



House and Holmes: A Guide to Deductive and Inductive Reasoning

Teacher Handout #4: **Solutions to 5-Minute Mysteries**

Where There's A Will...

Lisa Radebaugh studied the painting on Stuart Weingarten's office wall and made several perceptive, admiring comments that brought pleasure to the artist -- me. I could have continued listening all day. But Stuart called us back to the business at hand -- settling D.W. Radebaugh's estate. We sat in the leather chairs facing his desk, and he poured out three glasses of champagne to mark the successful resolution of the case of too many Lisas.

"Should we call you Lisa or Julie?" Stuart asked.

"I'm used to Julie." She smiled. "I can't thank you two enough. My only regret is that D.W. will never know. I'd been building up to telling him I was his daughter, but I hadn't found the courage."

Stuart said, "I'm sure he would have been pleased to find out you were his daughter."

"Jess, how did you know the false Lisas were lying?" Julie asked.

"It wasn't hard," I said. "The picture in Angela's locket had tiny dots from a half-tone screen. It had obviously been clipped from the newspaper." I showed her the Chronicle clipping. She stared at herself as a baby, at the father she'd only recently come to know. I continued, "Sheryl faked her birth certificate on a computer at work and got too extravagant with her fancy fonts. Forty years ago they had to type the information in. What's worse, she got D.W.'s name wrong."

"But Elaine -- Clifford vouched for her letter."

I explained, "A 40-year-old photocopy, they said. But copiers weren't in use back then -- that was the era of carbon paper and mimeograph machines. Because Clifford supported Elaine's story, I knew they were in league to commit fraud."

Stuart said, "Clifford needed money for his gambling debts. He'd been pressing for an advance on his inheritance. When he learned he'd be giving up half his expected wealth, he recruited his girlfriend to become his 'sister.'"

"And his partner in crime." Julie sighed. "I thought they must have poisoned D.W. somehow. But with no proof, I was afraid to come forward. I'd be the prime suspect -- the daughter who appears out of nowhere and convinces a confused old man to change his will. Who'd believe my word over Clifford's?"

"Almost anyone," Stuart said.

"Elaine's bouquet cinched it for me," I said. "She'd brought flowers when she and Clifford stayed with D.W. the weekend he died -- although Clifford told me he'd met her after his father died."

"What did the flowers have to do with it?" Julie asked.

"The foxglove," I said. "Also known as digitalis. Medicinal or toxic depending on the dose. It brings on what looks like a heart attack. No one would suspect foul play when the victim is old and ill."

"But you did, and I'm glad." Julie lifted her champagne glass. "A toast to Jess."

"Where there's a will, she finds a way," Stuart said as we clinked our glasses.

The Menagerie Murder

It was the benzene that pointed J.J. Legendre in the direction of the killer. The ultra-toxic chemical, now known to be a carcinogen, was still in wide use in the '60s by artists preparing their work for reproduction or presentation. Since there was so little time between Vanessa Taylor's announcement and her departure for the party, the killer had to find a poisonous substitute for the actress' medicine quickly. Therefore, it had to be something readily available.

Both J.J. and Officer Joe Bordelon agreed, Vanessa Taylor did name her murderer. But the "Laura" she blamed was not her assistant, Laura LeBlanc. Instead, it was the actress (and commercial artist) Jeanine Chenovet who portrayed her stage daughter, "Laura Wingfield," in the Tennessee Williams play. As was pointed out, Taylor had trouble remembering the real names of the cast members. She further complicated the issue by trying to be more specific, by mumbling what J.J. initially thought to be "The heroin did it." In fact, she was saying, "The (play's) heroine did it."

The Fragment of Serpentine Marble

Rosencreutz and Flowers acted together, as Rosencreutz revealed by his careless reference to "measurements," the secret aspect of Di Stephano's research that would shortly guarantee him the permit to excavate the tomb -- and shut out Rosencreutz. Only Flowers could have supplied this information. Flowers agreed to help Rosencreutz by actually killing Di Stephano in exchange for a chance to join the Stanford team. He had met Jason Craig when they had been students together at Stanford, and he pocketed a used syringe from Craig's trash.

