Arcana Magi Behind the Scenes: The Making of Arcana Magi Universe Ver 2.0

by H-M Brown

Greetings fellow readers.

Welcome to Arcana Magi Behind the Scenes.

Today I'm going to talk about how the Arcana Magi Universe came to be.

Back in 2006, I wrote the first few pages for a novel called Mystic Hunter Mayumi. The story was to follow the adventures of Mayumi Kanzaki, a teenager with magical powers who was able to see auras around people. While at a museum with her mother, a curator, she received a magical pendant from its original owner, Mrs. Mizaki. That was until a magical fox named Monty stole it and she chased it through the museum. I stopped short of finishing the first chapter, but what was to happen was that the museum and everyone inside would turn to stone. Mayumi and Monty would then go hunting for the artifact that caused it so they could return the people to normal.

I shelved the story to focus on writing other novels and projects, and I completely forgotten about this one. That wasn't until October 2009, when I signed onto Fictionaut and wrote a Short Story simply called Alysia's Saga. Unaware, and subconsciously, I had taken the plot of Mystic Hunter Mayumi and condensed it into a Short Story. Mayumi Kanzaki became Alysia Perez and Monty became Megumi.

Available online at *«http://fictionaut.com/stories/h-m-brown/arcana-magi-behind-the-scenes-the-making-of-arcana-magi-universe-ver-20»*
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In the First Draft of Alysia's Saga, it featured The Orb of Vyndor asking Alysia to help find the source that caused the museum to turn to stone, but I felt for a Short Story there were too many protagonists. So, I removed that clutter from the short and rewrote it. Instead, I focused on a magical gem that turned people to stone and its guardian was a shadow of a basilisk.

During this time, the story grew on me and many people were viewing it, though I don't know how many account for actually reading it to the end. So, I went ahead and wrote the sequel Megumi's Fable and renamed the shorts Arcana Magi. I decided in the sequel to focus on Megumi herself and give some back-story to her, which was why Alysia was left out. A few weeks later, I wrote the third Short, It's So Wonderful, It's So Beautiful. My intent was to set up for what would be the Main Series for Arcana Magi, so I chose to hold back on action and instead put emphasis on character development.

While I had thought about continuing the shorts as a chapter series, and started outlining the plot of the story, the world, and everything, what stopped me from going forward with these characters were a few factors. One was that the short stories inadvertently shifted the main character Alysia Perez to Megumi Miyazaki. It wasn't my intent, but it happened that way, especially with the event of Megumi's Fable. Second were the transformation sequences that I had written for the girls. I felt that it would make me a lazy writer since the paragraphs are very long (nearly half a page) and would take away the reading time from everyone. I also didn't like the plot for these characters in particular because it just didn't fit right after establishing so much about them. So, I renamed the shorts Arcana Magi Zero to separate them from the Main Series.

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In January 2010, I wrote the Main Series simply titled Arcana Magi. There were things I had to do to approach the writing in this story. One of those happens to be the word length. My short trilogy word count was between 6100 and 6500, but they had an ending

and were Short Stories. I became aware that there were people who don't like to sit in front of their computers to read long stories. My Short Stories in Word Document are 12 to 13 pages long but the PDF Format in Fictionaut extended the page numbers from an average of 18 pages into 28. So, I reduced the number of pages on Word for each chapter I wrote at the start. From the average 12 to 13 pages down to an average of 5 to 7 pages for the Main Series, which in Fictionaut's PDF Format is set at 12 to 17 pages. This provided me new challenge to improve my writing techniques and storytelling. Unfortunately, after I reached the tenth chapter, I found my writing style hampered with keeping the word count under 3500. So, I had to write to my strengths and wrote chapter at the ten page minimum on word.

My other concern was when to post up. At first I was going to post twice a month, but I feared that people will forget about Arcana Magi and never come back to read. So, I decided to try three times a month. I kept it up until I started posting my earlier novel The Impossible Man and the end result was that I was posting both Arcana Magi Main Series and The Impossible Man once a week at the same time.

For this story, I created a different Alysia character to set her apart from the one in Zero. I inadvertently took the premise for one of my characters in my hard Sci Fi universe De x Maquina and applied it to Alysia here. Which was why there was the evil corporation/brainwashed child soldier storyline. I intended to write a long story, which was why many characters were slow to come out. But because this was my first attempt at doing a weekly Web Novel, my inexperience showed and I found myself losing the story overall. Especially since I was writing each chapter every week as oppose to The Impossible Man, which I wrote eight years ago and went through many revisions.

It was not easy doing this since I have no editor and I had to act as one myself. Even now, I know there are probably still some minor grammatical errors lurking within those chapters. I hope that readers are forgiving for that. By August 2010, I ended the series at

Chapter 30 due to exhaustion and I wanted to write other stories, both publishable and to post on Fictionaut. I did my best to give closure to every character I wrote and have at least an ending to close out the story. The risk I was willing to take is if there were questions on what happens next.

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In late September 2010, I wrote Arcana Magi Rush to continue my pursuit of publishing my stories. Unlike Zero and the Main Series, where the main characters were teenage girls, the main character here was a young woman named Akane Ramirez. The characters are completely original and set in Merydia this time rather than in New Jersey to help expand the universe. I decided to bring dragons in this storyline and have magical giant piloted robots called Golems battle them as the plot.

I decided to try a unique approached in which I wanted to have one long fight. Trying to flesh it out was a difficult feat. It was fast paced, and changed scenes rapidly. What was tricky was depicting what was going on inside the cockpit. Showing how Akane responded to the situation while simultaneously showing what dragon and the robot fighting. One of the unique things I wanted from the fight was diversity. Most giant robot stories always have guns and missiles firing, but here I wanted a gritty battle that included things like throwing cars and casting magical spells.

After spending months on the submission circuit, I conceded and in January 2011, I decided to post it up on Fictionaut to help expand the Arcana Magi Universe.

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In December 2010, I released on Fictionaut, Arcana Magi Memorial. This time I set the story in Memorial Academy itself in Merydia, marking the first time I am introducing of the school. The character this time was Azure but her creation was difficult. At first, I had her treated as an outcast and a criminal under probation, the shackles did serve as a plot point. But it went all over the place so I

focused on the shackles themselves rather than authority figures.

This was actually my first attempt at actually focusing on Foreshadow on purpose rather than by coincidence. In fact, I placed Arcana Magi Rush's Foreshadowing after the second draft, but in this story, I had outlined ahead of time what I wanted for Foreshadowing.

I chose to write it as a five chapter Novelette, with each chapter under 3500 words, so I would not have to push myself hard like I did with the Main Series. The reason I called it a Novelette is because according to Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, a Novelette has a minimum of 17,499 words. So I was able to keep this story under and at least provide for readers an opportunity to have a complete story without going through a marathon.

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In 2011, I decided to try a new strategy with new Arcana Magi releases. Seasonal releases. I figure with this approach it would help new readers and fans know when to expect new Arcana Magi stories well in advance. I felt this was better than an unpredictable timetable. It also helped me in terms of preparing Arcana Magi and not stress out.

I also made the decision to expand the universe by separating it into four sub-universes. Because Arcana Magi got bigger and the stories are not fitting into each other, I figured this would make things streamlined. Each sub-universe has its own set of rules expanding on the base rules I established in Behind the Scenes: The Rule of Mana. Doing so in a way gave stories more character onto themselves, with their own themes, metaphors, distinctions. It helped me out in knowing what I should write with each new story or continuation. Finally doing this helps prevent any rule breaking because of this separation. Which I stumbled into on Pure. The other important is that by sperating the universe I hoped that readers will have more to analyze and discuss with other fans about the story. What they like or dislike, or write essays about each universe and their meanings. I really encourage this. Communication is key.

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To start the season, I went with a sequel to Arcana Magi Memorial. It followed where the first volume left off. I added a new a friend for Azure, also established the pronunciation of her name and expanded on everything I buikt so far. In terms of her name I did pronounce it as Ah-shu-ray, but do to little lack of research I never knew it was actually A-shure. I found that pronunciation relatively annoying and liked how I originally said it better. I thread it in and hopefully for the best. I also came to enjoy Memorial a second time around and I decided to set up a little arc. So now I have a volume 3 in wings for the next season.

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The next story I wrote in the 2011 season was Cross. It shares the same universe as Memorial. This one I attempted at subtle writing. For those of you who have read it, I really hope I pulled it off. This was no easy task. Sometime subtlety can happen during the course of writing naturally, but when attempting it purposefully, that was a challenge unto itself.

One of the things I brought back through Cross was the transformation outfits introduced in Zero. It really was a risk given my assertion and fear of writing transforming scenes to be lazy writing. So, I focused on one character and let it happen once.

As for the story itself, I decided to go for the zombie plot by way of necromancy magic. I wanted to maintain the theme that I introduced in the first Memorial of strange monsters through magic. It was very tricky to maintain some consistency especially because of potential fridge logic. I really was threading the needle in this one. If I made one mistake, and I wouldn't doubt a reader will find it, I hope it is not at a devastating level that the whole story is ruined.

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The third story of the season was Pure. Which shares the same universe as Zero. This story I brought in Mayumi Kanzaki from

Mystic Hunter Mayumi, though I renamed her Akamatsu due to naming pattern I have established. Since the plot to Mystic Hunter was taken by Alysia Perez in Zero, I had to go a different route. At first I was going to play it safe and just have go take on a mystical object, which was the premise of Mystic Hunter Mayumi, but I felt it was too generic and it would have been static. I also wanted to try something that hasn't been done already in Arcana Magi Universe.

I introduce to you her twin sister Emi. I thought about this and realized that I haven't tried the biology sisters. I figure with twins it would be easier to see how they would react to each other with magical powers and the paths they take. One of the things I feared when writing this was Mayumi. She is the main character, but I feel I didn't do enough of her character development. While although her feelings about her sister could be justified, I mean Emi is her sister, I fear I may have turned Mayumi into a whiner. I did my best to have Mayumi express those feelings but not lose the character development. So I had her a join a cooking club and assert herself in her teen years to at least do something.

Another thing I expanded on were the shrines. I chose to go with traditional Japanese folklore by making clans out the mythical creatures like the centipedes (Trans. Mukado), the dogs (Trans. Inu), and foxes (Trans. Kitsune). By setting in Japan as well, that meant I had to adhere to Japanese culture, and I don't just mean the bowing. I'm talking about dialog that would match up the translation of actual Japanese. Think of them as subtitles. Now I'm not expecting to be one hundred percent accurate. I'm letting you all now that I may not be accurate, but the idea was to maintain the Japanese verbal expressions as best as possible in the English language. So if it seems weird the way they're talking, that is the reason why.

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In strange way, I did let the season go into 2012 with Arcana Magi Divine. It shares the same universe as Rush. So basically the giant robots are back. This time I focused on a team rather than an individual. Which proved to a daunting task since this was a short

story. I only had so much space to work with and so much story to write.

That meant sacrificing a lot of heavy details and really leaving readers imaginations to fill in the blanks. Which I believe is supposed to be the objective of fiction writing. I just hoped that I put in enough to accomplish that. I chose to put in as much emphasis on character development as usual and limited the fighting unlike Rush. With that, I made another shift from the other universes.

Young adult women. Just like in Rush, the main characters are young adult, not under aged. This is to help reach a broader demographic of readers. A little something for everybody to reach out with. Giving little hints on what their childhood is like and how they behave as adults. I wouldn't say I'm looking for the adult behavior approach. That would be forceful writing. What I hoped to accomplish with young adults in this sub-universe is to allow them to have transitional growth from youth to adult.

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So, in total I now have seven different Arcana Magi Stories, across four sub universes, each one different and unique. Originally, my goal for writing this and posting on Fictionaut, was to see how far my writing has come. Find my strengths and weaknesses. In a sense Arcana Magi is a tool for my training in becoming a good writer for everyone. I did not intend to turn it into something big. But the story really did grow on me and enjoyed writing them for all of you. I don't know what I can make out of this, and it's not as though the internet is not capable of giving me the push I need to truly shine. There is a lot I would like to see happen for my Arcana Magi Universe, the best I could do is keep pushing the story forward and write with everything I got.

Thank you.

I hope you enjoyed this edition Arcana Magi Behind the Scenes.

Until next time…
See ya.