

Arcana Magi Pure Vol.3 - c.3

by H-M Brown

In the nurse's office in school, Mayumi stared at her bandaged right foot on the bed. It was a little bigger than the left and the cooling pack made the pain more noticeable. It was not the pain that occupied her mind, it was her friends. All four of them sat around her bed listening to her entire story. She poured out all her feelings of how she and Emi became Magi. The fights she had with Emi for the past month. The impure Mana. Everything that she experienced up to this point. Her voice choked up at times. Her hands trembled when she spoke of people that died. Everyone remained silent. A moment where everything about the world of Magi and Clans settled in. And Ayane spoke.

“Amazing.”

“It's not.” Mayumi said. “I hate it.”

“You're just overwhelmed and scared. Like that walking turtle guy said to you. You've only seen the bad parts. You should go to this Blue Star Festival.”

“Blue Moon Festival.”

“You should go there. It may be fun. It may ease your mind.”

“No, I have to focus on helping Emi. I have to get stronger so I can cast Purify and save her.”

“You need to relax.”

“I CAN'T!” Mayumi tightened her grip on her skirt, clenching her teeth to hold back the tears. “I'm sorry.”

“I'll go with you.” Hideki said, and everyone turned to him. “I want to see this festival. It sounds like fun. And these turtle guys sound pretty cool. How about it?”

“I'll go.” Tomiko said. “Maybe they have good food to try out.”

“I don't know if you should.” Mayumi said. “They may not allow you since you're not Magi.”

"We'll never know if we don't try." Ayane said. She took Mayumi's hands, clasping gently, and looked at her eye to eye. "Whatever you decide is okay, but I'm not going to let you do any of this alone. You have friends now. I am here for you."

"Ayane." Mayumi's eyes shifted side to side grasping what she heard. A tear fell down her cheek and she smiled. "Okay let's go."

"Only one problem Akamatsu." Takashi said, pointing at her foot. "You're really going to walk on that."

"It's not that bad." Mayumi stood on her foot, grimacing from the pain, but she stood tall and walked around. "See?"

"Sure." Takashi said with an exhale. "Well let's go to this festival."

Mayumi's head turned sharply at Takashi, as he walked out of the nurse's office with hands in his pockets. She was having a hard time figuring him out, but with little smile, she understood he was being nice in his own way.

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Over at the track field, Emi's team finished practicing for the day and she had just exited building saying goodbye to everyone. The priestess was alone walking down the street. Memories of the impure Mana moving on its own last night, left her questioning how that was possible. To move at such a speed, and reaching out to the sky. Emi's thoughts wandered for so long that she did not pay attention to where she was, and found herself standing in front of a set of stairs. The sign above her read Shrine of Four Mythic Beasts. Her eyes trembled. This was the home of the Kitsune. The group who fought her and the Mukado last month. Her first month as a Magi. A memory still fresh and raw.

However, this time everything is different. Her plans failed to the point that she could no longer help the Mukado and the decision Elder Sato made. Despite her decision to remain a priestess, the stories about the Kitsune Mayumi told her sounded fun. They sounded nice. She was not sure if she could face them after everything that happened.

"Go." The sound of wind echoed in her ears.

Emi took her first step up the stairs. She walked up imagining what could have been, if she had been by her sister's side. Smiling, and feeling safe. The priestess did not understand why these thoughts flashed in her mind. It was as if the burdens that overwhelmed her, were claming down. Her skin felt the Mana around her. It was warm to the touch, like the sun on a breezy beach.

Emi reached the top and saw the shrine ahead of her. She just stood there. Old as it was with no decay. It looked clean compared to Hikari's Shrine. She spun her body around and realized that the whole place was clean. The trees brimming with life, nothing was dying. No cracks on the floor. Nothing was falling apart. It was a different world than what she was used too. The voices carried through the wind. Soft voices that comforted her. She turned to the shrine and saw no one was there.

Emi stepped onto a path. She followed it down a hill. Along the way, she heard a soft song. It touched her heart. Her memories opened again, at first, she saw her younger self enjoying her times with Mayumi, playing at parks, and singing songs together, but that changed. Replaced was everything that happened last month. Those memories returned once more. It left her in tears as she walked toward the end of the path. The fear that gripped her, the people who died at the hands of the Mukado and the life of nature she poisoned so that Mukado would live. What pained her the most was fighting her sister.

When she exited out into the open field, the singing stopped. Everything went silent. She stood before the crater, surrounded by burnt trees. She touched the grey dirt and it felt smooth like ash. The scent of char overwhelmed her. That was when she realized something. No wind, no noise, and no movement in this area. The air was cold to the touch, not even the sun warmed the place. The priestess stared deep into the crater, and she felt it. A strange feeling. Neither fear or sadness or joy. That was it, the feeling of emptiness. With her hand over her heart, she felt it there too.

“Mayumi?” Nina said, and Emi turned around taking deep

breathes, shocking the little fox. "Emi."

"I can't feel anything."

* * *

Hidden deep in the forest outside the city, the elders of the Kitsune, Inu and Higurashi Clans arrived before an old gate. The old wooden doors were thick under a canopy, and the walls stretched outward hidden by the trees. There was a seal on these doors, an emblem of a bow with a sword acting as an arrow nock. The fox made a ghostly hand appear over his head and knocked twice. There was a ripple of blue light, like the water, with each knock. The doors opened wide and they entered inside.

Walking on the stone floors, there were various animals of different sizes. Many of them carrying books and scrolls with their ghostly hands. Others were pushing carts filled with books. The young read quietly focusing on their studies. The Elders presence caught everyone's attention. The trio walked toward the large building ahead, big enough for even the largest of the Elders. The only building surrounded by the walls.

Inside, there were rows of bookshelves all along the walls. The first floor had books and tables, aisles of books. When they arrived at the center there was an opening showing the second and third floors above. More patrons walked around the balconies picking out their books. Some sat on the floor before the bookshelves to read, others sat before tables with lamps. The Elders approached the main desk that sat under the opened floors above. They placed the scroll before a young cat no bigger than horse.

"Uh... welcome Grand Elders." The cat said with a female voice. "Are you registering this to the archives?"

The fox spoke. "Actually we are in the middle of an investigation. We would like to talk to the Moderators. Where are they?"

"They went to Blue Moon Festival about an hour ago." The cat reached for the scroll but the dog scooped it up, followed by a question.

"Where is your chief of security then?"

"Also with the Moderators."

“Is there any security around?!” His voice was loud boom the shook the building. Everyone above gathered at the balconies and looked down below, and the patrons on the first floor were under the tables.

“Easy now.” The cicada said holding the dog back.

“We do have security guards here. Please you're making our patrons nervous.”

The fox spoke. “We would like to see the records of missing texts and literature.”

“I'm sorry but none of us have access to it, only the chief of security.”

“Only the chief of security?” The fox turned to the others and faced the cat. “What about the lieutenant?”

“What Lieutenant?”

“Listen child!” The elder dog said. “This was stolen from here and we're trying to find out how this happened.”

“That was...” The cat went silent, but the growl of the dog made her ears twitch. “That was not what was stolen.”

“What was?”

“I don't know.” The cat whispered watching the patrons. “The chief of security ran out when he discovered it. He wanted to keep it quiet so he criminal won't get tip off and escape.”

“I see.”

The fox raised his head back with stern cold eyes. “Let's go.”

“Thank you.” The cicada said to cat. The Elders walked away without saying a word.

Outside the gates, the dog leaned down and allowed the cicada to hop on his back. He ran alongside the fox, both picking up speed that made the leaves shake.

“Something's not right.” The dog said.

“This may be bigger than we anticipated.” The fox said.

“We must find the connection.” The cicada said.

* * *

Mayumi and her friends arrived at the beach. The sun was near setting for the night, and a few stars began an early peek in the

twilit sky. Mayumi looked across the street, trying to find an entrance. She led her friends along, keeping her eyes opened, but she did not see it.

“Are you sure it's here?” Ayane said.

“Yes.” Mayumi looked back. “Sometimes these shrines can only be found in hidden paths.”

As Mayumi surveyed the area, Tomiko looked out at the beach and her eyes grew wide. She patted Ayane's shoulders and she shrugged her off. Tomiko yanked her arm angering the club leader, and she gasped. Everyone turned around and there was a small bonfire. Mayumi saw the Kappa dancing around the flames to sound of flute and drum. She hurried onto the beach with her friends' following. They stopped before the dance circle and watched the walking turtles clap their hands together to the music. On opposite ends of the bonfire were two more turtles; one playing a flute and the other playing the drums.

The sound of the crashing ocean with the sound of the music, created a very fun atmosphere that put a smile on everyone's face. Ayane clutched Mayumi's shoulder with a giggle, but Mayumi felt her friend's hand shivering. Tomiko hid behind Hideki while Takashi just crossed his arms unimpressed. When the dancers finished and the music stopped, they looked at the Cooking Club and bowed. They stayed bowed until Mayumi slowly clapped, and her friends followed suit. The Kappa stood up straight and put out the fire with the sand.

“Is this the festival?” Mayumi asked.

“Yes, well part of it.” The drummer said. “You must be Mayumi Akamatsu. Kameto is expecting you and told us to guide you if you were to show up.”

“Is it okay for my friends to come?”

“Of course. This festival is open to everyone, even if they are not Magi, though very rare to have in our presence at this time.” The drummer looked at Mayumi's friends and bowed to them. “We are members of the Kappa Clan.”

“Amazing.” Ayane said and each Kappa took a member of the

club by the hand leading them to a small patch of forest at the edge of the beach.

"I thought the shrine was across the street." Mayumi said.

"The shrine is split in half due to the road. One is where we pray, the other is where we celebrate."

"That's awful."

"It's okay, we've got signs to let driver's know that we are crossing. So are you excited to attend the festival?"

"I'm a little nervous." Tomiko said. "Are we safe?"

"Of course. We have our Magi with us not only to enjoy, but to provide security as well. Even Akamatsu-san."

Everyone climbed up the sandy path leading up into the small forest patch. They heard music in the distance, lights glowing through the trees. Despite the setting sun providing light outside, the trees have the area dark. The sound of voices grew louder as they walked closer. It was then that the Cooking Club stopped with unfazed eyes.

"Come to the raffle and win a prize!" One of the barkers said. Small kiosks lined up the entire path. They reminded Mayumi of dollhouses. There were Kappa and turtles lining up at the raffle booth. Others lined up for raw fish and crab. Games and haunted houses and playgrounds all around. A group of young Kappa ran past the Cooking Club all gathering at a small theater where a puppet show entertained. Guided by the drummer, they arrived out into an opening and there were the larger kiosks where the humans gathered. Men, women, and children enjoying themselves alongside other animals of different sizes.

Everyone looked back at the Kappa having fun inside the wooded area, and then turned to the people conversing with animals as if they were everyday people. Not a single reaction from the club, it was hard for them to say anything. Even Mayumi was awestruck with what she saw despite her one-month experience. Now they understood Mayumi's feeling of this world of Clans and Magi. It was amazing but difficult to grasp. While Tomiko sat down on the nearest bench rubbing her forehead, Ayane's shaking hand pointed back to

the Kappa.

"That... that was real."

"Of course we're real." Kameto said approaching everyone. He stood in front of the musicians and he moved his hand presenting the area. "Welcome to the Shrine of the Ocean Moon."

Everyone looked in the direction the he was pointing and saw a wooden shrine with the carvings of ocean waves. The sound of the ocean crashed below the cliff and the stars were bright and visible unlike outside.

"We must get ready Grand Elder." The drummer said to Kameto.

"Very well. Thank you for bringing my guests."

"Thank you." Ayane said to the drummer and his team bowed. She and the club saw Mayumi walking toward the shrine. It was almost as if she was hypnotized. They followed her, watching carefully as she stretched out her fingers. They saw her hair blow back and her arms stretching out. Ayane looked at Kameto. "What's happening to her?"

"The wind is calling her." Kameto looked back smiling. "She looks happy."

Ayane stood next to Mayumi and felt the wind hugging her. Mayumi's eyes closed and face appeared serene.

"Mayumi?"

"It feels wonderful." Mayumi closed her eyes.

"What does?"

"The wind." Mayumi opened her eyes and turned to Ayane.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes." Mayumi said, and the wind stopped. She looked up at the shrine, placing her hand on it. "It's not the wind that's speaking to me. It's something else using the wind to talk."

Kameto hurried beside the girls and tugged Mayumi's finger.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes." Mayumi nodded.

"The wind is much stronger here than inland." The Elder rested his hand under his chin, and a thought shocked his mind. "You're sister is a priestess right?"

“Yes Kameto. Why?”

“I think you may be a priestess too?”

“What?” Mayumi stepped back wincing from the pain in her foot. Tomiko held her up and Mayumi's eyes trembled before the shrine.
“No.”

“It's okay.” Kameto said and Ayane stood between them.

“Mayumi told us everything about you Clans and Magi.” Ayane said. “We don't want her to get hurt.”

“Trust me.” Kameto raised his hands up in innocence while looking at Hideki and Takashi. “I only want to talk. Not to hurt her.”

“Its okay, Ayane.” Mayumi said standing up straight. “I'll listen. But my friends come with me”

“Of course.” Kameto said. “Right this way please.”

As, Mayumi and her friends followed Kameto away from the festival, a pair of large cats watched her intently from within the crowd.

“Get the Moderators.”

TO BE CONTINUED...

