

The Wind in the Willows



by Todd Espeland

Sample Pages from The Wind in the Willows

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THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

adapted by
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from
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Casting

3W + 16 Any Gender

Toad: Loud, obnoxious and full of self-importance. Will lie and put on a 'show' if it means Toad doesn't have to do any work.

Rat: Down to earth, grounded, sensible. Looks out for Mole like a parent.

Mole: Innocent and eager. Is amazed by the big wonderful world.

Badger: Bold, commanding and imposing. Of the four friends Badger is the real leader.

Otter: Overly friendly and eager. Speaks their mind.

Jailer: Hates Toad.

Horse: Stubborn and hard to convince.

Train Clerk: Bored by their job. Customers are a problem for the Clerk.

Law Clerk: A bold by-the-book lawyer.

Fox: Can be sly and sneaky or tough as nails. Suckers their victims in by acting nice.

Weasels 1-5/Police: All the Weasels kiss up to Fox and are extra mean to their victims. They can put on an act to sucker their victims.

Judge: Stuffy and stern

Rabbit: Excited and scared

Jailer's Daughter: Tries to be sweet to Toad but eventually loses patience and is prone to yell at him.

Washer Woman: Bold and brash and hates Toad

Train Conductor: Kind and clever. Always wants to help.

Barge Woman: Smart and doesn't fall for Toad's lies.

Hedgehog 1: Innocent and loves to tease Hedgehog 2

Hedgehog 2: Innocent and hates being teased by Hedgehog 1

In the original production, the roles of Otter/Jailer and Horse/Clerk/Train Clerk were played by the same performers. Fox, Toad, Badger, Mole were played by women. We discussed how the behaviors of the characters were universal and could be done by any gender.

In general, I have tried to use gender neutral pronouns for most of the characters in the play except the Jailer's Daughter, the Washer Woman, and the Barge Woman. This was so you could cast any gender in almost any role in the show.

Fox as the Narrator

Fox is the narrator of the story – watching, narrating and occasionally manipulating the action. I have deliberately given few stage directions for Fox's entrances and exits so Fox can appear as much or as little as you want. Fox never left the stage in the original production.

Fox is also an unreliable narrator. All of the narration should be done from the Fox's perspective. Toad, Mole, Rat and Badger are in the way of Fox getting Toad Hall. Because of this, Fox's narration doesn't have to be sweet and nice. Fox can be mean, mocking and belittling the four main characters as much as needed.

Costuming

We didn't costume the characters to be male or female but used classic clothing you might see in the illustrations in *Wind in the Willows* or we used clothing that was informed by the character's animal.

Mole wore a tiny bowler hat and tiny glasses. Badger was dressed in a big bulky overcoat. Toad was in fancy green clothing with large, clown-like green shoes. Have fun with the costuming and use the character and their behavior to inform your choices rather than gender.

The Set

The original production of *Wind in the Willows* at the Fort Wayne Youtheatre was performed in a black box theatre on a proscenium stage. However, the show can easily be adapted for almost any theatre configuration from in-the-round to a thrust stage.

This is a fast-paced show comedic show and the scene changes should be fast and without going to a blackout. It's best if you can use only what is on the stage to set each scene. This is an ensemble show, which means that everyone in the cast is used to create scenes and settings. Large scenic elements are created by the cast, such as the

tunnel Mole climbs through to leave their home, the spooky forest, the train and the barge. You can create these elements with actors using their bodies and added costume pieces. This staging is intended to be imaginative representations of large objects and settings that would be costly to reproduce on stage. You are encouraged to use as much imagination as possible to bring these elements to life. Detailed descriptions will accompany these parts of the script, to give you a sense of what we did at Fort Wayne Youtheatre to bring these to life. Feel free to use these ideas and build on them. If you see other parts of the script you want to use the ensemble to create setting or mood, please add them.

The set for the original production was simple. There was a large (8'x8') platform upstage left. This platform transformed to become various large indoor settings like Toad Hall, or Badger's house, the courtroom, or the jail. We left two chairs on the platform as well as a couple of stumps nearby; they're simple and fit into many of the show's settings.

In addition we had two larger trees, one upstage left and one upstage right.

There were four flats on stage. The first flat was stage right of the platform and the second was upstage on the platform. This gave some masking for entrances and exits.

In the upstage flat there was a large "window" shaped screen with muslin across the opening. Projections were back projected onto the muslin to set scenes or story needs that were to big for us to build such as the caravan or the train. These projections were specifically chosen to be silhouettes and were all public domain. You can choose to have an artist create these for you as well.

The second two flats were stage right placed at a larger than 90 degree angle. Again, this was for masking as well as creating a more intimate playing space. Here there were an additional two stumps. This stage right area was used for more outdoor areas. All Mole and Rat scenes were in this space as well as outside Toad Hall. We deliberately chose not to show Rat's house because the scenes and scene transitions needed to move quickly, like a commedia play. So rather than have a setup for Rat's house, we decided to have Mole and Rat always outside.

Wind in the Willows is a script that goes back and forth between large cinematic scenes and smaller scenes. This set design leaves you with a considerable amount of open center stage area to play scenes or the ability to focus smaller scenes around one stump or up on the 8x8 platform.

The set was painted to look like a watercolor children's book and was a giant map of the Wild Wood and the River Bank. There were areas of trees, hills, farmland and a large painted river through the center of the playing space. This set painting was non-literal and never intended to set a particular scene.

Original Production

Wind in the Willows premiered at the Fort Wayne Youtheatre on October 4th 2019, with generous support from Arts United and the Indiana Arts Commission, in the Parkview Physicians Group ArtsLab Theatre at the Arts United Arts Campus Fort Wayne with the following cast:

Toad: Abby Spoltman

Rat: Kayden Ptak

Mole: Violet Park

Badger: Emma Humbarger

Otter/Jailer: Jonathan Lowden

Horse/Clerk/Train Clerk: Will Guthrie

Fox: Amaela Bruce

Weasel 1/Police: Brynn Stahl

Weasel 2/Police: Kelsey Bowning

Weasel 3/Police: Mara Nicholson

Weasel 4/Police: Megan Schwartz

Weasel 5/Police: Ty Budenz

Judge/Rabbit: Ian Fraser

Jailer's Daughter: Emily Koch

Washer Woman: Raigyn Dobson

Train Conductor: Brandt Colglazier

Barge Woman: Gretchen Lowe

Hedgehog 1: Adali Hyder

Hedgehog 2: Mason Foote

Director: Todd Espeland

Stage Manager: Sloan Amburgey-Thomas

Set Design: Todd Espeland and Christopher J Murphy

Light Design: Brock Eastom

Light/Projection Operator: Hudson Mulhall

Sound/Projection Designer: Christopher J Murphy

Sound Operator: Keegan Combs.

Lights up. We see RAT, MOLE, BADGER and TOAD on stage right. MOLE is standing on one of the stumps. The other friends are around MOLE. They are facing off against FOX and the five WEASELS who are on the platform, which is currently Toad Hall. The emblem for Toad Hall and the words "Toad Hall" appear on the screen.

TOAD: How dare you take over Toad Hall, you awful Fox and Weasely weasels!

WEASEL 1: Hey there, warty Toad.

WEASEL 2: Where ya been?

WEASEL 3: In jail?

WEASEL 4: Crashing more cars?

WEASEL 5: Running from the police, you coward?

FOX: And you have brought your 'brave' friends Mole and Rat and Badger with you. Do you really think you can throw us out of Toad Hall?

WEASEL 1: Yeah, we already beat the three of you once.

WEASEL 2: Yeah! And tossed you out of here.

WEASEL 3: YEAH! This is our hall now!

WEASEL 4: YEAH! Fox and Weasel Hall now!

WEASEL 5: YEAH!

FOX: And you think that by sneaking in a hidden entrance in Toad Hall and surprising us that you four can toss us out?

WEASEL 1: It looks like it is four against six.

WEASEL 2: And Toad is a coward.

WEASEL 3: So that makes it three against six.

WEASEL 4: And Mole is tiny.

WEASEL 5: So it's more like two and a half against six.

FOX: It seems the odds are in our favor.

As we move back in time to the beginning of the story, everyone except FOX and MOLE exit the stage. The lights shift inside the MOLE's house. If you are underscoring with music that should shift as well. FOX addresses the audience.

FOX: We have been waiting for the right moment to toss Toad out and move on in. We have wanted to take over Toad Hall for some time. We have been watching and waiting for the right moment. It all started when Mole, after a long and particularly chilly winter, felt the call of springtime and began spring cleaning his sad little home.

MOLE grabs a broom and feather duster from under the platform and furiously mimes cleaning the house.

MOLE: It's not sad, it is cozy. First with brooms, then with dusters; then on ladders. Oh I have to stop! This cleaning is miserable. I have dust in my throat and eyes, and an aching back and weary arms. (*collapses on stool or chair on platform, exhausted*) and I can feel Beautiful Spring moving in the air above.

MOLE tosses duster and broom to an actor who takes them offstage.

MOLE: Bother! Hang spring cleaning! I need to be out of this hole and in the sun above.

FOX: We watched Mole bolt out of the house without even waiting to put on a coat and climbed the tunnel that lead out of his home. He climbed...

The ENSEMBLE creates a "tunnel" out of their bodies made up of all kinds of structures, large and small, for MOLE to climb through. It's best if the tunnel twists its way across the whole stage. They also stick their arms or legs out as obstructions. As MOLE passes through each section, have MOLE act like they are pushing the dirt away and have the tunnel actors fall away to the floor.

MOLE: And climbed.

FOX: And scraped and scratched...

MOLE: Up we go!

FOX: Till at last, “pop!” Mole’s snout came out into the sunlight, and he rolled like a fool, in the warm grass of the great meadow.

The tunnel actors exit.

MOLE: This is fine! This is much better than spring cleaning. Sunshine on my fur and feeling the breeze is much nicer than my lonely little home deep in the ground. This warm spring seems too good to be true.

FOX: Hither and thither he wandered.

MOLE: Through the meadows,

FOX: Along the hedgerows,

MOLE: Finding everywhere birds building, flowers budding, and everything happy.

FOX: Until he came to the full-fed river.

The ENSEMBLE enters with a large blue cloth to represent the river. In the original production, our cloth was light and about 10 feet long. The actors kneeled down, with the cloth at length between them, and gently flapped the cloth to create the waves of the river.

Two ENSEMBLE members and the actor playing OTTER enter with a boat as soon as the river is in place. We used a three-dimensional boat on casters. If you use a two-dimensional boat, the actors could sit on cubes behind the boat. You could also have the actors sit on cubes behind the waves and mime the presence of a boat.

This all should be done quickly without drawing focus. Once the boat is in place, the actor playing OTTER should lay on the stage behind the boat and the ‘river’ so they can pop up out of the water on their cue. In the original production the audience never saw OTTER get in place, making OTTER’s

entrance into the scene a surprise and a good laugh moment.

MOLE: (*in awe*) I've never in my life seen a river before. How lovely and sleek and twisting. I don't know why I have never left underground and come up here before? I guess... I guess I was afraid I would not make any friends and I would be here all alone.

The WEASELS and FOX enter and surround MOLE.

FOX: Hold up my friend.

MOLE: (*startled*) Oh hello.

FOX: Fifty cents for the privilege of gazing on this 'private river.'

WEASELS: Yeah!

The WEASELS begin to push MOLE between them.

WEASEL 1: Fifty cents, you freeloader!

WEASEL 2: How stupid you are...

WEASEL 3: This mole looks stupid...

WEASEL 4: So cough up the money...

WEASEL 5: Don't make us remind you again...

FOX: It's the toll.

RAT enters and steps between MOLE and the WEASELS.

RAT: (*to MOLE*) There is no toll to look at the river or even boat in the river my little friend.

MOLE: But these weasels and this fox say there is.

RAT: (*gives a threatening look to the WEASELS*) They were just having a bit of fun weren't you?

WEASELS: HEY!

FOX: (*steps in front of WEASELS and pushes them back*) You found out our little game, Ratty. We were just having fun with... Who are you?

MOLE: Mole. I'm Mole.

RAT: They were just playing a little game.

FOX: It seems we were having a bit of fun with you, Mole.

WEASELS: BUT!

FOX: BUT, we will take our game elsewhere. (*to RAT*) Watch yourself, Rat. You don't want to be running afoul of us. (*to everyone*) Good day to you little Mole. (*WEASELS and FOX exit*)

RAT: Watch out for that crew, Mole. They are usually up to no good.

MOLE: Thank you... What was your name again?

RAT: Rat.

MOLE: Thank you, Rat. Going out of your way like that was really kind of you.

RAT: You looked like you were a little lost and were in need of a friend.

MOLE: Excuse me?

RAT: I said, you looked lost and in need of a friend.

MOLE: I've never really had a friend before.

RAT: You do now, Mole. And seeing as how we are friends, would you like to travel across the river and visit my house?

MOLE: Across the river?

RAT: Yes, we can take my boat.

MOLE: Boat! This is such a wonderful day! I've never been in a boat before.

RAT: What? Never had a friend before, and never been in a boat? What have you been doing then?

MOLE: Mostly I've been living in my little home, under the ground. Is boating nice?

RAT: Nice? It's the only thing! Believe me there is NOTHING—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats. In or out of them, it doesn't matter.

Whether you get away, or whether you don't; whether you arrive at your destination or whether you reach somewhere else, or whether you never get anywhere at all. It's about enjoying the time.

Look here! If you've really nothing else on hand this morning, suppose we drop down the river together, and have a long day of it?

MOLE: WHAT a day I'm having! Let's start at once!

RAT: Now you have your first friend and we are about to enjoy your first boat trip.

MOLE and RAT climb into the boat.

RAT: Sit over there. And take this here and shove that under the seat.

MOLE: What's inside it?

RAT: Our lunch. Cold ham, cold turkey, pickles, French rolls, lemonade...

MOLE: Oh stop! This is too much!

RAT: Do you think? It's what I always take on these little excursions. And Mole, I like your clothes. I've always wanted to dress so nicely.

MOLE: Excuse me for being so rude, but all this is new to me. So... this... is... a... river?

RAT: THE River.

MOLE: And you really live by the River. OH! What a wonderful life!

RAT: By it and on it and with it.

MOLE: *(looking over the side of the boat)* OH MY!

RAT: What is it?

MOLE: I'm looking at a streak of bubbles under the surface of the water.

RAT: Hello Otter!

OTTER "pops up out of the water" and hangs on the upstage side of the boat. MOLE and RAT talk out to the audience while speaking to the upstage OTTER.

OTTER: Hey there you greedy beggars!

MOLE: (*surprised by OTTER*) AH!

OTTER: Why didn't you invite me, Ratty?

RAT: This was an unplanned trip. By the way, meet my friend Mole.

OTTER: Pleased to meet you, Mole. Any friend of Ratty is a friend of mine.

RAT: How's your day going, Otter?

OTTER: There is such a rumpus everywhere! All the world seems out on the river today. So I swim to this out-of-the-way spot to get a moment's peace and here are the two of you. No offense. It's always good to see you, Ratty.

The BADGER enters on the riverbank walking quickly.

RAT: Hello old Badger. Come over for a chat.

BADGER: Ah, not today good Rat. (*grumbles and exits*)

MOLE: That's odd.

RAT: That is just the sort of fellow Badger is. Simply hates society.

OTTER: Toad is out today as well. In a speedboat. Toad loves speeding around now.

RAT: Once, it was nothing but sailing. Then Toad tired of that and took to the houseboat and we all had to go and stay in the houseboat, and pretend we liked it.

OTTER: He was going to spend the rest of his life in a houseboat.

RAT: Whatever Toad takes up; he gets tired of it, and starts on something fresh.

OTTER: Toad can be unreliable. Did I ever tell you that story about Toad and the lock keeper? What happened was...

TOAD zooms through in his speed boat. You can use a kick scooter with a two-dimensional cutout of a boat on the side.

TOAD: LOOK OUT SLOW POKES!!!!!!

TOAD zooms offstage.

OTTER: Watch it, Toad!

OTTER "dives back under" the river.

RAT: We ought to be moving along. Before Toad tips us over.

MOLE: Rat, please if I could, I would like to row.

RAT: Not yet. Wait till you have had some lessons.

MOLE: But I want to try to go fast like Toad.

RAT: It's not as easy as it looks.

MOLE: *(not listening, grabs the oars)* Do you just grab them and go?

RAT: Wait. Stop, you fool. You will tip us over.

MOLE grabs the oars. The boat rocks, tipping both MOLE and RAT into the water. To create the effect of falling off the boat and being underwater, MOLE can step off the boat as the actors who are the river stand and flutter the cloth up high with MOLE under the cloth. MOLE and the river actors can move to the side of the stage you decide to use as the riverbank. One river actor lets go of the cloth and the other takes it offstage quickly. While this is happening, another set of actors take the boat offstage. This ideally should all happen at the same time and quickly.

MOLE sits on the bank coughing.

OTTER: (*laughing*) Look at you. You are a squishy, pulpy lump.

RAT: Are you OK?

MOLE looks wet on the outside and ashamed on the inside.

RAT: Don't feel bad. It is all OK.

OTTER: I'll get the basket.

MOLE: Ratty my generous friend, I am very sorry for my foolish and ungrateful conduct. I've been a complete fool and I know it.

RAT: That's all right. What is a little wet to a water rat? I am more in the water than out of it.

OTTER: And I saved the basket of food.

MOLE: I am so glad we didn't lose the basket and all the food.

RAT: Don't you think any more about it, Mole. I really think you had better come with me to my house for a little time. It's plain and not like Toad's grand home at all. But it is comfortable and you are welcome to stay there. Depending on how long you stay I'll teach you to row.

OTTER: And I'll teach you to swim and soon you will be as handy on the river as any of us.

MOLE: YAY!

RAT: Let's go home, make a bright fire in the parlor and I'll tell you stories about adventures by waterfalls.

OTTER: And night fishing with me.

OTTER, RAT and MOLE exit. FOX enters.

FOX: This day was only the first day of many similar ones for Mole, living with his new friend Ratty. (*the lights change to a bright summer morning*) One bright summer morning we were sneaking around Rat and Mole's house, spying on them...

MOLE: Ratty, I want to ask you a favor...

RAT: One moment. Listen to this poem I composed this morning.

RAT climbs up on a stump and prepares to recite the poem like a dramatic actor with lots of posturing and throat clearing.

All along the backwater,
Through the rushes tall,
Ducks are a-dabbling,
Up tails all!
Ducks' tails, drakes' tails,
Yellow feet a-quiver,
Yellow bills all out of sight,
Busy in the river!

RAT: What do you think?

MOLE: I'm really not a poet, but to be honest, I don't think much of that song.

RAT: Neither do the ducks. When I read it to them they said "WHY can't birds be allowed to do what they like WHEN they like and AS they like, instead of other non-birds sitting on banks and watching them all the time and making remarks and poetry and things about them?"

MOLE: I guess you won't be writing any more poems for them?

RAT: Certainly not.

MOLE: My turn. What I wanted to ask you was could we go visit Toad? I've heard so much about Toad.

RAT: Sure. Let's get out of the boat and paddle up there at once.

MOLE and RAT exit.

FOX: After an uneventful trip up the river and docking at the boathouse, they soon came to the lavish estate of Toad. We thought this might become the chance we needed to take over Toad Hall.

The Emblem for Toad Hall and the words "Toad Hall" appear on the screen. MOLE and RAT enter mid-conversation.

RAT: ...and the stables are over there to the right. That's the banqueting-hall you're looking at now—very old, that is. (*whispers*) Toad is rather rich, you know, and this is really one of the nicest houses in these parts. But we would never admit that to Toad.

TOAD: (*entering*) HOORAY! This is splendid. I was just going to send a boat down the river for you. How good to meet you, Vole.

MOLE: I'm Mole.

TOAD: Mole?

MOLE: Yes, Mole.

TOAD: Well how droll, Little Mole, I'll have to take you to Bowl. HAHAAHAAHAAHAAHAAHAA! (*TOAD switches quickly from laughing at their own joke to becoming the noble TOAD*) Now look here – you are just the animals I wanted. You've got to help me. It's most important.

RAT: Is it about your speed boat, I suppose?

TOAD: O, pooh! Boating? Speedboats? Ugh! No! A silly childish amusement! I gave that up long ago. Sheer waste of time!

MOLE: Really? I like boating.

TOAD: NO! (*TOAD stops MOLE with a hand in front of MOLE's face*) I've discovered the real thing. The only genuine occupation for a lifetime. I propose to dedicate my life to it. Come, dear Ratty and you, little Bowl.

MOLE: Mole.

TOAD: Yes. Mole. That's what I said. Come both of you, just as far as the stable and you both shall see!

They turn to face the platform where the slides are projected. As they turn, a silhouette of a caravan wagon appears.

TOAD: There you are! There is the real life for you, embodied in that camper. The open road, the dusty highway, the hedgerows, the rolling downs! Travel, change, interest, excitement! This is

the very finest cart of its sort that was ever built, without any exception.

MOLE: This is tremendously exciting!

RAT: Here we go with another of Toad's plans.

TOAD: This is the finest caravan ever made. A cooking-stove, lockers, bookshelves, a bird-cage with a bird in it! All complete! And we will start out today!

RAT: Wait! Did you say "we" and "start" and "today."

TOAD: Now, dear good Ratty, don't you begin talking in a stiff and sniffy sort of way because you know you've got to come.

RAT: Stiff and sniffy?

TOAD: It is settled, and don't argue. It's the one thing I can't stand. You surely don't mean to stick to your dull fusty old river all your life, and just live in a hole in a bank, and BOAT? I want to show you the world!

RAT: I don't care. I'm not coming, and that's flat. And I AM going to stick to my old river, AND live in a hole, AND boat, as I've always done. And what's more, Mole's going to stick to me and do as I do. Aren't you, Mole?

MOLE: (*determined*) Of course I am!

RAT: Good!

MOLE: (*less determined*) I'll always stick to you, Rat.

RAT: Yes!

MOLE: (*beginning to be hypnotized by the caravan*) All the same, it sounds as if it might be... rather fun.

RAT: What?

TOAD: (*Watching them and coming up with a plan. Diplomatically.*) Come along in, and have some lunch, and we'll talk it over. We needn't decide anything in a hurry. "Live for others!" That's my motto in life. (*TOAD, MOLE, and RAT exit*)

FOX: During luncheon that loudmouth Toad ignored Rat, and proceeded to play upon the inexperienced Mole as on a harp. Toad painted the trip and the joys of the open life, on the road, in such glowing colors. Mole was a sucker, mastered by imagination, and could hardly sit still from excitement.

TOAD, MOLE, and RAT enter mid-conversation.

TOAD: ...and we will sleep under the majestic stars every night.

MOLE: That sounds wonderful. And can we go fishing too?

TOAD: Yes we can, Joel.

MOLE: MY name is Mole.

TOAD: Oh yes, of course. *(deliberately and slowly says MOLE's name)* Mole. We will catch fish and go swimming every day. What do you think, Ratty?

MOLE: Please Rat! Please!

RAT: FINE! I will not disappoint my two friends, who are already deep in schemes, planning out each day.

TOAD: Let's not wait another minute. Off to the stables. Rat, you go and get the Old Grey Horse harnessed up to pull the cart. Mole... did I get it right? *(MOLE nods. TOAD turns away and fist pumps.)* Yesssssssssss. *(turns back to MOLE)* Mole, you pack these bags into the caravan.

RAT: And what will you do?

TOAD: I shall do the important business of supervising. Now off and ready us for the open road! *(TOAD exits)*

During this scene MOLE loads bags and suitcases on the caravan by walking from one side of the stage to the other. The progression of bags/suitcases should be: One small bag/suitcase (MOLE's), two large bags/suitcases (RAT's), one LARGE trunk (TOAD's). These can be labeled with the names of the owners.

HORSE enters.

RAT: Ok, Horse, we need to harness you up to the caravan.

HORSE: Ugh! Why?

RAT: Apparently you will be pulling us to and fro on this adventure.

HORSE: No one consulted me about this!

RAT: No one consulted me either but here I am, on another of Toad's adventures and doing all the work.

HORSE: I've got important studying to do.

RAT: I've important boating to do, but here we are.

HORSE: I shall be doing all the work. Pulling you three hither and thither, while you rest in the caravan. Nope! No way!

RAT: Please.

HORSE: No! It is the dustiest job of this dusty expedition. Besides, I prefer the paddock to dragging you three along the open road.

RAT: Horse, we need your help to pull the wagon. I am not going to try to trick you into doing this job. Mole and I need your help and so does Toad. Together the three of us can help Toad not get in trouble. That is the truth. Will you help us please?

HORSE: (*thinks a moment*) Fiiine. Together we can help protect Toad from Toad. It's a deal. I'll help. Thank you for telling me the truth.

MOLE, RAT and HORSE cross to sit on the platform.

FOX: Off you three jerks went, across the countryside, through the afternoon and stopping late in the evening.

TOAD enters on the platform as if coming out of the caravan.

TOAD: Good day all of you who look upon Toad's glorious caravan. Ah I feel so fresh and rested. This is the real life. This is the pleasant easy life we should all be living. Away from all the cares and worries of home. Well good night to all of you.

*TOAD exits like they are going back in the caravan.
MOLE, RAT and HORSE meet up.*

MOLE: I've never worked so hard in my life. I'll do whatever you like, Ratty.

HORSE: I told you this was a bad idea. Shall we run away tomorrow morning, quite early?

MOLE: VERY early. And go back to our dear old hole on the river?

RAT: No. We'll see it out.

HORSE: Ugh! But I had to drag everyone over the hot roads and across the farms! And you, Rat, had to set up the tents and the cots and prepared a fire for the night!

MOLE: And I trudged off to the nearest village, a long way off, for milk and eggs, that Toad had, of course, forgotten to provide.

RAT: We can't abandon a friend out here all alone. We ought to stick by Toad till this trip is ended.

HORSE and MOLE look ashamed.

MOLE: True. You are right, Ratty. It wouldn't be safe for Toad.

HORSE: Ugh! Fiiiine. Besides this shouldn't take very long. Toad's fads never do. Remember when Toad fell in love with boxing?

RAT: Yes, spent hundreds of dollars on boxing gear and even a ring.

HORSE: That dream ended with one punch in the nose. And remember Toad's dreams of being a trapeze artist?

RAT: Yes, until everyone on the ground discovered that heights made Toad throw up.

MOLE: It sounds to me, after a few days camping, this adventure should end soon.

FOX: The weasels and I thought that, if this trip went longer, it would be the perfect chance to take over Toad Hall. The end was nearer than any of us expected.

TOAD: *(enters yawning, as if coming out of the caravan)* Oh, good morning my intrepid explorers.

RAT: It's not morning.

HORSE: It's noon.

MOLE: And we have been up since dawn.

TOAD: Where is breakfast?

RAT: In our stomachs.

HORSE: (*teasing TOAD*) Ummmm. Oats and coffee, and juice, and fruit.

MOLE: It was quite delicious.

TOAD: And you saved none for me?

RAT: We didn't know when you would be waking, your highness.

TOAD: What about second breakfast?

MOLE: Is that a thing?

TOAD: Ah Mole, second breakfast is the meal of Royalty!

They look at TOAD blankly.

TOAD: Well then I guess I will busy myself with lunch. Who's made it?

RAT: No one.

HORSE: We were packing up to travel some more!

TOAD: (*gestures in frustration*) Oh poo. (*TOAD suddenly has a 'hurt back'*) OUCH! (*limps away*)

MOLE: Why are you walking so funny?

TOAD: (*dramatically*) That infernal cot of mine is so tiny and cramped compared to my luxurious feather bed at home. I think I've cramped my back. Perhaps I should go back to bed and sleep it off.

RAT, HORSE & MOLE: Oh no you don't!

They block his way. TOAD evades them. MOLE grabs TOAD's jacket.

TOAD: No, no, no, I think a bit of a noontime nap will do the trick. Wake me when second lunch is served.

HORSE and RAT block the way to the caravan.

RAT: There are no second breakfasts, third lunches or fourth dinners.

HORSE: *(together with RAT)* We have to pack to leave. And someone needs to walk with me as I pull. I'm tired of being ignored.

MOLE: *(together with RAT)* Dear Toad, you need to help me carry the bags to the caravan. I'm not strong enough to get them on top.

TOAD: *(together with RAT)* Oh my back, my back. And starving to boot. I don't have the energy to do anything but sleep.

They begin to argue all at once. There is the sound of a motor car in the distance. It gets louder as they argue.

This next section is acted out in slow motion. The "car" is the kick scooter with either a 2-D cutout of the side of a car or the grill of a car on the front.

FOX: As they argued and hauled Toad away from the caravan by force, they wandered into the road. Behind them was heard a faint warning hum. There was a small cloud of dust behind them, with a dark center of energy, advancing at incredible speed. From the bushes where we were spying, we felt a blast of wind and a whirl of sound and those suckers jumped for the nearest ditch!

The actors playing TOAD, MOLE, RAT, and HORSE scatter in slow motion as if they are avoiding being hit. They toss all that they are carrying in the air. ENSEMBLE actors can help make the objects fly around and the actors fall in slow motion, like it is an action scene. TOAD should be the only character still standing after the 'car' speeds by.

TOAD: *(in an awed whisper)* A magnificent motor car.

RAT: You speed demon! How dare you try to kill us with that monstrosity. I'll have the law on you!

HORSE: (*together with RAT*) You villains, you scoundrels, you jerks, you... you road hogs!

MOLE: (*Together with RAT. Spinning in a circle from the force of the car.*) Oh no! Oh my! If I don't stop, I think I will be sick!

TOAD walks into the middle of the road.

TOAD: (*quietly staring after the motor car*) Zoouooooom!

RAT: Toad, come here and lend a hand, why don't you.

TOAD: (*staring after the motor car*) ZOOUUUUUUOOM!

MOLE: Are you coming to help us, Toad?

TOAD: (*starts to run around like a motor car*) ZOOUUUUUUUUUUUOOM!

HORSE: Toad, I need a hand getting up.

TOAD: Glorious, stirring sight! Poetry in motion! And to think I never KNEW that you could go that fast on land!

MOLE: Toad, stop dreaming and help us.

TOAD: (*this becomes a Shakespearian monologue*) The REAL way to travel! The ONLY way to travel! ZOOUUUUUUOOM! ZOOUUUUUUOOM!

TOAD runs around like a car and knocks over the others like a car.

But now that I know, now that I fully realize! Henceforth, what dust clouds shall spring up behind me as I speed on my reckless way!

HORSE: What shall we do with him?

TOAD keeps running around them like a car and saying 'zoom, zoom.' TOAD talks over MOLE, RAT and BADGER in this next section.

RAT: Nothing at all. Toad is now possessed and has got a new craze.

MOLE: We can't leave Toad here in the middle of the road. It's not safe. Supposing another "Zooming Thing" were to come along?

RAT: (*grabbing TOAD*) Now, look here, Toad! Calm down. (*TOAD stops saying 'zoom'*) As soon as we get to the town, you'll have to go straight to the police station, and see if they know anything about that motor car and lodge a complaint against it.

TOAD: Police station? Complaint? Complaining about that heavenly vision of speed? No Rat. I will now ZOOM about everywhere. O, Ratty! I thank you for coming on this trip! I wouldn't have gone without you, and then I might never have seen that – that sunbeam, that thunderbolt, that motor car! I might never have heard that entrancing sound of ZOOOOOM! I owe it all to you, my best of friends! (*hugs them all in turn*)

HORSE: You see?

RAT: This is hopeless.

HORSE: I give up.

MOLE: Well let's at least pick up this mess and get Toad back to town.

TOAD: YES! BACK TO TOWN! Where I can go and order myself the largest, most zooming, most expensive MOTOR CAR!

TOAD runs offstage followed by MOLE, RAT and HORSE. Lights out on them. Up on FOX.

FOX: And with that our plans to invade Toad Hall were ruined. Horse went back to his dusty paddock and Rat and Mole returned to Rat's house and Toad marched off to buy a grand motor car to bring back to Toad Hall.

We hear the sound of a huge car engine starting and racing along, then tires screeching, and horn honking and a comical crashing sound.

FOX: As the summer sun gave way to the cool breezes of fall, we knew that there was no way we could get Toad out of Toad Hall in winter. We had to strike in fall. So we resumed our spying on you four.

MOLE: Rat! Rat! Rat! Where are you?

RAT: (*enters sleepily holding a blanket, as if woken up from hibernation*) I'm right here. What is the matter with you?

MOLE: (*entering*) It's Toad getting into more trouble with that zooming motor car. We need the help of the smartest person you know. We need Badger.

RAT: Badger will turn up some day and then I'll introduce you. But Badger can be very fussy.

MOLE: Couldn't we ask Badger to dinner or something?

RAT: Wouldn't come. Hates invitations and dinners and that sort of thing.

MOLE: Supposing we go visit?

RAT: I'm sure Badger wouldn't like that at all. I've never just gone out there for a visit. Besides, it is out of the question. Badger lives in the middle of the (*whispers*) Wild Wood.

MOLE: You told me the Wild Wood was all right?

RAT: I know. But... I think we won't be going there just yet. Not this time of year. It's getting colder and we should be napping. He will come along some day.

MOLE: But we need help with Toad!

RAT: Toad's troubles will have to wait. (*yawns*) Now give it a break. This chilly weather is making me (*yawns*) sleepy. (*exits*)

MOLE: (*grabbing RAT's pant leg and pulling across stage, letting go as RAT exits*) But it's our duty as a friend to help our friends.

FOX: We knew our best chance would be if Toad could do something wrong with that motorcar of his and get tossed in jail. But you, meddling Mole, needed to do something, and that maybe grumpy old Badger could help. So we followed after Mole, who was going out to explore the Wild Wood and find Badger.

A spooky silhouette forest is shown on the screen. Actors (including the WEASELS) become the gnarled, spooky trees of the Wild Wood and are obstacles in MOLE's way. MOLE has to move around and between and duck under the actor's arms/branches. The 'trees' can move their arms/branches to grab at MOLE.

FOX: It was a cold afternoon with a hard steel sky overhead.

WEASEL 1: The woods lay bare and entirely leafless...

WEASEL 2: ...as Mole walked into the dark, low and threatening Wild Wood.

WEASEL 3: A perfect place for us to stop that little runt.

MOLE: It's awfully still here in the Wild Wood. But I am not scared. I'll just sing a little song to help me on my way.

MOLE walks around and in between the trees. FOX can follow MOLE if you want.

MOLE: (*sung to the tune of Frère Jacques*)

I am walking, I am walking,
in the woods, in the woods
I see a little face there, I see a little face there
In the bushes, In the bushes.

It is getting darker, it is getting darker
All around me, all around me
I hope I find Badger, I hope I find Badger
Very soon, very soon.

I hear footsteps, I hear footsteps
Behind me, Behind me
I hope they will not eat me, I hope they will not eat me-

Out jumps RABBIT.

MOLE: (*jumps and falls over*) AH!

RABBIT: Get out of here Mole! And stop singing.

MOLE: But I...

RABBIT: Get off my doorstep. You are getting dirt on the doorstep to my home.

MOLE: (*panicked and spoken really quickly*) Well can you point me in the direction of Badger? I really need his help, you see. Toad has bought this motor car and he-

RABBIT: (*cuts off MOLE*) No! I don't want to be bothered with that unbearable Toad's troubles! I'm trying to get ready for a winter's nap! NOW GET OFF MY LAWN!

RABBIT runs off.

The forest actors move quickly offstage with RABBIT. The WEASELS drop being trees and surround MOLE. The WEASELS pass MOLE down the line of them until he is caught by FOX.

WEASEL 1: Hey there, Moly.

WEASEL 2: What brings you out here shorty?

WEASEL 3: We never see you here in the Wild Wood.

WEASEL 4: Why so jumpy, you little squirt?

WEASEL 5: What are you scared of?

FOX: Yesssss, friend. What brings you out all this way? You look lost.

MOLE: Well, I came out here into the Wild Wood to find my way to Badger's house. But now it seems I have gotten lost. But I think I can find my way on my own. Thank you for the conversation. (*starts to leave but is stopped by WEASEL 1*)

WEASEL 1: Hold up Moly.

WEASEL 2: Yeah, where do you think you're going?

WEASEL 3: If you want to go on, you need to tell us the password.

WEASEL 4: Or pay the passage tax.

WEASEL 5: Password or Tax!

FOX: What my five friends mean is, to make your way through this part of the Wild Wood, you need to know the password to prove you belong here. Or for a nominal fee we can make you a temporary Wild Wooder and let you through.

MOLE: I'm really just needing to go see Badger.

WEASEL 1: Why do you need to get to that old grouch anyway?

FOX: I'm sure for a little more coin we can handle your problem for you, little friend.

WEASELS: Yeah cough up the coin!

MOLE: According to Rat, Badger is the wisest, so I think I should only talk to Badger. And as for coin, well, I think I left home without any money at all.

FOX: That will be a problem. Won't it, weasels? Seems you are going to have to head back home.

WEASELS: No coin is a problem.

WEASEL 2: Maybe we need to lock you up for not paying?

RAT enters.

RAT: Mole, there you are. Why did you run off to the Wild Wood when I told you not to?

WEASEL 1: Back off, Ratty.

WEASEL 2: Yeah! Back off.

WEASEL 3: This here Mole's gotta either pay the toll...

WEASEL 4: Or tell us the password.

WEASEL 5: Toll or password.

RAT: Everyone knows the Wild Wood password is "Piper at the Gates of Dawn."

WEASEL 1: (to FOX) Is it?

FOX: You are a sly one, Ratty. Yes, he is correct.

WEASEL 2: So what? Now we let him go?

FOX: Indeed.

WEASEL 3: But you said we gotta stop Mole from...

FOX: ENOUGH! He said the password. It's our duty as Wild Wooders to let them pass.

WEASEL 4: But what about Toad Hall...

FOX: Enough!

FOX: Weasels it's time to go.

WEASEL 5: We will be keeping an eye on you, Ratty.

RAT: And I'll be keeping an eye out for you six.

FOX and WEASELS exit.

The lights during this next section ping pong back and forth between MOLE/RAT and FOX. This is so you can move quickly back and forth in a cinematic way. When MOLE falls over the boot scraper, just have MOLE sit down and grab their shin when the focus and light is on FOX. This way you don't need to stage a 'fall' on stage. The lights will just come up and MOLE will be on the ground, holding their shin in pain.

MOLE: O, Rat! I've been so lost and frightened here in the Wild Wood, I couldn't think.

RAT: I woke from my nap and saw you were gone and knew you ran off here.

MOLE: I couldn't help myself. I wanted to find Badger.

RAT: I understand, but you shouldn't really have gone and done it, Mole. I did my best to warn you. We River-Bankers, we hardly ever come here by ourselves. If we have to travel here, we bring a friend. Now let's get on our way while there is a little light left.

Lights down on MOLE/RAT and up on FOX.

FOX: Off the two friends went, deep into the Wild Wood. And as they walked, it began to snow.

Lights down on FOX and up MOLE/RAT.

RAT: Hello there.

MOLE: What is up, Ratty?

RAT: Snow is up. Or rather, down. It's beginning to snow hard.

MOLE: The snow is making everything look different.

RAT: I think we might be lost.

Lights down on MOLE/RAT and up on FOX.

FOX: The snow was getting so deep that they could hardly drag their legs through it. The trees were thicker and more like each other than ever.

Lights down on FOX and up MOLE/RAT.

MOLE: Ratty, I just need to catch my breath.

RAT: We can't sit here for very long. The snow will soon be too deep for us to wade through.

MOLE: If it gets too bad maybe we can shelter in some cave or other. Or we could go back to Fox and sign up for his forest guide service?

RAT: That flimflam artist. I wouldn't let Fox cheat us. No! We can find our way out.

Lights down on MOLE/RAT and up on FOX.

FOX: Just when we thought they would be hopelessly lost in the woods and not get to Badger...

Lights down on FOX and up on MOLE/RAT.

MOLE: Ow my leg! Oh, my poor shin.

RAT: You don't seem to be having much luck today. Let's have a look at your leg.

MOLE: I tripped over this boot scraper by the tree. Look!

RAT: *(looks and begins dancing around)* Hooray!

MOLE: WHAT?

RAT: *(holds up a boot scraper)* Look!

MOLE: I see it. I've seen those plenty of times and used them to scrape snow off my boots. Why dance around after a boot scraper has injured me?

RAT: Don't you see what that means, Mole?

MOLE: It means that some forgetful person has left their boot scraper in the middle of the Wild Wood where it is sure to trip everyone up. Especially me? Very thoughtless of them.

RAT: (*grabs a doormat by the door scraper and holds it up*) Well see this?

MOLE: You seem to have found another piece of trash someone else has left out here, too?

RAT: Yes. A doormat.

MOLE: I bet that one wants to trip me and hurt my other shin.

RAT: But it's a doormat. Left near a boot scraper. What does that tell you?

MOLE: We need to get out of this snow and not dance around over garbage heaps left in the forest. Can we ride that mat like a sled out of the snow? Can we eat that doormat?

RAT: No my friend, but it does mean that there is a door nearby.

A fancy door in a tree appears on the shadow screen.

MOLE: Oh...

RAT: And a door nearby means a home.

BADGER: (*angry, from behind the "door"*) And it is a home you are disturbing with your arguing. Who is it this time? It better not be that Fox and Weasels, trying to sell me some junk. (*enters*)

RAT: Hello there, Badger. Please let us in. It's me – Rat and Mole – and we have lost our way in the snow.

BADGER: What, Ratty?! Lost on a night like this? Come along at once. You both must be frozen.

They go inside BADGER's house. RAT crosses up on the platform with the two HEDGEHOG children, who are sitting by the fire and drinking cocoa out of

mugs. MOLE and BADGER cross behind the flat as if going into another part of the house.

RAT: Thank you, Badger.

BADGER: This is not the sort of night to be out. Come along, into the kitchen. There's a first-rate fire here, and supper and everything.

HEDGEHOG CHILDREN: Hello!

RAT: Hello hedgehogs. Tonight must be the night for getting lost in the snow. Where have you youngsters come from?

HEDGEHOG CHILD 1: Yes, sir. Me and little Spike here, we were trying to find our way to school, Sir.

HEDGEHOG CHILD 2: And of course we lost ourselves, Sir.

HEDGEHOG CHILD 1: And Spike got frightened, Sir.

HEDGEHOG CHILD 2: I did not!

HEDGEHOG CHILD 1: Did too.

HEDGEHOG CHILD 2: Did not.

HEDGEHOG CHILD 1: Did too.

HEDGEHOG CHILD 2: Did not.

HEDGEHOG CHILD 1: Did too.

HEDGEHOG CHILD 2: Did not.

HEDGEHOG CHILD 1: And at last we happened on Badger's door, Sir.

HEDGEHOG CHILD 2: And we knocked and knocked for help, Sir.

HEDGEHOG CHILD 1 & HEDGEHOG CHILD 2: Because everyone knows Badger is kindhearted and always willing to help, Sir.

HEDGEHOG CHILD 2: Badger sent word to Mother and she is coming to get us, Sir.

RAT: I understand. Mole and I got lost, too. And you don't have to "Sir" me so much.

HEDGEHOG CHILD 1 & HEDGEHOG CHILD 2: Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir.

BADGER and MOLE step up to the platform as if coming from another part of the house. MOLE is bundled in a blanket to keep warm.

BADGER: Thank you, little Hedgehogs. Go run into the living room and play while we wait for your mother to come with her sleigh.

HEDGEHOG CHILD 1 & HEDGEHOG CHILD 2: Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir.

BADGER: Now then, what is the news from the River Bank Rat? How is old Toad going on?

MOLE: That is exactly why I came to see you and how we got lost. Oh we need your help, Badger, and Ratty said you were the wisest person in the Wild Wood and River Bank. Toad is going from bad to worse.

RAT: Toad is positively mental for motor cars.

MOLE: And has yet to give up this fad.

RAT: Loves to carelessly speed about in them...

MOLE: ...and had another smash up last week.

BADGER: How many?

MOLE AND RAT: Smashes or motor cars?

RAT: This was the seventh. Of both.

MOLE: And Toad Hall is piled to the roof with broken bits of motor cars.

RAT: Been to the hospital seven times.

MOLE: And the fines Toad has had to pay are huge.

RAT: And that is part of the trouble. Toad is rich as we all know, but isn't a millionaire.

MOLE: And is a hopelessly bad driver.

RAT: And may go to jail or worse.

MOLE: We're Toad's friends. Shouldn't we do something to help?

BADGER: Well, that is trouble, isn't it? And we cannot do something now with all this snow. Now that it is cold, is Toad still driving?

RAT: There has been less driving. But I don't think this fad will go away. On cold days Toad sits in the broken bits of the cars and pretends to drive.

MOLE: Or grabs a broken steering wheel and races about shouting "ZOOM! ZOOM!"

MOLE runs around BADGER's house imitating TOAD, until BADGER stops MOLE with an arm, making MOLE "Crash."

BADGER: I see. Well this is Toad's worst fad yet. (*BADGER thinks*) Here is what I think we should do. Once the year has turned warmer, we will have a serious talk with Toad. We'll stand no nonsense whatever. We'll teach reason, by force if need be. We'll MAKE Toad be a sensible Toad.

RAT & MOLE: Agreed!

BADGER, MOLE and RAT exit.

FOX: There wasn't much we could do that snowy winter. So we waited and watched. All winter, Toad tinkered with a new motor car. We knew once it was Spring, that impulsive Toad would be possessed and have a need for speed. Out on the road causing crashes and give us the chance we needed. Then one bright early morning in Spring...

BADGER quickly enters the center stage followed by MOLE and RAT.

BADGER: The hour has come!

MOLE: What hour?

BADGER: Whose hour, you should say. Why it is Toad's hour! The hour of Toad. I said we would help as soon as the winter is over, and that shall be today! You two shall accompany me instantly to Toad Hall and our work shall begin.

Lights shift to Toad Hall. The Emblem for Toad Hall and the words "Toad Hall" appear on the screen. TOAD enters.

TOAD: Hello, you are just in time. Why do you all look so stern?

BADGER: Take Toad inside.

MOLE and RAT grab TOAD.

TOAD: What is the meaning of this outrage?! I demand an explanation.

BADGER: Take those ridiculous driving goggles off.

MOLE and RAT grab TOAD and try to take the hat and goggles off but are fought off by TOAD.

TOAD: But, wait, no, stop. This! Is! An! Outrage!

BADGER: *(aggressive to TOAD)* You knew it would come to this someday, Toad.

RAT: *(aggressive to TOAD)* You've disregarded all the warnings we've given you.

BADGER: *(aggressive to TOAD)* You've been wasting your money and given all of us at the River Bank a bad name with all of your furious driving and crashes.

MOLE: *(kind to TOAD)* You are good and we don't want to be hard on you. We care about you.

BADGER: I will take you in the living room and I will make one more effort to make you see reason.

BADGER grabs TOAD and marches up onto the platform which is now "Toad Hall." BADGER sits TOAD on a stool.

RAT: THAT'S no good. TALKING will never cure him.

MOLE: Give it a chance.

We see the following acted out by TOAD and BADGER big and quickly, like they are in a silent film. We see BADGER shaking a finger and lecturing TOAD in three different ways, while TOAD goes from pouting, to sitting and crying, to having a tantrum on the floor.

FOX: Spying through the window we could just hear the long continuous drone of the Badger's voice and Toad sobbing like a baby. After some boring three-quarters of an hour, the door opened, and Badger reappeared, solemnly leading a very dejected Toad.

BADGER and TOAD cross back to MOLE and RAT. BADGER looks satisfied. TOAD looks very unhappy.

MOLE: Sit down here, Toad.

BADGER: My friends, I am pleased to inform you that Toad is truly sorry for past behavior and has promised to give up motor cars entirely and forever.

MOLE: That is good news.

BADGER: There is only one thing left to be done. You must say you are sorry for what you have done and you see the folly of it all.

Long pause during which TOAD silently fights exploding in anger.

BADGER: I'm sorry and I see the folly of what I have done.

TOAD: I'M NOT SORRY! AND IT WASN'T FOLLY! IT WAS GLORIOUS!

BADGER: You're backsliding, Toad!

TOAD: I'm not a bit sorry!

MOLE: Then you don't promise to never touch a motor car again?

TOAD: Certainly not! On the contrary, I faithfully promise that the very first motor car I see, ZOOOOM! Off I go in it! (*pretends to drive*) ZOOOOM!

RAT: I told you, didn't I?

BADGER: Very well. Since you won't be reasonable, take Toad upstairs to be locked in the bedroom until we figure out how to help.

TOAD keeps saying "zoom." All three take TOAD and cross into "Toad Hall." They sit TOAD down.

RAT: It is for your own good, Toad.

MOLE: Think what fun we shall all have together, when you get over this.

RAT: *(Covers TOAD's mouth with their hand. TOAD keeps saying "zoom.")* No more crashes or incidents with the police.

BADGER: *(after they grab TOAD)* It's going to be tedious. I've never seen you so determined, Toad. However, we will see it out. *(to RAT and MOLE)* Toad must never be left an instant unguarded. *(to TOAD)* We shall have to take it in turns watching you, until this has worked itself out of your system.

BADGER, MOLE, and RAT exit. TOAD acts out driving a motor car faster and faster and faster until it crashes. On the crash he falls over, knocking the chairs over. Laying on the floor, TOAD lets out a huge sigh. BADGER and MOLE enter off the platform.

BADGER: Hello Mole. Here to replace me on Toad watch?

MOLE: Yes. How is it going?

BADGER: Toad's still in bed. Can't get much out, except, a sad, "O leave me alone." Look out, Mole. It's been weeks without an incident. There's sure to be something up. Be careful.

BADGER exits. MOLE crosses up on the platform and quietly looks in on TOAD. TOAD is sitting in his chair, sadly looking at the ground.

MOLE: How are you today?

TOAD: *(a big sigh)* Thank you so much, dear Mole. So good of you to inquire. But first tell me how you are.

MOLE: I'm doing great. Ratty and I had a nice time boating and having lunch on the river. Cheer up, Toad. Don't sit around moping there in your chair on a fine morning like this.

TOAD: Dear kind Mole, how little you realize my condition (*sighs*) and how very far I am from "jumping up" now—if ever. (*sighs*) But do not trouble about me. I hate being a burden to my friends, and I do not expect to be one much longer. (*sighs*)

MOLE: I'm glad to hear it's going to stop.

TOAD: (*sighs*) I'm a nuisance, I know.

MOLE: You are indeed. If only you would be sensible and give this up. We could go have fun on the river.

TOAD: I would like that, Mole. I would beg you, for the last time, probably, to go to the village as quickly as possible – even now it may be too late – and fetch the doctor. But don't you bother. (*sighs*) We may as well let things take their course.

MOLE: What do you want a doctor for?

TOAD: Surely you have noticed... but why should you? Never mind. Forget I asked.

MOLE: Of course I'll fetch a doctor for you, if you really think you want one. But you can hardly be bad enough for that yet. Let's talk about something else.

TOAD: I fear that "talk" can do little in a case like this—or doctors either. And, by the way—while you are about it—I HATE to give you additional trouble, would you mind at the same time asking the lawyer to come see me?

MOLE: A lawyer! O, this must be really bad! I've never heard you ask for a lawyer! I'd better be on the safe side and run off to the village to get you both a doctor and a lawyer. Don't worry Toad, we will get you the helpers you need.

TOAD: (*faintly*) Thank you, little Mole.

MOLE exits quickly.

TOAD: HA HA! (*pretends to lack strength*) “Dear kind Mole, how little you realize my condition (*sighs*) and how far I am from “jumping up” now—if ever. (*sighs*) But do not trouble about me.” (*acting sick, but getting louder and gloating as the speech goes on*) I won’t send you off on a wild goose chase so I’m left alone. I won’t sneak out of Toad Hall. And I certainly won’t rush out and find the biggest, loudest motor car and race it around as fast as I can ZOOOOOOOM!!!

As TOAD zooms offstage, BADGER and RAT lead in MOLE, who looks ashamed.

BADGER: You’ve been a bit of a fool this time, Mole. You know how Toad can be.

MOLE: I’m so sorry, Badger. But in my defense Toad did it awfully well.

BADGER: What’s done is done. Talking won’t fix things. Toad’s got clear away for the time, that’s certain.

RAT: Toad will be back soon. After committing some folly and needing to run home and hide.

BADGER: True. That means we’d better continue to sleep at Toad Hall for a while longer. Toad may be brought back at any moment—on a stretcher, or between two policemen.

BADGER, MOLE and RAT exit.

During FOX’s speech the WEASELS cross in and set the scooter/car center stage and pose around it like they are showing off a great game show prize.

FOX: Meanwhile, happy and irresponsible, Toad was walking briskly along the High Road, some miles from home. When there was...

TOAD: (*seeing a motorcar*) OH MY.

FOX: This looked like the perfect opportunity to get Toad removed from Toad Hall permanently.

WEASEL 1: (*cheerful*) Hey look! It’s Toady!

WEASEL 2: (*cheerful*) Hey there, Toady!

WEASEL 3: (*cheerful*) Did you escape from your house, Warty?

WEASEL 4: (*cheerful*) Rat and Mole and that cranky old Badger couldn't hold you, could they?

WEASEL 5: (*cheerful*) Got your eye on that fancy motor car, don't ya?

FOX: (*cheerful*) Hello Toad of Toad Hall. The fastest Toad in all of the Wild Wood. How are you my friend?

TOAD: I'm fantastically well now that I have laid my eyes on this lovely object of engineering.

FOX: Word in the wood is that horrid Badger and friends had you trapped in Toad Hall?

TOAD: They did have me trapped, but I outsmarted them.

FOX: Of course you did. You are the amazing Toad. What brilliant plan did you use to get away?

TOAD: Smart piece of work that! Brain against brute force—and brain came out on the top. I outsmarted Mole.

FOX: Mole has many good qualities, but very little intelligence and absolutely no education.

TOAD: Sad isn't it?

FOX: You must teach Mole someday to be more like you.

TOAD: Yes, I should try to make Mole be more like me. But now if you will excuse me I need to gaze at this splendid motor car. (*greedily looks over the car*)

FOX: (*to TOAD*) You really can't appreciate a fine motor car unless you take a look inside.

TOAD: Too true, fine Fox. (*begins to get hypnotized by the car and crosses to it*)

FOX: And you really can't appreciate a fine motor car unless you sit behind the wheel.

TOAD: Too true, fine Fox! And while we are at it, there should be no harm in just sitting in the driver's seat.

TOAD grabs the scooter handles and stands behind it as if 'in the car.'

FOX: Too true, tremendous Toad. You know, I wonder... I wonder if a car like this starts easily?

TOAD: I wonder as well... That is a curiosity. And curiosity should always be followed through on.

FOX: Indeed! How else would one learn?

TOAD starts the car. We hear the sound of a car starting. TOAD revs the engine. We hear the sound of a revving engine.

TOAD: HAHHAHAHAHAHAHA! I am Toad of the High Road once more! Toad the terror, before whom all must give way or be smitten into nothingness. HAHHAHAHAHA!

The stage goes dark. We hear multiple cars chasing TOAD and flashing police lights. Then we hear screeching tires and a comical crash.

TOAD: *(after the crash and in the dark)* Dang it!

Switch to a courtroom on the stage. The shadow screen shows a gavel and/or the word "COURT." We hear ominous courtroom music. The JUDGE, CLERK and JAILER enter. The CLERK places a small table in the center of the platform. This is the JUDGE's bench. The CLERK and JAILER cross offstage and stand at the corners of the platform. The ENSEMBLE enters opposite of the JUDGE, CLERK and JAILER and become the audience in the court. The WEASELS enter wearing police hats. TOAD is center stage. FOX stands on a stump, higher than everyone else.

During this scene the ENSEMBLE reacts in shock to the negative accusations towards TOAD. They repeat in anger, shock, or disbelief "Public danger," "Cheeky Toad," "Yes, the Children" etc.

JUDGE: Look at this incorrigible rogue who we see cowering in front of us.

FOX: Toad is a menace.

TOAD: I am not a menace.

POLICE/WEASEL 4: We aren't safe with that speed demon on the roads.

POLICE/WEASEL 5: We need to Toad put away.

POLICE/WEASEL 1: Think of the children!!

General grumbling and repeating what the WEASELS said.

JUDGE: Order, order!

CLERK: QUIET PLEASE!

JUDGE: Let me see: Toad has been found guilty, on the clearest evidence. First, of stealing a valuable motor car.

POLICE/WEASEL 2: Thief!

TOAD: It was a BEAUTY that needed to be driven!

JUDGE: Secondly, of driving recklessly and dangerously.

POLICE/WEASEL 3: Toad is a public danger!

TOAD: I am a driver of immense skill, Your Honor.

JUDGE: And, thirdly, of gross disrespect and cheek to the rural police.

TOAD: They should be on trial for being disrespectful to me, Your Honor.

POLICE/WEASELS: You disrespectful and cheeky Toad!

CLERK: Order! Order!

JUDGE: The ONLY difficulty that presents itself in this otherwise very clear case is, how can we possibly punish this hardened ruffian enough for all of these crimes.

POLICE/WEASEL 4: Throw the book at the prisoner!

JUDGE: Clerk, will you tell us, please, what is the very stiffest penalty we can impose for each of these offences? Without, of course, giving this criminal the benefit of any doubt, because there isn't any.

The CLERK interrogates and crosses back and forth behind TOAD.

CLERK: Some people would think that stealing the motor car was the worst offence.

TOAD: BAH!

CLERK: And so it is. But cheeking the police undoubtedly carries the severest penalty.

TOAD: ABSURD!

CLERK: Supposing you were to say twelve months for the theft, which is mild.

TOAD: What?

FOX: You should add three years for the furious driving, which is lenient.

TOAD: What?!

JUDGE: Excellent suggestion.

POLICE/WEASEL 5: And fifteen years for the cheek.

POLICE/WEASEL 1: Which was pretty bad sort of cheek, judging by what we've heard.

FOX: It was an extremely bad cheek!

TOAD: WHAT?!

CLERK: Those figures, if added together correctly, (*counts on fingers with great difficulty*) to nineteen years—

TOAD: Nineteen years?!!

FOX: You had better make it a round twenty years and be on the safe side.

JUDGE: Another excellent suggestion!

TOAD: This is a gross miscarriage of justice. You're out of order, Judge! And you're out of order, Clerk! This whole court is out of order!!!!

JUDGE: Prisoner! Pull yourself together. It's going to be twenty years for you this time. And I warn you, if you appear before us again, upon any charge whatever, we shall have to deal with you very seriously!

WEASELS/POLICE come forward to grab TOAD and drag them to the jail. The Shadow Screen switches and we see bars and/or the word "Jail." The platform is now the jail.

TOAD: Keep your hands off of me, you brutal minions. At least if you are going to imprison me, let me stay in the confines of my own simple modest home on house arrest! I don't deserve to be kept in this grim old castle, in the grimmest dungeon that is in the heart of this dank old prison.

The POLICE/WEASELS pass TOAD down the line of them and in front of the JAILER.

POLICE/WEASEL 1: Get up, Jailer.

POLICE/WEASEL 2: Take over from us this vile Toad.

POLICE/WEASEL 3: A criminal of deepest guilt.

POLICE/WEASEL 4: Watch and beware of Toad's tricks.

POLICE/WEASEL 5: If there is an escape, all the blame will be on your head!

TOAD: I am a helpless prisoner in the remotest dungeon of the best-guarded stoutest castle in all of the world.

The JAILER tosses TOAD in prison. TOAD falls to the floor dramatically and cries. The POLICE/WEASELS exit.

TOAD's moaning and complaining should start small and get progressively bigger and bigger.

TOAD: This is the end of everything!

JAILER: Quiet in there!

FOX: Toad's moaning went on for weeks.

TOAD: The popular and fine-looking Toad. The rich and hospitable Toad. The Toad so free and careless! Is... no more!

FOX: And weeks.

TOAD: How can I hope to ever be happy again? I have been unfairly imprisoned for stealing such a handsome motor car in such an audacious manner.

FOX: And weeks.

TOAD: Now I must languish in this dungeon till people who were proud to say they knew me, have forgotten the very name of Toad! O wise old Badger! O clever, intelligent Rat and sensible Mole!

FOX: Until...

JAILER: I can't take any more of this moaning!

JAILER'S DAUGHTER enters, carrying a tray of food for TOAD.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: I can't bear to see that poor beast so unhappy.

JAILER: I can't bear to see that beast so unhappy either.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: Toad is so unhappy and getting so thin! Would you let me manage this prisoner?

JAILER: Gladly. So I won't have to listen to Toad any longer. Do what you like. (*exits*)

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: (*crosses to the platform*) Hello? Toad?

TOAD: Who are you?

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: Now, cheer up, Toad. Sit up and dry your eyes and be sensible. Now here, I've brought you a bit of breakfast.

TOAD: No, I will just lay here on the floor in misery.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: Hot from the oven.

TOAD: I refuse to be comforted.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: (*gets on platform and into cell and offers TOAD the tray of food*) It's hot buttered toast and tea with honey.

TOAD: It does smell good. And it's making me think new and inspiring thoughts of my grand home at Toad Hall. Very well. (*hungrily grabs the tray of food*) Thank you for being so kind.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: Tell me about Toad Hall. Is it beautiful?

TOAD: Toad Hall is beautiful and very unique; dating in part from the fourteenth century, but replete with every modern convenience. Up-to-date sanitation. Five minutes from the golf course.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: Toad, I'm feeling very sorry for you. It is a shame that you should be locked up here.

TOAD: It is a shame. A great shame.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: It IS a great shame. A shame that a poor little toad should be locked up in prison for what seems trivial offence.

TOAD: Yes! A trivial offence. A very trivial offence.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: Yes. VERY trivial.

TOAD: YES! Extremely, VERY, trivial and minor and tiny and –

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: (*snaps*) Toad! Just listen, please. (*calms herself*) I have an aunt who is a washer woman –

TOAD: (*interrupts*) There, there. Think no more about it. I have several aunts who OUGHT to be washer women.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: (*snaps*) Do be quiet a minute, Toad. You talk too much, that's your chief fault. I'm trying to think, and you hurt my head. (*calms herself*) I think my aunt can help you. She does the washing for the prisoners here. She takes out the

washing on Monday morning, and brings it in on Friday evening and then leaves for the weekend.

TOAD: (*bored*) This is fascinating.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: (*giving TOAD a big hint*) Today is Friday.

TOAD: You know the days of the week. Very good young woman.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: Auntie!

The WASHER WOMAN enters and crosses into jail cell.

WASHER WOMAN: I will let you have my dress and bonnet and so on, and you could escape as the official washer woman.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: 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.

WASHER WOMAN: See. What a horrid little Toad.

TOAD: You wouldn't surely have the great Toad of Toad Hall going about the country disguised as a lowly washer woman!

WASHER WOMAN: You proud, ungrateful toad. She is feeling sorry for you, and trying to help you! Then you can stay in jail as the Toad you are.

TOAD: No, no. You are good, kind and I am indeed a proud and a stupid toad. I am sorry.

WASHER WOMAN: Now you take this dress of mine and you can walk out of this jail dressed as me. I will say you stole some of the clothes I had with me when I stopped to get your laundry.

TOAD: Oooh Yes! And then I escape from prison without a trace. Like smoke. Like an international spy. Like a ninja. This is a grand way for Toad of Toad Hall to escape. This will make my reputation.

JAILER'S DAUGHTER: No, once free you must be kind and humble and keep out of trouble. You are a gentle soul and this is your second chance.



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