

# Arcana Magi Zero Arc 3 - c.3

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Megumi stood up to her feet. Fable floated beside her like a pet. As the team fought off the Nocturne behind her, Megumi placed her hands on the rotted fence. Her eyes grew wide as thoughts linked with Hikari's. She could see from her soul's point of view, all the years since 1949 that it had been in this shrine, watching over the environment and people who came by.

"I can't allow that." Hikari's voice echoed in Megumi's mind. The goddess pushed Megumi back and she bumped into Arturo.

"We don't need to do this." Megumi said and she looked Arturo. He nodded to her and he nudged her forward. "Come back to me. Our family will help us."

"I can't do that."

"It's over. Valdgaurd failed. This experiment is a failure."

"I don't expect an empty shell to understand."

"Dad." Megumi looked back. "Cover me please."

"Okay." Arturo clutched the bat shaped Wisp and looked around at the Nocturne within the bushes, staring at them. As he charged at one of them, Megumi channeled her Mana.

"GOLEM DEFENDERS!" Megumi's magic circle appeared and Fable flipped to the drawing and four large statues emerged. They spread out to fight the Nocturne and Megumi jumped. "MANA GLIDER!"

Megumi flew up into the air and Hikari fired lightning blasts at her. She dodged the attack and her raced. She never saw a spell like that before.

"Impressed?" Hikari said.

"Where did you learn that spell?" Megumi flew to the side.

"When I return to our body, you will see."

Fable flipped to a drawing of a shield. Megumi raised her hand

out and paused. She was further out than she expected and saw a grey magic circle appear at the fence.

"REBOUNDER!" Just as Megumi aimed her spell between Arturo and the shrine, a blast of white light fired like a cannon. Her lavender magic circle grew out, just enough to deflect the spell, but the circle broke into pieces. Megumi's eyes grew wide as Arturo scurried to the team. She looked at her shivering hands. Her heart raced as her memories flashed and she found herself watching her parents run out of the house to a large light. "Dad."

Looking at Arturo struggling to fight the Nocturne, Megumi focused her attention to the Nocturne. A paintbrush appeared before her and Fable flipped to an empty page. She drew a circle of flames, rough as it was, the brush was able to shape it to her thoughts, creating a rotation effect. She planted her hand on the page and she channeled her Mana.

"FIRE CIRCLE!" Her magic circle appeared underneath Arturo and the team. The Nocturne yanked one of the men away from the group as the flames licked up like a snake. The creatures jumped back, some into the arms of the golems. Everyone looked at the flames and realized they were not burning. The circle provided protection.

Megumi landed before the shrine. She was short of breath.

"MEG!" Arturo yelled out, but the barrier clocked him as the flames pushed back the Nocturne.

"I'm okay." Megumi stumbled and the captain pulled Arturo by the shoulder.

"Your daughter can't maintain all these spells at once." They looked at her. "She needs to cancel this spell."

"Meg, stop this now!"

"I can do this dad!" Megumi looked shifted her head slightly, keeping her eyes on the shrine. "Please, believe me."

"MEG! Listen to me!" Arturo's words did not reach Megumi. He could only watch from the barrier, the door to the shrine opening.

"What's happening?"

Megumi took one step back. Fable floated beside her and flipped

through the pages. There was darkness beyond the door. She sensed her soul at a stronger level than before. She felt exposed. Impure Mana spilled out like a flood. Megumi ran towards it ignoring Arturo's scream. Her body repelled the Mana as continued onward. The wall of flames protected Arturo and the team. She jumped the fence, but the barrier stopped her. The energy coarse through her body, her muscles tightened, and her bones vibrating. She screamed from the pain as she pushed herself forward. Megumi found her way to the door, despite the impure Mana slowing her down like mud.

"What are doing?" Hikari said.

"Beating you." Megumi reached inside and climbed into the opening. Shielding her eyes, she used all her strength to enter.

"This is sacrilege! You never enter a shrine of a kami!"

"You are no kami!" Megumi said sliding inside. "YOU'RE ME!"

Megumi fell inside. Her energy slowly weakening. She knew that time is short or Arturo and the team will be exposed to the impure Mana.

"Hang in there Meg." She said to herself. Suddenly she felt an arm grab her. It made her stop falling. She opened her eye and saw her soul. Hikari was in the Orichalchum armor, just as she remembered it. The pain of Valdegaurd removing her soul from her body was fresh in her mind.

"The experiment is almost over."

"What is th—?"

Hikari fired another blast of energy pushing Megumi away. She followed her with her armored claw reaching out. She saw Megumi's reached out as well, but her hand glowed. She her hand into a fist and it glowed. "NO YOU DON'T!"

Hikari flicked her hand out. "LIGHTNING SHOCK!"

The electricity struck Megumi and she screamed. Hikari punched her in the face. As Megumi spun around, Hikari made a grey magic circle appear behind Megumi. She watched her body hit the circle and roll along it like a ground. Hikari landed on top of her circle walked towards Megumi.

Megumi lifted herself up coughing from the pain. She felt her

hair pulled up and saw the metallic claws aimed at her face. Fable flew into Hikari face. It made her release Megumi. She turned around with a punch of her own and struck Hikari. As her soul fell to the ground, Megumi made her magic circle appear. Her vision blurred. Her body struggled to cast a spell. Instead she raised her hand up and Fable turned the pages to a sword. "TORAKO!"

Hikari grabbed Fable, but the book made the sword emerge. Megumi grabbed the weapon and aimed it at Hikari. The goddess tried to rip the book in half but when she saw Megumi rushing toward her, she threw the book aside and used her claws as a shield.

Each swing sliced the air and the air roared like a tiger. Sparks shot out with each clash of metal. Megumi successfully cut Hikari's arm. The goddess jumped away and saw the wound, there was no blood, but Mana seeped out.

"If you kill me, you will live your life in emptiness."

"Better a life of emptiness than a life knowing you are running around killing people in my name!" Megumi ran with the sword leaning to the side. She watched Hikari glide to the side and she made her Mana Glider appear. The girls flew beside each other clashing by Fable. The book floated up as though watching like a spectator. It waited.

Hikari kicked Megumi away. The Mana Glider vanishes and the sword slid away. She noticed the sword faded a bit but maintained its presence. She smiled and hurried to Megumi with her claws out.

Megumi lifted herself up, her vision blurring even more as she struggled to hold up any spells. She felt Hikari pin her to the ground. Her hands pushing the goddess's arms back. She could feel the claws cutting her. Megumi calmed herself as Fable bounced off Hikari. Her hand free, she reached out to Torako. With the hilt in hand, she jabbed it into Hikari. The goddess screamed and pushed off Hikari.

"It's over!" Megumi jumped Hikari, pinning her to the ground. She pressed her hand onto Hikari's wound and they both glowed. "You're coming with me."

Hikari laughed out loud. "You won't like it."

"What!?"

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Outside, the flames disappeared but Megumi's barrier remained. The golems vanished as a large plum of light shot up over the city. Arturo and the team watch as the ground rumbled under their feet. A shockwave struck the barrier, as slowly faded. Grey Mana surrounded the barrier and made its way to the shrine. Standing before them was Megumi in the Orichalchum armor. Fable flew beside her as she walked towards Arturo and the team.

"Meg?"

"What happened to her?" The captain said.

"The experiment is a success." Megumi said with a cold voice and floated above everyone. "Valdegaurd will be pleased with my report."

"This isn't you Meg!"

Megumi looked down at Arturo. "It appears the barrier is still holding up. Interesting."

She landed before them and examined the spell. "It would appear I have some influence within. Hmm..."

Megumi planted her hand on the barrier and Arturo did the same.

"Do you remember me?" Arturo said.

"Of course... Arturo." Her words made Arturo step back in shock. She placed her hand over her heart without hesitation. "I see. I am reacting to you despite returning to my body."

Fable flew beside her and she nodded. "It would appear I am protecting all of you subconsciously. This must be a result of having been separate from my body all these years. 1949 to now is a very long time. Perhaps killing you will correct this situation."

Megumi raised her hand up and energy pulled Arturo through the barrier the bat in hand. The grey Mana parted ways to keep him from being inside it. She clutched his shirt and lifted him up. Megumi looked deep into his eyes and saw his sadness.

"Your soul has been there all these years?"

"Yes."

"I'm so sorry."

"Why?" Megumi saw her metal claw vibrate. She realized what was happening. "Silence."

She threw Arturo to the side, just near the edge of the Mana. Megumi noticed this and looked at her hands.

"Stop this." Megumi clutched her shoulders but she remained confused. "Why is this happening? Why am I not in control of my arms?"

Tears fell down her eyes as Arturo stood up to his feet.

"You're in pain." Arturo released the bat and it turned back into a crow. He watched it fly above the Mana and turned his attention to Megumi. "Your family is here for you. You are not alone."

"LIES!" Megumi pulled her arms away, clenched into a fist. "You don't know what it was like sitting in that shrine!"

"No, I don't." Arturo said approaching her slowly. His hand acting as shield so as to not rattle her. "I can't imagine what you went through. What was done to you."

"Yeah... watching people come and go. Seeing the Kitsune examining this place. My parents... I saw them again. I was with them when I was little."

Arturo's eyes saddened as he watched Megumi pace back and forth.

"There was so much I wanted to say. So I wanted to know. So many questions and I COULDN'T SAY ANYTHING!"

Megumi turned around with hand over her face. "I wanted to go home. Why couldn't I go home?"

She felt a hug.

"Arturo... I mean dad." Megumi turned around. "I so sor—"

Her eyes grew wide. She was in the arms of her mother and father. Fable glowed bright. She noticed the Orichalchum armor and she struggled to break free from them in shame, but they held tight. She lifted her metal-clawed hands slowly, and she pressed their backs.

"We are so sorry." Her mother said.

"You have endured so much." Her father said.

"You made me into a kitsune. Why? Why did you leave me?"

"Because..." Her mother said placing her hands on Megumi's cheeks. Their eyes locked. "I never brought you into this world to die. We had to protect you no matter what."

"It's our job as your parents to protect you." Her father said handing her Fable. "We are here for you now."

Megumi looked at Fable, and examined her Orichalchum armor. She closed her eyes and it changed to her Guardian costume.

"It still hurts." Megumi looked up to her parents.

"I'm so sorry this has all happened to you..." Her mother said. "I do not how to undo all of this, but you are not alone."

Her father turned her around to face Arturo. "We are always watching over you, and guiding them as best as we could."

"Will I see you again?" Megumi tilted her head back. Her mother slid her arms over Megumi's shoulders and clasping her hands together. Megumi understood that the answer was no.

"Go home, my little Sparkles. Your family is waiting for you."

Megumi looked Arturo in the eyes, and with tears, she ran to him. "DAD!"

They embraced each other, tightening their grip. Arturo looked up at Megumi's parents, nodded, and said thank you with only his lips. Megumi looked back and saw her parents — hand in hand — walking away towards a light without looking back. She broke away from Arturo to reach out to them, but paused. Megumi took a deep breath, smiled at them, and bowed.

"Thank you mother, father. I love you." Megumi stood up and tightened her grip on Fable. She looked back at Arturo with a smile. The barrier disappeared releasing the team, keeping distant from the grey Mana that Megumi's body was repelling. Megumi looked at her hands and channeled her Mana. It was grey as well.

TO BE CONTINUED...

