

# Prologue

**Wednesday, 3:08 p.m.**

It was all a lie.

But was that such a bad thing?

Of course, he didn't want anyone to know that he was lying. Could they tell? Did his voice give him away? His posture? His hands?

He imagined his lie made material: a bright yellow balloon floating above his head for all to see.

But if lies were material, how many balloons would there be in this room? Standing at the lectern, he looked out across the rows and rows of seats.

There would be a pink balloon floating above his best friend who was sitting in the fifth row. Did that man chatting with his friend know that the balloon was there? Had no one noticed it during the past six years?

The beautiful young woman in the third row, whose lithe body was accentuated by the way she turned to laugh at a joke from one of the people sitting behind her, had a red balloon over her head, one that he had helped inflate.

The man in the last row, the one surrounded by his acolytes, probably had twisted balloons the size of floats in a Thanksgiving Day parade hovering over him.

And that bastard in the first row, with his head inclined to the left as he shared a confidence with the person sitting next to him, he was sure there would be a whole bouquet of shiny black balloons over him, if he only could see them. He wished he could.

Yes, if lies were balloons, this room would be filled with gold and pink and white and red and black balloons. It would look like the hall at a political convention.

Balloons everywhere. There was even one big one right over this building. This building, in its own way, was a lie.

But was that such a bad thing?

He took a breath and began to speak.

“It’s a pleasure to be here today . . .”

Another lie.