

## Chapter One

MARNIE

Patrick is late meeting me for dinner, which is good because it means I get a few minutes to sit by myself at our favorite table in the back of LaMont's, where I can sip my merlot and practice how I'm going to ask him my big question.

Patrick and I have been together for nearly four years, and I can talk to him about every little thought that might come into my head, but this—this is one of those questions, you see. Life-altering stuff. And Patrick is a man who has already had enough life-altering situations to last him a hundred years. He would prefer decades of some good old status quo.

But . . . I just can't.

So I take a gulp of my wine and close my eyes. I left the flower shop early so I could rehearse. Luckily, this is Brooklyn, so people on the subway didn't seem to notice that I was practicing out loud and enumerating talking points on my fingers.

Here's what I've got so far. "Patrick," I will say, "I love you more than anything. You, my love, are the flap in my flapjack. The cream in the center of my Oreo cookie. The monster in my monster mash. And you are the horizon of all my longing."

Sappy? God, yes, although that part about the horizon of my longing might be considered poetic if I use the right tone of voice. If I'm lucky, he'll laugh. And once he laughs, it'll be easy. I'll just blurt the question out, and then it will be done. Yes or no.

"Yes or no, Patrick," I'll say. "Take all the time you like, my love, but please remember that I am already thirty-three years old, and that loud banging noise you hear—well, that thing is my heart."

*For God's sake, get a grip, Marnie.*

I smile, recognizing this voice in my head. It's Blix—or not really her, since she's dead and all, but it's what she would say if she were here. I can squint and pretty much see her essence sitting across the table from me right this minute, all floaty and light, in her bright scarves and necklaces and long skirts, with her wild Einstein white hair sticking up everywhere, shaking her head and yelling at me to stop stressing about the question.

*Just lighten up! Trust in the goddamn universe for once, will you?*

Blix was always going on about the universe, and frankly, she and that universe of hers are what got me here. She was a one-of-a-kind matchmaking wizard, and she always said she knew two things from the moment she met me: I was a natural-born matchmaker, and also Patrick and I were meant to be together. (Never mind that I was

engaged to be married to Blix's grandnephew at the time; she and the universe already knew *that* relationship was a lost cause.)

I wasn't so sure I believed her. In fact, I was stunned when I found out soon after she died that she had left me her Brooklyn brownstone, having apparently decided that I, Marnie "Nobody Special" MacGraw, was the one to follow in her matchmaking footsteps and inherit her ongoing projects, as well as all the charming misfits she cultivated.

I had no intention of actually doing anything that crazy. By then, I was divorced from her grandnephew, and I was back living with my parents in Florida, heartbroken and blindsided by life. After months of listlessly dating my ex-boyfriend from high school, I may have accidentally agreed to marry him. I had *zero* plans to become a matchmaker in—*Brooklyn? Are you kidding me with this stuff?* So I came here intending to sell the building and go back home . . . only it just so happened that there was this guy Patrick living in the basement apartment of that brownstone.

And, well, Patrick turned out to be . . . my true home.

Okay, if I'm being honest here, he was not the man I would have chosen. That's when I learned that love doesn't always come in the package we might expect. He's a reclusive introvert, for one thing, and I'm always working out plans on how *not* to be alone. But he's smart and funny and possibly the tiniest bit crazy in all the good ways, and he knows how furnaces work and also he senses exactly what to say when I'm feeling lost or sad. He bakes the best pies from scratch, and he's the only person I know who likes to have all his conversations about world events in the bathtub, and besides all that, he lets me eat the centers of all his Oreo cookies. From the very start, even when I was a big whiny pain who knew nothing whatsoever about city life, he took care of me and made me laugh. And I fell for him in a way I'd never known I could love anyone.

Which just goes to show that we don't know everything about ourselves, because this was definitely not the way I saw my life going, being the live-in girlfriend of a brooding but funny artist, and owning a flower shop where I did matchmaking on the side. By the age of thirty-three, I was supposed to be a suburban mom married to Blix's handsome grandnephew, living next door to my parents and spending Saturday afternoons lolling around the pool with my sister while our husbands manned the barbecue pit and our kids napped in their strollers.

The only big question I'd planned to be asking at age thirty-three was should we have potato salad as a side dish, or would corn on the cob be best.

But you know what? Blix had some serious magic to her, and somehow she transferred that to me, and right now I hear her whispering in my ear, *Oh, for heaven's sake, Marnie, stop with this. You're going to get everything you want. Just trust in the universe.*