

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 can still 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.

"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 N 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, 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 doesn'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 arms. 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 doesn'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. Buck-toothed, chip-toothed, the crooked false teeth in the dentist's office (Sandy's dentist). "Cheer up, my friend, the game's not over. You can still 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 party 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."

## 26 ♦ *Turtle's Trial*

Hoo was furious. "Haven't we had enough game-playing," he complained. "And led by a confessed bomber, no less."

Judge Ford rapped for silence with the walnut gavel presented to her by associates on her appointment to a higher court. Higher court? This was the lowest court she had ever presided at: a thirteen-year-old lawyer, a court stenographer who records in Polish, and the judge in African robes. Oh well, she had played Sam Westing's game, now she would play Turtle's game. The similarity was astounding; Turtle not only looked like her Uncle Sam, she acted like him.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Turtle began, "I stand before this court to prove that Samuel W. Westing is dead and that Sandy McSouthers is dead, but Crow didn't do it."

Pacing the floor, hands behind her back, she confronted each of the heirs in turn with a hard stare. The heirs stared back, not knowing if they were the jury or the accused.

Grace Wexler blinked up at her daughter. "Who's that?"

"The district attorney," Jake replied. "Go back to sleep."

Now frowning, now smiling a secret smile, Turtle acted the part of every brilliant lawyer she had seen on television who was about to win an impossible case. The only flaw in her imitation was an occasional rapid twist of her head. (She liked the grown-up feeling of shorter hair swishing around her face.)

"Let me begin at the beginning," she began. "On September first we moved into Sunset Towers. Two months later, on Halloween, smoke was seen rising from the chimney of the deserted Westing house." Her first witness would be the person most likely to have watched the house that day. "I call Chris Theodorakis to the stand."

Chris lay a calm hand on the Bible and swore to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. What fun!

"You are a birdwatcher, Mr. Theodorakis, are you not?"

"Yes."

"Were you birdwatching on October thirty-first?"

"Yes."

"Did you see anyone enter the Westing house?"

"I s-saw s-somebody who limped."

Good, now she was getting somewhere. "Who was that limping person?"

"It was D-Doctor Sikes."

"Thank you, you are excused." Turtle turned to her audience. "Doctor Sikes was Sam Westing's friend, a witness to the will, and his accomplice in this game. On the day in question he limped into the Westing house to build a fire in the fireplace. Why?" Her next witness might answer that.



Judge Ford instructed the witness to remove his aviator's helmet. His gray hair was tousled but barbered. "And place your gun in the custody of the court."

"Oh my!" Flora Baumbach gasped as Otis Amber unzipped his plastic jacket, pulled a revolver from his shoulder holster and handed it over to the judge, who locked the gun in her desk drawer.

Turtle was as startled as the other tenants. "Mr. Amber," she began bravely, "it seems that we are not all who we say we are. In other words, who exactly are you?"

"I am a licensed private investigator."

"Then why were you disguised as an idiot delivery boy?"

"It was my disguise."

Turtle was dealing with a practiced witness. "Mr. Amber, who employed you?"

"That's privileged information."

The judge interceded. "It would be best to cooperate, Mr. Amber. For Crow's sake."

"I had three clients: Samuel W. Westing, Barney Northrup, and Judge J. J. Ford."

Turtle stumbled over her next question. "What were you hired to do and when and what did you find out? Tell us everything you know." It was unsettling to see Otis Amber act like a normal human being.

"Twenty years ago, after his wife left him, Samuel W. Westing hired me to find Crow, keep her out of trouble, and make sure she never used the Westing name. I assumed this disguise for that purpose. I mailed in my reports and received a monthly check from the Westingtown bank until last week, when I was notified that my services were no longer needed.

But Crow still needs me, and I'll stick by her, no matter what. I've grown fond of the woman; we've been together such a long time."

"How and why did Barney Northrup hire you?"

"Amber is second in the phone book under *Private Investigators*; maybe Joe Aaron's phone was busy that day. Anyhow, Barney Northrup wanted me to investigate six people."

"What six?"

"Judge J. J. Ford, George Theodorakis, James Hoo, Gracie Windkloppel, Flora Baumbach, and Sybil Pulaski. I made a mistake on the last one; I wasn't aware of the mix-up until I looked into Crow's early life for the judge. It seems I confused a Sybil Pulaski with a Sydelle Pulaski."

"Would you please repeat that," the court stenographer asked.

"Sydelle Pulaski," Otis Amber repeated, then turned to the judge. "I couldn't tell you about Crow's relationship to Sam Westing—conflict of interest, you understand.

Judge Ford understood very well. Sam Westing had predicted every move she would make. That's why Otis Amber, with his privileged information, was one of the heirs; that and to convince Crow (the queen) to play the game.

Turtle had more questions. "Are you saying that Barney Northrup didn't ask you to investigate Denton Deere or Crow or Sandy?"

"That's right. Denton Deere turned up in my report on Gracie Windkloppel—the Wexlers. Barney Northrup said he was looking to hire a cleaning woman for Sunset Towers,

good pay and a small apartment, so I recommended Crow. I don't know how Sandy got the doorman's job."

"Mr. Amber, you were also hired by Judge Ford, I assume to find out who everybody really was. Did you investigate all sixteen heirs for the judge?"

"I didn't investigate the judge or her partner."

The judge bristled at the reminder of her stupidity.

"Therefore," Turtle continued, "you have never investigated the man we knew as Sandy McSouthers for any of your clients?"

"Never."

"One more question." It was the question she had planned to ask before learning that Otis Amber was not who he seemed to be. "On the afternoon of Halloween, when we were watching the smoke in the Westing house chimney, you told a story about a corpse on an Oriental rug."

"I saw it," Grace Wexler cried, "I saw him."

Turtle forgot the rules of the court and hurried to her mother. "Who did you see, mom? Who? Who?"

(Terrified by the whos, Madame Hoo slipped away.)

"The doorman," Grace replied, lifting her dazed face to her husband. "He was dead. On an Oriental rug, Jake. It was awful."

Jake stroked his wife's hair. "I know, Gracie, I know."

Turtle returned to her witness. "Mr. Amber, did you tell that spooky story to dare one of us to go to the Westing house that night?"

"Not really. Sandy told me the story that morning, and we decided to scare you kids with it, being Halloween."

"Thank you, Mr. Amber, you may step down." (Step down was a term used in court; the floor was level here.) Turtle turned to her baffled audience. "A fire was started in the fireplace to call attention to the deserted house. Then a spooky story was told to dare someone to go into the house. That someone was me. I sneaked in the house, followed Dr. Sikes' whispers, and found the corpse of Samuel W. Westing in bed. I now call D. Denton Deere to the stand."

Turtle stared at her most unfavorable heir. "Intern Deere, you saw the body of Samuel W. Westing in the coffin. Did he appear to have been poisoned?"

"I could not say; he was embalmed."

"You are under oath, Intern Deere. Do you swear that the body of Samuel W. Westing was embalmed?"

What kind of a trick question was that? "I cannot swear to it, no. I did not examine the body in the coffin."

"Could the body in the coffin, which you did not examine, have been no body at all? Could it have been a wax dummy dressed in the costume of Uncle Sam?"

"I am not an expert on wax dummies."

"Yes or no?"

"Yes, it's possible, anything is possible." What's the brat driving at? Or is she just trying to make a fool of me?

"Intern Deere, you may not be an expert in wax dummies, but you are an expert in medical diagnosis, and you did examine the body of Sandy McSouthers. Correct?"

"Yes to the first question, no to the second. I did not examine Sandy; I tried to make him comfortable until help arrived. He was still alive when Doctor Sikes took over."

Turtle turned quickly to conceal her smile. "But surely you saw enough symptoms to make one of your famous diagnoses." She peered at the judge from the corner of her eye. That last word didn't sound right.

"Coronary thrombosis," the intern diagnosed, "but that's just an educated guess. In simple language: heart attack."

"Then Sandy could not have died of an overdose of lemon juice, which is what I saw Crow put in his flask?" Turtle could have called on Angela to testify to that, but she didn't want her screwy sister confessing all over the place.

"I never heard of anyone dying as a result of lemon juice consumption," the expert replied.

"One more question, Intern Deere. Do you swear that Sandy had a bruise on his shin resulting from a kick?"

"Absolutely. I should know, having been the recipient of such a kick myself."

"You may step down."

"I call Sydelle Pulaski to the stand. SYDELLE PULASKI!"

Overcome with excitement, the secretary had to be helped to her feet for the oath-taking.

"Ms. Pulaski, I must compliment you on your good thinking in taking down the will in shorthand."

"Professional habit."

"This looks professional, all right. The typing is perfect—well, almost perfect. It seems you left out the last word in section three:

The estate is at the crossroads.  
The heir who wins the windfall will  
be the one who finds the

"Finds the what, Ms. Pulaski? Finds the what?"

Sydelle squirmed under Turtle's hard stare. Leave it to the brat to discover my one error. "There was so much talking I couldn't hear the last word."

"Come now, Ms. Pulaski, you claim to be a professional."

Hounding the witness and doing it quite well, Judge Ford thought, coming to the secretary's defense. "I don't think anyone heard the word, Turtle. Mr. McSouthers made a joke about ashes at that point."

"You are excused, Ms. Pulaski," Turtle said offhandedly, her eyes on the will. The judge was right. Sandy had joked about ashes scattered to the winds. Winds, Windy Windkloppel, no, it still didn't make sense. *It is not what you have, it's what you don't have that counts*—maybe no word was ever there. She read on:

FOURTH. Hail to thee, oh land of opportunity! You have made me, the son of poor immigrants, rich, powerful, and respected.

So take stock in America, my heirs, and sing in praise of this generous land. You, too, may strike it rich who dares play the Westing game.

FIFTH. Sit down, your honor, and read the letter this brilliant

young attorney will now hand over to you.

"Judge Ford, could you introduce as evidence the letter that brilliant young attorney handed over to you?"

"It is just the usual certification of sanity, signed by Doctor Sikes," the judge replied as she removed the envelope from her files. But the letter was gone; the envelope now contained a receipt:

Check received, November 1	\$5,000
Check received, November 15	<u>+5,000</u>
Total amount paid by Judge Ford	\$10,000
Cost of educating Josie-Jo Ford	<u>-10,000</u>
Amount owed to Sam Westing	0

"I'm afraid the original letter has been replaced by a personal message. It has no bearing on this case, and..."

"Yes, please." A trembling Madame Hoo stood before the judge. "For to go to China," she said timidly, setting a scarf-tied bundle on the desk. Weeping softly, the thief shuffled back to her seat.

The judge unknotted the scarf and let the flowered silk float down around the booty: her father's railroad watch, a pearl necklace, cuff links, a pin and earrings set, a clock. (Grace Wexler's silver cross never did turn up.)

"My pearls," Flora Baumbach exclaimed with delight. "Wherever did you find them, Madame Hoo? I'm so grateful."

Madame Hoo did not understand why the round little lady was smiling at her. Cautiously she peered through her fingers.

Oh! The other people did not smile. They know she is bad. And Mr. Hoo, his anger is drowned in shame.

"Perhaps stealing is not considered stealing in China," Sydelle Pulaski said in a clumsy gesture of kindness.

The judge rapped her gavel. "Let us continue with the case on hand. Are you ready, counselor?"

"Yes, your honor, in a minute." Turtle approached the frightened thief. "Here, you can keep it."

With shaking hands Madame Hoo took the Mickey Mouse clock from Turtle and clutched the priceless treasure to her bosom. "Thank you, good girl, thank you, thank you."

"That's okay."

The heirs were anxious for the trial to continue. They pitied the poor woman, but the scene was embarrassing.

One half hour to go. Turtle was so close to winning she could feel it, taste it, but still the answer eluded her. "Ladies and gentlemen, who was Sam Westing?" she began. "He was poor Windy Windkloppel, the son of immigrants. He was rich Sam Westing, the head of a huge paper company. He was a happy man who played games. He was a sad man whose daughter killed herself. He was a lonely man who moved to a faraway island. He was a sick man who returned home to see his friends and relatives before he died. And he did die, but not when we thought he did. Sam Westing was still alive when the will was read."

The judge rapped for order.

Turtle continued. "The obituary, probably phoned in to the newspaper by Westing himself, mentioned two interesting facts. One: Sam Westing was never seen after his car crashed.

Two: Sam Westing acted in Fourth of July pageants, fooling everybody with his clever disguises. Therefore I submit that Sam Westing was not only alive, Sam Westing was disguised as one of his own heirs.

"No one would recognize him. With that face bashed in from the car crash, his disguise could be simple: a baggy uniform, a chipped front tooth, broken eyeglasses."

Sandy?

Does she mean Sandy?

The judge had to pound her gavel several times.

"Yes, ladies and gentlemen," Turtle went on, "Sam Westing was none other than our dear friend Sandy, the doorman. But Sam Westing did not drink, you say. Neither did Sandy. I used his flask on Halloween and there was a funny aftertaste in my pop, but not of whiskey; I know how whiskey tastes, because I use it for toothaches. It was medicine. Sandy was a sick man, and the flask was part of his disguise, but it also contained the medicine that kept him alive."

Turtle surveyed the stupefied audience. Good, they bought her little fib. "As I said earlier, I saw Crow fill the flask with lemon juice in the kitchen, but I saw something even more interesting on my way back to the game room: I saw Sandy coming out of the library. Sam Westing, as Sandy, wrote the last part of the will *after* the answers were given, then locked it in the library desk with a duplicate key.

"But what about the murder, you ask," Turtle said, even though no one had asked. "There was no murder. The word murder was first mentioned by Sandy, to put us off the track. *I did not die of natural causes*, the will says, *My life was taken from me—by one of you!* Sam Westing's life was taken from

him when he became Sandy McSouthers. And Sandy died when his medicine ran out." Turtle paused in a pretense of letting the heirs mull over her last words, trying to figure out what to do next.

Why did Turtle leave out Barney Northrup, the judge wondered. She knows Northrup and McSouthers were the same man because of the bruised shin. Either she doesn't want to confound the jury, or she has no more idea than I have why Sam Westing had to play two roles.

Why did Sam Westing have to play *two* roles, Turtle wondered. He had a big enough part as the doorman without playing the real-estate man as well. Why *two* roles? No, not two, three. Windy Windkloppel took three names; one: Samuel W. Westing, two: Barney Northrup, three: Sandy McSouthers.

The judge had a question: "Surely Mr. McSouthers could have had his prescription refilled, or are you implying he committed suicide?"

"Pardon me?" Turtle was searching the will.

The estate is at the crossroads.  
The heir who wins the windfall will  
be the one who finds the

FOURTH.

That's it, that has to be it: *The heir who wins the windfall will be the one who finds the fourth!* Windy Windkloppel took four names, and she knew who the fourth name was! Keep calm, Turtle Alice Tabitha-Ruth Wexler. Slowly, very slowly, turn

toward the judge, act dumb, and ask her to repeat the question. "I'm sorry, your honor, would you repeat the question?"

Turtle knows something. The Judge had seen that expression before. Sam Westing used to look like that just before he won a game. "I asked if you consider Sandy's death a suicide."

"No, ma'am," Turtle said sadly. Very sadly. "Sandy McSouthers—Sam Westing suffered terribly from a fatal disease. He was a dying man who chose his time to die. Let me read from the will:

SIXTH. Before you proceed to the game room there will be one minute of silent prayer for your good old Uncle Sam.

"Ladies and gentlemen, heirs (for we all inherited something) let us bow our heads in silent prayer for our benefactor Sam Westing, alias Sandy the doorman."

"Crow!" Otis Amber leaped to his feet as Ed Plum led the cleaning woman through the door.

## 27 ♦ *A Happy Fourth*

His aviator's helmet again flapping over his ears, Otis Amber danced up to his soup-kitchen companion, flung his arms around the taut body, and squeezed her tightly. "Hey Crow old pal, old pal, old pal."

"They said I was innocent, Otis. They said I was innocent," she replied vaguely.

Angela, too, wanted to hug her in welcome, but closeness was not possible for either of them. Instead, Angela offered a crooked smile. Crow nodded and lowered her eyes, only to raise them to Madame Hoo, clutching a Mickey Mouse clock. "Things very good," Madame Hoo said, extending her free hand and shaking Crow's hand up and down.

"It was all a regrettable mistake," Ed Plum explained to the judge. "Can you imagine, that sheriff wanted to arrest me, not Crow—me, Edgar Jennings Plum—he wanted to arrest the attorney! Fortunately, the coroner determined that Mr. McSouthers died of a heart attack as did Samuel W. Westing."

"Then Turtle's right," Theo said. "There was no murder. The coroner was part of the plot."

Ed Plum had no idea what Theo was talking about. Masking his ignorance with arrogance, he continued. "I had my suspicions about this entire affair from the start. I came here for one reason only: to announce my resignation from all matters regarding the Westing estate, with sincere apologies to all concerned."

"Wasn't there a last document?" Judge Ford asked, knowing that Sam Westing had to make his last move.

"Yes, but as I no longer take a legal interest..."

"Please turn it over to the court."

Baffled by the word "court," the lawyer set the envelope on the desk and found his way out of Sunset Towers.

Without once clearing her throat, Judge Ford proceeded to read the final page of the will of Samuel W. Westing.

*SEVENTEENTH ♦ Good-bye, my heirs.  
Thanks for the fun and games. I can rest in  
peace knowing I was loved as your jolly  
doorman.*

*EIGHTEENTH ♦ I, Samuel W. Westing,  
otherwise known as Sandy McSouthers and  
others, do hereby give and bequeath all the  
property and possessions in my name as  
follows:*

*To all of you, in equal shares, the deed  
to Sunset Towers;*

*And to my former wife, Berthe Erica  
Crow, the ten-thousand-dollar check  
forfeited by table one, and two ten-  
thousand-dollar checks endorsed by J. J.  
Ford and Alexander McSouthers.*

*NINETEENTH ♦ The sun has set on your  
Uncle Sam. Happy birthday, Crow. And to  
all of my heirs, a very happy Fourth of July.*

Judge Ford set the document down. "That's it."

That's it? What about the two hundred million dollars, the heirs wanted to know.

"We lost the game," the judge explained, staring at Turtle, her face a mask of sad, childlike innocence as she nestled once again in Flora Baumbach's arms. "I think."

Turtle rose and walked to the side window, seeking the Westing house, which stood invisible in the moon-clouded night. (Hurry up, Uncle Sam, I can't keep up this act much longer. The candle must have burned through the last stripe by now.)

Behind her the discontented heirs grumbled: He made fools of us all. He played us like puppets. He was a g-good man. He was a vengeful man, a hateful man. Windkloppe! He tricked us, the cheat. A madman, stark raving mad.

"Oh my, oh my, just listen to you," Flora Baumbach said. "You each have ten thousand dollars more than you started with and an apartment building to boot. The man is dead, so why not think the best?"

BOOM!

BOOM!

BOOM!

"Happy Fourth of July," Turtle shouted as the first rockets lit up the Westing house, lit up the sky.

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM.

BOOM!!!

The heirs gathered around Turtle at the window.

BOOM! Stars of all colors bursting into the night, silver pinwheels spinning, golden lances up-up-BOOM! crimson flashes flashing blasting, scarlet showers BOOM! emerald rain BOOM! BOOM! orange flames, red flames leaping from the windows, sparking the turrets, firing the trees....

"BOOM!" cried Madame Hoo, clapping her hands with delight.

The great winter fireworks extravaganza, as it came to be called, lasted only fifteen minutes. Twenty minutes later the Westing house had burned to the ground.

"Happy birthday, Crow," Otis Amber said, reaching for her hand.

The orange glow of the morning sun had just begun its climb up the glass front of Sunset Towers when Turtle set out to collect the prize. She pedaled north past the cliff, still smoldering with the charred remains of the Westing house. Reaching the crossroads she turned into the narrow lane whose twisting curves mimicked the shoreline.

*The heir who wins the windfall will be the one who finds the fourth.* It was so simple once you knew what you were looking for. Sam Westing, Barney Northrup, Sandy McSouthers (west, north, south). Now she was on her way to meet the fourth identity of Windy Windkloppel. She could probably have figured out the address, too, instead of looking it up in the Westingtown phone book—there it was, number four Sunrise Lane.

A long driveway, its privacy guarded by tall spruce, led to the modern mansion of the newly-elected chairman of the board of Westing Paper Products Corporation. Turtle climbed the stairs, rang the bell and waited. The door opened.

Turtle felt her first grip of panic as she confronted the crippled doctor. Could she have been wrong? "I'd like to see Mr. Eastman, please," she said nervously. "Tell him Turtle Wexler is here."

"Mr. Eastman is expecting you," Doctor Sikes said. "Go straight down the hall."

The hall had an inlaid marble floor (no Oriental rugs). Reaching its end she entered a paneled library (this one filled with books). There he was, sitting at his desk.

Julian R. Eastman rose. He looked stern. And very proper. He wore a gray business suit with a vest, a striped tie. His shoes were shined. He limped as he walked toward her, not the crooked limp of Doctor Sikes, just a small limp, a painful limp. Again Turtle was gripped by panic. He seemed so different, so important. She shouldn't have kicked him (the Barney Northrup him). He was coming closer. His watery blue eyes stared at her over his rimless half-glasses. Hard eyes. His teeth were white, not quite even (no one would ever guess they were false). He was smiling. He wasn't angry with her, he was smiling.

"Hi, Sandy," Turtle said. "I won!"

## 28 ♦ *And Then...*

Turtle never told. She went to the library every Saturday afternoon, she explained (which was partly true). "Make your move, Turtle, you don't want to be late for the wedding."

The ceremony was held in Shin Hoo's restaurant. Grace Wexler, recovered from a world-record hangover, draped a white cloth over the liquor bottles and set a spray of roses on the bar. No drinks would be served today.

Radiant in her wedding gown of white heirloom lace, the bride walked down the aisle, past the tables of well-wishers,