

PORTIA

Is that you, Mum?

(The small otter has emerged from the undergrowth.)

MRS OTTER

There you are. Where have you been? Say hello to Mr Mole.

PORTIA

I'm just going to eat this worm.

(She pounces and chews. MOLE has stood to shake her hand. He waits. He and RAT are slightly uncomfortable.)

MRS OTTER

How many times must I tell you, Portia? Animals do not burden each other with their different diets. Eat the worm if you must. But do not refer to it in polite conversation.

PORTIA

But Moles eat worms.

MRS OTTER

Even so, it's the principle of the thing.

MOLE

I don't think I knew that, about not discussing food. But then I'm not much out of the company of moles, which can be a bit limiting.

PORTIA

Can I go, Mum?

MRS OTTER

Alright. Run along and play. There's a good pup. But don't go too far.

(PORTIA skips off. MOLE has been thinking.)

Girls

Boys
or
Girls

SCENE 9

(TOAD HALL; TOAD'S BEDROOM)

(TOAD's bedchamber is very splendid indeed. He is admiring himself in front of a glass, which shows him his dazzling new motoring clothes. A rabbit in the coat of a BUTLER is listening to his Master's orders.)

TOAD

When the motorcar arrives, you are to notify me immediately.

BUTLER

Of course, sir.

TOAD

It is a new model, direct from London, so you will treat it with the reverence it deserves.

BUTLER

As you wish, sir.

TOAD

I do so wish. I wish it most entirely. But then all cars are to have reverence here. This is where cars are worshipped! This is the very Temple of Cars!

BUTLER

Just so, sir.

(There is a noise at the door and BADGER, RAT and MOLE arrive. TOAD views them suspiciously.)

BADGER

Mr Toad.

TOAD

Gentlemen. Really, this is my bedroom!

RAT

That must be why there is a bed in it.

TOAD

I did not know I was expecting you.

BADGER

You didn't know it, because you weren't. Thank you, Rabbit. That will be all.

TOAD

I will dismiss my own butler, thank you, if he needs to be dismissed.

Boys or
Girls

SCENE 2

(TOAD'S PRISON CELL)

(TOAD is alone. There is the sound of a key in the lock and the pretty GAOLER'S DAUGHTER enters. She carries a tray and a suitcase. She puts the case down and walks forward.)

GAOLER'S DAUGHTER

Have your friends gone home then, Mr Toad? That nice Mr Rat and Mr Mole?

TOAD

They have, lucky devils!

GAOLER'S DAUGHTER

How did you find them?

TOAD

A great deal better than they found me!

GAOLER'S DAUGHTER

Honestly I think it a shame, to see you locked up, when your crime is not great...

TOAD

Not great? Excuse me! When Toad breaks the law, he does it handsomely! Stealing a magnificent motor! Giving cheek to a dozen policemen into the bargain!

GAOLER'S DAUGHTER

So you think you ought to be here?

TOAD

I wouldn't say that. It seems quite mad to me. Toad of Toad Hall in a dungeon? I ask you.

GAOLER'S DAUGHTER

Tell me about Toad Hall.

TOAD

Which part? Shall we discuss the chambers, the galleries, the drawing rooms and libraries? Or would you rather hear about the gardens or the stables or the kennels or the farms? Or shall I describe an evening spent in the banqueting hall, with twenty animals around the table, singing and telling stories and making merry?

GAOLER'S DAUGHTER

When you talk like that, it's as if you lived in a fairy tale.

TOAD

So I did. Until the wicked fairy cursed me and I woke up here.

Boys
or
Girls

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(PORTIA skips off. MOLE has been thinking.)

MOLE

Surely she won't get into trouble here on the riverbank

MRS OTTER

Maybe not. just as long as she stays away from... over there.

#2B THE WILD WOOD UNDERSCORE

MOLE

You mean the Wild Wood?

MRS OTTER

We don't go there much, do we, Ratty? We riverbankers.

MOLE

So who lives in the Wild Wood?

RAT

Rather a mixed bag, to be honest. The squirrels are quite nice, and the rabbits are all right - well, some of them. Although they can be an odd bunch.

MRS OTTER

We musn't forget Mr Badger. He lives in the Wild Wood. Right at the heart of it. Of course, being Badger, no one interferes with him.

MOLE

Why? Who should interfere with him?