
NO. 1
FREE DIGITAL EDITION
THE ILLUSTRATED ADVENTURES OF GUS THE GUARDIAN
ANDY & GUS
Chapter 1: The Spark
WINGS... WORK WITH ME!
THE SPARK!
HEAVEN SENT. LANDING OPTIONAL!
ANDREW RICHARDS


The winter of 1969.
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA—


He tumbled head over heels through the clouds, wings flapping wildly in all the wrong directions.


His halo spun off like a runaway hubcap, glittering somewhere above him.


With a panicked look of despair, he thought,
Note to self: ground—rapidly approaching.


NO NO NO NO
NO NO NO NO NO—!


Arms, legs, feathers—everything was chaos.


Yep... that's me.
You're probably wondering how I managed to 'trip' out of Heaven on my first day.
It starts with two names: Aurin and Zephiel.
The Tweedle-Dee Brothers in white... up there laughing, that's how!


"WHUMPH!"


A geyser of snow explodes skyward, scattering in slow motion, glittering in the morning light like confetti from a very confused parade.


Silence.


Then the mound of snow twitches.
A muffled grunt escapes, followed by one lonely arm poking out of the drift like a flag of surrender.
From the wreckage rose a thoroughly rumpled angel—wings crooked, white suit wrinkled, one shoe missing.
Snow clings to his lashes as he blinks and exhales a long puff of frosty air.
"Well... that could've gone better,
he mutters.


He brushes himself off and looks up at the glowing hole still swirling in the clouds above.
"I knew I should've taken Guardian Flight School. But nooo—"You'll pick it up naturally," they said."
He scowled.
Turns out the only thing I picked up was terminal velocity!"
He shakes a snow-covered fist toward Heaven.
Real funny guys!


The world around him was still and cold—a quiet neighborhood, bare trees, chimney smoke curling into the gray morning, and snow. Endless, glorious, mocking snow.


Somewhere in the distance, a dog barks. Probably laughing.


Oh, there you are,
he grumbles, spotting his halo half-buried nearby.


He scoops it up, shakes off the slush, and plops it back onto his head.


It flickers once, then glows in a sheepish shade of gold.


With a sigh, he straightens what is left of his dignity and turns toward you, the reader, with a crooked grin, brushing snow from his hair.
"Hi. My name's Augustus—Gus for short. Guardian Angel.
He smirks and rubs his hands together.
"Well I think we got the practice run out of the way so let's get started!."


Gus says, voice echoing as if through glass.
Right,


"Before my belly-flop-out-of-Heaven practice run, there was orientation. You know—wings, halos, paperwork, a few thousand years of tradition nobody tells you about until you're already signed up. and then wham the BIG Day! So stick with me and let's get this show on the road."

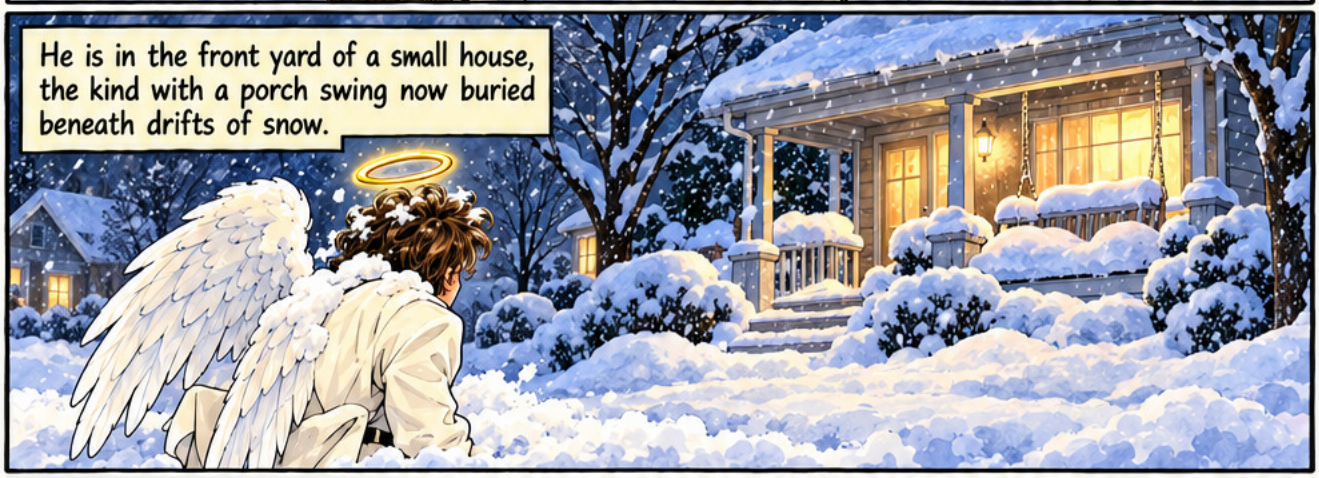

Everywhere Gus looked, there was white, not snow, but brilliance.


The great audience chamber blazed with light, marble-white walls rising into eternity, angels rushing in every direction with wings brushing wings.
Assignment scrolls flashed through the air, names called faster than Gus could follow.
Gus! Gus, come on!
a voice cried above the clamor.
It's the busy season, you're up!


Before he could steady himself, a scroll of light unfurled before his eyes. The Voice, vast, steady, irresistible, spoke:
"A new soul.
Erie, Pennsylvania.
Guard. Guide. Watch."
And then, without warning, he was falling... better this time.
Bright lights twisted around him, tumoring chaos, a roar in his ears as though creation itself were rushing past. He flailed, wings catching gusts of light and shadow, until suddenly.


Whumph!


The world slammed into focus. Dusting snow off himself, Gus blinked hard, his vision returning in fragments.

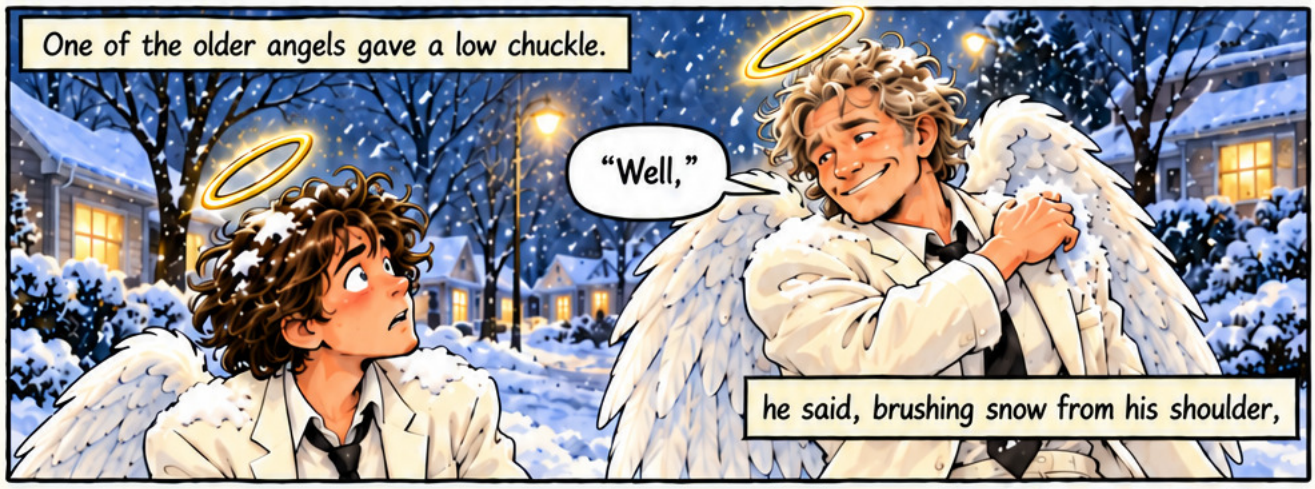

He is in the front yard of a small house, the kind with a porch swing now buried beneath drifts of snow.


The suburban neighborhood stretched in both directions, though most of it blurred behind the blizzard. Streetlamps flickered halos in the storm, and the wind shoved icy pellets against his face.


For a moment, he simply stood there, dazed, the confusion of his “descent” slowly clearing.


Then he noticed them: lined along the street, perched in yards and on rooftops, other guardian angels were appearing too, shaking off the disarray of their travels.


Wings fluffed against the cold, halos dimmed to a glow, and they looked around at one another with the same bewilderment Gus felt.


One of the older angels gave a low chuckle.
“Well,”
he said, brushing snow from his shoulder,


"on a night like this, in Erie, there's not much else for people to do ... except make babies."


A ripple of laughter moved through the angels. Even Gus couldn't help but smile. The storm raged around them, but he knew his assignment had begun.


Somewhere inside that little house, at that very moment, a new soul was sparking into being.


And Gus, confused, cold, and wide-eyed, was a Guardian Angel.

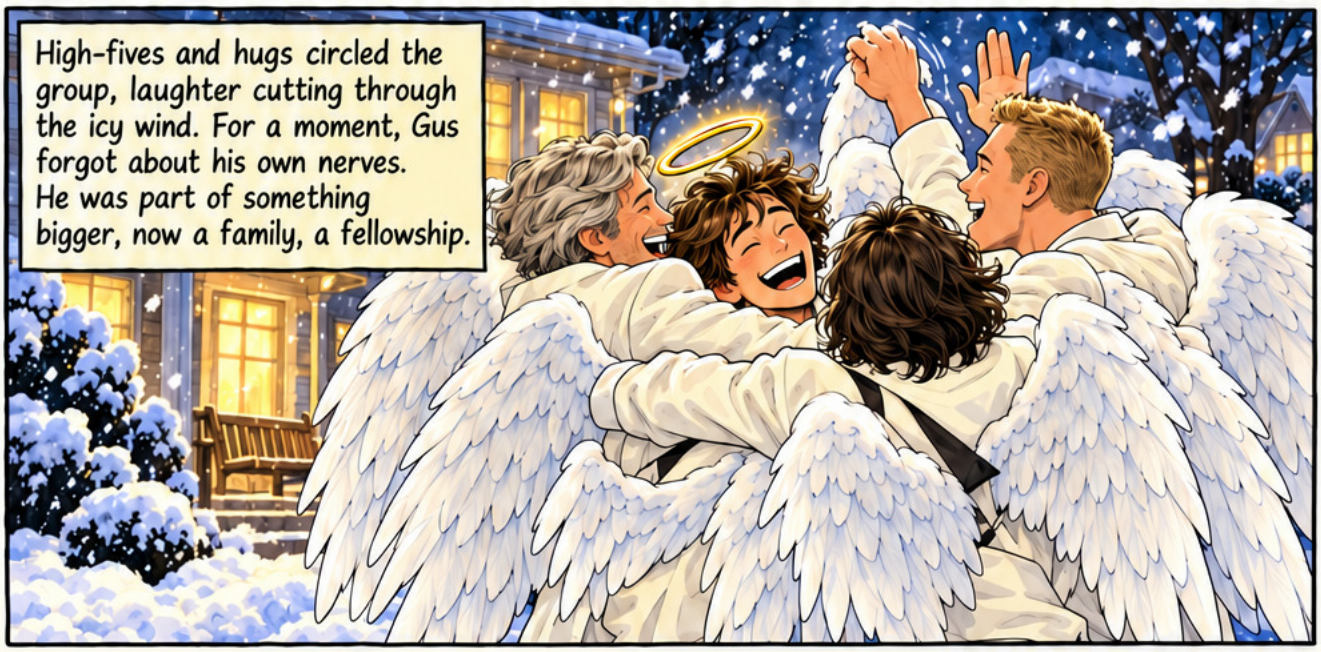

The storm still howled, but now Gus could see the others more clearly, angels scattered along the street, perched on rooftops and porches, wings shaking off the chaos of descent.
For a moment, everyone simply stood, blinking at one another through the heavy snow. Then, slowly, laughter bubbled up through the confusion.
The laughter swelled, and Gus felt the corners of his mouth twitch into a smile. Then he heard it:
"Gus? Hey Gus!"


A tall angel with broad wings was waving at him from the next yard over.
"Well, look at you! Finally assigned, huh?"
He strode through the snowdrifts and clapped Gus on the back.
Congratulations, rookie.
Another pair of angels turned and joined in.
About time!
one grinned, holding out a hand.
Welcome to the neighborhood.

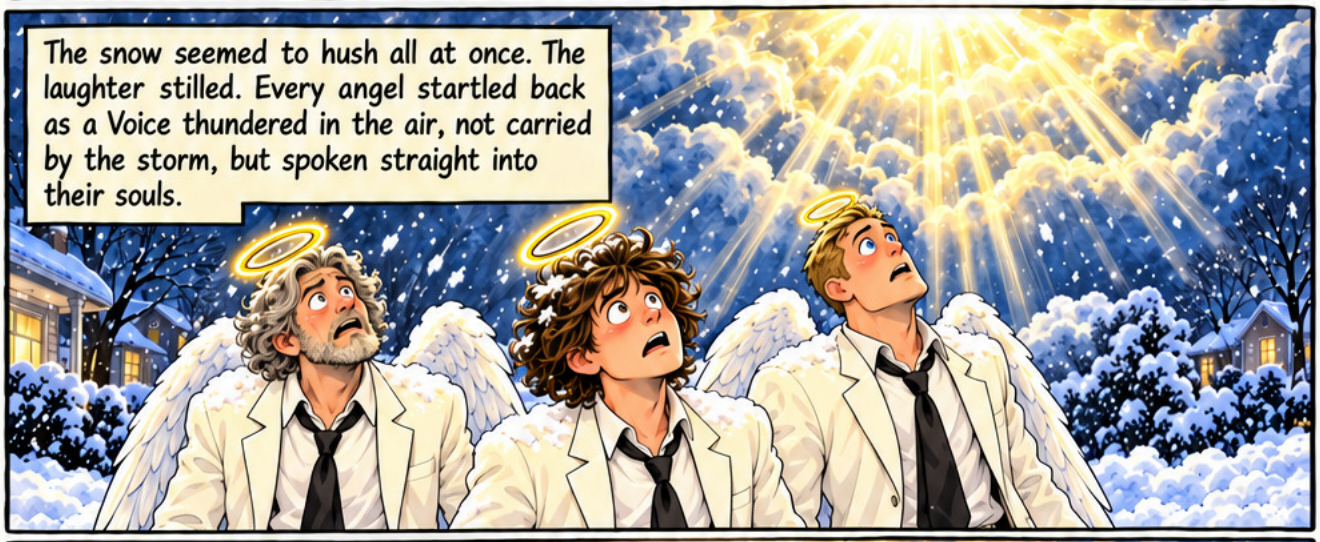

Before long, Gus found himself surrounded, wings brushing wings as angels laughed and swapped greetings.


First assignment jitters?
one teased.
Don't worry, it gets easier after the first thousand years.

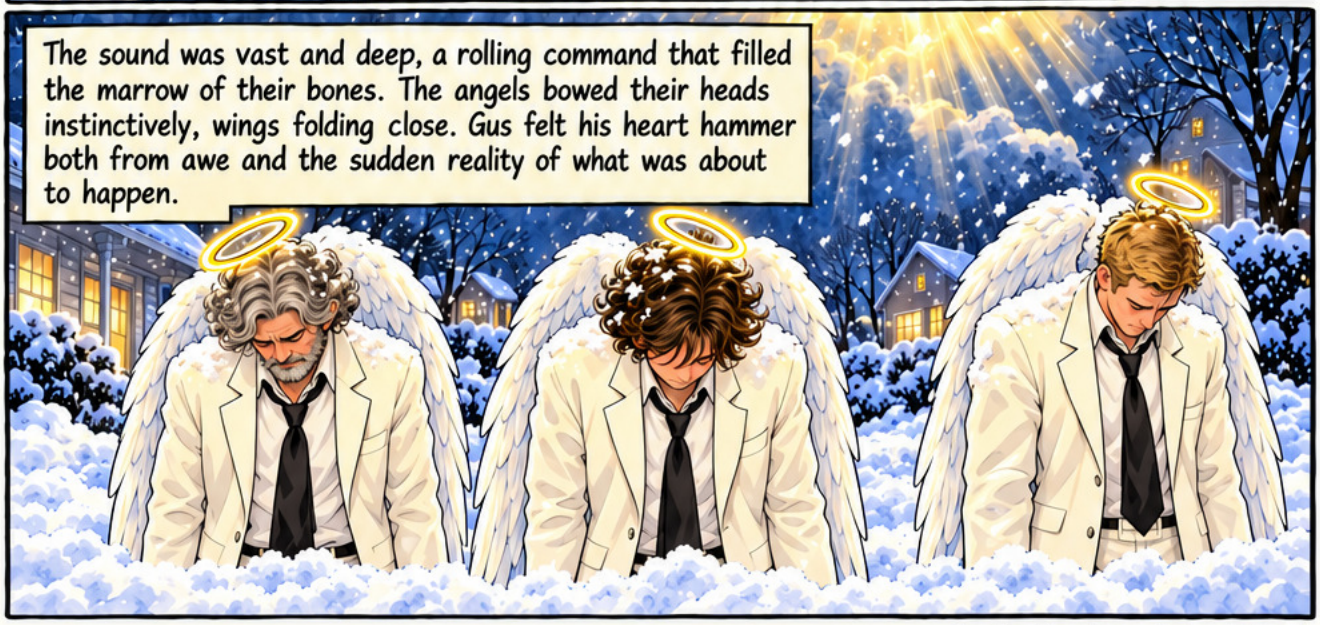

Yeah,
another quipped,
unless you get assigned twins. Then may the Lord have mercy on your feathers.


High-fives and hugs circled the group, laughter cutting through the icy wind. For a moment, Gus forgot about his own nerves. He was part of something bigger, now a family, a fellowship.


And then

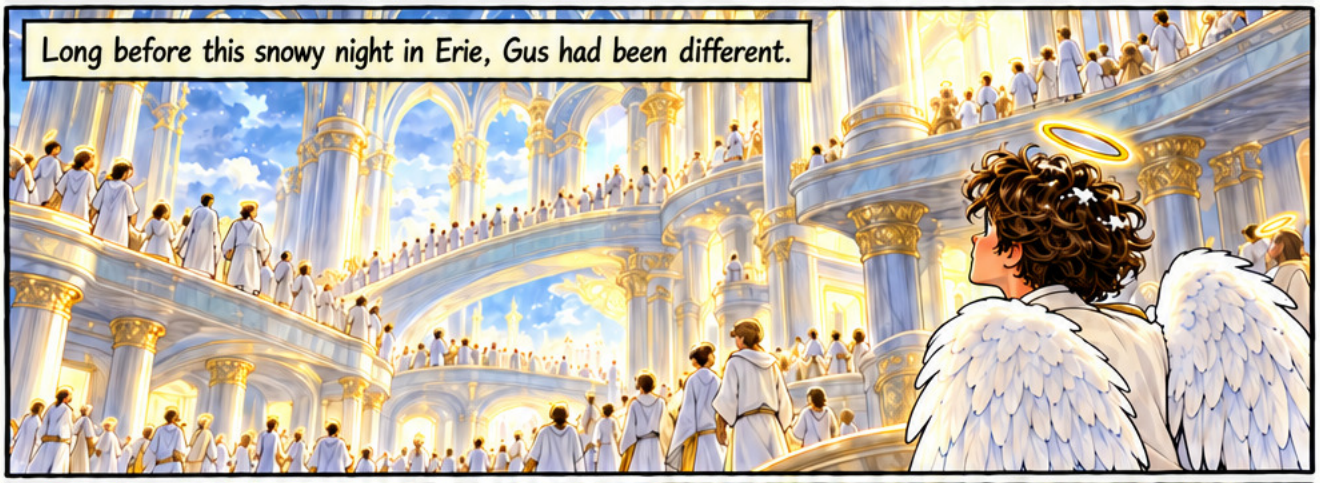

The snow seemed to hush all at once. The laughter stilled. Every angel startled back as a Voice thundered in the air, not carried by the storm, but spoken straight into their souls.

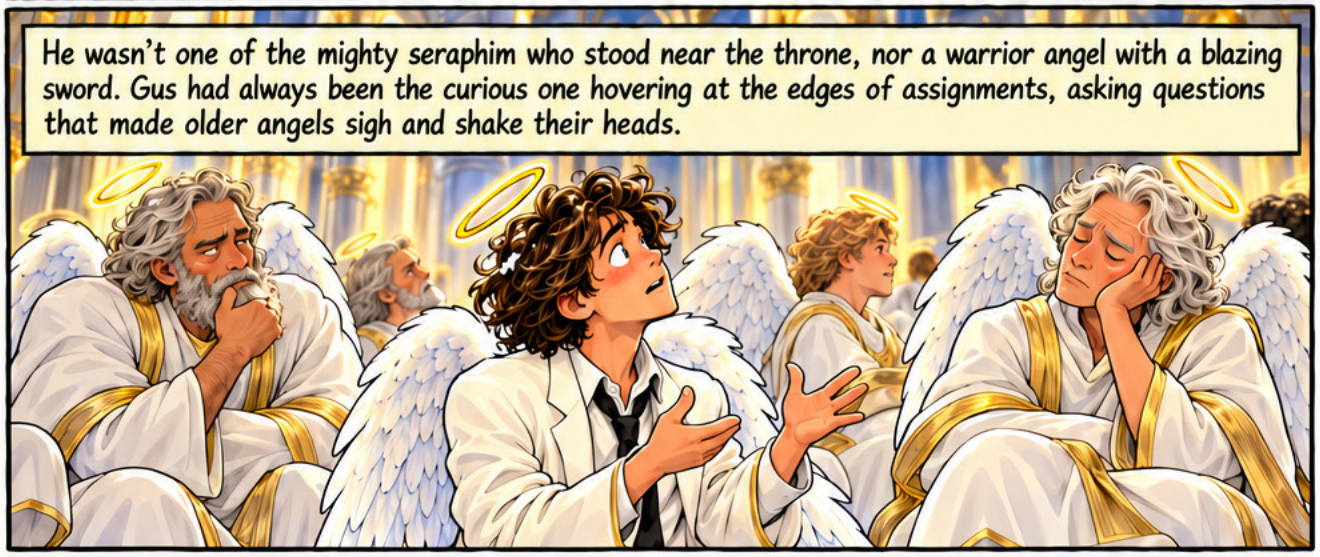

"It is time. Prepare."


The sound was vast and deep, a rolling command that filled the marrow of their bones. The angels bowed their heads instinctively, wings folding close. Gus felt his heart hammer both from awe and the sudden reality of what was about to happen.


Someone tried to whisper a joke,
"Hi-Ho-Hi-HO, it's off to work we go..."
but even that was swallowed by the hush that followed the Voice.


Gus exhaled slowly. His moment had come.


Long before this snowy night in Erie, Gus had been different.


He wasn't one of the mighty seraphim who stood near the throne, nor a warrior angel with a blazing sword. Gus had always been the curious one hovering at the edges of assignments, asking questions that made older angels sigh and shake their heads.


He trained for centuries in patience, in watching, in listening, always eager, always a little clumsy.


He once mixed up a song of praise so badly that choirs stopped mid-hymn to look at him.


Another time, he misfiled an assignment scroll and sent an angel to the wrong country, a mistake Heaven still jokes about.

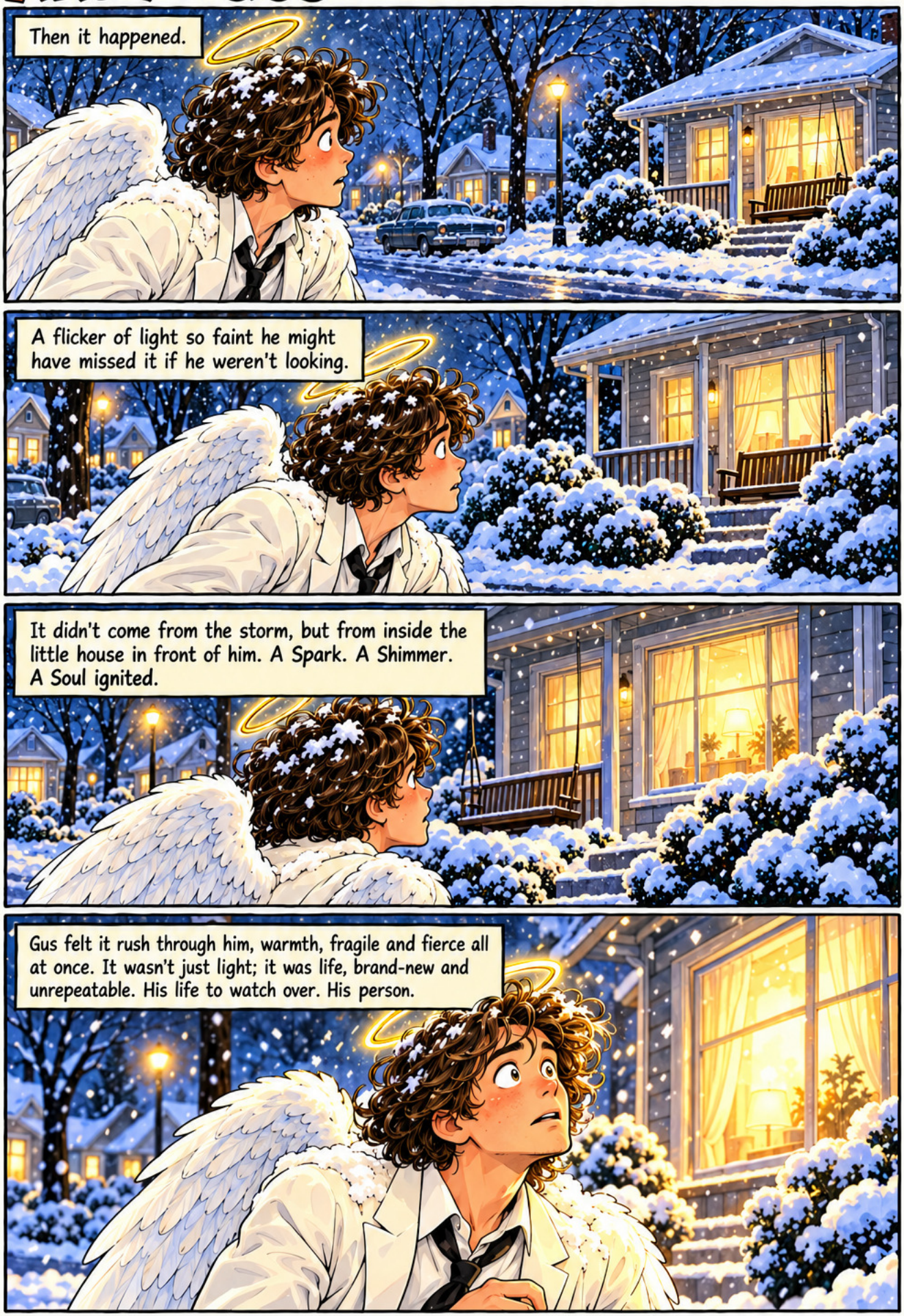

But through it all, Gus's heart had never wavered. He enjoyed it. He cared. And he longed for the day when he, too, would be entrusted with a soul of his own to guard.


That day had finally come.


Gus, once the awkward observer, was now a full-fledged guardian angel. And his very first charge was about to take shape in the world.


The angels along the snowy street stood still, their laughter fading into the silence that followed the Voice. The blizzard howled, snow piling against rooftops and fences, but none of them seemed to feel the cold. All eyes turned toward the houses, each small, ordinary structure now pulsing with unseen significance.


Gus swallowed hard, his wings drawing close around him. The others shifted with practiced ease, as if they had done this countless times before. But for him, everything felt new, electric, almost frightening.


Then it happened.
A flicker of light so faint he might have missed it if he weren't looking.
It didn't come from the storm, but from inside the little house in front of him. A Spark. A Shimmer. A Soul ignited.
Gus felt it rush through him, warmth, fragile and fierce all at once. It wasn't just light; it was life, brand-new and unrepeatable. His life to watch over. His person.

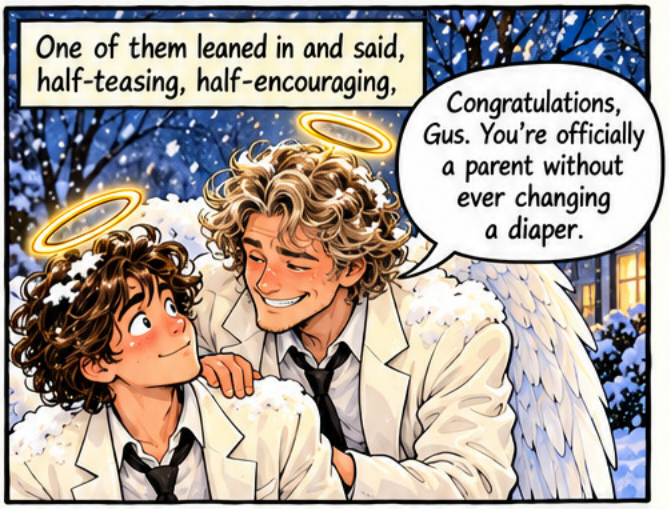

He gasped, staggered a step, clutching his chest as if the spark had set his own heart ablaze.


That's it,"
murmured the angel beside him, voice hushed with reverence.
That's your purpose."

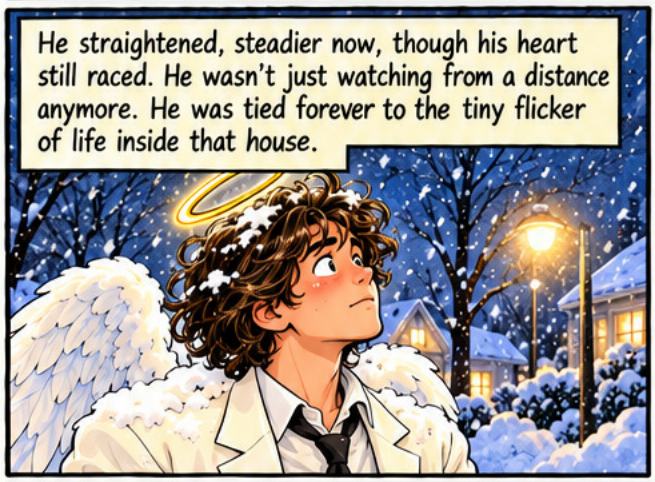

Gus turned toward the house, snowflakes catching on his lashes, but all he could see now was the glow. The storm, the houses, the street, they all blurred away. Only that light remained.


I... I feel it,"
Gus whispered, almost afraid to speak too loudly.
"It's so small, but...it's so big. It's overwhelming"


A ripple of knowing smiles spread through the angels nearby. They remembered their first times, too.


One of them leaned in and said, half-teasing, half-encouraging,
Congratulations, Gus. You're officially a parent without ever changing a diaper.


The group chuckled softly, wings fluttering with warmth. But no laughter could shake the gravity of the moment. Gus, once the awkward newcomer of Heaven's halls, was now bound to a soul on Earth.

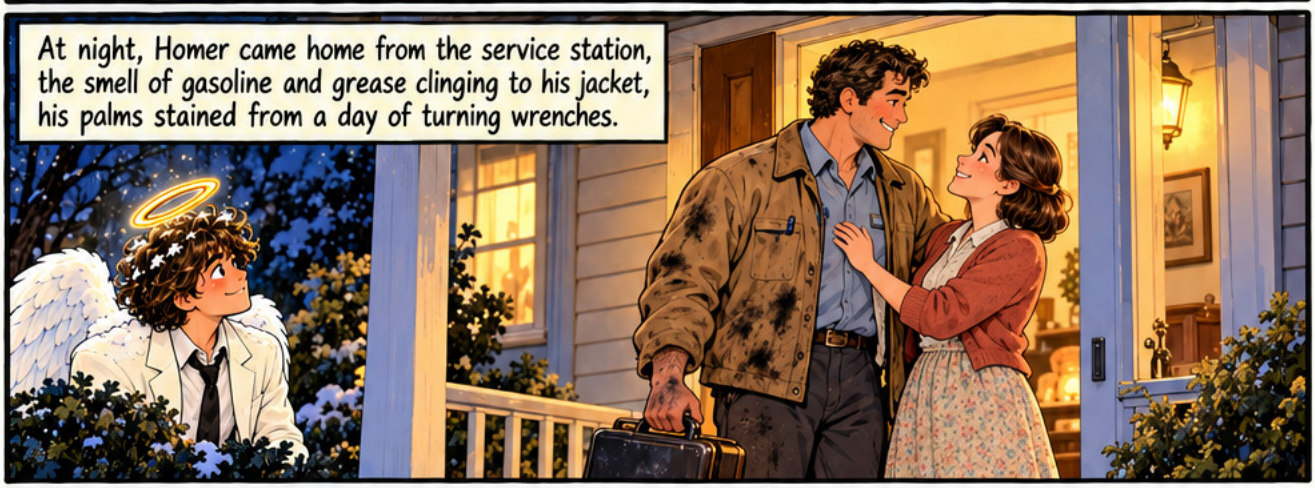

He straightened, steadier now, though his heart still raced. He wasn't just watching from a distance anymore. He was tied forever to the tiny flicker of life inside that house.


And for the first time, Gus understood the weight of being a guardian angel.


Gus was in love.

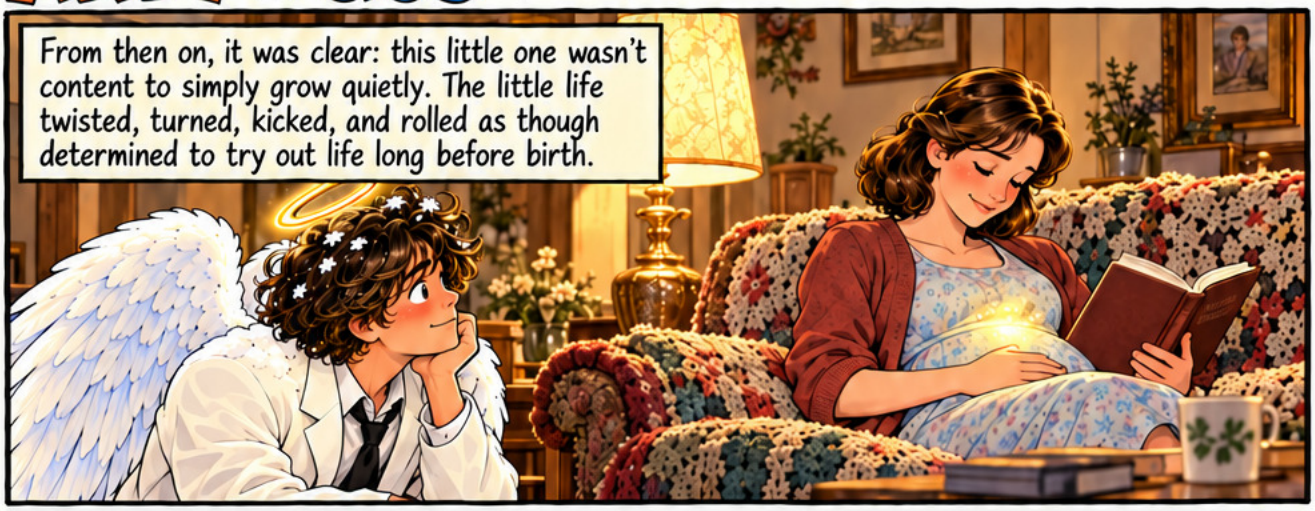

The weeks passed, and the blizzard gave way to clearer skies over Erie. From the first spark in that little house, Gus never left his post.

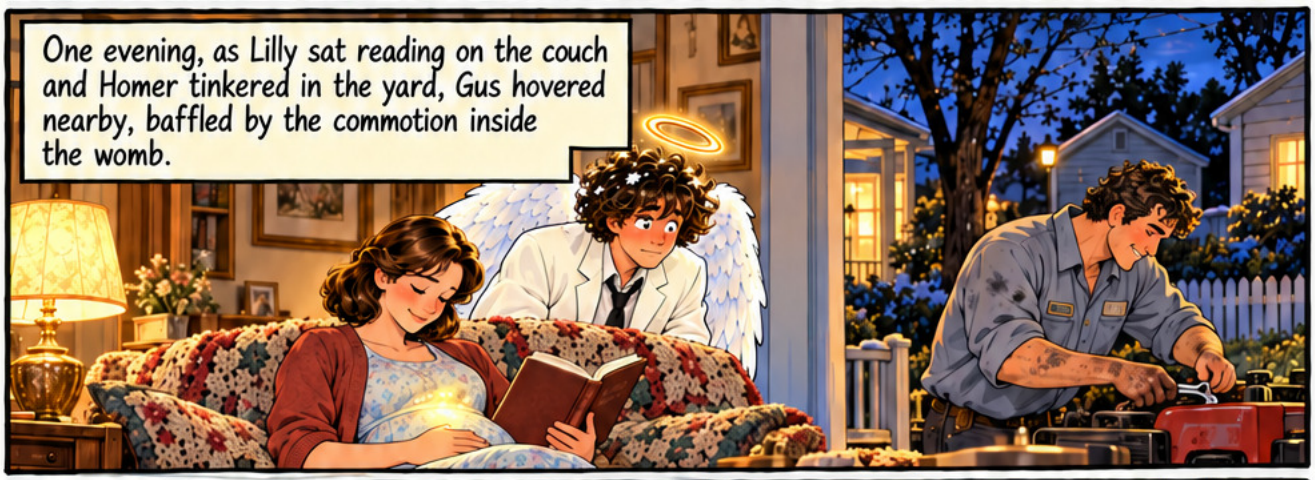

He lingered unseen, watching Lilly move through her days at the hospital, her hands steady with patients, her voice kind.


At night, Homer came home from the service station, the smell of gasoline and grease clinging to his jacket, his palms stained from a day of turning wrenches.

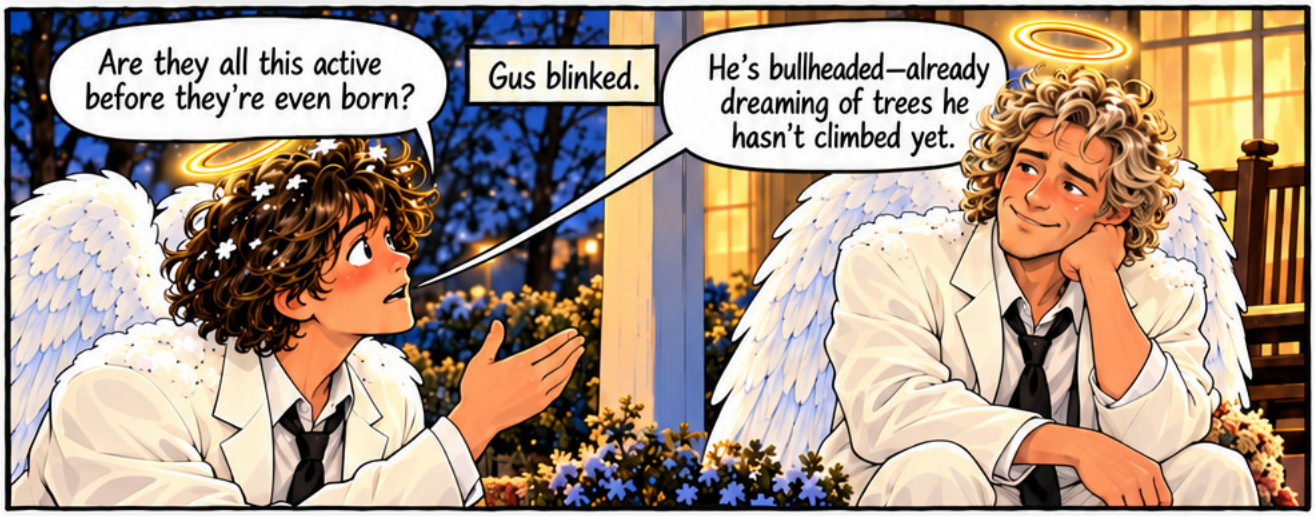

They were ordinary people, humble and hardworking, but to Gus, they were extraordinary. For within and because of them, the spark he guarded was growing.


By the third month, Gus could feel the change. What had been a shimmer of light was becoming... someone.
He leaned close, wings brushing softly against the unseen barrier that separated him from his charge.
Hello in there,"
he whispered.
I'm Gus. I'm yours, and you're mine. That's how this works. Now the manual states that...
A sudden flutter, a kick, jolted him back. Gus blinked, startled.
Did you just...? Oh. Oh, you're feisty, aren't you?

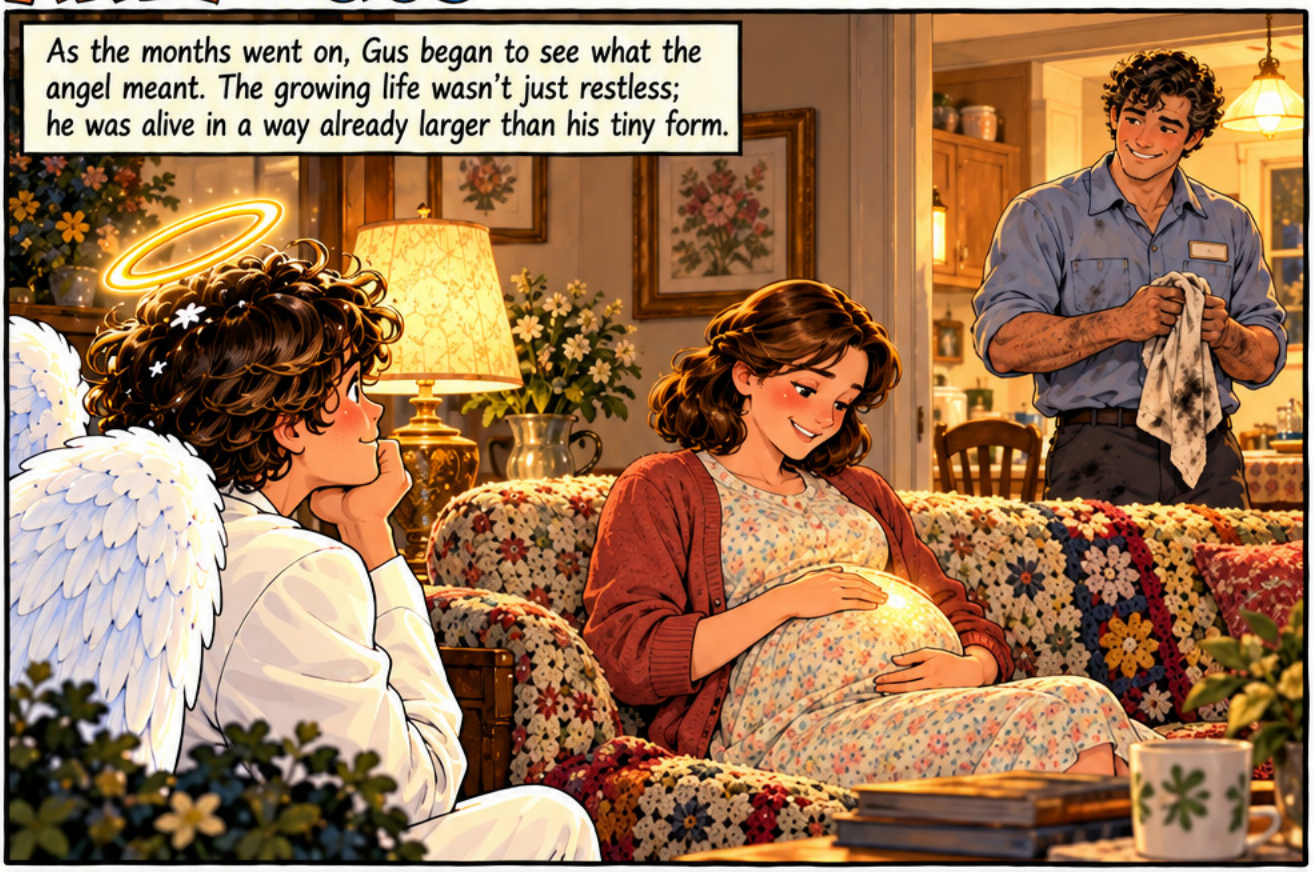

From then on, it was clear: this little one wasn't content to simply grow quietly. The little life twisted, turned, kicked, and rolled as though determined to try out life long before birth.


One evening, as Lilly sat reading on the couch and Homer tinkered in the yard, Gus hovered nearby, baffled by the commotion inside the womb.


Finally, he turned to another angel perched on the porch rail, there to assist the new Guardian.

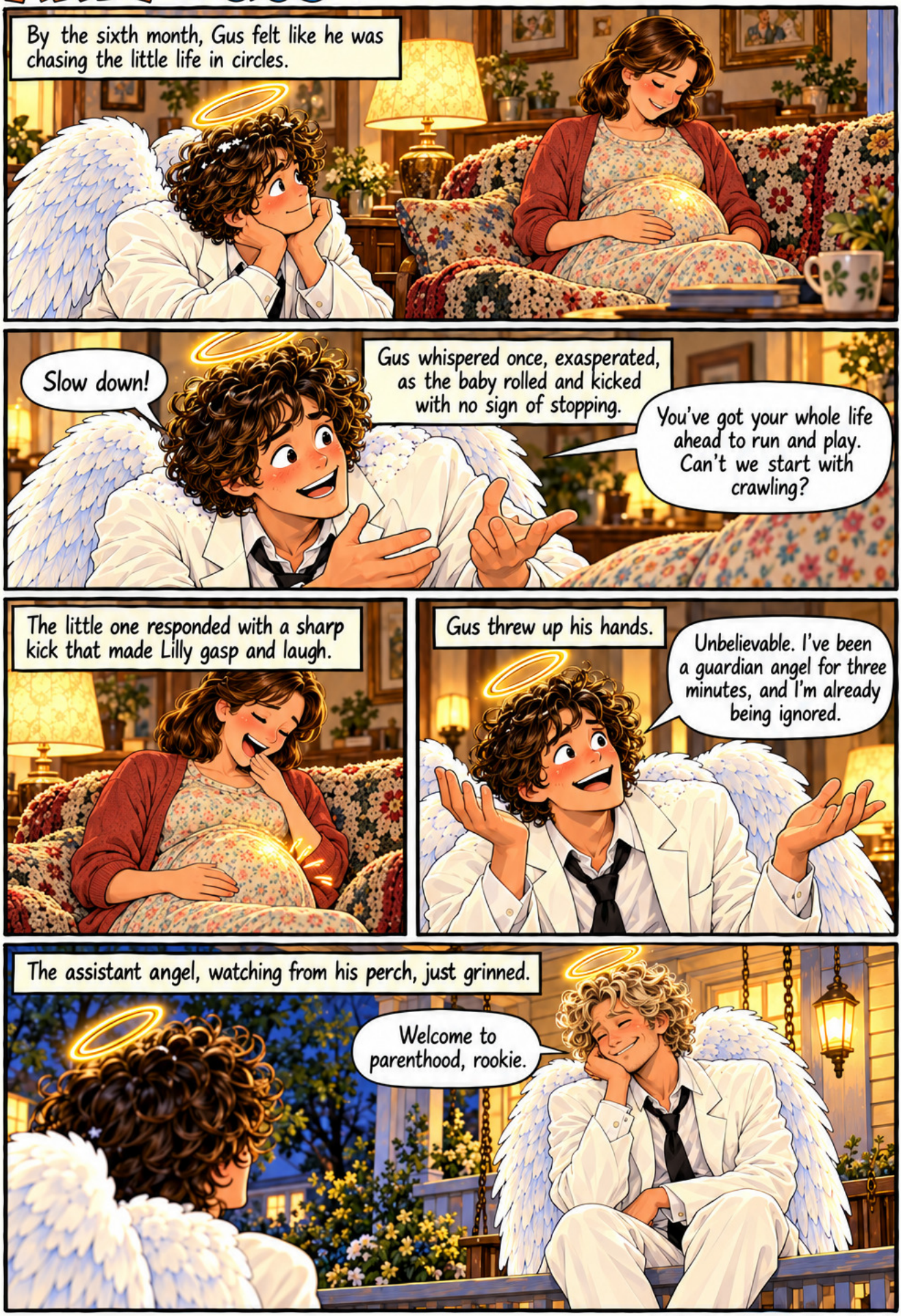

Are they all this active before they're even born?
Gus blinked.
He's bullheaded—already dreaming of trees he hasn't climbed yet.

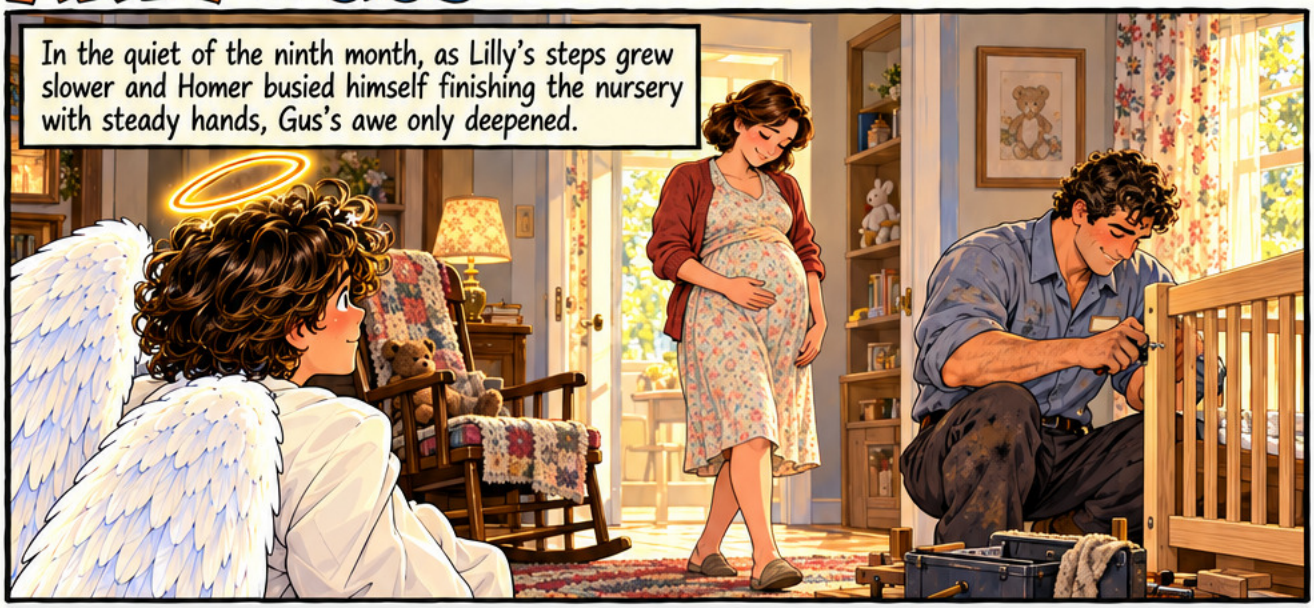

The older angel chuckled, wings shaking with laughter.
Some souls are still waters, Gus. Yours? He's a river in spring flood.
Gus sighed, though a smile tugged at his lips.
He's going to be trouble, isn't he?
Not trouble,
the angel corrected.
Adventure. Big difference.


As the months went on, Gus began to see what the angel meant. The growing life wasn't just restless; he was alive in a way already larger than his tiny form.

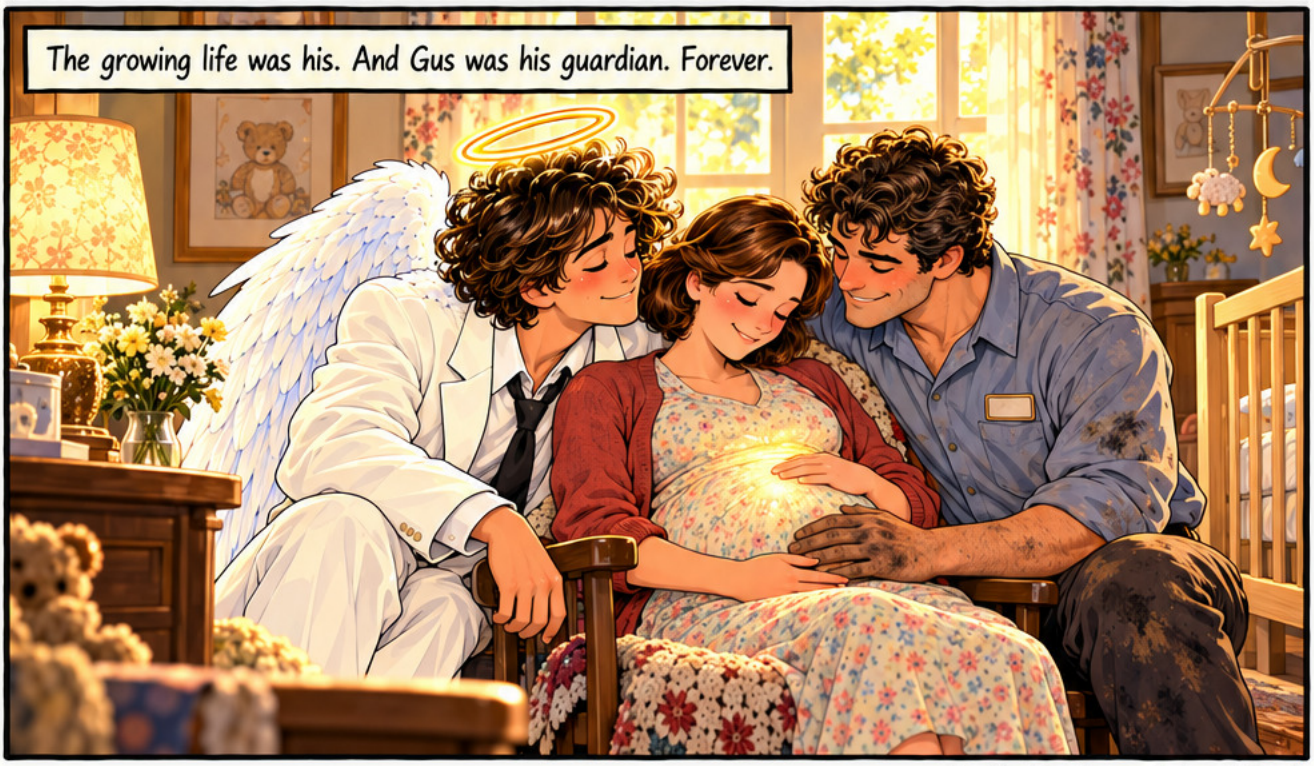

Lilly often rubbed her belly, laughing.
This one's going to keep me on my toes,
she told Homer.

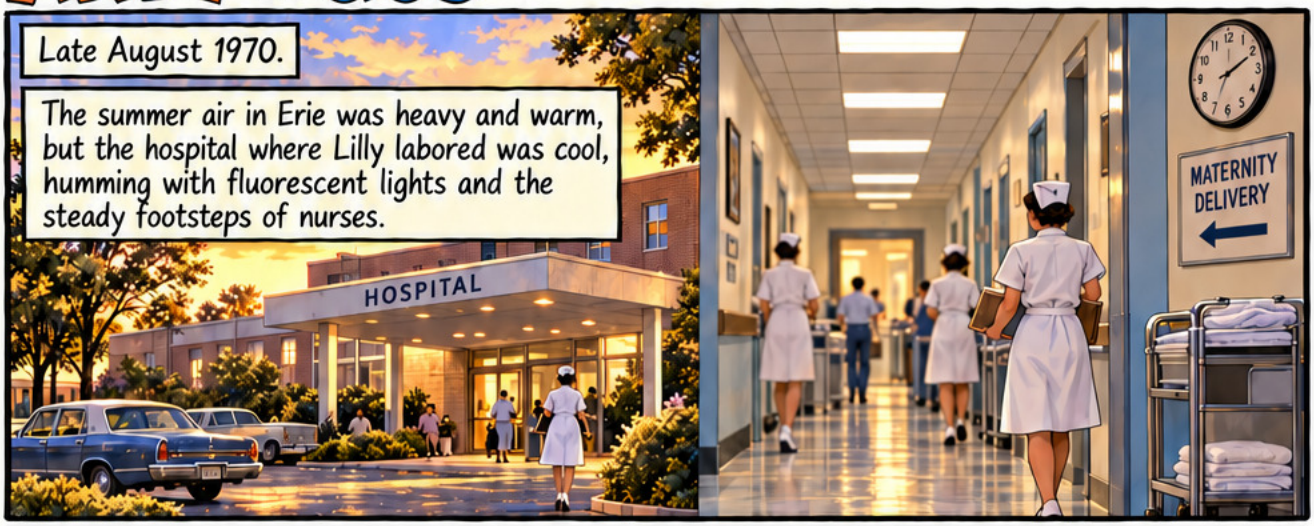

And Homer, wiping his hands on a rag, would grin.
He'll fit right in. I'll put him to work as soon as he's walking.


By the sixth month, Gus felt like he was chasing the little life in circles.
Slow down!
Gus whispered once, exasperated, as the baby rolled and kicked with no sign of stopping.
You've got your whole life ahead to run and play. Can't we start with crawling?
The little one responded with a sharp kick that made Lilly gasp and laugh.
Gus threw up his hands.
Unbelievable. I've been a guardian angel for three minutes, and I'm already being ignored.
The assistant angel, watching from his perch, just grinned.
Welcome to parenthood, rookie.


In the quiet of the ninth month, as Lilly's steps grew slower and Homer busied himself finishing the nursery with steady hands, Gus's awe only deepened.


For all the little ones' constant action, there was something luminous, something fierce, something destined.
And though Gus still had too many questions, he knew one thing for certain: he wouldn't trade this soul, this fiery, restless little boy, for anything.


The growing life was his. And Gus was his guardian. Forever.


Late August 1970.
The summer air in Erie was heavy and warm, but the hospital where Lilly labored was cool, humming with fluorescent lights and the steady footsteps of nurses.
HOSPITAL
MATERNITY DELIVERY


Homer paced the hallway outside, grease-stained hands wringing a cap he'd forgotten to take off. The man who could fix any engine in town was helpless here, his face pale as he listened to muffled sounds from behind the delivery room doors.
DELIVERY ROOM

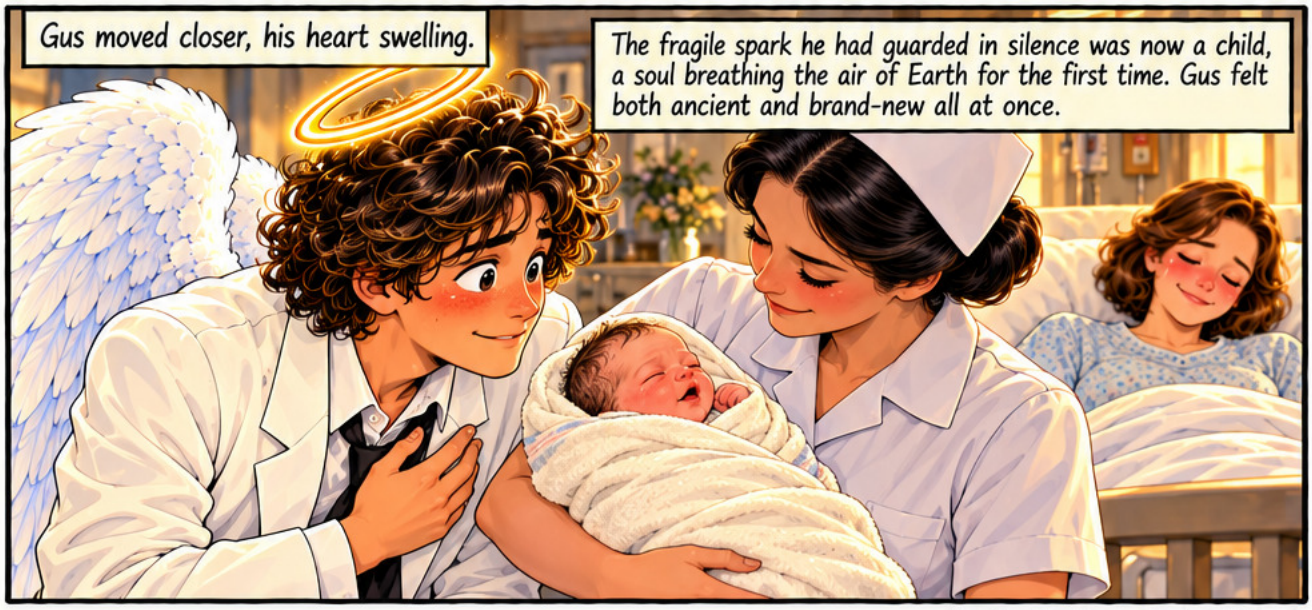

Gus hovered above it all, wings trembling. He had stood guard through nine months of restless kicks and endless questions, but nothing had prepared him for this.


The air itself seemed to crackle with anticipation. Heaven was leaning close, watching.
DELIVERY ROOM

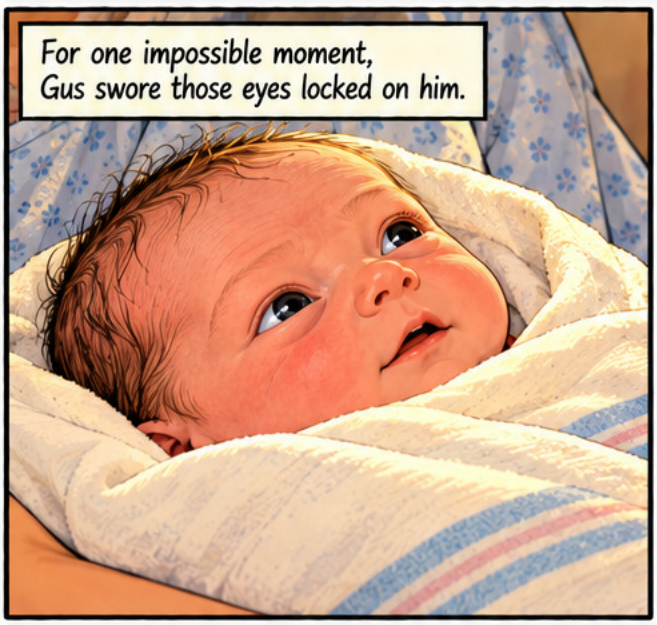

And then the cry.
It split the air, sharp and strong, louder than Gus thought possible from lungs so small.
DELIVERY ROOM

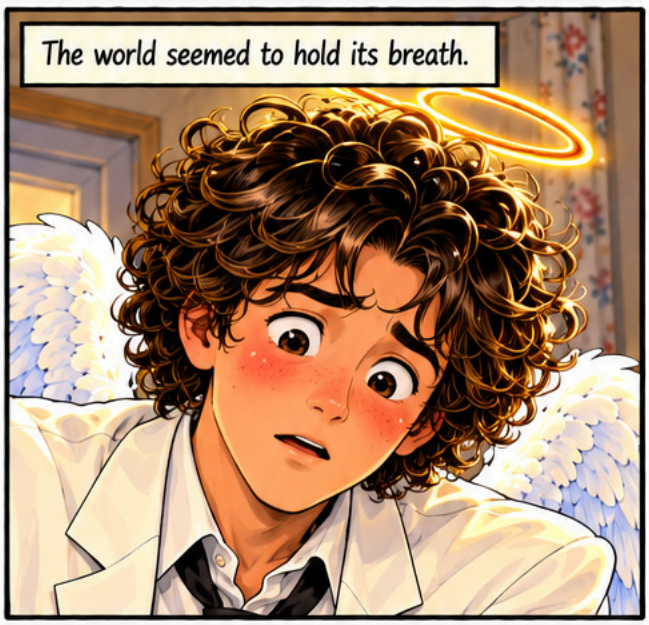

Nurses hurried. Lilly wept. Homer nearly collapsed with relief.


And there he was: tiny, wrinkled, red-faced yet burning with life. A baby.


Gus moved closer, his heart swelling.
The fragile spark he had guarded in silence was now a child, a soul breathing the air of Earth for the first time. Gus felt both ancient and brand-new all at once.


As the nurse laid the newborn in Lilly's arms, she whispered,
Andy
the baby blinked up, eyes unfocused, but bright.


For one impossible moment, Gus swore those eyes locked on him.


The world seemed to hold its breath.


And then- A wink. A tiny smirk.

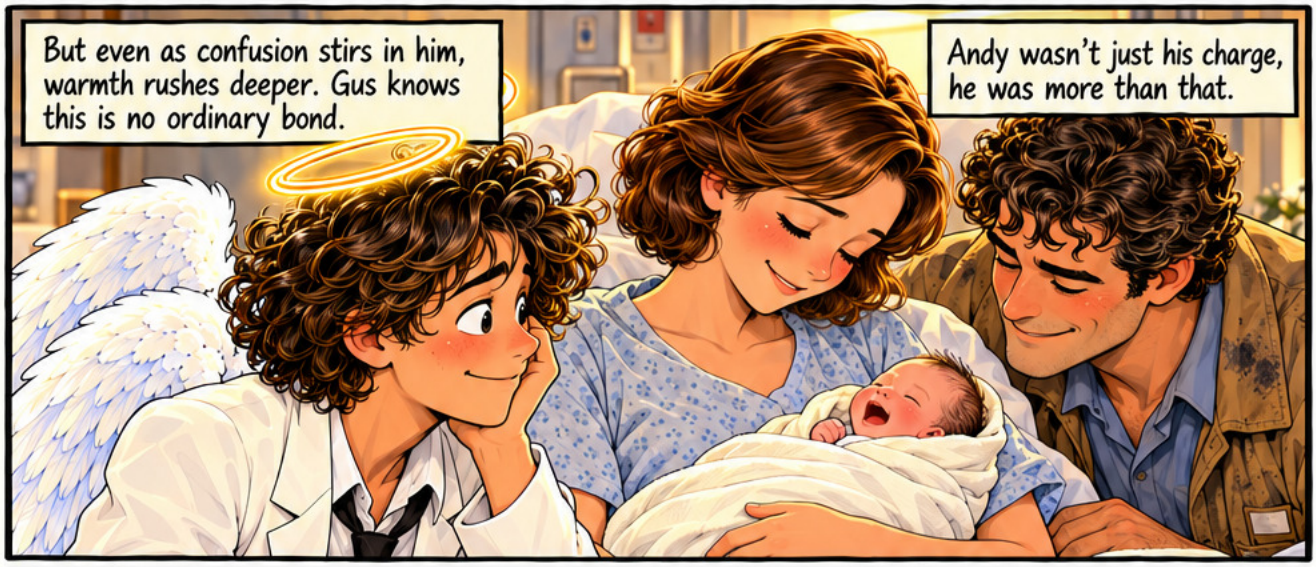

Gus jerked back, stunned.
Wait, what? Did he just...?
finger wagging at Andy in disbelief


He looks around wildly, but the assistant angel says nothing, only smiling with the calm patience of one who'd seen this before.

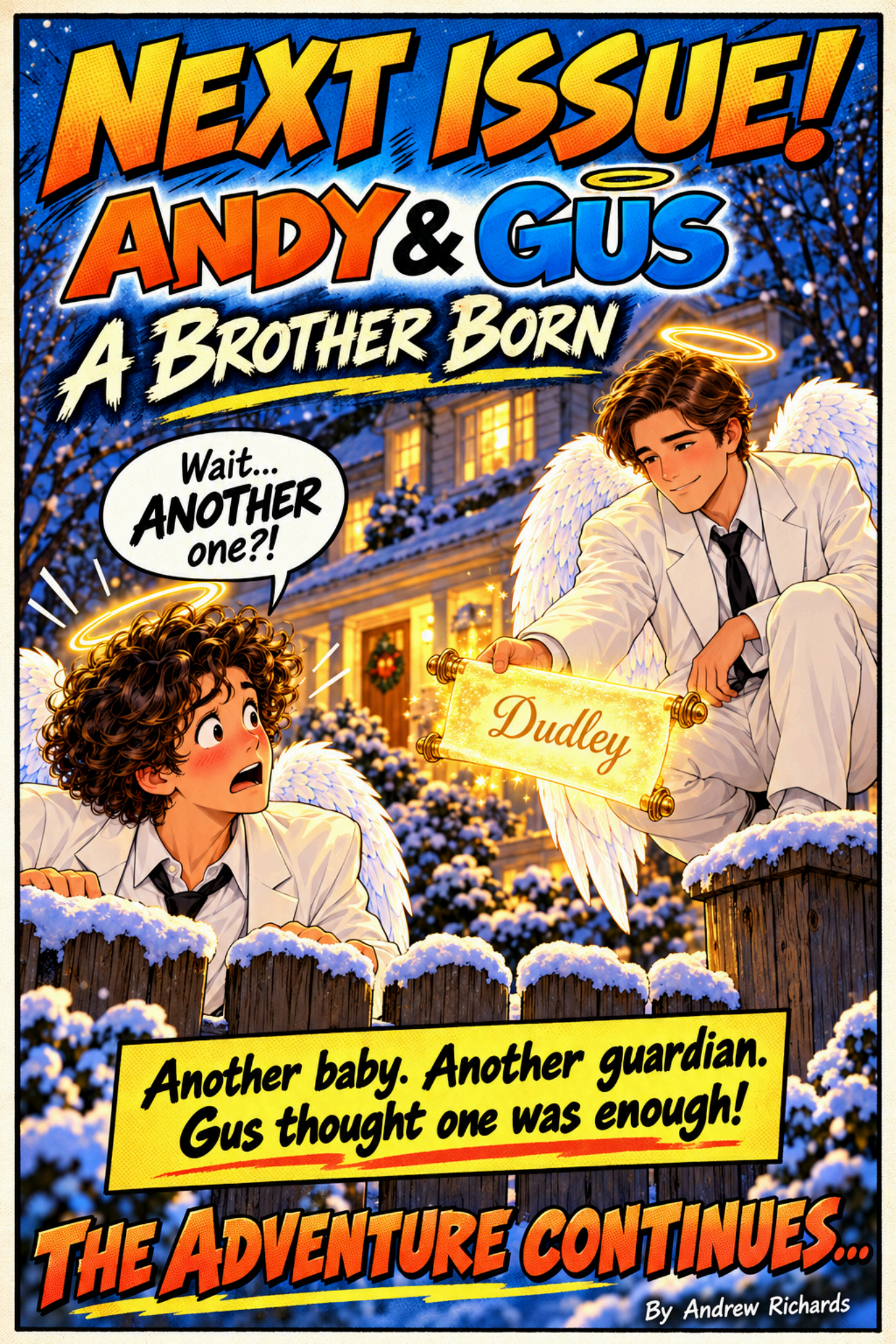

The assistant chuckles softly,
Oh...Gus, looks like he already knows more than he lets on.
Alright, good luck I am out of here.


and with a quiet flash the assistant is gone.


Gus dragged a hand across his face, still staring at the infant grinning through newborn cries.
Oh my goodness. What have I gotten myself into?


But even as confusion stirs in him, warmth rushes deeper. Gus knows this is no ordinary bond.
Andy wasn't just his charge, he was more than that.


And Gus, wide-eyed and still learning, would be swept along for every turn.
The journey has only just begun.


NEXT ISSUE!
ANDY & GUS
A BROTHER BORN
Wait... ANOTHER one?!
Dudley
Another baby. Another guardian. Gus thought one was enough!
THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES...
By Andrew Richards

GUS'S AMAZING BACK-PAGE BARGAINS!

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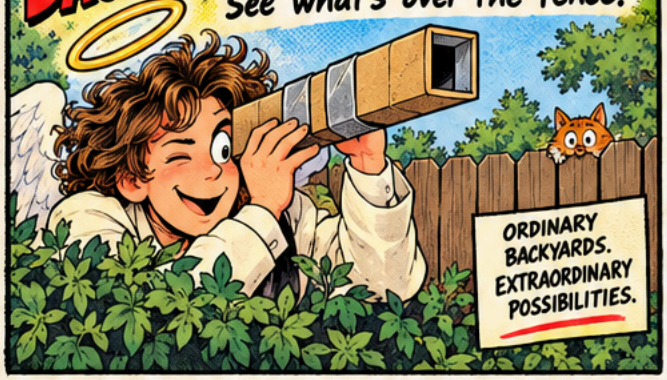
LEARN TO LAND!

Lesson one: aim for snow.



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