

You Once Called Me Wife |

Chapter 16

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I was pacing angrily when there was yet another knock on the door. Chelsea went to answer it, and I heard his voice.

All at once, the knot that had been forming in my stomach released. I'd only been upset with him for one day, and I couldn't hold onto it any longer. I needed Zane like I needed air to breathe.

"Baby, I was still in town when you texted," he said, walking toward me. "Are you all right?"

As Chelsea left to give us some space, I rushed over and wrapped my arms around him. I still wasn't happy with what he did, but I understood it. I couldn't hold it against him anymore. We all made stupid choices when we were young, and I needed his comfort right now.

"I'm so angry at him I can't see straight," I said, burying my face in Zane's chest and breathing him in. "First, he set up that mess yesterday, and now he's trying to use it against us. I guarantee he thinks we are having problems and he wants to move in on that."

"I've caused such a mess. I'm so sorry," Zane said, pain clear in his voice.

"It's all right. I know you weren't trying to hurt me. You were young and scared. I think that I just needed to process everything. We're good, Zane."

I reached up and pulled him into a kiss. When I finally let go, he asked, "What are you going to do about him?"

"I'm going to go give a piece of my mind."

At lunchtime, I marched straight through the diner doors and found Chris sitting with Opal. The man had no shame. He had sent me roses with an apology note but was still eating lunch with the woman he left me for.

I couldn't believe Chris was arrogant enough to think that he had any right to step into the middle of my relationship. He was the one who said he wanted to leave; I was the one who had to accept it and move on. It was upsetting that he and everyone else in town kept bringing the past up, making me feel like I would never be able to put it all behind me.

Zane followed as I walked over to my ex's table. Opal glared at me, but Chris smiled, sending me further over the edge. I was ready for blood.

"I need you to get something straight, Chris. I have no interest in any apology that you have to give. Zane may have known that you had cheated, but you used his greatest fear against him. He was trying to protect me while all you've done is hurt me over and over.

"I know you set up yesterday. You wanted me to hear you two talking. But I don't care what you think, care, or want. Stay away from me, and stop trying to ruin my relationship! It's ridiculous that you think you can have her while I have to stay alone. It will not happen."

I pulled my ring off the chain I was wearing and put it on. "I'm marrying Zane!" I yelled.

"What is she talking about, Chris?" Opal asked, acting like she was trying to keep herself under control. Like she wanted to scream and cry.

To the town, Opal had portrayed herself as a modest and innocent woman who had simply been deceived by the man she loved. And who was being deceived once again. It was a well-thought-out plan, but cracks were forming in her façade. First, the man at the mall; then, her concern yesterday that I would tell Chris.

She was playing a long game, one full of lies. I still wanted nothing to do with exposing her, but I was waiting. I wanted her downfall to be spectacular.

"I—" Chris stopped and looked from me to Opal. The imbecile was obviously trying to decide which woman to placate.

"Go on. Choose which of us you want to piss off less," I said, then turned to his girlfriend. "I got roses this morning, and I know they're from him. Just like I know all that crap showing up at my house is from you. I don't want to argue with you at all, Opal—he's all yours. Just learn to keep him on a short leash!"

I turned around to leave and noticed everyone in the room watching me. *Good.*

“Kenzie,” Chris began, “wait. We need to talk about all this. I need to talk to you.”

I heard his chair scratch the floor as he stood up. Opal started to say something, but he shushed her.

I could only imagine the look on her face. The energy I felt her put out made it clear that she was going to make his life hell. After all, he had just shown me and the rest of the people in this room how he really felt.

“I want everyone in town to know this,” I said before making my exit. “I am marrying Zane. He and I are happy, and we are going to stay that way. Chris made his bed, and now he has to lie in it. Spread the word.”

With that, I took Zane’s hand and walked out of the diner.

On the sidewalk, Zane stopped me and said, “I’ve never loved you more than I do at this moment.” Then he pulled me into a searing kiss.

When he finally let me go, I said, “I’m so tired of everyone thinking that our lives are something they can toy with. His every word is a lie, and I’m sick of it. I want us to live our lives without him or anyone else interfering.”

As if those words summoned more interference, I heard Chris yell, “Kenzie, wait! You can’t keep running away from me.”

I turned around, but Zane stepped in front of me. “I think you need to head back in there,” he said, his voice low.

“You need to stand aside and let me talk to my wife!” Chris shouted.

“She’s not your wife anymore!” Zane growled. He stepped closer to Chris, looking ready to swing. “She’ll always be mine!”

“That’s enough, Chris!” another voice called out. I glanced over and saw his father, who was always calm and composed, looking livid. “Son, you need to stop embarrassing yourself and go home. Take the rest of the day to cool off.”

"I will not. McKenzie, you've got to stop this ridiculous game of cat and mouse. You need to go home and let me come explain everything to you," Chris said.

"There is no chance of that happening," I replied. "I already told you that you and I are over. There's nothing you can say that will change my mind. You made your choice."

I walked around Zane and tried to get past Chris, but he grabbed my arm. It wasn't rough, but I hissed. I felt like his touch was acid, and I'd melt away to nothing from the rot it would cause.

I pulled my arm out of Chris's grip just in time to see Zane's arm pull back and his fist land right in the middle of my ex's face. The crunching sound was sickening.

Chris screamed. "You asshole! You broke my nose!"

"Touch her again, and you'll get a lot worse than a broken nose," Zane said. He looked over at James. "I'm sorry, sir, but I will not risk him hurting her."

Before Chris's father could respond, Zane took my hand and led me back toward the chiropractor's office. My ex was carrying on behind us, but I couldn't be bothered to look back. *Let his mistress take care of his idiot self.*

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