Toad

PART TWO

These days an offender of Toad's social position and financial resources could expect to be sent directly to an open prison, but Toad's prison is anything but open. He has the dungeon to himself, it's true, but Toad is not at the moment disposed to look on the positive side. Dressed in the traditional prison garb of overalls printed with broad (green) arrows he sits on his little bench contemplating his lot with no equanimity at all. Were there a psychiatrist attached to this gaol he would diagnose Toad as "subject to violent mood swings"

Toad Poor Toad. Poor little Toady. All aloney. On his owney. Nobody wants him. Nobody cares. I had a big house once. Servants. Friends. Wise old Badger. Clever intelligent Rat. Sensible little Mole. Why did I not listen to you? O foolish, foolish Toad. It's the end of everything. At least it's the end of Toad, which comes to the same thing. Thrust into this dark, damp dungeon, despised by the world, deserted by his friends, whom he entertained entirely at his own expense. Ungrateful Badger. Sanctimonious Rat. Silly Mole. Where are they when I need them? All nice and snug at home while I'm stuck here for twenty years. Twenty years! Oh, it's not fair. (*He goes into a paroxysm of grief, kicking his legs and banging his fists on the ground*) I can't bear it.

There is a shaft of light as the Gaoler's Daughter comes in with a plate

Gaoler's Daughter Dinner.
Toad Dinner? *Dinner*! At a time like this? I couldn't. (*Pause*) What is it?
Gaoler's Daughter Bubble and squeak.
Toad Bubble. And squeak. How insensitive people are. No. No. Never.
Gaoler's Daughter I'll take it away then.
Toad (*hastily*) No. I might just manage to force down a mouthful. After all, I owe it to my friends. (*Snuffling, he takes a mouthful or two*)
Gaoler's Daughter You like that?
Toad Not particularly.
Gaoler's Daughter Oh well. (*She makes to take it away again*)
Toad No. I mean I don't dislike it. It's perfectly acceptable, in its way. Only, it's not what I'm used to at Toad Hall.
Gaoler's Daughter Toad Hall? Tell me about Toad Hall.

Toad Toad Hall is a self-contained gentleman's residence in a picturesque riverside setting. It is very unique in its way and though parts of it date back to the fourteenth century it has up to the minute sanitation and the last word in billiard rooms.
Gaoler's Daughter It sounds paradise.
Toad Toad Hall? (*Airily*) No. Just a well-run gentleman's residence.
Gaoler's Daughter I wish I could see it, Toady. [When all's said and done he is rather a pet.]
Toad I wish I could take you there, my dear. [She's a comely enough lass.]

They cuddle

Who knows? Perhaps one day I can find you a position below stairs.

They uncuddle smartish

Gaoler's Daughter Below stairs? You're a convict. You're in here for twenty years.
Toad I was forgetting. Twenty years! Twenty years!
Gaoler's Daughter There, there. I'm a fool to myself, I know, but I've got a real soft spot for you.
Toad I know. So many people do. It's known as charm.

He blows his nose vigorously and while he doesn't quite examine the results, it's still a bit off-putting

Gaoler's Daughter I just wish I could think of a way of getting you out of here.

There is a distant call, echoing down the prison corridors

Washerwoman (*off*) Washing! Bring out your washing!
Gaoler's Daughter Here comes my aunt. She's a washerwoman.
Toad Think no more about it. I have several aunts who ought to be washerwomen.

The call gets closer

Washerwoman (*off*) Washing! Put out your washing!
Gaoler's Daughter She washes for all the convicts in the castle.
Toad How lovely for her — all those terrible vests and big men's smalls.

The Washerwoman comes into the dungeon