

A Game of Chess

By Karen Harbert

The beloved relative of a friend is killed in a so-called 'hunting accident,' and then the person responsible for the shooting attempts to obtain his property from the grieving widow. Jennifer, Alex and Sabrina combine forces to solve his murder, aided by a remarkable young lady named Brynn, and Roz, the devoted Chesapeake Bay Retriever.

"The guy – his name is Jared Rance – was an acquaintance of Uncle Doug. He has a partner whose business is training retrievers. Uncle Doug has – had – his own training center; the other guy has to rent space or use public places. They had made several overtures to Uncle Doug about going into partnership, but Doug wasn't interested. He said he'd heard rumors of harsh training procedures, possibly even abuse, and he didn't want his reputation linked with someone of questionable character.

"But still, like some men do their bonding and negotiations on the golf course, they hunted together from time to time and compared their dogs' performances. Uncle Doug told me once that his were always happier, more willing retrievers. That day they were out in a sort of mucky area as they headed out. Jared said Uncle Doug was ahead of him, and Roz dropped behind – he said she stopped to squat – and then raced to catch up with him and slammed into Jared's leg. He slipped in the mud and fell down. His shotgun went off and the blast hit Uncle Doug in the back of the neck. I've been suspicious of that story all along, but the investigation was closed and marked accidental, he lost his license for the rest of the season, and that was it. But what still bothers me, our Chesapeakes are very much one-man dogs, very loyal, so it's very unlikely that the dog would have run into the other guy even accidentally."

"Rebecca, you're right, the whole story is very suspicious."