liquid leaking from some of the vein-like areas, and she had a very brief, but curious urge to lean up and try to taste it; but her nose curled and the thought faded away just as quick as it had arrived.

She opens her mouth to speak, finally, towards Bayrull - maybe a question or two about what exactly he was able to see from up there, when a wave of....something, suddenly creeps over her and has her mouth snapping shut in shock, her head going back and forth in search of what had caused the feeling. Shadows, all around them, contrasting the mood that had been so cheerful and joyful just minutes before; she squinted towards them, almost certain something white had flashed right at her, but she couldn't quite determine what they'd been before they're gone. The fur on her back rises in alarm as she glances at the other two behind her, ears pulled back in the first surge of fear she'd ever felt since waking up.

"W-Why is everything getting dark?" She whispered, backing away from the tree and bumping right into the other two, hiding herself right between them and finding a small source of comfort and safety from brushing against the two larger cats. "I....I don't feel right, I feel like..." She continued to glance around, but deciding that this just frightened her even more, she decided to just bury her face into Anatoli's leg, preventing her from speaking more.

Summary

Nutmeg is disappointed that the lizards can't talk, but shrugs this off and decides to find out what Bayrull had found and follows after Anatoli towards him. She is starstruck by the beauty of the tree, and is surprised by the texture of it. She is also curious about the *taste* of that coppery liquid but...decides not to act on any urges for it. She's about to question Bayrull on the sight from above when she suddenly gets a terrible, sinking feeling, with the shadows and white flashing and decides to hide herself between the two biggest cats for safety. Oh dear...

Simon

He/him ♦♦♦ Post 7/? ♦♦♦ Word Count: 700



It was a shame that the lizards didn't seem to be able to speak, Simon thought. But that didn't deter him from watching them with the other cats. He even found himself settling down into a squared crouch, paws naturally tucked under his chest as he observed. It made him think: were cats --or even just the four of them-- the only talking things around here? And where was here?

"check on... Bay-role. Shouldn't be far...." Hmm? Oh, Anatoli was going ahead to find Bayrull--

"GUYS! Guys come LOOK! I found bugs!"

--who seemed to have already made yet another discovery. Simon chuckled softly, fondly, and stood back up with a small grunt. "Bugs?" Nutmeg also seemed keen on finding out more, based on her glance back at him. She eagerly departed with a quick brush of her tail against his side, leaving only

Simon and the colony for a moment. Though they were marvelous to look at, though, he knew he'd much rather try and keep up with his new companions. Couldn't have them having all the fun, after all!

Though they couldn't talk, Simon gave the colony a dip of the head in parting as he started away. But it was as he turned from them to once more follow Bayrull's calls that he noticed the shift in the air. Pinkish clouds seemed to apparate almost instantly, and he momentarily lost sight of the others --even their glowing neck-orbs. He felt alarm, but he had seen them straight ahead at the bottom of a tall plant--a tree. Knowing he'd find them easily calmed him, enough to let himself take a second to inhale deeply and become acquainted with a new smell. Rain. Or, at least, a promise of rain.

And as the fog brought with it the smell of rain, it also seemed to awaken the drooping flowers that towered just overhead. Simon found his eyes drawn to the nearest one as it blossomed, and he had to lift a paw to shield his eyes from the sheer brightness within. It was quickly mitigated as the fog became thick enough to hinder the light, thankfully. Shaking his head to clear the little spots that flashed in his sight, he said, "Tolya? Bayrule? Nutmeg?" Their new but welcome smells were dampened by the wet fragrance as well, but he knew they hadn't gone far. They were next to a tree, he reminded himself--yes, there! The fog had moved--it seemed, and the thickness that had hidden his friends now blocked that flower's light. Able once more to focus on their shapes, Simon hastened himself until he was finally right beside Anatoli.

He craned back his head, eyes squinting through the drifting fog, as he glimpsed Bayrull perched in the tree. The other had stopped, for some reason, still for the first time since they had all convened. "Bay? Bayrule? Bayrull? What do you see?" He hollered up before stepping back a few feet to assess their surroundings again. He only just noticed the eyes boring into them from the growing shadows before they vanished, and he shivered as he felt a coldness crawl down his spine. At the same moment, Nutmeg scurried away from the tree, slipping between him and Tolya. Fur already fluffed out against the chill the mist brought, Simon looked down to see her huddled and somewhat hidden under his large mass of fur.

An uneasy, oppressive sense had fallen over Simon by this point, as they waited for word from Bayrull. Nutmeg seemed to feel the same presence as she said, "I....I don't feel right, I feel like..." and hid her face against Tolya's leg. Immediately, Simon leaned closer to them both, wondering if helping to cover the she-cat would make her less... this. Less afraid.

"It's... different. Than it was before. Doesn't feel right, either. But we are all here. What do you think?" He asked Tolya, ears pointing back and forth in alertness. Listening. For Bayrull. For something other than the buzzing of the bright bugs flocking to the even brighter flowers. If the shadows were moving like the fog had before, would it also be silent, despite having eyes like they did?

Summary:

Simon watches the lizards for a while longer, before deciding that he should stay with his friends. The fog sets in and he is slightly thrown off by the changes it brings, but he rationalizes his way out

of worrying. He's quick to catch back up to the other three, calling up to Bayrull to know what's made him stop. When Nutmeg presses between him and Anatoli, he leans into it in the hopes they both find it comforting.

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

* Anatoli *

He/Him • Post 7 • 358 Words

Journal

Just when he had voiced his question he watched Bayrull leap forward towards the tree before beginning his ascend. "Inly one way to find out!" And with that Bayrull sent himself flying towards the, under closer inspection, strange looking tree, his claws digging into the rubbery bark and what looked like veins of some sort of brown liquid or... sap? He took a step closer and placed a paw on the stem of the tree. The strange texture felt weird on his paw pads but before he had a chance to follow his new friend, Anatoli heard rustling in the bushes behind him and paused.

The white and brown pelt of Nutmeg peaked through the leaves followed by the darker fur of Simon a moment later. "Oh good, you're back. Bayrull found this uh tree." It was now that Tolya noticed how their environment had shifted. The previously bright and upbeat nature of nature had made room for a much more gloomy darkness combined with pinkish clouds of fog that lurked around the edges of the little clearing. The air smelt... moist? Like a promise or maybe even a warning?

Regardless of what it was, something about it left a tingling sensation under his skin, leaving him wary. He was glad they were all back together now. His gaze shifted back to the crown of the tree, where Bayrull sat attempting to communicate with the buzzing creatures. "Maybe we should leave" he mumbled under his breath before noticing a movement in the corner of his eyes but when he turned around to identify it it seemed to have moved further. No matter what he tried the shadows stayed just out of sight. The other two cats with him at the roots of the tree seemed to have noticed it too and he felt Nutmeg move closer to him, clinging to his leg. "I....I don't feel right, I feel like..." He wouldn't admit it but he, too, began to feel like something was off about this whole situation. He protectively moved his front legs above Nutmeg in an attempt to protect her from whatever might come at them next.

* Summary *

About to follow Bayrull up the tree, Tolya notices the shift in atmosphere and remains at the roots for now. When Nutmeg clings to his leg he moves his front legs above her to hopefully offer some protection from whatever might be lurking nearby. He also mentions they should move.



the bug hive. He could see better now, how the bugs filed in through a single small hole, how the hive itself was roughly colored, appearing to glow warmly from the bugs within.

A mirthful noise escaped him, tinged with a hint of jingling purr from the glow in his throat. This was great! He could see so much better up here.

His eyes drifted to the side, catching flits of another new creature, but ultimately going wide as he realized what was in the distance.

"Frieeeends..." he called down in an uncertain voice. "There's um," Where could he even begin?

It was horrible! It was terrible! It was dark out there, and he didn't know why but just seeing it was making him uneasy. Then, almost in time with his discovery, the world began to change. Wind grew, fog fell, and as the darkness creeped closer, he realized there was somebody still left out there, all alone, on the other side of an intimidating river.

"GLYS, there's um," his voice wavered, even though he knew he needed to say something. He could only see the other cat now that he was up high. None of them were up high. "There's—" he choked on the word again, feeling intensely like he needed to clear out his throat.

His first attempt to do so came out more like a keening whine, which he swallowed before trying again. "There's—there's Another CAT out there! By the DARK!" he yelled. "They're all alone out there."

The longer he looked, the more he was certain of it. "They're ALL covered in stuff, and moss, and the MOSS, there's too much of it! It's gonna bury them!" How would they ever find the fifth friend like this?

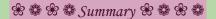
"They're aCR055 a river, and they aren't M0VING, and—and—" he wanted to pace, wobbling uneasily in place on the branch instead. "And I THINK they need help!"

"We need to do something!" he cried, ears pinning back against his head as he craned his neck again, hoping to see something they could use to help their motionless neighbor. "WHAT do we do?"

Bayrull looks around for a way to help the cat, but is almost entirely hampered by the mist. He has the feeling that the smartest thing to do would be to move towards the edge of the river and further explore, as fast as possible - perhaps something will become obvious upon closer examination?

It was too hard to see up here with all the mist and the fog. Already he was getting worried about losing track of their vanishing neighbor. He took a moment to look for things nearby: a certain twist in the nearby foliage, the way a fern curled up against the growing moss, the pointed shape of a bush across the river from the lone cat. Hopefully it would be enough to find them later.

"What do we do..." he said to himself softly. They'd have to find something.



Bayrull sees something terrible, and he makes sure to let everyone know. He stays on the tree branch, trying to use his new perspective to find anything they can use to help the new cat.



Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 8 | Words: 361

She felt Simon shift above her, leaning over both her and Anatoli in an attempt to cover her, and she felt a moment of calm wash over her as she allowed herself a moment to simply breathe. She would be fine - she had to be - Bayrull, Anatoli and Simon were all there, right next to her. She would be fine.

As Anatoli's name crossed her thoughts, he also moved to place his legs above her, and the mental image of what they probably looked like right now was enough to make her giggle softly, completely out of place for their current situation. She sobered quickly, though, at Bayrull's nervous yelling.

"There's-there's Another CAT out there! By the DARK! They're all alone out there."

The moss, he was saying. That same, sticky, terrible-tasting moss from earlier? And...bury them - the cat? The cat he was seeing?

"They're aCROSS a river, and they aren't MOVING, and-and-And I THINK they need help!"

She peered from between the two larger cat's legs, gazing up wide-eyed towards Bayrull, more than unnerved by the fear she heard in his shaking, pitched voice. "Another cat..." She murmured, more to herself than the others. "Can't...can't leave them, they might be just like us." She mewed towards Simon and Anatoli, and, despite what she was *really* wanting to do at that moment, (which was to hide underneath them and pretend the darkness didn't exist, obviously) she wiggled herself slightly out from underneath them and stood just in front of the two.

"B-Bayrull...he's right, we, we need to help them. T-they must be so scared," She mewed, her voice adopting a noticeable quiver as she gazed around them again. She could *try* to climb the tree, to help Bayrull observe their surroundings, but she was almost confident she would fall...

"D-do you see...is there a way to get to the cat?" She called up to Bayrull, wincing at how her voice carried and immediately remembering those white, flashing *things* from the darkness she'd seen just before. "A...a s-safe way, f-for all of us?" She tacked on, much more softly, ignoring the shake of her legs as her mind drifted without her consent as to just what was out there, watching them.

Summary

Nutmeg finds safety and comfort between her two friends, but at Bayrull's fearful yelling, she decides she needs to stop hiding - no matter how much she wants to and, oh, does she want to - so that they can figure out a way

to help the cat that's being buried by moss. She asks Bayrull if he sees a way for them to get to the cat - preferably a safe way, for all four of them.

Simon

He/him ♦♦♦ Post 8/? ♦♦♦ Word Count: 532

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

Simon was about to reply to Anatoli's suggestion to leave, when Bayrull shouted down, his exploring halted. Bayrull described their surroundings--the river, the moss that moved, the cat, all of it intriguing Simon. The last of those things lighting a sense of urgency he'd yet to feel before that moment. He wasn't entirely sure how to put it into words until Nutmeg squeezed out from her spot between the two bigger cats, cementing his own decision with her plea.

Before they could help this new cat, though...

Simon's green eyes were drawn to Nutmeg's glowing orb, seeing how it was dimmer than before. So things that made them laugh and purr --things that made them happy, he realized-- made it brighter. And things like the shadows and other cats being in trouble-- feelings he did not like, caused it to fade. Now that he was paying attention, he could tell that his own orb had also lessened in vibrancy.

So what to do?

He bent his head to Nutmeg's level, nodding, "Agreed, Nutmeg. We'll find a way, too. To? To cross, I mean. And help our new friend. Breathe. It helps to not stop the jiggle paws," Simon demonstrated, taking an exaggerated breath of air and puffing out his chest, holding it before letting it out in a coughing laugh. He wasn't sure what compelled him to do something so silly in the tense moment, but he knew from earlier that breathing really did help to steady himself. And, if he could get their orbs to glow a little brighter again, then it was worth it. At least he was able to give her a true, hopefully reassuring smile now. He made sure to also turn the smile to Anatoli, along with the tail gesture he was already so fond of.

As Simon took the first step around the tree, he called upward to Bayrull, "Rule? Are you okay? I-Simon-me-I am going to find the river down here. Can you watch me?" Just in case. He continued on, already trusting in Bayrull and the other two to watch his back.

He hadn't walked far when felt his insides give a leap, forepaw suddenly skimming open air. Thankfully, he'd been treading slowly and was able to withdraw his limb from the precipice without further risk. His ears flicked back as he followed his own advice and took a deep inhale to steady himself, before calling over his shoulder, "I think I found it...it's so pretty..."

Sadly, he'd have to admire it later- when a cat wasn't being 'eaten' by the moss under their feet. Or was the moss over there different? Bad moss. Right. Finding a path to stop the moss. Simon situated himself firmly as he began to look up and down the bank through the fog:

How far from his paws was the water? How far across was the other side? Could he see the cat that Bayrull spoke of from here? If there was no ground, how would they cross?

These thoughts pummeled Simon's head in a loop as he found himself pacing the edge of the river, eyes and ears scanning for anything that would answer his questions.

Summary:

Simon considers the circumstances and notices that the grim atmosphere has dimmed all of their neck glows. He does his best to reassure Nutmeg and Anatoli before he calls to ask Bayrull to watch from above. He picks his way around the tree and steps in the direction he'd seen Bayrull looking, going slow and breathing deep as he looks for the edge of the river. He manages not to trip into said river and starts to try putting the pieces together without getting distracted by his awe of everything. He wants to see how deep and wide the river is and if there is anything they could use to cross. Think!

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

* Anatoli *

He/Him • Post 8 • 382 Words

Journal

He hoped his gesture helped Nutmeg feel a little more secure in this suddenly very strange new situation. And maybe he also hoped to calm his own nerves a little by ensuring the smaller one felt safe. Just maybe so. Not like they really knew any of the things hidden in this garden before but somehow they did know it wasn't bad. This was pretty bad though. He could tell from what that bad feeling in his guts at least.

His gaze moved upwards to where Bayrull was still standing in the tree looking out for something. He suddenly seemed very focused before Tolya noticed that something about his upbeat attitude shifted into something less cheery and more fearful. "Frieeeends… There's um" he stuttered a couple of times before his thoughts spilled out "There's—there's Another CAT out there!"

Another cat? So there were others like them! But what if they were different? They didn't wake up with the rest of them. Maybe there was a reason for that.. "We should be careful. Don't know if we can trust the other" he voiced his concern "but we better go and find out ourselves and make sure." he added. Before he had the chance to finish his sentence, Simon had already bounced up and out of sight. Most likely towards where the river was. He didn't like this..

"Stick together!! Don't stay!" he yelled back towards Nutmeg and Bayrull before following Simon back into the underbrush to make sure the taller tom wouldn't run into any trouble alone. Bursting through the leaves that marked the border of the small forest they had wandered into, Anatoli spotted Simon coming to an abrupt stop right in front of what he assumed to be the river. A pitch black void that stretched out all the way across to the other side. He slowed down and came to a halt just a bit behind Simon, staring at the river. "Yeah... We definitely

won't be making it across that very easily.." he noted. His eyes wandered upwards from the water after a moment all the way to the other side of the river where he assumed the strange cat must be, based on Bayrull's description, searching for the newcomer and attempting to get a better gist of the situation.

* Summary *

Anatoli calms down a little with the others before sprinting after Simon, telling Nutmeg and Bayrull to follow but stick together! Stopping at the river near Simon, he looks across the water to try and find the other cat and get a better picture of the situation.

Roll: 17

ANATOLI casts his gaze across the river. It is difficult to make out the finer details with eyesight alone. However, Anatoli is able to reason that based on where the cat's head is resting and the fur of its tail sticks out that they are larger than himself, Simon, Nutmeg and Bayrull. He knows there is a good chance that the shadows around them are still lurking.

His paws shifted against the branch, delicately countering the weight behind the nervous swinging of his tail.

"D-do you see...is there a way to get to the cat?"

"I don't know," he murmured, not loud enough to be heard down below.

"Rule? Are you okay? 1-Simon-me-1 am going to find the river down here. Can you watch me?"

"I-I don't kNOW" he said, just a bit louder. It was hard to see, and it wasn't exactly getting any easier.

Would they even be able to find the cat again, if he lost track of them now? **Quickly, he set about looking for things near the cat they might be able to use to find him, if he did end up all covered in moss**: a peculiar curl in a tree trunk, the clump of ferns pressing up against one side of it, the particularly point shape of a nearby bush. It wasn't much to go on, but hopefully it would be enough to find him again once they got past the river.

If he even was going to go past the river. "/–I don't..." he mumbled, ears pinned back as he looked down the tree's trunk. Simon was already gone. The others would be too, soon. "I don't WANT to stay here," he told Anatoli, already feeling a nervous energy fill him as he realized he was going to end up alone.

"Stick together!! Don't stay!" Anatoli called out.

The relief was palpable. Bayrull was certain he could feel it in his paws as they tingled against the bark. Or maybe that was the moss kicking in. Either way, he felt much better now.

"Yeah—yeah let's stick to Gether Guys!" Bayrull called out, gathering himself together and leaping down from the tree. It didn't take long for him to realize that going down happened a lot faster than going up, but his legs seemed to know what they were doing well enough. He landed paws first in the soft moss, and quickly followed behind Anatoli as they all headed for the river.

"Did you find any thing? What DO you see?" he asked as they all arrived at the riverside. He turned his own attention back in the direction he remembered the new cat being. He didn't want to lose track of them!

With this new, lower vantage point by the river, he glances back, confirming the difficulty of seeing where things were from this point of view. It was hard enough to pick out the tree they just came from, and he had actually been in it!

He looked back across the river, to the spot where he saw the pointy bush and the swirled tree spot. It was hard to focus with the flickering of white eyes in the fog, but **he tried his best to find the same** landmarks.

BAYRULL peers through the thickening fog for landmarks around the cat. It is almost impossible to make anything out through the mist, but what little he can see is this:

- creeping moss, obscuring some large stones
- dark stains in the dirt
- two tall, oddly shaped plants

* * * Summary * * * *

Bayrull wants to be a good lookout, but it's too much pressure for him to handle right now. **He looks for landmarks near the cat from his position on the tree**, then descends and follows Anatoli. Once by the riverside, **he compares this view with the one he had from the tree**, **verifying a couple key landmarks near the new cat.**



Simon

He/him ♦♦♦ Post 9/? ♦♦♦ Word Count: 589

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

Pretty, but dangerous, Simon concluded as he stared down into the watery depths. The longer he looked, he realized that he could imagine gliding through the water, bottom or no. In theory, it seemed delightful, but it there were several pressing factors. For one, any attempt to push through the liquid would be impossible in this instance. It was too deep to feasibly walk through, and the gap from one side of the river to the other was giant. Far more cat lengths than he and the others could manage, again he was certain. He could feel his legs tremble at the thought of losing energy part way to the other side and then...what? Be lost forever to whatever was down there? Not if he could help

it. But if they did nothing and let the bad feelings and the shadows take them, they'd be no better off, his inner voice chimed in.

So then, what to do?

"Stick together!! Don't stay!"

Simon turned his head back toward Anatoli as the dark blue cat came to a stop behind him, Bayrull and presumably Nutmeg hot on his trail. "Water. It's...water. A river. If it were less, maybe we-t-you could get through. But it is too far and...deep. We would risk..." he trailed off, realizing that saying all of this wouldn't help keep the others calm. He shook his head, "We will find a safe-safer way.

Before the shadows and moss bite us."

Even as he spoke, he glimpsed something just visible enough through the fog. A... a vein tree, like the one Rule had found! Only, this one appeared longer, far far taller and a bit bigger around, if only a bit. It was right alongside the river, too, so maybe they could do what Bayrull did and climb it and then--

And then what? They'd be higher, he realized, but no further across. And they had to do something. If not for the cat Bayrull saw, then for the slowly approaching darkness that Simon had so far managed to fade into the background. Mostly.

What could they do with it, though? He didn't quite see a lot else to do with it. He peered at the tree, and then the river that it hung over, and then back. Wait... Was his mind playing tricks? Was it possible that the tree might be long enough to...

After all, Bayrull had climbed the other tree, using his claws to stick to the skin-the bark? So what if they did the same just... with the tree laying down? It'd be a better bet than getting dragged down in the water. "I think... I think I have an idea, but... hrrm, come with I-me, Nutmeg, Bay, Tolya. To that vein tree," He said, hoping that his naturally placid tone didn't undercut the urgency of the matter.

the made his way -carefully- along the bank, as he explained, "Bay was able to go up the other tree, right? Stayed on with his claws. What if...what if we-t-us did the same, but while the tree was laying down? It might be long enough to get us-we across...?" He crouched, trying to puzzle out just how they'd get the tree to lay across the river and give them a passageway. A... a bridge. His attention drifted to the roots. Why did they plunge into the ground like that? Was it like how Bayrull used his claws to get up the other tree? If so...what if they pulled out these root-claws?

VVVVV

Summary:

Simon goes into deep thinking mode, trying to absorb as much info as he can and being surprised with how much he seems to actually know. Huh. He hears the others behind him and waits for them to catch up as he spies another long tree a small distance away on the bank. Explaining his findings to

his friends, Simon rambles away as he starts to somewhat piece things together--albeit in an odd way.

He specifically wonders about the roots that keep the tree in place.

Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 9 | Words: 538

Nutmeg heard movement behind her, and she paused her wide-eyed viewing of the area around them to turn towards Simon, who had lowered his head to her level to speak to her. "Agreed, Nutmeg. We'll find a way, too. To? To cross, I mean. And help our new friend. Breathe. It helps to not stop the jiggle paws,"

"J-Jiggle paws?" Nutmeg mewed, confused at the term, but she said nothing else as he took in a large pull of air, and in a raspy, coughing laugh, let it out in one big exhale. She couldn't help but pause, blink, and then giggle at the sight of his chest - that was already so fluffy it made it look pretty big - getting even wider, and his laugh!

The shape on her throat began to glow a little brighter at this, and she took that moment to brush her tail against Simon's chest in a loving, thankful gesture before he padded off to explore a way to the abandoned cat.

"We should be careful. Don't know if we can trust the other." Anatoli spoke, and Nutmeg glanced at him, her eyes squinting through the fog to see him clearly. She was about to say something when he tacked on that they were going to go check it out anyway, and her jaw clicked shut in satisfaction. She just wanted to make sure the other cat was okay - trust wasn't an issue right now.

Anatoli started after Simon, calling back for them to stick together, and Nutmeg stayed right on his trail, not at all keen to wander off alone or too far from her companion. Bayrull sidled up right next to her as they followed Anatoli, and soon enough, they were met with Simon staring at the river. He saw them, and in response to Bayrull's question, explained his thoughts. Her fur prickled a little at his words, and at the idea that they were on a time limit...

She brushed forward a little, close enough to see into the river, and she peered into it with worry evident in her eyes. They had to cross this? To get to the cat? She had half a mind to bend down, to try and tap at the surface with her paws, just to feel it - could she walk through it? Would she fall? How were they supposed to-

"I think...I think I have an idea, but... hrrm, come with I-me, Nutmeg, Bay, Tolya. To that vein tree,"

At the mention of her name, Nutmeg perked up, rising to her paws to follow Simon as he spoke.

"Bay was able to go up the other tree, right? Stayed on with his claws. What if...what if we-1-us did

the same, but while the tree was laying down? It might be long enough to get us-we across...?"

Simon stopped, crouching at the foot of a tree, bigger than the one Bayrull had been on earlier. "You...want to use it to cross," She mewed, trying to understand his thought process as best she could. She followed his gaze, towards the claws of the tree that penetrated the ground. "How...how are we gonna move it?" She asked Simon, gazing up at him questiongly.

Summary

Nutmeg finds Simon's display to be funny and it lightens her mood, making her neck shine a little brighter to reflect it. She follows Anatoli and Bayrull to the edge of the river, briefly wondering if she should try to touch the

water, before Simon asks them all to follow him. Seeing the tree, she takes note of the roots and asks Simon what he's planning.

* Anatoli *

He/Him • Post 9 • 305 Words Journal

His eyes landed on the bright pelt of the stranger across the river, being covered by more and more of the creeping moss. They had to hurry if they wanted to help the other cat. But something about them felt strange. Different. He looked at his companions and back at the cat. Were they..? Simon was the tallest of them by a good bit but their new encounter appeared.. Even taller despite the distance that was between them. Could it be that Simon wasn't as big of a cat as they had thought? Or was the stranger just unnaturally big? "Strange. The other is much taller than us" he meowed to himself. It was a little intimidating.

They didn't seem like much of a threat at the moment. Something that did seem like a threat were those lurking shadows that remained all around them. Almost like they were following them. He couldn't always see them but that sinking feeling of being followed remained persistent. A barely audible growl grew in his throat, tinged with a metallic sound similar to their purrs.

A deep breath. 'Focus' He told himself. When the others joined them, Simon returned from investigating a tree nearby. It was definitely the same kind that Bayrull had climbed earlier. "I think...I think I have an idea" Anatoli listened to his friend's explanation. "What if...what if we-l-us did the same, but while the tree was laying down? It might be long enough to get us-we across...?"

"Hm, you might be onto something here.." He agreed while he followed Simon to the tree. It seemed quite sturdy but maybe.. Maybe he could do something. He pressed his shoulder against the stem and pushed himself against the tree. It was hard getting a good grip with his feet without slipping while he tested the tree's endurance.

* Summary *

Anatoli points out the size of the cat before following the others to the tree. He agrees with Simon that using the tree as a bridge could be their solution. **Wanting to test the tree's sturdiness he pushes himself against its stem.**

Roll: 19

Anatoli will feel the tree shift slightly under the force of his weight. It lets out a small creak and the bees around the hive start buzzing more loudly, alarmed by the movement.

Simon

He/him ♦♦♦ Post 10/? ♦♦♦ Word Count: 602

"You...want to use it to cross...How...how are we gonna move it?" Nutmeg asked as she appeared and peered up at him. Simon didn't answer right away, though, still sorting out the jumble of thoughts in his head with a furrowed brow.

The Nebelung traced over the roots thoughtfully, first with his sight and then with a gentle, revenant paw. Even as his mind filled in the blanks of his plan, he felt remorse at having to disrupt the tree like this. He wasn't sure how, but he had the feeling that this giant thing was also alive, like him and the other cats and the little creatures they'd seen so far. Even the bright flowers had moved, opening up and shining brilliantly. But despite getting that sense, the trees had yet to move or make their activity known. Was he wrong, then? The one that Bayrull had climbed, it had seemed to leak the odd copper liquid when hurt, so did that mean anything? And what of the hive, hanging overhead? Something inside him said 'danger' when he stared up at it, despite how pretty they looked. If the cats knocked their tree over, what would they do?

But the longer they lingered here, the closer the shadows crept, and the further they were from aiding whoever that was on the other side. Claws digging into the mossy soil in slight frustration, he found himself blinking at how easy it was to shift the dirt.

Maybe his root-claw idea had merit after all. Simon stepped to the side of the tree opposite the bank so that he faced the river. If they were going to knock it over, it made sense to do it from this angle, right? Poking his nose around the soil, he gave a small, satisfied and jingly purr at how pliable it all seemed. "I don't think the tree can take its root-claws from the ground like we can," he told Nutmeg and the other two, demonstrating by unsheathing his claws and then resheathing them, "so if we move the dirt and moss for it, it might let us help it lie down. I don't want to make the little glow bugs... upset? Any kind of unpleasant feeling. But we have to. I-me-I don't think we'll find another crossing place like this... But... that bug nest might..."

"Hm, you might be onto something here..."

Anatoli came up beside him and heaved his side against the tree with a grunt of effort, and Simon shot another look up at the hive. After a moment of watching and hesitation, he placed his paw flat against the trunk, closing his eyes, as he said. "I am sorry, glowing bugs, but we need to cross and help that Other cat." His voice was soft with sincerity and respect-after all they all came from this place as far as he could tell, so why not respect the tree? Then, he backed up and, scooting the sharper rocks out of the way behind him, began to dig. Still, he could at least be soft and careful with it not wanting to harm the tree if it was really alive.

As he did though, another thought occurred to him: hadn't there been more buzzing and darting little bugs after the fog had rolled in and the bright flowers opened? Did that mean the bugs liked them? "Maybe if we give them a big bright flower they won't be so mad..." he sighed, loud enough to be heard though he meant it for himself. He kept digging, though, even as his mind wandered.

Summary:

Simon tries his best to formulate a decent idea for how to make a bridge, despite feeling guilty for disturbing the glowy-bug hive. Seeing Anatoli give a good shove to the trunk of the veined tree, Simon gives a heartfelt apology to the tree and hive and gets to digging, informing the other's of the basic gist as he goes. His stream of consciousness kicks in yet again and he ponders over using a bright flower to lure some of the bugs away from the tree, but isn't sure it would work.

The continued presence of dark in the garden continued making it difficult to see, but Bayrull was pretty sure he had enough to go off of. The moss was extra lumpy over there, and there were a couple weird plants that were particularly tall. They wouldn't be going very far from the cat either. With Simon's idea of putting the tree across the river, they should be able to go right to where they wanted to go.

Still, his paws itched. He wasn't doing enough. Walking to the tree made him feel better-maybe he just needed to move more?

Anatoli seemed to have much the same idea, moving to push the tree with his whole body. Simon too, started digging at the base of it.

"If we move the dirt and moss for it, it might let us help it lie down."

"Good thinking!" Bayrull said quickly, running over Simon's next words a bit as he ran over to where Simon was testing the dirt.

"Make the little glow bugs... upset?"

"Upset?" Bayrull said, pausing to stare at the dirt for a moment. He didn't want the bugs to be sad about their tree...

"But we have to." Simon continued, and Bayrull...well.. he was pretty sure he agreed. "I am sorry, glowing bugs, but we need to cross and help that Other cat."

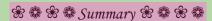
"I didn't see any other way to cross when I was up other tree..." he murmured, tail whipping back and forth a few times. "But maybe digging the dirt out will let the tree move gently! And—and then we can put the dirt back, once it's down by the river. Then the tree will be okay, and the bugs don't have to be sad," Bayrull said quickly, already feeling better about digging.

That was a good thing, because it really looked like Simon would need help here. Those roots were awfully tight for the larger cats paws. A quick glance was all it took to confirm Bayrull's paws were smaller. They could fit better.

"Maybe if we give them a big bright flower they won't be so mad..."

"We can do that too!" Bayrull said, some cheerfulness seeping back into his voice. "We can dig, and you can find the best flower for the bees. They all look the same to me."

He bounced around the roots a few times, looking for the best place to start digging, kicking aside a few stones as he did so. "Hmmm...maybe here," he said to himself, moving forwards and moving paws to move that dirt. "Don't worry, bugs! We'll set that tree down slowly and you'll all be safe! We'll be careful with it."



Bayrull, eager to put his paws to work on *something*, decides to take over digging for Simon. There's a brief moral dilemma of what to do with the bugs, but he's pretty sure it'll work out alright. **He looks for a good place to loosen roots, and starts digging.**



Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 10 | Words: 511

While Simon was deep in thought, Anatoli had arrived next to them and, noticing the tree, tried to push his weight into it - trying to make it... lie down? Nutmeg watched on in amusement, but it turned to interest as Simon began to dig at the claws of the tree, gradually attempting to free them and remove it from the dirt. As she listened to the larger cat speak, she decided that she didn't like the idea of making the glow-bugs upset; how could they? It was their own place here...but...Simon was right - they *had* to get across, or else...she shivered a little, fighting the urge to glance behind her.

"Maybe if we give them a big bright flower they won't be so mad..."

She heard Simon say, and she looked to Bayrull at his response. "We can dig, and you can find the best flower for the bees. They all look the same to me."

Her eyes squinted as she recalled the appearance of the flowers...they were big, very much so, and probably far too big for her to try and grab by herself...so definitely, Simon...? She turned her attention back onto the three as they continued to work, and cast the thought away. They were busy; she could do it instead! She wasn't sure she'd be much help pawing at the dirt, anyway.

But, still, with the flowers...there was the matter of size.

Her eyes drifted to the foot of the tree, and then a little ways up it. The same vein-like lines that the tree Bayrull had climbed were on this one too. She remembered the urge to approach the tree and taste the coppery liquid that had come from it, and she wonders. Would the bugs be the same? Maybe they wouldn't mind the cats using the tree for help if they were offered the vein-stuff in return?

She trotted closer to the tree, eyeing the veins closest to those that were digging, nearest Bayrull. She bent down a little, raising a tentative paw to lightly tap at one of the veins, flinching back as soon as it made contact.

Nothing....yet? The tree wasn't reacting to them at all, as they dug around it. As long as she was gentle, and took as little as she could...it wouldn't mind, right? She glanced up to the top of the tree, waiting for any kind of sign that it would be unpleasant or that it would refuse her silent request.

When she received none, she looked back down and placed her paw back over the vein, oh-so-lightly pricking her claws into into it to try and draw out the liquid she knew would be within. She coated the bottom of her paw in it and stepped back, falling onto her haunches as she raised a paw to the sky, pointing it to the glow-bug creatures. "Look!" She mewed in the direction of the bugs. "Tree-stuff, for you!" Hopefully they would be distracted enough and not mind their tree being used until they could fix it again later.

Summary

Nutmeg, realizing she wouldn't be much help in the digging mission, decides to take over Simon's idea of appeasing the bugs with flowers. Though, thinking she probably wouldn't be able to carry one of the giant flowers, she decides to lure the bugs with the tree-vein-liquid instead, knowing that it had interested her before...maybe it would be the same for them?

@Moiod

Simon digs around at the roots. Unfortunately he spends so much time focusing on one small section that it doesn't do any particular good.

@ Bay's Rule ●

However, when Bayrull joins in, he starts to loosen the roots quite effectively. It isn't quite enough to give the tree that final push, but it is certainly less stable.

@DefectedCat

The bees have most certainly been getting angry and might well have been preparing to strike. However, they hesitate when Nutmeg offers them the juice from the tree's vein. For a moment they are distracted, buzzing curiously around her paw. They will not however, be distracted for long, Nutmeg should bare this in mind.

CHECKPOINT #2

12th July 2021

The darkness around the four cats trembles for a moment, and then, with alarming abruptness they are engulfed once more by the light. It is blinding at first, even the plants around them appear startled. Flowers close their petals and leaves appear to withdraw in on themselves. There is even a hiss from the bushes nearby, followed by a panicked rustle of foliage.

The 'night' is over, or at least, the imitation of a night cycle has come to an end and it is 'day' once more.

The cats will also begin to experience something very new, a building pressure in their stomachs that weakens their legs and clouds their head. Anatoli's stomach lets out a particularly irritable grumble, although it is quickly echoed, with the same irate tenacity, by tiny Nutmeg. Catching sight of a nearby lizard, the cats will feel their mouths begin to water. The lizard, as if sensing their subconscious intent, flees back into the bushes.

Bayrull is the only one who will feel something in addition to this. The tightness in his throat is worse, he is now struggling to take in air, each breath takes great effort and results in an uncomfortable wheezing. If it wasn't apparent before, something is very wrong.

The tree the four cats have been working on has slackened, and is now bending quite dramatically over the river. The cats will now see that it isn't quite long enough to reach the other side. However, if they can stabilize it in some way, it will get them a good two-thirds of the way. The river's current is not particularly strong.

On the other side the moss continues to extend its reach over the other cat, tightening its grip around their paws and legs until only the faintest trace of pale fur is still visible. The four cats standing on the other side of the river cannot see more than this. However, the stranger's muzzle has also been sealed shut, and the soft harmless looking moss is now creeping up along their body.

The shadows appear to have gone for now, it appears that they are no longer a threat.

A new creature passes under Simon's nose. It is tiny, with a deep red furry body and a long slightly bent nose. It is fluttering in front of him, supported by wings moving too quickly for the naked eye to see. It blinks once, meeting Simon's green eyed gaze with its own wide amber, and then it is gone.

You must find a way to cross the river, before the moss consumes the stranger on the other side. Bayrull is now struggling to breathe, and the early pangs of hunger are starting to take hold.



"It's working! It's-" he hacked as the dirt irritated his throat, "-working!" The tree was slowly beginning to sag as its roots came loose. The bees didn't seem too upset, and he was pretty sure at this rate, they'd make it to the other cat in no time.

Only problem was, he was really starting to get tired. He coughed again, paws slowing until they gradually came to a stop. Was it the dirt making his throat hurt so much, or the digging itself that did it?

"I think—" he paused to cough again, "I think I'II take—a break." There was no doubt he was breathing harder now. "I think dig—cough—digging must be even har—cough—harder than climbing," he said, the words sounding more choked as he stumbled back from the tree's roots. He licked his lips, wishing he had something, anything to help soothe his aching throat.

"Mmm," he hummed, frowning at the way it ached when he did so. He fell quiet, instead choosing to rub at his glowing throat with one paw.

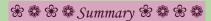
Something for his throat...something something....aha! The river! Just looking at it made him lick his lips. He would try the water in it, and see if that helped at all.

He took a deep breath, despite the increasing difficulty of doing so, and stumbled over to the water so he could get a drink.

His first drink.

As his whiskers brushed against the river's surface, he found himself wondering just what he should do to catch some of the rushing water. Curiously, he taped the water with his nose, sneezing painfully as a few drops went into his nose. Not that way then.

Carefully, he lowered his head again, this time holding his jaws wide open so he could snap up some water that way. He snapped his jaws shut, enjoying the way the water felt rushing against his tongue as he swallowed. A few more snaps at the water had it splashing all over the place, and seemed to get him as much to drink as he could ask for. Success!



Bayrull realizes he's not feeling so hot, and decides all that digging must be getting to him. **He decides to take a break and try some of that organic, natural river water** that they have so much of.



* Anatoli * He/Him • Post 10 • 431 Words Journal

With all of his weight pressed against the stem and the other two digging at the roots, Anatoli could feel the tree shift under his weight. "Keep going!" He encouraged the others when the world grew bright again way too suddenly. He squeezed his eyes shut to protect them from the light that flooded the plains again. After a few testing looks through squinting eyes he slowly grew used to it again.

With the light also came a new sensation; Tolya felt a strange discomfort stemming from his middle and before he could voice his concerns his body took over the job for him with a deep grumble. This did very little to soothe his worries until Nutmeg's stomach followed his own. At least he wasn't the only one. He also had to laugh a little at the contrast of such a loud noise coming from the smallest of their group.

"I think I'll take—a break. I think dig—cough—digging must be even har—cough—harder than climbing" He stopped pushing against the tree when Bayrull announced his need for a break, but there was something else. Aside from that emptiness in his middle, Tolya seemed to feel fine while the other tom was seemingly struggling,

coughing and wheezing as he carried himself over to the river. "I think we should all take a break maybe.." His gaze shifted to the other side of the river once more, hoping to be able to discern more about the situation over there now that it wasn't as dark anymore. "The cat!" he exclaimed "The moss has covered almost all of them. I feel like we don't have the time to take a break right now.."

Even though the tree didn't seem to cover the entire length of the river after all, Tolya felt like they might be able to make the jump across from the tip of it. If it wasn't for those bugs, that seems a lot less friendly now that they had messed with their tree. However they seemed distracted by nutmeg at the moment. "We might have to... get rid of their nest to get across" he noted, reluctantly. His eyes fell on the sharp rocks that Simon had moved aside earlier so they wouldn't get hurt. "Maybe.." he picked one of them up "maybe we could use one of these?" He held onto it tightly while doing his best to avoid its sharp edges. Aiming at the ledge, where the tree had started to bend, Anatoli leaped upwards to climb partially up the tree without getting too close to the agitated creatures.

* Summary *

Anatoli adjusts to the return of daylight and notices the changes that come with it, including Bayrull's dwindling strength. He casts his gaze across the river noticing the almost entirely covered stranger and informs the others of this. With the bees agitated he decides they may not be able to avoid getting rid of them. He grabs one of the sharp rocks and attempts to climb up to the bend of the tree.

Roll: 11

ANATOLI successfully manages to climb to the trees first bough! However, in doing so, his added weight seems to make the tree even more unstable. It tilts precariously over the running water. Anatoli must be careful he does not slip and fall in. Around his head, the disturbed hive buzzes furiously, gathering in a swarm. By some unseen miracle, they do not sting him, but they seem on the precipice of it.

Simon

He/him *** Post 11/? *** Word Count: 1021 (I'm so sorry for the novel)

It was very quickly apparent that Simon was doing very little in the ways of actually getting the dirt to move anywhere. As Bayrull took over and Simon was able to step back, he took the time to compare his paw size to Bay's. It made sense, in a way, that he'd struggled with the digging. Not just due to size, though. Bayrull seemed to just have this... level of drive behind his limbs that Simon simply did not. Which, he decided, was alright by him. He hadn't wanted to hurt the tree, anyways.

Observing their progress, he was pleased to see that the tree was already beginning to bend, though he couldn't help but worry about the growing buzzes of distress from the bug home in the low branch. Maybe he SHOULD go and find one of the flowers--they were bigger than him but they couldn't be that hard to drag over! Turning with that thought in mind, he saw that Nutmeg had apparently already found an alternative, the coppery liquid that bled from the tree coating her paws.

It seemed to be working, based on how the buzzing had dulled, and Simon could feel the sense of danger lessen, just a bit. "Great idea, Nutmeg! Hopefully they don't come after you, though..." He meowed.

So, while Anatoli and Bayrull worked on the tree and its roots, and Nutmeg kept the bugs distracted, Simon set about pushing the upturned dirt and moss back toward the rest of the roots that remained safely entrenched. He figured that shoring up those parts might make it harder for them to come loose, or something.

Suddenly, Simon clenched his eyes shut as a powerful burst of light erupted. It was like when the flower had opened in front of him and made spots appear in his vision, only even more so. When he finally dared to peek again, he saw that things had gone back to how it had been when they first woke up. Or, at least, the eerie shadows had receded. With it went the glow of the flowers around them, though the fog seemed to remain. What just happened? Blinking again, he reared a bit as a flying, flittering being zipped to a halt in front of his muzzle, their eyes meeting his. Bigger than the bugs, he couldn't help but lick his lips as it zoomed out of sight on wings too fast to see. There was a new feeling inside of him, he realized as the critter flitted away, one that seemed to be echoed by roars within Nutmeg and Anatoli. And it made him want to chase the new being down to stop the emptiness.

Already overwhelmed by the sheer amount of things happening at once, Simon closed his eyes and took a series of deep breaths. It'd worked well for him so far, so why not? "I think I'll take—a break. I think dig—cough—digging must be even har—cough—harder than climbing," That was Bayrull, reeling back from the roots to hurry to the water for some reason.

Stepping around the tree to check on Bay, Simon froze, fur pricked along his spine as Anatoli gave his own report. "The cat!" Anatoli called, "The moss has covered almost all of them. I feel like we don't have the time to take a break right now..." Standing his forepaws onto the trunk of the tree, Simon could just about make out the lump of Big Cat that Anatoli had seen, though the fog made it impossible to tell what state they were in. Still, he trusted the assessment of Tolya, and that meant they had to hurry.

Wait, he paused, why was Tolya gripping a sharp rock in his jaws as he began to ascend the tree? Following his line of sight, Simon felt a pang of remorse as he saw the hive. He hadn't wanted to move them if possible, or do anything to hurt them, but... what if they DID come after them for laying down their tree? "I'm sorry," He said again to no one. The Big Cat needed them most of all, and surely these guys could find a new hive in another tree! It'd be hard enough to get over without them in their way, he could tell. "Meg-Nutmeg, you should get that stuff off your paws if you can," He commented in a slightly hurried voice- AKA about as fast as the others talk normally. "I don't want those bugs coming at you because they're mad at us... Once you do, you should follow Tolya across...and I'll send Bayrull after you." He spoke with a more positive lilt to his voice this time, trying to encourage and bolster them despite the nervous energy around them all. It was more than obvious that him being at the back was the best idea, given how much slower he naturally seemed to move.

Giving her a sweep with his tail, he padded over to check on Bayrull finally, both worried and intrigued by his snapping at the water. It looked like he was consuming the liquid, which seemed to be

the case, given the bobbing of his throat orb as he swallowed. Again, it made Simon lick his lips, and he couldn't resist joining in clumsily snapping at the water a few times. Oh how nice it felt going down his throat! Purring, he forgot for a moment the danger they were in to savor the taste and coolness of the water going down to where the small empty feeling was. Only, it didn't do anything to fill the space. Simon thought again of the flittering red thing and figured there was something to be done with that information... after they were all across the river and the Big Cat was safe.

For the moment, he let the remnants of the water dribble down his chin as he faced Bayrull, "did that stop the bad noise?" He asked, feeling refreshed at least. If that didn't help, then what would? He looked over the other, leaning in a bit to try and figure out what else might help.

Summary:

Simon sucks at digging so he lets Bayrull take over, and he takes the time to give the others praise for their separate ideas. He sees the flittering thing when the 'time' changes but he has more pressing things to worry about. Like Bayrull coughing. When Tolya starts up the tree, he encourages Nutmeg and Bay to go next, though cautions that Nutmeg should somehow get rid of the sap, in case the bugs' hive can't be dealt with. He says in his own lax way that he should go last and tries to figure

out what might help bayrulls cough if the water doesn't.

ROLL: 19

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

@Moiod

SIMON will look around for something that might help Bayrull and, seeing how the other cat drank from the river, will come to this realisation: all of them must eat and drink to stay healthy. This realisation will make sense of the cramping and rumbling of his stomach, and the strange way his mouth will water when he catches a flash of a lizard's face, peeking out through the moss. They must eat the animals in this place, the way that the bees eat from the flowers. This is the natural and right order of things. One of the angry bees descends, buzzing around Simon's face, and it is just frustrating enough - the glow, that constant buzz - to consider sharing his thoughts. He will be struck with inspiration to suggest Bayrull test his theory out.

Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 11 | Words: 582

"Great idea, Nutmeg! Hopefully they don't come after you, though..."

Simon spoke in her direction, and a crawl of discomfort shivers its way over her spine at those words - come after her? Was it possible they might attack her...?

The bugs in the glowing hive above her head move down towards her paw as she thinks, buzzing noisily around the liquid that she'd coated her paw with, bobbing up and down around her in curiosity. She's startled, at first, but when nothing more happens she giggles lightly at their actions, finding it a little endearing - they didn't seem like they'd come after her at all! As she watches them in amusement, her joyful mood is eventually interrupted by a large flash of light that utterly blinds her, if only for mere moments. It nearly shocks her into

falling, and she ends up having to move both paws back to the ground to hold herself up properly. Trying to clear her eyes of spots, she rubs at them with her clean paw, before being able to see clearly again. She hears, before she sees Bayrull as he sputters and coughs near her. Her paw drops as she glances to him in worry, following him with her gaze as he travels to the edge of the water, taking...bites, out of its surface.

She also hears another noise - a low, grumbling sound, coming from Anatoli himself. Her head falls to the side in confusion, before the very same noise comes from her and makes her emit a small *squeak!* in surprise. Nearby, a tiny lizard that had been making it's escape from the sudden light catches her gaze, and she feels...*something,* in her, and her mouth moistens unexpectedly, the moisture dribbling down her chin in her slack-jawed confusion. As if sensing a negative intent from her, it promptly scurries away, leaving her attention to fall back onto the others.

"-as covered almost all of them. I feel like we don't have the time to take a break right now.."

Anatoli mewed, as Nutmeg was able to tune back into the conversation. She watched him lift a rock into his jaws, leaping onto the tree and heading right for the bugs that were still buzzing around their area on the tree, and her heart fell at his implication; was there no other way? But...the other cat - they mattered too...

"Meg-Nutmeg, you should get that stuff off your paws if you can. I don't want those bugs coming at you because they're mad at us... Once you do, you should follow Tolya across...and I'll send Bayrull after you."

"O-oh...okay..." She absentmindedly rubbed her paw into the ground underneath her, trying to get as much off as she could before she moved forward towards the now leaning tree. Simon, in his usual gesture, swept his tail over her, but it didn't give her the same feeling of comfort as it usually did. She was just too focused on the fate of the bugs' hive and the cat across the river. She watched Simon leave to confront Bayrull at the river's edge, before turning to glance back up to where Anatoli was climbing up the tree. Flexing her paws a little, she was able to fully extract her little claws, **and she slowly began her clumsy, uncertain ascent up the tree.** Bayrull had made this look so easu...

Hmm...maybe once she caught up to him, she could try and talk to Anatoli about the hive...

Summary

Nutmeg finds the bugs buzzing around her paw to be very endearing, but it doesn't last long when she's suddenly blinded by the light. She's worried for Bayrull, for Anatoli, and herself, not liking the weird noises their bodies are making...but most of all, she's worried for the cat that is being engulfed by the moss and the hive that Anatoli intends to remove from the tree. **She attempts to climb the tree** to catch up to him, as per Simon's wishes.

@DefectedCat

NUTMEG's attempt to climb the tree has her scrabbling up the trunk, clinging to the odd, slippery bark and trying to get a foothold on the first bough, which Anatoli made it to. The tree will again groan and dip, swaying dangerously closer to the river. She manages to remain stable, but the noise is concerning. At least the opposite bank does not seem quite so far away... However, this addition of yet another cat in their tree, upsetting their hive, is enough to infuriate a few of the bees nearby. One after another, they duck and dive around Nutmeg's face, before delivering two painful stings to her

cheek and her shoulder. They burn under the contact, throbbing hothothot! The sting on her cheek will begin to swell her left eye shut, though it will not impede her breathing or speech. Luckily, the damage is only surface level.

The water was great. Cool, refreshing, feeling entirely like something he needed, but it was hard to fully appreciate it with the rising tension in his throat. Why didn't it help? Was it the wrong thing? It felt right to drink the water, but not as right as he needed...

Did he need to try something else?

He pulled back from the water, staring listlessly at it for a few moments as he thought about what other things there were to put in his mouth. Flowers, for one. The bees seemed to like flowers. Moss, not doing that again. It was disgusting, and didn't feel right at all.

"Meg-Nutmeg, you should get that stuff off your paws if you can."

Stuff? Bayrull turned around at that, looking to Nutmeg's paws for inspiration. They were covered in stuff-hadn't they mentioned tree stuff earlier?-and that stuff seemed particularly enticing.

He looked at the tree, which was bending lower as Anatoli progressed across it. It was covered in veins that looked similar to Nutmeg's paws. That'd be the tree stuff then! For a moment, he wondered if that would really be the right thing to eat, but he shook those doubts out of his head. The bugs liked it. If the bugs liked it, then what was the harm in trying? They wouldn't steer him the wrong way.

Bayrull rose with an unsteady lurch, coughing and totally missing Simon's query as he headed for the leaning tree. It was nice of it to lower down like this where it was so easy to reach. It must have found the digging to be agreeable. He raised a paw to the trunk, turning his head open-mouthed to say something dramatic about his plans, but the words wouldn't come. They got stuck somewhere in his rough, coughing throat. Slowly, he closed his mouth again, licking his lips and wondering what in the world all that digging had done to him.

No grand speech then. He'd just raise his paw, dig in with his claws like he was going to climb, and-there! Thick, glistening water was oozing from the tree. Sap? He was pretty sure this would be sap.

He breathed a sigh of relief, and took his first taste of the sap. It was thick, sticky in a way totally different to Nutmegs fur, and it tasted-it tasted-

The sap is very sweet, and for a moment it seems to soothe the worst of the pain. But it returns soon after, and does nothing to ease the pressure on Bayrull's breathing.

Sweet.



Bayrull decides he likes water, then starts thinking up other things to try. Tree sap, for example. **Bayrull tries eating some tree sap to soothe his throat.**



* Anatoli *

He/Him • Post 11 • 332 Words

Journal

The pointy rock in his mouth made the ascend a lot less comfortable than he had hoped it would be but with a little bit of patience he managed to get a good leap in far enough to where he could pull himself up the rest of the way and onto the bough of the tree. He took a deep breath of relief through the rock occupying his mouth before the form under him quaked under his added weight. Did he really add that much to it? Unbelievable. The strange texture of the bark made it difficult to really hold onto and even with his claws digging into it, he realized the next steps would have to be planned properly.

Angry buzzing made its presence known from all around him and a quick glance upwards confirmed that the flying bugs, that had seemed so peaceful before, were beginning to form a thick swarm just above him. He whirled around when the tree let out another creaking noise behind him. Someone else, Nutmeg, had landed on the same bough behind him! Despite her smaller size the tree didn't seem happy about another cat stepping on top of it and dipped further downwards towards the water. But not only did the tree disapprove of their endeavors, neither did the bees. The ones Nutmeg had been distracting earlier joined the others in their swarm, seeming more and more agitated by the intrusion, before diving down towards the both of them.

"YopT!(chort)" he cursed, dropping the stone, before ducking away, avoiding the attack of their, previously thought to be, friends. Afraid of losing his footing and plummeting into the river if he stopped now, he did the only thing that appeared logical to him at the moment: Run. His claws digging into the tree to push him forward he sprinted along the tree trunk towards the middle of the river where he knew the tree was going to end eventually. And when it did, he jumped.

* Summary *

With the creatures getting more and more agitated before attacking him and Nutmeg, **Anatoli follows his instincts** and runs along the trunk of the tree towards the top of it until it ends and he jumps..

Roll: 15

Having built up speed, Anatoli launches himself into the air. He moves fast enough to avoid the bees, but the river is wide and his jump does not carry him forward quite far enough. Anatoli lands about half way through the river. His landing is awkward and carries him down below the surface for a few moments. The force he hit the water with was strong enough to bruise, and

Anatoli will feel a faint throb in his ribs. He is now in the water and can feel the pressure of the current pulling him downstream.

Anatoli takes 9 damage

Simon

He/him ♦♦♦ Post 12/? ♦♦♦ Word Count: 623

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

Clearly the water, despite feeling refreshing going down his own throat, did nothing to aid Bayrull, as evidenced by the hacking that the smaller tom did. So then what? "Bayrull, I--" Simon trailed off, blankly watching as Bayrull stepped over to the tree and lapped at the copper liquid. Well, that was one option.

Why was Bay making those noises in the first place? None of the others were, so what--oh, wait, didn't Bayrull say something about the moss? When they first met? He'd gotten some in his mouth when he was helping Nutmeg get it off herself, Simon recalled. Said it was bad or something. Could that be what caused it? Glancing to the side, he stared at the moss nearby as if requesting answers.

Just like the red fluttering thing from before, the sight of a lizard peering through the moss had his insides lurch and his mouth water. Suddenly, it all clicked. He wasn't sure how or why, but he knew: if they could drink from the river, then it made sense that they could (and should) consume other things as well. That was why the buzzers went to the flowers--there must be something in them that stops their own insides from hurting! Hungry, his mind supplied.

He exhaled, feeling tension and doubt leak from his body as he came to a rather sobering understanding of how life worked. Simon couldn't say he liked it, but…it all just felt…natural. In a way, it actually helped to shrug off the tension he hadn't even realized he'd been carrying since they discovered the lizards. He still found the lizards, bugs and fluttering things cute, of course, but the sheer feeling of acceptance and rightness he felt when he connected that eating led to staying strong and on their paws helped.

As he tried to focus, the buzzing of the agitated bees grew louder, and his eyes crossed slightly as a buzzer flew around his nose. Once more he experienced an emotion for the first time: a pinprick of annoyance. He was trying to think, here! But the annoyance had the benefit of drawing him back to reality, along with the loud splash of Tolya hitting the water. Oh no, Nutmeg seemed to be in troubleand he wasn't sure if Bayrull had succeeded in getting the noises to stop. Quickly, or at least, quickly for him, Simon touched Bayrull on the side with a paw.

"Not what I was going to suggest, but... okay. I think maybe... well, biting that lizard could help too, though, if that doesn't work..." He shared his new knowledge steadily, as he gestured with a paw toward the same lizard he'd seen earlier. "You ate-eit? Ate the moss, maybe something else will help? Whatever you do, try and do it fast... I'll help Meg."

Maybe, he thought, maybe he could use his new knowledge to help here. The buzzers had been attracted to the sap before, so what if he used their hunger against them? He found the spot on the tree that Bayrull had pulled some of the sap from, and worked to quickly coat his paws in it, like Nutmeg had done. Setting his forepaws now onto the trunk of the tree, he swallowed and lifted his chin. "Hey, buzzers! Leave my friends alone... we just want to help the Big One over there! No need to go biting, now... We'll even put the tree back!" He figured that, like the lizards, they couldn't speak back, but him calling attention to himself like Nutmeg did might distract them enough for the little she-cat to hurry past. He braced himself, hoping his fluff would deter at least some of them if they agot hostile.

Summary:

Simon has a moment of clarity and insight as he realizes that nature requires them to eat and drink to keep going. Reluctant as he is, he suggests to Bayrull that, if the sap doesn't help, he could try eating one of the lizards nearby. Knowing that they have to follow Anatoli across the river soon, he lets Bayrull make the call and uses this new insight on hunger to draw the attention of the bees so she can go along the bridge.

Roll: 14

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

* Anatoli *

He/Him • Post 12 • 383 Words

Journal

Anatoli felt himself leaving the stem behind as he launched himself into the air. Without his body weighing it down as much anymore, the tree bounced back upwards a little almost hitting his leg in the process. He could hear some of the bugs following him, buzzing angrily but his sudden departure had given him the headstart he needed. Unable to catch up with him they lost interest and returned to the remainder of the swarm. And to Nutmeg. A bit of guilt for leaving her to deal with them alone made itself known in the back of his mind, but he had acted too quickly to really do anything about it now.

His 'flight' didn't take as long as he had hoped and with the other side of the land still quite a bit away, Anatoli felt himself losing height as he began his descent down towards the dark, rushing water of the river below. A cold shiver ran down his spine as his paws hit the water followed by pain against his soft belly when the rest of his body landed on the surprisingly hard surface of the stream.

Only moments later his body continued to sink down and Tolya barely managed to shut his eyes before his head met the same fate. All the sounds became muffled. The buzzing of the buggers, the voices of the other cats he had barely even noticed until they were gone, it all felt so much further away. In exchange his own pulse felt a hundred times louder.

A sudden tightness growing in his chest called the tom cat back to reality. A sense of panic settled in his mind and he began struggling. His legs kicked against the liquid almost without any result until he felt his head bop back above the surface of the water. He gasped for air and continued kicking his legs to stay afloat. His panic subsiding slightly, he began looking around, water dripping in his eyes and clinging to his fur, weighing him down.

Locating the tree he noticed that he had already been washed up downstream quite a bit, but he was also closer to the other side now. Knowing where he came from, he began swimming towards the opposite shore of where the other cat was.

* Summary *

Anatoli experiences the discomfort that is jumping into a river belly first. After orientating himself on the tree, **he** begins his swim towards the other shore, where the stranger was.

Roll: 11

Anatoli splashes towards the other side of the river. It is not at all graceful, and the activity leaves him quite winded. However, he manages to pull himself up onto the opposite bank.

Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 12 | Words: 504

Beneath her, the tree dips unsteadily, loosening her already fragile grip on the bark and nearly making her fall right back to where she'd started. She manages to stabilize herself, just barely, and she lets out a long sigh of relief now that she's positioned herself...though it doesn't last long.

To the side, the hive has now grown considerably more angry with the cats' presence. Where they were once amicable towards her, they were now *furious*. A few of the closest bees dive towards her face, and before she can even blink, she's been stung on her cheek and shoulder. She cries out from the unexpected pain and shock of the impacts, both areas now throbbing in unison - not only that, but they felt like they were *burning*, too. Her left eye is slowly closing off its sight by itself, and this only frightens her all the more in her already terrible situation. Her claws dig further into the bark beneath her as she hugs her body close to the surface of it, trembling beneath the angry swarm above her.

She didn't want to move, she couldn't; the bugs would attack again, they'd hurt her, it was already burning and so hot and her eye cheek and shoulder *hurt so much and-*

The tree suddenly shudders beneath her paws, making her squeak in surprise and nearly making her topple over again, and she can just barely make out with one eye the sight of Anatoli walking...running - falling?

Through the air, directly into the water below with a mighty splash!

Simon was yelling something from the ground, and she struggled to focus on his words past the painful and hot, hot sensation in her cheek and shoulder that muddled her mind so terribly. "Hey, buzzers! Leave my friends alone... we just want to help the Big One over there! No need to go biting, now... We'll even put the tree back!"

What was he doing...? The bugs would attack him too...! Unless - he was doing it on purpose? Her one good eye narrowed slightly, spotting something glistening on Simon's paw, and she realized what he was doing; he was using the tree-stuff like she had earlier!

Above her, the bugs were still hovering around her threateningly, and she didn't think she had much time to stick around and find out if Simon's idea worked for them a second time. He was trying to stall them for her - she had to use this chance, not waste it. So, instead, she turns toward where Anatoli had run off, and prepares herself to follow him down.

On shaking, unsteady paws and only half-decent vision, her distance across would probably be far shorter than Anatoli's, but she really, *really* did not want to be bit by the bugs again. With a singular exhale, she releases her claw's vice-like grip from the bark **and begins to sprint across the tree, nearly forgetting to leap from the end at the last possible moment to make it across.**

For the few moments she is airborne, Nutmeg is in love with the feeling - like she's weightless, open, loose; it's exhilarating. And then she's falling. She hits the other side, stumbling, her landing more than a little awkward as she fights to stay up-right on shaking legs, but she manages. Pausing for a few seconds only to stare at the ground she's touching in shock and relief, she whirls around and stares across to the other side of the river, where Simon and Bayrull yet remain.

Summary

Nutmeg's first experience with pain is definitely not a good one. Not only does her shoulder and cheek feel like they're on fire, but she's also unable to see out of one eye. Luckily, Simon is to the rescue and attempts to distract the bees for her. Without sticking around to see if it works, she **sprints across the tree and tries to**jump across the river like Anatoli had done just before.

YSimonY

He/him *** Post 13/? *** Word Count: 510

It was working! At least, the glowing bugs hadn't attacked him or even Nutmeg as she raced past! His throat light glowed brilliantly as she disappeared, and Simon listened for a splash that would signal her entering the water like Tolya. When nothing came, he grew a bit concerned, but rearing up awkwardly gave him the slightest glimpse of her making it across the entire gap. Great! Now she and Tolya both-- who looked much more tired than Nutmeg, granted-- were both across, and Bayrull could go next!

"Good jump!" He called jovially, forgetting for a moment the urgency behind their motives. He also had no idea that, based on the sheer distance across the river, they were very unlikely to have heard him.

A bee buzzed a bit closer to his face and he leaned back, nearly toppling over the roots, before remembering the situation. Right, focus. Simon righted himself on the base of the toppled log, turning to look down at Bayrull as he asked, "are you ready?" He couldn't tell upon a simple glance over whether or not the sap helped, and he wondered how Bay would make it across if they couldn't figure this out.

Still, there was a steely determination in his resolve to make sure Bay got across, and his instincts were telling him that eating something like one of the lizards -sad as it was- was something to at least try. So what could he do to buy them more time, if Bayrull needed it to catch one? If they even had time at all.

Swallowing and feeling his throat orb bob with the action, he felt struck by a weird sort of inspiration. One that, instead of assuring him of facts he somehow knew, gave him a bizarre vision of the open bright flowers. Why did paying attention to his orb spark that? He glanced again at the bees along the trunk and thought: 'well, we probably have no time to get a real one, but if the bees are coming after the sap and get stuff from the flowers... maybe combining both ideas would let him draw them from the hive altogether? Maybe not all of them, but enough that when the time came they could cross swiftly.

Fumbling with the sap on his paws, he slid off of the tree bridge and waddled haphazardly a few feet away. Happy thoughts made his orb glow brighter, right? He focused on the relief and glee he'd felt seeing his two companions across the river safely, and a jangling purr erupted from him as his light grew. He stood tall on three legs, his final one extended out and coated with sap to entice the bees. This way if any DID come over, he could waddle backwards to keep a distance. One pretend bright flower, coming up!

"If the sap didn't help you, maybe it'll help us a bit more here! Try for the lizard or go across the tree-maybe there're things to try over there?" He suggested through his melody of jingling.

Summary:

Simon has just enough of a vantage point on the roots of the tree to see that both Tolya and Nutmeg have made it across to the other side. Thrilled but feeling the looming need to hurry, he urges Bayrull to do what he has to while the bees are docile. Looking around, he has an idea and uses the time waiting for Bayrull to smear the sap upon a nearby plant stalk, after which he purrs to make his throat glow and simulate an open Bright Flower. Hopefully the bees are interested enough to leave the hive and give them a better chance to hurry across.

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

Bayrull leaned his head against the tree trunk, enjoying the few moments of free air he was getting. When his throat turned sore again, he took a few more licks of sap. The moments of peaceful breath felt like the best thing he had found in this whole place. How had he not noticed it before?

Was Simon saying something? He'd been too distracted by his throat to pay attention.

"...biting that lizard could help too, though, if that doesn't work..."

"I-wh-what ווֹצ-פִּרְּםֹ?" he choked out, before taking another few licks of soothing sap. "What's a ווֹצִמִּרִם?" he asked, baffled.

He stared at Simon's paw, where the buzzing necky glowbugs were beginning to gather. What...what was Simon doing over there? Making friends?

"Are you ready?" Simon asked, seemingly oblivious to Bayrull's jealousy.

That one hurt a little bit. Bayrull wanted the bugs to be his friend. He found them first!

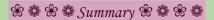
Pouting, he pushed himself away from the tree and watched for a moment as more and more bugs gathered around Simon. Watching that made him feel bad. He didn't want to watch it at all. He turned and took a few more licks of the tree trunk, then set off into the surrounding brush.

He felt that feeling again. The same one from the night when he had been alone in the tree. It wasn't as scary now that it was light outside, but it still felt bad. He thought he knew the word for it.

"Lone-cough-lonely..." he murmured, casting his gaze around the trees and ferns.

Simon really wanted him to bite a lizard. Whatever that was. Maybe if he did that, he could come back and Simon would let him make friends with the bugs too.

"L-liz-cough-Lizards?" he called out weakly, hoping they might show themselves. He'd wanted to say more, maybe something nice to convince them, but it was hard to talk. He'd just have to hope he found them on his own then.



Bayrull enjoys the sap for a few moments, but is driven by Simon's actions to abandon that for now. **He attempts to hunt for a 'lizard' to bite.**



* Anatoli *

He/Him • Post 13 • 317 Words

<u>Journal</u>

Struggling against the current of the river, Anatoli pushed forward focusing on the shore. He felt his body getting dragged further down the river a couple of times when especially strong currents whipped against his body and the cold began slowing down his limbs when he finally reached the shallower end of the river. Grabbing onto a particularly sturdy looking twig between his teeth, Tolya pulled himself up onto the soft moss of the other side.

Feeling drained from the experience, he slumped down for a moment giving his legs some rest while thinking about the next steps. With the adrenaline leaving his body he realized that he had acted rashly and left the others on the other side. Or so he thought. With a loud *thud* something landed on the moss nearby and he rolled over to see

Nutmeg, who had followed him across the river. Much more gracefully at that. He felt a little embarrassed thinking about his far less elegant crossing.

Shaking the water out of his fur he moved over towards Nutmeg, his eyes scanning the landscape for the other cat, which was what brought them here in the first place. A loud grumble from within him, reminded him of their condition. He thought back at the lizards they had found and felt his mouth water a little. Maybe they had enough time for a quick break now after all..?

"Nutmeg" he called out when he got close enough "I want to try grabbing one of those lizards for us to.." He wasn't sure how to put the feeling into words "To make the noise stop. Maybe" That'd do. "Can you check on the cat? Call me if something happens!" Giving her an encouraging nod he moved towards the plains with his ears perked up and his eyes focused on the tiniest movements in the moss and underbrush searching for something to hunt.

* Summary *

Anatoli pulls himself back onto dry land and meets up with Nutmeg. **He decides to attempt to hunt for them** and asks Nutmeg to check on the cat.

Roll: 18
You can't see any lizards around to pounce on.

This wasn't working. His neck hurt, it didn't jingle anymore, and even in the bright glow of the day he could tell his neck had dimmed. It wasn't casting as much of yellow light on plants as he drew near. What was he doing wrong? Surely if he was supposed to find lizards to bite, then he would just find them, right?

He sighed, as best as he could at least, and fell silent. The lizards weren't talking to him, and the farther he walked, the less he could hear anything of Simon and his bees. There was nothing to talk to out here, and trying make his neck tremble rebelliously. Whatever he thought about all this, it would just have to stay in his head for now.

This was tiresome. His paws still moved against the moss and he kept pressing forward in search of a lizard, but it wasn't fun. He wanted to have fun. He wasn't to have fun. That's what it seemed like at least.

He paused for a moment, pulling his claws against the flavorful trunk of a nearby tree. Another hit of sap could cool his throat, and then he'd keep looking.

Cool, then
The sap in the tree.
Lizard, when
Will run up to me?

This was still something he could do, he thought to himself. He could think up the words that sounded right, and string them together into whole ideas for what to do. Between him and the rhythm, he'd find a way to make this work.

He'd find a lizard of that he was sure If just for a moment he found where they were

He could look for hints of lizards passed, then, couldn't he. Try to find where they stood and where they ran. He looked back at his own trail, noting the subtle shift in the plants where he had pressed onwards.

This would be a good plan, he thought to himself. This would see him through to a lizard for sure. All he had to do was look in the right spot...

Bayrull sees something shifting in the bushes near the river. He can not however, figure out what it is. It is difficult for him to concentrate, and each breath is now painful.



Bayrull is looking for a lizard. An attempt at perceiving, you might say.



Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 13 | Words: 365

Turning away from the others across the shore for a moment, Nutmeg focused on Anatoli as he padded up to her, his fur dripping with water and making him look smaller than he really was. Fighting to keep her amusement from showing - they really didn't have time for that - she instead focused on his words as he neared her.

"I want to try grabbing one of those lizards for us to...to make the noise stop. Maybe." The noise? She tilts her head in confusion, before a grumbling noise emanates from her torso that promptly reminds her of what he's referring to. "Oh!" She mewed, holding a paw to her stomach with faint embarrassment. She didn't know why, but a sound that loud coming from her made her feel silly.

"Can you check on the cat? Call me if something happens!" She glanced up at this, catching him just as he'd turned around and began to leave again. The cat...yes, she could do that, but...where? She couldn't see where it was from here, could she? She turned in circles where she stood, looking around fervently to try and spot them. She could feel an uncomfortable, anxious warmth crawl up her back and face, as she realized she couldn't help.

She turned back towards Anatoli, prepared to run after him to explain why she couldn't do as he'd asked, when her stomach rumbled again. He looked focused, too, trying to find something to stop both of their bodies from making the noises. If she interrupted him...

Her shoulder twinged painfully, and her paw immediately went to it, tapping it lightly in discomfort. Bayrull...Simon, both of them would know where to go, but they were still across the jump spot.

Maybe...she could help find something for their weird body noises instead. That way, she'd still be helping! If both her and Anatoli were doing it, by the time the other two came across, they might all be able to fix it at the same time!

Dropping the paw from her shoulder, she walks a bit further from the shore, opposite of Anatoli, and **looks** around for something to stop their bodies from making the grumbling noises.

Summary

Nutmeg, despite desperately wanting to go and help the moss-cat, discovers that she doesn't know which way to get to it...she'd never had enough time to look while she was on the tree. Instead, she thinks to help in a different way, via hunting. She looks around for something to help the rumblies their stomachs are making.



He/him ♦♦♦ Post 14/? ♦♦♦ Word Count: 344

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

He had to admit, he hadn't really expected this idea to work so well... Or, rather, he hadn't really thought of what to do after it worked. Simon gave a deep albeit nervous chuckle as he felt the bees hover close to his throat light. He'd seen them sting at Tolya and Meg and for some reason he felt a flare of panic when they settled into his massive mane. But he could freak out later. Bayrull still hadn't answered him, so he spoke again, drawl even more pronounced, "Bayrull, I--Bay?" He paused, watching the smaller cat disappear into the moss and fog.

Wait, where was he going? Hadn't he seen the lizard? Simon looked around but could no longer see it. Oh, Bay was probably going to try and find it, then. But that just meant that the sap hadn't done much to help, which saddened him. It appeared that, for now at least, the group had been split into two, and Simon felt like he could trust Tolya and Meg to look out for each other while he helped Bayrull.

A small wiggle of guilt wormed its way into him, the longer he stood there. What had the point of his plan even been, with Bay unable to cross the bridge? Nutmeg was fine now, he shouldn't have wasted time with making nice with the bees when his friend was struggling so much. Granted, he had no way of knowing just how bad it had gotten, unable to imagine what having a clogged throat felt like. First, he had to get away from the swarm without making them mad. His green eyes dart to the river beside him, barely four pawsteps away. Would they follow him if he went into the water? Maybe not.

Simon felt his chest squeeze and he realized that he'd been somehow holding all the air in--when did that happen? Letting it out now in a slow sigh, he pondered how best to handle the situation; namely getting these bees off so he could hurry to Bay's side.

The bees do not seem to be aggressive. Perhaps if Simon guides them back to their hive slowly, he might not get stung.

<u>Summary</u>

Simon realizes he is kinda screwed thanks to his plan actually working. Even worse, Bayrull has slunk off into the fog on his own. Internally screaming, he eyes the river and wonders if they'd lose interest if he went in. Or, really, he tries to think of any other method to get them off of him without being stung. After a long pause of deliberation, he slowly cranes his paw inch by inch to rub the sap off against the nearest tree root, thinking they might follow the alluring smell once his light dimmed a bit. Hopefully another burst of inspiration would aid him once more, if this doesn't work...



Despite his best efforts with the water, the sap, and the hunt, his throat just kept getting worse. What would happen if it kept going like this? Was it even possible for his throat to hurt more? Was it possible for him to breath even less? What if he lost his breath altogether?

Those thoughts rolled uneasily through his mind as he blearily cast his gaze around for something to eat.

He wished Nutmeg was back here. When she was here, things were okay. He could breathe and talk and have fun. Now he couldn't do any of that. Simon said Bayrull needed to bite a lizard, but what if he really just needed Nutmeg back? Was Simon hurting the same way from lack of Anatoli?

Somehow, he doubted it. Last he saw, Simon replaced Anatoli with bees. He found his solution already. Why couldn't Bayrull find his? It was so hard.

Nothing on that tree. Nothing under that fern. Nothing skittering across the moss. He didn't see anything, lizard or otherwise. Nothing, that is, until he looked back towards the river to a peculiar, eye-catching bush.

There was movement. His throat hurt, and he didn't know what it was, but there was movement. Was it a lizard? He didn't know, and he wasn't sure he cared. He was fed up with his current situation, and about ready to try anything to get out of it.

Slowly, he moved closer to the bush he'd seen it in. Not because he wanted to, but because moving was harder the more his throat hurt. He took things slowly, padding against the moss and keeping his eyes on the spot. He hoped it was a lizard. Or that it was anything. He needed something.

The closer he drew, the more he felt like he should hold his breath. Breathing was too distracting. The anticipation added to it catching in his chest. The silence grew as he drew closer.

Bayrull's clumsy movements alert whatever was in the bushes to his presence. There is a flurry as it begins to run.

* * * Summary * * * *

Bayrull is going to hunt the movement.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wx9hjDLX_FE

It hadn't noticed him-not yet- he thought gleefully. He was going to win! He'd catch it, and bite it, and he'd be better again!

He sped up, wanting to get it as fast as possible, but the trees around him seemed to have other ideas. A root caught under his foot, then moss caught on his claws, and before he knew his, his quiet stalking became a clamour of wheezing and excited yelps as he rushed forward.

Something moved in response-something moved in response! It was right there, he just had to get it!

He forgot about the pain for a moment, eyes going wide and neck lighting up with the thrill of the hunt as he lunged forward. His target darted away long before he landed, but the movement kept his eyes fixed on its path.

He could hear it now too, now that he was close. It scratched against the bark of the trees and made the plants shuffle against each other as it moved. It was barely audible over the roar of the river, but Bayrull's ears turned to face it, clearing out the noise.

He lunged against, this time roughly hitting a tree with his shoulder as his momentum carried him forward. Missed again! It was still here though, he hadn't lost it yet, and he wouldn't let it get lost. This was his chance to really win at something here, to bite the lizard and fix his neck!

Paws readied for one more good spring, Bayrull stilled himself for a moment to track his target's movements. If it kept moving that way, and he jumped that way, then maybe he could pin it this time.

He only had a moment to consider it, hardly any time to think, but his instincts tried to work it out for him, letting him leap at the potential lizard one more time.

Bayrull runs after the creature. He sees as the bushes clear that it is one of the lizards. They are running as fast as they can. It is a few paces ahead of Bayrull.

* * * * Summary * * * *

Bayrull is in hot pursuit.



Simon

He/him ♦♦♦ Post 15/? ♦♦♦ Word Count: 313

He's already inching slowly up along the tree to where the hive is lodged, when a thought occurs to him. Which seemed to be happening a lot, and he'd honestly be really happy when they could go back to the leisurely time where this anxiety sent his mind into overdrive. It was so much nicer. That being said, he thought about how, while he was thrilled the bees weren't a threat now, he wasn't sure if they'd stay that way once he put them back. After all, he and Bay still needed to cross the river.

The urgency to save the Big cat discovered by Bayrull, however, was trumped by his growing urgency to help his friend. Bayrull hadn't looked too good before he vanished, after all. Well, it was time to do something other than think. Tolya and Nutmeg could do what they felt was right, he at least had to make sure Bay would be able to make it to them.

Turning the way he saw Bay go, he propelled himself forward with a sudden lurch, tucking his light deep against his chest and obstructing the glow with his wildy long fur. He raced with a heavy huff through the bushes, hoping that the bees would follow what little light still shined through his fur but that his mediocre speed would let him slip away eventually. As he ran, he found himself moving with a sort of heft that the smaller cats hadn't seemed to possess, and he felt like his speed was no where close to theirs, but the idle thought was jerked from him as he swerved to avoid a Bright Flower that appeared in the fog.

He could hear the distant rustling of grass and plants off to the side and, assuming it to be Bayrull, Simon clumsily turned and headed that way, back toward the river bank.



Summary:

Simon decides last minute to duck back and race away from the tree, intending to lead the bees away and then lose them in the fog.

Roll: 8





https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTFxE32onks

His heart was pounding, his throat wasn't bothering him, and though his paws missed another time, he had his target in his sights. His lungs were screaming, and as he raced forward, he howled "THAT'ら LIZAAARD"

Had it not been scared before, it certainly must be now. Bayrull was sure the fierceness in him made it into his voice

For a moment, the world seemed to slow as he and the lizard made eye contact. It's bright yellow scale shimmered in the light, perhaps producing some of its own. It's eyes were wide with fear, its mouth agape as it took in the horror that was Bayrull the Hunter. Bayrull the Starved. Bayrull the Biter.

He could see the terror in its eyes as he bore down on it, this lizard knew full well what it was up against. Sure as he could see terror in its eyes, it could see hunger in his, a fierce desperation.

So, it did the best thing it could do, it steeled itself and ran, desperate to evade Bayrull's pursuant paws.

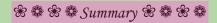
"IDITE THE LIZARD!" Bayrull crowed, demanding that the world knew his goals. It had to let him have it this time. He would keep trying until he couldn't try anymore!

The moss hardly even felt soft anymore, so firmly did his paws move against it. The lizard was a slight breeze, a skating leaf. Bayrull was an avalanche, a hero of his own, one who'd change the world all with this one lizard, all with one good bite.

"Here! Come here!" he demanded of the lizard, lunging forward with his claws outstretched. He had to have it this time. There was no way this lizard could keep going like this. He was bigger, faster, bitier, and somewhere inside him he *knew* this was the way it was supposed to be.

The lizard is too fast and dives into a small hole in the ground where Bayrull cannot follow.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Jo73WL319Y



Bayrull, howling: "THAT'S LIZAAAARD!" Bayrull is in hot pursuit. Dinner or bust



* Anatoli *

He/Him • Post 14 • 320 Words

Journal

Feeling slightly revitalized and energy flowing back into his limbs after his traversal of the river, Anatoli started his search for something that could satisfy this deep rumbling sensation in his stomach. He felt a sharp sting in his chest when he took a deep breath, likely the result of his inelegant dive into the cold water of the river. It hurt less than the actual impact, but he couldn't deny the aching sensation still residing in his chest and part of his stomach. "Not doing that again", he noted to himself.. Despite the aching, he felt good enough to continue on for now.

His paws carried him through the mossy green landscape in search of a lizard or some other creature that inexplicably seemed like the right solution to their troubles. A couple of times he could've sworn that he heard something next to him or behind him but everytime he twirled around to get whatever was lurking nearby he was greeted by just more and more moss wherever he looked. "Oh.. come on! They were everywhere between the trees earlier." He mumbled to himself as he continued on his tracks.

A rustling nearby caught his attention and when he lowered himself, sneaking up on said spot before pouncing into some stray bushes he was met with more.. More nothing. Nothing. His tail lashed back and forth in frustration and he noticed he had deviated quite a bit from Nutmeg, barely able to see her anymore. "Guess I'll try over there." Tolya shrugged with a sigh and got back up, making his way back towards where he spotted the silhouette of the smaller cat

Keeping his ears perked and eyes sharp scanning the area for potential prey, he began his journey back towards the river. There had to be something here right? It wasn't like there were just no creatures on this side of the river right? That'd suck.

* Summary *

Anatoli searches the mossy landscape for something to eat. A lizard or so maybe.

Roll: 6

Anatoli thinks he spies movement a short distance away. A lizard pops its head out of a hole but does not emerge the full way.



♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

He didn't get incredibly far, though in retrospect he would admit that he had been pretty dumb in trying to jerk away like that. Especially after he had gotten them to calm down in the first place.

Regrets for later.

No, he made it a short distance from the river bed when he first felt the pain. Right between his ears, where his fur was thinner before running out into the messy mane that enveloped his neck. With a short yell, he nearly tripped but was just able to right himself, continuing to press on into the shock of bushes that emerged through the fog. Bursting out the other side in a small haze of delirium momentarily gave him the impression that he was safe, but the looming buzzing got him moving again before he could feel at the burning on his head.

As he looped around and re-emerged from the fog onto the bank, he paused at the sight of Bayrull leaping and failing to attain a lizard as if vanished into its hole. So close! But his distracted nature gave one of the tenacious bees just enough time to catch up and come around to the front, stabbing him right in the nose. It was immediate and gripping, Simon yelling out as he crumbled to the ground, paws shielding his now enflamed muzzle.

It seemed, for now anyways, that the remaining members of the swarm had lost him in the fog. Even better, they were now away from the hive and bridge. This was a swift, passing thought, though. At the moment, he was more caught up in the agonizing, sweltering pain that bloomed on his head and nose.

He was already panting from the short adrenaline rush, so he didn't even notice how he couldn't inhale through his nose until his mouth finally shut. An intake of the air sparked another seizure of pain, and he nearly rolled about in a panic before opening his mouth to let more in unobstructed.

Was this how Bayrull felt? Only worse, Simon figured, since any sort of breathing had seemed to be a struggle for the smaller cat, while he could at least manage through his maw. Weakened from the sprint, his paws shook slightly by the time he managed to right himself and sit up. Simon stared down at the now almost lifeless insect beside him that had given their being just to hurt him once. It made him sad, on top of the minute anger he felt at the pain. What a waste. It wasn't like he even disliked them, and, if anything, he knew they had only wanted to protect their hive. They didn't have to die so pointlessly, though.

That being said... maybe it was the blitz of pain talking, but what if it wasn't for nothing?

From an INT roll of 18:

The bee stings burn, they burn hot, so hot that Simon feels the skin around the points of contact blister. The acidic sting races through his veins like fire. Everything feels sensitive and tense but so alive at the same time. He touches the sting on his head, the skin feels a little weird there. He looks over a Bayrull, the other cat is clearly suffering and needs help. The moss, they know its the moss. Simon looks again at the bees on the floor, still twitching and barely alive.

Heat... He's already noticed from the day and night cycle and the changing temperature that accompanies it, that the plants respond to changes. Could heat like the warmth of the day cycle influence the moss in Bayrull's throat in some way?

He was just full of epiphanies, wasn't he? He looked back at the fog where he'd lost the bees, and then over to where Bayrull was. The decision was easy.

"B-bay--" he made a face, voice made horribly nasally thanks to the swollen and stuffed up nose. "It-it's okay, give one of these a try, certainly makes me feel... more alive." A bad joke, and laughing hurt a bit, but what else can you call the raw striking heat coursing through him? As dizzying as it was, the pain had a sort of revitalizing sting -hah- to it. Gingerly, Simon prodded the twitching bee, paw shaking. "They're pretty hot, it might help... instead of a lizard"

Simon makes it to the foliage before a burst of pain sears into his face terribly, blocking up his nose and making him crash to the ground in agony. He lays as he deals with his first dose of pain, before blearily realizing that the two bees that stung him are on the floor beside him, twitching and dying. He struggles to think beyond the pain, but what if the bees could help Bayrull?

> ((Result integrated into post above but not used in word count))

Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 14 | Words: 381

No matter where she looked, Nutmeg was unable to see anything. Her tail brushed across the ground lightly as she stood in thought, her one good eye surveying the land around her. She cast a glance back towards where Anatoli had gone, now barely able to spot him through all the layers of bushes and foliage. She watched him leap - at something? Or in response to something, she didn't know, and she couldn't make out his body language from her current distance.

She could see him beginning to pick his way back to her, and her ears folded with worry about what he'd think when she explained why she couldn't get to the cat right away. A cold, guilty feeling washed through her, and she promptly turned her head away to focus on her current task; finding something to help all of their noisy bodies.

She couldn't see anything around her, which meant she could try to smell, instead. She took a few steps forward, falling into a steady, peaceful pace as she trotted in circles around the area, her face lifted to the air. She inhaled as hard as she could, puffing up her chest in a funny way akin to how Simon had earlier to cheer her up, to try and smell something, anything, like the glowy things her, Simon, Anatoli, and Bayrull had been chasing after earlier. Anything other than those bugs that had gotten angry at her for climbing their tree...

At the thought of the bugs again, her shoulder and eye promptly reminded her of their existence, and she was momentarily drawn out of her focus by the discomfort. So far, she hadn't really noticed much of a difference in her sight, but now she couldn't see out of her left eye at *all,* and that frightened her. Would it go away? Was it only for a little bit that the pain would stay? Or was she stuck like this forever?

The pain had settled, considerably, from what it had been before - which meant that it *could* go away, right?

...Maybe Simon would know more...he was smart. He would know what to do about it!

With hopefulness lifting her mood, Nutmeg returned to her mission of scenting out something for her and the others.

Summary

Nutmeg isn't able to find anything with her sight, and decides to switch to scent. She briefly worries about the state of her shoulder and eye before deciding to rely on Simon's help for that in the future. Hopeful, she **returns** to her hunting mission via smelling for anything nearby.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E&Nv5hWd-Js

The lizard ran down a hole.

He stood at the entrance to it, stunned. It-he never thought it would do something like that! He didn't even know there were lizard holes out here.

So much for being the hunter supreme.

He was ready to spiral into another teary, miserable episode when he heard Simon's voice behind him.

"B-bay--"

Simon sounded very...silly.

"It-it's okay, give one of these a try, certainly makes me feel... more alive."

Bayrull turned to look at him.

Simon looked very silly.

"Ппе-спидh-ппе what?" Bayrull asked, frown starting to turn into a smile thanks to Simon's lumpy appearance.

"They're pretty hot, it might help... instead of a lizard." Simon said, drawing Bayrull's attention to a bug lying still on the ground.

"...уоц-соц9h-у-соц9hсоц9h-" His throat was really driving him crazy! It was impossible to talk like this. Exasperated, Bayrull decided to trim down his sentence. "Ме ыте?"

He stared at the bug-it was still like the cat across the river was, and wondering if he could really do it. If he could really bite the bugs he wanted to make friends with. Would they mind?

"Вид, if I—соидь—bite—соидь—," he started, moving forward and leaning down low to address the bug. "Would you might—соидь—if—соидьсоидь—bite?"

The bug didn't answer. It didn't even do that buzzing thing they liked to do.

Well...Simon had been having such a good time with the bugs earlier. And he said he tried one, and it turned out alright. They must not mind too much if they let Simon try them.

He would do it then, he'd bite the lizard(bug) and do it!

He leaned down lower, opened his mouth, and paused, just in case the bug wanted to run out of the way. It didn't. So, he carefully picked it up with his teeth, shook it a bit, and chowed down.

The pain Bayrull experiences will be unlike anything he has encountered so far. He feels the bee's furry body burn the entire way down his throat, setting all of his senses alight. Just like the skin of the previous victims of the bees, Bayrull's skin begins to blister along the inner lining of his throat. He might well try to scream, but that will only intensify the pain. His eyes close tightly. He can still feel the bee burning its way through his digestive system, and this pain will remain until the end of the chapter. However, it will cause him no permanent damage, although his throat might be sore for a while. The one relief Bayrull does feel is an easing in his chest and throat. The bee has left his insides a little swollen, so his breathing is not quite back to normal. However, the moss has burned away, not a trace of it remains.

Bayrull considered the bee's taste as he rolled it around in his teeth. It was weird, like the total opposite of tree sap. Kinda hot, no really hot! Out! He needed it out of his mouth now!

Instinctively, he swallowed.

"AAA-" he started to scream, immediately cutting himself short and clamping his paws over his mouth. His throat hurt even worse now! This was horrible!

Eyes watering, Bayrull made a few clumsy steps towards the river before falling over-cats weren't made for walking on two legs. With his front paws still clamped over his mouth, Bayrull began rolling back and forth on the ground kicking his hind legs in the air.

Finally, he managed to find the words to tell Simon, "Hot! HothothothothothothOOOOT!" That last one was too loud though, as he snapped his paws back over his mouth with a pained squeak.

* * * Summary * * * *

Bayrull eats the bug!! (drama, horror, tragedy)



Simon

He/him ♦♦♦ Post 17/? ♦♦♦ Word Count: 317

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

"Bug, if I—cough—bite—cough—, would you might—cough—if—coughcough—bite?"

Simon heard Bayrull talking to the deceased hotbug, though he said nothing to contradict it, rather a bit caught up in concentrating on breathing around the horrid blockage. Eyes closed tightly, he gingerly rested a paw on his nose, trying to soothe the pain despite a vast majority of it being inside of him.

Said eyes shot open in utter shock as Bayrull swallowed the hotbug and began to scream. Leaning away slightly, Simon was left slightly aghast at the sight of his friend taking his advice and suffering because of it. Though Bayrull was definitely moving around like he had at the start --wild and sporadic-- this isn't what he meant when he said it'd make him feel more alive. Instead of the wacky silly vibe that Simon had felt watching Bay previously, there was only guilt.

How could he fix this? It was his fault, after all. He had just locked onto the river as Bayrull reared up onto his back legs and stumbled toward the same goal, only to flounder and fall. Shaking off his long fur that had poofed out even more, Simon bit back the pain of his own stings and came to Bay's side, trying to nudge him back to his paws.

"Come on, whirlwind...." He ran his feathery tail over Bay, trying to purr and reassure the other. It made sense, right? The water was cool and the pain was hot, and he might be struggling to think clearly, but it was as good an idea as any. Wait, what if it didn't help, though? He couldn't make Bay test it first this time.

Dragging himself the final few feet, he plops down and <u>unceremoniously dunks his muzzle into the</u> <u>water, just hoping this didn't worsen the pain. At least this way, if it failed, Bay wouldn't be the one to suffer for it.</u>



Summary:

Simon can only watch as Bayrull bites the metaphorical lizard and proceeds to flail about in a wild storm of limbs. It isn't until Bay is able to scream out the issue does Simon realize he MIGHT have underestimated just how hot these tiny things are. Oops. Seeing the water beyond Bay, he makes a connection and tries to nudge the other to the river before dipping his own nose into the water.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20JphbcA95Y

He needed something-anything to make his throat quit doing this! Right now! Man, and he thought he had it bad before. Eating bugs was the worst thing ever!

He thought back to the last thing that had calmed his throat down: tree sap. It hadn't staved off his earlier problem, but desperate times call for desperate measures, and sometimes desperate measures include trying the sap thing again. Maybe it'd fix things this time!

He took a few deep breaths, steeling himself for the upcoming sprint, then pulled his paws from his mouth so he could stand properly.

"Come on, whirlwind...." Simon said, brushing past him to the river.

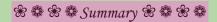
"I'm going! I'm going." Bayrull squeaked out, trying to find a way to talk that didn't hurt so much. Squeaking helped.

Now on his paws, he shot off in the direction of the fallen tree. Sure there were other trees around, but he knew this one worked best earlier. Tilting it sideways might have something to do with that. He wasn't sure he knew or cared though.

The river roared beside him, masking the sound of the nesting bugs, but he could still see them there by their hive. He was happy to see them, but the memory of eating one was almost enough to make him cry. He looked away, tears forming in his eyes as he ran. Correction: it was more than enough to make him cry.

He hit the tree with his front paws, jerking himself to a stop with heavy breaths as he frantically searched for that line where the sap would come from so easily. There! Right there!

He snapped his claws against the trunk of the tree, hitting it multiple times in his fervor. The sap oozed out-perfect-and he hastily lapped up as much as he could.



Bayrull makes a run for the tree bridge and drinks tree sap to try to soothe his throat.



Nutmeg | She/Her | Post 15 | Words: 366

So many smells that Nutmeg couldn't even begin to describe flooded her senses, quickly overwhelming her as they filled in all at once. She could faintly recognize Anatoli's scent, amidst the flurry of the other smells, and it gave her a miniscule amount of comfort; enough to calm herself down, at least. She rubbed a paw at her nose, as if to brush away the discomfort she'd just experienced, before trying again.

This time, there was another vaguely familiar scent; the same scent that the first creatures - besides Simon, Anatoli, and Bayrull - she'd seen had had! Her eyes widened in relief at her discovery, even though she had yet to actually see it. Quickly, she turns to see if Anatoli was close enough yet, offering a brief wag of her tail in the general direction of the scent as if to invite him to follow her. Then, she carefully picked her way towards where it had come from

Not too far away, she spotted it...*them*, a cluster of the glowy animals resting on top of a rock. Their eyes were closed...why were they closed? Was it too bright for them? But...weren't *they* bright themselves?

When that flash of light had happened earlier, she'd closed her eyes - without meaning to, of course, and she'd tried to cover them, even, because it had kind of hurt. Maybe it was the same with them?

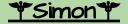
She followed the train of thought for another few beats before blinking herself back in focus, completely having forgotten her actual objective. They were easily scared, she remembers, knowing how much they hissed or ran away from the others with their earlier interactions. So she'd just have to be quiet, right?

Gingerly, she raised her paws up and placed them down with equal care, slowly bringing herself closer and closer to the rock. She can feel excitement buzz through her, fighting off the urge to purr through it as her tail hung high in the air with glee.

She watched the creatures breathe, eyes closed and soundless, and her body squirmed once, twice, and *three* times in eagerness before finally, she **pounced towards the lizards, aiming to catch one between her paws**.

<u>Summary</u>

Nutmeg is briefly overwhelmed by the scents around her, but once she gets used to them, she follows the familiar scent of the lizards. Barely able to contain her excitement, she **pounces towards the sleeping animals, trying to catch one between her paws**.



He/him *** Post 18/? *** Word Count: 370

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

The cool blast of the water against his nose felt absolutely amazing for a second. Sadly, though, it did little to sate the thrums of fiery pain that continued to spasm through his noggin, other than dull it somewhat. Better than nothing, he guessed. He was rather thirsty from the hussle and chase a moment ago, anyways. Already having his entire face in the water, he opened his mouth and drank.

Due to this, for a split second, Simon felt like he was choking. Water bubbled as he accidentally traded the air for water, and he sputtered as he tugged up his head and shook it wildly, spraying water droplets everywhere. Blinking best he could through the water streaming from his eyes, he first heard and then saw Bayrull trudge up to the Tree cross and start to claw at it for the sap. Huh, that was an idea. What might happen if he put some on his nose and head? Would it soothe better than the water? Maybe not something to try until they were across and away from the hive, though, considering the hotbugs' attraction to it.

Oh! Right! He squinted through the blur of the water up at the hive of the hotbugs, trying to gauge how many remained that hadn't followed him into the fog. Thankfully, at least, his chasers hadn't returned yet, at least from what he could tell...

Lightly rubbing at his eyes now with his paws, he shook his head once more and blinked. Much better. He still couldn't breathe through his nose, and it and his head occasionally stung, it was more manageable now and he could think better.

Another dunk to be sure, though.

"How 'bout it? That sticky stuff help at all?" He rasped, after bringing his head up again and coming to stand beside Bay. "Might need some fer my nose-- haha," he chuckled, coming out as awkward snorts that only made him laugh harder. He tried to cover it with the long draping fur of his forepaw,

"Heheh, quite the weird sounds I make now, huh?" Even through the throbs of heated agony, he couldn't deny that laughing made him not feel as... bad. "But what about you?"

Summary:
Pulling his head from the water, and uncertain if the cool liquid even helped, Simon now tries to gauge how safe their passage will be across the bridge. He checks on Bay as he does this, nasally voice a bit distracting and making himself laugh despite the blockage. He also asks about how Bay is feeling overall, considering how much more paid the other had been in.

Roll: 5



The sap worked again, acting as a soothing balm to his throat. It still hurt, hurt more than he had imagined possible, and far more than it had before eating the bug, but he finally felt like he could breathe again. He really wished he could breathe easy *and* not be hurting so much, but it didn't seem like his body was going to make that easy for him.

"How 'bout it? That sticky stuff help at all?" Simon asked, coming closer to take a look.

"Yeah, some," Bayrull rasped, hide roiling up on his back as he shivered against the burning sensation of his throat.

"Might need some fer my nose-- haha,"

Bayrull shrugged, focused much more on his throat and the sap now. He could laugh at the joke later. He scratched at the bark again, making less of a mess now that he wasn't flailing quite so wildly. The paws he'd used to scrape at the bark were all kinds of sticky now, already starting to get bits of dirt and bark clinging to them.

"Heheh, quite the weird sounds I make now, huh? But what about you?"

"Yeah," Bayrull responded in a low tone, grimacing as speaking aggravated his throat once more. "M' throat hurts," he mumbled, rattling his throat as little as possible as he spoke.

He'd just have to keep drinking sap, it seemed. Drink until he didn't need to anymore. Well, that wasn't too bad, he thought as he took a long lick of the stuff. The sap was actually really nice, he thought with a slight smile. It tasted good, it felt good, it didn't smell particularly bad. All in all, probably the best thing he'd put in his mouth to date.

He flicked his tail at Simon, trying to brush him closer to the tree. It was too much trouble to talk ever since his throat started bothering him. Hopefully Simon could work out what the tail meant on his own. He seemed to have lots of ideas.

* * * Summary * * * *

Bayrull continues drinking tree sap because it makes his throat feel better.



YSimonY

He/him ♦♦♦ Post 19/? ♦♦♦ Word Count: 363

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Oh. Well, Simon supposed that made sense. If the pain was worse than what he felt a moment ago, he could understand why Bay wouldn't want to talk. He sure seemed to enjoy the sap, though.

Fighting down the urge to laugh in endearment --not the time, Simon!-- he looked again at the bridge and the hive. Oh no, it looked like a few had stayed by the lump of nest! But as long as they were careful and fast, it should be fine. All he could really figure was that time wasn't on their side. Hadn't been this whole time. And soon, the hotbugs he'd taken on a run would be back and probably not too happy. Better to face a few than the whole at once.

Simon felt bad for rushing him, when he clearly was still in pain, but the riding tension he'd tried to abate with his nasally voice was back, crashing over him suddenly like a swarm of angry hotbugs. "I know it hurts, Bay, but Toyla and Meg are waiting—so is the Big Cat you saw. Why don't you go first, I don't want the hotbugs to be mad at you for something I did if they come back." For the very first time, the anxiety and urgency he felt truly bled through into his voice, as opposed to the laid-back and confident cadence he'd carried for the most part.

He didn't want to stay separated from the others any longer, especially if he could help it.

There was still the issue of the hotbugs still floating around their hive, but it was better a risk now than an entire horde.

What he didn't say out loud was that, even with the water, he still felt just a little winded from the race and didn't want to slow Bayrull down, just in case. Still, he cajoled himself through the biting pain on his face and head to at least climb up onto the mass of roots leading to the rest of their bridge. Casting a furtive glance at the hive, he positioned himself low and tense to follow right behind Bay when he got up and over.

Summary:

Letting Bay go first, Simon waxes philosophical in his head as he tries to not let his sedate mind dwell on the hotbugs returning too much. He gets ready to cross and support Bay.

Roll: NAT 20!!!





The sap was so nice to him...it really was. Making his throat feel all better, and making itself easy to drink. Nicer than the lizard, which refused to let him bite it. He still hurt though, deep inside. Somewhere past where his breath went. He wasn't quite sure what to do about that, but maybe now he was feeling well enough to do something again. At the very least, he was feeling well enough to talk, so long as he was careful with his voice.

"Mmm, the sap helps," he told Simon, finally pushing away from it with a clinging, sticky noise as he pulled his paws away. He looked across the river, wondering for a moment if there was anything in the water before remembering why they were at a river in the first place.

They needed to cross it! To save the other cat!

He looked up, seeing Nutmeg and Anatoli had long since crossed. They must have done that while he was distracted by his throat and his lizards.

"My turn?" he asked, glancing at Simon.

"Why don't you go first, I don't want the hotbugs to be mad at you" Simon agreed.

Bayrull nodded, shaking out his body to loosen up that nasty feeling in his stomach. He hoped it didn't distract him too much for his big climb. Climbing the first tree had been hard enough.

He took a couple steps back, then a couple forward, uncertain of what the best distance might be to make the first jump. This tree was different after all. It was all leaning over instead of straight. He shuffled a bit more to the side, then decided that was probably a pretty good angle to try and made his first leap at the trunk, claws finding purchase just like they had before.

It was wobbly compared to the first, perhaps because its roots were out, but if he held onto the bark closely, it didn't seem as bad. He began to work his way up the wobbly trunk, determined to make it far enough for a jump of his own.

* * * Summary * * * *

Bayrull takes the lead on round 2 of tree boogaloo. He gets climbin(parkour!!)



Simon

He/him ♦♦♦ Post 20/? ♦♦♦ Word Count: 423

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

Fur fluffed out against the chill he felt, Simon watched with a rapid beating from inside of him as Bayrull made his way along the tree. So far so good. The hotbugs didn't seem to even notice the tiny tom. His shoulders drooped with relief when Bay was well enough past the threat. His turn. Waiting a bit longer just in case, Simon shimmied his way low against the trunk. Carefully, carefully...

He nearly bolted forward when Bay slipped, but the whirlwind was fine after adjusting himself. The split second of hesitation though brought forth the knowledge that he very much would have jumped in after Bayrull if needed. Why, though? Simon thought of the hotbugs that had given their lives just to hurt him. Was the concept similar? Would Simon really give his existence for one small act that might not even have mattered?

Wait, no. This was something to consider and ponder when he wasn't suddenly ahead of Bayrull and... what?

Craning his head back, Simon was a bit dumbfounded that he'd zoned out and passed his companion, who was navigating a different web of branches a bit further back. All things considered, he was unable to help himself from purring up a storm after making it so far along the bridge without it bending right into the water. He knew he was bigger than everyone else, so he'd also wanted to go last just in case it couldn't hold him. However, it looks like that was unfounded!

To top it all off, he was at the very last branch, leaving a small gap between him and the rest of their party! Nutmeg had jumped, but when Tolya had tried, it led to a loud crashing sound that Simon believed came from hitting the water. At the corner of his mind he was aware enough of the small tremors in his legs from the exercise, so he ruled out jumping. Haha, rule. But that didn't mean he had to plunge in like Tolya had.

"We're almost there, Bay!" He called out, staring down into the deep, deep water. Just a little bit further. Knowing now that he only had one method of breathing at the moment, and that the water was good to drink but not to breathe --though he didn't quite understand the difference, he took a deep lungful of air and readied himself. It was a bit tricky, but with some swaying and internal rallying, Simon bit the lizard and slipped into the river directly from the bough.

c **O**LD!

Summary:

SOMEHOW, Simon manages to navigate the entirety of the tree, avoiding the ire of the remaining hotbugs. He zones out and overtakes Bay. Then, taking a breath through his mouth --as he learned that one cannot breathe water, he psyches himself up and slides in and goes for the opposite bank.

<u>Roll</u>: 3

Result: The attempt at swimming to the opposite bank is disastrous. Where on the branch he was surefooted and graceful, in the water he finds himself struggling to maintain balance. It is icy cold, and the shock of it has his head ducking below the surface. He splutters back to the surface, so close to the opposite bank, when a loose segment of stone that must have come free further upstream takes his paws out from under him. The pain in a jolt up his right hind leg, not enough to seriously damage, but certainly enough that he slides several feet off course, and only manages to get a foothold on the opposite bank after a protracted struggle. (-10 Health Base - twisted right hind

He had to be pretty close now, right? It was hard to see with all these branches going all over the place. The tree got more and more wobbly as they went, seeming ready to fall into the river entirely as Simon climbed up behind him.

That was it, he had to jump, now or never! He readied his paws and wiggled his hindquarters as he picked a path through the tree limbs to leap, and he lept.

The water was freezing, a stark comparison to the heat he'd felt before. Not only that, but every time he put a paw down, the water seemed to move with it. He could feel himself moving, he was sure of it, but water wasn't as sturdy as land. It wasn't even as sturdy as a leaning, wobbly tree. He had no idea how to walk through it, and was stuck flailing his legs somewhat blindly in the murky waters.

Sometimes, he could feel his paws press firmly against the water, other times sliding cleanly through. It was hard to tell what exactly he was doing differently that made that happen.

"5-5imon," Bayrull gasped as the larger dark cat splashed down in front of him.

He jumped early. He was pretty sure he did, because Simon landed in the water further ahead. Either that or being bigger meant jumping bigger too.

"Simon, it's cold!" Bayrull wailed, fighting against the river. It seemed to be pulling him away from the others already, he'd have to swim even harder to make it across in the right spot.

He was glad he could breathe now. Climbing took a lot of work, but swimming took even more. The water seemed like it wanted to make things even harder than the tree though, frequently splashing up against his nose and making him choke for a moment. He began holding his breath everytime the water seemed like it would jump that high. Paws shaking from cold and exhaustion, he focused himself on reaching the other shore.

* * * Summary * * * *

Bayrull be swimming across that river. Going for gold at the garden olympics(topical)



Doc 2 -->