

I turned my attention to Bessie. “Just what is it you want me to do?”

“I have a friend at Oxford University. An ichthyologist. Right now, she’s running an extremely promising experiment. If it lives up to its promise, it will be a significant upgrade to her group – at least in the eyes of the ichthyology community.”

“So where would I come in?”

“Someone’s sabotaging the experiments. We need you to find out who.”

“I can’t do it, Bessie. This is not like before I became Director. For one thing, I can’t just run over to the sleuthing site and back to my office. You’re talking about Oxford University on the Chesapeake Bay’s Eastern Shore – a nearly three hour drive from here. I’d have to stay there overnight until the culprit is caught.”

Pie said, “We know. We’ve arranged a nice bed and breakfast for you.”

“That’s just wonderful. And how’m I going to tell Alex that he’ll have to do without his conjugal rights for the duration? And let us consider *my* conjugal rights.”

Bessie said, “Your conjugal rights can wait a week. And I was just talking to Alex. He said it would be okay if you weren’t gone more than about a week. And if it was more than a week, you’d be home over the weekend.”

“Bessie, be realistic! Pie used to have my job. You know how much time it takes. I can’t just walk off.”

Pie said, “Don said he can cover for you.”

I glared at Don. “You Judas!”

Don laughed.