



## Stories of the Hot Young Widows Club: June and the Dead Dog

By Cami Craig

### Hot Young Widow Club Meeting Minutes

#### **Attendees:**

President- Nora, Vice President- June, Secretary- Sugar, Treasurer- Terry, Outreach- Aylah, New Member- Nicky

#### **Opening (Led by Nora):**

Welcome to the 7th Hot Young Widows Club meet! The shittiest support group you never asked to be a part of. Today we will be introducing the roles of everyone and sharing our stories about our dead partners. As a reminder, if you know a widow; invite a widow. We can only support if there is someone to support.

#### **Business (Led by June):**

Taking meeting minutes is our gal, Sugar. Collecting funds to help with the weekly cookie supplies is Terry. Aylah is overseeing the search party for some sexy ass widows to be a part of the club! Oh and we are joined today by Nicky who we will hear from in a minute. For general ground rules, feel free to reference the handy dandy laminated sheet of paper on the snack table in the middle.

#### **New Members (Led by Nora):**

Thanks June! Welcome to new member Nicky. Please feel free to share.

“My name’s Nicky. My wife died in an accident about three years ago. I have never gone to a group like this or really talked about what happened. But, my daughter just turned 10, and she asked why I still carry Mama M in my bag. So, I decided to take up my neighbor, Sugar, on her offer to attend the Hot Young Widows Club. I don’t really know where to start?” I hesitantly questioned. Sugar was about to respond, but Nora chimed in before she could.

“Why don’t you tell us about your wife?” She inserted ever so confidently.

I started talking about what she looks like. “The large plastic baggie, with the purple seal of death, is holding the ashes of my wife. And the walls of the bag are wearing thin. Wrinkled by time, and

crushed by the heavier items in my purse that carelessly shuffle on it. Occasionally, I pick up our daughter Evie from piano lessons when Morgan's mother can't. Mostly, I pick up Evie when it's time to pay for the month. After paying for her daughter's funeral; the cherry finish coffin, the burial, the premium gravestone that rendered useless as I flippantly changed at the last minute, Morgan's mother's finances are all but depleted. On every 3rd Thursday of the month, I reach down in my purse scouring blindly for the checkbook that used to be Morgan's, to pay the little old asian lady that teaches Evie extremely basic chords, that are somehow worth \$75 a lesson.

Just in between the old tampon that fell out of pink plastic covering, and the lipstick that has melted on the book I've never even opened, lives Morgan. My hand grazes over the worn down plastic. Feeling what I tell myself is sand that Evie and I collected on our last visit to Florida to see Grandpa Joe. I remind myself that the car accident happened to *my* Morgan. Unfortunately (and somehow fortunately), it didn't happen to the man across the street from Sugar and I's Morgan, and that fact; although, sometimes, a moment of welcomed reality, was too shocking for me to feel in front of Mrs. Yu. Without tact, the somewhat shitty piano teacher comforted me after seeing the unwelcome flinch only a widow could evoke. She lightly slapped my plump cheeks and tells me that she understands, because her husband snoring in the recliner by the piano was as good as dead. It's been three years and Morgan still lives in my purse, as if it's her body now. So, that's why I'm here, I guess."

"Thank you for sharing Nicky!" Nora responded as everyone repeated "Thank you" in unison.

There was about 30 seconds of silence before Nora volunteered herself to go next. "June and I met when she commented on my instagram post announcing Sam's death. She thought that when I was referencing his brain being sick, I meant that he had brain cancer. I remember holding on to the brief wave of peace that hit me, as I considered letting her think that's what happened to him. What if this had

been my reality? I married my high-school sweetheart, and fucked him when we were sixteen and never stopped. I had a baby with him and watched him cry as he lost his first job. I held him as he took his last breath from the tumor that wasn't even there a month ago. Watched as the ball of death growing inside his head, shoved out all the best parts of his brain, eventually smearing the remnants against his skull. It hurts to admit that I prefer this version of my life. I prefer the version where I didn't kiss my seemingly healthy husband goodbye, as he walked out the door to go to work, but really drove 15 minutes down the road to hang himself from a tree with the shirt I got him for Easter.

She DM'd me about an hour after she commented on my 'dead husband' post to tell me about Aaron. They got married in Arizona 3 months after his diagnosis and immediately tried for a baby. She remembered how she sat in his hospice room 6 months after their wedding. She was telling him that he needed to die; that he needed to slip into the rainbow colored hospital light, that used to indicate that someone alive was in the room. But as it glared in her eye, like the headlights of a hearse coming back from an evening service that ran over time, she realized that the light would never be the same for her. As she left that night, the nurses cleaned up what was left of him, and had to get rid of the chair that she sat in, because she miscarried while holding Aaron's cold hand.

Unable to tell the difference between the pain of the most alive person she had ever met being dead, and the physical pain of losing the child (that ironically was supposed to live in Aaron's honor), she left every tangible part of him in that room. The nurses never said anything about the chair when she came back to sign his death certificate. She was thankful for that. June followed me because I was a co-worker of Aaron's best friend, and I sent them flowers when he died. I never knew her, but I knew that I had wished someone sent me flowers when Sam died. We met for breakfast three weeks later, and all the

weeks after that. I sobbed in the yellow lit Denny's to her and told her that I was jealous of her, and apologized for how that if that made her feel that her pain was less valid than mine.

She sobbed to me too because similarly, she was jealous of me. The heartache of knowing that Aaron so desperately wanted to beat this is what stings the first two hours after she wakes up each morning. She wished that as he took his last breath, that just a little bit he would've wanted the release. As the weeks turned into months, the table at Denny's grew larger, as we found new widows to sit with us. Eventually, we asked June's church to open up a space for us to have each Saturday night to meet all together."

The meeting concluded with Nora and June's joint story, and as I awkwardly wandered around the room, only kinda knowing Sugar, while everyone caught up with each other. Once again saving me from the depths of an awkward interaction, Nora invited me to a wine night at June's house. In every room, there was a minimum of 10 photos of her dog Steve hanging on the wall. On June's 23rd birthday Aaron gave her Steve, their only child together even though they wanted six. All while June attended to Steve's bad leg, Nora talked to me about what I wanted out of the club.

"I'm not sure." I said with more confidence than I usually have.

"I'm not sure what I want either." She responded without looking at me.

A year later from that oddly honest conversation the President of my support group had with me on my first night, Nora started showing up a little late to meetings. Her new boyfriend Cole, typically got off from work around 6pm and she tried to make sure that she was home to watch old episodes of Saturday Night Live. Unfortunately, that cut into some of the club time. It wasn't terribly noticeable, especially considering that June was spiraling and that was pretty freaking noticeable. Occasionally, she would show up without pants. Literally, walk into the church that *only she actually attended*, and just be

wearing an oversized shirt and underwear. Sitting on the leather foot rest that was up against the wall, gliding her feet up and down the emerald carpet, as she watched the color become one shade lighter and one shade darker. It was strange because Nora was technically there, but she didn't see the pubic hair that grew just long enough to pop outside her underwear every time she would swing her knees open like a child. We would ask about her dog Steve, then move on after she cried for a few minutes about him.

### **Hot Young Widow Club Meeting Minutes**

#### **Attendees:**

President- Nicky, Vice President- Absent, Secretary- Sugar, Treasurer- Terry, Outreach- Aylah, Member- Taylor.

#### **Opening (Led by Nicky):**

Welcome guys! Tonight will be short. We will just be going around and updating on anything major.

#### **Business (Led by Nicky):**

Nothing new.

#### **Group Share Order:**

Sugar, Terry..

Half way through the meeting, soaked from the rainfall, shaking from her lack of pants, bursts in June; a lifeless Steve, dead in her arms. The stench of a decomposing dog and wet dog fighting each other for dominance in the room. It was hard to make out if she was sobbing or screaming over the thunder, while the rain made her mascara run all down her cheeks to the top of her collar bone. First day as President, standing there just as helpful as Mrs. Yu after Morgan's death. Nora would know what to do, I thought to myself. But, as June plopped the soaking wet dead dog on the green carpet in the middle of the room, and kept calling him Aaron, I knew that I was wrong.

