



Willow the **Duckling**



For BB the duck – J.C.

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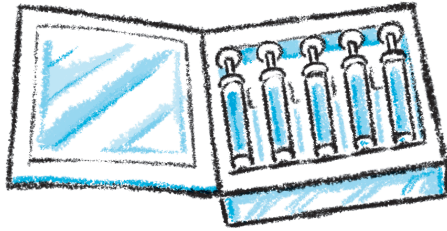
Willow the Duckling

Jane Clarke

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Chapter One



Peanut looked out the window of Dr. KittyCat’s clinic. A long line of young animals was waiting at the door.

“We’re going to be busy this morning,” he squeaked. “It looks as if every little animal in Thistle town has come to be vaccinated against fur and feather flu!”



“Purr-fect,” Dr. KittyCat purred happily. “No one wants to get the flu.”

“Especially now,” Peanut agreed. “The Thistle town Talent Show is in ten days.”

“I’m looking forward to seeing everyone’s acts,” Dr. KittyCat meowed, taking a box from the supply closet and handing it to Peanut. “There are some very talented animals in Thistle town.”

Peanut opened the box. It was full of individually wrapped plastic tubes with plungers. Each little tube was filled with the same amount of liquid.



“Each tube contains exactly the right dose of the vaccine,” Dr. KittyCat told him as she unwrapped one.

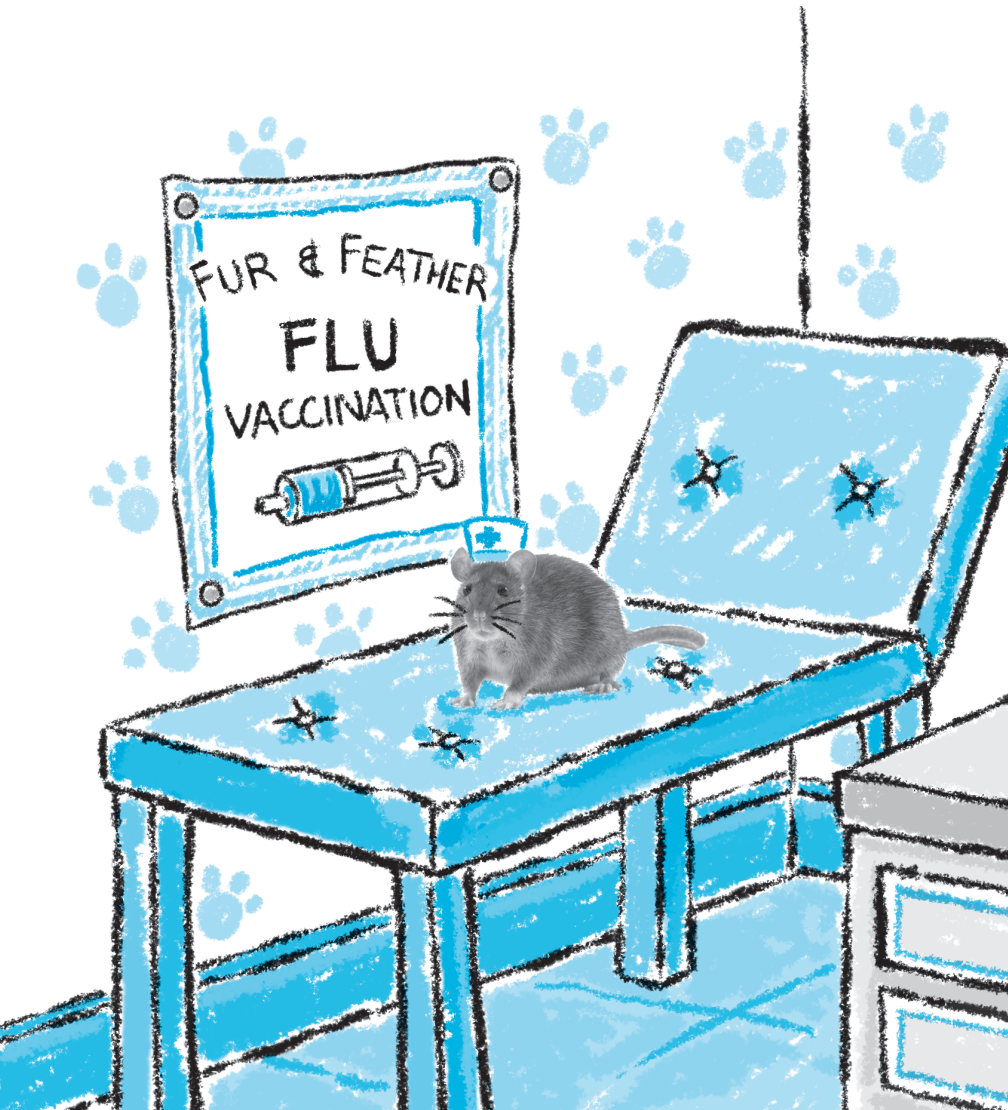
“I’ve already given myself the vaccination. Now it’s your turn, Peanut. I’ll vaccinate you before we open the clinic.”

Peanut’s ears twitched.

“Eek!” he squeaked. “I don’t like shots!” His whiskers quivered.

“Don’t panic, Peanut,” Dr. KittyCat meowed. “The new vaccine for fur and feather flu isn’t an injection. It’s a nose spray. The plunger pumps a mist of

vaccine into your nostril. It will be over in a whisker.”



Peanut sat very still as Dr. KittyCat gently placed the end of the tube in his nostril and pushed the plunger with her soft paw. It didn't hurt at all.

"That was nothing," he said, wiggling his whiskers. "It just felt a little tickly."

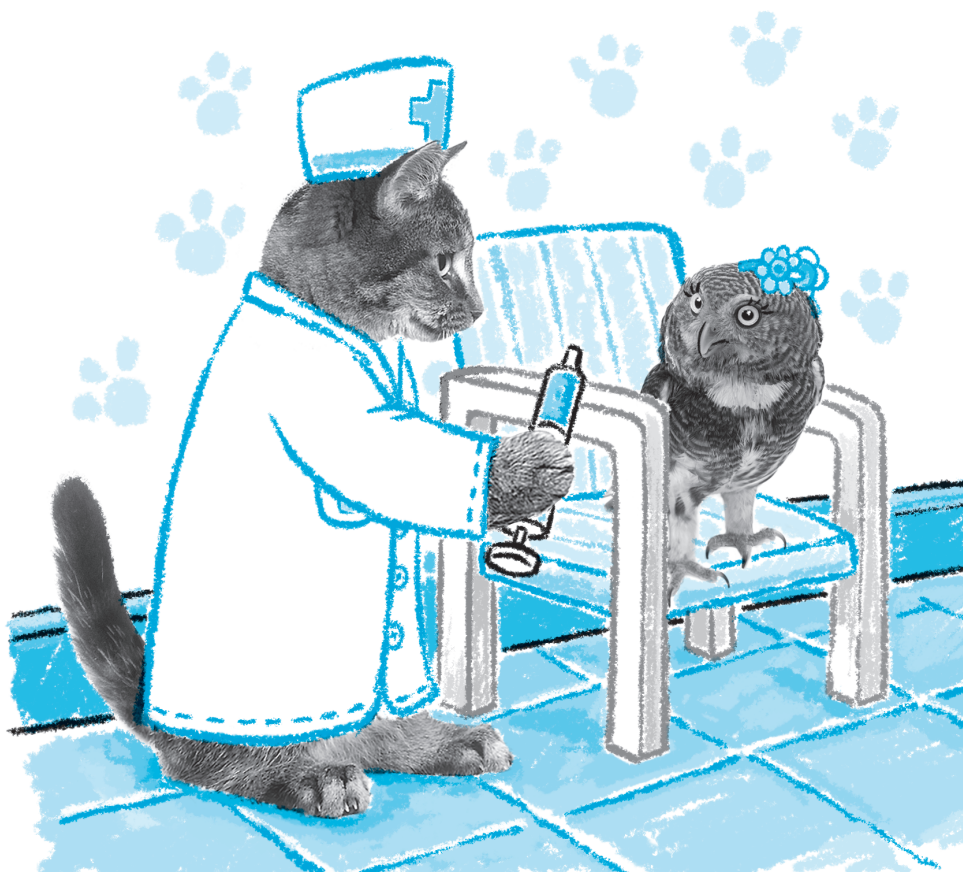
"Good job," Dr. KittyCat meowed. "Now you can reassure our patients. It's time to open the clinic."

Peanut scampered to the door. "Come in!" he told the young animals who were waiting. "The flu vaccine is a nose spray. It doesn't hurt at all."

Sage the owlet was first in line. She blinked her big eyes at them.

“Don’t worry,” Peanut told her.
“You’re safe in our paws.”

“I’m not worried,” Sage hooted.
“But why do I need to take medicine
when I’m not sick?”



“Fur and feather flu is caused by a type of germ called a virus,” Dr. KittyCat explained. “Coughs and sneezes release virus germs into the air. A vaccine is a sort of medicine that helps your body fight off the virus before it can make you sick.”

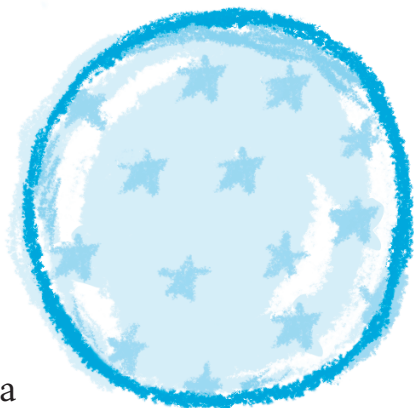
“And by having the vaccine, you help protect everyone in Thistle town, because you won’t get the virus and pass it on to anyone else,” Peanut added.

“I see.” Sage nodded her head up and down. She stood patiently as Dr. KittyCat gently squirted a dose of vaccine into Sage’s nostrils at the top of her beak.

“Good job!”

Dr. KittyCat
meowed.

Peanut
handed Sage a
sticker with “I was a
purr-fect patient for
Dr. KittyCat” on it.



“Thanks,” Sage said. “I don’t want
to catch the flu. I’m the host for the
Thistle-town Talent Show. I’m learning
lots of jokes. It will be a hoot!”

“I’m sure it will,” Dr. KittyCat
laughed.

“I’m going to perform some magic
tricks,” Clover the bunny told them as he

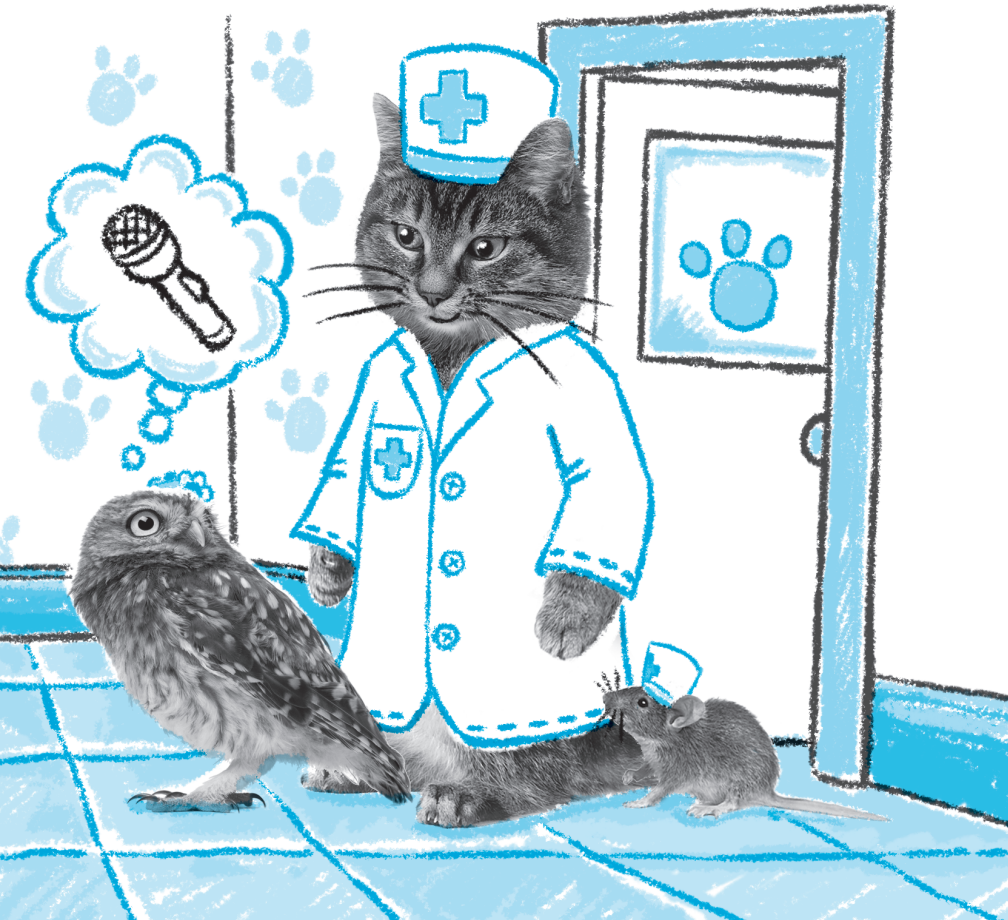
stepped up and tilted his furry nose for Dr. KittyCat. “It takes lots of practice.”

“I’ve decided to sing a song,” Posy the puppy woofed.



“And I’m doing a webfoot waltz,”
Willow the duckling quacked excitedly.
“It’s really difficult!”

There was a buzz of chatter in



the clinic as all the little animals talked excitedly about the acts they were going to perform at the show.



Soon, everyone had been vaccinated. Peanut took out Dr. KittyCat's *Furry First-aid Book*.

"These little animals don't need to worry about getting the flu," he commented as he wrote their names in the book.

"That's good to know," Dr. KittyCat meowed as she reached into her bag for her knitting. "I'd hate to think of anyone



missing the talent show. They're so excited about their performances."

I've never performed on stage, Peanut thought dreamily. *I wonder what it feels like?* He closed his eyes and imagined himself singing and dancing in the spotlight.

“It will be amazing!” he squeaked.
“I can’t wait to see the show!”

