

Millie and Andy took the fastest route to the lower deck. The corridor leading to the gangway was filled with passengers waiting for the all-clear to exit the Siren of the Seas and begin exploring the Cork, Ireland port.

Despite it taking a few extra minutes for them to make their way through the crowd, Millie and her boss reached the front of the line with seconds to spare.

Suharto waited until they were in position before signaling the guards to remove the retractable belts securing the area.

The line began to move as a steady stream of passengers dinged their keycards and descended the gangway. Andy and Millie fielded questions including some from those who hadn't made plans and asked about tours outside the port.

"You may be able to find last minute tours or taxis beyond the gates." Andy cleared his throat. "A word of warning...any tours outside the gates are not ship-sponsored and you take them at your own risk."

The line dwindled until it was only an occasional group or couple who made their way off. Millie consulted her watch. It was quarter 'til eleven.

"You better get ready to go," Andy said. "You don't want to keep Amit and your driver waiting."

"I need to run home and change. Thanks again for helping us find a ride."

"Don't thank me, thank Sophia."

"I will, just as soon as I get back." Millie turned to go when a thought occurred to her. "How will I find our driver?"

"The driver. I almost forgot." Andy patted his pocket and pulled out a slip of paper. "Your driver's name is Max. He'll be wearing a red cap and meeting you just outside the security gate. Sophia said you can't miss him."

An inkling of dread crept down Millie's spine. "What does she mean...we won't be able to miss him?"

"I don't know," Andy shrugged.

Millie's eyes narrowed. "What kind of car are we looking for?"

"A car." Andy waved dismissively. "Stop being so paranoid, Millie. I trust Sophia's judgement. I'm sure you'll have a wonderful day. You should be grateful for her help, not suspicious of it."

"I... You're right." A wave of guilt washed over Millie. Sophia didn't have to help find a driver. She needed to be more trusting of people and not always questioning others' actions and motives.

She dashed up the steps. Nic wasn't on the bridge, and she guessed he was still dealing with the crewmember who was being removed from the ship.

Millie briefly wondered if Siren of the Seas would arrange for transportation back to wherever the crewmember came from and then decided he deserved to have to find his own way home. There were better ways to solve grievances other than attacking your boss.

She took Scout, their small pup, out for a balcony break and then returned inside where she swapped out her crew uniform for a pair of capris and a light blouse. She'd checked the forecast first thing that morning and discovered it was going to be perfect...perfect weather to explore the magnificent castle and expansive grounds, not to mention track down the Hawthorne berries that Annette needed.

As Millie dressed, she thought about Amit's comment that Annette was acting oddly. She had noticed a change in her friend's behavior when they were in Southampton and chalked it up to her being stressed out and worried about her health.

Could there be more to it than that? What if there was some other underlying health issues Annette didn't know about? Millie offered up a quick prayer that the doctors would come back with a diagnosis soon, and that whatever was wrong with her friend could be cured, or at least controlled, with medication.

On her way out, she asked Captain Vitale to remind Nic she was leaving the ship and heading to Blarney with Amit.

She reached the gangway to find Amit already waiting for her. She almost didn't recognize him in a pair of blue jeans, a t-shirt and a ballcap.

"You are right on time, Miss Millie."

"And so are you." Millie clapped her hands. "We're going to have a busy day ahead of us."

"How will we find our driver?" Amit cast an anxious glance toward the exit.

"His name is Max. He's meeting us on the other side of the security gate." Millie led the way along the dock. Amit easily fell into step, and she began to relax.

Millie recognized the security guard. He was the same one who had been stationed at the Southampton gate, near the pier where she and her friends had met Halbert, the homeless man.

He glanced at Millie's lanyard. "Heading out for the day, Millie?"

"Yes, Amit and I are visiting Blarney Castle."

"That's where most of the folks seem to be going. I'm sure it will be busy." The guard checked Amit's identification. "Are you going to kiss the Blarney Stone?"

Amit curled his lip, a horrified expression on his face. “I will not kiss a stone thousands of others have kissed. Think of all of the bacteria and germs.”

The guard chuckled. “I think I would take a pass on that too.”

Millie stepped off to the side, shading her eyes as she studied the area. “I think we need to go that way.”

They strolled to the end of the sidewalk and stopped near a row of empty parking spaces. Millie’s heart sank. There wasn’t a single car in sight. “Our driver isn’t here.”

Disappointed, she reached for her cell phone. Perhaps there was some sort of mix-up.

She began scrolling the screen, searching for Andy’s cell phone number when she heard tires squealing.

Millie’s heart skipped a beat as she caught a glimpse of a vehicle fly down the hill. The car barely slowed for the curve, quickly picking up speed when it reached the straightaway. It was barreling right toward them.

Amit lunged forward, yanking Millie away from the curb and to safety. The car came to a screeching halt as the driver slammed on the brakes.

Millie clutched her chest. She could feel her blood boil as she marched to the end of the sidewalk.

The reckless driver sprang from the vehicle, reaching the curb at the same time as Millie. She opened her mouth to give him a piece of her mind when she noticed he was sporting a red cap.