

Arcana Magi Pure Vol.2 - c.4

by H-M Brown

Mayumi brushed the dirt off her clothes. The crow flapped its wings and circled around her just like the other one before. She remembered the voice that spoke to her before and felt a chill on her back. With a deep breath, she followed it through the forest. It was a long walk uphill, then across a brook. She slipped through a pair of bushes and found herself in the middle of a path. She looked back and saw the city below. Mayumi could see as far as her eyes could, all the buildings hugged by the trees. Roads stretching outward as if reaching for something far away. The crow swooped high over her and she saw smoke billowing from the top.

Mayumi followed the path upwards. The wind blew her hair back. She could hear the breeze whisper in her ears. Her fears diminished and her thoughts calmed. Reaching the top, her eyes grew wide. There was large crow with a peace sign necklace around its neck. It perched behind a campfire, with a tree and bushes behind it, and a flat rock big enough to be a seat. She sat before it and felt another gust of wind. She looked at her hands and saw her Mana react to the air. It was almost as if she could hold onto it like a cup.

"The wind has taken a liking to you." The crow said taking a large rolled paper. "You have potential."

"Who are you?"

"My name is Ren, Akamatsu-san." The crow lit the paper with the campfire and took a puff.

"You know me."

"Your reputation is like well known among the Magi and the Clans, as well as the Society and the Guilds."

"Society? Guilds? There are more of you?"

"There are lots of things you still have yet to learn, up here."

Ren pointed at the top of his head. "It is unfortunate that your sister ended up in the hands of the Mukado. I'm sure things would have been different if that didn't happen, you know."

"I have to go back and get my sister. I overheard back at the shrine that the Clans are going to Purge my sister. Whatever that is?"

"I am aware of that." Ren took another puff. "This is why I brought you here."

"What?"

Ren rested the burning rolled up paper and a pair of red eyes appeared in the bushes behind him. Mayumi shifted her body, but she was afraid to move anymore.

"Don't mind the Tengu here. He's like just watching over us for protection."

"Uh... I see." Mayumi relaxed her body, placing her hands on her lap.

"Purging, Akamatsu-san, is like Purify but like cranked up to level eleven see?" Ren received a negative shake as a response.

"Okay, Purify let's you clean up impure Mana. It can also calm the mind. If used improperly, that calm mind could go into shock and ruin that person's way of thinking. Purge does those two things, but..."

"But?" Mayumi while Ren took another puff.

"It cleans out every ounce of the physical body like diseases. It cleans out the brains of all impure thoughts, I mean like reduce you to happy thoughts only, you don't get happy thoughts because your brain can't handle the spell. It then cleans out the soul, like, you can feel your soul scrubbed down with soap and cloth. Even your heart gets washed up."

"That's an interesting way of putting it."

"Once it's all over, you know your name, but you don't know if you are you anymore."

"That's... horrible."

"It's also forbidden. Part of the treaty we all made with the Magi back in the 60s."

"What?! Why did they agree to that then if they're not supposed to use it?"

"I don't know and this is where you come in."

"Me?"

"We don't have good vibes with the Clans see? So, we can't send our people or our Magi to investigate. You see the Clans leave us alone only because of what we did during the Children's War."

"I heard the Grand Elder mention that before."

"Would you like to hear it?"

"Why? I don't care what happened back then. I just want to get my sister out of that place and get us away from all of you."

"I can make that happen, if you listen to our story."

Mayumi and Ren just stared at each other. The whistling air was the only sound around them.

"I guess I have no choice do I?"

Ren hopped over to Mayumi. He turned around to the sky. The clouds slowly moved by. He kept quiet not saying a word. Mana gathered around them and Mayumi found herself surrounded by the mist. Visions of an era she never lived in appeared in her mind like television show. Her mind shook but she felt Ren's wing on her back helping maintain focus.

"In 1965, the culture was changing throughout Japan. Many young Magi began dating foreigners despite the elder's feelings. Teenagers rejected the old ways, some even formed gangs, and violence broke out, to the point that the Magi was about to be exposed to the public. So, the Clans decided to rein the children in and started Purging them of everything including love. Absolute obedience. The children who saw this told their parents what the Clans did and most parents took the Clans side. Those who didn't agree with the Clan, fought back. It grew into a hidden war that lasted two years. The public believed it to be gang violence that the police could not handle."

"No way. How could you all let this happen?"

"It was a complicated time, not just here but all over the world. Our role as Karasu was to protect the Magi children. We returned in

the 1960s after we survived the bombing of Kobe twenty years earlier during the war. Because we were Karasu and Tengu, we were treated with disdain during that war. When we returned from the shadows, our Magi had babies, with foreigners. It only made the Clans hatred worse. We tried to reason with them regarding the Purge and this war. We warned them it could destroy all trust with the humans, but the Clans were so determined to keep to the old ways, that they nearly destroyed themselves."

"So how did it all stop?"

"Sacrifice."

Mayumi looked at Ren, her eyes unsure whether to stop the story there or not.

"The Clans decided to reset the Magi with a country wide Purge. Two young people, one native and one foreign in love with each other, stood up against this spell. Together they called time and space itself, and brought the Purge spell towards them. It was remarkable what they had done, and frightening. However, they succeeded and absorbed the spell. Their bodies Purged of everything."

"Who were they?"

"Satoshi Hamazaki and Karyn Mayweather. They're love and want for peace ended the war. After they regained they're awareness, they were completely different people, yet they're love for each other remained underneath that emptiness. It was then that Clans and Magi formed a treaty to prevent themselves from attacking each other, and never use Purge on a Magi or anybody for that matter. However, we are not so naïve, the world is not so black and white as you would see in movies. We still had demons and humans who would exploit spellcasting. So our alliance went further to deal with those who would do harm."

"So you think someone is trying to do something bad?"

"Yes." Ren looked down at Mayumi. "It's like, too easy for them to suddenly decide to Purge a child when the solution is just to get her out. Someone wants this to happen and probably start another Children's War. I tried to warn them today, but they still don't trust

us. They won't listen."

"Look, as much as I want to help, I don't want to waste time leaving my sister in the hands of monsters. I can't play detective while everybody threatens her life. I'm sorry. You'll have to find someone else to help crack this Purge mystery."

"I understand. Like, I won't stop you, but even if you do rescue your sister, the Mukado will replace her with someone else. Someone who won't have a sister like you to protect. Do you think that's fair?"

"And what makes you think they'll find a replacement? You don't know that."

"You don't know if your plan will work either. See how trippy that is when you think about. We don't know anything but we got to like, let everything play out and see what happens."

"I'm leaving." Mayumi walked down the path rubbing her forehead with a grumble. She stopped for a moment and turned around. Ren was gone. The story left a bitter taste. The idea was too much to comprehend, yet doubt sprouted into her thoughts. It has been a month, and the Inu and Kitsune Clans have not been able to defeat the Mukado. On the other hand, Ren said getting her sister out was simple. Looking down at the city below, the idea of a Clan turning on one its own no longer seemed farfetched. She felt the calm wind brushing her hair and she wanted more time to think this over, but she felt it was too late.

Mayumi arrived at the shrine where Keiko, Nina, and Goro met up with her, but she walked past them. Without saying a single word, Keiko singled for Nina and Goro to stay behind, and she went with Mayumi.



Mayumi returned to Natsume's apartment. When the door opened, Mayumi's eyes pushed Mrs. Saito back. There was no fear or shivering, nor the patience for any intimidation. She just walked past Mrs. Saito, leaving her shoes behind at the front door. Mayumi stood before Natsume's room, and the seamstress came out with a smile, but it turned off. She led Mayumi in and left Keiko with Mrs.

Saito.

Mrs. Saito led Keiko to the living room. She went to make tea and watched Keiko sit quietly on the couch. Mrs. Saito thought about whether she should talk to Keiko or not, but she was not sure if she wanted to too tip her off.

"So." Keiko said. "What is the Society going to do about Emi Akamatsu?"

"What? How?"

"I'm not that stupid Mrs. Saito. You've all been quiet for month. You're waiting for something."

"We had hoped the Clans would have this resolved, but it seems we were mistaken."

Keiko got up and approached the kitchen. She stood before Mrs. Saito leaning on the wall with her arms crossed and spoke.

"The Mukado have been fighting smart. Sneak attacks. Traps. We've lost battles and a handful of Kitsune and Inu. A few of our Magi were injured as well. The Kitsune have only three, two are in America who can't get here, and Mayumi. So as you can see we're light on manpower. That's why it's taken this long."

"I see." The teapot whistled and Mrs. Saito removed it from the stove. "So what are the Clans planning?"

Keiko looked away and refused to answer.

"You're a Magi. One of our people is danger and if the Clans are going to do something they shouldn't to Akamatsu, you need to tell us."

"Everybody is keeping to themselves, even Mayumi."

"Oh?" Mrs. Saito poured a cup of tea and handed it to Keiko.

"Thank you. The Old One, the Grand Elder, and my Master believe there is something greater beyond the Mukado. We have a feeling the Karasu notice the same thing."

"We feel the same." Mrs. Saito poured two cups of tea. "The Mukado are not this smart. So I assumed Mayumi and her sister are the key to unlocking this mystery."

"If Mayumi doesn't pull her sister out first."

"That would be good." Mrs. Saito placed the cups on the tray. "Is

that all the Clans are planning?"

Keiko did not answer and Mrs. Saito carried the tea to the living room. Keiko looked at her hand shivering. She remembered Nina and Goro telling her about the Clans decision to Purge Emi, and the promise to keep this silent from the Society. She did not like the fact that she had to keep this information from them, because of the consequences this could bring.

"Another ten minutes Akamatsu-san, and your combat outfit will be ready."

"Okay." Mayumi followed Mrs. Saito to the living room. She sat on the couch taking deep breaths. Keiko sat next to her and the couch shook. Mayumi gripped the arm of the sofa. "Please don't move it."

"You used up a lot of Mana." Keiko said. "It happens when adjustments are made for combat outfits."

"Here, have some tea." Mrs. Saito handed a cup to Mayumi. "This will help recharge your Mana."

"Thank you." Mayumi took a sip and felt a tingly sensation throughout her body. She saw her Mana appear over her skin. It was warm to the touch. She moved her hand examining the mist and smiled. "Wow."

"Amazing isn't it?"

"Yes."

"But?"

"I don't know anymore. All I ever see is fighting, and monsters. Is this all there is to being a Magi?"

"No." Mrs. Saito sat across Mayumi. "There are plenty of things a Magi can do instead of fighting. Perhaps, if you want, I can take you to the Society."

"The Society?" Mayumi remembered Ren mentioning them. "I heard that name before. What do you do?"

"We provide assistance and education for all Magi such as yourself. You don't have to be a member of the Clans to be a member of the Society. If you want, I could give you a tour of our facility."

"I'll... I'll think about it." Mayumi nodded. "But I have important

things to do.”

“Your sister eh?”

“Yes.” Mayumi stopped short of saying anymore. She looked out the window, thinking of everything Ren told her. However, the memories came to a stop when a billow of smoke rose above a nearby building with a plume of flames reaching out to the sky, and a large centipede lifted its head up with a roar. “The Mukado.”

TO BE CONTINUED...

