

Mercy and the Postman

By Joanna Mawson-Lee

Mercy was bored. She was on the verge of handing in her resignation as a guardian angel. Her mother was right, being an ordinary angel had been good enough for her mother and grand-mother, and it should be good enough for her too. Why concern herself with the glamorous lives of archangels and guardian angels. As her mother would say 'they are not like us Mercy, just accept the way things are'.

Only Mercy hadn't accepted the way things were and had worked hard at all her metaphysics exams, passed with flying colours the higher rules of morality and was just starting her thesis on the 'spiritual laws of conflicting duties'.

As a novitiate guardian angel, Mercy had only one human form to watch over. At first she had been excited about who this human would be, secretly dreaming of some great saint or maybe a politician who would end all wars on earth. Instead, they had allocated her Arthur Ferry, a postman in a small country town.

It was the first day in the astral week, a Moon-day. How she wished it were Saturn-day and she could fly wherever she liked, with whoever she liked. Instead here she was, stuck at her desk, watching a monitor that followed Arthur's every movement and looking at an empty in-tray with no prayers waiting to be answered nor possible disasters to avert.

Arthur was about to start on his morning postal run. He jumped on his little red motorbike and smiled to himself. Another glorious day! Arthur did not believe in angels, in fact he wasn't even sure there was a God, but he did know that each day was full of amazing possibilities! All he had to do was point his bike in the right direction, turn on the ignition and they were off. Life was like that for Arthur, he just kept heading in the right direction, and everything fell into place around him.

Mercy was frustrated by Arthur's life 'philosophy'! Didn't he know that life was more complex than that! He'd never experience higher states of being with that attitude she thought.

As Arthur made his way slowly around the little town, Mercy was yawning with boredom. She tried to concentrate on the job in hand but had little faith that Arthur would do anything in a day other than be a postman and deliver his letters. She fell asleep at her desk, just as Arthur arrived at the main thoroughfare of the town and an urgent fax dropped into her in-tray.

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A car screeched to a halt in front of the local petrol station. Arthur watched the group of young men who jumped out; they seemed nervous, looking about them, as if anxious not to be seen. Arthur felt a prickling sensation. Suddenly the men pulled on balaclavas and walked quickly into the petrol station shop. The men started shouting orders at the terrified customers, and the ringleader pointed a gun at the owner of the store.

Arthur didn't wait to see anymore. He jumped on his bike, driving at full throttle, which wasn't very fast but fast enough on this day to get him there within 5 seconds, and sped into the petrol station with his mail flying out behind him all over the ground.

The man with the gun was distracted by the noise outside and turned to see what was going on. Arthur ran into the shop and threw himself on the young man, bringing him to the ground. The gun flew out of the man's hand, firing a shot that travelled through Arthur's right leg and out the other side. The other young men scattered in terror but the shopkeeper managed to restrain the ringleader until the police and ambulance arrived.

Mercy woke up to her supervisor tapping her gently on the shoulder. "Mercy my dear, you might want to check on your charge; there's been a high maintenance event. Arthur's been seriously injured."

There was no reprimand, as she knew that Mercy would be mortified by her mistake. It was not the supervisor's job to add to her pain. In a daze, Mercy read the ignored fax: "Task for Guardian angel of Arthur Ferry: to safely deflect bullet away from Arthur when he prevents a robbery."

Immediately another fax arrived. "Task for Guardian angel of Arthur Ferry: to help him find a new purpose in life after losing his job as a postman through injury."

Arthur continued to live in the belief that if he just kept heading in the right direction, everything would simply fall into place around him. He never wasted time wondering which direction to take because it always seemed so obvious to him. He still didn't believe in angels, but was grateful for the bullet, without it, he'd never have learnt about physiotherapy and discovered that helping other people to overcome serious injuries was just as interesting as being a postman.