



RABBIT AND THE ILLEGAL RAVE

Rabbit scurried up to Owl's front door in the forest, looking very important indeed. When he reached the door, he called out: 'Hallo, Owl, are you there? If you are, then come outside. I have an important announcement to make.'

Owl did not answer, so Rabbit banged on the knocker and pulled on the bell. And then he pulled on the knocker and banged on the bell. And then he banged on the door with the bell, until at last Owl appeared.

'Who's there?' asked Owl crossly. 'Go away... Unless you're Piglet,' he added, peering round the side of the door.

'I say, Owl - it's me, Rabbit. Open up right now!'

Owl muttered to himself and then slowly pulled open the door. He looked rather tired and extremely annoyed. His feathers were all in a mess and his spectacles were on upside down.

'What do you want, Rabbit?' he asked. 'I've had a bad night, hardly slept at all, and I was just catching forty winks.'

'Exactly!' said Rabbit triumphantly. 'Precisely what I wanted to talk to you about. None of us got much sleep last night, what with all that music, and shouting and flashing lights.'

'Is that what it was? Music? Are you sure?' asked Owl, looking a little surprised. 'I thought it was a thunderstorm. You know what thunderstorms can be like, what with thunder and – um – bangs and things. I remember when I was younger —'

Rabbit held up a paw to stop Owl's reminiscences. 'There's no time for that now,' he said sternly. 'I have formed a Committee, and you are on it.'

Owl looked surprised. 'Me?' he asked. 'On a Committee?' He thought about it for a moment. It sounded very grand. 'What sort of Committee?' he asked at last.

'A Committee for Preserving Peace and Quiet after Bedtime,' said Rabbit proudly.

'H'm,' said Owl, 'that's a very long name, isn't it? Wouldn't it be better to —'

'No time for that now,' interrupted Rabbit. 'Come on, we have to find Pooh and Piglet and Eeyore. They're on the Committee too.'

Owl sighed, put his spectacles on the right way up and stepped outside. He closed the door very carefully behind him and hung up a notice saying

GON OUT
BACKSON

Piglet was visiting Pooh at Pooh's house. It wasn't quite time for a Little Something, but Pooh was counting his jars of honey. Just in case. Piglet was helping him. They had reached three - for the fourth time, because things got a bit tricky after three, and Pooh could not remember if five or eight came after three, while Piglet thought it would be impolite to suggest four, and so they had to start all over again. Just then, Rabbit knocked on Pooh's door.

'Pooh, are you there? Come outside immediately. I have an important announcement.'

'Oooh!' squeaked Piglet. 'Come on, Pooh, let's see what an Ouncement is.' He scampered outside, said 'Hello, Wol' to Owl and sat down on a log.

Pooh wished people wouldn't interrupt when he was counting honey. But he made a note to come back inside as soon as he could and continue. He placed two small twigs on the floor to remind himself how far he had progressed.

'So,' said Rabbit, when everyone was assembled, 'I call to order the first meeting of the Committee.'

Pooh looked at Piglet. Piglet looked at Owl. Owl looked back at Piglet. Piglet looked back at Pooh.

‘What’s a Committee?’ asked Pooh.

‘Oh, keep up, Pooh!’ said Rabbit crossly. ‘A Committee is when we get together, and I take the chair and I decide things and you all agree with me.’

‘But there is no chair,’ said Pooh looking round.

‘It’s just a way of saying that I’m in charge. Never mind that – the important thing is that —’

‘I could get you a chair,’ offered Pooh kindly. ‘In fact I could get two chairs, one for you and one for Wol. Wol is looking very tired.’

‘That’s very kind of you,’ murmured Owl. ‘Yes, I am very tired. I was saying that to Rabbit, just a few minutes ago, wasn’t I, Rabbit?’

Rabbit stamped firmly on the ground. ‘Stop talking everyone and listen to me. No, Pooh, we don’t need any chairs, because we’re on our way to collect Eeyore and then we’ll have a Quorum.’

Pooh was about to ask, but Owl shook his head at him.

So off they all set, through the woods towards Eeyore’s house. As they were going along, Pooh happened to mention that he had not slept at all well last night, because of the thunderstorm, and Piglet said that he had not slept well at all either, and he hadn’t known it was a storm and was it very loud at your house, Wol? And Owl said that, despite his being a Creature of Nocturnal Habits, he had not slept well either, and Rabbit said that’s why they had formed a Committee, and Pooh was about to ask Owl about Nocturnal Habits, but Rabbit gave him a stern look, so Pooh didn’t ask, but instead just pointed out some of the clouds to Piglet, because they looked like Pooh and Piglet going for a walk together. And then they met Kanga and Roo and Tigger, who had come out to get some fresh air.

Tigger bounced up to them in a springy sort of way and accidentally gave Rabbit such a surprise that he fell over.

‘Really, Tigger!’ said Rabbit, picking himself up and dusting himself down.

‘Yes, Tigger,’ said Kanga, ‘you really must be more careful around older people.’

Rabbit looked offended and was about to say something about older people, when Roo shouted squeakily to everyone that there had been a dreadful storm last night and that he and Tigger had not slept very much and had hidden under the bed and that was much funner than sleeping in your bed. And Piglet said he thought it was fun too.

But Rabbit did not agree. ‘Come along, everyone,’ he said. ‘We are going to find Eeyore. Kanga, you can come too, as long as Roo and Tigger behave themselves. You can all be Observers at our Committee meeting.’

Pooh was about to ask again, but Rabbit had already hopped on ahead, so everyone trotted along, trying to keep up. After a while, they came to the field where Eeyore’s house was supposed to be. Eeyore’s house moved around quite a lot, but Eeyore was resigned to it. ‘Sometimes,’ he said, ‘changing where one lives can be a good thing. Just as long as you can find your house before it rains. Or even after it has stopped raining, which is more common.’

On this particular day, Eeyore’s house was still where it had last been seen. But the field surrounding it was littered with rubbish. Abandoned tents, empty bottles, party streamers, plastic bags, canisters of laughing-gas.

‘Oh, dear me.’ said Owl, ‘what a mess someone’s made!’

Kanga organised Pooh, Piglet, Roo and Tigger immediately into a Work Party to tidy up the mess. Tigger was in charge of collecting the plastic bags and cans, while Piglet and Roo rolled up the tents. Pooh slowly collected the empty bottles, looking carefully into each one as he picked it up, in case there might be any honey inside.

Meanwhile Rabbit and Owl approached Eeyore’s house. It was looking a bit shaky this morning. And when Rabbit knocked firmly on the door, the whole thing fell to bits. All that was left was a pile of sticks. After a few minutes, the pile of sticks began to move and something emerged. First one ear,

then another. Then a nose. Finally, Eeyore's head poked out.

'Ah,' said Eeyore, 'I was just wondering why I was having such a nice sleep and why no one was waking me up or knocking down my house. And now I know that it was all just a dream. A wild fantasy. A vision of hope and idle comfort. How silly of me.'

'Are you all right, Eeyore?' asked Owl anxiously.

'Yes, perfectly all right,' replied Eeyore, at last able to haul himself out of what had once been his house. 'Just a little tired.'

'Quite right,' said Rabbit. 'That's why we're here. About the noise. That wasn't a storm, you know?' Eeyore sighed. 'Of course it wasn't a storm. That was my Illegal Rave.'

Rabbit had been about to call the Meeting of the Committee to order. Instead, he stopped and stared at Eeyore.

'What did you say?' he asked.

'My Illegal Rave,' said Eeyore, yawning.

At this point Owl, who had been listening intently, blinked several times. 'Aha!' he exclaimed. 'Covid-Related ISolation-Induced Syndrome. Eeyore obviously felt that his Individual Liberty was being eroded by The Lockdown, constraining his natural equine instincts. So he decided to have a Party.'

Rabbit was almost lost for words. At last he managed to gasp: 'It was you that made all that noise last night?'

Eeyore shook his head. 'No, not me personally, Rabbit, that would have been the DJ. He was playing techno, hardcore, house, dubstep, the lot. Wicked. And what a light-show he had. For once, I was not disappointed.'

'Awesome!' said Tigger, who had soon tired of collecting plastic bags and was bouncing around nearby.

'A party?' asked Roo excitedly. 'Can we come to the next one, Eeyore?'

'Not until you're older, dear,' said Kanga. 'Come here – you've some dirt on your paws.'

'Don't you know how noisy it was?' demanded Rabbit. 'You kept everyone awake. All night.'

'You're quite right, Rabbit,' sighed Eeyore. 'Next time, I imagine, I'll have a quiet Illegal Rave. That'll be fun, I expect. No music, no dancing. Yes, of course, that's precisely what we'll do.'

Rabbit drew himself up and looked important. 'I have to issue a Formal Warning,' he announced. 'You and anyone else who was at your Rave are Under Notice. Any more noise and there will be Trouble.'

'Ooh!' squeaked Piglet. 'What kind of trouble, Rabbit?' he asked.

'Big Trouble,' stated Rabbit decidedly.

'Certainly, Rabbit,' said Eeyore. 'I'll be sure to remember that. Rabbit has spoken. Eeyore has heard. Of course, all your Friends-and-Relations were here last night, too.'

'What?' exclaimed Rabbit, aghast. 'My Friends-and-Relations? You must be mistaken!'

'Every single one of them' said Eeyore. 'Pogo-ing all night long. Quite disgraceful, I expect.'

Rabbit snorted and huffed and puffed and looked at Eeyore, then looked at Owl. Then he was about to say something, and then he decided not to, and then he announced that the Committee was being dissolved and he ran off home, looking very business-like indeed. Owl and Kanga helped Roo and Tigger in tidying up the mess in the field. Pooh and Piglet started to help Eeyore rebuild his house, and then Piglet wondered whether Eeyore might like to live in one of the tents, and Eeyore thought that was a Good Idea, and Piglet blushed, and Pooh said that Piglet had lots of Good Ideas, and Piglet looked grateful, and so they put up a large orange tent and Eeyore had a nice dry house for a few weeks. Until it blew away in a real storm, with Eeyore still inside.

But that is another story.

