

# The Westing Game



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ELLEN RASKIN

Born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin—a place that went on to inform her fiction over the course of her career—Ellen Raskin grew up during the Great Depression. After attending college at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and majoring in fine art, Raskin began a prolific career as a writer and illustrator of children’s books. Raskin’s own novels include *The Westing Game*, which won the 1979 American Library Association’s Newberry Medal for the year’s most distinguished children’s book, as well as *The Mysterious Disappearance of Leon (I Mean Noel)*, *Figgs & Phantoms*, and *The Tattooed Potato and Other Clues*. She also wrote and illustrated 12 picture books between 1967 and 1976. Additionally, Raskin is well-known for creating the original cover art for the first edition of Madeline L’Engle’s *A Wrinkle In Time*. The designer of over a thousand dust jackets throughout her long career as a commercial artist, Raskin’s mystery novels and playful illustrations have delighted young readers for decades. Her satirical work is often rooted in themes of family, mismatched identities, and the search for (or the corruption of) the American Dream. Raskin drew inspiration for her illustrations and her stories from wide-ranging topics and figures such as East Asian art, zoos, sporting events, Vladimir Nabokov, Henri Matisse, William Blake, and Walt Disney’s *Fantasia*. Raskin died in 1984, at the age of 54, from complications of a connective-tissue disease.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Written and published in the late 1970s, *The Westing Game* satirizes the complex and rapidly changing social, political, and economic standards of the time. The ensemble cast of the novel, which has been described by critics as “deliberately, flagrantly, almost allegorically” multicultural, allows Raskin to highlight the racist and classist thoughts of characters who think of themselves as openminded and “liberal” while demonstrating the difficulties that immigrants, minorities, and disabled individuals continue to face even at a relatively progressive historical time. Several of Raskin’s characters are minorities or disabled people who are judged and discriminated against for the differences. In highlighting these narratives, Raskin shows how American society tends to target marginalized people and fuel divisions based upon race, ethnicity, social class, and personal background.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

*The Westing Game*, as a children’s mystery novel which satirizes complicated race and class dynamics, is part of a longstanding tradition mystery novels that pit unlikely groups of people from various walks of life against one another in the search for answers, money, or power. Similarly-themed novels include Agatha Christie’s classic [Murder on the Orient Express](#), Roald Dahl’s *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and Ellen Raskin’s own *The Mysterious Disappearance of Leon (I Mean Noel)*. L. Frank Baum’s classic novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, like *The Westing Game*, features a shadowy, powerful figure whom the primary protagonist—in both books, a young girl—must endeavor to find and expose. *The Westing Game* is also unique in its narrative style: a witty, all-seeing omniscient narrator dips in and out of the heads of 16 main characters, all the while offering commentary on the thoughts and actions of the very characters it seeks to explain. Novels like William Goldman’s [The Princess Bride](#) and Liane Moriarty’s *Nine Perfect Strangers* also employ omniscient, self-referential narrative voices which allow readers to glimpse the thoughts—as well as the deceptions—of multiple characters.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Westing Game
- **When Written:** 1970s
- **Where Written:** New York, New York
- **When Published:** 1978
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Children’s Novel; Mystery
- **Setting:** An unnamed Wisconsin town on Lake Michigan, just north of Milwaukee
- **Climax:** Shortly after the “death” of Sandy McSouthers, the intrepid young Turtle Wexler solves the titular “Westing game” and confronts the mysterious and reclusive paper magnate Sam Westing.
- **Antagonist:** Sam Westing
- **Point of View:** Third Person

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Historical Roots.** The figure of Sam Westing is inspired by the real-life Kohler Company magnate John Michael Kohler, who established a massive factory and a town around it called Kohler just north of Milwaukee on Lake Michigan. Kohler was an intense patriot who encouraged—and even pressured—his immigrant employees to apply for citizenship and express their love for their “adopted country.” Kohler’s industrial innovation and staunch patriotism are reflected in the enigmatic character of Sam Westing.

**Picture Perfect.** A renowned illustrator with a decidedly visual brain, Ellen Raskin compiled extensive files of research and drafting materials as she composed *The Westing Game*. In these files, she included alternate titles (such as *Eight Imperfect Pairs of Heirs*), intensely detailed visual descriptions of her characters, figures and images cut out from magazines, and a full-length version of Sam Westing's will. Raskin's wide-ranging research file even included letters written to the State of Wisconsin to learn more about their court system.



## PLOT SUMMARY

On the Fourth of July, a 62-year-old delivery boy rides around a town on the edge of Lake Michigan delivering letters signed by a man named Barney Northrup—a man who does not exist. The letters invite their recipients to move into Sunset Towers, a new apartment building on the lake which, despite its name, faces east. Within days, Northrup has rented all of the homes in Sunset Towers, as well as both restaurant spaces and a medical office in the lobby. In September, the tenants move in. Hidden among them are a bookie, a burglar, a **bomber**, a thief, and a mistake. A “NO TRESPASSING” sign and a wire fence have been erected on the north side of the building's property—beyond them lies the mysterious Westing estate.

On Halloween, Sandy McSouthers, the doorman at Sunset Towers, and Otis Amber, the delivery boy, spot smoke coming from the Westing manor's chimney. They rib the teens who live in the building—Theo Theodorakis, Doug Hoo, and Turtle Wexler—by telling them ghost stories about how old man Westing has been rotting away inside for years. The other tenants notice the smoke, too—Theo's brother Chris, who is suffering from a neurological disorder and uses a wheelchair, spies the smoke through his birdwatching binoculars, and Turtle's engaged-to-be-married older sister, Angela Wexler, spots the smoke during a fitting with her wedding dress maker, Flora Baumbach. Turtle's father, Jake Wexler, is a podiatrist—as he visits with a patient, Berthe Erica Crow, the building's religious cleaning woman, Crow spots the smoke and becomes alarmed. Judge J.J. Ford and Sydelle Pulaski, two other tenants of Sunset Towers, return home and notice the smoke, too.

That night, Turtle meets Doug at the Westing estate: she is determined to win \$2 for every minute she spends inside the manor. Doug sets a stopwatch as Turtle runs in. Minutes later, she runs out screaming—she has seen the dead body of Sam Westing. The next morning, Turtle finds that Westing's death has made headlines. Turtle is excited when she reads that Sam Westing, the son of immigrants turned founder of the lucrative Westing Paper Products Corporation, is worth over \$200 million. A patriot and teetotaler, Westing made his corporation vast and successful while also dismantling his employees' attempts to organize a union. Turtle also learns about the tragedies in Westing's past: many years ago, his daughter Violet

died the night before her wedding. Not long after that, Westing and his friend, the county coroner Dr. Sidney Sikes, were in a terrible car accident which was rumored to have left Westing disfigured. Meanwhile, Otis Amber sets out on another delivery. He has 16 letters from Westing's attorney, E.J. Plum, to deliver—tomorrow, there is to be a reading of the will at the Westing estate.

At the reading of the will, the recipients of Plum's summonses gather. Among them are Turtle, Angela, their mother Grace, and Angela's fiancé Dr. Denton Deere; James Shin Hoo, the proprietor of a Chinese restaurant in Sunset Towers along with his son Doug; Crow, Flora, Ford, Sydelle, Theo and Chris, Sandy, and Otis. Hoo's wife, Madame Sun Lin Hoo, and Jake have also been summoned, but they do not attend. The will declares that the 16 potential heirs to the Westing fortune will soon be divided up into pairs of eight, handed sets of clues, and invited to play “the Westing game.” Westing's will declares that he did not die of natural causes—one of his heirs took his life from him. The heir who “wins the windfall” will be the one who solves the mystery.

In the next room, Plum reads out the game's pairings: Madame Hoo and Jake, Turtle and Flora, Chris and Denton, Sandy and Ford, Grace and Mr. Hoo, Crow and Otis, Theo and Doug, and Sydelle and Angela. Each pair, Plum says, will receive a \$10,000 check—if anyone drops out, their partner must also forfeit the money. Both players must sign the check to cash it. Plum passes out the clues—the pairs are confused by the inscrutable slips of paper they've been given, on which four or five seemingly unrelated words are written. Plum ends the session by reading from one last section of the will. The will reminds the players that it is not what they have but what they don't have that counts. It also urges the players to discover who they are (and who their partners are) deep down—but, at the same time, it encourages them to “beware” of one another.

After a blizzard, the residents of Sunset Towers are snowbound. Sydelle becomes popular as the tenants vie for a glimpse at the notes she took during the reading of the will. Turtle decides that the clues she's been given spell out stocks she should invest her and Flora's check into. Ford, determined to learn everything she can about her fellow heirs, enlists the help of a reporter to dig up facts about each of them. Sydelle's notebook goes missing—and so do many other tenants' most precious items. Ford invites all of the heirs to a party, hoping to learn more about them. The next morning, the heirs meet at the coffee shop owned by Chris and Theo's parents, George and Catherine. Theo wants the heirs to pool their clues, but many of the others, including Hoo and Ford, are reluctant to do so. Instead, the heirs agree to allow some anonymous questions. Everyone writes down the questions they have for the other heirs on a slip of paper, and Theo reads the questions out. Before he can get to the end, however, a bomb goes off in the kitchen. The heirs leave, rattled.

Ford's investigation continues. Her reporter turns up pictures of George and Violet Westing together at a party. Ford, knowing she needs to go deeper, calls a private investigator. Meanwhile, the bomber sets another trap in the kitchen at the Hoos' restaurant. That evening, many of the heirs head up to Shin Hoo's for dinner. As the restaurant is bustling in the middle of dinnertime, the second bomb goes off. Grace, who has taken a position as the restaurant's hostess, tries to calm the guests. Sydelle sprains her ankle outrunning the blast and is taken to the hospital.

Eventually, the sun comes out and melts the snow, freeing the residents of Sunset Towers. Sandy and Ford begin compiling dossiers on their fellow heirs. As Ford gets to know the scar-faced Sandy better, she learns that he is a former boxer who was fired from the Westing Paper Products plant after trying to organize a union. Several of the heirs begin piecing together bits of the will and bits of their clues, realizing that the song "America the Beautiful" is key in solving the mystery. Some of the heirs begin breaking out of their pairs, exchanging theories in clusters. At Angela's bridal shower, as Angela opens her gifts, one of the presents explodes in her face. The beautiful Angela is taken to the hospital with burns on her hands and face. The heirs grow even more suspicious of one another.

Suspicion flies throughout Sunset Towers as the heirs work round-the-clock to discover more about one another's pasts. Ford and Sandy deduce a connection between Grace, whose maiden name is Windkloppel, and Crow, who was once married to a man named Windkloppel. They also learn that Violet Westing killed herself the night before her wedding after her mother arranged a sham marriage to a hack politician, pulling Violet away from her true love, George Theodorakis, whose family were workers at the Westing Paper Products plant. Ford reveals to Sandy that she grew up in the Westing house: her parents were servants there, and Westing financed her education. She has never repaid her debt to him. She and Sandy decide that Westing is not dead, but is instead likely in disguise as one of the heirs. They believe that Westing wants revenge on his ex-wife, Mrs. Westing, for driving their daughter to suicide. They realize that they must protect Mrs. Westing—she, too, has to be among the heirs.

Another bomb goes off in the elevator—Turtle confesses to being the bomber, though it was really Angela. That night, at the Westing estate, the heirs receive another \$10,000, but are told that in order to win the \$200 million, they'll need to produce the name of who among them is responsible for Westing's death. The heirs offer up their answers—some don't offer one at all. The group moves to the library, where Plum opens up another envelope and declares that all answers are wrong. Partnerships, the document says, are dissolved—all the heirs are on their own. Plum leaves the room and locks the door. Theo suggests everyone work together. Sandy drinks from a flask as the others arrange their clues: the words spell

out the lyrics to "America the Beautiful," but several letters and words are missing. The missing letters spell out "Berthe Erica Crow." Sandy falls to the floor, apparently having been poisoned, and dies. The police arrive to investigate. Plum reads yet another document from the will: if no one offers up the answer in five minutes, the will becomes null and void, and no one gets any money. The heirs refuse to offer up Crow's name, unwilling to believe she is guilty. Crow, at the last minute, offers up her own name. The police lead Crow away.

After this, the heirs return to Sunset Towers and gather in Ford's living room, where Ford and Turtle hold a "trial" to determine what has truly transpired. Turtle believes that Crow is yet another red herring and that the answer to the mystery lies in the pages of Westing's will. Over the course of the makeshift "trial," Turtle reveals that Otis Amber is a private investigator with three clients: Westing, Northrup, and Ford. Deducing that language in the will relating to Westing's ashes being scattered to the "four winds"—and Westing's original family name, Windkloppel—relate to the answer, Turtle realizes that Sandy McSouthers, Barney Northrup, and Julian Eastman, the CEO and President of Westing Paper Products, are three of Westing's aliases. She tells the others that Sandy was Westing in disguise, but she doesn't reveal anything about the other aliases. Madame Hoo reveals herself to be the thief and returns all the items she's stolen from the others. Ed Plum returns with Crow, who's been found innocent. Fireworks go off at the Westing estate. The next morning, Turtle heads out on her bike to the estate of Julian Eastman—there, greeting Eastman as "Sandy," she proudly declares that she's won the game.

In a series of flash forwards, the narrator reveals the fates of all the heirs. Turtle never reveals what she found to the others, but she attends weekly chess lessons at "Sandy" (Westing's) house. Crow and Otis Amber, lifelong friends, marry each other at last. Angela returns to medical school after breaking off her engagement. Ford ascends to the Supreme Court and finances Chris's education, paying off her debt to Westing by paying it forward; Chris goes on to become a successful ornithologist. Sydelle marries her former boss at the sausage factory. Jake becomes chairman of the state gambling commission. Doug Hoo wins an Olympic gold medal and becomes a successful sports reporter. Hoo invents paper insoles that make him a rich man before he dies at a young age. Grace becomes a restaurateur. And many years later, Turtle—now going by T.R.—becomes the head of the board of the Westing Paper Products Corporation after her mentor, Julian Eastman, dies at a ripe old age on his favorite holiday, the Fourth of July.



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Tabitha-Ruth "Turtle" Wexler** – The de facto protagonist of the

novel and the youngest of Sam Westing's 16 potential heirs, Turtle Wexler is a precocious preteen who is fiercely protective of herself, her secrets, and the beloved long braid that hangs down her back. She's Angela's sister and Grace and Jake's daughter. A tomboyish shin-kicker who doles out physical punishments to anyone who dares touch her precious braid, Turtle doesn't fit in with her family at all. The Westing game, then, presents her with a chance to shine on her own terms. While working through clues (and playing the stock market) with her partner in the game, the dressmaker Flora Baumbach, Turtle learns important lessons about empathy, teamwork, and having faith in other people. All her life, Turtle has felt lonely even within her own family—her bedroom is little more than a closet in her family's apartment, and Grace's preference for Turtle's beautiful sister, Angela, has never been much of a secret. As a result, Turtle has cultivated a practical understanding of the world around her, refusing to play by anyone else's rules or to let anyone get too close to her. As the novel progresses, Turtle finds herself questioning the defense mechanisms she's developed and reconsidering her relationships with other people. Ultimately, after discovering the true identity of Sandy McSouthers—and the fact that Sam Westing created four aliases for himself based on the directions of the four winds—the logical and enterprising Turtle wins the Westing game, but she doesn't tell any of the other players that she's solved the puzzle. Turtle becomes the apprentice of Julian R. Eastman—Westing's latest alias—and eventually, many years into the future, she inherits control of the Westing Paper Products Corporation. Shrewd, resilient, thoughtful, and observant, Turtle Wexler exemplifies the combination of canniness, enterprise, and self-determination that Westing seeks in an heir—not just to his company, but to his entire legacy.

**Samuel W. Westing** – Sam Westing, the son of immigrants who was born as Samuel “Windy” Windkloppel, is the eccentric and reclusive owner and operator of the Westing Paper Products Corporation, a conglomerate based in the eponymous Westingtown just off the shores of Lake Michigan. Westing has not been seen in public for many years—at the start of the novel, rumors swirl that his corpse has been rotting away in his mansion for a long time. A shrewd but selfish businessman who broke up any of his employees' attempts to organize over the years, Westing has a reputation not just for eccentricity and reclusiveness, but for being cruel and power-hungry. When Turtle Wexler sneaks into the Westing house on a dare one Halloween night, she finds Westing's dead body in his bed—in the days that follow, Westing's lawyer summons 16 “heirs,” Turtle among them, to his manor to compete for a \$200 million inheritance. The heirs compete feverishly (and, in some cases, even ruthlessly) for the cash prize—but little do they know that Westing is still alive, pulling strings behind the scenes as he tries to establish a legacy that will repair the mistakes of his power-hungry, union-busting past. Westing, with the help of his

three other aliases—Barney Northrup, Sandy McSouthers, and Julian R. Eastman—engineers many of the titular Westing game's twists and turns as he searches for the individual worthy of inheriting control of his company and the opportunity to shape and steer it toward a brighter future. Westing's past is marked by discord, violence, and heartbreak—the death of his daughter Violet and the resulting dissolution of his marriage to Berthe Erica Crow left Westing a lonely man. Through the game he engineers, he is able not just to create but also to participate in his own redemption arc, touching forever the lives of 16 people deeply in need of community, friendship, and a common goal.

**Grace Windsor (Windkloppel) Wexler** – The snobby, social-climbing Grace Wexler is the wife of Jake Wexler and the mother of Turtle and Angela. She's one of Sam Westing's 16 potential heirs. A self-proclaimed heiress with a passion for interior design—and a penchant for bigotry and self-absorption to the point of narcissism—Grace is, at the start of the novel, trying desperately to outrun her humble origins and disguise herself as a moneyed, mannered socialite. Grace claims to be related to Sam Westing, though she is purposefully vague about their connection and continues to disguise her maiden name (Windkloppel, which is also Sam Westing's original family name) from the other heirs. Grace is paired with James Shin Hoo in the Westing game, and though the two of them have trouble seeing eye to eye—largely due to Grace's racism—Grace eventually comes to understand the complexity of her game partner's experiences and helps him revive and reinvigorate his floundering restaurant business. Grace is obsessed with appearances—as such, she encourages Angela to marry the successful plastic surgery intern Dr. Denton Deere without even considering whether the teenaged Angela is prepared to marry so young. Over the course of the novel, Grace slowly learns how skewed her priorities have been and how cruelly she's treated not just her neighbors but her own family. By discounting her husband's profession, pressuring her eldest daughter into marriage, and constantly berating her youngest daughter Turtle for her offbeat tomboyish-ness, Grace has alienated herself from those she loves most. In playing the Westing game, she learns to see not just the strangers who are her fellow players but her own family members as complex people with agency of their own.

**Angela Wexler** – Angela is the beautiful 19-year-old daughter of Jake and Grace Wexler and the sister of Turtle Wexler. She's one of Sam Westing's 16 potential heirs. Engaged at the start of the novel to the medical intern Denton Deere, Angela is conflicted about her upcoming nuptials—yet she's uncertain that there's any other path possible for her. Having been told all her life that her angelic beauty is her only asset, Angela's self-confidence is in tatters at the start of the novel. When the Westing game begins and Angela is paired with Sydelle Pulaski—an eccentric, attention-seeking older woman who is, in

many ways, as invisible as Angela is visible—Angela begins feeling in control of her fate for the first time in her life. Angela is eventually revealed to be the **bomber** behind the three sets of fireworks that go off in Sunset Towers—these impact the businesses of the Theodorakis and Hoo families and literally blow apart Angela’s own bridal shower, leaving Angela’s face and hands are severely burned. Angela has engineered the bombings in various attempts to disfigure herself—she wants those around her to see past her beauty and appreciate the person she is, but she feels that this is impossible without drastic measures. Ultimately, Angela is able to summon the courage to break off her engagement, return to school, and declare her intention to live life on her own terms. Angela is just one of many characters who finds that the partnerships and friendships she makes in playing the Westing game embolden her to reconsider what her life has the potential to look like. Angela wants to create a legacy she can be proud of—and by the end of the novel, she has completed medical school, married Deere on her own terms, and given birth to a daughter named Alice.

**Jake Wexler** – Jake Wexler is a podiatrist, Angela and Turtle’s father, and Grace’s husband. He’s one of Sam Westing’s 16 potential heirs. Jake is also secretly a bookie—dissatisfied with his own profession yet so offended by his wife’s belief that he is not a “real” doctor that he refuses to change his situation, Jake turns to gambling and betting to feel alive. Though Jake, who misses the initial reading of Westing’s will, is mostly a tangential player in the Westing game, he is a sardonic and humorous presence throughout the novel. The put-upon Jake sees himself as an underdog, and, as such, allies himself with the other underdogs around him. He strikes up a friendship with Madame Hoo—his partner in the Westing game, even though neither of them is as involved as the other heirs after missing the initial reading of the will. Jake is the only person who takes Madame Hoo seriously as an individual, and he is successful in helping to teach her some English by simply talking to her as if she’s anyone else. Jake is cool, level-headed, and slightly self-deprecating—he uses humor as a way of disguising the discrimination he himself has faced as a Jewish man, and the ways in which his Jewishness has created a chasm in Grace’s family. By the end of the novel, he has used his skills as a bookie to parlay his way into a seat on the state gambling commission.

**Judge Josie-Jo “J.J.” Ford** – Judge Josie-Jo “J.J.” Ford is a judge who serves in the Appellate Division of the Wisconsin Supreme Court. She’s one of Sam Westing’s 16 potential heirs. A reserved yet proud black woman, Ford has battled racism, prejudice, and discrimination to get to the point she’s at in her career—as such, she’s often defensive, detached, and purposefully suspicious of those around her. Ford has a secret connection to Westing that she’s embarrassed to admit: her mother was once a servant in the Westing house, and her

father was the gardener. As such, Ford grew up in the house—and Sam Westing, who took a shine to her, often challenged her to chess games and even financed her private-school education. Ford knows that she is in debt to Westing—a debt she’s ashamed of, as she may never be able to repay it. In spite of the cruel taunts Westing used to level against Ford as a girl, he is the man who made Ford’s success possible. Ford has nonetheless made her own way in the world, and her resilient, proud spirit has helped her on her mission to become a person who upholds justice even in the face of systemic prejudice. The Westing game pulls Ford back to her roots, forcing her to consider the ways in which she might repay her debt by paying forward Westing’s faith in her and financing Chris’s education in turn. Ford is a woman who plays things close to the chest, gathering the facts before drawing any conclusions. The Westing game challenges her to have more faith in those around her, to reframe her own conception of her past, and to take pride in the difficult but meaningful path she’s chosen.

**Berthe Erica Crow** – Crow is a mysterious, deeply religious, and very tall woman who dresses all in black. She’s one of Sam Westing’s 16 potential heirs. Crow works as the cleaning woman at Sunset Towers and lives in a small maid’s apartment. She volunteers each week at a soup kitchen on Skid Row with her close friend, the delivery boy Otis Amber. Crow is severe and quiet, and the other heirs know little of her past. Eventually, it is revealed that Berthe Erica Crow is the mysterious Mrs. Westing—Sam Westing’s wife who left him after the death of their beloved daughter, Violet. Crow, desperate to secure her daughter a more secure social and financial position, arranged to marry Violet off to a crooked politician—and in doing so, she separated Violet from her true love, George Theodorakis, the son of a Westing factory worker. After Violet committed suicide the night before the wedding, Crow left Westing, returned to using her maiden name, and became devoutly religious in order to atone for her sins against her daughter and her family. Berthe Erica Crow’s full name is the “answer” to the Westing game—and though Crow “wins” the game by offering herself up to the authorities as Westing’s murderer, she’s absolved of any role in the man’s death and receives over \$30,000 from Westing’s will. Crow eventually marries Otis. Together, they renovate the soup kitchen downtown, and many years later, the two lovers die within days of one another.

**James Shin Hoo** – James Shin Hoo is a restaurateur, father to Doug Hoo, and husband to Madame Sun Lin Hoo. He’s one of Sam Westing’s 16 potential heirs. Born James Hoo in Chicago to immigrant parents, Hoo added “Shin” to his name when he went into the restaurant business in order to sound more authentically Chinese. All his life, Hoo—an aspiring inventor—has had to endure the bigots who patronize his restaurant yet mock his culture, leaning into their assumptions about him in order to make a profit and support his family. Hoo

encapsulates Raskin's view of the impossible catch-22 that many immigrants and minorities face: the directive to either assimilate into American society and abandon their heritage, or to accept harmful stereotypes in order to satisfy white people's prejudiced assumptions. In spite of the struggles Hoo has faced, he remains hopeful that he'll one day make it big as an inventor. His current project is an insole made from thin paper—a seemingly ridiculous invention that nonetheless actually seems to work for the residents of Sunset Towers Hoo tries them out on. Though Hoo faces prejudice and bigotry throughout the novel—most pointedly from his partner in the Westing game, Grace Wexler—he remains devoted to his business, his family, and his values. Hoo comes under suspicion when it's revealed that many years ago, he was locked in a dispute with Sam Westing over the rights to a patent on paper diapers, and he is further maligned after a series of **bombs** go off throughout Sunset Towers. Hoo maintains his innocence, however—and by the end of the novel, he is not only vindicated but embraced by his fellow players as an important fixture of their newfound community. Though prickly and often surly, Hoo proves to be a staunch defender of his family, his culture, and his own self-worth—things he has had to defend more often than most due to the unfair forces of racism, prejudice, and bigotry he's confronted all his life.

**Madame Sun Lin Hoo** – Madame Sun Lin Hoo is the 28-year-old second wife of James Shin Hoo and stepmother of Doug Hoo. She's one of Sam Westing's 16 potential heirs. A recent immigrant from Hong Kong, she is isolated by the language barrier that keeps her from communicating in English. None of her neighbors will even try conversing with her or helping her to learn English, and some—like Grace Wexler—even go so far as to stereotype her “doll-like” appearance and quiet nature. Madame Hoo turns to burglary in order to get to know her neighbors, stealing objects beloved by them in order learn more about them, feel more connected to them, and understand their lives. Jake Wexler, Madame Hoo's partner in the Westing game, is the only person who treats her as an individual rather than a stereotype. As Jake helps Madame Hoo learn English, she comes out of her shell a bit and begins feeling more connected to her new neighbors. Fiercely protective and proud of Doug, Madame Hoo is a young but devoted stepmother and, ultimately, a beloved member of her new community. When the other heirs learn that Madame Hoo is the burglar, they forgive her immediately—they have come to understand just how complicated and trying her journey has been.

**Alexander “Sandy” McSouthers** – Sandy McSouthers is the doorman at Sunset Towers. He's presented as one of Sam Westing's 16 potential heirs, though he is secretly an alias of Westing. A kindly ex-boxer with a chipped tooth and a sunny demeanor, Sandy is paired with Judge Ford for the duration of the Westing game. Sandy's warmth and silliness ingratiate him

to all the residents of Sunset Towers—especially Turtle Wexler—though Ford is the only one to piece together the truth about his identity before the final reading of the will and the conclusion of the Westing Game. Omnipresent yet unassuming, Sandy McSouthers is the perfect disguise for Westing throughout the duration of his own game: by becoming Sandy, Westing is able to participate in his own game, intimately observe its players, and steer things in the direction he wants them to take when red herrings (misleading clues) or dead ends threaten to throw the whole enterprise off course.

**Sydelle Pulaski** – Sydelle Pulaski is a lonely, aging woman who has worked for decades as the secretary to the owner of a local sausage company while living with her mother and two older aunts. Sydelle is the “mistake” among Sam Westing's 16 potential heirs—it is her sister Sybil, not Sydelle, who has a connection to Sam Westing. Despite having been summoned in error first to live in Sunset Towers with the other heirs and later to Westing manor to begin the Westing game, Sydelle is one of the players who needs the game most. Sydelle feels completely invisible in her day-to-day life. At the start of the novel, she turns to attention-seeking measures such as using a pair of gaudily hand-painted crutches—even though she has no need for them. Sydelle, a well-trained secretary, is the only player in the game with the foresight to take notes during the initial reading of Westing's will, which doubles as the game rules (and contains subtle clues). Sydelle, however, takes her shorthand down in her native Polish, making her notes useless to the other players and giving Sydelle a leg up in the game. Sydelle is emboldened by the high status this grants her. Together with her partner Angela, whom Sydelle quickly realizes is the **bomber** behind the three sets of fireworks that go off in different locations throughout Sunset Towers, Sydelle realizes that the key to the Westing game lies in the lyrics to the song “America the Beautiful.” Gregarious, sly, canny, and self-aware enough to understand the consequences of her own loneliness, Sydelle is one of the heirs who benefits most from the Westing game. She ultimately finds a kindred spirit in Angela and a kind of family in the other players.

**Christos “Chris” Theodorakis** – Chris Theodorakis is George and Catherine's the 15-year-old son and Theo's younger brother. He's one of Sam Westing's 16 potential heirs. An intelligent, thoughtful, and soulful young man who has recently been stricken with a degenerative neurological disorder of unknown origin, Chris loves birdwatching—one of the few activities he can do from his wheelchair. Chris's preoccupation with birds perhaps reflects his desire for flight and unimpeded freedom. Though Chris's movements and speech are impaired by his disorder, his thoughts are as cogent and sharp as ever. The fawning sympathy and nervous avoidance he faces as a result of his disease exhaust and frustrate him, yet he remains sunny, excitable, and determined to play the Westing game through to the end alongside his skeptical partner, Denton

Deere. Smart, observant, and gentle, Chris eventually begins receiving an experimental treatment for his disease when Denton recommends him to a doctor at the local hospital as a perfect candidate. Chris's condition improves—and while he uses a wheelchair for the rest of his life, as flash forwards reveal, he finds happiness and success as an ornithologist after Judge Ford finances his education.

**Theo Theodorakis** – Theo Theodorakis is a high-school senior. He's one of Sam Westing's 16 potential heirs. George and Catherine's and Chris's older brother, Theo is a family-oriented youth who loves his parents and his brother and who is determined to do whatever he can to help them all through a difficult time. Theo even gives his half of the check, which he and Doug receive at the start of the Westing game during the reading of Westing's will, to his parents in hopes of easing their burdens. Theo has an analytical mind, and he tries to solve the Westing game using science and formulas—a tactic which literally backfires. Though Theo harbors a crush on Angela for the duration of the game, he ultimately marries Turtle and becomes a mildly successful novelist. Thoughtful, curious, and astute, Theo wants to solve the Westing game for unselfish reasons: he wants to help those he loves.

**Doug Hoo** – Doug Hoo is the son of James Hoo. He's one of Sam Westing's 16 potential heirs. A high school senior, track star, and accomplished athlete, Doug Hoo is a genial, easygoing kid who works in his family's restaurant and enjoys picking on Turtle with Theo, his classmate, neighbor, and partner in the Westing game. Doug's skills as a runner come in handy throughout the game as he is able to tail players who seem to know more than they're letting on—such as Otis Amber. Doug's enthusiasm is the perfect match for the brainier Theo's diligence. After the conclusion of the Westing game, Doug goes on to become an Olympic gold medalist and a popular sportscaster.

**Otis Amber** – Otis is a hapless aging delivery boy who, at 62, lives in the basement of a greengrocer and makes local deliveries on his bicycle. He's one of Sam Westing's 16 potential heirs. Otis and Berthe Erica Crow have been friends for many years, and together, they run a small soup kitchen on Skid Row. They are also paired together in the Westing game. Though Otis isn't particularly bright, he is a gregarious and kind person. Eventually, Otis is revealed to be a private investigator in the service of three different people: Sam Westing, Barney Northrup, and Judge Ford. Westing initially hired Otis to keep tabs on Crow and make sure she never used the Westing name—but over the course of their friendship, Otis and Crow have become close, and Otis has developed real affection for her. Toward the end of the novel, the two marry in a ceremony at James Hoo's restaurant.

**Flora Baumbach** – Flora is a plump, kindly dressmaker who is one of Sam Westing's 16 potential heirs. She is paired with the whip-smart but bratty Turtle Wexler; Flora is also in the

process of making a wedding gown for Turtle sister, Angela. Flora is amused (and confused) by Turtle's laser-sharp focus on winning the game by playing the stock market, and though she doesn't always understand what Turtle's master plan is, she proves a loyal and devoted partner who's willing to do anything to win. Flora and Turtle grow extremely close over the course of the Westing game, and the patient, generous Flora even becomes a kind of mother or grandmother figure to Turtle, who begins calling her Baba. Flora, who lost her developmentally disabled daughter Rosalie to pneumonia just a year ago, fights through her grief to be there for Turtle. Gregarious, loving, and kind, Flora helps teach Turtle to be more patient with the people around her—and Turtle helps teach Flora to be a bit more shrewd and invested in her own success.

**Dr. Denton Deere** – Dr. Denton Deere is Angela's fiancé and an intern in plastic surgery at the local hospital. He's one of Sam Westing's 16 potential heirs. A smarmy, pompous, and self-important man, Deere is constantly diagnosing the conditions of others and offering unsolicited (and incorrect or impractical) medical advice. In the Westing game, Denton is paired with Chris Theodorakis for the duration of the challenge, during which time he becomes determined to help Chris fight back against a serious neurological disorder by helping him access experimental treatments at the local hospital. Denton, a blowhard but a good man deep down, loves his fiancée Angela—but he has lost sight of her agency and independence, and their relationship crumbles before they are able to marry. Toward the end of the novel, it is revealed that years after breaking off their engagement, Denton and Angela meet again—this time, as equals. They decide to marry after all, and, together, they eventually have a young daughter named Alice.

**Julian R. Eastman** – The mysterious Julian Eastman is the president and CEO of the Westing Paper Products corporation—and an alias of Sam Westing. Westing disguises himself as Eastman in the wake of his terrible automobile accident in order to hide from the public eye in plain sight. Eastman is the last of Westing's aliases left "alive"—he lives out the remainder of his days following the end of the Westing game as Eastman, though Turtle, the winner of the Westing game and Sam Westing's great-niece, never calls Eastman anything but "Sandy" (another of Westing's aliases). Many years after the conclusion of the game, when Eastman is an old man, he perishes on the Fourth of July—Sam Westing's favorite holiday—and leaves control of the company to his protégé Turtle, now known as T.R. Wexler.

**Barney Northrup** – Barney Northrup is a salesman charged with renting the six available apartments in the newly-constructed Sunset Towers on Lake Michigan—and an alias of Sam Westing. Barney Northrup wears a disguise—a bad wig and buck-toothed dentures—in order to throw the Westing heirs off his trail. Northrup is unkind and business-oriented above all else. He is the most minor of Westing's aliases.

**Dr. Sidney Sikes** – Sidney Sikes is Sam Westing’s longtime friend and the local county coroner. After Sikes and Westing were in a car accident many years ago, both men all but disappeared from public life. Sikes, it turns out, has been in on the Westing game all along, even helping Sam to engineer the plot.

**Edgar Jennings “E.J.” Plum** – Edgar Jennings “E.J.” Plum is the young, inexperienced lawyer assigned to handle the reading of Sam Westing’s will, the organization of the Westing game, and the distribution of Westing’s estate. Plum, who is in way over his head, is unsure of himself and often nervous, leading the players of the Westing game to suspect that he has something to hide.

**Violet Westing** – Violet Westing is the deceased daughter of Sam Westing and Berthe Erica Crow. She was once in love with George Theodorakis, the son of one of Westing’s workers, but her mother felt that the match was unsuitable and arranged a marriage between Violet and a crooked politician. The miserable Violet killed herself the night before her wedding, a tragedy that tore her parents’ marriage apart.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**George Theodorakis** – George is Chris and Theo’s father and Catherine’s husband. As a young man, he was in love with Violet Westing, but their courtship was cut short when Violet’s mother, Crow, arranged a more suitable match for Violet—a move that ultimately led to her unhappy daughter’s suicide.

**Catherine Theodorakis** – Catherine is George’s wife and Chris and Theo’s mother. A tired, anxious woman, she frets over Chris’s health and her family’s coffee shop business, yet she knows how to handle a crisis.

**Alice** – Alice is Angela and Denton Deere’s daughter.

**Rosalie** – Rosalie is Flora Baumbach’s deceased daughter. Rosalie was developmentally disabled, and she died of pneumonia a year before the start of the Westing game.

them up in pairs, and urges them to compete for a \$200 million prize, thus setting in motion a battle between individualism and teamwork. Westing’s challenge to his heirs—work together or lose everything—stands in stark contrast to his own union-busting techniques as a businessman. Yet it is clear that Westing longs to inspire a sense of camaraderie in his potential heirs. As Raskin shows her characters wrestling with the values of individualism versus solidarity, she argues that the sense of interconnectedness one learns through teamwork and camaraderie is among life’s most important lessons.

Although the individualistic, union-busting Westing learned the importance of teamwork, community, and solidarity too late, he hopes to impart to his heirs the importance of those things while they still have time to build a sense of community among themselves. Thus, the real purpose of the titular Westing game is, in spite of the competitive form the game takes, the cultivation of community and solidarity. Westing’s will doubles as a set of instructions as to how to play the Westing game—the game that will determine who is to be the sole heir to Westing’s vast estate. For years, Westing preyed upon his workers as they sought to unite, placing his company’s profits over the success of the individuals it employed. As such, he embeds in the will itself the directive to work together rather than struggle individually. Westing includes this cryptic reminder in his will: “It is not what you have, it’s what you don’t have that counts.” Westing is referring to the fact that the clues, when compiled, create a puzzle that can easily be solved (while on their own, each individual set of clues is meaningless). However, this statement also takes on a deeper meaning: Westing suggests that it is only by using their collective life experiences and wisdom, and recognizing that a balance of different strengths is more important than any one strength or weakness, that the group can solve the game. Westing wants his heirs to rely on the power of solidarity rather than individual achievement—however, he recognizes that it will take a while for the heirs to catch on, cast aside their pride, and work together. Westing even refers to them as his “nieces and nephews” in his will in order to inspire a sense of family and camaraderie among them. While many characters ignore this tip-off, by the end of the book, the heirs are united by their shared experience of playing the Westing game and do indeed become a kind of family, complete with periodic reunions.

Over the course of the game, its players go from seeing one another as enemies to appreciating one another as they learn that the only way to succeed in the game—and, more largely, in life itself—is to embrace openness, vulnerability, and solidarity. At the start of the novel, many of the characters are isolated, self-serving, or otherwise cut off from their community. For instance, Grace Wexler is a social climber concerned only with her own advancement—and she uses her beautiful daughter, Angela, as a pawn in her games, further isolating Angela from her own desires. Turtle Wexler, Grace’s other daughter, kicks



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don’t have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



### SOLIDARITY VS. INDIVIDUALISM

When the supposedly deceased founder of the Westing Paper Products Corporation, the reclusive Sam Westing, he uses his will to call together 16 seemingly random strangers. He offers these people the chance to become potential heirs to his vast estate, matches

anyone who gets too close to her in the shins—she literally repels anyone who tugs on her beloved braid in an attempt to tease her, express affection toward her, or establish familiarity with her through physicality. Madame Hoo, the young immigrant wife of restaurateur James Shin Hoo, has just arrived from Hong Kong and cannot speak English—she resorts to stealing her neighbors' possessions in order to feel close to them, unable to find anyone who will put in the time and effort to help her learn to communicate. Chris Theodorakis, battling a neurological disorder, retains his brilliant mind yet finds himself unable to verbally or physically express himself as his body breaks down. Raskin uses these characters' stories of isolation to highlight how badly they all need the Westing game—whether they realize it or not. As the game forces 16 characters together in unusual pairings, they find themselves forced to open up to at least one other person. Breaking through their loneliness and working together is a core tenet of the game—and slowly, the characters realize that even working together in devoted pairs is not enough. It is only when the characters finally pool their clues that they discover the answer—and realize that although their clues point to the name of Westing's supposed "murderer," they are unwilling to turn in one of their own for a chance at money. When they refuse to turn Crow in, they forfeit the \$200 million—but they're rewarded when Westing gifts them equal shares of Sunset Towers, a physical manifestation of the community they have built. The Westing game works after all: Westing teaches a group of 16 lonely people to see the importance in teamwork, solidarity, and advocating for the health, success, and happiness of people other than themselves. By the end of the novel, Madame Hoo is learning English from Jake Wexler, Grace's husband; Chris Theodorakis has gained access to an experimental treatment from Angela's self-absorbed fiancé, Denton Deere; and Turtle has found a mother figure in her partner, Flora Baumbach. The Westing game allows these characters to feel less alone and to understand the power of working together as a unit.

By having a character who failed to learn the lessons of solidarity and collectivism try to impart those lessons to a group of people in need of camaraderie, Raskin highlights how profound the benefits of community can be. For years after the game ends, its players continue to lean on and learn from one another. Raskin's faith in the power of solidarity to change an entire community shines through in *The Westing Game*.



### CAPITALISM, GREED, AND INHERITANCE

As the son of immigrants turned reclusive, multimillionaire owner of the fruitful Westing Paper Products Corporation, Sam Westing knows

that money is a corruptive force. Westing, who grew from humble origins into a shadowy and greedy figurehead of a massive company, knows just how much wealth and power can

change a person. In deciding to bestow his inheritance upon an unsuspecting heir drawn from a seemingly random assortment of individuals, Westing offers the freedom of financial security and social clout—yet he also uses the Westing game, a competition for a \$200-million-dollar inheritance, to show his potential heirs the dark side of inheriting someone's legacy. Ultimately, Raskin uses *The Westing Game* to argue that true inheritance is not about passing down wealth or social power—it is about passing along the wisdom, values, and practical tools the next generation needs to grow, succeed, and help others.

By first focusing on the heirs' collective obsession with the idea of inheriting \$200 million—and on the fact that not even money and power could insulate Westing from tragedy—Raskin demonstrates that true inheritance is about wisdom, knowledge, and insight rather than money, fame, or clout. From the start of the novel, it is clear that Westing is a complex and even hated figure in the community. A union-buster who has lived a reclusive, solitary life for many of his years, Westing's name alone inspires suspicion in those who hear it. On Halloween night, the main characters in the novel—who are soon to become potential heirs to Westing's estate—gleefully spread rumors that Westing has been rotting away alone in his mansion for years. This shows that they regard his legacy as one better off left for dead, untouched by future generations. However, when the heirs are called to the Westing manor and instructed to play the titular Westing game, they jump at the opportunity to claim Westing's inheritance. Westing has engineered a game in which the inheritance itself is a red herring (a popular murder-mystery term for a clue, fact, or object that is meant to be misleading or distracting). The heirs ultimately find that in order to win the money, they must name one of their own as the murderer—even after they have come to realize that Westing was not actually murdered and is perhaps even still alive. They refuse to play Westing's game any longer, unwilling to sacrifice one of their own for the cash prize. Westing's whole game has sought to impart to his heirs the importance of teamwork, generosity, and acceptance. In the end, through the teamwork the Westing game has required of each of the heirs and the communal perspective it's shown them, the heirs have learned that the values and wisdom one passes along are more important than the proliferation of empty generational wealth. While the heirs don't get the millions they were promised, they each obtain a share of Sunset Towers, signifying that the legacy Westing wants to leave behind is one of community and growth rather than empty money.

Toward the end of the novel, after Turtle wins the Westing game and goes to the home of Julian Eastman—Westing in disguise—to tell him she's solved the mystery, Raskin employs a series of flash-forwards to demonstrate that the alternative "inheritances" the heirs received from Westing (in the form of

lessons about solidarity, goodwill, and perseverance) are much more valuable than cash. Five years after the conclusion of the Westing game, Hoo is a successful inventor, Doug is an Olympic hero, Angela is in medical school, Grace is a restaurateur, and Turtle is becoming good enough at chess to beat the “master,” Sam Westing himself. This brief flash-forward shows how while only Turtle technically “won” the Westing game, the other heirs used the lessons they learned from one another and from Westing’s own mistakes—an inheritance in and of itself—to better not just their lives, but the lives of others. In pursuing knowledge, personal fulfillment, and helping others, the heirs create their own inheritances which they pass down to others in turn. Another several years later, Turtle—now known as T.R.—is a successful businesswoman. After solving the Westing game by deducing that Julian Eastman, president and CEO of the Westing Paper Products Corporation, is really Sam Westing in disguise, Eastman has taken Turtle on as a mentee in business, strategy, and the lessons of life. Over the years, Turtle has learned the tools of the trade from her mentor. Eastman has paid to put T.R. through school, just as Judge Ford has financed Chris’s education and allowed him to become a noted ornithologist. In turn, T.R. now takes on her niece Alice (Angela and Denton’s daughter) as a chess apprentice. This second flash-forward shows how all of the characters have come to realize that true inheritance is the gift of passing on knowledge, privilege, and opportunity. Money, clout, and fame can only get one so far in life—but by facilitating another person’s education and self-motivated advancement, one can turn even the most complex of legacies into an endless chain of paying forward faith, goodwill, and wisdom.

Throughout *The Westing Game*, the eight pairs of Westing’s 16 potential heirs chase the promise of wealth and renown in the form of Westing’s estate. But ultimately, as all of the heirs come to learn, the true inheritance Westing stood to pass along was the lessons he learned from the ways in which the pursuit of wealth and fame corrupted his own life. By showing how Westing ultimately creates a legacy of goodwill, generosity, and community, Raskin suggests that capitalism and greed can be corruptive—there are other, more meaningful kinds of inheritances worth passing along.



### PREJUDICE AND BIGOTRY

Written in the 1970s, a time of social change in America, *The Westing Game* portrays an ensemble of “16 imperfect ethnics” in order to expose the prejudices and stereotypes to which people of racial and ethnic minorities and various ranges of disabilities are unfairly subjected. As a diverse group, these characters’ varied experiences show how, contrary to the message of acceptance that’s commonly espoused in American society, people’s differences are often used against them. By highlighting how racism and ableism weave their way into American ideology,

Raskin crafts a novel which argues that bigotry has unfortunately become part of the fabric of American society—and it must be annihilated before it weakens and divides the nation.

The Hoo family—comprised of James, his son Doug, and his second wife Sun Lin—are frequent targets for racism and cruel stereotyping throughout the novel. Hoo was born James Hoo in Chicago, but he added Shin to his name when he became a restaurateur because he felt it made him sound “more Chinese.” Sun Lin Hoo—whom many of the other characters call “Madame Hoo,” a nickname which, like Hoo’s adopted name, exoticizes and stereotypes her—is a recent immigrant from Hong Kong. Together, the Hoos operate a restaurant on the top floor of the Sunset Towers, the apartment building in which the majority of Sam Westing’s potential heirs live—but when the other tenants dine there, they poke fun at the offerings on the menu and wonder if they’re about to be served “boiled grasshopper” or a fried mouse. Grace Wexler—herself the recent descendant of immigrants—remarks on how “doll-like and inscrutable” Madame Hoo is straight to James Hoo’s face. Later, Grace even employs Madame Hoo to serve dim sum while dressed up in a “slinky” Chinese getup at her daughter Angela’s bridal shower. Throughout the humiliating ordeal, Madame Hoo counts the minutes until she can return home and put on her regular clothes. Through the Hoos’ stories, Raskin shows how immigrants and ethnic minorities are often forced to be unable to speak out against unfair stereotypes, as doing so would mean risking their livelihoods and further marginalizing and isolating themselves. Thus, they’re forced to accept or even lean into the prejudiced treatment they receive. While the Hoos eventually find community in Sunset Towers—Jake Wexler begins helping Madame Hoo learn English, while Grace helps take some of the burden off of Hoo by running his restaurant so that he can focus on his inventions—their acceptance is hard-won. Raskin uses the Hoos’ stories to demonstrate the frustrating catch-22 that many minorities and immigrants face in America—and how the cruel and dehumanizing prejudice they face breaks down the networks of community upon which American society is supposed to be based.

Judge J.J. Ford, a black female judge, serves as yet another profound example of how bigotry ultimately weakens and endangers American society and its ideals. Ford, whose parents were once servants in the wealthy Westing household, grew up around Sam Westing. The man took a shine to the young J.J. (Josie-Jo)—yet even as he instructed her in games of chess and agreed to finance her education, he made racist references to her “frizzy head” and, according to Ford herself, only helped her so that he could have a judge in his debt. Now, as a black woman in a position of power, Ford has come a long way in her career, battling against senseless structural racism, prejudiced thought, and bigoted speech. Her role as a judge means she is

someone who upholds the law, decides the fates of others, and pursues truth above all else. Thus, Ford's character is emblematic of the ways in which the integrity of American society depends upon honest work, a lack of prejudice, and fair, unbiased treatment—no matter the person or the situation. Ford has devoted her life to bettering the very systems which have worked against her.

Raskin also demonstrates how prejudice against disabled individuals further cleaves American society. Christos "Chris" Theodorakis, as well as Flora Baumbach's deceased, developmentally challenged daughter, Rosalie, are two examples of how prejudice can harm those who move through the world without the advantage of living in healthy, able bodies. At the start of the novel, Chris is suffering from a rapidly progressing and degenerative neurological disease. His movements and ability to speak are heavily impaired, though his thoughts remain as cogent as ever—yet everyone around Chris still handles him with kid gloves, simultaneously expressing sympathy for the "poor kid" while failing to help him much at all. Flora Baumbach's daughter, Rosalie, is dead at the start of the novel, yet her presence haunts Flora's life. Flora only ever describes her daughter as being beautiful and sweet—yet the private investigator's records obtained by Ford refer to Rosalie as "retarded" and "Mongoloid," hurtful words which reduce Rosalie to cruel stereotypes. In both Chris and Rosalie's cases, Raskin shows how writing off an intellectually or physically disabled individual—or focusing solely on their disadvantages—weakens American society by excluding people who stand to contribute much more than they're given credit for. Rosalie's kind heart and sunny demeanor changed Flora's life—and it might've touched countless others. Chris's love of ornithology, discounted by many as the only thing he's able to do, actually does go on to change his life: toward the end of the novel, he discovers a new type of bird, and the scientific community names it in his honor. Writing off individuals of intellectual or physical difference is, in Raskin's estimation, equally as cruel as racially profiling or stereotyping an individual.

*The Westing Game's* patriotic motifs take on a sense of irony and frustration as Raskin suggests that America's purported values aren't the reality for a large portion of the population. Yet the book conveys the idea that without bigotry and prejudice against immigrants, the disabled, and racial and ethnic minorities, America could live up to its own promises.



## MYSTERY AND INTRIGUE

*The Westing Game* is a mystery novel—as such, the book contains numerous twists and turns, plentiful red herrings (clues intentionally designed to be misleading or distracting), sleights of hand, and seemingly random or useless clues which lead to an unexpected (and even profound) conclusion. By employing a classic murder-mystery

structure, Ellen Raskin uses a plot full of intrigue to show how the individuals involved in the Westing game—and, by proxy, all individuals—are just as deep, unknowable, and complex as the complex trial at the heart of the novel. The most compelling mysteries, Raskin argues, are not related to scandal, intrigue, or crime, but to uncovering the truth of another person's existence.

Just as the work of solving a murder—like that of the wealthy Sam Westing—requires a combination of openness and suspicion as well as instinct and logic, understanding another person requires looking beyond the simple facts of their life and seeking to understand their histories, motivations, and imperfections. Thus, Raskin uses her main characters' engagement in the titular Westing game—in which they must compete to solve Westing's murder and win his inheritance money—to compare the complexity of a murder mystery to the complexity of the human spirit. Raskin concludes the first chapter of the novel with the following passage: "Who were these people, these specially selected tenants? They were mothers and fathers and children. A dressmaker, a secretary, an inventor, a doctor, a judge. And, oh yes, one was a bookie, one was a burglar, one was a **bomber**, and one was a mistake." With this, she frames the disparate people she's introduced as complex, mysterious, and even threatening—the secrets they possess in spite of their fronts as "mothers and fathers and children" are deep and fraught. Raskin unspools these secrets, revealing by the end of the novel who the bomber, the burglar, the bookie, and the mistake are—but by the time the narrative comes to a close, she's also shown her readers that none of her characters can be defined by one simple thing. The "bomber" is Angela Wexler, who begins setting off fireworks in hopes of disfiguring herself so that the people who have told her all her life she'll never amount to anything other than a beautiful wife will be forced to look beyond her face and discover who she truly is. The "burglar" is Madame Hoo, a young immigrant from Hong Kong who is unable to communicate with her new neighbors. Isolated and afraid, she resorts to stealing the possessions of others in order to understand her new neighbors and feel closer to them. The "bookie" is Jake Wexler, who feels unsatisfied by his lackluster profession and yearns for a way to prove himself to his critical, social-climbing wife. The "mistake" is Sydelle Pulaski, who was summoned to live in Sunset Towers along with the other heirs when she was confused with her sister Sybil—and though she is involved in the Westing game by accident, she proves one of its most deft, curious, and insightful players. In unseating her readers' expectations of these reductive terms and easy categories, Raskin shows how the journey of uncovering who another person truly is can be just as exciting, complicated, and indeed frightful as solving a murder mystery. Once readers learn who the bomber is and who the bookie is, those categories become insufficient to hold all the complicated, disparate parts of each characters' journey.

Just as following a promising clue often leads one to realize that one has only encountered a red herring, Raskin demonstrates how looking only at the surface of a person's life in order to understand them often leads to a frustrating dead end. Raskin exemplifies this idea most profoundly through the use of the character dossiers which Judge Ford compiles with the help of her partner in the game, Sandy McSouthers, and a private investigator. Believing that she can get a leg-up on the competition—and quickly determine who the murderer is—by hiring someone to compile hard facts about their neighbors and fellow players, Ford spends hours completing files on each heir. Yet in the end, she comes to realize that these facts reveal nothing. Ford ultimately learns that her partner, Sandy, is Sam Westing in disguise. Once Ford comes to this realization, she begins to see all her research and her dossier compilations as useless. If Westing—her former mentor—could hide from her in plain sight, she begins to wonder what else her fellow heirs could be concealing even as they present themselves, seemingly openly and authentically, to the world. Ford's journey throughout the novel, from a woman convinced of the power of facts to a woman who understands the unknowability of the human spirit, cements the link between mystery, intrigue, and the impenetrability of individual human experience.

In a novel filled with eccentric individuals, Raskin uses the device of a murder mystery to force her characters—and her readers—to see how complex and multifaceted human beings can be. The almost comically anticlimactic ending of the Westing game, in which even the winner doesn't truly "win" the inheritance, demonstrates that the game was never about solving a murder or earning an inheritance—it was always about encouraging a diverse and unlikely group of individuals to see the brilliant, unique humanity in one another.



## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



## THE FOUR BOMBS

The bombs that go off at four distinct moments in three different Sunset Towers locations symbolize the pent-up feelings of the people who are playing the titular Westing game in hopes of becoming the heir to Sam Westing's \$200 million inheritance. The first bomb goes off in the kitchen of the Theodorakis family's coffee shop, the second goes off in the kitchen of Hoo's restaurant, and the third goes off in the Wexlers' apartment during Angela's bridal shower. It's eventually revealed that Angela herself is the one who set these off. The fourth, set by Turtle in order to try to maintain the illusion of her sister's innocence, goes off in the elevator. The "bombs" are really fireworks—their colorful, noisy

explosions outwardly symbolize three emotional breaking points among the heirs as their pent-up, closed-off suspicions of one another escalate and explode. The heirs, having been told that someone amongst them is a murderer, never feel fully safe around one another. These tensions rise to a head in the moments surrounding the bombings.

The bombs escalate the suspicions among the heirs—suspicions drawn on lines of race, class, gender, and social backgrounds. They also externalize the wild emotions that each of the heir is experiencing, demonstrating the need to learn to trust one another and lean on each other in a difficult, confusing time. No one suspects the angelic, beautiful Angela—a white, heterosexual, beautiful 19-year-old girl—of being the bomber, though it is she who has been setting off each set of fireworks with the hopes of becoming a victim of her own trap. Angela hates her own beauty: it is the first thing everyone sees, and it is the reason her academic career has been cut short so that she can be married off to a pompous doctor. Angela's bombs take three attempts to fulfill their purpose—and by the third bombing (which permanently disfigures Angela's face and hands), it is clear that the Westing game players would rather point fingers at immigrants and minorities than someone as "perfect" as Angela. The bombings, then, bring out the structural prejudice that keeps the Westing heirs from working together and trusting one another while symbolizing the tensions, frustrations, and even self-hatred that such an environment can inspire.



## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Puffin edition of *The Westing Game* published in 2014.

### Chapter 1 Quotes

☹☹ The sun sets in the west (just about everyone knows that), but Sunset Towers faced east. Strange!

Sunset Towers faced east and had no towers. This glittery, glassy apartment house stood alone on the Lake Michigan shore five stories high. Five empty stories high.

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 1

### Explanation and Analysis

The opening lines of Ellen Raskin's *The Westing Game* are brief, and yet they hold many clues as to how the reader should approach the story that is about to unfold. By instructing her readers in the book's topsy-turvy logic and

atmosphere of mystery and intrigue, Raskin sets the stage for the wild goose chase to come. Sunset Towers, the apartment building where the majority of the book's action takes place, is introduced here as an idiosyncratic and "strange" place. Its very name is misleading, even though its "glittery, glassy" facade promises transparency. This suggests that the book's main characters, who will soon come to live in Sunset Towers, are similarly different on the inside than they may appear or purport to be on the outside.

In showing how appearances are more often than not deceiving in the world of this novel, Raskin urges her readers not to be misled by red herrings (distracting clues) or conventional logic when it comes to solving the mystery at the center of the plot. Raskin uses the trappings of a mystery novel full of intrigue, suspicion, and confusion in order to plumb the depths of the human experience and suggest that nothing, when it comes to human nature, is exactly as it appears. Invoking the contradictory image of Sunset Towers, then, is the perfect way for Raskin to fold her readers into the rules of the world she's created.

☞ Who were these people, these specially selected tenants?

They were mothers and fathers and children. A dressmaker, a secretary, an inventor, a doctor, a judge. And, oh yes, one was a bookie, one was a burglar, one was a bomber, and one was a mistake.

**Related Characters:** Barney Northrup, Angela Wexler, Madame Sun Lin Hoo, Judge Josie-Jo "J.J." Ford, Jake Wexler, James Shin Hoo, Sydelle Pulaski, Flora Baumbach

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 5

### Explanation and Analysis

At the end of Chapter 1, Ellen Raskin's narrator describes the people who have been "specially selected" to live in the Sunset Towers apartment building (ironically name, since the building faces east) on Lake Michigan. Recruited by a realtor named Barney Northrup—a man who the narrator almost immediately reveals does not actually exist—the new tenants are a group of people who seem to be defined by simple titles. The ordinary is pressed up against the extraordinary in this passage as Raskin reduces her characters to their basest categorizations: "mother" and "secretary" are prescriptive roles, just as "burglar" and

"bomber" and "mistake" are.

Because the entire novel is devoted to unraveling the complexity of the human spirit, ending the first chapter on this note is significant. Raskin appears to be dismissing her characters as one-note stereotypes—yet as the novel progresses, she will unspool just how complicated, nuanced, and intricate people can be. People are more complicated, Raskin suggests, than the roles they play in society. A father is never simply a father, just as a bookie is never simply a bookie. The purpose of the titular Westing game, which the novel's characters will soon begin playing, is to help them understand just how reductive it is to try to pigeonhole one another. Instead, they must learn to accept one another's quirks, flaws, and complexities and work together toward a common goal.

## Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ Jake turned to Madame Hoo. "Hi there, partner."

"She doesn't speak English, Dad," Angela said flatly.

'And she never will, Angela, if no one talks to her.'

**Related Characters:** Angela Wexler, Jake Wexler (speaker), Judge Josie-Jo "J.J." Ford, Madame Sun Lin Hoo

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 58-59

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, during a party at Judge Ford's apartment, Jake Wexler approaches his partner in the Westing game, Madame Hoo. Both of them missed the reading of Westing's will and thus forfeited their \$10,000 check—they are both behind in the game, yet they are still partners and participants. As Jake attempts to get to know Madame Hoo, his daughter Angela attempts to dissuade him from talking to her, explaining that Madame Hoo doesn't speak English. However, Jake declares that Madame Hoo will remain isolated for exactly as long as those around her isolate her, making clear that Jake is different from many of the other players who simply assume that because it's not easy to communicate with Madame Hoo, she's not worth talking to.

This demonstrates one of Raskin's more subtly radical arguments: the idea that individualism and isolation erode American society, weakening the bonds that should be strengthened by solidarity, resistance to prejudice, and acts of good faith. Those who ignore Madame Hoo because of the language barrier between her and themselves are prejudiced and bigoted—they refuse to see that what

Madame Hoo needs is someone willing to ford the gap between them and treat her like the full, complex person that she is.

## Chapter 3 Quotes

☞ "What do you mean his corpse is rotting on an Oriental rug, some kind of Persian rug, maybe a Chinese rug." Mr. Hoo joined his son at the glass sidewall of the fifth-floor restaurant.

**Related Characters:** James Shin Hoo (speaker), Otis Amber, Alexander "Sandy" McSouthers, Samuel W. Westing, Doug Hoo

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 12

### Explanation and Analysis

In the early chapters of *The Westing Game*, on the first Halloween night that the new tenants of Sunset Towers share together, rumors begin swirling about Samuel W. Westing, the founder of the Westing Paper Products Corporation, after smoke is spotted coming from the chimney in his mansion up the hill. The doorman, Sandy McSouthers, and a local delivery boy, Otis Amber, both try to spook the teens who live in the building with stories of Westing's corpse rotting away on an Oriental rug in the mansion. Their repeated use of the term "Oriental"—an outdated, and, by modern standards, bigoted descriptor of Asian people or things—draws the ire of James Shin Hoo when his son, Doug, repeats the anecdote to him. As Hoo explains to Doug that there's no such thing as an Oriental rug, helping his son to see the nuance and specificity of identity that the term erases, Raskin highlights how stereotyping, prejudice, and bigotry erode the individuality of a person and the singularity of a culture, thus eroding the fabric of American society: a place meant to celebrate and incorporate difference rather than ignoring it or forcing people to assimilate.

Throughout the novel, Raskin's characters will continue to confront the wide cultural, economic, and social gaps between them. Hoo, a man who has been made to feel either too ethnic or not ethnic enough throughout his life—evidenced by his choice to add "Shin" to his birth name to sound "more Chinese"—is still grappling with the prejudices his son, as an Asian American, will face throughout his life. Hoo wants to help Doug find the strength and self-confidence to resist bigoted and stereotypical language whenever he encounters it—a luxury

that Hoo himself has never known.

☞ At least the never-there-when-you-need-him doorman had propped open the front door. Not that he ever helped her, or noticed her, for that matter. No one ever noticed. Sydelle Pulaski limped through the lobby. She could be carrying a high-powered rifle in that package and no one would notice.

**Related Characters:** Sydelle Pulaski

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 15

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, as Ellen Raskin introduces the character of Sydelle Pulaski, she focuses intensely on how bitter Sydelle is after a lifetime of feeling invisible and unimportant. Sydelle is a lonely woman who feels she is moving through life completely unnoticed. As a result, she has become caustic and resentful—a vicious cycle which only contributes to her furthered, continued isolation.

One of *The Westing Game's* most prevalent themes is the gulf between solidarity and individualism. Having lived an unremarkable life, Sydelle Pulaski is one of the characters most hesitant to work together with the other players in the Westing game—yet as the novel unfolds, she'll find herself learning how to be part of a community and how to have faith in the ability of the people around her to see her for who she is. Like many of the other characters in the novel, Sydelle feels reduced to a caricature, stereotype, or misrepresented version of herself. But the friendships and partnerships Sydelle—and the others—will find through the Westing game will allow her to examine her own complexity. As she comes to understand the complicated inner lives of her fellow players, she will become more self-aware in turn—and she'll feel seen and understood on her own terms for the first time in her life.

## Chapter 5 Quotes

☝☝ "Itsss-oo-nn," Chris announced.

"What did he say?"

"He said it's snowing," Theo and Flora Baumbach explained at the same time.

The heirs watched helplessly as the invalid's thin frame was suddenly torn and twisted by convulsions. Only the dressmaker rushed to his side. "I know, I know," she simpered, "you were trying to tell us about the itsy-bitsy snowflings."

Theo moved her away. "My brother is not an infant, and he's not retarded, so please, no more baby talk."

Blinking away tears, Flora Baumbach returned to her seat, the elfin smile still painted on her pained face.

Some stared at the afflicted child with morbid fascination, but most turned away. They didn't want to see.

**Related Characters:** Flora Baumbach, Theo Theodorakis, Christos "Chris" Theodorakis (speaker), Samuel W. Westing

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 24

### Explanation and Analysis

This passage takes place at the Westing manor, just before the initial reading of Sam Westing's will. All of Westing's potential heirs have gathered, but many of them don't fully know one another even on a casual basis—and they certainly don't yet know one another's complicated backstories. As Flora Baumbach tries to communicate with Chris Theodorakis, a young man who's been stricken by a degenerative neurological disorder which affects his speech and movement (but not his mind), Chris's brother, Theo, becomes offended on Chris's behalf. He uses coarse, thoughtless language to try to reprimand Flora for talking to Chris in an infantile way. Little does Theo know that Flora herself once had a daughter, Rosalie, who had a developmental impairment—Flora was only trying to make Chris, whom she knows from experience must be feeling isolated and othered, feel noticed and understood.

This passage is deeply significant on many levels. It demonstrates both the unknowability and complexity of a person's life and experiences—and it also shows that prejudiced thought, snap reactions, and bigoted language is harmful. In trying to defend his brother, Theo actually invokes a cruel stereotype of a "retarded" person, failing to take into account Flora's own experience with disabilities. As Flora, taking her cue and not wanting to agitate Chris or Theo any longer, tearfully returns to her seat, reminded of bittersweet memories of her daughter, the rest of the heirs

find themselves either gaping at the spectacle of Chris or trying to ignore him. None of them really see Chris as a person separate from his disability—a catch-22 which Flora, having raised a disabled daughter, understands intimately. This passage foreshadows the ways in which Westing's potential heirs will need to see past one another's outer characteristics in order to understand one another's experiences.

## Chapter 6 Quotes

☝☝ *Today I have gathered together my nearest and dearest, my sixteen nieces and nephews...*

**Related Characters:** Samuel W. Westing (speaker), Edgar Jennings "E.J." Plum

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 28

### Explanation and Analysis

This quotation is taken from the will of Samuel W. Westing, a document which the lawyer E.J. Plum reads aloud to 16 confused, unsuspecting potential heirs to Westing's estate. In the document, Westing refers to the disparate heirs he's gathered as his "nieces and nephews"—much to many of the heirs' shock and chagrin. They do not take Westing's statement literally, but are instead perturbed and offended by the suggestion that the bunch of them should act as a family. Raskin's ensemble cast of "16 imperfect ethnics" view one another as unknown and suspect. Even as Westing entreats them here to see one another as family, they have a hard time understanding how such a thing could be possible. This passage is significant because it ties in with how the forces of greed, prejudice, and bigotry make people behave as strangers to one another. Rather than joining together and bonding over this bizarre experience, the potential heirs are already isolating themselves from one another on lines of race, class, and status when they should instead be working together to build solid, thriving communities.

## Chapter 7 Quotes

☝☝ *It is not what you have, it's what you don't have that counts.*

**Related Characters:** Samuel W. Westing (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 36

### Explanation and Analysis

This quotation from the will of Samuel W. Westing is taken from the portion of the document outlining the rules of the Westing game—the game Westing has set up in order to make his 16 potential heirs compete with and against one another (in eight pairs) for a cash prize of \$200 million. Even though the game is a competition, Westing clearly outlines in this passage the directive for his competitors to work together—not separately—to solve the clues before them. Westing wants this group of people—who all have some kind of personal connection to him, however vague—to come together rather than tear one another apart in pursuit of their reward. Westing’s game is a deliberate test of the values of solidarity versus individualism and the negative motivators of greed and capitalistic pursuit of wealth. The heirs have been paired up, but simply working together in groups of two is not even enough: Westing wants to impress upon his inheritors the need for true solidarity beyond the small teams into which they’ve been forced.

## Chapter 8 Quotes

☞ The game: a tricky, divisive Westing game. No matter how much fear and suspicion he instilled in the players, Sam Westing knew that greed would keep them playing the game.

**Related Characters:** Samuel W. Westing, Judge Josie-Jo “J.J.” Ford

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 47-48

### Explanation and Analysis

As Judge J.J. Ford considers Westing’s aims in gathering together his 16 potential heirs—the group he erroneously calls his “nieces and nephews”—to compete for his vast estate, she finds herself feeling skeptical and resentful of Westing’s knowledge of how the mechanisms of greed, competitiveness, and individualism work. Ford’s connection to Westing is, at this point in the novel, unknown—but this passage makes clear that she understands his “tricky” nature and his desire to sow “fear and suspicion” in pursuit of his goals. The version of Westing whom Ford knows seems indeed to be the man who would organize a ruthless competition among a group of strangers who don’t really know or particularly like one another. As the novel unfolds, however, Raskin will challenge what Ford knows of Westing and suggest deeper, more well-meaning motivations behind

his creation of the Westing game. Through the game, Westing desires to repair his legacy of “greed” and sowing division. But he ran his business in such a way for decades—and so even those who knew Westing personally, as Ford did, have a hard time seeing that he has his own set of tricks up his sleeve.

## Chapter 11 Quotes

☞ "Now then, if no two sets of clues are alike, as the will says, that could mean that each set of clues is only part of one message. The more clues we put together, the better chance we have of finding the murderer and winning the game. Of course, the inheritance will be divided into equal shares."

**Related Characters:** Theo Theodorakis (speaker)

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 65

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Theo Theodorakis calls all the other heirs and Westing game players to a meeting at his parents’ coffee shop in order to entreat them to share their clues, pool their resources, and divide the winnings among themselves equally as a shared reward for a show of solidarity. Theo is an open, generous, family-oriented person to begin with, and his belief in the power of solidarity to solve life’s most difficult problems is encapsulated in this quotation. He believes that the forces of greed and individualism are evil and divisive—he doesn’t understand why one person should win the \$200 million when all 16 of them could benefit from working together and splitting the winnings they’ll undoubtedly earn if they pool their resources, their intelligence, and their drive.

This passage condenses Raskin’s belief in the need to shatter the forces of prejudice, greed, and individualism that hold American society back. Westing’s game seems like a tool for dividing the heirs and isolating them from one another—but in truth, its intent is to repair the divisive tactics that marked Westing’s past as a father and a businessman and help a group of disparate people to realize a common goal.

## Chapter 14 Quotes

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

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

**Related Characters:** Theo Theodorakis (speaker), Samuel W. Westing

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 85

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Theo Theodorakis hits upon a major clue in solving the Westing game. In Sam Westing's will, the eccentric multimillionaire, after granting \$10,000 checks to all competing pairs of heirs, urged the players: "May God thy gold refine." Most heirs assumed the quotation was from Shakespeare or the Bible—but Theo is the one who discovers that it is a little-known verse of the song "America the Beautiful."

This passage is significant because it turns on its head what many of the heirs believed Sam Westing's original directive was. The instruction is not about the heirs refining their gold—or making more money out of the \$10,000—but instead seeking to make "nobleness" their standard of success and finding "divine" gains. That is to say, Westing's hope for the potential heirs is for them to see that furthering one's lot in life is achieved by pursuing divinity and goodness rather than treasure or capital. Theo dismisses the lyric as Westing's eccentric patriotism, unable to see the deeper meaning behind the choice of words. Westing lived a life that was, in appearance alone, dedicated to the values of patriotism, success, and solidarity—Westing was a miserly and individualistic man who did not live up to the values he claimed to cling to. In "death," however, Westing has decided to try to at last live up to the patriotic values that he previously failed to embody.

## Chapter 15 Quotes

☛☛ The coffee shop was full of diners.

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

**Related Characters:** Angela Wexler, Catherine

Theodorakis, George Theodorakis, Madame Sun Lin Hoo, James Shin Hoo

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 88

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, set after the first two bombings, the Theodorakis family's coffee shop reopens to bustling crowds while the Hoo family struggles to regain their footing. Both restaurants were victims of "bombs," fizzy fireworks that were deployed in the kitchen of each. Only the Hoos, however, struggle to repair their public image and attract more business in the wake of the accident.

This passage shows how bigotry and prejudice weaken the American value of solidarity and neighborliness—thus more largely eroding American society as a whole. Though the Theodorakis family is Greek, they still benefit from a degree of white privilege. But the Hoos, who are Chinese, are ostracized and considered suspect by their neighbors. In the wake of the bombings, many tenants of Sunset Towers suspect James Hoo himself of setting off the bombs in both restaurants, sacrificing his own business to draw suspicion away from himself. None of the residents ever suspect the true bomber—Angela Wexler—because of her angelic demeanor and her whiteness, privileges which shield her from suspicion. As Raskin starkly sets forth the ways in which the Hoos' business suffers because of their fellow tenants' distrust of them—distrust based on the idea that the Hoos are somehow "other"—she hammers home how racism weakens communities.

## Chapter 16 Quotes

☛☛ Madame Hoo served in a tight-fitting silk gown slit high up her thigh, a costume as old-fashioned and impractical as bound feet. Women in China wore blouses and pants and jackets. That's what she would wear when she got home.

**Related Characters:** Grace Windsor (Windkloppel) Wexler, Angela Wexler, Madame Sun Lin Hoo

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 94

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Madame Hoo—hired by Grace Wexler to cater Angela Wexler’s bridal shower while dressed in a stereotypical Chinese dress—expresses her discomfort and humiliation over having to wear the “impractical” garment, something she herself would never choose to wear. Madame Hoo describes the dress as being as harmful as “bound feet,” the ancient Chinese practice popular from the 10th century on and responsible for the lifelong disabilities of countless women. Madame Hoo feels that she is being put on display as an oddity or an exotic item—she is demoralized and out of her element, and she hates being typecast in a role that is “old-fashioned” and alien to her. Women in Madame Hoo’s native China dress much the same as they do America, and Madame Hoo resents being treated like an oddity in the place where she is trying desperately to make a home. This passage demonstrates how Grace Wexler’s cruel bigotry disguised as good-natured fascination is destructive not just to Madame Hoo, but to the entire community to which both women belong.

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

**Related Characters:** Angela Wexler

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 96

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the third bomb has just gone off in the middle of Angela Wexler’s bridal shower. Angela is the bomb’s victim—and, as will later be revealed, both its intended target and its manufacturer. Angela has been carrying out the bombings in hopes of getting caught in the act—or caught by one of her own explosive devices. Angela, who has been told all her life that because of her great beauty, she is destined only to be a wife and mother, resents her upcoming wedding and all that is attached to it. In wounding herself in the bomb blast, she destroys her face and her hands—her face being the source of the endless compliments she receives, and her hands being associated with the burdensome engagement ring she tries to wear as infrequently as possible. Angela hates being reminded that she is only valued for her beauty and that she’s giving up her college dreams to become a wife at only 19.

The fact that Angela is the bomber is significant on many levels: she skirts blame for the bombings due to the racism, prejudice, and suspicion of the other heirs, yet only someone with the white privilege Angela possesses could do something as drastic as arrange a series of bombings and get away with it. Even in this scene, as the bomb goes off in Angela’s hands at her own shower, no one suspects her or considers that she has been present—and close by—when every single bomb has launched. Angela’s still waters run deep, and she hides the truth of who she is while relying on the bigotry and individualism of those around her to shield the full, complicated mess of herself from being discovered.

## Chapter 20 Quotes

☛ "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."

**Related Characters:** George Theodorakis (speaker), Judge Josie-Jo “J.J.” Ford, Berthe Erica Crow, Samuel W. Westing, Violet Westing

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 120

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, George Theodorakis tells Judge J.J. Ford about his connection to Sam Westing: he was once in love with Violet Westing, who killed herself on the eve of her wedding to the “important” hack politician that Violet’s mother, Crow, set her up with after pulling Violet and George apart. This passage is significant because it illustrates how greed, classism, and individualism contribute to the erosion of relationships and communities—and, more largely, the very fabric of America. George’s sad story about Violet reveals that Violet’s parents didn’t see her as a person or recognize her agency—and their unwitting cruelty toward her ultimately killed her. Their snobbish prejudice against the working class, their greediness and individualism, and their failure to understand their daughter as a complex person with unique needs effectively ruined their family. In designing the Westing game, Sam Westing created a set of challenges that would hopefully show his heirs the error of his ways—and instill in them the sense of solidarity, community, and reverence for humanity that’s needed to rise above capitalist greed and empty egoism.

## Chapter 21 Quotes

☞ "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."

**Related Characters:** Alexander "Sandy" McSouthers, Judge Josie-Jo "J.J." Ford (speaker), Violet Westing, Samuel W. Westing

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 125

**Explanation and Analysis**

In this passage, J.J. Ford discusses her childhood in the Westing manor—as the child of servants—with her partner in the Westing game, Sandy McSouthers, whom Ford does not yet know is Westing himself in disguise. Ford recalls the prejudice and racism she faced, and how those factors contributed to her being unable to even begin developing a friendship with Westing's daughter, Violet, her only potential playmate. Instead, as Ford recalls learning chess with Westing, she remembers their matches as being caustic, overcompetitive, and seemingly even on the verge of traumatic owing to the racist insults Westing spewed at Ford during the game. Westing later went on to finance Ford's boarding school and collegiate educations, and she suspects that he helped her get every job she ever applied for in order to keep a judge in his pocket.

Ford's unhappy recollections of her experiences with Sam Westing and his family—unknowingly directed at Westing himself—force the man to consider the lasting impact of his classist and racist words and actions. At the same time, this passage reveals the nuance inherent in the relationship between Ford and Westing. Though Ford speaks of Westing in slightly revolted terms, she is also aware that she is profoundly in his debt—and that without him, she would not be who she is today. This speaks to the idea of mystery and intrigue as it relates to the human spirit and the human experience. Ford's relationship with Westing is complicated and difficult—so much so that even as she speaks to him face-to-face, she has no idea that she's doing so.

## Chapter 23 Quotes

☞ "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."

**Related Characters:** Christos "Chris" Theodorakis (speaker), Samuel W. Westing, Dr. Denton Deere

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 143

**Explanation and Analysis**

In this passage, as the heirs are called once again to the Westing manor to read out their answers to the Westing game, Chris Theodorakis speaks on behalf of his partner in the game, Dr. Denton Deere. Chris declares that Westing, in spite of the derision and suspicion with which many of the heirs discuss him, was a "good man." Chris believes that Westing gave each of his heirs the perfect partner, using the game to introduce them to the people they needed most to meet and get to know.

Chris is right in pointing out that the aim of the Westing game was the creation of solidarity and community. In helping 16 people intimately understand one another's complexities, quirks, gifts, and flaws, Westing has given a lonely group of individuals the chance to feel supported, seen, and heard. Chris, for example, was paired with the pompous Denton, who at first refused to even participate in the game alongside Chris. Over the course of the game, however, Denton began to take a special interest in Chris—he helped him access an experimental treatment for his neurological disorder, a treatment which has improved Chris's ability to control his speech and motions. Westing has helped his heirs to see past their prejudices and work through their greedy, capitalistic impulses in order to arrive at a greater sense of friendship, community, and mutual support.

## Chapter 24 Quotes

☞ "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."

**Related Characters:** Judge Josie-Jo “J.J.” Ford (speaker), Samuel W. Westing, Berthe Erica Crow

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 151

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Ford stands up in the library of the Westing manor after the heirs, having finally compiled their clues and found that the answer to the Westing game is “Berthe Erica Crow,” realize that to win they must turn Crow in for murder. Ford’s words in this passage reflect the lessons in solidarity, generosity, and community that the Westing game has taught her and the other heirs. Westing’s true aim in inventing the game and calling forth the heirs was never truly to avenge his murder, as it’s eventually revealed that Westing isn’t really did. Nor was the purpose to secure the passage of his vast estate to a suitable inheritor—rather, the game was designed to unite 16 people in need of friendship and community. In this speech, Ford demonstrates that she values Crow—and all the other heirs—more than the opportunity to cash in big. Ford has come to appreciate how precious and complex human lives are more acutely than she’s ever understood before through the Westing game. After this rousing speech, the others refuse to turn Crow in, demonstrating that they, too, are no longer so motivated by greed that they’d “sell” the life of another person.

## Chapter 26 Quotes

☞☞ *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 [Turtle] knew who the fourth one was!

**Related Characters:** Julian R. Eastman, Alexander “Sandy” McSouthers, Barney Northrup, Samuel W. Westing, Tabitha-Ruth “Turtle” Wexler

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 169

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Turtle Wexler effectively solves—and thus wins—the Westing game. In realizing that Sam Westing used extensive coded wordplay in his will to point to four aliases, each representing one of the four winds, Turtle

understands that Sam Westing is not dead—and has instead been impersonating three other individuals. Westing’s alternate identities include the realtor Barney Northrup, the doorman Sandy McSouthers, and the president and CEO of Westing Paper Products, Julian R. Eastman. Each name relates to a cardinal direction in homage to the four winds and Sam Westing’s original surname, Windkloppel, the family name belonging to his immigrant parents. The nickname “Windy” also points to someone who is a windbag, or a fast talker skilled at wordplay. The layers of Westing’s creation of his own identity—in addition to his three disguises—reveal a man ashamed by his roots and even more ashamed by his erasure of them, a man torn into literal pieces by the tragedies of his own making that he’s suffered in his lifetime. Sam Westing, like all of his heirs, is more complicated than he seems at first glance—and it turns out that the mystery of his interior has been the true mystery behind the entire Westing game.

## Chapter 27 Quotes

☞☞ 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.

**Related Characters:** Julian R. Eastman, Tabitha-Ruth “Turtle” Wexler, Angela Wexler, Samuel W. Westing

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 172

### Explanation and Analysis

At the very end of the Westing game, the fifth (and final) bomb or set of fireworks is deployed—but not by Angela, the bomber, or Turtle, who covered for her sister by setting off a decoy fourth bomb. Instead, the bomb has been set by Westing himself—it is the biggest one yet, a Fourth of July-inspired firework display that is intended to burn down the Westing manor. This passage is significant because it represents not just the end of the Westing game, but the end of Sam Westing entirely. Westing has decided to “die”—even as he lives on under the alias of Julian R. Eastman, a fact which only Turtle knows.

Westing struggled all his life to uphold the values of the country he loved so deeply. Though a son of immigrants, he treated immigrant workers in his factories poorly by failing to allow them to organize a union. Though he loved his

daughter, he prioritized her potential to rise as a socialite over her wants as a human being. Though a patriot, he engaged in racist speech and profited off the suffering of the less fortunate. Westing's cataclysmic final act is a burial of sorts. He celebrates his own attempt to redeem himself, redistribute his wealth, and repair the mistakes of the past. His true inheritance, he wants his heirs to see, is not the \$200 million he ultimately denies them—instead, he wants to “die” having passed on a legacy of solidarity over individualism, generosity over greed, and active investment in a stronger, more accepting nation.

## Chapter 29 Quotes

☝ "Hello, Angela." Denton Deere had grown a thick moustache. He was a neurologist. He had never married.

"Hello, Denton." Angela's golden hair was tied in a knot on the nape of her neck. She wore no makeup. She was completing her third year of medical school. "It's been a long time."

**Related Characters:** Angela Wexler, Dr. Denton Deere (speaker), Christos “Chris” Theodorakis

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 178

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Dr. Denton Deere and Angela Wexler—who were, five years ago, engaged to be married—meet again for the first time since breaking off their engagement. Both of them have changed a great deal since the last time they saw each other. While playing the Westing game, they were engaged, yet they hardly knew anything about one another—or themselves. In the years that have passed, they have grown as individuals. No longer motivated by pressure from their parents, financial incentives, or a shaky sense of self, the two meet again on new terms.

Angela, who was always afraid of being judged for her beautiful looks and seen as nothing but a pretty face, now puts little stock in her appearance, as evidenced by her simple bun and lack of makeup. She has invested in her education instead of her social or financial prospects, and she has at last come to understand herself. Denton, too, has learned a lot about himself: while he was an intern in the arguably shallow field of plastic surgery, he has switched his specialty and now works as a neurologist—no doubt a choice inspired by the help he showed to Chris Theodorakis and the difference he made in the boy's life. Denton was once a pompous, frivolous man, but now he is more serious

and focused. As Angela and Denton have privately solved the mysteries of their inner worlds, they have come to reject the drives that once bound them together. Now they can come together on their own terms, having reconciled their natures apart.

## Chapter 30 Quotes

☝☝ Julian R. Eastman was dead; and with him died Windy Windkloppel, Samuel W. Westing, Barney Northrup, and Sandy McSouthers. And with him died a little of Turtle.

**Related Characters:** Samuel W. Westing, Tabitha-Ruth “Turtle” Wexler, Alexander “Sandy” McSouthers, Barney Northrup, Julian R. Eastman

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 182

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Turtle mourns the death of Julian R. Eastman—the alias of Samuel W. Westing, her distant relative and mentor for much of her adult life. Westing was not a perfect man in any way—but the three aliases he constructed together engineered a game of wills and wits that forever changed the course of Turtle's life, as well as the lives of the game's fifteen other players. This passage shows how much the many selves that Westing inhabited over the course of his lifetime have meant to Turtle—so much that when he dies, Turtle feels that a part of herself has been lost along with him.

This passage speaks to Westing's final goal in life: creation of a community rooted in solidarity, mutual aid, and togetherness. The playful, eccentric, and flawed Westing engineered a game that would allow him to mend the mistakes of his past. Doing so required the creation of a number of different identities—each with their own flaws and quirks, but each nonetheless comprised of a part of Westing himself. In fracturing himself into four different men, Westing was able to live a fuller life than he ever could have as himself. Each alias was integral in repairing the mistakes of Westing's own past—and now that all four of them are gone, Turtle feels the pain of having lost not merely Westing himself, but all the complex parts of him that impacted her life in different ways.

●● Veiled in black, she hurried from the funeral services. It was Saturday and she had an important engagement. Angela brought her daughter, Alice, to the Wexler-Theodorakis mansion to spend Saturday afternoons with her aunt. There she was, waiting for her in the library. Baba had tied red ribbons in the one long pigtail down her back. "Hi there, Alice," T. R. Wexler said. "Ready for a game of chess?"

**Related Characters:** Tabitha-Ruth "Turtle" Wexler (speaker), Samuel W. Westing, Alice, Flora Baumbach, Theo Theodorakis, Angela Wexler

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 182

### Explanation and Analysis

In the final lines of the novel, shortly after burying her uncle and mentor, Sam W. Westing—who lived out his final years under the alias Julian R. Eastman—Turtle Wexler, who now goes by T.R., hurries to a chess lesson with her niece. As she

arrives home to the mansion she and her husband, Theo, once a player in the Westing game, now share, she finds her niece Alice waiting for her. Alice's hair is full of ribbons given to her by Turtle's former partner in the Westing game, Flora Baumbach.

This passage shows how richly the Westing game enhanced and how inextricably it interwove the lives of all its players. Many years after the conclusion of the game, the romantic, familial, and intellectual relationships formed during the game are still solid and meaningful. Westing's aim was always to mend the mistakes of his greedy, individualistic past and help bring a group of disparate players together in solidarity. Now, T.R. carries on her mentor's legacy of intellectualism, playfulness, and strategy by teaching her niece how to play chess, Westing's favorite pastime. This passage, which comprises the final lines of the book, demonstrates that his mission was successful. He forever impacted and wove together the lives of many people in need of friends, partners, and purposes.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## CHAPTER 1

Though the sun sets in the west, the newly-constructed Sunset Towers apartment complex, a glassy, solitary, and magnificent five-story building on the shore of Lake Michigan, faces east. One summer day—the Fourth of July—a sixty-two-year-old delivery boy rides around town slipping flyers under the doors of a group of “chosen” tenants-to-be. The letters are signed from a man named Barney Northrup—but no one receiving these letters is aware that Barney Northrup does not exist. The six letters describe the prospect of living in Sunset Towers as an unmissable opportunity and a “once-in-a-lifetime offer”—and advertise the fact that the building has space for a medical office, a coffee, shop, and a top-floor restaurant.

All six recipients of the letters make appointments with the man called Barney Northrup to see the apartments. Barney is a practiced salesman who knows how to appeal to each of his six clients. He highlights the luxurious chandeliers as he leads Grace Windsor Wexler and her husband, Jake, around a unit, which he tells them is the last available (although they are his first appointment of the day). He speaks about the affordability and practicality of the place as he shows Sydelle Pulaski, an aging secretary, her unit.

In just one day, Barney Northrup manages to rent all of the apartments in Sunset Towers. Jake Wexler, a podiatrist, takes the medical office, the Theodorakis family takes the coffee shop, and the Hoo family takes the restaurant upstairs. The other “specially selected” tenants consist of a dressmaker, a secretary, an inventor, and a judge. Hidden amongst the tenants are a bookie, a burglar, a bomber, and a mistake. Barney Northrup has rented one apartment to the wrong person.

*The novel's first pages set up the theme of mystery and intrigue by immediately tipping readers off to the fact that things are not exactly as they seem to be. Sunset Towers faces the wrong direction, the local delivery boy is not a boy, and the realtor Barney Northrup does not exist. By establishing early on that no clue in this mystery can be fully trusted, Raskin urges her readers to constantly look deeper for the answers—just as her characters will need to plumb the depths of their own souls and one another's in order to play the Westing game.*



*Barney Northrup misleads the future tenants of Sunset Towers as he shows them their future dwellings. This demonstrates that he is desperate to rent these apartments—a fact that Raskin will unpack later on. For now, the reason these specific people need to live in the building is a mystery—just as each of the tenants are a mystery both to the reader and to one another.*



*By reducing the characters that she is about to introduce to one-word stereotypes or caricatures, Raskin purposefully urges her readers to challenge such reductivism and look deeper into who each tenant actually is. No single word can contain the multitudes of a person, and as the novel unfolds, Raskin plans to explore how someone can hold multiple identities, wants, and needs within themselves at once.*



## CHAPTER 2

On September first, the carefully chosen tenants move into Sunset Towers. Behind the north side of the building, a wire fence and a NO TRESPASSING sign have been erected, warning tenants that the property beyond is part of the Westing estate—the empty old Westing house, unoccupied for fifteen years, sits on a cliff beyond the towers to the north.

*Introducing the looming specter of the old Westing mansion just beyond Sunset Towers is yet another mystery trope—but the significance of the mansion in relation to the towers is another thing that is not quite what it seems.*



On September second, James Shin Hoo opens his Chinese eatery, Shin Hoo's Restaurant, on the fifth floor. On the same day, George Theodorakis opens up a less-expensive coffee shop on the ground floor and finds himself flooded with orders from workers who live in nearby Westingtown and work at the Westing Paper Products plant. Though there is tension between the two restaurateurs, the larger problems to face the tenants of Sunset Towers are yet to come.

On Halloween, four people stand in the Sunset Towers driveway. Sandy McSouthers, the doorman, stands with high-school seniors Theo Theodorakis and Doug Hoo and the sixty-two-year-old delivery boy Otis Amber. Otis is pointing north, and all four can see that there is smoke coming from the chimney of the Westing house. Junior-high-schooler Turtle Wexler pedals into the driveway on her bicycle, having seen the smoke herself. She asks if old man Sam Westing has returned to the house. Otis Amber replies that no one has seen the man for years—rumor has it that he lives on a private island or that he died inside the Westing manor years ago and has been “sprawled out on a fancy Oriental rug” rotting away for a long time. Turtle shivers at the grisly image.

Sandy suggests that the smoke is the work of delinquent kids from Westingtown. Exactly one year ago, he says, a pair of kids entered the Westing house on a dare on Halloween night. Turtle whips her head around. Doug Hoo dodges Turtle's long braid—she kicks in the shins anyone who touches it. Otis says that the kids who entered the manor came out minutes later claiming to have been chased by a ghost. One ran off the cliff at the edge of the property and died on the rocks below; the other, he says, sits locked in a state asylum, unable to say anything but “purple waves.” Sandy laments that such misfortune befell two kids playing at a juvenile bet. Turtle, however, says she'd take any bet offered to her—she's not afraid of the Westing house at all.

Upstairs, from the window of apartment 2D, 15-year-old Chris Theodorakis watches the group clustered in the driveway. Chris, who has used a wheelchair since the recent onset of a mysterious neurological disease, spends his days birdwatching out the windows of his family's apartment. Even though Chris knows no one can see into the apartment, he sometimes gets the distinct feeling that he is being watched. As Chris's body succumbs to a spasm, he watches the smoke coming from the Westing house curl toward Westingtown and sees someone with a limp walk into the side door of the house.

*Raskin sets up animosity between two competing restaurateurs of different ethnicities in order to introduce the theme of prejudice and bigotry. The novel will go on to explore how people's prejudiced thoughts and long-held stereotypes erode communities—and as Hoo and Theodorakis compete for the business of the Westing Paper Plant workers, the deeper tensions running through Sunset Towers make themselves known.*



*In this passage, Raskin offers readers one of their first real-time glimpses into how the new tenants of Sunset Towers interact and talk with one another. There is a gentle camaraderie between all of them—and they are all aware of the looming presence of Sam Westing, founder of Westingtown and the Westing Paper Products Corporation. As the group talks about the old man, they do so with a mixture of fear, curiosity, and disdain, signaling that Westing is a controversial figure in their community.*



*Sandy and Otis's spooky Halloween tale speaks to an atmosphere of terror and intrigue inside the Westing manor. Rather than scaring the young kids off, the story makes them even more determined to conquer their fears and solve the mystery in front of them. Raskin ties this scene to the theme of mystery and intrigue by showing how irresistible the human drive to uncover new information about a person or a place can be.*



*Chris Theodorakis sees something mysterious taking place at the Westing manor—yet the confines of his disease mean that he may be the only one privy to this information as the mystery begins to unfold. Chris can't join the others at the Westing house tonight—and he perhaps can't even warn them about the mysterious person waiting inside the house.*



## CHAPTER 3

Upstairs in 3D, the beautiful 19-year-old Angela Wexler is being fitted for a wedding gown by Flora Baumbach, a dressmaker who lives and works in an apartment on the second floor. Grace Windsor Wexler, Angela's haughty, judgmental mother, supervises the fitting from a velvet couch in the corner. As Angela spies smoke coming from the Westing house, she cries out in shock. Mrs. Wexler, delighted, announces her intention to bring a housewarming gift to their new neighbors. Turtle bursts in with the news about the smoke—again, she is too late. Mrs. Wexler is decidedly unexcited to see Turtle, her “other” daughter—Turtle always feels like second-best to the angelic Angela.

Turtle asks Flora if Flora can hem the witch costume Turtle has selected to wear tonight for Halloween. Grace chides Turtle for trying to distract Flora from her work on Angela's dress with her own silly, ugly costume. Turtle points out that the wedding dress—and Angela's upcoming marriage to a “marshmallow-face” doctor—is what's ridiculous. As Grace pulls her hand back to strike Turtle, Turtle begins running downstairs to tell her father about the smoke, but Grace reminds Turtle that her father operates in the afternoon. She sends Turtle to her room. As Turtle retreats to her small closet of a room, Angela offers to hem the witch's costume.

Downstairs, in Jake Wexler's office, a pale and strict-looking woman named Crow, dressed all in black, looks out the window as the podiatrist cuts out a corn on her toe. Crow exclaims “Smoke!” as she sees the column of smoke rise from the Westing manor. The doctor asks Crow to be still. Noticing a bruise on Crow's shin, Jake asks her about it. Crow replies that his daughter, Turtle, kicked her the other day for touching her braid. Such things happen, Crow declares, when there's no religion in a home. She speculates that Westing isn't rotting alone in his mansion—he's roasting away in hell.

When Doug Hoo tells his father the rumor about Westing, Mr. Hoo retorts that the man's corpse can't be rotting on an “Oriental” rug—he suggests maybe the man is laid out on a Persian rug or a Chinese rug. He chides Doug for listening to the rantings of his neighbors instead of studying. The athletic Doug leaves the restaurant and retreats to his family's apartment, where he does sit-ups to prepare for track practice the following day. In the restaurant, Mr. Hoo worries about the slowness of his business—he has only two reservations for tonight. Mr. Hoo looks over at his young new wife, Sun Lin Hoo, who is gazing out the window longingly. Mr. Hoo wonders if she misses China—she immigrated from Hong Kong less than two years ago.

*This passage introduces the complicated dynamics within the Wexler family. There is clearly tension between Grace, Angela, and Turtle. Turtle doesn't fit in with the stereotypes of femininity that her mother and sister embody, and neither Grace nor Angela appears particularly invested in learning about the intricacies of Turtle's offbeat personality.*



*Again, this passage confirms that Turtle is chronically misunderstood and out of place within her family. Only sweet Angela entertains Turtle's whims. This scene highlights how the Wexler family's individualistic, isolated nature weakens them collectively.*



*By introducing her characters in mismatched pairs, Raskin foreshadows the unlikely connections that the Westing game will force these people to make. Introducing her protagonists in such a way also allows Raskin to contrast a wide range of different personality types—for instance, here, Crow's severe piousness starkly contrasts with Jake's laid-back nature.*



*As Raskin introduces the Hoo family, she shows how Hoo attempts to shield his son from the sinister effects of even casually-deployed prejudiced or racist speech. Hoo encourages Doug to understand that “Oriental” is a prejudiced blanket term that flattens and exoticizes Asian cultures—he wants Doug to stand up for his heritage and be proud of who he is. At the same time, Hoo worries about his second wife's happiness. Hoo fears that he cannot protect Doug and Sun Lin from the ravages of American bigotry.*



As Judge J.J. Ford's red Mercedes swings into the Sunset Towers driveway, Sandy opens the car door for her with ceremony and points out the smoke coming from the Westing house. As the tall black woman slips out of the car, she looks at the house on the hill without interest. Sandy asks the judge if she believes in ghosts, but the judge insists that there must be a rational explanation. Sandy tells her that he heard the rumors about a ghost in the house from Otis. The judge retorts that Otis is a dull man, then apologizes for her cruel words. She has had a long day. She asks Sandy to keep what she said between them, and Sandy promises he will—she is the biggest tipper in the building, after all, he thinks to himself.

Upstairs, Theo Theodorakis tells his brother Chris, who is having an episode of spasms, about the legend he's heard about Sam Westing rotting away on a rug inside his mansion. Chris's spasms relax—he loves his brother's stories. Even as Theo relays grisly improvised details about the corpse, Chris delights in hearing the spooky Halloween tale. Chris tries to tell Theo that he saw somebody going into the mansion, but his spasms prevent him from getting the words out.

Downstairs, Sydelle Pulaski struggles out of a taxi. Sandy is driving a red Mercedes to the parking lot—he is never there, Sydelle thinks, when she needs him, and he hardly ever notices her. No one, Sydelle feels, ever notices her. Moving to Sunset Towers hasn't allowed her to meet any exciting new neighbors—only the sweet boy in the wheelchair and the bratty girl with the long braid have been nice to her. Sydelle shuffles up to her apartment and unpacks the things she's lugged home: paint, brushes, and wooden crutches. As she readies her supplies, Sydelle hopes that soon people will start paying attention to her.

## CHAPTER 4

Under the full Halloween moon, Turtle, dressed in her witch costume, meets Doug at the Westing manor. She sees that the doors at the side of the house are already open. Doug readies a stopwatch and urges Turtle to hurry inside. As Turtle checks her pockets (which are full of sandwiches, a flashlight, and a silver cross necklace stolen from her mother), she feels prepared to go in. Doug has promised to pay her two dollars for every minute she spends inside. Turtle, determined to make money to play in the stock market, hurries inside. After 11 minutes, Doug hears Turtle scream. Seconds later, she comes running out of the house, shrieking.

*Raskin introduces Ford as a well-off, reserved woman. She mentions Ford's race right off the bat in order to begin examining how Ford, a prominent judge, has had to struggle against racism and prejudice all her life. Her behavior is mannered and controlled, and when she lets slip some of her real feelings to the doorman, she is careful to ask him to keep quiet on her behalf. Ford knows that as a judge she's expected to behave a certain way—and that as a black woman, her behavior will always be under higher scrutiny than her peers who benefit from white privilege.*



*Theo is a devoted brother—he does his best to care for Chris and to treat him normally, even as Chris's condition worsens before his very eyes. Chris's disease impairs his ability to communicate—though seemingly this would be a vital skill in the trial to come (the Westing game), Chris's ability to keep things close to the chest will actually serve him well.*



*Sydelle feels isolated and invisible in her day-to-day life, and here she becomes determined to take the steps necessary to change the way others see her. Sydelle knows that people with disabilities often get a lot of attention—whether it's wanted or not—and she plans to find a way to benefit from that herself. Sydelle's actions are misguided, yet her intentions are motivated by a desire for a sense of community and camaraderie.*



*Turtle undertakes Doug's dare, motivated by her own individualistic desire for profit. Doug, though frightened, waits for Turtle while she stays in the house, demonstrating the fact that he sees her as a friend and is willing to stand beside her. Both are curious about the mystery hiding inside the Westing house.*



In the Westing manor, Turtle found the corpse of Sam Westing tucked in a four-poster bed on the second floor after following a whisper upstairs. Now, as she lies in her bed at the Sunset Towers, she waits for dawn to break, terrified by what she has seen but excited for her \$24 prize. When Turtle hears the morning paper thud against the door, she hurries to fetch it. "SAM WESTING FOUND DEAD," reads the headline. Turtle is shocked—when she emerged from the house reporting what she'd seen, Doug hadn't believed her, and she hadn't told anyone else. She wonders who could have found the body—and whether the whisperer she believed she heard was real.

As Turtle reads the sixty-five-year-old industrialist Westing's obituary, she learns that he was the only child of immigrant parents and was orphaned at twelve, yet he rose from humble beginnings to create the Westing Paper Products Corporation and the city of Westingtown to house his workers and their families. His estate, the obituary reports, is worth more than two hundred million dollars. The number shocks and excites Turtle.

A chess master, teetotaler, and a patriot who staged elaborate Fourth of July pageants each year, Westing lost his daughter Violet when she drowned on the eve of her wedding; two years later, his wife left him. Five years later Westing was sued by an inventor over an intellectual property dispute concerning diapers. After getting into a terrible car accident alongside his friend, Dr. Sidney Sikes, the county coroner, Westing disappeared from public view. The obituary concludes with a statement from Julian R. Eastman, the current President and CEO of the Westing corporation, expressing his sadness at the news of the mogul's passing.

At the end of the obituary, Turtle is shocked to find no mention of how the body was found—or the note she spied on the corpse's nightstand before fleeing the premises. Turtle knows that four people were in the Westing house last night: Doug Hoo, Theo Theodorakis, Otis Amber, and Sandy. She sets out to find them and collect her \$24.

At noon, Otis Amber sets out to deliver sixteen letters from E.J. Plum, Westing's attorney. The letters address the named beneficiaries of Westing's estate and urge them to come to the Westing manor the following day at four for the reading of the will. Otis collects signatures on a receipt—the receipt also asks each recipient to list their job or position. By sunset, Otis has finished his rounds.

*Turtle is suspicious of what transpired in the Westing house last night. Her experience heightens the sense of intrigue and misleading clues established in the first chapter and portends that the mystery of Westing's death will not be a straightforward one.*



*As Turtle begins learning about Sam Westing, Raskin highlights Westing's humble beginnings and contrasts them with the unimaginably vast wealth he ultimately accrued. There are many blanks to be filled in when it comes to Westing's story—and his road to riches will prove to be paved with misdeeds.*



*Westing's obituary includes many important facts about the man and his life—facts which will all become important to remember as the Westing game unfolds. Westing's life was marred by tragedy and loss, yet he retained a deep-seated sense of patriotism and a belief in America's promises. Westing, like all of the other characters in the novel, was a deeply complex and difficult man—and the quest to unravel the mysteries of his life will become the book's confounding center.*



*Turtle is motivated by selfishness and greed: she wants her due, and she wants it now. Perturbed by the lack of information as to how the body was found, Turtle decides to begin solving the mystery for herself.*



*This passage foreshadows the turn of events still to come. Westing has named sixteen people beneficiaries—yet calling together such a large number of seemingly unconnected people is a mystery unto itself.*



## CHAPTER 5

Grace Windsor Wexler and her daughters arrive at the Westing house the next day at the appointed time—Jake has refused to come. Grace always heard family gossip growing up about a rich uncle somewhere down the line—she believes that she is Sam Westing’s rightful heir. Crow, the religious Sunset Towers cleaning woman, opens the door—she is dressed in all black, as always. Grace, Angela, and Turtle take their seats in the library after handing Crow their coats. Turtle is shocked when she sees that Sam Westing’s waxy corpse is laid out in an open casket in the corner of the room. The silver cross Turtle stole from her mother and brought with her to the house to ward off evil spirits is clasped between the corpse’s hands. Turtle barely notices when Angela’s fiancé, Dr. Denton Deere, arrives and takes his seat with them.

Flora Baumbach arrives and sits with Turtle. Otis Amber arrives next, followed by Doug Hoo and Mr. Hoo. Sandy arrives, then the Theodorakis boys. Chris grows excited when he spots snow falling outside, and as he collapses into spasms, Flora attempts to comfort him using baby talk. Theo reprimands her for talking to his brother in such a condescending way. Denton Deere haughtily whispers the boy’s diagnosis into Angela’s ear. Angela hurries from the room. When Judge Ford enters, Grace makes a big show of shaking the woman’s hand—she wonders if the judge’s mother was once a maid at the house.

Mr. Hoo asks if they can start—he has to get back to his restaurant. Plum points out that many heirs have not yet arrived. Mr. Hoo says that his wife is not coming, and Grace says her husband isn’t either. She explains he was called away for emergency surgery, but Turtle whispers to Flora that her father’s absence has something to do with a football game. Judge J.J. Ford—whose given name is Josie-Jo—wonders why Plum, a young, inexperienced lawyer, is handling Westing’s estate. Angela returns to her seat. Crow comes into the room, followed by Sydelle Pulaski, who thumps in on ornately painted purple-and-white crutches. Everyone asks her what has befallen her—she states she has been stricken ill with a terminal wasting disease. Deere tries to diagnose her as she struggles to her seat. As Sydelle sits down, the lawyer shuffles his papers, ready to begin.

*Grace Windsor Wexler marches into the Westing manor with an attitude of entitlement, revealing her individualistic nature and her focus on obtaining an inheritance. Grace is a woman focused entirely on appearances—her own and her daughters’ most acutely. Turtle, on the other hand, is genuinely invested in figuring out what is going on. The nervous Angela seems to be pulled along by the tides. All three Wexler women are more complicated than they seem to be.*



*There is a lot at play in this passage as the heirs come together for the first time. Flora speaks to Chris in a way that Theo believes is demeaning—yet he doesn’t stop to consider what Flora’s own experience with individuals with disabilities might be. Grace congratulates herself for treating Ford well—yet at the same time harbors racist assumptions about the judge’s past and the reasons she’s here. Every heir judges the others and jumps to conclusions without getting to know the others first.*



*Again, as the heirs come together to hear the reading of the will, there are already many small judgements and conflicts between them as they gossip about one another, make judgements upon one another, and begin unraveling the mysteries of who the others truly are. As the Westing game begins, the heirs will have to look past their initial judgements and get to know one another on a deeper level in order to unravel the mysteries before them.*



## CHAPTER 6

Edgar Jennings Plum introduces himself and states that while he never met Westing, he found himself appointed executor of the man's will. He states that although the will is "eccentric," he has verified that it has been signed by Westing and two witnesses, Julian R. Eastman and Sidney Sikes. Plum begins reading from the will to the breathless gathered heirs. The will, composed by Westing, declares that he has gathered his "sixteen nieces and nephews" together—Grace stands up and explodes in surprise, at which point Plum reads a directive from the will: "Sit down, Grace Windsor Wexler!"

Judge Ford declares that she is also appalled. Sydelle asks Plum to continue. Plum turns back to the will. Tomorrow, the document states, Westing's ashes will be scattered to the four winds. He wants his heirs to know, though, that he did not die of natural causes—one of them, the will says, took his life. Chris has a spasm and Sydelle shrieks. Crow looks down. Plum continues reading—the will states that the culprit is far too smart to be caught by the authorities, so it is up to the heirs to "cast out the sinner" amongst them. The heir who "wins the windfall," the will states, will be the one who finds something—but what that something is has been cut off.

In the next section of the will, the fourth section, Westing praises America, the "land of opportunity" that has made him a rich man. He urges his heirs to "take stock in America" and "sing in praise of this generous land" as they begin the Westing game. Judge Ford declares the proceeding to be a "cruel trick" or the work of an insane man. Plum reads from the will: it instructs her to "Sit down, Your Honor" and read aloud the letter Plum is about to hand her. Ford puts the letter in her purse rather than read it aloud, declaring that Westing could afford to buy off anyone who might make a statement in support of his mental fitness. Plum reads out yet another section of the will which calls for a moment of silence before proceeding to the game room.

*This scene shows that though many of the gathered heirs don't know Westing—and never did—he knows all of them better than they know themselves. In calling together his "nieces and nephews"—a term which surprises the others—Westing suggests that the group should act together as a family or at least a cohesive unit, foreshadowing the trials they will soon face together.*



*The heirs realize what the purpose of their having been called here truly is: Westing, it would appear, has been murdered, and they must find who is responsible. Some of the heirs are more shocked than others, and Raskin draws attention to some individual reactions to the will's contents in order to cast suspicion on several people.*



*This passage shows that just as Westing is able to anticipate the words and actions of several of his heirs, so too are many of them able to see what Westing is trying to do. Judge Ford seems unmoved by Westing's death and unimpressed by the ceremony accompanying the reading of the will, even as Plum leans into Westing's baroque pomp and circumstance.*



## CHAPTER 7

In the game room, eight card tables with two chairs at each are set up in the center of the room. Theo, who loves chess, is delighted as he spots a game of chess laid out. He makes a move on the board. Sydelle, who has been taking shorthand notes on the proceedings, flips to a new page in her notebook as Plum starts reading out a new section of the will outlining the rules of the game. The 16 players will be divided into eight pairs, and each pair will receive \$10,000 and one set of clues. If any player drops out, their partner must also leave the game and both must return the money. Absent pairs forfeit their money and their clues will be held until the next “session.” Two days before each new “session,” pairs may give one answer each.

Plum reads out the pairs—“It will be up to the other players to discover who you really are,” the will states cryptically. Madame Sun Lin Hoo, Mr. Hoo’s wife and the cook at Shin Hoo’s, is paired with Jake Wexler—but both are absent. Turtle is paired with Flora. Chris is paired with Denton Deere. Theo suggests he should be paired with his brother, and Deere protests having to give medical advice to the invalid Chris. Chris, though, is excited. Sandy McSouthers is paired with Judge Ford. Grace is paired with Mr. Hoo. Berthe Erica Crow is paired with Otis Amber. Theo is paired with Doug. Sydelle is paired with Angela.

Plum reads the next section of the will—the section about the \$10,000. Each check, the will states, must be signed by both partners in order to be cashed. “May God thy gold refine,” the will states. Plum passes out the checks. He then reads the next section of the will, which is related to the clues. Each pair in attendance will receive an envelope containing a unique set of clues—it is not what one has, the will warns, but what one doesn’t that counts. Plum passes out the clues—they are written on Westing paper towels.

As the players puzzle over their clues, they struggle to understand what the words on the papers mean. Judge Ford is actually offended by the words on her clue sheet, insisting they remind her of a “minstrel show dialect.” Sandy, however, begs her not to quit—he needs the money. Ford reluctantly agrees to stay in the game and play the way Westing would—“mean.” Flora can’t begin to understand the clues, but Turtle, feeling she understands them intuitively, puts the paper in her mouth and swallows it. As the other players struggle to understand their clues, they demand to see the will—but Plum insists he is under strict order not to let them look at it. Everyone looks to Sydelle, who has been taking notes in shorthand—she is their only hope of glimpsing the will in full.

*At last, Plum reveals the rules of the Westing game—the game the eccentric, sly Westing has laid out. The game is contradictory in nature as it seems to serve two purposes: one being to indict one of the heirs for Westing’s murder, and the other being to reward the heirs collectively no matter their innocence or guilt. The rules of the game are yet another topsy-turvy twist in Raskin’s novel of mystery and intrigue.*



*As Plum reads out the pairs, the unlikely matches suggest that Westing has deliberately paired people up based on certain criteria—yet what those criteria are remain to be seen. The odd matches reflect, again, the twisting nature of the novel as it relates to murder-mystery plots of old.*



*The advice from Westing included in the will—including the phrase “may God thy gold refine” and the directive to consider that what one doesn’t have is the most important part of the game—suggest that Westing wants his players to work together to pursue the giant cash prize. The heirs, however, will not realize that solidarity is the answer until much later.*



*The players’ initial reactions to their clues display their disparate feelings about what is happening to all of them. Some are disdainful of the game while others are desperate to profit off of it. Some feel they understand what’s happening, while others are totally in the dark. As Sydelle becomes valuable because of her access to notes, Raskin foreshadows the ways in which individualism and greed will fuel the relationships that are made and unmade by the Westing game.*



Plum reads out the final passage of the will. The will states that while the players may find the game “senseless,” life itself is senseless unless one knows who one is, what one wants, and which way the wind blows. The game should be simple, Westing says, but he urges the heirs to “beware” and “be aware”—some among them are not who they say they are. He closes the will by urging everyone to go out and buy Westing Paper Products.

*The eccentric will seems, at first, as if it will end on a profound note, entreating the players to discover their true selves and follow their hearts—but Westing then buttons things with a strangely self-serving, capitalistic directive which seems to undermine everything that came before.*



## CHAPTER 8

During the night, the snow falls heavily and turns into a blizzard. The next morning the tenants of Sunset Towers awake to find snowdrifts imprisoning them in the building—the phones and power are out, too. Turtle goes door-to-door selling homemade striped candles which help to tell time at five dollars each. Jake, disappointed at having forfeited his \$10,000, retreats to his office; Madame Hoo, who has no clue about the game, stands alone in the restaurant. Sandy is home and Deere is at the hospital, working. Otis and Crow are nowhere to be found. Sydelle thumps through the halls—she has been invited for tea by seven different tenants, all of whom, she knows, are desperate to see her shorthand notes. Whenever someone asks her for them, though, she stands up and leaves, claiming she has medication to take.

*As the tenants of Sunset Towers find themselves snowbound inside, they realize that they are being constricted together by not just one but by two different sets of unpredictable, incredible circumstances. While locked up together, some heirs find themselves trying to go on with normal life and ignore the game—others consider solving and winning the puzzle the only thing worth pursuing.*



Sydelle and Angela go together to visit Chris Theodorakis in his apartment. Sydelle fawns attention on Chris, embarrassing Angela. Chris struggles through his speech impediment to talk to Angela about clues and to ask for Sydelle’s notes—as soon as Sydelle realizes what he’s asking, though, she leaves. Chris can tell that Sydelle’s limp is fake. He thinks of his four clues as they go: FOR, PLAIN, GRAIN, and SHED. He puzzles over the words as he uses his binoculars to look for birds. Instead of birds, however, he spots someone drawing the drapes in the Westing manor—someone is snowbound there, too.

*Chris’s nonsensical clues hammer home just how essential it is for the various heirs to put their heads together as they try to win the game—yet Sydelle’s patent refusal to share her notes with anyone underscores the suspicion, greed, and prejudice which still exist among the heirs more largely.*



Turtle has interpreted the will’s order to “Take stock in America” as a recommendation to invest in the stock market—and she believes the clues are the names of the companies to invest in. SEA, MOUNTAIN, AM, and O are Turtle and Flora’s four clues. Turtle insists the clues don’t relate to the murderer’s identity and suggests there isn’t even a murderer in the first place. Flora frets over alternatives as Turtle makes some calculations, deciding to buy stock in Westing Paper Products too. Flora, initially skeptical, finds herself impressed with Turtle’s smarts. Flora points to the sentence “May God thy gold refine” as proof of their plan’s worthiness, wondering aloud if the quotation is from the Bible. Turtle, however, insists it’s from Shakespeare.

*The analytical, focused Turtle remains practical as ever in spite of her own private experience in the creepy Westing manor. She is either unconvinced by the things she heard and saw inside—or she’s in denial and struggling to use logic and practicality to make sense of what’s happening to her.*



Upstairs at the restaurant, Grace and Mr. Hoo puzzle over their clues. Grace compliments Madame Hoo's "doll-like" demeanor and asks why she cannot speak English. Mr. Hoo defensively states that she is his second wife—she only arrived from Hong Kong two years ago. He hates being forced to put up with a bigot like Grace. Grace, oblivious to her partner's agitation, continues making insensitive remarks about Sydelle Pulaski's limp. Mr. Hoo suggests that Grace, Westing's niece, murdered him for his money. Grace laughs off Hoo's accusation. Hoo says he believes the "cheating" Westing got what he deserved.

Hoo and Grace try to divine the clues in front of them: FRUITED, PURPLE, WAVES, FOR, and SEA. Grace reads "FOR SEA" as 4C and suggests the murderer lives in apartment 4C. Hoo declares that he lives in 4C. Grace asks if Doug has shared any of his clues with his father, but Hoo replies that Doug is busy with track practice. Sydelle and Angela, he says, came to the restaurant—but didn't pay for their meal and didn't show him their clues. Grace leaves dismissively, unwilling to sign her full name—Grace Windkloppel Wexler—to a check she has to share with Hoo.

Doug and Theo, meanwhile sign their check hastily. They are excited to split the funds. Theo wants to give his half to his parents for their coffee shop. They read their inscrutable clues over: HIS, N, ON, TO, THEE, and FOR. They guess at what the words could mean—they fear solving the puzzle is hopeless without Sydelle's shorthand. Theo is concerned that if they don't solve the clues in time, the murderer will kill again—but Doug seems unconvinced that there is even a murderer amongst them. Theo suggests they find a way to get all the heirs to pool their clues, but Doug says there's no way the greedy heirs will give up the goods. He goes off to jog up and down the stairs of the apartment building, determined to stay in shape for the upcoming meet.

Ford reads over her clues: SKIES, AM, SHINING, and BROTHER. Ford knows the words are part of a longer statement. She also knows that there's no way Westing could have been murdered—as a powerful, man, she knows he would have bought police protection if he suspected his life was in danger. Ford reads the statement of lucidity from Sidney Sikes—the doctor friend with whom Westing was in an automobile accident—then turns back to the clues.

*This passage underscores the many layers of animosity, distrust, and bad faith which exist between many of the heirs. Grace's insensitive comments spare no one: her racism and prejudice against people with disabilities make her odious to Hoo. Hoo himself seems to have a private resentment toward Westing which arouses Grace's intrigue—but she knows, perhaps, that in order to win Hoo's trust, she must change her behavior.*



*Grace remains cagey with her partner even as she hammers him relentlessly for more clues and information. This shows that she and her partner are not ready to show a display of solidarity yet—they are still in the game as individuals, unwilling to betray their own secrets and offer up any sense of good will to the other.*



*Theo and Doug's opposing views mirror the previous scene. Neither knows exactly what the right path forward is, though Theo's kindhearted, generous sense of openness and solidarity seems to him the right way to play the game. Doug wants to keep things closer to the chest—he doesn't have faith in the goodness of the other players, and so he reacts accordingly. The purpose of the Westing game is to force people to break through those suspicions and embrace Theo's ethics—but this is not so easy for everyone to do.*



*Ford seems to know Westing better than the other heirs do—adding to the sense of mystery and intrigue surrounding her participation in the game. Her analytical brain and her personal knowledge of Westing's habits give her a leg up in the game.*



Ford knows Westing has set up a “tricky, divisive” game meant to divide the players and fill them with fear and suspicion. She knows that one of the heirs must be guilty of some great offense against Westing—she wonders who it is he wants revenge on so badly. She becomes determined to learn everything she can about each heir. She picks up the phone to call Barney Northrup, deciding to start investigating Sunset Towers, but he doesn’t answer. She calls the paper to ask a reporter there to help her out—after eight rings, someone answers. Ford is determined to beat Westing at his final game.

In the Wexler apartment, Angela and Sydelle go over their clues: GOOD, HOOD, FROM, SPACIOUS, and GRACE. Sydelle points out that Grace is Angela’s mother’s name—but she also acknowledges that the will stated it was what the heirs didn’t have that was important to solving the puzzle. They try to recall other words the heirs mentioned in the meeting with Plum—but even with a few additional words (and even with a piece of paper Angela has stolen from Turtle’s drawer, a piece of paper on which are written some stock market calculations), nothing seems to make sense.

Both women jump at a knock on the door. Sydelle lets Theo in—he asks if anyone wants to play chess. He is determined to find out who laid out the chess game at the Westing manor. Sydelle says she doesn’t, and Theo leaves. Sydelle says that she remembers reading in Westing’s obituary about his prowess as a chess master—nothing is a coincidence anymore, she suggests. As she puzzles over the statement that the object of the game is to win, she wonders if “to win” could be shortened to “twin.” The two women head to Sydelle’s apartment to look through her shorthand notebook for more clues—but when they arrive there, Sydelle finds that her door is open, and that her notebook has been stolen.

## CHAPTER 9

The next morning, Sydelle places an index card on the elevator’s back wall asking for the return of her notebook. No one returns Sydelle’s notebook, but the other Sunset Towers residents begin using the elevator wall as a bulletin board. Grace asks for the return of her stolen silver cross necklace. An anonymous note asks those willing to share their clues to come to the coffee shop the next morning. Turtle asks for the return of a stolen Mickey Mouse clock. Hoo posts an advertisement for his restaurant. Flora posts that she is missing a string of pearls. Ford posts an invitation to an informal party at her apartment. Grace posts a note demanding Turtle return home by seven that evening.

*Ford’s determination to best Westing seems to stem from a personal grudge against him. She is aware of his tricks and his devious nature—and she is unwilling to let his game psychologically manipulate or torture the players he’s selected to compete in it.*



*Angela and Sydelle are excited by the game and intrigued by their clues, yet they struggle to piece together any sense of what they mean. Again, Angela and Sydelle resist the game’s obvious compulsion to break down the barriers of individualism and work together. They are just as cagey about their prized notes as the other players are about their clues.*



*Sydelle and Angela burrow further into individualistic obsession over tiny pieces of the will and the wording of the game rules rather than opening up their resources to all. When they discover that Sydelle’s notebook has been stolen, they understand that the stakes of this game—and the things people are willing to do in pursuit of its prize—are far greater than they’d realized.*



*As the residents of Sunset Towers begin realizing that items of theirs are missing, it becomes clear that there is a thief among them. They create a bulletin board as a shared space for notes and advertisements, yet even as they construct tools of solidarity and community, they remain laser-focused on their own individual needs and problems.*



At Flora's apartment, Turtle and her partner have just finished placing an order on their stocks. Turtle feels she pulled off the transaction with aplomb. She believes that in "refining gold," or investing her money, she is already winning at the Westing game. Turtle returns home to her own apartment to get ready for the party. Grace asks if she can fix Turtle's hair, and Turtle reluctantly lets her mother brush out her braid and redo it. As Grace compliments how nice Turtle's hair is and how pretty she'd look in pink at Ford's party tonight, Turtle realizes that her mother is being sweet to her in hopes of getting a look at her clues. Turtle tells her mother that she won't show her even one. Angela walks in. Grace asks where her engagement ring is; Angela replies that she has a rash.

Sydelle Pulaski comes to the open apartment door and peeks in—she is sporting a pair of black-and-white checkered crutches and a black-and-white checkered dress. She has come, she says, to take Angela to the party. They are planning on wearing identical costumes to find out if anyone is a twin. Grace asks Sydelle if she'll show her her notes. Sydelle refuses to respond. Turtle, uncomfortable, hurries out to meet her date to the party, Flora.

Judge Ford and Theo are getting ready for the party when the newsperson Ford spoke with earlier calls back with information about several heirs. The journalist describes Angela and Deere's engagement announcement and a lawsuit brought against Sam Westing by James Hoo, who believed Westing stole his idea for a disposable paper diaper. Mr. Hoo walks into the apartment with catered food for the party. Ford cups her hand over the phone and asks him to stay for the party—he reluctantly agrees. The judge thanks the journalist for their time and hangs up. The party is about to start.

## CHAPTER 10

Though Grace Wexler usually arrives fashionably late to parties, she doesn't want to miss a second of Ford's fete—she arrives right on time. As Grace introduces her husband Jake to the judge and beseechingly compliments Ford's apartment, Jake quietly smirks at his "social-climbing wife." Ford excuses herself from her conversation with Grace just as Grace begins to explain her familial connection to Sam Westing—Ford is unimpressed by pretenders like Grace. Over the next several hours, the party goes on and on as the gathered guests drink and hob-knob—everyone refuses to leave, unwilling to miss even the hint of a clue.

*Grace clearly wants to manipulate Turtle in order to get Turtle's clues and further her own position in the game. Turtle is used to being misunderstood or unappreciated by her mother, but to be actively used and controlled is a painful new development in their relationship.*



*This passage further demonstrates how the heirs' individualistic impulses erode their relationships—and their larger chances at winning the game. If they can't work together, they'll continue harboring suspicions about one another and leading each other astray.*



*Even as Ford calls everyone together for a party, ostensibly meant to help the heirs all get to know one another better, she continues surreptitiously gathering information on those around her, fueling her suspicions about the other potential heirs.*



*This passage reveals that while many heirs are individualistic, self-absorbed, and focused solely on furthering their own claims to the inheritance, others—often those close to them—consider the whole enterprise a sham and lament the social-climbing, greedy ways of those desperate to win. Jake and Grace are a married couple—yet this passage makes it clear that they have completely different philosophies in life.*



Jake moseys over to Angela and asks how she's faring without her fiancé. Angela is frustrated that everyone always asks about Denton as if she herself isn't a person without him; she's also angry that Grace made her change out of her twin costume, and now she and Sydelle have no way of finding out who might be a twin. Jake starts talking to Madame Hoo, who is standing nearby. Angela points out that the woman does not speak English. She never will, Jake retorts, if no one talks to her. He continues talking with Madame Hoo, who points out the snow outside and hints that she misses China. Angela is embarrassed by how her fear of making the wrong move socially in front of her mother often results in her acting cruel to others.

Sydelle Pulaski, meanwhile, moves around the party talking to different groups of people, artlessly working the concept of twins into each conversation with no luck. Judge Ford watches George and Catherine Theodorakis—Theo and Chris's parents—as they stand together with Chris, looking troubled and tired, in the corner of the room. Ford, determined to talk to Hoo, the inventor, makes her way over to him and begins asking him about his restaurant. Sydelle interrupts their conversation, much to Ford's chagrin.

Meanwhile, Grace fusses over Angela and tells her she's arranged for Mr. Hoo to cater her upcoming bridal shower—and for Madame Hoo, in a "slinky Chinese gown," to serve the food. Angela rushes away, fearing she's about to burst out crying. In the kitchen, she finds Crow standing there alone. Crow passes Angela a dishtowel and Angela immediately begins weeping into it.

Turtle and Flora poll the gathered guests about whether they think "May God thy gold refine" is a quotation from Shakespeare or the Bible. When Turtle gets to Sydelle, Sydelle taunts Turtle by reminding her of the entire quotation listed in the will: "Spend it wisely and may God thy gold refine." The gathered guests, who have been listening to Sydelle in hopes of getting a real clue to what the woman remembers from the will, sigh in disappointment. Soon, the guests begin making their way home.

*This passage hints at the seriously complicated inner lives of all the gathered heirs. Angela does something reprehensible—she makes the bigoted suggestion that because Madame Hoo doesn't speak English, she should be ignored—yet she is privately battling her own insecurities. Angela herself feels those around her discount her and misjudge her—so she, in turn, reacts to only what she can see of other people's surface lives.*



*The complicated social dynamics at the party intensify as the night goes on and the heirs struggle to get in all the conversations, questions, and introductions they can. Rather than find a better way to socialize and organize the party, they continue competing for the spotlight and butting into one another's conversations selfishly and thoughtlessly.*



*Grace continues to treat the Hoos as lesser—much to Angela's chagrin, disappointment, and embarrassment. Crow and Angela begin forming a connection—perhaps the only genuine one yet.*



*The guests only stay at the party for as long as they believe they can get something out of being there. As soon as Sydelle declares she won't share her notes on the will, they can no longer feign interest in being around one another. This shows how selfishly the heirs are trying to use one another for information and clout—they don't yet really care about getting to know one another as people.*



## CHAPTER 11

On the third snowbound morning, Turtle prepares to go to the meeting at the coffee shop. She rushes to Flora's apartment and asks the dressmaker to fix her hair for her. As Flora braids Turtle's hair, she recollects braiding her own daughter's hair. Turtle asks what happened to Flora's daughter. Flora says only that her daughter is "gone." Flora asks Turtle what her real name is, since Turtle is clearly a nickname. Turtle tells Flora her real name is Alice, though it is not.

Theo pushes Chris into the elevator to head down to the coffee shop. They see that Judge Ford has posted a notice on the bulletin board: she has lost her father's watch. In the coffee shop, Theo and Chris find many of the other heirs already gathered. Theo calls everyone to attention and announces that there will be a chess game after the meeting open to anyone who wants to play. Theo goes on to ask the other heirs to pool their clues, reminding them that their chances of winning the game are higher if they work together. That way, they can split the prize. Sydelle says she's uninterested in an equal share when she did the work of taking notes on the contents of the will.

Mr. Hoo, irritated, slaps Sydelle's notebook down on the counter. She accuses him of being a thief, but Hoo insists he found the notebook on a table in his restaurant. He says he doesn't care if she believes him—the notes she has been selfishly dangling in front of all of them are worthless, because they're written in gibberish. Sydelle, furious, says she'd never trust any one of the other heirs—she wrote her shorthand in Polish.

The meeting comes to order once again. Mr. Hoo suggests Sydelle get a slightly larger share of the winnings. Hoo suggests they share clues right away to more quickly get to the bottom of the mystery. Ford, however, suggests they take some time to ponder sharing their clues and instead ask anonymously whatever questions they all have. Everyone writes their questions out on papers, which Theo reads aloud. One question asks if anyone is a twin—no one answers. Another asks what Turtle's real name is. Grace states that it is Tabitha-Ruth. The next question asks who has actually met Sam Westing in person. Mr. Hoo raises his hand—though Grace considers putting hers up to prove her legitimacy as an heir, she knows doing so would be a lie. Hoo is the only one with his hand raised. Ford, however, feels she doesn't need to respond to her own question.

*Turtle and Flora, too, begin forming a deeper, more intimate connection. They genuinely like each other and want to discover more about each other—yet there are still roadblocks to their full expression of their deepest selves to one another. Flora is cagey when she talks about her daughter, and Turtle offers up a fake name when asked for her real one.*



*Theo gathers all the heirs together in good faith. He hopes that they can look beyond their individualistic pursuits and see the bigger picture: they could all take home a lot of money if they simply work together. Pride, greed, and distrust, however, still stand in the way of any kind of alliance between the many heirs.*



*As the other heirs realize that Sydelle wrote her notebook in her native tongue, Polish, it becomes clear that she did not ever intend to share her notes with anyone else—and wanted to bar thieves from spying on her hard work. Sydelle's individualistic protection of her assets contrasts against her lonely desire for connection—yet in the end, she's getting the attention she's always wanted.*



*Even though Hoo is willing to make concessions so that they can all win, others are less certain about collaborating just yet. Even though Ford's suggestion seems to be in the best interest of everyone, she remains cagey and isolated when it comes time to share her own truth with the rest of the group. Even though Theo's optimistic suggestion that the heirs pool their resources makes sense, the heirs are, on the whole, simply not trusting enough of one another to make themselves vulnerable.*



The final question—which, Theo recognizes, was painstakingly written out by Chris—is never answered. Something terrible happens, and the meeting comes to a swift end due to the heirs' collective panic.

*Raskin ends the chapter on a cliffhanger as she heightens the air of mystery and intrigue at a moment in which the heirs are becoming even more mysterious to one another by refusing to be fully honest or transparent.*



## CHAPTER 12

Suddenly, loud bangs reverberate through the coffee shop. People begin screaming and running in confusion. Catherine Theodorakis comes running out of the kitchen, splattered in something red. Sydelle believes it is blood, but it soon becomes apparent that Catherine is covered in tomato sauce. Everyone hurries into the kitchen. Mr. Hoo states that the tomato sauce cans must have exploded from the heat of the stove over which they were kept. George and Catherine, however, insist that a **bomb** went off—the kitchen filled with red and purple sparks. As the Hoos and the Theodorakises smolder with suspicion, Grace discusses how the kitchen might be redecorated.

*At a moment of tension, a literal bomb goes off in the kitchen. In introducing the symbol of the bomb, Raskin externalizes and metaphorizes how the heirs' collective suspicions, distrusts, and dislikes threaten to implode the community they are tentatively building.*



Back in her apartment, Sydelle sits down to her typewriter to begin translating her shorthand into Polish and her Polish into English. A knock at the door startles her. Angela, who is with her in the apartment, answers it—it is Turtle, furious with Angela for stealing her newspaper earlier. Turtle is in a foul mood because the stock market has fallen today. Turtle says that Grace believes Angela stole the notebook. Sydelle is hurt by the idea that her own partner would turn against her. Defensive, Sydelle calls the idea absurd and accuses Turtle of being jealous of Angela. Turtle says that at least she doesn't need crutches to get attention. Sydelle retorts that Turtle's "crutch" is her "big mouth." Angela hurries Turtle out of the apartment.

*Even though the bomb has already gone off, metaphorically suggesting that tensions between the heirs have reached their peak for now, this scene represents yet another more minor interhuman implosion. As the seeds of discord begin to flower amongst the heirs, no one knows who to trust, and many begin lashing out in cruelty or in anger.*



Ford takes another call from the researcher at the paper, who has found some old pictures showing Violet Westing and George Theodorakis together at a party. The judge now knows of four heirs with Westing connections—Hoo, Theodorakis, Sandy (who was fired from the Westing paper mill for trying to unionize), and herself. She decides to hire a private detective. She flips through the Yellow Pages and finds herself shocked when she gets to a certain name. Nevertheless, she decides to chance it and dials the number. When the investigator answers the phone, she realizes their voice is identical to the voice of someone else she knows.

*Raskin ends yet another chapter on a major cliffhanger in order to heighten the sense of mystery, suspicion, and distrust. Raskin mechanically engineers the readers' suspicions to mirror the old—and new—suspicions that are flying between the many heirs as they inch closer to solving the Westing game.*



## CHAPTER 13

Shin Hoo's restaurant is empty when the bomber sets their next trap behind some cans on a shelf. The color-striped candle they are using as fuel is scheduled to burn down to the fuse at 6:30 p.m.—whoever is working will not be hurt. Shin Hoo's, the bomber knows, will be extra-busy because of the closure of the Theodorakis coffee shop. At that very moment, Grace Wexler—the new seating hostess at Shin Hoo's—tacks up a new ad for the restaurant in the elevator. Mr. Hoo interrupts his wife as she goes through an old trunk containing childhood mementos from China and brings her up to the kitchen to start cooking, then hurries off to stop Doug from jogging in the stairwell and urge him to put on his busboy outfit. When Hoo returns to the restaurant, he and Grace bond over how hard it is to be a parent.

As the restaurant opens for dinner, many of the heirs head up to the establishment for dinner. Chris and Sydelle sit together, as do Theo and Angela. Angela, making small talk, asks Theo about his college plans. Theo, however, says he isn't going to college—the operation Chris needs to reverse his sudden-onset neurological disorder is too expensive. Angela admits that she herself only went to college for a year—she wanted to be a doctor, but her parents urged her to marry for money. Theo asks her if she'd go back to school if she won the inheritance. Angela looks down, unable to answer.

Ford and Flora sit together at dinner—they, too, struggle to find something to talk about. Flora talks about her dressmaking business, but when the conversation veers toward her daughter, she switches the discussion quickly to Angela and what a beautiful bride she will be. Flora says that Angela reminds her of someone. The judge asks who that might be. "Violet Westing," replies Flora—Flora made Violet's wedding dress.

Grace seats Jake at a table with the sour-faced Turtle, who is listening to the stock market report on her radio. Hoo comes over to take their order. He asks Jake, in a low voice, what the point spread is on the upcoming Packers game. Jake tells him to ask another time. Turtle matter-of-factly tells her father that she knows he's a bookie. Sydelle and Chris continue talking, and Chris asks for Sydelle's notes. Sydelle assures Chris she'll show them to him soon. She abruptly stands up to leave and thumps toward the kitchen door to give her compliments to the chef before heading home. Otis Amber arrives at the restaurant, bundled up in snow boots and scarves. As he announces his entrance, the second **bomb** goes off.

*Even as the bomber continues to sow discord among the heirs—for reasons yet unknown—some tensions deepen while others relax. Grace and Hoo have at last decided to work together in earnest—their new partnership reflects that while several heirs are not yet ready to put aside their suspicions and work together, others are deepening their understandings of one another (and thus getting ahead in the game, whether they know it or not).*



*As Theo and Angela discuss their lives, more of their private motivations are revealed. Theo genuinely wants only to help his family—so it makes sense that he is the one to suggest that the heirs do whatever they can to win together, even if their individual earnings are reduced. Angela, on the other hand, has never even stopped to consider what it is she truly wants in life—she's clearly confused by her choices and uncertain of whether she's making the right decisions. She can't even fully focus on the game because her own demons are haunting her.*



*As the heirs let their guard down a little bit at a time, they uncover important new information about one another. Once again, this passage hammers home that the true answer to solving the game lies not only in the nonsensical clues, but in the heirs' collective sharing of stories and resources.*



*Some of the heirs are working so hard to disguise their identities from those closest to them that they don't realize their covers may already be blown. In this passage, as tensions between several characters come to a head once again—Turtle announces that she knows about Jake's side gig, and Sydelle weighs whether to take pity on Chris and help him with her notes—the second bomb detonates, again externalizing the simmering conflicts all throughout the restaurant.*



As red sparks hiss through the kitchen and Hoo attempts to get everyone to stay exactly where they are, Grace tries to calm everyone down by insisting there's been a "little mishap." As Hoo comes back out of the kitchen, however, he asks for someone to call an ambulance. Angela runs into the kitchen. Jake calls 911. As everyone fusses over Sydelle, she insists she's all right. Privately, she thinks about how she doesn't want attention like this, but to earn it on her own terms. When the ambulance arrives, the paramedic tells Sydelle she has fractured her ankle. Angela frets terribly over Sydelle as she is loaded into the ambulance. Angela's parents urge her to accompany her partner to the hospital—Grace tells her to check in with Denton while she's there.

A policeman and a fire inspector arrive on the scene and declare the matter a gas explosion. Grace asks the policeman to address the burglaries, but he insists he's with the bomb squad, not robberies. Jake points out how odd it is for two explosions to happen so close together, but the fireman says that with weather packing snow over the air ducts, such a thing isn't really out of the ordinary. Grace and Jake return to their apartment and open up the windows, determined to keep their apartment in the clear as Angela's bridal shower approaches—they do not know that the bomber has already chosen their apartment as the site of the next bombing.

## CHAPTER 14

As the sun comes out and the snow melts, the streets clear once again and the residents of Sunset Towers are no longer snowbound. Angela follows up on one of Sydelle's old hunches about their clues relating to "hood space" and checks beneath the hoods of cars in the parking lot, but she finds nothing. Flora and Turtle drive together to their broker's office to watch their stocks. Turtle is disheartened by their losses—but she knows that it takes "nerves of steel" to play the market, and that she mustn't give up hope yet.

Sandy returns a tip Ford gives him as he brings her car around—she has given him the entire \$10,000 check, and he feels embarrassed accepting more. He explains that although he was fired from the Westing plant for trying to organize a union, he's made a fine living for his family as a boxer. Ford now understands why Sandy has so many scars on his face and such badly-chipped teeth. Sandy excitedly tells Ford he's made some headway on their clues. He believes that "skies" refers to Sikes, that "brother" refers to the Theodorakis brothers, that the "shin" in "shining" might refer to James Shin Hoo or Turtle's shin-kicking, and that AM and BROTHER can be shortened to AMBER—as in Otis.

*In the aftermath of the bombing, everyone tries to underplay its impact. Grace doesn't want Hoo to be seen in a suspicious light, while Sydelle doesn't want attention that comes with pity. The bomb has diffused the tensions in the room for the moment, yet what this bomb will do to the already shaky relationships between many of the heirs remains to be seen.*



*Raskin, once again, uses the device of an end-of-chapter cliffhanger to increase the tension. As the tension in the book mirrors the tension between the various heirs, Raskin uses mystery and intrigue to underscore how complex and unknowable each one of her 16 protagonists truly is. The characters' motivations are often unknown—such as why the bomber has singled out these three places specifically—and yet the pleasures of untangling the webs of human connection and motivation are as real as those of solving a complex mystery.*



*In the aftermath of the bombing, as the snow melts away, it seems the heirs have entered a new chapter in the game. Many pairs, such as these two sets of heirs, are taking one another's ideas more and more seriously, investing faith in even the wackiest possibilities as they work together in pursuit of a common goal.*



*Ford is beginning to understand her mysterious partner better. It is significant that Sandy talks a lot about being fired for trying to start a union—he paints himself as a man who values the promises of collectivism and solidarity, yet when it comes to sharing clues and seeking information, he still keeps things relatively close to the chest. Sandy embodies the very values Westing wants to imbue in his heirs.*



Ford is impressed with Sandy's work, but she points out that the clues ought to point to just one suspect—not six. Sandy laments that he can't figure out why some of the heirs have been selected—especially himself, who has no connection to Westing. He suspects Westing is out to get somebody from the grave—and Ford agrees.

*Ford and Sandy are working together and developing theories about Westing's true motivations. They are trying to look beyond the heirs' individual qualms with one another at the larger purposes for why they've all been called together in such a way.*



Grace and Hoo get into an argument about the costs of redecorating—Grace insists it will take at least half of their check to redo the kitchen, and Hoo becomes incensed and orders her out. Grace returns to her apartment—once there, she finds Crow, who is cleaning her apartment, having an argument with Otis about having lost their clues. Crow insists she remembers them by heart. Otis is concerned someone else will find them. Otis is in a bad mood, exhausted from the deliveries he's making. He tries to close the window to keep out the draft, but Grace warns him that she can't have a gas explosion in the apartment. "Boom!" shouts Otis angrily before stalking out of the apartment. On the way down, he brushes by Denton Deere in the hall.

*This passage shows that in spite of the strides they've all made, many of the heirs are still experiencing setbacks and struggles when it comes to their ability to work together. Even as old suspicions are erased or overcome, new ones take their place.*



Downstairs, Denton meets with Chris. He insists he cannot help Chris with his disease—he's only a plastic surgery specialist. Chris laboriously repeats the clues to Denton, desperate to have the intern help him play the game. All Denton wants is his half of the \$10,000. He begs Chris to sign the check, but Chris refuses, knowing that as long as he holds out, Denton will have to keep coming back.

*Denton and Chris enter an uneasy arrangement in this scene. They both want something from one another—yet each is hesitant to give what they must to get it. Denton and Chris should work together as a team, yet they cannot put aside their individual needs.*



Angela embroiders in the lobby, waiting for Denton to come downstairs and drive her to the hospital to visit Sydelle. Angela never learned how to drive herself because her mother insisted that she was pretty enough to never be without a man who would chauffeur her around. Theo comes into the lobby and excitedly tells Angela he's found the source of the quote Turtle was curious about: "May God thy gold refine." He opens up a library book and reveals the quotation comes from a verse of "America the Beautiful." Denton comes out of the elevator and hurries Angela from the lobby, past Sandy, who whistles the song as the couple walks out.

*Theo seems to make a break in the case, uncovering the connection between Sam Westing's patriotism and a line from the will. Before Angela can properly make sense of Theo's detective work, however, her fiancé whisks her away. Angela is clearly conflicted about her impending marriage—and by showing how her obligations to her fiancé distract her from the game, Raskin foreshadows Angela's continuing dissatisfaction with the things her relationship requires of her.*



At the hospital, Denton chides Angela for going to visit her "crazy partner" who made up her wasting disease. Angela insists that Denton is wrong about Sydelle. Noticing how troubled Angela is, Denton asks her what's wrong. He asks her if something's wrong with the wedding preparations—or if she doesn't want to get married at all. Privately, Angela thinks about how she doesn't want to get married—but that she feels that she could never tell Denton or her mother her true feelings.

*This passage further confirms that even though Angela should be closer to Denton than anyone else in the world, she is still harboring huge secrets from him and presenting a false face to the one she should trust the most.*



A psychiatrist emerges from Sydelle's room. Angela stands up from a bench in the hall to greet him. She asks how Sydelle is. The psychiatrist replies that Sydelle isn't crazy—she just wanted attention. Angela asks if it's normal to try to shock people into noticing you. The psychiatrist replies that no one was hurt by Sydelle's actions and urges Angela to go in and visit with her. Angela goes into Sydelle's room. Sydelle asks her what the doctors have said. Angela replies that while Sydelle's wasting disease is incurable, she could still live for many years. Sydelle, satisfied, asks Angela to fetch her makeup. Angela, who has brought Sydelle's makeup along inside her own tapestry bag, finds a confusing, cryptic letter and two clues inside the bag: THY and BEAUTIFUL.

*As Angela visits with Sydelle, she does her best to accept her partner in the way Sydelle wants to be seen. She doesn't invalidate Sydelle's disease, though it is fake, or make fun of her for her gaudy, attention-seeking crutches. Instead, she offers Sydelle the support and friendship she needs. Angela's seemingly divine reward for her goodwill toward her partner is two more clues, though she doesn't know who gave them to her or what they mean.*



## CHAPTER 15

On Friday, Theo, Doug, and Turtle all return to school. The coffee shop is full, but Shin Hoo's is empty. Ford goes to work and Sandy mans the door. Flora spends her day at the broker's office charting stocks—at the end of the day, she tells Turtle they've lost \$3,000 in a week. Turtle insists that they'll soon regain their losses, but Flora is not so sure that Turtle is following the right plan.

*As the heirs go about the ordinary comings and goings of their lives, the pressure of the game weighs on all of them nonetheless. They are still all in competition with one another and determined to hurry and solve the game in time.*



Turtle, Sandy, Doug, Theo, and Otis stand outside Sunset Towers looking at the Westing manor—no smoke has come from its chimney in weeks. They wonder whether Westing was truly murdered—and if he was, how the murderer got away with killing Westing in his bed. The members of the group exchange increasingly opaque, improbable theories, and Sandy offers particularly strange tales about deaths in ancient Rome and Greece.

*This passage shows that while many heirs continue playing the game close to the chest, others are willing to share their theories about what is happening to all of them—and what happened to Westing. The heirs are slowly opening up to one another, building community even outside of their pairs and partnerships.*



Doug teases Turtle about being the murderer, since she was the one who found Westing's corpse. He pulls her braid and runs away. Sandy restrains her from chasing and kicking him. Otis pedals away, insisting that there is no murderer—Westing was simply insane. Theo asks Sandy if anyone else came out of the building on Halloween night other than Turtle and Doug. Sandy says he saw Crow and Otis leaving together. Theo hurries off to check his clues. Turtle asks Sandy to tell her another ridiculous tall tale about death, and he obliges her.

*This passage shows that even as the heirs grow closer together, being reminded too acutely of the game's true aims turns them against one another again. They remain suspicious of each other whenever they're reminded that they're solving a murder mystery, not simply puzzling out the answer to a silly game.*



Jake comes home to find his apartment empty. He decides to go to Shin Hoo's and give them some business. He finds Grace working at the desk. She sits down with him at his table but insists she's already eaten. Jake asks about all the presents on the table in the apartment—Grace reminds him that Angela's bridal shower is tomorrow. Mr. Hoo brings Jake an order of spareribs and sits down at the table. Grace asks Jake to help her and Hoo settle a debate: she thinks the restaurant needs a catchier new name, like "Hoo's On First." Jake likes the name, but Hoo thinks it is stupid. He takes Jake's order away again before he's finished eating.

Ford returns to Sunset Towers and makes a plan with Sandy to interrogate George and Hoo separately. They plan on ordering from the café tonight and from Hoo's tomorrow. They are disappointed when Theo delivers their order, and, instead of questioning him decide to go through the files from the private detective—they are files on the Westing family. Sandy has been asking tenants about their connections to the Westing family and has learned that only Flora met Violet. He himself saw the mysterious Mrs. Westing, whose face is always obscured in pictures, once or twice, and he remembers her having a mole. Judge Ford, who remembers very little about Mrs. Westing, recalls only that she was pale.

As Sandy and Ford puzzle over the picture, Sandy wonders what the connection is between Angela, who looks like Violet, and Theo, who looks like George (a man who was once seen in the society pages dancing with Violet before her engagement to a hack politician). Sandy reminds Ford of the rumor that Violet's death was a suicide—and that she wanted to die rather than marry someone other than George. Ford asks if Angela and Theo are seeing each other in secret. Sandy says that if Westing is trying to replay the terrible event of his daughter's death, it would mean Angela must die.

## CHAPTER 16

At Angela's bridal shower, Madame Hoo serves food, embarrassed by her ridiculous and uncomfortable "traditional" Chinese gown. She cannot wait to get home and change back into her real clothes.

*The tensions between Jake, Grace, and Hoo in this passage are more friendly and playful than outright antagonistic. This marks a profound change in the relationships not just between these three individuals but between the heirs more largely. Just as another group of heirs clustered outside the towers shares information and lighthearted stories, so too does this group find themselves better able to talk openly and rib one another.*



*Ford and Sandy are making a seriously concerted effort to investigate all of the other heirs, leaving no stone unturned. As they pool their knowledge, memories, and resources, however, the question remains whether the two of them are being fully truthful and upfront about what knowledge they do—or do not—possess about the Westing family.*



*This passage shows Ford and Sandy realizing that the connections they've uncovered lead to a dark conclusion: that Westing may yet be playing with very real lives in an attempt to avenge the tragedies of his past. Whether Westing would go to such lengths is still unclear, but Ford and Sandy's collective suspicions begin to rise yet again.*



*Madame Hoo does not speak English, yet Raskin's omniscient narrator allows readers into her head. Madame Hoo is resentful of being exoticized and treated like an oddity—she feels that Grace is bigoted toward her and pigeonholes her using outdated, inaccurate stereotypes.*



Grace calls for Angela to open her gifts in front of her guests gathered in the living room. Angela is barely making it through the party—she hates that all of the guests are her mother’s friends, and that none of her own career-focused friends are present. Angela opens two identical, gaudy gifts—as Turtle reaches for a third, Angela snatches away and opens it. An explosion goes off and rockets shoot through the room. When the smoke clears, everyone can see that Angela has a mean gash on her cheek and that her hands are badly burned. The third **bomb** has gone off.

The heirs gather in the lobby around the police captain whom Ford has summoned. With a murderer, a bomber, and a thief amongst them, every heir is suspicious of the other. Mr. Hoo suspects Flora and Jake suspects Sandy. Chris wonders if Ford is “one of those Black Panthers in disguise.” The captain calls the “bombs” a series of juvenile pranks and suggests that they’ve endangered no one’s life. Crow calls whoever tried to harm Angela a “devil.” As the captain attempts to reassure them, the members of the group continue to privately wonder how the others amongst them might be guilty.

Angela winds up in the hospital in a bed next to Sydelle’s. Angela claims to be unable to remember anything about the moment the **bomb** went off. Turtle sits by her sister’s bed and comforts her—Angela is worried about damage to her face, but Turtle reminds Angela that Angela has always said that it’s what’s on the inside that counts. Angela wonders if she really believes such a thing to be true. In her bed across the room, Sydelle’s ears perk up—she has realized that Angela is the bomber, but she feels proud rather than angry or betrayed.

## CHAPTER 17

Monday is a gray day. The stock market falls even further, and Turtle begins to worry. She is not the only anxious one—all the heirs are nervous in the wake of the third bombing. The **bomb** squad is called several times to inspect “suspicious” packages that end up being ordinary pieces of mail. When Turtle calls out Flora’s full name—Mrs. Baumbach—someone thinks she is shouting “bomb” and calls the squad again.

On Tuesday, the market continues bouncing up and down. Jake visits Hoo’s to eat lunch and to converse with Madame Hoo, who is learning English quickly. Grace and Hoo show their clues to Jake, who quickly interprets “PURPLE” and “FRUITED” as pointing to Plum, the lawyer. They rejoice in their breakthrough, ignoring the other clues.

*The third bomb goes off, as the first two did, at a moment of significant tension. Not only is Madame Hoo seething with humiliation and rage, but Angela is on the verge of a panic attack over the unstoppable velocity of her own wedding preparations. This bomb, like the first two, externalizes these tensions and symbolizes a breaking point in relationships between the heirs.*



*The bomb, in this case as in the others, is an expression of tension that doesn’t quite diffuse those tensions and anxieties. Here, the heirs find that their suspicions—and their collective reliance on prejudice and racist tropes—deepened and heightened when they should instead be pushing aside their differences and working together to solve the problems in front of them.*



*In this passage, as Sydelle realizes that Angela is the bomber, she is full of pride for her partner rather than suspicion about her motives. Sydelle knows Angela well enough at this point to realize that Angela is a very conflicted young woman—Sydelle celebrates rather than denigrates Angela for taking action on her own behalf.*



*The third bomb has made the heirs more suspicious of one another than ever. The heirs now see all of each other’s actions as suspect or threatening. There is hardly any sense of togetherness or solidarity—everyone, it seems, is out for themselves and their own protection.*



*In this scene, the Hoos and the Wexlers bond over their mutual suspicion of Plum, showing that while some heirs are more trusting of one another even in the face of the bomb, they are all still looking for a common enemy.*



Sandy buys a notebook to begin keeping track of all the private investigator's reports, which are delivered daily to Ford's office. Sandy begins compiling dossiers on each of the heirs—his first completed file is on the Hoo family. He reports that James Shin Hoo added "Shin" to his name after going into the restaurant business in hopes of sounding "more Chinese"—and that after suing the Westing company over his invention, he settled for \$25,000 just last year. Sandy also reports that Hoo has recently invented a paper inner sole—Sandy himself, he says, gave Hoo the idea.

Theo, meanwhile, tries to arrange his clues into some kind of numerical formula or equation as he does his homework. When he is done, four clue letters remain: I, S, T, and O. Theo puts the letters together to form the name "Otis"—he believes between the name and the formula, he has discovered the bomber and the formula for an explosive substance. Theo runs downstairs to find Doug and tell him. On the stairwell, he runs into Crow. She pulls him into her apartment and asks him to kneel and pray with her. Theo is disoriented and weirded out, but nevertheless, he agrees.

## CHAPTER 18

Flora and Turtle have settled into a routine each day: Flora braids Turtle's hair while Turtle reads *The Wall Street Journal*. One morning, Turtle announces that the newly elected chairman of the Westing Paper Products board, Julian R. Eastman, has predicted that the company's earnings will double in the next quarter. Turtle urges Flora to sell every other stock and put all the money into WPP at the broker's office. Flora, addressing Turtle as Alice, says she will. Turtle says she likes being called Alice and wants to think of a nickname for Flora too—she asks if she can call her Baba. Flora happily agrees, telling Turtle how smart she is. Turtle says she bets Flora's daughter Rosalie was smarter.

Down in 4D, Sandy continues compiling dossiers. In his file on Flora Baumbach, he notes that her husband left her years ago, abandoning her with their daughter Rosalie—who was developmentally disabled. Rosalie died last year at age 19 of pneumonia. When Sandy gets to the file on Otis Amber that the investigator has prepared, he begins laughing out loud.

*As Sandy and Ford step up their investigation, they begin learning much more about their fellow heirs. The information they uncover about Hoo—specifically the fact that he changed his name to make himself seem more authentically Chinese—demonstrates just how deeply each heir is wrestling with issues of identity and conflicts of personality, even if their surface-level demeanor reflects something else.*



*This strange encounter between Theo and Crow underscores the unknowability of the human condition. These far-flung individuals all live together in the same building, yet they know little about one another's inner lives. Whenever they're confronted with the unlikely or unpleasant truth of who another person really is, the effect can be surreal or disorienting, as it is here.*



*Flora and Turtle are growing closer and closer all the time, learning more about one another and helping each other to feel seen, understood, and appreciated. Turtle's family doesn't really get her, and Flora lives all alone—they are each other's support not just in the game, but now in life.*



*Sandy's revelation about Flora's tragic past shows that Flora—like all the other heirs—has a difficult past and all the baggage associated with it floating just below the surface.*



At school, Theo is still perturbed by his encounter with Crow the night before. He remembers Crow giving him something, but this morning, all he found in his robe was a Westing Paper Products handkerchief. He has convinced himself it must have been a dream. Theo tells Doug about having solved the clues, and he asks Doug to follow Otis Amber. Meanwhile, across town, Flora sits at the broker's office and watches as WPP rises in value by the minute.

After school, Doug follows Otis as he picks up packages from the baker and the butcher and heads to Sunset Towers. Doug then follows Otis to the house of Plum the attorney, and then to the hospital. Doug waits at the entrance—several minutes later, Otis dashes out of the hospital again. On foot, the track star follows Otis to a stockbroker's office, the high school, and Sunset Towers. In the parking lot, Otis spots the exhausted Doug leaning against the side of the building. Otis approaches Doug and hands him a piece of paper—all heirs must sign the receipt and report to the Westing house Saturday night. Doug signs it.

Back at Ford's apartment, Sandy reads to her three dossiers. Otis Amber is, at 62, a delivery boy with a low IQ who lives in a grocery basement. His connection to Westing is that he regularly delivers the letters from Plum. Denton Deere is a plastic surgery intern whose only Westing connection is that he is engaged to Angela, who looks like Violet Westing. Sydelle Pulaski is the secretary to the president of Schultz Sausages. She is currently using six months' saved-up vacation time. Before moving to the towers, she lived with her mother and two aunts. Her Westing connection is unknown. Ford feels Sydelle somehow doesn't "fit in" to the Westing game.

In the hospital, Angela receives a visit from Denton and his superior, a plastic surgeon who advises her to make an appointment for a graft to repair her cheek in two months. After the doctor leaves, Angela complains to Denton that they'll have to postpone their wedding. Denton suggests they have a small wedding. Angela says her mother wouldn't want that. Denton asks Angela what it is that *she* wants. She doesn't answer. Turtle busts into the room. Denton tugs her braid, and she kicks him in the shin. Denton leaves, and Plum enters with a large male nurse whom Denton has sent to remove Turtle. Turtle runs away, warning Angela not to tell the lawyer anything. Moments later, Grace enters—seeing the man she believes is the murderer standing over Angela, she screams.

*The heirs continue trying to one-up one another and figure out each other's motivations. They don't all trust one another, even as several of them begin forming deep friendships.*



*Doug has been following Otis all around town only to realize that Otis is doing a very benign task: collecting the heirs' signatures in advance of their second gathering at the Westing mansion soon. This demonstrates that even though the heirs still harbor suspicions about one another, these suspicions are largely unfounded—and often only harmful.*



*The dossiers reveal little about the heirs' deeper motivations or the truth of who they are—yet they are helpful in piecing together the various heirs' connections to Westing. Sydelle, however, doesn't seem to have one—it is almost as if her presence among the heirs is some kind of mistake.*



*The chaos of this scene mirrors the chaotic response Angela is having to the idea that even after her scheme has worked—she has landed herself in the hospital and delayed her wedding—she still cannot escape her fate. Angela is so disconnected from herself and her needs that she doesn't know how to express even to her fiancé what it is she wants out of a wedding—or a relationship.*



Back at Sunset Towers, Chris is excited about receiving three visitors in a day: Otis with the letter, Flora, to talk about her daughter, and now Denton, his partner. Chris wants to talk about clues, but Denton has news—he has found a neurologist who thinks a new medicine may help Chris’s condition. Denton has already secured Chris’s parents’ approval and now just needs Chris to pack a bag for the hospital so the doctor can run some tests. Chris smiles and laboriously tells Denton he can have the money. Denton helps Chris get ready to leave and wheels him down to the parking lot. Chris is excited.

*Even though Denton has been loath to play the Westing game, Chris finally feels a connection to his partner in this scene as he realizes the magnitude of what Denton is doing for him. This demonstrates that though the heirs have been placed into unlikely pairs—and often have conflict between them—there are still ways in which they can profoundly change one another’s lives.*



## CHAPTER 19

On Thursday, Flora sits at the broker’s office and watches WPP stock rise and rise. Turtle is at school, listening to the reports on her radio—but when she’s caught, she blames her distraction on a toothache and is sent to the nurse. She lies about having a dentist appointment the following week and asks to be sent home. The nurse sends her back to class. She continues going to the bathroom every few minutes, citing a bladder infection, to listen to the radio.

*Turtle is so invested in the Westing game that she’s shirking her other responsibilities, like being good in school. She is determined to win.*



Meanwhile, Crow cleans the Wexlers’ apartment, worried about returning to the Westing house in a few days. Otis knocks on the door—he is delivering a box of Westing Paper Products to the apartment. He tells Crow that he believes he’s figured out who the bomber is: Hoo. Hoo wanted to put the coffee shop out of business and he catered Angela’s shower—he bombed his own restaurant, Otis suggests, to avoid suspicion. Crow becomes furious with Hoo for threatening the life of Angela, an “angel reborn.”

*Otis suspects Hoo, and, as a result, Crow instantly detests the man. Otis is drawing a simple connection between what all three bombings had in common—but there is another obvious link between them that he doesn’t see.*



Sandy reads to Ford from Crow’s dossier file. It states that she was raised by a single father and married at 15 to a man named Windy Windkloppel. Crow has been arrested three times for vagrancy and public intoxication. She runs a soup kitchen on Skid Row, she is deeply religious, and she works as a cleaning woman. The only question is what her Westing connection might be.

*Crow, according to her file, is a person with a long, strange, and hard-to-understand history. Crow is a woman who seems to have bounced between several different lives—yet her fellow players in the game see her only as a one-dimensional religious nut without questioning the events that made her that way.*



As Jake Wexler enjoys lunch, Crow shows up to Hoo’s restaurant. Grace seats her; Madame Hoo is serving a special tea lunch. As Madame Hoo serves Jake, Grace feels jealous and nauseated. Crow complains to Jake of the poor job he did excising her corn. Jake insists that Crow wears shoes that don’t fit and that give her terrible podiatric problems. Hoo comes out of the kitchen with a pair of paper innersoles, his latest inventions, and offers them to Crow. Crow suspiciously slips the insoles into her shoes and feels great relief. She decides that the charitable Hoo cannot be the bomber and leaves without eating her meal.

*The heirs, in this scene, continue to try to understand one another’s motivations and capabilities, sizing one another up by what they see of each other’s behavior. Crow is a person who clearly longs to see the best in others. She considers Hoo’s guilt for a time, but once she appreciates what a good person he is, she drops her suspicions.*



A nurse wheels Chris into Angela and Sydelle's room, explaining that Chris has come to the hospital for some tests. Chris reaches into the pocket of his bathrobe—he has something for Angela. Theo has a crush on Angela and Chris suspects that Theo wanted to sneak a letter to her but put it into the wrong bathrobe pocket. Chris retrieves the letter and hands it to Angela. The nurse wheels him back out. Angela opens the cryptic letter, which reminds her of the letter she found in her tapestry bag days ago: "Your love has 2, here are 2 for you. Take her away from this sin and hate NOW! Before it is too late." The two clues at the bottom are WITH and MAJESTIES.

Sandy and Ford are still compiling their dossiers, gathering information on the Wexlers. Sandy adds to the investigator's file that Jake is a bookie, but Ford says such a fact has no bearing on their assessment of him: she'll take a bookie any day, she says, over an "upstanding" man like Westing who cheated people, stole ideas, and mistreated his workers. Sandy takes a flask from his pocket and takes a drink. He is surprised when Ford exclaims that Grace's maiden name, Windkloppel, corresponds to the name of Crow's ex-husband, Windy Windkloppel. Ford rereads the reports. She finds an extract from an interview with one of Crow's downstairs neighbors and best friends growing up—Sybil Pulaski. Ford announces that Sam Westing has made his first mistake.

## CHAPTER 20

On Friday, as the specter of returning to the Westing house looms, Turtle skips school and accompanies Flora to the broker's office. As WPP reaches its highest price in over a decade, Turtle declares it is time to sell. Meanwhile, Doug continues following Otis Amber around town on foot. He watches as Otis enters a rooming house downtown. He waits for Otis to emerge, but the man does not come out for hours. At five, Otis returns to Sunset Towers. Doug wonders where Theo is. Theo, it turns out, is in the emergency room after finding out that his formula was miscalculated—his lab equipment blew up, shattering glass into his skin. A bomb squad detective questions Theo as a doctor removes shards from his shoulders—but Theo has alibis for all three **bombings**.

*The mix-up of the bathrobes demonstrates that Crow did give Theo something the night of their strange encounter: a letter which matches the tone of the first cryptic letter Angela got. Crow wants to help both Angela and the one who loves her—Theo—to win the game.*



*Sandy and Ford begin uncovering more and more crucial information about the other heirs. Ford is uninterested in reductive information like the truth about Jake: she knows that one word can rarely sum a person up, and that a person is better defined by their deeds and beliefs. Ford has come to understand just how complicated people are—and it is this relatively newfound understanding that allows her to at last see Sam Westing as a fallible human being.*



*The heirs grow increasingly desperate to tie up their loose ends before the return to the Westing house over the weekend. They are all clearly motivated to win—so much so that they make risky decisions, cause themselves bodily harm, and risk blowing their own investigative covers.*



Ford and Sandy continue placing orders from the coffee shop until George Theodorakis himself delivers their order. When he arrives, they ask him about Violet Westing. George explains that his father was a foreman who lived and worked in Westingtown. George and Violet were childhood sweethearts, but Violet's mother disapproved of the match and urged Violet to marry someone more respectable and "important." Mrs. Westing, George reveals, handpicked the crooked politician Violet ended up engaged to. Rather than marry the man, Violet killed herself. Sandy and Ford are at last able to complete their dossier on the Theodorakis family.

As Ford and Sandy puzzle over why Westing involved Chris and Theo but not George or Catherine in the game, they begin to consider the deeper question of which heir Westing wanted to see punished. They agree that the person who caused his daughter's death is the one being targeted. Ford concludes that the mysterious Mrs. Westing must be one of the heirs—and that she is the person they must protect.

*The opportunity to talk with George about his past reveals the truth about the Westing family's tragic past. Ford and Sandy are saddened by what they've learned—but they also understand Westing a bit better. Westing's motivation for playing the game is clearly to right the wrongs of his past—yet it is unclear whether he believes the blame for his daughter's death lies with his ex-wife or with himself.*



*Ford and Sandy begin to believe that because Mrs. Westing all but disappeared after Violet's death, she must have changed her identity—and she is, without a doubt, hidden amongst the heirs. Ford and Sandy know that those around them could be anyone, so unknowable are humans to one another. By showing how Mrs. Westing has been living right under everyone's noses, Raskin suggests just how impenetrable and mysterious human beings are.*



## CHAPTER 21

Theo comes up to Flora's apartment, where Turtle and Flora are counting their stock market winnings, to ask if he can borrow Turtle's bike—it is his turn to follow Otis Amber. Turtle does not reply. Theo says he had a conversation with the police earlier—and didn't mention anything about Turtle being the bomber. Turtle asks what Theo means. Theo, of course, believes that Turtle is the bomber. He demands that Turtle lend him her bike. She reluctantly agrees, tossing him the keys for the lock. As soon as Theo leaves, Turtle calls the hospital and asks to speak to Angela—the operator tells her that Angela's room is not accepting calls. Turtle worries that her sister will confess to being the **bomber**. Turtle makes a hasty excuse and leaves.

Theo follows Otis and Crow on a city bus bound for a gritty downtown neighborhood. Together, the two of them enter a shabby storefront: The Good Salvation Soup Kitchen. As Theo watches homeless people flood the soup kitchen, he hears the sounds of hymns coming from inside. Theo approaches the window and looks in: Crow and Otis are serving together. Theo pedals back to Sunset Towers, disgusted with himself for spying.

*Turtle knows that Angela is the bomber, and so does Sydelle—but Theo is in the dark. Turtle, however, interprets his statement to mean that he knows about Angela and is going to do something about it. Turtle rushes off to protect her sister, planning to do something that will help Angela escape suspicion and trouble at all cost. Even though Turtle and Angela are not partners in the game, Turtle cannot help but defend her sister.*



*Theo and Doug have both been following Otis with suspicion—now, though, as they see him arrive at a soup kitchen with Crow and begin helping the less fortunate, Theo sees that they have misjudged the man all along.*



Ford and Sandy have nearly completed their dossiers. The only files left are their own. Sandy finishes his, noting that his Westing connection is that he was fired by Westing for trying to organize a union. When Sandy asks Ford for her help in filling out her own biography and Westing connection, Ford admits that her parents worked in the Westing house: her mother was a servant and her father was a gardener. Ford herself lived in the house for years. While she was not allowed to play with Violet and rarely even saw Mrs. Westing, Sam Westing himself often played chess with the young Josie-Jo. At age twelve, she went off to boarding school and never returned to the house again: Sam Westing himself financed her entire education, she admits, and she has never repaid her debt to him.

Theo returns to Sunset Towers and calls the elevator. When it arrives in the lobby and the doors open, rockets and **fireworks** whiz out of the elevator. The final firework does not explode until the elevator returns to the third floor. By the time the bomb squad reaches the scene, the smoke has cleared. Turtle is huddled in the hallway, crying. Most of her braid has been singed off. As the police investigate, they find a piece of paper in the elevator. “THE BOMBER STRIKES AGAIN!!!” says the front; “‘How I Spent My Summer Vacation’ by Turtle Wexler” is written on the back. Grace, furious, asks Turtle if she is the bomber. Turtle replies only that she wants a lawyer.

The bomb squad brings Turtle to 4D to see the judge. As Ford questions Turtle about her actions, it becomes clear to her that Turtle is not the **bomber**—but that she is protecting whoever it is. Ford asks if Angela is the bomber and Turtle furiously replies “no.” The judge, however, is convinced that the unsuspecting, quiet, beautiful Angela has enough hidden rage to be the bomber after all. Ford asks if Turtle has anything else to confess, and Turtle begins telling her about going into the Westing house on Halloween night and finding the body, though she admits that the body looked more like a “wax dummy” than a brutally murdered corpse. Ford is intrigued by the idea of a wax dummy, and Turtle is excited by the judge’s intrigue.

Turtle asks for some bourbon on a piece of cotton to put on her bad tooth. The judge gives her some and sends her on her way. Turtle heads for Flora’s apartment but runs into Sandy in the hall. Smelling alcohol, Sandy asks Turtle jokingly if she’s hitting the bottle. When she shows him her tooth, he notes that she has a large cavity and suggests she visit his dentist tomorrow. Sandy asks Turtle if he can buy one of her striped candles for his wife’s birthday tomorrow. Turtle offers to sell Sandy her most beautiful candle for a discounted price.

*Sandy’s Westing connection is well-known, but this is the first time that Ford has revealed the full truth about her connection to the Westing family. Ford is embarrassed by her lowly roots, by Westing’s cruel treatment of her as a girl, and by the debt she nonetheless owes the man who was the architect of so much of her shame. Ford’s relationship to Westing—and to the game—is thus more complicated than anyone could have imagined.*



*Turtle sets off a bomb in the elevator in order to disguise the fact that Angela is the bomber. Turtle doesn’t care what others think of her, unlike her angelic sister—she knows that she can take the heat, whereas being outed as the bomber would all but destroy Angela.*



*After speaking with Turtle, Ford is unconvinced that the mercurial young girl is indeed the bomber—but Turtle does provide Ford with some intriguing information. Turtle and Ford are two of the heirs most attuned to how tricky, divisive, and purposefully misleading Sam Westing has designed his game to be—and by putting their heads together in earnest for the first time, they’re able to hedge at a breakthrough in the case.*



*Turtle and Sandy are friends, and in this scene, they help one another out with the things they need. This passage further cements how, over the course of the game, the various heirs have come to like and respect each other as people in spite of their restrictive pairings. All the heirs are breaking out of their shells, shying away from their suspicions, and learning to trust and befriend one another.*



In their hospital room, Angela and Sydelle reshuffle the clues they've gathered, trying to make sense of them. A note slipped under the door, signed Denton Deere, includes a bonus clue sent from Chris: PLAIN. As the women reshuffle their clues once again, they find they have the phrase "PURPLE MOUNTAIN MAJESTIES." Recalling Sydelle's notes on the section of the will urging the heirs to "Sing in praise of this generous land," they realize that the song "America the Beautiful" is an important part of the game.

*Angela and Sydelle are not the first heirs to hit on "America the Beautiful" as an important tool in interpreting the clues—but after compiling the clues that a mysterious individual, likely Crow, has given Angela, they can no longer deny that the clues all seem to point to the lyrics to the song.*



## CHAPTER 22

On Saturday morning, the tenants of Sunset Towers awake to find a notice posted in the elevator. It is from Turtle. She admits to being the bomber and apologizes for being "dumb"—but she insists she is not a thief or a murderer. As Madame Hoo and Mr. Hoo get into the elevator on their way to Doug's track meet, Hoo laments Grace's bad luck and gives thanks that his son is just a "dumb jock." Madame Hoo, excited for Doug's track meet and the gold medals he'll win, decides that though she's stolen many other things, she'll never steal Doug's shiny trophies.

*This passage reveals definitively that Madame Hoo is the burglar—she has been stealing and hoarding her neighbors' things all along. Though she's been betraying her neighbors and fellow players in the game on one level, she's also been struggling with a sense of loneliness and betrayal of her own—things are more complicated than simple categories allow for.*



Jake and Grace, in the elevator on the way to Doug's track meet, argue over Turtle. Grace insults her daughter, stating that she's always felt the hospital mixed up the babies when she brought Turtle home. Jake chastises Grace for being so cruel and asks where the kind, fun-loving Gracie Windkloppel has gone. Grace, in turn, insults Jake for being a fake doctor. Jake privately laments that his wife doesn't take him seriously—he believes she resents him because when she married him, her family disowned her for tying her life to a Jewish man.

*This passage reveals that Grace and Jake have deep-seated, unaddressed issues in their marriage. Grace clearly wanted to run away from her heritage and her past, so she chose a match that her parents would never approve of and fled. Jake and she both carry an enormous amount of baggage, it seems, over this decision—Grace's parents' prejudice, Grace's own denial of her true self, and Jake's failure to feel supported or valued all weigh on them daily.*



As the elevator doors open on the lobby, Grace begins crying. She apologizes for being so cruel. Jake presses the button to go back up and takes Grace in his arms, telling her they can skip the meet. On the second floor, though, the doors open—Turtle, having been at Flora's, is standing in front of them. She apologizes to her crying mother for setting off a "few fireworks." Jake tells Turtle they're going home. He urges her to have fun with Flora at the track meet. Turtle is confused—she is not on her way to a track meet.

*As Grace has a full-on meltdown, revealing her true emotions for the first time in the novel, the other characters are visibly flustered by what to do for her. When faced with the true contents of another's soul, many of the heirs are so unused to the raw emotionality that they can barely muster a reaction.*



Jake leads the sobbing Grace into their apartment. Angela and Sydelle, newly home from the hospital, are inside. Grace and Jake, however, don't even seem to care that Angela is back. Angela realizes that she is on her own—but she is delighted rather than saddened. She lets out a little laugh of joy. Sydelle tells her that tonight is the night they're going to win it all. They playfully sing "America The Beautiful," focusing on the line mentioning "amber waves of grain."

*Angela has felt stifled by her parents—specifically by her mother—for so many years. Now, as she realizes she's not—at least for the moment—the focus of her mother's life, she feels free rather than disappointed. The bombings were always about Angela freeing herself—in this scene, she sees that her mission has been at least partly accomplished.*



Ford paces alone in her apartment, wondering what the night will hold. Sam Westing may try to take his revenge—he may even be alive. There is a knock at the door, and when Ford answers it, she is surprised to see Denton Deere and Chris Theodorakis. Denton explains that everyone else in the building is going to Doug's track meet—Chris needs looking after, and Denton has to get back to the hospital. Ford agrees to mind Chris. Chris greets Judge Ford with a handshake and a shaky but intelligible hello—Ford is shocked. Chris explains that the medicine he's been receiving at the hospital has helped a lot. Denton knows that Chris may still remain in a wheelchair for the rest of his life—but that there are even more effective medications being developed.

After Denton leaves, Chris goes to the window to birdwatch while Ford continues going over her dossiers. She decides that Mrs. Westing, who was thin and tall in all her pictures and must be about sixty, can be no one other than Crow. She continues looking through the files, focusing on Sam Westing's in particular. She realizes that the face of the wax dummy in the coffin at Westing's will reading was modeled over his face before his accident—an accident in which he sustained serious facial injuries. Westing's face was remade with plastic surgery after the accident—Ford knows Westing could be anyone.

Turtle goes to her dentist appointment. She is unimpressed by the dentures in a glass cabinet on the wall—she thinks they're poorly made. Sandy's dentist, however, explains that the imperfections are what make the false teeth look real. As the dentist gets to work, Turtle distracts herself from the drill by thinking of a visit she and her family received earlier from Barney Northrup, demanding repayment for all the damage done throughout the building by Turtle's **bombs**. Turtle kicked him in the shins—her hardest kick ever. Before Turtle knows it, the drilling is done—and it is time to go with Flora to the hairdresser to have her singed braid lopped off.

Doug wins the biggest event at his meet: the mile run. As photographers take pictures of the beaming Doug, Doug insists he owes everything to his father. After the reporters dissipate, Madame Hoo uses a combination of Chinese and English to insist that Doug wear his medals to the Westing house that night.

*Denton and Chris are one of the Westing game pairs who have most truly helped one another. Denton has helped Chris through a terrible disease, providing him access to treatment he might not otherwise have been able to attain. The effect is astounding, and Ford finds herself touched by the gifts the partnership has granted both men.*



*Ford continues unraveling the potential twists and turns in the case, but each mystery she reveals leads to another. If Westing is still alive, as Ford suspects he is, discerning Mrs. Westing's identity only solves one part of the problem—the mystery of who Westing himself is hiding out as remains to be solved.*



*At Turtle's dental appointment, she meets Sandy's dentist and, unbeknownst even to herself, reflects on several important clues: her encounter with Barney Northrup and her glance at the dentist's handiwork in the form of elaborately-made dentures may hold the clues to the puzzle of Westing's true identity amongst the heirs.*



*The Hoo family enjoys a happy afternoon celebrating Doug. They want everyone to know how proud they are of their son. In spite of all their family's troubles, they are able to come together in celebration of Doug's successes.*



Sandy returns to Ford's apartment to deliver some sad news. He says that Barney Northrup has fired him for being lazy and drinking on the job—all lies, Sandy insists. Sandy asks if Ford will put in a good word for him with Barney—he wants his job back. Ford insists she hasn't seen Northrup since she rented the apartment. She begins to wonder if Northrup is Westing in disguise. Together, Sandy and Ford make a plan for the evening: they plan to give no answer at the meeting tonight. Their only duty, Ford insists, is to protect Crow. Sandy confesses to Ford that he has discovered that Otis doesn't live in the grocery basement—he believes Otis is Sam Westing in disguise. Ford has no idea what to believe. She is determined not to play into Westing's hands.

Otis and Crow make their way to the Westing house. Crow, however, is being sluggish—she tells Otis she has a bad feeling about entering the house. She feels it is a manor full of “sin” and that Westing is still in there. Otis insists that Westing is dead. When Crow retorts that Westing is hunting for Violet's murderer, Otis accuses her of scaring herself with frightening thoughts. As they make their way to the house, Crow mutters that she can't shake the feeling that she is in real danger.

## CHAPTER 23

Plum, Turtle, and Flora are already in the game room when Otis Amber arrives. Otis makes fun of Turtle's short new haircut, but Flora distracts Turtle by pulling from her pocketbook a picture of her daughter, Rosalie. Turtle is touched. She compliments Rosalie's sweet face and says she wishes she could have met her. Sydelle and Angela enter next—they are quite a pair. Sydelle is still on her crutches while Angela's hands are covered in burns.

The heirs continue to arrive and take their seats at the small tables. Sandy and Chris compliment Turtle's haircut. Judge Ford arrives dressed in traditional African clothes—she wears a turban and a handprinted caftan. Sandy makes fun of Ford's outfit, and she ignores him. The Hoos arrive with Doug, who is draped in medals and who receives great applause from everyone. The Wexlers walk in—it is obvious that Grace is drunk. She is so far gone that she doesn't even recognize Turtle with her new haircut. Crow arrives last, silently taking her seat near Otis.

*Ford knows that time to solve the mystery in advance is running out. With so many different possibilities as to who Westing could truly be, she sees no way of entering the night confidently, one step ahead of the master, as she'd hoped to. Ford, haunted by her childhood games of chess with Westing, wonders how she can possibly win against someone who's holding all the chips.*



*Crow herself knows exactly what is going on in the Westing game—she is aware that she is a pawn and that Westing holds the key to winning the whole thing. Nevertheless, she perhaps believes she deserves whatever penance is her due for her role in Violet's death—she willingly enters the house to face whatever is waiting for her.*



*As the heirs arrive for the final showdown, they are more connected to one another than ever before. Some of the heirs have truly found deep connections with one another in spite of Westing having pitted them against one another in the beginning, as evidenced by Flora and Turtle's relationship as well as Sydelle and Angela's.*



*The heirs are all able to be themselves around one another now—no matter how hard things have been along the way, they've at last realized that in order to succeed not just in the game but in life they must be themselves, transparently and wholly, for better or worse, without hiding the truth of their complexities.*



There is an envelope in front of each pair. Plum invites them to open the envelopes: each contains another check for \$10,000. Plum begins to read from the will. The document congratulates the pairs on earning another \$10,000—but urges them not to lose sight of the fact that by the end of the night, they stand to inherit much more. Each pair is about to offer up a single answer—the lawyer will record each one.

Plum goes around to each pair and collects their answers. Jake and Madame Hoo offer “boom” as their answer. Turtle and Flora, having won over a thousand dollars in the stock market with their initial \$10k, offer the answer “\$11,587.50.” Chris and Denton offer the answer “Mr. Westing was a good man.” Ford and Sandy do not provide an answer. Grace and Hoo offer “Plum” as their answer. Grace drunkenly announces the grand re-opening of Hoo’s on First the next day. Crow and Otis offer “mother” as their answer. Doug and Theo offer no answer. Sydelle and Angela sing “America the Beautiful” together, then offer “Otis Amber” as their answer.

Plum reads from the will. He announces there will be a break before the winner is announced. The will instructs Berthe Erica Crow to go to the kitchen and gather the refreshments. Crow, fearful, rises from her seat and heads into the kitchen. Ford asks Sandy to accompany her. As they enter the kitchen, Sandy passes his flask to Crow and asks her to refill it. Angela leaves, too. Turtle follows Angela to make sure she doesn’t set off any more **fireworks**.

Crow and Angela return with refreshments. Sandy stands in the doorway taking swigs from his flask. Plum makes small talk with Angela, who asks him if he has the answer to the game. Plum checks his watch—he is one minute late opening the next document in the will. As he tears the envelope open, Plum reads aloud: “Go directly to the library. Do not pass go.”

## CHAPTER 24

The group makes their way to the library and take their seats at the long library table. Plum opens another envelope—“Wrong!” the document inside says, “All answers are wrong!” The document goes on to announce that the partnerships are dissolved—each heir is on their own. The document instructs Plum to leave them alone and fetch the authorities in order to arrest the murderer at the proper time. The document urges the heirs to remember that it is what they don’t have that counts. Plum promptly leaves the room without another word, locking the library door.

*It is time for the heirs to offer up their answers. Their presence is incentivized with more cash—but Westing is perhaps wrong at this point in believing that his heirs are entirely motivated by greed and material pursuits.*



*As the heirs offer up their clues, it is clear that they have not been working together toward an answer as the game intended for them to do. Their answers are as far-flung and disparate as the heirs themselves—none of the answers are really united thematically or ideologically, with some believing a number might be the answer, others believing a name might be the answer, and other still feeling a phrase or song might be what Westing is looking for.*



*The will seems to somehow know each player’s state of mind. As the players move innocuously about the mansion, their every move is charged with potential meaning—and the potential for disaster. The heirs have come to trust one another, but here, in the Westing manor under the edicts of Westing’s will, all bets seem to be off.*



*The game is about to change, as evidenced by the mysterious and seemingly urgent shift in location directed by the will. The easy-going atmosphere of the night thus far switches on a dime, elevating the air of mystery, intrigue, and uncertainty.*



*When the will declares that all of the answers supplied are wrong, the document dissolves the partnerships between the heirs, essentially suggesting that they are all on their own. This is a cruel and vindictive move by Westing, a product of his frustration with the heirs’ inability to work together.*



Paranoia takes over—the heirs begin to worry that they've been poisoned or framed. Theo suggests that the heirs stop fighting and pointing fingers and work together instead. Sydelle speaks up—she says she still believes the answer lies in “America the Beautiful.” Jake suggests that perhaps some words in the song are missing from the clues—one of his clues, he says, is the word AMERICA. Sandy drinks from his flask, coughs, and suggests that everyone hand their clues over to Sydelle so that she can spread them out and look at them. Ford grows suspicious of Sandy's suggestion—he already knows the answer must be Crow. As Ford watches Sandy, she considers his battered, scarred face—and she realizes that her partner has been Sam Westing in disguise all along.

Sydelle arranges the clues in order. They read: “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.” Sydelle quickly realizes that what's missing from the song are the syllables BER, THE, ERICA, and CROW. Crow grows pale. Ford urges the gathered heirs not to jump to any rash decisions—they have no evidence against Crow, and no proof that Westing was even murdered. Ford reminds the heirs that Crow is both their neighbor and their helper—they cannot condemn her to imprisonment just for money.

Ford turns to her partner and begins to address him. As she does, Sandy's hand flies to his throat. His face turns red and he falls to the floor, gagging and unable to breathe. Though Jake and Denton hurry to help him and though Theo pounds on the door, prompting Plum to open the door and allow Dr. Sikes in, Sandy is beyond help—he expires on the floor. Turtle screams, pushing through the crowd to reach the doorman. As she looks down at him, she sees his right eye close and open again before Sandy takes his final breath. Sikes pronounces Sandy dead. Turtle runs to Flora for comfort, crying that she doesn't want to play the game anymore.

In the game room, the heirs return to their assigned tables while the sheriff ensures that no one leaves the premises. Plum says he has one more document to read. He opens up another envelope and reads. The document states that Sam Westing—born Sam “Windy” Windkloppel—declares that if no one wins the game, the will becomes null and void. The document states Plum will count off five minutes.

*It is finally time for the heirs to put aside their pride and their differences and pool their resources—they are running out of time, and the will has turned against them. Rather than playing on their own, as the will seems to suggest they should, they decide to act as a unit and put together the clues they've been hoarding in order to solve the puzzle and try to win together. At this moment of great revelation, Ford has a giant breakthrough—but she cannot divulge what she knows.*



*Westing's puzzle was related to “America the Beautiful” all along—and, as he warned, in the end it wasn't about what the heirs did have but what they didn't have on a much more literal level than any of them anticipated. After putting the clues together at last, the heirs are faced with the idea of Crow as a murderer—yet after getting to know her, hardly any of them can believe that she truly has the capacity for such evil.*



*In this passage, Sandy appears to die suddenly and violently after drinking from his flask, suggesting that someone has poisoned him. This activates in the most uncertain heirs the belief that there was indeed a murderer amongst them all along—and that whoever they are, they have struck once again. This shatters the heirs for a moment, leading them to believe that the bonds of solidarity, community, and even family they created over the course of the game were meaningless.*



*The will's cruel final act forces the heirs to choose between naming one of their own and losing out on the inheritance they were promised. This passage speaks to the complicated nature of inheritance—Raskin asks whether Westing is truly trying to pass along his material assets, or whether he's instilling within his heirs a different, darker inheritance: a legacy of retribution and hatred.*



As the minutes speed by, the heirs stare at the answer in front of them: Berthe Erica Crow. Crow waits for her penance to begin. When no one offers up the answer, Crow herself at last says her own name—with one minute to go. She stands up and declares that she, as the winner, is offering half her inheritance to Otis and the other half to Angela.

*Crow has lived a life that is defined by the loss of her daughter—she has come to truly believe that she deserves “penance” for her actions, and that the game’s conclusion in her guilt is her just reward.*



## CHAPTER 25

The fourteen remaining heirs sit in Ford’s living room wondering what has happened. With Crow arrested and Sandy dead, the heirs are shocked, upset, and confused. The heirs are divided: some feel bad for Crow, who has been arrested without any evidence that she committed murder, while others believe she herself killed Sandy by filling his flask with poison. Turtle laments her friend’s death. Denton chastises her for kicking her friend. Turtle swears she’s never kicked Sandy, but Denton points out that Sandy had a huge bruise on his shin. Turtle says the only person she kicked today was Barney Northrup.

*This scene reveals an important potential connection between Sandy and Barney—they may, it turns out, be the same person. Turtle kicked Barney in the shin, yet Sandy was the one who showed up with the bruise. Turtle is in such a state of dismay and shock that she can’t yet begin putting the pieces together quickly—but Denton’s remarks pique her interest.*



Theo reveals that Sandy was the one who knew how to play chess—Sandy was about to make his last move before he died on one of the chessboards in the game room, but Theo would have won the game anyway. Ford asks how Theo won the game. Theo replies that he took Sandy’s queen. Ford recognizes this as one of Westing’s signature moves from when he used to challenge her to chess games as a girl—he always sacrificed his queen but won on the next move. As Turtle revels in Theo’s loss, she thinks about her poor friend Sandy. As she recalls Sandy’s final moments, she realizes that his eye twitch was actually a wink. Turtle rushes over to Angela and asks to see Sydelle’s notes on the will.

*In this passage, as the heirs work through the clues they’ve continued to hold close to the chest all the way up to the very end, important information begins to emerge about who is really playing who. Turtle realizes before anyone else does that Sandy may have been someone other than he appeared to be, that he may know more about the game than he ever let on, and that he may not actually be dead.*



In the corner of the room, Turtle rereads the will. When she gets to the bit about Westing’s ashes being “scattered to the four winds,” she is reminded of her mother’s maiden name (and Sam Westing’s original last name), Windkloppel. She says the name aloud. Ford repeats the name once again before deducing that Berthe Erica Crow married a man named Windkloppel—she is the former Mrs. Westing. Crow has been mourning the death of Violet for years—and Westing created the game to punish Crow, whom he believed was responsible for their daughter’s suicide.

*The heirs continue piecing together the impetus for the game and the background facts about those involved. Westing having changed his name from the immigrant surname “Windkloppel”—just as Grace herself did—demonstrates that the two of them are united not just by blood but by their desire for the privileges of white, upper-class American life.*



Turtle continues reading the will aloud. The indignant Otis interrupts to ask why Westing would make Crow an heir when she can't inherit anything from jail—Crow, he says, has been sacrificed. Ford realizes that Westing has duped them all by “sacrificing” his “queen” in his classic final chess move. Somehow, she knows, Westing—dead or alive—will make his last move.

Deere tells the other heirs that they're all being taken for a ride—Sam Westing was nothing but a lunatic. He wrote “Happy Fourth of July” into the will, but it's currently November. Otis Amber laments that today, the 15th, is Crow's birthday. Turtle looks up from the will, remembering that Sandy asked her for a striped candle for his wife's birthday earlier. The game, she realizes, is still on—she can still win. Turtle tells Ford she would like to call her first witness.

## CHAPTER 26

Hoo is reluctant to listen to Turtle, whom he believes is the bomber—but Ford insists on allowing Turtle to follow through with her trial. Ford is shocked by the similarity between Turtle and her Uncle Sam—she can't believe she's never noticed it before. Turtle declares that she wants to prove that while Westing is dead, Crow did not kill him. She calls her first witness, Chris, and asks him about the night of Halloween. She asks him if he was birdwatching that evening. He says that he was, and that he saw a limping person enter the Westing house: Dr. Sikes.

Turtle calls her next witness: Otis Amber. Turtle asks Otis to reveal who he really is. He confesses that he is a private investigator in disguise—his three clients are Sam Westing, Barney Northrup, and Judge Ford. Westing hired him twenty years ago to take care of Crow—and make sure she never used the Westing name. Over the years he's been taking care of her in disguise, however, he's grown fond of her. He also states that Barney Northrup called him to investigate six potential tenants: Ford, George Theodorakis, Hoo, Grace, Flora, and a Sybil Pulaski—whom he mistook for Sydelle. Ford is impressed by Westing's decision to list Otis as an heir in order to convince Crow to play the game.

As Turtle continues questioning Otis, he reveals that he never investigated the man known as Sandy McSouthers for any of his three clients. He also reveals that Sandy was the one who first told the story about Westing's corpse being laid out on a rug in the Westing manor. Grace drunkenly cries about seeing Sandy's corpse on a rug in the Westing house library.

*Ford knows Westing better than nearly anyone else in the room—she is aware of the moves he's making and the labyrinthine, tricky game he's playing. There is still more to come in the Westing game—and Ford anticipates seeing what it is with a mix of excitement and dread.*



*Turtle continues putting together pieces of the puzzle, even as the other heirs want to give up in frustration and write off Westing's entire enterprise. Turtle is as determined to win the game as ever—but she knows she can't do so without the help of her fellow players in piecing together the final clues.*



*Turtle begins piecing together the full mystery of the Westing game—and all the events surrounding it—not for any kind of gain or reward, but in simple pursuit of understanding. Turtle wants to help her fellow heirs understand what has happened to them so that they can all make sense of the experience together.*



*When Otis reveals that he has been undercover for over two decades, it is perhaps an even bigger bombshell than the “conclusion” of the Westing game. Otis has already been part of a larger Westing game, helping the man to carry out his most eccentric wishes over the years.*



*Turtle wants to gather information on who Sandy really was. Considering Otis was never asked to investigate him, it makes sense that Barney Northrup, Westing, and Ford all already knew what they needed to know about Sandy.*



Turtle calls Denton Deere to the stand. She asks, if in his professional medical opinion, the body in the casket could have been a wax dummy. Denton says it could have been. She asks him if he has a diagnosis for the cause of Sandy's death. Denton says he suspects a heart attack. Turtle says that she saw Crow put lemon juice in Sandy's flask and asks if he could have died of an overdose of it. Denton says such a thing is impossible. Turtle asks her last question, about a bruise on Sandy's shin. Denton confirms that Sandy had such a bruise.

Turtle calls Sydelle to the stand. She asks about a typo in Sydelle's copy of the will at the end of the third section. The section concludes: "The heir who wins the windfall will be the one who finds the". Turtle asks what the missing word is. Sydelle confesses she doesn't know. Turtle looks down at her copy of the will. The next section begins: "FOURTH. Hail to thee, O land of opportunity!" Turtle asks to see the certification of sanity Plum gave to Ford, but Ford no longer has it—all she has is a receipt which totals out her "payment" to Sandy in return for the amount owed for her education.

Madame Hoo, who slipped from the room earlier in all the confusion, returns with a scarf-tied bundle. She sets it on the table and takes her seat. Ford opens the bundle—all of the stolen items have been returned. Everyone is grateful to have their things back, and they collectively forgive Madame Hoo. Turtle even lets the woman keep her Mickey Mouse clock.

Turtle gives her closing arguments. She points out the contradictory nature of Westing's life and persona. She declares that he is dead now—but was not when the will was read. She believes that Westing disguised himself as one of his own heirs: Sandy. She reveals that Sandy was drinking medicine out of his flask. Westing was never murdered—his life was "taken from him," as he wrote in the will, when he became Sandy.

Turtle stops talking. Ford waits for her to make the connection between Sandy and Northrup for everyone, but Turtle doesn't say anything. She privately puzzles over why Westing played three roles: himself, Sandy, and Barney. Remembering the will, Turtle realizes she has solved the puzzle: "The heir who wins the windfall will be the one who finds the FOURTH." Turtle does not share this discovery with the rest of the group. Instead, she asks for a moment of silence. As everyone bows their heads in remembrance of Sandy, the door opens—Ed Plum brings in Crow.

*By gathering information about Sandy's state when he died and Crow's potential involvement in it, Turtle hopes to make clearer just who Sandy was—and why his death, like Westing's, might be more complicated than it appeared to be.*



*Turtle continues her trial, hoping to get to the bottom of things but struggling to make sense of Westing's will. Turtle is so upset with herself for being unable to figure things out that she begins questioning Westing's sanity.*



*Madame Hoo, it turns out, was the burglar all along—but of course she is much more complicated than the title of thief might imply. As she returns her friends' stolen possessions, they react with empathy and understanding, demonstrating that they are truly a community willing to stand in solidarity with one another no matter the circumstances.*



*Turtle cannily unravels the heart of the Westing game, alerting everyone to Westing's secret identity. He was playing the game amongst them as one of them—and living vicariously through the connections his heirs made and the fun they had solving the puzzle he laid out for them.*



*In this passage, Turtle at last solves the Westing game by making the connection between Westing's many aliases—including a fourth whom the heirs have never met. She doesn't leap to share this information with the rest of the group—she wants to enjoy her victory on her own and decide what to do with the answer to the puzzle she alone has been able to solve.*



## CHAPTER 27

Otis greets Crow excitedly. Crow happily states that the police have declared her innocent. Plum says that the coroner determined Sandy died of a heart attack, as did Mr. Westing—Theo states that the coroner, Sikes, was in on the plot as Westing’s old friend. Plum announces his resignation from all Westing matters. Ford asks if there is one more document. Plum says there is. Ford urges Plum to hand it over. He obliges her. Ford opens it and reads the final section of the will. The will states that Westing is going to rest in peace knowing he was loved as Sunset Towers’ “jolly” doorman. He divides Sunset Towers in equal shares bequeathed to each of them and awards Crow thirty thousand dollars. The will wishes Crow a happy birthday—and everyone else a happy Fourth of July.

Everyone wants to know what happened to the two million dollars, but Ford points out that they lost the game. As everyone gripes about what a cheat and a miser Westing was, Turtle goes to the window which looks out over Westing manor. Suddenly, rockets light up the sky. All the other heirs join Turtle at the window to watch the fireworks extravaganza. By the time it is over, the Westing house has burned to the ground.

The next morning, Turtle heads out on her bike to collect her prize. Now that she has figured out the final clue, she can’t believe how obvious the answer is. The first three of the “four winds” are Sam Westing, Barney Northrup, and Sandy McSouthers—now, as she pulls up to the mansion of the chairman of the board of the Westing Paper Products Corporation, she knows she is about to find the fourth. Turtle rings the bell and asks to see Mr. Eastman when Doctor Sikes answers the door. Sikes tells Turtle that Eastman is expecting her. Turtle walks through the large manor into the library, where Eastman is sitting at his desk. As Eastman limps toward her, Turtle feels terrible for kicking him. When Eastman gives her a crooked smile, she greets him enthusiastically, calling him Sandy and crowing, “I won!”

## CHAPTER 28

Turtle never tells anyone that she won the Westing game. Every Saturday afternoon, she tells her family she is going to the library—and she does, though the library she visits is the one in Eastman’s manor, and though she goes there not to study but to play chess against the master.

*The heirs know that there’s no possible way that Westing is truly dead—and yet he bequeaths unto them his assets and possessions anyway. Westing is more invested in giving back to the heirs who made him feel loved and appreciated at last during the time he lived as Sandy than he is in furthering the life of consumption, greed, and isolation he has been living for so long.*



*In this final “bombing,” Westing burns his estate to the ground by launching a dramatic and beautiful fireworks display. The Westing game is over—and so is Sam Westing. Even if he isn’t dead, Westing knows he must abandon the flawed person he once was and symbolically burn all he earned as a greedy, self-centered union buster to the ground.*



*Turtle at last wins the Westing game by being the only person capable of seeing the tricky connection between Westing’s four aliases—a connection rooted in wordplay, since each name contains one of the four winds (north, east, south, and west). Turtle is proud of the good job she’s done—but she’s not excited about winning the money or earning bragging rights. She just wants to see her friend Sandy again and share with him the excitement of getting to the bottom of his puzzle. Though many of the other heirs have stronger “Westing connections” than Turtle, she has proved herself to be the one with the most profound intellectual connection to the man.*



*For Turtle, winning the Westing game was never about money or bragging rights—it was always about proving to herself her own agency, intelligence, and worth. Her private lessons with Eastman reflect that quiet but intense drive.*



One afternoon, there is a wedding held at Shin Hoo's. The bride walks down the aisle, escorted by Jake, toward the nervous groom and the best man: Mr. Hoo. Angela is a bridesmaid at this wedding—the other bridesmaid is Sydelle. The bride is Crow, and the groom is Otis—Flora has made Crow's dress. The heirs gather in celebration as they toast the happy couple.

Judge Ford moves out of 4D, troubled by the idea of never solving the Westing game but relieved that her debt to Sam Westing is finally paid. The money she has made from the sale of her share of Sunset Towers will go to another young person's education: that of Chris Theodorakis, whose condition is improving every day.

Sydelle Pulaski goes back to work at Schultz Sausages—without her crutches. Now that she is an heiress, she gets plenty of attention at work. One day, Mr. Schultz—her boss of many decades—invites her to a private lunch.

Jake, having given up his private practice, becomes consultant to the governor's inquiry panel for a state lottery. Hoo's On First becomes a great success with Grace Wexler as its new owner—the sports-themed restaurant becomes a local landmark. Angela still has a faint scar on her cheek. She has enrolled in college again and returned her engagement ring to Denton—she has not seen him since Crow's wedding. Angela's life is full between classes, weekly dates with Sydelle, and Sundays volunteering at Otis and Crow's soup kitchen. Turtle, meanwhile, keeps playing the stock market. Crow and Otis move into an apartment above their soup kitchen and, with the money from their inheritance, invest in a building renovation and fresh ingredients which are delivered every day.

## CHAPTER 29

Several years later, Otis arrives at the Hoos' new lakefront home excited to celebrate Doug's recent Olympic victory—all the other heirs are coming, too. Hoo is a wealthy man now thanks to his business, Hoo's Little Foot-Eze. Theo is a cub reporter: he helped contribute to an article covering Doug's Olympic success, as Doug has set a new record for the 1500-meter run. Sunny—as Madame Hoo now likes to be called—welcomes Jake, the chairman of the State Gambling Commission, to her home. Angela and Denton Deere reunite for the first time in years—they are both still unmarried. Sydelle sidles up to them and introduces them to her fiancé, Mr. Schultz, her former boss and the owner of the sausage factory.

*The Westing heirs celebrate a happy occasion together in harmony. Though it's not the wedding any of them planned for, they nonetheless come together in solidarity and gratitude to toast the union of two of their own.*



*Judge Ford's actions demonstrate that, in spite of her complicated feelings about Sam Westing, she has chosen to learn from the positive side of his legacy and pay forward the generosity he showed her in financing her education.*



*Sydelle, like many of the other heirs, at last finds that the game has given her the tools she needs to move more confidently through the world and live life on her own terms.*



*Because of the Westing game and its gifts—financial freedom, sense of community, and lessons in creating a life whose legacy one can be proud of—the 16 Westing heirs go on to do great things with their lives as they take control of their circumstances and seek to better themselves and those around them.*



*By relaying the final chapters of the novel in flash-forward format, Raskin allows her readers to see just how far the heirs have come since the Westing game. Raskin implies that the lessons they learned playing the game and the bonds they forged throughout its duration have shaped their lives into happy, successful ones—lives each of the heirs are at last living on their own terms.*



Chris is still in a wheelchair—but many of his neurological symptoms have completely abated, and he now speaks in full, clear, sentences. He introduces his new girlfriend to Judge Ford, who is now a judge on the United States Circuit Court of Appeals. Chris's new girlfriend tells Ford that the two of them are going on a birdwatching tour of Central America in just a few months.

Grace Wexler now owns a chain of five restaurants: Hoo's On First, Hoo's On Second, and so on, but she caters the afternoon herself. Theo comes up to her and asks who the "attractive young woman" talking to Flora is—Grace is surprised that Theo doesn't recognize the eighteen-year-old Turtle, who now goes by T.R. Wexler. No one knows that earlier that day, T.R. won her first match against her Uncle Sam Westing, the chess master.

*Again, this passage continues to show how the players of the Westing game have grown into themselves and recognized their full potential—in part because of the confidence the game instilled in it and the lessons in community and generosity they learned from it.*



*Everyone has changed, grown, and become more successful than they once were as a result of the bonds they've forged and the lessons they've learned playing the Westing game. T.R., as the game's rightful but unacknowledged victor, has perhaps come the furthest—her apprenticeship with Westing has helped her grow into seemingly an entirely new person.*



## CHAPTER 30

Another handful of years later, Turtle—who now goes by T.R. Wexler—is on the board of the Westing Paper Products Corporation. With a handful of advanced degrees in law and business, T.R. is a multimillionaire who has made a fortune in the stock market. She sits by the bedside of 85-year-old Julian R. Eastman, who tells her that he is nearing the end of his life rapidly. T.R. tells him, addressing him as Sandy, that even if he dies in front of her, she won't believe he's dead.

*This passage makes clear that Sam Westing successfully passed his legacy on. He has instilled in T.R. the playfulness, self-determination, sense of community, and fair business sense that he always wanted for himself but found derailed time and time again by conflict and tragedy. T.R. clearly loves Westing, though she still thinks of him as Sandy—the humble, self-effacing doorman who took care of her and all the other residents of Sunset Towers so well.*



T.R. tells Eastman about the other heirs. Ford is now on the United States Supreme Court. Crow and Otis, she says, still run their soup kitchen—this, however, is a lie. Crow and Otis died two years ago within a week of one another. Sydelle, she says, is married to Schultz and retired in Hawaii. Eastman asks what became of Angela, the **bomber**. She says that Angela is now an orthopedic surgeon. Angela and Denton are married—and now they have a daughter named Alice. T.R. reveals that Flora lives with her; the Theodorakises have retired to Florida; Chris is a professor of ornithology at a nearby university. She also reveals that after winning Olympic gold twice, Doug is now a sports announcer. She does not reveal that Mr. Hoo is dead.

*As T.R. fills Eastman in on the many varied fates of all the heirs, she tries her best to tell him things that will bring him pride and joy. She is careful to leave out the sad losses their little community has suffered—she doesn't want to upset Eastman or ruin his last moments on earth. T.R. wants Eastman to go to his grave hearing only of how he has positively impacted the lives of his "sixteen nieces and nephews."*



Eastman asks about his niece, Gracie Windkloppel. T.R. reveals that Grace now has ten restaurants. Jake, meanwhile, is the state crime commissioner. Eastman asks how T.R.'s husband is—and how his writing is coming along. T.R. reveals that Theo is a novelist who is nearly finished with his second book. If the two of them have a child, she says—leaving out the fact that she and Theo have decided against having children in order to prevent passing down Chris's disease—they will name it Sandy whether it is a boy or a girl. Eastman asks T.R. to tell Crow to pray for him. T.R. feels her mentor's hand grow cold in her grasp. Tomorrow is the Fourth of July.

When Eastman dies, with him die Windy Windkloppel, Sam Westing, Barney Northrup, and Sandy McSouthers. No one ever learns T.R.'s secret—and so a little bit of her dies with him, too. She inherits Eastman's stock and ascends to director of the company. On the Saturday of Eastman's funeral, T.R. hurries from the cemetery to meet her niece, Alice, for a game of chess.

*On his deathbed, Eastman doesn't worry about his business or his financial affairs—he only wants to know about the fates of the people whose lives he touched, and who touched his life while he lived as Sandy the doorman. It is clear that Eastman has learned the lessons he wanted to pass down to the next generation—and that the Westing game was just as important in his life as it was in all the other heirs'.*



*This passage demonstrates how fractured Westing needed to make his identity in order to repair the mistakes of his past. In spite of his flaws—and his many aliases—T.R. came to love him, and now, after his death, she becomes determined to carry on his legacy to the next generation.*





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