

Guest of Honour

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It was a delightful summer morning. The sun shone over the bright, well-kept lawn. Clusters of people like colourful schools of fish swayed taciturnly, speaking in a hushed voice. An air of expectation breezed through the quiet morning: they were all awaiting the guest of honour.

The sea of gaudy dresses was parted by the darkness of one single suit. Its owner felt quite out of place, though he knew he should not: it was not he who was out of place, but those distasteful men and women wearing ordinary jeans and printed shirts, utterly underdressed for the occasion. At least *he* could claim to be a classic man.

He was standing alone in the midst of that sea of people. Had he been asked only twenty-four hours ago, he would not have dreamt of finding himself in such a context, surrounded by kids he doubled in age. Once a young lady approached him and asked him if he was doing alright by himself.

“Yes”, he had said. “I’m just a little tired of standing. I hope it won’t take long”.

“I don’t think so”, she had answered, taking out her phone. “I just got a text sayin’ they’re on their way.”

He had smiled at her tender young age, and then she had asked how he had got to know Matty.

How had he got to know him? Well, it was a long story. They had been friends a long time ago, and before that he had been Matt’s tutor, back at college. They had worked together and studied together, and then they had become friends. But they had fallen apart many years ago, and they had never reconnected.

“I wish I had known him then”, mourned the woman. “He must have been so adorable. I only met him a few years ago, but I instantly developed a soft spot for him. It’s not like we became the best of friends overnight but...”

The woman stopped, gazing at the glowing light of her phone. She instantly started typing something and then she announced:

“They’ll be here in ten minutes.”

As his pocket watch ticked the minutes away, the old man looked around him. There must have been around twenty people, all around the age of thirty (of course, he was so much older than dear Matt) standing awkwardly close to each other. Apart from them, there was no one to be seen under the blazing sun. It was a quiet and peaceful morning, and the old man took in the beautiful scenery that extended for miles: rows and rows of trees, and flowers, and...

And then he heard the sobbing. The young woman who had approached him was covering her mouth, pointing at some place in the distance.

As the man turned around, the crowd burst into mournful cries. The black car had got as near to the clearing as it could, and an old man and an old lady (still younger than himself) dressed in black got out of it, and beside them a group of men carrying a wooden casket.

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And inside the casket, the man they had been waiting for all along, the guest of honour, their beloved Matt.