

# Arcana Magi - c.9: Brie Williams, Sentinel of Byakko

*by* H-M Brown

There they sat side by side on the bed Saturday morning. Their backs leaned on the wall, hugging their knees and not a word spoken. Alysia just finished telling her story to Brie, even though her own memories were fragmented and missing. She did the best she could to explain what happened to her. Brie, though still processing the horror that was Therapy, talked about herself, and how she got captured.

Brie Williams was born on September 22, 2000, during the Autumnal Equinox. Her parents were Darnell and Sharonda Williams, two of Merydia's greatest heroes. The country and its citizens awarded their heroism for defeating the Troll Underground and thwarting the evil Magus Nor. Their names written down in both history and song. They settled in Seattle, Washington where they had Brie.

When Brie turned ten, Merydia called for her parents help to deal with a new and unknown threat. They left her in the care of a nanny and said their goodbye to her. That was the last time she hugged them. A few weeks later, she learned from Mystic Intelligence that they died in a battle. No one knew what attacked them. The news broke Brie's heart. She watched Merydians bury them with honor and their names etched in the walls of the Hall of Legends. With no relatives, Mystic Intelligence's Seattle Branch placed her in an orphanage for her protection. She remained quiet during her time there and became isolated since she could not talk about her parents or Merydia.

By the age of eleven, Brie learned how to use a computer. She searched the internet and read about inventions in Merydia. The

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child studied science and technology, and drew blueprints for her own creations. She would sneak off to a junkyard after school to gather parts and began building her first invention, The Manalight. A flashlight that used mana as its energy source. It became her pride and joy, especially since her parents never had the chance to teach her how to channel mana and cast spells. Her inexperience directed her to inventing machines that operated on mana. It was very difficult to build the inventions especially without access to spellbooks, or any book from Merydia on mana and its technology. This was due to the banning of selling such books outside Merydia. So, she kept all her inventions and blueprints small and simple.

One Friday afternoon in the summer of 2011, the orphanage took the children on a field trip to the local museum. As they followed the tour guide down a hallway to see some fossils, Brie fell behind and lost the group. She wandered into an exhibit closed off to the public. The room had paintings hanging on the walls. Before the biggest painting of them all, was a woman staring at the majestic painting. Drawn on the canvas were four warriors, two men and two women, fighting a monster. Each of these warriors held a weapon, a hammer, a gauntlet, a sword, and a staff. She looked up at the picture with awe as the woman beside called the painting 'The Sentinels'. Brie looked up at the adult and introduced herself. The woman then introduced herself as Professor Catherine McClean, the curator of the museum.

Brie asked about the painting and Catherine told her about how the Sentinels spent generations fighting all kinds of evil. There have been varieties of stories throughout world history. The curator figured that maybe Sentinels were something passed down from person to person. She showed Brie a small pendant with a yellow gem in the middle. It looked like a cat's eye. The curator said that she found it in South Carolina two years earlier. She figured it might have something to do with the Sentinel's because the yellow gem matched the one on the hammer in the painting. However, after a thorough analysis, it proved to be a fake. The tour guide arrived and told Brie that everyone from the orphanage looked everywhere for

her. Learning this fact about Brie, and no longer needing it, Catherine offered the pendant to the child. Excited about it she gave a hug and the curator placed the jewelry around Brie's neck.

For the next year, she wore that pendant with all her heart. Thinking about the legacy of her parents and the Sentinels, she used it as her motivation to be like her parents and the Sentinels. So, she pushed herself. Learning everything about computers and built inventions that used mana. She practiced channeling her mana but she still could not learn how to cast a spell.

When Brie turned twelve, with her inventions working with success, she tried to be a hero, and help fight bad guys. But as she looked around for crime to stop she instead bumped into members of Mystic Intelligence. They confiscated her inventions and blueprints while reminding her that she was to remain hidden for her protection. Once again, she felt deflated and found her dreams crashed to a halt.

Brie spent months keeping to herself, never wanting to invent things again. She found it pointless with Mystic Intelligence around. In time, she set aside the idea of casting spells and inventing things, and interacted with the other children. She did not care about foster homes, despite the efforts of the orphanage. Schoolwork became a little too easy at times, and boring. It would not be until March when Brie laid down on her bed, closing her eyes, and wished once more to be a Sentinel. It happened. She opened her eyes and there was her pendant floating over her body. She thought of her parents and the four heroes in that painting. She saw mana from the pendant floating to her chest and its resonance pulsed with her heart, yet it felt empty. Unaware of what she had done, she reached out to it, thought of a name, and called for it.

Legacy.

It burst into droplets of light and gathered around the yellow gem. It grew into a hilt where the jewel rested with four arrows pointing outward in four directions like a compass. A large metal

neck stretched out until it formed a hammerhead at the end. She took the hilt and sat up. It felt light in her hands as the mist flowed through her fingers. Brie left her room and went outside to the playground. There she stood in an open spot where the full moon shined down on her and gave light. Brie examined the hammer and stared deeply at the yellow gem. It looked exactly like the one in the painting and she smiled. She called herself a Sentinel and lifted the hammer high above her head, feeling the heroism in herself.

When she lowered the hammer, she felt it vibrate and gripped its metal neck to make it stop. She thought about how sound waves could pass through metal and rock in different levels. She wondered if the neck itself was hollow that allowed sound to pass through it. She approached a nearby tree and held the hammer like a bat. She swung it toward the tree and felt the motion slow down. The air rippled like water, it felt like she struck the tree even though the hammer did not touch the trunk. The tree shook knocking some leaves of the branches and the force back from the sound wave knocked her to the ground. She looked up at the leaves as they rained down on her and she laughed. Whenever she had an opportunity after school, she would practice using Legacy.

When summer arrived, she showed Catherine the hammer, and the woman felt joy that the story of the Sentinel's was real. Brie would go to the museum everyday and practiced using Legacy to manipulate the ripples in the air. With Catherine's help, Brie was able to get access on spellbooks from Merydia. Brie took her time, through trial and error, and learned how to cast spells. She even kept the pendant a secret from Mystic Intelligence so they would not take it away from her. Brie and Catherine learned more about Merydia and its laws regarding magic and did their best to keep the story of the Sentinel's away from everyone.

By late July, on a Thursday, when she returned to the orphanage after one of her practice sessions, Brie felt dizzy as the pendant glowed bright. She collapsed on her bed. Brie opened her eyes and found herself in a world of darkness. There stood Reya, holding her head in pain. A large white tiger appeared before them. Its body

towered over Brie that scared her into running away but had nowhere to go. Reya told her it was okay and Brie introduced herself. Brie listened to the catgirl's story as she gave Brie the location, passwords, and told her of Avalon Techs plans. She warned that they had Alysia, the Sentinel of Suzaku under their control and were trying to capture the others. Brie absorbed every information she could from the catgirl. Finally, Brie listened to Reya saying she could not be a Sentinel anymore to the tiger. It nodded its head and approached Brie looking back at Reya. It howled that it they will return for her and Brie agreed before they disappeared from her sight.

Unsure of what happened to Reya, Brie looked up to the tiger. Its feminine voice introduced itself as Byakko. The last thing the tiger remembered was what happened to Reya, when Avalon Tech experimented on her and a kitten before it fell into stasis. It apologized for not providing any more information but Brie said it was okay. The hammer appeared before Brie and she snatched it into her hand. With a tight grip, she told Byakko its name was Legacy and that she will do her best to rescue Reya and Alysia. The white tiger nodded and told her that since this was her decision, it's assistance to help would not violate its creed of not interfering with her life. When Brie woke up, she saw the time set to one o'clock, Friday morning. She washed up, changed clothes and snuck out to orphanage office computer.

Inside the office, she used the computer to hack into Avalon Tech. She found herself challenged by another hacker named Analog. Every move they made was met program for program, click for click. By five o'clock, Brie defeated Analog and controlled security and company network. With control over the security cameras, she saw a girl with a staff in hand and recognized it from the painting. She figured the girl was Alysia, whom Reya talked about. Brie followed her movements with each camera and saw Alysia carry Reya toward the elevator. She feared they were not going to make it when the buttons did not light up. Reading the blueprints she brought up on the computer, she took control of the elevators when she found

Alysia and Reya cornered. With a little distraction with the sprinkler system, they escaped. The elevator stopped at the lobby and she switched to the entrance cameras. She saw security guards everywhere. She programmed the computer to look like they were back to normal and made the guards disperse.

Brie cheered on as Alysia walked toward the entrance, until she saw her collapsed. She sat there quietly, trying to understand what happened. She watched helplessly as Alysia struggled to move forward and passed out. With her mouth covered, she watched the lone guard approach them. He looked out toward the elevators and picked up Reya. Brie opened another window to an outside camera and the guard carried the catgirl away from the building. She looked at the last window and found Alysia picked up by a man accompanied by a woman. She did not know who they were but she wondered where they came from since she controlled the only elevator. She followed their movements and saw a hidden stairwell. Brie went through the building blueprints on the screen and found nothing on it. She placed her hands on her head and felt failure. Minutes later, a message appeared on the monitor. It told her to activate the webcam window and audio. When she did, there was Alysia in the hands of a man identified as Jonas. Oryn introduced herself and told Brie to surrender or Alysia dies. Fearing her life, Brie accepted and received her instructions.

Before anyone woke up, Brie left the office and waited by a bus stop not far from the orphanage as instructed. In one hour, a limo arrived to pick Brie up and escorted her to a private airport where the chartered jet waited to take her to Newark. Exhausted from a long night, Brie fell asleep and woke up Saturday morning to Alysia's voice.

There they were waiting for what Oryn would do next. Time felt slow with each passing second. They ran out of things to say about each other so the best thing Brie could do right now, was to help Alysia.

"I'll teach you about emotions and feelings."

"You can?"

"Well, you can't live without feelings. It's not normal. Even your voice sounds empty."

"Empty?"

"Yeah. You had to have felt that."

"No." Alysia rested her head on her knees and stared out across the room.

Brie just looked at Alysia silently. The thought of having no feelings saddened her. Along with the thought of Reya falling into a coma because of Therapy, the idea that people could be this evil left her speechless. She thought about what her parents would do in a situation like this, but without them to give advice, her ability to help Alysia would be even more difficult. Placing her hand on Alysia's shoulder, she smiled and nodded when they face each other.

"We'll get out of here. I promised. Now that Reya is out of the building, we only have ourselves to worry about. We can trust this Zach West right?"

"He never hurt us. He was helpful."

"Okay. So all we have to do is get back our pendant and bracelet, and break out of here."

"I'll just go to sleep like before."

"I'll drag you out."

"And I can't fight back. I tried."

Brie closed her eyes and growled at Alysia's negative words. She punched the Sentinel of Suzaku in the shoulder and they looked at each other as Alysia rubbed her shoulder.

"So you do feel pain." Brie sighed and took Alysia's hand. "Look, I may not understand what you're going through emotionally, but the one thing I won't do is give up in the face of evil. Believe me, once we get our weapons back, we'll blow through them and bust out of here. We can do it. Then we'll find Reya, go to Mystic Intelligence, and tell them what to Avalon Tech did. They'll arrest them. You'll see."

Brie's smile brimmed with confidence when the door opened. The hallway light outside shined on them as they looked outside. There stood Oryn carrying two sets of Mage Suits for the girls to wear.

At Level B4, Brie followed Alysia and Oryn as she examined her lavender and purple Mage Suit with light pink gloves, boots and shrug jacket. She touched the matching colored hairclips on her head and noticed that Alysia had a set of her own.

"What are these for?" Brie said to Oryn, but received no answer. She looked at the gurneys and medical equipment throughout the facility. It felt like she was in a mad scientist lab rather than a corporate building. Chills ran along her skin as she thought about the twisted experiments done to Alysia and Reya. Fear of this being done to her trembled her hands. Brie looked ahead of Oryn and saw Jonas, Marcel, Anna, and Lyn standing before a television with a camera on top. She and Alysia stood in front of Oryn as everyone towered over the girls like trees. The television turned on and within the screen was an orb set on a pillow. Brie stood there wondering why it was on television.

"I take it you could not grace us with your presence again, Vyndor?" Oryn said to the monitor as Brie look at the woman as though she was crazy.

"I'm settling a few issues you left on my plate, but yes I couldn't show up once again. So these are the Sentinels?"

"Yes. Introduce yourselves ladies."

"I am Alysia Morales, Sentinel of Suzaku." She said hypnotically as her eyes twitched at the orb's familiar voice. She cannot remember where she heard his voice but her heart never pounded this way before. Her hands quaked.

Brie remained silent on the other hand. She could not believe the orb actually talked. She visited Merydia before with her parents and was aware of the some of the races living there like elves and fairies, but never had she ever seen an orb like Vyndor before. She felt Oryn's breath by her ear as the executive leaned close to the child's ear.

"Do not make a fool of me. Introduce yourself."

"It's alright Oryn. I read her file. Her parent's reputation precedes even her. Right Ms. Williams?" Brie looked away as Vyndor



continued. 'You want to follow in their footsteps. Become a hero like them. Die like then.'

Brie turned to the television, her eyes wide opened, and tears welled.

"I heard that you're parents died tragically. I do believe they died as they lived. Like fools."

"SHUT UP!!" Brie's tears fell down her cheeks as Vyndor laughed and got what he wanted. She wiped her tears away and gave an angry look to the orb.

"See Oryn, that's how you manipulate a child's mind without Therapy."

"Don't think highly of yourself Vyndor."

"Of course not. After all, when you're right, you're right. Using the Therapy Room on all of our employees made things very easy when plans go wrong."

Brie tilted her head as she looked to the side and covered her mouth. Approaching everyone was Zach carrying Reya in his arms. She followed his movement as he stood beside the television for her and Alysia to see. It was the first time she saw Reya in person, still in a comatose state. She felt Alysia's hand gripping her wrist and she gripped Suzaku's hand. Not paying attention, Brie shook her head side to side not believing what she saw.

"He took her away from the building. I thought..."

Oryn placed her hands on Brie's shoulders.

"You thought you were like your parents, a hero? You're not, because a hero would not be so gullible to think that there were employees sympathetic to your problem. You are a child. See, the truth is that you both are helpless children trying to overcome a helpless situation. Did you really believe that we adults are so stupid as to just let children run freely in this building without drawing attention? Just say, you have to take a psyche test to continue working in this company or you're fired, and they will stand in line. With the economy in such a bad state, people will do anything to keep their jobs. Even at the expense of their minds. Mr. West is no

different. You don't possess a machine like the Therapy Room and not use it to its fullest capabilities."

"What is my daughter doing out of bed?" A woman's voice said from within the Therapy Room door. Out of the darkness came Sydney. She approached everyone dressed like a mechanic, wiping her hands clean with a rag. She stood before Reya in Zach's arm and checked her forehead.

"Ah Sydney, I would like you to meet the Sentinels, Alysia and Brie. Ladies, this is Sydney Everheart. Reya's mother."

Alysia and Brie looked up to Sydney as the woman looked at them, her sense of shock was nonexistent due to seeing what they had done to Reya. Kneeling before the girls to examine them, she sighed with relief that Brie was all right, but when she turned to Alysia, tears fell down her cheeks realizing she was the one Oryn talked about not long ago.

"How could you?" Sydney placed her hands on Alysia's cheeks and stroked the teen's hair back. 'She's just a child.' Sydney looked up to Oryn with angered eyes. She channeled her mana but Oryn placed her hand on Brie's head.

"Sentinels are expendable and can be replaced... very easily."

Sydney closed her eyes, stopped channeling her mana, and stood to her feet. She watched Oryn move her hand back and Brie rushed to Reya's mother with a hug. Sydney kept her eyes on Alysia as Vyndor spoke.

"So what will you do Oryn?"

"Simple.' The executive smiled and walked past Sydney and the Sentinels, approaching the television. 'Brie will go to Level B2 and build her inventions that we acquired from Mystic Intelligence. Sydney will continue to fix the Therapy Room. And to show my humanity, I'll allow Alysia to tend to Reya while she rest in bed. This will keep the Sentinels separated.

"Excellent Oryn."

"Now are you convinced about my theory?" Oryn said with a smile.

“Indeed I am. I never thought your calculations would bring them together so easily.”

“And we still have our little internet video. Many fake Sentinels have been responding to it, but it's only a matter of time that the real Sentinels, Genbu and Seiryuu would respond.”

Oryn and Vyndor giggled like children at the success of their plan.

“Good. I will see you in a moment Oryn?”

“Yes.”

“Sydney?’ Vyndor said getting her to face the screen. ‘It's good to see you again. Take care.’”

Sydney grabbed a keyboard and threw it at the television. The glass shattered and the monitor fell onto the ground. Sparks flew out from the circuits as Oryn cleared her throat.

“Lyn, take Sydney to the Therapy Room and make sure she fixes it. Anna, you take Brie to the tech lab and study her inventions. Marcel, take Alysia and return Reya to her bed. Zach you're dismissed, go home. Jonas you're with me.”

Everyone dispersed and left the broken television behind. The entire floor quieted and the atmosphere relaxed.

To Be Continued...

