

Mikal had never cared much for art until he was assigned to William. The emerald-haired human had turned this guardian angel's heart into a canvas, and everything he did left behind a stroke of love. He watched over each of the human's reincarnations for centuries, his love for William growing stronger each time he was reborn, and his grief growing increasingly unbearable each time his day to die came around – he was always young, the death always painful. The other angels knew of his infatuation, and that it went beyond what a guardian angel would normally feel for their charge, but ignored it as long as it didn't get in the way of his job.

It wasn't until William's thirtieth incarnation in 1997 that Mikal's love for him became a problem. He had watched the human suffer an early death 29 times, and he simply couldn't take it anymore. He vowed that this time would be different. This time, William would be able to live a full life, regardless of what fate had planned for him. He plotted in silence, watching over his ward as his timer counted down the years.

The day came a week after his twentieth birthday.

William was in a car headed to an art competition with a friend, a covered canvas sitting in the back seat. He was in the passenger's seat while his friend drove. They were having a cheerful conversation about what he would do with the money if he won; his friend kept insisting that he would win, despite William's protests that he was going to be facing off against a ton of artists that were much better than he was. Malik flew close to the car, keeping a close eye on his timer. The little display read 0 years, 0 days, 0 hours, 5 minutes, 49 seconds. His heart beat so hard that he could hear his blood rushing in his ears as he watched the other cars on the road, wondering which one was going to cause the accident that was meant to take the life of the two beneath him. A dark blue sedan caught his eye, swerving in and out of the lines and driving twenty over the speed limit. He glanced at his timer again with a little frown: 2 minutes, 52 seconds. That was the one.

The problem with interfering with a human's time to die is that the guardian angel can't directly influence a person. He can whisper in the ear of his charge and suggest that a decision they were about to make might not be the best idea, but he can't control them or interact at all with a different human. On top of that, it is forbidden to affect the environment unless there is a risk of his charge dying before their time, since he would have to make himself corporeal (and visible) to do it. Keeping William alive tonight would mean breaking every rule set in place for guardian angels and losing his wings.

As Malik was lost in thought, the sedan drove past William's car, suddenly cutting into their lane and slamming into the front left corner it hard enough to cause hood to crumple in. William was thrown forward against his seatbelt, the breath being forced from his chest as the polyester tightened across him; then, with a ripping sound, the belt snapped and he was thrown through the windshield with a sharp cry. He landed on his back five feet away and slid another two.

Malik felt his panic course through him and cursed softly, tucking his wings against his back and diving out of the air to get to the male's side. The timer now read 45 seconds. It wasn't over yet.

The angel turned to the rest of the wreckage in time to see that William's car had been flipped over the back of the sedan and was still rolling, right towards where the unconscious human lay. He barely had time to think before it was nearly on top of them. Malik threw his arms out and stretched his baby-blue wings to either side, making himself corporeal and bracing himself for impact. He grit his teeth against the pain as the car slammed into his chest, his knees buckling and his feet skidding back a few inches. Guardian angels were far from indestructible, at least compared to their warrior counter-parts, and they weren't as strong. But a car was nothing compared to the thought of failing William again.

When the car started pushing against him, he slowly peeled himself away from it with a groan. There was a Malik-shaped dent in the top of the car, only recognizable because he knew where it came from. A soft whimper came from behind him and he turned to rush to William's side, crouching down next to him and very carefully touched his hand to the male's cheek comfortingly.

"You're alright." He murmured. William's eyes fluttered a little, and he thought he saw them open a fraction, but it must have been his imagination. Sirens could be heard in the distance now and he quickly made himself fade away, staying by his ward's side until an ambulance pulled up and the paramedics took him away. Taking a deep breath and preparing himself for the worst, Malik spread his wings and launched himself into the air with a single flap.

He was intercepted before he could even make it to the Gate. Two armored angels flanked him and grabbed onto his arms, relaying in Enochian that he was under arrest for treason. He didn't struggle as they hauled him off for judgement, forcing him to his knees in front of the Golden Throne and the prying eyes of his fellow Guardians. His trial took several weeks as the Archangels mused over a fitting punishment. They finally deemed him guilty and unfit to be a Guardian Angel, tearing out his wings. The pain was excruciating; his screams could be heard all across the Heavens, his vision flickering as tendons and bones snapped and tore. The last thing he heard as he was tossed out of Heaven was the Archangels' words.

"You are cast out."