

Johnno: The Best Man

Johnno and Will stand in the damp, cavernous darkness, their breath echoing against the stone walls as years of suppressed guilt rise between them. The Best Man was supposed to be a title of honor, yet for Johnno, it has become a reminder of the burden he has carried alone for too long. The weight of unspoken truths presses heavily on his chest, while Will stands opposite him, arms crossed, his expression unreadable. The silence stretches between them, thick with tension, before Johnno finally speaks, his voice raw with frustration and sorrow. He has spent years trying to make sense of what they did, grappling with the reality of their past mistake, while Will has seemingly moved forward, untouched by the memories that haunt Johnno's every waking moment. The confrontation is long overdue, yet now that he is face to face with the only other person who knows the full extent of their crime, Johnno finds his words catching in his throat. He expected The Best Man to be different—to show some sign of remorse, to bear some mark of the weight they both should have carried—but Will remains as composed as ever, as if their secret is nothing more than an unfortunate footnote in his otherwise successful life.

The memory of that fateful day replays in Johnno's mind with agonizing clarity, the moment they took a cruel joke too far. What started as a childish prank—another round of their twisted game, "Survival"—turned into something much darker when they set their sights on a quiet, unsuspecting boy known only as "Loner." At first, it had seemed harmless, just a way to test his limits, to see how much he could endure before breaking. But when Loner stumbled upon their stolen exam papers, the stakes shifted, and suddenly, Will wasn't just playing a game anymore—he was covering his tracks. The plan to scare Loner into silence escalated into something sinister, their recklessness fueled by arrogance and fear. They had tied him to a handrail at the base of the cliffs, laughing at his protests, never truly believing that the rising tide would reach him. By the time morning arrived, the reality of what they had done crashed

down on them with the force of the waves that had swallowed Loner whole.

Johnno had spent the years since then living in the shadow of that single, unforgivable act, unable to escape the guilt that clawed at his conscience. Every decision he made, every failed attempt to move on, was stained with the memory of the boy they left behind. Will, on the other hand, had built a career, a life, an identity that did not include the stain of their past. It enrages Johnno—the ease with which Will has buried their sins, the way he can stand here now, meeting Johnno's pain with indifference. He demands answers, desperate to know how Will can sleep at night, how he can justify what they did. Will, ever the pragmatist, shrugs it off, calling it an accident, a mistake of youth that they could not have foreseen. He argues that dwelling on it won't change anything, that they did what they had to do to protect themselves, and that there is no point in rehashing the past. But Johnno refuses to let him rewrite history, refuses to let him escape accountability so easily.

The cave feels suffocating now, the walls closing in as Johnno realizes the futility of this confrontation. Will will never confess, never break under the weight of their shared secret, because he simply doesn't carry it the way Johnno does. The moral chasm between them has grown too wide, and for the first time, Johnno sees Will not as a friend but as a stranger—someone capable of burying the truth so deeply that it no longer touches him. Their voices bounce off the walls, the echoes stretching out like ghosts demanding justice, but justice will never come. Johnno wanted closure, wanted to believe that confronting Will would bring some kind of absolution, but instead, it only solidifies his isolation. As he looks at Will, standing there unaffected, Johnno realizes that he has been alone in this all along. Some people, he now understands, can walk away from even the worst sins untouched. Others, like him, are doomed to carry them forever.