

# 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.

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.

*The Westing Game*  
*Chapters 12-17*

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 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?

*The Westing Game*  
*Chapters 12-17*

"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).

N H(IS) FOR NO THEE (TO) = NH4NO 3

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."

## 18

# THE TRACKERS

IT WAS FLORA BAUMBACH who braided Turtle's hair now, sometimes in three strands, sometimes four, sometimes twined with ribbons, while Turtle read The Wall Street Journal.

"Listen to this: 'The newly elected chairman of the board of Westing Paper Products Corporation, Julian R. Eastman, announced from London where he is conferring with European management that earnings from all divisions are expected to double in the next quarter.'"

"That's nice," Flora Baumbach said, not understanding a word of it.

Turtle gave the order for the day. "Listen carefully. As soon as you get to the broker's office I want you to sell AMO, sell SEA, sell MT, and put all the money into WPP. Okay?"

Oh my! That meant selling every stock mentioned in their clues and buying more shares of Westing Paper Products—at a loss of some thousands of dollars. "Whatever you say, Alice, you're the smart one."

Flora Baumbach's hands were gentle, they never hurried or pulled a stray hair. Flora Baumbach loved her, she could tell. "I like when you call me Alice," Turtle said, "but I better not call you Mrs. Baumbach anymore, because of the bomb scare, you know." Calling her Flora would spoil everything. "Maybe I could call you Mrs. Baba?"

"Why not just Baba?"

That's exactly what Turtle (Alice) wanted to hear. "Was your daughter, Rosalie, very smart, Baba?"

"My, no. You're the smartest child I ever met, a real businesswoman."

Turtle glowed behind *The Wall Street Journal*. "I bet Rosalie baked bread and patched quilts and dumb stuff like that."

The dressmaker's sure fingers fumbled over the red ribbons she was weaving into a four-strand braid. "Rosalie was an exceptional child. The friendliest, loveliest . . ."

Turtle crumpled the newspaper. "Let's go. I'm late for school and you've got that big trade to make."

"But I haven't finished tying the ribbons."

"Never mind, I like them hanging." Turtle felt like kicking somebody, anybody, good and hard.

Sandy was not at the door when they left. He was in apartment 4D neatly writing in his patriotic notebook information gathered on the next heir.

- BAUMBACH

FLORA BAUMBACH. Maiden name: Flora Miller. Age: 60. Dressmaker. Husband left her years ago, sends no money. She had a retarded daughter, Rosalie, a Mongoloid child. Sold bridal shop last year after Rosalie died of pneumonia, age 19. Spends most of her time at the stockbrokers. Westing connection: Made wedding gown for Violet Westing, which she never got to wear.

Sandy turned to a fresh page, propped his feet on the judge's desk and began to read the data supplied by the private investigator on Otis Amber. He laughed so hard he nearly fell off the tilting chair.

Haunted by last night's dream, Theo jogged behind his partner halfway to the high school before he uttered a breathless "Stop!"

Doug Hoo stopped.

"Who lives in the apartment next to yours?"

"Crow. Why?"

"Nothing." How come he didn't know that? Because no one ever wonders where a cleaning woman lives, that's why. But he wasn't like that, was he? Still, it must have been a dream. In the dream, the nightmare, Crow had given him a letter, but the only thing he found in his bathrobe pocket this morning was a Westing Paper Hankie. "Hey, wait!" Doug had started off again. "I figured out our clues. Ammonium nitrate. It's used in fertilizers, explosives, and rocket propellants."

"I knew those clues were a pile of fertilizer," Doug replied, jogging easily. Only one thing mattered: Saturday's big track meet. If he won or came in a fast second he'd have his pick of athletic scholarships. He didn't need the inheritance.

"Stand still and listen." Theo grabbed Doug by the shoulders and held him flat-footed to the ground. "Like it or not we're partners, and you've got to do your share."

"Sure," Doug replied. His father was angry, his partner was angry, and a bomber was blowing up Sunset Towers floor by floor. Some game! "What do you want me to do?"

"Follow Otis Amber."

Head tilted back, Flora Baumbach squirted drops in her eyes, blinked, and stared again at the moving tape.

HR1000\$42 1/2 WPP5000\$39 1/4 BRY27 TA5\$17 1/4 Z5000\$271/4 WPP5000\$39 1/2

"Oh my!" Westing Paper Products had jumped four and a quarter, no, four and a half points. Her eyes must be blurry from the medicine. The dressmaker sat on the edge of her chair, biting her fingernails, waiting for WPP to cross the board again. There: WPP \$40. Oh my, oh my! This morning she had paid thirty-five dollars a share. There it goes again: WPP \$40%. Oh my, oh my, oh my!

After classes, instead of running around the indoor track, Doug Hoo jogged out of the gym to the shopping center six blocks away. There was Otis Amber, placing two cake boxes in the compartment of his bike. He picked up a package from the butcher shop, and pedaled off, unaware of the sweat-suited figure trotting half a block behind him, and went into Sunset Towers to make his deliveries.

"Hi, Doug. Gonna run the mile under four minutes on Saturday?" the doorman asked.

"Sure hope so. Do me a favor, Sandy, give a loud whistle when Otis Amber comes out. Okay?"

Chip-toothed Sandy gave such a loud whistle that Otis Amber would have been deafened if the flaps of the aviator's helmet had not been snug against his ears.

Leaving his bicycle in the parking lot, Otis Amber boarded a bus. Doug ran the five uphill miles to a house with the placard: E. J. Plum, Attorney. He ran another three uphill miles after the bus that took the delivery boy to the hospital entrance.

Doug sank down in a waiting-room chair, wiped his face on his sweatshirt and picked up a magazine. Fascinated by the centerfold picture, he almost missed Otis Amber, who dashed out of the hospital as though fleeing for his life.

Hiding behind parked cars, Doug followed the delivery boy to another bus, ran four steep miles to a stockbroker's office (how is it that all roads go uphill?), from the broker to the high school, from the high school (downhill, at last) back to Sunset Towers.

The exhausted track star leaned against the side of the building, thankful he was not a long-distance runner.

"I gotcha!" Otis Amber poked a skinny finger into Doug's ribs. "He-he-he," he cackled, handing the startled runner a letter. "It's from that lawyer Plum. Says all the heirs gotta be at the Westing house this Saturday night. Sign here."

With his last ounce of energy he wrote Doug Hoo, miler on the receipt, then slid down the wall to a weary squat. Some miler. His feet were blistered; his muscles, sore; he could barely breathe, he might never run another step in his life.

On receiving the notice of the Westing house meeting, Judge Ford canceled her remaining appointments and hurried home. Time was running out.

Sandy read to her from his notebook:

- AMBER

OTIS JOSEPH AMBER. Age: 62. Delivery boy. Fourth-grade dropout. IQ: 50. Lives in the basement of Green's Grocery. A bachelor. No living relatives.

Westing connection: Delivered letters from E. J. Plum, Attorney, both times.

"I would've guessed Otis had an IQ of minus ten," Sandy said with a smile.

"Go on to the next heir," the judge replied.

- DEERE

D. DENTON DEERE. Age: 25. Graduate of UW Medical School. First-year intern, plastic surgery. Parents live in Racine (not heirs). Westing connection: Engaged to Angela Wexler (see Wexlers), who looks like Sam Westing's daughter, Violet, who was also engaged to be married, but to a politician not an intern.

"That's awful complicated, I know," the doorman apologized, "but it's the best I could do."

- PULASKI

SYDELLE PULASKI. Age: 50. Education: high school, one year secretarial school. Secretary to the president of Schultz Sausages. Is taking her first vacation in 25 years (six months' saved-up time). Lived with widowed mother and two aunts until she moved to Sunset Towers. Walked with a crutch even before she broke her ankle in the second bombing. Now needs two crutches (she paints them!).

We sting connection: ?

"We don't have any medical reports on her muscular ailment," Sandy reported. "The nurse at Schultz Sausages said she was in perfect health when she left on vacation."

"Strange," the judge remarked. A suspicious malady, no apparent Westing connection, somehow Sydelle Pulaski did not seem to fit in.

Sydelle Pulaski clasped the translated notes to her bosom. "My little secret, mustn't peek," she said coyly, but the doctors had come to see Angela.

The plastic surgeon loosed the tape from her cheek and peered under the gauze. "One graft should do it, but we can't operate until the tissue heals," he said to the intern, then spoke to the patient. "Call my secretary for an appointment in two months." He strode out of the room leaving Denton Deere to replace the bandage.

"I don't want plastic surgery," Angela mumbled. It still hurt to talk.

"Nothing to be frightened of. He's the best when it comes to facial repairs, that's why I brought him in."

"We'll have to postpone the wedding."

"We can have a small informal wedding."

"Mother wouldn't like that."

"How about you, Angela, what do you want?" He knew her unspoken answer was "I don't know."

The door flew open and slammed against the adjacent wall. "Where do you think you're going?" Denton pulled Turtle to a halt by one of the streaming ribbons twisted in her braid. "The sign says No Visitors."

"I'm not a visitor, I'm a sister. And get your germy hands off my hair."

*The Westing Game*  
*Chapters 12-17*

Denton Deere hurried to seek first aid for his bleeding shin and sent the biggest male nurse on the floor to take care of Turtle, the same male nurse who chased Otis Amber out of the hospital for sneaking up on a nurse's aide carrying a specimen tray and shouting, "Boom!"

Turtle had time for one question. "Angela, what did you sign on the receipt this time after 'position'?"

"Person."

"I changed mine to victim," Sydelle said.

Turtle paid no attention to the victim. She was more interested in the two men entering the room: the burly male nurse and that creep of a lawyer, Plum. "I gotta go. Don't say anything to anybody about anything, Angela, no matter what happens. Not even to a lawyer. You know nothing, you hear? Nothing!" She skirted Ed Plum, ducked under the outstretched hairy hands of the male nurse, slid down the hall, scampered down the stairs and out of the hospital.

"Hi, how are you?" Ed Plum smiled at Angela, ignoring the patient in the other bed. He didn't recognize Ms. Pulaski without her painted crutch. "I'm sorry to hear about your accident. Otis Amber told me about it. Just thought I'd drop in for a chat." The young lawyer, who had admired the pretty heiress from the minute he first laid eyes on her, did not have a chance to chat.

Grace Wexler entered the room, saw the answer to the clues: Ed Purple-fruit, the murderer, standing over her daughter, and uttered a blood-curdling shriek.

Three visitors in one day! The first was Otis Amber with a letter and another receipt to sign. Chris had pretended to be scared by the "Boom!" but he wasn't really. He had twitched because he was excited about going to the Westing house again, even if he hadn't figured out the clues.

Then Flora Baumbach came to see him. He wasn't nervous at all with that nice lady. She smiles that funny smile because she's sad inside. She once had a daughter named Rosalie. She told him how Rosalie would sit in the shop and say hello to the customers, and how she would feel the fabrics. Mrs. Baumbach made wedding dresses, which are mostly white, so she bought samples of materials with bright colors and patterns because Rosalie loved colors best. Rosalie had 573 different swatches in her collection before she died. Mrs. Baumbach said her daughter might have been an artist if things had turned out differently.

What would I have been if things had turned out differently?

The third visitor entered. Limping! His partner was limping! Too much excitement, his stupid body was jerking all over the place.

*The Westing Game*  
*Chapters 12-17*

Denton Deere sat down next to the wheelchair. "Take it easy, Chris. Calm down, kid, I'm not the creature from the black lagoon, you know."

His partner, a doctor, watched horror movies on television, too. Slowly arms untangled, legs unsnarled. Slowly Chris stuttered out his news: Flora Baumbach felt so guilty about seeing their dropped clue that she told him one of her clues: mountain. "But we m-mus-n t-tell T-Turtle."

"Don't worry," the intern said, displaying a bruised shin.

Chris laughed, then stopped. "I s-sorry."

"Mountain, hmmm." Denton Deere thought about the new clue. "If a treasure is hidden in a grain shed on a mountain plain, I sure don't have time to look for it. Do you?"

"N-n-n."

"Let's forget the clues, I have something more important to tell you. Don't get excited, okay?"

Chris nodded. His partner was going to ask for the money. Denton Deere stood. "I'll get your toothbrush and pajamas, then we'll go to the hospital. Don't get excited."

Chris got excited. How could he explain that what he wanted from his partner was companionship, not more probing, pricking doctors with their bad news that made his mother cry?

"Listen, Chris, can you hear me? Just overnight. I found a neurologist, a nerve doctor, who works on problems like yours."

"Op-p-pra-shn?"

"No operation. Did you hear me, Chris? No operation. The doctor thinks a new medicine may help, but he has to examine you, make some tests. I have your parents' permission, but no one will touch you unless we talk it over first, you and me, together. I promise."

Chris grimaced trying to smile. His partner said talk it over, the two of them, together. They were really partners now. "You c-c-cn have m-money."

"What? Oh, the money. Later. Here, let me take those, you won't need them in the hospital." Chris clung to his binoculars. "Well, I guess you do need them. Ready? Here we go!"

All of a sudden he was leaving Sunset Towers, pushed by his limping partner. Maybe Doctor Deere is not who and what he says he is. Maybe he is being kidnapped for ransom. Maybe he's being held hostage. Oh boy, he hasn't had so much fun in years.

## 19

# ODD RELATIVES

THURSDAY WAS a sunny day, a glorious day; the autumn air was crisp and clear. None of the heirs noticed.

WPP crossed the tape at \$44 . . . \$44 1/2 . . . \$46. Forty-six dollars a share! Oh my! ("Don't sell until I give the word, Baba," Alice-Turtle had said.) Baba. The dressmaker smiled at her new name and eased back in the chair, but not for long. WPP \$48 1/4. Oh my, oh my! Flora Baumbach bit her thumbnail to the quick. If only the child was here.

The child was being examined by the school nurse, having been caught again with a radio plugged in her ear. Turtle blamed her misbehavior on a toothache. "The only thing that soothes the horrendous pain is listening to music."

"You should see a dentist," the nurse said.

"I have an appointment next week," Turtle lied. "Can I go home now? The pain is truly unbearable."

"No." The nurse packed the tooth with foul-tasting cotton and sent her back to class. So every half hour Turtle had to ask permission to go to the lavatory in order to keep up with the latest stock market reports. "Bladder infection," she explained.

Crow polished Mrs. Wexler's silver teapot with a Westing Disposable Diaper for the third time. Two more days, the day after next. It was too painful, going back to that house, but Otis said she must, to collect her due. It was her penance to go back, not her due. Blessed is he who expects nothing.

"Boom! Just a warning to keep doors locked," the delivery boy said, dumping a carton of Westing Paper Products on the kitchen floor. "You know, Crow old pal, I think I figured out who the bomber is."

Crow stiffened as she stared at her distorted reflection in the shining silver. "Who?"

"That's right," Otis Amber said. "James Shin Hoo. He wanted to put the coffee shop out of business, right? Then he had to bomb his own restaurant so nobody would suspect him, right? And he catered the Wexler party. Nobody would notice if the caterer brought in an extra box along with the food, right?"

James Shin Hoo was the bomber. Crow's hands trembled, her face blotched with hate. That beautiful, innocent angel reborn; Sandy said her face will be scarred for life. James Shin Hoo, beware! Vengeance shall be mine.

The judge rearranged her docket in order to have these last days free. (Leave it to Sam Westing to interfere with her work.)

Sandy turned to his next entry. "It's an interesting one."

- CROW

BERTHE ERICA CROW. Age: 57. Mother died at childbirth, raised by father (deceased). Education: 1 year of high school. Married at 16, divorced at 40. Ex-husband's name: Windy Windkloppel. Hospital records: problems related to chronic alcoholism. Police record: 3 arrests for vagrancy. Gave up drinking when she took up religion. Started the Good Salvation Soup Kitchen on Skid Row. Works as cleaning woman in Sunset Towers, lives in maid's apartment on fourth floor. Westing connection: ?

"Yes, it is interesting," Judge Ford replied, "but it hardly tells us what we want to know."

"You've got a customer." Jake Wexler pointed a sparerib at the black-clad figure standing at the restaurant door.

"Must be a bill collector," Hoo said, frowning over his account book.

Grace looked up, saw it was only the cleaning woman, and returned to the sports photographs she was sorting. A dozen or more superstars would be framed and hung on one wall of Hoo's On First.

"Come on over and join us," Jake shouted.

Limping to their table, Crow heard Mrs. Wexler click her tongue. Sinful woman, she'll go to hell with her pride and her covetousness, and take that foot-butcher of a husband with her. And that one, the fat one, the glutton, the bomber, the mutilator of innocent children.

Maybe she is a customer, Hoo thought, recognizing the face clenched in righteous anger as that of a diner not being served fast enough. He rose and pulled out a chair for Crow. "My wife will be serving a Chinese tea lunch shortly,"

Madame Hoo placed a variety of dumplings on the table, giggled at Jake and ran back to the kitchen.

That tittering Madame Hoo was a beautiful woman. And quite young. Grace, casting a suspicious eye on her husband, was suddenly seized by a surge of gnawing jealousy (maybe it was just the fried dumpling).

Madame Hoo returned to pour the tea. Jake patted her hand. Good, Grace noticed, she's clutching her stomach, about time she felt jealous. The podiatrist turned his smile to Crow. "Nothing wrong with your appetite, I'm happy to see.

"Nothing is wrong with my mouth," the cleaning woman replied, looking down at her plate, "it's my feet that hurt. That corn you cut out didn't heal yet, I got a callus on the sole of my left foot, and my ingrown toenail is growing in again."

Grace clasped a hand over her mouth and ran out of the restaurant. Mr. Hoo headed for the kitchen.

"Your trouble comes from years of wearing the wrong kind of shoes," Jake lectured.

Crow wasn't listening. James Shin Hoo, the bomber, was coming back. He had something in his hand.

"Here, Crow, try these. I invented them myself. Paper innersoles. They'll make you feel like you're floating on air. It's tough standing on your feet all day. Here, take them."

Crow examined the two pads of spongy folded paper. "How much?"

"Nothing, compliments of the house."

Still suspicious, Crow slipped the innersoles into her shoes and tried walking. What a blessed relief. Otis Amber was wrong. James Shin Hoo was a charitable man, he couldn't be the bomber. Crow floated out of the restaurant without paying for her lunch.

"Oh no, not another victim," Sydelle Pulaski cried, stuffing her notes under the mattress.

The nurse wheeled Chris next to Angela's bed and explained that the boy was being tested for a new medication. "Are you all right?" she asked, bending over the squirming patient.

Chris was trying to remove a blank, sealed envelope from his bathrobe pocket. He knew his brother had a crush on Angela. He figured Theo must have sneaked upstairs in the wrong bathrobe to slip this letter under Angela's door, then remembered she was in the hospital and was too shy to give it to her in person.

"Look at that smile," Sydelle exclaimed.

"F-from Theo," he said. Chris hoped to watch Angela read the love letter, but the nurse insisted he return to his room.

"Bye-bye, good luck," Sydelle called. Angela waved a bandaged hand.

"M-moun—t-tain," Chris replied. "From T-turtle." Serves her right for kicking his partner.

Mountain, Angela thought. Turtle's MT stood for mountain, not empty. And the letter was not from Theo.

Your love has 2, here are 2 for you.

Take her away from this sin and hate

NOW! Before it is too late.

Again two clues were taped at the bottom:

WITH MAJESTIES

"Crow and Otis Amber's clues are not king and queen," she told Sydelle. "They are with thy beautiful majesties."

Sandy and the judge were still at work on the heirs.

- WEXLER

JAKE WEXLER. Age: 45. Podiatrist. Graduated from Marquette. Married 22 years, has two daughters (see below).

GRACE WINDSOR WEXLER. Born Gracie Windkloppel. Age: 42. Married to above. Claims to be an interior decorator. Spends most of her time in the Chinese restaurant or the beauty parlor. She and Jake (see above) have two daughters (see below). ANGELA WEXLER. Age: 20. Engaged to marry D. Denton Deere (also an heir). One year college (high grades). Victim of third bombing. Embroiders a lot.

TURTLE WEXLER. Real name: Tabitha-Ruth Wexler. Age: 13. Junior-high-school student. Plays the stock market. Smart kid, but kicks people. Flora Baumbach calls her Alice.

Westing connection: Grace Windsor Wexler claims that Sam Westing is her real uncle. Angela looks like Violet Westing, so does Grace in a way, except she's older.

Sandy fidgeted with his pen. "There's something I didn't write down. Maybe I shouldn't tell you, you being a judge and all, but, well, Jake Wexler . . . he's a bookie."

No, he should not have told her. "A small-time operator, I'm sure, Mr. McSouthers," the judge replied coldly. "It can have no bearing on the matter before us. Sam Westing manipulated people, cheated workers, bribed officials, stole ideas, but Sam Westing never smoked or drank or placed a bet. Give me a bookie any day over such a fine, upstanding, clean-living man."

The doorman's face reddened. He pulled the dented flask from his hip pocket and downed several swigs.

She had been too harsh. "Would you like me to fix you a drink, Mr. McSouthers?"

"No thanks, judge. I prefer my good old Scotch."

"Windkloppel!" The judge's outburst was so unexpected, Sandy had a hard time keeping down the last swig.

"Grace Wexler's maiden name is not Windsor, it's Windkloppel," the judge exclaimed, riffling through the pages of Sandy's notebook. "Here it is: 'Berthe Erica Crow. Ex-husband's name: Windy Windkloppel.' "

Sandy stopped coughing, started laughing. "Grace Windsor Wexler is related to somebody all right; she's related to the cleaning woman. Think she knows, judge?"

"I doubt it. Besides, we cannot be certain of the relationship. I'd like to see the documents in Crow's folder again."

"I'm sure it's Windkloppel, judge, I checked all my spellings three times over."

Judge Ford reread the private investigator's reports. "Mr. McSouthers, it is Windkloppel, but look carefully at the name of the woman in this interview."

Berthe Erica Crow? Sure I knew her. She and her pa lived in the upstairs flat. We were best friends, almost like sisters, but she was the pretty one with her beautiful complexion and long gold-red hair. She left school to marry a guy named Windkloppel. Haven't seen or heard from her since. She's not in any trouble, is she?

Transcript of a taped interview  
with Sybil Pulaski, November 12.

"Pulaski!" the doorman said.

"Not just Pulaski," the judge pointed out. "Sybil Pulaski. Sam Westing wanted Crow's childhood friend, Sybil Pulaski, to be one of his heirs. He got Sydelle Pulaski instead."

"Gee, judge, I never noticed that; boy, am I dumb. But what does it mean?"

"What it means, Mr. McSouthers, is that Sam Westing made his first mistake."

## 20

# CONFESSIONS

FRIDAY CAME QUICKLY to the Westing heirs. Too quickly. Time was running out.

Turtle skipped school. She was in trouble enough, but she could build her own school and hire her own kind of teachers once she became a millionaire.

In spite of having Turtle at her side, Flora Baumbach still stared at the ever-changing, endless tape from the edge of the chair, chewed what remained of her fingernails, and uttered an "Oh my!" each time WPP went by. At two o'clock Westing Paper Products sold at fifty-two dollars a share, its highest price in fifteen years.

"Now, Baba. SELL!"

Doug Hoo had a legitimate excuse from classes: tomorrow was the big track meet. He jogged, he sprinted, he ran at full speed—not on the track, but on the trail of Otis Amber. Back and forth from the shopping center to Sunset Towers, again and again and again and . . . hey, this is a new direction.

Otis Amber parked his delivery bike in front of a rooming house and went inside. Doug waited, hidden in a doorway across the street. And waited. People came and went, but no Otis Amber. Doug jogged up and down the block for two hours. Still no sign of Otis Amber.

Doug was cold and hungry, but at least his feet didn't hurt anymore. Last night when he asked Doc Wexler about the blisters, the podiatrist told him to see his father—his father, of all people. But those paper innersoles really worked.

At five o'clock Otis Amber skipped out of the rooming house, hopped on his bicycle, and returned to Sunset Towers empty-handed. Doug's assignment was over, well, almost over. Where was Theo?

Theo was being patched up in the hospital emergency room after a slight miscalculation in his "solution" experiment. Fortunately, no one else was around when the lab blew up.

"You like playing with explosives, kid?" the bomb squad detective asked. Accidents in high-school chemistry were not unusual, but this student lived in Sunset Towers.

"I was experimenting on chemical fertilizers," Theo replied, wincing as the doctor probed his shoulder for a glass shard.

"The first bomb went off in your folks' coffee shop, right? Your mother and father work you pretty hard, don't they?"

"They work harder than I do. Why all the questions? Your captain said the Sunset Towers explosions were just fireworks."

"Sure they were, but bombers have a funny habit of going in for bigger and bigger bangs. Until they get caught."

Theo had an alibi. He was nowhere near the Wexler apartment the day the third bomb went off. The detective grunted a warning about careless chemistry, but Theo had already learned his lesson. "Ouch!"

At last the coffee shop owner himself delivered the up order. The judge came right to the point. "Mr. Theodorakis, tell me about your relationship with Violet Westing. I have reason to believe a life is in danger or I would not ask."

It was a question he had expected. "I grew up in Westingtown where my father was a factory foreman. Violet Westing and I were, what you'd call, childhood sweethearts. We planned to get married someday, when I could afford it, but her mother broke us up. She wanted Violet to marry somebody important."

The judge had to interrupt. "Her mother? Are you saying it was Mrs. Westing who arranged the marriage, not Sam Westing?"

George Theodorakis nodded. "That's right. Sam Westing tried to involve Violet in his business. I guess he hoped she'd take over the paper company one day; but she had her heart set on being a teacher. Besides, Violet didn't have much of a business sense. After that her father never paid her much attention."

"Go on." The judge held the witness in her stare. The subject was becoming painful, and Mr. Theodorakis faltered several times in the telling. "Mrs. Westing hand-picked that politician—probably figured the guy would end up in the White House and her daughter would be First Lady. But Violet thought he was nothing but a cheap political hack, a cheap crook. Violet was a gentle person, an only child. She couldn't turn against her mother, she couldn't face marrying that guy. . . . I guess she couldn't find any way out, except . . . Mrs. Westing sort of went off her rocker after Violet's death, and I . . . well, it was a long time ago."

"Thank you, Mr. Theodorakis," the judge said, ending the interrogation. The man had a different life now, different loves, different problems. "Thank you, you have been a big help."

Sandy was now able to complete the entry:

- THEODORAKIS

THEO THEODORAKIS. Age: 17. High-school senior. Works in family coffee shop. Wants to be a writer. Seems lonely; can't find anyone to play chess with.

CHRISTOS THEODORAKIS. Age: 15. Younger brother of above. Confined to wheelchair; disease struck about four years ago. Knows a lot about birds.

Westing connection: Father was childhood sweetheart of Sam Westing's daughter (who looked like Angela Wexler). Mrs. Westing broke up the affair. She wanted daughter to marry somebody else, but Violet Westing killed herself before the wedding. Neither parents of above are heirs.

"I hear the new medicine they're trying out on Chris is doing some good," Sandy reported. "But the poor kid needs more help than medicine. He's real smart, you know. Chris could have a real future, be a scientist or a professor, even; but it will take a pile of money, more money than his folks could ever make, to put him through college with a handicap like that."

"The parents interest me more," the judge said. "Why are they not heirs?"

*The Westing Game*  
*Chapters 12-17*

Sandy had some thought on that, too. "Maybe Sam Westing didn't want to embarrass George Theodorakis, him being married and all. Or maybe Westing figured he'd be too busy with his coffee shop to stay in the game. Or maybe Westing blamed him for his daughter's death, figuring they should have eloped."

"No, if Sam Westing blamed Mr. Theodorakis, he would have made him an heir in this miserable game," the judge replied. "There are too many maybe's here, which is what Sam Westing planned. We must not allow ourselves to be distracted from the real issue: Which heir did Sam Westing want punished?"

"The person who hurt him most?" Sandy guessed.

"And who would that be?"

"The person who caused his daughter's death?"

"Exactly, Mr. McSouthers. Sam Westing plotted against the person he held responsible for his daughter's suicide, the person who forced Violet Westing to marry a man she loathed."

"Mrs. Westing? But that's not possible, judge. Mrs. Westing is not one of the heirs."

"I think she is, Mr. McSouthers. The former wife of Sam Westing must be one of the heirs. Mrs. Westing is the answer, and whoever she is, she is the one we have to protect."