

You find Professor Childers in his office in the Department of Linguistics. He is a small man with long, thin white hair brushed back on his head.

"It's tragic about DuMont's disappearance," Childers says. "He was one of the great scientists of our time. And I think he was on the verge of being able to talk to the whales."

"Could that really be possible?" you ask.

"Indeed, if the whales are ready to talk and we are ready to listen. But mind you they won't suddenly start saying 'noodle' or 'give me fish.' They may already be talking, and we are failing to understand them. They may already have a highly structured language, but you would have as much trouble understanding them as you would a recording of an ancient Egyptian speeded up to three times and played backward. Also, assume that words have different meanings depending on pitch and so forth. Also, assume the speaker has never been on land. Perhaps you begin to get my point?"

"Where do you think DuMont is?" you ask.

Childers pauses to stroke his chin before replying. "Well, I know that if the Russians succeeded in capturing him and tried to use him for communicating with the whales for their own purposes, he would try to protect the whales from them."

"Is there any chance he would have gone with them on purpose?" you ask.

"Look, my friend," Childers says. "What would you do?"

"I'm not here to speculate about what I would do," you reply. "I'm here to find out what DuMont did."