

Arcana Magi Memorial

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by H-M Brown

Outside the Purification Clinic, the illumination spells around the building waned. The shadow cast by the cloud above stretched near Salamander. Each adult member lined up staring down the Nocturne staring at the shadow moving inward to the grounds. Some of the creatures wrapped their hands around the gate and shook it, trying to knock it down. Their screams grew louder. The adults snarled back as the teens stood before the door with Polo.

Polo could sense the tension with his group. He was unsure what the creatures would do to them. Would they kill or re-assimilate them into Nocturne? It was question that lingered despite holding his expression of fear in check. Yet Polo knew the sentiment was there. They had to fight for their own lives as well as everyone inside. One look at the windows and he saw the children of Salamander watching intently. Their eyes glowed red. They were prepared to fight as well. However, the nurses and orderlies pulled them away from the window one by one, despite their protests. The main door opened and Jean-Pierre approached Polo. His eyes directed at the teen, Jean-Pierre caught Polo by surprise, gripping the collar and pulled him to his face.

"Why didn't you, or someone from your group, go with Sora and Madam Mayweather?!"

"Look around you, idiot." The illuminated lights are fading away fast. "We need everyone here to protect the clinic."

"One person!"

"I know it's hard for to accept but we are outnumbered and we are the only ones that stand between them and you."

Jean-Pierre looked at the gates, bending by the force of the Nocturne. He released Polo, and faced the sky taking a deep breath. His eyes lowered as got a better look at the clouds and noticed how

close it was.

"Why is it coming down?"

Polo looked up as well. "We don't know. This must be something new Mother brought from her trip. Perhaps this was why she was away."

"Jeez." Jean-Pierre turned to Polo. "I don't think we should be here when that comes down."

"I know." Polo's eyes shifted to the main entrance, he took a few steps to the door looking at the patients and children inside. "Jean-Pierre wait here."

Polo went to the adults and they a few gathered around him. Jean-Pierre watched as the huddle grew large, and the adults nodded in agreement. Polo returned and the teens listened on.

"The adults agreed, we're going to get the children to take everyone here to our base. We should have enough room. We're going to act as the second line of defense until this is cleared. Anybody left behind will fall to the Nocturne."

"Why not try to save those who fall behind?" Jean-Pierre said.

"It's a numbers game, even if we hold the clinic that cloud will get us. We might not be able to save everyone. We have to face that fact and do as best we can. Come Jean-Pierre; let's get the children to work."

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Ciel stood to her feet, her right hand up asking to wait. She saw Azure breathing heavily, teeth clench and eyes targeting her. Her friend's fist shivering at her side, ready to strike. Ciel's heart raced as the Circle of Four floated by, watching the girls prepare to fight. They struggled to get Azure's attention as Ciel step to the side, nearing the closet door.

"Why?" Azure said. "Why do you want my artbook?"

"You're under Mother's control. You reacted to this book when I touched it. Sora and I are trying to rescue you."

"Who's Sora? And why would my mother control me?"

Ciel closed her eyes, rubbing them with her fingers. "Oh, Azure... listen to me. The Circle of Four said you were turned into a

Nocturne, and you had a plan, but we don't what it is, or if any of this is part of it. What we do know is that in the real world, you are collared down by Mother, leader of the Nocturne. She is treating you like a dog and you are acting like it."

Azure's eyes blinked and she looked at wrists. The shackles faintly appeared, but vanished.

"It's horrible." Ciel said getting Azure's attention. "We can't save you because she is attacking the city. Everyone is turning into a Nocturne. We can't get close to her to get you away, but here we have a chance. Sora and Madam Mayweather--"

"Madam... Mayweather?" Azure placed her hand over her head. "Karyn?"

"Yes." Ciel slowly opened the closet door and peeked inside. She lifted her head up and saw the black artbook on the shelf. "She is with Sora going to your house."

"My house?" Azure looked around her room. "Mom... dad..."

"Yes. Your family, my family, Sora's family. Everyone is in danger." Ciel reached up to the book and just as fingers tapped the edge, she felt her body slam into the wall. She looked up and Azure's hands aimed at her. The shackles glowed with her tail swaying side to side. As they vanished, Blue tried to enter the shackles, but it went through her body. In that instant, Azure clutched her arms, shivering.

"I feel cold. What happened?"

"It's the Circle of Four. They are trying to return to your shackles. They are trying to wake you up. I must take you artbook."

"Never!" Azure pounced Ciel and the girls rolled over the dresser knocking down books and cup. She grabbed Ciel's hair, pulling her head to the side. Azure kneed Ciel in the stomach, making her scream.

Ciel punch Azure, and she rolled off to the side of the bed. Ciel got to her feet, but Azure tackled her into the closet door. The force jarring the off its hinge. The artbook fell down next to Azure. As Ciel reached for it, Azure bit her arm and slapped the artbook further away.

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Standing at the roof of gymnasium, watching the Nocturne push back the security guards, Mother turned to Azure, sitting beside her with eyes staring out. With her hand on the teen's head, she saw what was going on and realized the threat the artbook posed. She increased her power of Azure and dug deep into her mind. Tears fell down Azure's face as Mother found the location of Azure's home. She released Azure, letting her collapse to the floor, her legs twitching again. With the leash in hand she dragged Azure into a shadow.

* * *

Sora stood before the web as Madam Mayweather saw her shivering hand. The teen made her magic circle appear. She tapped on Aeros and the mechanical bird appeared before them. Sora mounted the bird, her boots locked into place, and blue lines glowed throughout the Golem. She waved Madam Mayweather. Aeros took off. Sora guided her Golem in the air, using search lights to spot Azure's house. The spider-like creatures spat out their webbing into the air, missing them by inches. Sora pulled Aeros up to fly higher, out of reach.

Madam Mayweather looked up at the cloud; it was much closer then before. It sent chills down her spine as it looked alive. As though it was reaching out with tendrils even though it was just mist, Madam Mayweather wondered what it would do to the life below.

"I'll bring us lower!" Sora said.

"No, I rather take my chances with the cloud then those things below."

They flew over cocoons litter throughout the webbing. The Nocturne were siphoning out the Mana from its victims below. Sora took a deep breath, but felt Mayweather's hands consoling her.

"I'm scared." Sora said.

"I'm here with you. They won't get you if you follow my lead."

They arrived at the roof of Azure's house. It had a backyard that was covered in web. There was a balcony on the side of the roof. It

led to the attic. Aeros landed above on the roof. Sora and Madam Mayweather slide down channeling Mana.

"Illuminator!" A flash of bright light chased the creatures away screaming and Sora broke the door down.

"Aeros Return." As her Golem returned to the magic circle, Sora led Madam Mayweather inside.

Stepping down from the attic stairs, Mayweather illuminated the house; the Nocturne turned back to humans and scurried off. Crawling on their bellies like roaches. They looked past the stairs to the first floor and saw cocoons. Sora was about to approach them but Madam Mayweather stopped her.

"They could be her parents."

"I'm sorry, we can't help them. We have no way of carrying them back."

Sora closed her eyes and nodded in agreement. She looked at the cocoons. "I'm sorry."

She then led Madam Mayweather into Azure's room. Upon opening the door, they saw Mother sitting on the bed petting Azure on her lap. She held up the artbook as Mayweather thrust her Illuminator spell at her. Azure screamed with her wings stretched up like a cat. The room lit bright as Mother slinked slowly into shadow, pulling Azure along. However, Azure was struggling to lunge at Sora, her arm swiping away. Mother pulled her back, but her swaying arm knocked the book onto the bed.

Without hesitation, Sora jumped at the artbook, grabbing it and she stretched it out to Azure. Once Azure touched it, her eyes froze. Her finger gripped as Mother pulled towards the shadow. Sora grabbed Azure's arms, their eyes locked toward each other.

* * *

Ciel pinned Azure to the ground, her knees on her friend's back. She heard Azure whimper, her eye glazed over. Her hand lay on the cover of the artbook. Azure tears fell out as Ciel leaned close to her ears.

"Please, Azure. I'm not going to hurt you."

"She's hurting me." Azure's car ears appeared again and Ciel

took the book to her hand. "NO! Please, no. Don't look at it."

"I'm sorry. I know this is private, but it's the only way to save you." Ciel opened the book and slid off Azure. She leaned her back on the bed as her friend lifted herself up and sat on her knees. As Ciel flipped through the drawing, her eyes grew with each page, Azure's shackles appeared and the Circle of Four floated before her. "Oh, Azure. What happened to you?"

Azure reached out to the Circle of Four, nodding her head. Each of the lights entered through the shackles and her body turned back into a chimera form. She looked at her webbed turtle feet and dragon claws for hands. She felt her tail wag, her ears twitched, and her feathered wings stretch out. She covered her face in shame and Ciel pulled her into her arms.

"Mother... I remembered what she has done."

"What did she do to you?"

As Azure spoke of what had happened, the world faded to white. Ciel held onto Azure tightly as her friend cried.

When Azure opened her eyes, she found herself in Sora's arms. She looked up and saw her room and Madam Mayweather keeping Mother at bay. Sora wrapped Azure in her blanket, and stood her to her feet. They both walked backwards behind Mayweather as Mother formed a shadow behind them. The spider-like creatures hissed at them and Mayweather turned her head to the side.

Mayweather screamed as her leg bled from Mother's attack in the shadow under the bed. She dropped to her knees the Illuminator spell fizzling out. Azure and Sora grabbed Mayweather, both holding her in their arms.

Mother rose up but kept her distance staring deeply at Azure. Her eyes intimidated Azure, her heart beat fast.

Azure felt pain in her head, the result of Mother's mental assaults. Memories flashed in her mind of the Nocturne swallowing her whole. Azure curled her hands into a fist and made the shackle in the right hand appear. It was colored teal instead of purple. Sora and Mayweather's eyes grew wide. Azure stretched her arm out and her own personal magic circle appeared. It was small, but purple. It

had runic text and a pair of wings drawn inside a star.

"Radiant Burst!" The force of the spell, bright white light, repelled Mother back into the shadow. Azure grabbed her wrist screaming from pain. Her magic circle seeped impure Mana.

Mayweather's Illuminator spell died out, and Mother grabbed Azure's leg. Everyone fought to hold onto Azure. Sora screamed aloud looking back at the spide creatures crawling toward them. Suddenly, the Blood Circle appeared above and shattered the Nocturne into liquid. On the ceiling, Ciel slid out landing on her feet. Polo, hang upside down with arms stretched out.

"Azure Return!" Ciel pressed her hand on her magic circle. Azure burst into light and entered the circle.

Mother flipped the bed over with a roar, and Polo threw himself onto Mayweather and the girls through a new shadow. Just as they entered in Mayweather threw up one more Illuminator spell, freezing Mother in her tracks and the shadow closed up.

Everyone landed in an empty room. Salamander adults helped the girls to their feet while Patricia tended to Mayweather's injuries. As they were led out of the room, two teenagers from Salamander appeared through a portal leading Memorial Academy students inside. Mayweather looked back as an adult brought in a police officer.

"Salamander are searching for survivor throughout the city and bringing them here. Mr. Morden is waiting."

"The students?"

Patricia shook her head negatively. "We got as many as we can. We're just finding loose kids hiding in some spots. Azure?"

"She's in the Blood Circle." Mayweather watched Ciel showing Sora the Blood Circle then hugged each other tightly with tears.

"She won't come out." Ciel said to Sora.

"Why?"

"She's in pain."

Madam Mayweather sighed and turned back to Patricia. "Azure's parents are captured."

"As are many other parents."

“Indeed.” Sais and old man from behind.
Mayweather and Patricia turned around, and Sora hurried past them.
“Grandfather!” Sora hugged him tightly and cried her heart.
“It's all right. You're safe now.” He pulled back, wiping her tears.
“Now, we fight back.”
Sora nodded and looked back at everyone, including Azure's image in the Blood Circle.

THE END.

