

Karia:
Nuh-uh.

Brynna:
Just hear me out.

Karia:
No, I am not taking your magic circuits!

(Theme Music)

Brynna:
Oh, so you get to be a hero, but I don't?

Karia:
I thought heros weren't real.

Brynna:
They weren't before I met you.

Karia:
Where is this coming from, Brynna? I thought you were trying to be the "cold-blooded, practical" person preaching all about looking out for yourself, but you want to give up your own magic for me?

Brynna:
I wouldn't be giving up *all* my magic.

Karia:
Answer the question, Brynna. Why me?

Brynna:
Only if you'll tell me where this obsession with helping others comes from.

Karia:
Obsession?

Brynna:
What else would you call it? You'll throw your life away for a stranger on the street. Do you think that's normal? Because I promise you it isn't.

Karia:
It's the right thing to do.

Brynna:
It's self-harm.

Karia:
I'm doing a good thing!

Brynna:
But why?

Karia:
You don't need a reason to do the right thing.

Brynna:
Why do you break yourself for others, Karia. Why are you so hellbent on fixing others?

Karia:
Because then people will need me!

(A beat of silence)

Brynna:
Need you?

Karia:
(sighs) You saw what it was like growing up. The other kids could smell my queerness from a mile away. I was different and they knew it. So I was nice to everyone hoping they would like me. When I learned to heal it made me feel important. I had never felt important before. I had never felt wanted. Not by Dad, not by mom. I'm worthless if I can't heal.

Brynna:
That's not true.

Karia:
Oh yeah?

Brynna:
It's not. Everyone has inherent worth just by being alive. And you especially.

Karia:
And why is that?

Brynna:

You just--You just do. I just don't understand how you can possibly think you're worthless, Karia.
If you could just see what I--wait a minute.

Karia:
What?

Brynna:
Close your eyes, Karia.

Karia:
Why?

Brynna:
Because I'm going to let you see through my eyes and hear my thoughts.

Karia:
That sounds terrifying.

Brynna:
C'mon, I'm the one opening up here.

Karia:
You regularly suggest murder as a solution. What sort of nightmare is in your mind?

Brynna:
I like to keep my options open.

Karia:
I don't know about this, Brynna. It seems like a huge violation of your privacy.

Brynna:
I'm welcoming you in for this one time, Kari. Let me do this for you.

Karia:
(sighs) Okay. If you really want me to.

Brynna:
I do. But first let me do something.

(Brynna puts a hand on Karia's shoulder.)

Brynna:
Fukurō no chie.

(Magic sound)

Brynna:

I just boosted your sense of wisdom and discernment.

Karia:

What?

Brynna:

I just made you a little more wise, so you can appreciate and contemplate things on a slightly deeper level. I hope it will help.

Karia:

(deliberately) I think any help we can receive in this world is a blessing.

Brynna:

See? That's the good shit. Okay, ready?

Karia:

(apprehensively) Okay.

Brynna:

Close your eyes.

(Brynna puts a hand on Karia's forehead and begins incanting.)

Brynna:

'asmae al'afkar.

(Magic sound and music swells as Brynna's thoughts fire in rapid succession.)

Brynna:

Best friend. I can't believe she can't love herself. She saved me. I owe my mental stability to her. I love her so much. She's so pretty. I want to help her, but I'm worried she won't take it. I need her. No, I want her around. I'm so happy to have her in my life. I want to make her proud.

Please work. Please see. I love her.

(Music and magic sound reverse as Karia snaps back to attention.)

Brynna:

Did it work?

Karia:
You really feel all that about me?

Brynna:
Karia, I don't think romance is really...my thing? But I do believe in love, and...I love you.

Karia:
You're blushing so hard right now.

Brynna:
How would you know? You're colorblind.

Karia:
Yeah so how bad is it that I can tell?

Brynna:
Do you see what I mean now, though? This is how others see you, Kari. Not as a burden, not as annoying or worthless. As someone important in their lives. Not just because you try to help them, but because just by being around you others feel better and choose to be better. You get to decide who you are, but in each of our minds, you are invaluable.

Karia:
But I still don't like myself.

Brynna:
That won't change overnight. But you can change. What you are now isn't what you'll be forever.

Karia:
(starting to tear up) Yeah?

Brynna:
You deserve to be here. It's okay to still figure things out. It's okay to be imperfect. You taught me that.

Karia:
I want to make you proud, too.

Brynna:
You already are. Just, promise me something okay?

Karia:
What?

Brynna:
Be as kind to yourself as you are to others. You deserve it.

(Brynna and Karia hug)

Karia:
What was that about me saving you, though?

Brynna:
I was worried you would ask that.

Karia:
You don't have to tell me. I was just curious.

Brynna:
You're not the only one born with faulty circuits.

Karia:
What?

Brynna:
I couldn't perform magic as a child. My circuits didn't work. I knew I was an embarrassment to my mother. I knew I was a failure. So I practiced every day. I forced mana through my circuits trying to get them to open. I built new, temporary circuits through painful processes that threatened my life. I studied, I struggled, I sweat, and I bled. I did anything I could so Mother would be proud of me. And I failed over and over and over again.

Karia:
Brynna.

Brynna:
My life was agony every day. And then I met you. The sweetest little cinnamon roll who offered me her lunch one day when I forgot mine. You were poor. You didn't have the luxury of extra meals. Yet here you were, looking out for me. You were the first person to be kind to me. You were the first person in the world to treat me like I was worthy. And as we grew older, you taught me I was worth loving and that I could love myself because of it. And guess what.

Karia:
What?

Brynna:

I could start doing magic after that. My circuits opened up. Karia, I owe my ability to do magic to you. It would only be fair to return it to you now.

Karia:

I--I don't know what to say.

Brynna:

I love you, Karia. You're my best friend, and I would do anything to protect you.

Karia:

And I would do the same, which is why I can't let you do this.

Brynna:

Be selfish just this once. For me.

Karia:

Let me win just this once. For me.

Brynna:

Then we are at an impasse.

Karia:

I'm afraid so. I can't compete with you physically, and you're no match for my brains.

Brynna:

You're that smart?

Karia:

Let me put it this way: Have you ever heard of Plato, Aristotle, Socrates?

Brynna:

Yes.

Karia and Brynna:

(simultaneously) Morons!

(Both of them laugh.)

Brynna:

You know, I think I have an idea.

Karia:

Is it the cutting out my nerves thing? Because I was really hoping we could avoid that.

Brynna:
No, but you might find it even more difficult.

Karia:
What is it?

Brynna:
Well, Karia, how do you feel about therapy?

Karia:
You think me talking about my feelings will fix my magic circuits?

Brynna:
What's mental is physical. If your nervous system is compromised, and that includes your brain, then that affects your magic circuits. Just like it did for me.

Karia:
That sounds a little contrived.

Brynna:
You heal people by swapping body parts. Who knows what's possible?

Karia:
Fair point.

Brynna:
The problem is that this is going to take a lot of work, Kari. This won't happen overnight, and there's going to be a lot of times you fall on your ass and slip backward. Just be prepared for that, okay?

Karia:
Okay. So what's next?

Brynna:
You need to learn to love yourself. And that starts with affirmations. Repeat after me: I am important.

Karia:
(annoyed) I am important.

Brynna:
I am worthy of love.

Karia:
(sarcastically) I am worthy of love.

Brynna:
This doesn't work unless you mean it, Karia.

Karia:
This is so stupid, Brynna. I hate it.

Brynna:
I know. I hated it, too. But repetition creates new pathways in the neurons of your brain, which may also form new magic circuits. You need to learn to accept things, both mana and help from others.

Karia:
I still don't think this will work.

Brynna:
I don't know for sure if it will help your magic circuits, but I know it will help *you*. And you said you'd do anything, right?

Karia:
Well--

Brynna:
Then keep your word and do something good for yourself, okay? Then you can help others.

Karia:
(sighs) Okay.

Brynna:
Good.

(A doorbell rings.)

Brynna:
Huh, that's weird. Let me get th--

(A window crashes and something lands in the room)

Brynna:
Oh my god. Get down!

(Brynna tackles Karia to the ground for cover as a high pitched sound rings and their ears start ringing)

Brynna:
(Telepathically) Karia, I'm speaking telepathically. Just think of talking to me and I'll hear it.

Karia:
(telepathically) What was that?

Brynna:
(telepathically) Sense Jammer. It's like a grenade that temporarily turns you blind and deaf.

Karia:
(telepathically) Is it magic?

Brynna:
(telepathically) Worse, science. We gotta get out of here.

Karia:
(telepathically) How? I can't see anything.

Brynna:
(telepathically) I'll share my magic sight with you so you can see through my mind's eye. This is my hand. Just take it and hold on tight, okay?

Karia:
(telepathically) Okay.

Brynna:
(telepathically) Be brave, Karia. Things are about to get interesting. *Tercer ojo*.

(Magic sound)

Brynna:
(telepathically) Okay, let's go.

Brynna:
(telepathically) Is your sight starting to come back?

Karia:
(telepathically) Slowly. I'm starting to hear again.

Brynna:
(telepathically) Keep speaking telepathically for now. It'll make us harder to find.

Karia:
(telepathically) Harder for who to find?

Brynna:
(telepathically) Whom.

Karia:
(telepathically) Oh go whomst yourself.

Brynna:
(telepathically) It's a long story, but there's a group of mage-hunters called The Anti-Arcanists whose mission is to find and destroy mages. They believe we are a threat to this world and the natural order of things. Okay, out through the back door.

Karia:
(telepathically) So you think that's who's after us?

Brynna:
(Not telepathically) Well I'm pretty sure now.

Mason:
Hello, Overseer. We meet again.