

Twenty Three

I was awakened by Jody 'shouting' in my head. "Lisa, *Lisa*. Wake up. Please wake up now!"

"Ok, ok. I'm awake. What's the matter?"

"It's your dad, Lisa. He was attacked in the street. Mugged we think. He's in hospital. He's very ill, Lisa."

Jody was already back home I remembered. They hadn't bothered to stay in Geneva but had set off straight back home. "What happened, Jody. Will he be all right?"

"They don't know, Lisa. He's got a blood clot or something in his head. He's in a coma and they can't operate for some reason. Come home as fast as you can."

I had to get Brian moving and get that plane in the air back to England. Chucking on some clothes I burst into Brian's room. "Brian, Brian. Wake up. Something terrible's happened."

When I'd got him awake I told him what Jody had told me. He got on the phone at once. But there was a snag.

"For some reason there's been a problem with the refuelling and preparation of the plane. We can't set off until later this afternoon. Lisa, I'm sorry."

I paced up and down the room. I *had* to get home to be with Dad. I got more and more agitated, I couldn't help it, I *had* to get home I *had* to! Then, suddenly, *I was!* There, in the front room of our house back in England! *I'd teleported all the way from California!*

I 'called' Jody. "Right, Jody, I'm back in England. No, don't ask I'll tell you later," I said as I felt her about to ask difficult questions. "Which hospital are you at?"

When she told me, I thought about trying to teleport directly there, but soon realised I didn't actually know how I did it. So that was out. Right, then. Have to fly.

I rushed out into the back garden, made sure the door was locked and then, heedless of anybody watching, flung myself into the air. I did have the presence of mind not to break the sound barrier at least. I covered the few miles to the hospital in what seemed like a few seconds. At the speed I was flying it probably *was* only a few seconds.

I landed running in front of the hospital. It was Sunday morning and quite quiet. I don't *think* anybody saw me. I rushed up to the front desk and enquired after the whereabouts of Phil Chandler, my dad.

Directions duly given, I rushed off. I swear my feet didn't touch some of the steps on the stairs. Dad was in something called an 'ICU'. Mum was there as well as Jody. Dad looked *awful*. He looked all sort of grey and ill, with wires and tubes all over him. I felt very scared - he might *die!*

Mum put aside exactly *how* I'd got there so fast. Instead she told me what had happened.

"Your dad was just about to get into the car in the town centre when three young men attacked him. They punched and kicked him then stole his wallet. They even kicked him while he was unconscious on the floor. The kick in the head has given him a fractured skull, not desperate in itself, but it's made a blood clot which is pressing against his brain and is causing the coma. Apparently they can't operate, it's too dangerous."

Mum had told me all this in a fairly normal voice but I know her well enough to know that there was a scream lurking just below the surface just waiting to emerge. Mum was controlling it, but just barely. Truth to tell, I wasn't far behind, but we both knew that hysterics wouldn't help right at this moment.

A doctor came into the room carrying what looked like x-rays. He stuck them in a box on the wall which lit up to let us see them. The blood clot was very visible on the pictures. As I looked at the x-ray plate it began to dawn on me what I had to do. And if I didn't do it, Dad might die. I had to try.

"Doctor, if that clot is removed my dad will recover, right?" He began to tell me about how they couldn't operate then something, the look on my face, perhaps, made him stop.

"Yes, basically," he said. "That will relieve the pressure and he should recover."

"Right," I said. "What should we replace the clot with? Will normal air do?"

He seemed stunned at my question, then answered on a sort of autopilot, "No, that won't relieve the pressure. The air will still press on the brain surface."

"Ok. How about a vacuum. Will that do?"

"Yes, but..."

I shut him up with a gesture. "I need a glass bottle with the air removed. *Now*, please." I added when nobody moved.

Something about my determined tone of voice made the doctor do as I asked. He rushed from the room and returned about two minutes later with a glass bottle with a sealed lid. "All the air has been pumped out. Will this do?"

"Perfect. Just dump it on the table." I began to concentrate on the x-ray picture. My attention was not what it might have been, I was *very* tired. Suddenly I felt Jody's hand on my shoulder. Almost at once I felt better, more able to do what I knew had to be done. "Thanks, Jody. Don't let go." I felt her hand squeeze my shoulder.

Looking at the picture again, I could almost see the actual blood clot. I 'told' it to move into the bottle. Immediately there was a lump of reddish-purple yuck in the sealed jar - the clot. Now if I'd done it right, the equivalent contents of the jar - nothing - should have been sent into Dad's head. The pressure on his brain should be gone now.

The doctor looked at the jar in disbelief. He looked at me then back at the jar again. Then he shook himself like a dog and rushed to the beeping instruments at the side of the bed.

"It's gone! The pressure's gone. The brain activity is back to normal. The coma has lapsed and he's in natural sleep." The doctor seemed totally bemused, I don't think he actually knew what was happening. I didn't care, in fact I was having my own problems. The whole world seemed to rush away from me down a long tunnel and everything just went black.

Twenty Four

I woke up in my very own hospital bed with Mum and Jody standing beside me.

"Ah, you're back with us I see my dear," Mum said. "Don't worry, you only fainted.

Understandable really."

I tried to sit up. "How's..."

"Hush dear. Your fathers fine. He woke up a couple of minutes ago, complained about 'a bit of a headache' and fell asleep again. He'll be ok soon. The doctors think your problem is nervous exhaustion, which doesn't surprise me. You teleported all the way from California, didn't you?"

I could only nod. I was so tired and *hungry*, I could eat a horse.

Jody said, "You used some of my energy when you fixed your dad. I could *feel* it draining out. More miracles for the lab to worry about." I managed to laugh a bit.

Mum said, "You should stay here for a few hours at least. They've arranged to feed you, hospital food, I'm afraid, but apparently they can run to burger and chips, which should probably suit you."

'A few hours' turned into overnight. I guess hospitals are ok but so *noisy*. People coming and going all night. Lights on here and there. Talking in hushed tones in odd corners. I'd be glad to get home.

There was no question of going to school, Monday morning or no. Somehow Jody had managed to bunk off as well and came to help me visit Dad before Mum drove me home. Poor Dad. He looked so ill lying in bed. When I thought about what *might* have happened and then what I'd done, I got the shakes then burst into tears. Dad as usual didn't know what to make of all this but Jody and Mum managed to calm me down finally.

Jody sat with me next to Dad's bed while Mum marched off to 'have words' with the hospital staff who wanted to keep me in another day. We kept waiting for the bang and the little nuclear cloud but Mum must have been more restrained than usual.

Dad quickly got tired so we didn't stay too long. To tell the truth, I could sleep for a week myself. Mum carted us off home and began to prepare lunch for about a million people. Did I look *that* hungry?

"Jody's dad has wangled you both off school for the whole week," said Mum.

I think I ate about sixteen meals that day. Jody wasn't far behind me. we were *both* a bit beat up.

Mum went to see Dad a couple of times each day, I went with her as often as I felt able but I was still getting upset at the sight of him in that hospital bed.

Around about Thursday Mum said, "You look well enough now to resume normal life. Oh don't worry, not back to school this week at least. Beth has been beating a path to your door. If you feel up to it a trip to the lab might stop her climbing the walls."

If truth be known, both Jody and I had been getting a bit bored. As we were supposed to be 'ill', we didn't feel we should go gallivanting about here and there and so had been staying indoors, mostly at my house. Perhaps a trip to the lab with Mum's blessing might be just what we needed.

Mum dropped us off outside the lab building just after lunch. We were now so well known we felt like real VIPs. Beth came out to meet us herself instead of sending an assistant. We thought we might have to tell all to an audience and expected to be taken to the big conference room but we ended up in Beth's office where soft drinks and nibbles had been provided. Mum must have rung ahead as usual.

"Right. I'm so full of questions I could burst," said Beth. "I've no idea where to start so why don't you just tell me what happened last weekend. Try not to leave anything out. I'm going to record it so *try* not to say anything you might regret." She grinned as she started the recording machine.

I began the story and Jody chimed in anytime she felt she had something to add. It was odd. We never spoke together, I just seemed to know when she was going to say something, the story unfolded but with two voices telling it. Beth knew most of the early part, after all, she'd arranged what we were to do that weekend. Slowly we managed to tell her the bits she didn't know. I left out what happened with Brian, a girl has to have *some* secrets!

As I told Beth about what I'd done for my dad, I felt myself getting upset again but Jody took hold of my hand and I managed to recite it all without crying. Beth sat there stunned. Finally she said, "I had no idea you could do things like that! I would have said that teleporting several thousand miles was impossible but you two are redefining the word 'impossible' day by day. I'd like to get you into the lab proper to do tests but not today. For one thing I don't think we'd learn anything new. We probably need new instruments that haven't been invented yet before we find out how you do what you do."

"The staff will go over your recording and see if they can learn anything from what you describe first before we go poking and prodding you again. You've eaten all the food and drunk all the drinks and you *still* look hungry. Do you want to go to the canteen?"

"Oh yes please. Their burgers are nearly as good as McDonalds!" Beth laughed but led us out of her office.

As we walked down the corridor a small, nervous voice said, "Hello. You're Jody and Lisa aren't you?"

We turned round to see a pretty girl, a bit younger than us, being escorted along the corridor. I was going to say, "Well, Lisa and Jody *actually*." But something in the girl's face made me change my normally slightly sarcastic tone to a more kindly one. "Yes, it's us. Who are you?"

"I - I'm Holly." I can do what you do." Then all in a rush. "But I'm not nearly as good at it as you are, but I'm trying very hard, I'll never be as good as you two, everyone knows you're the best there is, but I'm trying..."

"Ssh," I said, uncomfortable with all this hero worship, well, heroine worship anyway. "Don't worry about it, you'll get better at it, we did."

"What can you do so far?" asked Jody.

Holly seemed to relax a bit. "I can levitate, see." And she rose from the floor and hovered in the air for a moment before coming down again. "But that's about all really. I can't move things around or speak to other people without talking like you two can."

Something made me say, "You only think you can't." And I 'said' to her, "See it's easy. you can 'hear' me can't you?"

I'm not sure what happened but *something* passed between us. It included Jody as well. I heard Holly say, both with my ears and my mind "Yes I heard you clearly but your lips never moved!"

I 'heard' Jody 'say', "No need to move your lips either, dear. Go on, try it."

"I can hear you, I can! And I'm talking to you without speaking as well. That's *incredible*."

"You see," I said out loud so Beth could hear me. "All you need to do is think you can and you can. Easy, see."

After we'd calmed Holly down a bit more and got rid of another bout of hero worship, we continued on our way to the canteen. Somehow I thought that they'd not get anything more out of Holly today at least. In the canteen, when we'd been plied with food and drink, Beth said, "Ok, you two. What did you do to Holly?"

I grinned sheepishly. "I have no idea. But whatever it was it worked didn't it."

Beth sighed. "There's no end to the wonders you two can perform. I was watching as you spoke to Holly. At one point *something* connected you three together, I could almost see it. I suspect I wasn't seeing it with my eyes, though. More sort of with my mind's eye, if you see what I mean. If we'd had the Kirlian camera I have no doubt it would have shown your auras connected. Now I'll have to go and debrief *myself*."

I wondered if what we'd done to Holly was permanent so I 'called' her. "Holly dear. Can you hear me. It's Lisa."

"What - oh - Lisa. So it wasn't a dream. I really did meet you and you really did teach me to - what do you call it?"

"Yes you did meet us and yes you can speak mind to mind. It's called telepathy. What are you doing anyway?"

Holly told us she was in the lab connected to a machine with lots of wires and sticky pads.

"With chaps or without?" said Jody.

"What - oh I see." and Holly giggled. "Without chaps. Mind you, there's a couple of the chaps..." Her 'voice' trailed off in amusement.

"That's my girl," I laughed. "Hold that thought and you can ignore the indignity of the whole thing." We left it at that, all three of us laughing.

Beth said, "Ok, who were you talking to? You get a sort of pre-occupied expression as if you're not quite here."

"Just checking with Holly to see if what we did to her is permanent."

"And is it?"

"Seems to be. Your people have got her in the lab connected to the sticky-wire machine."

Beth shook her head slowly. She was wearing a sort of bemused smile. Not *quite* as bad as the doctor at the hospital, but certainly similar. She pulled herself back to us with some effort.

"I have no idea what we're going to do next. There's so much new data to look at. For instance, obviously it takes energy to do your various tricks. You two never seem to stop eating and there you are, still indecently thin as rakes." Beth looked down at her own body. "Makes you sick, really."

"Beth! You're not overweight!"

"Perhaps not, but I'd still like to be one size smaller."

When the laughter died down, she went on, "Anyway, food intake aside, it seems that you can actually *share* your energy reserves, at least from what you told me happened at the hospital."

I thought about what had happened. Beth was quite right. I'd 'pulled' energy from Jody to do the trick with the bottle. Scary thought. In the darkest corner of my mind I was beginning to think maybe we were not humans at all, maybe some aliens in disguise.

"What's the matter, Lisa?" asked Beth. "You've gone quite pale."

I told her what I'd just thought.

"Oh poo. Don't worry about that. You're as human as the rest of us. Normal girls. You can just do some things other people can't, that's all. Why do you think the lab was established at all? For years and years the sorts of mind things you can do have been increasing slowly, you two are just at one end of the curve."

We looked blank. "Statistics, dears. Not done it in Maths yet? Probability curve? Normal distribution? Bell curve?"

We nodded. I remembered something about it. All the average people in the middle, the people with no mind powers at all at one end, and us, with the whole bit, at the other end.

"But that means that Mr. Average must have *some* mind powers. Why don't we see more flying people and so on?" said Jody.

"Quite right. The vast majority of people have a smattering of this and that. Mostly they don't know about it, calling it 'luck' or 'intuition' or some such. How often have you heard somebody say 'I knew you were going to say that'? People with fully developed powers like yours are really quite rare. By the same token, people with absolutely no powers at all are just as rare. The average level of ESP has been rising slowly over the years. In a few hundred years, everybody will be able to do what you can do now. The *really* scary thing is, what will the Jody and Lisa of the year 2500 be able to do if the average oik can do what you do now? Everybody here is firmly dedicated to finding out all we can and helping all we can. See what I mean?"

Beth gestured around us. While we'd been talking in the canteen, a large number of people had slowly gathered around us, quietly listening to what we had to say. A couple of them were taking *notes*!

"You'll have to excuse them. All data is valuable. Somebody must have mentioned where we were and what we were talking about. This is the inevitable result I'm afraid."

There was a slightly embarrassed rustling from the crowd round us. Beth went on, "Right. I'm off to my office to lock myself in with a tape recorder for a while. We don't need you for the moment so I suggest you make good your escape while you can. Take Holly for a milkshake or something."

Holly was standing at the edge of the slowly dissipating crowd of people. Presumably the lab were done with her for the moment. I waved at her and she hesitantly joined us.

"Are you free now? Have they finished with you?"

She nodded shyly.

"Come on then, lets hit the High Street."

"M-my Mum's coming for me in a few minutes."

"No problemo. Got a mobile? Give her a ring and tell her where you're going and who with. She'll know who we are. You should be ok for a McDonalds at least." This celebrity status might as well be put to *some* good use.

Holly fished out a shocking pink mobile phone. She dialled.

"Hi Mum. I'm finished at the lab. Is it ok if I go to McDonalds with Jody and Lisa?"

There was a squeaking sound from the phone. It sounded loud and excited.

"Yes Mum. *That* Jody and Lisa." More squeaking from the phone. "OK. I'll see you later then."

We looked expectant.

"She says it's ok. If I ring her later, she'll pick me up."

I suspected Holly's Mum had said a bit more than that but modesty forbids.

We linked arms and set off for the nearest McDonalds. I felt like one of the Three Musketeers.

Twenty Five

Holly, it turned out, was seventeen, tall, thin and blond, like Jody. She went to a different school on the other side of town, which was why we'd not met before. Her awe at sitting with the famous (privately, I thought 'infamous' a better word) Lisa and Jody soon wore off and we chattered away just as usual.

"I can levitate really well". she said.

"No. no, dear. 'Flying' is what we call it, because flying is what it *is*. Even the lab are calling it that now. Besides, it sounds much more exciting than boring old 'levitation'."

"Yes, you're right. It's a *much* better word. Good heavens, I can *fly*!"

I got a thought from Jody. "Hmm. Do we have a third Super-heroine here, Powergirl?"

I thought back, "Could be, Supergirl. What can we call her?"

"Needs though. I'll call you back."

Jody resumed the normal conversation as if we'd never been away. But before she could open her mouth, Holly got there first.

"I can fly like Supergirl!"

Yes, there was definitely a gleam in her eye. Jody headed her off.

"Well, actually you can't be Supergirl." Holly looked perplexed.

Jody went on, "Because *I* am. Ok, ok. Not *really*. We'll have to show you."

I thought quickly. The afternoon had only just begun. We had plenty of time. "Now would be as good a time as any, hmm? My place?"

It would have to be my place. Both our costumes were in my bedroom at the moment.

We dragged Holly out of McDonalds. Bus or our own 'transport'. I thought Holly would probably find flying much more exciting. We had a route from the town that let us fly more or less unseen. We flew.

I knew Mum would be visiting Dad in hospital all afternoon, so we had the house to ourselves. I sat Holly down in the lounge and gave her a glass of coke to occupy her. Jody and I rushed upstairs. Quickly we hauled out our costumes and struggled into them. A few seconds later and we were flying down the stairs.

The look on Holly's face as we made our entrance as Supergirl and Powergirl! She dropped her glass on the floor - empty, thank goodness.

Jody said, "Well. What do you think?"

Holly sat with her mouth open. She stammered. "You're not - not - really - are you?"

"Don't be silly dear. Of course not. These are just ordinary fancy dress costumes."

We went and sat beside her. Jody told Holly how we'd met, dressed like this.

"Do you want to join us, dress as a super-heroine and all that? It's great fun."

Holly's eyes shone. "Ohh, yes please!"

I thought about the stuff I had that might make a costume. I had a pale blue leotard I'd had for the dancing classes Mum had tried to get me to go to. It was still around somewhere. That would do.

"Come on upstairs. Let's see what we can find."

We all three floated up the stairs to my bedroom. I fished in the drawer and produced the leotard. "This should do for starters."

We turned our backs while Holly got out of her clothes and into the leotard. While she was doing that, I fished out a dark blue dance skirt I had that was supposed to go with the leotard. Mum had gone to town on the dance stuff. I'd always felt a bit bad about not using it. Now, at least, it would get *some* use - but not for the purpose it was bought for.

The leotard had a collar and buttons. I suddenly realised the extra cape my costume had would fit nicely. With that fixed on and hanging in place, Holly looked as good in her home-made outfit as Jody and I did in our 'proper' ones.

Now we were three Super-heroines. What to call Holly? Jody was one step ahead as usual.

“Ultragirl. Yep, sounds good, Ultragirl And so it was decided, Holly became Ultragirl.

Jody whooped, “To the woods, girls. Let’s go and be super girls for a while and forget the rest of the world.”

We slipped out into the back garden. Jody was first into the air, then Holly, then me.

Holly imitated Jody as she flew. She looked a little awkward at first, she’d obviously not done much actual flying, but she learned very quickly.

We landed in our wood in a flurry of capes and skirts. The next hour was very pleasant as we flew around pretending to be super girls and chattering about this and that. It was nice to forget about the important stuff for a while.

Eventually we flew back to my house, landing in the back garden and quickly slipping in through the back door before anybody saw us. We flew up the stairs to my bedroom.

Jody said, “Come on girls. Time to get back in the everyday secret identities.”

Once we’d all three got dressed again we came together in the middle of the room for a monster hug. I had an immense feeling of friendship and belonging, all three of us together. The feeling was *incredibly* intense.

Then something happened that I’d not expected. During the hug, I felt Jody inside my head. Not like when we ‘spoke’ to each other but present in a much more substantial way. I could feel Holly too, not as strongly, but she was there. I ‘reached out’ with my mind and ‘pulled’ Holly closer. The words don’t really describe what I did but it made Holly’s presence in my head stronger. There was a – snuggling - feeling as we fitted together. It was as if there weren’t three girls there, just one - but made up of three parts.

We disengaged from the hug. Jody and Holly no longer appeared to be side by side in my mind but I could still feel their presence in a way I hadn’t before. Holly stood there, her eyes wide with wonder.

“What *happened*? I *felt* Jody hug you, Lisa. It’s as if I was in your mind with you - as if we were one girl, not three.” She thought for a moment. “I can feel you still with me - and Jody. I feel - different - but not different. What happened?”

She was asking *me*? I still didn’t know myself. Then I had a thought.

“Holly, can you pass me a tissue, please? They’re in a box on the dressing table. No don’t go and fetch one, just tell it to be over here instead of over there.” As I spoke I concentrated on what I did to make such things happen. Sure enough, a tissue appeared in my hand. I hadn’t done it and I was fairly sure Jody hadn’t done it, she understood what I was getting at. It had to be Holly.

Holly had gone pale and was shaking slightly.

“I take it you couldn’t do that before.” I said dryly.

“N-n-no. What’s *happened* to us!” Holly almost wailed.

“Don’t worry. I think that the strong link when we hugged, has transferred some of our abilities to you. You could probably do them anyway, you just didn’t know you could. Like when I ‘spoke’ to you in the corridor this morning. We already knew Jody and I were linked, seems you’ve joined in as well. It’s a bit stronger than it was as well.”

“You always were prone to understatement,” said Jody, “a *bit* stronger?”

“Remember in the hospital, where you held me and I used some of your energy or whatever? I think this is the same thing. Includes our newest member as well.”

Something occurred to Jody, “Holly, when you fly, how fast can you go?”

Holly was recovering nicely. “Oh, not very fast. About as fast as I can run.”

“Hmm. That may have changed. Do a test when you have a minute. Right now I think we should get organised and in our right minds. Your mum will be expecting you to call, Holly, and Lisa, your mum could be back anytime.”

We burst into action. When three girls who can fly start tidying up, it doesn’t take long.

While we sat downstairs waiting for Holly’s mum to collect her, she said with a glum expression, “I suppose that means I’m for the lab now, like you two.”

Jody said, "You know we're going to have to tell Beth what happened, don't you?"

"I suppose you're right" I said. "Don't worry Holly, we'll be with you, possibly in more ways than one."

I thought about the afternoon. Two girls and Mike had become three girls and Mike. Hm. What would Holly think of Mike? I knew what Mike would think of Holly, boys don't think with their heads when it comes to girls, what they think with is about three feet lower down. I liked that expression. I shared it with Jody, she thought it was *hilarious*.