

Johnno: The Best Man

The Best Man retreats to his room, attempting to unwind with a small stash of marijuana purchased in Dublin's famed Temple Bar district. The crowded, tourist-heavy area had provided a quick solution, though he knew the quality of the weed wouldn't match his usual supply back home. Still, he hopes it will grant him the peace of mind he so desperately seeks. The crashing waves outside form a rhythmic soundtrack, their unrelenting force mirroring his restless thoughts. The island's rugged isolation serves as an unwelcome reminder of Trevellyan's, the boarding school where he spent his formative years. The parallels are unavoidable—both settings encircled by unyielding waters, both places steeped in a mix of beauty and unease. The waves become a trigger, pulling him back to a dormitory where barred windows framed his view of the world, leaving him to question whether they were there for protection or to prevent escape. In this moment, the sounds of the sea are no longer calming; they are a portal to memories he has struggled to forget.

For years, he has avoided revisiting his time at Trevellyan's, knowing that the experiences there are too heavy to carry into his present life. Yet, something about this island refuses to let those memories lie dormant. The atmosphere seems to crack open the carefully constructed walls in his mind, allowing suppressed emotions to flood back in. Despite the alcohol he has consumed throughout the evening and the weed he now smokes, which would normally leave him sedated, he finds no relief. Instead, his body is overtaken by an unbearable restlessness. His skin crawls as if insects are skittering across it, though he knows it is only his imagination manifesting the unease bubbling inside him. Sleep, once a reliable refuge, now feels like a threat. It isn't the discomfort of the bed or the lingering effects of the substances he's consumed—it's the fear of what awaits him in his dreams. After years of blissful ignorance, the nightmares have returned, vivid and merciless, dragging him back into the shadows of

his adolescence.

The root of his unease is not just the isolation of the island, nor the psychological effects of the substances coursing through his system. It lies deeper, tied to the presence of certain people he is now forced to face and the unresolved secrets they share. This trip, which should have been a celebration, has instead unearthed a part of himself he thought he had buried for good. The island feels alive, its air thick with the weight of unspoken truths, its crashing waves like a relentless reminder of what he's been avoiding. He knows he cannot blame the setting entirely; the past has been knocking at the door for years, and this place, this moment, has simply flung it wide open. It isn't just the physical similarities to Trevellyan's that are haunting him—it's the memories of nights spent in silence, hiding truths he was sworn to keep, and the realization that those truths are still clawing at him, refusing to be forgotten.

As he stares at the ceiling, his mind races, circling the same memories and questions over and over again. He wonders if his current restlessness is a punishment for having ignored these feelings for so long or if it is simply a coincidence, stirred by the island's eerie ambiance. He cannot shake the sense that this place, this gathering, and these people are all forcing him to confront something inevitable. The connection between the setting and the company he keeps grows sharper, pointing to unresolved tensions that cannot be ignored any longer. Finally, he closes his eyes, not because he feels ready to sleep but because he has no other choice. His exhaustion is outweighed only by his dread, a fear that what waits for him in his dreams will be just as relentless as the memories that echo in his waking mind. Sleep becomes not a reprieve, but another battleground, one where he knows he will face the weight of a past that has never truly let go. The island may be remote, but its power to strip him of his defenses is undeniable, leaving him vulnerable to the very truths he's spent a lifetime avoiding.