

CHAPTER ONE

OF

FATAL IMPULSE

A Green Dory Inn Mystery: Book 5

JANET SKETCHLEY

janetsketchley.ca

Fatal Impulse, A Green Dory Inn Mystery, Book 5

© 2026 by Janet Sketchley

978-1-989581-15-5 (print)

978-1-989581-16-2 (ebook)

All rights reserved, in all media. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted for commercial purposes, except for brief quotations in printed or electronic reviews, without written permission of the author.

Permissions requests may be directed to the author via her website: janetsketchley.ca/contact/ or via email at info@janetsketchley.ca.

The characters and situations in this book are works of fiction and are not intended to represent any individuals, living or dead. The Green Dory Inn is purely fictional and in no way intended to represent a real location. Where real locations are mentioned, they are used fictitiously for the purposes of the story.

Scripture References:

Chapter 19: “worth more than rubies” paraphrases Proverbs 31:11.

Chapter 27: “I believe... help me believe” paraphrases Mark 9:24.

Scripture marked NIV is taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Edited by Brilliant Cut Editing.

Cover by E.A. Hendryx Creative.

Interior dory image: iStock.com/Gunay Aliyeva.

Author photo by Amanda Walker Photography.

FICTION/CHRISTIAN/SUSPENSE

Published in Canada by Janet Sketchley.

NOTE TO READERS

Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, is a real town—a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Green Dory Inn and most other places mentioned in this novel are products of my imagination and in no way intended to represent real locations.

I have also taken creative licence with the inn's geography by elevating that part of the coastline to allow for the sea tunnel beneath it. One of the perks of writing fiction is being able to adjust the facts as needed to accommodate the story.

Non-Canadian readers, please note I'm using Canadian spellings in this book. You'll see words like colour, neighbour, licence, and travelling, and they're not typos. You'll also see some hyphenated words like mid-fifties and mid-size.



DEDICATION

For all of us who've tended to blame ourselves for not being perfect. May our Creator gently help us believe that He sees us and He loves us. Truly, we're fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139: 14 NIV).

*...but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.
Isaiah 40:31 NIV*

Chapter 1

Thursday

“**T**HE INN WILL be fine.” Landon Smith squeezed her friend Anna’s shoulders, staring into the care-pinched brown eyes. “I’ll be fine.”

That’s what this last-minute fussing was about, not leaving the Green Dory Inn. Leaving her here alone.

The older woman’s lips flexed in a thin parody of a smile. “Of course you will.”

Surrounded by her luggage inside the inn’s back door, Anna zipped her puffy red winter coat and drew a knitted hat from one pocket. “The neighbours are here if you need any help, and Bobby will take you for groceries and things.”

As if Landon were fourteen, not twenty-four. She drew her hair into a ponytail and let it trickle through her fingers. “I don’t need a babysitter. Or a bodyguard.”

A slow inhale, meant to calm her, caught overtones of cinnamon from the kitchen. Muffins, still warm, a parting expression of love from Anna’s heart.

Anna slid the red and white striped hat over her grey-threaded brown bob. “I wish you had a friend staying to keep you company.”

"I'll get more work done this way." They'd had this conversation multiple times in the past few weeks.

The pinch deepened in Anna's forehead, and her mouth curved down. "Please don't get involved if there's any more trouble. Leave it to the police."

The harbour town of Lunenburg and its nearby communities had seen more than their share of mysteries in the past year.

Landon lifted empty palms. "Any crime I'll have to solve will be domestic. With two feline suspects."

"Timkin may cut up a bit to punish me for being gone, but he's a good boy."

The "good boy" had been forcibly evicted from Anna's open carry-on case and had yowled ominously before stalking, dignified and tail high, from the room. He hadn't been seen since. The marmalade cat, Mister, had darted outside at first light.

Landon grabbed her coat and stuffed her feet into her favourite boots. "I'll help carry your bags to the car."

Pulling on gloves, Anna indicated the white panel on the wall. "Remember to use the security system."

"I will." Whatever it took to protect Anna's inn and keep her from worrying.

Outside, the wind whipped Landon's hair into her face, blond strands stinging her cheeks. She tugged Anna's suitcase down the stairs from the deck and along the narrow slate path to the car.

The winter sun hung low in the sky, climbing above the bay across the road from the inn. Whatever warmth it promised would feel good through a windowpane but do nothing for the cold morning air.

Bags stowed in the trunk and car windows scraped clear

of frost, Anna leaned a hip against the driver's door. Her mouth opened, then closed as she shook her head.

Landon could fill in the unsaid words about being safe, taking care, not overdoing the work for her classes. At least Anna was trying to resist the urge to overprotect.

They hugged each other tight with the car engine purring and the wind whistling in the trees behind the inn.

"Everything will be fine. Go help your daughter and cuddle that new grandchild."

Deep in the forest, a crow let out a harsh caw.

Anna grinned. "He's telling me not to miss my flight. See you in a few weeks."

Once the car eased down the long driveway and turned left onto the two-lane coastal road, Landon hurried inside. She shed her coat and traded her boots for slippers. The inn's honey-hued hardwood floors weren't exactly warm in the winter.

At the hallway's far end, light spilled in through the panes beside the front door. Arms spread wide, fingertips to each ivory-tinted wall, Landon embraced the silence and the lingering cinnamon scent.

Too much quiet would make her stir-crazy. But this place—this sanctuary—made a peaceful counterpoint to the university clamour and the angst of wrangling her dyslexic brain to produce acceptable papers.

Thoughts of school sent her flying along the hall and upstairs to her room. By the time she heard Bobby's car arrive, she was ready.

One last check of the ground floor detected no sign of Timkin, the black and white cat. "You'll be stuck inside all day, then. Behave."

Reciting the security code, she pressed each number

carefully on the touch pad and then waited for confirmation before leaving. She locked the deadbolt behind her.

The boxy blue sedan idling in the lot had seen better days and picked up various dents along the way. Not like Bobby's cherished white Corvette, safely parked in heated storage for the winter.

Landon wedged her backpack and lunch on the floor behind the passenger seat before climbing into the front.

"You're sweet to drive me." Saying goodbye to Anna this morning made her late for the commuter van to the city.

"Hey, it lets me start my day with you."

With his rumpled hair, Bobby might have just rolled out of bed. But the alertness behind the gunmetal-framed glasses suggested he'd been up for hours writing. Probably to compensate for this two-and-a-half-hour round trip.

She smiled her thanks and passed him a paper bag of muffins. "Compliments of Anna."

He leaned in for a kiss. "She got away okay?"

"Not without some fretting. It'll be good for her to see her daughter and the kids, especially the new baby."

"Gramp insists you come for supper tonight, so you don't have to cook on your first night solo."

"She filled the freezer for me." As they drove, a low-flying gull cut a steady wingbeat over the bay to Landon's right. "I'm not helpless."

Bobby slowed for a curve. "I think it's more that Anna's helpful. You've been there for months. She knows you're competent. She wouldn't have trusted you to take care of the inn otherwise."

With the Green Dory Inn closed for the season, there'd be no guests and minimal housework. "House-sitting, I can

handle. It's the course load. Even dropping to two this semester, it's like an avalanche waiting to crash down on me."

"Have you spoken to your profs? They're not all as harsh as that one from last year."

"I have tools and strategies for my dyslexia. I should be able to succeed. If I can't keep up, I fail. It's that simple."

And it mattered more than ever now that she and Bobby were a couple.

~~~

In the fading daylight, the two-storey dormer-windowed inn didn't look as welcoming as the last time the commuter van brought her home.

Landon had set the same lights on timers that Anna always switched on manually. On the snow-covered lawn halfway between the building and the road, the inn's signature green dory still held the snowman she and Bobby built on the weekend. Complete with yellow Sou'wester rain hat and a paddle.

The externals hadn't changed, not even a fresh dusting of white on the driveway. But inside, there'd be no cheery greeting or hug. Definitely no warm aroma of a home-cooked meal to lure her into the kitchen.

Tonight, she'd find that next door with Bobby and his grandfather, Roy. The wide treed lots meant she couldn't see their place from here, but knowing they were close felt good.

As the van departed, she shouldered her pack and trudged along the slate path behind the inn.

The forest already blocked much of the setting sun's glow. No colours tonight, just shades of clouded grey.

On the top step, the lean marmalade cat sat tall, amber

eyes unblinking, tail curved around his feet. At her approach, the motion-sensor light snapped on, edging his fur with pale gold. He rose silently and strolled across the deck to the door, his crooked-tipped tail like a signal flag.

Brutal day on campus. Empty house. Judgy cat.

Landon followed and unlocked the door. "Not my idea of fun either, Mister."

Her fingers stumbled on the security pin pad, and she had to enter the code a second time. When the system beeps ceased, she wilted against the wall.

The cats' tardy supper was the least of her concerns. The heavier the course load, the more she fought failure, the harder it was to silence her doubts.

Did she even want to be a social worker? Or had she made the choice out of gratitude to those who'd helped her as a broken teen rescued from human trafficking?

She let her backpack thud to the floor, earning a yowl from the cat at her feet.

"Mister! I'm so sorry. Are you okay?" She'd assumed he'd gone straight to the kitchen.

He'd dodged the impact, but his steady stare warned the incident would not be forgotten.

Why'd he been so close?

Timkin hadn't appeared when Landon set out both cats' food. She made a quick but unsuccessful search, then left him to his sulk.

Time to text Bobby to come get her. The wooded walk between their houses offered a few minutes alone with a pause for a kiss to keep warm on a cold winter night.

Two thumps on the back door sent her feet in that direction before her brain caught up.

She only knew one person likely to show up unexpectedly at odd hours. That wasn't his knock.

The inn loomed large and empty around her.

When the sound repeated, she pressed her cheek to the chilly metal door to check the peephole.

The outside light revealed a scowling young teen in a loose plaid work coat, shoulder propping open the lightweight glass storm door. His bare fist hit the solid interior door again.

Quinn.

Not her favourite person, but not a housebreaker either. At least not anymore.

Cold swirled around her feet as she let him in.

He latched the outer door against the rising breeze, but planted himself on the threshold to block the inner one from closing. Whatever he wanted to say, he didn't plan on staying long.

Landon kept a light grip on the handle. "What's up?"

Quinn angled toward the glass, facing outward into the night. "Roy says you're dyslexic."

The old man was no gossip. She studied the blond boy's stiff posture. His quick access to escape if rejected.

For him to confide in Roy meant a degree of risk. To approach a person he'd always dismissed and ask for her help—and that must be his intent—Landon's breath caught.

"I am." She kept her voice low, like she'd done when earning Mister's trust after he arrived as a skinny, battle-scarred stray.

Mister, who had decided to join them here in the chilled hallway. He paced between them now.

Quinn turned away from the now-dark night. He seemed to track the cat's lazy figure-eight motion. "Roy says you've got strategies. Ways to help you learn."

The school should have those too. Yet Quinn, with his attitude, wouldn't be easy to support. If he'd even submit to an assessment.

His countenance lost some of its hard lines as he watched the cat. From the beginning, he'd shown a soft spot for the outcast stray. As if he considered himself unwanted too.

The teen lived down the road with his grandparents, Anna's good friends. Whatever took his parents out of the picture had hurt them all. Despite his grandparents' care, he seemed to expect, even invite, their rejection.

"Quinn, I'll help if I can. We're all different, though. What works for me might not work for you. Is it dyslexia or another learning disability?"

"I'm not disabled, and I'm not stupid." His head lifted, eyes slitted. "I hate that school and most everyone in it. If I don't get my marks up, they won't let me try out for track in the spring."

Landon held his gaze. "I understand you're frustrated, but here's the boundary—we treat one another with respect. You may not have meant to imply anything about me there, but that's what it sounded like. I don't have to accept that. Not anymore."

His lips twisted like he wanted to spit. "Yeah. My bad."

Oh, how she remembered being in his shoes. She hadn't known about her dyslexia then. She'd believed her struggles at school proved her inadequacy.

She extended her hand for a shake. "I'm assuming you wouldn't ask me if you had another option. Let's give it our

best try.”

Cold fingers pressed hers, then dropped. “Thanks.”

“I’m late for supper. Walk me to Roy’s? We can talk on the way, and it’ll save me dragging Bobby out in the cold too.”

“Afraid of the dark?” His lip started to curl, then thinned into a straight line.

She reached for her coat. “Anna’s orders.”

Which she’d obey, not because she was helpless and not from any actual danger. “And, yeah, some of what happened last year still makes me a little nervous.”

She wouldn’t be jumping into any more mysteries. For safety’s sake and for a chance at managing her course load.

Taking on Quinn’s study needs... She couldn’t say no, but had saying yes put her university degree in jeopardy?

~~~

Want to read the full novel?

Print and digital copies are available online. Buy links are curated here: books2read.com/fatal-impulse.

~~~



**Janet Sketchley** is an Atlantic Canadian writer who likes her fiction with a splash of mystery or adventure and a dash of Christianity. Why leave faith out of our stories if it’s part of our lives?

She’s the author of the Green Dory Inn mystery series, the Redemption’s Edge Christian suspense series, and the daily devotional books, *A Year of Tenacity* and *Tenacity at Christmas*.

She has also produced a fill-in reader's journal, *Reads to Remember: A book lover's journal to track your next 100 reads* (available in print only). Find her online at [janetsketchley.ca](http://janetsketchley.ca).

You're invited to subscribe to Janet's newsletter at [janetsketchley.ca/subscribe](http://janetsketchley.ca/subscribe) or follow her on BookBub at [bookbub.com/profile/janet-sketchley](http://bookbub.com/profile/janet-sketchley).

## BOOKS BY JANET SKETCHLEY

### The Redemption's Edge Series:

*Heaven's Prey*  
*Secrets and Lies*  
*Without Proof*

### The Green Dory Inn Mysteries:

*Unknown Enemy*  
*Hidden Secrets*  
*Bitter Truth*  
*Deadly Burden*  
*Fatal Impulse*

### Daily Devotions:

*A Year of Tenacity: 365 Daily Devotions*  
*Tenacity at Christmas: 31 Daily Devotions for December*

### Readers' Journals:

*Reads to Remember:*  
*A book-lover's journal to track your next 100 reads*  
(Available in two cover options, print only)