

# Allegiances

## ThunderClan

Leader Darkstar-dark brown tabby she-cat with white spots and green eyes

Deputy Mossyfall-white she-cat with gray spots and blue eyes

Medicine Cat

Sprucestalk-tall light brown tabby tom with green eyes

Apprentice, Kestrelpaw

Warriors

Pebblespot-silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Smallstone-small gray tabby tom with amber eyes

Honeyflurry-golden tabby she-cat with green eyes

Moosebriar-dark gray she-cat with brown paws and amber eyes

Smokethorn-gray tabby cat with amber eyes

Mothstream-golden she-cat with white spots and green eyes

Apprentice, Lightningpaw

Cedarspring-silver tabby tom with amber eyes

Flowerwaters-cream she-cat with green eyes

Spottail-fluffy ginger spotted tabby tom with blue eyes and a white tail-tip

Briarstep-silver she-cat with green eyes

Ferretear-small white tom with green eyes and large ears

Dovefeather-fluffy gray she-cat with blue eyes

Twistedflank-calico tom with a twisted leg

Prickleflash-cream she-cat with green eyes

Quailbrook-large gray tabby she-cat with white paws and amber eyes

Apprentice, Beaverpaw

Apprentices

Kestrelpaw-dusky brown tom with green eyes(Medicine Cat Apprentice)

Lightningpaw-black tom with amber eyes

Beaverpaw-large brown tabby tom with a stub tail

## Queens

Rushrock-silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes(mother of Smallstone's kits, Dustkit, a silver tabby tom-kit with amber eyes, and Condorkit, a small silver tabby tom-kit with blue eyes)

Swaneyes-deaf white she-cat with blue eyes(helps out with kits)

Frostgaze-white she-cat with silver spots and bright blue eyes(expecting Cedarspring's kits)

## Elders

Speckpatch-old, speckled beige tom with amber eyes

Daisystream-silver tabby she-cat with age, once beautiful cream-colored she-cat

Bristlefern-orange and white tabby she-cat with blue eyes, oldest cat in the Clans

# RiverClan

Leader Streamstar-sleek silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Deputy Lightstep-small golden tabby tom with green eyes

## Medicine Cat

Tumbleleaf-orange she-cat with a white belly, paws, and tail-tip and blue eyes

Apprentice, Mistpaw

## Warriors

Branchfluff-beige tabby tom with green eyes

Marigoldnose-fluffy golden she-cat with green eyes

Grayrunner-sleek gray tom with blue eyes

Apprentice, Moonpaw

Cloverstrike-fluffy silver she-cat with green eyes

Tinypad-tiny silver tom with blue eyes

Tornfish-scarred black tom with a torn ear and blue eyes

Witheredstreak-white cat with a gray streak in their fur and orange eyes

Bramblesong-brown tabby cat with white spots and green eyes

Pinewind-brown tabby tom with green eyes

Brightfoot-calico she-cat with bright blue eyes

Apprentice, Briarpaw

Darkjaw-dark brown tom with yellow eyes

Brindlespeck-speckled gray she-cat with green eyes

Brookstride-sleek silver tabby she-cat with amber eyes

Mossrunner-sleek gray and white tom with green eyes

Echoclaw-brown tom with dark tabby stripes and amber eyes(formerly of SkyClan)

Flowertail-beige she-cat with a silver tail-tip and clear blue eyes

Apprentices

Mistpaw-silver she-cat with darker ear tips and clear blue eyes(Medicine Cat Apprentice)

Sandypaw-beige she-cat with green eyes

Briarpaw-brown she-cat with dark tabby stripes, white paws and tail-tip, a white spot on her belly, and bright blue eyes

Moonpaw-small silver she-cat with one white paw and blue eyes

Queens

Lakeflame-orange tabby she-cat with blue eyes(formerly of ThunderClan, mother of Pinewind's kits, Goosekit, an orange tabby tom-kit with green eyes, Troutkit, a calico she-kit with green eyes, Sagekit, a calico she-kit with blue eyes, and Pricklekit, an orange tabby tom-kit with blue eyes)

Silvertail-fluffy silver she-cat with spots of black and white and blue eyes(mother of Echoclaw's kit, Owlkit, a brown tabby tom-kit with silver ears and amber eyes)

Swanpond-white she-cat with green eyes(expecting Tinypad's kits)

Elders

Weaselsight-white tom with amber eyes

Vinesight-beige tabby tom with green eyes

Haydust-golden tabby tom with green eyes

## WindClan

Leader Foxstar-orange and white tom with green eyes

Deputy Hazelsting-thin beige she-cat with hazel eyes

Medicine Cat

Icepuddle-white she-cat with one green eye and one amber eye

Apprentice, Cherrypaw

## Warriors

Aspenface-white she-cat with black tabby stripes and amber eyes

Palewater-pale gray she-cat with blue eyes

Witheredbelly-gray tabby cat with a scarred stomach and amber eyes

Badgertail-black and white tom with amber eyes and a large tail

Hayrunner-golden tabby tom with green eyes

Eelwhisker-sleek black tom with amber eyes

Frogstorm-silver tabby she-cat with green eyes

Slateskip-thin silver tabby tom with amber eyes

Mothpuddle-golden she-cat with white spots and blue eyes

Boulderjaw-large black tom with green eyes

Spottedgaze-calico she-cat with green eyes

Otterfall-small brown tabby tom with blue eyes

Newtlight-thin brown tom with black stripes and gray eyes

Hailspots-gray tom with white spots and amber eyes

Cinderbranch-dark gray she-cat with amber eyes

Pikedawn-silver tom with one blue eye and one amber eye

Berryblaze-black and white she-cat with blue eyes

## Apprentices

Cherrypaw-brown tabby she-cat with green eyes(Medicine Cat Apprentice)

Mottlepaw-mottled beige tom with green eyes

Littlepaw-small beige tabby tom with green eyes

## Queens

Fernbranch-gray tabby she-cat with green eyes(mother of Boulderjaw's kit, Wolfkit, a smoky gray tom-kit with green eyes)

Daisystreak-cream she-cat with a gray streak of fur and green eyes(mother of Otterfall's kits, Goldenkit, a brown she-kit with green eyes, Daykit, a brown tom-kit with a gray streak of fur and blue eyes, and Pigeonkit, a silver tom-kit with green eyes)

## Elders

Fernstep-gray she-cat with darker flecks and green eyes

Marigoldfluff-fluffy silver she-cat who was once a bright golden with green eyes  
Smokeshadow-dark gray tom with blue eyes

## ShadowClan

Leader Nettlestar-silver tabby cat with green eyes

Deputy Bearthroat-big brown tom with small ears, amber eyes, and a scar on his neck

Medicine Cats

Rockwing-stone gray tom with one green eye and one blue eye

Owlthorn-brown tabby tom with green eyes and dark brown flecks

Warriors

Pricklefur-beige tom with prickly fur and green eyes

Ashenslip-white she-cat with gray stripes(formerly of WindClan)

Snailtail-white cat with blue eyes and a small tail

Crookedpond-silver she-cat with blue eyes and a crooked ear

Sandlegs-brown tom with beige legs and green eyes

Pineblaze-brown tabby tom with green eyes

Cootbrook-beige she-cat with brown flecks and amber eyes

Springwillow-brown tabby she-cat with green eyes

Breezejump-black tom with green eyes

Batshine-dark black tom with brown stripes and amber eyes

Wasprock-golden she-cat with black stripes and green eyes

Speckpoppy-speckled tall gray she-cat with green eyes

Feathereye-silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Apprentices

Stagpaw-brown tabby tom with amber eyes

Ashenpaw-silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Pigeonpaw-speckled gray tom with amber eyes

Rushpaw-gray tom with black stripes and blue eyes

Queens & Nursery Fathers

Goldenstone-golden she-cat with gray paws and green eyes(mother of Breezejump's kit,

Mudkit, a black tom-kit with green eyes)

Elmwaters-beige tom with black stripes and blue eyes(father of Cootbrook's kits,  
Amberkit, a beige she-kit with black stripes and amber eyes and Rosekit, a beige she-kit  
with brown flecks and blue eyes)

Elders

Pebblestorm-silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Sandydawn-beige she-cat with brown flecks and green eyes

## SkyClan

Leader Emberstar-smoky gray tom with amber eyes

Deputy Flamefern-ginger tabby tom with green eyes

Medicine Cat

Aspendawn-white she-cat with black stripes and amber eyes

Apprentice, Ebony paw

Warriors

Brownclaw-brown tabby tom with green eyes and several scars

Antwatcher-small black tom with amber eyes

Apprentice, Swift paw

Branchstem-brown tabby tom with green eyes

Eveningback-brown she-cat with amber eyes

Hazeldawn-cream she-cat with hazel eyes

Sprucestreak-brown tabby cat with amber eyes

Applewillow-cream she-cat with green eyes

Hawkstreak-smoky gray tom with blue eyes

Dayshine-cream she-cat with amber eyes

Witheredsky-gray tabby tom with sky blue eyes

Silverthroat-silver tabby she-cat with a scar on her throat and blue eyes

Beelegs-golden she-cat with black stripes, long legs, and green eyes

Seedpoppy-tall cream she-cat with green eyes

Apprentice, Speckle paw

Sheepfur-fluffy white she-cat with green eyes

Leopardfall-golden she-cat with black spots and amber eyes

Pinewaters-brown tabby tom with green eyes

Apprentices

Ebonypaw-black she-cat with green eyes(Medicine Cat Apprentice)

Swiftpaw-black and white cat with amber eyes

Specklepaw-speckled gray she-cat with green eyes

Queens

Troutpetal-silver she-cat with white patches and blue eyes(mother of Witheredsky's kits,

Graykit, a gray tom-kit with white paws and blue eyes and Rubblekit, a gray tabby tom-kit with a white spot on his eyes and white ear-tips and amber eyes)

Ivyswirl-white she-cat with gray swirls and green eyes(expecting Hawkstreak's kits)

Elders

Weaselspeck-small white tom with amber eyes

Crookedstorm-brown tabby tom with a crooked tail and green eyes

Buzzardleap-cream tom with amber eyes

Prologue

"Silvertail, I can't leave my Clan," Echoclaw meowed, "I know it's allowed, and I'd just have to pass trials, but the shame I would face... what will my father think?"

Silvertail's blue eyes widened, shining with tears.

"That doesn't matter," she whispered, "I'm sure Streamstar would accept you, and you won't see him as much!" Echoclaw sighed.

"Silvertail, I can't do that to him," he meowed, "He's old. On one of his last lives. I know you don't want to come to SkyClan, but you could swim and hunt fish in the lake..." Silvertail sighed.

"I know," she meowed, "But it's not that. I don't want to leave my Clanmates, and your father would find some way to kick me out." Echoclaw nodded.

"I guess," he meowed, "I... I guess I could join RiverClan, but I'd feel terrible." Silvertail sighed, nuzzling close to her mate.

"Which Clan do you think kits would be happiest in?" she asked. Echoclaw's eyes widened.

“What?” he asked. Silvertail looked up at the SkyClan tom.

“Which Clan do you think kits would be happiest in?” she asked, “I don’t want to put them in a situation where their own grandfather will hate them. But I don’t want their father to be miserable his whole life.” Echoclaw stayed silent for a moment.

“You’re... no, yes, I...” he stuttered after a moment, “Which Clan? I-I don’t know! I was happy in SkyClan my entire life... until I was a Warrior. Father put so much pressure on me...” Echoclaw shuddered, and Silvertail thought of what he had told her, about how Emberstar had put so much pressure on him for being the Leader’s son.

“I don’t want my kits to be pressured,” Silvertail meowed, “RiverClan can be dangerous sometimes when the river floods, but they’ll be trained in how to deal with it.” Echoclaw shifted uncomfortably.

“I don’t know,” he meowed finally, “Can I tell you at the next Gathering? It’s a few nights from now.” Silvertail nodded.

“Okay,” she meowed. The two cats stood up and parted ways, walking out of their meeting spot, which was a hollow tree at the edge of RiverClan’s territory, towards the ShadowClan border. Silvertail carefully padded back into her nest, ready to fall asleep when her sister, Brookstride, nudged her.

“Don’t tell me you went to see him again,” Brookstride whispered. Silvertail rolled her eyes.

“Quiet, Brookstride!” she hissed, “And yes, I did.” Brookstride sighed.

“You’re throwing away your life, Silvertail,” she meowed. Silvertail sighed.

“Like you would know,” she muttered, “You threw your life into your duties as soon as we became Warriors-you hardly even talked to anybody for the first moon of us being Warriors!” Brookstride shrugged.

“At least I’m not getting carried away with some random cat from another Clan,” she whispered, “You know, it’s never too late to back out. I know that a few toms would like you, I heard Tornfish is interested-” Silvertail glanced at the scarred black tom and stuck out her tongue in disgust.

“He’s always brooding,” she whispered, “I don’t want him. There’s only one cat I want, and you know it.” Brookstride sighed.

“I’ve heard that he can have terrible anger issues,” she pointed out, “He’s even yelled at his own father before.” Silvertail lashed her tail.

“You don’t know *anything* about him,” she snarled, “Now quiet down. Some of us want to sleep.” Brookstride sighed.

“It’s never too late, Silvertail,” she whispered. Silvertail shook her head.

“I’m not backing out,” she whispered back, “And even if I were to, it is too late. I’m in love, Brookstride. I’d run away with him if I had to.” Brookstride gasped.

“You’re not planning on it, are you?!” she asked. Silvertail shook her head.

“No!” she exclaimed, “Of course not. But maybe if you don’t shut up, I might join SkyClan.” Brookstride quieted down with a few grumbles of something, which Silvertail ignored, curling up and trying to sleep, but Echoclaw’s decision was looming over her head. *If he chooses to stay in SkyClan, will I join? Silvertail wondered, I don’t know if I’d want to... no matter how much we fight, I could never leave Brookstride. Would Streamstar understand? Would the Clan understand? I don’t know...*

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Silvertail searched around the Gathering, hoping to see him. She finally saw him talking with Sheepfur and Pikedawn. Silvertail caught his eyes, then crept off to the side, and Echoclaw followed.

“So, have you made a decision?” Silvertail asked. Echoclaw nodded.

“Yes,” he meowed. Silvertail blinked, her heart pounding.

“Well, what is it?” she asked. Echoclaw took a deep breath.

“I’ve decided to join RiverClan.”

## Chapter One

Briarpaw dipped her claw into the river, trying her best not to fidget, so she could catch a fish. Suddenly, she was pushed into the water, and she looked around, finding herself face to face with a fish, which quickly swam away. Briarpaw swam up to the surface, spitting out some water.

“Moonpaw!” she snapped, climbing out of the water, “You ruined my hunt!” Briarpaw shook the water out of her pelt, then stuck her tongue out at her foster sister. Moonpaw had been found outside of the camp as an abandoned newborn kit a few days

after Briarpaw had been born, and Silvertail and Echoclaw had taken her in as one of their own.

“Sorry!” the silver she-cat laughed, “It was really funny though.” Briarpaw rolled her eyes and splashed Moonpaw, who let out a little yelp.

“I could have caught something,” Briarpaw grumbled. Brightfoot padded over.

“You wouldn’t have caught anything anyway,” she meowed, “You forgot that your shadow leaning over the water would scare away the fish.” Briarpaw blinked.

“Oh, you’re right!” she exclaimed. Grayrunner scolded Moonpaw for pushing Briarpaw in, and the brown tabby she-cat stretched, then spotted a squirrel climbing up a willow tree. Before she could be told not to, Briarpaw ran over to the tree and climbed up, chasing after the squirrel.

“Briarpaw!” Brightfoot exclaimed, “Get down from there!” Briarpaw ignored her, chasing after it. The squirrel leapt onto another tree, and she followed, managing to land on the branch. Briarpaw managed to catch the squirrel, and killed it, then climbed down.

“Briarpaw, you know better than to do that!” Brightfoot scolded, and Briarpaw put down the squirrel.

“I caught it though!” she meowed, “And I’m okay!” Brightfoot sighed.

“Briarpaw, you’re a RiverClan cat,” she meowed, “We don’t eat squirrels.” Briarpaw rolled her eyes. While squirrels weren’t her favorite food, but she liked running in the trees and catching squirrels and birds.

“My father’s a RiverClan cat, and he likes squirrels,” Briarpaw meowed. Brightfoot opened her mouth, but didn’t say anything. Briarpaw’s father, Echoclaw, was originally a SkyClan cat, but he joined Briarpaw’s mother, Silvertail, in RiverClan.

“I caught a water vole!” Moonpaw exclaimed, bouncing over. Briarpaw smiled.

“Nice job!” she purred. Grayrunner glanced at Brightfoot.

“Did she go in the trees again?” he asked, and Brightfoot nodded, “Let’s go back to camp.” Briarpaw and Moonpaw followed their mentors back to the camp, crossing the tree-bridge that lead to their camp. She dropped the squirrel off on the fresh-kill pile, then looked at Brightfoot for her evening chores.

“Briarpaw, you can go and bring the Queens prey,” Brightfoot meowed. Briarpaw nodded, then padded into the Nursery, nuzzling close to her mother.

“Hello, darling,” Silvertail purred, “How was training today?” Briarpaw shuffled her paws.

“I got in trouble for going in the trees and catching a squirrel,” she meowed. Silvertail sighed.

“Briarpaw, you know better,” she meowed. Briarpaw shrugged.

“Well, what would you like to eat?” she asked. Owlkit, Briarpaw’s younger brother, let out a mewl, and she purred, giving him a lick on his head. The tom-kit had been born a few days before, and Briarpaw was obsessed with him, she’d always wanted a sibling, since she was the only kit in her litter, and so was Owlkit.

“I’ll have a fish,” Silvertail meowed. Tinypad lifted her head from where she was resting, her expectant belly plump.

“I’ll have a mouse,” she meowed. Lakeflame, an orange tabby who had moved to RiverClan from ThunderClan, glanced up.

“I’ll share a water vole with my kits,” she meowed, “They’re not as good as normal voles, but they’re all right.” Briarpaw knew that Lakeflame didn’t like fish very much, and neither did her father. She padded out of the Nursery, and then returned with all the prey that the Queens wanted.

“Thank you, sweetheart,” Silvertail purred. Briarpaw smiled.

“Of course!” she meowed. Briarpaw padded out of the Nursery and grabbed a fish from the fresh-kill pile, then joined Moonpaw and Mistpaw, the Medicine Cat Apprentice, outside of the Apprentices Den. Sandypaw, the other apprentice, sat with Flowertail, who was her and Mistpaw’s sister from their litter, but Sandypaw had gotten injured when her leg had gotten caught between a rock while swimming, and hadn’t been able to become a Warrior with Flowertail.

“So, what did you guys do today?” Mistpaw asked. Briarpaw laughed.

“Well, *someone* pushed me into the river today,” she laughed. Moonpaw smirked.

“It was *really* funny though!” she purred. Mistpaw laughed.

“I wish I’d seen that!” she exclaimed, “Troutkit came in with a thorn in her paw from when she and Sagekit were messing around at the edges of camp.” Briarpaw smiled.

“That sounds like those two,” she meowed, “They were always messing around while I was in the Nursery with them.” Moonpaw smiled.

“I remember that,” she purred. Briarpaw took a bite from her fish, savoring the delicious taste.

“What do you want your full names to be?” Mistpaw asked, “I think that Mistleaf would be cool for me.” Briarpaw blinked, wondering what she would want her name to be.

“I like Moonrunner,” Moonpaw meowed. Mistpaw smiled.

“That’s cool!” she purred, then glanced at Briarpaw, “What about you?” Briarpaw shrugged.

“I’m not sure,” she meowed, “There’s so many names to choose from! I think I wouldn’t mind Briarheart or Briarfern.” Moonpaw’s eyes widened.

“Ooh, those are so pretty!” she meowed. They continued to chat and eat their prey until it grew dark, and everyone began to head to sleep. Briarpaw yawned and stretched, said goodnight to Mistpaw, who slept in the Medicine Den, and padded into the Apprentices Den with Moonpaw, curling up in her nest. She smiled as she watched Moonpaw and Sandypaw breathe peacefully in their sleep.

*I never want things to change, Briarpaw thought, My life is perfect.*

## Chapter Two

“Let all those old enough to swim gather beneath the Willowstump for a Clan Meeting!” Streamstar called. Briarpaw padded over to the meeting with Moonpaw and sat down in front of Brightfoot.

“I think this will be the cats going to the Gathering,” Moonpaw whispered, “I hope we get to go!” Briarpaw nodded.

“Me too!” she whispered back. Briarpaw looked up at Streamstar, who looked glamorous in front of the entire Clan. *Streamstar is amazing*, she thought to herself, she’d always looked up to Streamstar since she was a kit.

“The cats going to the Gathering will be Branchfluff, Grayrunner, Tinypad, Witheredstreak, Pinewind, Darkjaw, Brindlespeck, Echoclaw, Briarpaw, and obviously, Lightstep, Tumbleleaf, Mistpaw, and myself,” Streamstar announced. Briarpaw’s eyes lit up in excitement.

“I’m going to the Gathering!” she whispered excitedly to Moonpaw. Moonpaw smiled.

“You’re so lucky!” she whispered, “I wish I was going!” Briarpaw smiled.

“I’m sure you will next time,” she whispered in reassurance, then looked back up at Streamstar.

“Clan dismissed, get ready to go,” Streamstar meowed. Briarpaw stood up and stretched, and she saw her father go into the Nursery, probably to say goodbye to her mother and brother.

“So, you excited for your first Gathering?” Mistpaw asked, nudging her playfully. Briarpaw nodded.

“Yeah!” she meowed. Briarpaw had heard millions of times from Mistpaw and Sandypaw about the Gathering, since Mistpaw went every time, being the Medicine Cat Apprentice, and Sandypaw had gone many other times.

“Cats going to the Gathering, we leave in five minutes!” Streamstar called from the entrance of the camp. Briarpaw padded over to the entrance of the camp with Mistpaw, and was joined by Echoclaw soon after.

“Are you excited?” her father asked. Briarpaw nodded.

“Yeah, I can’t wait!” she meowed, “Will we see any SkyClan cats?” Echoclaw nodded.

“Yes,” he meowed, keeping his head up as they left. Briarpaw narrowed her eyes, wondering why her father was being skittish. They arrived at the Gathering Island and crossed the fallen tree-bridge. The only Clan there so far was ThunderClan, and Briarpaw had no idea who to talk to.

“Briarpaw, I want you to meet some cats,” Mistpaw meowed. Briarpaw followed her friend to some ThunderClan apprentices.

“This is Kestrelpaw, ThunderClan’s Medicine Cat Apprentice, and Beaverpaw,” Mistpaw meowed. Briarpaw smiled.

“Hi, I’m Briarpaw,” she meowed. More apprentices ended up joining, and Briarpaw grew more comfortable, chatting and joking about Warriors being boring and strict. Two SkyClan apprentices padded over, and Briarpaw glanced at them, almost immediately noticing similarities in their body types. While most RiverClan cats had sleek pelts and plump bellies, Briarpaw had a fluffier coat, and while she was plump and well-fed, she had a more lithe frame, built for tree-climbing, than the other RiverClan cats, from her father.

“Oh, hey Ebony paw,” Littlepaw, a WindClan apprentice, meowed, “Hi, Specklepaw.” Specklepaw smiled.

“Hi!” she meowed, sitting down next to Stagpaw, an apprentice from ShadowClan. Ebony paw narrowed her green eyes.

“Are you Echoclaw’s kit?” she asked. Briarpaw blinked in surprise, then nodded.

“Yes,” she meowed. Ebony paw sat down.

“I can tell,” she meowed, “You look similar.” Briarpaw was a bit taken aback, she hadn’t expected the SkyClan apprentice to tell immediately.

“Oh, yeah, um,” she meowed, not sure what to say. Fortunately, the Leaders all yowled for attention, and the Medicine Cat Apprentices, including Ebony paw, all padded over to the Great Oak and sat beneath it. Briarpaw shifted her paws uncomfortably, she was left alone with the other Clan’s apprentices, as Mistpaw had gone to sit with Tumbleleaf.

“Daisystream has joined the Elders den in ThunderClan,” Darkstar announced, “She has served her time well as a Warrior.” The Clans cheered for the old she-cat, and Briarpaw joined, despite not knowing who she was.

“Silvertail and Echoclaw have had a second litter, consisting of a singular kit, Owlkit,” Streamstar announced. Briarpaw smiled, hearing her brother announced to all of the Clans.

“Silvertail! Owlkit! Silvertail! Owlkit!” the Clans cheered, Briarpaw sticking out her chest in pride. She saw her father smile, a proud expression on his face.

“Owlkit should be in SkyClan!” Emberstar snarled suddenly, and there were several gasps from throughout the Clans, “He and Briarpaw are *my* grandkits, and I *demand* they are raised in SkyClan.” Specklepaw rolled her eyes.

“He does this every time, it’s so embarrassing!” she muttered. Briarpaw hardly even listened, she was in such a state of shock. *My grandfather... is the Leader of SkyClan?! she thought, her mind racing, How did I not know about this?! Why didn’t Dad tell me about this?! That’s something important! I think you should tell your kit about that!*

“Emberstar, we go over this every single Gathering,” Streamstar meowed, sounding rather irritated, “Echoclaw and Silvertail chose to raise their kits in RiverClan. We have no control over where they’d like to be. There is no reason for them to get up and move, as Owlkit is doing well and receiving the proper care he needs, Briarpaw is doing wonderfully in training, and Silvertail and Echoclaw haven’t told me about not being happy, and frankly, they seem *quite* happy.” Briarpaw perked up. She hadn’t expected her Leader to mention her training-and to say that she was doing wonderfully! *Has Streamstar been noticing my training? Briarpaw thought, Oh my StarClan! I can’t believe it!*

“We’ll see about that,” Emberstar muttered. The Gathering went on as normal after that, but Briarpaw stayed in a state of shock. As the Clans were all leaving, Briarpaw found her father.

“Why didn’t you tell me that he’s my grandfather?!” she asked. Echoclaw sighed.

“Briarpaw, it’s complicated,” he meowed. Briarpaw lashed her tail.

“So?!” she exclaimed, “You can still tell me! I’ll understand!” Echoclaw shook his head.

“No, you won’t,” he meowed, speeding up and walking away, leaving Briarpaw. She stood there in a state of shock, then joined Mistpaw on their walk home.

“Are you okay?” Mistpaw asked, “I didn’t know that this would end up happening.” Briarpaw sighed.

“Yeah, whatever,” she meowed, trying to play it off. However, her mind was racing. *Streamstar noticed my training! Briarpaw thought, My grandfather is the Leader*

*of SkyClan. Mistpaw knew... everyone knew! Does Moonpaw know? Why does he want Owlkit and I in SkyClan so badly?*

But most importantly, and loudly, *why did Mom and Dad keep this a secret?*

### Chapter Three

“So, wait, let me get this straight, your grandfather is the Leader of SkyClan?!” Moonpaw asked, “Does that make him my foster grandfather?” Briarpaw shrugged.

“I don’t know,” she meowed, “He’s only mentioned Owlkit and I, so I don’t know if he knows about you.” Moonpaw narrowed her blue eyes. Briarpaw sighed. She didn’t know how to feel. It had been a few days since the fiasco at the Gathering, and Briarpaw had been avoiding her father, she didn’t know how to talk to him.

“Let all those old enough to swim gather beneath the Willowstump for a Clan Meeting!” Streamstar called. Briarpaw sat down in front of Brightfoot and looked up at her Leader. *I still can’t believe she said I’m doing wonderful in my training, she thought, The Leader of RiverClan herself has noticed my training!* Sandypaw padded out of the Apprentices Den with her mentor, Witheredstreak, and sat down in front of the Willowstump, while Witheredstreak sat down with the rest of the Clan.

“I, Streamstar, Leader of RiverClan, call upon my Warrior ancestors to look down at this apprentice,” Streamstar began, “She has trained hard to learn the ways of the Warrior Code, and she will now become a Warrior in return. Sandypaw, do you promise to uphold the Warrior Code, even at the cost of your life?” Sandypaw nodded.

“I do.”

“Then Sandypaw, I name you Sandywhisker,” Streamstar finished, “StarClan honors your intelligence and patience.” Sandywhisker smiled, and Briarpaw saw Mistpaw and Flowertail beaming at their sister.

“Sandywhisker! Sandywhisker!” the Clan cheered. Briarpaw saw Mistpaw shuffle her paws in excitement, obviously wanting to run over to her sister in happiness.

“Clan dismissed,” Streamstar meowed with a flick of her tail, “Sandywhisker, you will guard the camp tonight.” Briarpaw saw several cats run over to Sandywhisker, Mistpaw and Flowertail at the front, happy to finally congratulate their sister. Before she could head over, Briarpaw’s father stopped her.

“Briarpaw, we need to talk,” Echoclaw meowed. Briarpaw shook him away.

“No, we don’t,” she meowed. Echoclaw sighed.

“You know that we do,” he meowed, “We can’t just leave this alone.” Briarpaw rolled her eyes.

“Yes, we can,” she meowed. Echoclaw narrowed his eyes.

“What is with this sass?” he asked, “That’s not normal from you, Briarpaw.” Briarpaw sighed.

“Fine, what do you want?” she hissed. Echoclaw lead her out of the camp, and they sat down by the river.

“You deserve to know about your grandfather,” he meowed. Briarpaw’s eyes widened in surprise. She hadn’t expected her father to easily talk about it after the other night.

“What made you change your mind about telling me important things?” Briarpaw asked, not meaning to sound as sarcastic as she had. Echoclaw lashed his tail.

“Be nice, Briarpaw,” he snapped, “Do you want me to tell you, or not?” Briarpaw sighed.

“Fine, I’ll bite my tongue,” she meowed. Echoclaw sighed.

“Very good,” he meowed, “Emberstar is your grandfather. When I first met your mother and fell in love, he found out, and he disapproved. I was forced to stop seeing her. However, we managed to still see each other in secret. You see, Emberstar always put too much pressure on me as soon as I became a Warrior. He told me that as soon as I was ready, he would make me his Deputy, and I would become Leader one day, but he would scream at me and pressure me. Your grandfather is not a bad cat-he just has high expectations, he really did love my sister-your aunt-and I.” Briarpaw’s eyes widened.

“You have a sister?!” she asked, surprised. *I didn’t know that I have an aunt on Dad’s side of the family, Briarpaw thought, I thought Brookstride was my only aunt! Then again, there seems to be a lot of things I don’t know.*

“Yes, I do,” Echoclaw meowed, “Her name is Silverthroat. You remind me of her everyday-you’re both dramatic, you’re like a little mini her.” Briarpaw’s eyes widened. *I’m like my aunt!* she thought in excitement.

“So, did you decide to leave SkyClan because you didn’t want to be Leader?” Briarpaw asked. Echoclaw shifted his paws uncomfortably.

“Partially,” he meowed, “I wanted to be with your mother-and you. I left for you. I didn’t want you to grow up with the pressures your grandfather put on Silverthroat and I.” Briarpaw blinked.

“Oh,” she meowed. *He left his Clan, his family, everything, for Mother and I,* Briarpaw thought, *And Owlkit, even though he wasn’t even thought of yet.*

“Yeah,” Echoclaw meowed, “Don’t hate your grandfather. He’s old-he doesn’t know how his actions hurt others. Please. He wants you in SkyClan because he loves you.” Briarpaw blinked.

“I see,” she meowed, “Okay. Thank you for telling me, Dad.” Echoclaw smiled.

“Come here,” he meowed, pulling his daughter close. Briarpaw nuzzled up close to her father, feeling safe in his matching brown tabby fur with hers.

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“Pricklekit, you will now be known as Pricklepaw,” Streamstar finished, “Brookstride, you will mentor Pricklepaw. StarClan honors your loyalty and courage, and I hope that you will pass these traits onto Pricklepaw.” Lakeflame’s kits had become apprentices, and Briarpaw already knew that the Apprentices Den would be running out of nests. *Thank StarClan Moonpaw and I will be out before Owlkit is made an apprentice,* she thought, *Or else some of us would have to sleep outside like WindClan cats!*

“Goosepaw! Troutpaw! Sagepaw! Pricklepaw!” the Clan cheered, their parents, Lakeflame and Pinewind, watching proudly.

“Clan dismissed,” Streamstar meowed, and Briarpaw padded over to the apprentices.

“Congratulations!” she meowed, “We have some open nests in the Apprentices Den, if you guys want them later.” The younger apprentices smiled.

“Thank you!” Sagepaw meowed. Briarpaw smiled at them. She remembered how nice Sandywhisker had been to her when she had been made an apprentice, and she wanted to do the same for the younger apprentices. Briarpaw moved aside, letting their

parents and mentors come and congratulate them. Owlkit bounced over, tripping on one of Briarpaw's paws.

"Hello, Owlkit!" she purred, helping her brother stand back up. The kit looked up at her, his amber eyes shining up at her.

"Hi, Briarpaw!" the tom-kit mewed, "I can't wait until I'm an apprentice. It seems so cool and fun!" Briarpaw smiled.

"You will be eventually," she purred, "But you're only a moon old, you're not ready for that yet!" Owlkit sighed.

"Being a kit is *so* boring!" he mewled, "I want to be an apprentice! No, a Warrior! I want to be Leader!" Briarpaw laughed.

"Maybe you will be some day," she purred, "Owlstar! That's a big name." Owlkit nodded.

"I want it to be mine!" he mewed. Briarpaw purred.

"Perhaps if you work hard enough, it will be some day," she meowed. Owlkit sighed.

"Ugh, now that Goosepaw, Troutpaw, Sagepaw, and Pricklepaw are apprentices, I won't have *anyone* to play with!" he exclaimed, flopping over dramatically. Briarpaw laughed.

"What about Swanpond's kits?" she asked, "What are their names? Jaggedkit and Robinkit, right?" Owlkit nodded.

"Yeah," he mewed, "But they're *so* boring! They haven't opened their eyes yet, all they do is flop around loudly!" Briarpaw laughed.

"Seems kind of like what you're doing right now," she pointed out. Owlkit scrambled to his paws.

"No I'm not!" he exclaimed. Briarpaw watched her brother play with her tail, a smile on her face.

*He's so sweet and innocent, she thought, He doesn't know about our grandfather and everything that's happened... poor thing.*

Chapter Four

Briarpaw kept her paws light on the ground, stalking the mouse. *Mouse hears you*, rang in her head, something that all apprentices were told when they learned to hunt mice. Briarpaw had heard that ThunderClan and WindClan had a different version of that which included rabbits, but RiverClan didn't hunt rabbits, so they had no need for it. She leapt forward, catching the mouse and killing it, then stood up.

"Nice catch," Brightfoot meowed. Briarpaw smiled.

"Thanks, Brightfoot!" she meowed, setting down the mouse. Darkjaw, who had gotten his Warrior name for how strong his jaw was when killing prey, padded over, a water vole dangling from his jaws.

"I caught this," he meowed, placing it on the ground. Briarpaw was on the afternoon hunting patrol with Brightfoot, Darkjaw, and Brindlespeck, and were hunting on land, as the morning hunting patrol always did fishing.

"Good job," Brightfoot purred, "Darkjaw, you and Briarpaw can drop the prey off in the camp, then come back out." Briarpaw nodded, and she and Darkjaw padded back towards the camp. In RiverClan, cats always brought their prey back to camp instead of burying it like the other Clans did. As she was dropping the mouse off, Briarpaw saw several of her Clanmates staring at her. *Did I just grow another head?* she thought, *Why is everyone staring at me?* Briarpaw tucked her tail and followed Darkjaw out of the camp.

"Do you know why everyone is staring at me?" she asked. Darkjaw glanced at her.

"I think it's better if someone else tells you," he meowed. Briarpaw narrowed her eyes. *What does he mean by that?* she wondered, *Did something happen at the Gathering? Maybe I should ask Moonpaw or Mistpaw, they were at the Gathering last night.*

Briarpaw continued on the hunting patrol, and they padded back into the camp with their final catches, a water vole dangling from Briarpaw's jaws. She dropped it off on the fresh-kill pile, then turned to Brightfoot.

"What are my chores for today?" Briarpaw asked. Brightfoot set down the mouse she'd caught, then turned to the apprentice.

"You can change the Elder's bedding," she meowed. Briarpaw nodded, and padded into the Elders Den, where Moonpaw and Troutpaw already were.

“Moonpaw, get that tick on my back, it’s been bothering me all day,” Weaselsight meowed. Moonpaw nodded.

“Will do,” she meowed, placing bile on it. Troutpaw placed a water vole in front of Vinesight, who shook his head.

“I said I wanted a fish!” he hissed, “Apprentices these days.” Troutpaw nodded and quickly brought the water vole back to the fresh-kill pile and came back with a fish.

“Be nice, Troutpaw is giving you prey, and helping catch it!” Haydust meowed. Briarpaw had always liked Haydust, he was the nicest Elder to the younger cats, Weaselsight was usually sleeping or complaining about his old joints, and Vinesight was always grumpy.

“Do any of you need your bedding changed?” Briarpaw asked. Haydust nodded.

“Yes, please,” he meowed, “Weaselsight, didn’t you say you needed yours changed as well?” Weaselsight nodded.

“Yes,” he meowed, “Vinesight, you too?” The old tom nodded, and Briarpaw padded out of the Elders Den, heading out of the camp to find some moss on rocks by the river. She dried it off, then headed back to the Elders and placed it into their nests.

“Thank you, Briarpaw,” Haydust meowed. Briarpaw smiled.

“Of course!” she meowed. Briarpaw padded out of the den and grabbed a mouse from the fresh-kill pile, then sat down with Mistpaw and Moonpaw outside of the Apprentices Den.

“Hey, Briarpaw!” Mistpaw meowed, “How was training?” Briarpaw smiled.

“It was good,” she meowed, “Completely unrelated, but did anything happen at the Gathering last night related to me? Everyone’s been staring at me since last night.” Moonpaw shuffled her paws.

“Should we tell her?” she asked. Mistpaw nodded.

“I think she’ll have to know eventually,” she meowed, “Last night, Emberstar said that two days after the Gathering, he would come with a patrol to collect you and your family and bring you back to your ‘rightful home.’” Briarpaw’s eyes widened.

“Two days after the Gathering... that’s tomorrow!” she realized. Moonpaw nodded.

“Yeah,” she meowed, “I’m sorry no one told you.” Briarpaw nodded and sighed.

“It’s okay,” she meowed. *Dad wasn’t at the Gathering, so he wouldn’t have known, and neither was Mom, Briarpaw thought, She’s a Queen, she can’t leave Owlkit on his own, he’s too little. Has anybody told them? And if so, will we have to leave?*

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Briarpaw paced anxiously, awaiting the arrival of the patrol. The entire Clan seemed to be on edge, it seemed that word had traveled quickly.

“Maybe he decided not to,” Mistpaw meowed, “And even if he does come, I’m sure that Streamstar and your parents can sort it out.” Briarpaw nodded. *I do want to get to know my grandfather and my family in SkyClan... but RiverClan is my home, I can never leave here!* she thought. It grew close to the time for the afternoon hunting patrol to leave for that day, and Briarpaw was nearly convinced that the patrol wasn’t coming.

“They’re not coming,” she meowed, “They can’t be!” Moonpaw nodded.

“Yeah, maybe they’re-” she began to say, but then, the sunhigh patrol brought in Emberstar, Brownclaw, Antwatcher, and Swiftpaw.

“Greetings, RiverClan,” Emberstar meowed, “We are here to collect Echoclaw, Briarpaw, and Owlkit, and Silvertail, if she’d like.” Streamstar stepped forward.

“Emberstar, it’s not going to go that easily,” she meowed, “Echoclaw, Silvertail, Briarpaw, and Owlkit are all *RiverClan* cats, and they already have lives and friends here.” Emberstar sighed.

“Streamstar, you obviously want more cats,” he meowed, “I want them in SkyClan because they’re my family, and I want them to be with me.” Echoclaw stepped forward angrily, lashing his tail.

“That is not what she is trying to say!” he exclaimed, “Streamstar wants us to be here because we are happy here. Owlkit is much too young to move—we are not uprooting our two moon old kit who is perfectly happy to a new Clan! It would be a big change for both of our kits.” Emberstar sighed.

“Echoclaw, you don’t understand,” he meowed, “I want them to be happy and be with their family. Silverthroat is dying to meet Briarpaw and Owlkit.” *My aunt, Briarpaw thought, I mean, I do want to meet her, but I want to stay in RiverClan!*

“She can meet them at a Gathering,” Echoclaw meowed. Streamstar sighed.

“Emberstar, why don’t we make a deal?” she asked, “Echoclaw and Briarpaw-if they’re okay with it-can spend one moon in SkyClan, and Briarpaw can see if she likes it there. If she does and would prefer to stay there over RiverClan, we can sort something out. Briarpaw, Echoclaw, are you all right with this plan?” Briarpaw’s eyes widened. *I’d get to meet my SkyClan family!* she thought, *But RiverClan is my home... what does Dad think of this?*

“What about Owlkit?” Emberstar asked, and Streamstar shook her head.

“He is too young to be able to make such a decision,” she meowed, “And he will stay here. Echoclaw, Briarpaw, are you all right with this deal?” Echoclaw nodded.

“I’m fine with it if Briarpaw’s fine with it,” he meowed, “Briarpaw?” Briarpaw shuffled her paws.

“I-I don’t know,” she meowed. Emberstar stepped forward.

“Why don’t you just try it?” he asked. Briarpaw looked up at the Leader. He looked scarier on the Great Oak, he just looked very old close up. *If he was a Warrior, he would be in the Elders Den,* Briarpaw assumed.

“Okay,” she meowed, still rather unsure. Emberstar nodded.

“Then it’s settled,” he meowed, “I’ll send a patrol for Echoclaw and Briarpaw tomorrow. Thank you, Streamstar.” Briarpaw stared as SkyClan left, feeling frozen in place.

“Briarpaw, are you okay?” Mistpaw asked, but Briarpaw didn’t answer, “Briarpaw?”

*I can’t believe that just happened,* she thought, *And I can’t believe that I’ve actually agreed to spend a moon in SkyClan. Oh, StarClan, please let this go well.*

## Chapter Five

Briarpaw woke up and yawned, and she saw the sun shine into the den. *Why hasn’t Brightfoot come to get me yet?* she thought, *Everyone else has already left.* With dread, Briarpaw remembered everything that had happened the day before, and that she had to go to SkyClan. She stood up, stretched, and stepped out of the den, looking up at the sky. *Mouse-dung, it’s almost sunhigh,* Briarpaw thought, *That’s when the patrol is*

*coming to get Dad and I. I guess I should find Brightfoot and say goodbye...* She looked around the camp, and saw Brightfoot sitting with Bramblesong and Mossrunner. Briarpaw padded over to her mentor anxiously.

“Um, hi, Brightfoot,” she meowed. Brightfoot looked up.

“Hello, Briarpaw,” she meowed, “Have you come to say goodbye?” Briarpaw nodded.

“Yeah,” she meowed, “I’ll probably be back after the moon that I have to spend there-you’re an awesome mentor, I don’t want to leave you.” Brightfoot smiled.

“Thank you, Briarpaw,” she meowed, “I’m glad I’ve done well with my first apprentice-you’re growing up to be a fine young cat.” Briarpaw smiled.

“Thank you,” she meowed. *I wish things didn’t have to change*, Briarpaw thought, *I don’t want to leave!* She shook off her thoughts and padded over to the Medicine Den, where she knew Mistpaw would be, and she heard Moonpaw with her.

“I just think that it’s ridiculous that-” Moonpaw was saying as Briarpaw padded in, “Oh, hi Briarpaw.” Briarpaw sat down next to her.

“Hi, Moonpaw,” she meowed, “Hi, Mistpaw. I’ve come to say goodbye.” Even though it was just one moon that Briarpaw would be away, it felt as if it would be forever.

“Oh, StarClan, I’m going to miss you,” Mistpaw meowed, nuzzling close to her. Briarpaw purred at her friend.

“I’ll miss you too,” she meowed, and Moonpaw joined.

“I’m gonna miss you so much,” she meowed, “You’re pretty much my sister-even though you’re *so* annoying, I’ll miss you.” Briarpaw nuzzled close to her friends, their silver pelts close to her brown tabby fur. She stepped back and sighed.

“Please wish me luck,” Briarpaw meowed, “If everything goes well, I’ll be back in one moon, and we can forget about this forever.” Moonpaw nodded.

“Well, hopefully you’ll know some extra tricks for hunting and fighting,” she meowed. Mistpaw nodded.

“Yeah,” she meowed, “Goodbye, Briarpaw.” Briarpaw smiled.

“Bye, guys,” she meowed. Briarpaw padded out of the Medicine Den and glanced at the sky, it was almost sunhigh. She padded over to the Nursery, where her mother was sitting and watching Owlkit play.

“Hi, Mom,” Briarpaw meowed. Silvertail smiled.

“Hello, Briarpaw,” she meowed. Briarpaw sat down next to her mother, who brought her close with her tail.

“Do I have to go?” she asked. Silvertail sighed.

“I think you should,” she meowed, “It could be a good opportunity. But after one moon, you can come right back, if it’s what you want. Don’t worry, I’ll still be here, and so will Owlkit, and your father is going with you.” Briarpaw nodded.

“Yeah,” she meowed, “Do you think that the SkyClan cats are nice?” Silvertail nodded.

“I’m sure,” she meowed, “I’ve heard that your aunt, Silverthroat, is very excited to meet you.” Briarpaw nodded.

“I can’t wait to meet her,” she meowed, although only half-heartedly. Brookstride padded over and sat down.

“I’m going to miss you,” Briarpaw meowed to her aunt. Brookstride smiled.

“I’m going to miss you as well, Briarpaw,” she meowed, “Silvertail, I know I was against it at first, but you made a good choice in a mate and family.” Briarpaw’s mother smiled.

“Thank you, Brookstride,” Silvertail purred. *Did Brookstride not like Dad at first? Briarpaw thought, I wonder why. Maybe it’s because he’s from SkyClan... but that doesn’t seem like Brookstride.* Before she could say anything, a SkyClan patrol consisting of Flamefern, Witheredsky, Silverthroat, and Specklepaw entered the camp. Streamstar padded over, dipping her head.

“Greetings,” she meowed, “Are you here to collect Briarpaw and Echoclaw?” Flamefern nodded.

“Yes,” he meowed. Briarpaw stood up and nuzzled close to her mother.

“Goodbye, Mom,” she meowed, “I love you.” Silvertail let out a purr.

“I love you, Briarpaw,” she meowed. Briarpaw padded over to her brother, who looked confused.

“I want to come too!” Owlkit mewled, “I don’t want you to leave!” His amber eyes widened, and Briarpaw felt as if she was about to cry, she didn’t want to leave her brother.

“I’ll be back in one moon, I promise,” she meowed, “And you’ve got Mom, okay?” Owlkit pouted.

“Okay,” he meowed, “Bye bye, Briarpaw.” Briarpaw gave her brother a lick on his head.

“Bye, Owlkit,” she meowed. Briarpaw padded away from her brother, and it felt as if her heart was breaking, she didn’t want to leave her home. She stood next to her father, who was near the patrol.

“May StarClan light your path,” Streamstar meowed, dipping her head to them.

“Thank you,” Echoclaw meowed. Briarpaw followed the patrol out of the camp and towards the border, and as they crossed into ShadowClan territory close to the shore, she glanced back at RiverClan territory.

*I’ll be back in one moon, Briarpaw thought, I know it.*

## Chapter Six

The nerves really hit Briarpaw as she padded onto SkyClan territory with the patrol. *What if I don’t fit in SkyClan?* she thought, *What if I’m not liked? What if Emberstar puts too much pressure on me as well?*

“You okay?” Echoclaw whispered to her. Briarpaw glanced at him.

“Yeah, yeah,” she meowed, “Just a little worried.” Echoclaw sighed.

“Don’t worry, the apprentices are very nice,” he meowed, “One of them-Swiftpaw-is your cousin.” Briarpaw’s eyes widened.

“I didn’t know I had a cousin!” she meowed. Echoclaw smiled.

“Yes, you do,” he meowed, “I believe that they’re going to be a Warrior very soon.” Briarpaw nodded. *I hope I can still get to know them, even when they become a Warrior,* she thought. The patrol arrived at the camp, and Emberstar padded over as soon as they walked in.

“Welcome back, Echoclaw,” the Leader meowed, “I’ve missed you.” Echoclaw nodded.

“Hello, Father,” he meowed. Emberstar turned to Briarpaw, and a wave of anxiety hit her. *What’s he going to say?! she thought, What will I say?! Will what I say seem stupid?!* The only Leader Briarpaw was used to talking to was Streamstar, and that was rarely. She wasn’t used to talking to the Leader of SkyClan, especially having him in her family.

“Oh, Briarpaw, you’re so grown up!” Emberstar meowed, “I was allowed to come meet you once, when you were a newborn kit, so you won’t remember it. You were so tiny, and now you’re practically a grown cat!” Briarpaw nodded.

“Y-yeah,” she meowed, “Thank you.” Emberstar dipped his head.

“Of course,” he meowed, “Now, where’s Silverthroat?” Almost on cue, a beautiful silver tabby she-cat blue eyes and a scar on her throat padded over.

“Oh, Echoclaw, I’ve missed you so much!” she purred. Echoclaw smiled, he seemed much more comfortable with his sister.

“I’ve missed you as well,” he purred back. Silverthroat stepped back and glanced at Briarpaw.

“Oh, darling, you’re so big!” she exclaimed, “I remember being allowed to see you when you were just a newborn kit. And when I first heard your name, oh, I said that you would do great things! Briar is such a beautiful prefix, and it suits you very well, and I’m sure you’ll have a wonderful Warrior name to go with it.” *Wow, she is very different from Brookstride, Briarpaw thought, I don’t know what I was expecting, but this isn’t it. But that’s fine, I like her.*

“Thank you,” she meowed shyly. Silverthroat purred.

“Oh, darling, you’re so beautiful,” she purred, “Now, where is Swiftpaw?” A black and white cat padded over, and Briarpaw recognized them from one of Emberstar’s patrols to RiverClan.

“Right here, Mom,” Swiftpaw meowed, “Hi, Briarpaw, I don’t think we’ve formally met. I’m Swiftpaw!” Briarpaw smiled.

“Hi,” she meowed. There was so much going on, she hardly knew what to focus on.

“Specklepaw and I made you a nest in the Apprentices Den,” Swiftpaw meowed, “Want to go check it out?” Briarpaw nodded.

“Sure,” she meowed. Briarpaw followed Swiftpaw into the Apprentices Den, where there were several nests, three of which were lined with feathers.

“We put feathers in our nests to make them more comfortable,” Swiftpaw meowed, “I heard that you guys in RiverClan collect shells, which is pretty cool.” Briarpaw nodded.

“Yeah, I collect a whole bunch,” she meowed, “They’re all over my nest-my friend Moonpaw and I compare our collections all the time.” *Oh, I just realized I can’t do that for an entire moon... and feathers aren’t as pretty as shells to me,* Briarpaw thought.

“That’s cool!” Swiftpaw meowed, “Specklepaw should be back from the sunhigh patrol any minute, she was excited to meet you.” Briarpaw nodded.

“Okay,” she meowed, “I met her at a Gathering, but not for very long.” Swiftpaw nodded.

“Do you want to go wait for her?” they asked, “Maybe you can meet some more cats. Troutpetal’s kits are about to become apprentices, probably a few days after I become a Warrior, so there’s enough room in the den.” Briarpaw nodded.

“Sure,” she meowed. The two cats padded out of the Apprentices Den, and Briarpaw really took in the camp-it was very lively, but not in the way RiverClan was. About half of the cats in RiverClan were soaking wet at a time, and there was constant chatter about things such as fish, patrols, or shells they found. In SkyClan, it was similar, but also different. There were cats chatting, and Briarpaw could hear words about patrols, prey, Swiftpaw becoming a Warrior soon, who would mentor Troutpetal’s kits, and of course, chatter about Echoclaw and Briarpaw.

“There she is!” Swiftpaw meowed. Specklepaw padded behind a tall cream she-cat, spoke a few words to her, then looked around, making eye contact with Briarpaw. A feeling overtook Briarpaw, and she had no idea what it was. Specklepaw padded over, smiling.

“Hey, Swiftpaw!” she meowed, “Hi, Briarpaw! I remember you from the Gathering-and now you’re here!” Briarpaw nodded.

“Y-yeah, I’m here,” she meowed. Briarpaw’s blue eyes met Specklepaw’s beautiful green ones-they had flecks of hazel here and there, and they shone in the light.

“Well, welcome to SkyClan!” Specklepaw meowed, “At least, for this moon. Oh my StarClan, I can’t wait to show you around!” Briarpaw smiled.

“Thanks,” she meowed. *Oh my StarClan, Specklepaw is so pretty!* Briarpaw thought, *And so nice... wait, what?! Why am I thinking this?!* Emberstar padded over, interrupting Briarpaw’s thoughts.

“Briarpaw, can I speak with you for a moment?” he meowed. Briarpaw nodded.

“Yeah, sure,” she meowed. Briarpaw glanced at Swiftpaw, who nodded in encouragement.

“Don’t worry, we can gossip about him later,” they joked in a whisper. Briarpaw nodded, and followed Emberstar into his den, which was inside of a massive boulder covered in lichen. Inside the den was a cream she-cat with green eyes, who smiled at Briarpaw. She sat down as Emberstar did and glanced at the she-cat.

“Briarpaw, this is Applewillow,” Emberstar meowed, “She will be your mentor while you’re in SkyClan.” *She’s not Brightfoot, but I guess she’ll due,* Briarpaw thought.

“Hi, Briarpaw,” Applewillow meowed, “If it’s okay with you, I’d like to start training tomorrow morning, if you’re not on the morning hunting patrol.” Briarpaw nodded.

“Okay,” she meowed, “Sounds good.” Emberstar purred.

“Very good!” he meowed, “You can go back out into the clearing, if you’d like.” Briarpaw nodded.

“Thank you,” she meowed. Briarpaw padded out of the den and back over to Swiftpaw and Specklepaw.

“Hey!” Specklepaw meowed. Briarpaw sat down and smiled.

“Hi,” she meowed, her chest fluttering.

“What did Emberstar want?” Swiftpaw asked, beginning to clean themselves off.

“Oh, he introduced me to my mentor while I’m here,” Briarpaw meowed, “Applewillow.” Specklepaw glanced at her.

“Oh no, Applewillow’s *so* strict!” she exclaimed. Anxiety clutched at Briarpaw once again.

“Really?” she asked. Specklepaw shook her head.

“No, I’m just messing with you!” she purred, “You’re fine with that, right? Because I can stop if not.” Briarpaw laughed.

“Oh!” she laughed, “It’s fine, don’t worry.” *She’s so nice*, Briarpaw thought.

“Oh my StarClan, Specklepaw, you’re not even sparing the new cat?” Swiftpaw purred, “Don’t worry, Briarpaw, Applewillow is one of the nicest Warriors.” Briarpaw nodded, and Specklepaw shrugged.

“Oh well!” she meowed, “Anyway, do you want me to show you around?” Briarpaw nodded.

“Sure,” she meowed. Specklepaw stood up, and Briarpaw followed her.

*Maybe I will fit in here*, Briarpaw thought, *But I still miss everyone back in RiverClan... what will I choose when I eventually have to?*

## Chapter Seven

Briarpaw opened her eyes, Applewillow standing in front of her.

“Are you ready to train?” her new mentor asked. Briarpaw stood up and stretched.

“Sure,” she meowed. Briarpaw followed Applewillow out of the Apprentices Den, and ignored the stares from the SkyClan cats. They headed over to a clearing that Specklepaw had told her was the training area.

“So, can you tell me what you know already?” Applewillow asked. Briarpaw shuffled her paws.

“I know how to catch fish, mice, water voles, birds, and squirrels,” she meowed, “And I know some fighting tactics, but they’re RiverClan ones, not SkyClan.”

Applewillow nodded.

“All right,” she meowed, “Our prey is mice, birds, squirrels, and shrews. You don’t know how to hunt shrews, so I’ll show you.” Briarpaw nodded.

“Okay,” she meowed. Applewillow dropped into a hunting crouch.

“This is how you stalk a shrew,” she meowed, “That leaf over there will be our pretend shrew.” Briarpaw watched as Applewillow stalked the leaf, then pounced, catching it between her paws.

“That’s how you do it!” the cream she-cat meowed, “Would you like to try?” Briarpaw nodded, and she dropped into a crouch, making sure to use what she remembered from hunting.

“Get your tail a bit lower, it’s sticking up like a bluebell right now,” Applewillow advised. Briarpaw lowered her tail and continued stalking the leaf, pouncing, but missing.

“Next time, pounce a bit farther away,” Applewillow meowed, “You were too close to our pretend shrew.” Briarpaw nodded.

“Can I try again?” she asked. Applewillow nodded.

“Of course, go ahead,” she meowed. Briarpaw padded back to where she started and dropped into a crouch once again, making sure to keep her tail down. She leapt forward, catching the leaf between her paws. Briarpaw looked up at her mentor, hoping for approval.

“Good job!” Applewillow purred, “You have a great hunting crouch. Now, would you like to try hunting real shrews?” Briarpaw nodded.

“Sure,” she meowed. They padded out of the training clearing and into the forest. It was strange for Briarpaw, being beneath the trees all the time, and not having space.

“I hear a shrew, would you like to try?” Applewillow whispered. Briarpaw nodded, dropping down into a crouch. She stalked the shrew, which was standing between two roots. Briarpaw leapt forward, catching the shrew cleanly.

“Well done!” Applewillow exclaimed. Briarpaw smiled.

“Thank you!” she meowed, “Should I go drop this back off at camp?” Applewillow narrowed her eyes.

“Oh, I was going to say that you could just bury it so we can keep going,” she meowed, “We bury our prey and then come back for it here.” *Oh, StarClan, I must look so stupid right now,* Briarpaw thought.

“Oh, yeah,” she meowed. Briarpaw buried the shrew, but it felt wrong, as if she should be bringing it back to the camp. They continued their hunt, returning to the camp with two shrews each.

“Your chores for today will be to bring the Queens and kits prey,” Applewillow meowed. Briarpaw nodded.

“Okay,” she meowed. Briarpaw padded over to the Nursery and went inside. She saw a silver she-cat with white patches lecturing one of her kits, while the other giggled in the corner. *Those kits look as if they're almost apprentices,* Briarpaw noticed, *So they're probably Troutpetal's kits, and that silver she-cat is Troutpetal.* A white she-cat with gray swirls was feeding a smoky gray she-kit with white spots, a tired expression on the mother's face.

“Hi,” Briarpaw meowed, “I'm here to get you prey-what would you like?” Troutpetal looked up from scolding her kit.

“I'll share a squirrel with my kits,” she meowed. The kit in the corner, a gray tabby tom-kit with a white spot on his eyes and white ear-tips, shook his head.

“No, ew, squirrels are too fluffy!” he mewled. Troutpetal rolled her eyes.

“Fine, a bird,” she meowed. The kit being scolded, a gray tom-kit with white paws, shook his head.

“No fair!” he mewled, “I wanted a squirrel!” Troutpetal sighed.

“I can't wait until you two are apprentices,” she muttered, “I'll have a mouse, then.” Briarpaw nodded.

“All right,” she purred, “And you?” The white she-cat with the gray swirls looked up.

“I'll just have a shrew,” she meowed. Briarpaw nodded and padded out of the Nursery, then returned with the prey the Queens had requested. She picked up a mouse, and didn't know where to sit.

“Briarpaw!” Specklepaw called, “Over here!” Briarpaw glanced at Specklepaw, who was sitting with Swiftpaw outside of the Apprentices Den. She smiled and went and sat down next to Swiftpaw.

“Hey,” Briarpaw meowed. Swiftpaw smiled.

“Hi!” they meowed, “How was training? What did you guys do today?”  
Specklepaw smiled.

“I learned some more fighting techniques,” she meowed, “How about you, Briarpaw?” Briarpaw felt a bit flustered, and her chest fluttered as Specklepaw spoke.

“O-oh, I learned how to hunt shrews,” she meowed, “I already knew how to hunt everything else SkyClan eats.” Specklepaw smiled, her green eyes shining.

“That’s awesome!” she meowed, “I’m sure you did great.” Briarpaw felt herself blush a bit, and felt embarrassed and confused. *Why am I blushing?!* she thought.

“Thanks,” Briarpaw managed to say. *That was so embarrassing, she thought, Why am I worrying so much around her?*

“I’ve been preparing for my Warrior Assessment,” Swiftpaw meowed, stretching their claws. Specklepaw smiled.

“I’m sure you’ll do great!” she purred. Swiftpaw smiled.

“Thanks, Specklepaw,” they meowed. *I feel so awkward around them, Briarpaw thought, They know each other so well, they’re best friends, and I... I don’t know. I’m Swiftpaw’s cousin, so at least we have that connection, and Specklepaw... I don’t know about Specklepaw.*

*I think I might have a crush on her.*

## Chapter Eight

“Let all those old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the Tallrock for a Clan Meeting!” Emberstar called. Briarpaw padded over to the meeting with Specklepaw and sat down with her, her chest fluttering as their pelts touched. Swiftpaw and Antwatcher, his mentor, padded out of the Apprentices Den, and Swiftpaw sat down beneath the Tallrock, while Antwatcher sat down with the rest of the Clan.

“I, Emberstar, Leader of SkyClan, call upon my Warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice,” Embestar began, “He has trained hard to learn the ways of the Warrior Code, and in return, he should be made a Warrior. Swiftpaw, do you promise to uphold the Warrior Code, even at the cost of your life?”

“I do.”

“Then Swiftpaw, I name you Swiftwind,” Emberstar meowed, “StarClan honors your agility and intelligence.” Briarpaw smiled at her cousin.

“Swiftwind! Swiftwind!” the Clan cheered, and Briarpaw saw Silverthroat watching her son proudly.

“But we’re not done,” Emberstar continued, “Graykit, Rubblekit, please step forward.” Troutpetal stood up, and she and Witheredsky lead their kits to the Tallrock. Witheredsky joined the rest of the Clan, and Troutpetal sat down with her kits.

“I, Emberstar, Leader of SkyClan, call upon my Warrior ancestors to look down on these two kits,” he meowed, “They are six moons old and ready to be made apprentices. Graykit, I name you Graypaw. Leopardfall, you will mentor Graypaw. StarClan honors your speed and intelligence, and I hope that you can pass these traits onto Graypaw.” Briarpaw watched the new apprentice bump noses with his mentor, then head to the edge of the crowd. *I remember when I was made an apprentice, and I was so nervous with Brightfoot*, she thought. Briarpaw remembered how nervous she had been, and she was trembling visibly, and Brightfoot whispered to her that she would do very well.

“Rubblekit, I name you Rubblepaw,” Emberstar continued, “Eveningback, you will mentor Rubblepaw. StarClan honors your intelligence and maturity, and I hope you pass these traits onto Rubblepaw.” Rubblepaw bumped noses with Eveningback, then joined his brother and his mentor.

“Graypaw! Rubblepaw!” the Clan cheered, and Briarpaw smiled.

“All though I’ll miss Swiftpaw in the den, at least we have enough room for Graypaw and Rubblepaw,” Specklepaw whispered. Briarpaw nodded.

“Yeah,” she whispered back, “And when I go back to RiverClan, there will be more.” Specklepaw glanced at her.

“Oh, you’re planning on going back?” she asked. Briarpaw nodded.

“Yeah, probably,” she meowed. *I’m actually not that certain*, Briarpaw thought, *I don’t know which one I want to choose...*

“Clan dismissed,” Emberstar meowed with a flick of his tail. Briarpaw sighed and stretched as she stood up.

“Should we go talk to those two?” she asked. Specklepaw shook her head.

“Nah, we’ll see them later,” she meowed, “There’s already nests prepared for them anyway, Swiftpaw and I lined them with feathers.” Briarpaw nodded.

“Nice!” she meowed, “Our nests will stay the same though, right?” *I want my nest to stay the same, it’s next to her*, Briarpaw thought.

“Of course!” Specklepaw meowed, nodding. Briarpaw smiled.

“Good,” she meowed.

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That night, Briarpaw was sitting with Specklepaw, eating a mouse, while Specklepaw had a bird.

“I can’t wait until I’m a Warrior,” Specklepaw meowed, “I only have a few more moons! I think we’re about the same age, so if you stay here, we’ll probably be Warriors at around the same time.” Briarpaw nodded.

“I know, and we can join Swiftwind,” she meowed, “I’m so happy for them, they work so hard, they totally deserve it.” Specklepaw nodded.

“For real,” she meowed, “And so I can have a family and have a mate... do you think you’d want that some day?” Specklepaw and Briarpaw’s eyes locked, blue eyes meeting green ones, and her heart fluttered. *Does she feel the same?* Briarpaw wondered.

“Yeah, I’d at least want a mate,” she meowed, “It depends with kits, probably after some time as a Warrior.” Specklepaw nodded.

“Yeah, I’d want kits sooner in my time as a Warrior, then have a break, and later, I’d have a second litter,” she meowed. The evening patrol padded back into the camp, which consisted of Sheepfur, Leopardfall, Echoclaw, and Pinewaters. Specklepaw let out a sigh.

“Oh, StarClan, Pinewaters is so dreamy,” she purred, “Isn’t he? He went to the Warriors Den only a moon ago.” Briarpaw felt as if her heart was about to break into a million pieces. *Oh*, she thought, *Oh, of course. Specklepaw likes Pinewaters. Not me.*

*Great StarClan, I’m stupid.*

Chapter Nine

Briarpaw stretched out her claws, licking her lips as she finished the mouse she was eating. She was sitting with some of her family, as she had been avoiding Specklepaw out of embarrassment. *I know I never told her, but I'm just so hurt*, Briarpaw thought. She couldn't help her eyes from gazing at Specklepaw, who was sitting with Pinewaters, Swiftwind, Graypaw, and Rubblepaw.

"Briarpaw," Silverthroat meowed, "Briarpaw!" Briarpaw shook herself out of her thoughts, and then looked at her aunt.

"Do you know where you're going to choose to stay?" Silverthroat asked. Briarpaw blinked.

"Is it already close to the Gathering night?" she asked. Silverthroat nodded.

"Yes, it's in a few days," she meowed. Briarpaw's eyes widened. *Have I really lost track of time that much?* she thought, *I haven't even thought about my choice! I want to stay here more than ever, but oh, I miss my family and friends so much, I can't leave. What do I choose?!*

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Briarpaw covered her dirt, ready to pad out of the dirtplace, when she heard two cats talking to each other.

"Father, why do you want us to be here so bad?" Echoclaw asked, "Is it just wanting more Warriors? Want Briarpaw to be the next Leader? Because she needs to choose who she wants to be, and Flamefern would make a wonderful Leader. I'm not going to allow you to put the same pressure on Briarpaw as you did on Silverthroat and I." Emberstar sighed.

"Echoclaw, it's not just wanting more Warriors, or wanting my line to be the Leaders," he meowed, "I do want those things, but I have Silverthroat and Swiftwind to continue it. I... I miss you, and I want my grandkits here." Echoclaw lashed his tail.

"You should have shown that earlier, instead of demanding we come over when we didn't want to," he hissed, "Have you ever considered anyone else's feelings?! I don't want to make Briarpaw choose, she can be very anxious with decisions like this. Anyone would be!" Emberstar showed a flash of hurt in his face, but quickly covered it.

“Have you considered mine?!” he snapped, “Running off with that RiverClan she-cat, leaving me without one of my strongest Warriors?! My... my own son?” Emberstar’s voice lowered, practically into a whimper at the end.

“I left because I wanted to get away from *you*, Father,” Echoclaw hissed, “And I didn’t tell Briarpaw about you because I didn’t want her to have bad thoughts about her grandfather.” Emberstar stayed silent for a moment.

“I knew you weren’t cut out for being a Leader,” he meowed quietly after a moment, “You were all I had, Echoclaw. Yes, I had Silverthroat and Swiftwind, but you left *right* after Softshadow died. Your *mother*.” Echoclaw looked away, a look of guilt on his face. Briarpaw tried to back away, and stepped on a stick, both cats looking at her.

“Briarpaw!” Emberstar exclaimed. Briarpaw’s eyes widened, and she quickly ran off, towards the lake. She sat down at the edge, panting. Briarpaw watched the waves lap at the shore, feeling a mix of many different emotions. *I don’t know which Clan I want to choose*, she thought, *I love my family here, and honestly, I even think that if I don’t have a chance with Specklepaw, I can still have a good friend in her. It hurts so much, but I guess I have to accept it and stop whining about how it’s not fair.*

“Briarpaw,” Echoclaw meowed behind, and Briarpaw turned and looked at him.

“Hi, Dad,” she meowed. Echoclaw sat down next to her, and they sat in silence for a few minutes, neither knowing what to say.

“So, how much did you hear?” Echoclaw asked. Briarpaw sighed.

“All of it,” she meowed, “Is Emberstar really a terrible cat?” Echoclaw shook his head.

“No,” he meowed, “He’s just broken. He was... well, I don’t know everything, but the Elders always told me he was so strict because it was what he was taught.”

Briarpaw nodded, then looked at her paws.

“Is that how he rose to power?” she asked. Echoclaw shrugged.

“I guess so,” he meowed, “He became Leader shortly after I was born, but I still remember it like it was yesterday.” Briarpaw laughed.

“That’s what you say about the day I was born,” she purred. Echoclaw laughed.

“It’s true!” he pointed out. Briarpaw leaned close to her father.

“Dad?”

“Yeah?”

“I love you.”

“I love you too, Bria.”

“You haven’t called me that since I was a kit!”

“I know. Emberstar made it up for you.”

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Briarpaw anxiously padded alongside Rubblepaw to the Gathering.

“You’re sure all the other apprentices will be nice, right, Briarpaw?” Rubblepaw asked. Briarpaw nodded.

“I’m sure,” she meowed, although her voice wavered. Briarpaw wasn’t worried about the other apprentices, it was her choice that she was worried about. *Which Clan will I choose?* she thought, *There’s so much I love about both.* SkyClan was the last Clan to arrive, everyone was already there. Almost as soon as Briarpaw stepped onto the island, she was bombarded by two silver she-cats.

“Briarpaw!” Moonpaw exclaimed, “Great StarClan, I’ve missed you!” Briarpaw purred.

“I’ve missed you more!” she purred, nuzzling close to her foster sister.

“I’ve missed you *even* more!” Mistpaw purred. Briarpaw smiled, brushing her pelt against her friend’s.

“I think we all know how much we’ve missed each other,” she purred, “How are you, Mistpaw?” Mistpaw smiled.

“Actually, it’s *Mistclaw* now,” she meowed. Briarpaw gasped.

“You got your full Medicine Cat name?!” she exclaimed. Mistclaw nodded.

“Yes!” she exclaimed, “Isn’t it cool?” Briarpaw nodded.

“It totally is!” she exclaimed, “Aspendawn and Ebonywing didn’t tell me!” Mistclaw gasped.

“Oh, they should have!” she meowed, “And don’t worry, I’m sure you guys will get your names soon too.” Moonpaw nodded.

“Yeah, only a few moons more!” she meowed, “If you come back to RiverClan, Briarpaw, we can get our names together. You know how moon is a suffix? Mistclaw and I have been joking about me getting my full name as Moonmoon. Wouldn’t that be funny?” Briarpaw nodded.

“Yeah, it is!” she meowed half-heartedly. *I miss them so much, I didn’t even know until now*, Briarpaw nodded, *But what about SkyClan, and Specklepaw, Silverthroat, Swiftwind, and Emberstar? I can’t possibly choose tonight! What do I do?!* The Leaders yowled for attention, and they went through all the normal processes, beginning with ThunderClan.

“One of our Elders, Bristlefern, has ascended to StarClan,” Darkstar announced, “She was the oldest cat in the Clans, and may she rest in peace.” There were several gasps, and Briarpaw glanced at Condorpaw, a ThunderClan apprentice.

“She was an Elder since before I was a kit, I always felt like she would live forever, even though I knew that wasn’t true,” he meowed to Wolfpaw, a WindClan apprentice, “She always had the best advice. Her best bit of advice, ‘do what makes you happy.’” Wolfpaw’s eyes shone, and he comforted Condorpaw. *Do what makes you happy*, Briarpaw thought, *What would make me happy? RiverClan, or SkyClan?* Eventually, it came time for her to choose.

“Before we finish off the Gathering, it’s time for Briarpaw to choose which Clan she will be living in,” Streamstar meowed. Emberstar nodded.

“Yes,” he meowed, eyeing the RiverClan Leader, “Briarpaw, have you made a decision? Will you stay in RiverClan, or join SkyClan?” Briarpaw shuffled her paws uncomfortably as the eyes of all the Clan cats at the Gathering landed on her.

“I-I don’t know,” she meowed softly, then repeated louder, “I don’t know.”

## Chapter Ten

“What do you mean, you don’t know?!” someone shouted from the crowd, and Briarpaw shrank beneath the stares of all the cats in the Clans.

“She means, she doesn’t know,” Echoclaw meowed, stepping forward and close to his daughter, “She’s an apprentice. It’s hard to make a decision like that!” Streamstar nodded.

“I see,” she meowed, “Briarpaw, if you would like, we could give you a day off in the forest nearby, but not on Clan territory, to think about this.” Briarpaw glanced at Echoclaw for reassurance.

“I think it’s not that bad of an idea,” her father whispered, “If you want, I can go with you.” Briarpaw stood up, and looked up at the Leaders.

“Briarpaw, have you chosen what you would like to do?” Emberstar asked. Briarpaw nodded.

“I’d like to take the option to do a day out in the forest,” she meowed. Streamstar nodded.

“Very well,” she meowed. Echoclaw glanced at her.

“Would you like it if I come with you?” he asked. Briarpaw shook her head.

“It’s fine,” she meowed, “I want to be by myself.” Echoclaw nodded.

“All right,” he meowed. The Gathering ended, and Briarpaw padded away from the Clans after saying goodbye to her father and friends. She padded through RiverClan territory, making it out of the territory. Briarpaw found a clearing and made a nest there, curling up and falling asleep. *Please, StarClan, help me pick which Clan I want,* she thought.

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Briarpaw woke up the next morning, feeling a bit confused about her surroundings, until she remembered everything that had happened at the Gathering. She stood up and stretched, then padded out of the clearing. Briarpaw stalked a mouse, remembering to keep her paws light, like Brightfoot had taught her how to. She leapt forward and caught the mouse, then ate it. *I don’t know what I should do today,* Briarpaw thought, *I don’t know if I’m allowed on the Clan territories today... maybe I should just sneak and watch RiverClan and SkyClan from afar.* She did just that, padding onto RiverClan territory. Briarpaw quickly got into the river, masking her scent and swimming down to the camp. She got out and shook herself off, then hid in the cattails and watched the camp. Streamstar was sitting on the Willowstump, watching the Clan, Cloverstrike, Tinypaw, Tornfish, and Troutpaw were going on the morning hunting patrol, and Moonpaw was padding out of the camp for training with Grayrunner.

“You’re almost ready for your Warrior Ceremony, only about one more moon,” Grayrunner meowed, “So we’re going to cram in as much practice and review as we can for your Warrior Assessment.” Moonpaw nodded.

“Okay!” she meowed, “I really hope that Briarpaw comes back, so I can become a Warrior with her. We’ve been waiting for it since we were kits.” Grayrunner sighed.

“I know,” he meowed, “But eventually, it’s up to her.” Briarpaw blinked, remembering how she and Moonpaw had been kits and had dreamt of the day they would finally become Warriors. *I don’t know what I want*, she thought, *Do I want to become a Warrior with Moonpaw and be with my family in RiverClan, or go and be with my family in SkyClan, and be with Specklepaw?* Briarpaw turned her attention to Owlkit, who was bouncing out of the Nursery, leading Jaggedkit and Robinkit, their mothers following and sitting outside of the Nursery. Briarpaw felt a pang of longing as she saw her mother and brother, she hadn’t realized how much she’d missed them.

“Okay, so I want to play Clan today,” Owlkit mewed, “I’ll be the Leader, Jaggedkit, you can be my Deputy, and Robinkit, you can be the Medicine Cat!” Jaggedkit narrowed his eyes.

“But I wanted to be the Leader!” he mewled. Owlkit shook his head.

“Well I’m oldest, so *I’ll* be Leader,” he mewed, “Robinkit, do you agree?” The white she-kit nodded, her green eyes shining as they looked at Owlkit.

“Of course!” she mewled. Jaggedkit rolled her eyes, and Briarpaw smiled. *My bossy little brother, still the same*, she thought, *He’ll be an apprentice soon enough. Do I want to miss that? I don’t know...* Briarpaw stepped back from the camp, deciding she would sneak over to SkyClan and watch them, then go off the Clan territories to make her choice. She slid back into the river, swimming away. As she went down, Briarpaw spotted Mistclaw by the river, picking herbs.

“Briarpaw!” Mistclaw whispered in surprise, “What are you doing here?” Briarpaw glanced at her friend.

“I’m here to just watch from afar,” she meowed, “Do you think I could get in trouble?” Mistclaw shrugged.

“I don’t know,” she meowed, “But you should go, Tumbleleaf is close, and I don’t know how she’ll react if you’re here, you might not be allowed on the territory today, I’m not sure.” Briarpaw nodded.

“Mistclaw!” Tumbleleaf called, “Are you talking to someone? Hurry up!” Mistclaw glanced at the older Medicine Cat.

“No, Tumbleleaf!” she called back, “Just a moment!” Mistclaw glanced back at Briarpaw.

“Go,” she meowed, “Now.” Briarpaw nodded.

“I love you,” she whispered, “Bye, Misty.” Mistclaw smiled, as Briarpaw had called her one of the nicknames they’d given each other as kits. Briarpaw had been Bria, Mistclaw was Misty, and Moonpaw was Moonie, but they hadn’t called each other those names in ages.

“Bye, Bria,” Mistclaw whispered, “I love you.” Briarpaw smiled, then continued swimming away. She got out of the river and shook off her pelt, then hurried off the territory. Briarpaw stayed near the edge of ShadowClan territory, which eventually turned to SkyClan territory. She snuck onto the territory and looked into the camp discreetly. Nightkit was playing outside of the Nursery with Rubblepaw, her mother and Beelegs watching happily. The morning hunting patrol, consisting of Eveningdawn, Hazeldawn, Sprucestreak, and Graypaw, padded back into the camp, prey dangling from their jaws, and the sunhigh patrol set out. Briarpaw saw Specklepaw and Pinewaters talking, their eyes shining as they spoke, and she felt a bit of hurt. *I wish that was me, she thought, Perhaps that could be me if I stay in SkyClan, and even if it isn’t, I could be best friends with Specklepaw, and I can be with my family here... Silverthroat, Swiftwind, Emberstar... and hopefully Owlkit will get the option to choose which Clan he wants to live in when he’s older. If both of us move here, Mom and Dad will probably move with us. But I don’t know... what about Moonpaw and Mistclaw, and all of RiverClan? Brookstride? Streamstar?*

“Let all those old enough to climb the trees gather beneath the Tallrock for a Clan Meeting!” Ebonywing called. Briarpaw narrowed her eyes in confusion. *Why is*

*Ebonywing calling a Clan Meeting?* she wondered, *She's a Medicine Cat!* The Clan gathered around, confused expressions on their faces.

“Emberstar, both Aspendawn and I have agreed that because of your age and recent actions, it is best you step down,” Ebonywing announced, “You have served us extremely well, but it’s time for a new Leadership.” Emberstar lashed his tail.

“You all agree with this?” he asked his Clan, “I’m going back to the Elders Den?!” Aspendawn leapt down from the Tallrock and went over to her Leader.

“Emberstar, StarClan has agreed,” she meowed, “It is time for Flamefern to be the new Leader of SkyClan.” Emberstar sighed.

“Fine,” he meowed, “Silverthroat-”

“No,” Silverthroat interrupted, “Father, I love you very much, but I know you. I’m not going to allow you to make me your last minute. And if you try with Swiftwind, it would break the Warrior Code, they’ve never had an apprentice.” Emberstar sighed.

“I... all right,” he meowed, “I guess it is time. Flamefern, you will make a wonderful Leader.” Ebonywing dipped her head.

“We will go to the Moonpool tonight to give Flamefern his nine lives, and to take away Emberstar’s remaining lives except for one,” she announced. *Wow, Briarpaw thought, That just happened. But I guess it was time for a change... Emberstar is getting old, he'd probably die of old age over and over again until he's fully dead eventually.* She stepped away before being able to hear the new SkyClan Deputy, but Briarpaw expected that it was going to be a Senior Warrior, like Brownclaw, Antwatcher, or Branchstem. Briarpaw padded back outside of the Clan territories and caught a vole, eating it and thinking about her decision.

*I think I know what I'm going to choose.*

## Chapter Eleven

Briarpaw padded onto the edge of the SkyClan border, hoping a patrol would come to get her soon enough. Hawkstreak, Dayshine, Witheredsky, and Rubblepaw padded to the border, and the apprentice ran over to, smiling.

“Hi, Briarpaw!” Rubblepaw meowed, “Have you decided on living in SkyClan? Specklepaw has been hoping that you would!” Briarpaw felt her shut flutter as she heard about Specklepaw. *She wants me here?* she thought, *Maybe I do have a chance with her!*

“That’s for me to discuss with Emberstar,” Briarpaw meowed, getting out of her wishful thinking.

“About that…” Hawkstreak meowed, “Emberstar is not going to be Leader for long. He and the Clan have decided that it is best if he steps down and becomes an Elder, and Flamefern will be Leader as of tonight. He has made Brownclaw his Deputy.” Briarpaw pretended to act surprised, not as if she’d been watching earlier.

“Oh!” she exclaimed, “Well, could I still talk to him, since he’s my kin?” Dayshine nodded.

“I’m sure,” she meowed, “Come with us.” The patrol finished marking the border, then brought Briarpaw back to the camp.

“Briarpaw!” Specklepaw exclaimed, running over to her, “Have you decided to join SkyClan? We can become Warriors together! Oh, StarClan, this is so exciting!” Briarpaw’s chest fluttered, but she shoved it down, knowing Specklepaw just wanted to be friends, and she loved Pinewaters instead.

“I have to speak with Emberstar right now,” she meowed, “Yes, I have heard that he won’t be the Leader for long, but I want to speak with him anyway, since he’s my kin.” Specklepaw nodded.

“Seems reasonable!” she meowed, “But if you do want to join, I’ll be so excited!” Briarpaw nodded.

“I’ll talk with Emberstar,” she meowed. Briarpaw was lead to where Emberstar was, in the Elders Den, making himself a nest between Crookedstorm’s and Buzzardleap’s, taking Weaselspeck’s old nest, as he had died a few weeks before.

“Briarpaw!” Emberstar exclaimed, “Have you decided to join SkyClan?” Briarpaw shuffled her paws uncomfortably as Witheredsky, who had dropped her off, padded away.

“I actually would like to speak with you,” she meowed, “I know you’re not going to be Leader for long, I was told about it, but I want to speak with you anyway, you’re my grandfather, my kin.” Emberstar nodded.

“All right,” he meowed, sitting down in his nest, “What is it, Briarpaw?” Briarpaw sat down, anxiety pulsing through her.

“I’d like to go back to RiverClan,” she meowed finally, her breath catching, “I’ve been treated wonderfully here in SkyClan, and I love it here so much. I’ve made so many friends, and I’ve gotten even closer with family I didn’t know I had. But RiverClan is my home, I was raised there, and my closest friends are there.” A flash of hurt went through Emberstar’s eyes, then anger, and he sighed.

“All right,” he meowed, “I’ll miss you very much. Please come and visit me... but I understand your choice.” Briarpaw nodded.

“Thank you for understanding,” she meowed. Briarpaw went and said goodbye to her family and friends, and it got down to Specklepaw.

“I’m going to miss you a lot,” Specklepaw meowed, “You’re one of my best friends. Hopefully we can stay friends at the Gathering!” *I like you, Briarpaw thought, But you don’t feel the same. And that’s... that’s okay. It’s going to be okay.*

“I’d really like that,” she purred. Specklepaw smiled, and the two she-cats nuzzled close to each other, purring. Briarpaw was escorted to the ShadowClan border by Flamefern, Brownclaw, Antwatcher, and Branchstem.

“May StarClan light your path, Briarpaw,” Flamefern meowed, dipping his head to Briarpaw. She dipped hers back in respect, then set out through ShadowClan territory, making sure to stay near the shore. Briarpaw made it to RiverClan territory, and anxiety filled her, but she shook it off and walked onto the territory. As she neared the camp, the walk turned into a run, and eventually, Briarpaw was sprinting. She ran over the tree-bridge to the island into the center of camp, all eyes on her.

“I’m staying,” she meowed, “I’m staying here. I can’t leave!” Moonpaw ran over, closely followed by Mistclaw.

“I knew you would choose here!” Moonpaw meowed, “I told you, Mistclaw!” Briarpaw purred, tears pricking at her eyes.

“I missed you guys,” she meowed, “I could never leave you.” Her parents came over with Owlkit, smiles on their faces.

“I’m proud of you, kit,” Echoclaw whispered into her ear as he nuzzled close to her. Briarpaw smiled.

“Thank you, Dad,” she purred. Stepping back, Briarpaw turned to her mother, a whole new flood of tears coming. She nuzzled close to her mother, taking in her sweet scent.

“I saw you earlier today,” Silvertail whispered, “As soon as I saw you, I knew you would come.” Briarpaw’s eyes widened.

“I thought I was discreet!” she whispered. Silvertail smiled.

“Briarpaw, I’m your mother,” she meowed, “You could be surrounded by all the cats in every single Clan, and I would still pick you apart from the rest.” Briarpaw smiled.

“I love you,” she purred to her mother.

“I love you too, Briarpaw,” Silvertail purred. Briarpaw stepped back and was attacked by Owlkit.

“Owlkit!” she purred, “You’re so big!” Owlkit smiled.

“I know, I bet I could take you down any day now!” he mewed. Briarpaw laughed.

“I’ll have to take you up on that!” she meowed. Streamstar stepped forward.

“Welcome back, Briarpaw,” she meowed, “We’re happy to have you home. You’re a strong asset to our Clan. Now, would you like to continue your training beneath Brightfoot?” Briarpaw nodded.

“Yes, please!” she exclaimed, “Thank you, Streamstar!” Streamstar dipped her head, and Brightfoot padded over.

“I kept heading towards the Apprentices Den over the past moon, ready to wake you,” her mentor meowed, “Are you ready to complain about me waking you again?” Briarpaw nodded.

“I wouldn’t have it any other way,” she purred. Briarpaw glanced at the sky, it was beginning to get dark.

*Thank you, StarClan, for giving me the opportunity to see how other Clans live. And for reinforcing my love for my own Clan, and the knowledge that I need to stay here.*

Epilogue

“Briarpaw, Moonpaw, do you promise to uphold the Warrior Code, even if it costs you your lives?” Streamstar asked.

“I do.”

“I do.”

“Then Moonpaw, I name you Moonshower,” Streamstar finished, “StarClan honors your kindness and loyalty. Briarpaw, I name you Briarslip. StarClan honors your sense of humor and hunting skills.” Briarslip looked at Moonshower.

“We’re finally Warriors!” she whispered to her foster sister, who’s face shone with happiness.

“Briarslip! Moonshower!” the Clan cheered. Briarslip saw her parents watching both her and Moonshower with pride, Owlkit sitting with them. He was so big, he was practically an apprentice, only a few more weeks until he was one.

“Clan dismissed,” Streamstar meowed with a flick of her tail, “Briarslip, Moonshower, you will guard the camp in a silent vigil tonight.” Briarslip stood up, and Mistclaw ran over in happiness.

“We’ve finally all got our names!” she purred, “I’m so happy for you two!” Briarslip and Moonshower nuzzled close to Mistclaw.

“Thanks!” Briarslip purred. Her parents then padded over, smiles on their faces.

“I’m so proud of you both,” Silvertail purred to both of them.

“Thanks, Mom,” Briarslip purred. Owlkit bounced around her, he was almost half her height.

“Congrats!” he mewed, “You’re even *cooler* now!” Briarslip smiled.

“Thanks, Owlkit,” she purred, “And don’t worry, you’ll be an apprentice very soon.” Owlkit smiled.

“I’m not worried,” he mewed, and Briarslip burst out laughing.

“Okay then!” she meowed. Briarslip ate a fish for dinner with Moonshower and Mistclaw, laughing and joking about their Warrior names.

“Our names are way better than whatever we wanted as apprentices,” Moonshower meowed, “What was I thinking, wanting *Moonrunner*? *Moonshower* is way better.” Briarslip nodded.

“For real, I love this name much more than Briarheart or Briarfern,” she meowed. Mistclaw nodded.

“Yeah, I love your names,” she meowed, “And Mistclaw is way better than Mistleaf. I think we all got great names!” Moonshower nodded.

“We did,” she meowed. Briarslip smiled as she looked at her friends. *Thank StarClan I chose RiverClan, she thought, I’m happier than ever here.* That night, as Briarslip sat in her silent vigil, she thought back to her experience in SkyClan as an apprentice. *Specklepaw is probably also becoming a Warrior one of these days, she thought, To think, I nearly left the Clan to go chasing after her, even though she’s clearly into Pinewaters. I hope everything goes well for the two of them, truly.*

*And as for me, I don’t really know what I’m going to do with my life from here. But what I do know is that I’m going to live it with my best friends beside me, and my family backing me up.*

*That’s all I need to be happy.*