

## **Poppy excerpt from Chapter 4, "The Emergency Meeting"**

1 The moment Poppy entered the room, he saw her.

2 "Ah, Poppy," he cried, "you're late, but at least you're here."

3 "For Poppy's sake," he began, "I'll review what I've said already. Our family has grown very  
4 large. So large, in fact, that there is not enough food in this neighborhood to feed us all.

5 "Indeed, our family is still an expanding one." He nodded to Sweet Cicely, who smiled wanly  
6 in dutiful recognition of the remark. "For example," Lungwort continued, "my wife and I have  
7 had seventy-five children, who in turn have given us forty grandchildren, twenty great  
8 grandchildren, and twelve great-great-grandchildren."

9 This remark was greeted by the assembled mice with a generous tapping of tails upon the  
10 floor.

11 Lungwort dipped his head in acknowledgment of the tribute. Then he went on. "The truth is,  
12 by my calculations, our current rate of population growth--and it's this I was about to say  
13 when Poppy arrived—promises serious food shortages, sickness, and, yes, death, unless we  
14 take action within the next few days."

15 There was an immediate buzz and squeak among the family "Good grief!" "How awful!"  
16 "What'll we do now?" "Who would have guessed?"

17 Lungwort raised his voice over the hubbub. "Living in the open will not do. The dangers of  
18 that are obvious. No, we need to establish an extra residence—a home near to abundant food  
19 but still close enough to Gray House so that the family, with its present leadership, can be  
20 maintained. And of course, the second dwelling must be safe.

21 "Happily, I have been informed by an old sparrow acquaintance of mine—Mr. Albicollis—  
22 that a new home has been built within the territory."

23 Again there was chatter. "Where?" "Have you seen it?" "What's it like?"

24 "It's on the northern side of Dimwood Forest. New House, it's called. A half day's trek from  
25 here."

26 "That's so far!" "Almost another country!" "I've never been away from home!" "I bet it's not  
27 so good as this place!"

28 Lungwort held up a paw: The talk stilled. "This New House is reachable by the Tar Road,  
29 across the Bridge, and beyond New Field, which, I've been informed, has abundant food."

30 "Somebody else can go!" "Wonder what kind of food there is." "I doubt I'd do well there!"

### **Appendix 4a1**

31 "Naturally; I will need to investigate New House with care."

32 "Would I get a room of my own?" "Can I keep sharing with Tansy?" "They'll never get me to  
33 go." "I won't bunk with Husk."

34 "Further, there will be much organizing and packing to be done."

35 "I hate the thought of packing." "I have too much to move." "I just put together a whole new  
36 room."

37 "Finally;" Lungwort went on, "we will need a delegation to go through the formality of  
38 applying to Mr. Ocax for permission to move."

39 This time Lungwort's words brought silence. Every eye looked down or away except for  
40 Poppy's. She could only stare at her father in revulsion. How could he even suggest such a  
41 thing!

42 "Now, now," Lungwort said severely; "Mr. Ocax has always been most accommodating. Need  
43 I remind you that he protects us from porcupines. We all know about porcupines, don't we?  
44 We do indeed. Have we seen so much as *one* porcupine in these parts for years? Not one!  
45 Proof enough that Mr. Ocax is holding up *his* end of the bargain. As long as I'm head of this  
46 family; I expect us to do *our* part. Asking his permission to move is an insignificant sacrifice  
47 to make for our well-being.

48 "All right, then," Lungwort concluded, looking around. "Any questions?"

49 Poppy had no idea what Ragweed would have asked, but she knew it would have been  
50 *something*.

## Appendix 4a2