

FIRE ANGEL



a short story for English reading & speaking

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Introduction

Do you believe in angels? If so, why? If not, why not?

Do you think there is an afterlife? What happens there?

Are good people taken from this earth too early?

What about bad people?

Fire Angel

The entire room was filled with smoke. He could not breathe.

Jim ran to the door and pulled it open.

As he did so, an immense wave of flames roared towards him.

He staggered back, pulling his hands up to his face. The flames licked at his face, burning his eyebrows and hair and singeing his skin.

Jim pulled his shirt up to protect his face as much as he could and ran into the fire.

The entire corridor was a furnace.

He could see none of the other residents. The roar of the flames and the cracking of wood and cement were too loud.

At the end of the corridor, were the stairs. Jim had to make his way there. It was the only way out.

Not unless he jumped from the window. And that would be certain death.

With his heart pounding inside his chest, Jim took another deep breath and tilted his head down.

Then he ran through the gauntlet of fire towards the stairs.

He was halfway down the corridor when he passed an open door to another room. Inside, he could hear someone screaming.

They were not using any words. These were just screams of sheer panic. Of absolute terror and fear.

Jim ran another metre or so, then stopped.

He knew it was the worst thing to do, but with no other thought, he ran back to the room and inside.

Flames engulfed the walls and fingers of red-hot fire traced outlines along the ceiling.

The room was filled with smoke.

Jim coughed and held his shirt in front of his mouth and nose as he choked for air.

By the window, a young girl sat on the floor. Her clothes were covered in soot and her face blackened from the smoke and fire.

Tears ran down her cheeks.

Jim ran to her and grabbed her by her arm.

Come on! Let's go!

My mum! The girl called out through sobs. *My mum is here!*

Jim turned his head left and right. He had no idea what to do next.

We have to go! He called out above the roar of the fire.

Jim yanked at her arm and the girl screamed out, but her small body shot up into his arms. He grabbed her around her waist and ran back for the door.

Hold on! We have to get to the stairs! He called out.

The girl screamed and held onto the door frame.

My mum! My mum! She screamed.

Jim tore her hand from the door and held her head against his body. Then he ran for the stairs.

Just as he reached the end of the corridor, there was a loud cracking sound and the ceiling collapsed into the stairwell.

In the next second, flames roared up, the big mass of air inviting the fire further up the building.

Jim cursed into the sleeve of his shirt.

He lowered the girl to the ground and, just as he did; she tried to pull her arm free from his grip.

No! What are you doing? He shouted out to her.

She didn't say a word, just pulled and yanked at his wrist.

Jim wrapped his arms around her and bear-hugged her against his chest.

Then he ran to the second flight of stairs. He bolted up them two at a time. The entire space filling with smoke.

Another crack behind him and more beams and cement fell down.

He had to get to the roof. That was their only chance.

Get to the roof and they would have air.

And maybe more chance of being rescued. A helicopter. Or something.

Jim pushed the thoughts aside and lunged up the steps. His lungs were burning from inhaling the smoke and fiery flames all around him.

Finally, they got to the roof. A fire door separating them from the outside.

He pushed at it. It was locked.

Letting the girl onto the ground again, he looked into her face.

No running away, okay?

She stared back at him with no expression in her eyes.

Then he threw himself at the door.

Once, twice. Again and again. But the door would not give.

Then the girl held out her hand.

Wait, Jim.

He stopped. She placed her hand on the door and a light appeared around it. A kind of amber glow.

Then the door opened.

The girl smiled at him, and Jim looked down into her face.

He could barely process what had just happened, so he stepped out onto the roof.

The girl followed him.

On the roof, there was barely a sound. It was like nothing was happening at all. It was like any ordinary night in the city.

Jim looked at the girl.

She smiled up at him.

You're a good person, Jim, she said and nodded.

He had never seen this girl before. He had never seen any children in the building at all.

Who are you?

She continued smiling at him, nodding her head further out on the roof.

You're good, Jim.

Jim walked out onto the middle of the roof. The girl followed.

Then she stood before him and spread out her wings.

It's time to go, she said.

She placed her hand in Jim's. Her hand was soft, but there was a grip to it that was unlike any strength he had felt before.

The girl guided him to the edge of the roof. Below, two fire engines had arrived. Firemen spilt out of the doors and took out fire hoses and extended ladders.

Jim would not meet any of them.

They stood on the side of the roof. The tops of buildings surrounded them like a forest.

The wings rose high from the girl's back and, holding onto Jim's hand, she stepped off the roof.

And they left.

Reading Comprehension Questions

How does the story begin?

What is the location? What is happening?

What happened when Jim opened the door?

What parts of Jim's face did the fire burn?

How did he protect himself?

Where are the other residents?

Where did Jim run to?

Can he leave from the window?

What did Jim hear in the corridor?

What did he do next?

What did he see in the room?

What is on her face?

Does Jim try to help her?

Does the girl want Jim to help her?

Who is the girl worried about?

What thing fell down in the corridor?

What did the girl try to do?

Where did they both go?

Is the door open?

How did they open the door?

What can Jim see from the roof?

What does the girl have on her back?

Where do they both go?

Essential Vocabulary

immense	corridor	engulfed
flames	furnace	soot
roared	cracking	choked
staggered	gauntlet	bolted
singeing	yanked	lunged
fireman	ladders	forest
wings		

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Immense – *Extremely large or vast; of great size, magnitude, or extent.*

Corridor – *A narrow passageway or hallway that connects different rooms, areas, or spaces within a building or structure.*

Then write a sentence of your own that uses the new word or

phrase correctly.

The library contained an immense collection of rare books and historical manuscripts.

The hotel had a long, well-lit corridor lined with room doors on either side.

Do this with all the vocabulary and, over time, this will help improve all your English skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Discussion Questions

What do you think of this story?

What happens in this story? Tell the story in your own words.

How do you think Jim feels when he discovers the building is on fire?

Try to think of three words to describe his feeling.

If you are in a burning building, what should you do?

Describe the best actions to take in steps.

The girl calls for her mother. Do you think her mother is really there? Explain your reasons.

Why does Jim help the girl?

How did the girl open the door going to the roof?

What do you think happened?

What do you think went through Jim's mind when he saw her do this?

In the story, Jim has never seen any children in the building

before. So where did the girl come from?

The girl tells Jim he is good. What do you think of Jim? Is he a good person? Why/why not?

What is the girl?

Why is she in the building?

Why is she taking Jim away?

Where will they go?

What are angels?

Do they exist?

What do angels look like?

Where do they come from?

Are angels good or evil?

What kind of power do angels have?

If angels do exist on earth, why are they here?

Are angels male or female? Or neither?

Role Play

This is a role play activity.

There are two characters in the role play.

A Firefighter

A Fire Chief

The Situation

The firefighter is being interviewed by the fire chief at the fire station.

The firefighter claims to see a young girl flying from the roof of the burning building. She was holding a grown man's hand.

Of course, the fire chief finds this very hard to believe and has many questions to ask the firefighter about it.

- ***What kind of questions can the fire chief ask?***
- ***How can he possibly believe what the firefighter says?***

Throughout the interview, the firefighter sticks to his story. He knows what he saw, and he will not change it.

- ***What could be the result of the interview?***
- ***What will the fire chief do with the firefighter?***

Get into pairs and choose a character each.
Then create your role play.

When you are ready, show your classmates and teacher.

Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

A Letter from An Angel

Imagine you are an angel. And you have written a letter that could be read by millions of people on the earth.

- **What letter would you write?**
- **What would you say in the letter?**
- **What message would you give the people?**

Write your letter and express whatever you want to tell the world.

The letter could be a warning.

Or a message of hope.

It can be whatever you want.

When you have finished the writing exercise, read your letter out in front of the class.

Ask your teacher and classmates for feedback.

Credits

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