

## Chapter One

The black car spit Binnie out at 53rd and Third. The lawyer inside lost the casino bankruptcy trial, big time, and he had a pitiful countenance. She'd almost tried to put him out of his misery with a kiss. Could he tell that was happening? She thought, replaying in her mind the way she'd leaned forward, slightly, toward his sorry face and loosened tie, that he could tell. Well. That was embarrassing.

She'd pick up her paycheck and move on with her Friday night. The sun had set. She had already made plans with Gary from the Newark stop on the Acela. Lately, he'd been more forthright, dropping hints. They'd weathered several stupid relationships together, like a boy now squatting in Detroit hoping to be the next Banksy and a girl who aspired to be a diplomat and found Gary's Iraqi Jewish lineage titillating. They were, for the first time in their five-year friendship, both single. The driver deposited her roll-y bag on the sidewalk. The lawyer muttered "See ya Monday." Her bag went *thunk thunk thunk* as her clearance-rack heels clacked.

Gary waited for her beneath the pink granite pillars of the Lipstick Building, cheeks rosy from the first chill of fall, fists thrust in his charcoal jacket pockets, a black knit cap hiding his brown curls. When he saw Binnie, he lifted his head from its natural melancholic tilt and smiled. Still wound up from the trial, the loss, the pitiful lawyer, a harshness balled up in her chest, she said, "You could've waited in the lobby."

His long brown eyelashes brushed up against his wire-rim glasses. He said, "I've had my daily allotment of recycled air." She softened. They hugged, their usual platonic hips-angled-away-from-each-other hug.

"Want to come up?"