

# PROGRAMMANUS

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## MOLE END

The Mole and the Rat are friends. They met one spring day when the Mole went down to the river. He left his house because he thought the spring cleaning was so very boring. Rat, or Ratty as his friends call him, and the Mole spent the day together and by the end of the day, the Mole was invited to stay with Rat for the summer, and so he did, the whole summer.

When we meet the Mole and the Rat it is winter. They are walking the long way back to Rat's house by the river, after a long day out. It's getting late and there is frost in the air.

The Mole and the Rat found a track that made walking more interesting. They could both hear that small something all animals carry inside them, saying: 'Yes, quite right! This track leads home!'

'It looks as if we were coming to a village', said the Mole, as the track became a road. The animals were not all that fond of villages.

'Never mind', said Rat. 'At this time of year they're all safe indoors by now sitting round the fire: men, women and children, dogs and cats and all.'  
'We can walk without any problems, and we can have a look at them through their windows if you like.'

It was almost dark when they came to the village, walking on soft feet over a thin fall of snow.

They could see people in the houses, sitting around the tea-table, talking, laughing. The windows were like small theatres. When they moved from one theatre to another they could see a cat, a sleepy child in a bed and a man knocking out his pipe on the end of a log.

Then a frosty wind woke them as if from a dream and they felt that their toes were cold and their legs tired. It was a long way home.

They plodded along silently, thinking.

Rat was walking a little way ahead, his eyes fixed on the road in front of him. He did not notice poor Mole, when suddenly something took Mole, like an electric shock. It



was one of these mysterious fairy calls from far away that reached Mole in the darkness.

It was familiar, but he could not remember what it was. He stopped. His nose was searching. What was it? He felt it again...and this time he remembered. Home! That was what they meant those invisible little hands pulling him all in the same direction!

It must be quite close to him, his old home which he had left that spring day a long time ago. And now his home was sending out messages to make him come back. He had to go.

'Rat! Ratty, my friend!', he called.

'Oh, come along, Mole, do!' replied Rat.

'Please stop, Ratty!' said the poor Mole. You don't understand! It's my old home! I've just felt the smell of it, and it's close by here, really quite close. And I must go to it, I must, I must! Oh, come back, Ratty! Please!

The Rat was too far ahead to hear the Mole.

'Mole, we mustn't stop now!' he called back. 'It's late, and the snow's coming!'

The Rat walked without waiting for an answer.

Poor Mole stood alone in the road. And somewhere low down inside of him there was a big sob on its way up. But never for a moment did he dream of leaving his friend. He could hear the whisperings from his old home grow stronger and stronger.

His heart was broken, but he turned his face to the road and followed the Rat. He could still feel the smell from his old home in his little nose. He walked to the Rat, who did not know anything of this. The Rat talked about what they would do when they got back and how nice and warm a fire of logs would be. He never noticed his friend's silence. At last, when they had gone a long, long way, the Rat stopped and said:

'Look here, Mole, old chap. You seem dead tired. We'll sit down here for a minute and rest.'

The Mole sat down and tried to control himself, for he felt it coming: the sob. Up and up, it forced its way to the air, and then there came a new sob and another, and ever more of them, until poor Mole started to cry. He had lost something. Something he had never even found.

'What is it, my friend?' the Rat asked.

It was difficult for poor Mole to speak through the sobs.

'I know it's a simple place, not like your cosy house not beautiful or great in any way, but it was my own little home. And I liked it, and I went away and forgot all about it. And then I smelt it suddenly— on the road, when I called and you wouldn't listen, Rat— and everything came back to me with a rush— and I wanted it!— O dear!— and when you wouldn't turn back, Ratty— and I had to leave it, — I thought my heart would break.— We might have just gone and had one look at it, Ratty— only one look— it was so close— but you wouldn't turn back, Ratty! O dear, O dear!'



The Rat looked at the Mole in silence. Then he said:  
'I see it all now. What a pig I have been! A pig!'  
He waited till Mole's sobs were almost gone. Then he said:  
'Well, now we must go, old chap!'  
And the Rat started walking again, back the same way they had come.  
'Wherever are you going to, Ratty?' cried Mole.  
'We're going to find that home of yours', replied the Rat.  
'You'd better come along. It will take some time, and we'll need your nose.'  
'Come back!' cried Mole. 'It's too late and too dark, and the snow's coming!'  
'And I never meant to let you know I was feeling that way!'  
'I don't care!' said the Rat. 'I'm going to find this place now. Take my arm!'  
And they walked. When the Rat thought they were close to the right place, he said:  
'Now, business! Use your nose, and do your very best.'

Then suddenly the Rat felt something from Mole's arm, which he was holding. A short electric thrill. The signals were coming through! Mole stood still. His nose felt the air. Then he ran forward - a mistake he stopped, he smelled the air again and then a new step. The Rat kept close to the Mole. The Mole walked through a hedge and over a field. Suddenly, he dived, and the Rat followed him. He had found a tunnel!

It seemed a long time to the Rat before he could stand up. The Mole struck a match, and by its light the Rat saw that they were standing in an open space, neatly sanded. The next thing he saw was a small front door with the letters 'Mole End' painted on it.  
This was the Mole's home.