

# The Christmas Spirit

by Angie

*What if Christmas ... perhaps ... means a little bit more!"  
— Dr. Seuss, 'How the Grinch Stole Christmas!'*

*Author's note: This story takes place just after 'The Impossible Silence', coincidentally when the song featured was first released. Why did Devin decide to return when he did? Here's one possibility.*



Devin stood on Broadway, regarding the Christmas lights and marquees with a jaundiced eye. He had arrived by plane and bus, and somehow this had felt like the place to start.

He had left New York a long time ago, when he was barely an adult, and had not returned until now. But it was Christmas. He shivered a little at the cold winter wind that blew through the canyons of concrete and seemed to go right through him. He'd forgotten about that aspect of this city in winter. He usually contrived to be somewhere much warmer when winter came to this hemisphere, or the other. The weather wasn't bad for the time of year - a dusting of snow lingered, but looming clouds promised more white stuff. It was December, after all.

He carried nothing but a small dufflebag over his shoulder and had carefully chosen his clothing to be worn and serviceable, but relatively nondescript. He wished he had worn an overcoat instead of the leather bomber jacket, but that wouldn't fit the desired image. He walked with the confidence of a man in good physical shape and his facial scar did the rest. He blended in well, even with that. New Yorkers had seen it all.

Although he was living elsewhere, he'd been drawn back to the city of his birth - at least the part above the tunnels he knew, the part he'd escaped to, back then.

In truth, even before he'd 'disappeared', he had spent a lot of his spare time in the world above, far more often than Father knew, although Vincent had, since they shared a room. Vincent had said nothing, of course, merely waited for him to return and relate his adventures.

How many more adventures he could tell his brother now ... assuming his brother still lived. That thought made him straighten his back. How could he know that Vincent - or any of them - still lived below ground? What he did know was that he wanted to suss out the City, get a feel for it, and decide whether he should return ... sometime.

It had been ... a long time. New York City *had* changed, but not as much as he would have assumed. Cities changed their faces, but never their hearts or souls, he supposed. There were new buildings, old ones were older, some very much more decrepit than he expected, but Central Park was still there, and the Christmas decorations distracted him from any

deeper examinations. There were a lot of street people and bustle, but New Yorkers knew how to celebrate, how to enjoy the season. Everyone looked ... distracted and intense. Big city folk were like that everywhere.

Devin wandered far that day, farther than he ever had. He wanted to absorb the city of his birth, be a part of it again - although the latter thought only came to him after hours of walking around.

He could have just found an entry into the tunnels and gone to visit, but something prevented him. He didn't have a job in the city and was doing business in the south, where he was currently living, and where the rest of his stuff was, such as it was. He could not visit yet, with only a dufflebag to his name - even if that was padded with a significant amount of money.

How could he find out whether anyone was still living below? Did the entries still exist and could he access them even if he tried? He mused on that as he walked.

It took some time, and several exposures, for him to realize that a particular song was playing in many places he passed - from boombox radios being carried around by punks, loudly from the doorways of tiny cafes with steamed windows, more muted from shop fronts, pointedly by street vendors from scratchy cassette players, even from lit windows in alleys and apartment buildings. He stood and listened to it, finally, in front of a pub, then shrugged and went in. The tune was catchy, the words difficult to understand in places - and obviously Irish - so when he was seated at the bar with his mug of beer, he listened carefully. It seemed to be on a loop, not loudly, but insistently.

*'Got on a lucky one  
Came in eighteen to one  
I've got a feeling  
This year's for me and you  
So, Happy Christmas  
I love you, baby  
I can see a better time  
When all our dreams come true'*

Then the tempo changed and the Irish lilt became very prominent. The two voices, male and female, complemented each other and blended into a fine song, a toe-tapper.

*'They've got cars big as bars, they've got rivers of gold  
But the wind goes right through you, it's no place for the old  
When you first took my hand on a cold Christmas Eve  
You promised me Broadway was waiting for me'*

Devin smiled at the chorus. God, he loved this city. The people were cynical and knew themselves well. He had been away too long.

*'The boys of the NYPD choir  
Were singing "Galway Bay"  
And the bells were ringing out  
For Christmas day'*

*'You were handsome  
You were pretty, Queen of New York City'*

*When the band finished playing  
They howled out for more  
Sinatra was swinging  
All the drunks, they were singing  
We kissed on a corner  
Then danced through the night'*

Then the song got serious and somewhat vulgar and Devin almost choked on his beer, which was almost gone.

*'You're an old slut on junk  
Lying there almost dead  
On a drip in that bed  
You scumbag, you maggot  
You cheap, lousy faggot  
Happy Christmas, your arse  
I pray God it's our last'*

He waved at the bartender, who nodded and brought him another beer.

That too was very much New York, at least the one he had wandered through when he left the tunnels that night to seek his fortune, his only possession the prized and damning penknife. He had made getting it back, secretly, his last act of defiance. It was gratifying to know that the city - or its people at least - had no illusions. He had lost any he had very quickly in order to survive - and left as soon as he had enough cash to do so.

A little way down the bar there was a folded, much read newspaper. Devin grabbed it and idly scanned it. He wasn't sure what he was looking for, except that it was a place to start. He was sure no news of the tunnel community would be there, but there could be ... something, a hint that the tunnel folk still went above, not always unnoticed.

The big front page story was the exposure of a drug ring run by a few senior cops. He snorted. As if New York's finest didn't do more than sing Christmas carols! He had made a point of staying far away from them.

Several names jumped out at him as he read. The Assistant DA, who also got her picture in the article, was a looker, and obviously known to the press. The girl who had exposed the scam, a young street person, had apparently been chased after witnessing one of the accused cops shoot someone in a car - a person very different to what the cop had later claimed. Apparently, a deal gone wrong.

There was no picture of the woman, but Devin's radar woke up. Who but a young tunnel person would be looking for clothing in garbage cans, as this one had been, apparently? Most street people looked for food, not clothing. He knew that from his own experience. They went to one of the charities to find clothes - which were freely given. The article only mentioned a name, 'Laura'. It wasn't one he recognized, but the article said she was deaf too. Another clue. Handicapped people, especially young ones, did not last long on the street. She obviously wasn't destitute and she used sign, indicating education. Anomalies fascinated him.

Why had the deaf girl come forward? The ADA had praised her for doing so, as she had prevented a miscarriage of justice. That was another clue. Street people didn't rat to the cops, not for anything. Being deaf would not make it easy for her to approach the law. This one had, so she had probably told someone, who had recommended this course. Who? Vincent?

Father? It was a big assumption, of course, since he couldn't know that, but the suspicion was too much to discount, taken with the other facts.

Farther down, near the end of the article, it stated that the cops had got into an argument over what to do with the girl (whom they had kidnapped from a police station before she could make an official statement) and two of them had been killed. Stranger and stranger, since the perps had been slashed with knives, which didn't jive with men who had guns. Afraid of waking the neighbours? Too much not said made him suspicious.

Devin touched his scars and realized he might know more about the story than the press. So ... Vincent was still alive, and somehow this girl had been saved by him. Perhaps he had been the person who told her how to report. There was no further mention of the ADA, oddly. Was she involved with the tunnel community somehow? He was one hell of a guesser.

His curiosity now very strong, Devin realized he had found an excuse to come back to New York - and a job he could con his way into. The DAs office was always short-staffed and overworked, everyone knew that. They were the same everywhere. He wouldn't get the kind of deep scrutiny a regular lawyer's office would give him. He was a good con, certainly good enough to be a public prosecutor. He smiled. It was enough to convince him to leave the pub and he silently thanked the song for the diversion. On impulse, he asked the bartender the name of the song. '*Fairytale of New York*', he was told, and that got a laugh from him. The bartender nodded wryly.

Devin had some business to wrap up down south, but he would return, probably in the warmer weather.

The song, though, wasn't done with him yet. As he left the bar, the final words stuck in his mind and he hummed the tune down the street.

*"I could have been someone  
Well, so could anyone  
You took my dreams from me  
When I first found you  
I kept them with me, babe  
I put them with my own  
Can't make it all alone  
I've built my dreams around you*

Yes, he had built his dreams, not around a person, but a city, his city, New York. It was time come home. He was alone - but he had a family. He wanted to see them again soon.

Devin hummed the chorus to himself for several days. He had found both Christmas spirit and a gift in his city - the gift of knowing what he wanted to do.

*The boys of the NYPD choir  
Still singing "Galway Bay"  
And the bells are ringing out  
For Christmas day " \**

The END

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

*"It was Christmas Eve, babe  
In the drunk tank  
An old man said to me  
"Won't see another one"  
And then he sang a song  
The Rare Old Mountain Dew  
I turned my face away  
And dreamed about you*

*Got on a lucky one  
Came in eighteen to one  
I've got a feeling  
This year's for me and you  
So, Happy Christmas  
I love you, baby  
I can see a better time  
When all our dreams come true*

*They've got cars big as bars, they've got rivers of gold  
But the wind goes right through you, it's no place for the old  
When you first took my hand on a cold Christmas Eve  
You promised me Broadway was waiting for me*

*You were handsome  
You were pretty, Queen of New York City  
When the band finished playing  
They howled out for more  
Sinatra was swinging  
All the drunks, they were singing  
We kissed on a corner  
Then danced through the night*

*The boys of the NYPD choir  
Were singing "Galway Bay"  
And the bells were ringing out  
For Christmas day*

*You're a bum, you're a punk  
You're an old slut on junk  
Lying there almost dead  
On a drip in that bed  
You scumbag, you maggot  
You cheap, lousy faggot  
Happy Christmas, your arse  
I pray God it's our last*

*The boys of the NYPD choir  
Still singing "Galway Bay"  
And the bells are ringing out  
For Christmas day*

*I could have been someone  
Well, so could anyone  
You took my dreams from me  
When I first found you  
I kept them with me, babe  
I put them with my own  
Can't make it all alone  
I've built my dreams around you*

*The boys of the NYPD choir  
Still singing "Galway Bay"  
And the bells are ringing out  
For Christmas day "*