

SUNSHINE EVERY DAY

Lynn L. Sloan

The Rookwood is a stately apartment building, built in the era between the First World War and the Great Depression, and occupied today by elderly couples and CFOs of established manufacturing firms. If, on a Monday morning, in the vast and echoing lobby you were to see a nattily dressed old man consult a scrap of paper for an apartment number, you would guess, rightly, that he was a realtor, an appraiser, or a moving company's agent, and you would also be right to surmise that property was about to change hands.

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Bernard stood outside the open door of 14C, produced his card, thought longingly of retiring to Seaside, and smiled down at the tiny woman. What was her name? He ignored the Pomeranian growling behind her ankles, and waved his card in mid-air, pretending to check for smudges before handing it over, a practiced gesture he used to stretch out the first critical moments with a potential client. Proceeding slowly at the beginning was essential to success with the bereaved and the elderly. And god bless her, this woman was both. Recently widowed, she'd mentioned on the phone, and pushing eighty-five by the looks of her, with a wig the color of stewed apricots and a face the years had pummeled into submission. Giving Mrs. What's-her-name plenty of time to admire his suit, extra-starch shirt, silver hair, no longer banker-short—that was a bad year—he lowered his eyes, imagining sun on his face, a breeze, being somewhere else. Her rat-faced puffball began to whine. Bernard glared down at the beast. Dogs, foul stench, bickering relatives, these and worse he'd learned to accept. He noticed the carpet, an imitation Aubusson of the kind sold in shops connected to low-end casinos. This did not augur well. The dog ululated.