

Arcana Magi Memorial

Vol.5 - c.3

by H-M Brown

At Lucy's Café, Madam Mayweather read her menu. The street outside was filled with people. It was a regular day. She looked at her watch; there was a sense of restlessness in the air. It felt as though something was off, but she could not put her finger on it. Madam Mayweather saw the door open and in came Doctor Patricia. She smiled approaching the retiree. Not a single worry on her face. Madma Mayweather stood up to greet her with a hug and they both sat back down.

"How's retirement Karyn?" Patricia said receiving a menu.

"Boring." Madam Mayweather burying her face in the menu.
"Lonely."

"Well you are out in the countryside since you left the academy. You need to get out here more often."

"I know, it's just that, after being investigated for Azure's disappearance, I did not want to draw any more attention."

The waitress arrived with a notepad in hand. Madam Mayweather and Patricia looked up.

"Are you ready with your order?"

"Yes." Patrica said. "I'll have a salad, no dressing and coffee."

"I'll have tea and an egg sandwich."

"Okay, I'll send your order in." The waitress took the menus and Patricia had a stare at Madam Mayweather.

"No more coffee?"

"It got bitter Patty."

"Patty eh? You really changed."

"Nothing's been the same..." Madam Mayweather folded her hands together, pressing them to her lips, and closed her eyes.

"Azure's friends came to my home. They were looking for her."

"A first name basis with your students too?"

"Former student... a...anyway, I was hoping that maybe you might have seen her."

"Azure hasn't been to the clinic. It's been three months now. She needs to come back for more Mana purification. The amount of time she has been away from this, she may regress and undo all the effort we have."

"Damn that kid." Madam Mayweather heard the door open and saw two construction workers enter inside. They sat at the counter and received menus. She turned her attention back to Patricia, but overheard the men.

"Jake is in the hospital." Said the man on the right.

"What happened?"

"His wife said they were attacked last night by some mugger in a shadow. He was all dark and had red eyes."

"Red eyes? What the hell is that?"

"Nobody knows. Jake couldn't describe it and there were no witnesses."

"I'll have to swing by the hospital after work."

Madam Mayweather and Patricia stared at the men listening to their story as the waitress placed their order on the table.

"Excuse me sir?" Patricia said and the construction workers turn to her.

"Where did this happen at?"

"Just a few blocks from Memorial Academy. I think by West Street and Warren Drive."

"Thank you." Madam Mayweather said and looked at Patricia whom nodded back.

* * *

Classes were over for the day at Memorial Academy. Sora walked down the stairs of Henderson Hall, with other students and teachers, where Ciel waited for her at the bottom of the steps. Ciel was texting on her phone when Sora. They walked through the parking lot, without saying a word. There were security guards running all over the place. Campus police cars, with lights flashing, at various locations in the distance. Sora gripped her books tight as

they saw their dormitory building ahead.

"Jean Pierre and Hitomi will be here soon." Ciel said putting her phone away.

"I can't believe it's been this long since Azure disappeared. The police stopped looking, my parents are shifted their resources and leaving me in charge of the whole thing. I feel overwhelmed."

"Jean Pierre isn't giving up, but I..."

"Ciel?" Sora walked up the stair to the dorm entrance. She placed her fingers on Ciel's forearm to make her stop. "You're giving up are you?"

"I don't want to, I just don't know what more to do."

"You know what I am afraid of, that Azure got captured by those shadow beings. It seems weird that she would disappear after they had attacked the school."

Ciel looked up at Sora's eye, defeated and lost.

"If it's true, then we lost her forever."

"Don't think like that. We can't... give up."

Sora and Ciel saw the dorm housemother stapling a notice on the bulletin board. Girls gathered around to read what was going on. Sora and Ciel approached the crowd struggling to see over everyone's heads.

"Hey Cathy?" Sora asked a tall girl standing still, whom was reading the notice with no problem. "What going on?"

"The Academy says there have been attacks near the school." Cathy said as Ciel looked at the text message on her phone. "They're issuing an eight o'clock curfew. Any student outside the campus must call the Academy for transport. They're also advising us to not be alone."

Ciel tapped Sora's shoulder and showed her the message from Jean Pierre. Sora read it aloud.

"There is rumor of shadow creatures attacking people near Memorial Academy. Be careful. Hitomi and I are on the bus."

Sora and Ciel rushed away from the crowd. They ran upstairs making sure no one was around. Sora watched the security activity outside the window.

"Ciel, I was thinking..."

"No, we're not going after the shadow creature."

"This could be our chance to find out if they got Azure."

"By ourselves?"

"Your brother and Hitomi will be with us."

Ciel turned Sora around, gripping her shoulders. "Do you remember the last time we fought those shadows? They're not exactly huggable things. Especially with what they did to you."

"I'm not afraid."

"Don't lie."

"I'm not, really?" Sora's eyes trembled, but regained focus. "Please."

"No."

"Okay." Sora stepped away from Ciel, her hand rested on the window. "We'll go to Dean Morden, and talk to him. He's always willing to listen. Maybe he might send someone to check it out."

"We can give it a try."

* * *

A bus arrived one block from the intersection of West Street and Warren Drive. A police car blocking the bus' route forced the driver to turn left. In the back seats were Jean Pierre and Hitomi watching the bus drive away from the academy. Jean Pierre pressed the button to prompt the bus to stop. He led Hitomi to the front as the bus slowed.

"We're trying to get to Memorial Academy." Jean Pierre said leading Hitomi.

"Well I'll have to let you off here then."

"Thank you." Jean Pierre said getting off the bus and Hitomi bowed to the bus driver.

As the bus drove away, Hitomi's rabbit ears twitched and she looked up at the open sky. There were clouds moving by like a herd of cattle. The first group was white, but the group that followed them were grey.

"I think there is a storm coming Jean Pierre."

Jean Pierre looked up and he saw the clouds grew darker at a

snails pace. It was only a matter of time before day became night. Jean Pierre and Hitomi walked past the police blockade watching investigators searching, observing, talking to one another. Making notes of the area and pictures for records.

"Master Jean Pierre, what do you think happened?"

"I don't know, maybe a robbery or an accident." Jean Pierre noticed an officer approaching from behind.

"All right kids move along. There is an investigation going on."

"Is any one hurt sir?" Hitomi said.

"Everything is under control here, please move along."

"Come on Hitomi." Jean Pierre led Hitomi away from the scene as the wind picked up and the day slowly disappeared. "We better get to the academy before the storm hits us."

They walked three blocks over. Memorial Academy is in the distance. Just they crossed the street, Hitomi's ears twitched and she stopped. Jean Pierre looked back and grabbed her hand to move forward, but she refused.

"I hear someone." Hitomi ran ahead of Jean Pierre forcing him to follow her. They ran down the block away from the academy as thunder gently rumbled in the sky. They turned on Jefferson Lane and Hitomi heard a cry for help. Following the sound as a car drove by there was a garbage dumpster behind a gate. "He is in there."

"I don't hear anything." Jean Pierre said as the wind howled loudly by. He watched Hitomi jump over the fence in a single bound. "Hey be careful!"

Hitomi landed on the edges of the dumpster and saw a hand amongst the trash. There was a face of a man crying out for help one more time. Hitomi jumped in, moving aside all the trash. The man was unclothed, which made the rabbit cringe, and she immediately jumped out of the dumpster.

"There is an injured man here. He needs help."

"Okay." Jean Pierre grabbed his phone dialing 911 as he flagged down a car that drove past him. He stepped out onto the street waving his arm as the operator answered. "I need an ambulance, my friend and I found an injured man in a dumpster."

The next car slowed down as Jean Pierre stepped aside to avoid getting hit. Rain poured as the window rolled open revealing Patricia in the driving seat and Madam Mayweather in the passenger seat.

"Oh, great." Jean Pierre said lowering his phone.

"Oh look," Madam Mayweather said. "it's Azure's stalker."

"Is everything okay?" Patricia said.

"Oh yes... NO, no." Jean Pierre answered his phone. "There is an injured man in the dumpster on Jefferson Lane."

Jean Pierre stepped aside as Patricia and Madam Mayweather stepped out of the car. He led the adults to the Hitomi where she jumped back to there side. Jean Pierre lowered the phone and listened to the rabbit.

"The man has cut and bruises. He has been mumbling something about the Nocturne and 'Mother knows.' What does that mean?"

"Take us to him." Madam Mayweather said, and she and Patricia followed Hitomi. As the rabbit jumped the fence and reached out to Patricia, Madam Mayweather walked aside and flipped open the fence's door.

* * *

At Salamander, a couple of girls and a boy exited the training room. Azure walked the opposite direction, with a towel draped over her shoulders, where she waved to Polo as he approached her carrying a box down the hallway.

"Oh Azure, how are you liking training so far?"

"It's been great." Azure followed Polo. "I'm really learning a lot about combat."

"Listen, Miri said she wants to see you in her office."

"When were you planning to tell me this?"

"Well I figured since I have to get the box, and its on my way to you, I'd kill two birds with one stone, but don't tell Miri that."

"I won't." Azure smiled and she tilted her head at the box.

"What's in the box?"

"Stuff for the next mission, Miri wants to keep it confidential, just incase any of us got captured. Miri will fill you in on it. Sorry, I

have to hurry, she's waiting for this."

"Okay. I'll go get changed."

"I'll let Miri know."

"Thank you." Azure watched Polo walk away and she looked at the box. There was an odd scent coming from it. It was familiar. She could not put her hands on it, but it was something she knew. At first she took a few steps back, accidentally bumping into a man passing by, but she decided to follow Polo.

Azure followed Polo using her eyesight to keep her distance. Her ears could only pick up Polo whistling. He turned the corner and she kept up with him without being spotted. The scent was trying to trigger her memory but she could not make the image in her head. She noticed Polo entered Miri's office and she waited. Once her left and walked away, she approached the room. She knocked first.

"Miri, are you available?" And she opened the door peeking inside. On a white marble desk was the box. There was no one else there. She looked both ways down the hall and entered the office. The smell was strong now that she got closer. Her memories became fuzzy, trying to form its image. She flipped the lids open and her eyes trembled. She quickly grabbed the box and flipped it upside, emptying the contents. She shifted through a pair of gloves, head gear, boots, shorts, leggings and she lifted up her open skirted leotard. "Are you serious?"

As Azure picked up the boots, the door opened and Miri stepped inside. She stood there quietly as Azure's cheeks blushed red. Her eyes slowly bulged, bloodshot with ferocity. Her wings stretched outward, and her claws pierced the soles of the boots. Miri showed no sign of emotion no matter how loud Azure's growl got.

"I see you found the next mission Azure?"

TO BE CONTINUED...

