

## QUILLSTAR / STREAMCLAN

An unhappy puff left Quillstar's mouth as he sat at the front of the Gathering Place, fur ruffling in the freezing breeze. Making sure to snuggle his paws securely underneath his stomach fur, he began to speak first.

“Good evening,” he greeted, not bothering to take a step forwards to centre himself in front of the gathered cats. “Over the past few moons, StreamClan has been graced with multiple new warriors. Seapaw has been named *Seaspring*, Lightningpaw has been named *Lightningnose*, Dewpaw has been named *Dewdancer*, and Softpaw has been named *Softsplash*. Furthermore, we have two new apprentices, *Drizzlepaw* and *Emberpaw*. All of these cats have proven themselves to be outstanding warriors, and I couldn't be more proud to have them in my Clan.”

A soft glint flashed in his eyes as he settled his gaze upon the mentioned cats. Though, it fizzled out as he continued speaking.

“...Unfortunately, as you all must know, StreamClan has had some... struggles over the past few moons. Two warriors, *Snowbark* and *Mistlefrost*, have been exiled from our Clan. Cats walking by borders, you should remain on *high alert*. These two are dangerous cats, and are heartless enough to take the life of my own clanmate,” his voice cracked as he spoke, his gaze tearing from the crowd beneath him. “If encountered, use any means necessary to keep yourself safe.”

A tired sigh escaped his mouth.

“Other than that, StreamClan's rivers have been flowing and our supply of fish plentiful, we have been comfortable even in this harsh Leafbare,” nodding politely, he turned his gaze to the ValleyClan Leader. “That's all from me. Sootstar, I believe it's your turn?”

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## SOOTSTAR / VALLEYCLAN

Sootstar wanted to cover his ears. The mention of Snowbark and Mistlefrost rang in his head as he hadn't even mentioned the fact that Snowbark essentially “killed” him, taking a life from him. But it seemed Streamclan were going through enough trouble.. Best he spared Quillstar the details of what Snowbark had done to him.

Sootstar dipped his head to Quillstar, taking a step ahead of the other leaders, facing down on the crowd. It seemed.. Empty. Most of the clans looked like they had been hit with an ambush with how much the numbers in ranks have dwindled down. “Evening, clans.” He looked over to Quillstar for a moment. “I would like to start off Valleyclan’s news by giving Quillstar and Streamclan my condolences. Streamclan is in my thoughts for the loss of their clanmate, no one should have to go through that and I will make sure our borders are watched at all times.” Sootstar cleared his throat before looking back at the clans.

“With Valleyclan, I would like to congratulate a new warrior to our ranks, please give a congrats to Centipedecrawl! He has worked hard in his training and we welcome him as a full Warrior to our clan, may Starclan light his path.” Giving the clan a moment to send out their compliments, he continued. “Last gathering I had not gotten the chance to share the news, Flametail and I were expecting kits and already, they have become apprentices. We would like to congratulate Viperpaw, Reedpaw, Silentpaw, Copperpaw, and Hawkpaw! Alongside them we also now have Brackenpaw, Blazepaw, Pricklepaw, Hickorypaw, and Pepperpaw! Valleyclan is ecstatic to gain in numbers and we hope all of these apprentices shine in their duties and training. I would also like to congratulate two new Healer apprentices, both of which trained previously as warriors! With open paws, Lilyfrost has now began training Pheasantleaf, and Clouddancer! May Starclan light their path into the world of healing and herbal knowledge. I am most certain they will make fine Healers in the future!”

But with gain, comes loss... “Although, unfortunately, as the clans may know, the group of F’jell cats have offered cats of our own to join them on their journey to participate in their life. We are saddened to say that Oakvine has left to join them. We wish her well and are also thankful that Valleyclan has only lost one of our members, but still, the pain of even one gone is tough on all of us. I.. Do not necessarily trust this group of cats and why they want cats of our own clans to be with them but as for now, I will stand my distance and so will my clan.” The Valleyclan leader yowled, a look of seriousness shown in his face, he was not to be messed with when it came to the F’jell Byr.

“I would also like to add that in the previous Gathering, I had mentioned Wildsoot and Fawnwish have tried to join Valleyclan to start a new life. After some time and talks with my Deputy, as a good leader, it is the value of each member of your clan to make things move forward in a positive light. The thoughts and concerns have been heard loud enough and with that, I gave my warriors the chance to vote if they should stay...”

Pausing for a moment, he took a deep sigh. “We have come to the decision to remove Wildsoot from our territory. Fawnwish was welcome to stay but as expected, she ran off with Wildsoot as well as Aspenbreath, Beelight’s son. Where they have departed I

do not know for sure but I encourage every clan to watch out for these band of exiled cats, they are up to nothing but possible revenge.”

After yet, another mouthful of announcements.. But it was best the tom was thorough in his words as it was only once a moon they all came together. “Morningstar, you look eager, I’ll give you the floor next.” Sootstar smiled, backing into position to give the Rockclan leader space.

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## MORNINGSTAR / ROCKCLAN

Morningstar watched the two leaders closely and of course noticed the huge scar on the Valleyclan leaders throat. Her flopped ears twitched from time to time as she listened to the two felines.

She nodded slowly as Sootstar called out her name. “Thank you, Sootstar.” she meowed nearly silently as she got on her paws. A groan could be heard as she got up, followed by cracking bones as the small sunset colored leader moved forward to sit down in front of the mass of cats.

“Rockclan also gives its condolences to Streamclan. It must have been very tragic to lose a clanmate like this.” she meowed as she turned towards Quillstar.

Steading her posture she began: “Rockclan has been doing well, while we havent had many new apprentices the past moon, we did have a couple of new warriors joining our ranks, Muddancer, Turtlesnap, Cloudbelly and Runningrain have completed their apprentice training with a very high quality and Rockclan congratulates them for beginning this new step in their life.” she meowed, a smile rested upon her lips as she let the crowd below her cheer for a second or two. “A Rockclan kit named Vixenkit has also been born. We hope he will turn into a fine warrior one day.”

“Furthermore, Roachmask has now also been accepted by Starclan as a full healer and helps Smokemask a lot with her daily duties and keeps our clan as healthy as ever.”

Now even a purr arose from the mollys throat as she talked. “Lilypaw has also decided to step in the pawprints of these two amazing cats and wants to pursue the rank as a healer.”

She took a short break as this was everything normal that has been going on. With a deep breath she continued. “But this hasn't been the only news, as Valleyclan has lost strong

cats to the Fjell, some Rockclan cats decided to leave with them as well.” the smile on her face disappeared as easily as it had come. “To the Fjell we have lost Slateshadow, Hawkmoon, Frostbite, Shadowberry and Willowchomp.” She took another small breath to continue with the last news from her side for today.

“But before Willowchomp left I had to strip her off her deputy rank, which most likely had sealed her decision to leave Rockclan.” Morningstar decided to not give any more detail on this matter as it was simply Rockclans worry alone.

“Rockclans new deputy is Tigerstrike! May his loyalty and strength lead Rockclan toward a better future.” With that, the she-cat got on her haunches again, walking backwards a few steps. She nodded towards Hazelstar to signal her that it's her turn now.

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## HAZELSTAR / WOODCLAN

Hazelstar did not acknowledge the other leaders as she walked past Morningstar to take the stage. She did not care for formality right now. She was *enraged*.

After meeting with the investigation patrols, talking with Pinepath, and meeting with her deputy. She concluded there was only one way to solve this, ‘*No use in me beating around the bush. There is one thing WoodClan demands. It is **justice**.*’

“**Cats of the forest,**” she breathed out, her gaze full of nothing but spiteful rage as she scanned the crowd. Looking for *her*, the cat behind it all. She had no doubt in her mind that after all of this, Pinepath’s story of Beetlebloom’s life, the fur between Beetlebloom’s claws, the scents at the border.

It was *her*.

Seeing a cat from her clan in such a state. After witnessing Cinnamonsnap, and now this so soon.

She refused to let it go. She could not let these cats think WoodClan would stand for this, not any longer.

Her gaze shifted to Pinepath, a fiery blaze in her eyes. One that matched the small warriors, “**I come to you with matters too important for our usual casualties. Forgive me for being brash, but I would be doing my clanmate a disservice to go through my announcements like usual and put him at the end like this. I will keep this brief, and to the point.**” she

meowed, her voice beginning to tremble with anger. Her tail was bristled as it lashed back and forth in a calculated manner. She had been waiting for this, thinking it over for the little time she had from his attack to the gathering. All of that planning went out of the window at that moment, she felt like she was in a fight or flight situation.

*She was ready to fight.*

**“Two days ago. RockClan’s shared border with WoodClan, we found Beetlebloom’s body near lifeless. Had Pinepath and a RockClan healer not been there, he would be as good as gone. He was snared in a trap, which could possibly be considered an accident, but the level of torture that he had been put through *after being snared* is one that cannot go ignored. This was no accident. This was a *crime*.”** she snarled, her claws digging into the soil. **“I know you are here tonight, Spiderbite. You will not leave this gathering without meeting my wrath. You may not fear many, but I will make you fear me before this day is over.”** she threatened, her teeth glinting in the moonlight. Hazelstar, usually composed, had been fed up with seeing her clanmates relentlessly *beaten* and *worn*. She was their protector, their only means of having their voices *truly heard*.

She would rise up and howl at the moon, no matter how long it took, no matter how sore however *raw* her throat would get.

They would get their due justice.

**As much as I would like to share the details, there is one here who knows the tale from start to end. She will be the one to tell you, I expect you, *hush and listen well*.”** she narrowed her eyes, her gaze turning to Pinepath.

**“Pinepath, please tell the clans what happened.”** she commanded.

Their gazes swivelled.

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## ***PINEPATH / WOODCLAN***

An eerie quiet settles over the gathered cats.  
Holding their breath, waiting.

Hazelstar has given her the floor.

As mouthy as she is, she has never spoken in front of such a large group of cats before, and though she does not sit upon the same stones that the leaders, or even the healers do, the

cats around her have stepped back as though she is dangerous. As though she is much like a certain icy-eyed Clanmate of hers.

Perhaps she was, once. But idle threats hissed to Roachmask are example enough of how devoid she is of caring about the twisted siblings of her mate.. What she wants most, is to return to Beetlebloom's side. So...

The floor is yours, Pinepath.

Thinking: *'remember to breathe. You'll be back with him soon.'*

Her mouth opens, dry and tasteless like a desert. Words should not fail her. They do not fail her. Usually. But having hundreds of pairs of eyes trained on you can freeze the mind. Turn the mouth to ash. She feels like a flame, sputtering against the darkness of the night. Eyes, hundreds of eyes. Staring.

**"At the border,-"**

Her words are weak, she can feel that. A tremble of leaves, rustling in the breeze. They need to have weight. So she tries to cast her mind back to finding Beetlebloom. In snow and blood. She feels her pelt prickle uncomfortably. A hot flush of anger and fear washing over her pelt in waves. Finding him, holding him, standing in the way of death, teeth bared in a snarl.

And her lip curls.

**"Spiderbite attacked Beetlebloom!"** She wants to dig her claws into the earth, but gatherings are where promises of peace must be upheld. And her pupils flick to the sky, just once, wondering if the clouds have grown stormy. But they do not. And though her faith in StarClan is a felled tree at best, she supposes that the endless, unmoving dark grey clouds are some kind of go-ahead.

Please, continue.

And she does.

**"He went there to visit his family. Out of the goodness of his heart."**

Of his siblings, he has always been the kindest. And look where it got him. Her expression trembles, just slightly, and she sneaks a glance at Tigerstrike. He's a deputy now. What does he make of it all? No matter, his stormy-blues are focused intently on her. And the runt warrior feels comforted, just by his presence. Stormy gaze and all.

'I'm almost sorry I left.' Thought mournfully.

**"I... she met with him at the border, he was trying to mend his relationship with his siblings."**

*'They should've been grovelling at his paws, begging for him to accept their apologies.'* The wretched thought crosses her mind and her brows furrow sharply. **"Though he did not need to!" Her voice rises, an octave higher. "He was being a good cat by giving them a chance. And Spiderbite... Spiderbite got him trapped in a snare."**

Pine-green eyes glance at Hazelstar, she's been a WoodClan warrior for some time, but she knows that even apprentices do not get caught in those things by mere accident.

**"Those are... the facts. Spiderbite's scent was all over Beetlebloom, and his eye wounds... he has lost his remaining eye. Those claw marks-"** heaving in an unsteady breath, a stuttering inhale of air. **"She took his remaining eye with her claws. How else would he have sustained those injuries?"**

Because she would not even entertain the notion that it was an accident.

Because it wasn't.

**"I... she has to pay. I want her punished."**

*'Darling, if you're here tonight.'* Thought listlessly, paw absentmindedly tracing a pattern into the pristine snow. *'I'm sorry. But, I'm also not.'*

Her lips twitch into a sneer. She hopes that, at the very least, this strikes fear into her. She can stick out this gathering, if only to bury the rot that will not die.

Her head turns to Hazelstar.

The floor is yours, leader. Please, take it back. I don't want it.

Instead of saying that, though, the ginger and white warrior dips her head. Nice and low. Hazelstar has commanded her respect ever since she allowed Pinepath to join her Clan.

She trusts the warm-toned brown tabby to pursue justice. And her evergreen-eyes glimmer slightly as she makes eye-contact with the leader. Mouthing:

**"Please, if not for me, for him."**

Stepping back into the crowd, though still very much at the front of it, Pinepath's dark-ginger paws press into the snowy earth beneath. Her stomach churns uncomfortably.

Chewing over and digesting the idea that Spiderbite may not be punished.

*'StarClan, if you're there-'*

Thought pensively, eyes squeezing shut, just once, as though she is pained.

*'I know I'm not a good person, but he is. Please, please get him justice.'*

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## **HAZELSTAR / WOODCLAN**

**"And there you have it,"** she her ears pinned to her skull, **"Spiderbite's fur was found between Beetlebloom's claws, Spiderbite's scent was found all over Beetlebloom's**

body, the border, everywhere. The evidence is overwhelming, there is *no denying this*. Denial is ignorance. Denial is willingly *looking away*. There is *no denying this*.” she spat.

There would be cats who would refuse this information, would support Spiderbite. She knew it, they *lingered* and *crawled*. They would never be truly free from the Dark Forest and their vile clutches. *But if she could remove some of the venom, she’d scrape it out with her own claws.*

“If it were *my* decision, I would take your remaining eye as you have done to Beetlebloom, then send you fending for yourself in exile. The amount of suffering he went through is *immeasurable*. These are things he will take to his grave, his eyesight can not heal, his eyesight *cannot be returned*. We are lucky he even breathes to this moment, StarClan knows any day he could be gone. We are grateful he still draws *breath*.” she shook her head. Owlshine and her had deliberated on what to suggest, if to suggest anything at all, but Hazelstar refused to seem like she was neutral on the matter.

She wanted punishment, and she didn’t want Spiderbite getting off easy. The only path Spiderbite would be allowed to walk was a treacherous, rocky road. Hazelstar would carve that path *herself* if she must.

“However, it would be *foolish* of me to demand it, as much as I want it. I know you will be punished, I will be sure of that. The decision is not mine alone, and as *furious* as I am, I cannot simply force the clan’s paws and send you into a snowy grave. So. I suggest a trial, I’ll let your life be at the *mercy* of the cats who surround you. I hope you’ve treated them well in your years as a *clancat*,” her eyes were slits, nothing but rage and *disgust*.

“Your life is in their paws. If there’s any god you believe in, it’s best you start *praying*. You may meet your maker before the moon sinks below the horizon.” she spat.

With that, she sat back down. Refusing to look at the leaders who sat beside her. She felt no guilt for exposing her true feelings.

*WoodClan would not be hurt any longer.*