

Arcana Magi - c.8: Realization

by H-M Brown

“reya...”

Alysia tried her best to piece her memories back together, but a fog surrounded her and she disappeared in the soup. With her hands on her forehead, it felt like a hammer slammed her. When she closed her eyes, a flash of light flickered on her face.

“NO!” Alysia crouched down, her teal eyes twitched, and her lips trembled. The more she thought, the more she struggled to stand up. She lifted her head up and stretched her arms out trying to find her way. Blinded by the fog, she crawled on the floor. Pressing her hands on the ground as a guide, she bumped her head on something. Using the object as leverage, she stood to her feet. She found herself standing before a mirror, her body was not in the reflection. A pulse shot out of the glass and her heart matched its resonance. She placed her hands over her chest as her heart continued to pulse with the mirror.

She reached out to the surface, and with a touch, it rippled like water. Alysia lifted her head up as images of people appeared inside the mirror. They looked like shadows as the fog around her cleared a little, but not enough to disappear. She stepped back and fog thickened, tough not enough for her to lose sight of the mirror. Her fingers slid across the surface bending the glass. The fog around cleared some more and she heard a voice.

“When will you trust our heart?” Her voice said from beyond the mirror. Alysia pulled her fingers away and remembered what Oryn said about her memories. Beyond that mirror was a lie. The people there were not her real family and friends. They made her into someone she was not.

“Are our memories that important?” Her voice said.

"I... I don't know." Alysia's voice remained lifeless and emotionless. Her eye looked cold and untrusting. "I don't know who I am anymore. Oryn said..."

"Oryn doesn't care."

"She does." Alysia placed her hands on her head. She refused to accept that Oryn did terrible things to her. That everything the woman did was to help her. But when she thought of lights flashing in her face, her body struggling, her mind invaded, she tried to deny it. She tried not to face herself in the mirror as her image appeared on the other side. Her reflection dressed in the same Mage Suit as her, only her white and light blue hair was short. Alysia lifted her head up and looked at herself in the mirror.

"Is this really me?" Alysia said to her reflection.

"Yes, this is us."

"We're not different."

"No, we're not."

Alysia realized this was her true self, reaching out. It was difficult to believe, that Oryn lied. Alysia expected to see someone completely different, only she had short hair. That was the only thing that set the apart. The pounding in her head, the flashing lights, therapy itself, none of them helped Alysia find her true self. Now she wanted to know what lied beyond the mirror.

"No more..." Alysia said to her reflection, stretching her arms out to the mirror.

"No more." Her reflection said as they drew closer to the mirror. The tip of their fingers touched and a large ripple spread across the surface. Their foreheads leaned on each other and slipped through the glass. They tried this before. Alysia remembered this when Reya called out for her to fight back, but Oryn interfered and separated them. Now passing through their bodies, there was a sensation that was warm, and their heart beat as one. When the shorthaired Alysia reached the other side, her hair turned light brown, as did the longhaired Alysia, and then their hair returned to white and light blue. They leaned their backs on the mirror, and grasped their hands. The tip of their wings touched each other with mana seeping

down the mirror like a cascading waterfall. They looked up into the darkness and their thoughts cleared.

“What have they done to me?” They said together. Alysia lowered her head and clutched her shoulders. She was a complete stranger to herself. Her mind constantly altered to the point that she cannot believe every memory she thought off. She would have to trust her heart to choose the truth from the lie. For now, she came to terms that her name was Alysia Morales. For now, she accepted this was how she was born, with white and light blue hair, teal colored eyes, and wings made of mist. This was her real self. This was what she always looked like.

She closed her eyes and her heart pulsed. Reya appeared in her thoughts, they were clear and her smile made Alysia remember why she called her friend. Her heart pulsed again and a shadow appeared next to Reya. Her memory flashed as a boy ran up a hill leading no one to the top. It flickered in and out like static on a screen. She clutched her head and her heart fought back the sensations that suppressed her memories.

“You can do it.” She said to herself and the image cleared. It was a short memory, but she recognized the boy. He held her hand as they reached the top of the hill. It stopped there as her lips trembled and tears built up in her eyes. His face was as clear as her memories of Reya. Her hands pulled away from her hair and closed into a fist.

“K... K...” She dropped to her knees as the programming fought back. The block tried to remove this one piece of memory she wanted more than anything else. Her heart called for it, her wanted it because it was truth. With a familiar habit realized while looking at her fist, she punched the ground hard, and lifted her head up with tears splashing out of her eyes.

“KYO!”

Alysia threw her body up from on her bed. She awoke to her chest heaving up and down with each breath. Lifting her hands up and looked at the bracelet, she realized she could move without orders. She remembered doing that earlier in the week before Oryn flashed a light that paralyzed her. She could still sense the programming

within her mind, despite her self-awareness. Wiping the tears from her eyes as her head pounded away, and she focused her thoughts to suppress the sensation. Taking a deep breath, she stood to her feet with the urge to go to the bathroom.

Minutes later, after taking a shower, Alysia stood before a newly replaced mirror. Alysia examined the scars on her right hand and remembered the glass wedged into her skin. She removed her towel and stared at her reflection, trying to understand herself beyond her dreams. She looked physically fit. She turned to face her wings. They moved as easily as she moved her hands. Flapping them side-to-side in wiping motion, then inward and outward like bird, stretching out the feathers and squeezing them to her back. A slight giggle slipped out from her lips, her fingers quickly covered them. She did not know what that reaction was, nowhere in her mind could answer that. It made her lean on the mirror to handle the slight ping on the side of her forehead.

After focusing again, Alysia thought about Reya. Her friend became the only person she thought of. Seeing her carted away by doctors and nurses overwhelmed her. Whatever Oryn did to Reya, nearly killed her. Alysia knew what she had get Reya away from Oryn. Seeing through the reflection of the mirror, her bracelet rested on her Mage Suit and knew she would to have to fight.

Alysia slipped into her Mage Suit and watched her wings burst into mist. Her eye opened wide as the mist floated behind her back. She zippered her back and slipped on her shrug jacket thinking she lost her wings. Once she tugged and straightened her shrug jacket, the mist reformed into her wings, and her lips formed one word without saying it aloud.

“Wow.”

She slid her bracelet onto her wrist and looked at the teal jewel embedded on the trinket. Closing her eyes, she slid her thumb on the surface of the gem that brought memories of the red bird towering before her tiny body. It was the first day they met, when it told her its name and spread its wings wide opened. The memory was short, but just enough for Alysia to understand who she was... a

Sentinel. She raised her arm up, opening her eyes, and looked at herself in the mirror. She saw herself in a new way. This was what wanted to be and she would always call this name.

“Awaken... Saga.”

Minutes later, Alysia made her way to Level B4. She remembered this was where Oryn held Reya. With Saga in hand, she summoned courage from her heart, knowing that Oryn would do anything to keep her under control. The elevator doors opened and she approached security lock as the security camera moved its lens forward and shifted to the side. She entered her security password and the door opened. Alysia kept her body low, her small frame made it difficult for anyone to see her behind the desks and tables. There was a lot of noise in the facility. Chaos was everywhere. Alysia looked up to one of the computers and found it flickering wildly with the date set on Friday at five o'clock in the morning. All the employees panicked as they tried to keep the computers working, the distraction made it easy for Alysia to slip by them. As Alysia neared the curtain, Oryn walked with Jonas on the other side of the table. The Sentinel saw only their legs as she crawled under to hide.

“This has become a real mess.’ Oryn said. “The Therapy Room is down, Reya transferred Byakko, and this Brie Williams has spent the entire night hacking our systems. Vyndor has my head and will be arriving today to take over the operation.”

“What about Suzaku?” Jonas said.

Alysia lifted her head up. Her eyes trembled by that name, and became tired of everyone calling her that.

“I think Reya's coma undid Suzaku's latest therapy. We've gone too far with her and can't afford to replace the child.”

“We tried our best doing it your way Oryn, but it's time we face facts. Suzaku has to have her mind erased and raised her from scratch. You've seen how powerful her spells are.”

“I know Jonas. But what if she ended up like Reya and Suzaku itself goes into stasis? It took us years to get Reya's mana back. Getting memories back after erasure is more difficult.”

“That's the risk we'll have to take.”

“Very well.”

Alysia watched Jonas' legs turn around and walk away as Oryn stood there for a moment. With Reya not too far away, the Sentinel held her head as she took each breath and her hands shook. She did not understand why that w happened but she tightened her grip on Saga and waited Oryn for to leave.

“DAMN!” Oryn said with a loud thump on the surface of the table and startled Alysia.

The Sentinel watched Oryn walk away and the Sentinel leaned her head. Looking side to side she was all alone. She slid her legs along the floor and while on her knees, she peeked over the table. As she saw the Therapy Room from beyond the tables and desks, there was Oryn approaching the door while talking on the touch pad phone. She appeared mad and glowed red, something Alysia hoped she would not face in a fight. The Sentinel turned to the curtain where Reya stayed. Alysia remained low as she approached the curtain and slipped inside, looking back to make sure no one saw her.

Alysia turned around and there was Reya on the bed. The catgirl had a feeding tube connected to her arm, her face was pale, and the heartbeat on the monitor had a consistent beep. The Sentinel stood before her friend and nudged her shoulder to wake up. No response. With no expression or emotional response, Alysia placed her hand on Reya's forehead and moved the grey her aside. She held the catgirl's hand and crossed each other's fingers.

“Don't worry.’ Alysia said with a lifeless voice. ‘I'm getting you out of here.” Alysia removed the feeding tube connected to Reya and saw blood seep out of the arm. There was nothing to cover the wound with, so she ripped a strip of cloth from the bedsheet and used it as a bandage. After removing the chord attached to Reya's chest, the monitor chimed a long tone that was loud. She did not have time to turn it off and instead lifted Reya onto her back. With Saga aimed forward, she slipped out of the curtain and there she saw Oryn walking toward them. They stared at each other for a second and Alysia ran.

“STOP HER!!”

Alysia heard the executive as a couple of employees looked in her direction. As fast as she could, she made it to the security door and with her foot, she kicked it into one of the doctors reaching for her. Alysia stretched her hand out and pressed the elevator button. The door never opened. Over and over she pressed, but only the door behind her opened and there stood Oryn and Jonas, silent and quiet. She aimed Saga at the executive but struggled to channel mana because of her programming. Stepping back as the woman walked closer, the Sentinel bumped Reya's body to the wall and found herself cornered. She saw Oryn took a rectangular flashlight from Jonas and remembered what it did. Alysia dropped to her knees and tucked her head.

“No... not that...”

“Look at me.”

Alysia did not obey and Oryn took the Sentinel by the hair, pulling her head up. The Sentinel looked directly at the device, the light bulb was clear like crystal. Her eyes wandered to the right and across from them, she saw the security camera looking down at them. It moved on its own and pointed in her direction. Alysia's blinked her eyes and thought she saw things, until the elevator door opened on its own. Everyone turned to it and waited to see who came out. It stayed open longer than it normally would. When Jonas turned to Oryn with a shrug, the fire alarm sounded turning heads upward and the fire sprinklers sprayed water. As Oryn and Jonas shielded their eyes from the water, Alysia crawled to the elevator and entered inside. Alysia turned around as the door closed on Jonas reaching for them.

As the elevator climbed up, Alysia checked on Reya to see if she was okay. The catgirl was wet from the water and Alysia wiped the water off her friend's face. The screen pinged for the lobby and the elevator door opened. Alysia peeked out and saw sunlight beyond the entrance. Only problem was that there was more security than usual. Alysia sat down in the elevator and held Reya in her arms. She looked down and sighed.

“Hey the computers are working again.” A woman said.

It came from the security post and Alysia peeked out. She saw Zach, the head of security leaned over the desk looking in. She caught his attention and ducked back inside. Pressing her hand on her heart and closing her eyes hoping he did not see her, she looked up at the camera and realized they could see her and Reya.

“I want you two to go to the security room for a second and get the master key. You three go and check the parking lot.”

Alysia opened her eyes and looked outside again. There she saw the security guards spread out and left the lobby. She crept toward the exit and her legs turned heavy. Her knees buckled and could hear Oryn talking to her.

“If you leave, the pain will not go away.”

Her eyes blurred and the pounding struck her head. With each step, she thought about Reya more than herself. She did not care if Oryn erased her mind so long as she did not have Reya. Just as she reached the desk, she fell to her knees and could not move anymore. She jerked her legs and her body to break free while holding Reya on her back. With the door across the way, outside so near, her leg moved one more time, but she fell over closing her eyes.

Alysia opened her eyes and found herself in her bed. She wore a hospital gown when she lifted herself up. She looked across the room and there she saw a lump under a bedsheet.

“reya... i'm sorry.” Alysia said with a drained voice. She stood to her feet and the room became dizzy. She took her time as her feet dragged across the ground. She refused to give up and forced herself across the room. The Sentinel collapsed on the bed and caused movement from under the sheet. With her eyes closed, Alysia moaned from the pounding in her head as she felt a hand sliding over her hair.

“Don't worry, Reya is safe now.” A girl's energetic voice said.

Alysia opened her eyes suddenly and lifted her body up. Before her was a tanned skinned girl dressed in white pajamas. She was shorter than Alysia but tall enough for her age. Her long black hair was in a tail that looked like scattered bristles and dyed a peach

color. With natural green eyes and a cheery smile, she held Alysia's hands and introduced herself.

“I'm Brie Williams, the Sentinel of Byakko.”

To Be Continued...

