

12

THE FIRST BOMB

IT WAS SO SUDDEN: the earsplitting bangs, the screams, the confusion. Theo and Doug ran into the kitchen; Mrs. Theodorakis ran out. Her hair, her face, her apron were splattered with dark dripping red.

"Blood," Sydelle Pulaski cried, clutching her heart.

"Don't just sit there," Catherine Theodorakis shouted, "somebody call the fire department."

Angela hurried to the pay phone on the wall and stood there trembling, not knowing whether to call or not. They were snowbound, the fire engines could not reach Sunset Towers.

Theo leaned through the kitchen doorway. "Everything's okay. There's no fire."

"Chris, honey, it's all right," Mrs. Theodorakis said, kneeling before the wheelchair. "It's all right, Chris, look! It's just tomato sauce."

Tomato sauce! Mrs. Theodorakis was covered with tomato sauce, not blood. The curious heirs now piled into the kitchen, except for Sydelle Pulaski, who slumped to the counter. She could have a heart attack and no one would notice.

Mr. Hoo surveyed the scene, trying to conceal his delight. "What a mess," he said. "That row of cans must have exploded from the heat of the stove." The entire kitchen was splattered with tomato sauce and soaked in foam from the fire extinguishers. "What a mess."

George Theodorakis regarded him with suspicion. "It was a bomb."

Catherine Theodorakis thought so, too. "There was hissing, then bang, bang, sparks flying all over the kitchen, red sparks, purple sparks."

"Cans of tomato sauce exploded," Doug Hoo said, defending his father. The others agreed. Mrs. Theodorakis was understandably hysterical. A bomb? Ridiculous. Sam Westing certainly did not appear to have been killed by a bomb.

Judge Ford suggested that the accident be reported to the police immediately in order to collect on the insurance.

"You might as well redecorate the entire kitchen," Grace Wexler, decorator, proposed. "It should be functional yet attractive, with lots of copper pots hanging from the ceiling."

The Westing Game
Chapters 12-17

"I don't think there's any real damage," Catherine Theodorakis replied, "but we'll have to close for a few days to clean up."

Mr. Hoo smiled. Angela offered to help.

"Angela, dear, you have a fitting this afternoon," Grace reminded her, "and we have so much to do for the wedding shower on Saturday."

In thumped Sydelle Pulaski. "I'm fine now, just a bit woozy. Goodness, what a nasty turn."

Having recovered from the nasty turn, Sydelle Pulaski settled down to transcribing her shorthand to Polish, then from Polish to English. Startled by loud banging on her apartment door, she struck the wrong typewriter key.

"Open up!"

Recognizing the voice, Angela unbolted the door to a furious Turtle. "All right, Angela, where is it?"

"What?"

"The newspaper you took from my desk."

Angela carefully dug through the embroidery, personal items, and other paraphernalia in her tapestry bag and pulled out the newspaper folded to the Westing obituary. "I'm sorry, Turtle. I would have asked for it, but you weren't around."

"You don't also happen to have my Mickey Mouse clock in there, too, do you?" Turtle softened on seeing her sister's hurt expression. "I'm only kidding. You left your engagement ring on the sink again. Better go get it before somebody steals that, too."

"Oh, I wouldn't worry about anyone stealing Angela's ring," Sydelle Pulaski remarked. "No mother would stoop that low."

The thought of Grace being the burglar was so funny to Turtle, she plopped down on the sofa and rolled about in laughter. It felt good to laugh; the stock market had fallen five points today.

"Angela, please tell your sister to get her dirty shoes off my couch. Tell her to sit up and act like a lady."

Turtle rose with a tongue click very much like her mother's, but she was not about to leave without striking back. Arms folded, she leaned against the wall and let them have it. "Mom thinks Angela was the one who stole the shorthand notebook." That got them. Look at those open mouths. "Because mom asked to see it, and Angela does everything she says."

"Anyone could have stolen my notebook; I didn't double-lock my door that day." If Sydelle couldn't trust her own partner, she was alone, all alone.

"Did mom really say that?" Angela asked.

"No, but I know how she thinks, I know what everybody thinks. Grown-ups are so obvious."

"Ridiculous," scoffed Sydelle.

"For instance, I know that Angela doesn't want to marry that sappy intern."

"Ridiculous. You're just jealous of your sister."

"Maybe," Turtle had to admit, "but I am what I am. I don't need a crutch to get attention." Oh, oh, she had gone too far.

"Turtle didn't mean it that way, Sydelle," Angela said quickly. "She used the word crutch as a symbol. She meant, you know, that people are so afraid of revealing their true selves, they have to hide behind some sort of prop."

"Oh, really?" Sydelle replied. "Then Turtle's crutch is her big mouth."

No, Angela thought, hurrying her sister out of the door and back to their apartment, Turtle's crutch is her braid.

The newspaperman called again to say he had found some photographs taken at Westingtown parties twenty years ago. "One of those names appears in a caption as Violet Westing's escort: George Theodorakis."

"Go on," the judge said.

"That's all." He promised to send her the clippings in the Westing file as soon as he was shoveled out.

The judge now knew of four heirs with Westing connections: James Hoo, the inventor; Theo's father; her partner, Sandy McSouthers, who had been fired from the Westing paper mill; and herself. But she had to learn more, much more about each one of the heirs if she hoped to protect the victim of Sam Westing's revenge.

She would have to hire a detective, a very private detective, who had not been associated with her in her practice or in the courts. J. J. Ford flipped through the yellow pages to Investigators—Private.

"Good grief!" Her finger stopped near the top of the list. Was it a coincidence or dumb luck? Or was she playing right into Sam Westing's hand? No choice, but to chance it. The judge dialed the number and tapped her foot impatiently waiting for an answer.

"Hello. If you're looking for a snowbound private investigator, you've got the right number."

Yes, she had the right number. It may be a trick, but it was no coincidence. The voices were one and the same.

13

THE SECOND BOMB

NO ONE WAS in the kitchen of Shin Hoo's Restaurant when the bomber set a tall can labeled "Monosodium glutamate" behind similar cans on a shelf. The color-striped candle would burn down to the fuse at six-thirty; whoever was working there would be at the other end of the room. No one would be hurt.

Due to the unfortunate damage to the coffee shop

SHIN HOO'S RESTAURANT

is prepared to satisfy all dinner accommodations. Order down, or ride up to the fifth floor. Treat your taste buds to a scrumptious meal while feasting your eyes on the stunning snowscape before it melts away. Reasonable prices, too.

Grace Wexler tacked her sign to the elevator wall as she rode up to her new job. She was going to be the seating hostess.

"Where's the cook?" Mr. Hoo shouted (meaning his wife). He found Madame Hoo in their rear fourth-floor apartment kneeling before her bamboo trunk, fingering mementoes from her childhood in China. He hurried her up to the kitchen, too harried to find the words that would explain what was happening. Now where was that lazy son of his?

Doug jogged in from a tiring workout on the stairs. How was he supposed to know the restaurant would open early? Nobody bothered telling him.

"Some student you are; anyone with the brain of an ant-eater could have figured that out: people are short of food, the coffee shop is closed for repairs. Stop arguing, go take a shower, and put on your busboy outfit. Get moving!"

"Don't you think you're rather hard on the boy?" Grace commented.

"Somebody's got to give him a shove. If he had his way he'd do nothing but run," Hoo replied between bites of chocolate. "You're not so easy on Angela, either."

"Angela? Angela was born good, the perfect child. As for the other one, well . . ."

"It's not easy being a parent," Hoo said woefully.

"You can say that again." Grace held her breath. Her husband would have done just that, said it again, but Mr. Hoo only nodded in shared sympathy. What a gentleman.

Only Mr. and Mrs. Theodorakis ordered down. The other tenants of Sunset Towers lined up at the reservations desk, waiting for Grace Windsor Wexler to lead the way. Oversized menus clutched in her arms, Grace felt the first proud stirrings of power rush up from her pedicured toes to the very top curl on her head. If Uncle Sam could pair off people, so could she.

"You see your brother every day, Chris, how about eating with someone else for a change?" She wheeled the boy to a window table without waiting for an answer. It would have been yes.

The two cripples together, Sydelle Pulaski thought. She'd show that high and mighty hostess, she'd show them all. She and Chris could have private jokes, too, and everybody would be sorry they weren't sitting with them.

"Whas moo g-goo g-gipn?" Chris asked, baffled by the strange words on the menu.

"I think it's boiled grasshopper." Sydelle screwed up her face and Chris laughed. "Or chocolate-covered moose."

"Frenssh-fry m-mouse," Chris offered. Now Sydelle laughed. They both laughed heartily, but no one envied them.

"Your brother seems to be enjoying Ms. Pulaski."

Theo nodded, awed by the beautiful Angela, three years older than he, so fair-skinned and blonde, so unattainable. Here he was sitting at the very same table with her, just the two of them, and he couldn't think of a single thing to say that wasn't stupid or childish or childishly stupid.

Usually the quiet one, Angela tried again. "Are you planning to go to college next year?"

Theo nodded, then shook his head. Say something, idiot. "I got a scholarship to Madison, but I'm not going. I'm going to work instead." What big, worried sky-blue eyes. "The operation for Chris will be very expensive." That was worse, now she's feeling sorry for him. "If Chris had been born that way, maybe it wouldn't be so bad, but he was a perfectly normal kid, a great kid. And he's smart, too. About four years ago he started to get clumsy, just little things at first."

"Perhaps my fiancé can help." Angela bit her lip. Theo was not asking for charity. And fiancé, what an old-fashioned, silly word. "I went to college for a year. I wanted to be a doctor, but, well, we don't have as much money as my mother

pretends. Dad said he could manage if that's what I really wanted, but my mother said it was too difficult for a woman to get into medical school." Why was she gabbing like this?

"I want to be a writer," Theo said. That really sounded like kid stuff. "Would you go back to college if you won the inheritance?"

Angela looked down. It was a question she did not want to answer. Or could not answer.

Long before becoming a judge, Josie-Jo Ford had decided to stop smiling. Smiling without good reason was demeaning. A serious face put the smiler on the defensive, a rare smile put a nervous witness at ease. She now bestowed one of her rare smiles on the dressmaker. "I'm so glad we have this chance to become acquainted, Mrs. Baumbach. I had so little time to chat with my guests last night."

"It was a wonderful party."

Flora Baumbach appeared even smaller and rounder than she was as she sat twisting her napkin with hands accustomed to being busy. Was her face permanently creased from years of pleasing customers, or was a tragedy lurking behind that grin? "Have you always specialized in wedding gowns?"

"Mr. Baumbach and I had a shop for many years: Baumbach's for the Bride and Groom. Perhaps you've heard of it?"

"I'm afraid not." The judge would have said no in any case to keep her witness talking.

"Perhaps you've heard of Flora's Bridal Gowns? That's what I called my shop after my husband left. I don't know much about grooms' clothes, they're mostly rentals, anyway." Flora Baumbach lost her timidity; the judge let her chat away. "I'm using heirloom lace on the bodice of Angela's gown; it's been in my family for three generations. I wore it at my wedding, and I dreamed that someday I'd have a daughter who would wear it, too, but Rosalie didn't come along until I was in my forties, and . . ." The dressmaker stopped. Her lips tightened into an even wider grin. "Angela will make such a beautiful bride. Funny how she reminds me of her."

"Angela reminds you of your daughter?" the judge asked.

"Oh my, no. Angela reminds me of another young girl I made a wedding dress for: Violet Westing."

The heavy charms on Sydelle Pulaski's bracelet clinked and clunked as she raised a full fork and flourished it in a practiced ritual before aiming it at her open mouth. Chris's movements were even jerkier. She's a good person, he thought, but she thinks too much about herself. Maybe she never had anybody to love.

"Here, let me help you to some of this delicious sweet and sour ostrich."

Their laughter drowned out the loud groan from another table where Turtle sat alone, a transistor radio plugged in her ear. The stock market had dropped another twelve points.

"I'm starved, let's sit down to eat." Head held high, Grace Wexler led her husband across the restaurant. "All I want is a corned beef sandwich, not a guided tour."

"Would you prefer to sit alone or with that young lady over there?"

"I thought I was going to sit with you."

"Please be seated," Grace replied. "Jimmy, I mean Mr. Hoo, will take your order shortly."

Jake snatched the menu from his wife and watched her glide (gracefully, he had to admit) to the reservations desk and whisper in Hoo's ear. (Jimmy, she calls him.) "That's a fine kettle of fish," he exclaimed, then turned to his dinner companion. "Fine kettle of fish. I'm so hungry even that sounds good, and from the looks of this menu that's probably what I'll get."

"I'm okay," Turtle replied, the final prices of actively traded stocks rumbling in her ear.

Mr. Hoo waddled over. "I recommend the striped bass."

"See, what did I tell you, a kettle of fish."

Turtle switched off the radio. She had heard enough bad news for one day.

"How about spareribs done to a crisp," Hoo suggested; then he lowered his voice. "What's the point spread on the Packers game?"

"See me later," Jake muttered.

"Go ahead and tell him, daddy," Turtle said. "I know you're a bookie."

"Can you stand on your legs?" Sydelle Pulaski asked. "Can you walk at all?"

People never asked Chris those questions; they whispered them to his parents behind his back. "N-n-no. Why?"

"What better disguise for a thief or a murderer than a wheelchair, the perfect alibi."

Chris enjoyed being taken for the criminal type. Now they really were friends. "When you ree m-m-me nos?"

"What? Oh, read you my notes. Soon, very soon." Sydelle daintily touched the corners of her mouth with the napkin, pushed back her chair and grabbed her polka dot crutch. "That was a superb meal, I must give my compliments to the chef." She rose, knocking the chair to the floor, and clumped toward the kitchen door.

"Where is she going?" Angela, starting up to help her partner, was distracted by shouting in the corridor.

"Hello in there, anybody home?" Through the restaurant door came a bundled and booted figure. He danced an elephantine jig, stomping snow on the carpet, flung a long woolen scarf from his neck and yelled, "Otis Amber is here, the roads are clear!"

That's when the bomb went off.

"Nobody move! Everybody stay where you are," Mr. Hoo shouted as he rushed into the sizzling, crackling kitchen.

"Just a little mishap," Grace Wexler explained, taking her command post in the middle of the restaurant. "Nothing to worry about. Eat up before your food gets cold."

A cluster of red sparks hissed through the swinging kitchen door, kissed the ceiling and rained a shimmering shower down and around the petrified hostess. Fireflies of color faded into her honey-blond hair and scattered into ash at her feet. "Nothing to worry about," she repeated hoarsely.

"Just celebrating the Chinese New Year," Otis Amber shouted, adding one of his he-he-he cackles.

Mr. Hoo leaned through the kitchen doorway, his shiny straight black hair (even shinier and straighter) plastered to his forehead, water dribbling down his moon-shaped face. "Call an ambulance, there's been a slight accident."

Angela dashed past Mr. Hoo into the kitchen. Jake Wexler made the emergency telephone call and sent Theo to the lobby to direct the ambulance attendants.

"Why are you standing there like a statue," Hoo shouted at his son.

"You told everybody to stay where they were," Doug said.

"You're not everybody!"

Madame Hoo tried to make the injured woman as comfortable as possible on the debris-strewn floor. Angela found the sequined spectacles, wiped off the wet, crystalline mess and placed them on her partner's nose.

"Don't look so worried, Angela. I'm all right." Sydelle was in pain, but she wanted attention on her own terms, not as a hapless, foolish victim of fate.

"Looks like a fracture," an ambulance attendant said, feeling her right ankle. "Careful how you lift her."

The secretary suppressed a grunt. It was bad enough being drenched by the overhead sprinkler and draped with noodles; now they were carrying her right past them all.

Grace pulled Angela away from the stretcher. "You can visit your friend in a few days."

"Angela, Angela," Sydelle moaned. Pride or not, she wanted her partner at her side.

Angela stood between her determined mother and her distraught partner, paralyzed by the burden of choice.

"Go with your friend, Angie-pie," Jake Wexler said. Other voices chimed in. "Go with Pulaski."

Grace realized she had lost. "Perhaps you should go to the hospital, Angela, it's been so long since you've seen your Doctor D." She winked mischievously, but only Flora Baumbach smiled back.

The policeman and the fire inspector visiting the scene agreed that it was nothing more than a gas explosion. Good thing the sprinkler system worked or Mr. Hoo might have had a good fire.

"What kind of a fire is a good fire," Hoo wanted to know.

"And what about the burglaries?" Grace Wexler asked.

"I'm with the bomb squad," the policeman explained.

"You'll have to call the robbery detail for that."

"And what about the coffee shop accident?" Theo asked.

"Also a gas explosion."

Jake Wexler asked about the odds of having two explosions in two days in the same building.

"Nothing unusual," the fireman replied, "especially in weather like this, no ventilation, snow packed over the ducts." He instructed the tenants to air out their kitchens before lighting ovens.

Mrs. Wexler turned up the heat in her apartment and kept the windows open for the next three days. She did not want anything blowing up during Angela's party.

But the Wexler apartment was exactly where the bomber planned to set the next bomb.

14

PAIRS REPAIRED

THE SNOWPLOWS plowed and a warm sun finished the job of freeing the tenants of Sunset Towers (and the figure in the Westing house) from their wintry prisons.

Angela, disguised in her mother's old beaver coat and hat and in Turtle's red boots, was the first one out. Following Sydelle's instructions she hastily searched under the hood of every car in the parking lot. Nothing was there (nothing, that is, that didn't seem to belong to an automobile engine). So much for Good gracious from hood space.

Next came Flora Baumbach. Behind her a bootless Turtle tiptoed through puddles. Miracle of miracles: the rusty and battered Chevy started, but the dressmaker's luck went downhill from there. First, the hood of her car flew up in the middle of traffic. Then, after two hours of watching mysterious symbols move across the lighted panel high on the wall of the broker's office, her eyes began to cross. After three hours the grin faded from her face. "I'm getting dizzy," she said, shifting her position on the hard wooden folding chair, "and worse yet, I think I've got a splinter in my fanny."

"Look, there goes one of our stocks," Turtle replied.

SEA 5\$81/2 GM 5000\$67 LVI 32 1/4 MGC 2\$14 T 1000\$651/4 AMI 3\$191/4 I 8\$221/2

Flora Baumbach caught a glimpse of SEA 5\$8% as it was about to magically disappear off the left edge of the moving screen. "Oh my, I've forgotten what that means."

Turtle sighed. "It means five hundred shares of SEA was traded at \$8.50 a share."

"What did we pay?"

"Never mind, just write down the prices of our stocks as they cross the tape like I'm doing. Once school opens it's all up to you." Turtle did not tell her partner that they had bought two hundred shares of SEA at \$15.25 a share. On that stock alone they had a loss of \$1,350, not counting commissions. It took nerves of steel to play the stock market.

"The Mercedes is wiped clean and shiny like new," the doorman boasted. His face reddened around old scars as he rejected a folded five dollar bill. "No tips, judge, please, not after all you've done for the wife and me." The judge had given him the entire ten thousand dollars.

J. J. Ford pocketed the bill and, to make amends for her thoughtless gesture, asked the doorman about his family.

Sandy perched on the edge of a straight-backed chair, adjusted his round wire-framed glasses, repaired at the bridge with adhesive tape, across his broken nose, and told about his children. "Two boys still in high school, one daughter

married and expecting my third grandchild (her husband just lost his job so they all moved in with us), another daughter who works part-time as a typist (she plays the piano real good), and two sons who work in a brewery."

"It must have been difficult supporting such a large family," the judge said.

"Not so bad. I picked up odd jobs here and there after I got fired from the Westing plant for trying to organize the union, but mostly I boxed. I wasn't no middleweight contender, but I wasn't bad, either. Got my face smashed up a few times too many, though; still get some pretty bad headaches and my brain gets sort of fuzzy. Some dummy of a partner you got stuck with, huh, judge?"

"We'll do just fine, partner." Judge Ford's attempt at familiarity fell flat. "I did try to phone you, but your name was not listed."

"We don't have a phone no more; couldn't afford it with the kids making so many calls. But I did make some headway on our clues. Want to see?" Sandy removed a paper from the inside of his cap and placed it on the desk. Judge Ford noticed a flask protruding from the back pocket of his uniform, but his breath smelled of peppermint.

The clues as figured out by Alexander McSouthers:

SKIES AM SHINING BROTHER

SKIES—Sikes (Dr. Sikes witnessed the will)

AM BrothER—Amber (Otis Amber)

SHINing—Shin (the middle name of James Shin Hoo or what Turtle kicks)

BROTHER—Theo or Chris Theodorakis

"Remarkable," the judge commented to Sandy's delight. "However, we are looking for one name, not six."

"Gee, judge, I forgot," Sandy said dejectedly.

Judge Ford told him about Theo's proposal, but Sandy refused to go along. "It seems too easy, the clues adding up to one message, especially for a shrewd guy like Westing. Let's stick it out together, just the two of us. After all, I got me the smartest partner of them all."

Shallow flattery for the big tipper, the judge thought. McSouthers was not a stupid man; if only he was less obsequious—and less of a gossip.

The Westing Game
Chapters 12-17

The doorman scratched his head. "What I can't figure out, judge, is why I'm one of the heirs. Unless Sam Westing just up and died, and there is no murderer. Unless Sam Westing is out to get somebody from his grave."

"I agree with you entirely, Mr. McSouthers. What we have to find out is who these sixteen heirs are, and which one, as you say, was Westing 'out to get.' "

Sandy beamed. They were going to play it his way.

"What you need is an advertising campaign."

"What I need is my half of the ten thousand dollars."

"Five thousand dollars is what I estimate the redecorating and the newspaper ads will cost."

"Get out of here, get out!"

Grace stared at Hoo's smooth, broad face, at the devilish tufts of eyebrow so high above those flashing eyes, then she turned her back and walked out. Sometimes she wondered about that man— no, he couldn't be the murderer, he couldn't even kill the waterbug in the sink this morning. Grace spun around to see if she was being followed on the footstep-hushing carpet in the third floor hall. No one was there, but she heard voices. They were coming from her kitchen. It was nothing, just Otis Amber shouting at Crow, something about losing their clues.

"I remember them, Otis," Crow replied in a soft voice. She felt strangely at peace. Just this morning she had been given the chance to hide her love in Angela's bag, the big tapestry shoulder bag she carries next to her heart. Now she must pray that the boy comes back.

"I remember them, too, that's not the point," Otis Amber argued. "What if somebody else finds them? Crow? Are you listening to me, Crow?"

No, but Grace Wexler was listening. "Really, Mr. Amber, can't you find another time to discuss your affairs with my cleaning woman. And where are you going, Crow?"

Crow was buttoned up in a black moth-eaten winter coat; a black shawl covered her head.

"It's freezing in here." Otis Amber shut the window. Grace opened the window. "The last thing I need is a gas explosion," she said peevishly.

"Boom!" he replied. The two women were so startled that the delivery boy sneaked up on the unsuspecting for the rest of the week, shouting "Boom!"

Besides shouting "Boom!" Otis Amber delivered groceries from the shopping center to Sunset Towers, back and forth, to and fro. Not only did the tenants have to restock their bare shelves, they had to add Westing Paper Products by the gross to their orders. "Idiots, just because the will said Buy Westing Paper Products," he muttered, hefting a bulky bag from the compartment attached to his bike. Even Crow was using Westing Disposable Diapers to polish the silver and Westing Paper Towels to scrub the floors. (Is that what happened to their clues?) Poor Crow, she's taking this game harder than he had expected. She's been acting strange again. "Boom!" Otis Amber shouted as the intern hurried by. "Idiot," muttered Denton Deere.

Denton Deere paced the floor. "Listen, kid, I'd like to help you, but I'm only an intern specializing in plastic surgery. It would be different if you wanted a nose job or a face-lift." He had meant to be amusing; it sounded cruel.

Chris had not asked for charity. All he wanted was to play the game with the intern.

All the intern wanted was half of the ten thousand dollars. "I hear your brother suggested sharing clues. Sounds like a fine idea." No response. Maybe the kid thinks I'm the murderer. The tenants must think so, the way they peered over their shoulders; and that delivery boy shouting like that. Why me? I'm a doctor; I took an oath to save lives, not take them. "I'm a very busy man, Chris, I have lots of sick people depending on me. Oh well." Plowing his fingers through his stringy mouse-brown hair to keep it out of his eyes (when would he find time for a haircut?), he seated himself next to the wheelchair. "The clues are in my locker. What were they? 'The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain'?"

"F-for p-plain g-g-grain shed." Chris spoke slowly. He had practiced his recitation over and over, hour after lonely hour. "G-grain—oats—Otis Amber. F-for, shed—she, F-Ford. F-Ford lives in f-four D."

"Ford, apartment 40, good thinking, Chris." The intern rose. "Is that all?"

Chris decided not to tell him about the limper on the lawn, not until the next time. His partner would have to visit him a next time, and a next time, as long as he didn't sign the check.

"Now, about signing the check," Denton Deere said.

Chris shook his head. No.

On a bench in the lobby Angela embroidered her trousseau, waiting for Denton. Dad had tried to teach her to drive, but she was too timid; he, too impatient. Why bother with driving lessons, her mother said, anyone as pretty as you can always find a handsome young man to chauffeur you. She should have insisted. She should have said no just once to her mother, just once. It was too late now.

Theo came in with an armload of books. "Hi, Angela. Hey, I found that quotation, or rather, the librarian found it. You know: May God thy gold refine."

The Westing Game
Chapters 12-17

"Really?" Angela thought it unnecessary to remind him that it was Flora Baumbach and Turtle who had asked about the quotation, not she.

What lush lips, what white teeth, what fine and shiny hair. Theo fumbled between the pages of a chemistry book for the index card. On it was written the third verse of "America, the Beautiful":

America! America!
May God thy gold refine
Till all success be nobleness
And every gain divine.

Theo had begun reading the refrain and ended up singing. He shyly laughed off his foolishness. "I guess it doesn't have anything to do with money or the will, just Uncle Sam's patriotism popping up again."

"Thank you, Theo." Angela stuffed her embroidery in the tapestry bag on seeing Denton Deere rush off the elevator.

"Hello, Doctor Deere, how about a game of chess?"

"Let's go," the intern said, ignoring Theo.

Sandy opened the front door for the couple, whistling "America, the Beautiful." The doorman was a good whistler, thanks to his chipped front tooth.

"I can't drive you home; I'm on duty tonight."

"I'll take a cab."

"Why must you go back to the hospital? Your crazy partner isn't dying, you know."

"She's not crazy."

"She made up her so-called wasting disease, I call that crazy. Nothing was wrong with her legs until the explosion in the Chinese restaurant."

"You're wrong."

"First you ask me to look in on her, now you don't want my opinion. Anyhow, I called in a psychiatrist. Maybe you should talk to him, too. I've never seen you so troubled. What's wrong, the wedding dress isn't ready, the guest list is too long? You'll have to cope with more important matters than that once we're married. Unless you don't want to get married. Is that it?"

The Westing Game
Chapters 12-17

Angela twisted the engagement ring her mother made her wear in spite of the rash. No, she did not want to get married, not right away, but she couldn't say it, she couldn't tell him— them, not like that. Denton would be so hurt, her mother . . . the engagement was announced in the newspaper, the wedding gown, the shower . . . but once they found out she wasn't their perfect Angela . . .

How long has she been sitting here in the hospital corridor? A man in a business suit (the psychiatrist?) came out of Sydelle's room. "You must be Angela," he said. How had Sydelle described her—a pretty young thing? "I hear you're going to marry one of our interns." She was going to get married, her one claim to fame.

"How is Ms. Pulaski, doctor?"

"Do you mean is she crazy? No. No more or less than anybody else in town."

"But the crippling disease, she made that up?"

"So what? The woman was lonely and wanted some attention, so she did something about it. And quite creatively, too. Those painted crutches are a touch of genius."

"Is that normal? I mean, it's not insane to shock people into noticing who you are?"

The doctor patted Angela's cheek as though she were a child. "No one was hurt by her little deception. Now, go in and say hello to your friend."

"Hello, Sydelle."

Without makeup, without jewelry, clothed only in a white hospital gown, she looked older, softer. She looked like a sad and homely human being. "You talk to the doctors?"

"It's a simple fracture," Angela replied.

"What else?" Sydelle turned her face to the wall.

"The doctor says your disease is incurable, but you could have a remission lasting five years, even more, if you take good care of yourself and don't overdo it."

"The doctor said that?" Maybe a few people could be trusted. "Did you bring my makeup? I must look a mess."

In the overstuffed tapestry bag, under Sydelle's cosmetic case, Angela found a letter. It was a strange letter, written in a tense and rigid hand:

Forgive me, my daughter. God bless you, my child. Delight in your love and the devil take doctor dear. Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? The time draws near.

Taped at the bottom were two clues:

THY BEAUTIFUL

15

FACT AND GOSSIP

FRIDAY WAS BACK to normal, if the actions of suspicious would-be heirs competing for a two-hundred-million-dollar prize could be considered normal.

At school, Theo studied, Doug Hoo ran, and Turtle was twice sent to the principal's office for having been caught with a transistor radio plugged in her ear.

The coffee shop was full of diners.

Shin Hoo's restaurant had reopened, too, but no one came.

J. J. Ford presided at the bench, and Sandy McSouthers presided at the front door, whistling, chatting, collecting tidbits of gossip and adding some of his own.

Flora Baumbach, her strained eyes shielded by dark glasses, drove Turtle to school on her way to the broker's office and picked her up in the late afternoon with a sheet of prices copied from the moving tape. They had lost \$3,000 in five days.

"Paper losses," Turtle said. "Doesn't mean a thing. Besides, I didn't pick these stocks. Mr. Westing did."

Did he? The dressmaker thought of the clue Chris had dropped; no stock symbol had five letters or even resembled the word plain. But Flora Baumbach played fair and kept the secret to herself.

Four people stood in the driveway's melting snow, shivering as the sun dropped behind Sunset Towers. The fifth jogged in place. No smoke had risen from the chimney since that fateful Halloween; still they stared up at the Westing house, murder on their minds.

"He looked too peaceful to have been murdered," Turtle said. She sneezed and Sandy handed her a Westing tissue.

"How would you know?" Doug replied. "How many people have you seen murdered?"

"Turtle's right," her friend Sandy said. "If Westing expected it, he'd have seen it coming. His face would have looked scared."

"Maybe he didn't see it coming," Theo argued. "The killer was very cunning, Westing said. I read a mystery once where the victim was allergic to bee stings and the murderer let a bee in through an open window."

"The window wasn't open," Turtle said, wiping her nose.

"Besides, Westing would have heard the buzzing and jumped out of bed."

Doug had an idea. "Maybe the murderer injected bee venom in his veins."

Otis Amber flung his arms in the air. "Whoever said Sam Westing was allergic to bees?"

Doug tried again. "How about snake venom? Or poison? Doctors know lots of poisons that make it look like heart attacks."

Turtle almost kicked Doug, track meet or not. Her father was a doctor. She would not have minded if he had said "interns."

"I once heard about a murderer who stabbed his victim with an icicle," the doorman said. "It melted leaving no trace of a murder weapon."

"That's a good one," Turtle exclaimed appreciatively. Sandy had more. "Then there was a Roman who choked on a single goat hair someone put in his milk. And there was the Greek poet who was killed when an eagle dropped a tortoise on his bald head."

"Maybe Westing was just sleeping until Turtle stumbled and fell on his head," Doug suggested.

"That's not funny, Doug Hoo." How could she ever have had a crush on that disgusting jerk?

Doug would not let up. "And who was that suspicious person in red boots I saw opening the hoods of cars in the parking lot the other morning?" He looked at Turtle's booted feet.

"The thief stole my boots and put them back again. They leak."

"A likely story, Tabitha-Ruth." Doug pulled her braid and ran into the lobby at full speed.

Sandy placed a large hand on Turtle's shoulder, a comforting hand, and a restraining one.

The Westing Game
Chapters 12-17

Otis Amber hopped on his bike. "Can't stand around chitchatting about a murder that never happened. Sam Westing was a madman. Insane. Crazy as a bedbug." He pedaled off, shouting back, "We ain't murderers, none of us."

Theo could not agree. If there was no murderer, there was no answer; and without an answer, no one could win. "Sandy, did anybody leave Sunset Towers on Halloween night, before Turtle and Doug?"

The doorman scratched his head under his hat, thinking. "One day seems like the next, people coming and going. I can't remember."

"Try."

Sandy scratched harder. "Only ones I recall are Otis Amber and Crow. They left together about five o'clock."

"Thanks." Theo hurried into the building to check his clues.

Turtle had no reason to suspect Otis Amber or Crow or any of the heirs. Money was the answer. Her only problem was that dumb stock market; it didn't want to play the game. "Sandy, tell me another story."

"Okay, let's see. Once, long ago in the olden days, there was this soothsayer who predicted the day of his own death. That day came, and the soothsayer waited to die and waited some more, but nothing happened. He was so surprised and so happy to be alive that he laughed and laughed. Then, at one minute to midnight, he suddenly died. He died laughing."

"He died laughing," Turtle repeated thoughtfully. "That's profound, Sandy. That's very profound."

"Where's everybody?" The apartment was empty, as usual.

Jake Wexler decided that Shin Hoo's was going to have a paying customer.

"I'd like a table, if you're not too crowded."

"I think I can squeeze you in," Hoo said, leading the podiatrist through the empty restaurant. "You must have liked those spareribs."

"Yeah, sure." Jake watched his wife slowly stack her papers at the reservations desk. At last, seeming to recognize him, she walked over. Jake returned his unlit cigar to his pocket (Grace hated the smell).

"I've already eaten," Grace said, sitting down.

"Hello to you, too," Jake replied.

He probably thinks that's funny. Since when do people go around saying hello to their husbands?

"What's new with you, Grace? Where are the kids? And what are all those presents doing on the coffee table? It's not your birthday and it's not our anniversary." What was she so upset about? "Or is it?"

"No, it isn't. Those are gifts for Angela, the wedding shower is tomorrow. Don't worry, you're not supposed to be there, just girls. The doorbell was ringing all morning, I couldn't leave the apartment for an instant; one at a time he delivered them, the smirking fool, and each time he shouted 'Boom!' "

She looked especially attractive today, Jake thought. Between the ringing doorbell and the booms, she had managed time for the beauty parlor and the sunlamp.

Mr. Hoo set the spareribs on the table and lowered himself to a chair.

Grace lost her scowl. "Since you're here, Jake, I'd like your opinion on the advertising campaign I'm planning. Jimmy and I are having a slight disagreement. I say that Shin Hoo's sounds like every other Chinese restaurant to English-speaking ears."

English-speaking ears? Jake bit his lip in an effort to keep silent.

"I say the restaurant needs a name people won't forget," Grace continued. "A name like Hoo's On First."

Jake could not help himself. He tried to cover a loud guffaw with louder coughing. Hoo pounded him on the back and apologized for the ginger.

'You remember that old baseball routine, Jake," Grace prompted.

Yes, he did. "Who's on second? No, What's on second; Who's on first."

"It's an idiotic name," Hoo argued. "Hoo's On First sounds like my restaurant is on First Street, or worse yet, on the first floor. Customers will end up in the coffee shop drinking dishwater tea."

"Not the way I'll promote it, they won't," Grace insisted. "Well, what's your opinion, Jake?"

The podiatrist put down the sparerib he was about to bite into. "Hoo's On First is a dandy name."

Before he could pick up the rib again, Hoo whisked the plate off the table. "Who elected you judge, anyhow?"

The judge returned to Sunset Towers with clippings from the newspaper's files. Faithful Sandy was waiting.

Hoping to interrogate both George Theodorakis and James Shin Hoo, they alternated their dinner orders. One night they would order up, the next night they would order down. To their disappointment Theo delivered up. They had no questions to ask him, but he had one for the doorman.

"Chess?" Sandy replied. "Sorry, don't know the game. I'm a whiz at hearts, though. 'Shooter,' they call me."

Theo left them to their sandwiches and their work.

The private detective the judge had hired was still investigating the heirs, so tonight's project would be the Westing family.

Judge Ford opened the thin folder on Mrs. Westing. Mrs. Westing—no first name, no maiden name. In the few newspaper photographs in which she appeared, always with her husband, the captions read: Mr. and Mrs. Samuel W. Westing. A shadowy figure, a shy woman, she seemed to slip behind her husband before the camera clicked, or had her face masked by a floppy hat brim. A slim woman dressed in the fashion of the time: long, loose chemise, narrow shoes with sharply pointed toes and high spiked heels. A nervous woman, her hands, especially in the later pictures, were blurred. In the final photograph a black veil covered her face. She seemed to lean unsteadily against the stocky frame of her husband as they left the cemetery.

Sandy reported his findings. "Jimmy Hoo never met Mrs. Westing. Neither did Flora Baumbach. She says Violet's fiancé brought her to the shop for fittings. She says it's bad luck for a groom to see the bride in the wedding gown before the wedding; I guess she's right. Well, that's it. Nobody else admits to having known Mrs. Westing, except me."

"You knew her, Mr. McSouthers?" the judge asked.

"Well, not exactly, but I saw her once or twice." The doorman described Mrs. Westing as blonde, full-lipped, a good figure though on the skinny side. "Mostly I recall those full lips because she had a mole right here." He pointed to the right corner of his mouth.

Judge Ford did not remember a mole; she remembered copper-colored hair and thin lips, but it was so long ago, and well—Mrs. Westing was white. Very white.

Next, Westing's daughter. The judge studied the photograph under the headline:

Violet Westing To Marry Senator

The senator turned out to be a state senator, a hack politician, now serving a five-year jail term for bribery. But Flora Baumbach was right about the resemblance. Violet Westing did look like Angela Wexler. And that was George Theodorakis, all right, dancing with her in the society page clippings.

"What does it all mean, judge?" Sandy asked, squinting at the pictures through his smeared glasses. "Angela looks like Westing's daughter, and Theo looks like his father, the man Violet Westing really wanted to marry."

"How did you know that?"

Sandy shrugged. "It was common gossip at the time, that Westing's daughter killed herself rather than have to marry that crooked politician. . . ."

Now the judge remembered; her mother had written her about the tragedy. "Tell me, Mr. McSouthers, you seem to know what's going on in this building: Is Angela Wexler involved with Theo in any way?"

"Oh no." Sandy was certain of that. "Angela and her intern seem happy enough with each other. At least, I hope so. I mean, if Sam Westing wanted to replay that terrible drama, Angela Wexler would have to die."

16

THE THIRD BOMB

"BOOM!"

Grace Wexler slammed the door on the delivery boy's silly face and returned to her party with a pink-ribboned gift. The gossiping guests were sipping jasmine tea from Westing Paper Party Cups, nibbling on tidbits from Westing Paper Party Plates, and wiping their fingers on Westing Paper Party Napkins. Madame Hoo served in a tight-fitting silk gown slit high up her thigh, a costume as old-fashioned and impractical as bound feet. Women in China wore blouses and pants and jackets. That's what she would wear when she got home.

Grace clapped her hands for attention. "Girls, girls! It's time for the bride-to-be to open her presents. Angela, you sit here and everybody gather round."

Angela did as her mother said. She lowered herself to a cushion on the floor, ringed by gift boxes and surrounded by vaguely familiar faces. She had not invited her few friends from college; they were bent on careers, this wasn't their thing. These were her mother's friends and the newly married daughters of her mother's friends—and Turtle, who was leaning against the wall, arms folded, smirking. Lucky Turtle, the neglected child.

"Read it out loud, dear," Grace ordered, as Angela opened the card tied to the yellow-ribboned box.

To the bride-to-be in the kitchen stuck,
An asparagus cooker and lots of luck.

from Cookie Barfspringer

"Thank you," Angela said, wondering which one was the Barfspringer.

The next gift was an egg poacher.

The box in pink ribbons contained another asparagus cooker.

"I sure hope Doctor Deere likes asparagus," someone remarked. The giver said she could return it for something else, although two might come in handy. "A doctor's wife has so much entertaining to do."

Angela glanced at her watch and reached for the tall, thin carton wrapped in gold foil.

"Look how Angela's hands are shaking; she's as nervous as a groom." Giggles. "Bride-to-be jitters." More giggles.

Slowly, Angela unknotted the gold ribbon. Carefully, she unfolded the gold foil. How neatly she did everything, the perfect child; not like Turtle, who ripped off wrappings, impatient to see what was inside.

"Hurry up, Angela, you're such a poke," Turtle complained. Suddenly there she was, kneeling down to peek under the lid.

"Get away!" Angela cried, jerking the gift up and away from her sister as the lid blasted off with a shattering bang. Bang! Bang! A rapid rat-a-tat-tat. Rockets shooting, fireballs bursting, comets shrieking, sparks sizzling. Two dozen framed flower prints falling off the wall.

Then it was over. Screams hushed to whimpers and the trembling guests crawled out from under tables and peered out of closets.

"Is anyone hurt?" Grace Wexler asked nervously. Other than being scared out of ten years of their lives, thank you, they were fine. "Where's Angela?"

Angela was still seated on the cushion in the middle of the floor. Fragments of the scorched box lay in her burned hands. Blood oozed from an angry gash on her cheek and trickled down her beautiful face.

Heirs, beware, Sam Westing had warned. They should have listened. Now it was too late.

The Westing Game
Chapters 12-17

The suspicious heirs gathered in the lobby around the police captain called in by Judge Ford. One of them was a murderer, they thought, and one of them was a bomber, and one of them was a thief. But which was which and who was who? Or could it be one and the same?

"Some game," Mr. Hoo grumbled, unwrapping a chocolate bar. One ulcer wasn't enough, Sam Westing had to give him three more. "Some game. The last one alive wins."

(Now, there's a likely suspect, Otis Amber thought. Hoo, the inventor; Hoo, the angry man, the madman.)

"The last one alive wins," Flora Baumbach repeated. "Oh my, what a terrible thing to say."

(Can't trust that dressmaker, Mr. Hoo thought. How come she's grinning at a time like this?)

The captain offered no help at all. "Neither the bomb squad nor the burglary detail has enough evidence to search the apartments," he explained.

"You call that justice?" Sandy asked.

(Good-natured Sandy couldn't be the one. He wasn't in the building when the first two bombs went off, or when the judge's watch was stolen, Jake Wexler thought. On the other hand, he sure did hate Sam Westing.)

"Yes, Mr. McSouthers, justice is exactly what I call it." (Not her, not the judge, in spite of the clues, Chris thought. Unless she's one of those Black Panthers in disguise.)

"Those weren't gas explosions, those were bombs. Right?" Theo pressed the captain.

(A nice kid, that Theo. Doug, too, Flora Baumbach thought. But how often had she seen television interviews of next-door neighbors saying: Can't believe he killed thirteen people, he was such a nice kid. Oh my, oh my, what's gotten into me, thinking such a thing?)

The captain would not call them bombs. "More like childish pranks," he said.

(Childish pranks! That brat's capable of anything.) Turtle stuck out her tongue at the sneering Doug Hoo. "Evil pranks of the devil," Crow muttered. Her blessed Angela was almost killed.

"Crow could be the one. Bring hellfire down on all of us," Theo whispered to Chris, "but she wasn't in the building when the first two bombs went off."

"Yes, s-she was."

"No, she wasn't."

The captain described the so-called bombs. "Just a few fireworks triggered by a squat striped candle set in a tall open jar; the ribbon probably hid the air holes in the box. No one would have been hurt if the young lady had not tilted the box toward herself."

"A time bomb," Grace Wexler said, glaring at the person who delivered the gifts.

(An unhappy woman, that self-appointed heiress, the judge thought. Unfulfilled, possibly disturbed. Capable of the burglaries, perhaps, but not the bombings. She wouldn't have hurt her own daughter—at least, not Angela.)

"Don't look at me like that," Otis Amber shouted at Mrs. Wexler. "I don't own no striped candles, or no fireworks, neither."

(That idiot is the likeliest of all, Grace thought. But he wasn't around when the coffee shop blew up.)

"O-o-o-ggg a-a-ahh." The excitement was too much for Chris Theodorakis.

(That was one heir no one suspected. And Angela, of course, no one could suspect her.)

Otis Amber was not even sure of that. "Still waters run deep," he said. "He-he-he."

Turtle could not let him get away with that, even if it was true.

"Otis Amber limps," Chris noted the next day.

Her family kept reassuring her. "You're going to be fine, Angela, just fine."

The loud snore that erupted from the next hospital bed was Sydelle Pulaski pretending to be asleep.

"I still don't remember," Angela mumbled. Her bandaged cheek made speaking difficult. Her face hurt, her hands hurt—hurt very much.

"Traumatic amnesia," Jake Wexler said. "It happens after sudden accidents. Don't worry, Angie-pie, you're going to be fine."

"You're going to be fine, Angela, just fine," Grace said despondently. "I'll be back tomorrow. Come, Turtle."

"In a minute." Turtle waited for the door to close. She touched her sister's bandaged hand. "Thanks."

"For what?"

Another snore from Sydelle.

"Just thanks. The fireworks would have gone off in my face if you hadn't pulled the box toward you. Here, I brought your tapestry bag; I didn't look at your notes or clues, honest." But she had removed the incriminating evidence.

"Turtle, tell me the truth. How bad is it?"

"The doctor had to take some glass out of your hands, but no stitches. The burns will heal okay."

"And my face?"

"Some scarring, not bad really, Angela. Besides, you always said being pretty wasn't important, it's who you really are that counts."

Angela wondered about that. Maybe she was wrong. Maybe pretty was important. Maybe she was crazy, she must have been crazy.

"Don't worry, you'll still be pretty," Turtle said. "But, wow, that sure was a dumb thing to do."

Sydelle Pulaski's eyes popped open in surprise. Quickly she squeezed them shut and uttered another loud snore. Well, what do you know? Her sweet, saintly partner was the bomber. Good for her!

17

SOME SOLUTIONS

MONDAY WAS A GRAY, rainy day. Depressing. So was the stock market, which fell another six points. Turtle was jittery.

All the heirs were jittery. The bomb squad was called in several times to examine suspicious parcels. One turned out to be a sealed vacuum cleaner bag full of dust that Crow had set behind the incinerator door. Another was a box delivered to Mrs. Wexler. In it were bonbons (her favorite) and a note: Love and kisses, Jake.

The Westing Game
Chapters 12-17

"What do you mean, how come? Can't I send candy to my wife without getting the third degree? I thought you were looking on the thin side, okay?"

Grace made him eat the first piece.

The next day Grace received a larger box. In it the bomb squad found one dozen long-stemmed roses and a note: For no reason at all, just love, Jake.

The bomb squad was called again when Turtle ran after her partner through the lobby shouting "Mrs. BAUM-bach, Mrs. BAUM-bach!" Someone thought she had shouted "Bomb! Bomb!"

A hollow wind wailed through damp Tuesday. In the morning the stock market rose three points. "Bullish," said Flora Baumbach. In the afternoon the market dropped five points. "Bearish," said Flora Baumbach. Those were the only two trading terms she had learned.

Madame Hoo, a quicker student than the dressmaker, had learned more words: partner, money, house, tree, road, pots, pans, okay, football, good, rain, spareribs. Her teacher, Jake Wexler, visited her in the kitchen before he sat down to his daily lunch in the Chinese restaurant. Today his wife and Jimmy Hoo agreed to eat with their only customer on the promise that he would help them with their clues and not take a share of the inheritance if they won.

Grace laid their five words on the table.

"These are clues?" Jake looked down on purple waves for fruited sea. He switched two squares of Westing Superstrength Towels. "Purple fruited makes more sense. How about grapes or plums?"

Grace was about to insist on purple waves, but plums reminded her of something. "Plum," she said aloud. "Plum. Wasn't the lawyer's name Plum?"

"You're right, Grace," Mr. Hoo said excitedly. "You're absolutely right." He tore one of the clues in two: fruit/ed. "Ed Purple-fruit. Ed Plum!"

"We got it, we got it," Grace cried, leaping up to embrace her partner.

"I never did trust lawyers," Mr. Hoo shouted gleefully.

"What about the other clues: for sea waves'?" Jake asked, but the happy, hugging and dancing, celebrating pair did not hear him.

"Boom!" said Madame Hoo, placing a plate of spareribs on the table. That word she had learned from Otis Amber.

Sandy was proud of the notebook he bought, with its glossy cover photograph of a bald eagle in flight (sort of appropriate, he explained to the judge; fits in with Uncle Sam and all that). In it he painstakingly entered the information culled from reports the private detective delivered each day to Judge Ford's office: photostats of birth certificates, death notices, marriage licenses, drivers' licenses, vehicular accident reports, criminal records, hospital records, school records. To these the doorman added the results of his own snooping.

"My investigator is having a difficult time getting into the not-so-public records of Westingtown," the judge said. "We'll have to put the Westings aside and begin with the heirs."

"Since we're feasting on chicken with water chestnuts," Sandy said, "I'll start off with the Hoos," (Doug had delivered down.) He read aloud from his entry:

- HOO

JAMES SHIN HOO. Born: James Hoo in Chicago. Age: 50. Added Shin to his name when he went into the restaurant business because it sounded more Chinese. First wife died of cancer five years ago. Married again last year. Has one son: Douglas.

SUN LIN HOO. Age: 28. Born in China. Immigrated from Hong Kong two years ago. Gossip: James Hoo married her for her 100-year-old sauce.

DOUGLAS HOO (called Doug). Age: 18. High-school track star. Is competing in Saturday's track meet against college milers.

Westing connection: Hoo sued Sam Westing over the invention of the disposable paper diaper. Case never came to court (Westing disappeared). Settled with the company last year for \$25,000. Thinks he was cheated. Latest invention: paper innersoles.

"I can take some credit for those paper innersoles," Sandy bragged. "My feet were killing me, standing at the door all day, so I said to Jimmy: 'Jimmy, if only somebody would invent a good innersole that didn't take up so much room like those foam-rubber things.' And sure enough, he did it. They're great, I got a pair in my shoes now, wanna see?"

"No, thank you." The judge was eating.

It was past midnight when Theo finished his homework in the dim light of the study lamp. The wind was still howling, and something (a word? a phrase?) was still eluding him. He had been studying solutions in chemistry. Solutions—that was it! The solution is simple, the will said. He was sure of it.

By changing for and thee to the numbers four and three, Theo was able to arrange the clues into a formula (whether or not it was a chemical solution, let alone the Westing solution, was another matter).

The Westing Game
Chapters 12-17

N H(IS) FOR NO THEE (TO) = NH₄NO₃

But four clue letters were left out: isto, osit, itso, otis. OTIS! He had it: a formula for an explosive, and the name of the murderer! He had to tell Doug.

"Where g-g-gogin?"

"Shhh!" Theo smoothed the blanket over his sleepy brother in the next bed, struggled into his bathrobe and stumbled over the wheelchair as he tiptoed out of the room.

The elevator made too much noise, use the stairs. The cement was cold, he had forgotten his slippers. Two unmarked doors, which one? Tap, tap. Tap. A grunting voice, dragging footsteps. Please, let it be Doug, not Mr. Hoo or Judge Ford.

It was Crow. Clutching a robe about her gaunt frame, her unknotted hair hanging long and limp, she tried to focus her dulled eyes on the shocked face of her visitor. "Theo! Theo! The wind, I heard the wind. I knew you would come."

"Me?"

Grasping his hand she pulled him into the maid's apartment between 4C and 4D and shut the door. "We are sinners, yet shall we be saved. Let us pray for deliverance, then you must go to your angel, take her away."

Theo found himself kneeling on the bare floor next to the praying Crow. He must be dreaming.

"Amen."