

The Journey, by Catherine Megregian

Plot Summary: *In two interwoven journeys, we see a couple rush to an airport through icy conditions, while a pair of scientists contend with the dangers of a trip to Antarctica.*

Characters:

BEN (m), *Scottish, 50s, older middle-aged, married to Steph.*

STEPH (f), *Scottish, 50s, older middle-aged, married to Ben.*

CARTWRIGHT (LILY) (f), *Scottish, late 20s, a scientist, Steph and Ben's daughter*

DAVIDSON (LIAM) (m), *mid-30s, a scientist*

SCENE ONE

BEN: Let's go! Let's go! Let's go!

STEPH: I know!

BEN: Get the door!

STEPH: Yes!

A heavy door slams shut.

BEN: Ah, damn it!

STEPH: What now?

BEN: The windscreen.

STEPH: Well, just get the thing and hurry up and scrape it off.

BEN: I told you this was going to happen. I told you it was cold last night.

A car door opens.

STEPH: I'm getting in and turning the heating on. Here. Be quick.

SCENE TWO

CARTWRIGHT and DAVIDSON are sitting on a plane, waiting for take-off. In the background, quiet conversation can be heard from the other passengers.

CARTWRIGHT: How long did they say? I missed it.

DAVIDSON: At least an hour, but it could be more if we don't get a taxi slot in time and they have to redo the de-icing.

CARTWRIGHT: Journey's off to a good start, then.

DAVIDSON: Hmm.

CARTWRIGHT: Is it silly that some part of me still doesn't trust the mechanics of a plane? No matter how many I've been on, the idea that lift can keep all of this in the air seems like witchcraft.

DAVIDSON: Yes, that's a little stupid.

CARTWRIGHT: Sure, but doesn't part of you worry that one moment this will all come crashing out of the sky?

DAVIDSON: Excellent catastrophizing. Is this what I have to look forward to for the next six months?

CARTWRIGHT: No! That'll be fine. It's just the plane part really.

DAVIDSON: Good, because the cold makes me grumpy. I don't think we would both make it back alive.

CARTWRIGHT: ...I'm sorry? You don't like the cold but you've signed up for the British Antarctic Survey?

DAVIDSON: I am aware of my decision.

CARTWRIGHT: This should go well.

SCENE THREE

STEPH: Go left here.

BEN: What? Why?

STEPH: Ice on the Queensferry bridge, it's been closed since last night. You'll have to go the long way around.

BEN: God, we're really going to be late now. I told you we –

STEPH: Don't!

BEN slams on the car breaks and the tyres screech.

SCENE FOUR

CARTWRIGHT and DAVID are disembarking a boat. Their footsteps are loud on the metal gangway and some seagulls can be heard.

CARTWRIGHT: Turns out I'm not a boat person either.

DAVIDSON: Three days of sea sickness on a freezing ship not your cup of tea?

CARTWRIGHT: I would rank today's mood a 6.

DAVIDSON: A 6? Out of 10?

CARTWRIGHT: Yes, I'm currently working on the assumption that it's linearly related to the outside temperature but I'll need more data points before I can draw a conclusion.

They reach the bottom of the gangway and stop walking.

DAVIDSON: You're tracking my mood?

CARTWRIGHT: For science.

DAVIDSON: Science? You're aware that we're about to embark on a trek across a glacier to an isolated field camp, just the two of us? And you think commenting on my disposition out loud is a good idea?

CARTWRIGHT: All in the name of scientific discovery.

SCENE FIVE

BEN slams on the car breaks and the tyres screech. At the same time there is a dull thud as STEPH hits her head on the window. After a moment they come to a halt and it is silent.

STEPH: Ow!

BEN: Jesus! Steph, are you alright?

STEPH: I think so. Banged my head off the door. It hurts like hell.

BEN: Let me look. No blood - but it will definitely bruise.

STEPH: This morning could not have gone worse.

BEN: Bloody council. They must not have gritted the road. Car just skidded out from under me. But you're sure you're alright? We can go to the hospital if you'd like.

STEPH: No, I'll be fine. We're already late anyway. Let's keep going.

SCENE SIX

In strong wind, DAVIDSON and CARTWRIGHT must shout to be heard.

CARTWRIGHT: We have to get out of here now!

DAVIDSON: Boswell station, emergency rescue requested. Boswell station, this is Cartwright and Davidson. I repeat: emergency rescue requested.

DAVIDSON: Still no response.

CARTWRIGHT: We need to get back to the tent!

DAVIDSON: Maybe the base's power lines were damaged by the storm -

CARTWRIGHT: We can't stay out here!

DAVIDSON: - but the sat phones should still work -

CARTWRIGHT: For God's sake!

DAVIDSON: - they know we're meant to have contacted the station three hours ago, so they'll send someone out to look for us -

CARTWRIGHT: Listen to me! We don't know how far off track we've gone. We don't know what's happening at the base. We don't know if someone is coming to get us. What we do know is that we need to get back to the tent now. If we wait much longer it could be a white-out and we'll be dead.

DAVIDSON: Shit. You're right.

CARTWRIGHT: Besides, chances are all this ice's fucked the antenna. There's no way we're getting in touch with them now. We'll have to wait until the storm clears.

DAVIDSON and CARTWRIGHT pause while the storm rages around them.

DAVIDSON: So, it's just us.

CARTWRIGHT: It's just us.

SCENE SEVEN

STEPH and BEN arrive at the airport. Their car doors open and shut and they walk across the pavement.

STEPH: She's probably arrived already. Six months since we last saw her and/

BEN: Watch your step there! The pavement's slippery.

STEPH: Oh, can you just imagine? After everything so far this morning, I slip on the pavement and break my leg? That would be the cherry on top of this nightmare.

As they enter the terminal, the noise from other people talking in the background can be heard. An announcement is being made over the PA system.

BEN: Well, we've just about made it in one piece.

STEPH: Except for my bruised forehead.

BEN: Yes darling, except for your poor, bruised forehead. Which I apologise for. Again.

STEPH: Thank you.

Beat.

STEPH: There. The board says she landed 25 minutes ago!

BEN: Keep an eye out.

STEPH: We should have made a sign! You know, 'We missed you, did you smuggle us back a penguin?' or something like that.

CARTWRIGHT: Mum! Dad!

STEPH: Lily! You're back!

BEN: We missed you darling!

STEPH: We missed you so much! You can't imagine!

CARTWRIGHT: Ugh, it's so good to see you! Oh, but let me introduce you to my expedition partner. Mum, Dad, this is Liam Davidson. Liam, my parents: Ben and Stephanie.

DAVIDSON: Pleasure to meet you both.

BEN: Likewise. I apologise for all you had to put up with! Six months with Lily, she probably talked your ear off.

DAVIDSON: Perhaps a little, but she's also the only reason I made it out the other side.

CARTWRIGHT (Scoffs): Being a little dramatic there I think. I told Liam we would give him a lift to the station on our way back. Is that OK?

STEPH: Not a problem. You'll have to tell us all about it in the car. But be careful, the road and pavements are a little icy. You won't believe the time we've had getting here.

BEN: I think they've had their fair share of ice-related disruptions, Steph.

They start to leave the airport, and the sound of the other travellers falls away.

STEPH: Oh God, of course! You must be sick of it by now!

DAVIDSON: Honestly, part of me considered skipping the UK entirely and just heading straight to Spain.

CARTWRIGHT: Well, you've got 6 months to sun yourself before you meet me back here.

DAVIDSON: Remind me, why did I sign up to go a second time?

STEPH: You're going back? Next winter?

CARTWRIGHT: That's the plan. And maybe by then they'll have figured out a way to sort all our ice problems.

DAVIDSON: One can only hope.

END