

Arcana Magi - c.20:

Compelling

by H-M Brown

Karl drove past a sign that read 'Used Car Lot.' The elf traded his minivan for a large size minivan, capable of seating the Sentinels and lay Reya in the back. He had the radio on and listened to the news report. He stopped at a signal light as a row of three police cars drove past him at the intersection. With lights flashing and sirens blaring, they all went in the direction of the motel. He looked up at the sign for the interstate pointing ahead for travelers. There was concern as he watched the cars in the distance. He hoped they would turn to another block. They were not.

"This just in.' The anchorman on the radio said. 'There has been a break in the case regarding the attack at Newark Airport early this week. A suspect has been arrested, linked to the airport incident. Reports are coming right now in Springfield, New Jersey. Authorities said the suspect is female in her late twenties to early thirties. She was found with a teenage girl authorities believed may have been kidnapped. There will be a press conference this afternoon. This is 1212 AM News, today is Thursday July 25th. It will be noon at the sound of the tone."

The sound of a horn from the car behind the minivan startled Karl. The elf turned right to follow the police cars. He kept his distance, driving casually, as to not draw attention to the authorities. He saw traffic up ahead redirected by a roadblock to turn left on an intersection. The elf pulled aside the road and saw black vehicles and police cars all over the place. Karl drove into the parking lot and made his way to a restaurant. He parked the minivan behind the building and stepped out, walking the rest of the way.

He arrived behind a fence across from the motel. There were Mystic Intelligence Agents, state troopers, county sheriffs and local police everywhere. He used his sharp elven eyes to see if Suzie or

Reya were okay, but all he saw were authorities removing all the belongings in the three rooms they rented. He ducked down on the fence as an officer walked by to talk to his partner.

"Crazy isn't it?" The officer said to his partner.

"Yeah. They said that woman kidnapped that teenage girl. The kid was acting crazy. Behaved like a cat I heard."

"Reya?" Karl whispered.

"Such a shame. So where did they take them?"

"Those guys in the business suits didn't say. They just placed the girl in the ambulance and the woman in an unmarked car and drove off. Took them away half an hour ago."

"Wow they work fast."

An officer came out from behind the motel carrying the box of evidence and handing it to an agent. Karl slapped the fence, catching the officer's attention. The elf watched them looking in his direction until an agent approached them. With the officers no longer looking in his direction, Karl slipped out from the back and returned to the minivan. Knowing that Suzie and Reya are heading for Mystic Intelligence, Karl hopped into his minivan and headed for the interstate. He received a phone call from Fynir and he answered it.

"Fynir."

"I saw the report on my phone's web page. What happened?"

"I don't know," Karl turned the corner and saw the highway ahead. 'but I'm heading for Mystic Intelligence right now."

"I'll meet you there."

"But you're..."

"It doesn't matter. They could be setting up a trap for the girls."

"Alright, I'll see you there." Karl turned onto the interstate highway marked for Newark. He picked up speed and flew by every car.

At Avalon Tech, Oryn got off the phone with the commissioner of Mystic Intelligence. The executive smiled as Karyn watched the breaking news coverage on television. Oryn stood before the old

mage with a smug look. She turned off the monitor and crossed her arms. She expected Karyn to admit her theory worked.

"I'm not impressed." Karyn said with a monotone voice.

"You saw how fast they found them. And according my aculations, the girls will be on their way soon."

"You do realize the reporter said that the authorities received an anonymous tip. Anybody could have seen us or recognized us from the news reports."

"You just don't get it, do you? This was my spell in action."

Karyn just stood there. Her eyes were half opened, not one single expression came out of her face. The mood angered Oryn to the point that the executive raised her hand ready to slap her.

"Where did you get the idea from?" Her question stopped Oryn from striking.

"What?"

"You said you want to convince me. Then tell me where you got this idea for your theory from?"

Oryn lowered her arm and thought it over. She walked away from Karyn as the old mage watched her movements. The executive stopped short of her desk and stared at her book. She turned around and told her story.

"I was thirteen years old when it happened. On my way home from school, a strange hole ripped out from nowhere. Just appeared out of thin air. It was beautiful. But like a rose, the thorn emerged, and I found myself pulled into it. It was very painful falling through the portal. It destroyed my clothes and schoolbooks. It was never ending. I did not know how long I was falling but eventually, I saw a strange light around my wrists. They were shackles, but they did not connect to anything. Then a collar wrapped around my neck and they all glowed red. I was scared. I didn't know what was happening. There were flashes of math equations feeding into my mind. I was learning this as I fell through the portal. I saw a light at the end and I wanted to get out. What was beyond that light was another world. I could almost see a room. Then someone stood there. It was a shadow. It looked like a boy. I couldn't tell what age

he was. He had shackles and a collar like me. What he did next became a revelation."

"What did he do?" Karyn said as Oryn said on the chair.

"He raised his hand up and a chain stretched out from one of his shackles. It connected with my collar and turned it grey. At that precise moment, I saw mathematical equations flash in my head. He said something to me but all I heard was 'minus fate'. Before I knew it, I flew back through the portal and returned to our world. I never got to step into that boys world. Ever since then those two words, and the equations in my mind, has led me to believe that destiny and fate were intertwined, with mathematical calculations. After research upon research, I now have the ability to control the fate and destiny of everything and everyone."

"You're insane." Karyn said. The first thought that instantly came to mind. It was something that did not sit well with Oryn as she got up out of her seat.

"Very well." Oryn said as she took her notepad. 'After you meet Vyndor, I will see to it that you meet your destiny... and die."

Danica found herself in a dilemma. She did not know where Avalon Tech was. Worse than that, she did not know her way around Newark. A foolish error she readily admits to. The thief felt she let her feelings and emotions for Alysia cloud her judgment. She was not only lost in a foreign country and an unknown city, but she was all alone. Thankfully the rain stopped.

"Nurture the weak, crush the strong." Danica reminded herself. A mantra she repeated over and over in her mind. Remembering how strong Alysia looked in the web video, casting such powerful spells. It left a remarkable impression of a worthy opponent and a wonderful magical item to possess. Her failure to summon Saga left Danica with only one solution to steal it, kill Alysia. But she felt that by killing Alysia in her current state of mind, she would be killing the weak. It would go against everything she preached to her parents. Yet something resonated in her heart that she was beginning to hate. A strange feeling about Alysia that she does not

want to face. The thief tried every bit her best to suppress this so she could focus on her plan.

Danica found herself walking along a large street. It had three lanes going in each direction. There were police cars and military vehicles parked every three blocks apart. There were no sign of people walking around. Businesses were closed. It was as though life had ended and only the military ruled the streets. The activity in this area was intense. The sounds of sirens in the distance made the thief slid into a nearby alley. Black unmarked cars escorted by New Jersey State Troopers passed by. She watched each car pass by. That was when she saw Suzie in the middle car with her head down, followed by an ambulance. She stepped out into the open as the rest of the vehicles flew past her.

"Was that Suzie?" Danica paused for a moment as thoughts of going to Avalon Tech changed to heading for Mystic Intelligence. She could not understand why she thought about going there. Her wish was to face Oryn and fight her. Her eyes weakened for a moment. Thinking about the parade of unmarked vehicles and the ambulance, she felt compelled to go to Mystic Intelligence instead. She blinked her eyes out of the trance and walked in the direction the cars went. Danica at first ran but they were too fast. Even if she did use her spell to follow them, she would not keep up and waste her mana and energy. She followed as best as she could down the street. Learning from her parents, usually a parade of police cars on straightaway road would mean that the precinct is nearby. Watching how her parents operated she followed this advice and stayed on the same street.

Inside Kyo's house, Alysia stared at the picture of herself and her parents with Kyo at a picnic. She still could not believe that they were really her parents. Despite the insistence during Therapy that they stole her life, it was hard for her to accept that she would believe such a lie so easily. The thought of pain inflicted on by Oryn was the only explanation on why she gave in. She slid her fingers over the surface of the frame. The winged girl tried to keep her

composure so she would not trigger the enchantment. She heard footsteps stomping down the stairs and there was Kyo slipping on a pair of black gloves with a bookbag on his back.

"What are those?" She said looking at the glove, with an emotionless voice that made Kyo grimace.

"These are the gloves I used to contain my weapons. You don't..." Kyo stepped back. He watched what he said fearing he would upset Alysia. Kyo saw the photo in her hand, took it from her, and placed it back on the table. 'I'm a combat mage and I keep my families weapons in a pocket universe within these gloves, that I could at anytime. I can channel mana directly from these weapons and cast spells. It's the only way.'

Kyo handed Alysia a pair of white baseball gloves.

"Here are the gloves you wanted. I didn't think I'd still have them."

"Thank you." Alysia took the gloves and slid them over her hands, covering the scar on her right knuckles. She fixed them so that her bracelet would not rub against her skin and flexed her fingers to get a feel for them. 'Let's go.'

Kyo stood by the door as Alysia took the yellow ponchos from the table. He watched her stare at the photo one more time as her wings stretched a little. Kyo's eyes froze in place as Alysia picked up the ponchos. His heart skipped a beat, as he stared at her. When he last saw her people easily mistook her for a boy at times. It always drove Alysia angry. Now he sees she developed into a young lady. Her wings made her even more beautiful than he could imagine. Her teal color eyes, despite the lack of emotion made her look unique. Despite the smears of leftover brown dye, he liked her new white and blue hair as much as her original color.

"Kyo." Alysia said as he snapped out of his fantasy. 'Did I miss my birthday?'

Kyo became silent. He felt that now was not the time. There were things to worry about with Danica heading to Avalon Tech. Most importantly, he did not want Alysia to feel pain.

"Tell me." Alysia handed him the yellow poncho and lifted her head up to look into his eyes.

"Yes. You're thirteen now. June 22 is your birthday." Kyo saw no reaction in her eyes. They were dead, no life in them. He wondered if she felt pain or not.

"And yours?"

The question soon became a reality for Kyo. She does not remember everything. Yet she showed a willingness to regain what she had lost. He smiled as he unfolded the yellow poncho.

"May 18. I'm thirteen also."

"Am I upsetting you with all these questions?"

"No." Kyo grabbed her shoulders out of reflex. The sudden movement brought an emotional reflex in Alysia's eyes. He paused for a moment and released her. "I'm sorry."

Alysia took his hands and held them tight. She did not mean to make Kyo react that way. She just wanted everything to seem normal, at least in some sense. But with so many questions on her mind, she felt she would annoy him.

"How much do you remember?" Kyo said.

"It feels like there are pieces missing in my mind, like an incomplete puzzle. When I try to remember something it's a blank, and yet there are parts that I can remember." Alysia slipped on her poncho, her wings burst into mist. She helped Kyo slip on the yellow poncho she gave him and fixed it over his bookbag. "I remember doing this when we were in third grade. You always struggled to reach around the back to get the end so you could tug it down like this."

Alysia tugged the poncho over the bookbag. She placed her hands on the covering and tears streaked down her face. She clenched her teeth, not so much to resist the enchantment, but to not feel weak. The winged girl looked up as Kyo turned around. She felt his arms pull her in and they hugged each other. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath calming her emotions.

"My head hurts."

"Just relax Alysia. We're wasting time. Come on." Kyo led Alysia out of the house as Brie just arrived at the top step. He pulled out a key tied to a string around his neck and let Alysia go. As Kyo locked the door, Brie took Alysia by the hand with a smile and made her run down the porch steps with her.

"You're too slow Alysia." Brie said as they approached Chisame. "Maybe we should put a barrier between you two so you could focus on our situation."

"Sorry." Alysia watched Kyo walk down the stairs. "I just haven't had a chance to learn about my past."

"I know Alysia." Chisame said approaching the winged girl. "I'm sorry we're rushing you into this, but you understand better than we do what will happen if Oryn gets Danica."

Chisame stood beside the winged girl and pulled the hood over her head hiding her white and light blue hair. Chisame wanted to keep the winged girl covered and prevent people from noticing her.

"We could learn about your past on our way to Avalon Tech. Alright?"

Alysia saw the smile on Chisame's face. It felt unusual for the winged girl. It was like having a big sister looking out for her. Just like how Brie stood beside her and tried her best to make her feel comfortable. Even Reya was by her side. Alysia knew Reya did her best to make her feel safe under harsh conditions. She gave a light smile, doing her best to resist the pain. She gave a nod and walked forward. As everyone left the neighborhood, Alysia looked back one more time. She watched her home with the 'For Sale' sign drift away in the distance. Wondering what happened to her parents, it soon became her newest priority.

Even though Alysia remembered some of her past, she still could not remember her way around. The Sentinels therefore turned to Kyo to act as a guide. Along the way, Kyo stopped at a small grocery store where Alysia and he would buy candy and drinks. He wanted to at least stock up on extra food he did not have at home in case something went wrong. But the store closed due to the city lock down. After a few more minutes of walking, they crossed the street

and arrived at a school. Kyo slowed his walk to allow Alysia a chance to see it. The pacing gave Alysia enough time to remember.

"Didn't I know a girl here?" The winged Sentinel said.

"You were best friends with Natasha." Kyo said as he slid his hands on the gate, his finger slapping each bar.

"Natasha?" Alysia felt the name before. A flash of memory struck her like lightning as she remembered skating alongside her in a hockey game. She remembered the girl taking her into a store and buying her winged hairclips on her first date with Kyo. "What happened to her?"

"She..." Kyo took a deep breath. "she was devastated by your death. After she finished seventh grade, she and her parents moved away. I haven't heard from her since."

"Seventh grade?" Chisame said as they she looked up at the school building sign reading elementary school. "But this an elementary school."

"Actually," Alysia said. "this is one the few elementary schools in Newark that have grades kindergarten to eighth."

"Really?"

"It's the only school we both know." Kyo looked at Alysia and she nodded.

"We have kindergarten to eight grade schools in Seattle, but the orphanage I live in send us to elementary school first then to middle school then to high school. I was about to start seventh grade this year. Before all this happened."

"Well in Japan I was going to be in my last year in junior high before going to high school. But, after I was attack by a monster and went blind, Madam Karyn invited my parents and I to live in Merydia so I could get medical help. Because I'm fourteen, I was able to enroll into Memorial Academy instead."

"Memorial Academy?" Kyo said as the school left their sight in the distance.

"Yeah. You heard of it?"

"It was where I wanted to go." Alysia said suddenly.

"You knew about Memorial Academy?" Brie said lifting her head up to Alysia.

"Kyo told me about it. I liked the idea but I wasn't born with mana."

"You were born without mana?" Chisame and Brie stopped. They looked at the winged girl confused by what she said.

"That's right." A flash of memory came to mind. "My parents had mana, but I was born without it. It was when I had that concussion in the hockey game, that's when I saw mana first time."

"Oh yeah." Brie said. "I forgot that you mentioned that once before."

"How strange?" Chisame said continued walking with everyone. "My mana kicked in when I hit puberty."

"I was born with mana right from the start." Brie said as Kyo added to the conversation.

"It would appear that gaining the ability to see mana differs from person to person."

"Another mystery of life." Chisame said with a smile. "As Madam Karyn would say."

They were now away from the familiar neighborhoods and areas that Kyo and Alysia grew up in. They were now in Newark that Kyo knows how to get around. Alysia though never had the chance to see these areas since her parents forbade her to go out of the neighborhood. In fact, she remembered them saying that she be allowed at the age of thirteen, so long as she was with friends, and had her cell phone with her. Alysia thought about how annoying it was that they would act so overprotective of her. She wished for that, just for that. To hear them say one more time to be careful.

It took them awhile to get across the city, but they arrived at the downtown district, where Alysia said Avalon Tech was. The tall skyscrapers, reaching out into the sky was a marvel to behold for Brie and Chisame. The wide multi-lane streets, empty of traffic and people, worried Alysia and Kyo as they stood at the corner. It did not make sense. The entire city now felt like a ghost town.

"Where are the people?" Kyo said.

"I don't know." Alysia said.

"Maybe..." Brie said. "...the military sent people home."

"Alysia?" Chisame saw the winged girl lifting her hands up shivering. "What's wrong?"

Alysia looked up at the buildings as an unmarked black car drove by across the street. The car turned toward them and slowly moved past by, there was a strange wave around it. She followed its movement as Brie and Chisame stood beside her.

"Did you see that?" Alysia turned to Chisame.

"I did." The Sentinel felt something strange from the car. "There was some kind of aura around it."

"I feel weird." Brie clutched her arms. "I feel like we're supposed to go to Mystic Intelligence."

"What?" Kyo said as he stood in front of the Sentinels. He jerked his head back as he saw weakness in their eyes. He looked closely at Alysia as she blinked her eyes snapping out of the trance along with Brie and Chisame. "Alysia?"

"We have to go to Mystic Intelligence."

"What happened? I thought we had to go to Avalon Tech."

"I know." Chisame said. "But for some reason we have to follow that car and go to Mystic Intelligence instead. Let's go!"

The Sentinels ran after the car as Kyo watched them in confusion. He followed them as they ran passed an arena. The run was long and tiring as they reached a large building. They saw unmarked cars and vans surrounding the unmarked structure. Agents talked to each other casually and patrol cars dispatched to other parts of the city. It looked like a convention. Kyo and the Sentinels knelt behind a parked car. They saw an ambulance parked along the side building. Next to it was a van where an agent approached it and leaned inside.

"That's Mystic Intelligence?" Chisame said.

"It is." Brie said. "I've been to the Seattle branch and their buildings are always unmarked. But why are they out in the open like this."

"I don't like it.' Kyo said. 'Let's get out here and get to Avalon Tech."

"I know,' Alysia said. 'but I feel like we have to do something here."

"Look.' Brie pointed at the agent carrying Karl's duffle bag and the box of evidence. 'How did they get the evidence and all our things?"

"Suzie. Reya." Alysia turned to Chisame and saw Danica across the street hiding in the parking lot. The winged girl tapped on Chisame's shoulders and pointed out to thief across the street.

"Well we found her. Thank goodness.' Chisame looked over the trunk and saw that the agents outside the building were not patrolling the area. She waved everyone to follow her and scurried across the street keeping low until they reached the first parked car. 'Danica."

The thief turned to their direction and rolled her eyes in disbelief. She did not expect them to find her. With a deep breath, she checked the agents in the distance and saw everything was clear. She waved them over and kept her eyes on the agents as they arrived.

"Why are you here?" Chisame said with a whisper as they entered the parking lot.

"I was almost at Avalon Tech when I saw Suzie in the back of the agent's car."

"Suzie?' Alysia said as Brie looked over the hood of the car at the empty ambulance. 'So she is here? Was Reya with her?"

"No.' Danica leaned back with her hands resting over her head. 'But they had Reya in the ambulance. She's awake now."

"She is?!" Alysia said as Brie covered her mouth.

"Someone's coming." The hacker said as everyone leaned down to keep as low as possible.

Kyo and the Sentinels remained silent as an agent, all by himself, entered the parking lot. He stood by a car not far from them and lit a cigarette. As he took a puff, Alysia calmed down as Chisame sat on the ground with her arms crossed.

"It's too late to wonder how they got Reya and Suzie. Now is the time to have a rescue plan."

"I have an idea." Danica said with a smile.

"No killing." Brie and Chisame said together.

"As cool as it would be for me to kill off the entire precinct, I was thinking more about infiltrating the building to break them out.' Danica saw Alysia, Brie, Chisame, and Kyo stared at her not believing a single word she said. 'Okay, maybe I'll kill a couple along the way, but that's only if they get in my way."

Everyone shook their heads side to side as Alysia saw the agent throwing away the cigarette and walk back to the building. Looking at the ambulance, the winged girl thought of an idea, and smiled.

"Chisame.' Alysia said pressing her hand on her head. 'Look at the ambulance."

"I see it.' Chisame fixed her glasses on her face. 'What about it?"

"They got Reya and Suzie. Knowing Oryn, she'll have Mystic Intelligence transport them to Avalon Tech. Rather than charge inside; we could use that to our advantage."

"But what about the evidence.' Brie said. 'Without it we can't prove Avalon Tech is behind all of this that's going."

"You're right.' Alysia said. 'We have no choice but to go inside."

"Before they destroy it." Danica said without looking at anyone.

"I see.' Chisame knew this was going to be more difficult then she imagined. She formed a circle with the Sentinels and left Kyo out. She saw him leaning on the other parked car watching them and she slid to the side. 'We need all the help we can get."

Alysia took Kyo's hand and guided him inside. With their gloved hands clenched tight, Chisame laid out her plans on how to rescue Reya and Suzie and reclaim the evidence.

To Be Continued...

