

Toad in a Hole



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or

Where There's a Willow There's a Way

THE BARKWAY PANTOMIME 2020

ACT 1

Pre-prologue

Tabs open

SONG: ETON BOATING SONG (Company)

Jolly boating weather,
 Just a gentle breeze,
It's such a pleasure
 Under the willow trees;
Riverbank folk together,
 Doing just as we please;
Riverbank folk together,
 Doing just as we please.

We may not be that clever,
 Though we get by somehow,
No cares whatsoever,
 Not yet anyhow.
We'll go on like this forever,
 Living for here and now;
We'll go on like this forever,
 Living for here and now.

Others may try to chase us
 Out of our burrows and holes,
But these are our places,
 We are the riverbank souls!
No-one displaces
 Badgers and rats and moles,
No-one displaces
 Badgers and rats and moles.

Tabs close.

Prologue:

There is a small truckle bed set up on the stage extension. In it lies a small creature in a nightcap. On the screen there is a terrifying silhouette of what appears to be a monster with many teeth, roaring ferociously. The small creature tosses and turns, moans and eventually cries out. The screen goes blank and the small creature reaches for its glasses, and, clearly distressed, hurries offstage clutching a small chest that was under the bed.

ACT 1 SCENE 1

Morning, Ratty and Mole's home on the riverbank. A very cosy hole with two old armchairs very worn, table with two cups, bowls etc laid for breakfast. Books everywhere, an old standard lamp, a photo of Ratty and Mole on the wall, slightly crooked. Ratty is sitting at the table with a newspaper pondering the crossword. Maybe the 1st movement from the Pastoral Symphony is playing quietly in the background.

RATTY Hmm. 14 down. 7 letters "Nickname for Australian moles?" question mark. No idea. It's a tricky one today.

Mole enters, dishevelled, wearing his nightcap still and dressing gown, clutching a small chest to his er.. chest.

RATTY Ah, there you are old chap. I was wondering if you were ever going to surface (ha ha). How are you this bright, sunshiney morning, when all is right with the world?

MOLE Oh, I've had a terrible night, Ratty, the most awful nightmares of a huge monster with rows of teeth as sharp as steel knives chasing me along the riverbank. And it was one of those dreams where the harder you try to run away the more impossible it becomes to move – and then it was upon me – and then I woke up screaming. Didn't I wake you Ratty?

RATTY *(smiling benignly)* Slept like a baby old chum. I told you not to have your cocoa too strong last night didn't I! Come and have a nice cup of tea. That will fix you up.

MOLE *(still distraught)* No, you're not taking me seriously. I know what I saw. You've got to listen. It was a monster and it was out to destroy us all.

RATTY Oh, for goodness sake, Moley ... here, drink your tea and pull yourself together; it was only a dream old man.

MOLE *(sighs, reassured)* I'm sorry old chap, but it seemed so real. I'm still shaking. You are always so wise, my friend, and as always, probably right. *(he sits on the box.)*

RATTY By the way, what's in the box that's so precious?

MOLE I haven't the least idea. I was having a rummage around underground and this was blocking my path, so I dug an extra-large molehill and pulled it out. Trouble is it's locked and there's no key. But there is something inside and it could be valuable. Listen. *(He shakes the box)*

RATTY: Yes, yes, drink up Moley, let's think instead about what we are going to do today. Those carrots in the vegetable patch need thinning out and I rather fancy a bit of a punt up the river later on.

From offstage:

NANNY HEN: *(clucking noise – possible SFX)*

RATTY: Ah, that will be Nanny Hen. Now let me see... Good morning Mr Water Rat Sir, good morning Mr Mole Sir. I've brought you both two lovely scarves I've knitted with my own fair claws. *(pause)* Nanny Hen! Come in!

NANNY H Good morning Mr Water Rat Sir, good morning Mr Mole Sir. I've brought you both two lovely scarves I've knitted with my own fair claws. *(she produces two long stringy dishcloth –like things)*

RATTY: Thank you so much Nanny Hen. They are lovely. I'll put them with the others *(Opens cupboard doors from which spill a mountain of scarves)(aside to Moley)* Poor soul, I think her mother laid her egg from a great height when she was little. No wonder she's scrambled. But she is a kindly mortal and we all care for each other on the river bank.

MOLE Indeed, Ratty. Where would we all be without each other?

There is much quacking outside and in tumble a number of ducklings.

D1: Morning Mr Rat, Mr Mole. We thought you might have some breadcrumbs for us.

D2: Or better still cake crumbs! Huge ones with currants in.

NANNY H Now you youngsters, you know breadcrumbs give you tummyache. I think I might 'ave some worms in my pocket you can 'ave, though.

She hands out decidedly worm-like sweets.

RATTY: Still six of you, I see. (*Aside to Moley*) I think Mrs Pike and Mr Heron must have gone on holiday, but of course nothing can go wrong when you are on the riverbank.

NANNY H Now waddle along little ones back to your mummy. We can't 'ave lots of little fluffy yellow ducklings floating along the river on their own can we?

D1 Thank you, Mr Ratty, sir.

D2 You're a true gent.

There is a knock on the door. Ratty gets up and opens it. It is Dormouse the postman.

DORMOUSE: Mornin' all.....sorry post's a bit late...overslept. (*he yawns loudly*)

Ratty and Dennis laugh together.

RATTY Nothing new there then. Hold the front page! Dennis the Dormouse oversleeps!

Much gaiety and fraternal backslapping ensues, during which Dennis hands the post to Ratty.

RATTY (*He leafs through the letters*) Hmm. Do we need a walk-in bath, Moley?

MOLE We have a walk-in bath: it's called the river!

RATTY How about a Rhine cruise with a lot of very old, incontinent people?

MOLE A river cruise? I'd call that a bit of a busman's holiday!

RATTY Wait a minute! What's this?

MOLE It's very big – it must be important.

RATTY: Now Moley, you know size isn't everything. Dennis, wake up!!

DENNIS Oh, sorry, it was just forty winks. I'll be on my way and leave you two to it. I've still got the whole of the other side of the riverbank to do. By the way, everyone has got one of them (*pointing at the big envelope. exits*)

RATTY *(opens letter and gazes thoughtfully at it. He turns to Moley with a look of horror on his face)* Moley, this is a disaster! A catastrophe! A nightmare!

MOLE What is? Read it!

RATTY Dear hole dweller, an application has been lodged with the riverside council for planning permission to build a facility, supported by a road system, on 100 acres of the riverbank with a large jetty alongside.

MOLE Oh no! Our beautiful home, our idyllic lifestyle, our perfect world! Who would do such a thing and ruin our lives?

RATTY Think about it Mole old friend. Who do we know who is always wanting to make more money in the riverbank area, who is greedy, cruel, rude, overbearing, selfish – and, let's face it – a bit common? Can you think of anyone who fits that description?

NANNY H That sounds like that Broderick Bandersnatch. I don't 'ate many people but I 'ate 'im. 'e ran over my great nephew with one of those gurt cars of his. Squashed 'im flat as a pancake 'e did. I never did find out why he wanted to cross the road.

MOLE *(overly dramatic)* Why, oh why does this tragedy have to visit us? We shall lose our homes. We shall be split up from our friends. Where shall we go? I love our home – and our friends. Oh, I feel so bad now. What terrible deeds have we done in our lives to bring this visitation upon us? Or is life just a meaningless, arbitrary existence in the empty vacuum of space?

RATTY Come on, old fellow. I feel as bad as you do, but we've got to pull ourselves together and see what we can do about this state of affairs.

Badger enters.

RATTY Oh Badger, am I glad to see you. Moley is in a right old state *(Moley is sitting on his box, clutching his arms around himself and rocking backwards and forwards)*

BADGER So I see. About this letter I suppose. *(brandishes his own copy)*. Well, it's no use crying over spilt milk, Moley old chap. We must put our heads together and think what to do. Any suggestions?

RATTY: We stand up for our rights. We demonstrate!

BADGER Just exactly how do you plan to do that?

RATTY: Er ... we all lie down on the riverbank, make a human chain.

BADGER Animal chain. Oh yes, let me see (*sarcastically*) fifteen assorted rodents, other small mammals and the odd waterfowl covered in mud is really going to scare the pants off our Mister Bandylegs, isn't it!

NANNY H Master Toad!

BADGER What?

NANNY H Master Toad! 'E'll know what to do.

BADGER You know I think you might be right, Nanny. He's a big landowner in these parts. He'll be as horrified as us at the thought of diggers moving in to destroy the land.

MOLE (*screams*) Diggers! That's it!

RATTY What?

MOLE My dream. It wasn't a monster chasing me – it was a digger, with its jaws tearing up the ground.

RATTY Diggers?

MOLE That's what I said ..with its jaws....

RATTY (*interrupting*) No, no! 14 down – Australian moles – diggers!!! I've got it – finished the crossword!

BADGER Ahem. Well, now we've cleared all that up, I think we have an appointment with Mr Toad. Chin up everyone. We're going to fight this. By the way Moley, what's in the box?

MOLE I don't know, but I find it strangely comforting. (*To the audience*) I can't carry it round all the time, but if I leave it here will you guard it for me? If anyone tries to touch it can you shout: Don't touch the box! Leave the box alone! And if any of you find a key can we try to see if it fits? Go, on, have a go, Nanny Hen.

Nanny Hen approaches the box – hopefully, audience reacts. Ad lib ...

BADGER Enough of that, Nanny! Don't encourage her, Audience! Onward, Riverbankers. to Mister Toad!

End of scene

ACT 1 SCENE 2

Front of tabs.

Bandersnatch, Weasel and Stoat enter

BSNATCH Now listen, you two. He'll be here in a minute

WEASEL Who's he, Mr B? Tell Stoat again. He's got a real bad memory.

STOAT No, I haven't! I just forget things sometimes.

WEASEL Yeah Stoaty. Like your own name.

BSNATCH Enough, you two. He's called Arthur Daley, he works in one of my many businesses, and he's a car salesman. All you two have to do is keep quiet and watch. You might learn something. Here he comes.

Enter Arfur

ARFUR Oh, Mr Bandersnatch, sir, what a pleasure it is to see you. I trust I find you in your usual excellent health? And how is dear Mrs B, too, what a lovely woman, an ornament to her sex, I always say.....

BSNATCH Enough with the grovelling, save it for the punters. I've got a job for you. I want you to sell me a car.

ARFUR Sell you a car? But you've already got several, Mr B, why would you want.....

BSNATCH No, no, I want you to sell a car for me. To someone else. Mr Toad, of Toad Hall. And you'd better get it right. This deal goes through or you're history.

ARFUR Don't you worry, sir. It will be an honour to sell one of your lovely vehicles to a classy gent like Mr Toad. I've heard he's a real gentleman and lives in a fine property by the river.

BSNATCH You're not wrong. And I want him on my side, so how do we penetrate his defences eh, Arfur? What's his weak point?

STOAT If he's a toad, he probably likes eating flies.

BSNATCH I told you to keep quiet. Well, Arfur?

ARFUR Er ... lady toads?

BSNATCH No! Flattery, that's how we get to Toady! Plus vanity, Arfur, he's an enormous snob, and greedy too. So your nauseatingly greasy sales technique, which personally makes me feel a little sick –

ARFUR Oh, Mr B, thank you, you're too kind

BSNATCH - is exactly what's needed to get old Toad licking my boots. I need his support, you see. Now you run along and fetch that car, then bring it to Toad Hall. I've already made an appointment to visit him. I'll meet you there.

ARFUR Right away, Mr B. (*Exit Arfur*)

WEASEL Why are you buttering up Mr Toad, boss?

BSNATCH For my new factory, of course! My giant factory, built right here on the river bank, making twenty million plastic ducks a month, and pumping millions of gallons of disgusting chemical waste into the river, and digging up the bank, thus rendering hundreds of harmless river creatures homeless, if they haven't been poisoned already.

STOAT Mmmm, nice.

BSNATCH It will be wonderful. To do all that, I need to get Toad on my side. We're going to sell him that car on terms he can't possibly refuse. He'll be so grateful to me, he'll be my friend....

STOAT/WEASEL for life?

BSNATCH No, but for long enough. Until he realises what's going on, then it will be too late. Hahahaha!

He turns to the audience

And there's another angle to the plan. It's not just the factory I'm after, you know. Oh, no! I do quite fancy getting my hands on that place of Toad's as well. Toad Hall, he calls it. I'm aiming to make it Bandersnatch Hall. No, that's not quite right.

WEASEL Bandersnatch Mansion?

BSNATCH No, still not right.

STOAT Bandersnatch Castle?

BSNATCH Nearly. I know – we'll call it Bandersnatch Palace. Won't my old mum be proud of me! Come on you two. Let's see how long that idiot Toad will stand up to Arfur's sales technique. I'll give him 5 minutes.

As B'snatch exits, he notices Moley's box.

B'SNATCH 'Ere, what's this old box?

AUDIENCE Don't touch the box! Leave the box alone!

B'SNATCH All right! Keep yer 'air on! I only arsked!

They exit. Tabs open to reveal Toad Hall in the background, green sward and trees surrounding. Enter Mr Toad and Nanny Hen the housekeeper / nanny

TOAD So, Nanny Hen, we want to make a good impression on Mr Bandersnatch. He's a very important industrialist. Go to the market and get some peanut butter and some ham, and some elderflower wine.

N HEN Yes, Master Toad.

TOAD And when you get back, put up some more pictures of me. I like the ones where I'm wearing that splendid red velvet smoking jacket. I look very Toady in that. Do you know, there are rooms in Toad Hall that don't have a single portrait of me in them. It's not good enough, Mr Toad's got to make the right impression. (*A bell rings*) Oh, gracious, he's here already. Quick off you go, hurry, hurry..... (*exit Nanny Hen, clucking anxiously as she goes.*)

Enter Arfur, accompanied by Weasel and Stoa, pushing a car. Or even better, Arfur is driving it, with suitable SFXs, parps, a backfire, and a cloud of smoke. We see about the front half of the car. He dismounts, removing his goggles and massive driving gloves. It's quite an entrance.

TOAD Who are you? What's that... *(he catches sight of the car)* oh, my goodness!

ARFUR Mr Toad, I believe?

TOAD Why, yes, I'm.... I'm.... Oh, my, what *is* that wonderful thing?

ARFUR Mr Toad, sir, let me introduce myself. I represent Mr Broderick Bandersnatch of Bandersnatch Elite Automobiles, and he's sent me because he believes a discerning, sophisticated gentlemen of taste such as yourself must be in need of the latest thing in personal transportation solutions. I do believe you could be the first gentleman in the county to own one of these.

TOAD I could? I could!

ARFUR And Mr Bandersnatch has authorised me to tell you that he's able, in the case of a gentleman such as your good self, and a personal friend, to offer you very advantageous terms. Oh, very advantageous indeed.

TOAD Oh, my. It is very beautiful. It could be me driving it, at a hundred miles an hour. What would people say then? Oh, vroom, vroom. Look out, here comes Toad! Oh, parp, parp! Advantageous terms, you say?

ARFUR Mr Bandersnatch is very generous to his close friends. You might almost call it.... a gift.

TOAD Well, I would certainly like to be Mr B's friend, as one of the leading lights hereabouts, I'm looking forward to meeting him very soon. He'll soon be here. *(the bell rings)* That must be him now. *(Enter Badger, Mole, Ratty and Hetty)* Oh, it's you, Ratty. *(he sounds disappointed)* And your friends.

RATTY Toad, we've come to see you about something tremendously important.

MOLE Something terrible has happened. A real nightmare!

BADGER And we'll need your help, or we're all done for.

TOAD Well, as a prominent landowner and – ahem – a respected citizen of the Riverbank, I'd be pleased to help. But I'm expecting a very important visitor very soon. Can't it wait?

BADGER No, it can't wait. Listen, we've had this letter from the Council.

MOLE Well, really, Ratty got it, it was delivered by Dormouse in fact, and he nearly fell asleep –

BADGER Moley, leave this to me. There's someone who's planning to put up some sort of 'facility' as he calls it right here on the river-bank, all bricks and concrete and horrible roaring machines digging the place up and ruining everything. We've got to stop it!

RATTY So of course, we'll need your help, Toad, as a big landowner round here, they'll listen to you.

TOAD Yes, yes, terrible, terrible, I do sympathise, and of course you have my support. But I'm very busy right now, so please just go and organise something yourselves. You could call a meeting or something like that, print some posters, hand out a few leaflets, just go away and do it. And now, if you don't mind, I am very busy – *(he begins to shoo them out)*

RATTY But Toad, we need more than leaflets! You've got to help us!

TOAD Sorry, must be pushing along, work to do and all that – *(The bell rings again)* oh drat, more visitors! *(Enter Nanny Hen)*

N HEN Mr Broderick Bandersnatch to see you, Master Toad.

TOAD Sorry, sorry, lovely to see you, important visitor.....

BADGER Bandersnatch? Did she say Bandersnatch? That was the name on the letter, that greedy property speculator! Toad, that's the very man who's building this 'facility' on your doorstep. You've got to listen!

TOAD Ever so sorry you have to go. Goodbye! *(He pushes them all out as Bandersnatch enters through another entrance)* Ah, Mr Bandersnatch, I presume!

BSNATCH You must be Mr Toad. So pleased to make your acquaintance. I have heard so much about you. Push off, Arfur. *(exit Arfur)* I do

hope we shall get to know each other better. As a leading industrialist and a prominent landowner, I'm sure we have much in common, much to discuss. But pleasure before business! How did you like the motor I sent you? Did Arfur demonstrate all its features?

TOAD Oh, he did, he did! It's beautiful. I should like to have it. Parp, parp! Arfur mentioned something about.... advantageous terms? A few percent off list price? Mate's rates?

BSNATCH *(Laughs tolerantly)* Oh, I can tell you're a true businessman at heart, a brilliant negotiator. It's clear there's no point in trying to bargain with you! I know when I'm beaten, Mr Toad. Tell you what. How would you like to own this wonderful car for.... nothing? Not one penny, but free!

TOAD *(a little flustered by this sudden victory)* Well naturally, I.....

BSNATCH As you know, I'm planning to build a little factory hereabouts – nothing significant, we'll be making a few charming toys for the children. You'd scarcely know it was there.

TOAD Well, my friends who live on the riverbank, they're a bit concerned about this, so I'm not so sure that Ratty and Badger and everyone would approve. In fact, they might be quite cross with me if I helped you. So, I'm not quite sure...

BSNATCH Very public-spirited, but I assure you, it would be a very discreet little operation. Your friends would scarcely notice it. And of course, if you could see your way to giving me your support, I would gladly let you enjoy this wonderful car as a small token of my deep appreciation. You do want to be my friend, don't you?

TOAD Why, yes of course, but ...

BSNATCH Well, then.

SONG: I COULD BE SO GOOD FOR YOU (Bandersnatch and Chorus)

BANDERSNATCH

If you want to, I'll change the situation,
Right people, right time, and the right location,
I've got a good idea, just you keep me near,
I'd be so good for you.

CHORUS

I could be so good for you,

Help ya like you want me to,

I could be so good for you,

Help you like you want me to.

BANDERSNATCH

I'm gonna help ya

I'd do anything for you-ou-ou,
I'd be so goo-ood for you.

I'll do it like you want me to,

There ain't nothin' I can't go through,
I'd be so good for you.

BANDERSNATCH

Sometime when you're feelin' like a poor relation,
Call on me and I'll give you more than conversation,
Take an' shake it, hey it's a deal,
And woh big brother I'll make you heal,
I'll be so good for you.

CHORUS

I could be so good for you,

Help ya like you want me to,

I could be so good for you,

Help you like you want me to.

BANDERSNATCH

I'll be right by your side,

There ain't nothin' you can hide from me
I'd be so goo-ood for you.

(spoken) I'm the man!

(sung) I tell you nothing, baby, nothing,
nothing I cannot do,
I'd be so good for you.

BANDERSNATCH

Don't ask me no questions, I'll tell ya no lies,
We can have an arrangement,
I will be right by your side,
This will be your car tonight!

CHORUS

I could be so good for you,
Help ya like you want me to,
I can make the good times roll,
Even when you're in a hole.

BANDERSNATCH

I'm the one you really need,
I can even help you breathe,
I'll be so goo-ood for you.
(spoken) Make 'em roll!
(spoken) That's right!
Oooh
I'd be so good for you.

BSNATCH

So, Mr Toad, all you have to do is write your name on this bit of paper, and the car's yours. How does that sound?

TOAD

Where do I sign?

BSNATCH

Oh, just here. And here. And here. And one last time... here. Excellent. All done! Here are the keys. Enjoy your new life of motoring!

TOAD

Oh, parp, parp! Thank you so much. *(He takes the keys, and goes over to the car, which he begins to polish lovingly.)*

Curtain closes leaving Bandersnatch in front of tabs.

BSNATCH

Like taking sweets from a baby. Parp, parp! Do you want to see what he just signed?

The writing is large and legible: TITLE DEEDS TO TOAD HALL

B'SNATCH

Toad Hall's mine now! But don't tell Toad, will you? Oh, no, Toad mustn't know ... yet!

Bandersnatch laughs loudly and uncontrollably. End of scene

ACT 1 SCENE 2A

Interlude: Gardener's Question Time. Front of tabs.

MRS B Welcome, ladies, welcome all
To our lovely village hall
Now first, for those who don't know me
Would you just call me Mrs B?
Our subject's flower beds and grass
And growing rhubarb under glass
It's marjoram and mint and lime
Yes, girls, it's Gardener's Question Time!
Now if you have a problem, shout –
And I shall try to help you out
So who'll go first?

LADY 1 Well, if I could,
My melons are not looking good
My husband says, and he should know,
They were much firmer years ago.

MRS B Ooh, what a shame, I think you might
Be suffering from melon blight.
I've heard that an effective cure
Is treating them with horse manure
It should protect them from disease
And make them much more nice to squeeze.
Next?

LADY 2 My hubby's cucumbers are small
They're not like cucumbers at all!
These little cukes are not much fun
Give me a great big whopping one!

MRS B Dear Mrs H, it seems to me
Your hubby's cukes need TLC.
Just give his fruits a daily stroke -
And he'll soon be your Big Cukes bloke!
Next?

LADY 3 Well, I've got troubles with me leeks –

A planted member of the audience interrupts. He may stay among the audience or make his way on stage.

PLANT Stop!
Get off the stage! That's quite enough!
Who wrote this vile disgusting stuff?
I don't know what the audience thinks
But my opinion is, it stinks.
Such smutty humour doesn't go
With what should be a family show.
Go on! Buzz off!

MRS B *(who now loses her stage persona and country accent)*
We didn't mean
To make our pantomime obscene
It's just that scriptwriters are fonder
Of churning out poor double-entendres
Than writing proper drama – but
Bill Shakespeare also wrote some smut.

PLANT Like we should care! It's well past time
To sanitise this pantomime.
And for a start, you should be cleaning
The script of every double meaning.

MRS B What, every one? That would be hard
And what an insult to the Bard!
Not only difficult, but silly.
What's your name, sir?

PLANT It's Ivor Willey.

ACT 1 SCENE 3

FOT

Enter Mother Duck from kitchen side. She stands on the top step and beckons towards the kitchen.

MUM D Oh do come along, children. I've booked the village hall for 7.30. You'll be late for your audition, and we have to practise it again before you perform in front of the committee.....

Enter Duckling 1.

D1 Coming Mother!

MUM D This is not a solo performance I hope....

D1 No. The others are on their way. I think they're having a bit of trouble..

Enter ducklings running up steps and on stage, almost knocking Mother over....

D2 Will you get off my tail feathers?

D3 Well, don't get in my way!

D2 MUUUUUMMMM!!!!

D3 Oh yes, call for mum.

MUM D CHILDREN!!!!

DUCKLINGS Sorry, mother.

MUM D OK, OK, calm down! Now, get into your line.

SONG: DUCKS' DITTY

All along the backwater
Through the rushes tall
Ducklings are a-dabbling
Up tails all!

Ducks' tails, drakes' tails
Yellow feet a-quiver
Yellow bills all out of sight
Busy in the river.

Slushy green undergrowth
Where the roach swim,
Here we keep our larder
Cool and full and dim.

Everyone for what he likes!
We like to be
Heads down, tails up
Dabbling free!!

High in the blue above
Swifts whirl and call
We are down a-dabbling
UP TAILS ALL!

Mum claps enthusiastically. Enter Ratty through tabs.

D4 How was that, Mother?

D5 We've been practising really hard.....

RATTY 'Ello, ello, ello, what's all this then...?

MUM Ooh, you sound just like Mister Plod the copper...

RATTY I was wondering what this is all about outside the hall when we're expecting a crowd of people here tonight.

MUM What? For the audition?

RATTY No, I don't know anything about any audition. I'm talking about the meeting. *(Looks down at his clipboard)* No audition here this evening. We're holding a protest meeting for the residents and members of the R.A.G – that's the Riverbank Action Group. There's a slot for auditions next week though.....

MUM D Oh dear, so sorry! Never mind: all the more time for practising. Come along my children.

DUCKLINGS Yes, mother.

Exit all and disappear. RATTY back through tabs.

Other side FOT: the meeting with Broderick Bandersnatch and his two henchmen, who are pretending to be partners in the law firm Snatch, Grabbit and Runne.

B'SNATCH Right, boys, what I want by the end of the meeting is for all those verminous little hole squatters to go away happy that their riverbank is going to be a better place because of the generosity of Broderick Bandersnatch. And you are going to persuade them.

STOAT How?

B'SNATCH Words, Stoat, words.

WEASEL But Boss, I fink we're better at fumping fings.

STOAT Yeah, wiv our fists n'all.

B'SNATCH Listen will you? I want you to pretend to be partners in the law firm of Snatch Grabbit and Runne. You are acting for me in this business. Don't worry. I've written you a speech. You just have to read it. And I've got one of you a perruque.

STOAT I don't want a perruque. It might peck me or poo on my shoulder.

B'SNATCH Perruque you idiot, not parrot - it's a periwig.

WEASEL Why do we need a piggy wig? Mind you, I do like a bacon sandwich.

STOAT Mmmm, plenty of tomato sauce – and a mug of tea.

B'SNATCH *(exasperated)* Shut it, you two! Periwig – a lawyer's wig to make you look more intelligent, to make the dumb animals believe in what you are saying. Though frankly I think that's going to be an uphill struggle. Here, Stoat, put the wig on.

Stoat puts the wig on back to front and the two pigtail bits fall in front of his face, making him sneeze.

WEASEL *(oafish laugh)* Huh, huh, huh, you need a naircut, matey.

B'SNATCH It's the wrong way round you fools *(he turns it round)*

WEASEL Now you look like a girl..

STOAT Wotchit sunshine! *(Grabs him by the throat)*

B'SNATCH Look, just take the speech and read it. You can read, can't you?

WEASEL Yus

STOAT Yus

B'SNATCH Good. Just read the speech then – and don't mess it up. *(He leaves)*

W and S Yes Boss.

WEASEL Can you read?

STOAT Nope. Not very well anyhow.

WEASEL Me neever. We'll toss for it. *(Exit, but as he leaves, he notices Moley's box, still on the stage)* 'Ere, what's this old box, then?

AUDIENCE Don't touch the box! Leave the box alone!

WEASEL All right, keep yer 'air on, I only arsked!

Curtains open on the interior of the village hall with a flipchart, table and chairs laid out for a meeting. Enter Ratty, Badger and Mole all clutching lots of pieces of paper, some of which are being dropped as they approach the table. Mole pats his precious

box/chest, pleased to see it's safe. If anyone in the audience shouts, he will have to explain it's all right for him to touch it, as it's his box.

Dennis the dormouse is slumped in one of the chairs, ready for the protesters to occupy.

RATTY *(Looking around)* Not many people here then.

BADGER Hmm... bit sparse. But it's early yet. Some of them will still be asleep in their holes...

MOLE Hang on. [*Slapping the box down on the table*]. I see something on that chair. I think it's.....

BADGER It's Dennis!

RATTY Of course it's Dennis! You can hear him snoring : it's ALWAYS Dennis!

MOLE Wish it was me. I could do with a good sleep. Had one of my nightmares again last night..... those monsters are getting bigger you know.....

RATTY *(Shouting loudly)* DENNIS !! *(To audience)* I'm afraid you are going to have to help us again. Can you shout "Wake up Dennis" as loud as you can?

There follows the usual business of 'not loud enough : you're going to have to shout louder than that' etc.

DENNIS *(Wakes with a start)* Ooh! Where am I? *(spots the box)* What's this?

AUDIENCE Don't touch the box! Leave the box alone!

DENNIS Sorry! I only asked!

RATTY We're in the village hall, Dennis. We need you to be fully awake and on top form for the meeting.

DENNIS I'll try, but I'm feeling very sleepy again.

BADGER So, where is everybody then? If they're not worried about losing their cosy homes, we may as well all go home now.

.RATTY Come along, old chap, they'll be here. They're probably all watching Countryfile. I do like that John Craven.

Enter 3 butterflies giggling and chatting as per usual.

B3 Ohhhhh you are awful...!!!!

B2 Ohhhhh I know!! That great tit told me the very same thing lastnight...! *(lots of giggling)*

B1 Well, I only came 'cause I heard Leonardo di Caterpillar would be here.

They all utter hysterical little screams.

B1 We might as well just hang on here, he might just turn up.

B2 Oh heavens – just look at me – what am I like! I forgot to do my nails.

B3 And my left antenna is looking a bit droopy...hope I'm not coming down with something.

B2 Come on let's sit down. Someone interesting might just turn up.

Enter Sammy Skunk. Flies hover around his head.

B3 Oh no! I think someone just came in. No, don't look, girls! You don't need to. Just sniff the air and get your masks out.

B1 B2 *(breathing in)* It's Sammy, isn't it ?

They do a bit of coughing and shifting around to get far away from Sammy.

RATTY *(produces can of air freshener and hands to girls)* Thought this might come in handy.

Enter Nanny Hen with Billy Beaver. They sit down together, chatting. She is, of course, knitting.

BILL Is that the bobble hat you promised me last Christmas, Nanny Hen?

NANNY H Not sure yet, Billy Beaver. Could be, or – on the other hand – maybe not.

BILL I would like it to be. It's getting a bit chilly building those dams at this time of year you know.

NANNY H Well, it could be a scarf. That would be nice and warm around the neck for you, Bill.

BILL It's always a bit of a surprise what I end up getting from you, Nanny.

NANNY H Oh, I know, exciting, isn't it! (*she jabs him with her needle*) Get my point??

BILL I have now. A surprise a minute with you, Nanny.

BADGER Ah, Bill, glad you could make it. We're going to need someone with your building expertise and knowledge of aquatic engineering to challenge these fellows.

Weasel and Stoat enter the hall where the animals are assembled. There is a screen or flipchart set up and one of them has the speech (and the wig). Stoat goes to the lectern and picks up the paper. There is a long silence while he stares at it, before Weasel comes over and turns it the other way round.

STOAT Thanks mate, I mean thank you, esteemed colleague. Laydees and gennlemen -

WEASEL (*aside*) Accent, Stoat. You're not refereeing a fist fight.

BADGER Get on with it!

Weasel won the toss and is operating the flip chart.

STOAT We are here to put before you the glorious changes which are coming to the riverbank near you and which will transform your lives when Mr Bandersnatch's fack...fash...fish ...

WEASEL (*Whispers*) 'Facility' numnuts!

STOAT (*Glaring at Weasel*) FACILITY is built. In all his generosity he promises to: Build an underpass beneath Paradise Watermeadow so that you can cross it safely. (*Flipchart of underpass crossing*)

(shout from the audience)

BILLY We wouldn't need an underpass if you weren't building a six lane motorway across our meadow.

DENNIS And what about the rare knob orchid that grows there?

STOAT Make a pelican crossing over the river so that your little ones can reach the Broderick Bandersnatch Daycare Centre, a state-of-the-art nursery what will nurture and educate your babies while you earn lots of money in the facility. (*Flipchart of real pelican with a lot of ducklings on its back*)

BILLY So just how big are those delivery ships you are planning to bring up the river?

NANNY H I don't want to work in a facility.

STOAT He will build you a lovely pavement with brand new concrete kerbs.
(Flipchart of path with kerb)

BILLY Yes, but it doesn't go anywhere.

DENNIS And we don't need it anyway.

STOAT Affordable homes! Help to buy your burrows! Shared ownership of your holes!

BILLY *(various)* Booo! Get off! We don't want you here!

Gradually a chant starts up.

ALL Toad! Toad! Toad! Toad! We want Toad! We want Toad! We want Toad!

SONG: YOU'RE THE TOP (Ratty, Mole, Badger, Butterflies)

With words persuasive, you're so creative,
And we're sure that we'll find it best,
Instead of getting it off our chest,
To let you, Toad, be our guest,
The men invading just need persuading
That they really have gone too far,
And you're so witty that this committee
Invites you to show us how great you are.

You're the top! A respected aesthete,
You're the top! You're the Barkway High Street.
You're a cricket team that has won the village cup,
You are Cupid's bow, the Royston Crow,
You're on the up!

You're sublime, like the Barkway Panto,
You've the time to learn Esperanto;
We are only furry animals, we're flops,
But if, Toady, we're the bottom, you're the top!

You're the top! Never a pedestrian,
You're the top! You're a Hitchin Thespian,
You're the Barley shop on a weekday afternoon,
You're the M eleven, a slice of heaven,
A silver spoon.

You are one in a hundred million,
You are quite an unique amphibian;
We are only furry animals, we're flops,
But if, Toady, we're the bottom, you're the top!

Toad is carried shoulder high to the podium. He is out of breath and passes his hand through his hair like Boris Johnson. He has no notes. The hall falls silent.

TOAD Er, er er, fellow – riverbankers, sorry I'm a tad late. Tempus fugit and all that. I had a bit of trouble with my new car. It's bright red. Have you seen it? *(puzzled silence in audience)* No? OK. You will, I expect. Parp parp and all that. Er, right, so erm, aren't we all lucky to live in such a lovely place? *(Murmurs of agreement)*. Beautiful. I know I like it! Perfect! *(murmurs grow)* And that's the way it's stayed for generations! *(Cheers from the hall)* Your father! Your mother! Your grandfathers! Your grandmothers! *(Toad's on a roll)* Your great grandmothers! Your great grandfathers!

BADGER Ok, ok enough. We get the point.

OTHER VOICES: Good old Toad! You tell 'em Toad! Go for it Toad!

TOAD BUT: perhaps things could be EVEN BETTER.

B1 Yeah, nail bars, hairdressers, beauty salons.

B2 Have you got nails?

B1 *(cautiously)* No....

B2 Me neever. Oh well.

BADGER *(challenges him)* What exactly do you mean, Toad?

TOAD *(in his stride now)* Progress, Badger old chap, progress. We're gonna make the Riverbank great again. It's gonna be beautiful, really beautiful. We're gonna build a factory - *(gasps from the audience)*

MOLE Noooooooooooooooooooo.

TOAD It's gonna be great, really great.

B1 I suppose that would mean more people would come here to work in this factory ...

B2 Young people...our age...

B3 Handsome young people our age...

B1, 2,3 Mmmmmmmm!

SAM SKUNK Maybe I'd find someone who wouldn't mind sitting next to me and being my friend.

BILLY BEAVER I would get lots of building work.

NANNY H BUT I may find it hard to cope with the extra demand for knitted articles, and I'm not getting any younger you know.

RATTY Toad, you can't be serious. Have you considered what a factory would do to our world, our environment? And what will this factory make? It might smell worse than Sammy Skunk.

TOAD Ducks.

DUCKLINGS What?

TOAD That's right. Ducks, that's what it'll make. Lovely little yellow plastic ducks. Millions of them, actually.

EVERYONE PLASTIC!???????? Shouts of: Are you insane? Idiot! Traitor! *(and they start throwing things at him. Mole is back rocking on his box in tears)*

TOAD No, no, friends, you've got it wrong. *(He has now morphed from Boris to Trump)* Fake news, fake news. Mr Bandersnatch is a great guy – great guy.

EVERYONE *(variously and repeatedly)* Down with Toad! Down with Toad! Toad the traitor! We hate Toad! *(and any other random slogans they can think of)*

The audience shouts drown him out – and he is grabbed by STOAT and WEASEL who are also fighting off the animals. This has to escalate into something really ugly.

STOAT Back off, mammals, before I shoot you and stuff you.

WEASEL Time to go, Mr Toad. Things are getting ugly. Run before they get you and gnaw you to death.

STOAT On my way! Come on, Mister Toad, sir. *(They leave –fast)*

The hall turns quiet apart from Mole's muffled sobbing.

RATTY What in heaven's name has got into Toad? I thought he was on our side.

NANNY H Well, he said he was, didn't he, and an amphibian's word is his bond.

BADGER I'm not so sure. He seemed pretty keen to get us out of the way when Bandersnatch turned up at Toad Hall.

MOLE I was so frightened back there. I thought we were all going to die. And I thought Toad was our friend.

BADGER Now buck up, Moley, my friend. Nobody is going to die – but I do think we need to have this out with Toad – and soon.

They all exit the hall.

End of scene

ACT 1 SCENE 4

Toad is seen polishing his car (Only the front bit, cardboard cut out) He is singing to himself and doing that Madness dance thing as he does so.

I like driving in my car,
It's better than a Jaguar,

TOAD Oh, my beautiful car. How I love you. In fact I love you more than myself. Ah yes, now all the ladies will want to know me now I have you, oh love of my life.

And look at you. *(Takes the horn in his hands and caresses it)* My, you're a big one. *(He honks it)*

Oh, what a beautiful sound you make. *(He then starts dancing around with it honking it every so often)* Sing to me, oh beautiful one. Daddy's going to rub you down and make you all shiny just like Daddy's beautiful car. Is that a fly on the front? *(He leans down and eats the fly)* That's better. Nothing must spoil you for Daddy.

While he's making this speech the Riverbank Committee enter and stare in disbelief.

TOAD I will name you.....

RATTY Toad, we have some very pressing matters to discuss with you.

BADGER Yes matey, you've got some answering to do.

TOAD Do I? Oh look, you can see your face in the paintwork. Have you seen my new car?

MOLE I can't see anything. Lost my specs, see.

BADGER Oh shut up, Moley. Your specs are the least of our worries.

RATTY *(embarrassed laugh)*. Toad, we thought you were going to fight our case at the Parish meeting last night. But you let us down and now everyone's up in arms.

MOLE Yes, Mr Toad. I tried to stick up for you, but the Riverbank folk were what can only be described as mutinous.

BADGER In other words, they want your blood, Mr Toad, no matter how cold it is.

RATTY In contrast, their blood's boiling. The question they all want answered is, how could you do this to all your friends?

TOAD I don't know what you mean.

RAT You supported Bandersnatch's factory plans.

TOAD Oh that, it's nothing.

BADGER Nothing, NOTHING? You call making us all homeless NOTHING?

TOAD Oh it won't come to that. Just a little patch down at the bottom of the garden for a weeny little factory. Mr Bandersnatch says we won't even see it. You've no need to worry.

MOLE How do you know that?

TOAD Well, he promised me everything would be all right. I've bought lots of shares in his company, which will not only make me rich, but means I can plough it back into our economy. Have you seen my nice new shiny car?

BADGER Forget your blasted car! We, your former friends, are looking at eviction with nowhere to live.

TOAD Oh, Mr Bandersnatch also made promises about the riverbank folk. He said he would, now what did he say? What did he say? No, sorry, can't remember. But it was all jolly good. There was an underpass he mentioned, and.....

RAT Toad, we all looked up to you. That's why everyone wanted you to speak last night.

TOAD Well, of course they would. Prominent local landowner and all that.

MOLEY We put our trust in you. And you let us down, Toad

TOAD No, I'm your friend! Nice Mr Toad, who everyone loves!

All the other creatures are now making noises. Sammy Skunk comes forward.

SAMMY SK My dad always said I should look up to you. Mr Toad will look after us, he said. But he was wrong.

BADGER It's no use talking to him. Just you wait, Toad, you will get what's coming to you.

SONG: JUST YOU WAIT (Badger, Mole, Ratty)

Just you wait, Mister Toad, yes just you wait
Evil Bandersnatch has got you on a plate,
You'll be broke and he'll have money,
Will he help you? Don't be funny;
Just you wait, Mister Toad, yes just you wait.

Just you wait, Mister Toad, now we are through,
What an error to have ever trusted you.
You're a weasel or a stoat, or
Just obsessed with your new motor,
Oh ho ho, Mister Toad, yes just you wait.

Ooo, Mister Toad
Do you really think you'll stay here at Toad Hall,
Ooo, Mister Toad
Mark our words, you'll soon have nothing left at all,
When life starts to get you down,
You'll find we are not around,
Oh ho ho, Mister Toad, oh ho ho, Mr Toad, just you wait!

Mr Toad is left alone on the stage. He is upset at how his friends have reacted to him.

TOAD Oh my. What have I done? Will my friends ever speak to me again?

Enter Nanny Hen. She is carrying three bags packed with her belongings. She puts them down.

TOAD Nanny Hen, what's all this, are you going somewhere?

NANNY Master Toad, I've have been your nanny since you were a toadpole. You've done some silly things in your time, but nothing like this. You've really let your friends down with your greed and self-importance.

TOAD But, Nanny, I didn't mean....

NANNY I'm sorry, Master Toad, but I can't look after you anymore. I'm ashamed of you and I want nothing more to do with you. You were like the son I never had, but now.....*(she weeps)*I'm off.

TOAD Nanny! Don't leave me! Who will make my Marmite soldiers?

NANNY You can make them yourself! Not sure where I'll go now there's to be no Riverbank village. Perhaps I'll go and join my cousin at Old MacDonald's Farm.

TOAD *(weakly)* Ee-aye-ee-aye- oh.....

NANNY You've let us all down, Master Toad, but worst of all, you've let YOURSELF down. Goodbye, Master Toad.

As she exits she only picks up two of her bags.

TOAD Nanny Hen, don't go!

(She turns, looks at him, sniffs and walks off).

TOAD What have I done? What have I done? *(He toots the horn.)* Even you haven't cheered me up.

Outside shouts of "Down with Toad" "Toad the Traitor" "We hate Toad" and similar.

TOAD Everyone hates me. I can't stay here now. But where will I go? I've lived here all my life, so have all my friends and now Nanny's gone and nobody will speak to me. But my car is so, so lovely, and that Mr Bandersnatch was so convincing. Oh my, oh my, what am I to do?

He notices Nanny's bag, walks over to it and rummages through. He pulls out a dress. Lights black out leaving a spotlight on Toad.

TOAD Look! Nanny's old night-gown! *(during this speech he struggles into a voluminous nightie.)* I'm going to disguise myself as an old lady and run away into the Wild Woods. I'm going to find Mr

Bandersnatch. I know he lives somewhere in there. He'll make everything right, I know he will.

Reprise of song directed at the Riverbank Folk.

SONG: JUST YOU WAIT – REPRISE (Toad)

Just you wait, Mole and Ratty, just you wait,
I'll find Bandersnatch before it is too late,
I will prove I'm not a traitor
While I'm still in this the-at-tre,
Oh ho ho, Mole and Ratty, Oh ho ho, Mister Badger,
Just you wait!

At the end of the song, Toad exits.

End of scene

End of Act 1

ACT 2 SCENE 1

Tabs open on Toad creeping alone to centre stage. He looks ridiculous in Nanny Hen's clothes which he hugs around him. Sound effects here are very important to create a terrifying atmosphere: owls of course; the wind in the trees, but also whisperings, barely audible at first, certainly no recognisable words, rising to a crescendo. This could be done with the children with a mic or be a sound effect. Toad stares around wildly.

TOAD It's pitch black! I can't even see my hand in front of me. *(pauses)* Oh, how I wish Nanny Hen was here. When I was a toadlet and I couldn't sleep and the nasty thing was lurking under my bed and – and - trying to grab my ankles, Nanny knew how to chase it away. Never again will I feel her wings encircling me and hugging me to her feathery breast. *(Anguished)* Oh Nanny! What have I done? I'm so scared.

A child, as a beetle or something, flits across the stage, visible only because of the fluorescent paint splattered across the costume, and ruffles Toad's warty head; another blows on the back of his neck.

TOAD Waaah! What was that?

Similar sort of child runs in and tweaks his ankles. Toad turns round wildly.

TOAD I've been bitten! I'm going to die! Oh foolish me!

Disembodied wild laughter – probably sfx unless the children are extraordinarily talented. Toad falls to his knees with his head in his hands. A whispering of 'Just You Wait' grows in volume. Toad raises his arms, Christlike.

TOAD Bandersnatch! Bandersnatch! Why have you forsaken me? I need you, my friend! Where are you? We must talk. *(Sorry if this is a bit much – have just been to see Jesus Christ Superstar)*

No answer. Onto the stage tiptoes Dorothy the Dinosaur. We can either have her doing 'behind you' jokes or they both back into each other. Whatever, when Toad finally sees her he falls to the ground feigning death – on his back with his legs spread wide. Some toads do this as a defence mechanism, honestly, and it's called thanotosis.

DOROTHY Oh no! I've killed him. Just when I thought I had found a new friend. *She kneels over him.*

Director walks on with clipboard and pencil behind ear, stands at side of stage to address Dorothy.

DIRECTOR How come the writers have gratuitously introduced a dinosaur like you so late on in the plot of this pantomime? And what are you doing in the middle of the Wild Wood anyway? It certainly bears no resemblance to the subtropical forests of the Jurassic period.

DOROTHY Well, I believe dinosaurs are very current.

DIRECTOR *(Wearily)* Oh, very well, you can stay I suppose. *(He exits, but as he leaves, he notices, maybe trips over, Moley's box)* Oh, dear. Who left that lying around on the stage? *(shouts)* Props! *(He bends to pick it up)*

AUDIENCE Don't touch the box! Leave the box alone!

DIRECTOR *(startled)* Sorry! I used to think it was me directing this show... *(exits)*

Dorothy turns back to Toad, who is gradually coming round. He sits up. From this point the ratlets are eavesdropping on the conversation and with varying degrees of boldness creeping up on the two main characters. This will need to be carefully choreographed so that it doesn't become repetitive.

TOAD My, you gave me a fright. Haven't needed to do the old feigning death thing for a long time. I've never seen anything like you before. What happened to your arms?

DOROTHY My name is Dorothy - Dorothy the Dinosaur. I have been looking for my mother or someone of my own kind for what seems like millennia. I thought I'd found a distant relative in Loch Ness, but it just turned out to be a floating log. What about you?

TOAD I'm the famous Mr Toad. It's a very sad story you have told – you must have been very lonely. So why are you in the Wild Wood?

DOROTHY It's the closest I can find to home *(shades of ET)*, where I used to live and also I can hide in here. People say they love dinosaurs, but they only really love them when their bones are hung up from a piece of wire in the British Museum. When they see me they all scream and run away. That's why I'm so very lonely. I have no friends, and I miss my Mummy! She was green and 16 feet tall.

TOAD Well I must confess when I first saw you I was a tad, well, unsettled.

DOROTHY A tad? You pretended to be dead! I yearn for that David Attenborough to turn up. He'd love me and then I wouldn't feel so alone.

TOAD *(Touched, he endeavours to put an arm round her hesitantly)* Oh come along old thing, I'm here now, and I haven't run away have I?

DOROTHY No, you haven't, but you haven't told me yet why you are here.

TOAD I've been a very stupid Toad. It's a long story, but in short all my oldest and dearest friends hate me for something I did. Even *(he chokes on these words)* Nanny Hen has left me. I feel like an orphan too, lost and so, so alone. We are two of a kind you and me, cast adrift in a cruel world, though I've got longer arms. *(Brightens)* But it's not all bad. I came here to find my new friend Mr Bandersnatch who will help me sort it all out. I'm sure there has been a mistake.

DOROTHY Did you say Bandersnatch? Oh, no! there have been Bandersnatches in these woods for thousands of years. They hide out here. Over time they have come to resemble humans. They are bad, bad creatures.

TOAD But he gave me a new car *(faintly)* parp parp.

DOROTHY A bribe, I'll be bound. In the past he has got innocent creatures to sign away their homes so that he can build his foul factories over their little burrows. They also say terrible things go on with voles in his research laboratories.

TOAD That's awful but I'm sure... *(his voice trails off)*

DOROTHY You didn't sign anything, did you?

TOAD Well, only a little piece of paper.

DOROTHY Oh no! He'll have taken everything you have.

TOAD Oh, what have I done? My friends will never speak to me again. I'm all alone in the Wild Wood, hated, misunderstood, homeless.

DOROTHY Not quite alone. *(shyly)* I'm here still. *(she touches his arm with her teeny tiny little paw).* I could be your friend.

TOAD Why yes! Two outcasts together.

Paws clasped, they face each other and lean inwards. Just at the critical moment, there is suppressed hysterical laughter from the ratlets and they both turn.

DOROTHY I'd like to give you something as a token of our er..friendship. *(She delves into the dinosaur equivalent of her bosom and pulls out a small key on a chain)* It's not much, but it's all I have.

TOAD A key! It's very pretty. Where did you find it?

DOROTHY Oh, I was just foraging in the forest as you do and I saw it glittering amongst some leaf litter.

TOAD *(Jokingly)* Is it the key to your heart? *(Dorothy simpers becomingly but says nothing)*. I wish I had something to give you, but I've signed away everything I own to Mister Bandersnatch.

DOROTHY You don't need to give me anything, but you can do something for me.

TOAD Anything.

DOROTHY Take your clothes off.

TOAD What?

DOROTHY *(laughing gently – I'm really getting to hate this dinosaur)* Just the night dress. It really doesn't suit you!

The mood of charged sexual tension is broken as they both laugh heartily together. How would a toad and a dinosaur engage in sexual congress anyway? I fear it will remain one of life's eternal mysteries.

ACT 2 SCENE 2

Front of tabs. On extension Ratty is sitting in his chair – the picture on the wall still crooked as in Act 1. He is still plugging away at the crossword - scratching his head, biting his pencil end...

RATTY Why do they make these things so difficult? “What is a collection of ratlings called?” Ten letters beginning with “B” –

ENTER some little ratlings, running and pushing each other out of the way to get to Ratty.

RATTY Hey! Hey! Enough of that! Far too much excitement for a Monday evening... calm down ...

DICK Actually, to be strictly accurate, it is, in fact, Tuesday morning...

RATTY Well, excuse me, Richard, Clever Dick – but I AM trying to concentrate on today’s crossword puzzle.

DICK Yes, but if you just look at the date on your newspaper, you’ll see it’s Monday which was yesterday because we are three minutes into today which is Tuesday – three minutes past midnight.

RATTY And I’ve just solved the last clue: what do they call a collection of ratlings? **BOTHERSOME**: that’s it!

DICK But ...

RATTY And that’s quite enough from you, Clever Dick. Not another word. (*addresses the others*) Now will someone kindly tell me what all the excitement is about?

DICK Well, Uncle Ratty, we were all feeling **VERY** brave so we thought we would go into the Wild Wood for a dare.

RATTY **WHAT??** I don’t call it brave, I call that...

DICK **STUPID**, that’s what I’d call it. I refused to go with them.

RATTY Shhhhhh!

RAT 2 Anyway, we all held hands and whistled as we went in.

RAT 1 All brave, we were.

RAT 3 Then there was a loud scream.

RAT 5 A blood curdling loud scream.

RAT 4 And a rustling sound in a tree.

RAT 5 A rustling sound so loud it woke me up!

RATLETS Oh shut up!

RATTY So you all ran out again.

DICK (*sarcastically*) how DID you guess?

RATTY So what happened in the end?

RAT 2 To cut a long story short, we plucked up all our courage, went into the wood again and we saw ..

RAT 1 Through the thick undergrowth.

RAT 3 Through the blustering wind.

RAT 4 Ignoring all the scary noises.

RAT 5 Until we.....

RAT 2 Excuse me. I think I was telling this story. Until we saw...

RAT/DICK Yes, you saw...?

RAT 5 We saw A DINOSAUR!!!!!!!!!!!!

RAT 2 That was my line!!!!

RATTY Too much cheese for supper – gives you nightmares.

RAT 3 But that's not all.

RATTY Oh, sorry, I see, so a huge dinosaur is just the beginning, then.

RAT 4 Yes. It was kissing...

RATTY Of course it was: a dinosaur kissing ... kissing what?

RAT 2 Mister Toad. Well, almost.

RATTY (*laughing*) KISSING MR TOAD - this gets better!

SONG: WE SAW TOAD KISSING A DINOSAUR

We saw Toad kissing a Dinosaur
Over in the Wild Wood last night,
They didn't see us creep
Thr'u the trees to have a peep,
They thought we were tucked up
In our rat holes fast asleep.

Yes, we saw Toad canoodling with a Dinosaur;
It was such an unexpected sight.
Oh what a laugh it would have been
If you had only seen
Toady with that dinosaur last night!

(Instrumental break and repeat)

RAT 3 Then we ran away.

RATTY Lovely, lovely, what a brilliant imagination you all have. Now run
along and leave it all to the grown ups to sort out. It's way past your
bedtime.

DICK I'll just stay here with you Mr Rat, in the event you may need some
help..

RATTY Not necessary Richard. Goodbye Richard - just hop off and help
someone else. *(Dick exits)*

RATTY They may be bothersome, and they may be making the dinosaur up,
but I must tell the others where Toad is. And we should do it right
now!

Exeunt

End of scene

ACT 2 SCENE 2A

Enter the butterflies. They appear to be having an in-depth discussion.

- KAYLA** Yeah, I've been trying out that new diet where you eat chocolate cake, ice cream, pickles, cheese, salami, lollipops, cherry pie, sausage, cupcake and watermelon all in one day and you turn into a beautiful butterfly.
- HARPER** Did it work?
- KAYLA** Nah, just made me fat. What you bin doing, Kylie?
- KYLIE** Same old, same old, fluttering about, looking for nectar, landing on a path, waving me antennae about a bit, hoping the purple emperor would flap by, but 'e never did.
- HARPER** Annoying, innit! You're looking for Rory the red admiral, and all you get is Wayne the cabbage white.
- KAYLA** Don't talk to me about Wayne. He's the reason I'm stuck under that broccoli leaf with 650 caterpillars to look after.
- KYLIE** You just go for the wrong type, Kayla.
- KAYLA** So, what is it you look for in a boy, Kylie?
- HARPER** Careful how you answer that, Kylie.
- KYLIE** No, seriously, the reason you can't hold down a relationship, well, it could be you're looking for the wrong things in a butterfly.
- HARPER** Yeah, like, you've got to give up the younger men: stop dating caterpillars.
- KAYLA** I know, I know. It was going really well with Kevin Caterpillar, but then he *changed*. (*Boom boom!! She starts to cry*)
- KYLIE** Of course he did, love. He was a caterpillar. They're all the same, caterpillars. Just sit down and think about it calmly for a couple of minutes, OK?
- HARPER** I will know when I fall in love because every time I look at him, I'll feel humans in my stomach.

KAYLA OK. (*Sits on stage front, looking out into the audience*) I want, first of all, tall and handsome.....

KYLIE You missed out DARK!

KAYLA Doesn't matter. He can have any colour wings. I'm not prejudiced. In fact, I went out last night with that Adonis Blue. But tall and handsome: gotta be.

HARPER What else?

KAYLA Rich. A huge..... (*pause here, of course, while the other two lean in expectantly*)

H & KYLIE Yes?

KAYLA ... garden, with loads of flowers to suck.

HARPER Yeah.....(*They all stare vacantly into space*)

ENTER suddenly wandering on, carrying a basket of shopping, a woman wearing a flowery frock: very mumsy. It's MRS B. Actually, she has heard the last part of the wish list. She steps forward to join in the conversation.

MRS B Actually if you don't mind my butting in on your riveting conversation girls, I have to tell you that you're looking for the wrong things!

KYLIE Who are you?

HARPER Are you that lady wot lives in the Wild Wood?

MRS B Yes, that's me. My name is MRS B and I live there with my son.

KAYLA Oh, you must be SOOO BRAVE.

MRS B Yes. He can be quite a trial sometimes.

KYLIE No! Not your son - brave to live in that place!

HARPER Anyway, what do you mean: "looking for the wrong things"?

MRS B Things that don't matter! The way someone looks, what he's got in the garden department. Those kinds of things don't matter at all.

She puts her basket down, rips her voluminous skirt off, and CUE MUSIC... Mrs B starts very very lively dancing, very out of character for this mumsy lady with her basket of shopping.

SONG: WANNABE (Mrs B and Butterflies)

(spoken/chant)

Yo, I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want,
So tell me what you want, what you really, really want,
I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want,
So tell me what you want, what you really, really want,
I wanna, (ha) I wanna, (ha) I wanna, (ha) I wanna, (ha),
I wanna really, really, really wanna zigzag ah.

(singing)

If you want a future, forget your past,
If you wanna be with him, better make it fast,
Now don't go wasting your precious time,
Get your act together, you could be just fine.

(spoken/chant)

I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want,
So tell me what you want, what you really, really want,
I wanna, (ha) I wanna, (ha) I wanna, (ha) I wanna, (ha),
I wanna really, really, really wanna zigzag ah.

(singing)

If you wanna find a lover, you gotta have lots of friends,
Make it last forever, friendship never ends,
If you wanna find a lover, you have got to give,
Taking is too easy, but that's the way it is.

(spoken/chant)

Yo I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want,
So tell me what you want, what you really, really want,
I wanna, (ha) I wanna, (ha) I wanna, (ha) I wanna, (ha),
I wanna really, really, really wanna zigzag ah.

(singing)

If you wanna find a lover.

At the end of song/dance, Mrs B picks up her discarded skirt and basket, adjusts her hat which has become dislodged during the gyrations and says:

MRS B Well, must be off! My son will create a terrible fuss if he doesn't get his dinner on time!

She starts to EXIT

MRS B And don't you forget young lady, the most important things to look for in a butterfly are honesty, generosity, faithfulness and most important of all: **LOVE!!** Good Luck!

Exit Mrs B The girls are a bit dumbstruck. They pick up anything which may have fallen in the frantic session and, arms around each other, wander off.

KYLIE What a woman! What did she say her name was?

HARPER Mrs B, I think.....

Exeunt omnes.

ACT 2 SCENE 3

The Wildwood. Scenery and SFX as for Act 2 Sc 1.

Enter Badger, Ratty and, a little behind them, Mole

RATTY Oh, do keep up, Moley.

MOLE It's all right for you. I've only got little legs. Please don't leave me behind – this Wildwood place scares me. There's things creeping about in the undergrowth – I can hear 'em rustling.

RATTY I think he's right, Badger. I can hear them too

MOLE (*clutching Ratty for security*) I think it might be a woozle. I heard they lie in wait for unwary moles, then all of a sudden, they pop out from behind a tree and....

BADGER There's no such thing as a woozle. You mean a weasel - plenty of them about, I'm sorry to say.

MOLE There is such a thing! My cousin Arthur told me. They're much bigger than weasels. He saw one once. Enormous, he said it was, with big jaws and huge sharp teeth. It was eating leaves.

BADGER If it hunted moles, why was it eating leaves?

RATTY Because its mum told it to eat up its greens!

BADGER Oh come on, Moley – have a bit of courage.

MOLE I don't feel very brave. No small animal would, out here in the Wildwood.

RATTY That's simply not true. Don't you remember the old story? The things animals used to do in the old days when they were afraid of something.

BADGER Ah yes: the stories of when Toads were shy and retiring creatures – unlike our Mister Toad today.

RATTY And my old Grandfather Rat – always taking chances, he was.

BADGER Then there was the wise Owl, and the slightly silly Bat.

MOLE I think I remember the story – but not very well. What was the name of the leader of the gang?

BADGER Would you like us to tell you the story, Moley?

MOLE Oh, yes please!

RATTY As it happens, I have the storybook to hand ... *(he reaches into the wings and brings out an unlikely-sized storybook from which he and Badger begin to read.)*

SONG/VERSE: CAPTAIN BEAKY (Ratty, Badger, Mole)

(Spoken in time)

The bravest animals in the land
Are Captain Beaky and his band:
That's Timid Toad, Reckless Rat,
Artful Owl and Batty Bat.
They march through the woodlands singing songs
That tell how they have righted wrongs.

(instrumental – 4 bars)

Once Hissing Sid, an evil snake,
Kept the woodland folk awake
In fear and trembling every night
In case he gave someone a bite.
Said Artful Owl, 'We'll lie in wait
And one of us will be the bait.'
Said Timid Toad, "I like your plan."
"Good luck," said Owl, "For you're the man!"

So Timid Toad, his eyes a-popping,
Into the woodland night went hopping.
Captain Beaky waved his hand,
Followed by his trusty band:
That's Artful Owl and Reckless Rat,
And above the trees flew Batty Bat.

(instrumental – 4 bars)

"Stop!" said Beaky, "I hear squeaking!"
"It's Batty Bat" said Owl, "He's speaking!"

He says 'can clearly see the road,
Hissing Sid has captured Toad!"

Then into sight the snake came hopping,
Right past his hole, no sign of stopping
Said Reckless Rat, "That's rather funny,
"There's something jumping in his tummy.
Said Captain Beaky, "Well I'm blown!
Hissing Sid has swallowed Toad!"

At last they found him, tired and dizzy
And pulled out Toad, who said, "Where is he?
For, left alone, I felt quite sick,
And hopped into a hollow stick."
Said Owl, "A clever step to take!
You jumped into that slippery snake."

Said Captain Beaky to his men
We'll not see Hissing Sid again
And as they marched off down the road,
They sang in praise of Timid Toad.

(instrumental coda)

BADGER Look, we're here to look for our Mister Toad, not to tell stories. I think we should be going that way. *(He points off.)*

RATTY Oh, why not? It's as good as any other way. Let's face it, we're lost. Everywhere looks like everywhere else.

BADGER It might look like that, but it doesn't smell like that. You forget that we badgers have famously sensitive noses. And my nose tells me there's a faint but unmistakable whiff of Toad in that direction.

RATTY Amazing! How do you do it? *(Music hall voice)* I say, I say, Moley, how does Mr Badger smell?

MOLE Terrible! *(they fall about laughing at this ancient quip)*

BADGER Oh, please. I can smell Toad, I tell you, and it's getting stronger. I'd say he hasn't had a bath for a bit.

RATTY Which would be no surprise out here in the wild wood. Hold on – someone’s coming. We can ask if they’ve seen him

Enter Toad, still dressed in Nursie’s nightie.

RATTY Excuse me madam, but do you happen to have seen a Toad hereabouts? We’re looking for one.

TOAD *(In a quavery old lady voice)* A Toad? A Toad? I think you must be referring to the Mr Toad, the famous, handsome and much respected resident of Toad Hall? The Brad Pitt of the riverbank? That well-known aesthete, that sought after stage presence and celebrity cook, who is envied -

BADGER All right, Toad, you can cut all that out. We know it’s you.

MOLE Good gracious! It’s him.

TOAD Oh, you saw through my disguise. Hello Mole, hello Badger, hello Ratty.

BADGER Why are you dressed up like that anyway?

TOAD Because..... because..... because everyone HATES me, Badger old chap, there was that awful time in the Village Hall, when everyone shouted at me, then even Nanny Hen went away and left me on my own. So I put on a disguise and ran away to find Mr. Bandersnatch, but now I know he’s not really my friend either. Oh, Badger, I’ve been such an idiot. And it’s lovely to see my Riverbank friends again. If you are still my friends. Did you come all this way to look for me?

BADGER You don’t deserve it, but yes, we did. But we’re still not sure if we’re your friends or not. That will depend a good deal on you.

TOAD I know, I don’t deserve your friendship. But I do have a new friend. She’s really bonzer! Dorothy! Are you coming?

SFX heavy footsteps as Dorothy enters

DOROTHY Coo-ee! Did someone call?

MOLE Arrgh! It’s a Woozle! Please don’t eat me! Oh, look at those teeth!

DOROTHY Hello, little feller! Don’t be afraid!

TOAD She’s Dorothy, Dorothy the Dinosaur.

DOROTHY I only eat salads and other leafy greens. My ancestors gave up meat at the end of the Jurassic.

TOAD Dorothy, these are my friends Badger, and Ratty, and Mole.

ANIMALS Hello!

DOROTHY Pleased to eat you! (*Mole screams in fear*) Sorry, bad joke.

TOAD Dorothy's told me that Mr Bandersnatch isn't the nice man I thought he was. I think I'd better get back to Toad Hall, then I can –

RATTY Oh, Toad, don't you know?

TOAD Know? Know what?

BADGER Bandersnatch has moved into Toad Hall, that's what – and a hundred weasels with him, to guard the place. I'm afraid you've lost your home, you idiot, and it's all your stupid fault for being such a selfish, conceited, greedy Toad. You and that car!

MOLE We tried to tell you, but you wouldn't listen

TOAD (*dejected*) Oh, parp, parp. It was a lovely car, though.

BADGER Still on about that wretched car! It would just serve you right if we left you here in the Wildwood. In fact, that's what we'll do. You don't deserve to be helped. Come on, Ratty and Mole, let's go home.

MOLE Quite right, he doesn't deserve it.

They all make to go.

DOROTHY (*indignant*) Hold on, that's no way to treat one of yer cobbers! How do you think us dinosaurs have survived all those millennia until now?

BADGER We didn't think you had, actually.

DOROTHY Well, you were wrong. And we didn't do it by walking out on our old muckers in their time of need, that's for sure!

RATTY That's true. We mammalian life-forms are a relatively recent evolutionary development. Compared to Dorothy and her relatives, we're complete newcomers on this earth. We could learn something from them.

DOROTHY Too right you could! And don't forget my amphibian friend Toad here descends from an evolutionary line that started 370 million years ago. That's longer than any of you furry mammalian folk. So show some respect.

MAMMALS Yes, Dorothy. *(Toad looks pleased with himself)*

DOROTHY So we're all going to help Toad get his home back, yes?

RATTY But how? There's just us moles and voles and water rats and ducks, against Bandersnatch and all his weasels and stoats.

BADGER True. Let's think.....

The animals pace up and down the stage thinking, and finally Badger trips over Mole's box.

BADGER Ouch, my toe! That dratted box of yours, Moley, what's in it, for heaven's sake?

MOLE Don't know. Still can't open it. No key.

DOROTHY Toad's got a key. The one I gave him.

TOAD *(simplers)*The key to your heart.....

DOROTHY *(simplers back)* Oh, don't be soppy. Go on, try it. You never know.

TOAD You do it, Badger. I lack an opposable thumb. *(gives him the key)*

BADGER So do I, but I'll try. Here goes. It's a bit stiff..... There!

MOLE My box – it's open at last!

RATTY What's in it, let's see. It's a paper – looks like something legal – a deed or something.

BADGER You read it, Ratty.

RATTY Well, it seems to say..... 'All that message known from time out of mind as Toad Hall, and its curtilages, farms, forests and riverbanks of every degree shall in perpetuity irrevocably be vested in.....yes, I see..... well!..... Good gracious, who'd have thought it?

MOLE What's it say, what's it say?

RATTY Well, it's a deed - that's a special sort of very important legal document, children, and whatever it says in a deed, everybody has to do whatever it tells them to do.....

BADGER Oh, do get on with it, Ratty, or we'll never get to the finale.

RATTY Well, it seems to have been written by old Ebenezer Toad – that's your grandfather, Toady, who bought the Hall a hundred years ago – and it says – well, what it seems to say is that all the riverbank, and Toad Hall and its land, and just about everything round here, belongs – not to you, Toad, it never did, in fact, but to all of us. Old Ebenezer gave everything to all the riverbank people who live here. For ever and ever. So Toad couldn't have signed Toad Hall away to Bandersnatch, because it was never Toad's property to begin with!

MOLE Hooray! My tunnels, and Badger's sett, and Ratty's snug hole in the bank, are all safe! We've won!

SONG: TOGETHER AGAIN (Mole, Badger, Ratty, Dorothy, other Animals, Chorus)

MOLE We've gone and succeeded,
Just when we were needed;
Saved each burrow and each hole,
Badger, Ratty and the Mole,
Together, together again!

ALL Together again for the first time,
There won't be a factory here,
It could have turned into the worst time,
Now there's no need for such fear.
Together again for the first time,
Seen off the Bandersnatch scheme,
No longer a bad and accursed time,
It's easy to see
You have to agree
We really are such a great team!

All of our lives we have lived in this place,
Five days a week, and weekends;
All of our lives we have lived in this place,
Here by the river, surrounded by friends.

Together again for the first time,
Back on the track to renown.
We are the heroes,
The others are zeroes,
We don't need long speeches,
We're just little creatures,
We'll send the blooming Bandersnatch
Right back to his town!

Band: vamp 'til ready as dialogue continues.

BADGER (to Mole) Don't speak too soon, lad. Today's the day Bandersnatch's machines are going to start work down on the riverbank. (to Toad) He's digging the foundations for his new plastic duck factory – in your garden, Toad! By tea-time it will be dug up and wrecked, and all the old legal documents in the world won't change that.

RATTY Oh, come on, Badger. Give us a chance to enjoy a moment of triumph. Why don't you join in the chorus? It's fun.

BADGER As it happens, I do sing a bit. I am in fact a member of the Royston Choral Society.

RATTY The Royston Choral Society? Wow! Well, come on then!

BADGER Oh, what the hell.

(singing)

BADGER Together again for the first time,
There might be a factory here,
It still could turn into the worst time,

ALL It's easy to see,
You have to agree,
We really are such a great team!

All of our lives we have lived in this place,
Five days a week, and weekends;
All of our lives we have lived in this place,
Here by the river, surrounded by friends.

Band: vamp 'til ready

BADGER Hold on a minute. Do you really think Mr Bandersnatch is going to let himself be stopped by some writing on an old bit of paper? He'll laugh in our faces.

RATTY You're right! We've got to do something, and now!

DOROTHY I know that Bandersnatch. We're going to have to get a bit prehistoric with him. Come on! We must stop him before it's too late!

(singing)

ALL Together again for the first time,
We'll show we're such a great team,
An animal army,
You may think we're barmy,
Although we are furry,
We not going to worry;
For the first time,
Together again!
Together forever again!

Everyone marches off stage.

ACT 2 SCENE 4

Front of tabs. Enter Stoat and Weasel. Stoat is carrying the horn from Toad's car, which he "parps" a couple of times.

WEASEL Put that thing down, will you? It's giving me an 'eadache.

STOAT *(He "parps" the horn a couple more times.)*

WEASEL Will you be quiet? Not sure the boss'll be very 'appy with you nicking stuff from Toad's car.

STOAT 'E won't care about that. Anyway, Toad left it outside Toad 'All – that is to say, Bandersnatch Palace. Now it belongs to the boss.

WEASEL Well, stop making so much noise – someone might come asking questions.

STOAT Someone? Like 'oo?

Enter Mrs B through the curtains.

STOAT Oh. 'Ello, Mrs B.

WEASEL Can we 'elp you, Mrs B?

MRS B And how, exactly, do you know my name?

STOAT We was listening very carefully durin' that scene with the butterflies.

MRS B Oh, that one. I could not help hearing a rather loud noise just now. It sounded like "parp, parp". Do either of you happen to know what might have been causing it?

STOAT *(hiding the horn behind his back)* I really can't think, Mrs B.

WEASEL Nothing to do with us, Mrs B.

MRS B *(rolling eyes, puts out her hand towards Stoat)* Give it to me.

STOAT Give what ...?

MRS B You know perfectly well what I mean. Give it to me.

Stoat reluctantly hands over the horn. Mrs B gives it an experimental "parp".

MRS B You do realise that stealing things is dishonest, don't you?

STOAT It wasn't exactly stolen –

MRS B *(with emphasis)* Don't you?

STOAT AND WEASEL *(chastened)* Yes, Mrs B.

MRS B And people who do bad things don't come off well in pantomimes.

STOAT AND WEASEL Yes, Mrs B.

MRS B What are you doing here, anyway?

WEASEL We're supposed to sing a song. Wiv the audience. You know what I mean – the Audience Participation Scene.

STOAT Yeah. While they're doing a scene change.

WEASEL We've got a song about cars. You see, my friend the Stoat 'as a Ford Escort, and I've got a Mini.

STOAT What kind of a car 'ave you got, Mrs B?

MRS B Actually ... it's a Ferrari.

STOAT AND WEASEL Wow!

WEASEL That's perfect for our song. Shall we giv it a go? Will you join in, Mrs B?

MRS B If I must.

SONG: A FORD ESCORT (Stoat, Weasel, Mrs B, Audience)

STOAT A Ford Escort, a Ford Escort
WEASEL A Mini, Mini, Mini
STOAT and a Ford Escort.
STOAT A Ford Escort, a Ford Escort
WEASEL A Mini, Mini, Mini
STOAT and a Ford Escort.
MRS B Ferrari, Ferrari,
WEASEL A Mini, Mini, Mini
STOAT and a Ford Escort.
MRS B Ferrari, Ferrari,
WEASEL A Mini, Mini, Mini
STOAT and a Ford Escort.

(Mrs B parps the horn 3 times to the rhythm of "Ford Escort" on the last line.)

STOAT Well, that was fun. But do you know what will make it more fun?

WEASEL What?

STOAT Getting the audience to join in!

Ad lib with the audience as usual. Stoat, Weasel, aided by any members of the audience brought on to the stage, demonstrate the actions, and the song is repeated with the audience and then with actions.

When everyone has had quite enough ...

MRS B Well, that was jolly good. Anyway, I'd better be off. (*Exit, taking the horn with her*)

STOAT Do you know who she actually is?

WEASEL No idea.

STOAT Me neever. Anyway – come on, we need to get to Toad Hall or we'll be late for the boss.

WEASEL You mean Bandersnatch Palace. Yeah – let's hurry! (*tabs open for next scene*) Oh. That's handy.

(Mrs B will wordlessly return the horn to Toad in the final scene.)

ACT 2 SCENE 5

I envisage the first part of this scene being one of frantic activity involving much running around the village hall with a gathering number of riverbank folk joining in as we go along.

- BADGER** Hurry up, all of you or we'll be too late. Look lively!
- RATTY** It's all right for you, Badger. You won the River Bank sports 800 metres miles ahead of the rest of us, despite your rather short legs and tendency to shuffle.
- BADGER** Grit and determination, old boy, grit and determination – and that's what we need now if we're to get there in time.
- MOLE** I'm finding it a little difficult to see at this speed. Mind if I hang on to you, Toad? I'm a little bit nervous about all this.
- TOAD** Blind leading the blind, I'm afraid, Moley. We toads aren't built for speed. More of a crawler, me. Now if we had the car....
- ALL** DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT, TOAD!!!!
- TOAD** No, of course, of course. Silly me.
- DOROTHY** I could run ahead. We tyrannosauruses are built for bursts of speed in pursuit of small mammals to devour. *(She turns to look at everyone and they are staring at her in silence)*
- MOLE** Eeek!
- DOROTHY** *(hurriedly)* Of course, I'm vegetarian now. Have been for 10,000 years. *(audible sighs of relief)* Besides, I really don't think I'd be any faster than the rest of you in this ridiculous costume.
- BUTTER 1** I know how you feel. We butterflies just generally flutter by.
- BUTTER 2** Yes, my wings are killing me.

BADGER Stop talking and keep running. I can hear the digger starting up in the distance.

Fantastic sound/ visual effects show digger on the screen, its bucket poised to make the first excavation. The animals, now all onstage are dumbstruck, rooted to the spot.

RATTY OH NO! We're too late.

SFX of some superhero movie, possibly Superman. Moley steps forward, the hero of the day, despite being timid

MOLE No, my dear friends. All my life I have been a timid nobody. Now is MY moment.

He runs towards the digger to shouts of No! Moley! Don't be a hero! As he reaches the screen, there is a blackout and a terrible screeching of machinery. The lights go up and there is no sign of Moley. The digger man appears from behind the screen and the animals stand in shocked silence.

DIGGER I didn't see him coming. It all happened so fast.

RATTY What have you done? My dearest old friend Moley... *(He chokes back tears, and picks up a pair of battered spectacles)* Poor, shortsighted old Moley. You didn't see this coming – or did you?

DIGGER *(Removes hard hat in gesture of respect)* Well, I can't carry on now. I didn't want to do this job anyway. I live up the affordable housing end of the riverbank. Moley.... was a bit of a relative ... on the wife's side. Oh, I can't tell you how bad I feel. *All the animals bow their heads in respect.*

RATTY It's not your fault, dear comrade in arms. Join us.

BADGER In Moley's memory, friends, we need to finally put an end to this. To Toad Hall!

BUTTER 1 Oh, not more fluttering!

BADGER *(savagely)* Have some respect!

BUTTER 2 He's right, Sharon. We'll flutter till our wings drop off for Moley.

DOROTHY When I see that Bandersnatch I'm going to scrabble him to bits with my teeny tiny arms.

TOAD

(Gently) No, Dorothy, my dear. For once in my life, we're going to do things properly.

BADGER

Onward, fellow Riverbankers. We have unfinished business to attend to.

ACT 2 SCENE 6

Bandersnatch sits centre stage on Toad's throne-like chair. Behind him, the portrait of Toad has been replaced with a rather common one of him looking sideways and sporting a very large cigar.

B'SNATCH Stoat! Weasel! Where are yer? Cm'ere. Where's me grub?

STOAT Sorry Mr B, we was looking to see if Tesco would deliver the Cristal champagne and caviar you ordered for breakfast.

B'SNATCH Mister B? Mister B? I am now Sir Broderick Bandersnatch and you will address me as such from now on.

WEASEL Blimey! How did that happen?

B'SNATCH Bought it didn't !! You can get titles off the internet now. And fetch my jacket. I've got to look the part now I'm going to be mixing with the toffs. *(Weasel goes off and returns with a vile gold lame jacket which B puts on)*

STOAT *(whispers to Weasel)* Not so much Downton Abbey as downtown Disney I'd say *(they titter)*

B'SNATCH What was that?

WEASEL Er nothing, Sir B.

B'SNATCH I can feel my power growing. Today the Riverbank, tomorrow the World! Animals will bow down to me as I populate their lands with plastic ducks, sparkly unicorns, Peppa Pigs and Baby Sharks. The plastic I make will last thousands of years. Plastic will make me immortal. I am Bandersnatch!!!! I shall be King of the World!!!!

STOAT Ooer, I don't think we signed up to this, Weasel.

WEASEL No, funny, it reminds me of someone – can't quite put my finger on it.

There is a banging on the front door.

B'SNATCH Get that, one of you.

Faint sounds of the refrain of 'Can you hear the people sing?' (Just for Neil)

STOAT *(running in)* It's those pesky riverbankers again, only this time there's more of them.

B'SNATCH Bring it on, Stoat. They're no match for a man like me.

The animals enter, suddenly overawed by the place and the figure of Bandersnatch. They gaze around. Bandersnatch rises magisterially from his throne and surveys the crowd.

B'SNATCH Yes, impressive isn't it, you snivelling little grub eaters.

KYLIE Excuse me, we don't eat grubs – we eat nectar.

B'SNATCH Be quiet insects or I'll get my evil henchmen to spray you along with your 650 offspring.

HARPER Noooo!

BADGER I'll deal with this.

B'SNATCH Ha! Fancy being culled, old greybeard?

Toad moves centre stage and places a restraining hand on Badger.

TOAD No, my friend, no more casualties. This whole mess is my fault and I shall put it right.

B'SNATCH And how will you do that, Wartface?

TOAD The paper I signed...

B'SNATCH Ah yes, handing over everything to me – like taking candy from a baby.

TOAD No, the point is the Riverbank and Toad Hall don't belong to me.

B'SNATCH I know that: THEY BELONG TO ME!!

TOAD That's where you are wrong, Bandersnatch. They belong to the Riverbankers.

B'SNATCH What???

TOAD Yes, it's true, and on behalf of them all, I give you this.

He bops Bandersnatch on the nose. Bandersnatch staggers back to the chair and sits holding his nose.

DOROTHY My hero!

TOAD No, Dorothy, let's not endorse violence in front of these innocent children. *(He addresses the children in the audience)* Now, children, I just did a jolly bad thing, and let me tell you that violence is never the answer. *(From behind his hand to the audience:)* But it did feel very good!

RATTY I think this calls for a song.

ALL Hurrah!

KAYLA Aren't you forgetting something? Moley's gone, a martyr to the cause. We should remember him in silence, our true hero. We'll get Nanny Hen – if she ever returns – to knit him a memorial so we shall never forget him.

The animals all bow their heads in respect, slightly ashamed. Dennis, who has been asleep in a corner since everyone arrived wakes up, looks around a bit disorientated and sees a hump moving along under the carpet.

DENNIS *(rubbing his eyes)* Am I dreaming? The carpet is alive. What can it be? What can it be? *(...he asks the audience. He needs to get them to screaming pitch with lots of 'pardons?' and 'I can't hear you's before Moley pops out of a hole cut in the carpet)*

DENNIS *(shouts)* MOLEY!

The others turn, come out of their contemplation and join in the shouts – much hugging, backslapping.

RATTY Moley, my dear, dear, dearest friend. How come you are here and not... well....

MOLEY Simple, Ratty. As the digger came towards me with its caterpillar tracks, I did what Moles do best. I dug a quick hole and escaped underground. Lost my glasses, though, and had a bit of trouble finding my way home.

BILLY Here they are, Moley. They are a bit battered, but I could probably nibble them back into shape.

The animals continue to show their delight with lots of rhubarbing, not noticing that Bandersnatch has climbed onto his throne and, still holding a hanky to his bloody nose, begins...

B'SNATCH You fools! Do you think a bop on the nose is going to stop me in my plan for world domination? I have a million stoats and weasels...

STOAT Does he?

WEASEL I dunno.

B'SNATCHunder my command to annexe the riverbank and then the watermeadows and then THE WORLD!

Offstage a voice shouts:

MRS B Get your dirty shoes off the furniture, young man! (*Mrs Bandersnatch enters, saying*) How many times have I told you to put your slippers on indoors! Get down! Come on, I'm waiting.

B'SNATCH (*mumbles*) Mum, what are you doing here?

MRS B Never you mind what I'm doing. What do you think you are doing? I've been hearing things about you and frankly I'm ashamed to call you my son.

B'SNATCH But Mum...

MRS B No buts – you've been a naughty, naughty boy. Fancy thinking you could just take away these lovely people's homes and lifestyles without a by your leave. If I weren't over a thousand years old, I'd put you over my knee and give you a good walloping.

B'SNATCH Mum, I....

MRS B You're to say sorry to Mr Toad and all the riverbankers for what you have done. Right now, please! Well?

B'SNATCH (*mumbles*) Sorry

MRS B Louder!

B'SNATCH (*slightly louder*) Sorry.

MRS B (*To audience*) Is that loud enough? *Much business ensues until we have Bandersnatch screaming it out.* Good. From now on you will be living with me where I can keep an eye on you.

B'SNATCH (*A broken bandersnatch*). Yes, Mum.

RATTY Perhaps we can have that song now. Maybe a dance too!

Most of the riverbankers gather around Ratty, but Dorothy and Toad stand apart.

TOAD You know, it looks like we're getting to the happy ever after bit, but I feel strangely empty.

DOROTHY It needn't be like thatdear. *she goes to touch him, but he moves away unaware.*

TOAD Oh, I miss her so much.

DOROTHY *(offended)* Who?

At this point, the much-vaunted barge hoves into view with Nanny Hen at the helm.

TOAD Nanny Hen!

Dorothy moves off to the side of the stage with a tearful backward glance as Toad runs towards the barge and throws himself into Nanny Hen's arms.

TOAD Oh Nanny, I've missed you so much!

NANNY Oh, I couldn't leave my little toady toadlet for long.

RATTY Toady toadlet?

NANNY Who knows what kind of scrapes you would get into? *(She looks pointedly in Dorothy's direction)* And if I'm not much mistaken you're missing something staring you in the face right now.

TOAD *(Follows her gaze)* Oh, stupid, stupid Toad! What am I thinking? Dorothy!

DOROTHY *(She turns a tearful face in his direction).* Yes?

TOAD Dorothy, I can't promise that our offspring will be all that attractive, crossing the species barrier and all that, but you have taught me to be a sensible Toad, a thoughtful Toad, and an unselfish Toad – and I want to spend the rest of my life with you. What do you say? Will you marry me?

DOROTHY Yes, oh yes!

CLOSING SONG: THOROUGHLY MODERN PANTO (Company)

TOAD There are those, I suppose
 Think we're mad, heaven knows,
 The pair of us, just what are we doing?

DOROTHY But the fact is I think you are quite adorable,
 Not to get hitched would be really quite deplorable!

ALL So the fact is
 Dorothy and Toad are going to get married,
GIRLS Isn't that predictable?
ALL Bandersnatch's Mum is marching him home,
GIRLS Wasn't she formidable?
ALL The furry animals, especially the Mole,
 Can all feel happy that Toad's no longer in a hole!
 Now it's time once more to bring down the curtain,

GIRLS We'll become invisible,
All Just as well for actors not in their prime,
GIRLS Query: are they kissable?
ALL We hope you'll give a cheer
 As we take our bow,
 Next year there'll be another wonderful Barkway Pantomime!

(instrumental break)

ALL Ev'rything today is thoroughly Panto,
GIRLS It is so traditional,
ALL Missing lines and tripping over our feet,
BOYS That's a point of principle!
ALL Each year in Febru'ry we head to the Hall,
 And it's a certainty: ev'ryone will have a ball!
 We hope you enjoyed our fabulous panto -
 Pardon us our vanity;
 Wasn't it a most spectacular show?
 That's the actuality!
 Goodbye to everyone
 From us for this time,
 Next year there'll be another wonderful Barkway Pantomime!

THE END