

Arcana Magi Pure - c.1

by H-M Brown

"I don't believe it." There she stood in the school restroom before a mirror watching mist float around her body. It seeped down onto a book the name the Mayumi Akamatsu on it. Mayumi did not feel any pain, but it did frighten her. She slid her hand over her shoulder length hair and watched the mist cascade down her back. She even tried to brush it off her blouse, light blue bow tie, and teal skirt but it was useless. "Mother never told me about this in our talk."

"Mayumi?" A girl said from the entrance.

"Emi?" Mayumi turned and saw an exact image of herself, dressed in the same exact outfit, except Emi had short hair and wore a sweater bearing an emblem of a wing and shield. Mayumi saw the mist around Emi's body as well, and noticed the fear in her eyes. She stood before her, both same in height staring at each other green eye to green eye. Mayumi reached for the mist around Emi and brushed it off, but it did not work either. "What's happened to us?"

"I don't know." Mayumi said looking at her arms.

"We have gym next class. I don't want to go out looking like this. I don't want to go to track and field practice after school either."

"We should see the nurse."

"I went there. She said she saw nothing around my body."

"What? Are you sure?" Mayumi received a nod and she planted her hands on the sink squeezing the edge tightly. "Then we should have nothing to worry about then. We could go to the next class."

"Didn't you see everyone? They have this thing around their bodies." Emi stepped back with her hands clutching her shoulders. "I don't like this."

"Emi, don't panic. Maybe this is something everyone goes through."

"Even the trees and the birds? I... I don't want this." Emi ran off.

"Wait." Mayumi followed her through the hallway passing by

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classrooms in session. She nearly knocked over a boy in a button shirt, tie and slacks, carrying a box. Emi was so fast that Mayumi lost her at the next hallway intersection. When she turned the corner, her sister was gone. Mayumi walked past the classrooms overhearing various subjects taught to the students. She arrived at an opening door where a female teacher crossed her arms making Mayumi come to a stop.

“Roaming the hallways during class hours is forbidden.”

“But I...”

“No excuses.” The teacher led Mayumi away. “Let's go.”

* * *

When school ended, Mayumi hurried to the track and field practice. She saw Emi's teammates gathered around ready to train, but she was not there. Mayumi looked everywhere throughout the school, from the science lab, to the home economics room, to even a few clubrooms. Nowhere. Mayumi leaned against the wall, with her head down. She did not want to go home without her sister. That was until her cell phone rang. Mayumi took it out, fumbled it, and answered.

“Emi?!”

“Mayumi.” Her voice sounded tired and weak.

“What happened?”

“I'm okay. I'll be coming home later.”

“You don't sound okay.”

“I'm okay!”

Mayumi moved the phone away from her ear and when everything went quiet, she listened again.

“Where are you?”

“At a shrine. I'll tell you everything about it when I get home. You'll like it.”

“Emi.” Mayumi heard a click, and the connection cut off. She looked at the screen of her cell phone with her sister's name and number. Mayumi hurried down the halls and left the school.

* * *

Mayumi used the time she had to search the nearby shrines. Emi was not in any one of them. From small shrines to large shrines, not one priestess or a caretaker saw her sister. Mayumi refused to quit and expanded her search to the nearby woods. It was there that she found a sign that read 'Shrine of Four Mythic Elements'. The entrance hid within the bushes and trees. She saw two statues of foxes at the entrance at the base of the stairs before the Shinto shrine gate. It was the first time she ever saw something like that. Normally the statues would be beyond the gate before the shrine itself, but this one.

Mayumi climb the stairs with the sunlight breaking through the branches and leaves creating a variety spotlights along the way. She came to a divergent path. Not far from the distance was a house. Mayumi wondered if Emi was in there and she navigated her way down. The sound of rustling startled her, but she stood unfazed determined to find her sister.

Once Mayumi stepped out of the path, she found the house, decayed with a large opening exposing the living room. It was unlike anything she had seen before like something blew it up with explosives. There was an aura of sadness around the building. Mayumi wondered if the owners were still alive. She was not sure if she should take off her shoes or not before going inside. Instead, Mayumi walked around first looking through the windows.

"Emi." Mayumi said when she heard a cry deep in the forest. Without hesitation, she followed the sound. She hoped that Emi was not hurt. Pushing through the bushes and tree limbs, climbing up the slope, she did not let anything stand in her way. She was not going home without her sister. The cry grew louder and Mayumi forced her way through the bushes, into an opening.

Mayumi's eyes grew wide at what she saw crying. A fox whimpering like a human girl. It went beyond Mayumi's own sense of comprehension when the fox looked up wiping away a tear.

"I hurt my leg." The fox with a girl's voice said. "Could you help me find my collar?"

And Mayumi collapsed on the ground, sliding down the nearby slope.

* * *

"I hope I didn't kill her."

Mayumi's eyes winced at what she heard and she opened them. When her vision cleared she saw the fox looking her.

"Hello." The fox said.

Mayumi scurried across the ground and bumped her head on a nearby tree. She saw the fox sitting, tilting head. Mayumi raised her hand pulling up a collar with a teal bead on it.

"You found my collar." The fox approached with a limp.

Mayumi got to her feet trying to keep a distance. She saw the collar and noticed the teal bead. It looked liked she could wear it.

"Don't put it on! Or you'll turn into a fox."

"Really?"

"No not really." The fox laughed but received a dagger eyes in exchange. "It's just a magical communicator running on Mana. That's all."

"Mana? What's that?"

"You don't know Mana? But you're covered in it."

Mayumi looked at the mist around her body and brushed it off again.

"You... can see it?"

"See it? Why it's all around us."

Mayumi saw the mist around the trees, the birds, and the ground. She pressed her hands on the trunk and she could sense a strange energy building up on her palms.

"What's happening?" Mayumi pulled her hand back and felt it shiver.

"You channeled Mana."

"Channeled?" Mayumi stepped back. "What are you?"

"That's, who am I?" The fox said approaching Mayumi, reached for the collar, and took it out of teen's hands. "My name is Nina."

Mayumi watched Nina struggle to put the collar with the injured foot. She knelt down before the fox and took the collar. Mayumi

stretched it before Nina, and the fox lifted her head.

"My name is Mayumi Akamatsu." She said snapping the collar in place. "I'm thirteen and I attend Sakura Memorial Academy."

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Akamatsu-san." Nina bowed.

"Well you're very polite." Mayumi lifted Nina up and the fox pointed with her paw to go up the slope. "So you're a kitsune I've read about in a book aren't you?"

"Yes. We are guardian spirits to the Shrine of Four Mythic Elements. Although, we're supposed to stay hidden and scare away people to protect the mystical artifacts that resided here."

"It doesn't seem like you're doing a good job at it. So what are these Mythic Elements? I've never heard of them."

"They are the four gods that watch over the lands in four different directions. The family that lived here were priests and priestesses. That was until a group of people attack us seeking the artifacts."

"So that explains why the house looked like that. What happened to the owners?"

"They died. This all happened before I was born so I don't have the whole story, but the daughter of the house returned two years ago to claim what was left to her. So, we don't exactly have anything to protect anymore. We sent her back to her new home in America. Then last year she came back with her foster sister, but we were caught in a battle where they had to sacrifice the Sacred Trunk to keep it out of evil hands. Ever since, we never continued our traditions, nor were we able to bring the girls here in case of an emergency. We're sort of on our own now."

Mayumi stepped out into a wide-open field. Before her was a crater, untouched and charred. She approached it and saw the bottom. It looked like no one would be able to climb out of it. The field looked dead. The ground was nothing but grey dirt. The trees burnt and in chunks. The scent was too unbearable. Mayumi could almost imagine what it was that cause this dead area. Remembering how Emi sounded over the phone, she wondered if she had come here.

"Nina."

"Yes?"

"I'm looking for my sister, Emi. She looked and dressed exactly like me, but with shorter hair and wearing a sweater. Did she come by here?"

"I don't know but we could ask around."

"Thank you."

* * *

An hour passed according to the cell phone, and there were no calls or messages. Mayumi watched Nina talked to a pair of adult foxes, who scolded her upon looking at the teen. The large foxes looked at her with a sigh and shook their heads negatively to Mayumi. When they left, Nina approached Mayumi with a bandage over her paw and sat down before her.

"Sorry. Nobody saw your sister."

"Thank you for trying. I should move on."

"You said your sister called saying she would return home. Why don't go and see?"

"Okay." Mayumi followed Nina and they arrived at the shrine itself. She saw a cave behind it, curious as to what was in there. Mayumi thought about it but Nina nudged her to move along. Before she went down the stairs, she stood before the shrine, staring at the four-lit candles beyond the small gate. Mayumi clasped her hands together, focusing on the flames themselves. "Please watch over my sister. She's scared and doesn't know about this Mana thing. I want her to be safe and happy."

"Mayumi." Nina said sitting next to her. "I sorry I didn't tell you much about Mana. You were very focused on finding your sister. I just want to tell you, that Mana is a natural part of life. Very few humans see, sense, and channel it. Channeling Mana is drawing a piece of energy from the source itself, and using it to cast spells."

"Spells? You mean I can use magic?"

"Yes." Nina nodded. "With the proper training, you will become a Magi. While although you cannot become a Guardian to the Gate of Four Mythic Elements, maybe I can convince the elders to help you

and your sister learn to become Magi. Would you like to do that?"

"I take it... it will be hard."

"Of course. It's like school, only with spells. Think about it. You don't even have to come back here to reject this offer. I'll understand."

"Thank you." Mayumi walked down the stairs heading for the entrance.

"Goodbye Akamatsu-san."

"You can call me Mayumi, Nina."

Nina smiled and turned to the shrine. She sat before it and saw the flames on the candles flicker. Nina's eyes grew wide and she hurried away happily.

"Thank you."

* * *

"Emi?!" Mayumi said entering her home. She removed her shoes at the entrance and ran upstairs. Mayumi opened a bedroom door and there she saw Emi with her back to her. "Oh thank goodness. Are you all right?"

Mayumi placed her hand on Emi's shoulder. It felt cold and her Mana gave off a worn out feeling. When Emi's head shivered, Mayumi stepped back. She noticed Emi's room was messy and the bed sheets made out like a little tent. Her sister turned around with a calm look. Emi placed her hands on Mayumi's shoulders, giving off uncomfortable feeling.

"Mayumi. I know why we're covered in this. It's Mana. We can cast spells."

"I know. What happened to you? Where did you go?"

"I found this shrine and... you knew?"

"I found out about it when I was looking for you. I went to a lot of shrines. Which one did you go to?"

Emi stepped back, placing her hand over her heart. Mayumi did not understand what happened. Emi's eyes trembled despite the smile she displayed. Mayumi covered her mouth fearing something happened to her.

"Mayumi we always do things together. I wanted to share this

with you before anyone told you."

"Emi tell me what happened?"

"Get out."

"Emi."

"GET OUT!"

Mayumi looked away and left her sister's room. Before she closed the door, she looked back at Emi and saw her tears drop from her face. Mayumi did not understand what happened, but she decided to let her sister be alone for now. When she closed the door, she walked over a centipede never noticing it, and it crawled into Emi's room.

TO BE CONTINUED...

