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Dramatic Publishing



THE WESTING GAME



ADAPTED BY DARIAN LINDLE
FROM THE NEWBERY AWARD-WINNING NOVEL
BY ELLEN RASKIN

THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO HOLD ALL THE CLUES
ARE ONE WESTING HEIR AND YOU.

COMMISSIONED BY PRIME STAGE THEATRE, PITTSBURGH, PA.

THE WESTING GAME

Mystery. Adapted by Darian Lindle. From the Newbery Award-winning novel by Ellen Raskin. Cast: 8m., 7w..

The unsuspecting residents of Sunset Towers are summoned to the reading of a mysterious will, only to find themselves locked in a thrilling game, as they must discover who is responsible for killing an eccentric millionaire. "More than a dozen people—who are heirs to the Westing estate, but don't know why—split off into teams of two and try to win the game by solving the mystery ... It's a combination of a mystery novel, a jigsaw puzzle and a game of 'Clue.'" —Wayne Brinda, Prime Stage Theatre, Pittsburgh, Pa.. Through blizzards, bombings and unlikely alliances, the game is on, and the only people who hold all the clues are one Westing heir and you. *Unit set. Approximate running time: two hours. Code: WC6.*

*Cover photo: World premiere production,
Prime Stage Theatre, Pittsburgh, Pa.*

Photo: Connie Brinda. Cover design: Susan Carle.

ISBN-10 1-58342-734-1
ISBN-13 978-1-58342-734-7



9 781583 427347 >

www.dramaticpublishing.com



Dramatic Publishing

311 Washington Street,
Woodstock, IL 60098
Phone: 800-448-7469
815-338-7170



Printed on recycled paper

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DARIAN LINDLE

From the novel by
ELLEN RASKIN



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Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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MM Literary Partners, LLC, 3100 U.S. Hwy. 206,
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ISBN: 978-1-58342-734-7

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The Westing Game was originally commissioned and first produced by Prime Stage Theatre in Pittsburgh, Pa., from May 2 - 10, 2009, with support from American Eagle Outfitters Foundation and the Small Arts Initiative of the Howard Heinz Endowments. Produced by special permission with the Ellen Raskin estate. Artistic director, Wayne Brinda.

The play, presented at The Hazlett Theater, was directed by Terry Brino Dean, with set by Johnmichael Bohach, lighting by JR Shaw, projections by Alex Bard, costumes by Paula Parker and sound by Parag S. Gohel. [The original cast was as follows:](#)

Judge J. J. Ford, Shower Guest	Chrystal Bates
Flora Baumbach, Shower Guest	Sandy Boggs
Otis Amber, Detective, Shower Guest	Steven J. Clemens
Barney Northrup, Sandy McSouthers	David Crawford
Theo Theodorakis, George, Shower Guest	Cameron Crowe
Edward Plum, Dr. Sikes, Shower Guest	John Feightner
Angela Wexler, Violet Westing	Sara Ashley Fisher
Sydelle Pulaski, Shower Guest	Lynne Franks
Chris Theodorakis, Shower Guest	Matt Henderson
Grace Windsor Wexler, Mrs. Westing	Sara Rachel Lamb
Doug Hoo, Shower Guest	Robert Le
Berthe Erica Crow, Shower Guest	Charlotte Sonne
D. Denton Deere, Podcaster, Shower Guest	Vince Ventura
Turtle Wexler.	Morgan Wangler
James Shin Hoo, Shower Guest	Chris Young

THE WESTING GAME

CHARACTERS

ANGELA 20 years old
CHRIS 15 years old, Greek American
CROW 57 years old, Caucasian
DENTON 25 years old
DETECTIVE in his 60s
DOUG 18 years old, Chinese American
EASTMAN in his 60s, Caucasian
FLORA in her 50s
FORD in her mid-40s, African-American.
GRACE in her early 40s
MR. HOO in his late 40s, Chinese American
NORTHRUP in his 60s, Caucasian
OTIS in his 60s
PLUM in his late 20s
PODCASTER in his mid-20s
SANDY in his 60s, Caucasian
SIKES in his 60s
SYDELLE in her 50s
THEO 19 years old, Greek American
TURTLE 13 years old
SHOWER GUESTS

TIME & PLACE: Present time in Westingtown, Wisconsin.

DOUBLING RECOMMENDATIONS

(for a cast of 8m, 7w)

CHRIS / SHOWER GUEST
DENTON / PODCASTER
DOUG / SHOWER GUEST
MR. HOO / SHOWER GUEST
OTIS / DETECTIVE
PLUM / SIKES / SHOWER GUEST
SANDY / NORTHRUP / EASTMAN
THEO / GEORGE / SHOWER GUEST

ANGELA / VIOLET WESTING
CROW / SHOWER GUEST
FLORA / SHOWER GUEST
FORD / SHOWER GUEST
GRACE / MRS. WESTING
SYDELLE / SHOWER GUEST
TURTLE

NOTE: See back of script for expanded character notes.

A NOTE ON THE SET: The chess game is critical to the story. Games are the key... The set needs to be flexible; it must be able to serve as many locations in and around Sunset Towers and the Westing mansion. It should also help tell the story visually as much as possible. Projections are encouraged. The heirs must be represented by images somewhere on the set; by cards in a card game or chess pieces on a board. The floor could be a chessboard.

EXPANDED CHARACTER NOTES"

BARNEY NORTHRUP – A smarmy realtor who convinces most of the Westing heirs to move into Sunset Towers. He oozes charm like a snake-oil salesman."

OTIS AMBER – Sunset Towers' delivery "boy," often thought of as an idiot because of his silly jokes. He delivers mail, packages, and whatever else to the apartment building and environs on his bike."

GRACE WINDSOR WEXLER – A social climber and self-professed decorator. She is the mother of Turtle and Angela. She is unwittingly xenophobic, slightly neurotic and completely self-absorbed. She used to have a softer side but it's been a while since she's shown it."

ANGELA WEXLER – Oldest daughter of Grace; the perfect child, she is soft-spoken, very beautiful, and very good at bottling her anger."

TURTLE WEXLER – The youngest daughter of Grace; a plucky girl with a braid who kicks people's shins in "self-defense." Turtle is smart, aggressive, slightly neglected and a stock-market whiz."

SYDELLE PULASKI – Secretary to the president of Schultz Sausages. Sydelle is hungry for attention and admiration; she has no close friends."

MR. JAMES SHIN HOO – Doug's father and owner of Shin Hoo's Restaurant on the fifth floor of Sunset Towers. His restaurant is failing. He is a disgruntled inventor who is so tightly wound he has given himself an ulcer. A widower, his son's academic and financial success is supremely important to him."

DOUG HOO – Son of James Shin Hoo. Doug is a high-school track star with Olympic dreams, smart but not a scholar. He has a winning smile and an ability to make everyone like him."

FLORA MILLER BAUMBACH – She's a timid dress-maker whose daughter Rosalie died a year before the story begins. Flora always has a kind word for everyone and speaks softly so as not to inconvenience anyone. She smiles too much."

JUDGE J. J. FORD – A judge on the appellate court; she has a grudge against the Westing millionaire. She's tough, but fair—just what you'd expect a judge to be."CHRIS THEODORAKIS – Younger brother of Theo; he suffers from a neurological disease that confines him to a wheelchair. He is also barely able to speak or control his body movements. He enjoys birdwatching and is lonely for company."

THEO THEODORAKIS – He is his brother's guardian."

Theo wants to be a writer but has no time or money for" study. He is a thoughtful, sensi tive and sometimes an gry young man."

BERTHE ERICA CROW – Sunset Towers' maid and a"

Good Salvation Soup Kitchen volunteer. She dresses ex -"clusively in black as if in permanent mourning. Crow is"obsessed with sin and its penalties."

D. DENTON DEERE – A medi cal intern engaged to"

Angela Wexler. He can be egotis tical and has gone into" plastic surgery for the money—not the love of medi cine. But he is a good guy underneath...deep, deep un der-"heath."

SANDY MCSOUTHERS – He is the doorman at Sunset"

Towers and is everyone's pal. He has a grudge against" Westing and a large family to support."

PODCASTER – A no-nonsense news professional."

EDWARD PLUM – A very inexperienced lawyer who

just passed the bar. He was hand selected by Westing as ex-"ecutor of the Westing will. He is competent but not very confident. He is alternately theat rical, hysteri cal and"bumbling."

SAM WESTING – A corpse dressed like Uncle Sam."

DETECTIVE – A gruff fellow; hired to find out the skinny on the Westing heirs."

DR. SIDNEY SIKES – The personal physician, old friend and confidant of Sam Westing. He suffered a crushed leg from the car accident he was in with Westing and has a permanent limp. He was a witness to the Westing will."

JULIAN R. EASTMAN – Newly elected chairman and CEO of the Westing Paper Products Corporation. He takes control after the death of Sam Westing. He is well-manicured and impeccably dressed."

ACT ONE

(Projections are mentioned throughout the script. They are suggested for use when presenting to younger audiences but are not required. The opening projections are newspaper clippings. [Alternately the projections can be assigned to actors and spoken as though being read aloud from a newspaper. The character names in parentheses below are suggested for that purpose.])

PROJECTIONS: “SAM WESTING FOUND DEAD!”

(THEO)

“Industrialist’s Will Found: Leaves Behind \$200 Million” (FORD)

“14 Strangers Named in Millionaire’s Will”

(ANGELA)

“Westing’s Life Taken by Heir; Will Accuses”

(FLORA)

“Foul Play Suspected in Paper Baron’s Death!”

(OTIS)

(Some sort of dramatic musical flourish. Sunset Towers is revealed. The heirs enter:)

TURTLE. It all began with Sunset Towers.

THEO. The sun sets in the west—

GRACE. Just about everyone knows that.

MR. HOO. But Sunset Towers faces east.

SYDELLE. Strange!

FORD. Sunset Towers faces east and has no towers.

PROJECTION: “Two months ago...”

(BARNEY NORTHRUP enters; OTIS AMBER delivers LETTERS to the heirs. As NORTHRUP speaks to each family their cards light up.)

NORTHRUP. Here it is, folks—the apartment you’ve always dreamed of, at a rent you can afford, in the newest, most luxurious building on Lake Michigan. You have to see it to believe it. These unbelievably elegant apartments will be shown by appointment only. Hurry now; there are only a few left! *(He shows the WEXLERS around an apartment.)* I’m glad you got my letter, Mrs. Wexler. I’m Barney Northrup. Now, you’re in luck, there’s one apartment left but you’ll love it. It was meant for you.

TURTLE *(looking up from her phone)*. Who does that house belong to? It looks haunted.

NORTHRUP. Why, that’s the Westing mansion, little girl, it’s been empty these thirteen years. *(To GRACE.)* Sunset Towers is a historical landmark. And despite all this luxury the rent here is cheaper than what your old house costs in upkeep.

ANGELA. How would he know that?

GRACE. It’s perfect. We’ll take it!

(They shake hands.)

NORTHRUP (*to SYDELLE PULASKI*). You're in luck, Ms. Pulaski. I've only got one apartment left but you'll love it. It was meant for you. (*He indicates the apartment interior.*) Now is that breathtaking, or is that breathtaking?

SYDELLE. Not especially.

NORTHRUP. I have twenty people begging for this apartment. Take it or leave it?

SYDELLE. I'll take it.

(SYDELLE shakes hands with NORTHRUP. The HOOS, FLORA BAUMBACH, JUDGE FORD and the THEODORAKISES are schmoozed by NORTHRUP. He moves them through like they're on a conveyor belt.)

NORTHRUP (*to the HOOS*). Now, Mr. Hoo, Sunset Towers offers the ideal space for an elegant restaurant on the top floor! See those chandeliers? Crystal!

MR. HOO. I'll take it. (*He shakes hands with NORTHRUP.*)

NORTHRUP (*to FLORA*). Look out that window, Ms. Baumbach, a lake view.

FLORA. It's lovely. (*She smiles warmly and shakes NORTHRUP's hand.*)

NORTHRUP (*to JUDGE FORD*). How about this carpeting, Judge? Three inches thick!

FORD. It will do nicely.

(FORD shakes hands with him. THEO and CHRIS enter. THEO pushes CHRIS in a wheelchair.)

NORTHROP. Ah, the Theodorakis brothers—all floors are handicap accessible. Plus, the floor-to-ceiling windows provide a great opportunity for birdwatching. (*He gives CHRIS a pair of binoculars.*)

CHRIS. Th-thanks.

(*NORTHROP and the THEODORAKISES shake hands. CROW enters.*)

NORTHROP. You're late, Mrs. Crow. The maid's apartment is on the fourth floor. The back hallway needs to be vacuumed. Get moving.

CROW. Yes, Mr. Northrup.

NORTHROP. All the apartments rented in one day, ha! I've still got the knack for it.

TURTLE. Hey look, our names are already on the mailboxes.

ANGELA. That's not so strange.

TURTLE. But they're engraved.

NORTHROP (*the lights on the cards start to alternate*).
And who are these people, these specially selected tenants of Sunset Towers?

GRACE. We are mothers

MR. HOO. And fathers

ANGELA. And children.

FLORA. A dressmaker.

SYDELLE. A secretary.

FORD. A judge.

(*Lights dim and focus on NORTHROP.*)

NORTHRUP. But that's not all: one is a private eye, one is a bomber and one is (*clears throat*) a mistake.

CROW. We all have our secrets.

TURTLE. Can you figure out who will win it all in the Westing Game?

(Lights out, only the cards remain lit for a moment and then they go out too.)

PROJECTION: *"Two months later, on Halloween..."*

(CHRIS sits in his wheelchair and looks out the window through binoculars.)

CHRIS. W-wow. A r-redheaded w-woodp-pecker, M-melanerpes Er-rythrocephalus. (*He sees a mysterious figure [DR. SIKES] limp across the stage toward the Westing mansion.*) S-someone limps!

(THEO and OTIS gather in the parking lot. DOUG finishes his jog and joins them. OTIS points to the Westing house. Smoke curls ominously from its chimney [we don't necessarily have to see this.]

SYDELLE crosses the stage carrying a large and unwieldy package shaped like a CRUTCH. She tries to look inconspicuous and in the process draws a great deal of attention to herself. The men snicker as she passes. OTIS is particularly obnoxious about it.

SANDY enters.)

DOUG. Morning, Sandy. How's the doorman business?

SANDY. Oh, it's fascinatin'. People go in, people go out; I hold the door. How about your Pop's new restaurant?

DOUG. He's in a rage. Only three people came to the opening. He made me skip track practice twice last week to hand out flyers.

(TURTLE, dressed as a witch for Halloween, runs over to them.)

TURTLE. Look! Look! There's smoke! There's smoke coming from the chimney of the Westing house!

DOUG *(to OTIS, sotto voce)*. What does she think we were looking at anyway?

OTIS. Ix-nay, you don't want an ick-kay in the in-shay from the omboy-tay.

(TURTLE kicks OTIS in the shin.)

TURTLE. Sandy, do you think old Mr. Westing's up there?

SANDY. Naw. Nobody's seen him for years. Supposed to be living on a private island in the South Seas; but most folks say he's dead. Long gone dead.

OTIS. They say his corpse is still up there. His body sprawled out on a fancy Oriental rug and there're maggots creeping in his eye sockets and crawling out his nose holes. *(He laughs a high-pitched he-he-he.)*

(TURTLE shivers. DOUG rolls his eyes and begins to stretch.)

SANDY. But somebody must be up there. Maybe it's those kids again.

TURTLE. What kids, Sandy?

SANDY. Come to think of it, it happened exactly one year ago tonight. On Halloween.

THEO. What happened?

OTIS. Seems it all started with a bet; somebody bet this young fella a dollar he couldn't stay in that spooky house for five minutes. One measly buck! He weren't hardly in the house a minute when he came tearing out like he was being chased by a ghost—or worse. And now... (*Shivers.*)

TURTLE. What happened to him?

SANDY. He sits up in the state asylum saying, "Purple waves, purple waves" over and over again, just staring at his hands. You see, when he came out of the Westing house, his hands was dripping with warm, red blood. And nobody from town has been up to that house ever since.

OTIS. Poor kid, all that pain and suffering for a dollar bet.

TURTLE. Make it two dollars for each minute I stay in there, and you're on.

THEO. Yeah right.

DOUG. You'll chicken out.

TURTLE. I will not, Doug Hoo. Turtle Wexler has never chickened out of anything.

SANDY. I'll take that bet. Anybody else?

OTIS. Sure.

DOUG. I guess.

THEO. Fine.

SANDY. We need a timekeeper to wait outside the house. I can't do it; my family expects me home.

OTIS. There ain't no way I'm hauling my bum up there in the middle of the night.

DOUG. I'll do it. We'll meet here at midnight, all right, kid?

TURTLE. I'm not a kid, Doug Hoo, and you better be ready to spend a long night waiting.

THEO (*glances at his watch*). Aw, man. I gotta go. I'm late making my brother his dinner.

DOUG. And I've got to finish my workout. See you to-night.

(Everyone exits except TURTLE and DOUG. TURTLE addresses the audience. DOUG continues his jogging.)

TURTLE. And that's how it began—with a dare and a bet. Doug and I went about our day, doing chores and homework, little knowing that that Halloween night would change all of our lives forever.

(The scene shifts to the WEXLER apartment. ANGELA WEXLER is standing on a chair. She is in her wedding dress, the bottom of which is being pinned by FLORA. GRACE stands nearby and directs the activities.)

FLORA. Turn, dear.

ANGELA. Oh.

GRACE. Please be careful, Mrs. Baumbach; Angela has very delicate skin.

ANGELA. No, I was just surprised to see smoke coming from the Westing chimney.

TURTLE (*rushing in*). Mom, can you re-braid my hair for me before tonight?

GRACE (*startled*). Turtle! Must you burst into the room like that? Can't you see we're busy? (*She looks at TURTLE for the first time.*) Why must you wear that silly costume, Turtle? Thirteen is too old for that sort of thing. (*Exasperated.*) I don't know why you insist on making yourself so ugly.

TURTLE. It's no sillier than a wedding dress. Besides nobody gets married anymore, and if they do, they don't wear silly wedding dresses. And who would want to marry that stuck-up, know-it-all, marshmallow-face Dr. Denton—

GRACE. —Turtle! (*To FLORA.*) Denton Deere is a brilliant young man. When Angela is married she'll become Angela Deere.

FLORA. How precious that sounds.

(*TURTLE gives an exasperated sigh and rolls her eyes.*)

GRACE. Turtle, just go to your room and work on your stock market reports or whatever you do in there.

ANGELA. I'll braid your hair as soon as I'm done here, Turtle.

GRACE (*looking at ANGELA*). What an angel.

(*Lights up on the opposite side of the stage; MR. HOO is talking with DOUG.*)

MR. HOO. What do you mean his corpse is rotting on an "Oriental rug"? Is it some kind of Persian rug? Or maybe a Chinese rug? And why were you wasting precious time listening to an over-aged delivery boy with an

overactive imagination when you should have been studying? (*DOUG shrugs.*) Don't shrug at me, go study. DOUG. Sure, Dad. (*MR. HOO leaves.*) Go study. Go study. (*DOUG starts to exercise—sit-ups?*) Only there's no school tomorrow, just practice. Jeez. Two...three... four...five...

(He continues exercising while the scene shifts to the THEODORAKIS apartment. CHRIS looks out the window with binoculars. THEO enters. CHRIS gets excited to tell THEO what he saw.)

CHRIS. I saw someb-b-b...

(One of his arms shoots out and twists up over his head. THEO helps CHRIS untangle himself. As THEO tells the story it becomes clear that he is good at it.)

THEO. Listen, Chris, I'll tell you about the haunted castle on the hill. Somebody is up there, but nobody is there, just rich Mr. Westing, and he's dead. Dead as a squashed June bug and rotting away on a moth-eaten Oriental rug. (*CHRIS starts to laugh, then realizes he is supposed to be frightened.*) And high above the putrid corpse a crystal chandelier is tinkling. It tinkles and twinkles, but not one breath of air stirs in that gloomy tomb of a room.

CHRIS (*smiling*). You will b-be grrrt wrrriter smmbday.

THEO. Thanks, man. Come hang out with me in the kitchen while I get dinner ready.