

Arcana Magi Zero - c.5

by H-M Brown

A pile of juice boxes with the logo “Mana” written on it, rested on top of the table inside the tent. A freshly crushed box landed on top of it, and rolled to the bottom. Megumi held a juice box of her own sipping out of the straw while Alysia carefully removed the gauze that Officer Brooks placed on Megumi. Alysia chewed her straw as she aimed her hand at the wound. Her magic circle appeared underneath her feet and extended under Megumi.

“Ready?” Alysia said chewing the straw.

“Yes.”

“Heal.”

A shot of blue light struck the wound. Megumi winced and moaned as the heat added to the pain. The warmth sealed the wound up leaving a light scar. The spell became cool, soothing the pain yet leaving a bruised sensation. Once finished, Alysia dropped onto her butt, taking short breaths.

“Thank you.” Megumi said feeling her skin. She knelt down before Alysia, whom still chewed her straw with a smile. “Are you okay?”

“I think I still have a long to go to recover my Mana.”

“I wish I could give you more time.” Megumi said looking out the tent where the brightness of the sun shined through. “But I afraid we have to find out what is going on.”

“Yeah.” Alysia said getting up with help from her sister, grabbing Saga. “I wonder who made that spell?”

The sound of trucks rumbling by shook the ground. The girls stepped out of the tent and saw military trucks rolling by. Each one parked side by side, and members of the Society opened the back. One by one, a Magi stepped out. Some adults were in stretchers carried off by doctors. Teens climbed out dressed in costumes helping one another off. Alysia and Megumi approached the trucks and helped the people climb down, handing them off to the nurses. One boy the carried down wore a tourniquet around his right knee.

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“What happened?” Alysia said to the boy.

“We were ambushed by the Nocturne.” He said wincing on Megumi's shoulder. “It was like they knew we were coming. The people we found there were turned to stone.”

A nurse sat the boy on a wheelchair, carting him away. Alysia and Megumi looked over at the adults from the Society talking in panic with each other about what happened. The girls approached them but Lucinda blocked them and turned them around.

“Come on.” Lucinda said with her hands on their backs. “You kids did enough out there.”

“Enough what?” Alysia said.

“We want to help.” Megumi said looking back at the adult conversation.

“I understand,” Lucinda said. “but all underage Magi are now being sidelined from combat. We're already counting kids among the dead combatants and we can't have further loses.”

“Come on.” Alysia said and Lucinda turned her around.

“Your info about the edge of the city really helped us. We've saved many lives because of that. You're both heroes.”

Alysia's eyes turned to Megumi where her sister nodded. Alysia took a deep breath and stepped back. There was a moment's hesitation, but she felt Megumi's hand gripping her wrist. Alysia nodded and walked with Megumi behind the other child Magi. They stood with the crowd kids who showed signs of exhaustion. Wounds all over their bodies, and outfits tattered. The girls knew they were not alone, but they felt inept that they could not continue further. Lucinda joined Briggs standing on a makeshift stand to address the children.

“Young Magi.” Briggs said. “The Society thanks you all for your hard work and sacrifice assisting in protecting the people of Newark during this time of crisis. We know this was a very difficult situation and the lose of your friends pains us. We would ask that all of you remain here on standby. Those of you able bodied can assist with the injured and supplies. Those of you with Healing Spells can assist the doctors and nurses, but at a limited capacity, considering that you

are all not licensed doctors. Just, follow their orders. There will be more injured Magi arriving, so we expect all the help we can get. Again thank you for all your hard work and help. Dismiss.”

As the crowd dispersed, Briggs waved Alysia and Megumi over. Lucinda shook her head negatively at Briggs while the girls arrived. The sisters stood before the adults a little confused.

“We received a report from one of the injured who was at Clinton Park. They saw the source of this problem, what we are seeing above the sky right now, they said that there is a statue that is causing this mess.”

Briggs showed the pictured message on his smartphone of an obelisk with Japanese text on it. Megumi read the inscription out loud.

“Shrine of Hikari and Kurai.”

“It can't be.” Alysia took the smartphone and looked at it. “You guys have a reception?”

“It's Society issued, one of our recon teams took the picture and brought it to us.”

“Oh.” Alysia noticed stoned people lying in the vicinity. “Does the Society in Japan know about this?”

“So you don't know about this?” Lucinda said and the girls shook their head ‘no’.

“Emi-chan and Mayumi haven't told us about this.” Megumi said.

“They may not know this is happening.” Alysia turned to Megumi. “We know about the Shrine of Hikari, but the Shrine of Kurai?”

“I never heard of that either. Something isn't right.” Megumi looked up at Briggs. “Can you take us to the statue?”

“No.” Briggs said crossing his arms. “You girls stay here where its—”

“MANA GLIDER!” The girls chanted and flew into the air.

“WAIT!” Briggs stomped his feet and led Lucinda to the nearest jeep. “Damn these kids.”

* * *

Marissa and Madam Mayweather arrived at the park. There were some members of the Society in the distance forming a perimeter. Inside the park, there was the obelisk, with its warp like beam piercing the sky above. Marissa stepped ahead of Mayweather but the old woman grabbed Marissa's shoulder to stop her.

"Don't get to close."

"Is that what's causing all this?"

"Yes." Madam Mayweather looked up at the sky. "It created the force field to isolate the city from the real world."

"You said this was a set up." Marissa looked back. "How?"

"I've seen obelisks like that in Japan. No other country I have been to has anything unique like that. I'm not sure if you see it from here, but these obelisks are made of marble imbued with Mana. Sculpting this is very rare feat and Japan is the only country with that level of professional craftsmanship."

"So why is it here?"

"I had hoped it would not involve your daughters, but they are the only Magi in this city that has a connection with Japan and a shrine."

"Come on." Marissa said with a disdained look. "What are the odds of that happening?"

"The odds of someone in Japan knowing that your daughters are Guardians to the Four Mythic Beasts and a threat to whatever situation is going on there are very likely."

"It's a coincidence."

"There are no coincidences." Madam Mayweather walked past Marissa. "Have you seen the local news reports of this obelisk erected in this public park?"

"I don't read all the local news reports."

"And that is why we are in this situation." Mayweather turned her head aside. "We didn't pay attention."

Marissa lowered her head down, thinking how true that statement was. She lifted her head up ready to speak when she saw something in the sky.

"Is that the girls?" Marissa pointed up in the sky and

Mayweather turned around. Making a pass of the warped beam was Alysia and Megumi on their gliders. They circled around looking at the obelisk unaware of Marissa and Mayweather presence.

“ALYSIA! MEGUMI!” Marissa waved and the girls looked in her direction. They made a u-turn diving toward their mother. Once they landed, Marissa immediately embraced them, squeezing them tightly. She looked at the girls in shock at their tattered outfits and bruised faces. She caressed their cheeks gently while observed the feathered wings torn from their battles. “What happened to you?”

“Us? What happened to you?!” Alysia said looking at their mother battered and beaten as well.

“I’m sorry to interrupt your reunion.” Madam Mayweather said. “We can catch up later.

Everyone turned to the obelisk. It was surrounded by people turned to stone. It was unusual to see, for they did not know what the proximity is to get close to the sculpture.

“Can we return them to normal?” Megumi said.

“No.” Madam Mayweather said. “They were turned to stone because their Mana was drained.”

“Just like that tree.” Megumi turned to Alysia.

“Where?”

“At the edge of the city.” Megumi looked up at Madam Mayweather. “Anybody who touches the edge is turned to Mana and falls into a vortex below.”

“A distraction.”

“Eh?” Megumi tilted her head.

“What do mean?” Alysia said.

“The obelisk is Japanese.”

“Yeah, we saw the inscription. It reads Shrine of Hikari and Kurai.” Alysia said and Megumi spoke.

“Our friends, Emi and Mayumi are dealing with a Shrine made for Hikari, but they never mentioned anything about a Shrine of Kurai.”

“It’s because of both of you.” Marissa said catching her daughters attention.

"Us?" The girls said and Madam Mayweather nodded 'yes' to them.

Alysia clenched Saga and marched toward the obelisk only to be pulled back by her mother. She struggled to break free, screaming in anger, looking at the stone statues lying in the park.

"They're dead because of us!" Alysia pulled her free but Marissa smacked her daughter in the back of the head.

"Calm down!" Marissa said hugging Alysia. "It's not your fault. It's not your fault."

"We need you to focus Lys. We need a plan."

Alysia stared out at the park as she felt Megumi holding her hand. Madam Mayweather stood before the Perez' and pointed towards the corner.

"We'll each take one of the corners. We'll tether our circle together to create a Containment Field. The park is in the shape of triangle so we should have no problem setting up. Then your mother will use the bat I powered up and bash the ground to create shockwave at the obelisk to break it. Our Containment Field spell should prevent an explosive backlash."

Alysia and Megumi looked at their mother and then each other.

"What are you girls waiting for?" Marissa said to Alysia and Megumi. "Take a corner and get your spells ready."

Alysia and Megumi's eyes lit up like lights and they nodded in agreement. They both cast their Mana Gliders and split off in both directions while Mayweather crossed the street for the nearest corner. The girls took their positions as members of the Society approached them. They each explained Madam Mayweather's plan, and with a nod, the adults stood behind them for backup.

A female member from the Society approached Mayweather and received instructions. Mayweather made her magic circle appear as did Alysia and Megumi. Alysia and Megumi held Saga and Fable in the air over their heads as their mother watched in action.

"Do not worry Mrs. Perez." Madam Mayweather said looking at the obelisk. "They know what they're doing."

"I know." Marissa took a deep breath clenching the bat. Light as

it was in her grip, she prayed that her strike would connect.

Madam Mayweather stretched her arms out aimed at the Saga and Fable. With a deep breath, she channeled her Mana.

“Containment Field.” Two beams of green light shot from her hands and connected with the magical staff and book. Alysia and Megumi channeled their Mana attaching it to Mayweather's spell and together they chanted.

“Containment Field.” They both created a beam that connected with each other and together, all three Magi built a large force field that reached out into the sky.

Just as Marissa raised her bat into the air aiming very carefully at the obelisk, Alysia started to feel weak as the car pulled up. Her Mana was not enough when her spotter clutched her waist to keep her from falling over. Briggs and Lucinda stepped out of the car, hurrying to Alysia's aide.

“We got you.” Lucinda said placing her hands on Alysia's left arm.

“A Containment Field Spell?” Briggs said watching Megumi and Madam Mayweather holding the barrier up. He heard Alysia screaming under breath and Lucinda and the spotter cast a spell to reinforce the barrier. Briggs saw Marissa across the park ready to swing.

“Who is that?”

“My mother.” Alysia said squinting her eyes. “She is going to destroy it with a shockwave.”

Without hesitation, Briggs channeled his Mana and aimed for the obelisk as well.

“SHATTER BURST!” Briggs threw a punch in the air as Marissa smashed the ground. A pair of shockwaves from different directions converged at the obelisk. The impact cracked the marble. Slowly the cracks spread over the sculpture, peeling and crumbling onto the concrete. Then it burst apart, revealing a grey sphere surrounded by pure Mana and impure Mana, it looked like a planet. The Containment Field held the explosion.

Suddenly, the sphere sparked lightning. It pierced the barrier

and wrapped its spark like a rope around Alysia and Megumi, disrupting the Containment Field Spell. The girls were pulled towards the sphere, screaming and clawing to hold onto to something. Their cries for their mother shatter the sky. Their bodies lifted up in the air and they saw each other pulled closer to the sphere. They channeled their Mana only for it to suck the mist out of them and onto the orb. Their feet were about to touch the surface when a bat landed onto of the sphere.

The impact pushed the sphere onto the ground and a crater spread out across the park. The girls were free, landed on the now powered hole. They crawled to their mother without hesitation. At first, Marissa thought they were hugging her, but actually, she was lifted off into the air with Saga and Fable flying behind them. A pillar of fire and Mana shot up into the air striking the force field in the sky. One big explosion where the flames followed the dome. The heat felt right down to the ground.

Alysia, Megumi and Marissa looked up at the sky and saw the clouds. It was dawn. They found themselves in each other's arms. The girls holding so tight Marissa felt her children again. She kissed them both, consoling whatever pain they were feeling. She looked up at Madam Mayweather as the old woman walked by.

"I will help you get to Japan." Madam Mayweather said. "My entrance is will appear at the usual spot. The choice is yours."

Alysia and Megumi sat on their knees watching Mayweather walk quietly away. The girls and their mother soon found themselves surrounded by members of the Society, tending to them to make sure they were okay.

* * *

"Turn here." Alysia said as their father turned the corner. She looked out the window watching people cleaning up the broken windows of their stores. People reuniting with tier loved ones in tears. A coupe of teens lighting a candle light vigil on the side of the fence. The devastation was too much to bear. "I wish we could have done more."

"We take what we can get Lys." Megumi said with her arms

around Alysia.

"Don't worry girls." Marissa said. "We'll put an end to this situation together. Right Arturo."

Marissa looked at her husband and he nodded. "Everything is going to be okay. You both are not alone in this."

"Thank you." Megumi said.

"Yeah, thanks." Alysia saw the alley ahead. "We're here."

The car stopped and Arturo stepped out to go to the trunk. Just as Alysia pulled the door latch, she looked up to her Marissa.

"Mom."

"Yes sweetie."

"Megumi and I wanted to talk to you about what happened last year, but we can't explain it."

"Take your time. I'm listening."

"Actually," Alysia looked at Megumi and they both looked at their mother. "we want to take you to where it all happened. We think you would understand better if you saw it."

"Okay." Marissa turned around to face them. "We'll go to wherever you need to. Hopefully I can help answer your questions in whatever way I can."

The girls stepped out of the car, and took their luggage from Arturo. As they talked with their dad, Marissa wrote notes on a pad of what was just said. Written on the first line was 'Empty feelings' and 'Felt ripped apart.' Looking at those words alone ached Marissa's heart. With a tap of the window, Marissa saw everyone waiting. She stepped out of the car and took her luggage. Together, the family walked down the alley.

Alysia and Megumi took out their smartphones, typing a text message set to both Emi and Mayumi.

[We're on our way. We should be at the Shrine in a few hours.]

THE END.

