

Now: The wedding night

The wedding night is drenched in an almost suffocating darkness as the group stumbles forward, their every step marked by an overwhelming sense of unease. The absence of Pete weighs heavily on their minds, his sudden disappearance shifting the atmosphere from tense anticipation to outright dread. Each member of the group feels the unseen force of the night pressing down on them, amplifying every rustle in the trees and every snap of a twig. The oppressive blackness seems to stretch endlessly, swallowing their surroundings and leaving them to feel as though they are suspended in a void. Each step they take is cautious, deliberate, their feet brushing against hidden roots and uneven stones that threaten to trip them. The terrain is unforgiving, and every stumble deepens the feeling that the ground itself is working against them, as though nature conspires to keep them lost in this inescapable abyss—an eerie contrast to the joy and celebration that had filled the air just hours before on the wedding night.

Despite their fear, they cling to each other in the only way they can—through their voices. Their occasional shouts to check on one another, though trembling with uncertainty, act as the sole threads binding them together. These fleeting connections momentarily pierce through the overwhelming silence, offering tiny glimpses of reassurance in a world that now feels alien and hostile. Yet even these exchanges are tinged with the gnawing suspicion that something, unseen and malevolent, is observing their every move. They feel the weight of invisible eyes following them, tracking their movements like a predator stalking its prey. Each shift in the shadows, each inexplicable sound, forces them to huddle closer, their fear growing as their imagination begins to fill the gaps left by the unknown.

The breaking point comes when Femi, overwhelmed by the crushing tension, raises his torch in a frantic motion to illuminate what he believes to be a looming figure. The

beam of light reveals a graveyard, its ancient Celtic crosses standing as silent witnesses to their panic. The sight is jarring—both a relief and a fresh source of unease. Though no threatening figure emerges, the graveyard itself feels like an ominous presence, its weathered stones and crumbling statues emanating a quiet but persistent sense of foreboding. The eerie stillness of the graves is unnerving, as if the dead themselves are aware of the living intruding upon their territory. For a moment, the group hesitates, uncertain whether to feel gratitude for finding no immediate danger or dread at the symbolism of their discovery. The graveyard, with its decaying headstones and silent history, reminds them of their own fragility, of how easily the living can be swallowed by the unknown.

The weight of exhaustion begins to settle over the group as they debate their next steps. Some suggest pausing to regroup, while others argue that lingering near the graves feels like tempting fate. The oppressive silence returns, broken only by the sound of their shallow breaths and the occasional shuffle of their feet. The air feels heavier, almost suffocating, as if the very night itself is pressing down on them, urging them to keep moving despite their fatigue. Each of them wrestles with their own fears, silently wondering if Pete's disappearance is an isolated event or a sign of what is to come. The tension is palpable, their imaginations spiraling into darker territories with every passing second. Even as they push forward, the graveyard remains imprinted in their minds, a haunting reminder of how close death feels in this moment.

As they trudge on, the line between reality and paranoia begins to blur. Every flicker of movement in the shadows, every faint sound carried by the wind, feels like a threat. Their fear is no longer just about the darkness—it's about what the darkness hides, what could be lurking just out of sight, waiting for the right moment to strike. The group's reliance on each other grows, their shared fear forging a bond that feels as fragile as it is vital. Each whispered reassurance, each glance exchanged in the dim torchlight, becomes a lifeline, reminding them that they are not alone in this nightmare. Yet, despite their unity, the question lingers unspoken among them: if Pete could vanish so suddenly, what's to stop the same fate from befalling the rest of them?

The night stretches on endlessly, each step forward feeling like an act of defiance against the unknown. Their journey becomes less about reaching safety and more about surviving the night, battling not only the physical challenges of the terrain but the mental toll of their own escalating fear. The graveyard, the darkness, and Pete's absence create a perfect storm of anxiety that threatens to consume them. Each member of the group carries the silent understanding that the answers they seek may not bring relief but only deepen the terror they feel. As they continue through the suffocating blackness, the only certainty they have is that this night will not let them escape unscathed, and whatever awaits them in the shadows may change them forever.