

Now: The wedding night

On the wedding night, the atmosphere takes a chilling turn as the ushers, including Femi and Angus, stumble upon a twisted gold crown embedded in the damp, storm-ravaged earth. At first, it appears like a discarded remnant of the celebration, but upon closer inspection, they realize it belongs to Jules. The sight of the once-pristine crown, now severely bent and misshapen, sends an unsettling wave of unease through the group. The damage suggests a significant amount of force was applied, raising immediate concerns about what could have happened. Angus, visibly troubled, recalls the last time he saw Jules—right before the cake-cutting ceremony. He remembers catching a glimpse of her expression, one that seemed tense, bordering on either anger or fear, a detail that now feels far more significant in light of this ominous discovery.

As the group stands in silence, processing the implications of the damaged crown, the air around them feels heavy with something unspoken. Femi, attempting to piece together the events, asks if anyone had seen Jules after the power briefly flickered during the reception. An eerie pause follows as they exchange uncertain glances, each of them realizing that no one can confidently recall seeing her in the aftermath of the blackout. The realization settles over them like a weight, amplifying their collective unease. Angus, unwilling to voice his worst fears, shakes his head, his reluctance mirroring the group's growing sense of dread. Duncan exhales sharply, the sound cutting through the tension, a nonverbal confirmation that he too feels the unsettling presence of something amiss.

Femi clarifies that he isn't outright suggesting Jules has been harmed, but his attempts to reconstruct the evening expose a gaping hole in their recollections. If Jules had left the reception willingly, someone should have seen her, yet no one did. The silence that follows his statement speaks louder than any words—the fact that not a single one of

them can confirm where she went is deeply unsettling. The storm, which had once seemed like nothing more than an inconvenience, now feels like a shroud concealing something far more sinister. The battered crown in Angus's grasp serves as a tangible clue, but it only raises more questions than answers. The fact that it was found in the mud, away from the main wedding area, implies something happened—something that shouldn't have.

As they reluctantly push forward, the night air grows colder, and the remnants of the storm leave behind an eerie stillness that feels almost unnatural. Each step through the wet grass and shifting earth feels heavier, as if the land itself is reluctant to give up its secrets. The Folly looms in the distance, its windows reflecting the occasional flicker of light, but instead of appearing welcoming, it now seems like a dark, watchful entity. Every gust of wind, every distant rustle in the underbrush, sets their nerves further on edge, as if something unseen is lurking just beyond their sight. The group, once merely concerned, now moves with a sense of urgency, their unease growing into a palpable fear that Jules may not just be missing—she may be in real danger.

Despite their shared apprehension, they know they cannot stop now. The longer Jules remains unaccounted for, the more their worries take root, threatening to spiral into full-blown panic. Every passing second deepens the mystery, and though none of them want to say it aloud, the thought lingers between them: what if they are already too late? The contrast between the joyous celebration that had taken place just hours ago and the foreboding atmosphere that now grips them is staggering. What was meant to be a night of unity and happiness has instead unraveled into a night of fear, unanswered questions, and an overwhelming sense that something terrible has happened. The darkness surrounding them is no longer just a product of the night—it is a veil hiding the truth, and they can only hope that whatever they are about to uncover is something they can still fix before it's too late.