

LETHAL INTENT by Carol Putman

EXCERPT

Caroline shifted in the high-backed chair. The massive conference room table made her feel more petite than usual. Quentin Jackson, the man propelling Praecursoria through its rapid growth, vibrated with energy as he studied her.

“We are on the cusp of amazing developments and a transition from the lab to trials. We have a few CAR T-cell therapies in early stages now with more in our pipeline.”

She racked her mind for the importance of T cells, and he gave a hearty laugh.

“Don’t worry if the science overwhelms you. We’ll have you up to speed in no time. All you need to know right now is that T cells are one of the two cells that make up white blood cells. The treatments we’re working on could be the difference between life and death for young cancer patients. We need your legal expertise and quick mind to synthesize the science with the map to market.”

“I’ve overseen several court trials related to patents, which should help with that process.” It had been an unforeseen aspect of her days clerking for Judge Loren. She swallowed against the lump in her throat that still welled up when she thought about his untimely death from pneumonia. A month ago she couldn’t imagine interviewing for a job somewhere else, even if a part of her knew that she should stretch her wings.

“When can you start? Today?”

She felt rooted to the chair. Everything was moving so fast. Could she really transition her experience managing clerks for a judge into managing patents and contracts for a start-up? While Praecursoria had been around for a decade as a cancer research lab, about eighteen months ago Quentin sold off its lucrative genetic testing branch to focus exclusively on the development of cutting-edge CAR T-cell therapies. Starting over that way was a bold if risky move.

She lifted her chin and forced a smile that didn’t waver. “If that’s what you need. First we have a few details to work out.”

He laughed. “I like the way you tackle issues head-on. That will be key in this role. I know how to steer the ship, and my chief scientist can navigate the research, but you’ll keep us on the legal straight and narrow.” He tapped his pen against the legal pad in front of him. Then he picked up her résumé and named a salary that pressed her against the chair. “There will be performance bonuses tied to the successful conclusion of trials. We want to look into stock options as well. That will be one of your assignments in conjunction with HR.” He slapped his hands on the table and she jumped. “My enthusiasm gets away from me sometimes.” He shrugged but never wavered as he examined her. “Let’s start with a field trip. The best way for you to understand why we’re doing this work and research is to show you.”