

*There are great clankings of doors, turning of keys and dripping of walls as Toad is taken down into the depths of the castle*

*Meanwhile Badger, Rat and Mole make their melancholy way home from the trial*

**Badger** The parting of the ways. You're sure you won't come and stay?

*Mole looks at Rat*

You're very welcome.

**Rat** No. We'll get on home.

**Badger** Sad day. Not going to be much of a Christmas. Goodbye Moley, little chap. Safe journey.

*Badger disappears into the Wild Wood as Rat and Mole go on in the direction of the River Bank. Rat, though, seems nervous and keeps looking over his shoulder*

**Mole** He was brave, Toad, singing his song in the court.

**Rat** Very foolish, if you ask me. He should have kept his mouth shut.

**Mole** At least he went down fighting.

**Rat** Yes. Silly fellow.

**Mole** You're always so sensible, Rat. I can't bear to think of him stuck in some dark, damp hole.

**Rat** No. It's no place for a toad.

*There is an unkind laugh somewhere: Rat looks round and, not for the first time, feels there is someone in the shadows watching them*

What's that?

**Mole** What's what?

*They listen*

No. It's only the wind — in the willows.

**Rat** Hmmm. I just have the feeling we're being watched. Come along.

*Rat has been moving ahead quickly but Mole has stopped, sniffing the air*

**Mole** Ratty. Come back. I want you quick.

**Rat** Oh come along, Mole, for goodness sake.

**Mole** It's my home. It must be quite close.

*Rat hasn't heard*

**Rat** Can't stop now, old chap. Must press on.

**Mole** But Ratty.

**Rat** Listen, Mole, we can't hang about. It's late and I'm not sure we're alone. Be sensible.

*Mole runs after Rat then suddenly starts crying*

**Mole** I know it's a shabby little place and not as smart as yours — but I was fond of it.

**Rat** Fond of what?

**Mole** I'd forgotten all about it until suddenly I smelled it.

**Rat** Smelled what?

**Mole** I just wanted to have one little look only you wouldn't turn back. Oh, Ratty, it was home.

*Rat stops*

**Rat** I'm a beast. A thoroughgoing beast.

**Mole** No, no.

**Rat** My best friend eating his heart out and what do I do? Tell him to pick his feet up. Rat, you're a fool. You don't see what's under your nose. So. Now we've got that straightened out, it's about turn. *(He heads back)*

**Mole** We can't. What about the Wild Wooders?

**Rat** Hang the Wild Wooders. We're going to find your little house. Come on. You're in charge now.

**Mole** It's too late and too dark. I shouldn't have said anything.

**Rat** Now whereabouts was it — about here, I think.

*Mole begins to sniff*

**Mole** Yes, yes. Mmm. Mmmmmmm.

*Suddenly Mole disappears*

**Rat** Mole. Mole. Where are you?

**Mole** *(off)* Here.

*Rat suddenly disappears too and as the scene changes we find them both coming down the stairs at Mole End*

*Outside the front door is a little gravelled forecourt (not to say patio) with on*



*one side a garden seat, flanked by a roller and some ferns, with on the other a skittle alley. For the National Theatre production Mark Thompson managed to contrive most of the delights of Mole End but this rather Pooterish pleasure had to be omitted. Rat therefore comes directly into Mole's dusty front room where Mole shows off his two Staffordshire figures*

**Mole** That's Garibaldi.

**Rat** Was he a Mole?

**Mole** No. He was a hero of modern Italy. That's Queen Victoria.

**Rat** Was she a hero of modern Italy?

**Mole** No. Though she could have been if she'd wanted to be. That's my family. There were fourteen of us. There was Frank, and Claud, Winifred and Jane — she got caught in a trap and made into a waistcoat. That's one of the risks of being a mole, people are always wanting you for a waistcoat. It's not a patch on your place, Rat.

**Rat** Nonsense, old chap. I'm sure it's absolutely — delightful.

**Mole** Oh, Rat. Why ever did I do it?

**Rat** Do what, old fellow?

**Mole** Bring you to this poor, cold little place when you might have been at River Bank toasting your toes before a blazing fire.

**Rat** Absolute nonsense. What a capital place! So — compact. So labour saving. Oh Mole, I congratulate you. It's perfect.

**Mole** Do you really think so?

**Rat** The stove's laid already so we'll soon have the place warm. Meanwhile Moley, why don't you find yourself a duster and have a little dust around.

**Mole** Do you like this bunk under the stairs? That was my idea.

**Rat** I like it all, Moley. It's so — cosy.

*It is cold, it is dusty and here still are the evidences of the spring cleaning abandoned on that memorable morning so long ago. Still, Rat's making the best of things, cheers up his friend until another thought strikes Mole and he slumps on his bed in despair*

Oh, what's the matter now?

**Mole** Food. I've nothing to give you for supper. Not a crumb.

**Rat** Really! Well, what's this? A sardine opener. If there's an opener there must also be the wherewithal that's to be opened. Namely a tin of sardines. (And to no-one's surprise he finds one) And what's this? A German sausage? A biscuit tin containing — surprise, surprise — biscuits. And what have you got here? Mole, you dark horse, beer. It's a banquet.

*As they sit down to eat there is the sound of shuffling outside. Still on the watch for weasels, Rat is instantly on the alert*

What's that?

*The sound of "Ding dong merrily on high" answers his question*

**Mole** No, no. It's only the fieldmice. They've come carol singing: they always come to Mole End last of all.

**Rat** Come on. Let's have a look at you.

*He opens the front door but the fieldmice flood in through every door in the room, form up and, conducted by Mole, finish their carol*

### Christmas Song

#### Fieldmice

Ding dinga dinga dinga dong  
The bells are ringing loud and clear.

Ding dinga dinga dinga dong

This is the happiest time of year.

Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas one and all,  
Joy to each and every creature great and small.

Singing ding dinga dinga dinga dong  
The bells are ringing loud and clear.

Ding dinga dinga dinga dong

This is the happy time of year.

Ding dinga dinga dinga dong! (Eek!)

**Rat** Well sung, mice.

**Mouse Mark** We've missed you, Mr Mole.

**Mole** I've missed you.

**Mouse Maureen** Don't you live here any more?

**Mole** I live on the River Bank with Mr Rat, though I still keep this on as a — *pied-à-terre*.

**Mouse Malcolm** Who looks after you?

**Mole** We look after ourselves.

**Mouse Martin** Who cooks?

**Mole** Mr Rat cooks.

**Mouse Margaret** Don't you have a mother to look after you?

**Mole** No, we don't have a mother.

**Mice Martha** } (together) We do.

**Mouse Mary** }

**Mole** I did once.

**Mouse Malcolm** What happened to her?

**Rat** Here, what are all these questions?