

Arcana Magi Pure Vol.3 - c.5

by H-M Brown

The Elders of the Kitsune and Higurashi Clan waited restless under the night, waiting for the Elder of the Inu to finish searching. His nose aimed up sniffing, then followed a scent on the ground. It was pungent like sour milk and lemon. It messed up his sense of direction. There was a strange feeling of taste with each inhale. He wanted it to stop. He had to find the source.

"This way. I think"

"We're wasting time." The fox said.

"I'm telling you something is not right in the air."

"And we have to find the Moderators immediately. I've never smelled anything like this."

Blindly, the dog walked along the grass into a dense patch of trees. He relied entirely on scent for his sight, navigating around the trunks. The smell got stronger to the point that his vision blurred. He covered his nose, shedding tears as though an onion affected him. It was hard to get close, but he willed himself forward, and arrived to a small area lit only by the moon.

"What the...?"

Right before them laid a large dead cat. Its body decayed, eyes glazed. There was impure Mana throughout the body, eating away at the flesh, oozing out of the opened belly. The Mana was not in mist form, it was a fusion of the meat and skin. The Elders were careful as they examined the corpse. Hesitating to touch, the fox picked up a stick with a ghostly hand and used it to move the body. It felt like jelly when poked.

"This can't be." The fox said.

"Something came out his body." The dog took the stick from the fox and lifted the cat's collar. "It's the chief of security."

"How could he have impure Mana? Everyone would have

noticed."

"Unless," The cicada said to the fox. "It's alive."

"No. Mana can't do that." The fox turned to the dog. "Can it?"

"We know nothing of Mana's true nature. Anything is possible."
The dog turned to the cicada. "Hop on we got to hurry to the festival and find Satoshi."



Mayumi and Hideki arrived before a large group of people. She looked back wondering if Satoshi was going to show up. A hand grabbed her wrist. It was Ayane. She guided Mayumi and Hideki through the crowd, into the front. Alongside Takashi and Tomiko, they all watched Kameto finish his speech. Everyone clapped leaving Mayumi wishing she heard what he said. Soon the crowd followed Kameto and the Kappa down the hill. The slope was spacious enough to handle even for the largest animals. It shaped out so everyone can see the lagoon below like a theater.

Kameto smiled at Mayumi and granted them front row access alongside the Kappa. They all stood behind the rail and saw mounds of sand for as far as the night sky could give them. The sound of the crowd's excitement, their smiles, and laughter started to turn Mayumi's thoughts about life in the Magi world. Looking at Clan and Magi side by side, she understood what Kameto said about her stress. They were all here for a moment. Not in anger or hate. No fighting or killing. To enjoy life. To see the innocent breathe their first air.

"Those children," Kameto said to Mayumi. "are coming into this world without any knowledge of what we have experienced or done. Some will be scared. Others will adapt. However, we will be there for them when they're time of need arrives. Just as we are here for the Magi... and you."

"Thank you."

"You know, we Clans were so different in past. You meant practically nothing to us."

"Ren told me about what happened to the Karasu."

"I see." Kameto opened up a can of coffee and took a sip. He

noticed Satoshi standing at the top of the slope smiling at them. "I was young when that war happened when the Clans refused to help the Karasu during the air raids. I vowed never to treat anyone, no matter our differences, like that. I apologize again for voting in favor of your sister's Purge. I should have followed my principals."

"I'm not mad at you. I'm just, I don't know."

"You'll find what you want soon enough. You're young. You should enjoy this rare portion of your life and not worry about fighting adult battles. Listen, you're life as a Magi will only get better. Each and every one of you is still living the same human life with a little power behind it. But life will get better."

Mayumi saw Takashi standing alone. There was no interest in his eyes, or at least it appeared that way. Kameto nudged her to go ahead; a signal that he figured Takashi needed a little help himself. She knew what it was he needed and she approached him.

"Sakuraba." Mayumi said.

"Akamatsu."

"I'm sorry for laughing at your dream."

"Don't care."

"Well I do. I hurt your feelings. I shouldn't have done that."

"I'm jealous."

"Of what?"

"Of your world. I always read fantasy books and dreamed of casting spells. And here you are one a part of this fantasy world, but you hate it."

"Believe me if you've seen what I've seen..."

"I probably wouldn't be upset at all. There are deaths in fantasy stories."

"But they're just fantasies. Those are fictional characters, the people I saw die were real."

"It's life."

"It's wrong!" Mayumi lowered her voice watching the decibel of her voice. "I don't read fantasy. Just because I saw people die in books or movies, didn't prepare me for something like this. I didn't even know the Magi existed."

"It's okay." Takashi looked at Mayumi and saw her back turned to him. He did not know what to do. He scratched his head and reached out to her shoulder.

"Funny." Mayumi said and Takashi pulled his hand back. "I came to apologize and we ended up talking about whether being a Magi is fun or not."

Mayumi turned around wiping her tears. "I was born a Magi priestess and there is nothing I can do about it."

"Sure there is." Takashi walked past her with hands in his pocket. "Have fun casting spells and play with them."

"Play with them?"

"That's what I would be doing right now. Fly like a bird. Who wouldn't want to do that?"

Mayumi looked at her hands and saw a couple of kids, siblings, casting a spell to bounce a ball while they waited. They were having fun despite their mother making them stop. She thought about how amazing it was to glide across the air last week. Never had she thought about trying to fly for real. She felt the blindness that fighting to save her sister brought. Yet one of the things Mayumi now realized that it was not fighting that could have saved Emi, but playing with her by casting spells. She did not consider Emi's true feelings. Those first days where Emi wished Mayumi shared her information that Nina gave her, to feel included and not alone. Mayumi felt the sting of her sister's pain.

"I'm sorry Emi." She whispered.

"What did you say Mayu-chan." Ayane said and Mayumi turned around.

"Nothing." Mayumi leaned her arms on the rail and looked out at the dunes. "I'm going to make things right Ayane. I'm going to talk to Emi."

"That's great to hear. I hope it all works out."

"They're hatching." Tomiko said pointing out at the dunes. She leaned over the rail with eyes wide open, the mounds shifting. There was silence all around. The crowd anticipating life, but the wind died out.

“Protect.” Mayumi heard the whisper in the air, and a woman screamed from within the crowd.

Everyone turned to the scream and a dark misty hand held the young man in the air. They saw the clean Mana around his body turn impure. He choked and flailed looking for a way out. As Hideki walked in front of Ayane, Tomiko and Takashi, all they saw was a man floating in the air. Everyone was caught flatfooted watching the young man's body fall, skin covered with decay and rot, his breathing mixed with screaming muffled pain. The crowd ran up the slope. A variety of spells shot in the air, lighting the sky. Magi and Clans fighting a common enemy. They want to protect everyone. There was no effect from the attacking spells. Nobody knew what to do. The hand swung as if swatting flies and struck a small group of men, women and children, leaving them in a plume of mist.

Watching what happened, Mayumi pushed her friends to run, and run they did. Ayane screamed as the hand scooped a woman into the air. The plume of mist blocked their exit, but a strange burst of water flew past Ayane, Tomiko and Takashi, pushing it aside. They looked back and saw Hideki but he shrugged his shoulders unsure of what happened. They continued forward and Hideki watched the grey crowd fly over their heads.

“Mayu-chan!” Ayane said and looked at the bottom. There she saw Mayumi side by side with Kameto casting spells at the hand. The look of determination on Mayumi's face fighting this invisible thing attacking everyone. The sound of crying from the injured caught Ayane's attention, and she felt the tug of her stocking. Next to her was a little boy crying for help. There were others struggling to get up, many of them victims of trampling. Takashi without hesitation picked a woman up, and everyone followed his lead, helping the injured onto their feet. When they reached the top, Ayane looked back and stepped forward wanting to help Mayumi but Takashi grabbed her shoulder.

“This is her fight.” He said.

“But...” Ayane said propping up an injured teen girl in her arms.

“We get as much injured out of here so they concentrate on

whatever that is attacking us.”

Ayane nodded and handed one of the Kappa the injured girl. She reached and dragged an old man nearby out of the combat zone.

Mayumi watched the hands movement. It was as though it was moving like a snake. Waving side to side, readying for its next strike. It made its turn and dove very fast. Her magic circle appeared over her and Kameto.

“REFLECT!” The mist bounced off the shield and the air rippled. More spells flew at the mist. Fire and ice. Stone and light. All went through its body, into the night sky. The battle felt futile. The thing was unstoppable. Then it floated high above everyone. Its fingers pointed directly over the slope. Kameto waved for everyone to gather around and Mayumi raised her hands. The mist acted without hesitation. “FORCE SHIELD!”

A dome of air surrounded those who made it in time. Those who did not, found themselves caught in a vacuum. Mana, clean as it was, sucked up into the form of a pillar. The hand absorbed it all from the trees, the ground, and the injured lying about. It grew in size as the trees became soft and limped over like strings, and the dirt dried into grey. The people and animals, they were still breathing, but it was like watching live torture. Crying for the pain to end. All ages and all forms of life, their Mana now impure, their skins covered in blight.

When it stopped, Mayumi leaned on the rail short of breath. The hand circling around, leaning toward the beach. She saw the first turtle emerge to the surface, and many more babies followed. Looking up, the hand found its target. Mayumi climbed over the rail, the pain in her foot ignored. She dropped over the short cliff landing on the sand, never thought once to cast a spell to slow her fall. The impact made her injury worse. Mayumi limped as fast as she could, careful not to trample over the mounds. She watched the baby turtles start their journey to the sea and the dark mist, large as a bus, dove straight for them.

Mayumi never closed her eyes, trembling as they were; her hands made her magic circle appear overhead. Her Mana gathered

around her body, the wind blew her hair up. The pain in her foot no longer mattered. Her circle turned night into day and her heart relaxed.

“PURIFY!” Upon impact, the dark mist slid through the circle, filtering out the impurity and clean Mana splashing onto Mayumi and turtles. All that was the hand is a cloud of white mist resting on the sand. It dispersed into the air. The wind guiding it over the ocean.

Mayumi lay on the sand gasping for air. She struggled to her feet. The pain in her right foot intensified and her muscles numbed from overexertion. She collapsed onto her knees and turned around sitting on the beach. An endless sea of turtles walking out into the ocean. Unaware of the danger they were in. She flopped on her back, her eyes blurred for a moment. When her vision returned, she was in a bed, her foot coated with a green film and a Kappa nurse wrapped it with gauze.

“Your foot is broken, but this aloe will mend it back together.”

“Where am I?”

“Triage.”

“My friends?”

“They are fine. They're waiting for you outside.” The Kappa went to the next patient and Mayumi sat herself up to the sound of yelling. Mayumi heard Satoshi outside. She willed herself to the door where Ayane turned and immediately grabbed her.

“Mayu-chan.” She said grabbing Mayumi's shoulders. “You need to go back inside.”

“What's going on?”

Satoshi paced back and forth holding something in his hand. It was a centipede as big as house cat. It was decayed like all the victims. It carried a scroll in its feet; the Moderator took it and opened it. He presented it to Kameto and his hand lowered it.

“How did it get this?”

“What is it?!” Mayumi said and Satoshi took the scroll from Kameto.

“You know what this is Akamatsu.” He approached Mayumi and

revealed it. It read Certification of Purge. Emi's name was the target and all the signatures of those who voted. Kameto's name was on it and the seal of the Moderators. "You stole this from the Grand Archives and used this to attack the Kappa Clan."

"It's a lie!" Ayane said.

"Quiet!" Satoshi roared at her face. "You do not belong here. You have no business being amongst us!"

"Leave my friend alone!" Mayumi said standing up straight.

"You are the Priestess of the Mukado and this was your plan all along. You will be Purged immediately. Kameto, have your men detain her."

"No." Kameto said.

"Are you a traitor?" Satoshi stood over Kameto, the size difference made had no effect on the Elder Kappa.

"That will be enough." The voice of the fox turned everyone's heads. All the Clans and Magi stepped back with a murmur. Fear gripped everyone. There was an anticipation of a great battle between Elders, but the cicada waved his hand calming everyone down.

"We know about your deal with Mukado Satoshi." The elder dog said showing Kameto the paper.

"Forfeiture of Land." Kameto kept reading. "The Mukado is leaving the city."

The elder dog spoke. "Their land was tainted with impure Mana because of the humans. They tried to use the Priestess to heal them, but the spells they used were wrong and made things worse."

"Emi."

"The child is an innocent," The cicada said. "and we think she and the Mukado were misled."

"By who?" Satoshi said.

"Perhaps by you." The elder dog took the Certification of Purge from the cat. "We found the chief of security dead. He was covered in impure Mana and something came out of him."

"The dark mist." Mayumi said aloud and everyone whispered to each other.

"Mayumi isn't that what your sister is covered in?" Tomiko said looking at the victims resting inside the triage.

"Sister?" Satoshi said turning to Mayumi.

"I am Mayumi Akamatsu."

"But I have the culprit right here." Satoshi waved his bare ghostly hand. His eyes trembled that the corpse was not in his hand. He looked up and saw Hideki handing the centipede to the fox elder, and everyone watched it crumble into pieces. The decay was ink and hollow.

"Oops." Hideki said and walked away. "I think this is a fake."

The fox's eyes lowered with a light grumble. He saw the grey crow watching from the roof of the kiosk and he walked past Hideki.

"Let me paint this picture." The elder fox said. "You make a deal with the Mukado to leave, in exchange for creating havoc in the city. You chose Emi as bait to get you to bring Purge in last weeks meeting. It backfired because the Society got involved. So you fulfilled your end of the bargain by giving them the Forfeiture of Land under the guise of theft, but here you are claiming that the Mukado stole the Certification of Purge, to get revenge on those who signed this, just so you can get the Priestess Purged."

"You idiot, that's not how it went, Sato incited the attacks himself to get me to-" Satoshi jerked his back and everyone waited for him to finish.

"Go on." The dog elder said.

"I want representation." Satoshi raised his head up in defiance. "I won't speak any further."

"Very well." Kameto said. "Guards escort him to detainment. Contact the Society. They will need to hear this. And begin talking to all the witnesses."

Kameto leaned up to Satoshi and looked him in the eye. "I want to know why you're so determined to use Purge."

Satoshi leaned close with a smile, and whispered in his ear. "Because humans are impure and they have forgotten the old ways. Their place amongst us."

"Get him out of here."

As the guards escorted Satoshi, the Elders gathered around Mayumi. There was guilt on their faces and they bowed.

"You and your sister are safe now." The elder fox said.

"What's your name?" Mayumi said.

"I am Kiba." The elder dog said.

"My name is Daimon." The cicada said.

"And I am Nemo." The fox elder said to everyone's surprise. "It was the Sixties. My parents wanted me to be unique."

"Right." Kameto said with a laugh. "Come gentlemen, we have an emergency meeting with the Clans to make. We must invite the Society so we can straighten all this out, and get some serious answers about that mist."

"Mayumi Akamatsu." Nemo said. "You and your sister need not worry about us. You both never had obligations to us."

"Huh?"

"And boy..." Kiba said walking away. "Tell Ren to stay out of our business."

"Was he talking to us?" Tomiko said and Hideki shrugged his shoulders.

"Who cares?" Takashi said watching the people and animals recovering in the triage. He saw a woman crying over her children as a nurse placed a blanket over their faces. Mayumi, Ayane, Tomiko and Hideki watched on, unsure of what to do.

"I'm sorry Mayumi." Takashi said. "This isn't a fantasy."

* * *

Emi, in her orichalcham outfit, led the Mukado Clan outside the city. A mass exodus of centipedes. Sato the elder led all his people along a path in the forest. It was dark and difficult to see. Emi and her followers helped those struggling to walk, climb over a slope. There was hissing, and they backed off. Emi hurried to the front where a horse sized centipede stopped her. It shook its head refusing her to go any further. As the Mukado Clan kept moving, Sato gave the Priestess his attention.

"This is where we say farewell." Sato said.

"I should come with you. Make sure you're settled."

"We will eat you if you do. From here on, any human who comes near us, shall be devoured. Do not seek us out."

"I... I know this was not what I had expected. I don't whether to be angry or grateful. You were the only ones that cared about me."

"We don't care about you. Never have. Never will. You were only a pawn for our one last chance at survival."

"You're lying."

"You are a human and a nuisance!" His roar fazed everyone but Emi. He saw it in her red eyes. Hardness and lack of fear. As though death meant nothing to her. He turned away and continued moving. "Beware of that shrine. There is evil within. And it stole something from your heart."

"I know." Emi placed her hand over her chest trying to feel what it was that was missing. She shook her head and turned to her followers guiding them back to the city.



The centipedes spent a day walking non-stop. Through the lush forest, and the rolling hills it covered. There was no rest, and the hunt was on the go. They ate their prey leaving a trail of death and impure Mana. The plant life barely could handle the poison the centipedes carried with it. Soon the sun reached its zenith beyond the mountains. It was becoming a new night and what light remained rewarded the creatures.

They arrived at the valley. Clean and fresh, teeming with water and food to live on. They crawled their way through the forest, each spreading out to claim a piece of area to rest on. The impure Mana around their bodies infected all plant life. They paid no mind.

Sato followed an open trail with some of the young and adults. At the top, there was a shrine. The little ones frolicked around the structure, roughhousing and laughing. The adults shivered beside Sato, and the Elder's eyes filled with tears.

"This can't be."

"There are two of them." One of the adults said.

Before them was the same shrine they lived in back at the city. White Mana seeped out and spread over the youth. They cheered

about how clean the Mana was and it made them happy, but Sato's tears fell to the ground. He heard the children's scream into silence. The river of Mana turned them to stone. Like a river breaking through a dam, the clean Mana consumed the entire valley. Screams echoed through the air. Everything that was impure turned to stone. The centipedes, the prey, and the plant life, along the trail the Mukado left behind.

Five fingers stretched out from this river of Mana to push it further. Down the hills, and toward the city.

THE END.

