

Hannah: The Plus-One

Hannah grips the boat's railing tightly, her knuckles white as she fights the rising nausea brought on by the relentless rocking of the waves. The journey to Inis an Amhlóra is proving more treacherous than she had anticipated, the rough seas serving as an unsettling prelude to *The Plus-One* wedding they are about to attend. Charlie, seated beside her with a look of mild amusement, reassures her with empty platitudes, though his own unease is betrayed by the occasional tightening of his jaw. Their captain, Mattie, an older man well-versed in the island's treacherous waters, steers with practiced ease, regaling them with stories of the land they are fast approaching. His tales, rich with history, paint a darker picture than the picturesque wedding venue they had imagined. Once a sanctuary for a persecuted religious sect, the island had been the site of an unspeakable massacre—an event buried beneath the weight of time and forgotten by all but those who made the journey across these waters.

Mattie's voice carries over the howling wind as he details the discovery of the remains, a grim reminder of the island's violent past. Hannah listens intently, feeling an inexplicable chill creep up her spine, as if the very air on the boat has grown heavier. Jules had chosen this location for its exclusivity, its inaccessibility lending an air of grandeur to her already extravagant wedding plans. Yet, as Hannah watches the jagged cliffs loom in the distance, she cannot shake the feeling that beneath the island's breathtaking beauty lies something deeply unsettling. Charlie, on the other hand, remains unbothered, dismissing Mattie's stories as superstitious ramblings meant to entertain nervous travelers. He is more preoccupied with his thoughts on Jules's fiancé, Will, whose sudden and whirlwind engagement he finds questionable at best.

As they approach the dock, the contrast between Hannah and Jules becomes ever more apparent. Where Jules thrives in a world of careful curation and refinement,

Hannah exists in a state of organized chaos, her life dictated by instinct rather than meticulous planning. The island, with its duality of isolation and grandeur, mirrors the complexities of their friendship—an uneasy balance between admiration and unspoken tension. Hannah can sense Charlie's skepticism about the wedding, a doubt she too shares but dares not voice. There is something about the rapid nature of Jules's engagement that feels off, and while Charlie's distrust stems from Will's carefully controlled persona, Hannah's discomfort is more visceral, a feeling she cannot yet articulate.



Summary

As the boat nears the island, the water calms slightly, momentarily easing Hannah's discomfort. A cormorant emerges from the mist, its dark wings slicing through the sky before disappearing into the cliffs, an image that inexplicably captures her attention. There is something poetic about the sight—a creature that thrives on the edge of land and sea, moving effortlessly between two worlds. It serves as a brief distraction from her unease, though the ominous weight of Mattie's stories lingers at the back of her mind. She glances at Charlie, wondering if he feels it too—that creeping sensation that they are stepping into something far more complicated than a wedding celebration. But Charlie, ever pragmatic, simply gathers their belongings, eager to disembark.

The chapter ends with their arrival, the boat docking against the weathered wood of the pier, the grandeur of the Folly rising in the distance. Hannah steps onto solid ground with a mixture of relief and apprehension, feeling as though she has crossed an invisible threshold into something unknown. The island, with its breathtaking beauty and unsettling past, awaits them, a stage set for celebration yet laced with an unshakable sense of foreboding.