

Earlier that day: Olivia: The Bridesmaid

Earlier that day, Olivia's experience as a bridesmaid fills her with a growing sense of dread and discomfort. She wakes up with an oppressive headache, both a literal pain and a figurative reminder of the emotional burden she feels heading into the wedding. The thought of wearing the bridesmaid dress triggers a wave of reluctance—she dreads the very idea of embodying this role. As she struggles to get ready, a small cut on her hand causes a bloodstain to appear on the dress, an incident that triggers an unsettling memory from her past, one involving blood that is connected to an unresolved trauma she has been unable to shake off. The small act of staining her dress becomes symbolic of something deeper, a reflection of her own emotional scars that, despite her efforts, seem to resurface at the most inconvenient times.

As the day moves forward, Olivia is consumed by feelings of claustrophobia and anxiety, her discomfort deepening as the wedding preparations continue. She feels overwhelmed by the thought of interacting with so many guests, most of whom are strangers, and the pressure to fulfill her role as a bridesmaid weighs heavily on her shoulders. The idea of walking down the aisle, knowing all eyes will be on her, fills her with dread. The attention that will be focused on her during the ceremony feels suffocating, heightening her sense of being trapped in an uncomfortable position. Despite the festive atmosphere around her, Olivia finds herself shrinking inward, the noise of the event amplifying her internal turmoil. She is consumed by a growing desire to retreat from it all, to escape the overwhelming responsibility of being a part of something that doesn't feel right to her.

In search of solace, Olivia recalls a conversation with Hannah, someone who, like her, has been somewhat marginalized from the main happenings of the wedding. Hannah's

presence offers a temporary reprieve from the whirlwind of anxiety that Olivia has been experiencing. The memory of Hannah's calming and understanding demeanor gives Olivia a brief sense of hope that she could find a moment of peace by confiding in her. The more Olivia thinks about it, the more the idea of sharing her burdens with Hannah seems like a relief—she imagines it might be the release she desperately needs. She resolves to seek out Hannah, convinced that a moment of genuine connection and catharsis will help to ease the heaviness she's been carrying. In this moment, Olivia feels the need to step outside of her own emotional chaos and find someone who might truly understand her.

With resolve, Olivia changes out of her bridesmaid attire into more comfortable, casual clothes, ready to leave her room and find Hannah. Her intent is clear: she wants to share her struggles, to reveal the emotional weight she's been carrying for so long. But as she nears the door to Hannah's room, her progress is suddenly interrupted by the sound of voices. She hesitates, realizing she is about to overhear an exchange between Hannah and Charlie, a figure from Olivia's past to whom she once had a juvenile crush. The conversation between Hannah and Charlie seems tense, and Olivia is struck with the overwhelming realization that she is intruding on a private moment. The sudden awareness that she is on the verge of crossing a boundary only amplifies Olivia's anxiety. She stands frozen, unsure whether to retreat or press forward, the need for connection now overshadowed by a sense of impropriety and discomfort.

This unexpected turn of events causes Olivia to withdraw, leaving her feeling even more isolated than before. Her initial intent to find solace in Hannah's company is thwarted by her own sense of embarrassment and the tension she now feels, not only in the moment but about the situation she's found herself in. Her need to unload her emotional baggage is thwarted once again, and she is left to grapple with the realization that her moment of release is slipping further from her grasp. The chapter ends with Olivia standing at a crossroads, feeling caught between her desperate desire for catharsis and the boundaries she must respect. As she faces yet another emotional setback, she is forced to reckon with the layers of tension that continue to weigh her down, leaving her at a point of reflection and uncertainty.