

TALES BEYOND HEAVEN AND HELL:

THE CURE

The transition was brutal for the woman—or rather, for the angel she was becoming, one among the countless thousands who served the kingdom of Heaven.

Such a transformation did not come uninvited; it happened only because she had chosen it. What she could not have known was that this choice marked merely the beginning of a long succession of trials, each more demanding than the last.

The training stretched on endlessly. Learning to wield her new abilities was arduous enough, but mastering her wings—living with their weight, their power, their constant reminder of what she no longer was—proved far more difficult. Yet, the greatest challenge lay elsewhere.

She had to learn to understand humans again, creatures defined by absolute freedom, capable of love and cruelty in equal measure. Once, she had known that freedom intimately. Now, it existed only as a distant echo. Her memories of humanity had been erased—with her consent—leaving behind an absence she could feel, but never name.

Her purpose was clear: she was to protect the beings who inhabited the vastness of Earth, a world balanced precariously between kindness and corruption. It was a planet stalked daily by demons. Hunters, drawn not only to life, joy, and happiness, but to angels themselves—to beings like her.

"It sounds like you're nervous, Serah. I don't see any reason for that. Chronos hasn't even called you yet," said an angel, talking about the machine that dictated the destinations and the missions to be followed on Earth.

"Do we have to stay in front of Chronos all the time?" Serah asked.

"Of course not, you can do whatever you want; you will know when he calls you."

Serah felt momentarily steadier as she stepped away from the great machine, but the relief was short-lived. A sudden, searing pain tore through her back, sharp enough to steal her breath. Beneath the thin fabric of her blouse, large wing-shaped markings ignited, glowing with an unnatural brilliance as though something beneath her skin had awakened.

This was the sign the other angel had warned her about—the call that meant she was to go to Chronos. Yet, as she turned back toward the immense structure, uncertainty tightened its grip around her. Angels arrived continuously now, appearing and departing in seamless succession. To them, it seemed effortless—a matter of seconds before they were sent on their missions, faces calm, movements assured.

Serah lingered at the edge, suddenly aware of how alone she felt. She scanned the vast space for something—anything—that might allow her to signal her request: a button, a mark, a place to stand. Nothing responded. The machine remained silent, indifferent to her presence.

Then, unexpectedly, another angel appeared at her side and spoke.

"Close your eyes and you'll get your mission. Only you will know the place and what to do."

Serah closed her eyes before the vast machine, surrendering herself to its presence, and just as the angel had promised, it answered her. Heat bloomed deep within her body, fierce and consuming, and in that instant, everything unfolded inside her mind. The revelation was absolute. Her mission was clear: she was to descend to Earth and observe her human for twenty-four hours. Only then would her purpose be fulfilled.

With no further hesitation, she turned toward the great portal—the threshold through which angels passed into the mortal world—and stepped forward.

The descent was smooth, almost gentle, and when she landed, it was flawless. Years of training guided her movements without conscious thought. Serah knew nothing of the human she had been assigned to protect, only a name, Alana, and a location. She had not been told what danger awaited the girl, nor what form salvation would take.

The place itself was deceptively serene. Towering trees framed a vast lake whose waters gleamed clear and untouched, a thin veil of morning mist drifting across its surface in the cold air. It was beautiful in the way untouched things often were—quiet, fragile, and unaware of what might come to disturb them.

Across the clearing stood a solitary house. On its porch sat a young woman.

Serah's attention fixed on her at once. Alana was strikingly beautiful, yet sorrow clung to her features like a shadow that refused to lift. Her stillness carried a weight that spoke of loneliness rather than peace.

Serah had been told she would know when the moment to intervene arrived—an added sense that would sharpen unexpected, unmistakable, and urgent. Until then, she was to watch. And so the hours passed.

Remaining unseen, the angel lingered nearby, observing. At first, nothing seemed improper. No sudden threats, no obvious danger, but patterns began to emerge. The girl lived entirely alone. There was no telephone, no computer, no trace of connection to the outside world. Nothing that would allow her to call for help—or be found.

A troubling thought took hold.

Perhaps Alana was not simply alone.

Perhaps she was hiding.

"What are you hiding?" She spoke to herself, as she could not be heard. "How can I help you?" It was then that Serah saw Alana on her knees on the floor.

There was nothing she could do. Not yet. To intervene now would mean revealing herself, and that was forbidden. The rule was absolute. So the angel watched, bound by silence, her unease tightening with every passing second.

Then Alana spat blood onto the floor.

The sight struck Serah like a blade. Horror bloomed where certainty had been, and at last the truth took shape. This was not an attack, not an accident, not a demon lurking in the shadows. This was an illness. A slow, merciless enemy she had never been trained to fight.

Doubt etched itself across Serah's face. Throughout her long training, she had learned how to battle demons, how to bend her power to save lives from violence and catastrophe. She knew how to shield, how to strike, how to destroy, but she had never been taught how to heal. Never how to cure a body from within.

She stood frozen, realization sinking like lead into her chest. To her, the mission already felt lost. She could not save Alana, not in the way that mattered, and still, she was required to remain. Twenty-four hours at the girl's side. Twenty-four hours of

watching life drain away, breath by breath, while she remained powerless to intervene.

Alana rose unsteadily, fetched a cloth, and wiped the blood from the floor with quiet resignation. There was no panic in her movements, only familiarity, as though these were not the first time. She retreated to the bedroom, and Serah followed, unseen and aching.

The girl knelt beside the bed. Folding her trembling hands together, she bowed her head and began to pray.

"Lord, I know I have very little time left. Don't let me die without your presence. Bring him back. Don't let this cancer take me away without Tobias by my side." Alana's prayer was clear; she wanted to die next to a person, but Serah didn't know who he was.

From the fragments she had witnessed, the angel reached a quiet conclusion: finding this man might be the true purpose of her mission.

After the prayer, Alana lay upon her bed, exhaustion claiming her swiftly. Sleep took her with unsettling ease, as though her body had learned to surrender without protest. Serah lingered a moment longer, watching the slow rise and fall of the girl's chest, then turned away.

She began to move through the house, careful, methodical, searching for anything that might lead her to Tobias. Drawers, shelves, forgotten corners—each offered nothing but silence. At last, she found a single photograph. A man's face stared back at her, frozen in time.

Serah's expression tightened. "With this alone, I won't be able to find him," she murmured to herself. The realization weighed heavily. "I never imagined my first

mission would be this complicated—to search for someone I don't even know, in a world I barely understand."

There was nothing more to learn within those walls. She stepped outside, the night air cool against her skin, and considered her options. Searching on foot felt futile. The world was too vast, the time too short.

The decision settled within her.

Her wings unfurled, feathers catching the breeze, and the sensation was different here—earthbound air, heavy with life and scent, brushing against something not meant to belong to it. For a fleeting moment, she savoured it, then she rose.

Serah climbed swiftly into the sky, the land falling away beneath her as she began to scan the region below. Rivers, roads, scattered lights—each passed beneath her gaze as she searched for any sign of the man from the photograph, knowing that somewhere below, time was already slipping through Alana's weakening grasp.

"If he's here, I'll find him. I need to do this before it's too late."

The angel spent more than two hours searching but decided to go back and check on Alana. When she approached the house, she saw a car parked in front of the gate. As soon as she landed, Serah retracted her wings and ran into the house. Serah saw the man in the photo sitting on the edge of the bed, tears streaming from his eyes, holding Alana's hand tightly while she slept.

"I'm here, my love. I'm by your side, and I'm not leaving at all." Serah was an angel, trained to control all her feelings, so at that moment, she showed no emotion. "I shouldn't have left you here. I should have stayed by your side."

"I'm glad you're here." With a fragile voice, Alana managed to answer Tobias, and with a small smile on her face, she pulled the young man in to hug her.

"Why did God allow this to happen to you?" Tobias seemed unable to accept Alana's illness.

Serah watched everything unfold, her gaze sharp, her mind turning over every detail. She studied their movements, their words, the fragile rhythm between them. Yet now, with Tobias present, the mission felt more obscure than ever. Nothing aligned the way it should have. Protection, salvation—none of it was clear any more.

Her thoughts shattered when Alana suddenly doubled over and spat blood onto the bedroom floor.

"We need to go to the hospital, love," Tobias said urgently, pushing himself up from the bed, panic breaking through his restraint.

He barely managed to rise before Alana caught his arms, her grip weak but desperate.

"Stay with me," she whispered.

The words were soft, almost weightless, yet they carried the gravity of a plea spoken by someone who knew time was slipping away. Tobias froze, torn between reason and love, while Serah felt something twist painfully within her—an ache no training had prepared her for. This was not a battle to be fought, nor a threat to be destroyed.

This was a moment where saving someone might mean breaking the very laws she had sworn to obey.

"My God, I need help. Send one of your angels to help us, please. She can't die, I can't be without her." At that moment, Alana went back to sleep.

Could this be Serah's sign? The angel that Tobias asked God for was right in front of him, but she couldn't show herself, she could be punished. However, if the man

asked God for an angel, and if she was there, there was no reason for her to be punished, at least that was what she thought.

"Even if I show myself to them, what can I do?" the angel wondered. "I could take her to a hospital. With my wings, we would get there faster, but she desires to stay with him. If she died far from him, I would be ruining their relationship, even his desire to be with her. On the other hand, if I do nothing, I will fail." In an act of desperation, Serah decided to appear to Tobias and somehow try to help them.

The moment Tobias saw her, his expression shifted completely—shock draining the colour from his face, recognition flickering where fear should have been.

"You are really here," he breathed.

Serah stiffened, caught off guard by the certainty in his voice.

"But how can you be—"

"We need to help her," Serah cut in sharply, leaving no room for questions or disbelief. Time pressed in on her like a closing vice. She moved closer to Alana, her gaze unyielding. "There's no time left to lose."

"No, you can't be here. You are supposed to be dead. This cannot be happening. You came to take her, but she is not to blame for anything. I am to blame for everything. Get out of here, Serah. She cannot go. You can't take her away from me."

Desperate, Tobias pushed Serah violently. She did not react as she was completely disturbed by the young man's words.

Serah ran outside and spread her wings, deciding to move away from home. She went into the woods and stood there for a few minutes without saying anything; just thinking about everything she had heard. The man knew her, but she didn't remember his face, let alone the reason he seemed to fear her.

"You broke a rule, Serah. You must immediately return to heaven." The silence was interrupted by the voice of an angel, who was accompanied by many others.

"No, I can't go back. That man knew me. How could a man on Earth know me, especially on my first mission? I can't go back until I find out what's going on."

"Are you disobeying an order, angel?"

"Yes, this mission was given to me for some purpose, and I need to find out what that purpose is, especially when I'm involved in it. How could I go back to heaven and be at peace, knowing that someone here on Earth knows who I am? He said I was dead. Why don't I remember any of this?"

"Come back with us, Serah, or we will have to inform Reik that you are refusing to comply with the order. You will be hunted down and killed." The angel was serious.

"Tell Reik to take my life," she said, her voice steady despite the cost of the words. "But only after I know the truth. I will not run. I will stay here and await the trial."

The decision rippled outward. Almost instantly, the angels withdrew, slipping through a portal that sealed behind them without ceremony. The space emptied, as if the breath itself had been taken from it. Serah remained behind and turned back toward the house, her thoughts heavy and unresolved.

Then pain detonated inside her head, sharp and overwhelming. She dropped to her knees as the world fractured around her. Images burst forth, not mere visions, but something far more consuming. The space reshaped itself into a vast, living hologram, light and memory folding over one another until past and present became indistinguishable.

And then she saw her.

Alana stood at the centre of it all, whole, radiant, and alive—beautiful and healthy, her happiness unmistakable. Her eyes shone with recognition and relief as Tobias appeared before her, arriving from somewhere unseen. In that suspended moment, everything Serah thought she understood wavered, and the truth—whatever it was—began to take form at last.

"I missed you so much," the young man said, hugging Alana.

"I thought you wouldn't come to see me any more. Why did it take so long?" the girl asked.

"I was talking to her. I finished everything, but she didn't accept it. The problem is that I can't take it any more. We are no longer happy."

"Sometimes I feel like what we're doing feels so wrong," Alana said.

"No, what was wrong was my relationship. It started wrong. I never loved her, not the way I love you."

"And how did she accept all this?" the girl asked.

"It doesn't matter any more. What matters is that now it will be just the two of us."

"She was coming after me, lost control of the car and—"

"Tobias, what happened to her?" Alana asked, seeing the young man's despair.

"She's dead. Serah is dead, Alana."

The expression on Serah's face was confused—a mixture of anger and conflict. Having her memories come back in one fell swoop left her paralysed, thoughtful, and no matter how hard she tried to get all the ideas into her head, it was impossible to describe such outrage. Serah was an angel who didn't remember her past until that moment, and now she would have to live for eternity with those memories.

"Tobias was my boyfriend. Alana was my best friend." The memories came flooding back at the speed of a bullet passing through the angel's head.

Serah's wings flared wide, feathers snapping taut as something inside her finally broke. With all the strength she had, the angel drove her fist into the ground. The impact thundered through the earth, a brutal crack that sent birds exploding from the trees in panicked flight.

Hatred surged through her—hot, uncontrollable, unmistakably human. It flooded her veins with a force she had never expected to feel again, a forbidden emotion clawing its way back into a being meant to stand above such things. And at that moment, Serah understood with terrifying clarity that something within her had changed forever.

"Why did they want my help? Why was I put on this mission?" Serah was devastated and confused. "Reik!" the angel cried. "If I'm going to die, come and do it. This mission is over!"

Her wings retracted and Serah fell. Tears rolled down her face and she remained on the ground for a few more hours as if she were a statue in the middle of that forest.

Tobias tried to do something to revive Alana, who was no longer moving. Her heart rate was incredibly low. She was leaving, and Tobias was desperate.

"Lord, why don't you listen to me? Help her, I beg you." Between words, tears continued to fall on the young man's face.

Distracted, Tobias looked at the door, and the image of Serah resurfaced in his mind. Then, as if by a miracle, he saw her again—not as the enemy who had come to threaten his beloved's life, but as the angel destined to save her.

"I can't believe I did that," Tobias whispered, his voice breaking under the weight of realization. "It was her, Serah—the angel I prayed for. She came to help me... and I turned her away."

He rose, gripping his beloved's hand as though it were the only thing anchoring him to the world. "Hold on just a little longer, my love," he murmured, desperation threading every word.

He ran outside, scanning the darkness in every direction, searching for wings, for light, for any sign she had been there at all. The night offered nothing—no trace of her presence, no echo of the miracle he had refused.

Still, he kept looking. Somewhere deep within him, a fragile spark of hope refused to die, insisting that if angels truly answered prayers, then perhaps this one had not gone far.

"Serah!" the young man shouted. "Forgive me, please."

His cry echoed far and wide. When the wind blew, the sound of Tobias' voice spread through the forest like a great bang until he reached where he needed to be.

Serah, who remained in the same position, opened her eyes and spread her wings when she heard Tobias' voice. This time, it was not her human side that was touched, but the angel she had become.

"Tobias!" Serah flew with her long white wings until she found the young man waiting for her in front of the house.

As soon as she landed, the two stared at each other for a few seconds that, to Serah, seemed like eternity. Anger was dying within the angel's body, and the desire to do good prevailed.

"Come on, we need to help her." Serah closed her wings and ran to Alana's room but saw that the girl was weaker than before. "I can't cure her illness, Tobias, but I can try to restore her heartbeat. You need to take Alana to a nearby hospital after that."

"If you're really an angel, you can heal her. God performs miracles in people's lives and he sent you to perform this miracle. You need to save her, Serah."

"But I'm not God," Serah shouted. "I'm just an angel who doesn't even know what my real mission is here."

"You can heal Alana. I know you can," Tobias continued, insisting.

Serah's tattoo began to glow. She tried to apply one of the healing techniques she learned in her training.

"*Rekiah!*" said the angel in a deep voice.

Alana's body moved. The angel's ability was manifesting, and soon her heartbeat returned to normal.

"This healing will keep her alive a little longer," the angel said quietly, her voice stripped of comfort. "But it cannot destroy the tumour. The disease was not born of the body alone. It was shaped by something Alana carries within her—guilt, buried and festering. Until she releases it, my power will reach its limit. I cannot save her from what she refuses to let go."

Tobias studied her, something raw and searching in his eyes. "You still don't understand, do you?" he asked. "Why did you come back to help her?" His voice tightened. "After everything, after what we did, don't you feel angry with us?"

Serah hesitated. “Yes,” she admitted at last. “I do, but I couldn’t allow that anger to consume me. I made a choice, Tobias, and that choice was to help—to protect life, even when it hurts.”

He nodded slowly, as if that answer confirmed something he had already feared. “Then you’re closer now,” he said. “You understand more than before.”

Her brow furrowed. “Understand what?”

Tobias drew in a breath, heavy and deliberate. “Do you understand where the tumour came from?”

Serah did not answer. Confusion clouded her expression, a fragile pause stretching between them. Seeing it, Tobias continued, the truth pressing hard against his chest, no longer willing to remain silent.

“Alana has never forgiven herself for what she did to you,” Tobias said quietly, the words heavy with years of regret. “No matter how many times I tried to tell her it was my fault for letting that false love continue, she carried it alone. She could never find peace, knowing how much suffering our choices caused to our families... especially yours.”

“Tobias,” the angel said gently. “It doesn’t matter any more.”

“Of course it does,” he replied, his voice tightening. “Can’t you see it now? The cure... is you.”

Understanding struck Serah with sudden clarity. Everything fell into place. Her mission had never been to fight, to heal with power, or to defy death itself. She had been sent to heal Alana, but not through skill or medicine. The wound was older, deeper. Forgiveness was the only cure.

Weak but resolute, Alana reached for the angel's hand. "Serah... forgive me," she whispered, her voice barely more than breath.

Bound once more to human emotion—to love, regret, and mercy—Serah looked down at her old friend.

"I forgive you," she said softly.

Alana smiled, a genuine peace settling over her features, and slipped back into sleep.

"And I forgive you too, Tobias," Serah added, turning her gaze to him. "I'm sorry for being so blind... for never seeing the truth."

The angel rose and walked toward the door. Tobias followed, afraid to break the fragile calm that had filled the room.

"Her heartbeat has returned to normal," Serah said as they moved through the house. "In a few hours, she will wake. The tumour is gone. I believe the miracle you asked God for has been fulfilled."

"Serah!" Tobias caught the angel's attention. "Thank you for being our miracle."

Serah smiled and rose into the air, her wings carrying her towards the forest. A strange sensation settled within her—not unsettling, but warm, as though something long fractured had finally aligned. She knew, unquestionably, that her mission was complete.

Yet, completion did not mean freedom. A promise still waited to be honoured.

She returned to the place where she had first stood among the angels and remained there, alone, ready to face what came next.

"Welcome back."

Reik's voice cut gently through the stillness, startling her.

“Reik,” Serah said, lowering her gaze. “I am ready to receive my punishment. I broke the greatest rule of all. I revealed myself to humans.”

Instead of judgment, Reik studied her quietly. “How do you feel, Serah?”

“Happy,” she answered after a pause. “And relieved.”

“Is that happiness because you completed your mission?”

She shook her head, a soft smile touching her lips. “No. I’m happy because I’ve lifted a weight I didn’t even know I was carrying. I feel lighter... whole.”

Reik nodded, as if the answer confirmed something he had long known.

“When you died,” he said, “there was anger lodged deep within you—the same anger you felt the moment Tobias pushed you away. Even after you chose to become an angel, even after you relinquished your human memories, that wound remained. It could not be erased by Heaven. Only you could cleanse it.”

Serah listened, unmoving.

“Like all angels who carry unresolved pain, your first mission was never about saving another,” Reik continued. “It was about healing yourself. But the truth had to be discovered, not given.” He met her gaze. “When you heard Tobias call for help, compassion overcame resentment. That choice—that impulse—is Heaven’s truest desire.”

He paused, then added softly, “It has a simple name. One known well by good-hearted humans. It is called love.”

“But I disobeyed,” Serah said. “The angels warned me there would be consequences.”

“You did disobey,” Reik agreed. “But there will be no punishment. This, too, was part of the design.” He lifted his hand. “The others have been instructed to forget.

Alana and Tobias will remember you only as the kind soul you once were. The guilt that poisoned her heart is gone. You healed her.”

Serah inhaled slowly. “And now... what becomes of me?”

Reik stepped closer and placed a single finger against her forehead. “That depends on your choice. Do you wish to keep the memory of what happened here... or erase it forever?”

Serah did not hesitate. “I wish to erase it. They deserve their future, and I have mine—to help others who need me.”

“So be it,” Reik said calmly. “Thy shall be done.”

He pressed lightly, and the world shifted. The weight of memory dissolved, leaving only peace behind.

“Congratulations,” Reik continued, his voice echoing with quiet authority. “You have completed your mission. Welcome to my core circle of angels.”

“Thank you,” Serah replied, though she no longer remembered why the words mattered.

“Continue to follow Chronos’ will,” Reik said. “And be ready. In a few Earth years, I will call upon you again for a mission of great importance.”

“May I ask what it will be?” she asked.

“Not yet,” he answered. “Only this: it will involve the protection of a girl... and the future of humanity itself.”