

Will: The Groom

In the wake of the wedding festivities, Will, known to many as "The Groom," retreats to the bathroom of the Folly, feeling the weight of the day's events settle on him. The remnants of cake are smeared across his face, clinging to his skin in places he hadn't even realized, reminding him of how quickly the joyful celebration turned chaotic. As he faces the mirror, the image of himself, covered in the symbols of what should have been a joyous occasion, feels like a cruel joke. The journey back to some semblance of normalcy, with a fierce wind fighting against him, offers a brief escape—a moment of peace where he can collect his thoughts before rejoining the group. Yet even in this fleeting moment of respite, the events of the evening continue to press on him, a reminder of how his carefully planned day has gone horribly awry.

The cake-feeding ceremony, once a symbol of marital unity, had spiraled into a spectacle, one that embarrassed him and left him questioning his every move. Worst of all was the undeniable presence of his father, whose gaze from across the room seemed to pierce through him with a silent disapproval. His father's expression—a blend of grim satisfaction and barely concealed judgment—mirrored all the past disappointments Will had faced: the athletic failures, the academic struggles, the ever-present feeling that he had never quite measured up. It wasn't just the cake incident that left him unsettled; it was the history behind his father's eyes, those eyes that always seemed to silently echo the refrain of "I told you so." The sting of paternal disapproval was a familiar one, but that didn't make it any easier to bear.

But the disquiet isn't solely rooted in his father's judgment. Will can't shake the unease that creeps in as he thinks about Jules's reaction to the cake disaster. She had been angry, yes, but there was something else in her eyes, something more unsettling than the simple disruption of their wedding. Had she suspected something deeper, something he hadn't even fully confronted within himself? The fear that Jules might

have uncovered a hidden truth that he wasn't prepared to face sends a chill through him. In his mind, he clings to the hope that it's all just a misunderstanding, that with a few words of reassurance, everything could be smoothed over and returned to normal.

As the weight of the day's events sinks deeper into his consciousness, Will reflects on the fragile nature of the joy he had hoped to build. The realization comes slowly, like a wave breaking just below the surface, that the fragile happiness of their wedding might already be slipping away. He had worked so hard to craft the perfect celebration, yet it felt as though the very foundation of their new beginning was already starting to crumble. Will knows there is an urgency to return to the unfolding chaos, to confront the storm that looms over them, but for a moment, he is frozen, unsure of where to begin. The tapestry of their celebration, once so carefully woven, is starting to unravel, and he doesn't know which thread to pull first to attempt to repair what is quickly falling apart.

In this chapter, Will is portrayed as a man caught in a tangled web of expectations, both the ones he has imposed on himself and those thrust upon him by others, especially his father. His reflection on the events of the day exposes a man struggling with his identity, his marriage, and his role within a family that has always expected more of him. As he stands at the precipice of what should have been the happiest day of his life, the weight of his past and the unknowns of his future create an emotional tug-of-war. Will is left to navigate the complexity of marriage, personal aspirations, and the crushing weight of unmet expectations, all while trying to hold together the remnants of a celebration that now seems far beyond his control.