

One of our tanks is missing

A story about the Three Angels by Ian Berry © Copyright Ian Berry Manchester July 2013

One

"We've lost a tank."

"How can you lose a tank, Arnie? A whole tank?"

"They don't come in bits like Lego, Louisa."

"Sorry, Arnie. What would you like me to do?"

"Are the others there, or can you do one of your special conference calls?"

"Not here at the moment. I'll set up a call. Hang on a mo."

Louisa's 'conference call' didn't involve a telephone, or any other technology for that matter. Louisa just 'called' them, using the telepathic abilities the three Angels had awakened in her.

At that exact moment, Lisa, Jody and Holly, the three Angels, were engaged in an important activity – eating. Food intake didn't stop or even slow as Lisa 'answered' Louisa.

"Hello, Weeza. Got a problem for us?"

Louisa 'grinned', "It's Arnie on the phone. When are his calls *not* about problems?"

"Ok. Tell him we're listening." The Angels strengthened the telepathic link with Louisa until they could hear with her ears. They could see with her eyes too when needed, but there was nothing to see at the moment. Hearing was another matter.

"The others are listening, Arnie. Go ahead."

Arnie was quite used to this slightly bizarre arrangement. He repeated what he'd opened the conversation with, "We've lost a tank."

Jody was first. "Lost a tank? That's careless of you, Arnie. What did you do? Leave it in your jacket pocket when you sent the suit to the cleaners?"

Louisa was getting really good at repeating out loud what one of the others 'said' in her head. She could do it word for word, only needing to add who 'said' what. Arnie was quite happy with this and just replied as if Jody was listening on the phone, which she was – in a manner of speaking.

"Not me. I didn't lose it. One of the Tank Regiments has had it stolen."

"How can you *steal* a tank?" 'said' Lisa.

"It was on a transporter ready to go to Salisbury Plain. They were going to shoot at stuff and blow things up. You know what they're like. "

Louisa 'felt' Lisa 'grin' as she 'said', "*Tell* me about it. Gang of kids the lot of them."

Arnie laughed as he continued, "Someone, actually several someone's - there were a few of them - managed to blag their way into the camp. They had all the right paperwork and stuff. They just drove it out of the main gate."

"What was it anyway, Arnie?" 'asked' Jody.

Louisa almost heard Arnie cringe at the end of the phone as he said, "Challenger 2."

There was quiet for a few seconds, the Jody 'said', "So the army have lost one of their most up to date and destructive battle tanks. Hmm."

Holly 'spoke' for the first time, "So was it fuelled and armed then?"

"Fraid so, Holly," said Arnie. "Both H.E. and sabot rounds."

Louisa added a "?" to her thoughts.

"Ask Jody later, Weeza," 'said' Lisa. "Ask Arnie what he needs us to do."

"I don't really see there's anything you *can* do," said Arnie. "I just got told to put you on alert. I suppose our bosses might think the three of you can fly around and look for it. But it could be *anywhere*. You're not Supergirl - even Angel isn't."

Jody got as far as "Er..." before Lisa broke in, "Later, Jody. Weeza, ask Arnie to keep us up to date. It's when the thing pops up again that they might need us."

Louisa dutifully repeated this to Arnie, carefully *not* mentioning Jody trying to say something that was overruled by Lisa. Louisa knew what it was, which made it hard for her not to laugh out loud. Arnie ended the call with the usual pleasantries, and Louisa put the phone down. *Then* she began to laugh.

The laughter wasn't helped by Lisa, who 'said', "Jody? You are only Supergirl in Jodyworld, not here in the real world. Just remember that most people don't know about our dream worlds."

"Arnie wouldn't have heard me," 'said' Jody, plaintively.

"That's as may be. But I know that Weeza gets locked into repeating everything we think at her. One day she might not stop herself in time."

"Sorry, Lisa. Sorry, Weeza." Jody couldn't stay contrite for very long. She brightened almost immediately, "Hey, one day you might get to visit Jodyworld or one of the others. Wonder who you'll be and what you'll look like."

Louisa just grinned. She knew that the dream worlds were just that - dreams - but so vivid that they appeared as real experiences, with all the memories remaining when you woke up. She also knew that in Jodyworld the girls - and occasionally the boys, the Angels boyfriends - had full on Supergirl super powers, x-ray vision, heat vision, total invulnerability, so much so that Jody had once edited the 'story' so someone dropped an atom bomb on them - with no effect whatsoever. Of course, they could also fly, but that was no novelty, they could do *that* in the real world. Using their telekinesis to move themselves resulted in levitation at speeds up to about mach 1.5! She was actually looking forward to the day she joined them. Holly's boyfriend, Victor, had been there and he only had the same telepathic abilities as Louisa herself. Perhaps one day.

Louisa pulled herself back to the here and now. Lisa was still speaking, obviously in full-on Director mode. "Right. Mobiles carried at all times, you too, Louisa. Don't know what we'll need to do but let's be ready."

"Shouldn't think we could lift or 'port a tank," 'said' Holly.

Lisa simply 'said', "Jody?"

Jody, the Angel's Engineer, thought seriously for a moment. "No. Shouldn't think so for a moment. Weights umpteen tonnes, over fifty or sixty at least. I know we lifted that train, but we did use its momentum to help, and it took all six of us. But a straight lift of a tank? No, almost certainly not. Probably couldn't 'port it either."

"Jody? I suppose H.E. stands for High Explosive, but what's a sab... whatever Arnie called it?" 'asked' Louisa.

"Sabot," 'said' Jody. "Means armour-piercing. Uses a gismo to increase the muzzle velocity of the shell so it'll go through tank armour. That's the theory anyway."

"Oh." 'said' Louisa. "Almost sorry I asked."

"Watch out," 'said' Holly, "or Jody'll tell you exactly what it is, what it does, and how it works."

Louisa grinned with the others. Jody was the Angel's firearms 'expert'. There was no doubting she could actually do exactly that.

Lisa, Jody and Holly let the telepathic link with Louisa go back to 'normal'. They were still there in the back of Louisa's mind, so to speak, like a telephone that's been put down on a table, still connected but nobody's speaking at the moment. Louisa had work to do anyway.

Two

A week or so went by. The girls had almost forgotten about the missing tank. There had been lots of other stuff to occupy them, like an experiment to see how they could contain an explosion. That had required a hand grenade, a thick blast wall, tonnes of cameras and other test equipment - and a *lot* of people to make sure nobody got hurt. A smaller-scale version of the bomb Angel had contained on the train in the Channel Tunnel.

Friday saw a call from Gerald, the head of security at 10 Downing street. As it happened, all four girls were together in their office at the lab at the time.

Lisa answered the phone. "Hello, Gerald. How are you today?"

Jody and Holly strengthened their telepathic link with Lisa so they could hear the conversation with her ears, Holly 'pulling' Louisa into the link so she wasn't left out.

"I'm fine, thank you. Got a job for you, if you'd be so kind."

"Go on, Gerald. We're all ears."

Jody 'laughed', "Yeah. Eight ears at the last count."

"Quiet, Jody," 'said' Lisa, listening to Gerald's reply.

"Usual stuff. Got a visit from the PM of Uzbekistan, coming over from Tashkent to talk to His Nibs."

That made all four girls grin. Gerald was noted for his apparent lack of respect for the Prime Minister.

"Need us there?" asked Lisa.

"Please."

"Ok. When?"

"Tomorrow lunchtime. I know it's short notice ..."

"Should charge extra for short notice and working weekends," said Lisa with a small laugh. "Anyway, just us, or do we need the full bit for outside with the PM?"

"Nobody should know about the visit. Just the PM being twitchy about the fact that Uzbekistan is next door to Afghanistan - and, of course, there's the missing tank."

"Hm. Forgotten about that," said Lisa. "Any news? Or aren't you in that particular loop?"

"Not heard anything," said Gerald with a small laugh. "But that doesn't really mean anything. Sometimes I think the only loop I'm in is the one in Chicago."

"Now, you know that's just not true," said Lisa.

"You're right, of course. But it sounds good doesn't it."

Lisa and Gerald made the relevant arrangements for the following afternoon and Lisa put down the phone. She summarised, although the other three had 'heard' both sides of the phone call.

"Plane coming into Heathrow. Then a car to Downing street with an escort. We hang about behind the door, make sure there's nothing to worry Gerald. Then run the whole thing in reverse after the meeting."

"Seems simple enough," said Holly.

"Mm. When has anything to do with Downing street been simple," said Louisa.

"First time for everything," grinned Jody. "Anyway, you on for the pub tonight, Weeza? Victor and Mike are coming but Brian has to work, a night exercise or some such, so you and Lisa can keep each other company."

"Yep. I'll be there."

Jody grinned some more as she said, "Mike is staying at mine tonight. Mum is stringing barbed wire, trip wires and alarms as we speak."

There was more laughter as the three Angels dispersed to do whatever they had planned - probably to do with food - all the mental stuff they could do took energy, energy comes from food, so they spent quite a lot of time eating - or refuelling as Jody was fond of calling it. Even Louisa ate a bit more than usual, and she was only telepathic. Louisa grinned to herself as she got on with finishing the day's office work.

Three

The evening in the pub had been a great success. Both Lisa and Louisa had been approached by a couple of boys. The one trying to pick up Lisa stood no chance, of course. She'd even 'told' Brian about it as it happened. The pair of them had had a gentle laugh. Louisa was a different matter altogether.

There'd been a live band and dancing and by the end of the evening Louisa had a new number in her mobile phone. Alex had been a perfect gentleman, not pressuring Louisa to see her home or trying to separate her from her friends. They'd had several dances and a couple of drinks and Louisa was well pleased with how the evening had gone. However, that was all about to change.

The Angels had teleported Louisa home, Lisa had 'ported herself, Jody and Mike went courtesy of Jody, while Victor saw Holly home with his car which he'd insisted on taking. It was around three in the morning when Lisa sat bolt upright in bed.

All she could see was a plane on fire on the ground. She knew this was a Precog, a vision of a possible future event. She'd had them before, but it was still disturbing enough for the others to be stirred awake as her distress was dumped into the telepathic link the Angels maintained. Even Louisa and the three boys were affected.

As they had done before, everybody supported Lisa at the same time as they tried for as much information as they could.

"It's on the ground," 'said' Lisa. "Basically in two bits."

"Crashed?" 'asked' Jody.

"No. Don't think so. More as if it's been blown apart. Two big bits, not lots and lots of little ones. It's on fire in the middle."

"A bomb?" 'asked' Holly.

Lisa thought for a long few seconds. "Not sure. No, don't think it's a bomb. Jody? Tell me if I'm wrong but a bomb would spread debris evenly on both sides. It's not like that. The mess is all on one side."

"Been hit by something," 'said' Jody.

"A rocket maybe?" 'said' Brian. "That'd push stuff away from the impact point."

"Maybe not," 'said' Jody. "A rocket would penetrate the side then go off bang. Same effect as a bomb planted inside the plane."

"Would a rocket actually get inside?" 'asked' Louisa. "Sorry, I'm not an expert like you lot. Wouldn't it need to be - what did you call it? - armour-piercing?"

"No," 'said' Brian. "Plane skin is basically aluminium alloy. A good tin-opener would do it - well not *really* - but you get the idea."

Jody 'said' a rude word. "A ruddy sabot round would do it! It'd blast the side of the plane inwards and blow the far side outwards. Follow that with an H.E. round and you get an exploded plane with most of the mess on one side. What d'you think, Brian?"

"Well, yes. That'd do it just as you said. But where do you get a high velocity armour-piercing shell from? And how do you fire it?"

"You use a tank," 'said' Holly. "A nice, shiny, new, fully fuelled and armed Challenger 2."

"But who has that kind of gear - apart from the army, I mean?" 'asked' Brian, with a puzzled tone to his mental 'voice'.

"Oh, just your normal average terrorist gang," 'said' Lisa. "Just like the gang who stole a Challenger out from under the noses of a tank regiment just last week."

"So what d'we do?" 'asked' Holly.

"Lisa? Look again - sorry, dear. How much damage was there around the plane? Busted buildings, all like that."

The others felt Lisa concentrate. "Mm. Nothing much. Open space around the plane. I'm seeing it from the side the shell was fired from, which is why I can't see the tank. It must be behind my viewpoint."

"So we need to deflect the shells."

"Would think so," 'said' Lisa. "Where d'we send them?"

Holly grinned. "The South of France again?"

"Better idea," 'said' Lisa. "We send 'em to the place we 'ported into the A310 from. That's umpteen hundred miles out over the Atlantic. They can blow up as much seawater as they like."

"Can you *do* that?" 'asked' Brian, with a slightly incredulous tone.

Mike 'spoke' for the first time. "You know the Angels. They can do *anything*."

Victor sent an animated picture of himself nodding agreement. By mutual agreement any further discussion was put off until morning.

Four

Saturday morning saw Lisa and the other Angels up and about early. Mike had gone home, Brian and Victor were home already. The Angels congregated at Lisa's, including Louisa, 'ported by Jody.

"The problem is going to be convincing people that I saw what I saw - and what the consequences might or might not be." said Lisa, as she sat down to begin breakfast.

Food intake might be happening, but the conversation continued.

"So we don't tell them," 'said' Holly, spooning up cereal.

"*That'll* be interesting," 'said' Jody, crunching toast.

"Not really. All it means is we know in advance what we're trying to avoid. We'd only have had to do it anyway."

"Arnie will probably believe you," 'said' Louisa, mouth full of toast.

"There is that," 'said' Holly, still shovelling in cereal.

"I'll ring him after breakfast," 'said' Lisa, drinking orange juice.

Arnie was sceptical at first, but he did at least have faith in the abilities of the Angels.

"Don't know if I'll be able to convince the army to make a move. At Heathrow, you say?"

"Yeah. Visit by the PM of Uzbekistan. Check with our bosses. They might give you more details. Bottom line is that the tank will appear at Heathrow at some point in the next few hours."

"Thanks, Lisa. I take it you're going to ..."

"Yep. The Angels are going to attempt to save the day again."

Next on the telephone list was Gerald at Number 10. "Not coming directly to you, Gerald," said Lisa. "Going via Heathrow. We'll teleport across while the cars are driving to you. Be there in plenty of time."

"That's good, Lisa. We're getting some odd reports of stuff maybe going to happen at Heathrow. Nobody will commit themselves, but something's not right. How d'you know about it anyway?"

Lisa grinned, "We have our sources. It's no trouble to us to make sure, so that's what we'll do."

Thanks, Lisa. Keep me up to date - just in case His Nibs hears about it somehow."

Both Gerald and Lisa were laughing gently as Lisa ended the call. Lisa reviewed the 'troops'.

"At least you're all dressed for it," she grinned. A reference to all four girls wearing their one piece Angels suits.

"Where are we going?" asked Louisa.

"Been to Heathrow before," laughed Jody. "Even I remember that little jaunt. Almost got gassed. Lisa managed to 'port us all out just in time. I expect the place is etched into her memory."

Lisa grinned as she said, "Yep. No problem. On the tarmac just outside the VIP terminal building. We ready?"

Next thing, the kitchen at Lisa's was empty, and four girls were standing on the tarmac at Heathrow. Led by Lisa, they matched into the building they'd materialised next to - to be stopped cold by a pair of very large security guards.

"Who the hell are you lot? How did you get in here? This area is restricted today."

"We know," sighed Lisa. "Louisa? Show the nice man your ID."

Louisa smiled as she dutifully fished her Security Service ID badge from her belt pocket. She handed it over for inspection.

"Ok. That's you, but what about the others."

The pause as Louisa produced her ID had given the Angels time to remember where they'd left their own ID badges. Lisa 'said', "Three, two, one, go!"

Three hands were suddenly full of three badges as the girls simultaneously 'ported their ID's from wherever they'd left them. The two guards actually took a step backwards. They inspected the credentials gingerly, as if they expected them to explode at any moment.

"That'll teach 'em," 'laughed' Jody.

"Now that's sorted out," said Lisa, "We need to tell you what's going to happen."

"We know what's going to happen."

"Ah. So you're expecting the tank, then?" grinned Jody.

"Tank? What tank?"

"The one that'll appear to trash the plane," said Holly, with a grin like Jody's.

"Enough already," 'said' Lisa, then in normal speech, "We have intel that the tank that was stolen a week ago will be used to attack the plane."

"You serious?"

"Never more so."

"What the hell are we going to do?"

"Stop swearing for a start," 'said' Lisa, but only to the other girls. Out loud she said, "We're the Angels. We can fix it so the plane doesn't get hit by tank rounds. Don't ask - we can - ok?"

Louisa had been looking around while Lisa spoke to the security guards. Now she 'said', "Lisa? Incoming."

Lisa turned to look, just in time to see a large car with various escort vehicles sweep towards them across the tarmac. Several large, efficient-looking men got out and took up position around the small convoy. Among them were the Angels particular friends in the Security Service - Arnie Nichols and his sidekick, Jim.

Arnie spoke first. "Hello, girls. Unless I'm mistaken, isn't this where we first met, our first job together?"

"Yeah," said Holly. "The Japanese girl."

"What have you managed to arrange, Arnie?" asked Lisa.

"Basically not a lot," was the reply. "The Army is going to 'investigate the reports', and the Police are thinking about it. Best we could do was to increase our own presence, and be here ourselves."

"Not going to stop a tank with your P30," laughed Jody, referring to Arnie's choice of sidearm."

He joined in the laughter. "Suppose not. Relying on you three - you four - sorry, Louisa - for that. What're we going to do?"

"I have no idea," said Lisa. "We'll just play it by ear. Only thing for certain is that Louisa will be in charge of looking after any bigwigs. She's *good* at that."

Suddenly Lisa got a concerned expression on her face. "Got a problem. It's not going to go as planned."

"Another Precog?" asked Holly.

"Not a full-blown one, no. More a strong premonition. We aren't going to be able to stop the plane being blown up."

She was quiet for a moment, then. "Right. Change of plan. We get the bigwigs off the plane before it lands."

"How will you do that?" asked Arnie.

"Teleport them off."

"Need to know what the inside of the plane looks like, Lisa", warned Jody.

"Mm. Ok. Like the train. One of us flies alongside, scouts a place by looking through a window and 'ports aboard."

"That'll work," said Holly. "I'll go"

"No," said Lisa, "Angel will go."

Then there was no more time for talking. A radio somewhere made incomprehensible noises and one of the VIP building staff said, "It's on short finals. It's about ten miles out."

Jody turned and asked, "How many planes in front of it?"

"None. It's in a cleared slot. It's the next one down."

"Right," said Lisa, "Angel, now."

Lisa, Jody and Holly strengthened the telepathic link between them until it became so tight that the three girls minds merged together to make just one - Angel. To Louisa, it was as if three little light bulbs in the back of her mind had become one huge searchlight. Angel lost no time in putting stuff into effect.

The Holly part of Angel lifted into the air, turned towards the landing aeroplane and shot off towards it. Travelling at just under the speed of sound, it took her only a minute or so to be close to the aircraft. She turned and flew alongside. It was easy to spot a clear space inside. Angel 'ported into the space she could see - to be met by several men holding guns pointed at her!

The sight of a young girl just - appearing - in front of them had obviously unnerved the Prime Ministers bodyguards. One of them opened fire. At such point blank range he wasn't going to miss!

Five

But he did - with a little help from Angel. Her telekinetic abilities meant that the bullet was teleported outside the plane. Naturally Angel didn't even bat an eyelid. There were no more shots.

The Prime Minister himself issued orders, in whatever language is used in Uzbekistan, and the men lowered their guns. The PM himself spoke, in accented but very good English.

"I beg your pardon, my dear. Your appearance was unexpected to say the least. I do know who you are, who you work for. For you to appear like this must mean problems on the ground, yes?"

"Yes, sir. I'm afraid that is the case. I plan to rescue you and your staff before the plane lands. Please collect anything you think you can't do without, quickly if you please, we don't have much time."

While the people on the plane were scurrying around under the watchful eyes of the Holly part of Angel, the Lisa part was speaking to Louisa. "Can you baby-sit them please, Weeza. There's a bar and restaurant here. I'll send them there. Can you make sure they stay there?"

"Yep. I'm on it. D'you need me to scout the bar area for you?"

"Please. You can be the far end anchor. Makes it easier."

Louisa left at a run to find the required room deeper in the building. A few seconds later she 'said', "Here, Angel."

Looking through Louisa's eyes let Angel see the landing area. Next second the almost empty room was full of men, most of them muttering what Louisa supposed were swearwords.

"Gentlemen, please, you're safe here for the moment." Then to Angel only, "Which one's the PM?"

"This one," 'said' Angel, sending a picture along with the words.

Louisa approached the PM and gave a small bow. "Are you ok, sir? I'm sorry we treated you a bit rudely. We should stay here until Angel has sorted stuff outside. It may get a little noisy but don't worry."

"A little noisy, she says," 'laughed' Angel in Louisa's head. "I think you mean rather a lot noisy actually. Woops, plane's landing."

The pilots had no idea their plane was actually empty. Empty, that is, except for the Holly part of Angel who'd stayed aboard to see that nothing happened to either of the two poor men in the cockpit.

Suddenly the two parts of Angel still outside the building turned together and both looked the same way, out to the perimeter of the airport away in the distance.

"Get ready, boys," she said. "Tank's over that way. Here comes the trouble."

There was a far away rumble - and a huge tank appeared on the far side of the perimeter fence.

Perimeter fences are designed to stop people and animals, not umpteen tonnes of battle tank. The fence put up no resistance whatever. The tank gathered speed over the grass towards the VIP building.

"It'll fire any time now," shouted the Jody part of Angel. There was no need to 'speak' to the Holly part still on the plane, she *was* Angel, she knew what was going on without needing to be told.

With a huge bang and cloud of smoke, the tank's main gun fired at the plane just nicely coming to a stop. Angel had Holly's shield running at full power, even a sabot armour-piercing round wasn't going to get through that - and it didn't. Somewhere just short of the plane, quite difficult to see at the speed it was travelling at, the shell just - vanished.

"Where did you send it?" grinned Arnie. "Not the South of France again?"

"Nope," said the Lisa part of Angel. "It's somewhere out over the Atlantic, probably looking *very* puzzled. Watch out for an H.E. round."

At that moment, the tank's gun fired again. This time, instead of a noise like a giant angry bee, there was a much deeper sound, more like a train going past. The H.E. shell was bigger and slower.

That didn't make the slightest difference. It joined the first one out over the ocean.

But there was a bigger problem looming. The tank was heading directly for the plane - and it didn't look like it was going to stop!

Six

The various parts of Angel didn't need to discuss or plan amongst themselves, they were effectively one girl with three sets of everything. That one girl was easily capable of doing more than one thing at once.

With the plane parked and stationary, Angel 'ported the pilots to safety. They joined the men in the restaurant. The Lisa and Jody parts rose into the air and shot across to the speeding tank.

Landing on the top, she hung upside down and looked in through the slit the driver was using to see out. That let her see not only the layout of the driver's position, but also to 'see' how to drive the tank as the information needed was extracted from his mind. Angel needed to know how to drive the tank, the driver knew, so now so did Angel.

The driver was unceremoniously teleported to Arnie and his boys, who'd half expected something like this. Handcuffs were already waiting.

One of the two girls on the top of the tank vanished. The Jody part of Angel was now in the driver's seat. But there she hit her first snag.

It takes a lot of brute strength to control a tank, and all three parts of Angel were just slim young girls. But that could work to her advantage. Suddenly there were two parts of Angel in the driver's seat. It was a squash but they managed.

The drivers were the Jody and Holly parts, which left the Lisa part still on the top of the machine. She intended to look through the slit at the top of the turret and repeat the teleport trick on anybody still inside. Changing drivers had taken too much time. Although the tank was beginning to slow, the man or men in the turret had reloaded the main gun. It fired a third time.

All the parts of Angel were either on or in the tank. There was no possibility of shielding the plane. The high explosive round hit it dead centre.

With a large bang and a huge fireball, the plane broke in two - and there was no time to completely stop or turn the tank. Only one thing to do - go through the middle.

The Lisa part of Angel had still been on the outside when the H.E. round hit the plane. It takes no time at all to teleport, so that part was standing next to Arnie as the tank ploughed into and *through* the plane.

"That went well," said Angel, as the tank disappeared into the flames and smoke.

"Are they - are *you* ok in there?" asked Arnie, remembering belatedly that Angel was actually only one girl.

"I'm fine. So is the chap still in the turret. He won't be there long. Here he comes - now."

Another man just appeared, teleported from the tank. Another pair of handcuffs appeared, the normal way, from someone's pocket, and the late tank commander was led away.

Suddenly Angel turned to look at where the tank had originally appeared from. "Oh, crap. Another threat. More incoming, Arnie."

"What is it? Another tank?"

"Dunno yet. Can't be another tank. Damn. I know what it is. It's the ruddy transporter. If it's big enough to carry the tank, it's a hefty bit of kit." She turned and looked behind her. "Oh, no! I think they intend to ram the building. I'm not having *that!*" And she vanished.

Arnie watched in fascination as the huge transporter came nearer and nearer. Eventually he came to his senses and gave orders. "Get the people out! Through the rear fire doors. Get them OUT! NOW!"

In the hurry to mobilise his men, Arnie didn't see the tank come into view round the tail of the still-burning plane. He heard it all right!

The main gun swung round, took a second to find a lock, and fired. An armour piercing sabot round went right *through* the engine of the transporter.

The combination of the almost point-blank range and the enhanced muzzle velocity of the shell meant it was through the engine block and out the other side before it exploded. All that did was rock the tractor unit. The wheels on one side left the ground momentarily, but the thing stayed upright. Without an engine, the tonnes of tank transporter ground to a halt just a few metres from the front of the building.

The Lisa part of Angel reappeared beside Arnie. She grinned as she made the first two fingers of her hand into the gun-shape that children have used in games for many years. The grin only paused for a second as she raised her hand to her mouth and blew across a pretend-gun muzzle. The grin returned as she dusted her hands together.

Angel let the full merge collapse to become Lisa, Jody and Holly again. Jody was first.

"Woo-ee. Driving that tank was awesome. Didn't even singe our eyebrows as we went through the fire."

Holly was a bit more restrained. "Look at the plane. Look at the way the debris is scattered. All on the side away from us. Does that match your Precog, Lisa?"

"Oh, wow. Yes it does. So it wasn't the actual rounds fired that did it, it was the tank itself driving through the mess, pushing it along."

"How did you load the gun?" asked Arnie.

"I'm ashamed to say it took all three of us, all of Angel's resources, just for a moment. Those big shells are *heavy!*"

Further discussion was put on hold by Louisa. "Hello? Is it all over? Can we come out now?"

Arnie probably wondered what the three Angels were laughing at. Lisa 'replied', "Yep. You can let 'em out now. Just warn them what to expect." Lisa sent Louisa a mind picture of the scene of devastation outside the front of the building.

Louisa just 'said', "Oops!"

Seven

Louisa turned to the group of men standing in the restaurant. The PM's bodyguards had surrounded him with guns drawn, although what use they'd be against a battle tank she wasn't sure. Nobody had moved, despite Arnie's orders, there'd been no time to even *begin* an evacuation. Louisa wasn't sure quite what would have happened if Angel hadn't taken out the tank transporter, but she knew it'd have been all right. She trusted Angel to have done *something*.

"Mr. Prime Minister, gentlemen. It seems the entertainment is over for the moment. As you can hear, the noise has stopped. Please don't be alarmed at the mess outside, I'm afraid we had a couple of problems. If you'll follow me, we can go to the vehicles."

Louisa led the way from the building, followed by the PM. She stood aside at the door to let him go first but he stopped dead in the doorway. The PM took in the sight of a destroyed and burning aeroplane being covered in foam by fire tenders, a huge battle tank with its engine still running, and a partly destroyed tank transporter that didn't even *have* an engine, let alone one that was still running.

There was muttering in a foreign language that Louisa knew were swearwords, then, "You said a couple of problems. I heard a lot of noise but I didn't expect *this*!"

"Neither did we, sir," said Louisa, which was a bare-faced lie as she well knew, but the truth wasn't something to be shared, not at the moment anyway.

The other three girls walked over and bowed slightly to the PM. "We trust you are ok, sir?" said Lisa. "I know you know who we are, but I'm distressed that our protection was actually needed. It seems you have enemies."

"I regret that this seems to be the case, yes," said the PM with a rueful grin. "Perhaps we should proceed to your Prime Minister as quickly as possible?"

"Let's 'port them," 'said' Holly, "Just in case. And anyway, I'm not sure all the cars are in one piece," she indicated the convoy of vehicles covered in debris.

"Mm. Good idea," 'said' Lisa. "Weeza? If I send you to Number 10, can you scout a clear area and tell the boys what we intend?"

"Yep. Just let me fade to the back a bit so they don't see me go."

While Lisa explained what they intended to do, Louisa appeared in the cleaners cupboard on the first floor of Number 10 the girls used so they could come and go without causing people to jump as they just - appeared. She hurried down the big stairs to the back of the shiny black door.

"Ah. Nick. The very man. We've had a few problems at Heathrow. The Angels are going to teleport the people directly here. Can you pass the word around, to Gerald and so on, while I go and tell *our* PM what's going on?"

Nick just nodded and turned to his telephone. Louisa galloped back up the stairs. She knew exactly where the PM's office was, she knocked on the door, pushed it open and popped her head round it.

"Excuse me, sir. May I come in?"

"By all means, my dear. Louisa, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir. That's me. Have you heard about Heathrow?"

"Sketchy reports only. I hear you needed to deal with a tank."

"Angel did that, sir, not me. I just got to look after the PM's party. If I may," she continued as the PM was obviously going to say something else, "We intend to teleport the party directly here. Where would you like them to appear?"

The PM rallied, "In the reception room next to the dining room. You remember where that is?"

At that moment Gerald appeared at the door, slightly out of breath from obviously running up the stairs.

"Can you get everyone in the reception room ready for a special delivery," grinned Louisa.

"Mostly all in there already. What're you going to do? Just make 'em appear?"

"Yep. Something like that." Louisa turned to the PM, "If you'd join them there ready to greet the foreign party, sir?"

"Yes, of course." Louisa stood aside to let the PM go first, then followed him.

"If you'll arrange yourselves as if the other party was already here ... that should be enough room, thank you."

"Ready, Weeza?" 'said' Lisa.

"Yep. Have they put the guns away?"

"Yeah. We lined 'em up as if they're already there."

"Good, That's what I've done as well." She looked at the room, with special emphasis on where the foreign party should appear. The girls merged to be Angel again, looked where they should go to through Louisa's eyes, and the whole party from Heathrow simply - appeared - in the reception room in Number 10.

The two Prime Ministers each took a pace forwards and shook hands. The four Angels slipped out of the door to find Gerald in the corridor.

"If I find you some food, will you brief me on what the hell is going on?"

Lisa laughed. "That's the best offer we've had all day. Lead on, Gerald."

There would be *loads* of loose ends to tidy up, but others could do that, pick up the pieces - and there were lots of *those*. But for now the Angels were happy. What did you expect, Gerald provided food. As Lisa, Jody and Holly told Gerald what had happened, Louisa's mind wandered. When she'd found out about the Angels and finally begun to work for them, she'd never thought it would turn out quite like this. Still, never a dull moment - and there was always the possibility of a phone call from Alex! If the others noticed the big grin, they didn't say anything.