

Chapter 13.

In this chapter of "The Last One at the Wedding," the party atmosphere has shifted from a lively jazz trio to a raucous electronic dance scene, with the pounding music overwhelming conversation. The protagonist, Frank, finds himself alone at his dinner table, where Tammy and Abigail have left him surrounded by unfamiliar faces engaged in boisterous revelry. He scans the lawn, searching for Maggie amongst the chaos, witnessing more curious behaviors, like two men making out on a collapsing chair and women throwing horseshoes into the darkness.

Tammy finally appears, carrying a drowsy Abigail, who expresses her remorse for dropping food earlier. Tammy mentions that Maggie had come looking for Frank, but left after waiting too long. Concerned about Abigail's discomfort and the questionable environment, she opts to take her away. Frank reflects on his sister's situation, knowing that her parenting responsibilities were being compromised by the chaotic party.

Afterward, Frank walks down to a bonfire on the beach, worried about safety as young people frolic in and around the fire, and he notices nudity and partying, which intensifies his protective instincts for Maggie. When he finds her among the revelers, she playfully encourages him to join the swimming party, joking about the microdosing of drugs that some are trying. Frank is grateful to discover that Aidan is not part of this scene, prompting concern about Aidan's whereabouts at this crucial family gathering.

Their conversation highlights Frank's apprehension about the party's nature and the people involved. He attempts to focus on a promise of a morning canoe trip with Maggie, symbolizing his desire to rebuild their bond after her mother's death fifteen years prior. However, conversations with Errol and Gerry reveal societal expectations regarding relationships and parenting, adding to his internal conflict regarding family dynamics.

The chapter ends on a tense note as Frank questions Aidan's absence, peering into the lodge and sensing a figure watching him from a window, which leaves him feeling even more uneasy. Despite his exhaustion, there's a lingering concern as he questions the family values and the well-being of those around him. The narrative captures the complexity of parenting amid festive chaos and the emotional undercurrents of familial relationships, setting the stage for deeper exploration of these themes.