

The Wind In The Willows

by **Kenneth Grahame**
adapted by **Sheila Laughton**

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The Wind In The Willows

This play was first presented by **The Man In The Moon** on 19 December 2019

Cast in Order of Appearance

Mole	Judge Proudfoot
Ratty	Ferret 1
Mr Otter	Ferret 2
Mrs Duck	Ferret 3
Badger	Jailor
Toad	Henrietta
Dobbin, <i>the horse</i>	Washerwoman
Butler	Policeman 1
Mr Ford	Policeman 2
Mrs Ford	Policeman 3
Lady Vixen, <i>a fox</i>	Old Man
PC Stoutly	Stoat 1
Weasel 1	Stoat 2
Weasel 2	Stoat 3
Weasel 3	Delivery Man

Director's Note

There are thirty named characters in this play. They can be doubled as needed. The Weasel, Ferret and Stoat lines may also be split, to create more roles if required.

In this version Ratty has been written as a girl. You are welcome to change her gender, or the gender any of the other characters in the play.

The play runs approximately 60 minutes. If you prefer, you may leave out the interval.

Being An Actor

You're now an **actor** about to begin rehearsing a **play** of **The Wind In The Willows**.

Rehearsing or **rehearsals** are the words that actors use when practising for the show. It's an exciting time and is a lot of fun too.

Before you get started, you might like to read this section about putting on a play. It will also help you learn some of the words we use in the theatre. You'll be talking like a real actor in no time at all.

The Script

This book is your **script**. It tells you what your **character** says and does in the play:

Ratty Hello! Sorry if my singing disturbed you. I've seen you around, but never got to say hello before. (*Holding out her hand*) I'm Ratty. Isn't it a glorious day to be out on the river?

You can see the character names are in **bold** and **stage directions** (*what you do*) are in *italics*. You don't say the stage directions out loud.

Who's Who

Different people work very hard to put on a play. The **director** is in charge of the creative parts of the show. The **producer** looks after the **budget** (money), booking the theatre and rehearsal rooms and makes sure that everything's in the right place at the right time.

There will also be **designers** for the **costumes** (what you wear), **lighting** and **scenery**.

The **Stage Manager** makes sure that rehearsals and performances run smoothly.

The Parts of the Theatre

The **stage** is where you do your acting. The **wings** are the spaces just **off-stage** left and right where actors wait before they make their entrance.

The area behind the stage is called **backstage**. The place where the audience sits is called the **auditorium**.

The place where you get into costume and make-up is called the **dressing room**. You must always be really quiet when you're backstage.

Stage Directions

When you start rehearsing the play, the director will tell you which side of the stage you need to come on from and where you should stand. Sometimes they will ask you to move to different places whilst you're saying your lines.

Stage right and left are as the actor looks at the audience. **Downstage** is closest to the audience. **Upstage** is furthest away, towards the back of the stage.

	Upstage Right (USR)	Upstage Centre (USC)	Upstage Left (USL)	
The Wings	Stage Right (SR)	Centre Stage (CS)	Stage Left (SL)	The Wings
	Downstage Right (DSR)	Downstage Centre (DSC)	Downstage Left (DSL)	

The Audience



Rehearsals

You'll have a **read-through** at your first rehearsal when everyone sits together and reads the script for the first time.

After this, you'll start **blocking** the play where everyone finds out where they come on from and the different things they'll do. It's a great idea to **write all this down in your script** to help you remember. You should always write in pencil, just in case you need to change it later (sometimes you might find a better way of doing it). Once you've finished blocking, you'll begin **run-throughs**.

After a few rehearsals and once you've learnt your lines, you'll be **off-book**. If you forget a line, the **stage manager** will give you a **prompt** (remind you of your line).

Once you get to the theatre, you'll have a **technical** (or tech) **rehearsal**, where you practise with the lights and sound.

Finally, you'll have a **dress rehearsal**, which you'll do in your full costume and make-up. The last rehearsal before you have an audience. Exciting!

Rehearsals/performances usually start with a warm-up to get your voice and body ready.

During the show, your director might give you notes after the performance about anything that didn't go quite right, or something they might like you to change.

Learning Your Lines

The hardest part of being in a play is learning your **lines** (the things you say). Sadly, there's no magic way of doing this, you just need to practise – a lot!

Here are some helpful tips. Remember, the sooner you do it, the more fun you'll have at rehearsal:

- * Read your lines out loud to yourself. Hearing them spoken helps you to remember.
- * Ask a friend for help. They can read the other characters and correct any mistakes that you make.
- * Do a little bit at a time. First thing in the morning and bedtime is a great time to practise.
- * Record your scenes. You can listen to it on your headphones while you're out and about – maybe leave gaps for you to say your own lines.
- * Learn your **cues**. The line before yours is called the **cue line**. It's important to know this, or you won't know when it's your turn to speak.

Enjoy The Show!

We hope that you've found this interesting. There are lots of new things to learn, and you'll pick them up easily during rehearsals. Don't forget to ask questions if there's something that you don't understand.

We hope that you have a brilliant time putting on **The Wind In The Willows**.

Break a leg — that's what people in the theatre say to wish each other good luck!

Act One

Scene One

The Riverbank

It is a hot and sunny day

Ratty is gently rowing along the river in a boat. In the distance

A little Mole pokes his head out of his home

Mole There must be more to life than this. I'm fed up of cleaning. I wish I were braver, then I could see what's going on outside. Not that I'm moaning. I'm lucky to have a roof over my head, even if I dug it myself. *(He laughs to himself)*

Mole hears a voice singing, coming nearer to where he is standing with his feather duster

Ratty appears, rowing her boat along the river, singing

She pulls into the bank and sees Mole, who jumps back

Ratty Hello! Sorry if my singing disturbed you. I've seen you around, but never got to say hello before. *(Holding out her hand)* I'm Ratty. Isn't it a glorious day to be out on the river?

Mole I wouldn't know, I'm cleaning... It's all I seem to do. *(He sighs)* My name's Mole.

Ratty You're spring cleaning on a gorgeous day like this? You should be out enjoying yourself on the river. Meeting people for picnics. Having fun.

Mole I've never been on the river. I can't swim. In fact, I've never been anywhere. Too shy.

Ratty I can swim. I know lots of people and I have a picnic. Why don't you join me and I'll show you around? Introduce you to some of the nice people who live here. I promise not to let you fall in!

Mole You would do that for me? I'm not very interesting and don't say very much.

Ratty That's OK. I can talk for the two of us. *(She laughs)* Hop aboard.

Mole climbs on board. They start to row along the river

An otter pokes his head out of the water

Mr Otter Hallo Ratty! I thought that noise was you. You never could sing. *(He laughs)*

Ratty Cheeky blighter. I'll have you know, I have perfect pitch.

Mr Otter Yes, and I know where I would pitch you! Who's your friend?

Ratty This is Mole. Mole, meet my good friend, Mr Otter.

Mole Good friend? But he was so rude.

Mr Otter Ratty expects it. We've been friends for a long time. Nice to meet you, Mole. Any friend of Ratty is a friend of mine. Sorry, I can't stay, I've got hungry mouths to feed.

Ratty So the babies have arrived. Congratulations, old chap. *(They shake hands)* I trust your good lady is well?

Mr Otter She is, and I'm the proud father of six. Four handsome boys and two beautiful girls.

Mole Wow, that's a big family. Please give your wife my kindest regards. I will get Ratty to drop in some of my cookies, they're rather good, even if I say so myself.

Mr Otter That's very kind of you, feel free to drop in any time you're passing. We live just over there, under that willow. *(He spots something in the water)* There's a fish, must be off!

Mr Otter turns and dives under the water

Mole Six children?! What a large family to feed.

Ratty Yes, he will need to catch a lot of fish.

Mole Do you know a lot of river folk?

Ratty Oh, yes my family has lived here for generations. Do you have family living near by?

Mole *(looking sad and muttering 'no', before changing the subject)* Can I meet some more of your friends?

Ratty Of course! Mrs Duck and her family live just along here but they're moving to a bigger nest at the village pond soon.

They pull up beside a nest where a mother duck is packing up boxes

Ratty How's it going, Mrs Duck?

Mrs Duck *(jumps)* Oh, it's you Ratty. Make yourself useful and hand me that blanket. I never realised we had so much stuff. *(Seeing Mole)* Who's that?

Ratty *(passing her the blanket)* My good friend, Mole. We're on our way to have a picnic with...

Mrs Duck Picnic! I wish I had time for a picnic. My husband's gone off to find more boxes, he said, but that was ages ago. Left me looking after our brood. Just wait till I

see him. I reckon he's gone to the pub for breakfast. They always put out the leftovers about this time.

Ratty (*whispering to Mole*) Time to go. There's no talking to her when she's like this. (*To Mrs Duck*) Well, we'll leave you in peace and visit you in your new home once you've settled in. Won't we, Mole?

Mole Yes, erm, of course.

Ratty rows away as fast as she can

Mole She frightened me, all that squawking and flapping her wings. I feel sorry for her husband.

Ratty She has a heart of gold really, but they do say moving is very stressful.

Mole Then why is she moving?

Ratty She says we are too noisy here to raise her brood. Wants a quieter, more restful nest to raise them. Nothing ever happens in the village pond.

Mole Can we go home? I think I've had enough excitement for today.

Ratty Nonsense! I know, I'll introduce you to my very good friend, Badger. He may appear fierce, but he looks after us all here.

Mole I'm not sure. He sounds quite frightening. Besides, I might fall in the river and drown.

Ratty Have I let you fall in yet?

Mole No. Oh, I've just remembered, I've left a cake in the oven and...

Ratty (*looking him in the eye*) Really, Mole?

Mole (*looking embarrassed*) Everything frightens me. I'm only a little Mole.

Ratty Well, you never have to be afraid again. I look after my friends. We're almost there now. Look that's Badger's home, just through those trees.

They disembark and walk a little way. In the distance we can hear a clip clopping

Ratty (*calling*) Badger, are you there? I've someone I'd like you to meet.

Badger (*appearing from behind the tree*) Thought I heard you coming, Ratty. All that noise. Enough to wake the dead.

Ratty (*pulling Mole from behind him*) Mole, this is Badger. Badger, this is my friend Mole.

Badger Nice to meet you, young fella. Now, what's this all about you being afraid of me?

Mole I've never met anyone so big. I mean, distinguished looking, before. *(He bows)*
How do you do.

Badger You are a very polite young Mole. Welcome to our wood. You'll find everyone here very friendly.

Ratty Yes, everyone here helps each other. We're all equal.

Badger *(laughing)* All equal, huh? Has he met our friend yet?

Ratty No. We're on our way for a picnic with him.

Mole Who's him?

Badger You'll find out soon. I see you've got his old boat which means he's still travelling in that awful caravan, neglecting his duties. Makes me so angry. When I think how his father...

Ratty *(noticing Mole is shaking)* He's young. He'll soon calm down. Anyway, I'm sure you have lots to do, Badger, see you soon.

They go back to the boat and row off

The clip clopping is getting louder

They pull in by a bridge

Ratty Now, Moley, I'm going to introduce you to a very important Toad. At least, in his eyes. We're meeting here for a picnic. As Badger said, this was his boat until he got fed up with it.

Mole Does he live under this bridge?

Ratty Toad? Live under a bridge? *(Laughing)* Good Lord, no. He lives in Toad Hall. A huge Manor House, beyond those fields. In fact, this is all his land. He is Lord of the Manor.

Mole *(getting flustered)* A Lord? I wish you had told me I would have put on my best coat.

Ratty I wouldn't worry. He only notices things about himself.

The clip clopping is even closer. There's the neigh of a horse. Toad enters, on his caravan, pulled by Dobbie, the horse

Toad Ah, hello Old Chap, who have we got here?

Ratty This is my dear friend, Moley. Moley, meet Toad.

Mole bows

Toad (*touched*) I say, there's no need for that. I don't mind being seen with the common folk. I want both of you to meet my new horse, Dobbin.

Dobbin neighs

Now, Ratty, what did you bring for luncheon?

Ratty Crusty bread, cheese, salmon, my mother's best chutney and...

Toad (*cutting him off*) No matter. My caravan has all the mod cons. Feather bed, stove, the very best of everything. Climb aboard.

Ratty and Mole climb aboard Toad's caravan. They sit up front

It's the only way to travel, open roads, stopping wherever you want at night. There are some fabulous inns around. You must let me show you.

Ratty Toad, enough! I'm starving. Let's eat.

As they continue on their journey, they begin to enjoy a delicious picnic

Mole (*to Toad*) Ratty told me you live in a beautiful Manor House. I've never seen one.

Toad It is rather magnificent and will be perfect when I have modernised it. A bit antiquated, don't 'cha know? Well, it is one's duty to share their fortune with you lower classes, so after lunch, I'll take you and Ratty to my home for tea. You will see what you will never be able to own.

Mole Thank you, my Lord.

Toad It's the least I can do. Just call me Toad.

Suddenly there's the sound of very loud motor horn. Dobbin rears and they're off, racing around the stage, being thrown all over the place

Ratty Toad, control your horse, we're going to hit something.

But Toad is busy staring into the distance where the sound of the motor horn came from

TOAD!

Mole I should have stayed at home. I feel sick.

Ratty (*grabbing the reins from Toad*) Whoah, Dobbin, whoah. Look out for that tree!

Mole (*hands covering his eyes*) Did we miss it?

Ratty Mole, hold the reins while I release Dobbin. It's the only way we'll stop.

Toad I'll do it and remember, I'm a Lord, and I want no frightened faces even though we will probably die horribly mangled...

Ratty You're not helping, Toad.

Mole We're doomed, doomed.

While Toad has been boasting about his bravery, Ratty has managed to release Dobbin

Dobbin attempts to gallop off but is overtaken by the caravan with Toad, Ratty and Mole on board, screaming

They rush off stage

There's a loud crashing sound

Then... silence

Scene Two

Toad Hall

A portrait of Toad hangs on the wall, next to one of his father

Everything in Toad Hall is luxurious and extravagant

Badger is sitting in a large chair, smoking a pipe

The Butler enters carrying a tankard of beer

Butler Will there be anything else, Sir?

Badger No thank you. Did Toad say when he'd be back?

Butler You know the master when he's got a new hobby. He left three days ago. When I reminded him you were coming this afternoon he said he'd be back. Cook said she'd cook you a nice trout for tea. She knows you are partial to them.

Badger That's very kind of her. It seems that I may be staying tonight. I really must speak to Toad.

Butler Very well, Sir. Just ring if you need anything.

The Butler exits

Badger stands and looks at the picture of Toad's father

Badger I'm sorry Chester, old friend, I feel I've let you down. I've tried, but Toad just won't take on the responsibilities he has.

A disheveled Toad, Ratty and Mole stagger in

Toad is holding part of the door of his caravan

Badger Toad! What have you done now?

Ratty It wasn't his fault, we were coming here when this huge, noisy...

Toad Shiny...

Ratty Horseless carriage sped past. It frightened Dobbin who bolted. We couldn't calm him.

Badger Is Dobbin all right?

Ratty Yes, I managed to...

Toad (*interrupting*) Of course, my duty as an aristocrat was to save him and my passengers. (*Dramatically*) Even if I sacrificed myself.

Badger Which, by the look of you, wasn't much of a sacrifice.

Mole Ratty saved us, she untied Dobbin's reins.

Ratty But the caravan smashed into a tree. (*Pointing at the door in Toad's hands*) This is all that's left of it.

Mole Horrible, horseless carriage. We're lucky to be alive.

Toad Horrible? No! It was shiny and it went 'poop, poop!' It was the most beautiful thing that I have ever seen.

Badger Toad, I know that look. No. It's time you took on the responsibilities of running this estate. I can't do it forever. I promised your dear father that I would... Toad? Are you listening?

Toad isn't listening. He's gazing into the distance, making a 'poop, poop' sound

Mole I don't think he is listening. He's making a 'poop, poop' sound, just like that horseless carriage.

Badger Well, now you've met the Lord of this Manor. I'm sorry his stupidity nearly killed you both, which would have been such a shame.

Mole And Toad?

Badger Not such a shame. I'm just sorry you've witnessed Toad's irresponsibility. We had a meeting arranged, but he chose to go out instead and paid the consequences. Lost his caravan, but no thought...

Toad (*running around as if he is driving a racing car*) Poop, poop!

Badger Toad, stop it. We need to discuss estate matters.

He grabs Toad and drags him into the study slamming the door

Mole and Ratty hear raised voices

Mole Is it always like this? Badger seemed quite hard on Toad.

Ratty Toad deserves it. Since his father died he's refused to run the place. Left it all to Badger, who is worried sick about what trouble Toad will get into next.

Mole Trouble?

Ratty Toad goes through fads. First, it was sword fighting, then the art of archery, which was great until he shot the vicar's wife in the derrière. Then he wanted to travel the world, six months later we got a telegram saying Toad had upset a prince who challenged him to a duel and Badger had to find him and put things right. He promised never to be so selfish again, but forgot his promise of course.

Mole But those things don't seem too bad.

Ratty Did I mention burning the local school down? No? Well, Toad decided he needed a fire service and he would run it. Bought a lovely fire engine, uniforms, the lot. Only thing he forgot was learning how to pump the water. He called us all together to demonstrate and set a small fire near the school. The wind changed, he couldn't pump the water, no more school.

Mole (*laughing*) I bet the children were happy.

Ratty (*laughing*) They didn't complain. Next, we had the penny farthing, then the boat, then the caravan. Let's hope he has learned his lesson this time.

The door opens and Toad enters sheepishly

Toad I'll fetch them, they're in my room. (*He rushes past Ratty and Mole*) Can't stop, I need to break free.

Toad runs off

Badger enters

Badger Where did Toad go? He was meant to bring me the safe keys.

Ratty and Mole (*together*) He went that way.

Ratty and Mole point to the door that Toad left by

Badger That's it! Promise or no promise to his father, I'm finished with him.

Ratty It's just Toad, he'll be back.

Mole He can't go far, he's got no transport.

Badger Quite right, Mole, and anyway, it's nearly dinner time.

The Butler enters and bangs a huge gong.

Butler Dinner is served.

They all exit

Scene Three

The Squirrel Inn

Parked outside is the motor car that caused Toad to crash his caravan earlier

Toad enters, out of breath

Toad (*feeling sorry for himself*) Badger needs to understand I'm not a child anymore. I'm an aristocrat. I can't be expected to bother with the day-to-day running of things. So boring. (*He notices the motor*) Why, this horseless carriage is even more beautiful up close. Look at the seats. (*Feeling them*) Real leather, and the lamps. So shiny. I must have it.

He enters the Inn. Mr and Mrs Ford are having tea

A mysterious caped figure is sitting near by

I say, does anyone know who owns that wonderful horseless carriage outside?

Mr Ford You mean my motor car?

Toad Yes, where did you get such a beautiful thing?

Mr Ford I've just picked it up from the garage. It wasn't cheap.

Toad I should hope not, I don't do cheap. I'm a Lord. I'd like to buy it.

Mrs Ford Well, make us an offer.

Toad Twenty pounds.

Mrs Ford (*laughing*) Twenty quid? (*Aside*) That's a lot more than we paid. Take it, Henry.

Mr Ford I paid fifty pounds and you can have it for that.

Toad Certainly not! Twenty pounds is my final offer, take it or leave it.

Mr Ford Then, we'll be leaving it. (*To his wife*) Come, Clara.

Toad exits

Mr and Mrs Ford rise to leave but are stopped by the mysterious caped figure

Mr Ford Move yourself, the wife and I wish to pass. Stand aside, I say.

The mysterious caped figure removes her hood, it's a fox, Lady Vixen. She is holding a large pouch of coins

Who are you and what do you want?

Lady Vixen How would you like to earn yourself one hundred pounds?

Mr Ford Keep talking.

Lady Vixen I feel it's time that Toad paid for the damage his family has done.

Mrs Ford Well, I'm sorry, but my Henry won't do anything dishonest, will you dear?

But her husband is looking at the pouch of coins Lady Vixen is holding

Mr Ford Let's hear her out, sweetheart. First, what did his family do?

Lady Vixen Can we just say that I hate toads?

Mr and Mrs Ford *(together)* No.

Lady Vixen Toad Hall should have been Fox Hall, but my father was robbed of his rightful title.

Mrs Ford Oh, that's so sad. Of course we must help a poor homeless fox.

Mr Ford *(not taken in by the story)* A hundred pounds you say? *(She nods)* What do I need to do?

Lady Vixen *(leaning forward)* Well, I noticed when I came in, that you had left the keys in your horseless carriage. Knowing how stupid Toad is, I knew he'd want to drive it. One of my gang... Erm, friends, is outside waiting to... encourage... him. All you need to do is report it as stolen when the police arrive. Then we give evidence when he is arrested. Simple really.

Mrs Ford He can do that. My husband is very big in amateur dramatics.

Mr Ford *(holding his hand out for the cash)* Consider it done.

Lady Vixen Half now and the rest after Toad is convicted. Deal?

Mr Ford Deal.

They shake hands and leave

Outside the Inn, Toad enters

Toad Fifty pounds for a horseless carriage?! I think not! Still it won't hurt for just one look.

He looks inside the motor car

Why, how silly, they've left the keys in the ignition. I'll just see what it sounds like. *(He climbs in, turns it on)* That's music to my ears. This is just what I have always wanted.

Lady Vixen *(to Toad, unseen offstage)* Would it be so bad if you took it for a spin? They'll never know. Besides, they were so rude to you, an aristocrat.

Toad *(not bothering to see where the voice is coming from)* You're right! They were very rude and had no respect for my superiority. I'll have it back before they know it's gone. Tally ho!

Toad drives around the stage

Mr Ford and Mrs Ford come out of the Inn and sees Toad driving away

Mr Ford *(unconvincingly)* Come back, come back you thief. *(He pretends to chase Toad)* Help! Help! Someone call a policeman. I've been robbed.

A Ferret runs on leading Police Constable Stoutly

Ferret *(to PC Stoutly)* Here you go, Governor. Oh, I just remembered I've got to get home to my poor, sick mother. See ya!

The Ferret (Bert) leaves quickly, so as not to get caught up in things

Mr Ford That was quick.

PC Stoutly I was on my way home when this fella, *(he looks around but the Ferret has gone)* told me they were giving away free pie here. As the Squirrel Inn makes brilliant pies, I came straight away, only to find you shouting about being robbed. I don't suppose it can wait until after I've had my pie? No? OK, what happened?

Mr Ford *(who has been joined by his wife)* Well, we were having tea when...

Mrs Ford It was lovely. Cucumber sandwiches, scones, jam, cream, gorgeous cakes...

Mr Ford I don't think the Constable wants to hear about that. He wants to hear about the awful tragedy that we've suffered, don't you Constable?

PC Stoutly Yes, but the food's so good here. I was just about to have some pie myself. *(Seeing her husband's face)* But yes, please tell me what's happened.

Mr Ford That Toad stole my motor car.

Mrs Ford dramatically faints as Mr Ford relates what happened to PC Stoutly

Lady Vixen beckons to three Weasels who have been watching from the bushes

Weasel 3 is carrying a large bag containing a women's outfit, including mop cap and bloomers; a man's overcoat and cap; and a child's outfit complete with a doll dressed as a baby

Lady Vixen Well done boys, you managed to arrive on time.

Weasel 1 Yes, you made it very clear not to be late.

Weasel 2 Glad we were able to witness your performance with those humans.

Weasel 3 It was very nicely done, if I may say so, my lady.

Weasel 1 Toad will be caught and he'll get a huge fine.

The Weasels laugh

Weasel 3 (seeing Lady Vixen's face) But I don't think that's what you want.

Lady Vixen No, it's not enough. Toad must pay for what his family did to mine. (*Pulling herself together*) Now inside that bag you will find three outfits and a baby doll. You three are going to help me put Toad in prison for a long time.

The Weasels tip out the outfits. Weasel 1 and 2 grab the men's clothes. Weasel 3 is left with the woman's outfit and bloomers

Weasel 3 I'm not wearing a dress. Not even for you my lady. It's not right, I have a reputation to uphold.

Lady Vixen moves towards him, claws out stretched

Weasel 1 What he means is, why do we need to disguise ourselves? What's in it for us?

Lady Vixen As you said, Toad stealing the horseless carriage will only get him a fine. I want more. You are going to pretend that he has recklessly run you down.

Weasel 2 That sounds painful, and we don't do pain.

Weasel 3 Unless it's to others.

They laugh

Lady Vixen Enough, you are wasting time and I warn you, if you mess my plan up, you need never worry about...

Weasel 3 Ok, let's not get nasty. What do you want us to do?

Lady Vixen You need to get to the village pond, and cause the horseless carriage to crash, preferably in the pond. There's a new mother duck there.

Weasel 2 Good plan, but how do we pretend to have been hit by Toad?

Lady Vixen Must I tell you everything. Your reputations say you are cunning and devious. Improvise. Now go. Succeed and you will live a life of luxury. Fail me and...

Weasel 1, 2 and 3 (*together*) We won't fail you, my lady.

They hurriedly get changed and run off

Lady Vixen And so it begins. Revenge will be ours, Father, I promise!

She exits laughing

Toad driving the motor car, re-enters

Toad This is fun. (*Sounds the horn*) Out of my way common folk. This is the life for me, the only way to travel.

Villagers jump out of the way of Toads reckless driving

Constable Stoutly chases Toad

PC Stoutly Stop in the name of the law, you common thief. I order you to stop!

Toad He can't be talking to me. I'm certainly not common. I'll speed up a bit and lose him.

The three Weasels, in disguise, enter and stand near the pond

Weasel 1 That copper's too slow, he will never catch Toad.

Weasel 2 She'll kill us if Toad escapes. (*To Weasel 1*) You're the clever one. What shall we do?

Weasel 1 I don't know. I'm too young to die. Scarper. Every Weasel for himself.

Weasel 3 Stop panicking. I suppose I'll have to sort it as usual.

Weasel 3 bends down and slips off the large pair of bloomers. He throws them towards the motor car. They hit Toad in the face

Toad (*sounding his hooter*) What's that? Get off.

He swerves dramatically and ends up in the pond, narrowly missing Mrs Duck and her new ducklings

Mrs Duck (*flapping her wings and hitting Toad*) Watch where you're going you mindless amphibian! You nearly squashed my ducklings.

Toad Ouch. Oh, be quiet you daft duck. I'm nowhere near your ducklings. Stop squawking. Get off me! Stop pecking me! Do you know who I am?

PC Stoutly (*out of breath, finally catches up and tries to grab Toad*) Stay still, you're nicked. Stop struggling. I arrest you...

Toad Take that!

Toad knocks the helmet off PC Stoutly who, with the help of a Weasel, handcuffs Toad and drags him off stage

Toad (*shouting*) Somebody tell Badger that I've been arrested.

The Weasel family high five, congratulating each other

Weasel 1 The boss will be pleased.

Weasel 2 Can't believe you threw your knickers at him, though. That wasn't ladylike.

Weasel 3 You two were useless. Besides, (*dropping his voice*) I ain't no lady.

They exit laughing

Scene Four

The Courtroom

Mole, Ratty and Badger are sitting opposite the dock

Behind them is a Jury, made up of Stoats, Weasels and Ferrets

The Judge's seat and table are between the dock and the Jury.

Ferret 3 Bring in the prisoner.

Toad is dragged in by two Ferret guards. He is struggling and shouting

Toad Let me go you ruffians. Have you any idea who I am?

Ferret 1 You're our prisoner.

Ferret 2 And if you don't behave, we'll give you a clip round the ear.

Toad How dare you, I'm a Lord and you are riff-raff, so far beneath me... (*Ferret 2 slaps Toad*) Ouch!

Ferret 1 We warned you, now behave. His Honour, Judge Proudfoot, doesn't take kindly to disrespectful criminals.

Ferret 2 No! He will add another ten years onto your sentence.

Toad But I've not been tried yet and I'm innocent.

Ferret 1 (*laughing with Ferret 2 and looking over to Toad who's been forced to sit down*) How sweet. He still believes in justice.

Toad Yes, I do. It's the law of our noble country that matters, isn't it?

Ferret 2 (*laughing even harder*) Not in this court. It depends on whether the judge likes you and you've failed on two counts already. You're an aristocrat and a Toad.

Toad But that's discrimination. My good friend Badger will never put up with that. He will demand justice.

Ferret 3 All rise for the right honourable Judge Proudfoot.

They all rise and Toad is dragged to his feet

Ferret 3 hands the judge a very thick folder of documents

He begins looking through it, tutting

Judge Proudfoot Who is prosecuting?

Lady Vixen (*disguised as a lawyer*) I am, your Honour. Lady Vixen, at your service. May I just say how fortunate it is that you are presiding today? This is my first case and I am hoping to learn from your vast experience. (*She flutters her eyelashes at him*)

Judge Proudfoot (*smiling*) You may rest assured I will guide you, dear lady. But where is Mr Hickory? He's my normal prosecutor.

Ferret 3 He's suffering with gout, my Lord, and this lady was the only prosecutor left, the others being on holiday or indisposed.

Lady Vixen (*looking coy*) I hope that is acceptable to you, my Lord? I cannot believe I am so fortunate to be under the watchful eye of someone as learned as yourself.

Judge Proudfoot You are quite acceptable my dear. Now let's get on, I have a luncheon booked at the The Ivy for twelve and they won't keep the table if I'm late.

Badger (*standing*) Ahem, your Honour. I am defending the prisoner and if that folder contains statements from the witnesses, I would like to see them before we begin.

Judge Proudfoot Well you can't. I'm sure you've had plenty of time to see them before the case? (*Lady Vixen nods*) Read out the many charges.

Ferret 3 Lord Toad the Fourth, of Toad Hall, is charged with the following. On the sixth of this month, he did steal a horseless carriage and drove it without thought or care around the village, knocking down fences, flower pots and nearly running down an innocent, young, family quietly going about their lawful business.

Toad Lawful business. Ha!

Judge Proudfoot Silence the prisoner. Please continue.

Ferret 3 Finally crashing the said horseless carriage into the village pond, causing stress to a nursing duck and her ducklings.

The jury mutter, “disgraceful”, “awful”, etc.

Judge Proudfoot How does the defendant plead?

Toad Not guilty. I deny it all. Well, most of it...

Badger Sit down, Toad, before you condemn yourself...

Toad sits down

Lady Vixen My first witness is the owner of the horseless carriage, Mr Henry Ford.

Mr Ford stands by the Judge and is sworn in by Ferret 3

Lady Vixen I'd like you to look at this picture. Is this, or was this, your horseless carriage?

Mr Ford Yes, that's my motor car. It was one of a kind, especially made for my wife and I to travel. She's not well you know and I wanted to take her mind off her woes.

Lady Vixen Can you see the creature who stole this horseless carriage, which you had bought to take out your very sick wife?

Mr Ford points at Toad, again the jury comments

Badger I object, your Honour. The prosecution is trying to prejudice the jury.

Judge Proudfoot Overruled. Please carry on, dear lady. Just be careful how you question the witness.

Lady Vixen I will, thank you, your Honour. How much did the horseless carriage cost you?

Mr Ford Fifty pounds, which was a lot, but for my wife's health, well worth it.

Lady Vixen Fifty pounds, a fortune indeed. Please tell us what you saw that day?

Mr Ford We had stopped at the Squirrel Inn for afternoon tea when he, (*pointing at Toad*) came up and started asking about the horseless carriage outside. I said it was mine and that toad asked if he could buy it. He offered me twenty pounds...

Toad That was a very generous offer, which was well over what it was worth.

Ferret 1 Not worth a shilling now.

All the court laugh

Ferret 3 (*shouting*) Order in court.

Toad Just so. He's lying. He never paid fifty pounds.

Mr Ford I did.

Toad Didn't.

Mr Ford Did!

Toad Didn't!

Badger Toad, be quiet, you're not helping yourself.

Lady Vixen Please continue, Mr Ford.

Mr Ford Well, I said no, it wasn't enough. I mean you can't put a cost on the pleasure it gave my dear sick wife. The next thing I know my motor car is speeding past us driven by that toad. I would have given chase, but my dear sick wife began to feel faint...

Judge Proudfoot So you obviously looked after her. How is she now?

Mr Ford Very well. She's over there serving on the jury.

Mrs Ford (*waving to the Judge*) Cooeey!

Judge Proudfoot Cooeey!

Mole (*to Ratty*) That can't be right. How can she be on the jury?

Ratty It's not right, but look at Toad, if he doesn't calm down he'll ruin Badger's case.

Lady Vixen What happened then?

Mr Ford Fortuitously, the Constable over there was popping in for lunch. He gave chase. He was close to catching him too.

Toad Liar! You'd never have caught me. I was going at least twenty miles an hour!

Judge Proudfoot Badger, any questions for this witness? (*Badger stands*) No? Then please call the next witness.

Badger But...

Ferret 3 Call Mr West.

Mr West (Weasel 2 in disguise), limps in using a walking stick and takes the oath

Lady Vixen I see you are limping, is that the result from the horseless carriage recklessly driven by that Toad over there?

Badger Your Honour, I must protest, the prosecution is leading the witness. We have not established all the facts. I also believe you are a Weasel, are you not Mr West?

Weasel 2 (Mr West) So, what's your point?

Badger Nothing, only Weasels have a certain reputation for being, shall we say, less than truthful?

Lady Vixen And is this Toad any better? Has he been a good Lord of the Manor? Didn't he crash a caravan, steal a horseless carriage, drive at innocent creatures, oh and try to kill a poor defenceless mother duck and her ducklings?

The jury mutter, "disgraceful, down with the aristocracy," etc.

Badger (to Lady Vixen) I object! Anyway, who are you? I'm sure I've seen you before. I don't think you're all you say you are.

Judge Proudfoot If you have quite finished, I will rule on your objection. I'm afraid he is right, but I know you don't want to influence the jury. Pray, continue.

Lady Vixen In your own words, please tell us what happened that terrible evening that you nearly lost your family.

Weasel 2 (Mr West) I am a Weasel but me and my family wanted a new life away from the reputation of bad Weasels so we changed our names. We're now honest, caring citizens. *(He looks at Lady Vixen)* That's right isn't it? *(Lady Vixen glares at him)*

Toad A Weasel, honest? Never!

The jury mutter again, "how dare you,? We're Weasels," etc.

Weasel 2 (Mr West) Who are you to have a go at me? I ain't in the dock. You're going down for... I mean if the jury of honest creatures finds you guilty.

Judge Proudfoot Well said. Now sit down, Toad, or I will have you removed.

Toad But...

Judge Proudfoot SIT!

Toad does, muttering

Ratty (to Mole) He's doomed if he doesn't shut up.

Lady Vixen Please continue, Mr West.

Weasel 2 (Mr West) Well, we were out delivering a pie to Mrs Duck who has just moved to the pond, having hatched eight lovely ducklings, when this loud object hurtled towards me, my missis and littluns. We had to jump for our lives.

Lady Vixen A loud object?

Weasel 2 (Mr West) A horseless carriage, but at the time we didn't know what it was as we'd never seen one, being humble folk. (*Dramatically*) How's an honest man to feed his family? I've lost work because of my injury. All due to that posh Toad over there. Money doesn't matter to him. My littluns are still having nightmares and...

Lady Vixen (*whispering*) Don't over do it.

Weasel 2 (Mr West) Sorry, your Lordship if I was rude about him over there.

Judge Proudfoot Quite understandable, Mr West. Any questions for the witness, Badger?

Badger Yes, your Honour. What work do you actually do, Mr West?

Weasel 2 (Mr West) A bit of this, a bit of that.

Badger A bit of a wheeler-dealer then. Obviously good at what you do, as your clothes are good quality.

Weasel 2 (Mr West) Thank you. You need to look good, otherwise the punters don't believe you and... What I mean is...

Badger I think we all know what you mean, Mr Weasel, I mean Mr West. No further questions.

Mr West (Weasel 2) leaves. Lady Vixen glares at him

Ferret 3 Call Mrs West.

Weasel 3 enters dressed as a woman, 'she' is carrying a baby. She takes the oath

Lady Vixen Now Mrs West, please tell us what happened on that fateful night?

Weasel 3 (Mrs West) Well, we had just taken a pie to Mrs Duck, she's nursing you know so can't go far, like me and my baby here. No one knows what it's like. Sleepless nights, not seeing anyone, trapped with a screaming, ungrateful...

Lady Vixen Quite. But what did you see that evening?

Weasel 3 (Mrs West) It was a lovely sunset, warm and...

Lady Vixen (*getting annoyed*) Stick to the story we agreed. I mean, what happened.

Weasel 3 (Mrs West) Well, we were crossing the road and that Toad over there drove straight at us. If my hubby hadn't pushed me out of the way, I hate to think what would have happened.

Mrs West (Weasel 3) dabs her eyes on her apron. Judge Proudfoot sends over his hanky .She blows her nose loudly and tries to return the hanky. Judge Proudfoot declines

Badger (*standing and speaking before he can be interrupted*) Nice performance, Weasel. Did it take you long to learn?

Weasel 3 (Mrs West) (*leaning against the Judge's desk*) No, a couple of weeks at the most. I'm a natural...

Badger Yes, you are. You are a natural fraud. A typical weasel who doesn't know the meaning of truth. Your Honour, this is a travesty. These witnesses are obviously fake. I demand you drop the charges and just fine Toad for crashing the horseless carriage.

Lady Vixen I object. He is badgering this poor mother.

Judge Proudfoot Good pun. But there is something suspicious about...

Weasel 3 (Mrs West) (*realising he has overdone his act, starts to cry loudly*) Your lordship, I'm a simple woman and he confused me. Oh I feel faint.

Mrs West (Weasel 3) dramatically faints

Everyone rushes to catch the baby and help Mrs West. They carry her out, moaning

Badger My Lord, I must protest.

Judge Proudfoot Really, Badger? Have you no heart? We will have a short break while the court composes itself. But I warn you, things aren't looking good for your client.

Badger (*goes over to Toad who is laughing and mimicking the last witness*) Toad, you have got to take this seriously. This court doesn't like you.

Toad You worry too much, old friend. Put me in the witness box and I will soon get them eating out of my hand.

Badger Toad, please listen.

The court resumes

Lady Vixen Our final witness is Constable Stoutly.

He enters and takes the oath

Lady Vixen What happened on the evening of the sixth?

Constable Stoutly I had gone to the Squirrel Inn for a bite to eat. There, I saw a gentleman yelling, "stop thief!" After ascertaining what had happened, I gave chase. On arriving at the pond I found poor Mrs Duck screaming at the top of her voice

and saw a huge horseless carriage in her pond. Mrs Duck apologises for not being here today, but her ducklings are still suffering from shock and she can't leave them. Holding the wheel in his hand was that Toad over there.

Judge Proudfoot And where were the West family?

Constable Stoutly I didn't see them to begin with, your honour. That Toad there, knocked off my helmet when I tried to arrest him. It was after Mr West helped me pin Toad down and handcuff him. He then told me what had happened and I saw them laying by the side of the road. It was obvious they were victims of that Toad's dangerous driving.

Judge Proudfoot Any questions, Badger?

Badger Yes, your Honour. You didn't see them, but assumed them to be victims of Toad after hearing their side and not Toad's? Mr West was well enough to help you hold him down, yet today he can barely walk. Did it not seem odd to you that this family of Weasels were suddenly there?

Toad (*shouting, drowning out what Badger is saying*) That's not what happened, I demand you put me on the stand.

Badger Sit down Toad. I can prove...

Toad (*shouting even louder*) I'm a Lord, who's word is his bond. I demand you put me on the stand. Put me on the stand. NOW!

Judge Proudfoot Sit down Badger, your client doesn't seem to want your help. Do you have any objections? (*Looking at Lady Vixen who shakes her head*) No? Then swear in Toad.

Toad leaves the dock and swaggers over to give his version. On the way he stops and whispers to Badger

Toad It's in the bag. They'll recognise my noble bearing and be overawed by...

Ratty Your arrogance?

Badger Stupidity more like.

Toad I'm ready, your Honour. Mind you, a chair would be nice. I've been stood up there for hours, don't 'cha know?

Judge Proudfoot (*sarcastically*) Anything else?

Toad A cup of tea wouldn't go amiss. Six sugars please and not too strong. (*He looks around to see the Judge who is looking really angry*) Well, maybe just one sugar.

Judge Proudfoot You are the most rude, obnoxious Toad that I have ever met. I sentence you to...

Ferret 3 leans forward and explains that the jury has to find him guilty first

Ferret 3 My Lord, you need to find him guilty, first...

Judge Proudfoot I stand corrected. Please give your evidence first.

Ratty He's doomed.

Toad Well, it was a lovely day and I had been for a ride in my top-of-the-range horse drawn caravan. My stupid horse, scared by a horseless carriage, crashed it into a tree. To cheer myself up and get away from Badger, he can be so bossy at times, I decided to go for a walk. I met a very nice Ferret called Bert, who asked why I was so sad. Thoughtful chap, listened to me and suggested I cheer myself up at the Squirrel Inn. They do a spiffing cream tea. Having not eaten for hours, I decided to go. We set off but Bert realised he had to get home to his sick mother. Such a caring lad. When I arrived I saw this incredible shiny, horseless carriage parked outside. It was so beautiful, and did I mention shiny? The only thing I ever wanted. Well, of course, I had to have it. So I went in and offered a fair price, but this idiot said he wanted more. I laughed at him but I had another look at the wonderful shiny machine. I had to have it.

Lady Vixen So as you had to have it you went out to steal it?

Toad Yes... No... But the idiot had left the keys in it, so I thought I would just borrow it for a little while and I did. After all, he'd caused my horse to bolt, which had in turn caused my caravan to crash. Did I mention it was top-of-the-range?

Judge Proudfoot You stole it? I'm confused. Just because your horse bolted?

Toad No. I *borrowed* it. There's a difference, don't 'cha know?

Judge Proudfoot Indeed I do.

Toad Would you like me to continue? *(He swaggers around the courtroom)* Well, I drove into the village when something suddenly blinded me.

Judge Proudfoot The sunset?

Toad No, a pair of oversized knickers.

Judge Proudfoot There's no need to be sarcastic.

Toad I'm not, they were bloomers. Large ladies knickers. Quite shook me. So, I lost control and ended up in the pond. A duck attacked me squawking loudly, then this Constable arrives and starts trying to arrest me and then a Weasel appears and

they threw me to the ground. Well, being a Lord and them being riff-raff, I couldn't put up with that, so fought back. Now here I am a poor, innocent, aristocratic Toad. I had no option but to defend myself. I rest my case.

He returns to the dock, bowing

Judge Proudfoot Normally, I would ask the Prosecutor and Defender to sum up but Toad, in this case, it is such an open and shut case that I'm just going to ask for the verdict of...

Toad (*giving a thumbs up to his friends*) It's in the bag. I'm as good as free.

Judge Proudfoot Guilty. I will pronounce his sentence.

Toad I protest...

Ferret 3 Members of the Jury, do you find the defendant guilty or guilty.

Jury (*unanimously*) Guilty.

Toad But...

Judge Proudfoot I sentence you to two years.

Lady Vixen leans forward and whispers in his ear

Ah, my learned friend has reminded me of the terrible disrespect you showed to an upholder of our law. I refer, of course, to Constable Stoutly. Therefore I sentence you to fifteen years. (*Taking out his watch*) And there's still fifteen minutes to go until my booking at The Ivy. (*Looking at Lady Vixen*) I wonder if you would care to join me?

Lady Vixen I'd be delighted to...

As they exit, Lady Vixen looks over her shoulder and smiles

Toad But I'm innocent. I'll be dead before I come out. Save me Badger... Please!

Toad is dragged out and can be heard shouting his innocence

Mole He'll never come out.

Ratty (*to Badger*) That wasn't justice.

Badger I'd like to learn more about that prosecutor, Lady Vixen. Something doesn't ring true.

They follow the rest of the court out

Interval

Act Two

Scene One

The Jail

Toad But I'm innocent, yes I borrowed his horseless carriage but...

Jailer Fifteen years is a bit harsh for a Toad, but you wouldn't stay quiet.

Toad is pushed into a cell

The room is light, airy and he has a view of the fields beyond the prison walls

Jailer Now, behave yourself. Henrietta will be here soon with your dinner. Her mother will do your washing so you won't need to worry about that.

The Jailer shuts the door

The focus changes to Badger, Ratty and Mole who are walking home after the case

Mole It's not fair.

Ratty No it isn't. Toad was set up.

Badger Who is this Lady Vixen and what has she got against Toad? Ratty, use your contacts to find out what you can. I think we will need to keep an eye on Toad Hall. I have a bad feeling about this.

They exit

Toad's Cell, three months later

Jailer Hello, Henrietta. I hope you can cheer up that Toad today, he's been here three months and is still as miserable as the day he arrived. It's not natural.

Henrietta Yes, but he's a Lord used to being free and doing what he wants. *(She hands the Jailer a brown parcel)* Mum managed to get that stain off your best shirt. She said to wear a bib next time you eat.

Jailer *(laughing)* Cheeky. In you go.

Toad is sitting sadly in the corner of his cell, picking at his breakfast. Henrietta, the Washerwoman's daughter, returns his clean shirts

Henrietta Here you are Mr Toad, good as new. Mum managed to get the stains out. I've also got some nice bread, cheese and cake for your lunch.

Toad HmMMM... *(Turning his back to her)*

Henrietta You've not eaten your breakfast. You'll fade away if you don't eat. You've been here three months and getting regular letters from your friends, which I smuggle in. Pull yourself together.

Toad Pull myself together? How dare you? I'm innocent. I'm a Lord, I'm an adventurer and not meant to be cooped up in this awful damp, dirty place with you riff-raff.

Henrietta Charming. To think I've smuggled in another letter from your friends and some of your favourite chocolate. You can...

Toad I'm so sorry dear lady. It's just that I'm not used to being shut up all day. I have people to see, cars to drive. I'm a doer, not a loafer... Chocolate and letter did you say?

Henrietta Yes. (*Handing them over*)

Toad opens and reads the letter

Toad (*eating some of the chocolate*) Why those thieving...

Henrietta (*alarmed at his reaction*) What's happened?

Toad Someone calling themselves Lady Vixen and her gang of Stoats, Weasels and Ferrets have taken over my home Toad Hall. The cheek of it!

Henrietta (*takes up the letter and reads it*) They're also turning innocent creatures out of their homes. They'll starve as winter's nearly here.

Toad (*waving that aside*) It's alright, they're just the common folk, used to suffering. Not as important as my...

Henrietta Toad, you are the most selfish prisoner I have ever met. And to think I had come here to help you escape. Your friends have convinced my mother and me that you're innocent. We've come up with a plan.

Toad, I am innocent. Well, that's only right as I'm... I mean, I need to go and save my tenants and... Common people. What's the plan?

Henrietta leans forward and whispers in his ear. Toad smiles

It's the next day

Henrietta's mother, the Washerwoman, brings back Toad's sheets

Jailer Morning. Where's Henrietta?

Washerwoman At home in bed. She's got a cold.

Jailer I hope she feels better soon. Tell her that I miss her smiling face.

The Washerwoman enters Toad's cell

Washerwoman (*quietly*) Well, your Lordship. We need to be quick.

Toad (*looking at the clothes that the Washerwoman is wearing*) Couldn't you have chosen something that would have suited me a bit better?

Washerwoman Cheek! I'll have you know that this is my Sunday best.

Toad Well that Sunday must have been years ago.

Washerwoman I don't need to do this you know, I could get into trouble. In fact, I'm going home. And you can rot in here.

Toad (*realising that he's overstepped the mark*) My dear lady, (*taking her hand and kissing it*) please forgive a frightened Toad. I didn't realise that I was being so rude. Your clothes are delightful.

Washerwoman (*flattered*) Oh, Toad, that's all right. All is forgiven. Now you remember where you're supposed to meet Ratty and Mole?

Toad Yes, by the Big Oak.

Washerwoman Right, now, let's change quickly.

They exchange clothes

Washerwoman Now, Toad, tie me up so that they think you overpowered me. (*Toad begins to tie her up*) Hey not so tight, that hurts!

Toad leaves the cell carrying a basket of dirty washing. He's stopped at the gate by the Jailer

Jailer That was quick. Did he speak to you? He never speaks to us. He feels we're too common.

Toad (*forgetting he's in disguise*) Well you are. (*The Jailer looks at him. Toad, remembering, says in a squeaky voice*) I mean, he's the common one. I think I'm getting my daughter's cold. Must rush home. Washing to do. Bye...

Toad exits

The Jailer is suspicious and goes to Toad's Cell, where he finds the Washerwoman tied up. He takes off her gag

Washerwoman (*dramatically*) He jumped me, as soon as I entered. I fought him, but he was too strong. He stole my only clothes. He's a monster.

Jailer Odd, there's no sign of any struggle. You stay here, I'm going to raise the alarm.

He exits and the alarm begins to ring

Toad enters again

Toad Drat, they've discovered my brilliant escape. You just can't rely on common folk these days. *(He hears a dog barking and stops)* Yikes! They've called out of the hounds. Where shall I go? Where can I hide that they'd never find me?

Toad begins to run in circles around a tree. He hears a horse and cart plodding along

I could hide in that cart and get away.

Toad hears a police whistle and hides behind the tree

Three policeman run on

Policeman 1 Where's he gone?

Policeman 2 I thought I saw him running this way. He must be an idiot to try and escape wearing a dress.

Policeman 3 *(They hear dogs barking in the distance)* They've found something. Quick, before he escapes!

They run off

An Old Man leads his horse on stage. It's Dobbin

Old Man It's alright, Dobbin, nothing to be afraid of. Those dogs won't harm you. Now calm down.

Dobbin has spotted Toad and recognised him even though he is dressed as the Washerwoman

(To Dobbin) Calm down. Anyone would think you had seen that awful Toad. He should have got twenty years for how he treated you. You would have starved if I hadn't found you. That Mr Toad is an idiot.

Toad *(from behind the tree)* Idiot?! How dare you. Dobbin is my horse and you've stolen him! I'll have you thrown in jail. I will...

Old Man Who's there? I'm sorry, what did you say. I'm old and my sight and hearing is not all it should be.

Toad *(hearing the dogs)* No problem. I'm just a poor old washerwoman trying to get home and wondered if you could give me a lift to the village? My feet are killing me.

Old Man Of course I can. There's a dangerous prisoner escaped from nearby and it's certainly not safe for a lady to be out alone.

Toad Dangerous you say? I was *never* dangerous! (*In the Washerwoman's voice*) I mean, how do you know?

Old Man There's a police road block and they're searching everything, from here to the village. I have a pass to say I've been searched.

Toad (*aside*) Oh blast! How will I reach Ratty and Mole if there's a police road block. Unless... (*In his sweetest Washerwoman voice*) Dear Old Man, at the next road block could I pretend to be your wife so there's no hold up? My dear daughter is very ill and at home. (*He pretends to cry*) I didn't want to leave her, but being poor and comm... (*He has difficulty saying the word*) common like you, I had to deliver his Lordship's washing.

Old Man Of course, dear lady. Hop aboard my wagon. Dobbin, behave yourself and calm down.

They reach another police road block

Policeman I Stop! We need to search you. (*The Old Man shows them his pass*) Oh, you've been searched. Drive on.

PC Stoutly Stop, that Washerwoman looks familiar! Stop that cart!

Toad panics, jumps off the cart and runs for it. The Old Man and Dobbin continue off stage

The Policemen go to grab Toad, but grab each other

Toad runs into the audience to hide and is chased around the auditorium

Eventually Toad escapes back onto the stage and hides

The Policemen run off in opposite directions

Toad entering and seeing that the coast is clear begins to throw off his disguise

Toad I'm free! Oh, the cleverness of me. So, here's the Big Oak. Now, where are Ratty and Mole? I knew they'd be late.

Ratty (*entering with Mole*) Ahem! We've been watching from over there. Best laugh I've had for ages.

Toad Ratty, dear chap, and Mole. So kind of you to meet me... Now, where do we eat? I'm famished.

Ratty You could also do with a bath. You smell.

Toad So would you if you had been starving and dirty in a dark, damp, cold dungeon.

Mole Poor you, I didn't realise that. Henrietta must have lied to us, she said you were in a lovely cell, washed your clothes and cooked your food each day.

Ratty She didn't lie, it's Toad exaggerating again. You haven't changed at all, Toad, I've a good mind to send you back.

Toad (*sheepishly*) Well, it might not have been too bad but...

They hear a noise, all jump

Ratty It's only a bird, but we'd better get you to Badger's. He has a few things he wants to say to you.

Toad Oh, I bet he does.

Mole We've got a hamper that we can eat on the way. Come on, and we'll fill you in on what's been happening.

Toad, Ratty and Mole go deeper into the woods

Toad If I had been there those awful creatures wouldn't have taken over Toad Hall. I would have...

Ratty Well, you weren't and they did.

Mole We did our best but there weren't enough of us. Badger took it very badly. They broke his stick.

Toad Not the one his grandfather gave him?

Mole Yes. He was so angry that he took ten of them down. It was then that their chief cut the cord holding up the chandelier and it fell on him!

Toad Not my Austrian crystal chandelier! The one with my face on every piece, the one...

Mole Toad!

Toad I mean, how's dear Badger?

Ratty We thought they'd killed him, until we heard him groan. It took six of us to calm him down. While they sang that awful song of theirs.

Toad The one that goes, "We are the Weasels, we are the Stoats"?

Ratty Yes, but how do you know it?

Toad I can hear it.

They listen. They can hear the song being sung in the distance. The sound is getting closer

Ratty Quick! Hide!

They dive behind some bushes. The Weasels and Stoats swagger on stage singing

**Weasels
and Stoats**

We are the Weasels, we are the Stoats.
We like to fight, and then we boast.
We are the Weasels, we are the Stoats.
We rule this wood, and Toad Hall too.
We beat the foxes and the rabbits,
Ratty, Mole and Toadies flunkeys and even Badger too.
We are the Weasels, we are the Stoats.
We beat them all, and that's our boast.

Weasel 1 Life is good. Doing what we want, when we want.

Weasel 2 No one to stop us. Everyone's afraid of us.

Weasel 3 But what happens when Badger recovers? My arm still hurts where he hit me.

Stoat 1 And what about Toad? He's not going to be very happy when he sees what we've done to Toad Hall.

Weasel 2 But he will never know. He's still in prison, thanks to you great acting performance.

Weasel 3 (*Reenacting his performance*) I was so frightened your Honour, when Toad almost hit me and my family with that horseless carriage. My littlun still has nightmares...

Stoat 2 You deserved an Oscar for that performance. You have to hand it to our boss. The planning was faultless. Toad's in prison for the rest of his life and good riddance.

Weasel 3 My personal highlight was pretending to faint when recalling how Toad almost hit my baby.

Stoat 3 You made a good lady. I nearly choked laughing.

Toad Then they framed me! Why, I'll...

Ratty Do nothing until we have spoken to Badger.

Mole I'm sure he will have a cunning plan.

Toad (*loudly*) Just one punch then I'll...

Ratty covers his mouth

Weasel 1 Quiet! I thought I heard something. Is that bush moving?

Stoat 1 (*they all look*) No. It's not.

Stoat 3 It's your imagination.

Weasel 3 He's always seeing things we can't.

Weasel 2 I have the gift of sight. I see things you can't.

Stoat 2 Well, I have a gift of sight too. It's the "boot up your backside if you all don't get a move on" sight. The boss wants us to pay a visit to the Otters later, to collect their contribution to the cause.

Stoat 1 But they refused. Got real shirty.

Stoat 2 They'll be different when we kidnap their babies.

They all laugh evilly and leave the stage singing their song

Toad, Ratty and Mole come out from hiding

Toad Scoundrels. Good job you held me back, I would have...

Ratty I'm sure you would have, Toad. Moley, go and see the Otters. Take their babies to my house. Then tell them to play along until we've seen Badger. He'll know what to do.

Toad is still muttering under his breath and pretending to fight the Stoats and Weasels

Ratty When you have quite finished, Toad, perhaps we could visit Badger.

Toad Right-o Ratty. Just keeping in shape after my stay in that awful prison. Did I tell you about my daring...

Ratty Yes Toad, several times.

They exit

Mole (*who has been listening to them*) I hope Badger does have a plan.

He exits

Scene Two

Badger's Den

Badger is sitting in a large chair. He is surrounded by various weapons. He is finishing carving a very large heavy stick into a club. Toad and Ratty arrive and knock on the door

Badger Hello, Ratty. Hello Toad.

Toad How did he know it was us?

Ratty Badger knows everything.

Badger (*not looking up*) Mind where you step, I've been modifying some weapons for when we teach those pesky, arrogant, little runts a lesson. I'll pulverise them, rip their guts out, pull their whiskers and chop their claws off.

Toad I say Badger, that's a bit harsh. They can't help it. You just all need to remember you are all my inferiors and as such...

Ratty Toad...

Toad You need to remember their lack of my ancestry, my education...

Ratty (*seeing Badger's face*) Now Badger, I don't think Toad was referring to us...

Badger (*putting his hand up to stop Ratty*) Just to make sure I've heard you right Toad. Unless we're you, we're all beneath you.

Toad My family have always been the noblest in the land. I can trace my line back ten generations, can you? My noble features proclaim...

He croaks as Badger grabs him by the neck just as Mole comes in

Mole (*entering*) What have I missed?

Ratty Toad, telling us we're his inferiors.

They sit back and watch as Badger shakes Toad like a rag doll

Toad is turning red in the face and desperately signalling to his two friends to help him

Badger Inferior, am I? Uneducated, am I? Not as noble as you? Where were you when us inferiors tried to save your home? Where were you when the animals round here were bullied and forced to give up most of what they own? I will tell you where you were... (*He takes a deep breath*) In prison. A common felon who was caught with a horseless carriage that didn't belong to you, just because you HAD to have it.

Mole Shouldn't we do something, Ratty, to help Toad?

Ratty Why? It's about time someone told him the truth. Besides I'm rather enjoying it.

Mole Please, Ratty, he is beginning to turn a very un-Toad-like colour.

Ratty (*noticing*) So he is. Badger, old man, I think Toad's learned his lesson. You can put him down now.

Badger freezes, shakes himself, sighs and drops Toad

Toad I say, that was a bit harsh. You hurt me. (*Badger takes a menacing step towards him*) What I mean is, I didn't realise you had lost your home, Mole. Or that others may have been suffering because of my... Shall we say... Little indiscretions.

Badger I'd say more because of your selfish, thoughtless devil-may-care attitude. Your father understood that obligations come with nobleness.

Toad I think I'm beginning to understand. I'm sorry Mole that you lost your home. I promise that when I come into my own again, I will build you an even bigger house.

Mole I don't want a bigger home. I only want things back as they were. A leader who will be fair, keep the peace and the law of all us animals.

Toad is puffing himself up when he sees Badger looking at him. Toad has a sudden, inspirational idea

Toad Well we have to win back Toad Hall first, then I can begin to put things right and for that I need your brains, Badger. You should be our advisor on how I can do that. Tell me about this Lady Vixen. Who is she? Where does she come from?

Ratty There are lots of rumours. Some say her family lost their money gambling. Others, that she holds a grudge against your family, Toad.

Toad What grudge. What could my family have done wrong?

Ratty We should ask Badger.

Toad Please tell me, Badger. It's time I knew.

Badger We need to go back many, many, years. The Great Hall became vacant. Two families, the Foxes and the Toads thought that they should inherit it. Eventually your family, Toad, proved their claim was better and the rest is history. But the Foxes never gave up their claim. They turned to a life of crime. Lady Vixen is the last of her line.

Mole Poor girl. It's sad to be all alone in the world. I know how I felt when I lost my... *(They all look at him)* My family were killed by humans who poured fire down our holes. I only escaped because I had visited my friend. I just ran as fast as my legs would carry me and came here. Built my house, and kept myself to myself until I met Ratty and, well, the rest is history.

Ratty puts her arm around Mole

Badger That was cruel, but I promise you will always be safe here.

Ratty. Badger, just a thought, but could this Lady Vixen be that daughter? She's made it clear that she hates Toad and his family. When we were in the woods we heard her cohorts saying that they had framed Toad.

Toad Yes, that's right. The cheek of it!

Badger That's interesting. Well, we can deal with that after we've taken back Toad Hall but you will need a good magistrate who's not under their control. I always thought Judge Proudfoot was too friendly with the Weasels.

Mole But who would do it, it's not a nice job.

Toad I say, Mole, I know just the fella. As Lord of the Manor it is my job to appoint a magistrate who is honest, noble and impartial.

Mole Yes, but who?

Toad (*looking smug*) Badger!

Ratty and Mole (*together*) That's genius, Toad. Badger, you would be great.

Badger Well, I must say I'm surprised you didn't choose yourself.

Toad I did consider that, but I can't do it all. Besides, there are things to see, things to do.

Badger Toad, if you intend to continue with these hare-brained schemes then...

Toad Don't worry, Badger, I've learned my lesson. There are homes to be built, the school to be reopened, and I need to say sorry to those I thoughtlessly used.

Badger Well, that's a start. But first we win back Toad Hall. I have a plan, but it will need all our cunning and as much help as we can muster. I've already sent out a call to everyone I know and they will be waiting for us at nine, tonight, outside Toad Hall. Now get some sleep.

They settle down while Badger finishes preparing the weapons

Scene Three

Toad Hall

Stoats and Weasels are lounging, eating and drinking. Lady Vixen is busy counting the money her gang have brought her

The Ferrets are playing cards

Ferret 1 Hey, I saw that. You're cheating.

Ferret 2 No I'm not.

Ferret 1 Show me what's up your sleeve.

Ferret 2 (*pulling his sleeve up*) Nothing.

Ferret 1 The other one. (*He pulls out two aces from Ferret 2's sleeve*)

Ferret 3 Wow. I never knew you were a magician. I'm impressed.

Ferret 1 He's not, he's a cheat. I'll teach you.

They begin to fight

Lady Vixen Boys, boys, stop it. There's no need to fight. Cheating is encouraged.
(*Looking at Stoat 2*) You, go and sort them out.

Stoat 2 goes over and bangs the heads of Ferret 1 and 2 together, knocking them out

Stoat 2 All sorted. They're having a nap.

Lady Vixen Boys, you've not brought me as much cash here as usual. You wouldn't be trying to cheat me, would you? (*She flexes her claws*) Keeping some back for yourselves?

The Stoats and Weasels look at each other

Weasel 1 That's hurtful. We wouldn't rob one of our own.

Stoat 1 No way. Why, you're worse than any of us. Why, you're rotten to the core.

Weasel 2 Vindictive, cruel and common like us.

Lady Vixen How dare you? I'm a Lady and won't be compared to the likes of you.
Why, I'll... (*She stands*)

Stoat 2 What we mean is, it's a pleasure learning from you. Your plan to get rid of Toad was genius.

Lady Vixen Yes, it was rather, wasn't it. I knew he couldn't resist new expensive toys. It was only a matter of time. My father would have been proud. But it still doesn't answer why this money is short... Now turn out your pockets.

Stoat 3 (*seeing a way to take Lady Vixen's mind off the missing money*) Your father must have been an incredible teacher, seeing how you've turned out. (*Bowing*) My lady.

Lady Vixen (*smiling*) He was. After we were robbed of our rightful title by those loathsome Toads and paid the huge legal costs, my family were left destitute. We lost everything.

Weasel 1 It's always us innocent ones who suffer. I remember my Dad...

Stoat 2 (*to Weasel 1*) Don't interrupt her. Just slip the money back, while I keep her talking. What did you do?

Lady Vixen What every self respecting fox would do. Use our cunning, to become the best criminals in the land. And we were, until... (*Her eyes mist over*)

Weasel I (to *Stoat 2*) It's done. Until what, my Lady?

Lady Vixen It was our last job until the winter. My father had planned to rob Toad Hall. But he caught a chill and died. So I vowed...

Unseen by them Badger, Toad, Ratty, Mole, the Washerwoman, her daughter and the other Woodland animals, have crept in through a secret door and are surrounding the Weasels, Stoats and Ferrets

Badger ...To get your revenge!

Toad So, you framed me.

Lady Vixen (*laughing*) It was so easy. You obviously didn't inherit your father's brains. Are you sure you're his?

Toad How dare you! No one insults my heritage. I'll show you!

Lady Vixen leaps towards Toad, but Ratty pushes him aside

Ratty She's mine. I'll teach you to pick on smaller animals.

They circle each other and then fight, clawing at each other

Mole (*fighting Weasel I, who is holding Mole at arms length*) Take that you brute, and that.

Washerwoman (*tapping him on the shoulder*) Perhaps you would like to pick on someone your own size?

Weasel I Wait your turn, then I will see to you my lovely. I'll... (*He falls over as she hits him with a broom*)

Henrietta (*busy fighting a Ferret*) Be careful Mum, these are hardened criminals.

Washerwoman I'm fine. I haven't had so much fun in years (*She bashes Weasel I with the broom, chasing him around the room*)

Weasel I Help me someone, help me. She's going to kill me.

Washerwoman Take that, you coward. And that. (*Sees a Ferret creeping up behind her*) Oh, no you don't sunshine. (*Hitting him with the broom*)

Toad Oh, well done, dear lady.

Toad is directing the fighting, but not getting involved

Toad Over there, Badger, those two are trying to escape with the silver. Henrietta, don't let that Weasel escape, he framed me. Mole put your back into it, he's only a Ferret.

Badger is busy knocking heads together. The Washerwoman and her daughter are tying up those captured

Badger (*fighting off three Weasels and Stoats*) Toad, I could do with some help here.

Toad You're doing fine Badger, I'm busy directing the battle and very well if I say so myself.

Badger flings off one Stoat and bashes the other two Stoats' heads together

Mole is trying to fight the Ferrets who are laughing at him until Henrietta hits them with her mother's broom

Lady Vixen and Ratty are fighting

After a fierce battle, everyone is caught and tied up

Lady Vixen and Ratty are left fighting

Toad Ask her why she hates me. Is it my noble charm? My natural aristocracy? My...

Badger Toad, stop it. I think Ratty has her hands full.

Ratty Ask her yourself Toad, when I've...

Lady Vixen sees her chance and trips Ratty who falls, she goes to swipe Ratty with her claws when Mole jumps forward biting her tail. She turns

Lady Vixen Why you little... I should have dealt with you when you refused to pay protection money.

Badger steps in and grabs Lady Vixen by the arm

Badger Oh no you don't, lady!

The battle is over

Toad I won, I won! Toad Hall is mine again. (*To Lady Vixen*) You thought you could outwit me, a Toad whose family goes back hundreds of years. A Toad...

She makes a lunge at him. Toad yelps and jumps back

Ratty Who's a coward.

They all laugh

Badger Lady Vixen, I don't understand why you turned to a life of crime.

Lady Vixen We lost the title that was rightfully ours. What was left other than a life of crime?

Toad Well, it's your turn to rot in prison now, my conscience is clear.

Henrietta But you can sort of understand. I think I would have wanted revenge.

Mole Me too...

Badger I think you should be merciful, Toad.

Toad But she framed me.

Badger Toad.

Toad Alright. They can repair all the damage they've done, then Badger as magistrate you can decide their fate. Take them away. *(They are led away)* Now, thank you dear friends. *(Looking around)* It won't take long for you all... I mean us, to tidy up this mess. Ratty, can you make sure that monies and stolen items are returned to their rightful owners?

Everyone begins to tidy up

On Saturday, we will have a party to celebrate my triumphant return!

Scene Four

Party day in Toad Hall

Tables are laid with food

Toad Now, my friends. If I could have your attention, there are things that I need to put right. People I need to ask forgiveness from.

Washerwoman If you mean me and my daughter, we forgave you a long time ago. It's been hard losing my job and all, after your escape, but we managed. *(She puts her arm round her daughter)* Henrietta here has been my rock. She contacted Badger who sent us money and food.

Toad Your generosity towards my dishonest use of you, my disregard of the price you would pay for my selfishness, shames me. I...

Badger Don't overdo it Toad.

Toad Calm down Badger, old friend. *(He takes the Washerwoman's hand and bows to her)* My dear Washerwoman, it would please me if you oversaw the washing at Toad Hall and your daughter Henrietta, who's a bright girl, become my housekeeper. You can have as many commoners... Erm, people as you like to help you. I always envied the white collars on the jailers shirts. *(He releases her hand and wipe his own on her coat)*

The Washerwoman is overcome. Henrietta is fanning her, with the help of Badger

Ratty *(whispering to Toad)* Were you really envious?

Toad No, they were a grey mottled colour but I don't want to hurt her feelings.

Ratty You really have changed.

The Washerwoman, with the help of Badger and Henrietta, rises

Toad Ah, you've recovered, now you need to see my Butler and he will arrange for you to have one of the cottages, after I've made those pesky Stoats and Weasels clean and decorate it. Feel free to use any of the furniture in the attics. Now, there's no need to thank me. *(Taking his hand back from the Washerwoman who's grabbed it)* It's the least that I can do.

Henrietta That's very generous of you, Lord Toad. *(She curtseys, Toad raises her)*

Toad I will always be just Toad, the humble, to you. Now, I need to speak to the others here who helped me regain Toad Hall.

Toad stands on a chair

Toad My dear friends, you see before you a humbled and ashamed Toad, who has learned his lesson. I promise that with the help of my friends, Ratty, Mole and our new magistrate, Badger, *(he looks at Badger, who nods)* I will make Toad Hall, the riverbank and our wood, a community of safety, learning, trust and honesty. I shall be a benefactor to all. I shall... *(Badger coughs)* Anyway, I have learned my lesson and hope you can forgive me. Now let the party begin.

There's a knock on the door and Toad rushes to answer it

Badger, Ratty and Mole follow Toad as he goes out of the door. A Delivery Man is standing there with a clip board

Delivery Man Where do you want it?

Badger Toad, what are you up to now?

Toad Just taking delivery of my new toy. It's the 'in' thing. Mark my words, everyone will travel on an aeroplane in the future. Would you like to see mine?

Badger Hold me back you two. Toad, you are the limit. I was such a fool to believe you had changed.

Toad returns carrying a brown box. Toad opens the box with a flourish and pulls out a model toy aeroplane

Toad My new hobby! The real ones are far too dangerous.

Ratty and Mole look at Badger, who looks at Toad. They all burst out laughing

Badger *(puts his arm around Ratty and Mole)* Come on, let's join the party.

There's a sound of an aircraft passing overhead

Toad (*looking up*) *Although...*

Toad winks at the audience and enters Toad Hall

Curtain

Perusal Copy

Useful Theatre Words

Speak Like An Actor

Act: A group of scenes.

Aside: When an actor says their lines to the audience, not to another actor.

Audition: A bit like a team try out, to see which role would best suit you.

Auditorium: The part of the building that is used for performances. Sometimes called the House.

Applause: When the audience claps the actors.

Backdrop: A big curtain, painted as scenery, hung at the back of the stage.

Backstage: The wings, dressing rooms and other parts of the theatre out of the audience's view.

Black Out: When all the lights on the stage are turned off.

Blocking: An early rehearsal where the Director decides how everyone is going to move around the stage.

Book: Another word for the script.

Cameo: A small but important role, sometimes played by a famous actor.

Cast: The actors in a play.

Character: The part an actor takes in the play.

Costume: What an actor wears.

Corpsing: When an actor laughs on stage but isn't supposed to.

Cue: The words or action signalling something to happen on stage.

Curtain Call: When all the actors come on stage for a bow.

Debut: An actor's first-ever performance.

Director: The person in charge of everything that happens on stage.

Down-Stage: Moving towards the audience.

Dressing Room: Where an actor gets ready for the performance.

Dress Rehearsal: The final rehearsal that the actors do in costume before an audience comes to watch.

Ensemble: A group of actors performing together, sometimes playing smaller roles.

Finale: The final scene of a play.

Front of House: The area outside the auditorium, that the audience use before the show and during the interval.

Fourth Wall: An imaginary wall between the actors and the audience.

Improvisation: An unrehearsed performance.

Intermission or Interval: The break between acts (time for ice cream!).

Monologue: A long speech spoken by one actor.

Off-Stage: The area that the audience can't see.

Performance: When you do the play in front of an audience.

Plot: The story of a play.

Premiere: The first performance of a play.

Props: The things an actor uses in the play.

Projecting: Making sure that you are loud enough to be heard.

Prompt: To help an actor with a forgotten line.

Rehearsal: When you practise for the performance.

Rostra: A raised platform or piece of scenery.

Scene: Uninterrupted action within a play.

Script: The words an actor says in the play.

Sight Line: The different view that the audience has of the stage.

Soliloquy: When a character says their thoughts out loud.

Spotlight: A special light to shine on a particular actor.

Stage Manager: The person who makes sure that the performance runs smoothly.

Tab: The word that is used for the theatre curtains.

Technical Rehearsal: The rehearsal in the theatre when you make sure that the sound, lights and special effects all work.

Thespian: An old fashioned word for an actor.

Understudy: An actor ready to step in if needed e.g. If an actor's sick.

Up-Stage: Moving away from the audience.

Wings: The spaces off-stage, at the side.



My Notes

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