

# Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame

Abridged in 10 episodes

## 9: LIKE SUMMER TEMPESTS CAME HIS TEARS

The Rat put out a neat little brown paw, gave a great hoist and a pull; and the water-logged Toad came up slowly but surely over the edge of the hole, till at last he stood safe and sound in the hall, streaked with mud and weed to be sure, and with the water streaming off him, but happy and high-spirited now that he found himself once more in the house of a friend.

'O, Ratty!' he cried. 'I've been through such times since I saw you last, you can't think! Such trials, such sufferings, such escapes, such disguises. Oh, I AM a smart Toad, and no mistake!'

'Toad,' said the Water Rat, gravely and firmly, 'you go off upstairs at once, and take off that old cotton rag that looks as if it might have belonged to some washerwoman, and clean yourself thoroughly, and put on some of my clothes, and try and come down looking like a gentleman if you CAN.'

Toad was at first inclined to stop and do some talking back at him. However, he caught sight of himself in the looking-glass over the hat-stand, and he changed his mind and went very quickly and humbly upstairs to the Rat's dressing-room.

By the time he came down again lunch was on the table, and very glad Toad was to see it. While they ate Toad told the Rat all his adventures.

When at last Toad had talked himself to a standstill, there was silence for a while; and then the Rat said, 'Now, Toady, don't you see what an awful ass you've been making of yourself? You have been handcuffed, imprisoned, starved, chased, terrified out of your life, insulted, jeered at, and flung into the water! Where's the amusement in that?'

When the Rat had quite finished, Toad heaved a deep sigh and said, very nicely and humbly, 'Quite right, Ratty! How SOUND you always are! Yes, I've been a conceited old ass, I can quite see that; but now I'm going to be a good Toad, and not do it any more. I'm going to stroll quietly down to Toad Hall, and get into clothes of my own. I've had enough of adventures.'

'Stroll quietly down to Toad Hall? What are you talking about? Do you mean to tell me,' shouted the Rat, thumping with his little fist upon the table, 'that you've heard nothing about the Stoats and Weasels?'



What, the Wild Wooders?’ cried Toad, trembling in every limb. ‘No, not a word! What have they been doing?’

‘And how they’ve been and taken Toad Hall?’ continued the Rat.

Toad leaned his elbows on the table, and his chin on his paws; and a large tear welled up in each of his eyes, overflowed and splashed on the table, plop! plop!

‘Go on, Ratty,’ he murmured ‘tell me all. The worst is over. I can bear it.’

‘When you - got - into that - that - trouble of yours,’ said the Rat, slowly and impressively, ‘Well, it was a good deal talked about down here, naturally, not only along the river-side, but even in the Wild Wood. Animals took sides. The River-bankers stuck up for you, and said you had been infamously treated. But the Wild Wood animals said hard things, and served you right, and it was time this sort of thing was stopped.’

‘So Mole and Badger arranged to move their things in to Toad Hall, and sleep there and keep it aired, and have it all ready for you when you turned up. One dark night - it was a VERY dark night, and blowing hard, too, and raining simply cats and dogs - a band of weasels, armed to the teeth, crept silently up the carriage-drive to the front entrance. Simultaneously, a body of desperate ferrets, advancing

through the kitchen-garden, possessed themselves of the backyard and offices; while a company of skirmishing stoats occupied the conservatory and the billiard-room.

‘The Mole and the Badger were sitting by the fire, when those bloodthirsty villains broke down the doors and rushed in upon them from every side. They took and beat them severely with sticks, those two poor faithful creatures, and turned them out into the cold and the wet.’

‘And the Wild Wooders have been living in Toad Hall ever since,’ continued the Rat; ‘Lying in bed half the day, and breakfast at all hours, and the place in such a mess I’m told, it’s not fit to be seen! Eating your grub, and drinking your drink, and making bad jokes about you.’

‘O, have they!’ said Toad getting up and seizing a stick. ‘I’ll jolly soon see about that!’

‘It’s no good, Toad! I am convinced that we can do nothing until we have seen the Mole and the Badger, and heard their latest news.’

‘While you were riding about the country in expensive motorcars, and galloping proudly on horses, and breakfasting on the fat of the land, those two poor devoted animals have been keeping a constant eye on the stoats and the weasels, scheming and planning to get your property back for you. You don’t deserve to have such true and loyal friends, Toad, you don’t, really.’

'I'm an ungrateful beast, I know,' sobbed Toad, shedding bitter tears.

There came a heavy knock at the door. Toad was nervous, but the Rat, went straight up to the door and opened it, and in walked Mr. Badger.

He came solemnly up to Toad, shook him by the paw, and said, 'Welcome home, Toad! Alas! what am I saying? Home, indeed! This is a poor home-coming. Unhappy Toad!'

They waited in silence, and there came another lighter knock. The Rat, went to the door and ushered in the Mole, very shabby and unwashed, with bits of hay and straw sticking in his fur.

'Hooray! Here's old Toad!' cried the Mole, his face beaming. 'Fancy having you back again! The position's about as bad as it can be and as for what's to be done, why, blest if I know! The Badger and I have been round and round the place, by night and day; always the same thing.'

'It's a very difficult situation,' said the Rat, reflecting deeply. 'But I think I see now, in the depths of my mind, what Toad really ought to do. I will tell you. He ought to - '

'No, he oughtn't!' shouted the Mole, with his mouth full. 'Nothing of the sort! You don't understand. What he ought to do is, he ought to - '

'Well, I shan't do it, anyway!' cried Toad, getting excited. 'I'm not going to be ordered about by you fellows! It's my house we're talking about, and I know exactly what to do, and I'll tell you. I'm going to - '

By this time they were all three talking at once, at the top of their voices, and the noise was simply deafening, when a thin, dry voice made itself heard, saying, 'Be quiet at once, all of you!' and instantly every one was silent. 'Toad!' said the Badger. 'You bad, trouble-some little animal! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? What do you think your father, my old friend, would have said if he had been here to-night, and had known of all your goings on? Now I'm going to tell you a great secret.'

Toad sat up slowly and dried his eyes. Secrets had an immense attraction for him, because he never could keep one.

'There - is - an - underground - passage,' said the Badger, impressively, 'that leads from the river-bank, quite near here, right up into the middle of Toad Hall.'

'O, nonsense! Badger,' said Toad 'I know every inch of Toad Hall, inside and out'.

'My young friend,' said the Badger, with great severity, 'your father told me a great deal he wouldn't have dreamt of telling you. He discovered that passage - and he showed it to me.'

'Well, well,' he said; 'perhaps I am a bit of a talker. A popular fellow such as I am. Go on, Badger. How's this passage of yours going to help us?'

'There's going to be a big banquet tomorrow night. It's someone's birthday - the Chief Weasel's, I believe - and all the weasels will be gathered together in the dining-hall, eating and drinking and laughing and carrying on, suspecting nothing.'

'And this is where the passage comes in. That very useful tunnel leads right up under the butler's pantry, next to the dining-hall!'

'We shall creep out quietly into the butler's pantry - ' cried the Mole.

' - with our pistols and swords and sticks - ' shouted the Rat.

' - and rush in upon them,' said the Badger. 'Our plan is settled. So, as it's getting very late, all of you go right off to bed at once. We will make all the necessary arrangements in the course of the morning tomorrow.'

Toad slept till a late hour next morning, and by the time he got down he found that the other animals had finished their breakfast some time before. The Mole had slipped off somewhere by himself, without telling any one where he was going. The Badger sat in the arm-chair, reading the paper, and not concerning himself

in the slightest about what was going to happen that very evening.

The Rat, on the other hand, was running round the room busily, with his arms full of weapons of every kind, distributing them in four little heaps on the floor, and saying excitedly under his breath, as he ran, 'Here's-a-sword-for-the-Rat, here's-a-sword-for-the Mole, here's-a-sword-for-the-Toad, here's-a-sword-for-the-Badger! Here's-a-pistol-for-the-Rat, here's-a-pistol-for-the-Mole, here's-a-pistol-for-the-Toad, here's-a-pistol-for-the-Badger!' And so on, in a regular, rhythmical way, while the four little heaps gradually grew and grew.

Presently the Mole came tumbling into the room, evidently very pleased with himself. 'I've been having such fun! I found that old washerwoman-dress that Toad came home in yesterday. So I put it on, and the bonnet as well, and the shawl, and off I went to Toad Hall, as bold as you please. The sentries were on the look-out, of course, with their guns and their "Who comes there?" "Good morning, gentlemen!" says I, very respectful. "Want any washing done to-day?" "They looked at me very proud and stiff and said, "Go away, washerwoman! We don't do any washing on duty." And the Sergeant in charge, he said to me, very short, he said, "Now run away, my good woman, run away! Don't keep my men idling and talking on their posts." "Run away?" says I; "it won't be me that'll be running away, in a very short time from now!"'

'O MOLY, how could you?' said the Rat, dismayed.

'I could see them pricking up their ears and looking at each other,' went on the Mole; 'and the Sergeant said to them, "Never mind HER; she doesn't know what she's talking about."'

"O! don't I?" said I. "Well, let me tell you this. My daughter, she washes for Mr. Badger, and that'll show you whether I know what I'm talking about; A hundred badgers, armed with rifles, are going to attack Toad Hall this very night, by way of the paddock."

"Six boatloads of Rats, with pistols and cutlasses, will come up the river and effect a landing in the garden; while a picked body of Toads, known as the Die-hards, or the Death-or-Glory Toads, will storm the orchard and carry everything before them. There won't be much left of you to wash, by the time they've done with you, unless you clear out while you have the chance!"

'Oh, you silly ass, Mole!' cried Toad, 'You've been and spoilt everything!'

'Mole,' said the Badger, in his dry, quiet way, 'I perceive you have more sense in your little finger than some other animals have in the whole of their fat bodies. Good Mole! Clever Mole!'

'Well, we've got our work cut out for us tonight, and it will probably be pretty late before we're quite through with it; so I'm just going to take forty winks, while I can.' And he drew a handkerchief over his face and was soon snoring.

The anxious Rat at once resumed his preparations, and started running between his four little heaps, muttering, 'Here's-a-belt-for-the-Rat, here's-a-belt-for-the Mole, here's-a-belt-for-the-Toad, here's-a-belt-for-the-Badger!' and so on, so the Mole drew his arm through Toad's, led him out into the open air, shoved him into a wicker chair, and made him tell him all his adventures from beginning to end, which Toad was only too willing to do.