

# Arcana Magi Divine

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With the lighting of incense, its scent of lilac rose into the air. With candles the only light, a wooden building as small as a dollhouse rested before a mural of the sun in the sky. The art had a strange aura of positive within, but the young woman in a white robe veiled by its hood, hid the aura of her negative expression. Her breathing and heartbeat was the only sound in the room. The mist around her body reacted with each sound in harmony. Her thoughts randomized with memories she wished to forget. Prayers she whispered, keeping them tucked away from any artificial ears she suspected would be around her. Her whispers stopped and the doors opened. Two women dressed in ceremonial gowns entered and stepped aside.

A male soldier followed them, with medals and stripes strewn throughout his uniform. The women greeted him with a salute of their fist pounding over the hearts. He returned the salute and approached the robed woman. He clacked the heels of his boots, saluted the woman and removed his hat revealing his grey hair. He then approached the young woman and bowed.

"Priestess Amyra." He said. "You and the priestesses have been assigned a mission."

Amyra stood up and turned around. She pulled the back of her hood revealing her brownish black hair and her youthful face that showed she was an older teen despite the fact that she was beginning her adult years. Her cold yellow eyes and uninterested expression frightened the man. Without saying a word, she stood patiently for him to realize that he was in her way. As soon as he stepped aside, Amyra walked away with him accompanying her.

"Prepare the limo." Amyra said to the women.

"Yes my lady." Both women said with their heads down.

Amyra made her way through the hallway and arrived in her room. It was clean and organized. Her shoes polished. Her uniform neatly folded in the closet. It was stale and felt cold. No sense of life

or color. Not even a window to the outside world. Amyra let out breath sitting on her bed looking up to the white ceiling. None of this had any effect on her. It would roll off her shoulder and brushed aside like dust.

After Amyra changed into her uniform, she stared at herself in the mirror. She shed a smile, but it felt empty while in that uniform, or anything else on for that matter. Amyra pressed her hands on the brick wall and rubbed it. She thought about hanging something on there, but she did not have the tools to make a hole. In fact, the thought of having a hole in the wall would be enough. With the knock on the door, she closed her eyes and looked down.

She opened it and her two female escorts, in black business suits and sunglasses, stood at attention ready to go. They saluted her and she returned it. Once they stepped aside, she exited and led them to the limo.

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The limo approached Fort Anderson Air Force base. There was a large airship, grey and black, floating high above with cargo placed in the loading docks. Among that cargo were four large human looking robots, colored red, blue, green, and purple. Amyra pressed her hands on the window and stared deeply at the red robot.

“My golem.”

The limo parked near the airship. Amyra's escorts opened the door for her and led her to the elevator. Going up, she looked down at the runway. She saw platoons lined up saluting their superior officer. From ground troops to pilots, she wondered why such a large deployment.

Once inside, the familiarity of the ship kicked in and she knew where she had to go. She passed by communication rooms, personnel quarters, and supply rooms. Amyra found her way to the guest quarters and when the door opened, she saw three other young women sitting inside. They looked as young as her, and difficult to tell who was the oldest or the youngest. One had pointed ears and long fair hair in a ponytail. Another had cat ears atop her short hair and a tail resting over the chair, her sharp nails scraping

the arm of her seat. Finally, a human with her hair in a bun and bangs draped over. They sat quietly with an air of dread. An important issue for them to address alone.

"You are relieved." Amyra said to her escorts and saluted them. As soon as the door closed, she let out a sigh and turned around. "I can't believe they're finally gone."

Amyra unbuttoned the top of her blouse and flopped on the chair. She looked up to the cat eared girl leaning close to her.

"How're you doing Jessie?"

"Great as always Amyra." Jessie knelt down and whispered into her ear. "Have you found a guy yet?"

"No. We can't even have men. We're priestesses."

"But that's not fun. Right Ruby?"

"Amyra is right." Ruby said picking up a magazine. She removed the band on her hair and let it drape over her pointed ears. "The Emperor would be upset if we so much allow a man to bed with us."

"Come on. Help me out here Sayuri."

"Keep me out of this." She said typing on a touch screen phone.

"Well at least when this mission is over, can we all go karaoke? I'm craving for alcohol."

"I'm game." Sayuri said. "I just hope this mission is not long. I have the unveiling of my new sculpture at the Museum of Art next week."

"I prefer to see a movie." Amyra said. "But sure why not."

"I'm busy." Ruby said.

"No you're coming." Jessie said leaning close to Ruby. "And you will as always."

"I hate alcohol."

"So order a soda."

"The last time I did that, it had alcohol in it." Ruby looked at Jessie who smiled innocently to the giggles of Amyra and Sayuri.

"So do any of you know why we're needed in this mission?" Sayuri said.

They all looked to each other and none had an answer. The uncertainty left Amyra crossing her arms and pacing back and forth.

Before she had a chance to give her thoughts, the intercom beeped and she answered it.

"Sanchez here." Amyra said.

"The meeting will start in ten minutes."

"Understood." Amyra turned to her friends and they nodded.

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The priestesses arrived at the meeting room where ranking officers sat before a round table. None shed a single emotion before military when they received their salute. Their presence triggered fear and whispers in the room. They each took their seat and a holographic projection turned on with the date 4/7/1438 M.E. on the top right corner. A map of a town labeled Eastburgh appeared and it was destroyed. There were buildings aflame and roads reduced to liquid tar. Though the priestesses felt shocked at what they saw next, they held their facial expressions in check at the sight of the injured and deceased. Burns on bodies, limbs lost, and a woman holding whatever was left of her child in her arms. Sayuri reacted to it causing the officers to whisper. She lowered her head in shame and Amyra turned to the military triggering silence.

"Forgive us my lady." An old general with the nametag reading Richards said. "This shall not leave this room."

"Who did this?" Amyra said with a cold monotone voice to a young general with stubble hair that was near baldness and a nametag that read Kerns.

"A dragon named Zerus." A holographic image of a large red dragon appeared. "This attack occurred this morning and we still don't know the motive of this beast's actions. But we do know that this town did nothing to provoke this attack. The Dragon Clans as usual have not said a word why this has happened. We can't get our diplomats to La Isla Fuego to talk to them."

The next image to appear, were ships lined up outside an island along a channel. From destroyers to aircraft carriers, their positions had all of the weapons targeting the towns along its shoreline.

"We have established a blockade. We are convinced that the citizens there are working with the dragons against our Beloved

Father, and we intend to protect him at all costs. The citizen's status is now terrorists and they're to be arrested on site and brought to the Tribunal Courts for appropriate punishment."

"Then what is our purpose?" Jessie said with a mature voice. "This is merely a police job."

"We believe Zerus is returning to the island. Therefore, the priestess's job is to intercept the dragon at his direct course through Windsor with their Golems and capture the beast. Dead or alive."

The officers whispered at this revelation and General Richards stood up slamming his hand on the table.

"This is an outrage! That is the job of the Hunters! Beloved Father's priestesses are not to be tasked with such a dangerous mission. The citizens will not tolerate this if they get hurt or worse."

"This was sanctioned by Beloved Father himself. He wishes to assert his power through his priestesses to assure the public that they he loves them and will always protect them. The priestesses' actions are a direct hand of Beloved Father himself. Their actions are his actions. Their voice is his voice."

Amyra felt exposed by that comment. Out in the open with all attention pointed at her and her squad. She noticed the eyes of the old general piercing the young man. That need to kill him on sight for the comment he made. Hearing the old man's defense of sending her and the others to fight a dragon eased her heart a bit. Amyra maintained her composure and felt Ruby's hand on her knee shivering. Amyra took it and tightened her grip. She even saw Jessie's cat ear twitch rapidly. She wanted to object to this idea, but as the voice of Beloved Father, she could not chance it.

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In the locker room, the priestesses were changing into their pilot suits. Not a single word spoken so far. Neither knew what to say about this mission or the plans they received. They just know that they are going to fight a lone dragon that annihilated an entire town.

Amyra finished buttoning her red vest over her suit and slipped on her hairclips, when she saw Ruby sitting at the end of the bench still undressed and staring at her pilot outfit. Amyra approached her

and sat beside her. She heard Ruby whimper. Amyra placed her hand on her friend's back leaning her forehead on it.

"Are we ready for this?" Ruby said catching the attention of Sayuri and Jessie. Amyra responded.

"We've been training for this since we were five. We have to be ready."

"This is different. We're not dealing with riots or terrorists against the emperor. This is a dragon."

"That dragon killed people. We can't look away from this."

"I know. It just... doesn't feel right."

"Why?" Sayuri said slipping on her hairclips.

"Because dragons never attacked us without reason."

Sayuri and Jessie looked to each other wondering the same thing. Amyra patted Ruby on the back and stood to her feet. She turned to her friends with her arms crossed receiving their attention.

"You all finish suiting up and head to the hangar. I'll go talk to one of the generals. I don't like where this mission is going."

"Don't." Jessie said slipping on her green vest. "I sensed something strange from Kerns. My instincts tell me there is more to this and we're just being used for something big."

"I agree." Sayuri said. "It's best we play this out and see who makes the wrong move. I just hope we're not getting dragged into anything beyond our control."

"When have we ever had control?" Ruby said looking back. Her statement caught the priestesses off guard. "We never had control over our lives. We have the power just short of the emperor and yet we can't order these generals to fight the dragon themselves. How unfair is that?"

"Like last time." Jessie said and Sayuri gripped her shoulders looking down.

"We've been through this before." Amyra said and Ruby gripped her head. "This is our way of life. We serve the emperor and are task to do his bidding. But we don't get ranks higher than the generals since we're Golem pilots. The reality is, people have died today and

we have to bring the dragon to justice.”

“You’re a naïve fool.” Ruby turned around and saw the tears welled up in Amyra’s eyes.

“Look,” Amyra wiped her eyes. “the best... the best we can do right now is keep our guard up and be ready for any deception. Agreed?”

Amyra leaned close to Ruby with her eyes closed. She received a nod from her and the other priestesses, and they all gathered in a huddle.

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In the hangar, the priestesses approached the four large robots. Amyra stood before the red one, her hand sliding on the cold metal chest. Ruby opened the cockpit of the purple and the hatch revealed only a seat with two orbs and a touchpad on the arms. Jessie unplugged a large cable to her green golem and the technician analyzed the exposed parts. Sayuri sat in the seat of her blue golem typing on a touchpad on the chair and made adjustments to fit comfortably.

As the hatch of her golem opened, Amyra looked up at the control room and saw General Kerns watching over them. She kept her eyes on him for a moment until she received a green light from a technician to start up her golem. Amyra sat on the seat, it slid inside closing the hatch, and her body felt glued in place. She placed her hands on the orbs resting on the arms of her seat. Amyra closed her eyes and focused her mind. The lines on her suit and hairclips glowed bright. The mist seeped out from those lines and rose up to a large orb like a vacuum. Suddenly the screens around her turned on and the engine of the golem rumbled. The seat shifted forward leaning her into a standup position.

Amyra opened her eyes and her mind made her believe that she was floating in the air. No seat under her. Her arms and legs free moving. She felt like she was a part of the golem. Unfortunately, it was all in her mind, for in reality her yellow eyes were pupil-less. Her body was stationary, numbed from the pain of the mist seeping out of her. With only her muscle memory, she moved the golem the

forward leading her squad to the launch bay doors.

"Captain Sanchez, standing by." Amyra said.

"Captain Inoue, standing by." Sayuri said.

"Captain Nowakowski, standing by." Jessica said.

"Captain Erowyn, standing by." Ruby said.

"Opening launch bay doors." The control room said over the intercom. The wind of the sky whipped through the launch bay. Once opened they could see the forest below. "Bay doors now open. Launch golems."

With the shift of her arms and legs, Amyra activated the thrusters and made the golem glide out of the airship. Her squadron followed freefalling to the earth below. Using the thrusters to slow their descent, they landed in the middle of the forest triggering the animals to scurry away out of fear. The tree covered up to the golems waists and prompted them duck for cover.

On Amyra's screen she saw other golems, generic looking, marching into position inside the city of Windsor. Tanks rolled up along the side of the roads with cannons aimed up. Helicopters evacuating sick people from a nearby hospital. Trucks and school buses filing out in a single row. It was calm despite the tension. Amyra knew her hands were shaking. She wanted it to stop.

"Amyra?" Sayuri said over the intercom.

"Yes?"

"If we're going to use the Binding spell, shouldn't we be out in the front line?"

"I know but General Kerns orders are to stay back and watch over the civilians. We go after Zerus when he comes our way." Amyra tightened her grip and whispered. "What are you up to Kerns? Why call us for a capture mission and not put us out front?"

One of the tall buildings deep inside the city lit aflame. It was not an explosion but a wave of red liquid splashing on it. The sounds of screams reached Amyra along with the sound of gunfire and rockets. Ice balls and lightning bolts materialized in the sky. The roar of fighter jets flew over the priestesses and they heard a loud roar. As the platoon of golems leaned alongside the walls of



buildings look around the corner, Amyra lifted her head up and saw a large dragon circling above the city.

"You see it Amyra?" Jessie said.

"I do. Target confirmed."

"Stand your ground." General Kerns said.

"Sir if we go in now, we can Bind it in surprise."

"I said hold your ground."

Amyra saw small explosions and civilians stampede out of the city. Fires spread at the pace of a speeding car, and Zerus using its claws to clip the wings of fighter planes. It was war alright. A one sided one. A couple of bullets struck the dragon and it roared into spewing red liquid over the gunman, reducing them to liquid. The military stood outmatched despite the damage they inflicted and the priestesses now understood why. For in the grip of Zerus was one of the military golems. Held around the waist like a toy, the golem raised its hand up and cast a lightning spell on Zerus' legs. The dragon let go and the golem exploded on impact in the ground.

"Zerus is an adult male." Ruby said over the intercom.

"They're not going to make it." Sayuri said.

"We have to help them." Jessie said and Amyra held back her tears thinking about what happened to the people in Eastburgh.

"What's the point of being priestesses if we can't help fight back?"

"Don't worry ladies you'll all do fine." General Kerns said. "We're leading him your way now."

"What are you watching? It's a one sided battle. We can't fight him out in the open sir." Amyra said. "We have the element of surprise now."

"If you disobey..."

"Screw the orders! I have a golem!" Amyra made her machine crawl on its belly staying hidden in the trees. She looked back and saw her friends behind her, keeping pace. "You don't have to come."

"No way am I leaving you alone." Jessie said.

"I concur." Ruby said.

"I didn't get dressed to just hide behind the bushes." Sayuri said.

"Besides as scared as I am fighting a dragon, I don't think I would have a right to call myself a priestess if I didn't confront this monster."

"Yeah." Jessie and Ruby said together that put a smile on Amyra's face.

"You four will be put in the... hey!"

"Priestesses this is General Richards. Happy hunting."

"Roger." Amyra said.

The priestesses reached the end of the forest where there is nothing but an opening between them and the city. Amyra used the golems hand to signal Jessie to the left and Sayuri to the right. With Ruby in the back, they split up and ran up to the buildings carefully avoiding the people underneath their feet. They leaned on the buildings with the sound of the dragon's roar loud and clear. The priestesses walked in a crouch down through different streets maintaining a visual of each other at each intersection.

After ten intersections, they saw the devastation. Cars overturned, fires collapsing the buildings. A couple of survivors weeping over a pool of red liquid surrounded by the flames. They saw a military jeep pushed back up to it wheels by a couple of soldiers and Ruby knelt down to them.

"Soldier." She said getting their attention. "Get those civilians out of here now."

Without hesitation, they drove up to the survivors and forced them into car despite their refusal.

"Be careful." General Richards said over the intercom. "Zerus is on the ground."

"Damn!" Amyra slapped the arm of her chair. "Split up so he can't spray us at once."

With everyone off in different directions, Amyra climbed the building and peeked over the rooftops. She saw a piece of Zerus' wing struggling to lie down. His size gave him away allowing Amyra to calibrate his coordinates, sharing that information. She received acknowledgment from her squad and they carefully navigated their way around the city to surround the dragon. Amyra kept sight of the

wing and watched her friends on radar take their positions. She channeled her mana and received confirmation from the others. Once she had visual of their location, she gave the signal. They jumped out into the open with hands aimed out creating large bracelets of light with runes etched on them.

"BIND!" They said but all they found was a large black tarp and their spells vanished due to a missed target. They heard a growl nearby, but it was not at ground level.

"Above!" Amyra said.

The priestesses jumped back and red liquid splashed on the street. Drops of the liquid landed on all the golem's limbs turning the metal red. They scattered in different directions and received cover fire from the military's barrage. The priestesses regrouped and assessed the damage. The outer layer of their arms and legs melted off exposing the gears and wires. When Amyra leaned close to Sayuri, the dragon scooped the red golem up in the air.

"AMYRA!"

"I got him." Ruby said using the golem's arms to simulate a bow. A bracelet of light appeared and targeted the dragon. "ARROWIND!"

The arrow of light released and struck Zerus' thigh. It released Amyra sending her to a free fall. Jessie sprinted and channeled her mana. She leapt into the air with her feet targeting the ground.

"MUDSLIDE!" Upon impact, the ground ripped apart and turned into a slope. Amyra landed on it and slid safely. Jessie made a fist aimed at the slope. "SEISMIC PUNCH!"

The strike pushed outward an array of jagged rocks and spikes, pelting Zerus into a roar. When he turned around, he let out a spray of red liquid, but Sayuri stood between Jessie and the attack.

"RISING FALLS!" A burst of water blasted out of the sewers striking the red liquid. It evaporated reducing the attack to mere black mud. It splashed over Jessie and Sayuri blinding their video feed.

Zerus dove at them with another round of liquid but it felt a tingling in its underbelly. It was a wave of flames originating from Amyra, but it had no painful effect. Once Amyra saw Ruby pull,

Jessie and Sayuri into cover, she ran leading the dragon away.

"Amyra what are you doing?" Ruby said.

"Get Jessie and Sayuri away from the battle zone."

"Amyra no!" Sayuri said.

"We can still fight!" Jessie said. "Lead him over to us and we'll bind it"

"Let's take our positions." Ruby said.

Amyra gritted her teeth from her friend's stubbornness and let out a deep breath.

"Give me your coordinates." Amyra received them on the screen. As she turned the first corner Zerus swooped by swinging its claws missing her. Amyra looked back and saw the dragon took to the skies. She hoped he would not see her friends setting up. "Zerus is airborne."

"Roger." The priestesses said together.

Amyra ran fast past the soldiers and tanks and golems, each of them dispatched by the dragon like roaches stomped by a boot. She made her way out into the open right past Jessie and sprinted into a slide across the park knocking a few damaged cars aside. They channeled their mana and aimed their spell at Zerus but something happened. The dragon landed. With the debris of battered buildings in the way, targeting became difficult.

"Come on." Amyra said. "I'm right here!"

A blip appeared on her radar. It was unmarked and approaching fast. Amyra saw Zerus sniffing with a look of familiarity on its face. He launched himself in the air and Amyra had no choice.

"Now!"

"BIND!" All the priestesses jumped out and cast the spell together. A rope like light surrounded the dragon, bounding its body up. Zerus fell to the ground struggling to break free. Squirming like a worm held by two fingers. It roared but the light clamped it shut. Zerus continued to struggle and looked out into the opening. The priestesses turned around and saw golem approaching them. It was teal with white highlights around the armor. It looked old and out of place next to the sleek new designs of all the golems. A large

serrated blade jolted out the right hand. Zerus' reflection from the steel made it struggle to break free. Amyra looked at the dragon and saw the fear in its eyes.

"A custom golem?" Sayuri said.

"Can't be." Ruby said. "Beloved Father forbids it."

"It's so old." Jessie said and Amyra walked towards it.

"Withdraw your weapon and surrender your golem." Amyra approached the golem with arms raised to halt it. "You are in direct violation of Beloved Father's royal decree."

"That's Suzaku!" General Kerns said over the intercom. "He's the reason Zerus attacked Eastburgh."

"What?! When did you learn about this?!"

"Apprehend that golem at once!"

The priestesses looked at each other unsure what was going on.

"But Zerus..."

"That's an order!"

They did not know what to do now. Fighting Suzaku would mean releasing Zerus so they can concentrate their spells on the unmarked golem. Before they could do anything, a teal magic circle appeared under Zerus and a pillar of light rose up trapping it inside.

Amyra pounded on wall of light watching the bind spell turn off. Her eyes trembled despite the repeated calls from Kerns to apprehend Suzaku. With the priestesses beside her, she watched the golem walk through the light. For one moment, she had conflicting thoughts. Watching Suzaku raise the serrated blade at Zerus, she understood what was about to happen after everything that came before this golem's arrival. Yet her duty as an officer of the military compounded her to obey her orders. She turned to her squad who waited a decision. Instead, she listened to the bloodcurdling scream of Zerus and its blood spill out of its neck spreading across the street like a river.

The teal pillar of light disappeared and they watched Zerus' heartbeat come to a stop. Standing of its dead body was Suzaku with both dragon wings severed and in its hand. The blade dripped with blood amidst the reflection of Amyra's golem. When the serrated

blade retracted, it made Amyra jolt her head. The remainder of the military marched past the priestesses with weapons aimed at Suzaku climbing down. The continued berating by General Kerns left Amyra clenching her teeth.

"All military personnel stand down."

"Not again." Sayuri said.

"This is not the time Amyra." Ruby said.

"As Priestess of the Southern Parallel, I order you all to stand down."

"You don't have the authority!" General Kerns said.

"General Richards." Amyra said staring at Suzaku.

"I can't help you Captain Sanchez."

"Think about it. Why are we here on a dragon-hunting mission when we have the Hunters to do that? I don't believe Beloved Father understood the situation. I'm sending you a feed of what I'm looking at on my screen and asked yourself that question. Why? Why General Kerns?"

There was silence. Amyra could sense her friends breathing down her neck for this. She knew the risks in making this posture because of what was unfolding, but there was something wrong from the beginning. The reason was right before her.

"Captain Nowakowski." General Kerns said. "Relieve Captain Sanchez and take command of your squad."

"No." Jessie said and moved her golem beside Amyra's. "I have to agree with Captain Sanchez. This entire mission was wrong."

Amyra smiled, and saw Sayuri and Ruby standing beside her. Amyra looked back at Suzaku. She took a step back creating an opening to allow Suzaku to walk by. The priestesses watched the golem drag the wings of Zerus away from the scene.

"You will be punished for disobeying Beloved Father!" General Kerns said.

"General Richards." Amyra said. "Our target is down as ordered by our Beloved Father. Mission accomplished."

"Good job Captain. Your squad did a good job. Come on home."

"I will write a report on General Kerns. I can only pray that he

was not deceitful to Beloved Father.”

“Understood.”

Amyra led her friends away from the scene opposite the direction Suzaku went. She looked back one more time and saw the golem disappear from the smoke of burning buildings.

The End.

