

HARLAN COBEN RETURNS WITH
THE FIRST RIVETING
WINDSOR HORNE LOCKWOOD III
THRILLER

WIN

AVAILABLE MARCH 2021

Please turn the page for a preview.

CHAPTER 1

The shot that will decide the championship is slowly arching its way toward the basket.
I do not care.

Everyone else in Indianapolis's Lucas Oil Stadium stares at the ball with mouth open.

I do not.

I stare across the court. At him.

My seat is courtside, of course, near the center line. An A-list Marvel-Superhero actor sporting a tourniquet-tight, show-biceps black tee sits on my left, you know him, and the celebrated rapper-mogul Swagg Daddy, whose private jet I bought three years ago, dons his own brand of sunglasses to my left. I like Sheldon (that's Swagg Daddy's real name), both the man and his music, but he cheers and glad-hands past the point of sycophantic, and it makes me cringe.

As for me, I sport a Savile Row hand-tailored suit of pinstripe azure, a pair of Bedfordshire bespoke Bordeaux-hued shoes created by Basil, the master craftsman at G. J. Cleverley's, a limited-edition Lilly Pulitzer silk tie of pink and green, and a specially created Hermès pocket square, which flares out from the left breast pocket with celestial precision.

I am quite the rake.

I am also, for those missing the subtext, rich.

The ball traveling in the air will decide the outcome of the college basketball phenomenon known as March Madness. Odd

that, when you think about it. All the blood and sweat and tears, all the strategizing and scouting and coaching, all the countless hours of shooting alone in your driveway, of dribbling drills, of the three-man weave, of lifting weights, of doing wind sprints until you hurl, all those years in stale gyms on every level—biddy basketball, CYO travel all-stars, AAU tournaments, high school, you get the point—all of that boils down to the simple physics of a rudimentary orange sphere back-spinning toward a metallic cylinder at this exact moment.

Either the shot will miss and Duke University will win—or it will go in and South State University and their fans will rush the court in celebration. The A-list Marvel Hero attended South State. Swagg Daddy, like yours truly, attended Duke. They both tense up. The raucous crowd falls into a hush. Time has slowed.

Again, even though it's my alma mater, I don't care. I don't get fandom in general. I never care who wins a contest in which I (or someone dear to me) am not an active participant. Why, I often wonder, would anyone?

I use the time to focus on him.

His name is Teddy Lyons. He is one of the too-many assistant coaches on the South State bench. He is six foot eight and beefy, a big slab of aw-shucks farm boy. Big T—that's what he likes to be called—is thirty-three years old, and this is his fourth college coaching job. From what I understand, he is a decent tactician but excels at recruiting talent.

I hear the buzzer go off. Time is out, though the outcome of the contest is still very much in doubt.

The arena is so hushed that I can actually hear the ball hit the rim.

Swagg grabs my leg. Mr. Marvel A-list swings a muscled tricep across my chest as he spreads his arms in anticipation. The ball hits the rim once, twice, then a third time, as though this inanimate object is teasing the crowd before deciding for itself who lives and who dies.

I still watch Big T.

When the ball rolls all the way off the rim and then drops toward the ground—a definite miss—the Blue Devil section in the arena explodes. In my periphery, I see everyone on the South State bench deflate. I don't care for the word "crestfallen"—it's an odd word—but here it is apropos. They deflate and appear crestfallen. Several collapse in devastation and tears as the reality of the loss sinks in.

But not Big T.

Marvel A-lister drops his handsome face into his hands. Swagg Daddy throws his arms around me.

"We won, Win!" Swagg shouts. Then thinking better of it: "Or should I say, "We win, Win!"

I frown at him. My frown tells him I expect better.

"Yeah, you're right," Swagg says.

I barely hear him. The roar is beyond deafening. He leans in closer.

"My party is going to be lit!"

He runs out and joins the celebration. En masse, the crowd charges the court with him, exuberant, rejoicing. They swallow Swagg from my view. Several slap me on the back as they pass. They encourage me to join, but I do not.

I look again for Teddy Lyons, but he is gone.

Not for long though.

Two hours later, I see Teddy Lyons again. He is strutting toward me.

Here is my dilemma.

I am going to "put a hurting," as they say, on Big T. There is no way around that. I'm still not sure how much of one, but the damage to his physical health will be severe.

That's not my dilemma.

My dilemma involves the how.

No, I'm not worried about getting caught. This part has been planned out. Big T received an invitation to Swagg Daddy's blowout. He is entering through what he believes is a VIP entrance. It is not. In fact, it is not even the location of the party. Loud music blasts from down the corridor, but it is just for show.

It is only Big T and I in this warehouse.

I wear gloves. I have weaponry on me—I always do—though it will not be needed.

Big T is drawing closer to me, so let's get back to my dilemma:

Do I strike him without warning—or do I give him what some might consider a sporting chance?

This isn't about morality or fair play or any of that. It matters to me none what the general populace would label this. I have been in many scrapes in my day. When you do battle, rules rapidly become null and void. Bite, kick, throw sand, use a weapon, whatever it takes. Real fights are about survival. There are no prizes or praise for sportsmanship. There is a victor. There is a loser. The end. It doesn't matter whether you "cheat."

In short, I have no qualms about simply striking this odious creature when he's not ready. I am not afraid to take—again to use common vernacular—a "cheap shot." In fact, that had been my plan all along: Jump him when he's not ready. Use a bat or a knife or the butt of my gun. Finish it.

So why the dilemma now?

Because I don't think breaking bones is enough here. I want to break the man's spirit too. If tough-guy Big T were to lose a purportedly fair fight to little ol' me—I am older, much slighter, far prettier (it's true), the very visual dictionary definition of effete—it would be humiliating.

I want that for Big T.

He is only a few steps away. I make my decision and step out to block his path. Big T pulls up and scowls. He stares at me a moment. I smile at him. He smiles back.

"I know you," he says.

“Do tell.”

“You were at the game tonight. Sitting courtside.”

“Guilty,” I say.

He sticks out his huge mitt of a hand for me to shake. “Teddy Lyons. Everyone calls me Big T.”

I don’t shake the hand. I stare at it, as though it plopped out of a dog’s anus. Big T waits a second, standing there frozen, before he takes the hand back as though it’s a small child that needs comforting.

I smile at him again. He clears his throat.

“If you’ll excuse me,” he begins.

“I won’t, no.”

“What?”

“You’re a little slow, aren’t you, Teddy?” I sigh. “No, I won’t excuse you. There is no excuse for you. Are you with me now?”

The scowl slowly returns to his face. “You got a problem?”

“Hmm. Which comeback to go with?”

“Huh?”

“I could say, ‘No, YOU got a problem’ or ‘Me? Not a care in the world’—something like that—but really, none of those snappy rejoinders are calling to me.”

Big T looks perplexed. Part of him wants to simply shove me aside. Part of him remembers that I was sitting in Celebrity Row and thus I might be someone important.

“Uh,” Big T says, “I’m going to the party now.”

“No, you’re not.”

“Pardon?”

“There’s no party here.”

“When you say there’s no party—”

“The party is two blocks away,” I say.

He puts his mitts on his hips. Coach pose. “What the hell is this?”

“I had them send you the wrong address. The music? It’s just for show. The security guard who let you in by the VIP entrance?”

He works for me and vanished the moment you walked through that door.”

Big T blinks twice. Then he steps closer to me. I don’t back up even an inch.

“What’s going on?” he asks me.

“I’m going to kick your ass, Teddy.”

Oh, how his smile widens now. “You?” His chest is the approximate size of a squash court’s front wall. He moves in closer now, looming over me, staring down with the confidence of a big, powerful man who, because of his size, has never experienced combat or even been challenged. This is Big T’s amateurish, go-to move—crowd his opponent with his bulk and then watch them wither.

I don’t wither, of course. I crane my neck and meet his gaze. And now, for the first time, I see doubt start to cloud his expression.

I don’t wait.

Crowding me like this was a mistake. It makes my first move short and easy. I place all five of my fingertips on my right hand together, forming something of an arrowhead, and dart-strike his throat. A gurgling sound emerges. At the same time, I sidekick low, leading with my instep, connecting directly on the side of his right knee which, I know from research, has undergone two ACL surgeries.

I hear a crack.

Big T goes down like an oak.

I lift my leg and strike him hard with my heel.

He cries out.

I strike him again.

He cries out.

I strike him again.

Silence.

I will spare you the rest.

Twenty minutes later, I arrive at Swagg Daddy’s party. Security

whisks me to the back room. Only three types of people get in here—beautiful women, famous faces, fat wallets.

We party hard until five a.m. Then a black limo takes Swagg and yours truly to the airport. The private jet is gassed up and waiting.

Swagg sleeps the entire flight back to New York City. I shower—yes, my jet has a shower—shave, and change into a Kiton K50 business suit of herringbone gray.

When we land, two black limos are waiting. Swagg involves me in some kind of complicated handshake-embrace as a way of saying goodbye. He takes one limo to his estate in Alpine. I take the other directly to my office in a 48-story skyscraper on Park Avenue in midtown. My family has owned the Lock-Horne building since it was completed in 1967.

On the way up the elevator, I stop on the fourth floor. This space used to be home to a sports agency run by my closest friend, but he closed it down a few years back. I then left the office empty for too long because hope springs eternal. I was sure that my friend would change his mind and return.

He didn't. And so we move on.

The new tenant is Fisher and Friedman, which advertises itself as a "Victims' Rights Law Firm." Their website, which won me over, is somewhat more specific:

We help you knee the abusers, the stalkers,
the douchebags, the trolls, the pervs, and the
psychos right in the balls.

Irresistible. As with the sports agency that used to lease this space, I am a silent partner-investor in the firm.

I knock on the door. When Sadie Fisher says, "Come in," I open it and lean my head inside.

"Busy?" I ask.

"Sociopaths are very much in season," Sadie says, not looking up from the computer.

She is right, of course. It's why I invested. I feel good about the work they do, advocating for the bullied and battered, but I also see insecure-cum-violent men (it's almost always men) as a growth industry.

Sadie finally glances in my direction. "I thought you were going to the game in Indianapolis."

"I did."

"Oh, right, the private jet. Sometimes I forget how rich you are."

"No, you don't."

"True. So what's up?"

Sadie wears hot-librarian glasses and a pink pantsuit that clings and reveals. This is intentional, she explained to me. When Sadie first started representing women who'd been sexually harassed and assaulted, she was told to dress conservatively, garments that were shapeless and drab and hence "innocent," which Sadie saw as more victim blaming.

Her response? Do the opposite.

I am not sure how to broach the subject, so I just say, "I heard one of your clients was hospitalized."

That gets her attention.

"Do you think it would be appropriate to send her something?" I ask.

"Like what, Win?"

"Flowers, chocolates."

"She's in intensive care."

"A stuffed animal. Balloons."

"Balloons?"

"Just something to let her know we are thinking about her."

Sadie's eyes turn back to the computer screen. "The only thing our client wants is something we don't seem to be able to give her: Justice."

I open my mouth to say something, but in the end, I stay silent, opting for discretion and wisdom over comfort and bravado. I turn

to leave when I spot two people—one woman, one man—walking toward me with purpose.

“Windsor Horne Lockwood?” the woman says.

Even before they whip out their badges, I know that they are in law enforcement.

Sadie can tell too. She rises automatically and starts toward me. I have a slew of attorneys, of course, but I use those for business reasons. For personal affairs, my best friend, the sports agent/lawyer who used to inhabit this office, always stepped in because he had my full trust. Now, with him on the sidelines, it seems that Sadie has instinctively slid into the role.

“Windsor Horne Lockwood?” the woman says again.

That is my name. To be technically correct, my full name is Windsor Horne Lockwood III. I am, as the name suggests, old money, and I look the part, what with the ruddy complexion, the blond-turning-gray hair, the delicate patrician features, the somewhat regal bearing. I don’t hide what I am. I don’t know whether I could.

How, I wonder, had I messed up with Big T? I am good. I am very good. But I am not infallible.

So where had I made a mistake?

Sadie is almost by my side now. I wait. Instead of my responding, I let her say, “Who wants to know?”

“I’m Special Agent Brynn with the FBI,” the woman says.

Brynn is black. She wears an Oxford blue button-down shirt under a fitted cognac-hued leather jacket. Très fashionable for a federal agent.

“And this is my partner, Special Agent Lopez.”

Lopez is more central stock. His suit is wet-pavement gray, his tie a sad and stained red.

They show us their badges.

“What’s this about?” Sadie asks.

“We’d like to talk to Mr. Lockwood.”

“So I gathered,” Sadie replies with a bit of bite. “What about?”

Brynn smiles and puts her badge back in her pocket. “It’s about a murder.”

We hit a little bit of a wall. Brynn and Lopez want to take me someplace without further explanation. Sadie will have none of that. Eventually I intervene, and we come to an agreement of sorts. I will go with them. I will not be interrogated or questioned without an attorney present.

Sadie, who is wise beyond her thirty years, doesn’t like this. She pulls me aside and says, “They’ll question you anyway.”

“I’m aware. This isn’t my first run-in with the authorities.” Nor my second or third or . . . but Sadie does not need to know this. I don’t want to continue stalling or being “lawyered up” for three reasons: One, Sadie has a court appearance, and I don’t want to hold her up. Two, if this does involve Teddy “Big T” Lyons, I would prefer that Sadie not hear about it in this rather head-on manner for obvious reasons. Three, I’m curious about this murder and preternaturally overconfident. Sue me.

Once in the car, we travel uptown. Lopez drives, Brynn sits next to him. I am in the backseat. Oddly enough, anxiety is coming off them like tangible sonar. They are both trying to be professional—and they are—but under that, I can sense the undercurrent. This murder is something different, something out of the ordinary. They are trying to hide that, but their excitement is a pheromone I cannot fail to smell.

Lopez and Brynn start off by giving me the customary silent treatment. The theory is a rather simple one: Most people hate silence and will do anything to break it, including saying something incriminating.

I’m almost insulted that they are trying this tactic on me.

I don’t engage, of course. I settle into the backseat, steeple my

fingers, and stare out the car window as though I'm a tourist on my first visit to the big bad city.

Finally, Brynn says, "We know about you."

I reach into my jacket pocket and press down on my phone. The conversation is now being recorded. It will go straight to a cloud in case one of my new FBI friends discovers that I'm recording and opts for deletion or phone breakage.

I am nothing if not prepared.

Brynn turns to face me. "I said, we know about you."

Silence from me.

"You used to do some stuff for the Bureau," she says.

That they know anything about my relationship with the Federal Bureau of Investigation surprises me, though I don't show it. I did work for the FBI immediately after I graduated from Duke University, but my work was highly classified. The fact that someone told them—it had to be someone on top—again informs me that this murder case is out of the ordinary.

"Heard you were good," Lopez says, catching my eye in the rearview mirror.

Moving quickly now from the silent treatment to flattery. Still I give them nothing.

We drive up Central Park West, my home street. The odds now seem slim that this murder has to do with Big T. For one thing, I know that Big T survived, albeit not intact. Second, if the feds wanted to question me for anything related to that, we would be headed downtown toward their headquarters at 26 Federal Plaza; instead, here we are, traveling in the opposite direction, toward my own abode in the Dakota, on the corner of Central Park West and Seventy-Second Street.

I consider this fact. I live alone now, so it is not as though the victim could be a loved one. It could be that the courts had issued some sort of search warrant for my residence and found something incriminating that they wish to spring on me, but this too seems unlikely. One of the Dakota doormen would have warned me of

such an invasion. One of my hidden alarms would have buzzed my phone. I'm also not careless enough to leave around anything that might implicate me for authorities to locate.

To my surprise, Lopez drives us past the Dakota without a pause. We continue uptown. Six blocks later, as we reach the Museum of Natural History, I spot two NYPD squad cars parked in front of the Beresford, another esteemed prewar apartment building, at Eighty-First Street.

Lopez is now studying me in the rearview mirror. I look at him and frown.

The Beresford doormen wear uniforms seemingly inspired by Soviet generals from the late seventies. As Lopez pulls to a stop, Brynn turns to me and asks, "Do you know anybody in this building?"

My reply is a smile and silence.

She shakes her head. "Fine, let's go."

With Lopez on my right and Brynn on my left, they escort me straight through the marble lobby and into an already-waiting wood-paneled elevator. When Brynn presses the button for the top floor, I realize that we are heading into rarified air—figuratively, literally, and mostly monetarily. One of my employees, a vice president at Lock-Horne Securities, owns a "classic six" apartment on the fourth floor of the Beresford with limited views of the park. He paid over five million dollars for it.

Brynn turns to me and says, "Any clue where we are headed?"

"Up?" I say.

"Funny."

I bat my eyes in modesty.

"The top floor," she says. "Been there before?"

"I don't believe so."

"Do you know who lives there?"

"I don't believe so."

"I figured all you rich guys know each other."

"Stereotyping is wrong," I say.

“But you’ve been to this building before, right?”

The elevator door opens with a ding before I bother not replying. I figured that we would be let out into a grand apartment—elevators often open directly into penthouse suites—but we are in a dark corridor. The wallpaper is a heavy maroon fabric. The open door on the right leads to a corkscrew staircase of wrought iron. Lopez goes up first. Brynn signals for me to follow. I do so.

There is junk everywhere.

Six-foot stacks of old magazines, newspapers, and books line both sides of the stairs. We need to go up single file—I spot a *Time* magazine from 1998—and even then we have to turn our bodies to the side to slip through the narrow opening.

The stench is suffocating.

It is a cliché, but it is a cliché with merit: Nothing smells like a decaying human body. Brynn and Lopez both cover their noses and mouths. I do not.

The Beresford has four turrets, one atop each corner of the edifice. We reach the landing of the northeastern one. Whoever lives here (or perhaps more accurately, lived), up high on the top level of one of the most prestigious buildings in Manhattan, was a full-fledged hoarder. We can barely move. Four crime technicians in full garb with the shower caps are attempting to comb and climb through the clutter.

The corpse has already been zipped up. I’m surprised that they haven’t moved it out of here yet, but everything about this is odd.

I still have no idea why I’m here.

Brynn shows me a photograph of what I assume is the dead man—eyes closed, white sheet pulled up high on the body, right up to the chin. He was an older man with white-to-gray skin. I would venture to say in his early seventies. He is bald on top with a gray hair ring that’s overgrown by the ears. His beard is big and thick and curly and dirty-white, so that it looks as though he were eating a sheep when the photograph was taken.

“Do you know him?” Brynn asks.

I opt for the truth. “No.” I hand the photograph back. “Who is he?”

“The victim.”

“Yes, I figured that, thank you. His name, I mean.”

The agents exchange a glance. “We don’t know.”

“Did you ask the tenant?”

“It is our belief,” Brynn says, “that he is the tenant.”

I wait.

“This tower room was purchased almost thirty years ago by an LLC using an untraceable shell company.”

Untraceable. I know this all too well. I use similar financial instruments often, not so much to avoid taxation, though that is often a fringe benefit. In my case—as it appears was the case for our late hoarder—such actions are more about anonymity.

“No identification?” I say.

“We haven’t found one yet.”

“The building employees—”

“He lived alone. Deliveries were left at the bottom of the steps. The building has no security cameras in the upstairs corridors, or if they do, they aren’t admitting it. Co-op fees were paid on time from the LLC. According to the doormen, Hermit—that was their nickname for him—was a big-time recluse. He went out rarely and when he did, he would wrap his face in a scarf and leave via a secret basement exit. The manager just found him this morning after the smell started wafting down to the floor below.”

“And no one in the building knows who he is?”

“Not so far,” Brynn said, “but we’re still going door-to-door.”

“So the obvious question,” I say.

“That being?”

“Why am I here?”

“The bedroom.”

Brynn seems to expect me to reply. I don’t.

“Come with us.”

As we start to the right, I can see the view of the Natural

History Museum's giant round planetarium across the street, and to the left, Central Park in all its glory. My apartment too has a rather enviable view of the park, though the Dakota is only nine stories high while here we are somewhere above the twentieth floor.

I am not easily surprised, but when I enter the bedroom—when I see the reason why they brought me here—I pull up. I do not move. I just stare. I fall into the past, as though the image in front of me is a time portal. I am an eight-year-old boy sneaking my way into Granddad's parlor at Lockwood Manor. The rest of my extended family are still out in the garden. I wear a black suit and stand by myself on the ornate parquet floor. This is before the family destruction or perhaps, looking back on it now, this is the very moment of the first fissure. It is Granddad's funeral. This parlor, his favorite room, has been over-sprayed with some kind of cloying disinfectant, but the familiar, comforting smell of Granddad's pipe still dominates. I relish it. I reach out with a tentative hand and touch the leather of his favorite chair, almost expecting him to materialize in it, cardigan sweater, slippers, pipe and all. Eventually, my eight-year-old self works up the courage to hoist myself up to sit in the wingback chair. When I do, I look up at the wall above the fireplace, just as Granddad so often did.

I know that Brynn and Lopez are watching me for a reaction.

"At first," Brynn says, "we thought it had to be a forgery."

I continue to stare, just as I did as an eight-year-old in that leather chair.

"So we grabbed an art curator from the Met across the park," Brynn continues. The Met being shorthand for the Metropolitan Museum of Art. "She wants to get this off this wall and run some tests, just to be positive, but she's pretty certain—this is the real deal."

The hoarder's bedroom, as opposed to the rest of the tower, is neat, tidy, spare, utilitarian. The bed against the wall is made. There is no headboard. The side table is bare except for a pair of

reading glasses and a leather-bound book. I now know why I was brought here—to see the only thing hanging on the wall.

The oil painting simply called *Girl at the Piano* by Johannes Vermeer.

Yes, that Vermeer. Yes, that painting.

This masterpiece, like most of the only thirty-four Vermeer paintings in existence, is small, a foot and a half tall by a foot and four inches wide, though it packs an undeniable punch in its simplicity and beauty. This *Girl*, purchased nearly a hundred years ago by my great-grandfather, used to hang in the parlor of Lockwood Manor. Twenty-plus years ago, my family loaned this painting, valued in excess of \$200 million by today's standards, along with the only other masterpiece we owned, Picasso's *The Reader*, to the Lockwood Gallery in Founders Hall on the campus of Haverford College. You may have read about the nighttime burglary. Over the years, there have been constant false sightings of both masterpieces—most recently, the Vermeer on a yacht belonging to a Middle Eastern prince. None of these leads (and I've checked several personally) panned out. Some theorized that the theft was the work of the same crime syndicate who stole thirteen works of art, including works by Rembrandt, Manet, Degas, and yes, a Vermeer, from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston.

None of the stolen works from either robbery has ever been recovered.

Until now.

“Any thoughts?” Brynn asked.

I had put up two empty frames in Granddad's parlor, both as a homage to what was taken and a promise that his masterpieces would someday be returned.

Now that promise, it seems, will be at least half fulfilled.

“The Picasso?” I ask.

“No sign of it,” Brynn says, “but as you can see, we still have a lot to look through.”

The Picasso is far larger—over five feet tall and four feet wide.

If it was here, chances seem strong that it would have been found already.

“Any other thoughts?” Brynn asks.

I gesture toward the wall. “When can I bring it home?”

“That’ll take some time. You know the drill.”

“I know a renowned art curator and restorer at NYU. Her name is Shan Liu. I would like her to handle the piece.”

“We have our own people.”

“No, Special Agent, you do not. In fact, per your own admission, you grabbed a random person from the Met this morning—”

“Hardly a random—”

“This is not a big ask,” I continue. “My person is educated in how to authenticate, handle, and if necessary, restore a masterpiece like few people in the world.”

“We can look into it,” Brynn says, trying to move us past this topic. “Any other thoughts?”

“Was the victim strangled or was his throat cut?”

They exchange another glance. Then Lopez clears his throat and says, “How do—”

“The sheet was covering his neck,” I say. “In the photograph you showed me. That was done, I surmise, to cover trauma.”

“Let’s not get into that, okay?” Brynn said.

“Do you have a time of death?” I ask.

“Let’s not get into that either.”

Shorter version: I’m a suspect.

I’m not sure why. Surely, if I had done this deed, I would have taken the painting with me. Or perhaps not. Perhaps I was clever enough to have murdered him and left the painting so it would be found and returned to my family.

“Do you have any other thoughts that might help us?” Brynn asks.

I don’t bother with the obvious theory: The hermit was an art thief. He liquidated most of what he pilfered, used the profits to hide his identity, set up an anonymous shell company, purchased

the apartment. For some reason—most likely because he either loved it or it was too hot to unload—he kept the Vermeer for himself.

“So,” Brynn continues, “you’ve never been here before, right?”

Her tone is too casual.

“Mr. Lockwood?”

Interesting. They clearly believe that they have evidence I have been in this turret. I haven’t been. It is also clear that they took the unusual step of bringing me to the murder scene to knock me off my game. If they had followed the normal protocol of a murder investigation and taken me to an interrogation room, I would be on my guard and defensive. I might have brought a criminal attorney.

What, pray tell, do they think they have on me?

“On behalf of my family, I’m grateful the Vermeer has been found. I hope this leads to the speedy recovery of the Picasso. I’m now ready to return to my office.”

Brynn and Lopez don’t like this. Brynn looks at Lopez and nods. Lopez slips into the other room.

“One moment,” Brynn says. She reaches into her binder and pulls out another photograph. When she shows it to me, I am yet again puzzled.

“Do you recognize this, Mr. Lockwood?”

To buy time, I say, “Call me Win.”

“Do you recognize this, Win?”

“You know that I do.”

“It’s your family crest, is that correct?”

“It is, yes.”

“It will obviously take us a long time to go through the victim’s apartment,” Brynn continues.

“So you said.”

“But we found one item in the closet of this bedroom.” Brynn smiles. She has, I notice, a nice smile. “Only one.”

I wait.

Lopez reenters the room. Behind him, a crime scene technician carries an alligator-leather suitcase with burnished metal hardware. I recognize the piece, but I can't believe it. It makes no sense.

"Do you recognize this suitcase?" Brynn asks.

"Should I?"

But of course, I do. Years ago, Aunt Plum had made one up for every male member of the family. They are all adorned with the family crest and our initials. When she gave it to me—I was fourteen at the time—I tried very hard not to frown. I don't mind expensive and luxurious. I do mind vulgar and wasteful.

"The bag has your initials on it."

The technician tipped the luggage so I could see the tacky baroque monogram:

WHL3.

"That's you, right? WHL3—Windsor Horne Lockwood the Third?"

I don't move, don't speak, don't give anything away. But, without sounding overly melodramatic, this discovery has given my world a shove off its axis.

"So, Mr. Lockwood, do you want to tell us why your luggage is here?"