

## **Auto Wars Murder Mystery Dinner**

### **Back Story**

The setting is Mount Desert Island, summer of 1907. Automobiles have been outlawed on over half the Island, including Bar Harbor, Somesville and along the eastern coast. Although Southwest Harbor and Tremont allow cars, year-round residents are pushing hard to lift the ban on the rest of the Island. Publicity stunts and public letters aren't working, and the locals are starting to get desperate to have their voices heard. Wealthy, part time residents are resisting, fearful the dreaded "devil cart" will ruin their peaceful and beautiful, summer retreat. Not able to vote in Maine, summer residents are pressuring servants to vote their cause, thus ensuring locals are denied their desire for the business opportunities, fun, and convenience automobiles can bring.

In the middle of this community debate, an annual event is taking place; the Chauffeur's Picnic. Wealthy summer residents host the picnic as thanks for the work of their staff and Island locals. It has brought together people both for and against cars on the island, in the hopes everyone can take a break and enjoy a beautiful evening together. However, the picnic is interrupted with the arrival of the local constable, who announces there has been a deadly car accident- someone has driven over a cliff and died. A summer resident shouts "The roads here are too narrow and hilly for cars! It shouldn't have taken someone to die before we realize cars are not safe on Mount Desert Island!" Just as a debate starts to break out, the constable interrupts and continues his announcement, saying that upon inspection of the car, it appears foul play was involved. The victim, Ross T. Cator, was one of the few prominent summer residents who favored cars on the Island, but he rarely shared this opinion with others for fear of social ostracism. Like many summer residents, he drove his car to MDI for the summer, keeping it in a garage in Hulls Cove so he could use it for drives off the Island. Knowing everyone would be at the Chauffeur's Picnic, Mr. Cator took his car from the Hulls Cove garage and went on a joy ride on the narrow and hilly roads along Otter Cliff. While on this drive, the car veered off the cliff and Mr. Cator died. The question becomes who had the motive and means to tamper with the car?

### **Act One**

*5:30 PM - Actors in place, drinks in hand, ready to greet guests and introduce themselves*

*6:00- Guests arrive, get drinks, have a snack, visit with one another. Antique car and buckboard will be on display as guests arrive.*

*6:00-6:30- Actors engage in conversation with guests and one another. The important elements here will be to introduce their characters and their opinions about cars, as well as laying the foundation for alibis and suspicions. This will take place outside on the lawn.*

*6:30- Constable Barnes arrives in antique automobile. Actors gather on the lawn, in front of Seal Cove Auto Museum. Constable announces there has been an accident.*

## ACT ONE

*It is a sunny, August day, with actors assembled on the lawn, beneath the spreading branches of a stately maple. Some of the guests are holding drinks in their hands. Caroline Ramsay and Barbara Livingston are sipping champagne. The local constable steps down from his antique automobile. The conversation stops as all faces toward him.*

### CONSTABLE BARNES

If I could please have everyone's attention! I hate to interrupt the celebration, but I am afraid I have terrible news. You see, it seems there has been an accident near Otter Cliff.

### W. H. DAVIS

What? One of my buckboards crashed off the cliff? But they're the safest way to travel, I can't believe it! No one on Mount Desert Island has ever died from an accident on one of my wagons!"

### CONSTABLE BARNES

No, it wasn't a buckboard, Mr. Davis. It was an automobile.

*Several actors gasp.*

### SIM MAYO

But that road is closed to automobiles. I don't mind saying I often considered driving my own motorcar along those cliffs but we all know there is that cussed ban.

*Many of the actors nod their heads to acknowledge they are all too familiar with the ban.*

### ABIGAIL RAMSAY

I, for one, am for keeping the island as unspoiled as it was when the land was first colonized by Europeans. Those horrible contraptions would ruin the peaceful beauty of the cliffs, scare horses, and make for a most unpleasant distraction.

### CAROLINE RAMSAY

As Mr. Mayo pointed out, that road is closed to autos, although I happen to agree it would be great fun to speed along the edge of the cliffs.

### ABIGAIL RAMSAY

Caroline! Don't even joke about such things!

### MRS. DOLLIVER

Listen to your mother, child, that road is too narrow to be safe for automobiles. It would be such a shame to have those devil carts running all over the island, chasing hens and scaring women and children.

**MR. HUNT**

Oh, I wouldn't be so sure about that ladies. Before cars were banned from this island, my Boston Automobile steam cars were small enough to travel safely on even the smallest village alleys and trails. Once the ban is lifted, the cars we build in Bar Harbor will be perfectly suited for the roads of this island.

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

*(Grinning mischievously)* Are you going to give them a little umph too, Mr. Hunt?

**MR. ROCKEFELLER**

Mr. Hunt, you have no money and no investors. Surely you must know your cause is lost!

**MR. HUNT**

That's not true—Ross T. Cator has promised his fortune to me upon his death.

**MR. ROCKEFELLER**

That may have been true in the past, but we know all about your recent argument with Mr. Cator, and the fact he had lost faith in your company and was planning to withdraw his offer.

**DOROTHY MAYO**

Mr. Barnes, you haven't told us who was driving this automobile? Is he injured? Were there any other passengers?

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Unfortunately, Mrs. Mayo, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but the driver was killed. As far as we can tell, he was alone. I think all of you knew the victim. You see, it was Ross T. Cator.

*Many of the guests, gasp.*

**EVERETT BREWER**

A great tragedy, no doubt, but why are you here, at the Chauffeur's Picnic?

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

I'm glad you asked that question. The plain fact of the matter is we suspect foul play and have reason to believe the victim's automobile was sabotaged. As I understand it, many of you knew the victim and he was supposed to have been here, today. Isn't that right?"

**SIM MAYO**

He's had a lot of mechanical problems since he stopped usin' my garage, or so I've heard!

*Mr. Brewer casts a nasty glance in the direction of Mr. Mayo.*

**EVERETT BREWER**

Is someone implying this might have happened while the car was stored in my shop? This is an outrage.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

I am not accusing anyone, Mr. Brewer. I just wanted to take this opportunity, while all of you are here, to ask some questions. I am hoping some of you will have some clues, or information, that would help the police to understand who might have had a motive for such a crime.

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

Well done, Constable! I must say, if you are looking for motives, then you are certainly in the right place!”

**ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

Caroline, what are you saying? Can you hear yourself?

**MR. HUNT**

I am afraid, Mrs. Ramsay, the young lady is only saying what many of us were already thinking. I for one will not miss the victim and I don't care who knows it.”

**MR. ROCKEFELLER**

Well said! I hate to speak ill of the recently departed, but I agree the man was a scoundrel. At the same time, I hasten to add, I have no knowledge of automobiles. If you are looking for a skillful saboteur, Constable, then I am certainly lacking as a suspect.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Well sir, not that I am implying anything, but it has occurred to me many of you would have the money required to hire an accomplice. I mean, I have no choice but to consider all the possibilities.

**MRS. DOLLIVER**

Well I hardly knew the man, but I have been saying all along that exactly this kind of thing was bound to happen. *(Pause)* Eventually. Everyone knows it.

**W. H. DAVIS**

I think you are onto something, Mrs. Dolliver. Nobody was ever killed in one of my buckboards, that's for darned sure.”

**SIM MAYO**

I am sorry, but if we are going to debate the merits of horses versus the horseless carriage, then I must agree with Mr. Hunt when he says automobiles are a perfectly safe mode of transportation.

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

I must say that only on this island is there any real debate. The rest of the world has long decided the future and it does not include the horse and buggy. It is as unavoidable as the obvious fact the sun will come up tomorrow.”

**BARBARA LIVINGSTON**

Well said, Caroline! Here’s to the sun coming out, tomorrow!”

*The young ladies laugh, as they clink their glasses together.*

**MR. ROCKEFELLER**

Indeed, ladies. I agree wholeheartedly the automobile will transform the world and I myself have several motorcars in the city. As you say, the real debate is whether they belong in a place as serene and bucolic as here, in Eden. On that point, as everyone knows, I am firmly of the opinion the island is a better place without them.

**MR. HUNT**

I am afraid I must disagree. Would it not encourage the growth and general economy of this island, and this community, if ever increasing number of visitors were able to travel the long distances required to get here, by virtue of being able to drive their own cars?”

**MR. ROCKEFELLER**

Have you considered that summer residents such as myself are not at all enthusiastic about “ever increasing number of visitors”? The number of people already living on this island is quite enough and larger crowds would obviously take away from the tranquil nature that brings myself, and others like me, to this island in the first place. What happens to the economy if some of the wealthier residents decide to summer elsewhere, eh?

**SIM MAYO**

Nonsense! You can’t really believe that. The notion is preposterous that a few automobiles on the roadways will have any significant impact on rusticators that are exploring the forests and mountains on the island. That pig won’t fly!”

**MR. ROCKEFELLER**

I would be remiss if I did not point out, the increasing presence of noisy automobiles, driven by all manner of persons, spewing their exhaust gases into the atmosphere is exactly what people such as myself are trying to avoid by coming to the island. Mark my words, if the number of automobiles escalates, tourism will wither on the vine. Summer cottages such as my own will become shuttered all year round. Is that really what we want?

**MOTHER DOLLIVER**

And what about safety? Many of the roads on this island are hilly and narrow. What is to prevent accidents? For those in the motorcar and pedestrians in harm’s way?

**MR. HUNT**

I really don't think safety is the issue at hand, here.

**ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

I must agree with Mrs. Dolliver. My husband was killed in an accident with an automobile. They are dangerous, infernal contraptions.

**SIM MAYO**

I think Mrs. Dolliver and Mrs. Ramsay make the same point which has been expressed by many people. Therefore, I think it must be addressed. What needs to be done is that people need to be reassured. I dare say, I believe the automobile is much safer than it is made out to be. I know any number of people who now own at least one and I can say with certainty none of them have been injured.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

*After listening to more arguing and discussion among guests*

Alright, alright, it looks like there are quite a few of you here who aren't too upset Mr. Cator is no longer with us. This could take a while. Do I smell dinner? No sense in letting good food go to waste, I mean, we all have to eat, right? Why don't we all go on in and take a seat, and I'll continue the investigation over dinner.

**END OF ACT ONE**

*The first act is over, and the actors move toward the museum and dinner. Dinner guests are seated before the play continues. Act Two is divided into six pieces which can be spaced so guests can enjoy their dinner between vignettes. Each vignette uses a subset of the cast, so a relatively small space is required for the action. In the Seal Cove Auto Museum, it was possible to have the actors take their positions in a gap between some of the tables.*

## ACT TWO

### First Vignette

*Constable Barnes, Caroline Ramsay and Barbara Livingston are on stage.*

#### CONSTABLE BARNES

Miss Ramsay, correct me if I'm wrong, but weren't you the first person to hint this picnic would be a good place to find people with a motive for murdering the victim?

#### CAROLINE RAMSAY

Yes, constable. That's right.

#### CONSTABLE BARNES

I have been told Mr. Cator was giving you driving lessons and that he was a friend of your family. Surely you are not suggesting you yourself are one of those people with a motive?

#### CAROLINE RAMSAY

Emphasis on the past tense, he *WAS* a friend of my family.

#### BARBARA LIVINGSTON

Caroline, what do you mean? Has something happened? I thought he was giving you racing lessons?

#### CONSTABLE BARNES

I don't understand. Was he or was he not a friend?"

#### CAROLINE RAMSAY

I apologize. I am not deliberately trying to be vague. You see, my father was killed a few years ago, in an automotive accident.

#### CONSTABLE BARNES

Yes, I'm sorry to hear that. But what does this have to do with Ross T. Cator?

#### CAROLINE RAMSAY

You see, my father and Mr. Cator were night clubbing, in New York City, a few years ago. There was an accident. According to Mr. Cator's account, my father was driving when they struck a light post. That's what we all believed, until recently.

#### BARBARA LIVINGSTON

What! Have you been holding out on me? Is there something new that I don't know about?

*Caroline turns to face her friend.*

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

Yes, exactly. Mother just learned it was Ross who was driving and that he was drunk. According to a detective she hired, that low-life used his influence and his checkbook to cover up the fact he basically killed my father.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

That's a serious accusation, miss. It's not something you want to say without evidence.

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

Well, as my mother frequently says, I tend to speak before I worry about such things. Needless to say, I confronted the man, and do you know what he said to me?

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

No miss, I can't imagine how he might have reacted.

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

He said it would be difficult to prove such an accusation since the only other witness is dead.

**BARBARA LIVINGSTON**

He actually said that! Really? That's unbelievable!

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

What, if you don't mind my asking, did you say?

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

Constable, I told Ross T. Cator that from this day forward, he needed to look both ways before crossing the street.

**BARBARA LIVINGSTON**

*laughing*

Caroline, you are too much!

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Miss Ramsay, I can understand your reaction, but this creates a serious issue for me...and for you. I mean, after all, it would be powerful motive for someone like yourself, someone familiar with automobiles, to sabotage his car. I hate to say it... but there it is.

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

I understand this makes me a suspect, I accept that. Part of me wishes I had sabotaged his car but, to be clear, I did not.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

So, you say. But correct me if I'm wrong, you did have access to his car, did you not?

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

Yes, it's common knowledge that I frequent Mr. Brewer's shop, where Mr. Cator kept his car. As a matter of fact, I was in the shop a few days ago. I was talking with the mechanics. They were having a slow day and we were talking about cars. As a matter of fact, we were admiring Cator's car. It was sitting right there, in front of us.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

That's interesting, very interesting. And what was being said?

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

Oh, it was nothing special. I asked if the car was getting serviced, or just being stored until Mr. Cator needed it, like so many other cars in the shop. I remember the conversation because the mechanics said something strange.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

What was that, Miss Ramsay?

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

They said the car came in with a broken wheel, but we were all looking at the car and all 4 wheels were fine. You could plainly see a new one had been installed.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Excuse me, but that must happen all the time, in the shop. Why would that be strange?

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

Because none of the mechanics could say who replaced it. Normally, Mr. Brewer - he owns the shop - would have asked one of them to make the repair. But nobody could say who did the work.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Is there anything else you would like to share?

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

No, not really. I must warn you though, mother will shriek if you tell her what I said to Mr. Cator.

**BARBARA LIVINGSTON**

She will positively shriek. I can hear her, already.

*Caroline and Barbara, champagne glasses in hand, return to their seats, laughing all the way.*

## Second Vignette

*Constable Barnes and Abigail Ramsay are on stage.*

### **CONSTABLE BARNES**

Mrs. Ramsay, I apologize in advance because I will have to ask some questions that might seem offensive. You understand, of course, I am just doing my job.

### **ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

Of course, constable. I understand. Let's just please get this over with... as quickly as possible.

### **CONSTABLE BARNES**

Yes, ma'am, of course. Let me start by saying I know about your investigation into the automobile accident, the one involving your husband and the victim, Mr. Cator. I know about your suspicions Mr. Cator may have been responsible for your husband's death.

### **ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

I can only assume my daughter has informed you.

### **CONSTABLE BARNES**

That's right. Miss Ramsey was very helpful.

### **ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

That's unusual, constable.

### **CONSTABLE BARNES**

Pardon me, ma'am. I don't understand.

### **ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

You used the word helpful in the same sentence with my daughter's name. It's unusual, that's all I meant to say.

### **CONSTABLE BARNES**

As I was telling her, this creates a powerful motive for murder. I'm not saying either you or your daughter were involved, but you must admit, it certainly doesn't look good.

### **ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

I can assure you that my daughter had nothing to do with Ross Cator's death. As for myself, I don't know the first thing about automobiles. The possibility I could have sabotaged one is preposterous.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

As I said earlier, Mrs. Ramsay, there are many people here with plenty of money available to hire an accomplice, someone who would know something about automobiles, don't you think?

**ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

You are entitled to your opinion, Constable.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Is there anything more that you think I should know? Do you know anyone else who might have had a motive for murder?

**ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

Well, I don't like to gossip but there is one thing. I probably should not even mention it.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Go on, Mrs. Ramsay. I really need all the help I can get. Anything you can tell me will be most appreciated.

**ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

Well, I suppose it would be my duty to tell you anything that might be relevant, wouldn't it?

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Oh, absolutely ma'am, absolutely.

**ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

It's just that I know Mrs. Brewer is a wonderful chef and although she worked for Mr. Cator, the rumor is she really wanted to resign her position as chef and work full time with her husband, in his shop.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Then why couldn't she simply resign?

**ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

Well, I probably shouldn't say this...

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

But this is a murder investigation, after all...

**ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

Precisely.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

So, you have a duty, don't you?

**ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

Just as you say. Well, the rumor is that Mr. Cator was blackmailing Mrs. Brewer to stay.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Blackmail, you say. Well, that is interesting. I don't suppose you know what this blackmail was about, would you ma'am?

**ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

I am afraid, constable, that is a subject you would have to discuss with her.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Yes, of course. I understand. That is exactly what I intend to do. You have been most cooperative.

### **Third Vignette**

*Constable Barnes, Dorothy, Mayo, and Brewer are on stage.*

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Mrs. Brewer, I have been told wonderful things about your abilities as a chef.

**DOROTHY BREWER**

*Obviously flattered*

Why, thank you so much, Constable. I had no idea I had such a reputation.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

You're welcome. As I understand it, you were the head chef for Mr. Cator?

**DOROTHY BREWER**

Yes, that's right. It is such a tragedy, isn't it? I mean I can't believe he is dead. You don't really think it was murder, do you?

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

I'm afraid so, ma'am. I also understand you work part time, as a bookkeeper for your husband, at his shop in Hulls Cove?

**DOROTHY BREWER**

Right again. You seem to be awfully well informed, Constable.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Well, thank you ma'am. I try. Now, it seems there is a rumor you were planning to resign your position as chef, so that you could spend more time in your husband's shop.

**DOROTHY BREWER**

If you don't mind my asking, just where are you getting all this information?

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

I'm sure you understand I am not at liberty to divulge my sources, don't you? I also know, Mrs. Brewer, your employer refused to release you from your duties as chef. As a matter of fact, I am afraid it appears you were being blackmailed. Isn't that right?

**DOROTHY BREWER**

I am not sure I should answer any more questions, Constable, if you don't mind.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

I am afraid ma'am, you really don't have a choice. You see, unless you cooperate, we will have to continue this conversation at the police station. I'm sure neither of us want that to happen, do we?

*Mrs. Brewer is obviously becoming agitated. She has started to nervously wring her hands. The constable knows if he keeps on the pressure, she will volunteer more information.*

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Which is it to be then, here or at the station?

**DOROTHY BREWER**

All right, Constable Barnes, I suppose I really have no choice, do I? Very well. Yes, I was being blackmailed by that miserable man. I should have poisoned him is what I should have done. What do you think about that?

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

What I think, Mrs. Brewer, is blackmail is a powerful motive for murder. So, I need to know, what information could the victim possibly have had that you had essentially become his slave?

**DOROTHY BREWER**

Slave! Is that how you would put it? Well I am shocked to hear you say such a thing!

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Come now, Mrs. Brewer, here or down at the Station? One more time, what was the victim using to blackmail you?

**DOROTHY BREWER**

*Agitated*

You must understand, constable. It wasn't me...it was my husband. You see, my husband was letting other people drive the cars...without permission...for money. Oh, you mustn't tell anyone. Please, my husband has worked so hard, setting up the shop, hiring people, training the mechanics, it would destroy everything.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Let me make sure I understand. Your husband has been renting out other people's cars, for joy rides? Is that it?

**DOROTHY BREWER**

This is all very embarrassing for me, but yes, that's it. Please, no one must know.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Mrs. Brewer, I appreciate your cooperation. Really, I do. I know this must be very hard for you. I must ask another question. Did your husband know about the blackmail? I mean, did he know the victim was threatening to expose the both of you?

**DOROTHY BREWER**

*Thinks for a moment before responding*

Why, no, not at all. I never told him.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Well excuse for saying so, ma'am, but I must admit I am a little surprised. I would think a woman would share something like that, with her husband, especially when it concerned him.

**DOROTHY BREWER**

I assure you, constable, my husband knew nothing about the blackmail. He had no reason to hurt Mr. Cator, no reason at all!

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Okay, ma'am, I didn't mean to offend you. My apologies. I think that's all I need for now. You've been most helpful.

## Fourth Vignette

*Mr. and Mrs. Brewer are on stage.*

**EVERETT BREWER**

Dorothy, you've talked with the constable, haven't you? What did you say?

**DOROTHY BREWER**

He knew, Everett, he already knew about the blackmail!

**EVERETT BREWER**

Then he knows both of us had motive for murder!

**DOROTHY BREWER**

No, no. I assured him that you knew nothing at all about the blackmail. But as for me! Oh, I'm afraid, Everett.

**EVERETT BREWER**

Don't be, my dear. I know you had nothing to do with this awful accident.

**DOROTHY BREWER**

I know the same is true for you, Everett. I can't wait for all of this to be over.

**EVERETT BREWER**

Just wait, you'll see. In the end, this will all have been for the best. You're free from that overbearing man, free of that job and free to spend more time in our shop. Not only that, but the shadow of blackmail is gone!

**DOROTHY BREWER**

Yes, you're right, of course. Promise me again you are finished with letting other people use those cars! I want to hear it one more time.

**EVERETT BREWER**

I promise, my dear. It will mean we will have less money, but I promise.

## **Fifth Vignette**

*Mr. Rockefeller, Mr. Hunt and Mother Dolliver are on stage.*

### **MR. ROCKEFELLER**

Have either of you spoken with the constable, yet?

### **MR. HUNT**

No, not me. I can't say I relish the prospect, either.

### **MOTHER DOLLIVER**

Me neither, although I can't imagine why he would want to talk with me.

### **MR. ROCKEFELLER**

Really, Mrs. Dolliver? It's common knowledge what you've been saying these last few weeks, to anyone who will listen. You've been hinting something like this was going to happen. Speculating openly about an accident of some sort...explaining how everyone will feel differently after blood has been spilled.

### **MOTHER DOLLIVER**

Mr. Rockefeller, just what are you implying? That I had something to do with this tragedy!

### **MR. HUNT**

You, or perhaps your son, the one that helped to build a homemade jalopy. He certainly would have the ability and those kids are hanging out around the shop all the time.

### **MOTHER DOLLIVER**

What about yourself, Mr. Hunt. Everyone knew Mr. Cator had decided to withdraw his funding from your little investment scheme, that's what everyone is saying!

### **MR. HUNT**

That's preposterous. I don't know what you are talking about.

### **MR. ROCKEFELLER**

Come now, Hunt. Everyone knows she speaks the truth. You're desperate for investors and were counting heavily on Cator. You and he were overheard arguing, in town. He was threatening to withdraw his support.

### **MR. HUNT**

And what about you, Mr. Rockefeller? I am not the only one who was heard arguing with Cator. I understand you found out he was secretly supporting automobiles on the island. I was told you lost your temper in public, going so far as to call him a backstabber. Isn't that right? Sounds like motive to me, all right.

**MOTHER DOLLIVER**

You must confess, it sure would help your cause, wouldn't it? I mean, a wealthy man dies on the island in an automobile crash. What better way to make sure the ban is never repealed, eh?

**MR. ROCKEFELLER**

Don't be ridiculous. I wouldn't know the first thing about how to sabotage an automobile.

**MR. HUNT**

Oh, I am sure there are plenty of people on the island who would be willing to do the wealthy and powerful Mr. Rockefeller a favor. People who would have the knowledge and the tools to get the job done.

**MR. ROCKEFELLER**

And what about you, then? I imagine a man who used to build automobiles for a living would know a great deal about how to sabotage one. And consider, many of the employees in Mr. Brewer's shop were people who used to work in your factory - some of whom are no doubt still loyal to their former employer. Sounds like a great combination of motive and opportunity to me!

*The constable overhears the several people arguing and comes over to investigate.*

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

What's this? Did I hear something about motive...and opportunity? Whose motive, whose opportunity?

**MR. ROCKEFELLER**

Constable, where did you come from, er, I mean where have you been? I trust your investigation is going well? We were just talking about the weather, weren't we?

**MOTHER DOLLIVER**

Why yes, exactly. Don't you think it looks like rain, constable?

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Rain, Mrs. Dolliver? There isn't a cloud in the sky.

**MR. HUNT**

You can never tell on this island, can you? Weather changes all the time, doesn't it?

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Interesting, very interesting.

**MR. ROCKEFELLER**

What do you mean, constable? Are you trying to imply something?

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Oh no, sir, not at all. I just think it's interesting you should be talking about the weather in the middle of a murder investigation, that's all. By the way, if you don't mind that I change the subject for a moment, I know all about the arguments you and Mr. Hunt recently had with the victim. Yes, indeed. And Mrs. Dolliver?

**MOTHER DOLLIVER**

Yes, Constable?

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

It looks like you were right, doesn't it?

**MOTHER DOLLIVER**

Excuse me?

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Your predictions about some unfortunate soul perishing in a fiery automobile accident. Just like you predicted, ma'am.

## Sixth Vignette

*Mr. Sim Mayo and W.H. Davis are on stage.*

**SIM MAYO**

It's all my fault.

**W. H. DAVIS**

Excuse me?

**SIM MAYO**

The accident with Ross Cator, it was my fault.

**W. H. DAVIS**

What are you saying, sir? That you sabotaged his car?

**SIM MAYO**

No, no - not at all. Let me explain. Do you remember the little stunt I pulled, when I drove my automobile on the island? You remember, don't you? I was arrested. The case went to the Supreme Court.

**W. H. DAVIS**

Yes, I remember. Darned fool stunt if you ask me.

**SIM MAYO**

Of course, you would say that. After all, as the leading manufacturer of buckboards, we all know you would like nothing more than to completely ban those infernal automobiles from the entire island, wouldn't you?

**W. H. DAVIS**

Obviously. My position is well known on this subject. But what does all of this have to do with Ross Cator and his car?

**SIM MAYO**

Well, you see, not many people knew this, but Ross secretly yearned to do exactly what he just did, to ride his automobile around the island. I know this because he confided in me - I think mostly because of my ride through Bar Harbor and all the publicity. It was me who encouraged him to do the same as I had done. As a matter of fact, it was me who dared him to do it. I even suggested the Chauffeur's Picnic was the perfect opportunity - while everyone was here, he could be out there - on the road!

**W. H. DAVIS**

Why in heaven's name would you suggest such a thing? Are you insane?

**SIM MAYO**

It is not insane to realize the island is a wonderful place to drive one's automobile.

**W. H. DAVIS**

It is not wonderful, sir, to break the law. I personally think you should have been jailed for your stunt and was disappointed when you were not prosecuted with more vigor.

**SIM MAYO**

You know, Mr. Davis, one cannot help but think how much you would have gained by this accident. I can see the headline - Prominent summer resident killed in automobile accident at the Bluffs. Just the kind of publicity that would ensure buckboards continue to thrive, isn't it? Almost made to order...at least for you.

**W. H. DAVIS**

If you are implying I had a hand in this business, I would like to point out you are the one who dared the victim into this joy ride. It seems very convenient to me; therefore, it was also you who would have known exactly when the victim was going to take his ride. What do you say to that, Mr. Mayo?

**SIM MAYO**

What possible reason would I have to kill Ross T. Cator? I just told you, he was on my side, he secretly wanted the ban to be lifted.

**W. H. DAVIS**

So, you say, sir. All I know is that Ross Cator publicly supported the ban. With him out of the way, you stood to benefit, didn't you? One less opponent to automobiles. It seems to me, you had more than enough to gain.

**SIM MAYO**

I think, Mr. Davis, the next time you are riding in one of your buckboards, please consider the view directly in front of you. That is exactly what comes to mind as I think about you, and your opinions.

**END OF ACT TWO**

*Each member of the audience is given the opportunity to cast a secret ballot for who they believe to be the murderer. When the play is finished, each ballot that correctly identified the killer is entered into a drawing for a prize.*

### ACT THREE

*Constable Barnes takes center stage. The rest of the cast are seated at various tables, along with the dinner guests.*

*The constable has gathered a great deal of information about motives and opportunities. He finally believes he has identified the killer. At this point, the constable announces he is ready to summarize his findings. He stands and begins his summary.*

#### CONSTABLE BARNES

I want to thank all your cooperation in this investigation. I realize it has been stressful for many of you and I apologize for that. I am afraid however, that one of you has committed a serious crime and the time has come to unmask our killer.

*Everyone gasps, while rising to their feet, so that entire cast is now standing. Only the constable is center stage. The rest of the cast are each standing beside the table at which they were sitting.*

#### CONSTABLE BARNES

Mrs. Dolliver...

#### MOTHER DOLLIVER

*Mother Dolliver's face becomes a mask of fury.*

What! Are you saying that I killed poor Mr. Cator! This is an outrage!

#### CAROLINE RAMSAY

*Who has become quite tipsy at this point*

Good show! It's like I always say, if you want something done right, ask a woman.

#### ABIGAIL RAMSAY

*Shrieking*

Caroline!

#### CONSTABLE BARNES

Please, everyone calm down. Actually, I was just about to say Mrs. Dolliver was one of the first suspects I was able to rule out.

#### MOTHER DOLLIVER

Oh...so sorry. I didn't mean to fly off the handle like that.

#### CONSTABLE BARNES

Perfectly understandable, Mrs. Dolliver. My fault, entirely.

*The constable turns to face Mr. Hunt.*

If you would like to take a seat, this brings us to Mr. Hunt.

**MR. HUNT**

If you are going to make accusations Constable, I warn you to reconsider.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

No, Mr. Hunt. One could argue you had motive, because the victim had changed his mind about investing in your company. There are however, some problems with that theory. First, you would not have had access to Mr. Cator's car. Sure, you could have hired an accomplice inside Mr. Brewer's shop. Some of the employees worked for you, at one time in the past. But then you would have been vulnerable. Your accomplice could have eventually made things difficult for you, in the future. And then we must consider what you really had to gain. I mean, it wasn't like the opposition to automobiles was going to fall apart just because Mr. Cator had died. No, I think I am secure when I state it wasn't you.

**MR. HUNT**

Well...yes...Of course not.

*Mr. Hunt sits down.*

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

This brings me next to Mr. Rockefeller. It was public knowledge he and the victim had a recent argument because Mr. Cator was secretly in favor of cars on the island. But the more I thought about this motive, the more I realized many of Mr. Rockefeller's friends on the island were sympathetic to automobiles. Therefore, unless he had decided to kill all of them, it wouldn't have made much sense to murder Mr. Cator.

**MR. ROCKEFELLER**

Very astute powers of observation, Constable. Thank you for that vote of confidence...I think.

*Mr. Rockefeller sits down.*

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

I learned Mr. Mayo, about your challenge to the victim to drive around the island while everyone was here and, while I question your judgement, I just don't see how that makes you into a prime suspect. Certainly, you have the skills to sabotage an automobile, but you didn't really have the kind of access you would have needed to the victim's car.

**SIM MAYO**

Very sporting of you, Constable, I must say. Just the same, I can't help but feel at least partially responsible.

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

I understand sir but, in the end, I don't believe for a minute it was you who killed the victim.

*Sim Mayo sits down.*

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

This brings us to consider another person with something to gain the longer the automobile ban is maintained. There is no question a ban on automobiles is good for buckboard sales, is there, Mr. Davis? There's just no way around that. And it does seem the negative publicity around this accident will help buckboards and hurt automobiles. But I still have the issue of opportunity, the same as Mr. Rockefeller and Mr. Hunt. No, I have decided it wasn't Mr. Davis.

**W. H. DAVIS**

Of course, I didn't do it. I've known that all along. Darndest fool thing I ever heard.

*Davis sits down.*

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

I am afraid, Mrs. Brewer, we both know you had a powerful motive. At the same time, you certainly had opportunity. As the bookkeeper, you could have easily found a way to be alone with the victim's car. But I suspect it is not so easy to sabotage a car so that it can be driven out of the shop but still cause the driver's death at some later point. No, I was inclined to rule you out, as well.

**DOROTHY BREWER**

Thank god!

*Mr. and Mrs. Brewer both sit down.*

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Another person with powerful motive was Mrs. Ramsay, but again, I had to rule her out because there was no real opportunity.

**ABIGAIL RAMSAY**

Well of course not, how absurd!

*Abigail sits down.*

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Miss Ramsay...

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

*She turns to Barbara and exclaims, drunkenly*

My turn!

**BARBARA LIVINGSTON**

*Laughing*

Gosh, I wonder if you did it?

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

Mother, did you bring money for bail?

*Abigail Ramsay drops her head into her hands, muttering something about her father's lack of discipline when raising Caroline. Abigail had always warned him, spare the rod, spoil the child.*

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

No, Miss Ramsay, I am afraid it was not you, either. You see, in the end, it had to be someone with both the skills to commit sabotage and complete access to the car, after working hours. What really gave it away was something you said.

**CAROLINE RAMSAY**

*Speaking with slurred speech, at this point.*

Something I said?

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

Yes. You said, none of the mechanics had been asked to repair the victim's car and yet, the broken wheel had been replaced. So, I had to ask myself, who could have done the work? Who better than the man that trained the mechanics?

*Caroline sits while Mr. Brewer slowly stands.*

**CONSTABLE BARNES**

It seemed strange that Everett Brewer, the owner of the shop, would make the repair himself - especially when the mechanics had enough time to be chatting with Miss Ramsay.

Why would you do that Mr. Brewer, why indeed? Frequently, I find the best answer is the most obvious one. Who would benefit the most by Mr. Cator's death? It was obvious. You knew about the blackmail, didn't you? There is simply no way I could believe your wife would not have told you. It was therefore your only choice, it was him or you. With one bold move, you could save yourself...and your business. Simple enough to wait for all your employees to go home for the day, leaving you alone with the car. Your mistake was when you decided to repair the wheel at the same time.

**EVERETT BREWER**

Very clever, Constable. You were correct when you said it was him...or me. After all, it was war - an automobile war.