

Day 6

All this time the Rat, warm and comfortable, was sleeping in limit of his fire. When he woke up, he looked round for his friend, but the Mole was not there. He called out 'Moly!' several times, and when he heard no answer, he got up and went out into the hall.

The Mole's hat was missing, and so were his boots.

The Rat left the house and looked around. The ground was wet from rain, and he could see clearly which way the Mole had gone - straight towards the Wild Wood.

The Rat stood thinking for a moment, looking very serious. Then he went back into the house, took a gun and a thick heavy stick, and hurried away across the fields.

Inside the wood it was nearly dark, and the whistling and the pattering began almost at once. But when the faces in the holes saw the Rat's gun and his thick heavy stick, they disappeared immediately, and everything became still and quiet. Patiently, the Rat began to search the wood from end to end, calling all the time, 'Moly, Moly! Where are you? It's me! It's old Rat!'

At last, to his great happiness, he heard a little answering cry, and soon he found the Mole in his hiding-place in the tree.

'Oh, Ratty!' cried the Mole. 'I'm so pleased to see you! I've been so frightened, I can't tell you!'

'I can understand that,' said the Rat kindly. 'You see, Mole, it's really not a good idea to come here alone. We river-bankers always come in twos or threes, if we have to come here. Of course, if you're Badger or Otter, then there's no problem.'

'Surely the brave Mr Toad is happy to come here alone, isn't he?' asked the Mole.

'Old Toad?' said the Rat, laughing loudly. 'He doesn't put his nose inside the Wild Wood - much too frightened!'

The Mole felt a little happier when he heard this, but he was still too tired to start the journey home. So he lay down to sleep under some dry leaves, while the Rat sat next to him, patiently waiting.

## The Wind in the Willows

The Mole woke up feeling much better, and ready to leave. The Rat put his head out of the entrance of the hole, and then the Mole heard him say, 'Oh dear, oh dear!'

'What's the matter, Ratty?' asked the Mole.

'Snow,' replied the Rat. 'It's snowing hard. But we can't stay here all night - it's too cold, and too dangerous. We'll just have to start walking, and hope. The trouble is, I don't really know where we are, and in the snow everything looks so different.'

It did indeed. The white blanket of snow covered everything, hiding the paths, changing the shapes of the trees and bushes. An hour later, they were wet, cold, aching with tiredness, and had no idea where they were.

They sat down for a rest and were moving on again when the Mole gave a sudden cry and fell forward on his face.

'Oh, my leg!' he cried. 'I've hit my leg on something really hard.'

'Let's have a look,' said the Rat, sitting down beside him. 'That's a very deep cut,' he said, surprised. 'I wonder what...' Suddenly, he got up and began to dig in the snow.

'What are you doing, Ratty?' said the Mole.

The Rat just went on digging. Then he found something, and immediately began to dance round it excitedly.

'Look at this, Mole!' he shouted. 'Just look at this!'

The Mole looked. Then he looked at his friend. 'It's a boot-scraper. Why get excited about a door-scraper?'

'Don't you understand, you silly animal?' cried the Rat.

'I understand that somebody's been very careless, leaving a boot-scraper lying in the middle of the Wild Wood, for other people to fall over. And when I get home—'

'Oh dear, oh dear!' cried the Rat. 'Just stop arguing, and dig! Or do you want to spend all night in the snow?'

The Mole did what he was told, although he thought his friend was going crazy. The two animals dug and dug, and after ten minutes' hard work they were successful.

## The Wind in the Willows

The Mole had thought that they were digging into a snowdrift, but now he saw that there was a door under the snow. A green door, with a long bell-pull beside it, and a name on it in big letters which said:

MR BADGER

The Mole fell backwards on the snow in surprise. 'Oh, Rat!' he cried. 'How clever you are! And how stupid I am!'

'Never mind all that,' said the Rat. 'Just get up and pull on that bell, while I knock on the door.'

The Rat banged on the door with his stick, and the Mole pulled. And from somewhere far under the ground they could just hear the sound of a deep, slow bell.