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The Fire

Mary Graham Bonner

"Quack, quack, quack! Help, help, help!"

More than a hundred thousand ducks were shrieking at the same time.

A fireman sitting outside the firehouse heard them from some distance away. "There must be trouble at the duck farm," he told his colleague. He fetched his spyglass and had a long look.

"Don't you suppose one duck was hurt," said the other fireman, "and the rest are quacking in sympathy?"

"I don't believe a hundred thousand ducks would all be that sympathetic at once," said the first. "And they wouldn't make this much noise. Something's happened over there."

He kept looking. "There—I can see smoke. Not near the farm exactly—farther off. A forest fire, I think, but heading that way."

They sent out the alarm. The horses galloped as hard as they had ever galloped, toward the duck farm and whatever lay beyond it.

"It's a fire!" the people on the farm were already shouting when they arrived. "A terrible forest fire! Where are the engines—where is the help?" And they were reaching for the telephone even as the fire engines roared past them into the trees.

The firemen pushed the fire back, and pushed it back again, until it stopped—just before it reached the duck farm.

The ducks quacked softly now, still shaken, but safe: "*We are safe, quack, quack, we are safe.*"

"How on earth did you get here before we even telephoned?" asked the people on the farm.

"Your ducks sent us the alarm," said one of the firemen.



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