

# You Once Called Me Wife |

## Chapter 19

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Over the next few months, things settled into a new normal. The community stopped worrying so much about my life, and other people in town became the subject of gossip. It was nice to be invisible for a change.

I also stopped seeing Chris all over town. Though I didn't ask, people told me that he was finally letting things go and trying to make a life with Opal. I took it all in stride; I didn't want to live my life in anger.

Zane had moved into my house, and we were slowly getting all his things organized, but we'd been having a lot of discussions about how we should handle everything at the ranch. The drive wasn't terribly long, but during emergencies, it could seem like forever.

I knew he would never complain about this, but I didn't want him to have to worry about how the ranch was doing. I wanted our marriage to be one where we could talk things through and hear each other out.

"I know you're trying to be careful about what you say about the house," I told him over dinner one night.

"What do you mean?" he asked around a mouthful of food. Lord, sometimes it was like eating with a caveman.

"Zane, I know that you're not suggesting the one thing that you need to do. You know I love this house, so you don't want to make me leave it. But if it's better for us to be closer to the ranch, I can handle that."

Several years ago, when Chris asked me to move to a house that was more modern and closer to town, I had been steadfast about living in my grandparents' home. I'd said that the house meant everything to me and we didn't have a mortgage here, but that had led to our first argument as a married couple. Now I realized I'd been childish about it.

"I don't want to ask you to give up something that means so much to you," Zane said sincerely. "You've loved this house since you were a child. You've been happy here for the most part. *We've* been happy here."

“But I don’t have to be here in order to be happy, Zane. Why do you think that?”

“Because I know you. I think I’ve studied you for enough years to know you won’t be happy anywhere else.”

“Why is it so shocking that I want to do this for you?” I asked. “Did you honestly think I was going to fight you about living somewhere else?”

I was almost afraid to hear his answer. Chris once told me I acted like a spoiled brat whenever he suggested anything. Usually, I acted that way because his suggestions weren’t realistic and I wanted to save us some heartache, but I realized now that that made me hard to live with.

“I don’t want to fight about this, Kenz,” Zane huffed out.

“There’s something you’re not telling me,” I said. “You think I’m going to be a brat about not living in this house, don’t you?”

He sighed. “I didn’t want to say anything, but I heard about the fights you and Chris had about moving. I don’t want us fighting. We just got married.”

I swallowed hard and stood.

“So, instead of asking me about what happened, you assumed I would act like a child who wasn’t getting her way?” Zane started to say something, but I cut him off. “Just so you know, you’re wrong. There was a lot more going on than just me not wanting to leave this house.”

I took a deep breath. “I would have never brought this up if I wasn’t willing to do this for you. Now, I’m going to Erika’s to cool off before either of us says something we’ll regret.”

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On the ten-minute drive to Erika’s, Zane didn’t text me once. I kept waiting, but I received nothing but silence.

I knew I didn’t always handle things in life like an adult. I wasn’t stupid enough to think I was perfect. But there were a lot of things in my past that Zane didn’t know about.

My relationship with Chris was tiring and sometimes downright childish. I would try so hard to make him understand things from my point of view, but he was used to things going his way. After the awful fight over where we should live, I just stopped trying.

“McKenzie, I think you need to tell him,” Erika said when I explained all this to her, for once being a voice of reason instead of stoking the fire. “This is your first real fight. I’m sure he feels just as bad, if not worse, than you do. You should have just told him when you said he didn’t know everything that was going on.”

I sighed. “I know, but I was upset that he believed the rumors about that fight. Have you ever known me to act like a spoiled brat?”

“Truthfully, no. Chris wasn’t thinking about what it would cost you to live like he wanted. He had this idea that you two would live just like his parents, not understanding that you’d have to work your way up to living like that. And I heard him complain about how he thought he would be making more at the bank.

“Zane doesn’t know all that, so you need to tell him. He needs to understand what your marriage to Chris was like so he can know how not to treat you.”

I felt lucky to have Erika as a friend. She could be crazy sometimes, but she was so much more than that. I couldn’t imagine what I’d do without her.

Just then, I got a text. I looked at my phone eagerly, expecting to see a message from Zane.

Unknown

Thought you should see what your husband is doing while you’re away.

Below the message was a photo taken outside my bedroom window. Inside, a lamp was on, revealing a naked Becky lying in my bed. She looked like she didn’t have a care in the world.

I saw red. I couldn’t look away from the woman who was lying where I was a few short hours before.

Erika looked over and paled. She took my hand and held it tightly, trying to keep me grounded and clear-headed, but I was holding on by a thread.

“I think I need to go kick someone’s ass,” I said.

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