



# Down These Mean Streets a Faerie Must Go

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IT WAS RAINING OUTSIDE IN GRAY, GRITTY SHEETS, AND THE window of my office rattled with every smack of the storm. I pulled the bottle of foxglove dew out of the file cabinet and poured myself a healthy thimbleful. It was a little early in the day for drinking, but I hadn't slept well—so I figured I'd look at it like it was still last night.

I slammed it down, feeling the tingle all the way to my wingtips, and when my door opened I smiled blissfully, making sure my dress covered my legs.

"Detective Shanahan," I said. "What brings you to my palace?"

"We got a dead faerie, Blossom," he said, water dripping off his fedora onto my cheap, bare-wood floor. I sat up, instantly sober.

"What happened?" I asked. We fae just don't *die*, not the way humans do, and when we dissolve we never do it in public.

"It's that C-Dog kid, the one with the tattoos and bad attitude. He's lying dead on the sidewalk in front of the bank tower. Looks like he jumped from the top, judging by the mess."

"That's impossible," I said. C-Dog—whose real name was Carillon, he'd changed it recently to fit his new persona—was a pain in the ass, but he wouldn't have done something like that. "No fae falls to his death. Our wings won't let us . . ." I trailed off at the expression on the cop's face. Frank Shanahan and I weren't exactly *friends*, but we got along okay and his expressive Irish face was usually creased into some kind of

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smile, whether happy, sarcastic or grim. But right now that face was a block of granite.

“He cut off his wings before he jumped,” said Shanahan.



As we arrived I fluttered up over the dash so that I could see the squad cars’ flashers blinking garishly in the rain. I was antsy—riding in cars, being surrounded by all that iron, makes me anxious.

“I’m telling you, Frank, that no fae ever committed suicide,” I said, sinking back down onto the passenger seat.

“First time for everything,” he said, parking diagonally. Cops can’t park straight. It’s some kind of pride thing I haven’t figured out yet, but I’ve only been here a year and a half.

“Not for this,” I said.

“Blossom, he left a note,” sighed the detective. He’s the only guy can get away with calling me ‘Blossom’. My fae name is Peaseblossom, and I tacked on the Marlowe after I decided I was going to be a private dick, and I don’t answer to pet names or derogatory terms, let alone shortenings . . . but for some reason I don’t mind when Shanahan nicks my name.

“I want to see it,” I said, not bothering to open my door, flying straight out my open window into the bedlam.

“It’s evidence,” said Shanahan, stepping onto the street, looking up at me fluttering near his head. Other bulls noticed me, and the assistant ME looked up from her examination of the body, tweezers in hand, staring at me from behind her goggles. I ignored everybody and darted over to the corpse lying on the sidewalk.

It was Carillon, all right, and my stomach turned when I saw what he looked like. We only weigh a pound or two—C-Dog had been one of the bigger fae of the diaspora, and probably went about one-and-three-quarters—but falling from thirty-nine stories is enough to splatter a fair amount of cement, and I figured when they got around to doing their chalk outline it would look like a Rorschach blot.

“Arrgh,” I said, hovering.

“Yeah, it’s not pleasant,” said Shanahan. “The note was in his tunic, and when we got it back to the lab and put it under a microscope, we saw it was definitely his handwriting. So it’s open-and-shut, Blossom, and all I need to know is why.”

“It’s not . . .” I started, then buttoned it. There was no point arguing with Frank. Not now. As far as he was concerned it was suicide, my protesting wasn’t going to change that.

So I’d have to poke around myself. I didn’t like C-Dog much, and I wasn’t getting paid for my efforts, but when a fellow fae is killed a dick’s supposed to do something about it. Frank, good man though he was, wouldn’t understand.

“He was a wild one,” I finally said. “Who knows what he’d gotten into? I rarely saw him, and when I did he was running with those Fifth Avenue assholes.”