Dear readers,

Did you guess what would be waiting for Graystripe when he returned to the forest? His Clanmates gone, the camp destroyed in a swath of logs and mud, no sign that generations of cats had lived, hunted, and worshipped there for countless moons . . . Far from being the end of Graystripe and Millie’s long journey, it’s only the beginning. And this time they have no idea where they are going!

Will Graystripe and Millie make it to the sun-drown-place and find the scattered Clans? Join them on the final part of their adventure right to the edge of the earth, following the sign of the dying warrior.

Sincerely,
Erin Hunter
MY NAME IS GRAYSTRIPE. I'M A WARRIOR OF THUNDERCLAN.

I WAS TAKEN BY THE TWOLEGS AND FORCED TO LIVE LIKE A KITTY-PET... AND WHEN I FINALLY GOT THE CHANCE TO GET AWAY...

...I REALIZED I WAS LOST. I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO GET BACK TO MY CLANMATES.

THIS IS MILLIE. SHE WAS A KITTY-PET, BUT SHE LEFT HER LIFE BEHIND TO COME WITH ME. AND NOW, AT LAST...

...WE'VE COME BACK TO MY HOME.

OH, GRAYSTRIPE... I'M SO SORRY...
EVERYTHING'S SMASHED...
WRECKED... DESTROYED.

THE HIGHROCK...

...THE FERN TUNNEL...

...THE APPRENTICES' DEN...
...even the elders' tree.

Only the medicine cats' den made it through.

Everything I've ever known... my whole life.

Torn to pieces.

Part of me thinks, maybe if I go to sleep here, I'll wake up and everything will be back to normal.

Everything will be good again.
Graystripe? Are you all right?

Scoot over a little, will you?

No point in sleeping on the cold ground if we don't have to.

They talk with StarClan. They're the ones who give us messages... prophecies.

At first I think I can take my mind off things by telling Millie about the Clan's Medicine Cats.
HOW THEY TREATED OUR WOUNDS... HEALED THE SICK... INTERPRETED DREAMS...

SHE LISTENS CLOSELY, BUT THEN IT ALL HITS ME AGAIN. MY HOME IS GONE. DESTROYED... BY TWOLEGS.

STARCLAN FORGIVE ME... I HATE THEM SO MUCH.

IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT, GRAYSTRIPED. WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS.

YOU SHOULD TRY TO GET SOME SLEEP. OKAY?

MILLIE'S SWEET. I KNOW SHE CARES ABOUT ME.

BUT I WON'T BE SLEEPING TONIGHT.
IT'S THE COLD THAT WAKES ME.

MILLIE?

Uh?

MILLIE?

There she is. So she hasn't left me and my crazy quest behind.
MILLIE? WHAT'RE YOU DOING UP HERE?

IT'S TIME TO GO.

WHERE?
BACK TO YOUR TWO LEGS?

NO, SILLY. TIME TO GO FIND YOUR CLAN, OF COURSE.
LOOK, EVERYTHING YOU'VE TOLD ME—ALL THE TRADITIONS, THE RITUALS, THE WARRIOR CODE...

THAT'S NOT ATTACHED TO A PLACE. THAT LIVES IN THE CATS THEMSELVES.

YES, YOUR HOME'S GONE. BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOUR CLAN IS! THE WARRIOR CODE IS STILL OUT THERE. STILL ALIVE.

BUT... THEY'VE DISAPPEARED. THE TWO LEGS PROBABLY STOLE THEM.

EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM?

COME ON...

SHOULDN'T YOU BE MORE CERTAIN BEFORE YOU THINK ABOUT GIVING UP?
Millie's words stick in my head as we go out to hunt one last time.

She's right. I can't give up yet.

Not on ThunderClan.
THANK YOU, STARCLAN, FOR THIS FRESH-KILL THAT HAS GIVEN IT'S LIFE TO US.

AND... THANK YOU...

...THANK YOU FOR ALL THE PREY THAT WAS EVER CAUGHT HERE. THANK YOU FOR THE FOREST.

IT WAS A FINE HOME.
SO... WHERE TO NOW?

THAT’S A GOOD QUESTION. I’VE GOT TO FIND FIRESTAR AGAIN. HE’D NEVER STOP SEARCHING FOR ME.

BUT ALL I KNOW IS THAT SOME OF MY CLANMATES CAME BACK FROM THE SUN-DROWN-PLACE WITH A MESSAGE...

WE GO WEST.

...THAT A DYING WARRIOR WOULD SHOW THEM THE WAY TO A NEW HOME.

THAT’S THE BEST I CAN DO.
But first I have to see.

I can only imagine how peaceful it must have been here.

See what they've done to our land.
WELL... MOSTLY. YES.

WE LIVED OUR LIVES IN THIS PLACE... SOME OF THE MEMORIES HURT.

SILVERSTREAM... IT'S NOT BAD ENOUGH THAT I LOST YOU HERE.

NOW I'VE LOST EVERYTHING ELSE.
Hey... what's that out there?

I... I can't tell. That's WindClan territory.

Let's go and look.

I'm sorry... but I can't leave until I know what's happened to each Clan.

Huh?
THE LAND OF RIVERCLAN HASN'T REALLY BEEN TOUCHED...

...BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER.

IT'S BETTER THAT THEY'RE ALL GONE.

WITHOUT THE WATER AND THE FISH, THE CATS WOULD HAVE STARVED TO DEATH.
LOOK AT IT... THE TWOLEGS TORE DOWN EVERYTHING.

GRAYSTRIPES?

THE FOUR GREAT OAKS ARE GONE. ALL OF IT...

...TO MAKE THIS.

WHERE SHOULD WE GO?

EVERYTHING WE WORKED FOR... HOPED FOR...
I KNOW THAT PLACE.

MILLIE DOESN'T COMPLAIN.

WE HAVE TO SNEAK PAST THESE SLEEPING MONSTERS...FIGHT OUR WAY THROUGH THE MUD...AND SHE NEVER SAYS A WORD.

I'M LUCKY TO HAVE HER WITH ME.
WHY ARE WE COMING HERE, AGAIN?

WELL... REMEMBER THE OTHER BARN CATS I MENTIONED, BACK WITH HUSKER AND MOSS AND SPLASH?

WHO'S THERE?

GRAYSTRIPES?

WELL, THIS IS WHO I WAS TALKING ABOUT.

IT'S ME, GRAYSTRIPES!

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU!
FIRESTAR SAID YOU'D BEEN Captured BY TWOLEGS.

YOU'VE SEEN FIRESTAR?

YES! HE CAME THROUGH HERE With ALL Four CLANS, ON THEIR WAY OUT OF THE FOREST!

MY HEART PRACTICALLY STOPS FOR A SECOND. IT'S TRUE!

THEY'RE ALIVE! MY CLAN, FIRESTAR, THEY'RE ALL STILL ALIVE!
DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY WENT?

TOWARD THE SETTING SUN. I WENT WITH THEM AS FAR AS HIGHSTONES, WHICH IS WHERE BRAMBLECLAW RECEIVED A SIGN...

THE DYING WARRIOR? WHO WAS IT?

NOT A LIVING WARRIOR, IT WAS A SHOOTING STAR, THE LIGHT OF ONE OF OUR WARRIOR ANCESTORS FLICKERING OUT, FAR ON THE HORIZON.

SO—HOW WERE THEY? HOW DID THEY SEEM?

THIN... SCARED... BUT THEY HAD FAITH.

THEY KNOWN STARCLAN WOULD LEAD THEM TO THEIR NEW HOME.

THEY ASKED ME TO GO WITH THEM.

BUT THIS IS MY HOME NOW... PLUS I KNEW I COULD SEND YOU THEIR WAY, IF I EVER SAW YOU.
HOW LONG AGO WAS THIS? WHEN YOU SAW THEM?

OH... THAT WAS... SEASONS AGO. MANY SEASONS AGO.

THEY WERE ALIVE WHEN RAVENPAW SAW THEM, BUT SO MUCH TIME HAS PASSED...!

THEM COULD HAVE BEEN BROKEN UP BY DISASTERS... OR JUST SCATTERED... OR FOUGHT AMONG THEMSELVES AGAIN.

IT BARELY EVEN REGISTERS WHEN RAVENPAW ASKS US IF WE WANT TO STAY THE NIGHT IN THE BARN.

BARLEY! HEY! YOU HERE?

WHO'S THIS?

DON'T WORRY, BARLEY, THAT'S GRAYSTRIP, MY OLD FRIEND FROM THUNDERCLAN.
AND THIS IS HIS FRIEND MILLIE.

GRAYSTRIPE...
WOW. IT'S BEEN A WHILE, HASN'T IT?

I GUESS IT HAS.
YOU LOOK WELL.

AND, UH... MILLIE, RIGHT?
WELCOME TO THE BARN.

WOULD YOU, UH, DO YOU WANT ME TO CATCH A MOUSE FOR YOU? WE HAVE PLENTY.

I APPRECIATE THE GESTURE, BARLEY, BUT I'M PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF HUNTING FOR MYSELF.
AND SINCE YOU SAY YOU HAVE PLENTY...

...I'LL JUST TAKE ONE NOW.

THOSE ARE THUNDERCLAN HUNTING TECHNIQUES, AREN'T THEY?

SHE LEARNED QUICKLY.

I'M IMPRESSED. SHE'LL FIT IN WITH YOUR CLAN WELL, WON'T SHE?

IF WE CAN FIND THEM... YES, I EXPECT SHE WILL.
There's a nip in the air as we leave the next morning.

Nobody talks much. But there's a lot that's left unsaid. Lots of words, lots of feelings.

Ravenpaw and Barley only agree to go with us up to Highstones.

After that they're going back to their farm... and we're on our own.
WE'VE COME A LONG WAY... BUT I GUESS WE'VE STILL GOT A LONG WAY TO GO, DON'T WE?

I DON'T KNOW FOR SURE. BUT IT'S POSSIBLE, YEAH.

AND IT'LL BE WORTH IT. WON'T IT? IF EVERYTHING I'VE LEARNED ABOUT THUNDERCLAN AND THE WARRIOR CODE IS TRUE...

WE LEAVE MY TWO FRIENDS BEHIND, AND I CAN HEAR MILLIE'S WORDS AGAIN.

...IT WILL DEFINITELY BE WORTH IT.

IT WILL BE WORTH IT. OF COURSE IT WILL.

YOU OKAY?

YEAH. YEAH, I'M FINE. IT'S JUST...

...HE WAS MY LAST CONNECTION TO THE FOREST.
IT'S NOT TOO LONG BEFORE WE GET TO THIS FOUL, AWFUL PLACE...THE PLACE WHERE WE FOUND WINDCLAN WHEN THEY WENT INTO HIDING.

A PLACE THAT REPRESENTS EVERYTHING I'VE COME TO HATE.

DON'T WORRY, MILLIE. WE DON'T HAVE TO CROSS ANY OF IT. I KNOW A WAY.

TALKING WITH RAVENPAW REMINDED ME EVEN MORE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE PART OF THUNDERCLAN.

IT'S TIME I EMBRACED THAT.
STINKING TWOLEG TUNNELS LIKE THIS...

...STINKING TWOLEGS THEMSELVES...
NONE OF THIS IS FIT FOR A CLAN CAT. NOT FOR A WARRIOR.

I'VE GOT TO START DISTANCING MYSELF FROM ALL OF IT.
I DON'T EVEN STOP TO THINK FOR A SECOND THAT MILLIE MIGHT NOT FEEL THE SAME WAY.

I'M GETTING PRETTY HUNGRY. ARE YOU HUNGRY?

OH! HEY! THERE'S NO NEED!

YEAH, I AM, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT. COME ON, LET'S HUNT.

HUH? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I BET THAT TWOLEG NEST WILL HAVE FOOD. IN FACT, I THINK I SEE A CAT FLAP IN THE BACK DOOR, SO WE CAN--
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS! YOU WANT TO GO INTO A TWELEG NEST?

WELL... YEAH.

YOU DID SAY YOU WERE HUNGRY, DIDN'T YOU?

YES. SO WE HUNT. THAT'S WHAT WARRIORS OF THUNDERCLAN DO, THEY HUNT.

THEY DON'T SNEAK INTO PLACES AND EAT TWELEG PELLETS.

YOU'RE--YOU'RE NOT JOKING, ARE YOU?
YOU BETTER BELIEVE I'M NOT JOKING! WE'RE GOING TO JOIN MY CLAN, MILLIE, NOT GO OFF AND BE KITTYPETS.

CLAN CATS HUNT.

Sniff
Sniff

SO COME ON, I THINK I SMELLED SOME MICE OVER THIS WAY.
I'm glad Millie saw things my way today.

As I'm falling asleep I can't help but wonder...Did Firestar and the rest of the clan cats sleep here?

I don't smell them, but it was so long ago.

That night I dream of all the cats...wandering, hungry, desperate...
...begging StarClan to guide them to safety.

In the back of my mind I know I'm going to wake up exhausted.
WOW, THAT'S...WELL, THERE'S A LOT OF THEM, AREN'T THERE?

WE'LL BE THROUGH IN NO TIME.

AND YOU DON'T WANT TO GO AROUND, WHY, EXACTLY?

BECAUSE IT WOULD TAKE TOO LONG. THERE'S NO NEED.

BESIDES, GOING AROUND YOUR WAY MEANS USING A TWOLEG PATH.
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. IT'S WRONG EVEN TO THINK ABOUT USING SOMETHING MADE BY TWO LEGS NOW, ISN'T IT?

THAT'S RIGHT.

WELL, I DIDN'T SEE YOU COMPLAINING TOO MUCH WHEN YOU LIVED WITH TWO LEGS.

YOU ATE THEIR FOOD. YOU LET THEM PET YOU.

AND I WAS WRONG TO DO THOSE THINGS.

I'M A WARRIOR. I NEED TO LIVE BY THE WARRIOR CODE.

SO LET'S STOP WASTING TIME AND GET ACROSS THIS FIELD.
QUIET... QUIET... NO PROBLEM AT ALL...

BARH ARH ARH ARH!

RRRRROWF! RRRROWF!

RRRRROWF! RRRROWF!

THOSE DOGS ARE PANICKING THE SHEEP!
GO GO GO!

HAHH... HAHH... HAHH...

YOU OKAY?

NO, I'M NOT OKAY!
YOU SEE WHAT YOUR STUBBORNNESS DID? YOU SEE WHAT YOU ALMOST COST US?

YOU ALMOST GOT US KILLED!

COME ON.

I WANT TO GET A LOT MORE GROUND COVERED BEFORE DARK.
I KNOW MILLIE’S MAD AT ME. BUT I CAN’T WAVER. CAN’T BUDGE.

IF I LOSE SIGHT OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A WARRIOR AGAIN, I...

...WELL, I JUST CAN’T.

...CAN I?
WOW... GRAYSTRIPE, I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MANY MONSTERS IN ONE PLACE BEFORE.

HAVE YOU?

REPAIRS

NO.

AND I DON'T LIKE IT.
BUT WE NEED TO HUNT, AND THERE'S PROBABLY PLENTY OF MICE AROUND THOSE LITTLE BARNs.

FOLLOW ME... AND JUST BE CAREFUL, OKAY?

I DON'T WANT EITHER OF US GETTING HIT BY ONE OF THOSE THINGS.

THIS IS WEIRD. NOT LIKE ANY BARN I'VE EVER SEEN.

HEY! LOOK UP THERE!
IS HE DEAD?

NO.

I CAN SEE HIM BREATHING.

WE SHOULD PROBABLY ASK HIM IF HE'S SEEN--

OH, THANK GOODNESS.
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?

OVER THERE.

AND WHERE THERE'S A CAT FLAP--AS I'VE STATED BEFORE--

THAT'S A CAT FLAP...

THERE'S FOOD.

YEAH, TWOLEG FOOD.

DISGUSTING LITTLE PELLETS, LIKE RABBIT DROPPINGS.
OH, YOU--YOU JUST--FINE.

HAVE IT YOUR WAY. YOU WANT TO STAY OUT HERE, SEE IF YOU CAN MAYBE CATCH SOMETHING TO EAT? FINE.

BUT I'M HAVING DINNER.

SHE JUST DOESN'T UNDERSTAND, IS ALL. SHE WASN'T RAISED IN A CLAN. SHE DOESN'T GET IT.

I TELL MYSELF THAT OVER AND OVER WHILE SHE'S IN THERE.

...FOR A LONG TIME.

I'M FULL AS A TICK. JUST WALKED RIGHT IN, HAD A SEAT, AND ATE TILL I COULDN'T EAT ANY MORE.

TOLD YOU SO.

ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE NOT HUNGRY ENOUGH TO GO IN THERE...?
I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S BECAUSE I AM HUNGRY... OR IF I'M JUST TIRED OF ARGUING... BUT SUDDENLY I DON'T HAVE THE ENERGY.

OKAY. OKAY. YOU WIN. I'LL GO AND EAT.

HMM. WELL... THAT IS A LOT OF FOOD. JUST SITTING THERE, WAITING FOR ME...

PURRRRRRR...

YOU'RE NOT DIESEL!

YOU GET OUT OF HERE, YOU LOUSY STRAY!
GO ON! THAT'S NOT FOR YOU! GO ON, GET OUT!

RREEEEHHHRR!

LOOK, I DIDN'T KNOW THAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN, I SWEAR. NOBODY BOtherED ME WHEN I WAS IN THERE. I'M REALLY SORRY.

DID YOU... AHEM. DID YOU AT LEAST GET TO EAT ENOUGH?

DID I--

NO, I DIDN'T GET TO EAT ENOUGH! I BARELY HAD TWO BITES OF THAT REVOLTING GARBAGE YOU CALL FOOD!

AND YOU KNOW WHY I SHOULD'VE KNOWN? BECAUSE YOU SUGGESTED IT!

I SHOULD'VE KNOWN! I SHOULD'VE KNOWN GOING INTO A TWOLEG PLACE WOULD BE A DISASTER!

YOU'RE NO WARRIOR. YOU'RE STILL A KITTYPET! TWO-LEGS AND KITTYPET FOOD AND... AND CAT FLAPS... THEY'RE FOR YOU, NOT ME!
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY YOU'RE HERE! YOU SHOULD BE OFF ASLEEP ON SOME CUSHION SOMEWHERE!

GRAYSTRIPE...YOU DON'T MEAN THOSE THINGS...

YOU DON'T THINK SO? WELL, YOU DON'T KNOW--

AH!

WHUMP

GRAYSTRIPE!
OH NO, OH NO, GRAYSTRIPE, GRAYSTRIPE, CAN YOU HEAR ME?

GRAYSTRIPE, WAKE UP, YOU'VE GOT TO WAKE UP!

NNHHN... HHRRRRN...

HERE.

LET ME.
THANK YOU--!

JUST NEED TO GET HIM INSIDE HERE.

IS HE--HE'S NOT, PLEASE DON'T LET HIM, DON'T LET HIM BE--
He's not dead, don't worry. I don't even think he's that badly hurt.

The truck wasn't going very fast, and it just knocked him backward.

I've seen other cats get back up from a lot worse...

Name's Diesel, by the way. What's yours?

Hey, welcome back, bro.

I got breakfast. My treat.

Thanks.
THIS IS DIESEL, GRAYSTRIPE. HE LIVES HERE--THIS PLACE IS CALLED A ‘TRUCKSTOP.’

HE’S GOING TO LET US STAY HERE FOR A FEW DAYS, UNTIL YOU GET BETTER.

DID YOU ASK HIM IF HE’S SEEN THE CLAN CATS?

YEAH, SHE TOLD ME ALL ABOUT HOW YOU TWO ARE LOOKING FOR YOUR FRIENDS. SORRY, BRO, I HAVEN’T SEEN ‘EM.

LOTS OF CATS PASSING THROUGH...EVERYBODY HERE’S JUST PASSING THROUGH...BUT NOBODY LIKE YOU’RE DESCRIBING.

I TOLD HIM WE WERE HEADING TOWARD THE SETTING SUN.

RIGHT. WHAT YOU’RE GONNA WANT TO DO IS TAKE THE ROAD. IT’LL POINT YOU STRAIGHT AT THE SEA.
I've never been myself, but I've heard it talked about.

It's like the biggest stretch of water you've ever seen... and the sun drops down behind it every night.

In an instant I realize he's talking about the sun-drown-place.

That's it! That's where we need to go.

Thanks for the food and shelter, Diesel, but we'll be on our way now.

Hey, now, Graystripe, you've got heart—and lots of it, bro, you've got my respect—

But you just got hit by a truck.

You're not goin' anywhere, at least not for a while.
RELAX, OKAY?
YOUR FRIEND AND I'LL MAKE SURE YOU GET ALL FIXED UP.

AS MUCH AS IT IRRITATES ME TO ADMIT, DIESEL'S RIGHT. MY SHOULDER'S NOT BROKEN, BUT IT HURTS A LOT.

WHEN HE LEADS US OUTSIDE, I'M LIMPING SO BAD I FEEL LIKE AN ELDER.

DON'T WORRY, GRAYSTRIPE. I'LL CATCH US SOMETHING.

AND NOW, NOT ONLY DO I HAVE TO COMPETE WITH THIS--THIS OTHER CAT...
...but a former kittpet's a better hunter than I am.

GOTCHA!

WHOA.

I don't feel very lucky. Not right at the moment.

She's really good!

I hope you know how lucky you are, bro.
BUT THEN I START TO REALIZE SOMETHING. I'VE BEEN THINKING IT ALL ALONG...

BUT I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER ACTUALLY TOLD MILLIE HOW I FEEL ABOUT HER.

DIESEL'S RIGHT.
I AM LUCKY.

BUT THEN—RIGHT WHEN I DECIDE TO TRY TO TELL HER—

AFTERNOON, FOLKS.

HEY, MILLIE, I TRIED THAT STALKING THING YOU SHOWED ME. IT WORKED GREAT. THANKS.

NO TROUBLE AT ALL, DIESEL. I'LL BE HAPPY TO TEACH YOU MORE IF YOU'D LIKE.
I've felt lost before... I've been lost before, but never like this.

Now I feel like I'm lost, just sitting here.

After all this time, I've made up my mind to talk to Millie... really talk to her...

...or she's acting like a medicine cat and telling me to rest.

...and every chance I get, either Diesel's there...
I'm not even sure how many days go by like this. I just know I'm frustrated beyond words.

How can you tell?

It smells like salt and fish.

That one's from the sea, too.

The young twolegs use those boards for something. They go to the sea, and their skin's one color.

...Then when they come back, they smell like the sea, and they've gotten darker, and they always yelp a lot.

Aren't you ever curious? Don't you want to see this place yourself?

Nah. I just do my own thing, y'know? And my thing is here.

I barely pay diesel any attention. I don't know how he can stand living here, surrounded by the twolegs and their monsters.
How's my favorite patient?

I brought us a snack to share.

Thank you.
I REALLY APPRECIATE IT, BUT YOU KNOW, I CAN HUNT AGAIN. MY SHOULDER'S A LOT BETTER.

I KNOW.

I JUST LIKE DOING NICE THINGS FOR YOU.

THIS IS IT! THIS IS PERFECT. DEEP BREATHS...JUST SAY THE WORDS. SAY THE WORDS.

YES, ACTUALLY!~

MILLIE...DID YOU...DO YOU EVER WANT TO TELL SOMEONE SOMETHING, BUT YOU'RE NOT REALLY SURE HOW TO SAY IT?

BECAUSE I'VE BEEN~

OH, I'M SO SORRY! I JUST RAN RIGHT OVER YOU THERE.

OKAY, WELL... NOW, I KNOW YOU'RE GOING TO THINK THIS IS CRAZY. AND MAYBE IT IS A LITTLE BIT, BUT HEAR ME OUT.

ALL RIGHT...

NO, NO... YOU GO AHEAD.

WE COULD GET TO THE SEA BY RIDING ON ONE OF THE MONSTERS!
THE MONSTERS GO REALLY
FAST, RIGHT? AND WE NEED TO GET TO
THE SEA. AND YOUR SHOULDER'S STILL
SORE, RIGHT?

EXCUSE ME?

SO EVEN IF WE WALKED,
WE'D HAVE TO GO SLOW BECAUSE YOU'RE
HURT, BUT IF WE RODE ON A MONSTER
WE'D GET THERE IN NO TIME!

BUT, BUT THAT'S,
IT'S, YOU'RE—you're out
OF YOUR MIND, RIDING ON
A MONSTER?

WHAT'RE YOU
TALKING ABOUT?

I THINK IT COULD WORK.

I'VE BEEN THINKING
ABOUT IT FOR A WHILE,
AND I THINK IT'S A PRET-
TY GOOD IDEA.
SO I SEE YOU'VE ALREADY DISCUSSED THIS WITH HIM.

WELL... JUST... ONLY BECAUSE HE KNOWS SO MUCH MORE ABOUT THE MONSTERS THAN WE DO.

ARE YOU, I--I DIDN'T MEAN TO MAKE YOU MAD...

IT'S TOO DANGEROUS! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?

GRAYSTRIPE...

I'VE BEEN INSIDE ONE OF THOSE THINGS, TOO. PROBABLY A LOT MORE THAN YOU HAVE.

I'VE BEEN INSIDE ONE OF THOSE THINGS! WE COULD GET KILLED!

I KNOW IT'S DANGEROUS.

BUT FOR YOU, I'M WILLING TO TAKE THE RISK.

MAC'S TRUCKSTOP
GAS
I JUST NEED SOME TIME, ALL RIGHT?

JUST--JUST GIVE ME A LITTLE BIT. I HAVE TO THINK.

STARCLAN, HELP ME.
IT'S TOO MUCH.

MORE THAN LIVING WITH THE TWOLEGS... MORE THAN HELPING THE BARN CATS, EVEN MORE THAN SAVING THAT LITTLE TWOLEG KIT.

THE TWOLEGS DESTROYED MY ENTIRE WAY OF LIFE.

AFTER COMING ALL THIS WAY AND TRYING MY BEST TO LIVE LIKE A TRUE WARRIOR...

...I'M SUPPOSED TO USE A TWOLEG MONSTER TO REJOIN MY CLAN? ISN'T THAT JUST SPITTING ON THE WARRIOR CODE?

HOW COULD I DO THAT... AND STILL BE A WARRIOR? STILL BE ME?
IT TAKES ALL NIGHT FOR ME TO MAKE UP MY MIND, AND I'M STILL NOT CONVINCED IT'S THE RIGHT CHOICE.

BUT I THINK ABOUT MILLIE... AND FIRESTAR... AND I KNOW IT'S A CHOICE I HAVE TO MAKE.

AND THE LITTLE ONE, THERE'S NOWHERE TO HOLD ON. THE TWO LEGS WOULD SEE YOU.

SO WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

NAH, THAT ONE'S NO GOOD. IT'S BEEN THERE, BUT IT'S HEADING AWAY FROM THE SEA NOW.

IT'S GOT THE BOARDS. IT'S HEADED TOWARD THE SEA. AND YOU CAN HIDE IN THE BACK PART WITHOUT EVER BEING SEEN.

AHA!

YOU'RE LOOKING FOR THAT.

A PERFECT CHOICE, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF.
THANK YOU, DIESEL.
YOU’VE BEEN FANTASTIC TO US.

YEAH. THANK YOU.

YOU COULD ALWAYS COME WITH US, YOU KNOW.

NAH, I BELONG HERE. MEANT TO BE A LONER.

I CAN’T BELIEVE I’M DOING THIS...

BESIDES, I MEET TOO MANY INTERESTING CATS TO GIVE THIS UP.

HURRY NOW, OR THE MONSTERS WILL LEAVE YOU BEHIND.

GOOD-BYE!

I REALLY CAN’T BELIEVE I’M DOING THIS...!
ALL RIGHT! WE DID IT!
GRAYSTRIPE, WE DID IT! I'M
SO PROUD OF YOU!

GRAYSTRIPE?
ARE YOU OKAY?

I'M FINE...

...JUST BASKING IN
ALL THE PRIDE...

OH, IT'S AMAZING!
HAVE YOU EVER FELT THE
WIND IN YOUR FUR LIKE
THIS?

IT'S LIKE RUNNING
FASTER THAN I'VE EVER
RUN BEFORE!

WEEEEEE!
IT FEELS LIKE WE'RE SLOWING DOWN.

ARE WE THERE?

OH... NO, THIS CAN'T BE IT. I DON'T SEE ANY WATER ANYWHERE.

I GUESS THE TWO-LEGS ARE STOPPING FOR THE NIGHT. BETTER GET OUT BEFORE THEY SEE US. LET'S TRY TO HUNT.

WHEREVER WE ARE, I HATE IT. THE BEST WE CAN DO IS A FILTHY RAT, AND THE WATER OUT OF A MUD PUDDLE.
THE WHOLE PLACE SMELLS LIKE CROW-FOOD. I'M AMAZED MILLIE CAN SLEEP.

I STILL WANT TO TALK TO HER... I NEED TO, BUT NOT HERE.

NOT YET.

BESIDES, I CAN'T SHAKE THE FEELING THAT WE'RE BEING WATCHED.

GRAYSTRIPE?

WHAT'S WRONG?

KITTYPETS. I CAN TELL BY THEIR SCENT ALONE. WE'RE BEING ATTACKED BY KITTYPETS. AT FIRST I'M MORE ANNOYED THAN ANYTHING...

...BUT I REALIZE THESE AREN'T PAMPERED WEAKLINGS. THESE ARE MORE LIKE DUKE. I GET READY TO FIGHT, AND FIGHT HARD. BUT THEN...
WAIT, WAIT, WAIT! THERE’S NO NEED FOR ANY VIOLENCE! WE’RE JUST PASSING THROUGH!

YES—PASSING THROUGH OUR TERRITORY. WE DON’T WANT YOUR KIND HERE.

“YOUR KIND?” BUT I AM YOUR KIND! I LIVED WITH TWOLEGs UNTIL JUST A FEW DAYS AGO!

LIES!

YOU HAVE THE SCENT OF THE WILDERNESS! YOU’RE A WILD CAT, JUST LIKE THIS OTHER ONE!

AND WE WON’T LET YOU TAKE OUR HUNTS AND OUR KILLS AWAY FROM US!

I’M A LITTLE WORRIED—AT FIRST.
BUT WE’VE FOUGHT A FIGHT LIKE THIS BEFORE, AND WON.

WE’RE JUST ABOUT TO WIN AGAIN...

...WHEN ONE OF THESE MISERABLE KITTY PETS CATCHES ME RIGHT ON MY BAD SHOULDER.

THE PAIN IS SO INTENSE, I’M AFRAID I’M GOING TO BLACK OUT. BUT THAT DOESN’T HAPPEN. WHAT DOES HAPPEN...

KLONG

...IS THAT I GET VERY ANGRY.
IT DIDN'T HAVE TO HAPPEN LIKE THIS, YOU KNOW! WE TRIED TO BE REASONABLE!

THEN, JUST WHEN I THINK I'LL HAVE A CHANCE TO CATCH MY BREATH AND SEE HOW BADLY MY SHOULDER'S HURT...

...MILLIE SAVES OUR HIDES ONCE AGAIN.

GRAYSTRIPE, OUR MONSTER'S LEAVING!

I TAKE OFF AFTER HER, MOVING AS FAST AS I CAN...

HURRY!
...but my shoulder is killing me. Stupid kitty pet hurt it, and I haven't pushed it this hard since I got hit.

Come on, Graystripe!

You can make it! I know you can make it!

Rrraaaowwrr!

Hold on! Hold on, I'll help you!

Yes!
I can barely talk once I get back onto the monster with Millie.

Now my paw and my shoulder hurt so much I'm too distracted to talk.

Or... well... that might just be an excuse...

Graystripe! Graystripe!

Huh? What?

Why can't I tell Millie how I feel? Why is this so hard?

Look!

What? What do you see?
OH.

WE'RE STOPPING AGAIN.
SHOULD WE... I DON'T KNOW...

SHOULD WE GET CLOSER?

I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW LONG WE STAND THERE, STARING OUT AT THE WATER. I'VE GOT NO WORDS TO DESCRIBE IT.

FINALLY MILLIE BREAKS THE SILENCE.

WHAT NOW?

UH...WELL....
AND IF FIRESTAR IS LEADING THEM, THEY WOULDN'T GO SOMEWHERE THAT HAD NO TREES.

THEY WOULDN'T SETTLE IN A TWOLEGPLACE.

BUT THERE...

COME ON. IT'S THAT WAY. NOW THAT WE'RE HERE...

...I CAN ALMOST FEEL IT.
EVERYTHING’S SO QUIET AS WE ENTER THE FOREST. NO TWOLEGS... NO MONSTERS.

BUT THE QUIET DOESN’T LAST FOR LONG.

DID YOU HEAR THAT?

YEAH.

FOLLOW ME.
YOU THERE!

RAAAOOW!

HEY, WAIT! WAIT A MINUTE!

I SAID WAIT!

OKAY, OKAY! TAKE THE MOUSE! YOU CAN HAVE IT!
THE MOUSE?

NO, NO, NO, LISTEN, WE DON'T WANT THE MOUSE. THE MOUSE IS YOURS.

UH... OKAY THEN... WHAT DO YOU WANT?

HAVE YOU SEEN A LARGE GROUP OF CATS COME THROUGH HERE?

LARGE... UH... LARGE GROUP... LET ME THINK...

OH, WAIT—YEAH! YEAH, THERE'S A BIG GROUP OVER THIS RIDGE... BUT I WOULDN'T GO OVER THERE IF I WERE YOU.

I'VE HEARD THEY EAT BONES!

BONES! THAT'S THE SAME SILLY RUMOR KITTY PETS WERE SPREADING ABOUT ME!
DO YOU REALLY THINK IT'S THEM? DO YOU REALLY THINK WE'VE FINALLY FOUND YOUR CLAN?

FOR A SECOND I'M SCARED TO ANSWER HER...SCARED TO BE DISAPPOINTED AGAIN.

BUT THEN...

THEN I'M STARING DOWN AT A LAKE, AND I KNOW. WE'VE DONE IT. WE'VE FOUND THEM.

PRAISE STARCLAN...

MILLIE, I-I THINK I CAN SEE CATS MOVING DOWN THERE ON THAT LITTLE ISLAND!
...it'd be time for the gathering now.

That would...that would make sense...

Wow...it's beautiful... are you ready? should we go down?

Actually...Millie... I want to talk with you first.

Yeah?

Uh-oh...this looks serious.

I've been trying to figure out how to say this...or when to say this... for days now.

Millie... I know I've been hard to deal with. and I know this life can be hard.
BUT I COULDN'T HAVE MADE IT HERE WITHOUT YOU. YOU SAVED MY LIFE, BUT...MORE THAN THAT...YOU SAVED MY SOUL.

YOU FOUND ME WHEN I WAS LOST, AND YOU BROUGHT ME BACK TO WHO I REALLY WAS.

I'VE ALREADY SAID I WANT YOU TO JOIN THUNDERCLAN WITH ME, BUT I NEED YOU TO KNOW HOW I FEEL...

GRAYSTRIPE... TO BE WITH YOU...

...AND I HOPE YOU'LL FEEL THE SAME WAY, MILLIE...

...I WANT YOU TO STAND BY MY SIDE...AS MY MATE.

THAT'S WHAT I'VE WANTED SINCE I FIRST LAID EYES ON YOU.
WE DON'T TALK AGAIN AS WE MOVE DOWN TOWARD THE WATER.

WE DON'T HAVE TO.

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A VERY LONG TIME...

...MAYBE FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER...
I know exactly where I am and exactly where I'm going.

I'm not.

Graystripe?

There's no need to be scared.

It's just... this is big. You know?

I know.

All right. Let's go.

Be careful on the tree, okay? It looks like it might be slippery.
I don't really know what to expect when Millie and I get to the island. Could be nothing. Could be anything.

But what we do find...
...IS EVERYTHING.

GRAYSTRIPES?
GRAYSTRIPE! YOU FOUND US! I KNEW IT, I KNEW YOU WOULD!

FIRESTAR... EVERYONE...I HAVEN'T COME ALONE.

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CHAPTER ONE

Kallik

“A long, long time ago, long before bears walked the earth, a frozen sea shattered into pieces, scattering tiny bits of ice across the darkness of the sky. Each of those pieces of ice contains the spirit of a bear, and if you are good, and brave, and strong, one day your spirit will join them.”

Kallik leaned against her mother’s hind leg, listening to the story she had heard so many times before. Beside her, her brother, Taqqiq, stretched, batting at the snowy walls of the den with his paws. He was always restless when the weather trapped them inside.

“When you look carefully at the sky,” Kallik’s mother continued, “you can see a pattern of stars in the shape of the Great Bear, Silaluk. She is running around and around the Pathway Star.”

“Why is she running?” Kallik chipped in. She knew the answer, but this was the part of the story where she always asked.
“Because it is snow-sky and she is hunting. With her quick and powerful claws, she hunts seal and beluga whale. She is the greatest of all hunters on the ice.”

Kallik loved hearing about Silaluk’s strength.

“But then the ice melts,” Nisa said in a hushed voice. “And she can’t hunt anymore. She gets hungrier and hungrier, but she has to keep running because three hunters pursue her: Robin, Chickadee, and Moose Bird. They chase her for many moons, all through the warm days, until the end of burn-sky. Then, as the warmth begins to leave the earth, they finally catch up to her.

“They gather around her and strike the fatal blow with their spears. The heart’s blood of the Great Bear falls to the ground, and everywhere it falls the leaves on the trees turn red and yellow. Some of the blood falls on Robin’s chest, and that is why the bird has a red breast.”

“Does the Great Bear die?” breathed Taqqiq.

“She does,” Nisa replied. Kallik shivered. Every time she heard this story it frightened her all over again. Her mother went on.

“But then snow-sky returns, bringing back the ice. Silaluk is reborn and the ice-hunt begins all over again, season after season.”

Kallik snuggled into her mother’s soft white fur. The walls of the den curved up and around them, making a sheltering cave of snow that Kallik could barely glimpse in the dark, although it was only a few pawlengths from her nose. Outside a fierce wind howled across the ice, sending tendrils of freezing air through the entrance tunnel into their den. Kallik was
glad they didn’t have to be out there tonight.

Inside the den, she and her brother were warm and safe. Kallik wondered if Silaluk had ever had a mother and brother, or a den where she could hide from the storms. If the Great Bear had a family to keep her safe, maybe she wouldn’t have to run from the hunters. Kallik knew her mother would protect her from anything scary until she was big enough and strong enough and smart enough to protect herself.

Taqqiq batted at Kallik’s nose with his large furry paw. “Kallik’s scared,” he teased. She could make out his eyes gleaming in the darkness.

“Am not!” Kallik protested.

“She thinks robins and chickadees are going to come after her,” Taqqiq said with an amused rumble.

“No, I don’t!” Kallik growled, digging her claws into the snow. “That’s not why I’m scared!”

“Ha! You are scared! I knew it!”

Nisa nudged Kallik gently with her muzzle. “Why are you frightened, little one? You’ve heard the legend of the Great Bear many times before.”

“I know,” Kallik said. “It’s just . . . it reminds me that soon snow-sky will be over, and the snow and ice will all melt away. And then we won’t be able to hunt anymore, and we’ll be hungry all the time. Right? Isn’t that what happens during burn-sky?”

Kallik’s mother sighed, her massive shoulders shifting under her snow-white pelt. “Oh, my little star,” she murmured. “I didn’t mean to worry you.” She touched her black
nose to Kallik’s. “You haven’t lived through a burn-sky yet, Kallik. It’s not as terrible as it sounds. We’ll find a way to survive, even if it means eating berries and grass for a little while.”

“What is berries and grass?” Kallik asked.

Taqqiq wrinkled his muzzle. “Does it taste as good as seals?”

“No,” Nisa said, “but berries and grass will keep you alive, which is the important thing. I’ll show them to you when we reach land.” She fell silent. For a few heartbeats, all Kallik could hear was the thin wail of the wind battering at the snowy walls.

She pressed closer to her mother, feeling the warmth radiating from her skin. “Are you sad?” she whispered.

Nisa touched Kallik with her muzzle again. “Don’t be afraid,” she said, a note of determination in her voice. “Remember the story of the Great Bear. No matter what happens, the ice will always return. And all the bears gather on the edge of the sea to meet it. Silaluk will always get back on her paws. She’s a survivor, and so are we.”
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