

Several hours later: Olivia: The Bridesmaid

The marquee, once a place of celebration and warmth, now feels like a hollow shell, filled with people left stunned by the shocking revelation. The Bridesmaid stands among them, her face pale, processing the weight of what has just unfolded. The Irish police have spoken, their voices cold and unwavering, delivering the grim details of their discovery and the arrest that followed. The weight of their words lingers in the air, wrapping the gathered crowd in a shroud of confusion, fear, and hushed speculation. The only sound that persists is the faint rustling of foil blankets as people shift in their seats, a subtle but persistent reminder that, despite the stillness, life continues to move forward.

Olivia sits among them, but she feels detached, as if watching everything unfold from behind an invisible barrier. Her mind is a whirlwind of conflicting emotions—shock, disbelief, something that resembles relief but is quickly chased away by guilt. For months, her thoughts had been consumed by him, tangled in an obsession that she never fully understood, but now, with the news of his death, the weight of those thoughts takes on a new, unsettling form.

She struggles to process it, to align the cold finality of his absence with the person he had been just hours before. The memory of their last encounter replays in her mind, growing heavier with each pass, tainted by something she cannot ignore. The cake-cutting ceremony with Jules had been an ordinary moment, one that should have faded into the background of the night, but instead, it lingers with eerie significance.

A single, fleeting thought had crossed her mind during that moment—an impulse, a brief imagining of something violent. It had come and gone in an instant, dismissed as

quickly as it arrived, but now it feels like an indictment, a damning piece of evidence buried within her own conscience. Did that thought matter? Did it mean something? Could something so fleeting hold any real significance in the wake of what had happened?

The possibility that thoughts could have power beyond the mind unsettles her, making her question the thin, fragile line between impulse and reality. She had never considered herself capable of real harm, yet the thought had been there, however brief, however meaningless. And now, as she sits in the suffocating silence of the marquee, she cannot help but wonder—does thinking about something make it real? Does it plant a seed, an idea, that might someday manifest?

She steals a glance at the people around her, afraid to meet their eyes, afraid that they might see the doubt and fear creeping into her expression. The guilt she feels is irrational, but that does not make it any less suffocating. It clings to her, making her feel as though she has crossed a threshold she never meant to approach, as though she is complicit in a crime she never committed.

Her thoughts drift to Charlie, to their last conversation before the tragedy unfolded. It had been a simple exchange, nothing remarkable, but now it feels laced with an unease she can't place. She wonders if, deep down, she had already sensed something was wrong, if the universe had tried to warn her in ways she had ignored.

Doubt tightens its grip, forcing her to confront a truth she does not want to face—that darkness does not always exist in the outside world but sometimes lingers within, quiet and unnoticed. It is an uncomfortable realization, one that makes her feel unsteady, as though she is teetering on the edge of something she does not yet understand. She tries to push the thought away, to remind herself that a passing idea means nothing, that everyone has fleeting moments of darkness, but the weight of it remains, heavy and unrelenting.

The marquee, once so full of life, now feels like a waiting room for something inevitable, something unseen yet undeniably present. The whispered conversations

around her are subdued, punctuated by the occasional glance toward the entrance, as though expecting another announcement, another revelation. Olivia presses her hands together to stop them from trembling, grounding herself in the sensation of her fingers against her palms, in the physical proof that she is still here, still real, still separate from the darkness she fears might exist within her.

As the minutes pass, the weight in her chest does not lessen. Instead, it settles deeper, embedding itself into her thoughts, shaping the way she sees the events of the night. She knows the truth—that she did nothing wrong, that thoughts are not actions, that fear is not guilt—but the uncertainty remains, whispering questions she cannot yet answer.

Even as the marquee remains filled with people, Olivia has never felt more alone. The island, the tragedy, the quiet terror in her own mind—they are all wrapped around her, binding her to a moment that she cannot yet escape. And as she sits in the silence, unable to find comfort in the presence of others, she begins to wonder if she will ever truly be free of it, or if this moment will linger within her forever.