The Wind in the Willows



RETOLD BY

Rashmi Sirdeshpande

ILLUSTRATED BY

Jojo Clinch

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MOLE WAS BUSY shuffling about in his underground burrow, sweeping, dusting, and painting. He had dust in his eyes, splashes of paint on his fur, and his whole body was hurting from head to paw.

Up in the outside world, spring was in the air. Mole could feel it. "Oh, forget it," he said suddenly. He threw down his broom and bolted out of his house.

He scratched and scraped at the mud with his paws until — POP! — out he rolled on to the soft grass. A breeze tickled his fur and birdsong filled his ears. The world smelled of spring.



He followed his nose, skipping about until he reached a great big sparkling river. Mole blinked. “So *this* is a river,” he whispered.



Just then, a little blue boat drifted by.

“Moly!” shouted Rat. ‘Don’t just stand there. Climb aboard!”

“The thing is, Ratty,” said Mole as he scrambled into the boat, “I’ve never been in a boat before . . .”

“Never been in a boat? What have you been doing then? Believe me, there is nothing — *absolutely nothing* — so wonderful as messing about in boats . . .”

So off they went, down the river.

Far away, on the edge of the water, sat a dark wood.

"What's over there?" Mole asked.

"That's the Wild Wood," said Rat. "We Riverbankers don't go there much. The squirrels and rabbits are all right. And dear old Badger who lives in the middle of it. But the stoats and weasels — you can't trust them. Not really."

"And what's beyond the Wild Wood?" asked Mole.

"Beyond the Wild Wood is the *Wide World*," said Rat. "I've never been there and I'm never going, and neither will *you* if you know what's good for you!"

Mole peered at the distant darkness and gulped.

“I see Toad’s out today,” said Rat as they stopped for a picnic. “With his brand-new racing boat! Typical Toad. Takes up some new hobby, gets bored and moves on to something else. Terribly good chap but he’s got more money than sense!”

“He sounds *wonderful*,” said Mole dreamily.



On their way back, Mole begged Rat to let him have the oars.

“It’s not as easy as it looks!” said Rat. “Now wait a minute, Moly . . .

Moly?

MOLY!”

SPLOSH!



Mole shivered. Everything went awfully cold and dark and WET until Rat fished him out, laughing all the while.



He rowed Mole home, wrapped him in dry clothes, and fed him a hot supper.

“Stay with me a while,” said Rat. “I’ll teach you how to row and swim and we’ll have a jolly old time of it.”

So Mole moved in with Rat.

Spring turned into summer and the two friends spent many happy days messing about on the river.