

Willow pov

It's been a month since Tate was murdered and she was floundering. The kids were floundering without their father.

Therapy was not helping anyone especially her and Aspen.

Willow was at the end of her rope. She was beyond thankful to her Uncle James and Aunt Bertha as the kids called her, who of course stepped up immediately to help her navigate these difficult times.

Currently Willow was in her office trying to call the social security office trying to get ahold of some one about their application for social security benefits for the kids. Tate's life insurance policy was in the works to pay out, but it would be another month at least. The funeral had cost over ten thousand dollars. It took a huge chunk of their savings.

Willow still had her trust fund money, but she didn't want to use it if she didn't have to.

Willow was checking her work emails while she had her phone on speaker. She had been on hold forever. She had an incoming call on her work line.

"Yeah, Sierra what's up?" Willow responded as she put her cell phone on the desk.

"Is that musac?" Sierra asked her.

"I'm on hold, what is going on," her voice was tired Exhaustion was her constant companion these days.

"You have a couple of visitors from the state police."

"Send them up," Willow groaned out. Willow was not happy they were here. Ryan had been calling her for the past month and Willow had been ignoring his calls. She knew why he was calling and didn't want to hear it. Ryan could have come by, the man knew

where she lived. It wasn't a minute later that her office door opened

"Hey Ryan, Chris, how are you?" Willow asked as she saw the men enter her office. Chris was Tate's partner. He was also carrying a box. She knew it was his stuff from the precinct that they had been wanting her to pick up. She Willow just didn't want to do it.

"Willow-"

"The both of you didn't have to drop it off, one of the sergeants could have done it." Willow wanted to keep this meeting short.

"That's not why we are here," Ryan said as he sat down and Chris did the same.

"Look the family wanted to-"

"Stop Ryan, I want you to leave. Thank you for dropping off Tate's things, but I'm not interested in meeting with anyone.

Especially the person responsible for my husband's death,"

Willow responded chilly.

"You don't mean that," Chris responded and she sneered:

"Don't I?" Willow responded. "I read all the reports, that woman was a b\*\*\*h and kept her child away from her father despite the court agreement. The police and courts didn't do anything to stop her. The father finally snapped and took his son. She reported it as a kidnapping. It wasn't and my husband was killed protecting the child and mother. You think I didn't want to be vindictive when my first husband cheated on me? No I did the right thing and look where it got me, leave now." Willow's tone was cold and brooked no argument.

"Willow," Chris pleaded and Willow started to get angry.

“Where have you been Chris? Ryan? My kids have lost their father and not a single one of you have stopped by since the funeral.

Brotherhood my ass. Johnson and Garcia drive down at least once a week, but not a single one of his state

‘brothers have given us support since his death.” Willow spat at them furious. Hell, Memphis was more supportive than these two and she barely knew the man. Ryan looked to Chris confused,

“You said you’ve been stopping by.” Willow chucked,

“He lied, you think I don’t know that Tate had been covering for you these past few years Chris?” Willow asked and Chris’s face morphed to one of anger.

“You b\*i\*h!” Chris seethed, his outburst only proving her right. Tate told her in confidence that his partner had sometimes pushed things too far with suspects. Willow urged

Tate to speak to Ryan or internal affairs about the issue. Tate didn't want to turn against his brother. Now he was dead

"That's enough!" Ryan told Chris in a firm tone. Willow turned on Ryan, the man who convinced Tate to join the force.

"It's not like you are any better, you just want to make headlines right chief, you didn't care about me and my children's well being. Leave!" Willow hollered. Willow knew the anger consuming her was bad, but she was just too overwhelmed to care:

"Hello?" a voice called out once her door was shut.

"Yes, hello."

Knox pov

A month has passed since he found out Roxanne had been cheating on him with his neighbor. He has been doing nothing but collecting evidence of cheating and parental

neglect. His lawyer, who was a shark, declared that it was finally time to strike. His lawyer told him that they finally had enough evidence that Knox should be able to have primary custody. They just had to be smart about the paperwork. He only hoped his lawyer was right and better than his first divorce lawyer. The whole morning he couldn't help but think about Roxanne getting the papers and her reaction. Knox tried to simply focus on work and his daughter. Her needs.

Lola's teeth had finally broke through and hadn't seemed to be feeling any ill effects from that fateful day that seemed so long ago. His father was not happy with him and threatened to report him to CPS. Knox ran his hand through his hair as he remembered seeing his brother standing there with an utter look of contempt on his face and the matching one of his father. What was he supposed to do?

He had to earn a living. s\*\*t. He never felt lower than he did when his father handed him his daughter who looked so happy to see him. He felt so guilty for leaving Lola alone with Roxanne, but how could he have possibly know she would totally neglect her?

God he felt like such a loser, he was just getting into his thirties and on his second divorce already. Had two baby mama's he was done with marriage and children. His brother definitely did it the right way and only got married once. This s\*\*t is stressful.

He loved his kids, but it didn't mean they weren't stressful.

Knox looked at the picture of his two precious girls sitting on his desk: Aspen had came to visit when Lola was just born. She had a huge smile on her face. The proud big sister. While the picture is sweet Knox remembered that Roxanne hated that Aspen came to visit them in the hospital. Jesus. He needed to think about something else.



He decided to give Aspen a call. Knox got Aspen a cell phone for her last birthday despite Willow's protests. The phone rang and rang. Huh that was odd, he checked the time and it was four. Aspen was normally home working on homework. Maybe she was busy. His landline rang and he picked it up,

"What the hell is this Knox!" Roxanne screamed in his ear. It seemed that his wife was delivered the divorce papers today and emergency custody paper as well.

"I imagine you can read can't you?" He asked in a condescending tone

"How dare you ask me for a divorce, and in front of my coworkers. What have I done?" Roxanne seethed. The woman didn't even ask about their daughter. "You think you are getting the house, you are insane, where am I going to stay?!" Roxanne screeched and he smiled.

“I bought that house long before I met you Roxanne, its mine and if you need a place to stay why don’t you ask our next door neighbor? Oh that’s right his wife lives there... well for now.” He smiled bigger.

“What. Did. You. Do?” Roxanne shrieked out and he laughed.

“Oh my dear wife you shouldn’t have neglected our daughter. Just wait and see what I am going to do with you.” Knox hung up and decided he needed to get home before Roxanne tried to do anything crazy. It was almost quitting time any way.

Memphis pov

It has been two weeks since he started his new job and he was in heaven. God he missed the game: he forgot how much he loved the smell of the field. The crack of the baseball against a wooden bat. The thwack of the ball hitting a leather glove. Memphis was in heaven. He went into work every day

excited and happy in a way he hadn't in years.

The new job as head coach allowed him to be outside in the fresh air all day instead of doing hard physical labor all day. Stuck inside and everyone was generally miserable.

Memphis got to work out in the gym with the players. He stood on the baseball diamond everyday and he loved it.

He met and talked to every single member of the team. The only troublemaker he foresaw was the new star pitcher that Jason just signed. The guy was a show boat and a hot head. The rest of the team was pretty relaxed and interested to work with him to see what the entire team brought to the table to further the success of the team.

He looked out at the men practicing and he saw his son sitting in the stands. Memphis couldn't help but smile as he saw his son have a huge smile on his face.

The house had been fully moved into and Jackson was back at school for almost three weeks now. His son didn't talk about school much, Jackson only talked about his cousins that he would visit every weekend. Aiden wanted to come and see the baseball Diamond. There was going to be a small mock game this weekend and Memphis told his son to invite Aiden. It was a big deal to the team according to Jason who was his buddy and new owner of the team.

The families came out to cheer on their players. Jason was going to do it big this year as it was his first year as owner and having a new coach. Jason was going to have a barbecue afterwards and let off some fireworks. The whole team seemed to be excited for the party afterwards and he was no exception. His son started to wave at him and Memphis decided to wave him over. The atmosphere was pretty relaxed as it was later on in the evening. The majority of the

players had left and only around half the team was still doing batting practice.

“Dad guess what?” Jackson hollered out as he crossed the field

“What’s up bud?” He asked as he kept his eye on the new pitcher.

“Aunt Willow called me and asked if everyone can come this weekend!” Memphis felt shock and happiness at the announcement. He looked at his son who had a huge smile on his face. Since the move he hadn’t heard from Willow at all. Memphis knew she was grieving her husband, but he didn’t want to be too distant. He would normally send Jackson with ready cooked meals when he left for the weekend. Memphis didn’t even know if she noticed.

“Of course they are all welcome,” Memphis told him as his son looked at him waiting for an answer.

“Awesome! I’ll text her back right now!” His son said and Memphis checked the time.

“All right, I’m calling it!” Memphis yelled out as his phone showed five in the evening. It was time to go home and get some food. It was a good day!

[My Husband Cheated with My Bully \(Book 2\) Chapter 7](#)

Willow pov

“Let’s go! Let’s go or we are going to be late!” Aiden screamed at the top of his lungs running down the stairs.

“Mom! Do I have to go? I want to go play with Zoey,” Aspen pouted as Willow was packing the bag for the game: she looked up to see her eldest on the phone.

“Aspen I told you last night, yes you have to go. I want everyone to go.” Willow thought it would be a good family activity for them to do together. It was also free, always a plus.

“Fine!” Aspen started to stomp off.

“Hey! You don’t talk to me like that and you know it. You need to knock it off or I’ll take that phone away from you,” Willow scolded her and Aspen humped.

“It’s not like it’s good for anything anyway,” Aspen muttered and walked off. Willow was going to ask if she heard from her father, but she was up the stairs. She sighed, it was going to get better. It had to.

“This is sooo awesome!!” Aiden yelled stomping down the stairs with Jackson following behind slowly holding Ari.”

Mom do you have all the drinks?”

“Yup I’m packing them,” Willow responded as her mood uplifted at seeing the kids so happy. Well most of them.

Honestly Willow didn’t think Aspen was ever going to be the same.

“Okay guys let’s load up!” She hollered and everyone went to the van.

“Can Radar come?” Aiden asked as the corgi started following them to the door.

“Not this time, Aspen will you put him in his cage outside please?” Willow asked her and took the cooler to the car.

It took another ten minutes to get everyone settled in the van and onto the highway. Willow was exhausted before she even got onto the highway and there was an hour drive to the baseball field. The kids settled down after a few minutes as Willow let them have their tablets on long car rides.

Willow watched Jackson out of the corner of her eye for the last ten minutes and could see that he wanted to talk about something. He had a bad habit of biting his nails when he was nervous. She never liked the bad habit, but couldn't get him to break it.

“So you want to talk about why you had trouble in school?”



Willow asked her nephew finally breaking the silence.

Jackson looked away, finally letting go of his thumbnail.

“Not really.”

“Jackson your father moved several states away. The reason has to be a big one.”

“I Uhh...” Jackson stuttered. “I bullied a boy so badly he left school.” Jackson finally admitted. Willow was beyond shocked at hearing that. Silence stretched between them.

“Do you hate me?” Jackson asked in a small voice.

“No sweetheart I could never hate you. I am very disappointed.” Willow admitted and Jackson looked heartbroken. Willow continued, “Jackson I came into your life when you were about two years old and you were the sweetest person I had ever met.

You stayed that way, you always had a heart of gold. I don't know why that changed.

"I am that same person!" Jackson burst out.

"Do you feel guilty?" Willow asked and Jackson nodded.

"Every day."

"Then apologize, but not for yourself. Explain to this person the real reason why you did what you did. Even if this means you end up humiliating yourself." Willow told her nephew and he looked upset. "Let's put this aside and have a good day, okay?" Willow asked and Jackson nodded. She turned up some classic rock and a small smile started to creep up on his face as she started to sing along.

The rest of the drive was peaceful and Willow's GPS guided her to the ballpark.

“Oh no!! We aren’t going to get any good seats!” Her son Aiden hollered in her ear as she tried to find a good parking space.

“Don’t worry Dad saved us some decent seats,” Jackson responded. Her son calmed down as her ears continued to ring. Willow was able to find a decent parking place.

It was total chaos as every got out of the vehicle. Her heart gave a pang as she missed having Tate by her side to help her corral the kids.

“Jackson will you get the cooler?” She asked as she started shutting doors.

“Yes ma’am,” Jackson responded and went to the back.

“Does everyone have everything?” She asked as she grabbed Aria’s hand who immediately tried to pull away from her.

“Aria you have to hold my hand until we sit down,” Willow ground out.

“I don’t want to!” Her daughter screamed.

“I didn’t ask if you wanted to, I told you to. You have to do you don’t run away from me again!” Willow ground out tired of her daughter’s attitude. Ariana had been fighting with her for the past week, just not wanting to do as she asked. Her daughter growled at her.

“Fine.” Jackson came back with the small cooler and then they walked to the entrance of the ballpark. Willow wasn’t sure what she expected as Jackson led them to their seats, but she didn’t expect to see what seemed like a professional ball field. The walk down the stairs was long, especially with a five year old

They finally made it to their seats and Willow let go of Aria’s hand who started bouncing around the place like a pinball and immediately started asking for juice. The people around us gave her dirty looks and so Willow quickly dug into the cooler to

produce said juice. The next demand was snacks, which she quickly pulled goldfish from her oversized purse and passed around. It wasn't until fifteen minutes after sitting down in their seats that Willow was able to get everyone settled and situated.

She finally took a look at the kids faces. Aiden was in heaven. Aspen was on her phone playing trivia. Aria seemed to be confused. Jackson was like a puffed up peacock he was so proud. She was exhausted and regretted coming already. Willow checked her phone and saw that it was only two in the afternoon. She had hours left of this and she could help but suppress a sigh. Willow finally managed to look out at the players and look to see what was going on.

Baseball wasn't her sport, but she knew the basics. Willow always enjoyed watching hockey, Tate loved watching football on Sunday's at home with his friends and the kids.

Willow tried to make the memories go away and decided to look for Memphis. She saw him by the dugout, wearing cargo shorts and white tshirt. He carried a clipboard with him.

“How does your dad like his new job?”

Willow asked trying to reconcile the new wardrobe Memphis was currently sporting. She had never seen the man wearing anything but biker boots and jeans. Willow didn't know much about Memphis life before his injury as she hadn't met him until Jackson was two years old. It was nice to him smiling freely. She wondered wryly if she would ever smile like that again.

“He loves it!” Jackson burst out with surprising her. Willow had been lost in her melancholy that she lost track of the conversation.

“Really?”

“Yeah, he seems so much happier now.” Jackson told her and Willow was happy for him. Truly, after Gina the man deserved it. Willow looked at her nephew and he seemed to be happy for the first time and in years. She was happy for both of the Hayes men.

“What’s that?” Aiden asked pointing to a cooking area beyond the playing field.

“Dad said we are having barbecue after the game tonight,”

Jackson responded. Willow knew that and her son being his father’s son got beyond excited about meat.

Memphis pov

“Great game! Everyone!” He hollered as the men were in the locker room changing. “I did see some things to work on, but I will save that for Monday practice. Let’s get cleaned up and go eat with our family!” Memphis hollered out and the men cheered

The men exited the locker room and went back to the area where the barbecue was waiting for them. His eyes immediately honed in on his son who stood out above everyone. Jackson was still a young gangly teen, but had his height already. Jackson reached six foot last year and was still growing. Memphis watched as his son helped Willow's children with their food and got them to their table.

Any doubts of moving to a new state faded away as he watched his son. Jackson was the sweetest kid he knew.

The situation in Boston had took his sweet boy away from him, but this place gave him back. That and Willow's family. This is why he always wanted more children. He just wasn't blessed to have anymore.

Memphis went to the table where Willow, her children, and Jackson were eating. They were all sitting, eating, and laughing. He approached,



“Mind if I sit with you?”

“Dad!”

“Uncle Memphis!” Aspen greeted him with a hug.

“Hey kiddo” he responded.

“Are you my uncle too?” Aiden asked him and he looked to Willow not sure what to say.

“Of course he is Aiden,” Willow responded and he let out a breath.

“How come he doesn’t visit us like uncle Rowan then?”

Arianna asked him.

“Well sweetheart that because Uncle Memphis had a hard job that didn’t allow him to get away from work very often,”

Willow responded giving the kids a great response that wasn’t the whole truth.

Memphis could have visited, it just hurt too much.

“Now we can see you? And Jackson whenever we want?”

Aiden asked him.

“Well you have to ask your mom, and within reason.

Though, yes I did move to the area,” Memphis decided it was time to let her know that he was here for her and her kids.

“Mom?”

“We will see son,” Willow responded and Aiden groaned.

“That means no,” Ari commented and Memphis couldn’t deny it as he had given his son many answers similarly.

Tho much he couldn’t help but fight a smile at the little girls blunt ways. She was definitely Willow’s mini-me.

“Not necessarily, I just work a lot of weekends and I know you all have activists starting up soon. It sounds like your mom just doesn’t want to make a promise she can’t keep.”

Willow sent him a grateful smile

“Well I want to stay at your house,” Aiden commented.

“Aiden!”

“It’s okay Willow, we did promise the sleep over would happen,”

“You’re right.”

“Well how about I get your moms number and we talk about finding a weekend that works best for everyone,”

Memphis proposed I.

“Yay!” Ari squealed and launched herself onto his lap. He quickly caught her and held her close so she didn’t go flying off.

“You want to eat some barbecue?” He asked the little girl that was a carbon copy of Willow. Ari shook her head no and ate chips. He sighed and looked up at Willow gave him her card.

“Here, it has my number on it. Make sure and text me when you are free to watch the kids. I mean they are a lot,” Willow started rambling as she tended to do when she got nervous. Memphis took the card and assured her,

“Don’t worry, I can handle them.” Memphis smiled as he sat next to his son and the kids. It was the most content he had been in years.

[My Husband Cheated with My Bully \(Book 2\) Chapter 8](#)

Jackson pov

“You sure you want to do this son?” His grandpa asked him as they parked across the street from Arnie’s house.

Jackson nodded and stared at the kid who he used to be close friends with in elementary school, but that all changed once they entered junior high.

“You don’t have to do this you know?” His grandfather assured him.

“No grandpa, I have to try.” Jackson got out of the car with his papers clutched tight in his fist. It took him all week to prepare what to say to his former friend. Aunt Willow suggested writing a letter in case Arnie didn’t want to hear him out and Jackson thought that was a good idea. Aunt Willow was adamant that an apology couldn’t be forced.

He spent all week on it, he also wrote his mother a letter too. That one was easier. Therapy made him realize that he had a lot of anger at his mother, his father too. Though mainly his mother. His dad did his best to raise him after their divorce. His dad worked long hours, but he always picked

him up on Wednesday and the weekends his mother allowed his father visitation. He was a decent father, he showed up unlike his mother. Jackson was angry for the longest time at his dad for breaking up his family, but his therapist helped him understand that it was his mother that wanted to turn him against his dad

During elementary school his mom would often have him stay with her parents. Which was okay, but he would have rather stayed with his dad as his grandparents were frail and only sat in front of the tv watching wheel of fortune.

His mom was a bartender so Jackson didn't get to see his mother much during his childhood.

Then his mother met that douche and just didn't care about him any longer. She didn't care where he stayed any longer.

So Jackson spent most of his time with his dad, until that one horrible day when he went to see him mom. He hadn't seen his mom in months and just missed her. It was dumb to miss her as she had changed. Previously when Jackson would see his mother he would receive a hug, that changed to apathy. He was unaware that his mom was steadily becoming an alcoholic.

When he walked into the front door of his old childhood home, Tats walked up to him completely hammered and hit him in the face. His mom laughing in the background. He went back to his room at his dads and stayed there until his dad came home: then shot really hit the fan.

Jackson's letter was pretty much filled with how he didn't think he could ever forgive what happened. He didn't think the letter would ever reach his mother, but he felt better after writing it and that is all that mattered to him.

Jackson walked up the drive and stood in front of the modest but well kept home. Arnie and his family lived only two blocks away from his grandfather. He nervously wiped his hands down pants before ringing the doorbell. Jackson heard footsteps before the door open widely. Arnie's mom stood on the other side and her face revealed disbelief.

"Hello Mrs. Whitfield, May I please speak to Arnie?" The definition of a Karen mom scoffed at him.

"You can't be serious." Mrs. Whitfield responded scowled and Jackson couldn't blame her as he was part of a group that bullied her son severely.

"I came to apologize, if he doesn't want to see me then can you give him this letter?" Jackson offered the woman the letter and she took it. Mrs. Whitfield stared him down for a good minute before finally letting him in the house.



“You can wait in the living room and I will see if he wants to talk to you.”

“Yes ma’am.” Jackson entered the old, but familiar house, and went to the large living room. Him and Arnie were both only children. The only difference being is that his parents were still together. They became close friends, until junior high and Arnie joined a lot of academic clubs. Jackson never really fit in anywhere and he who had already been slightly jealous of Arnie became even more so at Arnie’s ability to make friends. Then when the summer before high school he shot up to six feet. His dad knew he was feeling awkward about his height so the two of them often went to the gym during their time together. Jackson enjoyed it as the two of them would talk. He also encouraged Jackson to join writing classes. His father didn’t share his interests, but he encouraged them.

However, his trips to the gym caused him to go from gangly to toned. Then when he entered high school a group of kids took an interest in him. Jackson was flattered and since he didn't really have any friends as Arnie no longer had any time for him due to his activities Jackson didn't think there was any harm in hanging out with the group of kids. It's was the biggest regret of his life.

There was no warning when Arnie walked through the door.

That or Jackson was too lost in his regrets. Jackson looked at Arnie as he sneered at him.

"My mom told me that you were here, I couldn't believe it."

"I-uh-I came here to apologize," Jackson admitted.

"What is this another joke?" Arnie asked with scorn. Arnie who was once skinny kid had seemed to grow in the last eight months since he had seen him. Jackson stood up and

was surprised to see that Arnie was only a few inches shorter than him, but still awkward in appearance.

“No my apology is genuine,” Jackson raised his hands in surrender.

“What you aren’t worried about being one of the cool kids any more?” Arnie asked still wary.

“No, me and my dad moved to a town near Charleston a few months ago.”

“What?” Arnie looked shocked. Jackson had found out that Arnie was going to a private school for gifted kids since the final incident in the bathroom. He wouldn’t know that Jackson had moved

“Yeah, we moved and my time away from that group finally made me realize what a horrible person I became. So you don’t have to forgive me Arnie, but I am sorry.” Jackson was trying to be sincere. Jackson looked

down at his notes to see if he said everything that he wanted to say.

“You wrote notes?” Arnie asked.

“I didn’t want to screw it up.”

“Can you at least tell me why Jax?” Arnie asked.

“Honestly? I was always slightly jealous of you.”

“Me?” Arnie asked shocked.

“Yeah, your parents are still together and I was always jealous of that. Your life just seemed perfect. But you were my only friend. Then when we went into junior high you always fit right in with the academic kids. I never had many friends other than you.” Jackson took a deep breath. “Then high school came and that group just saw a tall quiet kid.

The next thing I know I'm laughing with them as they are making fun of people walking down the halls. I'm talking back to my dad whose struggling to raise me on my own." Jackson looked away in shame, "I'm giving you a swirly in the bathroom...so I'm sorry Artie. I'm really sorry. I hope one day you can forgive me." Jackson started to walked out the door.

"Jax, I don't know if I can forgive you today, but I understand. You know my life isn't perfect either."

"I know and I'm sorry for thinking it was... just... I don't know, I'm a jerk I guess." Artie nodded,

"I can't forgive you today, but maybe someday." Jackson nodded again as he felt tears burning behind his eyes. He walked out of the living room and saw Aeries mom standing there. She didn't say anything to him, but her face looked kinder.

“Mrs. Whitfield.” Jackson told her.

“Have a safe trip back Jackson.” Jackson nodded and exited the house, feeling a thousand pounds lighter. He knew his old friend didn’t forgive him, but that wasn’t the purpose of the visit. Jackson just wanted Artie to know why he did what he did. He opened up the door to find his grandpa waiting for him and he ran for him.

Willow pov

It was Sunday afternoon and finally having a break. Her uncle agreed to watch the kids for her and Willow sat down to take a break to look over paperwork she had been neglecting. Her phone started buzzing on her desk that had been working at. Willow looked to see Knox calling and reluctantly picked it up.

“Yeah?”

“Hey Will I need a favor,” her ex-husband rambled off without even asking how their daughter was

“No,” she replied in a cold voice and he sighed

“Look I really need some one to watch Lila tomorrow,” Knox ignored her.

“God you still are such an ass aren’t you?” Willow asked him floored by his request.

“Look I know I haven’t been there for awhile, but I need help and I don’t have anyone else to ask.”

“Then I guess you shouldn’t have burnt every single bridge

Knox. You haven’t seen or talked to your daughter in over six weeks, before that it was like six months. I just lost my husband and you have the guts to ask me to watch your kid. You have to be out of your mind, the only reason I picked up is because

apparently I live in a fantasy land where I thought you were wanting to see your daughter.”

“Willow-” Knox started but she hung up, she didn’t have time for his s\*\*t. She put down the phone for it to start buzzing immediately, she looked to find her nephew calling her.

“Hey, how did it go?” She asked picking up the phone.

“I think it was okay,” Jackson responded tentatively.

“Well what happened?” She asked and he told her everything that happened yesterday at his old friends home.

“What do you think?” Jackson asked clearly nervous.

“I think you did great honey,” Willow responded.



“Really?” He asked

“Yeah, it sounds like you did a good job. You didn’t force anything, just explained your side of things.”

“Thanks aunt Willow, my dad says the same.”

“Did your dad go with you?” Willow asked him.

“No, unfortunately he has to work most weekends now, but he’s home earlier.”

“That’s good,” she responded

“Oh I have to go, we are starting the trip back now. Love you.”

“Love you too sweetie.” They hung up the phone and Willow saw she had six new messages.

Knox: look I know I’m a jerk but please do this for me

Knox: please I'll do whatever you want

Knox: Willow!

Unknown: did you hear what Jackson did today? I'm very proud of him.

Knox: Willow!

Willow sighed and quickly responded to Knox.

Me: stop messaging me otherwise we will have to involve lawyers. I'm grieving and not in the mood for this. Hire a nanny.

Then she looked at the number that had to be Memphis's.

Me: yes I was happy to hear that it went well.

Willow went to add Memphis number in her phone.

Memphis: it's so good to see my son coming back to me.

Me: were things that bad?

Memphis: yes, they were Willow. They were awful.

Willow looked at Memphis's message and for the first time she felt guilt about moving away from Boston. She quickly squashed it, Memphis knew where she was for years and he never reached out. He shut the door on their friendship a very long time ago. She wasn't going to feel bad that it had stayed closed. Willow had always done her best by her nephew and that is all that mattered to her. Willow quickly texted back an "I'm sorry" and went back to work. She ignored the following buzz as she knew it would be one of the Hayes brothers and she didn't have any more time for them:

[My Husband Cheated with My Bully \(Book 2\) Chapter 9](#)

Knox pov

He let out a sigh as he tossed the phone down. His nanny had to cancel today and he

had no one to watch over Lola while he went to work. Knox had hoped that Willow would be willing to watch Lola for the day, but he was wrong. He knew he was a bastard for even asking and Willow was right. He burnt his bridges a long time ago. The reality is, he didn't care that they were burnt to cinders. Knox didn't care that he never talked to his brother or had a shitty relationship with his father. The only person he truly missed was his mother. He will admit that he felt slightly guilty toward Willow and his daughter Aspen, but he has his daughter to take care of right now.

Knox was scrambling to find nanny services for his daughter as he had to leave for work. It took him fifteen minutes but he managed to find an emergency services who promised to have a professional in his house within an hour. He checked the time and realized that it would be perfect. Minus the fact that he had to pay an outrageously high fee. Knox walked with his daughter to the kitchen. She

was crying for breakfast and so he sat her down in the high chair. He poured some plain Cheerios in front of her and put some milk in a sippy cup. His daughter was settled at the sight of food and so he quickly grabbed the schedule that he had printed out a month ago whenever Roxanne was supposed to watch their daughter. He sighed looked up at his daughter who squealed happily

“Da-da” Knox smiled and went over and gave his daughter a kiss.

“Hey beautiful.” He looked over the scheduled and realized that nothing had changed. The doorbell rang as he was putting more milk in her cup. Knox scooped up his daughter and went to the door. He opened it to reveal a women in her late twenties with a nice smile on her face.

“Aspen?” The woman asked looking at his daughter and reached out for his. His

daughter was pretty easy going and thankfully went to the woman.

“I’m Sasha.” The decently attractive woman introduced herself.

“Knox, follow me to the kitchen.” The three of them went into the kitchen and Knox laid out the ground rules. “Here is her schedule, all of the numbers are on the last page. If you need anything call me and I’ll help if I can. I normally get home by six. Her room is on the second floor, second room to the right. The rest of the rooms are off limits. The downstairs is free reign and baby proofed. Any questions?”

Knox asked the woman as he got his briefcase.

“No sir, the woman responded nuzzling his daughter. He tried not to worry about his daughter being in the care of a women he had never met. The nanny service he used

was recommended to him by his boss. It was his only option right now.

“All right, see you then,” Knox walked out to his car. His BMW. That was one of the first things he did was buy himself a Z3 model. He loved it. Knox quickly backed out of the driveway and headed to work

The whole drive to work he couldn't help but think of the conversation with Willow. She was right, he hadn't seen Aspen in months, minus the funeral. He sighed and realized that he was becoming even more of an ass. Not to mention an absent father in Aspen's life.

He called Aspen's phone, but she didn't answer. Knox let out a sigh, his daughter always answered his calls excited to talk to him. The last few times he tried contacting her, she didn't pick up. He knew their deteriorating relationship was his fault. Just like the fact that Aspen was raised in a broken home his fault. The same thing that

Lola was going to have live through. Knox quickly sent Aspen a text, but he didn't receive a response.

The only good thing in his life was the divorce. Roxanne wasn't fighting him on anything. He heard that the neighbor Roxanne was seeing was getting a divorce as well. It didn't matter to him, he just wanted his house and daughter. Did that make him a cold hearted bastard? Yes. Did he care?

No not really. Knox sometimes questioned if he would ever know what it would be like to love a person other than his children. At this point in his life he didn't think love was in the cards for him. Some people just don't have that. He knew his brother didn't get it either as Memphis never married another woman. He was definitely smarter than himself.

Knox arrived at work feeling stressed and hating the fact that he once again felt like his life was going down the tubes



Rowan pov

Life was good. He had an amazing wife. Four beautiful children. Last year he was promoted to junior partner and on his way to partner.

Rowan rolled over as soon as he heard Fiona starting to whimper. She still wasn't sleeping throughout the night yet.

Fiona was in the bassinet next to the bed so he got up and checked on his sweet little girl. Fiona was kicking her legs and eyes wide open.

"Hey princess, let's not wake mommy okay?" He asked as he picked her up.

"Mommy's already awake," he heard his wife's muffled voice coming from behind him.

"Sorry babe, I didn't mean to wake you," he responded as he sat back down with a

wiggling infant. Charlotte turned over and smiled at him,

“It’s okay, you know I’m a light sleeper.”

Rowan looked at his beautiful wife and once again thanked God that she came into his life. Charlotte came into his life when it was a mess and was a good friend. However, she taught him

what real love was and should always be. She helped his heart heal in so many ways. Lottie was his life as well as his children. They were his world

“Have you heard from your father? Or Willow?” Lottie asked and he sighed heavily

“No, I haven’t.” That was also a good part of his life now.

He had his best friend back. It took about a year of groveling. It was actually Charlotte who convinced Willow that he had changed for the good. It took time, but Willow it

seemed finally realized that life wasn't worth holding a grudge.

The two of them were truly like siblings now, and got together often. It had been awhile given that Fiona was still young and didn't do well on flights.

Rowan hated the first time he saw Willow in such a long time was due to her husband's passing. The last time he saw her was when she came up to see Fiona after she got her two month shots. Lottie was being careful about who was being around the baby and Willow didn't mind. She understood more than anyone what it was like living with hectic schedules.

Rowan watched his wife feed their daughter and couldn't help but feel so lucky that he managed to turn his life around. He knew it was all thanks to his wife, his child often, and his father. His father really stayed by both of his and Willow's side despite living a thousand miles apart.

Rowan thought that Willow would be the one that got away, but that was before he fell in love with Charlotte. The love he had for his wife was real and strong and true. She was everything. The love he had for Willow was that of a sister or friend. His heart ached for her as he couldn't imagine what it would be like to lose his Lottie.

Rowan checked his phone on the nightstand to check the time. He knew it was early, but he wasn't sure what time it was. The kids normally got up a little before seven. The time read six-thirty. Rowan was shocked by the missed calls from his father. He looked to Charlotte and saw that she was still feeding Fiona. He got out of bed and went into the bathroom to call his dad.

"Rowan there you are"" his father's voice came in loud and clear after a few rings.

"Yeah, what's going on?" Rowan asked nervously. The last call he got from his

father like this he was told Tate had passed away.

“I don’t want to worry you but-” his father trailed off.

“What is it dad?” He asked.

“I just got word that they are releasing your mother,” his father told him.

“What? Why? That bullshit! She was supposed to be in jail for another five years!” Rowan tried not to yell, but he let his father know he wasn’t happy.

“Yes son I know, I gave your letter to the judge personally.

It’s just that...” his father trailed off and Rowan felt his wife enter the room.

“It’s just the word from the warden is that your mother had cancer. Whether it’s true or not I don’t know. It apparently gained her enough sympathy to get her released.” His

father told him and honestly Rowan didn't believe his mother had cancer for a moment. She had to be lying to get her way. "Son? Are you okay?"

"Yeah," he responded in a whisper. "When is she being released?" He asked in a steadier voice when he felt his wife take his hand.

"A month."

[My Husband Cheated with My Bully \(Book 2\) Chapter 10](#)

Willow pov

Crying before even opening her eyes made her cry harder. It was Tate's birthday and Willow was having a rough time with it. It had been a six months since she buried her husband. There hasn't been a day that she hasn't thought about her husband and wanted him back. It was only last week that she managed to box up his clothes and put them in the attic. Willow seriously considered selling the house and moving away. Everywhere she walked she saw

memories of her and Tate. Him with their children. He was haunting her.

In the end after talking about it with her Uncle James she did the only thing she could. Willow decided to remodel the house.

Willow couldn't remove her children from the life they had and the only stability they had known their entire lives because she can't cope. Especially after the children were starting to show signs of improvement. Isiah was going to start the remodel in a few weeks.

That didn't help her with today's struggle though. She decided it would be best to call the kids off of school. The therapist said that the first holidays are always the hardest to get through. This was the first since his death and it was the hardest as it was his personal holiday. The Walker's always did birthdays big. Willow believed it was a person's own holiday that was made just for them.

Willow decided after much debate it would be best to treat it like any other birthday. As the kids grew they as a family preferred outings instead of presents or a party.

Willow thought it would be a good idea to do the same today.

She asked her kids what would you like to do for your fathers birthday? They decided that Tate would want to go to the zoo. God she hated the zoo, but she decided to put on a smile for her kids.

The kids were very much quiet this morning during breakfast. Willow still made her traditional celebration pancakes that she made for everyone's birthday. Willow watched the kids eat them with little enthusiasm. She couldn't even force herself to eat one herself. She just drank her coffee while she shoved the memories away.

"All right guys let's get headed out to the zoo before it gets too packed," she responded.



“All right,” the kids responded half heartedly.

“Aspen did you invite Zoe?” Willow asked her daughter before she went up the stairs to get changed.

“No, not this time,” Aspen responded and Willow found that odd. She didn’t know how to take that as Aspen had been begging her to let Zoe hang out for weeks. Willow quickly went upstairs to help Arianna to change into her clothes and brush her teeth. She helped Aiden do the same and then came back down the stairs.

“Okay everyone have their tablets and water bottles?”

Willow asked and she heard a chorus of ‘yes momma.’

“All right load up,” Willow said trying to sound cheerful even though she was dying inside

The drive to the zoo was short, but the pay, bathroom break, and getting everything situated took about an hour.

The kids mood was generally down and Willow did her best to cheer them up. Though it was clear that she was miserable and heartbroken as well. Tate loved the zoo and his laughter and fun facts about the animals made the whole family love it.

“All right where do we want to go first?” Willow asked the kids as she pulled out the map. Aspen was looking at her phone, and the other two were looking around the zoo.” Okay since no one wants to pick I will. How about my favorite the giraffe’s.”

“Mom!!” The kids all groan and Willow smiled finally got a reaction from her kids.

“Well you should have said something.”

“Daddy loves the monkeys though,” Ari said in a small voice.

“Don’t worry baby we will be getting to the monkey’s, I won’t forget.” Ari looked up at her and lifted her youngest daughter after she begged to be picked up. Ari who was such a daddy’s girl now often clung to her during outings without her father. It was murder on her body.

It took a bit, but the children finally started to cheer up after some expensive food, a trip to the gift shop, and Willow’s fun facts about animals.

Giraffe’s necks are too short to reach the ground.

Lemurs are a matriarchal society. (That one went over the kids heads)

Penguins poop every twenty minutes. (Lots of laughter)

It was worth it seeing the kids laugh at her facts that she spent all night looking up on the internet.

When the kids were done with the zoo the Aiden suggested to go somewhere to eat. Aspen wanted to go to their favorite place to eat as a family. Willow was hesitant but she agreed and it was a good decision. The four of them went to the old hole in the wall diner that her and Tate discovered on one of their date nights almost ten years ago. The two of them loved it so much they returned once a month afterwards.

They hadn't been back since the funeral. Willow was worried that going back for the first time would bring up a lot of questions or pitying comments. She was relieved to see Flo working that evening when they walked in. Flo had been working at that restaurant for the last five years and was a real no nonsense woman and she loved the kids. Flo made sure that Tate's name wasn't brought up and even kept some regulars away from their table. It was a nice evening and the only one who mentioned Tate was Aiden when he mentioned his favorite menu item.

The family left the restaurant after Willow left a hundred dollar bill on a forty dollar order. Flo was her saving grace this evening and was incredibly grateful for the woman.

The Walker family returned home content but with an air of grief surrounding them. When they arrived home Aspen wanted to have cake.

“Okay sweetheart, have we decided how to do the birthday wish?” Willow asked as she got out the candles in the junk drawer in her kitchen.

“I want to blow out the candles!” Arianna shouted.

“No fair! You always get to blow out dad’s candles!” Aiden yelled back upset.

“Guys! I think everyone can blow out the candles this year,” Willow responded as she put the candles in the cake she made. Willow started to light the candles and she realized that Aspen wasn’t there.

“Aspen?”

“Coming!” Her voice called from the den. Then there Aspen was holding a picture of Tate.

“Here, I thought this might help.” Willow quickly finished lighting the candles and started the birthday song.

“Happy birthday to you,” the kids started singing to their fathers picture and Willow had to fight like hell to keep the tears away. “Happy dear daddy! Happy birthday to you.”

“Make a wish.” Willow said out of habit.

“Daddy can’t make a wish mommy,” Arianna responded.

“Yes, I mean make a wish for daddy,” she replied and the kids seemed happy with the answer. The kids quickly blew out the candles, even Aspen. Willow had to turn away to keep the tears at bay.

“Mommy, I want cake!” Ari cried and Willow went to get the plates.

That evening after dinner her uncle came over to watch the kids and she drove to the cemetery. She had gotten word that her husband’s headstone had finally been delivered and installed. Willow wanted to see it by herself for the first time.

Willow got out of the van and her feet walked to where her husband lay, her heart beating wildly out of her chest. She stopped a few feet from where Tate lay. She could see the headstone, but it was faded away from her. Willow didn’t think that she could do this.

“You have to do this, the kids have been wanting to come and see him here.” Willow closed her eyes and took deep breaths.

1,2, 3, 4, 5. She counted in her head to keep her panic attack at bay. Willow went walking up to the marker. Then she finally came

upon the black granite headstone and she read the inscription.

Tate Walker

Born 1988- Died 2023

Husband. Father. Veteran. Protector.

He will be forever missed.

She couldn't believe it, his life had been reduced to a single inscription. Willow fell to her knees as she saw his picture staring back at her. She spent the extra money for the option that included the photo

“Why?!” The sobs just tore from her in waves. “Please just come back, I’ll do anything.” Willow fell ontop his headstone, not caring if her clothes were stained with dirt or grass. She didn’t understand why this was happening to her family. They followed all of the rules, were good people, went to church. Why did this happen to her husband??



“Please God, give him back to me. I can’t function without him. Our kids can’t function without him.”

Willow sat at her husband’s headstone for hours. Until the sun fell unto the horizon and the stars came out in the sky.

Tate loved the constellations. He tried to teach her even the basic ones, but she was lost. She always had fun teasing him about the stars.

She ignored her phone for the first hour, but when it started to ring, Willow knew it was her uncle. She needed to make sure the kids were okay.

“Willow tree are you okay?” Her uncle’s voice came from the phone. She tried to collect herself,

“No, I’m really not, but I’m here.” She responded and there was a pause at the end of the other line.

“While I’ve never lost a spouse as deeply as you loved Tate, I have lost some one I’ve loved deeply.” Willow knew he was talking about her biological father.

“My dad?”

“Your dad. I can tell you Willow the pain never really goes away, you just have to learn to live with the wounds that were left behind with his death.” Her uncles words pierce her so deep with the accuracy with how deeply she feels the loss of her husband like a wound.

“Do the wounds every heal?” She whimpered and her uncle sighed.

“Some wounds are so deep that they will always feel the pain, but yes they should heal over time. Scar over.”

“Can I live with a scar this deep?” Willow asked her uncle.

“Honey for the sake of your children you have to.”

“Are they okay?” Willow asked as she finally was brought out of her grief.

“They are wondering where you are, you never left them this long since...”

“I’m on my way home.”

Willow made it to her driveway when she received a call from an unknown number.

“Please not another condolence call,” Willow groaned as she picked it up. She was getting a lot of them still despite it been six months after Tate’s death. Johnson or Garcia who had her number would pass it along and it was getting to the point she would have to call them to say it was an issue

“Hello, who is this?” She asked.

“Is this Willow Walker?” A female’s voice rang on the other end.

“Who is this?” Willow was surprised as most of them were women.

“Willow I am the mother of the little boy who your husband died to save-” Willow didn’t want to hear any more. She hung up the phone and promptly blocked the number. She was furious and there was only one way that woman could have got her unlisted number.