

**SORRY  
I STOLE  
YOUR CAR**

**JACKIE DERUSHA**

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For W,  
the girl who mapped a thousand stories in her mind  
but forgot to draw the exit.  
Found it eventually, in paw prints, tire scorch,  
and a horizon that didn't flinch.  
Keep your foot down. Make it smoke. J.

# Chapter 1

## I Posted WHAT?!

Cassie woke up face-down in something that had once been soup. Or maybe ramen. Technically *ramen* if we're being brand-loyal, but mostly it was just a puddle of dried noodles and soy sauce regret. Her cheek was glued to the floor. Her neck did not feel like it had bones anymore, and somewhere in the vicinity of her ribs, a single chopstick was making a bold case for impalement.

Her phone was vibrating underneath her. Or under the dog. Or maybe the building was collapsing—unclear. This was the East Village—Manhattan's beautifully decrepit pocket of plumbing breakdowns and denial, two pigeons away from a building code violation. Collapse wasn't off the table.

Cassie groaned, rolled over, and accidentally cocooned herself in the twisted bed sheet she must've dragged across the floor during her apparently violent sleep migration. Her studio apartment, which was already the spatial equivalent of a panic attack, looked like someone had shaken a dorm room and poured it into a blender.

Rocky, her tiny, judgy mutt, was asleep on a pile of laundry. He opened one eye when she moved. Closed it again, deeply judgmental, but acting unimpressed.

She found the phone by sound alone, like some deranged millennial echolocating shame.

A message from Nina: "WTF." Cassie squinted at it.

Another buzz. TikTok notification. Another buzz. A dozen more. Her stomach flipped.

No.

No no no no no.

She opened TikTok.

@CassieWritesRomance

Posted: 2:08AM

THE CLOSURE ROAD TRIP™ COMING UP, BABY!!!

The thumbnail was a freeze-frame of her holding up a crumpled takeout receipt with the words "Closure List" scrawled across the back.

She hit play with the same energy one uses to confirm a limb has been amputated.

There she was: wine-drunk, pad-thai-smeared,

wrapped in a blanket like a half-eaten burrito. Her eyeliner was tragic. Her eyes were glassy. Her voice did a dead-on Janice from Friends impression. Unintentionally. Tragically. Maybe her next career move could be unsolicited impressions and public humiliation.

“I just think—” she slurred, stabbing the air with her chopsticks, “—that fictional characters always get a second chance, right? They get to mess up epically and still wind up with the love of their life and a cottage and a dog that doesn’t judge them. MUST BE NICE TO BE FICTIONAL.”

Cue dramatic sip. Slurp. Cough.

“But I know how it works. I write this shit.”

“The happy ending only shows up *after* the main character faces themselves. The big flaw. The thing they’ve been avoiding.”

She gestures with her chopsticks like they’re sacred scrolls. “It’s called character growth. Or rock bottom. Same thing.”

“So I’m doing it. I’m facing myself. Or my past. Or whatever version of me thought ghosting people and setting hoodies on fire was *setting boundaries*. I’m confronting my exes. Owning my shit. Like a romance protagonist on a budget.”

She holds the receipt—aka the infamous Closure List—closer to the camera, underlined like it owed her money. Below that—a list of names. Barely legible. Definitely

incriminating.

“Anyway,” she says brightly, “I’m going on a road trip! For closure. And to see if real people get second chances too.”

She sniffled. Smiled.

“It’s like *Eat Pray Leave a Trail of Emotional Wreckage!*”

She suddenly lifts Rocky like Simba from *The Lion King*, grinning manically.

“ROCKY AND I DESERVE A NARRATIVE ARC.”

The screen goes black.

She stared at the screen, heart pounding, throat dry. And then, like a horror movie memory flickering to life, it started coming back to her.

The wine. The blanket. The pad thai that tasted like betrayal. *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*.

She hadn’t meant to spiral. She’d just wanted something familiar. Something where the sad woman gets the happy ending. Where grief gets rewritten into love again—because fiction can do that. Fiction has editors.

She remembered hitting play. She remembered Bridget—older, lonelier—trying to hold it together with a smile and a school pickup line. A woman trying to move on without the person she thought she’d grow old with. It hurt more than she expected.

Cassie—one-part-life-in-flames, zero-parts-going-okay—had paused the movie.

Took a bite of pad thai.

Unpaused.

And then Bridget got her second chance. Of course she did. Cassie had cried into her noodles. Whispered, “Must be nice to get a second chance when you’re FICTIONAL.”

And then—God—TikTok. Somebody should ban it.

Because if fictional women could spiral and still get Colin Firth *and* a second chance, then maybe she could get... something. A moment. A little serotonin. A reason not to set something on fire.

Rocky landed on her back like a guilt-weighted blanket, jolting her back to reality.

She checked the views. Over a million. That was, like, a mid-sized city. A city of people had witnessed her emotional unraveling and thought, *yep, that’s the energy I needed to ignore my own problems.*

Panicking, Cassie checked the comments. They were—unfortunately—on.

*@slytherin321: Is that a stunt for her new book or does she actually MEAN it???*

*@90snostalgia: I love your books! When is the next one coming out? Don’t waste your time on exes and write gurl!!!*

Cassie blinked. Read it again. Then another one.

*@messymillennial: Wait—are you that girl whose breakup ended up on @CoachHunterX Insta?*

Cassie was about to delete the TikToks when her phone

buzzed again.

NY Lit Buzz: “Cassie Rose Returns? Viral TikTok Sparks Book Rumors”

She clicked the notification like it was a group chat she forgot she rage-left.

*Is Cassie Rose Writing Again?*

by Paige Witherspoon for NY Lit Buzz

Last night’s TikTok meltdown may be more than just emotional unraveling—it could be the comeback of the year.

In the now-viral “Closure Road Trip” video (1.2M views and counting), romance author Cassie Rose drunkenly declared: “I write this shit. I know how it works.”

Some fans believe this is a cryptic nod to a new project, possibly her first release in over three years.

Rose, who rose (no pun intended) to bestseller status with *The Last First Kiss* and *How to Find Your Forever Happy*, has been noticeably absent from the publishing world since 2022.

*Is the road trip a new book? Or a real breakdown?*

*We’re watching—and manifesting a tour de mess.*

Cassie threw the phone under the couch like it could still be saved—and screamed.

Rocky, who had in the meantime retreated to the laundry pile like a man who’d seen some shit, sighed, stared at her for two seconds too long, and went back to

sleep.

From the other side of the wall, someone banged—loud, deliberate, vaguely threatening.

“IT’S SUNDAY,” shouted her six-foot-five Viking of a neighbor. “GET A GRIP.”

Cassie imagined him shirtless, holding a battle axe and a French press.

She laid back on the floor, hands over her face, brain buzzing like an overheating hard drive.

“Oh my God,” she whispered to the ceiling. “I think I just soft-launched a breakdown.”

## Ready for the rest of the story?

Grab the full story on Amazon and find out just how messy Cassie's road trip—and her heart—gets.

Now with a bonus epilogue, available for a limited time.

See you there!



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*Coming October 2025 • Pre-order opens July 31*

## **SORRY I KISSED A FIREFIGHTER**

***But Cassie's story isn't over yet...***

Next up: a snowed-in small town, forced proximity, and way too many second chances.

And Cassie's about to learn that staying put might be way scarier than running.

**Sign up at <https://jackiederusha.com/newsletter/> for sneak peeks, deleted scenes, and early cover reveals.**

## About the Author

Jackie DeRusha writes stories with sharp edges and soft centers, featuring imperfect but strong women, hard-won hope, and canine sidekicks who definitely know too much.

After graduating in journalism, she fell in love, crossed borders, and landed in the glamorous world of corporate cubicles, uppercase abbreviations, and passive-aggressive email chains. Years later, she finally said “I quit”—and never looked back.

Jackie currently lives in England with her dog, talking to countryside fairies, bravely managing a mild tea addiction, and apologizing to furniture when it bumps into her.

She’s always working on her next story.

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