

From The Desk of Sloane Duffy – Clear The Way: High Street's New Motorcar

BY SLOANE DUFFY.

The Commodore believes in measured momentum. He understands steam, canvas, and the steady, predictable pull of a four-in-hand team. What he had not fully accounted for, until approximately ten o'clock this morning, was the sheer, glorious terror of four rubber tires hitting the dusty lanes of the valley under my direct supervision.



The motorcar arrived yesterday evening via railcar from Hearthcombe Station, complete with a mechanic. It possessed gleaming brass fixtures over a deep crimson lacquer with black leather seating. Burton eyed it with the same quiet suspicion he usually reserves for the evening before *The Thornwick Badger™* goes to print. He offered to "take the helm" for its maiden voyage. I politely informed him that while he may command the sea, High Street belongs to me.

The Commodore accepted the challenge. His exact words were—"If you can turn it over, you may have at it."

Needless to say, I was prepared.

The mechanic stood silently—more than aware of what was about to happen. I confidently removed a pair of heavy leather gloves from under the front seat and put them on. I held them up, wriggling my fingers excitedly. It was at that moment the Commodore flashed the mechanic a barely perceptible, yet angry look. I went through the routine that was presented to me earlier that morning. I set the hand brake. Ensured the vehicle was not in gear. I opened a gadget called a "choke" and primed the engine. I performed a few other tasks that I did not know the exact reason for—though that was something Burton did not need to know.

The mechanic stood motionless while his face turned beet red.

We set out toward Thornwick just as the morning fog cleared off the open fields. Burton sat in the passenger seat, knees braced, knuckles white as ivory against the leather upholstery.

He maintained the rigid, dignified posture of a man preparing to go down with the ship, eyes fixed on the horizon as if scanning oncoming dray wagons or perhaps a red telephone box. I, on the other hand, gave the throttle its proper due.

The wind caught us immediately. The brass lamps rattled, the Cotswold hills blurred into a warm golden streak, and for five glorious miles, the valley was entirely ours.

Saoirse took up her rightful station in the rear. While Burton calculated stopping distances and wind resistance, the dog lived in a state of unbridled ecstasy—ears thrown back like banners, tongue out, drinking in the slipstream without a single thought for parish speed limits or civil decorum.

We rattled past Owens's farm, gave a sharp double-honk of the horn to startle a cluster of grazing sheep, and swept up the ridge before Burton managed to squeeze out a single, perfectly measured sentence: *"Miss Duffy, the parish council recommends twelve miles per hour."*

I did not decelerate.

Our new motorcar is parked out front of The Social House, having returned the way we came, passing The Manor and coming down High Street into Hearthcombe. The engine ticks softly as it cools in the shade. Burton has retreated to his ledger books to regain his footing, Saoirse is asleep by the hearth, and I am already eyeing the road to the upper ridge for tomorrow's run.

If you see a cloud of dust tearing down the valley lane this afternoon, clear the way.

Sloane Duffy is a fictional character and co-founder of the Duffy & Ward brand universe, created by Sloane Duffy Media LLC. She rides every morning, manages the books every afternoon, and has never once missed a brew day. © 2026 Sloane Duffy Media LLC.

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