

Confessions of a Bad Boy CEO
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Chapter One

Holly

I must be crazy. Out of my freaking mind. A certifiable lunatic at best. What other explanation could there be, because no other human on the planet would be driving in such horrible weather conditions. I should have turned around thirty minutes ago, when my radio could still pick up a signal—when the heavy rain first began to impair my driving, and the ocean to my left started surging and spilling onto the narrow, winding, two-lane road.

But I figured I was so close, and turning around meant an even longer journey back to the city. Not my smartest move, considering the way the twisted and snapped tree branches are pinging off my rain-soaked windshield as I drive slowly, carefully toward my parent's house, which just happens to be in the middle of butt-fuck nowhere.

My childhood stomping grounds.

Truthfully, it's nothing short of a miracle that I'd made it this far. The weather was bad the second I packed my car and left Toronto for the long drive to Nova Scotia. Exhaustion should have stopped me long before the heavy hurricane winds touched land, and while I should have drove straight to my hotel in the city—apartment searching would come later—I was anxious to see my folks. I hadn't been back to Nova Scotia in months, nine to be precise. I usually only made it home for Christmas, but this time I'm back for good. Thanks to my asshole boyfriend.

Correction, asshole ex-boyfriend.

We'd been together for five years now, having met in college, and the two of us had spent many a day making plans for the future. As a junior accountant in one of Toronto's biggest firms, I worked and put him through law school. In turn, he was supposed to put me through law school when he joined a firm, and together we were going to open our own practice, and become a serious power couple. But then a few months back, after landing his first job, the douche bag fell for one of the firm's partners, and the rest, you could say, is history.

Could I be any more of a cliché?

In the end, I guess I'm glad it all happened. Did I really want to spend my life with a guy who could so easily dismiss me—especially after all the support I'd given him? And the whole power couple thing, it was more his dream than mine. I'm just an easygoing small town girl who

doesn't need a lot of material things to be happy, and there is a secret part of me that knots up at the thoughts of becoming a lawyer. Wouldn't that put the final nail into my childhood dream of opening my own bakery! I became an accountant to pay the bills, and my ex always said a bakery was juvenile and ridiculous, and wouldn't so much as pay the rent on the lease. While I know he's right, the heart wants what the heart wants, right? But now that I'm on my own again, and have taken a job at a big accounting firm in the city—another junior position that I'm grateful to have, even though rumor has it my boss is an ogre—it's time to buckle down and face reality.

So much for childhood dreams.

So much for Prince Charming.

Neither exist. Not in my reality anyway.

I reach out and fiddle with the radio dial, needing something, anything to keep me from feeling so alone and afraid as the storm pummels my car, as well as my nerves. I peer through the window as something big and dark enters the road, and when I realize it's a deer—mesmerized by my headlights—I let loose a yelp and swerve to avoid it. My tire hits the gravel shoulder, and before I can right it, my car veers off course and the next thing I know, I'm headed straight for the muddy, flooded ditch. I topple into it, and jolt forward, but my seatbelt keeps me in place. What it doesn't do, however, is stop my air bag from punching me in the face with enough force to drive my head back and nearly break my nose. I gasp for air, and work not to panic.

Too late. Panicking.

Okay, pull it together, Holly. You're a smart girl. You've got this.

I take a deep breath, then another, as I struggle to release my seatbelt. Good God, the buckle has no plans of discharging anytime soon, and water is rushing into the car. Reaching out, I fish my purse from the floor, drag it to my lap, and riffle through it until I produce my cell phone. I throw up a silent prayer, hoping I can get service out here in the middle of nowhere, although deep in my gut, I'm guessing I can't. I squint through watery eyes, and feel a measure of relief when I see one bar.

Yes!

I go to contacts and punch in my parents' number. I have no doubt they're worried sick about me, but I didn't want to take the time to pull over and let them know I was okay, which I'm totally not anymore.

I put the phone to my ear, but then it goes dead. I check the bars again, find none.

Of course, there are none! Why on earth would there be? For the last week, month...year, nothing has been going my way. Why should it start now? Honest to God, I'm a nice girl, a rule follower, always kind to others. I even used to get Mr. Johnson's groceries for him when he was going through dialysis. Why is karma kicking my ass so hard? All I can figure is I'd done something horrible in another lifetime.

With no time to dwell on that, I toss my phone aside and shift my body, trying to squirm from the seat when a loud cracking sounds reverberates through me. I fight the air bag, and bite back a yelp when my windshield splits, a huge fissure travelling from one side to the other, compliments of the big-assed tree that just landed on it. Okay, enough of this. I need to get out of this car and seek shelter, ASAP. I try my door, and I'm grateful when it opens—the water accumulating in the ditch and filling my car however, not so happy about that.

Fighting off a new wave of panic, I curse, squirm and struggle, but go still when I see a figure emerge from the shadows.

I open my mouth, about to scream, but then stop to give myself a quick consultation. A girl broken down in the ditch, about to drown in her car, versus a deranged killer who escaped from an asylum. Did I mention I have a crazy imagination? I pull my purse to my chest and consider my options. Okay, deranged killer it is.

"Over here," I scream, just as the man swings my door open wider and does a quick assessment. I look down at my soaked feet and yoga pants, the muddy water rushing in and threatening to engulf the vehicle.

He pulls a knife from his back pocket and I suck in a fast breath, ready to whack him with my purse when he leans over me. Oh God, he *is* a deranged killer, and I'm a goner. Two seconds later he's cutting into my seatbelt and pulling me from the driver's seat. I choke on the fear tightening my throat as he gathers me into his arms.

"Are you okay?" he asks.

"I...I think so. There was a deer, I swerved," I say, and blink a fat raindrop from my eyes as I shoulder my purse and snake my hands around his neck to hold on. When my vision clears, I

realize I'm being rescued by the hottest guy on the face of the Earth. Although it's certainly not the time to be thinking about that.

"It's okay, I got you. No need to talk anymore."

He continues to hold me to his hard body, and rain slaps against our skin as he darts into the trees, the overhead canopy of leaves providing a modicum of shelter. Heavy wet branches smack our bodies as he zigzags between the trees like he knows the woods better than the back of his hand, which is a strange saying. I don't think I know the back of my hand at all. Coming down from my adrenaline rush, I lay my head against his flannel shirt, which smells like man, wood, and smoke. It's not a bad scent. In fact, it's quite...appealing. I angle my head, take in his intense features, the weekend's worth of scruff on his face. Good God, have I just been rescued by a lumberjack?

Why does the idea of that excite me?

Oh, probably because lumberjacks are rough and rugged and manly and I haven't been touched in ages. Although, when I had been touched it was less than stellar—not that I know what great sex is. I only know it took my own hand in the bathroom later to reach orgasm. Or maybe it's because I just finished an awesome book called WOOD, and have been fantasizing about getting it on with my very own woodsman.

"Who are you?" I manage to get out around a tongue gone thick as we climb higher into the forest.

He casts me a quick look. "Will," he says and hurries forward, like I weigh nothing. I don't. Even my curves have curves. I don't have a problem with that. I like myself the way I am. I'm smart enough to realize guys prefer their girls wafer thin, but I refuse to starve myself to fit some misguided image of the perfect body. If I want a sandwich, I'm going to eat a sandwich, dammit.

His eyes seek mine again, another careful assessment. "You sure you're okay? You've got a hell of a bump on your forehead."

It's only then that I realize I have a killer headache. I reach up, not even sure how, or when I banged my head. But when my fingers connect with a goose egg, I wince. Damn, must have hit the steering wheel before the air bag deployed.

"Ouch," I whimper.

He takes my hand and moves it away. "Don't," he commands in a soft voice that does the strangest things to my insides. I never much liked guys who were bossy, but that one word, and

the forcefulness behind it, piques my interest and make me a little more curious about that man who'd just saved me from drowning. "We're almost there. I'll take care of your head when I get you to safety."

Safety?

I'm being whisked away by a stranger—albeit a gorgeous one who looks like he knows his way around a woman's body—and carried so deep into the woods, there's no way I'll ever find my way out. Am I really safe? I shift in his arms, my hands loosening on his neck, ready to break free and make a run for it if I have to. I'm pretty sure there is an old granola bar in the bottom of my purse that I can survive on until I find civilization.

"I won't hurt you," he says, like he can read my mind. "You're safe with me."

"I never said—"

"You were thinking it."

"How do know—"

"Because I do," he says.

Okay, so apparently, I've been rescued by a *mind-reading* lumberjack. I'd better cool it with erotic thoughts or this is going to get a whole lot more interesting.

Let's go for interesting, Holly.

I quiet the needy side of me, and work to focus on something other than how good it feels to be in this man's arms.

"You do know where you're going, right?" I ask, only because there is no path and every tree looks the same to me.

He scowls at me and I glance up to see a cabin, ribbons of smoke coming from the chimney. Okay, I guess he does. There is a Jeep in the driveway, and a long road that likely leads to civilization. At least I can find my way to the main road if need be. I want to ask if it's his place, and what he's doing in these woods alone, but don't say anything when he opens his door and steps inside. The warmth of the place falls over me, and pushes the chill from my bones.

"We need to see to that bump and get you undressed." He sets me on the sofa in front of the fire and disappears up a set of stairs. I take that moment to catalogue my surroundings. The log cabin is rustic, but I get the sense it was decorated like this purposely, like someone put a great deal of money into making it look primitive, while still providing its owners with modern conveniences. He comes back in a dry pair of jeans and a t-shirt, holding a clean flannel shirt

three times too big for me and a first aid kit. As he approaches, I can't help but admire the way he moves, the squareness of his broad shoulders, the way his low-slung jeans hug his body to perfection.

Dark eyes meet mine. "Put this on," he says. "Then I'll attend to your head."

I accept the shirt as water drips down my nose and pools on my lips. His gaze leaves mine, heats a few degrees, and that's when I realize my white t-shirt is soaked to my skin and showcasing my lacey bra. He clears his throat, and his gaze lifts slowly, zeroes in on my mouth as I lick the fat droplets. Good God, how long has this man been in the woods, been around another woman?

Maybe I'm not so safe with him after all.

Halleluiah!

Cut it out, Holly.

"Do you...think you could turn around," I say, and twirl my finger to draw his attention from my breasts to my face.

His eyes snap to mine, hold for a second, then he tears his gaze away. "I'll make coffee," he says gruffly. I stand when he offers me his back and walks into his kitchen. I can see him from my viewpoint in the living room. The main interior of cottage is an open concept, with a loft above for sleeping, and one door off the living room that likely leads to a bathroom. With all the up-to-date conveniences, I'm sure there must be a modern shower in there. The thoughts of climbing under a hot spray sounds perfectly divine.

"Do you have tea?" I ask, not want to sound ungrateful, but I prefer it over coffee.

"No."

All righty, then.

"Coffee will be fine," I say. "Thank you. I really appreciate it."

He grunts something under his breath as I hurry from my wet clothes, a little unstable on my feet. I slide into the warm flannel and bring my arm to my nose to inhale. His shirt smells like fabric softener, not the flames blazing in the hearth, or the delectable man in the kitchen.

"Um, do you have a dryer?"

He points to the one and only inside door, and I walk through it to find the bathroom. I was right, there is a magnificent shower with a dozen nozzles that only a person with an engineering degree could operate. Behind a set of double closet doors, I discover the washer and dryer. I toss

my clothes in and set it to delicate dry. I go back into the room in time to see Will carry the coffee into the living room.

“I’m Holly,” I say, and tug on the hem of the shirt. It feels a little weird to be in his clothes without any panties on. “Thanks for helping me. I had no idea the storm was so bad. I’m moving back from Toronto and was just on my way to my parents’ house.” I jerk my thumb out, although I’m so disorientated, I have no idea which direction their place is. “They’re just a few miles down the road. Whitman’s Lane. Do you know it?” Okay, stop rambling already. “I’ll be out of your way once my clothes dry.”

He hands me my coffee and as I take a small sip, he gives me a look that suggests I’m insane. “What would be the point of drying your clothes just to go back out into the rain?”

Okay, good point.

He moves across the room to toss another log onto the fire and I take in the way he carries himself—with an air of authority—and once again my curiosity is piqued. A lumberjack with stature. Who would have ever thought I’d run into a man like that.

“I don’t want to bother you any longer than need be.” I’m smart enough to realize a man who lives in the middle of nowhere values his privacy, and having me here is interfering with that.

“If I didn’t want you here, I wouldn’t have brought you. Now sit. So, I can take care of you, and try to get that swelling down. Your head must be aching.”

In that instant, as those dark eyes of his lock on mine, my gaze goes to his big, calloused hands, and all I can think about is another area of my body that’s begun aching, and how much it would like to be taken care of by him.

Oh boy!

Chapter Two

Will

I rub the scruff on my chin and gaze at the woman wearing my flannel shirt as she slowly lowers herself onto my sofa. Women don't wear my clothes. Ever. Nor do they invade my private space, or see me in such a disheveled state. Not since my college days, anyway. And it's not only women who must always see me at my best. As the president and CEO of WSC Associates, I'm the face of my business and have a professional image to uphold. But after investing the sound of a car crashing, and finding her stuck behind the wheel, I had no choice but to bring her into my sanctuary, let her invade my much-needed solitude. I'm a lot of things, but I'm not a complete asshole.

I take in her curves, prominent even in my unflattering shirt. I never expected my privacy to be broken by such a beautiful woman, one with a body a guy could sink his fingers into, not to mention his teeth. She gazes at me over the rim of her cup as she takes a drink, and I don't miss the way she's checking me out. Although something tells me she's far too innocent for a guy like me, wouldn't understand the rules that sex is for sex only, or that I have no desire for a relationship. Still, that doesn't stop me from fantasizing about all the ways we can pass the time and ride out the storm.

"Coffee is good," she says, pulling my attention back.

"You shouldn't have been out on the roads," I say, and she frowns, those lush lips of hers turning downward, and all I can do is envision is her on her knees, her mouth wide open as I feed her my thickening cock. *Christ, get it together, Will.* I've never lacked the company of the opposite sex before, but lately I've been working too hard. This trip to my cabin was about fishing and relaxing, yet the open laptop on my kitchen counter tells another story. The doctor straight up told me if I didn't find a way to unwind, find a hobby, some sort of extracurricular activity to take my mind off work, I was going to have a heart attack before my thirtieth birthday next month.

Damned if this woman isn't filling my mind with other extracurricular activities.

"I know," she says quietly, and stands. My gaze moves to her legs as she walks to the fire and holds her hands out. "I don't know what I was thinking."

Something inside me softens at the vulnerability in her tone. “You still cold?”

“I’m okay,” she says, but from the way she’s hugging herself, I get she just doesn’t want to be a bother.

I grab a blanket from the end of the sofa, and close the distance between us. I drape it over her shoulders and her entire body stiffens. “Oh, thank you,” she says quietly.

“I need to take a look at your head,” I say and slowly guide her back to the sofa.

“Are you a doctor?”

“No,” I say and redirect with, “You said you were trying to visit your parents.”

She nods but then winces, and I examine her pupils to determine if she has a concussion. I might not be a in the medical field like my youngest sister Cara, but I had my share of fights on the playground and am aware of trauma when I see it. Plus, I used to help Cara study and picked up a thing or two. My other sister Randi is an architect, and I learned a lot about design from her. She’s also headstrong and bossy, and I learned a lot about negotiation because of her. I look over Holly’s eyes, but see no signs of a concussion. Still, I want her to take it easy; an accident is scary and can bring on shock.

“Easy. No sudden movements.” I fix the blanket around her and open my first aid kit. “Did they know you were coming?”

“Yes.”

“They’ll be worried then?”

She nibbles her bottom lip. “I’m afraid so.”

I fish my phone from my back pocket and hand it to her. “You’d better call them.”

Her eyes widen. “You have service?” I nod and she says, “Thank God. I tried my phone but I couldn’t get a signal. I’d hate for them to go out in this weather in search of me.”

Something inside my chest pinches, right around the vicinity of my heart. It’s nice that she has parents who worry about her. Hell, my father left when I was young, and my mother gave zero shits about her three kids. As the oldest, the responsibility of my younger siblings fell on me, and there were times we had to eat cereal for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Long ago I vowed to make something of myself, to give my sisters everything they ever needed. What do I get in return? The two of them nagging me on a daily basis, asking when I’m going to settle down and get married.

I’m not.

Ever.

Women want me for one of two things. What I have in my bank account or what I have between my legs. That's fine. I accept that, just like they accept I'm not about to give them any more than that. An invitation to my bed is that only. It does not come with a morning after, deep conversations, or long Sunday walks on the beach.

She punches in her parents' number as I pour two pills into my hand and hold them out for her to take. "For the pain," I say. She holds onto them as I fill a cotton ball with antiseptic.

"Mom," she says, and gives a relieved breath. I dab at her forehead and listen to the one-sided conversation "I'm fine. Really. No, tell Dad to stay put." A pause and then. "A deer ran out in front of me, and I went into the ditch." Another pause. "No really, I'm fine. I'm at a...friend's house." She nods a few times, even though her parents can't see her. "His name is Will...ah...Will..." Her questioning eyes go to mine.

"Carson," I say quietly.

"Will Carson. He lives just down the road from you. I'm sure you must know him." She shakes the pills in her hand as I finish cleaning her forehead. "Of course I'm safe." Her gaze flashes to mine and I nod to reassure her, but then I take that minute to see things from her eyes. Christ, I wouldn't want either of my sisters to be rescued by some guy who isolates himself in the woods, and has been doing nothing but thinking inappropriate thoughts upon first meeting.

"Can I have that for a second?" I say, and flatten my hand. She hesitantly hands me back my phone. "What's your mother's name?"

"Lucy." She eyes me, curiosity backlighting her baby blues.

I snap a picture of myself, send it to her mother, and put the phone to my ear. "Hi Lucy. I just sent you a picture to ease your worries. Holly is safe, and I'll keep her that way until the storm is over."

"Oh my, well thank you, Will," Lucy says, her voice a bit distant, like she's holding the phone away to examine the picture.

"Not a problem."

Something chimes in the background, like a stove timer going off. "My my, don't you sound like a lovely young man." Lovely young man? Now there's a name I've never been called before. "Holly can use more of those in her life."

As I think about that, and consider the kind of men Holly might have had in her life, the old car she's driving, with all her goods stuffed into the back seat, a picture of her life begins to form. I hand the phone back to her, and don't miss the way Holly is looking at me, like I have two heads—but that she just might trust me.

She tosses the pills into her mouth, washes them down with coffee and puts the phone back to her ear. "Mom?" Her eyes never leave mine as she speaks. "No, he's not my boyfriend." A beat and then, "Yes, I supposed if you like that type." I can't help but smirk, and Holly rolls her eyes at me. "Okay, yes, I will. What? No, no. I can get my own car fixed." She exhales a frustrated breath. "I know, Mom. Seriously. I can." She rolls her eyes at me again, but it's easy to see how much she appreciates the parental concern. "I'm an adult. As soon as the storm dies down and I get my car to a garage, I'll call you. I'm just not sure how long that's going to take."

With that, she ends the call and hands my phone back. I shove it into my pocket.

"Thanks. They feel better now."

"Good."

Her head angles, and I brush her damp hair away to finish cleaning the wound. "I thought you guys might know each other, but they said they don't recognize you or your name."

"I keep to myself." She opens her mouth, but I cut her off and ask, "What was your big hurry to see them today?"

She crinkles her nose, and I recap the antiseptic and put it back inside the first aid kit. "I'm moving back home," she says, and I nod, having put that together earlier. "I haven't seen them in months." She shrugs her shoulders, but her body is tight. "I was going to stay in the city, but I thought I could make it to their place before the storm got really bad."

"You have a place in the city?"

"Not yet. I was going to stay at a hotel just outside the city, until I find an apartment."

"Where outside the city?"

"Why all the questions?"

"We have to do something to pass the time, don't we?"

"I suppose. In Newtown."

"Hmm..."

"What?" she asked.

"That's not a great area."

“Yeah, I know but...”

She doesn't finish the sentence, doesn't have to for me to understand she's strapped for cash, and her only belongings are likely the ones she was able to stuff in her car.

“You have work lined up?” I have no idea what this woman does, and I consider openings at my firm. She looks like she could use a break.

“Yes, I start my new job next Monday.”

Which is probably a good thing. I have a no fraternizing rule at the office, and it's best not to put temptation under my nose. “I'm afraid you're not going to make a very good impression.”

Her eyes go big. “Why not?” She points to her head. “The lump?”

“No, because this storm isn't dying down anytime soon, and trees are down everywhere. It will take clean-up crews days before they clear the roads, and you'll be lucky to make it back to the city mid-week.”

“Damn.” She worries her bottom lip with her teeth.

“What?”

“I need this job.”

“I'm sure your boss will understand.” I wave my hand toward the window. “The circumstances and all.”

Her stomach makes a sound as she takes another sip of coffee. “I hear he's an ogre,” she says, and that makes me laugh because my employees have called me that a time or two. I run a tight ship.

“You must be hungry.”

She evades her eyes, like she's embarrassed by that, and I can't help but think how adorable she looks. I've never met a woman who hated to ask things of me. “I'm fine.”

“Well, I'm not.” I rub my stomach. “I was going to heat up some seafood chowder.” I stand and she lifts her chin. “Food allergies?”

“No, actually that sounds great.” She glances into the kitchen, and makes a move to push herself up from the sofa. “Can I help?”

I put my hand on her shoulder, and as I pin her in to keep her seated, she sucks in a fast breath. “No,” I say that one word coming out with a little more force than necessary. I remove my hand, shove it into my pocket. “You need to rest. I don't think you have a concussion, but you could go into shock.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.”

Conceding, she folds her hands on her lap, and sinks back into the cushions. Would she succumb to my commands as easily in the bedroom, let me have my way with her?

“Well, thank you for helping me.” Dark lashes fall slowly over big blue eyes and my dick pulses. You’d think I’d never seen a beautiful woman before. But Holly isn’t just any ordinary woman. It only took me seconds to realize that. She’s sweet and unassuming, doesn’t like to ask for anything, and has an innocent quality about her that really draws me in. “Do you...live here?” she asks.

As soon as the question leaves her mouth, I realize she has no idea who I am. No idea that I’m Will Samuel Carson of WSC Associates, a guy who graduated top of his class at McGill University, started his own business and landed on Forbes’ top 30 under 30. Most who know me fear me, but this woman, well, she’s completely oblivious to my true identity and everything inside me wants to keep it that way. I’ll probably never set eyes on her again once I get her car fixed, so what more does she need to know? Why can’t we just be two strangers, enjoying each other’s company as a storm brews outside, and let whatever might happen...happen. Yeah, she might be unaware as to who I am, but I’m fully aware of how her body reacted to my touch when I pinned her to the sofa.

“Whenever I can,” I say.

She stands, and walks to the window. “It’s very quaint. I guess I’d be here as much as I could be too.” A fine shiver goes through her and she stifles a yawn.

“Why don’t you have a warm shower while I heat up your chowder?”

She turns back to me and offers a sweet smile that strokes my dick. “That sounds like a good idea.”

“Leave the door cracked, okay?” I nod toward the bathroom. “Just in case you need me.”

“What would I need you for?”

Oh, I don’t know, maybe to wash your back, bring you to orgasmic pleasure with my finger, my mouth...my cock.

“You had a car accident, Holly. The body can go into shock after that kind of trauma. If you feel weak or lightheaded, you might need help.”

“True. Okay...” She makes move to leave, then hesitates. “Wait, uh, how do you even turn the nozzle on?”

I laugh at that. “Come on, I’ll show you.”

She glances up at the loft as we head to the bathroom. “After you eat, I’ll settle you into the bed.”

“It looks like you only have one, and I’m not going to take it on you,” she says. “I’ve been enough trouble as it is.”

Trouble? Yeah, this woman is definitely trouble. Something tells me if I ever get one taste, I might want more.

“Are you always so stubborn?”

“Yes,” she says.

“Just so you know, I excel at negotiations, and always get my way.” She opens her mouth to counter, but I hold my hand up to stop her. “You need to rest. Shock, remember?”

When we reach the bathroom, she plants one hand on her curvy hip and my flannel shirt rises higher on her thighs. “Wait, is a person going into shock supposed to sleep or be kept awake?”

“Doctors are always changing their mind on things, aren’t they?”

She gives an unladylike snort that somehow manages to turn me on even more. “That’s true.”

I reach into the shower, turn the nozzle and adjust the sprays. “You have a rain shower,” I say and point upward. “These taps here turn on the body spray and foot spray, which comes out here and here,” I say and point to the nozzles lining the wall.

“Got it.”

“Towels are in here,” I say and open the cabinet. “And if you need me, I’m only a call away.”

I step into the main room, and leave her door cracked. The sound of her climbing under the shower spray reaches my ears, and I’m about to head to the kitchen—and work not to fantasize about me in there with her—when I hear my name on her lips.

