

BLUE JUSTICE



# OATH OF HONOR

LYNETTE EASON



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Lynette Eason, *Oath of Honor*  
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Dedicated to the men and women in blue.  
To all of the law enforcement workers  
who risk everything to keep us safe.



[illegible]

★★



# THURSDAY





Officer Izzy St. John plopped down at the table of one of Columbia, South Carolina's, finest Chinese restaurants and opened the fast-food carton of General Tso's chicken and white rice. The bell above the door rang and she glanced over her shoulder to see Chloe and her K-9, Hank, enter. "Hey. Here's yours." Izzy pushed the unopened food to her sister.

"Great. I'm starving." Chloe took the seat opposite her and opened her carton. Hank settled on the floor at her feet, while Chloe took a bite and sighed her enjoyment.

"Pork roast and mushrooms," Izzy said with a grimace. "Nasty. How are we even related?" Chloe, one of Izzy's five siblings, was two years older.

"You don't know what's good," Chloe said once she swallowed.

"I know what fungus is and there's no way we're meant to eat it."

"I beg to argue with that," a voice said. Izzy turned once more to see Ruthie, another sister, standing there, still decked out in her scrubs. At least they didn't have blood on them this time. Ruthie sat in the third seat and opened the food Izzy slid in front of her. "Mushrooms have many redeeming qualities," Ruthie said. "They have selenium. It's good for your bladder."

Izzy rolled her eyes. "I don't care. I'm not eating them."



“How about they’re rich in vitamin D and boost your immune system?” Ruthie took a bite.

“There are other ways to do both without having to eat fungus,” Izzy said and opened her can of Coke.

This time Chloe wrinkled her nose. “You won’t eat something healthy, but you’ll pour that into your system. You make no sense at all.”

It was an old argument. A comfortable one.

The door swung open once more and Brady, Izzy’s brother who was a former underwater criminal investigator turned homicide detective, joined them at the table. “What’s up, brats?”

Ruthie raised a brow. “I finally break away from the hospital where I’m saving lives and this is the respect I get?”

“From the head brat, no less,” Izzy murmured. Brady was the eldest of the St. John siblings.

He shot her a wink and dug into his sweet and sour chicken. “So, Rude Ruthie, you cut anyone up today?”

“Yes, two down, two to go.”

Izzy caught the startled gaze of the customer just leaving the booth next to their table. “She’s a surgeon,” she hurried to reassure her. The woman’s obvious relief made Izzy giggle. Once she was out the door, Izzy threw her napkin at Brady. “Seriously, you’re rotten. You’ve got to realize not everyone gets our morbid St. John family humor.”

“Sorry.” He didn’t look very sorry. He took another bite. “Who decided it was Chinese day anyway? I was kind of in the mood for Mexican.”

“Derek decided,” Chloe said. “Remember? Every second Thursday of the month is Chinese. He insisted.”

“And yet,” Brady said, “he’s not here.”

Izzy frowned. “Anybody seen him lately? I’m kind of worried about him. He wasn’t at Mom’s this past Sunday.”

Her siblings stopped eating and looked at one another.



Chloe shook her head. "I haven't seen him, now that you mention it."

"Me either," Ruthie said.

Brady leaned back. "That's kind of weird."

Worry giggled at Izzy. "You think he's all right?"

Ruthie's chuckle sounded forced. "Y'all need to stop. Derek's probably on one of his undercover gigs again."

"Or got called out with the SWAT team," Chloe murmured.

Izzy sighed. Such was the life of a family in law enforcement. "You're probably right. Hey, is Linc coming? I got him sweet and sour chicken."

Brady glanced at the clock on the wall. "He texted and said he was finishing up some paperwork and would be about ten minutes late."

Linc, second oldest in the St. John clan, had finally been assigned to the FBI field office in his home city. It had been one of his greatest joys to move back to be near his family once again and he never missed a Thursday lunch unless he just couldn't help it.

"So, who's eating at Mom's this Sunday?" Chloe asked.

"I'll be there," Izzy said.

The others chimed in their plans to attend the weekly lunch. Sometimes only a couple of them could make it. Sometimes they all could. No matter the number, the food was always there and waiting, thanks to their father, who had most weekends off from his law practice—and loved to cook.

Izzy drew in a deep breath and glanced around the table. How she loved them. And admired them. Her phone buzzed and she unclipped it from its home on her belt.

A text from Kevin, her partner.

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Can you go on a stakeout with me tonight?

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Yes, I guess. What's going on?

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I'll explain when you pick me up at 6:30.