

busy with his coffee shop to stay in the game. Or maybe Westing blamed him for his daughter's death, figuring they should have eloped."

"No, if Sam Westing blamed Mr. Theodorakis, he would have made him an heir in this miserable game," the judge replied. "There are too many maybes here, which is what Sam Westing planned. We must not allow ourselves to be distracted from the real issue: Which heir did Sam Westing want punished?"

"The person who hurt him most?" Sandy guessed.

"And who would that be?"

"The person who caused his daughter's death?"

"Exactly, Mr. McSouthers. Sam Westing plotted against the person he held responsible for his daughter's suicide, the person who forced Violet Westing to marry a man she loathed."

"Mrs. Westing? But that's not possible, judge. Mrs. Westing is not one of the heirs."

"I think she is, Mr. McSouthers. The former wife of Sam Westing *must* be one of the heirs. Mrs. Westing is the answer, and whoever she is, she is the one we have to protect."

21 ♦ *The Fourth Bomb*

The door to apartment 2C opened. Flora Baumbach screamed, and Turtle flung herself on the pile of money they had been counting.

It was Theo, not the thief. "Can I borrow your bike for a few hours? It's very important." Theo was not a runner like Doug, who was fuming about his being so late. He needed the bicycle to follow Otis Amber, right now.

Turtle stared at him in stony silence.

"I didn't make that sign in the elevator; besides, you already kicked me for it. Please, Turtle." She still wouldn't answer, punk kid. "I had a long talk with the police today, but I refused to tell them who the bomber was."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

What does she think it means? It means that he and everybody else knows that Turtle is the bomber. "Never mind. Can I have your bike or not?"

"Why do you want it?"

Theo ground his teeth. Take it easy; anger won't help any more than blackmail did. Try being a good guy. "I saw Angela in the hospital today. She sends her regards."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You let me have that bike, Turtle Wexler, or—or else!"

Turtle did not have to ask what "or else" meant: police—bomber—Angela, but how did Theo find out? "Here!" She threw the padlock key across the room and waited for him to rush out before she let go of the money.

"He's such a nice boy," Flora Baumbach remarked.

"Sure," Turtle replied, dialing the telephone number of the hospital. "Angela Wexler, room 325."

"Room 325 is not accepting any calls."

Turtle hung up the phone. If Theo knew, others knew. Angela had set off those fireworks wanting to get caught, but it was different now. Now she was confused, now she was just

plain scared. They could force a confession out of her in no time, the guilt was right there staring out of those big blue eyes. Maybe they're questioning her now. "Baba, I'm not feeling so good; I think I'll go home to bed."

Weaving through rush hour traffic on Turtle's bike, Theo trailed the bus to a seamy downtown district across the railroad tracks where Crow and Otis got off. Skid Row. The pair wandered through the dimly lit, littered, and stinking street, bending over grimy bums asleep in doorways, raising them to their unsteady feet, and leading the ragtag procession into a decaying storefront. Paint was peeling off the letters on the window: Good Salvation Soup Kitchen.

A drunken wreck of a man lurched into Theo, who put a quarter into the filthy outstretched hand, more out of fright than charity.

Snatches of hymn-singing drifted toward him as the last of the stragglers staggered through the door. Theo crossed the narrow street and pressed his nose against the steamy soup-kitchen window. Rows of wretched souls sat hunched on wooden benches. Crow stood before them in her neat black dress, her hands raised toward the crumbling ceiling. Behind her Otis Amber stirred a boiling mess in a big iron pot.

Theo pedaled back to Sunset Towers at a furious pace. Whatever brought Crow and Otis Amber to these lower depths was none of his business. He hated himself for spying. He hated Sam Westing and his dirty money and his dirty game. Theo felt as dirty as the derelicts he spied on. Dirtier.

*

The judge thought they had finished with the heirs.
"Not quite," the doorman said.

◆ McSOUTHERS

ALEXANDER McSOUTHERS. Called Sandy. Age: 65. Born: Edinburgh, Scotland. Immigrated to Wisconsin, age 3. Education: eighth grade. Jobs: mill worker, union organizer, prizefighter, doorman. Married, six children, two grandchildren.

Westing connection: Worked in Westing Paper plant 20 years. Fired by Sam Westing himself for trying to organize the workers. No pension.

Sandy turned to a blank page, pushed his taped glasses up the broken bridge of his nose and looked at the judge. "Name?"

It had not seemed sporting to investigate one's own partner, but McSoutthers was right, this was a Westing game. Of course, she had kept some facts from him about the other heirs, but only because she did not trust his blabbering.

"Josie-Jo Ford, with a hyphen between Josie and Jo."

"Age?"

"Forty-two. Education: Columbia; law degree, Harvard." The judge waited for the doorman to enter the information in his slow, cramped lettering. He had to be meticulous in order to prove he was better than his eighth-grade education. It's a pity he had not gone further, he was quite a clever man.

"Jobs?"

"Assistant district attorney. Judge: family court, state supreme court, appellate division. Appellate has two Ps and two Ls. Never married, no children."

"Westing connection?"

The judge paused, then spoke so rapidly Sandy had to stop taking notes. "My mother was a servant in the Westing household, my father worked for the railroad and was the gardener on his days off."

"You mean you lived in the Westing house?" Sandy asked with obvious surprise. "You knew the Westings?"

"I barely saw Mrs. Westing. Violet was a few years younger than I, doll-like and delicate. She was not allowed to play with other children. Especially the skinny, long-legged, black daughter of the servants."

"Gee, you must have been lonely, judge, having nobody to play with."

"I played with Sam Westing—chess. Hour after hour I sat staring down at that chessboard. He lectured me, he insulted me, and he won every game." The judge thought of their last game: She had been so excited about taking his queen, only to have the master checkmate her in the next move. Sam Westing had deliberately sacrificed his queen and she had fallen for it. "Stupid child, you can't have a brain in that frizzy head to make a move like that." Those were the last words he ever said to her.

The judge continued: "I was sent to boarding school when I was twelve. My parents visited me at school when they could, but I never set foot in the Westing house again, not until two weeks ago."

"Your folks must have really worked hard," Sandy said. "An education like that costs a fortune."

"Sam Westing paid for my education. He saw that I was accepted into the best schools, probably arranged for my first job, perhaps more, I don't know."

"That's the first decent thing I've heard about the old man."

"Hardly decent, Mr. McSouthers. It was to Sam Westing's advantage to have a judge in his debt. Needless to say, I have excused myself from every case remotely connected with Westing affairs."

"You're awfully hard on yourself, judge. And on him. Maybe Westing paid for your education 'cause you were smart and needy, and you did all the rest by yourself."

"This is getting us nowhere, Mr. McSouthers. Just write: Westing connection: Education financed by Sam Westing. Debt never repaid."

Theo, upset over his Skid Row snooping, took out his anger on the UP button, poking it, jabbing it, until the elevator finally made its way down to the lobby. Slowly the door slid open. He stared down at the sparking, sputtering arsenal, yelled and belly-flopped to the carpet as rockets whizzed out of the elevator, inches above his head. Boom! Boom! A blinding flash of white fire streaked through the lobby, through the open entrance door, and burst into a chrysanthemum of color in the night sky. Then the elevator door closed.

The bomber had made one mistake. The last rocket blasted off when the elevator returned to the third floor. Boom!

By the time the bomb squad reached the scene (by way of the stairs), the smoke had cleared, but the young girl was still huddled on the hallway floor, tears streaming down her turtle-like face.

"For heaven's sake, say something," her mother said. "Tell me where it hurts."

The pain was too great to be put into words. Five inches of Turtle's braid were badly singed.

Grace Wexler attacked the policeman. "Nothing but a childish prank, you said. Some childish prank; both my children cruelly injured, almost killed. Maybe now you'll do something, now that it's too late."

Unshaken by the mother's anger, the policeman held up the sign that had been taped to the elevator wall:

THE BOMBER STRIKES AGAIN!!!

On the reverse side was a handwritten composition: "How I Spent My Summer Vacation" by Turtle Wexler.

Grace grabbed the theme and shook it at her daughter, who was being rocked in Flora Baumbach's arms. "Somebody stole this from you, didn't they, Turtle? You couldn't have done such an awful thing, not to Angela, not to your own sister, could you, Turtle? Could you?"

"I want to see a lawyer," Turtle replied.

The bomb squad, faced with six hours' overtime filling out forms and delivering the delinquent to a juvenile detention facility, decided it was best for all concerned to escort the

prisoner to apartment 4D and place her in the custody of Judge Ford.

Judge Ford put on her black robe and seated herself behind the desk. Before her stood a downcast child looking very sad and very sorry. Not at all like the Turtle she knew. "You surprise me, Turtle Wexler. I thought you were too smart to commit such a dangerous, destructive, and stupid act."

"Yes ma'am."

"Why did you do it, Turtle? To hurt someone, to get even with someone?"

"No ma'am."

Of course not. Turtle kicked shins, she was not the type to bottle up her anger. "You do understand that a child would not receive as harsh a penalty as an adult would? That there would be no permanent criminal record?"

"Yes ma'am. I mean, no ma'am."

She was protecting someone. She had set off the fireworks in the elevator to divert suspicion from the real bomber. But who was the real bomber? Nothing to do but drag it out of her, name by name, starting with the least likely. "Are you protecting Angela?"

"No!"

The judge was astounded by the excited response. Angela could not be the bomber, not that sweet, pretty thing. Thing? Is that how she regarded that young woman, as a thing? And what had she ever said to her except 'I hear you're getting married, Angela' or 'How pretty you look, Angela.' Had anyone asked about her ideas, her hopes, her plans? If I had been treated like that I'd have used dynamite, not fireworks; no, I would have just walked out and kept right on going. But

Angela was different. "What a senseless thing to do," the judge said aloud.

"Yes ma'am." Turtle stared down at the carpet, wondering if she had given Angela away.

Judge Ford rose and placed an arm around Turtle's bony shoulders. She had never wished for a sister until this moment. "Turtle, will you give me your word that you will never play with fireworks again?"

"Yes ma'am."

"While we're at it, do you have anything else to confess?"

"Yes ma'am. I was in the Westing house the night Mr. Westing died."

"Good lord, child, sit down and tell me."

Turtle began with the purple-waves story, went on to the whisperings, the bedded-down corpse, the dropped peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and her mother's cross, and ended with the twenty-four dollars she had won.

"Did either you or Doug Hoo call the police?"

"No ma'am, we were too scared, we just ran. Is that a crime?"

The judge said it was a criminal offense to conceal a murder.

"But Mr. Westing didn't look murdered," Turtle argued. "He looked asleep, like he did in the coffin. He looked like a wax dummy."

"A wax dummy?"

Now Turtle was the one surprised by the excited response. The judge thinks it might have been a real wax dummy, not a corpse at all. Then what happened to Sam Westing?

The judge regained her composure. "Not reporting a dead body is a violation of the health code, but I wouldn't worry about it. Is there anything else, Turtle?"

"Yes ma'am," Turtle replied, glancing at the portable bar. "Could I have a little bourbon?"

"What?"

"Just a little. On a piece of cotton to put in my cavity. My tooth hurts something awful."

Relieved at not having a juvenile alcoholic on her hands, Judge Ford prepared the home remedy. "Is that better? Good. You may go home now."

Home meant going to Baba. Baba loved her no matter what, and Turtle didn't care if the others thought she was the bomber—except Sandy. He was walking toward her right now, walking his bouncy walk, but not smiling. Sandy is disappointed in her, he thinks she hurt her own sister, he doesn't want to be friends anymore.

"How's my girl?" Sandy said, cupping his hand under her chin and lifting her head. "Whew! Hitting the bottle again?"

"It's just bourbon on cotton for my toothache."

"Yeah, I've heard that one before."

"Honest Saaan-eee." Turtle was pointing inside her wide-open mouth.

The doorman peered in. "Wow, that's some cavity, it looks like the Grand Canyon. Tomorrow morning you're going to see my dentist—no back talk. He's very gentle, you won't feel a thing. Promise you'll go?"

Turtle nodded.

Sandy smiled. "Good, then down to business. My wife's having a birthday tomorrow. I thought one of your gorgeous striped candles would make a swell present."

"There's only one candle left," Turtle replied. "It's the best of the lot. Six super colors. I spent a lot of time making it; that's why I wouldn't part with it. But since it's for your wife's birthday, Sandy, I'll let you have it for only five dollars. And I won't charge you sales tax."

"Try not to stick your fanny out so far," Angela said from her chair. Now that Sydelle Pulaski depended on crutches, she lurched clumsily, hobbled by old habits.

"Just keep reading those clues." The secretary straightened, shoulders back, stomach in, until her next step.

With their telephone switched off and Contagious Disease added to the No Visitors sign, the bomb victims had privacy at last. Sydelle had twice read the entire will aloud. Now Angela, her hands unbandaged, was reshuffling the collected clues.

GRAINS SPACIOUS GRACE GOOD HOOD
WITH BEAUTIFUL MAJESTIES FROM THY PURPLE
WAVES ON(NO) MOUNTAIN

"Again," Sydelle ordered. "Change them around and read either the word on or the word no; both together are confusing."

GOOD SPACIOUS GRAINS WITH GRACE
ON THY PURPLE MOUNTAIN HOOD WAVES
FROM MAJESTIES BEAUTIFUL

"Shh!" Someone was at the door. Angela picked up the note that was slipped underneath.

My darling Angela: I guess the sign on the door means I should stay away, too. I understand. We both need time to think things over. I'll wait. I love you—Denton

"What does it say, what does it say?" Sydelle pressed, but Angela read only the postscript aloud:

P.S. You have another admirer. Chris wants to give you and Ms. Pulaski one of our clues. (Flora Baumbach has seen it, too.) The word is plain.

"Like an airplane?" Sydelle asked.

"No, plain, like ordinary. Like the wide open plains."

"Plains, grains. Quick, Angela, read the clues again."

GOOD HOOD FROM SPACIOUS PLAIN
GRAINS ON WITH WITH BEAUTIFUL WAVES
GRACE THY PURPLE MOUNTAIN MAJESTIES

"That's it, Angela. We got it, we got it!" Sydelle could barely control her excitement. "The will said, *Sing in praise of this generous land. The will said, May God thy gold refine. America, Angela, America! Purple mountain majesties, Angela. Whoopee!*"

Fortunately Sydelle Pulaski was close to the bed when she threw her crutches in the air.

22 ♦ *Losers, Winners*

Saturday morning a new message was posted in the elevator:

*I, TURTLE WEXLER, CONFESS TO
THOSE FOUR BOMBS. I'M SORRY, IT
WAS A DUMB THING TO DO AND I
WON'T DO IT AGAIN. BUT! I AM NOT
THE BURGLAR AND I NEVER
MURDERED ANYBODY, EVER.*

YOUR FRIEND, TURTLE

*P.S. TO MAKE UP FOR SCARING YOU, I
WILL TREAT EVERYBODY HERE TO AN
EXQUISITE CHINESE CUISINE DINNER
WHEN I WIN THE INHERITANCE.*

"Poor Grace," Mr. Hoo said. "One daughter almost killed, the other one a bomber. Smart-aleck kid, first she blows up my kitchen, then she advertises my cuisine. Win the inheritance—ha! Maybe I'm lucky my son is a dumb jock."

"Boom," Madame Hoo said happily. She knew where they were going. Always on the day when Doug ate six eggs for breakfast, he ran around and around a big track and people

clapped and gave him a shiny medal. Doug was so proud of his medals. She would never take them, not even the gold one, not even if it took her two more years to pay to go back to China. No, she would never take Doug's medals, and she would never sell that wonderful clock with the mouse who wears gloves and points to the time.

"You must be out of your mind, Jake Wexler. Go to a track meet with all those people pointing at me, snickering, saying: 'Look, there she is, the mother of Cain and Abel.' I'm not even sure I have the nerve to show my face at the Westing house tonight."

"Come on, Grace, it'll do you good." The podiatrist urged his reluctant wife down the third floor hall. "Stop thinking about yourself for a change, think how poor Turtle must feel."

"Don't ever mention that child to me again, not after what she did to Angela. I never told you this, Jake, but I've always had a sinking sensation that the hospital mixed up the babies when Turtle was born."

"It's no wonder she wanted to blow us all up."

Grace's despair exploded in anger. "Oh, I get it, you're putting the blame on me. If you had given her a good talking to about kicking people when I asked, she might not have ended up a common criminal."

"Whatever became of that fun-loving woman I married, what was her name—Gracie Windkloppel?"

Grace quickly looked around to see if anyone had overheard that ugly name, but they were in the elevator, alone. "Oh, I know what people think," she complained. "Poor Jake Wexler, good guy, everybody's friend, married to that uppity

would-be decorator. Well, Angela's not going to have to scrimp and save to make ends meet; she's going to marry a real doctor. I'll see to that."

"Sure you will, Grace, you'll see that Angela doesn't marry a loser like her father." A real doctor, she says. A podiatrist is a "real" doctor—well, it is these days, but when he went to school it was different. He could have gone back, taken more courses, but he was married by then, a father—oh, who's he kidding, Gracie's right, he is a loser. Next she'll mention having to give up her family because she married a Jew—no, she never brings that up, Grace with all her faults would never do that.

The elevator door opened to the lobby. Grace turned to her silent, sad-eyed husband, the loser. "Oh, Jake, what's happening to us? What's happening to me? Maybe they're right, maybe I'm not a nice person."

Jake pressed the CLOSE DOOR button and took his sobbing wife into his arms. "It's all right, Gracie, we're going home."

The doors opened on the second floor. "Mom! What's the matter with her, daddy, she's crying? Gee, mom, I'm sorry, it was just a few fireworks." If her mother ever found out who the real bomber was, she'd really go to pieces.

Turtle looked even more like a turtle today with her sad little face peering out of the kerchief tied under her small chin. "Let go of the door, Turtle," Jake said. "And have a good time at the track meet. You, too, Mrs. Baumbach."

Track meet? They weren't going to a track meet. And they sure were not going to have a good time.

Grace was still sobbing on Jake's shoulder as he led her into their apartment.

"Mother, what's the matter? What's wrong with her, dad?"

"Nothing, Angela, your mother's just having a good cry. Why don't you and Ms. Pulaski leave us alone for a while."

"Come, Angela," Sydelle said, prodding her with the tip of one of her mismatched crutches. "We have some painting to do."

Angela looked back at the embracing couple; her father's face was buried in her weeping mother's tousled hair. They had not asked how she got home from the hospital (by taxi), they had not asked if she was still in pain (not much), they had not even peeked under the bandage to see if a scar was forming on her cheek (there was). Angela was on her own. Well, that's what she wanted, wasn't it? Yes, yes it was! She uttered a short laugh, and her hand flew up to the pain in her face.

"Do I look funny or something?"

"No, I wasn't laughing at you, Sydelle, I'd never laugh at you. It's just that suddenly everything seemed all right."

"It's all right, all right," her partner replied, unlocking the four locks on her apartment door. "Tonight's the night we're going to win it all."

Were they? The will said look for a name. They had a song, not a name.

"O beautiful for spacious skies," Sydelle began to sing, "For purple waves of grain."

"Not purple," Angela corrected her, "amber. For amber waves of grain."

Amber!

*

Judge Ford paced the floor. Tonight Sam Westing would wreak his revenge unless she could prevent it. If she was right, the person in danger was the former Mrs. Westing. And if Turtle was right about the wax dummy, Sam Westing himself might be there to watch the fun.

There was a knock on her door. The judge was surprised to see Denton Deere, even more surprised when he wheeled Chris Theodorakis into her apartment. "Hello, judge. Everybody else in the building is going to the track meet, it seems. I passed Sandy on the way out and he said you wouldn't mind having Chris for part of the afternoon. I've got to get back to the hospital."

"Hello, Judge F-Ford." Chris held out a steady hand which the judge shook.

"You're looking well, Chris."

"The m-medicine helped a lot."

"It's a big step forward," the intern said. Wrong word, the kid may never leave that wheelchair. "An even more effective medication is now in the developmental stage." That really sounded pompous. "Well, so long, Chris. See you tonight. Thanks, judge."

"He knows lots of b-big words," Chris said.

"Yes, he certainly does," Judge Ford replied. What was she going to do with this boy here? She had so much to think about, so much to plan.

"You c-can work, I'll birdwatch," Chris offered, wheeling to the window, his binoculars banging against his thin chest.

"Good idea." The judge returned to her desk to study the newspaper clippings. Mrs. Westing: a tall, thin woman. She may no longer be thin, but she would still be tall. About sixty years old. If Sam Westing's former wife was one of the heirs, she had to be Crow.

"Look!" Chris shouted, startling the judge into dropping her files to the floor. She rushed to his side, thinking he needed help. "Look up there, judge. Isn't it b-beautiful?"

High in the fall sky a V of geese was flying south. Yes, it was a beautiful sight. "Those are geese," the judge explained.

"C-Canada goose (*Branta c-canadensis*)," Chris replied.

The judge was impressed, but she had work to do. Stooping to gather the dropped clippings, she was confronted by the face of Sam Westing. The photograph had been taken fifteen years ago. Those piercing eyes, the Vandyke beard, that short beaked nose (like a turtle's). The wax dummy in the coffin had been molded in the former image of Sam Westing as he had looked fifteen years ago—not as he looked now. She searched the folder. No recent photographs, no hospital records, no death certificate, just the accident report from the state highway police: Dr. Sidney Sikes suffered a crushed leg and Samuel W. Westing had severe facial injuries. Facial injuries! It was the face that had disappeared fifteen years ago, not the man. Westing had a different face, a face remodeled by plastic surgery. A different face and a different name.

Now what? Her gaze rested on her charge at the window. Feeling her eyes, Chris turned around. The boy has a nice smile.

"I hope you are better at filling cavities than making false teeth," Turtle said, gripping the arms of the dentist's chair. In a glass cabinet against the wall three rows of dentures grinned at her with crooked teeth, overlapping teeth, notched teeth.

"Those faults are what makes the dentures look real," the dentist explained. "Nothing in nature is quite perfect, you know. Now, open your mouth wide. Wider."

"Ow!" Turtle screamed before the probe touched tooth.

"Just relax, young lady, I'll tell you when to say 'Ow!'"

Turtle tried to think about other things. False teeth, buckteeth—that rotten bucktoothed Barney Northrup stopped by this morning to tell the Wexlers they would have to pay for all the damage done by the bombs. Barney Northrup had called her parents "irresponsible" and had called her something worse, much worse. He sure was surprised by that kick; it was her hardest one ever.

"Now you can say 'Ow!'" The dentist unclipped the towel from her shoulder.

Turtle passed her tongue over the drilled tooth. She had not felt a thing, but the real pain was yet to come. Flora Baumbach was taking her to the beauty parlor to have her singed hair cut off.

College teams from five states competed in the first indoor track meet of the season, but the big event, the mile run, was won by a high-school senior.

"That's my boy, that's my Doug," Mr. Hoo shouted, one voice among thousands cheering the youngster on his victory lap.

Cameras flashed as Doug posed, smiling broadly, index fingers high in the air. "I owe it all to my dad," he told reporters, and cameras flashed again as Doug flung an arm around the proud Mr. Hoo. Just wait until the next Olympics, the inventor thought. With Doug's feet and my innersoles, he'll run them all to the ground.

Later that evening Madame Hoo, chattering in unintelligible Chinese, made it known that she wanted Doug to wear his prize to the Westing house. Standing on tiptoe she placed the ribbon over his bent head and patted the shiny gold medal in place on his chest. "Good boy," she said in English.

A saddened Sandy returned to apartment 4D. "Hi, Chris. Did you talk to him, judge?"

"Talk to whom?"

"Barney Northrup. He was waiting at the front door when I got back from the track meet, mad as a wet cat. Said he had lots of complaints about me—never being on duty, drinking on the job—lies like that. He fired me right on the spot. I told him you wanted to see him, figuring you might put in a good word so he'd let me stay on."

"No, Mr. McSouthers, I'm sorry, but I haven't seen Barney Northrup since I rented this apartment." Barney Northrup, was that Westing's disguise: false buckteeth, slick black wig, pasted-on moustache?"

"Well, it's not the first time I got fired for no cause." The dejected doorman blew his nose loudly in a Westing Man-Sized Hankie. "Hey Chris, bet you don't know the Latin name of the red-headed woodpecker."

That was a hard one. Chris had to say *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* very slowly.

"Some smart kid, hey, judge? Chris, the judge and I have a little business to discuss. Excuse us for a minute."

Judge Ford joined the doorman in the kitchen. "Our game plan is this, Mr. McSouthers. We give no answer. No answer at all. Our duty is to protect Westing's ex-wife."

"Crow?" Sandy guessed.

"That's right."

"There's something else that's been bothering me, judge. I know it sounds crazy, but, well, I found out Otis Amber doesn't live in the grocer's basement, and he's not as dumb as he pretends. He's a snoop and a troublemaker and I don't think he is who he says he is?"

"And who do you think Otis Amber is?" the judge asked.

"Sam Westing!"

Judge Ford leaned against the sink and pressed her head against the cabinet. If Sandy was correct, she had played right into the man's hands—Sam Westing's hands.

"C'mon Crow, you always like to get there early to open the door for people."

Crow had stopped in the middle of the steep road to stare up at the Westing house. "I've got a funny feeling that something evil is waiting for me up there, Otis. It's a bad house, full of misery and sin. He's still there, you know."

"Sam Westing is dead and buried. Come on, if we don't go we gotta give the money back, and we already spent it on the soup kitchen."

"I feel his presence, Otis. He's looking for a murderer, Violet's murderer."

"Stop scaring yourself with crazy notions, you sound like you're on the bottle again."

Crow strode ahead.

"I didn't mean that, Crow, honest. Look up there at that moon. Isn't it romantic?"

"Somebody's in real danger, Otis, and I think it's me."

23 ♦ *Strange Answers*

Lawyer Plum was there and one pair of heirs when Otis Amber danced into the game room. "He-he-he, the Turtle's lost its tail, I see."

Turtle slumped low in her chair. Flora Baumbach thought the short, sleek haircut was adorable, especially the way it swept forward over her little chin, but Turtle did not want to look adorable. She wanted to look mean.

The dressmaker fumbled past the wad of money in her handbag. "Here, Alice, I thought you might like to see this."

Turtle glanced at the old snapshot. It's Baba, all right, except younger. Same dumb smile. Suddenly she sat upright.

"That's my daughter, Rosalie," Flora Baumbach said. "She must have been nine or ten when that picture was taken."

Rosalie was squat and square and squinty, her protruding tongue was too large for her mouth, her head lolled to one side. "I think I would have liked her, Baba," Turtle said.

