

Audition Piece Two – pages 27 – 31

Rat goes, whereupon an elegant Fox waylays the unsuspecting Mole. The Fox, possibly on the if-you-can't-beat-'em-join-'em principle, is dressed in hunting pink.

Fox I say, did I hear you mention the Wild Wood?

Mole Yes, do you know it?

Fox One has various elderly female relatives there, largely bedridden, alas.

Mole I'm sorry.

Mole They would welcome a visit, a little ray of sunshine like you. That way. Give them my love.

The weasels, the ferrets and the stoats are busy lording it over their territory. This happens to be the Wild Wood but it could be any provincial bus station on a Saturday night. But they are not alone.

Chief Weasel Mole!

The place is suddenly deserted as Mole comes wandering alone.

Mole Well, I don't see what all the fuss is about. It's a bit dark, I admit. But it's only a wood. Somebody might think those trees had faces but I don't. I mean, what is there to be frightened of?

But if Mole is as bold as he is pretending to be, why is he saying this out loud? Meanwhile the Wild Wooders flit between the trees and it grows darker.

Still, I wish I was back with Ratty round his cosy fireside.

Then the whistling begins, and the panting and all sorts of other frightful noises, and Mole begins to panic. He runs this way and that but whichever way he runs, he finds his path blocked by one of the Wild Wooders.

Ch. Weasel Well, well, well.

Ferret Fred Hello, Mole.

Ferret Gerald How's it going?

Weasel Norman Hello Mole.

Stoat Ian Lovely weather.

Weasel Norman All right, Mole?

Stoat Stuart Where's friend Rat?

Weasel Norman Where's friend Toad?

Weasel Wilfrid All right then?

The Wild Wooders close in on Mole.

Ch. Weasel A hole is where you belong.

Stoat Stuart Go back to where you belong.

Ferret Fred We don't like moles.

Weasel Norman We don't like little black animals.

Stoat Ian We don't like moles who are friends with Toad.

Weasel Wilfred Moles are dirty.

Weasel Norman Moles smell.

Ferret Fred Who's a smelly little mole then?

Wild Wooders begin to chant.

Wild Wooders We don't like moles. They belong in holes. We don't like moles. They belong in holes. We don't like moles. We don't like moles. We don't...

The Wild Wooders have Mole on the floor now and are kicking and beating him. The Chief Weasel is about to do his worst and gestures for silence to accentuate the horror when in the silence a distant but familiar voice is heard.

Rat (off) Moley.

Ch. Weasel It's Rat.

The Wild Wooders scatter, only the Chief Weasel, who is as two-faced as they come, runs back with Mole's spectacles.

Put your glasses on, mate. Only a bit of fun.

Rat Moley. Where are you? It's me. It's old Rat. Moley.

Mole Ratty? Ratty? Is that really you?

Rat Moley?

The Wild Wooders have withdrawn to a respectful distance but are watching the proceedings, still wondering if they could be in there with a chance. Rat, catching sight of them, puts paid to that idea.

Don't even think about it. (To Mole.) Oh, thank goodness I've found you, old chap.

Mole Oh Rat, I've been so frightened, you can't think. Frightened to death. Oh, oh.

Rat Hold up, hold up. It's all right. Safe now. Rat's here. You shouldn't have done it, Moley. We River Bankers hardly ever come here by ourselves.

Mole But why do they do it, Rat?

Rat It's just their nature. We can't stop here. The weasels are still somewhere about and it's snowing. Trouble is, I don't quite know where we are. Up you get, Moley. We must get on.

Mole I'm tired out, Ratty.

Rat Me too, but our only hope is to find some shelter or we're done for. Come on.

Mole trips and falls headlong.

Mole Oh, my leg, my leg.

Rat What's up?

Mole I must have tripped over a tree stump. Oh my, oh my.

Rat *(Getting out his handkerchief).* No, you didn't.

Mole Yes, I did.

Rat You didn't, Mole. This is a very clean cut. It's not from a tree stump, it's from something sharp.

Mole Well, never mind what done it. It hurts just the same whatever done it.

Rat 'Whatever did it'. Just because we've hurt our leg doesn't mean we can forget our grammar. *(Rat starts scraping away the snow.)*

Mole Hey, Ratty, what about my leg?

Rat Never mind your leg. Look.

Mole So? A doorscraper. What of it?

Rat What of it? Don't you see what this means, you dull creature?

Mole Of course I see what it means. It means that some very careless person has left his doorscraper in the middle of the Wild Wood. And you seem to have forgotten I've hurt my leg.

Rat Where there's a doorscraper, what else is there?

Mole How should I know? Sometimes, Rat, I don't understand you.

Rat Yes...that's because you're a thick-headed beast. Now dig.

Mole I'm not thick-headed. I'm not thick-headed at all. Ratty! A front door!

Rat Exactly. Now do you understand?

Mole It's Mr. Badger's.

Rat Exactly. Pull the bell.

Mole You saved us! You saved us!

Mole pulls the bell. Rat seizes it from him and yanks it even harder.

Oh, Rat, you're a wonder. You're wasted here...among us simple creatures. You should be at Oxford. Or in the government.

Rat I'd rather be beside a warm fire. *(He batters on the door.)* Wake up, Badger, wake up. Pull Mole, pull. We must wake him. Badger, Badger. Wake up!

There is the sound of many locks being unlocked and bolts drawn and of a gruff voice inside.

Badger Now the very next time this happens, I shall be very cross. Very cross indeed. Disturbing someone on a night like this. Who is it? Come on, speak up.

Rat Badger, let us in, please. It's me, Rat, and my friend, Mole. We're lost.

Badger Lost? How can you be lost? You're outside my front door.

He opens it. Badger is all dressing gown. His hair, once black, now has a broad streak of grey down it and, though there is a tail somewhere, since he is never out of his dressing gown, we don't see it. His bark, needless to say, is much worse than his bite and his heart melts at the sight of the two friends.

My dear little man. And it's snowing. I'd no idea... and who's this little chap?