

## Appendix B: Exposure passage

One day Chicken Little was pecking in the dirt under the acorn tree, looking for tasty worms, when he felt a sharp WHACK on his fluffy head.

“Ouch! Oh dear! Disaster!” cried Chicken Little, who was a bit of a drama queen. “The sky is falling!” His head hurt, and he could feel a big, painful bump on it.

“I’d better warn everyone!” he squawked. And off he raced, in a panicked cloud of fluff.

He found Plucky Ducky doing backstroke in the pond.

“Get out of the bath! Emergency!” shrieked Chicken Little. “The sky is falling!”

“Stay calm,” quacked Plucky Ducky, puffing out her chest. “I’ll save you. I’m not scared of anything. Remember that time that rabid dog—”

“No time to waste! Or bathe!” shrieked Chicken Little. “A chunk of sky just bruised my head. It’s starting to throb – look at this bump!”

Chicken Little wasn’t playing around: Plucky Ducky could see the swelling under his feathers.

“Oh boy,” she said. “Never fear, I’m no coward. I’ll get us out of this alive. Come on! We’d better grab the others.”

Hurrying down the path, the pair met Weepy Sheepy, chewing gloomily on some clover.

“Run!” screeched Chicken Little. “Mass evacuation, the sky is falling. Look at my poor head!”

Weepy Sheepy burst into tears. “Please don’t raise your voice at me,” he said, sobbing. “I’m feeling a bit delicate.”

“Have courage,” said Plucky Ducky, “I’ll protect you. No need to nominate me for a medal or anything, this is just the way I operate. Join us! Make haste!”

“Oh help, I’m scared,” wailed Weepy Sheepy, trotting after them. “Has anyone got a tissue?”

Down in the woods they found Perky Turkey, picking flowers.

“Hi-ho!” grinned Perky Turkey, who was always happy. “Hello all! What a lovely day.”

“It’s not a lovely day at all!” screamed Chicken Little, hopping around madly. “It’s the apocalypse! The sky is falling!”

“What fun!” said Perky Turkey cheerfully. “You’re so sweet, dear Chicken Little, always off having adventures. You really brighten things up.”

“It’s an international disaster!” bawled Weepy Sheepy. “We’re all doomed.”

“Goodness, things can’t be that bad,” smiled Perky Turkey. “Soothe yourselves. Let’s look on the bright side.”

“There is no bright side,” squeaked Chicken Little. “I’m saying the whole sky’s about to crash down.”

“Be brave! We will endure,” declared loyal Plucky Ducky. “I’m coordinating the evacuation. You’d better come with us.”

“Sure,” said Perky Turkey joyously. “Count me in, it sounds like a hoot.” And off they went.

Down by the bog, they found Niggly Piggly lying in the mud.

“The sky is falling!” screeched Chicken Little. “A piece just hit me in the head!”

Niggly Piggy snorted. “Rubbish. You’re always panicking, you paranoid fowl. Apparently you got hay-fever once, and told everyone it was bird flu.”

“But it’s true – honestly, it’s the end of the world,” wept Weepy Sheepy. He was so upset he could barely breathe.

Niggly Piggly scowled. “Pathetic! Don’t snivel, you big sook. You’re always having a blub. Another false alarm. This is getting beyond a joke.” Weepy Sheepy’s lip began to tremble.

“I’m afraid they’re right, my friend,” said Plucky Ducky. “But fear not. My plan is to relocate everyone to a safe underground bunker, with enough food to last for months.”

Niggly Piggly struggled to sit up; he wasn’t exactly lithe. “Food for months?” he grunted. “Hmm, I do like my grub. Fine, I’ll come, if these two bright sparks don’t annoy me.”

“See!” said Perky Turkey, clapping her wings. “Every cloud has a silver lining!”

“You can shut your beak too,” glowered Niggly Piggly as they all ran away down the lane.

Beside the flowing brook, the animals found Groggy Froggy sitting blearily on a log.

“Evacuate! Evacuate!” squealed Chicken Little. “The sky is falling!”

Groggy Froggy winced. “Could you keep the noise down?” he said. “I’ve got the worst hangover. I think I’ve poisoned my liver.”

Plucky Ducky stepped up. “Pull yourself together, Froggie. We’ve come to save you.”

“The world’s ending,” sniffled Weepy Sheepy. “It’s Doomsday.”

Groggy Froggy looked confused. “Am I dreaming?” he asked woozily. “I thought today was Thursday. Where am I?” He couldn’t remember anything.

Niggly Piggly stamped his trotter, in a huff. “This frog’s brain is pickled,” he snapped. “He belongs in rehab. Let’s leave him here to sober up, and get to that bunker in time for supper.”

“No,” said Plucky Ducky, loyal as ever. “We’re all in this together. Enough talk, Froggy – it’s join us or perish, you have no choice.”

Flopping down beside them, Groggy Froggy gave a loud burp. “All right,” he said vaguely.

“But can we stop at the pub? Alcohol is great for stress.”

Further down the lane they found Gloaty Goaty.

“The sky is falling!” screeched Chicken Little. “The universe is exploding! The end is near!”

Gloaty Goaty sniggered. “Oh goodie,” he said. “You’re having another panic attack. You’re so entertaining when you get in a flap.”

“I’m not playing around!” yelled the frazzled Chicken. “Look at this bump!” He gave his head a rub.

“Now now,” gobbled Perky Turkey happily, as blithe as ever. “It might be the Apocalypse, but I’m sure everything will be just fine. Let’s keep our chins up.”

Gloaty Goaty laughed. “Sure. And how many chins have you got, turkey? I can count five – the royal flush!”

Plucky Ducky wagged a wing. “Behave, Goatie! No time for sniping. I’m coordinating this rescue operation. Join us!”

Gloaty Goaty snickered. “Bravo! What a pithy summary. You’re hilarious. Are you our saviour, then?”

“Some people call me a hero,” admitted Plucky Ducky, bowing modestly, “but I think that’s going a bit overboard.”

Niggly Piggly rolled his eyes. These delays were making him seethe. “Can we go? I’m starving.”

“I’m really dehydrated,” said Groggy Froggy. “I need a drink.”

“Oh boy, you nutcases make me feel normal,” crowed Gloaty Goaty. “I always enjoy a good

disaster. Sign me up for the Apocalypse club.”

At the end of the lane, the animals saw a big white van parked at the crossroads ahead. Beyond it stood a powerfully built man in blood-stained overalls, squinting at a map.

“Civil emergency!” blared Chicken Little. “Alert the media! Call a lawyer!”

The man peered at them short-sightedly. He’d lost his glasses, but he knew a chicken when he saw one. And a sheep. And a goat. Oh yes, he knew his animals alright.

“What’s all this palaver?” said the Man with the Van. “Looks like someone left the farm gate open.”

“The sky is falling!” gasped Chicken Little.

“Is it now?” said the man thoughtfully, rubbing his chin. “Can I do anything to help?”

“We’re heading for shelter,” said Plucky Ducky. “There’s no time to waste.”

“Aha,” said the man slyly. “Shelter, you’re saying? Can I offer you a lift? I know a safe place. It’s not far away.”

“Um... You know the way to the bunker?” asked Plucky Ducky, suddenly realising she hadn’t really thought this through.

“Well sure, it’s like a bunker,” said the man, his voice smooth. “It’s definitely secure. And I know a shortcut. How about hopping in the back of my van?”

As the nervous animals crowded together, Perky Turkey looked at the van. It had pretty lettering painted along one side.

She spelled the word under her breath: “B – U – T – C – H – E...” The last letter was hidden behind the man. The turkey froze.

“Guys, look!” she hissed urgently, pointing at the ghastly word. “It’s a ploy! He’s trying to lure us to our deaths!”

One by one, the animals mouthed the letters, and began to writhe and tremble in pure, genuine, heartfelt fear – all except Groggy Froggy, the little grub, who was only half-awake, with dribble on his chin.

“So what do you say?” said the man, peering at them. “Shall we all head off?”

But the animals were frozen in terror. They cowered together, hardly dared to breathe.

“Don’t move,” whispered Plucky Ducky. “It’s a trap!”

Chicken Little shook so hard his beak began to rattle. Then, with one especially violent tremble, something popped out of his frothy feathers and fell onto the road with a CLUNK.

The animals stared down at it. There on the road lay a big brown acorn. They looked at Chicken Little. The bump on his head was gone.

At last, they realized: the sky was not falling at all. But now they were in real trouble.

“You silly, thick-headed chicken,” growled Niggly Piggly. “I really loathe you bird-brained types!”

The man squinted down. “What is that thing?” he asked suspiciously.

Plucky Ducky thought fast. “It’s a hand grenade!” she shouted, grabbing the acorn with one webbed foot. “A highly accurate miniature explosive! Get behind me, animals!”

The man stepped back. “Don’t throw it at me,” he said. “I’m just trying to help.” He peered at the object. Maybe they were bluffing. But it did look like a tiny hand grenade.

“Get back! We see your evil plot!” yelled Plucky Ducky. “Vamoose, or I’ll blow you to

smithereens!”

The man hesitated. These animals were crazy – better safe than sorry. He jumped in his van, revving up the engine.

“Next time I’ll bring my chopper and put you all on the slab! I’ll make mincemeat out of the lot of you!” he yelled furiously as he sped away.

As the animals watched him go, they sighed with relief.

Weepy Sheepy began to sob. “What a nightmare!” he howled. “I think I’m having a nervous breakdown.”

“Ahem. No need to reward me for saving your lives,” declared Plucky Ducky proudly. “Please don’t bother. But I suppose I can’t avoid getting that medal now.”

“Oh, joy!” said Perky Turkey. “Wasn’t I saying everything would turn out for the best?”

Gloaty Goaty gave a gleeful snicker.

“Can you believe that guy?” he said. “Humans! They’re just SO gullible!”