

# The Dead Dreamer

a *Carnival Row* fanfic

by Rodo

for *BookGirlFan*

“SHITE!” PHILO HEARD Turnus curse when he entered the building they were in the process of demolishing. “Shite, shite and double shite!”

“What is it?” Young Trip asked. The rest of them just looked on in confusion. They’d been gone for what? Half an hour, three quarters of one at the most. Any more and the foreman would dock their pay. What could have happened in that space of time? Had the wrong wall collapsed? Please not another broken pipe or open sewage, Philo prayed to the Martyr. It had been a month, and he swore he could still smell it sometimes.

“There’s a dead man in the second room.”

“Fuck!” one of the others cried beside him. “What do we do now?”

While the fauns argued among one another, and someone else was sent to fetch the foreman, Philo’s mind was elsewhere. In the room with the dead body, to be precise. He itched to take a look at it, to find out who he was, what had killed him. It had been half a year since his last case, since Vignette had come back into his life, but the instincts were still there. He’d been a good detective, he thought mournfully. A better one than a construction worker, at any rate.

“What are you making a fuss about now?” the foreman grouched when he arrived where they all huddled next to the house they were supposed to tear down. None of the fauns dared go inside, and Philo didn’t want to stand out any more than he already did – a half-blood that looked human save for the scars on his back.

“A dead body,” Turnus replied. He was the oldest of them, powerfully built with magnificent long horns and an aquiline nose. He was their unofficial leader, and the one who usually spoke for them.

“Well, what are you waiting for? We don’t have all day and need to get on with it!”

“A man, a fresh one,” Turnus slowly replied, as if he was speaking to an old man who was hard of hearing. The foreman definitely had his problems listening to what his workers told him, so it was probably for the best. Philo watched as he finally realised why they hadn’t just done what they did when they found a dead critch that had tried to flee the Row. Nobody cared about them; they were tossed into the river without fanfare, but a dead human was a different matter. The foreman’s face darkened and he ground his teeth.

“Show me!” he told Turnus, and the old puck nodded.

The moment the foreman crossed the threshold of the house, it was as if a spell had been broken, and the rest of them followed inside, Philo included. He peered over the foreman’s shoulder when he stopped a few steps into the room. The body was male, young, with wavy brown hair. His clothes were expensive, and his head was caked with slowly drying blood. On the floor next to him lay a piece of wood with a nail poking out – a remnant of the staircase they’d started dismantling earlier that day. If he strained his eyes, he could make out the blood coating the nail.

“Alright then,” the foreman said. “Back to the shack with you.”

“Can’t we just work around him?” one of the others asked while Philo’s eyes were still glued to the scene.

The foreman scoffed. “Are you mad? That’s a toff who bit it. The Constabulary is going to be all over this. Go back and wait.”

“But our money ...” another argued.

“There’s going to be no more money until they’re done. Now do as I say, or there won’t be any money tomorrow either. You too, half-blood!”

With some effort, Philo tore his eyes from the body and followed the others outside, to the shack they spent their breaks in. It was a flimsy box of thin wood, with equally rickety benches and a table they’d salvaged from one of the deserted buildings. They were next to the Row here, and the government had decided to reinforce the security measures on it, tearing down houses and bricking up everything, building a wall and guard posts, turning the Row into even more of a prison. And of course the critch were building it. Who else? It wasn’t as if they could say no – they all needed the money. But for once, Philo’s mind wasn’t

occupied with the strange irony of building his own prison. His mind was still on the dead body, no matter how much he wished he could stop himself.



The Constabulary arrived half an hour later, polished boots on ancient cobble, spreading out around the crime scene. In the shack, Philo wondered who they'd sent – hopefully someone who didn't know him. If not, he might just end up back in a cell, with another murder he hadn't committed to his name. But there was nothing he could do but wait.

When the door opened, Philo was sitting on one of the benches with his head against the wall and his eyes closed.

"These are the workers," the foreman told the policeman, and Philo opened his eyes. It was both better and worse than he had imagined. Better in that they had sent the one constable who knew him and who wouldn't accuse him of murder without proof, and worse in that they had sent, well, Berwick. If it had been someone else, Philo might have gotten away with a fake name. But when Berwick let his eyes roam over the assembled crowd, they naturally stopped at Philo, the lone non-faun, and Philo could see the precise moment he was recognized. Berwick opened his mouth, then closed it, then repeated both motions.

"Thank you," he finally told the foreman.

The foreman nodded and left, closing the door behind him, while Berwick had visible trouble trying to get himself together.

"The body," Philo reminded him. "You're supposed to ask us who found him, when, and so on."

"Philo."

Philo felt the eyes of everyone in the room on himself and tried to act like he didn't notice. He'd gotten good at that recently. All his life, he'd tried to avoid drawing attention, but the past half a year, it had followed him whenever he left the flat he shared with Vignette. On the Row, he looked as out of place as he had felt his entire life. It was terrifying and freeing at the same time.

"Berwick," he replied with a nod.

"What—" Berwick began, but Philo cut him off.

"Can we do this later?"

Berwick let his eyes roam over the curious pucks that were the audience for

their little reunion. Philo knew about the rumours that had spread on the Row. Some said he wasn't actually a critch, he'd just fallen in love with Vignette and told a lie to be with her. Others thought he was there on orders of the Constabulary, sent to keep an eye on things. Those voices grew quieter the longer he stayed without anything happening. And those who had grown to know him while he was still an inspector tended to say that it all made sense, that now they knew why he was a nice one. They said that he'd concealed his true identity to help their people. Very few guessed right, that Philo was just a man who would rather be anywhere else, but who didn't have much of a choice.

"Of course," Berwick finally said, then he cleared his throat and addressed the room at large. "Who found the body?"

Turnus raised his hand.

"When was this?"

"When we got back from our lunch break. So around one, maybe."

"Did you see anything suspicious, before or after your break?"

Turnus shook his head, and so did Philo and the rest, when Berwick turned his face towards them.

"And how long was your lunch break?"

"About half an hour," Turnus answered. "He wasn't there before."

"Did any of you recognize the man?"

Again, a chorus of nos and shaking heads. Philo doubted they had anything to contribute to the investigation. Just about the only thing they could do was narrow down the time of death. Berwick still took his notes religiously, and Philo could feel he was about to talk to him again, when someone knocked against the door.

"You about done, Berwick?" an unfamiliar voice asked. "The inspector wants you at the crime scene."

"Yes," Berwick called back, shooting Philo a look that promised that they would talk, sooner or later.

"Can we go then?" Turnus asked, and Berwick nodded. They all followed Berwick outside, and Philo did his best to keep his head down. He spotted some familiar faces back at the demolition site, among the uniforms. Luckily, the foreman had accepted that they wouldn't get any work done and dismissed them to be escorted back to the Row with their half-day's pay. No unaccompanied fae allowed outside the Row, these days. But they were still needed to work, and so some humans had found work herding them back and forth, shooting at those that

tried to run. There was a short walk, with only two minders, and Philo listened to the others wondering if they could get something else for the afternoon.

At one of the few official entrances to the Row, Philo and the others showed their papers (false ones, in Philo's case), and the guards took meticulous notes of who left and who came. Nobody was supposed to enter the Row in secret these days, and much less were any critch allowed to leave without a good reason, nor could they fail to return on time. Back inside, Philo stood still for a moment and looked back outside the cage made of brick and barbed wire, wondering how long it would take for them to force them all to wear shackles outside. Then he shook his head in an effort to rid himself of these dark thoughts, and headed back home.



"You've been silent today," Vignette told him, when they lay in bed together that night. She was stretched out half on top of him, one hand drawing lazy circles on his shoulder blade. "Did anything happen?"

Philo sighed and buried his head deeper in the pillow. "Something did happen," he admitted. "I only got half a day's pay, for one. Someone got murdered at the construction site. The Constabulary cordoned everything off."

He felt Vignette tense. "Did anybody recognize you?"

Philo nodded. "Berwick."

"The decent man?"

"Yes. We didn't have time to talk, but I don't think he'll rat me out to Dombey or Flute. He tried to warn me, after all."

Philo felt more than heard Vignette hum against shoulder. "He was your friend, wasn't he?"

He thought about this for a moment. He and Berwick had worked together for years, ever since Berwick had started at the Constabulary. He was the only one of his colleagues who Philo would have said he was close to, and the only one he actually liked to go drink a beer with after a case. But were they friends? Probably not. Philo didn't have friends, except for Darius, who was more of a brother than a friend. Friendship required trust, and Philo had only ever tried to trust two people with his secret.

"Not quite," he finally answered. "But I would have liked to have had him as one."



The next day, they worked at a different construction site, and Philo was glad for it. It would have been distracting to see the place where the body had been, and to wonder if they'd found the killer yet. Would a critch be blamed? It was close to the Row, after all. Who had the victim been? The questions still tormented him, but as he cleared the rubble, they didn't distract him too much from his work. Until the foreman called him, that is.

"Hey, half-blood! Somebody here to speak to you!"

Berwick was easy to recognize even from a distance. He was tall and wore his uniform, with his helmet under his arm. The foreman eyed Philo uneasily when he walked over. Maybe he thought it had been him who killed the guy.

"Berwick," Philo said in greeting.

"Philo."

"Is this going to take long?" the foreman interjected. "If you don't work, you don't get paid."

Philo and Berwick exchanged a glance.

"It's okay," Philo said. "Will you take me back to the Row after, Constable?"

Berwick nodded and put his helmet back on. Only they didn't go head for the Row quite yet. Instead, Berwick bought something to eat at a street cart and directed Philo to a quiet bench, next to the river, that had seen better days. Philo concentrated on the fried sausage in a bun he was given, waiting for Berwick start talking. He was the one with the questions, after all.

"So. You're alive," he eventually said.

Philo shrugged and took another bite out of the sausage and watched as a gull dove into the river.

"*How?* The others said you were taken away on orders. I thought it was Dombey."

"It wasn't."

"Who was it, then?"

Philo hesitated for a moment. He wasn't sure if he wanted to tell. Oh, he *wanted*, that wasn't the problem. He had always wanted to tell. He'd just known better from the moment he was old enough to know that he was half-fae, and old habits died hard. In the end, he thought, it didn't really matter. Breakspear was dead, and so was his wife. Still...

“Are you sure you want to know?” he asked Berwick. And Berwick, to his credit, didn’t immediately answer and instead thought the question and its implications over. He’d always been one of the smarter constables. Hopefully he’d get promoted soon. The Burgue needed decent coppers, especially now.

“Yes,” he finally answered.

“Absalom Breakspear,” Philo told him, and he kept an eye on Berwick’s face. His eyes widened, out of surprise, not because he didn’t believe him.

“The chancellor? Why would he want to get you out of prison?”

Philo wondered how best to put it. The entire thing was a tangled affair in his mind, and every possible approach seemed to leave something of it out. In the end, he decided to tell it chronologically. “He thought I’d killed Aisling Querelle. They had been in love, back when he was a boy, and so he wanted to get revenge. Until we sorted out that it was neither of us who killed her, and he let me go.”

Out of the corner of his eye, Philo watched Berwick mull over that information. “In love, so you mean ...”

Philo nodded.

Berwick breathed out heavily and Philo saw how he looked at his face, scrutinizing it and comparing it to another well known one. Philo wondered what conclusions he came to. He’d looked into the mirror and compared his features with both Breakspear’s and Aisling’s, but he never quite knew what to make of himself. He looked a little like both, he supposed. And not too much like either.

“You ever figure out who did it, then?”

Philo thought of the dead bodies and the fear of losing Vignette. “His wife.”

“That won’t exonerate you,” Berwick decided, after a while.

“No. It won’t. I’m not sure it matters much. My secret is out now, and there’s no going back.”

For a while they sat together, and Philo wondered what went through Berwick’s head. Had it been difficult to wrap his mind around a betrayal like Philo’s? Had it cost him much to keep seeing him and not just the changeling that had lied to him? And where would they go from here? He decided to go for a distraction.

“So, have you found out who our dead body was?”

Berwick’s head shot around, and after a moment, he nodded. “Robert Pike, Anatheus Pike’s second son.”

Philo whistled. One of the most prominent Hardtackers, now that Ritter



Longerbane was dead, and the favoured successor, before Longerbane's daughter had proven to be even more shrewd and astute than her father.

"Flute must be in a tizzy."

"Oh, he is," Berwick assured him with a hint of a smile. "The chancellor and the leader of the opposition are after him for a solution, but it's a bit of a mystery, what happened. Robert was something of a black sheep of the family, lots of secrets that nobody wants to tell us anything about. Rumour has it he didn't agree with his father's politics in the least. How that might have killed him is up to anyone's guess, but Dombey had me running down leads all day yesterday. Nothing."

"Dombey?"

"He's inspector now," Berwick told him, rolling his eyes.

Philo had to laugh when he heard that. At least someone had benefited from him being exposed. It would be funny, if Dombey wasn't usually too blind to see what was in front of his eyes, unless it agreed with his politics.

"That's going to be a hard one, then," Philo told him.

Berwick shook his head slightly. "I'm supposed to find out why he was on the construction site. Do you have any ideas?"

Philo thought about it for a moment. A young man, from a good family, being on this side of the river, where there were only factories, working class neighbourhoods and the Row. And he'd died just a stone's throw from the Row, in a half-demolished house that was making way for a wall, the better to keep the critch contained.

"You said he didn't agree with his father's politics? How exactly?"

"He was friends with another young man who runs in equalist circles, who told us that he'd argued with his father and brother over the treatment of the fae. His friend thought he was in love with one, something about how he got this faraway look when he talked about how fae were people too."

Philo and Berwick exchanged a look at that. Neither had ever been a young idealist, Berwick had been a realist by inclination, and Philo by necessity. But they had both met enough rich young men who thought they could change the world with a couple of grand gestures and the right words. Usually, they were piss drunk and unable to finish a sentence while still remembering how it had started.

"I might have an idea, then."

"You do?"

Philo hummed and nodded. "Is the demolition site still off limits?"

Berwick nodded.

"Then let's go. I'll show you."



The construction site was deserted, save for a constable, who looked barely old enough to grow a beard, guarding it. He looked at Berwick and Philo with naked curiosity in his eyes, but was too shy to ask his questions. Once they were out of sight and close to the crime scene, Philo motioned for Berwick to follow him. It was a little disorienting to see a place that was usually full of activity so empty and silent, but Philo cast his eyes upward, over the stairwells and half collapsed walls. When they reached the crime scene, he stood still for a moment.

"So, why are we here now?" Berwick asked. "Why do you think he was here?"

"Look up," Philo told him. "What do you see?"

Berwick did as he was told and Philo watched him take in the area with a frown of confusion on his face. He supposed very few people would think of it, unless they had been caged somewhere. Once you spent some time in captivity, looking for exits and entries became second nature.

"A ruin. There's absolutely nothing here."

Philo had to smile. "It's not about what's here. Do you know what's on the other side of that wall?" Philo pointed east.

"The Row," Berwick answered. "That's why they're tearing this place down. These houses are full of bolt holes that the critch use for smuggling."

"Not here," Philo told him. "This was just an empty house with its doors and windows nailed shut. And no secret holes. We'd have found them, and there's less than you might imagine. What's on the other side of this wall isn't just the Row. It's a house on the Row. Follow me."

Philo went out of the room again and up the stairs that had been stripped of their banisters a day ago. He walked up to the first floor, then the second, which was as far as it still went. The roof and third storey were already a heap of rubble in front of the house, and above them, dark clouds were starting to build up.

"What now?" Berwick asked.

Philo took a quick look around, then spotted the bits of rubble that still clung to the other back of the other house, the one that was part of the Row. He

grabbed one as a handhold and another as a foothold. It was only a storey, and he was on the roof within moments. Down below Berwick stared at him.

“You coming or what?”

It took Berwick a little longer, and since he wasn’t as much of a climber as Philo, Philo had to help him up the last bit. Once on the roof, Berwick brushed powdered brick from his pristine uniform. Philo had long ago given up on bothering with that.

They stood at the top of The Burgue and could overlook the rooftops from the battlements to Balefire Hall. Philo had always loved how the city looked from on high. He blamed it on his fae blood, just like that little voice in the back of his head that told him he should be able to spread his wings and fly. Everything looked calm and orderly and less like an anthill up here.

“So you think he wanted to get through to the Row,” Berwick surmised. “But you’re forgetting something.”

Berwick was pointing at the hastily erected barbed wire that marked the borders of the Row, but Philo just smiled and walked over to it.

“It’s just barbed wire, Berwick.”

He walked over to the makeshift fence and grabbed two wires, then carefully crawled between them. His shirt got stuck twice, and he’d need to repair it once he was home, but it didn’t take more than a few moments. On the other side, he turned around to look back at the constable, who stared at him through the wires. This was how they lived now, Philo thought. On opposite sides of the fissure that divided the city.

“It’s not quite as easy as all that,” Philo explained. “Unless you know what to look for. Pucks don’t like climbing onto roofs with their hooves, while the fae don’t like to tangle with barbed wire unless they have to. It’s really easy for them to get their wings caught on a barb. The worst that can happen to a human is a scratch on your back. But apart from that: the guards don’t usually patrol the roofs near where the construction happens, because the buildings can be unstable. They stay on the ground and don’t bother during the day because of all the workers. It’s the easiest way in and out of the Row if you don’t know one of the better ones.”

Berwick stared at him with narrowed eyes. “The better ones?”

Philo smiled crookedly. “Don’t expect me to tell you.”

For a moment, Berwick’s dark eyes bore into Philo. The camaraderie of the

day forgotten in favour of the gulf between fae and copper. Then Berwick sighed.

“So you think he wanted to get into the Row. And then what? He upset some fae and they followed him out to get rid of him where it wouldn’t attract suspicion?”

Philo snorted. “They would have done a great job of it, if that’s the first place your mind goes. No. I don’t think so. I think someone followed Pike, or saw him while he was waiting for the workers to go on lunch break, and they saw their opportunity while he was looking for the best way up.”

Berwick pondered that for a bit while the sky darkened further above their heads. Philo glanced upwards when the first distant sounds of thunder rolled over the city. It was starting to smell like rain too.

“I’ll go home, if you don’t mind,” Philo told him. “I don’t want to get caught in the squall.”

Berwick nodded, and he watched as Philo climbed through the barbed wire again. Together, they climbed down the building and left the rubble behind with a nod to the still curious young constable who was looking at the sky with worry as well. By the time Philo was past the gate, it had started raining. This time, he didn’t look back as he hurried back home.



Two evenings later, Philo was doing the dishes when someone knocked on the door. He exchanged a questioning glance over his shoulder with Vignette, who shrugged and stood up to go to the door.

“It’s probably Tourmaline.”

But Philo could tell that that wasn’t the case when Vignette opened the door and it wasn’t Tourmaline’s voice that spoke, but a male one. They were too quiet for Philo to tell what they spoke of, and so he kept scrubbing the last of the plates. He was just drying his hands off when Vignette returned to the kitchen.

“It’s for you,” she said, her face carefully neutral.

A moment later, Berwick entered the kitchen, looking awkwardly out of place in their small flat. It only had a kitchen, a bedroom and a small hallway, even the bathroom they had to share with the other tenants. He looked around for a moment, taking in the peeling, faded wallpaper and the chipped furniture, until Philo waved him to one of the three chairs that stood around the table. He himself took the one that allowed him to look straight at the doorway, where

Vignette still lingered. He waved her inside as well, and she took a seat on the remaining chair, opposite Berwick.

“May I introduce Vignette Stonemoss?” Philo told Berwick.

Berwick stretched out his hand over the table after a couple of seconds of staring at Vignette, and Vignette took it, equally hesitantly.

“I’ve told you about Berwick, of course.”

Vignette nodded.

“Why are you here?” Philo asked. “And how do you know where I live anyway?”

“I asked,” Berwick said simply. “I’ve spent the entire day trying to find out why Pike wanted to get into the Row, but nobody would talk to me. So I thought I’d try to find the one person in this place who would. They weren’t as shy when it came to telling me where you live.”

Philo could imagine. He’d bet there were at least fifty people who knew he’d got a visit from the Constabulary by now. He exchanged a look with Vignette, who hopefully wouldn’t get in trouble with the Black Raven again. Dahlia’s hate for the Constabulary had only intensified after they had all but destroyed what had passed for normality on the Row before. Philo wondered how many people thought he might rat them out, and it annoyed him. He had worked all day and he was tired. All he wanted was to belong, sometimes. Here, in this small flat with its terrible plumbing and creaking floors, he belonged. But outside, he never did.

“Are you really surprised they didn’t tell you a thing?” Philo asked Berwick.

Berwick raised an eyebrow. “No. But I thought you could help me.”

“I don’t work for the Constabulary any more. And besides, they’re not going to be any more eager to speak to me. Especially now that you showed up on my doorstep.”

Berwick sighed and stared past Philo at the wall. Vignette looked at both of them in turns, and Philo wondered what went through her head. Later, he thought. They’d talk later, when they were alone again.

“Flute is really on my case on this one, Philo.”

“I thought it was Dombey’s case?”

Berwick shot him a long suffering look. “And who has to do the legwork, now that he’s inspector? He prefers to deal with the leads that lead to the victim’s friends. Pike senior is adamant it’s they who are at fault.”

I bet, Philo thought. “And Dombey is only too eager to go along with that, I

suppose. Does he even know that the victim claimed to be in love with a fae?”

At that, Berwick blushed and tried to hide behind his moustache.

“Ah. You left that bit out. A good idea. So he thinks what, one of his friends lured him to a secluded place to kill him as retribution for his father’s politics?”

“More or less.”

For a while, Philo stared through the empty doorway and thought. He thought about who he was, and who he wanted to be. Who he could be. And about that poor young man who had died, maybe while he was trying to be with the woman he loved. Philo looked at Vignette who still kept an eye on Berwick like he was a threat. When she noticed it, she raised a knowing eyebrow at him. At his core, Philo realised, he wasn’t someone who could let these things go. He hadn’t been when he was an inspector, and he wasn’t now that he did whatever odd jobs he could get.

“Alright. I’ll see what I can do,” he promised Berwick. “But you need to find out what you can outside the Row. Talk to his friends again. And his family. Someone out there has a motive and no alibi, and you need to find out who.”



“Do you think you’ll find out who Robert Pike was in love with?” Vignette asked while they were getting ready to go to bed that night.

Philo sighed and sat down on his side of the bed. “Who knows. But I want to know.”

Vignette hummed and Philo felt her sit down on the other side. Then she wrapped her arms around him from behind and laid her head on his shoulder. “I do too. It’s a familiar story, isn’t it? A man falling for a fae. Only this one didn’t have a happy end.”

“Do they ever?”

Vignette laughed and slapped him on the shoulder, and Philo had to smile. He turned his head and pressed a kiss to her hair.

“What are you going to tell Dahlia?” he asked her.

“The truth, I thought,” Vignette said. “It has nothing to do with the Black Raven, so she shouldn’t be bothered.”

“Could you ask her if she knows something?”

“Do you think she’d tell?”

Philo shrugged with the other shoulder, so as not to disturb her, and he stared around the room. His home. His first real one. First he had lived in the orphanage, then he'd joined the army, and after that, he'd lodged with old widows or at hotels, not bothering with a home since it was just him. In the corner stood Aisling Querelle's phonograph and the cylinders that preserved her voice. The bed was as creaky as any at the orphanage. In the night-stand on her side of the bed, Vignette kept her battered copy of *Kingdoms of the Moon*. It wasn't much, but it was theirs. He didn't want to lose it, and he feared that that was precisely what getting involved with Berwick would lead to. But he still wanted to know.



The next morning, Philo found himself standing in front of the Tetterby Hotel while the rain drizzled down on him. It had changed quite a bit in the last six months. No longer was it one of the city's most prominent brothels; the clientele was put off by having their comings and goings registered at the gate. But it was still home to whores, and a lot of other refugees besides. The rooms were crammed and it was once again a hotel. Madame Moira's flexibility in the face of change was to be admired. As for the whores, they worked outside the Row now, whenever a man ordered for one to be brought to his house by a discreet servant. When he walked in the door, Philo saw the new catalogue with their pictures in one corner, and a couple of young fauns kicking a ball around in the other.

"Is Tourmaline in?" he asked at the reception, and got a nod in response.

Tourmaline was in her room, which she now shared with two others, smoking as she stared out the window. One of the other girls used the murky light for darning her stockings, and the third was snoring softly in the bed.

"What do you want, Philo?" Tourmaline asked, eyes still fixed on the street below. When he didn't answer, she turned around. "I can recognize your tread by now. Plus I saw you staring up at the Tetterby for longer than any normal person would in this weather. How's Vignette?"

"She's fine," Philo said. "She sends her regards. I wanted to talk to you about something else."

"That something else have something to do with the copper who was asking around for you yesterday?"

“It might.”

Tourmaline stared at him. “You’re seriously going to get involved with those fuckers again?”

“It’s a one time thing.”

“Sure. Sure. It always is. Until it’s not.”

There was a tension between them, as usual. Philo didn’t know what to do about it, but somehow, he and Tourmaline tended to rub each other the wrong way. Initially, he had assumed it was about Vignette, but as time went on, he realised it wasn’t. They were just too different from each other. The tension didn’t break until the girl who had been darnning her stockings coughed. Then it flooded out of the room as if it had never been there in the first place.

“Let’s hear it then. What does the copper want?”

“There was a murder a couple of days ago. A young man by the name of Robert Pike. He died trying to get into the Row, and rumour has it that he was in love with a fae. I thought I’d start my search here. Figured a young man with a taste for fae might have come here at some point.”

Tourmaline looked at the other girl, who shrugged and shook her head. “Pike. Like the politician?”

“His second son.”

“Ouch. But no, never heard of him. If he was here, he used a different name. And none of the girls here have any romances with humans going on, as far as I know. Is the girl a suspect?”

Philo shook his head. “He never made it that far, did he? No, I just want to know what she might know about who would want him dead.”

Tourmaline nodded and then turned back towards the window. Philo made his goodbyes and left the Tetterby. Outside, it was still raining. When he looked up, he saw that Tourmaline was still watching the street. Philo dipped his head at her, then headed further up the street. His first hunch might not have paid off, but he wasn’t out of ideas yet.

Despite the weather, Mima Sawsaan’s shrine was busy as usual, with fae praying to their saint and leaving offerings in the little chalices. The shrine was adorned with flowers and leaves, and while he waited for the Mima to get around to him, Philo thought about how strange these fae customs felt to him, even after everything. He was used to being surrounded by fauns, centaurs, trow and fae. Their traditions and ways were slowly becoming second nature to him. But their



religion remained as foreign as ever. He couldn't even figure out why. It wasn't as if he'd ever been truly devoted to the Martyr, even if he had been raised in his light.

"What can I help you with, Inspector?" Mima Sawsaan asked, drawing Philo back into the present.

"I'm no longer an inspector, Mima," he told her, but she just waved him off. A couple of fae children ran past, delaying her reply.

"You may not have the title, but I have the feeling that you still are one, at heart. What brings you to my shrine?"

"A case, as it happens."

"See, I told you you're still an inspector. Now what can I help you with?"

Philo sighed. He was only too aware of the other people in the shrine, who were probably listening in on their conversation more than for an answer from Saint Titania.

"I'm looking for a fae that may be in a relationship with a human, and who might be distressed about him not showing up when he promised to."

Mima Sawsaan hummed and looked back to the shrine, but Philo had the nagging feeling that she was really looking back in time. "And why are you looking for this fae?"

"She isn't in trouble," Philo promised. "I only want to ask her a few questions about her lover."

"He isn't going to show up, is he?"

"No," Philo said.

Mima Sawsaan sighed deeply. "The third house on Glover Lane, the one with the green door. She lives on the second floor. Her name is Carlina. And inspector, be gentle with her."

"I will," Philo promised. When he turned around, he felt the eyes of the Mima and her flock on his back. It made his scars itch and he wished he could stretch the wings he didn't remember. He didn't breathe until he was around the corner, out of their sight.



Glover Lane was one of the better parts of the Row, even if it was still run-down by human standards. However, there were no homeless living on the street – if only by virtue of it being too narrow for that – and the houses were in good

repair, even if their latest coat of paint was from the last century. He found the house with the green – or what passed for green after half a century of wind and weather were done with it – door without too much trouble. On the second floor were two flats. In the first one lived and aged puck who slammed the door in his face when she saw him, and so Philo turned his attention to the other one. He knocked on the door hesitantly. It took a while until he heard steps and the door opened. The fae on the other side was pretty, extremely so, even. She was a little older than Philo, if he was any judge. It was always a little tricky with fae. Her blonde hair was long and not in a faerish style, just like the dress she was wearing was human in cut as well. She'd been in The Burgue for a while, then.

“Can I help you?” she asked. Her voice caught in that way that suggested she'd been crying recently.

“Carlina?”

“Yes. Are you one of Robert's friends?” she said hopefully.

With a motion that had become second nature to him in his years with the police, Philo took off his hat and held it to his chest. “I'm afraid not. Can I come in?”

The young fae looked up at him with suspicion in her eyes, and Philo saw how her grip on the door tightened.

“I may not be Robert's friend, but I am here because of him.”

After another tense moment, Carlina opened the door and allowed him to pass. Her flat was nicer than his own, with better furniture and probably its own bathroom. Everything was old, but well cared for. Carlina led Philo into her drawing room and he took a seat on an ageing brown sofa, while she nervously sat down in a chair.

“You said you had news about Robert. Is he alright?”

Philo sighed. He done this so often, he still knew the routine, but after half a year, it felt incredibly rusty. Especially since he had never fully mastered it in the first place. “I'm afraid not. Robert Pike was found dead four days ago.”

The tears weren't a surprise, and neither was the sobbing, but all Philo could do was sit by and wait it out. He patted his pockets for a handkerchief, and when he found one he handed it to her, but Carlina didn't take it. She just wiped her eyes with her sleeves. It felt like half an eternity that he just sat there and watched as this woman's entire world fell apart, until finally the crying and sobbing tapered off.

“How?” she asked.

“He was murdered,” Philo told her.

He didn’t know what he expected, another bout of crying, maybe. Whatever it was, the quiet, resigned sigh and the sob that sounded more like a hiccup surprised him.

“Are you with the police, then?”

“Not any more. They don’t employ half-bloods.” He gave her a crooked grin, and hoped that admission would help her open up. “But an old friend of mine is working on the case. He spent all day yesterday trying to find you, but nobody would talk to him. So he came to me. They’re still looking for a suspect, and hope that you might know who would want to kill him.”

“Isn’t that obvious?” Carlina asked, the sadness in her voice replaced by anger.

Philo shrugged. “If it were, they’d have a suspect already.”

Carlina scoffed. “No. They’d never suspect him.”

“Anatheus Pike?”

She nodded. “Robert didn’t get along with his father. His brother was almost as bad, but it was his father who he really hated. That was even before he met me. Robert was just different. Curious, interested in seeing the world and all manner of different people. He didn’t consider those not like him inferior, he just wanted to understand them better. That’s what was so intriguing about him when he first talked to me, you know? I was born here, I haven’t seen much beyond the walls of the city, but I’ve always wanted to.”

“How about you start at the beginning,” Philo suggested. “I’d like to know anything you can tell me about him. About how you met, who knew about you, that sort of thing.”

And so she did. Carlina was a singer. Before the Chancellor’s murder, she often sang in cafés, restaurants and clubs all over the city. That sort of work had since dried up, since the good citizens of The Burgue didn’t like to be reminded of the existence of fae if they didn’t have to, but sometimes, she still left to sing in a café or a club. One of these clubs was a gentlemen’s club geared towards the more open-minded young gentlemen of Burguish society, and that was where she had met Robert Pike approximately five months ago. Robert, to hear her tell it, had been fascinated by her singing the first time he came, and he paid her a compliment afterwards without assuming too much. Carlina had been charmed, and things had developed from there.

“He’d tell me things he couldn’t even tell his friends,” she confessed. “He was afraid that they’d use him against his family and wasn’t sure if he wanted that, even though they didn’t get along.”

Pike’s mother had died the year before, and ever since, it had just been him, his father and his brother. His elder sister had been married for five years already. His mother had been more moderate, politically speaking, and Robert had been her favourite, so her loss had hit him hard. Robert’s brother Jeremiah was already following in his father’s footsteps, and now his father expected the same of his second son: a law practice, a commission in the army, some respectable, Burguish profession.

“But Robert wasn’t like that. He liked art, not just as a patron. He could draw well, and he wanted to see the world. He had been dreaming of becoming a journalist.”

“Not a respectable profession for a son of Anatheus Pike,” Philo surmised.

Carlina nodded. “When he told his father that he wouldn’t study law, that’s when everything went wrong.”

Pike Senior hadn’t taken no for an answer. Robert hadn’t either. They had argued. That was shortly before Carlina had had her last engagement at the club, a week ago. Robert had told her all about it, about how much he hated everything, how he was afraid of what his father might do to him, how he wished he could just run away. Carlina had suggested that he try. And so they had come up with a plan. If Robert couldn’t change his father’s mind, he’d sneak into the Row, and she’d hide him. Later, if he wanted, he could leave, but Carlina had said that he had told her he would document the wrongs done in the name of the Republic against the fae. He had been full of hope and plans when they’d kissed each other goodbye that evening.

“I knew something was wrong when he didn’t show up,” Carlina told Philo when her story was finished. “I thought his father had locked him up, but not that. Not that I would never see him again.” Tears welled up in her eyes again. “It’s all my fault.”

“It’s not,” Philo told her. “You didn’t kill him. You tried to help him. You gave him hope. Sometimes that is all we can do when the world is against us.”

“But still, he wouldn’t have died if he’d never known me.”

“Maybe,” Philo conceded. “Or maybe he would have killed himself without you. In any case, the one to blame is the one that killed him.”

“It’s Pike,” she assured him again.

Philo nodded, and wished her the best when he left her flat and walked back home past puddles and melting muck. He wasn’t quite as sure as the singer, though. People like Anatheus Pike didn’t usually do their own killing, nor did they follow someone to a secluded construction site. And whatever else he was, Anatheus Pike was a father. There were other ways to deal with sons that had become an embarrassment to the family. He sighed, and wondered if Berwick had had more luck.



That evening, Berwick paid them another visit in their flat. This time, he didn’t bother to sit down at the table. Instead he and Philo faced each other in the small, empty hallway. Berwick took off his helmet and leaned against the wall while Philo listened to their neighbours arguing.

“Did you find out anything?” he asked.

Philo nodded. “I found her. Apparently the victim was in trouble with his family and was trying to run away from them. She thinks it was Anatheus Pike.”

Berwick frowned and shook his head. “It wasn’t him.”

“What makes you so sure?”

“He has an alibi.”

“A good one?” Philo asked, although people like Pike rarely had bad ones.

“Parliament was in session. It went one hour over the allotted time, even.”

“So the fifty most powerful people in the entire Republic are his alibi?” Philo shook his head in defeat. “That’s a dead end.”

“Don’t I know it,” Berwick agreed. “Dombey has ordered surveillance on the victim’s known associates.”

Philo snorted. “Still looking in the wrong place, then. The key is the family. You need to talk to the household, figure out what they know, and what all their alibis are. Whether they noticed anything odd.”

“I already have. None of them did.”

“Talk to them again, then. You know more now. I don’t believe none of them noticed that their master and his son argued repeatedly in the last few months. Robert wanted to become a journalist or a painter, from what the girl told me. His father wanted him to follow in his and his brother’s footsteps. Start with that

and see what else you can get out of them. Someone in that house knows something that will point you towards the killer. And double check the alibis for all of them, down to the last scullery maid.”

Berwick listened and nodded, then stared awkwardly past Philo for a few heartbeats. It took Philo a bit before he realised that he had spotted Vignette, waiting for him to join her in the doorway to their bedroom.

“Can’t you come with me?” Berwick asked.

Philo sighed and didn’t answer for a few moment. “You know I can’t, Berwick. People will want to know who I am, and I can’t risk that. You’re on your own with this one.”

Berwick nodded, resigned, then put his helmet back on his head. He left the flat with a goodbye to both of them and Philo sighed deeply when he heard him down on the next landing. He wished he could go with Berwick, he really did. Then he looked back at Vignette, reminding himself of everything he had to lose. She smiled, and he returned it.



Three days later, Philo was back on the demolition site that had started it all, hammering at the brittle walls and carrying the rubble away. It was hard work, and he was sweating so much his shirt was soaked at the back, but what really got to him was the mystery. Something had to have happened, since they could proceed with their work. Had Berwick found the killer? Or had Dombey found someone to blame the murder on? Or maybe Flute had just gotten pressure from above about hindering the construction of the wall that was meant to protect the city from the destructive elements contained within the Row. He had to snort at that thought. As if the inhabitants of the Row were any worse than the rest of them.

It was during their lunch break when the foreman poked his head into their little shack again and nodded at Philo. “Come on, half-blood, that copper is asking for you again.”

Philo frowned at his food and finished it off hastily with a few bites, then followed the foreman out the door.

“Do I need to worry about this?” the gruff man asked.

Philo frowned. “No.”

“Good. Make sure it stays that way or you’re out of a job, mark my words.”

Philo did, not that he hadn't known that before. He knew how thin the ice he walked on every time he left the Row was. Berwick was waiting for him beyond the perimeter of the construction site, where the new wall already loomed above them, topped with barbed wire and interrupted by the occasional guard post. They waited until the foreman returned to his own lunch before talking.

"You have news, then?" Philo asked.

Berwick nodded. "I thought I'd let you know. It was the brother. We cuffed him late last evening, and he confessed a couple of hours later. Dombey and Flute aren't happy, Pike is fuming, but the chancellor made it clear that we should find whoever was responsible, not whoever makes an easy target, so he's happy, at least."

Philo nodded. "I'll tell the girl, when I see her. How did you figure it out?"

Berwick huffed. "You were right. It was the alibi. He had a good one, but he didn't count on the chambermaid. He said he was studying in his rooms, and nobody saw or heard him leave, but the girl brought fresh flowers for the vase shortly before lunch. I made sure to ask everyone what they had all done that day in detail, and the chambermaid told me he wasn't there."

"And the motive?"

"He thought the brother would shame his family and ruin his own political career. Anatheus Pike didn't know about the girl, but Jeremiah did. He found it out through some rumour and said he didn't want to believe it, until he saw his brother sneak out that day. So he followed him out through the window and down a tree. When he realised what Robert was up to, well. He hoped we'd pin it on one of Robert's friends."

Philo took it all in and thought back to the young man lying on the ground like a broken doll, surrounded by rubble. Brothers. He wondered what it would be like to have one. Well, he did, but he wasn't exactly keen on meeting the chancellor when he was partly responsible for the man's mother's death. Maybe one of them would kill the other too, if they ever met. What a sobering thought.

"I couldn't have done it without you, Philo," Berwick told him.

"You're a good constable, Berwick. You would have figured it out eventually."

Berwick looked at him, and Philo could see him search for the right words. It was true, though. Berwick was one of the good ones. He just needed to learn to trust in protocol and to think a little outside of the box every now and then. He wasn't the fastest, but he got there in the end.

“I mean it,” he finally said. “I owe you one, Philo. Thank you. If there is anything I can do for you, just say it.”

Philo thought about it for a few moments. Maybe it was the talk of brothers that had brought it on, but there actually was something. “There might be. Are you free next Swansday? There’s somewhere I’d like to go.”

“Where?”

“Bleakness Keep.”



Bleakness Keep hadn’t changed in the months Philo hadn’t been there, except it was fuller. He could hear the prisoners argue and scream in their cells as Berwick guided him up the familiar stairs, past stairwells and corridors that led to other cells with other people. He wondered how many were innocent fae, and how many were half-bloods like him who didn’t get out of their one year sentence. He’d escaped that destiny by a hair’s breadth, and he was thankful for it, even if he also felt guilty that he’d only been that lucky by virtue of who his father was. The injustice of it all rankled him.

“I’ll wait here,” Berwick told him at the last door. “Give you some privacy.”

Philo walked the last steps to the cell that he knew so well. Darius looked much the same as always, if a little thinner, and he stared at Philo in disbelief.

“Well, fuck me, Philo. I thought you were dead.”

“I almost was,” Philo admitted.

Darius laughed and shook his head at that. “I take it that I was right, that telling Portia was a mistake.”

Philo sighed and didn’t bother to answer with more than a tired glare.

“So everyone knows what you are now? Why aren’t you sitting in a cell next to mine?”

“That’s a long story.”

Darius spread his arms to emphasise just where they were. “I’m not going anywhere. Now tell me. Where have you been in the last few months?”

Philo took a deep breath. Then he began.

*Fin*