

Arcana Magi Memorial

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by H-M Brown

So many questions lingered in Madam Mayweather's mind as she flew through the dark tunnel, like 'Who are the Nocturne?' and 'Why Azure?'. There was sense of frustration fighting with her focus. Anger festered to unleash her rage. These emotions wanting to unleash a level of selfishness ever since the authorities had questioned her about Azure's disappearance. Right under her nose, these beings had been roaming around the academy on her watch. When she heard Gurney said what happened since the destruction of Ocular, it did not take long to know what he was talking about, the domed creature. Getting answers felt like it was not enough. Madam Mayweather wanted more. She wanted to hurt someone. She was ready to inflict pain until all that anger and rage and hurt dissipated from her mind.

She saw the light ahead and found herself turning around. Her feet aimed at the light preparing her for landing. As soon as her feet touched the ground, she heard a little squeak. Looking up at the opening to the hallway was the ponytail of white hair. A tiny hand gripped the edge of the wall, and the sound of sniffing echoed in the room. Mayweather saw a little face peek out, lightly tanned skin, and purple eyes. The hand trembled on the wall creating the sound of thumping.

"Come out." Madam Mayweather's voice made the person squeak again. "Now!"

Entering the room was a little girl. She had long white hair, her shirt, shorts and sneaker were white with traces of purple to match her eyes. She kept her distance and she sat like an animal, her hand resting on the floor between her legs, looking up at Mayweather. She just looked at Mayweather innocently. Suddenly, Mayweather felt all that emotional temper waned, and she knelt down with her

right hand reaching out.

"It's all right. I won't hurt you." Madam Mayweather said and then under her breath she said. "She has to be to be old enough for first or second grade."

The little girl crouch walked toward Mayweather sniffing the air until she reached the hand. Mayweather felt the nose of the little girl analyzing her fingertips, it sank her heart. It occurred to her, if this was why Azure came to them to help.

"You smell like Azure?" The little girl said.

"I do?" Madam Mayweather said with a light smile. "Well my name is Karyn Mayweather, I happen to be..."

It dawned on Mayweather as to who Azure is to her. It was a glancing thought given the gap in age difference, but she tucked that notion in her mind for now and went ahead and said it.

"I am Azure's friend, Karyn Mayweather."

"You're old to be her friend."

"Heh, perhaps I am." Mayweather planted her hand on her knees. "What is you're name?"

"Swift."

"Oh?" Madam Mayweather noticed Swift's ears were not human, a little rounded. It reminded her of Azure's cat ears, despite the difference in circumstances, but she noted that becoming a Nocturne can alter the human body. "That is a lovely name."

"I'm really fast."

"Well I would like to see you run some day, Ms. Swift."

"Hey, are you really Madam Mayweather that Azure talked about?"

"Whom Azure talked about." Madam Mayweather said and Swift looked at her weird. "You say 'whom Azure talked about.' Now say it with me."

"Whom Azure talked about." Swift said with Mayweather.

"Good." Mayweather smiled and received Swift's smile in return. She then found her hand held by the child and she followed the child out of the room.

"Everybody is gathering at the meeting, Madam Mayweather.

They'll be happy to see you. I'll take you to them."

"Thank you." Madam Mayweather saw the sterile look of the hallway. White walls at every angle and very little color. It had a depressing atmosphere despite the cheerful smile of Swift. Feeling the urgent, she just realized they were walking fast. Towed by the little girl, Mayweather could sense something was wrong from the way Swift turned the first corner. She had so many questions about Salamander and this place, but she was not given time to observe or reflect on it. Mayweather knew something big has happened; she has yet to run into someone else. They turned left on the next corner and the sound of people grew. "Is this the meeting?"

"Yes." Swift said and entered inside a room full of people. "Polo, look who arrived."

Mayweather stood at the entrance looking at the adults, teens, and children. Everyone was quiet, looking directly at her. Mayweather did not know how to react. So many people, with parts of their bodies in animal form, dressed in white clothes, it was hard to outline them, a near whiteout. Some did look normal, but for the most part, she saw Azure's side effect in them. She wondered if Patricia diagnosis of Azure's condition was wrong. As Polo stood up to his feet, Mayweather noticed a small group of teens and adults with bandages and arm slings. She looked out at Polo.

"I am Karyn Mayweather."

"I am Polo. You're the dean Azure told us about." Polo said as the crowd mumbled to each other that it was her and Polo raised his hands up to quiet them. "You're here for Azure."

"I have come for her, but also to warn you."

"Warn us?" Polo said approaching Mayweather. "We're kind of in a hurry right now. We were selecting a group to get Miri before she executes her plan."

"Who is Miri?"

"Our leader." Polo said standing before Madam Mayweather.

"Her plan?" Mayweather looked down at Polo as he stood before her.

"To fight Mother, but Miri ruined it by turning Azure into a

Summon Spell. We tried to stop her, but she fought back injuring some of us as you can see. She's on her way to Memorial Academy to execute... the..."

Mayweather's eyes glared at Polo, and the crowd stepped back out of fear. She felt Swift's hand trembling like a leaf, pulling away from her. Mayweather calmed down.

"Do you know Gurney?" Mayweather said.

"He's one of our scouts."

"I found him injured. He said Mother knows your plan and she's set up a trap. Your plan failed from the start, or perhaps, Miri is in on the whole thing and tricked you all from the start."

Polo immediately turned around with anger in his eyes.

"Volunteers now!"

"No time." Mayweather said turning around taking Swift by the hand, leading her away. "All of you are coming with me. All of you."

"Yes." Polo said walking beside her, waving for everyone to follow.

"You will tell me everything you know; Miri's plan, the Nocturne, Mother, and your group. Now."

"Yes ma'am."

* * *

At the entrance of the dormitory, Sora and Ciel heard everything from Jean Pierre as Hitomi stared outside at the rain. Sora's fist shook from the news about Azure, and Ciel leaned on her back to the wall with her arms crossed. Only the sound of the storm was heard among the silence. Sora and Ciel had a conflicted look on their faces. It was hard for Jean Pierre to tell if they were relieved or mad about Azure. He had no way of approaching them in conversation without triggering some form of anger out of them.

Jean Pierre turned to Hitomi, where her rabbit ears twitched at the sounds outside. Her eyes focused out the window, looking up at the clouds. He stood beside her, trying to figure out what she was staring at. Of all the rain clouds in the sky there was a patch of darkness, like the night.

"That's unusual." Jean Pierre said. "Can you tell what it is

Hiroimi?"

"The rain is interfering with my sight. I will go there and see what it is."

"Don't." Sora said revealing her magic circle. She looked back to make sure there were no adults around, and Ciel played lookout while using her body to shield the circle from anyone's sight.

"Aeros."

Aeros emerged from the magic circle inside the vestibule and Jean Pierre opened the doors to let the golem out. As they watch it fly in the sky, Sora made a screen appear on her circle while she controlled her golem remotely. Everyone gathered behind Sora and watched the clouds on the screen turn unusual. Circling around, they are looking down at the ground and saw a girl they never saw before.

"Who's that girl?" Ciel said as the screen zoomed in at Miri.

"I don't know." Sora said. "She might be new here, but why is she outside?"

Suddenly, a portal opened up. Everyone recognized it.

"She's a Nocturne." Jean Pierre said. "I'll go call security."

"She's casting a spell." Ciel said as Jean Pierre headed for the nearby phone on the desk.

"It's a Summon Spell." Sora said and the girls looked at the magic circle noticing the shackles drawn on the circle.

"No." Ciel said. "It can't be."

Despite the rain water blurring out most of the visuals, the girls were able to recognize Azure emerging from the circle just like Sora's golems. As they watched Azure drop to her knees, without hesitation, Sora slapped her hand on her magic circle.

"Aeros, defend Azure!"

Ciel immediate ran outside with Hitomi, and Sora followed them leaving Jean Pierre watching them. He hurried after them, watching Aeros in the sky dive downward firing a beam of light from its eyes.

* * *

Miri jumped back as Aeros' beam drew a line between her and Azure. It swooped low striking her with its wing. She landed on her

face and looked up at the golem flying back into the sky. His appearance shook her as she sat on her knees.

"Where did that come from?" Miri watched the golem circle around one more time and heard a voice in the distance.

"Aeros! Eye Blast!"

Another beam shot straight for Miri and she used her magic circle as a shield. It pushed her, sliding along the wet grass on her back. Miri lifted her head up. Sora, Ciel, Hitomi and Jean Pierre; she recognized Sora and Ciel but not the others. Looking back at the portal, she felt there was not enough time.

"I know who you two are." Miri said to Sora and Ciel. "I can explain everything, but right now I have to send Azure to Mother."

Everyone turned to Azure, whom was on her knees. Her arms slumped on the grass, and her head looking down with her hair wet from the rain slouched over her face. She was dressed in her costume that Sora and Ciel recognized. It was Azure's favorite and what caused her to end up in then Dean Mayweather's office, but now more modified; a white long sleeve turtleneck leotard with an open front skirt wrapped but with an armor like vest, heavy gloves clasped around her elbows, boots clasped around her knees over thigh length white stockings, hairclips with a white ribbon attached onto her cat ears, and protective armor like clips attached to the stem of her wings as though it would be hard to sever them from her back. Azure's dressed more like a warrior then a girl in costume now. Her appearance angered Sora and Ciel.

"How did you get her outfit?" Ciel said.

"Azure." Miri said ignoring the question, making the magic circle in her hand glow. "Enter the portal and kill Mother."

Azure slightly lifted her head up, revealing her withdrawn pupil-less teal eyes. She struggled to move despite the command, but the shackles pinned her down completely.

Sora took two steps forward but small a burst of energy punctured a small hole in the ground before her feet. She looked up at Miri's determined eyes, and she worried for Azure's safety being near her and portal.

Everyone watched Azure struggle to stand up, her shackles weighed her down again, pushing her head further towards the ground. Miri stood behind Azure.

"Come on." Miri said struggling to pull up Azure's arms. "Oh no, not the shackles again."

"Yeah the shackles." Sora said approaching Miri and Azure with Ciel behind her. "You should have known about the shackles."

While Aeros circled in the sky, the sound of sirens were blaring in the distance and five portals appeared at the top of a hill. Mayweather and Polo arrived first, landing on the ground. One by one, each member of Salamander ejected. As Mayweather started walking down the hill with Polo hurrying to Miri, Sora and Ciel knelt beside Azure, checking on her.

Without hesitation, Polo pounce Miri on the ground as she held onto the magic circle she was using.

"You betrayed us!" Polo said with eyes glowing red.

"No I didn't!"

"Madam Mayweather told us about Gurney. He said Mother knows we're coming and has a trap set for us, and here you are having turned Azure into a Summon Spell. Were you giving Azure up to Mother?!"

"NO! I'm telling you the truth! I didn't betray you or her!"

"Don't lie! You ignored Azure's idea to find Mayweather and then you did this!" Polo raised his hand up to strike her and Madam Mayweather grabbed his wrist.

"Enough, Mr. Polo." Mayweather pulled him up to his feet. "We made it in time."

Polo turned his back on Miri as she slowly got to her feet. Polo walked away to Azure and her friends as members of Salamander turned to the campus security cars stopping beside them.

"Please." Miri reached out, but Madam Mayweather violently grabbed her hand with the magic circle, practically dragging her off her feet. "I'm trying to rescue everyone imprisoned by Mother in her sanctum."

"We will take care of that later." Mayweather said as the security

guards gathered around Salamander asking questions while other guards walked down the hill to the scene. "Right now close this portal and come with me so we can free Azure from this spell."

"You don't understand." Miri said with tears in her eyes, looking up at Azure struggling to move. As she opened her mouth to speak to Madam Mayweather, a large shadow spike burst out of her right shoulder. Her scream got everyone's attention as Mayweather stood there with eyes wide open. Suddenly, shadow like ropes wrapped around Azure's waist and arms, and pulled her away from Sora and Ciel's arms. However, the shackles weight slowed the shadow ropes, dragging the grass. Polo grabbed Azure's arms to pull her back, but a shadow spike pierced his leg.

Sora and Ciel stepped forward but the spikes stopped short of their faces to hold them back. Aeros flew down, using its eye beams to sever the spikes, allowing Sora and Ciel to grab their friend.

"Don't worry Azure, we're here." Ciel said holding tight to Azure's arms.

"We won't let you go." Sora said with her arms wrapped around Azure's waist. She saw her friend's lips move but no sound. "Azure?"

"S... steal..." Azure spoke a little louder. "Miri's circle..."

"Steal her circle?" Sora said and Azure slowly nodded with a groan.

"There's no need." Ciel said feeling herself sliding with Azure. "Madam Mayweather is here, she'll undo the Summon Spell."

"Undoing the spell takes a very long time," Sora said. "and I don't how long the shackles can keep Azure down with her our arms holding."

"Sora... make me your... summon..." Azure lifted her head up, but slump back down. "neck... hurts..."

"I don't know how to steal a circle. Even if I could, I don't have anymore space."

"I do." Ciel said. "I haven't made any drawings yet on my circle."

"But it's a blood circle. We don't know how it will affect Azure."

"I... trust... Ciel..." Azure's voice sounded mature, Sora recognized the tone, but for Ciel it was like she heard a different

person. "No matter... what happens... don't let Mother... take me and the Circle of... ow... I'll teach you this spell..."

Ciel and Sora looked at Azure lowering her head from the shackle and her hand grasped Ciel's hand tightly, pulling her closer to her lips. Ciel listened to Azure's whisper, instructing her on how to cast it and her eyes grew wide.

"I've never heard that spell before." Ciel looked up at Azure.

"We'll worry about that later. GO!" Sora said as Aeros dove at the spikes coming for the girls, only to be struck by another set of spikes, then Daniel led the guards in a volley of spells attacking the portal. She watched Ciel duck and dodged all the attacks from everyone.

Ciel slid on the grass beside Miri as the academy medics, with Madam Mayweather, struggled to keep her alive. Ciel lifted up Miri's blood covered hand with the magic circle dimly lit. She noticed something underneath; it was a shadow, stretched like putty. Ciel looked back at the portal and can barely see this piece of string connected to it. She raised it up and showed Madam Mayweather.

"Mother is trying to steal the spell," Mayweather said hold using her spell to slow the blood spillage. "but if we don't keep this child alive, we'll lose Ms. Martinez because the Summon Spell will die with her."

"Don't worry Madam Mayweather, I'll stop her."

"How?" Mayweather watched Ciel channel her Mana.

"A spell Azure taught me." Ciel's red magic circle appeared underneath Miri's magic circle. Ciel raised their hands up and Mayweather watched the Ciel's blank circle warp and bend.

"Circular Theft."

Ciel felt the intensity of her blood circle using Azure's spell. It has been a long time since she used her circle outside of class. It was frightening. The last time she used it other than training was the day she first met Azure; when Jean Pierre came to bring her home to their mother. It was weird now how she was to Azure. Ciel did not want to make friends because of her blood circle, her fear of it, and yet here she is, using her circle to save Azure, someone she

cares about. Someone she searched for months. Now her chance to be with her friend again has come and she has learned this new spell from her. It was overwhelming to process in thought. It made Ciel wonder how much training Azure had to go through to control such a spell like this.

“How much has she stolen with this spell?” Ciel thought to herself, for a second, she almost lost control of the spell. “No time to worry about that. Focus Ciel.”

As Ciel closed her eyes, Madam Mayweather cast a shield spell blocking the spikes aimed at them. Ciel took a deep breath and pulled her hands back. Miri's magic circle stretched away from her fingertips and slowly stuck to Ciel's blood circle. Ciel screamed aloud, pulling the drawing of Miri's circle until it became one. Ciel fell back, the water on the grass splashed, and in her hand was Miri's magic circle now drawn in red. Suddenly, she felt the shadow string tug at her circle.

“No... you... don't.” Ciel said pulling hard as shadow string came toward.

“Recall Azure now!” Mayweather said.

“Re—” Ciel's mouth and nose was covered by shadow.

Mayweather channeled her mana to free Ciel, but her face was also covered. Soon everybody who was close to the portal face, except for Miri and Azure, had their face covered. Ciel looked back at Miri and can see she was slowly closing her eyes. The portal once controlled by Miri was now in Mother's control. The shadow opening slid under Azure's body pulling her in with ease. Ripped right off of Sora's hands. All of the shadows Mother back retracted back into the portal and everyone gasped for air. Ciel raised her hand one more time.

“Recall Azure!” But the portal closed up and Azure did not return. “How?”

“You can't recall...” Mayweather took a deep breath. “...if the summon is not in the same plain as you are.”

“No.” Ciel lowered her head as Sora sat there with her arms still raised where she held Azure. They looked at each other ready to cry.

"I'm sorry Sora." Ciel said as Sora looked at her hands.

"It's not your fault." Sora looked back at Ciel. "It's not your fault!"

"Mom...my..." Miri said getting Ciel's attention. Miri stretched her blood covered hand out to Mayweather. Her hand was cold to the touch and her eyes stared out at the former dean. "I wanted to save... everyone imprisoned. Please... save them..."

"I will Ms. Miri." The paramedics arrived with a gurney to carry her out. "We're going to take you to the hospital now."

"I can't remember my mommy's face..." Miri looked over at Polo with tears in her eyes as he watched on. "Mother took that from me..."

"Stay calm." Mayweather said and she felt Miri's grip tightened in her hand.

"mommy... mom... my..."

Mayweather felt the hand release, Miri's eyes glazed over her tears washed away by the rain her last visual was Polo shedding tears, reaching out for Miri.

"no... Miri..." Polo crawled to her but was held back by Mayweather. "I'm sorry I said those things. You didn't betray us. You didn't..."

He tightened his grip on Mayweather, closing his eyes.

As Aeros returned to Sora, Ciel stood beside her looking at the spot where Azure was taken. They looked at Polo as he cried over Miri with one question in mind and Sora asked.

"Can you make us that portal so we can follow Azure?"

Polo continued crying and Mayweather looked up at the girls to answer.

"You'll be turned into a Nocturne once you step inside. I'm sorry."

Sora and Ciel walked away quietly as security and police officers checked on the injured. They saw Dean Morden in the distance directing campus security on where to send the members of Salamander. The area was so chaotic; they had no words describe what just happened. Everything went too fast for them to process a

thought. Jean Pierre and Hitomi approached the girls, and Sora looked at everyone.

“Let's regroup, get our thoughts together, and figure out our next move.”

With a nod everyone agreed and Sora led them away from the scene.

THE END

