

*“...when you wake, just wait by the river; I’ll pick you up on boat.”*

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Reaperwing woke up in the middle of the night, the bright full moon shining its soothing cold light on the world. Pain entered his system as they did their best to stay up.

It had been weeks since the end of the Eclipse. It, Wheatmouse and Serpentsight made it out of the dreaded Eclipse’s Disciples’ camp alive, but not unscathed. It was a battle between disadvantaged lurkers and armored cats, but the trio were lucky to make it out, let alone with a body count.

Reaperwing’s second-in-command and the Palmposse leader opted to head back to their homes. It was just funny in hindsight that he would be following the latter’s direction.

They were by the river now, watching the stream flow and the waves reflect the moonlight. it donned his hat that slightly veiled their face, hoping it wouldn’t be given attention. At least, not from those he didn’t need it from.

From there came a familiar means of transportation; a wooden kayak. The cat on top was pale white, but their pelt was neatly covered with an oversized hat and a dark cloak.

“Whitelily! Oh, thank the Wanderers you made it!”, the moth lurker exclaimed.

Whitelily parked right in front of Reaperwing. due to his dysfunctional legs, he had a support beam that kept him up, enough to be able to row the boat with. He looked exhausted, but still kept up a smile.

“Reaperwing!”, he mewed.

“I’m so glad to see you again! Can you get on?”

Reaperwing made a slight limp as it makes it towards the boat.

“Fortunately, I can walk.”, he sighed.

“The pain hasn’t stopped in a long time, however...”

“Ah, well at least you’re still alive and well.”

Whitelily prepared his oar, placing it on the water to steady himself first.

“Once we make it to Palmposse, we should be able to patch you up before you can go about once more.”

Reaperwing couldn’t help but smile.

“That would be nice, thank you.”

Whitelily chirped a “You’re welcome” at them before heading forward. With a beat of the oar, the two were off.

Boat travelling was a quick but arduous way of going around. Reaperwing only caught glances of it from afar, but now he got to not only see it firsthand, but also was in that very kayak at all.

It was shockingly stable, perhaps a benefit of their size. There was a net that seemed to help catch fish as they went, so prey wasn't a problem by any means.

In front of them was Whitelily, the cat manning the boat. Despite his handicap, he found a way to adapt back to his way of life. It seemed he was less struggling with actually driving the boat than making it faster than he used to. Though, Reaperwing soon realized, it wasn't a consequence of his paralysis.

See, it had been moons since they last met, no thanks to the Eclipse. And seeing Whitelily once more made Reaperwing wonder...

"So...not to judge, but what's with the growing belly?", he asked him, pointing to the little bump that peeked outside his cloak.

Whitelily didn't seem too surprised by the question, but was eager to answer regardless. "Oh! See, I'm expecting kits soon! I'm actually going back home to..."

The boat cat was met with the moth looking at him with dilated pupils the moment he turned around, as if it were excited. He was then met with more questions.

"Are you doing okay?!"

"How long has it been?!"

"Have you eaten?!"

"Is Chickadee treating you well?!"

"Can I be their uncle?!"

Whitelily couldn't help but snicker.

"Alright, alright, one at a time.", he started. The benefit of being an envoy included being able to keep up with a conversation.

"I've been doing alright. It's been about two moons now. Chickadee has kept me safe and well-fed; in fact he encouraged me to return to my posse for better aid."

He then purred, smiling.

"And yeah, you can be their cool gang leader uncle!"

"AWE, thank you!", Reaperwing squeaked.

"How many kits do you think you'll have?"

"Well, I hope maybe three kits.", he giggled in response.

"We might get more, I just pray they'll be manageable for myself, Chickadee, and the posse."

"Awww, that's nice!"

The boat travel was quiet for a moment

“...I feel like one of them could be a lurker.”, Whitelily confessed.  
“I’m a lurker myself, so it’s a little more likely. I just hope whatever their abilities will be won’t interfere as much with how they adapt and live.”

Reaperwing could only nod. The Eclipse was hard on every lurker as is. Having kits with the chance of them being lurkers made things terrifying.

“Well, if any of them are, they’ll be under SOL protection as well as your posse’s.”, they said.  
“Serpentstar is reliable, I can say that much.”

Whitelily nods back.  
“Thank you, Reaperwing...”

He looked ahead, and turned his boat so that it stopped nearby.  
Reaperwing then watched as the pale cat began to turn back and forth, his visible ear from under his hood perking and turning.

“Hey, is everything alright?”

Whitelily turned to his companion  
“Everything is alright...I just had a feeling.”  
He looked up, observing that the moon began to set  
“The moon is losing light. We can take a rest for a few hours before continuing.”

Reaperwing nodded and began to drift to sleep as well, settling in the position he was already on as Whitelily entered the little hole in the center, placing his hat down on his face before dozing off.

Little did either cat know they were being watched.  
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A cloaked silver cat crept behind the thistle bushes, watching as Reaperwing and Whitelily settled to sleep.

One step.

Two steps.

With quiet movements, they made their way beside the boat. Simply pushing it could alert both cats, and they didn’t want that.  
They looked into the hole, seeing a sleeping Whitelily, who covered his sight with his cowboy hat. With his position, his scars from under his grown belly were as large as those on top.  
The silver cat glared, raised their paw up with claws unsheathed, and finally—

*"What are you doing?"*

The cat's hairs were on all ends, frozen in place as they turned behind them.

A dark brown cat was facing the silver one with a threatening look. His half-scarred face with burned flesh allowing for his fangs to show didn't help to calm the other cat's nerves. Beside him were two kittens, one almost unseeable in the dark, save for a bright bell that helped point where it was, and the other right behind the leg of its parent. The silver cat was amused, to say the least.

"H-hello there.", she started.

"I've just been taking a stroll, nothing much to do. Happened to see this little contraption, and I got intrigued."

"Right, like you wouldn't be suspected with your shiny armor from under your cloak?", the dark cat rebutted, pointing at something that glistened under the silver cat's cloak, as he said.

The silver cat could only look down, then at the stranger, before giggling, allowing him to growl at her.

"I'm shocked you're this observant.", she replied.

"Well, it's no matter. I assume you know why I'm here, then?"

*"You are not killing Reaperwing or Whitelily with me around—"*

"So that's what Moonflower calls herself now?", the cat mused, a toothy grin showing itself

*"Whitelily...quite a pleasant name for her—"*

"Him' .", he corrected.

"...I see." was her only reply.

"...May I ask - since we're so quickly acquainted - what your name may be?"

"Deerhowl.", he spat.

"We're not acquaintances, and I don't see how that helps you, hunter—"

*"Silver Tree"*, she replied with.

"And I just want to keep track of...his associates.", she pointed to the sleeping Whitelily.

"See, I heard he has connections wherever he goes, and—"

"If you so much as continue to stalk him, I am going to make sure you wish you were dead when I'm done with you!", Deerhowl growled once more.

"Me? Stalk him?", Silver Tree gasped, pretending to be shocked.  
"Oh no, no. We've known each other since kithood! Think of it as...a planned reunion. A monitoring session from afar, if you will!"

Deerhowl wasn't convinced, and it showed with his glaring expression.

Silver Tree then smiled, pulling the hood over her head. Her ears were so long they looked like hair when her head was covered up.  
"It doesn't matter. One way or another, I'll make sure Whitelily never gets to look at another dream or awaken a memory."

She and Deerhowl stare at each other, the moonlight shining on them both.

"It was good to meet you, Deerhowl...and your kits...It seems I've been bested by one of his associates."

She took a turn away from him.

"Good evening to you. Tell him to keep his eye open...or perhaps he'll find that out on his own before you breath a word out..."

Deerhowl kept eye contact as Silver Tree finally headed away from the boat. From there, his attention was drawn to his kit, then at the sleeping Whitelily and Reaperwing.

"Daddy?", the bell-worn kit spoke.

"Yes, Tempest?", Deerhowl responded. His voice was soothing and kind - a harsh contrast to how he spoke with Silver Tree earlier.

"Who are those? What's that?", Tempest jumped towards the boat, pointing at it and at the two sleeping cats. It was a miracle they didn't wake up from the whole verbal scuffle.

"Shh, you might wake them!", the other kitten quietly hissed, still cowering behind her father's leg.

Deerhowl couldn't help but soothe his hiding kit, using his free paw to gently rub her head

"It's alright, Eagle. They won't hurt us. I know them.", he purred before turning to Tempest once more.

"Well, the big guy with the covering hat is called Reaperwing. And this guy sleeping on the hole is Whitelily. They're lurkers, and friends of mine.", he said, pointing to each cat respectively.

"And this thing is called a kayak, I think.", he gestured towards the boat.

"At least that's what Whitelily calls it. He owns it."

"Wow!!", the kit said in awe.

"What's a lurker?"

"OH! Well, a lurker is usually a cat with powers.", Deerhowl answers, almost surprised he was asked that.

"Oooh, that sounds cool!", Tempest chirped.

"Are we gonna watch over them?"

"That's right", Deerhowl nodded.

"We'll be here until they wake up. They're going to go home, to the river"

"Oooh, a river!!!"

"That's the place where it's all wet, right?", Eagle chimed in

Deerhowl nodded, smiling at them.

"Yes it is, very good!"

"But I do advise you to be quiet for now, both of you. Daddy can stay up. You should sleep too.", he cooed at his kits.

"Awww, do I ha..", Tempest yawned as he spoke while Eagle began to curl up beside him.

"...ve to, daddy?"

Deerhowl could only snicker as he watched his kits pass out for the night, lying down beside them.

In-between Tempest, Eagle and the boat, he sat down comfortably, guarding everyone who was asleep for the night.

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*"...Ough, my head...."*

Whitelily put his paws up to his face, rubbing it before lifting his hat above his eyes.

He jumped at the sight of two dark-colored kits staring at him, falling further into the kayak hole.

"WHAT IS-WHAT-WHO-"

His panic was enough to startle Reaperwing awake, and for the kits to jump and yelp at the sudden call, Eagle running back to her father on the shore.

"Hey-Hey!! Relax, Whitelily! It's just my kits!!", Deerhowl called nearby.

"YOU-Oh! Oh it's you, Deerhowl."

Whitelily sounded disappointed while being frozen in place, but Deerhowl knew the pale cat was more than relieved to see him again.

"Hey!!", he greeted back, walking over to Whitelily and helping him up and out of the hole.

"Sorry about Tempest and Eagle, they're just excited to see you two."

"Tempest?! Eagle??", Reaperwing called from behind before the kit hopped towards it.

"WOW!! You look so cool, mister!", Tempest started.

"Ooh, what are those things on your paws?? OOH, are these wings??? Can you fly???? What happened to this one???", he pointed at a missing wing on Reaperwing's side.

"Tempest, stop!!", Eagle hissed, crouching behind

"Tempest, dear! Your sister is right, we shouldn't be bothering them this much.", Deerhowl said.

"He just came back from a fight, see."

"Ooh, sorry mister.", the kit pouted, backing away.

"..."

"Uhm, congratulations??", Reaperwing complimented, turning to Deerhowl.

"Haha, thank you." Deerhowl couldn't help but smile.

"How long were you three even here for?!", Whitelily asked, preparing to push the boat down stream. He sounded annoyed.

"Since dawn, Whitelily."

"You guys are heavy sleepers!"

Tempest looked at Whitelily and squeaked.

"Look daddy!!!", he pointed at the pale cat's scarred face

"His face looks like yours!!! Are you brothers???"

"Sorry kid, but your father is more of an annoying nuisance to me.", Whitelily patted Tempest's head before placing his oversized hat on his head. It was large enough to cover the scarred side of his face.

"What does that mean?", Tempest asked, cocking his head.

"Nothing you'll need to worry about, son.", Deerhowl chimed in.

"Speaking of, how have you been, Whitelily? It's been a while since we met face-to-face."

"Alright, I suppose.", the white cat shrugs.

"I've gotten stressed lately with being pregnant, some awful memories and dreams, and stronger paranoia...Right, I asked you to check on us. Thank you. I guess."

A smirk escaped Deerhowl's lips.

"It's no problem. We'll be escorting you both to Palmposse. I'm sure everyone will be happy to see you alive."

"..."

"Yeah, I...I hope so.", Whitelily murmured, successfully pushing the boat back on the water.

"What happened to your legs, mister?", Tempest asked as Whitelily began to walk towards the kayak, Reaperwing following behind him.

"Oh, I don't think that's good to ask...", Reaperwing winced.

"It's not too bad, I can handle that question. I was almost eaten by a big, scary beast!!", Whitelily smiled.

"Ooh!!", Tempest jumped, with Eagle widening her eyes in shock.

"Last I heard, it's gone for now, but we need to keep watch.", the white cat looked ahead. "With that out of the way, where will you three be going after this?"

Deerhowl held his breath

"See, Whitelily, I came here for another reason...I need a place to stay—we need a place to stay. I could go around the outskirts just fine, but my kits won't. Not in this environment."

"Are you asking me if I could bring you with us?", Whitelily intercepted, his head perked to the side.

And before Deerhowl could react, he turned to Tempest and Eagle

"Would you both like to hop on the kayak?"

"Do I???", the kits chirped happily before hopping towards the boat, settling between Whitelily and Reaperwing

"But what about daddy?"

Whitelily snickered.

"He can run, don't worry."

"You let Reaperwing on your boat?!", Deerhowl protested.

"It's got a ripped off wing on top of several injuries, and you got to recover even during the Eclipse, mister.", the pale cat smirks, much to the brown cat's disappointment.



“Oh, and by the way, I may take you to Palmposse, but it will be up to Serpentstar to decide if you can stay.”

“...”

“Okay, fine, you have a point.”, Deerhowl huffed before beginning to walk as the boat sailed on the river. Conversations kept going thanks to Tempest being a cat of many questions, with both lurkers trying to keep up with the little kit’s words

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To any other cat, the river wouldn’t smell much different from any other location, but a Palmposse cat could quickly identify the change of scent thanks to the fish and the flora – oh, how Whitelily missed the flora. And how he missed the chatters of little kits as those older gossiped around the camp, some even taking a swim in the waters from his view. His eye could catch the ever tall palm trees in their territory, and watched as other cats caught his gaze, either in awe or excitement that he even showed up. With a little help from Deerhowl and Reaperwing, the boat was anchored just nearby the camp borders, with the pale cat coming down to meet his possemates.

Things changed the time he was gone. Some cats have hardened from the Eclipse, Lock-Ness attack, or both. Some cats were gone, and some were new faces, young or old. Serpentstar made it to the forefront to greet the posse’s found envoy as Reaperwing was immediately sent to the medicine den.

Yet, Whitelily wanted to cry. So much has changed on both ends, yet it still felt like the Palmposse he knew and grew up in.

He was finally back home.