

Three Years Forgotten, Why Go Crazy When I Say Goodbye?

Chapter 10

Jade Yates was a cutthroat attorney and had been Willow's absolute best friend for the better part of her twenty-five years on earth.

They had met in high school, navigated college together, and forged a seven-year sisterhood that had felt entirely unbreakable.

The turning point came three years ago when Willow announced her sudden engagement to Julian. Jade had been vehemently opposed to the union. She had warned Willow over and over that Julian was a calculated shark who didn't actually love her, predicting that the marriage would end in disaster.

But Willow had been deeply infatuated and entirely blind to the red flags. She foolishly believed that her unwavering love would be enough to thaw Julian's cold exterior over time. She thought she had decades to slowly win his heart.

Unable to stop the trainwreck and refusing to watch her best friend ruin her life, Jade had severed ties with her on the spot. They hadn't spoken a single word since.

Looking back with the brutal clarity of hindsight, Willow realized Jade had seen right through Julian's facade from day one.

If only Willow hadn't been so hopelessly naive.

A heavy, prolonged silence hung over the line. Worried the call had dropped, Willow whispered, "Jade? Are you still there?"

"I'm here," Jade finally replied. Her tone was still clipped, but the icy hostility had melted away. "Where are you right now?"

Glancing back at the wrought-iron gates of Emerald Heights, Willow gave her an intersection a few blocks away, desperate to keep her friend out of the Sinclair family's immediate crosshairs.

"Stay put. I'm on my way."

"You don't have to do that. I—"

"Stay put," Jade cut her off with fierce authority. "I'll be there in thirty minutes. Go find somewhere warm and wait for me."

"Okay," Willow sniffled, tears welling up again. Jade was incredibly blunt and refused to sugarcoat anything, but she possessed a fiercely loyal heart. She was the one person Willow could always count on to pull her out of the wreckage.

The biting New York winter air whipped through her coat, quickly numbing her fingers and toes.

She mapped a cheap coffee shop nearby, intending to buy a simple black coffee and wait inside. But just as she took a step, her phone vibrated violently. Julian's name flashed on the screen.

She swiped to answer. "You assaulted Toby and vandalized my house?" his lethally calm, impatient voice demanded.

She had barely been gone for ten minutes. He had dropped everything to go to war over his precious secret son.

"I did," Willow stated, refusing to offer a single excuse.

"It seems I've been far too lenient with you," Julian scoffed. "Did you actually stop to consider the consequences before throwing a tantrum?"

His chilling tone immediately triggered a spike of pure anxiety in her chest. For three years, whenever he used that voice, she would instantly grovel, accepting whatever degrading insults he hurled at her until his temper cooled.

It was a deeply ingrained trauma response, wired straight into her nervous system.

Fighting against her racing heart, she forced her voice to remain completely steady. "Julian, let's get something straight. That estate is legally our marital home. Toby is legally our adopted son. I was in my own house, smashing my own property, and disciplining my own child. Is there a problem?"

Dead, loaded silence crackled across the line.

Willow held her ground, letting the heavy quiet stretch out.

She knew exactly how nuclear those words were, and she had aimed them perfectly. If he wanted to weaponize this fake marriage, she would play the role of the legally entitled wife right back.

"Do you have any idea what you're saying?" Julian's voice dropped to a dangerous, vibrating low. "Who gave you the audacity to speak to me like that?"

Even through the phone, his seething, volatile rage was palpable.

She understood his shock. For years, she had been nothing but a submissive pawn—a loyal dog who never dared to bite the hand that starved her. Facing the teeth she was baring now must have been a very rude awakening.