

that opened on the parking lot was kept busy serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner to tenants "ordering up" and to workers from nearby Westingtown. ← title (Westing)

Sunset Towers was a quiet, well-run building, and (except for the grumbling Mr. Hoo) the people who lived there seemed content. Neighbor greeted neighbor with "Good morning" or "Good evening" or a friendly smile, and grappled with small problems behind closed doors.

The big problems were yet to come.

3 mos have passed

Now it was the end of October. A cold, raw wind whipped dead leaves about the ankles of the four people grouped in the Sunset Towers driveway, but not one of them shivered. Not yet.

The stocky, broad-shouldered man in the doorman's uniform, standing with feet spread, fists on hips, was Sandy McSouthers. The two slim, trim high-school seniors, shielding their eyes against the stinging chill, were Theo Theodorakis and Doug Hoo. The small, wiry man pointing to the house on the hill was Otis Amber, the sixty-two-year-old delivery boy.

They faced north, gaping like statues cast in the moment of discovery, until Turtle Wexler, her kite tail of a braid flying behind her, raced her bicycle into the driveway. "Look! Look, there's smoke—there's smoke coming from the chimney of the Westing house."

The others had seen it. What did she think they were looking at anyway?

Turtle leaned on the handlebars, panting for breath. (Sunset Towers was near excellent schools, as Barney Northrup had promised, but the junior high was four miles away.) "Do you think—do you think old man Westing's up there?"

"Naw," Otis Amber, the old delivery boy, answered. "Nobody's seen him for years. Supposed to be living on a private island in the South Seas, he is; but most folks say he's dead."

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Long-gone dead. They say his corpse is still up there in that big old house. They say his body is sprawled out on a fancy Oriental rug, and his flesh is rotting off those mean bones, and maggots are creeping in his eye sockets and crawling out his nose holes." The delivery boy added a high-pitched he-he-he to the gruesome details.

Now someone shivered. It was Turtle.

"Serves him right," Sandy said. At other times a cheery fellow, the doorman often complained bitterly about having been fired from his job of twenty years in the Westing paper mill. But somebody must be up there. Somebody alive, that is." He pushed back the gold-braided cap and squinted at the house through his steel-framed glasses as if expecting the curling smoke to write the answer in the autumn air. "Maybe it's those kids again. No, it couldn't be."

"What kids?" the three kids wanted to know.

"Why, those two unfortunate fellas from Westingtown."

"What unfortunate fellas?" The three heads twisted from the doorman to the delivery boy. Doug Hoo ducked Turtle's whizzing braid. Touch her precious pigtail, even by accident, and she'll kick you in the shins, the brat. He couldn't chance an injury to his legs, not with the big meet coming. The track star began to jog in place.

"Horrible, it was horrible," Otis Amber said with a shudder that sent the loose straps of his leather aviator's helmet swinging about his long, thin face. "Come to think of it, it happened exactly one year ago tonight. On Halloween." Is date significant

"What happened?" Theo Theodorakis asked impatiently. He was late for work in the coffee shop.

"Tell them, Otis," Sandy urged.

The delivery boy stroked the gray stubble on his pointed chin. "Seems it all started with a bet; somebody bet them a dollar they couldn't stay in that spooky house five minutes. One measly buck! The poor kids hardly got through those French doors on this side of the Westing house when they came tearing

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