

Arcana Magi Pure Vol.2 - c.2

by H-M Brown

Outside the city, deep within the forest sloped alongside a mountain, there was an old theater made of stone. The branches and leaves canvassed the structure, the sun itself created spotlight on the stage, and bushes surrounded the theater enclosing the area. The seating was semi-circle, each section paired with a small slab and a large slab. Leaves rained down onto the theater. Then a strange rumble followed. It made more leaves rain down. The sound built up, louder and louder causing birds and insects to fly into the air. Then it stopped. At the top of the theater, a bush shivered and a rabbit emerged wearing a little bow on its head. It stood there looking at the bottom and smiled. It walked down the stairs and a large head rose up from behind the bushes. It was a giant rabbit. It followed the little one and they took their seats fitting for their size.

"We got here early." The little rabbit said with a girl's voice.

"No." The large one said with a man's voice. "We are on time."

"We are here Master." Goro said. He arrived accompanied by a large dog. Following them were house cats, wolves, cranes, mantis, evening cicadas, and turtles. They conversed with each other as more animals and insects arrived. The story of the day was the Mukado, rumors mainly, but they wanted the facts now. Goro did his best explaining the situation to those who approached him, but there were too many to repeat the same thing.

Nina arrived with a large old fox. His age showed. Everyone looked at them with whispers. Their eyes had a judgmental look to them. Goro led his elder to the foxes and the old ones greeted each other. The atmosphere was unsettling. They knew what they were up against amongst the clans. The whispers grew louder, but the sound of a bell called for seating.

"Ompa?" Nina looked up at the elder. "Will they understand our

situation?"

"It's okay Nina, we are amongst allies. They will listen." Ompa sat beside Goro and Master. Nina leaned over to wave at the dog.

The cats walked onto the stage and everyone became silent. The felines were ready to speak when voices blared from beyond the theater.

"We're late." A young boy's voice echoed.

"I know man." An adult voice said. "But you know I had to channel my Zen."

Everyone in the theater except for the elder fox turned to the top. Landing at the staircase were two crows. The small one had a rag cloth wrapped around his head, and the large one had a necklace of a peace sign around his neck. Many of the elders grimaced at their presence. They really did not want them around.

"Hey where do we get to sit man?" The large crow hopped down the stairs with the little one following. The bird waved with its wing trying to find a seat. Everyone followed the crow's movements causing the small crow to shiver.

"I don't think they want us here sir."

"Nonsense Kain. We all are at peace with each other here. After all, we all know what happens when we don't have peace with each other. All of Zen goes out of whack man and we have ourselves..."

The elder crow's face became shrouded in shadow. "...another Children's War."

Those words made some of the elders lowered their head looking away. Nina looked at Ompa and there was no movement. The elder cicada and dog also showed the same posture as her elder. It was as though they understood more than anybody else did. Looking around the theater, Nina realized something; there were no seating for the crows.

"Don't worry Moderators." The big crow said to the cats. "We just want to hear what you all have to say and then we are out of here. By the way, we got a big party at our shrine and everyone is invited man."

"Ompa, he's not serious is he?" Nina watched the crows hop past

them. The big crow looked at Nina. For almost a second she saw a serious look in his face. It was as if he said he understood the situation, and like a flash of light, he smiles waving his wing as if to brush everyone off.

"I feel hungry Kain. I hope this won't take long."

Nina watched the crows climb back to the top and stood there listening. She turned to the stage and the small cat talked.

"Clans, our first order of business is a grave situation. As you all know, one month ago two young girls awoke to Mana, and one of them fell into the hands of the Mukado. Yesterday the child has officially become their priestess and has gathered followers."

The crowd murmured. Some stared at the foxes and dogs with a look of condemnation.

"We were assured by the Kitsune and the Inu that they would have settled the child, but apparently they have failed, and we may have to take this onto our own hands."

The sound of wings flapping silenced the Moderators and the shadows of the crows sliding over the theater quieted everyone. Nina's eyes grew wide at the majestic flight of the crows, and she heard a strange sound. She and Goro looked at their elders, and saw their eyes trembled despite the brave posturing. The Clans only showed their disdain, but within that crowd, Nina and Goro saw the Cicadas giving off the same vibe as their own elders.

"Goro."

"I know Nina. I know."



Mayumi and Keiko were quiet walking down the street. After what they saw yesterday, it felt like the rules have changed. Mayumi had no interest in talking to Keiko. Thoughts of the shrine within her sight to destroy burned deep in her heart only for Keiko to pull her away, drove her anger deep into her heart. The one chance to save her sister and end the madness became thin. She wished she had a spell to reverse time just so she can go back and undo that mistake, but then there were thoughts of other points in time she could go back to prevent all of this from happening.

They arrived at an apartment complex. It was only seven floors. The entrance had a directory with a list of names, but Keiko stood before an intercom and typed in the number 503. The intercom buzzed and a soft female voice spoke.

"Who is it?"

"It's Keiko, Natsume. I have my friend with me for her appointment."

Friend was the last thing Mayumi thought of. She struggled to stay focus and really had no interest in magical fashion. As Keiko stepped through the door, Mayumi looked back out into city, wanting to run back.

"Let's go." Keiko said. "Natsume is waiting."

Mayumi close her eyes and let out light growl. She marched inside, following Keiko to the elevator.

They were on the fifth floor and approached apartment 503. Keiko knocked on the door and the door opened revealing a young woman. She had long flowing hair covered in Mana, and was old enough to be their mother. Mayumi looked up at the woman and sensed a tense aura. It was as if she judged Mayumi for something she done. Mayumi's legs buckled and Her hands twitched.

"Hello Mrs. Saito." Keiko said. "We are here for Mayumi's appointment."

"H...hello." Mayumi struggled to bow. "I am... I am Mayumi Akamatsu."

Without a word spoken, Mrs. Saito stepped aside. Her eyes followed Mayumi right into the living room. She stood behind her, allowing Keiko to lead everyone to Natsume's room. Mrs. Saito knocked on the door and opened it. Once inside, there was a teenage girl with short hair in a simple dress sitting before a desk in front of her bed. Her room had a fashion mirror with a stand. There was sewing machine next to the window.

"Hello I am Natsume Saito. Please to meet you."

"I am Mayumi Akamatsu. Please to meet you."

"Mother, please. You're scaring my customer."

Mrs. Saito stepped backwards out of the room. She closed the

door with her eyes locked onto Mayumi. The girls practically collapsed from the force of Mrs. Saito's presence and they took a moment to calm down.

"I'm sorry. Ever since the Mukado got active, my mother has been very overprotective of me. First, I want to look at you Akamatsu-san." Natsume turned her body but not her legs and stared at Mayumi. She pulled Mayumi closer and pulled her hair back. Natsume analyzed her. "You really do look exactly like the priestess I saw yesterday at the parade."

"You were there?"

"Yes." Keiko leaned her arm on the desk. "I was on my way back with some fabric and sewing supplies when my mother and I stumbled onto the parade. I have to admit, it was very frightening seeing her led by the Mukado, and to see you here, well, it scares me a little."

"I'm not like my sister. My sister isn't even like that at all."

"Don't worry. Keiko told me your situation. It must have been frightening for the two of you awakening to Mana."

"It was."

"It's unfortunate your sister fell into the Mukado's hands. Being forced to fight your sister is really hard. I've seen first hand what happens when siblings fight each other. It can be tragic."

"That's why I have to save her. You have to believe me, this isn't really her. She is not evil."

"I'd like to believe you, but I've been through too much. I've been a Magi for six years, started when I was ten. I wanted to protect people, but my mother demanded that I study instead. I never listened to her. But now I found myself wanting to help other Magi by providing them with combat outfits, it's the least I can do. That is why you are here."

"Honestly..." Mayumi saw Natsume offering a seat with a hand wave and she sat down. "I don't really like these outfits you guys are wearing. They're all tacky and childish."

"Heh heh heh." Natsume turned to Keiko making the teen blush. "You're right, but those types are usually worn by little girls with

overactive imaginations and teens who watch too much animation.”

“Hey!” Keiko said. “This outfit I had you made is a perfectly legitimate battle outfit.”

“Keep telling yourself that.”

Mrs. Saito entered the room carrying a tray with tea. She placed it on the desk while staring at Mayumi.

“Mrs. Saito.” Mayumi said and Mrs. Saito leaned right into her face. She wanted to tell her about herself but the force of Mana the woman projected frightened her. “Thank you.”

Once Mrs. Saito left, Mayumi placed her hands over her chest letting out a breath of air. Keiko smiled.

“She likes you.”

“No she doesn't. It's because I look like my sister.”

“Don't worry.” Natsume said pouring tea. “I explained to my mother what was happening, I'm sure it's nothing.”

After taking a sip of tea, Natsume clapped her hands together and took out a measuring tape from her desk.

“Let's get started.” Natsume reached over her desk and picked up a cane. “I'll need to you to strip down completely naked.”

“What?” Mayumi jerked her head back, and her eyes blinked twice when Natsume turned her legs over. All she heard was her own breath. She did not hear a single word Natsume and Keiko were saying. All she had on her mind was the plastic left leg Natsume stood on. Her eyes never moved, even when Natsume smiled at her talking.

“You like my leg?”

“Huh?” Mayumi looked up at Natsume and lost her train of thought. “I'm sorry I didn't...”

“It's okay. I lost it when I fought against a Magi serving the Hebi clan.”

Mayumi thought of a snake as big as a horse and her mind replaced it with a centipede. She lurched over, cradling her stomach. She felt Keiko rubbing her back and Natsume leaned close to her face.

“How can you two do this?”

"We made this choice." Natsume said.

"At ten?!"

"Akamatsu-san, when our Mana is awakened we don't exactly have time to think or understand what has happened to us. The clans can sense us right away. You don't know this, but secretly in the shadows, they wait for us to awaken to make their move. Clans like the Mukado want to recruit us when we are at our most vulnerable. Take a look out that window."

Mayumi faced the window.

"Regular people don't know Magi exist, and given how history has treated us Magi, we don't want to face hatred from two sides. We humans are far worse than the clans are, and we've done more to each other than those creatures did. We don't think about it until after the fact, but the truth is, we rather take our chances with monsters than with our own people. With this decision, come risks."

That last line echoed in Mayumi's head as she looked at the prosthetic leg.

"The good thing is that we still can make our own choices. We still have free thought. If you don't like our world, then I suggest you get your sister, and get out immediately. Don't come back to this side, and live as if Mana never existed. It would do us a favor and have two less Magi to fight against."

"Fight against?" Mayumi faced Keiko who looked away. Natsume just stared at her. It soon hit her when she looked at the mirrors. The reason they had to wear these outfits. Fighting each other. It was too much to grasp. She got off from her seat and stepped back into the wall. Mayumi saw her reflection off the three mirrors, her mouth covered. She did not want to fight and lose her leg. Then there was Emi, the fights she may have had. What she might have seen first hand. Mayumi shook her head side to side and practically dropped to her knees.

"You never told her Keiko."

"I tried to explain this one step at a time. Let her get used to being a Magi first. I was hoping to save her sister quickly, without telling her, and convince them not to continue as full time Magi."

"It's okay." Mayumi stood to her feet. "I don't have time to cry. I will save Emi, and get her away from this. I'll get her to stop being a Magi and leave together. Let's get this outfit ready."

Mayumi stood before the mirror and took her shirt off. She saw Natsume stand behind her with the measuring tape in hand, and Keiko nodding.

TO BE CONTINUED...

