

# You Once Called Me Wife |

## Chapter 21

### Chapter 21

The next morning, my parents arrived with Zane's. Shortly behind them was Becky, and I felt some sense of justice in the fact that she couldn't look either of us in the eye. She might not be the best person, but she at least knew when to keep her head down and not say anything.

When the doorbell rang again, I opened it to find James and Rachel, who were followed by Chris and Opal. As they walked in, Chris looked around at all the changes Zane and I had made to the house. We'd wanted a fresh start for our marriage.

Opal looked disgusted, no doubt because the older house didn't live up to her standards, but I didn't care. She might think what she wanted was better, but she'd learn the truth one day.

"Come in," I said. "Have a seat. I don't want to keep everyone here long."

As everyone sat down, Zane came to stand next to me, and I felt stronger. Chris, of course, glared at him by my side, but like Becky, Opal wouldn't look us in the face. Neither of them bothered me.

"I'm not going to drag my feet on this," I began. "Something happened last night that was unacceptable. Becky snuck into our house, got naked, and lay in our bed. I received a picture of her with a text telling me I didn't know what my husband was up to."

Gasps came from around the room. All the mothers looked horrified while the fathers looked murderous.

"I was not here," Zane said. "We had a disagreement, and we both left to cool our heads. I found Becky when I returned, and Kenzie arrived shortly after. My wife is smart. She could tell by the angle of the picture that I hadn't been home."

Chris shot to his feet. "Kenzie, you can't possibly know that. He could be lying to you!" he yelled, and Opal looked shocked.

"I could," I replied. "But more than that, I have Becky's word that nothing happened. She claims a man paid her money to pull this stunt."

As the words left my mouth, Becky winced, likely thinking about how this would not help her reputation in town. But she did the right thing and said, just loud enough for everyone to hear, "He told me he would give me ten thousand dollars to make it look like Zane was having an affair. And to blame it on Chris if something went wrong."

Chris stomped over to Becky and yelled in her face until my father and James pulled him away. James forced him to sit down and stay there. I could understand why my ex was seething; he was still under the delusion that things would always work out just the way he wanted them to.

"How can you know any of that is true?" Opal said. "The girl has a reputation for being a man thief. She's probably trying to cover her own butt."

"You know, once upon a time, I might have thought the same thing. But Opal, can people really be judged solely on their past actions? If so, then you're a whore for willingly getting involved with a married man."

"Excuse me?" Opal screamed. "You don't have any right to talk to me like that! Chris, are you just going to sit there and let this happen?"

I smiled. I'd been dreaming of seeing her lose her composure for months.

Chris only sat there, staring at us.

"So, someone other than Becky is behind it all," Zane said calmly as if our spat hadn't happened. "But she would have recognized Chris if he put her up to it. After all, they slept together in school."

Chris put his head in his hands, defeated.

I didn't feel an ounce of sympathy for him, but when I glanced at his parents, it looked like their world had shattered again. James sat with slumped shoulders, shaking his head slowly. Rachel began to cry. My mother walked over and sat beside Rachel, then wrapped an arm around her shoulder.

I hated seeing them hurt, but I had to get this all out.

"The man was tall and good-looking, but I'd never seen him before," Becky said, trying but failing to be helpful.

I pulled my phone from my back pocket and looked through my photos. *I know I have it in here. I just need to find it.* And bam, there it was.

"Is this the man who talked to you?" I asked, handing my phone to Becky.

I was only going on a hunch. Her vague description could have fit any number of men. But there were not a lot of strangers around here.

Becky's eyes lit up in recognition. I wanted to jump up and down in joy, but I knew I needed to play this straight. If I wanted to stop all the problems, then I needed to get to the root of the main problem.

"That's him," she said, and the look in her eye told me she wasn't lying. If anything, she seemed scared. "He was handsome but intimidating. I was kind of afraid to say no. He knew all this stuff about me, and I was worried he'd do something bad if I turned him down."

Her fear confused me. Douglas hadn't seemed like someone frightening.

"Who is it?" James asked.

"I met him a while back when I was shopping with Annabeth and Erika," I said. "He was shopping for an engagement ring. What was his name?" I placed my finger to my chin as if trying to remember. "Oh, yeah. It was Douglas, Opal's cousin."

\*\*\*

After an excruciating silence, Chris asked, his voice accusing, "What is she talking about? I thought you were the only grandchild in your family?" He snatched my phone from Becky, and I wanted nothing more than to laugh at that moment.

"I'm sure she just heard him wrong," Opal said. "Douglas is an old friend from college. He wouldn't do something like that. He's a good man."

I was surprised at how quickly and smoothly she was able to switch lies. I could never lie like that; I would give myself away in the first minute. No wonder Chris didn't suspect anything.

I took my phone from Chris and pulled up the audio file Annabeth had recorded and I'd saved.

*"Oh, come on, Opal," Erika's voice came through my phone. "I've never heard of you being speechless before. Who is this fine young man?"*

*"This is my cousin, Douglas," Opal said clear as a bell.*

*"Oh, your cousin?" Annabeth chimed in. "I would've bet my life that you'd say brother."*

Chris stared at Opal, waiting to see some kind of reaction on her face. She managed to give nothing away.

*"Sorry, but we can't stay and talk," Opal said on the recording. "We're on a tight schedule to get everything ready for Douglas's big day."*

I cut the clip off and looked at Opal. She'd tricked a lot of people in this town into thinking she was an upstanding person who just made a mistake, but I wanted the people in this room to know what they were up against. A snake that Chris had brought to live among us.

"I only said that to get them off my back," Opal said, trying to look innocent. "I knew McKenzie would stop at nothing to get back at me for taking you away from her. If rumors started to fly, I didn't want to risk you getting upset when I was just out with a friend. You said it yourself; she wasn't taking the breakup well."

Chris looked like he was thinking. Was he dumb enough to believe her? Everyone else looked skeptical.

"None of that changes the fact that this man had Becky sneak into our house and try to frame me," Zane said, his voice firm. I could tell he was starting to lose patience.

"How do you know Becky can be trusted?" Chris growled.

"How do you know Opal can?" Zane countered. "What do you really know about her, Chris, other than that she does something in bed you like?"

"Watch your damn mouth!" Chris shouted, then jumped up and stomped over to Zane.

"All right, I've had about enough!" James yelled.

Chris stopped just short of grabbing Zane and turned wide-eyed to his father. Everyone else in the room stopped what they were doing and looked at him too. James never raised his voice; I'd never heard him like this.

I looked closer at my former father-in-law. He looked tired. There were bags under his once-happy eyes, and his shoulders sagged. He used to hold himself like a man on a mission.

When I turned to his wife and realized she didn't look any better, I wanted to throw myself at them. To hug them and tell them it would all get better. But I couldn't do that now.

"Ever since you moved to this town," James said, pointing at Opal, "it's been nothing but chaos. Don't think that I don't understand how much sway you have over my son. Since you walked into our bank and asked to have a meeting, our lives have been turned upside down, and you're the only one to blame!"

"James..." Opal started.

"It's Mr. Weston to you! I've tried to give you a chance, if only for the sake of my son. I saw that there was something about you that attracted him, but I'll be damned if I can't find it." He turned to Chris. "You brought the devil into this family when you went beyond a business relationship with this woman."

"Dad, she's not like that," Chris said, but there was no conviction in his voice. I honestly didn't know why he bothered.

"Chris, stop thinking with that thing between your pants!" James yelled. "You ruined your marriage, business started slowing down, and now there's money being filtered through your login information! Think for once before you speak!"

Next Chapter

Continue to the next chapter of [You Once Called Me Wife](#)