

## **The October Surprise**

**by H. W. Moss**

Melody Parker entered the living room from the kitchen, felt the baby kick so hard she had to grab hold of the door frame. Her mother witnessed this, saw Melody's hand pressed palm to stomach, saw Melody's face pale, and became concerned.

"Want to sit down, Precious?" Jane smoothed a pillow lying next to her on the couch. "Here, right here, come on, sit next to me."

Melody wobbled over and fell with relief into the soft cushions. Jane put out her cigarette.

"That's better, Precious. You have to take care now. He could come out at any time."

At that exact moment a flood of clear liquid gushed from between Melody's legs and she cried, "Ohmigod! I think he's coming now."

Jane leaped to her feet and grabbed the telephone from the low table in front of her. She frantically dialed 911 saying to her daughter, "Just sit there Precious. I'm calling an ambulance." Into the mouthpiece she gave her name and address, asked, then demanded paramedics get there immediately. But before they could arrive, the baby was born.

The widow mumbled incantations, practiced her peculiar brand of Catholic voodoo over what the paramedics who finally arrived said resembled a Santeria ritual birth as Milo Parker came kicking and screaming into the world. It was a messy beginning which left a stain on the living room carpet. As a toddler, Milo would point this out to any

visitor and say proudly, “That’s where I was born.” Melody never denied, always confirmed this.

Melody’s mother was her father’s second, much younger wife. Both marriages produced a litter of three. Melody was the sixth, born when her father was 60.

As the last child, Melody was never disciplined. She was her mother’s favorite, made in her image Jane used to remark, and by then the father was just not the authoritarian figure he once had been. As a result, Melody rebelled. At 14 she ran away from home and nine months later gave away the first child she had out of wedlock. Although all five of her siblings received college degrees, Melody never graduated high school, had no marketable skills other than her good looks and a nice figure. By the time Milo was born Melody was 17 and had a new boyfriend who was not Milo’s biological father.

Melody lived with Jane who scratched out an existence at a local coffee shop and had a three pack a day habit. They never asked for or received social welfare benefits. Melody held a series of low paying service jobs as a seamstress, a cake maker, a beautician until she was old enough to work bars as a cocktail waitress. She raised Milo with Jane until her mother died thirteen years after Milo came into the world.

“Smoked herself to death,” Melody explained to her sister. The condo was sold and the money divided among Jane’s three children. But there was an entirely other family Melody was a member of: Her father’s offspring by his first wife.

As Milo grew, Melody allowed her half brothers, unmarried with no children of their own who were much older, successful and lived on the West Coast, to pamper Milo. After all, she turned them into uncles over night. They referred to Milo as “The October

Surprise” and every summer took him sailing on the Pacific which was 1,591 miles to the left of where he was born.

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Guests at the memorial service were greeted with a shot of Irish whisky in a small cup which they were encouraged to down in one go. It was ten in the morning on a Friday and among the three hundred mourners a few intended to return to work at some point in the day. Ah, but what the heck, a toast to Steve whose life turned out to be important to so many.

The two sisters and three brothers were told they would share the estate which was substantial. Steve had against all odds founded a publishing empire. They were sad for their loss, but a twenty-year old will named them and Steve’s step-mother, Jane, who had pre-deceased him. So, by California law, the executor apportioned the estate not in fifths but in sixths and one of those sixths was divided among Jane’s three surviving children.

No medical examination could adequately explain why Steve’s great big beautiful generous heart stopped, but it did. He was 56.

The five were grateful for having won the lottery. However, near the end of the farewell ceremony it was clear they were not going to agree on much of anything. An undertow of resentment, one against the other, threatened to suck outsiders beneath the surface if they got too close. Which no one could, of course, because each sibling had an ego the size of a jumbo jet. None was able to share a room with another, let alone see their point of view. They even argued over who felt the greater loss.

Melody and Milo sat together in the front row close beside her half brother, Milo’s uncle Marcus, who took the stage first. Next, the military brother rose, was stoic and shed

no tears as he recounted tales about Steve. Jane's other daughter, Marjorie, was able to make wise observations about Steve from the dais while the oldest of the surviving five was inconsolable and unable to speak in front of the gathering.

"Get away from me. I'm not talking to you," Marcus told Todd when he was sure he would not be overheard by any of the black arm-banded friends of their deceased brother.

Todd replied, "You think your grief is larger than mine? I just wish you and I were close enough to be estranged."

The two had not gotten along for nearly thirty years, not since they traveled to Ireland together to visit their mother's family. The bitter rivalry was goaded into existence some time in childhood and its flames abated only with distance: One lived in the north of the state, one in the south.

Words of praise flowed from the podium while words of acrimony flowed between the surviving family members.

"You're an ignoramus!" Todd hissed. "That means not only are you stupid, you're an asshole!"

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"Honestly, Brian, I don't know why he isn't talking to me. He won't talk to me to tell me why he isn't talking to me." There was no hidden irony in Todd Parker's observation. The absurdity of this position was clearly part of his story.

Brian swirled the wine in his glass, sniffed, tasted and sat back to savor the flavor of the zinfandel. "It's about money," he opined. "Isn't it always in a family? About money. Your brother's estate."

Brian was in town for a week of instruction orchestrated by his employer, a huge internet equipment manufacturer. Todd whined about his family problems, bending Brian's ear over the situation that had evolved between himself and his brother.

"I don't try and anthropomorphize him." After an appropriate pause to see Brian's reaction, Todd added, "I got that from a New Yorker cartoon."

Brian enjoyed his Thai shish kabob and sticky rice. Between mouthfuls he observed, "It's always better to argue. At least that's a form of communication."

"Yah, well, both of my brothers are examples of the good die young."

Brian dipped his appetizer into a peanut sauce and nodded in sympathy. "That's clever. One for doing just that, the other for not doing that."

"And I used to enjoy Marcus' company. He has a few good traits. Used to introduce me as, 'This is my brother, Todd. He lives in San Francisco, but he likes girls.'"

Brian chuckled.

"So this week I found out Freddy sided with Marcus who brought suit against the estate's proposal to sell Steve's interest to the current managing partners of the newspapers. Their suit also tries to keep me from retaining ten percent. You see, I don't want to sell, I want to keep my share. They don't want me to do that."

"Why? What the hell difference would that make to them if you sell or not?"

"Well, if they were talking to me, maybe I could find out. But they're not, remember? Then Fred wrote an email telling Melody, Marjorie and me to throw away his address, phone number, any method of contact because he is cutting us off over the issue

of a storage container filled with personal papers and possibly copyrighted material. Absolutely nothing of value. Just their egos grinding away.”

Brian seemed surprised. “Nothing of value and they’re angry about it? That doesn’t make any sense.”

Todd said, “You’re right. It makes no sense. But that doesn’t stop Marcus. Fred’s joined with him, become as a piece of flint which brooks no other stone, is roughly sharpened but never honed. However, I must keep in mind: flint was by-passed centuries ago as tool of choice for anything.”

“Poetic. Now eat your pad thai. It’s getting cold.”

“Right. Enjoy the food, enjoy the music, enjoy life while you can.”

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The initial players were Pauline and Conny, but the number who knew quickly increased.

Pauline raced past the patrons lining the bar and rushed with her arms full into the back room where customers are not supposed to enter. “Empleados Unicamente” was written in large red letters along with a translation.

The gate-type door was painted a gloss black with horizontal bars, cross members and a thick wire mesh screen. The door was never locked and you could see through it if you hooded your eyes with your hand and stood nose to screen mesh. The manager often lurked just inside, his figure hidden in the dark behind the door, able to see out but no one could see him, watching the bartenders to be sure they were charging for drinks, not pocketing the money, not pouring so heavy that all the bar’s profits walked out the door at closing. Lining the walls in the store room were stacks of beer kegs and a refrigerator

full of what a bar rack holds -- tiny pickled white onions, olives and bright red Maraschino cherries.

Pauline set something down on the cement floor, hurriedly backed out pulling the door closed behind her. She turned to Conny who was carrying a tumbler full of liquid. It turned out to be water and you could see that Conny was flustered.

Conny put the water glass on the floor inside the dark room and the two women conferred briefly. Todd saw this sequence of events and his curiosity was piqued. When Pauline went to the front of the bar wearing a look of apprehension on her face, he walked over to Conny who was the worse off of the two. She was nervous as hell. She could not stand still, had a cigarette out even though you were not allowed to light up inside the building. She fumbled, dropped it, picked it up off the floor, shifted it half heartedly from hand to hand as Todd came near and asked, "What's going on?"

"It's that obvious, hunh?"

"Oh, yah. Want to tell me? I'm curious what's behind that door."

Conny was not afraid to tell him. In fact, she and Pauline would involve quite a few patrons in the next hour explaining they had just hidden a six month old puppy in there.

"Pauline took it from a homeless person on the street who was abusing it."

The full story went something like this: Pauline is a dog person. In fact, she built a neighborhood business of dog walking and did quite well for herself. She now complains about how much she pays in taxes and has hired a number of the bar's customers to perform this duty, dog walking, when she has her hands full, as it were. As Pauline was coming to the bar tonight, she saw this puppy running free although he was wearing a collar and a leash. She realized the animal was thirsty, although how one can tell a dog is

thirsty simply from watching it on the street was beyond Todd. Somehow she also figured out who the owner was. He was among a nearby group of street people although Pauline insisted they were homeless.

There is a difference between “street people” and “homeless people” even if the distinction seems moot or minor.

When the owner was not paying attention, Pauline simply grabbed the leash and walked away.

After that, the women put the animal safely behind bars, in the dark sanctuary of the storage room, and started looking for a way out of the situation, preferably the back door. Unfortunately, the lot was land locked with an exit that went nowhere. Unless she hopped fences with the dog, Pauline would not be able to get home.

Todd heard Conny tell Pauline as she returned, “He’s drinking like crazy.” So the dog was thirsty after all.

At this point Conny’s boyfriend was brought into the conversation. Todd did not know if Dave had been briefed before, but he quickly became a willing co-conspirator. Jerry O, who works at the local pet store, and Shannon, his girlfriend, were also apprised of the situation when they arrived and ordered a couple glasses of wine. Perhaps two or three more people were included in the conspiracy. Dave went out and did reconnaissance while the others conferred. He returned to say the homeless people still had not figured it out, they did not even miss the dog yet.

At this point Todd was curious enough to want to actually see the creature. Through the bars he made out a small, perhaps two or three foot long puppy, for that is exactly what it was, a baby dog, a very young example of the breed, a black and brown

colored animal with wrinkled skin that might actually have a blood line, that would grow up to become either a Doberman or a Labrador, Todd could not be sure what it was at that young age, nor was he certain either of his assessments of the two strains was correct. It could be a baby Afghan or a bloodhound for all he knew.

“What a surprise,” he said turning toward Conny who merely nodded and shifted the cigarette from one hand to the other.

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“We aren’t arguing. There’s no argument when you aren’t talking to one another. No one talks. No argument.”

Brian nodded at this wise observation. “I don’t have a drinking problem. I drink, I fall down, no problem. That’s a line from a tee shirt. So what finally happened? Did you get your money back?”

Todd went momentarily blank. You could see it on his face. Then he said, “Oh, you mean the airline tickets. Forgot. I didn’t tell you how that turned out. Where’d we leave off?”

Brian picked up the plate of basil pork, scooped a healthy portion over his rice and made sure to catch some of the sweet savory sauce. “I think you were trying to figure out who to call at the airline to raise the bar. They didn’t want to give you a refund.”

“Not quite true. They were willing to refund my money to Danny, but not to me, plus a penalty of course.”

“And why was that? I mean, you paid for the tickets, didn’t you? Why wouldn’t they give you the refund?”

Todd reached for one of four small bowls delivered to their table at his behest. The bowls contained different hot spices, from freshly chopped Thai chili to dry flakes of crushed red pepper. He delivered a generous helping of a red liquid to his chicken prig king, then sprinkled the plate with an equally large amount of fresh green chopped jalapeno pepper.

“Airline protocol. If you order a ticket in someone else’s name and you want to cancel, they will send the refund to that person, but not to you even if you paid for it.”

Brian said, “As I recall, you ordered three tickets to Cabo. Did the other guy pay you back?”

“Yes. We were all invited and I accepted the invitation to Jade’s bachelor party right away. Some time later in the week I realized it would take place in Mexico, Cabo San Lucas to be exact. I called Danny.” Todd placed a hand to his head with the little finger acting as a mouthpiece, the thumb as the speaker in his ear. ““Hey, Danny, you going to Jade’s bachelor party? Yah? Well, don’t you think we ought to be buying tickets now rather than later? Fuel prices are heading up, the airlines are getting hit by a mechanic’s strike, we’ll probably get our best prices now rather than waiting two months. What’s that? Well, sure, I could order for you, you pay me back before the credit card bill comes due. By the way, how’s the gig going?”” The hand phone came down. “I helped him get a job in admin at the parking garage firm I do accounting for on the side, y’know.”

Todd explained how he introduced Danny to the company then, just a few months later, Todd left to take a full time job. Todd kept in contact with a few people in management and knew full well what Danny had done to get demoted.

“They kept him on with the same pay but made him a garage manager instead of being in corporate. He hated it. He has an unreasonably exalted view of himself which makes being a crew chief beneath him. Like my brother Marcus in that respect. Can’t see himself in certain jobs even if the pay’s great.”

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There was a family precedent. Their father and his brother were cool, one might more accurately say cold, toward one another. Oh, they appeared to be on friendly terms, but there was always the suspicion that between the two, Uncle Doug being the youngest, some deep seated anger ran which neither of them could explain or discuss with anyone else. No one in the family knew or could remember exactly what caused the enmity which was buried in the dim past and Todd believed his father and his uncle had completely forgotten the root cause of their simmering feud. Then Todd’s father died and Doug took potshots at him whenever Todd was around, usually Thanksgiving and Christmas. Todd still resented Doug for this even though Doug passed away more than three years ago.

Todd inadvertently inaugurated the most recent tempest in a teacup among his siblings, this absurd brouhaha, this vitriolic exchange. It was over the contents of the storage shed. He replied to a request from the executor asking that the five attempt to resolve the issue of who got what from its contents. Todd’s mistake was to write back that there was also copyrighted material in the form of a book that earned maybe \$1,000 a year in royalties. In addition, he had in his possession a set of Steve’s drawings which Todd did not want the others to claim he had stolen from the estate at some future time.

The drawings were for Todd's unpublished Science Fiction novel, "Googol the Great," and Steve had given him verbal permission to include them when and if Todd proposed the book to a publisher.

Todd did not expect the executor to send his email to the others. But he did. All Todd sought was guidance, not to present his case to anyone, and he asked the executor's opinion about how to handle the shed, the royalties and the drawings. Here is what he wrote that set off the firestorm:

"I just received and read the petition for settlement which the law firm filed on the 12th. In exhibit A I found a section titled 'Royalty Income.' This money derives from '55 Fiction' which is apparently owned by Daniel & Daniel, publishers presumably.

"Has anyone read the contract between them and Steve? Do we know who to contact there? Or how to contact them? I ask because I am interested in knowing how this asset will be distributed. I don't see where that is mentioned in the filing.

"Further, the executor mentioned some request by Marcus to acquire rights to Steve's writings. I could be wrong. The executor may not have mentioned this at all and I imagined the comment. However, I would like to know how the estate is handling such items."

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The bar began to fill. Jerry O and Shannon each ordered a second glass of wine and Dave went back and forth from the street to the pool table area bringing his reports. Conny went outside to smoke and Pauline kept a careful eye on the dog. The great fear was one of the homeless might have seen her enter with the dog, but as time passed that seemed less and less likely.

Nonetheless, the owner was still out there, according to Dave, and had finally started looking for his pet.

At that point Jerry O and Shannon agreed to take the animal home to Jerry O's house which was a block and a half walk up Shrader Street. They shrouded the animal in Shannon's coat to the point where nothing showed. It was a light weight dog, not ten pounds, but it was a half frightened creature and Todd saw it squirm as Shannon petted it and soothed it with small words and covered it entirely so that no part of the animal was visible outside her coat.

They proceeded out the front door. Todd followed. It was the sort of instant drama which made him want to watch unfold. It was also the sort of stupid action he would never have taken -- pick a dog up off the street -- but as the events played out he was fascinated. He wanted to learn what would happen next, so he followed them.

Jerry O and Shannon were merely a couple exiting a bar with a big black coat sticking kind of straight up in the air in the woman's arms. The front door was at the sidewalk and parked directly in front of the bar was a white van with no side windows. Jerry O and Shannon made a jay out the door to the right aimed toward Shrader, but were immediately within the ranks of five or six young people, the street people who may or may not be homeless who hung out near the front door and were often chased off by A J sometimes brandishing his recently acquired K-Bar.

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"I have in my possession certain writings and drawings sent to me by Steve over the years. I would like to know what possessory rights I have to those," Todd's email continued. "Some, indeed most or many, will be found duplicated somewhere in the

estate. I am not even sure I have originals. The ones I do have originals of I may want to publish. Who knows what the future holds? I would like to know if any of my siblings has any greater or lesser rights to them than the final distribution indicates. I certainly do not want Marcus to receive any rights greater than those I have.

“And there are the contents of the storage container. I know the estate is withholding monies for future unforeseen expenses. Is that one of those expenses? Who has access to that container? Who has a key, I guess I’m asking. I intend to be in the area for Thanksgiving. I wonder if at that time, or prior, I can investigate the contents and if I am allowed to retrieve any items. Specifically, I recently went to a family reunion for our mother’s Irish side of the family and one of Steve’s cousins requested a copy of ‘The Coffee Book.’ I don’t know if anyone inventoried the things in that storage container, but that would be something I would like to find.”

The executor passed Todd’s comments on to everyone with the statement that they might consider hiring an attorney at a flat fee to inventory and place a value on the contents of the shed. The executor did not deal with the issue of copyright material or royalty income.

Todd ended with, “Just a few thoughts to stir the pot,” but the net effect was to throw a rock at a hornet’s nest.

Melody wrote in response, “I don’t care what you do with Steve’s stuff, fight until you die. It’s an embarrassment (sic) to me.”

Freddy wrote: “Todd: Your assault on Marcus two messages ago was passive-aggressive and not the appropriate behavior of someone who is the most ‘senior’ of our family. You didn’t mend any bridges with that message, so I hope your intent was to

burn them all, because I'm certain that you did. You have offered no solutions throughout this entire process. Instead, you seem to expect everyone else to do the leg work and to solve the problems, so talk to Marjorie from here on out. She seems to know all the answers."

At the end Freddy wrote a shotgun paragraph: "Todd, Marjorie, and Melody, please delete mine and Suzanne's email addresses, telephone numbers, and address from your books. Don't call me. I won't be calling you. If you attempt to contact me, I'll just press <delete>, hang-up, or send whatever hate mail you send right back to you."

Todd was so glad he lived in San Francisco. He had once considered New York, but Marjorie now claimed it. He never once considered living in Oklahoma and now would never.

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Jerry O and Shannon were not under suspicion by any of the street people, but the crush of them forced the couple with their bundle right up against the side of the white van where they took some seconds to gather their wits before proceeding.

The punk was on a small bicycle with 20 inch wheels and a 12 inch gooseneck with risers. He was so close to them he could have reached out with his fingertips and touched them and the puppy. But he didn't. Instead, he reared on his back tire, raised the front off the sidewalk as he began bicycling away screaming, "I'm gonna kill the mother fucker who stole my dog!" When his front wheel dropped to the ground he shot up the street, past Shrader, as Jerry O and Shannon held still and watched him depart.

Thankfully, the dog did not bark. Todd let out a breath he did not even realize he was holding as he watched Jerry O and Shannon start the trip home, perhaps a five minute walk. He learned later it proved uneventful.

The next day Todd called Jerry O and learned the puppy was at his house and would be taken to the pound where it would receive its shots, be neutered and then adopted. He knew the way things worked so when Todd asked if the dog would be euthanized, Jerry O was emphatic that it would not.

But he did say the punk who once owned the puppy could go to the shelter and get him back.

“How about I take him,” Todd heard himself say. “I have a nephew I’d like to give him to. I think Milo will be surprised.”

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“So I already agreed to buy Danny’s ticket when I call George who is still a bachelor. I suggested we get our tickets early, he said he had just dropped ten thousand dollars on his wedding plans and was a little strapped for the \$500 air fare. Would I mind putting it on a credit card and he’d pay me back? No problem.”

Brian said between mouthfuls of sauce over rice, “And you agreed.”

“I agreed. I mean, we have known one another for at least ten years, we were undergraduates at Princeton together. So I ended up putting three round trip tickets on my credit card.” Brian gave Todd a disapproving squint. “What could I do? Then the credit card bill arrives. So I got George to send me a check, no problem. But Danny’s another story. He’s gone from bad to worse at work.”

“Uh, oh.”

“Yep. Right. He stopped taking my phone calls. It was obvious the guy blamed me for trouble at the office and it was clear he was no longer interested in going to Cabo. I decided to cancel Danny’s ticket even if there was a penalty. Unfortunately, that’s when I learned that airline refunds are not made to the person who paid for the ticket, but to the person in whose name the ticket was issued.”

“You tried to explain this to the airline? I mean, did you take it up a level, maybe to a supervisor?”

“I tried to but they blocked me. Finally, someone said they would cut me some slack. ‘Get an affidavit from your friend in which he agrees he is not going to use the ticket, have him sign it and send that to us along with a copy of his driver’s license.’”

It was clear to Brian what the problem with that was. “If the guy was not returning your phone calls, he was certainly not going to sign an affidavit.”

“It gets worse,” Todd said grimly. “I decided to sue in small claims court.”

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Todd drove over to Jerry O’s, picked up the puppy and took it home. He contacted the same airline he bought the tickets to Mexico from and inquired how to send the creature to Minneapolis now that everyone had returned after the memorial to Steve.

The dog would have to travel as cargo on the three hour flight, but after that the rules became somewhat complex. Surprisingly, there was no mention of sedatives to calm the creature, but Todd would have to purchase a U. S. Department of Agriculture approved kennel and follow the airline’s requirements.

“You must obtain a health certificate, an original and a copy, from a licensed vet which is only valid for ten days,” the woman on the phone told him. “This certificate has

to be valid on the date of the shipment. Since the earliest you can make a reservation is seven days and the certificate is only good for ten and it must be valid on the day of shipment, you must coordinate the certificate and the booking.”

Todd would have to have someone pick the animal up at the airport. He had to supply their name, address and phone number and they would have to show a picture ID. Then he learned the price. It would cost as much to send the puppy between San Francisco and Minneapolis as a human.

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“I got the forms from the court and read them, followed the procedure and did what I was supposed to do in order to collect on a debt. I wrote two letters requesting the money and sent one certified, the other regular mail. The certified letter was returned undelivered. The guy was going to avoid all contact, and that meant he would try and avoid being served with legal papers. What would make process serving even more difficult was that he managed to get a new job in a downtown high rise with a security guard who won’t let anyone past without approval from the person being visited. Fat chance.”

While Todd talked, Brian recognized the background music in the restaurant as Joseph Hayden’s Symphony No. 94, nicknamed the Surprise Symphony.

“One way to serve the papers would be at our mutual friend’s wedding which was about as inappropriate as I could imagine. Nonetheless, I was determined to see the situation through when the weather intervened.”

Brian looked surprised. “What do you mean, the weather?”

“Two storms hit the Northern Hemisphere at about the same time. One hit Mexico, drenched Cabo with hurricane force winds and caused all tourists into soccer stadiums where they were surrounded by *Federales* toting machine guns. The flight was cancelled, they sent me my money back.”

“You mean to tell me the airlines won’t refund the person who pays for the tickets unless the flight gets cancelled?”

“That’s about the size of it.”

“What about the dog?”

Todd finished eating and pushed the plate away. He wiped his mouth, took a sip of beer and said, “I shipped it to Minneapolis.”

Brian asked the waitress to pack up the leftovers. Then he asked Todd, “How about your brothers’ court challenge?”

“Oh, they lost. In this state, the executor has the power. I found out it’s almost impossible to get a judge to go against an executor’s wishes. Plus the executor hires an attorney paid for by the estate. Plus if you do try and sue the executor, the estate pays extraordinary fees, not the executor. Frankly, it was a foredawn conclusion. Marcos and Freddy would lose, they just didn’t know it.”

“So has the estate been closed? Did you receive your share?”

“Not quite. Turns out someone finally opened the storage shed. The estate hired another attorney to go through everything and inventory the contents. Marjorie had simply boxed all Steve’s things up. She didn’t read every scrap of paper and this attorney found a more recent will which was handed to the executor before the judge ruled on the petition for settlement.. It was a handwritten piece of paper, simple and straightforward.

It had been written ten years before Steve died, but it was prescient in its distribution of his assets.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Well, it didn’t mention any of us. It passed right over everyone and his entire estate, his interest in the newspaper business, two buildings including the one he built and leased to the New Times, a car and all personal property plus three bulging bank accounts and a stock portfolio all go to Milo upon his reaching the age of majority which is still three years away. During that time the estate will be held in trust for him. The executor was named as the trustee, not his mother Melody.”

Brian lifted his glass and with a beaming smile said, “That’s something I’ll toast.”

“Me too,” Todd said as the wine and beer glasses clinked together.

“What’s more, Freddy and Marcus have a nice big fat legal bill to pay because they challenged the estate and Melody borrowed \$84,000 from a company that advances money to heirs she has to pay back,” Todd said with a huge grin on his face.

Brian seemed satisfied with the conclusion of the story, so they clinked glasses once again.

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