

**A GREAT TALE**  
By Richard Tornello © 2010

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In a far distant land of The Great Foggy Lakes, filled with animals like beavers, badgers, moles, mice and all sorts of creatures that could talk, there lived a fishing family of Moles. Mr. Mole was hard working as was Mrs. Mole. They scurried about their daily duties in a most diligent matter.

Mr. Mole would attend to his boat while Mrs. Mole would care for the children in the morning, and then once off to school, she would go to her employment where she worked as a bean counter for the canning factory. It was a dull but necessary job.

Mr. Mole liked being on the water and if the truth be known, he would rather just sail up and down The Great Foggy Lakes. But, he did have to catch a few fish for family and profit. He was always dreaming of ways to make his tasks easier.

One day Mr. Mole came home all bent over complaining about his back. "I hurt myself working on the hull when I pulled the boat to dry dock. I'll never be able to work again. What am I to do?" Mrs. Mole, deeply sympathetic to Mr. Moles pain and plight, gave him a massage and herbal medicines to kill the pain. "Tomorrow you go to Dr. Kitsune the fox and get this taken care of straight away."

"Yes dear, of course." Was all he moaned.

The next morning, feeling a bit better he got dressed and was about to just ignore the appointment when an idea popped into his head. "Oh my back my back it really hurts. Could someone summon Dr. Kitsune the fox? I'm not sure I can make the trek to his office today," he wailed.

Mrs. Mole sent her oldest to the doctor's office. This being a small village where the professionals still made local calls, the request was not considered unusual. Dr. Kitsune arrived promptly before his first scheduled office visit.

Dr. Kitsune, the fox was an early riser as everyone knew.

Dr. Kitsune examined Mr. Mole. After some time said, "I see a sprain and some muscle discoloration, but I cannot understand the great pain you claim to be in. Far be it from me to doubt you."

"Oh Doctor, you have no idea. What Can I do? I'm not sure I can work. My children will starve. We'll be thrown out of our family home. What can I do?" He wailed with tears streaming down his face.

Dr. Kitsune was taken aback by all this. Dr. Kitsune thought to himself, he must have injured himself deeply. I do not see it. I will do what I can to assist him. He said, "Mr. Mole, you have to come to my office where I can examine you with my instruments. I have a program of exercise that should assist you. Please read it. I will see you tomorrow first thing. I will give Mrs. Mole my thoughts and a copy of my instructions for you."

"In the mean time, stay off the boat." He said wagging his paw in Mr. Mole's face. Everyone knew Mr. Mole would rather be sailing than anything else. "We have a fund to help injured members of our community when things like this occur. You and your family will be taken care of. Please do not worry."

Dr. Kitsune informed Mrs. Mole of what she was to do and what Mr. Mole was to do and *not to do*.

"Thank you doctor," she said, her face red from crying.

Mr. Mole was pleased.

Mrs. Mole stole into the bedroom quietly so as not to disturb her husband. Was she shocked by what she witnessed. There was Mr. Mole jumping out of bed. As soon as he saw, her he fell down crying about his back.

"You fraud," she gasped. "I cannot abide by this!"

"Not so fast with your conclusions. Please, not so fast, and not so loud," said Mr. Mole. "Just listen to what I have to say." And he went on to explain his ideas.

Mrs. Mole was not entirely convinced this was a good and proper thing to do but there was some logic to it. "Okay I will go along with your idea only so far as to see if it allows you to work less and not injure yourself again."

"Trust me, dear, this will work. I'll be able to watch the children, take care of our grandchildren giving them the guidance they deserve." He knew this was an important issue in his family life. He added, "And, I'll be able to work here and there to make up any difference that this plan will not afford us."

"Yes the children. I never thought of that benefit." The more she thought about it the more she was brought into the plot. "Yes this is very good. I will do what ever we need to do to make this work. BUT nor a word to anyone, not even the children," she commanded. She, having a great math mind, began initiating a plan that not even Mr. Mole would have dreamed up.

Over time everyone came to believe Mr. Mole was permanently disabled and could only conduct his business on a part time basis, if at all. The whole community felt terribly sorry for Mrs. Mole and the strain she must be under.

This went on for years. Mr. Mole worked very little. He always had his cane around just in case his back hurt when a visitor arrived. However he re-roofed his house on a good day. He sided it on yet another and rebuilt his boat from the ground up, complaining to anyone who would listen. Some would look at his craftsmanship and cane with a jaundiced eye. Others wondered just how a permanently disabled mole could accomplish so much physical work. Most just ignored him. In some respects that's what Mr. Mole wanted. And yet he did crave attention as well as desiring the respect he never got for his work. This ate at him. He was on the horns of a dilemma of his own manufacture.

One day, as fate would have it, Mr. Mole came upon a wounded and sick badger. Now Mr. Mole was not an evil man, just, lazy and conniving. And, having found a way not to have to put in a full days effort to earn his daily bread, he was content... sort of. In truth he now worked even harder to continue this life he was presently living. But this truth he didn't realize or chose to ignore.

Well, Mr. Badger was truly sick. And since most of the Mole children had moved out by this time there was room to accommodate Mr. Badger's needs. However Mr. Mole's first impulse was to call the village officials to come rescue Mr. Badger. He had no desire to take on the responsibility or effort necessary of a care giver.

The village officials said that they were up to capacity supporting its citizens. And since Mr. Mole was used to caring for his children, and that the village had supported him, maybe he would find it in his heart to assist Mr. Badger. By the way, Mr. Badger was known to all as a curmudgeon.

"How can I do that?" Mr. Mole questioned. "I can't even lift my grandson up. This is impossible for me to do." Mr. Mole did nothing but complain and walk with a bigger cane than previously, in order to show just how disabled he was.

The Village elders came to him and said, "Mr. Mole, you have been on the dole for some time. You have no work to do. You occasionally sail the Great Foggy Lakes. You rebuilt your house and more. You can do this for us."

Mr. Mole thought about the deeper meaning of their words. They would go along with his pain if he would just take Mr. Badger off their hands. Normally they would have done it and continued to ignore Mr. Mole which as Mr. Mole once complained, "No one gives me the time of day. It's as if I'm invisible."

In a manner of speaking he was. No one wanted to admit they had been snookered, and by a mole no less. So they ignored the situation, and allowed it to continue as if it did not occur. BUT now, due in part to the situation I described, they called their marker in. Mr. Mole had to play along.

Mr. Badger was a pain to live with. Mrs. Mole was not at all happy with the situation. She was ready to leave and go visit her sisters on the other side of the Great Foggy Lake. "Husband of mine," she said, "I cannot deal with this man in our house. All he does is grouse, complain and yell at the grandbabies."

"Wife, wife I know. It bothers me so. But if we want to continue our lifestyle we are presently living, we are obligated to this. He will be gone soon. Of that I am sure. Then we can live as we have."

"Are you sure? She inquired.

"Yes, he said so himself. In fact he seems to be warming up to our family. He's been telling me things about his past." Now Mr. Mole whispered, "I think he's really rich. And I think he's dying too."

Mrs. Mole grasped the implication quickly. Her countenance brightened. "You do what is necessary dear. I will do what I can to make him feel at home. Does he have family?"

"Yes but they live in a far off land and hardly communicate. He was married and I still think he might be. But he hardly mentions her or them."

"Do you think...?"

"Don't even suggest that, yet," Mr. Mole said.

Mr. and Mrs. Mole did their utmost to make Mr. Badger's last days as comfortable as possible. They made the children visit so as to give a family feeling to Mr. Badger.

Mr. Badger, who had never really wanted all this attention, was beginning to reconsider his life now that it was coming to an end. He warmed up to this family and because of the predicated actions of the Moles, became estranged from his real family.

Mr. Badger's real family had done what ever they could for him over the years. He just pushed them away. In fact his grandson badger has rescued him from traps a number of times and kept an eye on him for the rest of the family. He, the grandson badger, lived so close. He felt it was his duty.

Not that the family was tight knit, but they did take care of each other in a somewhat dysfunctional loving manner.

Mr. and Mrs. Mole began another plan. As the old badger's health began to really fail and his mind going, they convinced him to do as they suggested. This was another plot to get around working. If the plan worked the two of them could retire and sail up and down The Great Foggy Lakes not caring a fig what others thought. They both knew wealth brought power and respect. That's what they had always desired.

This, their plan working as it was, was done with great secrecy and stealth. Not even their children were told. They just thought their parents were the nicest folks in the village. Yes, they even fooled family. They were that good.

When Mr. Badger's final days did arrive, they came a bit too short in time for the plan to be fully implemented. Some how Mr. Badger's wife and family got hold of all the other resources that actually belonged to Mrs. Badger and put them in safe keeping out of harms and Mole's way.

All that the Moles acquired was what Mr. Badger had carried with him.

What the Moles didn't expect was that Mrs. Badger had an old friend, Mr. James Wolf the lawyer. And Mr. Wolf loves Mrs. Badger as did the whole town where she lived. There was outrage over the treatment she was getting from the Mole family.

"We will look into the legalities of the Moles actions. If there is anything untoward, and there appears to be based upon the correspondence we have here, I think they might be in for a surprise."

Mrs. Badger did not hold a grudge since the Moles did give Mr. Badger a good environment for his final days. But did the Moles conduct themselves in a manner that might come back to harm her? To this they couldn't disagree.

Her family enlisted Mr. Wolf's assistance if only to protect her. They wanted nothing to do with the Mole family. If Mr. and Mrs. Mole did somehow circumvent the will of Mr. Badger, and harm their Mrs. Badger, then they would do something.

However, what they did discover, and to their chagrin, was the Moles and the Badgers were distantly related. Grave reflection took place among the family elders. What to do, they pondered? Upon hearing that news, one family member piped up "Well, it looks like *we all* put the fun in dysfunctional."

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THE END

All characters (except the fox) and events in this story are fictional. Any resemblance to human or fictional characters living, dead and or otherwise is purely coincidental.

