

An extract from 'The Fourth Angel'

Despite the heart to heart with Mum, I was in the office at the usual time that morning - nicely in time to scoop up the phone as it rang.

"Hello, the Angels, Louisa speaking, how can I help you?"

I actually knew who it was before the person on the other end spoke, the little window on the phone revealed all. A number I recognised, the local CID bit of the police.

"Hello, Louisa. It's Grant here from CID, got a minute?"

"Hi Grant. Is it something fiendishly important that the others need to know immediately?"

"No, no. Just some information for you."

Ok. I didn't need to 'call' the others, at least not quite yet. "Go on."

"We've confirmed that the man who shot people at the cash and carry was just one man, if you see what I mean."

"That's about what we thought as well," I said. "So do you have an E-fit of him?"

"Yes. I don't think you need to come and look - unless you want to, of course - it's the same guy who held up the bank."

"We'll accept your word on that," I said. "Did you get a call from the Security Service?"

"Mm. They wanted a report. We told them what we could, which wasn't a lot as you already know."

"I'll add to your knowledge just a little, I don't think anybody'll mind. We now have four sightings of this chap." I continued quickly as I sensed him about to say something, "But only two of those are doing criminal acts that would involve you guys, and both of those are in your area. Not a lot, but every little bit of intel is useful."

Grant actually laughed. "That's exactly what the guy from London said. Just who *are* you girls anyway?"

I grinned, not that Grant could see that of course, "Sorry, can't tell you. National Security, you know how it is."

"I know, I know. I saw your badge. Anyway, you take care. Try not to get shot at."

I smiled as I put the phone down. Poor Grant had no *idea*.

The smile vanished as Victor burst in through the office door looking distressed and very troubled.

"She's gone, she's gone. Holly's gone!"

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I jumped up and grabbed his arms. "Victor, *Victor!* Look at me, *look at me.* What do you mean, Holly's gone?"

I didn't need to wait for his reply, I knew exactly what he meant. Normally I could 'feel' Holly in the back of my mind. The 'feeling' with a label that said 'Holly' was missing."

I tried to calm Victor. "Maybe she's just withdrawn from the link. You know we can do that if we think one of the others needs some privacy."

"She wouldn't do that with me. Besides, she disappeared with a sort of mental sigh, as if she'd fallen asleep. But she isn't asleep. I can still feel her when she's sleeping." Victor was getting wound up again, not helped by Lisa 'porting in, closely followed by Jody.

"Victor? What's going on? Where's Holly?"

I waved a hand at Lisa to shut up while I used the other hand to hang onto Victor.

"Concentrate on me, on my face. Take a deep breath, Victor. That's right, now another one." I held his other hand again. "Now, exhale and hold it just for a moment. Good, good, now take a breath and breath normally."

I almost saw the slightly mad look leave his eyes, he'd be ok now.

"I was on the phone when Holly vanished," I said, "So I don't know exactly what happened. Can you tell us?"

"We already know," 'said' Jody."

"Shush, Jody," 'said' Lisa, "I see what Weeza's doing. Victor might have sensed something different to us."

Victor was speaking. "We weren't talking, just *there* if you see what I mean."

I nodded encouragingly, "Then all of a sudden she just gave a little sigh, a mental one if you follow me, then she just faded away. Like she does when she falls asleep, but this time she faded completely away. Where's she gone? Where is she?"

"Unconscious," 'said' Jody. "Like the time Lisa got knocked on the head."

"We think she's unconscious," I said to Victor, "Not asleep, deeper than that, which is why you can't feel her. You aren't alone, none of us can feel her."

"Think carefully, Victor," said Lisa. "Did she really just fade away or did you get any impression of pain?"

"She just - faded away."

"Drugged then, not bashed over the head," said Jody.

"How can we find her, get her back," Victor almost pleaded.

"We can't," said Lisa. "But the moment she wakes up it'll be different. Whoever's got her will wonder what hit them. Angel will sort them out, don't you worry."

"Can't she do it now," he said, then it hit him, "You can't, can you. Without Holly there's no Angel."

"I'm rather afraid you're right," said Lisa.

"We just need to wait until she wakes up," said Jody.

"Trouble is, she's likely to be disorientated - maybe too disorientated to 'port out or merge to Angel."

"So what do we *do?*" asked Victor.

I put a hand back on his arm, "We wait and see."

That didn't sit too well with Victor, he wanted to be up and doing, looking for Holly, dashing here, there and everywhere. But that's all we'd be doing - until she was back with us.

Morning turned into afternoon without any of us sensing Holly, however lightly. Victor was about ready to fight off the whole world, I'd had to calm him down again more than once. Then, about the middle of the afternoon, The feeling in the back of my mind labelled 'Holly' was back again.

"Oh my God, my head aches."

"Holly! You're alive!" 'said' Victor.

"Matter of opinion at the moment," 'said' Holly.

"Come back to us," pleaded Victor.

"Hang on, Victor," I said. "Softly, softly catchee monkey - and that's what we want to do - catch 'em."

"But Holly ..."

"... Is fine, Victor. I have a headache and my mouth feels like an old pair of socks but that can be fixed. I'm lying here quietly pretending to be out still. Trouble is, I need to keep my eyes shut. Right. Perhaps I'm up to a scan to see what's around. Let's see, gun, gun, another gun, oh no!"

"What, Holly," 'said' Lisa.

"I thought I was strapped down to the bed or whatever it is. I'm not. The strap is holding some kind of explosive device to me. I'm booby-trapped. You'd better stay out of here for the moment."

Despite being distressed, Victor was thinking rationally again now he knew that Holly was still alive. "Can't you just teleport out and leave the bomb-thing behind?"

"I could, but if it goes off it'll kill everybody here. I know they might be terrorists or whatever, but I'm not comfortable with that."

"I'd agree with that," 'said' Lisa.

"If you merge to be Angel the men or whatever won't notice and Angel can use Lisa's ability to find out where Holly is." I 'said'.

"And Angel can use Jody's ability to stop the thing going off until we can deal with it. Good shout, Weeza. You up for a merge yet, Holly?"

"I guess so."

"Here we go."

Lisa and Jody merged their minds with Holly. The usual three little candles in my mind becoming one big bonfire.

"Oh wow," said Angel-Lisa. "That's some headache. Hang on while I do something about *that*."

"Phew, that's better," said Angel-Jody.

There was quiet for a moment as Angel used Lisa's ability to collect information to see if she could figure out where Angel-Holly was.

"The old block of flats on the ring road, the one they keep trying to get demolished. It's empty at the moment - except for sundry terrorists and Angel-Holly. For some reason I can't 'see' just where in the block they are."

"Let's go and search," I said. "With Angel back in action we should be fine, even Victor and me."

"About all we can do I suppose." said Angel-Lisa. "Ring your friends at the local nick, Weeza, and tell 'em to get over there as fast as they can, although I should think we'll have the job sorted before they turn up. They might be able to round people up as they try to run away."

I quickly did as asked. I think it was only because the police knew exactly who we were that made them jump into immediate action. Then there was no time to waste. Angel gathered me up, along with Victor, and we moved to somewhere that had to be near the flats. Near - but still almost a mile away.

“None of me have been anywhere nearer. We’ll need to fly. Sorry Victor, you’ll have to run I’m afraid, grab a hand, Weeza.”

I caught hold of Angel-Jody’s hand. Next thing we were zipping through the air towards the flats. We seemed to be a bit high - a lot high actually. Angel must have sensed what I was thinking.

“We need to be above any look outs. I’m going to land us on the roof.”

Next second we came to a gentle landing next to a small building on the roof of the flats. The building had a door, but it appeared to be locked.

Angel-Jody closed her eyes. I could tell she was ‘feeling’ around the door fastening with her telekinesis.

Angel made a rude noise, in my head, but still a rude noise. “It’s only bolted.”

There was a quiet ‘snick’ from behind the door as Angel manipulated the bolt, then the door swung open.

A dark stairwell wound down into the darkness. “The doors on each level should let in some light,” said Angel-Jody. “It’s not as dark as it looks.”

We started down. I found that Angel was right, I could at least make out where I was walking.

Slowly, one floor at a time, we made our way down. This continued in silence for a little while until Angel ‘said’, “There’s a gun somewhere on this floor. Hang around up here, Weeza, and see if you can follow anybody you see. Don’t worry, The shield is running flat out, if anybody shoots at you they won’t hit you.”

I could handle that, besides, I’d probably only be in the way lower down.

I slowly pushed open the door from the stairwell to the landing. A corridor stretched ahead of me with about four doors off it, two on each side. Any light there was, was coming through an open window at the end of the corridor. I moved forwards slowly. The whole floor was deathly quiet. If Angel said there was a gun up here then there was, but I began to wonder if that gun was actually connected to a gunman.

I was almost at the window when Victor ‘called’.

“What should I do? I’m outside on the road.”

“Nothing,” I ‘heard’ Angel reply. “Walk on past as if you know nothing. There’re lookouts about. We’re inside, don’t worry.”

“Me? Worry? Never been known.”

By now I’d reached the window on what had to be the fourth or perhaps the fifth floor. I leaned out of it slightly to see if I could see Victor. There was no sign of him, so I leaned out a little further. The next thing I knew was a pair of hands on my ankles. My feet were lifted off the floor - and I tumbled head first out of the window!

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I didn't even have time to scream as I fell head first down the side of the building. I think I got about two floors nearer the ground, then something went 'click' in my head. I just - stopped - hanging there in mid-air still head-down. I knew exactly what had happened. The stress and fright of falling had awakened my ability to fly on my own. Angel had said I obviously knew how to do it , evidently I did.

No point hanging about down here, maybe whoever had pushed me out was still around. Was *he* in for a shock!

Quickly I swapped ends so I was facing up instead of down, then I aimed at the window I'd been pushed out of and told myself to get on with being up there instead of down here. It worked! In no time flat I zipped back up the face of the building, in through the window and back into the corridor - just in time to see a man walking away towards the stairs.

I landed on my feet and called out, "Hey! You!"

Of course he turned and did a double take. He'd been expecting me to go all the way to the road then splat - no more Weeza. I found I wasn't sorry that I couldn't oblige him.

Then he began to run towards me, probably hoping to try for a take two. I stood my ground, which I think unnerved him a bit, but he kept coming. My wide grin couldn't have helped matters much either.

Then he reached me, still running. I grabbed the front of his loose jacket-thing and let his momentum push me backwards. As I fell backwards onto my back I kicked his feet out from under him, placed one foot on his stomach, and threw him neatly over my head to land on his back on the floor with an "Oof", as the wind was knocked out of him. The judo I'd learned at school comes in useful sometimes.

Because I was expecting what happened, I was up on my feet first. He did have a gun, it was on the floor where he'd dropped it. Not for long, I scooped it up and pointed it at him. Suddenly I got a mental picture of the gun with an arrow and a label that said 'safety catch'.

The click as I thumbed it to the off position seemed very loud in the sudden silence. "I'd advise you not to move," I said in my best intimidating voice. "As you can see, I'm quite capable of using this."

He just grinned at me, grinned no less, as I threatened him with his own gun.

Then he said, "You have no idea, have you," - and vanished!

Damn. He'd teleported. But then there was no more time for thought as I heard the muffled 'crump' of an explosion somewhere below me. Oh no! The bomb must have gone off!