OFFICE OF IMPROBABLE JURISDICTION

EXPERIMENTAL INTELLIGENCE AND AUTONOMOUS PERSONS REVIEW BOARD

NIMH-ERB-MED-001

TIMOTHY FRISBY

On Pediatric Pneumonia, Emergency Relocation, and the Competing Duties of a Parent Confronting Multiple Foreseeable Hazards

An Institutional Inquiry into Medical Judgment, Parental Responsibility, the Preservation of a Vulnerable Child, and the Ethical Limits of Demanding Safety Where Every Available Course of Action Carries Risk

Issuing Authority: Office of Improbable Jurisdiction
Reviewing Body: Experimental Intelligence and Autonomous Persons Review Board
Administrative Division: Medical Ethics, Vulnerable Dependents, and Extraordinary Emergency Accommodation
Docket: NIMH-ERB-MED-001
Related Proceedings: NIMH-ERB-001 through NIMH-ERB-007; NIMH-ERB-MUN-001
Principal Patient: Timothy Frisby — Literary Record
Corresponding Patient: Timothy Brisby — Cinematic Record
Parent and Primary Caregiver: Mrs. Frisby / Mrs. Brisby
Medical Adviser: Mr. Ages
Additional Interested Parties: Teresa, Martin, Cynthia, Jeremy, the Great Owl, Nicodemus, Justin, and members of the enhanced rat community
Classification: Pediatric Medical Ethics, Parental Decision-Making, Treatment and

Recovery, Competing Hazards, Emergency Accommodation, Informed Judgment, Third-Party Assistance, and the Protection of Vulnerable Dependents
Date: October 28, 2026
Status: Substantive Findings Entered; No Finding of Parental Neglect or Improper Care

Nature of Proceeding: Fictional regulatory satire and literary ethics review.

This proceeding examines events depicted in Robert C. O'Brien's *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* (1971) and Don Bluth's *The Secret of NIMH* (1982).

The literary and cinematic narratives constitute separate evidentiary records.

The medical practices described belong to fictional mouse society. They are examined as narrative evidence, not endorsed as contemporary clinical guidance.

No real-world medical treatment recommendation, diagnosis, legal judgment, or regulatory determination is made.

The Office claims no actual medical, judicial, scientific, or regulatory authority.

I. NOTICE OF MEDICAL ETHICS INVESTIGATION

The Experimental Intelligence and Autonomous Persons Review Board hereby opens a specialized proceeding concerning the illness of Timothy Frisby and the extraordinary efforts undertaken to preserve his life.

The investigation arises from a conflict between two foreseeable dangers.

Timothy is seriously ill.

His condition is identified within the literary narrative as pneumonia.

He exhibits symptoms that cause substantial concern to his mother and the community's medical adviser.

Mr. Ages provides treatment and advises that the child remain warm and at rest during recovery.

The medical advice is intended to prevent a dangerous recurrence of illness.

However, the family's winter home is situated within a cultivated field on the Fitzgibbon property.

Seasonal agricultural activity threatens the continued safety of the dwelling.

The family must ordinarily relocate before plowing begins.

Timothy's condition makes that relocation dangerous.

The Board therefore identifies a conflict.

Remaining in the dwelling may preserve the conditions necessary for recovery.

Remaining in the dwelling may also expose the family to destruction through agricultural machinery.

Leaving the dwelling may prevent injury from the plow.

Leaving may expose Timothy to conditions that Mr. Ages believes could cause serious medical deterioration.

The Board recognizes that Mrs. Frisby possesses responsibility for the welfare of all four of her children.

It further recognizes that the existence of responsibility does not establish the existence of a risk-free option.

The question before the Board is therefore not whether the mother selected a course that eliminated every foreseeable danger.

No such course was initially available.

The question is whether her decisions reflected a reasonable effort to protect her children within the circumstances she confronted.

The Office considers that distinction essential.

A parent's duty to protect a child does not necessarily create the power to remove every danger threatening that child.

The investigation proceeds.

II. QUESTIONS PRESENTED

The Board identifies twelve principal questions.

First: What medical information was available concerning Timothy's illness?

Second: What were the limits of Mr. Ages's assessment and the treatment he provided?

Third: What significance should attach to the distinction between improvement in symptoms and completion of recovery?

Fourth: Was Mrs. Frisby required to disregard medical advice when remaining in the family dwelling became dangerous?

Fifth: Could the mother reasonably rely upon medical advice that did not account for a subsequently discovered agricultural hazard?

Sixth: What responsibilities arose once the original plan for seasonal relocation became medically unsafe?

Seventh: Did Mrs. Frisby possess an obligation to investigate alternatives before exposing Timothy to either danger?

Eighth: What ethical obligations did third parties assume when they agreed to assist the family?

Ninth: Was the movement of the entire dwelling a defensible accommodation of the child's medical vulnerability?

Tenth: What significance should attach to the risks Mrs. Frisby accepted in seeking assistance?

Eleventh: Could a successful outcome justify every method used during the rescue, or could an unsuccessful outcome establish parental negligence?

Twelfth: How should the interests of a medically vulnerable child be protected when the child cannot exercise the same degree of independent decision-making as the adults responsible for his welfare?

The Board considers these questions related.

It does not consider them interchangeable.

The legitimacy of a parental decision must not be determined solely by the emotional force of the eventual outcome.

III. THE PATIENT

The principal patient is Timothy Frisby.

In the literary record, he is the youngest child of Mrs. Frisby and the late Jonathan Frisby.

His siblings are Teresa, Martin, and Cynthia.

The family occupies a winter dwelling constructed within a cement block in the Fitzgibbon garden.

The dwelling provides shelter during cold weather.

Its construction offers substantial protection from the elements.

However, the location is unsuitable for continued occupation once seasonal cultivation begins.

The family ordinarily relocates to a summer home near the brook.

The Board recognizes that this seasonal arrangement reflects practical adaptation to the surrounding environment.

The winter dwelling provides warmth.

The summer dwelling provides refuge from agricultural activity.

The family's survival depends upon the timing of the transition.

Timothy's illness interrupts that arrangement.

The Board also recognizes that Timothy has a history of medical vulnerability.

The literary record describes an earlier incident involving a poisonous spider bite or sting during infancy.

Mr. Ages assisted the family during that emergency.

Mrs. Frisby subsequently regarded Timothy as physically more delicate than his siblings.

The Board considers this history relevant to her concern.

However, it declines to infer a specific causal relationship between the earlier injury and the subsequent pneumonia.

The available narrative does not establish such a relationship.

Nor does the patient's comparatively delicate constitution establish that he lacks interests in activity, independence, or ordinary childhood experiences.

Timothy is not merely an illness.

He is a child.

The Board considers this fact foundational.

IV. THE INITIAL MEDICAL EMERGENCY

The literary record describes Timothy developing a serious illness.

His mother observes fever, chills, perspiration, altered awareness, and respiratory difficulty.

The symptoms are sufficiently concerning that she seeks assistance from Mr. Ages.

The journey is difficult.

Mr. Ages lives at a substantial distance.

The route contains dangers associated with predators and exposure.

Mrs. Frisby nevertheless undertakes the journey.

The Board considers this conduct relevant to the assessment of parental responsibility.

The mother recognizes that her child requires assistance.

She identifies an individual possessing relevant knowledge.

She seeks that individual despite the risks associated with travel.

The Office therefore finds no basis for characterizing her initial response as indifference or neglect.

The Board further recognizes that the patient is not transported to Mr. Ages.

The information is communicated by Mrs. Frisby.

Mr. Ages forms his assessment from the symptoms she reports.

This distinction is significant.

A diagnosis based upon a caregiver's account may be useful.

However, it does not provide the same information as a direct physical examination.

The literary narrative presents Mr. Ages as experienced and knowledgeable.

The Board does not dispute his established role within the story.

Nevertheless, it recognizes the limits of the information available to him.

A medical adviser may exercise reasonable judgment while remaining dependent upon observations supplied by another person.

The distinction is entered.

V. THE ASSESSMENT OF MR. AGES

Mr. Ages identifies Timothy's illness as pneumonia.

He provides three packets of medicinal powder and instructions for their administration.

He advises Mrs. Frisby to keep the child warm and in bed.

He further warns that improvement in the fever will not mean the child has fully recovered.

The Board considers this warning especially significant.

The medical adviser distinguishes between the reduction of visible symptoms and the restoration of sufficient physical resilience to tolerate environmental exposure.

The danger is not confined to Timothy's immediate fever.

It includes the possibility that premature movement into colder conditions could cause his condition to worsen.

Within the literary record, Mr. Ages expresses particular concern about recurrence during the following weeks.

The Board therefore identifies two related phases.

Acute Illness: The period during which Timothy experiences serious symptoms requiring immediate attention.

Recovery: The period during which symptoms may improve but the child remains medically vulnerable.

The distinction matters because a caregiver may observe improvement and incorrectly conclude that all restrictions have ceased to be relevant.

Mrs. Frisby does not make that assumption.

She understands that her son may appear better while remaining at risk.

The Board considers this evidence of appropriate attention to the advice she received.

The Office therefore rejects any proposed finding that Timothy's declining fever automatically authorized unrestricted relocation.

Improvement is not necessarily recovery.

The distinction is entered.

VI. ON THE LIMITS OF THE MEDICAL RECORD

The Office recognizes that Mr. Ages provides treatment within the conventions of the fictional narrative.

However, the available record does not establish a modern clinical examination.

It contains no laboratory results.

It contains no imaging.

It contains no verified composition or pharmacological analysis of the medicinal powders.

It does not establish comprehensive information concerning their safety or effectiveness outside the fictional account.

The Board therefore declines to describe the treatment as a validated contemporary medical regimen.

The novel also depicts instructions for administering medicine to a delirious child that would raise serious safety concerns if imitated outside the story.

The Office does not endorse those instructions.

Nor does it treat them as a reliable guide to administering medication to actual children or animals.

The present proceeding concerns the ethical choices presented by the narrative.

It is not an attempt to certify the medical practices of a fictional mouse.

The Board further recognizes that some of Mr. Ages's predictions are expressed with considerable certainty.

His prognosis is important to the plot.

However, the Office declines to convert that fictional prognosis into a universal medical rule concerning pneumonia.

The relevant fact is narrower.

Mrs. Frisby received advice from the available medical adviser that premature exposure could seriously endanger her son.

She had reason to take that warning seriously.

The Board considers this sufficient for the ethical inquiry.

VII. THE FIVE-DAY PROBLEM

The literary record subsequently establishes that plowing may begin in approximately five days.

The farmer's equipment requires repair.

The soil is not yet suitable for immediate cultivation.

These circumstances provide a temporary delay.

Mrs. Frisby recognizes that the delay is insufficient.

Timothy's expected recovery period substantially exceeds the time remaining before agricultural activity resumes.

The Board identifies a serious conflict of timelines.

The medical condition requires continued shelter.

The agricultural schedule threatens that shelter.

Neither timetable is controlled by Mrs. Frisby.

She cannot compel Timothy's recovery.

She cannot reasonably assume that the farmer will abandon cultivation.

She cannot move the family to the summer residence without exposing the child to the conditions Mr. Ages has warned against.

The Office therefore recognizes that the mother confronts a genuine conflict between foreseeable hazards.

This is not a circumstance in which she merely refuses to select an obvious safe option.

The safe option has not yet been identified.

The Board considers this distinction essential.

A decision cannot be condemned for failing to select an alternative that was not reasonably available to the decision-maker.

The Office further observes that the existence of a deadline does not eliminate the medical danger associated with premature relocation.

Nor does the medical danger eliminate the physical threat posed by the plow.

Both require consideration.

The Board therefore rejects the proposition that either hazard automatically makes the other irrelevant.

VIII. THE MEDICAL ADVICE THAT DID NOT ANTICIPATE THE PLOW

The Board next considers whether Mr. Ages's recommendation remained appropriate after Mrs. Frisby learned of the agricultural deadline.

The advice to keep Timothy warm and sheltered was directed toward preventing medical deterioration.

It was not intended as a comprehensive assessment of every environmental danger confronting the family's dwelling.

The Board therefore distinguishes the content of the advice from the scope of the circumstances it addressed.

Mr. Ages evaluated the child's illness.

The mother subsequently confronted a separate threat to the place in which the child was recovering.

The existence of that new threat did not necessarily make the original medical assessment incorrect.

It made the practical problem more complicated.

The Board recognizes that medical recommendations are often made within limited factual circumstances.

A recommendation may be appropriate under one set of conditions.

Additional information may require reconsideration of how the recommendation can be followed.

The proper response is not necessarily to discard the recommendation.

Nor is it necessarily to follow it without regard for new danger.

The decision-maker should consider whether the medical objective can be preserved through alternative means.

Mrs. Frisby eventually does precisely that.

She seeks a way to preserve Timothy's sheltered environment while removing the dwelling from the path of the plow.

The Board considers this a significant exercise of practical judgment.

When circumstances make literal compliance with medical advice dangerous, the relevant question may become how to preserve the advice's protective purpose through a different arrangement.

The distinction is entered.

IX. ON THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF PERFECT SAFETY

The Office considers the standard by which Mrs. Frisby's conduct should be assessed.

A parent possesses responsibilities concerning a child's welfare.

Those responsibilities may include seeking appropriate care, recognizing serious hazards, and making decisions reasonably directed toward protection.

However, the existence of responsibility does not confer unlimited ability.

A parent cannot guarantee that illness will resolve.

A parent cannot eliminate every environmental danger.

A parent cannot always obtain perfect information.

A parent cannot ensure that every person offering assistance will act competently.

The Office therefore rejects a standard requiring the elimination of all risk as a condition of responsible parental conduct.

Such a standard would render the duty impossible to satisfy in many emergencies.

It would also confuse the seriousness of an obligation with the availability of means to fulfill it.

The Board recognizes that a parent may nevertheless be criticized for disregarding available information or refusing reasonable assistance.

The absence of perfect safety does not excuse reckless indifference.

But it does require that conduct be assessed according to the choices actually available.

Mrs. Frisby confronts risks that cannot all be eliminated through ordinary measures.

She seeks information.

She considers alternatives.

She obtains assistance.

The Board therefore determines that her conduct must be evaluated as an effort to manage competing dangers rather than as a failure to produce perfect safety.

The presence of danger does not establish parental negligence.

The failure to prevent every possible harm does not establish that the parent failed to care.

The distinction is sustained.

X. THE SEARCH FOR AN ALTERNATIVE

The Board considers the sequence through which Mrs. Frisby seeks assistance.

She does not immediately transport Timothy into the cold.

She does not remain passive while the agricultural deadline approaches.

She considers the inadequacy of her available options.

She seeks further advice.

Jeremy, the crow whom she previously assisted, becomes an important participant.

Their relationship began when Mrs. Frisby freed him from a dangerous entanglement.

Jeremy subsequently offers assistance.

He transports her to the Great Owl.

The Owl initially presents danger to a small mouse.

However, his response changes when he learns that she is Jonathan Frisby's widow.

He directs her to the rats occupying the rosebush.

He advises that they may possess the means to move the family's home to the sheltered side of the stone.

The Board recognizes that this sequence involves several acts of assistance.

It further recognizes that none is entirely without risk.

Mrs. Frisby travels through dangerous environments.

She approaches powerful animals.

She seeks help from beings whose intentions and capacities she does not fully understand.

These actions expose her to danger.

However, the Board considers their purpose.

The mother is attempting to identify an alternative to two potentially fatal courses.

She does not expose herself to danger merely for excitement.

She seeks information necessary to protect her children.

The Office therefore finds that the existence of personal risk does not, by itself, render her conduct irresponsible.

The relevant question is whether the risk was reasonably related to the protective objective.

The Board considers the relationship substantial.

XI. THE GREAT OWL'S RECOMMENDATION

The Board examines the significance of the Owl's advice.

The Owl does not propose that Timothy be carried to the summer home.

He identifies a different solution.

The dwelling itself may be relocated to the sheltered side of the stone.

This would remove the home from the path of ordinary cultivation while preserving the protected environment in which Timothy is recovering.

The Board considers this recommendation exceptionally important.

The proposed intervention does not require choosing between medical safety and physical safety in their original forms.

It attempts to preserve both.

Timothy can remain inside.

The dwelling can be moved.

The plow can operate elsewhere.

The mother can continue providing care.

The Office recognizes that the proposal requires extraordinary practical assistance.

An ordinary mouse cannot relocate a cement-block residence.

The Owl cannot accomplish the task merely by suggesting it.

The enhanced rats possess the necessary technical capacities.

The recommendation therefore identifies a possible accommodation whose success depends upon the cooperation of others.

The Board considers this a significant distinction.

An apparently impossible conflict may become manageable when the available options are expanded rather than merely compared.

The Office further observes that the Owl's recommendation does not eliminate all danger.

The operation still requires planning.

The dwelling must be lifted.

Its occupants must be protected.

Mechanical failure remains possible.

Nevertheless, the recommendation offers a means of reducing the original risks.

The Board therefore regards it as a legitimate alternative requiring serious consideration.

XII. ON THE MOVEMENT OF THE HOUSE RATHER THAN THE PATIENT

The Office now examines the central accommodation.

The rats propose to move the family's winter dwelling.

The distinction between moving the patient and moving the dwelling is substantial.

Ordinary seasonal relocation would require Timothy to leave the warm shelter and travel to another residence.

The proposed intervention permits him to remain within the protected environment.

The Board recognizes that the entire structure must nevertheless undergo physical movement.

The child is not literally motionless in space.

The relevant distinction is therefore not absolute immobility.

It concerns the conditions of exposure and disturbance.

Moving the dwelling may permit the family to preserve warmth, shelter, and rest while avoiding the environmental hazards associated with travel.

The Office considers this a creative attempt to preserve the purpose of medical advice.

It further recognizes that the proposed accommodation involves significant risks associated with lifting a heavy structure.

The Board therefore rejects the proposition that moving the house is automatically risk-free.

However, the existence of operational risk does not establish that the accommodation is unreasonable.

The appropriate comparison concerns the expected dangers of the available courses.

The original choices were dangerous.

The proposed alternative introduces a different risk that may be reduced through planning and technical assistance.

The Office therefore finds that the plan is ethically defensible in principle.

A protective accommodation need not eliminate every risk to represent a meaningful improvement over the available alternatives.

The distinction is entered.

XIII. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RATS

The Board next considers the obligations assumed by the enhanced rat community.

The rats possess substantial technical intelligence.

They can construct machinery.

They can coordinate labor.

They can manipulate equipment beyond the capacities of ordinary mice.

Their abilities make the proposed intervention possible.

However, the possession of technical capacity does not automatically establish a general obligation to undertake every dangerous rescue.

The Board therefore considers the circumstances under which the rats agree to assist.

The community recognizes Mrs. Frisby's connection to Jonathan.

Jonathan had played an important role in the rats' history.

His assistance contributed to their escape from the laboratory.

Nicodemus recognizes an obligation of gratitude.

The Board considers that history relevant.

However, it rejects the proposition that the child's entitlement to humane consideration depends exclusively upon his father's past service.

Timothy is not morally significant merely because Jonathan was useful to the rats.

His vulnerability matters independently.

The Board therefore distinguishes gratitude from the ethical justification for assistance.

Gratitude may help explain why the rats agree to act.

The child's need supplies an additional reason why the assistance is morally meaningful.

The Office further recognizes that once the rats voluntarily undertake the operation, responsibilities arise concerning its execution.

They must consider foreseeable hazards.

They must employ reasonable care.

They must avoid unnecessary danger to the occupants.

They must account for the limitations of their equipment.

They must not deliberately compromise the rescue.

The Board considers these responsibilities especially significant in light of the cinematic sabotage examined in NIMH-ERB-006.

A community that voluntarily undertakes a rescue assumes responsibility for the manner in which it conducts that rescue.

The distinction is entered.

XIV. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRATITUDE AND ENTITLEMENT

The Office separately considers whether the rats' obligation arose from a debt to Jonathan Frisby.

The historical relationship was significant.

Jonathan's conduct contributed to the survival and freedom of the enhanced rats.

His family subsequently required assistance.

The decision to help may therefore be understood as an expression of gratitude.

Nevertheless, the Board identifies a potential difficulty.

If the community's obligation to consider Timothy's welfare depended entirely upon Jonathan's history, a similarly vulnerable child without such a connection might receive no consideration.

The Office does not conclude that every community must undertake every rescue within its technical power.

Resources and risks may impose legitimate limits.

However, it rejects the proposition that a child's moral standing depends upon a parent's prior usefulness.

The Board therefore distinguishes two questions.

Why did the rats choose to help this family?

Their relationship with Jonathan provides an important explanation.

Why was helping the family ethically significant?

Because the assistance was directed toward protecting vulnerable lives.

The two answers are compatible.

They are not identical.

The Board therefore determines:

Gratitude may create a special reason to assist.

It does not create the underlying worth of the person receiving assistance.

The distinction is entered.

XV. THE QUESTION OF PARENTAL CONSENT

The Board considers Mrs. Frisby's role in authorizing the proposed intervention.

Timothy is a child.

His capacity to understand complex medical and technical risks is not established.

His mother acts as his primary caregiver and decision-maker.

The Board recognizes that parental decision-making carries substantial ethical responsibility.

A parent may make choices intended to protect a child who cannot fully evaluate the consequences.

However, parental authority is not unrestricted.

Its ethical purpose is protective.

It should be exercised with attention to the child's welfare.

The Office therefore considers whether Mrs. Frisby's agreement to the house-moving operation was reasonably directed toward Timothy's interests.

The available narrative supports that conclusion.

She seeks to avoid the medical danger associated with premature exposure.

She seeks to avoid the physical danger associated with the plow.

She pursues assistance from individuals possessing relevant capabilities.

She does not authorize the operation for personal enrichment or convenience.

The proposed intervention is directed toward preserving her child's life.

The Board therefore finds no basis for treating her consent as inherently improper.

Nevertheless, the Office recognizes that a parent's willingness to accept risk does not eliminate every responsibility owed by the parties conducting the operation.

The rats remain responsible for reasonable precautions.

The mother remains entitled to relevant information where available.

The child's welfare remains the central concern.

Parental authorization does not convert a dangerous procedure into a harmless procedure.

Nor does the existence of danger automatically invalidate the parent's authorization.

The distinctions are entered.

XVI. TIMOTHY'S OWN INTERESTS

The Office now considers the patient as an individual.

Timothy's illness makes him dependent upon others.

His age limits his participation in the decisions being made.

He is not shown conducting the risk assessment.

He does not negotiate with the rats.

He does not determine the agricultural schedule.

He does not select the mechanical equipment.

Nevertheless, the decisions concern his life.

The Board therefore rejects any characterization of Timothy as merely an object to be transported.

He is the person whose medical vulnerability gives rise to the accommodation.

His interests include survival.

They include relief from illness.

They include protection from avoidable danger.

They also include the ordinary interests of a child in family life, movement, play, and future development.

The Board recognizes that illness may temporarily restrict activity.

Such restrictions may be appropriate for protection.

However, the purpose of treatment is not to preserve permanent dependency.

It is to support recovery.

The Office therefore considers Timothy's future significant.

The intended outcome is not merely that he remain alive inside the winter dwelling indefinitely.

It is that he recover sufficiently to resume ordinary life.

This distinction matters.

A successful protective intervention should preserve the possibility of future agency.

The child is not being protected merely so that others may continue protecting him.

He is being protected because his life, including the future he may yet experience, matters.

The distinction is entered.

XVII. THE OTHER CHILDREN

The Board considers the interests of Teresa, Martin, and Cynthia.

Timothy's illness does not eliminate the needs of his siblings.

The other children also require shelter.

They also face danger from the plow.

They also depend upon their mother.

The proposed house-moving operation therefore concerns the welfare of the entire family.

The Board recognizes that a parent caring for a seriously ill child may need to direct substantial attention toward that child.

This does not establish disregard for the others.

The relevant inquiry concerns the circumstances and available means of providing care.

Mrs. Frisby seeks an intervention that protects the entire dwelling.

The proposed accommodation therefore has benefits extending beyond Timothy.

The Office also recognizes that the siblings' ability to participate in caregiving may vary.

Older children may assist with ordinary tasks.

They may understand aspects of the emergency.

They may experience fear.

However, the Board rejects any assumption that the presence of older siblings eliminates the adult caregiver's responsibility.

Children may contribute to family care without becoming responsible for resolving dangers beyond their capacities.

The Office further recognizes that the emotional consequences of Timothy's illness may affect the entire household.

Fear for a sibling is a morally relevant experience.

The fact that a child is not the principal patient does not mean the child is unaffected by the medical emergency.

The Board therefore considers the family's collective welfare significant.

XVIII. ON THE RISKS ACCEPTED BY MRS. FRISBY

The Office next considers the dangers Mrs. Frisby accepts while seeking assistance.

Her efforts involve travel through environments containing predators.

She approaches the Great Owl.

She enters the rat settlement.

She agrees to assist with the problem posed by Dragon.

She is subsequently exposed to capture and confinement.

The Board recognizes that these events involve serious personal risk.

It therefore asks whether a parent responsible for dependent children should expose herself to such danger.

The question requires care.

A caregiver's life is valuable independently of the lives of those receiving care.

The parent is not an expendable resource.

The death or incapacitation of the caregiver could also place the children at greater risk.

These considerations are important.

However, the Board rejects the proposition that any dangerous act undertaken by a parent is necessarily irresponsible.

The relevant circumstances include the severity of the threatened harm, the availability of alternatives, the relationship between the act and the protective objective, and the caregiver's understanding of the danger.

Mrs. Frisby acts in response to an emergency.

She is not seeking unnecessary danger.

Her efforts are directed toward obtaining assistance that otherwise appears unavailable.

The Office therefore considers the risk substantial but not inherently unjustified.

The Board further recognizes that courage does not require the absence of fear.

Mrs. Frisby repeatedly experiences fear.

Her conduct remains directed toward protecting her family.

The Office therefore enters the following principle:

A caregiver's willingness to confront danger may be responsible when the danger is undertaken for a sufficiently important protective purpose and reasonable alternatives are lacking.

The Board does not convert this principle into an obligation of unlimited self-sacrifice.

A parent may be courageous without being required to seek death.

The distinction is sustained.

XIX. THE PROBLEM OF THE FAMILY'S DEPENDENCE UPON OTHERS

The Board now examines the assistance provided by the surrounding community.

Mrs. Frisby cannot resolve the emergency alone.

Mr. Ages provides medical advice.

Jeremy provides transportation.

The Great Owl provides information.

Nicodemus and the rats provide technical assistance.

Other members contribute labor.

The mother's ability to protect her child therefore depends upon a network of relationships.

The Office recognizes that dependence is not necessarily evidence of failure.

Human and nonhuman communities routinely rely upon cooperation.

A caregiver may act responsibly by seeking assistance rather than attempting an impossible task alone.

The Board therefore rejects the proposition that parental competence requires complete self-sufficiency.

Mrs. Frisby's inability to lift a cement-block house does not establish that she is incapable of caring for her children.

Nor does her reliance upon the rats establish that responsibility for Timothy's welfare has become exclusively theirs.

The appropriate relationship is cooperative.

The mother identifies the need.

The medical adviser identifies a danger.

The Owl identifies a possible accommodation.

The rats possess the means to attempt it.

The participants contribute different forms of knowledge and capability.

The Board regards this distribution of responsibility as significant.

The fact that no individual can perform every necessary task does not establish that the necessary tasks should remain undone.

The distinction is entered.

XX. RECORD A — THE LITERARY RESCUE

The Office now examines the original novel.

The literary record establishes that Mrs. Frisby seeks assistance from the enhanced rats.

The community agrees to move the winter dwelling to the sheltered side of the stone.

The intervention requires preparation.

The rats employ their mechanical knowledge.

They construct or organize a system capable of lifting and relocating the house.

The operation is completed.

The dwelling is placed where ordinary plowing will not reach it.

Timothy remains sheltered.

The family does not need to undertake the dangerous journey to the summer residence while he is medically vulnerable.

The Board recognizes the significance of the result.

The intervention resolves the original conflict through accommodation.

It does not cure Timothy's pneumonia instantaneously.

It does not eliminate the need for continued recovery.

It does not change the farmer's ordinary agricultural purpose.

Instead, it changes the family's location in a manner that preserves the conditions necessary for healing.

The Board considers this an important distinction.

The successful intervention does not replace medical treatment.

It makes continued adherence to the protective purpose of treatment possible.

The Office therefore finds that the literary rescue was reasonably directed toward Timothy's welfare.

The Board further recognizes that the operation permitted the family to remain in the winter dwelling until Timothy recovered sufficiently for ordinary seasonal relocation.

The literary record subsequently depicts that later relocation.

Timothy is shown participating in ordinary childhood activity without apparent signs of the earlier illness.

The Office considers this a favorable outcome.

It does not claim that the narrative supplies a comprehensive long-term medical assessment.

The finding remains limited to the events depicted.

XXI. RECORD B — THE CINEMATIC RESCUE

The Board next examines the 1982 film.

The cinematic narrative preserves the central conflict.

Timothy Brisby is ill.

Mr. Ages believes he has pneumonia.

He provides medicine and advises continued bed rest.

The approach of plowing places the family's home in danger.

Mrs. Brisby seeks assistance.

The rats undertake an operation to relocate the house.

However, the cinematic sequence introduces complications not present in the same form in the novel.

Jenner deliberately sabotages the lifting apparatus.

Nicodemus dies.

The operation is disrupted.

The family home becomes endangered during the subsequent emergency.

The structure sinks into mud.

Conventional efforts to recover it fail.

Mrs. Brisby ultimately employs the extraordinary amulet.

The home is lifted and moved to safety.

The Board recognizes that these events are specific to the cinematic record.

The literary rescue does not depend upon the amulet.

Nor does the literary narrative establish that Nicodemus dies during the house-moving operation.

The Office therefore declines to consolidate the two accounts.

Nevertheless, the ethical purpose of the rescue remains consistent.

The family requires a means of avoiding agricultural danger without exposing Timothy to the conditions associated with premature relocation.

The final intervention preserves the home and its occupants.

The cinematic record subsequently depicts Timothy improving.

The Board considers this a favorable result.

However, it rejects the proposition that the successful supernatural rescue eliminates responsibility for the earlier sabotage.

The intervention prevented the final loss of the family.

It did not reverse Nicodemus's death.

It did not erase the dangers created by Jenner.

Nor did it render the original medical concern irrelevant.

The distinction is entered.

XXII. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MEDICAL EMERGENCY AND THE POLITICAL CONFLICT

The Board considers a complication arising from the rats' internal disagreements.

The community's assistance to the family occurs amid conflict concerning the Plan for Thorn Valley.

In the cinematic record, Jenner exploits the house-moving operation to kill Nicodemus.

The resulting danger extends to the Brisby family.

The Office therefore recognizes that the patient's welfare becomes entangled with circumstances unrelated to his illness.

Timothy did not participate in the dispute concerning the rosebush settlement.

He did not advocate for or against relocation.

He did not possess political authority among the rats.

He did not request that the rescue be used as an occasion for assassination.

Nevertheless, the consequences of the dispute threatened his safety.

The Board considers this ethically significant.

A vulnerable individual receiving assistance may be exposed to institutional failures beyond that individual's knowledge or control.

The fact that the institution possesses legitimate internal disagreements does not authorize exposing dependent persons to deliberate danger.

The Office therefore enters the following principle:

An institution's internal political conflict does not eliminate its responsibility toward individuals who have become dependent upon its promised assistance.

The Board further recognizes that the protective purpose of an operation may be compromised when participants pursue competing personal objectives.

The appropriate response is not to regard the patient as responsible for the institutional conflict.

Timothy's needs remain.

The community's responsibilities remain.

The distinction is sustained.

XXIII. THE QUESTION OF INFORMED RISK

The Office now considers whether Mrs. Frisby possessed sufficient information to authorize the rescue.

The literary record establishes that she understands the need to move the house.

She also understands that the rats possess extraordinary capabilities.

However, she is not an engineer.

She does not possess complete knowledge of the proposed machinery.

She may not understand every operational hazard.

The Board recognizes these limitations.

It further recognizes that informed decision-making does not always require the decision-maker to possess the same technical expertise as the person providing assistance.

A parent may reasonably rely upon specialized knowledge.

The relevant considerations include whether the proposed intervention is explained to the extent practicable, whether material risks are disclosed when known, and whether the decision-maker possesses an opportunity to raise concerns.

The Board does not infer the existence of a formal written consent process.

No such process appears in the record.

Nevertheless, the circumstances demonstrate that Mrs. Frisby sought and accepted assistance directed toward a known emergency.

The Board considers this meaningful.

It further recognizes that the cinematic sabotage was not a risk Mrs. Brisby could reasonably be expected to anticipate merely because a mechanical operation was underway.

A parent may consent to an operation involving ordinary mechanical hazards without thereby consenting to intentional interference by a conspirator.

The distinction is fundamental.

Consent to a rescue does not constitute consent to its sabotage.

The finding is entered.

XXIV. ON THE TEMPTATION TO JUDGE BY OUTCOME

The Board now considers whether Mrs. Frisby's decisions should be evaluated solely according to Timothy's eventual recovery.

The Office rejects that approach.

A favorable outcome may provide evidence concerning the effectiveness of an intervention.

However, it does not establish that every decision preceding the outcome was necessarily appropriate.

Similarly, an unfavorable outcome does not automatically establish that the caregiver acted improperly.

The quality of a decision depends upon the information available at the time.

It depends upon the alternatives reasonably accessible.

It depends upon the severity of the anticipated harms.

It depends upon the decision-maker's purpose and conduct.

The Board therefore distinguishes prospective judgment from retrospective certainty.

Mrs. Frisby cannot know at the beginning that the rats will successfully relocate her home.

She cannot know that Jeremy will provide useful assistance.

She cannot know that the Owl will direct her to the rosebush.

She cannot know that the rats will recognize Jonathan's name.

She cannot know the complete history of the experimental program.

She cannot know whether every danger she encounters will be survived.

Nevertheless, she must act.

The Office considers that circumstance central to the inquiry.

Responsible decision-making under uncertainty is not the same thing as guaranteed success.

The distinction is entered.

XXV. ON THE DUTY TO RECONSIDER

The Board considers the importance of changing a plan when new information becomes available.

Mrs. Frisby's initial expectation is that the family will make its ordinary seasonal move.

Timothy becomes ill.

She seeks medical advice.

The advice makes ordinary relocation dangerous.

The farmer's schedule makes remaining in place dangerous.

She seeks a new solution.

The Owl proposes moving the house.

The rats agree.

The plan changes.

The Board recognizes that this sequence demonstrates adaptive judgment.

The mother does not remain committed to the original plan merely because it is familiar.

She also does not abandon the medical objective merely because it is difficult to preserve.

She revises the means while retaining the protective purpose.

The Office considers this especially significant.

Institutions and individuals may become attached to procedures.

A procedure may originally serve a legitimate goal.

However, changing circumstances may require an alternative.

The ability to revise the procedure does not necessarily represent abandonment of the goal.

It may represent a more effective means of pursuing it.

The Board therefore determines:

Responsible care may require changing the plan while preserving the obligation the plan was intended to fulfill.

The distinction is entered.

XXVI. THE QUESTION OF FUTURE HEALTH

The Office considers the patient's welfare after the immediate emergency.

The successful relocation removes the immediate danger posed by plowing.

However, Timothy's illness remains relevant.

The family must continue to support his recovery.

The Board therefore distinguishes rescue from complete restoration.

The relocation addresses environmental danger.

The medical treatment addresses illness.

Rest and shelter support recovery.

These activities serve related but distinct purposes.

The Office recognizes that resolving one danger does not establish that all others have been eliminated.

The literary record subsequently depicts Timothy recovering and joining his siblings on the journey to the summer dwelling.

The cinematic record also presents his condition as improving.

These outcomes are favorable.

Nevertheless, the Board declines to invent a comprehensive clinical follow-up.

The fictional narratives do not provide every detail concerning long-term respiratory health.

The Office therefore enters no finding of permanent immunity from future illness.

Nor does it infer that Timothy's earlier vulnerability ceased to matter for every subsequent decision.

The Board considers the depicted recovery sufficient to establish that the immediate protective effort achieved its central purpose.

XXVII. THE PATIENT WHO NEVER REQUESTED AN INVESTIGATION

The Board now considers the unusual position occupied by Timothy throughout the proceedings.

The broader NIMH investigation has addressed experimental autonomy.

It has examined property.

It has examined governance.

It has examined political dissent.

It has examined conspiracy and lethal violence.

It has examined extraordinary artifacts.

It has examined agricultural operations.

These inquiries are extensive.

Timothy did not initiate them.

He did not request a determination concerning property rights.

He did not ask for a review of the laboratory's research practices.

He did not participate in the rat council's disagreement concerning Thorn Valley.

He did not seek access to supernatural power.

His immediate circumstances were simpler.

He was ill.

He needed care.

He needed shelter.

He needed time to recover.

The Office therefore recognizes the danger of allowing the complexity of the surrounding investigation to obscure the person whose vulnerability prompted the original rescue.

The Board considers this especially important.

An institution may become absorbed in its procedures.

It may accumulate records.

It may establish categories.

It may examine competing authorities.

All of these activities may possess legitimate value.

However, their value depends in part upon whether they remain connected to the interests they are intended to protect.

The complexity of an inquiry does not increase the moral importance of the institution conducting it.

Nor does it diminish the importance of the vulnerable person whose circumstances gave rise to the inquiry.

The distinction is entered.

XXVIII. FINDINGS

Following review of the literary and cinematic records, the Board enters the following findings.

Finding 1 — Serious Illness

Timothy develops a serious illness identified within the narratives as pneumonia.

Finding 2 — Maternal Recognition

Mrs. Frisby recognizes the seriousness of her child's condition and seeks assistance.

Finding 3 — Medical Consultation

Mr. Ages provides an assessment and treatment recommendations.

Finding 4 — Limits of Assessment

The literary medical assessment is based substantially upon symptoms reported by the mother rather than a documented direct examination of Timothy.

Finding 5 — Recovery Vulnerability

The medical advice distinguishes improvement in symptoms from completion of recovery.

Finding 6 — Environmental Restrictions

Mr. Ages advises continued warmth, shelter, and rest.

Finding 7 — Agricultural Threat

The family's winter dwelling is situated within the area threatened by seasonal cultivation.

Finding 8 — Incompatible Timelines

The anticipated agricultural deadline occurs before the period of recovery advised by Mr. Ages has elapsed.

Finding 9 — Genuine Conflict of Risk

Ordinary relocation and continued occupation both present foreseeable dangers.

Finding 10 — No Risk-Free Initial Option

The mother does not initially possess an available course of action that eliminates both dangers.

Finding 11 — Reasonable Search for Assistance

Mrs. Frisby undertakes substantial efforts to identify and obtain a safer alternative.

Finding 12 — Material Third-Party Contributions

Mr. Ages, Jeremy, the Great Owl, and the enhanced rats contribute different forms of assistance.

Finding 13 — Significance of the Owl's Proposal

The recommendation to relocate the dwelling rather than expose the patient to ordinary seasonal travel offers a meaningful accommodation.

Finding 14 — Technical Assistance

The enhanced rats possess capabilities sufficient to attempt relocation of the family home.

Finding 15 — Protective Purpose

The operation is directed toward preserving the welfare of Timothy and his family.

Finding 16 — Legitimate Parental Decision-Making

The mother's acceptance of assistance is reasonably related to the child's protection.

Finding 17 — Continuing Responsibilities of Rescuers

The rats' voluntary undertaking of the operation creates responsibilities concerning reasonable care in its execution.

Finding 18 — Literary Outcome

The novel depicts successful relocation of the dwelling and subsequent recovery sufficient for ordinary seasonal movement.

Finding 19 — Cinematic Complications

The film depicts deliberate sabotage, the death of Nicodemus, and subsequent supernatural intervention.

Finding 20 — No Patient Responsibility for Institutional Conflict

Timothy bears no responsibility for the political dispute that threatens the cinematic rescue.

Finding 21 — No Automatic Exoneration Through Success

A favorable rescue outcome does not eliminate responsibility for intentional interference or other misconduct.

Finding 22 — No Automatic Negligence Through Failure

An unfavorable outcome would not, standing alone, establish that the mother acted improperly.

Finding 23 — Family Interests

The interests of Timothy's siblings and primary caregiver remain relevant.

Finding 24 — No Duty of Unlimited Self-Sacrifice

The mother's responsibility to protect her children does not eliminate her own moral worth or establish an unrestricted obligation to risk death.

Finding 25 — Agency and Recovery

The protective purpose of the intervention includes preserving Timothy's opportunity to recover and participate in ordinary life.

Finding 26 — Adaptation

Mrs. Frisby's willingness to reconsider the method of relocation demonstrates practical judgment under changing circumstances.

Finding 27 — No Finding of Parental Neglect

The available narrative record provides no basis for concluding that Mrs. Frisby was indifferent to her child's welfare or failed to make reasonable efforts to protect him.

XXIX. THE BOARD'S DETERMINATION

The Board returns to the central question.

When every available choice carries danger, can selecting a dangerous course constitute responsible care?

The answer is yes.

The existence of danger does not, by itself, establish that a decision is improper.

The relevant inquiry concerns the circumstances under which the decision is made.

A parent may confront competing risks.

The parent may possess incomplete information.

The available alternatives may be limited.

The consequences of delay may be serious.

The consequences of immediate action may also be serious.

Under such conditions, responsible conduct requires judgment rather than certainty.

Mrs. Frisby confronts precisely such circumstances.

Her son is ill.

The available medical adviser recommends continued warmth and rest.

The family's home is threatened by agricultural activity.

Ordinary relocation may endanger Timothy.

Remaining in place may endanger the entire family.

The mother cannot eliminate the conflict through willpower.

She cannot cure Timothy merely by wishing him well.

She cannot alter the agricultural schedule through authority she does not possess.

She cannot carry the cement-block dwelling by herself.

Nevertheless, she acts.

She seeks medical assistance.

She follows the protective purpose of the advice she receives.

She recognizes the new danger created by the approaching plow.

She seeks additional information.

She considers an unconventional solution.

She asks for assistance.

She accepts help from those possessing capabilities she lacks.

The resulting plan is not free from risk.

But it is directed toward reducing risks that otherwise appear unavoidable.

The Board therefore finds that her conduct demonstrates responsible care.

The Office further recognizes that the decision to move the house rather than the patient is ethically significant.

It transforms the nature of the problem.

The original dilemma appeared to require sacrificing one form of safety to preserve another.

The accommodation permits the medical and environmental objectives to be pursued together.

The family can remain sheltered.

The home can be moved beyond the plow.

The farmer can continue cultivation.

Timothy can recover.

The Board recognizes that this solution depends upon extraordinary circumstances.

Most caregivers do not possess access to experimentally enhanced rats capable of relocating a cement-block dwelling.

The Office therefore declines to establish this particular method as an ordinary standard of care.

Nevertheless, the underlying principle remains important.

When conventional options expose a vulnerable person to serious danger, responsible decision-making may require seeking an accommodation that changes the conditions of the choice.

The Board considers this principle applicable to the fictional narrative.

It further recognizes that innovation does not eliminate the need for care.

The accommodation must be evaluated according to its own risks.

Technical assistance must be responsibly provided.

The patient's interests must remain central.

The successful outcome does not justify every act undertaken during the operation.

But the existence of operational risk does not establish that the effort should never have been attempted.

The Office therefore determines:

Mrs. Frisby did not abandon her medical responsibility by seeking to relocate the dwelling.

She sought to preserve the protective purpose of medical advice under circumstances in which ordinary compliance had become dangerous.

Her decision to obtain extraordinary assistance was reasonably directed toward the welfare of her children.

The absence of a risk-free alternative does not establish parental neglect.

The determination is entered.

XXX. DISPOSITION

NIMH-ERB-MED-001 is hereby concluded as to its principal ethical findings.

The Board recognizes that Timothy was seriously ill.

It recognizes that his mother sought available medical assistance.

It recognizes that the advice received created substantial restrictions upon ordinary relocation.

It recognizes that the approaching plow introduced a separate and potentially fatal danger.

It recognizes that the mother sought an alternative capable of reducing both hazards.

It recognizes that the rats agreed to provide technical assistance.

It recognizes the successful literary relocation and the more complicated cinematic rescue.

It recognizes the patient's subsequent improvement.

The Board enters no finding of parental neglect.

It enters no finding that the mere presence of danger rendered the mother's decisions improper.

It enters no determination that the fictional treatment provided by Mr. Ages constitutes validated contemporary medical care.

It further declines to infer that a successful outcome eliminates every question concerning the conduct of those who assisted.

The Office concludes that Mrs. Frisby's response was a reasonable attempt to protect her children under circumstances of substantial uncertainty.

No adverse parental finding is entered.

The principal medical ethics inquiry is concluded.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM A

Regarding the Allegation That Mrs. Frisby Violated Medical Advice by Moving the House

The Office of Medical Records has received a proposed finding that Mrs. Frisby violated Mr. Ages's instructions by permitting Timothy's dwelling to be moved.

The submission relies upon the recommendation that Timothy remain at rest and avoid exposure to cold.

The Board recognizes the stated purpose of the recommendation.

However, the proposed finding fails to distinguish the movement of the patient through the external environment from the relocation of the enclosed dwelling in which the patient remains sheltered.

The Board further recognizes that moving the dwelling introduces mechanical risks.

It does not establish that such movement necessarily produces the environmental exposure Mr. Ages sought to prevent.

The Office therefore declines to classify the intervention as an automatic violation of medical advice.

The relevant question is whether the accommodation preserved the protective purpose of the recommendation while reducing the danger posed by agricultural activity.

The available narrative supports that interpretation.

The proposed finding is rejected.

The Board respectfully requests that future submissions distinguish between moving a patient and moving the structure containing the patient.

The Office recognizes that both activities involve physical movement.

It does not recognize that fact as sufficient evidence of medical equivalence.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM B

Regarding the Proposed Finding That Timothy Was Recovered Once His Fever Subsided

The Office has considered the proposition that the family's relocation difficulties should have ended when Timothy's fever improved.

The Board recognizes that fever reduction may indicate improvement.

However, the medical adviser expressly warned that the child's vulnerability would continue after the acute symptoms diminished.

The proposed finding therefore disregards information material to the caregiver's decision.

The Office declines to treat visible improvement as proof that all medical risks had ended.

It further observes that a caregiver may reasonably distinguish between a child who appears more comfortable and a child who can safely tolerate environmental stress.

The Board therefore rejects the proposed declaration of complete recovery.

The Office respectfully notes that symptom improvement is not an automatic authorization to resume every activity previously considered dangerous.

The distinction is entered.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM C

Regarding the Proposal to Require Mrs. Frisby to Choose Which Risk Was More Acceptable

The Board has considered a proposed assessment requiring the mother to select either immediate relocation or continued occupation.

The submission assumes that these were the only permissible alternatives.

The Office recognizes that both options were initially available.

It further recognizes that both presented danger.

However, the proposed assessment excludes the possibility of obtaining assistance that would alter the conditions of the decision.

The Board considers this exclusion unwarranted.

The mother was not obligated to confine her search for a solution to two dangerous options merely because those options were the first to become apparent.

The Office therefore rejects the proposed requirement.

It further observes that responsible problem-solving may involve identifying alternatives not initially contemplated.

The Board does not regard the discovery of a third option as evidence that the original dilemma was imaginary.

The dilemma was real.

The accommodation changed it.

The distinction is entered.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM D

Regarding the Proposed Assessment of Parental Fitness Based Upon the Mother's Fear

The Office has received a hypothetical assessment suggesting that Mrs. Frisby's repeated fear demonstrates inadequate confidence to make decisions for her children.

The Board rejects the proposition.

Fear may arise in response to credible danger.

A caregiver's awareness of danger may be evidence of appropriate concern.

The existence of fear does not establish inability to reason.

Nor does it establish indifference.

Mrs. Frisby repeatedly acknowledges danger while continuing to seek assistance.

The Board therefore considers her conduct inconsistent with the suggestion that fear prevented responsible action.

The Office further observes that emotional composure is not identical to moral competence.

A parent may be frightened and act wisely.

A parent may appear calm and exercise poor judgment.

The Board therefore declines to establish the absence of fear as a prerequisite for responsible caregiving.

The proposed assessment is rejected.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM E

Regarding the Proposed Classification of Jeremy as an Unauthorized Medical Transport Provider

The Office has reviewed a proposed complaint concerning Jeremy's transportation of Mrs. Frisby to the Great Owl.

The complaint identifies the absence of documented medical transport certification.

The Board acknowledges that Jeremy transported an individual seeking assistance concerning a medical emergency.

However, Jeremy was not transporting the patient.

He transported the patient's mother to obtain information.

The Office therefore considers the proposed classification incomplete.

The Board further recognizes that Jeremy is a crow.

No established interspecies licensing framework governing his transportation of mice has been produced.

The absence of such documentation does not establish that the assistance was improper.

The Office also notes that Jeremy's earlier rescue from entanglement created a relationship of mutual assistance.

His subsequent transportation of Mrs. Frisby was reasonably connected to her efforts to protect her child.

The proposed complaint is dismissed.

The Office respectfully requests that future medical transport allegations identify whether the patient was actually being transported.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM F

Regarding the Proposed Conclusion That the Rats' Assistance Discharged Their Debt to Jonathan

The Board has considered a proposed accounting entry stating that the rescue of Timothy fully discharged the rats' obligation to Jonathan Frisby.

The Office recognizes the importance of Jonathan's earlier assistance.

It further recognizes that gratitude influenced the rats' decision.

However, the proposed entry treats the preservation of a child's life as a transaction capable of extinguishing a precisely measured debt.

No such accounting arrangement is established.

The Board therefore declines to assign a monetary or equivalent value to the rescue.

It further observes that Timothy's moral worth does not depend upon the amount of assistance his father previously rendered.

The Office recognizes that obligations of gratitude may be meaningful.

It does not recognize them as a complete explanation of every ethical duty concerning a vulnerable child.

The proposed accounting entry is rejected.

No balance shall be entered against Timothy's continued existence.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM G

Regarding the Suggestion That the Farmer Should Have Delayed Plowing Until Timothy Recovered

The Office has considered the proposition that Farmer Fitzgibbon should have suspended agricultural operations until Timothy was medically cleared for relocation.

The Board recognizes that such a delay would have reduced the immediate threat to the mouse family.

However, the available record does not establish that the farmer knew of Timothy's condition.

Nor does it establish that he possessed a practical means of receiving medical information from the mouse community.

The Office therefore declines to impose retrospective culpability based upon knowledge the farmer was not shown to possess.

The Board further recognizes that agricultural timing may carry legitimate consequences for the farmer.

The proposed indefinite suspension would therefore require consideration of feasibility and competing interests.

The Office does not conclude that delay could never have been appropriate.

It concludes only that the present record does not establish that the farmer knowingly refused a reasonable request.

The proposed adverse finding is rejected.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM H

Regarding the Assertion That the Successful Rescue Proves the Medical Advice Was Unnecessary

The Board has considered the proposition that Timothy's eventual recovery demonstrates that Mr. Ages's restrictions were unnecessarily cautious.

The argument is not sustained.

The family avoided the ordinary relocation that prompted the medical concern.

The dwelling was moved instead.

Timothy remained sheltered during recovery.

The successful result therefore cannot be used to establish what would have happened had the family ignored the advice and undertaken the original journey.

The Office recognizes that the precise effect of every avoided hazard cannot be demonstrated retrospectively.

Nevertheless, the absence of a harmful outcome following an accommodation does not establish that the accommodation was unnecessary.

The Board therefore rejects the proposed inference.

The Office respectfully observes that preventing a harm may result in the absence of evidence that the harm would otherwise have occurred.

That absence does not automatically invalidate the preventive effort.

The distinction is entered.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM I

Regarding the Proposed Use of the Amulet as a Standard Pediatric Transfer Device

The Office has received a hypothetical proposal to designate the extraordinary amulet as approved equipment for relocating medically vulnerable children.

The proposal cites the successful cinematic rescue.

The Board recognizes the artifact's demonstrated capacity to move a residential structure.

It further recognizes that the occupants survived.

However, the operating mechanism remains unexplained.

The artifact's repeatability is unestablished.

Its capacity for controlled movement has not been systematically evaluated.

Its effects upon the user include physical injury.

No ordinary equipment specification has been produced.

The Office therefore declines to certify the amulet as a general pediatric transport device.

The Board recognizes that the intervention was justified by extraordinary emergency circumstances.

It does not recognize that justification as proof of suitability for routine clinical operations.

The proposal is rejected.

The Office further observes that a supernatural rescue cannot responsibly be treated as the foundation of a standard medical transportation service without additional evidence concerning whether the supernatural event can be reproduced.

The distinction is entered.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM J

Regarding the Proposed Characterization of Timothy as the Cause of the Emergency

The Office of Records has received a proposed incident description stating that Timothy's illness caused the family's inability to relocate.

The Board recognizes that the illness materially complicated ordinary relocation.

However, the description requires qualification.

The family's danger arose from the interaction of multiple circumstances.

The child was ill.

The medical adviser recommended continued shelter.

The winter dwelling stood in an area threatened by agricultural activity.

The farmer's schedule permitted insufficient time for ordinary recovery.

The family lacked the physical means to move the dwelling without assistance.

No single circumstance provides a complete explanation.

The Board therefore rejects the characterization of Timothy as the cause of the emergency.

A child who becomes ill has not committed a wrongful act by requiring care.

Nor does the child's vulnerability establish responsibility for the external dangers confronting the family.

The Office directs that future incident descriptions identify the medical and environmental circumstances without attributing culpability to the patient.

The proposed language is struck.

The child is not the problem to be corrected.

The danger is.

The distinction is entered.

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE NOTICE

On the Difference Between Perfect Safety and Responsible Love

The Office concludes this proceeding by returning to the beginning of the story.

Before the laboratory is revealed, before the rats' intelligence becomes known, before the rosebush is examined, before the conflict concerning Thorn Valley reaches its consequences, there is a mother.

Her youngest child is ill.

He has a fever.

His breathing frightens her.

She seeks help.

The assistance she receives offers hope.

The child may recover.

But recovery requires time.

Time that the approaching season may not allow.

The family must move.

The child must remain sheltered.

The mother cannot satisfy both requirements through ordinary means.

The Board recognizes that this is the central difficulty.

It is not a failure of affection.

It is not a failure of concern.

It is not a failure to understand that her child's life matters.

It is the collision of obligations that cannot initially be fulfilled together.

The mother possesses a duty to protect Timothy from medical deterioration.

She also possesses a duty to protect him and his siblings from the destruction of their home.

Neither duty is imaginary.

Neither may simply be dismissed.

The existence of one does not render the other unnecessary.

Mrs. Frisby therefore confronts a problem familiar to caregivers throughout the world.

What should be done when the course recommended to prevent one danger increases exposure to another?

The answer is not always obvious.

A caregiver may possess incomplete information.

The available advice may address only part of the problem.

The circumstances may change.

The resources required for a safer alternative may belong to someone else.

The decision may need to be made before certainty is possible.

The Board therefore rejects the proposition that responsible care can be measured solely by the absence of danger.

Such a standard would place upon caregivers an impossible obligation.

It would require them to guarantee outcomes they do not control.

It would condemn them for circumstances they did not create.

It would confuse vulnerability with neglect.

The Office considers that confusion especially serious.

A parent may love a child deeply and still confront a dangerous world.

A parent may seek medical assistance and still be unable to eliminate every threat.

A parent may make a reasonable decision and still experience tragedy.

The seriousness of these possibilities does not diminish the importance of responsibility.

It requires that responsibility be understood accurately.

Mrs. Frisby's decisions demonstrate a sustained effort to protect her family.

She recognizes illness.

She seeks medical assistance.

She understands the warning concerning recovery.

She recognizes the approaching agricultural danger.

She does not disregard the medical advice.

She does not deny the threat posed by the plow.

She seeks a solution.

The resulting journey exposes her to danger.

She encounters beings whose assistance is uncertain.

She must ask questions.

She must trust others.

She must accept that the protection of her child may depend upon capabilities she does not possess.

The Board recognizes that these circumstances involve vulnerability.

It does not regard vulnerability as a defect in parental competence.

Indeed, the willingness to seek assistance may be evidence of responsible judgment.

The mother does not insist that she must solve the emergency alone.

She recognizes that others possess knowledge she lacks.

Mr. Ages understands the illness.

Jeremy can transport her.

The Great Owl understands the surrounding environment.

The enhanced rats possess technical capabilities.

Each contributes something.

None possesses the entire solution alone.

The Board considers this distribution of responsibility significant.

The medical adviser cannot stop the plow.

The Owl cannot lift the house.

The mother cannot operate the rats' machinery.

The rats cannot simply eliminate Timothy's pneumonia.

Yet their different capacities can be brought together.

And through that cooperation, an alternative becomes possible.

The Office therefore recognizes an important distinction.

The inability of one person to perform every necessary act does not establish that the person has failed in the obligation to seek what is necessary.

The mother cannot lift the house.

But she can ask for help.

The rats cannot cure the child.

But they can move the dwelling.

The farmer need not abandon the ordinary purpose of cultivation.

The family need not expose Timothy to the original danger of premature seasonal travel.

The solution does not require any participant to possess complete power.

It requires the recognition that different forms of ability can be directed toward a common protective objective.

The Board further recognizes that the resulting intervention is not without risk.

The dwelling is heavy.

The machinery must function.

The occupants must remain protected.

The operation requires coordination.

In the cinematic record, deliberate sabotage transforms those hazards into tragedy.

Nicodemus dies.

Sullivan later dies.

Jenner dies.

The home becomes endangered.

The final rescue requires supernatural intervention.

These circumstances demonstrate that successful assistance cannot be assumed.

The Board does not treat the family's eventual survival as proof that the dangers were insignificant.

The dangers were real.

The fact that they were overcome does not erase them.

Nor does the presence of tragedy elsewhere in the operation establish that the mother's request for assistance was wrongful.

The ethical responsibility for deliberate sabotage belongs to the individual who undertook it.

It does not transfer automatically to the parent who sought help for her child.

The Office considers this distinction indispensable.

A vulnerable person may depend upon an institution.

The institution may subsequently fail.

The failure may create harm.

The dependent person's need for assistance does not establish responsibility for the institution's misconduct.

The Board therefore rejects any reasoning that would treat Timothy's illness as an excuse for the actions of others.

The illness created a need.

It did not create a permission to kill.

The mother sought protection.

She did not authorize political violence.

The rats agreed to assist.

Their assistance did not authorize sabotage.

The existence of a child in danger did not eliminate anyone else's responsibility to act with restraint.

These obligations remain distinct.

The Board then returns to the literary record.

The house is moved.

It is placed in shelter near the stone.

Timothy remains protected.

The plow passes without destroying the dwelling.

The family continues its life.

Later, when the weather is warm and the child has recovered, the mother and children undertake their ordinary seasonal journey.

Timothy runs with his siblings.

The Board considers this detail important.

The objective was never merely to keep the child inside a cement block.

The objective was to preserve his life.

To allow recovery.

To restore the possibility of ordinary childhood.

The successful accommodation did not require Timothy to remain permanently defined by illness.

It created the conditions under which illness would no longer govern every decision concerning his future.

The Board therefore recognizes that the end of the emergency is not simply the absence of death.

It is the return of possibility.

Timothy can leave the winter dwelling.

He can travel with his family.

He can play.

He can participate in the life that had been threatened.

The Office considers this outcome significant.

The child's future is not merely an abstract benefit.

It is the reason the protective effort mattered.

The Board further recognizes the role of Jonathan Frisby.

His earlier conduct helped establish the relationships through which the family eventually received assistance.

The rats remembered him.

They recognized the significance of his sacrifice.

They agreed to help his widow.

These circumstances demonstrate how acts of care may produce consequences beyond those immediately visible.

Jonathan did not survive to assist Timothy during this emergency.

Nevertheless, his earlier relationships mattered.

The Board does not regard this as evidence that children must inherit a parent's moral credit before receiving assistance.

It regards the history as an example of how responsibility and gratitude can persist beyond the individual who originally acted.

The mother sought help.

The community remembered.

The child benefited.

The Office recognizes that this sequence is moving.

It does not consider emotional significance incompatible with rigorous ethical analysis.

Indeed, the Board concludes that the analysis would be incomplete without recognizing the human—or, in this case, murine—purpose of the intervention.

The child was not an administrative inconvenience.

He was not a disputed property interest.

He was not an experimental asset.

He was not an obstacle to agricultural operations.

He was not an instrument through which the rats could demonstrate their technical superiority.

He was a child.

He was ill.

He required care.

The fact that his circumstances produced complicated questions concerning medicine, agriculture, engineering, and institutional authority does not make those questions more important than his life.

The Board therefore returns to the simplest formulation of the case.

A mother was told that her child must not be moved.

She learned that the place in which he rested could not safely remain where it was.

She sought help.

And the community discovered a way to move the shelter rather than expose the child.

The Office recognizes that the intervention required extraordinary capability.

But the ethical purpose was ordinary.

To protect a vulnerable life.

To make room for recovery.

To respond to a need that could not be met through the resources of one household alone.

The Board therefore enters its final determination.

Responsible care is not the elimination of every danger.

It is the sustained effort to recognize danger, evaluate available alternatives, seek appropriate assistance, and protect the interests of the person who depends upon that care.

The presence of uncertainty does not eliminate responsibility.

The presence of responsibility does not eliminate uncertainty.

And the absence of a perfect choice does not establish that the caregiver has failed.

The distinction is entered.

The Office recognizes that Mrs. Frisby was frightened.

It recognizes that she lacked extraordinary strength.

It recognizes that she did not understand the rats' technology.

It recognizes that she had no authority over the farmer.

It recognizes that she could not cure Timothy by herself.

It recognizes that she could not move the house by herself.

It further recognizes that none of these limitations prevented her from acting with determination and care.

The Board therefore concludes:

The mother was not negligent because she lacked the power to guarantee safety.

She was responsible because she continued seeking a means of protection despite the limits of her power.

The Office recognizes that Timothy's recovery required medical care.

It recognizes that the family's survival required shelter.

It recognizes that the proposed relocation required technical assistance.

It recognizes that the successful outcome depended upon cooperation.

It further recognizes that the child was not required to understand every institution involved in his rescue in order to be worthy of that rescue.

The matter is concluded.

The Board has examined an extraordinary civilization of enhanced rats.

It has considered the ethics of scientific experimentation.

It has investigated technological infrastructure.

It has reviewed collective government.

It has protected the right of political dissent.

It has distinguished dissent from lethal conspiracy.

It has examined supernatural power.

It has considered the interests of an uninformed farmer.

And it now returns to the circumstance that made these investigations possible.

A mother asked for help.

The Office does not consider that request extraordinary.

It considers the response extraordinary.

And it enters one final observation.

The measure of a civilization is not exhausted by what it can build.

It may also be found in what it is willing to move when a vulnerable life stands in danger.

The house was moved.

The child was protected.

And, in the literary record, when spring had fully arrived, Timothy was finally well enough to run.

No further finding is necessary.

So entered.

Office of Improbable Jurisdiction
Experimental Intelligence and Autonomous Persons Review Board
Division of Pediatric Medical Ethics, Competing Hazards, and Extraordinary Household Accommodation

END OF NIMH-ERB-MED-001

SOURCE RECORD

Record A: Robert C. O'Brien, *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* (1971).

Principal narrative material includes:

The Sickness of Timothy Frisby; Mr. Ages; Mr. Fitzgibbon's Plow; Five Days; A Favor from Jeremy; The Owl; Go to the Rats; In the Rosebush; The Doctor; and *Epilogue.*

Particular attention is directed to Timothy's illness, the medical advice provided by Mr. Ages, the five-day agricultural deadline, the Great Owl's recommendation, the rats' relocation of the winter dwelling, and Timothy's subsequent recovery.

Record B: Don Bluth, director, *The Secret of NIMH* (1982).

Principal narrative material includes Timothy Brisby's illness, Mr. Ages's medical assessment, the approach of plowing, Mrs. Brisby's efforts to obtain assistance, the operation to move the family home, the sabotage of the lifting apparatus, and the eventual supernatural rescue.

Foundational Proceeding: NIMH-ERB-001 — *Preliminary Investigation into the Rats of NIMH.*

Companion Proceedings:

NIMH-ERB-002 — *The Experimental Subjects.*

NIMH-ERB-003 — *The Rosebush Settlement.*

NIMH-ERB-004 — *The Plan for Thorn Valley.*

NIMH-ERB-005 — *The Literary Jenner.*

NIMH-ERB-006 — *The Cinematic Jenner.*

NIMH-ERB-007 — *The Extraordinary Amulet.*

NIMH-ERB-MUN-001 — *The Fitzgibbon Farm.*

Scope of Findings: Fictional literary and medical ethics analysis. The proceeding does not provide contemporary medical advice, establish real-world standards of clinical care, or determine actual legal liability.