

## Contents

3

The Wind in the Willows

32

About the story

33

Activities

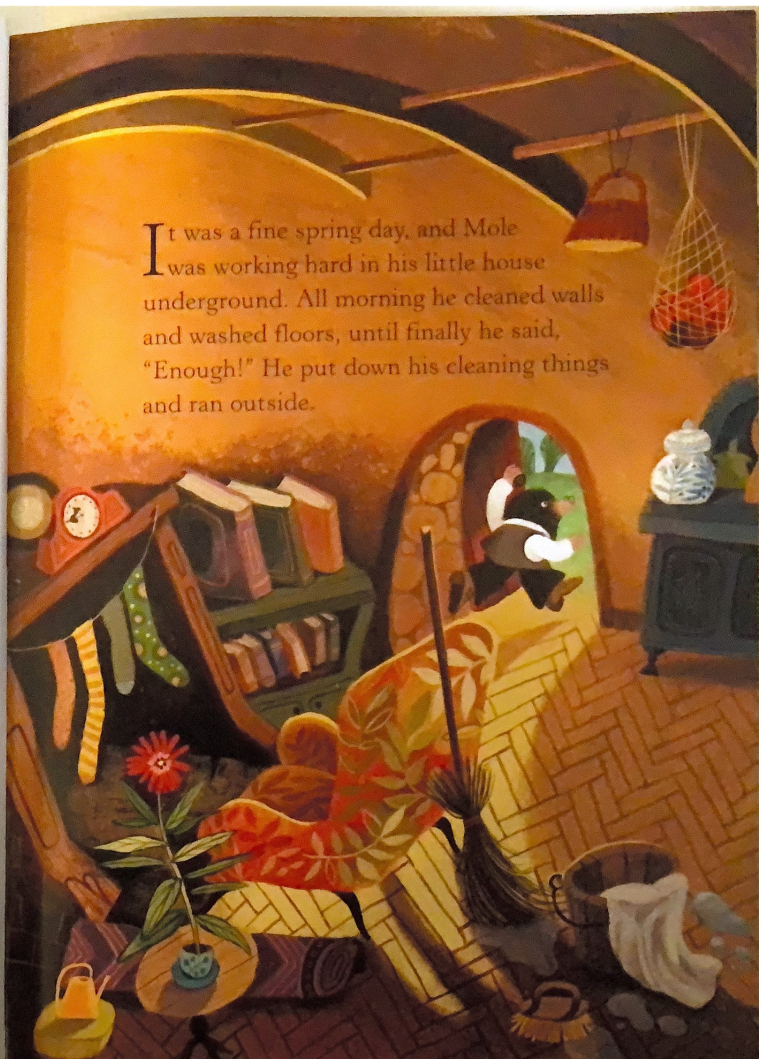
38

Word list

You can listen to the story online here:  
[www.usborneenglishreaders.com/  
windinthewillows](http://www.usborneenglishreaders.com/windinthewillows)



It was a fine spring day, and Mole was working hard in his little house underground. All morning he cleaned walls and washed floors, until finally he said, "Enough!" He put down his cleaning things and ran outside.





He could hear birds singing, and see new spring flowers. "This is better than house-cleaning!" he said. He could see something bright on the far side of the field. The river was shining between tall willow trees, and the trees were moving in the gentle wind. Mole ran towards the water.

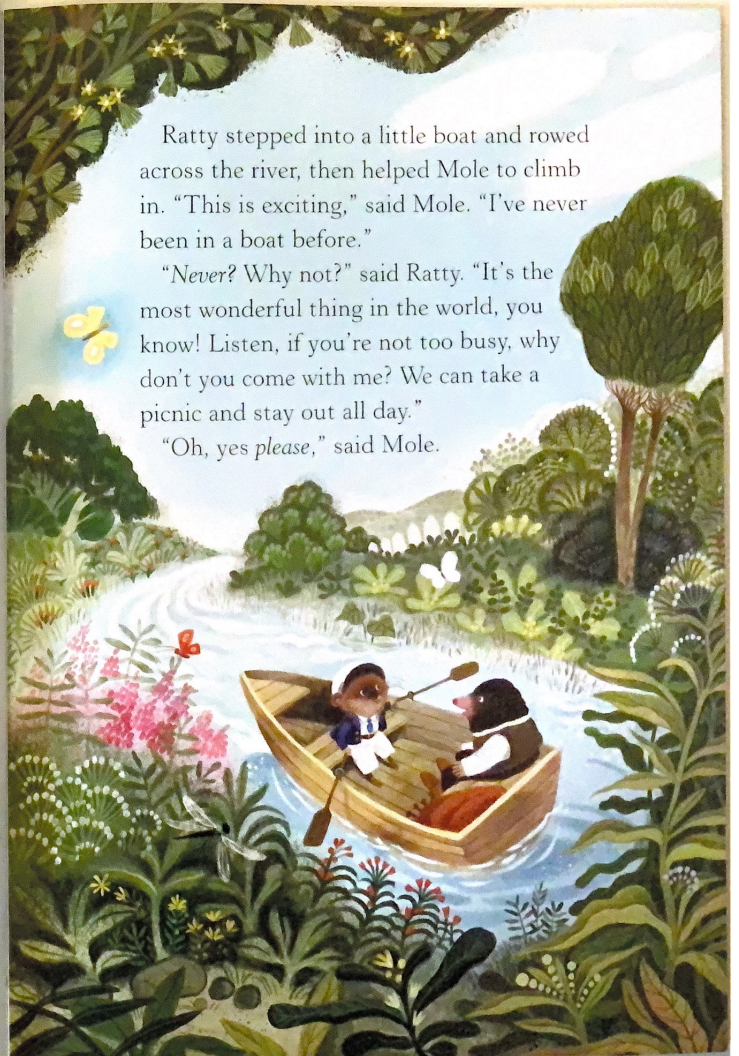


He saw a small face on the other side. The Water Rat said, "Hello, Mole! I'm Ratty. Would you like to come over here?" "How can I do that?" asked Mole.

Ratty stepped into a little boat and rowed across the river, then helped Mole to climb in. "This is exciting," said Mole. "I've never been in a boat before."

"Never? Why not?" said Ratty. "It's the most wonderful thing in the world, you know! Listen, if you're not too busy, why don't you come with me? We can take a picnic and stay out all day."

"Oh, yes *please*," said Mole.





Ratty rowed back to his house and fetched the picnic. Then he rowed along the river to a little island. Mole was very hungry, and the picnic was delicious.

At one moment they saw a black and white face on the river bank. "Hello, Badger!" shouted Ratty. "Sorry, Ratty, too many people," said Badger, and disappeared.



"He's always like that," said Ratty. "He's a kind friend, but he prefers being alone. He lives in the Wild Wood. One day we'll go and see him, but we'll have to choose a good time."

They finished the picnic and started rowing back. "Let me try," said Mole.

"Not yet," said Ratty. "It's more difficult than you think." But Mole jumped up, and fell over Ratty, and then the boat turned over and Mole was in the water, going down and down...



Two strong arms pulled him to the bank. "Oh, Ratty, I'm so sorry!" said Mole.

"Don't worry," said Ratty. "You wait here, and I'll bring the boat. And then – would you like to stay with me for some time? I can teach you to swim, and to row, and the river's very nice in the summer."

"Oh, yes *please*!" said Mole.



One morning, Ratty said, "Mole, I'd like you to meet my friend Toad. He talks about himself a lot, but he has a kind heart. You'll like him." They rowed to a beautiful old house by the river.

Toad was sitting outside. "I'm so pleased to see you!" he said. "Come and look at this!"



Behind the house was a little wooden caravan. Toad wanted to show them everything inside. "Isn't it perfect? We're leaving this afternoon."

"Toad, we can't just go," Ratty started to say, but Mole looked sad. "Oh, all right," said Ratty.

They helped to catch Toad's old horse, and soon they were on the quiet road. It was a fine way to travel.

Suddenly there was a roaring noise and a cloud of dust. The poor horse was terrified, and tried to escape. An enormous car drove past them. As it disappeared, they heard a 'Toot-toot!'

The caravan lay on its side, with a broken wheel. "Oh, Toad, I'm so sorry!" said Mole. "Toad, are you hurt?"



Toad was sitting in the middle of the road and smiling. "Toot-toot!" he said happily. "Toot-toot!"



The months went past, and it was almost winter. Ratty often went to sleep by the fire, and it was much too cold and wet for the boat. "Maybe we can visit Badger?" said Mole, but Ratty never wanted to leave the house.

"I'll just go by myself," Mole decided one afternoon. The sky was pale and the air was cold. Even without their leaves, the tall trees looked beautiful.

In the wood, the trees were closer and it was much darker. Suddenly Mole saw a face between the trees – a little, narrow, unfriendly face. He looked again, and it was gone – but then he saw another. He heard the sound of little feet all around him.



Mole was terrified. He started running, then fell over, then climbed inside a dead tree. He stayed there in the dark.

Some time later, he heard a strong, friendly voice. "Mole?"

"Ratty, is that you? Oh, I'm so happy to see you!"



"Silly Mole, coming to the Wild Wood on your own! We river animals never do that. It's no problem for Badger, of course. He likes it here. He's not afraid of the weasels and foxes – but for us, they're trouble. Let's go home. We can come back another day. Wait a minute – is that snow?"



The snow fell, more and more of it, and it was difficult to see their way through the trees. They walked this way and that, then Ratty stopped and looked around. Were they lost?

Then Mole fell over something. "Oh, my leg! That hurts!"


"Clever Mole!" said Ratty. "Look, it's a doorstep!"

"A doorstep? What a silly place to leave a doorstep," said Mole – but Ratty started digging, and soon they could see a door. "Hello!" Ratty shouted.



They heard a sleepy voice inside. "Who's making that noise, at this time of night?" Then the door opened. "Ratty!" said Badger. "What are you doing here? Are you lost in the snow? Come inside, quickly."





The two animals followed him to a warm kitchen with a wonderful bright fire. Badger took their coats and boots and brought dry clothes. Then he put a hot meal on the kitchen table, and the animals ate until they were full.

"Now, tell me the news about Toad," said Badger.

"Oh, it's bad," said Ratty. "He's a terrible driver, but nobody can tell him that. He crashes his car, then buys a new one, again and again. He's crashed six already. Soon, someone is going to get hurt."

"We must do something," said Badger. "When the weather is warmer, we'll talk to him and make him understand. Now, you need to sleep. Come this way." He showed them a comfortable bedroom.

In the morning they all had a good breakfast, and Badger took them back to the river bank. Soon they were safely at home in Ratty's little house.



It was spring again when Badger came to Ratty's house. "It's time to visit Toad," he said. "I hear he's bought a new car – another one. We must stop him!"

When the animals arrived at Toad's house, the car was waiting. Toad was on the doorstep. "This is perfect!" he said. "You must come... with..." He stopped when he saw Badger's face.



"Take him inside," Badger told Ratty and Mole. Then he told the car driver, "Mr. Toad has changed his mind. You can take that horrible machine away, thank you."

Inside the house, he said, "Toad, we need to talk." He and Toad went into a quiet room. Ratty and Mole sat outside. They could hear Badger's angry voice. When they heard Toad, he sounded quiet and sad.

Finally the door opened. "Tell them, Toad," said Badger. "Tell them you're sorry, and you'll never drive a car again."

"But I'm *not* sorry," said Toad with a smile, "and I *will* drive again. It's so much fun! I'll show you. The first car I see – toot-toot!"





"Then we'll stay here until you change your mind," said Badger. "You'll stay in your room, and one of us will be with you all the time. You'll be quite comfortable, but you won't leave the house. It's the only way."

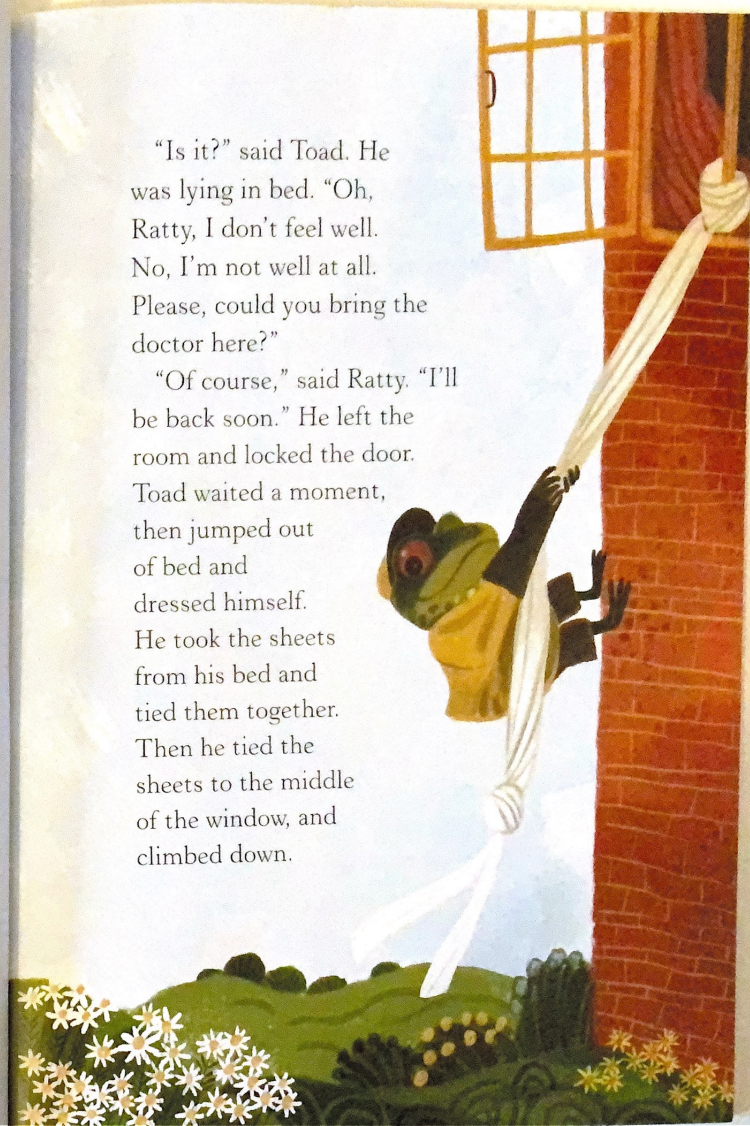
Toad looked sad, but he didn't argue. He stayed in his room for a week. One morning, Badger and Mole went out, and Ratty was alone with Toad.

"It's a lovely day," Ratty said.



"Is it?" said Toad. He was lying in bed. "Oh, Ratty, I don't feel well. No, I'm not well at all. Please, could you bring the doctor here?"

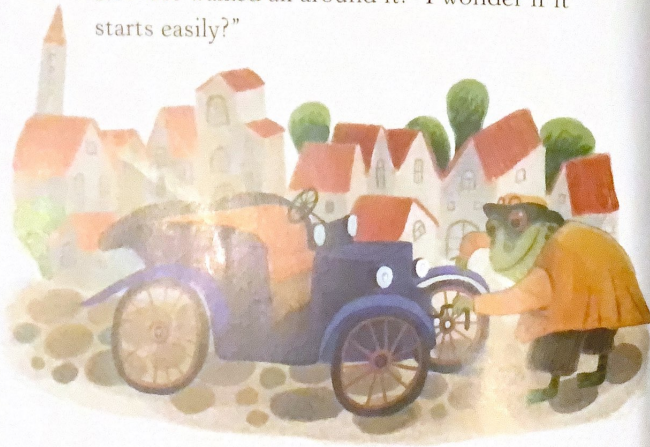
"Of course," said Ratty. "I'll be back soon." He left the room and locked the door. Toad waited a moment, then jumped out of bed and dressed himself. He took the sheets from his bed and tied them together. Then he tied the sheets to the middle of the window, and climbed down.





"Clever Toad!" he said to himself. He started walking across the fields, and soon he came to a village. In the middle of the main street he saw something wonderful.

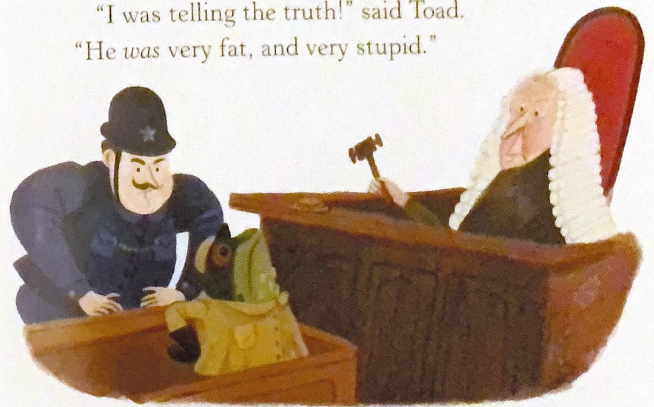
"A car!" said Toad. "A lovely, shining blue car!" He walked all around it. "I wonder if it starts easily?"



He turned the starting handle, and there was a roar. Then he was sitting in the car, and the car was moving, faster and faster... Then there was a crash, and Toad was flying through the air.

"You stole a valuable car," said the judge. "You drove very dangerously, and crashed the car, but that's not the worst thing. The worst thing is that you were rude to a policeman."

"I was telling the truth!" said Toad. "He was very fat, and very stupid."



"Stop!" said the judge. "Don't argue with me. For stealing the car, I'm sending you to prison for one year. For dangerous driving, three years; but for being rude to a policeman, fifteen years. That's nineteen years, so let's say twenty. Now take him away!"



She started to bring his meals, and she talked to him about his home and his friends. "He's not a bad animal," she thought. "He shouldn't be here."

One day, she said, "Toad, do you know my aunt? She washes the prisoners' clothes. She takes them out on Mondays, and brings them back clean on Fridays. I was thinking, you look rather like her..."



"I do not!" said Toad.

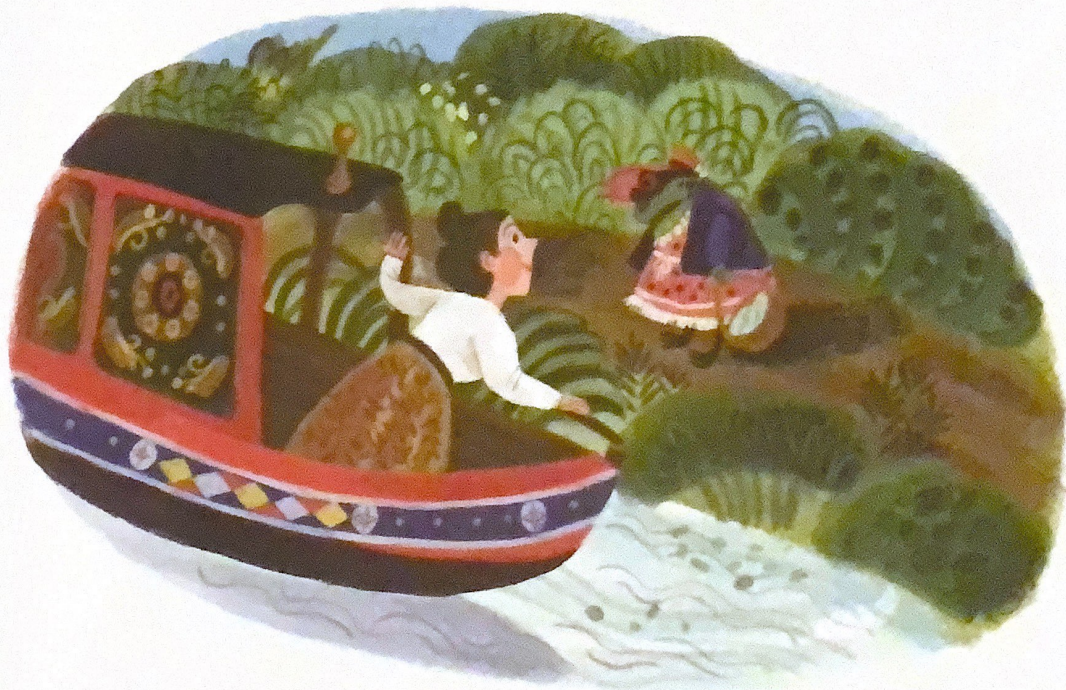
"Listen to me, you silly thing. Tomorrow is Friday. I'll speak to my aunt. You can change clothes with her, and then you can escape."

"Ha ha, yes!" said Toad. "I like it! I'll do it!"



There was a small wood next to the road.  
Toad soon found some dry leaves, and made  
a bed and went to sleep.

In the morning, the sunlight woke him.  
He could see light on water, and he hurried  
towards it. There was a canal, and Toad  
could see a horse on the path beside it. The  
horse was pulling a narrow canal boat.



“Good morning,” said the boatwoman.  
“Are you enjoying your walk?”  
“Not really,” said Toad. “I’m tired, and the  
path is dusty, and my feet hurt.”



"Where are you going?" asked the boatwoman. Toad told her. "Well, that's lucky! I'm going that way too," said the boatwoman. "Jump on the boat. What work do you do?"

"I wash clothes," said Toad. "I'm famous for it."

"That's even better!" said the boatwoman. "I have all these sheets to wash, but I never have time. Wait, I'll get you some soap and water."

"It can't be so difficult," thought Toad, but half an hour later he was hot and tired, the soap was gone and the sheets were as dirty as before.



"What a mess! You've never washed clothes in your life!" laughed the boatwoman.

"Of course not!" said Toad. "A Toad does not wash clothes. A Toad drives fast cars, and escapes from prisons, and –"

"A horrible Toad! On my boat!" screamed the boatwoman. She picked Toad up and threw him in the water.



He swam to the bank and sat there. "What am I going to do now?" he wondered.



"Can I help you? Toad? Is it really you?"  
Toad knew that voice. "Ratty! Oh, it's good to see you."

"Toad, what are you wearing? Come and find some dry clothes."

Soon Toad was at Ratty's house, and he was dry and dressed. "Now it's time to go home!" he said. He stood up.

"Oh, Toad, I'm very sorry," said Mole, "but the Wild Wood weasels are in your house and we can't go near it."



Toad was so angry that he couldn't speak.  
"Don't worry," said Mole. "Badger has a plan."

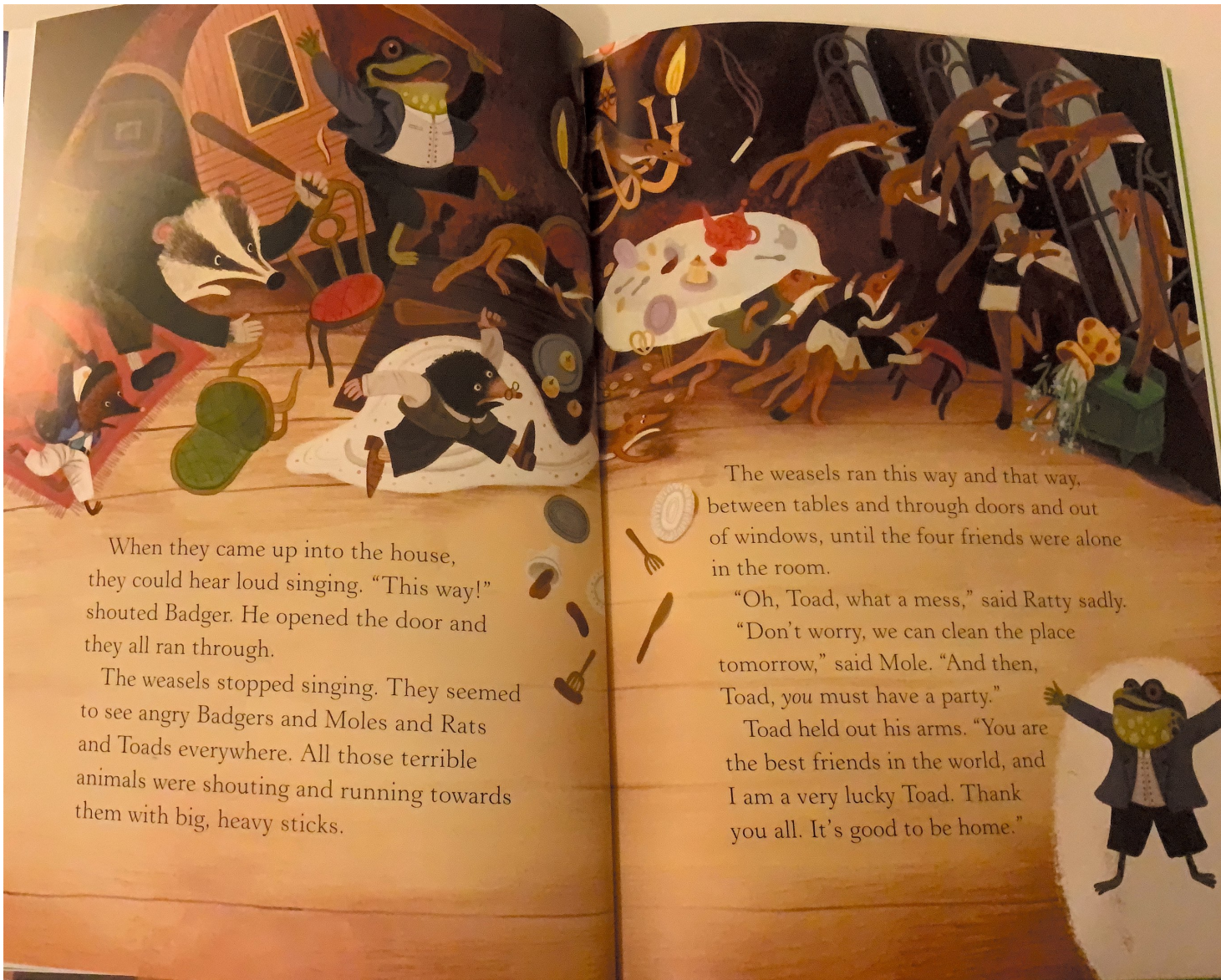
Badger arrived that afternoon. "There are weasels and foxes everywhere," he said, "but tomorrow, there'll be a big party for old Grandfather Weasel's birthday. Now, Toad, many years ago your father told me about a secret passage. It goes all the way from the river bank to the middle of your home, so I was thinking..."

"Yes!" said Toad. "We'll surprise them!"



They spent all the next day planning and getting ready. When it was dark, Badger took them to the secret passage and they followed him inside.





When they came up into the house, they could hear loud singing. "This way!" shouted Badger. He opened the door and they all ran through.

The weasels stopped singing. They seemed to see angry Badgers and Moles and Rats and Toads everywhere. All those terrible animals were shouting and running towards them with big, heavy sticks.

The weasels ran this way and that way, between tables and through doors and out of windows, until the four friends were alone in the room.

"Oh, Toad, what a mess," said Ratty sadly.

"Don't worry, we can clean the place tomorrow," said Mole. "And then, Toad, you must have a party."

Toad held out his arms. "You are the best friends in the world, and I am a very lucky Toad. Thank you all. It's good to be home."

