

# Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

2400 THIRD AVENUE SOUTH  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55404  
612-872-5108  
FAX 612-874-8119

## *Wind in the Willows*

Story by  
**Kenneth Grahame**

Adaptation by  
**Thomas Olson**

Music by  
**Roberta Carlson**

*Wind in the Willows* was first presented by The Children's Theatre Company for the 1994-1995 season.

*The license issued in connection with PYA perusal scripts is a limited license, and is issued for the sole purpose of reviewing the script for a potential future performance. All other rights regarding perusal scripts are expressly reserved by Plays for Young Audiences, including, but not limited to, the rights to distribute, perform, copy or alter scripts. This limited license does not convey any performance rights of any kind with this material. By accepting any perusal script(s), Licensee agrees to and is bound by these terms.*

### Cast of Characters

- Mole
- Mouse Boy/Father Mouse
- Mouse Girl/Mother Mouse
- Rat
- Otter
- Badger
- Hedgehog
- Ferret
- Stoat
- Squirrel
- Thugs
- Weasel
- Nanny Squirrel
- Toad
- Swallow
- Constable
- Sailor Rat
- Gaoler's Daughter
- Washer Woman
- Engineer

Ensemble includes: Rabbits, Mice Carolers

## **Act I, Scene 1**

A theatre in a wooded clearing. An easel with placard: 'Riverbank Repertory Players present: "The Tale of Peter Rabbit."' A few minutes before curtain, RABBIT appears and gestures for painted backdrop to be flown in. Another RABBIT changes placard to: "The Wind in the Willows." After RABBITS' exit; TOAD, in dressing gown, swiftly sneaks on and writes beneath the title: "Starring Mister Toad " TOAD exits.

House out with sound of breeze and distant pipes of Pan. RABBIT QUINTET enters. They bow/curtsy to Audience.

**RABBITS:** (Singing.)  
Look alive now! Come and gather.  
Hurry on, now! Come and gather. Listen!  
Gather 'round young creatures of the meadow and the forest  
Gather 'round and we will tell a tale heroic ...  
Aye, but more . . .  
For it's not only scenes of valorous deeds and dashing acts of  
daring  
We offer you a gentler play with humor, warmth and sharing.  
Listen! Listen!  
Listen to the murmur of the wind so soft and quiet  
Listen to the sounds of spring awake, til by and by it  
Ever gently, most miraculously finds a form and meaning  
Then ... It's Mole! Spring cleaning!

RABBITS cock their ears at sound beneath their feet.

**RABBITS:** Scrabbling, scratching, scraping and scurrying  
Up some more, stirrying, hurrying...

RABBITS hop aside as MOLE filings open trapdoor with a cloud of dust.

**MOLE:** Up! Up above and out! Ah. Light. Warmth. Bright. The sun? Ah,  
yes! Strange, quite a change, for a Mole such as me ... and yet,  
rather fine. Curiously fine. Yes, up and out -- this feels better!

MOLE has a basket of stuff he dusts and sorts while he sings.

**MOLE:** (Singing) Spring-cleaning's made me all a-fidget

Hang this musty dusty stuff

Dash it, ditch it.

Polish it?

*(Spoken)* Pitch it! There, now I've said it: enough is enough! *(Tosses feather duster into trap.)* Onion sauce!

**RABBITS:** *(Beckoning MOLE to venture and explore a bit. Singing.)* Hurrying, scurrying, hurrying, scurrying, la, la, la, la, la, la!

*FIELD MICE BOY and GIRL enter, at silent play.*

**MOLE:** *(Regarding open trap, stowing stuff back into it.)*  
What nonsense this: this house all damp and grim and dreary.  
Shouldn't a home be bright and warm and cheery?  
*(Stepping away from trap. MICE CHILDREN approach trap.)*  
No wonder friends don't call on me, how could they know they're wanted? One glance and quick as lightning, run!

**MOUSE BOY:** *(To MOUSE GIRL, as they run off)* That place looks like it's haunted!

**MOLE:** To live one's life in solitude as I've done isn't proper  
I'd like a friend or two, I think, to chat with over supper.  
Then afterwards a stroll amidst the gardens of the shire  
And just before retiring, a nightcap by the fire.  
Then dream of all the things we'll do next day, whatever weather  
Come sun or rain or snow or sleet, "Hail Friend!" - we'd be together.

**RABBITS:** So, then ... ?

**MOLE:** *(Kicks trapdoor lid closed, claps palms together.)*  
Bid farewell to the old Mole, say "Goodbye and Too-da-loo!"  
For I'm certain there's more beyond this door; much more to do,  
Much more to see.  
Much more to smell and taste and touch.  
Discovery! Camaraderie!  
All this and more I seek. ... I hope ... I pray may be.

**RABBITS:** *(As MOLE wanders, gazing in wonder.)*  
Feel the longing, learn the burning, let your senses soar and scatter,

Feel a tickle, yearn a yearning, shed your past away -- What matter?

**RABBITS:** It's but bygones, merely mem 'ries.  
Look alive now, seek the wonder,  
Know the breezes, hark the thunder.  
Come rejoice! It's spring and all around the earth's gone mad in splendor.  
Take heart, take hope, take sight on life's adventure:  
In sunlight gold amongst the clouds and wind-song in the willows.  
(*Patterns of light begin to flicker, suggesting a river.*)

**MOLE:** (*Halting at "riverbank."*) My goodness! What on earth..?

**RABBIT 1:** A river.

**MOLE:** Never before in my life have I seen such.. .

**RABBIT 1:** A full-fed river.

**MOLE:** A river! How very wide it is. And so sleek and sinuous, like a living animal...

**RABBIT 1:** Yes, an animal -- fat with all the wetness of a winter's melt.

**RABBIT 2:** A river: glinting, gleaming, all a-shake and all a-shiver ...

**RABBIT 3:** With a chasing and a chuckling, a gurgling, a rustling ...

**RABBIT 4:** Babbling and bubbling.. .

**RABBIT 5:** And bijou-baubled bustling!

**MOLE:** Yes! Yes! Yes! This ... is ... fine! (*Releasing a great, contented sigh, MOLE sits on the bank.*)

**RABBITS:** Take hope, take heart, it's spring, just make a brand new start!  
Take hope, take heart, it's spring...

**MOLE:** This is grand!

**RABBITS:** ... bright it billows!  
In sunlight gold amongst the clouds and wind-song in the willows!

**Act I, Scene 2**

*Continuous with the preceding. RAT appears in his boat, sees MOLE and waves an oar in greeting. MOLE rises to his feet and stands, shyly returning the wave.*

**RAT:** Hullo there.

**MOLE:** Hullo.

**RAT:** I'm Water Rat.

**MOLE:** How do you do? The name's Mole.

**RAT:** Lost, are you?

**MOLE:** Lost?

**RAT:** It's just that I'm rather surprised to see you, Mister Mole. Seldom -- indeed, never have I happened upon a mole up and out and about along the riverbank. And in the full light of morning? Never before in my vast experience. Yes, I must say it is most extraordinary meeting you, my good fellow.

**MOLE:** Extraordinary? Me?

**RAT:** (*RAT nods.*) Quite. Say, Mole -- would you like to hop in?

**MOLE:** Hop in what?

**RAT:** In my little boat. In here. With me.

**MOLE:** Oh, it's all very well to talk. Easy to say "hop in," when one's so very familiar with boats. As for me ... I've never been in a boat before in all my life.

**RAT:** What?! "Never been in a...!" Why, what in the world have you been doing with yourself?

MOLE: Spring-cleaning.

RAT: Oh, bother spring-cleaning.

MOLE: That's just what I said. And "onion sauce," too.

RAT: Well, then? Come along, Mole, step lively. (*RAT offers his arm.*) Just lean on my arm. Nothing to fear. Here you go. Just a hop up and over and ... (*MOLE leaps in and the boat sways from side to side. MOLE teeters precariously, about to plunge overboard. RAT grabs him by the arms and steadies MOLE.*) ... and there. What did I tell you? Nothing to it! (*MOLE is clutching the sides of the rowboat, terrified.*) Mole? Moley? Relax, old boy. See? You're safely in.

MOLE: Such a day. *Such* a day I'm having. Only look at me. Ratty, I'm floating!

RAT: And what do you make of it?

MOLE: Why, it seems – just now -- rather nice.

RAT: "Nice?!" "Nice," you say? Why, my friend, this is the *only* thing. To my mind there is nothing -- absolutely nothing -- half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats on the river.

MOLE: Ah. Fond of boats, are you?

RAT: The river, Mole. I love the river. Whether you're in a boat and actually getting away and arriving at some destination you've planned to visit, or whether you reach somewhere else, or whether you never go anywhere at all -- it hardly matters. For, once you've gone and been there, or simply stayed and not gone anywhere, still there's always *something* happening and passing by and moving and shifting shape and, well, I suppose that's what I'm most fond of, really. The charm of it is in the ever-constant changing -- even though it might appear, more or less, to stay the same.

MOLE: I see.

RAT: Do you?

**MOLE:** Well ... I'd like to.

**RAT:** Then we'll make a long, lovely day of it, what?

**MOLE:** Oh, I don't know, Ratty. I've my chores to do and ...

**RAT:** I packed a picnic.

**MOLE:** (*Instantly interested.*) How's that?

**RAT:** A picnic. There. In the wicker basket. (*MOLE picks up the basket.*) There's cold chicken.

**MOLE:** Ooh.

**RAT:** Cold tongue, cold ham, cold beef, pickled gherkins, salad, French rolls, cress sandwiches, ginger beer, lemonade.. .

**MOLE:** Oh stop, cease! This is too much! Yes, Ratty! Yes, I'll gladly join you in a long, long everlastingly lovely day -- here -- now -- you, the Water Rat and me -- Mole -- upon a river!

**RAT:** No, Mole. *The River*. This is my entire world and I want no other.

**MOLE:** But there appears to be such more. Over there, for instance. What's over there?

**RAT:** That's just the Wild Wood. We don't go there much, we River-bankers.

**MOLE:** Why not? Aren't they -- aren't they very nice people in there?

**RAT:** Well. Some are all right. Squirrels, usually, aren't a great bother. And the Rabbits ... though Rabbits tend to be rather a mixed lot. And then there's old Badger, of course. Badger lives right in the heart of the Wild Wood and is as wise and good a fellow as you'd ever hope to have for a friend.

**MOLE:** Then why shouldn't you go there? Sounds rather pleasant.

**RAT:** And so it would be, if it only weren't for the others.

**MOLE:** Others?

**RAT:** Certain weasels, stoats, ferrets, hedgehogs and so on. Not all of them, of course. But a few have been known to forget themselves and.. .

**MOLE:** And what?

**RAT:** And misbehave. Break away. Violate the common code.

**MOLE:** Oh, my! You mean like one reads about in novels? Renegades and scoundrels?

**RAT:** Perhaps not quite so sensational. Still, I can't say I've known a weasel, stoat or ferret in whom I've felt I could really put my trust. Have you?

**MOLE:** All my life I've lived alone, under the ground, at the edge of the meadow. I've never met anyone from the River, nor the Wild Wood nor from ... there, Rat - what's there, beyond the Wood -- where it looks all blue and dim and smoky?

**RAT:** That, Mole, is the Wide World.

**MOLE:** The Wide World!

**RAT:** Infested with humans.

**MOLE:** Humans?

**RAT:** I've never been to the Wide World and most certainly don't intend to go. And neither will you, if you've got any sense at all. No, Mole, I've quite decided that what this, my River, hasn't got is not worth having. And what it doesn't know is simply not worth knowing.

**MOLE:** So this is it, eh? And I suppose you have a house beside the riverbank?

**RAT:** I do.

**MOLE:** And a family?

**RAT:** Just myself.

**MOLE:** Just you and The River and no one else to pass the time with?

**RAT:** "No one else to...?" Only, look, Mole. Look about. The water below us and the banks beside -- it's all quite teeming with activity. Trout and perch, mayflies, dragonflies, kingfishers, dabchicks, moorhens.. . and, there.. .see there?

**MOLE:** What? Where?

**RAT:** The ducks. There. My friends, my favorites ... in fact, I've written a few verses about them. I've the slight touch of a poet in me, I don't mind telling you.

**MOLE:** A poet? Really? Why, *my* chief hobby is reading. And I do so enjoy a good poem. Oh, won't you recite it, Rat?

**RAT:** Recite?! Why, I'll sing it ...

**MOLE:** How dreadfully clever! A song!

**RAT:** Well, just a ditty.. .  
*(He sings. RABBITS manipulate puppet ducks.)*  
 All along the backwater through the rushes tall  
 Ducks are a-dabbling, Up tails all!  
 Oh! All along the backwater through the rushes tall  
 Ducks are a-dabbling

**RAT & RABBITS:** Up tails all! All along the backwater through the rushes tall  
 Ducks are a-dabbling, Up tails all!

**RAT:** Ducks' tails, feathered sails, Yellow feet a-quiver  
 Hungry bills down out of sight Busy in the river.

**RABBITS:** Soaring in the sky above Swallows whirl and call

**RAT:** Ducks are down a-dabbling Up tails all!

**RABBITS:** Oh! All along the backwater through the rushes tall  
Ducks are a-dabbling, Up tails all!  
All along the backwater, through the rushes tall  
Ducks are a-dabbling, Up tails all!

**RAT:** Everyone for what he likes! Ducks prefer to be,  
Heads below and tails up high, Dipping, dabbling pee!

**RAT & RABBITS:** Oh! All along the backwater through the rushes tall  
Ducks are a-dabbling, Up tails all!  
All along the backwater, through the rushes tall  
Ducks are a-dabbling, Up tails all!  
Ducks are a-dabbling, Up tails all!

*A commotion in the water. The boat begins to rock DUCKS. RABBITS paddle away, quacking angrily.*

**RAT:** Well? What do you think?

**MOLE:** I think I'm going to be sick.

**RAT:** Sir?!

**MOLE:** Seasick, I mean. Or, rather, riversick. Something's churning up the water.

**RAT:** Nothing to fear. Just hang on. (*MOLE clutches sides of boat.*) To the basket, Man -- our picnic! (*MOLE awkwardly clutches basket while trying to maintain his place in the boat.*)

**MOLE:** (*Peering cautiously into water; suddenly alarmed.*) Eek! A sea monster?!

**RAT:** Now, Moley; this isn't Loch Ness. It's only ... (*OTTER appears at the upstage edge of boat and spouts water into the boat, causing MOLE to get wet.*) ... Otter! Mornin', Otter!

**OTTER:** Same to you, Ratty.

**RAT:** Say hullo to Mr. Mole.

**OTTER:** Mighty glad to know you, Moley. (*He extends his hand. MOLE reaches cautiously. OTTER grasps MOLES hand firmly and shakes it; causing boat to nearly capsize again. MOLE shrieks.*) Easy! Easy there, old chap. You seem more nervous than them ducks.

**MOLE:** Only trying to mind getting water on my velvet jacket.

**RAT:** Yes, I like it awfully.

**OTTER:** But a swimming costume would be more the thing to wear, don't you think?

**RAT:** I don't believe Moley's ever had a swim, Otter.

**OTTER:** Never?! Never had a swim?! Why, it's the *only* thing! Stop by tomorrow and I'll teach you. I've just started giving my new son Portly his first swimming lessons.

**RAT:** Ah, yes, Otter -- and how is little Portly-- and Mrs. Otter?

**OTTER:** Splendid. Just splendid, the both of them, thanks for asking. (*A sniff*) Say, do I detect a smell of kippers?

**RAT:** Sardines. Mole and I are going to have a picnic.

**OTTER:** Greedy beggars! And I'm not invited?

**RAT:** But of course you are now, Otter. This is an impromptu affair.

**OTTER:** What *is* it about this morning? Seems all the world's out on the river. Such a rumpus! First those ducks, then you, Ratty, with -- of all people -- a Mole! Why, I hear tell even Toad's about on the water today.

**RAT:** Not Toad! Oh, no!

**OTTER:** That's right. Best keep a sharp eye out.

**MOLE:** What's wrong, Ratty? Who is this Toad person?

**RAT:** Well, now, how should I put it? Toad is ... well, he's a nice enough fellow and all -- indeed, he's a good friend, but, nevertheless, Toad is the sort of person who ... well, how would you put it, Otter?

**OTTER:** Toad? Ha! Why, Toad's ...

**RAT:** And do be kind.

**OTTER:** "Kind?" Oh, well. Then I'd have to say that Toad is ... (*Water begins to roil again, causing boat to bob.*) ... well, here he comes now in his fancy new yacht. You can see for yourself.

**MOLE:** (*Craning his neck to better see.*) Where?

**OTTER:** There. Heading.. .right at us! (*RAT begins rowing with all his might as yacht carries giggling TOAD past.*)

**RAT:** But that yacht's far too big for this shallow backwater!

**OTTER:** (*Calling.*) Toad! You're sailing too fast!

**RAT:** (*Calling.*) Slow down! Your wake will have us capsized if you don't... ! (*Boat dips and picnic basket flies out of MOLE'S arms and overboard Yacht is off. Boat is calmed. A beat. Suddenly RAT and OTTER raise fists in direction of yacht's exit.*)

**RAT & OTTER:** Toad!

**MOLE:** Ratty -- the picnic!

**OTTER:** Not to worry! (*He disappears "underwater" and almost immediately pops back up again, holding forth a drenched, dripping basket.*) Fellows, about that invitation to picnic. Thanks just the same, but if my lunch must be soaking wet, I'd prefer it fresh.

**MOLE:** Oh, Ratty, I'm awfully sorry.

**RAT:** What are *you* sorry for? It's Toad's fault.

**OTTER:** Right you are, Ratty. And I've a good mind to rock Toad's own boat, if you take my meaning.

**RAT:** No, Otter, please. Force will have no effect on Toad.

**OTTER:** *(Rolling up his sleeves, threatening.)* Oh, no?

**RAT:** Please. Let me, instead, go have a talk with him.

**OTTER:** But he never listens. Not unless you talk about newer, faster ridiculous ways to get about. Why, Toad has less of an attention span than my baby boy Portly. And ... *(A fish leaps up out of the water. OTTER dives out of sight toward it.)*

**MOLE:** Speaking of brief attention spans.. .

**RAT:** Seems Otter was just called to lunch. Perhaps we ought to do the same. But on dry land, what?

**MOLE:** Oh, yes, please, terra firma, solid ground, thank you, I'd be quite delighted!

### Act I, Scene 3

Continuous with the preceding. RAT and MOLE are ashore and begin unpacking their soggy picnic.

**RAT:** How I do so relish the first picnic of the season -- don't you, Moley?

**MOLE:** Yes, but Ratty.. .

**RAT:** But what?

**MOLE:** Didn't you just now promise Otter you'd have a talk with Toad?

**RAT:** Yes, but heavens -- not on an empty stomach! Now, please don't misunderstand -- I'm really rather close chums with the fellow, despite his devil-may-care behavior. I daresay that you'll fancy Toad, too. And if you shouldn't, at least you're bound to find his house amusing. Assuming he's in, of course. It's not often one finds Toad at home.

**BADGER:** *(Loud, disgruntled, poking his head through the bracken.)* Toad? Bah!

**MOLE:** *(Slightly startled.)* What? Hullo!

**RAT:** Hmm? *(Seeing BADGER)* Ah, Badger, hullo! Do join us, won't you? We've a picnic.

**BADGER:** Picnic? Hmmmph!

**RAT:** *(As BADGER pivots and retreats.)* Oh, do come on and join us, old Badger, it's only just me and Mister Mole ....

**BADGER:** *(A grouchy wave of dismissal.)* Company? Hmmmph!

**MOLE:** *(After BADGER is quite gone.)* Did I do something wrong?

**RAT:** Not at all. That's just the sort of fellow Badger is. Simply hates Society.

**MOLE:** But I'm not Society. Am I?

**RAT:** Picnics, teas, social calls to Badger's den, leisure affairs in general -- that's Society to the dear, gruff old fellow, and he'll have none of it. Only understand that, Mole, and you and Badger will get along splendidly. And speaking of getting along ... (*Using his napkin, hopping to his feet.*) ...had enough?

**MOLE:** (*Quickly swallowing mouthful.*) Just one more.. . (*RAT begins packing basket.*) ... of course.. .yes.. .quite stuffed.

**RAT:** Judging from the old chap's growl at the mention of Toad, I'm surmising Badger's aware of Toady's little yachting excursion.. And though Otter's anger was distracted easily enough, Badger's quite another kettle of fish. (*Packed and heading of.*) Come, Moley -- I know a shortcut to Toad Hall, here along the outskirts of the Wild Wood.

**MOLE:** The Wild Wood?! But ...

**RAT:** What?

**MOLE:** (*Nervous.*) Didn't you say something earlier about weasels?

**RAT:** So I did. But really only just one in particular, the Chief Weasel: more wily and willfully wanton in his disregard for the Code of Animal Behavior than any creature in the Wood. And I've heard tell he's lately assembled a handful of henchmen.. .

**SQUIRREL:** (*Stepping in their path.*) "Henchmen?"

**FERRET, STOAT  
& HEDGEHOG:** "Henchmen?"

**RAT:** Sorry. Perhaps I was too harsh. I meant associates. Partners.

**SQUIRREL:** But you *said*, "henchmen." For your information, I happens to be a girl.

**RAT:** Indeed? I stand corrected. Make that "henchmen and one henchgirl," then, Mole.

**THUGS:** (*Laughing, derisively.*) Mole?! Did you just say Mole?!

**MOLE:** Yes. Mole. What's so funny about that?

**HEDGEHOG:** Yeah. What's so funny?

**FERRET:** Who's ever heard of a Mole trotting about, above ground?

**STOAT:** Traipsing about the Wild Wood -- and in the daytime, no less? It's unheard of!

**RAT:** Oh? For that matter, who ever heard of a ferret with a cigarette?  
(*Starts snatching away tobacco products from THUGS' hands.*)

**MOLE:** A squirrel smoking a cigar?

**RAT:** A stoat with a stogie?

**HEDGEHOG:** I never.

**RAT:** Seems life is chock full of little surprises, yes?

**SQUIRREL:** You calling me little?

**RAT:** Not at all, sir -- I mean, Miss. Now, if you'll excuse us, Mole and I have some business at Toad Hall.

**STOAT:** Hold up!

**RAT & MOLE:** Sir?

**STOAT:** I said, "Hold up!"

**FERRET:** Not so fast.

**SQUIRREL:** Stop right there.

**HEDGEHOG:** Yeah. Stop.

**RAT:** Why?

**HEDGEHOG:** *(To THUGS.)* Yeah. Why?

**STOAT:** Sixpence.

**MOLE:** Sixpence?

**FERRET:** That's right. "Sixpence."

**SQUIRREL:** Fourpence payment a piece, making.. .

**HEDGEHOG:** Sixpence.

**MOLE:** No, that would make.. .

**RAT:** *(Interrupting.)* Payment for what?

**STOAT:** For the privilege of passing by the private road.

**RAT & MOLE:** "Private road?! "

**RAT:** What private road?

**STOAT:** This one.

**SQUIRREL:** Right here.

**MOLE:** What a notion!

**RAT:** Indeed! And since when has this or any path become a private toll way?

**STOAT:** "Since when?" Since today.

**FERRET:** By order of the Chief Weasel.

**MOLE** (To RAT) But this Weasel fellow can't just go about claiming community property for his own. Can he?  
**RAT:** He can certainly try. But there's nothing -- besides these rude fellows, that is -- to make us willingly comply. (*Clears his throat; addresses THUGS.*) My dear gentlemen.. . (*THUGS look about to see if any gentlemen have appeared behind them.*) ... and lady. Regarding your Chief Weasel's request.. .

**SQUIRREL:** Demand.

**RAT:** ... as to payment for passage along our way to Toad Hall, our considered response is as follows: (*THUGS hold out their hands for payment.*)

**RAT:** Fiddle-sticks!

**MOLE:** Balderdash!

**RAT:** And.. .

**MOLE:** Onion-Sauce! Onion-Sauce! Onion-Sauce! (*Stunned, THUGS share a look and, in unison, begin an ominous grumble.*)

**RAT:** Run, Moley, run!

*RAT and MOLE quickly dash past THUGS. THUGS prepare to pursue but halt at a whistle from WEASEL. THUGS stand at attention.*

**WEASEL:** Blokes!

**THUGS:** Chief!

**WEASEL:** Where to?

**HEDGEHOG:** Wouldn't mind going for some grub.

**WEASEL:** Dimwit! I mean them -- the Water-Rat, that Mole -- where are they headed to?

**SQUIRREL:** Said they had some business down at Toad Hall.

**WEASEL:** Off to Toady's, are they? Well, fine. That's fine.

**STOAT:** But Chief -- they didn't pay.

**WEASEL:** Oh, no? Then I guess we'll just have to see that Toad pays *for* them. One way or another. Won't we, mates? (*A sinister chuckle. THUGS join in laughter.*) But let's don't just stand here; we've some business to attend to ourselves, don't we? But not at Toad Hall. Not yet. First, fellas -- first it's into the Wide World! (*THUGS laugh devilishly.*) Well? Let's go! Scurry! Prowl! Slink! Howl! And make it sneaky! (*THUGS retreat, howling. Lights shift. RAT and MOLE jog on.*)

**RAT:** (*Laughing.*) "Onion-Sauce?!" Oh, Moley -- that was capital -- sheer poetry.

**MOLE:** Thanks, Ratty. Still, I somehow doubt those rude fellows found it as amusing.

**RAT:** Ah, never mind them -- look, we've arrived: Toad Hall. (*RABBITS appear to function as doormen.*)

**RABBITS:** (*Singing; like "Ta-dah!"*) Toad Hall!

Door opens to darkness. RAT and MOLE peer in.

**MOLE:** Oh, my -- how grand! How deliciously dark!

**RAT:** Anyone home?

A candle's light flickers. Ancient NANNY SQUIRREL appears from the darkness at the open door.

**RAT:** Toad? Is that you? Oh, Nanny Squirrel, hullo!

**NANNY:** (*Gruffly.*) Yes? Who is it?

**RAT:** It's me, Nanny -- Water Rat. And I've come with a new guest, too. Mole.

**MOLE:** Delighted.

**NANNY:** (*Ominous.*) Are you.

**RAT:** (*Awkward, trying to be light.*) Nanny? Would Toad happen to be in?

**NANNY:** In what? In trouble? Into mischief? Incurable?

**RAT:** In the drawing room? That is, if it's not any bother.

**NANNY:** Bother? Young fellow, ever since I came to Toad Hall to look after that boy, I've known nothing but trouble and perpetual vexation. (*Suddenly whirling on MOLE, who emits a little shriek.*) New to Toad Hall, then, eh?

**MOLE:** New to nearly everything.

**NANNY:** Well, then -- I suppose it'll have to be the grand introduction.

**MOLE:** Whatever you like.

**NANNY:** Who said I like it? But the toffee-nosed Toad insists. (*Growl.*) Ready, then?

**MOLE:** I doubt it.

**NANNY:** (*A beller into the darkness.*) Toad! You got guests! (*A forced curtsy to MOLE and RAT, through clenched teeth.*) Welcome to Toad Hall.

*MUSIC. Lights rise as RABBITS facilitate scene shift into drawing room. Portraits of Toad's ancestors. A grand staircase.*

**RABBITS:** (*Singing.*) The world has held great heroes, as hist'v booh 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 they none know not a nary an action as much as intelligent Mr.  
Toad.

**NANNY:** Intelligent?!

**RABBITS**                   *(Singing)* Remarkable Mr. Toad!  
The animals sat in the ark and cried. Their tears in torrents flowed.  
Who was it said: "There's land ahead!"? The eloquent Mister Toad!  
The eloquent, intelligent ...

**NANNY:**                    Idiotic!

**RABBITS:**                 ... Remarkable Mr. Toad!  
The Queen and her ladies-in-waiting sat at the window and sewed  
She cried, "Look! Who's that elegant man?" They answered, "Mr.  
Toad." The elegant...

**NANNY:**                    Wasteful!

**RABBITS:**                 ... eloquent...

**NANNY:**                    Pompous!

**RABBITS:**                 ... intelligent...

**NANNY:**                    Nincompoop!

**RABBITS:**                 ...Mr. Toad!

#### **Act I, Scene 4**

*Continuous with the preceding. Drawing room of Toad Hall. TOAD is revealed, wearing yachtsman costume. RABBITS withdraw.*

**TOAD:**                    Hooray! Hooray! Why, Ratty, this is splendid! I was just now about to send Nanny Squirrel down river for to fetch you. How lucky, you turning up like this. Nanny? Tea for three.

**RAT:** *(As NANNY shuffles off with a growl.)* Good morning, Toad. Permit me to introduce.. .

**TOAD:** *(To MOLE)* Hello, I'm Toad; pleased to meet me, I'm sure.

**MOLE:** Delightful residence, this.

**TOAD:** Quite the finest house on the whole river. Or anywhere else, for that matter. *(TOAD notices RAT give MOLE a look)* Oh, all right, Ratty, I know that sounds conceited, but it's not such a very bad house. You rather like it yourself, now admit it. Oh, I'm so pleased you're here. You are the very animals I wanted. You've got to help me.

**RAT:** Indeed you do. Toad, about your yachting.. .

**TOAD:** Yachting?! Yachting?! Oh, pooh! *(Beginning to change out of his yachting costume.)* Silly, boyish amusements: boats. I've given up on all that nonsense long ago.

**MOLE:** *(To RAT.)* Long ago? But not an hour past, he.. .

**TOAD:** You know, Ratty, it makes me downright sorry to think of you fellows in your boat this morning, thrashing about with your paddles, spending all that energy, wasting all that time in such aimless activity. No, Ratty - I'm pleased to report that your most charming, cherished friend Toad has finally come to his senses.

**RAT:** *(Sarcastic.)* Have you.

**TOAD:** Yes, yes, at long last, yes, I've just now discovered the real -- the *only* -- thing. I propose to devote the remainder of my mortal days in pursuit of it, and can only regret the wasted years that lie behind me, forever lost, squandered in trivialities. But now I have found my niche. Heard the voice. Envisioned my future. Come to embrace the only genuine occupation for a lifetime. *(Revealing himself now dressed in full gypsy drag.)*

**MOLE:** *(To RAT.)* Fortune-telling?

**RAT:** (To TOAD.) Tambourine tapping?

**TOAD:** No, no ... !

**BADGER:** (A thundering voice, entering.) No!

*BADGER enters, followed by disgusted NANNY who holds a tray of teacups. During following, NANNY offers tea to MOLE, RAT and BADGER in turn, though TOAD attempts to intercept tea for himself each time she passes near. Alas, there is no tea for TOAD.*

**TOAD:** "No?!" Oh. Hello, Badger.

**BADGER:** Hello yourself, you ridiculous animal.

**TOAD:** Wha.. .why.. . who.. .

**BADGER:** Shame! Shame! Thank goodness your father isn't alive to witness this.

**TOAD:** Why.. . wha.. .who.. .

**BADGER:** The sheer vulgarity. The wanton disregard.

**TOAD:** (Referring to his costume.) Is it the fringe, Badger? The earring?

**BADGER:** Have you no concern at all for your heritage? The sanctity and honor of your good family name?

**TOAD:** If it's the yacht that's got you all bothered, Badger, then never mind it. Quite smashed to smithereens.

**BADGER:** Is this news supposed to please me?

**TOAD:** Well.. .yes. Doesn't it?

**BADGER:** In a word: no.

**TOAD:** Why ever not?

**BADGER:** Because, based upon your past history, it only suggests that you've once again wasted a small fortune on another fanciful fad.

**TOAD:** "Fad?!" A fad, you say? Bigger, faster modes of transportation are not fads. They're trends. Remain if you must in your dusty old past, Badger, but I -- I intend to keep apace -- nay, blaze the trail -- through this delightful, new twentieth century.

**BADGER** At what price?

**TOAD:** Badger, please! That's confidential.. . that's business.

**BADGER:** It's not confidential when one's business is transacted with the likes of the Chief Weasel.

**RAT & MOLE:** (*A gasp.*) Weasel?!

**TOAD:** What about Weasel? He proved most helpful in negotiating the purchase of my yacht. At a most generous discount and extremely gracious payment schedule, I might add.

**BADGER** Don't tell me you've gone into debt? And don't you dare say you've in any way compromised the deed to your father's estate in these spending sprees.

**TOAD:** All right, I won't tell you. Really, Badger -- must we discuss my finances in public? I have a banker. Make that several.

**BADGER:** (*Shaking his head.*) Oh, Toad, Toad.. . !

**TOAD:** Now please, Badger, you sound just like Mummy and Daddy used to when ... (*A sniffle.*) All right, then, I'm sorry, aren't I? I shan't ever deal with the Weasels or Humans ...

**OTHERS:** (*Appalled.*) "Humans?!"

**TOAD:** ... shan't ever, ever again.

**BADGER:** Well! I should hope not!

**TOAD:** My glorious, new canary-colored-gypsy-caravan-complete shall be my absolutely final major purchase.

**BADGER** Your *what?!*

**TOAD:** My new canary-colored gypsy caravan. It's just out back. Care for a lift home, Badger? I understand Weasel's about clearing a road through the Wild Wood; I could have back to your cozy den in no time flat.

*BADGER is speechless with rage. BADGER throws up his hands and exits with a growl. NANNY follows.*

**TOAD:** I'll take that as a "no, thank you; not today." Well, fellows -- are *you* quite ready?

**RAT:** Ready for what?

**TOAD:** For life! Adventure! The open road, the dusty highway, the heath, the hedgerows, the rolling downs and dells! Here today; up and off to somewhere else tomorrow!

**MOLE:** (*Caught up in the excitement.*) Yes! Yes!

**RAT:** Moley !

**MOLE:** What? (*Noticing RAT'S stern look.*) Oh, Ratty -- it can't hurt just to have a look -- can it?

**TOAD:** There's a good, modern Mole. And besides, I already bought it, so there's no turning back, now is there? Come, lads -- an afternoon's jaunty excursion.. . .travel, interest, change, excitement! (*TOAD exits.*)

**MOLE:** Ratty, if you'd really rather not.. .

**RAT:** No, no. In truth, I think it best we stick by Toad. He isn't safe, left to himself it won't take long. Toad's fads never do. Just don't expect me to ride.

**TOAD:** (A call. Off stage.) Ratty?! Mole?!

TOAD's tambourine flies onstage. RAT catches it, hands it to MOLE. They exit as lights and scenery shift, facilitated by RABBITS.

**TOAD** (Driving a caravan pulled by HORSE)

**& RABBITS.** (Singing.) Oh! the joys of the open road  
Ah! the charms of a wide, ample boulevard  
You can walk, skip or stroll, but there's nothing so droll  
As a ride down a street that's been freshly tarred.  
Oh! the joys of the open road  
The allure of a newly-paved promenade  
Past the bracken and bramble, sheer heaven to ramble  
Down by-ways unbumpy and manly-made.

**MOLE:** Oh! the joys of the open road  
For the wind in my hair I've an appetite.  
Such a thrill never known 'cept by cannonball blown  
When we swift gallop off at the speed of light.

**TOAD:** Oh! the joys of the open road  
Ah! the ease of an avenue infinite.  
Never fear thorn or thistle and who cares if we miss all  
The sights -- this is Progress, lads, isn't it?

**RABBITS:** (Singing.) It's the hasty adieu that delights the Toad.  
Just a glance at a map makes him tipsy.  
And his dearest devotion?  
Perpetual motion!  
The wanderlust life of a gypsy....

## Act I, Scene 5

TOAD atop Gypsy Caravan, pulled by disinterested CARTHORSE. MOLE and RAT are helping push the caravan along.

**TOAD:** *(Calling over his shoulder.)* That's it! Push! Push! Take heart; I spy a slight depression in the road ahead.

**MOLE:** *(Depressed.)* Oh, joy.

**RAT:** Just look back at us if it's depression you're after.

**TOAD:** Now, Ratty, I told you I had no idea Horse wasn't quite up to speed.

**RAT:** Yes, but I can't understand how you let Weasel sell you such a pig in a poke in the first place.

**HORSE:** *(Offended)* I beg your pardon?! *(HORSE drops caravan with a thud)*  
Call me a pig, will you?

**RAT:** Oh, please, no -- I didn't mean that ...

**HORSE:** I'll have you know, in my time, I've suffered insults from far better than you country bumpkins.

**TOAD:** No doubt.

**HORSE:** Indeed, I have been verbally abused by no less than the Queen of England herself

**MOLE:** No! Queen Victoria?

**RAT:** Why, we had no idea. Then it is an honor, indeed, to make your acquaintance. Isn't it, Toad? Toad!

**TOAD:** *(Gazing through a telescope, not listening.)* Whatever you say.

**MOLE:** But whatever persuaded you to leave the palace for the country life?

**HORSE:** There were a number of reasons. For one, I'm not the frisky young filly I once was. *(TOAD whistles: "The Old Grey Mare.")*

**RAT:** Toad!

**HORSE:** And then there was the ever-increasing hustle and bustle of the London streets. Why, it was beginning to quite frazzle my nerves. Progress, they call it. The industrial age -- all about the boom, pop and sputter of machines. I tried blinders, and that helped a bit, and cotton in the ears, to deaden the dreadful noise. But then, it was during the Queen's Diamond Jubilee parade.. .

**RAT & MOLE:** You were in the Jubilee parade?

**HORSE:** My dears, I led it. And quite a sight was I to behold, if I do say so myself. (*Referring to gypsy costume. To TOAD.*) Real diamonds, my costume then. (*TOAD: hmpph!*) Canterng down the avenue, the crowd, how they cheered. Sixty glorious years, their Queen had reigned over the greatest empire the world would ever know. But as you may well know, a glory achieved not without its price. Wars, massacres, civil unrest, anarchy -- assassinations. But then.. .

**MOLE:** Yes?

**HORSE:** The sixty gun salute!

**RAT:** Sixty guns! Pow! Pow! Pow!

**HORSE:** (*A shriek of alarm.*) Good sir! My nerves!

**RAT:** Sorry. You were saying: sixty guns' salute . . .?

**HORSE:** Quite right. And as I just said: my nerves.

**MOLE,RAT & TOAD:** Ahhh.

**MOLE:** Bolted, did you?

**HORSE:** As if it were the bloody Ascot Derby! And so, a somewhat ignominious end to my regal career. A pension, a change of scenery away from the city, was deemed in order. It's been several years now since last I donned a bridle. Indeed, my Queen has long since retired to her own greener, celestial pastures. (*A sigh.*) And I was

quite resigned to a life of quiet retirement. Until I heard news of a situation in the employ of a well-to-do country squire ...

**TOAD:** Which leads us back to the present. Charming story. But let's get cracking, shall we, before another sixty years passes us by?

*MOLE and RAT gallantly assist HORSE in rising as TOAD hops back up onto the caravan.*

**HORSE:** Thank you. There are a few gentlemen of breeding in the country after all. *(The sound of a motorcar approaching. HORSE spooks.)* Oh, dear! Good heavens! What's that sound?! Gunfire?! Cannons?! Run! Run for your lives! Assassins!

*HORSE backs up cart in its alarm, causing it to fall apart. HORSE rushes off. WEASEL appears in a motor-car, backfiring with bursts of smoke. WEASEL honks and speeds off with a 'put put poop. TOAD has tumbled down from his seat at the caravan and sits in the middle of the road, dazed, gazing after the car.*

**RAT:** *(Calling after HORSE.)* Wait! Horse! Come back!

**MOLE:** There's nothing to fear! It's only just a motor-car! *(RAT and MOLE shrug; the HORSE is gone for good.)*

**RAT:** *(Seeing TOAD in the road.)* Toady?

**TOAD:** *(Sitting; entranced.)* Poop-poop. Poop-poop.

**RAT:** Toad, are you all right?

**MOLE:** What's the matter? He's not injured?!

**RAT:** Toad?!

**TOAD:** Poop-poop. A motor-car, you said? Poop-poop.

**MOLE:** Pardon?

**TOAD:** The machine. Poop-poop. The Weasel. A motor-car? Poop-poop.

**MOLE & RAT:** Yes ....

**TOAD:** And to think I never knew! Poop-poop! The poetry of motion! And the bewitching smell! Poop-poop! The real way to travel. The *only* way! Here today -- in next week tomorrow! Villages skipped, towns jumped, cities hopped! Oh, what lavish lanes lie before me! What dust clouds shall spring up behind me as I speed along my reckless way! Poop-poop! Poop-poop!

**RAT:** That's quite enough, Toad. Come along home.

**TOAD:** Home?! Home?! When just beyond the horizon lies ... a great Wide World of motorcars!

**MOLE & RAT:** No, not the Wide World!

**TOAD:** (*Careening off in the direction of WEASEL'S previous exit.*) Poop-poop! Poop-poop! Poop-poop!

**MOLE:** Oh, dear ... Ratty, what are we to do with him?

**RAT:** Nothing.

**MOLE:** Nothing?

**RAT:** Not when Toad's first possessed like this. Believe me, Moley -- it's quite hopeless.

**MOLE:** I don't believe that.

**RAT:** Just for the time being. And now, all I wish to do is to go home, have my supper, write a verse or two, and dream of quiet, old-fashioned boats. What do you say?

**MOLE:** To what?

**RAT:** To a bite and a bit of a lie-down, what? I believe you'll find my guest room quite cozy. The river water lapping outside the window, so soothing, like a lullaby. And then, tomorrow morning, we'll mess about in the boat again and ...

**MOLE:** Tomorrow?

**RAT:** Yes. Oh, Mole -- perhaps had you other plans?

**MOLE:** No. None. It's just ... how awfully kind of you, Ratty.

**RAT:** Not at all. I do strive to be kind -- that is, when the other fellow's agreeable. So ... ?

**MOLE** By all means, yes --I'm agreeable.

**RAT:** *(Starting off.)* Splendid!

**MOLE:** *(To himself)* Yes. Most agreeable. And a most splendid first day in the world indeed! *(MOLE scampers after RAT as lights shift.)*

## Act I, Scene 6

Passage of spring, summer, autumn. RABBITS sing.

**RABBITS:** So the day led to night, then to more days thereafter  
Of picnics with Ratty, of boat trips, of laughter.  
Then April and May to full summer give way:  
Such a dazzlingly wonderful, nat'ral display!  
*(Pool of light on awe-struck MOLE, rowing in boat.)*  
In sunlight gold amongst the clouds and wind-song in the willows.

Lights expand to include RAT, OTTER and PORTLY by riverbank. RAT and MOLE picnic, OTTER coaches PORTLY in swimming lessons. RAT and MOLE step to bank to observe, chuckling.

**RABBITS:** But ... !

THUGS peer through bushes. SQUIRREL quickly rushes out, unobserved, steals picnic.

**RABBITS:** *(Sung)* Not every fellow shared Mole's childlike wonder  
The weasels thought the world was all for plunder.

*(THUGS are gone.)*  
Still others, like Toad, life's lessons never pondered,  
Poor Toad! Think of the fortune he's squandered. ..  
*(Sound of motorcar horn and "but-put" approaching.)*  
On motorcars!

TOAD appears in his motorcar. He honks and waves, not looking at where he's going.

**RABBITS:** Oh, that Toad, ready to hit the road  
New horizons to conquer, he's off in a flash  
With a clank and a clatter a clunk and a...  
*(Offstage sound of collision.)*  
Crash. Ohhh, Toad!

TOAD reappears, lurching, head bandaged, carrying a bulb horn. He gives it a feeble squeeze.  
RAT shakes his head, disgusted, and turns to pack up the picnic. Lights shift.

**RABBITS:** Now the month of July can bring fitful nights dreaming  
Of respite from summer days sweating and steaming  
Yes, summer-time's tough for those folks who are furred  
But heaven if one's a sun-loving bird. ...

RAT and MOLE stroll along the edge of the Wild Wood, fanning themselves with fern fans.  
MISS SWALLOW appears, all a-flutter.

**RAT:** Good afternoon, Mademoiselle. Mole, this is Miss Swallow.

**SWALLOW:** Allo, allo. Enchante- Messieurs. Lovely day, no?

**RAT & MOLE:** No, indeed!

**RAT:** This heat, Mademoiselle. Mole and I are positively perishing from our perspiration.

**SWALLOW:** But you're joking.

**MOLE:** How I wish.

**SWALLOW:** *(A shrug.)* Ah, well -- vive le difference, eh?

**RAT:** Mademoiselle?

**SWALLOW:** There is the difference between us, Messieurs. You find this weather too hot, when even now, I make my plans to travel south.

**MOLE:** Travel?

**SWALLOW:** But of course.

**MOLE:** South? Where it's even hotter?

**SWALLOW:** Ah, oui, Monsieur, I tell you, the more hotter, than the better. But how are you to comprehend? -- you boys are born with sweaters. We birdies have but feathers and live high up in the trees. How can you know the chills I feel whenever blows the breezes? And, all too soon, will come the months with names that end with "ber." Yes, "ber" indeed for us poor shivering creatures with no fur. We Swallows, unlike you, can't spend the winter in a cave. The southern sun, a tropic beach, the heat is what we crave. So, mes amis while here 'twill soon be cold with wind and raining. Then think of me, all hot and tan upon the Mediterranean. Mais oui, I'm off, my bags are packed, the sunshine I shall follow. To holiday in St. Tropez or Nice or Monte Carlo. *(The sound of a motorcar. SWALLOW cocks an ear.)* But what is this? The sound I hear: a deep and rumbling pitch Ah! zut alor! A motorcar? Stand back, a ride I'll hitch! *(SWALLOW adopts classic female hitchhike pose; thumb out and leg provocative. TOAD, in another motorcar, passes by, notices SWALLOW forgets to look where he's going as he exits.)*

**RABBITS:** *(Singing.)* Yes, it's Toad, with a 'put-put-poop"  
Can't you smell how the petrol fumes stink?  
Madame, stop -- don't distract! Toady's bound to ...  
*(Sound of car crash.)*

impact!

*(TOAD reappears, crosses stage, arm in a sling, carrying a deflated tire. SPARROW, RAT and MOLE exit opposite, shaking their heads. Lights alter. The RABBITS scatter a few autumn leaves.)*

September's brisk breezes blow bracing and chilling  
Daylight's grown shorter, the birdsong's less trilling  
Deep carpets of rusty leaves gracing the ground

The mice, at their harvest, are scurrying around...  
(*Alongside afield -- represented by RABBITS holding sheaves of wheat -- MOLE and RAT strolling. MOTHER and FATHER FIELD MICE appear, with burlap sacks and luggage.*)

**RAT:** Good morning, Mr. Field Mouse, Mrs. Mouse.

**FATHER MOUSE:** Ah, Rat.

**MOTHER MOUSE:** Hello, Mole. Out for another of your leisure strolls?

**RAT:** Yes. And you -- not moving out of the field already?

**MOTHER MOUSE:** Aye -- and not a moment too soon. Must move all our furniture and stores ...

**FATHER MOUSE:** Wheat, rye, barley, oats.

**MOTHER MOUSE:** ... clear it out from our summer digs before those horrid machines lay it to waste.

**MOLE:** Machines?

**FATHER MOUSE:** That's right.

**MOTHER MOUSE:** The mowers and threshers and reapers. Slicing and slashing.

**FATHER MOUSE:** Clacking and smashing.

**MOTHER MOUSE:** Time to move to winter quarters. And all the coziest flats seem to get picked up so quickly.

**FATHER MOUSE:** And we've the youngsters.. .

**MOTHER MOUSE:** Yes, to be enrolled in school.

**RAT:** Of course, but . . . well, it's such a splendid day. Couldn't you come for a row or a stroll?

**MOLE:** Or a picnic by the river? We've a lovely wheel of cheddar, fresh bread and wine.

**MOTHER MOUSE:** Thank you, but I think not just today.

**FATHER MOUSE:** Perhaps next month, eh?

**MOTHER MOUSE:** When we've got more time.

*The sound of a motorcar approaching.*

**FATHER MOUSE:** (*A gasp.*) Wife, listen!

**MOTHER MOUSE:** The threshing machines! Already?!

**FATHER MOUSE:** The children!

**RAT:** Wait. Not to worry.

**MOLE:** Not the thresher.

**MOTHER MOUSE:** But the sound.. .

**FATHER MOUSE:** And what's that there: a-coming through the rye?!

*RABBITS run, urging MOUSE CHILDREN to join their parents.*

**RABBITS. RAT**

**& MOLE:** Just Toad!

*TOAD appears in motorcar, hay on the windscreen, obstructing his view.*

**RABBITS:** (*Singing.*) Here he comes again!  
Not so fast, what's the rush, where's the fire?  
Toad! Clear out of that field!

**FATHER MOUSE:** (*Waving his fist.*) So help me...!

**MOTHER MOUSE:** I'll get your license repealed!

**RABBITS:** For pity's sake, Toady, just...

*(The sound of the biggest crash yet.)*

Yield!

TOAD crosses, covered in hay, the steering wheel around his neck, hobbling on a crutch. MOLE and RAT shrug at MICE, who pick up their bags and scurry 08 MOLE and RAT start of opposite.

**BADGER:** *(Appearing; to RAT and MOLE.)* Yet another motorcar? *(MOLE and RAT nod)* And how many does it make, all-told?

**RAT:** *(As MOLE silently counts on his fingers.)* All "totaled," you mean?

**BADGER:** It's all the same, isn't it? Rat, Mole: the hour has finally come.

**MOLE:** Time to finally rescue Toad?!

**RAT:** Convert him!

**BADGER:** I don't know that I'd describe my plans in terms quite so genteel.

**MOLE:** You don't mean.. . Now, Badger, you wouldn't be contemplating.. .

**RAT:** *(Not entirely averse to the notion.)* Physical force?

**BADGER:** Who, me? Not me. Thank goodness, for that we can rely upon ...  
*(Lights instantly up on TOAD's bedchamber.)*

## Act 1, Scene 7A

Continuous with the preceding. NANNY fiercely bathes [with the most caustic antiseptic] and bandages TOAD'S wounds as he sits on his four-poster bed, held firm by RAT and MOLE. TOAD cries out against the sting. Behind the headboard is a window.

**TOAD:** Nanny, no! No! No! Stop!

**BADGER:** Now, Toad -- no doubt it hurts Nanny far more than it does you.  
*(NANNY giggles with devilish glee.)*

**TOAD:** *(To NANNY.)* Sadist! Torturess!

**BADGER:** (*Gesturing for NANNY to cease.*) What? You dare talk of torture, Toad -- when all summer and fall it's been you: tormenting the district in your relentless campaign of destruction and devastation?

**TOAD:** What care you? They've been *my* motorcars, destroyed; my body, ravaged. (*BADGER throws up his hands in disgust.*)

**RAT:** Not to mention your family name. Try and understand, Toady -- lately all the Wild Wooders and Riverbankers and Field Folk have started in calling you "The Terror of the Highway."

**TOAD:** (*Flattered*) Have they? Have they really? (*BADGER growls and gestures for NANNY to resume her torments.*)

**RAT:** (*As TOAD cries out in protest.*) See, Badger? There's just no talking with him.

**BADGER:** Right, Rat. And so I'm done with it.

**MOLE:** But you can't mean we're just going to give up on Toad?

**BADGER:** Give up? No, sir. I am resolved to badger this bratty amphibian into submission if it takes all night. Nanny, my good woman -- seems to me the lad's mouth might need a bit of bandaging, what? (*NANNY nods and starts wrapping gauze about TOAD's mouth.*) This, Mole -- this is what I meant. Though I no longer see any point in talking *with* Toad, I shall keep on talking *to* him and then -- I daresay then we'll see what's what. (*TOAD is now gagged. TOAD tries to untie the gag, but NANNY keeps slapping his hands away.*) Excellent work, Nurse Nanny. Now -- Ratty, Mole -- if you'll be so kind as to fetch over the dressing screen? Toad, Nanny and I shall require some small measure of privacy. Thank you. (*MOLE and RAT exit to fetch dressing screen as BADGER begins his lecture, adopting a very patient, grandfatherly demeanor.*) Now, Toad -- I'm sorry it had to come to this, but we animals never allow our friends to make fools of themselves beyond a certain limit; and, Toad, **I'm** afraid, of late, that limit you've exceeded. Therefore, it grieves me terribly to say you've given me no choice but to ...

MOLE and RA T have hidden the bed with a screen. BADGER's voice suddenly alters to unintelligible angry barks and growls, while NANNY adds her customary abuse. TOAD moans and sobs. MOLE and RAT flinch. After a bit, silence. BADGER steps forth, adjusts a shirt cuffs.

**BADGER:** There. That's better. My friends, I am pleased to inform you that Toad has at last seen the error of his ways. He is truly sorry for his misguided conduct in the past and has, furthermore, given me his most solemn promise to give up motorcars quite completely and forever. Gentlemen -- I give you a Toad reformed. (*BADGER pushes screen aside. TOAD lies trussed in the bed: limbs bound to each of the posts. NANNY stands by, smiling proudly.*) Is there anything you'd like to tell your friends Rat and Mole, Toad? (*A moment's pause. BADGER realizes TOAD is still gagged*) Oh, Nanny -- if you'd be so kind. ..? (*NANNY pulls down mouth gag.*) Come now, Toad -- don't be shy. Say again how sorry you are for all the trouble you've caused. Confess how you now see the folly in all those motorcars you've mangled. Repeat your promise to me, how you'll never again risk your life and reputation in messing about with those infernal machines. (*TOAD takes a deep breath. Patiently, BADGER prompts TOAD.*) Yes? Yes?

**TOAD:** No! I'm not sorry.

**BADGER:** (*Scandalized.*) What?!

**TOAD:** I said I'm not the least bit sorry or repentant! And not a moment of my adventuring was folly. My machines, my motorcars, it was all simply glorious.

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

**TOAD:** On the contrary, I faithfully promise that the very first motorcar I see -- pop-poop! -- I'm off! As a matter of fact, I expect Chief Weasel to arrive at any moment now, to help arrange the purchase of yet another.

**MOLE. RAT  
& BADGER:** The Chief Weasel?!

**TOAD:** That's right. Weasel's gone in as partner to a motorcar business over in the Wide World.

**RAT:** Toad, no!

**MOLE:** Not the Wide World!

**TOAD:** Oh, Moley -- don't let Rat and Badger make of you such a snob. Why, I'll wager you've never even seen the Wide World, have you, let alone met the Chief Weasel?

**MOLE:** Well, no. I haven't. I've not even seen the Wild Wood.

**TOAD:** And yet, you -- all of you -- so quick to judge. Why, you're nothing but a pack of provincial, Victorian prudes! (*The sound of a motorcar, approaching.*) Oh, my! Oh, joy! Can you hear it? That lovely sound: "Poop-poop! Poop-poop!"

**RAT:** (*Opening window upstage of headboard; peering out.*) Just as Toad said; here comes Weasel.

**TOAD:** (*Crying out.*) Weasel! Poop-poop! Weasel! Poop-poop! Up here! Help! Poop-poop! Poop-poop!

**BADGER:** Come, Nanny. Seems we've a visitor to intercept. You, too, Mole.

**MOLE:** Me?

**BADGER:** Yes. It's time you met a weasel. (*Doorbell sounds: Distant Rabbits: "Toad Hall!"*.) Ratty -- use whatever means necessary to keep Toad quiet, won't you? (*NANNY leads BADGER and MOLE off.*)

**TOAD:** (*Calling.*) Tell Weasel I want a cherry red roadster, Mole -- with lots of chrome trim! Poop-poop! A real racer! One that'll go at least twenty miles per hour Poop-poop!

**RAT:** Now, Toad, do be quiet, or I'll be obliged to have you gagged again.

**TOAD:** No, don't -- poop-poop! Poop-poop! I'll behave. Truly. I.. .poop! poop!. . .promise.

**RAT:** But how am I to trust you?

**TOAD:** How? Because you're my closest, most cherished trusting friend. Are you not?

**RAT:** I've tried to be, Toady.

**TOAD:** And you mustn't think I don't appreciate it. Now, do be a good fellow, Rat, and loose my bonds?

**RAT:** Absolutely not.

**TOAD:** Oh. I see. We're not very trusting friends after all?

**RAT:** Of course we are. And I'll gladly oblige you just as soon as Badger, Mole and Nanny Squirrel. ..

**TOAD:** No! Now! Don't you understand? I can't wait.

**RAT:** Oh. I see. Well, here's your chamber pot.

**TOAD:** (*As RAT proffers chamber pot, turning his head away.*) Not that, Ratty.

**RAT:** No? Then what?

**TOAD:** I believe ... I feel quite odd, all of a sudden. Nanny's medical ministrations, though terribly sweet and well-intended, I nevertheless believe weren't quite up to snuff. Ratty, my friend -- I fear I may require a doctor.

**RAT:** A doctor?!

**TOAD:** Yes. For I'm sure I've suffered a concussion in that last smash-up. *Or.. . no ...* perhaps it's these bonds: cutting off my blood circulation to the brain. Yes. Why, everything's getting quite dim and woozy. Oh, be quick, Ratty -- before my vision fades forever -- quick, untie

me. (RAT obliges. One wrist is freed. TOAD reaches for the other with a whoop of joy.) Hurrah!

**RAT:** Toad?!

**TOAD:** (Realizing he dropped his act momentarily.) Huh? Oh. .. (In an extremely deliberate fashion, TOAD "thrashes" side to side, each time grabbing and loosening a knot.) Hurrah! Hurrah! I see a light, Ratty! And -- oh, yes -- Father, is that you? And Mother ... sweet, patient, Mother. Allow me to introduce my dearest friend in this my all-too-brief and rapidly fading mortal life. Father, Mother ... this is Water Rat. Please forgive him if he has to rush off just now; Rat doesn't want me to pass over quite yet. Rat wants to catch Weasel before Badger has him sent away. Rat wants to tell Weasel to race in his motorcar and fetch the village doctor. And a lawyer, too.

**RAT:** A lawyer?!

**TOAD:** Yes. To finalize my last will and testament. "I, Toad, being of bound mind and body, do hereby bequeath.. ."

**RAT:** Toad, no -- you've got to hang on. Stay with us, Toad.

**TOAD:** I can't bloody well stay if you don't go! Now quick! Hop to it! Run downstairs, before I croak. Before Weasel gets away.

**RAT:** Oh, yes! Yes! A doctor! A lawyer! Now! Before it's too late!

RAT rushes from the bedroom, panicked. TOAD hops, limbs freed, from the bed, reaches beneath it, pulls out a length of knotted bed sheets, ties one end to the bedpost and tosses the rest out the window. He grubs his motoring cap and goggles from the headboard before descending out the window with a giddy giggle.

**TOAD:** Poop-poop! Poop-poop!

**RAT:** (Frantically leading FRIENDS and unnoticed WEASEL in.) Toad? Toady?

**MOLE:** (As NANNY displays the knotted bed sheets with a growl.) Escaped!

**BADGER:** Oh, Ratty!

*The sound of the motorcar's horn and engine revving.*

**MOLE.:** *(Pointing out the window, calling.)* Toad's escaped! Catch him, Mister Chief Weasel! Catch Toad!

**WEASEL:** Oh, I'll catch him all right. *(ALL regard WEASEL with a gasp. WEASEL storms off.)* Confounded Toad! Come back here with my motorcar!

*BADGER raises a finger in admonition towards RAT; MOLE sits on bed, depressed. NANNY grabs chamber pot and angrily hurls it out window. Sound of clank; WEASEL "below": ouch! ; shatter. Lights and scene shift.*

## **Act I, Scene 7B**

*Wild sounds of car roaring and screeching about, TOAD shrieking gaily "Poop-poop!" Scene shift reveals headlights careening upstage of black scrim, culminating in TOAD in motorcar streaking onstage. Tires screech. TOAD rams into tree. Crash, tinkle, sputter. Motorcar steams, death rattle. WEASEL and his THUGS race in, with CONSTABLE.*

**WEASEL:** *(Pointing at TOAD.)* Constable.. .?

**WEASEL  
& THUGS:** ...do your duty!

*TOAD hops out of vehicle and attempts to make a run for it. He is blocked at every turn by THUGS.*

**CONSTABLE:** Mister Toad. You're under arrest. Come peacefully now.

**TOAD:** *(Flailing out of control.)* No! No! No! *(He accidentally knocks CONSTABLE'S helmet off his head.)* Oh-oh.

TOAD retrieves helmet, and turns, kneeling apologetically, offering helmet up. CONSTABLE slaps manacles on TOAD's wrists, snatches helmet, drags TOAD across stage as WEASEL and THUGS sneer and laugh derisively as they shift of the car wreck.

Lights shift to reveal Prisoner's Dock rising from the floor. TOAD is guided, unwilling, to position in the dock, guarded by CONSTABLE. Huge puppet image of Magistrate appears upstage, gavel in hand. Gavel pounds thrice; TOAD flinches with each sound.

**VOICE OF MAGISTRATE:** Guilty! Guilty! Guilty! And so my sentence. First, for the ...

**CONSTABLE:** Outlandish resistance of arrest and the cheeking of me -- a constable!

**VOICE OF MAGISTRATE:** ... for the theft and wreckage of Chief Weasel's motorcar, the penalty shall be complete monetary compensation for the damages.

**TOAD:** But, Your Honor, I haven't a brass farthing. I'm in hock down to my hoppers!

**VOICE OF MAGISTRATE:** Indeed? Well, then. ..twelve months in prison.

**TOAD:** Twelve months?! No.

**VOICE OF MAGISTRATE:** Very well. One year. Second offense. ..

**CONSTABLE:** For cheeking the police.

**VOICE OF MAGISTRATE:** ... for negligent navigation to tile public's peril, and reckless speed in excess of twenty-five miles per hour, I sentence you to an additional, lenient three years.

**TOAD:** Four years total?! Lenient, you think?! Your Honor, you can't...!

**VOICE OF MAGISTRATE:** Right: round it up to five. And now for the third, the most grievous offence of all ...

**CONSTABLE:** The cheek!

**VOICE OF MAGISTRATE:** Yes. For the cheek, the sass, the outrageous impertinence toward the police: I herein hand down the fully fair penalty of fifteen, years! Tot it up, that's twenty years.

**TOAD:** Twen.. .!

He clasps his own manacled hands over his own mouth to quell his vehement protestations, lest the sentence shall be increased as before.

**VOICE OF MAGISTRATE:** And mind, Mister Toad, if you ever again appear before us, this Court shall be obliged to deal with you very harshly indeed. Court adjourned!

Blackout. Sound of a gavel's rap, squeaking heavy gate's hinge, four echoing footsteps, prison cell door slamming shut, turn of key. An echoing wail of TOAD.

## **Act I, Scene 8A**

Exterior of RAT'S house. Early winter; late afternoon. OTTER speaks to BADGER and MOLE; RAT stands apart.

**OTTER:** And then, as if five years weren't bad enough, the Magistrate adds on another fifteen, on account of cheeky old Toad couldn't keep his silly mouth shut and behave himself.

**BADGER:** If he'd ever learned that, it never would have come to this in the first place.

**RAT:** If only I hadn't let him trick me.. . .

**BADGER:** How's that?

**RAT:** It's my fault, you know-- letting him get away to steal Weasel's motorcar.

**BADGER:** Bah! Rat, I'm going to tell you this but one last time: friendship is one thing, but your blame-taking for Toad's own folly is utter rubbish.

**RAT:** But ...

**BADGER:** But nothing! It's all stuff and nonsense, balderdash and utter... utter... *(Unable to think of the expression, he barks for help.)* Mole?!

**MOLE:** Onion sauce.

**BADGER:** That's right. Onion sauce. Toad's made his own bed -- or should I say: lumpy prison cot -- and now he's just going to have to lie in it. Perhaps not for a full twenty years, but at least through the winter.

**RAT:** *(Sullen.)* Yes.

**BADGER:** I hope so. And now, lads, it's time I headed home to the Wild Wood. It's nigh past time I was in bed.

**MOLE:** So early, Badger? It's not yet even dusk.

**BADGER:** Past my *winter's* bedtime, Mole. From December through March, I am compelled by nature to hibernate. Don't expect to see me again until the crocus bloom.

**OTTER:** Just a moment, Badger. What with Toad's news, I forgot the real reason I've come. The Mrs. and me, we're having a bit of a party tonight for Portly's first birthday.

**BADGER:** A party?!

**OTTER:** Yes, everyone's invited: the River-bankers, Meadow-dwellers... .

**BADGER:** Society? Hmmp! *(With a wave of his hand over his shoulder, BADGER starts off. OTTER and MOLE share an understanding look and shrug. BADGER pauses.)* Happy birthday, however, to young Portly, what? *(BADGER exits.)*

**OTTER:** Well, fellows? You'll come, won't you?

**MOLE:** Only just say when.

**OTTER:** No time like the present.

**MOLE:** But yes -- a present for Portly. Just a moment. (*MOLE steps inside the door.*)

**OTTER:** But, Mole - you don't have to bring anything. Just your coming to the party will please him plenty. Portly's quite fond of you, you know. Uncle Moley, he calls you.

**MOLE:** Portly just likes the fact that he can swim rings around me -- and only one year old. (*Reappearing with a book wrapped in a ribbon.*) Here we are. I do hope he'll like it.

**OTTER** (*As he and MOLE start off*) A picturebook -- how jolly!

**MOLE:** A fairly recent work: "The Tale of Peter Rabbit." Sent away for it. (*Halting, realizing RAT hasn't moved.*) But wait. Rat? Aren't you coming?

**RAT:** Pardon?

**OTTER:** Portly's party.

**RAT:** You go on ahead. I'll leave straightaway.

**MOLE:** Are you quite sure?

**RAT:** Yes, yes.

**MOLE:** (*As he and OTTER exit.*) Now, Otter, I think you'll find the book quite charming and true-to-life ... (*MOLE and OTTER's voices have faded in the wind. A gust. RAT hunches up his shoulders.*)

**RAT:** (*A whispered song; mournful.*)  
Now along the backwater, blows a frosty fall  
Ducks, geese ... most everyone 's... flown south all.  
Ducks' tails, feathered sails ...

**SAILOR RAT:** (*In the shadows.*) Sails, you'say? South, you say?

**RAT:** What?

**SAILOR RAT:** The song you were singing.

**RAT:** Not much of a song. Just a ditty.

**SAILOR RAT:** Put me in mind of a sea shanty me shipmates and me like singing.  
"Wayfarer's All." Know it?

**RAT:** No. Never been on a ship.

**SAILOR RAT:** And here I just now took you for a sea-faring chap.

**RAT:** Boats. Here, along the river. That's all I've known.

**SAILOR RAT:** Ah. Just your bit of a river, eh? That's all you ever wanted, eh?

**RAT:** Yes. The life. The only life. This. My home. So I always thought.

**SAILOR RAT:** And no doubt it is the best. For you. As for me, my life has ever answered to the call of the gulls, the mermaid's sweet sea song,  
"Come away, come away, ye wayfarer's all."

**SOPRANO SOLO:** (*Offstage. with SAILOR's preceding quote.*)  
Come away, come away, ye wayfarer's all.

**SAILOR RAT:** I did give it a try: your kind of life. All summer long I spent inland,  
close by the source of this your river. But now, pleasant though this  
sojourn's been, once again I feel the call, the burning ...

**RAT:** Like a cry. A yearning.

**SAILOR RAT:** Yes. It's only natural, is it not? Just as the season's change, so, too,  
inside, the stirrings, the flutterings, the beckonings, the cravings ...  
of dreams not yet dreamed afloat on waters yet to wander.

**SOPRANO SOLO:** Come away, all ye wayfarers. come, come away...

**SAILOR RAT:** New harbors to visit: exotic and gay ...

**SOPRANO SOLO:** Come to Venice. Palermo, Sardinia, Marseilles ...

**SAILOR RAT:** Ports like Lisbon, Madeira, Cherbourg and Calais.

**SOPRANO SOLO:** Let the wind fill your sails  
Bid your toils and travails  
Wash away, drift away, far away.

**RAT**

& **SOPRANO SOLO:** (*Fading.*) Come away, all ye wayfarers, come. come today...

**RAT:** Yes. Yes. Today! (*He turns. SAILOR RAT has vanished*) My friend, I should like to ... Gone?! No! Wait! Sir Sailor?! Come back! (*MOLE enters.*)

**MOLE:** Yes, Ratty? What is it?

**RAT:** Mole? Did you see him?

**MOLE:** "Him?"

**RAT:** The stranger. A sailor. A sea rat. We were just now talking.

**MOLE:** I heard your call. I saw no stranger.

**RAT:** It's time to go.

**MOLE:** All right. We'll go together then, what?

**RAT:** You're coming, too?

**MOLE:** Of course. Portly's party.

**RAT:** Party? But no -- South!

**MOLE:** South? !

**RAT:** (*Stepping inside doorway, fetching knapsack.*) Yes. South to the sea, then on ship, and so to shores that are calling me.

**MOLE:** "South to the sea?! " Ratty, what are you talking about?

**RAT:** *(In a fever.)* He said I could come. Leave, like all the others. Wayfarers all! Take the Adventure, heed the call, but I must be quick -- for the days, they will pass, and never return. Come, Rat, 'Tis only but a banging of the door behind you, a step forward, and then another, and another, and then one's out of the old life and into the new! Others do it. Have done. Why you, yourself, Moley. Why can't I?

**MOLE:** Why? Because you're not reasoning. You're not thinking. I can't let you just pack up in a flash and sail off to the sea, not without considering ...

**RAT:** You don't understand.

**MOLE:** But you're wrong, Ratty. I understand more than you know.  
*(Music.)* More than I ever dreamed possible ...  
*(He sings.)* I understand your yearnings, yes,  
I've known the need to grow.  
For, as you said, I ventured out just half a year ago.  
Half-blind I stumbled up and found a river bright and deep:  
Bright water woke me from my sleep  
And brought a friend: a friend to keep  
Close to my heart.  
Close to home.

See? The river's gone frozen like a moment in time.  
I remember the boating, the laughter, the rhymes.  
Consider friendship. Consider home.  
Consider what you give up when you roam.  
Far from friends.  
Far from home.  
Far from the river that you love.  
Ratty, I fear you've been out in this cold too long.  
You've caught sick.

**RAT:** You think I'm ill, do you? Well, perhaps I am. A little holiday should be just the ticket then, what?

**MOLE:** Holiday? Or is it just running away?

**RAT:** Don't. Please don't get clever with **me**, Mole.

**MOLE:** No, Ratty. I won't.  
(*Sung*) I'm not clever with my words like you, I fear I am no poet.  
Yet still I'm forced to tell you what I feel, should you not know it.  
I feel -- how should I put it? -- I feel anger, I feel sorrow  
I fear half a year of friendship here may vanish come tomorrow.  
See? The river's gone frozen like a moment in time.  
Now remember the boating, our laughter, your rhymes.  
Consider friendship. Consider home.  
Consider what you give up when you roam.  
Far from friends.  
Far from the river.  
Far from home.

**RAT:** Moley?

**MOLE:** Yes?

**RAT:** Perhaps I don't feel completely well.

**MOLE:** I'll put the teakettle on. And you could rest. Perhaps do a bit of poetry. I'm sure you'll feel better once you've jotted something down -- even if it's only just the rhymes.

**RAT:** Yes. So many thoughts.

**MOLE:** And I'm very glad you've reconsidered.

**RAT:** But Moley -- I haven't.

**MOLE:** Beg pardon?

**RAT:** Whether to stay. To leave. I've made no real decisions at all.

RAT withdraws into the house. MOLE stands, stunned, for a moment; then follows. Lights alter. RABBITS slowly pass along apron, sprinkling snow. Scene shifts into RAT's home interior.

## Act I, Scene 8B

RAT'S home interior. Afternoon. Potbellied stove, a couple of chairs. MOLE is putting the teakettle on. NANNY SQUIRREL appears at the "door" and lightly knocks.

**MOLE:** Just coming. Why, Nanny Squirrel, good afternoon; do please come in.

**NANNY:** Can't stay. Storm brewing, I fear. Brought a Christmas tea cake. For you and Rat.

**MOLE:** *(Accepting a ribboned parcel.)* How awfully sweet.

**NANNY:** Lemon.

**MOLE:** How awfully sour, then -- but thoughtful just the same.

**NANNY:** *(Offering another parcel: crumpled.)* Ran into the postman too.

**MOLE:** Thank you.

**NANNY:** Any better, is he?

**MOLE:** Rat? Somewhat. He's in his room, writing. I'm still afraid to leave him, though. Worried that he'll dash off as soon as I turn my back. But then, you know what that's like. *(NANNY nods.)* Miss your boy Toad, don't you? *(NANNY shrugs, nods again.)* You know, I'm sure Rat would welcome you here for the holiday. I know I would.

**NANNY:** I'll be fine. The Otters are having me by.

**MOLE:** Oh, that should be jolly, what? *(NANNY nods. A beat.)* Any news from Toad? *(NANNY shakes her head.)* Don't worry. I'm certain he's

just fine. And in the spring, once Badger's up and about -- and Rat's all better -- then we'll think of some way to help Toad. Don't you worry.

**NANNY:** You're a good boy, Mole. A good friend.

**MOLE:** Well, I'm still rather new at it. But I do try.

**NANNY:** *(Kisses MOLE on the cheek.)* Happy Christmas to Rat as well, eh?

**MOLE:** Yes. And to you, too -- dear Nanny. Happy Christmas. *(NANNY exits. MOLE turns back into the room. He sets down the cake and looks through the mail.)* Ratty? The post's arrived. A few Christmas cards here. A parcel, too.

**RAT:** *(Entering, taking the mail.)* Look, Moley -- a card from Mademoiselle Sparrow. Ah. She's outside the town of Nice. South. The Mediterranean. The sea. *(Opens parcel,)* Oh, lovely. The novels I've ordered have arrived.

**MOLE:** Novels? There's nothing I love better in winter than to sit by the fire and read a good.. .

**RAT:** *(Exiting.)* "Gulliver's Travels," "Captains Courageous," "Two Years Before the Mast," "Sail the Globe on Two Shillings a Day". . . .

*MOLE tries to busy himself: Unwraps the cake- Then sets it down with a frustrated growl.*

**MOLE:** "Two Years Before the Mast?" No! However can I persuade him to forget this fevered wanderlust? *(A beat.)* Badger. No one but Badger would know. *(MOLE grabs his scarf and hurries out the door. He exits in direction opposite of Nanny's previous exit. Teakettle whistles.)*

**RAT:** *(Appearing. Sets kettle off the stove.)* Moley? Mole? *(He sees cake, dips a finger, tastes it. Looks outside.)* Mole? *(Steps outside. Sees tracks in snow.)* I thought so. Nanny Squirrel's been here. Why didn't Mole tell me? *(A call.)* Mole?! *(At opposite side of door.)* What? Another set of tracks. Moley's tracks! Headed for ... oh, good heavens, not the Wild Wood! *(He sniffs the air.)* And a snowstorm coming. And the night falling. In the Wild Wood? Oh, no! *(Calls again.)* Mole?! Mole!

*(RAT rushes inside, grabs a scarf a holster with pistols, a cudgel as lights fade.)*

## Act I, Scene 9

Night in the Wild Wood. RABBITS carry skeleton branches and toss handfuls of snow.

**RABBITS:**           *(Singing.)* In the Wild Wood the whistle of wind makes you bristle  
The moaning of trees makes you swoon.  
Best think twice 'fore you enter here ...  
Eek! that sounds awful queer ...  
Yes, you'll find much to fear. ..  
Here, in the night, by the Eight of a cold winter's moon.  
*(MOLE enters, cautious yet determined. RABBITS move toward him.)*  
Better hurry, make haste now, you've no time to waste now.  
The Terror has come to the Wood.  
With a howl and a thrumming. ..  
A cold wind too numbing. ..  
A blizzard is coming. ... !  
Oh, the snow, blinding white, deadly storm,  
deadly night in the Wild Wood.

RABBITS make ominous sounds as they toss handfuls of snow in MOLE'S face, impeding his progress.

**MOLE:**           Help! Help!

He removes his spectacles to clean of the snow. A glint of eyes and evil grins in the dark. THUGS are near.

**THUGS:**           *(Mocking.)* Help! Help!

Startled by the sound of THUGS, MOLE whirls and his spectacles fly out of his hands.

**MOLE:**           Oh, no!

**SQUIRREL:** Oh, yes!

**MOLE:** My spectacles!

**FERRET:** Lost your specs, did you, now?

**MOLE:** Can't see a thing.  
**THUGS:** Good.

**SQUIRREL:** But we can see, can't we, blokes?

**STOAT:** Yeah, I sees a poor, blind little Mole!

**THUGS:** *(Laughing.)* A Mole? A Mole?!

**MOLE:** Please, please won't you help me?

**THUGS:** Help! Help!

**HEDGEHOG:** All right. That'll be fourpence.

**MOLE:** What?

**THUGS:** *(To HEDGEHOG.)* What?

**HEDGEHOG:** Fourpence for passage.. .

**THUGS:** Shhh!

**FERRET:** You great idiot! You want him to know who we are?

**HEDGEHOG:** Even I knew that.

**MOLE:** I know very well who you are. And I'll gladly pay you sixpence, if you'll only just help me find my spectacles, and then direct me to Badger's house.

**FERRET:** Oh, but I'm afraid that'll be an additional charge.

**MOLE:** Name it.

**HEDGEHOG:** Fourpence again.

**SQUIRREL:** (*Smacking HEDGEHOG.*) No!

**HEDGEHOG:** Oh, that's right -- he owes us from that time before ...

**STOAT:** Oh, bother the time before! This time we don't want his money.

**MOLE:** You don't?

**HEDGEHOG:** We don't?

**OTHER THUGS:** We don't?

**STOAT:** No. We'll happily help you, if you'll only just promise one thing, Mole.

**MOLE:** Promise what?

**OTHER THUGS:** Yeah, what?

**STOAT:** Leave off helping Toad.

**OTHER THUGS:** (*A nod of understanding.*) Ahh.

**MOLE:** Leave off helping Toad. Why? He's paid Weasel for the damage to the motor-car and been sentenced to twenty years in prison to boot. Isn't that enough?

**HEDGEHOG:** No, it's not. Chief Weasel's got big plans, you see. Chief wants to ...

**OTHER THUGS:** (*Pummeling HEDGEHOG.*) Shhh!

**SQUIRREL:** Just you agree to our terms, Mole or stay here and freeze to death. It's your choice.

**MOLE:** But that's no choice. Toad is my friend.

**FERRET:** Well, as they say, a friend in need is a friend indeed. Just wait and see how much help Toad gives you.

**MOLE:** But I've got other friends. There's Rat.

**STOAT:** Where? Here?

**MOLE:** Well. No. And there's Otter and Badger and ...

**FERRET:** Where? Here?

**MOLE:** No. But there's ...

**SQUIRREL:** There's us.

**HEDGEHOG:** Where? Here?

**THUGS:** *(To HEDGEHOG.)* Yes!

**FERRET:** But Mole -- he don't want our friendship, does he, mates?

**STOAT:** Noooo. Not us. We ain't good enough to be Mole's friends.

**SQUIRREL:** Noooo. We're bad.

**FERRET:** How bad?

**SQUIRREL:** Oh, I dunno... .

**HEDGEHOG:** I know! I know!

**SQUIRREL:** Right. Come on, Spike. Let's show the Mole what you know.

*HEDGEHOG "puts up his dukes" and approaches MOLE.*

**MOLE:** Help! Help!

**RAT:** *(Offstage call; approaching.)* Mole?! Mole! Moley, it's me! Where are you?!

**FERRET:**           *(Looking offstage.)* Lads, it's the Rat!

**OTHER THUGS:**    So what?

**FERRET:**            So he's got a pistol!

**STOAT:**             A pistol?!

**SQUIRREL:**         A gun?!

**HEDGEHOG:**        So what?

**OTHER THUGS:**    So let's go! *(THUGS scramble off as RAT enters, pistol and a cudgel at the ready.)*

**RAT:**                Moley?!

**MOLE:**              Ratty! Over here! Oh, thank goodness, is it really you?

**RAT:**                Of course it's me. See?

**MOLE:**              But no, I can't see. I dropped my spectacles.

**RAT:**                Your spectacles? *(RABBIT reaches spectacles up to RAT.)* Ah -- here they are. Right here.

**MOLE:**              *(Accepting and donning spectacles.)* Oh, hooray! Hooray! Oh, thank you, thank you, I can see again. ..! *(He trips, stumbles and falls into the snow.)*

**RAT:**                *(A chuckle.)* Yes, quite an improvement.

**MOLE:**              *(A slight chuckle himself.)* There was something under the snow. It tripped me.

**RAT:**                You don't say.

**MOLE:**              You don't believe me? *(Searching.)* It's right .... yes, right here.

**RAT:**                Hmph -- a door-scraper.

**MOLE:** A door-scraper?

**RAT:** Yes, "Watson" -- you know, for scraping off the soles one's boots?

**MOLE:** I know what it's for. But what careless person is it who's left his domestic litter out in the middle of the Wild Wood, to go tripping up poor unwitting people, I wonder?

**RAT:** Why, Badger, I expect.

**MOLE:** Badger?

**RAT:** Yes -- you clever Mole, you. Your first venture into the Wild Wood and where do you lead yourself? Directly to Badger's front door. And in a blizzard no less.

**MOLE:** I never!

**RAT:** See here, his brass doorplate ...

**MOLE:** *(Reading.)* "Mister Badger."

*A trapdoor opens, causing RAT and MOLE to tumble backward onto their rumps. BADGER appears in his nightgown, with a lantern.*

**BADGER:** Yes! Yes! Who's making such a rumpus outside my front door in the dead of ... ? *(Surprised to see them.)* Rat. Mole.

**MOLE & RAT:** Evening, Badger.

**BADGER:** Don't evening me at this time of the winter. What in the Wild Wood are you doing here? Why, when I heard all this noise above my head, I imagined you'd be those confounded field mice.

**RAT:** Field mice?

**BADGER:** You know -- them squeaky little field mice children -- they think it charming to come caroling.

**MOLE:** Caroling?

**BADGER:** (*Sarcastic.*) Yes, caroling! A not too terribly quaint little custom that tends to occur at Christmastime.

**MOLE:** I quite forgot -- it's Christmas Eve.

**BADGER:** Well? What do you want, waking me up? Don't tell me it's about that Toad?

**RAT:** No.

**MOLE:** I came to ... (*A look at RAT*) Well, you see, I was worried ...

**BADGER:** Worried about what?

**RAT:** Worried that we forgot to say Happy Christmas.

**BADGER:** Happy Christmas? That's it? You came all this way through the cold and snow, in the dead of night just to ...

**MOLE:** (*To RAT.*) Just to wish him Happy Christmas?

**RAT:** No other reason I can think of. Everything else -- at least as far as we're concerned -- everything's just fine. Isn't that right, Mole? (*He pats MOLE on the shoulder. MOLE smiles.*)

**MOLE:** Oh, Badger -- there is one other thing. Happy New Year.

**RAT:** Yes. That, too. And hope you have a good winter's sleep, look forward to seeing you again in the spring and so forth, you know.

**BADGER:** (*Suspicious.*) Indeed? (*RAT and MOLE nod*) Well, same to you, I'm sure. Now go home and, once and for all, good night!

**RAT & MOLE:** Good night.

**BADGER:** Wait. Here. Take my lantern. And ...

**RAT & MOLE:** (*As MOLE takes lantern.*) Badger?

**BADGER:** Happy Christmas and New Year and such like to you, too.  
(*BADGER withdraws.*)

**RAT:** Well?

**MOLE:** Yes, Ratty?

**RAT:** Badger handed you the lantern; so lead on.

**MOLE:** Me? Lead?

**RAT:** That's right, Moley. Lead us home! (*MOLE starts off RAT follows.*)

#### Act I. Scene 10

*At the edge of the Wood Light snowfall diminishes. Starry sky. MOLE and RAT still walking.*

**RAT:** (*Stepping ahead.*) Ah, yes -- capital job, Moley! I believe we're quite clear of the Wood. Why, at this rate, by midnight, we just might be...

**MOLE:** (*He has halted; he stands transfixed.*) Home.

**RAT:** ... home. Yes. If we hurry. (*He takes a few more steps, notices MOLE isn't moving.*) Mole? It's late. Come along now, do; there's a good fellow. (*MOLE still doesn't move. He heaves a great sigh. RAT continues walking. He is offstage. A call.*) Moley? !

**MOLE:** (*A call.*) Ratty! Wait! Please, Rat! My home!

**RAT:** (*Returning into view.*) Yes, "Home" -- that's precisely what I've been saying.

**MOLE:** No -- I mean, *my* home. My old home. I've just come across the scent of it. I believe it's close by here. Dreadfully close.

**RAT:** How awfully nice. I've an idea: tomorrow, if the weather's fine, why don't we trek back and you can show me all around the old neighborhood, what? (*RAT starts off again, sees MOLE still unmoving.*) Moley? What is it, old fellow?

**MOLE:** I know it's a shabby, dingy little place. Not like your cozy quarters - - or Toad's grand beautiful hall -- but, still -- it was my own little home -- and up until this last spring I was ... still am, I suppose, rather fond of it. Oh, dear --just now my heart feels as if it would break.

**RAT:** (*After a pause. He checks his pocket watch.*) Well, I'll be. Guess what, Moley. By my pocket watch it's midnight.

**MOLE:** (*Sniffing.*) Is it?

**RAT:** Yes. It's already tomorrow.

**MOLE:** Christmas.

**RAT:** And didn't I just say, come tomorrow -- I mean, now, today -- didn't I say how I'd rather fancy a look at your place?

**MOLE:** Would you? Would you really?

**RAT:** I would indeed. Can you still smell it?

**MOLE:** (*Sniffle, sniffle, deep sniff*) Oh, yes.

**RAT:** (*A gesture for MOLE to lead the way.*) Wonderful. Well?

*MOLE starts to seek his home. After a few false moves, he find it.*

**MOLE:** Here. Here it is.

**RAT:** Well? Are we going in, or what?

**MOLE:** Yes, of course ... but wait ... no, how can we? Christmas in a cold little underground cave -- when back by the Riverbank you have all your cozy comforts about you?

**RAT:** Moley .

**MOLE:** And what about your supper? You must be famished. I've nothing to offer you -- nothing -- not a crumb.

**RAT:** What?! No champagne? No pate de foie gras? It's all right, Mole. We'll forage.

**MOLE:** No. Never mind it.. (*He starts to turn away.*)

**RAT:** Mole?! Please. Invite me in. (*MOLE halts.*) There's a good fellow. Now open it. Open the door.

*As MOLE obliges, RAT holds the lantern. MICE CHILDREN CAROLERS are heard, approaching, singing.*

**MICE CAROLERS:** (*Offstage; singing.*) Villagers all, on this frosty tide  
Come let your doors swing open wide,  
Though wind may follow, and snow beside,  
Yet draw us in by your fire to bide;  
And joy shall be yours in the morning!  
And joy shall be yours in the morning!  
(*CAROLERS enter: MICE CHILDREN with MOTHER and FATHER.*)

Here we stand in the cold and the sleet,  
Blowing on fingers and stamping feet,  
Come far afield seeking friends to greet --  
Caroling merrily we in the street  
And singing of joy in the morning!  
Singing of joy in the morning!

*During preceding, RAT has gone inside and, by light shining up, we understand he has started a fire. He steps beside a MOUSE CHILD and pulls it aside from the CAROLERS.*

**RAT:** (*Handing the child a bag of coins.*) If your parents can spare it, please: a loaf of bread, a tub of butter, a smoked ham, some ginger beer and the fattest Christmas goose they've got. Right?

**MOUSE:** Right, Mister Ratty, sir! And Happy Christmas!

**RAT:** Happy Christmas, indeed! (*RAT observes his friend MOLE, who has begun singing with the MICE.*)

**MOUSE SOLO:** Ere half of the night was fled and gone  
Sudden a star appeared, beckoning on  
Raise now your heads and look high ...

**MICE CHORUS**

**& MOLE:** ... high upon  
Bliss on the morrow and ever anon,  
Joy promised every morning!  
Joy promised every morning!

*MOUSE MOTHER and FATHER have entered with basket of food and give it to RAT. RAT ushers MOLE inside. RABBITS enter to join MICE in final verse and chorus of song.*

**RAT:** I can easily see why you're so fond it, Moley. It's really the jolliest little place I ever was in, your home.

**MOLE:** Yes. My home.

**MICE &**

**RABBIT CAROLERS:** (*Sing*) Heard you the story the archangels tell?

*Who were the first to proclaim the "Nowell?"  
Bethlehem's animals, as it befell,  
Away in the stable, where they did dwell  
To witness a miracle's dawning!  
To witness a miracle's dawning!*

*(MOLE beckons for CHILDREN to enter his home. They do so, followed by RAT and MOLE. RABBITS & MOTHER & FATHER MOUSE exit.)  
Joy! Joy! Joy ev'ry morning!  
Sing joy! Joy! Joy!*

**MOUSE SOLO:** ... Singing of joy in the morning.

*MOLE pokes his head up through trapdoor again and sets the lantern outside as a door lamp.*

**MOLE:** Thank you. Happy Christmas. See you again come the spring.

MOLE descends, closing the door. Distant church bells chime.

CAROLERS sing in the distance: 'Joy, Joy!" Isolated pool of light rises on TOAD in cell, alone and forlorn. Lights fade, except for the lantern's glow in the snow.

## **INTERMISSION**