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Playscripts, Inc.  
325 W. 38<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 305  
New York, NY 10018

Phone: 1-866-NEW-PLAY (639-7529)  
Email: [info@playscripts.com](mailto:info@playscripts.com)  
Web: [www.playscripts.com](http://www.playscripts.com)

## **Cast of Characters**

MOLE

RAT

BADGER

TOAD (m)

OTTER

LITTLE PORTLY\*

RABBIT

MOUSE

CHIEF WEASEL

WEASEL 1

WEASEL 2

FERRET CAPTAIN

FERRET 1

FERRET 2

CAR SALESMAN

DRIVER 1

DRIVER 2

JUDGE

BAILIFF

JAILER'S DAUGHTER (f)

BARGE WOMAN (f)

Plus extra ANIMALS and WEASELS as desired

\* If desired, Little Portly may be portrayed through use of a puppet.

## **Additional Casting Notes**

Most of the roles in *The Wind in the Willows* may be double-cast as desired, with the exception of the following characters: Mole, Rat, Badger, and Toad.

In addition, most roles allow for flexible casting of either male or female actors. Any pronouns referring to these characters should be adjusted to fit the gender of the corresponding actor. If additional Weasels and Ferrets are added, their lines may be redistributed among those animals as desired (except for the Chief Weasel's lines).

Lastly, while an attempt has been made to retain some of the British flavor of the original writing, none of the characters require an English accent. Actors are encouraged to simply deliver their lines in their natural accent.

## **Technical Requirements**

### *Set Description:*

The sets in *The Wind in the Willows* are intended to be representational and as simple as desired, using only a few minimal pieces combined with lighting to suggest the different locations, allowing for easy transitions. For example, locations such as the Wild Wood or the prison may be accomplished solely with lighting to create the necessary mood. A more permanent background of the countryside and the River can help provide continuity throughout the play. If certain locations or transitions prove difficult, some scenes may easily be moved out of doors (such as setting Act 1, Scene 4 outside on the River instead of inside Toad Hall), reserving more complex locations for scenes when they are absolutely necessary. The playwright encourages each group to determine the level of technical complexity appropriate for their production and adjust accordingly.

The play also includes several types of vehicles, such as old-fashioned motorcars and rowboats. As noted in the stage directions, these may also be portrayed simply rather than literally, using suggestive pieces rather than elaborately realistic vehicles. Most of the vehicles, such as the motorcars, may also be simply invisible, relying instead on the appropriate sound effects and the actors' reactions. In keeping with the imaginative nature of the original story, depictions requiring audience imagination will often work best. Again, each group is encouraged to determine a portrayal that works best for their production.

*Sound Effects:*

The music of Pan (see opening stage directions)  
The sounds of spring  
An old-fashioned motorcar as it's driving  
A motorcar starting up  
A motorcar driving up and stopping  
A moving train  
A car crash  
A prison door slamming shut  
A storm, with wind and rain  
A barge, sailing down the River  
Loud splash  
Gunshot

*Prop List:*

Broom  
A pair of oars (optional, see stage directions)  
Picnic basket and lunch  
Towel  
Fishing poles (2)  
Large wad of money  
Notepad and a pen or pencil  
Book  
Chains or handcuffs (to restrain Toad)  
Assorted papers  
Judge's gavel (optional)  
Newspaper  
Tea tray with a pot of tea and two teacups  
Large sticks (6, more for additional Weasels and Ferrets)  
Tray of breakfast food  
Washerwoman's clothes  
Bar of soap  
Washtub filled with clothes  
Mugs (2)  
Swords and other assorted weapons  
Invitations

# THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

adapted by T. James Belich

FROM THE NOVEL BY KENNETH GRAHAME

## ACT I

### Scene 1

*(The lights come up on MOLE who is busy sweeping her underground home. Her home may be portrayed minimally through simple lighting as she will soon exit. MOLE sweeps furiously and is obviously feeling discontent at her task. The lights on MOLE are dim, but come up more brightly on the outside world around her: The English countryside of the 1900s. We hear the sounds of spring, and with it our first snatches of the music of Pan: A beautiful music which, if possible, includes the sound of panpipes. Whatever music is used, the music should carry with it a sense of great joy. MOLE stops and listens, clearly wanting to venture outside.)*

**MOLE.** I suppose, I shouldn't... *(She returns to her sweeping with even less enthusiasm than before, the outside world calling strongly to her.)* I mean, there's so much to be done... *(Pause and MOLE finally stops in exasperation.)* Oh, hang spring cleaning! Who can think of sweeping on such a beautiful day?

*(MOLE stashes her broom offstage and exits her home, acting as if she's wriggling up out of an underground hole. The rest of the lights brighten as she emerges into the countryside.)*

Now this is fine!

*(As MOLE begins to walk about other ANIMALS may also be about their business, as desired. As MOLE walks she leaves behind the woods and fields and reaches the River. The other ANIMALS interact and chat with each other, but MOLE remains separate, focused on her new surroundings. The WATER RAT has entered by this point, out on the River in her little blue and white rowboat. If the staging of a literal rowboat proves too complex, it may instead be portrayed through simple, suggestive pieces, or perhaps just through sound, lighting, and pantomime. MOLE sees the River for the first time.)*

**MOLE.** Oh my!

**RAT.** Hello, Mole!

**MOLE.** Oh! I mean, that is... Hello, Rat.

**RAT.** New to the River?

*(MOLE nods.)*

I thought as much. You had the look of a forest-dweller. It's a pleasure to meet you, Mole. How'd you do?

**MOLE.** Very well, thank you, Rat. I'm very glad to meet you. So this...this is a river?

**RAT.** *The River.*

**MOLE.** And you live on it?

**RAT.** *(Proudly:)* By it, with it, on it, and in it. It's the only world I've ever known and I don't want any other. What it hasn't got is not worth having, and what it doesn't know is not worth knowing. What do you think of it?

**MOLE.** It's marvelous! I've never known anything like it.

*(Slight pause.)*

**RAT.** Well? Aren't you going to join me? In the boat, I mean?

**MOLE.** Oh, it's all very well to talk...

*(RAT brings the boat over to MOLE.)*

**RAT.** *(Cheerfully:)* There you are then. Step lively! *(RAT helps MOLE into the boat.)* Careful now, hold on. *(Once MOLE is in the boat RAT brings it back out into the River.)* There!

*(MOLE is in awe, enraptured by this new experience.)*

**MOLE.** How wonderful! Do you know, I've never been in a boat before in all my life.

**RAT.** Never? What on earth have you been doing then?

**MOLE.** Is it as nice as that?

**RAT.** Believe me, Mole, there is nothing as worth doing as messing about in a boat. It's the finest thing there is, really. *(Dreamily:)* Just messing about, messing about in a boat...

**MOLE.** Rat! Look out!

*(They act as if the boat has hit the shore and fall over in the boat.)*

**RAT.** *(Laughing:)* Yes, nothing like a boat!

**MOLE.** Does that happen often?

**RAT.** Oh, often enough if you don't watch yourself. Look here, if you've nothing else to do, suppose you join me and make a day of it?

**MOLE.** Could I? I mean, I only meant to go for a quick stroll, but...

**RAT.** At least stay the afternoon. I've a picnic.

**MOLE.** If you're sure it wouldn't be an imposition...

**RAT.** Nonsense! I wouldn't hear of anything else.

**MOLE.** *(Excited:)* Certainly then! Oh, what a day I'm having!

*(RAT continues to make rowing motions, although the boat need not be in constant motion. RAT hums as they enjoy the River.)*

What a life you must lead, Rat.

**RAT.** *(Pleased:)* Whatever the season, the River always has its excitement.

**MOLE.** It's the most fun I've had in ages! *(MOLE watches as RAT continues to row.)* Rat, do you think I might give it a try?

**RAT.** Rowing, you mean? *(She shakes her head.)* Not yet, Mole, it's not half as easy as it looks.

**MOLE.** Please, Rat!

**RAT.** Nothing doing, Mole. You'd have us over and that's a fact.

*(As RAT rows, however, MOLE becomes more and more anxious.)*

**MOLE.** Oh...! I can do it, I know I can! (*Losing all patience, MOLE grabs the oars from RAT. She pulls hard at the oars and RAT acts as if she is about to tip over.*)

**RAT.** Stop! You'll turn us over!

*(MOLE pulls at the oars for a few more moments, but soon she misses the "water" altogether. They both lurch and MOLE falls out of the boat and into the River. RAT steadies the boat and pulls the now shivering MOLE back in. RAT cannot help but laugh.)*

**RAT.** There! What did I tell you!

**MOLE.** I'm so sorry, Rat. I really thought I could.

**RAT.** Everyone does, 'til they give it their first try. (*RAT pulls out a well-worn towel.*) Here, dry off with that.

**MOLE.** I've been very foolish, Rat, I know it.

**RAT.** Don't think on it, Mole. We all take a spill now and then. And you didn't do too badly for your first try.

**MOLE.** Thank you, Rat. You are a generous friend.

*(RAT starts to bring the boat back.)*

**RAT.** What you need now is a good lunch.

**MOLE.** Oh yes!

*(RAT ties up the boat and pulls out a picnic basket as they hop out.)*

**RAT.** Just the spot.

*(She sets up the picnic as MOLE looks off into the distance.)*

**MOLE.** Rat? What's that over there?

**RAT.** Where? Oh, that's just the Wild Wood. We don't go in there much, we river-bankers. (*She continues to prepare the picnic.*)

**MOLE.** Aren't they very nice in there?

**RAT.** The squirrels and rabbits are all right. And then there's old Badger, nobody interferes with him.

**MOLE.** Who should interfere with him?

**RAT.** There are others... Weasels and ferrets and animals of *that* sort.

**MOLE.** I don't much like the sound of them.

**RAT.** I'm friends with most of them, but, well, you can't always trust them and that's a fact. And after the Wood comes the Wide World. I've never been, and I'm never going. No animal with sense ever does.

**MOLE.** And Badger? Who's he?

*(RAT laughs.)*

**RAT.** You are one for questions, aren't you, Mole?

**MOLE.** I'm sorry, Rat, this is just all so new to me.

**RAT.** There'll be time to explain everything. Now dig in!

*(They start to eat and after a few moments OTTER and his child LITTLE PORTLY enter.)*

**OTTER.** *(Cheerfully:)* Greedy beggars! Why didn't you invite us, Rat?

**RAT.** Sorry, Otter, it was rather an impromptu affair. *(Making introductions:)* Otter, Mole.

*(OTTER shakes hands with MOLE.)*

**OTTER.** Proud, I'm sure. This is my son *[Or daughter]*, Little Portly.

**MOLE.** How very nice to meet you. And you, Portly.

*(LITTLE PORTLY says nothing.)*

**OTTER.** A little shy, he is. Don't you mind, Mole.

**RAT.** Join us, won't you?

**OTTER.** Don't mind if I do. *(He and LITTLE PORTLY share in the picnic.)* Such a ruckus everywhere! All the world seems to be out on the River today.

**RAT.** Who's all out?

**OTTER.** Toad, for one. Brand-new rowboat, new oars, new everything. You know Toad, Mole? Of Toad Hall?

**MOLE.** No, I've never seen him.

*(RAT laughs.)*

**RAT.** Well now you have! There!

*(RAT points as TOAD enters and crosses the stage in a red rowboat. It is clear that he is terrible at rowing. If desired, TOAD may be located offstage to simplify staging. In this case, RAT will have the added line, "That red boat there, Mole." They all watch TOAD for a moment.)*

**RAT.** Look at that animal splash about! Toad'll be out of the boat in a minute rowing like that.

**OTTER.** *(Chuckling:)* Of course he will!

**MOLE.** Isn't Toad very good at it?

*(RAT and OTTER both laugh.)*

**OTTER.** Good? Toad? A good fellow, but no stability, especially in a boat.

**RAT.** *(Explaining:)* Two summers ago it was nothing but sailing for Toad, and a nice mess he made of it too. Last year it was house-boating, and we all had to go and stay with him on his house-boat and pretend we liked it. But by the end of the summer he wouldn't go near the thing. It's all the same, whatever Toad takes up, he soon tires of it and starts something new. Today it's rowing and goodness knows what it'll be tomorrow!

*(They all watch as TOAD rows off and exits. As they finish eating LITTLE PORTLY tugs at OTTER.)*

**OTTER.** What is it then?

*(Shyly, LITTLE PORTLY whispers in OTTER's ear:)*

Oh! I nearly forgot. We were off to do some fishing when we found you two. Hope you don't mind.

**RAT.** Not at all, Otter.

**OTTER.** We'll see you animals soon, I'm sure. So nice to have met you, Mole!

**MOLE.** And you, Otter. Goodbye!

*(OTTER and LITTLE PORTLY exit.)*

Are there always so many about, Rat? Coming and going like that?

**RAT.** Rather! Some days you can't get a moment's peace, you'll see.

*(They pack up the picnic basket.)*

**MOLE.** That was marvelous, Rat.

**RAT.** *(Modestly:)* Nothing much, just what I always take. *(They finish cleaning up.)* Now look here, Mole...

**MOLE.** Oh I am sorry about before—

**RAT.** I really think you ought to come and stay with me for awhile.

**MOLE.** Rat?

**RAT.** I'll teach you to row and to swim, and you'll soon be as handy on the water as any of us.

**MOLE.** It sounds wonderful! Though I do have spring cleaning to see to... *(However, it is clear she'd rather accept Rat's offer.)*

**RAT.** You only need stay as long as you like.

**MOLE.** And you wouldn't mind?

**RAT.** 'Course not! We'll make a proper river-animal of you yet.

**MOLE.** Thank you, Rat, it's very kind of you. Of course I'll stay!

**RAT.** Right! This way then.

*(RAT picks up the picnic basket and exits offstage followed by MOLE. We hear a snatch of Pan's music as the lights fade to black.)*

**Scene 2**

*(The next day. RAT and MOLE are outside by the River, either by the bank or out in Rat's boat. Both are fishing while RAT hums a little tune.)*

**RAT.** *(Humming to herself:)* All along the backwater, through the rushes tall, ducks are a-dabbling, up tails all!

**MOLE.** I don't know that I think so very much of that song, Rat.

**RAT.** *(Laughing:)* Neither do the ducks! "What nonsense it is," that's what the ducks say. Mole, what say I take you to see Toad today?

**MOLE.** If you think Toad wouldn't mind.

*(If used, RAT brings the boat to shore and puts it away offstage. They start walking to Toad Hall.)*

**RAT.** 'Course not! It's never the wrong time to call on Toad. Early or late he's always the same animal: Always glad to see you, always sorry when you go.

**MOLE.** He sounds very good-natured.

**RAT.** The best of creatures, you'll see. He's not very clever, I suppose, and he may be a little boastful and conceited, but he does have some great qualities, Toad does. There's Toad Hall now. Toad's rather rich, you know.

**MOLE.** It's magnificent, Rat. I've never seen a house like it.

**RAT.** One of the nicest in these parts, though we never admit as much to Toad.

*(The rest of the stage has now become the lawn in front of Toad Hall. TOAD enters, a short and squat individual dressed in the clothes of a country gentleman.)*

**TOAD.** *(With genuine cheerfulness:)* Oh hooray! How splendid! *(TOAD shakes hands with RAT.)* How good to see you, Rat, always a pleasure. *(TOAD shakes hands with MOLE.)* And a pleasure to meet you, Mole. Any friend of Rat's, you know. I'm so glad to see you both.

**MOLE.** (*A little overcome:*) It's very good to meet you, Toad. It's a wonderful house.

**TOAD.** Finest house on the whole river, or anywhere else, for that matter.

(*RAT nudges MOLE.*)

All right, Rat! It's only my way, you know. Now look here, you're the very animals I wanted. You simply must help me.

**RAT.** It's about your rowing, I suppose. You're doing fine, Toad, though you splash about a good bit still. With a little patience you just might—

**TOAD.** Oh bother boating! I've given that up at last. Sheer waste of time. No, I've discovered the only real thing, my friends, the only thing.

**RAT.** (*Aside, to MOLE:*) And all since yesterday too.

**TOAD.** Come with me and you shall see! (*TOAD drags a reluctant RAT across the stage.*)

**RAT.** We just came by to say hello, Toad. I don't know that... (*Looking offstage:*) What on earth is *that*?

**TOAD.** A caravan! Bright and shining and new! That's the real life for you, right there in that little cart. The open road, the dusty highway, the whole world before us!

**MOLE.** It sounds exciting!

**TOAD.** It is, it is! Just think of the summer we three shall have when we make our start this afternoon.

**RAT.** I beg your pardon, Toad, but did you just say "this afternoon"?

**TOAD.** Now Rat, don't start talking like that, because you've got to come. Surely don't mean to stick to your silly old river all your life?

**RAT.** I do. I'm not coming, and that's that. And Mole's going to stick by me, aren't you, Mole?

**MOLE.** Of course I am, Rat. *(To herself:)* All the same, it sounds as if it might have been rather fun...

**TOAD.** Just come and take a look, Rat.

**RAT.** I won't!

*(TOAD and RAT struggle as TOAD tries to drag RAT towards the caravan. Suddenly there is the sound of an old-fashioned motorcar approaching rapidly with a "put-put" sound. We hear the motorcar pass by and drive away. As it passes the three animals they act as if it has almost run them over, especially RAT and MOLE. RAT runs after the motorcar and shakes her fist.)*

**RAT.** Villains, scoundrels, roadhogs! I'll have the law on you!

**TOAD.** *(As if in a dream:)* Put-put...

**MOLE.** What a terrible machine!

**TOAD.** Glorious, stirring sight! The poetry of motion! The only way to travel! Here today, in next week tomorrow! Put-put! Oh my, oh my!

**RAT.** Stop being such a fool, Toad. It's just one of those awful motorcars.

**TOAD.** *(Not listening, still watching after the motorcar:)* And to think I never knew! What a flowery track lies before me, what dust-clouds shall spring up behind me as I speed upon my reckless way!

**MOLE.** What's wrong with him?

**RAT.** He's got a new craze now, it always takes him this way at first. He'll be like this for days, quite useless for all practical purposes.

**TOAD.** And to think had you not been here I might never have seen, never have known that swan, that sunbeam, that thunderbolt! I owe it all to you, my best of friends!

**RAT.** You see what it is? We'd best bring him inside.

**TOAD.** Put-put... Oh, to think I never *knew!*

*(RAT and MOLE drag TOAD offstage and into his house. The lights shift, indicating the passage of time, as TOAD enters again.)*

*We hear the sound of a train. TOAD “boards” the train in a state of great excitement, unable to think of anything but motorcars. The sound of the train stops, TOAD disembarks, and we then hear the sound of a motorcar as it drives up. Throughout the play motorcars may be portrayed as minimally or elaborately as desired. For simple staging, the cars may be either invisible, portrayed through sound effects and the characters’ reactions, or suggested through a few simple pieces.)*

**TOAD.** Put-put...

*(TOAD admires the car as a CAR SALESMAN, a human, enters. The SALESMAN points out the ignition and other controls as TOAD gets behind the wheel, still in a daze, and admires the car. Hardly paying attention to the SALESMAN, TOAD hands over a wad of bills. The SALESMAN looks pleased and exits. TOAD starts the car and, the craze having taken control, begins to drive wildly. Other ANIMALS enter and run away from TOAD as if trying to get out of his way. TOAD laughs, fully under control of the craze. The lights fade to black and we hear the sound of a car crash.)*

### Scene 3

*(The following day. RAT and MOLE sit in Rat’s living room which looks out on the River. As with Mole’s home, Rat’s house may be portrayed as simply as desired, using as little as a couple of chairs and appropriate lighting to suggest its warm and inviting atmosphere. RAT hums as she scribbles down some poetry. MOLE sits reading a book, but is obviously restless.)*

**MOLE.** Rat, when do you think we might pay a visit to Badger?

**RAT.** Still on about Badger, are you?

**MOLE.** The way you and Otter talk about him, he seems so important. Though half of what I hear makes me nervous to meet him.

**RAT.** You’ll be all right if I introduce you. A good, solid creature, Badger is. But you must not only take him as you find him, but *when* you find him.

**MOLE.** Couldn’t you ask him here to dinner or something?

**RAT.** He wouldn't come. Badger hates society and invitations and all that sort of thing.

**MOLE.** Well then, suppose we go and call on him?

**RAT.** *(Alarmed:)* Oh I'm sure he wouldn't like that at all! I've never dared to call on him at home myself. Besides, Badger lives in the middle of the Wild Wood.

**MOLE.** So? You told me the Wild Wood was all right.

**RAT.** *(Evasively:)* Well, yes, I suppose I did, but I don't think we'll go there just yet.

**MOLE.** But if Badger won't come here –

**RAT.** Oh he'll come along, someday, if you wait quietly. You must just be patient, Mole.

*(Slight pause. OTTER enters in a hurry. LITTLE PORTLY tags along and follows OTTER around.)*

**OTTER.** Rat! Oh Rat, I'm glad you're home. You've heard?

**RAT.** *(Nodding:)* Bother that Toad, what a nuisance he'll make with that thing—

**OTTER.** I'm afraid he already has. You've got to come!

**RAT.** Certainly, Otter, is it as bad as all that?

**OTTER.** You'll understand when you see. Please!

*(RAT nods and starts to follow OTTER.)*

**RAT.** 'Course!

**MOLE.** Would you like me to...?

**RAT.** That's all right, Mole, we'll take care of it.

**MOLE.** But—

**RAT.** I'll be back as soon as I can.

*(OTTER and RAT exit quickly, followed by LITTLE PORTLY. Slight pause as MOLE continues to read. Soon, however, she becomes even more restless.)*

**MOLE.** Oh, I really think I could have done something... *(She continues to read.)* Badger, I suppose, would set Toad right. Badger! If we needed his help I can't think he'd mind... That is, if I stopped by, just for a moment... *(MOLE puts away her book and exits Rat's house.)* And I'm sure it couldn't hurt to introduce myself, whatever Rat says.

*(The lights gradually grow darker and more sinister as she enters the Wild Wood.)*

Besides, Rat *did* say the Wild Wood was all right. *(She continues to walk. In the distance we hear the sound of menacing laughter and the scampering of many feet.)* Brrr! Who knew it would be so cold? I wish to goodness I had brought a coat! *(MOLE stops for a moment. A WEASEL pops out, snickers, and disappears before MOLE can get a good look. MOLE laughs nervously to herself.)* Just your imagination, Mole. Now, which way, I wonder...Rat said Badger lived in the middle of the Wood. Must be deeper in.

*(MOLE walks on. Several WEASELS and FERRETS, including the CHIEF WEASEL and FERRET CAPTAIN, enter and follow her, ducking out of sight whenever MOLE turns around to look. MOLE moves faster and the WEASELS and FERRETS continue to follow. A RABBIT enters and runs past MOLE.)*

**RABBIT.** Run, run, run, run, run!

*(The RABBIT exits. Starting to become frightened, MOLE tries to exit but the WEASELS and FERRETS no longer hide and block her path.)*

**CHIEF W.** What do we have here, boys? If it isn't a little Mole! What brings you into the Wild Wood?

**MOLE.** *(Afraid:)* I... I...

**WEASEL 2.** *(Mimicking:)* "I... I..."

**MOLE.** I've come to see Badger.

**WEASEL 1.** *(Nervous:)* Badger?

**CHIEF W.** Friend of his, are you?

**MOLE.** Well...

**WEASEL 2.** She ain't no friend of Badger's!

**MOLE.** I'm sorry, I really must be going. So nice to have met you!  
(*MOLE tries again to run, but she is pushed back.*) Oh please!

**F. CAPTAIN.** (*Mimicking:*) "Oh please!"

*(The WEASELS and FERRETS laugh and snicker. MOLE runs to and fro, trying to exit, but each time she is blocked and becomes more and more frightened.)*

**MOLE.** Please, just let me go!

**CHIEF W.** Why not stay awhile, little Mole? Or are we not fit company?

**MOLE.** No, no! It's just—

**CHIEF W.** We haven't even been acquainted yet. I'm the Chief Weasel and this here is our Wood.

**MOLE.** I'm sorry, I didn't mean any harm. Please let me go.

**CHIEF W.** Well now, ain't that nice and polite? What say we let the little Mole be on her way?

*(The WEASELS and FERRETS stand aside.)*

**MOLE.** I... I... Thank you.

*(She starts to exit but the WEASELS and FERRETS, laughing, suddenly surround her again and start to push her back and forth as she tries to escape.)*

**MOLE.** Stop it! Please, stop!

**WEASEL 2.** (*Mimicking:*) "Stop, stop!"

*(The laughter continues. Each time MOLE tries to leave their circle the WEASELS and FERRETS push her back to the middle.)*

**MOLE.** Help me, help me!

**FERRET 2.** (*Mimicking:*) "Help me! Help me!"

**MOLE.** Please, someone...! Oh!

*(MOLE finally breaks free. She runs and hides in a far corner of the stage, cowering in fear.)*

**CHIEF W.** Come on out, little Mole! We didn't mean no harm.

*(The snickering continues.)*

**MOLE.** Please, just go away! Help!

*(More laughter and the other animals advance on MOLE.)*

**CHIEF W.** Ain't no one else gonna hear you. Besides, we're having such fun. Ain't ya having fun, little Mole?

*(More laughter as they all converge on MOLE.)*

**BADGER.** *(Offstage, angry:)* What's going on there?

**WEASEL 1.** It's Badger! Now we're in for it.

*(BADGER enters and the WEASELS and FERRETS back off a little.)*

**BADGER.** Chief Weasel. What are you animals up to?

**CHIEF W.** We ain't up to nothing. Just giving little Mole here a proper welcome.

**BADGER.** Is that so? Hm. I warn you, Chief Weasel, I grow tired of your foolishness. The next time this happens I shall be exceedingly angry.

**F. CAPTAIN.** Oh yeah?

**BADGER.** *(Firmly:)* Yes.

**CHIEF W.** We're going. Ain't gonna stay where we're not wanted. Be seein' ya, Badger.

*(Led by the CHIEF WEASEL the WEASELS and FERRETS slink away and exit.)*

**BADGER.** *(Sternly:)* Now, what animal was so foolish as to venture into the Wild Wood so close to nightfall? Come on out.

*(MOLE emerges from her hiding place.)*

**MOLE.** I... I'm sorry. I didn't mean—

**BADGER.** And who might you be?

**MOLE.** I'm Mole, a friend of Rat's.

**BADGER.** A river-banker, hm? Rat should know better than to send you into the Wild Wood alone.

**MOLE.** Rat told me not to come, but I didn't listen. Are they gone?

**BADGER.** Yes, they won't give you any more trouble, not tonight. You'd best come with me. (*BADGER leads MOLE to his underground home.*) That was very foolish, you know.

**MOLE.** I can see that now. I really I thought I'd be all right.

**BADGER.** Well, you're not the first to try it, I suppose. But what on earth for, I should like to know?

**MOLE.** It hardly seems important now.

**BADGER.** I don't much like being disturbed at my dinner.

**MOLE.** I am sorry, Badger. To be honest, I was very anxious to make your acquaintance.

**BADGER.** Hm. You could have worse reasons, I suppose. (*They enter Badger's house, again as simple or as complex as desired.*) Well, here we are. Not much, I warrant you, but it's home.

**MOLE.** (*Looking around:*) It's wonderful.

**BADGER.** I don't often have visitors. I'm not very fond of company, you see.

**MOLE.** I really didn't mean to intrude, Badger.

**BADGER.** Think nothing of it. You're here now, may as well make yourself comfortable.

**MOLE.** Thank you. I do feel very at home here.

**BADGER.** It's nothing like the River.

**MOLE.** No, it reminds me of my own burrow. There's nothing quite like being underground, I think. Nothing can happen to you and nothing can get at you. Things go on overhead, and you let 'em. When you want to, up you go, and there the things are, waiting for you.

**BADGER.** Now that is exactly what I say, Mole. Up and out of doors is good enough to roam about in, but underground, that's

*home.* Rat and the other river-bankers don't understand that, but I can see you do.

**MOLE.** Oh yes!

**BADGER.** You appreciate what a home should be. (*Paternaly:*) I knew you at once to be a sensible animal, Mole.

**MOLE.** Thank you, Badger.

**BADGER.** I'll pass the word around and I don't think you'll have any trouble in the Wild Wood from now on. Any friend of mine walks where he likes in this country, or I'll know the reason why.

(*RAT and OTTER enter.*)

**MOLE.** Rat!

**RAT.** Mole, thank goodness! I was worried, you know.

**BADGER.** I found her in the Wood with the weasels.

**RAT.** Oh Mole...

**MOLE.** I thought I could help by finding Badger.

**BADGER.** And I won't have either of you saying a word against her. It takes great courage to enter the Wild Wood alone.

**OTTER.** Well, Mole, you're a braver animal than Toad by far!

**BADGER.** Now, what can I do for you animals?

**OTTER.** We've news about Toad. We thought you should hear the latest.

**BADGER.** And how is old Toad getting on?

**OTTER.** From bad to worse, I'm afraid.

**RAT.** (*Explaining:*) Toad's bought a motorcar.

**BADGER.** Dear, dear...

**OTTER.** It should come as no surprise to any of us that Toad's a terrible driver, but just how bad...!

**MOLE.** What's happened then?

**OTTER.** Toad hadn't been on the road more than an hour when he got his car in a terrible crash and smashed it all up!

**MOLE.** Good heavens!

**BADGER.** Just like Toad, I'm afraid. This may be his shortest craze yet.

**RAT.** If only! But Toad being Toad, he just went straight back to town and bought himself another.

**OTTER.** And on the drive home he smashes up his second motor-car and this time lands himself in trouble with the police!

**MOLE.** My goodness! Toad'll have himself in hospital next!

**RAT.** He'll have himself in *jail* next.

**OTTER.** (*Nodding.*) They made Toad pay a terrible fine and that's part of the trouble. Sooner or later, Toad'll either be killed or ruined.

**BADGER.** I see.

**OTTER.** Rat and I did what we could to talk Toad out of buying any more of those things, but no luck. He's having another delivered tomorrow.

**BADGER.** Hm. Very serious indeed.

**OTTER.** He needs your persuasion, Badger. Well, if you'll pardon me, I have to get back to Little Portly, but let me know if I can do anything more.

**BADGER.** Certainly, Otter.

**MOLE.** Good night!

**RAT.** 'Night, Otter.

*(OTTER exits while BADGER sits and thinks.)*

Badger, we're Toad's friends, shouldn't we do something?

*(Slight pause.)*

**BADGER.** Will you both pledge to do whatever may be required to bring Toad back to his senses?

**RAT.** 'Course, Badger.

**MOLE.** Absolutely! I mean, if you think I could...

**BADGER.** Then it's settled. It's time we three took Toad seriously in hand.

**MOLE.** Hooray! We'll teach him to be a sensible Toad!

**BADGER.** And we'll start first thing tomorrow, before he has a chance to drive another of those horrible contraptions.

**RAT.** Right you are, Badger. We'll convert the unhappy animal. He'll be the most converted Toad that ever there was.

**BADGER.** He most certainly will be, when we're through with him. But goodness me! I haven't offered either of you so much as a cup of tea. And Mole, I'm sure you could use a nice supper after your adventure in the woods.

**MOLE.** Oh yes!

**BADGER.** Come with me then. We've much to discuss.

*(BADGER exits, followed by RAT and MOLE. Blackout.)*

#### Scene 4

*(The next day, inside Toad Hall. While, again, this need not be shown in a complicated fashion, Toad's house should reflect his wealthy status. BADGER enters and leads RAT and MOLE on a deliberate march across the stage. They enter Toad Hall and meet TOAD as he enters opposite, dressed in ridiculously elaborate driving-clothes: goggles, cap, overcoat, driving gloves, etc.)*

**TOAD.** Good morning, my fine animals! You're all just in time to come with me for a wonderful...that is a marvelous...marvelous...  
*(Slight pause as TOAD falters before the stern expressions of the other animals.)*

**BADGER.** Toad, take off those ridiculous things at once.

**TOAD.** I won't. I demand an explanation for this outrage.

**BADGER.** *(To RAT and MOLE:)* Take them off him, you two.

*(RAT and MOLE seize hold of TOAD and start to forcibly remove his driving accessories.)*

**TOAD.** No! *(He struggles.)*

**BADGER.** Toad, you knew it must come to this, sooner or later. You've disregarded all the warnings we've given you, you've gone on squandering the money left to you, and you're giving the rest of us animals a bad name with your furious driving. Independence is all very well, but we animals never allow our friends to make fools of themselves beyond a certain limit, and that limit you've reached. Now, you're a good fellow in many respects, and I don't want to be too hard on you.

*(During this speech TOAD appears more and more guilt-ridden and starts to fight back tears.)*

**RAT.** *(Aside, to MOLE:)* This is no good. Talking to Toad'll never cure him. He'll say anything.

*(MOLE nods.)*

**BADGER.** Now tell us, Toad, are you sorry for what you've done? Have you at last seen the folly of your ways?

**TOAD.** *(Crying:)* Yes, Badger, I have... I really have! I am sorry...

**BADGER.** *(To RAT and MOLE:)* You see? He can be made to listen to reason.

**MOLE.** This is very good news.

**RAT.** *(Doubtfully:)* Very good news indeed, if only...

**TOAD.** ...so very, very sorry! *(He throws himself on BADGER and weeps dramatically.)*

**BADGER.** Hm, well, I am pleased to hear it, Toad. And now I want you to promise that you intend to give up motorcars entirely and forever.

**TOAD.** Give up motorcars? But...but...

**BADGER.** Surely you see it must be done.

**TOAD.** But forever...put-put...

**BADGER.** (*Sternly:*) Toad, your word. (*Pause.*) Well?

**TOAD.** (*Quietly, but firmly:*) No.

**BADGER.** What?

**TOAD.** I won't. And it wasn't folly at all! It was simply glorious!

**BADGER.** You backsliding little animal, didn't you just say—

**TOAD.** You're so eloquent, dear Badger, you can make me say anything, you know you can. But the more I think on it the more I find that I'm not a bit sorry at all.

**BADGER.** Then you don't promise never to touch a motorcar again?

**TOAD.** (*Back to his old self:*) Certainly not! On the contrary, I faithfully promise that the very first motorcar I see—put-put!—off I go in it!

**RAT.** (*To MOLE:*) Told you so, didn't I?

**BADGER.** Hm, very well. Since you won't yield to persuasion, we'll see what force can do.

**TOAD.** (*Timid again:*) What do you mean?

**BADGER.** You've often asked us to come and stay with you, Toad, in this handsome house of yours. Well, now we're going to.

**TOAD.** You're going to stay? Here? For how long?

**BADGER.** For as long as it takes. When we've converted you to a proper point of view we may leave, but not before.

**TOAD.** But—

**RAT.** It's for your own good, Toad.

**BADGER.** Take him upstairs, Mole, and put him into his dressing gown. He won't be going anywhere for some time, I fear.

**MOLE.** (*As she leads the dejected TOAD offstage:*) Don't worry, Toad, we'll take care of everything until you're well.

**TOAD.** But...but...

*(MOLE and TOAD exit.)*

**BADGER.** I had hoped he would listen to reason.

**RAT.** You know Toad never does. Besides, Otter and I already tried.

**BADGER.** Yes, yes, but still... Hm. It's going to be a tedious business. I've never seen Toad so determined.

**RAT.** Neither have I, but it's got to be done.

**BADGER.** Toad must never for a moment be left unguarded, not until this poison has at last worked itself out of his system.

**RAT.** Bother Toad! And with the boating season just started.

*(MOLE and TOAD re-enter. TOAD is now dressed in a dressing-gown and slippers. TOAD appears even more depressed than when he left.)*

**BADGER.** Ah, very good, Mole. Feeling any better, Toad? *(TOAD shakes his head.)* Well, you soon will. Go ahead and sit him down, Mole.

*(MOLE sits TOAD down in a chair.)*

**MOLE.** Can we get you anything, Toad? Perhaps you'd like a book? Or some music?

*(TOAD shakes his head again. As the others talk, TOAD, as if in a trance, imitates the sound of a motorcar and pantomimes driving. He starts quietly and gradually builds up to a crescendo.)*

**RAT.** Best just to let him be, Mole. We've given him a bit of a shock.

**BADGER.** Now, we must see that we've plenty of provisions for a long stay. One of you will need to keep a close eye on Toad while I'm gone.

**RAT.** I will.

**MOLE.** I'll come with, Badger, if that's all right.

**BADGER.** Certainly. We may need to stop by the market, Rat, but we won't be gone long.

**RAT.** No hurry, Badger. I don't think Toad'll be feeling very spirited for awhile.

**BADGER.** *(So TOAD cannot overhear:)* Don't let Toad fool you, Rat. I know him well. It's when he's quiet and submissive that he's at his craftiest.

**RAT.** I don't think he'll be any trouble.

*(TOAD imitates the sound of a car crash, convulses violently, and then sits sprawled out in the chair, exhausted.)*

**MOLE.** Be careful, Rat.

**BADGER.** Yes. *(BADGER gives TOAD one last suspicious look and exits, followed by MOLE.)*

**RAT.** How are you feeling, Toad?

**TOAD.** *(Feebly:)* It's very good of you to ask, Rat. Where are Mole and Badger off to?

**RAT.** They just went out to see we've plenty of supplies. I'll do my best to amuse you while they're gone.

**TOAD.** Oh! Don't bother yourself about me, Rat. I don't expect to be a burden much longer.

**RAT.** I should hope not! You've made quite a nuisance of yourself with this craze of yours. Not that we mind, of course.

**TOAD.** I'm afraid you do mind, and I can quite understand. I wouldn't dream of asking you to do anything further.

**RAT.** *(On her guard:)* Don't think you'll rid yourself of us that easily, Toad.

**TOAD.** Rid myself of you? Ha! If only you knew...

**RAT.** What are you going on about, Toad?

**TOAD.** Nothing, nothing. I was just wondering...

**RAT.** Yes?

**TOAD.** Would you be so kind as to fetch a doctor?

**RAT.** A doctor!

**TOAD.** But if you don't want to go to the trouble, then perhaps we may as well let things take their course.

**RAT.** But what on earth do you want a doctor for, Toad?

**TOAD.** You mean you haven't noticed? But then, why should you. Tomorrow you may be saying to yourself, "If only I had done something!" But never mind, forget that I asked.

**RAT.** Look here, Toad, you can hardly be bad enough for all that. Let's talk about something else.

**TOAD.** As you wish, Rat. But I fear that in my case talk will do little good.

**RAT.** You look fine, Toad. Have a good rest and I'm sure you'll feel better.

**TOAD.** If you say so, Rat. I suppose you do know best. Perhaps just a short rest, and then...

**RAT.** Then what?

**TOAD.** No, no, I've been enough of a bother. Forget that I asked. *(He coughs.)* Though it would be a great convenience to me...

**RAT.** What is it, Toad?

**TOAD.** Would you mind asking round for a lawyer?

**RAT.** A lawyer! Are you as bad as all that?

**TOAD.** I'm afraid so. But I promise, Rat, this shall be the last favor I ever ask of you.

**RAT.** Why don't we at least wait for Mole and Badger to get back.

**TOAD.** All right. I'll try to hold out as long as that. *(He coughs quite spectacularly.)*

**RAT.** *(Cautiously:)* I suppose it's always best to be on the safe side...

**TOAD.** Whatever you think is best, Rat.

**RAT.** ...just in case there really *is* something the matter. *(Slight pause.)* I'll just see if the doctor's in. I won't be gone long, Toad.

**TOAD.** Only if it's not too much trouble.

**RAT.** No, no! If you've taken a turn we must have you looked to.

**TOAD.** (*Feebly:*) Thank you, Rat. Please hurry!

**RAT.** Don't worry, Toad, I'll be back as quick as I can.

(*RAT hurries offstage. Slight pause. TOAD hops out of his chair and laughs.*)

**TOAD.** How easy that was! Poor Rat, how she'll catch it when Badger gets back! (*Laughing, TOAD takes off his dressing gown, throws on his cap, goggles and driving gloves, and exits.*)

**MOLE.** (*Offstage:*) Rat, you didn't!

(*RAT, MOLE, and BADGER enter.*)

**BADGER.** You left him *alone*? My goodness, Rat, of all the foolish things...

**RAT.** He was asking for a doctor. *And* a lawyer.

**BADGER.** Hm. Just as I thought. Gone.

**MOLE.** Oh Rat, taken in by Toad, of all animals!

**RAT.** He did it awfully well.

**BADGER.** He did *you* awfully well. Well, talking won't change matters. Toad's got clear away this time. And the worst of it is he'll be so conceited with what he's done that he may commit any folly.

**RAT.** I *am* sorry, Badger. I really thought—

**BADGER.** Don't think on it, Rat. There's nothing to be done now but wait. Toad may be brought back at any moment, either on a stretcher or by the police. In the meantime, we won't have to waste any more time on sentry duty.

(*BADGER, MOLE, and RAT exit with the chair. TOAD re-enters, walking along a country road and whistling merrily.*)

**TOAD.** Oh what a clever Toad am I! Brains against brute force and brains came out on top! A fine animal, Rat, but simply no education. I must take her in hand someday and see if I can make something of her.

*(We hear the sound of a motorcar drive up and park. Two human DRIVERS enter, dressed in driving clothes. They chat with each other as they cross the stage and exit opposite.)*

**TOAD.** Put-put... *(TOAD tries to resist the overwhelming urge which begins to take control.)* There can't be any harm in my only just looking at it. *(TOAD admires the invisible motorcar.)* Now, I wonder if this sort of car starts easily... *(TOAD steps into the car, takes hold of the steering wheel, and starts the car. He then reaches to put the car into gear.)* I suppose I shouldn't... *(He hesitates, but the urge overwhelms him. Abandoning all caution TOAD begins to drive at a reckless pace.)* Yes, this is the life! Give up motorcars? Never! This is the only life for Toad! I am Toad the Terror, Toad the Invincible, Lord of the Road! All must give way before me or be crushed beneath my wheels!

*(TOAD laughs, the craze having once again taken control. Blackout. We hear the sound of squealing tires and an almighty crash.)*

### Scene 5

*(Several WEASELS and FERRETS, including the CHIEF WEASEL and the FERRET CAPTAIN, are lounging near the River. MOLE and BADGER are nearby, perhaps fishing, while RAT is working on her boat.)*

**CHIEF W.** So, you hear what happened to Toad?

**F. CAPTAIN.** Got himself into a mess of trouble, I heard.

**WEASEL 2.** Stole one of those motorcars, didn't he?

**CHIEF W.** Stole it and crashed it not ten minutes later.

**F. CAPTAIN.** A born driver, ain't he, that Toad?

*(They snicker.)*

**WEASEL 2.** Ain't seen him around since. Is he in hospital?

**CHIEF W.** *(Chuckling:)* That's the best part. Got himself thrown in jail, Toad did!

**F. CAPTAIN.** That's one in the eye for the proud Mr. Toad, ain't it? Serves him right, I say.

**CHIEF W.** 'Bout time Toad was stopped. We've had enough of his boasting and swaggering and puffed-up songs.

**WEASEL 2.** How long they throw him in for?

**CHIEF W.** May as well be forever. Toad's never comin' back this time, never, ever!

**F. CAPTAIN.** We'll be the better off without him.

**WEASEL 1.** He did throw a nice party.

**FERRET 1.** Aye, them was always a good time.

**F. CAPTAIN.** Never invited us, though, did he?

**WEASEL 1.** Still, a nice party.

**FERRET 1.** Gave me a twopence once to serve those little sandwiches.

**WEASEL 1.** Those are hors d'oeuvres, those are.

**CHIEF W.** Only had them parties to show off, singing his songs and givin' those speeches, all about himself.

**F. CAPTAIN.** We're rid of him for good this time. Maybe we'll throw our own party in Toad Hall, now he's gone.

**FERRET 1.** With them little sandwiches?

**CHIEF W.** And no songs about Toad!

**F. CAPTAIN.** Hooray for Toad, Toad the Jail-Bird!

*(They all laugh.)*

**MOLE.** *(Half to herself:)* You're wicked little beasts!

*(Slight pause.)*

**CHIEF W.** What then did you call us, little Mole?

**MOLE.** Me? Well... *(She falters and the WEASELS and FERRETS laugh.)*

**CHIEF W.** Thought as much. Best keep quiet then, you hear? *(To others:)* No, don't think we'll be bothered by Toad ever again.

*(They snicker.)*

**MOLE.** I...I said you're ungrateful, mean, wicked little beasts!

*(Slight pause.)*

**CHIEF W.** You all hear that, boys?

**WEASEL 2.** Aye, she ain't got no manners.

**CHIEF W.** You'd best watch your mouth, little Mole. Else next time you're walkin' in the Wild Wood you might have yourself a little accident.

**F. CAPTAIN.** What d'yall think? Little Mole looks like the accident type, don't she?

*(They snicker.)*

**BADGER.** I should think not. You'd best watch what you say about Mole, Chief Weasel. And about Toad.

**CHIEF W.** Sticking up for your jail-bird friend, are ya?

**BADGER.** No criminal laws have ever prevailed against the resourcefulness of Toad.

**CHIEF W.** Ain't never been thrown in the clink before, has he?

**MOLE.** Toad'll come back, sooner or later. He always has before.

**CHIEF W.** Got a lot of spunk when you're with your big friend Badger, don't you little Mole? But you're not so brave in the Wild Wood on your own, are ya? *(Mimicking, in a high-pitched voice:)* "Help me, help me!"

*(The WEASELS and FERRETS laugh.)*

**BADGER.** Toad has been treated shamefully. It is a travesty.

**RAT.** Animals shouldn't get mixed up in the doings of the Wide World, that's what I say. *(BADGER gives RAT a sharp look.)* But all the same, Toad has been treated rather badly.

**BADGER.** That's right. All of us animals should be sticking up for him.

**WEASEL 1.** What, us? Stick up for a jail-bird like Toad?

**MOLE.** We're his friends and we'll always stick up for him, jail-bird or not.

**CHIEF W.** Stick with him then if you like. Be a shame though if something happened to Toad Hall while he was gone.

**BADGER.** It would. Which is why I will be moving into Toad Hall myself to have it ready for Toad's return.

**F. CAPTAIN.** Oh yeah?

**MOLE.** Yes, and I will too! And see if Toad invites you to his next party.

**CHIEF W.** You go on then and wait for Toad. But we'll see who throws the next party in Toad Hall. Come on, boys.

*(The WEASELS and FERRETS exit.)*

**BADGER.** We'd best move in straightaway, Mole. Those Wild-Wooders are up to some mischief, I can tell you.

**MOLE.** You'll come with us, won't you Rat?

**RAT.** *(Shaking her head:)* Someone has to stick by the River. You'll miss the best part of the summer, you know.

**MOLE.** I know, but something has to be done.

**BADGER.** Right you are, Mole. And I've a feeling we'll want your help, Rat, before all is done.

**RAT.** 'Course, Badger. Whatever you need, I'll be here.

*(MOLE and BADGER exit, leaving RAT to continue working on her boat. Blackout.)*

## Scene 6

*(The lights come up on a human JUDGE who is shuffling through papers. In the tradition of English judges, the JUDGE wears a white wig in addition to a long, black robe. A human BAILIFF enters and drags on a chained, weeping, and very frightened TOAD. The BAILIFF places TOAD at center stage, before the JUDGE.)*

**BAILIFF.** The prisoner, your honor.

**JUDGE.** (*Looking up:*) Yes? Oh, that one! Time for sentencing, is it?

**BAILIFF.** Indeed, your honor.

*(The JUDGE shuffles through the papers to find Toad's case.)*

**JUDGE.** Let's see... Ah yes! Now, the only difficulty I see in this otherwise clear case is how we can make it sufficiently miserable for the incorrigible rogue whom we see cowering before us. (*To the BAILIFF:*) What is the stiffest penalty we can impose for each of his offences?

**BAILIFF.** Your honor, some would consider that stealing the motorcar was the worst offence, but the prisoner's impertinence to the police undoubtedly carries the severest penalty.

**JUDGE.** As it should!

**BAILIFF.** Let's say one year for the theft, which is mild, and three years for the furious driving, which is lenient, and fifteen years for his impertinence, which was of a pretty bad sort, and that adds up to nineteen years...

**JUDGE.** First-rate!

**BAILIFF.** So you had better make it a round twenty just to be on the safe side.

**JUDGE.** An excellent suggestion! Prisoner, pull yourself together! It's going to be twenty years for you this time. And mind you, if you appear before us again on any charge whatsoever, we shall have to deal very severely with you!

*(As the JUDGE exits the BAILIFF seizes hold of TOAD, who is too distraught to utter anything coherent, and drags him to a dank, dark jail cell. The BAILIFF exits and we hear the door of Toad's cell shut with a loud clang. The lights fade out on TOAD as he sits weeping.)*

**Scene 7**

*(Many days later, inside Toad Hall. BADGER sits, reading the evening paper. MOLE enters with a tea tray set for two. We can hear the sound of the wind and a growing storm outside.)*

**BADGER.** Thank you, Mole. How very good of you.

*(MOLE hands BADGER a cup of tea.)*

**MOLE.** Not at all, Badger. *(MOLE sits with the second cup of tea.)* My word! It looks to be a terrible storm tonight.

**BADGER.** Yes, makes me miss my own dry tunnels. Never bothered by rain or snow there.

**MOLE.** Very true.

*(Pause.)*

**BADGER.** It's a change, isn't it Mole? Being out on the River, I mean, amongst the other animals.

**MOLE.** Yes. I didn't feel like I belonged at first.

**BADGER.** It was good of Rat to teach you. I'm sorry you're missing so much of the summer.

**MOLE.** I couldn't let you watch over Toad Hall by yourself. And next summer, when Toad's back, think of the fun we'll have!

**BADGER.** Will *you* be back, Mole?

*(Pause.)*

**MOLE.** Yes, I think I will. I'd like to go home again, for awhile, but once it's spring...

**BADGER.** It'll be good to come back to the River. I should like to see your home, Mole.

**MOLE.** Oh it's nothing like your grand tunnels, Badger. It's rather small and—

**BADGER.** Just right. I'm sure I shall like it very much.

**MOLE.** You're all welcome to visit, when Toad returns.

**BADGER.** When Toad returns... Hm. If, I should say.

**MOLE.** You don't think he will?

*(Slight pause.)*

**BADGER.** Yes, yes, of course he will. All the same, it could be some time. I was good friends with Toad's father, you know, long before Toad was born, in fact.

**MOLE.** Were you?

**BADGER.** Toad the Senior was a very worthy animal. Before he died he asked that I keep an eye on his son, and I regret that I have not done so as well as I would have liked.

**MOLE.** Toad must learn to look after himself, sooner or later.

**BADGER.** You're right, of course, and I shall do what I can to make sure he behaves himself better in the future. And if Toad ever *does* grow up, I shall have a few things to tell him from his father.

*(We hear a sudden noise from nearby.)*

**MOLE.** Did you hear that? *(They both look out the window into the growing darkness.)*

**BADGER.** Hm. Can't see an inch past my nose. I'm sure it's nothing, Mole. Now, where was I...

*(The CHIEF WEASEL and FERRET CAPTAIN burst onto stage leading a pack of WEASELS and FERRETS. All are armed with sticks and attack MOLE and BADGER. They fight off the other animals as best they can, but they are unarmed and no match for the number of enemies against them. The WEASELS and FERRETS beat at MOLE and BADGER with their sticks and soon hold them captive.)*

**CHIEF W.** Hold 'em fast, boys!

**BADGER.** Chief Weasel, I demand an explanation at once!

**F. CAPTAIN.** We don't owe you nothin'.

**BADGER.** *(Very sternly:)* I think you do.

**CHIEF W.** We're moving in, that's all. And you're trespassing.

**MOLE.** *(Indignant:)* We're trespassing? This is Toad's house!

**F. CAPTAIN.** Toad's never coming back this time. And it serves him right!

**MOLE.** He will! Toad Hall is his!

**CHIEF W.** It's our house now, little Mole, and we're gonna stay for good.

**MOLE.** When Toad comes back, we'll show you!

**CHIEF W.** Oh you will now, will ya?

**MOLE.** Yes!

*(MOLE breaks loose of her captors and delivers one solid blow to the CHIEF WEASEL before the other WEASELS grab hold of her again.)*

**BADGER.** Good show, Mole!

**CHIEF W.** Think you're brave, do you, little Mole?

**BADGER.** Braver than you, attacking unarmed animals.

**CHIEF W.** We're just cleaning the place out, that's all. We'll take good care of it, won't we boys?

**WEASEL 2.** That's right, chief!

**CHIEF W.** I'd invite you to stay, Badger, but I know how much you hate society.

*(The other WEASELS and FERRETS snicker.)*

**BADGER.** Mole is right, you know. We will show you.

**CHIEF W.** That so?

**BADGER.** Yes. Go back to the Wild Wood now or else we shall have to deal very severely with all of you.

*(Slight pause and then the WEASELS and FERRETS all burst out laughing.)*

**CHIEF W.** Go back there yourself! It's all yours now. Get rid of 'em!

*(Laughing wickedly, they shove MOLE and BADGER offstage. Blackout. An intermission may take place at this point, if desired.)*

*End of Act I*

## ACT II

### Scene 1

*(Some time later. RAT and MOLE enter, walking along the bank of the River, enjoying the night air. It is clear, however, that the events of Act I still weigh heavily upon them. OTTER mopes about elsewhere onstage, but the others do not yet see him. It is now late fall and just past sunset. Pause.)*

**RAT.** Cheer up, Mole. I know things look bad, but... *(Realizing how unhelpful this is:)* All I mean is—

**MOLE.** I know, Rat. I mean, what could we have done? All the same, I feel as if we *should* have.

**RAT.** Look here, you can't blame yourself. Toad would go and steal a motorcar. And those weasels—

**MOLE.** Yes, those weasels! Just wait 'til I...I...Oh I don't know what! That's the worst of it.

**RAT.** It'll sort itself out. Not much you can do, if you ask me.

**MOLE.** But we must! And poor Toad, all this time without a word...

*(They walk on, having nothing left to say, and come across OTTER as he is stifling a sob.)*

**RAT.** Otter!

**OTTER.** *(Sadly:)* Oh, hello Rat, Mole.

**MOLE.** Why Otter, what's the matter?

**OTTER.** Oh, well... *(He sniffs.)* It's our son, you see, Little Portly, he's gone missing again.

**MOLE.** Is that all? *(Quickly:)* What I mean is, Little Portly is always straying off and getting lost, and he always turns up again, right as rain.

**RAT.** Mole's right, you know.

**OTTER.** This time it's more serious, I'm afraid. Portly's been missing for days. We've looked everywhere and haven't found a trace.

**MOLE.** (*Less certain:*) I'm sure some animal or other will find him and bring him back again.

**OTTER.** I thought so as well, but we've asked all around and no one knows anything about him. And, well, Little Portly hasn't learnt to swim very well yet. That's what has me most anxious.

**RAT.** I suppose he could get into trouble down by the rapids, if he weren't careful.

**MOLE.** And the River has been running high...

**OTTER.** I don't mean to burden you two, but if you hear anything...

**RAT.** 'Course, Otter.

**OTTER.** I thought I'd watch for Portly down by the fords tonight, I was just on my way there. It's where he caught his first fish, you know.

**RAT.** I remember.

**OTTER.** If he comes back from anywhere, I think he might go there. Well, it was nice to see you both. Good night.

**MOLE.** Good night, Otter.

**RAT.** 'Night.

*(OTTER exits. Pause.)*

**RAT.** Well, I suppose we ought to be turning in. (*Slight pause.*) Don't you think?

**MOLE.** I suppose. (*Pause.*) Rat, I simply can't go to sleep without doing something, though there doesn't seem to be anything to be done. Let's get the boat out and search as best we can. It's better than going to bed and doing nothing.

**RAT.** Just what I was thinking, Mole. It's not the sort of night for bed anyhow.

*(They get into Rat's boat and shove off. MOLE has now become much more adept at the river life and helps out quite ably, even taking turns at rowing. By this point the light has shifted to appear like moonlight. We hear nothing but the quiet sound of the River.)*

**MOLE.** Shall we try upstream to start? (*RAT nods and rows as MOLE scans the banks.*) It's just awful to think about.

**RAT.** Don't then. We must think about finding him someplace safe. Oh lord that we would find him safe!

**MOLE.** He must be. We've often found Portly ourselves, miles away from home, quite cheerful and unafraid, remember?

**RAT.** That's true. But poor Otter! (*Slight pause as they search.*) Take the oars for awhile, Mole.

*(MOLE takes over and rows while RAT searches. Pause. RAT suddenly perks up, as if she's heard something.)*

**MOLE.** Rat, what is it? (*RAT listens intently. Slight pause.*)

**RAT.** It's gone now. So beautiful and strange, it was.

**MOLE.** What did you hear?

**RAT.** (*Not listening:*) Such music! I almost wish I had never heard it. It has roused in me a longing that is pain, and nothing seems worthwhile but to hear that sound forever. (*RAT rouses herself.*) Didn't you hear it, Mole?

**MOLE.** No.

**RAT.** How could you not? (*Suddenly:*) Oh! There it is again! Listen, Mole, listen! (*MOLE tries, but does not hear it.*) Oh Mole, the beauty of it...

**MOLE.** But what is it?

**RAT.** Do you still not hear the clear, joyous call of the distant piping? Such music I never dreamed of...It calls to us. Row, Mole, row! The call must be for us!

*(MOLE rows hard for several moments while RAT strains to hear the music.)*

**MOLE.** But where to?

**RAT.** Follow the music! (*By now RAT is filled with an indescribable joy.*) Do you still not hear it?

*(By now we hear the beautiful music of Pan, as does MOLE.)*

**MOLE.** Oh I do, Rat, I do! Oh!

*(For a moment they both pause to listen, nearly in tears and overcome with joy. The boat comes to shore and the music grows stronger. Almost in a trance RAT and MOLE exit the boat and come to a secluded glade. It is now nearly sunrise.)*

**RAT.** *(Quietly and reverently:)* We are close, Mole. Do you not feel it?

**MOLE.** I do, Rat.

**RAT.** This is the place we have been called, the place the music sang of.

**MOLE.** Yes...

**RAT.** Here, in this holy place, here if anywhere, surely we shall find Him!

**MOLE.** Oh! He is here! *(Awe and wonder overwhelms the two animals and they bow their heads to the ground. At this, the moment of sunrise, the light of dawn shines bright from offstage and brings with it an indistinct shadow. It is Pan, friend and helper of animals. MOLE dares to look up into the light. Whispering, to RAT:)* Rat? Rat, are you afraid?

**RAT.** Afraid? Afraid of Him? Oh never, never. And yet...Oh Mole, I am afraid!

*(They bow their heads again. The light of dawn fades and with it the music. RAT and MOLE are now bathed in the light of morning and look around, confused.)*

**MOLE.** I beg your pardon, Rat, what did you say?

**RAT.** I think I was saying that this was the right sort place to find him. *(RAT looks over to where the shadow stood. There, nearly offstage, LITTLE PORTLY lies sleeping.)* And, Mole, there he is! Little Portly! *(RAT crosses to fetch LITTLE PORTLY.)*

**MOLE.** There was something... *(But she cannot remember. RAT crosses back to MOLE with LITTLE PORTLY.)* You've found him! How happy Otter will be!

*(MOLE takes LITTLE PORTLY from RAT and helps him into the boat. RAT now struggles to remember and looks at the ground where the shadow stood.)*

**RAT.** Some great animal has been here...

**MOLE.** Come along, Rat. Think of poor Otter!

*(RAT returns to the boat and they row away.)*

I feel strangely tired, Rat.

**RAT.** We have been up all night.

**MOLE.** No, it's not that. I feel as if I've been through something very exciting and rather terrible.

**RAT.** *(Murmuring:)* Or something very surprising and splendid and beautiful.

**MOLE.** Yes, that's it! Yet nothing particular has happened.

**RAT.** I feel just as you do, Mole. Dead tired, though not body tired. It's lucky we've got the River to take us home. How good to feel the sun again, with the wind playing in the reeds...

**MOLE.** ...like far away music.

**RAT.** Yes, like music, but with words to it.

**MOLE.** Rat?

*(Slight pause as RAT listens.)*

**RAT.**

“Lest the awe should dwell  
And turn your frolic to fret,  
You shall look on my power at the helping hour  
But then you shall forget!”

**MOLE.** *(Dreamily:)* Have we forgotten, Rat?

**RAT.**

“Helper and healer, I cheer  
Small waifs in the woodland wet.  
Strays I find in it, wounds I bind in it,  
Bidding them all forget!”

**MOLE.** But what do the words mean?

**RAT.** That I do not know. *(Slight pause.)* Here we are, Mole.

*(They come to shore. OTTER enters opposite, watching the River, but he does not see the others. RAT helps LITTLE PORTLY out of the boat.)*

**RAT.** Go on now, Portly. *(RAT returns to the boat and she and MOLE watch as the reunion takes place.)* There.

*(The lights fade to black.)*

## Scene 2

*(The lights come up on TOAD in his jail cell where he still sits, chained and weeping.)*

**TOAD.** *(With great remorse:)* Oh, what a miserable Toad am I! This is the end of everything! At least, it is the end of Toad, which is the same thing. How can I hope to ever be set at large again when I have been imprisoned so justly for stealing so handsome a motorcar in such an audacious manner? *(He weeps.)* Stupid animal that I was, now I must languish in this dungeon, 'til animals who were proud to say they knew me, have forgotten the very name of Toad. How I wish I had listened to my friends! Now I am a most unhappy and forsaken Toad!

*(TOAD continues to weep. A girl, the JAILER'S DAUGHTER, enters carrying a tray of food.)*

**DAUGHTER.** Do cheer up, Toad!

**TOAD.** Who's there?

**DAUGHTER.** I'm the Jailer's daughter. Now dry your eyes and try to be a sensible animal.

**TOAD.** If only I was a sensible animal! I have been such a foolish, wicked Toad! *(He continues to cry.)*

**DAUGHTER.** Yes you have, but you still must eat something. Look what I've brought you.

**TOAD.** Take it away, I don't want anything!

**DAUGHTER.** You've hardly eaten all week.

**TOAD.** How can I think of eating while I sit imprisoned in this dirty, awful hole? *(He cries and then sniffs.)* Is that bacon? And eggs?

**DAUGHTER.** *(Nodding:)* And tea and toast and jam.

**TOAD.** Well, perhaps a few bites...

*(The JAILER'S DAUGHTER hands TOAD the tray of food. At first he eats slowly, but soon he is devouring the food as quickly as he can.)*

**DAUGHTER.** I thought it might do you good.

**TOAD.** It's delicious. Though it isn't quite what I'm used to, of course.

**DAUGHTER.** Oh?

**TOAD.** Oh yes, at Toad Hall every meal is a banquet. There isn't an animal around who isn't dying to be invited.

**DAUGHTER.** Is that so?

**TOAD.** Of course! "Toad," they say, "is the best of creatures, the most generous of animals." All my friends think a great deal of me. I can't imagine how they're getting by without me.

**DAUGHTER.** You *are* a conceited beast! Well, if my food isn't good enough for you... *(She moves to take away the tray.)*

**TOAD.** *(Sincerely:)* No, you're right, I'm a very boastful Toad! That's how I came to be in such a terrible place to begin with. *(He starts to cry all over again.)*

**DAUGHTER.** There, there, Toad, it's all right. Go on and tell me about your friends, if that'll make you feel better.

**TOAD.** I do have a great many and they're most devoted to me. More so than I deserve, in fact. They warned me to leave motorcars forever.

**DAUGHTER.** And so you went off and stole one? You must not think very much of them.

**TOAD.** Oh I do! And from now on I promise always to listen to them. But I don't suppose I shall ever see any of them again... *(He breaks into tears once more.)*

**DAUGHTER.** Oh Toad, don't cry. Just listen to me. Listen!

*(TOAD stops crying for a moment.)*

I have an aunt who is a washerwoman.

**TOAD.** That's nothing to be ashamed of. I have several aunts who *ought* to be washerwomen.

**DAUGHTER.** Hush, Toad, and listen! My aunt does all the washing for the prisoners here. She takes it out on Monday and brings it back on Friday.

**TOAD.** What of that? I don't know that I'm much interested in the habits of washerwomen.

**DAUGHTER.** Don't you see? Today is Friday.

**TOAD.** Which means only that my washing will arrive tonight.

**DAUGHTER.** Do be quiet, Toad! You talk too much, that's your chief fault.

**TOAD.** I'm sorry. Please, continue.

**DAUGHTER.** Now you're very rich and my aunt is very poor. For the right price I think she would let you have her dress and bonnet and so on, and you could escape as the official washerwoman. You're very alike in many respects, particularly about the figure.

**TOAD.** We are not! I have a very elegant figure for what I am.

**DAUGHTER.** Fine then, have it your own way, you horrid, proud, ungrateful animal. I suppose you want to be taken off in a horse and carriage! *(She picks up TOAD's tray and prepares to leave.)*

**TOAD.** *(Sincerely penitent:)* You are a kind, clever girl. If you would be so kind as to speak to your worthy aunt, I have no doubt that the excellent lady and I will be able to arrange terms satisfactory to both parties.

**DAUGHTER.** That's better. She's already here, in fact, talking with Father. I'll go and speak with her, but...

**TOAD.** Yes?

**DAUGHTER.** She'll want to know what you're offering.

**TOAD.** Oh yes, I see. *(He pulls out a few bills and hands them to her.)*

**DAUGHTER.** Well, I'll try, though she is terribly poor, and could lose her position after this.

*(TOAD pulls out a wad of bills.)*

**TOAD.** Well, I suppose I could—

*(The JAILER'S DAUGHTER snatches the bills from him.)*

**DAUGHTER.** I think that might convince her.

**TOAD.** And leaves me nothing for myself!

**DAUGHTER.** If you'd rather stay here...

**TOAD.** No, no, please! Take it!

**DAUGHTER.** You are a good Toad, deep down, and I hate to see you stuck in this horrid place. I'll do the best I can. *(She exits.)*

**TOAD.** Oh I am clever! Soon I shall disappear from right under the noses of all my enemies and escape from the terrible place where they have thrown me. No prison can hold the indomitable Toad! By this time tomorrow I shall be sitting once again in my own living room before a roaring fire. Long live the triumphant Toad!

*(The JAILER'S DAUGHTER re-enters carrying a bundle of clothes.)*

**DAUGHTER.** My aunt has agreed, Toad.

**TOAD.** Hooray!

**DAUGHTER.** My father and I have tied her up, to make it look like this was all your doing.

**TOAD.** The ferocious Toad! Toad the Terror!

**DAUGHTER.** Hurry up and do be quiet! My aunt is supposed to be leaving soon and you have to go in her place. Put these on.

*(TOAD looks at the clothes.)*

**TOAD.** You want me to wear *these*? *(Quickly, at a look from the JAILER'S DAUGHTER:)* But of course I will.

**DAUGHTER.** Let me help you. *(She unlocks TOAD's chains and helps dress him in a cotton gown, an apron, a shawl, and an old bonnet. The JAILER'S DAUGHTER laughs.)* You're the very image of my aunt, only I'm sure you never looked half so respectable in all your life.

**TOAD.** I've never looked half so ridiculous, you mean. *(Quickly:)* But I'm very grateful.

**DAUGHTER.** You should be. Goodbye, Toad, and good luck.

**TOAD.** Thank you, I won't forget this. You shall find me a most generous Toad when I sit again in Toad Hall.

**DAUGHTER.** You are a kind-hearted animal, Toad. Just keep your tongue to yourself and go. Hurry!

*(TOAD exits his cell as quickly and quietly as he can while the JAILER'S DAUGHTER exits opposite. TOAD makes a couple of turns and then stands outside of the prison. We hear the outer door of the prison shut with a loud crash. TOAD begins to walk through the countryside and comes to the River, though he is still far from Toad Hall.)*

**TOAD.** At last, back in the wide world! Now, there must be a railway station or something hereabouts. I've but to purchase a ticket and... *(He starts to pull out his wallet when the realization strikes him.)* Oh! Greedy washerwoman! No money and before long any number of police after me. *(TOAD sees the River.)* But the River! That if anything will lead me home.

*(A BARGE WOMAN enters riding a barge down the River. If desired, the barge itself may simply be invisible and portrayed through sound effects.)*

**WOMAN.** A nice morning, ma'am!

**TOAD.** *(As a washerwoman:)* I dare say it is a nice morning to them that's not in awful trouble.

**WOMAN.** Why, what's the matter?

**TOAD.** I've lost my money and my way and I must get home tonight. Whatever I am to do I don't know. Oh dear, oh dear!

**WOMAN.** That's a bad business, indeed. Got some kids waiting for you?

**TOAD.** Any amount of 'em. And they'll be hungry and quarreling and playing with matches, little innocents! What am I to do?

**WOMAN.** Whereabouts do you live, ma'am?

**TOAD.** Near a fine house called Toad Hall. You must of heard of it, finest house in the district.

**WOMAN.** Sure I've heard of it, I'm going that way myself. You come along in the barge with me and I'll give you a lift. The River'll take us right past.

**TOAD.** *(To himself:)* Toad's luck again! Breakfast in Toad Hall tomorrow morning! *(As a washerwoman:)* Oh thank you, ma'am, thank you! *(TOAD gets into the barge.)*

**WOMAN.** So you're in the washing business? A very good trade, if you don't mind my saying so.

**TOAD.** *(Boastfully:)* Best trade in the world! In fact, all the gentlemen around come to me, wouldn't go anywhere else.

**WOMAN.** Are you very fond of washing then?

**TOAD.** Oh I simply adore it! Never so happy as when I'm up to my elbows in a wash tub. Wouldn't do anything else if you paid me.

**WOMAN.** Well, what a bit of luck then, meeting you!

**TOAD.** *(Nervously:)* What do you mean?

**WOMAN.** I like washing, the same as you, but with my barge to take care of, I've hardly a moment to see to my own.

**TOAD.** Oh, never you mind about your washing, not on such a beautiful day...

**WOMAN.** I can't fix my mind on anything else. If you'd just take care of a few things for me, why I'm sure it'll be a pleasure to you and a real help to me.

**TOAD.** (*Worried:*) Here now, why not let me steer the boat and then you can do your washing in your own way. I'm more used to gentlemen's things myself.

**WOMAN.** (*Laughing:*) Let you steer? It takes some practice and besides, it's dull work. I'd rather know you're enjoying yourself. You'll find a tub all ready back there in the cabin. Don't deprive me of the pleasure of giving you a treat! (*TOAD fetches some soap and a washtub full of clothes.*)

**TOAD.** (*To himself:*) If it comes to that I suppose any fool can wash.

*(TOAD sets to work. He of course makes a mess of it and quickly becomes frustrated. Finally the BARGE WOMAN, who has been sneaking glances at TOAD this whole time, breaks out laughing.)*

**WOMAN.** I thought you must be an imposter, from the conceited way you spoke. Pretty washerwoman you are! Never washed so much as a dishrag in your life!

**TOAD.** (*Angry:*) How dare you talk to me like that! Washerwoman indeed! I am the very well-known, respected, and distinguished Toad!

*(The BARGE WOMAN pulls off TOAD's bonnet.)*

**WOMAN.** Well, I never! A horrid, nasty, crawly Toad! And on my nice clean barge too! Now that is a thing I will not have.

*(TOAD snatches back the bonnet.)*

**TOAD.** I may be under a bit of a cloud at present, but I will not be laughed at by the likes of you!

**WOMAN.** Oh is that so? (*The BARGE WOMAN grabs TOAD and pushes him off the barge and offstage. We heard a loud splash.*) Go on then, washerwoman! Put yourself through your wringer and perhaps you'll pass for a decent-looking Toad!

*(She laughs and the lights fade to black.)*

**Scene 3**

*(The River, outside of Toad Hall. It is now winter and the snow has fallen. MOLE huddles near the frozen River, trying to keep warm. BADGER enters opposite, carrying a stout stick.)*

**MOLE.** Any change, Badger?

**BADGER.** None, I'm afraid. The weasels and ferrets are on guard at every point. Can't get within a stone's throw of Toad Hall without a ferret popping out and shooting at you.

**MOLE.** And laughing. That's what annoys me most. Whenever they see us, my how they do laugh! I went all around the gardens and the orchards this morning and I'm afraid it's no different there.

**BADGER.** Yes, it's a bad situation.

**MOLE.** I wish to goodness I had some idea of what to do, Badger. Toad'll come back and what will we have to tell him?

**BADGER.** I do have an idea or two. Just let me think on it a bit more. When Toad does return, I shall have something to say.

**MOLE.** The weasels and ferrets'll be afraid of you, at least. I'm not sure I'll be of much help when the time comes.

**BADGER.** You've been a great help already, Mole. Rat's a good, solid fellow, of course, but it's you who's camped out here with me night and day.

**MOLE.** I couldn't do nothing, Badger. I feel, well, involved now.

**BADGER.** Yes, I know how you mean.

**MOLE.** I miss my old home sometimes, but life on the River is different. We're not each on our own here.

**BADGER.** It is one thing to stay safe underground, but quite another to venture out into the world.

**MOLE.** And I'd rather be here than closed up in my burrow not knowing what's going on outside.

**BADGER.** I feel that as well, Mole.

**MOLE.** I just felt it time to *do* something.

*(In the distance we hear high-pitched voices singing to the tune of “O Holy Night.”)*

**MICE.** *(Offstage, singing:)*  
O holy night, the stars are brightly shining;  
It is the night of the dear Savior’s birth!

**BADGER.** Is that singing I hear, Mole?

**MICE.**  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,  
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.

**MOLE.** Christmas carols. I think it must be the field mice. They go round carol-singing regularly this time of year.

*(They listen as the voices continue to sing a verse or two of “O Holy Night.” The MICE may either be onstage or offstage as desired. A hint of the music of Pan underscores the singing.)*

**MICE.**  
A thrill of hope, the weary soul rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.  
Fall on your knees, O hear the angel voices!  
O night divine, O night when Christ was born!  
O night, O holy night, O night divine!

**BADGER.** Beautiful.

**MOLE.** It reminds me of something... *(She rouses herself.)* You know, Badger, it’s hard to hear such singing and think things hopeless.

**BADGER.** I have no doubts about you, Mole. You’ll perform admirably when it’s time. I haven’t forgotten the blow you gave the Chief Weasel.

**MOLE.** I don’t feel the same animal that I was when I first met Rat on the River. A great change has come over me, though I can’t say from what.

**BADGER.** Like something you once knew has been forgotten.

**MOLE.** Yes, that’s it exactly. Something forgotten that sits in your bones, just waiting to come out.

---

*(OTTER enters, followed by LITTLE PORTLY, carrying two steaming hot mugs of apple cider.)*

**OTTER.** Afternoon, Badger, Mole.

**MOLE.** Hello, Otter!

**BADGER.** Afternoon, Otter.

**OTTER.** Thought you animals could use some warming up. *(He hands them each a mug.)*

**MOLE.** Thank you.

**BADGER.** Very thoughtful of you.

**OTTER.** How goes the campaign?

**BADGER.** Little better, I'm afraid.

**OTTER.** I thought as much. *(Lowering his voice:)* Listen, Badger, I've an idea. *(He whispers in BADGER's ear.)*

**BADGER.** Yes, yes, very good. Come with me, Mole.

*(BADGER leads MOLE, who takes LITTLE PORTLY with her, to the edge of the stage where they all hide. OTTER adopts a different walk and voice to "disguise" himself.)*

**MOLE.** What's Otter going to do?

**BADGER.** Just watch.

*(OTTER crosses to the other side of the stage where the FERRET CAPTAIN enters and stops him.)*

**F. CAPTAIN.** That's far enough. Off with you!

**OTTER.** Right, mate! Wondered if you might need an animal for an odd job or two.

**F. CAPTAIN.** What sort of job?

**OTTER.** Anything and everything. Clean your chimney, shovel your walk.

**F. CAPTAIN.** We don't need no help. Clear off!

*(FERRET 2 enters.)*

**FERRET 2.** Don't we need no one for the party?

**OTTER.** Party? Oye, I love parties!

**F. CAPTAIN.** You ain't invited.

**OTTER.** Who's the party for?

**FERRET 2.** It's the Chief Weasel's birthday it is, in two days.

**F. CAPTAIN.** Shut your face!

**OTTER.** *(To FERRET 2:)* And you're all going?

*(The FERRET CAPTAIN notices movement in MOLE and BADGER's direction and moves to investigate.)*

**FERRET 2.** No, just the weasels. We've got to stay on watch 'cause they won't have no guns.

**F. CAPTAIN.** That's enough out of you! Back to your post! *(FERRET 2 slinks off and exits. To OTTER:)* We don't need no one. Now clear off, I say!

*(OTTER crosses back to BADGER, MOLE, and LITTLE PORTLY while the FERRET CAPTAIN exits.)*

**MOLE.** How clever of you, Otter!

**BADGER.** Yes, excellent work. This may help us out a great deal.

**OTTER.** I hope so. Poor Toad! Well, we have to be off, I'm afraid. I promised Little Portly we'd go ice skating this afternoon.

**MOLE.** Delightful!

**OTTER.** Come join us! You animals deserve an hour off, at least.

**BADGER.** Thank you, Otter, but we've work to do here.

**OTTER.** I understand. Good luck!

*(He exits with LITTLE PORTLY.)*

**BADGER.** Mole, I feel in my bones that our moment shall soon come. We must double our vigilance. March!

*(They exit. Blackout.)*

**Scene 4**

*(The countryside, near the River. TOAD enters. He is wet and still dressed as a washerwoman.)*

**TOAD.** When I'm back in my own, how I shall teach that barge woman! Thrown in the River indeed! But at least I'm closer to home than I was, with the police miles behind me. Really, there is no animal equal to me for cleverness in the whole world.

*(Full of conceit, TOAD begins to sing a made-up tune:)*

The world has held great heroes, as history-books have showed,  
But never a name to go down in fame compared with that of Toad!  
The clever men at Oxford know all that there is to be knowed,  
But none of them know one half as much as intelligent Mr. Toad!

*(The sound of a motorcar is heard approaching and TOAD breaks off his song.)*

Now *this* is the real life once again, my kindred spirits of the wheel! I'll talk them into giving me a lift and before you can say "Toad" I'll be driving up to Toad Hall in a motorcar. Won't that will be one in the eye for Badger! *(TOAD jumps into the road and waves at the approaching car.)* Hello! Hello! *(The sound of the car grows louder as it approaches. Suddenly TOAD's expression changes to one of fear.)* Oh dear! It's all up now! Of all things, the very car I stole that fateful day! Oh hapless Toad! Oh ill-fated animal!

*(He faints. We hear the car stop and the same two DRIVERS enter, dressed as before in driving clothes.)*

**DRIVER 1.** Look at this, a poor washerwoman!

**DRIVER 2.** She must have been overcome by the heat, poor creature. We should take her with us to the next village.

*(They lift TOAD into the motorcar and begin to drive with DRIVER 2 at the wheel. TOAD starts to revive.)*

**DRIVER 1.** The fresh air must be doing her good, she looks better already. How do you feel, ma'am?

**TOAD.** (*As a washerwoman again:*) I'm feeling a great deal better, thank you kindly.

**DRIVER 2.** Is there someplace we can take you, ma'am?

**TOAD.** Perhaps to Toad Hall, if you wouldn't mind. I live thereabouts, is all.

**DRIVER 2.** Of course, whatever we can do.

**DRIVER 1.** Just keep still now, and try not to move too much.

**TOAD.** Oh, I'm sure I'll be all right again soon. If only...

**DRIVER 2.** What's that, my good woman?

**TOAD.** No, no, it's nothing.

**DRIVER 2.** Go on.

**TOAD.** I was only wondering if you might let me try and drive the car for a little while. It looks so easy, and I should like to tell my friends that I'd driven a motorcar.

**DRIVER 1.** (*Laughing:*) Bravo, ma'am! I like your spirit.

**DRIVER 2.** I hardly think driving would be good for her.

**TOAD.** You're right, of course, how sensible you are. I'll just sit and enjoy the ride. (*Pause. TOAD lets out a long sigh.*)

**DRIVER 1.** Come now, let her have a try. She can't do any harm.

**DRIVER 2.** At least she should rest awhile longer.

**TOAD.** Quite right! And I shouldn't like to impose on you kind individuals any further. (*Slight pause and TOAD lets out another sigh.*) But how glorious it would have been.

**DRIVER 1.** Surely, just for a few minutes...

**TOAD.** Oh, please, not on my account.

**DRIVER 1.** If it would give her such pleasure...

**TOAD.** Only if you think it's wise...

**DRIVER 2.** I suppose she could try...

**TOAD.** You are kind!

**DRIVER 2.** Just for a mile or two, mind you.

*(They stop the car and put TOAD in the driver's seat where DRIVER 2 shows him the pedals. As he starts driving TOAD at first tries to control himself, but his driving soon becomes more and more erratic.)*

**DRIVER 1.** How well she does it! Don't you think?

**DRIVER 2.** Better than I would have thought...

**DRIVER 1.** You're a born driver, ma'am! Bravo!

*(TOAD drives faster.)*

**TOAD.** Why thank you, I've never had such fun in all my life!

**DRIVER 2.** Not so fast now.

**TOAD.** Why, I hardly gave it a tap! *(TOAD slows down for a moment.)*

**DRIVER 1.** She has gotten the hang of it, hasn't it?

*(TOAD picks up speed again and takes a curve wildly.)*

Careful now!

**DRIVER 2.** Hold on there, washerwoman, I think I'd better take over.

*(DRIVER 2 tries to take the wheel back, but TOAD pushes DRIVER 2 away.)*

**TOAD.** *(In his own voice:)* Washerwoman indeed! I am Toad the magnificent! Toad the motorcar-snatcher! Sit still, and you shall know what driving really is, for you are in the hands of the famous, the skillful, the entirely fearless Toad!

*(DRIVER 2 snatches TOAD's bonnet.)*

**DRIVER 2.** It is Toad! The wicked animal who stole our motorcar!

**DRIVER 1.** Stop him!

*(The DRIVERS struggle with TOAD and soon, as TOAD is driving, the car “crashes” throwing all three of them out. TOAD recovers first.)*

**TOAD.** Ha! Toad, as usual, comes out on top!

*(The DRIVERS recover and start to chase TOAD.)*

**TOAD.** Oh dear!

*(TOAD, pursued by the DRIVERS, runs offstage. Blackout.)*

### Scene 5

*(Rat’s living room. RAT sits, humming to herself and scribbling down poetry when TOAD, exhausted, enters and collapses.)*

**RAT.** My goodness! *(She crosses to TOAD.)* Why, it’s Toad! *(She revives him.)*

**TOAD.** Rat? Is it really you?

**RAT.** Of course it is.

**TOAD.** And there’s the River. I’m...I’m home! *(Remembering:)* Oh! Those drivers! They’re after me! I must—

**RAT.** Calm down, Toad. There’s no one after you that I can see. You must have given them the slip.

**TOAD.** Oh Rat, you don’t know how good it is to see you! I’ve been through such times since I saw you last. Just wait till I tell you—

**RAT.** Toad, I have never seen a more shabby, bedraggled, disreputable-looking animal in all my life. What on earth do you have on?

**TOAD.** Only the brilliant disguise that saw me out of prison and safely home, that’s all!

**RAT.** Well take it off at once. You never looked more ridiculous in all your life.

**TOAD.** Certainly I do not! I... *(RAT simply glares at TOAD who takes a good look at how he is dressed.)* Well, I suppose I do look rather foolish.

**RAT.** Rather. Now please, take off those rags and try and look like a gentleman, if you can.

*(TOAD starts to take off his washerwoman garments.)*

We'll get you cleaned up later, but first we need to have a talk.

**TOAD.** Oh yes! I have so much to tell you—

**RAT.** *(Firmly:)* Not about that. Now, Toad, I don't want to give you pain, after all you've been through, but don't you see what a fool you've made of yourself? And all because you went and stole a motorcar. You know you've had nothing but trouble from motorcars from the moment you first set eyes on one.

**TOAD.** Well, yes, I suppose...

**RAT.** But if you will be mixed up with them, why steal them? When are you going to think of your friends and be a credit to them? Do you suppose it's any pleasure to me to hear animals saying that I'm the chap that keeps company with jail-birds?

**TOAD.** *(Sincerely:)* You're quite right, Rat. How sound you always are! I've been a conceited old fool, I can see that, but now I'm going to be a good Toad and not do it any more.

**RAT.** I'm glad to hear it.

**TOAD.** I shall lead a quiet and respectable life from now on. Let's just stroll quietly down to Toad Hall, I'll get cleaned up and—

**RAT.** Stroll quietly down to Toad Hall? What are you talking about? Do you mean to say you haven't heard?

**TOAD.** *(Afraid:)* Heard what? Don't spare me, Rat, quick! What haven't I heard?

**RAT.** Do you mean to tell me that you've heard nothing about the weasels and the ferrets...

**TOAD.** Not a word!

**RAT.** ...and how they've gone and taken Toad Hall?

**TOAD.** *(Genuinely shocked:)* Taken Toad Hall? Oh! *(TOAD faints.)*

**RAT.** Toad!

*(RAT revives TOAD and helps him up again, but the shock has brought TOAD back down to earth.)*

**TOAD.** Go on, Rat, and tell me everything. I am an animal again. I can bear it.

**RAT.** When you got into that trouble of yours, Mole and Badger moved into Toad Hall to have it ready for you when you turned up again.

**TOAD.** *(Touched:)* Such good friends they are!

**RAT.** Yes, except one night all the Wild-Wooders stormed Toad Hall, beat Mole and Badger with sticks, and threw them out into the cold and wet.

**TOAD.** And they've been living in Toad Hall ever since?

**RAT.** *(Nodding:)* Eating your grub, drinking your drink, and making bad jokes about you. And the Wild-Wooders are telling everybody that they've come to stay for good.

**TOAD.** Oh are they! I'll soon see about that!

**RAT.** It's no good, Toad. You'll only get into trouble.

*(TOAD does not listen and storms off in the direction of Toad Hall.)*

Come back, Toad!

*(Just as TOAD is about to exit we hear the voice of the FERRET CAPTAIN.)*

**F. CAPTAIN.** *(Offstage:)* Who goes there?

**TOAD.** Stuff and nonsense! What do you mean by talking like that to me? Come out at once, or I'll... Oh!

*(TOAD drops to the ground and we hear a gunshot. TOAD runs back to RAT while the FERRET CAPTAIN laughs offstage.)*

**RAT.** What did I tell you? They've got sentries posted everywhere and they are all armed. You must just wait.

**TOAD.** Wait? While they have Toad Hall? I'll show them, I'll—

**RAT.** Sit down, Toad! Unless you want to be shot at again.

(TOAD *reluctantly obeys.*)

**TOAD.** I'm sorry, Rat, it's just that—

**RAT.** I know, but you'll just have to be patient. We can't do anything until we've seen Mole and Badger and heard their latest news.

**TOAD.** Oh yes! Mole and Badger! I had forgotten about them.

**RAT.** I'm sure you have! You don't deserve such true and loyal friends, Toad.

**TOAD.** (*With sincere remorse:*) I'm an ungrateful beast, I know. Let me share their hardships, and try and prove myself worthy of their friendship. (*He cries.*)

**RAT.** Oh do pull yourself together, Toad. I don't mean to shout at you. I just want you to see where all your foolishness has brought you.

**TOAD.** And I will do better, Rat, and value my friends as I ought. If only I had my home back!

(MOLE and BADGER *enter, each looking as if they have spent the past several nights sleeping outside on the cold ground.*)

**BADGER.** Why Toad, welcome home! (*He shakes TOAD's hand.*) Hm. What am I saying? Home, indeed! This is a poor homecoming, my unhappy Toad. (*BADGER crosses away and ponders matters in silence.*)

**MOLE.** But it's so good to have you back, Toad! Why, you must have managed to escape, you clever, clever Toad!

**RAT.** Mole...!

**TOAD.** (*Boastful:*) Clever? Oh no! I've only broken out of prison, that's all! I'm a fool, I am! Let me tell you, Mole, and you shall judge for yourself!

**RAT.** Do be quiet, Toad! And don't you egg him on, Mole, when you know what he is, but please tell us what's best to be done, now that Toad is back at last.

**MOLE.** What's to be done... Why, blest if I know!

**RAT.** Surely you must have some idea of what Toad ought to do.

**TOAD.** Well, I'm not going to be ordered about by you two, at any rate! It's my house we're talking about, and I'm going to –

**BADGER.** Be quiet, Toad! (*Silence and everyone becomes very still.*) You troublesome little animal! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? What do you think your father would have said if he knew of all the trouble you had caused?

(*TOAD begins to cry again.*)

Hm, well, never mind about that. We're going to let bygones be bygones. But it's quite useless to think of attacking the place. The weasels and ferrets are too strong for us.

**TOAD.** Then it's all over. I shall go and enlist for a soldier, and never see my dear Toad Hall again.

**BADGER.** Cheer up, Toad, there are more ways of getting back a place than taking it by force. I am going to tell you a great secret. (*Slight pause.*) There is an underground passage that leads from the riverbank, quite near here, right up into the middle of Toad Hall.

**TOAD.** Oh nonsense, Badger. I know every inch of Toad Hall, inside and out. Nothing of the sort, I do assure you.

**BADGER.** My young friend, your father told me a great deal he wouldn't have dreamt of telling you. He showed me the passage once and said, "Don't let Toad know about it unless he's in a real fix. He's a good boy, but simply cannot hold his tongue."

**TOAD.** Well, perhaps I am a bit of a talker. But how's this passage going to help us?

**BADGER.** It's the Chief Weasel's birthday tomorrow and all the weasels will be gathered together in the dining-hall, eating and drinking and carrying on. No swords, no sticks, and no guns!

**RAT.** But the ferrets will be on sentry duty as usual.

**BADGER.** Exactly. The weasels will trust entirely to them. And that is where the passage comes in. It leads up into the pantry, right next to the dining-hall.

**TOAD.** Ah! That squeaky board in the pantry! Now I understand it!

**MOLE.** We shall creep out quietly into the pantry...

**RAT.** ...with our swords and sticks...

**BADGER.** ...and rush in upon them...

**TOAD.** ...and whack 'em, and whack 'em, and whack 'em!

**RAT.** Good show, Badger!

**BADGER.** We will make all the necessary arrangements in the morning and by tomorrow night, Toad, I think we shall have taken back your home.

**TOAD.** Hooray!

*(TOAD exits, followed by RAT and BADGER. MOLE lags behind and picks up Toad's washerwoman clothes. MOLE chuckles and exits with the clothes. Blackout.)*

### Scene 6

*(The next day. The River, outside of Toad Hall. MOLE enters, dressed in Toad's washerwoman clothes.)*

**MOLE.** I'll show those ferrets!

*(MOLE crosses towards Toad Hall. The FERRET CAPTAIN pops out from offstage and points a gun at MOLE.)*

**F. CAPTAIN.** Who goes there?

**MOLE.** *(As a washerwoman:)* Good morning, gentlemen. Want any washing done today?

**F. CAPTAIN.** Go away, washerwoman! We don't do any washing on duty.

**MOLE.** Or any other time?

**F. CAPTAIN.** Listen here, none of your cheek!

*(FERRETS 1 and 2 enter.)*

**FERRET 1.** We could use some washing done!

**FERRET 2.** Aye, sir! We ain't got a clean shirt left.

**F. CAPTAIN.** That's enough out of you! *(To MOLE:)* Now run away, washerwoman.

**MOLE.** Run away? It won't be me that'll be running away, a very short time from now!

**FERRET 1.** What's she saying?

**F. CAPTAIN.** Never you mind! She doesn't know what she's talking about.

**MOLE.** Oh don't I? Well, let me tell you what I've heard: A hundred bloodthirsty badgers, armed with rifles, are going to attack Toad Hall tonight. Six boatloads of rats, with pistols and swords, will come up the river and land in the garden, while an army of toads will storm the orchard, yelling for vengeance. There won't be much left of you to wash, by the time they're done with you! *(MOLE laughs and exits.)*

**FERRET 2.** That's just like the weasels, that is, to sit at their banquet, feasting and having all sorts of fun, while we stay on guard.

**FERRET 1.** Just waiting to be cut to pieces by bloodthirsty badgers!

**F. CAPTAIN.** I told you, she don't know nothing. There ain't no badgers coming, nor no rats and toads neither. You, get off to the orchard and see how things are. You, to the boathouse, see that everything's secure. *(No one moves.)* Move!

*(FERRETS 1 and 2 exit and the FERRET CAPTAIN returns to his post offstage. By this point, BADGER sits in Rat's living room on the other side of the stage reading the paper. RAT enters and begins to sort a pile of sticks, swords, and other weapons. TOAD follows her onstage and watches the preparations in a state of great excitement.)*

**RAT.** *(To herself:)* A stick for Rat, a stick for Mole, a stick for Toad, a stick for Badger. A sword for Rat, a sword for Mole, a sword for—

**BADGER.** That's all very well, Rat. But just let us get past those ferrets and we shan't want any swords or pistols.

**RAT.** It's just as well to be on the safe side.

**BADGER.** Once we're inside, we four with our sticks shall clear the floor of the whole lot of them in five minutes. I'd have done the

whole thing by myself, only I didn't want to deprive you fellows of all the fun.

*(TOAD grabs a stick and swings it around.)*

**TOAD.** I'll learn 'em to steal my house!

**RAT.** Don't say "learn 'em," Toad. It's not good English.

**BADGER.** What's the matter with his English? It's the same as I use myself.

**RAT.** I'm sorry, Badger, only I think it ought to be "teach 'em."

**BADGER.** But we don't want to teach 'em. We want to learn 'em. And what's more, we're going to do it too!

*(MOLE enters, carrying the washerwoman clothes.)*

**MOLE.** I've been having such fun! I've been getting a good laugh out of those ferrets.

**TOAD.** Frivolous animal!

**RAT.** I hope you've been very careful, Mole?

**MOLE.** I should think so!

**BADGER.** What have you been doing then?

**MOLE.** I put on Toad's washerwoman dress and went to see the ferrets, and now I have them convinced that an army of badgers and rats and toads will attack Toad Hall this very night!

**TOAD.** Oh Mole, you've gone and spoilt everything! Tell her, Badger.

**BADGER.** *(Slowly:)* Mole, I perceive you have more sense in your little finger than some other animals have in the whole of their bodies. You have managed excellently and I begin to have great hopes for you.

**RAT.** Good old Mole!

**TOAD.** But—

**BADGER.** We'd best get ready.

**RAT.** I've everything organized. Here's a pile for Mole... *(She pulls MOLE over to one pile.)* And a pile for Toad... *(She pulls TOAD over to another pile.)* And a pile for—

**BADGER.** *(Laughing:)* All right, Rat, but I'm going to do all I've got to do with this stick.

**RAT.** Please, Badger, I wouldn't want you to think I had forgotten anything.

*(Everyone picks up their sticks while the rest of the weapons are stashed offstage.)*

**BADGER.** Now then, follow me. Mole first, 'cause I'm very pleased with her. Rat next and Toad last. And look here, Toad, don't you chatter so much as usual or you'll be sent back, sure as fate. Now march! *(They proceed, single file, with BADGER leading the way, and march halfway around the stage.)* Here is the entrance to the secret passage. Quietly now.

*(The lights dim as they enter the "passage" and proceed underground. As they continue on their way around the stage TOAD begins to lag behind.)*

**RAT.** *(In a fierce whisper:)* Come on, Toad!

*(TOAD walks quickly to catch up, but does not look where he is going. As a result, TOAD runs into the others causing all of them to fall over in a heap.)*

**TOAD.** *(Too loudly:)* Sorry, Badger, my fault!

**BADGER.** Be quiet, Toad! *(The animals pick themselves up and continue on, ending up on the far edge of the stage.)* We ought by now to be pretty nearly under Toad Hall.

*(The lights come up on Toad Hall where the WEASELS are laughing and eating and drinking.)*

**MOLE.** I hear them.

**RAT.** They are going at it, those weasels.

**BADGER.** What a time they're having!

**WEASEL 2.** All right, all right, quiet now!

---

*(The other WEASELS quiet down and the CHIEF WEASEL addresses them.)*

**CHIEF W.** I should like to say a word about our kind host, Toad. We all know Toad!

*(The WEASELS laugh.)*

**WEASEL 1.** Oh we know Toad!

**CHIEF W.** Good Toad, modest Toad, honest Toad!

*(They laugh even more.)*

**TOAD.** Just let me at that weasel!

**BADGER.** Hold on a moment, Toad. Get ready, all of you.

**CHIEF W.** Let me sing to you a little song which I have composed on the subject of Toad. *(The WEASELS laugh and cheer. The CHIEF WEASEL begins to sing, badly.)* Toad went a walking down the street, boasting to everyone that he did meet, how he's the greatest toad in all the land. My, oh my! Ain't that little Toad grand...!

**BADGER.** The hour is come. Follow me!

*(The four animals charge the WEASELS, all brandishing their stout sticks. As they make their charge the light of Pan shines on from off-stage and snatches of the music of Pan underscores the fighting. BADGER, TOAD, MOLE, and RAT chase the terrified WEASELS around the stage.)*

**MOLE.** I'll show you who's trespassing!

**TOAD.** I'll learn 'em! I'll learn 'em!

*(They attack the WEASELS who do their best to fight back, though they are unarmed.)*

**WEASEL 2.** It's the bloodthirsty badgers!

**WEASEL 1.** It ain't! It's that army of rats!

**TOAD.** And toads!

*(TOAD fights with the CHIEF WEASEL while RAT, MOLE, and BADGER hit at the other WEASELS with their sticks. One or two WEASELS are soon left unconscious on the ground while the rest*

*run away, screaming in terror. The CHIEF WEASEL fights back more bravely than the rest, but soon the furious TOAD knocks the CHIEF WEASEL to the ground. When it is all over, the four animals rest for a moment.)*

**BADGER.** Mole, be a good sport and go see about those sentries. I've an idea that, thanks to you, we shan't have much trouble from them tonight.

**MOLE.** Certainly, Badger. (*MOLE exits.*)

**BADGER.** I want some grub. How 'bout you, Rat?

**RAT.** I'm famished.

*(They both look at TOAD. Slight pause.)*

**TOAD.** Oh! Me too.

**BADGER.** Hm. We've got your house back for you, and you don't offer us so much as a sandwich? Look lively, Toad!

**TOAD.** What? Oh, of course.

**RAT.** I'll give you a hand.

*(RAT and TOAD exit as MOLE re-enters.)*

**BADGER.** How goes it, Mole?

**MOLE.** It's all over, Badger. As soon as the ferrets heard the uproar they threw down their rifles and fled.

**BADGER.** Excellent and deserving animal! There's just one more thing I want you to do, Mole. I wouldn't trouble you only I know I can trust you to see a thing done.

**MOLE.** Whatever you like.

**BADGER.** (*Referring to the WEASELS:)* Take those fellows upstairs with you and have some bedrooms tidied up and made really comfortable for the four of us.

**MOLE.** Certainly!

**BADGER.** Thank you, Mole. I'm very pleased with you, you know.

---

(MOLE rouses the remaining WEASELS and lines them up as RAT and TOAD enter with sandwiches.)

**MOLE.** Quick march!

(The WEASELS exit followed by MOLE, wielding her stick. RAT hands BADGER a sandwich.)

**BADGER.** Thank you, Rat.

(They eat.)

**RAT.** That was a marvelous piece of work, wasn't it?

**BADGER.** First-rate. You fought magnificently.

**RAT.** Thank you, Badger. And did you see Mole? Like a holy terror!

**TOAD.** And not the only one.

**RAT.** No, you were quite something yourself, Badger.

**BADGER.** Nothing much. Just showed those weasels what for, that's all.

(MOLE re-enters.)

**MOLE.** They're hard at work, Badger. The rooms'll be clean as a pin before you know it.

**BADGER.** Excellent!

**RAT.** Come join us, Mole.

**MOLE.** Oh, yes! Feels like I haven't eaten in forever. (MOLE sits and eats.)

**BADGER.** Now, Toad, there is something I very much want to say to you.

**TOAD.** To me?

**BADGER.** Yes.

**TOAD.** But I—

**BADGER.** I was most impressed at how you fought the weasels. Especially how you laid flat the Chief Weasel all by yourself.

**TOAD.** Well...

**RAT.** Three cheers for Toad!

**MOLE.** Hooray!

**BADGER.** Your father would have been proud of you tonight.

**TOAD.** Thank you all for your pains and trouble, and you, Mole, for your cleverness this morning.

**BADGER.** There spoke my brave Toad. Now, only one duty remains: Toad, you must throw a banquet to celebrate this affair.

**MOLE.** Oh yes!

**TOAD.** Oh all right, though why on earth you should want to have a banquet this late at night I cannot understand.

**BADGER.** The banquet will be tomorrow night, of course. But you've got to write the invitations. You'd best do so before bed so we may send them off first thing in the morning.

**TOAD.** You mean now?

**BADGER.** Don't fret, Toad, I'll take my share of the burden. I'll order the banquet. Tomorrow, I think. I'm ready for bed myself.

*(WEASEL 1 enters nervously.)*

**WEASEL 1.** Mole...?

**MOLE.** All done then, are you?

*(WEASEL 1 nods.)*

**MOLE.** Good for you!

**WEASEL 1.** It was all the Chief Weasel's fault, you know, him and those ferrets. If we can do anything else to make it up to you, just say the word.

**MOLE.** We'll do that. Off you are!

*(WEASEL 1 quickly exits.)*

**BADGER.** That settles it, bed it is. Mind you write neatly, Toad.

**TOAD.** If you mean for me to sit up all night writing invitations so that you three... Stop a minute, why shouldn't I? You wish it done and it shall be done. Goodnight!

**BADGER.** I'm glad to see you so sensible, Toad. Goodnight.

*(BADGER, MOLE and RAT exit, each giving TOAD a suspicious glance as they pass by. TOAD finds a stack of paper and a pen and sets to work. It should be noted that by this point TOAD's boastfulness comes mostly from habit. He has nearly, but not quite, turned over a new leaf.)*

**TOAD.** Yes, yes, of course I'll write them! And I'll tell all about tonight's heroic battle. Badger did say he was proud of how I tackled the Chief Weasel. And, of course, there's the evening's entertainment. *(As he writes:)* Let's see, "Speech, by Toad. There will be other speeches by Toad during the evening." Then, "Address, by Toad. Synopsis: Our prison system and the ways of the road." Lastly, "Song, by Toad, 'The Taking of Toad Hall,' with other songs sung throughout the night by Toad." Oh yes, this will be a marvelous banquet, with all my friends gathered together once more!

*(TOAD continues to fill out the invitations. The lights dim as TOAD continues to work. The lights brighten; it is morning. TOAD finishes and sits back, exhausted but pleased with himself. WEASEL 1 enters timidly.)*

**WEASEL 1.** Excuse me, Mr. Toad?

**TOAD.** Yes?

**WEASEL 1.** Just wondering if I might be of any service to you fine animals?

**TOAD.** I have just the thing for you. *(TOAD hands WEASEL 1 the pile of invitations.)* Take these round and see them delivered, as quick as you can.

**WEASEL 1.** Of course, sir. And thank you, thank you! *(WEASEL 1 exits.)*

**TOAD.** *(Pleased with himself, TOAD practices a new, made-up song:)*

There was panic in the parlors and bowling in the halls,  
There was crying in the cow-sheds and shrieking in the stalls,  
When the Toad came home!

There was smashing in of window and crashing in of door,  
There was scurrying of weasels that fainted on the floor,  
When the Toad came home!

Shout “Hooray!” And let each one of the crowd try and shout it  
very loud,

In honor of an animal of whom you’re justly proud,  
For it’s Toad’s great day!

*(BADGER and RAT enter from the direction in which WEASEL 1  
exited.)*

Good morning, my fine animals! I’m just off to take a look at things.  
Help yourselves to anything you like. *(TOAD starts to exits but is  
blocked by RAT and BADGER. TOAD laughs nervously.)* You needn’t  
worry, I’ll soon be back to lend a hand.

**RAT.** Now look here, Toad. It’s about this banquet.

*(BADGER shows TOAD the pile of invitations.)*

**TOAD.** My...my invitations. But...

**RAT.** We want you to understand, once and for all, that there are  
going to be no speeches and no songs. Try and grasp the fact that  
on this occasion we’re not arguing with you; we’re just telling you.

**TOAD.** Can’t I sing just one little song?

**RAT.** No. You know full well that your songs are all boasting and  
vanity.

**BADGER.** And all your speeches gross exaggeration.

**RAT.** You must turn over a new leaf sooner or later, Toad, and now  
seems a splendid time to begin. Please don’t think that saying all  
this doesn’t hurt us more than it hurts you.

*(Slight pause. TOAD sniffs and appears on the verge of tears. Fi-  
nally, he sighs.)*

**TOAD.** (*Sincerely:*) You have conquered, my friends. It was, to be sure, but a small thing that I asked, to let myself go just once more and hear the tumultuous applause that always seems to bring out my best qualities. However, you are right and I am wrong. Henceforth I will be a very different Toad. (*Still sniffing, TOAD starts to exit.*) But this is a hard world! (*TOAD exits.*)

**RAT.** Badger, I feel like a brute.

**BADGER.** I know, but the thing had to be done. Would you have Toad made a laughingstock, mocked and jeered at by ferrets and weasels?

**RAT.** 'Course not. And it's lucky we came upon that little weasel, just as he was setting out with Toad's disgraceful invitations.

**BADGER.** Mole is at work right now filling up plain, simple invitation cards. We'll give those to that weasel to deliver.

(*BADGER and RAT exit. A very humble TOAD enters and sighs.*)

**TOAD.** Such a little thing I asked! But they are right, and henceforth I will be a Toad my friends can be proud of. No more motor-cars and no more boastful speeches. But just *one* more little song...

(*TOAD sings again, quietly and to himself:*)

Shout "Hooray!" And let each one of the crowd try and shout it very loud,  
In honor of an animal of whom you're justly proud,  
For it's Toad's great day! It's Toad's great day!

(*TOAD sighs a long, great sigh.*)

There. Now I am ready.

(*All the ANIMALS of the River and the Wild Wood enter and begin to celebrate. RAT, MOLE, and BADGER ad-lib about their adventures when asked, while TOAD makes his way from guest to guest, acting the host and making sure that all is well.*)

**RABBIT.** What a clever Toad you must have been, to battle the weasels so!

**TOAD.** Not at all. It was nothing much, I assure you.

## **THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!**

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