

Arcana Magi Memorial

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by H-M Brown

Azure screamed from the pain. Unstable mana seeped out of her skin. The pressure of energy tightened her muscles, and the shackles crushed her. She saw a layer of shadow grafting onto her skin. Her mind could not handle it. She was becoming a shadow again. With all her might, she tried to suppress everything, but she felt she was losing the battle. Suddenly, her heart pulsed.

"Control." A male voice said to Azure.

She lifted her head up as a female voice said the same thing.
"Control."

"I... can't..."

"Control." A deep male voice, a third voice she heard.

Azure focused her thoughts on those words. She tried to understand how to control. She did not know where to begin. She did not know what to do.

"Control." A soft female voice said. The fourth and final voice to speak. It made Azure's heart pulse once again.

"My Heart." Azure understood now. She felt it there as she remembered what she told Sora after her ordeal with the domed creature. "I must protect my heart. No, I must use it."

Azure placed her hands over chest and channeled her mana. It poured out of her chest and was enough to stop her transformation into a shadow. The layer of shadow that grafted on her peeled off like post-sunburn, and she physically returned to normal. However, what brought out of heart to stop the change, did not protect her mind. Like a light switch flipped to off, her pupils turning red, Azure was no longer processing her critical thinking. All that was left was instinct. She roared out like an animal. Jean-Pierre and the two shadows stepped back. Growling under breath, her teeth gnashing into each other, her senses heightened to the point that she could

smell the oil of the shadows and dirt on Jean-Pierre's shirt.

Azure analyzed each of them. She was on all fours crouched and her tail up, readying for a strike. Jean-Pierre raised his hands up in the hope of showing peace. The male shadow maintained a defensive position ready to protect himself from an attack. The female shadow however, roared and took an offensive crouch. Azure rushed at her at that instant. They both punched and kicked. Pulling each other's hair, growling and roaring, it was like watching a nature show catching the wild in its primal fight.

Suddenly, sparks flew from the both girl's hands. Mana energy ripped the ground apart and rocked the area. Jean-Pierre and the male shadow were blown back by the force of wind pushed by Azure. They both climbed the hill together just as fire licked the grass. Breathing heavy from the near death experience, they heard the sound of clicking and found themselves surrounded by police officers in SWAT armor, half of the squad held wands or staffs. While two officers checked on Jane's injuries, another explosion downhill shook the ground and the male shadow slipped into the darkness. Jean-Pierre struggled to his feet, but he was pinned down and handcuffed.

Two officers looked down and watched in horror. Azure was pulled out mana from her chest, creating wind in the palm of her hands. The shadow motioned her arms as though it was scooping up snow and the roots of the nearby tree ripped out of the ground. Azure jumped into the air with the help of the wind and used her small wings to glide around the shadow. The girl waved her hand and the tree's roots chased after Azure, until a burst of fire destroyed the roots.

Azure and the shadow turned to the hill and saw the police slide down with channeled mana. In a fit of rage, Azure crossed her arms and spread them outward, creating a wall of fire. It rose up stopping the officers from advancing forcing them cast water spells, wasting mana.

Azure landed behind the girl and slashed her back. The shadow screamed and red blood poured out of the wound. For a moment,

Azure's hands shivered at the sight. Deep in the recesses of her mind was a spark that did not want to go where instinct wanted to go. The spark was too weak and overwhelmed to control the body. Azure ran up, tackling the shadow and clawed on the girl. She overpowered her so much, that the shadow shed tears. With a successful kick to the stomach, the shadow freed herself from Azure and delivered a kick to the face. The shadow limped away from Azure, realizing that was not going to win injured, or Azure in that state. She reached the nearest shadow, stumbling inside, but grazed in the neck by Azure's claws.

Azure circled around the shadow sniffing at the ground. She started digging when the police finished dousing the flames and tackled her. With so many hands pushing her down, her mind just suddenly brought memories of not only the dome creature, but her dream. The one she drew in her black sketchbook and shared with Sora. Her pupil's shrunk from terror and a burst of energy pushed everyone.

Azure went into hysterics. The mana was out of control. Everyone crawled or ran away. Keeping their distance, they watched her cast all kinds of spells. From water to fire to earth to wind, there was no way to stop her. It was as though she was attacking someone or something, but no one was around. Her mana, the shadow mana, and the circle's mana, both clean and impure, flowed around her body like oil and vinegar. Patches of shadowy skin slid over her body and peeled off. The shackles glowed bright and became both light and heavy. Everything that was in her mind spun around like a whirlpool. Everything that is Azure collapsed onto itself and it stopped.

Azure dropped on her hands and knees. She scurried to the tree like a wounded dog, whimpering in the shadows. Her face soaked in tears, the police hesitated to approach her. Then she sniffed the air. She followed the scent, and ran away from the police. Her tail wagging she sat like a loyal dog, nuzzling her face on the leg of Madam Mayweather. Like a cat, she slid her body around the legs and her tail licked up. As the police approached the dean, she

grabbed Azure's shoulders and stood the teen up.

At first, Azure was on her toes stumbling as though she were on hind legs. She grunted and growled, looking to walk on the ground, Madam Mayweather planted her hands on Azure's cheeks and stared deep into her eyes. Azure's eyes trembled. The sight of Madam Mayweather's uncaring face triggered a fear all too familiar. Slowly, Azure started getting sensations again. Her eyes wandered around and her mind jumped started. She realized what she did, stepped away from the dean, and covered her face. Azure felt Madam Mayweather again, and when she lifted her eyes, she found herself in the dean's arms.

As Azure closed her eyes, clutching tightly, Madam Mayweather signaled to the police that everything was all right.

* * *

Azure packed her bookbag, ready to return home. Her entire dorm emptied of her belongings early in the day. Now she is waiting for her parents to come pick her up soon. She carried with it all, good memories and bad. Waiting for her friends for one last goodbye, she wished all of this would be different. So many 'What if?' questions that it drove her mad. The idea of never meeting Sora and Ciel. Never attending Memorial Academy. Yet at the same time, never becoming a chimera, or a shadow creature. It made no sense, all of it. Just one simple act of thievery and a thousands different things happened. Avoiding this one act would have changed everything. It was too difficult to comprehend. Too difficult to understand.

Her ears twitched, and she turned around channeling her mana. The male shadow stepped out from the darkness and his shadow skin regressed. He revealed himself as having a human body but with long arms and fingers. Pointed ears, and stretched torso. Azure stepped back ready to protect herself, but he raised his hands showing no hostilities.

"Who are you?" Azure said.

"My name is Polo. Of Salamander."

"Salamander?"

"The name of my group."

"What do you want?"

"You're help."

"After what you've done." Azure raised her hand's up with her shackles glowing.

"I can assure you, we have nothing to do with that girl who attacked you. In fact, we didn't expect Mother to attack you so soon after her return."

"Mother?" Azure lowered her arms and shook her head. "I have questions."

"I'll answer whatever I can."

"Who are you?" Azure crossed her arms.

"We use to be the children to Mother."

"Who is she?"

"We don't know." Polo sat on the chair across from Azure. "What memories we have left, we know that we are not her 'children'. We have families of our own, but we lost all of our memories because of Mother. She remade use in her image then assigned us a headmaster to serve. Our group served the Ocular. The one you killed."

Azure remembered the dome creature with the giant eye.

"I thought it was a monster summoned by the girl."

"My sister served as a carrier for Ocular." Polo said and Azure' covered her mouth. "They made her a summoner and Ocular would use her for transport. He would take all of us inside and torture us. Just to keep our minds loyal to other. When you killed Ocular, you freed our minds. I got some of my memories back and found that you killed my sister."

"I am so—"

"I'm glad you did. She suffered the most out of all us. What was left of her was gone forever. She was another being. I don't blame you. I blame Mother."

Azure looked at the floor clasping her hands together. She pressed her forehead on it. Taking a deep breath, she got up to her feet and took her bag.

"Thank you for telling me."

"You're leaving?"

"Yes. My family is taking me far away. From everything."

"You don't understand. Mother is after you."

"After that girl, I believe you."

"You don't get it. There is no place for to hide."

"So she wants to kill me."

"She doesn't care if you live or die, Mother wants control, and what she can't control she will let die."

"Control?" Azure memory echoed the words of the wisps. She shook her head and turned to Polo. "So why now?"

"She was away for six months for her meditation retreat. She came back two weeks ago and found about you and my group. Now she is hunting all of us, and we need your help."

"What can I do?"

"Whatever you did to Ocular, do it to her and free everyone."

"You have no idea what I did to kill that thing. No one wins. No one."

"Tell me how and I'll do it myself."

"You can't." Azure clutch her shoulders feeling a sudden pressure for no reason. "Fight Mother. I can't control my mana, I can't control this animal rage. I have no control over anything."

"We can help you control your powers."

"You can?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"We learned techniques to control our powers. Help us, and we'll teach you. Believe me, if Mother was not after you, I would not be here, but we're all involved and everyone, even your parents and friend are in danger. My friends and I want to take the fight to Mother. We could use you."

"I can get you help. Madam Mayweather, she'll listen if you tell her everything." Azure clenched her hand tight and looked Polo in the eyes. "If you speak to her, I will come with you, and you teach me how to control al this."

"Deal." Polo approached a shadow and stepped in it. He reached out to Azure just as there was a knock on the door.

"Azure." Sora said behind the door.

"We've come to say goodbye." Ciel said.

Azure thought about telling them about this, but she feared they try to stop her. Without further hesitation, without looking back, Azure jumped into the shadow. The door opened and Sora and Ciel entered with a farewell cake, but they found the room empty.

"Azure?" Sora said and Ciel looked outside.

"She left without saying goodbye."

"Her parents must have came early." Sora stood beside Ciel.
"They probably rushed her out."

"Yeah."

* * *

Azure opened her eyes and found herself outside Madam Mayweather's office. The secretary was not at her desk and the door was slightly opened. She looked at Polo as he slunk back into the shadows. He waved her to go forward and she entered inside. She saw most of the office empty. The broken window covered with plastic paper. Azure looked around hoping to see Madam Mayweather, but instead Mr. Morden entered.

"Hello Azure." He said approaching her. "Can I help you?"

"I'm looking for Madam Mayweather. What happened here?"

Mr. Morden went to the corner and pulled a seat over to Azure. He took one for himself and they both sat down.

"Don't repeat what I am about to say okay?" Mr. Morden received a nod from Azure. "The PTA and the Board of Education pressured the Baord of Directors to fire her. She was let go last night."

"Why?!"

"Shh..." Mr. Morden waved for her to calm down. "I'm sorry. Everyone felt that five months of incidents is enough. They put the student's safety ahead of her. Please understand that."

Azure looked at Madam Mayweather's desk and rubbed her forehead.

"It's my fault."

"No. No it is not and don't say that in front of Karyn. It just happened the way it did. Just know that she cared about everyone here and did everything she could protect us all."

Azure nodded. "Where did she go?"

"Home."

Azure got off the chair and Mr. Morden led her out of the office. She looked back one last time at Madam Mayweather's desk. Azure wished she could have saw her one more time to tell what is happening, but she had to go.

"Thank you." And Azure closed the door.

THE END.

