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Home for Christmas

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CHAPTER ONE

Going Nowhere

Harminda looked at her watch and then at the traffic outside. The airport was 10 kilometres away and it was already 5.15 p.m.



track 02

‘Isn’t there a quicker way to get to the airport? My plane leaves in less than two hours,’ she asked the taxi driver.

‘Are you going home for Christmas?’ he smiled. The taxi was full of decorations; there was green tinsel on the steering wheel and mistletoe under the mirror.

‘Yes...’ said Harminda. But there was no Christmas spirit in her voice.

Harminda looked out of the window, trying not to cry. She remembered the phone call from her Mum earlier that day. She missed her parents so much.

Their argument,¹ four years ago, seemed stupid now.

Thirty minutes later, they arrived at Galway airport.

1. **argument** : when people do not agree and get angry.



‘How much is it?’ she asked.

‘Fifteen euros for you, sweetheart,’ said the taxi driver with a smile.

Harmina gave him a twenty-euro note and got quickly out of the taxi.

‘Don’t forget your change...’ shouted the taxi driver, with a five-euro note in his hand, but Harmina was already inside the airport terminal.

There were a lot of people, and Harmina pushed through the crowd to look at the screens for her flight...

‘Cancelled? Stay calm and read it again, slowly. You’ve read it wrong, that’s all,’ she thought.

‘Flight ZXY 247... destination, London Stansted... cancelled!’

All flights from Galway were cancelled because of bad weather.

‘I’m sorry, but tomorrow’s flight to London is fully booked. ¹ Christmas is a busy time of year,’ said the man at the ticket office when Harmina tried to find another flight.

‘What about another airport? Dublin perhaps?’

‘Sorry...’

‘You don’t understand,’ said Harmina, ‘I have to get to London as soon as possible. My Dad’s ill.’

‘I really am very sorry...’ the man said sympathetically. ² ‘You could hire a car. It’s a long journey, but if you need to get there quickly...’

As Harmina ran towards car hire, she saw that there were only two women waiting and she started to feel hopeful.

1. **fully booked** : full; there are no free places.

2. **sympathetically** : in a way that shows he knows how Harmina is feeling.

‘I’m sorry, but this is the last car,’ she heard the assistant say.

‘But I was here first!’ shouted a tall, blonde woman.

‘Only because you pushed in front of me! I’m getting married in three days. I have to get to London,’ shouted an Irish girl in her late twenties.

‘And I’ve got a very important audition!’ ¹ said the blonde woman.

‘Excuse me,’ interrupted Harmina. ‘Did you say that there’s only one car?’

‘Yes, and it’s mine!’ said the blonde arrogantly. ²

‘No it’s not!’ The argument continued.

Harmina wanted to cry. But then she had an idea.

‘If you two are going to London, we can share the car! What do you think? We can share the driving and the cost.’

The two women looked at her in silence.

‘They probably think I’m mad,’ thought Harmina. But that didn’t worry her. The only thing that worried her was getting to London to see her family.

‘Well, if *you* want to get to your audition,’ Harmina said to the blonde, ‘and if *you* want to get married,’ she said to the other woman, ‘well... you’ve got no choice!’

Harmina was speaking angrily, and after a moment, the two women reluctantly ³ agreed.

‘Mr O’Flaherty will be pleased,’ thought Chrissie, the car hire assistant, as she showed the women their car.

1. **audition** : a short performance by an actor, dancer or musician to show if they are good enough for a film/show, etc.
2. **arrogantly** : in a way that shows she thinks she is more important than other people.
3. **reluctantly** : in a way that shows they don’t really want to do it.



‘Chrissie! Chrissie!’ a man shouted, running towards them. It was very cold, but he was sweating, and his face was red and angry.

‘Oh, that’s my boss. Merry Christmas!’ she smiled, and closed the door.

‘Stop them, Chrissie!’

‘What...? It’s OK, Mr O’Flaherty. They’ve paid,’ she smiled, waving at the car as it left.

‘That car was reserved, you stupid girl!’ he shouted.



Chrissie's face turned red. She didn't see the three businessmen as she ran into the airport, crying.

'Where is my car, Mr O'Flaherty?' asked one. His voice was calm, but his grey eyes were dangerous.

Colin O'Flaherty turned around nervously ¹ to talk to the three men. And he knew that he was in trouble. Big trouble.

1. **nervously** : in a way that shows he is worried or frightened.