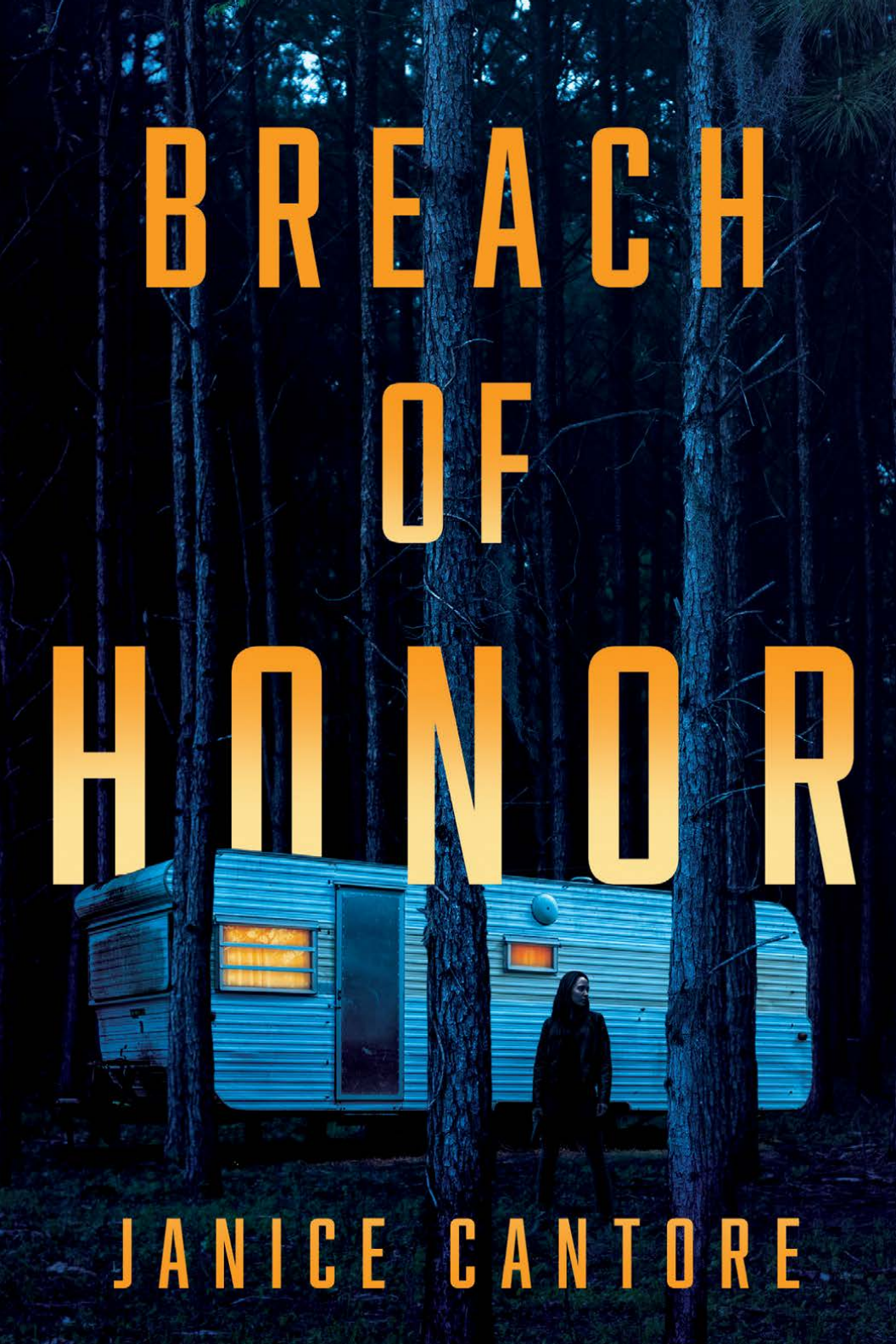


# BREACH OF HONOR

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark jacket and pants, stands in a dark forest. She is positioned in front of a light blue, corrugated metal trailer. The trailer has a door and two windows, both of which are illuminated from within, casting a warm yellow glow. The forest is dense with tall, thin trees, and the overall atmosphere is dark and mysterious. The title 'BREACH OF HONOR' is overlaid on the image in large, bold, yellow-orange letters.

JANICE CANTORE

## PRAISE FOR JANICE CANTORE

“Cantore’s fast-paced and unpredictable suspense kept me burning the midnight oil for the next page and the next. Romantic suspense doesn’t get better than this.”

DIANN MILLS, BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *AIRBORNE* AND *FATAL STRIKE*

“*Breach of Honor* is one of the best stories I’ve read in a long time! Pulling on her years of expertise in law enforcement, Janice takes the reader on an edge-of-the-seat journey that makes you willing to lose sleep to find out what happens next! This one is on my keeper list and I’m eagerly awaiting the next book from Janice.”

LYNETTE EASON, BESTSELLING, AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF THE DANGER NEVER SLEEPS SERIES

“I can’t remember the last time I’ve been so invested in the outcome of a story, or so satisfied with its conclusion. With *Breach of Honor*, Janice Cantore has crafted an adventure filled with brutal crimes, heartbreaking injustice, shocking twists, a gentle romance, and hard-won faith. Words like *page-turning*, *breath-stealing*, and *pulse-racing*, while accurate, don’t begin to do it justice.”

LYNN H. BLACKBURN, AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF THE DIVE TEAM INVESTIGATIONS SERIES

“In *Breach of Honor*, Janice Cantore tells a complex tale of deceit and back-room deals that leaves you wondering who the good guys actually are. . . . I could not wait to get to the end and see how it all tied together.”

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“A fast-paced thriller with a strong Christian message . . .  
[*Cold Aim*] is an exciting and thought-provoking book.”

*CHRISTIAN NOVEL REVIEW*

“A complex tale of murder, deceit, and faith challenges,  
complete with multifaceted characterizations, authentic  
details, and action scenes, even a subtle hint of romance . . .  
[all] well integrated into a suspenseful story line that keeps  
pages turning until the end.”

*MIDWEST BOOK REVIEW ON LETHAL TARGET*

“Well-drawn characters and steady action make for a fun  
read.”

*WORLD MAGAZINE ON LETHAL TARGET*

“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.”

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“*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?”

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*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*







BREACH  
OF  
HONOR



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BREACH  
OF  
HONOR

JANICE CANTORE



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Dedicated to domestic violence awareness.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

[thehotline.org](http://thehotline.org)

*“Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly,  
Thou has brought me to the valley of vision,  
where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights;  
hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Thy glory.*

*Let me learn by paradox  
that the way down is the way up,  
that to be low is to be high,  
that the broken heart is the healed heart . . .  
that the valley is the place of vision. . . .  
Let me find Thy light in my darkness.”*

**ARTHUR BENNETT, THE VALLEY OF VISION**

*“You can never learn that Christ is all you  
need, until Christ is all you have.”*

**CORRIE TEN BOOM**







PART  
ONE



## CHAPTER 1

**A** *dam-5, do you copy?"*

"No, I didn't copy." Leah Radcliff grimaced before grabbing the mike and asking dispatch to repeat the emergency call.

*"Can you 10-9?"*

Preoccupied, her thoughts still simmering over the latest argument she'd had with her husband, Brad, Leah's mind was not on policing the city of Table Rock, Oregon.

*"T-4, domestic violence call on Spring Street. Several reporting parties. Medics are also en route. Respond code 3."*

Leah clenched a fist and almost screamed in frustration. She hated domestic violence calls. In fact, she'd rather handle a three-week-old dead body call than a domestic violence situation any day, but especially tonight.

The tornado of emotions that swirled around domestic violence made her head hurt. Anger, fear, accusations, and palpable

pain often threatened to rip her off her own emotional foundation. She hesitated, pondering some way to avoid the call, but had no choice—it was in her beat, and she was in routine patrol mode a mere three blocks away. She let dispatch know she would handle the call.

Pressing the accelerator, she flipped on the emergency lights and siren and headed for the address given.

In a perfect world, *domestic* and *violence* were two words that wouldn't belong together. In reality, this was a typical summertime call. It had been a hot late-July day. Tempers were frayed, and there was a full moon. She'd had a training officer once who called them wife-beater moons. Maybe that was Brad's excuse.

Leah knew what domestic violence looked like in the field. The fight within herself was what it looked like in her own home. Brad had been furious. It wasn't the first time his hair-trigger temper scared her. Even now her stomach roiled over thoughts of just how frightening her husband could be.

In their two years of marriage this unpleasant side of her husband had surfaced more than Leah cared to think about . . . or admit.

*“Adam-5, be advised: calling party says a subject named Carlos has beaten his wife severely.”*

Dispatch jarred her back to the here and now, and she pushed Brad and their fights as far away as she could.

“Is he still on scene?” Leah asked.

*“Unknown. Suspect is described as a male white, late twenties, thin build.”*

Leah turned the corner onto Spring as she heard another unit answer up to assist. He'd be there in a few minutes. She slowed as she neared the address. This was a cluster of low-income housing units, and by the apartment number given, Leah knew the building she wanted was in the back, down a

long driveway. She turned in to the drive and started down. A tall, lanky man was at the bottom of the drive, in front of the building Leah guessed housed the apartment number she was looking for. He raised both arms, crossing them back and forth frantically when he saw her.

She advised dispatch that she'd arrived on scene, jammed the car in park, grabbed her nightstick, and stepped out into a stifling hot night. The air was heavy and there was no breeze.

The man approached, clearly agitated. He was older, with gray hair at the temples, barefoot, phone in one hand, wearing shorts and a button-down shirt with none of the buttons fastened. Sweat beaded on his forehead. Leah could hear the South heavy in his voice when he spoke.

"He beat her. He beat her like a dog," he said, breathless.

"Where is he now?"

"Don't know. I hollered at him. He ran off. I was 'sleep. The screams woke me. Nobody should do a woman like that—nobody. You got to hurry. My wife is with her."

"You are . . . ?" Leah asked as she followed him into the courtyard, wiping sweat from her brow with the back of her hand.

She'd been here many times before. The complex was filled mostly with hardworking people, but mixed in were enough troublemakers now and again to make certain that the police were called often.

"Neighbor, Michael Haynes. I called. My wife is Lavinia."

It was well after 1 a.m., but lights were on in almost all the apartments and people milled about the fringe of the property. The complex was made up of several independent buildings, with four forming a square around a common courtyard. Concrete walkways surrounded the sparse courtyard, which contained a tired lawn, a couple of trees, and two plain wood benches on either side. Next to one bench she saw a woman she



took to be Michael's wife bending over someone seated on the ground, who was half-leaning against the bench.

"Over here," Michael said. "Here."

Leah stepped toward the victim, coming up short when she saw the crumpled, battered figure on the ground. The beaten woman looked more like a girl, really, with her small frame. Her eyes were swollen shut and her face resembled raw hamburger. A low keening sound came from her, but Leah couldn't tell if it was a moan or the whistle of her breath through an obviously broken nose.

"Look what he did to her," Lavinia said. "He beat her within an inch of her life."

For a second Leah was paralyzed. Her knees threatened to buckle. She'd seen worse . . . but just barely. This hit home.

"I'm trying to stop the bleeding . . ." Lavinia turned her face toward Leah, tears in her eyes, bloody towel in one hand while she held the injured victim's left hand with the other. Her expression begged Leah to fix it.

Biting her tongue and tasting blood, Leah snapped out of it, pulled gloves out of her back pocket, and knelt down on one knee. But there wasn't much she could do. There was nothing spurting, no arterial bleeding. There was a lot of blood and horrific damage to the victim's face that she had no way to fix. It was pitted, cratered. What did this? she wondered. This was more than fists alone.

The victim's right hand caught her eye, her bloody fist clenching something. A pencil? A pen?

"Can you hear me?" Leah asked.

"Alex. Her name is Alex."

Leah nodded, but even addressing her by name got no response. A siren approaching told her that medics would soon be there to take over.

She turned her attention to the weeping Lavinia, placed a comforting hand on her shoulder. “Medics are close,” she said gently. “You’ve done all you can.”

“The poor girl . . . she’s been a good neighbor.”

“And you’re being a good neighbor. What’s her last name?”

“Porter. Alex Porter.”

“Where is Carlos, the guy who did this?”

Lavinia’s eyes darkened; she shook her head. “That worthless fellow, he ran off. I didn’t see where he went. We just wanted to help her.”

Leah heard the bounce and rattle of a gurney rolling across the concrete. She pulled Lavinia and Michael away from the victim to give the EMTs room to work. Relieved that the jarring image of the victim was no longer her concern, Leah readied her notebook to take down the witness information. Walking up with the medics was her backup, Clint Tanner, a low-key guy Leah barely knew. He had a couple of years more on the job than her, but he worked days, not the late-night shift, so they’d never worked together. Tonight he was filling in for someone.

“How can I help?” he asked, glancing at the medical activity going on around the victim.

“I just got a sketch of what happened,” Leah told him. “I don’t know where the suspect went. See if any of these people can help.”

He nodded. Leah’s attention went back to Lavinia. She and her husband had their heads together. They were praying.

Leah cleared her throat to get their attention. “Do you know Carlos’s full name?”

Lavinia blew her nose. “He’s Porter too, but they’re separated.”

Michael snorted and Leah turned toward him.

“That no-count. Alex has tried to get rid of him. She stays

in that apartment yonder.” He pointed to an apartment across the courtyard. The door was open, and all the lights were on. “He just shows up once in a while, for money, you know?”

“Are there any children?”

Michael shook his head.

“Any guns or other weapons that you know of?”

Again, a headshake.

The medics had the victim loaded up ready to transport.

“How’s she doing?” Leah asked.

One medic’s expression told her more than words could. Leah felt sick to her stomach.

“Can we go to the hospital with her?” Lavinia asked. “I’ll call her mother.”

“If you wish. I’ll be there as soon as I sort things out here.”

The couple left and Leah located Tanner. He was talking to some animated people who must have witnessed the fight. They pointed this way and that, obviously affected by what they had seen. She waited a beat for him to finish.

“Tanner, let’s check out the apartment.”

He nodded and followed her. “Guy’s full name is Carlos Porter, around twenty-six years old. He’s the estranged husband. Has a possible address in West Table Rock, but no one here saw which direction he ran.”

“So he doesn’t live here,” Leah said, half to herself. She couldn’t concentrate, kept seeing the victim’s face in her mind’s eye.

When they reached the apartment’s open door, she stopped. Obviously a fight had taken place. What sparse furniture was in the room was broken or torn. Just inside the door, on the floor, Leah saw something bloody. As she looked closer, she realized she was looking at a hard-plastic model horse, a realistic scale model with pointed ears and a long tail. All of the

legs were broken off, and that stopped her cold. This was what he'd beaten Alex with. Carlos most likely reached for the most convenient weapon. And it was probably a piece of a broken leg that Alex had clenched in her fist. Anger welled up inside Leah and she clenched her own fists, shoulder aching where Brad had squeezed it a few hours ago hard enough to leave a bruise.

Tanner stepped around her and inside the apartment first. Frowning, he asked, "Do you hear water running?"

Leah tore her eyes away from the horse. They'd need to collect it as evidence, but she did hear water running.

"Bathroom's in the back." They started toward the rear of the apartment.

Tanner reached the door first and lurched inside. "It's the guy!" he said, alarm in his voice.

Leah followed him in and saw the reason for his quick reaction. A male subject was in the tub, head slumped on his chest, eyes closed. Water ran down the drain—blood-tinged water. He'd cut his wrists.

Tanner shoved the shower curtain out of the way and grabbed the guy's shoulders. He fit the description of Carlos Porter.

"Get some towels," Tanner said as he struggled with the deadweight. There was scant room in the tight space for Leah to move in and help.

She pulled a towel from the sink as Tanner draped the limp body across the bathroom floor.

"Here, take this," she said. "Is he breathing?"

"Barely." Tanner felt for a pulse at the neck, then took the towel. He wrapped it around one wrist, then checked the other. "Weak pulse. He cut the wrong way; bleeding is slowing."

Leah saw that. Keying her mike, she explained the situation and asked for a second ambulance. She opened the small

cupboard under the sink and found another towel. This one she wrapped around the man's other wrist. The bleeding looked to have stopped, but she applied pressure anyway.

Squinting as sweat ran down her face, burning her eyes, Leah raised her arm and wiped the side of her face with her shoulder sleeve, a dull ache reminding her of her injury. Because of the warm night it was very humid in the tight space. She leaned over Carlos and Tanner to turn off the faucet, watching the last of the pink water disappear.

"What a coward," Tanner said.

"What?" Leah jerked around to face him. *Who was he calling a coward?*

"This guy. Any man who hits a woman is a coward. And he didn't have the guts to deal with the consequences of his actions."

Leah considered that as they waited for the paramedics. *Coward.* She agreed with him. But there was a disconnect. Her husband could never be called a coward. He was a cop—a good one. Yet he'd smacked her more than a few times in the last two years.

Was this her future? What she'd seen in the courtyard? Broken and beaten by Brad after he grabbed for the closest weapon?

*No, she told herself. My situation is entirely different. Brad was sorry. It was an accident. It's not the same thing.*

+ + +

At the station, as they filed their reports at the end of the shift, Leah was thankful that Tanner was low-key. He simply did his work, no useless chatter. He filed the evidence and the part of the report about finding Carlos in the tub. When they'd left



the hospital, Alex was hanging on by a thread while Carlos was stable. Michael and Lavinia were still there, trying to comfort the girl, who was now comatose. Leah appreciated the couple and told them so. People not family were seldom so warm and caring.

Since there was a chance Alex might die, they'd handled the call like an attempted murder. Homicide investigators had been called out, and they did their own investigation at the scene. As a result, Clint and Leah had been on the call for the whole night.

Leah didn't believe Carlos meant to kill himself. Yes, he'd lost a lot of blood, but the cuts were shallow and across the veins, so the bleeding was easy to stop. She believed he did it for sympathy—after all, that's what a coward would do.

As she finished the last bit of the paperwork, she looked up at Tanner across the room. Her tired mind wandered, and she considered what she knew about him. He wasn't one of Brad's friends; therefore he wasn't in her social circle. She'd never heard any criticism of his work, just knew that he had the nickname Saint Tanner because he didn't drink, not even a beer after work. Brad always said you couldn't trust a guy who was a teetotaler. Leah didn't completely agree with that adage and at times thought Brad drank altogether too much. He blamed it on the job. She had the same job and couldn't keep up with him.

Saint Tanner wasn't a bad nickname; some guys had worse. Like Marvin Sapp. His was Pinky because of his complexion—any exertion caused his face to turn bright pink. Leah thought Saint was much better than Pinky.

Tanner was older than she was, but not by much. He had dark-brown hair with a hint of red, but she doubted he'd be called a redhead. His eyes were a pale color, almost green but more hazel, really.

He was handsome, she decided, in an understated way. Strong jaw, classic features, well-built. She did know that he played on the department basketball team. Though she herself had played ball in college, she'd never watched a department game. Brad hated basketball, liked to say the only real sport for men was football.

Tanner wore a neatly trimmed mustache, and right now there was dark stubble on his chin. She noticed that he had a long, light scar running from his right eyebrow down the side of his face toward his ear. She wondered about that.

She didn't know if he was married or not. He wasn't wearing a ring, but that didn't mean anything; Brad never wore one.

Tanner looked up and caught her staring at him. She looked away, knowing that she was blushing and unable to stop it.

"Something wrong?" he asked.

Leah sighed. "I'm tired. It's hard to focus."

He grunted and looked at his watch. "Well, we're EOW an hour ago. Why don't you go home. I'll finish up."

She met his steady gaze. He still looked as if he could work another shift without any effort. Her phone buzzed with a text. It was Brad.

**Coming home? I miss you.** He added several hearts and flowers. There. He *was* sorry. He'd never meant what happened earlier.

"Thanks, Clint, I appreciate that. You won't be long?"

"Nah, almost done."

Leah nodded and headed for the locker room. On the way she passed the wall where all the medal of valor recipients had their pictures hanging. Brad's was there. He'd dived in and pulled a drowning woman and her two children out of the Rogue River two winters ago, earning the medal.

He was no coward, Leah told herself. And she was no victim.