

submission from: Lucinda Hahn

*"Cead mile failte. Cead mile failte..."*

We'd just landed in Ireland, and as we slowly filed off the plane, the Aer Lingus stewardess was bidding each of us "a hundred thousand welcomes." I shuffled down the aisle, short-breathed and shaky. I could feel a bead of sweat meandering down my spine, near where the strap of my carry-on dug into my left shoulder.

I tucked the bag closer to my left hip, so Moire—I was close enough to read her name tag now—wouldn't see it. Or notice any unusual bulges. With her red-glossed lips breaking into an easy smile, Moire looked like the amiable type of Irish girl who grew up on a farm, maybe in Kerry or Limerick, and now was living her dream of traveling the world. But in my panic, I could only see her as a suspiciously friendly sentry, manning her post just outside the cockpit door, waiting to pounce on wrongdoers like me.

*"Cead mile failte."*

I smiled the most honest fake smile I could muster as I sauntered past her. "Thank you," I said, then practically flung myself through the aircraft door. Relief washed through me as my feet hit the gateway. I hustled up the inclined tunnel toward the terminal, and was about halfway along when I heard it.

"Miss!" I picked up my pace, praying that Moire was shouting at someone else. "Oh, miss—wait!"

A portly business man stopped in front of me to adjust his hold on his suitcase, and I was trapped. From over my shoulder, I glimpsed Moire hurrying toward me.