

Olivia: The Bridesmaid

Olivia, the bridesmaid, stands among the wedding guests, yet she feels like a stranger in her own skin, detached from the joyous atmosphere that surrounds her. The air is crisp, sending chills through her thin dress, but the cold does not bother her as much as the weight of her emotions. She clenches the bouquet in her hands, the sharp thorns digging into her skin, a sting she barely registers as she discreetly licks away the blood, unwilling to let anyone see the cracks forming beneath her composed exterior.

The wedding ceremony has ended, but the endless cycle of photographs and social niceties only intensifies her discomfort. She forces smiles, answers questions, and nods at polite comments, all while feeling the suffocating gaze of her mother and cousin Beth, who seem to sense that something is wrong. The mention of Callum, the man who once promised her a future, sends a sharp pang through her chest, a reminder of how easily he disappeared when she needed him most.

Trapped in a role she no longer understands, Olivia struggles to reconcile the version of herself that once existed—the carefree, lively girl her family remembers—with the hollow figure she has become. The disconnect is unbearable, made worse by the pity in her relatives' eyes and the silent judgment lurking beneath their concern. She wants to scream, to tell them that their questions only deepen the ache, but instead, she offers a half-hearted excuse and slips away from the reception, searching for solace in the only place that makes sense—the cliffs.

As she moves toward the rugged coastline, the sound of the waves crashing against the rocks grows louder, a constant, rhythmic force that drowns out the noise in her mind. The salty wind lashes against her skin, tugging at her dress and hair, as if urging her to let go, to surrender to the elements. For a brief moment, she closes her eyes and allows herself to imagine a world where none of this exists—where the weight of

her grief, her shame, and her loneliness are washed away with the tide.

Descending toward the beach, Olivia stumbles on the uneven ground, her palms scraping against jagged stones as she catches herself. The sharp pain barely registers, blending with the deeper, more profound agony that she has carried for weeks—the secret she cannot share, the decision that changed everything. The memory of her abortion floods her mind, each detail etched into her consciousness, the sterile clinic, the hushed voices, and the overwhelming sense of isolation as she faced it alone.

Callum had promised to stand by her, but his words had been as fleeting as the wind, vanishing when she needed them most. The weight of his absence, the crushing realization that she had been left to carry the burden alone, has left her feeling adrift, disconnected from her own body. The girl she used to be—the one who laughed easily, who believed in love, who thought she had a future worth fighting for—feels like a distant memory, someone she no longer recognizes.

At the shoreline, Olivia kneels, her fingers trembling as she traces the cold, damp sand, seeking something, anything, to ground her. She reaches into her pocket, feeling the familiar weight of a small blade, her last refuge in a world that feels increasingly unbearable. The sharp sting of metal against her skin is a fleeting moment of clarity, a sensation that reminds her she is still here, still capable of feeling, even if the pain is self-inflicted.

Each shallow cut becomes a silent plea, an unspoken confession of the emotions she cannot articulate—the grief, the shame, the suffocating loneliness that lingers despite the people surrounding her. She watches as the blood seeps into the sand, a stark contrast against the pale earth, a reminder that even pain must find an outlet. The waves inch closer, licking at her feet, as though urging her to take another step, to give in to the pull of the sea and let it swallow her whole.

The vastness of the ocean reflects the emptiness inside her, an expanse that offers both escape and finality, an eerie kind of peace that tempts her more than it should. She stands at the water's edge, caught between the desire to disappear and the faint

whisper of something that keeps her tethered to the present. In this moment, she is neither fully here nor completely gone, lingering in the delicate space between giving in to the abyss and searching for a reason to hold on.

