

Craig Parker Interview

The carriage beneath me is causing me to bounce against the wooden seat of my carriage, and the Texas sun above me is so hot that it is almost hard to breathe. Despite this, I look forward with excitement as I see the ranch house come into view.

Craig Parker is one of the most honest, deep hearted men you will ever meet, and I knew from the beginning I would need to do a character interview for him once I finished writing about his love story with Amanda. I pull on the reins to encourage my horse to stop, which he does gratefully. As I step down from the carriage, I see Craig coming from the barn to help me with my horse. I wave a hand at him, then turn to pet the horse's nose, and croon to him until Craig gets close enough to talk to.

"Zoe, I am glad to see you made it through this summer heat." He says with a smile.

I can't help feeling bashful for a moment. His eyes are so genuine, it is sometimes hard to remember that he only has a big heart- with no intention of flirting with a woman who isn't his wife. "It is a bit hot, but I know it's worth it. Your land is so beautiful. How is your family?"

"Spectacular. Amanda has the children in the back of the barn playing with a surprise litter of kittens." He throws another grin my way, and I can see how much he cares for his family. He continues talking as he unhooks the carriage from my horse, and starts leading him to the barn to rest. "We have had a tough time insisting no kittens are allowed in the house. Even Amanda has a soft spot for those little ones."

I chuckle knowingly. "I can't say that I blame her. Kittens are adorable." I almost ask if I could go play with them too. I somehow manage to stop myself at the last minute. I came here for a reason. I follow him into the barn, where John Sittinghorse is brushing down one of Craig's horses. John is Craig's second-hand man and helps him with everything around the ranch.

"John, you know Zoe."

"Hello, Zoe. How's your day treating you?" John says with a smile and an accent.

"I can't complain," I say- even though I want to complain about the heat. It was something they dealt with every day, it wouldn't do much good to talk about it at this point. "How is your family?"

"Well enough. If you leave your horse tied to that post," he nods to a post to the right of me as he speaks, "I can brush him down for you."

"That would be fantastic. Thank you, John," I say appreciatively.

"Papa, look! Papa, Look!" Gracie came running in holding something in her hands. As she gets closer, we can all see it was a kitten. "Oooh," she croons, "I am never going to put her down."

Gracie had really come a long way since her surgery to fix a broken leg that hadn't healed right before Amanda and Craig had adopted her. She still limped a little, but it was barely noticeable. Her freedom let out a new bright side to the child. Everyone in town now called her a ray of sunshine.

Craig barks out a happy laugh. "That would be quite the luxury. You do know that the little kitten does need to stay with her Mama, right?"

Gracie's face drops with disappointment. "I know."

"She is too little be so far from her Mama. Go on and take her back now."

"Okay, Papa." She turns and croons to the kitten as she walks, making promises to come visit every moment she could.

"She seems to be doing very well." I say watching her leave. She hadn't even looked up from her kitten long enough to notice a new face in the room.

"She is. Having the ability to move around on her own has really changed her. She might be harder to keep track of, but I wouldn't have it any other way," Craig says with a smile. "Now, why don't we get you a drink of water, and sit down inside for this interview?"

"Wonderful idea," I respond with a smile. He leads the way into their house, which has been decorated quite nicely. Amanda must have worked hard to find the right fabric for curtains, table cloths and a few other pictures on the wall to tie all the colors together. She was artistic enough to decorate a welcoming home on a budget. "Wow, it looks great in here. You will have to tell Amanda she has done a good job decorating."

Craig smiles. "I have. She never seems to find a room complete. She wants me to make a bookshelf next."

I smile back at him. "Well, I would trust her to know what she is doing."

"Good point." Craig brings me a cup of water, and we sit down at the kitchen table together.

"Shall we get to it?" I suggest.

Craig looks uncertain for a moment, then smiles. "Of course. I have never done an interview before, so why don't you take the lead?"

"Absolutely. I think everyone would love to hear more about what made you fall in love with Amanda in the first place. I remember it took quite a few times of asking her to marry you before she said yes."

A large grin breaks across his face. "Well that one is easy. When I first saw her, we were at a barn raising. I knew from the beginning that I loved her. She was the most beautiful woman I had seen- but that wasn't the only thing that drew me to her. She was always looking for ways to help everyone around her, and she never stopped until everything was completed, and long after many of the women had left."

He smiles sweetly at the memory, and I can't help but lean toward him. The love he had for his wife emanated from him. "I knew by the end of the day that this wonderful woman deserved to be loved and cherished for all of her life, and I wanted to be the lucky man to do so." He chuckles for a moment before continuing. "Of course, I can't say I had much strategy for showing her that I could be the one she could love again. It wasn't until we adopted our children that she started to see me in a new light."

For a moment all I can do is sit smiling at him. I finally remember that I have more questions to ask him. "Do you ever wish that Amanda had said yes to one of your earlier proposals?"

Craig smiled again. "Sometimes I do. It would have been nice to get time to be married to her before we had children. We could have learned more about each other, and had time to create a solid platform to raise children on. In the end, I wouldn't change a thing. If Amanda had said yes earlier, and we had chosen to adopt, we could have only adopted one child. One of the rules of the Orphan train is that a family can only adopt one child. Because Amanda had waited, we were each able to adopt separately before our marriage, and that helped keep Jeremy and Gracie together. I couldn't imagine life without either one of them."

"One last question for you, Craig," I say with a smile. "Is there a moment after the adoption of your children your marriage that you can remember that you felt officially complete as a family?"

Craig takes a moment to think about this question, and finally gives his answer with emotion in his voice. "I would say after the birth of Amanda and my first child Suzanne. Jeremy, Gracie and I were all crowded around Amanda and the baby. We were all so wrapped up in that one moment, feeling the same emotions of awe and love for this new little life. I knew that we were all meant to find each other. I think that moment bonded all of us, and no one has once questioned whether they belonged to this family or not." I have to blink back my own emotion at his story. This man had such depth to him; it is obvious to see that he was a key component to this family.

"Thank you so much for giving me some time to come do this. It is always so thrilling to get a deeper look into my character's personalities."

"Anytime. You should come back to interview Amanda as well. There is much more to that woman than meets the eye," he says with a grin.

Just then, Amanda and the children all walk in. "Zoe, I'm glad I caught you!" Amanda comes over to give me a hug. "I was hoping to talk you into staying for dinner."

I think it over a moment. "I don't have anything planned, but I would hate to intrude."

“Oh, you would never! We love having company over, and Jeremy would love to show you the songs she has been learning on his harmonica.”

I smile brightly. “Nothing sounds more fun. I would love to stay.”

“Good, it’s settled then.”

I sit back and watch the family as they all wash up for dinner, and Amanda starts rolling dough into dinner rolls to be put in the oven. The love the children had for one another was staggering; It was clear that even the adopted children were accepted without thought- they were all one happy family together.