

The Robberies

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

One

There I was, working away as usual, when I had a visitor. No less than Beth, the lab Head Scientist. I didn't stand up, not quite. Beth's not like that anyway. She helped herself to a chair on the opposite side of the desk.

"Good morning, Louisa. Where are the Three Disgraces today?"

"I don't actually know," I said, "But give me a second and I'll find out."

I didn't bother with the diary, or even the telephone - I just concentrated. I reckoned Lisa would be favourite.

"Lisa? Where are you? Beth is asking."

Of course, Beth hadn't heard anything - I'd used telepathy, handy sometimes. Beth knew very well what I was doing, she *was* the head of a lab investigating ESP, Extra Sensory Perception, after all. She just smiled and waited. Lisa 'answered' almost at once.

"Eating breakfast, so are the others. If Beth wants us in a hurry it's not going to happen, Jody's still in her dressing gown."

"Hm," I heard Holly 'say'. "Always Jody. Bit of a pattern emerging here if you want my opinion."

"Hey! Is it my fault if I like breakfast *before* I get dressed?" 'said' Jody, in what I knew was quite fake indignation.

"Anyway, shush you lot. Louisa has the floor. You were saying?"

I grinned as I managed a 'word' in edgeways. "Don't know what Beth wants, not yet anyway. Hang on and I'll ask." I did this.

"Ah. Right. Contact established?"

"Mm. Lisa wants to know what's up."

Before Beth could say anything, Lisa 'said' quickly, "Don't repeat stuff, we're listening with your ears." This was something we'd only tried recently, when it worked it saved oodles of time. Beth was speaking.

"We've had a call from the local police. There've been a spate of odd burglaries recently. Apparently there is no sign of forced entry, all doors are still locked and perimeter alarms don't go off."

Lisa 'said', "Odd."

"That's what I said," said Beth, when I relayed Lisa's word to her. "Odd."

More 'words' to relay from Lisa. "We'll be round in a few minutes. Well, Holly and I will be. Might take Jody a *bit* longer." All I got from Jody was a picture of her face with her tongue stuck out.

Beth laughed as I relayed all this. "Typical Jody. I'll be in my office."

Beth left our office still with a grin on her face. Although it was quiet in the office, the Angels and I were still chatting together.

"Here first or straight to Beth's office?" I 'asked'.

"There with you. Beth *still* jumps a mile when we just 'port in directly. Ah. With you in a tick. Mum's just offered to clear stuff away for me. Thanks, Mum."

The change in the 'tone' of the last two words told me that Lisa'd spoken them out loud, presumably to her mum. Then Lisa was just - there - standing beside me. She'd just teleported herself from her kitchen at home directly to our office here at the lab. Jody I didn't expect, but there was no sign of Holly either. Lisa saw me look around.

"Holly'll be in Victor's workroom. Any excuse for a snog."

I grinned. Victor *is* Holly's boyfriend after all. Holly appeared after a minute or so with a grin to match mine. I couldn't resist. "Victor ok today, Holly?"

"Mm. He's wiping off the lipstick as we speak."

"But you don't wear lipstick," I said.

"Put it this way, if I did, he would be. Ok?"

Jody chose that moment to appear as well. She was still brushing her hair. "Where's the fire," she grumbled in a low voice.

Lisa took charge as usual. "Enough already. Jody, lose the hairbrush, Louisa, collect your notebook. Next stop, Beth's office."

Jody grinned as she 'told' her hairbrush to be back on the bedside table, or wherever it lived while not in action on her hair. It obediently vanished from her hand, presumably to reappear where told. The three of us formed up behind Lisa and she led to the way to Beth's office.

Beth's office door was open just a little. Lisa tapped on it and stuck her head round it. "You wanted us?"

"Mm. Yes. Find a perch."

We distributed ourselves on the chairs facing Beth's desk. "You said odd," said Holly. "What's odd about a burglary?"

"I don't have much information, not really. The police have drawn a complete blank, so much so that they don't know what to do next."

"So they asked you to come up with ideas?" asked Lisa.

"Er, no. What they want is you, the Angels."

"Us?" said Jody. "Why didn't they just ask us?"

"They probably don't know you as well as your cronies in the military and the security services," said Beth. "I think the only time they've been involved with you was the original mission to the lighthouse."

"That was ages ago," said Holly, "Before I joined."

Lisa's nose wrinkled up as she thought about stuff. "There was the chase after the jewel thieves and the original trip to Selafield, but I think that's it."

"Perhaps I should send them our contact details," I grinned.

"Blimey, we'll be having glossy brochures printed next," said Jody.

Ok, ok, you lot. What *do* you know, Beth?" asked Lisa.

"Right. No sign of break-in, no fingerprints, footprints or anything like that. Stuff just disappears. Mostly food and a few clothes, and even some bedding. I think you should go and talk to the nick. Oh, and I believe there a video camera surveillance that saw nothing either."

"Interesting," said Lisa. "Come on troops, to the police station. Let's see what they have to say for themselves. See you later, Beth."

It was a nice day so we walked, it was only the other side of the Town Hall after all. Of course, I had no option. I couldn't fly like the other three, and I could only teleport if one of the others took me. We walked.

Two

The cops didn't know how to contact us but they knew who we were - well - who the others were anyway. We were ushered into an office and sat round a table before you could say 'Angels'. They had a large transparent board-thing on a stand. I supposed this would normally be filled with stuff they'd found out, but not this time. Apart from a set of names, obviously of shops, it was blank.

Lisa began. "The only thing we know for sure is that you don't know anything," she grinned.

There were more grins around the room, all a bit rueful I thought. One of the cops decided to be spokesman, probably he was the boss. I opened my notebook and poised a pen expectantly.

"As you see from the board, there are about six or seven shops involved. Most of these have been hit several times. Probably actually more times than they reported because it took a while for it to be apparent there was anything missing at all."

"The lab say it seemed to be mainly food and clothing," said Lisa.

"That's right. Only quite small amounts. About the only clue we have is a video, from a security camera inside a shop. We can show you."

There was much fiddling with equipment and a big TV on a stand with wheels. Eventually they managed to display the correct bit.

"Watch carefully, although all you'll see is some stuff falling over. It was when the shop people came to tidy up next morning that they discovered something was missing."

The cops were right. All that happened was a small pile of what I thought were sheets or something toppling over. At least that what I saw. Holly has better eyes than me obviously. She got up and went over to the TV.

"Can you make it go frame by frame?"

"Not sure. I don't think we've ever actually ..."

Holly sighed. "Chuck over the remote. Let's see what we can do."

Now it was Holly's turn to fiddle. She rewound the picture backwards until it was just before the pile of stuff collapsed, then she made it go forwards very slowly. She stopped it on one particular picture.

"There, see?" She pointed to the part of the picture we were interested in. "Watch the next frame."

At first I couldn't see what she was getting at - and neither could the cops. She ran the frames backwards and then forwards. "Watch the whatever-it-is about half way down the pile."

Once she'd drawn our attention to it, it was obvious. Whatever it was simply - disappeared! That was what had made the rest of the pile fall over.

Lisa drew in a quick breath but Jody got there first, "Teleported. Must be."

Lisa used the breath she'd sucked in to say, "Now it makes sense."

"Maybe it does to you, but can you explain to us, please?" asked one of the cops.

"The stuff is being teleported. That's why you don't see anybody. There's nobody there - at least not *inside* the shop. Jody, show the nice men how it's being done."

Jody grinned. Suddenly she was holding a remote control - and Holly wasn't anymore.

Lisa again. "That's teleportation. Mostly you have to see what you want to move, but once you can, you just tell it to be somewhere else and usually it goes where you tell it. So, as you see, no need to unlock doors or break in, just look through the window."

"But why food and clothes, and that blanket or whatever it was?" asked one of the men.

The answer was obvious, to me at least. I waited a few seconds to see if anybody more important was thinking the same thing, then I said, "A homeless person. Somebody holed up in a corner somewhere with nothing and nobody."

Three

There was silence for a few seconds, then several people all speaking at once. Lisa put a stop to that. "Quiet a minute! Louisa? What do you mean?"

"If you're homeless and have nothing but the ability to teleport stuff then that's what you're going to do."

"Hm," said Jody. "If I was homeless and such like I'd nick a bit more than some food, clothes and bedding."

"But what if you don't know any different, that there *is* more than being fed, dressed and warm?" said Holly.

"So what you're saying is that we're dealing with somebody quite young, basically a child?" said Lisa.

"Seems that way," said Holly. "Most probable anyway. Pretty much has to be if teleportation is being used."

One of the cops was keeping up anyway. "If I understand you, that would explain one of the thefts we couldn't figure out."

"What was that," asked Lisa.

"A teddy bear."

There was another period of silence, broken by Lisa. "So, a homeless child." She turned to the cops. "Why don't you check with Social Services, see if they know anything."

"Lisa," I 'said', "Maybe they have a report of a missing child? Two and two together and all that."

"Good thinking, Weeza," 'said' Lisa. Then she went on in normal speech, "Louisa thinks you should cross-check against your list of missing children."

I grinned to myself as I watched the policemen wonder just how Lisa knew what I was thinking. At least it didn't stop a couple of them turning to computer terminals. Despite some intensive keyboard work, they turned up nothing, absolutely zilch.

"We need to keep watch and see if we can catch the child in the act," said Holly.

"How?" asked Jody.

"Not sure yet," said Lisa. "Probably need to be on watch all night – unless you have an idea of the sort of time the crimes take place, a sort of window of opportunity if you see what I mean," she grinned.

"Seems to be just up to around middle evening, a couple of hours after dark," said one of the cops.

"So we will get *some* sleep," grinned Jody.

"Have you plotted the thefts on a map yet?" asked Holly, waving her hand at the woefully empty transparent board.

"Actually, no," came the answer. "D'you want us to? We've not bothered so far because all the shops are in the same basic area."

"Might give you a clue to where the child or whatever is making a home," said Lisa.

A map was produced, several X-marks-the-spots drawn on it, and the whole thing stuck on the board. I looked at it along with the other three.

"That's near where my Aunt Kitty lives," I said. "Or at least used to live before her house fell down," this being a reference to the flood that had swept her house away, she and I being rescued in the nick of time by Angel. Holly was inspecting the map as well, she and Aunt Kitty both living on that side of the town.

"Hm. Nowhere near there to make a bolt-hole for a homeless person," she said. "It's all fairly new stuff. Need to do a recce."

"Right," said Lisa. "We'll go and do that now." She held up a hand as a couple of the cops began to speak. "No. We'll go. Couple of reasons. One is that a posse of you chaps will frighten the child, and two is that we might be able to sense their mind, maybe even contact him or her."

The cops weren't sure what to make of all that. I wondered what they'd made of the four of us just - vanishing - as Lisa got Holly to scout a suitable landing site, Jody collected me up, and all four of us teleported.

Holly's 'suitable landing site', appeared to be a service area behind some of the shops. I looked round with interest as we appeared. Holly was speaking.

"This is about the only place I can think of where you could hide, sort of among the bins and stuff."

"Hm," said Lisa, turning as she looked about her. "Not much here. Merge to Angel and let's see what we can sense."

Nothing appeared to change, at least on the outside, but the presence of the three others in the back of my mind became much stronger, and wasn't three anymore, but one - Angel. I knew Angel could sense other minds with ESP abilities, she'd done it before when she disarmed a man with a shotgun, using the mind of a small child to 'see' where she should teleport to. This time she appeared to be out of luck.

"Can see *you*, Weeza," said the Lisa part of Angel, "But nothing else. Don't have an amazing range though, at least I don't think I do." She grinned. It's spooky when she does this, as all three parts, Lisa, Jody, and Holly, grin the same grin at the same time. I'm used to it, but it doesn't half put other people off a bit.

Angel let the merge collapse to become three girls again. "Going to have to stake the place out," said Jody.

"Need somewhere to hide," said Holly.

There was quiet for a moment as we all contemplated this, then I said, "Need a car or something. Not to drive around, just somewhere to sit quietly while Angel keeps watch."

"Brilliant, Weeza," grinned Jody. "I'll borrow Dad's car and we can sit in that."

I knew Jody was the only one of us who could drive, she having learned in a minute or so by watching her Dad. That had transferred all his experience to her and she could now drive as well as he could. She'd even passed her test, working on the principle that it might be useful one day. It seemed today was to be that day.

"Tonight then," said Lisa. "Say seven o'clock. At Jody's. I'll come and get you Weeza."

I nodded. Not for the first time I wished I could 'port myself, or even fly like the others. Perhaps one day.

"I'll take Weeza back to the office," said Holly.

"And you volunteering for that task has nothing at all to do with a certain Victor?" laughed Jody.

"Perish the thought," said Holly, "But now you mention it ..."

Four laughing girls parted company. I had no idea where Lisa and Jody went but I suddenly found myself standing in our office at the lab. There was no sign of Holly. It seemed that despite 'carrying' me, she'd managed to have us end up in two different destinations. I felt I had to check.

"Holly?" I 'said'. "You *are* here aren't you?"

"Yep. I'm with Victor. Or at least I would be if he was here."

"So he's not in his workroom then?"

"No. He's escaped. Just wait 'till I catch him."

She didn't mean any of it, I could tell, her mind was 'grinning'. Next second, she was in the office with me.

"Serves me right. Should have found out where he was first. Anyway, seems the latest trick worked fine. You ended up here ok?"

"Yeah. No problem. Latest trick?"

Holly grinned. "When I teleport you, it's not the same as teleporting myself. It's more like when I move objects, not that I'm calling you an object, of course. No offence."

"Non taken. Go on."

"Well, it occurred to me that we needn't end up in the same place. Just a little bit of extra concentration required."

Lisa and Jody had obviously been 'listening' to this through the link the girls maintained between themselves. We shifted to telepathy so we could all four speak together.

"But that means you have to visualise two landing zones," 'said' Jody.

"Doesn't seem to be a problem," 'said' Holly. "About the only worry was getting them mixed up, me being in the office while Weeza materialised having a snog with Victor. I concentrated *very* hard."

There was laughter as we all four got on with the rest of the afternoon.

Four

When I got home from work, I told Mum what we were up to.

"Oh, the poor thing. How old d'you think she is?"

"Might be a boy, Mum."

"With a teddy bear?"

"Got a point I suppose. Would be a very young boy."

Mum reconsidered. "No, you probably couldn't tell actually. A teddy would give comfort whatever the age of the child. I hope you find him or her."

"So do I, Mum. So do I."

I left Mum with instructions to tell Dad all about it when he rolled in from work himself and prepared to go with Lisa to Jody's.

With four of us in the car, Jody drove us across the town. "Should have just 'ported all of us and the car," she grouched as she had to stop at a red light, "Would have been a darn sight quicker."

"But much more conspicuous," said Lisa.

"Mm," said Holly. "One second, nothing, next second, car. Mind you, been more fun to use telekinesis. A flying car, the bees knees."

"Could you actually do that?" I asked.

"Probably Angel could," said Holly.

I thought about this. "Hey, if she can lift a whole train, what's a little car?"

"Had a bit of help with the train," said Lisa, "Needed the boys as well and pretty much drained us dry. Be a bit pointless if all we manage to do is 'port the car to a McDonalds because we need to refuel straight away."

"I can get my head round that," grinned Jody as she made the car move off through a nice green light.

"Besides, we did actually once lift a car, and without merging to Angel," said Holly. "At the lab. The directors Range Rover. Nearly levered my brain out through my ears. We've moved on a bit since then.

Jody parked the car within sight of most of the shops within the area likely to be hit. I knew we didn't really need to be within actual eye-sight, mind-sight was going to be much more suitable. However, there was a slight snag to this approach. In order to be as sensitive as possible, the girls needed to be Angel, not the Angels. They had no real idea what being merged to Angel would be like over a long period with nothing to do, so to speak. Usually Angel had *lots* to occupy her. Tonight there'd be more or less nothing.

Despite this, Lisa, Jody and Holly merged themselves together to become Angel. She was easily capable of holding a conversation while watching out for signs of ESP.

"Are you still trying to see if you can do other things than just talk to me?" she 'asked'. It was only when speaking that there still appeared to be three girls, mind to mind there was only Angel.

"Mm. Now and then. I keep trying to move small stuff about," I 'said'.

"Let's see. This is how it's done." Something passed between us that wasn't the usual 'speech' and 'pictures'. "Try now," said Angel.

I tried to tell my pencil to be somewhere other than resting on my pad on my knee. It stubbornly refused to move.

"I can feel you trying. You should know how to do it now, but it's not quite there yet. It'll be like the telepathy thing. All of a sudden you'll be shifting stuff all over the place."

"I can wait. I'm a patient girl, me," I 'grinned'. There was no point grinning with my face, all the three parts of Angel were facing away from me, keeping watch out of the car windows. They'd not have seen anything.

For a while it was quiet in the car as we all kept a look out. Normally, even when we didn't speak out loud, there was conversation of a sort, but tonight I was sitting with Angel. She didn't need to talk amongst herself. Then all the three parts of Angel turned and looked the same way. I look too, but saw nothing.

"Somebody's there. By the fourth shop down," 'said' Angel. I looked harder. There was still enough light to see by even though it was rapidly getting dark.

"Can't see anything," I 'said'. "You certain?"

"I can't see anything either, but somebody's there. I can feel them. Quite strong too."

I *still* couldn't see anything. This was spooky - but I wasn't worried about *that*, that's more or less normal around the Angels.

"Out of the car, quietly." I opened my door and did as ordered. There were no further orders, so I stayed close to the car as Angel's three parts spread out to try and grab whoever it was she could sense.

I couldn't see or sense anything, but I could gain an idea of where the invisible person was by the direction Angel's three parts were looking in. It was coming towards me. I crouched behind the car, peering round to watch the action. It was as I stuck my head out to get a better look that something or somebody bumped into me!

Quickly I put my arms round whatever it was and grabbed it. I drew a breath to shout 'Got you!' or something like that but never got a chance to speak, either mentally or out loud. The dark street vanished, to be replaced by a brightly lighted room.

Five

The effect was far less disturbing than perhaps it might have been, I was quite used to being 'ported around. That's what this had to be, a simple teleport. I still had a firm hold of whoever it was I'd grabbed.

"It's ok," I said, gently. "I'm not going to hurt you. That's not the idea at all." Then an inspiration. "If you let me see you, I'll let you go and you can get your teddy bear. Then we can talk."

I think it was the teddy bear that swung it. Suddenly I had two arms round a small, grubby - very grubby - little girl. She was about eight or possibly nine years old.

While this had been going on, Angel had been listening with my ears and I was fairly sure she could see what I was seeing, She was quiet, leaving me to get on with it, but there was no time to think about that.

I let go of the small girl, who went to what had to be her bed, basically just a pile of blankets and stuff against one wall, and grabbed up the teddy bear. I went and sat on the bed.

"Come and sit down so I can talk to you," I grinned at her, "You've sort of kidnapped me."

I was rewarded by the faintest of smiles but she still hadn't said anything. She did at least sit next to me, clutching the bear fiercely.

"Where are we?" I asked, "seems like a nice place."

"It's not, it's not nice. Mummy calls it a dump. What's a dump?"

Hoorah. Communication. "Well, a dump is where you chuck stuff you don't want anymore."

"Like me, you mean? Nobody wants me."

"How do you know that?" I asked gently.

"Mummy told me. She said nobody wants us and we have to hide forever and ever."

"Why would she say that?"

"Because we're different, I'm different. I can do things other people can't do. So can Mummy. She said people were mean to her because of it."

"So where's your Mummy now?"

The little girl began to cry. "I don't *know*. She went out to get us some food and never came back. I was so scared and hungry. I had to go myself. I was so *frightened*."

I leaned over and gathered her into my arms. "There's no need to be scared now. You aren't alone. You don't need to hide to because you're different. I'm like you and I don't need to hide."

The tears stopped. She drew in a shuddering breath and said, "You can move stuff? Like me?"

"Actually, no I can't. But there's a lot more to it than just moving stuff. I can talk to people who aren't here. They're listening to us now."

Then a thought. "Angel? Send me something." I carried on out loud, "Watch this." I held out my hand, palm up.

"Incoming," 'said' Angel. Almost immediately a block of chocolate appeared on my outstretched hand.

The girl watched this as if it was the most common thing in the world, stuff just appearing like that. For her, it probably was. I opened it and broke off a bit. "Want some?"

As she munched the chocolate I handed her, I said, "See? Other people can do stuff like you. You don't need to hide anymore." Then the million-pound question. "Where are we anyway?"

The answer surprised me at first, but not when I thought about it. "I don't know. Mummy brought me here. I come and go by moving myself. The door's locked and I don't know what's on the other side."

"Ok. Not really important anyway." Then another idea. "How would you like a bath, get really clean, then a proper dinner and sleep in a proper bed?"

"Mm. I had a bath once and Mummy got me some new clean clothes. It felt really nice. Where are we going?"

"My house. Don't worry, there's only my Mum and Dad there and they'll stay out of the way for the moment."

"O-ok, I guess. I'd love to be clean anyway."

"Right. One minute to make arrangements, then we go travelling." I spoke to Angel. "Can you go and warn my Mum and Dad, then 'port us to my bedroom?"

"No problem. I'm in the car at the moment. One of me's already gone to your place, I'm talking to your Mum now. Hold your new friend's hand, I'm going to move you to your bed, you should arrive sitting down, like now."

"Hold my hand, got your bear? Here we go." The dismal room vanished and became my bedroom at home. The small girl looked around with an incredulous look on her face.

"Is this where you live? It's wonderful. Do all people have places like this?"

"Pretty much. And so can you, now we've found you. No more hiding. You aren't on your own anymore, but just me for the moment," I said, as I saw an apprehensive look appear.

While this had been going on, I'd been aware of Angel letting the merge collapse to become Lisa, Jody and Holly again. Lisa and Holly were downstairs with my Mum, while Jody was driving the car back. Didn't matter that she wasn't here, her link with the others mean she didn't miss anything. Wasn't much they could do anyway, all down to me for the moment.

I still had a hold of the small girl's hand. "Come on, let's hit the bathroom." I led her across the landing. I'd never had a younger sister or brother to look after, but that didn't seem important as I began to run a bath. Teddy was sat in a place of honour on top of the loo to watch over the proceedings as I began to help the girl get out of her clothes. They weren't raggy or anything, just very, very, dirty. I guessed they didn't get washed, just replaced when too grubby to wear any more.

"Hey," I said, "I never asked your name. Mine's Louisa, but people call me Weeza. What's your name?"

"Mummy called me April so I guess that must be my name."

"That's a pretty name, Do you have another one? Mine's O'Farrell."

"Mummy does, but I don't think I do. Mummy is Mary Hadfield, as far as I know. I think that's it."

The others were still listening through me. I was aware of Lisa on the phone, probably reporting progress so far to the police. I had other things to do. By now there was a pile of dirty togs on the floor. I helped April into the bath. I'd chucked in some bath salts and stuff, it smelled really nice. Poor little April had no real idea what to do, so I knelt by the side of the bath and helped. The worst bit was untangling her hair. When that was done, she had long straight hair down to the small of her back and it was blond, not the mousy grey/brown colour it had been.

While bathing had been proceeding behind a closed door, I'd been aware of stealthy movements around the other upstairs rooms. Mum's terrible, she'd never thrown away most of my old gear from when I was younger. This now worked to our advantage as Mum assembled an suitable outfit for April. Lisa 'ported the pile of togs into a corner of the bathroom April couldn't see.

Eventually I coaxed April out of the bath. A big fluffy bath towel later and she was ready to try on the stuff Lisa'd sent in.

"Undies first," I said. As well as the pants, Mum had had Lisa send a vest. April obviously hadn't worn anything like that previously. Then there was a T shirt and a pair of jeans with a flower pattern. I smiled to myself as I remembered thinking that they were the best thing I ever wore when I was nine years old. After her wash and brush up, April had turned into a really quite pretty young lady.

The others had been 'watching' and 'listening' while I dealt with little April. Now Holly 'said', "Good maternal instinct there, Weeza. You'll do ok when the time comes."

I didn't 'say' anything, but I sent a picture of me with my tongue sticking out. Holly just 'laughed'. But now we had to overcome another problem.

"Ready to meet the others?" I asked.

"I - I ..." she was obviously still very frightened.

"It's ok, really. There's Lisa, and Jody, and Holly. They're just like me really. And there's my Mum. She's cooking food as we speak. Hungry?"

April nodded hesitantly. I grabbed up Teddy and handed him to her. "Come on, Teddy can come too."

I took her hand and led her out of the bathroom and down the stairs. The others were sitting in the lounge waiting for us. When she saw them, April tried to hide behind me, but she didn't try to run or 'port away, which was a good sign.

"Hello, April," said Lisa. "Wow, you look great. *Love* the jeans."

"Mm. I had a pair like that," said Holly. "Still got 'em somewhere. Don't fit anymore." Holly managed to convey extreme sorrow that she couldn't go round wearing flower patterned jeans anymore. April giggled.

I did introductions. "That's Lisa, that's Holly, and the one over there being uncharacteristically quiet is Jody."

"What unchar.. uncharact .. what you said, mean?" asked April.

"It means Jody usually chatters on and on, but not at the moment. She isn't usually this quiet," grinned Lisa. Jody stuck her tongue out at Lisa, which made April giggle again.

Mum stuck her head round the door. "Food anybody? Hello April. I'm Louisa's mum."

We hit the dining room. Mum had just done burger and chips, but enough for an army, she'd got used to the Angels since I'd been involved with them. It seemed little April suffered from the same complaint. The mind stuff takes energy, energy comes from food. The Angels, and now April, began to pack food away like there was no tomorrow.

While we ate, Lisa brought me up to date with stuff so far. Of course, we didn't need to speak out loud. "Cops are looking for April's mum, she must be *somewhere*. Beth at the lab is wetting herself to get hold of April, this invisibility thing is apparently something new. I would imagine it works by convincing the mind of the person looking at you that you aren't there. We can think about that later. What do you want to do with April tonight?"

Blimey. What do *I* want to do? Hadn't thought about *that*. I did now. We had a spare room. No point upsetting April again so quickly. I decided. "She can stay here with me for the moment. Is that ok?"

"You're the boss," 'grinned' Lisa. "Whatever you say." That made me feel really pleased with myself.

After the meal, we curled up the lounge while Mum cleared away the devastation. April had questions.

"So who are you? You can obviously do what I can. Why aren't you hiding, like me?"

"You don't need to hide. All you have to do is just not do stuff that makes other people uncomfortable. Lots of people can do what we do, not as good as you perhaps, but you aren't alone by any means. There's lots of support you can get." Lisa told April all about the lab, the Donald Merriweather Institute. "So you see, there's lots of people around to help you."

"These three are a little bit special," I said. "They're called the Angels."

"And you?" asked April. "Are you an Angel too? If you aren't, you should be."

"Don't you worry," said Lisa. "Weeza's an Angel, just like the rest of us, especially after tonight."

April just nodded, as if it was the most obvious thing in the world. I felt pleased with myself all over again.

Six

The next day saw many loose ends to tidy up. The three Angels had gone home shortly after the meal with April, leaving me and Mum to sort April out. There were lots of things April had never done or been told about, like wearing PJs to bed, she seemed surprised that you were supposed to wear clothes to go to bed.

Beth at the lab wanted April there straight away. Lisa wasn't having any of that. Beth was told 'hands off' in no uncertain terms.

I sat with April having a late breakfast.

"Am I in trouble for taking things from the shops?"

"No, not at all," I said. "If we need to, we'll just pay for what you got."

"But I don't have any money."

"But we do, the Angels I mean. You're an honorary Angel at the moment so that'll all work out. Don't worry about it."

Mum produced more toast, then withdrew back to the kitchen.

"She's nice, your mum."

"Mm. I think so too." Now for it, "What's your mum like?"

"She's a bit like yours I suppose, but not as old. She tries her best to look after me, but ... but..." She began to cry.

I put an arm round her. "Hey, hey. It's ok. We'll find her. There's a lot people out looking right at this moment." I thought about the effect it would have on April if it turned out her mum had been killed or had died in some way. April herself headed that thought off at the pass.

"I know she's not dead or anything. I can still sense her, there, in the back of my mind. It's how she feels when she's asleep."

"So you think she's asleep? Does she wake up sometimes?"

"No. She's been asleep for ages. That's not right, is it?"

"Ok. That's brilliant."

"It is?"

"Yep. That means we've a fair idea where she is. Hang on while I speak to the others."

I 'called' Lisa, ".... so that means she's probably in a hospital somewhere. Should be easy enough to check, they'll have no idea who she is."

"I'm on it. Good work, Weeza. I'll let you know what the cops find out."

"Why are you grinning, Weeza?" asked April.

"Oh, nothing. Just a pat on the back from my boss."

Lisa was back in just a few minutes. "They've found her, at least they think they have. There's an unknown young woman in the ICU at the hospital. She's in a coma, has been since she was knocked down by a car. Got to be April's mum. Get her ready, we'll go and see."

I put an arm round April. "We may have found your mum. She's in hospital, asleep like you said. We need to go there and see. Up for that?"

"Oh yes! How do we get there?"

"Don't worry, Angel will take us."

"Angel? Who's Angel. Is she one of the Angels too?"

"In a manner of speaking. Come on, let's get ready. You don't know where we're going but Angel does. Ready?"

April held my hand. "Ready".

I didn't need to speak to Lisa, now part of Angel. We simply moved. Now we were in the hospital, by the look of it, just outside the Intensive Care Unit. The other three had appeared at the same time. Angel became Lisa, Jody, and Holly again as Lisa went to find out what and where.

She was quickly back. "Come on, this way." She led us into the ICU proper. There on a bed in an alcove was a young woman.

"Mummy!" April was by her side so quickly I was sure she'd 'ported. "Wake up, Mummy." She turned to me, "Why doesn't she wake up?"

"I don't know, but perhaps I know a man who does."

This man turned out to be a doctor who'd appeared to see what the invasion was all about. He explained, or tried to.

"She's been in a coma ever since she was brought in. There are no obvious injuries but the coma persists."

"So she's not actually hurt?" asked Lisa.

"Not that we can see. Her mind is another matter."

"Hm. April? Weeza tells me you can sense your mum. there in your mind?"

"Yes, yes. She's there. Why doesn't she wake up?"

"Ok. We're going to try something a bit odd. Don't worry."

The 'something a bit odd' would no doubt involve Angel, she had more mental 'ooph' than the three girls rolled together. Holly called it 'the whole being more than the sum of the parts'.

Suddenly I was aware of Angel in my mind, in a similar way to when she'd tried to 'improve' my abilities. She 'spoke' to me. "I'm using you as a contact for April. Don't worry Weeza. Just go with the flow."

I could feel Angel reach out to April. Suddenly she was there, in my mind. Now there were three girls linked together. Angel steered us towards the feeling April had for her mum. Suddenly the three of us became four as Angel contacted Mary Hadfield's mind.

I was never sure just what Angel did next, in fact Lisa said later that Angel didn't do *anything*, it was April. All I 'heard' was April 'saying', "Wake up, Mummy. Please wake up."

Whatever the cause, the effect was quite plain. Mary Hadfield's eyes flickered open. The coma was gone! April flung herself across her mum, crying, presumably tears of joy. Angel and the Hadfields disappeared from my mind and I was just plain old Weeza again.

So that was pretty much that. What had begun as an unexplained robbery had turned into something quite different. The Hadfields, Mary and April, were taken under the wing of the Institute, they even stayed at the lab for a while so they could be sorted out properly, so I saw them quite often. I had the impression that the three Angels were quite pleased with me, at how I'd managed throughout the whole thing. The only downside to it all was that I *still* couldn't do anything other than use telepathy. No matter. One day. One day....