

You Once Called Me Wife |

Chapter 5

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Annabeth and I spent Saturday morning leading the cows to the barn and preparing them to give birth. It was more difficult than I'd expected, and I couldn't help remembering how my friend used to hate living on a ranch with her family. The memory made me laugh.

While Annabeth was inside the barn, I heard horses' hooves and turned to see two men riding over. One was dressed like a typical rancher, and the second was shirtless.

As they came closer, I watched the second man's muscles ripple and his tan skin glow in the sun. Then I looked at his face and realized he was Zane. Those chocolate eyes brought me back to the ripe age of sixteen, when his young, boyish face made my heart swoon with the hope that one day I'd call him mine.

I'd always thought my friend's cousin was handsome, but this was a whole other level of gorgeous. He was breathtaking.

The men came to a stop, and Zane swung his legs over the horse and dismounted. He then handed the reins to the other man, who rode off without a word.

As Zane walked over, I prayed that I hadn't been standing there with my mouth hanging open. It was like my own personal Magic Mike show. I felt like I should start throwing dollar bills at him.

Then he said, "Hello Kenzie."

When I found out that my husband had been cheating on me, I thought my romantic feelings died. But standing there in front of the barn, they all returned. I shivered at the sound of his voice.

When was the last time I felt like this?

"What brings you out this way?" Zane asked with a smile.

Dear Lord, does he have to smile like that?

When I was younger, before I started seeing Chris, I had a crush on Zane. Though he seemed aloof, I always found him charming and sweet. He never ran around with a lot of girls, and he was always nice to me.

Well, until I started dating Chris, that is. Then he avoided me at events. Eventually, we stopped seeing him anywhere.

“Um,” I began, feeling a little awkward, “Annabeth called and said she needed some help, so I came running.”

Zane smiled brighter. “You’ve always been a good girl. I’m sorry you had to go through all you did. You didn’t deserve any of that.”

I looked into his eyes, trying to see what emotion was playing there. The last thing I wanted from him was pity. He was a man that I always wanted to see me at my best—the years I was married to Chris didn’t change that.

“Thanks,” I said, “but I honestly feel like a huge weight has been lifted off.”

“He never did deserve you. But I think you know that now. I’m sure there’s already a line of men wanting to take you out.”

I laughed. “I’ve been asked out a few times, but I haven’t said yes yet. I wanted some time to figure out what I wanted. Plus, none of them seemed right.”

Zane walked a little closer to me, close enough that I could smell his cologne and his natural musk. It was a mixture that I could easily get drunk off of. I had to watch myself or I might jump his bones.

He leaned forward and whispered, “You haven’t had a real man after you yet. Just wait, it’ll knock you off your feet when he comes for you. He’s just biding his time.”

He gave me a wink, then walked off like he didn’t just cause a river to flood my underwear.

“Are you planning on going to the church festival?” Annabeth asked before I got in my car that afternoon.

"Yeah, Mom wants me to come. She was upset when it got postponed, so I'm going to go to make her happy. How about you?"

"Yeah. Zane said he wanted all of us to take the day off and go. We've been working hard, and one day off won't hurt anything."

"Oh, is he going too?" I asked.

"Who?" I heard a low voice ask.

I jumped and whipped around. "Geez, don't sneak up on a girl like that! You almost gave me a heart attack."

Zane laughed. He'd put on a T-shirt, but he still looked gorgeous. All these years of working on the ranch really helped him stay fit, and damn if I wasn't appreciating it right then.

"You've got a little drool there, Kenzie," he said, leaning forward to wipe the corner of my mouth.

His smirk was panty-dropping, and I wondered where in the world this new Zane came from. He had never acted like this before. Did something change him over the years?

I was broken out of my thoughts by Annabeth cackling. "She does that when she sees something she wants to eat up," she said.

I turned and gave her a disbelieving look. *What was she thinking?* I was beyond embarrassed now and could only hope that my cheeks weren't as red as a firetruck.

"Hm, I'll have to remember that," Zane said, smirking again. "And yes, I'm going to the festival. Wanna hang out?"

When his words registered, I felt my face somehow grow even hotter. Zane just asked me to hang out with him at the festival. He and Annabeth must be in on something.

I looked at my friend, but she just smiled. I couldn't tell what she was thinking.

Had Chris ever courted me? I suddenly couldn't remember. We'd started dating so long ago, and after everything that had happened, I didn't trust my memories.

“Sure,” I replied, wondering how in the hell Zane could turn me on with just his words. I’d always needed a lot of foreplay to get to this point.

It was scary how far gone I was already.

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