

Arcana Magi - c.4: Reflection

by H-M Brown

"Wake up Suzaku." Reya said. "We have to get ready for work."

Alysia opened her eyes laying flat on her bed. She sat herself up, and saw teardrops fall onto her hand. She brought them closer and watched the tears roll down her fingers. She understood they were tears, but did not know why she shed them, or how she moved her hand without an order. All she knew was that the tears were there.

"Come on, we have to get to the showers." Reya took Alysia's hands and helped her roommate to her feet.

Outside, Reya and Alysia carried their towels and their own bucket full of toiletries to the shower room. Along the way, Reya greeted on-site neighbors with glee and a hand wave. She made the hallway feel cheery and relaxed in an atmosphere intensified by stress. As the girls reached the entrance to the shower room, a woman with short black hair approached them while putting on her white lab coat.

"Good morning Reya."

"Good morning Suzie. How is the project coming along?"

"It's coming along fine. In fact we're ready to test my invention."

"That's great to hear." Reya's cattail wagged from the news.

"I was wondering if I can borrow Suzaku for the test run."

"Well..." Reya turned to Alysia. "...I'll have to ask Madam Oryn. I can't just send Suzaku away."

"Oh..." Suzie looked at Alysia staring into nothing. "...I forgot. She has amnesia right?"

"Yes." Reya stroked her grey hair with a smile and created a suspicious look in Suzie's eyes. Without saying a word, Reya watched Suzie step back and walked away.

"I'll ask Madam Oryn if she can let Suzaku test your invention."

“O...okay. Thanks.” Suzie hurried into the elevators and never looked back again as Reya led Alysia into the shower room.

“Go stand in the mirror, Suzaku.” Reya finished wrapping her towel around her body. She took a brush from her bucket and opened the curtain. She took a wooden chair nearby the shower stall and slid it behind Alysia. Reya placed her hands on the teen's shoulders and sat her down. With each stroke, Alysia's head moved back forcing Reya to brush slowly. Everyday has been the same for Reya; bathe, clothe, and feed Alysia until she learned how to do these things with few orders. Everyday, Reya gets nothing but silence. It became a struggle for Reya. Everyday, she has to give Alysia an order for every little thing that she could do herself. She did not have this mind when asked to look after the Sentinel two weeks ago.

“Why do you have such long hair, Suzaku?” Reya's frustration grew and anger settled in. She tightened her grip on the brush and the thought crossed her mind to bash the Sentinel on the head with it. She felt a vibration in her mind. Her hands trembled, preventing her from committing the act. She looked at herself and Alysia in the mirror and memories of her therapy flashed in her mind. She dropped the brush and understood that Alysia has suffered as she did. Reya stretched her arms over Alysia's shoulders and came close to clasping her hands together, covering the teen's heart. She wanted to rest her head on Alysia's back and give her a hug for comfort. However, the vibration in her head overtook her thoughts; she shook her head, and stood upright. With a smile and a stroke of her grey hair, she no longer thought about therapy again and focused on what's important now.

“We have to get to work Suzaku. Come on.” Reya smiled while gathering their stuff so they could return to their room.

After a stop at the cafeteria, where they picked up apples, bananas, and orange juice as arranged for them to eat, the girls sat behind their desks ready to start the day. Reya turned on her

desktop computer and answered the phone while Alysia just stared at her.

“Madam Oryn will be available at three o'clock, will that be fine sir?” Reya typed on her keyboard with her right hand, while at the same time writing down the appointment memo with her left hand, and the phone rested on her shoulder.

Alysia watched Reya's actions and recorded it into her memories. Reya's movement commanded Alysia to do the same thing. She watched Reya hang up the phone and left her desk to make copies. It was quiet for a few minutes until Reya's phone rang. Alysia stood to her feet, approached Reya's desk, and sat in the seat. She picked up the phone and answered.

“Good morning, Madam Oryn's office.' Her soft voice pleased the person on the phone. 'I am sorry. She's not in the office at this moment. May I take a message?”

Alysia took a pen with her left hand and wrote the message as Reya arrived and watched.

“I will make sure she receives your message. Have a nice day.” Alysia hanged up the phone and went back to her own desk.

Reya stood before her desk and read the message. She turned to Alysia and stood before her. She could not believe that Alysia spoke. Reya found her voice to be sweet and innocent, and did not know how to react. She was upset that Alysia answered the phone. She wondered if there was more to Alysia then the Sentinel let on. For now, she took a deep breath with her hands to her hips.

“Thank you, but next time, if I'm not at my desk, you come get me. Understand?” Reya looked down and Alysia nodded.

“Madam Oryn made it clear that only I can take care of administrative work. It's the only way she can keep track of who's having access to her files. If she caught you doing this, she'll send you to therapy. Do you want to end up in therapy?”

Alysia answered with neither a comment nor movement and Reya sighed.

“We'll talk to Madam Oryn about getting security to provide you some clerical work they need done, so you can do something instead of sitting there.”

Oryn arrived from the elevators and approached the doors to her office. Reya and Alysia stood to their feet as a way to greet their boss.

“Good morning, ladies.”

“Good morning, Madam Oryn.”

“Any messages, Reya?”

“Yes.”

Oryn took the notes from Reya and flipped through each one until she noticed the last message written in a different handwriting.

“What's this?” Oryn's voice frightened Reya enough to rattle her cat ears. After reading the message, her eyes grew wide with a forgiving smile. She looked down at Reya as the teen's lips trembled from fear, answering the question.

“Suzaku answered the phone while I went to make copies.' Reya's hands shivered as Oryn turned to Alysia and watched her sit down. ‘I'm sorry, really I am. I don't know how she did it.’”

Oryn took a pad and pen from Reya's desk and placed them before Alysia.

“Write this message again.” Oryn watched Alysia write on the pad and took it. The handwritings were the same.

“Madam...”

“Next time, Suzaku...' Oryn said ignoring her assistant. ‘...when Reya is not at her desk, you get her when the phone rings or there is some activity happening. Do not sit in her desk ever again.’” Oryn watched Alysia nod accepting the orders. Oryn looked back at Reya with the corner of her eye and her assistant cowed, wanting to hide.

“I ran into Suzie at the Tech Lab. She said she made a request to you to bring Suzaku to test her invention. Take her there while I attend my meeting this afternoon. I'll be there afterwards. And make sure she is in her mage suit for the test.”

“Yes, Madam Oryn.” Reya watched her boss enter the office and she turned to her monitor, wiping her tears.

Alysia and Reya arrived at Level B2. When they walked through the doors, all the technicians inside were busy with other experiments. Alysia and Reya stood before Suzie with a male elf mechanic.

"You're right, Suzie, she has wings." The male elf said as he stood behind Alysia to examine her wings more closely.

"I told you, Karl." Suzie said and noticed Reya. "Sorry. I forgot you can't see mana."

"It's okay. I would love to see her wings someday." Reya placed her hands on Alysia's back unaware that she made the wings burst into mist. She watched Suzie and Karl become awestruck when the mist turned to wings again.

"Amazing." Suzie said under her breath and noticed everyone waited.

"Let's begin. My invention is right over here."

Reya took Alysia by the hand and followed Suzie and Karl to a table with a white blanket over it. The girls stood before the table and the young elf removed the blanket revealing two rectangular boards made of metal and wood. It was flat in the middle with sandpaper glued on it. It curved upward at the ends.

"Presenting... the manaboard." Karl said.

"Go ahead Suzaku. Check it out." Suzie said as she turned to Alysia and noticed the teen stood still. She took Alysia's hand and placed it on the board. "It's okay, you can take it. It's yours."

Alysia just stood there. She heard Suzie's command. It was an invalid order due to the inventor's status and position in the company. Alysia stared at the board when she saw Reya leaned closer to her.

"Take it Suzaku." Reya commanded and the young girl clutched the board lifting it off the table. "Suzie is going to teach you how to use the manaboard okay?"

Alysia's mind allowed her body to act on the commands from Suzie regarding the manaboard. She stood before the inventor and followed her to an open area.

“Set the manaboard on the floor and stand on top of it.”

Alysia obeyed and placed the manaboard on the floor, and stood on it straight. The board lifted into the air suddenly, and Alysia fell off it since she had no balance. She saw Suzie stand over her with a smile and helped the teen up. Alysia watched Karl bring the board back and set it before her.

“You need to stand on it like this Suzaku.” Suzie stood sideways with legs apart, knees slightly bent, and her arms up along the side. She gave a hand signal to Karl and he stood on the manaboard as Suzie described.

Alysia watched as her memories recorded his actions. The board levitated Karl into the air and he leaned his chest forward making the board move. A glowing mist covered the board and created a small vapor trail as the board moved forward.

“As you can see, the board is powered by the mana produced by Karl. With his body, he can move the board just like you would with a skateboard. The only difference is that you can actually go up in the air. In fact we were able to get mana output at eighty-eight percent.”

“Mana output?” Reya looked up to Suzie as her ears twitched.

“Mana is a form of energy Reya. As with some other form of energy, like electricity, mana has two types, stored and kinetic energy. The difference is that mana powers magical items, like the manaboard.” Suzie took a second manaboard from the table showing Reya its wooden surface as Karl stepped off the board and picked it up.

“You see Reya, Karl said. ‘mana's source of energy is within everything around us. From the living to the inanimate object. For us magi, we can channel mana from nature. Unfortunately, we cannot channel mana from each other or from creatures with living brain. This is due to our will and instinct to resist each other from channeling each others mana.”

“I see.” Reya nodded trying to comprehend the concept of mana.

“Back in ancient history, there was no technology like computers, so mana in forged weapons or wands were natural. Their output would be at one hundred percent. But now that technology

advanced, if you take copper out of a mountain and use it in say this computer here, all of its mana is gone due to impurity. With the manaboard we used natural wood and metal, but because we had to use glue and manufactured sandpaper to keep the feet from sliding while riding and gave the metal parts a chemical bath, its output went down by twenty-two percent. Understand?"

"I think so.' Reya turned to Alysia. 'Here Suzaku. Take it." Reya commanded as Karl rubbed the back of his head watching Alysia take the board from Reya as told.

"Poor kid, she must be traumatized from her accident."

"Karl... ' Suzie said leaning close to his pointed ear. '...it's best we don't talk about it here." Suzie and Karl stood quiet as they watched Alysia do exactly what they taught her on Reya's command. Their eyes grew wide as they saw the teen elevate the board high in the air and a flash of light covered their faces for a moment, then vanished. They approached the test area slowly as Alysia flew over their heads, and they held each other's hand, tightening their grip.

Oryn entered the room and noticed everyone looking up into the air. Those without magic, tried to figure out what their fellow co-workers were looking at as they watched Alysia fly. Oryn lifted her head up and her mouth gaped open, her eyes twitched as the reflection of a bright light glared across her eyes.

"Amazing."

Alysia's small wings straightened outward from her light blue shrug jacket. The wings were stationary with a beautiful brightness. They looked perfect picture. A streak of teal lights at the tip of her wings moved like lines drawing across a piece of paper. Waves of heat followed the back of her body as if the flame itself powered inside her like an engine. Alysia circled the entire room creating one long circular trail of light, heat, and mana.

"Pretty." Suzie said as her eyes welled with tears.

Despite the cold expression of Alysia's face, her teal eyes shed tears. She developed a sense of life within her, as if deep down inside, her true self emerged. The lies she accepted fought to keep the real Alysia from retaking the mind. For just one second, for one

moment unconsciously, the real Alysia appeared. Her lips stretched out as she saw what she made in the room that made everyone see her smile. The colors and effects she created was a wonderful thing that etched into her memory. She experienced something in her heart she could not describe, nor understand. She did not want it to end; she did not want to forget this sensation in her heart.

Until...

A pulse of sound burst out from her body like an echo. A pounding in her head struck her like a hammer and she fell down to the mat below. Her wings retracted as everyone hurried over. Alysia held her head as Suzie lifted her up. She never felt this sensation before. It was so sudden. She did not expect it to happen. She wanted this to stop, but did not know how. When she looked up, her vision blurred, but she remembered that it would go away as soon as she forgot what she experienced when she flew. She gathered the wonderful memories and blanked it out of mind. She forcefully forgot them all, the sensation in her head went away, and her vision returned.

"Suzaku. Stand up." Oryn said.

Alysia heard the order and she stood to her feet with lifeless eyes. She turned to Oryn as Reya approached them.

"The both of you return to your quarters."

"Yes Madam Oryn." Reya took Alysia by the hand and they left.

As they rode the elevator back to their room, Alysia's real memories fought back. But, the more her thoughts created images of her parents and friends, the more she refused to accept it as truth. The pulse in her head that she could not describe to herself, had left her face flushed, and dripping with cold sweat. She wanted it stop; she pushed her hands onto her skull, trying hard to push away this sensation, but her eyes blurred and Reya appeared before her distorted and twisted.

The girls arrived at Level B1 and Alysia stumbled out of the elevator. Her head pounded again, and she had no control over it. The thoughts of pushing away her memories made her heart beat so

rapidly, that she could not take the sensations anymore. She leaned along the wall as she walked forward past a couple of human adults. They turned to help her, but Reya clutched the teen's arms and held her up. Alysia pushed Reya off and entered the shower room. She bumped into a chair and threw it aside with a roar that scared Reya. Alysia faced the mirror she sat in front of earlier this morning.

Her reflection twisted and bent out of shape. Alysia refused to listen to the reflection. It insisted they were the same.

"What have you done to me?" Alysia said to the reflection with her mind. "Where are my real memories? Where are my family and friends?"

"We are one and the same." The reflection said. "Please, don't listen to their lies, and trust our heart."

Alysia punched the mirror breaking it into pieces. The shards pierced her glove and lodged into her right hand. Blood seeped out of the fabric and dripped down to the ground. With each deep breath, the reflections in each fragment faded away, her mind emptied of all senses ending the distortion in her vision and the pounding in her mind, and her tears fell down her cheeks.

To Be Continued...

