

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?