

The Wind in the Willows—Chapter 11: 'Like Summer Tempests Came His Tears'

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[0 : 00] Chapter 11 Like Summer Tempest Came His Tears And dodgings and evasions were over And he could at last lay aside a disguise That was unworthy of his position And wanted such a lot of living up to Oh ratty, he cried I've been through such times since I saw you last You can't think Such trials, such sufferings And all so nobly born Then such escapes, such disguises Such subterfuges And all so cleverly planned and carried out Been in prison Got out of it, of course Been thrown into a canal Swam ashore

Stole a horse Sold him for a large sum of money Humbugged everybody Made them all do exactly what I wanted Oh, I am a smart toad and no mistake What do you think my last exploit was? Just hold on till I tell you Toad, said the water rat gravely and firmly You go off upstairs at once And take off that old cotton rag That looks as if it might formerly have belonged to some washerwoman And clean yourself thoroughly And put on some of my clothes And try to come down looking like a gentleman If you can For a more shabby, bedraggled, disreputable looking object than you are I never set eyes on in my whole life Now stop swaggering And arguing And be off I'll have something to say to you later Toad was at first inclined to stop And do some talking back at him He had had enough of being ordered about when he was in prison And here was the thing being begun all over again, apparently And by a rat too However, he caught sight of himself in the looking glass over the hat stand With the rusty black bonnet perched rakishly over one eye And he changed his mind and went very quickly and humbly upstairs to the rat's dressing room There he had a thorough wash and brush up Changed his clothes and stood for a long time before the glass Contemplating himself with pride and pleasure And thinking what utter idiots all the people must have been To have ever mistaken him for one moment for a washerwoman By the time he came down again Luncheon was on the table And very glad Toad was to see it For he had been through some trying experiences And had taken much hard exercise Since the excellent breakfast provided for him by the gypsy While they ate, Toad told the rat all his adventures Dwelling chiefly on his own cleverness And presence of mind in emergencies And cunning in tight places And rather making out that he had been having a gay and highly coloured experience But the more he talked and boasted The more grave and silent the rat became When at last Toad had talked himself to a standstill There was silence for a while And then the rat said Now Toad, I don't want to give you pain After all you've been through already But seriously Don't you see what an awful ass you've been making of yourself On your own admission you have been handcuffed Imprisoned, starved, chased Terrified out of your life Insulted, jeered at Ignominiously flung into the water By a woman too Where's the amusement in that? Where does the fun come in?

[3 : 29] And all because you must needs go and steal a motor car You know that you've never had anything but trouble for motor cars From the moment you first set eyes on one But if you will be mixed up with them As you generally are five minutes after you've started Why steal them?

Be a cripple if you think it's exciting Be a bankrupt for a change If you've set your mind on it But why choose to be a convict? When are you going to be sensible and think of your friends And try and be a credit to them?

Do you suppose it's any pleasure to me For instance, to hear animals saying as a go about That I'm the chap that keeps company with jailbirds? Now it was a very comforting point in Toad's character That he was a thoroughly good-hearted animal And never minded being jawed by those who were his real friends And even when most set upon a thing He was always able to see the other side of the question So although while the rat was talking so seriously He kept saying to himself mutinously But it was fun though Awful fun And making strange suppressed noises inside him And other

sounds resembling stifled snorts Or the opening of soda water bottles Yet when the rat had quite finished He heaved a deep sigh and said very nicely and humbly Quite right, ratty How sound you always are Yes, I've been a conceited old ass I can quite see that But now I'm going to be a good toad And not do it anymore As for motorcars, I've not been at all so keen about them Since my last ducking in that river of yours The fact is, while I was hanging on to the edge of your hole And getting my breath I had a sudden idea A really brilliant idea Connected with motorboats There there Don't take on so old chap And stamp and upset things It was only an idea And we won't talk any more about it now We'll have our coffee And a smoke And a quiet chat And then I'm going to stroll quietly down to Toad Hall And get into clothes of my own And set things going again on the old lines I've had enough of adventures I shall lead a quiet, steady, respectable life Pottering about my property and improving it And doing a little landscape gardening at times There will always be a bit of dinner for my friends When they come to see me And I shall keep a pony chaise to jog about the country in Just as I used to in the good old days Before I got restless and wanted to do things Stroll quietly down to Toad Hall Cried the rat, greatly excited What are you talking about? Do you mean to say you haven't heard? Heard what? Said Toad, turning rather pale Go on, ratty, quick Don't spare me What haven't I heard? Do you mean to tell me? [6 : 04] Shouted the rat Thumping with his little fist upon the table That you've heard nothing about the stoats and weasels? What? The wild wooders? Cried Toad, trembling in every limb No, not a word What have they been doing?

And how they've been and taken Toad Hall? Continued the rat Toad leaned his elbows on the table And his chin on his paws And a large tear welled up in each of his eyes Overflowed and splashed on the table Plop, plop Go on, ratty He murmured presently Tell me all The worst is over I'm an animal again I can bear it When you got into that trouble of yours Said the rat Slowly and impressively I mean, when you Disappeared from society for a time Over that misunderstanding about a machine, you know Toad merely nodded Well, it was a good deal talked about down here Naturally Continued the rat Not only along the riverside But even in the wild wood Animals took sides As always happens The river bankers stuck up for you And said you had been infamously treated And there was no justice to be had in the land nowadays But the wild wood animals said hard things And served you right And it was time this sort of thing was stopped And they got very cocky And went about saying you were done for this time You would never come back again Never, never Toad nodded once more Keeping silence That's the sort of little beasts they are The rat went on But Mole and Badger They stuck out Through thick and thin That you would come back again soon Somehow They didn't know exactly how But somehow Toad began to sit up in his chair again And to smirk a little They argued from history Continued the rat They said that no criminal laws Had ever been known To prevail against cheek and plausibility Such as yours Combined with the power of a long purse So they arranged to move their things Into Toad Hall And sleep there And keep it aired And have it all ready for you When you turned up They didn't guess What was going to happen Of course Still they had their suspicions Of the wild wood animals Now I come to the most painful And tragic part of my story One dark night It was a very dark night And blowing hard too And raining simply cats and dogs A band of weasels Armed to the teeth Crept silently up the carriage drive To the front entrance Simultaneously a body of desperate ferrets Advancing through the kitchen garden Possessed themselves of the backyard and offices While a company of skirmishing stoats Who stuck at nothing Occupied the conservatory and the billiard room And held the french windows opening onto the lawn The mole and the badger Were sitting by the fire in the smoking room Telling stories and suspecting nothing For it wasn't a night for any animals to be out in When those bloodthirsty villains Broke down the doors And rushed in upon them from every side They made the best fight they could But what was the good? They were unarmed And taken by surprise And what can two animals do against hundreds? They took and beat them severely with sticks Those two poor faithful creatures And turned them out into the cold and the wet With many insulting and uncalled for remarks Here the unfeeling toad broke into a snigger And then pulled himself together And tried to look particularly solemn And the wildwooders have been living in toad hall ever since Continued the rat And going on simply anyhow Lying in bed half the day And breakfast at all hours And the place in such a mess, I'm told It's not fit to be seen Eating your grub And drinking your drink And making bad jokes about you And singing vulgar songs about Well, about prisons And magistrates And policemen Horrid, personal songs With no humour in them And they're telling the tradespeople And everybody That they've come to

stay for good Oh, have they?

[9 : 47] Said Toad Getting up and seizing a stick I'll jolly soon see about that It's no good, Toad Called the rat after him You'd better come back and sit down You'll only get into trouble But the Toad was off And there was no holding him He marched rapidly down the road His stick over his shoulder Fuming and muttering to himself in his anger Till he got near his front gate When suddenly there popped up from behind the palings A long yellow ferret with a gun Who comes there?

Said the ferret sharply Stuff and nonsense Said Toad very angrily What do you mean by talking like that to me? Come out of that at once Or I'll The ferret said never a word But he brought his gun up to his shoulder Toad prudently dropped flat in the road And bang!

A bullet whistled over his head The startled Toad scrambled to his feet And scampered off down the road as hard as he could And as he ran He heard the ferret laughing And other horrid thin little laughs Taking it up and carrying on the sound He went back very crestfallen And told the water rat What did I tell you?

Said the rat It's no good They've got sentries posted And they're all armed You must just wait Still Toad was not inclined To give in all at once So he got out the boat And set off rowing up the river To where the garden front of Toad Hall Came down to the water side Arriving within sight of his old home He rested on his oars And surveyed the land cautiously All seemed very peaceful And deserted and quiet He could see the whole front of Toad Hall Glowing in the evening sunshine The pigeons settling by twos and threes Along the straight line of the roof The garden A blaze of flowers The creek that led up to the boathouse The little wooden bridge that crossed it All tranquil Uninhabited Apparently waiting for his return He would try the boathouse first He thought Very warily He paddled up to the mouth of the creek And was just passing under the bridge When crash A great stone Dropped from above Smashed through the bottom of the boat It filled and sank And Toad found himself struggling in deep water

Looking up He saw two stoats Leaning over the parapet of the bridge And watching him with great glee It will be your head next time Toady They called out to him The indignant Toad swam to shore While the stoats laughed and laughed Supporting each other And laughed again Till they nearly had two fits That is one fit each of course The Toad retraced his weary way on foot And related his disappointing experiences To the water rat once more Well what did I tell you?

[12 : 19] Said the water rat very crossly And now look here See what you've been and done Lost me my boat That I was so fond of That's what you've done And simply ruined that nice suit of clothes That I lent you Really Toad Of all the trying animals I wonder you managed to keep any friends at all The Toad saw at once How wrongly and foolishly he had acted He admitted his errors and wrongheadedness And made a full apology to Rat For losing his boat And spoiling his clothes And he wound up by saying With that frank self-surrender Which always disarmed his friends' criticism And won them back to his side Ratty, I see that I have been A headstrong and willful Toad Henceforth, believe me I will be humble and submissive And will take no action Without your kind advice And full approval If that is really so Said the good-natured Rat Already appeased Then my advice to you is Considering the lateness of the hour To sit down and have your supper Which will be on the table in a minute And be very patient For I am convinced That we can do nothing

Until we have seen the Mole and the Badger And heard their latest news And held conference And taken their advice In this difficult matter Oh, ah, yes, of course The Mole and the Badger Said Toad lightly What's become of them, the dear fellows?

I had forgotten all about them Well, may you ask Said the rat reproachfully While you were riding about the country In expensive motorcars And galloping proudly on blood horses And breakfasting on the fat of the land Those two poor devoted animals Had been camping out in the open In every sort of weather Living very rough by day And lying very hard by night Watching over your house Patrolling your boundaries Keeping a constant eye on the stoats and the weasels Scheming and planning and contriving How to get your property back for you You don't deserve to have such true and loyal friends, Toad You don't, really Someday, when it's too late You'll be sorry you didn't value them more While you had them I'm an ungrateful beast, I know Sobbed Toad Shedding bitter tears Let me go out and find them Out into the cold, dark night And share their hardships And try to prove by Hold on a bit Surely I heard the chink of dishes on a tray Supper's here at last Hooray, come on, ratty

The rat remembered that poor Toad Had been on prison fare for a considerable time And that large allowances had therefore to be made He followed him to the table accordingly And hospitably

encouraged him In his gallant efforts to make up for past privations They had just finished their meal And resumed their armchairs When there came a heavy knock at the door Toad was nervous But the rat, nodding mysteriously at him Went straight up to the door and opened it And in walked Mr. Badger He had all the appearance of one who For some nights had been kept away from home And all its little comforts and conveniences His shoes were covered with mud And he was looking very rough and tousled But then he had never been a very smart man The Badger, at the best of times He came solemnly up to Toad Shook him by the paw and said Welcome home Toad Alas, what am I saying?

Home indeed This is a poor homecoming Unhappy Toad Then he turned his back on him Sat down to the table Drew his chair up And helped himself to a large slice of cold pie Toad was quite alarmed At this very serious and portentous style of greeting But the rat whispered to him Never mind Don't take any notice And don't say anything to him just yet He's always rather low and despondent When he's wanting his vittles In half an hour's time He'll be quite a different animal So they waited in silence And presently there came another And a lighter knock The rat, with a nod to Toad Went to the door And ushered in the mole Very shabby and unwashed With bits of hay and straw Sticking in his fur Hooray, here's old Toad Cried the mole, his face beaming Fancy having you back again And he began to dance round him We never dreamt you would turn up so soon Why, you must have managed to escape You clever, ingenious, intelligent Toad The rat, alarmed, pulled him by the elbow But it was too late

[16:25] Toad was puffing and swelling already Clever? Oh no, he said I'm not really clever According to my friends I've only broken out of the strongest prison in England That's all And captured a railway train and escaped on it That's all And disguised myself and gone about the country Humbugging everybody That's all Oh no, I'm a stupid ass I am I'll tell you one or two of my adventures, mole And you shall judge for yourself Well, well, said the mole Moving towards the supper table Supposing you talk while I eat Not a bite since breakfast Oh my, oh my And he sat down and helped himself liberally To cold beef and pickles Toad straddled on the hearth rug Thrust his paw into his trouser pocket And pulled out a handful of silver Look at that, he cried displaying it That's not so bad, is it?

For a few minutes' work And how do you think that I done it, mole? Horse-stealing That's how I done it Go on, Toad Said the mole, immensely interested Toad, do be quiet, please Said the rat And don't you egg him on, mole When you know what he is But please tell us as soon as possible What the position is And what's best to be done Now that Toad is back at last The position's about as bad as it can be Replied the mole grumpily And as for what's to be done Why, blessed if I know The badger and I have been round and round the place By night and by day Always the same thing Sentries posted everywhere Guns poked out at us Stones thrown at us Always an animal on the lookout And when they see us My, how do they laugh?

That's what annoys me most It's a very difficult situation Said the rat, reflecting deeply But I think I see now In the depths of my mind What Toad really ought to do I will tell you He ought to No, he oughtn't Shouted the mole with his mouth full Nothing of the sort You don't understand What he ought to do Is he ought to Well, I shan't do it anyway Cried Toad, getting excited I'm not going to be ordered about by you fellows It's my house we're talking about And I know exactly what to do And I'll tell you I'm going to By this time They were all three talking at once At the top of their voices And the noise was simply deafening When a thin, dry voice made itself heard Saying Be quiet at once, all of you And instantly everyone was silent It was the badger Who having finished his pie Had turned round in his chair And was looking at them severely When he saw that he had secured their attention And that they were evidently waiting for him to address them He turned back to the table again And reached out for the cheese And so great was the respect commanded

By the solid qualities of that admirable animal That not another word was uttered Until he had quite finished his repast And brushed the crumbs from his knees The toad fidgeted a good deal But the rat held him firmly down When the badger had quite done He got up from his seat And stood before the fireplace Reflecting deeply At last he spoke Toad, he said severely You bad, troublesome little animal Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

What do you think your father My old friend Would have said If he had been here tonight And had known of all your goings on? Toad Who was on the sofa by this time With his legs up Rolled over on his face Shaken by sobs of contrition There, there Went on the badger more kindly Never mind Stop crying We're going to let bygones be bygones And try and turn over a new leaf But what the

mole says is quite true The stoats are on guard At every point And they make the best sentinels in the world It's quite useless to think of attacking the place They're too strong for us Then it's all over Sobbed the toad Crying into the sofa cushions I shall go and enlist for a soldier And never see my dear toad hall anymore Come, cheer up, toady Said the badger There are more ways of getting back a place Than taking it by storm I haven't said my last word yet Now I'm going to tell you a great secret Toad sat up slowly and dried his eyes Secrets had an immense attraction for him Because he could never keep one

[20 : 28] And he enjoyed the sort of unhallowed thrill He experienced when he went and told another animal After having faithfully promised not to There is an underground passage Said the badger impressively That leads from the riverbank Quite near here Right up into the middle of Toad Hall Oh nonsense, badger Said Toad rather airily You've been listening to some of the yarns They spin in the public houses about here I know every inch of Toad Hall Inside and out Nothing of the sort I do assure you My young friend Said the badger With great severity Your father Who was a worthy animal A lot worthier than some others I know Was a particular friend of mine And told me a great deal He wouldn't have dreamt of telling you He discovered that passage He didn't make it of course That was done hundreds of years Before he ever came to live there And he repaired it and cleaned it out Because he thought it might come in useful someday In case of trouble or danger And he showed it to me Don't let my son know about it

He said He's a good boy But very light And volatile in character And simply cannot hold his tongue If he's ever a new real fix And it would be of use to him You may tell him about the secret passage But not before The other animals looked hard at Toad To see how he would take it Toad was inclined to be sulky at first But he brightened up immediately Like the good fellow he was Well, well, he said Perhaps I am a bit of a talker A popular fellow such as I am My friends get round me We chaff We sparkle We tell witty stories And somehow my tongue gets wagging I have the gift of conversation I've been told I ought to have a salon Whatever that may be Never mind Go on, badger How's this passage of yours Going to help us?

I've found out a thing or two lately Continued the badger I got uttered to disguise himself As a sweep And call at the back door With brushes over his shoulder Asking for a job There's going to be a big banquet Tomorrow night It's somebody's birthday The chief weasels, I believe And all the weasels Will be gathered together In the dining hall Eating and drinking And laughing and carrying on Suspecting nothing No guns No swords No sticks No arms of any sort Whatever But the sentinels Will be posted as usual Remarked the rat Exactly Said the badger That is my point The weasels will trust entirely To the excellent sentinels And that is where The passage comes in That very useful tunnel Leads right up Under the butler's pantry Next to the dining hall Aha!

That squeaky board In the butler's pantry Said Toad Now I understand it We shall creep out quietly Into the butler's pantry Cried the mole With our pistols And swords And our sticks Shouted the rat And rush in upon them Said the badger And whack em And whack em And whack em Cried the toad In ecstasy Running round and round The room And jumping over the chairs Very well then Said the badger Resuming his usual Dry manner Our plan is settled And there's nothing more For you to argue And squabble about So as it's getting very late All of you go right off To bed at once We will make all the Necessary arrangements In the course of the Morning tomorrow Toad of course Went off to bed Dutifully with the rest He knew better than to refuse Though he was feeling Much too excited to sleep But he had had a long day With many events Crowded into it And sheets and blankets Were very friendly And comforting things After plain straw And not too much of it Spread on the stone floor Of a drafty cell And his head had not been Many seconds on his pillow Before he was snoring happily

Naturally he dreamt A good deal About roads that ran away From him just when He wanted them And canals that chased him And caught him And a barge that sailed Into the banqueting hall With this week's washing Just as he was giving A dinner party And he was alone In the secret passage Pushing onwards But it twisted And turned round And shook itself And sat up on its end Yet somehow at the last He found himself Back in Toad Hall Safe and triumphant With all his friends Gathered round about him Earnestly assuring him That he really was A clever toad He slept till a late hour Next morning And by the time He got down He found that the other animals Had finished their breakfast Some time before The mole had slipped off Somewhere by himself Without telling anyone Where he was going to The badger sat in the armchair Reading the paper And not concerning himself In the slightest About what was going to happen That very evening The rat On

the other hand Was running round the room Busily With his arms full of weapons Of every kind
Distributing them In four little heaps On the floor And saying excitedly
[25 : 00] Under his breath As he ran Here's a sword for the rat Here's a sword for the mole Here's
a sword for the toad Here's a sword for the badger Here's a pistol for the rat Here's a pistol for the
mole Here's a pistol for the toad Here's a pistol for the badger And so on In a regular rhythmical way
While the four little heaps Gradually grew and grew That's all very well rat Said the badger presently
Looking at the busy little animal Over the edge of his newspaper I'm not blaming you But just let us
once Get past the stoats With those detestable guns of theirs And I assure you We shan't want any
swords or pistols We four With our sticks Once we're inside the dining hall Why We shall clear the
floor Of the lot of them In five minutes I'd have done the whole thing By myself Only I didn't want to
Deprive you fellows of the fun It's as well to be on the safe side Said the rat reflectively Polishing a
pistol barrel On his sleeve And looking along it The toad Having finished his breakfast Picked up a
stout stick And swung it vigorously Belabouring imaginary animals I'll learn em To steal my house
He cried

I'll learn em I'll learn em Don't say learn em Toad Said the rat Greatly shocked It's not good English
What are you always Nagging at toad for Inquired the badger Rather peevishly What's the matter
With his English It's the same What I use myself And if it's good enough for me It ought to be good
enough for you I'm very sorry Said the rat humbly Only I think It ought to be Teach em Not learn em
But we don't want To teach em Replied the badger We want to learn em Learn em Learn em And
what's more We're going to do it too Oh very well Have it your own way Said the rat He was getting
rather muddled About it himself And presently He retired into a corner Where he could be heard
Muttering Learn em Teach em Teach em Learn em Till the badger Told him rather sharply To leave
off Presently The mole came Tumbling into the room Evidently very pleased With himself I've been
having such fun He began at once I've been getting a rise Out of the stoats I hope you've been Very
careful mole Said the rat anxiously

I should hope so too Said the mole confidently I got the idea When I went into the kitchen To see
about Toad's breakfast Being kept hot for him I found that old washerwoman Dress that he came
home in yesterday Hanging on a towel horse Before the fire So I put it on And the bonnet as well
And the shawl And off I went Toad Hall As bold as you please The sentries were on the lookout Of
course With their guns And their Who comes there And all the rest Of their nonsense Good morning
gentlemen Says I Very respectful Want any washing done today?

They looked at me Very proud and stiff And haughty And said Go away washerwoman We don't do
any washing on duty Or any other time Said I Ho ho ho Wasn't I funny Toad?

Poor frivolous animal Said Toad very loftily The fact is He felt exceedingly jealous of Mole For what
he had just done It was exactly what he would have liked To have done himself If only he had
thought of it first And hadn't gone and overslept himself Some of the stoats turned quite pink
Continued the Mole And the sergeant in charge He said to me Very short He said Now run away my
good woman Run away Don't keep my men idling And talking on their posts Run away Said I It
won't be me That'll be running away In a very short time from now Oh Moley How could you?

[28 : 18] Said the rat Dismayed The badger laid down his paper I could see them Pricking up their
ears And looking at each other Went on the Mole And the sergeant said to them Never mind her
She doesn't know what she's talking about Oh don't I?

Said I Well let me tell you this My daughter She washes for Mr. Badger And that'll show you
Whether I know What I'm talking about And you'll know Pretty soon too A hundred bloodthirsty
badgers Armed with rifles Are going to attack Toad Hall This very night By way of the paddock Six
boatloads of rats With pistols and cutlasses Will come up the river And effect a landing In the
garden While a picked body of toads Known as the diehards Or the death or glory toads Will storm
the orchard And carry everything before them Yelling for vengeance There won't be much left of
you To wash By the time they've done with you Unless you clear out While you've got the chance
Then I ran away And when I was out of sight I hid And presently I came Creeping back along the
ditch And took a peep at them Through the hedge They were all as nervous And flustered as could
be Running all ways at once And falling over each other And everyone giving orders To everybody
else And not listening And the sergeant Kept sending off Parties of stoats To distant parts of the
grounds And then sending other fellows To fetch them back again

And I heard them Saying to each other That's just like the weasels They're to stop comfortably In
the banqueting hall And have feasting And toasts and songs And all sorts of fun While we must stay

on guard In the cold and the dark And in the end Be cut to pieces By bloodthirsty badgers Oh you silly ass mole Cried Toad You've been and spoilt everything Mole Said the badger In his dry quiet way I perceive you have more sense In your little finger Than some other animals Having the whole of their fat bodies You have managed excellently And I begin to have Great hopes of you Good mole Clever mole The Toad was simply wild For jealousy More especially As he couldn't make out For the life of him What the mole had done That was so particularly clever But fortunately for him Before he could show temper Or expose himself To the badger sarcasm The bell rang for luncheon It was a simple But sustaining meal Bacon and broad beans And a macaroni pudding And when they had quite done The badger settled himself Into an armchair And said Well We've got our work Cut out for us tonight And it will probably be Pretty late Before we're quite through with it So I'm just going to take Forty winks While I can And he drew a handkerchief Over his face And was soon snoring The anxious and laborious rat At once resumed his preparations And started running between His four little heaps Muttering Here's a belt for the rat Here's a belt for the mole Here's a belt for the toad Here's a belt for the badger And so on With every fresh accoutrement He produced To which there seemed Really no end So the mole drew his arm Through toads Led him out Into the open air Shoved him into a wicker chair And made him tell him All his adventures From beginning to end Which toad was only Too willing to do The mole was a good listener And toad With no one to check his statements Or criticise in an unfriendly spirit Rather let himself go Indeed Much that he related Belonged more properly To the category of What might have happened Had I only thought of it in time Instead of ten minutes afterwards Those are always the best And the raciest adventures And why should they not be truly ours As much as the somewhat Inadequate things That really come off■■■■■■■■■