

A League of Her Own

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Have you ever noticed that some of the most famous characters in the spy/mystery genre have the initials J.B.? Well, Mort and Seth have, and they're getting set to tease Jessica about it in this Murder, She Wrote Slice of Life!

"I'm amazed you haven't gotten the world's biggest migraine from dealing with some of your fans over the years, Jess."

"Why would I? Most of them are as nice as they can be."

"I'm not talking 'bout how nice or rude they are. I'm talking 'bout how most of them seem to forget that you have a name."

"They know I have a name!"

"Really? They've got me fooled. I spent the evening with you at that awards banquet, and nearly every person who came up to you asking for an autograph called you by your initials."

"Seth, that's how I'm known as an author. I'm J.B. Fletcher."

"They ought to remember you're *Jessica*. All night at that shindig, it was J.B. this and J.B. that, nary a Jessica, a Mrs. Fletcher, or even a Beatrice out of a one of 'em. I swear, Jess, if I was in your shoes, I'd go crazier than an outhouse rat hearing my initials ringing in my ears."

"Seth..."

"What?"

"You're ranting."

"Don't be ridiculous, woman, I don't rant! I just tell the truth about what I see, that's all!"

"What are you ranting about this time, Doc?"

Their conversation-slash-argument interrupted by the shutting of the back door and a familiar voice, Jessica Fletcher and Seth Hazlitt turned to see Mort Metzger coming in out of the pouring rain that was currently deluging Cabot Cove. The sheriff shrugged off his wet jacket and hat and Jessica immediately came over to him, guiding him to the table where Seth sat.

"See?" she asked the doctor pointedly as she poured Mort a cup of coffee. "I'm not the only one who knows that you rant."

Seth shook his head at his two friends. "Sometimes I wish the two of you had mute buttons."

"Wishful thinkin' there, Doc," Mort said, accepting his coffee with a grateful smile at Jessica. "There's no muting a born-and-bred New Yorker, and there ain't no way you can shut Mrs. F up for long – no offense, Mrs. F."

Jessica waved a hand as she sat back down. "None taken. I've heard much worse."

"Ayuh, like J.B., J.B., J.B. over and over again."

"Are you going to start that again?"

A bewildered frown puckered Mort's forehead. "Am I missing something here?"

Jessica smiled with a slight roll of her eyes. "It's nothing, Mort. Seth is just going on about how annoying it is to him that most of my fans call me J.B. instead of Jessica."

Mort shrugged. "So what? That's your pen name, isn't it?"

Seth ignored the face full of *I told you so* that Jessica was shooting him and fixed his attention on the sheriff. "I don't care if it is her pen name; it's not her real name. It's like people expect her to be this superwoman detective all the time when they call her J.B."

Mort grinned. "Well, she kinda is."

"Mort, don't be silly! I am not!"

"You are too. Besides, it's kind of an honor to have the initials J.B. and be a detective-slash-spy nowadays."

Jessica raised an eyebrow. "Really? Where did you hear about this?"

Mort chuckled. "It's a joke among those of us who like detective stories and spy movies. Everyone who does will tell you that all the best spies – or detectives, as some of 'em are – have the initials J.B."

"Like who?"

"James Bond. Jason Bourne. Jack Bauer." The sheriff's eyes crinkled in a grin. "And Jessica Beatrice."

Jessica began to laugh. "Mort, for heaven's sake! I may have a gift for perception and for solving crimes, but I am nowhere near on par with those characters."

"I don't know 'bout that, Jess," Seth spoke up, finally getting into the act. "I think you'd give all three of those guys a run for their money any old day."

"Yeah. I'm a Bond fan from way back, but put him and you together on an espionage mission, and you'd make him look like an incompetent wuss 'cause you'd solve the mystery and catch the terrorist or killer before he so much as kissed his first girl."

"Considering that Pierce Brosnan hasn't done much for Bond's image in the last few movies, that's not a big stretch there, Mort," Seth quipped.

Jessica wiped tears of laughter from her eyes, from laughing at the whole topic of the conversation and the two men shooting off zingers like pop guns. "You two make me sound like I'm ranked among an elite class of spies."

"No, Mrs. F, those guys don't even compare to you."

"Ayuh, Jess. You're in a league of your own. J.B. – Just Brilliant." The three of them laughed on as Jessica hugged the two guys, grateful that she had friends like this to love her and make her laugh.