

Arcana Magi Memorial

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by H-M Brown

Central Height's shopping district was teeming with people and pets. Cars waited at red lights while pedestrians crossed. Teenage boys hanging out on a bench watching teenage girls walk by. Businessmen shaking hands after a post meal meeting. Little kids gathered around an ice cream truck as their parents create a line for them. A police officer looked up in the sky as his radio blared about an attack at Memorial Academy. Those who were nearby overheard. They paused with concern as the cop grabbed his radio.

"Roger. I'm on my way."

A large shadow cast overhead as the sound of sirens blared in the distance. People looked up at the white clouds consumed by the pitch black cloud. Street lamps automatically lit up the streets, and cars had their headlights turned on. It looked alive to the children as they grabbed their mother's and fathers. The teenagers got up to their feet with eyes trembling. The businessmen peered out of the cab window as the taxi driver leaned over the steering wheel.

A loud thud shook the cars. Their alarms activated. Another thud. The ground vibrated. One more thud. The store front windows cracked. The street lamps flickered and the building's lights turned off. The sound of people in the distance screamed. A stampede of humans spilled out into the intersection as cars flew into the air. The police officer walked past the gawking crowd and witnessed men, women, and children trying to turn the corners, but a large black cylinder landed on them, silencing their screams. The police officer picked up his radio after another foot landed on another group of people. But before he spoke, the first cylinder lifted up. Underneath was the people it stepped on, with muffled screams, and their bodies stretching out like putty.

The police officer got the radio, calling for help. He drew out his

gun unaware of the red eyes appearing in the shadows around him. The cop ran through the panicked crowd as flames and light burst from above. Spells fired from the windows by people working within the buildings did their best to slow the giant creature down. Each flash of light revealed a section of the monster before the officer. Its lower jaw had the look a clamp, and jointed arms along side legs reached out to the windows yanking people out.

A car beside the officer flipped over, landing on a woman and teenage boy. The officer's eyes grew wide as their blood spread out across the street, stepped on by the crowd escaping. He felt warm puffs of air brushing his face. He turned to it as dog with rabbit sniffed him. The officer's hands trembled, struggling to rise up. He heard a man scream and turned to his right. A human shadow reached out to a man with his wife and daughter in her arms, and dragged them all into the shadow with him. He turned to the creature with its mouth opened revealing a vortex within its throat and lunged right at him.

The cloud above looked closer than normal in the sky. Its roar made the earth shake to slow the people down. Easy prey for the Nocturne to have until the spells shot high into the sky and illuminated parts of the city, and giving light to the shadows.

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At the purification clinic, magi cast various types of illumination spells, including Jean-Pierre and his Flashpoint. At every corner of shadow a Nocturne turned human. Man, woman, and child scurried away into a corner felling the walls for a way out. Polo, Salamander, and Hitomi approached the victims with blankets or towels covering them, and the orderlies helped to restrain them when they struggled to break free. As Patricia checked on an adult male with a light to his eyes, Madam Mayweather was on the phone nearby.

"Mr. Morden, how is the Academy?"

"We lost a lot of teachers, security and students." He said and Madam Mayweather tightened her grip on the phone. "The Nocturne dragged many of them into the Sanctum."

"Damn."

"That's something I don't hear everyday."

Madam Mayweather took a deep breath and calmed herself.

"By the way, some of the students in the upper classes have been assisting us."

"Why are they not in secured areas?"

"They call themselves the Avatars. A group of girls. They've been providing illumination spells and picking off the non-human Nocturne."

"Hey I'm on the phone here."

"Madam Mayweather this is Ai Hino."

"Ms. Hino, you are to report to the designated secure area immediately."

"I understand you don't want us here fighting, but we will have everything under control and the school locked down."

"Give me that!" Mr. Morden said. "And get that illumination spell over there."

"Okay!"

"Mr. Morden." Madam Mayweahter said.

"Yes, Karyn?" He said and Madam Mayweather closed her eyes.

"As soon as you have everything under control, you get every volunteer student to their designated areas immediately."

"I'm way ahead of you."

"Good." Madam Mayweather hang up the phone and saw Ciel approaching her. With the Blood Circle in hand, they saw the sparks popping up over Azure's summon spell.

"I still can't recall her."

"Come." Madam Mayweather led Ciel past Patricia and waved her hand at shadow. "Illuminator."

The Nocturne skin flew off a small boy's body and he scurried off right into Patricia's arms. "It's okay. You're safe."

Madam Mayweather and Ciel entered an office where Sora was tapping her fingers on the surface of her circle. She turned to them with her armor dented. Madam Mayweather checked as Sora removed her helmet. Are you hurt?

"Bruised." Sora rubbed her forehead. "But not broken."

"I'm sorry about Azure." Madam Mayweather sat on a chair beside Sora. "So, you think that if we get Azure's artbook, it might snap her out of it."

"Yes." Sora looked at Ciel. "She reacted to Ciel touching the artbook in her dream."

"Hmm..." Madam Mayweather crossed her arm when knock on the door interrupted them and Patricia entered.

"Everything is secured. And the outside grounds are full of light. The Nocturne are waiting at the gates."

"Good." Madam Mayweather turned the seat toward the girls. "We're going to Azure's house to get the book."

"It's a mess out there." Ciel said. "We won't get far."

"Sora and I will take care of this." Madam Mayweather looked at Sora, shocking the teen. "You are going back into Azure's dream and try to snap her out of it."

"I don't understand." Patricia said. "There are lot of people captured or getting hurt outside. Why Azure?"

"That Patricia..." Madam Mayweather said. "...is the big question."

Everyone listened.

"The moment she got Azure, she started attacking the city. Why? Why not when she returned? Why not while Ocular attacked even though she was not around?"

"It doesn't add up." Sora said. "She could have to just stop at Azure and attack Salamander to get them out of the way."

"Maybe she doesn't care." Ciel said. "Maybe she just wants to do as she please since she can slip in and out of the shadows and take anyone she wants."

"I hate to say this." Patricia said. "But we're wasting time trying to find an answer. If Azure is the key to Mother's actions, then get her back."

"Agreed." Madam mayweather stood to her feet and extended her hand out to Sora. "Let's go."

"Come Ciel." Patricia said leading her. "I have sleep potions. I'll

be monitoring you while you take care of Azure."

"Okay."

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Madam Mayweather and Sora approached a car. As they opened the door, Sora looked up at the sky. The clouds looked unusual. Moving in a way that was alive. It frightened her a bit, but she snapped out of it at the sound of a spell casting.

"Illuminator."

Sora turned to Madam Mayweather watching her plant a large ball of light on the roof. It was just as bright as the other light based spells scattered across the clinic grounds. They both sat inside and stared out at the Nocturne lying in wait at the edge of the light. Their red eyes observing the car moving slowly. The shadows hissed and stepped back. The spell causing some of the oily skin to repel off the humans and monsters. The warmth chasing some away. Madam Mayweather carefully driving through the crowd until they found an opening. When road looked clear, she picked up speed.

Sora looked out the window, watching the Nocturne feed the Mana off their victims. Human shadows dragging a man and child by the feet to other human shadows, growling at their victims. The high pitched screech in the sky where in the darkness a four legged animal was carried off by something with large wings. Sora saw the clouds again, and noticed something odd.

"Wasn't the cloud higher up before?"

Madam Mayweather looked up and saw the cloud in question. She remembered how it roared aloud when she cast her lightning spell and blood rained down. She kept her composure, planting her hand on Azure.

"I'm scared too."

"Really?" Sora turned her head with a whiplash, surprised to her that.

"These creatures are frightening. They have no sense of awareness or reasoning. If that is an extension of Mother, then we are nothing but the bottom of the food chain."

The ride was long as Madam Mayweather navigated around

large monsters with three legs. Some opened their mouths from their backs, slowly devouring dogs whole. When Mayweather turned right, Sora got a good look at a creature's skin covering a teenage girl and bird. It pulled them both in, their bodies stretched out with a muffled scream from the pain of the merger. Sora leaned back closing her eyes.

"We're not going to save everyone are we... Karyn?"

Madam Mayweather looked at the teen.

"No Sora, but we will sa--"

The car came to a full stop. The accelerator was moving the wheel, but the car slid side to side as though driving over a mound. While Madam Mayweather looked out the side of the window to see what happened, the head lights aimed forward and got Sora's attention. The teen's eyes froze in place as Madam Mayweather turned to her.

"Sora?" Madam Mayweather shook her, but the teen was unfazed to her presence. She looked ahead and lowered her eyes.

"Azure's neighborhood." Sora said in a trance, for before them were webs covering all the houses and parked cars.

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Ciel landed on the floor just outside Azure's room. The Circle of Four gathered around her as the bedroom door opened. Azure looked down as Ciel lifted herself up.

"Ciel?" Azure helped her stand. "What are you doing here?"

Ciel made her way inside the room nearly ignoring her friend.

"I didn't hear you knock at the front door."

Ciel started looking around. She lifted her head up at the lights and they floated before her. "Where's the artbook?"

"In the closet." Red said.

"No." Azure said. "You can't take my book."

Azure pushed Ciel to the wall. "Who do you think you are coming into my room and take my stuff?"

"Azure!" Ciel got up and grabbed Azure's shoulders. "This is not the real world."

"What's happening?" Blue said.

"The Nocturne is attacking the city. Sora is trying to get Azure's artbook while I try to this world's version."

"What are crazy?" Azure pulled herself free and looked around the room. "Who are you talking to?"

"The Circle of Four. Do you remember them?"

Azure shook her head negatively. "Get of my house. You're not my friend anymore."

"Azure, listen to me."

"NO!" Azure pulled Ciel's arm as the teen held onto the closet door.

"Azure, snap out of this!"

Azure's eyes turned red and she pushed Ciel to the floor.

"NO! NO NO NO! You will not take this from me!"

Ciel's eyes grew wide as Azure's ears and tail materialized but vanished. Azure clenched her fist ready to fight.

TO BE CONTINUED...

