

Day 10

Then began a very tiring few weeks for the three friends. Day and night they guarded Toad, and one of them was always with him. They talked to him and tried to amuse him, hoping that he would forget his motor-car madness.

But Toad did not seem to get better. He often put the bedroom chairs together to look like a motor-car. Then he sat in the front one and pretended to drive, making terrible engine noises all the time. His friends tried to interest him in other things, but Toad just became sad and silent.

One day the Rat was the guard for the morning. He went upstairs and found Toad still in bed. 'How are you today, old fellow?' he asked brightly.

A sad whisper came from the bed. 'Thank you so much, dear Ratty! But how are you, and the excellent Mole, and dear old Badger?'

'Fine, fine,' replied the Rat. 'Badger and Mole,' he added, perhaps not very sensibly, 'have gone out. They'll be out until lunch-time, so you and I will spend a pleasant morning together.'

'I don't want you to trouble yourself about me,' Toad said, in a sad little voice. 'I was wondering if you would go down to the village and fetch the doctor. But no, it's not important. It's probably too late by now.'

'Are you feeling ill, Toad? What's the matter?'

'I don't know... I think my heart... But you mustn't be sad, Ratty. Dear, kind friend ... I have enjoyed knowing you so much . . . hate to say goodbye . . .' Toad's whisper became slower and slower, and then stopped.

The Rat felt very worried. Toad lay so still and quiet - perhaps he really was ill. The Rat wished that the other two were not so far away. What should he do? He looked again at the still and silent Toad, and decided that he must get the doctor at once. He hurried out, carefully locking the door behind him, and ran off to the village as fast as he could.

The Wind in the Willows

When Toad heard the front door bang, he jumped out of bed, laughing loudly. He quickly put on his best suit and filled his pockets with money. Then he took the sheets off the bed, tied them together, and in minutes he had climbed down from the bedroom window and was running across the garden towards the fields.

A few hours later he was a long way from home. As he walked happily along the road, he felt very pleased with himself. 'A clever piece of work, that was!' he boasted to the trees and the fields. 'Poor old Ratty! A good fellow, but not very intelligent. Badger will be so angry with him!'

Soon he came to a small town and decided to have lunch in the pub there. He was very hungry after his long walk.

Halfway through his meal, he heard a sound that he knew very well indeed. Poop-poop! The car stopped outside and the people in it came into the pub to have lunch.

Shaking with excitement, Toad paid his bill and hurried out. He walked slowly round the car, looking at it lovingly.

Everybody was having lunch and the street was empty.

'I wonder,' Toad said to himself, 'I wonder if this kind of car starts easily?'

It started very easily, and Toad found himself in the driver's seat. He did not know how it happened, but a minute later he was driving out of the town, forgetting right and wrong, forgetting everything except this wonderful, beautiful madness.

Faster and faster he drove, singing and laughing, as the car ate up the miles. Once again he knew that he was Toad - Toad the dreamer, Toad the adventurer, Toad the terror of the open road!

'You are a dangerous criminal,' said the Judge. 'You stole a valuable motor-car, and you drove like a madman. It's surprising that you didn't kill somebody. And finally, you were very rude indeed to the police when they arrested you.'

Because of all this, I am sending you to prison for twenty years. Guards! Take the prisoner away!'

The Wind in the Willows

And so, shouting and crying, Toad was taken away. He was taken to an old dark castle, pushed into the smallest and darkest room below the ground, and the door was locked behind him.