

The Assignment

By **Deadly Chakram** <dwelf82@yahoo.com>

Rated: PG

Submitted: March 2017

Summary: An angel's work is never done. And this new assignment will be the hardest one of Mike's career.

Story Size: 3,598 words (20Kb as text)

Disclaimer: I own nothing. I make nothing. All characters, plot points, and recognizable dialogue belong to DC Comics, Warner Bros., December 3rd Productions and anyone else with a stake in the Superman franchise.

Author's Note: Because Mike was clearly an angel in the series, this fic uses the Christian concepts of God, Heaven, and angels.

"Hey, Mike. The Boss wants to see you."

Mike sighed wearily. It had been a long, demanding day. Two of his charges had given birth and needed his reassurance as they'd entered the hospital. The first had been Hannah, a seventeen-year-old girl who'd had no one to be her support system. Alone and terrified, she'd been most grateful for the "nurse" who'd checked in on her once she'd been admitted into her room. The other had been a married woman, Liz, and her husband, David, who'd discovered only once their son, Caleb, had been born, that the child had a disability. Mike had once again slipped into nurse's scrubs and given them his assurance that the boy would be fine and they were exactly the parents he needed. After all, the Lord didn't give anyone what they couldn't handle. When he'd left their room, the two had been much more confident about the future.

Then there had been Joe, a struggling former drug addict. He'd nearly slipped in his efforts to stay clean when his girlfriend had broken up with him. Mike had taken the form of a cab driver and had spent nearly an hour talking the young man down from his quest to find his old dealer. Others had taken up the rest of Mike's day. But the most difficult of all had been the death of Greg, a ninety-year-old veteran. Mike had played the part of a volunteer at the hospice where Greg had spent the last weeks of his life. It had hurt Mike's heart to know that Greg had no one to visit him. The man had never married, never had children, and had outlived the rest of his immediate family. So Mike had stayed for hours, sitting by the man's bedside, comforting Greg with his words while he quietly slipped away. But Greg was a good man, and Mike was certain he would be given his eternal reward and be granted access to Paradise.

"Thanks, Phil," Mike answered, giving his fellow Guardian Angel a tired smile.

"Nice work today, by the way," Phil said, clapping his friend's shoulder. "I heard Greg is headed for Guardian training."

Mike nodded. "Makes sense. He's always been a natural protector. Anyway, if the Boss wants me, I'd better get going."

"Okay, see you later," Phil said cheerfully, with a little salute.

"See you," Mike replied distractedly.

What could the Boss want with him at this hour of the night? It was true that angels didn't need to sleep, but it was unusual nonetheless for the Boss to call on one so late in the time zone they were assigned to. With a shrug, Mike allowed his wings to appear and he flew off in the direction of the Lord's office.

It was funny, how God tended to keep things close to what the humans on Earth were used to. His office looked like any CEO's

office that Mike had ever seen, though lower-key and more comfortable than most. Still, the set-up was basically the same. And as for the Lord himself? He could take the form of anything he wanted to, but He most often took the form of a kindly old man that could be anyone's white-haired and bearded grandfather. It was only His eyes that would give him away in a crowd. For those eyes held the knowledge of the entire universe, of everything that was, had been, and ever would be.

Mike reached the door and knocked, even though it was open. "Mike! Come in," the Lord encouraged with a friendly, beckoning gesture.

"Phil said you wanted to see me, Sir?" Mike asked by way of a greeting.

"Yes. Close the door behind you, if you would."

Mike did as he was bid. He took his usual seat on the plush couch along one wall. The Boss stood up from his chair behind the desk and sat on the other end of the couch. Then He simply sat in silence. A long minute passed.

"Sir?"

"Mike, I have a new assignment for you," the Lord said at length.

"Is that all? I can handle another charge," Mike said with conviction.

"This one will be...different," God cautioned. "The person I need you to watch over isn't like anyone you've guided before."

"Who is it?"

"A boy," God said, breaking his eye contact with Mike to look out the window and into the vast universe beyond. "A baby that I'm sending to Jonathan and Martha Kent."

"Kent...Kent..." The name sounded familiar to Mike. He snapped his fingers. "Janna and Dan's charges, right? Farmers out in...Kansas, if I'm not mistaken."

"Yes." The word was accompanied by a pleased smile.

Mike smiled in turn. "I didn't know they were expecting."

God shook His head. "They aren't."

"Oh. So...adoption, then?"

"Sort of. Mike, the thing is, the child I'm sending them...he's not of Earth."

"Not of... But, Sir! My jurisdiction has always been Earth! I have no experience guiding people from other planets!" Mike gaped, taken off guard.

He wasn't opposed to being Guardian to someone not born of Earth. He was open to just about anything. But he feared the unknowns that went hand in hand with working with someone who had the potential to be so different than what he was used to.

"Don't worry so much, Mike," the Lord offered, with a knowing twinkle in His eyes. "Trust me. You are just the angel for this assignment."

"Where is the child from?" Mike managed, struggling to once more reach that place of confident professionalism.

"A planet long light years from Earth. A place called Krypton."

"Krypton? Didn't that planet die a couple of months ago?" Mike asked.

The death of a planet — any planet — was news that spread fast. Within minutes of the explosion, all of the angels had been put on notice that new residents would be arriving by the millions. Humans tended to believe that Heaven was a place reserved only for the best amongst them. But the truth was, any person from any planet could earn their way into Paradise, simply by living a good life. It made no difference *where* they lived that life. Earthling or Kryptonian, they were all children of God.

The Boss nodded. "Few survived when the planet tore itself apart. The boy was one of the lucky ones. His parents foresaw what was to come and sent him in a capsule to Earth, saving his life even though it meant sacrificing their own. Tomorrow evening, that ship will land on Earth. Everything is in motion so

that the Kents will find him.”

Mike nodded thoughtfully. “They’re good people. They will make excellent parents,” he said aloud, more for himself than for the Lord.

“There are no better people to be this child’s parents. But he will still need you, Mike. He will need your patient guidance and assurances. He will need you perhaps more than anyone else ever has before.”

“How so?”

“As much as he will resemble an Earthling, he isn’t one,” God reminded him gently. “His biology will set him apart from his peers.”

“In what ways?” Mike needed to know. He needed to plan for whatever his assignment might bring.

“His home world existed under the light and warmth of a red sun,” the Boss explained with a wistful smile. “His new world has a yellow sun. Because of that, he will gain powers beyond mortal reasoning.” He sighed. “It’s a shame, you know, that his people so eagerly squandered their planet’s resources. They were a brilliant people, but they killed their world in their stubborn refusal to believe the warnings of their Guardians.”

“Powers, you say?” Mike felt a kernel of nervousness form in his heart.

The Lord nodded. “Strength, speed, invulnerability, and flight, to name just a few.”

“But, Sir! Those alone might cause the humans to...to view him as...a god!” It was almost painful to give voice to that blasphemous idea.

“Perhaps. But it can’t be helped. The boy’s destiny lies on Earth. In time, if he chooses, he may become a hero to mankind.”

A hero to mankind. Mike found himself momentarily speechless. Of course, he’d been the Guardian of heroes before — men and woman serving in the armed forces, police and fire fighters, even a brain surgeon, once - but the way “mankind” had been said gave Mike the impression that the boy would be a hero to the *entire world*, not just in the community or country in which he lived.

“Sounds like a tall order,” Mike said after a moment of contemplation. “But, I’m up to the task. Still, I have to wonder... We’ve never had a person born on one planet grow up amongst the people of a completely different planet before. Will he...be all right? It sounds like, physically, at least, he will. But...how will that affect his mindset?” He couldn’t help but to voice his concerns aloud.

The Lord paused and gazed again out into the cosmos. “It will depend on a lot of factors,” he said at last, in a distracted voice. “That’s why, out of all the others, I chose you, Mike. You have a knack for making strangers feel welcome wherever they are. The path before Kal-El will be a rocky one, no doubt. There will be times when he may feel like an outsider, like there’s no place where he belongs. It won’t be easy for him. But he *does* belong on Earth, more than he ever did on his home world. There, he would have been a leader to his people, simply because he was born to the role. On Earth, he can become the very embodiment of hope and shape his own destiny. Perhaps he can help lead the people there to a brighter future.”

“Utopia?” Mike asked hesitantly. It certainly appeared, from the far-off look in the Lord’s eyes, that he was thinking of that almost-mythical notion of a perfect world.

“He still had free will, of course.” The Lord shrugged. “But... yes, I believe he will lead the humans to a better world. Perhaps not in his lifetime, but if he lives his life well, he may inspire generations to come.”

“Incredible,” Mike breathed, his heart thumping hard in his chest with the excitement of a chance for the mortal realm to improve. “But, even with all of that...will he be *happy*, Sir? I mean...he will be set apart from everyone else with his

differences. Won’t he be a bit...lonely?”

The Lord grinned mischievously. “I’m working on creating his soulmate now. She will soon be sent to her mother’s womb. Lois shall be her name. And you, Mike, shall be *her* Guardian as well.”

Mike gaped. “Sir? That’s a bit...unusual.” As a rule, different Guardians typically watched over each member of a family, even ones created through marriage. It was a rare thing indeed, to have one Guardian for both halves of a couple.

“Yes, I know. But this is a special case, Mike. You are the only one I can think of who is equipped to guide each of them.”

“I’m honored,” Mike replied, a hand to his heart to convey the depth of his sincerity.

“She will be a handful,” God warned. “I’m not done crafting her spirit quite yet. But Lois will be made of fire and passion. She will be competitive — with others, with herself, it won’t matter. Impulsive and earnest, she will rarely check the water level before jumping in. She will do nothing in her life half-heartedly. She will work hard, live hard, love hard, play hard. For Kal-El, once they meet, she will be his rock, his source of light, a well of strength for him. Again, if they both choose to walk in the light and shun the darkness, she will encourage him to be his best self. She will be the reason why he will become a hero to mankind, though, in order to protect him, she will be content to be the woman in the shadows, someone the world never sees. And yet, she may well become a champion for mankind as well, for she has the potential to be a crusader for good in her own right.”

“She sounds wonderful,” Mike mused aloud, smiling. “I can scarcely wait to meet her.”

“She is the only soul I have ever created who is Kal-El’s equal,” the Boss agreed with a nod. “In fact, aside from Jonathan and Martha, she will be his greatest ally and protector. And, in turn, he will be hers.”

“A match truly made in Heaven,” Mike quipped.

That earned him another smile. “It may not be the easiest romance you ever handle,” God cautioned. “Because of who they are, there will be bumps in the road.”

“Few amongst the great loves are ever easy,” Mike said with a nonchalant shrug, feeling confident in his ability to guide both of those souls to their destinies as heroes and to each other.

God chuckled. “True.”

A companionable silence stretched out between them for several long minutes. Mike felt a thousand questions surging inside of him, but he found no voice to express them. Of course, that was no different than usual. Any time he got a new assignment, a world of questions presented themselves that he had to squash down, because they all hinged on how that person would choose to exercise their free will. He simply had faith that all would be well. After all, he hadn’t lost a soul to the darkness yet. And this child and his soon-to-be soulmate were no different. Mike would do his utmost to guide them to their destinies as heroes to the world. Because, really, how hard could watching over these two possibly be?

Mike’s heart was heavy as he watched Clark Kent’s final breath come shuttering out of his failing lungs, invisible to all the mortals around him. There were a handful of doctors and nurses who’d been specially chosen to make Superman’s final days as comfortable as modern medicine could make it. Even now, after all these years, there was little that could be given to the man that his Kryptonian physiology actually responded to. So Mike had spent hours with his old friend, giving what comfort he could with just his presence, and Clark had seemed to appreciate it in the moments when he was lucid enough to know that Mike was there.

Outside the hospice, rain poured down, as if the very heavens were mourning the great loss that had just occurred. Superman was dead. Soon the news would spread and everyone from Metropolis to the most obscure, remote villages would know that

the hero had passed away quietly in his sleep. Mike sighed. At least there was that, that Clark hadn't suffered much in his last days as his body began to shut down from his advanced age. And he hadn't died alone, not by a long shot. Sure, there had been doctors and nurses to tend to him, but not a moment had gone by when he hadn't had one of his children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren keeping him company at his bedside. In that respect, it was lucky that the world had known for several years now that the hero was no more than a disguise for Clark Kent, one half of the most famous — and decorated — reporting team in the world. It meant that there had been far fewer complications in having Superman being constantly visited in the hospice by members of the Kent family.

The anguished crying of Clark's family tore holes in Mike's heart. He slipped out of the room and into the hallway. For a minute, he did nothing, waiting for the medical staff to vacate the room to allow the family a chance to say goodbye in private. But once the hallway was again deserted, Mike allowed himself to materialize, this time in the form of a chaplain. Satisfied with his appearance, he gently knocked on the open door.

Christopher, Clark's eldest son, greeted Mike. "Father Mike," he said with respect.

"Chris. I heard of your father's passing. As you know, I knew him well, for many years, and was wondering if I might be able to pray with you," Mike said.

"That would be lovely," the other man said with a trembling smile.

Mike knew from his observations of the Kent family that those gathered were of varying degrees of faith. So he kept his prayers brief and respectful, choosing to spend the majority of his time listening to Clark's family reminisce about the man they'd just lost. In turn, Mike shared a few memories of his own, which he believed would make them smile, if only for a heartbeat or two. Soon, the somber room was filled with gentle chuckles as happier times were recalled, though the laughter was reserved and held notes of sadness.

When Mike finally took his leave, he knew none of them would remember his visit, though he was pleased with his ability to relieve some of their heartache. And though he was not an official Guardian for the family, he vowed that he would always keep an eye out for them. After all, between Lois, Clark, and their descendants, the world was well on the path to becoming a utopia, just as the Lord had wanted. He paused for a moment outside of the room, taking advantage of the nurses' shift change to dematerialize once again. He gazed in through the door, where he could just see the foot of the bed where Clark's mortal form lay still.

He sighed sadly. He never liked the ending of an assignment. It hurt to bid farewell to the mortal forms of his charges. But this one? This one hurt the most. Clark had been simultaneously the easiest and the hardest assignment Mike had ever had. Jonathan and Martha Kent had done wonders raising their boy, instilling in him an unshakable set of morals, which had made Mike's job of guiding Clark a piece of cake. And despite the powers Clark's DNA had given him in the presence of a yellow sun, he'd never been tempted by the darkness. He'd always been a warrior for the light.

But, for all of that, Clark had often needed reassurances and gentle nudges in his personal life, particularly when he'd first landed in Metropolis, and had met and fallen in love with Lois. Oh, Mike couldn't blame Clark for his initial hesitation in revealing his dual life to her, but as the two had grown closer, Mike had constantly shaken his head with every limp excuse Clark had given her, instead of just coming out and telling her the truth about Superman. Then there was the fact that, as good as Clark was, the darkness seemed drawn to him, trying to destroy him, trying to tear him apart from Lois. Directly intervening was, of

course, expressly forbidden, but Mike had appeared to both Clark and Lois whenever they needed him most.

But now that chapter of Mike's afterlife was over.

"Goodbye, my friend," he said quietly.

Mike always said goodbye to his charges, though he always saw them again back in Heaven. But it felt only right, to say farewell to the physical body that had housed the spirit he'd come to know and love in his own way. So he never missed an opportunity to say his final goodbye when someone passed from one plane of existence to another.

A hand clasped him on the shoulder.

"Don't worry, Mike," said a familiar voice. "You'll be seeing plenty of me."

Mike turned. Clark smiled at him.

"Of *us*," Lois corrected, standing next to her husband. Clark's arm was around her waist, and they both looked completely at peace to be reunited with one another.

Mike grinned. Though Lois had died some ten years before, an angel's work was never done. He'd known, of course, that she had been permitted entrance into Paradise, but he'd been kept perpetually busy and hadn't seen more than a passing glimpse of her. After all, in a place created from eternity, ten years was but a blink of an eye.

"Lois. Clark." Mike embraced them both. Then, as the realization dawned on him, he said, "But, if you're both down here..."

Lois grinned impishly. "We've been called to become Guardian Angels, like you. In fact, we've been assigned to train with you."

"But, you've both done so much good already. I thought for sure that you'd enjoy at least a long period of rest before something like this," Mike stammered.

"You know us," Lois said with a shrug and a laugh.

Clark's eyes sparkled and he nodded. "Yeah. Paradise or not, we'd be bored just sitting back and relaxing. We're kind of used to helping people."

"Well," Mike smiled, "I'm happy to have you both on my team. Come on," he said, with a jerk of his thumb to indicate that they should leave. "Let's go find out our next assignment."

THE END