

# Chapter 9.

In this chapter from "The Last One at the Wedding," the protagonist describes his visit to FCI Corbettsville, a minimum-security correctional facility in New York designed for nonviolent offenders. With a structure resembling college dorms, it offers inmates various jobs as well as classes in diverse subjects. On the protagonist's birthday, he arrives early to ensure he can visit his daughter, having researched online the best practices for visiting.

Upon entering, he encounters strict security protocols. He experiences a mixture of professionalism and impersonal bureaucracy, facing challenges when his name is not on the visitation list. These lists are crucial as inmates must approve visitors beforehand. Despite his efforts, the officer informs him that only Margaret can add him to her list, emphasizing that he must return during designated hours after getting her consent. Frustrated but understanding, he tries to persuade the officer to make an exception, but to no avail.

He then reflects on the various emotional ties and dynamics unfolding around him as visitors reunite with inmates. The atmosphere in the visitation room includes hopeful interactions, tears, and the solemn reality of incarceration. After some waiting, the officer finds Margaret but relays the disappointing news that she has chosen not to see him. The protagonist learns of other parents in similar situations but feels the weight of isolation as he moves forward.

As he prepares to leave, he acknowledges the contrast between his life outside and the palpable longing of those inside the prison, marked by a mix of hope and despair. He expresses gratitude for the love and support from friends and family waiting for him, all while grappling with the absence of his daughter at his birthday gathering. This chapter poignantly captures the struggles of maintaining familial bonds amidst the harsh realities of the prison system, creating a powerful emotional resonance for the reader.