

Have You Seen Me?

Chapter 1

1

As soon as I step off the elevator, something seems weird to me, off-kilter or unaligned—like a friend forcing a smile when she’s secretly livid at you.

Staring through the large glass doors at the end of the corridor, I realize that it’s dark inside the office and that no one else is here yet. That must be what’s throwing me.

I pull my wrist through the sleeve of my trench coat and check my watch. It’s 8:05. For the first time since I’ve been at the company, I’ve beaten everyone in.

My gaze runs up my sleeve, and I suddenly notice how wet I am. What had felt like a drizzle outside was clearly heavier rain than that, and my coat’s soaked. Shoes, too. When I touch my head, I feel my hair plastered to my scalp.

And then, to make everything worse, I fumble in my pocket for my key card and discover it’s not there. *Shit*. I’ve either lost it or left it home. My assistant has never been a morning person—there’s no chance of her showing up before nine. And the earliest the office manager, Caryn, will surface is probably eight thirty. I’ve got almost thirty minutes to kill.

I knead my forehead with my fingers, trying to decide what to do. I could trudge over to a café at Twenty-Second and Broadway. But I hate the thought of sitting there in my wet shoes, feeling the squishy leather pluck at my feet. And the trips there and back will do nothing for my appearance, which I’m sure is disheveled enough as it is.

Then, miraculously, I hear the elevator door slide open and as I pivot, a young Asian guy in a black hooded sweatshirt steps off, carrying his phone in one hand and shaking out a collapsible

umbrella with the other. It takes a second before he looks up from his screen and registers my presence. He must be brand-new at Greenbacks, because I've never seen him before.

"Is everything okay?" he asks. He's looking at me as if my mouth's started to foam. Hasn't he ever seen anyone undone by the weather before?

"I've been away and I must have left my key at home today," I say. "Would you mind letting me in?"

"Um, sure. You are . . . ?"

Does he really not know? "Ally. Ally Linden."

"Right," he says, nodding. But it clearly doesn't ring a bell. He's definitely new, probably on the tech side, a team I don't interact with all that often.

He snaps his key card from his wallet, swipes it over the black box, and swings open the door as soon as we hear the click. He motions for me to go first, and without having to look, he thrusts his arm to the right and taps a switch. The front section of the office floods with light, unveiling row after row of empty workstations.

"You all set?" he asks, turning back to me.

"Yes, thanks. You're . . . ?"

"Nick. Nick Fukuyama."

"Thanks. Thanks for your help."

He's halfway down the floor, tapping more light switches with a flick of his wrist, when I discover I'm also missing the key to my office, one of the few private ones. I moan in frustration. It's my first day back and I'm going to have a ton to do. I'll have to wait for Caryn to unlock my door with her master key once she arrives.

I traipse across the lobby area to the glass-walled conference room and nudge the door open with my hip. After shrugging out of my coat, I drape it on the back of a chair by the wall to dry. I take a seat at the table and kick off my soggy shoes. There's a pen holder on the table, stuffed tight with Dixon number twos—Damien Howe's favorite brand of pencil—and a stack of pads as well, bearing the Greenbacks logo. I can at least make notes, I decide. A plan for the day, for the week ahead.

It's hard to focus, though. I feel at loose ends, as if I haven't acclimated yet from my trip. Through the window, I can see that the rain's coming down really hard now, driven sideways by the wind so that it lashes the glass, with a sound at times like a train rumbling along the tracks. I notice that my throat feels slightly sore, and there's a faint, throbbing pain in my temples.

I ignore both and force my attention to the pad. I scribble the words "To Do" across the top of the page. And then a row of question marks. I sense an answer hovering, but the words refuse to form.

The muffled ding of the elevator bell pulls me from my thoughts. *Please, let this be Caryn*, I pray, but when I look up, I see a woman letting herself into the office, wearing a black baseball hat. I can't make out her face, but I can tell from the height and the shape that it's not Caryn. I glance again at my watch. Eight twenty-two. Surely, it won't be much longer.

I try to refocus on my notes, but seconds later, another noise from the front teases away my attention. I raise my head, spotting a shock of blond hair, the sight of which jolts me.

God, that hair. Thick, a little shaggy on the sides, and honey gold in color. So wildly improbable here in gritty, grungy, hipster-bearded, black-is-the-new-black New York City. Once, riding the train with him to a meeting uptown, I watched as two women jerked their heads

in his direction, their eyes widening, as if they'd suddenly found themselves in a subway car with a merman.

Damien Howe is on his phone, talking, nodding in agreement. Striking a deal, maybe. He seems oblivious to everything else, but it's probably not the case. As long as I've known him, he's always been intensely aware of his environment.

He halts at the wide counter to the right of the entrance, opposite the Pullman-style kitchen, and grabs a coffee capsule. Probably dark roast. He likes his coffee strong and never takes milk or sugar. It's surprising he doesn't keep an espresso machine in his office because that's what he *really* prefers, especially the moment he rolls out of bed.

I watch as he waits the few seconds for the coffee to brew, seemingly lost in thought now that the call's finished. I've been so good since we split about *not* looking at him, stopping myself from searching, sonarlike, for his presence, refusing to think of the body beneath those clothes, the sea-salt smell of his skin that used to make me wonder if he *was* a merman.

Five months. That's all it lasted. We were ridiculously careful, betraying not even a hint of flirtation at work. But our coworkers had started to put two and two together. I sensed it before Damien did, conscious of their eyes swinging in slo-mo between us in meetings. Someone, somehow, detected a tell in Damien's interactions with me that gave us away, like Jason Bourne catching the reflection of an asset in the blade of a butter knife.

Aware that the truth was seeping out, we agreed to cool things between us for the time being, and I put on as good a face as I could. It never restarted. And for weeks, months really, it hurt like hell.

His coffee's done brewing. He secures a lid on the cup, adjusts the messenger bag worn strapped against his body, and turns, clearly bound for his office. I lower my gaze, back to the

notepad, but I sense his attention land on me. And soon, out of the corner of my eye, I see him striding in this direction. Oh, lovely. He's about to be treated to my best impression of a sewer rat.

There's a whoosh as the door opens, and instinctively I stuff both feet back into my shoes and sit up a bit straighter.

"Ally?" he says.

I glance up, feigning nonchalance. "Morning, Damien."

He looks serious, possibly even annoyed with me. Has a project of mine blown up while I was gone?

"What are you doing here?" he demands.

"I'm sorry. Do you need the room?" That possibility had just occurred to me.

"No, I'm asking why you're *here*. At Greenbacks."

"Today, you mean?" The pulsing in my head intensifies. "It's my first day back."

"What are you talking about?" He steps closer, his eyes burrowing into me. "You haven't worked here in years."

Chapter 2

2

My head's practically pounding now.

"Damien," I say. "I-I-I *work* here. I—"

But even as the words sputter from my lips, I realize they're not true. I don't work here. I don't come to this place anymore. I press a hand to my head, urging alternate images to form in my mind, but I can't seem to remember where I *do* work.

My eyes fill with tears. *Don't cry*, I think. But three or four drops plop on the sleek black table.

"Ally, what's going on?" Damien asks, his voice softening. "Tell me."

"I don't know."

"Did you come here to see me?"

I shake my head. The answer's hopelessly out of reach. I start trembling, shaking really. When I glance back at Damien, his expression reads as more concerned than cross.

"Let's go into my office, okay?" he says.

He leads me from the room, abandoning his coffee cup so he can both grasp my arm and open the door. The work area is still mostly empty, with just one woman settled in a cube outside Damien's office door, possibly the person I saw in the baseball hat. She raises her eyes from beneath a fringe of black hair, curiosity piqued.

He guides me to a chair inside his office and then shoves the door closed. Instead of sitting at his desk, he drags the other visitor chair over next to me.

“Okay, talk to me,” he says, taking a seat. His voice, so cool before, is almost tender now.

“You must have come here for a reason. To speak to someone?”

I search the room with my eyes, hoping a clue will miraculously leap into view, but there’s nothing.

“I’m sorry,” I say with a shake of my head, “but I’m not sure how I ended up here. I can’t remember.”

“It’s okay, don’t worry. We can call someone to help you. Where’s your phone?”

“Um, in my purse.” He lowers his gaze to my lap and sees I’m not in possession of one.

“It’s probably in the conference room. Stay here, and I’ll get it.”

When he’s gone, I think as hard as I can, squeezing my head in my hands as if were dough, but I still can’t picture where I work. Or what I do. Or where I should be at this moment.

It’s only a few seconds before Damien comes hurrying back. I see the woman with the black hair raise her eyes again, managing to monitor his movements without moving her head even an inch.

“It’s not in there,” Damien says, shutting the office door behind him. He remains standing this time. “Could you have left it someplace?”

“I-I don’t know.” My anxiety spikes. If I don’t have my purse, I don’t have my phone. Or my wallet, either.

“Where did you come from just now? From home?”

I stare up at him, not comprehending at first, my heart beginning to hammer.

And then it hits me that I have no sense of that, either—where I was before I arrived or where my home is. There’s a thick, dark curtain between this moment and everything that came before it.

Damien says something else, but I can barely hear him. The outer rings of my vision shrink so that he now looks tiny, like he's at the end of a peephole. A wave of nausea swells inside me.

I sense myself start to slump in the chair and before I can straighten up, I keel onto the floor.