

Once Upon A Star

By

Sherry Bessette

One

Devon Starr trudged up the long flight of stairs from the records room in the Bureau's basement to her office on the top floor of the building. Twenty-six floors of stairs to be exact. Twenty-six floors with an armload of case files so tall she had to peek around the side to see where she was going. It was her own fault, really. She could have – okay probably should have assigned the task to a runner, but these were her cases. Cases that needed a final checkup before they were permanently handed off to the Closed Case Department. And, she liked to take care of her files herself. Even if it meant the equivalent of scaling a mountain to get them.

She looked up at the gold lettering on the gray metal door.

26

Bureau Of Fae / Human Affairs
Godmother Division
Special Cases Unit

"At last. Home sweet home." She blew out a sigh of relief and hurried forward. Her toe caught on the edge of the last step. She stumbled and let out a yelp. The files teetered, wobbling in her arms, the middle ones squeezing out of the stack. "Nooooo." she cried, juggling the papers back into place.

She leaned against the stairwell and took a long steady breath. Why didn't she take the elevator? Oh yeah, this building didn't have an elevator. She blew a lock of golden brown hair out of her eyes. Why on everything that's magick, would a twenty-six story building with three basements need an elevator?

In hindsight she could have at least waved her wand and magicked the files up to her office or teleported herself there and back again. Oh yeah, that's right. magick was forbidden at the Bureau. And, she always obeyed the rules. She snorted. If anyone believed that, she had beach front property on Mars she'd sell cheap.

The honest truth was she didn't use magick to retrieve her files because her boss had been in and out of her department all day. and it was too early in the week to ruffle the wolf's fur. She'd wait until at least Tuesday.

Early retirement was looking better and better with every second. She tried to turn the doorknob. The files slipped again. "Oh no you don't." She juggled everything back in place and kicked on the heavy door.

"Hey, boss, what are you doing out here?" Her bright-eyed, energetic pixie of an assistant opened the door and stood back, allowing Devon to pass. "Here, let me take some of those." The girl wrestled half of the files from Devon's iron grip.

"Thanks, Dora. Just put them on my desk."

"Yes, ma'am." The girl bounced down the hall toward Devon's corner office.

Ah, to be young and energetic. "I hate her." She didn't really. Dora was wonderful and Devon couldn't imagine doing her job without the girl's energetic help. Strictly speaking, Devon wasn't old. She was only forty-two in human years. She wasn't going to even think about what that translated to in Fae years. No matter what it was, according to all the humans she knew, forty-two put her squarely in her prime. So why was she so blasé lately? No, that wasn't the right word. She felt stagnant.

Devon walked into her corner office with its four banks of windows looking over the vast green space of the Bureau quad and then at the large wooden desk covered with files and other papers and grimaced. "You've turned into a bureaucrat, Devonian Evenstarr."

Take the promotion, they said. Special Cases Unit needs your touch, they said. It'll be a great boost to your career.

Boost to where? Boost to nowhere.

She deposited her half of the files on top of Dora's neatly stacked pile on the only clear space available on her desk. Crossing the room, she opened a window, hoping a little sweet, flower scented air would clear her head and lift her mood in the process.

She turned away from the window and looked at the soft yellow walls surrounding her. Devon puffed a tiny laugh, remembering the running battle she had with Vashan Wolfsbane, BOFHA's director, about the color. 'It was too frivolous,' the wolf said. 'Sunshine yellow did not reflect the seriousness of the work BOFHA represented.'

He was kidding, right? She was a Faerie Godmother, for heaven's sake. How in all of faedom did those two concepts go together?

That afternoon Wolfsbane sent workers in to paint over her lovely yellow walls with Navajo White. Devon shuddered at the memory. Two seconds after the work crew left she broke out her wand and changed the color back. For two weeks, Wolfsbane painted over her beautiful walls every night. And every morning she'd change them back. That was when the No-Magick-Allowed rule came into effect. But he did let her keep her yellow. *Score.*

She looked at the computer on her desk and the multi-line phone next to it and lastly at the mounds of paperwork that covered the rest of her desk, and let out a long whistle of a sigh.

No wonder the thrill of the chase wasn't there anymore. Ha! What chase?

Gone were the good old days of swooping across the heavens on a bridge of stardust to grant the deepest desires of her godchildren scattered all over the world. These days she spent all of her time sitting at a desk writing reports. This was not what she signed up for.

So, after twenty-two years as head of Special Cases Unit/Godmother Division, Devon was retiring.

She hadn't said anything to anyone, but she handed in her resignation the week before, effective at the end of the month. That left only three weeks to take one last look at her godchildren. Only three short weeks to make sure their Happily–Ever–Afters were still happily ever aftering. That's why she brought up all her old files.

Her cases rarely needed tweaking. Once Devon Starr Happily–Ever–Aftered someone, they stayed Happily–Ever–Aftered. She didn't expect to find any problems, but she wanted to take one last look while she still could. It hurt to think of someone else being in charge of her children. But still, nothing stays the same forever.

Devon turned back to the window and gazed across the lush grass of the quad. She loved being a Faerie Godmother. There wasn't anything more rewarding than making someone's dreams come true. But, after spending over half her life granting the wishes of others, she caught herself wondering if this was all there was?

Where was her Faerie Godmother?

Where was her Prince Charming?

Where was her Happily Ever After?

She tapped her finger against her pursed lips and contemplated what it would be like to have a Faerie Godmother of her own. One who would grant her wishes. *Why not? Why can't I wish upon a star? I mean, where is it written that a Faerie Godmother can't have a Faerie Godmother?* A giggle escaped her lips. "Oh brother, what a mess that would be. Two Faerie Godmothers battling it out in a clash of wills and magick over who should do what and where and who should sit down and be quiet." She shook her head. That was a perfect recipe for disaster.

"But still..." A slow smile spread across her lips. With a mischievous laugh, she snapped her fingers and a tiny golden star appeared in the palm of her hand. "What do you think, little friend? Can you fix me a Happily Ever After? Can you find me, my very own Faerie Godmother?" Devon stroked her fingers across the star and closed her eyes.

"Star light, Star bright, Make my dreams come to life. Send me a Faerie Godmother who will make all my Happily Ever After wishes come true." She kissed the tiny star and blew softly across her palm. The magick star rose and hovered. "Fly little star. Go to that magick land where dreams become real." She blew one more time and the star flew into the sky, a tiny speck streaking across the heavens in swirl of gold dust.

"Hey Boss," Dora called from the outer office. "Pick up line one. You gotta listen to this one."

Devon turned around and noticed the message light blinking on her phone. She crossed the room and reached across the desk for the phone, knocking all the folders onto the floor.

Every. Single. Folder.

She'd lugged those files up twenty-six flights of stairs without losing a single one. And then, with a swipe of her hand they were all on the floor. Adding insult to injury, before she could pick them up, a gust of wind rode in on the breath of

a mischievous sprite, flipping open the folders, lifting their contents into the air to dance around the room before they settled like freshly fallen snow, covering her once pristine floor.

Of course you did. She rolled her eyes at the mess. Snapping her wand into her hand, she waved it in a wide circle, casting a shimmering net of magick over the floor. All at once, the flurry of paper rose in the air and floated into their proper files, stacking themselves neatly against the wall.

Let them fire her for using magick. she sniffed and sank into her desk chair. Being the boss did come with a few perks. She rubbed her hands over the padded arm rests, luxuriating in the sumptuous leather. Now this she would miss. "I wonder if Wolfsbane would let me take this with me when I retire?" She grinned and hit the play button on her phone.

"... forties and that's too young. Please, you have to help me. I don't know what to do. You're my only hope, Godmother. Please help me." The young woman's voice faded into a sob just before the line went dead.

Devon pushed the replay button and leaned her crossed arms on the desk, while she listened to the message from the beginning.

"Star light. Star bright. Last star of the night, please carry my heart's plea to my faerie godmother. My wish is for my Papa. My mother died five years ago and he's still so heart broken and lonely. He used to be so happy and so giving to everyone and everything, but now he's a shadow of himself. He goes through the motions, but it's as if he isn't there any more. It breaks my heart to see him so sad. He's only forty-seven. That's too young to give up on life and be alone. Please, you have to help me. I don't know what to do. You're my only hope, Godmother. Please help me."

Devon palmed the tears from her cheeks and switched off the machine. She'd heard every wish known to faedom in her years as a Godmother, but never had a wish touch her heart as this one did.

She swiveled her chair around and punched in a few words on her computer.

"Hey boss," Dora called again. "What the heck has gotten into all the humans today? Our wish board is lit up like a mid-summer night's sky."

Devon pushed herself up from her desk and took a quick look at the wish board adjacent to Dora's desk. "Holy, dragon's teeth." Every light on the antiquated switchboard was lit. She looked at the bank of flashing lights and chuckled. "Be careful what you wish for Devonian."

"Excuse me? I didn't catch that, Boss." Dora asked.

"Nothing. I was just reminding myself of the first rule of wishes."

"Be careful what you wish for?"

"Exactly." Devon shook her head. "I've got a wish on hold right now. Let me set that one in motion and then you can patch these through to me. I'll call you in when I'm ready. We can listen to them together and you can help me assign Godmothers."

Dora looked at the wish board and her rosy cheeks turned ashen. "Where do I start?"

"At the top. Or the bottom. I don't care, just forward them." Devon spun on her heel and returned to her office.

It was going to be a busy few weeks.

Retirement might have to wait.