

Arcana Magi Zero - v.3: It's So Wonderful, It's So Beautiful

by H-M Brown

“Happy birthday Alysia.”

“Happy birthday Meg.”

The calendar page had February Twenty-Ninth circled with a happy face. Alysia and Megumi were now twelve years old and for the first time, they celebrated their birthday together. It was also special for them because it was a leap year and they did not have to celebrate on March First. It was a wary day for them because of Megumi's fears of what is going to happen to them since their magic circles were identical in alignment but opposite of each other. Megumi's magic circle aligned with the sun while Alysia's magic circle aligned with the moon. Alysia dismissed it as nonsense and felt that Megumi was overreacting.

Today was also a school day and the girls got dressed in their everyday clothes. It was a little different from what Megumi had expected since she remembered she had to wear a school uniform when she was little. Now she just wears a blouse and a skirt, with a sweater and sneakers. Megumi's knee length socks covered the scar on her right leg she got in her fight with the winged foreigners. She took her pendant from the top of her messy dresser and slid the string around her neck. She packed her schoolbooks, which included a Spanish language textbook, into her book bag and slung it over her shoulder. She picked up her dirty clothes and stuffed them in the hamper. She left her bed in a mess and did not bother to throw some of the paper balls on the ground into the small wastebasket by her.

Alysia on the other hand, wished to wear the school uniforms Megumi wore in her old hometown. She thought she would look cute

Available online at «<http://fictionaut.com/stories/h-m-brown/arcana-magi-zero-v3-its-so-wonderful-its-so-beautiful-19>»

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in them. It was also the only cute outfit she was willing to wear she preferred shorts and pants. Unless she enrolled in a private school, wearing a school uniform was not necessary, and it would make her look like she has some fetish in the eyes of her classmates. In the meantime, she just wore her usual jeans, long sleeve shirt and hooded sweater. She reached for her bracelet and wrapped it around her left wrist, just next to the scars she got from the basilisk's bite early in the month. Alysia gathered her schoolbooks and stuffed them into her book bag, which included a Japanese language textbook. Before she left her, Alysia picked up some of the trash she had on her desk and wiped the surface with a paper towel. She went to her already made bed and rubbed on the surface of the blanket to smooth out the wrinkles. Finally, she took her hockey equipment on the floor of her closet and put them back in their proper place.

Both girls stepped out of their rooms and made their way to the kitchen at the end of the hallway of their single floor home. After they placed their book bags on the floor, Alysia reached up for the cabinet, and took out a box of corn flakes cereal. Megumi went into the refrigerator and took out a gallon of milk. They walked past each other. Alysia opened another cabinet and pulled out a pair of bowls while Megumi went into the drawer and pulled out a pair of spoons. At the same time, Alysia tossed one bowl to Megumi and Megumi tossed one spoon to Alysia. They caught the items and approached the table. They sat on their chairs and made themselves a bowl of cereal.

"Happy birthday girls." Their mother said as she entered the kitchen.

"Thank you, mom." They said together as they each kissed their mother on the cheek when she approached them.

Their mother made coffee when she looked at the clock and realized the girls were already dressed for school. She wondered if it was because it was their birthday, but knowing how they think, she was suspicious.

"You two are looking for a head start today?"

"Yeah." Alysia said.

"We can't wait for papa to come home today from his business trip." Megumi smiled to her mother.

"When is pop coming home?" Alysia took another scoop of cereal.

"He'll arrive in Newark about one o'clock."

"I'm glad he'll be home for our birthday. Right, Alysia?" Megumi looked over at Alysia, as the shorthaired girl paid no attention to what she said. Megumi kicked Alysia in the leg and snapped her sister out of her fog.

"Yes. I am happy too." Alysia said with a smile as her mother stared at them, waiting for a mistake.

The girls finished eating their breakfast, placed their bowls and spoon in the sink, and grabbed their book bags. They hurried past the living room and reached the door. They put on their coats, hats, and gloves, and slung their book bags over their backs, when their mother approached them.

"I'll be out early so we can celebrate together. You both have a great day in school."

"We will mom." Megumi said as she opened the door and checked to see if anyone was around. She nodded to Alysia and they hurried out the door. The girls jumped off the porch and in mid air, their magic circles appeared under their feet.

"MANA GLIDER!" They chanted together and their magic circles shrunk into two smaller magic circles under their feet. Each had a band of light attached to the circles, Alysia's was teal and Megumi's was lavender. They rode on them like skateboards and took shortcuts through the neighborhood so the people would not see them, since their magic was a secret. Megumi checked the time on her cell phone and looked back at Alysia tapping the screen.

They arrived in an empty field. It was where they play hockey on their Mana Gliders. However, today, there were two snowmen in the middle of the field. The girls got off their gliders, landing on the snow, and stood before the snowmen. Alysia took the thermometer off the snowy shoulders of their artwork to read their temperature.

"They're cold enough Meg. No sign of melting. The weatherman said that its fifteen degrees today and the wind chill is going feel like five degrees below zero. Will this take long?"

"As long as you don't do anything sudden and you repeat what I had told you, this will work."

"Okay."

The girls stood behind the backs of the snowmen they made. Their magic circles grew under their feet and their own snowmen.

"COPY... AND... PASTE!!" A burst of frigid air raised the girl's hair up into the air. The snowmen transformed and took human shape. Information of their memories copied into the minds of their duplicates. The spell finished and when they opened their eyes, Alysia stepped back in shock. The copies stood before them a perfect image. She reached out with her hand and rubbed the cheek of her copy.

"Amazing." Alysia said.

Alysia and Megumi handed their book bags to the clones and sent them on their way to school. Megumi took out a pouch filled with money and dropped it on the snow. They looked at each other with a nod. Alysia pumped her left fist into the air with force and Megumi raised her pendant on the palm of her hands into the air with gentleness.

"AWAKEN... SAGA!!"

"ADVANCE... FABLE!!"

Their magic circles grew wide under them as they floated into the air. The bracelet burst into pieces of light off Alysia's wrist, gathered together in mid-air, and grew into her staff, Saga. The pendant burst into pieces off Megumi's chest, gathered in mid-air, and grew into her book, Fable. The magic circles slid over their bodies and changed into their magical outfits and armor. Ever since the Four Mythic Elements gave the girls their costumes, Alysia and Megumi added a belt to their outfits that slumped diagonally across their waists. Their cell phones materialized and clipped themselves onto their belts. Megumi picked up the pouch and tied it to her belt.

"We're cutting it close, Meg. I hope we find out what all this

nonsense about our circles is about.”

“Don't worry, once we get the answers we can head to school and replace our copies there. If we can't find out by two o'clock, our copies will come back here as programmed and we can change back.”

“Mana Glider. I hope we can get back to school soon. I really don't want to get caught and be punished by mom.”

“Mana Glider. Don't worry, Alysia. This plan will work. Let's go, we don't want to keep Madam Karin waiting.”

The girls flew up to the skies towards their destination. The snow white clouds in the sky provided cover for the girls since their outfits were primarily white. Below they saw nothing but urban neighborhoods, highways and bridges, and factories either abandoned or operational. The people and cars were like ants and none was aware of the girls presence in the sky.

Alysia and Megumi made an appointment to meet a woman named Madam Karin Mayweather. She has the ability to read anything from magic circles to astrological alignments. Rumor has it that she can read time and space itself, that has never been proven though. Madam Karin's place was a couple of towns over from where the girls lived and it took the girls about one hour to get there. It was a tiring trip since they were draining their mana, they had not even taken a rest and it was difficult at this point, but it was all worth it if the madam's answers were right. They circled around in the town the Madam lived and Megumi checked the text on her cell phone.

“Down there.”

The girls descended into an alley below, after checking for anybody nearby, and they got off their gliders. They stood before a painting of a tunnel that covered the entire wall. It had the picture of the universe with a clock drawn further deep into space. It had a light glow that stretched out to Alysia and her hand guided it toward her.

“What's it doing Meg?”

“It's just mana cloaking the spell. Only those of us with mana can

see this painting. Everything is okay." Megumi followed the instructions given to her by Madam Karin. It stated that they had to channel their mana and press their hands on the wall with the mural of a tunnel. Megumi approached the painting with Alysia watching on. She pressed her hands on it and looked back at her sister waiting.

"Come on Alysia."

Alysia stood beside her sister and placed her hands on the painting. They channeled their mana and pressed their hands together. The painting came to life, waving like water, and a vacuum of air sucked them inside. The girls screamed inside the painting, falling into the darkness of the tunnel toward the clock. They went through it and fell onto the brick layered ground.

An old woman with white hair stood smoking a long thin pipe over the girls. She was dressed in a black and red robe with sandals under her feet. Despite the rancid odor of the pipe she blew out of her mouth, her entire body smelled of flowers, and her dark skin was silky and smooth.

"You must be my ten o'clock." Her voice was monotone with a strong accent. She looked down at the girls without a hint of care on her face and walked away.

"I am Madam Karin Mayweather."

Alysia and Megumi were still on the floor looking at each other. They looked back at the painting and saw it was the same drawing, only, instead of a clock there was the Earth in its place. They did not know what to expect at this point and had second thoughts about being here.

"Get up off my floor." Madam Karin looked back with the corner of her eyes as she stood before a big beanbag chair. "This isn't a homeless shelter, unless you're dogs. If so, then I will claim you both as my pets. I have been lonely lately since I let go of the last two." The old woman sat on the beanbag chair in the middle of the stale brick chamber and leaned back taking another puff of her pipe.

Alysia and Megumi got to their feet and picked up Saga and Fable.

"I am Megumi Miyazaki-Perez and this is my sister Alysia." They stood far away despite the introduction. They saw the old woman waving for them to approach her and they did. They stood before the old woman as a puff of the rancid smoke covered their faces. They coughed and brushed the little cloud away. Alysia growled but kept her temper in check.

"Please sit."

Alysia and Megumi turned around and saw two beanbag chairs appear out of thin air from behind them. Alysia fell back on her beanbag with joy and folded her hands on her belly, though Megumi sat herself down in a well-mannered position, folding her hands on her lap.

"Why do you seek of me?" Madam Karin said.

"Meg is worried about our magic circles."

"You're Circular Magi eh? What is wrong with your circles?"

"She says that our alignment are identical but opposite. I don't know what the big deal is."

"The thing is Madam..." Megumi said. "...is that today is our birthday."

"And?"

"Well it just seems strange."

"Strange that you both are born on the same day with the same circles?"

"Well, yes."

Karin sighed at the fact that they wasted her time. She waved her hand for them stand up. She watched the girls get off their beanbag chairs holding Saga and Fable.

"Show me your magic circles."

Alysia made Saga float before her as Megumi released Fable and it floated before her. They raised their arms up along the sides and their magic circles appeared under their feet. The girls stayed in that position, watched the old woman take a puff of her pipe, and stood to her feet. They followed her movement as she walked around them.

"Very interesting runic spells. Very rare indeed."

"I don't understand." Megumi said.

"Of course you don't. Runic spells written on your circles are the result of what you experienced growing up, fate and destiny did not give these words to you. You gave these words to yourself. They are yours and only you have the choice on how to use them. As for your circles overall, they are perfectly fine."

"What do you mean fine?" Megumi asked as her and Alysia's magic circle disappeared.

"Despite the fact that the two of you are rare Circular Magi, born on the same day, is the same that can be said of anybody else. From wizards, sorcerers, mages, anybody. If you were looking for a deeper meaning in this, you are not going to find it."

Megumi lowered her head in disappointment as Alysia shook her head side to side with a sigh.

"I told you this was nonsense Meg. I hope this answers your silly question."

"Nice way to support your sister, Shorty." Karin took another puff of her pipe and Alysia looked back at her, with her mouth opened to say something back but she saw the look on Megumi's face and realized she was not being fair.

"I'm sorry Meg." Alysia put her hand on Megumi's shoulder as Karin observed them.

"Have either of you been able to make your own decisions?"

"Well, yes." Alysia answered.

"Has anything unusual occurred around your family and friends? Like walking past a window and something fell out of it missing them."

"No."

"From what I can see, no one had tampered with your circle. So you both are fine."

"Thank you Oldie. Pay the lady Meg and let's get out of here."

Megumi did not want to believe it. She refused to accept this answer. She knew there was more to this than was told.

"I don't get it. Alysia never knew she had mana."

"It happens sometimes." Karin said. "Nobody is born with a

destiny and you're not the first one to believe that some fantasy adventure is going to happen because your magic circles are identical yet opposite. And you will not be the last person to think this way."

"Sorry, but I can't believe that we are not bound by fate or destiny." Megumi curled her hands into a fist as Karin sighed.

"You really believe that fate and destiny has something to do with this?"

"Yes."

Karin shrugged her shoulders at Megumi's denial. She approached the girls, stood before them, and raised her right hand up overhead. They all looked up at the ceiling at the same time.

"Alright, do you want to know how fate and destiny work?"

"Yes." Megumi nodded.

"How old are you now?"

"We're both twelve."

"You were both born in 2000. It takes nine months to incubate in your mother's womb, so let's trace it back." Karin turned the room into darkness and the girls found themselves surrounded by the universe. The constellations were within their fingertips. Planets spinning and shooting stars flew across the universe. It was a remarkable sight. The old woman watched the girls smile as they reached out to touch the stars. She noticed Alysia's expression was pure and natural as the child placed a group of stars on the palm of her hand and giggled. Madam Karin used her hands to move the universe around like a mouse pointer. She traced the nine months prior to their births to the constellation Gemini.

"Both of your father's sperm met both of your mother's egg on... May 23, 1999."

"That was very graphic, Oldie. I didn't need that image in my head."

"Shh... sorry Madam Karin."

"As I was saying, both of your parents made you both on that day. But look carefully."

The girls saw the stars glowing brightly. They watched Madam

Karin take two stars with the palm of her hand and presented them.

"That's us?" Alysia asked.

"Yes."

"Then those stars are..."

"Everyone else who had been made that day."

"So we're not the only ones who could have had this alignment."

"Correct, Shorty."

The two stars that represented Alysia and Megumi floated back to the constellation.

"What's that constellation, Oldie?"

"That's Gemini, Shorty. It's where the month of May falls on in astrology."

"There are two people." Alysia said.

"Yes, they are."

"Weird because we're Pisces and that has two fish."

"Interesting." Karin moved the universe over until they were next to the earth, the moon, and the sun. "Shorty do you know about the Arcana Solstice?"

"No." Alysia looked at Megumi and her sister answered.

"It's when mana energy is fused into unborn babies."

"That's right." Karin said. "The Arcana Solstice was on June 23, 1999. For most people with magical power they just receive mana and move along. For Circular Magi such as yourselves, you each received an alignment. Those made on May Twenty-Third may have the same alignments as you two while they grew in their mother's womb. There could be a sorcerer or two who are connected. Alignment was determined during when and where the universe was at, the moment your mana merged with you. From what I can see in your circles, Megumi was born in the morning during twilight and Alysia was born in the evening during twilight."

"You mean Meg's older than me?"

"Yes Shorty."

"Not fair." Alysia crossed her arms and looked away as Megumi sighed and turned her attention to Madam Karin.

"So you're point is that there are others who were born today

back in 2000.”

“Yes. Any one of them could have the same alignment as you two.”

“That means that anybody could have awakened Saga.” Megumi sighed and accepted that there was no destiny or fate for her and Alysia.

“You should be happy Young Lady. The concept of destiny and fate are nothing but trouble.”

“Why?” Alysia asked.

“People who think they have fate or destiny tend to seek out to fulfill it and in the process hurt people and destroy things. The truth is there is no fate and destiny. It is all in the imagination. Trust me. I know this is true, the proof is right around us.”

The girls spun around once to look at the entire universe. Not everything in the universe was doing anything spectacular. The constellations just sat in their spot without moving a budge. The comets, asteroids, and meteors moved without changing directions. The sun and stars just glowed bright without a care in the world. It was a disappointing moment for Megumi, but she felt her hand grabbed by Alysia when Madam Karin directed the earth toward them. Megumi's eyes grew wide, looked up at their home planet, and together they reached out for it. Their hands slipped through the hologram and were shocked for a moment. They looked at each other and giggled at how funny that was.

“Tell me about how you two got your magical items and armor.”

The girls approached Madam Karin holding Saga and Fable in their hands.

“My family served under the House of Four Mythic Elements.” Megumi answered. “My book Fable was passed down from mother to daughter for generations. I inherited this.”

“Earlier this month at the museum my mom works at...” Alysia answered “...a spell was made by a magical artifact, turning everyone to stone. I wanted to save my mother and everyone from the spell, so I chose to awaken Saga and my mana. I never knew I had mana before.”

"Did you choose to take your mothers book Young Lady?"

"Yes I did."

"That is why fate and destiny are all in your imagination. If fate and destiny actually exist, they would have forced you to take the tome. That doesn't sound like fun does it."

"No."

"We would all be their slaves and our lives would have no other purpose but to serve them and their needs."

"You know Meg, I took the bracelet before I was turned to stone. If I hadn't turned to stone, and if I had never known about mana, then all it would be for me is just a piece of jewelry. It would have gone to my jewelry chest with my other stuff when I got tired of it."

"I see." Megumi stood beside Alysia. "Let's go."

Alysia nodded as Madam Karin removed the universe from the room and filled her pipe with more tobacco.

"Pay Oldie, Meg."

"Keep it Young Lady." Madam Karin said.

"Are you sure?" Megumi asked.

"It's my choice, right?"

Megumi's eyes grew wide and felt it was not right since Madam Karin took her time out for them. She untied her pouch and opened it. She took out some money and presented it to the old woman.

"Please I insist. It isn't right to have wasted your time."

Madam Karin approached Megumi, took the child's hand that held the money, and curled it up scrunching the dollar bills.

"Madam?"

"How you use your spells is still your choice to make. For now take care of your little sister."

Megumi looked at Alysia as the shorthaired girl rocked back and forth on her heels. She turned to Alysia, who stood confused since she did not hear what they said to each other. Megumi smiled and put her money away. Megumi led Alysia to the painting and they placed their hands on the painting. The girls channeled their mana on the painting and fell into tunnel screaming toward the earth drawing.

The girls landed on the ground and found themselves in the alley they came from. They stood to their feet and checked the time on their cell phones. School was going to be over in two hours. They looked back at the painting and wondered how time could have moved the way it did while they were in there. They were amazed.

"MANA GLIDER!!" The girls chanted and flew into the sky, after checking to see if anyone was around to notice them, to return to school to pick up their clones. They looked down below and watched the people living out their daily lives, wondering if they even care about a thing like fate and destiny. It was something that had lingered on their minds. What do they want to do with their magic now?

An hour had passed and Alysia was feeling tired. Since they were already near their school, she descended toward a park with snow covered swings, slides, and a jungle gym. Megumi followed her. They both landed and Alysia stumbled toward the snowy ground. She felt Megumi holding her around the waist to stop her fall. Alysia was glad. Together they walked to the swings, brushed off the snow, and sat down to rest.

"We have one hour until school ends." Megumi said. "Take your time and relax."

"Okay." Alysia said as she took short breaths. Her face flushed and she fought to keep her eyes open. Her feet pushed the snow back and forth creating two straight tracks. She turned to Megumi with a smile.

"That old lady was weird."

"Yeah. She was." She closed her eyes and sighed.

"Meg, why did you believe that we had a fate and destiny?"

"I don't know. Because my mother was a hero, I wanted to be just like her. I guess I can't let go of my mother." Megumi's tears slid down her cheek. It had only been a few weeks since she saw her mother's grave. Her heart still had not let go.

"I guess I lied to myself about my mother." Megumi felt Alysia's arms around her shoulder and she grabbed hold of them and tightened her grip.

"You shouldn't forget your mother Meg. That's a terrible thing to do."

"No, I won't forget her." Megumi felt Alysia's hand let go of her. Megumi lifted up Alysia and saw her head lean down with her eyes barely open. Megumi guided Alysia to a nearby bench and laid her on her back. She placed Alysia's head on her thigh as a pillow and rubbed her short teal hair back and forth.

"Meg."

"Yes?"

"Seeing the universe was so wonderful. I want to go back and see it again, even if I have to put up with Oldie."

Megumi smiled with a nodded and giggled under breath. She watched Alysia close her eyes and turned her body over.

"Meg, what do you want to do with your powers?"

"I... I don't know. I thought I knew what I wanted but now. I don't know anymore. What did you have in mind?"

"I want to play magic hockey again. I love that game. We get to float around on our Mana Gliders and shoot the puck and we don't have to worry about skates." Alysia lifted herself up on her own and sitting on her knees, she looked at Meg with a smile.

"I want to try every spell I have and learn as many spells as I can so I can play magic hockey and even magic dodge ball. Just think how awesome that would be to play magic dodge ball."

"Well..." Megumi put her hand on Alysia's teal hair and shook her head side to side. "...I'll be your teammate and we'll win as many as possible."

"Alright!!" Alysia threw her fist into the air with a cheer and felt dizzy at the same time.

"Rest a minute Alysia. Let's change out and go."

"Why do that? Let's fly over to the school and change there." Alysia stood to her feet but Megumi stood in front her.

"We're walking."

"No way Meg." Alysia grew her magic circle and was ready to chant.

"Listen to your big sister" Megumi said with a weak voice.

"Big sister? Ha!"

"Stop it Lys!"

Alysia's eyes grew wide and she turned to Megumi. She was shocked that Megumi called her that and saw how serious she was. Alysia did not know what to say. She did not know what to do. All she could do was make her magic circle disappear.

"I'm sorry." Alysia said with a low voice as Megumi hugged her with a smile.

"You're pushing your mana too hard. You can barely stand up. I wouldn't be a good sister if I let you hurt yourself. I don't want to see you get hurt. Understand?"

Alysia's eyes trembled hearing that. It felt comfortable in heart knowing that her big sister cared that much. She smiled.

"I love you big sister."

"I love you too."

They pulled away from each other and raised Saga and Fable up into the air.

"Meg, if we walk, it will be too late to go to school."

"Then we go straight to the field, Lys."

After they changed back to their clothes, they spent the last hour walking back to the empty field. They had never seen their hometown during a school day and watched the people go shopping. Trucks double-parked on the street where the deliverymen picked up furniture unload for a store. The mailman made his deliveries in the nearby neighborhoods. They stopped at a pet shop along the way and saw puppies playing around in the storefront window. The girl's took advantage of the time they had and stopped at a coffee that happened to serve hot chocolate. Megumi used the money Madam Karin did not take to buy the warm drink. The girls hurried out before the employees had a chance to call the truant officer and ran down the street. They sat down on a bench, drank their hot chocolate, and talked about their favorite singer they saw on television last night. Afterwards, they arrived at the empty lot and their copies had just arrived. Alysia and Megumi stood before their clones and received their book bags.

"Thank you for your help." Megumi said to her copy.

"Why are you thanking her?" Alysia asked.

"My mother once told me that you should respect the magic you cast. I guess after all the trouble my copy went through for me, it's only right."

Alysia faced her copy and smiled.

"Thank you." She placed her hand on her copy's shoulder.

As the copies glowed marking the end of their spell, Alysia and Megumi turned around and headed home.

"I had a great time Meg." The Alysia Copy said.

"So did I Lys." The Megumi Copy said.

Alysia and Megumi turned around. All they saw were two snowmen smiling, holding each other's hands. Their eyes welled with tears as they realized their copies had a happy day and enjoyed being with each other. They wondered what great things the two did at school but they will never know. With a smile, Alysia and Megumi held each other's hands and ran home. When the girls arrived home, they saw a taxicab parked in front of their house. Closing the trunk was a tall man with glasses on, wearing a trench coat, carrying both a briefcase and a suitcase.

"POP!"

"PAPA!"

The girls ran right up to him as he turned around and with smile, he knelt down and embraced them with a hug.

"Happy birthday girls."

"Thank you." They said together as they lead him home by the hand.

Before celebrating, the girls spent their afternoon first by doing their homework in the kitchen. When they pulled the chairs back, they felt exhausted and put down their book bags.

"My book bag is heavy." Alysia said.

"Mine too."

Alysia and Megumi opened their bags. Their eyes grew wide and they looked at each other. Inside were small boxes and envelopes. There was also a letter inside Alysia's bag address to them. Alysia

took it out and read it.

'Meg and Lys. Our friends held a surprise party for us. Although we were your copies, we would be lying if we said we didn't have a good time, but we did feel a little guilty because you didn't get to celebrate with your friends. Meg and I agreed and we saved all the cake for the two to you. We didn't eat a single piece. Okay, maybe a little but still. We wrote down everything we did today so you won't get lost in the conversation with your friends. All the homework is there. There is a test tomorrow. We had a great time and we are looking forward to helping you both again someday. Love your friends, Lys and Meg. P.S. Happy Birthday.'

"They didn't need to feel guilty Meg."

"I know. I'm glad they had a good time. I hope we can bring them back exactly like this the next time we need them."

"Yeah."

They read the instructions left for them, so they could answer their parent's questions about the school day. Since Alysia wrote it, it took them quite awhile due her habit of being thorough and organized. Second, they opened up the gifts they got from their friends. They were jewelry trinkets and small plushy dolls. They read their birthday cards and found a picture of their copies smiling together with their friends.

"We'll save this for them for when we bring them back." Alysia said.

"That's a good idea."

When their mother arrived by the end of the afternoon, the girls greeted her with a hug. Together they celebrated with a song and together they blew out the candles on their birthday cake. The first gift they got was from their parents together. They received new official hockey jerseys, with an 'NJ' logo on it, and a pair of front row tickets to tonight's hockey game. The second gift was from their father, they received mp3 players to listen to their favorite songs. The final gift from their mother, they each received their own lockets

that opened. One had a picture of Alysia and her mother together and the other had Megumi when she was little with her own mother. The shock overwhelmed Megumi as tears streaked down.

"How?" Megumi looked up at her mother.

"We asked a few friends in Japan to help find this picture. It wasn't easy, but they did find this one in an archive at a local photo shop. It was the only known picture that had your home address."

Megumi tightened her grip on the locket and she pressed the locket onto her chest, close to her heart. Megumi and her mother hugged each other and held on tight.

"I know you have been trying to move on without her and I know you're trying to forcefully forget her. I don't want you to do that. Look at me. I don't ever want to hear you say you want to forget your mother Meg."

"I won't forget her mommy. The locket is so beautiful. Thank you."

After dinner and cake, the girls changed into their favorite hockey outfit, spandex pants, their new hockey jerseys, and sneakers. They put on their hockey gloves and took their hockey sticks with them. They slid on their lockets and placed it under their jerseys close to their hearts. They grabbed their coats and together they stepped outside with their parents. The girls jumped off the porch.

"MANA GLIDER!!" They chanted and they floated around in a circle looking up at the sky. It was a clear night and most of the stars were visible through the urban light. They noticed the constellations Gemini and Pisces, and a pair of shooting stars flashed between them.

"Does the universe have to be that dramatic?" Alysia said as Megumi laughed.

"Maybe that was Madam Karin moving the universe Lys."

"Don't scare me like that Meg. We don't how powerful she could really be."

"Okay... Shorty."

"HEY!"

Alysia chased Megumi on their Mana Gliders laughing together,
with their parents following them hand in hand, as one whole family.

THE END.

