

Lust and crime enter a New York City law firm, as office romance and sexual harassment complaints arise. When murders, suicide, and arrests are added to the brew, catastrophe ensues.

Harassed

By Beth Button Conklin

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HARASSED



BETH BUTTON CONKLIN

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One.

“Saunders and Freeman, this is Cassie,” Cassie says with a grimace, as she stretches to grab her desk phone, smashing her shin into a half open desk drawer. Fortunately, she has put a lot of work into her goal to cut down on swearing, so she just *thinks* one of her favorite curse words (hint: it starts with an M and has more than three syllables), instead of sharing it with the caller and anyone walking by her office. As she’s treated to an earful of profanities, she realizes that it probably would be acceptable to this caller if she had expressed herself aloud.

She holds the receiver a couple of inches from her ear, as she pulls up her rolling desk chair with her other hand, then kicks her weapon of a desk drawer closed. Might as well get comfy, as her future client rants for a bit. She takes a sip of her mocha, then grabs a pen and legal pad from her top desk drawer. At a pause, she says, “Sir, I need you to calm down a little bit, so I can help you, okay?”

He apologizes and lets her get the necessary information from him. Thank *you*, whoever gave me this referral, she thinks while jotting down notes. They set up an appointment for the next afternoon. She can tell she can’t handle an early morning meeting with this guy, and gets the feeling that he’s not really an early riser any way.

“Shit, did they *remove* the caffeine from this thing, or what?” she mutters to herself as she takes another sip of her latte. So much for the “thought-swearing” only policy. Oh well, she had given it the old college try.

Her intercom line rings and she sees that it’s the receptionist. “What’s up Lana?”

“Ummmm, shit, what was I going to ask you?” Man, another one off the wagon. Cassie feels so much better.

“Oh, yeah. Trevor wanted me to tell ya that some consultant dude is coming by today, to like, meet everyone.” Lana pauses for a good forty seconds to release a cough that sounds like something an eighty

year-old chain smoking man with emphysema would produce. “Jack Levine is the name.”

You would think Lana was about twenty-one, if you went by her vocabulary and wardrobe alone, but it’s actually more like early forties.

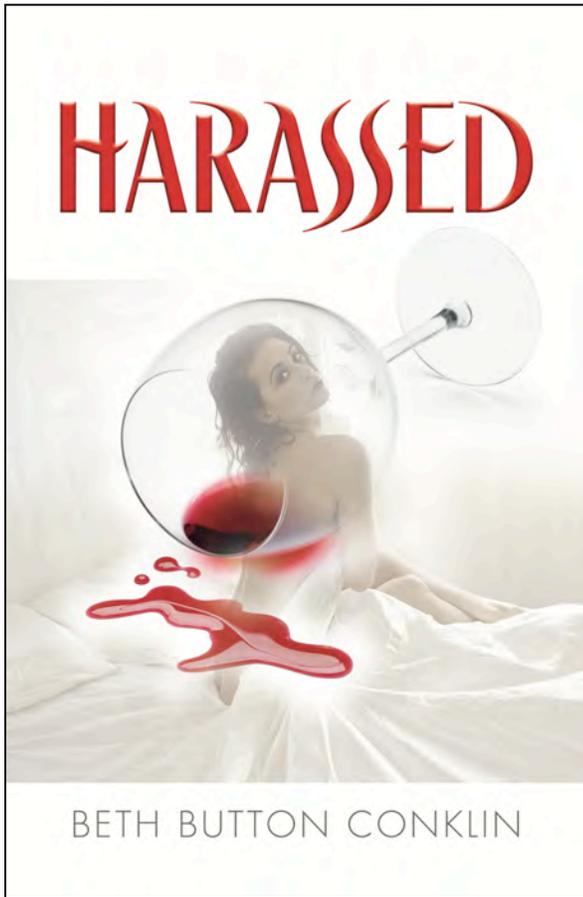
Cassie represses her urge to ask, “His name or *the* name?” She decides it’s not worth it, as it would just cause Lana undue stress. She wouldn’t realize it was a joke until about an hour after the delivery, and even then, she’d be slightly confused.

Cassie knew of Jack and had seen him at court hearings before. She remembered seeing an email about his arrival and felt no more excited now than she had when she had deleted it. “Okay,” she responded.

“Oh, and I brought some of that wine from my trip that I was telling you about. It’s a pinot noir, so get it from me before you leave today.”

Cassie thanked her, trying to sound enthusiastic, then hung up.

Lana kind of acts like they are the closest of friends, and after just three months of working with her, Cassie’s not quite sure why that is, but free wine is free wine. So, fuck it, they’re bffs.



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