



FIRECLAWS

SAMPLES FROM THE TALES OF SUNCLAN

The Sun Rises over a Beach (Moon 0)

A gentle breeze wafts the saline air across a seaside forest. Smoky the cat hides in the shrubs, the scent of a delectable mouse nearby. Relying on his expert hunting skills, he slinks on his haunches, waggles his hind legs, and with a swift pounce, he snatches the mouse. Contemplating whether he should stash or eat the prey, his rumbling stomach decides the latter. He gulps the mouse and ambles along the sandy shore.

Smoky admires the vast sunset and wonders if something else, some strange secret, lies on this beach. With the Twolegs having abandoned the site many moons ago, the place is overrun by cats. They live in clans or cults, he is unsure which. He roams the shore, having settled in a nook between their territories, near which rests a quiet pond and an enchanting beach cave. But this evening a feline from one of those so-called "clans" has strayed from their territory. When the two stumble into one another, both are startled, and they swiftly bristle and hiss. Smoky prefers not to fight, but he demands answers. To his surprise, the other cat obliges. A wise tom formerly from PoolClan, he introduces himself as Ember. Once known as Hawkwing, he denounces the name. He weaves a tale of mistreatment, coerced to sever even his sworn loyalty. He then promises said loyalty to a kind and competent loner such as Smoky, advising that cats best live in groups because of the Clans. Smoky invites Ember to his hideaway, where they share food and shelter.

Over the next few days, the pair cooperate and thrive, and loners who hear reports of their settlement join the group one by one. Abandoned pets, neighbor clan cats, a sweet stray she-cat past her prime, and even a pair of orphaned kits all join the gang. Now that their hideaway resembles a camp, Ember suggests they start a Clan, nominating Smoky to lead them. Smoky hesitates, cautious and indecisive. As he ponders what burdens could arise, he falls into a trance. A host of dancing, shining cats surround him. They recognize him by a strange name, Sunburst. One by one, eight specters rush into him, each granting him a new power and a renewed confidence. He wakes from his trance. Examining the vibrant glint in his sunlit ice eyes, a crimson-pelted she-cat named Copper explains, "You've seen a vision from StarClan. They have approved the birth of our Clan, and they have granted you your nine lives." Ember asks what Smoky wishes to call himself, reckoning they should assume Clan names. As the burnt orange sun glazes the new leader's fur, Copper exclaims "Look how his pelt gleams like the sun itself!" Ember asks what Smoky's clan name should be, to which the tom replies, "I wish to be called...Sunstar."

The remaining cats chant their leader's new name. Sunstar climbs upon a boulder and declares that Ember will be known as Briargrowl, the Clan's deputy. He then appoints Copper to be Oakpelt, the Clan's medicine-cat. Sunstar pronounces each cat's Clan name one by one. Together they are SunClan.

No sooner does the new Clan dawn than Sunstar tells his cats to collect prey and healing herbs, and to set borders for their territory. Briargrowl assigns himself and the medicine-cat on a quartet mission to gather herbs and prey. Meanwhile Sunstar leads Gorsetail and Heatherslip on a trek around the perimeter. The border patrol scouts the scent of a loner. Seeing the loner peacefully searching for herbs, the patrol observes the tom's skill and believes he could aid the Clan alongside Oakpelt. Sunstar hardly has to convince the tom; he joins the patrol with his two kits and settles into his new home, where he becomes known as Bluetooth. The hunting patrol returns with their paws full. They give thanks to StarClan under a red ocean sky, excitedly awaiting the thrills of Clan life and of their newfound companionship.

The Moon Rock Appears (Moon 1)

The SunClan cats settle into their new home. Since many are used to the loner life and not acclimated to sharing space and resources, some have begun to bicker. But at least the kittens are getting along. One sunny, Gustkit and Whisperkit are play-fighting in a sandpit the warriors built in their beach cave. Gustkit, being the older, is wrestling lightly while Whisperkit fights with everything he has. The tiny charcoal kitten unsheathes his claws and springs toward the older tortie, but even on three legs, she is agile enough to evade his pounce. Whisperkit careens into the sand, smashing his forepaws into a buried rock.

Whisperkit yowls in pain while Gustkit scrambles to find Bluetooth. Bluetooth arrives and tends to the kit, only to be distracted repeatedly as the rock glimmers in the sunbeams. Once Whisperkit has calmed, the medicine-cat pads toward the boulder, his suspicious aroused. It is no ordinary stone; it shines like a Twoleg treasure. He unearths the shining rock a little before realizing just how sizable and mysterious a relic the kits have discovered. He alerts Sunstar and Briargrowl, imploring them to inspect the strange sunken stone in their camp. The trio and the kits dig mound after mound of sand, ablaze with the wonder of Twoleg mystery, until they find a crease that spans its girth. After laborious tinkering and cooperation, the cats open the crease, releasing the upper half of the Twoleg object from its shackles, and discover a trove of Twoleg treasures, much like a fresh-kill pile but filled with shiny things instead of prey.

As the kits dig through the treasure, filled with curiosity and amazement, they uncover a small crystalline stone, slightly smaller than a warrior's head, gleaming in the dim cave as if it had fallen from the moon itself. Excitedly they call Sunstar. "What is it?" he inquires in his own curiosity, "Is it a piece of the moon?" The kits exclaim, "We found a moon rock!" Sunstar believes the name appropriate for their newly unearthed treasure. He lays his left forepaw on the moon rock. His head tilts as he ponders how it feels so smooth and polished, even strangely warm beneath his paw pads.

Sunstar, consumed by its warmth, fails to notice the hot red glow brightening on his firepaw. Suddenly, a blinding flash fills the cave, and Sunstar's paw catches fire! But there is no pain, nor does it burn. He waves his paw curiously as the flame follows it like a torch. He unsheathes his claws and feigns a swipe. The fire flickers on his claws, a dazzling slash as if searing a claw-wound into the air itself. Sunstar realizes, with a giddy half-grin, half-smirk, that he is controlling the flame. Endless possibilities flash through his mind as he imagines the potential future of his new clan.

Sunstar finally leaves the cave under a royal blue starry dusk sky. He gathers some bramble, announcing his discovery by kindling the twigs with a mere claw swipe. Sunstar reveals the moon rock and bids his clan mates to touch it, for perhaps they may gain elements of their own.

Like several other cats, Oakpelt gazes, uncertain and anxious. What does it feel like to touch it? Is it a prick? A shock? A fire? And the abilities the moon rock has reserved for her—what could they be? Does the moon rock grant powers to medicine-cats? To her the sight of this mysterious rock is an endless string of questions, curiosities, and fears that is disrupted only when her paw blindly grazes a familiar texture like moss. Perhaps nettle or marigold—the she-cat is so lost in thought that she isn't even watching. Soon a gentle tickle strokes her hind paws, growing beneath them, wrapping her ankles. Unable to ignore the itch any longer, she glances down and gasps—her paws are draped in flowers and vines! She plucks a goldenrod bud to examine it, only to watch in amazement as it blossoms before her eyes. Indeed, she has used herbs before, but now it is as if she can harness their very essence. She grins from ear to ear, aware of the unbridled healing prowess granted her by the moon rock.

Whisperkit's Apprentice Ceremony (Moon 5)

The morning of Whisperkit's apprentice ceremony arrives. Sunstar pads nervously, sorting his final thoughts about the kit. Is he ready to train? Who should be his mentor? He glances toward the fading stars of Silverpelt before consulting Briargrowl, seeking solace from his deputy as since the Clan's conception. They converse about Clan matters, their tense encounters with BeeClan and with the Twolegs, and about the mentor who would best suit Whisperkit. As they chat, Sunstar feels nervous and uneasy. Though he desperately wishes to, he can't stop thinking about the moonlight stroll they shared a few nights ago.

As the discussion continues, the leader averts his gaze for a long while, before staring, oddly longingly, at his deputy. At long last, Briargrowl asks what is so distracting, and Sunstar's response levels the befuddled deputy—he confesses feelings for Briargrowl and asks for them to be mates! In shock and struggling to ease the mounting tension, Briargrowl averts his own gaze and admits that he only sees Sunstar as a good friend and leader. Sunstar cannot help but snarl distastefully at the rejection, his tail and ears drooping as the reality of his lost hope sinks into his mind. But the faithful friend he is, Briargrowl still expresses his trust for Sunstar as a leader and that the smoky tom himself would make a good mentor to the soon-to-be apprentice.

Casting the heartbreak aside, the leader ascends the high rock and calls a Clan meeting:

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the high rock."

At first the assembly is tense, the apprentices snickering and gossiping of Sunstar's crush while the adults follow him cautiously. Then the leader adds,

"This includes you, Whisperkit."

A dozen pairs of eyes turn toward the nursery gate, watching as their youngest member shyly slinks into the sea of cats. The sight of him becoming one of them one day is a reality they have accepted, but most have hardly imagined that day to be *today*. Whisperkit leaps aboard the path of stones, the rocks smaller and the treks easier than he remembers. His heart pounds as he creeps toward the crest where his leader waits. Gazing from atop the high rock, the warriors who once restrained him and guarded him now appear as kits themselves. The perspective afforded from his newfound height bolsters his confidence as he sits, patient and nervous as he has ever been, restlessly wondering which of the warriors below will mentor him. Even so, he is surprised by Sunstar's declaration:

"I will mentor this apprentice myself. Until he has earned his warrior name, he shall be called Whisperpaw."

Chants of the new name echo across the crowd below. Whisperpaw hops from his perch and joins his fellow apprentices as they brush against and share tongues with their beloved youngest companion, ever excited to relive the days they spent together as they had in the nursery...except the adventures that would immerse them would not be mere stories, but instead legends forged by their very paws.