



FIVE FOOLISH FIREFIGHTERS

by Douglas Evans

One afternoon, the town hall of the small town of Townsville caught on fire. The bell at Townsville School rang to sound the alarm, and five firefighters from the Townsville Fire Department came running across the town square.

The five firefighters stood before the town hall. Ribbons of smoke snaked out a lower window of the white wooden building.

The first firefighter strapped on his yellow firefighter's helmet. He buckled up his yellow rubber coat.

"It's only a minor fire," he said. "So here's the plan. We'll douse the flames with water drawn from the town well. A few tosses of water in buckets will do the job. I'll go fetch the pails at once."

The first firefighter took off toward the well house, while the other four firefighters continued studying the fire. By now, black smoke poured from all the windows. Tongues of yellow flame lapped around the front doorway.

The second firefighter strapped on his yellow helmet and buckled up his coat. "Water buckets won't be enough to put out that fire," he said. "We need a new plan. We should use the large fire hose. We'll pump water from the river and have that fire out in no time. I'll run and get the hose cart."

After the second firefighter left, the three remaining firefighters studied the blaze some more. At this point, flames shot out of the second floor windows and engulfed the roof.

"A single hose from the river will never extinguish that fire," the third firefighter said. He strapped on his yellow helmet and buckled up his coat. "So here's a new plan. We need the hook-and-ladder truck. The long ladder will reach the Town Hall's top floor. The axes and extra hoses will be helpful. I'll hurry to the firehouse and drive the fire engine here."

The third firefighter ran toward the Townsville Firehouse, and the

two firefighters still at the Townsville Town Hall walked around the burning building. The sound of crackling wood filled the town square. Smoke darkened the sky.

The fourth firefighter strapped on his yellow helmet and buckled up his yellow rubber coat. "The other firemen's plans are no good," he said. "That fire is far too large to put out with buckets or hoses or even our hook-and-ladder truck. We must seek help from the firemen in the neighboring towns." And he ran to the corner phone booth to call the fire departments in nearby towns.

Now the fifth firefighter stood alone. He watched orange pillars of flames rise high above the town hall roof. He saw the roof collapse and a wall cave in.

"The fire has destroyed the entire building," he said. He strapped on his helmet and buckled up his jacket. "The only good plan now is to keep it from spreading."

Soon, the first firefighter returned with two fire buckets filled with water. The second firefighter arrived pulling the hose from the river, and the third firefighter drove up in the hook-and-ladder truck. Moments later, the fourth firefighter showed up with twelve firefighters from the neighboring towns. They all stood before the Townsville Town Hall, now a pile of smoldering cinders and charred lumber.

The five firefighters removed their helmets and unbuckled their coats.

“The fire beat us,” said the first firefighter. “What a shame.”

“We were called too late to save the building,” the second firefighter said.

“We held many fire drills,” said the third firefighter.

“And made good plans,” the fourth firefighter added.

“We did everything we could to save the Townsville Town Hall,” said the fifth firefighter, and the other firefighters in the Townsville Fire Department nodded in agreement.