

WARRIORS



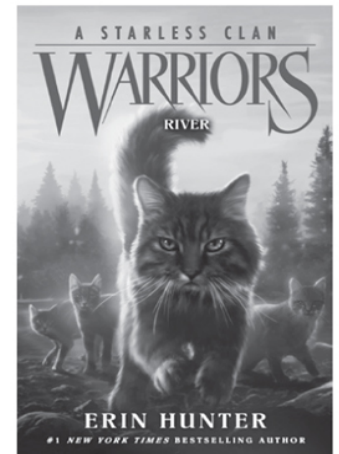
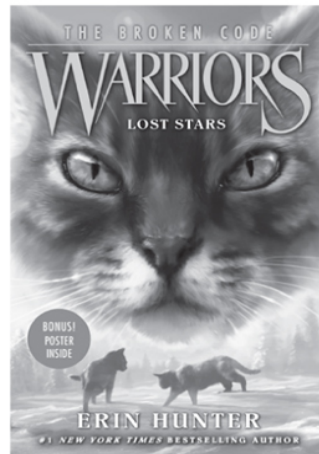
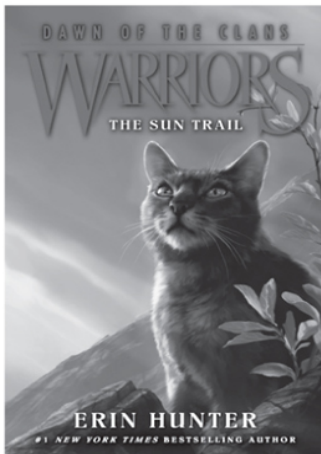
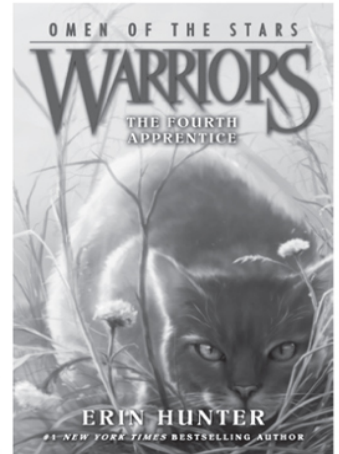
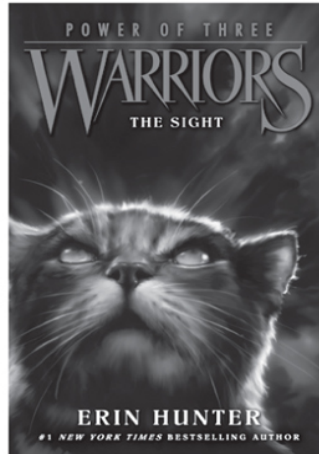
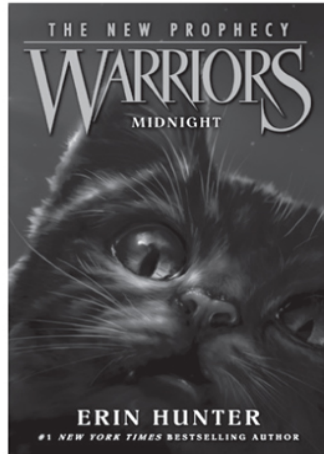
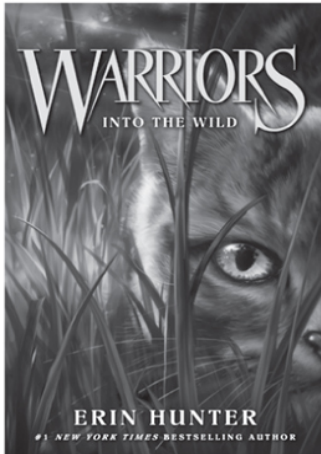
GRAPHIC NOVEL

A THIEF IN
THUNDERCLAN

ERIN HUNTER

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

— DIVE INTO THE WARRIORS WORLD! —



WARRIORS

A THIEF IN THUNDERCLAN

CREATED BY
ERIN HUNTER

WRITTEN BY
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ART BY
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An Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers

WARRIORS

GRAPHIC NOVELS

Graystripe's Adventure

Ravenpaw's Path

SkyClan and the Stranger

A Shadow in RiverClan

Winds of Change

Exile from ShadowClan

Tigerstar and Sasha #1: Into the Woods

Tigerstar and Sasha #2: Escape from the Forest

Tigerstar and Sasha #3: Return to the Clans

The Rise of Scourge

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A Thief in ThunderClan

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FIRST EDITION



THE DREAM ISN'T
ALWAYS THE SAME.



SOMETIMES
I STAND AND FIGHT.

**PACK
PACK**

MOST TIMES I RUN.



KILL

KILL



BUT SWIFTPAW...

...SWIFTPAW ALWAYS DIES.

**KILL
KILL**

**PACK
PACK**



AND NO MATTER WHAT
I DO...



...RUN AWAY, OR STAND
AND FIGHT...



...IT MAKES NO
DIFFERENCE.





MY NAME IS
BRIGHTHEART.

I'M A WARRIOR OF
THUNDERCLAN.



THOUGH, SINCE THE
ATTACK...



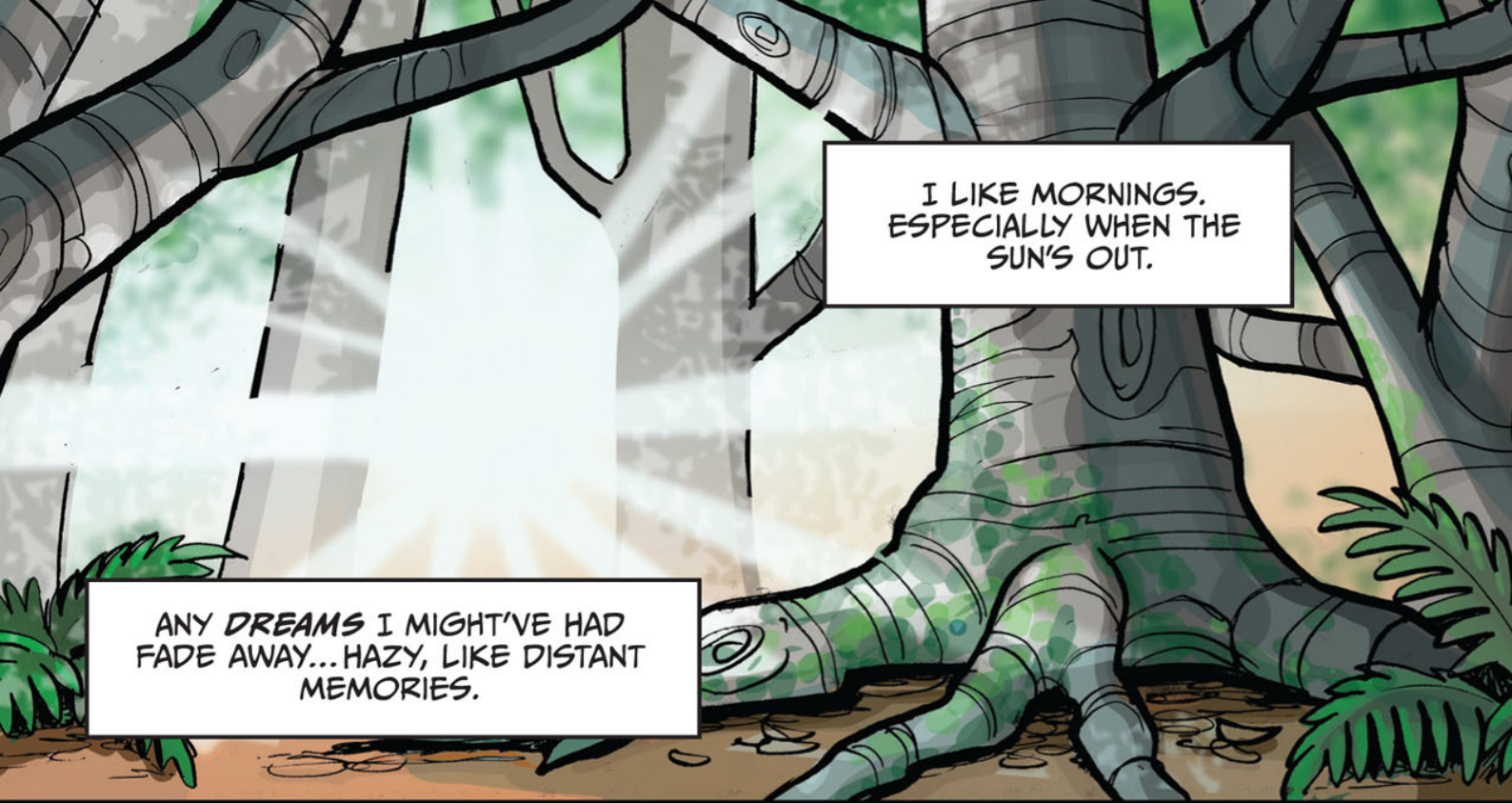
...I'M NOT ALWAYS SURE
WHAT THAT *MEANS*.



WOULD
YOU KEEP IT
DOWN?

SOME OF US
ARE TRYING
TO SLEEP.





I LIKE MORNINGS.
ESPECIALLY WHEN THE
SUN'S OUT.

ANY *DREAMS* I MIGHT'VE HAD
FADE AWAY...HAZY, LIKE DISTANT
MEMORIES.



AND I LIKE *HUNTING*
EVEN BETTER.

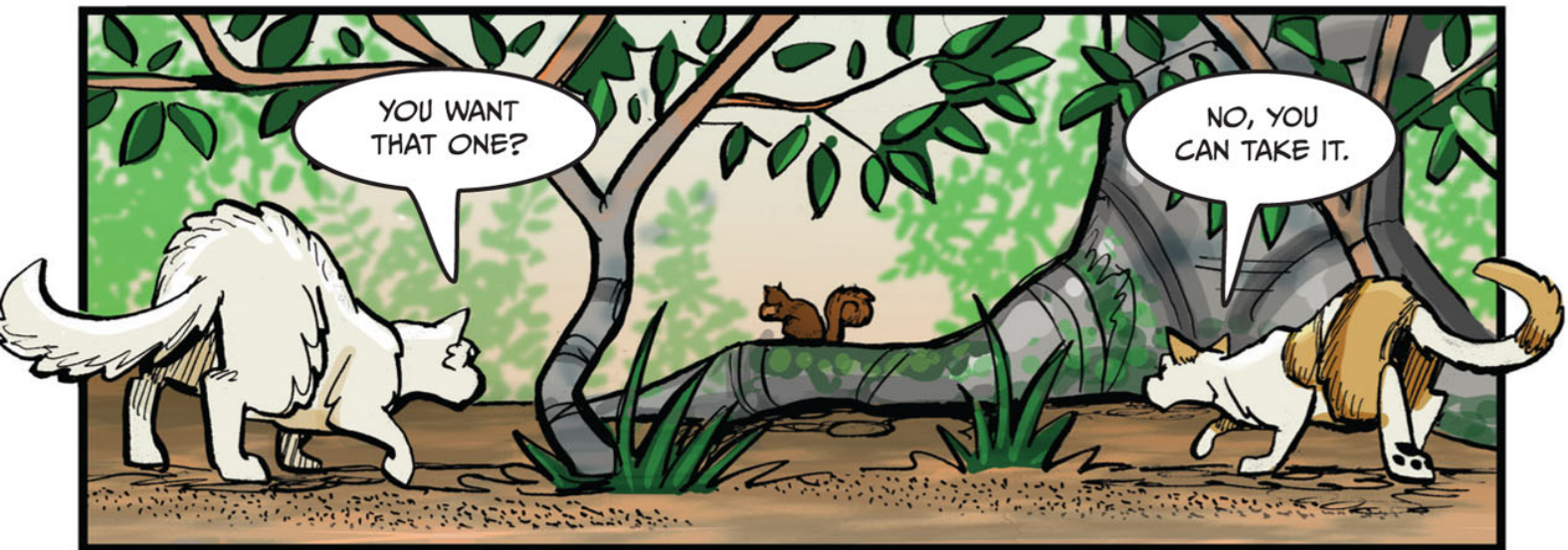
sniff
sniff

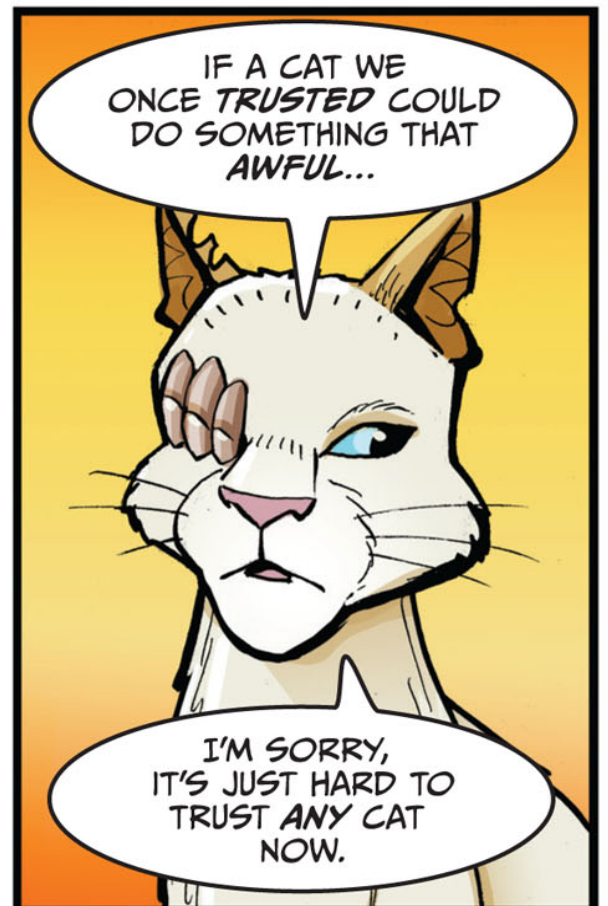
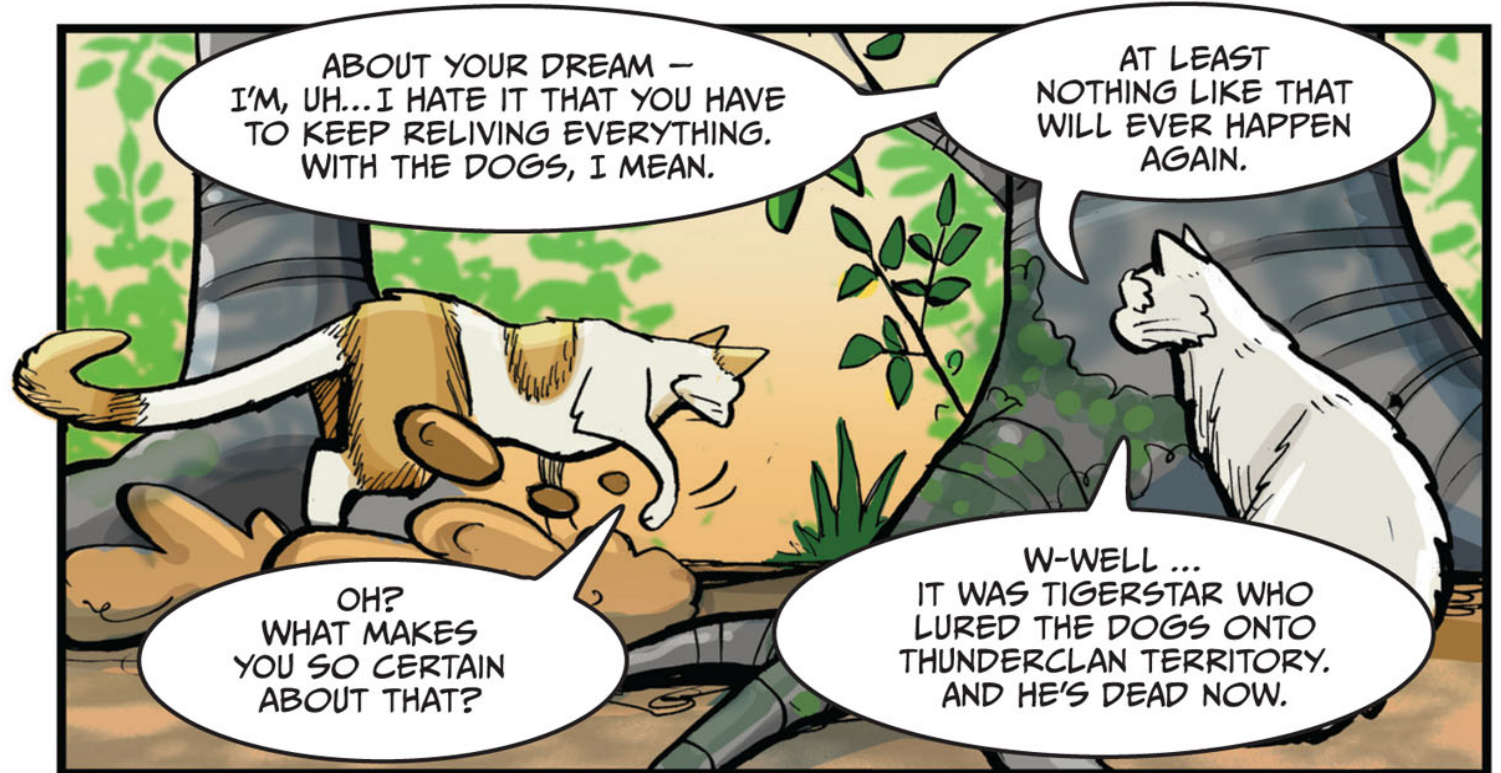
CLOUDTAIL
AND I MAKE A
GOOD TEAM.

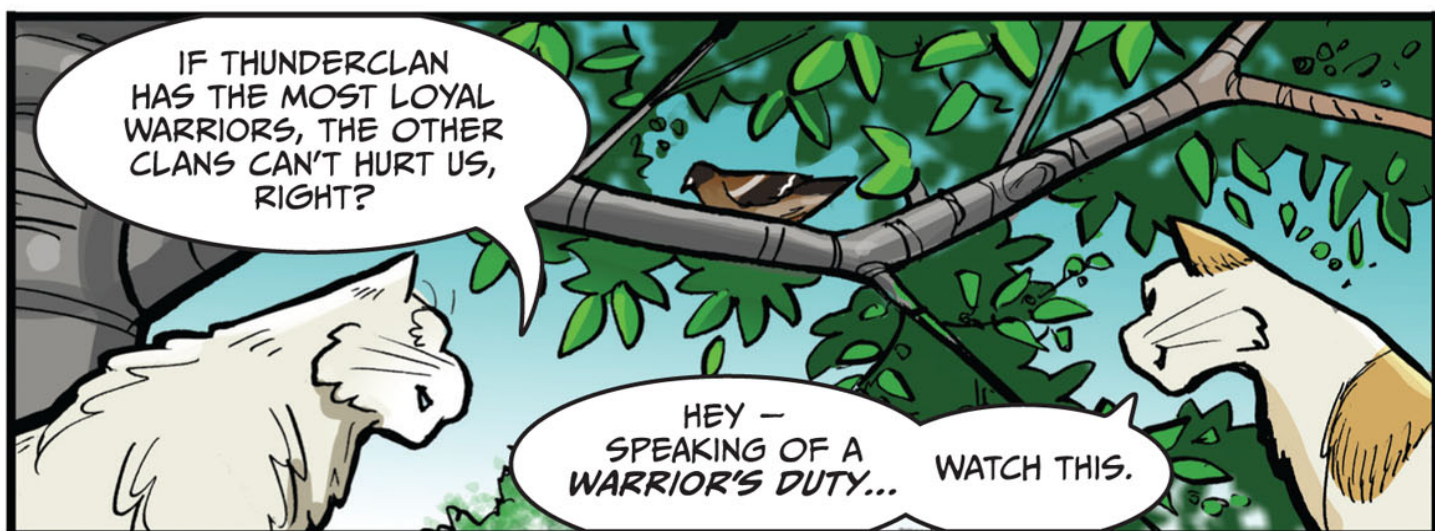


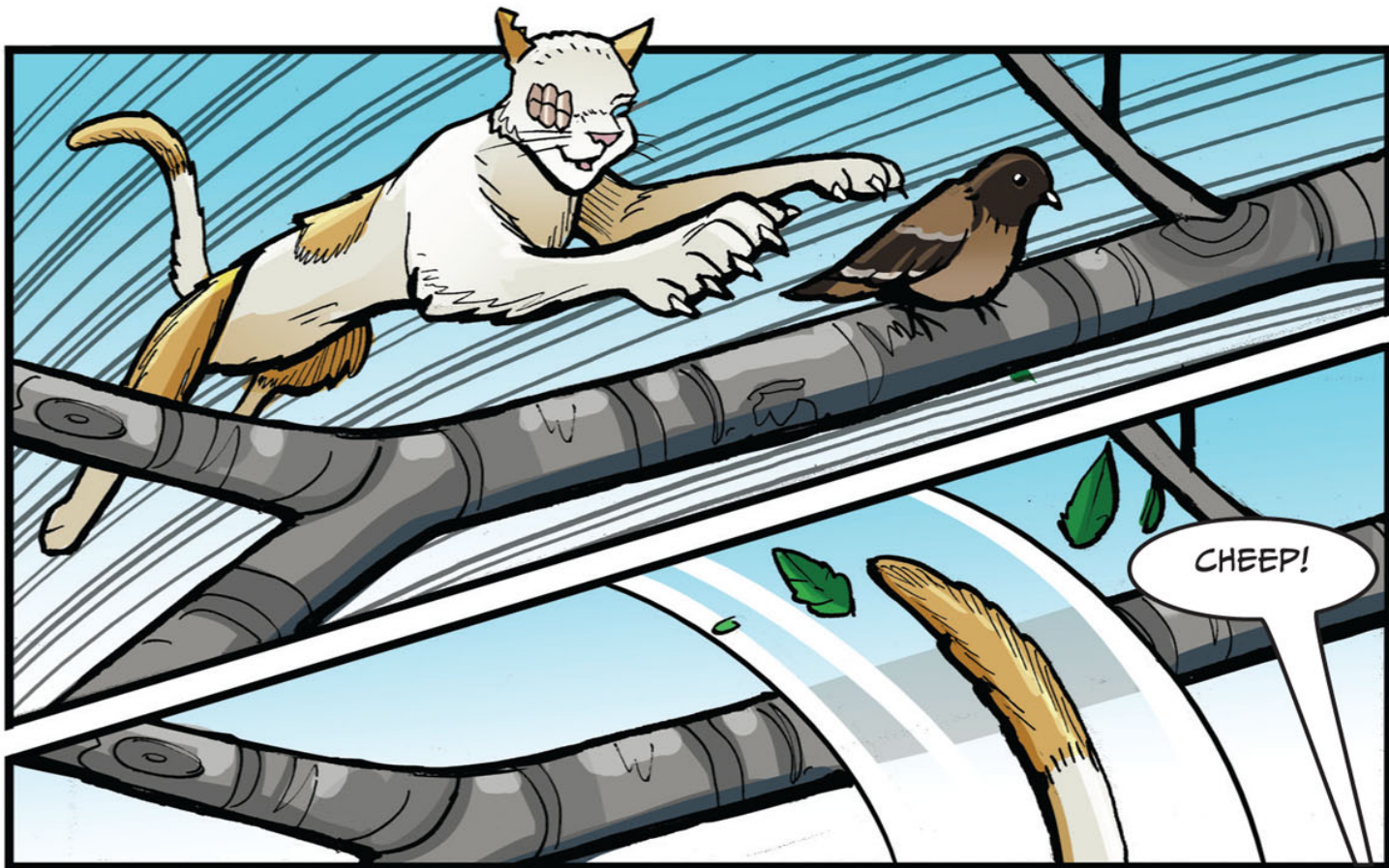
WE'VE KNOWN
EACH OTHER
SINCE WE WERE
APPRENTICES.

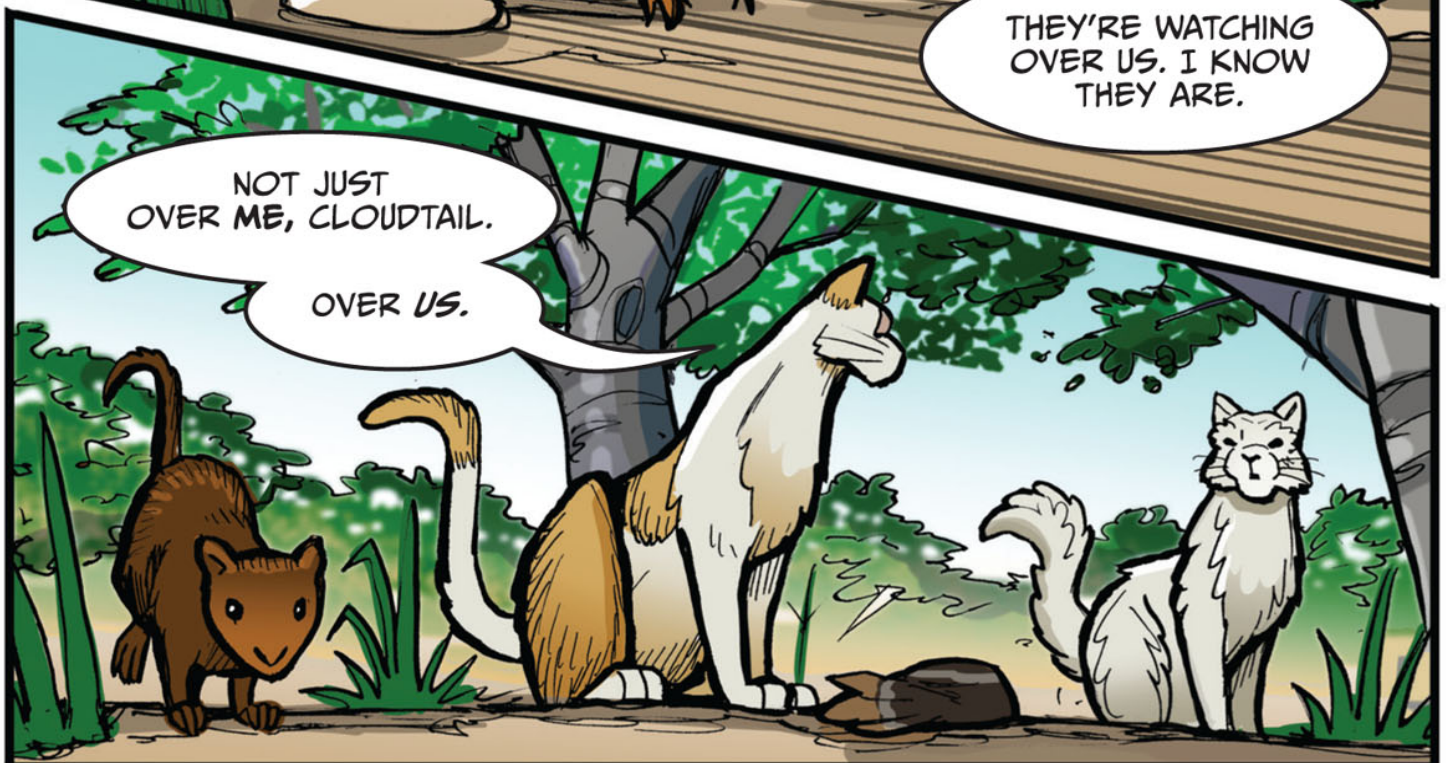
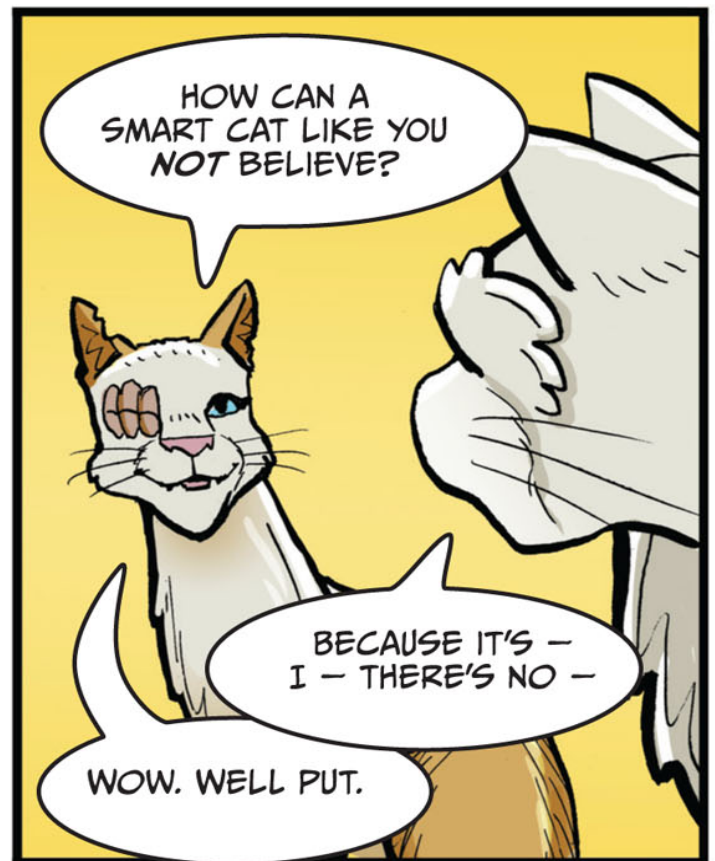
BUT IT STILL TOOK
ME BY SURPRISE
WHEN WE *FELL*
IN LOVE.

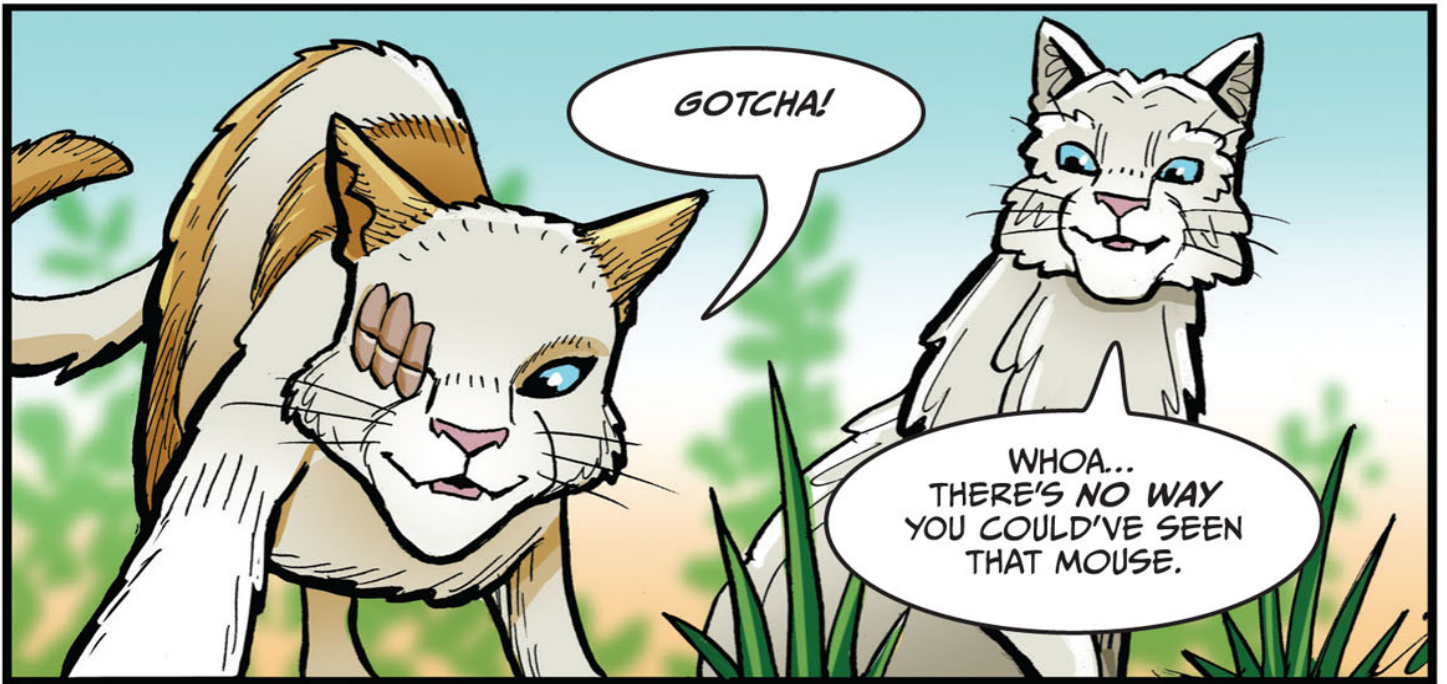
















FEELS GOOD TO
COME HOME, TOO.

GOOD HUNTING
TODAY, HUH?

HI, BRIGHTHEART!
CLOUDTAIL!



SPEAKING OF CLAN
DEPUTIES WE CAN TRUST...

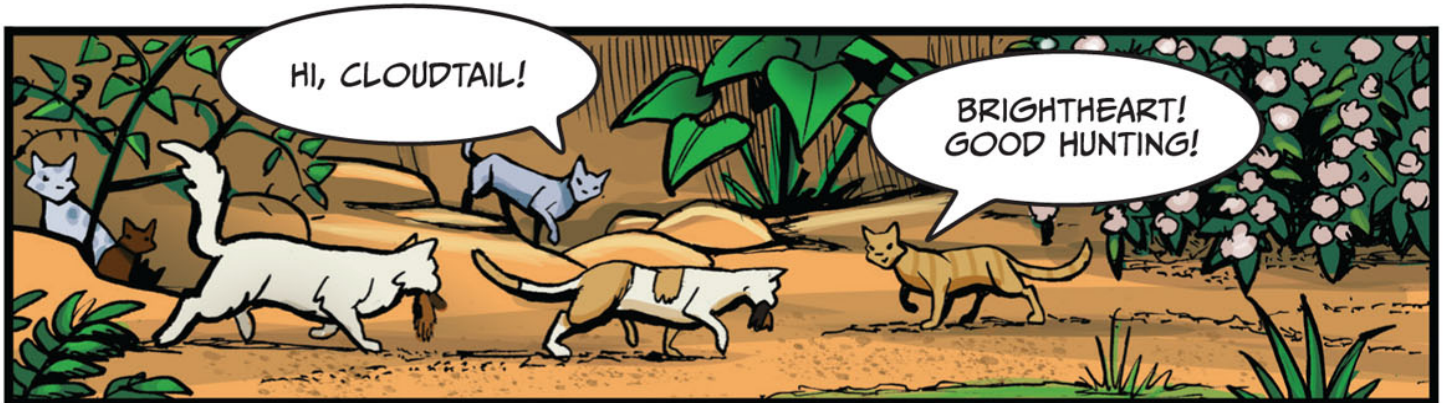
HELLO,
GRAYSTRIPE.



CLOUDTAIL.
BRIGHTHEART.
WE CAN ALWAYS COUNT
ON YOU TWO TO BRING
BACK PLENTY OF PREY,
CAN'T WE?

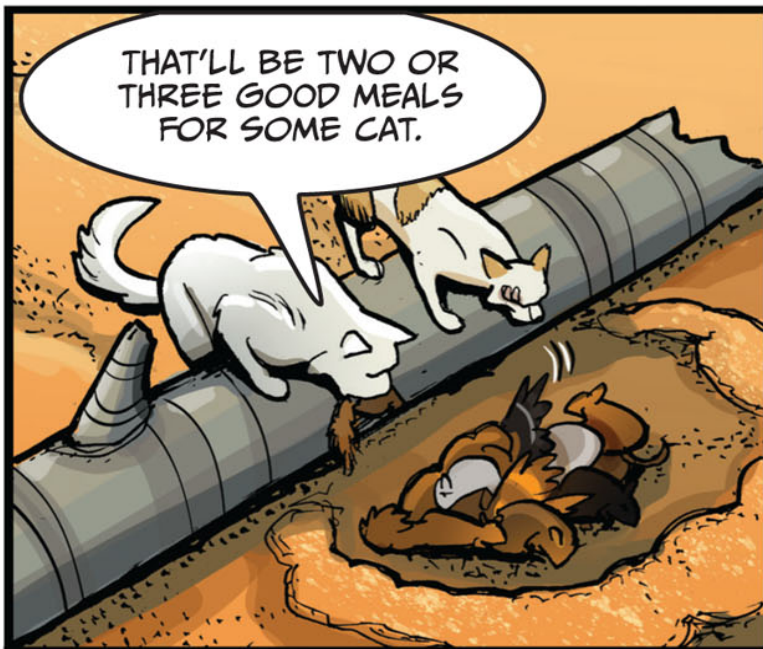
JUST DOING
WHAT WARRIORS ARE
SUPPOSED TO DO!

NO
NEED TO BE
SO MODEST!



HI, CLOUDTAIL!

BRIGHTHEART!
GOOD HUNTING!



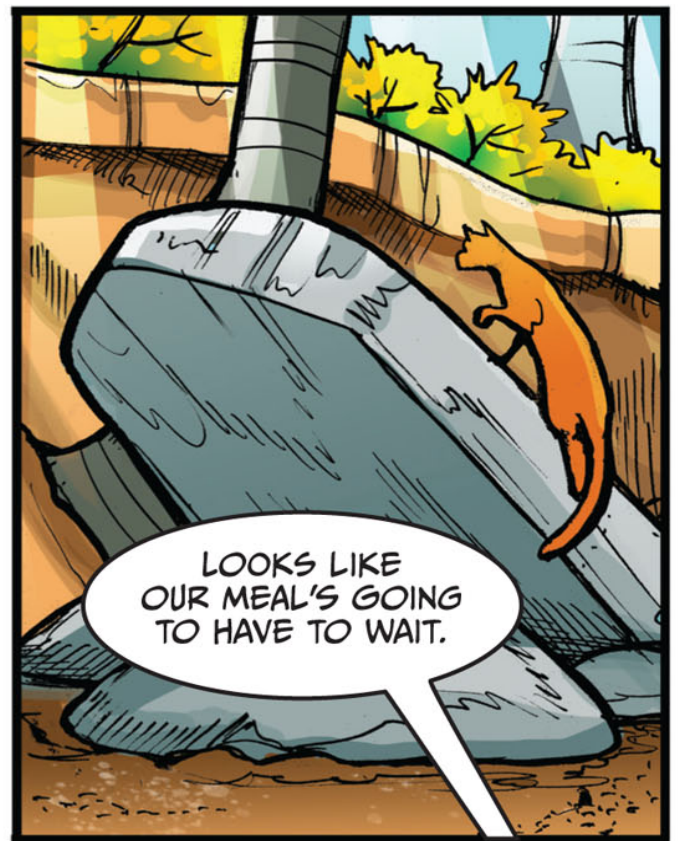
THAT'LL BE TWO OR
THREE GOOD MEALS
FOR SOME CAT.



YEAH —
AND I JUST GOT
REALLY HUNGRY.

WANT
TO SHARE A
VOLE?

THAT SOUNDS
LOVELY, YES,
THANKS.





THE CLAN'S IN NEED OF
MORE APPRENTICES...

...AND AS SOON AS I SEE
WILLOWPELT AND HER KITS,
I KNOW I'M RIGHT.



THEIR FATHER, WHITESTORM,
WAS THUNDERCLAN'S DEPUTY.

BUT HE DIED IN BATTLE AGAINST
BLOODCLAN TWO MOONS AGO.

I'M SURE HIS LOSS FEELS
AS FRESH TO THEM AS MY
SCARS FEEL TO ME.



NEITHER
CLOUDTAIL NOR I HAVE EVER
MENTORED AN APPRENTICE
BEFORE.



I HOPE WE
GET CHOSEN!



THREE
THUNDERCLAN KITS
HAVE REACHED
THE AGE OF SIX
MOONS...

BEING A MENTOR
WOULD BE AMAZING.

...AND ARE NOW
READY TO BECOME
APPRENTICES.



SOOTKIT,
FROM THIS DAY ON,
UNTIL YOU RECEIVE YOUR
WARRIOR NAME, YOU WILL
BE KNOWN AS
SOOTPAW.



AND YOUR
MENTOR WILL BE
LONGTAIL.



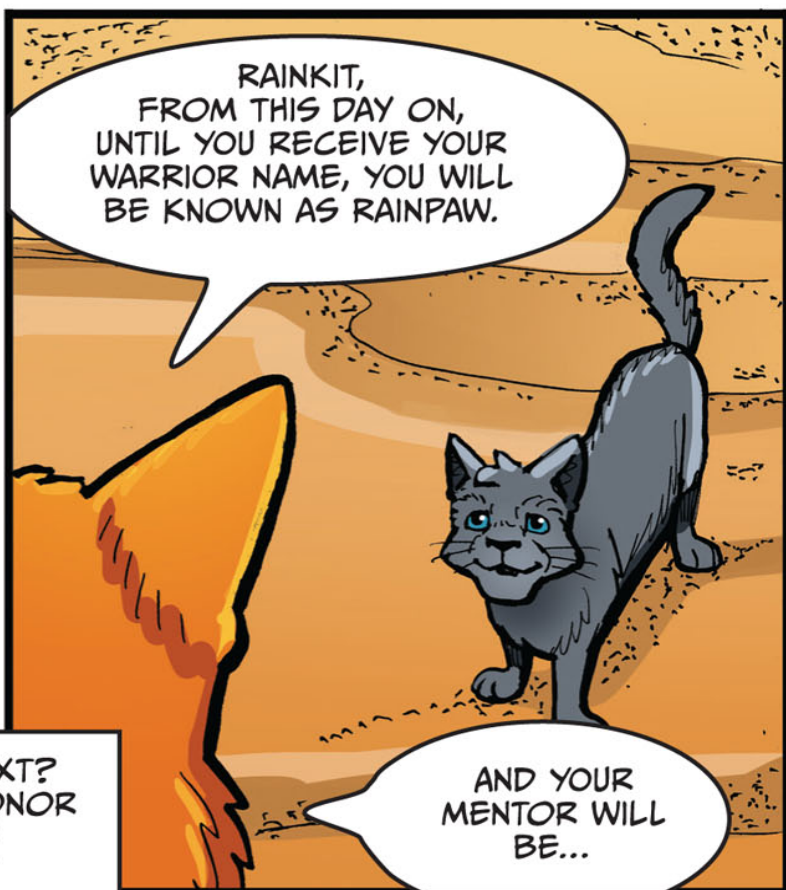
SORRELKIT,
FROM THIS DAY ON, UNTIL
YOU RECEIVE YOUR WARRIOR
NAME, YOU WILL BE KNOWN
AS SORRELPAW.



AND YOUR
MENTOR WILL BE
SANDSTORM.

OOH — SANDSTORM AND I
WERE BOTH WHITESTORM'S
APPRENTICES!

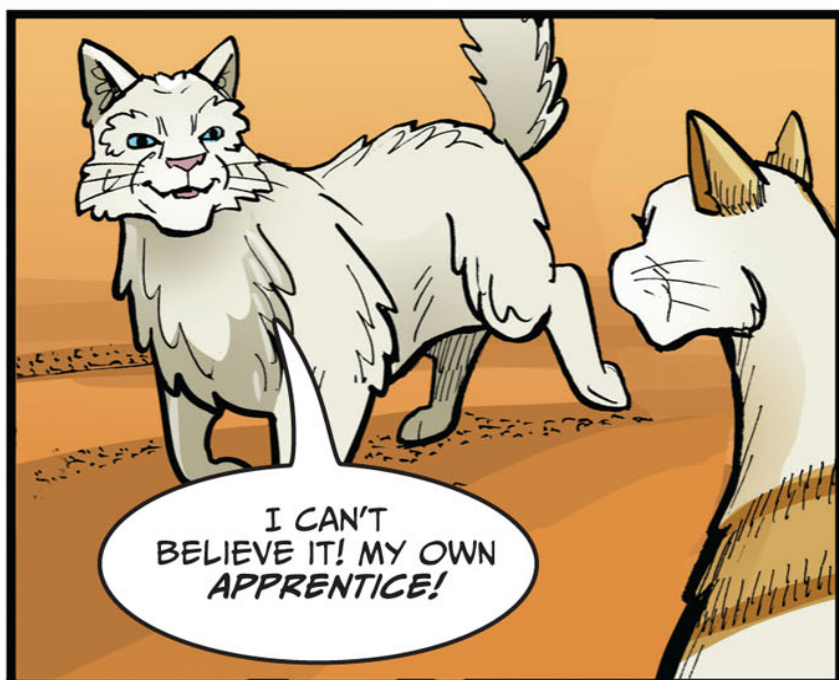
DOES THIS MEAN I'M NEXT?
IT WOULD BE SUCH AN HONOR
TO MENTOR ONE OF
WHITESTORM'S KITS!

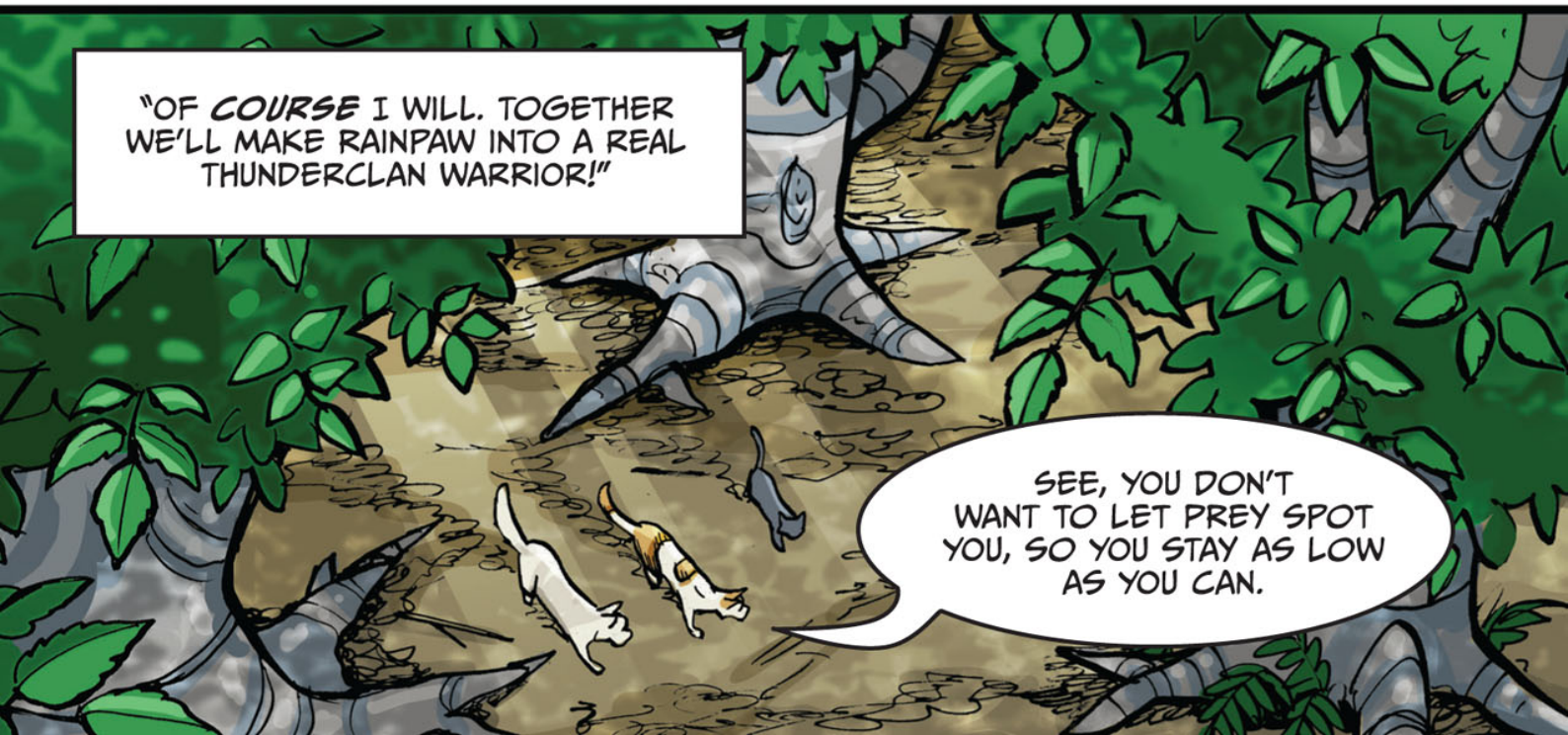
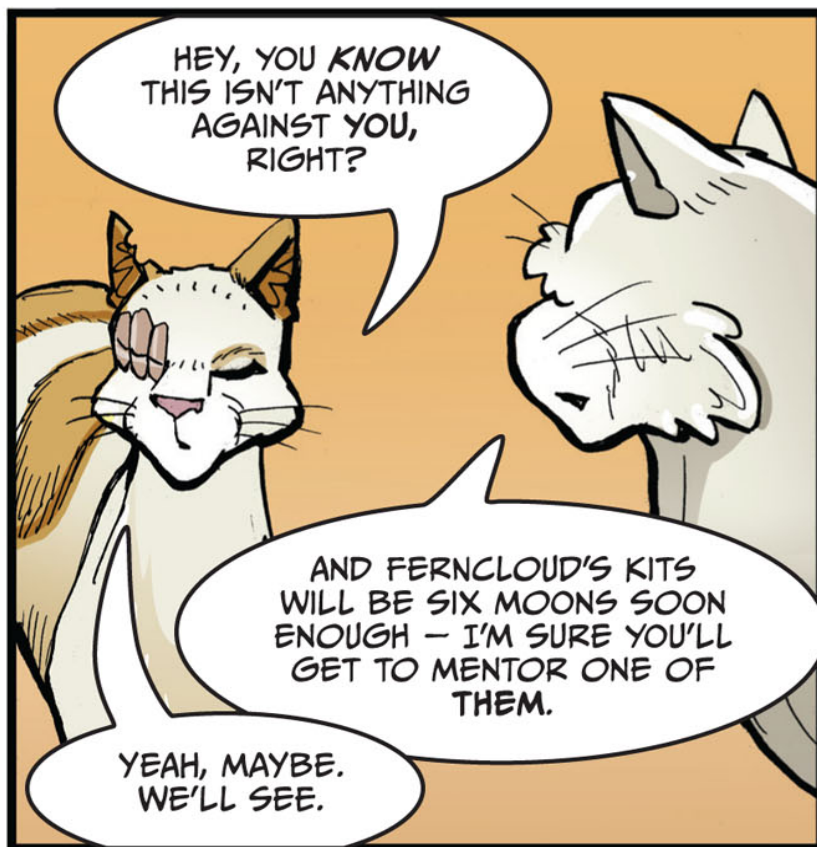


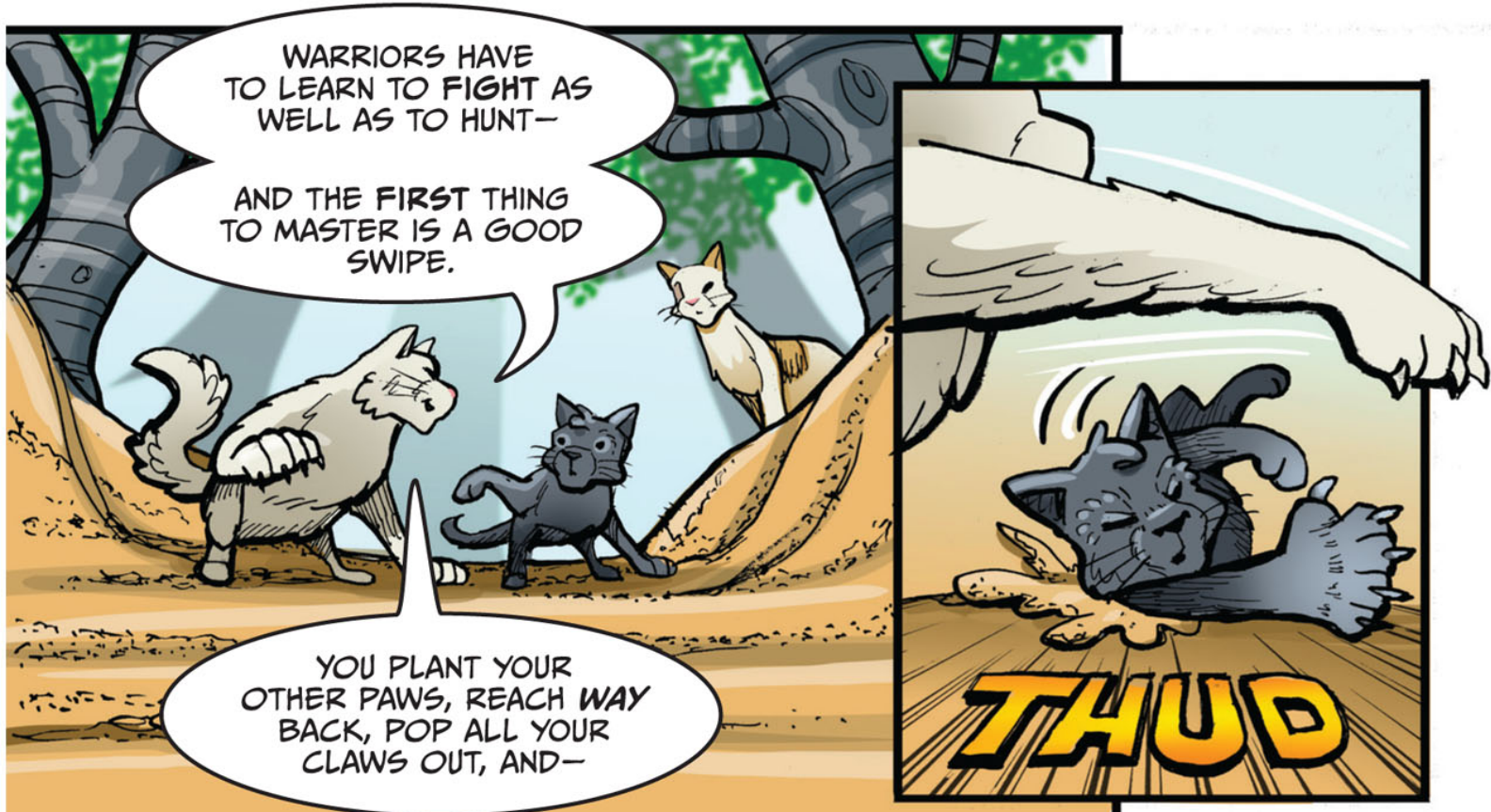
RAINKIT,
FROM THIS DAY ON,
UNTIL YOU RECEIVE YOUR
WARRIOR NAME, YOU WILL
BE KNOWN AS RAINPAW.

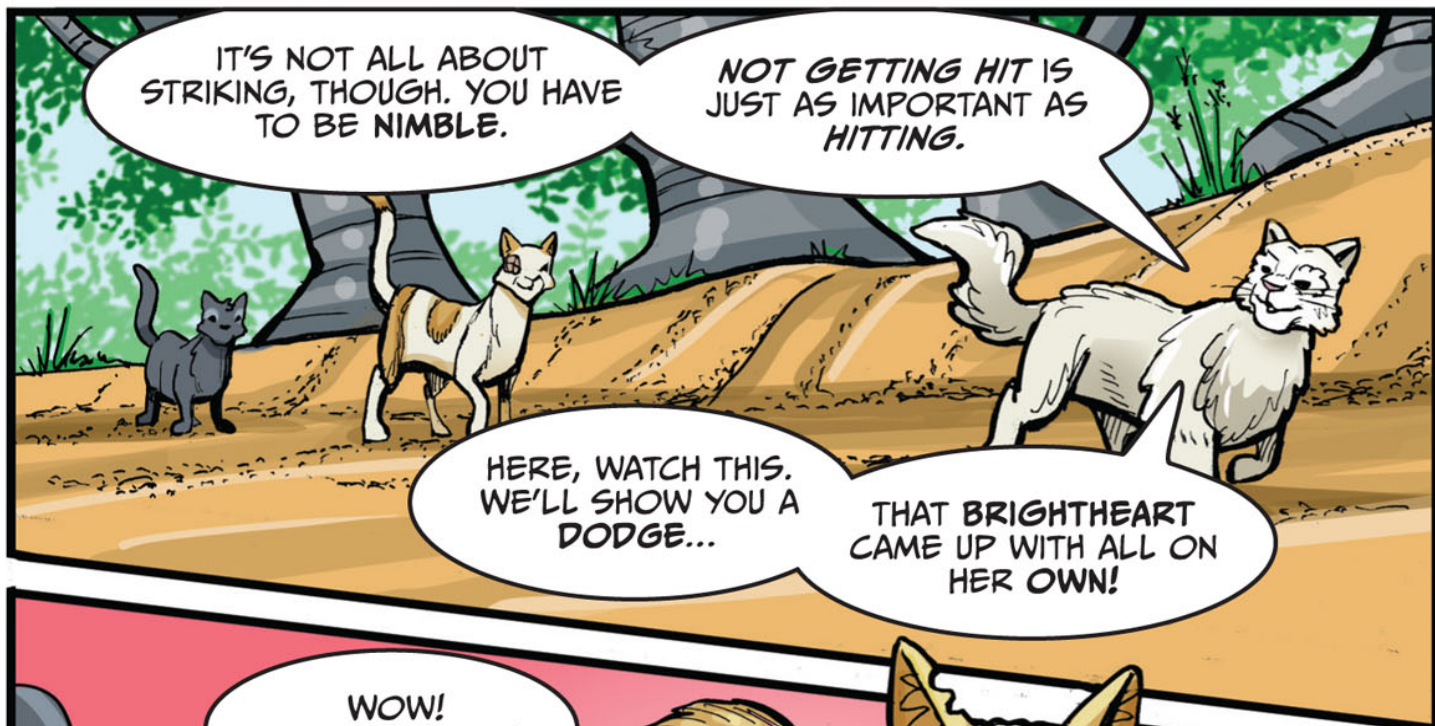
AND YOUR
MENTOR WILL
BE...

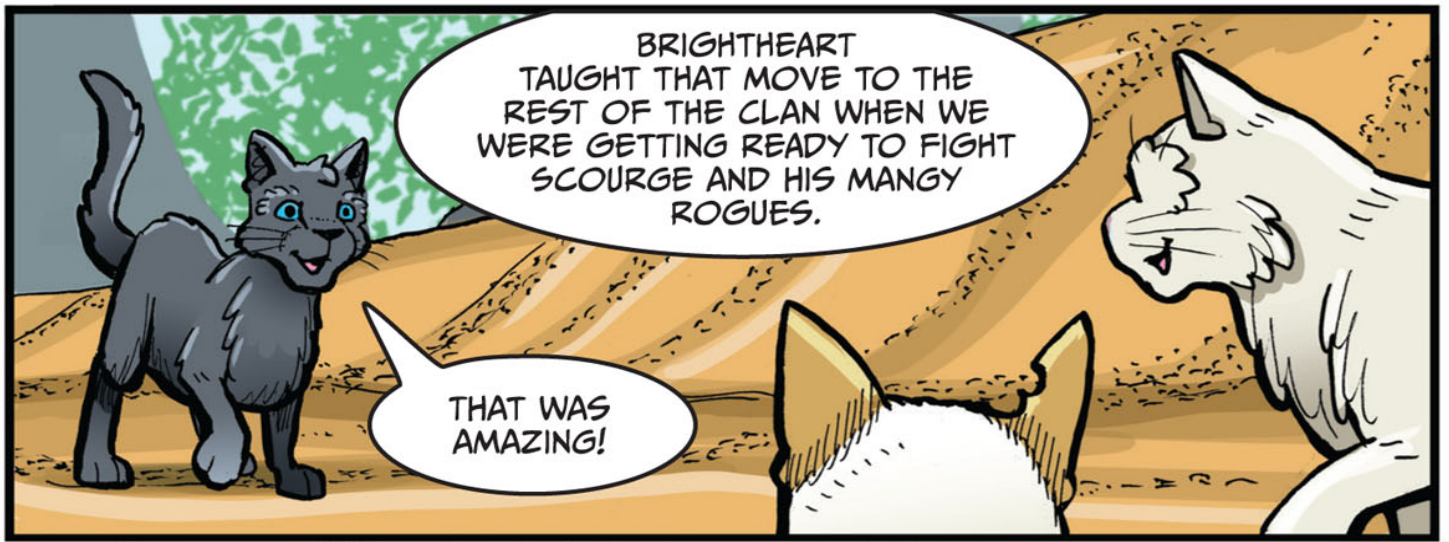












IT'S TIME FOR HIS
FIRST BORDER PATROL.

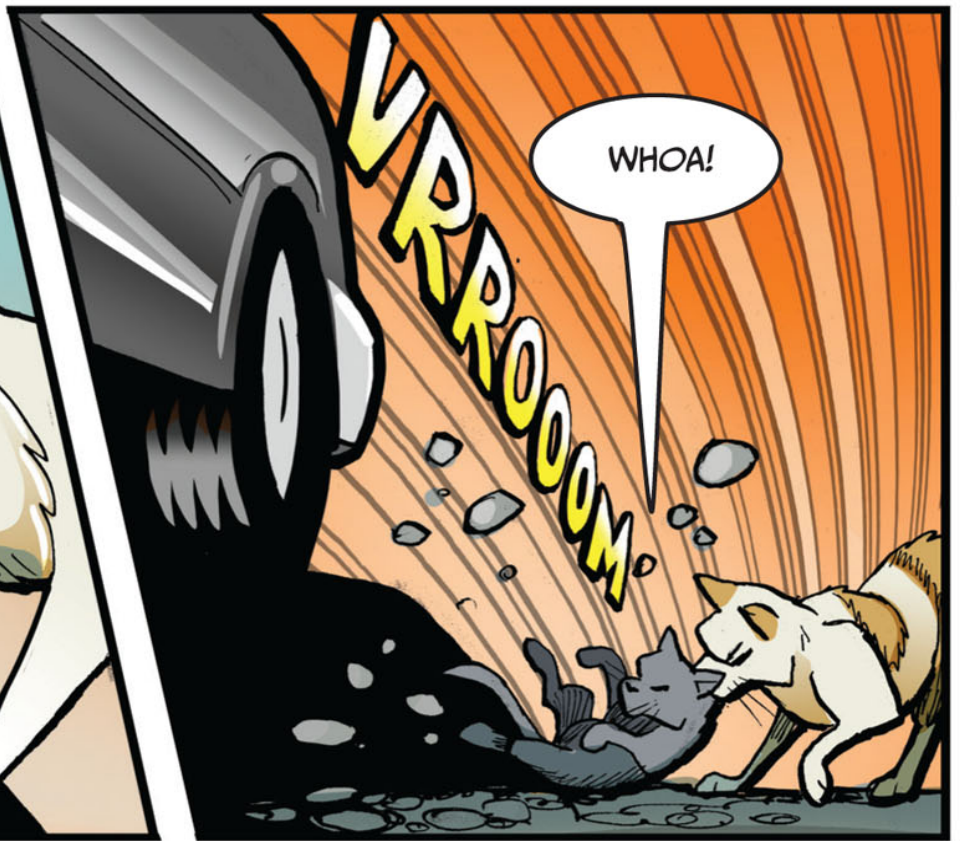
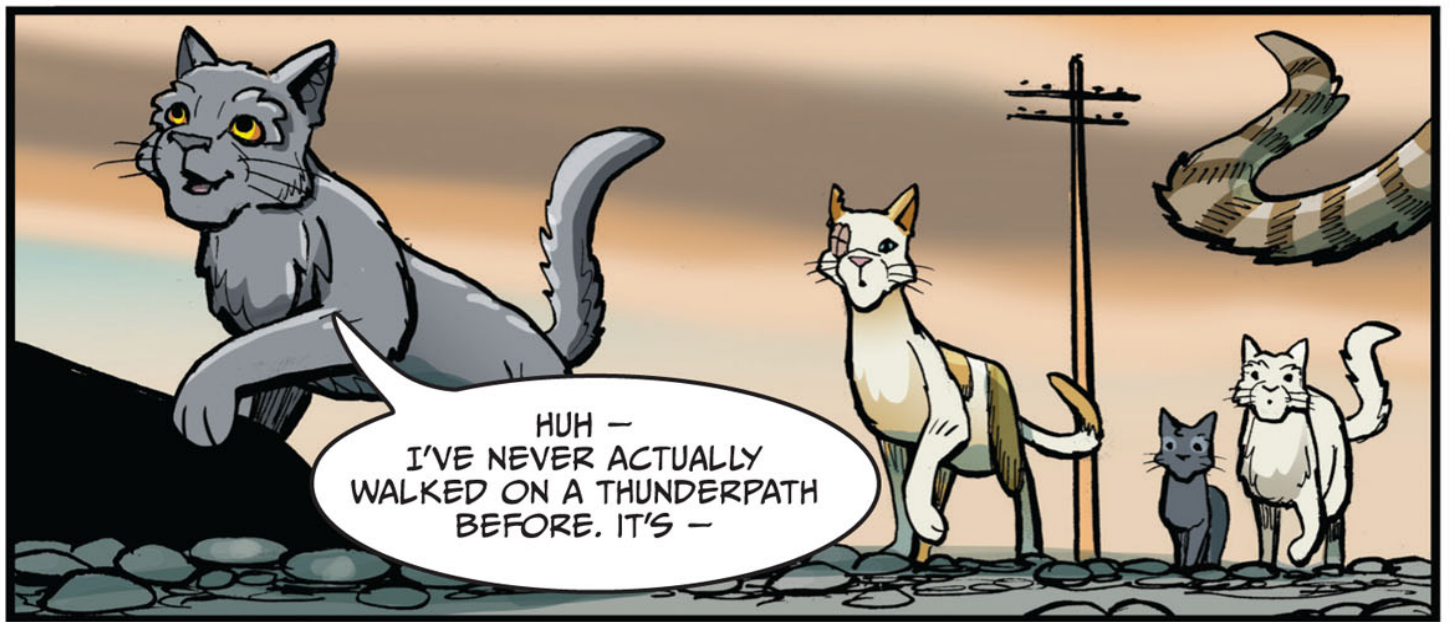
DESPITE THE SLOW
START, I THINK RAINPAW
HAS GREAT POTENTIAL.

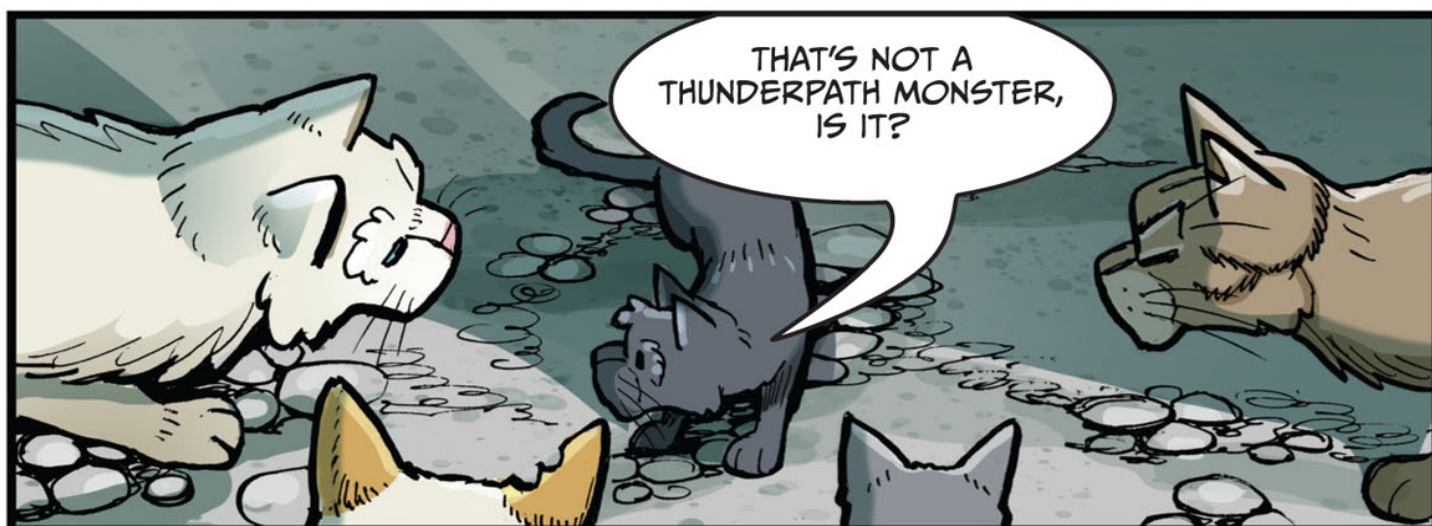
ALONG THE WAY, WE RUN
INTO LONGTAIL AND HIS NEW
APPRENTICE, SOOTPAW.

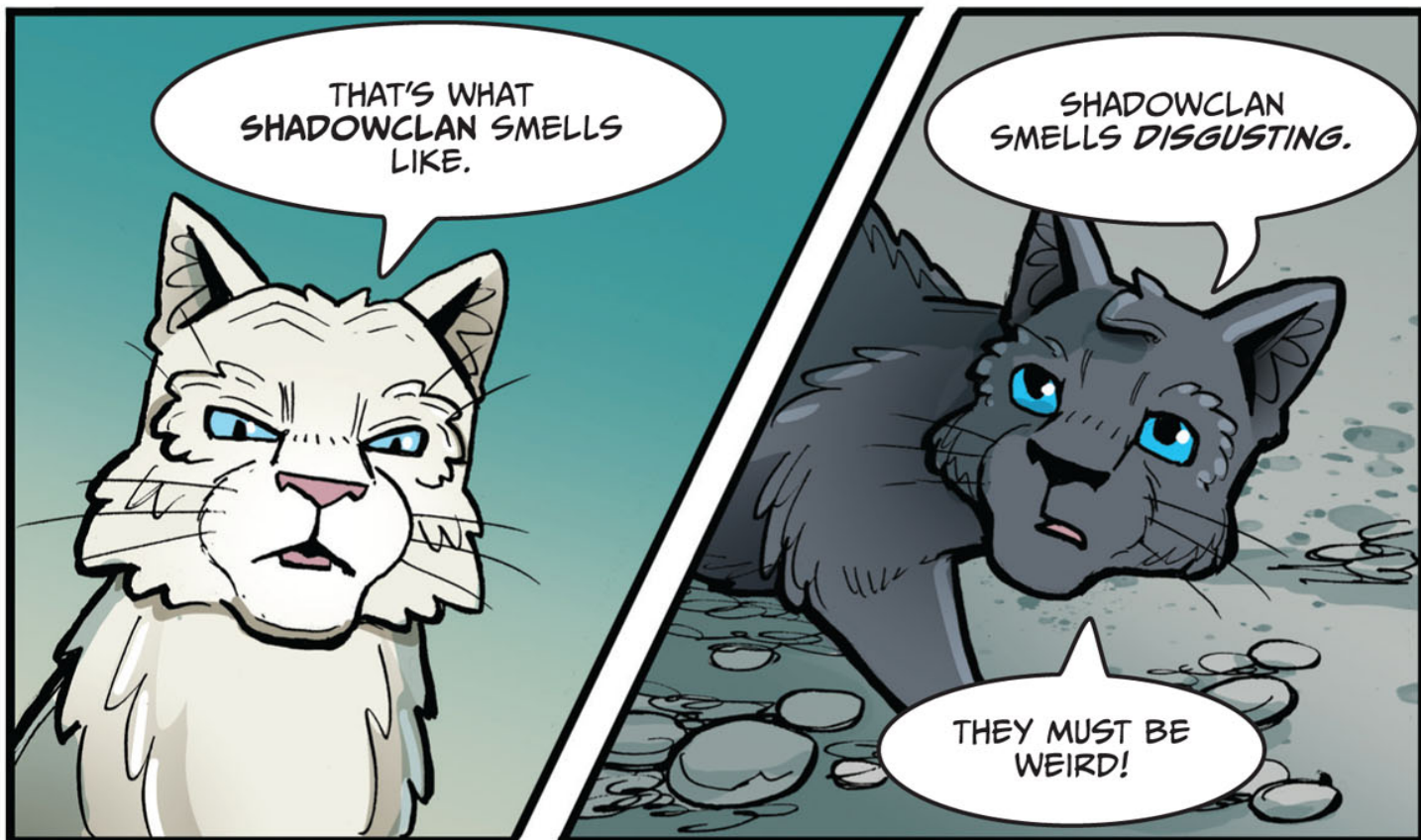


...WHICH IS WHY WE
MARK THIS SIDE OF IT.
TO WARN THE SHADOWCLAN
CATS AWAY.









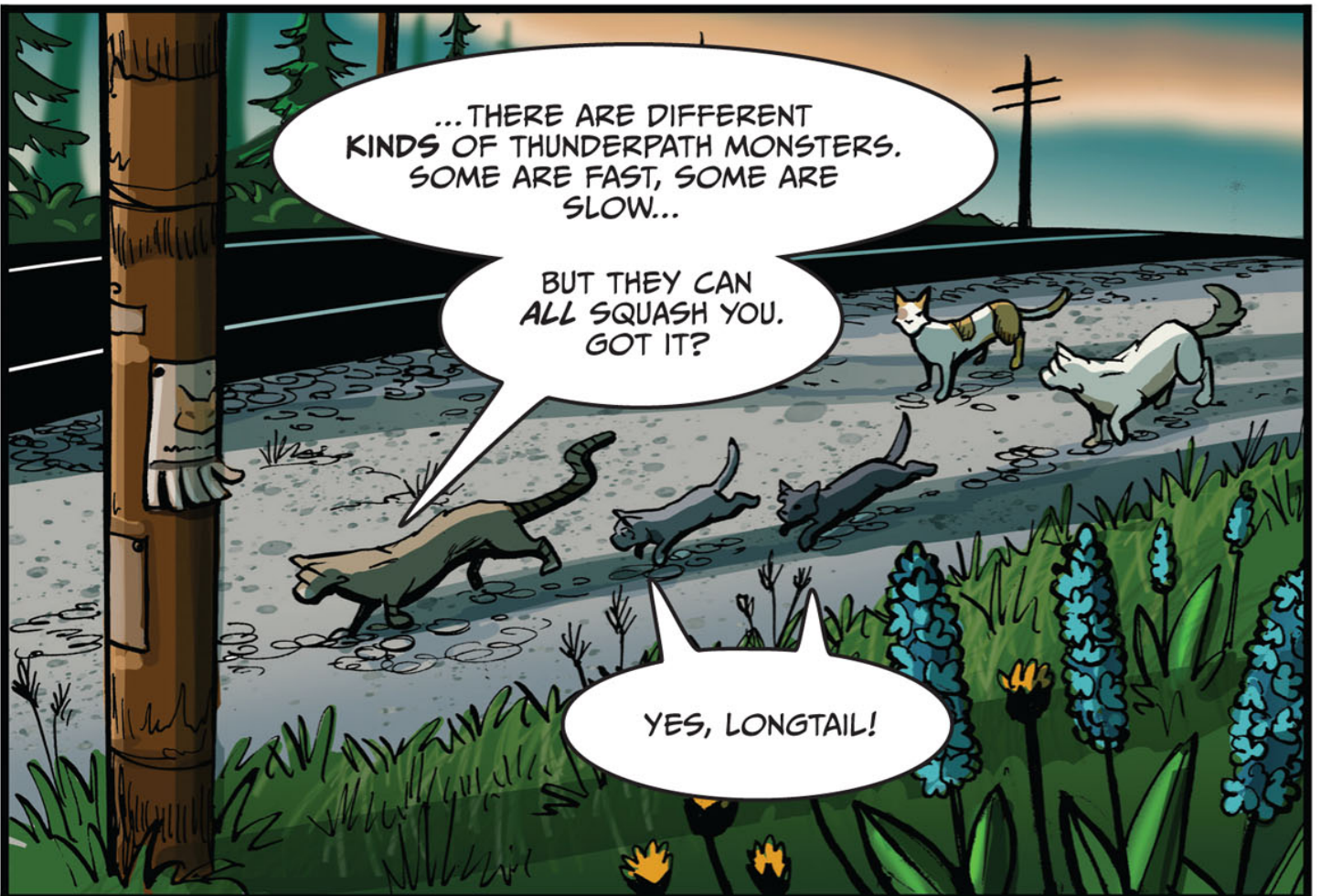


A SHADOWCLAN
PATROL.

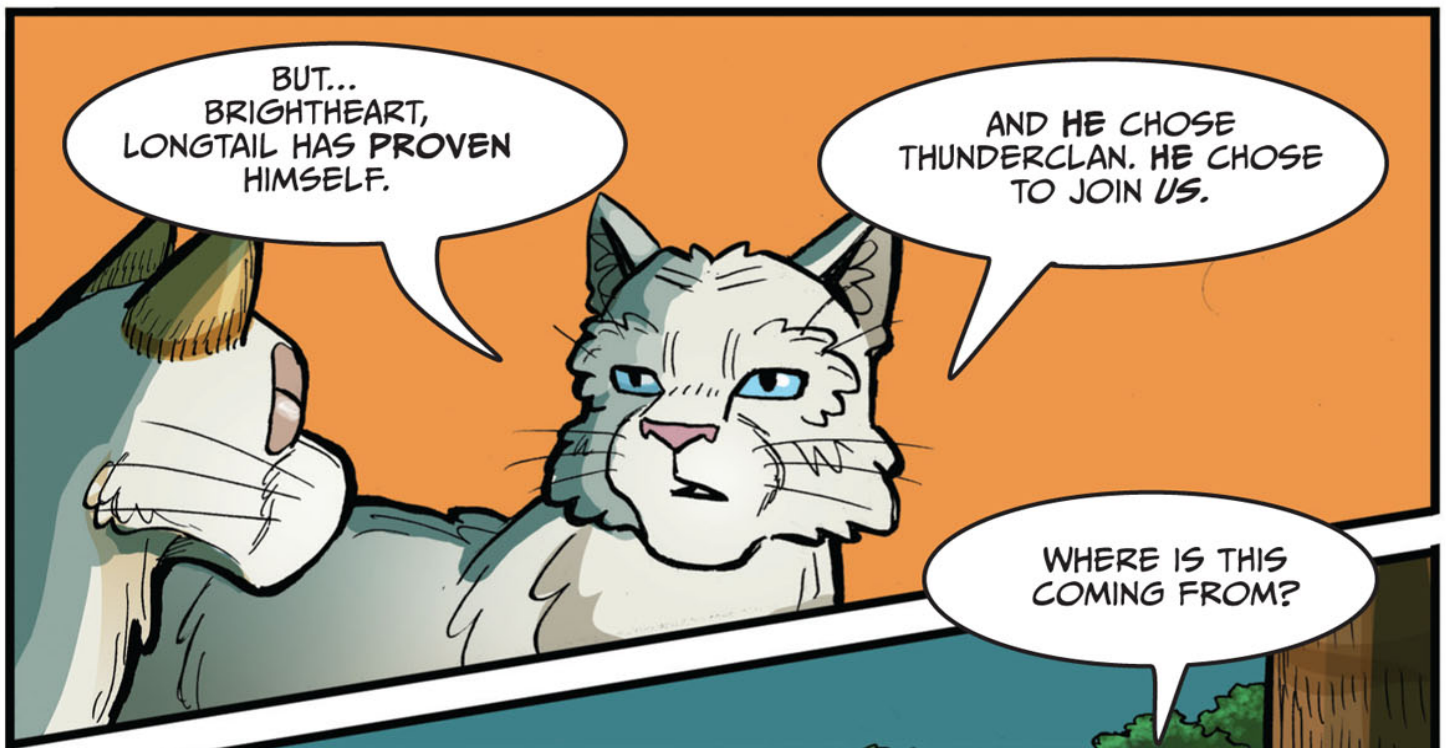
WHY ARE THEY
JUST WATCHING US LIKE
THAT?

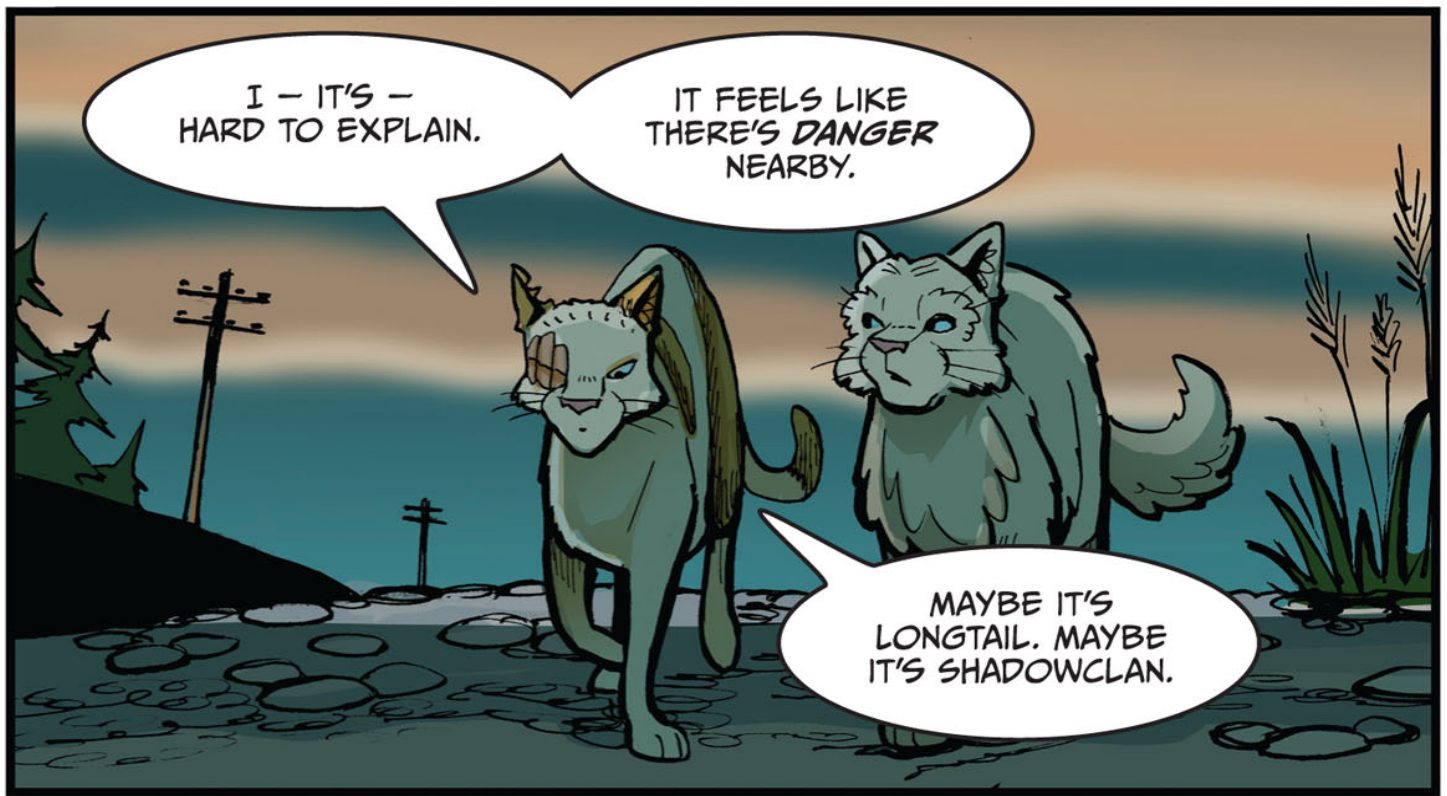


OR COULD THEY BE
LOOKING FOR SOME CAT
IN PARTICULAR...?











A GOOD NIGHT'S
SLEEP HELPS A LOT.

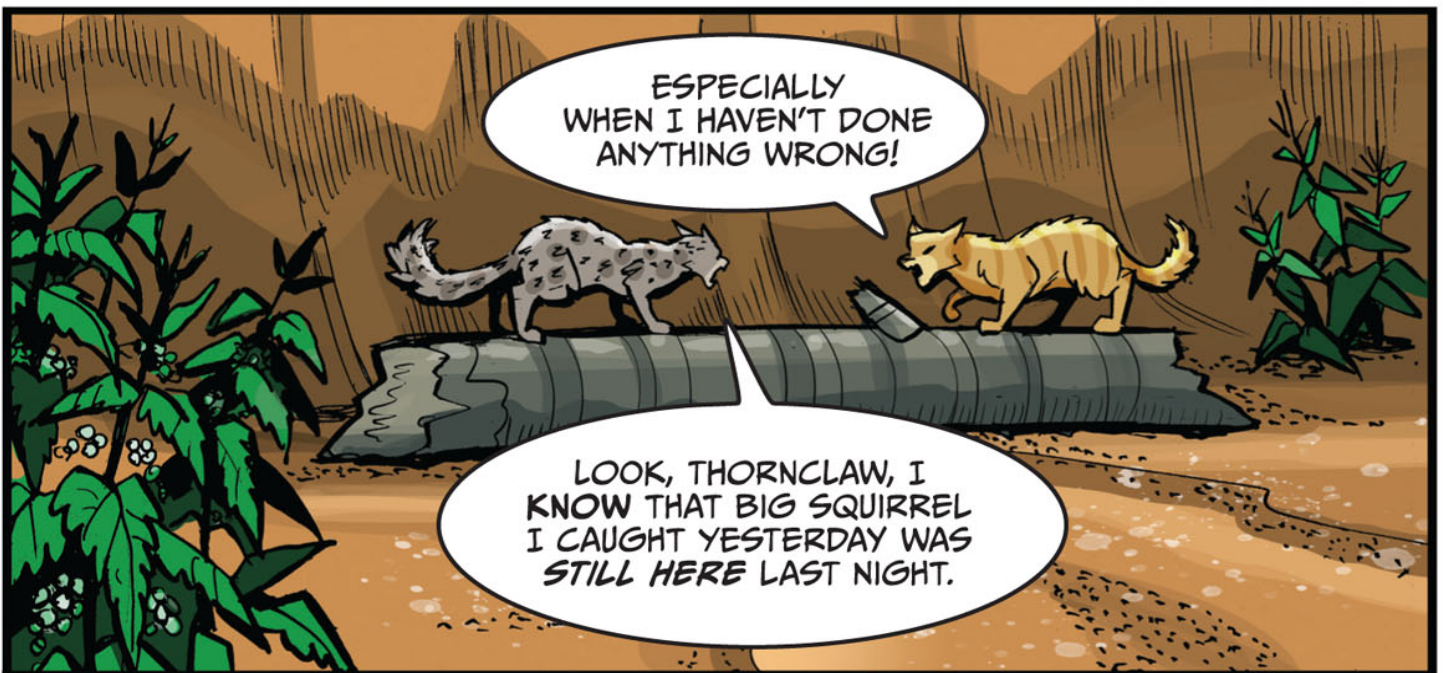
BUT IT TURNS OUT I'M NOT
THE ONLY THUNDERCLAN
CAT WITH SUSPICIONS.

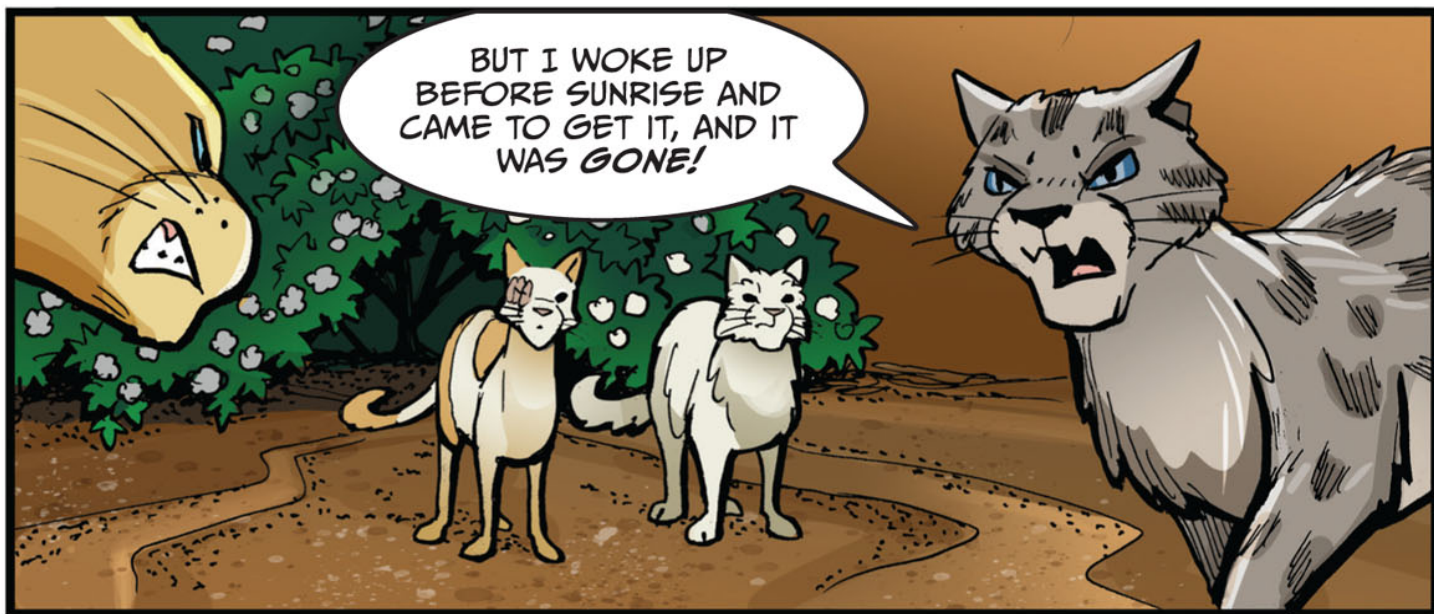


YEAH,
WELL, I DON'T
APPRECIATE ALL THESE
ACCUSATIONS!

ESPECIALLY
WHEN I HAVEN'T DONE
ANYTHING WRONG!

LOOK, THORNCLAW, I
KNOW THAT BIG SQUIRREL
I CAUGHT YESTERDAY
WAS *STILL HERE* LAST NIGHT.





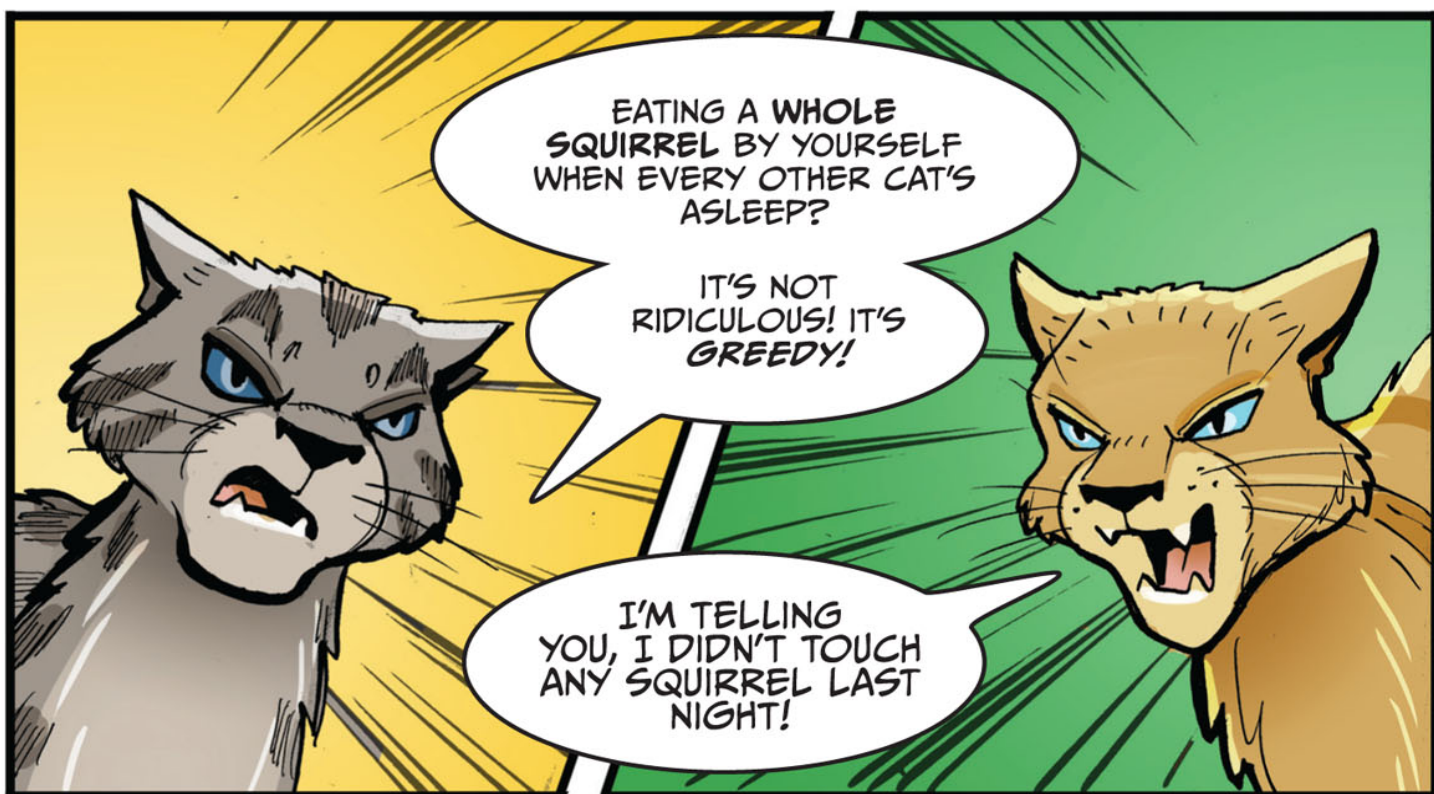
BUT I WOKE UP
BEFORE SUNRISE AND
CAME TO GET IT, AND IT
WAS *GONE!*



SO YOU MUST HAVE
TAKEN IT, BECAUSE
YOU WERE GUARDING
THE CAMP ALL NIGHT —

AND YOU *KNEW* I
WANTED AT LEAST
HALF OF IT!

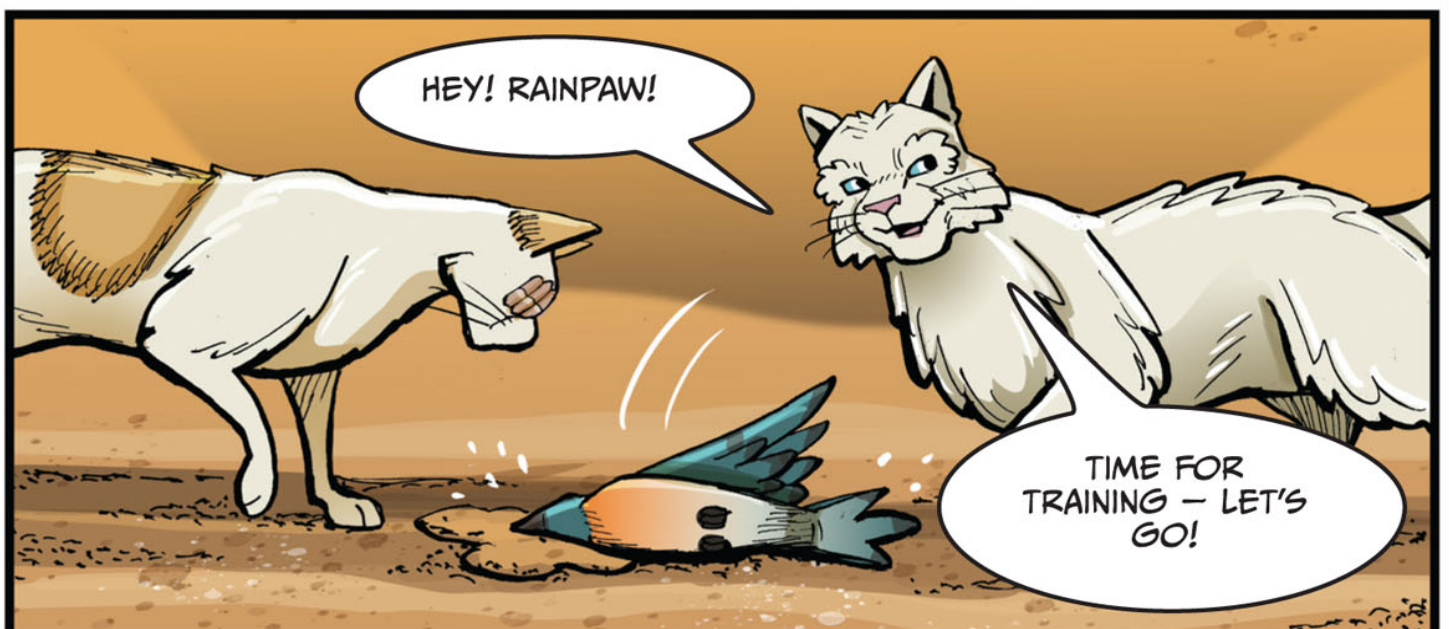
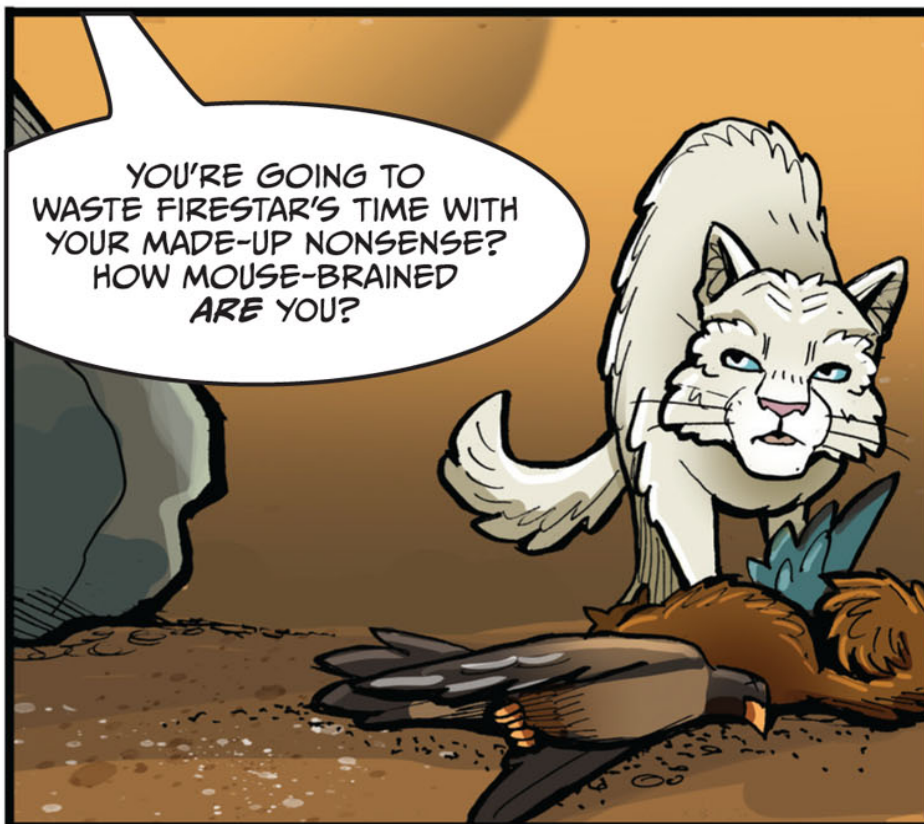
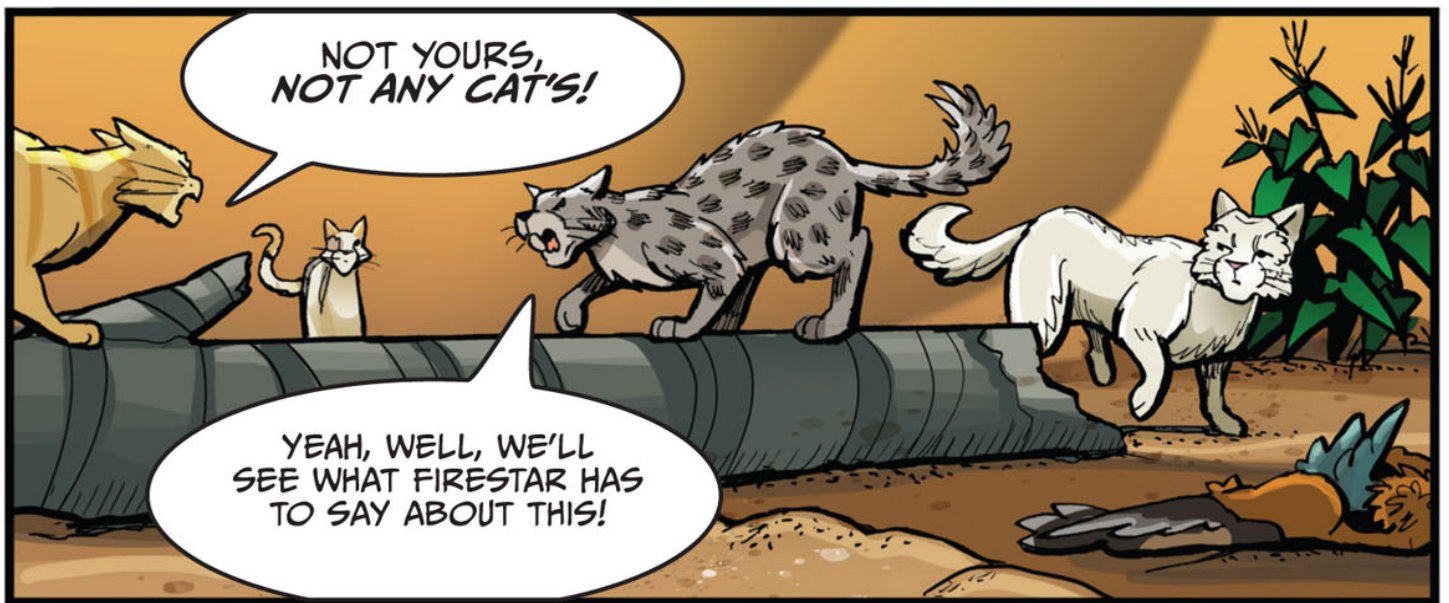
THAT'S RIDICULOUS!



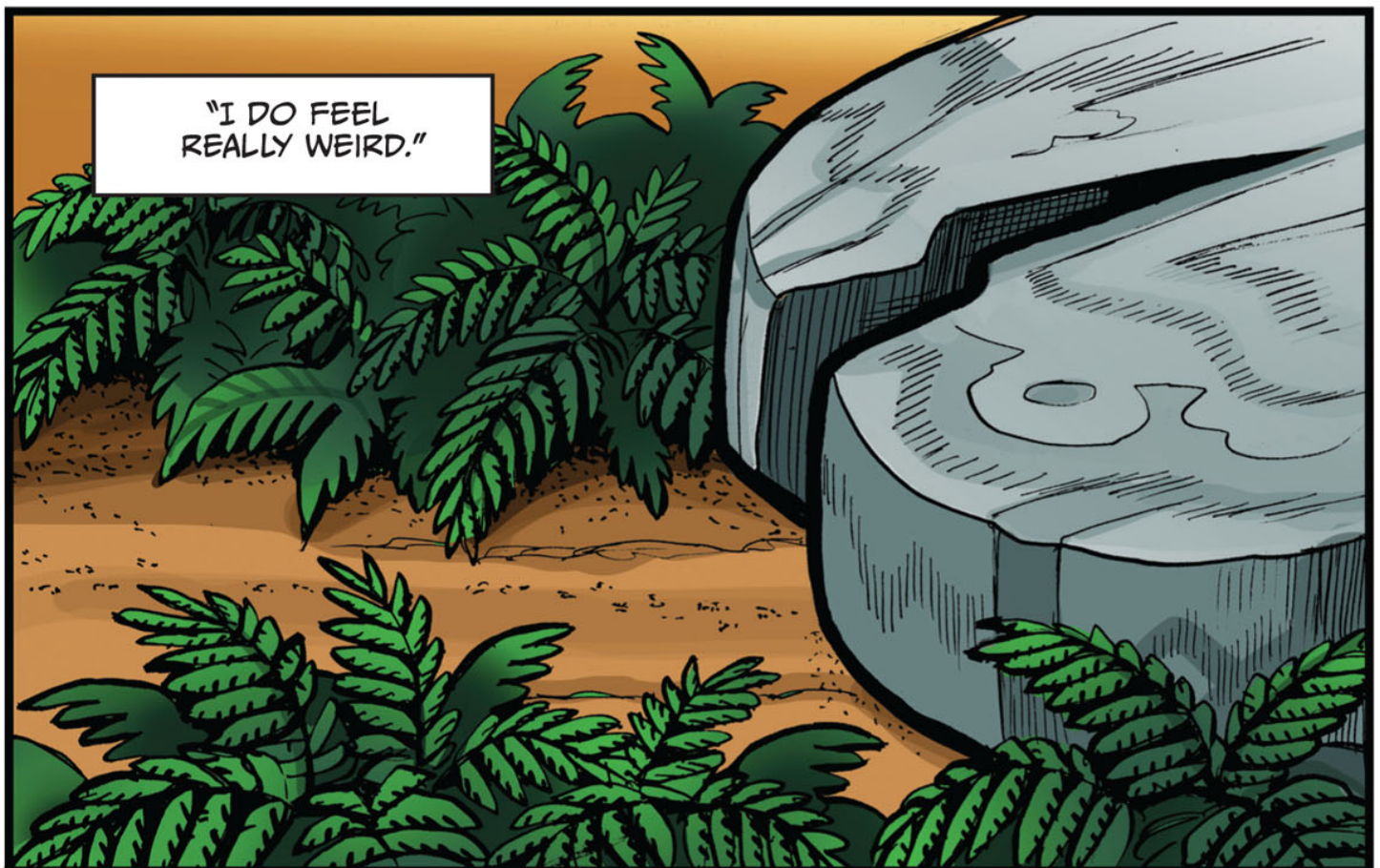
EATING A WHOLE
SQUIRREL BY YOURSELF
WHEN EVERY OTHER CAT'S
ASLEEP?

IT'S NOT
RIDICULOUS! IT'S
GREEDY!

I'M TELLING
YOU, I DIDN'T TOUCH
ANY SQUIRREL LAST
NIGHT!









ALL RIGHT...
I THINK WE'RE DONE
HERE.



WELL?
IS ANYTHING
WRONG?

NO, NO, NOT AT ALL.
A LITTLE BORAGE AND
YOU'LL BE FINE.



YOU SHOULD COME
BACK IN A FEW DAYS,
THOUGH, SO I CAN EXAMINE
YOU AGAIN.

OH—
OKAY. WHY?

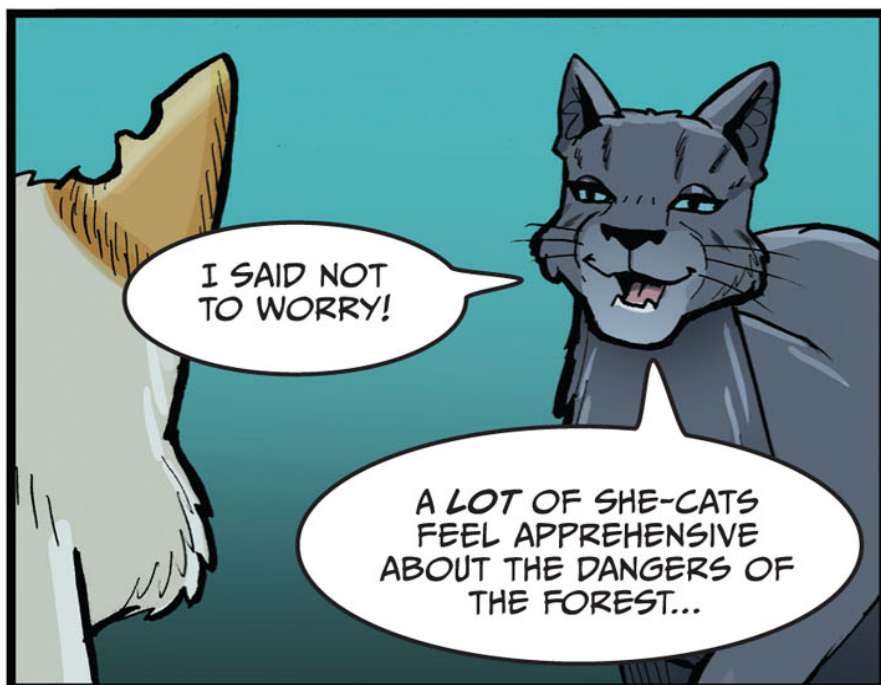
I'D JUST LIKE TO KEEP
AN EYE ON YOUR SYMPTOMS.
DON'T WORRY, AT THIS STAGE
IT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL TO FEEL
STRANGE AND NAUSEATED...

OR EVEN
JUST NERVOUS AND
UNSETTLED.



EXCUSE ME?

"AT THIS STAGE"
OF WHAT?



I SAID NOT
TO WORRY!

A LOT OF SHE-CATS
FEEL APPREHENSIVE
ABOUT THE DANGERS OF
THE FOREST...



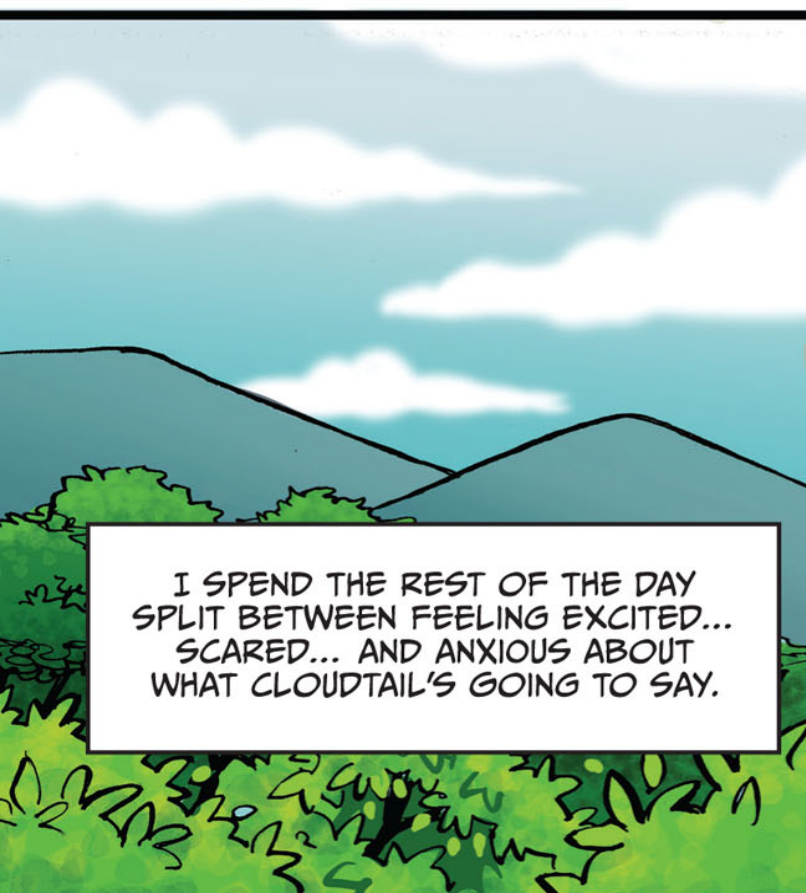
...WHEN THEY'RE
EXPECTING KITS.



I'M... I'M...

GOING TO BE A
MOTHER! YES!

CONGRATULATIONS!



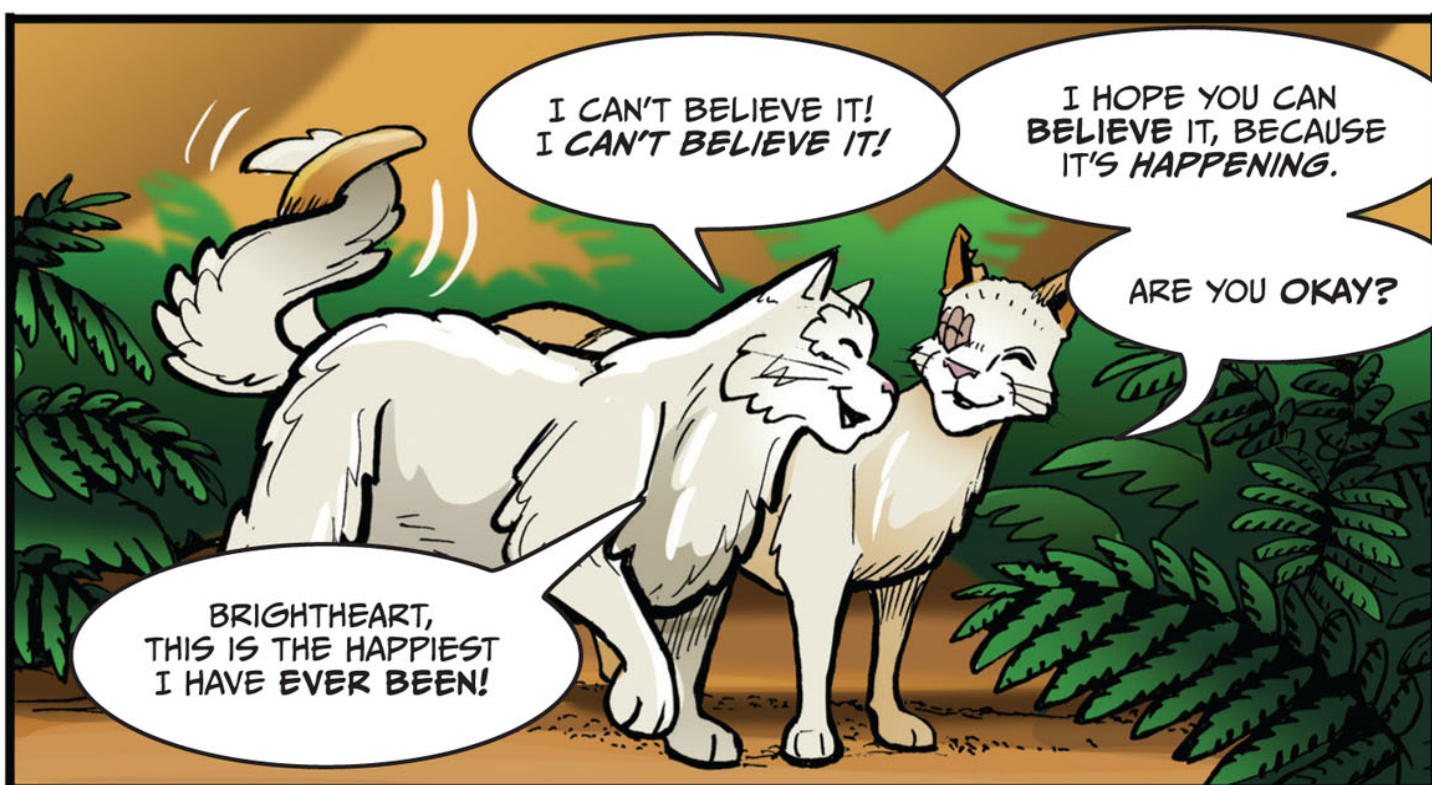
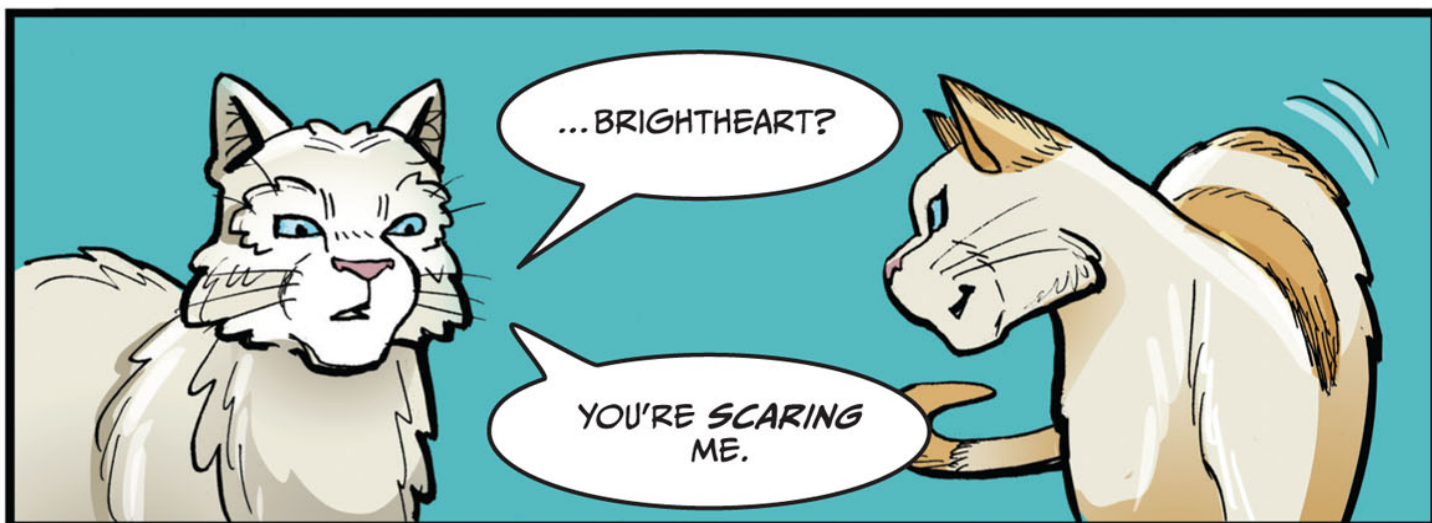
I SPEND THE REST OF THE DAY
SPLIT BETWEEN FEELING EXCITED...
SCARED... AND ANXIOUS ABOUT
WHAT CLOUDTAIL'S GOING TO SAY.



I GUESS I'M
ABOUT TO FIND OUT.

BRIGHTHEART?

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I KEPT WAITING FOR YOU TO
COME AND FIND US, BUT...

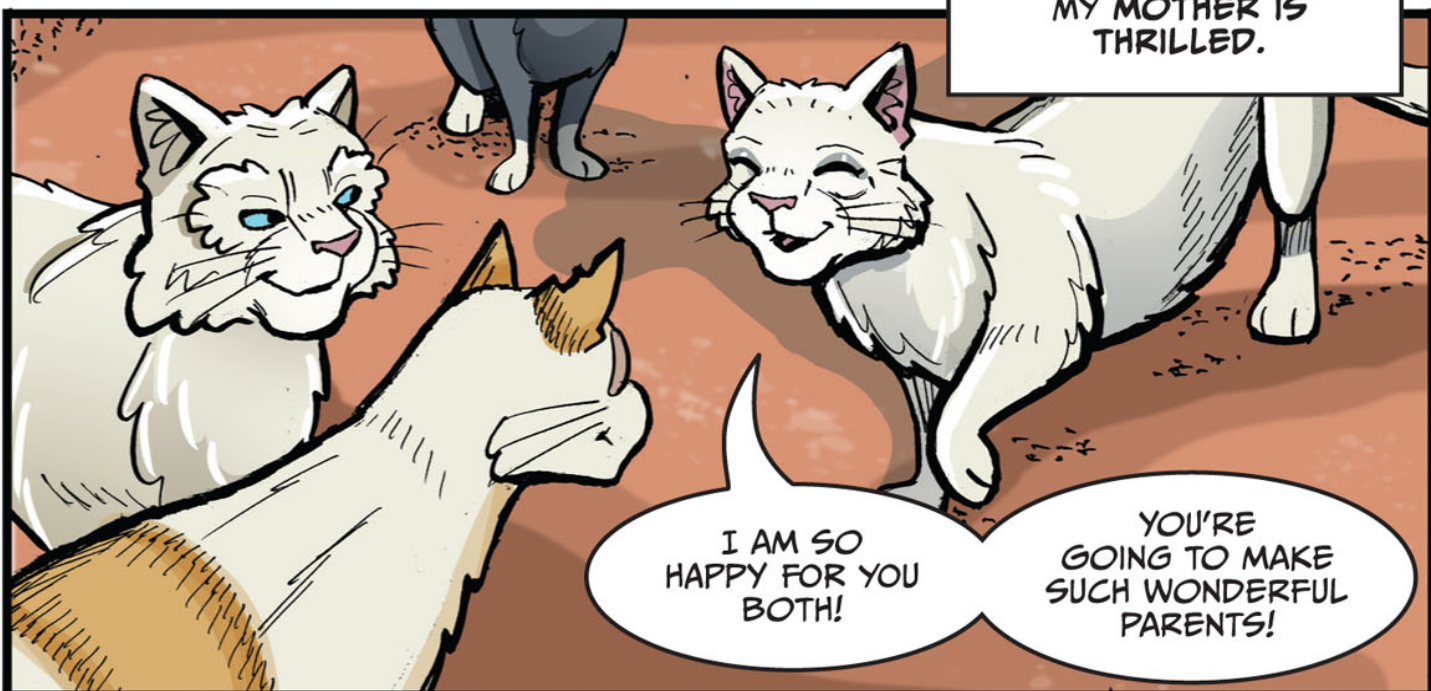


IT DOESN'T TAKE
LONG FOR THE WORD
TO SPREAD.

IT'S ALL SO
OVERWHELMING.



MY MOTHER IS
THRILLED.



I AM SO
HAPPY FOR YOU
BOTH!

YOU'RE
GOING TO MAKE
SUCH WONDERFUL
PARENTS!

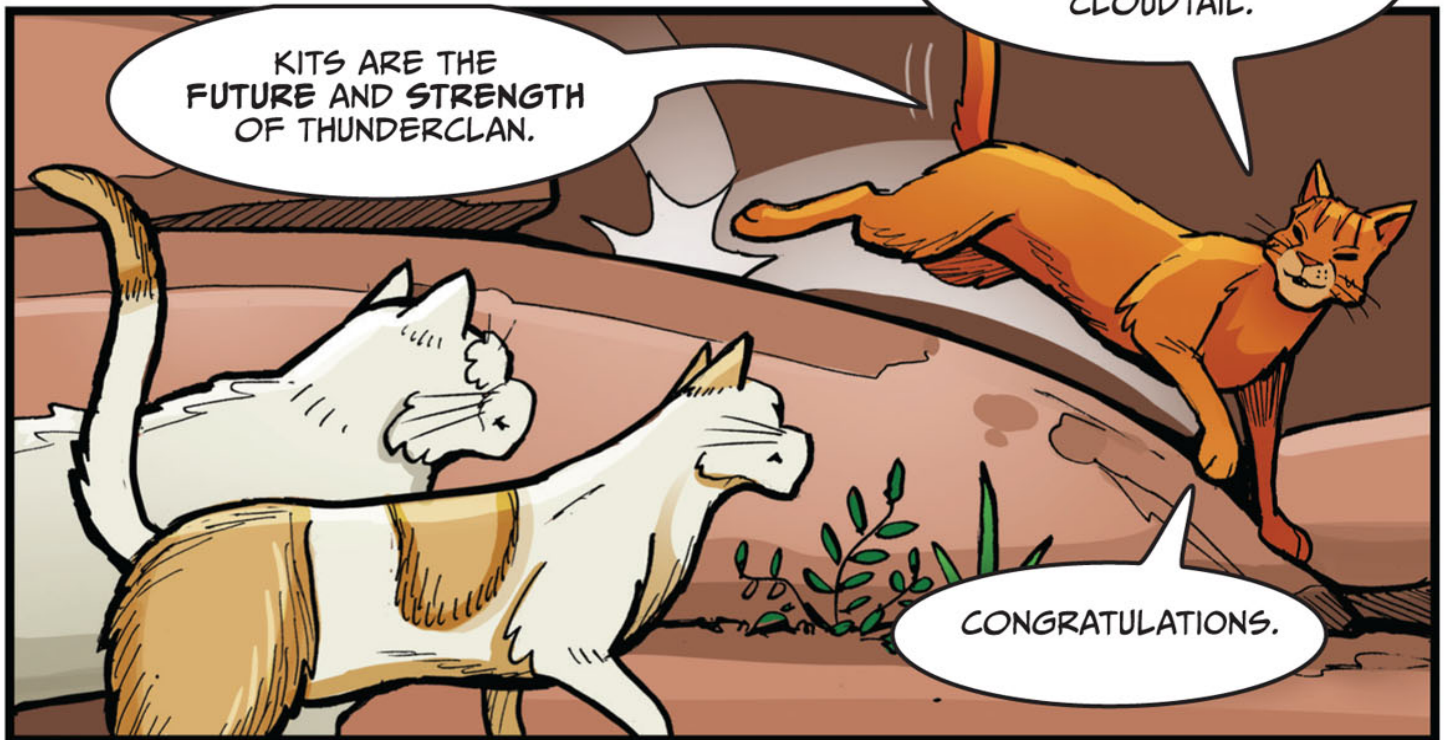


CONGRATULATIONS,
YOU TWO!

BRIGHTHEART,
IT'S GOING TO BE GREAT
HAVING ANOTHER MOTHER IN
THE NURSERY WITH ME!

DON'T WORRY,
I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING
YOU NEED TO KNOW!

THIS IS WONDERFUL
NEWS, BRIGHTHEART,
CLOUDTAIL.



KITS ARE THE
FUTURE AND STRENGTH
OF THUNDERCLAN.

CONGRATULATIONS.



I FEEL LIKE...
I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE
EVERY MOTHER FEELS
THIS WAY.

BUT I THINK
OUR KITS ARE GOING
TO BE SPECIAL.

ABSOLUTELY.

AND WE'RE GOING
TO PROTECT THEM. NO
MATTER WHAT.



HERE—
NO, COME ON,
THIS WAY.

THAT
BRANCH?



YES.

TRUST ME,
IT'S PERFECT.



OH, WOW,
YOU'RE RIGHT.

THIS IS
PERFECT.



WHEN I DIDN'T
KNOW WHAT WAS GOING
ON, I WAS SCARED...



...BUT NOW
THAT I *DO* KNOW —
I FEEL *GREAT!*

FULL OF ENERGY.

GOOD. WE'RE
BOTH GOING TO
NEED IT.



YOU THINK SO?
YOU THINK OUR KITS
ARE GOING TO BE LITTLE
TERRORS?

NO WAY
TO KNOW.

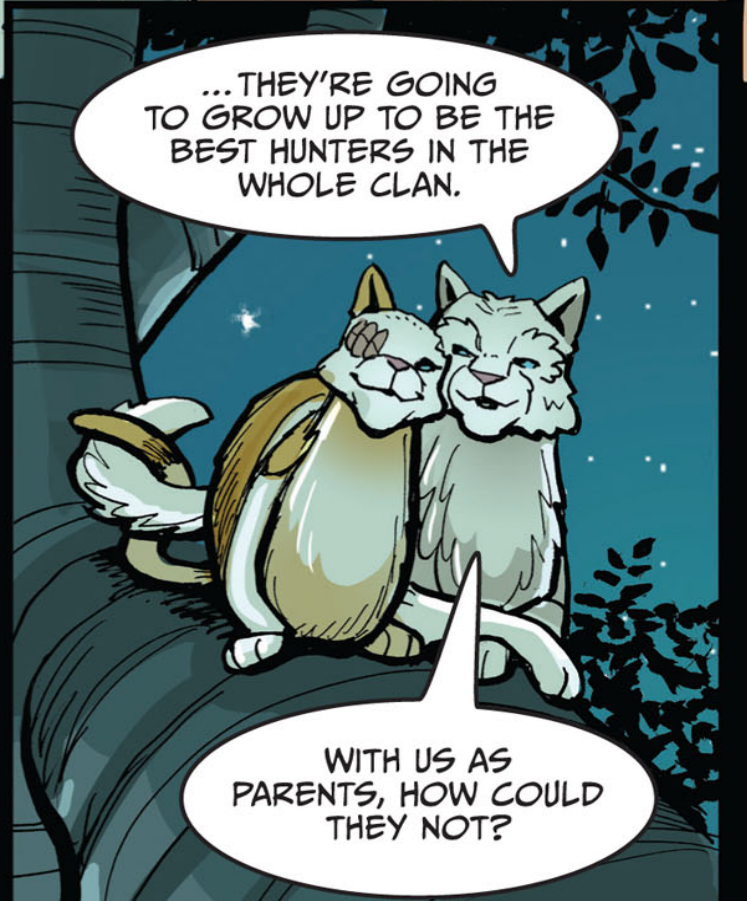
I'VE BEEN HOPING
THAT AT LEAST ONE
OF THEM IS A LITTLE
SHE-KIT.



I THINK IT'D
BE NICE TO HAVE A
DAUGHTER.




WELL, I THINK...
WHETHER WE HAVE
SHE-KITS OR TOMS...



...THEY'RE GOING
TO GROW UP TO BE THE
BEST HUNTERS IN THE
WHOLE CLAN.

WITH US AS
PARENTS, HOW COULD
THEY NOT?

Two cats are perched on a thick tree branch at night. The cat on the left is orange and white, while the one on the right is white with grey patches. They are both looking towards the left. The background is a dark blue night sky with some stars and silhouettes of other trees.

THEY'LL WANT TO
PRACTICE BEFORE THEY'RE
OLD ENOUGH TO LEAVE
CAMP, YOU KNOW.

I THINK WE SHOULD
LET THEM HUNT YOUR
TAIL.

A single cat is shown on a tree branch at night, looking towards the right. The scene is similar to the first panel, with a dark blue night sky and silhouettes of trees.

YOU *KNOW*
HOW MUCH I HATE HAVING
MY TAIL PULLED, DO YOU
NOT?

HAHAHA...
I DO KNOW THAT,
YES.

A close-up of a white cat with grey patches and blue eyes. It has a slight, knowing smile and is looking towards the left. The background is a dark blue night sky with stars.

AH,
I WON'T MIND.

NOT IF IT'S MY
OWN KIT PULLING
IT.

A close-up of two cats' faces. On the left is a white cat with orange patches and blue eyes, looking towards the right. On the right is a white cat with grey patches, looking towards the left. They are both smiling. The background is a dark blue night sky with stars.

IN JUST A FEW MOONS,
WE CAN TEACH OUR KITS
TO CLIMB THIS TREE.

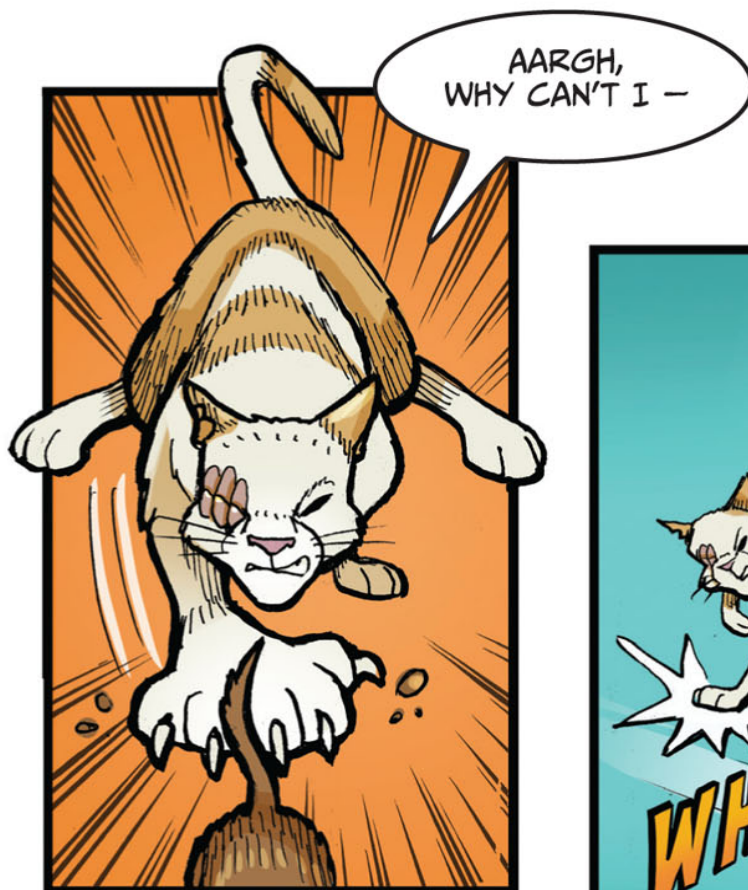
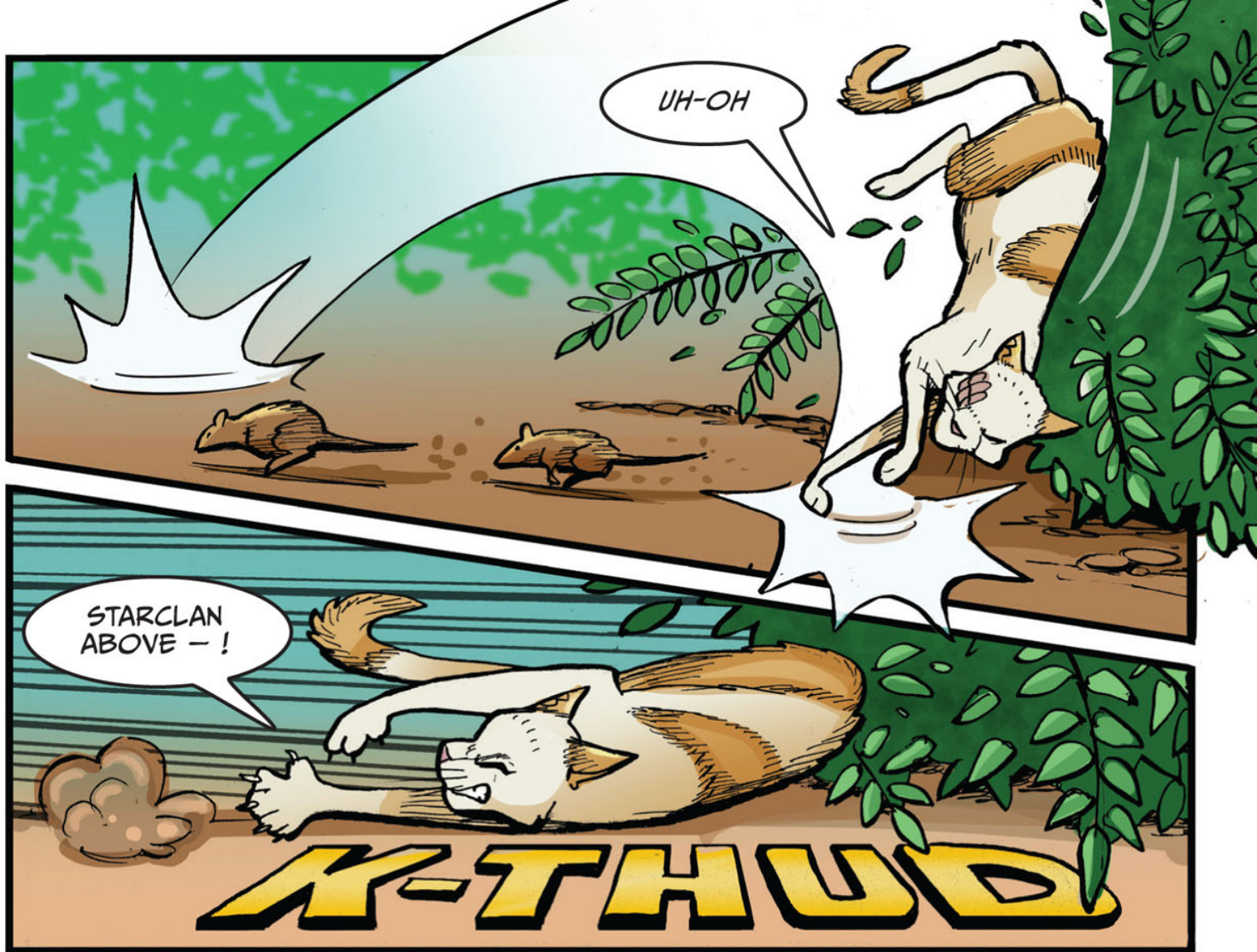
THEY'LL BE
ABLE TO CLIMB ANY TREE
IN THE FOREST.

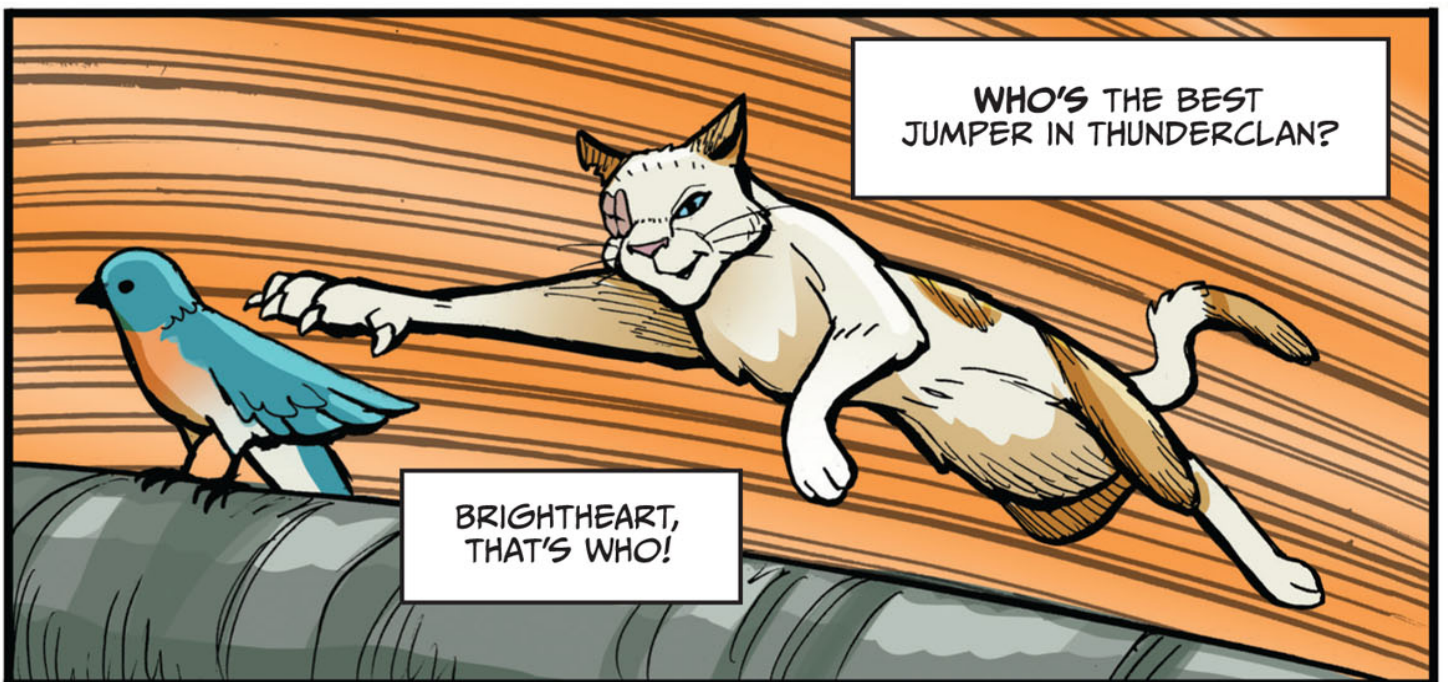
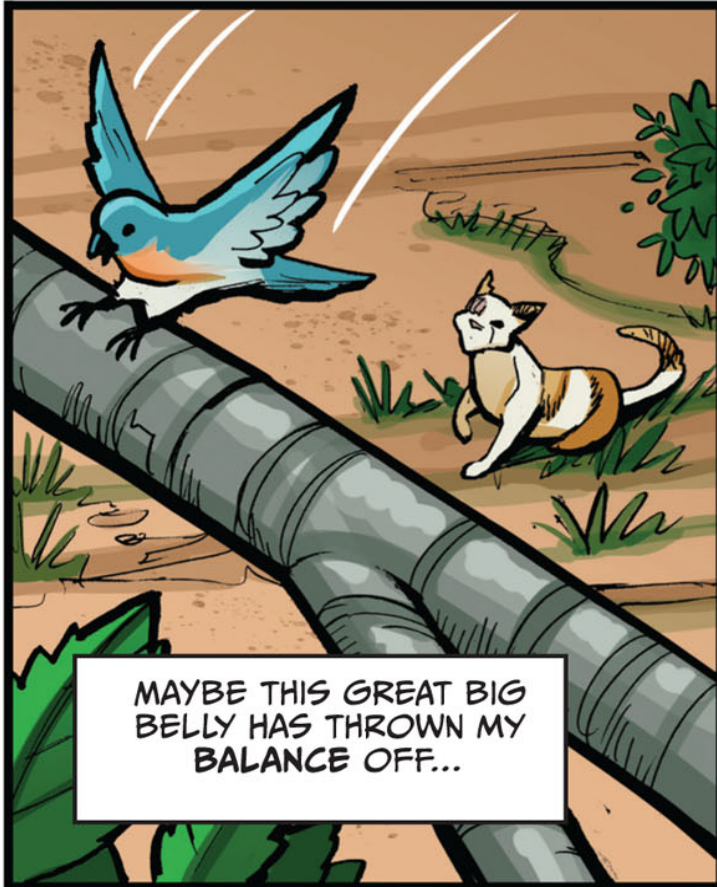
A MOON PASSES
BY SO FAST I BARELY EVEN
REALIZE IT...

...THAT IS, UNTIL I CATCH
A GLIMPSE OF MYSELF
IN A PUDDLE.

OR TRY TO
TAKE A REALLY DEEP
BREATH.

BUT AT LEAST
I CAN STILL HUNT!







HMM HMM HMM...
BEST JUMPER IN THE
TREES...

HMM HMM HMM...
CATCH BIRDIES WITH
EASE...

HMM HMM HMM...
BRIGHTHEART, IF YOU
PLEASE...



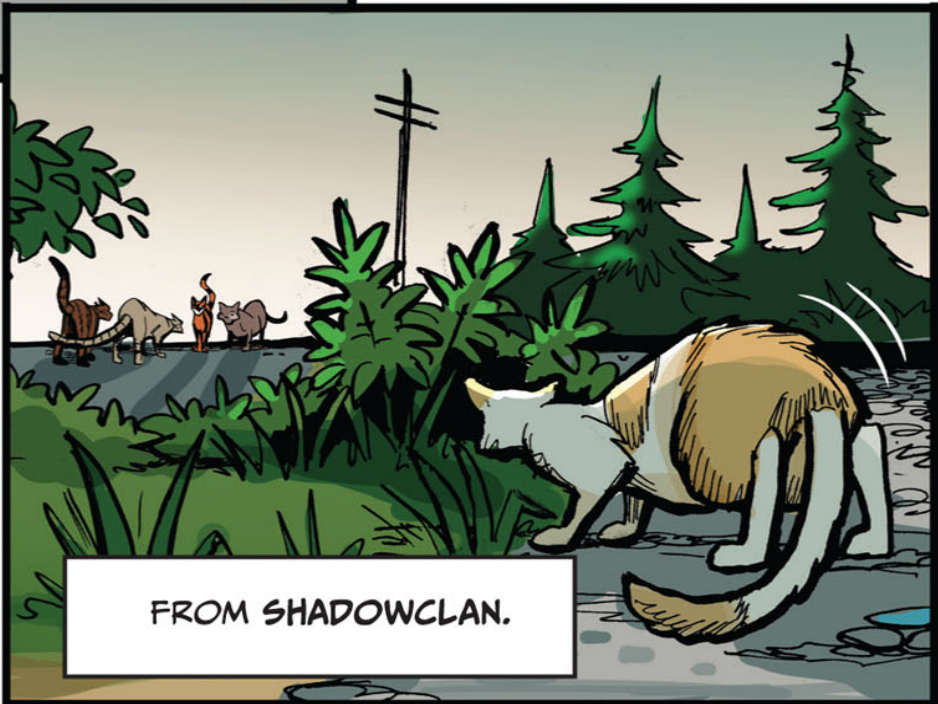
HUH?



I RECOGNIZE THE CATS
LONGTAIL AND BRAMBLEPAW
ARE TALKING TO.



OAKFUR AND
TAWNYPAW.



FROM SHADOWCLAN.

OOOH... THIS DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT.
I WAS SUSPICIOUS OF LONGTAIL...

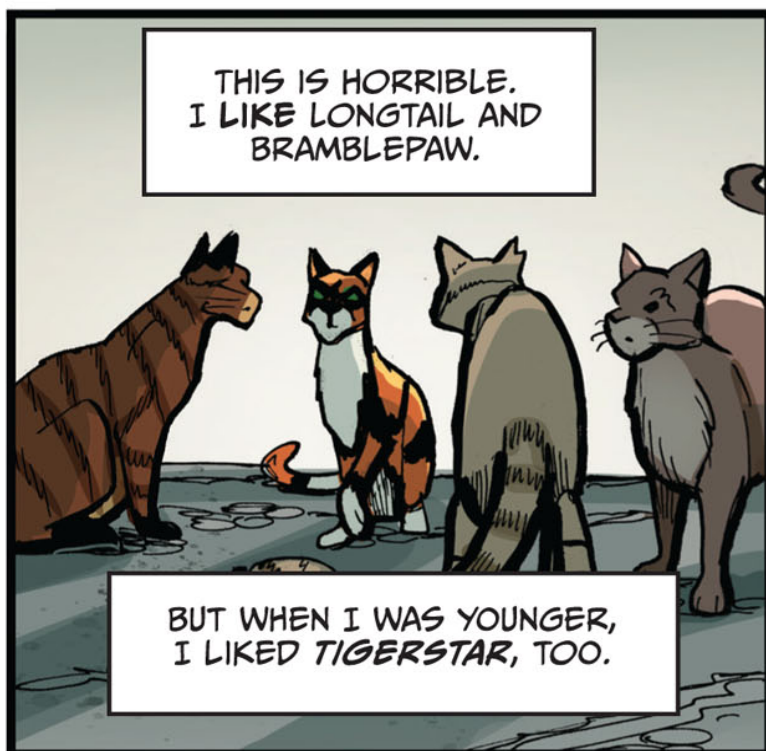
...BUT WAS I IMAGINING THAT?
WAS I JUST FEELING WEIRD BECAUSE
I'M PREGNANT?

I WANT TO TRUST MY CLANMATES.
BUT TIGERSTAR BETRAYED US...
AND LONGTAIL WAS HIS FRIEND
BACK THEN.

BESIDES THAT...

...TAWNYPAW AND BRAMBLEPAW
ARE TIGERSTAR'S KITS.
BRAMBLEPAW LOOKS ALMOST
EXACTLY LIKE HIM.

HOW HARD MUST IT BE
TO BE LOYAL TO YOUR CLAN
WHEN YOU HAVE KIN IN
ANOTHER ONE?



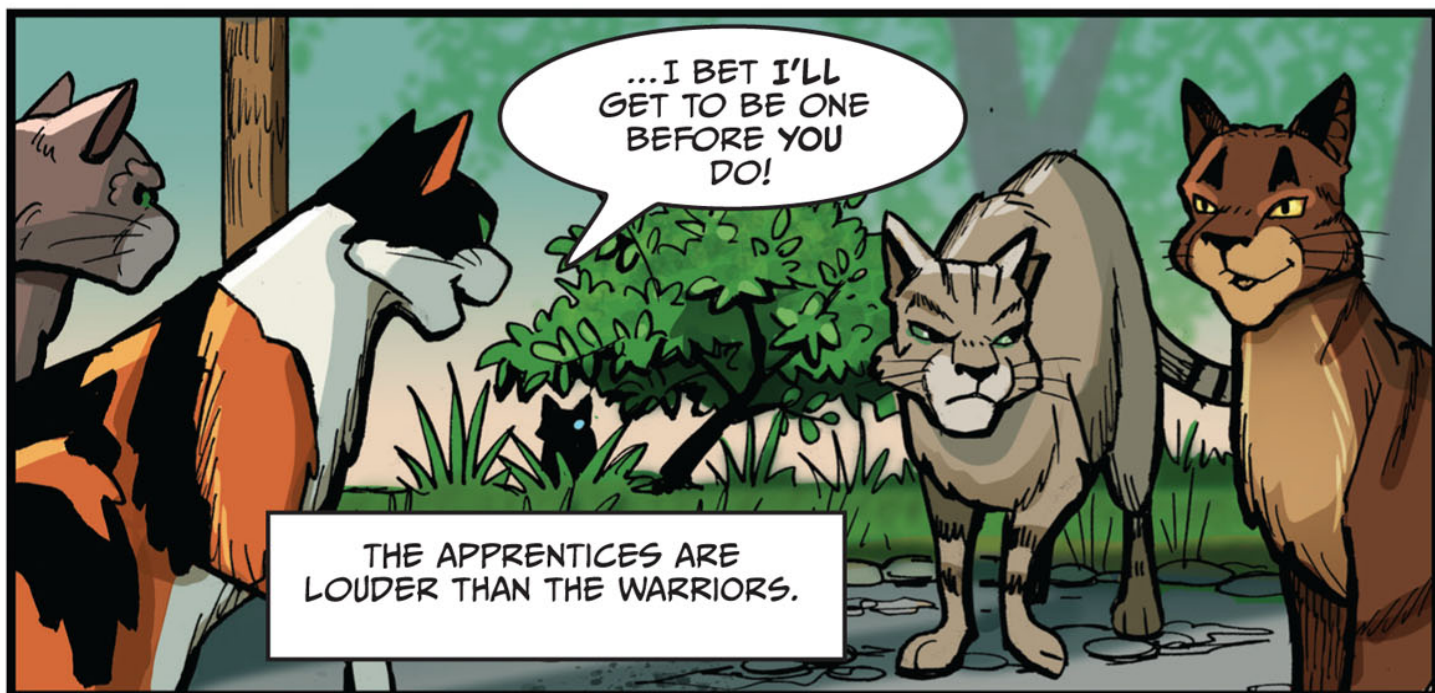
THIS IS HORRIBLE.
I LIKE LONGTAIL AND
BRAMBLEPAW.

BUT WHEN I WAS YOUNGER,
I LIKED *TIGERSTAR*, TOO.



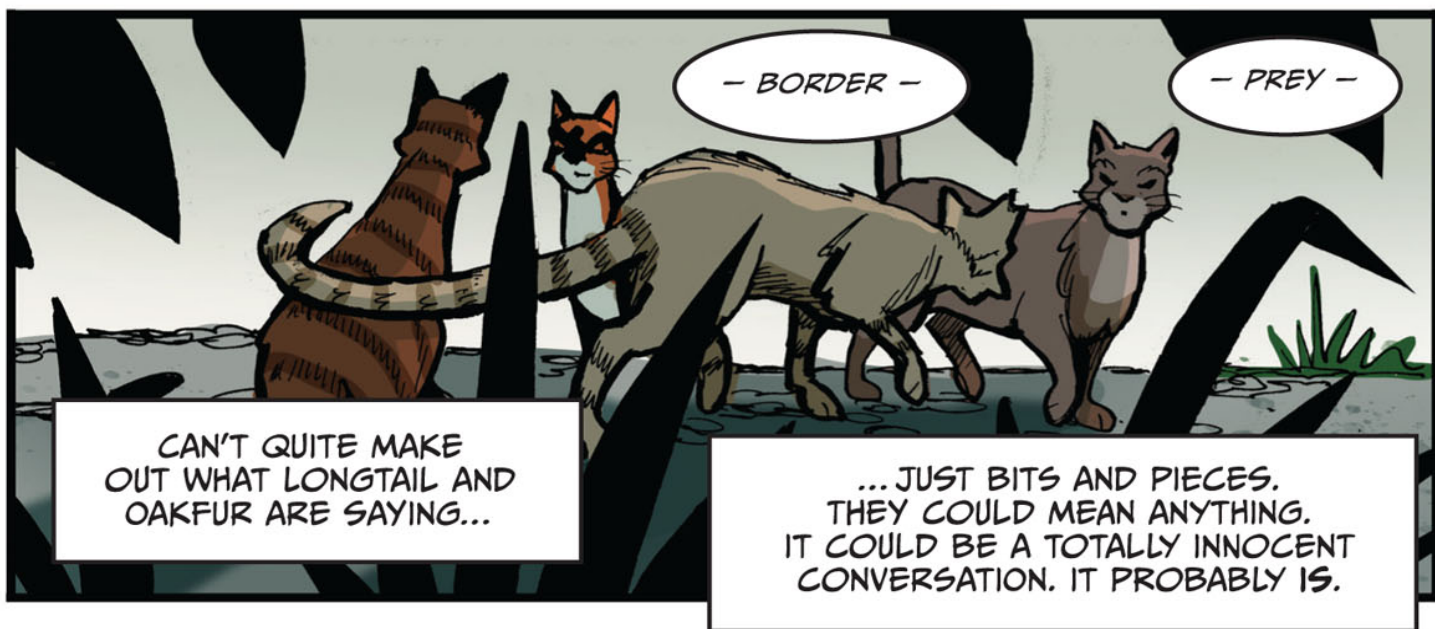
AND FIRESTAR'S
GOING TO MAKE ME
A WARRIOR SOON!

OH IS HE?
WELL...



...I BET I'LL
GET TO BE ONE
BEFORE YOU
DO!

THE APPRENTICES ARE
LOUDER THAN THE WARRIORS.



— BORDER —

— PREY —

CAN'T QUITE MAKE
OUT WHAT LONGTAIL AND
OAKFUR ARE SAYING...

... JUST BITS AND PIECES.
THEY COULD MEAN ANYTHING.
IT COULD BE A TOTALLY INNOCENT
CONVERSATION. IT PROBABLY IS.

A close-up of two cats. On the left, a grey cat with a white patch on its chest is looking towards the right. On the right, a brown cat with green eyes is looking back at the grey cat. The background is a solid green color.

BUT I THINK I SHOULD
TALK TO FIRESTAR ANYWAY.

A scene showing two cats in a natural setting. On the left, a large orange cat (Firestar) is standing and looking towards the right. On the right, a smaller white cat with orange patches is standing and looking back at Firestar. They are in front of some green plants and a large grey log. The background is a light brown color.

FIRESTAR...
MAY I HAVE A WORD?

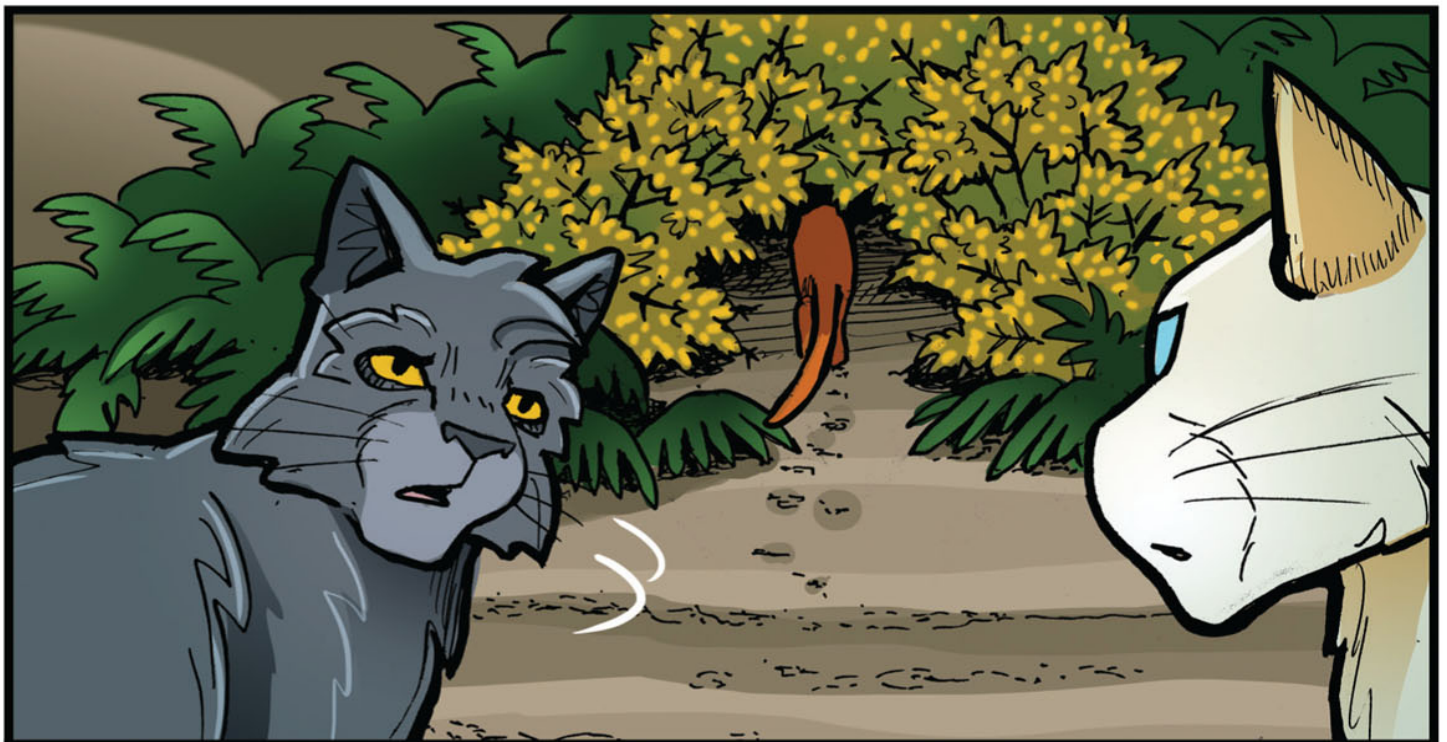
A close-up of two cats. On the left, the orange cat (Firestar) is looking towards the right. On the right, the white cat with orange patches is looking back at Firestar. The background is a solid teal color.

...AND I SAW THEM
TALKING TO OAKFUR
AND TAWNYPAW, THE
SHADOWCLAN CATS.

I COULDN'T HEAR
EXACTLY WHAT THEY WERE
SAYING, BUT...WELL, IT MADE
ME NERVOUS.

WHAT IF LONGTAIL
OR BRAMBLEPAW TURN OUT
TO BE LIKE TIGERSTAR?
WHAT IF THEY BOTH DO?





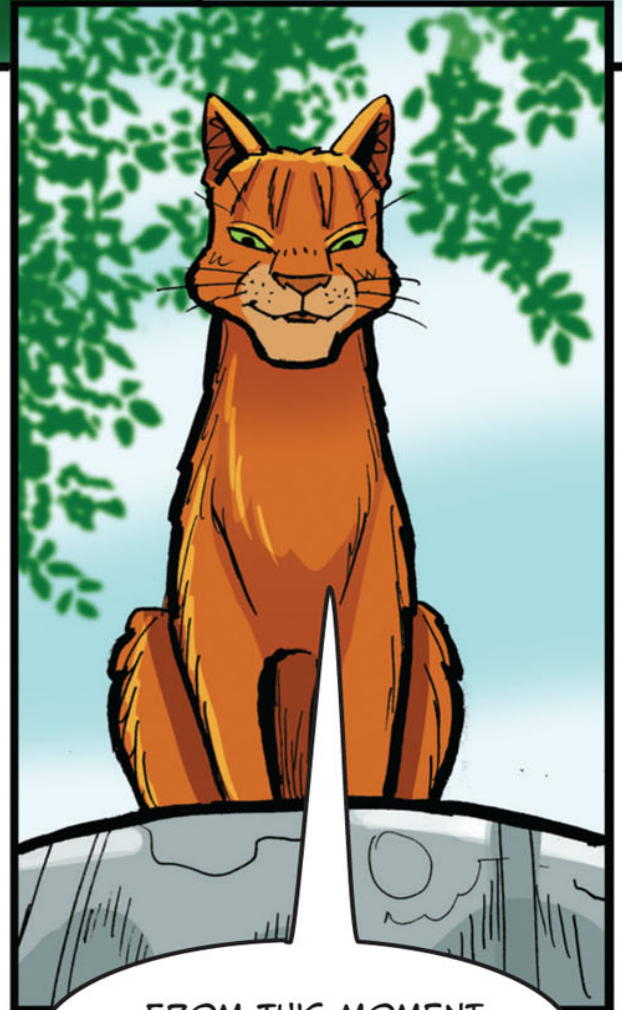
I COULDN'T MAKE HEADS
OR TAILS OF WHY FIRESTAR
WAS ACTING SO ODDLY.

COULDN'T TELL IF HE *MEANT* IT...
OR IF MAYBE THERE *WAS* SOMETHING
TO WORRY ABOUT, BUT HE DIDN'T
WANT TO *TELL* ME.

DOESN'T
LOOK LIKE I'LL FIND OUT
TODAY, EITHER...



...BUT THAT DOESN'T
MEAN IT STILL CAN'T BE A
GOOD DAY.



FROM THIS MOMENT,
YOU WILL BE KNOWN AS
BRAMBLECLAW.



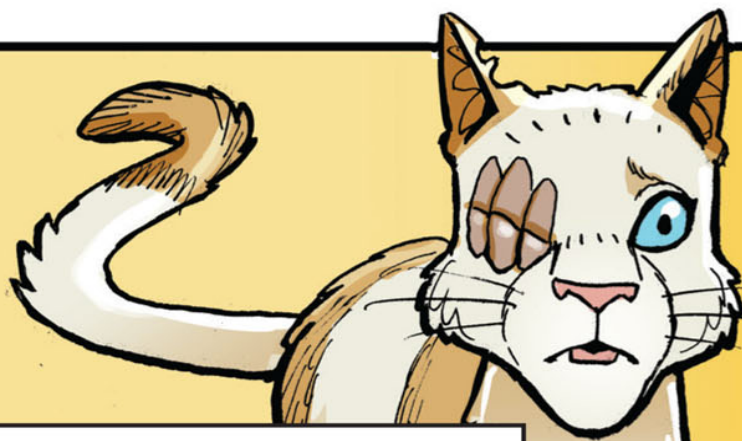
STARCLAN HONORS YOUR
COURAGE AND YOUR LOYALTY,
AND WE WELCOME YOU AS A FULL
WARRIOR OF THUNDERCLAN.



BRAMBLECLAW!

BRAMBLECLAW!

BRAMBLECLAW!



DID HE SERIOUSLY JUST
NAME TIGERSTAR'S SON...
BRAMBLECLAW?

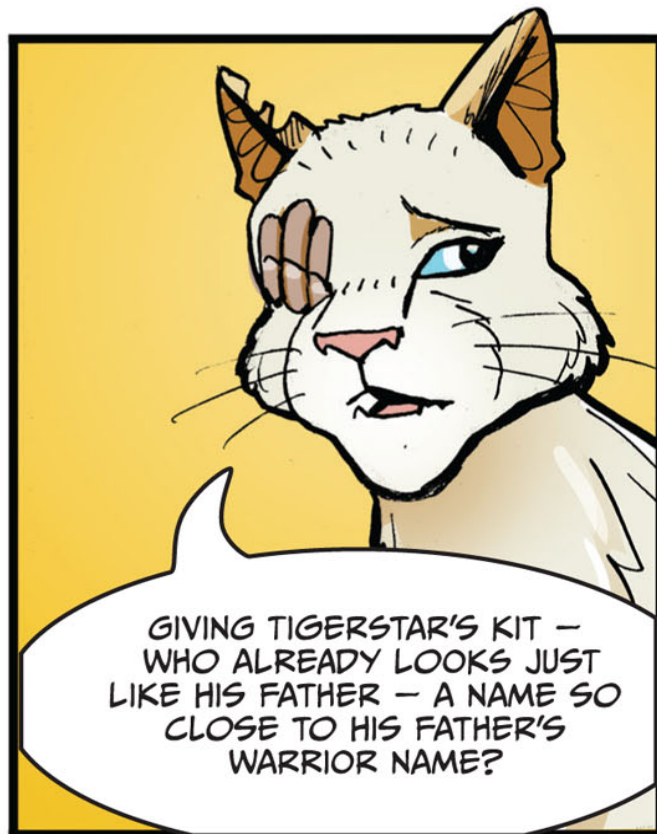
I'M STILL THINKING
ABOUT IT THE NEXT
MORNING.

BUT BEFORE HE
BECAME TIGERSTAR,
HE WAS TIGERCLAW!





DOES THAT
NOT STRIKE YOU AS A
TERRIBLE IDEA?

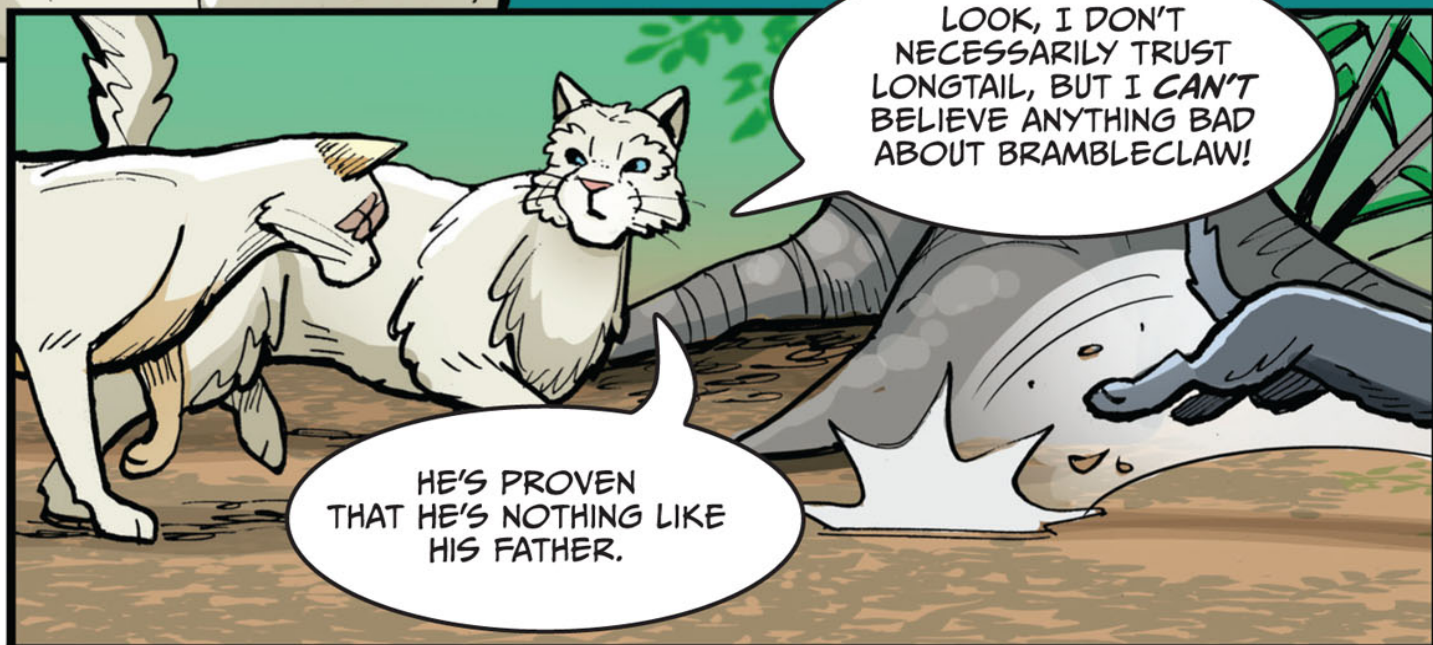


GIVING TIGERSTAR'S KIT —
WHO ALREADY LOOKS JUST
LIKE HIS FATHER — A NAME SO
CLOSE TO HIS FATHER'S
WARRIOR NAME?



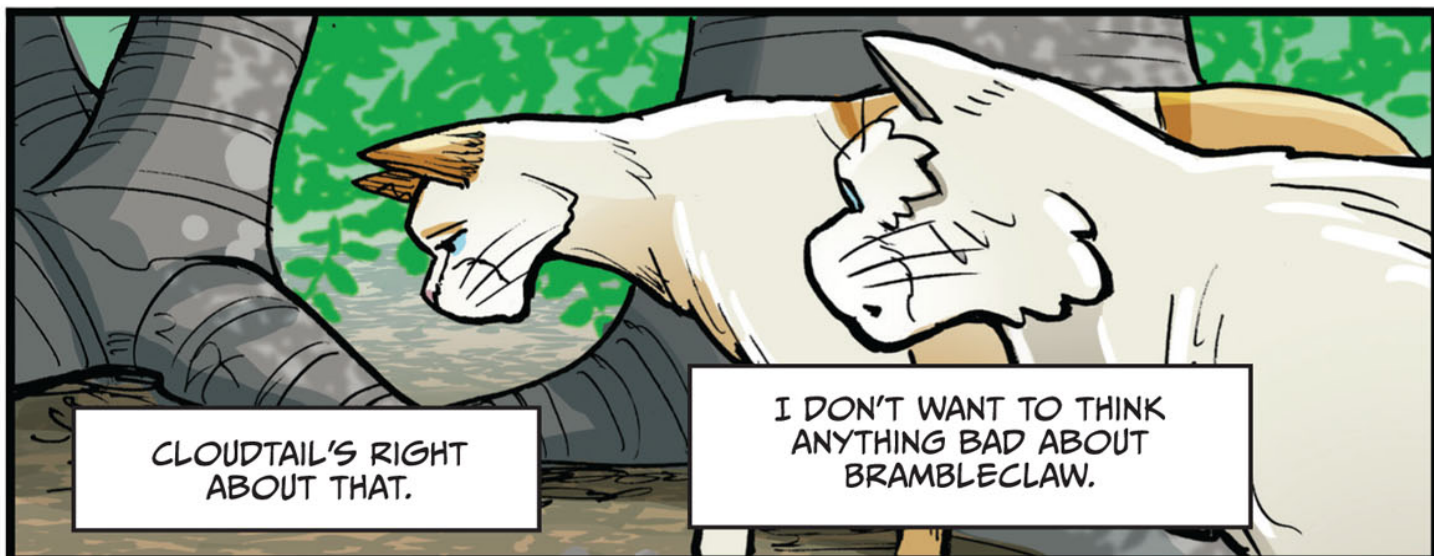
HE MIGHT WANT THUNDERCLAN
TO ACCEPT THAT BRAMBLECLAW
IS TIGERSTAR'S SON, AND THEN —
WELL — GET OVER IT.

MAYBE THE
NAME IS PART OF
THAT.



LOOK, I DON'T
NECESSARILY TRUST
LONGTAIL, BUT I *CAN'T*
BELIEVE ANYTHING BAD
ABOUT BRAMBLECLAW!

HE'S PROVEN
THAT HE'S NOTHING LIKE
HIS FATHER.



CLOUDTAIL'S RIGHT
ABOUT THAT.

I DON'T WANT TO THINK
ANYTHING BAD ABOUT
BRAMBLECLAW.



TAKE TODAY.
BRAMBLECLAW WAS
EXHAUSTED AFTER SITTING
VIGIL LAST NIGHT AS A
NEW WARRIOR...

BUT HE STILL
WANTED TO GO ON
PATROL THIS
MORNING.

THAT SEEMS LIKE
DEDICATION TO THE
CLAN TO ME.

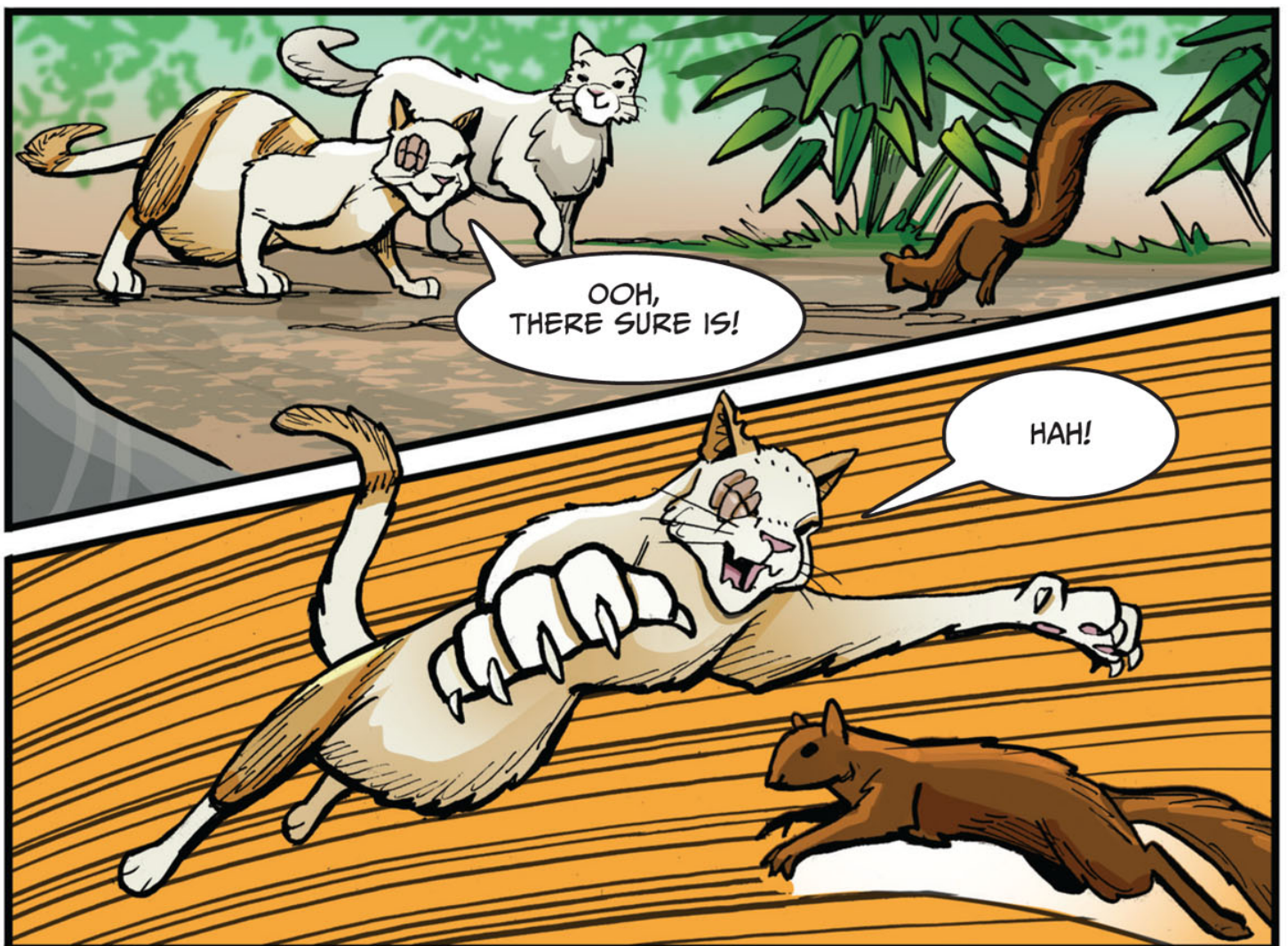
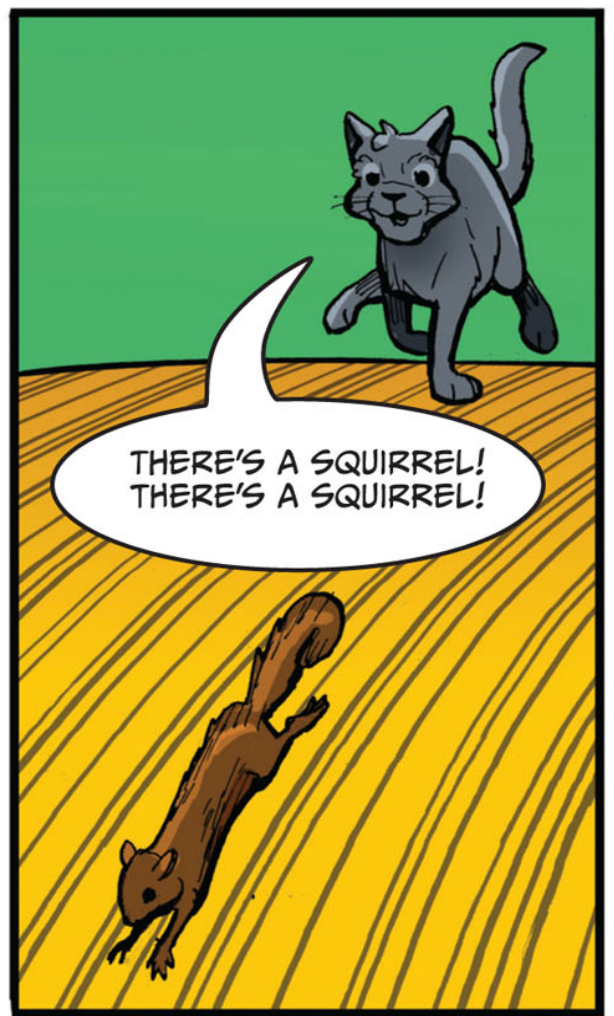
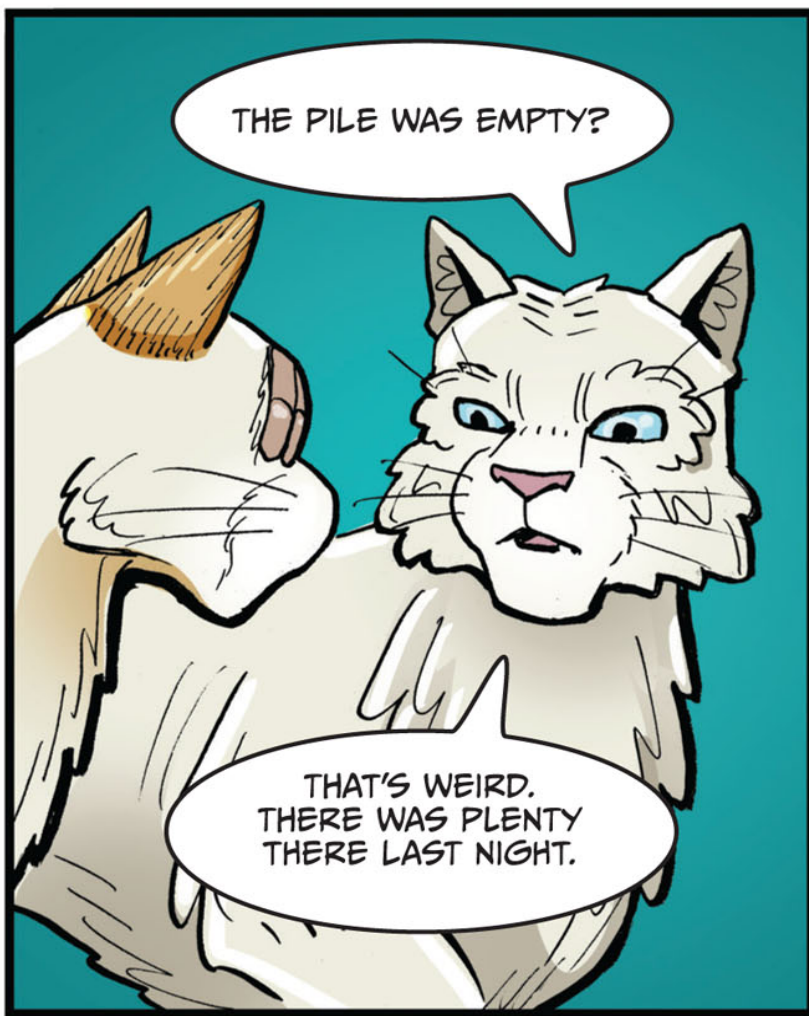


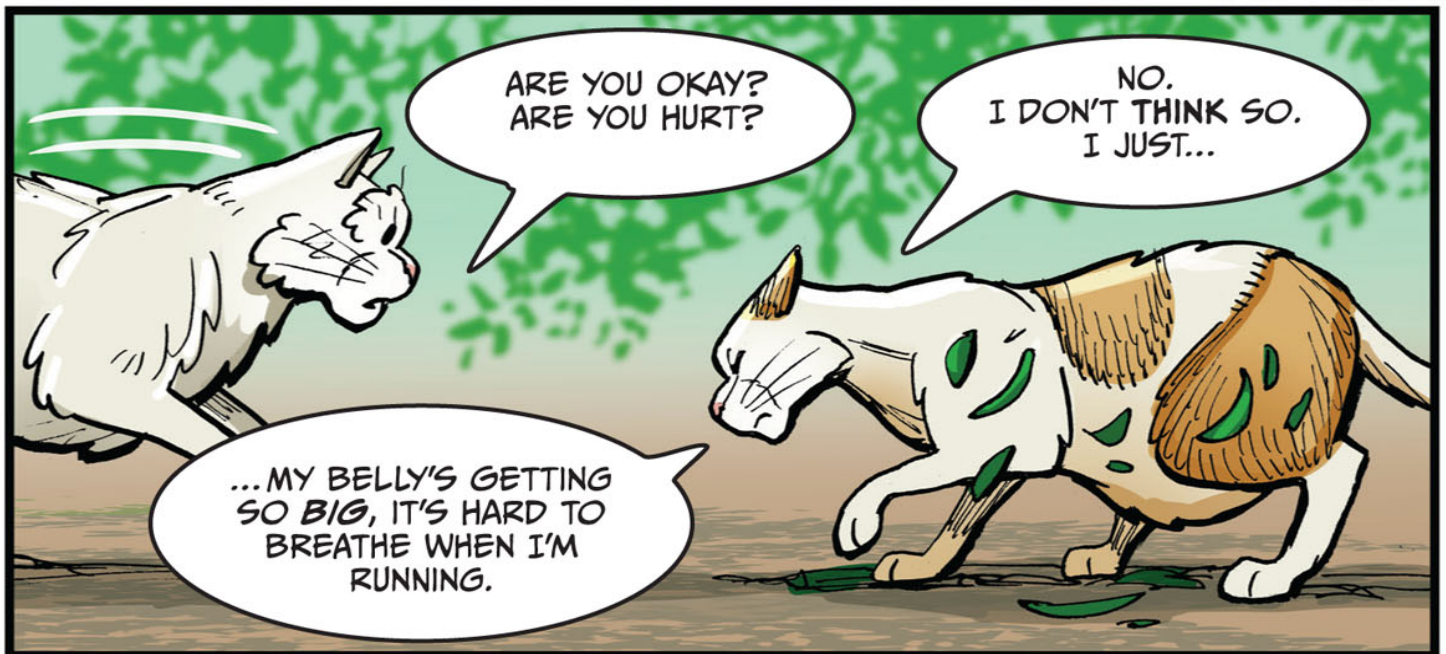
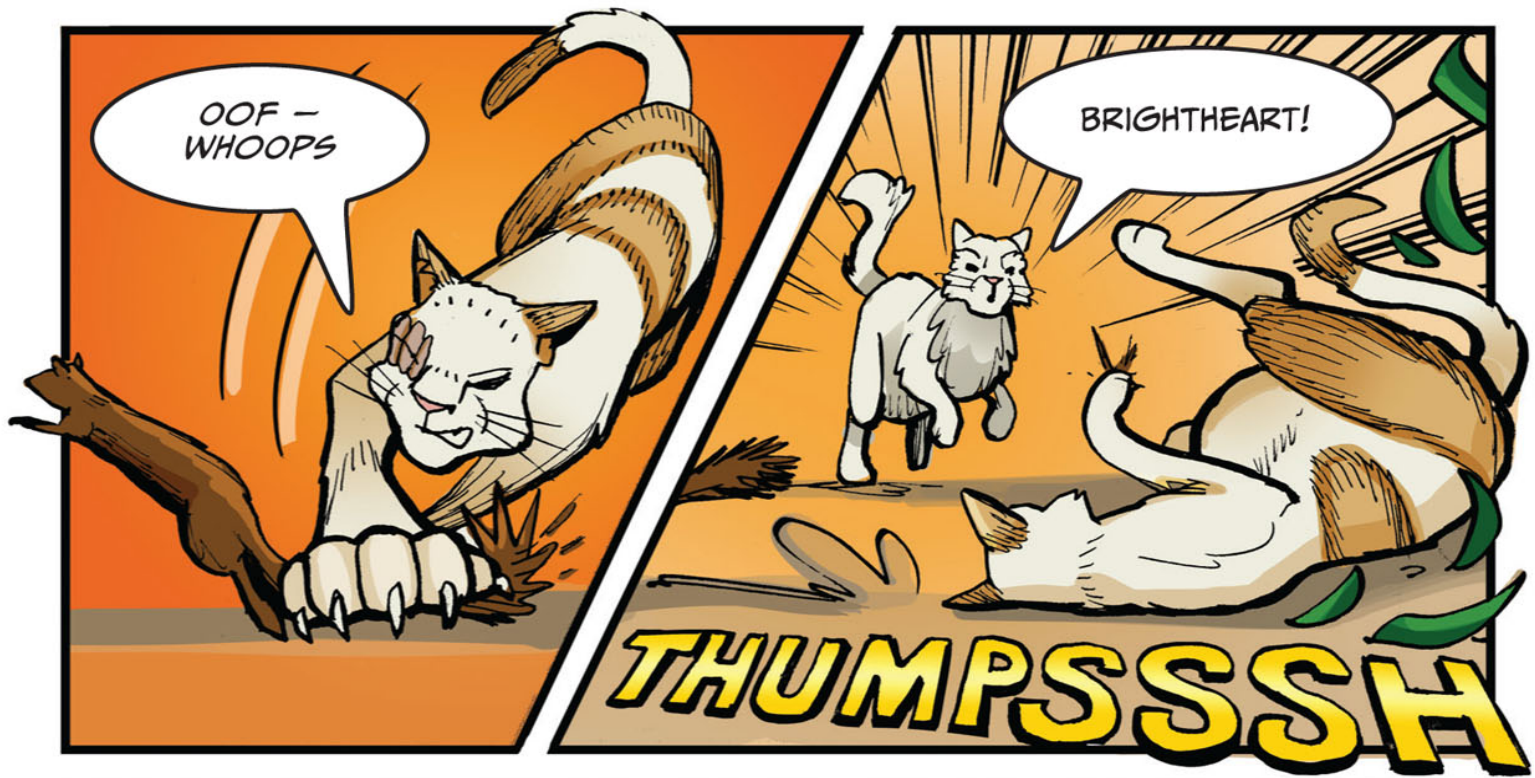
SIGH

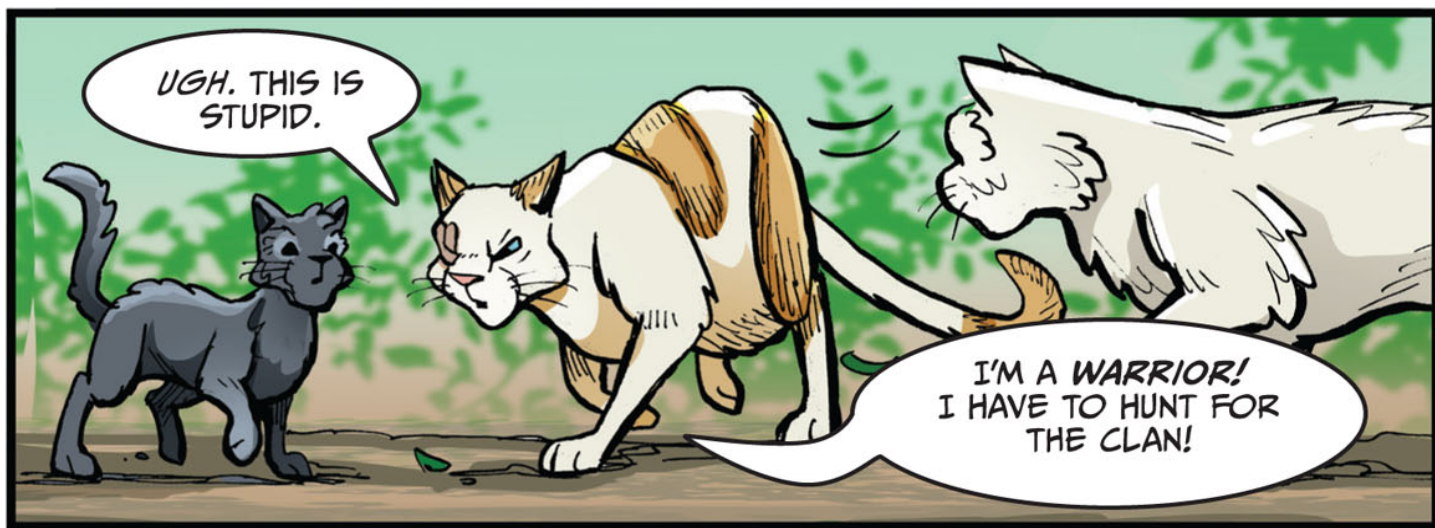


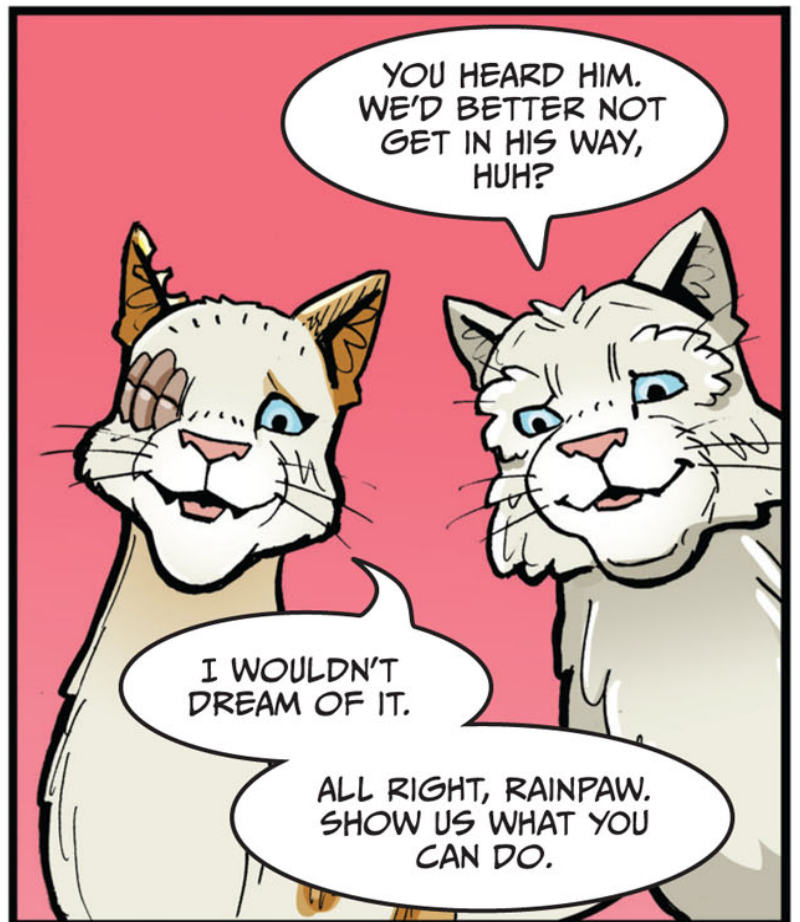
I CAN'T STOP
FEELING UNEASY.
I DON'T KNOW
WHY.

MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE THERE
WASN'T ANY FRESH-KILL ON
THE PILE THIS MORNING. AGAIN.
MAYBE I'M JUST HUNGRY.











RAINPAW WASN'T LYING.
HE BROUGHT DOWN A NICE, PLUMP
SQUIRREL IN NO TIME FLAT.




I WAS *GOING* TO REST
ONCE WE GOT BACK TO
CAMP...

...BUT THEN I THOUGHT MAYBE
MY SISTER THE MEDICINE CAT
MIGHT HAVE SOME KIND OF
HERB THAT WOULD HELP ME.



YOU SHOULDN'T
WORRY ABOUT IT. I'M
SERIOUS.

IT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL
TO BE A LITTLE CLUMSY AND
SHORT OF BREATH AS YOU
GET CLOSER TO THE KITS
BEING BORN.



ANY OTHER
PROBLEMS YOU'D
LIKE TO TELL ME
ABOUT?



WELL...
I'VE BEEN HAVING
TROUBLE SLEEPING...

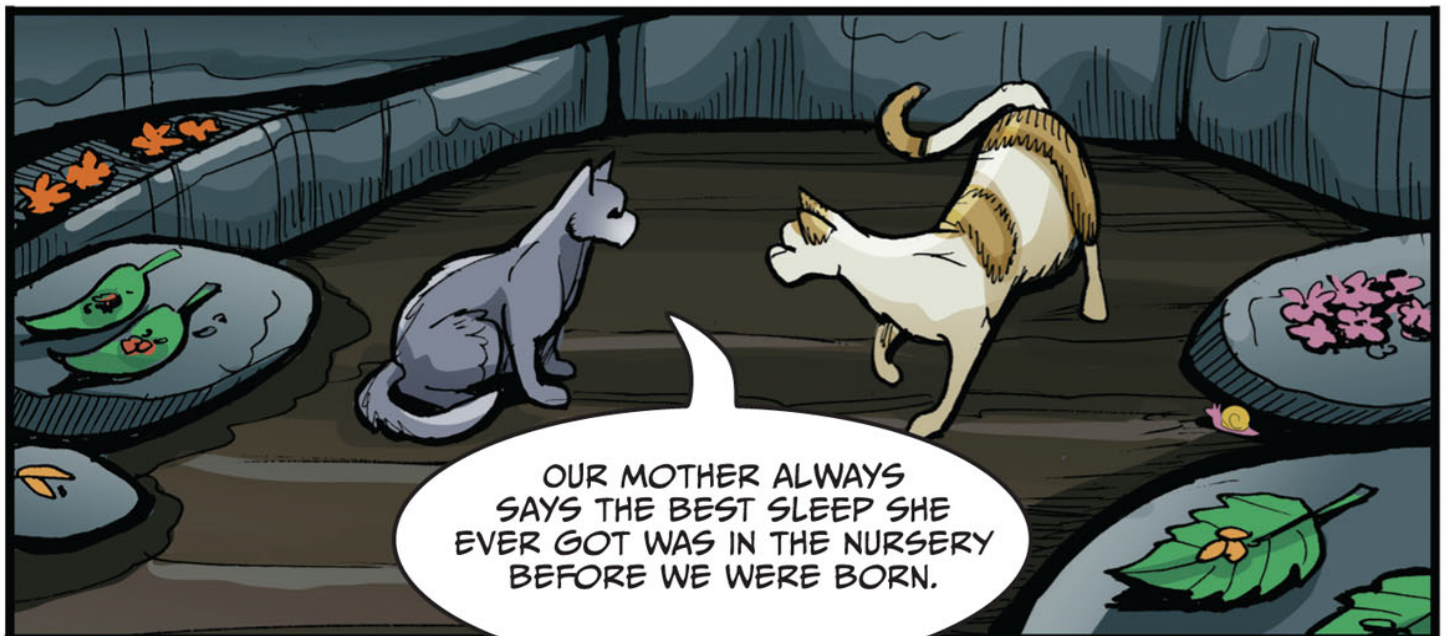


I'M SCARED
I'VE BEEN KEEPING THE
WHOLE WARRIORS' DEN AWAKE
WITH ALL MY TOSSING AND
TURNING.

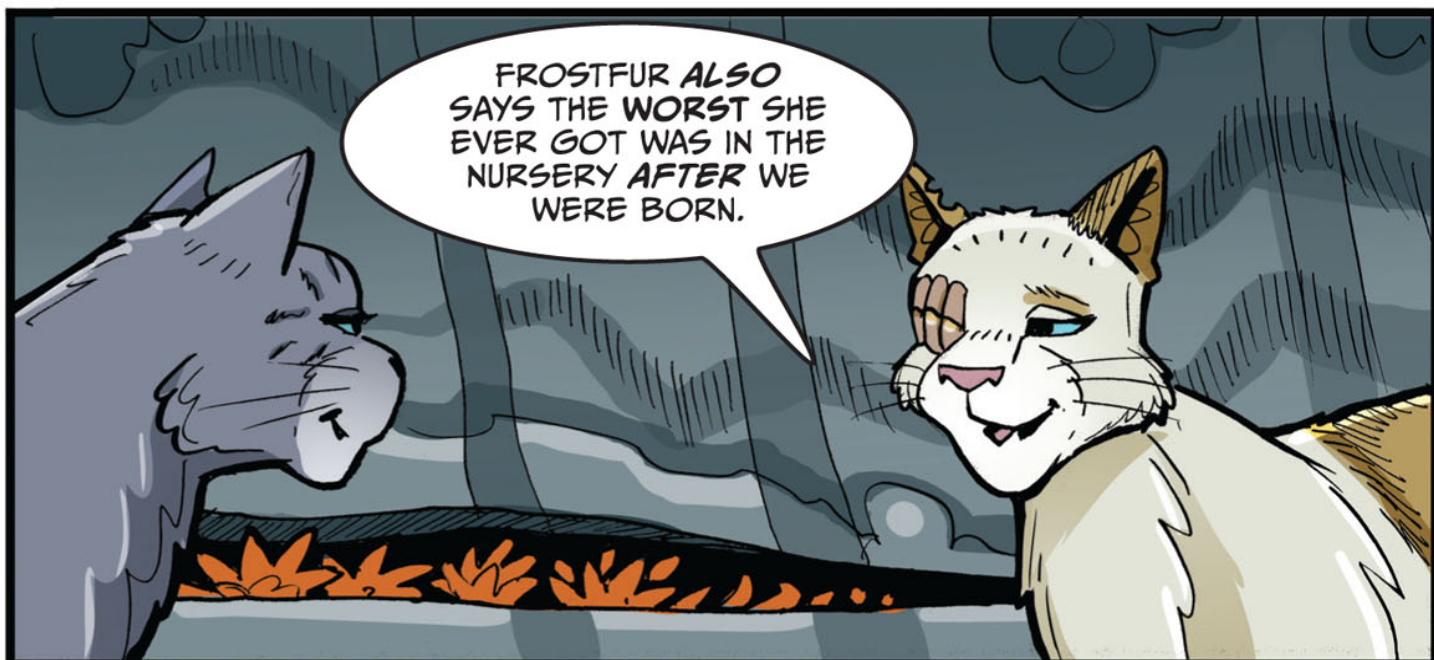


HMM.... WELL, IT'S
PROBABLY TIME FOR
YOU TO MOVE INTO THE
NURSERY ANYWAY.

YOU'LL HAVE MORE
SPACE THERE. AND YOU CAN
GET USED TO THE NEW DEN
BEFORE YOUR KITS
GET HERE.



OUR MOTHER ALWAYS
SAYS THE BEST SLEEP SHE
EVER GOT WAS IN THE NURSERY
BEFORE WE WERE BORN.





I MAKE THE
MOVE THAT NIGHT.



CLOUDTAIL'S GREAT ABOUT IT.
HE COMPLETELY UNDERSTANDS
THE REASONS WHY.



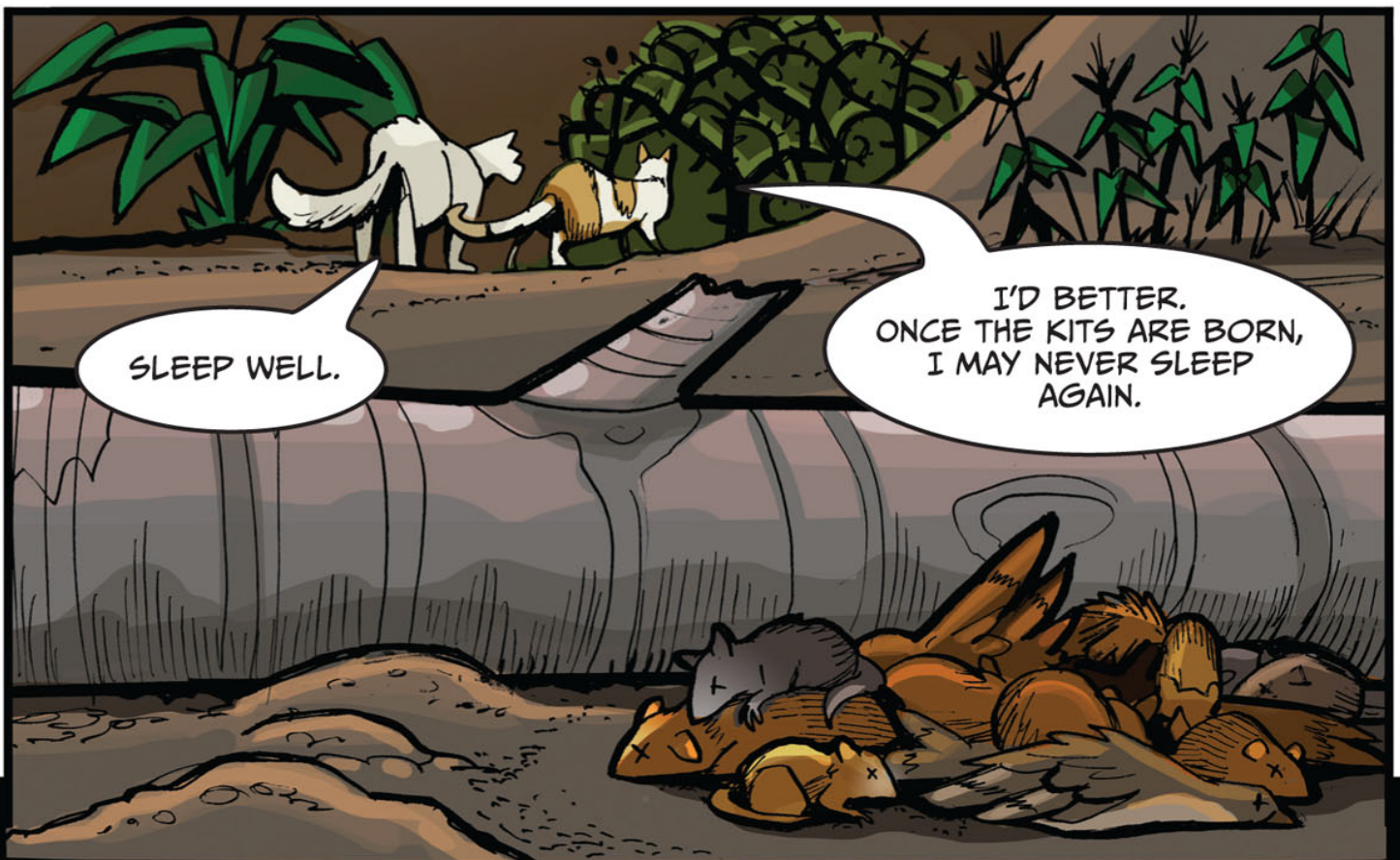
I THINK THAT'LL MAKE ME
MISS SLEEPING CURLED UP NEXT
TO HIM EVEN MORE.



I'M JUST ACROSS THE
CLEARING. NO MORE THAN A
SHOUT AWAY.

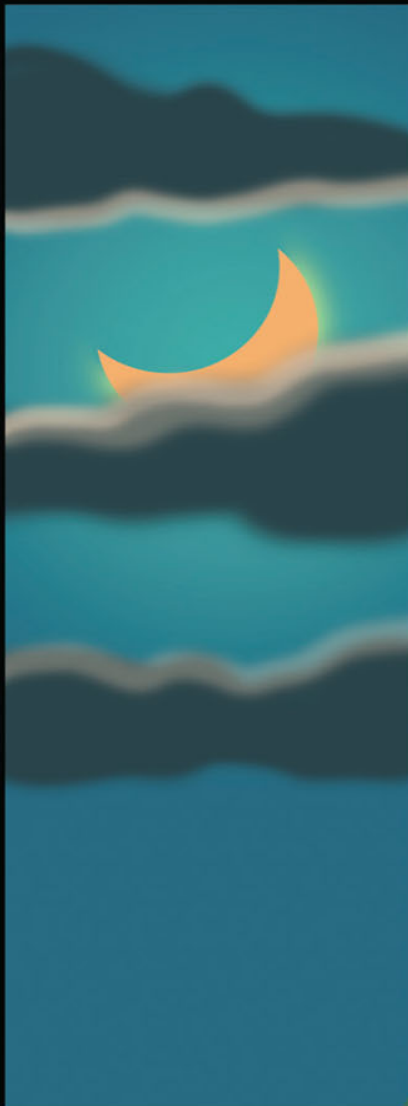
I KNOW.
I KNOW.

BUT I CAN'T FEEL
YOUR HEARTBEAT FROM
ACROSS THE CLEARING.



SLEEP WELL.

I'D BETTER.
ONCE THE KITS ARE BORN,
I MAY NEVER SLEEP
AGAIN.



SO MUCH FOR
"THE BEST SLEEP
I'VE EVER HAD."



UGH.



I'LL HAVE TO FIND OUT
FERNCLOUD'S SECRET TO
A RESTFUL NIGHT.



I CAN'T BEAR TO WAKE
HER UP, THOUGH.



YEAH, THIS IS
POINTLESS.



MAYBE IF I HAVE A NICE FAT
VOLE. IT'LL MAKE ME SLEEPY.

I'M EATING FOR
MORE THAN ONE
NOW, ANYWAY.



HMM. LONGTAIL'S
ON DUTY TONIGHT.

HAVEN'T SPOKEN TO HIM
SINCE I TRIED TO TALK TO
FIRESTAR ABOUT HIM...



WHAT HAPPENED TO
THE FRESH-KILL PILE?



...BUT HE'S GIVEN ME NO
REASON TO THINK HE'S DONE
ANYTHING WR —



I KNOW THERE WAS
PLENTY THERE AT
NIGHTFALL.



LONGTAIL!

WHERE'S ALL
THE PREY?



WHAT'RE YOU
TALKING ABOUT?
THERE'S LOTS OF
FRESH-KILL OVER
THERE.

NOT ANYMORE
THERE ISN'T! IT'S
ALL GONE!



HUH. SOME CAT
MUST'VE BEEN HUNGRY
WHILE I WAS CHECKING
FOR TRESPASSERS
OUTSIDE CAMP.



THAT'S RIDICULOUS!
NO CAT COULD'VE EATEN THAT
MUCH PREY SO QUICKLY!

OH YEAH?
THEN WHAT'RE YOU
SAYING?

SOMETHING CATCHES
FIRE IN MY MIND.

LONGTAIL AND OAKFUR BY THE
THUNDERPATH, TALKING ABOUT
"BORDERS" AND "PREY"...

BRAMBLECLAW GUARDED
THE CAMP THAT NIGHT — AND
THE PILE TURNED UP EMPTY
THE NEXT MORNING!



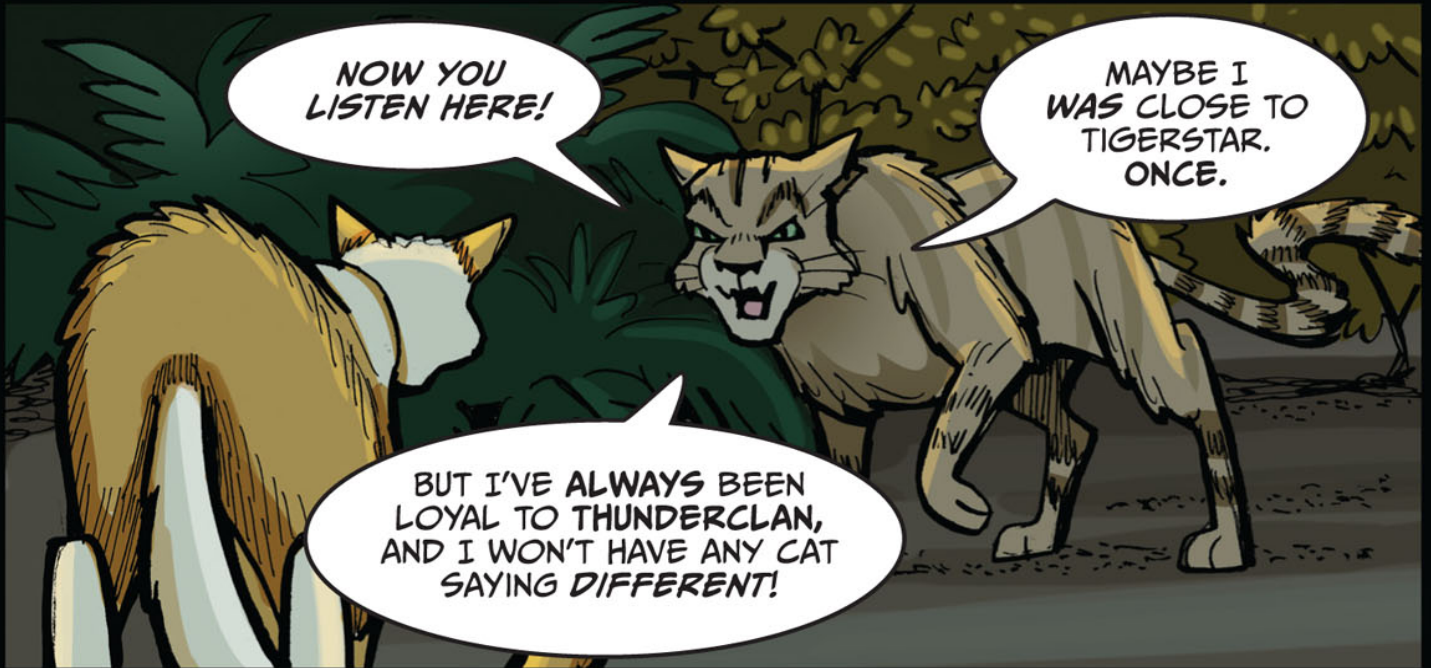
I'M SAYING YOU'VE
BEEN *GIVING AWAY*
THUNDERCLAN'S PREY.



AND
YOU'VE DRAGGED
BRAMBLECLAW
INTO IT!



JUST BECAUSE
HE'S TIGERSTAR'S
SON, DOESN'T MEAN HE
OWES *SHADOWCLAN*
ANYTHING!



NOW YOU
LISTEN HERE!

MAYBE I
WAS CLOSE TO
TIGERSTAR.
ONCE.

BUT I'VE ALWAYS BEEN
LOYAL TO THUNDERCLAN,
AND I WON'T HAVE ANY CAT
SAYING *DIFFERENT*!



AS FOR OAKFUR AND
TAWNYPAW, THERE'S NO RULE
AGAINST BEING FRIENDLY
WITH CATS FROM OTHER
CLANS!

STARCLAN ABOVE,
BRIGHTHEART!

I WOULD
NEVER GIVE AWAY
THUNDERCLAN'S
PREY!

NEVER!

I WANT TO
BELIEVE HIM.

AND I HATE NOT
TRUSTING A CLANMATE.

WELL, THE PREY IS STILL
GONE. SO *SOME* CAT MUST
HAVE STOLEN IT ALL, AND THAT
CAT IS ENDANGERING THE
WHOLE CLAN.

IF IT'S NOT
YOU...

WHO IS IT?

I DON'T KNOW.

BUT I SWEAR BY THE
WARRIOR CODE. I SWEAR
BY STARCLAN...

IT WAS NOT ME.

WELL,
I'M GOING TO GO
TALK TO FIRESTAR.

MAYBE HE CAN
FIGURE THIS OUT.

FINDING FIRESTAR
TURNED OUT TO BE DIFFICULT.

HE'S PATROLLING,
GRAYSTRIPE SAID. SO HE COULD
BE *ANYWHERE* IN THE FOREST.

LUCKY FOR US,
WE'RE BOTH EXCELLENT
HUNTERS.

NOT TO MENTION,
I THINK MY SENSE OF SMELL
HAS GOTTEN EVEN BETTER SINCE
I'VE BEEN PREGNANT.

IF WE DO FIND FIRESTAR WAY
OUT HERE, AT LEAST IT'LL BE A
CHANCE TO TALK IN PRIVATE.

SO, UH...
RAINPAW'S TRAINING IS
STILL GOING WELL.

HE'S
LEARNING FAST.





COULD
WE TALK TO YOU?

FIRESTAR?

CAN HE
NOT HEAR
US?



BRIGHTHEART.
CLOUDTAIL.

WHAT DO
YOU NEED?

FIRESTAR LISTENS CAREFULLY
WHILE I TELL HIM ABOUT LONGTAIL,
AND BRAMBLECLAW, AND THE
MISSING PREY.

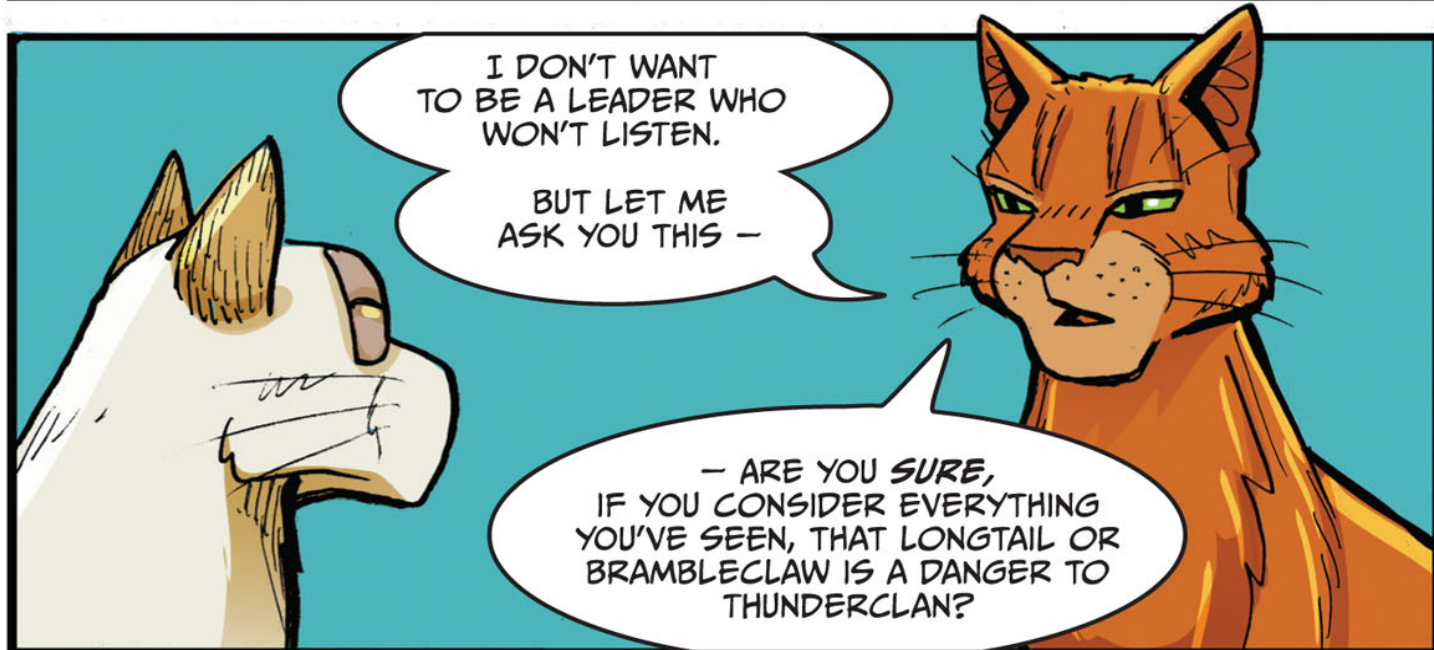
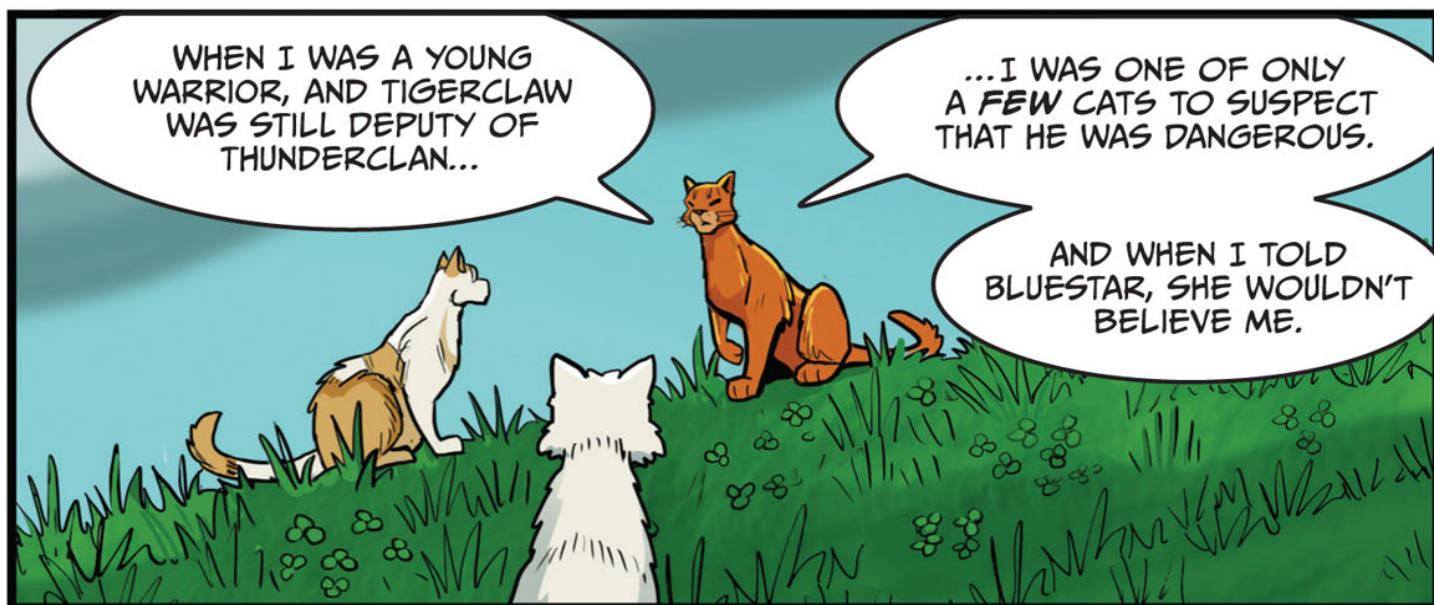


BUT THEN, HE LISTENED
BEFORE. I HOPE HE'LL DO
SOMETHING THIS TIME.



LOOK,
BRIGHTHEART...

I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE
TO FEEL SUSPICIOUS OF SOME
CAT, AND THEN FIND OUT NO
OTHER CATS BELIEVE YOU.





I JUST DON'T LIKE HOW
CLOSE LONGTAIL AND
BRAMBLECLAW ARE TO
SHADOWCLAN CATS.

BUT PROOF OR NOT,
FRESH-KILL IS STILL GOING
MISSING!

I'M NOT IMAGINING
THAT!



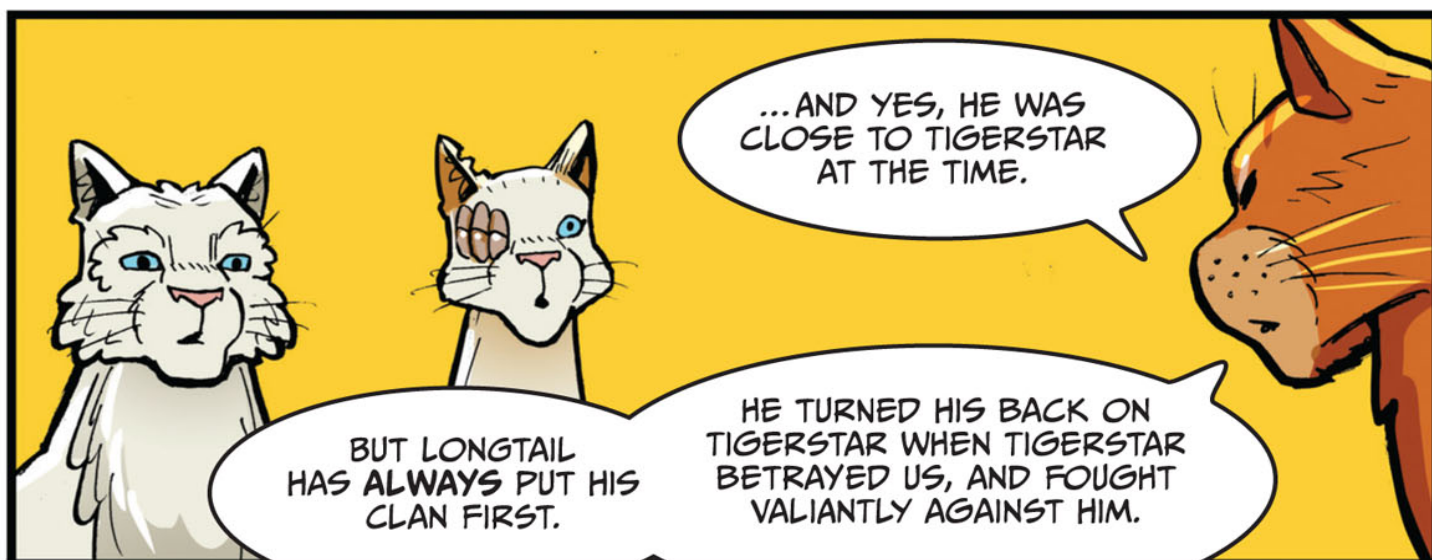
BRIGHTHEART, YOU CAN
ALWAYS COME TO ME, OR
TO GRAYSTRIPE, IF YOU
HAVE CONCERNS. ABOUT
ANYTHING.

AND DON'T WORRY
ABOUT A FEW PIECES OF
MISSING PREY. I'M SURE THERE'S
AN EXPLANATION.



BUT I HAVE FAITH IN
LONGTAIL AND BRAMBLECLAW.
I'M NOT GOING TO ACCUSE THEM
OF ANYTHING WITHOUT REAL
EVIDENCE.

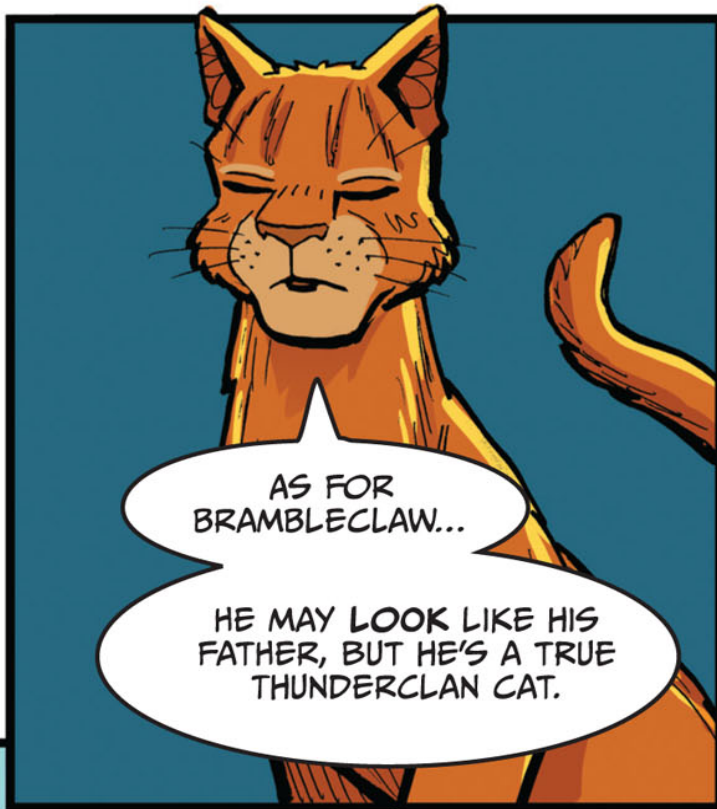
LONGTAIL MAY NOT
HAVE LIKED IT THAT A FORMER
KITTPET LIKE ME COULD JOIN
THE CLAN...



...AND YES, HE WAS
CLOSE TO TIGERSTAR
AT THE TIME.

BUT LONGTAIL
HAS **ALWAYS** PUT HIS
CLAN FIRST.

HE TURNED HIS BACK ON
TIGERSTAR WHEN TIGERSTAR
BETRAYED US, AND FOUGHT
VALIANTLY AGAINST HIM.



AS FOR
BRAMBLECLAW...

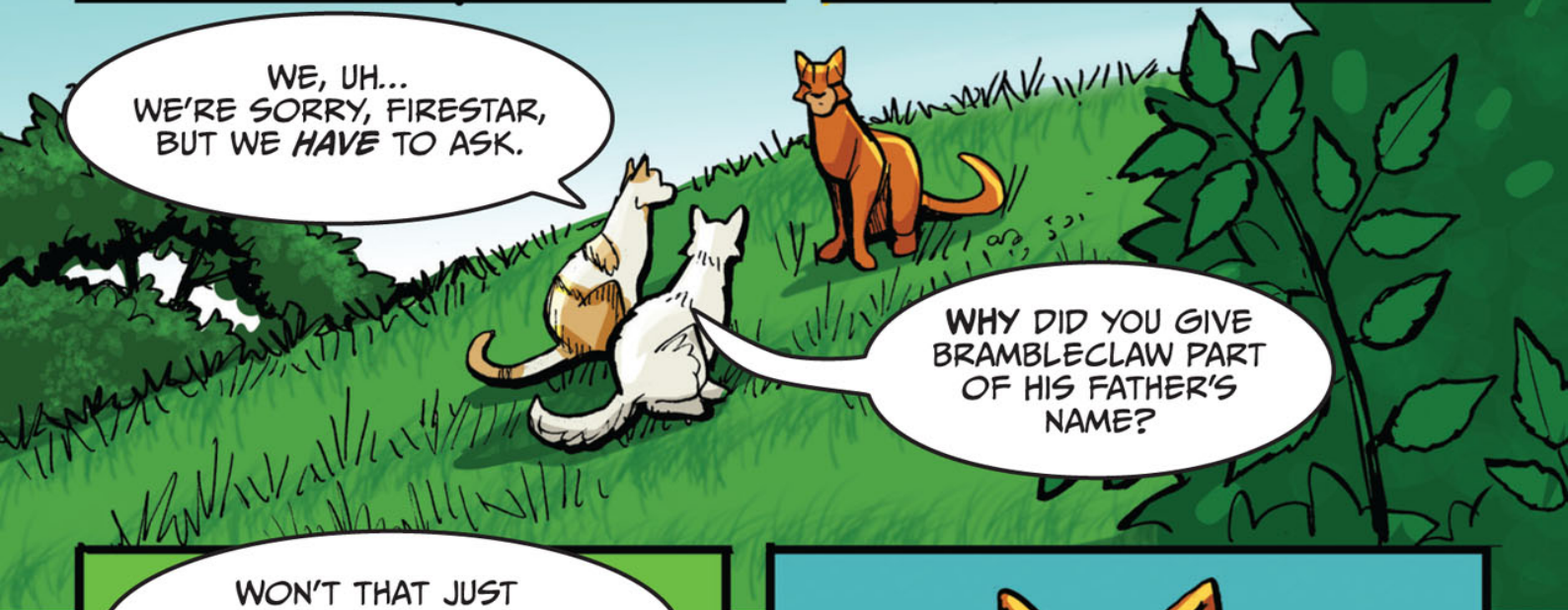
HE MAY LOOK LIKE HIS
FATHER, BUT HE'S A TRUE
THUNDERCLAN CAT.



AND THE
OTHER THING?

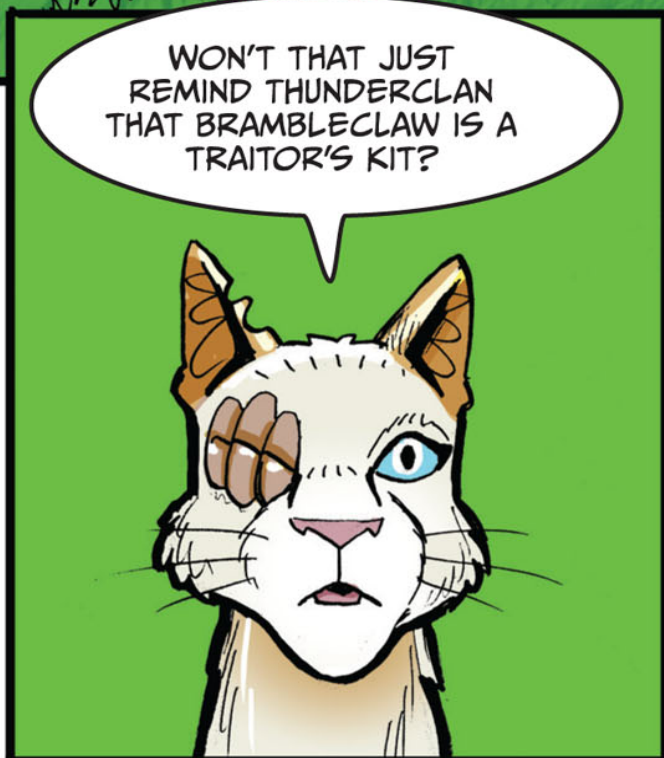
HUH?

OH!



WE, UH...
WE'RE SORRY, FIRESTAR,
BUT WE *HAVE* TO ASK.

WHY DID YOU GIVE
BRAMBLECLAW PART
OF HIS FATHER'S
NAME?

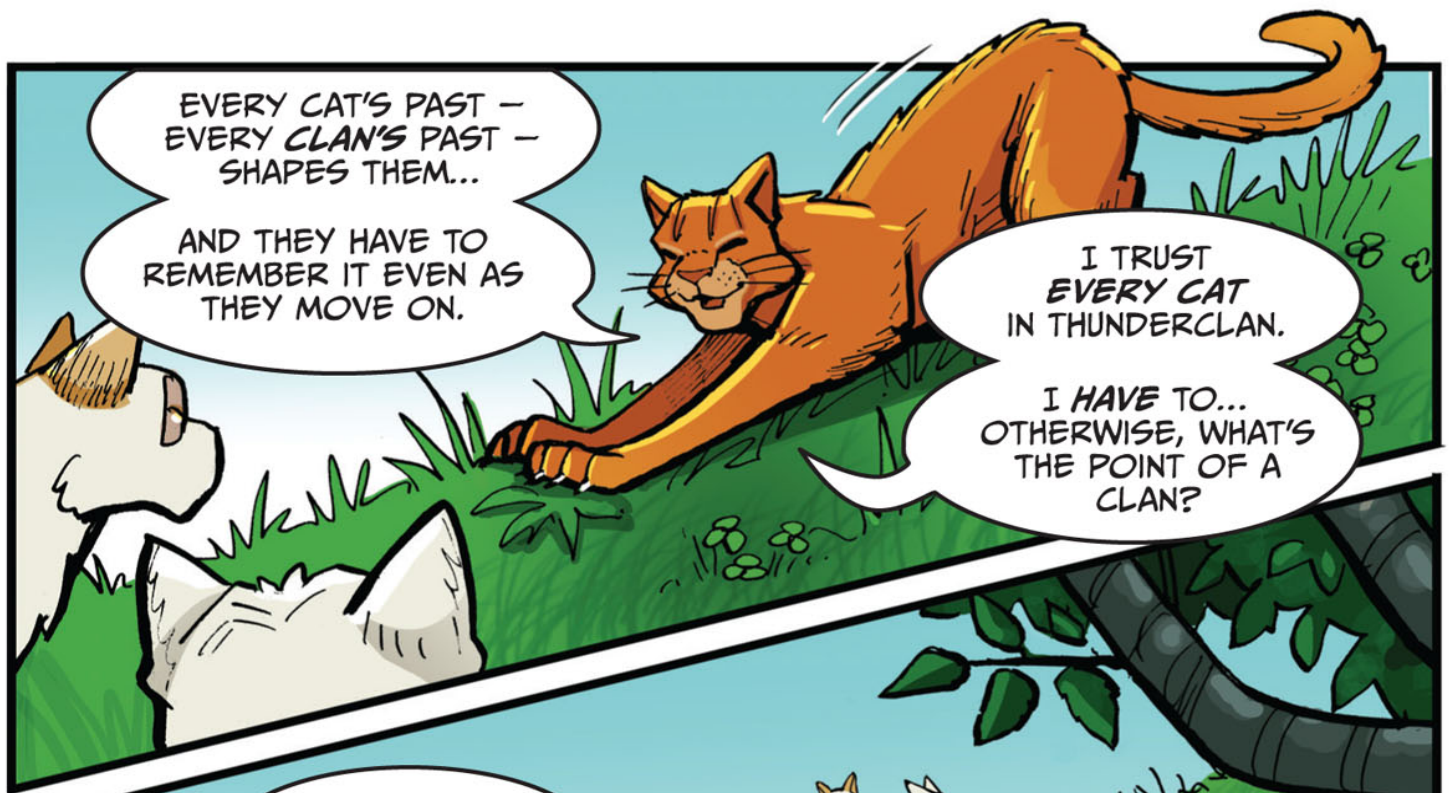


WON'T THAT JUST
REMIND THUNDERCLAN
THAT BRAMBLECLAW IS A
TRAITOR'S KIT?



BELIEVE ME,
NO CAT HAS FORGOTTEN
WHO BRAMBLECLAW'S
FATHER WAS.

BUT HE
SHOULDN'T BE
ASHAMED.



EVERY CAT'S PAST —
EVERY *CLAN'S* PAST —
SHAPES THEM...

AND THEY HAVE TO
REMEMBER IT EVEN AS
THEY MOVE ON.

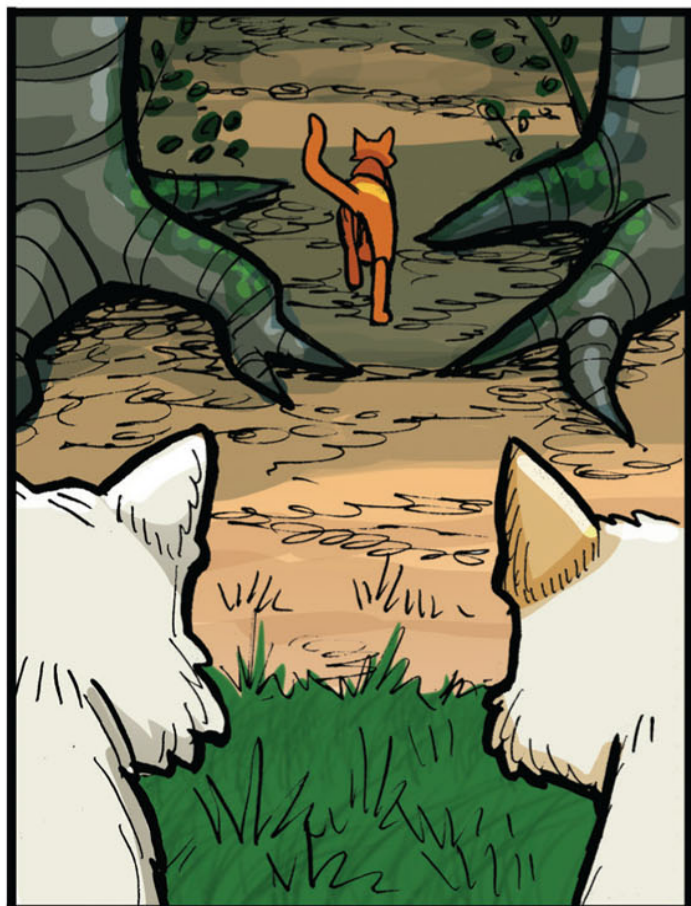
I TRUST
EVERY CAT
IN THUNDERCLAN.

I *HAVE* TO...
OTHERWISE, WHAT'S
THE POINT OF A
CLAN?



NOW, I MUST
RETURN TO
CAMP.

I NEED
TO TALK TO
CINDERPELT.



HE'S RIGHT.

ABOUT WHAT,
EXACTLY?

WELL...
ALL OF IT. EVERYTHING
HE SAID. MOVING ON
FROM THE PAST.

I WOULDN'T BE THE CAT I AM
IF NOT FOR THE DOG ATTACK.
AS HORRIBLE AS IT WAS.

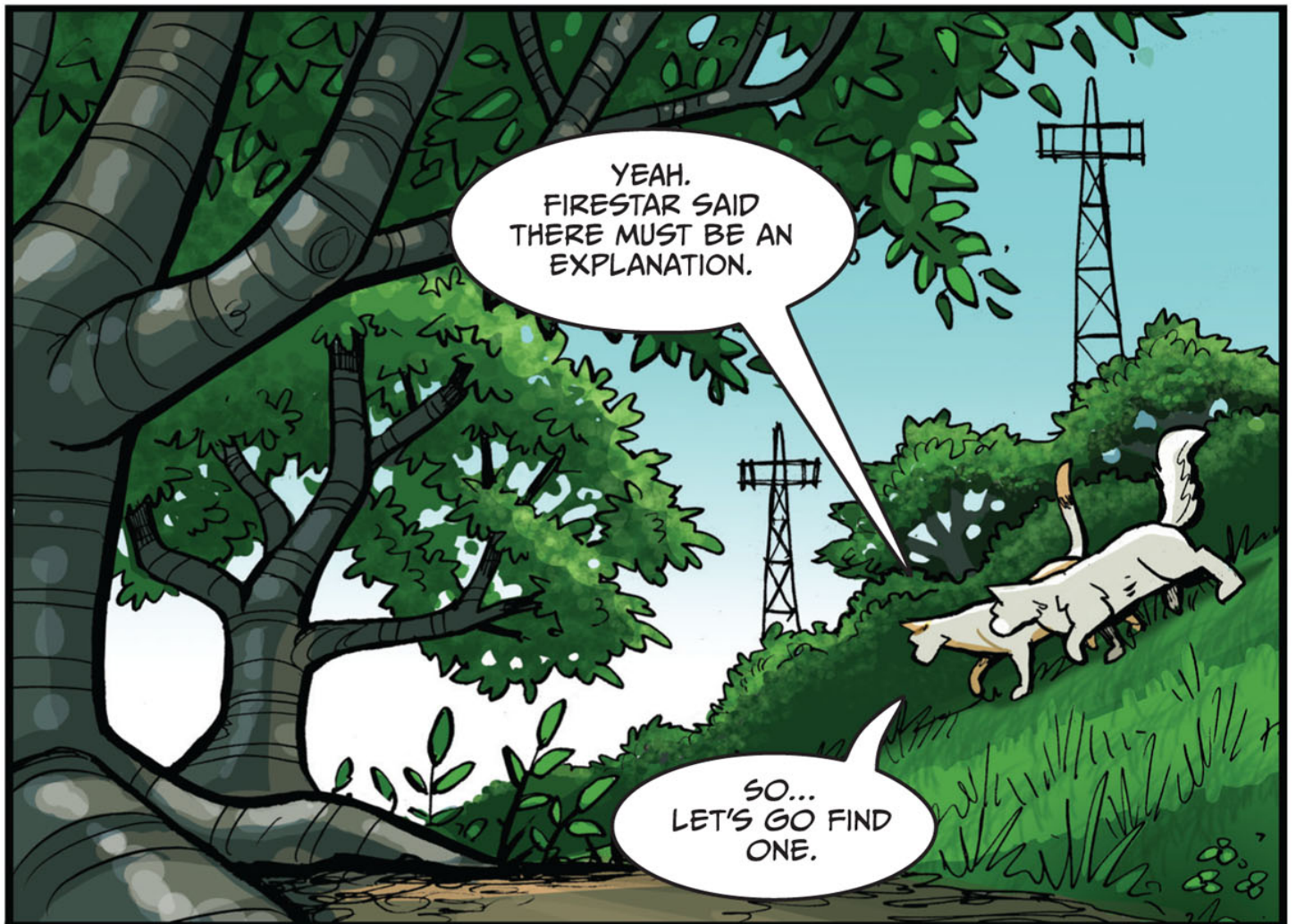


I WANT TO
HAVE AS MUCH FAITH AS
FIRESTAR DOES.

I NEED TO.

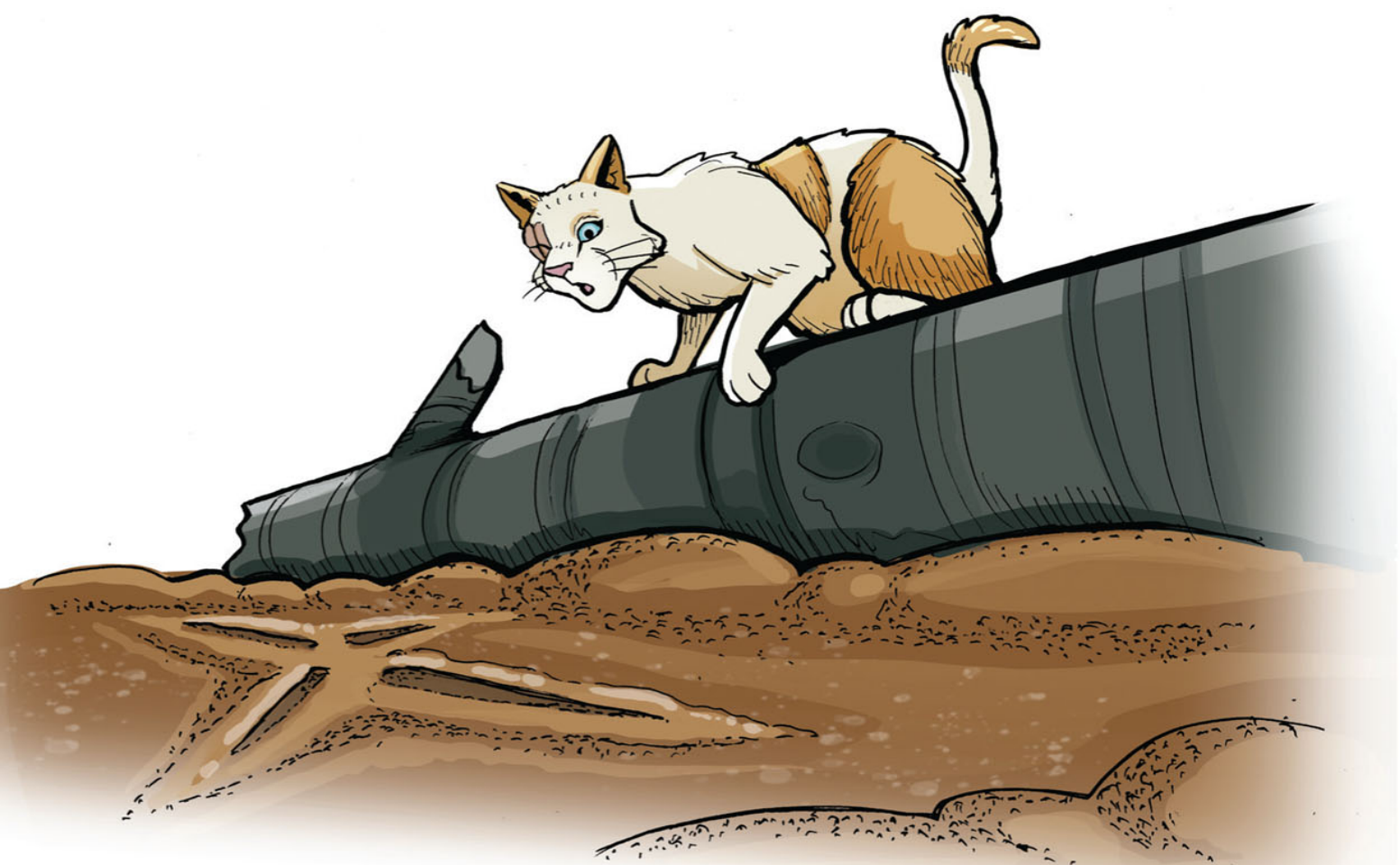



SOME CAT IS
STILL STEALING PREY,
THOUGH.



YEAH.
FIRESTAR SAID
THERE MUST BE AN
EXPLANATION.

SO...
LET'S GO FIND
ONE.



A cat is shown in a nursery setting, surrounded by large rocks and green plants. The cat is looking towards the right. In the background, several other cats are visible, including a grey one, a brown one, and a black one.

I *FINALLY*
GOT SOME DECENT SLEEP
IN THE NURSERY.

A cat with white fur and orange patches is walking towards the right. The background shows a nursery with large rocks and green plants.

NOW IT'S TIME TO
FIND THIS *THIEF*.

BUT *HOW?*

A close-up of a cat's face. The cat has a bandage on its right eye and a sad expression.

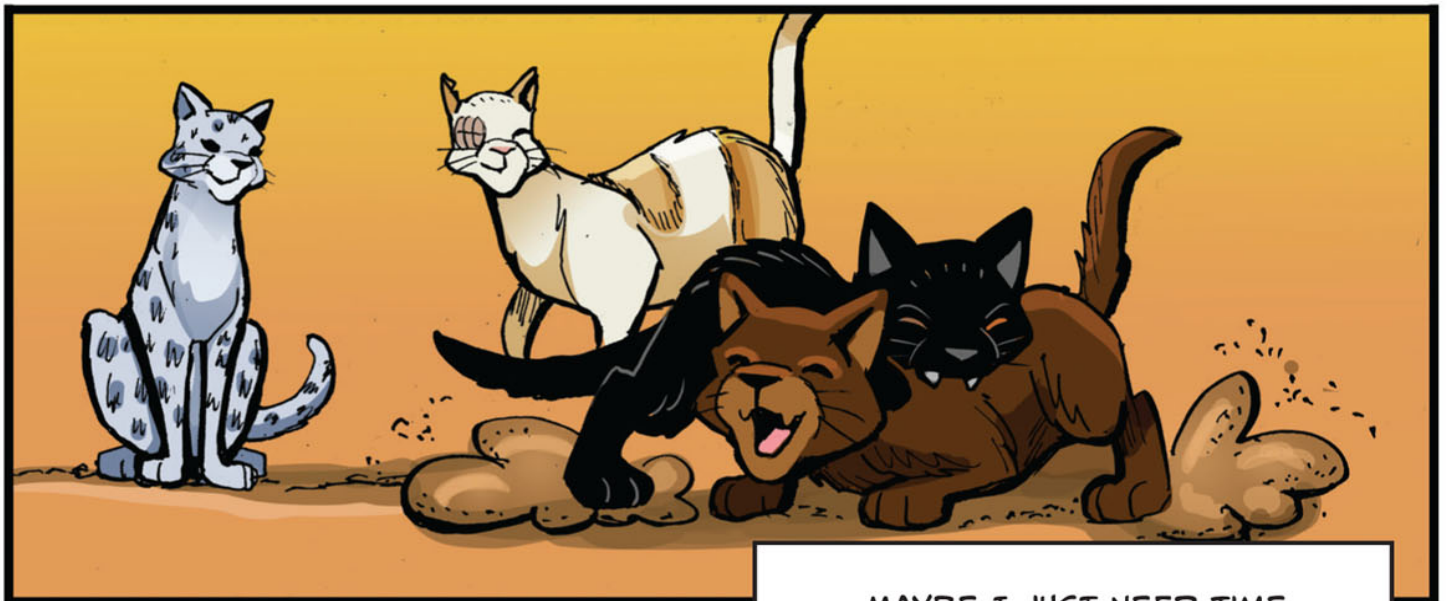
BRAMBLECLAW WAS ON GUARD
DUTY LAST NIGHT, BUT IT
DOESN'T LOOK LIKE ANY PREY
WAS STOLEN.



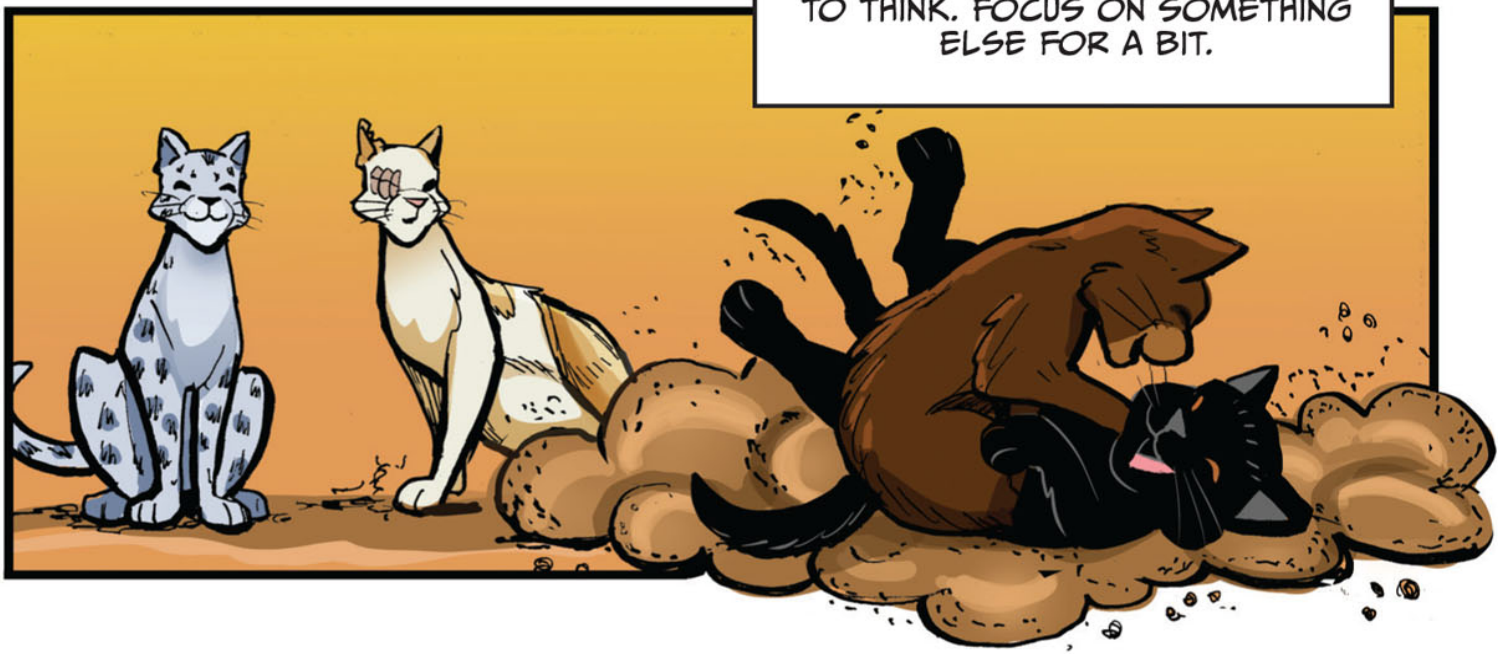
DOES THAT
MEAN HE REALLY ISN'T
INVOLVED?



OR DID IT SCARE THEM INTO
BEING MORE CAREFUL WHEN
I CONFRONTED LONGTAIL?



MAYBE I JUST NEED TIME
TO THINK. FOCUS ON SOMETHING
ELSE FOR A BIT.



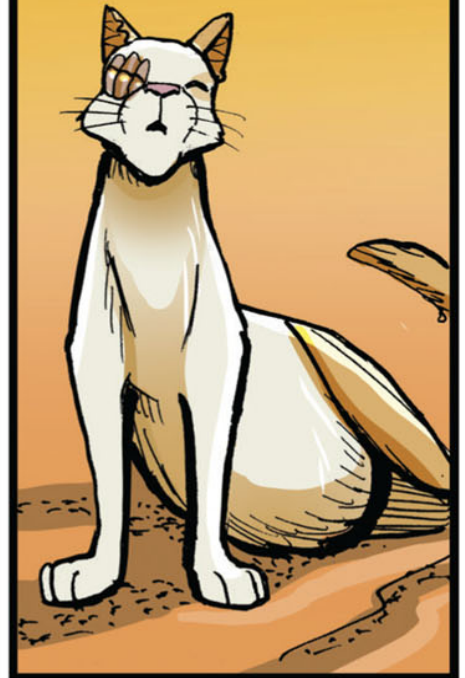
NOPE,
THAT'S NOT
WORKING.



UGH... WHY AM I
SO RESTLESS?



THIS REMINDS ME
OF THE DAYS AFTER
THE DOG ATTACK...



...WHEN EVERY CAT THOUGHT
I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO BE
A WARRIOR ANYMORE.

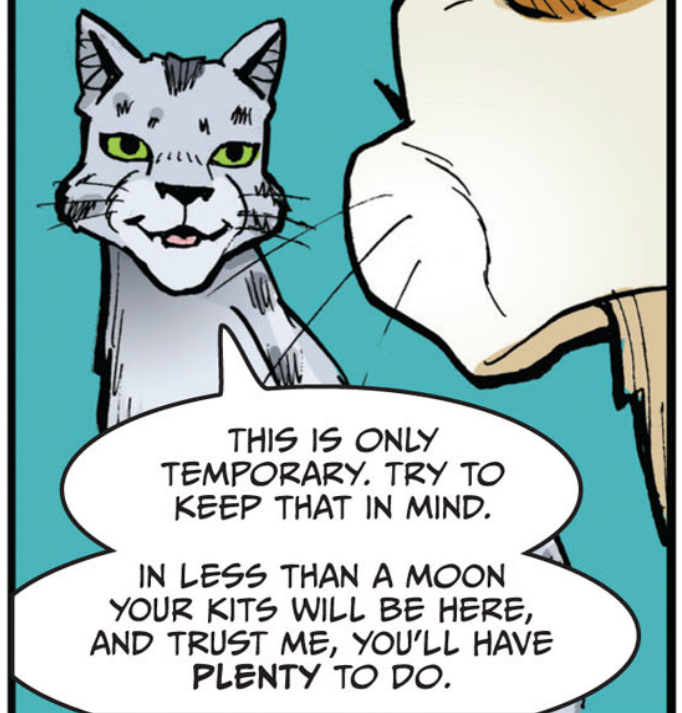
WHEN BLUESTAR WANTED ME
TO RETIRE TO THE ELDER'S DEN.



BRIGHTHEART...
YOU LOOK LIKE
YOU'VE GOT ANTS IN
YOUR FUR.

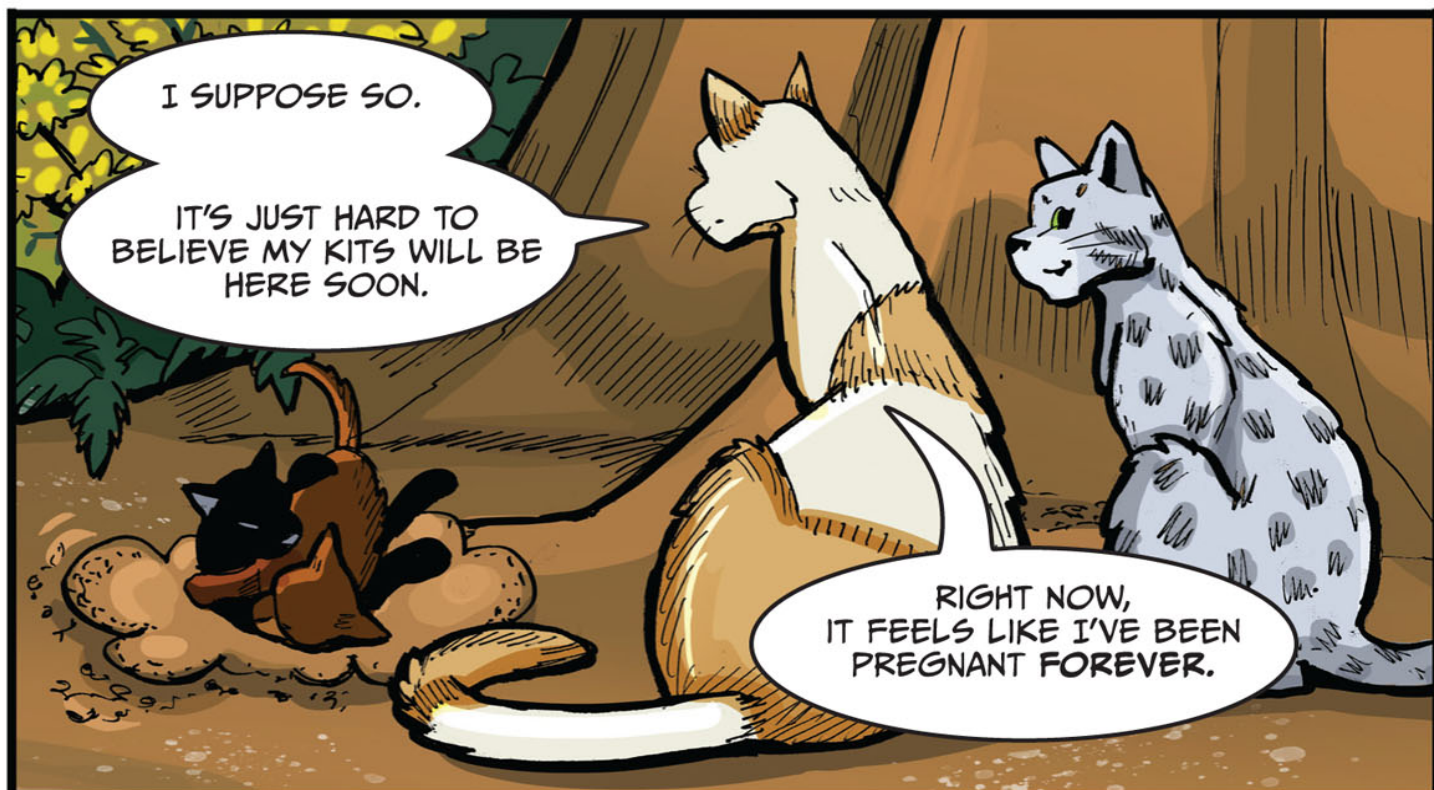
YSIGHK

I JUST HATE
BEING FORCED TO
STAY IN CAMP.



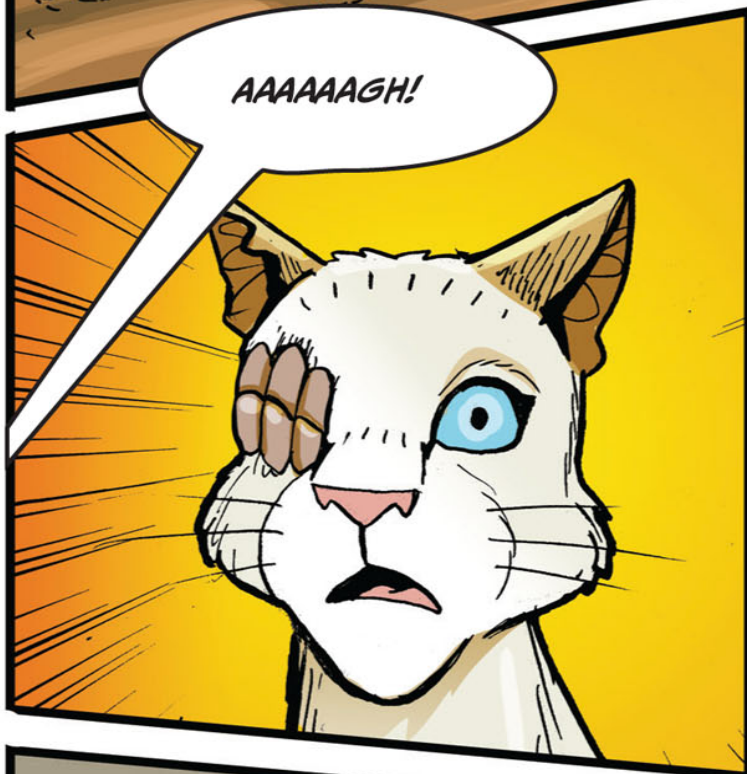
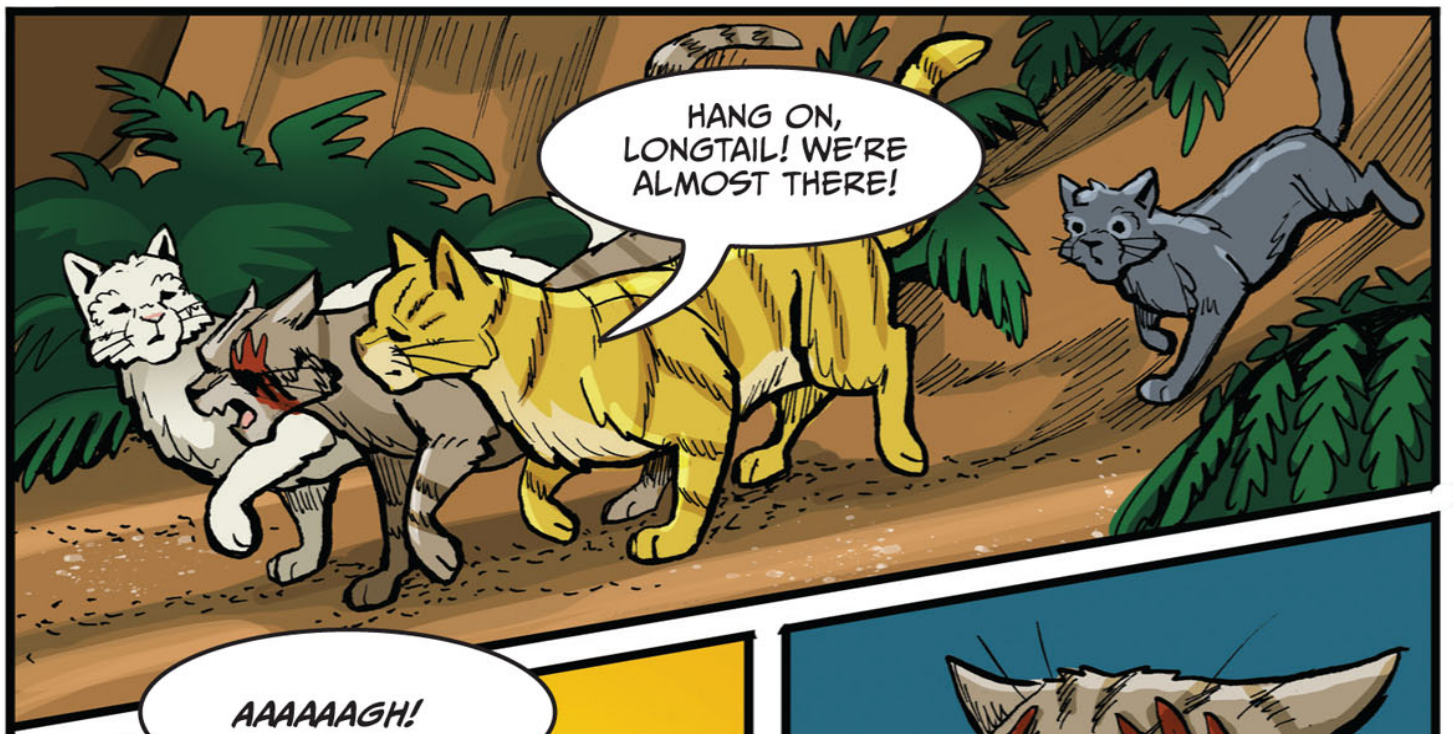
THIS IS ONLY
TEMPORARY. TRY TO
KEEP THAT IN MIND.

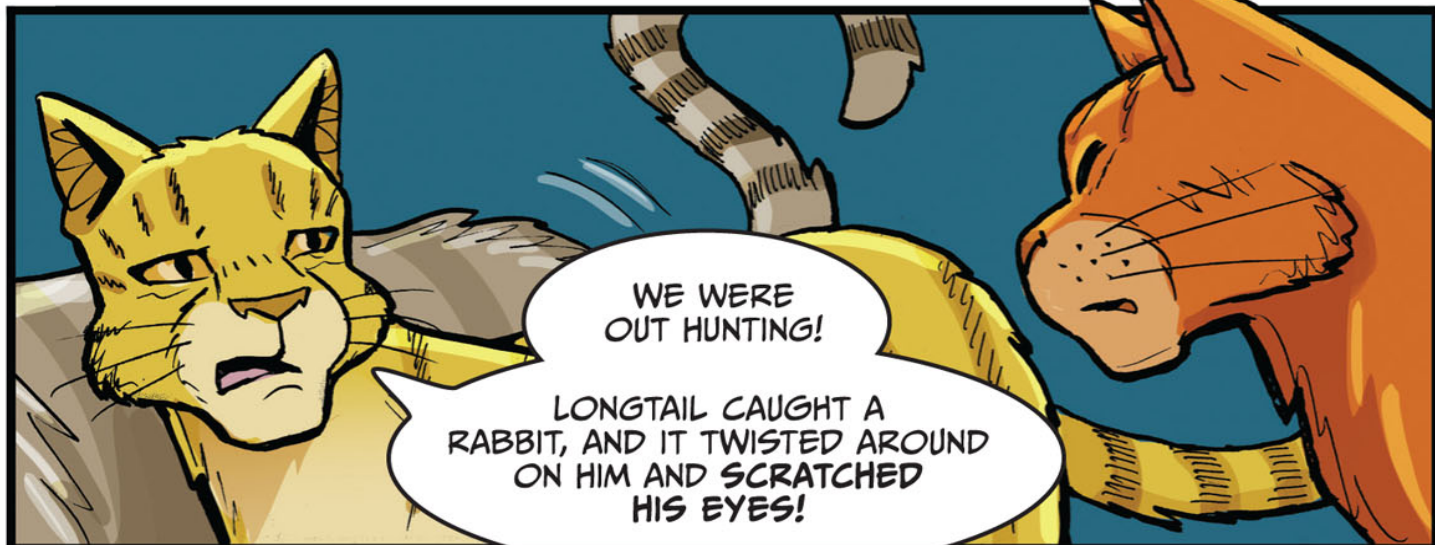
IN LESS THAN A MOON
YOUR KITS WILL BE HERE,
AND TRUST ME, YOU'LL HAVE
PLENTY TO DO.

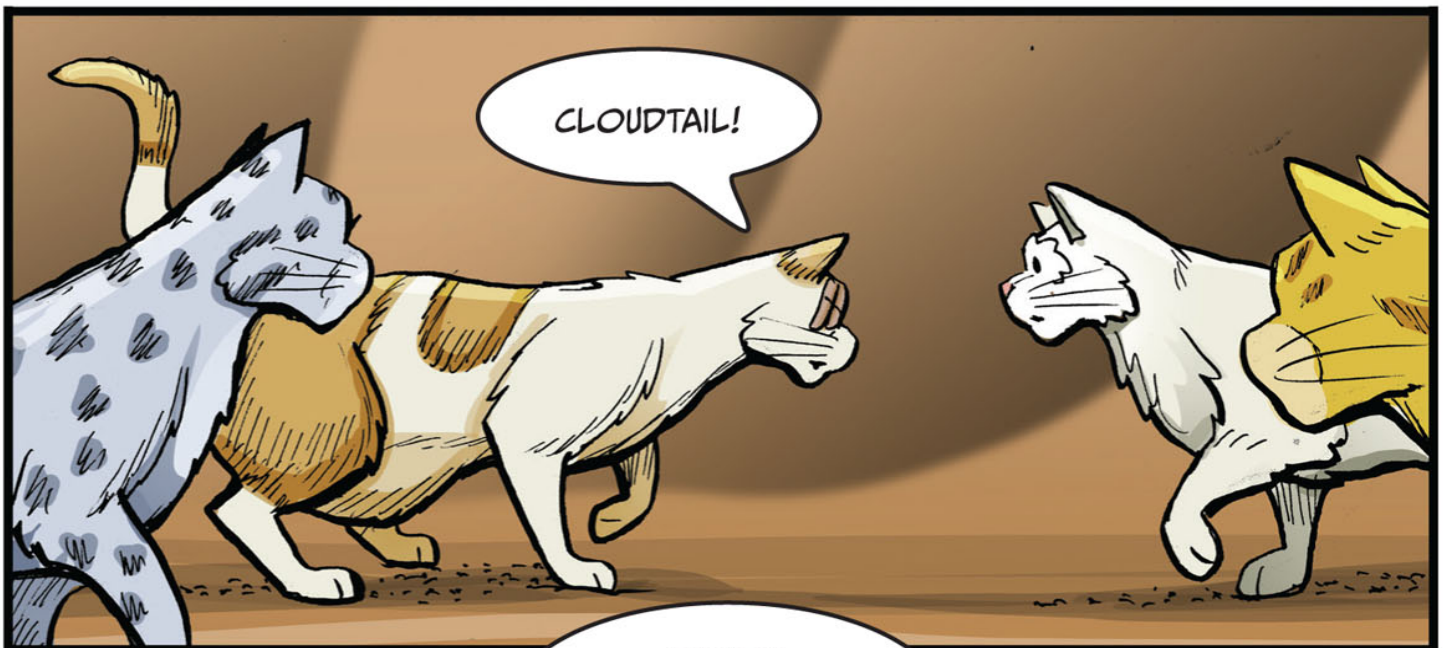
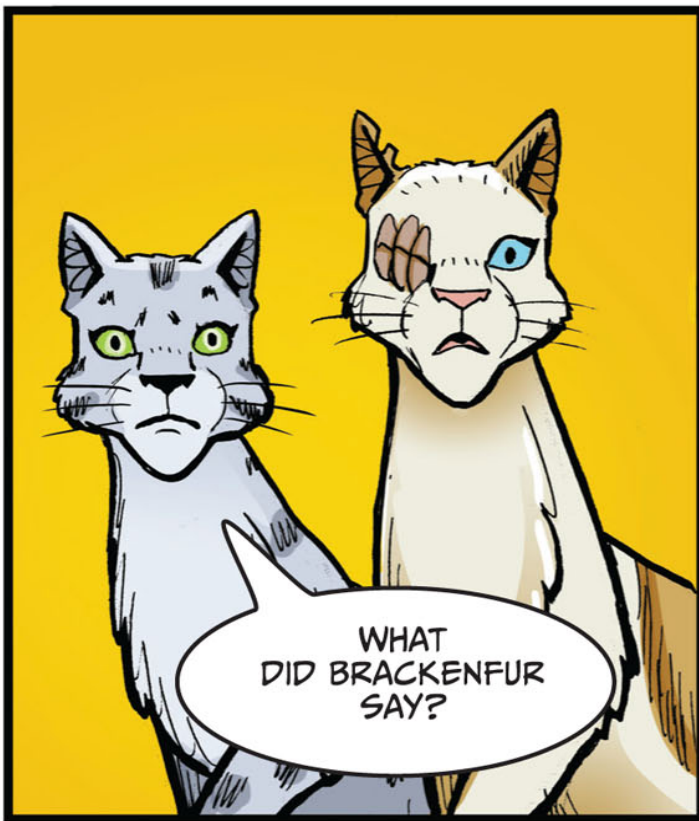




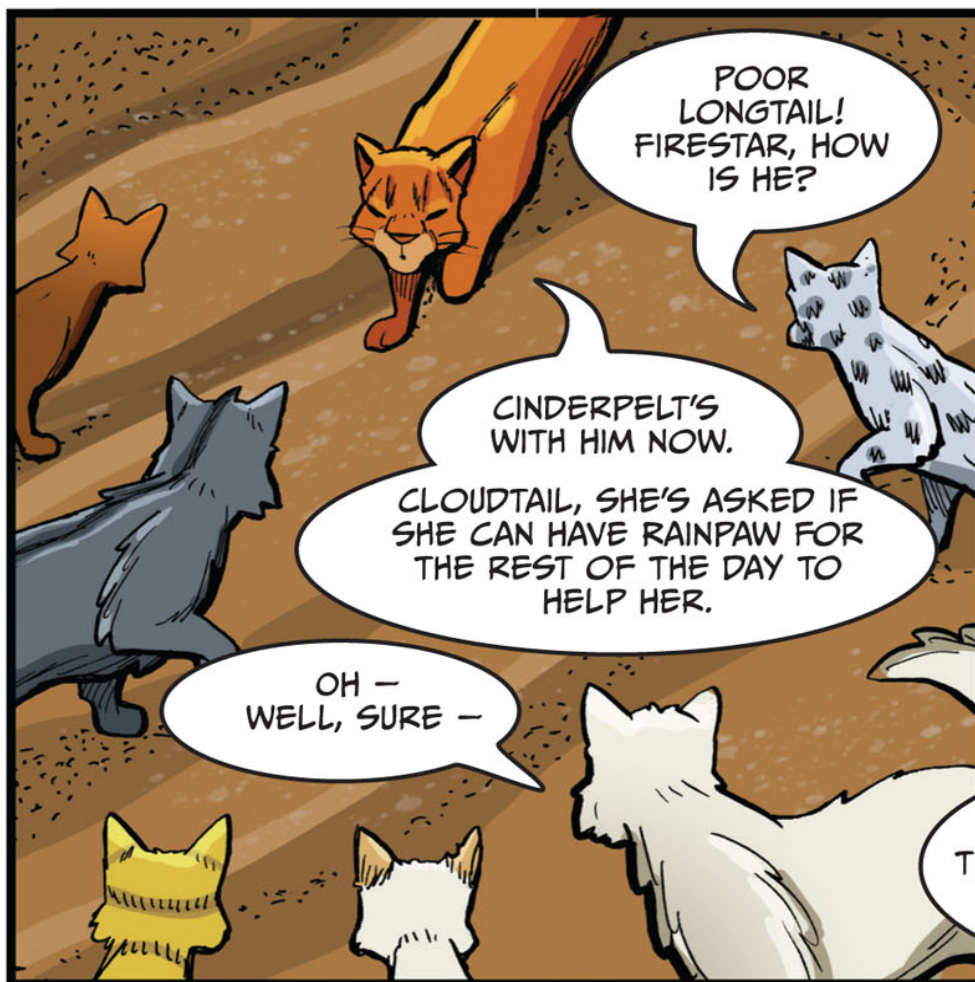
AAAAGH MY EYES!











POOR
LONGTAIL!
FIRESTAR, HOW
IS HE?

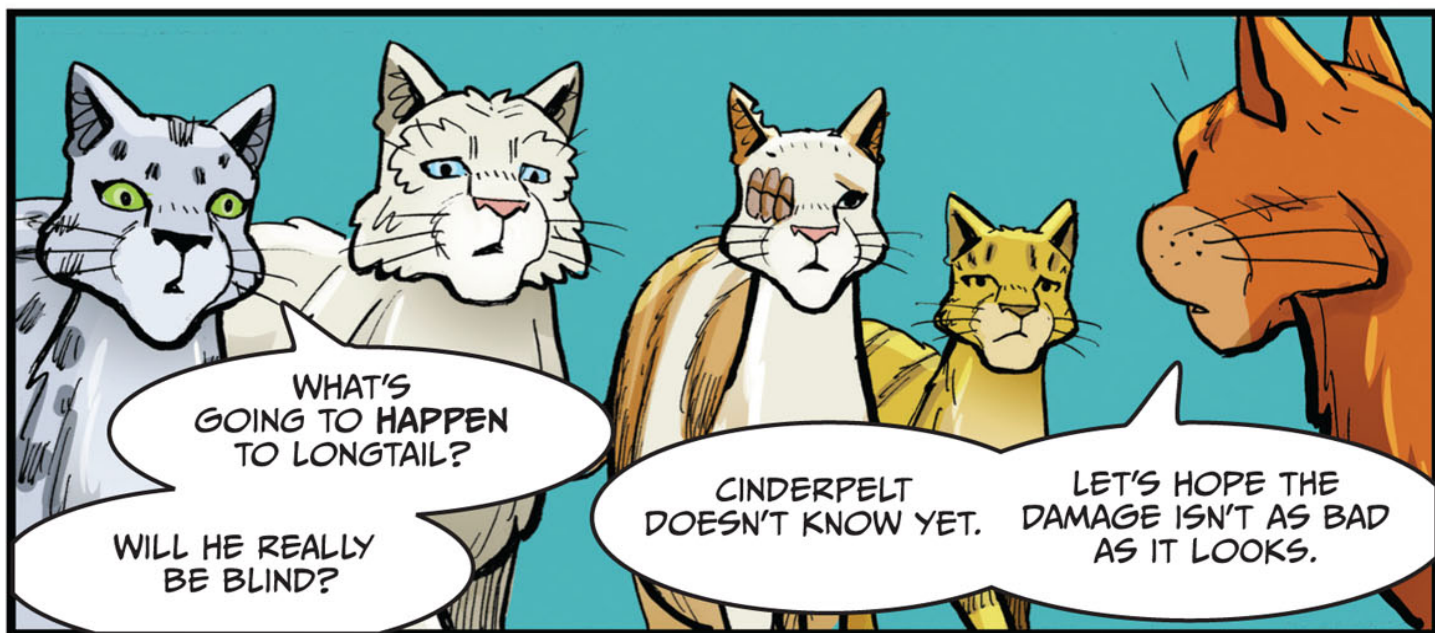
CINDERPELT'S
WITH HIM NOW.

CLOUDTAIL, SHE'S ASKED IF
SHE CAN HAVE RAINPAW FOR
THE REST OF THE DAY TO
HELP HER.

OH —
WELL, SURE —



IT'S GOOD
TRAINING FOR RAINPAW,
ANYWAY.



WHAT'S
GOING TO HAPPEN
TO LONGTAIL?

WILL HE REALLY
BE BLIND?

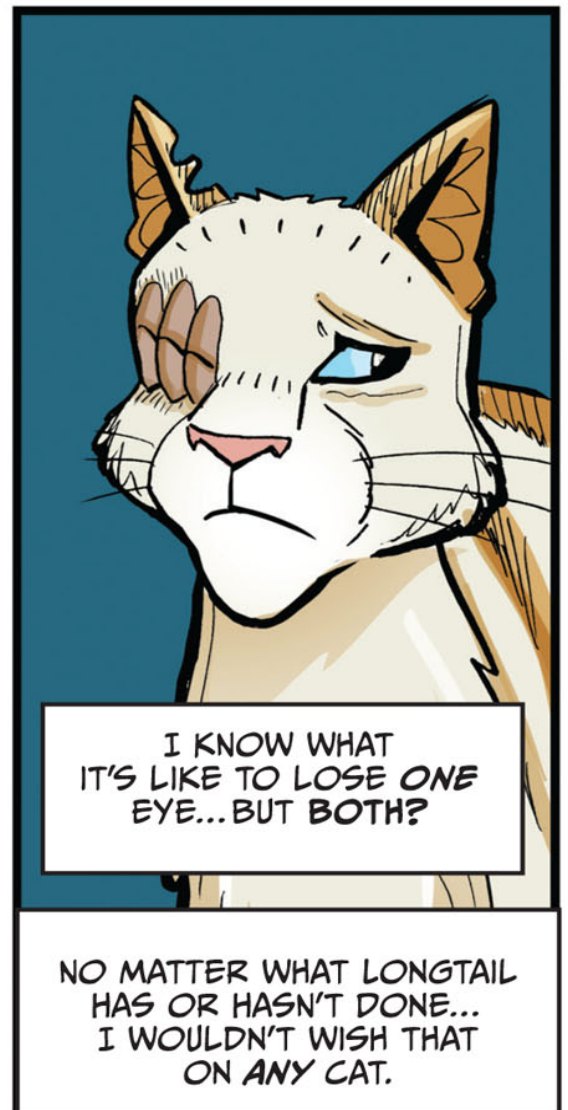
CINDERPELT
DOESN'T KNOW YET.

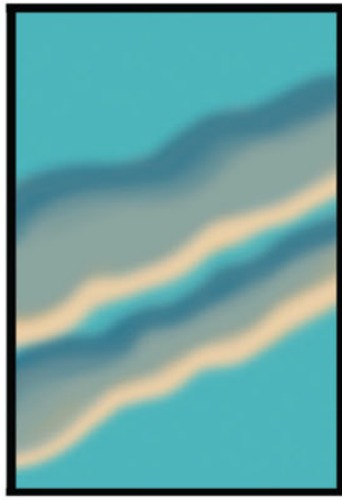
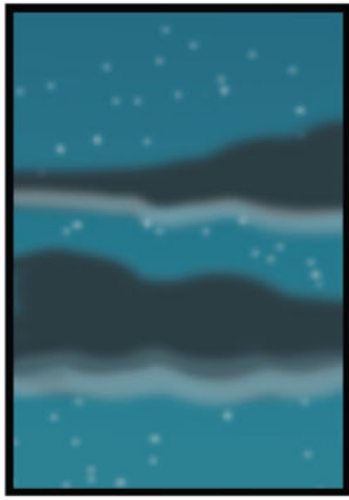
LET'S HOPE THE
DAMAGE ISN'T AS BAD
AS IT LOOKS.



I GUESS
I WAS LUCKY.

AT LEAST
I'VE STILL GOT
ONE EYE.







STARCLAN...
I HOPE YOU CAN
HEAR ME.



CINDERPELT'S
STILL LOOKING AFTER
LONGTAIL...



...AND HE STILL
CAN'T SEE.



SHE'S WORRIED
THE RABBIT'S CLAWS
WERE DIRTY...



...AND THAT
LONGTAIL'S EYES MIGHT
BE INFECTED.



SHE TRIES TO
BE POSITIVE, BUT I KNOW
MY SISTER.

I CAN TELL
SHE'S LOSING HOPE OF
LONGTAIL EVER SEEING
AGAIN.



I FEEL
TERRIBLE FOR
HIM.



BUT AT THE SAME TIME,
I CAN'T HELP NOTICING THAT NO
PREY HAS DISAPPEARED LATE
AT NIGHT.







MOST OF THE CLAN
WENT TO THE GATHERING.
LEFT ME HERE WITH A
FEW OTHERS.



YEAH, WELL.
I'M LEFT
BEHIND, TOO.

SHE WON'T
COME OUT AND SAY IT, BUT
CINDERPELT'S AFRAID I'M...
I'M BLIND. FOR GOOD.

HOW'S A BLIND
CAT SUPPOSED TO FIND HIS
WAY TO A GATHERING?

RIGHT THEN,
IT HITS ME.

MAYBE IT'S THE SOUND OF
HIS VOICE. MAYBE IT'S THE
WAY HE'S TREMBLING, JUST
A TINY LITTLE BIT.

BUT I **RECOGNIZE** THIS.
IT'S WHERE I WAS, AFTER
THE DOG TORE MY FACE.



I'VE SPENT SO MUCH TIME BEING
SUSPICIOUS OF HIM...BUT NOW I
LOOK AT LONGTAIL, AND IT'S HARD
TO SEE ANYTHING BUT...MYSELF.



IT'S TOO SOON TO
GIVE UP HOPE. YOU'RE
A WARRIOR. WARRIORS
ARE STRONG.

BUT EVEN IF —

EVEN IF YOU DON'T
SEE AGAIN. YOU'LL STILL
LEARN TO FIND YOUR WAY
AROUND.



BE REALISTIC.

WHAT GOOD WILL I BE TO THUNDERCLAN IF I CAN'T SEE?




NOT LIKE YOU LEARNED TO AFTER THE DOG ATTACK.

I WON'T BE ABLE TO MENTOR SOOTPAW ANYMORE, EITHER. HE'LL END UP GETTING ASSIGNED TO SOME OTHER CAT.



AT FIRST I THOUGHT I NEVER WOULD.



IT'S TRUE — YOU'RE FACING
SOME HARD WORK. I HAD A LOT
OF PAINFUL TIME WHILE I WAS
HEALING...

AND THEN I HAD TO
LEARN TO COMPENSATE FOR
THE MISSING EYE WHILE HUNTING
AND FIGHTING.

AND SOMETIMES
I STILL HAVE TO **DEPEND**
ON OTHER CATS IN A HUNT OR
A FIGHT.


MAYBE YOU'LL
REGAIN ENOUGH SIGHT
TO GET BACK TO THE WAY
YOU WERE.

BUT EVEN IF YOU
DON'T, I KNOW YOU'LL FIGURE
OUT HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO
THE CLAN.

MAYBE YOU'LL BE
ABLE TO FIND HERBS BY
SCENT, AND HELP
CINDERPELT.




OR TAKE CARE OF
KITS. OR SHARE WHAT YOU
KNOW WITH APPRENTICES.



ALL I'VE EVER
WANTED WAS JUST TO
BE THE BEST WARRIOR
I COULD.

AND YOU CAN
STILL DO THAT! NO MATTER
WHAT HAPPENS.



BRIGHTHEART...
I KNOW YOU THOUGHT
I WAS STEALING PREY AND
GIVING IT TO CATS IN
OTHER CLANS.

BUT I REALLY
WASN'T.

I WOULDN'T
DO THAT. EVER.



I BELIEVE
YOU.

THANKS.

SO IT'S NOT LONGTAIL
MAKING OFF WITH OUR
FRESH-KILL.

BUT THAT MEANS
THE *PREY THIEF* IS STILL OUT
THERE. SOMEWHERE.

AND I'VE
GOT TO FIGURE
OUT WHO IT IS.

GONE —
ALL OF IT!

WHAT CAT
COULD'VE TAKEN
THE ENTIRE PILE?

WHO — OR WHAT —
COULD'VE LEFT THESE
GOUGES?

WAS THERE SOME
KIND OF ATTACK?



IT ONLY TAKES A FEW
HEARTBEATS FOR THE CAMP
TO GO FROM MOSTLY EMPTY
TO CROWDED AGAIN.



CLOUDTAIL!



WE NEED
TO TALK.

UH — OKAY?



WHAT'S
UP?

YOU'RE
LOOKING MORE
BEAUTIFUL THAN
EVER TONIGHT, BY
THE WAY.



NO TIME
FOR SWEET TALK,
I'M AFRAID.

I MEAN —
THANK YOU, THAT'S
NICE TO HEAR —

BUT
WE'VE GOT A
PROBLEM.



YOU SEE THOSE
GOUGES, RIGHT?
I'M NOT IMAGINING
THEM?

OF COURSE
I SEE THEM. BUT
WHAT COULD'VE
DONE THIS?

WELL, THAT'S THE
QUESTION, ISN'T IT? A
VERY ANGRY CAT? OR
WAS IT A CAT AT ALL?



IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN
LONGTAIL, AND IT COULDN'T
HAVE BEEN BRAMBLECLAW
EITHER...

...BECAUSE
HE WAS AT THE
GATHERING WITH
YOU.



UH...HMM.

MAYBE WE CAN
GET A SCENT OFF
THE MARKS?



ARE YOU
GETTING ANYTHING
FROM ANY OTHER
CLAN?

NOT EVEN A
LITTLE.



WHAT IF...

...WHAT IF IT
WASN'T A CAT AT ALL?
WOULD A **BADGER**
LEAVE MARKS LIKE
THIS?

I DON'T KNOW.
BUT WE'D DEFINITELY
SMELL A BADGER IN
OUR CAMP.

TRUE.



GREAT. THAT
MEANS IT HAS TO BE
A THUNDERCLAN CAT.

MAYBE...
ONE OF THE ELDERS?
OR A CAT LEFT BEHIND
TO GUARD THE CAMP?



OR COULD A CAT
HAVE SNUCK BACK EARLY
FROM THE GATHERING AND
SOMEHOW GOTTEN PAST
DUSTPELT?



I'LL ADMIT,
I WASN'T PAYING
ATTENTION TO EVERY
CAT TONIGHT.

I GUESS
SOME CAT COULD'VE
LEFT WITHOUT ME
NOTICING.

MAYBE FIRESTAR'S
BEEN LOOKING INTO
IT, TOO — WE SHOULD
ASK HIM IF HE'S FOUND
ANYTHING.



I WISH
WE COULD.

HUH?

FIRESTAR DIDN'T
COME BACK WITH
THE CLAN.

HE WENT TO
THE MOONSTONE TO
ASK STARCLAN FOR
ADVICE.



ADVICE ABOUT
WHAT? WOULD HE BE
ASKING STARCLAN ABOUT
THE MISSING FRESH-KILL?

IT'S NOT *THAT*
SERIOUS, IS IT?

THE WHOLE
TRIP IS POINTLESS, IF
YOU ASK ME.

IT'S NOT LIKE A ROCK IS
ACTUALLY GOING TO TELL
HIM ANYTHING.



IF YOU SAY SO.
I SAY WE WAIT TILL
FIRESTAR GETS
BACK.

I DON'T WANT TO GO
FLINGING ACCUSATIONS
AROUND WITHOUT ANY
PROOF.

YEAH —
THAT MAKES
SENSE.



THERE'S NOTHING?

HOW MANY CATS DID WE LEAVE BEHIND, ANYWAY? THEY ATE *EVERYTHING*?



THEY OUGHT TO GO JOIN... I DON'T KNOW. *GREEDYCLAN*, MAYBE.



YOU THREE CAN GO ON A HUNTING PATROL FIRST THING IN THE MORNING, IF YOU'RE SO WORRIED ABOUT WHAT YOUR CLANMATES ARE EATING.

NO POINT IN COMPLAINING ABOUT IT.



I'D SAY THERE'S **SOME** POINT IN COMPLAINING ABOUT IT!


WE CAN REFILL THE PILE NOW, BUT WHAT IF CATS ARE STILL GORGING THEMSELVES WHEN LEAF-BARE COMES?



WE NEED TO **SHARE** OUR PREY IF WE'RE GOING TO SURVIVE!



FIRESTAR ISN'T BACK
BY THE NEXT NIGHT.




YOU REALIZE HE'S
JUST BARELY HAD TIME
TO *GET* TO THE MOONPOOL
BY NOW...?

I KNOW,
I KNOW.

AND SITTING UP
LOOKING FOR HIM
WON'T BRING HIM BACK
ANY FASTER.

I JUST FEEL
SO IMPATIENT.



I THOUGHT THE NEXT NIGHT
WAS GOING TO BE THE SAME
STORY. UNTIL —



THERE HE
IS!

FIRESTAR'S
BACK!



FIRESTAR!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YOU LOOK EXHAUSTED.
DO YOU NEED FOOD?
WATER?



I AM
EXHAUSTED,
BUT THANK YOU,
NO.



RIGHT NOW
I JUST NEED
TO TALK TO
LONGTAIL.

LONGTAIL?



FIRESTAR —

WHAT'S
GOING ON?



I'M SORRY,
GRAYSTRIPE, BUT I
HAVE TO GET SOME
SLEEP.

WE'LL DISCUSS
THINGS ONCE I'VE
RESTED A BIT.



COME ON,
WE CAN CATCH
HIM!

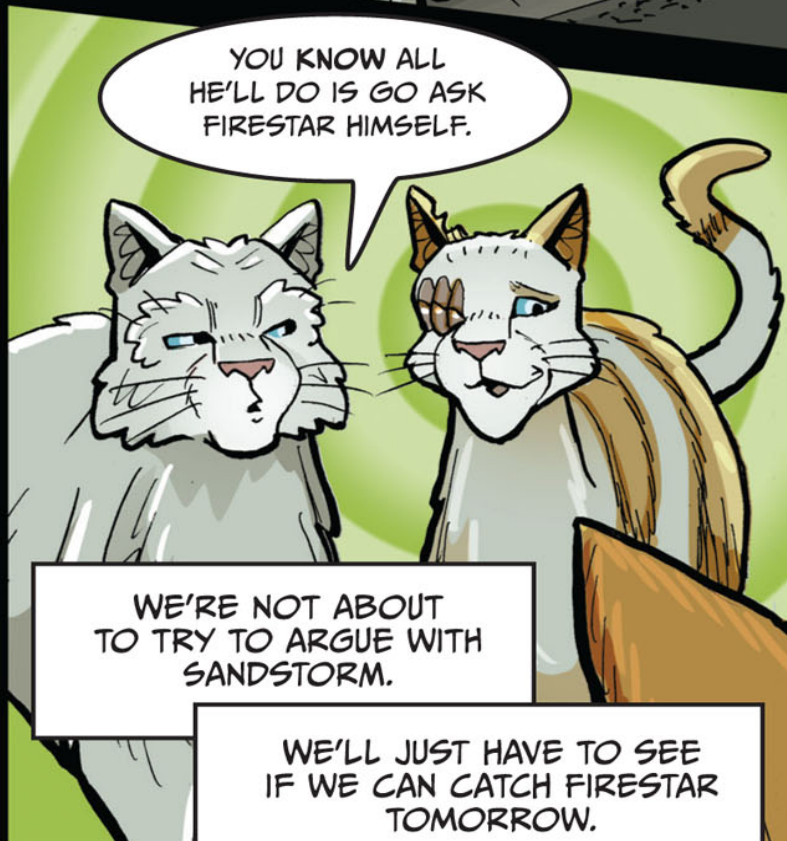


STOP RIGHT
THERE.

BUT —

NO. NO NO NO.
FIRESTAR SAID HE
WAS EXHAUSTED, AND THAT
HE NEEDS SLEEP. WHICH IS
EXACTLY WHAT HE'S
GOING TO GET.

IF THERE'S A
PROBLEM, YOU CAN
TALK TO GRAYSTRIPE.
THAT'S WHAT A DEPUTY'S
FOR.



YOU KNOW ALL
HE'LL DO IS GO ASK
FIRESTAR HIMSELF.

WE'RE NOT ABOUT
TO TRY TO ARGUE WITH
SANDSTORM.

WE'LL JUST HAVE TO SEE
IF WE CAN CATCH FIRESTAR
TOMORROW.



WHY DID HE WANT TO TALK
TO LONGTAIL, THOUGH?
IF IT'S ABOUT THE MISSING
PREY...

...MAYBE FIRESTAR
DID FIND SOMETHING
OUT?

WHILE WE'RE WAITING FOR HIM TO WAKE UP, THOUGH...

...I MIGHT AS WELL KEEP TRYING TO FIGURE THIS OUT ON MY OWN.

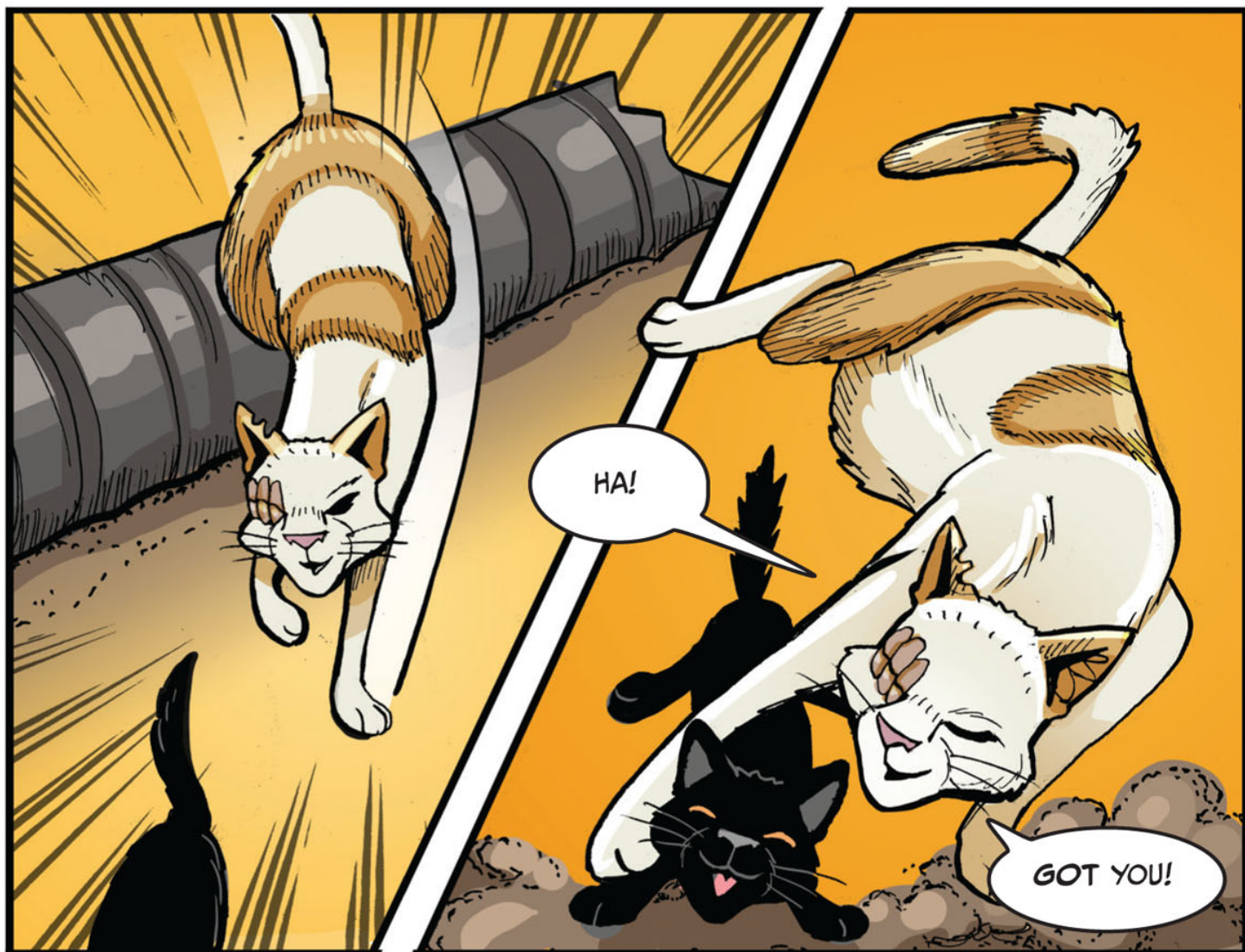
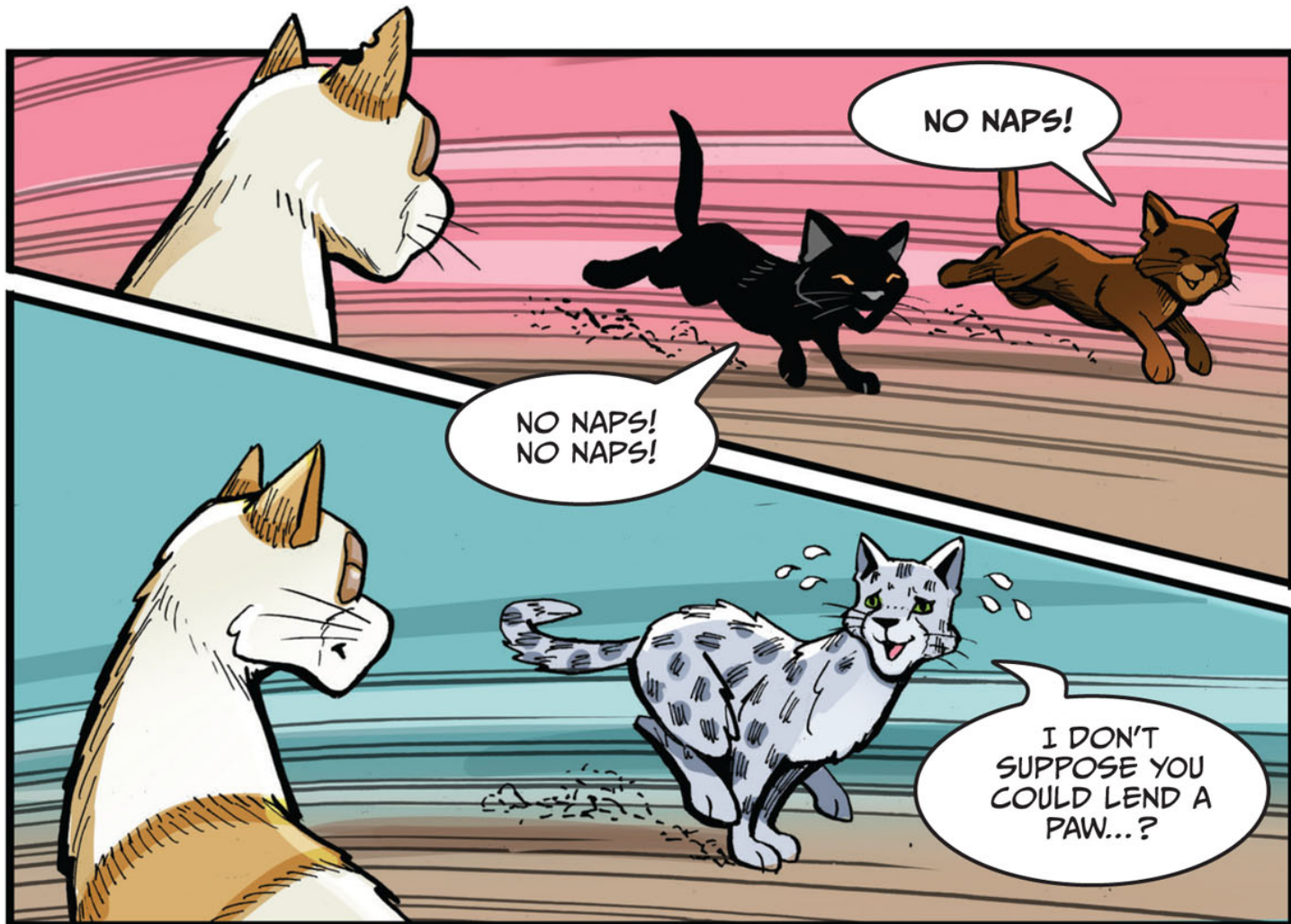
CINDERPELT WOULD PROBABLY SAY, "IF YOU CAN'T TALK TO FIRESTAR ABOUT IT, JUST TELL GRAYSTRIPE!" JUST LIKE SANDSTORM.

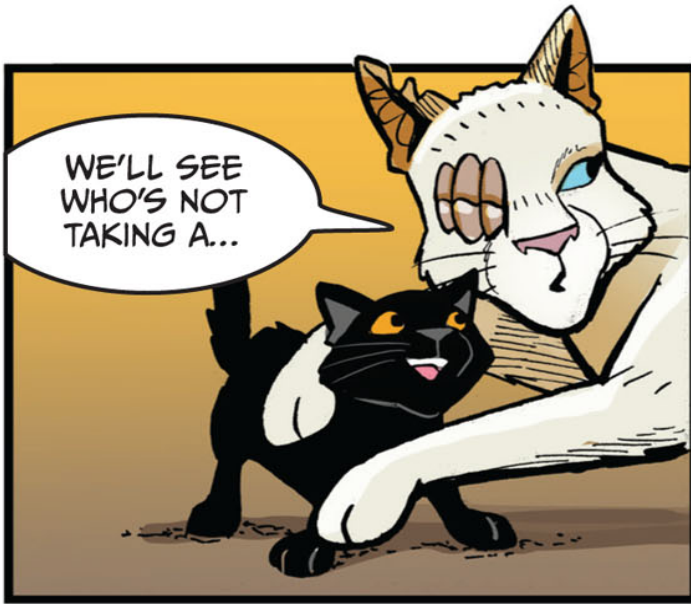
THE NEXT TIME I TALK TO FIRESTAR, I WANT TO HAVE SOME KIND OF PROOF.

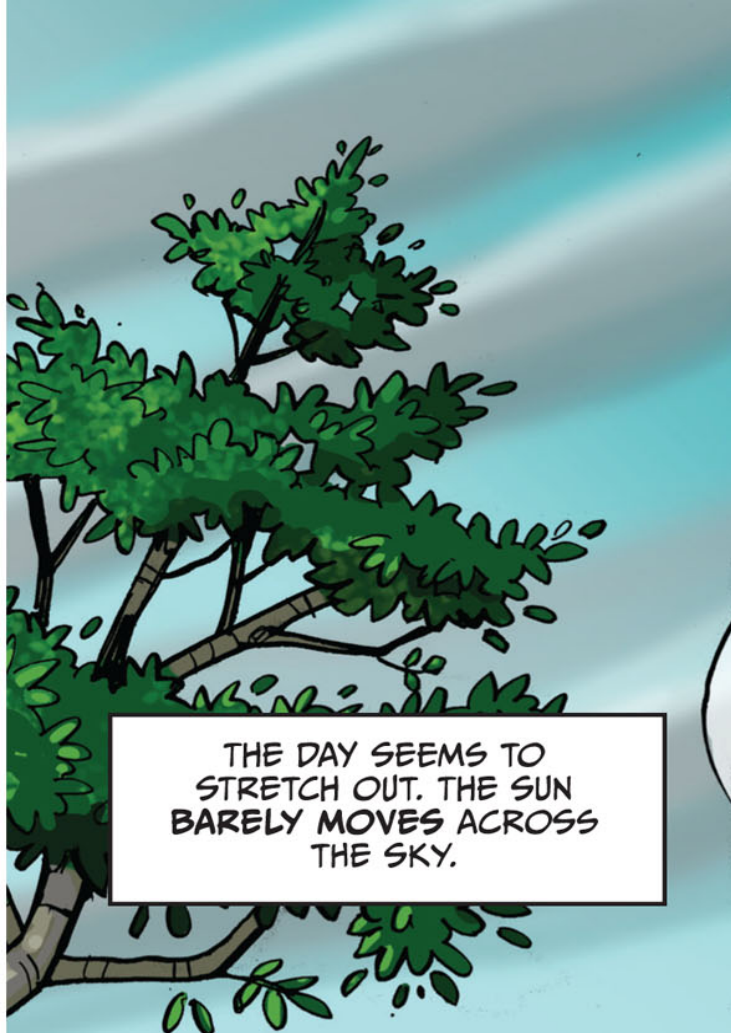
BUT I DON'T WANT TO BE THE CAT WHO BOTHERS THE WHOLE CLAN ABOUT A PROBLEM WITHOUT OFFERING ANY KIND OF *SOLUTION*.

IT'S NOT EMPTY THIS MORNING... BUT THERE'S A LOT LESS PREY HERE THAN THERE SHOULD BE.

SURELY SOME OF THESE MARKS ARE NEW?







THE DAY SEEMS TO
STRETCH OUT. THE SUN
BARELY MOVES ACROSS
THE SKY.



WAS I RIGHT
NOT TO TALK TO
GRAYSTRIPE?

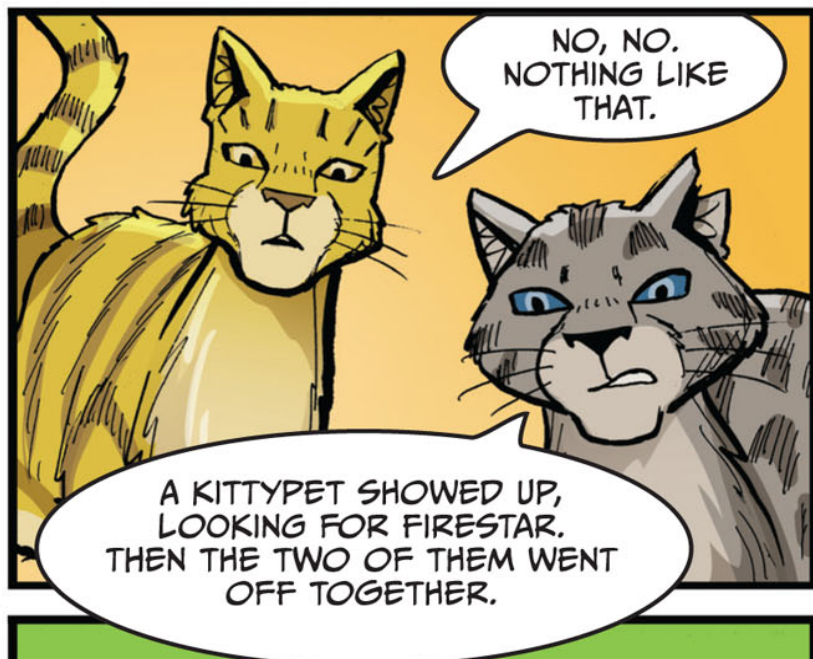
NOT THAT I EVEN COULD
RIGHT NOW —
HE'S OUT ON A PATROL, TOO.



HUH?

WHERE'S
FIRESTAR?







WELL THAT
DOESN'T MAKE
ANY SENSE.

HE WENT
OFF WITH A
KITTYPET?

WHY DOES HE
KEEP *LEAVING*?
WE NEED HIM HERE!



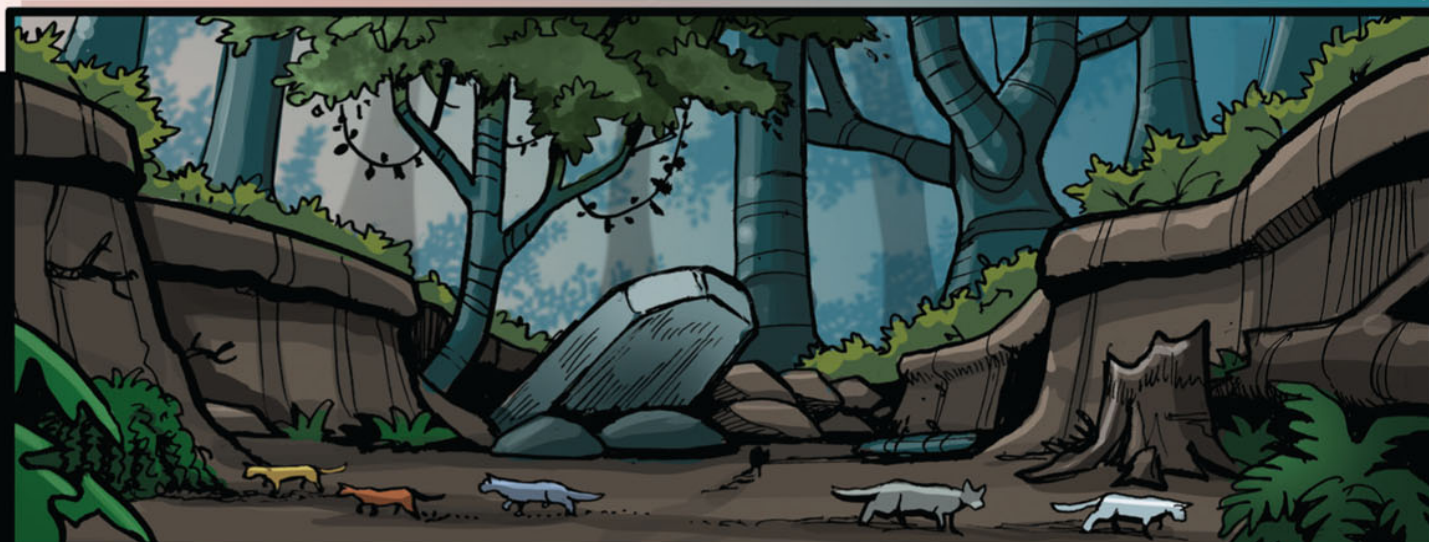
HEY!

FIRESTAR WILL
EXPLAIN WHEN HE
GETS BACK.

DON'T GET YOUR
WHISKERS IN A TWIST
ABOUT IT.

ANOTHER NIGHT
WITH NO FIRESTAR.

ANOTHER NIGHT WHEN THIS
MYSTERIOUS THIEF MIGHT STEAL
OUR FOOD, AND I STILL DON'T
HAVE ANY ANSWERS.





CAN I TELL YOU
SOMETHING?

YOU KNOW
YOU DON'T HAVE
TO ASK.



OKAY.

I'M... WELL...
I'M WORRIED.

FIRESTAR'S
BEEN ACTING
SO ODDLY.



ABOUT THAT —
DID BRAMBLECLAW
OR ASHFUR TELL YOU
WHAT THE KITTYPET
SAID TO FIRESTAR?

NO. BUT I, UH...
IT GAVE ME A THOUGHT.
I DON'T THINK YOU'LL
LIKE IT.

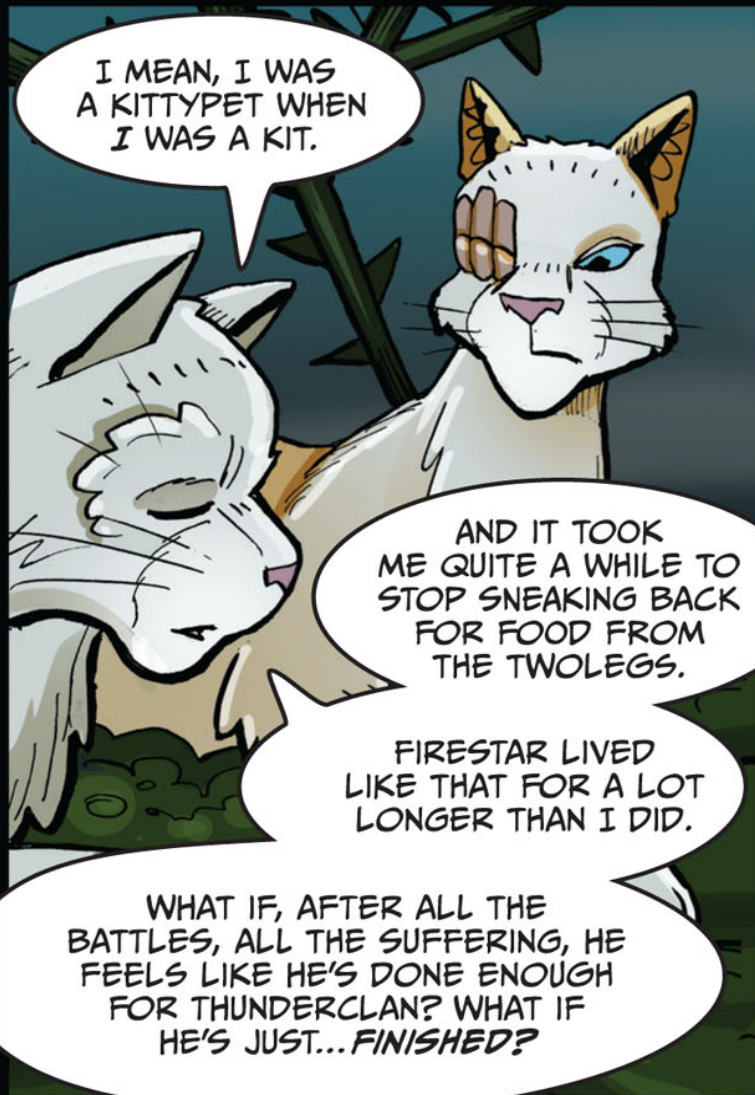
TELL ME
ANYWAY.



WHAT IF —
AND THIS IS A BIG
WHAT IF, I KNOW —
BUT LISTEN.

FIRESTAR USED
TO BE A KITTYPET HIMSELF.
AND, ALSO, LEADING A CLAN
IS DIFFICULT.

WHAT IF HE'S
THINKING ABOUT GOING
BACK? IT'S A SOFT LIFE. IT
HAS TO BE TEMPTING.





OKAY, BUT —
WHAT IF?

GRAYSTRIPE
ISN'T READY TO BE
THE CLAN LEADER. IT'S
NOT THAT LONG SINCE
HE WAS A RIVERCLAN
CAT.

WE NEED A STRONG
LEADER LIKE FIRESTAR, ONE
THE OTHER CLANS RESPECT,
TO KEEP THUNDERCLAN
SAFE.

WHAT IF OUR KITS ARE
BORN IN A CLAN THAT ISN'T
STRONG? WE'VE SEEN WHAT
CAN HAPPEN.



SORRY.
I'M...

I'M JUST
SCARED.

THAT'S ALL.



OH, CLOUDTAIL...

...IT'S ALL
RIGHT.



I'LL KEEP
YOU SAFE.

WITH YOUR
GREAT BIG ROUND
BELLY?

EXACTLY.
MY GREAT BIG ROUND
BELLY AND I WILL KEEP
YOU SAFE.

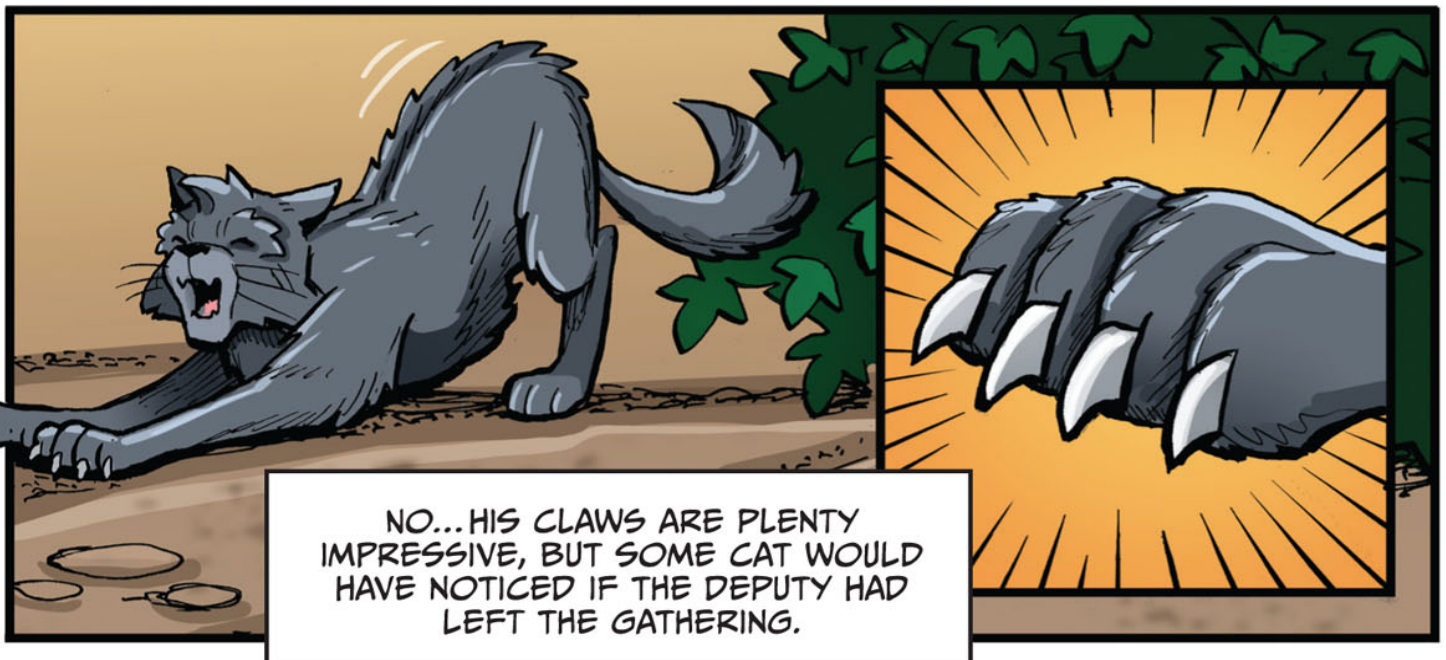
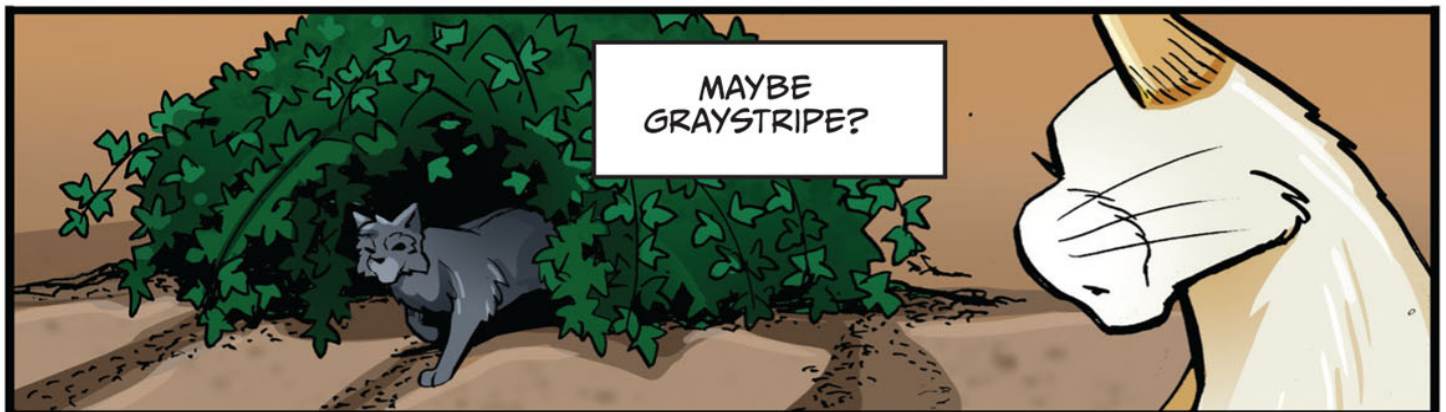
I FEEL
SAFER ALREADY.

IT'S CHILLY THE
NEXT MORNING.

AND NOT JUST
BECAUSE FIRESTAR
STILL ISN'T BACK YET.

I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* MY
MOTHER WAS TALKING ABOUT,
WITH ALL HER "BEST SLEEP
EVER" WHILE SHE WAS
PREGNANT.

I CAN BARELY BREATHE WHEN
I LIE DOWN, AND I SPEND HALF
MY NIGHT *MAKING TRIPS* TO
THE DIRTPLACE.





WHO ELSE
COULD IT BE?



WHO MIGHT HAVE
GIANT CLAWS THAT I'VE
NEVER NOTICED?

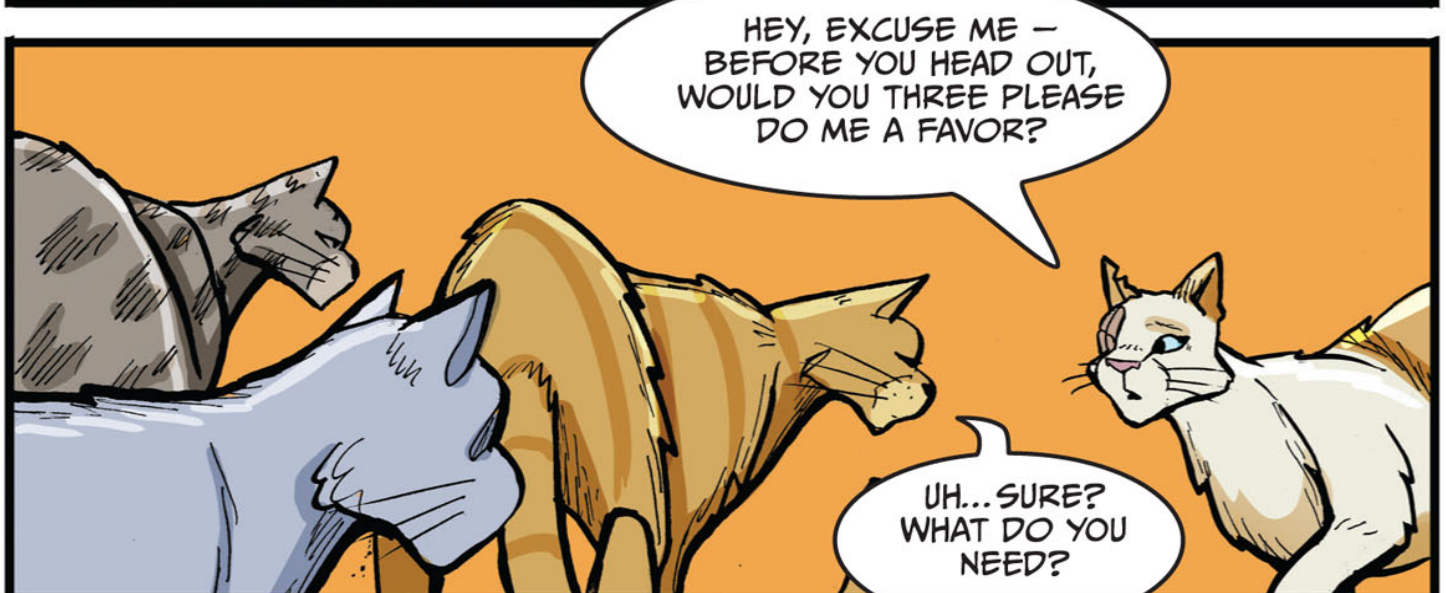


CAN'T TELL WHAT ANY
CAT'S CLAWS LOOK LIKE
WHEN THEY'RE ASLEEP.



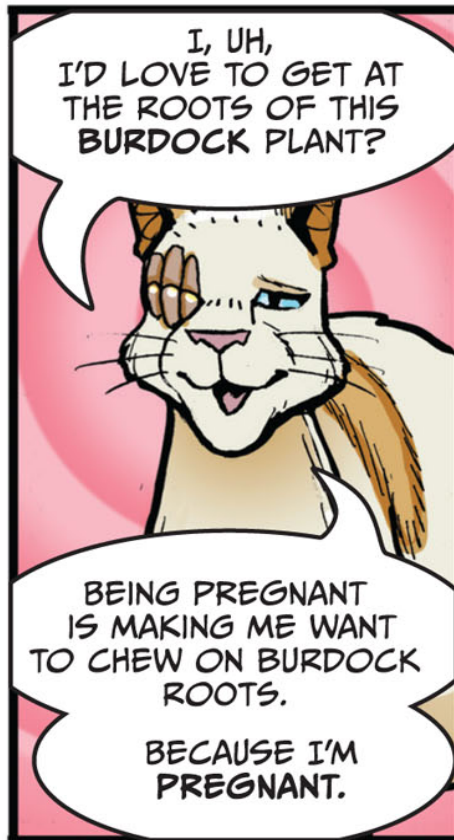
THIS WAS A MOUSE-
BRAINED IDEA.







WELL, I WAS
HOPING I COULD
GET YOU TO **SCRATCH**
AT THE DIRT IN THIS
ONE SPOT AT THE
EDGE OF THE CAMP
FOR ME.



I, UH,
I'D LOVE TO GET AT
THE ROOTS OF THIS
BURDOCK PLANT?

BEING PREGNANT
IS MAKING ME WANT
TO CHEW ON BURDOCK
ROOTS.

BECAUSE I'M
PREGNANT.



AND, WELL, MY,
UH...MY CLAWS
AREN'T LONG
ENOUGH.

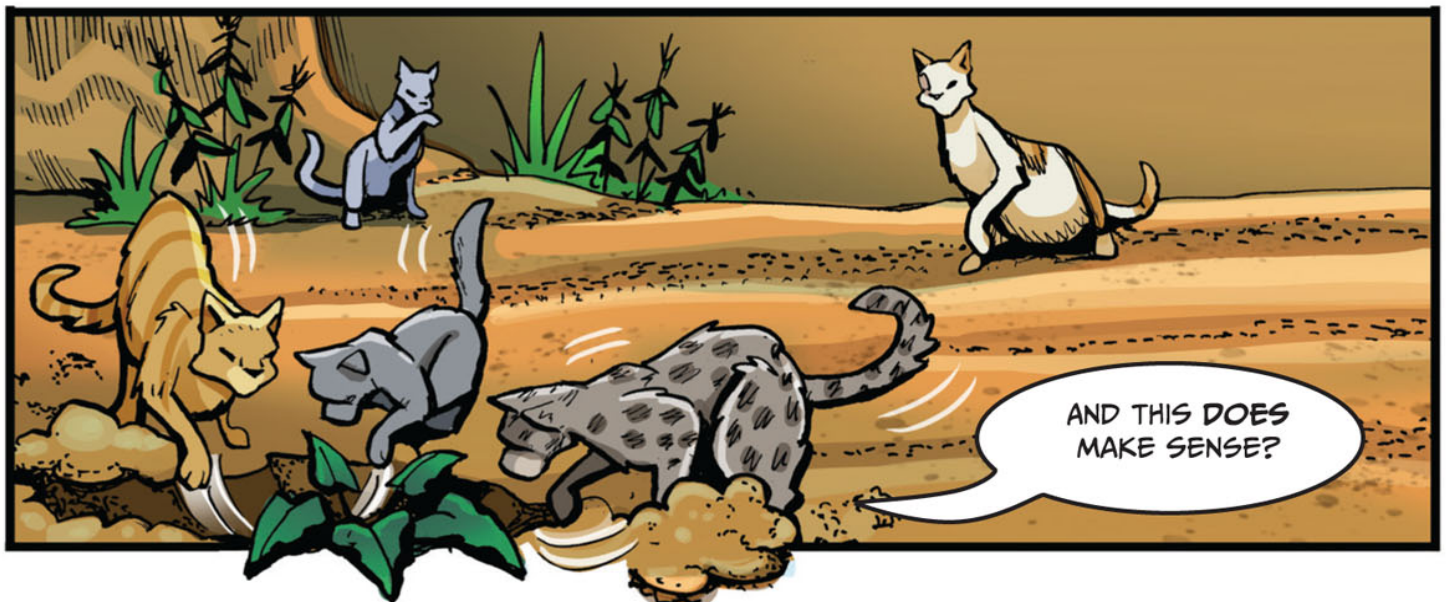


MINE
AREN'T EITHER,
BRIGHTHEART.

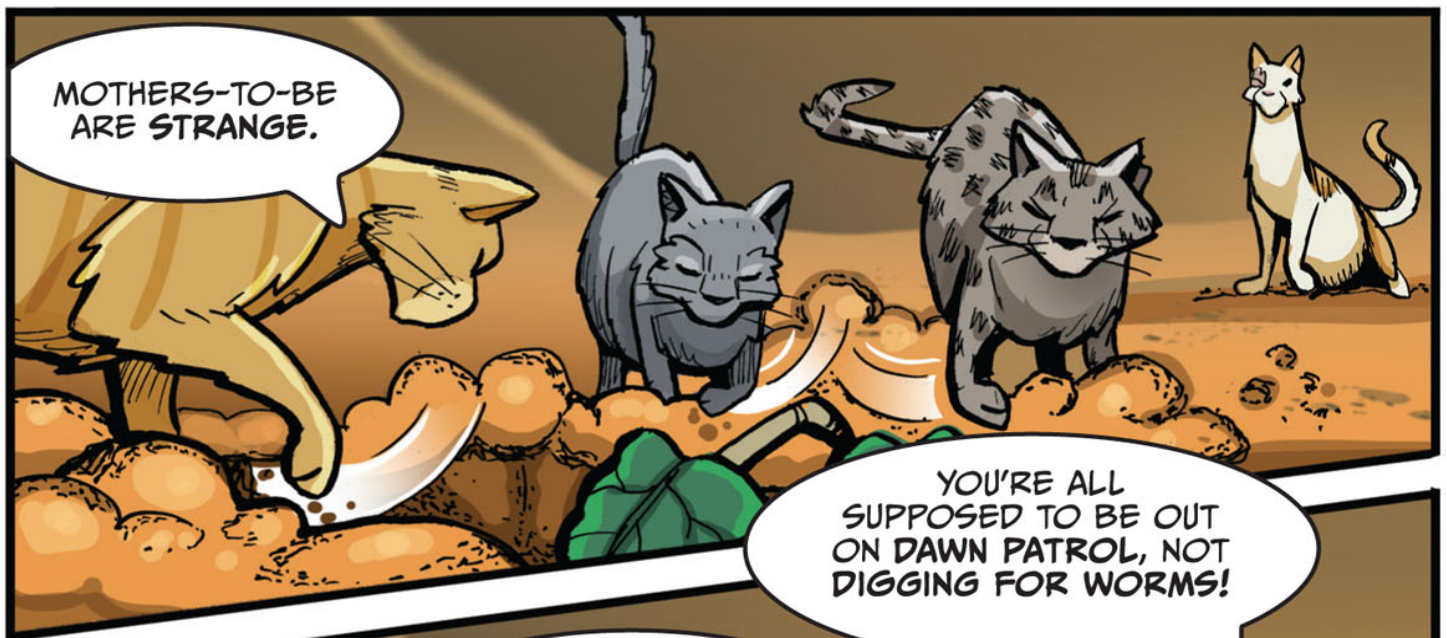
OH, W-WELL,
THEN, I COULDN'T
ASK YOU TO DO ANY
DIGGING, THEN.

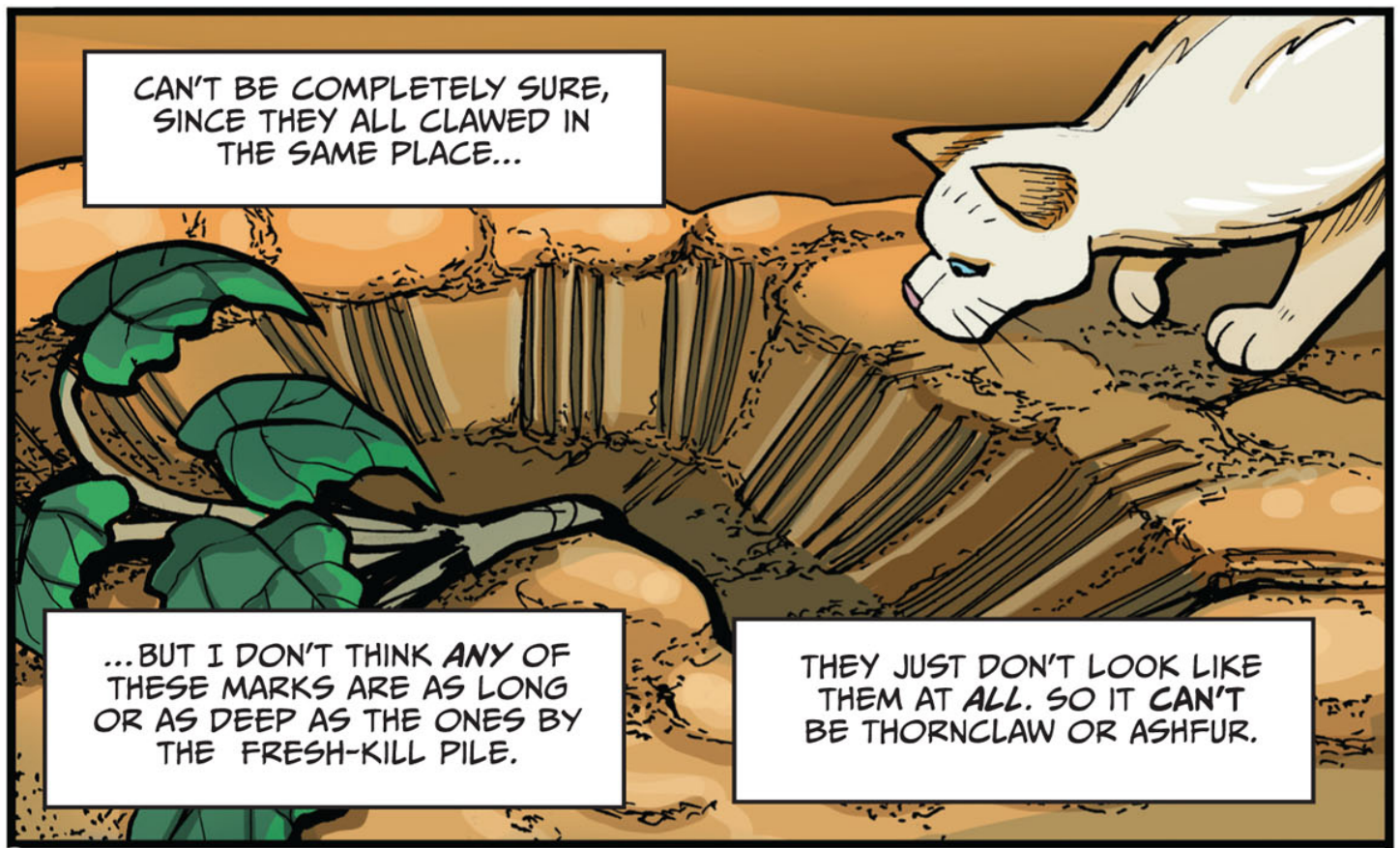
BECAUSE THAT
WOULDN'T MAKE
SENSE.

...



AND THIS DOES
MAKE SENSE?





CAN'T BE COMPLETELY SURE,
SINCE THEY ALL CLAWED IN
THE SAME PLACE...

...BUT I DON'T THINK **ANY** OF
THESE MARKS ARE AS LONG
OR AS DEEP AS THE ONES BY
THE FRESH-KILL PILE.

THEY JUST DON'T LOOK LIKE
THEM AT **ALL**. SO IT **CAN'T**
BE THORNCLAW OR ASHFUR.



MAYBE
WILLOWPELT?

ARE HER CLAWS
TRULY SHORT, OR DID
SHE JUST SAY THAT
BECAUSE SHE KNEW
WHAT I WAS TRYING
TO DO?



WHAT'S THIS?



YOU'RE
BRINGING ME
GIFTS?



THAT DEPENDS.
CAN YOU USE BURDOCK
ROOT?

WELL, SURE —
I CAN PUT IT ON
WOUNDS TO PREVENT
INFECTION.



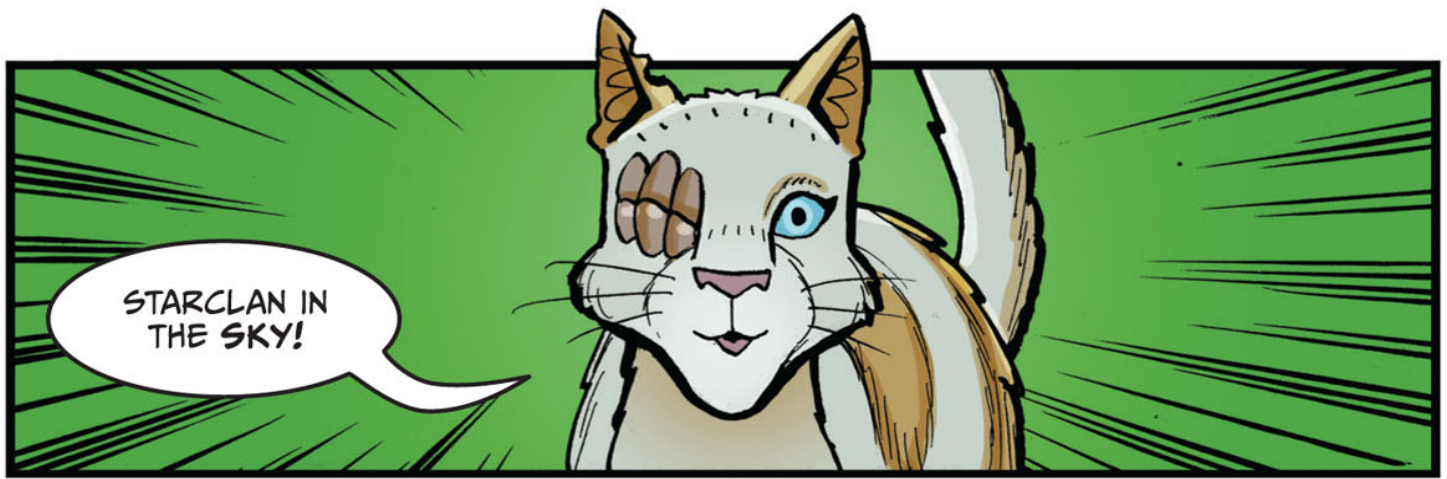
LET ME PUT IT WITH
THE REST. OH, AND THANKS.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO SEEM
UNGRATEFUL.

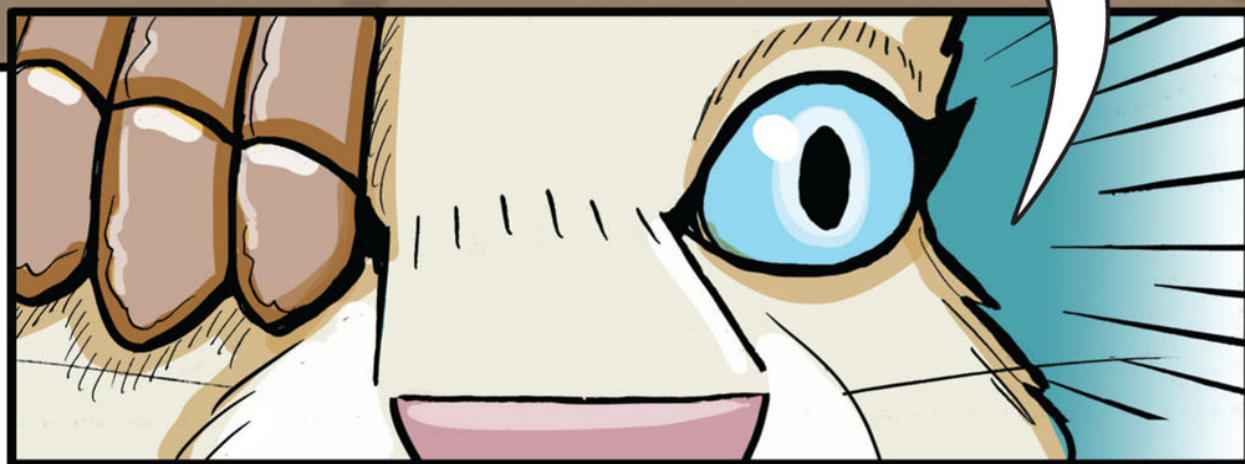


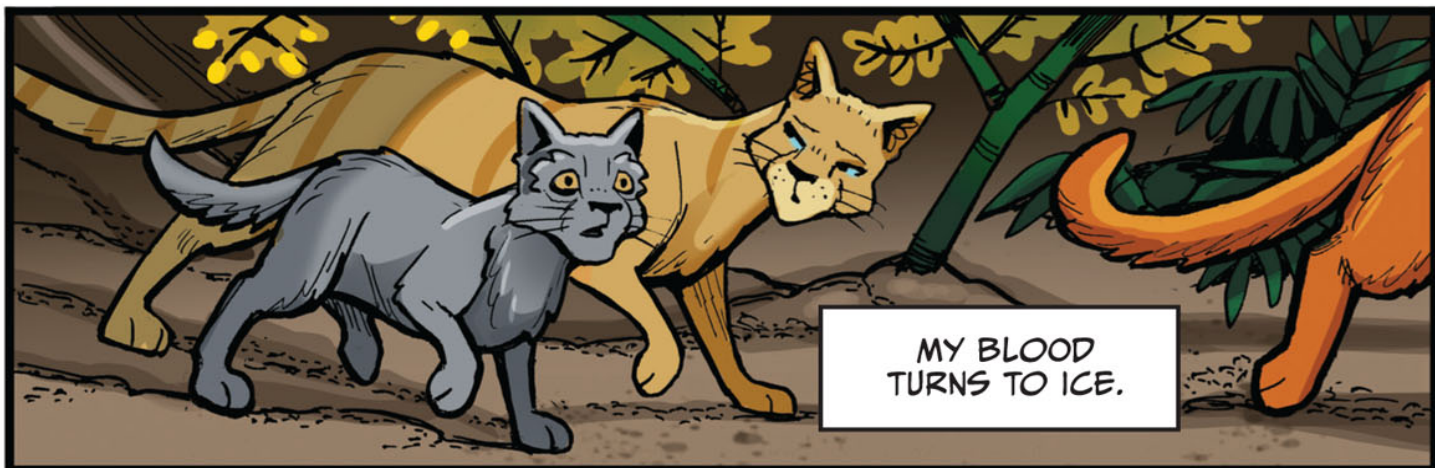
AM I
MISTAKEN...

...OR IS
SOME CAT
BEING USEFUL IN
HERE?









MY BLOOD
TURNS TO ICE.



I SEE THE SAME SHOCK
AND PAIN AND CONFUSION
INSIDE ME ON EVERY
THUNDERCLAN CAT'S FACE.

HOW COULD
THIS HAPPEN?

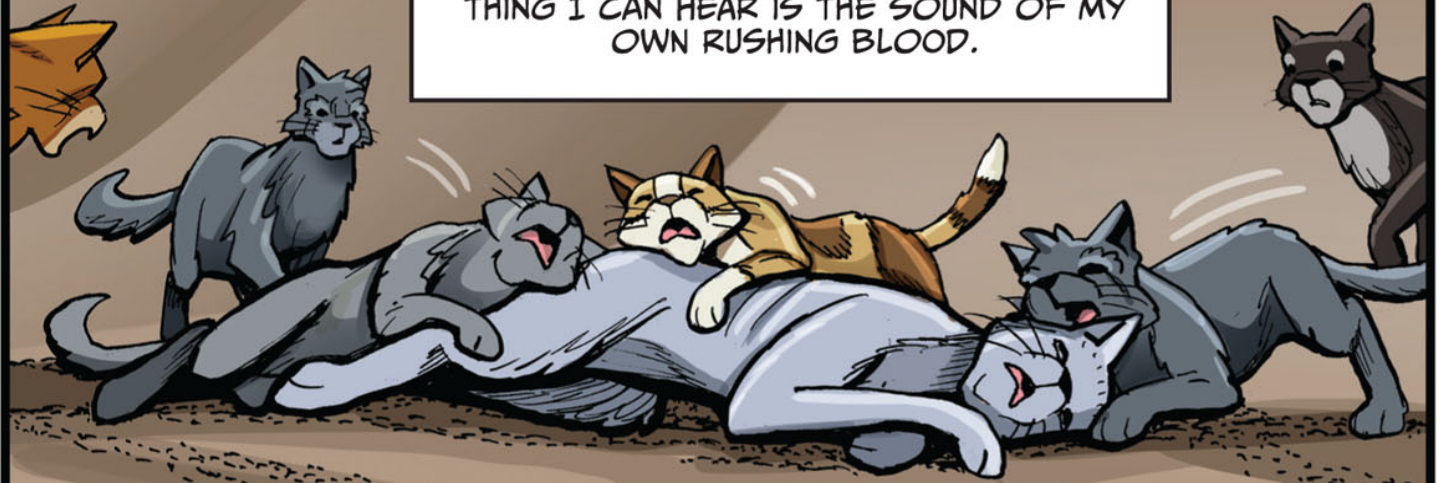


WHAT COULD HAVE
TAKEN THOSE PRECIOUS KITS'
MOTHER AWAY LIKE THIS?



I CAN BARELY MOVE.
MY LEGS DON'T WANT
TO CARRY ME.

THE CRIES OF GRIEF AND HORROR
ECHO ALL AROUND ME, BUT THE ONLY
THING I CAN HEAR IS THE SOUND OF MY
OWN RUSHING BLOOD.



CAN FIRESTAR MAKE
THIS MAKE SENSE?



CATS OF
THUNDERCLAN...

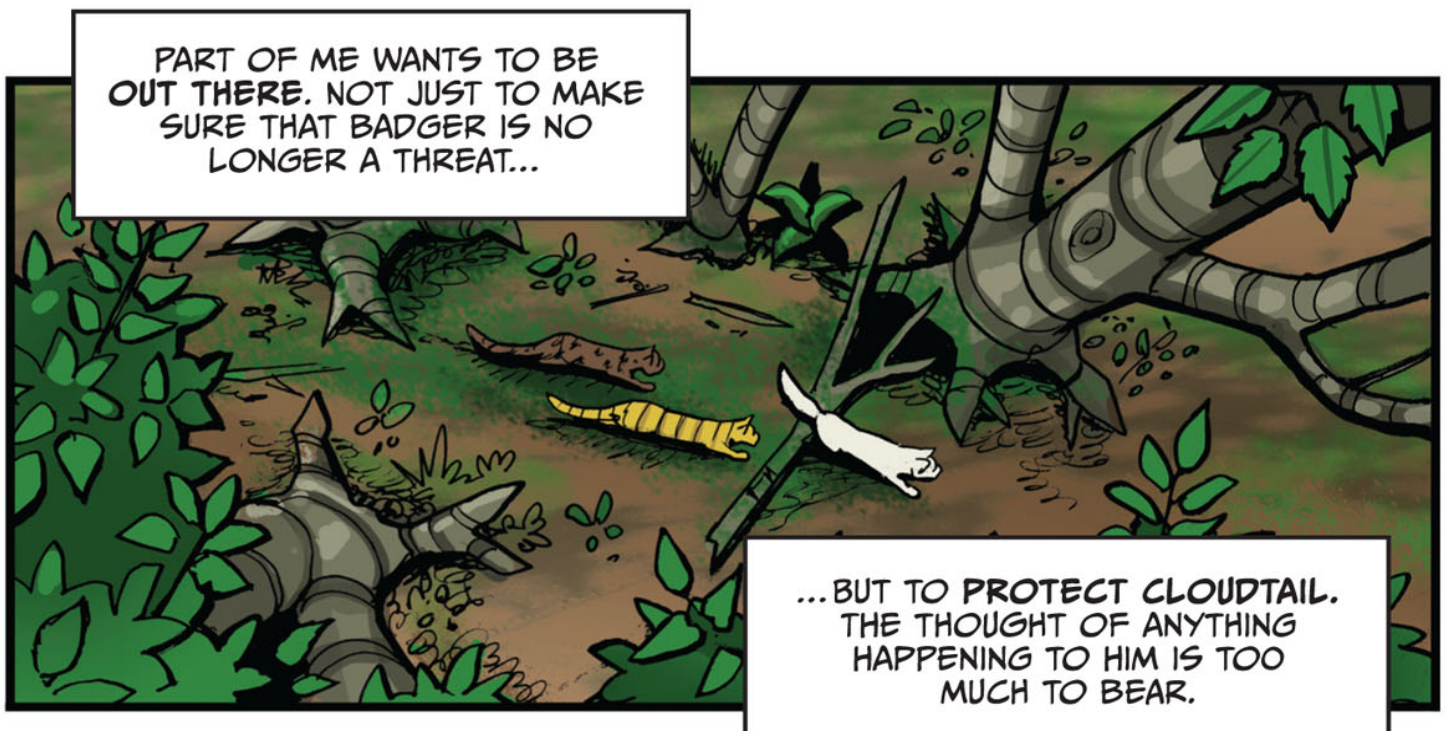
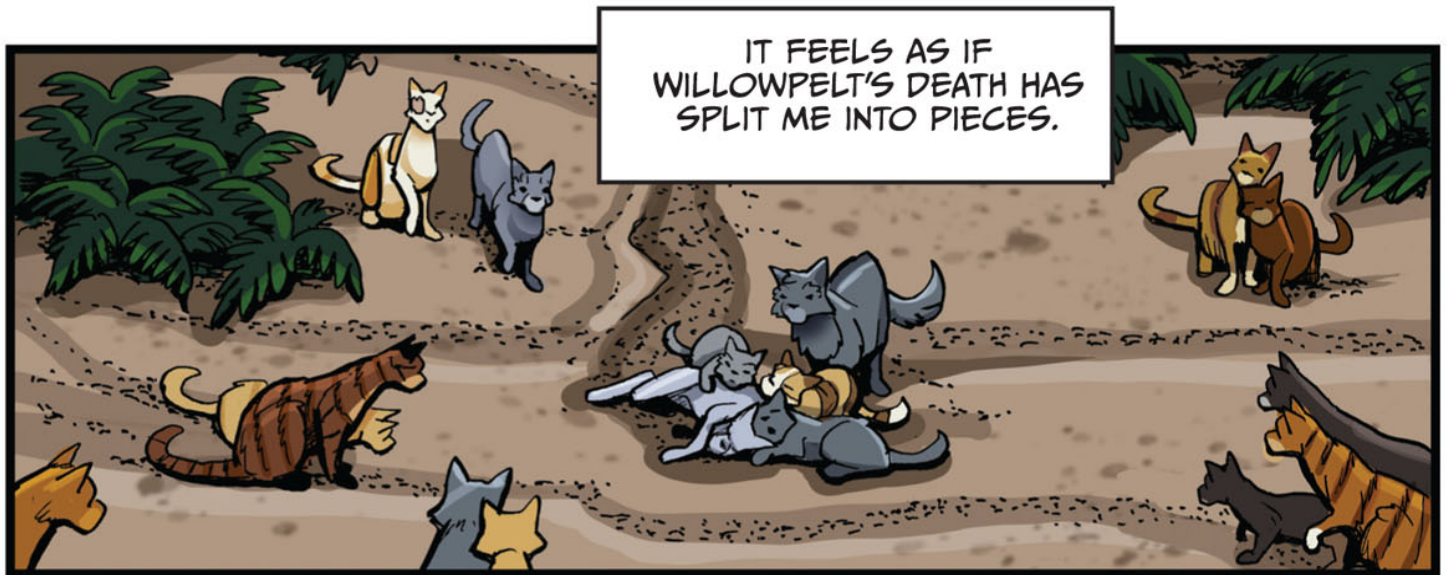
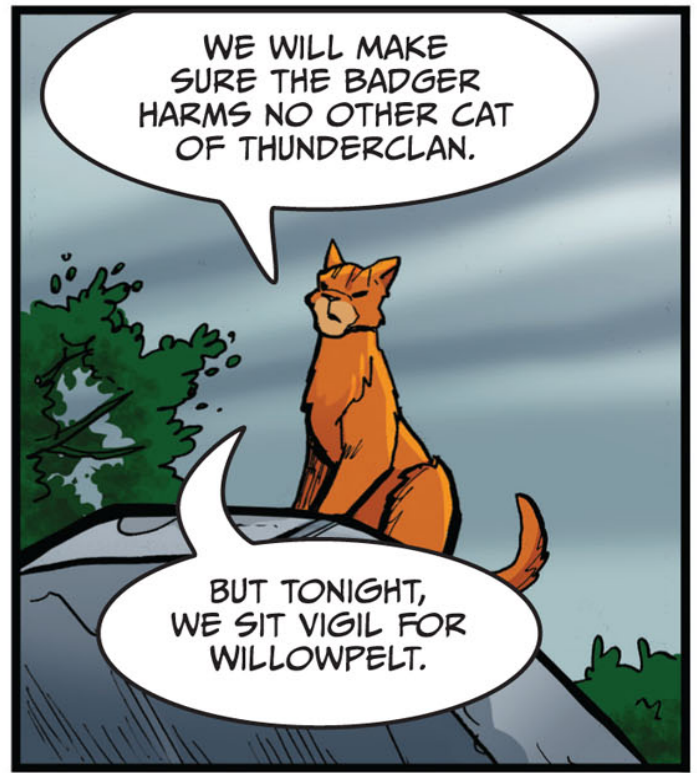
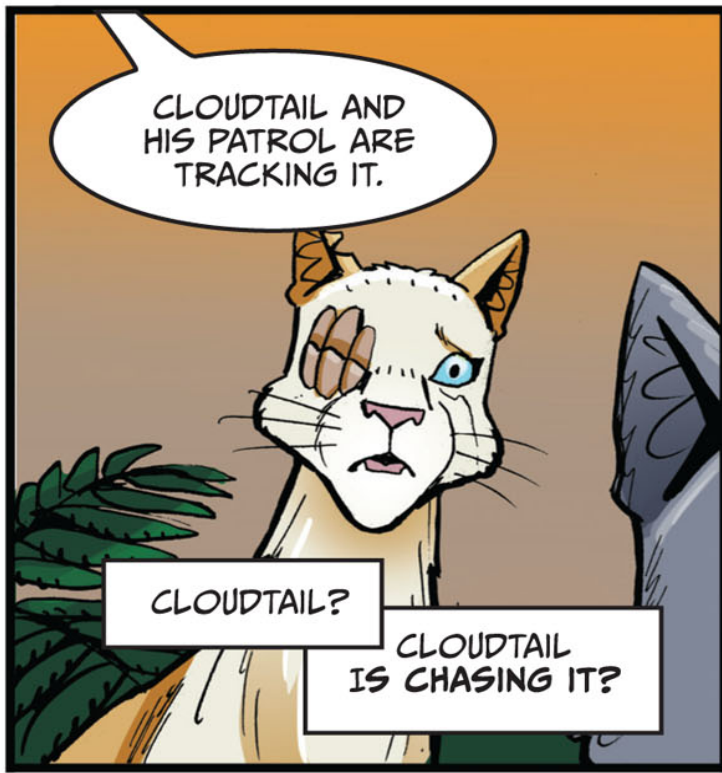
WILLOWPELT
IS DEAD.

SHE DIED
BRAVELY, AND HER SPIRIT
WILL BE HONORED IN
STARCLAN.



A VICIOUS
BADGER TOOK
HER LIFE.







EXCEPT I WANT TO BE HERE, TOO. WILLOWPELT'S KITS ARE STILL SO YOUNG — ONLY APPRENTICES. THEY'LL BE GRIEVING.

AND FERNCLOUD SHOULDN'T HAVE TO DO IT BY HERSELF. NOT WHEN SHE ALREADY HAS TWO OF HER OWN.

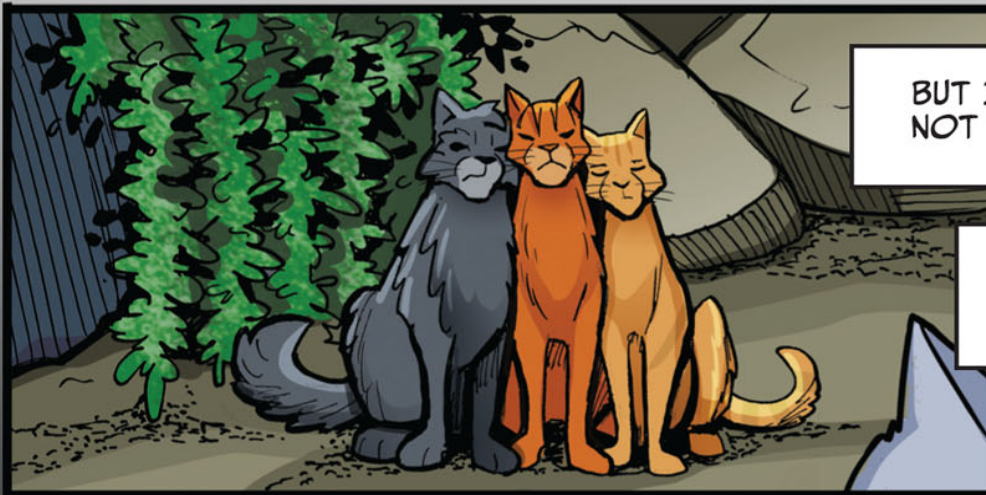
IT TAKES ME A WHILE TO REALIZE WHAT I REALLY WANT. WHICH IS...TO FIX ALL OF THIS.

THE FRESH-KILL THIEF.
THE BADGER. THE KITS.
LONGTAIL'S EYES.



BUT I CAN'T, CAN I?
NOT WITHOUT HELP.

I CAN ALMOST *HEAR*
CLOUDTAIL'S VOICE —



"BEING PART OF A CLAN MEANS RELYING ON EACH OTHER."





I DON'T KNOW
HOW TO DO THAT. NOT
PROPERLY.

BUT I THINK I
KNOW HOW TO MAKE
A GOOD START.



HEY THERE,
LITTLE ONES.

WHY DON'T YOU
COME WITH ME, BACK
TO THE NURSERY? WE'LL
GET YOU SOMETHING
NICE TO EAT.



WE'RE
ALL ALONE
NOW.

OH, SWEET
LITTLE KIT. YOU ARE NOT
ALONE. YOU'VE GOT ME,
AND FERNCLOUD,
AND CINDERPELT...

YOU'VE GOT
FIRESTAR, AND GRAYSTRIPE,
AND SANDSTORM. YOU'VE GOT
ALL OF US. EVERY CAT IN
THUNDERCLAN.



BUT
BRIGHTHEART...

WHAT IF THE BADGER
COMES HERE? WHAT IF
IT TRIES TO KILL US,
TOO?



DON'T YOU
WORRY, RAINPAW.
WE'RE TO GOING TO
PROTECT YOU.



PROMISE?

I'LL DO
BETTER THAN
THAT.

I SWEAR BY
STARCLAN.



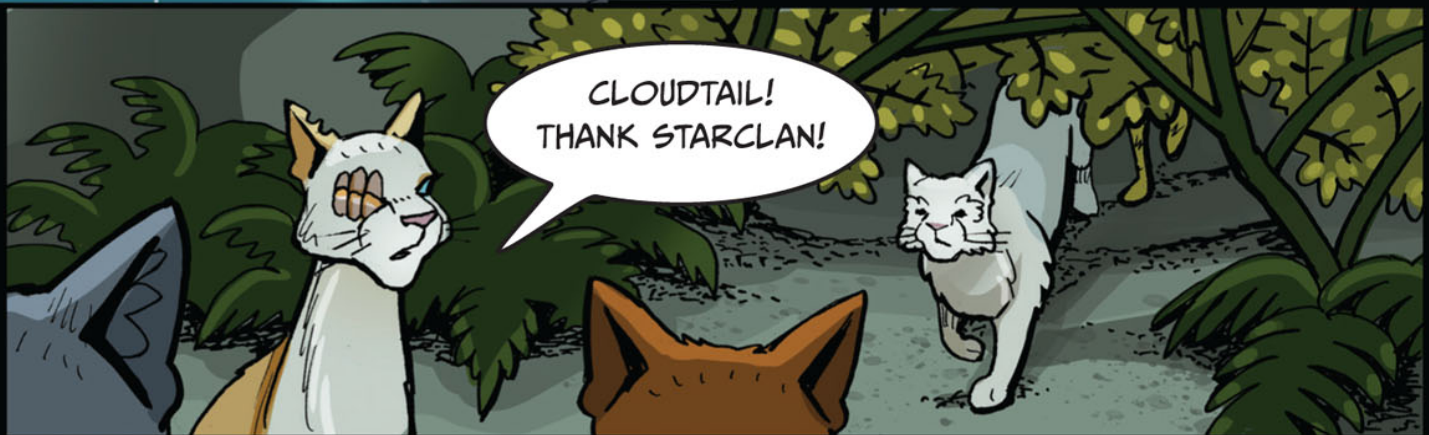
EVERY CAT IN
THE CLAN WILL
PROTECT YOU.

NOTHING WILL GET
TO YOU IN OUR CAMP AS
LONG AS A THUNDERCLAN
CAT IS ALIVE AND ABLE TO
FIGHT.

IT'S ACTUALLY KIND
OF PEACEFUL TONIGHT.

SAD. FULL OF
HEARTACHE AND GRIEF.

BUT STRANGELY CALM.



CLOUDTAIL...I
NEED TO TELL YOU
SOMETHING.

WHAT IS IT?

WHEN I THINK OF ALL
THE DANGERS IN A WARRIOR'S
LIFE...BADGERS, FOXES, WARRIORS
FROM OTHER CLANS...PACKS
OF DOGS...

I'M - I'M AFRAID
TO BRING KITS INTO
THE WORLD.

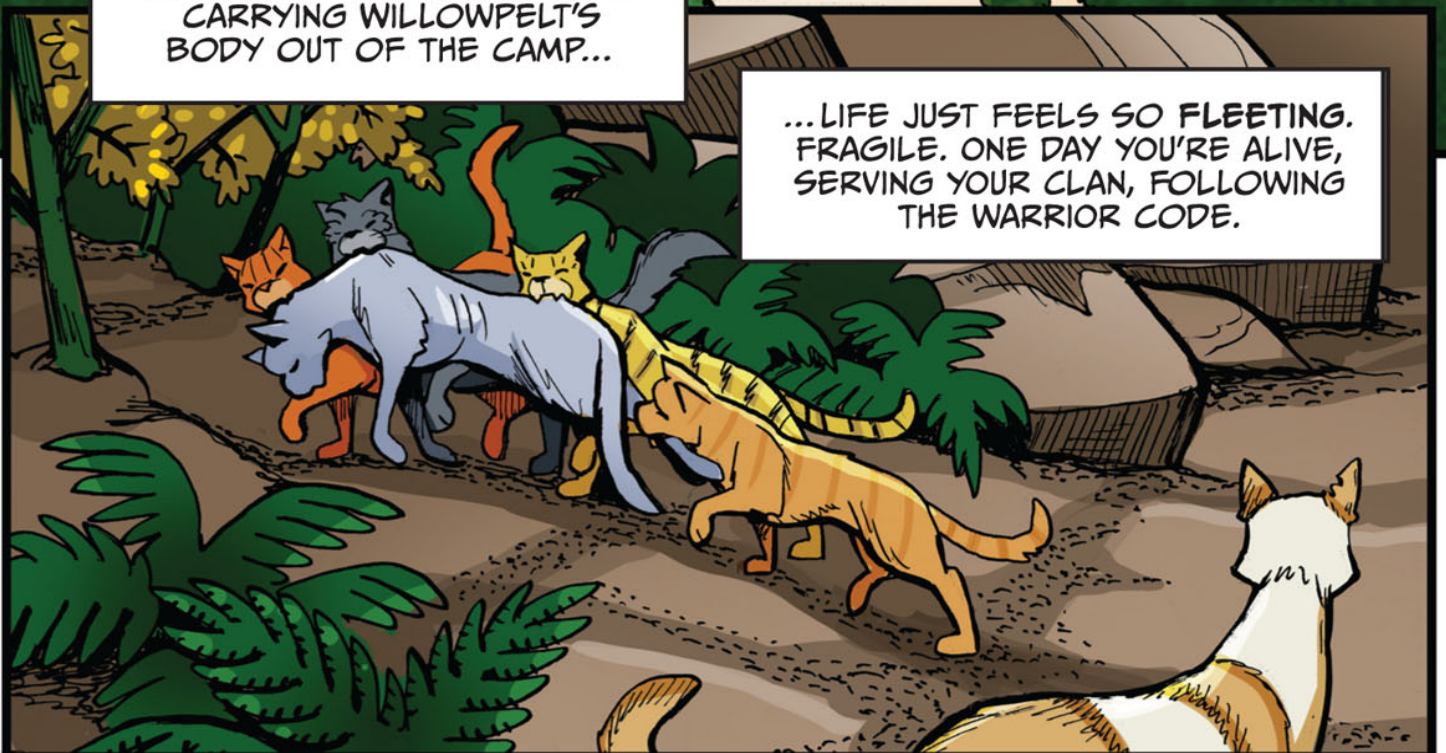


FEAR MAKES FOR A
TERRIBLE WARRIOR.

I SHOULD BE LIVING
EVERY SINGLE HEARTBEAT
OF THIS LIFE TO ITS
ABSOLUTE FULLEST.

BUT WHEN I SEE THE ELDERS
CARRYING WILLOWPELT'S
BODY OUT OF THE CAMP...

...LIFE JUST FEELS SO FLEETING.
FRAGILE. ONE DAY YOU'RE ALIVE,
SERVING YOUR CLAN, FOLLOWING
THE WARRIOR CODE.



AND THEN THE NEXT
YOU'RE **GONE**.

THE SWIPE OF A BADGER'S
CLAWS...THE TEARING OF A
DOG'S FANGS...

EVEN A MOMENT OF
CARELESSNESS ON A THUNDERPATH,
AND IT'S JUST...OVER.

I TRY TO SHAKE OFF THIS
BLEAK FEELING. NOT EASY
WHEN I'VE BEEN AWAKE
ALL NIGHT.

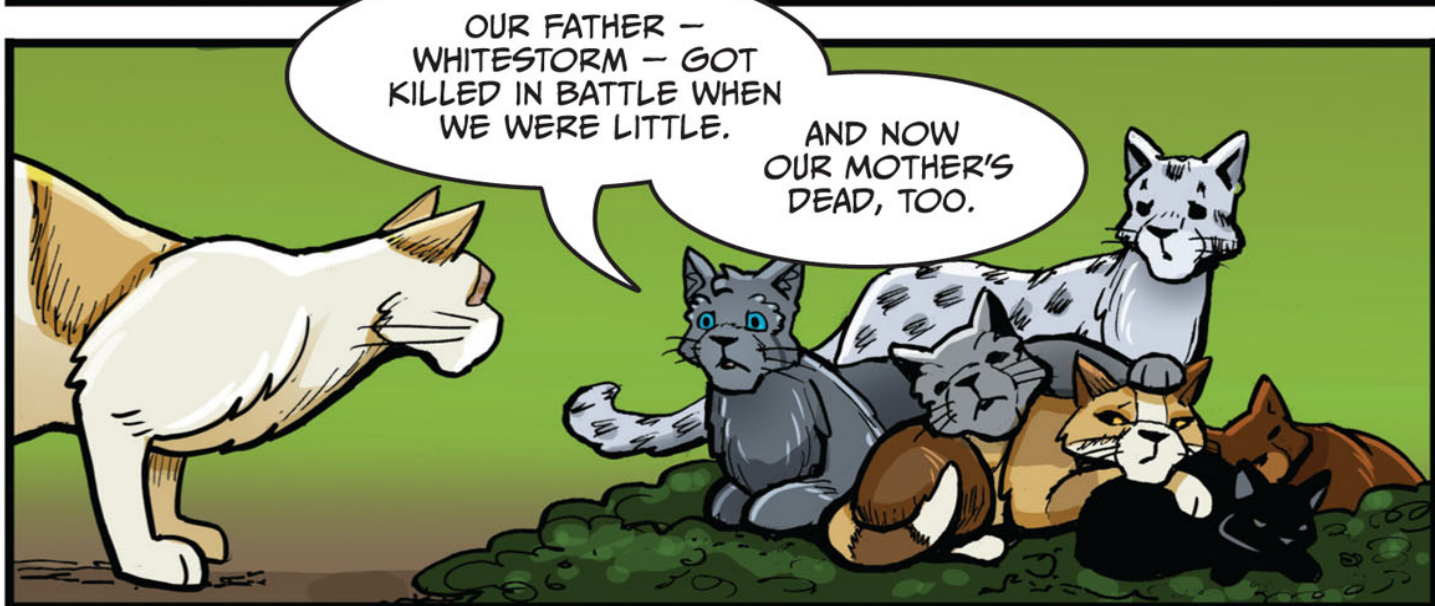
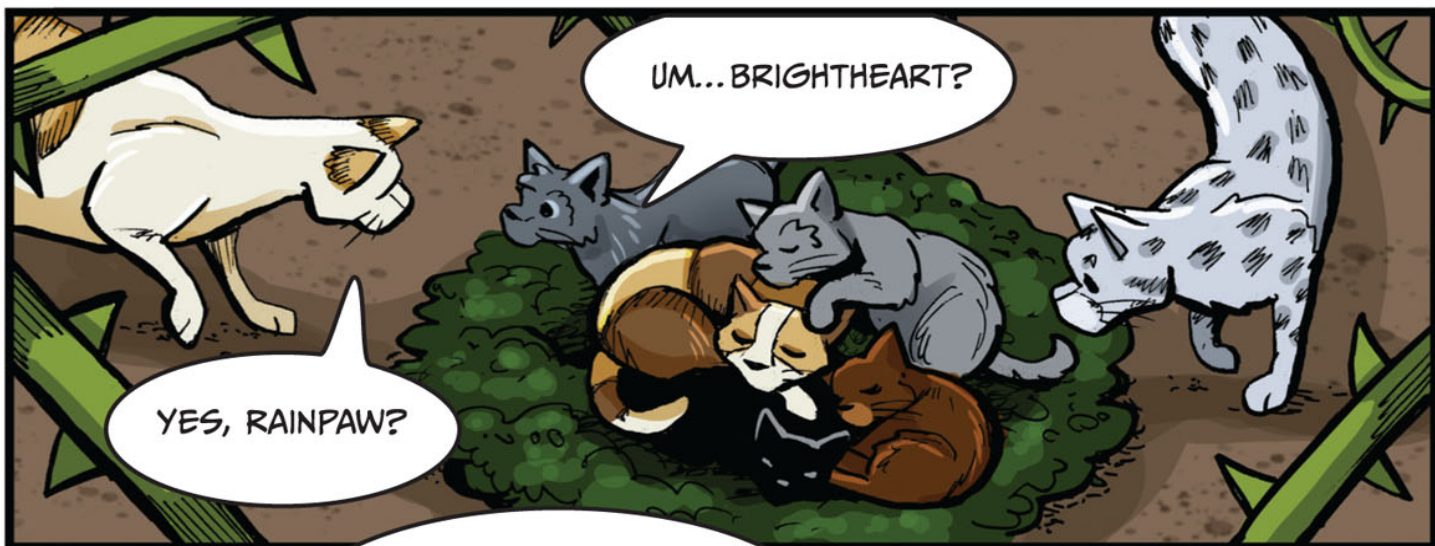
I WAS THINKING —
MAYBE WILLOWPELT'S KITS
SHOULD MOVE BACK INTO
THE NURSERY FOR A DAY
OR TWO?


SPEND SOME
TIME WITH YOU AND
FERNCLOUD?

IT MIGHT DO
THEM GOOD TO TAKE
A BREAK.

I THINK IT
MIGHT DO US **ALL**
SOME GOOD.

"WHAT CAT COULDN'T
USE A LITTLE WARMTH
AND PEACE?"





IT STUNG ME,
AND MY NOSE WAS
SO BIG FOR A WHILE!
SORRELPAW AND
SOOTPAW MADE FUN
OF ME.

BUT WILLOWPELT
TOOK US AND SHOWED
US THE HIVE, AND TOLD
US TO KEEP AWAY
FROM IT.

SHE SAID IF ALL
THE BEES GOT MAD AT
US, THEY COULD STING
US *ALL AT ONCE*.



OKAY, SO, YOU
REMEMBER HOW
LITTLE THAT ONE BEE
LOOKED?


LITTLE
ENOUGH TO SEEM
LIKE A SNACK.

YEAH...?



ONE BEE ON
ITS OWN CAN'T DO
MUCH, CAN IT?

WELL...
IT STUNG ME...



TRUE. BUT IT
STILL ENDED UP
IN YOUR BELLY,
DIDN'T IT?



A CAT WITHOUT
A CLAN IS A LITTLE
BIT LIKE THAT ONE
BEE.


BUT WHEN
YOU'RE *HERE* —
WITH ALL OF US —
THEN WHAT ARE WE
LIKE?

OH — OH!
WE'RE LIKE
THE HIVE!

THE THUNDERCLAN
HIVE!



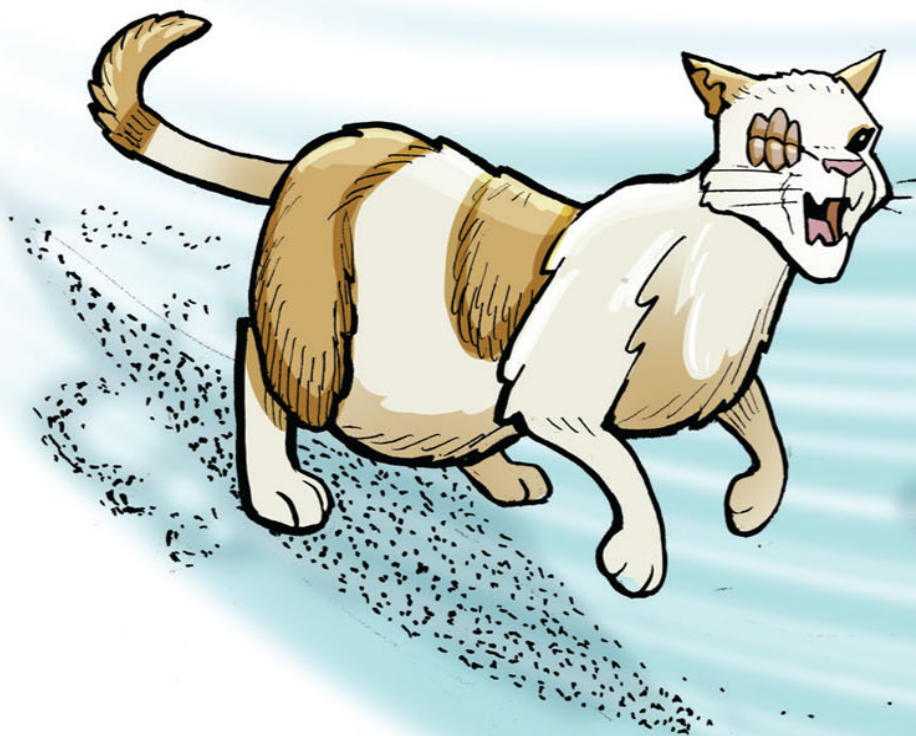
EXACTLY.



AND WHAT
DOES THAT MEAN
FOR YOU?

DON'T EAT
BEES?

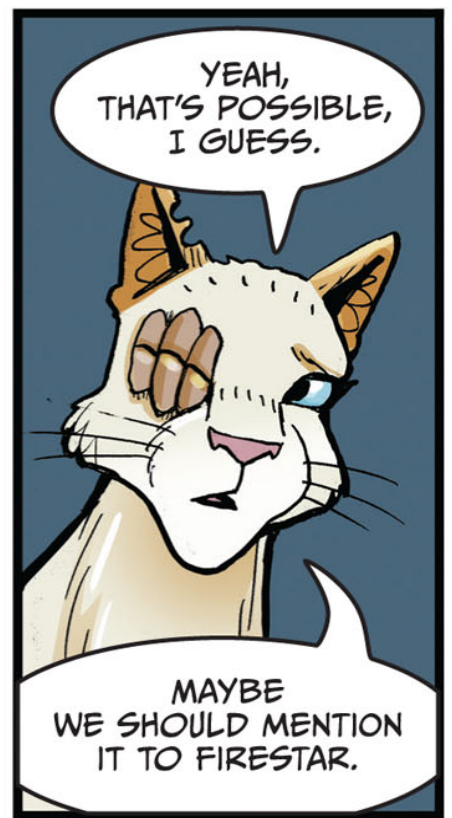
...GOOD
ENOUGH.



IT'S AMAZING HOW
MUCH BETTER I FEEL AFTER
SOME SLEEP.

I *REALLY* SHOULDN'T THINK ABOUT
THINGS LIKE LIFE AND DEATH AND WHAT IT
MEANS TO BE A THUNDERCLAN CAT WHEN
I'VE BEEN AWAKE ALL NIGHT.







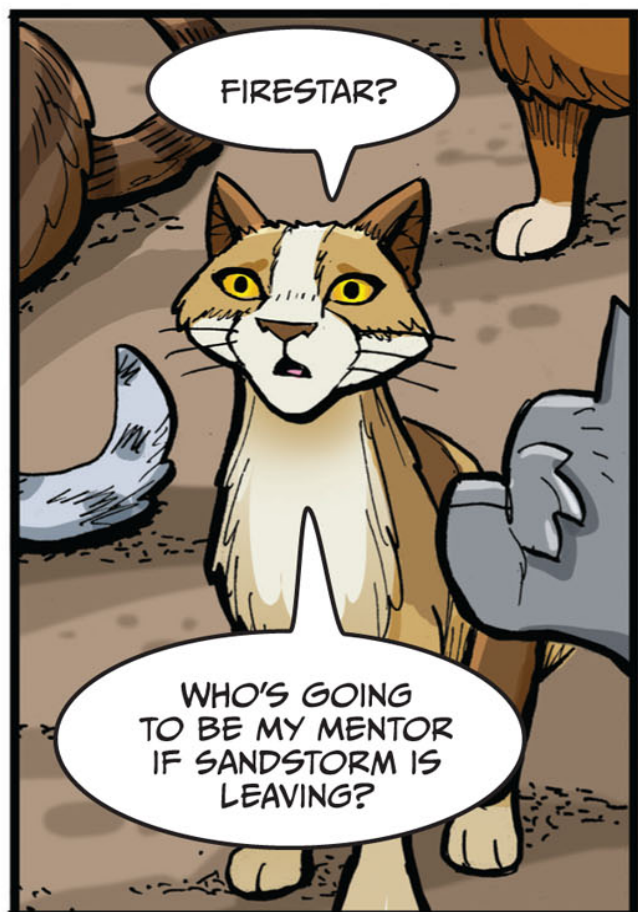
YOU'RE LEAVING?

BUT WHERE ARE YOU GOING?



WHAT DID THEY ASK YOU TO DO?

WHY DO YOU HAVE TO GO NOW?



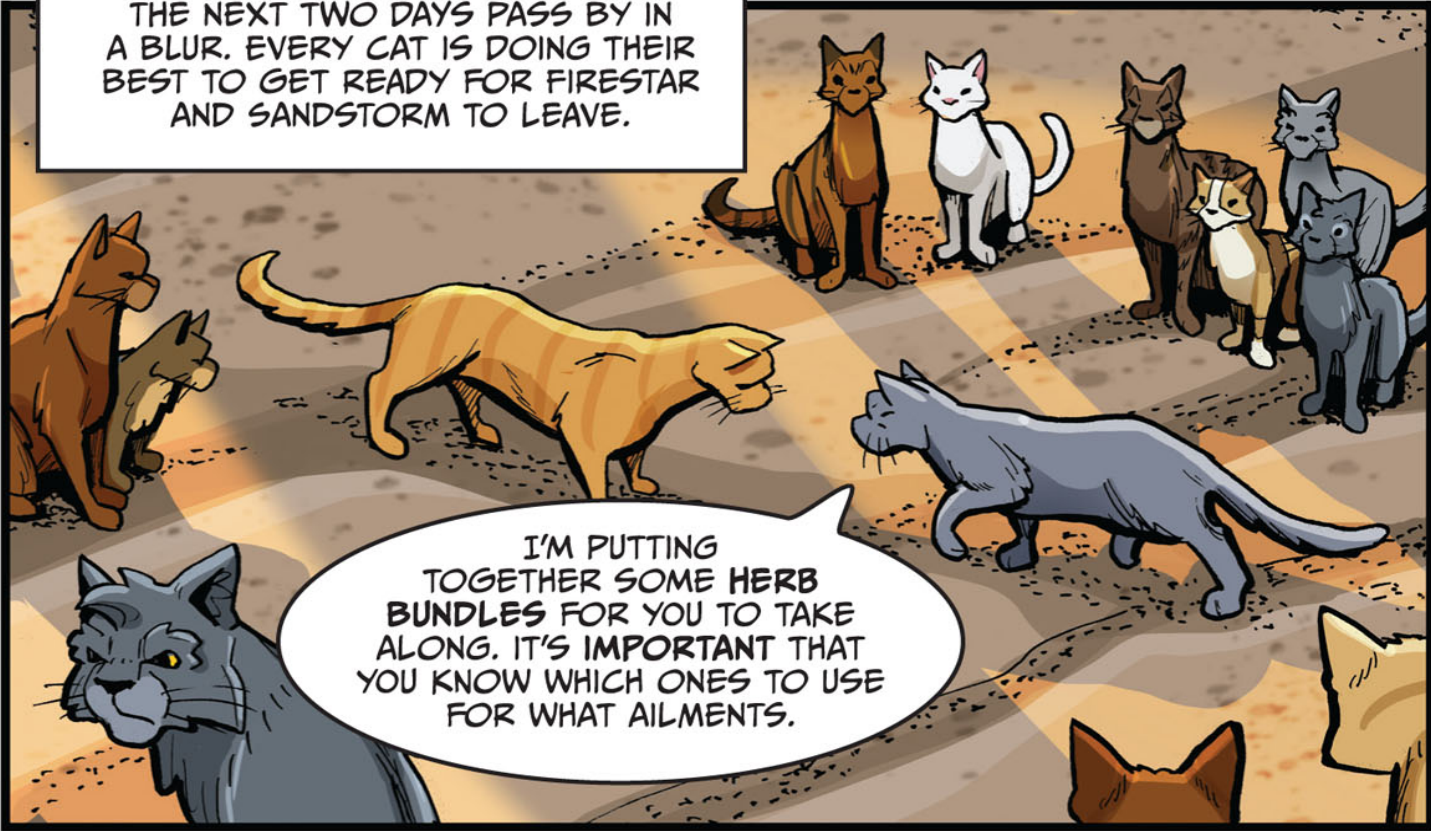




I'M SORRY.
BUT THIS IS GOING
TO HAPPEN.

WE'LL BE
LEAVING IN TWO
DAYS.

THE NEXT TWO DAYS PASS BY IN
A BLUR. EVERY CAT IS DOING THEIR
BEST TO GET READY FOR FIRESTAR
AND SANDSTORM TO LEAVE.



I'M PUTTING
TOGETHER SOME HERB
BUNDLES FOR YOU TO TAKE
ALONG. IT'S IMPORTANT THAT
YOU KNOW WHICH ONES TO USE
FOR WHAT AILMENTS.

BUT IT FEELS LIKE TRYING TO
COUNT EVERY TREE IN THE FOREST.
IT'S JUST TOO BIG A JOB.

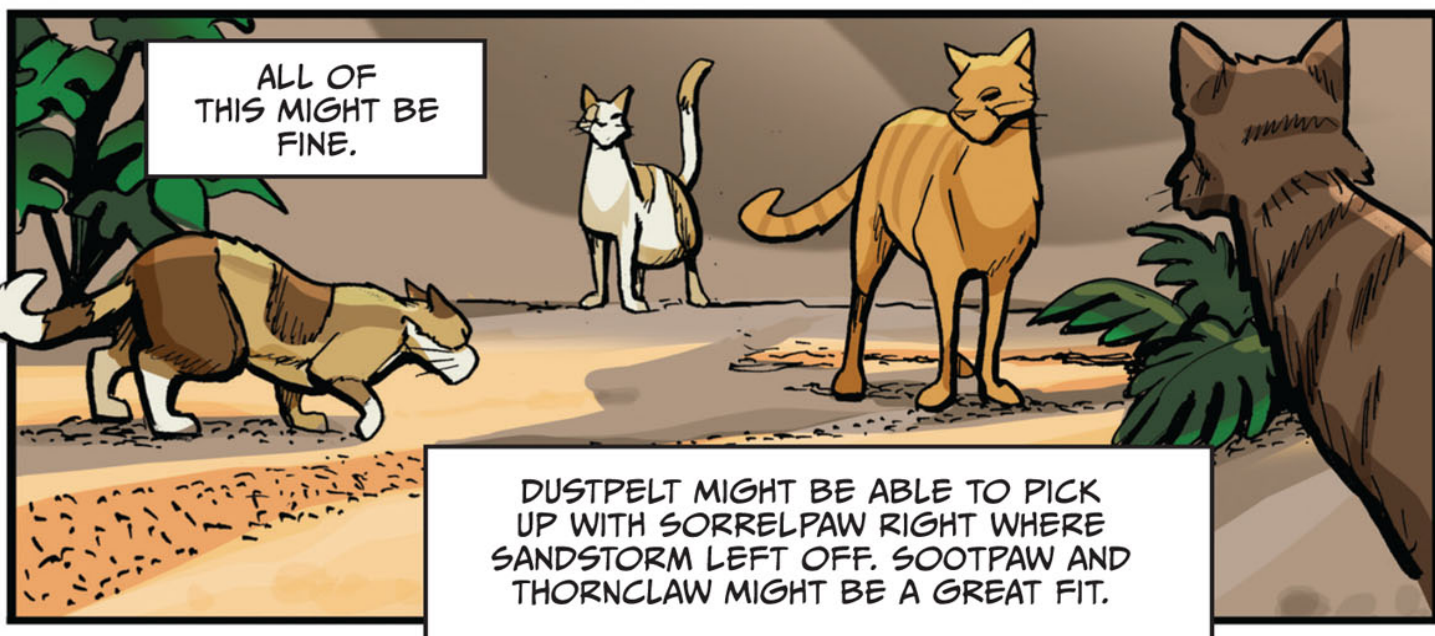
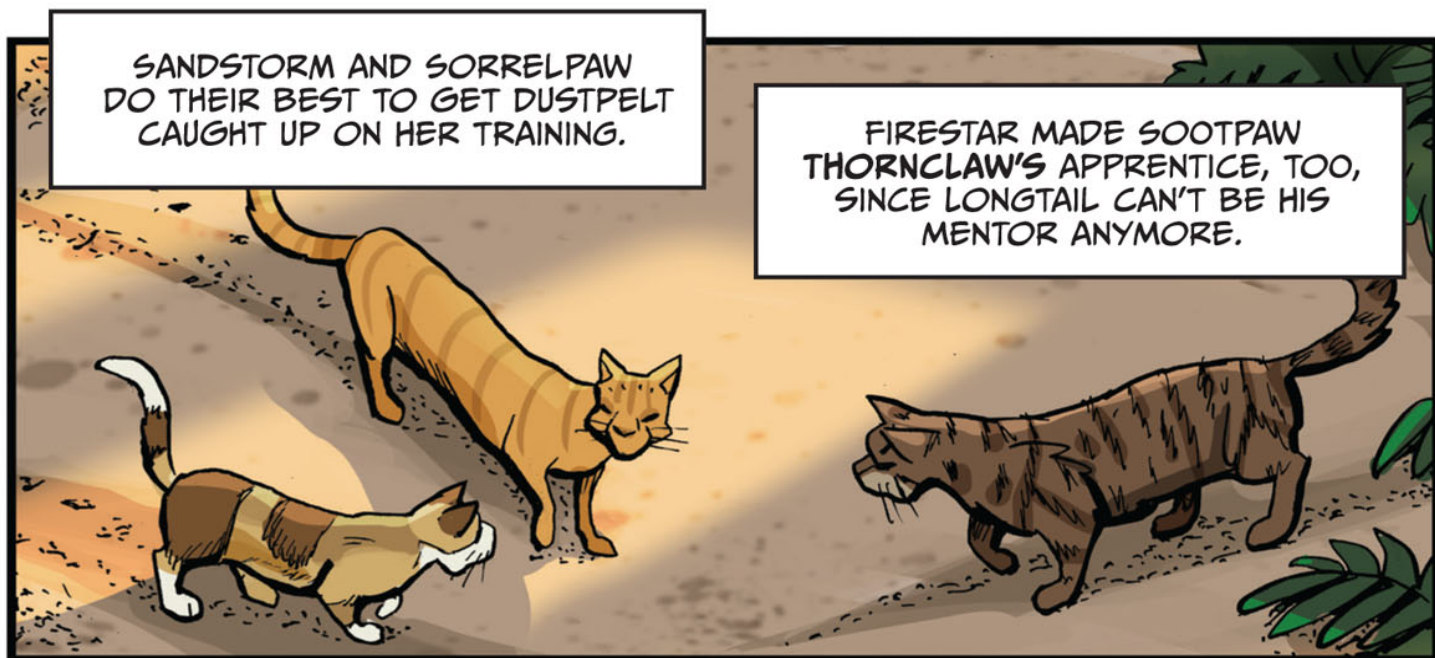
FOR EXAMPLE,
BURDOCK ROOT IS GOOD
FOR INFECTIONS OR BITES.
IT HAS DARK LEAVES AND
GROWS IN OPEN
AREAS...

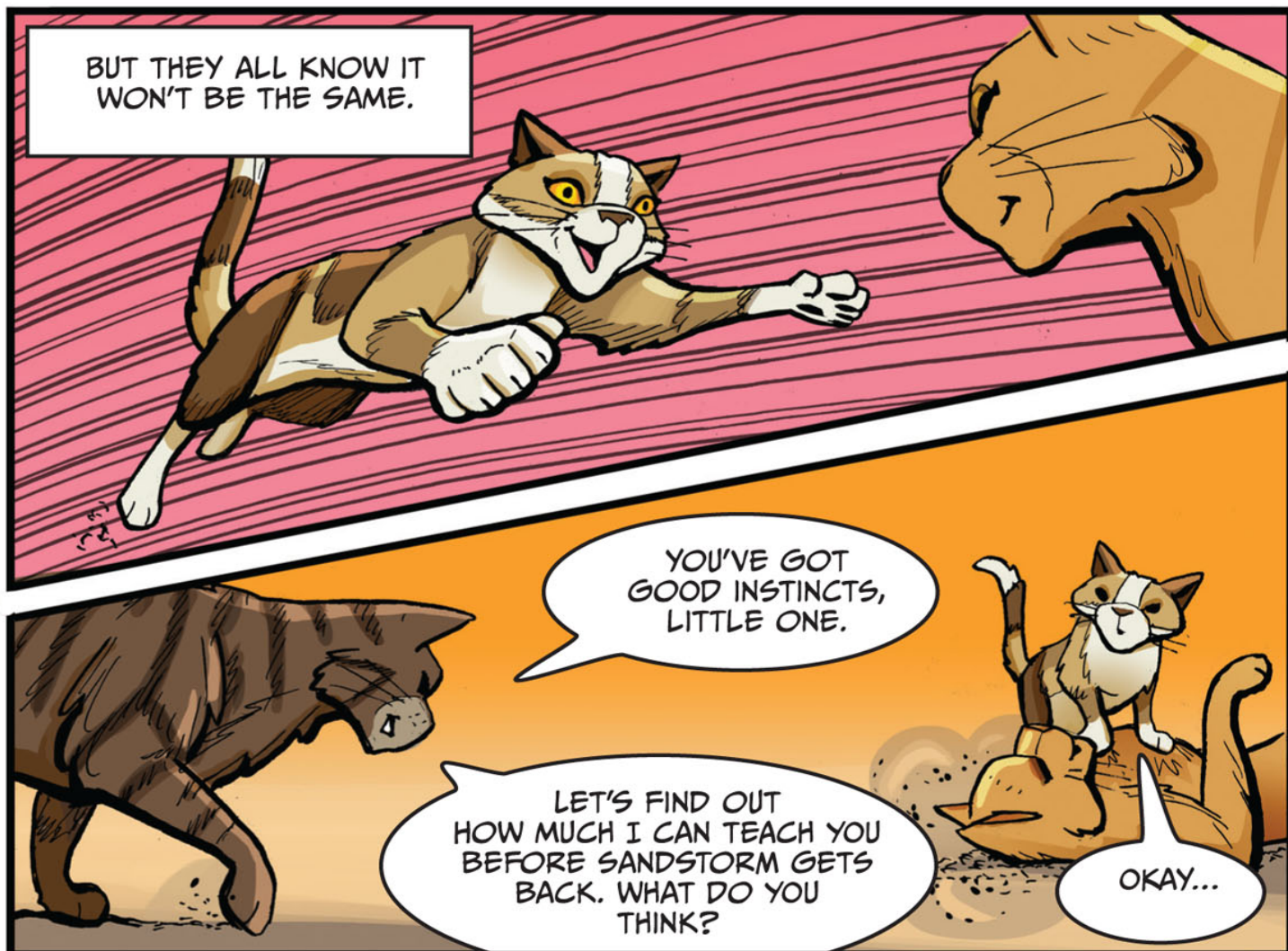
LIKE BY THE SIDE OF
A THUNDERPATH. I'VE GOT
SOME LOOSE YOU CAN USE
TO LEARN ITS SCENT.

CHAMOMILE, ON THE
OTHER PAW, WILL STRENGTHEN
YOU FOR TRAVELING, SO I'LL
GIVE YOU SOME BEFORE
YOU LEAVE...

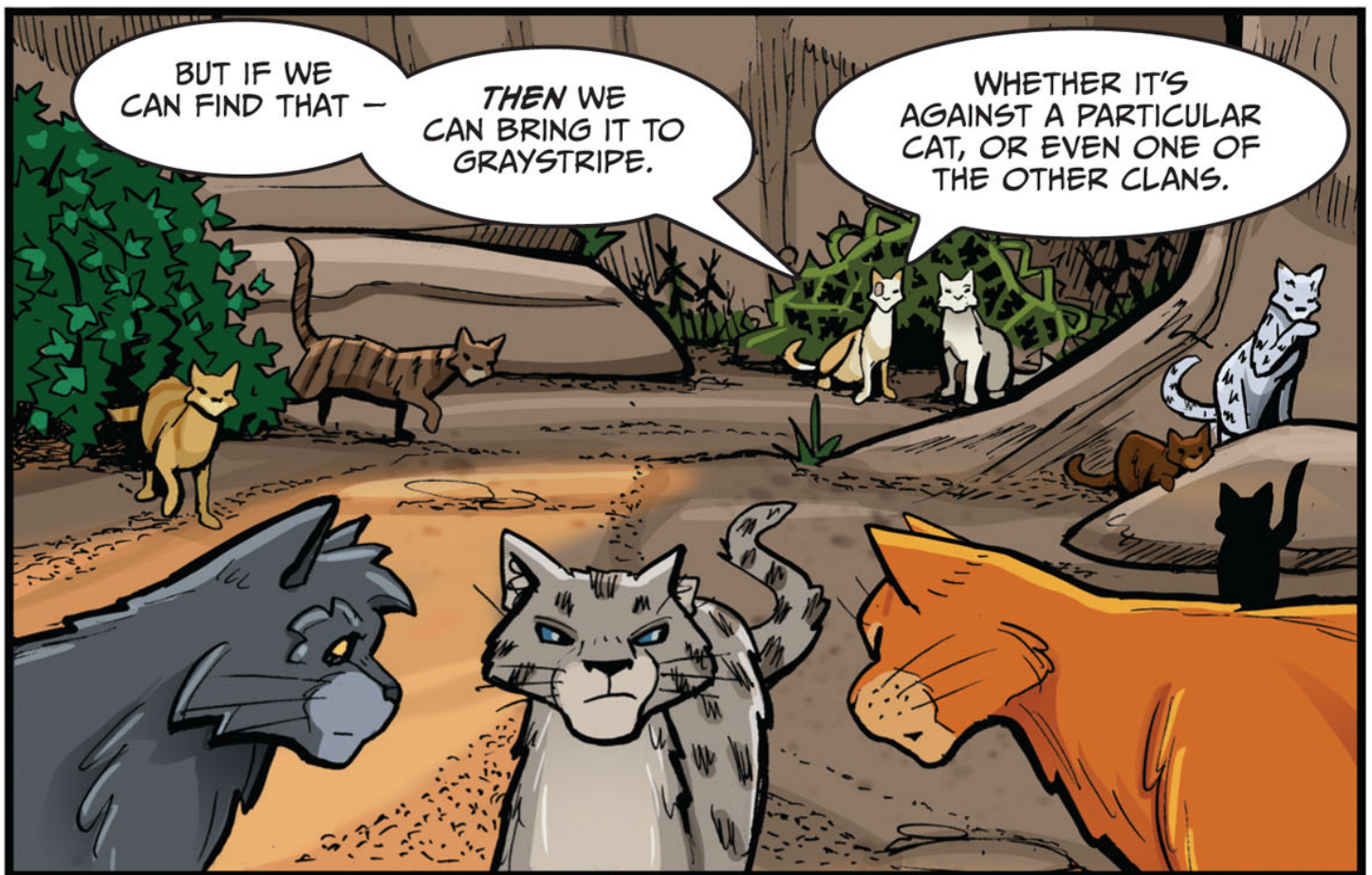


...ARE
YOU PAYING
ATTENTION?









BUT IF WE
CAN FIND THAT —

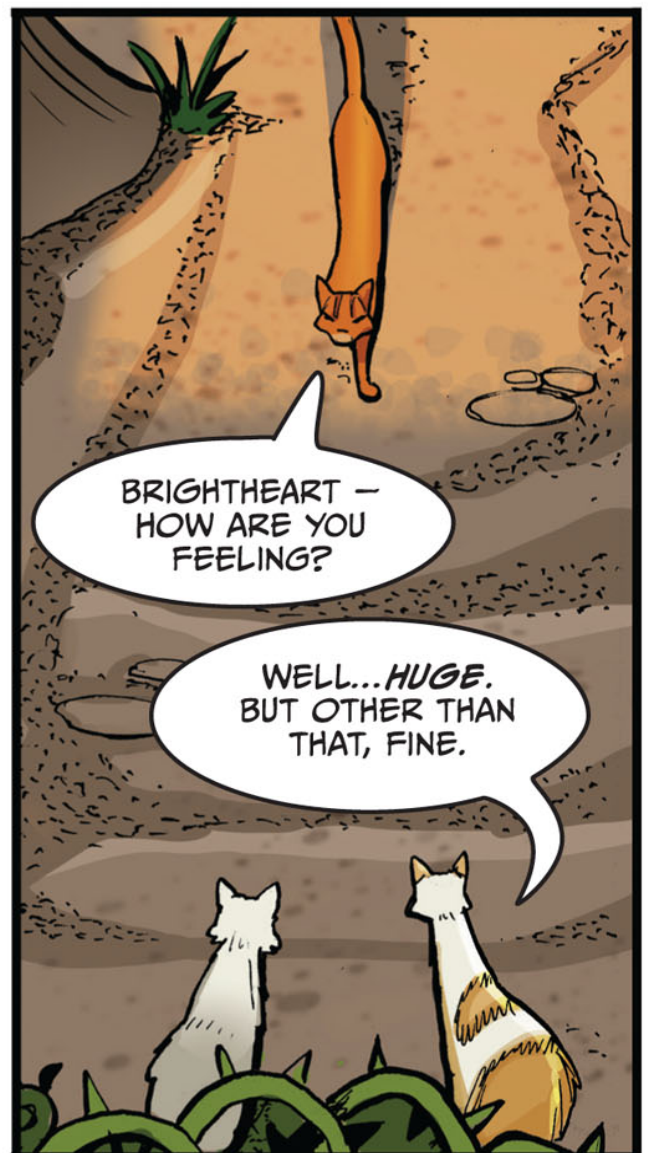
THEN WE
CAN BRING IT TO
GRAYSTRIPE.

WHETHER IT'S
AGAINST A PARTICULAR
CAT, OR EVEN ONE OF
THE OTHER CLANS.



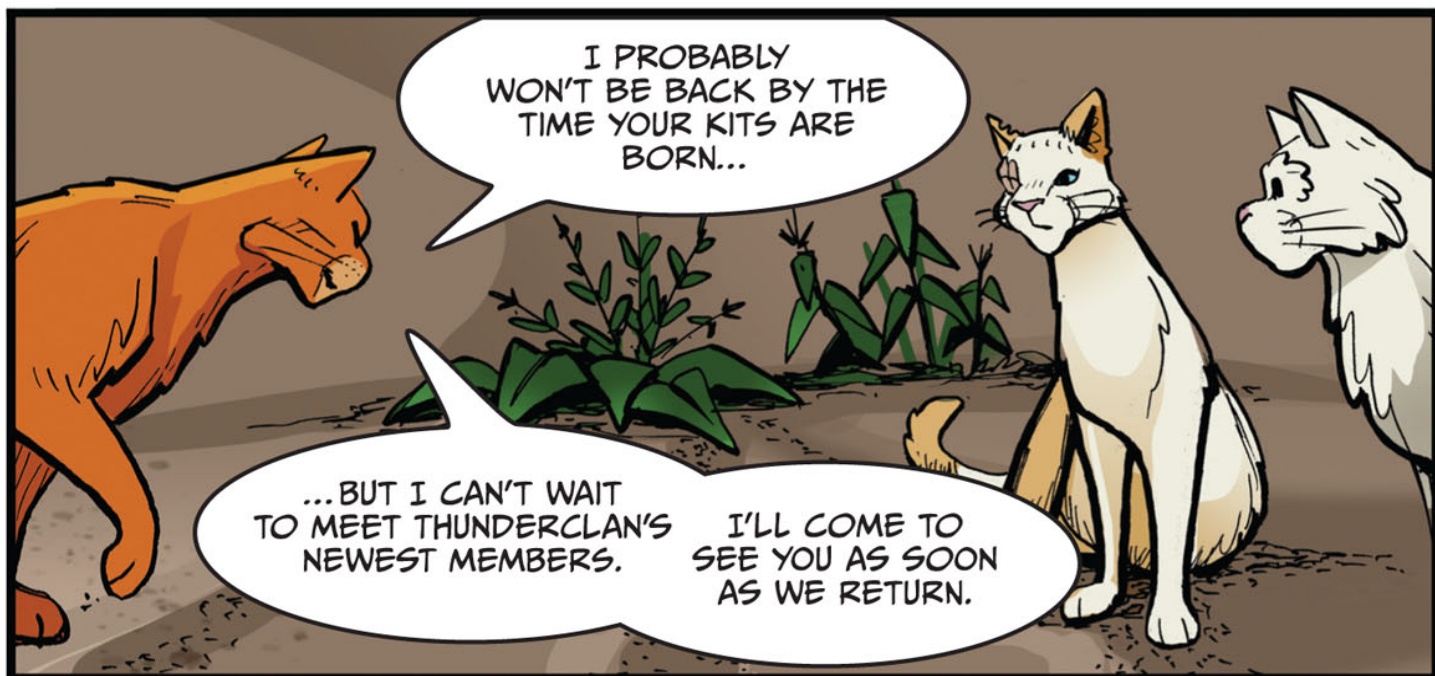
FIRESTAR
WANTED PROOF,
REMEMBER?

NOT
JUST GUT
INSTINCTS OR WILD
ACCUSATIONS.



BRIGHTHEART —
HOW ARE YOU
FEELING?

WELL...*HUGE*.
BUT OTHER THAN
THAT, FINE.



I PROBABLY
WON'T BE BACK BY THE
TIME YOUR KITS ARE
BORN...

...BUT I CAN'T WAIT
TO MEET THUNDERCLAN'S
NEWEST MEMBERS.

I'LL COME TO
SEE YOU AS SOON
AS WE RETURN.



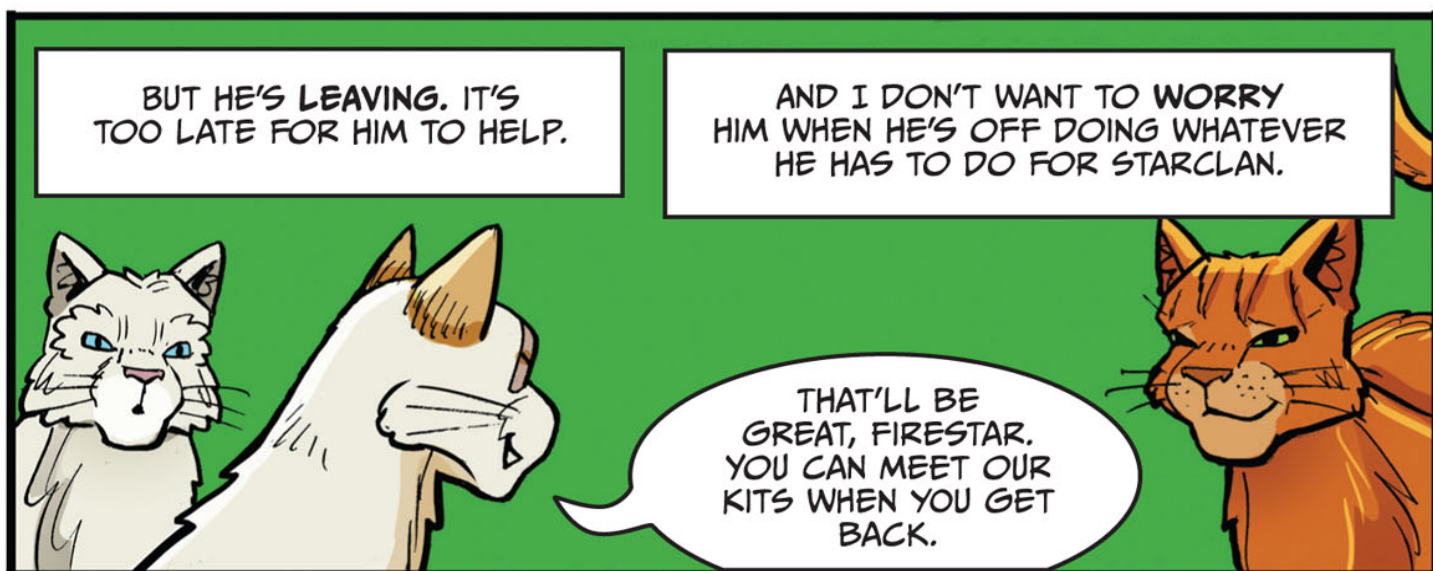
AND THERE IT IS.

THE PERFECT
OPPORTUNITY. SITTING RIGHT
THERE, LOOKING AT ME.



"TELL HIM!"
PART OF ME SHOUTS.


"SAY, 'FIRESTAR, WE NEED TO
TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOME CAT
OR SOMETHING STEALING THE
FRESH-KILL!'"



BUT HE'S LEAVING. IT'S
TOO LATE FOR HIM TO HELP.

AND I DON'T WANT TO WORRY
HIM WHEN HE'S OFF DOING WHATEVER
HE HAS TO DO FOR STARCLAN.

THAT'LL BE
GREAT, FIRESTAR.
YOU CAN MEET OUR
KITS WHEN YOU GET
BACK.

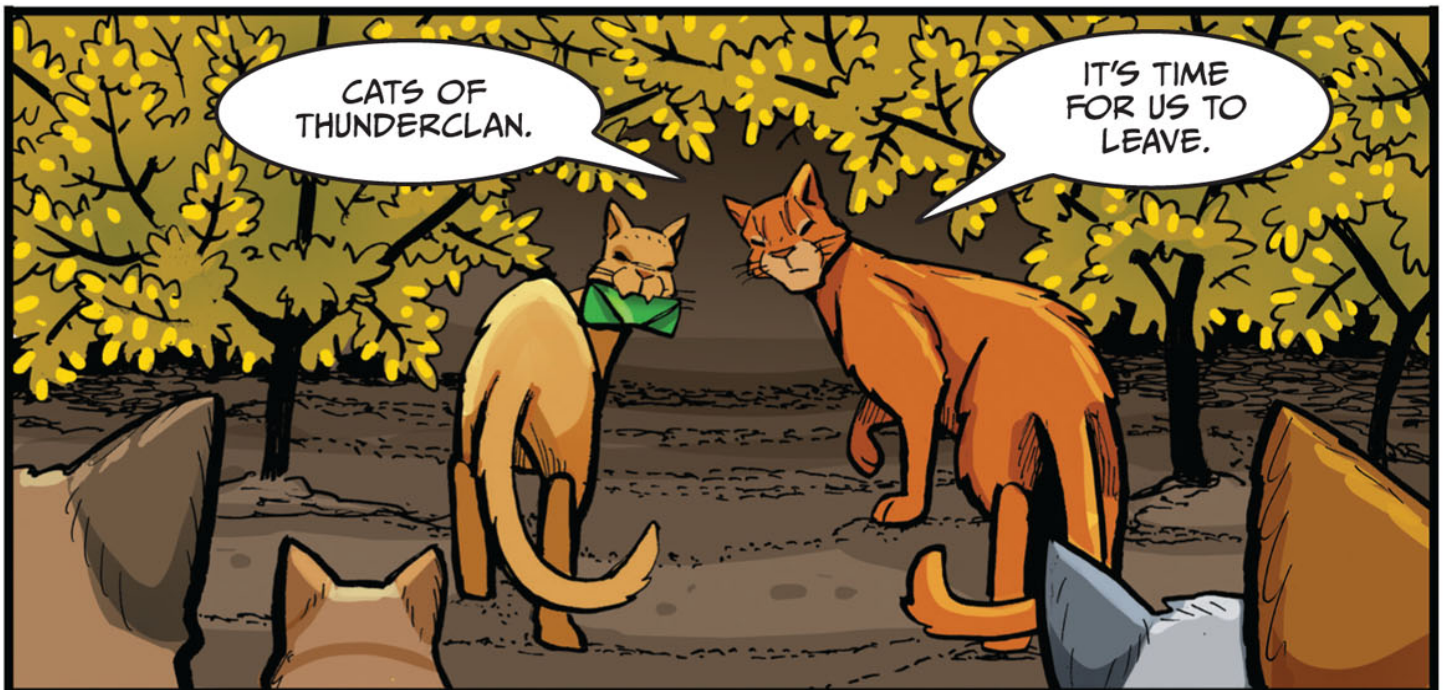


I KEEP TELLING MYSELF,
FIRESTAR WOULDN'T GO
UNLESS HE HAD TO.

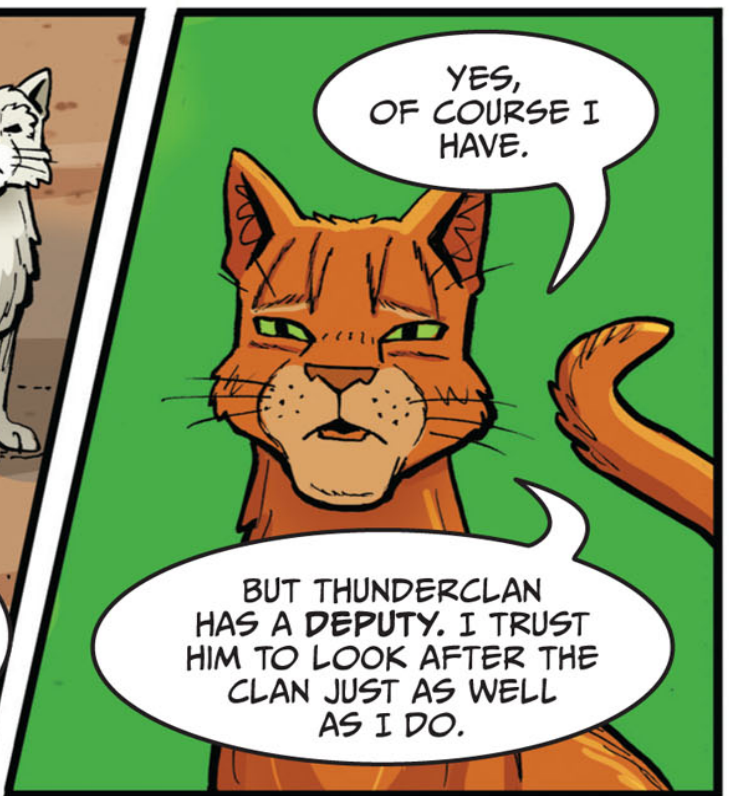
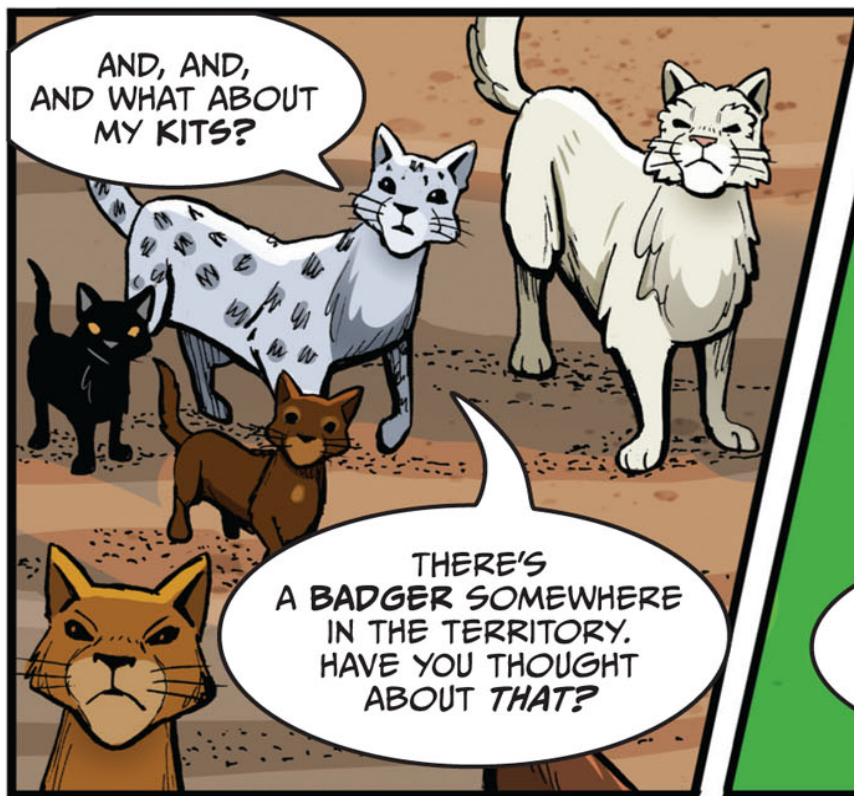


THE LEAST I CAN
DO IS SUPPORT HIM.











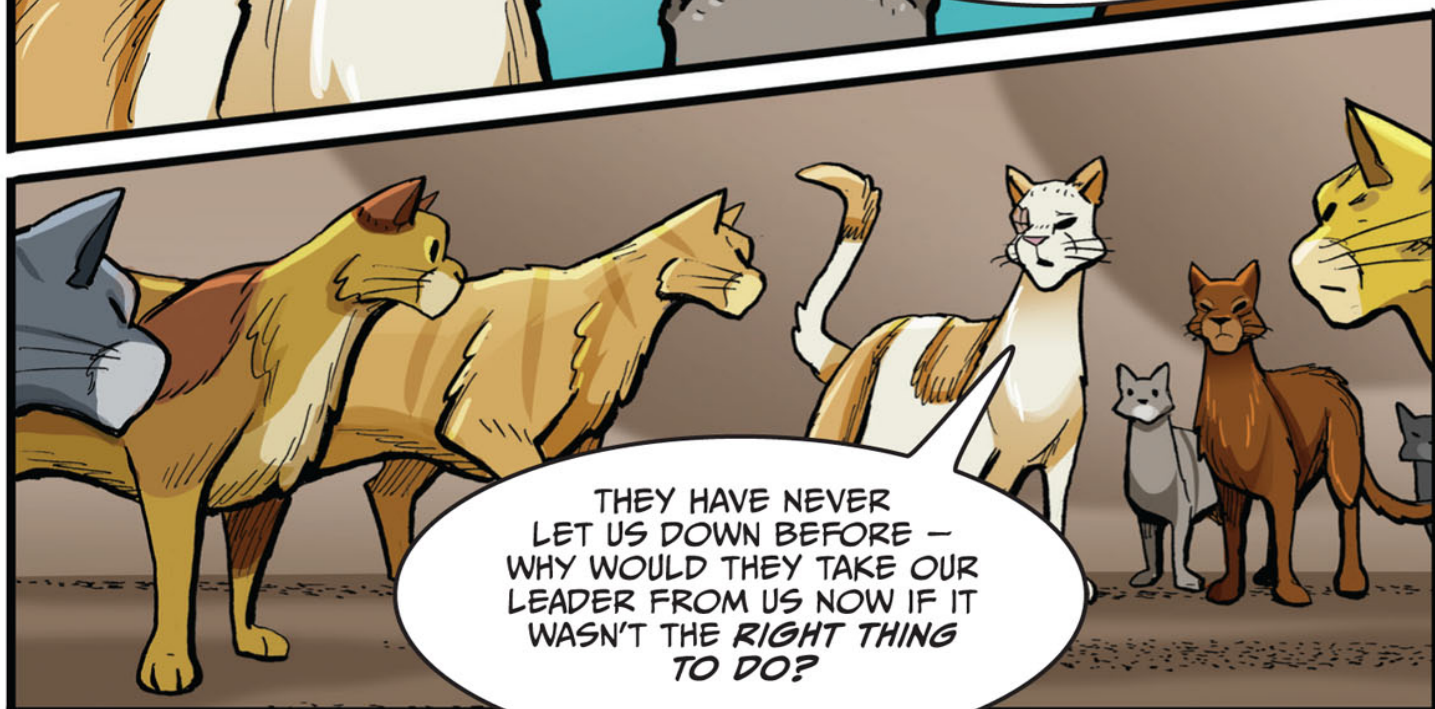
AND I FIND, TO MY OWN GREAT SURPRISE, THAT I CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN.

LISTEN!
EVERYONE,
LISTEN!



FIRESTAR
WOULDN'T LEAVE
US UNLESS HE
HAD TO.

IF STARCLAN
HAS TOLD HIM HE MUST
GO, THEN *WE* MUST TRUST
OUR WARRIOR ANCESTORS
TO TAKE CARE OF HIM
AND BRING HIM SAFELY
BACK!



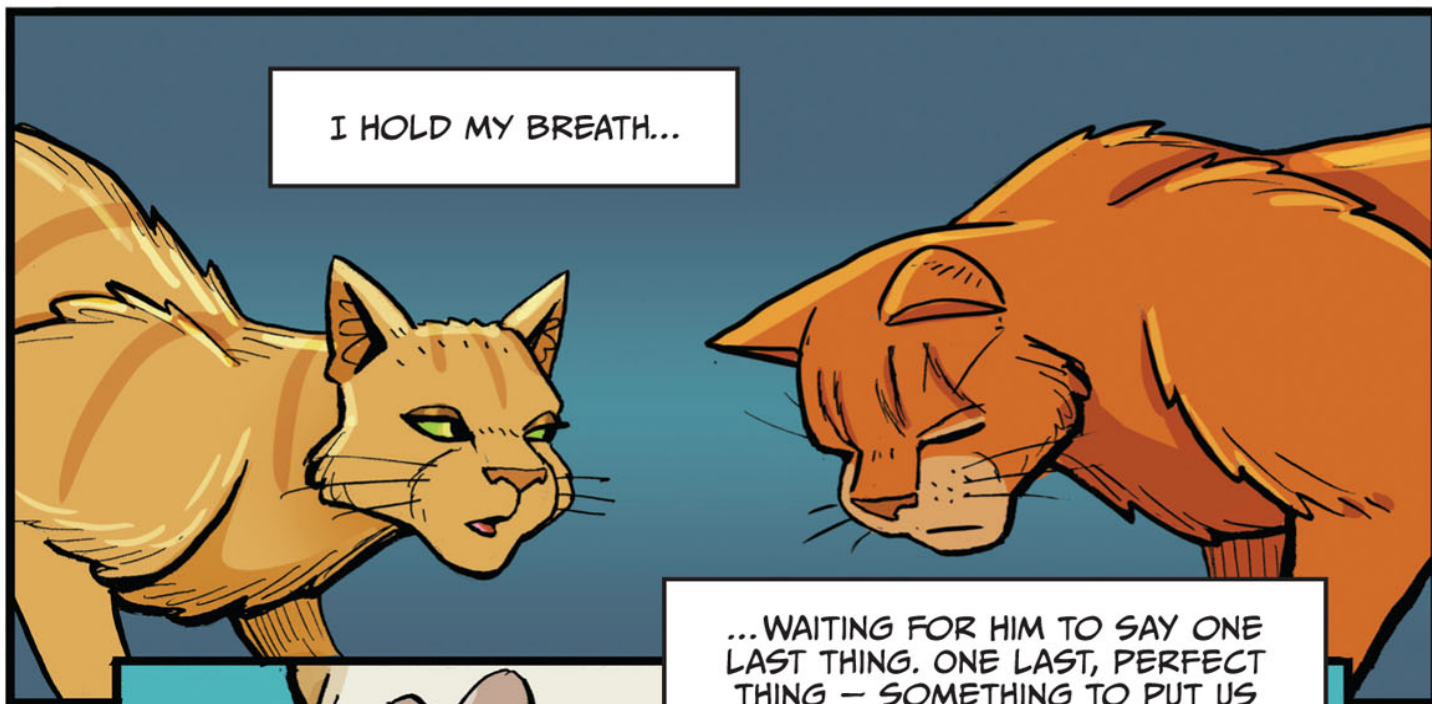
THEY HAVE NEVER
LET US DOWN BEFORE —
WHY WOULD THEY TAKE OUR
LEADER FROM US NOW IF IT
WASN'T THE *RIGHT THING*
TO DO?



SANDSTORM SPEAKS SOFTLY,
BUT I CAN HEAR HER WORDS.

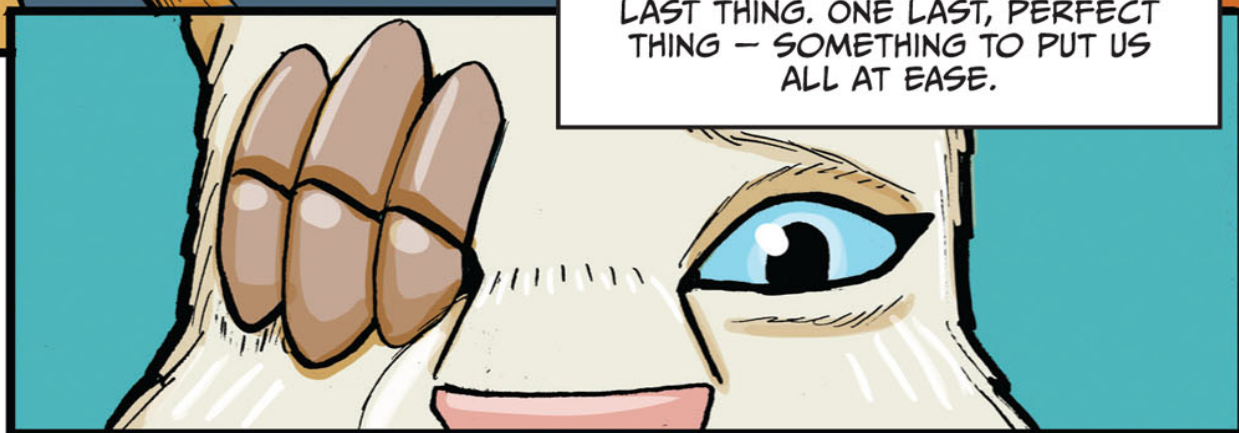
THEY
DON'T LIKE
YOU GOING.

BUT THEY'LL
ACCEPT IT IF IT
IS THE WILL OF
STARCLAN.



I HOLD MY BREATH...

...WAITING FOR HIM TO SAY ONE
LAST THING. ONE LAST, PERFECT
THING — SOMETHING TO PUT US
ALL AT EASE.



AS IT TURNS OUT,
WE DON'T HEAR IT FROM
FIRESTAR...

GOODBYE,
ALL OF YOU.





I LIE AWAKE
THAT NIGHT.



STARING AT THE
SKY.



TRYING TO THINK.





IT WAS THE RIGHT THING
TO DO, LETTING FIRESTAR LEAVE.
NOT **BEGGING** HIM TO STAY —
MUCH AS I WANTED TO.

BUT NOW IT'S
IMPOSSIBLE TO GET
COMFORTABLE.



WITHOUT OUR LEADER HERE...



...IT FEELS AS IF THUNDERCLAN
IS IN **TERRIBLE DANGER**.





I WAKE IN THE DREAM.
AND NOW I KNOW IT'S A
DREAM...

STARCLAN
SAVE ME...

WHERE
AM I?

...BUT THAT DOESN'T
MATTER. I'M NO LESS
TERRIFIED.

AAAAHH!

I ALSO KNOW —
DOWN IN MY BLOOD, IN MY
BONES, I KNOW — THAT I
AM COMPLETELY ALONE...

...AND THAT
NO CAT IS COMING
TO SAVE ME.



AAH!



MMMM...
BRIGHTHEART...?

YOU OKAY...?

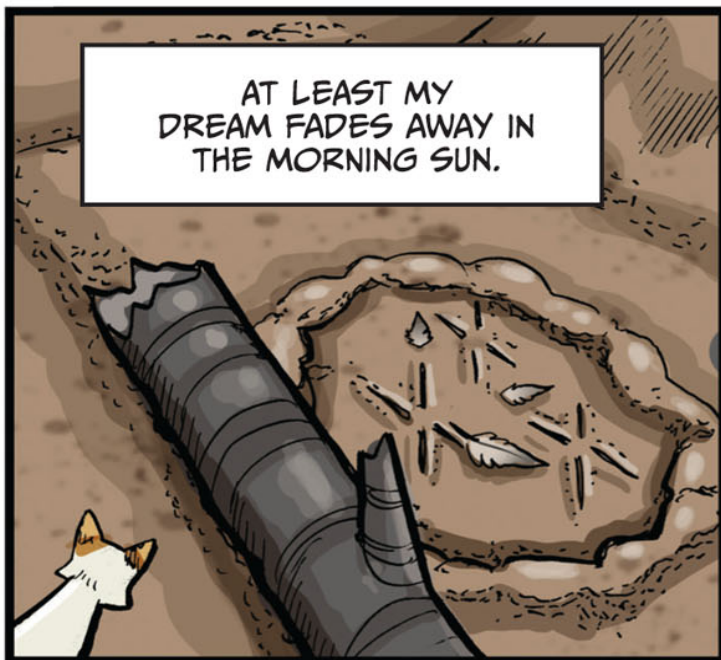
I TELL MYSELF THAT NONE
OF US ARE ALONE, EVEN IF
FIRESTAR'S GONE. THE CLAN
WILL COME TOGETHER AND
PROTECT ME.



I TELL MYSELF THAT,
OVER AND OVER...

...IN HOPES THAT I MIGHT
START TO *BELIEVE* IT.





AT LEAST MY
DREAM FADES AWAY IN
THE MORNING SUN.



IT LETS ME FOCUS
ON SOMETHING ELSE.



I DON'T KNOW THAT I'VE
EVER BEEN THIS GRATEFUL
FOR SUNRISE.



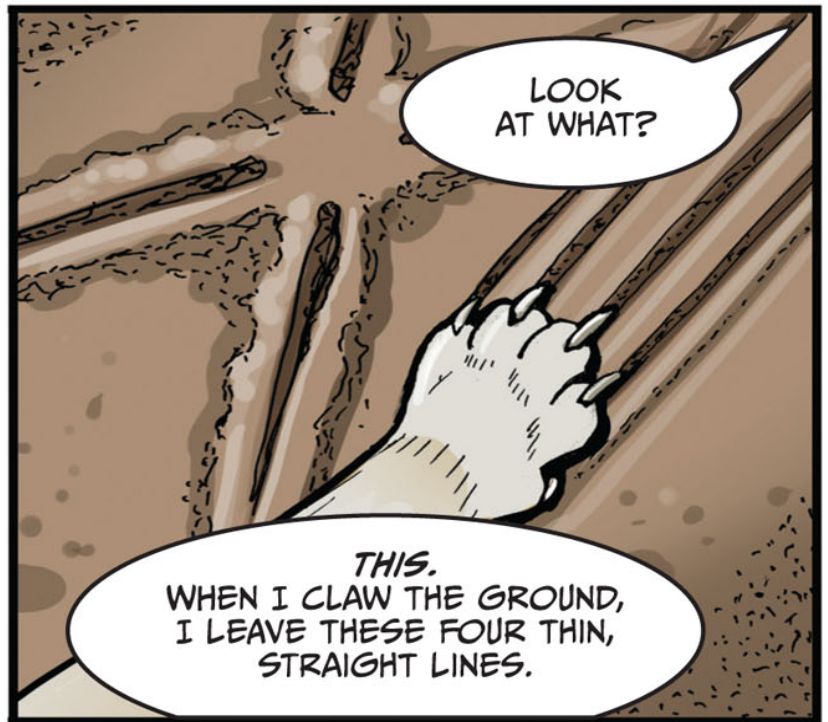
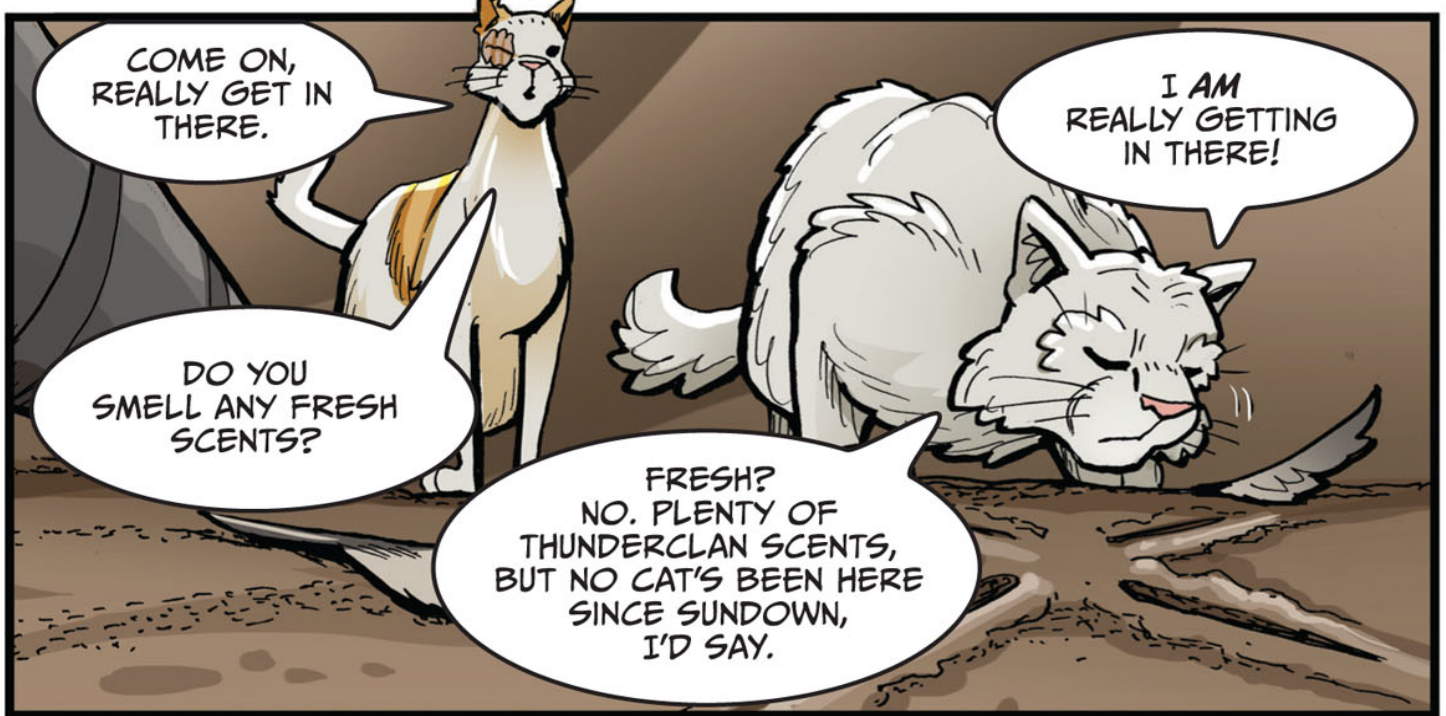
CLOUDTAIL.

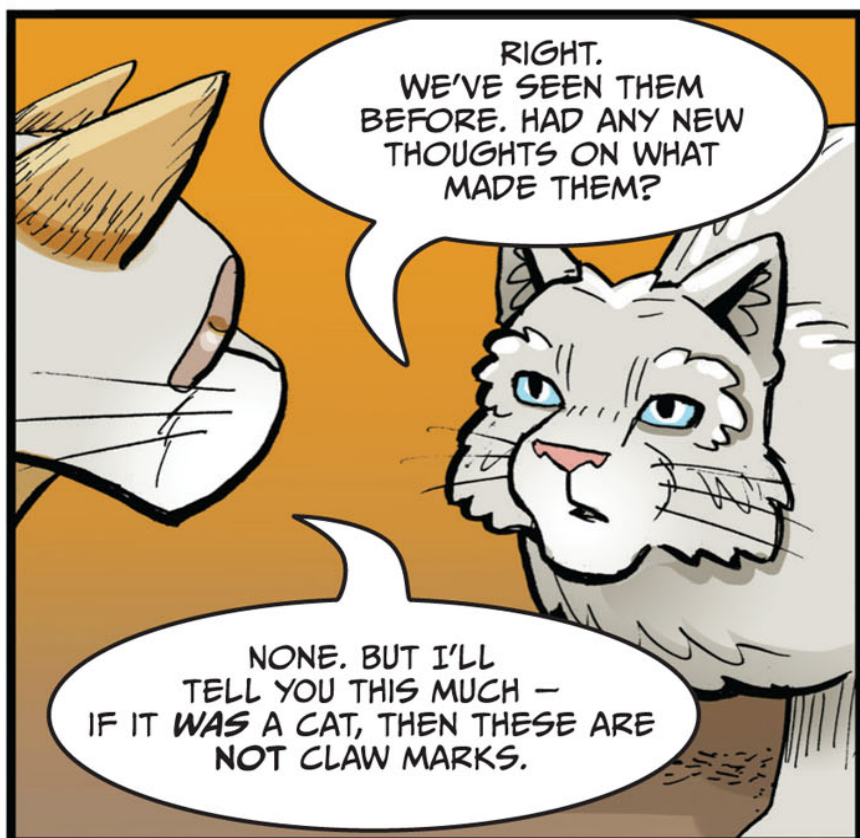


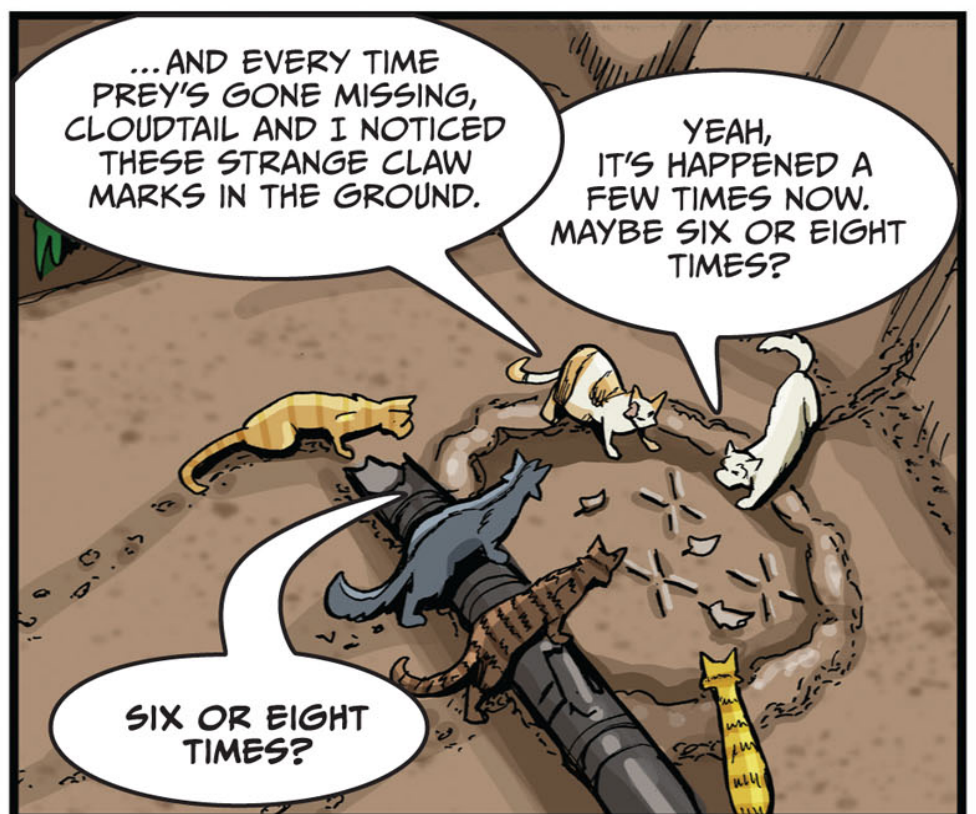
CLOUDTAIL.

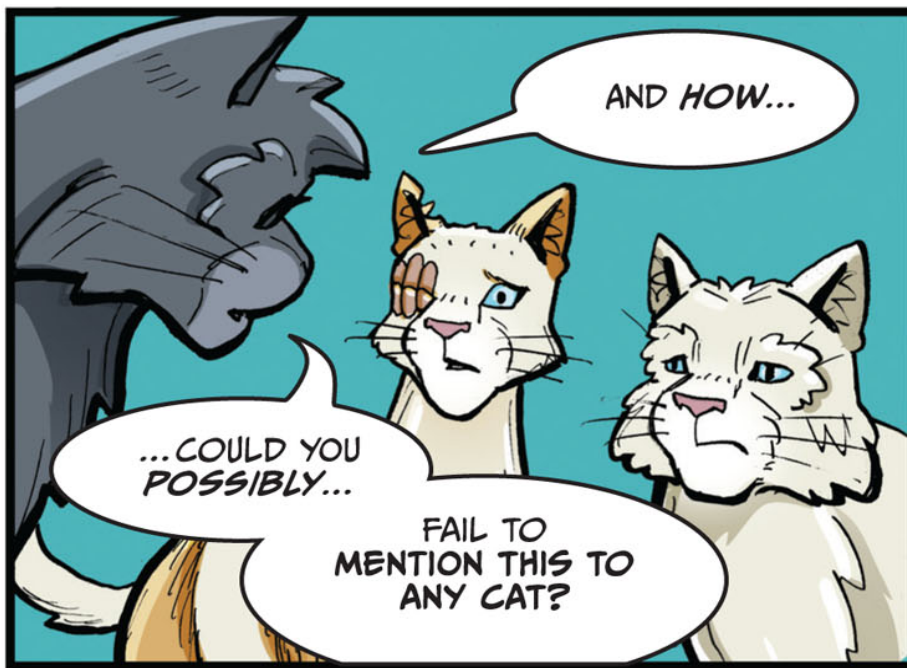
CLOUDTAIL.

WHUZZAH?









AND HOW...

...COULD YOU POSSIBLY...

FAIL TO MENTION THIS TO ANY CAT?



WELL, WE UH... WE DID TRY TO TELL FIRESTAR... BUT HE WAS BUSY.



THEN YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME!

OR SOME OF THE OTHER WARRIORS YOU TRUST!

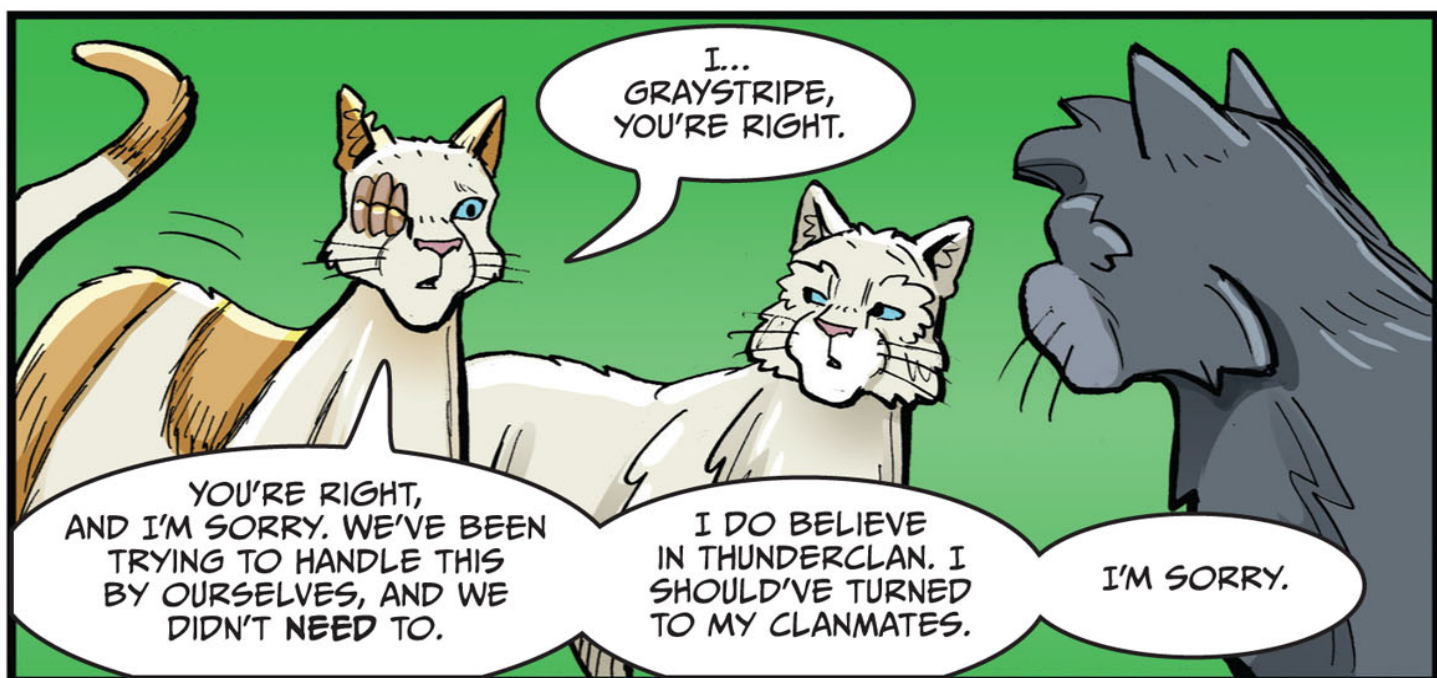
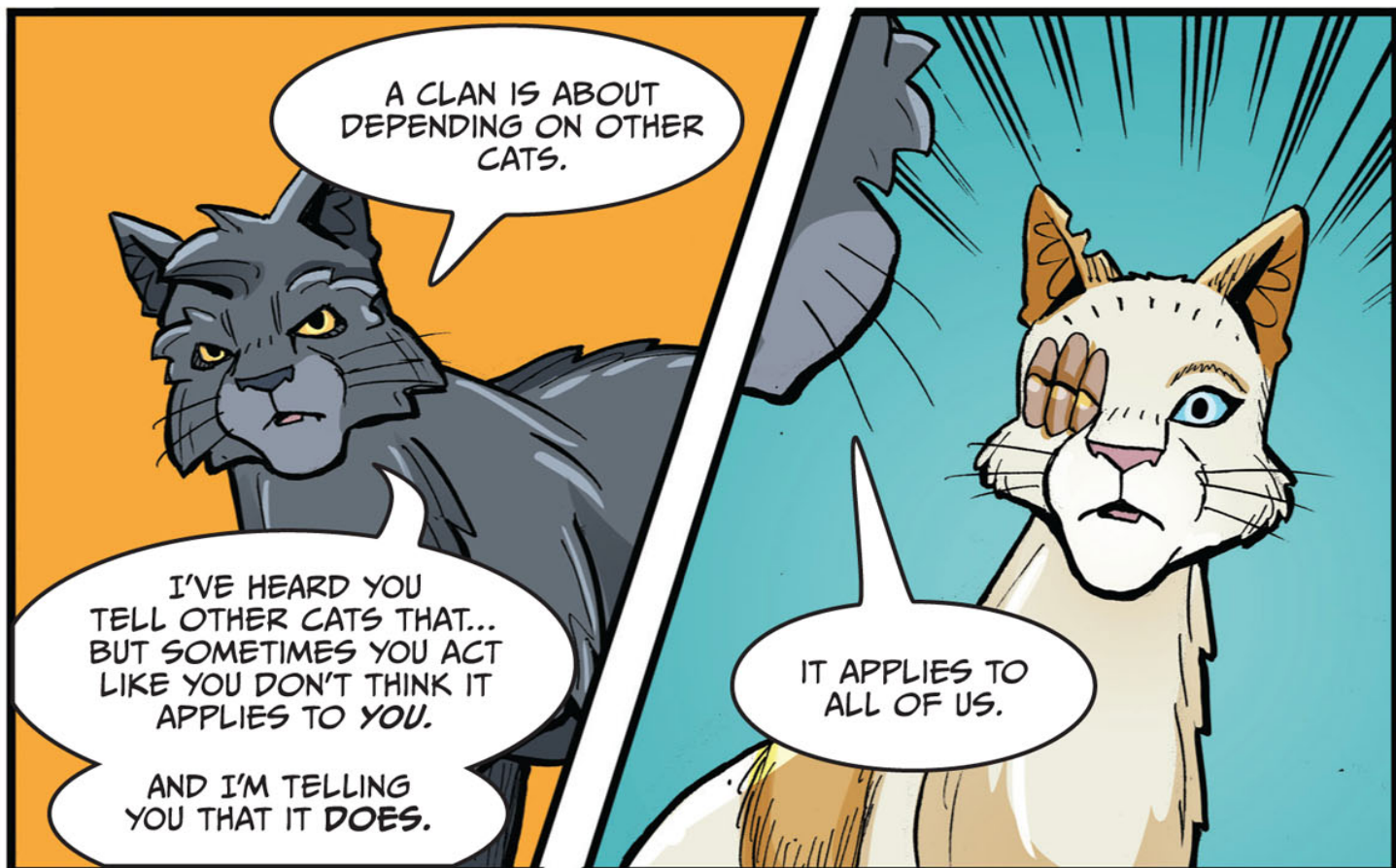
YOU DO TRUST YOUR CLANMATES, DON'T YOU, BRIGHTHEART?

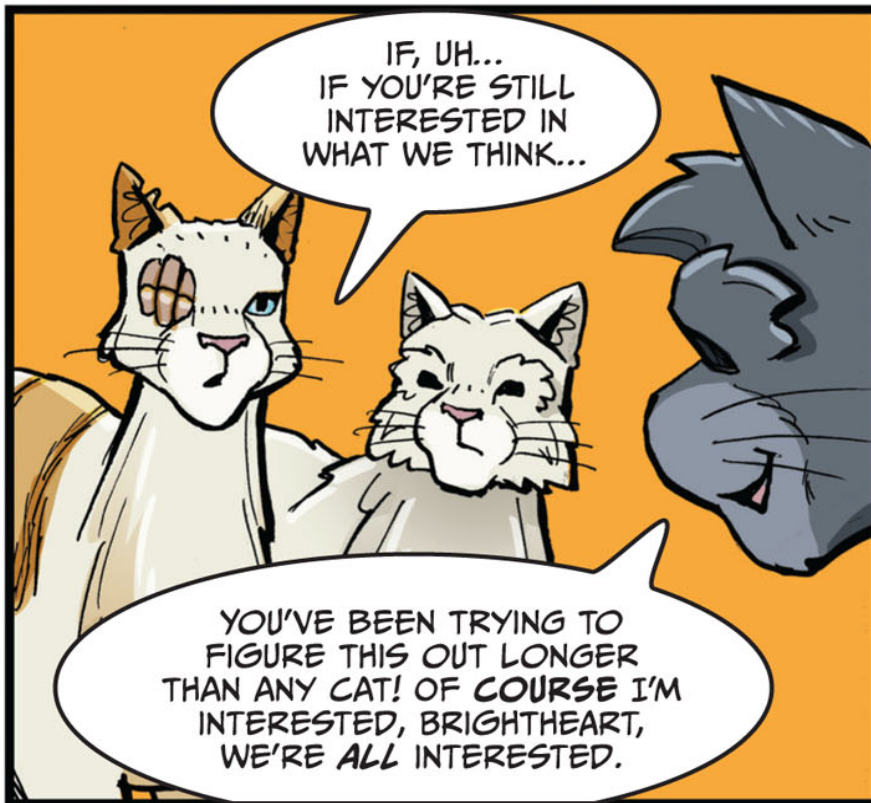
UM...



LOOK. I KNOW YOU AND CLOUDTAIL FELT LIKE YOU HAD TO WORK ALONE WHILE YOU WERE LEARNING TO BE A WARRIOR AGAIN.

BUT YOU CAN'T DO EVERYTHING ALONE!





DESPITE GETTING
CALLED OUT BY GRAYSTRIPE,
I SPEND THE REST OF THE DAY
EXCITED.

BESIDES, HE WAS RIGHT.
CLOUDTAIL AND I SHOULD'VE
ASKED FOR HELP IMMEDIATELY.

BUT NOW
WE'RE GETTING IT.



AND THE FIRST AND BIGGEST
STEP IS TO BAIT THE TRAP.



WHAT A
GREAT CATCH!

GOOD WORK,
RAINPAW!



SOON...



ALL WE
HAVE TO DO IS
WAIT.



WAIT...
AND WATCH.



THAT'S RIGHT —
MAKE IT STAND OUT AS
MUCH AS POSSIBLE!

PILE IT
AS HIGH AS YOU
CAN!



OKAY,
NOW WE HIDE.

PICK A BUSH
AROUND THE CAMP, CRAWL
UNDER IT SO YOU'RE OUT OF
SIGHT, AND DO NOT TAKE YOUR
EYES OFF THIS NEW PILE.



BRIGHTHEART —
WOULD IT HELP IF I
CLIMBED UP IN A TREE
AND WATCHED FROM
THERE?

IN A TREE... YES.
THAT'S AN EXCELLENT
IDEA, BRAMBLECLAW.
GOOD THINKING.



THORNCLAW
AND I COULD GO OUTSIDE
AND WATCH THE ENTRANCE
TO THE RAVINE...?

CATCH THEM
BEFORE THEY EVEN
GET INTO THE CAMP!
YES, VERY GOOD!



BRIGHTHEART?



LONGTAIL
AND I CAN TAKE CARE
OF SHREWKIT AND
SPIDERKIT.

KEEP THEM IN THE
MEDICINE DEN, SO
THEY'RE SAFE AND OUT
OF THE WAY.



I MAY NOT BE
ABLE TO SEE...

BUT I CAN STILL
FIGHT WELL ENOUGH
TO PROTECT THE KITS
FROM ANYTHING THAT
MAKES IT ALL THE WAY
INTO THE DEN.



YES!
ABSOLUTELY.

THAT MIGHT BE
THE BEST IDEA I'VE
HEARD ALL NIGHT!



SO WE WAIT...



...AND WAIT...



...AND WAIT SOME
MORE.



COME ON...
COME AND GET IT...
LOOK AT ALL THAT FRESH-KILL
OUT THERE... SO JUICY AND
TEMPTING...





THE NIGHT
DRAGS ON...AND ON...
AND ON.



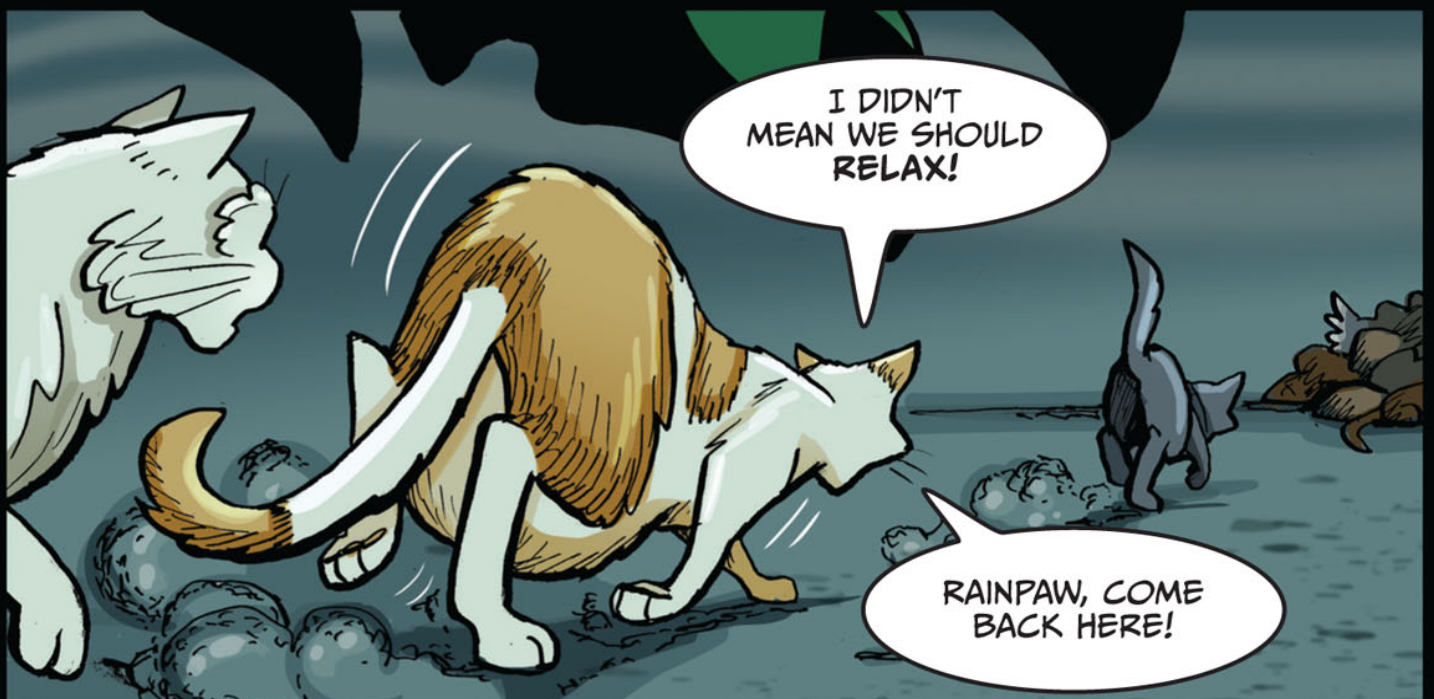
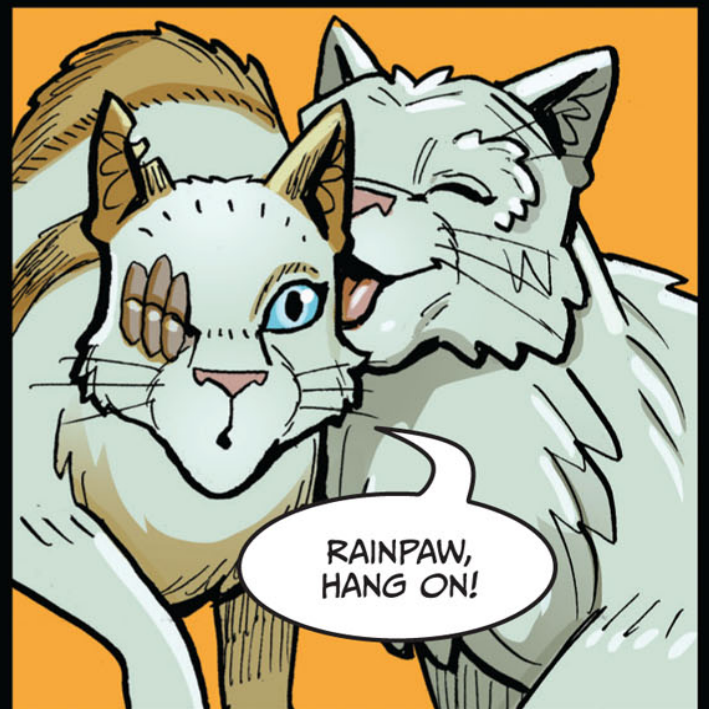
IT'S TOO MUCH
FOR RAINPAW.

IT'S ABOUT TO BE
TOO MUCH FOR THE REST
OF US, TOO.



ALL RIGHT.

I DON'T THINK
ANYTHING'S HAPPENING
TONIGHT. MAYBE WE COULD
TRY AGAIN TOMORROW.





RAINPAW,
LOOK OUT!



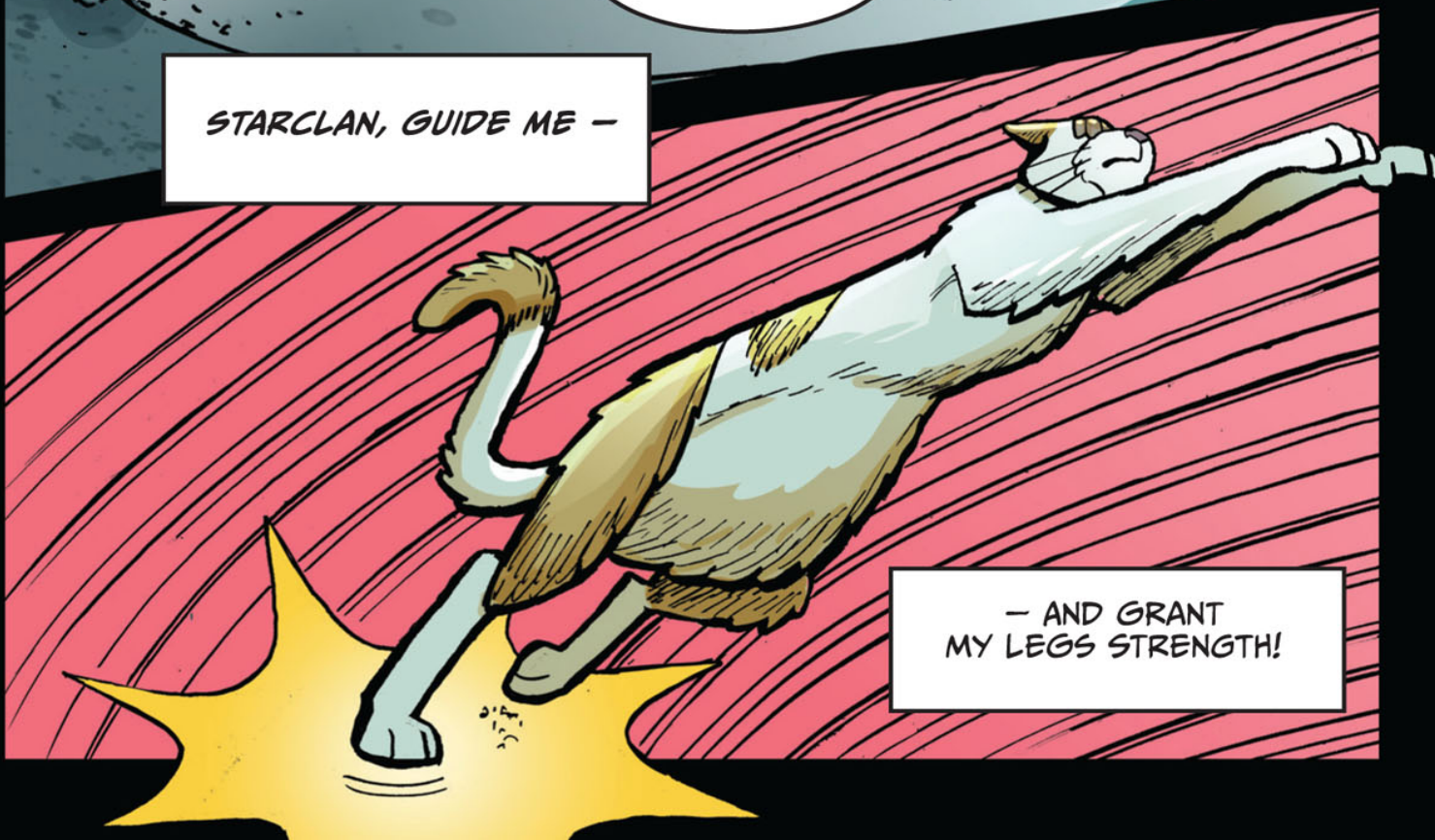
EEEEEE!!



BRIGHTHEART!

HELP ME!

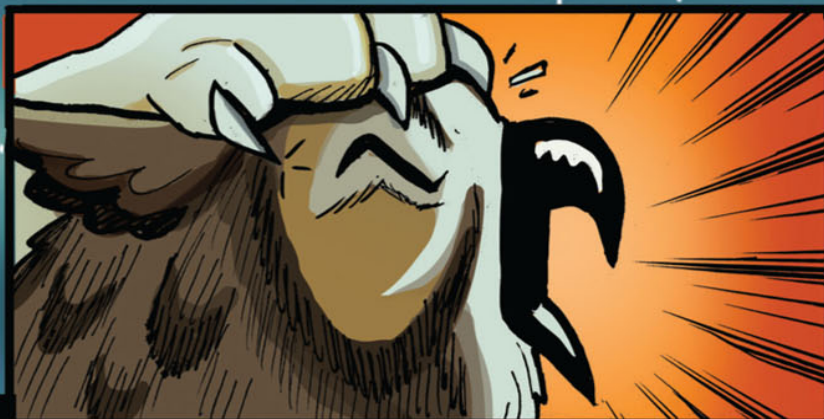
STARCLAN, GUIDE ME -



- AND GRANT
MY LEGS STRENGTH!



SCRRREECH!









ARE YOU OKAY?

I CAN'T
BELIEVE YOU
DID THAT!



THE SCRATCHES
AREN'T TOO DEEP.
SHOULD HEAL WITHOUT
MUCH TROUBLE.

YOU ARE
ONE LUCKY
APPRENTICE.

YEAH,
I FEEL LUCKY.



DID THE OWL HURT
YOU? DID YOU HIT YOUR HEAD
WHEN YOU FELL? HOW'S
YOUR BELLY? ARE THE
KITS OKAY?



I'M FINE,
I'M FINE, I —

WHOA...
FEEL A LITTLE LIGHT-
HEADED...

CINDERPELT!

THERE'S SOME SERIOUS
MOVEMENT IN HERE, BUT
I DON'T THINK YOU'VE GOT
ANY PROBLEMS.

YOUR LITTLE
ONES ARE PROBABLY
JUST *EXCITED*.

IT'S NOT
EVERY DAY KITS
GET TO GO
FLYING.

THE VOICES OF THE
CLAN WASH OVER ME.


THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT
HOW **BRAVE** RAINPAW IS...
AND SAYING I'M A *HERO*.

I CAN'T TELL ONE
FROM ANOTHER.

I'M NO HERO.
I JUST HELPED A CLANMATE.
THAT'S ALL.



WELL!
I DOUBT THAT OWL WILL
SEE OUR FRESH-KILL PILE
AS EASY PICKINGS
ANYMORE!



BUT, JUST TO BE SURE,
MAYBE WE SHOULD MOVE IT —
SAY, UNDER COVER OF
SOME BUSHES.



THEY'RE RIGHT,
BRIGHTHEART. WHAT
EVERY CAT'S
SAYING.

YOU ARE
A HERO.



BUT IF YOU
COULD PERHAPS BE
JUST A TINY LITTLE BIT
CAREFUL?

AT LEAST
UNTIL OUR KITS
ARE BORN?

I'D REALLY
APPRECIATE IT.

I'LL SEE
WHAT I CAN
DO.



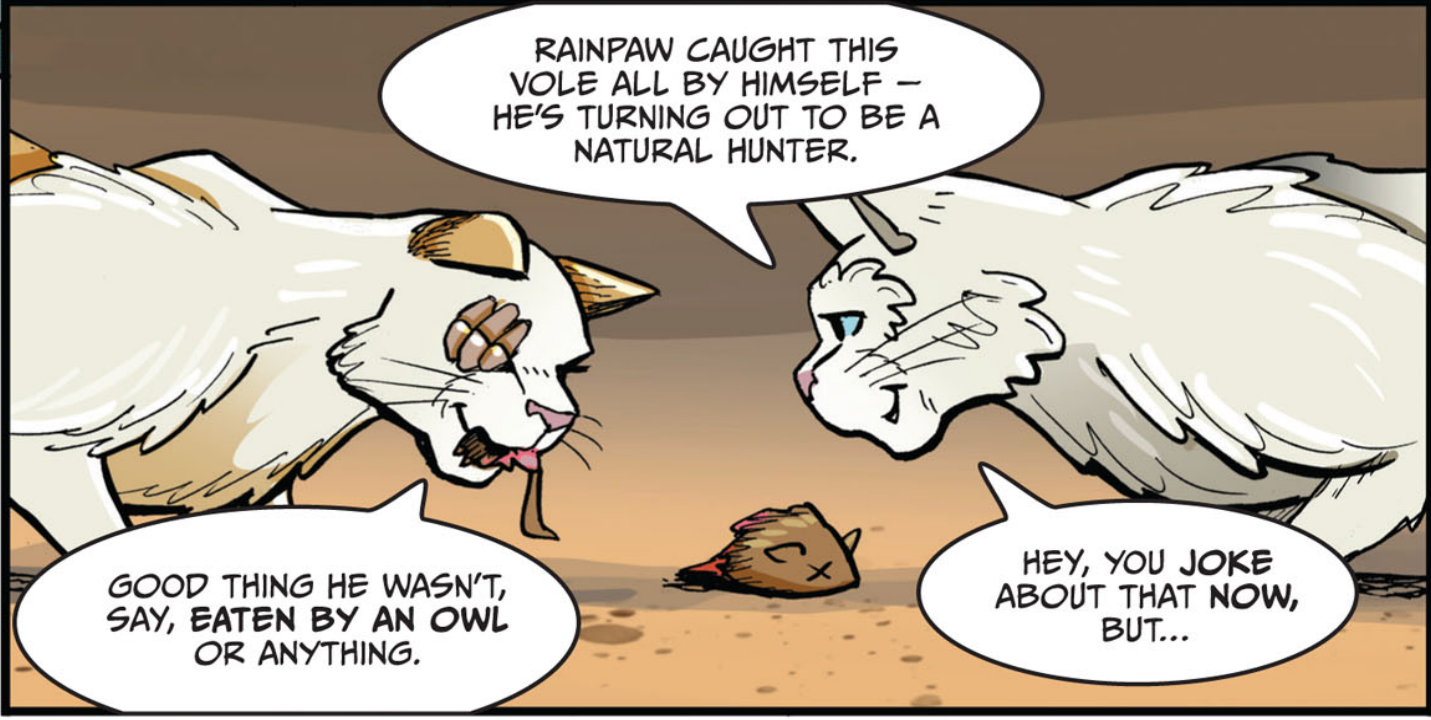
I THINK FIRESTAR
WOULD BE PROUD OF US.

WE CAUGHT THE THIEF...
SAVED AN APPRENTICE'S LIFE...
AND KEPT THE CLAN FROM
FALLING APART WHILE HE'S GONE.



CLOUDTAIL EVEN
GETS HIS WISH FOR
PEACE.

FOR A FEW DAYS,
ANYWAY.



RAINPAW CAUGHT THIS
VOLE ALL BY HIMSELF —
HE'S TURNING OUT TO BE A
NATURAL HUNTER.

GOOD THING HE WASN'T,
SAY, EATEN BY AN OWL
OR ANYTHING.

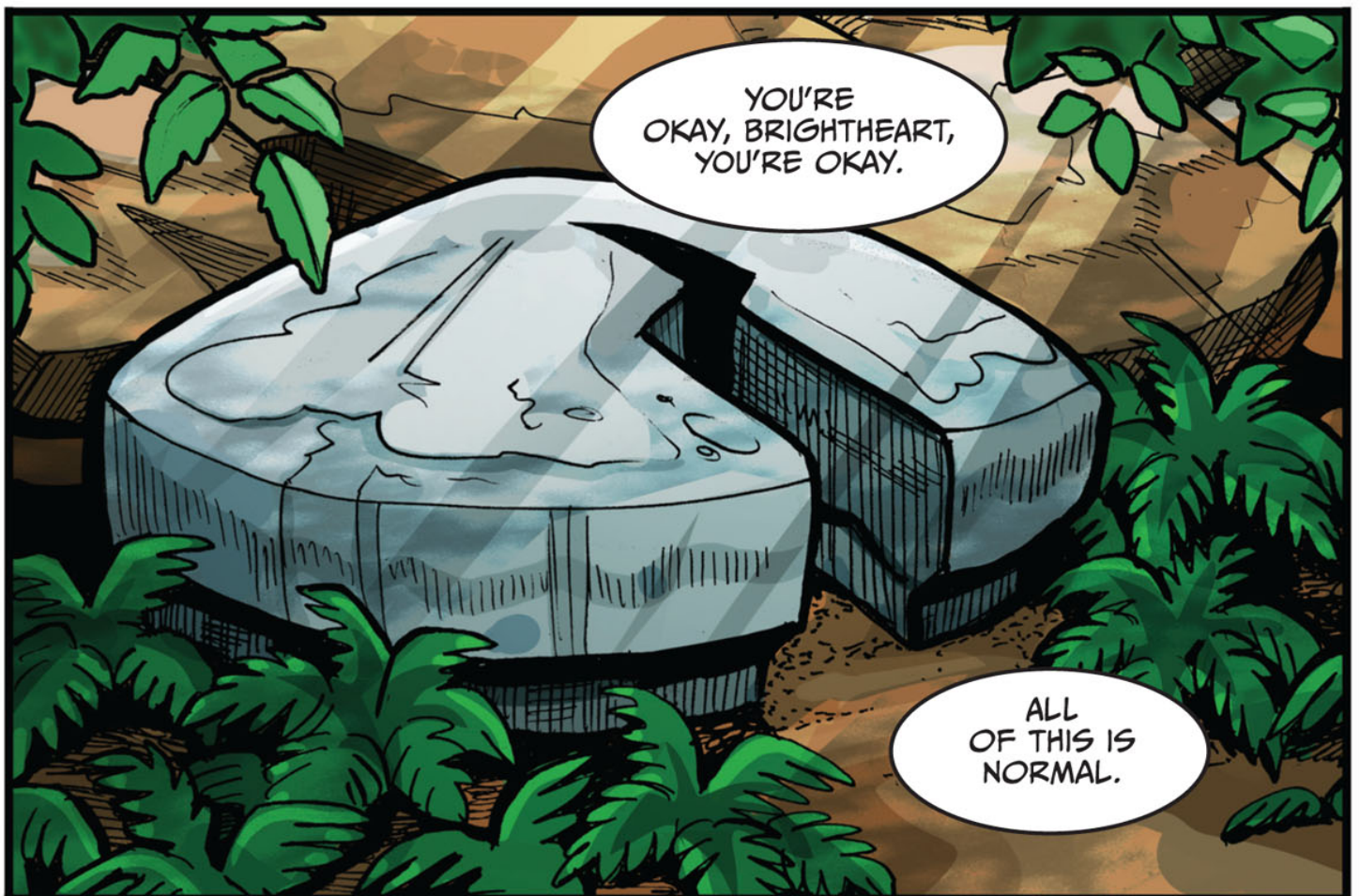
HEY, YOU JOKE
ABOUT THAT NOW,
BUT...

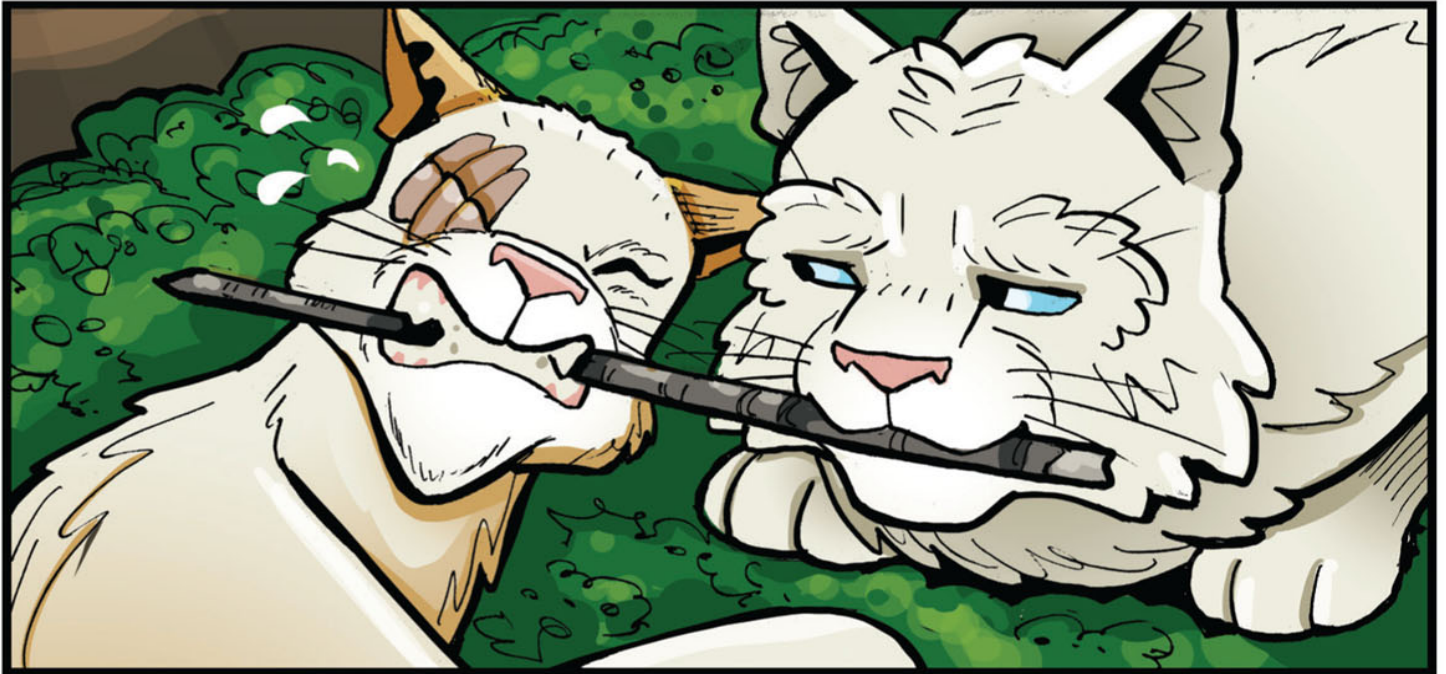


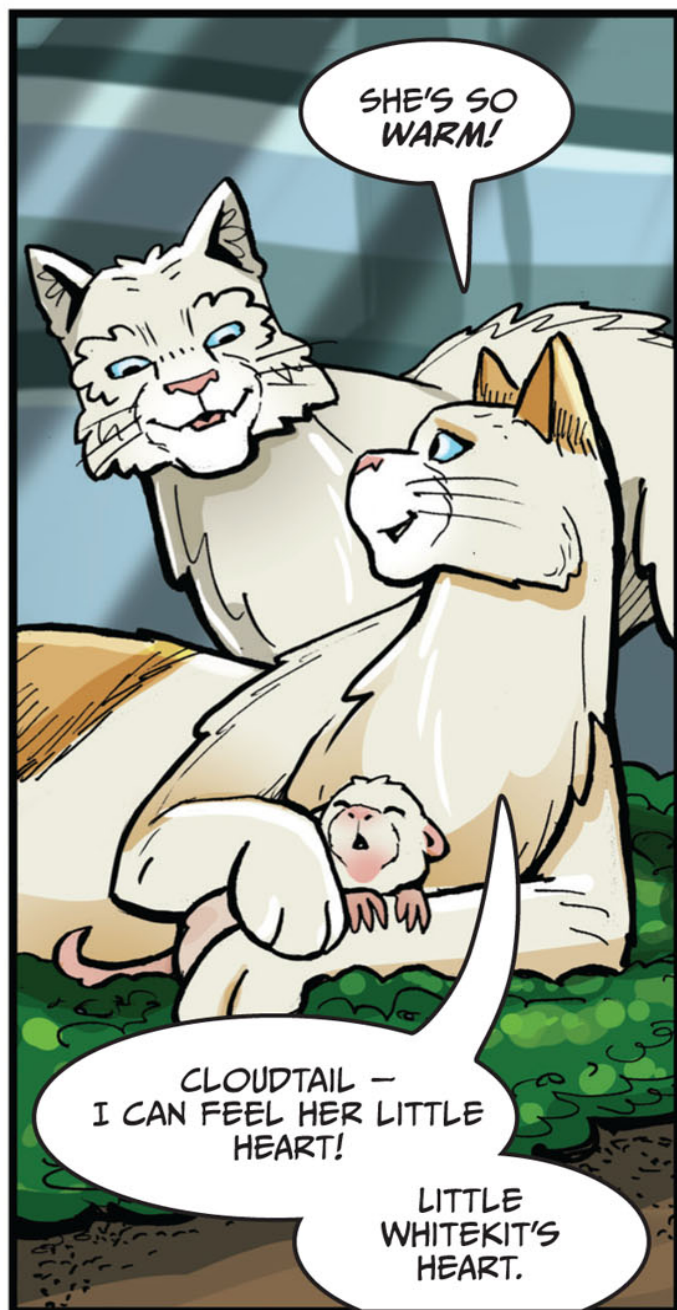
OOF.

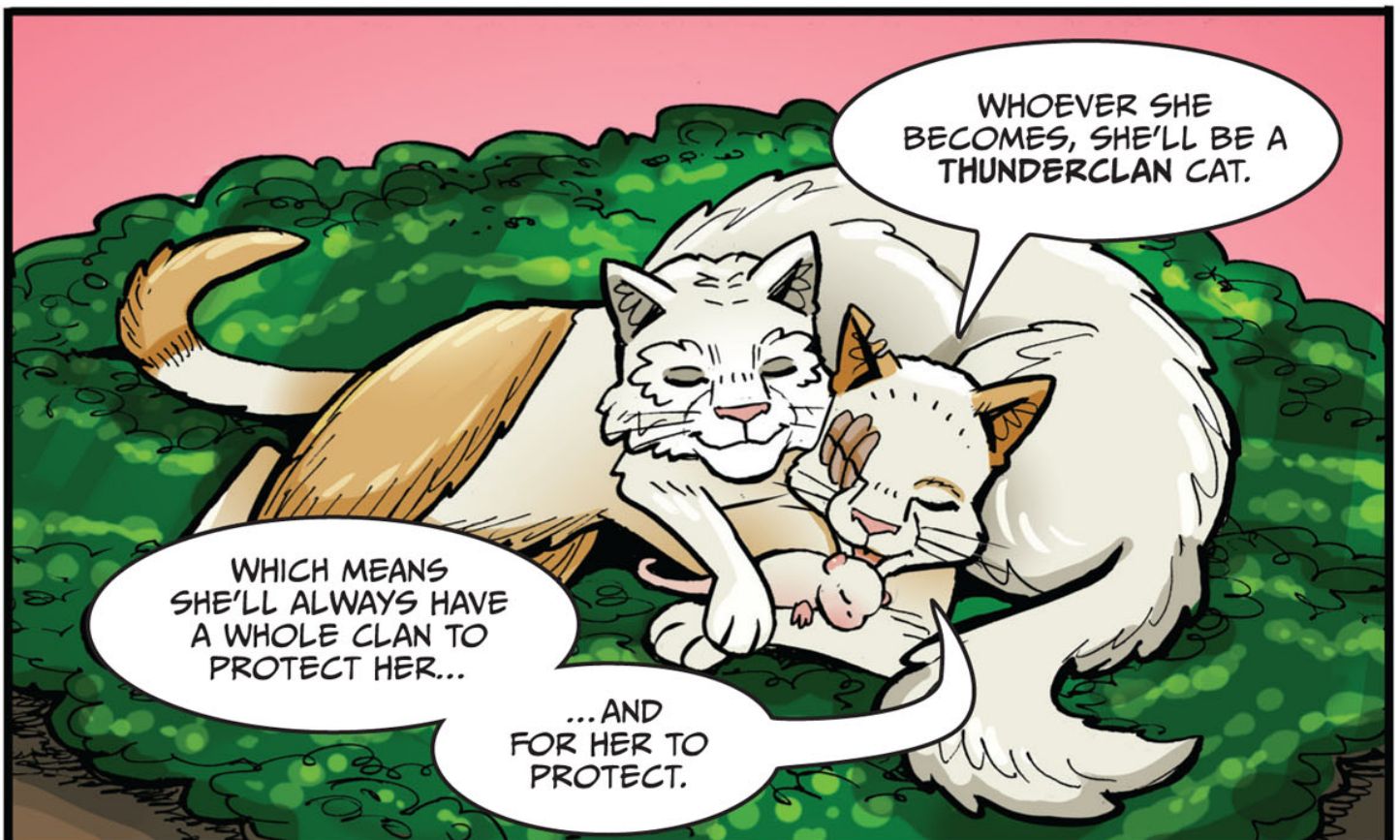
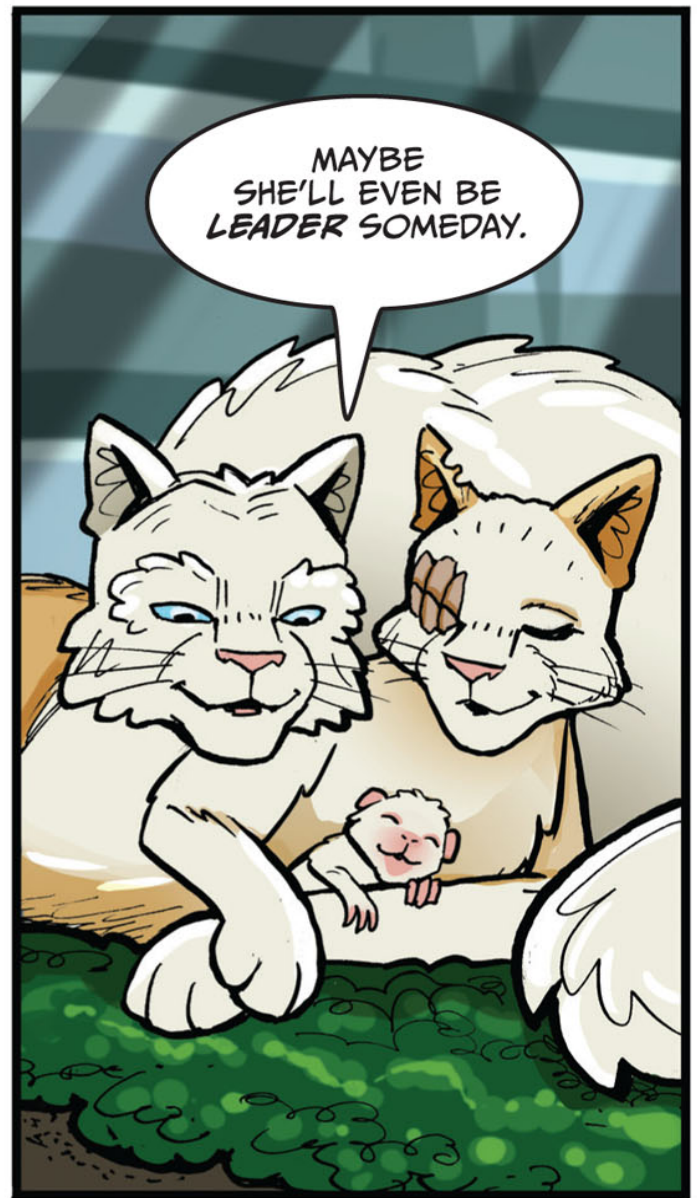


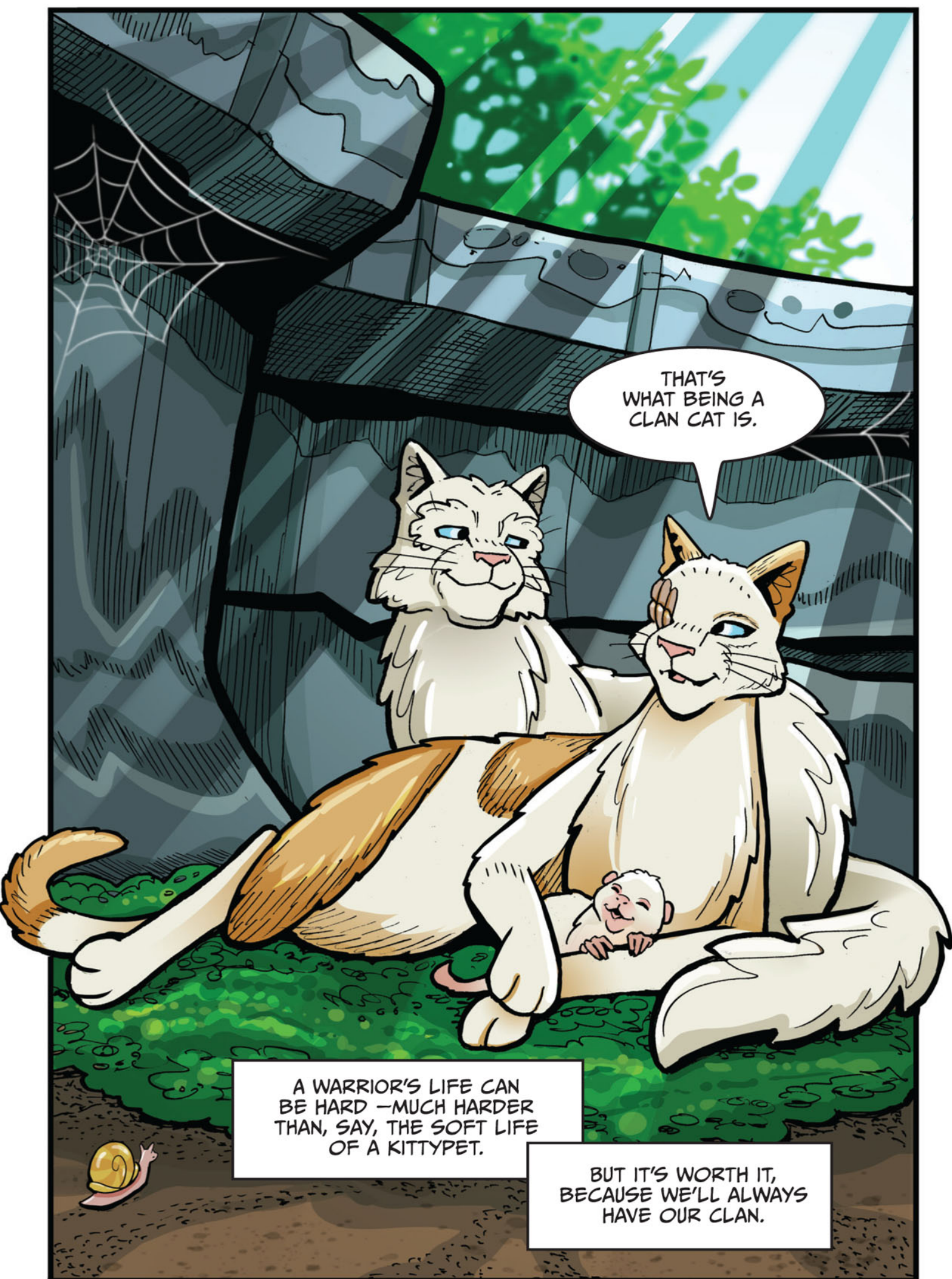
• • •











THAT'S
WHAT BEING A
CLAN CAT IS.

A WARRIOR'S LIFE CAN
BE HARD —MUCH HARDER
THAN, SAY, THE SOFT LIFE
OF A KITTYPET.

BUT IT'S WORTH IT,
BECAUSE WE'LL ALWAYS
HAVE OUR CLAN.

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WARRIORS

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