

Arcana Magi Memorial

Vol.3 - c.1

by H-M Brown

Sora stared at the ceiling. Her heart beating unlike anything she ever felt. A tear slid down to her ear and she struggled to sit. Her arms and legs were red. Her back tingled. With a deep breath, she willed herself to her feet. Limping toward the door, her arms slammed on it to keep from falling over. A light moan and a wince of her eyes, she lifted her head and made her way out to the hall. Using the walls as her guide, Sora navigated her way to the bathroom. She saw the shower room was empty and she stood under the showerhead. Without removing her clothes, she turned the knob to cold and steam rolled throughout the room. Sora leaned her head on the wall, and whimpered.

After Sora returned and dressed for the day, she clasped her fingers together and buried her face in it. Her eyes trembled while shifting them to her cell phone on her desk. Sora grabbed it and selected 'Mother' on her directory list. While pacing, she heard a woman's voice.

"Sora?"

"I don't want to do this anymore."

"We've discussed this."

"I don't care. I'm going to tell her the truth." There was silence. Sora lowered her head feeling light. "She came for me and saved my life from those weird monsters that attacked the school. I owe her that much. She trusts me, and I don't want to lose that. Azure is my friend. Last night, she got back her test results last, and she said nothing to me. She just went to her room. I have to be there for her."

The phone call ended. Sora looked at the ground and squeezed the phone. It was as if she had her mother's neck within her fingers. She could see pain and suffering. The begging and pleading, but the fantasy ended. Sora dropped the phone, realizing what she was

thinking. Slid over her bed and bumped her back to the wall. She hugged her legs.

"I'm sorry mom." Sora looked across the room and saw pictures wedged on the mirrors edge, of her, Azure, and Ciel hanging out and having fun. With her hand over her mouth, she nodded and got out of bed.

* * *

Sora arrived at Azure's dorm. She knocked on the door announcing her presence and opened it. The soft sound of orchestral music filled the room with a somber aura. She saw Azure sitting in front of her desk, her cat like ears twitching to song. Her gloved right hand held a paintbrush gently like a baby, swaying left and right like a conductor. It was like Azure was dictating the tempo of a song. Fluid in motion, and a story told. When she lifted the sheet up, Sora saw an oceanfront beach with a cliff looking out to the sun and the moon. The sky had layers of red, blue, and black, all blended in with the clouds. It was hard to tell if it was dusk or dawn, but there something else she noticed. A human girl reached out from on the cliff, and a strange looking girl reaching out from on the beach. Again, it was hard to tell what either was looking at, the sun, the moon, both. Sora could not understand, but with Azure, it was hard to know what went through her mind. Azure looked back and Sora realized something different. Slowing around her friend's ears was white and teal hair. She had not seen those colors since the day after the creatures attacked the academy. Sora kept her composure and focused.

"Good morning."

"Hi Sora." Azure smiled watching her friend approach her. "Do you like my latest drawing?"

"It's beautiful." Sora said and Azure turned her attention back to her painting. "Azure, I need to..."

"I can't wait to show off my outfit. It fits who I am perfectly. Check it out." Azure stood up, turned around and Sora's eyes grew wide.

"Where's the rest of your skirt?!"

"Huh? This IS the skirt."

"It only covers the back and waist. Are those panties?"

"No no no, it's a leotard. Long sleeve and turtleneck so the vest won't bother my neck. Oh yeah the vest and gloves match my hair see. The hairclips fit nicely around my kitty ears and have cute blue ribbons attached.

"Azure."

"And check out the boots, clasps right the knees leaving enough room for the stockings to go up my thighs without running."

"Azure!" Sora got her attention. "You're insane! You're going to get yourself suspended! At least put on some shorts."

"But that defeats the purpose of this outfit. It fits my body perfectly." Azure stood before the mirror and models in front of it. "See my tail has room and comfort. My webbed feet don't feel crushed, my wings are so relaxed, and the claws aren't ripping the tips of the gloves. This is my favorite now. It's just right. It really is... me."

"Azure?" Sora stood behind her friend and saw her eyes trail off from happiness. "Azure?"

"Oh." Azure turned around. "You said you wanted to tell me something."

"Yes, I have to tell you this."

"Okay." Azure smiled despite her tears hanging on the edge of her eyes. "Let me go freshen up, and then you tell me all about it when I come back."

Once Azure left, Sora sat on the bed nearly collapsing from what just happened. Her thought process ran too fast to focus. She just wanted all of this to hurry up. Sora noticed Azure's art books stacked on the dresser. She sifted through the books and flipped through the pages of a few remembering the first time she saw them. Halfway through the stack she came across a black covered art book. This was the first time she saw it. It was new, so she figured there might be incomplete drawings.

The first page she saw, her eyes froze. Page by page, her mouth opened slowly. She wanted to cry but could not do so. Her mind

struggled to comprehend each drawing she saw. They were of Azure herself. Every page of her unclothed in the darkness. In pain. Screaming. One with layers of her faces expressing different types of pain. The next with just her limbs scattered and shattered like glass. The next Azure surrounded by red eyes. Those familiar red eyes Sora saw first hand. The last two pages though, nearly left Sora in shambles. The vision of the eye within the domed creature Azure told her about. She barely could imagine it being alive pulling Azure inside. The last page brought her to tears.

"Sora!" Azure rushed up and snatched the book. She hugged it tightly to her chest and looked away.

"Is this what happened in there?"

"No."

"Please." Sora placed her hand on Azure's shoulder. "It's okay. You can tell me."

Azure dropped her book on the bed and placed her hands on Sora's head. Their eyes locked toward each other, and Azure rubbed her fingers back and forth.

"Feel that?" She squeezed Sora's head tightly. "Now imagine that pressure on your brain itself."

Sora grabbed Azure's wrists and saw the hands tremble. She clasped Azure's hands together and held them gently to relax.

"I can't imagine it. I don't understand."

"And that is why I don't talk about it." Azure sat down and put the book on her lap. The tone of her voice changed. It was not like a teen, but mature and near adult like. It made Sora uncomfortable. "I can't describe it. Somehow, its fingers went through my skull. It messaged my brain. Rubbing it, Squeezing it. All kinds of thoughts and memories scrambling. It made me think things. Wrong things. All while I was trying to get it to learn how to unlock the shackles so I could poison it. It didn't talk to me, it made me feel like I was a part of it. I still feel that. And I ask myself, was there a better way to stop it? Was there another solution? Every time I ask those questions, I realize, there was no time to think it through. Lives were at stake."

Sora's hand jerked a little. She just stood there unmoved from what Azure said. She just stood there while Azure put away her art book into the closet. She lost her thought for a moment and could not gather the right emotions.

"Sora?" Azure's voice returned to normal and Sora's eyes lit up from the change. "You wanted tell me something."

"It can wait." Sora turned to Azure. "Lunch time. I want to tell Ciel as well."

"Did someone say my name?" Ciel knocked on the door and jerked her head back at Azure's outfit. "Where's the rest of your skirt?"

"At the cleaners." Azure picked up her bookbag. "We're going to be late."

"You're going to get in trouble." Ciel said following Azure and Sora trailed behind.

"Nah... I'll be fine Ciel."

* * *

Sora arrived at Mister Morden's class, where she sat at her terminal with a large flatbed table. Her station had nothing on top of the table, unlike her classmates who had their golems out in the open. Sora made her magic circle appear which drew sharp eyes from the students, and she summoned her four robot golems onto the table. They yawned, stretched, and Flaros the wolf greeted Sora with a nuzzle to her face. She turned on her computer and activated a diagnostics program. She connected Terros the bear, Aeros the bird, and Hydros the gator to the terminal along with Flaros. Once activated, Sora went on the internet to pass the time until before class began.

"Okay guys." Sora said. "Listen up. I'm going to tell Azure and Ciel the truth at lunchtime. So there will probably be a lot changes. I'm not sure what will happen, but it would be best that we're ready to not have them around anymore. It's going to be just us if we have to say goodbye."

The golems let out a soft moan and Sora smiled at them. Sora turned to the computer, entering a website with only the symbol of

an arrow piercing the crescent moon. She looked around and entered her password. A window with puzzles and games popped up. She started a new game where the timer counted down. The objective was to solve four puzzles before time expired. She finished the first puzzle and saw Azure in the reflection of her screen. She turned around and saw her friend with a blanket wrapped around her body, escorted by a teacher. Sora pressed watched Azure into the window and waving to her with joy.

“Oh Azure.” Sora shook her head as Mister Morden arrived, climbing a set of steps next to the podium so he can appear before the class.

“Okay class time to take out your textbooks. Put your computers in sleep mode.”

Sora turned to her computer and closed the internet window. She watched her golems fall asleep and flipped open her textbook to begin class.

* * *

Madam Mayweather closed the door to her office and walked past Azure sitting on a chair with a folder in hand.

“Do you really hate my rules that much Ms. Martinez?”

Azure sat with her arms crossed. Her body slouched, and her eyes half opened looking away. There was no care or expression. Not even the glare of the dean's eyes shook her.

“I looked the other way because of what you have done for my school. But I would have expected you to grow up by now. If you want to dress like a fool and look like a cat creature outside of class hours, that's your business, but when you're in my classrooms, I expect you to dress like a lady and look human. Don't get me started about the fact that you are casting that spell breaking the rules.”

“What rules?”

“Students are not allowed to cast spells without adult supervision.”

“It's a transformation spell!”

“That could backfire and hurt you or other students! This is an institution not only of higher learning but of maturity.”

Azure lips moved with a faint sound.

“What was that?!”

“I don't care.” Azure looked Madam Mayweather in the eye and received a nod in return.

“Very well then. I'm sending you home and hopefully your mother will take you shopping for real clothes. And you will not come back here until you dress properly.” Madam Mayweather flipped open Azure's student file and picked up the phone. After a few rings, she received a hello. “Mrs. Martinez? This is Karyn Mayweather, Dean of Memorial Academy. I have to ask that you come and pick up your daughter. She is dressed inappropriately and has cast that chimera spell in violation of school rules. She will be suspended for... What? The chimera spell. With the wings and cat ears. She even dyed her hair. Excuse me? That doesn't make any sense. What do you mean she IS a chimera? She's a human...”

The phone slipped off Madam Mayweather's ear. She looked at Azure breathing heavily, keeping her composure. Madam Mayweather lowered her eyes. Her hand curled into a fist and turned her attention to Azure's mother. She wondered if Doctor Patricia knew about this.

“Please come to the school so we can discuss this. What do you mean you're busy? This is your daughter. What? What?! Wait a minute? Do you realize what you're saying? Please. Mrs. Martinez bring you're husband and let's discuss this in person. No. No! Mrs. Martinez this school is not an orphanage.”

Azure jumped out of her seat, ran out of the office, and down the stairs. She bashed the building door aside, denting the metal with her hand. She ran across the field right past Sora's class, never noticing her friend calling out from the window. Azure saw the main gate ahead and wanted out.

“AZURE!” Sora called out from the distance.

Azure never looked back and ran faster than normal. With the main gate in view, security was ready to catch her. Azure made her magic circle appear under her feet, her shackles glowed bright, and she leapt over the guards. Her wings stretched out, guiding her

descent out of the gate, and left everyone behind in shock, yet unaware of Sora continuing her pursuit.

* * *

Sora climbed up a hill in a park. The trees shielded the sun. She heard Azure ahead laughing out loud, but it was unusual. Coarse and cackling. A struggle of some type. Sora emerged from the path and found herself at a lookout point. There were benches before a guardrail overlooking Central Heights. She saw Azure standing on the bottom bar of the guardrail. Hopping up and down. Pulling and pushing herself. It looked like she was tempting herself to get hurt, but Sora wondered if those actions were more than that, when Azure stepped on the middle bar and leaned over the railing.

“Azure?”

“Isn't this great Sora?” Azure said swinging her body side to side. “I don't have to worry about parents anymore.”

“What do you mean?” Sora approached Azure watching her every move.

“See? If my parents saw me doing this, they would pull me off and yell at me, but now, they won't do it, so now I can have fun. I wonder what else I could do?”

“Azure let's sit down and talk.” Sora saw Azure's feet slide to the side and her arms reached out ready to grab her friend.

“I can eat all the ice cream.” Azure said with a giggle. “I can stay up all night. I don't even have to study. I don't even know where to begin.”

Sora saw Azure's legs slip through the bars, looking as though she actually lost her grip. Sora grabbed Azure's waist, pulled her away from the rail and stood her up.

“You could have died.”

“That would have been awesome.”

When Azure turned around, Sora stepped back. She saw Azure's gleaming smile as if her friend had done something for the first time ever, but that smile was soaked in tears. A steady stream one drop after another, left her face red enough to look like an apple.

“I can go anywhere without telling anyone.” Azure approached

Sora slowly. "I can watch dirty movies and violent movies. I can even avoid taking baths for days maybe weeks... and all I had to do was be a hero and turn into a monster."

Azure placed her hands on Sora's shirt and tightened her grip.

"Heh heh... Three different doctors and they all said the same thing. I'm not human anymore. My parents were not happy. Hee hee. They were mad. My mother was so angry, from the shackles to this. She pulled out a picture of me before I became this and told me that was her daughter, not me. I didn't know what to say other than sorry. I didn't ask to be this way. So much happened that night, I heard their voices call me and I... I... listened. Ha ha ha. I can still hear them in my dreams."

Sora tightened her hold of Azure and listened to her cries.

TO BE CONTINUED...

