

The Cubicle Giant
a novel

Seth Sawyers

Part I

Rachel

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Rachel Rubens had been employed by *The Sun* for twelve days. She had no business cards, no nameplate for her desk. She was blank. Her beat, technically, was arts and architecture, but she knew little about architecture and was only passable in her knowledge of the other arts, so, in practice, she had covered whatever the editors had told her to cover. She had gotten three contributor attributions but only two bylines of her own, one of which was a 14-inch story about a fire that had destroyed a vacant Westside hotel twice slept in by President William Howard Taft. Neither made the front page of their sections.

She was 26 and new in every way. She regularly took wrong turns downtown and found herself on some mean, four-lane concrete thoroughfare that invariably took her away from her interview and dumped her into one of the blown-out neighborhoods in East Baltimore. But she worked hard and had not missed a deadline, though she had already turned in a story in those first few days that was just beyond her actual ability. In the newsroom, she felt as if she were behind the wheel of a car that was traveling fifteen miles per hour faster than she would have liked. She still sometimes couldn't believe that she was there, with a phone and with unlimited access to the slim reporter's notebooks