

Seventeen

Sunday, it rained. What we'd have called 'miserable flying weather' not too long ago. It had been raining nonstop since we got back from shopping on Saturday. The local river was trying to tell us something, I think it was saying 'watch out, burst banks here we come'.

About the middle of Sunday afternoon there was a thunderous knocking on the front door. I'd just about finished that bit of revision so I hung over the banister rail as Dad answered the door. There was a large, wet policeman. Very large - and very wet. Dad listened to him for a few seconds, then turned and called up the stairs.

"Holly, get the others. There's some people trapped by the river water. They wonder if you can fly them out."

As soon as I'd spotted the wet cop at the door, I'd been letting Lisa and Jody know we might have a problem. By the time Dad had done speaking, Lisa and Jody were standing behind me, having 'ported into my bedroom. Lisa took charge as usual.

"Where's the problem? The island?"

"How did you know?" the cop seemed a bit flabbergasted. I knew how Lisa knew - but the cop probably wouldn't have believed her, so, a small fib.

"Good guess, that's all. Is the bridge under water?"

"Yes. That's why we can't get to them. The flow of water is too great."

"Ok. We'll go and see what might be done."

"Got a car here."

Not sure quite how Lisa managed not to laugh out loud at him, her mind was a different matter. "They really have no idea what we can do, have they."

Then to the cop. "Don't worry. We'll make our own way. We'll see you there." Then back to telepathy. "Serious waterproofs, just in case we have to shut off our fields."

As she 'spoke', she held out her hand, made a hook with a finger and neatly caught the huge coat that appeared there. Jody copied her. My coat was already in my hand, it had been hanging on the peg in the hall. We struggled into the coats and rushed out into the rain. We didn't rush far.

"Holly? You know this end of town best. Where can we appear? 'said' Lisa.

"Link up Angels," I 'grinned'. "We're going travelling."

With a close link in place, the others simply went with me as I teleported to an open space near the town side of the bridge. Bridge? What bridge? All I could see was water!

A couple of cops came rushing over, having presumably seen us just appear, apparently from nowhere.

"Keep this area clear," shouted Lisa, over the sound of wind and rushing water. This is where the people will be sent to. They'll just appear, like we just did."

She didn't give the cops time to reply, but 'said', "Fly over to the island, quickly."

Jody and I took off quickly and followed Lisa through the air to the island.

The island is literally that, an island in the river, which passes either side of it, really two rivers just at that point. It's quite large, having ten or twenty houses on it. The bridge is just downstream of it and there's a sort of road off the bridge, now well under water.

"The bridge is acting like a dam," 'said' Jody. "The water's piling up behind it, the ground floor of the houses are already below the water level."

"Look," I 'said', "All the people are in the bedrooms and stuff." And indeed people were waving at us as we hung there in the air, presumably not thinking about, just for the moment, exactly how we were doing that.

Jody again. "Waters rising as we watch. Not much time."

"Split up," 'said' Lisa. "We merge to Angel and just shift everybody to that high ground we appeared on."

The merge to Angel took no time at all. I shot down to three different houses. (The following conversations were more or less simultaneous. Very difficult to write down. Bear with me. HM).

I floated in through the windows of the first three houses, quite easy to do when you can fly in a horizontal position. "Hello. I'm Angel. I'm the cavalry. Don't worry, you're going travelling."

"Who? Angel?" "What do you mean - travelling?"

"Can you take the cat?"

"Yes, Angel. I'm going to teleport you out, you'll just appear somewhere else. Cat or dog, no problem, and any other livestock. No, young lady, your brother doesn't count as livestock, that's animals and such - that's a bit unkind of you."

Three families suddenly found themselves on the riverbank surrounded by police and other emergency services. I'd judged there wasn't time to let the people find coats and stuff, the cops would have to make their own arrangements.

I flew back through the windows and chose three more houses. I was worried about the houses being washed away completely, Jody-me had been looking at the water piling up at the upstream end of the island.

Three more families moved, then three more - then an awkward moment.

"Weeza?" I said. "What are *you* doing here?"

"Excuse me? How do you know my name, I don't think I know you, do I?"

Oops, see? Awkward moment. It was Holly-me speaking to Louisa. Louisa had never met Holly. Never mind, plough on. "I'm Angel. I'll come and talk to you later, ok? Bit busy just now." Quickly I sent Louisa to safety.

Then it was the last three houses. Inevitably - disaster!

"The side of the house is falling in!" called somebody in panic. Jody-me was nearest, she could see what was happening, and so, therefore, could I. I used telekinesis to 'hold' the side of the house in place. Problem was - that was all I could do. All my attention and resources were focused on holding the house together.

About all I could do was speak. "We need to get into the next house, or maybe the one even further away."

Jody-me had the answer. "Onto the roof," I shouted. "Push off the tiles and climb out. Get past the first retaining wall."

The remaining people to be rescued were all men. They were worried about leaving the three of me in a collapsing house.

"I'll be fine. Tell me when you're clear". Lisa-me went with them to act as relay station and to make sure they were all out of the way. What I planned was risky but should work. If I released the wall, it would take a second or so to fall. In that second or so, I could 'port myself away - I hoped.

I watched as the men made a hole in the roof above the loft space. The tiles were relatively easy to push out from inside. One by one, the men climbed out and inched their way along the wet, slippery roof.

"Come on Angel," one of them called, when Lisa-me didn't join them.

"Don't worry about me," I said. "I'll be fine, really." I'm not sure they believed me, especially not when I vanished back inside the roof. I went back down to join Jody-me and Holly-me, still holding the wall.

Now the men were out of the way, I could work out how to do this. I didn't need to discuss it, all three parts of me knew what I was thinking. The plan went, bedroom to roof, gather up men, roof to river bank. Lisa-me had scouted a landing zone on the roof where the men were. I mentally counted down from three. On 'zero', I 'ported to the roof. There was no time to watch the end wall falling in, but I heard it quite plainly.

It took a second or so to gather up all the men. I actually felt the roof sinking under me as I began the 'port to the river bank. We appeared in a heap on the wet grass. I would normally have just used my power of levitation to prevent myself falling down, but there were five big men with us as well. We made a heap.

By the time we struggled to our feet, I'd let the merge collapse and become Lisa, Jody, and Holly again, the Angels rather than Angel. There were cries of horror all around us, I turned to look at the island - just as the whole row of houses collapsed under the weight of the water.

"Just in time Angels," 'said' Lisa. "Cut it a teeny bit fine I think."

"A teeny bit?" 'said' Jody. "Bloody great big bit if you ask me."

A slight problem was looming. "Er, girls? Louisa on the port bow." Said Louisa was bearing down on us with a very puzzled expression on her face. I knew who it was, the Lisa part of Angel had identified her while my part was speaking to her."

She stopped in front of us. "You and you I know, Lisa Chandler and Jody Kenyon, but who are *you*," she said, looking at me. "You know who I am. How? You even know what my friends at school call me."

"Going to be a long story, Weeza," said, Lisa. "First thing, Louisa O'Farrell, meet Holly Merrick."

I grinned as I said, "Pleased to meet you." I forgave Louisa for a certain apparent rudeness, as she just nodded at me and rushed on.

"And just how did I get from there to here, may I ask?"

"What do I do?" 'asked' Lisa.

"Just tell her," 'said' Jody. "Simple statement of fact. We'll sort her out later."

"Holly?"

"We always said they'd work it out eventually," I 'said'. "Tell her. We can make her sign the Official Secrets Act later."

Lisa spoke to Louisa without any sign of the quick exchange with Jody and me. "We teleported you, like a Star Trek beam transporter."

Louisa's mouth opened and closed, but nothing came out. I took pity on her.

"Don't worry at the moment. Look, why don't you come home with us and we'll explain. I don't live far from here. What were you doing here anyway? You live at the other end of town near these two, don't you?"

Louisa seemed better with something she knew to talk about. "That's my aunt's house - was my aunt's house," she said, as she looked across at the pile of rubble sticking up above the water. "I was visiting. Mum and Dad don't know anything about this yet. My phone's under that lot somewhere," she pointed across the river.

General Lisa appeared again. "Right. Let's find your aunt, check she's ok and being looked after and stuff. We explain what we're going to do with you, you borrow a phone and ring your mum and dad, then come for tea with us at Holly's. We'll get you home later."

When Lisa arranges stuff, you don't have a whole lot of choice. Louisa took us to meet her aunt.

"Aunt Kitty, this Lisa and Jody from school, and this is Holly. What's going to happen now?"

Aunt Kitty was smothered in a blanket and a sort of plastic poncho. "I need to stay here to see what's going to happen. What about you, Lou?"

"I'm invited to Holly's for tea. I'll ring home and tell them what's going on. Dad might come out and get you later."

"That's good, dear. Means I don't have to worry about you."

I held out my shocking pink phone to Louisa. I'd been careful to make it appear while nobody was looking, no point being silly after all.

Louisa managed to convince her family that she was fine and that if any jumping up and down needed doing, it was on behalf of her Aunt Kitty, not Louisa herself.

"I think they're quite happy that I'm sorted out," she said. "Aunt Kitty is Mum's older sister. I think Mum's relieved that she only has to worry about one person for a few hours at least. How are we going to get to Holly's? Going to ring your mum or dad?"

"Er - no, actually," grinned Lisa. "Remember how you got from over there to here?"

"You're going to beam us there - you *are*, aren't you?"

"Yep. That's about the size of it. You ready?"

"I guess so. What do I oh my God!"

I forgave Louisa the slight profanity. We'd 'ported us and her as she'd been speaking. We were now making puddles on my kitchen floor - at least Louisa was, we Angels had been using our own method of staying dry. We were just a bit damp round the edges. Louisa was like a drowned rat - a fact that Mum picked up on directly she appeared to see what all the noise was.

"Good Heavens, you poor thing. Did you fall in the river?"

"She may as well have, Mum. It's raining a bit out there."

"Right. Holly, take - sorry - don't know your name yet."

"Mum, this is Louisa."

"Thanks Holly. Take Louisa up to the bathroom. Rummage some big towels and some dry clothes out for her. Lisa, Jody, you're with me. Kitchen Police. Expect you're hungry? Thought so." The sounds of Mum giving orders faded slightly as I towed Louisa upstairs.

"You wet right through to the last layer?"

"Yeah. You dumped me in the rain."

"Sorry. If we'd not done that you might have been a bit worse off than just wet."

"I know, and thank you."

"Don't mention it. All in a day's work for the Angels."

"Mm. Going to be questions in a bit."

I grinned as I ignored that last remark. "Want a shower? Come and sort out some togs first, then you can lock yourself in and get sorted."

I looked Louisa up and down. She was about the same size as me, despite being a bit older, like Lisa and Jody. We'd manage. One jumper and a pair of jeans later, together with a brand new unopened set of unmentionables I had in a drawer, and I left Louisa to it in the bathroom. Downstairs, the kitchen was a hive of activity.

"Weeza sorted?" asked Jody.

"Yep. Seems strange to deal with being wet by getting wetter still, but there you go I suppose. She's in the shower."

"What are we going to tell her?" asked Lisa.

"Hey. *You're* our Director. Anyway, if you want an opinion, we should tell her more or less everything - always leaving out stuff she'd find really weird - like us merging into just one girl."

"What about working for MI5 or whatever?"

"Especially that. Useful, 'cause we can tell her officially to keep her trap shut," grinned Jody.

Louisa reappeared just as we were about ready for food. Dad wasn't around so it was just us four girls and Mum. She walked slowly and a bit hesitantly into the kitchen.

"Er, hello."

Three Angels pounced on her and dragged her to the table. "Sit down," I said. "Soups on - literally." I giggled.

That broke the ice a bit, which was what I'd been trying for. Louisa smiled and let herself be sat down.

Mum has a slightly wicked streak, a bit like Lisa's mum really. "These three eat like there's no tomorrow, Louisa. I don't expect you to try to match them. They might tell you why after tea. I feel some curling up and explaining coming on." She glared round at the three of us Angels.

Normally, we chat amongst ourselves while eating, but that wouldn't be fair on Louisa, so we tried to carry on a conversation in normal speech. I found it actually quite difficult.

"How do you know these two then, Holly?" Louisa wanted to know.

"Ah, simple. We all belong to the same secret society. We met at our headquarters."

"Holly's winding you up. Louisa," said Lisa. "There *is* a society, but it isn't secret, just not very well known. Its headquarters, if we can use Holly's word, is the Donald Merriweather Institute."

"Isn't that the big building on the roundabout at the back of the Town Hall?"

"That's the one. Can't be all that secret if everybody, including you, knows where it is, now can it?"

"It's main work is investigation of para-normal stuff - ESP and things like that." I said.

"Para-what?"

"Don't worry about it. It just means things to do with the mind. Like teleportation. You have first-hand experience of that."

"Yeah. Just how do you *do* that?"

"We don't know. *They* don't know. That's what the Institute exists for - to find out."

"I have to assume all three of you can do that - tele-watsit - thing? So why don't you just pop in and out like that instead of walking and stuff?"

"Louisa, look at us. You're our friend, at least I hope you are. If you didn't know us all that well and you learned how different we are, what would you think, truly?"

There was quiet for a minute or two. Then Louisa gave us her thoughts.

"I'm not sure I'd like you, I might even be afraid of you, of what things you might do to me, bad things."

"I think you might have just answered your own question," I said gently.

Louisa sighed. "We may strain our friendship a little more after tea. There's more to it yet, quite a lot more."

Louisa thought for a minute, then she laughed. "I've just remembered a conversation from a little while ago. You'd been off school for a couple of days, and we tried to get you to tell us where you'd been and what you'd been doing. You told us a preposterous story about fixing a nuclear submarine for the navy. It was *true*, wasn't it? All of it?"

I grinned back. "Yep. Every word. The sub was in the Gulf of Aden. That's a fair way away, so that's why we were off school for a couple of days, me as well at my school. And if you'll make like the White Queen in Alice after tea, we'll tell you several impossible things to believe before breakfast. There may be more than the required six. I don't know, we've never counted."

We didn't tell Louisa anything else important during tea. Curled up in the lounge with mugs of hot chocolate was another matter entirely.

"Ok. Let's see if we can tell you why we're called the Angels and about the things we've found we can do," said Lisa, by way of a beginning. "First thing, if you think about it, you'll have at least heard of ESP or something similar."

Louisa's nose wrinkled up with the effort of trying to remember, really quite like Lisa's does when she puts her thinking cap on. "Um. Stands for Extra Sensory - something - Perception. Yes that's it. Extra Sensory Perception. But what's it *mean*?"

"Just means we do things by thinking about it instead of actually doing it manually so to speak," said Jody.

"Not *quite* like that Jody," I said. "But near enough, I suppose. We just 'tell' stuff to move in our heads - and it does. Including ourselves. Two different versions of that, watch."

I 'told' my glass of coke to come to my hand from the coffee table where I'd stashed it while we chatted. It obediently rose into the air and drifted over to my waiting hand. I lifted it slightly towards Louisa, took a drink, and 'told' it to be back on the table, please. It did as it was told for a second time, this time disappearing and reappearing again. Louisa looked shocked, but only for a second or so.

"Wow, that's clever."

"Did you see the difference, Weeza?" asked Lisa. "First time was telekinesis, second time was teleportation. We can apply both kinds to ourselves. If we teleport, we just appear somewhere else, if we use telekinesis, we can levitate in the air. We tend to call it flying, what else can you call it, really?"

"She's taking it well, I must say," 'said' Jody.

"Bit to go yet," I 'said'.

"So how does that fix a submarine?" asked Louisa, straight to the heart of the matter.

"Because I don't need to see what I'm doing to see what I'm doing," said Jody, then rushed on when Louisa looked puzzled, "I can see with my mind's eye, so to speak. It's more sort of feel really. Like doing something with your eyes shut, or in the dark. What needed fixing was inside the power generator in the submarine, very radioactive, impossible to get to."

"Unless you're Jody," I grinned. "Once she'd sussed out just what needed doing, she just used telekinesis to fix it. A child could have done the actual repair, that's why we let Jody do it."

That made all four of us laugh, even Jody, who'd realised what I was trying to do. No point bombing Louisa out altogether. Then a distraction.

"Holly? You there, love?"

"Hi Victor. Always here."

"Do I hear correctly that you rescued a load of people from the river?"

"Mm. Got one of them here. One of Lisa and Jody's classmates. We're just telling her all about ourselves."

"What? All about yourselves?"

"Ok, maybe not all, but a bit."

"Hm. Look, I'll give you a shout later. Didn't want anything really, except a chat and a hug."

"No problem. I'll call you later. Hug coming up." What we called a 'hug' was really just a release of emotion, had the same effect as a proper hug anyway.

I let my awareness come back to the lounge to find Louisa looking at me strangely, and the other two grinning widely.

"So how is Victor then?" asked Jody, still grinning.

Lisa and Jody knew I'd been talking to Victor, I'd felt them 'listening', poised to withdraw from the link if we started whispering sweet nothings at each other. Louisa was another matter entirely.

"What happened? You just - went away."

"Talking to my boyfriend, Victor," I smiled. "I expect I had a bit of a vacant expression?"

"Your *boyfriend*?"

I laughed gently. "I assume you mean how was I talking to him, and not shock at me having a boyfriend at all?"

"Yes - no - I mean ..."

I was sitting near enough to reach out and put my hand on her arm. "I'm sorry for the silly remark, but it actually shows one of the other things we can do. It's called telepathy."

"Think I've heard of that. Mind reading." She thought a bit more. "You can't read *my* mind - can you?"

"No, Weeza. Nothing like that. The people who can do the telepathy bit can only talk amongst themselves - and that's what it is - talking. Unless we 'speak', the others can't hear. And if people can't do the telepathy bit, we can't hear them."

"Any second now she's going to ask how Holly knew it was her, there at the island," 'said' Lisa.

Must have been a minor Precog, because that was the very next thing Louisa asked. Clever Jody had figured out a way to head questions like that off at the pass.

"As well as speak to each other, we can send sort of pictures. I'm sure Holly knows what most of our gang actually look like, just as we know what her friends look like, I suppose the caption with the picture said 'Weeza', and not 'Louisa O'Farrell', after all, that's what we usually call you."

A *brilliant* piece of misdirection on Jody's part. I sent her a picture of myself clapping my hands, I got back a picture of a smiling Jody taking a bow.

Louisa seemed reasonably convinced by that. "So how many people can do this telepathy thing, then?"

"As far as we know, only six," I said. "Us three here and our - boyfriends." I grinned. "You've already caught me thinking at Victor."

"And you two have steady boyfriends as well, Lisa and Jody?"

"Yeah, 'fraid so."

"Mm. Might explain why the boys don't get anywhere."

Now we were on a subject Louisa could relate to. The discussion moved away from us and our powers for a bit and for a little while we were just four ordinary girls.

"Only tell her more stuff if she asks," I 'said'.

"Need to tell her about working for the Government," 'said' Jody.

"No," 'said' Lisa. "Only if we absolutely have to. Poor girl's had enough for today."

Louisa herself broke up further discussion. "I need to go home. Hey! You can just tele-watsit me!"

Now a snag. "Any of us been to Louisa's house?" I 'asked'.

"Hm, no. Bit of a problem," 'said' Lisa.

"Don't worry. Explain to Louisa while I go and put Mum on Red Alert. She'll drive Louisa back."

I left Lisa explaining why we couldn't go to where we'd never been and went to find Mum.

"Can you run Weeza home please, Mum?"

"Ah. None of you been to where she lives then?"

"No, sorry Mum."

"Not a problem. Helps actually."

"Helps, Mum?"

"Mm. Means you don't come across as infallible supergirls. There *are* things you can't do. Do you see what I'm getting at?"

"I think so."

"Look, Louisa is going to think about what you've told her. What's that going to do to her when she decides you *are* supergirls."

"So this way we show her we aren't. Good thinking Mum."

Mum just smiled. Lisa and Jody had been 'listening' to my conversation with Mum, with half an 'ear' at least. Now Lisa sent me a picture of a hand with its thumb up. I thought about how it was the two of them who'd have to deal with any fall-out from Louisa, then a second thought shouldered the first one out of the way. Even apart, we three girls were one. I'd do my bit if Weeza threw a wobbler.