

ACT I

No.1 OVERTURE

Scene 1

(The River Bank. The birds are singing on a glorious Spring morning and the RIVERSIDE ANIMALS are playing contentedly)

No.2 INSTRUMENTAL

(Strange flute-like music is heard in the distance, suggesting that this River Bank may not be of our world at all. The scene is reminiscent of some brightly-illustrated story-book. The music fades into the Introduction of:)

No.3 HANG SPRING-CLEANING

(At periodic intervals large handfuls of earth emerge from under the ground. The RIVERSIDE ANIMALS gradually cease their activities and study this strange occurrence)

MOLE: *(from under the ground)*
SCRAPE AND SCRATCH AND
SCRABBLE AND SCROOGE.

(A large amount of earth is thrown up. The ANIMALS jump)
MOLE: SCROOGE AND SCRAPE AND
SCRABBLE AND SCRATCH.

(More earth follows. The ANIMALS back away)
MOLE: *(from below)*
UP WE GO! UP WE GO!
UP WE GO! UP WE GO!
AND POP!!

(MOLE's head appears from beneath the bank as the ANIMALS dive for cover and disappear offstage. The music stops abruptly. MOLE is dazzled by the daylight at first and rubs his eyes protectively. Then he slowly looks about him in surprise)

MOLE: Well I... Oh my! Oh my! *(He clammers on to the river bank and stares about him. He notices the audience and jumps slightly)* Oh my! Oh my! Oh my! Hello!

(The music begins again)
MOLE: I WAS DOWN AT HOME WORKING AWAY
WHEN I SNIFFED THE SPRING WAS HERE TO STAY,
SO I DOWNED MY PAILS, MY BUCKET AND BROOM
'CAUSE I GOT VERY BORED WITH BRUSHING
MY ROOM.
AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, THERE'S ONE THING
TO SAY:
HANG SPRING-CLEANING!

(MOLE:): HAVE YOU TRIED STAYING INDOORS,
 WASHING THE WALLS AND CLEANING THE
 FLOORS?
 NOSE IS A-TELLING YOU SPRING IS AROUND,
 CRIME FOR A MOLE TO BE UNDERGROUND.
 AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, THERE'S ONE THING TO
 SAY:
 BLOW SPRING-CLEANING!

(The music continues. MOLE potters about)

MOLE: AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, THERE'S ONE THING TO
 SAY:
 HANG SPRING-CLEANING!
 BIRDS START SINGING AND IT'S WHITEWASH TIME,
 THE CROCUSES ARE IN THEIR PRIME.
 NO WAY WILL YOU FIND THIS MOLE'S BELOW,
 UP IS THE ONLY WAY TO GO.
 AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, THERE'S ONE THING TO
 SAY:
 HANG! BLOW! BOTHER!
 SPRING-CLEANING!

(The music ends and MOLE is left staring into the river. He sees his reflection)

MOLE: Oh, I say....*(Peering into the water again)* Whatever... I say,
 hello. *(Looking up, puzzled)* There's another Mole in there.
(Cautiously he kneels down and stretches out his hand) How do
 you do? My name is Mr.... Oh.
*(The reflection is disturbed and MOLE pulls back his now wet
 paw)* Why this is most curious! One minute you're there and
 then....

*(MOLE continues to experiment with destroying and regaining his reflection in the
 river. RAT arrives on the river bank. He seems to be in no particular hurry and is
 whistling in stops and starts, almost as if he were composing a tune. He sees MOLE
 and stops in surprise. MOLE, by this time, is completely entranced by the
 extraordinary behaviour of the flowing water and is chattering excitedly. RAT peers
 over his shoulder; MOLE, aware that there are now two reflections in the water,
 stares puzzled)*

MOLE: Oh, well I never! Who's that?

RAT: *(Laughing)* Hello, Mole!

*(MOLE jumps up, confused, sees RAT and takes a moment or two to collect
 himself)*

MOLE: Er...hello, Rat!

- RAT: Where have you sprung from then?
- MOLE: Well I... (*Points to the ground*) That is.... How many are there of you?
- RAT: Sorry?
- MOLE: (*Pointing to the river*) Well, you see, in there I thought I saw-
- RAT: (*Laughing*) Oh Mole! That's my reflection! The river always does that on sunny days.
- MOLE: Ah! So that's a river, is it? I haven't seen one of those before.
- RAT: What!? You mean to tell me you've never seen a - you never - well - I - what have you been doing then?
- MOLE: (*Shyly*) Is it so nice as all that?
- RAT: Nice? It's the only thing!
- MOLE: Oh!

No.4 MESSING ABOUT

RAT: Believe me, my young friend....

THERE IS NOTHING! ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!
 HALF SO MUCH WORTH DOING
 AS MESSING ABOUT IN A RIVER.
 NAME ME SOMETHING! I CHALLENGE YOU TO
 SOMETHING

HALF SO MUCH WORTH DOING
 AS MESSING ABOUT IN A RIVER.

YOU CAN GO FOR A PADDLE BY THE WATERSIDE,
 YOU CAN FLOAT DOWNSTREAM ON YOUR BACK
 WITH THE TIDE,
 FISH FOR AN EEL WHEN THE SUMMER'S NEARLY
 DONE,
 OR DIVE AMONGST THE RUSHES BENEATH THE
 EVENING SUN.

MOLE & RAT: THERE IS NOTHING! ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!
 HALF SO MUCH WORTH DOING
 AS MESSING ABOUT IN A RIVER.

RAT: NAME ME SOMETHING! I CHALLENGE YOU TO
 SOMETHING

Music

MOLE & RAT: HALF SO MUCH WORTH DOING
AS MESSING ABOUT IN A RIVER.

(Several small RIVERSIDE ANIMALS begin to emerge from all directions)

MOLE: Would you consider teaching me the back-
stoke and crawl?

RAT: MOLY, OLD MAN, I SHALL TEACH YOU THEM ALL!
JUMPING IN A BOAT AND GOING ANYWHERE YOU
PLEASE.

MOLE: AND WATCHING LAZY BUTTERFLIES A-RIDING ON
THE BREEZE?

RAT: *(Exclaims)* YES!

MOLE, RAT & ANIMALS: THERE IS NOTHING! ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!
HALF SO MUCH WORTH DOING
AS MESSING ABOUT IN A RIVER.
NAME ME SOMETHING! I CHALLENGE YOU TO
SOMETHING
HALF SO MUCH WORTH DOING
AS MESSING ABOUT IN A RIVER.

MOLE: *(Excitedly)* MEETING DIFFERENT ANIMALS
WHICHEVER WAY YOU GO!

RAT: THERE'S ALWAYS TIME ON HAND TO TAKE A
SPECIAL MORNING'S ROW.
EVERYONE'S A NEIGHBOUR, YOU DON'T HAVE TO
KNOW THEIR NAME.

MOLE & RAT: THE RIVER KEEPS ON FLOWING AND NO DAY
TURNS OUT THE SAME.

(A happy dance has developed on the River Bank)

MOLE, RAT & ANIMALS: THERE IS NOTHING! ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!
HALF SO MUCH WORTH DOING
AS MESSING ABOUT IN A RIVER.
NAME ME SOMETHING! I CHALLENGE YOU TO
SOMETHING
HALF SO MUCH WORTH DOING
AS MESSING ABOUT IN A RIVER,
MESSING ABOUT ON A RIVER,
MESSING ABOUT IN A RIVER.

(The song ends and the RIVERSIDE ANIMALS disappear off)

- MOLE: *(Clapping his paws triumphantly)* Oh! What a day I'm having. Oh my! Oh my! Oh my!
- RAT: I say, calm down old chap. Look here! I tell you what; if you've nothing else on hand, why don't you come and stop with me for a little time? It's very plain and rough, you know; still I can make you comfortable. And I'll teach you to row and swim and you'll soon be as handy on the water as any of us. Now what do you say to that?
- MOLE: Oh Ratty! Would you!? Would you really? I would love that. When can we start? Straight away?
- RAT: Hold hard a minute. We don't want to rush things, you know. There's always plenty of time on the Riverbank. Nothing seems really to matter, that's the charm of it. Do you get the idea?
- MOLE: *(Confused)* Er.... yes, I think so.
- RAT: Splendid! I can see you'll be one of us in no time, Moly!
- MOLE: *(Happily)* Oh, will I really?
- RAT: No doubt about it. Now you stay here and try to keep out of mischief while I pop inside and get the picnic basket. *(RAT disappears off)*
- MOLE: *(Clapping his paws excitedly)* Ooh, a picnic too! Oh my! Oh my! I don't know what I can have been thinking of. Spring cleaning indeed! Phooey!

No.5 INSTRUMENTAL

(MOLE potters about, investigating his new-found world. Some small RIVERSIDE ANIMALS arrive, see MOLE and giggle amongst themselves)

- MOLE: How do you do! Do you live here too? Isn't it fine and.... Oh, my name is Mr. Mole.

(MOLE stretches out his paw which the ANIMALS proceed to take, and before he knows it he is being whirled around in a circle dangerously close to the river. The ANIMALS are highly delighted)

- MOLE: Oh I say, stop that! I can't see where I am going.... stop it!

(MOLE hovers on the edge of the bank for an instant and, in another moment, the Animals' plan would have succeeded. However, RAT arrives in the nick of time, drops the picnic basket and with a shout catches the unfortunate MOLE. The ANIMALS disperse laughing and MOLE is led, confused, to a safer part of the bank)

Music

MOLE: Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear.

(RAT laughs, settling MOLE near the picnic basket)

RAT: Now, my young friend. You're going to have to wait until you've had a few lessons before you go plunging in the river, you know. It's not as easy as it looks.

MOLE: *(Flustered)* Well, I.... that is I only wanted to say hello, and then they – well....

RAT: Never mind. It's because they know you are new here. They didn't mean any harm. Come along, it's lunch time. *(Pointing to the basket)* Look here!

MOLE: *(Recovering quickly)* Ooh I say. What's inside it?

RAT: There's cold chicken inside it.... and-cold-tongue-cold-ham-cold-beef-pickled-gherkins-salad-french-rolls-cress-sandwiches-potted-meat-ginger-beer-lemonade-soda-water-

MOLE: Oh stop, stop! This is too much!

RAT: Do you really think so? It's only what I usually pack. Let's pitch in.

(The picnic basket is opened and unpacked. Mysterious packets are arranged on the table cloth)

MOLE: Oh my! Oh my! What a spread!

RAT: That's the way, Moly. Help yourself.

(Soon the two Animals are munching happily. MOLE is in heaven and tucks in as though he has not eaten for days. RAT, amused, is studying his new-found friend)

RAT: I like your clothes awfully, old chap. I'm going to get a black velvet smoking-suit myself some day as soon as I can afford it. Pass the sandwiches, there's a good fellow.

MOLE: *(Doing so)* I beg your pardon, this is all so new to me, what lies over there?

RAT: That? Oh, that's just the Wild Wood.

(There is a faint rumble of thunder in the distance. RAT looks up somewhat nervously)

RAT: We.... we don't go there very much, we Riverbankers.

- MOLE: Aren't they – aren't they very nice people in there?
- RAT: W-e-ll, let me see. The squirrels are all right. And the rabbits – some of 'em. And then there's Badger, of course. He lives right in the heart of it; wouldn't live anywhere else, either, if you paid him to. Dear old Badger! Nobody interferes with him.... they'd better not.
- MOLE: Why, who should interfere with him?
- RAT: Well, of course, there areothers: the Wildwooders, led by a very nasty piece of work indeed, the Chief Weasel. Help yourself.

(Another roll of thunder, nearer this time)

- MOLE: Why, what do they do?
- RAT: Well, they break out sometimes, and you can't really trust them and that's a fact. But as long as you stick to the Riverbank, you'll be quite safe. Now, Moly, have you had enough for the moment?
- MOLE: *(Quickly grabbing another sandwich)* Yes, thank you, Ratty.
- RAT: Good-o. So, a quick snooze, then it's into the boat for your first rowing lesson. I wonder which of us had better pack the picnic basket?
- MOLE: Oh please let me.
- RAT: Splendid! It's all yours.

(RAT settles down for an after-lunch snooze while MOLE busies himself packing away lunch which includes gulping further sandwiches)

No.6 INSTRUMENTAL

(From behind them comes a grunt and a rustle and BADGER emerges from a pile of dead leaves under a hedge. MOLE stops his packing and stares at BADGER nervously. BADGER in turn trots forward but stops when he sees the two animals. MOLE tugs at the sleeve of the now-sleeping RAT)

- RAT: *(Waking)* Uh? What? What is it, old chap? What's the matter?
(Turning in the direction of MOLE's stare) Why bless my soul!
It's old Badger.
- BADGER: *(Grumpily)* Hm! Company.

(BADGER turns and is about to make his way back to the hedge when RAT calls after him)

- RAT: I say, Badger. Don't go away. Here, I'd like you to meet a friend of mine. Mr. Badger, may I present Mr. Mole. Mr. Mole, Mr. Badger.
- MOLE: (*Offering a paw*) I'm extremely honoured....
- BADGER: Yes, quite so. Quite so. (*Pointing to the basket*) You been having lunch have you, Ratty?
- RAT: Yes, but I'm sure there'll be a bite left if Mole hasn't managed to scoff the lot. What brings you to the Riverbank then, Badger?
- BADGER: I came up this backwater to try and find Toad. I want a few words with that animal, but he's obviously avoiding me. So I decided to have a quick snooze under the hedge. But that didn't last long. Such a rumpus everywhere! All the world seems out on the riverbank.
- MOLE: I'm sure we're very sorry if we disturbed you, Mr. Badger.
- BADGER: (*Studying Mole*) Hm! Have you heard the news?
- RAT: No, what news? Do sit down.
- BADGER: The whole neighbourhood is full of it. Toad has found himself a new contraption, a new toy.
- MOLE: Toad?
- RAT: Well, I'm not surprised. Poor old Toady. I knew he'd get bored with the river eventually.
- MOLE: Who's Toad?
- BADGER: Apparently he's careering around the countryside making an absolute human of himself. As usual, it's down to me to try and talk some sense into the animal. He's a disgrace to his family name. The worst thing his father could have done was to leave all that money to him.
- MOLE: Is Mr. Toad rich, then?
- RAT: (*Laughing*) Rich!? Old Toad has more money than he knows what to do with, but he's a splendid fellow all the same. Always good-tempered, always glad to see you, always sorry when you go.
- MOLE: He must be a very nice animal.

Music

- RAT: He is indeed the best of animals. So simple, so good-natured and so affectionate. A little boastful and conceited perhaps, but he has got some great qualities, has Toady.
- BADGER: Ay, but he has one or two important lessons to learn about behaving decently in the community, and one of these days I intend to see that those lessons are taught thoroughly, and there's more to living than simply going from one craze to the next.
- MOLE: Craze?
- RAT: That's right. Toad's always had crazes. Once upon a time it was nothing but sailing. Then he tired of that and took to punting. Nothing would please him but to punt all day and everyday, and a nice mess he made of it. Last year it was houseboating, and he was going to spend the rest of his life in a houseboat. It's all the same, whatever he takes up; he gets tired of it and starts on something fresh. So what's he up to now, Badger?
- BADGER: Well... I'm not a one to be spreading gossip; you know that, Ratty. So I shall find Toad first to see for myself if these rumours of his ridiculous new folly are true. If they are, I mean to take him in hand, once and for all. So if you and your good friend, young Mole here, will excuse me, I intend to make my way up to Toad Hall. No doubt I shall be seeing you both again. Goodbye.

(BADGER rises stiffly and disappears off)

- RAT: Goodbye, Badger.
- MOLE: Toad Hall! That sounds rather grand.
- TOAD: *(Shouting from offstage)* I say, you fellows! Cooee!

NO. 7 INTRODUCING MISTER TOAD

- RAT: There now! The very animal himself! Here, Toady!

(TOAD enters as the Introduction to his song begins. He struts through the audience)

- TOAD: Oh, I say! What a splendid lot!

(TOAD ad-libs suitably to the audience ensuring that his entrance is as enormous as possible. The band continue his Introduction until ready)

TOAD: I LIVE A LIFE OF LUXURY
IN THE VERY FINEST ABODE.
PLEASE LET ME INTRODUCE MYSELF:
I'M THE FAMOUS MISTER TOAD.
I'VE A STATELY HOME IN ENGLAND,
WHERE THE LAWNS ARE NEATLY MOWED.
MY TWENTY GARDENERS KNOW HOW TO PLEASE
THEIR EMPLOYER MISTER TOAD.

(The band takes over as TOAD produces several 'calling cards' from his pocket which he hands out to members of the audience – preferably the children. He also shakes as many hands as the length of the Instrumental link will allow)

TOAD: *(Waving at the Orchestra Pit)* Good evening, musicians! All right, are we? Good! Second verse.

WHAT AN ENORMOUS POSTBAG,
THAT'S FULL WITH SUCH A LOAD.
THEY'RE NOT CHRISTMAS CARDS, YOU'LL FIND
FAN MAIL FOR MISTER TOAD!
CRUISING ALONG THE RIVER
'JAMES' SAT IN THE BACK AND ROWED.
SO GUESS WHO'S COME TO SAY 'HELLO MY
FRIENDS' –
IT'S MISTER TOAD!

(The song ends as TOAD finally arrives on stage. TOAD grins at the audience and demands:)

TOAD: Applause! *(They do so)* Oh I say, wonderful! That's the idea! What a splendid crowd! *(Seeing RAT and MOLE and shaking them warmly by their hands)* Hooray! Oh this is splendid! Do you know I was just going to send a boat down the river for you Ratty, with strict orders that you were to be fetched at once, whatever you were doing. I want you badly – both of you. Hello, who is this?

(MOLE is staring at the boisterous TOAD quite open-mouthed)

RAT: Oh, this is my new friend, Mole.

TOAD: Splendid! So it is, so it is. Hello, Mole! All right, are we?

(MOLE continues to stare, not knowing what to say)

TOAD: *(To RAT)* Talkative sort of chap, isn't he? *(TOAD shouts 'Boo' to awaken MOLE. MOLE jumps)* Anyhow, James my loyal hedgehog then informed me that grumpy old Badger was on his way to deliver one of his boring sermons – so I did a crafty; avoiding him, and came down to see you myself. Isn't that just

Music

TOAD: *(In great disgust)* Oh pooh! Boating! Silly boyish amusement. I've given that up long ago. Sheer waste of time, that's what it is. No, I've discovered the real thing, the only genuine occupation.

RAT: Oh yes, and what might this new occupation be?

TOAD: Look over there, dear Ratty, and your amiable friend also, if he will be so very good, and you shall see what you shall see!

(MOLE and RAT look off. MOLE gasps)

MOLE: Oh! Oh.... my! Oh my! Oh my!

RAT: *(Staggered)* Well I'll be.... What is it, Toad?

TOAD: Do you want to take a closer look?

MOLE: *(Excitedly)* Oh yes! Yes please!

TOAD: Very well. *(He whistles)*

No.8 INSTRUMENTAL

(A Gipsy caravan painted a very bright canary-yellow is pulled on by a HORSE)

MOLE: Oh! Oh, I say!

RAT: Oh dear. Badger was right, boating is played out. He's tired of it and done with it. This is the new fad.

TOAD: Oh come along, Ratty. This is the very finest of its sort that was ever built without any exception.

MOLE: *(Simply)* But what do you do with it?

TOAD: Moly, my friend, there's a whole new meaning to life embodied in this little cart; the open road, the dusty highway, the heath, the common, the hedgerows, the rolling downs!

No.9 LET'S JUMP ABOARD

TOAD: Before you is the key to adventure:
A means of transport, a cart that's got the lot!
Every *mod con*;
There's Bourbon Scotch, there's gin and 'ton'.
Nothing whatever has been forgot.
Imagine the whole world before you;
Life's exciting when you're upon the road.
INSIDE THERE'S ROOM FOR ANOTHER TWO,
COME TAKE A HOLIDAY WITH TOAD!

(MOLE is already under TOAD's spell. RAT looks at him doubtfully)

TOAD: SO –
 LET'S JUMP ABOARD AND CRACK THE WHIP,
 AND SOON WE'LL BE ON OUR WAY.
 JOURNEY ACROSS THE COUNTRYSIDE,
 TRAVELLING BY NIGHT AND BY DAY.
 WE'LL VISIT TOWNS YOU NEVER EVEN DREAMT
 OF,
 DISCOVER CITIES YOU THOUGHT WERE LOST IN
 TIME,
 SEE AN EVER-CHANGING HORIZON
 WHEN YOU JUMP ABOARD THIS CART OF MINE.

MOLE: Oh Ratty, isn't it exciting? Do let's have a look!

RAT: *(Doubtfully)* Well.... I don't know.

TOAD: Come along, Ratty old man. Don't be so boring.

(RAT is determined not to be interested although he becomes more and more intrigued during the next verse)

TOAD: My brainchild is beautifully appointed,
 All is neatly in its place;
 Chocolate biscuits and sardines,
 Potted lobster and fresh greens,
 You will not find an inch of wasted space.
 There's a box of exquisite havanas,
 A pack of cards, a domino or two.
 And –
 IF YOU'RE ILL OF HEALTH,
 THE MEDICINE'S ON THE SHELF;
 A HOME FROM HOME THAT'S SPICK AND SPAN
 AND NEW.

(RAT, despite himself, is caught up in TOAD's enthusiasm. MOLE is now completely sold on caravanning)

MOLE, TOAD SO –
 & RAT: LET'S JUMP ABOARD AND CRACK THE WHIP,
 AND SOON WE'LL BE ON OUR WAY.
 JOURNEY ACROSS THE COUNTRYSIDE,
 TRAVELLING BY NIGHT AND BY DAY.

MOLE: WE'LL VISIT TOWNS YOU NEVER EVEN DREAMT
 OF,

RAT: DISCOVER CITIES YOU THOUGHT WERE LOST IN
 TIME,