Arcana Magi Memorial Vol.4 - c.1

by H-M Brown

A battle reflected from the surface of the eye. A tear welled up lightly as the muffled sound of grunting and moaning build up. A flash of light and a burst of flames clashed like swords, flickering off pupil. Sora lay still struggling to get up off the grass. All she could do was watch at the top of the hill, a fight she did not expect. A one-sided battle where Ciel hang inches above the ground due to the difference of height, the tip of her toes struggled to touch the floor. Sora watched her friend try to unwrap the fingers of a black hand around her neck.

Ciel's eyes fought the force of rolling back. Her throat made every effort to gather air. She could not concentrate her mana. Her thoughts were that of surviving. Her heart skipping a beat out of fear of what held her high. The hand tilted Ciel's head back and above the sky, she saw the clouds slurring a black, pink and purple hue. It moved as though it was a living being. The edges of the clouds flowing like hair in the wind. Ciel's eyes trembled at how this all could have happened. With tears falling down her cheeks, all senses of hope disappeared.

“Please.” Ciel said with a failing voice, and the girlish scream mixed with a dying cat's meow and a singing bird rattled her ears. Ciel's eyes shifted downward and there she stared into the cold red eyes of Azure. The cascade of impure mana flowed down Azure's back. The eyes on her wings looked around recording everything around her, including Sora lifting herself up. Ciel could see another world beyond the eyes. Her mind could not comprehend it and on the verge of collapse. “Azure.”

Ciel's plea went unheard and Azure opened her mouth to roar once more. Looking into the maw of her friend, she could see a

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vortex of star and clouds circling toward Azure's throat. The sight of it imprinted into Ciel's mind and her thoughts fell into silence. Mana seeped out of Ciel's face and headed toward Azure. But before she had a taste of the clean mist, a bolt of lightning struck the tips of wings and electricity covered her body. Azure released Ciel roaring from pain while her friend rolled down the hill to Sora.

Sora crawled to Ciel and pulled her body to her chest amidst the deafening roar in the sky. Azure roared rushing on all fours like cat, ready to pounce her friends, but another bolt of lightning struck her and her scream was much louder than before. They looked up trying to figure what that was when the sky roared again and Sora realized what that was. The cloud was in pain. It rolled and stretched almost as though it was nursing itself. Rain the sprinkled out was actually its blood. Sora saw Azure crawl back with a whimper, looking past her and Ciel.

Standing next to them was Madam Mayweather, her cold stare as frightening as the horrors that surround them. A strange whistle echoed from behind the hill and Azure scurried like a loyal dog up the hill. Climbing tot eh top was a woman in shadow, the veil of darkness hiding her identity, but just like Azure, only her red eyes were clearly visible. They watched in horror as Azure acted like pet, sliding her body on the legs of the woman like a cat, walking around her with purr. She sat on all fours with smile when her ears were scratched.

The purple shackles appeared on Azure. Her collar part of her circle tethered to a leash held by the shadow woman. Azure roared at Madam Mayweather and the girls below taking one step forward. A light tug from the leash made her stop, but she continued growling. Ready to fight for Azure, Madam Mayweather heard strange sounds rising behind the hill. Sounds familiar to Sora that Ciel felt the Technomancer's hands trembled in violent fashion that she could sense dread.

Red eyes rose above the hill like the rising sun, some in pairs, other single, and most in three or more. Too many in numbers, all hidden in shadow. Difficult to discern height or shape. It did not take

long though for complete black wall of darkness to suddenly drop down behind the hill, to the sound of sloshing liquid and the screams of the dying creatures. A trumpet blared in the sky and they found the clouds were partially hidden, and only the red eye the size of hubcaps peered down at Mayweather and the girls.

They ran without looking back, but can sense the creatures are catching up to them. Not too far from the hill was an SUV. The doors opened and Madam Mayweather pushed the girls inside. After she jumped in and closed the door, shadows bounced off the windows, cracking the glass a bit. Patricia struck the gas pedal and with the tires screeching, she drove off. They never looked back, the kept quiet for a moment. They cleared the gate of Memorial Academy and the living cloud consumed the sky. It was like another world was replacing the old one. Madam Mayweather checked on the girls and found Sora and Ciel buried in each others arms crying, shivering like leafs in the wind.

“Where's Azure?” Patricia said turning left on the intersection. Everyone was quiet, unable to say a word. To describe what had happened, but with the clinic nearby, she knew she would get her answer soon enough. Upon their arrival, with orderlies and nurses guiding people inside, the living cloud arrived over the clinic and continued onward across the city.

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The dark sky over the clinic became blue, and the white clouds were far and few between. Inside the checkup room, Azure just finished fastening her blouse. She waited patiently for the test results, swinging her feet on the examination table, but there were other things on her mind. Questions that made her rub her thighs and her face blush. Lifting her hands up, the purple shackles glowed from the mana she channeled. The mixture of white and purple mix was unusual. There was a little more clean mana then before, and the shackles felt lighter. The door opened and Patricia stepped inside with a file. She sat in the chair across Azure, crossing her legs, leaning forward.

“Congratulations Azure. You are now 64% purified. A 20%

improvement from last month. I estimate at least two months till your fully purified.”

“That's great. I can finally be back to normal.”

“You are still not out of woods yet, even if you make full purification. Given the nature of situation, there could be a risk of total relapse and your mana could become impure. Even now with all the progress made.”

“So even if I am normal, I'll never be free.”

“Stay positive. You are doing fine with everything you have been doing. Keep up with your control training, eat the right foods and get exercise, and most importantly don't cast spells involving the Circle of Four. Okay?”

“Okay.”

“Now about the unstable mana you absorbed from the shadow creature.”

“I have been studying the Body, Mind and Spirit Disciplines.”

“Oh? How is that coming along?”

“Hard. There is so much about those three I don't understand, but it's the only way I can use all three mana I have in me.”

“Don't worry, you'll get a handle of them. Your still young, and got plenty of time to master them.” Patricia got up ready to lead Azure out of the room and noticed Azure was hesitating. “Are you okay?”

“Actually…” Azure looked down and moved her lips.

“Speak louder.”

“I'm worried about… here.” Azure pressed her hands on her belly and Patricia crouched before her.

“What's wrong down there?”

“I'm worried what would happen if I can't return to normal. What if I want to have kids, will they be… human.”

“Azure, are you pregnant?!”

“No, NO!” Azure raised her hands up waving. “I have never had sex with a boy let alone kissed one. Because I'm afraid I might kill him with my mana. No, it's something I just thought of the other day when I had my period. I was thinking maybe seeing a specialist to

check on my eggs.”

“Was there anything unusual about the blood?”

“I don't know. It looked normal.”

“Any pain or discomfort?”

“No. I just… I just want to make sure. That's all.”

“Okay.” Patricia stood up and looked down at Azure. “I can arrange an appointment, but I'll need your mother's consent.”

“I don't want to her know.” Azure curled her hands in a fist.

“Then I can't help you. You are underage and this is clearly serious. If you really want this checkup, you bring your mother here. No notes, no phone calls, I want her present so I can give her your options. Understand?”

Azure looked away unhappy with the request. She let out a deep breath and nodded reluctantly.

“I just want to now and be ready in case I don't return to normal, instead of finding out when I'm older.”

“I understand.” Patricia placed her hand on Azure's shoulder. “It's terrible that you should have this on your mind at your age. Talk to your mother first, and have her call me to set up our meeting. Okay?”

“Yes.” Azure nodded and jumped off the examination table and exited the room with Patricia.

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The crescent moon hovered over Memorial Academy, a car pulled up to the girl's dormitory. Azure stared at the entrance while her mother's words faded in and out. She felt her mother's hand caress her white hair, triggering a light purr. Azure's eyes shifted directly at her mother and she stopped. Azure stepped out of the car slamming the door without looking back. She paused for moment ready to turn around, but her mother drove off without hesitation. Azure lowered her head.

Inside her dorm room, Azure turned on the lights and sat down on her bed. She took her shoes off ready to relax for the night. A light knock on the door got her attention and opened it. Sora and Ciel stepped inside greeting her, and Azure welcomed them inside.

As Azure talked to them about what happened at the clinic, the bushes outside rustled in the shadow of the night.

“Eh?” Azure said.

“What is it?” Sora said.

“I thought I saw someone in the bushes.” Azure's eyes turned red and she saw the shrubbery in the dark with clarity. There was nothing there. “He's not there.”

“Jean-Pierre?” Ciel said. “Don't worry. He's not that stupid to peep you twice in one week. For the third straight month. I am sorry about that. He has a turn on for strong women, and he likes your kind of strength.”

“Eh. I'm quite flattered, but it's really creepy. He long since missed his chance to talk to me, now he's just a nuisance.” Azure went to her dresser and took out some clothes. “Tell him I'm way out of his league the next time you see him.”

“Sure thing.” Ciel said.

“He likes getting beat by women eh?” Sora said. “I can already see your brother right becoming an old man spanked by a sexy nurse.”

“I don't need that image in my head.” Ciel said rolling her eyes.

“But he will.” Azure said unbuttoning her blouse. “He probably has a large porn collection too.”

“Ew.” Ciel and Sora said.

Their laughter blared out the window as a pair of binoculars emerged from the leaves, zooming in on Azure's window, watching her take her shirt off. A gleaming smile grew on Jean-Pierre's face when he heard footsteps nearby. It was a pair of security guards, moving their flashlights side to side. He dropped to his stomach and crawled underneath the bushes catching their attention. He watched the lights fly over his head, keeping his breathing in check. They moved on, and stuck his binoculars out. His face frowned when he saw Azure wearing sweater. Yet, his hopes grew when he noticed her thighs and imagined what she was wearing. Zooming in as best as he could for a better view, he heard rustling behind him. Jean-Pierre crawled back under the bush expecting security to show up.

Instead, he saw a pair of glowing red eyes.

“Heh, hi Azure.” He said with a guilty smile, but his eye grew wide when realized those were not her eyes. It was shadow blended in with the darkness made by the cover of the trees and bushes. Jean-Pierre could not make out a shape and in an instant he raised his hand up making his magic circle appear. “Flashpoint!”

A burst of light turn night to day for an instant, and at that moment, he saw the body of a young girl with pitch black hair, her red eyes were as normal as human, her pale skin scaly, oily, and limbs stretched out with sharpened claws. Her scream was otherworldly, a combination of a child and two animals fighting. She shielded her eyes rolling back into the shadows, blending in with the darkness. Once the light left, Jean-Pierre watched her body turned to shadow and blend with the darkness. He struggled to move unsure what she would do next, but he got his magic circle ready to strike. She jerked her body forward with a roar, catching Jean-Pierre flat-footed. It was feint that made him jump out of the bushes and into the arms of security. The guards pinned him down, pulling his arm over his back.

“You again?” One of the guards said.

“There's something in the bushes.”

“Of course there is.” The other guard said picking up the binoculars and showing it to Jean-Pierre. “Let's go.”

The guards pulled Jean-Pierre to his feet and he saw Ciel and her friends watching with disgust. He struggled to break free, screaming about what he saw.

“I'm telling you I saw a shadow in the bushes! It has red eyes! It was a girl!”

“Of course you saw a girl.” The guard dragging Jean-Pierre said. “I hope you enjoyed it because we're sending you to jail.”

Azure overheard Jean-Pierre with her cat ears, looked out at the bushes with her night-vision sight, and saw nothing there. Sora and Ciel got her attention and tossed her a skirt. They all knew they were going to have to see Madam Mayweather because of Jean-Pierre.

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