

Arcana Magi - c.10: To the Horizon

by H-M Brown

Saturday afternoon, Brie sat in front of a table littered with pieces of two of the mana powered inventions she had created, before Mystic Intelligence confiscated them two years ago. In addition to the manalight, there was the mazer, a two-pronged electric tazer. When she first created them, the devices were crude and outdated, but now, Avalon Tech had updated them into a more dangerous design than she could imagine. She sat there quietly, thinking about how they used the manalight on Alysia and Reya. The perversion of her hard work intended for good. As she tightened the screws on the mazer, Anna read through the blueprints on the computer for a new invention that Brie drew called the de-paralyzer.

“This is amazing. You can stimulate electrical charges along the spine and allow a person to walk again.”

Brie remained silent and did not want to hear this woman speak anymore. The child focused on her mazer as she placed two fingers on the battery and focused her mana. Like a charger, she built up the stored energy until it reached a full charge. Her eyes turned to Anna as the woman approached the child to see what happened.

“So are you using your mana to charge up the device?’ Anna stood before Brie unable to see the mana. With no answer given, she leaned closer to the child ready to rattle her nerves, but the sound of the main door opened and Suzie and Karl who stepped inside. They both laughed and fooled around in each other's arms as they noticed Anna.

“Oh hey, look its Anna.” Suzie said and Karl waved hello.

While Anna turned around to face the couple, Brie slid the cover over the battery and activated the mazer. An electric line waved its way up between the two prongs with a short whizzing sound growing loud. When Anna turned her head back to Brie, the Sentinel

jabbed the device into the programmer's back and she screamed. Brie stepped back as the woman's body shook and fell to the ground, with the couple stunned at what happened. Before Brie could run away, Suzie grabbed her shoulders and scared the child.

"What's the matter with you?" Suzie said.

"You don't understand.' Brie thought about the Therapy Room used on the employees and wondered. 'Have you taken the Psyche Test?"

"What?"

"Have you taken the Psyche Test?"

"Y...yes, but, what does that have to do with this?"

"Doesn't it seem strange that we kids are running around in the company?"

"Strange?"

"You know Alysia and Reya working here?"

"Who's Alysia?" Suzie looked at Brie's Mage Suit, placing her hand on her head and clearing her thought. She lifted her head up with her eyes wide opened and her mouth covered remembering what happened during the Psyche test. She turned to Karl as he rubbed his eyes and looked back at her in shock.

In the Control Room Level B4, Sydney finished replacing the orb Oryn shattered. She walked past Lyn, who followed her every move, toward Anna's station to type in the commands to activate the Therapy Room. The therapist shifted her head and with the corner of her eye, saw Lyn standing behind her, but not close. Reya's mother faced the screen and saw the cursor moving on its own. A message from Brie typed across the box stating that she was okay and has help. Pretending to be typing in codes, she replied to the Sentinel to stay put. Sydney switched boxes and typed random numbers and letters.

"You must be proud torturing children." Sydney said.

"Crack a few eggs and make an omelet."

"So it doesn't bother you that my daughter is in a coma or that Alysia is a shell of her real self? Don't you have any ethics in your heart?"

"You're one to talk.' Lyn stood beside Sydney and leaned her hand on the desk. 'You built this machine. You knew what this was capable of doing."

"True.' Sydney stopped typing and faced Lyn. 'In hindsight, I didn't expect the side effects to be this devastating. But you see, the difference between the veterans and the girls, was that the soldiers understood this was an experiment and that side effects could happen. They understood their decisions. Did you do that with Reya and Alysia? Did you talk to them about what they would go through? Did they even get to make that choice?"

Everything became silent, their eyes locked in place. Sydney channeled her mana and peered into Lyn's mind. She stood to her feet as the sorceress lost control of her body.

"You don't understand the Therapy Room. You just thought this was another machine to help your friend advance herself and you get to cash in. Hmm...You have a very interesting thought. Why is Sydney not dead and get experts to fix the machine? I'll tell you. It's because I am the Therapy Room."

The orb lit up, brightening the room, and Lyn placed her hands on her head. She experienced in her mind what Alysia went through inside the sphere itself. Finding herself in a Mage Suit and feeling the humiliation. It was a raw feeling, unfiltered from the machine itself, straight from the actual source. The sorceress tried to fight back, but she could not resist.

"Oryn knew the only way to keep me in control was to hold my daughter hostage. I could not do anything. Unlike you, I value my daughter's life. I value Alysia and Brie as well. I value everyone. That's ethics. Yes, my power is overwhelming, but I'm not using my full power. That's called restraint. To demonstrate my restraint, I'll allow you to keep your memories. But, every night you sleep, you will undergo Therapy in your dreams, very cleanly, and you will be comfortable in it... you will not want out. It is the safest place to be in."

Sydney turned around and left Lyn collapsing to her knees with glazed eyes. The therapist took a chair and bashed it over the

computer stations, then threw it into the glass window overlooking the chamber below. She took the orb and threw it at the mirror shattering it and orb. Sydney took a deep breath and leaned on the wall crying.

Across from the Therapy Room, Alysia sat by Reya's bed looking at her sleeping peacefully. The monitor showed her heartbeat at a steady pace. The Sentinel reflected on all the good things her friend did. The smiles, wanting flowers for their room, and the promise to escape this horrid place. Her thoughts sorted through the programming that stifled her feelings. The sensations that came with those emotions, in the absence of such knowledge, remained a confusing sensation. The sound of a rustling curtain snapped Alysia out of her thoughts and Marcel entered inside. The Sentinel watched him approach Reya on the opposite side of the bed to check on her.

"How's our sleeping princess?" Marcel leaned close to Reya and opened her eyelids reaching into his pocket.

The more Alysia looked at him, the more familiar he became when he took out a pocket flashlight. When she saw the light shined into the catgirl's eyes, her memory flashed. She remembered seeing Marcel beyond the light in her eyes as she reacted to it. It was so long ago as she looked down pressing her hands on her forehead.

"Getting a headache Alysia?"

That question jarred her memory. It became clear.

"I know you." Alysia said with a monotone voice as Marcel ignored her. "Something happened to me and you shined that light in my eyes."

Alysia thought about the feeling from the punch in her shoulder that Brie made and called pain. Rubbing her shoulder, she connected it to what she felt in her eyes and head that day.

"Alysia, I'm afraid I don't understand what you're talking about."

"You know. My head hurt me and you shined that light in my eyes making it worse."

Alysia curled her hands into a fist as Marcel put away the pocket flashlight. She stood to her feet and approached him slowly.

"Don't do anything foolish Alysia." Marcel stepped back and felt

the curtain behind him.

"You knew about the staff and saw it in my room when you came to check on my eyes. Why?" In a flash of insight, there was a couple in the same room with Kyo. They were the very strangers who stole her life and identity. It threw her thoughts off.

"Well,' Marcel shrugged his shoulders without care. 'let's just say our encounter was accidental. Believe me, had you not gotten injured in that hockey game, I would never have found you."

Alysia stopped and sat on the bed. She clutched her head as she remembered skating on the ice and falling into the wall. In that room, Marcel told her it was a concussion and she was sensitive to the light. She lifted her head up, as Marcel looked distorted, his twisted body reached into the pocket.

"No, it doesn't make sense. They... they never took me away. It was you."

"Interesting. It seems the concussion had protected you, to a point.' Marcel took out a rectangle flashlight veiled in mana. 'Such a nifty invention. This little flashlight invented by your new friend runs on a battery that stores mana. The first device to do such a thing. So of course, it allows me to use this, on you. So convenient, that a Reg like me could use it."

Alysia got off the bed and tried to run, but Marcel grabbed her hair and pulled her back. The pain she felt forced her eyes open and the light flashed her pupils away. She screamed from the trauma that etched into her memories once again. Her thoughts scrambled as her arms weakened and fell back. Her screams died down into silence.

"Hmph... All the talk about erasing your knowledge of emotions and your free will to circle around your injury. What a waste of time. Instead of faking your death, we should have just killed you and found a new Sentinel to work with. Oh well, I'll just tell Oryn you were out of control and had to die."

Alysia's eyebrows lowered without thought, and her left hand lifted up, clutching the flashlight in Marcel's hand. Her wings stretched out and heat gathered around the teal tipped feathers.

With tears, she channeled her mana, shifted their hands to the side and aimed at the wall.

"Ashes to Dust." A small fireball burst from her hand and at the same time, liquefied the flashlight and turned Marcel's arm into a plume of dust. The tiny fireball flew through the curtain catching fire and shattered on the wall creating a hole. As the fire triggered the sprinkler system, Marcel dropped to his knees with a horrified scream that echoed throughout the empty floor. Alysia tilted Marcel's head up with her left hand. Waterdrops bounced off his face as his eyes grew wide at the sound of her roar. She threw a right punch to his face. Another punch and another punch, Marcel's eyes rolled back and his face slid off her fingers into the sound of thud.

The sprinklers stopped raining as the fire went out. Dripping wet, Alysia stood there with shaking hands, the world still spinning in front of her eyes, her energy drained from her own spell. The Sentinel fell back and felt herself caught in the arms of Sydney. Her body laid back onto the therapists knees. Without thought, as Sydney wiped the water from her face, Alysia's right hand latched onto the therapist's throat and squeezed it to lift her body up.

"It's your fault this happened to me." With not one ounce of emotion from her voice, fear struck into the eyes of Sydney.

"I... swear... I didn't... know..." Sydney felt the heat building up around her neck. 'It... was... to... hel... to hel...'

"I don't care." Alysia's wings gathered heat, drying the Sentinel and channeling her mana.

"reya..." Sydney said reaching out to her daughter.

Reya's name made Alysia's pupils reappear and she released Sydney as the woman lurched over gasping and coughing for air. The Sentinel looked over to Reya and saw her own reflection on the monitor. She did not know how to react or what to do.

"I can't feel anything. Why can't I feel something?" Alysia turned to Sydney with her arms shaking violently and her lips trembling.

Sydney pulled Alysia into her arms and clutched the teen tightly. The woman felt the Sentinel's chest heave up and down. The sounds

of her whimper pierced her ears. She stroked Alysia's hair gently as crying followed.

"I'm so sorry, Alysia. I wished this never happened to you."

Alysia pulled herself from Sydney's shoulders and felt the woman wipe the tears from her face.

"I'll never get out." Her emotionless voice returned. "I'll just fall asleep when I get to the front door."

"I know. Oryn implanted many mental blocks to keep you under her control." Sydney looked up at Reya and thought the same thing done to her. "I could remove the blocks from your mind, but I can't restore your memories that were erased."

"How do I know you're not with Oryn all this time?" Alysia slid away.

"Because I would never hurt my daughter."

"I don't think your Reya's mother." Alysia clenched her fist as Sydney nodded and understood the teen's mistrust.

"Think about it, I could have erased your memories at any time, even now as we speak to each other. Had anything happened? Do you feel different?"

Not sensing Sydney in her mind, Alysia shook her head side to side.

"I'm not going to lie to you. This is the truth. If I remove the blocks in your mind, you will be scarred permanently. It will be painful. Or, you can grow up with Oryn whispering in your thoughts forever."

Alysia thought about it and could hear Oryn's voice telling her not to listen. She did not want that anymore. She wanted Oryn out of her mind and out of her life. With a nod, she lifted her hand up and channeled her mana.

"One wrong move and I will defend myself."

"Fair enough." Sydney slid over to Alysia and placed her hands beside the Sentinel's head. They focused eye to eye, as the world turned white around them. The blocks were in the form of Oryn's voice, one order more horrifying than the last. Each one erased hurt Alysia. Each pain so unforgettable. Everything that Oryn imprinted was gone, except for one enchantment. So powerful in nature, and

difficult to remove, for it linked Alysia's emotions to her concussion, her obedient control. Sydney tried to sever the link, but she saw Alysia clutched her heart and convulsed from shock. The white light disappeared as Alysia lurched over her knees and gasped for air.

"What... what happened?" Alysia said with no emotion in her voice and the enchantment remained within her mind.

"I can't remove that block. That enchantment was killing you. I'm sorry."

"Try again." Alysia said.

"We'll talk about this when we get out of here." Sydney helped Alysia to her feet and went to Reya. She removed the tubes, turned off the monitor, and carried her daughter in her arms. When she turned around, Alysia stood before her and rubbed Reya's forehead.

"Will she be okay?" Alysia looked up and saw Sydney nod with a smile, and they left area behind. When they arrived at the elevator room, Alysia pushed the up button. They looked up to the monitor and saw the elevator coming down from the top floor.

"Oryn?" Sydney said.

The security camera moved and caught Alysia's attention.

"Brie?"

A loud sound banged by the wall and it opened wide like a door. Inside were a set of stairs leading up and they looked to see if anyone came down. Hearing nothing, they ran up the stairs until they reached Level B2. That door opened wide and Brie walked in with Suzie and Karl, who both carried duffel bags in their arms. The Sentinels hugged each other as Suzie and Karl stood before Reya.

"We're so sorry, Reya..." Suzie said with Karl beside her. Suzie's hand stroking that catgirl's hair and pulled up the mana that covered the teen's body.

"We have to hurry." Brie said running up the stairs with Alysia. 'Oryn is coming down with Jonas and they left the pendant and bracelet in a green case in the office.'

"Wait." Karl said to the girls following them. 'You two aren't going up there for jewelry.'

"We have to Karl." Brie said looking back at Alysia.

"We're Sentinels,' Alysia said. 'and we can't let Oryn have them. Let's go Brie."

"Fine.' Karl said. 'I'm coming with you."

Everyone reached the lobby and looked out the door. Ahead of them was the front entrance. Suzie turned to everyone.

"Wait here with Reya, Sydney. I'll get the van, while Karl takes the girls to get their items."

Suzie and Karl walked out first with their duffel bags and pressed the elevator button. Acting as cover, they fooled around with each other as one of the guards walked by and ignored them. The elevator door opened and the Sentinels scurried in followed by Karl.

"I'll be outside with the van honey." Suzie said as the elevator door closed. She walked out of the lobby with both bags in hand and without any problems. As soon as she left the guards sight, an elevator arrived and Oryn stepped out.

Sydney peeked out the door and watched the executive approach the security desk. The therapist sat Reya along the wall, rubbed her grey hair gently, and caressed her cat ears. She kissed her daughter's forehead and a teardrop fell on the teens face, Sydney took a deep breath and stepped outside.

At the top floor, Alysia stood before her desk and turned to look at Reya's desk as Karl walked up to the door and kicked it down.

"Hurry." Karl said looking inside and waved the girls in.

Alysia and Brie stepped inside and saw no one was around. Brie approached the desk to grab the green case as Alysia looked at the titles of each book on the shelf. It was her first time looking at them, and one caught her attention. It was Oryn's own book, 'The Theory of Fate and Destiny'. She took the book and opened the pages. There were math equations in some of the chapters and diagrams that were hard to follow. Before she read a paragraph, Brie squealed from the desk and she dropped the book.

"What happened?" Alysia approached Brie.

"That." Brie pointed to an orb set on a pillow on Oryn's chair. They looked at the clear glass sphere, as it did nothing but sit there.

It felt strange. As though someone was there but there wasn't anyone around. It just sat there. Alysia's felt her skin jumping out of her. She did not know why as she stepped back and the sound of Brie opening the case snapped her out it.

"Here it is." Brie reached for the green case and opened it. She took out the jewelry and handed the bracelet to Alysia. As they walked away from the door while putting on their items, Alysia stopped and looked at Oryn's book on the floor. As she knelt down to pick it up, she saw another book on shelf about the Sentinels. Before she could take the books, Karl grabbed her arm and led her to the door.

When they arrived at the lobby, an explosion rattled the floor. The Sentinels and Karl looked to the side and saw Sydney slid to a stop on the ground. As Karl went to the stairwell to see if Reya was there, another elevator door opened and Jonas stepped out.

"RUN!" Karl said.

"ENERGUS!" Jonas threw an energy ball at the Karl as the elf pulled the door. The ball struck the door pushing Karl back and closed it. Jonas approached the door as Alysia clenched her fist.

"Awaken... Saga."

Alysia punched her fist into the air as 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, 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.

"Not bad." Brie said. "But you need to put in a little emotion. Like this."

Brie crossed her arms over her pendant and tilted her head down.

“ASCEND... LEGACY!”

Brie spread her arms back and tilted her head up as the pendant burst into droplets of light, pushing the yellow gem into the air, and gather around it. As her right hand stretched out with a gentle reached, four triangles stretched out from the gem. The hilt shaped outward beside her hand, and when Brie's hand gently wrapped around it, the metal neck stretched outward and the hammerhead formed at the end. She pulled Legacy close to her chest and swung it in a pounding motion, left to right, creating twp ripple of sound and spun the hammer over her right shoulder to rest it while curling her left hand into a fist stretched outward.

“I see.” Jonas turned around with a smile and saw Alysia's arms shivering and Saga vibrating. “You'll never hurt me Suzaku. You're still under Oryn's control.”

“My name is Alysia Morales!” She lunged at Jonas, her eyes filled with an emotion that rattled her head. Ignoring the pain she leapt in the air, with Saga over her head and the metal wings aimed at the Mageologist.

“SHIELDUS!” A ripple of air separated the wing blade from Jonas as they stared each other down. With a smirk, he watched Alysia drop to one knee.

“You're weak child.”

“Stay there Alysia!” Brie said from behind as she ran toward them. The Sentinel used Alysia's back as a step and launched herself into the air with Legacy over her head.

“Again?” Jonas threw his hands up in the air. “SHIELDUS!”

“SONIC BREAKER!” Brie slammed the hammer onto the shield and used the sound wave of his spell to shatter it, then landed beside Alysia.

“WHAT?!” Jonas stumbled back as a bright light glowed under him. He looked down and saw Alysia's wings gather heat. Caught off guard, the staff lunged at him and struck his stomach.

“EXPLODER!” A shockwave of heat burst out like a bomb and sent Jonas flying back into the wall forming a crater. Alysia stood up holding her head. She turned to Brie, trying to get some air as well.

"You feel tired too?" Alysia said.

"Yeah. Why?"

They turned to Jonas and watched him pull himself out of the wall. They lifted their weapons aiming at him as he brushed the dust off and paused. The Sentinels saw Jonas rubbed his forehead and wiped blood from his face.

"I'm not impressed."

The girls stepped back as another explosion from Sydney's fight with Oryn raged on. They looked back as a van pulled up to the front entrance. Distracted a force of energy pushed the wind, blowing their hair

"AERIAL THRUST!" Jonas pushed his hands forward and blew the Sentinels out into the open.

They bounced on the ground and moaned in pain. Lifting their bodies up, a gasp ejected from their mouths as Sydney struggled to her feet covered in blood and sweat, while Oryn only broke out in sweat. They turned to Jonas and saw Karl emerged from the door with a ball of light in his hand. They got to their feet and channeled whatever mana remained in them. Alysia created a small fireball at the end of Saga aiming it at Jonas.

"NOW!" Alysia said to Karl.

"FLASH!" The ball of light struck Jonas in back and made him stumble. The flash itself made Alysia's eyes quake and hesitate.

"Alysia this way!" Brie pulled Legacy like a baseball bat as the teen's eyes focused and faced her friend.

"CANNONBALL!" Alysia shot the fireball towards Brie as she swung the hammer.

"VIBRANT SHOCKWAVE!!" A ripple of sound engulfed the fireball and without the hammer touching it. Brie redirected Alysia's spell to Jonas with a sonic boom that shattered only the glass of the building and nothing else outside. With no chance to protect himself, the Cannonball burst onto his chest, knocking him back, and lit his clothes on fire. Alysia leaned on Saga as Brie dropped to her knees in total exhaustion. As Karl carried Reya to the van, Alysia turned to Oryn and dragged her tired feet to the fight. Brie looked up and

shook her head side to side at Alysia, as Sydney fell down to her face and Oryn landed her feet on the therapists back. Alysia stopped as Sydney lifted her head up to the Sentinel and smiled.

"You're Reya's family now." Sydney said in Alysia's mind.

Oryn's fingers turned red with electricity and formed claws. She rammed it down Sydney's back, pierced the flesh, and reached the spine. The executive smiled at Alysia as the scream satisfied her. The woman pulled her hand out leaving, the red electricity coursing through the therapist's body until there was no more movement.

"NOOO!" Alysia's wings stretched out with Saga aimed at Oryn, gathering very little heat. She felt Karl grabbed her waist and pulled her away as she struggled to break free, wanting to take down Oryn. Alysia reached out to Sydney as Brie lifted up Legacy.

"WALL!" She slammed the hammer to the ground a large wall blocked Oryn. Brie turned around and Karl pulled her inside with Alysia. Suzie drove off as the elf slammed the door shut, and turned to the nearest corner, heading for nearest interstate.

Minutes have passed as the car climbed the highway ramp. Alysia leaned on the window as the pain caught up to her now that she relaxed, and a moan followed, with her arms wrapped around her waist. At the top of the ramp, she saw Avalon Tech in the distance among the skyscrapers. Seeing it from outside a second time, memories of what happened there repeated over. It was something she wanted to forget, but it was all too raw, still too fresh. When she closed her eyes to fall asleep like Brie, she could see Oryn and her friends laughing at her, laughing at Reya in her arms. Their treatment toward them was joke. Treated them like dolls. That hurt so much. After the car passed under a bridge, Newark was no longer there and an open yellow sky appeared.

Looking up, the birds flew against the setting sun. Their wings spread wide open, gliding high in the sky. With her head pounding in pain...

...she smiled.

To Be Continued...

