I wonder – I wonder if this sort of car starts easily?

I pulled the lever and swung out into the road. All sense of right and wrong – gone. I increased my pace, the car devoured the road. I was Toad once more, Toad the Best, the Highest, Toad the Terror, the Lord of the Lone Trail. Give way before me or be smitten into nothingness and everlasting night. I am Toad! Poop-poop!

TOAD *careers towards a crash, and when the dust settles he's in court, in the dock, with the* JUDGE *and the* CLERK OF THE COURT.

JUDGE. Mr Toad. Of Toad Hall, you are herewith charged of – One: taking and driving away a motor vehicle without the owner's permission. To whit, theft.

TOAD. Lies, lies, it's all lies.

JUDGE. You mean you didn't steal the car?

TOAD. No. The car stole me.

JUDGE. How?

TOAD. She whispered to me.

JUDGE. What did she say?

TOAD. Poop-poop.

JUDGE. 'Poop-poop'?

TOAD. Yes. I couldn't help myself.

JUDGE. Stuff and nonsense. Clerk of the Court. What can we sentence the incorrigible rascal for theft?

CLERK. One year, my lud.

JUDGE. One year.

TOAD. One year!?

JUDGE. Secondly, you are accused of reckless driving on the public highway.

TOAD. Lies again. I wasn't reckless.

JUDGE. What were you then?

TOAD. I was fast! And I wasn't on the public highway.

JUDGE. Only because you came off the road. Clerk. What is our maximum sentence?

CLERK. Three years, my lud.

JUDGE. Three years.

TOAD. Three years?!

JUDGE. Thirdly, and most seriously, of gross impertinence to the officers of the law.

TOAD. What's that?

JUDGE. Cheek.

TOAD. I never.

JUDGE. Did.

TOAD. Didn't.

JUDGE. Cheek and backchat, for which we reserve our most serious sentence. Clerk?

CLERK. Fifteen years, my lud.

TOAD. Fifteen?

JUDGE. Fifteen years. Plus three.

CLERK. Eighteen.

JUDGE. Plus one.

CLERK. Nineteen.

JUDGE. Round it up.

CLERK. Twenty.

JUDGE. Twenty years in prison.

TOAD. Twenty years?!

JUDGE. Twenty years. And think yourself lucky. If you appear before us again, upon any charge whatever, we shall have to deal with you very seriously! Take him away!

TOAD. No!

And I was taken away in chains. Poor miserable Toad. The rusty key creaked in the lock, the great door clanged behind me and I was a helpless prisoner in the remotest dungeon of the best-guarded keep of the strongest castle in all the length and breadth of merry England.

RAT *and* MOLE. *It is a hot day.*

RAT. Oh, the blessed coolness.

OTTER *dashes in.*

OTTER. Rat! Mole!

RAT. Whatever is it, Otter, to be dashing around on such a hot evening? Do sit down.

OTTER. No can do. It's Portly. He's gone missing.

MOLE. Again?

OTTER. Well, normally I wouldn't worry but this time it has been a few days. If you see him, give him a clip round the ear and send him home.

RAT. Where are you going?

OTTER. To the ford. I thought – well, it's where I taught Portly to swim – and we'd go fishing. I thought – if he came wandering back, he might make for the ford. I just thought –

MOLE. Good luck, old chap.

OTTER. Thank you, Mole.

OTTER *leaves.*

RAT *and* MOLE *sit in silence.*

RAT. I suppose we should turn in.