# Facing Bullies

**Rating:** General Audiences  
**Archive Warning:** No Archive Warnings Apply  
**Category:** F/M  
**Fandom:** Marvel Cinematic Universe, Iron Man (Movies)  
**Relationship:** Tony Stark/Pepper Potts  
**Character:** Pepper Potts, Tony Stark  
**Additional Tags:** Original Characters - Freeform, High School Reunion, Bully, Bullies, Facing Bullies, Pepperony - Freeform, Iron Man - Freeform, Married Life, One Shot, One Shot Collection, Protective Tony Stark, Strong Pepper Potts  
**Series:** Part 7 of One Shots: A Pepperony Collection  
**Stats:** Published: 2018-08-27 Words: 4561

## Facing Bullies

by JustAnotherFan05

### Summary

When Pepper Potts (Stark) gets an invitation to attend her high school reunion, she ends up facing some of her old high school bullies. And even though things got a little tense, in the end, she realizes that facing her bullies was the best closure she could ever ask for.

### Notes

Hey guys!

So, this one was kind of tough for me to write because I didn't want to make either Pepper or Tony seem too weak when defending themselves, but I also didn't want them to look like jerks the whole time. Plus, it was weird trying to write something a bully would say/do without making them seem like overreactive a**holes, you know? (I had to delete a lot of dialogue that made them too harsh.)

BUT, I did it and I think it turned out well. If anything, I hope to send the message that if you're being bullied, persevere onwards because like Pepper Potts, you CAN and WILL find success if you study hard and work harder to earn what you want.

Anyway, thank you all for the support and enjoy the story!

P.S. I finished writing this at 5am. Yeah, I stayed up for five hours to write this... So, apologies in advance if there are any story errors...
The sun shone down brightly on the Stark Industries building, reigning in the beginning of another beautiful Monday morning. The entire city of Los Angeles was already awake, sliding right back into their normal weekly routines.

Virginia Pepper Stark was sitting at her desk in her executive office, powering on her desktop computer and logging in to her emails as she had for the past decade of being the CEO of an international conglomerate super company.

As she scanned through her inbox, her eyes found an email with the title line ‘Los Angeles High School Class of 1990 30th Reunion’, along with a message from the class reunion committee.

‘Dear LAHS Alumni, You’re invited to celebrate the 30th Year Reunion of the entire graduating Class of 1990 at the Main Event Center on the LAHS campus in two weeks! Please RSVP as soon as possible so we know how many guests will be attending. Thank you and we hope to see you there! Go Bearcats!’

Pepper sighed softly, leaning back into her office chair, staring blankly at the message. Her high school experience wasn’t the best, but it certainly wasn’t the worst either. Without all the bullies who teased her because of her strawberry blonde hair, her pale skin, and all her freckles, she wouldn’t have had the determination to prove them all wrong by excelling in her studies. And now, her studies have taken her to the life she had always dreamed of, and she was proud.

For a fleeting moment, Pepper thought it would be fun to go to the reunion, just so she could show off all her accomplishments along with her new, lavish lifestyle. But she was never one to boast or show off, so her excitement for attending the reunion quickly disappeared and was replaced with the ‘ever businesswoman’ thought that she simply didn’t have the time to go.

She was about to respond to the invitation with a ‘regrettably cannot attend’ when all of a sudden, her office door swung open with such enthusiasm, she knew there could only be one person on the other side.

“Hey honey!” Tony called out excitedly, walking into her office with the largest smile Pepper had ever seen on his face for a Monday morning. “Whatcha doing?”

“Just going through some emails,” Pepper replied, watching as Tony waltzed up to her desk. “What’s got you in such a good mood? Did the new coffee machine come in yet?”

“No,” Tony shrugged. “But, today is the day I pitch the new car line to the board of directors, so I’m excited!”

Pepper thought back to all the late night conversations they had about Tony starting a new Stark Industries car line, exclusively focusing on luxury sport cars. “Right, that’s today. I still don’t understand why you have to pitch your idea to the board… It is your name on the side of the building, isn’t it?”

“I know, but it’s fun to mess around with all those old guys every once in a while, you know, give them something to keep their hearts strong,” Tony smirked playfully, sliding around Pepper’s desk to stand beside her. “And by the way, it’s our name on the side of the building.”
“I know, I’m still getting used to it,” Pepper smiled up at Tony, her new husband after they got married a little over six months ago.

Tony smiled back, looking over Pepper’s shoulder to her computer to see what she was working on. “Oh, a high school reunion! That sounds like fun!” he said, noticing the invitation open on her screen.

“Yeah, but I’m not going,” Pepper told him, returning her attention to the invitation and starting to type out a reply message saying she won’t be attending.

“What? Why not? High school reunions are great! You get to see all your old friends again,” Tony reminded her, frowning slightly as he watched her type.

“Tony, I don’t have any time to go,” Pepper paused momentarily to explain. “It’s in two weeks, and you know what else is that weekend?”

Tony looked flustered, unable to remember anything they needed to do that specific weekend. When he couldn’t remember, he tried to gauge Pepper’s expression to best determine how prepared he needed to be for whatever wrath awaited him. “Saturday?”

Pepper sighed loudly, shaking her head and mentally face palming, though Tony could see her hand slapping against her forehead in his own mind. “The military benefit, remember? The company is being honored after we developed the newest limb prosthetic to help the injured veterans.”

“Right! I remember, of course,” Tony scoffed, but it was a total ‘yeah, I really didn’t remember that’ kind of scoff. “Well, why can’t we swing by your high school reunion for a couple hours then hop on over to the benefit for the rest of the night?”

“Because, Tony, knowing you, you’ll either be complaining like a child because you’re bored or you’ll be causing too much trouble for me to handle in one night,” Pepper eyed him obviously.

Tony had nothing to say to that because it was true. Whenever Pepper dragged him along to some fancy event, he couldn’t last a single hour before he started becoming admittedly childish.

“Alright, what if I pinky promise not to complain about my impending boredom until… 10 o’clock and I won’t go around embarrassing you unless otherwise initiated,” Tony offered, giving Pepper a hopeful smile.

Pepper sat there and stared at Tony for a long minute, considering his proposal. It wasn’t until he smiled widely again and gave her the look of complete reassurance did she agree. “Fine, but you’re limited to one drink per event and if you even think about pulling a move in public, I will not hesitate to slap you Mr. Stark,” she warned.

“Done deal,” Tony held out his hand to shake. “Mrs. Stark.”

Pepper shook her hand with a soft chuckle and the playful shake of her head before she turned around and changed her reply message with an RSVP for two. Secretly, she was glad Tony had convinced her to go, because her fleeting thoughts from before were slowly returning, and now, she was going with the Tony Stark, her husband, by her side.

* 

Two weeks later and both Starks were in their bedroom getting dressed for the double events of the night.
Pepper wore a beautiful long, flowing silk red dress than ran all the way down to her ankles with a pair of sparkling golden stiletto heels. (Yes, red and gold, as in Iron Man colors… To Tony’s subtle requests.) She wore a matching set of diamond earrings along with her diamond necklace and her diamond bracelet, but nothing compared to the stunning diamond ring on her finger. Her hair was curled, falling perfectly behind her shoulders, and she had just enough makeup on to accentuate her jaw dropping beauty.

Tony wore a handsome jet black tuxedo complete with a matching vest and cummerbund (the sash worn around the waist), as per Pepper’s full on request, along with a dark red bow tie to match the color of Pepper’s dress. He wore an expensive golden Rolex watch, but the shiny metal ring on his finger was the most important piece to his outfit. His hair was done up in his usual ‘Tony Stark hairdo’ and his goatee was trimmed perfectly, making him easily recognizable in any sized crowd.

Finally, after a combined four hours to get dressed and ready, the power couple of the century made their way to Tony’s newest Audi R8 and drove down to Los Angeles for Pepper’s high school reunion.

“I think I should warn you now,” Pepper said softly as they drove down the highway. “I didn’t have many friends in high school… I was never really a popular kid.”

“I remember you telling me about your bullies,” Tony told her fondly. “But you don’t have to worry about them anymore, Pep. Look at you, you’re living the life they said you’d never get.”

“I know, and I’m grateful for my past because I know it’s shaped my present,” Pepper agreed. “I just don’t know how they’ll react when they see us now.”

“Do you want me to hang back for a while, so they’re not all over you because of… well, me?” Tony asked her, both of them knowing how fast Tony’s presence could draw a crowd.

Pepper looked over at Tony quickly, holding his hand over the center console. “Maybe for a little bit, you know, just until we get a good feel of the place.”

“Alright, just let me know if you need me, okay? You know I’ll always be there for you,” Tony reminded her, looking back at her for a split second before returning his focus on the road.

“I will,” Pepper smiled at him. “Thank you, Tony,” she said, noticing the old high school building coming into view. She took a long, deep breath, squeezing Tony’s hand in hers.

Tony squeezed her hand back, parking the car and looking at her again. “It’ll be alright, I promise.”

Pepper nodded at him and with a small surge of confidence, they exited the car and headed toward the building. As they walked the halls of Pepper’s old school together, she briefly showed him around, until they reached the doors for the main event center.

“Why don’t you go in first, and I’ll follow you in after a few minutes once I get us some drinks?” Tony suggested, earning a nod from Pepper. “Vodka martini, extra dry, extra olives, right?”

“You know me so well,” Pepper smiled at him, grateful to have him there with her.

“I know, it’s almost like we’re… married,” Tony smirked, making Pepper chuckle softly.

“You’re such a dork,” Pepper swatted at his chest playfully, causing Tony to smile wider.

“And you love me for it,” Tony reminded her happily. “I’ll see ya in there, honey,” he finished, leaning in to kiss his wife softly on her lips. They lingered for a little bit before Pepper pulled away.
and smiled at Tony, turning around to walk through the double doors into the event center.

Pepper walked into the large ballroom, looking around at the people and taking in the atmosphere. There were banners on every wall with the same phrase ‘Los Angeles High School Class of 1990 30th Reunion’ repeated on all of them. There were balloons and streamers posing as decorations and there was music playing in the background. In the center of the room, there was a decent sized dance floor that had obviously been laid there temporarily with sound system wires all over the place. Surrounding the dancefloor, there was twenty large round wooden tables covered in a white tablecloth with eight seats surrounding each one, and a full bar to the side of the room with two bartenders manning their stations. All in all, it didn’t look horrible, but Stark Industries events looked a lot better than this.

Pepper noticed there were quite a few people there already, most of them standing around the tables with a drink in their hands, talking in groups. She didn’t immediately recognize anyone, but apparently, someone else recognized her as a tall, blonde haired lady approached her.

“Virginia?” the blonde asked, unsure if the woman standing in front of her was one of her old friends. “It’s me, Melissa!”

“Oh my God, Lisa!” Pepper smiled in excitement, quickly recognizing one of her best (and only) friends from high school. “It’s been so long! How have you been?”

“I’ve been good! You know, just living life one day at a time,” Lisa smiled. “How about you? How have you been?”

“I’ve been great, thank you. It’s certainly been an eventful few decades but, as you said, we’re just taking it one day at a time,” Pepper said, making both of them laugh a little.

Lisa took a step back to look over Pepper’s outfit. “You look amazing, by the way! Are those real diamonds?” she asked, admiring Pepper’s necklace and earrings.

Pepper blushed slightly. “Yes, they are. My husband bought them for me,” she smiled, showing Lisa the natural sparkle that twinkled off the plethora of diamonds she was wearing.

“Wow, he must be super rich!” Lisa exclaimed playfully, although she did feel a little jealous.

Pepper laughed a little again, nodding her head in agreement. “I can’t say he isn’t rich, but we certainly enjoy the finer pleasures in life.”

“That’s exactly what super rich people say,” Lisa joked with her friend, getting yet another laugh out of Pepper.

Meanwhile, Tony entered the room as discreetly as possible, sticking to the outer perimeter to draw as little attention as possible. Eventually, he found his way to the bar without much trouble.

“Bartender,” Tony called, getting the other man’s attention. “One scotch on the rocks and one vodka martini, extra dry with extra olives,” he ordered, pulling out his wallet and placing a hundred dollar bill into the tip jar.

“Coming right up,” the bartender said quickly, noticing the large tip and getting to work on the drinks in a hurry to please his generous customer.

Tony leaned back against the bar counter, looking around the room to see if he could spot Pepper. It wasn’t too hard to find her, seeing as she was the most gorgeous woman in the room. He noticed her talking to a tall, blonde woman, watching as they laughed together, seemingly having a good time.
So, he hung back for a little longer, giving Pepper some space to herself.

“Here you go, Sir,” the bartender said, sliding both drinks onto the counter beside Tony.

“Thank you,” Tony nodded to the man, earning a soft nod before the bartender walked away to help another guest. Tony picked up his drink and took a small sip, taking his time to savor his one alcohol beverage permitted for the first half of the night.

Pepper and Lisa were making small conversation when a group of three women (let’s call them Becky, Vicky, and Tracy) walked up to them, all of whom had their arms crossed over their chests and evil smirks on their faces, the true look of real bullies.

“Virginia,” Becky spit out Pepper’s name like venom. “Long time no see. How have you been?”

For a moment, Pepper paused time to allow herself a quick, internal pep talk (no pun intended). ‘I don’t need to be afraid of them anymore. This isn’t high school, this is real life, and as of now, I’m sitting on top of the world,’ she reassured herself. ‘It’s time to put the nice girl aside and show off for once, Pepper. Like Tony says, ‘All work and no play means no fun all day.’ I can do this,’ and then, she was back in reality.

“I’ve been well, how about yourself?” Pepper started, keeping up formalities for the time being.

Becky looked over Pepper, raising an eyebrow at her. “Not as well as you, I see. It looks like you’re earning a hefty paycheck, aren’t you?”

It was meant to be an insult, but Pepper didn’t hear that.

“I do, actually,” Pepper agreed. “As the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, I’d say I do pretty well for myself. How about you, hmm? How’s the catering company?”

Becky clearly looked taken aback at the realization that Pepper ran such a successful company, as did Vicky and Tracy. “It’s going great! We just got a new deal to cater the children’s science fair in Los Angeles for an entire week. It’s a million dollar deal,” Becky boasted.

“Oh, is that the one at the convention center?” Pepper asked her, and when Becky nodded in confirmation, Pepper smiled. “That’s right. Our company is one of the major sponsors for that event. We practically run funding for it every year.”

“Really? What company do you work for again?” Becky asked, her expression an even mixture between hatred and jealousy.

“I’m the CEO of Stark Industries,” Pepper replied simply, as if were no big deal at all. Pft.

Becky’s draw dropped a little (to her dismay) once she realized that the ‘Pepper Potts’ all over the news was actually ‘Virginia Potts’.

“Stark Industries? Isn’t that the company that made all those weapons which killed American troops?” Tracy stepped in, sounding just as judgmental as Becky did before.

“Is it,” Pepper admitted. “But that was when the company was under the leadership of a black market arms dealer, unknowingly to Tony, of course.”

“Sure, but when Tony Stark was found in the desert, he came back to change the focus of the company which affectively dropped your company’s stocks so low, it hurt the world economy,” Tracy continued to spit out her facts.
“I think you misunderstood,” Pepper shook her head. “Sure, Stark Industries went down in stock for two days, but as soon as our company shifted into clean energy development, our stocks went higher than they ever were when we were making weapons. In fact, our stocks are so high right now, we’re actually being credited for boosting the world economy,” she explained.

“Why are you defending Stark? Isn’t he out of the picture now that you’re the CEO?” Vicky asked, being biased to defending her own friends against Pepper’s more logical fact fire.

Pepper seemed genuinely confused for a moment. “No, he isn’t out of the picture at all. I don’t see why you would think that. After all, it’s still his company.”

“Yeah, but you’re in charge now,” Vicky reiterated. “I’m sure he’s just using you to do all the hard work so he can simply collect his own big, fat paycheck at the end of the day. A true case of gender discrimination.”

The word ‘discrimination’ within their growing argument was the point of reaction from their fellow classmates, causing a huge scene as everyone started to crowd around them curiously.

From the bar, Tony could see the argument escalating rather quickly, so he left their drinks behind and started to make his way towards Pepper.

“There’s no gender discrimination at all,” Pepper argued. “Tony and I collect almost equal paychecks, albeit his is a little bigger than mine, but that’s because, as I said earlier, it’s still his company. It’s the basic rules of business financials, not that you would know…”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Vicky scoffed at Pepper, with Becky and Tracy right back at her side with even angrier looks than before.

“It means, I run a huge successful company and you’re all just jealous because I’m finally better than you!” Pepper exclaimed, somehow feeling a lot better now that that was off her chest.

“Better than us?” Becky huffed loudly. “The only thing that would make you ‘better than us’ is if you brought Tony Stark along as your date, just to prove how much ‘better than us’ you are.”

And as if on cue, Tony pushed through the crowd and finally arrived by Pepper’s side, standing tall and proud (and kind of intimidating, being Iron Man and all). “Honey, are these people bothering you?” he asked, wrapping his arm around Pepper’s waist protectively and holding her close to him as he eyed angrily at all three ladies in front of them.

Pepper smirked so proudly, it hurt her cheeks, as she watched Becky, Vicky, Tracy, Lisa, and all their former classmates’ jaws completely drop. “Ladies, I’d like you to meet my husband, Tony Stark. Tony, meet Vicky, Tracy, and Becky, my…”

“Bullies,” Tony finished for Pepper before she had the chance to give them any nicer of a name. “I’d say it was a pleasure to meet you, but I don’t enjoy meeting people who hurt the one’s I love, especially Pepper, whether it was thirty years ago or thirty seconds ago.”

Pepper wrapped her arm around Tony as he pulled her closer to his side, feeling rather protective and kind of… possessive of his wife. Pepper didn’t mind at all. She actually quite enjoyed it.

“That’s a rather strong assumption coming from the man who hurt millions of people without a second thought,” Vicky practically spat at Tony, using her words as ammunition to her spit fire.

“Good one,” Tony nodded calmly, shaking off the insult easily as he had for his entire life. “I wouldn’t be one too quick to judge though. Without me, you’d all probably be dead.”
“Why? Because aliens fell from the sky in New York? News flash, buddy, that’s on the other side of the country,” Vicky continued, feeling smart but her arguments were quite… dumb.

“I have a news flash for you too, are you ready? Alien spaceships can fly. I know, it seems pretty crazy, but it wouldn’t take much effort for them to fly over and drop a shit on your front lawn if they succeeded in their attack,” Tony told her sarcastically.

“Oh okay, big man in a suit of armor saves the world yet again,” Vicky mocked. “I don’t see any signs saying this was a ‘Praise Tony Stark’ party, did you?”

“Yeah, why did you come here if you were just going to show off?” Becky asked, returning to the argument with her firing fumes of jealousy steaming off her.

“We didn’t,” Pepper said immediately. “And trust me, we don’t need to come to some high school reunion to show off. But I have to admit, it does feel kind of nice to be here to show you that even after years of bullying me, I survived. Not only that, but I prospered.”

“Congratulations, do you want an award or something?” Tracy clapped sarcastically. “Everyone, give it up for Potts, the one who showed us all how to sleep with your boss until you get to the top!”

Oh, that was the final straw for Tony, and he was about the bring the house down with all his pent up rage after listening to everything these people had to say against his Pepper. But he didn’t react nearly as fast as Pepper herself, who lifted her hand and slapped Tracy across the face so fast, everyone almost missed it.

Tracy gasped loudly, moving her hand to rub her cheek as her jaw dropped wide and her eyes grew huge. “You slapped me.”

“You’re lucky that’s all I did,” Pepper warned her angrily. “Don’t you ever say that I only got where I am today because I slept with my boss ever again. I got where I am today because I worked hard and I earned my position on the top.”

Everyone in the room watched with wide eyes as Pepper spoke, all slightly more intimidated of her now as they finally understood Pepper’s new life success. They weren’t teens anymore…

“Everything I have today, I have despite you three,” Pepper continued at her old bullies. “And frankly, I don’t care what you have to say about me anymore because I’m perfectly happy without any of you in my life,” she added confidently.

Pepper turned to her side, seeing Tony standing there, still looking tensely at the three bullies. She knew he wanted nothing more than to return to favor they shed upon her during high school, bringing down any and all kinds of hell fire to avenge his wife. But she wouldn’t let him get in trouble, not for them. They weren’t worth it anymore. Pepper had moved on, and after tonight, she had all the closure she needed to never have to think about her old bullies again.

“It’s okay, Tony,” Pepper whispered to him, gaining his attention. “I’m okay.”

Tony visibly calmed down beside Pepper, his expression relaxing and his figure loosening. Pepper took his hand in her own, squeezing it tightly, giving him all the reassurance he needed.

“Now, if you’ll excuse us, we have a charity ball to attend and we’re going to be late,” Pepper said calmly, turning to face Lisa. “It was great seeing you again. We should get together sometime, away from all this.”

Lisa smiled at her friend, nodding in agreement. The two shared a quick hug before Pepper took
Tony’s hand again. She was about to lead Tony outside when he paused and turned to face the crowd.

“Yeah,” Tony nodded to himself as Pepper turned around to watch him. “I definitely picked the best woman here,” he smiled, stepping up to Pepper and kissing her softly in front of everyone, wrapping his arm around her waist as they pulled away and walking with her back to the car.

They say, when one door closes, another one opens. Well, Pepper finally closed the door on her bullies, and the world awaited them with a bright future ahead.

*

Later that night at the military benefit, Tony and Pepper shared two drinks to make up for their lost beverages at the reunion. After all the formalities and speeches, the night died down until it was just Pepper and Tony in the middle of the dancefloor with a slow song playing behind them.

“I’m sorry about all that at the reunion,” Pepper started softly, her arms around Tony’s neck as they slow danced together.

“You don’t have to be sorry about anything,” Tony assured her, his arms around Pepper’s waist as they swayed from side to side. “I’m sorry I didn’t do more to stick up for you…”

“No, it was good you didn’t,” Pepper told him quickly. “It was good I stood up to them on my own. It felt better that way.”

“Did you get the show you were looking for?” Tony asked her quietly, looking into her eyes lovingly.

Pepper shook her head. “I didn’t want to cause such a scene, but they weren’t bullying me about my looks anymore. They were bullying our company, and you. And you know how I am about protecting our company and you.”

Tony chuckled softly. “I know, I taught you well,” he joked, knowing full well that if he considered himself protective over Pepper, then Pepper was considered super-duper protective over Tony.

“I’m glad we went, though,” Pepper admitted. “I haven’t seen Lisa in ages! It was nice to reconnect with her, for however brief it was.”

“You can always invite her over and hang out,” Tony suggested, understanding how the bullies of the night kind of ruined… the night.

“Maybe I will, but I think a simple coffee meeting will suffice for now,” Pepper said, not really trusting many people with the exact location of their home, even old time best friends.

“Whatever makes you happy, honey,” Tony smiled at her, pulling her a little closer to him.

“You make me happy, no matter what anyone else says or thinks, you will always make me happy,” Pepper reminded Tony with a smile.

Tony leaned in and kissed Pepper again, their eyes closed as they relished in the moment. After a long minute, they pulled away, staring at each other’s eyes.

“Does that mean I’m your happily ever after?” Tony asked her playfully, but Pepper took the question genuinely.
“Yes, this right now? Our lives? Together? This is my happily ever after,” Pepper agreed.

“I’m glad, because you’re my happily ever after too,” Tony told her sincerely.

And like all fairytales go, Pepper and Tony lived happily ever after.

The End.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!