



House and Holmes: A Guide to Deductive and Inductive Reasoning

Student Handout #2: **Salon 5-Minute Mystery, "Where There's A Will..."**

By Margaret Lucke

"Glad you could make it, Jess." Stuart Weingarten ushered me into his office. "This is a strange situation. I could use a little investigative help."

I slid into Stuart's guest chair. He perched on the edge of his glossy rosewood desk. Bookshelves behind him held fat volumes of the California legal code. A wall was covered with items in frames: Stuart's law school diploma, photos showing him posing with various prominent San Franciscans. In the center was a semi-abstract painting signed "Jess Randolph." I smiled, pleased that he still had it hanging there. Painting is my true love; my work as a private investigator supports my art habit.

"A criminal case?" I asked.

"No," Stuart said. "I'm the executor of a client's estate. You've heard of Dieter Wolfram Radebaugh?"

"Of course. Known as D.W. He owned half the city. Died last week of a heart attack."

"Right. He'd been in ill health for a long time." Stuart handed me a newspaper clipping. "Did you see this Chronicle story?"

The article was topped with a 40-year-old photo of Radebaugh holding a chubby baby: sweet smile, fat little cheeks, a birthmark over its eye, a halo of pale ringlets. A more recent picture showed the real-estate magnate on his yacht, the sun full in his face.

"It says there's a son and a missing daughter."

"Yes," Stuart said. "The son is Clifford Radebaugh, age 50. D.W.'s first wife died when Clifford was five. But there was another brief marriage, which produced a daughter, Lisa. That baby in the picture -- she'd be 40 now. The second wife, Suzette, felt D.W. mistreated her and ran away, taking the infant. She changed her name and the child's, and D.W. never saw them again. Originally his will left a little to nonprofit groups, a small bequest to the nurse who took care of him and the bulk of the estate to his son

Clifford. But right before D.W. died he made a new will." Stuart tapped his finger on a document on his desk. "It splits the family share between Clifford and the daughter."

"So you want me to find the daughter," I said.

"Not exactly. Clifford found her -- or thinks he did. A woman calling herself Elaine Jarrett. But now there are two more claimants -- Angela Ewing and Sheryl Greene. With all the publicity and millions at stake, more 'daughters' may appear."

"Must have upset Clifford to discover he's not the sole heir."

"He insisted he was delighted when Elaine showed up. Now, though, with these new claimants ... he doesn't know what to think. I need you to check the women out, help me determine who has the valid claim."

"If any of them do."

"Exactly." He handed me a file folder. "Here are names, addresses, everything you'll need."

I decided to begin with Clifford Radebaugh, who had already moved into his father's Pacific Heights mansion.

A 40-ish woman let me in. Her blond hair was clipped sensibly short; her azure eyes looked kind behind wire-rimmed glasses. I wondered if she was one of the would-be Lisas. But she introduced herself as Julie Brickwood, the nurse/secretary who had cared for D.W. and handled his business affairs during his final weeks.

"I'm helping Clifford sort things out," she explained. "He's not here now though. He'll be back this evening."

I described my mission. "You knew D.W. well at the end of his life. Could you give me your impressions of all this?"

"Sure, come on back. I'll fix us a cup of coffee while we talk."

Julie led me to a kitchen that was larger than the flat I lived in. There was a vase of wilted flowers on the counter and copies of the Racing Form on the oval oak table. She made a face and swept the papers off onto a chair. "These are Clifford's," she said. "Like father, like son."

"I didn't know D.W. played the horses," I said.

"Sure. That's why ... that's how his fortune got started. He always lost early on. But 30 years ago he came up with a system and won huge amounts. Clifford doesn't take after him that way. Still a big loser."

I poured cream into my coffee. "Have you met any of the three supposed Lisas?"

"All of them. But none of them are legit."

"Why do you think so?" I asked.

"Just a hunch. When I first came to work for D.W., he was extremely bitter about Lisa and her mother. I finally convinced him he shouldn't take hatred to his grave. Thank God he managed to put Lisa in his will before he died so suddenly. He'd have been shocked at the commotion that's erupted."

"Died suddenly?" I said. "I thought he'd been ill for a long time."

"He had a heart problem but the digitalis was keeping it under control. I was sure he had another year left at least." Tears welled in Julie's eyes. Embarrassed, she wiped them away, masking the gesture by rubbing at a scar over her brow. "God called him sooner than I expected. If only I hadn't gone to visit friends that weekend. But Clifford and Elaine were here. At least he didn't die alone." I comforted Julie as best I could, and told her I'd return later to see Clifford.

My next stop was the bar of the Fiesta Hotel, where Lisa One had agreed to meet me at four o'clock. At precisely that hour, a woman in a business suit bustled up the table where I was waiting.

"Angela Ewing?" I asked.

She corrected me: "From now on I'm Lisa Radebaugh. I'm reclaiming my true identity."

Angela was thin and sleek and carefully made up. Only an occasional gray thread in her raven-black tresses made her look old enough to be Lisa Radebaugh. The V-neck of her silk blouse revealed a gold chain with a heart-shaped locket that looked like an antique. Angela unclasped her necklace and handed it to me. "Here's my proof," she said. "My father's picture in my mother's treasured locket."

I opened the heart and saw a black and white photo, a close-up of a man's face. The eyes were squinting and the picture was poor and grainy, broken up into tiny dots. But the familiar image was clearly D.W. Radebaugh.

"He hit her," Angela said. "Mother wouldn't take that, so she left. She never forgave him, but she never forgot him either. She wore this every day for the rest of her life."

I asked some questions, made notes in my sketchbook and moved on to Bayside Print and Graphics, where Lisa Two was employed. I asked the kid behind the counter for Sheryl Greene.

"Yeah, she works here," he confirmed. "But she just left. Run and you'll catch her."

I dashed out onto the sidewalk yelling "Sheryl!"

A woman turned around -- a redhead like me, but freckled and faded-looking. She was wearing jeans and an oxford-cloth shirt with fraying cuffs and an ink-stained collar. A canvas backpack was slung from her shoulder.

"You calling me?" She appeared tense, worried.

I introduced myself and explained why I was there.

"I'm the real Lisa Radebaugh," she assured me. "Mom renamed me Sheryl when she left my jerk of a father. She caught him in bed with other women a few times too many. But I'm Lisa. Here, I'll show you." Sheryl rummaged through her backpack and pulled out a much-creased wad of paper.

"There. My birth certificate."

I unfolded the wad. The certificate used a fancy font to proclaim that Lisa Radebaugh had been born in San Francisco on February 6, 1957, to Suzette and Dexter Wolfgang Radebaugh. Female child, Caucasian race, attending physician's name.

"You can't ask for more than this," she said. "That lawyer better get the estate settled soon. I need the money."

That evening I returned to the Radebaugh mansion. The door was opened by a tall man who was beginning to pudge around the middle. His fair hair was thinning; what remained was half gold, half silver. He regarded me with piercing blue eyes. I introduced myself.

"Weingarten's detective," he said. "I don't know why Stuart insists on making such a fuss. I'm satisfied I've found my sister." He smiled looking over my shoulder. "Here she comes now." I turned to see a woman climbing the wide stone steps. Her arms were laden with sprays of pink gladiolus, purple foxglove and white snapdragons.

"Who's this, Cliffie?" she asked.

Clifford said, "Jess Randolph, this is Elaine Jarrett. Soon to be known as Lisa Radebaugh." He took the flowers from her and she gave him a sisterly kiss.

"Very pretty," I said, nodding at the bouquet.

"They're from my garden, to replace the ones I brought that week."

Elaine linked her arm in Clifford's. "Cliffie, I thought we'd give this batch to that sweet nurse."

She looked somewhat like him -- sapphire eyes, fair hair that tumbled to her shoulders. But Stuart would require better proof than a family resemblance. I said as much.

"Elaine has proof," Clifford assured me. "Sweetheart, show Jess the letter."

Lisa Three teetered into the house on spike heels. She returned with a little scroll tied in pink ribbon. "Read this, honey," she said in a throaty voice.

I undid the ribbon and unrolled the sheet of paper. It was a photocopy of a letter dated November 12, 1957, addressed to "Darling Dieter" and signed, "Yours forever, Suzy." In it she professed undying love. "But you are ruining yourself with drink. You know the shame my parents' drinking brought upon me as a child. I cannot let our precious daughter endure that horrid fate, so I am taking her away."

"D.W. was an alcoholic?" I asked.

"After receiving that letter, he never touched another drop," Clifford said. "I still remember the rampage Dad went on when it arrived. He poured all his liquor down the drain, smashed the bottles and burned the letter in the fireplace." He put his arm around Elaine. "Good thing your mother made a copy before she mailed it."

"Yeah, that was lucky." Elaine tilted her head against his shoulder.

"What a tumult this week has been," Clifford said, pulling her closer.

"My father dies, but then, thanks to the news reports, my sister turns up to fill the void."

I expressed sympathy for his loss and pleasure for his good fortune.

When I left them, I went straight to Stuart's office, knowing he planned to work late.

"How'd it go?" the lawyer asked.

"I found the real Lisa Radebaugh," I told him. "And you'd better call the police. I also found a murder."