

Then You Happened Excerpt

“Just face it, Knox. You’re head over heels in love with me.” Jack finally smiles, dimple winking and those eyes lighting up as he takes a step toward me, holding the scoop to his chest. “You can’t be near me because you want me, and you can’t talk to me because you get all flustered and tongue-tied.”

“There is nothing about you I find attractive,” I lie.

He places the scoop in my hand but doesn’t let it go when I try to take it. “It’d be much easier and a whole lot less distracting if I could say the same of you.” He lets go of the scoop and dips the tip of his hat in an aw-shucks kind of way. “But I’m not one to lie.”

Our eyes hold across the short distance as his comment floats through the air and fades like the dust specks dancing in the sunlight.

“That won’t work, you know?” I say.

“What won’t?”

“You trying to charm me every time you want something. I know your kind, Jack Sutton, and I’m not impressed by them.”

“Is that so?” He shifts on his feet and adjusts his hat before re-crossing his arms over his chest. “And what kind is that?”

“A man who uses his good looks and smooth words to get his way with people. A man who turns on the charm to disguise it.”

His eyes darken and then narrow. “Just like you’re the woman who keeps living her privileged life . . . fiddling while Rome burns down around her?” he counters, making me want to scream that he knows nothing about me or how I live or what I’ve been through for the last year. A small part of me is shouting about how that was his point, but I tell the voice to shut up. “And if by good looks and smooth words, you’re implying I’m like Fletcher, I suggest you not infer that again.” That muscle in his jaw feathers in contempt.

“I’m not the woman you think I am.”

He twists his lips and stares at me in a way that feels like he is seeing right through me. It’s unnerving and unsettling, and I force myself not to look away because his silence is telling me that maybe he thinks I am.

I’m not sure why that bugs me. Why I want him to see me as someone different. “I’m not even certain you know who that woman is either.”