



# The ARIMA

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Puddles of the moon’s pale-silvery glow formed on the forest floor as a cool and gentle breeze blew through the area. Ari stared at the man before him.

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He was broad-shouldered and well-built. The man sat crossed-legged with his eyes closed. He was bald and had a beard tied into a ponytail. The man wore only a pair of long cotton pants held up by a rope tied around his waist. Even while sitting, he was a head taller than Ari.

“Do you think she’ll win?” Ari asked.

For a while, the man was silent.

“Sit,” he said finally.

Ari did as instructed. The man opened his eyes and held out his hands, palms facing upwards.

“Movere Mediocris.”

Suddenly, a curved sapphire blue dagger appeared before them, floating mid-air. It had a black hilt with symbols engraved along the length of the blade.

“As you know, in this world everything is governed by its relationship with time.”

“Autocorrelation”, Ari said.

“The more dependent something is on time” the man continued, “the more likely its actions now will affect what happens to it in the future. The more independent something is of time, the less likely its actions now will affect what happens to it in the future. How dependent or independent something is on time is known as its order.”

He gripped the dagger by its hilt.

“The lower the order, the more powerful the technique.”

62 He swung the dagger above Ari’s head. Suddenly, he disappeared and reappeared behind him. He swung the dagger again. Immediately a clone of him appeared seated beside Ari.

“This is the power of the Movere Mediocris, to have strong independence of time. Mine is of low order, but not the lowest order.”

He held out his arm. The dagger faded until it vanished altogether. He then faced his palms upwards.

“Autoregressive.”

Suddenly, a long amber-orange double-edged sword appeared before him, floating in mid-air. It also had a black hilt, but with different symbols engraved along the length of the blade.

He gripped the sword by the hilt and walked to the nearest tree. He began tapping it gently with the sword. Soon the sword began to glow. On the third tap, it created a crack in the tree. On the seventh tap, the tree split in half.

“This is the power of the Autoregressive, to have a strong dependence on time.”

The man dismissed the sword and walked back, sitting before Ari.

“Temporis Seriem is the devotion to mastering the autocorrelation. Despite her young age, Arma is in a class of her own; while she is your superior, you have something she lacks.”

“What is it?” Ari asked.

“The strength to acknowledge your own weakness and move forward. To be at peace with oneself and the world is to be stationary. To be consistent and balanced. When you both came to me, neither of you were stationary. You were the last survivors of your village after it was pillaged and burned by the Differentia Pura, but despite all of that, Ari, you chose to move forward. You pursued your differenced self and found stationarity.”

The man took a deep breath and sighed. “Arma has yet to do so.”

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“So you think she’ll lose?” Ari asked. “If she does not difference herself and find her stationarity, she will most definitely lose.”

Meanwhile, Arma breathed in the crisp, cool air as she climbed the last stone stairs to reach the summit of the snowy mountain.

A large square platform made of stone stood before her. Large stone columns lay broken across the floor. Snow blanketed everything outside of the platform.

Sitting on one of the columns was a man with pitch-black hair. He wore a black suit with a red tie. He stared at Arma with his crimson-red eyes. She met his gaze.

“You must be Arma”, he rasped. “Your friends told me about you. Well, the whole village, really. Nice to finally put a face to the name.”

Arma took a deep breath and then exhaled. Suddenly, the whole area was engulfed by a strong gust of hot wind. She walked towards the man and extended her hands, palms facing upwards. Immediately, two blades materialised in her hands — one sapphire blue and one amber orange. Each step she took was followed by a hiss of steam as the snow below her instantly evaporated.

“Not much of a talker, I see. Well, go on then. Let’s see what you can do.”

Immediately, Arma disappeared and reappeared behind him. She slashed downwards with both blades and struck his shoulders. She disappeared once more and then reappeared where she started.

The man looked at his shoulders. There was a slight tear in his suit.

“Is that all? I was exp—”

He was cut short by Arma punching him in the face and launching him across the platform. He collided with one of the broken pillars, shattering it. The man lurched to his feet.

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“How? You hadn’t—”

Arma disappeared again, reappearing behind him and slashing. Her clone appeared in front of him and slashed. The man spun on his heels and blocked both attacks with his arms.

Her orange sword began to glow.

She immediately disappeared again, reappearing with three clones, slashing from behind, on his left side and towards his right leg. The man tried to block, but the swords dug into his flesh. He bellowed in pain.

Arma continued her onslaught of attacks until the man was sprawled out on the floor, covered in gashes and unable to move. She stood over him and brought her blades to his neck.

“Go on, do it!” He spat.

Arma glared at him and began shaking.

The man laughed hysterically.

“You can’t do it, can you? Hehehe! You came all this way, and you can’t even follow through! What would your village think right now? Your friends? Your brother? All this way just to let them down!”

Her eyes welled with tears.

“Awwww, is the baby going to cry?” he yelled.

Tears began streaming down her cheeks. For a while, she did not move. Eventually, she lowered her blades and dispersed them. She began walking away toward the stone stairs.

“What are you doing? Finish me!”

Arma stopped at the stairs and looked back with bloodshot eyes. She took a shaky breath.

“This isn’t what they would have wanted. Not for me and not even for you. Despite all you’ve done, they’re probably praying for you right now.”

She took another breath.

“You are defeated. This battle is over.”

Arma began descending the stairs.

The man wailed and continued to taunt her, but she couldn’t hear him. Despite the pain, she transformed herself and found her stationarity. She had become the Arima.