

You Once Called Me Wife |

Chapter 7

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“So,” I said, “I thought that since we haven’t talked in so long, we should get to know one another again...”

Zane had taken me to my favorite diner, which meant so much to me. I was sure he’d heard about my ex and his mistress ruining it for me by coming there every day; gossip traveled so fast in our town that you’d have to be the Flash to keep up with it.

Now Zane looked at me with a raised brow, apparently trying to determine whether I had some kind of underlying goal. “Okay,” he said, mock-seriously, “but it’s not like I’ve changed that much. You, on the other hand, have lived quite the life since we spoke.”

“True. I grew up and then lost everything.” I gave a half-hearted laugh. “The last six months have shown me I was living in a made-up world. I was in a marriage that was still based on the love of a teenage boy and not one of a man.”

Zane nodded, then gave me his infamous smirk. “All right, I’ll play your game. What do you want to know?”

Sure he thought I’d ask about his relationships first, and I gave a devious grin of my own. “What was college like for you?” I asked innocently.

His smirk dropped instantly. “It was good,” he answered soberly. “I spent most of my time studying business. I also took some courses in farming and ranching. I wanted to make the ranch more profitable.”

“More profitable?”

“I want my parents and Annabeth to be able to retire and travel the world. Ranching is hard work, and there’s not a lot of time for vacations. But since I started running the place, I’ve been able to raise profits enough to hire some staff. Now we can all get away every once in a while.”

Zane's confidence was always what drew me to him. If he wanted something, he got it. I guessed I was the one exception to that—up until now.

After I told him I was proud of him and was glad that he was prioritizing his family, he asked, "What is your dream?"

"A family. I wanted to start trying for kids, but then everything happened... It may sound silly, but being a mother is the one goal I've had since childhood. I couldn't have cared less about college or where I worked."

I looked down at my plate of food, smiling sadly. *If things had been different, would I be a mom by now? How many kids would I have? Would Zane be their dad?* The thought of having kids with him felt so right, but I had to stop myself from jumping too far ahead.

As we spent the rest of our meal getting reacquainted, I realized that while Zane was still the same person he'd always been, he'd grown up a lot. He cared about his family and even the town. He was the kind of man any woman would be proud to have.

After dinner, we walked around town. I could see people watching our every move, but honestly, I was okay with being the talk of the town for a while. The thought of everyone knowing Zane was mine struck a chord with me.

"So...why didn't you ask about who I've been with?" he finally asked.

I giggled. "I thought it'd be fun to watch you squirm for a while. If you want to tell me you can; if not, that's okay too."

Zane stopped walking and turned to me. "I only casually dated. Every time I thought I was going to get serious about someone, I would find flaws I couldn't look over. I compared all of them to you."

Looking into his eyes, I saw that he was sincere. He wasn't just telling me what he thought I'd like to hear.

"If I meant so much, why didn't you tell me?" I whispered.

"You were happy, and I was older. Sometimes loving someone means giving up your happiness for theirs. As much as I hated it, that's what I did. I put you first."

I looked at the handsome man in front of me and really tried to take all of him in. His dark hair was combed, and his beard was trimmed up nicely. It was obvious he put forth effort for me, and I couldn't remember the last time Chris had done that.

From the outside, Chris had seemed like the perfect husband. I had even thought the same until the affair. But looking back, I realized there were many small things that showed it was a very one-sided relationship.

"So, does this mean that you're going to fight for me this time?" I asked Zane.

"I know you've had a shitty excuse for a marriage," he began, "but Kenzie, let me make this crystal clear to you. I want you today, tomorrow, and every day after. I want to wake up with you in my arms and know that no one will ever be able to take you away again. I want to give you all those babies I know you want. So, does that mean I'm all in? Hell yes, it does."

I smiled so wide that I was sure my face would split. Being wooed by a man was an amazing feeling, and I could already feel myself becoming territorial. I wanted to be the only one he looked at. It was a new and scary feeling, one I wasn't sure I'd ever felt before.

"Then I'm full steam ahead myself," I replied. "I would have done things differently if I knew you felt the same way I did all those years ago, and Zane? I don't want to miss the chance to have a once-in-a-lifetime love. Will you give me that?"

I knew my eyes were filled with tears, but as Zane pulled me close, I didn't care. I wanted him to see how I really felt.

Zane cradled my face and looked into my eyes, and his warm breath felt like home. The place I was always meant to be. As he comes closer, my eyes close and I relish in the moment. When he finally kissed me, it was soft but firm, full of all his feelings. I only took a second to respond before opening myself up to him, wanting him to kiss me as deeply as he could.

Time seemed to stop. At that moment, the world could've imploded all around us, and I would've died happy.

When Zane pulled back and looked at me again, his eyes gleamed with satisfaction. It made me happy. Thinking about navigating the dating scene had terrified me; I didn't want to give myself to just anyone.

Some people could have multiple partners, but I couldn't imagine doing that. I put too much emotion into relationships to be casual, and I was glad Zane knew that.

"So, does this mean I can call you mine?" he whispered.

"As long as I get to call you mine and mine alone," I replied.

Zane chuckled. "I swear to you, you'll never have to worry about that again. Your biggest problem is going to be that I won't give you two minutes of peace."

Next Chapter

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