with any cash I could find. Next, knotting my bedsheets together and tying one end around my bedpost, I scrambled out of the window – please don't try this at home – slid down the rope and walked away in the opposite direction to Rat, whistling a merry tune.

RAT. While he was whistling his merry tune I was facing the music.

BADGER. You did what?!

MOLE. Oh, Rat!

RAT. I know.

MOLE. You thought he was dying!

RAT. Yes.

MOLE. Toad!

RAT. All right, all right. He did it very well.

BADGER. He did you very well. However, talking won't mend matters and now he's out of our hands. We can only wait and see. Will he come back between two policemen – or on a stretcher?

TOAD *alone*.

TOAD. Meanwhile, I was walking briskly along the high road, some miles from home. I came at last to a small town, where, feeling a trifle peckish, I purchased a cake to fill a gap. I believe it was a chocolate éclair. It was then I saw it pull up outside The Red Lion Hotel. Poop-poop! It called to me as if it knew me. Poop-poop! The passengers tumbled out, laughing at their morning adventures and went into The Red Lion.

There cannot be any harm in my just looking at it. Can there?

Poop-poop.

Oh my, I could really manage a sit-down. (*Gets in the car.*) Now where's the harm?

Poop-poop.

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.