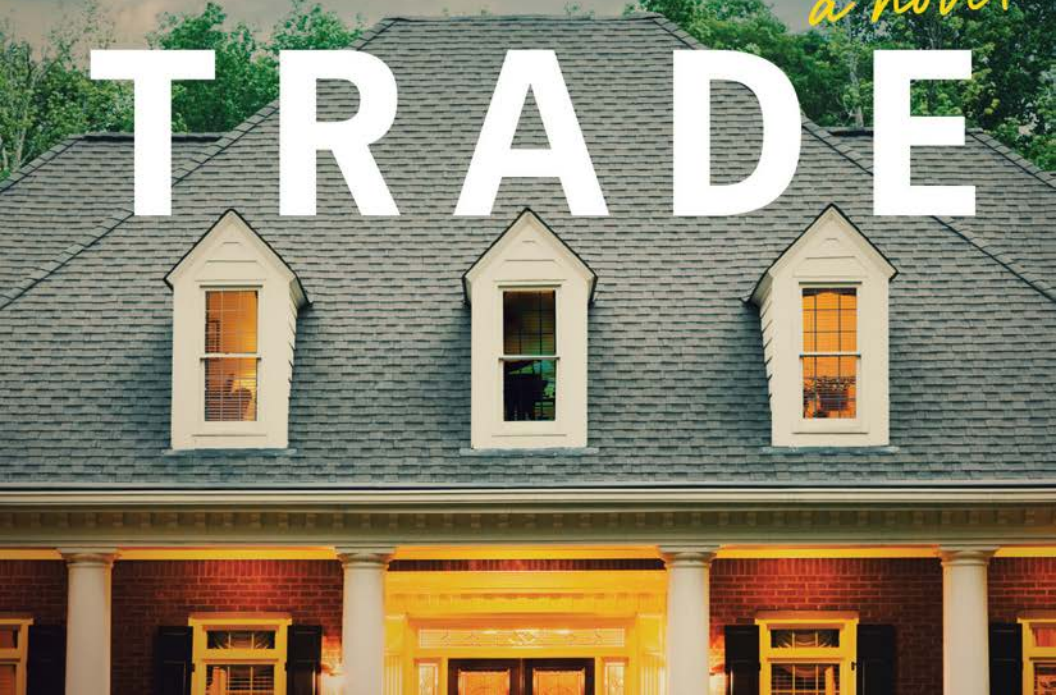


*Kristine Delano*

THE  
LIES  
WE

*a novel*

TRADE



## *Praise for The Lies We Trade*

*The Lies We Trade* is a dynamite debut! Kristine Delano expertly blends domestic suspense with a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at the high-stakes, high-drama life of a Wall Street power player.

RICK ACKER, bestselling coauthor of the Tupelo Grove series

An exciting debut from Wall Street insider Kristine Delano, *The Lies We Trade* is a taut, smart, and suspenseful page-turner full of mystery, betrayal, and hope. I look forward to more Kristine Delano!

TOSCA LEE, *New York Times* bestselling author

*The Lies We Trade* by Kristine Delano took me deep into the high-stakes world of Wall Street glamour and family secrets. . . . Fans of edge-of-your-seat suspense will be captivated by this masterful blend of corporate intrigue and deeply personal stakes with a wonderful, hopeful ending.

COLLEEN COBLE, *Publishers Weekly* and *USA Today* bestselling author of *Ambush*

A first-class corporate thriller . . . [and] a deeply emotional domestic suspense story, with a fragile family having to withstand nearly unbearable pressures—coming from both within and outside of the home. Delano strikes a wonderful tone with her strong but flawed protagonist Meredith Hansel, making us root for her as her world crashes down. An impressive and timely debut, *The Lies We Trade* will surely find a large audience eager for a multilayered, emotion-forward thriller.

CARTER WILSON, *USA Today* and *Publishers Weekly* bestselling author of *Tell Me What You Did*

Meet your new go-to author for tense, clever psychological thrillers! In *The Lies We Trade*, Delano takes readers on a twisty thrill ride that will keep you guessing until the very end. Highly recommend.

CONNIE MANN, author of *The Crown Conspiracy*



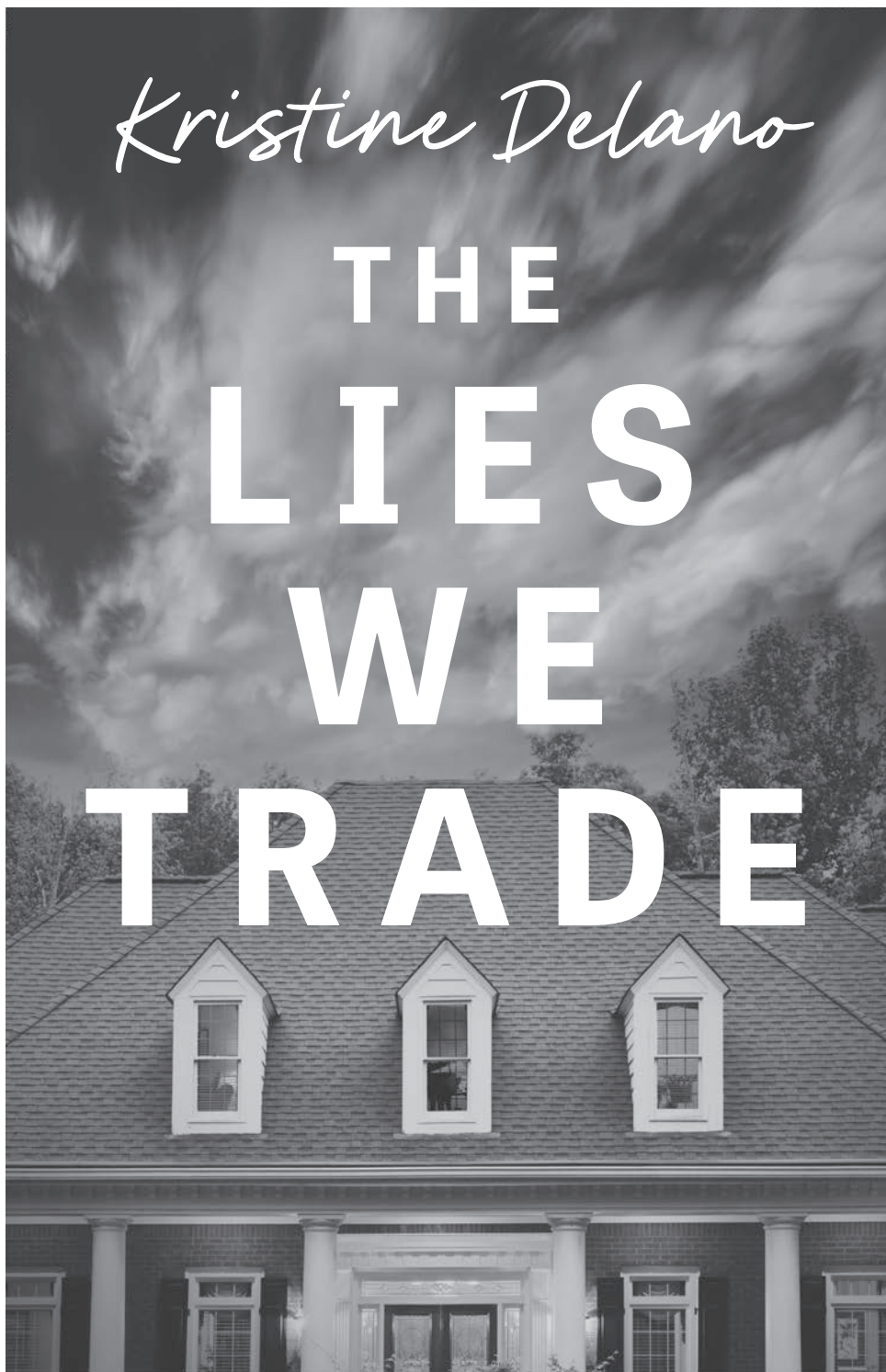
*The Lies We Trade*



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# 1

## ONE WEEK BEFORE

I always watch for the pivot—I sense it before I see it and I notice it before the crowd. The unusual hire, the buried earnings report, the hitch in the speaker’s voice that covers a lie. We each have our own unique superpower. It won’t be until much later that I’ll realize I’ve misplaced mine.

“So, Meredith.” The host’s British accent is gustier than when we spoke off-air. “A lot of investors are wondering—did anyone see this market correction coming? Were you caught napping like the rest?”

My smile tightens. “Markets are unpredictable by nature. The goal is never to predict every move. It’s to manage risk appropriately.”

“Right, right. But your mid-cap funds were still overweight in tech last quarter, weren’t they?” He arches a brow. “Any regrets?”

“Selective overweighting,” I correct him and speak to the green light above the camera lens. “These mutual funds are new to my portfolio, but we’re confident in our allocations.”



His smirk twitches, as if I sidestepped a premeditated trap. “Some might argue that sticking with tech at all was risky. Wouldn’t a more conservative approach have protected your investors better?”

There it is. He’s been waiting all segment to imply that I’ve been reckless. That, perhaps, I’m not quite up to the job. I ignore the drip of sweat careening down the back of my neck. “Markets reward conviction, not hesitation. If I’d shifted entirely, I assume you’d be asking why I missed the upside?”

A flicker of irritation crosses his face. “Fair point,” he concedes, though clearly he doesn’t think so. “Let’s talk liability. How did you convince your firm to risk their reputation on a wager?”

The recording light blinks yellow, signaling the interview is nearly over. With everything in me, I need off this stool. I speak into the camera, careful not to scowl. “As you know, Garman Straub is a powerhouse on Wall Street, but we’re also a trusted asset manager. We invest in individuals and institutions, from high-tech companies to innovators drilling wells in remote communities. We drive innovation.” Straightening my spine, I shift my gaze back to the host. “We don’t wager. Why did we launch two exchange-traded funds, called ETFs? Because our clients’ financial success is our priority, and our track record speaks for itself.”

The host plasters on his broadcast smile. “Well, I suppose we’ll find out if your strategy holds. Meredith Hansel, portfolio manager from Garman Straub, it’s been a pleasure.”

“Likewise. Thank you for having me.”

A shrill bell pierces the air of the New York Stock Exchange. “That’s a wrap. Great job, everyone,” a voice booms from behind me.

I take my first full breath in twenty minutes. Hardwin could have warned me. Our chief legal counsel set this up through his contacts in London. Ever the statesman, he’d never admit motive, but he likely

wanted this interview to remind me of my place—dependent on guys like him who’ve been at this far longer and have paid all their dues.

Flashing an untroubled smile, I shake the hand of my smooth-talking host, and then peel the wires from around my right ear. My hair snarls. Definitely too much spray. The more I pull, the bigger the tangle. I glance over my shoulder. The host smirks. Never fails, at some point I lose my poise.

As I stand at the sound booth teasing out single strands of hair from the earpiece, Betsey marches toward me.

“That was outstanding, Meredith. They want you to stay on.” She yanks a folder from her bag, her heavily made-up eyes shining with unshed tears.

“Not a chance. This one’s yours.” I shove her notes back at her.

“But that producer said—”

“We don’t care what any producer says, Betsey. You’re up next, and you get the friendlies.” I tighten my shoulder blades, willing her to match my posture. “You’re ready. You know our funds as well as you know the warm-up at your kickboxing gym.”

“Probably better. I do want to do this.” She bites her bottom lip, painted a pretty coral, and then lowers her voice. “But Meredith, do you think *they* want me to do this?”

“Of course they do.” But I know who she’s talking about. It’s not the producers or the teams here. Although she’s helped me raise a billion in assets, I had to use an undue amount of political capital to get her here. If she missteps, it’s a hammer to both our reputations.

“Not everyone wants us to succeed,” she whispers.

A sense, almost like a vibration, pulses in my temples. I flick my hair behind my ear. “Of course they don’t.” I lean in, lowering my voice. “We work in an industry predicated on greed and self-promotion. Not everyone’s a bad guy, but they sure don’t want us to

succeed at their expense.” Hardwin’s casual mention of this interview comes to mind—a fluff piece, it was not.

“I know.” She drops her gaze to the floor. “I just have this feeling . . . like . . . like we might not have the full picture of our sales.”

As if I’ve been sucker punched, air leaves my lungs. Scanning the faces around us, I drag her away from the microphones and cameras. “Betsey,” I hiss. “You report to me as a *sales* manager. What do you mean you don’t have a full picture of our *sales*?”

The unshed tears return. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to alarm you. I just—”

The vibration in my temples transforms into sharp jabs. “You can’t throw statements around like that. We review the numbers every day. Are you telling me we have a problem?”

“No. No. We’re good.”

“Hear me, Betsey.” I try to keep the annoyance out of my tone but utterly fail. “If you come at me with innuendo, I cannot help you.”

“I understand, Meredith. Nerves just got to me.” Her chin, as white as a porcelain doll’s, trembles.

“You’re on the road this week?” I soften my glare as she nods, urging her to regain her composure. “We’ll talk when you’re back. But right now, I have to run. You got this next interview?” I expect only one answer, because I can’t stay. I simply can’t.

“I’m ready.” A smile inches up through the worry still etching her face.

“I know you are. I’ll check in with you later.” I snatch my phone out of my leather satchel. “And hey, we’ll be right back here in a week. We get to ring that closing bell.” I hook my thumb at the white-marble balcony on the other side of the New York Stock Exchange. “Remember, you’ve a lot to be proud of.”

A young producer with a purple bow tie and slicked-back hair

marches toward me. I catch his eye and point at Betsey. It's her interview. He scowls but shifts direction.

On my phone, a confirmation for my next meeting appears. Although I'm expecting every single word, my mouth goes dry. Not only must we watch our backs, but we all have secrets we're forced to keep.

I drop my phone back in my bag and look toward Betsey, now standing in the midst of the hair and makeup team. With her shoulder-length auburn tresses swept up into a chignon, she looks regal—a completely different woman from only a moment ago.

She is the woman I've come to rely on.

As I whip toward the exit, my left stiletto twists under me. I stagger forward and grab the edge of a trading booth. Somehow, I remain upright. Running my palms down the silken wool of my pencil skirt, I plant a smile and glance backward.

Betsey, her lips now painted a blood red, silently mouths, *Be careful.*