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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:

The Westing Game
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- 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."

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.

The Westing Game
Chapters 18-25

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.

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.

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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

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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?"

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."

21

THE FOURTH BOMB

THE DOOR TO APARTMENT 2C opened. Flora Baumbach screamed, and Turtle flung herself on the pile of money they had been counting.

It was Theo, not the thief. "Can I borrow your bike for a few hours? It's very important." Theo was not a runner like Doug, who was fuming about his being so late. He needed the bicycle to follow Otis Amber, right now.

Turtle stared at him in stony silence.

"I didn't make that sign in the elevator; besides, you already kicked me for it. Please, Turtle." She still wouldn't answer, punk kid. "I had a long talk with the police today, but I refused to tell them who the bomber was."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

What does she think it means? It means that he and everybody else knows that Turtle is the bomber. "Never mind. Can I have your bike or not?"

"Why do you want it?"

Theo ground his teeth. Take it easy; anger won't help any more than blackmail did. Try being a good guy. "I saw Angela in the hospital today. She sends her regards."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You let me have that bike, Turtle Wexler, or—or else!"

Turtle did not have to ask what "or else" meant: police—bomber—Angela, but how did Theo find out? "Here!" she threw the padlock key across the room and waited for him to rush out before she let go of the money.

"He's such a nice boy," Flora Baumbach remarked.

"Sure," Turtle replied, dialing the telephone number of the hospital. "Angela Wexler, room 325."

"Room 325 is not accepting any calls."

Turtle hung up the phone. If Theo knew, others knew. Angela had set off those fireworks wanting to get caught, but it was different now. Now she was confused, now she was just plain scared. They could force a confession out of her in no time, the guilt was right there staring out of those big blue eyes. Maybe they're questioning her now. "Baba, I'm not feeling so good; I think I'll go home to bed."

Weaving through rush hour traffic on Turtle's bike, Theo trailed the bus to a seamy downtown district across the railroad tracks where Crow and Otis got off. Skid Row. The pair wandered through the dimly lit, littered, and stinking street, bending over grimy bums asleep in doorways, raising them to their unsteady feet, and leading the ragtag procession into a decaying storefront. Paint was peeling off the letters on the window: Good Salvation Soup Kitchen.

A drunken wreck of a man lurched into Theo, who put a quarter into the filthy outstretched hand, more out of fright than charity.

Snatches of hymn-singing drifted toward him as the last of the stragglers staggered through the door. Theo crossed the narrow street and pressed his nose against the steamy soup-kitchen window. Rows of wretched souls sat hunched on wooden benches. Crow stood before them in her neat black dress, her hands raised toward the crumbling ceiling. Behind her Otis Amber stirred a boiling mess in a big iron pot.

Theo pedaled back to Sunset Towers at a furious pace. Whatever brought Crow and Otis Amber to these lower depths was none of his business. He hated himself for spying. He hated Sam Westing and his dirty money and his dirty game. Theo felt as dirty as the derelicts he spied on. Dirtier.

The judge thought they had finished with the heirs. "Not quite," the doorman said.

- McSOUTHERS

ALEXANDER MCSOUTHERS. Called Sandy. Age: 65. Born: Edinburgh, Scotland. Immigrated to Wisconsin, age 3. Education: eighth grade. Jobs: mill worker, union organizer, prizefighter, doorman. Married, six children, two grandchildren. Westing connection: Worked in Westing Paper plant 20 years. Fired by Sam Westing himself for trying to organize the workers. No pension.

Sandy turned to a blank page, pushed his taped glasses up the broken bridge of his nose and looked at the judge. "Name?" It had not seemed sporting to investigate one's own partner, but McSouters was right, this was a Westing game. Of course, she had kept some facts from him about the other heirs, but only because she did not trust his blabbering. "Josie-Jo Ford, with a hyphen between Josie and Jo."

"Age?"

"Forty-two. Education: Columbia; law degree, Harvard." The judge waited for the doorman to enter the information in his slow, cramped lettering. He had to be meticulous in order to prove he was better than his eighth-grade education. It's a pity he had not gone further, he was quite a clever man.

"Jobs?"

"Assistant district attorney. Judge: family court, state supreme court, appellate division. Appellate has two p's and two l's. Never married, no children."

"Westing connection?"

The judge paused, then spoke so rapidly Sandy had to stop taking notes. "My mother was a servant in the Westing household, my father worked for the railroad and was the gardener on his days off."

"You mean you lived in the Westing house?" Sandy asked with obvious surprise. "You knew the Westings?"

"I barely saw Mrs. Westing. Violet was a few years younger than I, doll-like and delicate. She was not allowed to play with other children. Especially the skinny, long-legged, black daughter of the servants."

"Gee, you must have been lonely, judge, having nobody to play with."

"I played with Sam Westing—chess. Hour after hour I sat staring down at that chessboard. He lectured me, he insulted me, and he won every game." The judge thought of their last game: She had been so excited about taking his queen, only to have the master checkmate her in the next move. Sam Westing had deliberately sacrificed his queen and she had fallen for it. "Stupid child, you can't have a brain in that frizzy head to make a move like that." Those were the last words he ever said to her.

The judge continued: "I was sent to boarding school when I was twelve. My parents visited me at school when they could, but I never set foot in the Westing house again, not until two weeks ago."

"Your folks must have really worked hard," Sandy said. "An education like that costs a fortune."

"Sam Westing paid for my education. He saw that I was accepted into the best schools, probably arranged for my first job, perhaps more, I don't know."

"That's the first decent thing I've heard about the old man."

"Hardly decent, Mr. McSouthers. It was to Sam Westing's advantage to have a judge in his debt. Needless to say, I have excused myself from every case remotely connected with Westing affairs."

"You're awfully hard on yourself, judge. And on him. Maybe Westing paid for your education 'cause you were smart and needy, and you did all the rest by yourself."

"This is getting us nowhere, Mr. McSouthers. Just write: Westing connection: Education financed by Sam Westing. Debt never repaid."

Theo, upset over his Skid Row snooping, took out his anger on the UP button, poking it, jabbing it, until the elevator finally made its way down to the lobby. Slowly the door slid open. He stared down at the sparking, sputtering arsenal, yelled and belly-flopped to the carpet as rockets whizzed out of the elevator, inches above his head. Boom! Boom! A blinding flash of white fire streaked through the lobby, through the open entrance door, and burst into a chrysanthemum of color in the night sky. Then the elevator door closed.

The bomber had made one mistake. The last rocket blasted off when the elevator returned to the third floor. Boom!

By the time the bomb squad reached the scene (by way of the stairs), the smoke had cleared, but the young girl was still huddled on the hallway floor, tears streaming down her turtle-like face.

"For heaven's sake, say something," her mother said. "Tell me where it hurts."

The pain was too great to be put into words. Five inches of Turtle's braid were badly singed.

Grace Wexler attacked the policeman. "Nothing but a childish prank, you said. Some childish prank; both my children cruelly injured, almost killed. Maybe now you'll do something, now that it's too late."

Unshaken by the mother's anger, the policeman held up the sign that had been taped to the elevator wall:

THE BOMBER STRIKES AGAIN!!!

On the reverse side was a handwritten composition: "How I Spent My Summer Vacation" by Turtle Wexler.

Grace grabbed the theme and shook it at her daughter, who was being rocked in Flora Baumbach's arms. "Somebody stole this from you, didn't they, Turtle? You couldn't have done such an awful thing, not to Angela, not to your own sister, could you Turtle? Could you?"

"I want to see a lawyer," Turtle replied.

The bomb squad, faced with six hours' overtime filling out forms and delivering the delinquent to a juvenile detention facility, decided it was best for all concerned to escort the prisoner to apartment 4D and place her in the custody of Judge Ford.

Judge Ford put on her black robe and seated herself behind the desk. Before her stood a downcast child looking very sad and very sorry. Not at all like the Turtle she knew. "You surprise me, Turtle Wexler. I thought you were too smart to commit such a dangerous, destructive, and stupid act."

"Yes ma'am."

"Why did you do it, Turtle? To hurt someone, to get even with someone?"

"No ma'am."

Of course not. Turtle kicked shins, she was not the type to bottle up her anger. "You do understand that a child would not receive as harsh a penalty as an adult would? That there would be no permanent criminal record?"

"Yes ma'am. I mean, no ma'am."

She was protecting someone. She had set off the fireworks in the elevator to divert suspicion from the real bomber. But who was the real bomber? Nothing to do but drag it out of her, name by name, starting with the least likely. "Are you protecting Angela?"

"No!"

The judge was astounded by the excited response. Angela could not be the bomber, not that sweet, pretty thing. Thing? Is that how she regarded that young woman, as a thing? And what had she ever said to her except 'I hear you're getting married, Angela' or 'How pretty you look, Angela.' Had anyone asked about her ideas, her hopes, her plans? If I had been treated like that I'd have used dynamite, not fireworks; no, I would have just walked out and kept right on going. But Angela was different. "What a senseless thing to do," the judge said aloud.

"Yes ma'am." Turtle stared down at the carpet, wondering if she had given Angela away.

Judge Ford rose and placed an arm around Turtle's bony shoulders. She had never wished for a sister until this moment. "Turtle, will you give me your word that you will never play with fireworks again?"

"Yes ma'am."

"While we're at it, do you have anything else to confess?"

"Yes ma'am. I was in the Westing house the night Mr. Westing died."

"Good lord, child, sit down and tell me."

Turtle began with the purple-waves story, went on to the whisperings, the bedded-down corpse, the dropped peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and her mother's cross, and ended with the twenty-four dollars she had won.

"Did either you or Doug Hoo call the police?"

"No ma'am, we were too scared, we just ran. Is that a crime?"

The judge said it was a criminal offense to conceal a murder.

"But Mr. Westing didn't look murdered," Turtle argued. "He looked asleep, like he did in the coffin. He looked like a wax dummy."

"A wax dummy?"

Now Turtle was the one surprised by the excited response. The judge thinks it might have been a real wax dummy, not a corpse at all. Then what happened to Sam Westing?

The judge regained her composure. "Not reporting a dead body is a violation of the health code, but I wouldn't worry about it. Is there anything else, Turtle?"

"Yes ma'am," Turtle replied, glancing at the portable bar. "Could I have a little bourbon?"

"What?"

"Just a little. On a piece of cotton to put in my cavity. My tooth hurts something awful."

Relieved at not having a juvenile alcoholic on her hands, Judge Ford prepared the home remedy. "Is that better? Good. You may go home now."

Home meant going to Baba. Baba loved her no matter what, and Turtle didn't care if the others thought she was the bomber—except Sandy. He was walking toward her right now, walking his bouncy walk, but not smiling. Sandy is disappointed in her, he thinks she hurt her own sister, he doesn't want to be friends anymore.

"How's my girl?" Sandy said, cupping his hand under her chin and lifting her head. "Whew! Hitting the bottle again?"

"It's just bourbon on cotton for my toothache."

"Yeah, I've heard that one before."

"Honest Saaan-eee." Turtle was pointing inside her wide-open mouth.

The doorman peered in. "Wow, that's some cavity, it looks like the Grand Canyon. Tomorrow morning you're going to see my dentist—no back talk. He's very gentle, you won't feel a thing. Promise you'll go?"

Turtle nodded.

Sandy smiled. "Good, then down to business. My wife's having a birthday tomorrow. I thought one of your gorgeous striped candles would make a swell present."

"There's only one candle left," Turtle replied. "It's the best of the lot. Six super colors. I spent a lot of time making it; that's why I wouldn't part with it. But since it's for your wife's birthday, Sandy, I'll let you have it for only five dollars. And I won't charge you sales tax."

"Try not to stick your fanny out so far," Angela said from her chair. Now that Sydelle Pulaski depended on crutches, she lurched clumsily, hobbled by old habits.

"Just keep reading those clues." The secretary straightened, shoulders back, stomach in, until her next step.

With their telephone switched off and Contagious Disease added to the No Visitors sign, the bomb victims had privacy at last. Sydelle had twice read the entire will aloud. Now Angela, her hands unbandaged, was reshuffling the collected clues.

GRAINS SPACIOUS GRACE GOOD HOOD

WITH BEAUTIFUL MAJESTIES FROM THY PURPLE

WAVES ON(NO) MOUNTAIN

"Again," Sydelle ordered. "Change them around and read either the word on or the word no; both together are confusing."

GOOD SPACIOUS GRAINS WITH GRACE

ON THY PURPLE MOUNTAIN HOOD WAVES

FROM MAJESTIES BEAUTIFUL

"Shh!" Someone was at the door. Angela picked up the note that was slipped underneath.

My darling Angela: I guess the sign on the door means I should stay away, too. I understand. We both need time to think things over. I'll wait. I love you—Denton

"What does it say, what does it say?" Sydelle pressed, but Angela read only the postscript aloud:

p.s. You have another admirer. Chris wants to give you and Ms. Pulaski one of our clues. (Flora Baumbach has seen it, too.) The word isplain.

"Like an airplane?" Sydelle asked.

"No, plain, like ordinary. Like the wide open plains."

"Plains, grains. Quick Angela, read the clues again."

GOOD HOOD FROM SPACIOUS PLAIN

GRAINS ON WITH BEAUTIFUL WAVES

GRACE THY PURPLE MOUNTAIN MAJESTIES

"That's it, Angela. We got it, we got it!" Sydelle could barely control her excitement. "The will said, Sing in praise of this generous land. The will said, May God thy gold refine. America, Angela, America! Purple mountain majesties, Angela. Whoopee!"

Fortunately Sydelle Pulaski was close to the bed when she threw her crutches in the air.

22

LOSERS, WINNERS

SATURDAY MORNING a new message was posted in the elevator:

I, TURTLE WEXLER, CONFESS TO THOSE FOUR BOMBS. I'M SORRY, IT WAS A DUMB THING TO DO AND I WON'T DO IT AGAIN. BUT! I AM NOT THE BURGLAR AND I NEVER MURDERED ANYBODY, EVER.

YOUR FRIEND, TURTLE

P.S. TO MAKE UP FOR SCARING YOU, I WILL TREAT EVERYBODY HERE TO AN EXQUISITE CHINESE CUISINE DINNER WHEN I WIN THE INHERITANCE.

"Poor Grace," Mr. Hoo said. "One daughter almost killed, the other one a bomber. Smart-aleck kid, first she blows up my kitchen, then she advertises my cuisine. Win the inheritance—ha! Maybe I'm lucky my son is a dumb jock."

"Boom," Madame Hoo said happily. She knew where they were going. Always on the day when Doug ate six eggs for breakfast, he ran around and around a big track and people clapped and gave him a shiny medal. Doug was so proud of his medals. She would never take them, not even the gold one, not even if it took her two more years to pay to go back to China. No, she would never take Doug's medals, and she would never sell that wonderful clock with the mouse who wears gloves and points to the time.

"You must be out of your mind, Jake Wexler. Go to a track meet with all those people pointing at me, snickering, saying: 'Look, there she is, the mother of Cain and Abel.' I'm not even sure I have the nerve to show my face at the Westing house tonight."

"Come on, Grace, it'll do you good." The podiatrist urged his reluctant wife down the third floor hall. "Stop thinking about yourself for a change, think how poor Turtle must feel."

"Don't ever mention that child to me again, not after what she did to Angela. I never told you this, Jake, but I've always had a sinking sensation that the hospital mixed up the babies when Turtle was born."

"It's no wonder she wanted to blow us all up."

Grace's despair exploded in anger. "Oh, I get it, you're putting the blame on me. If you had given her a good talking to about kicking people when I asked, she might not have ended up a common criminal."

"Whatever became of that fun-loving woman I married, what was her name—Gracie Windkloppel?"

Grace quickly looked around to see if anyone had overheard that ugly name, but they were in the elevator, alone. "Oh, I know what people think," she complained. "Poor Jake Wexler, good guy, everybody's friend, married to that uppity would-be decorator. Well, Angela's not going to have to scrimp and save to make ends meet; she's going to marry a real doctor. I'll see to that."

"Sure you will, Grace, you'll see that Angela doesn't marry a loser like her father." A real doctor, she says. A podiatrist is a "real" doctor—well, it is these days, but when he went to school it was different. He could have gone back, taken more courses, but he was married by then, a father— oh, who's he kidding. Gracie's right, he is a loser. Next she'll mention having to give up her family because she married a Jew—no, she never brings that up, Grace with all her faults would never do that.

The elevator door opened to the lobby. Grace turned to her silent, sad-eyed husband, the loser. "Oh, Jake, what's happening to us? What's happening to me? Maybe they're right, maybe I'm not a nice person."

Jake pressed the CLOSE DOOR button and took his sobbing wife into his arms. "It's all right, Gracie, we're going home." The doors opened on the second floor. "Mom! What's the matter with her, daddy, she's crying? Gee, mom, I'm sorry, it was just a few fireworks." If her mother ever found out who the real bomber was, she'd really go to pieces.

Turtle looked even more like a turtle today with her sad little face peering out of the kerchief tied under her small chin. "Let go of the door, Turtle," Jake said. "And have a good time at the track meet. You, too, Mrs. Baumbach."

Track meet? They weren't going to a track meet. And they sure were not going to have a good time.

Grace was still sobbing on Jake's shoulder as he led her into their apartment.

"Mother, what's the matter? What's wrong with her, dad?"

"Nothing, Angela, your mother's just having a good cry.

Why don't you and Ms. Pulaski leave us alone for a while."

"Come, Angela," Sydelle said, prodding her with the tip of one of her mismatched crutches. "We have some painting to do."

Angela looked back at the embracing couple; her father's face was buried in her weeping mother's tousled hair. They had not asked how she got home from the hospital (by taxi), they had not asked if she was still in pain (not much), they had not even peeked under the bandage to see if a scar was forming on her cheek (there was). Angela was on her own. Well, that's what she wanted, wasn't it? Yes, yes it was! She uttered a short laugh, and her hand flew up to the pain in her face.

"Do I look funny or something?"

"No, I wasn't laughing at you, Sydelle, I'd never laugh at you. It's just that suddenly everything seemed all right."

"It's all right, all right," her partner replied, unlocking the four locks on her apartment door. "Tonight's the night we're going to win it all."

Were they? The will said look for a name. They had a song, not a name.

" 'O beautiful for spacious skies,' " Sydelle began to sing, " 'For purple waves of grain.' "

"Not purple," Angela corrected her, "amber. 'For amber waves of grain.' "

Amber!

Judge Ford paced the floor. Tonight Sam Westing would wreak his revenge unless she could prevent it. If she was right, the person in danger was the former Mrs. Westing. And if Turtle was right about the wax dummy, Sam Westing himself might be there to watch the fun.

There was a knock on her door. The judge was surprised to see Denton Deere, even more surprised when he wheeled Chris Theodorakis into her apartment. "Hello, judge. Everybody else in the building is going to the track meet, it seems. I passed Sandy on the way out and he said you wouldn't mind having Chris for part of the afternoon. I've got to get back to the hospital."

"Hello, Judge F-Ford." Chris held out a steady hand which the judge shook.

"You're looking well, Chris."

"The m-medicine helped a lot."

"It's a big step forward," the intern said. Wrong word, the kid may never leave that wheelchair. "An even more effective medication is now in the developmental stage." That really sounded pompous. "Well, so long, Chris. See you tonight. Thanks, judge."

"He knows lots of b-big words," Chris said.

"Yes, he certainly does," Judge Ford replied. What was she going to do with this boy here? She had so much to think about, so much to plan.

"You c-can work. I'll birdwatch," Chris offered, wheeling to the window, his binoculars banging against his thin chest.

"Good idea." The judge returned to her desk to study the newspaper clippings. Mrs. Westing: a tall, thin woman. She may no longer be thin, but she would still be tall. About sixty years old. If Sam Westing's former wife was one of the heirs, she had to be Crow.

"Look!" Chris shouted, startling the judge into dropping her files to the floor. She rushed to his side, thinking he needed help. "Look up there, judge. Isn't it b-beautiful?"

High in the fall sky a V of geese was flying south. Yes, it was a beautiful sight. "Those are geese," the judge explained.

"C-canada goose (*Branta c-canadensis*)," Chris replied.

The judge was impressed, but she had work to do. Stooping to gather the dropped clippings, she was confronted by the face of Sam Westing. The photograph had been taken fifteen years ago. Those piercing eyes, the Vandyke beard, that short beaked nose (like a turtle's). The wax dummy in the coffin had been molded in the former image of Sam Westing as he had looked fifteen years ago—not as he looked now. She searched the folder. No recent photographs, no hospital records, no death certificate, just the accident report from the state highway police: Dr. Sidney Sikes suffered a crushed leg and Samuel W. Westing had severe facial injuries. Facial injuries! It was the face that had disappeared fifteen years ago, not the man. Westing had a different face, a face remodeled by plastic surgery. A different face and a different name.

Now what? Her gaze rested on her charge at the window. Feeling her eyes, Chris turned around. The boy has a nice smile.

"I hope you are better at filling cavities than making false teeth," Turtle said, gripping the arms of the dentist's chair. In a glass cabinet against the wall three rows of dentures grinned at her with crooked teeth, overlapping teeth, notched teeth.

"Those faults are what makes the dentures look real," the dentist explained. "Nothing in nature is quite perfect, you know. Now, open your mouth wide. Wider."

"Ow!" Turtle screamed before the probe touched tooth.

"Just relax, young lady, I'll tell you when to say 'Ow!' "

Turtle tried to think about other things. False teeth, buck-teeth—that rotten bucktoothed Barney Northrup stopped by this morning to tell the Wexlers they would have to pay for all the damage done by the bombs. Barney Northrup had called her parents "irresponsible" and had called her something worse, much worse. He sure was surprised by that kick; it was her hardest one ever.

"Now you can say 'Ow!' " The dentist unclipped the towel from her shoulder.

Turtle passed her tongue over the drilled tooth. She had not felt a thing, but the real pain was yet to come. Flora Baumbach was taking her to the beauty parlor to have her singed hair cut off.

College teams from five states competed in the first indoor track meet of the season, but the big event, the mile run, was won by a high-school senior.

"That's my boy, that's my Doug," Mr. Hoo shouted, one voice among thousands cheering the youngster on his victory lap.

Cameras flashed as Doug posed, smiling broadly, index fingers high in the air. "I owe it all to my dad," he told reporters, and cameras flashed again as Doug flung an arm around the proud Mr. Hoo. Just wait until the next Olympics, the inventor thought. With Doug's feet and my innersoles, he'll run them all to the ground.

Later that evening Madame Hoo, chattering in unintelligible Chinese, made it known that she wanted Doug to wear his prize to the Westing house. Standing on tiptoe she placed the ribbon over his bent head and patted the shiny gold medal in place on his chest. "Good boy," she said in English.

A saddened Sandy returned to apartment 4D. "Hi, Chris. Did you talk to him, judge?"

"Talk to whom?"

"Barney Northrup. He was waiting at the front door when I got back from the track meet, mad as a wet cat. Said he had lots of complaints about me—never being on duty, drinking on the job—lies like that. He fired me right on the spot. I told him you wanted to see him, figuring you might put in a good word so he'd let me stay on."

"No, Mr. McSouthers, I'm sorry, but I haven't seen Barney Northrup since I rented this apartment." Barney Northrup, was that Westing's disguise: false buckteeth, slick black wig, pasted-on moustache?

"Well, it's not the first time I got fired for no cause." The dejected doorman blew his nose loudly in a Westing Man-Sized Hankie. "Hey Chris, bet you don't know the Latin name of the red-headed woodpecker."

That was a hard one. Chris had to say *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* very slowly.

"Some smart kid, hey judge? Chris, the judge and I have a little business to discuss. Excuse us for a minute."

Judge Ford joined the doorman in the kitchen. "Our game plan is this, Mr. McSouthers. We give no answer. No answer at all. Our duty is to protect Westing's ex-wife."

"Crow?" Sandy guessed.

"That's right."

"There's something else that's been bothering me, judge. I know it sounds crazy, but, well, I found out Otis Amber doesn't live in the grocer's basement, and he's not as dumb as he pretends. He's a snoop and a troublemaker and I don't think he is who he says he is."

"And who do you think Otis Amber is?" the judge asked.

"Sam Westing!"

Judge Ford leaned against the sink and pressed her head against the cabinet. If Sandy was correct, she had played right into the man's hands—Sam Westing's hands.

"C'mon Crow, you always like to get there early to open the door for people."

Crow had stopped in the middle of the steep road to stare up at the Westing house. "I've got a funny feeling that something evil is waiting for me up there, Otis. It's a bad house, full of misery and sin. He's still there, you know."

"Sam Westing is dead and buried. Come on, if we don't go we gotta give the money back, and we already spent it on the soup kitchen."

"I feel his presence, Otis. He's looking for a murderer, Violet's murderer."

"Stop scaring yourself with crazy notions, you sound like you're on the bottle again."

Crow strode ahead.

"I didn't mean that, Crow, honest. Look up there at that moon. Isn't it romantic?"

"Somebody's in real danger, Otis, and I think it's me."

23

STRANGE ANSWERS

LAWYER PLUM WAS THERE and one pair of heirs when Otis Amber danced into the game room. "He-he-he, the Turtle's lost its tail, I see."

Turtle slumped low in her chair. Flora Baumbach thought the short, sleek haircut was adorable, especially the way it swept forward over her little chin, but Turtle did not want to look adorable. She wanted to look mean.

The dressmaker fumbled past the wad of money in her handbag. "Here, Alice, I thought you might like to see this."

Turtle glanced at the old snapshot. It's Baba, all right, except younger. Same dumb smile. Suddenly she sat upright.

"That's my daughter, Rosalie," Flora Baumbach said.

"She must have been nine or ten when that picture was taken."

Rosalie was squat and square and squinty, her protruding tongue was too large for her mouth, her head lolled to one side. "I think I would have liked her, Baba," Turtle said. "Rosalie looks like she was a very happy person. She must have been nice to have around."

Thump-thump, thump-thump. "Here come the victims," Sydelle Pulaski announced.

Angela greeted her sister with a wave of her crimson-streaked, healing hand. Turtle had convinced her not to confess: It would mean a criminal record, it would kill their mother, and no one would believe her anyhow. "I like your haircut."

"Thanks," Turtle replied. Now Angela had to love her forever.

Most of the heirs had to comment on Turtle's hair. "You look like a real businesswoman," Sandy said. "Well, that's an improvement," Denton Deere said. "You look n-nice," Chris said. Only Theo, bent over the chessboard, said nothing. White had moved the king's bishop since the last meeting. It was his move.

At last the stares turned from Turtle's hair to a more surprising sight. Judge Ford strode in as regally as an African princess, her noble head swathed in a turban, her tall body draped in yards of handprinted cloth. She slipped a note to Denton Deere then sailed to her place at table four. Goggle-eyed Otis Amber was speechless; they all were, except for Sandy. "Gee, that's a nifty outfit, judge. Is that what you call ethnic?"

The judge did not reply.

Applaud, the local hero has arrived! Doug raised his arms, pointing his index fingers to the flaking gilt ceiling in the I'm-number-one sign, and acknowledged the clapping with a victory lap around the room.

"Here come the Wexlers," Mr. Hoo remarked, seating his puzzled wife at table one.

Turtle exchanged an anxious glance with Angela. The last time they saw their mother she was crying her head off; now the tears were gone from her bleary eyes, but she was staggering, giggling, her hair was a mess.

"Sorry we're late," Jake apologized. "We lost track of time." They had been clinking wineglasses in a small cafe (the cafe they used to go to before they were married), toasting good times. They had had many good times together, many good memories shared, it seems—three big wine bottles full.

Happy Grace waved at the heirs. She felt so wonderful, so overflowing with love for Jake, for everybody.

"Hi, mom," Turtle called.

Grace blinked at a young short-haired girl. "Who's that?"

Jake greeted his partner with a "How are you this fine day?"

"Doug win," replied Madame Hoo.

Having opened the door to the last of the heirs, a tense and troubled Crow took her seat next to Otis Amber. Ghost-threatened, she waited for the unseen.

"Hey, lawyer, can we open these?" Otis Amber shouted, waving an envelope. A similar envelope lay on each table.

His forehead creased with uncertainty, Ed Plum fumbled through his papers. "I guess so" was his opinion.

Cheers erupted as the heirs withdrew the checks.

Again Judge Ford signed her name to the ten-thousand-dollar check and handed it to the doorman. "Here you are, Mr. McSouthers, this should tide you over until you find another job."

Sandy's heartfelt thanks were muffled by Sydelle Pulaski's loud "Shhhh!"

"Shhhhhhhh!" Grace Wexler mimicked, then she dropped her head into her crossed arms on the table and fell asleep to the sound of the lawyer's throat-clearing coughs.

TWELFTH • Welcome again to the Westing house. By now you have received a second check for ten thousand dollars. Before the day is done you may have won more, much more.

Table by table, each pair will be called to give one, and only one, answer. The lawyer will record your response in case of a dispute. He does not know the answer. It is up to you.

1 • MADAME HOO, cook
JAKE WEXLER, bookie

Bookie? He really must have been distracted when he signed that receipt. Jake studied the five clues on the table:

OF AMERICA AND GOD ABOVE

Even knowing his wife's clues didn't help; he'd have to gamble on a long shot. "Say something," he said to his partner.

"Boom!" said Madame Hoo.

Ed Plum wrote Table One: Boom.

2 • FLORA BAUMBACH, dressmaker
TURTLE WEXLER, financier

Turtle read a prepared statement: "In spite of the fact that the stock market dropped thirty points since we received our ten thousand dollars, we have increased our capital to \$11,587.50, an appreciation of twenty-seven point eight percent calculated on an annual basis."

Flora Baumbach slapped a wad of bills on the table and two clinking quarters. "In cash," she said.

Ed Plum asked them to repeat their answer.

"Table two's answer is \$11,587.50."

Sandy applauded. Turtle took a bow.

3 • CHRISTOS THEODORAKIS, ornithologist
DENTON DEERE, intern

Ornithologist? His brother must have given him that fancy title when he filled in the receipt. Maybe he would become an ornithologist someday. He was a lucky person, getting that medicine and all. He didn't want to accuse anybody, not Judge Ford (apartment 4D), not Otis (grain) Amber, not the limper (just about everybody limped at one time or other—today Sandy was limping). "I think Mr. Westing is a g-good man," Chris said aloud. "I think his last wish was to do g-good deeds. He g-gave me a p-partner who helped me. He g-gave everybody the p-perfect p-partner to m-make friends."

"What is table three's answer?" the lawyer asked.

Denton Deere replied. "Our answer is: Mr. Westing was a good man."

4 • J. J. FORD, judge
ALEXANDER MCSOUTHERS, fired

"We don't have an answer," the ex-doorman responded as planned.

The judge looked at table three. Denton Deere, her note in his hand, shook his head which meant: No, Otis Amber has not had plastic surgery done on his face. The judge turned to table six. Otis Amber could not be Sam Westing (she was right to have trusted him). But Crow is expecting something to happen. Crow knows she is the answer, she knows she is the one.

5 • GRACIE WINDKLOPPEL WEXLER, restaurateur
JAMES HOO, inventor

Grace raised her head. "Did someone say Windkloppel?"

"Never mind Windkloppel, it's our turn," Hoo snarled. The lawyer got names and positions all fouled up, and I've got a drunk for a partner. He prodded Grace to her feet.

Faces were swirling, the floor was swaying. Grace grabbed the edge of the floating table and gave her answer in a thick, slurred voice. "The newly decorated restaurant, Hoo's On First, the eatery of athletes, will hold its grand reopening on Sunday. Specialty of the day: fruited sea bass on purple waves."

Grace sat down where the chair wasn't. Turtle gasped, Angela looked away, the heirs tittered as Jake helped his wife up from the floor.

"What is table five's answer, please," the lawyer pressed.

"Ed Plum," said Mr. Hoo.

"Yes, sir?"

"That's our answer: Ed Plum."

"Oh."

6 • BERTHE ERICA CROW, mother
OTIS AMBER, deliverer

"Mother? Did I write mother?" Crow mumbled.

"Is that your answer?" Ed Plum asked.

"I don't know," Otis Amber replied. "Is 'mother' our answer, Crow?" He could have sworn she had again signed the receipt Good Salvation Soup Kitchen.

Crow repeated, "Mother," and that's what the lawyer wrote down.

7 • DOUGLAS HOO, champ
THEO THEODORAKIS, writer

Their clues: a chemical formula for an explosive and the letters o-t-i-s. Doug, basking in glory, didn't care. Theo stood, turned to the man he was about to accuse and saw the scene in the soup kitchen, saw Otis Amber cooking soup for the dirty, hungry men. "No answer," Theo said sitting down.

8 • SYDELLE PULASKI, Victim
ANGELA WEXLER, person

Sydelle was dressed for the occasion in red and white stripes. Leaning on crutches decorated with white stars on a field of blue to match the cast on her ankle, she hummed into a pitch pipe and began to sing one note above the pitch she played.

O beautiful for spacious skies
For amber waves of grain
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain.

What a spectacle she made, her wide rear end sticking out, singing in that tuneless, nasal voice. The derisive smiles soon faded as, pair by pair, the heirs heard their code words sung.

America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.

"Such a beautiful song," Grace Wexler slurred, but the others sat in somber silence. Even Turtle thought table eight had won.

"What is your answer?" Ed Plum asked.

"Our answer," Sydelle Pulaski announced with certainty, "is Otis Amber."

The heirs listened to the lawyer read the next document, but their eyes stayed fixed on table eight's answer: Otis Amber.

THIRTEENTH • Okay folks, there will be a short break before the big winner is announced. Berthe Erica Crow, please rise and go to the kitchen for the refreshments.

Dazed with fear, Crow rose. The thirteenth section. Thirteen was an unlucky number.

Judge Ford told Sandy to follow her. "Hey, Crow, old pal, do me a favor and fill this for me," he said, handing her his flask as they left through the door. "I'll go on the wagon starting tomorrow. Promise."

Angela left the room, too, concerned over Crow's trance-like state. Turtle followed Angela to make sure she didn't end up in the fireworks room again. The judge remained seated, watching the remaining heirs who were watching Otis Amber. The delivery boy had had enough of their suspicions; he swept a pointed finger across their range, imitating the sound of a machine gun: "Rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat."

Crow and Angela came back with two large trays; Turtle returned empty-handed, puzzled but much relieved.

The judge joined Denton Deere and Chris at table three, bringing a plate of small cakes with her. "None of the heirs have had plastic surgery as far as I can tell," the intern remarked. "But your partner sure could have used some."

The judge studied Sandy McSouthers' prizefighter's face as he leaned against the open doorway. Their eyes met and he lifted his flask in salute. "Anybody want a drink?"

"Sure," Grace Wexler replied with a giggle, but Jake gave her a cup of strong black coffee instead.

"We must keep our wits about us, Mr. McSouthers," Judge Ford said walking toward him. "Sam Westing has not made his final move."

"Nothing like Scotch to clear the head," he replied. He took a long swig, coughed, wiped his mouth on the sleeve of his uniform and glared at Crow with narrowed, watery eyes.

Theo grinned down at the chess table. White had made another move, a careless move. He licked the cake crumbs from his fingers, wiped his hand on a Westing Paper Tea Napkin and took his opponent's queen from the board. At least he had won the chess game.

Perched on a corner of table eight, the young lawyer tried to start a conversation with Angela, ignoring Sydelle Pulaski who twice asked, "Surely you must have the answer, Mr. Plum?" She nudged her partner.

"Surely you must have the answer, Mr. Plum," Angela repeated sweetly.

"Oh, of course; at least, I assume I do," he replied. "My instructions are to open the documents one by one at the scheduled time." He checked his watch. "Oops!" He was one minute late.

Ed Plum hurried to the billiard table, tore open the next envelope and pulled out the document, cutting his finger on the paper's edge.

FOURTEENTH • Go directly to the library. Do not pass Go.

24

WRONG ALL WRONG

GRACE WEXLER clung unsteadily to Mr. Hoo's arm. "Where are we going?"

"Who knows," Hoo replied. "We didn't even pass Go."

Partner sat with partner at the long library table, moaning with impatience as Ed Plum opened another envelope, removed a tagged key, tried to unlock the top right-hand desk drawer, reread the tag, unlocked the upper left-hand drawer, and found the next document:

FIFTEENTH • Wrong! All answers are wrong!

"What!" Sydelle Pulaski cried.

I repeat: Wrong! All answers are wrong! Partnerships are canceled; you are on your own. Alone.

The lawyer will leave and return with the authorities at the appointed time. And time is running out. Hurry, find the name before the one who took my life takes another.

Remember: It is not what you have, it's what you don't have that counts.

Madame Hoo knew from the shifting eyes that a bad person was in the room. She was the bad person. They would find out soon. The crutch lady had her writing-book back, but all those pretty things she was going to sell, they wanted them back, too. She would be punished. Soon.

"How much time do we have?" Turtle asked.

Ed Plum left the library without answering. And locked the door!

"Oh my!" Flora Baumbach ran to the French doors. They opened.

Sydelle Pulaski complained of a chill, and the dressmaker had to shut the doors, but she left them unlatched, just in case.

Mr. Hoo said the tea tasted funny, maybe they had all been poisoned. Denton Deere diagnosed paranoia.

The doorman, who was pacing the room, replied that anyone who was not paranoid, after being told that the murderer would kill again, was really crazy. He stopped to pat Turtle's slumped shoulders. "Cheer up, my friend, the game's not over yet," Sandy whispered. "You still can win. I hope you do."

Otis Amber told everyone to sit where he could watch them.

Theo rose. "I think it's about time we played as a team and shared our clues and shared the inheritance."

With the murderer? Well, all right. Agreed. Sydelle Pulaski still thought the answer had something to do with "America, the Beautiful."

"Does anybody have a clue word that is not in the song?"

"I'm not sure," Doug said mischievously. "Sing it again."

No one cared for that idea. "It is not what you have, it's what you don't have that counts," Jake Wexler reminded them. "Maybe some words in the song are missing from the clues."

That makes sense. "Does anyone have the word amber?" Mr. Hoo asked.

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"Not again," Otis Amber groaned. "You heard the will, it said all answers were wrong. Well, I was one of the wrong answers."

"But Mr. Westing wrote the will before the game began," Sydelle argued. "Perhaps he assumed we weren't smart enough to find you out so soon."

Judge Ford did not interfere (Otis Amber could take care of himself). She had to be prepared to defend Crow when the time came.

Crow sat with her head bowed, waiting.

No one had the word amber, but two pairs had am in their clues. "Two ams do not an amber make," Sydelle declared. "Two ams stand for America, America."

"I've got America," Jake Wexler shouted. "I've got America."

Ravings of a madman, Mr. Hoo thought. The podiatrist, could he be the one?

Jake explained in a calmer voice. "The two ams could not stand for America, America, because one of my clues is America."

Sandy stood, took a long swig from his flask, coughed, then spoke in a hoarse voice. "We're getting nowhere. Why doesn't everybody hand in their clues so Ms. Pulaski can arrange them in order and we can see what's missing?"

Her eyes narrowed with suspicion, the judge watched Sandy collect the clues. "Just write them out again," he said to Turtle, who had eaten the originals. Then he placed the paper squares before the secretary and resumed his seat. What was her partner doing? Why was he playing into Westing's hands? He knows the answer, he knows he's leading the heirs to Crow. Again the judge studied the doorman's battered face: the scars; the bashed-in nose; the hard, blue eyes under those taped spectacles. The baggy uniform. Everyone was given the perfect partner, Chris said. Chris was right. She was paired with the one person who could confound her plans, manipulate her moves, keep her from the truth. Her partner, Sandy McSouthers, was the only heir she had not investigated. Her partner, Sandy McSouthers, was Sam Westing.

The secretary quickly arranged the clues in order:

O BEAUTIFUL FOR SPACIOUS SKIES

FOR AM WAVES OF GRAIN

FOR PURPLE MOUNTAIN MAJESTIES

ABOVE FRUITED PLAIN

AMERICA AM

GOD SHED HIS GRACE ON THEE

AND IN THY GOOD WITH BROTHERHOOD

FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA

"The missing words," Sydelle Pulaski announced, "are ber, the, erica, and crow. Berthe Erica Crow!"

Crow paled.

Judge Ford stood. "May I have everyone's attention? Thank you. Please listen very carefully to what I have to say.

"We found the answer to Sam Westing's puzzle, now what are we going to do? Remember: We have no evidence of any kind against this unfortunate woman. We don't even have proof that Sam Westing was murdered.

"Can we accuse an innocent woman of a murder that has never been proved? Crow is our neighbor and our helper. Can we condemn her to a life imprisonment just to satisfy our own greed? For money promised in an improbable and illegal will? If so, we are guilty of a far greater crime than the accused. Berthe Erica Crow's only crime is that her name appears in a song. Our crime would be selling—yes, I said selling, selling for profit—the life of an innocent, helpless human being."

The judge paused to let her words sink in, then she turned to her partner. Her voice hardened. "As for the master of this vicious game. . ." She paused. What's happening to him?

"Uh—uh— —UHHH!" Sandy's hand flew to his throat. He struggled to his feet, red-faced and gasping, and crashed to the floor in eye-bulging agony.

Jake Wexler and Denton Deere hurried to his aid. Theo pounded on the door, shouting for help. Ed Plum unlocked the door and two strange men rushed past him. One, carrying a doctor's bag, quickly limped on crooked legs to the side of the writhing doorman. "I'm Doctor Sikes. Everyone, please move away."

The heirs heard a low groan, then a rasping rattle. . . then nothing.

"Sandy! Sandy!" Turtle screamed, pushing through the restraining hands. She looked down on the doorman sprawled at her feet. His face was twisted in rigid pain; his mouth gaped over the chipped front tooth. The taped glasses had fallen from his blue eyes that were locked in an unseeing stare. Suddenly his body straightened in one last violent twitch. His right eye closed, then opened again, and Sandy moved no more.

"He's dead," Doctor Sikes said, gently turning her away.

"Dead?" Judge Ford repeated numbly. How could she have been so wrong? So very wrong?

A sob tore through Turtle's soul as she ran to Baba's comforting arms. "Baba, Baba, I don't want to play anymore."

The second stranger, the sheriff of Westing county, herded them back to the game room. Without thinking, the heirs seated themselves at the assigned tables.

Turtle sat quietly; it was Flora Baumbach's turn to weep. Crow waited. Only the throbbing veins in her tightly-clasped hands told of her torment.

"Excuse me, sir," Ed Plum said. "I realize this may seem inappropriate, but according to Samuel W. Westing's will, I must read another document on the hour."

The sheriff checked his watch. What kind of a madhouse is this? And there's something mighty fishy about this cocky kid-lawyer calling in the middle of dinner, insisting that I hurry right over. That was half an hour before anybody died. "Go ahead," he grumbled.

Plum cleared his throat three times under the sheriff's suspicious glare.

SIXTEENTH • I, Samuel W. Westing of Westingtown, born Sam "Windy" Windkloppel of Watertown (I had to change my name for business purposes. After all, who would buy a product called Windkloppel's Toilet Tissues? Would you?) do hereby declare that if no one wins, this will is null and void.

So hurry, hurry, hurry, step right up and collect your prize. The lawyer will count off five minutes. Good luck and a happy Fourth of July.

"Windkloppel, did someone say Windkloppel?" Grace Wexler slurred.

"I knew Westing wasn't an immigrant's name," Sydelle

Pulaski said. "I knew it."

"The man was insane," Denton Deere diagnosed.

Shhh! They were struggling with their conscience. Millions and millions of dollars just for naming her name.

One minute is up!

The heirs stared at the answer: Berthe Erica Crow. A religious fanatic, maybe even crazy, but a murderer? They had no evidence that Westing was murdered, the judge said so.

Crow waited. She had not suffered enough for her sins, her penance was yet to begin.

Two minutes are up!

Two hundred million dollars, Turtle thought, but who gets it? The last part the lawyer read wasn't very businesslike. Besides, she could never peach on anybody, not even Crow. Who cares about anything anyhow—Sandy is dead, Sandy was her friend, now she'll never see him again—ever.

Judge Ford tried not to look at the empty chair at her table, McSouthers' chair. Her one concern was the safety of Crow. The judge watched the heirs and waited. Crow waited.

Three minutes are up!

Westing wasn't murdered, the judge said so, but what about Sandy? He was drinking from the flask Crow filled and he died choking. Poison?

Crow felt the eyes on her. The hating eyes. They scoffed at her beliefs, they joked about her soup kitchen. Only two people here mattered to her. She was so tired, so tired of waiting. Of waiting.

Four minutes are up!

"The answer is Berthe Erica Crow."

"No," Angela cried. "No, no!"

"She's crazy," Otis Amber shouted. "She don't know what she's saying."

"Yes I do, Otis," Crow said flatly and repeated her statement: "The answer is Berthe Erica Crow." She rose and turned to the confused lawyer. "I am Berthe Erica Crow. I am the answer and I am the winner. I give half of my inheritance to Otis Amber, to be used for the Good Salvation Soup Kitchen. I give the rest of the money to Angela."

25

WESTING'S WAKE

SANDY WAS DEAD. Crow had been arrested. The fourteen remaining heirs of Samuel W. Westing sat in Judge Ford's living room wondering what had happened.

"At least the guilt is not on our hands," Mr. Hoo said, trying to convince himself that a clear conscience was worth two hundred million dollars.

"Crow's going to jail," Otis Amber wailed, "and all you do is pat yourself on the back for not being a stoolie."

"Let me remind you that Crow confessed," Sydelle Pulaski reminded him.

"Crow only confessed to being the answer, nothing more," Angela said, pressing her hand against the tearing pain in her cheek.

"Even if Sam Westing wasn't murdered, like the judge said," Doug Hoo argued, "there was nothing wrong with Sandy until he drank from the flask Crow filled."

"If Crow is innocent," Theo said, "that means the murderer is still here in this room."

Flora Baumbach tightened her grip on Turtle, who was nestled in her arms.

"Poor Crow," Otis Amber muttered, "poor Crow."

"Poor Sandy, you should say," Turtle responded angrily. "Sandy's the one who's dead. Sandy was my friend."

"You should have remembered that before you kicked him," Denton Deere remarked.

"I never kicked Sandy, never."

The intern turned sideways in his chair in case of attack, but the kicker stayed slumped in sadness. "Well, someone kicked him today. That was one mean bruise he had on his shin."

"That's a lie, that's a disgusting lie," Turtle shouted. "The only person I kicked today was Barney Northrup and he deserved it. I didn't even see Sandy until tonight at the Westing house. Right, Baba?"

"That's right," Flora Baumbach said, handing Turtle a Westing Facial Tissue.

But Turtle was not about to cry again in front of everybody, like a baby. If only she could forget how he looked, suffering, dying: the twisted body, the chipped tooth, that horrible twitch, that one eye (that was the worst) that one eye blinking. Sandy used to wink at her like that when he was alive. When he was alive. Turtle blew her nose loudly to keep from sobbing.

"Sandy was my friend, too," Theo said. "I was playing chess with him in the game room, but he didn't know I knew."

"Why is everybody lying?" Turtle slumped further into Flora Baumbach's arm. Sandy was her friend, not Theo's. And Sandy didn't know how to play chess.

The judge, too, was surprised. "How can you be certain it was Mr. McSouthers you were playing with, Theo?"

"That's what partners are for. Doug watched the chess table to see who was moving the white pieces," Theo replied.

Again the track star thrust his I'm-number-one fingers high in the air.

Dumb jock, thought Mr. Hoo. Doesn't he realize this is a wake? But he is the champ. My son's the champ.

"Doug win," said Madame Hoo. They did not suspect her anymore. Good, very good. But it was so sad about the door guard.

Theo went on in a mournful voice. "I'm sort of glad Sandy didn't go back to the chessboard after my last move. He never knew he lost the game."

"Did you checkmate him?" the judge asked. Could she have been right about McSouthers after all? No. A disguise was one thing, but Sam Westing lose a game of chess? Never.

"Well, not exactly checkmate," Theo replied, "but Sandy would have had to resign. I took his queen."

The queen's sacrifice! The famous Westing trap. Judge Ford was certain now, but there were still too many unanswered questions. "I'm afraid greed got the best of you, Theo. By taking white's queen you were tricked into opening your defense. I know, I've lost a few games that way myself."

Theo recalled the position of the chessmen, thankful that his skin was too dark to reveal his blushing.

Turtle almost smiled. That Theo thinks he's so smart; well, Sandy showed him, Sandy beat him at chess. But Sandy didn't play chess. And she never kicked him either. Buck-toothed Barney Northrup was the one she kicked, not Sandy. But Sandy had the sore shin. Bucktoothed, chip-toothed, the crooked false teeth in the dentist's office (Sandy's dentist). "Cheer up, my friend, the game's not over. You still can win. I hope you do." Those were the last words Sandy said to her. He winked when he said that. Winked! One eye winked! Dead Sandy had winked at her!

Sandy had winked!

"Oh my," Flora Baumbach exclaimed as Turtle suddenly bolted from her arms.

"Angela, could I see your copy of the will?"

Angela handed it over (she could not refuse her sister anything, now).

Turtle leaned against the dark window, poring over Sydelle Pulaski's transcript of the will:

FIRST. I returned to live among my friends and my enemies. I came home to seek my heir, aware that in doing so I faced death.

And so I did.

"To seek my heir," Turtle repeated to herself.

Today I have gathered together my nearest and dearest, my sixteen nieces and nephews (Sit down, Grace Windsor Wexler!) to view the body of your Uncle Sam for the last time.

Tomorrow its ashes will be scattered to the four winds.

Winds? "Windkloppel," Turtle said aloud. Her mother had been right all along about being related to Sam Westing.

"Windkloppel," Grace mumbled. Jake patted her head.

"Windkloppel," the judge repeated. At least she could explain that. "Crow married a man named Windkloppel, who then changed his name to Westing. Berthe Erica Crow is the former wife of Samuel W. Westing. They had one child, a daughter, who drowned the night before her wedding. It was rumored that she killed herself rather than marry the man her mother had chosen for her. If Sam Westing blamed his wife for their daughter's death, then the sole purpose of this game was to punish Crow."

Crow was Sam Westing's ex-wife? The heirs found that hard to believe. "Then why would Mr. Westing give her a chance to inherit the estate?" Theo asked.

"M-maybe he wanted his enemies to for-g-give him," Chris said.

"Ha!" said Mr. Hoo, one of the enemies. Turtle read on:

SECOND. I, Samuel W. Westing, hereby swear that I did not die of natural causes. My life was taken from me-by one of you!

The police are helpless. The culprit is far too cunning to be apprehended for this dastardly deed.

"What does dastardly mean?"

"Oh my!" Flora Baumbach was relieved to hear Jake Wexler define the word as "cowardly."

I, alone, know the name. Now it is up to you. Cast out the sinner, let the guilty rise and confess.

THIRD. Who among you is worthy to be the Westing heir? Help me. My soul shall roam restlessly until that one is found.

For the first time since Sandy died, Turtle smiled.

Judge Ford sat in glassy-eyed thought, elbows propped on the desk top, her chin resting on her folded hands. Why, indeed, was Crow an heir? Sam Westing could have pointed his clues at the Sunset Towers cleaning woman without naming her an heir.

"Crow's not going to inherit anything, not if she's in jail for murder," Otis Amber complained bitterly. "All your talk about chess and sacrificing queens. Crow's the one who's been sacrificed."

"What did you say?" the judge asked.

"I said Crow's the one who's been sacrificed."

Uttering a low groan, Judge Ford sank her head in her hands. The queen's sacrifice! She had fallen for it again. Westing had sacrificed his queen (Crow), distracting the players from the real game. Sam Westing was dead, but somehow or other he would make his last move. She knew it; she felt it deep in her bones. Sam Westing had won the game. "Stupid, stupid, stupid!"

The heirs stared in amazement. First they are told that Samuel W. Westing was married to their cleaning woman, now a judge is calling herself stupid. It couldn't be true.

"Sam Westing wasn't stupid," Denton Deere declared. "He was insane. The last part of the will was sheer lunacy. Happy Fourth of July, it said. This is November."

"It's November fifteenth," Otis Amber cried. "It's poor Crow's birthday."

Turtle looked up from the will. Crow's birthday? Sandy had bought a striped candle for his wife's birthday, a three-hour candle. The game is still on! Sam Westing came back to seek his heir. "You can still win. I hope you do," he said. How? How? It is not what you have, it's what you don't have that counts. Whatever it was she didn't have, she'd have to find it soon. Without letting the others know what she was looking for. "Judge Ford, I'd like to call my first witness."

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