

Arcana Magi Pure Vol.3 - c.4

by H-M Brown

Mayumi and her friends sat inside a wooden building, before a sign that read 'Think Like Water.' and burning incense underneath the frame. As Kameto closed the door to block out the sound of the festival, Mayumi looked at her hands and thought about the idea that she may be a priestess herself. After all this time, it seemed impossible, but now it was starting to make sense. Emi may have been talking with Hikari all this time at that shrine. Feeding her misinformation or at least misleading her into being a priestess. Kameto walked past her and sat down before her.

"How can my sister and I be priestesses?"

"Anybody can become priestess in the sense of faith you've seen in many shrines, but for a priestess to be a Magi, that is rare. When both a twins, there could be a reason beyond heaven and earth we could not comprehend."

"Like fate or destiny?" Hideki said, but Kameto shook his head in disagreement.

"There is no such thing as fate and destiny. You are born with what you are given. Everyone, even all of you, is born with Mana. All life is born with Mana. Even creation. We are bound by it in nature and can never be taken away. It is what you chose to do with such knowledge that will decide your future."

"Where did Mana come from?" Ayane said.

"We don't know. Some say from heaven, others say from hell. Most believe it was made from atoms, while others feel it is an act of faith. However, I believe it is just a part of nature that was not meant to be explained. Something special that nature can see, but others do not. You humans, only a certain number of you can see Mana like the one we do. You channel it into the palm of your hands and create imagination."

Ayane looked at her hands and tried to see this Mana. She closed her eyes trying to imagine it and she opened them to nothing.

"What does it look like?" Ayane said.

"White mist." Mayumi said. "And black mist."

"As interesting as this is," Takashi said. "what do you mean she is a priestess?"

"There are times," Kameto said. "when a Magi hears voices. Usually it feels like déjà vu, other times its just imagination. You can't see who is talking, but you feel their presence, their whispers. They will communicate through the elements of water, air, earth, or fire. Gods and goddesses. Mayumi has your sister talked about hearing voices through the wind?"

"She never said anything about the wind talking to her, but she kept saying that Hikari wants to bring light to the world, and she wants to bring it to us as well."

"Hmm... direct contact with a goddess can trigger attunement. When you went to the Kitsune's shrine, what did you do to get them to train you?"

"Nothing really. Why?"

"Think. The Kitsune are not very open to just take any Magi under their wing. The shrine is a family Miyazaki family tradition."

"I just told Nina that I wanted to help my sister and..." Mayumi remembered praying before the shrine to help find Emi. Her eyes stared long at the ground as she walked through every act she did leading the final motion. "I prayed."

"And the Kitsune said they could train you?"

"Yes."

"The gods of the shrine listened to you. Only a priestess could get them to listen."

"Amazing." Ayane said.

Kameto stood to his feet with a smile, and placed his scaly hand on Mayumi's. She looked up to see his smile. With a nod, she felt a weight lifted from her shoulders.

"I am a priestess."

"And you're not alone." Kameto said.

"Yeah we're right behind you." Ayane said. "Right?"

Everyone nodded and Kameto led them out of the building. Looking out at the festival, Mayumi smiled at her friends, and ran out to enjoy the celebration. As Kameto watched on, the grey crow looked down from the roof and flew after the Cooking Club, keeping out of sight.



At the Shrine of Four Mythic Beasts, Emi told Nina about how she and Mayumi were trying to undo what she had done the past month. She knelt down beside a bed of yellow flowers, slowly wilting away from the changing seasons. A pair of flowers leaned on each other, almost holding one another, their petals hanging off by the edge. Emi touched one of the petals to hold it up, but the dark mist appeared and made it fall off. Nina watched what happened, and placed her paw on Emi's thigh for comfort.

"It's not your fault Emi."

"All of this is my fault. I just wanted to help. I just wanted to bring light to the world."

"What light?"

"I don't know. It's just this wonderful feeling. Like nothing can bother me. I feel it in my heart, but it hurts."

Emi's eyes turned red for a brief moment and she fell onto her buttocks, pressing her hand to her heart.

"Emi? What's wrong?"

"Nothing."

"Tell me."

A rustle in the trees to the left caught their attention and Rumiko dropped from the branch, dressed in her ninja outfit. Landing on one knee, she stared at Emi and Nina, maintaining a defensive posture.

"How long have you been here?!" Nina said.

"Long enough." Rumiko saw Emi was no threat at the moment and approached them, keeping her hand on the hilt of her kunai knife. "She believes she is dying."

"Is this true?"

"Stay back." Emi said, the color of her eyes continued changing from red to green. She stood up to her feet stumbling and black mist appeared on her skin.

"You're not dying." Nina said. "You're changing."

Emi stopped and remembered what happened to Koi. Her eyes turned red. She looked back with the corner of her eyes, cold and uncaring. Rumiko drew her knife and stood in front of Nina ready to attack. There was a cold feeling in the air, as if there was someone else around, someone walking alongside Emi. The priestess approached them with little fear. A swagger of arrogance that she could beat them if they attacked her. She stared down Rumiko ready for a fight, but she looked down at Nina instead.

"Train my sister. Teach her Purify. Then tell her to meet me in the shrine when she is ready. I won't be coming home."

"Emi you don't have to do that." Nina stepped ahead of Rumiko. "You can stay here and we'll help."

"I've made my decision. Mayumi knows what it is."

"Emi you don't understand what's happening to you."

"I'VE MADE MY DECISION!" The dark Mana burst around her body. There was still clean Mana swirling inside, but it was faint. Emi took a deep breath. "I can do this. I can make everything right."

"I won't let you." Rumiko ran toward Emi and jumped into the air. She drew out her knife and flung it at the priestess. A burst of wind stopped the blade. Once Rumiko landed on the floor, her knife aimed at her neck. The wind shimmering uncontrollably, Emi's heart beat rapidly for she felt something in her chest burning.

"I'm sorry." Emi released the wind and the knife fell. She stepped back once she saw a spot of blood trickled out of Rumiko neck. The priestess looked at her hands shaking, almost seeing evil in herself. Her eyes turned green. "I'm sorry."

Just as Nina ran toward her, Emi ran with her eyes returning to red. She unleashed a burst of wind knocking Nina back and blinding Rumiko. When they opened their eyes, Emi was gone. Rumiko picked up her knife and saw her blood on the edge. At first, she felt angry but hearing Emi apologizing and stopping her attack, she was

not sure what to do now.

"Emi." Nina said and Rumiko tended to the fox.



At the festival, the moon was now at its peak. The Cooking Club, exhausted from playing games and dancing, sat before a takoyaki kiosk. The chef took batter and poured it onto a skillet lined with little half cups. He took a container filled with pieces of octopus and planted each one into the cooking batter. With a toothpick, he poked the sides of the cook batter making spin like a ball, flipping the uncooked side over. Once finished he served them on a plate and laid out the toppings of sauce, dried bonito flakes, and mayonnaise. He placed each plate before the cooking club and they all took a bite.

"Wow it's so fluffy." Ayane said taking notes and Hideki closed his eyes relaying what he tasted.

"The octopus is not overpowering the batter. The flakes are nice and crisp."

"You kids enjoying the takoyaki?" The chef said.

"Yes." They said together with a smile.

"I noticed you are taking notes." The chef said to Ayane.

"We are from the Cooking Club in our school."

"Really? So you all are fans of cooking."

"We're the best chefs in our school."

"Well not all of us." Mayumi said.

"You're getting better." Ayane nudged her shoulder on Mayumi with a smile.

"So what do you all want to do when you graduate?" The chef poured another batter on the skillet.

"I am going to be the World Steel Chef." Tomiko said.

"I'm looking to own a restaurant." Ayane said.

"For me," Hideki took a bite. "a food critic."

"Well now," The chef said. "I hope I get a five star rating."

"You get four stars."

"Close enough."

Everyone laughed and kept eating. The chef looked at Takashi

and Mayumi. Takashi grimaced at the chef who waited for a response. He really did not want to talk, but the stare was insistent. He growled under breath and conceded.

"I want to run a cooking show on TV."

Mayumi stopped eating looking in his direction and the chef responded.

"That is very big feat. Good luck to you."

"Thank you." Takashi continued eating. That tough moody exterior contradicted what it took to be a television personality. Mayumi chuckled under breath, trying not to laugh out loud, but the cold stare of Ayane shut her up. Takashi got out of his seat and nodded. "Thank you for the food."

Mayumi watched Takashi walk away with his hands in his pockets. She realized she hurt his feelings and followed him, but Ayane grabbed her arm.

"Takashi is a kind person." Ayane said. "I know you two argue over little things, but I won't let you hurt him."

Without saying a word, Mayumi nodded in understanding. Ayane released her and Mayumi searched for Takashi. She turned every corner, unaware of the grey crow following her above each kiosk. Mayumi called out his name a couple of times, bumping into a large dog. She bowed and kept forward finding her way to a fountain. Mayumi sat on a bench. She reached down to her right foot and rubbed the bruise until a shadow loomed over her. She looked up and there was a large house cat with a big smile. Its grayish fur bristled with the wind. He sat besides her causing the bench to tilt up into the air. Her face buried into the warm fur, and she looked up at his smile.

"You must be Emi Akamatsu." He said, while the crow perched above a lamppost nearby. "So glad to finally meet you."

"I'm not..."

"You have caused much trouble amongst us Clans. Forgive me. Let me introduce myself. I am Satoshi of the Neko Clan, and Moderator of all the Clans. It is my duty to make sure peace is maintained between Clan and Magi."

Mayumi noticed the crow above and remembered what Ren told her a week ago. Looking at Satoshi made her uncomfortable. She wanted to leave, but the fact that he mistook her for Emi made her suspicious. Mayumi wanted to know the truth.

"You're the one that made everyone vote for Purge."

"Oh a minor mistake on my part. It was hasty of me, but then, you and the Mukado threatened this entire city and all the Clans. Threatened the purity of all our lands."

"But..."

"I am speaking." Satoshi smiled leaning close to Mayumi. "You will slip up and I will Purge you. Peace will be restored and you will be one less problem to deal. Do you want to know what Purge feels like?"

"No."

"It's a very long and simple process." Satoshi used his claw to point at the center of Mayumi's forehead. That caught the grey crow's attention and it spread its wings ready to act. "Right here. All gone. And you're not Emi anymore."

Mayumi's hands clenched into a fist and wind gathered around it. The sound of heartbeat skipped at the thought casting a spell on him. Her thoughts willing her body to strike. All to protect her sister.

"Mayumi!" Hideki called from the distance. He ran up to her and jerked his head back at the sight of Satoshi. He waved at the cat, grabbed Mayumi's hand, and pulled her away. "Excuse us."

Mayumi ran with Hideki and looked back Satoshi smiling at her. She noticed the grey crow flying over his head, and she wondered how long has it been there. She hoped it heard everything Satoshi said. Mayumi never felt such fear ever sitting next to the Moderator. She wished she had not hesitated.

"Where are we going?" Mayumi said.

"Ayane sent me to get you. Kameto is going to show us the turtle nests. He wants us to watch the hatching."

They both hurried past a field of bushes rustling violently. It stopped as a couple of children played with a couple of young Kappa. As they continued to have fun, impure Mana seeped out from

underneath the shrubbery. It then formed a hand, crawling along the ground unnoticed, towards Mayumi direction.

TO BE CONTINUED...

