

When she finally stopped crying, he asked, “Do you want to tell me about him?”

“No.” She backed away from him and searched her pockets for a tissue, but of course at this moment, of all times, she didn’t have one. He did, though—a whole box stood on the coffee table— and he gave her one, and she blew her nose. Her mascara was running, and her face must be blotchy and red. “This is so humiliating,” she said. “I never do this. I feel like such an idiot.”

“Why? It’s perfectly natural. I’m glad to know you’re not so tough.”

“It’s unprofessional, and it makes me feel ugly. It’s a good thing you’re not attracted to me.”

“What?”

She peered at him, sniffing, and dabbed at her eyes. “You’re not, are you?”

“Which answer will get me in the least trouble?” he asked.

She laughed shakily. She felt a lot better. “If you were before, you wouldn’t be now.” He gave her another tissue, and she managed to get most of the mascara off. He rubbed away a stray smudge with his thumb, and his fingers brushed her cheek. The soft touch was even more comforting than being held in his arms. She closed her eyes.

He kissed her. It was the briefest pressure of his lips against hers, gentle and sweet, but she felt it deep inside. She opened her eyes. His were wide with surprise. “I think we just went off the clock,” she said.