



LETHAL TARGET

JANICE CANTORE

PRAISE FOR JANICE CANTORE

“Readers who crave suspense will devour Cantore’s engaging crime drama while savoring the sweet romantic swirl. . . . *Crisis Shot* kicks off this latest series with a literal bang.”

ROMANTIC TIMES

“A gripping crime story filled with complex and interesting characters and a plot filled with twists and turns.”

THE SUSPENSE ZONE on *Crisis Shot*

“A pulsing crime drama with quick beats and a plot that pulls the reader in . . . [and] probably one of the most relevant books I’ve read in a while. . . . This is a suspenseful read ripped from the front page and the latest crime drama. I highly recommend.”

RADIANT LIT on *Crisis Shot*

“Cantore, a retired police officer, shares her love for suspense, while her experience on the force lends credibility and depth to her writing. Her characters instantly become the reader’s friends.”

CBA CHRISTIAN MARKET on *Crisis Shot*

“An intriguing story that could be pulled from today’s headlines.”

MIDWEST BOOK REVIEW on *Crisis Shot*

“The final volume of Cantore’s Cold Case Justice trilogy wraps the series with a gripping thriller that brings readers into the mind of a police officer involved in a fatal shooting case. . . . Cantore offers true-to-life stories that are relevant to today’s news.”

LIBRARY JOURNAL on *Catching Heat*

“Cantore manages to balance quick-paced action scenes with developed, introspective characters to keep the story moving along steadily. The issue of faith arises naturally, growing out of the characters’ struggles and history. Their romantic relationship is handled with a very light touch . . . but the police action and mystery solving shine.”

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY on *Catching Heat*

“Questions of faith shape the well-woven details, the taut action scenes, and the complex characters in Cantore’s riveting mystery.”

BOOKLIST on *Burning Proof*

“[In] the second book in Cantore’s Cold Case Justice series . . . the romantic tension between Abby and Luke seems to be growing stronger, which creates anticipation for the next installment.”

ROMANTIC TIMES on *Burning Proof*

“This is the start of a smart new series for retired police officer-turned-author Cantore. Interesting procedural details, multilayered characters, lots of action, and intertwined mysteries offer plenty of appeal.”

BOOKLIST on *Drawing Fire*

“Cantore’s well-drawn characters employ Christian values and spirituality to navigate them through tragedy, challenges, and loss. However, layered upon the underlying basis of faith is a riveting police-crime drama infused with ratcheting suspense and surprising plot twists.”

SHELF AWARENESS on *Drawing Fire*

“*Drawing Fire* rips into the heart of every reader. One dedicated homicide detective. One poignant cold case. One struggle for truth. . . . Or is the pursuit revenge?”

DIANN MILLS, bestselling author of the FBI: Houston series

“This hard-edged and chilling narrative rings with authenticity. . . . Fans of police suspense fiction will be drawn in by her accurate and dramatic portrayal.”

LIBRARY JOURNAL on *Visible Threat*

“Janice Cantore provides an accurate behind-the-scenes view of law enforcement and the challenges associated with solving cases. Through well-written dialogue and effective plot twists, the reader is quickly drawn into a story that sensitively yet realistically deals with a difficult topic.”

CHRISTIAN LIBRARY JOURNAL on *Visible Threat*

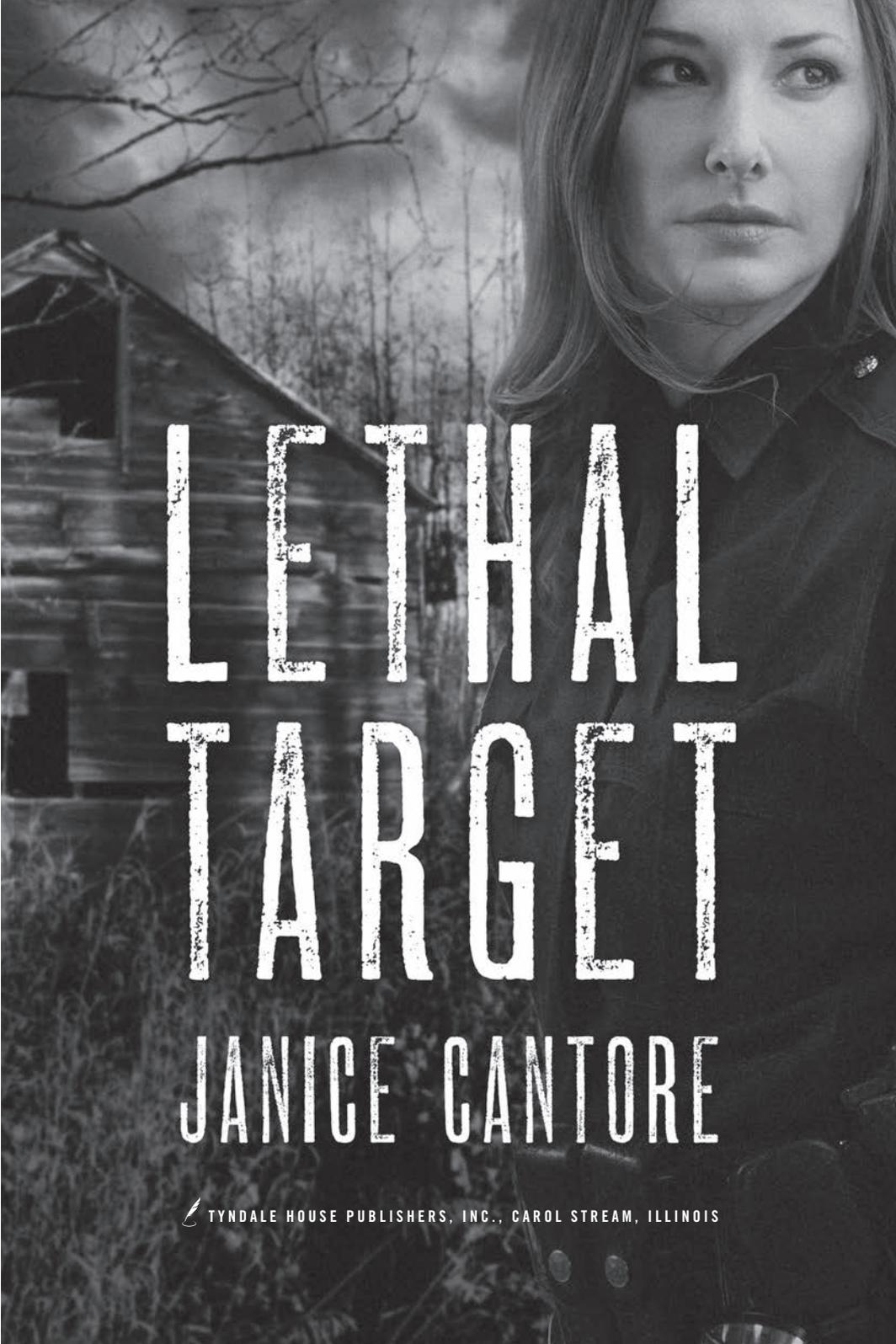
“[Cantore’s] characters resonate with an authenticity not routinely found in police dramas. Her knack with words captures Jack’s despair and bitterness and skillfully documents his spiritual journey.”

ROMANTIC TIMES on *Critical Pursuit*

THE LINE OF DUTY SERIES



BOOK TWO



LETHAL TARGET

JANICE CANTORE



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Lethal Target

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Romans 13:4 in the epigraph and chapter 23 is a paraphrase written by the author.

Lethal Target is a work of fiction. Where real people, events, establishments, organizations, or locales appear, they are used fictitiously. All other elements of the novel are drawn from the author's imagination.

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The dream was always so vivid to Tess. The sound of a struggle, the screams of fear and anger, then the sharp report of a gunshot—they were all completely real. It was as if she'd been there, but of course she hadn't. The fake echo of sounds didn't wake her up. Even in her sleep, it was the blood that woke her, the thud of a body hitting the pavement and the spatter of blood all over the sidewalk.

Tess's eyes shot open. She sucked in a shuddering breath as the nightmare faded. Feeling sticky with sweat, she sat up and threw the blanket off. She knew it would be no use to try to go back to sleep.

She placed her feet flat on the floor and sat with her head

in her hands as her heart rate settled down to normal. It had been more than a decade since the nightmare had shredded her sleep and she'd thought she was well past it. Why now?

It had started years ago, on her birthday. The nightmare smashed her sleep in some form or another for a long time after the incident that sparked it. The PD shrink had said it was a kind of PTSD that would fade with time, and it had. Here she was in a new home, in a new place, miles away from Long Beach, years older, so much perspective behind her, and she never expected the dream to resurface.

She was wrong.

It was a little after four in the morning. Chief of Police Tess O'Rourke flipped on the lights and decided that her day would start now. She showered, scrubbing her head with shampoo, working to wash the remnants of the dream away. There was no date on the calendar that affected Tess more than her birthday, June 1. Birthday—one day out of the year to celebrate however many years a person has been alive. Some people hated it because they hated the thought of getting older, but aging never bothered Tess. It was something else about the day that tortured her.

Her birthday was also the anniversary of her father's murder. He was shot and killed while on duty on her sixteenth birthday. He died on a dirty sidewalk in Long Beach. For Tess, the day was never a celebration. It was a day to get through, nothing more.

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The phone rang when Tess was halfway through her first cup of coffee, studying a folder of paperwork she'd received from

the DEA. Routine helped dispel the fog that came after the dream. The routine of police work was good medicine.

Caller ID told her it was Becky Jonkey, the graveyard patrol officer. Tess frowned. Becky would be EOW in a little over an hour; her call now meant something unexpected had happened. She grabbed her phone.

“O’Rourke here.”

“Chief, I’ve got a situation. A dead teenager. Looks like a drug overdose.”

Tess heard the uncertainty in her voice. “Looks like?”

“It’s complicated.”

“I’ll be right there. Address?”

Tess wrote down the address and closed the folder she’d been studying. It was Friday morning and, because of all the hours she’d put in at work so far this week, technically her day off, but she’d learned that the chief of police was never really off duty. And she didn’t mind. Police work was her life, especially on her birthday, and the lines between off shift and on shift were thoroughly blurred already.

Besides, she’d asked to be notified of any death appearing to be drug related. Drugs, specifically synthetic opiates, were the black plague of the twenty-first century. *Drug overdose* was becoming an all-too-common phrase. There was a growing crisis in the Rogue Valley of opiate addiction and death by opiate overdose. Officers in Medford, forty minutes away and the largest city near Rogue’s Hollow, carried Narcan to deal with the issue. Tess considered whether issuing Narcan was feasible for her tiny department. Given a small-town budget, it would be difficult.

The paperwork she’d been studying concerned drugs,

homemade and illegal opioids. Tess had arrested a fugitive last summer, Roger Marshall, a man who'd been smuggling drugs into Oregon from California. She and one of her officers had helped to develop the intelligence that enabled the DEA to make some big arrests. As a result, they were invited to take part in a large-scale warrant service in the early morning hours this coming Monday, led by the DEA, just over the border in Yreka, California. It was the culmination of nearly a year's worth of investigation.

But the raid wasn't until Monday. Today she had a death to investigate.

Her uniform was at the station, so she decided on jeans, a polo shirt, and her duty belt. As she dressed, Tess considered the address Becky had given her for the call, a high-priced location. She wasn't that familiar with this particular number, but it indicated to her that this wasn't some street person. The homes on Broken Wheel were the most expensive in Rogue's Hollow. Was that why it was complicated?

A passing glance at the digital clock on her mantel, one that also gave the temperature and the date, gave her pause.

It was bad enough the sun was just dawning on her birthday; now she was heading to a death. She'd never be free of the clutches of this day. It was a cool, dry morning, and Tess shivered with foreboding as she locked up her house and climbed into her patrol SUV.