

# *That Strange Little Angel!*



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Little Angel*

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**Dedicated to Jophiel**

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## Chapter One

### A New Name

He sure didn't look like an angel. He just looked like a little kid who was in some sort of trouble. Oh sure, he had the wings, and sometimes you could see his halo, but you could tell that something wasn't quite right. Also, one wing had been broken in a crash and hadn't healed right. (That's why he didn't like heights.)

It wasn't that he was barefoot; that seemed okay. It wasn't even that he was pretty dirty. Even the best of angels need a bath occasionally.

It was the cigar. That was the thing that didn't seem right. It wasn't lit, but he chewed it in the corner of his mouth.

Maybe you're wondering, "Why is an angel coming down a street full of people who are living on the sidewalk?"

Do you mean, "Why is he here?" or "Why is he walking?" Or both?

Why is he walking and not flying?

Well, it turns out that flying is a lot of work. First of all, angels aren't all that light. They weigh about the same as a person of the same size, and that means their wings aren't really big enough. Oh, sure, they look good, but try flapping them fast enough to lift off, and you'll get tired pretty quickly. And if you've been smoking a cigar, you'll be out of breath right away.

(That's why the cigar wasn't lit. He just chewed on it. He knew that kids shouldn't smoke, especially angels.)

Why was he here?

Well, he'd lived on the street for a while now, so that's just where he happened to be when this story started.

Right now he was cruising on the old yellow skateboard he'd found, which had a broken wheel so it made a constant clacking noise, but he didn't care because nobody paid him any attention anyway. Not even the cops.

And that was good, because there was definitely a cop up ahead.

The cop was yelling at a stressed-out teenager named Leroy about why he couldn't camp on the sidewalk anymore. There was so much junk piled up that people couldn't get by, even though none of the regular people wanted to walk past a homeless guy anyway. Leroy had

been living in his car for a while, and all his belongings wouldn't fit inside, so they spilled out onto the sidewalk and blocked it.

Most cops wouldn't care, but this one did. He wanted the kid to move his car and all his stuff to a neighborhood that wasn't as nice as this one (not that it was particularly nice).

Leroy showed him that his car had four flat tires. It was a place to live, not a thing to ride in.

That's when the tow truck arrived, and the kid started to cry. Leroy knew he was going to lose everything.

And that made the angel mad.

Oh, wait a minute....

Is that angel a "he" or a "she?"

Yikes. That guy angel is a girl!

Sorry about the confusion, but sheesh. She's a mess. What happened?

Well, she certainly hasn't always been an angel.

Back when she was just a kid, she'd been – just a kid. A homeless kid, but still a kid. A little girl who lived in a car with her unhappy mom and everything they owned. It was hard, but they managed somehow, moving from one awful parking spot to another – until one day her mom got sick.

She'd tried her best to take care of her mom, but then she got sick, too. There was a lot of coughing going on in their overstuffed little car, and they both had a fever. The car wouldn't run because it was out of gas, so mom had to walk when she went looking for help.

And she never came back.

From under a blanket in the backseat, the coughing and fever got worse and worse....

After she woke up dead, things didn't get any better. There was still nowhere to go. No home. No school. Not even a playground. If there was a heaven somewhere, she didn't know how to get there. There were no stairs. No elevator. Not even a signpost. And the wings didn't really help.

At least now she wasn't coughing anymore. And she wasn't hungry all the time.

The wings were new, but there were no instructions with them. She tried flapping them, but nothing happened. She ran and flapped, ran and flapped, and ran some more, until she was exhausted and decided that she couldn't fly any higher than she could already jump. By the time she got back, everything was gone.

The cops had towed the car she and her mom had been living in.

And that's why she really didn't want this cop to tow Leroy's car.

But what can an angel do? Especially a little one.

While the cop was arguing with Leroy, the driver of the tow truck used a metal tank to put air into the kid's flat tires, one by one, so he could tow it away.

While that was happening, the little angel went around letting the air out of all the police car's tires. That made Leroy start laughing. When the cop turned around and saw that he had four flat tires, he was furious.

He ran over to the little angel, flashing his handcuffs. As he grabbed her arm and clamped the cuffs on her, they went right through her wrist. It didn't hurt or anything. It was as if she wasn't real. Nervous and frightened, she fluttered her wings a bit and was surprised when she rose up into the air.

The cop was surprised, too. Unable to reach her, he shouted, "That strange little angel!"

And that's how she got her name. Well, it wasn't a proper name, but it's what she was called after that (sometimes with a big grin). Eventually, she came to just be known as Angelita, which means "little Angel."

Because the air tank was empty, there was nothing to be done for a police car with four flat tires except tow it away (with a really mad cop inside).

Then Angelita grabbed a pump from the kid's rusty old bike, and they took turns refilling his car's tires. It took a lot of frantic pumping, but when it was done, they loaded all his stuff into the car, and he drove away before the cop could come back.

Angelita didn't want to be there either when the cop returned, so she stepped onto her skateboard and rolled away.

## Chapter Two

### Let Her Go

Well, at first it had all been pretty confusing because Angelita wasn't quite sure how to be an angel. There hadn't been a job interview or anything. There was no orientation class and there was no manual as far as she knew.

What were the rules? No cussing, of course. No smoking. No murder, which was understandable. No stealing, which was always a temptation when you were broke and lived on the street. Could she even tell little white lies or cheat at cards? Could she throw litter on the sidewalk? Living on the street she'd learned to be really careful not to break any laws, but there could always be

a mistake, or a mean cop. Are there angel police? Or angel jails? That didn't seem likely.

Her clothes were dirty, as usual. Was there an angel laundromat? Were there angel coins for the washers and dryers? Was there angel money at all?

There were a few good things, for sure, about being an angel. She didn't have to study for school. Even though she really liked the idea of school, it had not been friendly to a kid without a home address.

At least people couldn't stare at her anymore, unless she wanted them to see her. They usually couldn't see her wings either, or that pesky halo that kept slipping down over her eyes.

Now people couldn't hurt her, or even hurt her feelings. She was beyond that.

She wasn't hungry anymore, but she was going to miss the occasional ice cream cone that her mom would splurge on after a good day of panhandling on a freeway exit.

Were there other little angels her age wandering around? If so, maybe they could start a club. She'd never been in a club before. That might be nice.

Was there an Angel Headquarters somewhere or an Angel Motel where they all slept? Do angels even sleep? If not, do they walk around all night – doing what? Do they read angel magazines or watch late-night angel television? Do they drink angel coffee to stay awake?

As an angel, would she be expected to fight demons? What are demons anyway? Would they be small, like her, or would they be monstrously large? Will there be weapons? Can angels get hurt? They're already dead.

That was probably enough, but who knows?

While she was walking down the street, wondering all these things and more, she noticed a little girl named Eileen all alone on the sidewalk – and she instantly knew what her problem was.

You could almost see it in her brave, haunted eyes, searching desperately for something, but it was Eileen's legs that gave her away. They were clinching over and over, almost knocking together. This was a little girl who desperately needed to pee. But where?

Before she'd become an angel these had been among the worst parts of Angelita's day. She'd learned long ago that wherever there were homeless people, all the public bathrooms were always locked up. She'd hated the stinky port-a-potties that were sometimes there, but usually weren't. She'd hated asking to use the bathroom at hamburger stands when she didn't have money to buy anything. Most of all, she'd hated having to squat in the bushes and hope no one saw her. And there was never enough toilet paper.

Now that she was an angel, one of the best things was not having to go.

It was the simplest thing, and perhaps the most human, just needing to pee. It wasn't bad behavior, and it wasn't mean. It was simply necessary. For everyone. Why would anyone object? But, she knew what this little girl was going through. She really knew.

So, the little angel took Eileen's hand and guided her up the steps to a library. Inside, the librarians didn't like the homeless, but there wasn't much they could do except whisper snotty complaints to each other.



In the bathroom, Angelita helped Eileen wash up and showed her how to leave the place a little cleaner than it was when she'd arrived. Her mom had always insisted on that. When a librarian came in to check on them, she was surprised by that and smiled at them.

As they were leaving through the library's large reading rooms, Eileen looked around, amazed at all the books. She mumbled that she'd never been in a library before. Angelita asked if she liked to read, then found a very special book to show her.

It was this book.

Eileen liked it very much, but she didn't recognize Angelita as the angel in the story. That would have been too obvious.

The librarian came over to check on her, so Angelita knew she should leave before Eileen got to this page and recognized her. She slipped out through the closest window and glided down to the street on her wings. They seemed to work best after she did something nice for someone, so she landed softly and unhurt.

Maybe being an angel wasn't going to be so bad after all. She was going to miss sometimes eating ice cream, but she was used to that. She was ready to be an angel.

But what did that mean?

### Chapter Three

## Angel Dunks

Anyone who gets wings is bound to be curious about them. Do they work? Is flying as fun as everyone imagines? Angelita was no different, so she decided to practice with her wings.

When she'd tried to fly, they didn't seem to work very well, but when she wasn't trying – when she was helping someone – she could float up into the sky.

That wasn't good enough because if she needed to fly, there wouldn't always be a good deed waiting for her nearby.

She definitely needed to practice, but she should have known better than to climb up a fire escape for a

If you don't have an address, or a phone number, if you aren't on a roll at a school, and you don't have medical records, it makes sense that maybe you're not on Saint Peter's list either -- if it even exists.

And, if it doesn't exist, you're certainly not on it.

Maybe that's what happened to this kid. There are the wings of an angel, and the halo, but this angel just didn't have anywhere to go.

Could an angel be homeless? Apparently.

Now what?

No school. No home. No family.

Are the wings even going to work?