

# IS IT ONE OF YOURS?

A STORY BY

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## Origins

This is an old idea. The last time I saw it was a story by Marquez. I thought I'd place it in an English suburban setting to see what would happen.

Is It One Of Yours?

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## Is It One Of Yours?

**I**t was a dark and stormy night... No, really, it was. People always look at me like that. What other kind of night could it have been? I mean, these things don't happen on nice mild summer evenings. The world is too peaceful then. Well, it is round our way. Peaceful to the point of utter boredom. Anyway, I can prove it happened, so you say what you like. I can even show it to you. And I know you'll say you've read stories about this sort of thing happening, but the people who write them haven't got hard solid evidence to show it was real. I have. Order another drink and I'll tell you all about it.

Where was I? Oh, yes, it was that night a couple of Novembers ago, you know, when we had that terrible storm. Real humdinger it was. Well, I told my wife that I wasn't surprised because we'd had a rotten summer anyway, and what do you

expect with these things going up, and messing around with the climate, and such stuff. She ignored me, just kept watching that awful tv show, you know, that idiot with the wavy hair. Never did like him. Don't know what real work is like, just saying a lot of rubbish to boring people. Anyway, just as it got to the most boring bit, you know, where he asks people if they want to take a chance and press a button, or take a load of rubbish they've already got at home, it happened. It. The thing you won't believe. No, don't go away, I've hardly started. And Father Daly knows it happened too, though he drinks enough these days to doubt the sun coming up. Funny that, I'd have thought that he would have been pleased about it. You never know though, do you?

Just as it gets to the most boring bit of that show,

it happened. Bang, sherspitz, crack, fizz, and rumble. The television picture flickered and went off for a few seconds, the lights dimmed, the cat screeched, and the dog growled. I don't know what the goldfish did, it always looks too bored to notice anything. My wife summed it up beautifully, she always does.

"Something's been struck by lightning," she said.

Nice sense of understatement. It's very funny the first two hundred times. Gets a little tedious after that. Anyway, something went KERRASH almost straight after. I rushed to the window. With a bit of luck it would be that tree next door crashed down on that creep's garden. I've been warning him all summer about that bloody tree, dangerous it is. Then I saw it.

"My shed," I muttered in horror, "My bloody garden shed."

"Don't swear dear," said my wife.

I'd only just finished it the previous weekend. You wouldn't believe the trouble I had getting that shed up. I was entitled to swear.

"It's him," I said, "him and his bloody tree. I

warned him about it."

I was very upset, and rushed to the phone. I'd tell him something. He was going to pay for this.

"He'll pay for it," I said as I dialled the number, "yes, he'll pay for it. I'll punch his supercilious smirk right down his throat."

The phone was dead.

"The phone's dead," I said.

"I expect the line got struck by lightning," said my wife.

The WavyTop Idiot was back on the tv. Should have been him that got struck. I don't see what people see in him.

"Well he's next," I said.

"Who dear?"

"Him next door," I shouted. "Him and his bloody tree, the one that's in my garden shed."

I rushed into the hall and made for the front door. The shed is at the side, it's easier to get to from the front door.

"Put your raincoat on if you're going outside," she

said.

The hell with that, sometimes there are more important things than raincoats. I should have though, it was pouring down outside. It was dark, but there was enough light to see the extent of the damage. It wasn't exactly what you'd call damage, more like total demolition. I'll admit that the walls were still standing, but only just. I was just looking forward to giving that creep a good punch in the mouth, when I looked again. Smashed up shed but no tree. Well, there was a tree, but it was standing exactly where it was earlier, before the storm. Doesn't matter. Whatever wrecked my garden shed must have fallen off his tree, I'd still get him. I ran to the door of the shed and pulled the handle hard. It came off in my hand. Not the handle, the door. All of it. I threw it into the wind, which was a mistake because it came back again, hit me hard and went cartwheeling across my roses.

"Bloody door," I shouted into the wind, and rushed over to where the door was lying on my roses.

I've spent years tending those things. I kicked

the door hard, jumped on it, and finally stamped any remaining life out of it. Smirko next door was really going to pay for this. I ran back to my shed and looked in at the damage. It was a mess, but what I saw was not what I expected. Looking back, I'm not sure what I really expected, but certainly not what I saw. I saw two of the biggest wings I have ever seen in my life, including those at the city zoo.

Wings? The prospect of hitting that smug creep next door receded, but came back when I realised that the dumb creature must have been sitting on his tree when it got struck by lightning. I couldn't see what kind of bird, but it had to be really big to have a pair of wings like that. I went back indoors.

"Have you seen my big flashlight?" I called out to my wife as I rummaged through the hall cupboard.

"Which one?" she asked from the comfort of the front room. If the bird had come down on her tv show she wouldn't be so calm.

"There's only one," I shouted in exasperation,

“the one I keep for emergencies.”

“Oh, that one,” she said.

After a few seconds she came into the hall with my big flashlight. I didn't dare ask her where she'd found it.

“You're all wet,” she said.

“Yes dear, I'm all wet,” I replied.

“Should have put on your raincoat,” she said.  
“Did it do much damage?”

“What? The rain?”

“No, the tree.”

“It wasn't the tree.”

“What was it then?”

“I don't know, some kind of big bird, that's why I want the flashlight.”

“It wasn't his tree next door then?”

“No dear,” I said, putting on my raincoat over my wet clothes.

“So, you aren't going to punch him after all?”

“I might,” I said gritting my teeth, “because if he'd

cut that tree down, the bird wouldn't have been sitting on it to have got struck by lightning and to have crashed down on my garden shed.”

I was yelling. I shouldn't have been. The damage was already done. You can't mend a garden shed by yelling at someone. But I'd make an exception in the case of that careless creep next door. My wife put on her raincoat too. Just what I wanted at that moment was someone else looking at my wreckage. It had taken me weeks to get that shed up. And with that creep giving me his supercilious comments at every stage.

“Well, come on,” said my wife, “let's see this poor bird.”

Poor bird? What about my poor garden shed? We went out to inspect the damage.

“Must have been an awfully big bird,” she mused.

It's not easy to muse when there's a storm blowing, but she can. I took the flashlight from her and shone it on the wreckage. All we could see were two enormous wings amid the splintered and broken wood of the roof.

“What sort of bird has wings like that?” she

asked.

“I don’t know. Eagle, buzzard, something like that. How should I know? It was sitting in his tree. It’s his tree, his bird, and he’s going to pay.”

We started moving wood carefully, more worried about a revived and angry big bird attacking us than about the rest of the shed falling on us. I shone the flashlight on the wings. The feathers were odd, they seemed to be white, but had a gold or silver sheen on them.

“Must have been a swan,” I suggested.

“With wings like that?”

“They can break a man’s arm with wings like that.”

We moved a few more bits of wood when we received the first shock. A man’s face, eyes closed, mouth open.

“What the frig is this?”

“Looks like the bird fell on someone in your shed.”

“What was he doing in my shed?”

“Probably sheltering from the storm, dear.”

“More likely stealing my mower when a dead swan came crashing through the roof. Ha, there’s justice for you.”

We moved a few more bits of wood. I haven’t met many thieves, but this one looked sort of serene. With a face like that he should have been in movies, not stealing from my shed. Takes all sorts, I suppose. The second shock came when we moved the wood off his chest. He was wearing a nightgown.

“Mother duck,” I exclaimed, “we’ve bagged a transvestite.”

The third shock was when my wife tried to wake him up. She slapped his face gently, but there was no reaction. She lifted his wrist and felt for his pulse. There was none.

“He’s dead,” she said.

“Oh hell,” I said slamming down a piece of wood. “Can’t you just see the headlines ‘Dead Swan Kills Transvestite Mower Thief’? And in my garden shed. It’s all his fault next door for not cutting down that bloody tree. Now I’ve got a

dead swan, and a dead creepo to clear up. If that swan hadn't have been sitting in his tree, this wouldn't have happened."

"Swans don't sit in trees, dear. They sit on the water."

"Well this one did," I yelled, "and it got struck, then crashed on my garden shed and killed him there out of spite for me."

"Don't shout. Besides, there's no swan, look."

"Of course there is, he's lying on it."

"Then he must have landed on the swan, not the other way round."

"Are you mad? You mean some creep was sitting in his tree next door, got struck by lightning, crashed through my garden shed, and landed on a swan that just happened to be sheltering out of the storm? Come on, be reasonable."

There's no swan," she said firmly. "Look for yourself."

I looked for myself. No swan. I stood and looked around the rest of the shed.

"Then where did the rest of it go?" I asked.

"There's no 'rest of it', they're his wings," she said simply.

I leant back against the wall of the shed. It creaked, and I stood upright again.

"It's him, isn't it?" I muttered.

"Who?"

"That poet creep that lives at 53."

"He's a writer," corrected my wife.

"Whatever. I heard he got up one night at 3 o'clock in the morning just to go down to the bay to watch the moon come up over the sea. What a creep. I mean, what normal person would do a thing like that?"

"I think that's rather beautiful," said my wife. She would.

"You would," I said. "And what's he doing in my shed? I'll bet he put on a pair of wings so he could experience a storm like a bird. What a creep. Serves him right. And just look at my shed! How are we going to explain this? A creep in his nightie, wearing a pair of wings, and found

dead in my shed? I've got an idea. Give me a hand."

"What are you going to do?"

"Put him back where he belongs. He came off that tree next door, so we'll put him over the fence, and let that creep next door have the problems. Come on, grab his legs."

"No, leave him there."

"Are you mad?" I said.

"No. Besides, it's our responsibility to see that the right thing is done by him."

"Rubbish! Did he think about doing the right thing by us when he was sitting up in that bloody tree? Roll him over so we can get these wings off."

That was the next shock. We rolled him over and I looked for the straps that held his wings on. No straps.

"By God, that's a neat job," I said.

"What is?" asked my wife.

"No straps. Must have taken him a long time to

glue those on. He must have had someone to help. Look at that join. You'd think the wing came right out of his skin. Creep or no creep, that's a real nice job. Maybe he's in a play or something. Still, he wrecked my shed, and I'm not having that, he's got to go. Let's get him up over the fence."

"No. I said to leave him here, we'll have to call someone about it."

"Don't be stupid. Who are you going to call anyway? The local creep's club? What are you going to say? 'Hello, you lost a flying creep? Well he came down on my friggin shed and wrecked it'."

"You know what I think it is?" asked my wife.

"I already know what it is. It's a flying creep and it WRECKED MY FRIGGING SHED!" I yelled.

"Don't shout," she said. "And don't be so irreverent."

"Irreverent? Why, who is it? Father Thingummy flying around to stop the storm?"

"I think it's an angel," she said simply.

“An angel?” I said. I laughed. Then I stopped laughing. I looked at where the wings joined the skin just by the shoulder blade. I tried to pull the wing off. It didn’t come off.

“Well,” I said in a very puzzled way. You’d have been puzzled too. I expected the skin to pull up, as if the wing had been glued to it. It wasn’t. That damn wing actually came through the skin, as if it was attached to the bone underneath. And it had muscles under the skin that you don’t normally see on a shoulder blade.

“Well,” I said again, lost for words. “What the hell do you make of that? I wonder how they made that?”

“They don’t make them. They grow them,” said my wife.

“Who does?”

“Angels. They have wings, and they grow them right there.”

“Don’t be stupid, woman, there’s no such thing,” I said.

“Then how do you explain it?”

I looked closely at the base of the wings, then noticed the gold shimmer in the feathers. They looked white at first glance, but when I held the flashlight closer I couldn’t exactly see what colour it was. And the texture of the feather was much finer than any bird’s feather I knew of, not that I knew many. I’ve got better things to do in life than go round staring at birds and their feathers.

“Well,” I said once more. “If that doesn’t beat everything, then I don’t know what does. This is going to need some thinking about.”

My wife gave me that look that says she was right all along. Not much you can do except smile sweetly.

“Let’s go back inside, I need a drink, and a dry shirt,” I said quietly.

“What about him?” asked my wife.

“He’s dead, I don’t suppose he’ll want a drink.”

“That’s not what I meant. What about the rain?”

“He’s dead,” I said. “I don’t suppose he’s worried about the rain either.”

Funny thing, though, we were getting soaked, but he seemed to stay as dry as if he was still indoors. We went back inside. I had a good stiff whisky. Four fingers, no ice, no water. She made a cup of hot drinking chocolate.

“Well,” I said again. “If that doesn’t beat everything.”

“Don’t keep saying ‘well’ like that,” said my wife. “You should be calling someone about it. You can’t leave him out there like that.”

“Who am I going to call? There’s no service for collecting dead angels. Old newspapers, yes, but dead angels?”

“What about an ambulance?” she suggested.

“Don’t be stupid. What am I going to say? ‘Hello, I’ve got a dead angel in the garden shed, can you do something for him?’”

“But you can’t leave him out there. Doesn’t seem proper somehow.”

“Hush woman, I’m trying to think,” I said. A bizarre idea came to me. I smiled.

“I know, we’ll call a taxidermist and have him

stuffed. Put him on show and charge admission.”

She screeched and threw a cushion at me. She went out to the kitchen.

“I know one thing,” I called out. “It’ll put me one up on that creep next door, and those down at the office. Not often you get a dead angel crashing through the garden shed.”

She didn’t reply. Whatever she was doing out there she was doing it very noisily. What I call her wordless conversations. No words, just lots of disapproving noises.

“What are you doing out there?” I called.

“I’m going out again. I’m making a flask of coffee.”

“That won’t do him any good, he’s dead.”

“It’s for me, stupid. Someone’s got to sit with him in his last moments, you’re doing nothing.”

“He’s had his last moments.”

“Well DO something for him,” she shouted as she slammed out into the storm, though the storm had passed its worst. Still lots of noise, but not so much rain. Well, what can you do? Me? I

went upstairs, took my wet clothes off, dried off, put on my warm winter stuff, and went out with my raincoat on. She was there with the flashlight hanging on a loose roof strut. The rain had almost stopped, but the thunder still rumbled around the sky.

“Did he say anything?” I asked, nodding to the angel.

She just looked at me with that pitying look of hers, then went back to gazing into his face. He must have had a quick death, he obviously didn't feel any pain. He looked as if he'd fallen asleep right there before crashing through my garden shed. He had the sort of face you see on people who can stare the world in the face and not notice the blemishes. His hair was, well that was the strange thing, you couldn't exactly say what the colour it was. It seemed to depend on what angle you saw it, as if it was refracting the colours like those birds do. One second it looked gold, then before you could say it was gold, it flashed through all the colours of humanity and become something else. Like one moment it was jet black, then flashing silver, then gold

shimmers, then everything together, then something else. Strange. It was the same with his skin. You couldn't exactly say what colour it was. One second Nordic fair, the next African black, then God knows what else. A similar shimmer in the tone as with the hair, shifting all over the place.

My wife just sat there stroking his face with the back of her hand, his head now resting on a cushion she'd brought out from the house. I examined the top of his gown, only there again, there was the same funny shift of colours.

“I read a story about this once,” I said.

“This is real,” said my wife.

I lifted the bottom of his gown, but my wife snatched it away.

“What are you doing?” she snapped.

“I'm having a peek at what he's got,” I said.

“Don't be disgusting,” she said.

“I'm only curious,” I said defensively. “It's not often you get the chance. Do you suppose he's got one, being an angel?”

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“Stop being curious,” she said. “Go and do something.”

“Like what?”

“Get someone down here to do something for him.”

“Like who?”

“How should I know? You’re the one who always has bright ideas about everything.”

I muttered something and went back inside. I mean, what can you do? It was past midnight. I looked through the phone book for angels, dead or alive, but nobody seemed to offer any kind of service. If they did, they’d be closed at this time of night. It wasn’t my problem, I’d call the police. Let them have the trouble. It looked as if I was going to have a sleepless night. I dialled the local station. A weary voice answered.

“Police.”

“Hello,” I said, “I want to report an accident.”

“Really? You should call for an ambulance.”

“That won’t do any good. He’s dead.”

“Oh? What happened?”

“I don’t know, it’s an angel.”

“Oh. Fall off his motorbike, did he?”

“No, no,” I said impatiently. “Not that kind, the flying kind. You know, the sort with wings, choirs invisible, and all that sort of stuff.”

“Wings? Choirs? Look sir, we’ve had a busy night with this storm, and I’m one for a good laugh now and then, but tonight isn’t the night. Be a good chap, and call back some other time.”

“This is not a joke,” I shouted, “and he wrecked my garden shed.”

“Oh, I see. Criminal damage is it then?”

“I suppose so. Look, you’re not being very helpful.”

“I’m trying, sir, believe me I’m trying. Unfortunately we don’t have a patrol car in your area.”

“That explains all the burglaries then.”

“What does? The dead angel?”

“No, your lack of patrol cars.”

## Is It One of Yours?

“That would be handy though, wouldn’t it? We could clear up the crime rate overnight if we could put it all down to dead angels.”

“Look here, I pay the taxes that pay for your salary and I demand that you come down and clear up this bloody angel.”

He sighed. He assumed that tone of cautious pomposity that most officials do when confronted by eccentrics, lunatics, and dangerous maniacs. That is, anyone who wants them to do the public duty they are paid to perform. He sighed again. There was a rustle of paper from his end of the line.

“Name?”

“I don’t know, he didn’t tell me. He’s dead.”

“Not his, sir,” said the policeman wearily, “yours.”

“Oh. Pelligrew.”

“Address?”

“25 Mordecoe Avenue.”

“Distinguishing marks?”

“Well, I’ve got an appendix scar...”

“Not yours, his.”

“Oh. Big wings and a gown.”

“Big wings and a gown?”

There was the sound of paper being screwed up.

“Look here sir, I’m here on my own at the moment, and there’s only one patrol car out there. I’ll add you to the list and ask them to come over.”

“What list?” I asked suspiciously.

“Burglars scratching at an upstairs window, probably a branch of an overhanging tree, and a cat stuck up a chimney. And of course a dead angel that wrecked a garden shed. Is it one of ours?”

“One of our what?”

“Angels, sir.”

“How should I know? I’ve never seen any round here before. What are you getting at?”

“I’m thinking sir, that angels don’t come from hereabouts do they?”

“So what?” I asked.

“Well, it sounds more like the responsibility of Immigration.”

“Immigration?” I exploded.

“Yes sir,” he said without letting me get another word in. “Look, I’ll send a car round to investigate your report of a suspicious stranger wrecking your garden shed, and you give Immigration a call at the airport. They’ll know what to do. Right?”

Before I could object he put the phone down with the sort of finality that indicates any further discussion will be useless. Right. If petty bloody officials want to bounce me around, I’ll do some bouncing myself. I looked up the number for the airport. Their bloody planes were coming in all night long, so they could bloody well deal with it. I dialled the number. I was getting rather angry by now.

“Airport,” came the bored reply.

“Immigration please,” I said.

“In or out?”

“In or out what?” I asked.

“Entering or leaving the country,” came the reply, even more bored.

“Entering I suppose.”

There was a pause and the sound of a number being dialled. This was getting beyond a joke.

“Immigration,” said a different but equally bored voice.

“Boring old life, isn’t it?” I said.

“Sorry?”

“You will be,” I promised.

“Really? What exactly can I do for you sir?”

“I want to report a possibly illegal alien.”

“Oh. What sort?”

“A dead one.”

“Surely that’s a matter for the police, isn’t it?”

“Look, don’t start that with me, I’ve just had a belly full of it from the police, and they say illegal aliens are your responsibility.”

The voice sighed. The sound of paper rustling came over the phone.

## Is It One of Yours?

“Name?”

“What?” I asked, fearful of starting another series of idiocies.

“The alien’s name, sir.”

“I don’t know, he didn’t tell me.”

“Nationality?”

“Mine or the angel’s?”

“The alien’s sir. I presume you’re one of us if you’re reporting an illegal alien. They don’t usually report each other.”

“I don’t know that angels have a nationality, except that they certainly aren’t one of us lot.”

“The what, sir? Angel?”

“Yes, you idiot, an angel. A-N-G-E-L. A dead one.”

“Oh. Fall off his motorbike, did he?”

“Don’t get funny with me,” I shouted. “I’ve got a bloody dead angel and it crashed through my bloody garden shed, and what the bloody hell are you going to do about it?”

“I’m not sure. What sort of angel?”

“A bloody big one with wings and a gown.”

“Wings?”

“Yes, bloody wings, you bloody idiot. You know, choirs investable or something, eternal beings that fly around heaven and crash through my garden shed.”

There was silence at the other end.

“Um. Well, if it was flying around and, um, crashed as you say, then by rights it’s not really my responsibility, is it?” said the voice.

“It’s somebody’s responsibility, and if it’s arrived without a bloody passport then it’s your bloody responsibility.”

“Hardly, sir. We only deal with live ones, with passports, who have arrived on aeroplanes.”

“Oh,” I said as sarcastically as I could, “so you do deal with angels?”

“I must say that I have never heard of one arriving at passport control, it sounds more like a case for Air Traffic Control.”

“Air Traffic Control?” I thundered. “Don’t be so bloody stupid!”

## Is It One of Yours?

“If it really is an angel, then flying things are really their responsibility. Look, I’m really very busy, and I think the joke has gone on long enough. Why don’t you call them and see if they can help. Or have a good night’s sleep and think about if you really want to report it. I’m sure there’ll be someone here in the morning.”

Before I could reply the phone went down at the other end. I slammed my phone down and went out to the garden again.

“Is it still there?” I snarled at my wife.

“Of course,” she said. “You don’t think he’s flown away in his condition, do you?”

“I wish it bloody well would,” I muttered, and slammed back into the house.

I called the airport again, and went through the same bored switchboard operator. I got through to the control tower.

“Hello,” I said. “Noticed anything strange on the radar tonight then?”

“Sorry?”

“The radar. You know, the thing that looks at

things in the sky. Noticed anything out of the ordinary tonight?”

“I can’t say sir, you know, security and all that. What exactly did you mean?”

“Well, if something unusual appeared and you lost it, I’ve got it. In my garden shed. It crashed.”

“Oh, I see sir. Would you hold the line for a moment?”

I held. I heard a muffled conversation and a click. The voice came back, but the quality had changed, as if they had switched the phone through to an intercom or amplifier or something.

“This thing that crashed, could you describe it?”

Aha, I thought, they obviously have seen something.

“It’s got wings,” I said, “and I’m told that flying things are your responsibility, and it’s landed in my garden shed. Smashed it to smithereens and it’s your job to come and collect it.”

“What? Your garden shed?”

“NO, YOU BLOODY FOOL, THE ANGEL,” I roared.

There was laughter from people in the room at the other end.

“The angel, sir?”

“YES,” I roared again (this was playing merry hell with my blood pressure), “a bloody angel, crashed right through my garden shed.”

“What? Fell off his..”

“DON’T START THAT WITH ME,” I shouted. I tried to catch my breath, and to calm down a little. “I wish to report an angel, a dead, formerly flying one, has crashed through my garden shed and wrecked it. And what the hell are you going to do about it?”

“What sort of angel, sir?”

“Choirs invincible, float on clouds and guard the pearly gates. What other sort is there?”

“Choirs what?”

“Oh hell,” I said, and slammed the phone down again.

Bloody public servants. This was ridiculous. Who else could I call? It was now 1 o’clock in the morning. I went outside to see if there was the

remotest chance that someone had collected him, or that it was all a bad dream. No such luck. My wife was still there comforting the corpse, and was now singing quietly. She’s gone nuts, I thought and went back inside. Right. I knew whose problem this had to be. I looked for the number of our local priest. I dialled the number and waited for what seemed like hours. A very sleepy voice answered.

“Yes,” the voice said, smothering a yawn.

“Hello, you don’t know me, well, you might, but I doubt it, we only come down at Christmas and the odd christening. Don’t think I’ve been to a burial yet, but this might be the first one.”

“What are you talking about? Do you know what time it is?”

“YES,” I screamed in my most reasonable tone, “I DO KNOW AND I’VE BEEN ON THE BLOODY PHONE ALL NIGHT.”

“I say, don’t you take that tone with me. Who exactly are you and what do you want?”

I sighed.

## Is It One of Yours?

“I’ve got one of your people here, he’s dead, and what are you going to do about it, and will you come down and get rid of him?”

“If it’s an accident you should call the police and an ambulance.”

“I did, and he’s dead, and they said to call Immigration at the airport, and then they said to call Air Traffic Control.”

“Well why didn’t you?”

“I did and they didn’t want to know. It’s one of yours, and I expect you to take him away and do Last Rites or whatever and bury him, or whatever you do.”

“One of ours what?”

“An angel,” I said very wearily.

“Oh dear,” said the voice, “One of ours, I suppose?”

“I don’t know, but it, he, is dead, D-E-A-D, dead. And he crashed into my garden shed. Wrecked it.”

“Oh my goodness. Accident was it?”

“If you like,” I said at last. “You’ll come down will you?”

“Oh of course. Called the police, have you?”

“Yes, they’re sending a car round sometime.”

“Right. I’m coming over right now. Poor chap. What’s the address?”

I gave him my address, put the phone down, and went out into the garden. My wife was praying.

“No need for that, someone’s coming for him,” I said.

“Who?”

“Priest up at the church. What’s his name? Never did catch his name.”

“No, I don’t suppose you did,” said my wife smiling.

We sat in the wreckage of my garden shed. Me, my wife, and the dead angel. A car pulled into the drive. It was Father Wotsit, looking very concerned. I walked over to him, shook his hand, and we stood looking at the garden shed.

“Terrible tragedy,” he said.

“You’re not kidding,” I replied, “I only got the bloody shed up last weekend.”

He gave me a funny look, then looked toward the shed.

“What exactly happened?” he said at last.

“God knows, begging your pardon, Father. I really don’t know, I suppose he must have been flying along then, ZAP, got shot out of the sky by a bolt of lightning and crashed down through the roof of my bloody shed. Pardon the language, Father, but it’s been a very harrowing night for me. Nobody seems to want to take responsibility.”

“Flying along?” said the priest, looking very puzzled. “What was one of our youth group doing flying on a night like this?”

“Youth group? I said it was an angel.”

“Yes, I know, that’s what we call them. Nice young people, they do good deeds around the area, an example to us all.”

“Youth group? No, no,” I said, “it was an angel, you know, with wings, choirs inevitable, or

something.”

“Wings?”

“Yes, wings, you know, flutter, flutter, an angel, like the ones your lot are always telling us about, only I’ve got a live one. A real live dead one. And it wrecked my garden shed.”

“Calm down old chap,” said the priest, a hint of worry tickling his features as he looked around the garden.

“No hidden cameras, I promise,” I said wearily. When, oh when, was this night going to end?

My wife came out of what remained of the shed, went over to the priest, took him by the arm, and led him to the corpse. The priest looked down at the angel, and said nothing for a few seconds.

“What’s that man doing in fancy dress?” he said at last.

I sat down on the ground and buried my head in my hands. My wife rolled the angel over onto its side, and showed Father Thingy the wings growing out of the angel’s back.

“Good Lord,” said the priest, looking very

bemused. "How did you do that?"

Before I could answer, the red and blue flashing lights of a police car turned into our road. The priest and I walked down the drive to meet them. Not the angel of course. It didn't look as if he was going anywhere. Just as the police car drew up, an enormous electrical storm exploded overhead. There was a great mass of flashing sizzling light around the shed, my wife was right in the middle of it. I must have been dazzled by the light but I swear there were dozens of things flying around in the light. The body of the angel lifted above the wreckage of my shed, then disappeared in another sizzling flash. My wife was right there, with the light crackling and hissing around the shed, but she wasn't harmed. It was all over in a couple of seconds, or at least most of it, because it still crackled and fizzled overhead for a while. The priest stood with his mouth gaping, staring at the sight. I swear he was about to fall on his knees when a policeman got out of the car, and spoke.

"Phew, that was a good one. We've had quite a storm tonight. Are you the gentleman with the

dead angel," he said with a smirk.

"I was," I said, "but someone's just collected him."

"Oh good. That'll save us getting involved then. Goodnight Father," said the policeman, walking back to his companion in the car. "Okay, George, what's the next fruitcake on the list?"

The car pulled away, leaving the three of us, me, my wife, and the priest.

"You look as if you could do with a good stiff four finger's worth, Father," I said, glad that the whole business was over, then noticed my wife holding something.

"What's that you're holding?" I asked her.

"A feather," she said simply.

"Where did you get it?" I asked. I don't think she'd actually pluck it from the body of a dead angel.

"They gave it to me," she said, looking up at the remains of the electrical storm overhead.

"Who?"

"The angels."

“What for?”

“I’m to take it with me when I go,” she smiled.

“Go where?”

“Go. You know, pass on, cast off this mortal coil. Snuff it.”

With that she turned her back on us and went back inside. The whole business was a bit too much for Father Thingummy, he just groaned and left in his car. Funny thing though, he crosses the road whenever he sees me coming now.

My wife had a beautiful mahogany box made for the feather, with a piece of plate glass over the top. Strange feather though, seems to catch the light and throw it all over the place. Next time she’s out at her women’s club, you should come over and have a look at it. It’s the only thing we’ve got from that night. It’s not often you get a dead angel crashing through your garden shed. They might have fixed up the damage, though.