

ONE ANGEL TOO MANY- by Nancy Cramer

The angels were resting from a dull and unexciting day. "We need just one more situation to liven up our day before it's over," said Senior Angel to the other three. "Where do you suggest we look?" "The Littlest Angel leaned over and pointed to an elderly woman getting out of her car. "I bet she needs our help."

"What makes you think that," Senior Angel quizzed.

"Look how slowly she gets out of her car, her head is down, and she is carrying a heavy bag," Littlest Angel explained. The attention of all four angels focused on the older woman. Indeed, she was walking bent over as if she carried the weight of the world on her shoulders. Of course, she didn't. That's for the angels to carry. The woman walked into the post office, stood in line, then asked her question of the postal clerk.

"I can't get the mailbox open. Am I using the right key?" The clerk examined the bunch of keys she handed him, and said "This is the right one. But it may be another problem. Let me get someone out here to help you." The woman was almost in tears. Another wait. Another wrong answer. Another problem. She had too many, with her sick friend and his mentally disabled daughter, their rent, bills, and overdrafts. The daughter driving an unlicensed, uninsured, unpaid for car. Too much.

The new postal clerk greeted her with a smile on his pleasant looking face. He explained there was too much mail, and it blocked the lock on the apartment's mailbox. He took her name and phone number and promised that he would talk to the mail carrier tomorrow, then call the woman. They would take care of her problem. He smiled kindly again, and told her to "be careful driving, it gets dark early now."

The older woman put the keys and the note into her purse and straightened her back. As she neared the heavy post office door, a young mother and daughter stood there. The mother opened the door as the woman approached. Heartened, the older woman said to the daughter, "Guess you will get a snow day tomorrow if we have ice. I used to be a teacher. What grade are you?" The little girl shyly smiled and answered, "Fifth grade and I love school."

The older woman saw the mother proudly patting her daughter's back. "And she's a good student too," and opened the heavy outside door for all three. The older woman, cheered by their pleasantness, said "Just wait until sixth grade. I taught that. You'll love it." And all three departed to their cars.

The angels hovered overhead, mused, "Now three of us have done our job. Jimmy, what will you do, as the fourth angel, to finish up your day?" Jimmy grinned, his freckles blending into his red hair, "Just wait and see." Off he flew to the apartment where the older woman also was heading. She was taking the mail and some clean clothes for her friend when he came home from the rehab center.

She unlocked the door and stood still in shock. The daughter had been there, signs were everywhere. Clothes on the floor, bed unmade, dishes in the sink, trash in the corner. What had that girl done all day? The old woman's feelings of pleasure almost disappeared by the sight. "Well," she thought, "I guess three angels watching over me was enough at the time. I won't straighten up this mess, just leave it for the daughter. She isn't that disabled, just disorganized. Tomorrow we will have a session on organizing an apartment." Yes, she thought, that's what we will do, and she went down the steps slowly but firmly, her car key in hand.

Jimmy, unknown to the woman, fitted over her head, his grin gone. It was replaced by a spark of admiration for the other three angels and their deeds. Even his impish act had failed to spoil the acts of kindness his three cohorts had worked. Maybe some day, yes, one day, he will mimic one of the acts they often discuss with each other. Maybe some day, yes, one day, he will put a smile on some old woman's face. His day was ending but his resolve hardened to keep that promise, and he smiled as he fitted to his angel home.