

Angel Sanctuary, A Continuation...

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Angel Sanctuary, a series about the end of the world by Yuki Kaori, has entered the Setsuna final chapter. It is appropriately titled "Heaven" in the recent issue of Hana to Yume. However, what makes Angel Sanctuary unique from other end-of-the-world genre stories is that it does not have a clear-cut distinction between good and evil. It also displays a variety of worldviews with a distinct and unique cast of characters that, for fans of Yuki Kaori, are quintessential Yuki Kaori characters. With the beginning of the new chapter, many questions and motives from the earlier chapters are answered, but many more new ones arise as readers take the plunge and speculate on the series and its end.

In the "Hades" chapter, Setsuna goes to the Underworld to bring back Sara's soul, much like the way Orpheus went into Hades to seek the soul of his love, Eurydice. Although things seem to end much like that ancient tale at the end of the chapter, the readers are not left without hope for a resolution. While back in Heaven, Rociel returns and thereby begins the political struggle between himself and the regime of Sevothtarte and Metatron that replaced Rociel while he was sealed beneath the earth. However the focus of the story shifts from the main characters to two side characters, Katou and Tiara. Katou was a dropout at Setsuna's school who was killed by Setsuna when he was possessed by Rociel. He is sent to kill Setsuna in order for him to go to Heaven. Tiara is a child who possesses the power to read others' minds and was for that reason imprisoned with the dead, where she had eaten another angel in order to survive. Because of that act she was branded as "fallen" and was taken to Katan for his food. The underlying themes between the two characters are that of acceptance and their search for love. The story of Katou is one of a troubled childhood where he was struggling to be loved and be accepted into his family, a fight which he eventually gave up because it was easier for him to do so. The one of Tiara is about asking God if He loved her and the others who had fallen from grace. She dies asking the same question. When Rociel asks Katan whether or not to make her one of their own, Katan replies that it would be too cruel to bring her back, and Rociel agrees that she would be happier with her body contributing to the cycle of life and death.

In the "Jahanna" chapter, things start to fall apart everywhere with the introduction of AS2the new characters, Michael, Raphael, Madhatter, and the awakening of Sara in the body of Jibrille, and Setsuna finding himself in the body of Alexiel. Madhatter breaks the balance between Setsuna and the others, and especially with Kurai and

Kira. Kira sees the shadow of Alexiel instead of Setsuna when Setsuna returns from Hades and occupies Alexiel's physical body and the tension escalates between them. Kurai starts to realize her love for Setsuna and the presence of Madhatter deepens the gap between them. Then she sacrifices herself in order to bring Setsuna's body back to life and agrees to become the bride of Demon Lord Lucifer. When finding this, Setsuna decides to go down to the deepest layer of Hell in order to retrieve her. In Heaven, Sara awakens as Jibrille, and there meets Raphael and Michael, so the story continues on the two fronts. In this chapter, the character of Kurai takes center stage as she struggles to deal with her love for Setsuna. And during the chapter she matures as she experiences betrayal, rejection, and deaths of those she loves the most and vows to herself that she will be stronger so that she can protect those she loves most.

Another aspect of love explored, not only this chapter, but throughout the series, Setsuna & Sempai is that of loyalty and servitude. This theme has been explored in previous chapters with the relationship between Katan and Rociel, but new relationships have been presented. There are two prominent relationships in these two chapters, one being of Raziel and Zaphikel. The relationship between Raziel and Zaphikel is that of a young boy who wants to repay the person who had saved his life and to also try to be of help in any way possible. The relationship between Madhatter and Lucifer is that of deep unreciprocated love from the former to the latter. In the end of the chapter, Madhatter tells Kurai that if she could have sacrificed herself to save Lucifer by merging with him, it would have been the most joyous and ecstatic experience for her.

Also underlying these two chapters is the question of God's motive and what He is trying to accomplish. We cannot help but think why these innocents such as Tiara must suffer when she is crying out for Him. Also what is really God's plan for humanity? Sevothtarte says that the Earth must be soaked with the blood of its children to amend the mistake. Alexiel says that she must kill God in order for Rociel and her to be freed from the "hunger". Rociel says to Alexiel that God is making the same mistake by creating Metatron and Sandalfone, the next children of rage that are to replace them. So who is God and what is He trying to do? And the question that was asked throughout the series comes up to mind, "God, were we created only to kill each other?"

The chapters explore the nature of the identity and motives of angels, humans, demons and that of God alike. As we read on, we realize that there is really no distinction at all among them, perhaps except for God; all the characters are motivated by the love and emotion that they themselves feel for their loved ones and

for each other. The rationale behind their actions can be traced to the best interests of their loved ones or perhaps for what they felt was a necessary step in the right direction. There is no line that can be drawn between good and evil, no clear-cut ideal that all can aspire to or despair of, and the reader can only empathize with all of the characters as they struggle, change, and make decisions that affect the lives of others and their own. And with the end of the series coming soon, we as readers can only hope that when Setsuna is made to choose between happiness for himself or for his loved one, he says 'all of us are happy.' Perhaps this may happen, perhaps not, but in the final epilogue, they are hopefully at least at peace with themselves and their choices.