



# NEVER LIE

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

FREIDA  
McFADDEN

# Never Lie

A NOVEL BY  
FREIDA MCFADDEN

Never Lie

© 2022 by Freida McFadden. All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means whatsoever without express written permission from the author

This book is a work of fiction. The names, characters, incidents and places are the products of the authors' imagination, and are not to be construed as real. None of the characters in the book is based on an actual person. Any resemblance to persons living or dead is entirely coincidental and unintentional.

# Table of Contents

[PROLOGUE](#)

[CHAPTER 1](#)

[CHAPTER 2](#)

[CHAPTER 3](#)

[CHAPTER 4](#)

[CHAPTER 5](#)

[CHAPTER 6](#)

[CHAPTER 7](#)

[CHAPTER 8](#)

[CHAPTER 9](#)

[CHAPTER 10](#)

[CHAPTER 11](#)

[CHAPTER 12](#)

[CHAPTER 13](#)

[CHAPTER 14](#)

[CHAPTER 15](#)

[CHAPTER 16](#)

[CHAPTER 17](#)

[CHAPTER 18](#)

[CHAPTER 19](#)

[CHAPTER 20](#)

[CHAPTER 21](#)

[CHAPTER 22](#)

[CHAPTER 23](#)

[CHAPTER 24](#)

[CHAPTER 25](#)

[CHAPTER 26](#)

[CHAPTER 27](#)

[CHAPTER 28](#)

[CHAPTER 29](#)

[CHAPTER 30](#)

[CHAPTER 31](#)

[CHAPTER 32](#)

[CHAPTER 33](#)

[CHAPTER 34](#)

[CHAPTER 35](#)

[CHAPTER 36](#)

[CHAPTER 37](#)

[CHAPTER 38](#)

[CHAPTER 39](#)

[CHAPTER 40](#)

[CHAPTER 41](#)

[CHAPTER 42](#)

[CHAPTER 43](#)

[CHAPTER 44](#)

[CHAPTER 45](#)

[CHAPTER 46](#)

[CHAPTER 47](#)

[CHAPTER 48](#)

[CHAPTER 49](#)

[CHAPTER 50](#)

[CHAPTER 51](#)

[CHAPTER 52](#)

[CHAPTER 53](#)

[CHAPTER 54](#)

[EPILOGUE](#)



# PROLOGUE

## ADRIENNE

Everybody lies.

Years ago, a psychological experiment was devised to estimate the prevalence of untruthful behavior. It involved a broken vending machine.

Subjects were informed that the vending machine was malfunctioning. If they put in a dollar, the faulty machine would dispense candy, but then return their dollar. Subjects who used the vending machine found this to be absolutely true. They dispensed one, two, three, or even four pieces of free candy, and then retrieved their money from the machine.

There was a sign on the vending machine. The sign read: “To report any malfunctions with this machine, please call this number.” Unbeknownst to the subjects, the number provided belonged to one researcher in the study.

Take a guess how many of the subjects called this number to report the broken machine.

Zero.

That’s right. Not even one of the dozens of subjects was honest enough to call the number and report the broken vending machine. Each one of them took their free candy and moved on.

As I said, everybody lies.

There are many easily identified signs that a person is lying, especially if they are an unskilled liar. As a trained psychiatrist, I am intimately familiar with these signs. It’s almost too easy to spot them:

Liars fidget.

The tone of their voice or speech patterns changes.

Liars offer too much information, babbling on with excessive detail to convince themselves or others of what they are saying.

Machines have been built to recognize these patterns and identify them. However, even the best lie detector has a twenty-five percent rate of

error. I am far more accurate than that.

If you listen to the audiotapes of my patient encounters, you can't always tell. On tape, you miss the important visual cues. Avoiding eye contact, for example, or covering their mouth or eyes. But if you are my patient, and you are sitting in my office talking to me, I can watch your face and your gestures and listen to the pitch of your voice.

I will know the truth. I always know.

Never lie to me.





# CHAPTER 1

## TRICIA

### *Present Day*

We're hopelessly lost and my husband won't admit it.

I can't say this is atypical behavior for Ethan. We've been married for six months—still newlyweds—and ninety percent of the time, he's the perfect husband. He knows all the most romantic restaurants in town, he still surprises me with flowers, and when he asks me about my day, he actually listens to my answer and asks appropriate follow-up questions.

But the other ten percent of the time, he is so stubborn, I could scream.

"You missed the turn for Cedar Lane," I tell him. "We passed it like half a mile down the road."

"No." A scary-looking vein bulges in Ethan's neck. "It's up ahead. We didn't pass it."

I let out a frustrated huff as I clutch the printed directions to the house in Westchester, courtesy of our real estate agent, Judy. Yes, we do have GPS. But that signal went out about ten minutes ago. Now all we've got to rely on are these written directions. It's like living in the Stone Age.

Well, Ethan wanted something out of the way. He's getting his wish.

The worst part is that it's *snowing*. It started a few hours ago, back when we were leaving Manhattan. When we left, they were cute little white flakes that evaporated on contact with the ground. Over the last hour, the flakes have quadrupled in size. They're not cute anymore.

And now that we have turned off the highway, this more deserted, narrow road is slick with snow. And it's not like Ethan drives a truck. His BMW has gorgeous hand-stitched leather seats, but only front-wheel drive. And he's not incredibly skilled at driving in the snow either. If we skidded, he probably wouldn't even know whether to turn *into* the skid or *out* of the skid. (Into the skid, right?)

As if on cue, the BMW skids on a patch of slushy ice. Ethan's fingers are bloodless on the steering wheel. He rights the vehicle, but my heart is pounding. The snow is getting really bad. He pulls over to the side of the road and holds out his hand to me.

"Let me see those directions."

Dutifully, I hand over the slightly crumpled piece of paper. I wish he had let me drive. Ethan would never admit I'm better at navigating than he is. "I think we passed the turn, Ethan."

He looks down at a sheet of typed directions. Then he squints out the windshield. Even with the wipers going full speed and our high beams on, the visibility is horrible. Now that the sun has dropped in the sky, we can only see about ten feet ahead of us. Everything past that is pure white. "No. I see how to get there."

"Are you sure?"

Instead of answering my question, he grumbles, "You should have checked the weather before we got on the road."

"Maybe we should turn back?" I press my hands between my knees. "We can view the house another time." Like when there isn't a freaking blizzard raging outside the car.

My husband whips his head around and glares at me like I have lost my mind. "Tricia, we've been driving for almost *two hours* to get here. We're about ten minutes away, and now you want to *turn around and go home*?"

That's another thing I have learned about Ethan in the six months since we've been married. Once he gets an idea in his head to do something, he does not back down until it's done. I suppose I could see it as a good thing. I wouldn't want to be married to a man who left a bunch of half-finished projects around the house.

I'm still learning about Ethan. All my girlfriends scolded me for marrying him too quickly. We met in a coffee shop one day—I tripped and spilled my drink right next to his table, and he insisted on buying me a new one.

It was one of those love at first sight deals. When I saw him, I fell hard for his blond hair streaked with even blonder strands. His blue eyes were the color of the sky on a clear day and rimmed with pale lashes. And his strong Roman nose kept him from being too pretty. When he smiled at me, I

was a goner. We spent the next six hours together, sharing coffee, then later that same evening, he took me out to dinner. That night, I broke up with my boyfriend of over a year, explaining apologetically that I had met the man I was going to marry.

Nine months later, my Coffee Shop Romeo and I were married. Six months later, we're moving out to the suburbs. Our entire relationship has been on fast forward.

But so far, no regrets. The more I learn about Ethan, the more I fall in love with him. And he feels the same way about me. It's so amazing sharing my life with him.

Except for the one big secret he doesn't know about yet.

"Fine," I say. "Let's find the house."

Ethan hands me the sheet of directions. He throws the BMW back into drive. "I know exactly where to go. It's right up ahead."

That remains to be seen.

He drives slower this time, both to account for the snow and to keep from missing the turn, which I'm certain that he already missed about half a mile down the road. I keep my eyes on the road as well even though the windshield is now caked with snow. I try to think warm, dry thoughts.

"There!" Ethan cries. "I see it!"

I lean forward in my seat, straining the seatbelt. He *sees* it? Sees *what*, exactly? Is he wearing invisible snow/night vision goggles? Because all I can see is snow, and then beyond that, more snow, and beyond *that*, blackness. But then he slows down, and sure enough, there's a little path leading into a wooded area. He turns the high beams in the direction of a sign that's almost obscured by snow. I can just barely make out the words as he takes the turn just a bit too fast.

*Cedar Lane.*

What do you know—Ethan was right all along. I was sure he had passed the turn for Cedar, but he hadn't. It's right here. Although now that we're on the tiny narrow road to get to the house, I am concerned the BMW won't make it. When I look over at my husband's face, I can tell he is worried about the same thing. The path to the house is barely paved, and now it's thick with snow.

"We should tell Judy to keep the showing quick," I say. "We don't want to get stuck here."

Ethan bobs his head in agreement. “I have to be honest. I wanted something out-of-the-way, but this is insane. I mean, it’s like we’re in the middle of...”

His voice trails off mid-sentence. I can only imagine he was going to point out that we are in the middle of nowhere. But before he can get out the words, his mouth falls open. Because the house has finally come into view.

And it’s unbelievable.

The listing on Judy’s website mentioned that it’s two stories tall, plus an attic, but that description doesn’t do justice to this sprawling estate. The ceilings must be extremely high, because the steep gable roof of the house seems to scrape against the sky, heavy with snow. The sides of the house are lined with pointed arch windows that give the house a look of a cathedral rather than a place where people live. Ethan’s jaw looks like it might unhinge.

“Jesus,” he breathes. “Can you imagine *living* in a place like that?”

I may know my husband for only just over a year, but I recognize the look on his face. He’s not asking a rhetorical question. He *wants* to live in this house. We have dragged poor Judy across half of Westchester and Long Island, because no place we have seen has quite lived up to the picture Ethan has in his head. But now...

“You like it?” I say.

“Don’t you think it’s great? I mean, look at the place.”

I open my mouth to agree with him. This house is undeniably beautiful. It’s huge and elegant and remote—all the things we have been searching for. It’s a perfect home to fill up with children, which is our eventual goal. I want to tell Ethan that I love the house as much as he does. That when Judy arrives, we should make her an offer on the spot.

But I can’t do that.

Because as I stare out at this sprawling estate, a sick feeling comes over me. So sick that I cover my mouth and take a deep breath to keep from losing my lunch all over the BMW's expensive upholstery. I have never felt this way before. Not about any of the dozens of empty houses we have toured over the last couple of months. I have never had a feeling this strong.

*Something terrible has happened in this house.*

“Oh crap,” Ethan says.

I take another shaky breath, pushing away another wave of nausea. That's when I notice we have stopped moving. The front wheels spin determinedly, but it's no use. The car is stuck.

"The roads are too slippery," he says. "We can't get any traction."

I hug myself and shiver, even though the heat is blasting. "What should we do?"

"Well..." He reaches out to wipe some condensation off the windshield. "We're pretty close to the house. We can walk it."

Easy for him to say. He's not wearing Manolo Blahnik boots.

"Also, it looks like Judy is already here," he adds.

"Really? I don't see her car."

"Yeah, but the lights are on. She must be parked in the garage."

I squint through the fogged windshield at the house. Now that I'm looking closer, I can see a single light aglow in one of the upstairs windows. That's odd. If a real estate agent were showing a house, wouldn't she turn the lights on *downstairs*? But the entire first floor of the house is dark. There's only that one light upstairs.

Once again, I shiver.

"Come on," Ethan says. "We're better off inside. It's not like we can spend the night in the car. We'll run out of gas and freeze to death."

Not an appealing thought. I'm starting to regret this entire trip. What was I thinking coming out here? But Ethan loves the house. Maybe this will all work out.

"Fine," I say. "Let's walk."