

*Consuming Revenge is a blend of suspense, romance, and faith that thrills the mind and touches the heart. Join Police Officer Lane and newspaper reporter Danielle as they navigate danger, intrigue, and love against the backdrop of revenge.*


## **Consuming Revenge**

By Bill Shaul

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BILL SHAUL

**CONSUMING  
REVENGE**

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## 01

“Ready! Aim! Fire! Aim! Fire! Aim! Fire!”

Nothing is quite as somber as the triplet of echoing eruptions from the barrels of the arms borne by an honor guard at the funeral marking the passing of a fallen veteran.

Commander Lane Stewart had been blessed to have heard that woeful chorus on only two occasions. The first was at the funeral of the love of his life, Angie. Every detail of that rain-soaked day eight years ago was etched into his memory as if it happened yesterday. That day lives in his mind constantly. That day when he said ‘goodbye’ to the one he had pledged his love, his honor, and his all to on their wedding day nearly fifteen years before. Only two truths helped him survive that dark time. First, he knew that the never-quenched appetite of the detestable, aggressive cancerous tumor that ravaged Angie’s body during the last month of her life would never bring her pain again. And second, he knew that she was in heaven, waiting for him to join her before God’s throne.

And now the second occasion. The funeral of two men. Two of his men. Men whom he commanded. Men whom he sent into harm’s way. Men who left wives, children, and parents behind. *Men who should be home today with their families. Men who were full of life, vim, and vigor. Men who did not deserve to be lowered into the ground so many years before their times.*

*Marty Baconne. A loving father. A good man. A patriotic American. A Marine. A survivor of three tours in Afghanistan. Now gone.*

*Billy De la Cruz. An immigrant from Chile. A man who loved America as much as any native-born person Lane knew. An Army*

*Ranger. Father of two of the sweetest twin six-year-old girls imaginable. Now gone also.*

And now, taps, that mournful, reverential final salute to those who were taken from the living, who were occupying caskets all too soon, and who would be so sorely missed.

He was roused from his musing by a touch on his elbow. He turned to see Barney Turko, perhaps the only person with whom he could share the thoughts that raced through his mind on this difficult day.

“We should greet Marty and Billy’s families.”

“Yes, of course, Barney.”

The looks on the faces of Marty’s family showed the emptiness, the hollowness, and the hopelessness of those who have no assurance of meeting their loved one again on the other side of the grave. Lane struggled to understand how people without a personal relationship with the Lord could function on days like this.

Billy’s family was grieving, but Lane could see that beyond the tears and the reddened eyes, there was peace, that peace that passes all understanding. About four years ago, Billy visited Lane’s church on a Sunday morning and came face-to-face with his need for a Savior. From that first Sunday, he never missed a service, except when his duty to the police force required his presence elsewhere. Within one year every member of Billy’s family had also asked Jesus to forgive them of all their sin and be their Savior. Today the faces of the DeLaCruz family spoke volumes of the peace that Jesus brings.

Barney and Lane were among the last to leave the grave site. Eventually, they settled into Barney’s vintage vehicle and began the slow journey down the cemetery’s gravel lanes and onto the street. As they hit the pavement and accelerated to the posted speed limit, Lane turned to his closest friend and asked, “Are you prepared to meet with the rest of ITU? They all agreed to gather at the Sirloin Pit after the funeral. Arnold is holding the party room for us like he usually does.

Although, I don't know if the 'party room' label is quite fitting for today."

He answered without taking his eyes off the light noontime traffic. "As ready as I'll ever be."

The two men traveled the five or so miles to the restaurant in silence. Both were deep in thought about the events of the past week.

Since founding the Inmate Transport Unit, or ITU, over five years ago, Lane had not lost a single officer. The only injury anyone had ever suffered was when he twisted his ankle during the annual Pioneers Day softball game two summers ago. But all that ended last Friday. The details of what should have been a routine delivery played in his mind over and over.

The arraignment of a suspected drug trafficker by the name of Freddie Henderson was scheduled for that day. Not only was he a well-known wholesale cocaine dealer, but the disfigurement of his nose from long-term 'nose candy' abuse was so dramatic that both friends and enemies referred to him simply as "The Nose." His arrangement was scheduled for Friday morning. Normally it would have taken place via videoconferencing, but a violent thunderstorm knocked out the satellite hook-up Wednesday night. Because the court appearance had to take place before the weekend, the ITU was given the responsibility of providing transport from the Macadam Detention Facility to the courthouse downtown. The duty fell to Team Gamma. Marty, the team leader, and Billy were assigned to make the delivery, while Melody, the third member of Team Gamma, was assigned to coordinate the logistics for the assignment from the ITU headquarters. All went according to the "shipping manifest" until a three-car accident cordoned off part of the planned delivery route. As Team Gamma's logistic officer, Melody activated the pre-determined alternate route, which took the unmarked van directly past an interstate exchange construction job site. As Marty slowed to negotiate a sharp turn, a runaway cement mixer crashed into

the passenger side of the van, crushing both Marty and Billy to death. “The Nose”, seated next to Billy in the third row of the van, escaped the collision with some superficial minor cuts from flying glass.

Lane jumped when Barney broke the silence. “Well, it seems that everyone’s here, from the looks of the parking lot.”

He mumbled some sort of affirmative response as Barney found one of the two last open parking spots, at the far end of the building. They entered the restaurant’s lobby and were met by Arnold, the owner of the Sirloin Pit and a staunch supporter of the Inmate Transport Unit. He nodded silently, extended a warm handshake to each man, and pointed with the tip of his head to the “Party Room”. They nodded back, completing the silent, but greatly appreciated greeting that a dear friend gives on a day like this.

The five small tables in the room were stark reminders of the size of the loss the ITU had just endured. When the entire unit met at the Sirloin Pit each week for lunch, Lane, Commander of the ITU, sat alone at one table, while the three members of each team sat together at the others. Today was just as usual, except for the Team Gamma table on the left side of the room. Instead of Marty, Billy, and Melody chatting and laughing, there were two glasses, turned upside down, on the vacant table. On the right side of the room, Team Alpha sat silently at their table. Barney joined them. Next to Team Alpha was Team Beta, who also sat silently. The table in the middle of the room was understood to be for Team Delta, the only all-female ITU team. They, too, sat in silence. The entire room was as quiet as a group of children waiting to see the school principal after a childhood prank went awry.

As Lane took his customary place and looked at the nine police officers seated in the room, the door opened, and Melody entered. He immediately could see in her eyes the toll that today’s funeral had taken upon her. He had only seen her eyes moisten once before. Those same tears were shed in a hospital room when the droning tone of the medical

equipment announced the end of Angie's battle with cancer. Melody and Angie could not have been closer if they were sisters.

Lane rose and greeted Melody, and taking her by the hand, led her to his table and helped her with her chair. She smiled and mouthed a "thank you". As she settled in her chair, her eyes welled up again at the sight of the two inverted glasses on the otherwise empty Team Gamma table.

Sensing the increasing awkwardness, Barney stood and addressed the group. "I think we all should share our fond memories of these two brave men in the spirit in which I believe that they would want us to remember them. But first, I want to thank Melody for joining us today." She barely nodded toward him in recognition of his kindness, briefly looked at Lane, then looked down into her purse, searching for one last fresh handkerchief she hoped it contained.

From all around the room the memories of the fallen officers flowed. When the stories trickled to a halt, all eyes turned to Lane, who had not spoken a word since his arrival. The grief-torn commander stood, eyed each one of them, and slowly began. "I could share many stories of the antics of both Marty and Billy. However, there are three things I would like to say instead.

"First, I take full responsibility for the events of last Friday. Mel, I know that as the logistics officer, you planned the route, as well as the alternate route. But remember, the approval of all plans ultimately rests in my hands. Mel, the tragic results are not your fault."

Melody nodded and weakly smiled at him.

"Second, all of us have a responsibility to Marty and Billy. We must redouble our focus and concentration to ensure that we never have a delivery interrupted or delayed again. Barney, Terry, Trudy, and I will work even closer together in the planning and executing of each delivery operation.



“Finally, there is the incomplete investigation of last Friday’s events. I’m not satisfied that we have truly devoted enough energy to figuring out exactly what happened.

“We’ve got some work to do. But for now, go home, get some rest, and I’ll see you in the morning, 7:00 sharp, in the Box. As I said, we’ve got work to do.”

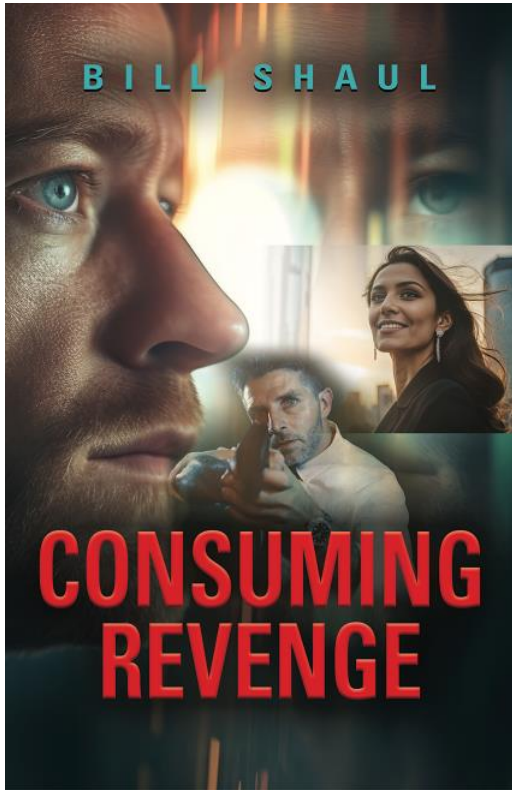
## WHAT'S NEXT FOR LANE AND DANNY?

I am looking forward to *Consuming Jealousy*, the next installment in the story of Lane and Danny. In it, you will discover the joys and struggles of their budding romance and their adjustments to the changes in their professional life. Along the way, you will also encounter changes in the lives of other individuals from *Consuming Revenge*, and the introduction of many new characters.

As with my first novel, my goal for *Consuming Jealousy* is to present wholesome, clean, conservative stories that honor traditional American values and a biblical worldview, woven into compelling fiction that captures, entertains, and satisfies my readers, creating a thirst for more such stories.

In the meantime, visit my website, [storiesbybill.com](http://storiesbybill.com), for updates and to read more of my fiction stories.

Bill



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