

AZURE



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Introduction

Pokémon meets Avatar: The Last Airbender.

A monster companion fantasy epic for young adults. *Azure* is about a 13-year-old girl named Sala who, together with her friends, competes in the Aster Archipelago Grand Tournament. The Tournament pits competitors and their familiars – spiritual companions whose abilities and temperaments reflect the personalities of their human counterparts – against each other in battles and various challenges. Unlike the rest, Sala was born without a familiar. But with the help of an unorthodox coach and her teammates she learns a long-lost summoning technique to bring familiars of legend to her aid. Even with such an incredible ability, will they be able to win the tournament and realize their dream?



Quinn, Sala, Ahmé



SUMMARY



Everyone in the archipelago of Aster is born with a familiar—a physical manifestation of an individual’s inner self that has remarkable abilities. Appearing as anything from sentient humanoids to immobile objects, the symbiotic relationship between people and their familiars is part of the very foundation of Aster’s society, down to their legends and history. Familiars play an integral role in the primary form of prestige and entertainment on Aster: Olympics-style competitive battles. No one in Aster is born without one, except for Sala.

As one of the very few people in Aster to have been born without a familiar it’s hard for Sala to feel like she’s anything but alone in the world. Finding little enjoyment in battle tournaments, Sala struggles to identify with everyone else on her island Lotuun. She’s more athletic than her peers due to her hard work on her father’s fishing boat, but her lack of a familiar makes her a pariah, which often leads to being ignored or bullied.

The story of *Azure* begins on Sala’s first day on the academy’s major campus. Unwilling to abandon her summer schedule, she starts the morning off early on her father’s fishing boat, causing her to be late. Already infamous, she can’t seem to get along with anyone, students and teachers alike—everyone seems to know who she is: the girl without a familiar. The stress of the

day comes to a head during phys-ed class (battle training) when a particularly cruel student singles her out in the gym. Sala slugs him in the nose and gets sent to detention. As she sits in an empty classroom, the teacher admonishes her to think about what she did...Sala does: and she's proud she stood up for herself.

Soon after, the all-academy tournament where teams of students battle to earn the honor of representing the academy is announced, sending the student body scrambling to form teams. Sala, feeling more of an outsider than ever, watches her peers select everyone until all that's left are her and two leftovers. Ahmé, a bookworm who shies away from battling, with a grumpy gryphon-hound familiar named Votun; and Quinn, the head of the class, with her chipper leaf-eel familiar Fen who was absent the day the instructor formed teams. Their ragtag group assembled, the trio must find it within themselves and one another to work as a team.

Their initial attempts to train or battle together are dreadful, causing great frustration for the team. Quinn, driven to be the best at everything, turns on Sala for dragging the team down, while ignoring Ahmé's attempts at peacekeeping. At the verge of



giving up on each other Ahmé and Quinn are spurred into action when they find out that battle participation is not only mandatory; their grades depend on it. Turning to the library, Ahmé finds a solution to their woes - the almost-lost technique of summoning familiars from the past

manifested as pieces of golden armor, enabling Sala to fight in the battles herself while still adhering to the rules.

The girls' exuberance aside, the technique is far easier said than done and with little decipherable information available, Sala finds herself unable to summon any physical manifestation. Her attempts are fruitless and it's not until at the end of a battle against the highest ranked team that she accidentally summons a golden gauntlet for a split second with a flash of blinding light. Using this distraction the girls are able to turn the tide and win the battle shocking the school. Riding high on the thrill by the surprising turn of events the girls are ill-prepared to become a target for the other teams who are determined to get the girls disqualified, convinced that Sala cheated.



Their spirits begin to fall as they realize that they might be thrown out of the tournament—until a mysterious woman named Jarna Von Lis, who lives alone on the far side of the island, busts into the principal's office and demands to become their coach. A retired ex-champion with a chip on her shoulder, Jarna proves to be an incredibly difficult personality for the girls to get along with. Seeing a lot of herself in the girls, but Quinn especially, Jarna has trouble reconciling the right degree of familiarity—too old to truly connect with them but young enough to want to. Never having properly coached a team before, Jarna must wrestle with her first genuine challenge in years. Despite these conflicts, the team begins to strengthen with someone in their corner.

Under Jarna's tutelage the girls work hard to become more a cohesive team, but are still held back, by both the slow pace at which Sala is learning the summoning technique and Ahmé's hesitance in battle which often prevents Votun from unleashing his full potential much to Quinn's chagrin. They need to learn how to resolve their issues together and figure out how to let friendship blossom from unusual circumstances.

Finally, their hard work begins to pay off. One weekend, after another bout of Jarna's furious training, Sala summons her first pieces of armor: a pair of golden gauntlets. Quinn and Ahmé's ever-closer friendship and their firm belief in Sala's strength makes all the difference.

Over the course of Sala's first year in the Majors, with renewed hope for the team and their future, they start to train even harder together. They'll compete against teams from neighboring islands to progress through a regional bracket, making new friends, gaining new rivals, finding a large cast of ancient familiars for Sala to summon, and ultimately learning how to work together both as teammates and as friends.

This proves easier said than done as the school's tournament continues. Though the school officials agree to let them stay in the tournament, the student body is less convinced and some of their peers seeking to undermine their training with pranks and harassment. Jarna attempts to keep them focused on training but they can't help but feel stymied, not just by their fellow students but also by their own lack of progress. Even Jarna can't deny that though they manage a win here and there, Quinn and her familiar Fen are carrying the team.

Quinn worked hard to become one of the top battlers in the school—and her naturally competitive spirit makes her energized by adversity—but the stress of covering the shortcomings of Ahmé’s timidity in battle and Sala’s unreliable summoning is starting to show. Jarna does what she can to work with the girls to balance and the team, but the school championship matches arrive too soon.

During the championship battle Quinn is injured due to her exhaustion and has to leave the match, forcing Ahmé and Sala to step up. In the last moments of the match, Sala is able to briefly summon a full suit of armor, allowing them to claim victory. This leads into the finale of the story, the regional tournament.

As champions of Lotuun they’re automatically invited, but with the event only a month away they don’t have much time to prepare. Bolstered by their recent surprise victory, Ahmé and Sala passionately train with noted progress. With her parents worried about her grades dropping due to battling too much, Quinn isn’t able to participate much. The day of the tournament arrives and Quinn is a no-show.

Jarna goes off to seek Quinn, trusting Ahmé and Sala to manage on their own and at first, their hard work pays off, allowing them to win the first couple matches as a pair. As the competition gets fiercer their spirits quickly fall. Without the support of their coach and teammate they are in danger of being knocked out of the tournament.

Quinn's parents, worried that her training was taking a toll on her health after she passed out from exhaustion, wouldn't let her come to the tournament. Jarna—with help from Quinn—convinces them to let her compete.

Quinn comes to her team's rescue at the last minute, allowing them to secure a victory. And Sala makes history, as the first champion to win the tournament in Lotuun without a familiar.

Epilogue:

As the girls celebrate victory, some intimidating-looking figures—champions from another regional league—who were sizing them up from the grandstand leave the stadium...will Sala, Ahmé and Quinn have what it takes to compete in the championship league?

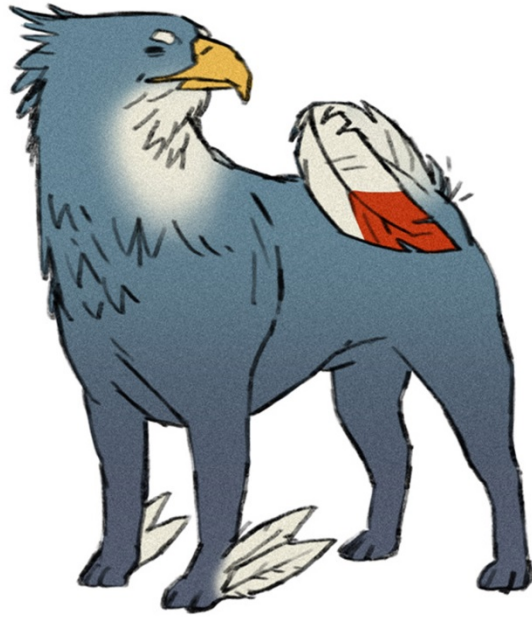


Characters

SALA – 13 years old. The familiar-less protagonist.

Born and raised on Lotuun, she has had to fight for respect among her peers and the population of Aster; she worked hard on bettering her own mind and body in lieu of training with a familiar. Though her training and time on her father's fishing boat have given her an athletic edge over others, any attempts to prove such have been met with rebuke; now she mostly keeps to herself. Her loving and supportive household is comprised of her father, grandmother, and their familiars - her other parent left at an early age but remains in regular contact. Initially apathetic toward competing in battle, Sala finds them an exhilarating means of self-expression and focuses on honing her skills so she can win the tournament, learning the depth of her ambition had lay dormant until now.





AHMÉ – 12 years old.

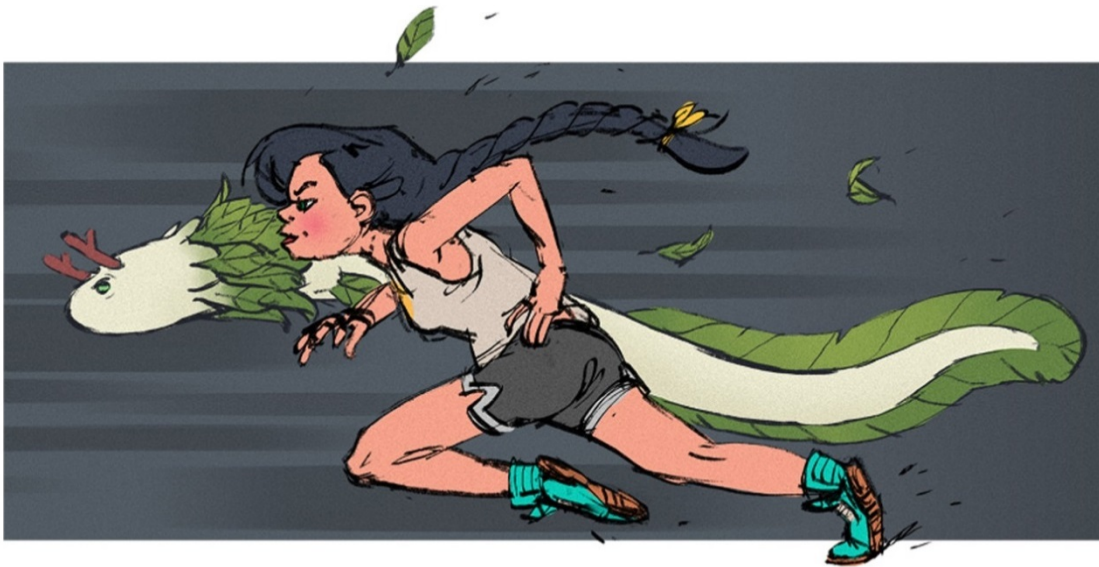
A transplant to Lotuun a few years prior, Ahmé is a devoted young scholar, ultimately responsible for finding the summoning method that Sala learns. Though she's a year shy of the upper campus age requirement her excellent marks and unwavering perseverance placed her in Sala's class a year early, but her academic prowess and disinterest in battling makes her unpopular. Votun, her large gryphon-hound familiar, is her only real friend until she meets Sala. Often considered a grump, Votun rarely interacts with anyone other than Ahmé, but will rise to the challenge to protect her at any cost. By contrast Ahmé is warm, friendly, quick to trust, and fiercely protective of the people she cares for. Often more interested in academic pursuits, she shies away from battling at the outset but becomes fascinated with Sala's summoning technique. Determined to learn about it's lore, history, and function she throws herself in the fray in the pursuit of knowledge.

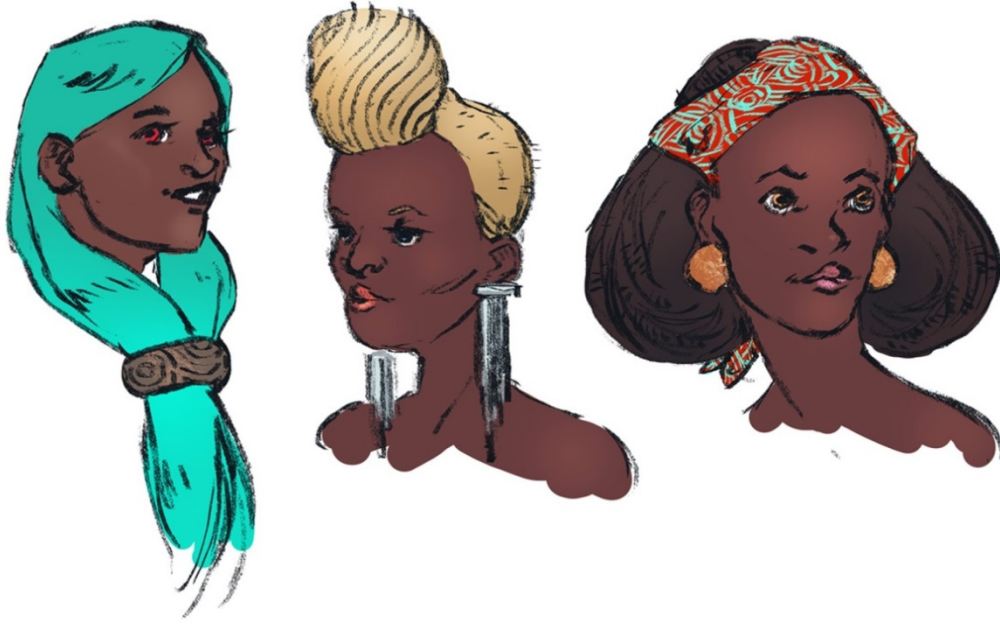




QUINN – 14 years old

Rather accomplished with her familiar for her age, Quinn embodies what Sala could never be. Head of the class and often considered a bit cold and distant, she is placed on a team with Sala and Ahmé because she missed team-picking day. Independent and often too stubborn for her own good, she spends quite a lot of time on Lotuun though her home is on the neighboring island Nis. Her familiar is a flying leaf-eel named Fen who is very outgoing, often responding to affection with chirping, purring, or trilling. Though chatty, Fen knows when to get serious and is very devoted to Quinn, only wishing that Quinn would listen to others more often. Quinn is often pushed to be competitive in all things at school by her demanding parents and though she always gets results, the pressure can be overwhelming.





JARNA VON LIS – 29 years old

The curmudgeonly hermit who lives on the far side of Lotuun and last generation's tournament champion. Often unwilling to interact with other people, she is widely-considered an antisocial hermit, though the rumors about why she left the professional battle circuit are quite tantalizing. Adding even more spice to the gossip is that her familiar, a huge amphibious hydra named Mezzur, left after they got into a fight and hasn't been seen in years. Curiosity piqued by Sala's summoning abilities, she demands the academy hire her to train the girls. Though sometimes viewed by the team as a punishing and tediously unconventional coach, Jarna ends up deeply caring about the team, and finds her fighting spirit again after years of ambivalence.



The Rivals

MALIN – 15 years old

Leader of the rival team and wrapped around Refin's finger. Malin is just as ruthless as the coach and desperate to prove himself as worthy. Seemingly charismatic, he holds the public spotlight both at Tulin's prestigious academy and on the battle leaderboards - drawing large crowds of fans to witness their triumphs. His familiar is a bat-ferret creature able to fly for short distances.

RONAS – 16 years old

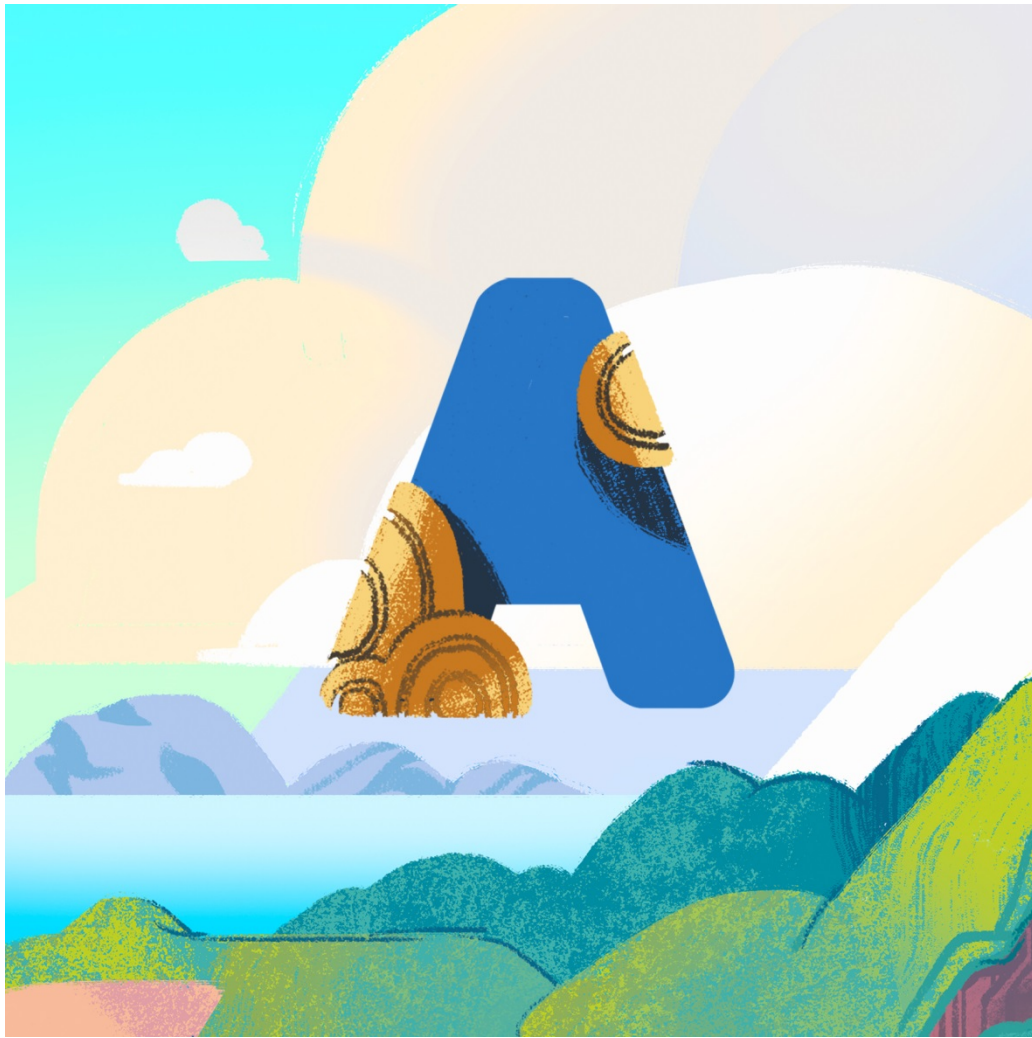
A recent addition to the rival team, replacing someone who attempted to usurp the frontman's role as captain. Hulking but not brutish, she keeps a tempered disposition and is arguably a better tactician than the others on the team, but recognizes her primary role as the team bruiser in battle. She's from a long line of champions and was fast-tracked into the team through those connections but doesn't necessarily feel comfortable with it. Her familiar is a large, talking weapon that enhances her strength.

QUILA DOM – 16 years old

Refin's favorite daughter - haughty and spoiled, but incredibly formidable. More so than the others on the team, she's a product of incredible influence and privilege; access to the best trainers, teachers, and coaches. Despite her position, she refuses leadership of the team as the extra responsibilities bore her. Her familiar is a flying jellyfish that can stun with a touch or cause enemies to fall asleep with a gas.

REFIN DOM – 40 years old

Coach for the rival team in Tulin. As a ruthless tactician, his prestigious role has pushed him to make the very best team possible any way that he can. The long-reigning champ before he was bested by Jarna right before her retirement (robbing him of the opportunity to battle her again). Refin's insatiable need for revenge comes to a head when he discovers she's come out of retirement to train the girls. Unafraid to resort to questionable tactics, Refin's a force to be reckoned with alongside his monstrous gorilla-like familiar.



The World of Aster and Familiars

Azure is centered around Aster, a continent-sized archipelago that hosts a large variety of climates from tropical islands to frozen tundras as well as a diverse cast of inhabitants; peoples from all backgrounds of life and their familiars. Legend states that before Aster came the Great Mothers – powerful beings with legendary familiars who shaped the world. After their work was done, they ascended beyond the world, their presence still felt by the constellation hanging above Aster in the same formation as the islands that, according to the fables, is formed by the familiars themselves.

Familiars are an irreplaceable part of everyday life, integrated into the culture as far back as history remembers. People and their familiars are inextricably linked from birth, each manifesting as reflections of their person's inner self. The range of manifestations is varied and each new generation of people brings new surprises as their familiars develop and grow. Some are humanoid in form while others are immobile objects that endow their companion with powers. Due to the intrinsically spiritual nature of familiars, they are celebrated throughout history and are customarily considered with a tone of reverence.

The Tournament

Being as large as it is, Aster has a loosely organized government that's essentially in place to manage the continuous tournaments. Neighboring islands of a similar climate and population makeup often group together into official regions with their own tournaments and identity. For

instance, Sala's home island of Lotuun belongs to a grouping called the Sisters: a small chunk of the Southwestern region of tropical islands with a reputation of scenic beauty.

Battling is considered the purest form of athleticism and entertainment in Aster, having roots in the forms of honorary dispute depicted throughout Aster's history; it is a means of brokering peace instead of war. Battling, like most modern sports has a variety of leagues, associations, and skill levels – each with their own following. Though the Professional League is the most popular, the Majors – comprised of teams from academies around the archipelago (think college leagues) – is a close second, with even local regional matches drawing a large turnout.

The tournaments take the form of Olympics-style competitive battles. Typically pitting teams of three people and their familiars against one another, island communities consider their team as a core element of their collective identity to the degree that battle training is integrated into their educational curriculum. Kids attending the Major campus at their academies (ages 13-18) are allowed to not only train for battles, but participate in the intramural tournaments hosted by schools all around the archipelago.

Format & Delivery

Azure will be a 140-page full-color graphic novel for young adults. The authors will be able to deliver a fully-illustrated manuscript within 10 months of signing.

Audience & Comps

Azure is written for readers ages 10-and-up. The violence is never excessive, and the energy, tropical setting, and “pet monster” fantasy world will appeal to fans of *Pokémon* and *Avatar: The*

Last Airbender. The authors are all fluent in and post regularly on social media, and attend both commercial and independent comic conventions. And if there's a good response from readers, there are many more stories to tell in the world of *Azure!*



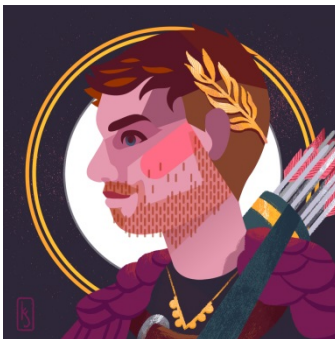
About the Authors



Zachary Clemente lives in Boston and writes for and about comics for many publications, including ComicsBeat. He helps run [MICE](#): The Massachusetts Independent Comics Expo. [@clementeworks](#)



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THANK YOU FOR TAKING A LOOK!