

Arcana Magi Pure Vol.4 - c.1

by H-M Brown

Gripping her bookbag, Mayumi found herself surrounded by a large crowd of people. Everyone crossing the intersections. Vehicles passing by. All in slow motion. It was unusual, since all the people were veiled in purple haze. Each individual had different thickness of this mist, easy to discern. She walked, but it was like molasses. Each step was as though she was dragging something heavy. Mayumi bumped into a man and he turned to stone. She screamed and stumbled back, bumping into a woman and child. They too turned to stone. Soon a white mist spilled out from body, with a strange feeling in her mind. It was like someone was talking to her, but no voice projected into her ears or thoughts. A sensation that made her clenched her hair and scream out into the air. The crowd looked at her. Mayumi noticed everything moving in real time. Everyone just stared and a woman approached her to see if she was okay. Once Mayumi felt the woman's hand touch her shoulder, her skin crawled and she ran.

Mayumi sprinted as fast as she could. She tried to run away from that mysterious voice. It was not the wind that she has heard before. That warm wind that guided her. It was something else. An emptiness that scared her heart. She found herself passing by other student from her school, all heading in the direction. They watched her run by, some sidestepping to avoid getting run over. She made into the school grounds when Emi, with her friend Sayako, called out to her with wave, but her voice never reached.

Mayumi burst her way into a bathroom and she checked the stalls for anyone. Once empty, she leaned over the sink splashing water over her face. The door opened and she heard Emi's voice.

"Hey you were slow again." Her smile disappeared as she heard a light whimper from her sister. "What happened?"

"I felt something strange. A voice." Mayumi stepped away from Emi. "She's calling for me."

"Who?"

"That kami you serve. Hikari."

"No. That can't be. I would have known if she called you."

"You still hear her?"

Emi closed her eyes and look away. She nodded with tears, taking a deep breath.

"Please trust me. I haven't gone to the shrine. I tried once and saw the Society surrounding the place, but I hear her all the time."

"Emi." Mayumi clutched her shoulders and leaned on the wall. "If it's not her, then who?"

"The wind? You said it talks to you."

"No, the voice was too... empty." Mayumi went over the sink and started cleaning her face. She felt Emi on her back and her arms around her waist. "I don't now what to do."

"I don't know either. I think we should get help."

"But who can we trust?"

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Mrs. Saito arrived at the Shrine of Hikari. There were guards everywhere and a crow perched atop the phone post watching above. She walked past men and women in white lab coats analyzing the trees and plants. Each step she took made the step crumble into pieces. Splinters of the torii gate plucked by tweezers held by a man with glasses. Two people were taking pictures of the main grounds, and standing before the shrine itself was Kameto of the Kappa Clan. Mrs. Saito stood next to the upright turtle, with his arms crossed.

"Anything?" She said.

"No." Kameto's eyes focused squarely at the building that housed the kami. Nothing happened. "The figure is there but she refuses to say anything."

"So is she a kami?"

"She has the essence of a kami, but it feels more like a human spirit." Kameto looked up at Mrs. Saito. "It's almost like a she was transformed into a kami."

"Are you sure?"

"The Clans have doubled their efforts to find out who this being is and why she has a kami shrine. If its true that this is a human spirit, then the only question remains who did this and how do we get her out?"

"What if she is a real kami? What then?"

"Hopefully, all the kami will accept her as one of their own. I just hope they don't bring their usual anger down on this city because of this one shrine."

Mrs. Saito looked up the sky where the clouds covered the sun. Reflecting on the legends of the kami, from Amaterasu to Susano-o, having them walk amongst human was a frightening thought. "I pray we find the truth soon."

"Where is the priestess?!" A man's voice reached across the grounds. "She is supposed to give me a blessing!"

Mrs. Saito hurried over to the commotion and there was a man, in a business suit carrying a briefcase, struggling to break free from the guard holding him back.

"We are in the middle of investigation." She said with arms crossed watching the struggle come to an end. "Please go home."

"No until I get my blessing." He said waving a white slip. "I have an important meeting that could make or break my career."

Mrs. Saito walked up to the business man, slipping on a pair of glove. She took the white piece of paper from him, making him struggle and scream for it to be returned. She opened it. Her eyes grew wide. She looked back at the guards signaling them to get rid him and she walked away ignoring the struggle. Mrs. Saito returned to Kameto and he immediately threw his back to the fence. He trembled at the sight of the slip when she unfolded it. The Japanese word for 'soul essence' was written on, but it was not the words that frightened him, it was the impure mana that seeped out of the ink.

"That mana came from that man you just threw out."

"Yeah." Mrs. Saito took out a lighter and lit the paper slip on fire. She held it in front of the shrine and let burn completely.

"Whoever you arm, you won't be using Akamatsu-san every again for this."

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The school bell rang, ending the day. Mayumi and Emi remained quiet gathering their school books. Sayako entered the room talking to Emi and Mayumi saw her sister's smile. Everyday that smile assured Mayumi that her sister is getting better after everything that had happened. Emi waved goodbye to Mayumi and left for track practice. Mayumi waved back and headed for the Cooking Club. As she walked down the hall, her mind had an attack. The purple haze that turned people to stone. She thought about that happening to Emi as well, but she shrugged it off, not wanting to be sad about it.

Mayumi arrived in cooking classroom and saw bowls and egg beaters laid out. There was Takashi wearing an apron taking out eggs from the refrigerator. He turned to her, but she just walked to the window. She patted her face and put on a smile when everyone else arrived.

"Hi Mayu-chan." Ayane said placing her bag on the counter and taking an apron from the rack. "Today you're going to learn how to bake a cake."

"I tired baking a cake with my mom once. It turned hard like a rock."

"Like your dense head." Takashi said and he felt a sharp elbow on the side by Ayane.

"Be nice."

"It's okay Ayane." Mayumi smiled despite her shaking hands. Hideki noticed this and he placed his arm around.

"Hey, how about I teach you eh?"

"So you finally showed your true colors." Tomiko pulled Hideki away by the ears. "Mayumi is off limits."

"Hey, I'm just trying to be nice." Hideki took his seat and Tomiko handed him his apron.

Everyone turned to Ayane as she pulled out a recipe from the counter draw. There was a moment of silence. Only the sound of students outside and in the hallway remained. Ayane walked up to

the door closing it, checking to make sure no one was coming by. She turned her attention to Mayumi and everyone sat around her, even Takeshi himself. It made Mayumi feel uncomfortable being the center of attention. She was not sure what they wanted.

"Take us to the shrine." Ayane said to Mayumi's sudden burst of shock.

"I don't want anything to do with the Clans."

"But we want to help." Tomiko said. "We want to see the shrine of the Kitsune."

Mayumi of course had her eyes on Takeshi, since he placed himself in the circle.

"You too?"

"Yeah, well, someone has to come to keep these three out of trouble."

"Sorry Takeshi." Hideki said. "The last I check I bailed everyone out when that giant cat tried to set Mayumi up."

"That was luck."

"It was obvious. Just like what I saw in detective shows."

Everyone started talking over one another when Ayane realized Mayumi went quiet on them. She placed her hand on Mayumi's shoulder, startling her. The circle went quiet. Mayumi opened her mouth but she slunk back into silence. Shaking her head she gave them an answer.

"I can take you there." Everyone cheered. "But, I have to take my sister first. It's something we have to alone. Please understand."

"Okay." Ayane said with a smile. "We have one good ticket for a visit. Don't forget."

"I won't." Mayumi looked up and saw everyone looking at her. It was weird, but she knew they are just being friends and that alone made her smile again. "When my sister and I take care of business there, I'll bring you all to meet Nina and see the shrine."

"Alright!" Ayane said getting off the seat. "Let's cook!"

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At the Shrine of Four Mythic Beasts, Nina laid on the bench soaking in the sun. She felt the wind getting cooler and could sense

the changing seasons have arrived. It was so quiet, not hearing Mayumi's voice. Not even the giggling of the cubs playing around in the forest eased that quiet feeling. She lifted her head up to the sound of a loud thump. There was the elder of the kitsune, standing tall, looking out at the main shrine housing the four beasts. Nina stood up, but the elder raised his paw to stop her. She laid down staring at the ground.

"Where did I go wrong Oompa? I was teaching Mayumi what she needed to know. She was so determined to protect her sister and heal of the impure mana, I know I did everything right."

"Perhaps what your student needed was more than just information and training. Humans tend to have a need that we can so easily not see before our eyes."

"What would that be?"

"It could be anything."

"Then what should I do. Bake a cake. Give her some advice." Nina looked up at the elder waiting for a reply, but he was not giving her anything. He just stood there, with his ears raised up. Her eyes grew wide and the sound of footsteps climbing the stairs echoed in her ear. "That could be Mayumi. I hope so I have so much to say."

Nina jumped off the bench and stopped for a moment. She realized the elder was still standing there with ears raised. Normally he would leave. Nina stepped aside expecting him to leave, but it seemed he was not finished talking to her.

"I don't understand. What are you saying?"

"Nina." Mayumi said in the distance.

"It's her. I have to go."

The elder walked away with disappointment on his face that made Nina sad. She turned around looking back one more time trying to understand what he was talking about. Nina hurried over to the stairs and there she saw Mayumi, with Emi, wearing coats. She approached the twins, slowly, noticing something odd in their behavior.

"We have to talk." Mayumi said.

"Great because I want to let you know that..."

"I said we have to talk." Mayumi's words silenced Nina. "And you're going to listen, because..."

Emi held Mayumi's hand and nodded.

"Because we're scared."

Nina's eyes grew wide and now she understood what the elder was saying. The fox lowered her head feeling shamed for thinking about herself, and forgetting that it was Mayumi and Emi who needed help, and guidance. The cubs stuck their heads out of the bushes to see what was happening, and Nina spotted them with the corner of her eyes. With a nod, and without saying a word, Nina led the twins deeper into the shrine for some privacy.

To Be Continued...

