

Day 9

Chapter 5 - A lesson for Mr Toad

Winter passed, and spring returned to the river bank. Then came a fine morning in early summer, when the world seemed full of sunlight and new green leaves. Down by the river bank, the Mole and the Water Rat were hard at work, mending and cleaning boats, looking for lost oars, and getting ready for a summer on the river. Then they went in to breakfast and had nearly finished when they heard a heavy knock on the door.

The Mole went to see who it was, and came back with a very surprised face. 'Mr Badger!' he said.

This was a wonderful thing indeed, for the Badger to come and visit them. He came into the room and stood looking at them, very seriously. The Rat dropped his egg-spoon, and sat open-mouthed.

'The hour has come!' said the Badger at last.

'What hour?' asked the Rat worriedly, looking at the clock on the wall.

'Whose hour, you mean,' replied the Badger. 'Why, Toad's hour! The hour of Toad! I said I would teach him a lesson when the summer came, and I'm going to begin today.'

'Toad's hour, of course!' cried the Mole. 'I remember now. We'll teach him to be a sensible Toad!'

'I learnt last night,' continued the Badger, 'that another new and very fast motorcar has just arrived at Toad Hall. You two must come with me immediately, and we will save Toad from this madness.'

'Right!' cried the Rat, jumping up. 'Let's go at once.'

When they reached Toad Hall, they saw the new motor-car in front of the house. It was long, shiny, and bright red - Toad's favourite colour. Then Toad himself came down the steps in an enormous overcoat, hat and driving-goggles.

'Hello, you fellows!' Toad called. 'Come for a drive. You're just in time to ... to ...'

He saw his friends' serious faces and stopped.

The Badger walked up the steps. 'Come inside the house, Toad,' he said. 'We have to talk to you.'

The three of them took Toad inside and shut the door. 'Now,' the Badger said to Toad, 'first of all, take off those silly driving-clothes.'

'No, I won't!' replied Toad. 'What is the meaning of this? Explain yourself at once!'

'Take his things off, you two,' ordered the Badger.

It wasn't easy to do. The Rat had to sit on Toad, while the Mole pulled off his overcoat, hat and goggles. And Toad called them some very unpleasant names while this was going on. But when he stood up again, he seemed more like himself, the Toad that they had always known.

'You knew this would happen one day, Toad,' explained the Badger. 'We've warned you so many times, and you haven't listened. You're spending all your money, you're always in trouble with the police, and you drive like a madman. You will come with me into the next room, and there you will hear some facts about yourself. And you will come out a different Toad.'

They took Toad into a room off the hall and closed the door. The Rat shook his head.

'We won't save Toad by just talking to him,' he said. 'He'll say anything - and then just go and do what he likes.'

After about an hour the door opened, and a very sad and sorry Toad came out, followed by the Badger.

'My friends,' said the Badger, looking pleased, 'I am happy to tell you that Toad now realizes how silly he has been. He has promised never to get into a motor-car again.'

That is very good news,' said the Mole seriously.

'Very good indeed,' the Rat said, watching Toad's face carefully.

'Now, Toad,' continued the Badger, 'I'd like you to repeat your promise in front of your friends.'

There was a long, long silence.

'No!' said Toad suddenly. 'No, I won't. I'm not sorry, and I haven't been silly at all. It was all wonderful! And I won't promise anything!'

'What?' cried the Badger. 'But in there you told me—'

'Ah, yes, I know,' said Toad quickly. 'You argue so beautifully, dear Badger, and I can't stop myself agreeing with you. But I've been thinking about it. I love driving, I'm a wonderful driver, and I promise you I'll go on driving for ever! Poop-poop!'

'I told you so, didn't I?' the Rat said to the Mole.

'Very well,' said the Badger. 'If you won't listen to reason, we'll have to try another way. We're going to stay with you in your house until you become sensible. Take him upstairs, you two, and lock him in his bedroom.'

So Toad, fighting and shouting, was pulled upstairs by his two friends.

'It's for your own good, Toady, you know,' said the Rat kindly. 'We'll all have good times together again soon, when this - this madness has passed.'

'We'll take good care of you, Toad,' added the Mole. 'No more trouble with the police. No more crashes, and weeks in hospital.'