

Uncle Janice

Matt Burgess

In Burgess's outstanding sophomore effort (after *Dogfight: A Love Story*), 24-year-old Janice Itwaru is an "uncle" for the NYPD, making controlled buys as an undercover narcotics officer, withstanding the good-natured ribbing of her fellow uncles, and counting the days until her 18 months comes up and she makes detective. But the Big Bosses have instituted a quota, and Janice, if she wants to earn that gold shield, needs to step up her game to include four buys a month, in an area where she is fast becoming a known face. As Janice attempts to scheme the hapless drug dealers of Queens in locations dank and desperate, while tending to her mother's descent into dementia and generally avoiding her alcoholic father, she begins to crack under the bureaucratic pressures of modern-day policing—and Internal Affairs may be watching her every move. VERDICT This fresh take on the cop novel genre retains the madcap energy of Elmore Leonard's best fiction while introducing the most irresistible police precinct this side of Joseph Wambaugh's Hollywood Station.

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