

Arcana Magi Pure Vol.3 - c.2

by H-M Brown

School ended for the day and students filed out of their classrooms. Mayumi and Emi stepped out into the hallway parting ways. Mayumi watched Emi catch up to Sayako as they both headed to track practice. The girls talked to each other, laughing toward the stairs where they disappeared from Mayumi's sight. Mayumi nodded feeling comfortable with the fact that her sister would be all right. She felt a pat on her back and turned around. Behind her was Ayane with big a grin. She handed Mayumi a flyer to a karaoke place called Sing One.

"We're heading out there now."

"Now?"

"Yes now." Ayane pulled Mayumi's arm and led her down the stairs. They both arrived at home economics classroom where Hideki and Tomiko waited. Ayane scanned the area and crossed her arms. "Where's Takashi?"

"Do we need him?" Mayumi said while sitting down.

"Yes, you do." Takashi said entering the room with unimpressed eyes. He sat across from Mayumi and leaned on his left hand.

"You're late." Ayane said.

"School just ended a few minutes ago."

"And you made everyone wait." Ayane held up the karaoke flyer and everyone but Mayumi collectively groaned.

"Not again." Hideki said.

Tomiko spoke. "So this is where we're going to research the food."

"Yes." Ayane smiled.

"But Sing One doesn't make good food."

"Exactly. We're going to taste test the entire menu, then I am going to use the data we collected so we can make a menu for our

karaoke bar in the upcoming festival.”

“It's six months away.” Hideki said.

“It's best that we do the research now and use the time to perfect the meals for all the patrons.”

As everyone continued debating, Mayumi saw the grey crow land on the windowsill outside. She exhaled and approached the window. Nobody was paying attention as she lifted the window open. They stared at each other. Strange as it was, they both expressed awkwardness because they could not talk. Mayumi leaned close and whispered to the bird.

“Tell Ren to stop spying on me.” Mayumi then flicked the bird off the windowsill, forcing it fly in the air. It flapped in place then launched itself into the air. Mayumi watched it head toward the roof, when she turned around and bumped into Takashi standing right behind her. Startled, she stepped back bumping her head on the edge of the window, and Ayane pushed Takashi to the side.

“Stop scaring Mayumi.”

“I didn't scare her.” Takashi said stepping back. “I was just trying to see...”

“And she hurt her head.” Ayane said and gave a scolding look.

“...what she was looking at.” Takashi rubbed his hair as Ayane led Mayumi to a cabinet on the wall that stored the first aid kit.

“I'm perfectly fine Ayane.” Mayumi said. “There's no need.”

“Now now, I can't have my friends getting after all.”

* * *

In the school gym locker room, Emi slipped on her sneakers while Sayako spoke to her. She hardly heard a word the team captain was saying. Her mind wandered off about last night. When the mist moved past her, and flew up to the air. It took the form of a hand, reaching for the stars. She felt awed by it, yet terrified. She was not sure if she could go on with her plan.

“Emi-chan...” Sayako said and Emi snapped her head to the left.

“Saya.”

“Are you okay?”

“Yes. I was... I was worried about the today test. I hope I pass

this time.”

“It was an easy test. Don't worry about it. Let's go.”

“Okay I just need to finish tying my sneakers.”

“Don't take too long.” Sayako left the locker room with the rest of the team and Emi smiled.

Once they left her sight, she leaned over with hands shaking. She saw her Mana form over her hand and it mixed with the black Mana. It felt intense. Like two magnets repelling each other when the same sides face each other. She placed her hands next to each and felt that force moved them side to side. Emi could not touch them together, until she relaxed her channeling. A loud clap brought them together, and she buried her face in them.

“Priestess.”

Emi lifted her head and saw Rumiko standing at the door dressed in a plaid skirt and white blouse. She stood up as Rumiko dropped her bag on the bench, approaching her. Emi felt the untied shoestring under her left foot and stumbled back. Before she could regain her footing, Rumiko rushed and slammed her into the wall. Emi felt the tip of Rumiko's kunai knife on her neck. They just stared. Cold eyes trying to out ice each other. Emotions and fears restrained.

“Is your little friend all right?” Emi said.

“Shut up!” Rumiko pressed tip deeper into the skin but without puncturing it. “What's your plan?”

“Like I'm going to tell, and you won't kill me without knowing the truth.”

“I don't mind killing you if it'll help our chances to avoid thousands of deaths.”

“Then do it.”

Rumiko tightened her grip on the hilt and leaned the blade horizontal, ready to slide it under Emi's chin. Her heartbeat raced. Her muscles tensed.

“That hand your friend and that bird saw.” Emi words made Rumiko pause. Her eyes glowed red and she gathered Mana at palm of her hand. “I've never saw it before.”

"Lies!" Rumiko's hand shivered at sight of Emi's eyes. "My teacher said it was impure Mana."

"You mean this." Emi lifted her hand up showing the impure Mana mixed with the clean Mana. It made Rumiko jump back and take a defensive stance. "I think I'm going to die."

"What?" Rumiko lifted her head up. Her eyes grew wide.

"I think this thing is going to kill me." Emi said while tying her sneakers. "But it's okay. This plan will at least make the city better."

"Tell me." Rumiko lowered her knife.

"Then you will stop me." Emi walked past Rumiko and reached the door. She paused with the corner of her normal eyes looking back at the ninja who was ready to strike her. The priestess saw Rumiko holding a defensive posture again. Looking at her Mana, Emi understood why. However, all she could do was just shake her head and walked away. Rumiko did nothing.

"Priestess?" Rumiko said stopping Emi in the hallway. "At least answer this one question."

"Fine."

"What you just said, does your sister know?"

Emi stood quiet unsure if she should answer or not. She kept walking without saying anything, and questioned herself in thought, if she should tell Mayumi.



The Cooking Club walked past shops and restaurants, ready to do their research. The area was busy with tourists buying souvenirs, business people having meetings in cafes, and students from other schools lounging around. It was so different from last week for Mayumi. There was no parade for her sister this time to shock her. Everything looked normal, and foreign. Not a single person around her was aware of the existence of Magi or Clans. Yet it did make her wonder who was a Magi amongst the crowd. It was difficult to tell.

As Mayumi and her friends turned the corner, they arrive at a street market. They walked past kiosks selling food, fabric, and toys. She remembered her father bringing her and Emi here on a summer day when they were younger. How fun it all was. How normal her

friends were as they gathered around a kiosk, smiling and teasing each other. How normal that was. Now, right now it does not feel right. She felt scared being here. It was unlike anything she felt before. Closed in and suffocating. Mayumi was not part of this world anymore, she tried to live here, but she cannot. Then suddenly, a woman's scream brought her back.

“Yukito! Don't go out into the street.”

Mayumi turned around with the rest of the crowd. There they saw a little boy heading toward the street, with his mother unable to keep up in her high heels. Mayumi saw the heavy traffic passing by and realized what was going to happen. She ran fast, with her friends watching on. The sounds of them calling her name never stopped her. She felt the wind gather under her feet. With just a thought, she leapt past the crowd. In the air, she saw the boy run out into the street chasing a bouncing ball. Not far away, a car sped by. With the aide of the wind, Mayumi landed next to the child to the sound of the horn and scooped him into her arms. Her magic circle grew under her and the wind surrounded them.

“LEVITATE!” The wind pushed them into the air and the car screeched under them. A loud thump echoed. Mayumi landed on the street, groaning from the pain on her foot, and opened her eyes. She saw the boy in her arms with tears, quivering like a leaf. She stood to her feet as the mother ran up to them. Mayumi handed the child to his mother and the kid cried aloud. She looked at the crowd, just standing there silent. Her friends watched her amongst the onlookers. Normal people stared at her, some with fear. Others with curiosity. The sound of cameras from cell phones capturing her face. Whispers asking how she did that. A world she once knew now foreign to her.

Mayumi ran. She ran fast as if her life depended on it. She never looked back. She did not care about her friends. Mayumi just wanted to escape that world more than ever, but she did not get far. The pain of injured foot slowed her and she collapsed on a bench next to a vending machine. Short of breath, Mayumi lifted her hand and examined them. The Mana built up forming a glove like coating and

the sound of the vending machine dispensing a can caught her attention.

Mayumi looked at the machine and saw a turtle standing on two feet. It had straw like hair with a patch of baldness. It opened the can of coffee and drank. Its eyes turned to her and it paused.

"Would you like a can?" It said with a young man's voice.

"Eh?"

"A can of coffee? My treat."

"Yes."

After receiving the can, Mayumi sat quiet and the turtle sat beside her. He took a sip and leaned back on the bench.

"My name is Kameto of the Kappa Clan."

"Mayumi Akamatsu."

"Oooohhh... so you're her."

"You've heard of me."

"The Akamatsu twins. Light and Dark, side by side." Kameto leaned closer to her face. "I was expecting you to be scary."

"Well we're not. We're more scared than scary."

"I see." He took another sip. "Not thirsty?"

"I don't feel thirsty." Mayumi tightened her grip and felt the warmth of the can in her hands. "I feel out of place."

"Oh?"

"I don't want to be a Magi, but when I tried to hang out with the Cooking Club from my school just now, everything was out of place."

"Hmmm... you still haven't adjusted to life as a Magi."

"It's too much. Everything I learned and saw about... us. People hurt or dying, my sister's life, the fighting, I want to get away from it."

"But you feel you can't."

"I don't know. I..."

"I think maybe what you need is to visit my Clans Blue Moon Festival."

"Blue Moon Festival?"

"We're holding it tonight. It's when we dance to the sea kami to watch over our hatchlings that will be born and make their way to

the ocean. There will be music, food, and games. It's a wonderful and fun time to watch."

"Will that be okay? I mean I'm not a member of your Clan."

"It's open to everyone. Even the Neko Clan will be there. From what I understand of what you're saying, is that all you've seen is the bad side of Magi and Clans. If you come tonight, you will see the good side of Magi and Clans. We are no different then you humans in good and evil. We all have our darkness, but we also have our light. Our shrine is across the street from the public beach if you decide to come."

"I know where that's at."

"Good."

"Mayumi!" Akane said in the distance and Mayumi saw the Cooking Club running toward her.

Mayumi heard the sound of a thump. She saw Kameto threw the can into the recycle bin, and walked away before she could say thank you. Mayumi found herself surrounded by the Cooking Club and she saw the look of worry in Akane and Tomiko's eyes. Mayumi stood up and felt the sting on her right foot. She sat back down wincing and took her show off.

"You're foot." Akane said kneeling down and saw the swollen bruise.

"It must have when I..." Mayumi looked down and away but she felt a hand on her shoulder. She lifted her head and saw Tomiko's hand and Akane's smile.

"That was awesome Mayu-chan." Tomiko said.

"How did you do that?" Hideki said.

"Well. I'm a Magi."

Hideki and Tomiko leaned closer wanting to hear more, but Akane nudged them back.

"Give her some room, she needs some air."

"I'm okay really."

"Well we'll at least take you home."

"Can you walk?" Takashi said and everyone looked at him with eyes wide open. "What? I can't ask that?"

Takashi shook his head and turned around. He knelt down, pointing to his back.

"Hop on Akamastu. I'll carry you."

"Th... thank you." Mayumi hopped on Takashi's back and relaxed.

"And you'll tell us everything as payment for carrying you."

"Jerk."



Ren stood at the base of stairs. The steps were littered with cracks, crumbling at the brush of the wind. The vines hanging from the trees were a greenish brown, ready to snap apart. The old crow exhaled from what he was looking at and heard the sound of footsteps. Approaching him from behind were the elders of the Kitsune, Inu, and Higurashi Clans. They stood before him as he took a pipe in hand and lit it. The pungent scent made them shake their bodies. Ren smirked and removed the pipe from his beak.

"Are the rumors true?" Ren said. "Someone raided the Grand Archives last night?"

"This is a Clan issue, karasu." The elder fox said. "Do not concern yourself."

"But I must, as you can see around us."

"We do not have time for this." The elder dog said and walked past Ren. The other elders followed and Ren kept up with them. The elders paid no attention to the forest around them. Ren however examined a plant with liquid spilling from the petals.

"Pollen?" Ren said but it did not attract the elder's attention. His eyes trailed to the side and his mouth opened a bit. He looked up at the falling leaves. The branches bent like a string. He caught up with the elders as they all stepped out into an open field. Ren stood beside the fox much to his chagrin. The crow noticed tall buildings in all directions beyond the trees. It was an oasis within a concrete desert.

"Elder Sato of the Mukado." The fox said. "We are here to speak with you."

"Welcome." A loud voice thundered over the field. His greetings

shocked the elders.

"Welcome?" The elder cicada said and he looked at Ren's presence wondering if it was a good idea to address the issue, but it was too late to turn back. "One of your members raided the Grand Archives last night, and gave the stolen item to your priestess."

"Yes, I gave the order."

"Why?"

The trees shimmered and bent over like a small dying plant. The elders stepped back as a large centipede emerged from the dead trees. There were black marks all over its body. Some of its flesh exposed with impure Mana cascading out of the wounds. The elders stood frozen in place as Sato presented, with a ghostly hand, the paper that Emi received.

"What happened to you?" Ren said.

"Our time has come." He handed the fox elder the paper.

"Forfeiture of Land?" The fox read and the elders gathered to read the writing. They looked back at Sato. "You are not a Clan. This means nothing from you."

"Look around you." Sato said as Ren took the paper and read it. "This has always been our territory Kitsune. Any who trespassed would be devoured. Now we cannot keep up with man. Unlike your lands, ours has been completely decimated."

"Why a priestess?" The elder dog said.

"This shrine was built when cities were built. However, we chased out the humans and kept the area hidden. But it was too much too push back and this small forest was cut off from the nature outside. Isolated, our Mana decayed. There were no followers of this shrine to maintain this place. That was when we saw the child."

"Emi Akamatsu." Ren said.

"Yes. The child was scared and alone. She arrived at the shrine unaware of us and prayed. That was when we received a sign from Hikari, goddess of the shrine. We made her our priestess, in the hopes of bringing in followers who bring light to our land and bring us out of the darkness of time."

"But it's not working."

"No, the impure Mana only spreads. I had hoped to incite you all into using Purge here, but the priestess expressed her anger at being used as a pawn. She is so forgiving that child. She deserves better. Therefore, I made the decision for us to leave this land and move to the valley. That was why one of my kin went rampage last week. For that I apologize."

The elders looked at each other as Ren approached Sato.

"Karasu..." Sato voice got the others attention. "I understand what your people said about the changing times. We did not want to accept this new world. I remember how far these trees would go. The scent of the sky so fresh. Heh, and the glorious terror we brought to the villages."

Sato rested his head on the grayish grass and closed his eyes beside Ren.

"Take your time." The crow patted Sato's head.

"We are dying, and our children will not bear another generation if we stay here. Going to the valley will at least give us a chance, but I doubt the young ones will live to build our new life. I want my kin to have the dignity of leaving this world in a peaceful land and not this." Sato raised his head up to the sky where the elders and Ren saw all the buildings around them.

"How do we know this is the truth?" The elder dog said. "How can we trust you?"

"I care not for trust. We will never stop being who we are. Until we leave this world, anyone who steps in our new land will be devoured. That will not change, but we have no need to invade this tainted world you all live in. This is not ours anymore." Sato's ghostly hand took the paper from Ren and handed it back to the elder fox. "This deed is our acknowledgement that man now owns our land. Our priestess shall guide us out of the city and she will return to her human world. This shrine, do as you wish, and this impure land... end its life so it may not suffer anymore. Now leave."

With a nod from the elders, they quietly left the field with Ren right behind them. The crow looked back at Sato and could see the suffering from the pain. He hopped back to Sato drawing the

centipede's ire. With just one quick puff of his pipe, Ren perched in front of Sato's face, and rubbed the elder's forehead. He heard a light grumble under Sato's breath. Ren knew it was comfort.

TO BE CONTINUED...

