

# Now: The wedding night

The chapter opens with the unsettling image of a waitress regaining consciousness, her body trembling as she struggles to process the disorienting experience she has just endured. Though physically unscathed, she is incapable of forming coherent words, emitting only fragmented sounds and weak moans, her distress palpable to those gathered around her. The scene unfolds during **the wedding night**, housed in an opulent marquee filled with lively music, flowing drinks, and elegant decorations. The venue is divided into distinct sections—dining tables adorned with candlelight, a dance floor alive with movement, and a bustling bar—each creating an atmosphere of indulgence and revelry. Yet, the physical separation of these spaces means that not all guests are immediately aware of the turmoil beginning to spread through the event. As the realization of an incident dawns upon them, the mood shifts, **the wedding night's** carefree energy slowly dissipating into an undercurrent of unease.

At the center of the commotion is the head waitress, a young woman herself, who is visibly shaken as she attempts to explain what little she knows. She reveals that the distressed waitress had been sent to the Folly, a secluded part of the estate, to retrieve additional bottles of champagne. What should have been a simple errand has instead left her in a state of shock, returning as a mere shadow of herself, unable to articulate what happened. The guests begin exchanging uneasy glances, their curiosity giving way to concern as they take stock of their surroundings and search for any missing companions. A few, still dazed from the festivities and alcohol, are slow to grasp the seriousness of the situation. Others, however, instinctively sense that something far more sinister may have occurred, their gazes flickering toward the darkness beyond the marquee's warm glow.

Whispers of speculation ripple through the crowd as they attempt to rationalize the waitress's condition. One guest suggests that the storm, now intensifying outside,

could have startled her, the howling winds and oppressive darkness playing tricks on her mind. Another, less convinced, voices the possibility that she encountered something—or someone—that left her in a state of silent terror. Tension tightens its grip on the gathering, but before panic can set in, the wedding planner takes charge, her presence a stark contrast to the growing chaos. Though her voice is measured, there is an undeniable edge of apprehension as she urges caution, warning against rash decisions that could put others at risk. She reminds them of the island's treacherous landscape—its unguarded cliffs, deep bogs, and unpredictable terrain—all of which pose serious dangers to anyone who ventures out unprepared. Her words carry weight, momentarily quelling the impulse for immediate action, yet they do little to dispel the growing sense of dread hanging over the night.

The once-glamorous atmosphere of the wedding is now tinged with an eerie stillness, as if the very island itself is holding its breath. What began as a night of joy and celebration has taken on an ominous new shape, the contrast between light and darkness becoming more pronounced. Guests who once danced with abandon now huddle together in hushed groups, their laughter replaced with murmurs of uncertainty. The marquee, once a sanctuary of indulgence, now feels like a fragile cocoon shielding them from something lurking just beyond its borders. The chapter

closes with a lingering sense of unease, as the storm outside rages on, its winds rattling the fabric of the marquee like an unspoken warning. The guests, now sobered by fear, wrestle with the uncertainty of what has transpired, their minds filled with questions but devoid of answers. Though the wedding planner maintains her composed exterior, even she cannot shake the feeling that this night has shifted irrevocably—that something beyond their control has already been set into motion.