

Arcana Magi - c.5: Will

by H-M Brown

Oryn sat on a chair before a glass window on the table, with a phone attached to the side of the wall. She watched a prison guard escort a female prisoner, in an orange jumpsuit on the other side. Oryn read the date on the calendar marked Saturday. Her situation became complicated from Alysia's actions yesterday. Oryn and her colleagues could not figure out during therapy, how she did everything with her own will erased. They all knew they had to get answers from outside. Oryn saw a brown haired woman led by a male guard. She was once a friend but now she stood in disgust of the executive's presence. With a hand gesture, Oryn directed her to sit down, and she picked up the phone waiting for the prisoner to do as told. Oryn watched the woman sat herself down and answered the phone.

“You...”

“Be careful, Sydney.’ Oryn lifted her fingers up to quiet the prisoner. ‘If you want your daughter to recognize you when you get out, I'd advise you co-operate and answer my questions.”

Sydney remained silent. Knowing what Oryn was capable of doing, she calmed down and nodded.

“Good.’ Oryn leaned back on her chair and took a deep breath. ‘Now tell me about willpower.”

“Willpower?”

“Yes.”

Sydney's eyes wandered off for a moment, soon her eyes opened wide, and she looked up to Oryn.

“Relax, your daughter is fine... for now. I have another experiment that I'm running into problems with.”

“I see.’ Sydney took a deep breath in relief. ‘You just can't let it go. Who is it this time?’

“A girl.”

“What's her name?” Sydney said with irritation to Oryn's runaround.

“She's the Sentinel of Suzaku.”

“You found one?” Sydney lunged forward, almost breaking through the glass as Oryn nodded.

“We erased her will, but it's like the erasure is reversing itself.” Oryn leaned her head down, feeling she reached the end of her limits with her experiment.

“You're such a fool Oryn.”

Oryn lifted her head, gritting her teeth. She did not like Sydney calling her a fool and lost her patience. She waited for her answer. Oryn took out a touch pad phone and typed on it. She turned the screen toward the prisoner and a window on it had the choice of send or cancel.

“Give me my answer or I will erase your daughter.” Oryn stared Sydney down with the threat. She watched the prisoner tightened her grip on the phone, and then relaxed.

“Will is a force of nature Oryn. It's like muscle memory. Like when we just walk up without needing to think aloud to command ourselves to walk. Almost anything can trigger will. Desire, emotions, hunger... a need to protect. These kinds of things drive willpower. You can't turn it off like a light switch.”

“Thank you I have the answers I need.” Oryn placed moved the phone to hang up, but stopped when Sydney raised her hand. The woman looked at her, wanting nothing more from her. With their eyes locked in place, Oryn placed the phone back onto her ear.

“You may think you have control over her will, but understand that the only way to remove will from a person, is either through a vegetative state, brain dead, coma, or death. This pretty much renders everything you thought about will useless doesn't it?”

With a smirk from Sydney, Oryn closed her eyes, and wished she had not stayed to hear that.

“Oryn.” Sydney tapped on the window. ‘Oryn.’ The prisoner got the executive's attention.

“How old is the Sentinel?”

“Thirteen.”

Sydney rested her head on her left hand and shook it side to side.

“Is she okay?”

“No.” Oryn lifted her head up and saw channeled mana around her former friend. The executive stood up out of her chair and looked down at Sydney.

“Nice try, but I won't fall for your Interrogation Spell.” Oryn turned to leave but looked back with the corner of her eyes. “By the way, I have a present for you. Happy birthday, Sydney.” Oryn hung up the phone before Sydney could respond and walked away.

Oryn approached a prison clerk's desk looking at a photo of Sydney hugging a little brown haired girl, who held a grey cat in her tiny arms, facing the camera together with smiles. Oryn sighed and placed the photo in an envelope addressed to Sydney. A last minute addition to another picture she placed in there. Oryn sealed it, handed to the clerk, and left the building.

Outside, in the prison parking lot, Alysia and Reya waited in front of the limo door. Alysia wore business attire while Reya wore a brown haired wig with her tail tucked, along with her blouse, under her skirt. They saw Oryn exiting the prison checkpoint and stood at attention. Alysia surveyed the area as Reya opened the door for Oryn and watched the woman sit inside. Alysia, then Reya, entered the limo and sat across from Oryn as the limo moved. The Sentinel rested her left hand over her bandaged right hand. She stared at Oryn leaning on the side of the door looking out the window.

Oryn tilted her head along the window. She tried to lower it so she can look outside, but it did not work. This was not right. She took the limo phone to talk to the driver, but it severed. Oryn crossed over to Alysia and Reya's side and knocked on the window but the driver never looked back. A burst of speed from the limo made Oryn and the girls to fall across to the other seats, dropping their touch pad phones. Oryn lifted herself up as the limo turned a corner and came to a halt in the middle of an empty field surrounded by trees and bushes.

Outside the limo, Oryn saw two businessmen, one with a hat and the other without a hat, standing in front of the back of a white van waiting. Oryn watched the limo driver exited the car as the two men walked toward the vehicle and reached for the doors. Before Oryn could give any orders, the doors opened, and the men pulled her out with Reya. The driver and the hatless man subdued Oryn and tied her hands up to prevent her from casting spells. The hatman pinned Reya down, making her wig fall off exposing her cat ears and grey hair.

“The girl's a Myth.”

“So it is true.’ The hatless man said then faced to Oryn. ‘Our boss said you were experimenting on new soldiers. Once we take her in for our tech boys to analyze, we'll be number one on the market.”

Alysia looked out the window and saw Oryn and Reya were in danger. She heard Oryn's programmed orders to protect her echo in her mind. She complied. She stepped out of the car and everyone saw her.

“You idiot.’ The hatless man said to the limo driver. ‘How could you forget that kid?”

“Sorry.” The limo driver approached Alysia as she looked up at the tall man.

The hat man lifted Reya to her feet and slammed her body on the trunk of the limo, when he noticed the wings on Alysia's back.

“Look out! She's a magi!”

The limo driver stopped as Alysia stretched out her left arm exposing her bracelet. He tilted his head from confusion as she raised her fist over her head.

“GRAB HER STUPID!” Both men said to the driver.

“Awaken... Saga.” Alysia said with a monotone voice.

The bracelet burst into droplets of light, pushing the teal jewel into the air, and gathered around it. As her fist uncurled with a gentle reach, four triangles stretched out from the jewel and connected the tips with a circular band. The red staff stretched outward over her hand, and when Alysia's hand gently wrapped around it, a pair of white metallic wings stretched out from the neck

base of Saga. She pulled Saga down across her body and spun it over her head like a baton until the headpiece pointed to the ground and the body of the staff rested on her back with her right fist leaning on her hip.

“What?” The limo driver had no clue to what he just saw.

Alysia rammed Saga into his stomach, knocking him back. She spun her body around swinging the staff at his legs and swept him off his feet; the blade of the wings severed the driver's legs at the knees as he fell on his back screaming. She turned to the hatless man as he pulled out a gun and aimed it at the teen. Alysia spun Saga with both hands as he fired shots.

“Pyro Shielder.” Alysia's lifeless voice chanted as a shield of flames made each bullet burst on impact, protecting her from injury. Leaning herself down with one-step back, she spun Saga with her right hand pulling it back alongside her body.

“Razor Flame.” Alysia flicked the staff like a bowling ball and it took the shape of a flaming circular saw rolling along the ground, ripping the earth. Saga rolled past Oryn, the intense heat warmed her body but never lit her aflame, and the hatless man stumbled back as his arms disintegrated from the fire. Alysia expanded her right hand directing the staff into the air and back to her. Once she grabbed it, blood seeped out of her right hand reopening the wounds. A tingling sensation struck her head, but it did not faze her. Alysia looked at Oryn as the woman sat on her knees, and the teen's heart pulsed normally. Alysia turned around as the hat man pulled Reya up with a wand to her neck and she just stood there. At this point, she did not know what to do regarding Reya. Her orders were to protect Oryn and she fulfilled that programming.

“Good. Stay there or I'll kill her.” The hat man pressed the tip of the wand at Reya's neck, making her whimper.

Alysia stared into Reya's eyes as her memories of Reya flashed in her mind. Her heart pulsed with each second as she watched the hat man pull the cat girl toward the van. She can see it in Reya's lips, a cry for help. Alysia did not understand why her heart beats this way, why for Reya and not for Oryn. Her memories showed that Reya had

stood by her side and said they were friends. Alysia did not know what it meant to be a friend. Knowing that Reya had been there for her made her heart pulse the way it did. Alysia followed them, without orders from Oryn, as the hat man led Reya to the van. Alysia watched the hat man go inside, pushed Reya to the ground, and closed the door. As Reya scurried on the ground like a cat past the Sentinel to help untie Oryn, Alysia stood still as the van's engine started.

“Stop him Suzaku.” Oryn ordered.

Alysia lifted Saga over her head and a mist surrounded the staff.

“Ring of Fire.” Alysia jabbed Saga into the ground and flames snaked sideways and outward towered the van. The flames rose up into the air creating a wall and encircled the vehicle, bursting its wheels. The heat cracked the windows and turned the van into an oven. Alysia stood before the wall of flames unaffected by the heat, as the hat man stumbled out of the back of the van, screaming from burning his hands while opening the doors to escape. The fire disappeared before Alysia and she saw the hat man on his knees crawling backwards as she pointed Saga at him.

“No... please don't.” The hat man's back bumped into the van and used it to stand up ignoring the pain from heat of the metal due to fear.

“Kill him Suzaku.” Oryn ordered.

Alysia's right hand shivered. She did not expect an order to kill. Somehow, she knew this was wrong, but Oryn's words were absolute. Alysia and the hat man stared at each other for a moment. Alysia cried and refused to obey. She saw pity in the hat man's eyes as he soon realized what happened to her. With each short breath, a throbbing sensation affected her head as she tried to resist the order.

“Do not defy me Suzaku.” Oryn's voice rattled Alysia; she could not refuse the order any longer. A ball of red and blue fire enveloped the headpiece, and the feathers of her wings stretched outward as the hat man screamed while running away past the van.

“Ashes to Dust.”

Like a cannon, the ball of red and blue fire burst out from Saga melting the van into liquid that triggered an explosion, enveloping Alysia. The fireball itself caught up with the hat man, its searing heat turned his body and clothes first into flaky ash, and then, when the fire itself struck the ashy body, it burst into dust that floated away with the wind. The ball kept going leaving a trail of char and flames until it burned out in the distance. Surrounded in a magical shield, Oryn and Reya stared out at the burning van and saw a shadow silhouette of Alysia's body in the flames.

As the fire calmed down, Alysia's clothes burned off from her body and she stood there unaffected by the heat. Her bloodied right hand tightened the grip of Saga, the wound dried and sealed from the heat, and her left hand curled in a fist, twitching as though she wanted to strike Oryn in the face with it. Her long white and teal hair floated outward in the air. Waves of heat extended beyond her small wings, that flapped like a pair of ribbons in the wind, and made her wings appear larger. She stood there with ladylike maturity; her eyes were frightening with an unforgiving look, visible in her tears that pierced the very core of Oryn's heart. The sentinel sensed something deep in her heart. She could hear a girl screaming aloud from within, the same girl in her reflections.

"Suzaku." Oryn said under her breath, looking at the child like a goddess from the heavens. With the fire and heat gone, Alysia collapsed onto the ground from exhaustion. Oryn walked toward the teen as Reya's ears twitched at the sound of rustling bushes in the nearby trees, and she turned in that direction.

"Madam Oryn..."

"Reya, call for a helicopter and a cleanup crew. We have to get everything out of here before Mystic Intelligence arrives."

"But..."

"Now!" Oryn looked back with the corner of her eyes that quieted Reya, and the teen obeyed her command. Oryn's arrogant confidence became fear and uncertainty. Something she never felt before as she looked down at Alysia resting with an innocent face.

Reya took her touch pad phone from the limo and looked back at the unmoving bushes by the trees. She concentrated her ears to listen but all she heard were the pain filled screams of the limo driver and the hatless man. Reya sighed, figuring that it may have been the injured men making the noise and she focused on calling Avalon Tech for help. It turned into a long day to clean everything up. Night fell and they left nothing in the area. The only thing left, was unfinished business with their would-be captors.

Oryn, Marcel, Jonas, Anna, and Lyn stood at their stations in the Therapy Room all night, analyzing the limo driver, looking for answers to everything that happened yesterday. Past midnight, starting Sunday, they finished giving therapy to Alysia and Reya an hour earlier. Oryn had no problem with Reya as she applied the standard conditioning to the cat girl with a few new adjustments. For Alysia, on the other hand, Oryn learned that Jonas did not teach the Sentinel the spells she cast as described. The executive became concerned about what Sydney said during her visit and she decided not to rewrite Alysia's mind, for now. Oryn's thoughts on Alysia drifted away from her current situation, images of the teen in the flames rattled her nerves. She felt a hand touch her shoulder, snapping out of her train of thought. She turned around and startled Jonas.

"Are you okay Oryn?"

"Yes. Yes I am." The executive's eyes trailed away from her colleague as she listened to what he had to say.

"This man works for Quillian, a military contractor."

"Quillian? Do they know something about the Sentinels?" Oryn lifted her head up to Jonas. She turned to the window overlooking the room and approached the control panel. She remembered the hatless man mentioned that Avalon Tech experimented on new soldiers.

"From what I read in his mind, Quillian received an insider tip at Wall Street about our project. Apparently, it was only a rumor. So they decided to try and find out if it was true by kidnapping the girls."

"Hmm..." Oryn crossed her arms and thought things through. She to report to Vyndor about this incident and she does not like the direction they headed. She found herself on the defensive end of this situation and her best solution was a risk to everyone. 'Prep this loser and his friend. We're cutting them loose."

"What?" Jonas said.

"Oryn,' Lyn said. 'we should dispose of them."

"True but then we'll be reacting to their every move. I want to stay one step ahead of Quillian until we get all the Sentinels." Oryn looked back at Lyn with a smile. 'Don't worry. I'm taking the lead on this one. Just get those two ready for therapy."

Oryn left the control room and walked past empty medical beds with folded sheets and blankets. She stood before a blue curtain and shifted a little opening to let herself inside. On the bed laid the hatless man, with his stubby arms covered with gauze. An elf nurse monitored his heartbeat and she took his temperature. Oryn waited for the nurse to finish and when she left, the executive approached the hatless man, each step invoking more fear into his eyes.

"What are you going to do to me?"

"Shh..." Oryn placed her hands on the hatless man's hair to calm him and pulled out a glowing notepad she owned. 'It's okay. You will serve me well."

At Level B1, in the shower room, Reya lurched over the toilet coughing. As the sound of the flushing toilet echoed the empty room, Reya came out of the stall dressed in a green and yellow mage suit similar in design to Alysia's outfit. Her stomach felt twisted in a knot. She leaned on the sink and turned on the faucet. With the water running, she took short breaths, and wiped the sweat off her forehead. She looked up to the mirror, saw the green hairclips attached to her grey hair, and felt uneasy wearing the mage suit Oryn had made for her. She lifted her arms up stretching the suit, flexing her yellow-gloved hands, and feeling her yellow shrug jacket. She wondered what Oryn tried to do. She realized that Oryn did not have her mind altered or erased in this session. Instead, Oryn tried to reach into her mind looking for something she knew did not exist.

With her gloves still on, she scooped up the water to clean her mouth and when she spat out the water, she cried.

Reya returned to her quarters wiping away her tears. The catgirl climbed into her bed removing only her yellow boots. She looked out at Alysia across from her and saw the Sentinel sleeping in her mage suit. Reya realized that they both were exhausted from everything and therapy did not help. They were too tired to change into pajamas. The catgirl also noticed that the Sentinel curled up facing the wall instead of laying flat on her back. Reya thought about how her roommate came to rescue her and watched her control the flames. She remembered the Sentinel stood in the fire somehow making the wave of heat move. It frightened and amazed her.

"I wish I could see your wings Suzaku. I wish you could tell me if you see me as your friend. I wish I could protect you like you tried to protect me."

Reya's tears would not stop as she faced the wall and heard whimpering. She looked up and saw Alysia. Reya watched the Sentinel clutched her shoulders and shook lightly. The catgirl got out of her bed and approached her roommate. She leaned her knee on the side of the mattress and climbed over Alysia to get a closer look. She saw the Sentinel cried in her sleep, shifting her knees closer to her chest.

"Kyo." Alysia whispered.

Reya's eyes opened wide and her heart skipped a beat. Reya felt helpless as she placed her hand on Alysia's hand, and leaned her head down. She wondered what the Sentinel dreamed about. If there was some way, she could go in and comfort her. Reya leaned closer to the Sentinel's ears.

"You're not alone. I'm right here for you. Please, tell me where you feel the pain..." Reya paused from her falling tears. "...so I can help you." Reya rested her head on Alysia's back, hearing the beat of her friend's heart. She lifted her legs onto the bed, and closed her eyes to sleep, never letting her hand go of Alysia's hand.

“I'm so sorry, Suzaku. Forgive me for not protecting you.” The girls whimpered and sniffled. Their fingers crossed each other and clutched tight...

...never letting go.

To Be Continued...

