

Hogs for Hostages

Albeit a very small part of the chapter, the latter part of Hogs for Hostages featured a memo from Colonel Flattery about the clean-up operation (which was added to the end of previous chapter). This part of the chapter was originally kept in so that younger readers would understand that the hedgehogs were going to be held hostage, however that is implicit from the story that Mag intends to hold them as bait. I really liked the character of Squirrel Nutcase and I hope to develop him further in the third book, Spikez: Viral, as a creature who gets his comeuppance. The chapter also highlighted Rosie's resolute belief that her brother would make things right.

Nutcase led an elite team of squirrel commandos through the forest. By intimidation and brute force, they had located the nest of Mr and Mrs Hog. Flanked by his two meanest looking rodents, Nutcase loomed over the hedgehogs, Harold and Henrietta, who were curled up as tight as fists.

Rosie was more defiant. She stood rigid, her claws and spines erect, lips tightly pursed, as they approached. "What do you want with us?" she snapped.

"You've been summoned by Big Mag. He wants to know where your brother is hiding."

"Even if I knew, do you think I'd tell you?"

"You've got an attitude," said Nutcase. "I like that."

"You furry slug, you've betrayed us all!"

"No, princess, your brother's let you all down. And 'cos of that, you're comin' with us whether you like it or not."

"Never!"

"Rosie," her mother said, uncurling herself. "Let's do as the squirrel says – we don't want any more violence."

"But mum, if we go to Big Mag he will do terrible things to us."

She shuffled towards Rosie and whispered in her ears. "And if we don't, they will do even worse things to us here. Let's go along with them, it will give us more time to come up with a plan."

Rosie didn't like giving in and she hated bullies. She looked at Nutcase as he bared his teeth, which were yellow like the rotting leaves that surrounded them. "He'll come for us." she said.

"We're counting on it."