

Jules: The Bride

The Bride, Jules, steps into her mother's room, immediately enveloped by the familiar scent of expensive perfume and the meticulous precision of her mother's beauty routine. The air is thick with floral undertones and the quiet hum of preparation, as if every movement is rehearsed, every detail carefully curated. Jules watches as her mother applies her signature makeup, a ritual so ingrained that it almost seems like a performance in itself. She stands stiffly, holding onto the version of herself she has crafted for this weekend—the perfect bride, composed and radiant, unaffected by doubt or distraction. Yet, beneath the surface, frustration simmers. Olivia's disinterest in the wedding gnaws at her, an absence that feels both personal and pointed. She chose Olivia, her younger half-sister, to stand beside her, believing that this act of inclusion would bridge the gap between them. But instead, Olivia has been distant, uninterested in the details, skipping the hen party, and failing to match the enthusiasm expected of a bridesmaid.

Jules broaches the subject carefully, attempting to mask her irritation beneath casual concern, but her mother's response is far from what she anticipates. There is no rush to defend Jules's feelings, no immediate acknowledgment of her frustration—only a quiet sigh and a dismissive wave of the hand. Her mother speaks with a knowing air, suggesting that Olivia's detachment is not personal, but rather a reflection of something deeper, something Jules does not fully understand. She hints at Olivia's recent struggles, at wounds still raw and unspoken, drawing an implicit comparison to her own past experiences. The remark unsettles Jules, stirring old memories of her teenage heartbreak, a love lost in a flurry of youth and naivety. Back then, when she had been drowning in grief, her mother had barely acknowledged it, brushing aside her feelings as melodramatic and fleeting. And yet, here she is, extending a sympathy toward Olivia that Jules had never been granted. The realization stings, fueling an old

resentment that has never quite faded.

Their conversation drifts toward the past, unearthing the struggles that shaped their family long before this wedding. Jules listens as her mother recalls the aftermath of her father's departure, the strain of single motherhood, and the relentless pursuit of an acting career that demanded more than it gave. It is a story Jules has heard before, yet it never ceases to remind her of the gaps in their relationship, the spaces where love and understanding should have been, but never quite settled. Her mother speaks of sacrifices, of choices made in survival mode, and while Jules acknowledges the difficulty of those years, she cannot shake the feeling that she was always expected to be strong, to require less. Olivia, on the other hand, is handled with delicate care, as though she is fragile in ways Jules never was allowed to be. The favoritism—intentional or not—sits uncomfortably between them, unspoken but undeniable.

As Jules presses for more details about Olivia's struggles, her mother remains evasive, her words carefully measured. There is a softness in her tone, a protectiveness that Jules cannot help but envy. She realizes, with a quiet bitterness, that empathy does not come as naturally to her as it does to her mother, or at least not in ways that are easily expressed. Jules prides herself on control, on logic, on crafting the life she wants through precision and effort, but emotions—especially messy, unpredictable ones—have always felt like a weakness rather than a necessity. She wonders if this is why Olivia keeps her distance, why they will never be the kind of sisters who confide in each other beneath fairy lights and whispered secrets. The thought unsettles her, leaving a hollowness in her chest that she does not have the time nor the patience to examine too closely.

As she prepares to leave, the conversation lingers in the back of her mind, intertwining itself with her thoughts about the wedding, about Will, about the life she is about to step into. The excitement she should be feeling is dulled by an unease she cannot quite name, a nagging sensation that something within her family—within herself—is still unresolved. Olivia's absence, her mother's quiet sympathies, the memories that refuse to stay buried—it all swirls together, forming a tension that does not belong in

the script of a perfect wedding. But Jules, ever the pragmatist, pushes it aside. She has spent her entire life mastering the art of control, of keeping things moving forward regardless of the chaos beneath the surface. Tomorrow, she will walk down the aisle, smile for the cameras, and promise herself to Will in a flawless display of love and commitment. Whatever lingers in the shadows of her past and her family dynamics will have to wait.

