

1 - Ms Williams' Court Case

Judge: "And during this period, you were both left unattended, why?"

Billy: "We were new to the school and I told one of the other kids on the bus to cover for us."

Judge: "'Cover for you' in what way?"

Billy: "I asked him to lie. I asked him to tell the teacher that we never came on the bus. The teacher believed him."

Standing in the courtroom, Billy was nervous. Sweaty palms and on the brink of collapsing from anxiety. He thought he'd done wrong but the judge was only trying to clarify how all of this had transpired.

He was a pretty average kid, Billy that is. 14, brown hair, brown eyes, pretty tall, a bit too thin and maybe slightly on the shy side much like the rest of his family. Generally good natured but as with all boys seemed to have a penchant for mischief and curiosity in conjunctions, not usually a good combination but one that all boys seem to have.

The judge continued. . .

Judge: "So let me see if what I have so far is correct."

Judge: "You went with your school on a trip to the mountains for a week. You told a classmate to tell your teacher - Ms Williams that you never made it on the bus so that you and your brother Marcus could have a trip of your own. Correct?"

Billy: "Yes, sir."

Judge: "But you were in-fact on the bus?"

Billy: "Yes, sir."

A short span of time passed, the judge furrowed his brow and continued.

Judge: "And to you Ms Williams, how did it come to be that you blindly accepted a child's answer on another child's whereabouts?"

Ms Williams sat on the defendants podium in awe of her own negligence and shame. She answered none but lowered her head and stared at the floor in the hopes that proceedings would continue.

The judge sat dormant, presumably thinking and perhaps seething. At one point it seemed as though he had more to say, until it was obvious he needed more time. Some moments passed and then seemingly out of nowhere, he spoke up.

Judge: "Mr and Mrs Rymer, It's clear to me that there is a gaping hole in the accountability of this case. The fact that two, or indeed any number of pupils

can venture off from a group and not have it so much as questioned by a member of staff acting in loco parentis is a disgrace.”

Mr and Mrs Rymer sat on the bench showing slight relief that their viewpoint was understood by the Supreme Courts. A bit of empathy goes a long way and in traumatic times like these even the slightest hint of understanding can put a lump in your throat.

Judge: “In ordinary circumstances a school showing this level of neglect might be lucky to receive a fine and suspension of the involved staff. However, the events that followed on from this are far from ordinary and certainly unjust.”

The room paused and sat painfully still as the judge came to a decision. Although the outcome was obvious (how many people really would dismiss unaccounted children as a “blip”?), there was still some apprehension noticed in the Rymer’s. They sat still but only to conform and not cause a ruckus. If it were up to them they’d be gently rocking and anxiously rubbing their hands as if that would somehow soothe their nerves.

Ms Williams shyly glanced at the judge from the corner of her eye apprehensive about what was about to come out of the judge’s mouth. The representatives of the school would have liked to have done the same but they carried an air of professionalism which perhaps weighed them down.

The judge looked up from his bench with a face that could win any poker game and delivered his verdict.

Judge: “To the school involved in this tragic story I order a sum of \$250000 to be paid to the Rymer’s immediately as compensation. Money cannot bring back a life but it can perhaps aid in reparations for Billy and the Parents. To lose a child is something no parent should bare witness to, especially over such a trivial mistake.

Ms Williams - You are the crux of the issue and your complete lack of common sense and care is maddening. Though I see the regret plastered on your face, it cannot undo what is done. I sentence you to 10 years in the state prison and upon release, you will be unable to exercise the right to teach in the United States. Do I make myself clear?”

Ms Williams looked to the judge, paused for a moment to gather her breath.

Ms Williams: “Yes your honour”.

The school representative followed after.

Representative: “Yes your honour”.

– TODO - Here detail Ms Williams being “taken away”. She’s sad and defeated but walking on her own etc. . .

The court finalised the case for that day and the courtroom was dismissed. The Rymer’s hastened their way out of the courtroom visibly worn from the proceedings, anxious, but with less of the world on their shoulders.

2 - The Rymer's (2 weeks later)

Mary: "NOOOOOO!! I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANY LONGER!!!"

Chris: "Mary my sweet, please. Bring yourself back down and try to relax"

Mary: "It's this house! We need to get out of this place!"

Chris: "And we will, in good time but until the decisions are finalised by the court I think it's a good idea to stay put. We don't want to add a house-move to the list of ever-growing stresses on this family."

Mary: "Oh Chris, please can we move? Move to somewhere far away where good things happen to good people? My mind can't keep defending itself against the memories of this house."

Chris: "Once *this* is a distant memory we can go wherever we want and do whatever we want. We'll get that compensation from the school within a fortnight and then we can live how we want. 3 more weeks until the final hearing and then we'll put this place up, pack our bags and drive. Drive as far as we can for as long as we can, maybe even as fast as we can. Somewhere far away where 'good things happen to good people'."

Mary: "It's all I want Chris. This house is filled with too many painful memories of him. I hope Billy is okay."

Chris: "He's surprised me Mary, out of all of us, he seems to be coping the best. We've raised a beautiful son."

Mary thought to herself "and lost one too".

Outwardly Mary smiled which seemed to fool not only Chris but also herself for a short while. The idea of moving elsewhere was Mary's silver bullet - The thing that would save her (their) sanity, fix all of her (their) problems and lead to a new start with no turmoil.

Chris was Mary's rock and had been wearing that stone-skin for approximately 3 months since the event transpired. He was an emotionally strong man, a little over 6'3" with a reserved yet good sense of dress and a steady gait that was unassuming.

By day Chris was a proofreader and fact-checker for (CITYNAME)'s academic journal. Hundreds of prospective scientists and engineers would submit articles to the journal and it was up to Chris to separate the good from the bad. If Chris was happy with it, you'd probably see it in the next issue and that was something Chris enjoyed. Not necessarily the power of approval and rejection of up and coming scholars, more so that quality would not slip so long as he had anything to do with it. After all, you've got to be pretty smart to be the moderator of smart people's smart findings.

Mary had worked in the same line of work for many years too. In fact, this is how the two met. Two unassuming people doing under valued work for a

modest wage. Mary had eventually decided to become self-employed doing similar work. She now works as a freelance proofreader, usually for university students working on PhDs or dissertations. If she struggled for work in the quiet seasons she would resign herself to spellchecking restaurant menus, signage, and various low-quality magazines. She had a keen eye for detail though was modest about her own skills and achievements through life which lended itself well to the shy character she possessed and perhaps was a gateway to some self-esteem issues she (and all the Rymeres) seemed to carry.

Billy: “Are you guys fighting again?”

Mary: “No honey, Mommy dropped something and wanted some help from Daddy.”

A lie that Billy could see straight through. Nonetheless he humoured them.

Billy: “Oh okay! Say... can I get the PS4 out of Marcus’ room?”

The mention of Marcus was a sore spot for Mary. She had accepted yes, that their 10 year old baby boy was dead but she didn’t care for the reminders.

This kind of question from Billy could go one of two ways:

1. She would flip her shit. Being a painfully introverted introvert has lead to pretty much 90% of her actual thoughts remaining in her head and never being released into the wild. There was nothing cathartic about Mary’s day-to-day conversations and so they’d tend to build up and suddenly, pop. She’d blow. A flurry of shouts, screams and tears would follow with poor old stone-skin to pick up the pieces.
2. She would contain her shit. Just as she so often does, she would say something to keep the people happy, resent them on the inside but say nothing of it to them. Generally this was preferable (though incredibly unhealthy) for her as it meant less drama and as we know, the Rymeres don’t care much for drama.

Mary: “Okay Billy just please be careful and return it when you’re done. Marcus’ room is still his and I’d like to keep it like that for now.”

(Number 2, phew!)

Billy hastily walked up the stairs, took a right and headed into his little brother’s room.

Being the younger brother, Marcus naturally got the smaller bedroom. Also being the younger, Marcus naturally got more stuff. His room was stuffed with 10 year old boy things. Old Pokemon cards going all the way back to the first generation (No shiny Charizard though), tacky educational posters involving space, animals and the ocean and of course, too many teddy bears.