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opening extract from

The Wind in the Willows

written by

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illustrated by

Inga Moore

published by

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One

The River Bank

The Mole had been working hard all the morning, spring-cleaning his little home. First with brooms, then with dusters; then on ladders and steps and chairs, with a brush and a pail of whitewash; till he had dust in his throat and eyes, and splashes of whitewash all over his black fur, and an aching back and weary arms. Spring was moving in the air above and in the earth below, around even his dark and lowly little house, and suddenly he flung down his brush, said "Bother!" and "O blow!" and also "Hang spring-cleaning!" and bolted out of the house without even waiting to put on his coat. Making for the steep tunnel which answered in his case to the gravelled drive owned by animals whose residences are nearer to the sun and air, he scraped and scratched and scrabbled and scrooged, then he scrooged again and scrabbled and scraped, muttering, "Up we go! Up we go!" till at last …



pop! his snout came out into the sunlight, and he found himself rolling in the warm grass of a great meadow.

"This is fine," he said to himself. "This is better than whitewashing!"

Jumping off all his four legs at once, in the joy of living and spring without its cleaning, he pursued his way across the meadow till he reached the further side.

He rambled busily along the hedgerows, across copses, finding everywhere birds building, flowers budding, leaves thrusting.

As he meandered aimlessly along, suddenly he stood by the edge of a full-fed river. Never in his life had he seen a river before. All was a-shake and a-shiver – gleams and sparkles, chatter and bubble. The Mole was bewitched. By its side he trotted spellbound; and when tired at last, he sat on the bank.

As he sat and looked across to the bank opposite, a dark hole just above the water's edge caught his eye and dreamily he fell to considering what a snug dwelling-place it would make for an animal with few wants and fond of a bijou riverside residence, when something bright and small seemed to twinkle down in the heart of it like a tiny star. But it could hardly be a star. Then, as he looked, it winked at him, and so declared itself to be an eye; and a small face began gradually to grow up round it, like a frame round a picture.

A brown face with whiskers.

A grave round face, with a twinkle in its eye.

Small neat ears and thick silky hair.

It was the Water Rat!

"Hullo, Mole!" said the Water Rat.

"Hullo, Rat!" said the Mole.

"Would you like to come over?" inquired the Rat presently.

