

Down on the Farm

The oviraptors are herded into the chute by Tiffin. Tiffin is a black and white border collie, but she doesn't have any problem transferring herding instincts from sheep to dinosaurs. The oviraptors click at each other when they're distressed and the yard sounds like a geiger counter. It smells musky and faintly of ammonia, the familiar oviraptor smell, although they aren't dirty creature. They groom like cats. Or maybe more like pigeons, if the pigeons had almost no feathers. I grab the oviraptor at the head of the chute, hoisting her into the air by the tail, and swipe hormone gel across her cloaca and then let her go. Ravished, she scuttles towards the egg house, hormonally activated to lay eggs for another month.

It's a strange way to make a living.

It helps to be quick, because the oviraptors are, and their muzzles are more like beaks than soft things and they hurt when they get you. Funky looking things, sort of like dwarf, leathery skinned ostriches with eyebrows and ridge crests of thin feathers. People are always surprised at how birdlike they are. Of course, the truth is that birds are really dinosaurlike.

It's not a moment when I want my cell phone to ring. "Sabiston Eggs," I say.

"Grace Sabiston?"

"Yeah?" I hold the phone between my chin and my ear and grab a brindle dinosaur tail and haul it up into the air to swipe hormone gel on it's ass.

"This is Bobby Kestler."

Bobby Kestler is one of my distributors. He doesn't usually call me at seven-fifteen in the morning but distributors, like farmers, start their days early. "Grace? I have to cancel my orders."

The next oviraptor screeches just then. "What did you say?" I ask, grimly holding up a squirming oviraptor. My right arm is really much stronger than it used to be but I'm getting bursitis. "You have to cancel an order?"

"No," he says, "all my orders. The FDA just put a moratorium on food products from genetically induced animals."

"Fuck," I say. "Bobby, they can't do that. What are they going to do about things like ever-ripe tomatoes? Tobacco mosaic resistant cantaloupe?"

"Vegetables aren't animals," Bobby says. "Look, I'm sorry, but I've got make a bunch of calls."

"What about cows?" I say. "They genetically modify cows. They genetically modify everything."

"Genetic modification is one thing, creating species is another, at least according to the FDA."

"Hell, half the DNA in my oviraptors isn't even from dinosaurs, its from chickens."

"Grace," Bobby says, exasperated, "I'm not the goddamn FDA, argue with them." The connection clicks in my ear.

