

Arcana Magi Pure Vol.4 - c.2

by H-M Brown

Mayumi and Emi followed Nina through a path away from the shrine grounds. It was narrow, but the plants did not interfere with their progress. Flowers showed signs of wilting, unable to handle the cold slowly coming in. It gave the area a sad atmosphere. The animals of the forest were scurrying around, some carrying food into the holes of trees. When the girls reached the end of the path, there was a moment of anticipation to see where they were going. When they emerged, there was no excitement or awe. The garden before them had wilted flowers and leaves falling from the tree.

"The flowers are dying." Emi said looking over a petal snapping off.

"Sorry about the area." Nina said heading towards a wooden bench in the center of the area. She hopped on, turned around, and noticed the girls observing the flowers. "Don't worry, they'll bloom next Spring. Please, sit."

The twins approached her but they did not take up on her offer. They just stood there with faces that said they were tired and exhausted. Nina could almost feel the tense emotion projected out of the girls, as though she betrayed them. All the fox could do was sit and listen, and she did.

"As priestesses," Mayumi said. "we must have trust in the people around us. So far, my sister and I have none."

"You have my trust."

"Not good enough, Nina!" Mayumi's voice made the fox lower her head and dared her to speak again. "The Clans tried to purge my sister. For some reason you all just hate my sister. You all blamed her and did nothing to help her. We didn't ask to be Magi let alone priestesses. I'm trying to save my sister from dying and all you care about is your hate for us humans."

Emi took Mayumi by the shoulder to calm her and she spoke.
“Nina, I am sorry for what I have done. Here.” Emi went into her bookbag and took out a jewelry box. She opened it and inside was her locket that contained the orichalcham armor. At first, Nina stepped back because of the impure mana inside, but when she looked at Emi in the eyes, there was a sense of change in her. “Is there a way to purify this? Maybe it can help my mana clean up.”

“It's poison. It can only be disposed of.”

Emi closed the box, and planted it before Nina. She stepped back and held Mayumi's hand.

“Please help us. I think goddess Hikari is after Mayumi.”

“What?”

“I can hear her voice.” Mayumi said. “I'm getting visions of people turning to stone.”

“How strong are the visions?”

“I... I'm just standing there around a crowd and I watched them turn to stone, but then I snapped out of it and everyone is okay. I know it's not the wind that speaks.”

“What did the voice sound like?”

“Empty.” Mayumi clutches her shoulders remembering the cold feeling. “I don't want this anymore. I don't want to be a priestess of anything.”

“Kameto told about what happened to you Mayumi. I'm sorry, but you and Emi are both priestesses.”

“We are not!”

“You're both attuned to the shrines. That's why you can hear voices.”

“Why us? Why me?”

“Mayumi.” Emi took her sister and they both sat down. She held Mayumi tight as Nina dropped off the bench to look at the twins. “It's okay. I know it is overwhelming.”

“I just wanted to save from the Mukado and the impure Mana. I don't want you to die.”

“I know. Thank you.” Emi took a deep breath and clutching her sister tight in her arms. Her expression caught Nina's attention.

“Train me.”

Emi took the box and dropped before Nina without a care. “Train me, so Mayumi doesn't have to do this anymore.”

“I can't. Well, I can, but not in your current state. You must be purified and Mayumi is the only one who could do it.”

“Don't you have others?”

“Yes, but Alysia is in America, and she can't come here until her school begins the holiday season. If we're lucky, she will be here the end of November, or else Christmas.”

“November?”

“They have their American Thanksgiving next week that gives schools time off. Again, if we're lucky, because it's not a full week like Christmas.”

“I understand.” Emi stood to her feet. “Let's do this.”

“What?” Mayumi said looking up to her sister.

“Training. You've come this far to purify me, let's finish this before it's too late. Then we can deal with Hikari so we can be free.”

Mayumi saw Emi's hand reach out. She remembered why she was training in the first place. She finally got what she wanted; her sister safe from danger. Now there was willingness to set things right. Mayumi grabbed Emi's hand and she was pulled to her feet. They looked each other in the eye, her sister's smile was alive and brimming, and with a nod they turned to Nina.

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At the entrance to the Shrine of Hikari, there was small gathering of people, held back by the Society's guards, and barricade. Their loud voices rattled the ear of a pair of crow perched on top of the telephone. One on the right looked at the other, and than flew off. The one who stayed behind listened to the crowd demanding see the priestess. Others asked where she was. They received only silence and it made them restless. Suddenly a bottle flew in the air. It landed at the foot of the guard by the stairs, and he largely ignored it. Coming down the stairs was Mrs. Saito. She noticed how big the crowd was and approached them with a calm face.

“Please go home. This shrine is quarantined until further notice.”

“Go to hell.” One man yelled from the crowd.

“Where's the priestess?” A lady said with her child in her arms. “Is she hurt? Is she all right?”

“Please.” Mrs. Saito said with her arms up to calm the crowd. “We're in the middle of an investigation and...”

“Who cares?! We want the priestess. We want the priestess now.”

The crowd chanted the same line over and over to the point that a man came up and pushed one of the guards to the floor. The crowd pushed their way through the barricade and hoisted Mrs. Saito and the guards over their heads.

Reinforcements arrived and used spells to repel the mob. It had no effect. They could not contain the impure mana around their bodies creating a barrier even though none of them are Magi. The shock of this revelation caused the guards to hesitate to cast more spells. Soon they were swallowed up by the mob, joining Mrs. Saito and the others, as they were carried up the stairs.

The crows took to the sky and accompanied the large murder arriving like a flying armada, and they all dove into the shrine. They flapped over the mob, pecking at their foreheads. The men struggled to chase the birds away, while a woman knelt down shielding her baby. The crowds were thrown into a state of confusion, and they ran down the stairs, some fell over each other. The shrine grounds were devoid of some followers.

Mrs. Saito lifted herself tending to her bruises when she saw a couple of people laying on the floor moaning. The guards got up and started checking on the injured. She watched the crows fly away. She wanted to thank them, but they were too far for her voice to reach. All she could do now was look back at the sacred area and wondered if this was all Hikari's doing.

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Mayumi and Emi were heading home. They were a bit late since school finished, and they have homework to do. The twins were

quiet for most of the walk. They did not know what more to say. They could almost sense an aura of pain lifted from shoulders after their conversation with Nina, but they also felt the uncertainty of their future. They sensed they have a lot to say to each other, but the walking was not helping. Emi stopped and saw a café across the street. Mayumi understood.

Inside they both received a plate of cake and tea from the waitress. At first they were silent. There were words to say, but could not be conveyed. Emi especially looked like she wanted to tell Mayumi something, but was afraid. Mayumi took a bite of her cake, waiting to hear her out.

“Mayumi, do you like being a Magi?”

“I don't know, anymore.” Mayumi said as Emi took a bite from her cake.

“I think this is something we should enjoy.”

“Then why am I not enjoying it.” Mayumi sat her fork down and looked Emi in the eyes.

“I don't know. I feel like we never got a chance to truly enjoy being who we are.”

“And who are we? Huh? Magi? No, not just Magi, priestesses.” Mayumi planted her hands on her forehead and took a deep breath. “Look, I think it is amazing what we can do. Never in my life would I have ever thought we would be living a fantasy. That there was a world of spells and spirits, and that it has a long history. But look what happened to us. We're not happy about this. We're not enjoying this. At least I'm not.”

“You're right.” Emi took a sip of her tea. “I have to live with the fact that I made decisions that hurt people. That made you make the decisions you did for my sake. Here you are now, still trying to find a way, and it's my fault. I was scared at first but that was for a short time. I embraced it and had the choices in my hands. Now I have to pay the price.”

“Emi.” Mayumi saw the look on her sister's face. There was so much on her sister that she forgot why she made her decision to fight back and learn Purify. “I'm sor...”

"I'm sorry Mayumi." Emi said with tears in her eyes. "I feel that I hurt you. I fought you. My own sister. I didn't want this. I just wanted to help bring light to everyone. To bring good."

Emi wiped her tears away, and smiled.

"I'm not turning back. I am a Magi and a priestess, and I want to fix everything I did. Once I am purified, I am going to use my spells to help people. To undo everything I've done. Maybe I'll ask Nina if I can be their priestess. You think they'll accept?"

Mayumi just sat there looking out the window. No reaction, no emotion.

"Did you hear me?" Emi's eyes turned to the window, and there was a crowd standing outside looking at her. She squealed with her mouth covered. The people looked hypnotized, pressing their hands on the window. They banged on the glass making the twins jumped out of their seat. The waitresses were trying to shoo the crowd away, but the girls knew it was not working.

"I heard everything you said Emi." Mayumi looked around for an exit. "I don't blame you. I never will. You were taken advantage of in your time of need. What's important is that you're safe, and happy. I'll always be there for you no matter what."

The doors opened and Mayumi made her magic circle appear and used it as wall. With a focused look on her face, she pushed forward, moving the crowd back. Each step distanced herself from Emi, but soon, the gap closed between as crowd banged on it, pushing Mayumi back, all crying out for Emi to bless them. Emi raised her hand beside her sister and made her own magic circle appear. They looked at each other with a nod.

"Ready..." Mayumi said.

"Set..." Emi said.

"PUSH!" They said together and forced the crowd outside. They grabbed each other's hand and started to run. However, Mayumi fell over. Her leg held by a woman on the floor. Emi tried to pull her sister free, but the crowd ripped them apart. The followers began forming a shield to protect Emi. Not a single one of them tried to hurt her.

"Are you okay priestess?" A man asked, but Emi was too overwhelmed to answer.

The priestess struggled to push through the crowd. Suddenly, she saw a ball roll underneath the feet of the crowd. Smoke shot out of it and everyone started coughing. Emi was able to push her way through, when a hand grabbed her and pulled her out. She was still coughing, and felt a pat on her back. She looked up and found herself in a nearby alley, where Rumiko propped Mayumi up on her shoulder.

"You?" Emi continued coughing as Keiko lifted her head up and splashed water into her eyes.

"Can you see?"

"Yes, thank you." Emi wiped her face. "How did you know we're here?"

"We were on our way to see the Kitsune when we noticed the crowd below. Once we saw you two pushing them out, Rumiko threw a pepper bomb."

"Your eyes will be fine in a few minutes." Rumiko said.

"Thank you Johnson-son." Emi said.

"Just Rumiko. Johnson-son sounds redundant. Got it?" Rumiko looked at Mayumi and received a nod.

"O...Okay."

"Let's get out of here." Rumiko noticed some people in the mob looking around and turned to Mayumi. "Can you run Akamastu-san?"

"Yes." Mayumi stood on her own, though she felt the bruise on her knee. "And it's Mayumi."

"Fine. Let's go."

The girls ran away down the alley and turned the corner just as the followers surveyed the area.

TO BE CONTINUED...

