Arcana Magi Zero Arc 2 - c.5

by H-M Brown

Alyssa and Megumi stood before the shrine house. A small wooden sign nailed by the door has Japanese text. Alysia tried to read it but its writing was worn out from time. The paper ties bristled with the wind. The bell swayed side to side. The small building itself held up well, even its door showed no sign damage. Alysia looked at the two fox statues beside the closed gate, sitting as though they were on guard.

With only the foxes around, the area was devoid of people and other mythical animals. There was nothing but sound of the air. Cool fall night despite Mayweather's Sunshine spell hanging in the sky. The girls clapped their hands, and then clasped their fingers. With their eyes closed, the foxes lowered their head and let out a light hum. Their song resonated around the girls. It allowed them to focus their thoughts. The rustling trees, and chirping birds added to the sudden calm they sense in the area.

Alysia and Megumi opened their eyes, and found themselves before the Four Mythic Beasts. Suzaku, Seiryu, Genbu, and Byakko looked that them with cold eyes. The girls could feel their anger, at first. Yet they realized it was much worse. It was disappointment. Alysia and Megumi did not know what to say, or how to express their feelings. They only felt shame and dared not look them in the eyes.

Suzaku, though, refuse to let them do that. She spread her wings getting their attention, and the girls looked up. Their eyes trembled in fear of the firebird; they knew they would be punished. Instead, all the beasts did was just look at them, as though they were peering into their soul. That was the thing; the girls could not feel the Beasts looking. It ache their hearts because there was no soul to peer.

Alysia stretched her arm out to Suzaku, but the bird folded her wings back. Alysia saw her reflection in Suzaku's eyes. There was an

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empty face looking back. Her fingers wanting to touch not the eye, but her reflection. She stopped and looked at the palm of her hand. Her heart calmed as she looked at each Beast. She turned to Megumi and saw her sister in a trance.

Megumi's eyes were in an expressive state. They were speaking out loud but no voice or sound. As Megumi stretched out her hands, the Beasts sat upright. She turned to Alysia and took her sisters hands.

“It hurts.”

“Yeah. It does Meg.”

“I believe we'll be okay.” Megumi looked at the Beasts their heads held high before the girls. “Valdegaurd wins if we don't take the pain with the good.”

Alysia tightened her grip on Megumi. “All I wanted was to go home. Leave the Manasphere”

Megumi nodded. “I thought they were nice people, but they aren't.”

“Karin was nice… is nice.” Alysia looked her in the eye. “You saw how she reacted when our souls were removed.”

“But she did hurt mom and dad Lys.”

“True, but she didn't kill them and she did admit it. I don't know.”

“So what should we do?” Megumi said looking Alysia in the eyes.

“I have to know. If she truly is our friend, but, we have to focus on the real problem.” Alysia turned to the Beasts. “We have to stop Valdegaurd by getting our souls back.”

“Yeah.” Megumi said and the Beasts nodded.

“Meg, if Karin is being manipulated by Valdegaurd, I want to save her.”

“Me too. Even if she can't go back to her home, let's bring her to ours.”

Alysia and Megumi smiled at each other and embraced in a hug. The Beasts howled out into the sky, showering the girls in a warm wind that eased their pain. They closed their eyes with a deep breath. When they opened their eyes, they found their tears welled

up. As they wiped their eyes, the foxes walked backed into the bushes and forest. It took a moment, but people and animal spirits returned.

Alysia and Megumi saw Ren approached them with a group of teens, each carrying a crow in their arms. The Elder lit up his pipe and took a puff.

“Are feeling okay?” Ren said.

“No.” Alysia said and everyone turned to her. “I feel bitter about what happened, but, I know I will be okay.”

“Me too.” Megumi said. “We know we have to do now to fix everything.”

“I would like you to meet Akamastu sister's friends.”

“I am Ayane Nakamura, head of the Cooking Club.” Ayane bows. “It's a pleasure to meet you.”

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Marissa walked with Madam Mayweather. The commotion within members of the Society got her attention. She saw large animals talking to the adults; it was a bit surreal at how natural their conversation flowed. Marissa saw it in their eyes that there was something big happening. It was regarding the Akamatsu sisters, but she could not keep up with their Japanese.

Madam Mayweather turned to Marissa. “They said that the Akamatsu twins have to fight each other or the city will be destroyed.”

“What?” Marissa stopped for a moment. “But why?”

“Your daughter's souls have the city under siege. With the new information of what has been going on, it has made things difficult to solve.”

“I don't want my daughters to lose their souls.”

“And they won't.” Mayweather saw a young fox approach them.

“Please come this way.” She said to Marissa. “Oompa wishes you to visit the cave.”

“Cave?” Marissa looked back at everyone discussing the situation, but she felt something in her mind telling her she should listen. Like an instinct. “O- okay.”

There were two small foxes standing before the entrance. Marissa noticed more member of the Society kept back. Their faces showed anger. Nemo blocked their view from Marissa with a smile on his face.

“We found out that while we were taking care of Alysia and Ojou-sama, Emi Akamatsu and Keiko Urashima came by and took the Orichalcum armor Emi was using. One of our cubs, Nina and her Goro are accompanying them.”

“So that means she is going to fight her sister, right?”

“Yes.” Nemo looked back at the Society. “However, I cannot let them into the cave to investigate.”

“Why? There might be clues here.”

“I agree, but there is something you have to do first, before I allow them.”

“I don't know… this doesn't feel right especially with so much at stake.”

“Please.” Nemo bowed and Marissa walked inside.

There were drawings of people on the walls. Marissa did not understand what she was looking at. There were storylike in nature. From the feudal era to the modern era, it began to occur to her that this history. She slid her hands over the art, the dry paint had grooves from the rock. Marissa saw an altar where candles lit up. A painting caught her attention. It was Alysia with the spell she saw in Megumi's dream over her head. She covered her mouth at first, then she slid her hand over her daughter image. Another candle lit up and she turned around.

It was drawing of her and Arturo hugging their daughters a little while ago. The image made her hear sunk. It was something she never expected to happen. There was a sense of brokenness in her home. What had happened to Alysia and Megumi this past year, she felt lost. She stood before the altar, being careful not to touch anything since the Society wants to investigate. It as then a bright blue light shined behind her. A young woman in white robes stood before Marissa. There was a gentle smile and her eyes welcoming.

“My name is Hinako Miyazaki. I am Megumi's mother.” She

bowed. “Please to meet you.”

“I am Marissa Perez. Alysia's mother.”

Hinako gestured her hand to sit on a slate bench. They sat down and looked at the drawings.

“How is this possible?” Marissa said.

“This is the Cave of Recording. Our family history is here, and your family has become a part of it.”

“Even our past?”

“No.” Hinako looked at the drawing of Marissa hugging her family. “But soon, if you continue the bond you have with my daughter. Your daughter.”

“Megumi.”

“Yes.” Hinako nodded. “I thank you with all my heart for the love you're giving her, in her time of need and her time of joy.”

“But I failed. I let her get hurt.”

“I understand.” Hinako's hand tried to touch Marissa's hand but it slid through. She took a deep breath. “But our daughters are growing up and they will face many bad things in life with or without magic.”

“I… I know but…”

“You're doing fine. You are being there for them at their darkest moments. Now more than ever, what they need from you and husband is not talk, but action. Fight beside them and help them overcome the monsters standing before them.”

Marissa stood up before the picture. Looking at the pain she and family went through at the former Sacred Trunk site. She knew she had to be there for them. Reaching out at the painting, she understood feeling this way was not going to heal.

“I will fight with-” Marissa found herself alone. “them.”

Marissa exited the cave, where Arturo waited for her. He held their bats, handing her weapon. Instead, she hugged her husband. She squeezed tight, taking a deep breath. She pulled her head back and kissed him on the lips. Her eyes were no longer in pain. There was ease.

“What are we going to do?” Arturo said as the Society were

signaled by Nemo to enter the cave.

“Get our daughter's souls back.”

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“Thanks again for fixing my house.” Megumi said to Ayane and her friends. Megumi watched them walk down the stairs with Ren floating behind them. She turned Alysia and their parents arrived with Mayweather. “Mom, dad.”

Megumi hugged them and Alysia looked at the bats.

“Did you enjoy your new friends?” Marissa said.

“Yeah.” Megumi looked up. “Their going to go find Mayumi and Emi and tell them what happened to us. If they can convince to not fight and meet us at the shrines, we can take on our souls and free them from Valdegaurd's control.”

“Meg and I were about to get our stuff together and change so we can head to the shrines.”

“Do you know where they are, Alysia?” Marissa said.

“Ren helped get the directions for both shrines, but the Shrine of Kurai is in the valley outside the city. So they are far apart.” Alysia noticed Mayweather was sweating, though she was not expressing any pain. “Are you okay?”

“No.” Mayweather looked up at the sky. It was slowly getting darker. “I can only hold my spell for so long. I'm at my limit.”

“Don't push yourself.” Megumi said and Mayweather patted her head. “Do not worry. The Clans and Society are aware of my situation, and are working with police to prepare for the Nocturne's attack. You two… you four have important things to worry about.”

Alysia and Megumi nodded and Mayweather turned to walk away but froze in place. Everyone looked in the same direction and saw Karin standing before them.

Karin's eyes trembled at the site of Mayweather. It was as though she was peering into the future. Alysia and Megumi slid their feet slowly past Mayweather, their arm up showing no sign of weapons of hostilities.

“Karin.” Alysia reached out to her. “Come here. We got past the madness. We're not mad at you.”

Alysia words got Karin's attention. Karin could not believe Alysia was okay.

“We'll protect you from Valdegaurd.” Megumi said and Karin swallowed her throat.

“You are with friends.” Mayweather said. “Do not be afraid.”

“I'm not afraid.” Karin said lifting her stick. “I have to fight you.”

“Why?” Mayweather said with cold eyes.

“This feeling, I can't describe. It's our mana.”

“No.” Alysia said signaling Karin to lower her weapon. “That's Valdegaurd talking. She's doing something to you. Just like what she did to us.”

“Listen to us.” Megumi said as she noticed Marissa slipping along the side in a blind-spot. “We're you're friends. We saw all kinds of stuff together in the Manasphere. That was special. We saw time and space. It's was amazing.”

“Yeah. It was wonderful to see all that.”

Karin lowered her staff. “It was, wasn't it. Why does it hurt?”

Marissa wrapped her arms around Karin. The girl struggled at first, but Marissa caressed her hair and hugged her. “Calm down, you're safe.”

Alysia and Megumi embraced Karin in a hug. “We got you.”

Karin looked at Mayweather, aiming her staff at her. “I have to… fight… I must know.”

“We can talk and learn about each other.” Mayweather said standing still without a care. She watched her younger self clutched her hair and kicking her feet.

“The madness, I have to stop Valdegaurd and save the world. Where am I? What is this grey mana? It's too much… the visions.”

A sudden burst of wind knocked everyone aside. Karin and Marissa separated from Alysia and Megumi. Everyone looked up and there was Darius and Myrianna. The adults noticed Karin shivering in Marissa's arms and Alysia and Megumi standing in a defensive position. Mayweather just stood there without care in the world while Arturo raised his behind her. Nemo and the foxes arrived with members of the Clans. The Society Agents came behind them armed

to cast spells.

“Karin.” Darius said. “Valdegaurd requires your presence.”

Karin looked up. Her vision blurred from the tears and madness overpowering her. Marissa tightened her hug.

“Karin is not going anywhere.”

Darius ignored Marissa. “Valdegaurd has a new experiment she wants you conduct.”

“Hey!” Alysia said. “We're talking to you!”

“Oh, it's the dolls.” Darius said.

“They appear to be okay.” Myrianna said.

“Why are they ignoring us?” Arturo said to Mayweather.

“Tell me.” Mayweather said with a tone that caught Darius and Myrianna's attention. “How much knowledge did attain from the Manasphere?”

Darius and Myrianna smiled and Darius spoke. “Just enough for you all to be nothing more than specs of dust.”

“Karin.” Alysia said to Mayweather. “He's right. We learned so much about Mana's part in the universe that all this means nothing to us.”

“Then why are any of you doing this if you know everything? To be gods over us?”

“Godhood.” Myrianna chuckled. “They really think small.”

“Indeed.” Darius watched Karin pull herself away from Marissa. “Even she understands despite the madness creeping up on her. Tell them Karin.”

“We are beyond all of you.” Karin pointed to Alysia and Megumi. “Even them. This world, this universe, is just pebble of sand within the Manasphere.”

Darius stood before Mayweather, eye to eye. “We do, because we can.”

He looked at Mayweather's hand, trembling at his presence. “See?”

Darius walked away from Mayweather towards Marissa and Karin. Marissa moved Karin behind her acting as a shield. Dairus raised his hand channeling grey Mana that caused everyone who

could see to gasp at what he was doing. No one could move, even though they channeled their Mana, and spells are aimed directly at the young man.

“Awaken Saga!”

“Advance Fable!”

A flash of light got Darius' attention, and Marianna turned around. Megumi channeled grey mana and slapped her page making a large stone golem appear before her. Alysia rode her, mana glider swing the staff at Darius. Everyone cast their spells with accuracy as to not hit the girls. Myrianna merely waved her hand deflecting spells moving only to dodge the stone golem. Darius shuffled his feet side to side like a dance while holding a shield of light to block all the spells coming at him. He smiled at Alysia as each swing missed.

Karin watched her friend and all these strangers fight, while Marissa grabbed her bat. She noticed Mayweather just standing still, her face flushed and covered in sweat. “Is she okay?”

“No Karin. She's not.” Marissa stood to her feet while holding Karin's hand. She swung the bat on the ground creating a shockwave towards Darius. It was blocked, but it got his attention. She felt Karin's hand tighten, looking back to her, Marissa smiled at the teen. “You're safe.”

Marissa looked up and saw a vortex made of Mana appear above them. It was like a vacuum pulling them towards it. Arturo grabbed them and marissa pulled Karins completely into her arms.

“It's Valdegaurd!” Karin said.

“MOM! DAD!” Alysia and Megumi said but were blocked off by Myrianna and Darius.

Mayweather turned to couple and she raised her hand up.

“KARIN!” Nemo said. “DON'T! YOUR MANA IS TIED TO SUNSHINE!”

With a growl, Mayweather let out a blast of energy, but hand made of Mana smacked it out of the way. She stepped back, her eyes shed an emotion of shock as she watched the hand grab Karin.

“NOOO!” Karin wrapped her arms under Marissa's shoulder. “PLEASE DON”T GO!”

“We got you!” Arturo said.

“You're coming home with us.” Marissa said watching Valdegaurd's fingers stretch out, forming electricity between her fingertips. “We won't leave you!”

Karin watched Valdegaurd's spell charge up. She noticed Alysia and Megumi flying over Myrianna and Darius, and they dove towards her. Memories of their time together flashed before her eyes as spells from the Clans and Society are deflected by Valdegaurd. She channeled her Mana, sloding her eyes.

“CANCEL!”

Alysia and Megumi fell to the ground, landing on their parents. All of the spells even Mayweather were stopped, except Valdegaurd's. Day turned to night as everyone watched Karin slip away from Marissa's fingertips. Karin's hands veiled in blue surrounded Alysia and her family in a dome as a burst of lightning from Valdegaurd rolled over the shield. Karin watched Alysia and Megumi struggle to get out of the dome, but her eyes locked onto Marissa.

“Thank you.” Her lips read to Marissa, and she watched the woman who tried to save shed tears. Karin's body was pulled into the vortex and Darisua nd Myrianna followed. They paused looking back at the girls.

“Alysia, Megumi…” Darius said. “you two will always have a place in Arcadia, for you are Arcadians.”

The vortex closed and Karin's spell ended. Alysia and Megumi turned to their mother, sitting there in silence. Eyes glazed. Arturo's pleas ignored. The girls were about to hug her, but she got up to her feet. Her eyes were different. Alysia and Megumi looked at each other, and sensed their mother's newfound determination. They stood up with her alongside their father, and she turned to Mayweather lying on the ground tended to by the Society.

“Girls?” Marissa turned to her daughters. “The fight is not over.”

Marissa lifted her bat and Arturo nodded. Alysia and Megumi stood beside their parents, focused on their next problem.

THE END.