

Karia:

(sighs) I've been thinking about what you said. So what's next? How do I start "loving myself?"

Brynna:

It won't be easy, but when you start to tear yourself down, you need to instead imagine you're helping a friend through a tough time. You are so incredibly talented at that, Karia. I know you have the capacity to give yourself true kindness and compassion.

Karia:

(sighs) Okay.

Brynna:

But there's one other thing I need you to understand first.

Karia:

What?

Brynna:

It's okay for you to be here.

Karia:

Where?

Brynna:

Here. Anywhere. You deserve to be alive and take up space and breathe and grow.

Karia:

Is this about those affirmation thingies? I fucking hate those.

Brynna:

See, I don't think those are going to work as long as you have that attitude.

Karia:

What do you want from me, Brynna?

Brynna:

I want you to see yourself as 10% of the magnificent person I know you to be.

Karia:

It's not that easy.

Brynna:

I know.

Karia:

You talk like you know everything. You play therapist because you have degrees in psychology. You say you know me, but you don't know about the thoughts I have that nobody can hear. You don't know about the darkness in me that I don't let out. If you knew, you wouldn't think those things about me. If you saw, you would drop me in a heartbeat.

Brynna:

We all have darkness within us. It's what we choose to do with it that matters.

Karia:

Why is this so important to you, Brynna? Why do you insist on digging into my most painful places right now?

Brynna:

Karia, how many times have you teleported yourself since James healed you?

Karia:

Once to get out, once to escape Mason, another to get back into HQ, and again to switch with Mason. Four times.

Brynna:

Can I see your hand? I want to check for nerve damage.

Karia:

Sure.

(Magic sound.)

Brynna:

Oh Kari...

Karia:

What?

Brynna:

Karia, we need to get you bidirectional circuits before it's too late. Your nerves and magic circuits are fraying. You won't be able to use magic many more times before....

Karia:

Before what?

Brynna:

(softly) Before it kills you.

(Theme Music)

Karia:

I still don't see how loving myself is going to give me bidirectional circuits.

Brynna:

It seems to be a trait in your family.

Karia:

What?

Brynna:

Your father also had unidirectional magic circuits, except he only allowed mana into his body.
Put simply, he could only take and receive, not give or output.

Karia:

(muttering) That sounds like him.

Brynna:

And what do you think your circuits say about you?

Karia:

Huh?

Brynna:

You're a giver, Kari. That's beautiful and wonderful, but you have to take as well. Your brain is a part of the nervous system your magical circuits live in. As long as you don't allow yourself to accept things from others, I think your magical circuits might not be capable of accepting mana either.

Karia:

This sounds a little touchy-feely for magic.

Brynna:

Magic is entirely touchy-feely, Karia. It's made by humans, who are messy, disorganized beings. Anything that comes from us will be the same.

Karia:

So what am I supposed to do, Brynna? Go on a spiritual journey? Learn martial arts? Stand under a waterfall?

Brynna:
You're supposed to let yourself grow.

Karia:
What?

Brynna:
You're supposed to drop all of this defensiveness you're guarding yourself with and let yourself get the things you need.

Karia:
I'm not being defensive!

Brynna:
Should I point out what you just said?

Karia:
Okay, smartass. What is it that I need then?

Brynna:
I don't know.

Karia:
The know-it-all finally admits it, everybody!

Brynna:
Only you can know what you need, Kari. It might be to talk about what you went through as a kid to process what you couldn't back then. It might be to have someone tell you it wasn't your fault. It might be someone to put things in perspective for you or to tell you they love you. You're the healer, Karia. You tell me what you need to heal the ways you've been hurt.

Karia:
I--I don't know.

Brynna:
That's okay.

Karia:
You're the one telling me I have to do this!

Brynna:

You do, but it's okay if it takes time. While you're figuring out what you need, you just need to let yourself heal, form new habits, and live authentically. The rest will come in time.

Karia:

(sighs) Look, this has been a great therapy sesh, but we're being hunted by a group of mage killers. Have any ideas of how to handle that particular situation?

Brynna:

Oh, yeah. I figured that one out a while ago.

Karia:

Excuse me?

Brynna:

We need to find James. He can heal some of your nerve damage and all the stuff the Anti-Arcanists did to me. Plus we can come up with a plan while under the protection of a master abjurist.

Karia:

Well how do we find James?

Brynna:

We meet him at a very specific point in these woods.

Karia:

And how does he know to meet us there?

Brynna:

Because I told him so. Sending a message is easy magecraft.

Karia:

(mockingly) Sending a message is easy magecraft.

Brynna:

Hm?

Karia:

Nothing. Did he say anything back?

Brynna:

Yeah. "Don't die."

(Rustling of Trees)

Brynnna:
James!

James:
Brynn!

(Hug)

Brynnna:
I'm so glad you're okay.

James:
Me? I'm fine. I'm thrilled you two got out of that place. How exactly did you accomplish that anyway?

Brynnna:
It was a whole episode.

James:
What?

Brynnna:
Have you found anything out about what the Anti-Arcanists might be planning?

James:
So far no. Also, Hi, Karia. Are you well?

Karia:
I'm good! Nice to see you James!

Brynnna:
Ahem! Ancient organization trying to kill us. Any info?

James:
No, I haven't found anything.

Brynnna:
Did my mom say anything?

James:
How did you--

Brynna:
C'mon, of course you'd seek out your best friend, especially if you thought she was dead.

James:
(sighs) She showed little interest in helping.

Brynna:
Just like her.

James:
You know where we need to go next, right?

Brynna:
Ugh, I know, but I don't wanna.

Karia:
Where does she need to go?

James:
As Overseer there is someone she reports to.

Karia:
An Overseer of Overseers?

James:
Yes, the Chairman of the Mage Tower.

Karia:
Is he like the head honcho of mages?

James:
Something like that.

Brynna:
But how do we get to London?

Karia:
London?

James:

That's where the Mage Tower is.

Karia:
(getting excited) Oh my god, is it in Big Ben???

Brynna:
Elizabeth Tower. Big Ben is the bell of the clock.

Karia:
(blows raspberry)

Brynna:
Mature.

James:
As to your question, Brynn, I can get to London just fine. There was no surveillance on me as I traveled to meet your mother.

Karia:
But how do we get there? They had eyes on me all the way to Japan.

James:
Simple.

Brynna:
Oh no, James, I don't want to spend an ten hour flight in a--

James:
Have you ever checked luggage before?