

# Not a Fairytale of New York

by Angie

*"Can't make it all alone  
I've built my dreams around you"*

*- The Pogues (Fairytale of New York)*

Devin and Vincent, both white-haired now, were reminiscing. They sat on chairs as close to the brazier in Vincent's chamber as they could get, enjoying both the camaraderie and the warmth.

Devin had come home for the festive season, but had not decided if he would stay longer. Something always helped him make up his mind - and if it didn't, perhaps that was a sign he should stay. He wasn't young anymore. These chats had become a tradition. He loved their discussions.

Vincent commented that he liked going above at night this time of year.

"The lights, the music - they seem to transform the city".

Devin suddenly rummaged in a pocket of his leather jacket and extracted an mp3 player. He turned it on. The sound wasn't great from the minuscule speaker, but there was no question about what it was playing. Vincent listened and nodded.

"I take it you know this song?" Devin asked, making an assumption from the nod.

"I remember hearing it in the streets above, the December before you returned. I still hear it often at this time of year, but that was the first time," Vincent replied.

"Yes. It was everywhere that particular Christmas, when it was first introduced. I heard it too."

Vincent sat upright, and looked intensely at Devin. "You were here, in New York, that Christmas?"

"Yes. I had come back with nothing but a duffle bag. I had been working in the south and was at a loose end. I don't really know why I came back, except I missed New York and Christmas was always a magical time." #

"And the song?" Vincent queried.

Devin knew Vincent wasn't asking about the song then, but the song now.

"The man who wrote and sang this, Shane McGowan, has just died. I was considering coming here, but I didn't wait when I heard. I wanted to be in New York soonest. The song struck a chord with me back then, as it probably did a lot of New Yorkers, whether immigrants, or just down on their luck. After all, it's called '*Fairytale of New York*'.

"I know the words," Vincent commented. "Not a typically festive song."

"Which is why it became an overnight success then, and has continued to be very popular. It made the group famous. It speaks to all of us, anyone who has ever had a rough time, anywhere, but particularly this city of lights. It was also what made me decide not to visit the tunnels just then, after all."

"I don't understand," Vincent said.

"I felt a bit like the couple in the song, untethered, loving the city, but unable to really relate to the season, and I didn't have ... enough. My presence wasn't enough after so long an absence. I wanted to do it in style.

"I did devise a plan, then, thanks to that song. I needed credentials. I didn't dare claim to be a doctor - Father would have known immediately - so I decided to be a lawyer. Even I knew the DA was always short-staffed."

"Why that?" Vincent asked, curious.

"I had travelled a lot, been many things, sometimes barely escaping the law, made quite a bit of money. I thought I could ...," Devin sought the correct word.

"Impersonate?" Vincent inserted, helpfully, with an eye roll.

Devin agreed with a chuckle. "Yes, I was sure I could impersonate a lawyer. I arranged my credentials, my money and my background very carefully, then came back, incognito."

Vincent chuckled. "Not completely incognito - or not for long. Catherine was suspicious, and followed you when you went into the Park. When you went to the culvert she was concerned enough to tell me. She described you in such detail there could be no mistake, even after all those years. Even though your name was Jeff."

"I had dozens of identities," Devin admitted. "After all, I left here without so much as a birth certificate. I could be anyone I wanted, and I had to reinvent myself - often."

"Whereas, I am and will always be just who I am," Vincent remarked, just a little enviously.

"My identities didn't always work. Catherine had sensitive radar. She didn't trust me from the first, and even less later - and she was right not to. I could have screwed up that case irretrievably," Devin admitted wryly.

"But you didn't. We both agreed you had the makings of a fine lawyer."

Devin laughed. "Yes, but only because of my gift of obfuscation - and the fact that I HAD to succeed, in order to earn my place with you again."

"You would have been welcome had you arrived in rags and destitute, Devin. You know that. There was no need to earn it."

"No, Vincent, I had to come back on my terms, to prove to Father that I had profited by leaving, that I could have a good life, a worthwhile one. I knew he was the one I had to convince, even when I didn't know he was my real father. I had to prove it to myself as well.

"But there was more. Like the song says, I'd built my dreams around you - you especially, Vincent. I always had, without realizing it. I guess I always knew I would come back, some day."

"And the role of the song?" Vincent pressed.

Devin was silent for a long moment, then spoke softly. "Shane McGowan also dealt with the world on his own terms. He was a fine Irish poet and song composer, apparently a very kind, empathic man, but those who didn't know him only saw what he showed the public - the drugs, the alcohol, the bad teeth and the craziness. I don't have the talents he had, but I tried to make my place in the world too.

"I had to come back now, so many years after that time I first heard the song. It seemed ... appropriate, a kind of tribute. We'll never know how many people he touched with that song, Vincent, or any of the others he sang. But he changed my life, definitely, that year. He seemed to be one of us, felt our pain in his bones and in his heart - and put it into poetry and

song."

Vincent had never heard Devin speak at such length about anyone, and now he wished he had known more about the man behind the music.

"A fine eulogy," was all he could say.

"It's funny what strikes a chord," said Devin, rolling his eyes at the pun.

"If it brings you back to us, it is special," Vincent remarked. "Do you have more of his songs on that thing?"

In answer, Devin handed it and the earplugs to him. Vincent held the device in his big hands, reverently.

"Thank you," he said softly. "I look forward to hearing them."

"Consider it an early Christmas gift," Devin replied. "I had intended to give it to you and I have one of my own too. Dreams translated into song."

"*You took my dreams from me' ... when you left,*" Vincent whispered, remembering that terrible night, so long ago, when his brother had disappeared. He had never felt so alone, so alien in his own world.

*"I kept them with me babe,"* replied Devin, softly singing the song's words. *"I put them with my own/ Can't make it all alone/ I've built my dreams around you". \**

"Truly?" Vincent asked.

"Eventually," Devin replied, wryly. "It took a while for me to realize it, but I never forgot you, or Father, or this hole in the ground that was home. I just needed the right reason to return."

"Then I thank this man, whom I never knew existed," Vincent replied.

END

# - Devin's visit to New York that year is told in "A Christmas Story".

\* - *"Fairytale of New York" - The Pogues (featuring Kirsty MacColl). First released as a single for Christmas 1987.*