

C. Edward Wheaton

Adapted from the novel (1908) by Kenneth Grahame
Illustrations (1913) by Paul Bransom

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The Wind in the Willows

CLASSIC. Adapted from the novel by Kenneth Grahame. Struck with spring fever, Mole the mole emerges from his underground home and ventures to the river, where he meets up with Ribby the water rat and the mischievous Thaddeus Toad, who has a knack for getting himself into trouble. Obsessed with motorcars, the impulsive Toad “borrows” Mr. and Mrs. Churchmouse’s car, recklessly crashes it into a tree, and ends up in jail. To save Toad, Ribby and Marley journey into the Wild Woods in order to find the wise Badger, who they think can transform Toad into a responsible, sensible creature and convince Judge H. Owl to release Toad from jail. Meanwhile, the rascally weasels have emerged from the Wild Woods, taken up residence in Toad’s house, and are running all the river-bankers off. With the help of two hedgehogs, Toad manages to sneak out of jail disguised as a washerwoman. Toad then joins up with Badger, Ribby, and Marley, and the friends set out to take back Toad Hall and drive the weasels back into the Wild Woods where they belong. Audiences of all ages will enjoy the friends’ adventures as they encounter a host of amusing animals including an otter, a horse, an owl, gray rats, a groundhog, wood mice, and even a pack rat.

Performance Time: Approximately 60 minutes.

About the Story



Kenneth Grahame (1859-1932)

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, Kenneth Grahame published his most famous work *The Wind in the Willows* in 1908. The novel became a classic in children's literature and features the comical exploits of Mr. Toad, Mole, Badger, and Ratty. Grahame's nightly bedtime stories for his only child, Alastair, were the basis for the book and Alastair served as the inspiration for the character of Mr. Toad.

Characters

(3 M, 4 F, 16 flexible, opt. extras)

(3 M, 2 F, 10 flexible)

THADDIUS TOAD: A wealthy, impulsive toad who lives in Toad Hall, the finest house on the river; he is conceited but jovial and has a knack for getting himself into trouble as he is easily bored and jumps from one craze to the next; wears a green double-breasted coat and an exaggerated version of Tudor shoes (like Henry VIII's shoes); male.

MARLEY: Mild-mannered, shy mole who is interested in river-bank life and easily impressed with Toad's crazes; has a long nose and wears glasses and a dark corduroy or velvet boiler suit that fits loosely and floppily; flexible.

RIBBY: Cheerful, friendly water rat who takes Marley under his wing and introduces him to life along the riverbank; wears a white shirt with the sleeves rolled up and white flannel pants with his long tail sticking out; flexible.

BADGER: Wise, brave badger who lives at the base of a tree in the Wild Woods; older than the other animals, he serves as a type of wise hermit or mother/father figure; wears a gray checked tweed smoking jacket, a fez, and slippers; flexible.

JEREMY/JEMMY: Ribby's cousin, a clever pack rat, who lives in the Wild Woods and loves to collect odds and ends; wears a jacket and always carries a sack containing his treasured assortment of odds and ends; flexible. (Note: "Jemmy," if female).

BOSS: Leader of a pack of menacing, greedy weasels, who collect tolls from travelers wishing to enter the Wild Woods and who have taken over Toad Hall and the riverbank; flexible.

WILLIE: A weasel who works for Boss Weasel; flexible.

MOREY: A weasel who works for Boss Weasel; flexible.

JUDGE H. OWL: Badger's good friend, a no-nonsense owl and courtroom judge; wears a judge's robe; flexible.

HEDGEHOG: A hedgehog who serves as Judge Owl's courtroom bailiff; wears a uniform; male.

JENNY: Hedgehog's caring daughter who works as a washerwoman at the prison; wears a plain/simple dress, woolen knickers, a shawl, and a bonnet.

AUNT NELLIE: Jenny's aunt, a hedgehog, who works as a prison washerwoman; wears a plain/simple dress, woolen knickers, a shawl, and a bonnet.

MRS. CHURCHMOUSE: A church mouse whose motorcar was "borrowed" by Toad and destroyed; wears a dress and hat.

MR. CHURCHMOUSE: Mrs. Churchmouse's meek husband and motorcar enthusiast; wears a suit.

BARGE RAT: Plump water rat; wears overalls, boots, a wide-brimmed straw hat, and a red neckerchief; female.

GROUNDHOG: An elderly, slow-moving, and unhelpful groundhog; flexible.

OTTER: Ribby's friend and fellow river-banker; flexible.

POLICE OFFICER 1, 2, 3: Gray rats; wear police uniforms; flexible.

WOOD MOUSE 1, 2: Wood mice who have to flee the riverbank because the Weasels have taken it over; flexible.

DOBBIN: A horse; non-speaking; flexible.

EXTRAS (opt.): As Courtroom Spectators and Weasels.

Suggestions for doubling:

JENNY/MRS. CHURCHMOUSE (Female)

NELLIE/BARGE RAT (Female)

HEDGEHOG/OTTER (Male)

JEREMY/MR. CHURCHMOUSE (Male)

WOOD MOUSE 1/POLICE OFFICER 1 (Flexible)

WOOD MOUSE 2/POLICE OFFICER 2 (Flexible)

GROUNDHOG/POLICE OFFICER 3/DOBBIN (Flexible)

Setting

Summer 1908. Riverbank and willows.

Sets

Sets can be as simple or elaborate as your budget allows.

Riverbank and willows. There is a backdrop depicting willow trees and several standing trees.

Wild Woods. Dark and gloomy. There is a backdrop of trees and bushes and a tree stump.

Badger's house. Front door at the base of a tree and a large door knocker.

Courtroom. There is a judge's bench, two tables, and benches for spectators.

Prison cell. There is a bunk CS with a worn mattress with straw sticking out of it and a tattered blanket and pillow. There is a window with bars and a cell door.

Courtyard at Toad Hall. There is a backdrop of the side of a house and three patio chairs.

Synopsis of Scenes

Scene 1: Riverbank.

Scene 2: Dirt road.

Scene 3: Riverbank.

Scene 4: Wild Woods.

Scene 5: Wild Woods.

Scene 6: Front of Badger's house.

Scene 7: Courtroom.

Scene 8: Prison cell.

Scene 9: Prison cell.

Scene 10: Wild Woods.

Scene 11: Riverbank.

Scene 12: Riverbank.

Scene 13: Courtyard, Toad Hall.

Props

| | |
|---|---|
| Blue and white rowboat cutout on wheels | Covered basket Wallet |
| Gypsy caravan/wagon | Money |
| Fallen tree trunk | Rope |
| Cart with misc belongs for Wood Mice | Tree stump |
| Sack filled with odds and ends, for Jeremy | Barge cutout |
| Water pitcher | Washtub |
| Water glass | Laundry soap |
| Chains | Scrub brush |
| Remains of a car | Large load of clothes including whites, colors, and delicates |
| Legal papers | 3 Drink glasses |
| Old-fashioned car/bicycle bulb horn | Pots and pans |
| Woman's handkerchief | 4 Clubs |
| Gavel | Large basket extending from hot air balloon (opt.) |

Special Effects

Gentle breeze

Sound of a vintage car

Sound of vintage car horn

Crashing sound

Cloud of dust

Sound of snapping twigs

Bushes rustling

Horse whinnying

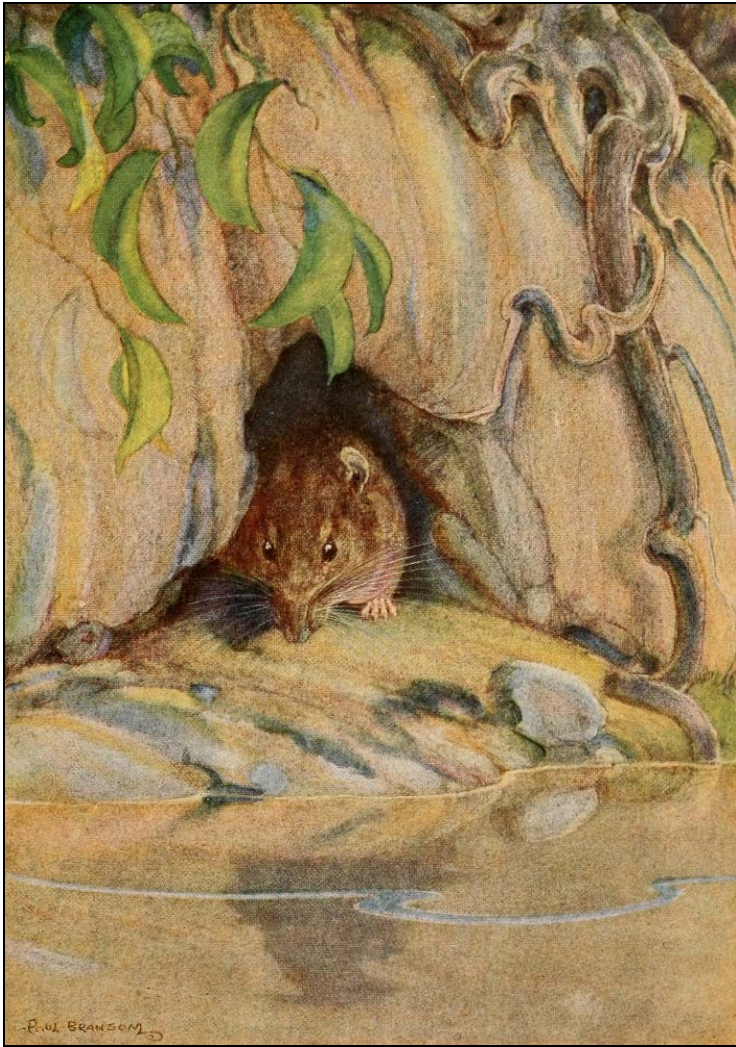
Hoof beats retreating into
the distance

Bird chirping

Bird singing

*"I didn't know
that there was
so much world
beyond my front door."*

—Marley



Scene 1

(AT RISE: Riverbank and willows. Ribby and Marley enter in a blue and white rowboat.)

RIBBY: Well, here we are. (*Gets out, secures boat. Helps Marley out of the boat.*) Welcome to the willows, old boy. (*Speechless, Marley surveys the surroundings.*) I thought it was about time for you to get out and see what the rest of the world looked like.

MARLEY: I didn't know that there was so much world beyond my front door.

RIBBY: Oh, there is much more than this. Besides, it is a much too beautiful day to be wasted on spring-cleaning.

MARLEY: (*Points paw in direction.*) What lies over there?

RIBBY: That? Oh, that's the Wild Woods. We don't go there very much, we river-bankers.

MARLEY: Why?

RIBBY: (*Hesitates.*) Well...

MARLEY: Aren't there very nice animals there?

RIBBY: Well, yes, there are a few. My friend, Badger, lives right in the heart of it. Dear old Badger. He says he wouldn't live anywhere else.

MARLEY: Isn't he afraid?

RIBBY: No. Nobody bothers him. They know it's just as well not to.

MARLEY: Who are "they"?

RIBBY: (*Hesitates.*) The weasels.

MARLEY: Weasels?

RIBBY: Always making trouble for anyone passing through their woods, or so they claim.

MARLEY: Oh, my! And beyond the Wild Woods?

RIBBY: Beyond the Wild Woods? The Wide World. And that's something that doesn't matter either to you or me. I've never been there, and I'm never going, nor you either, if

you've got any sense at all. Stick to the river. (*In a state of reverie.*) There is nothing, absolutely nothing, half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats. Nothing seems really to matter. That's the charm of it. 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. (*There is a gentle breeze that springs up just for a moment, gently passing through the willow trees.*) You smell that? (*Marley takes a deep breath.*) That's the clean smell of the river. You won't find that anywhere else.

(*Pause.*)

TOAD: (*Offstage, calls.*) Hullo there! I say, hullo there!

MARLEY: (*Looking off. To Ribby.*) Who's that?

RIBBY: Oh, dear. That's Toad.

MARLEY: Toad?

RIBBY: Thaddius Toad. He's a friend of mine. A nice enough fellow. But he does have a knack for getting himself into difficulties.

(*Toad enters.*)

TOAD: Why, hullo, Ratty!

RIBBY: Hullo, Toad.

TOAD: What brings you to the willows?

RIBBY: My boat.

(*Pause. Ribby's joke finally sinks in and Toad laughs.*)

TOAD: Oh, yes. I get it now. Your boat brought you. (*Laughs again.*)

RIBBY: I was giving my friend, Marley Mole, a boat ride. And... (*Introducing.*) ...this is Marley Mole.

TOAD: (*To Marley.*) Well, so you're a mole?

MARLEY: That's right.

TOAD: I suppose you have heard of me?

MARLEY: No. I can't say that I have.

TOAD: What? Have you lived underground all your life?

MARLEY: As a matter of fact, I have.

TOAD: (*Suddenly dawns on him.*) Of course you have. (*Laughs.*) Well, I'll tell you what...come with me to my house, and I'll fill you in on all you have missed. I own the finest house on the whole river or anywhere else for that matter.

RIBBY: (*Aside. To Marley.*) Modesty isn't one of Toad's attributes.

TOAD: (*Overhears.*) Well, if it's the truth, why tiptoe around it?

RIBBY: Actually, we weren't planning to call on anyone—

TOAD: Nonsense. It would be no imposition at all. (*To Marley.*) "Toad Hall," that's the name of my house. Toad Hall is always open to friends.

(*Caught up in Toad's enthusiasm, Marley looks at Ribby with excitement.*)

MARLEY: (*To Toad.*) It sounds wonderful! I would like to see it.

RIBBY: (*Sighs.*) All right, Marley. It's your day. (*Looks up and down the river.*) Where is your boat, Toad? Don't tell me you walked all the way?

TOAD: Toad walk? Never! Boats? Bah! I gave that up! Silly childish amusement. It makes me sorry to see you fellows—who ought to know better—spending all your energies in that aimless manner. To think of the wasted years that lie behind me, squandered in trivialities.

RIBBY: (*Annoyed.*) Now, see here, Toad. I've spent my life boating on this river.

TOAD: Oh, no offense, dear Ribby. That's all fine and well for you. But for Toad the Adventurous, I must contrive to try new things. I have discovered the real thing.

RIBBY: (*Sighs.*) Again?

TOAD: The only genuine occupation for a lifetime.

RIBBY: What is it this time?

TOAD: Wait here and prepare to be amazed. (*Exits.*)

RIBBY: (*Shaking his head.*) Oh, dear.

MARLEY: What's wrong?

RIBBY: I fear he is off on another one of his crazes. First, it was bicycles. He had six in all. Then it was motorbikes. Eight of those. All of which ended up in numerous wrecks. Then it was boats. He owns a dozen. He never does anything by halves. But it's all the same. Whatever he takes up eventually he gets tired of it and starts something fresh.

(Toad enters, leading Dobbin, a horse, pulling a gypsy caravan/wagon.)

TOAD: Here you are! There's real life for you embodied in this little cart. The open road, the dusty highway. Camps, villages, towns, cities! Here today, up and off to somewhere else tomorrow! Travel, change, interest, excitement! The whole world before you, and a horizon that's always changing!

(Marley is caught up in Toad's enthusiasm.)

MARLEY: Glorious! (*Suddenly embarrassed by this outburst.*) Oh, I'm sorry.

TOAD: Climb on board, and you'll be convinced to give up your boat.

RIBBY: Never! I'm going to stick to my boat and the old river.

TOAD: Just ride as far as Toad Hall.

MARLEY: *(To Ribby.)* This would be my first ride on a caravan. To think, a boat and a caravan all in one day! And I would like to see Toad Hall...

RIBBY: All right. But only as far as Toad Hall.

TOAD: Excellent! All aboard!

(Blackout.)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: Dirt road on the way to Toad Hall. The stage is dark. There is the sound of a vintage car, then a car horn honking, and then a crashing sound. Lights up. Toad's caravan is on its side. There is Dobbin, a horse, standing on the side of road in a cloud of dust. Toad is standing in the middle of road transfixed on the image of the car disappearing into the distance.)

RIBBY: (*Shaking his fist at the disappearing car. Shouts.*) You villains! You scoundrels, you highwaymen, you-you-road hogs! I'll have the law on you! (*Turns to Marley.*) Are you all right, Marley?

MARLEY: (*Coughs from dust.*) I'm all right. Nothing seriously wrong. But I think the caravan faired worse than I.

RIBBY: Let's see if we can set it upright. (*They try to tip the caravan upright on its wheels but are unsuccessful.*) It's no use. (*Shouts.*) Toad! Give us a hand, here. Toad!

(*In a trancelike state, Toad is staring down at the road. Marley starts to examine the damaged caravan.*)

MARLEY: Oh, look. The axle's broken.

(*Ribby approaches Toad.*)

RIBBY: Toad! Are you all right?

(*Ribby waves his hand in front of Toad's face.*)

TOAD: (*Ignoring Ribby.*) Glorious, stirring sight! Poop! Poop! Poetry in motion! Poop! Poop! The real way to travel! The only way to travel! Here today...in the next week, tomorrow! Oh, bliss! Poop! Poop! Poop!

(Toad begins steering an imaginary car around the stage and honking the horn.)

RIBBY: Toad! Snap out of it!

(Toad stops, opens the imaginary car door, gets out, and shuts the door.)

TOAD: And to think I never knew. But now...but now that I know, now that I fully realize! What dust clouds shall spring up behind me as I speed on my reckless way! What carts I shall fling carelessly into the ditch in the wake of my magnificent onslaught!

MARLEY: *(To Ribby.)* Is he all right?

RIBBY: Yes, I'm afraid so. And I'm sure he's going to get into some kind of trouble. *(Sighs.)* Well, we are not too far from Toad Hall. We'll get Toad home and have his housekeeper put him to bed, and maybe he'll forget all this nonsense.

MARLEY: What about his caravan?

RIBBY: We'll send someone out to pick it up and bring it back to Toad Hall and put it among Toad's other wrecks.

(Marley approaches Toad.)

MARLEY: Come on, Toad, let's get you home.

TOAD: *(Goes off with Marley.)* Poop! Poop! Poop! Poop!

(Ribby goes to Dobin and takes the reins. Ribby looks at Toad and sighs deeply. Dobin snorts and shakes his head.)

RIBBY: *(To Dobin.)* I quite agree.

(They exit. Blackout.)

Scene 3

(AT RISE: Riverbank and willows, somewhere along the river. Ribby is lying against a fallen tree trunk sunning himself. Marley enters.)

MARLEY: Ah, Ribby.

RIBBY: Marley, old fellow. Beautiful day, isn't it?

MARLEY: Yes. Too beautiful to spend the day whitewashing.

RIBBY: It's a splendid day for a row, or a stroll along the hedges, or a picnic.

MARLEY: Or...we could go see how Toad is doing. I have been worried about him since we left him last week.

(Otter pops up from the river, or he can just enter.)

RIBBY: Otter! What brings you here?

OTTER: Haven't you heard?

RIBBY: Heard what?

OTTER: There's nothing else being talked about all along the riverbank. Toad has been arrested.

RIBBY: Again? Well, I suppose he'll just get another fine along with a lecture.

OTTER: This time it's more serious.

RIBBY: More serious? What did Toad do this time?

OTTER: He stole a motorcar and wrecked it.

RIBBY: Was he injured?

OTTER: No. But word has it that Judge Owl is not going to let him off with just a warning this time.

(Ribby thinks.)

RIBBY: I guess the time has come for someone to take Toad in hand and force him to behave responsibly.

OTTER: Do you think he'll listen to you?

RIBBY: I wasn't referring to myself. I was thinking of Badger.

If anyone can get through to Toad, he can.

OTTER: Do you think he'll do it?

RIBBY: Who else can we turn to?

OTTER: Well, I have to be going. Goodbye, Ribby. Goodbye, Marley.

(Otter exits into the water or offstage. Ribby is deep in thought.)

MARLEY: *(To Ribby.)* You're not thinking of going into the Wild Woods where the weasels are, are you?

RIBBY: That's the only way to see Badger.

MARLEY: But, the weasels—

RIBBY: We'll just have to chance it. *(Pause.)* Are you with me?

MARLEY: I'll stick by you, Ribby... *(Scared, gulps.)* ...no matter what happens.

RIBBY: Then lets get started.

(They exit. Blackout.)

Scene 4

(AT RISE: On the border of the Wild Woods. Ribby and Marley enter. Marley is slowly following behind Ribby.)

RIBBY: (Looks offstage.) Who's that coming?

MARLEY: Do you think it might be the weasels?

(Wood Mouse 1 and 2 enter, pushing a cart containing all their belongings.)

RIBBY: (To Wood Mouse 1, 2.) Hold on there! Where are you headed in such a hurry?

WOOD MOUSE 1: We're moving away from the riverbank.

RIBBY: Why?

WOOD MOUSE 2: Haven't you heard?

RIBBY: Heard what?

WOOD MOUSE 1: The weasels are taking over the riverbank.

RIBBY: What?

WOOD MOUSE 2: They've moved into Toad Hall and are running the river-bankers off.

RIBBY: But—

WOOD MOUSE 1: We don't have time to stand around and talk. We have to find a new place to live.

(Mouse 1, 2 exit.)

RIBBY: (To Marley.) Now we need Badger's help more than ever.

(Blackout.)

Scene 5

(AT RISE: *In the middle of the Wild Woods, a dark and gloomy place. Ribby and Marley move along, cautiously. Nervously looking about, Marley is closely following Ribby. Suddenly, there is the sound of snapping twigs and bushes rustling.*)

MARLEY: (*Shouts.*) Weasels!

(*Marley dives for cover behind some trees or bushes. Out steps Jeremy Pack Rat with a sack slung over his back. Both Jeremy and Ribby stare at each other a moment.*)

RIBBY: Jeremy!

JEREMY: Ribby! (*Drops his sack. They embrace.*) What are you doing out here?

RIBBY: We're on our way to see my friend Badger.

JEREMY: We?

RIBBY: (*Looks around. Calls.*) Marley! Come out! It's all right. (*Marley slowly emerges from his hiding place.*) This is my cousin Jeremy Pack Rat.

MARLEY: (*To Jeremy.*) How do you do? I've never met a pack rat before. If you don't mind my asking, why do you carry a sack?

JEREMY: Family tradition. My father, my grandfather, my great-grandfather all carried sacks. We collect things.

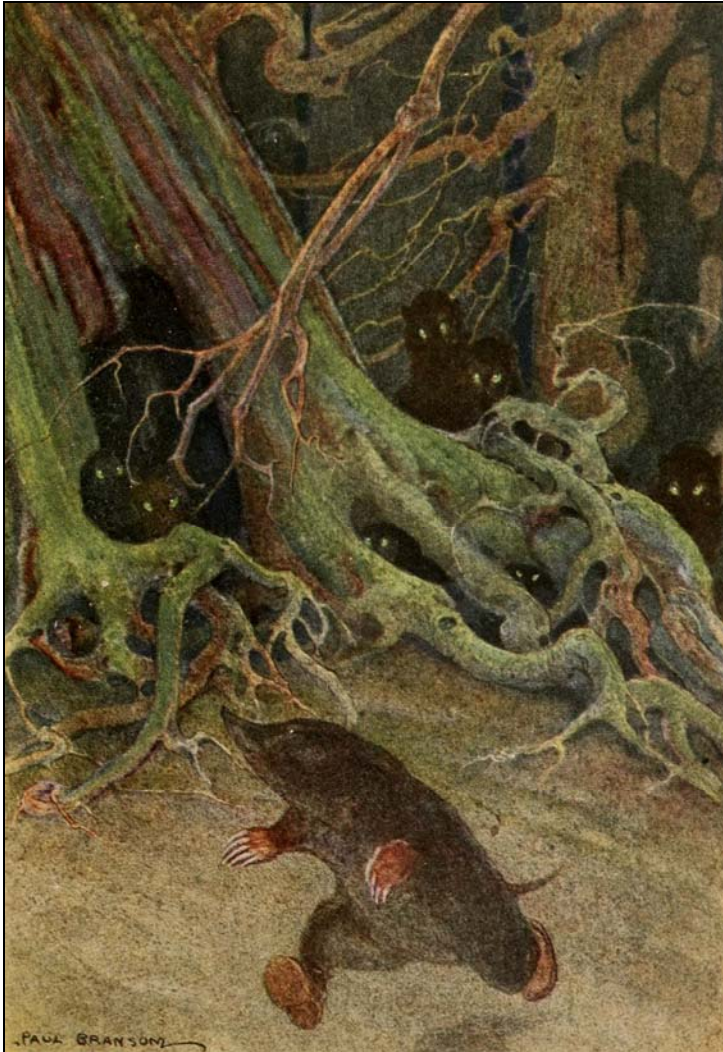
MARLEY: What kind of things?

JEREMY: Whatever odds and ends we happen to come across. But we never take anything without leaving something in exchange.

MARLEY: Aren't you afraid of going into the Wild Woods alone?

JEREMY: Naw. To travel in these woods there are dodges and tricks you must know. All simple enough, but they've got to be known if you're small, or you'll find yourself in

trouble.



(Pause. To Ribby.) Well, cousin, it must be something important that brings you into the woods.

RIBBY: Our friend Toad has got himself into a bit of a mess, and we need Badger's help to get him out.

JEREMY: Toad did you say?

RIBBY: That's right.

JEREMY: Oh, I heard about him. I'll say he is in a mess. He goes on trial today.

MARLEY: Do you really think Badger will be able to help him?

RIBBY: Well, if anyone can...it's Badger.

(Willie Weasel steps out from behind a tree.)

WILLIE: Well. Well. Well. What have we here?

RIBBY: (To Marley.) That's a weasel.

(Marley hides behind Ribby and Jeremy.)

WILLIE: You! (Points at Marley.) The guy with the long nose.

(Marley nervously peers out from behind Ribby and Jeremy.)

MARLEY: Who, me?

WILLIE: Yes, you. Get out here where I can see you. (Marley complies.) That's better. (Eying the trio over.) You boys are a long way from home. Well, if you want to go any farther, you'll have to pay a toll.

RIBBY: A toll? What's the idea?

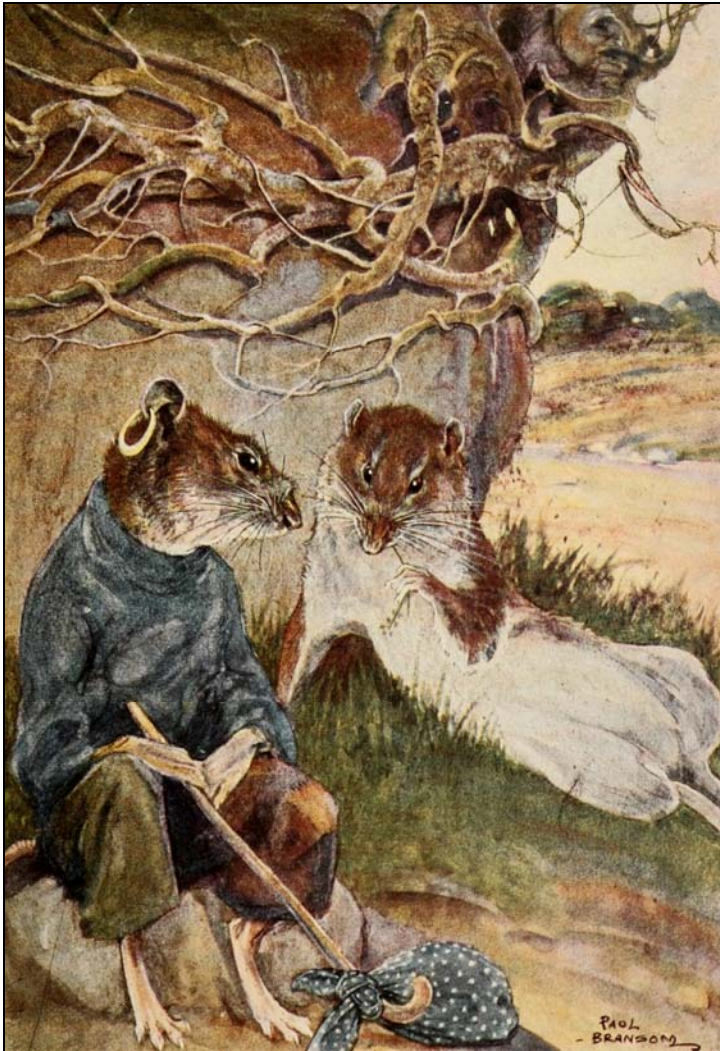
WILLIE: Allow me to introduce myself. I'm Willie Weasel. And it just so happens these are *my* woods.

RIBBY: Your woods?

WILLIE: As far as the eye can see.

JEREMY: Very impressive. Very impressive, indeed. I like what you have done with it...the trees and all.

WILLIE: Quit stallin' around.



MARLEY: But we haven't any money. (*Willie Weasel glares at Marley. Gulps.*) Sir.

WILLIE: Hmm... (*Rubs his chin and eyes up Jeremy's sack.*) I'm a fair weasel. What have you got in the sack?

JEREMY: Which sack are you talking about?

WILLIE: What are you, a wise guy?

JEREMY: Oh, you mean *this* sack. I don't think I could possibly part with it. A family heirloom. Passed down from generation to generation.

(*Weasel menacingly approaches Jeremy.*)

WILLIE: Come on. Hand it over.

MARLEY: (*Nervously, to Jeremy.*) Please give it to him.

JEREMY: (*Sighs.*) Well, I guess I don't have any choice.

(*Jeremy reluctantly offers up his sack to Willie Weasel.*)

WILLIE: Gimme that sack! (*Grabs the sack from Jeremy and opens it.*) What's all this junk? This is all worthless!

JEREMY: The good stuff is at the bottom.

WILLIE: (*Skeptically.*) At the bottom, huh?

JEREMY: You never know what unsavory characters you'll meet up with...

(*Willie Weasel thinks.*)

WILLIE: That makes sense. (*Begins tossing the items out of sack.*) Hey, what are you trying to pull? There is nothing else in here.

JEREMY: It's way down at the bottom.

WILLIE: (*Pokes his head into the sack a little farther.*) I still don't see anything.

JEREMY: Here, I'll hold the bag open, and you look inside...way down at the bottom.

WILLIE: Thanks, pal. But don't try anything funny. (*Willie Weasel crawls into the sack or puts his head into the sack.*) I still don't see anything.

JEREMY: Keep looking... (*Ties the sack shut with some rope.*)

WILLIE: Hey! What's the idea?

JEREMY: (*To Marley and Ribby.*) Weasels are not too bright.

(*Jeremy takes another sack out of his back pocket and picks up the discarded items. Pause.*)

WILLIE: (*Shouts.*) You better let me out, or else! (*Pause. Pleads.*) Aw, come on, fellas. Not fair. I was only foolin'.

JEREMY: (*To Ribby and Marley.*) I'd better travel with you to make sure you get to your friend Badger without any more trouble.

(*Jeremy, Ribby, and Marley exit.*)

WILLIE: (*Calls.*) Guys?! (*Pause.*) Aw, geez...

(*Blackout.*)

Scene 6

(AT RISE: *In front of Badger's house. The door is at the base of a large tree, and there is a large door knocker on it. Ribby, Marley and Jeremy enter.*)

JEREMY: *(To Ribby and Jeremy.)* Well, here you are...safe and sound at your friend Badger's.

RIBBY: *(Shaking hands with Jeremy.)* Thank you, cousin.

JEREMY: *(Shaking hands with Marley.)* Marley.

RIBBY: I hope we meet again sometime.

JEREMY: Who knows? I may drop in. Good luck with your friend Toad. *(Waves goodbye as he exits.)*

RIBBY: *(To Marley.)* Well, let's see if Badger's home.

(Ribby pounds on the door with the door knocker. The door opens and out steps Badger. He is wearing a smoking jacket, fez, and slippers.)

BADGER: Why, Ribby! What are you doing here? *(Notices Marley.)* And who is your friend?

RIBBY: This is Marley.

BADGER: *(To Marley.)* How do you do? *(Pause. To Ribby.)* It must be something important to bring you this far into the Wild Woods.

RIBBY: I have come about Toad.

BADGER: Toad!

RIBBY: He's managed to get himself into a real mess.

BADGER: Yes, with Toad it's one mess after another. His rows with the police. He disregards all attempts to bring him to reason! Toad! Humph! Toad the conceited! Toad the braggart! Toad the reckless!

MARLEY: *(Timidly lays his hand on Badger's arm.)* Toad our friend?

BADGER: (*Attitude softens. Looks down at Marley.*) Yes, Toad our friend. (*Pats Marley's hand.*) What mess has he gotten himself into this time?

RIBBY: He stole a motorcar and wrecked it.

BADGER: Toad and his infernal crazes!

RIBBY: We heard that he is most likely to go to prison for a long time.

BADGER: Well, maybe it will do him some good. How many times has he been warned?

RIBBY: Yes, I know. But you know Toad...

BADGER: Yes. All too well.

RIBBY: Badger, you are the wisest animal that I know. I came here in hopes that you could make him a responsible creature. I have tried and failed. He promises to be good one minute, and the next, he is off on another craze.

(Badger begins pacing back and forth in thought. Badger stops pacing and turns to Ribby.)

BADGER: (*To Ribby.*) Very well, then! I'll help you. But I'm not going to do this by myself. You, and our friend, Marley, here, will take Toad seriously in hand. We must be firm and stand for no nonsense whatsoever. We'll bring him back to reason, by force if need be. We'll make him a sensible Toad.

RIBBY: Right you are! We'll rescue the poor, unhappy animal! We'll convert him! He'll be the most converted Toad that ever was before we're done with him.

BADGER: When does he go on trial?

RIBBY: Today.

BADGER: Hmmm. We would never reach there in time. Anyway, it will do him good to spend the night in jail. Then maybe he'll be more receptive to the voice of reason and he won't be able to get into any mischief there. We'll leave tomorrow. I'll have a talk with Judge Owl, who is a particular friend of mine. I'm sure I'll be able to work something out.

MARLEY: You mean we'll have to go back through the Wild Woods?

BADGER: No. I'll take you by way of my tunnels.

RIBBY: How far do your tunnels run?

BADGER: My passages run farther than you think, and I have built holes to the edge of the wood in several directions. It will take less time to travel by these tunnels. Well, in the meantime, come in and make yourselves at home.

(Badger, Ribby, and Marley exit into Badger's house. Blackout.)

Scene 7

(AT RISE: Courtroom. There is a judge's bench with a pitcher of water and a glass on it, two tables, and benches for Spectators. Spectators, which include Morey and Willie Weasel, are seated. Police Officer 1, a gray rat, is standing at the door SL. Hedgehog, the courtroom bailiff, enters SR.)

HEDGEHOG: All rise! (*Spectators rise.*) The Honorable Judge H. Owl presiding. (*Judge Owl enters and takes his place behind the bench.*) You may be seated.

(*Everyone sits.*)

JUDGE OWL: What is the first case on the docket?

HEDGEHOG: The Commonwealth verses Thaddius Toad.

JUDGE OWL: Is the accused present?

HEDGEHOG: Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE OWL: Then bring him in. (*Hedgehog signals to Police Officer 1, who opens the door and signals. Toad, in chains, is escorted in by Police Officers 2, 3 and brought to one of the tables. Police Officers 2, 3 exit.*) What's the defendant accused of *this* time?

HEDGEHOG: Stealing a motorcar and reckless driving.

JUDGE OWL: How reckless? (*Hedgehog again signals Police Officer 1, who opens the door. Police Officers 2, 3 bring in all that remains of the car and place the pieces on the other table. Judge Owl glares at Toad, which makes Toad very nervous. To Toad.*) So, we meet again...

TOAD: (*Nervously.*) Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE OWL: Let's see, first it was reckless driving with bicycles. You were before me three times. Then it was motorbikes. Six times, I believe.

TOAD: Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE OWL: (*Slams legal papers down on the bench, which startles Toad.*) And now, it's a motorcar! What have you to say for yourself?

TOAD: (*Nervously.*) Well, Your Honor—

JUDGE OWL: (*Bangs gavel.*) I think we've heard enough. (*To Hedgehog.*) Are the witnesses here?

HEDGEHOG: Yes, Your Honor. (*Signals Police Officer 1, who opens the door. Mr. and Mrs. Churchmouse enter.*) Mr. and Mrs. Churchmouse, Your Honor.

MRS. CHURCHMOUSE: (*Points at Toad.*) That's the fiend!

(*Mrs. Churchmouse passes out, which causes a commotion in the courtroom.*)

JUDGE OWL: (*Bangs gavel.*) Order in the court! (*Hedgehog pours a glass of water from the pitcher on the Judge's bench, takes it over to Mrs. Churchmouse, and holds her head up for her to take a sip. Mr. Churchmouse is patting her hand. Mrs. Churchmouse is revived. She is helped up. To Mrs. Churchmouse.*) Will you be able to continue?

MRS. CHURCHMOUSE: (*Straightening her dress and hat.*) Yes, Your Honor.

MR. CHURCHMOUSE: (*Picks up car horn. Sadly.*) My beautiful car. (*Honks horn. Judge bangs gavel.*) Sorry, Your Honor.

JUDGE OWL: My condolences for your loss. (*Clears throat. To Mrs. Churchmouse.*) Now proceed with your testimony. Start at the beginning and when you come to the end, stop.

MRS. CHURCHMOUSE: Well, it was a bright, sunny day. (*To Mr. Churchmouse.*) Wasn't it, Mortimor?

MR. CHURCHMOUSE: Yes, dear.

MRS. CHURCHMOUSE: Mortimor and I decided we would take a drive out to the river and have a picnic. Isn't that right, Mortimor?

MR. CHURCHMOUSE: Yes, dear.

MRS. CHURCHMOUSE: Well, we no sooner arrived at the riverbank and spread the blanket on the ground, when all of a sudden, that fiend... (*Points to Toad.*) ...jumped out of the bushes with this crazy look in his eyes and making weird sounds—

JUDGE OWL: Excuse me, but what kind of weird sounds?

MRS. CHURCHMOUSE: "Poop! Poop! Poop!" Isn't that right, Mortimor?

MR. CHURCHMOUSE: Yes, dear.

MRS. CHURCHMOUSE: Anyway, he pushed Mortimor aside, jumped into the car, and sped off down the road. Isn't that right, Mortimor?

MR. CHURCHMOUSE: Yes, dear.

MRS. CHURCHMOUSE: Well, he hadn't driven very far when he lost control of the motorcar and smashed into a tree. I was so terrified. And Mortimor stood speechless as he watched the car disappear down the road.

JUDGE OWL: I see. It must have been terrible. (*Mrs. Churchmouse takes out a handkerchief and dabs her eyes.*) Do you have anything to add, Mr. Churchmouse?

MR. CHURCHMOUSE: Yes, dear. (*Realizes mistake. Embarrassed.*) I mean, no, Your Honor.

JUDGE OWL: (*Bangs gavel.*) The facts are clear. Thaddius Toad, you are a general nuisance. You have disregarded all the warnings given you. You've gone on squandering the money your father left you—and a fine Toad he was. You are giving the animals a bad name in your district by your furious driving, and your smashes, and your rows with the police. You are Toad the irresponsible! Toad the reckless! Toad, a pain in the— (*Catches himself. Clears throat.*) Well, I need not go any farther. This court has reached its limit with the leniency it has shown you in the past. I hereby sentence you to 12 months for motorcar theft, three years for reckless driving, and an additional 15 years just on general principles. (*This causes a stir in the courtroom. Bangs gavel. To Spectators.*) Silence! (*To Toad.*) This is in hope that you can

be rehabilitated and become a responsible member of society. That's my decision. (*Bangs gavel. To Police Officer 1.*) Take the prisoner away. (*Judge Owl exits.*)

HEDGEHOG: All rise! Court is adjointed.

(Police Officer 2, 3 enter and escort Toad out of the courtroom. Mr. Churchmouse goes to table, picks up the car horn, and sighs. Mr. and Mrs. Churchmouse exit. All Spectators exit except Willie and Morey Weasel.)

MOREY: *(To Willie.)* The boss is really gonna like this.

WILLIE: Yeah. A 20-year lease on Toad Hall. What better place to have our headquarters when we take over the entire riverbank.

[END OF FREEVIEW]