

Engelian Adventures: Transformations

Book 2: Transitions

Chapter 11

by

Phillip Berrie

A Story (Vers 1.0); © Phillip Berrie, 2010.

Check www.phillberrie.com.au/Fiction for other episodes and other tales.

Chapter 11

I found Lizzie in her bedroom curled up in the foetal position amid a large collection of fluffy animals. Despite the danger of the situation, I was struck by how children value their belongings for, with all those nice toys to choose from, she was hugging a tatty, green-furred tyrannosaurus rex.

She looked miserable. Her lipstick was smeared and black tears from the eyeliner she had inexpertly applied had left their trail down her face. And, the way she was staring blankly into space made me think that she'd already guessed the worst.

"Lizzie? The black man ... Justin. He sent me to fetch you."

Her despairing eyes turned towards me, which was what I had been hoping. I used my magick to mesmerise her. It was the kindest thing to do really, considering what had happened.

I commanded her to sleep and to dream of her favourite things until I told her to wake. Her little black-rimmed eyes closed obediently, for which I was grateful. I had no experience in dealing with little children and she must have been in the very pit of despair. Most likely I would have just made things worse doing anything else.

I looked out a window to see if I could see anything going on below. There was nobody visible in the courtyard. There had been no more gunfire. However, that by no means meant the threat was over. Loomis household was not large, but I still thought their enemies would have committed more than three men to the attack.

What Justin's plans for us might be I had no idea, but he obviously thought he was in command now that Loomis was dead. For the moment, I decided that it was probably best to let him keep that notion. He knew the area and the situation better than I. And besides, he was by far the most impressive of us and therefore the most likely target if we should come face-to-face with the enemy again. An advantage I could exploit I

hoped. So for the moment I would just take a back seat and hope he knew what he was doing.

I looked back down at the sleeping child. What would become of her? I assumed that there was no mother. And now, with no father ...

At home in Engle, I would have known what to do with an orphaned child. There were plenty of good families I could have placed her with. Here? I had no idea. I couldn't look after her, that was obvious.

That the bodyguard, Justin, cared for the feelings of the daughter of his dead employer was a good sign. I could only hope that he would also know of relatives or some family she could go to.

The sound of an approaching siren made me realise that I was wasting time. The last thing I needed was to get involved with a Police investigation. Also, Justin had said we were going to leave and he would also not want to get tied up with the law considering the nature of the business his ex-boss was involved in. I would have to hurry, or risk being considered an innocent bystander — like Lizzie — and be left behind.

Gently, I picked the girl up in my arms favouring my left side. Thanks to Semblor's healing, the wound there had stopped bleeding, but putting stress on it would probably not be a good thing.

The girl's dinosaur remained firmly clutched to her breast. It would be good for her to have something familiar when she awoke, so I let her keep it. Briefly, I thought about what else she might need, but not really knowing what that might be, I decided speed was of the essence.

Jonathan met me at the entrance, his face was pale and he was carrying a machine pistol and a bulging, black cloth bag that looked like a duffle bag with straps at the side.

"There you are — Is she okay?"

"Yes, she's fine. She's just asleep."

"Asleep?" He looked at Lizzie with an almost paternal consideration. "Are you sure, babe?"

"Yes," I said hoping that I sounded like I knew what I was talking about. "Some people react this way to stress. It's probably for the best."

"Ohhhkayyy," he said, still uncertain. "Justin says I should take you both to the garage. We've got to leave before the cops get here."

"Lead the way," I said and began following him down a path that lead away from the pool area.

I took a quick look back over my shoulder as we walked and could see Justin at Loomis' desk stuffing folders and sheaves of papers into another long black bag. I wondered why. Money I would have understood, but documents? Surely he could not hope to save his employer's reputation when there was so much other evidence of a gangland slaying littering the grounds.

Our way went down a short path between the guest suite and the larger building in which I'd found Lizzie. The path ended in a door that Jonathan opened. It was a darkened area, but there was the glare of sunlight from the other end. I'd only just got the chance to see that the space had vehicles in it when Jonathan pulled me down to the ground.

"The garage door's open. This must be where they got in," he whispered and then jumped as the door closed on its spring with a solid clunk. "They might have a lookout," he said after grimacing at the door.

I eased Lizzie and her dinosaur down onto the path. I was beginning to have doubts about Jonathan's capabilities as a warrior and wanted to have full mobility to face this potential new threat. No doubt any villain inside was now completely forewarned by Jonathan's mistake with the door.

I felt the beginning tingle of my Alfaren adrenaline and clamped down on it with my will to soothe it back into quietude. For the moment I needed to stay in step with Jonathan so we could make plans. However, Jonathan was ahead of me, and worse, thought he was in charge.

"I want you to wait here, babe," he said and let the strap of the bag he was carrying slip from his shoulder. He suddenly looked even paler. "If

you hear gunshots, or I don't come back in two minutes, grab Lizzie and run and find Justin."

This was silly. And, I almost said so. I was far better equipped to deal with any trouble than he was. However, to argue the point at this moment would have been even sillier. He wouldn't believe me and, we might make our situation worse by doing so.

I smiled with what I hoped was an encouraging smile and watched him open the door again and slip through. I caught the door as it closed so that it would not bang again. Jonathan looked back at me and put a finger to his lips before he began crawling around the end of the big American-style car that was closest to the door.

There might *not* be any danger. I hoped. I also hoped that if there was I would be able to intercede with my magick.

Tense seconds passed as I listened to Jonathan's progress through the garage. It is a good thing he is a pilot, as he would not have made a good thief. Fortunately, there were no other sounds.

Belatedly, I realised that if I got down at ground level and looked under the closest vehicle I might be able to see the feet of any lurking assassin and be able to warn Jonathan about them. It was while I was doing this that I heard sounds behind me and turned to find Justin hurrying down the path towards me. He carried two of the black bags slung on his shoulders and his own large handgun.

"What's wrong?" he asked, as he crouched down next to me, and eased his own burdens from his shoulders. He was speaking to me but his eyes were on the girl.

"Nothing, she's asleep."

"Asleep?" His voice rose almost to a squeak.

I put my fingers to my lips. "Shhh! Jonathan thinks there might be a lookout."

He grunted, again with a squeak, and pushed passed me to the door. As he did so I noticed that there was blood smeared on the tops of his white trousers and that there was a strong musk of body odour about him. Then he opened the door and slipped into the garage and I was left alone again.

I had no doubt that Justin could look after himself, but I was still worried about Jonathan. Unfortunately, there was not a lot I could do without giving away more about myself than I wanted to. I would just have to wait, but the now louder sounds of the police sirens meant that would probably not be for long.

My eyes were drawn to the bags that Justin had been carrying. What was in them that was so important? I let curiosity get the better of me and slid open the long zip on the nearest one. Apart from some electrical equipment that I didn't recognise the purpose of there were account ledgers, bank statements, details about stocks and at the end of the bag, a number of thick piles of banknotes still with the wrappers on them. There was tens, maybe hundreds, of thousands of dollars there, but why on earth Justin wanted the accounting information was unclear. Perhaps he thought he would be able to access his boss's bank accounts and steal more of his, now dead, employer's money.

There truly is no honour amongst thieves it seems, but it did show a certain amount of intelligence. Still I decided it would be best that Jonathan and I — and perhaps even Lizzie — parted company with Justin as soon as possible. To this end I took one of the stacks of notes — hundred dollars bills — and stuck it down the front of my trousers. I felt no compunction about this and I definitely had greater need of it than he.

A horn sounded from within the garage. I took that to mean that the coast was clear and, after zipping the bag closed, got to my feet. I was picking up Lizzie and her green friend, when Jonathan opened the door.

"C'mon, Babe. We've got to get out of here, now." There was the sound of a large engine being revved in the garage behind him.

I carried Lizzie through into the garage leaving Jonathan to bring the bags. There were three vehicles within and Justin was at the wheel of a large maroon-coloured vehicle that took the central position.

His choice reminded me of the Land Rovers of the sixties, but it was much bigger and with smoother lines. The garage door in front of the vehicle started to rise of its own accord as Justin gestured at me to hurry.

Vehicles had changed a lot in forty years. Fortunately, the door handles on this one were similar enough to Jonathan's, and I soon had Lizzie lying across the large back seat with her dinosaur wedged in between her and the opposite door for protection. There was even plenty of room for me as Jonathan put the bags in the large luggage compartment at the back. Justin put the car into gear even as Jonathan was taking his seat and it swept out onto the drive spraying gravel as it picked up speed.

"Hey!" shouted Jonathan his eyes on something outside. "What about my car?"

Justin didn't answer as he drove at breakneck pace towards the gates, which were even now starting to open.

"Shit! I only just finished paying for the damned thing," said Jonathan and punched the dashboard in frustration.

Justin barely slowed as we reached the road and I had to grab hold of the seat in front of me as he slewed the car onto the road proper with a squeal of tyres.

"Live with it," said Justin.

Considering the danger of the situation, I thought this a novel but very profound statement and raised my estimation of Justin's intelligence and sophistication.

Enjoying the Story?
For more, and other stuff, visit
www.phillberrie.com.au/Fiction