

Arcana Magi - c.2: Alysia Morales, Sentinel of Suzaku

by H-M Brown

Twelve-year-old Alysia Morales was born in the Southern Region of Puerto Rico on June 22, 2000 during the Summer Solstice.

Her family came from generations of middle class workers. Her parents had magical powers, but never served as heroes or legends. All four of Alysia's grandparents moved from Puerto Rico to mainland America in the early twentieth century. Her parents, Arturo Morales and Rita Beltran, were born and raised in New York City growing up as neighbors. When they graduated from college, they married and moved to New Jersey to start a family. Alysia became their first child and gave nothing but love to her. At age four, Alysia prepared to become a big sister and have a little brother. However, she did not understand at the time, why her mother cried in her father's arms. One week later, she stood in her brother's room and watched her father dismantle the crib. She grew up an only child.

When Alysia entered eighth grade, she came in excelling in math. She found it easy and her classmates asked her for help. Other than gym class, her grades in other subjects were B average at best. Her classmates liked her, but some students envied her. They tried to pick on her since her small size made her look weak. Alysia loved sports and proved her toughness with each fight she won. Of course, due to her small size, people often mistook her for being in the lower classes and not high school bound. When Alysia sat on her chair in class, only the tip of her toes would touch the floor. Never planted flat like the other girls. Her parents reassured that she would get taller.

Fashion wise, Alysia wore skirts or dresses in formal parties. Any other day she would run around in shorts or pants depending on the seasons. She also wore mostly t-shirts or blouses. She liked her light brown hair short but not short like a boy. People sometimes mistook her natural green eyes as contacts.

In terms of magic, Alysia became the first generation in her family incapable of channeling mana. She could not activate a magical artifact like her father nor could she read the ancient runes of her mother's spellbook. She wanted to be a mage and learn magic. She even wanted to go to Memorial Academy in Merydia to learn the magical arts. Eventually, she came to terms with the fact that she will never learn magic. Her dreams will become unfulfilled, until that one winter day in February.

Alysia went with to the mall with her friends from school. They entered a fashion store that sold cheap plastic jewelry. They made fun of each other as they tried on different items. One item stood out from the rest that caught Alysia's eyes. It was a red bracelet with a teal jewel, which had a pair of tiny wings attached. Alysia stared at the jewel and loved it. It looked real and cheap enough to purchase. It became her favorite and she carried it around everywhere she went. Even to her hockey game.

Alysia loved the sport. She played in the little league for three years. She ranked third best in the league in scoring and every goalie feared her slapshot. She played in the left wing position. In the center position was Kyo Kusanagi and at the other side was Natasha Stevens in the right wing position. Together they formed their team's first line as starters nicknamed, the Hockey Hooligans. Opponents feared the trio. If they took their eyes off them or kept their heads down, the Hockey Hooligans would strike them onto the ground.

Her team, the Firebirds, made the playoffs for a second year in a row and today was the first round of the tournament. After the first few minutes of the game went by, Alysia and her linemates returned to the bench to change players. As they watched the game, Alysia nudged Kyo for his attention. He turned to her and saw her pointing

at his jersey. He looked down and she tapped his nose with her hockey glove. Natasha laughed as Kyo pointed out to nowhere. Alysia turned in that direction and fell for it. Their coach stood behind them with arms crossed and got them to focus on the game.

It's the third period and the Hockey Hooligans skated first. Nothing exciting happened after two minutes and their coach called them in to change players. But before they made their way to the bench, Alysia forced a turnover, and stole the puck. She and Kyo raced up the ice as an opponents slowed Natasha down. Alysia and Kyo passed the puck back and forth with the goalie shifting side to side. Kyo passed one more time and in one stroke, Alysia slapped the puck toward the net. It flew under the goalie's arm, the red lamp lit, and the crowd cheered. Alysia pumped her fist gliding behind the net and Kyo embraced her to celebrate. At first, they looked at each other with a blush, until Natasha and their defensemen joined the celebration. They tied the game at two.

The game went back and forth with no change in the score. With two minutes left in the game, Alysia and linemates went back out. The game turned volatile as both goalies blocked every shot. Neither team would give up. Natasha intercepted the puck and flicked it to the other end of the rink. Alysia raced with her opponent to touch the puck to avoid an icing penalty. Once her stick touched the puck, her opponent smashed her head first into the board. Everything around her became a blur. She pounded the ice in anger when her vision returned and she stood to her feet. It only lasted one second, so the referees never called a penalty. But that did not stop Alysia from chasing down her opponent. She pushed her stick, with both hands, onto the back of her opponent's head. The referee blew his whistle and escorted Alysia to the penalty box for cross-checking. She sat there for the final minute of the game. There were four players on her team against five opponents. She watched them become overwhelmed and with 30 seconds left, her team was down three to two. Alysia left the penalty box and skated to the bench where everyone was quiet. She sat away from her teammates as they sat dejected when the time ran out and lost.

In the locker room, Alysia and Natasha sat on the bench, five rows away from the boys. Alysia felt the blame for their loss even though no one said anything. She took off her uniform wearing only a white t-shirt and shorts. She opened her lock door and took her bracelet out. Her vision blurred again. Now that she relaxed, her head throbbed in pain. Her hands shook violently as she held her bracelet tight. She leaned her head down with a moan and cried for Natasha. She pressed her hands on her forehead and heard Natasha's voice muffled in her ears calling for help. Kyo arrived and he held Alysia's hands to stop the shaking. Alysia saw a faint glowing mist around Kyo's hands. She lifted her head up and saw his body covered in it. Their eyes locked to each other as they found themselves covered in the mist. They did not know what to say or how to react. She watched Kyo slipped away from her fingers as her coach moved him aside. Her head tilted back as her coach and trainer examined her. She noticed no one else had the glowing mist like Kyo and it scared her. Alysia's turned her eyes to Kyo and everything went black.

Alysia opened her eyes to a world of darkness. A large red-feathered bird appeared before her. Its size towered over Alysia and frightened her. She had never seen anything like it. It looked down at Alysia with its teal eyes as the child step back ready to run away. But when she turned around there was nowhere to go and the bird was the only source of light. The bird introduced itself as Suzaku. Its feminine voice calmed Alysia and the child introduced herself to the bird. It spread its wings wide and fanned the small embers to create more light. The warmth soothed her fears.

Alysia watched the embers float around her. When a flake landed on her arm, she never felt it burn her skin. She looked up to Suzaku and approached it. The bird sat down bringing its feathers closer to Alysia. She pressed her hands on the feathers and they felt like her pillows. Her ears rested on its breast and heard its heart beat. She felt her heart beat at the same time and she giggled. The red bracelet she bought at the store appeared before them. The bracelet burst into droplets of light and gathered around the teal jewel. From the jewel four triangles stretched outward and a metal band

connected the tips together. It looked like compass. From that headpiece a large red staff grew outward. A pair of white metal wings stretched out between the compass and staff. Suzaku called it the Mist Wing Staff.

Suzaku asked Alysia if she would like to be a Sentinel. Alysia said she could not channel mana. With a single brush of heat from Suzaku's wing, the glowing mist covered Alysia. Suzaku told Alysia to let the mana flow around her and through her, to channel it. She did and felt the warmth of mana within herself, within her heart. Her dream came true and she smiled. She lifted her hands up and watched the mist trickle off her finger. Alysia realized this all happened after she felt pain in her head. She did not know how this all happened.

She was not sure if she wanted to be Sentinel. Suzaku told her that it was her choice and it would respect her decision. Whether Alysia accepted it or not, she would receive its blessing. Suzaku made it clear that no matter her choice, she had a right to choose her path in life, for better or worse. It would direct her life where she would not want to go. Alysia hugged the bird and appreciated its respect for her life. She rested her body on Suzaku's feathers and thought about taking on the role of a Sentinel. Suzaku explained that a Sentinel's role was to lead by example. She asked how and Suzaku said to just live to her heart's content.

Alysia got off Suzaku and stood before the Mist Wing Staff. Suzaku told Alysia to give it a name. She took the staff and examined every part of it. It felt light in her hands and the wings edge looked razor sharp. Her hands slid over the teal jewel and felt the smoothness of its surface. Alysia pressed the staff on her forehead closing her eyes. She nodded and raised the Mist Wing Staff into the air to call its name.

Saga.

Mana spread over her body. A pulse of sound burst out of Saga and her heartbeat resonated with it. She placed her hands over her

head as the pain pounded her skull. Her hands slid over chest. Her heart wanted to break out of her body as mana gathered around her back. She turned to Suzaku and saw the shock in the bird's teal eyes. Alysia clutched her shoulders and dropped to her knees. Suzaku folded its wings around her body as she screamed in pain. A light shined through the wings. The shadow of Alysia's body became visible and a pair of small wings stretched out of her back. They stretched outward and retracted once she relaxed. Their hearts pulsed in unison.

Alysia opened her eyes and found herself on a hospital bed. In a hospital gown, she lay on the side of her body, and took deep breaths. Her nails ripped her sleeves and dug into her skin. Her knees pressed onto her belly. She stared out at Saga floating in the air. She felt movement on her numbed back. She lifted her body up and saw herself in the mirror on the door. Alysia covered her mouth, her eyes twitched in horror. Her reflection showed a pair of white feathery wings with teal colored ends. The wings looked like mist and she felt the mana within each feather. She saw someone in the mirror standing by the hallway door. She turned and there stood Kyo holding a flower for her.

Alysia wanted to throw the sheets over her body but she realized it was too late. They stared at each other for a moment, neither had a word to say. Kyo walked up to Alysia as she followed his movement. He placed the flower on the dresser next to a bouquet of flowers signed by Natasha. Kyo reached out and gently touched her feathers. They turned to mist. Alysia clenched her teeth for her wings were sensitive. She saw the mist float along her back as Kyo moved his hands away. Her eyes twitched as the mist reformed into feathers and became her wings. It was amazing. She saw Kyo stepped away from her. He apologized for being insensitive, but she assured him it was okay. Kyo said that hey wings were pretty. Alysia blushed and she turned away in shyness. She turned to Kyo and they smiled.

Alysia asked if he knew magic all this time. He answered yes. Since the first grade, he never told her the truth since she could not

see mana. He was afraid that she may have preferred a regular life and would not want to be his friend anymore. See him as a freak. Alysia told him that it was not true and she never talked about mana because she was born without it. After her accident on the ice, they wondered if it caused her to channel mana now. Kyo helped Alysia to her feet and approached Saga as it floated in the air. She asked Kyo if he could teach her how to use spells and he said yes.

Her parents entered with a cup of coffee. They stood in shock when they saw her wings. Alysia asked if everyone could see them. Her parents assured only those who channel mana would see her wings. Doctor Marcel Jones arrived to examine Alysia's injury. He welcomed Alysia back to the waking world and saw Saga in her arms. He recognized it from description given by Oryn and focused his attention on Alysia. Marcel asked her to sit down so he would check her eyes. With a smile, she looked up to the doctor and he took a small flashlight to her eyes and saw them twitched. Marcel told her parents that he would need to take further tests on her brain. He warned them not to flash any sudden light in her eyes. She may have become sensitive to it. They agreed and arranged for her tests for the next week.

During the weekend before the examination, Alysia and Kyo spent Sunday together. Alysia's mother dropped them off at the movie theater. They watched a comedy film and shared popcorn together. Afterwards, they wandered the mall going from store to store. They ran into Natasha, who was happy to see Alysia was okay. Natasha took Alysia to a hair salon so they could talk alone. Kyo waited outside. It did not take long. When Kyo turned around his eyes froze. Natasha propped Alysia short light brown hair with a pair of white winged hairclips. Natasha waved goodbye to leave them alone. Since Natasha was unaware of Alysia's wings, the winged hairclips were redundant. They laughed and he told her they were fine.

Outside the mall, Alysia and Kyo ran hand in hand, across the street to a neighboring park. They climbed up a hill and stood under a tree. Kyo looked around to make sure no one watched them. Ready, Alysia lifted her right hand with her red bracelet on her

wrist. She called out for Saga. After it took form, Kyo slipped on a pair of gloves. He told Alysia he was a combat mage. He can channel mana directly from weapons that he chose. Kyo created a circle of light from his gloves. A portal appeared before him and a sword emerged. Kyo received the sword from his father, passed down from father to son for generations. Kyo drew the sword and the wind brushed his hair. Alysia remembered when they met in the first grade. Kyo was always alone and quiet. She came to him and cheered him up. Since then, they never left each other's side. Seeing him today, she felt she could trust he would never hurt her. Alysia never said it aloud to him, as she saw his hand reached out to her. She took his hand and together, they practiced magic.

The middle of the week came and Alysia held her mother's hand. Today she would have her brain scanned. Alysia's hand shivered from fear and begged her mother to stay with her. Her mother let go as Marcel escorted the child into a room. The last she saw of her mother was gentle smile and waved of her hand, saying goodbye. Alysia sat down on the chair. She watched Marcel placed white circular patches on her forehead and clipped on her hair. He connected them to a computer and moved a lamp over her head. It took a while as Alysia's looked round the room dark room. The only light was the crack in the door from the hallway. Marcel sat at his desk and told Alysia to close her eyes. He started the machine and the light flashed through her eyelids. She felt her head hurting and she screamed from the pain.

She underwent therapy for weeks. Her concussion overwhelmed her emotions. She heard voices repeating the same words. They said if she did not stop expressing emotions the pain would continue. She could not help it. Her head really hurts. She wanted them to stop, but they insisted she stop feeling emotions. The experiment was about to fail again, but this time the process changed directions. Alysia felt the invasion of her memories again. It was humiliating. She sensed mana entering her mind. The spell cast on her erased her knowledge of emotions. The definitions, the meanings, the word themselves in her vocabulary, all vanished from her thoughts. She no

longer knew what pain felt like. She no longer understood the definition of happy. She no longer knew what love or hate was. They were all gone. She stopped crying and the pain in her head went away. She no longer felt anything in her heart despite its crying pulse. The difficult part of the experiment ended.

The next phase began. With ease, the erased her free will, both physically and psychologically. Alysia no longer could resist them. She no longer could tell them no. She accepted everything they said and commanded.

In the final phase, her memories opened like a book. Every aspect and detail for everyone to see. Only this time, she disappeared from each moment of her life. During her birthdays, she hugged her parents, only it looked like they hugged themselves. When she scored a goal during her hockey game, her teammates rallied around her, but they high five into thin air. When she held Kyo's hand running up the hill, he led no one. Every part of her life, she was there, yet not there, as though she watched another person's life.

They told her that life was a lie. That life belonged to someone else. Those memories replaced her real ones. She never knew this fact. Unable to express the feelings of this new truth, she asked if she would ever get her stolen memories back. They told her they were gone forever. Her heart tried to resist this false information. Without her free will, Alysia had no choice but to accept this as fact.

One last memory remained. Alysia stood before a mirror trying on the red bracelet she bought that day. Seeing her reflection, she believed that was not the real Alysia Morales but another girl with that name. She believed she would never regain her original memories. She had to live with these lies forever. With the feeling of trust erased, her heart gave up and filled with cold emptiness...

...and her real body, her true self, vanished from the mirror.

To Be Continued...

