

Arcana Magi Pure Vol.5 - c.1

by H-M Brown

Mayumi was walking up a winding path leading around the Shrine of Four Mythic Beasts, touching the blue hairband that tied her short hair back. There were just bushes, no trees along the path. At the top of the hill is open air with a view of the shrine grounds below. Megumi's house was barely visible within the trees below, but enough visuals for Mayumi to see her friends from the Cooking Club laying down wooden planks before the gaping hole in the wall. She let out a light smile, the feeling of comfort knowing she was not alone.

As she continued up the hill, everything that has happened since she and Emi discovered they were Magi raced through her mind. From the Mukado to the Kappa's festival, to fighting her sister again, and yet, it was that vision she had during the fight that dominated her thoughts. One she shared with Emi, a valley near the city and a voice that spoke directly in her head.

Mayumi tripped over the side of the path and into the bushes. Her train of thought ended with her struggling to get up. She stopped with head tilted up at the sky. Her eyes trembled, fighting the tears that what to spill out. Mayumi wanted to cry but felt this was not the right time. Though she wondered when it was the right time to cry.

Calmed, Mayumi rolled her body out of the bushes and she stood to her feet. She continued her climb where vapor rose up into the air. She reached the top of the hill where Emi stood before a natural hot spring. To the right of the spring is a small hut with sitting stools and shower heads. Mayumi patted her face.

"Emi are you ready?" Mayumi approached her sister, whom looked back with a smile that suddenly turned to sadness.

"Your arm?"

Mayumi lifted her right arm and saw blood dripping out of the wound.

"Oh, this must have happened when I fell into the bushes."

"How do you do that?" Emi said leading Mayumi to a nearby bench to tend the wound. "The path is clear."

"I... I was thinking about that voice, when it told me to Purify."

Emi lifted her head with eyes wide open. Her eyes pointed down and her hand curled into a fist holding back any shaking.

"Ignore that voice Mayumi." Emi looked her sister in the eyes. "You can do it. I know you can."

"Do you hear Hikari?"

"All the time. It's driving me crazy, being connected to her. I reject her and yet she still keeps reaching out to me. Even in my dreams."

"Why us?" Mayumi said and Emi took a small cloth from her pocket and pressed it on the wound. "Ow."

"Sorry." Emi said, looking up at the sky while Mayumi placed her hand over the cloth. "Maybe I should use a Heal spell a try to remove this wound."

"Don't." Mayumi said with her hand raised. "Sorry, it's just... you know..."

"I know. My Mana." Emi got up to her feet, stretching her body. She looked at Mayumi with a smile. "I've invited Sayako to the Shrine. I'm going to tell her the truth, and then quit the Track team."

"No!" Mayumi said startling Emi. "Why would you want to do that?"

"I feel like I am cheating, since I have magical powers."

"I don't believe that." Mayumi looked her sister in the eye and can see her sister looking away.

"Please, I just... I don't know." Emi looked back at her Mayumi. "I do know that I should talk to her. She is my friend and I shouldn't keep this from her. I can see it in her eyes. She's worried."

Emi let out a short breath and got up to her feet. She patted her face and looked out at the spring.

"Let's get started, my Mana is not going to purify itself."

Mayumi and Emi were in the spring's together, center of the pool at shoulder depth. Emi stood in the center, letting its warm and clean air clear out her thoughts. It was difficult because of the fresh memories surfacing. She stared at Mayumi, whom had her arms reach out and clean Mana channeling the natural water and air around them. Emi felt Mayumi's magic circle under her feet, she did her best to stand as still as possible against the water's buoyancy. Her heart raced thinking of her pet Koi when Mayumi purified her, when they captured it. The side effect of Mayumi's inexperience made each breath rapid. Suddenly, Emi swam away.

"What happened?" Mayumi said and saw Emi at the edge of the looking back with terrified eyes. She received no response when she heard a familiar sound.

"Yeeeh."

"Koi?" Emi looked over at the path and there was Keiko with Rumiko, carrying Koi in her arms.

"Look who was waiting for us at the shrine?" Keiko said with a smile, trying to figure which twin was who, and Koi hopped off running towards Emi.

"Okay so you're Emi." Rumiko said pointing at Koi. She walked toward Mayumi. "Are you going to grow your hair back, or are you going to keep it short to throw people off until this problem is over?"

"I think I'll keep it." Mayumi looked at Emi.

"Hey, you don't get to be me."

"Too late." Mayumi splashed some water while Rumiko approached the shower hut taking her shoes off.

"So are you both done purifying? I want to jump in."

Emi stared deeply into Koi's purple eyes as its long slender body wiggled like a snake, and Keiko and Rumiko felt the air of silence from the twins.

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Ayane stood before the open the hole of Megumi's house. It was unusual because it looked like there was an explosion but no sign of fire. As she watched Tomiko sweep the floor, she wondered what this

place was like when the Miyazaki family was here. Looking inside, most of the furniture showed its age. Hideki brushed off the thick layers of dust that plumed into the air. Takashi carried damaged chairs out of the house. Ayane saw nothing but sadness from the destruction of this place.

"Ayane." Nina said approaching the club with Goro and Yuri following her. "Thank you for doing this."

"You're welcome." Ayane said with a bow. "It's the least we could do. You are helping one of my club members."

"I'm sure Megumi will be very happy to see her home restored."

"I felt that since Miyazaki-san and Perez-san are planning to come here to help with Mayumi, we could help them out as well. We can't cast spells, so it's the least we could do."

"Or maybe," Yuri said flying past Ayane, landing on the wooden planks. "you could do a little more than just build stuff."

"How?" Ayane turned to Yuri and Goro sat beside the club leader.

"You could act as a support team." Goro said and got the rest of the team's attention. Each of them stood at the hole in the wall to listen. "We can create and cast enchantments on objects, like armor and weapons."

"We're not fighters." Tomiko said.

"What he means is," Yuri said. "you can do things like use enchanted communicators to relay information if you see something. If you want to fight you can, but that is not what we're offering."

Nina climbed into the hole in the wall and sat on the edge.

"After what happened with the twins, the Society and the Clans cannot contain the secret of magic in the country. The world is starting to take notice of what is happening around the world, and our big fear is global panic."

"I don't understand." Hideki said and Goro took a deep breath.

"For instance, countries will want to use Magi as soldiers and weapons of war. At this point, some agencies secretly recruited Magi as secret agents to do spy work."

"You mean they're like James Bond?" Tomiko said.

"Yes, but not like in the movies. Many people get hurt and die."

"Also," Yuri said. "politicians will make laws in response to Magi. With each country, there is no telling what kind of laws they will make. Some will hurt us more than help us."

"Then there's religion." Nina looked up at club, piercing eyes driving one last point. "Persecution. From witch trials and paladins out in the west to onmyoji and hunters here in the east. They will kill each and every one of us if it means protecting the world from the 'devil' itself."

"That's awful." Tomiko said.

"War, politics, and religion, they're just the start of another changing world. Humanity could not handle Magi when they had swords and plowshares for technology, now, we guns and microchips. This is too much for your people."

"We'll adapt." Takashi said. "We humans always do."

Nina, Yuri, and Goro laughed at Takashi. He just stood there unable to defend himself. Ayane and Tomiko did not take the laughing kindly, but Hideki just stood there and smiled.

"Neither could the Clans." Hideki's words silence the animals. "None of you could adapt to us humans advancing technology all these years. Fear of religion, heh, you talk so big yet it was one your kind that wanted to Purge Emi, who is a victim of some unknown kami none of you heard of, and all because she is human."

"That's not fair." Yuri said. "Not all of us wanted to hurt Emi."

"Not all of us want to hurt Magi either, yet here we all are, humans lumping all Clans as a single mind and all Clans lumping humans the same. In all this time we," Takashi points to everyone in sight. "you and us, have stood here, how much time we wasted right now started to hate on each other rather than build Mayumi's house. A person this club has never met. I have never met, yet want to help them out because of what I learned about the Magi."

The air of silence left only the sound of the surrounding forest animals chirping and buzzing. Takashi's words made everyone around him look away from each other. Not one word was spoken. Hideki instead walked down the hole and picked up the wooden

plank by the end. Goro made a ghostly hand appear over his head and grabbed the opposite end. Their eyes locked, but there was no malice, just understanding. Without hesitation they carried to plank over to the hole as Ayane grabbed hammer and nails, and Yuri flew to Tomiko to help with the cleaning inside.

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On the outdoor stone theater, Mrs. Saito stood in front of three men and women dressed in business suits. She was behind the podium and saw all the Clan elders staring back at her like giants looking at an ant. At the top of the stairs perched Ren, lighting up his rolled paper with his ghostly hand. He took a puff and blew smoke out up into the air. He waved his hand at Mrs. Saito to proceed. She took a deep breath and spoke.

"The Society cannot keep the Magi a secret from the public any longer."

The elders, except for Kitsune, Inu, Kappa and Higurashi, barked back in anger, their voices creating an echo chamber that made the human cover their ears. There were demands for explanations and calls for disassociation from human contact. Hostilities was a given, that was until a piercing whistle made the sensitive ears of all the elders cower into silence. They all looked up at the Ren, whom took another puff of lit rolled paper. The Clans had the look of wanting to attack him without hesitation, but without saying a word he waved his hand for Mrs. Saito to continue.

"In cooperation with Kitsune and Kappa Clans, the testimony we received from Mayumi and Emi Akamatsu regarding the vision they had, leads us to the nearby valley outside the city. Emi said she believe that is where the Mukado headed after they relinquished the Shrine of Hikaru to the Clans. The fact that a female voice called out to Mayumi, is near identical to Hikari calling out to Emi according to the girl's report."

Mrs. Saito signaled the young woman behind her and she pressed a button starting a slideshow behind them. Pictured were trees and land in the form of stone seen from the air. The elders mumbled under breath.

"In these aerial photos, we have been finding trees, flowers and grass turned to stone. There are also some animals that were subjected the same way."

Pictures of animals turned to stone shows their bodies contorted, the look of pain. The pictures now have the Clans attention as they looked to each other asking questions under breath.

"It's not the just environment; there are reports of people missing in the area. We tried to survey the area, both in the air and on foot, but it the changed terrain made it difficult for us to get any samples. If any member of your Clan has been missing in this area please inform Mr. Inoue here after this meeting. The Society has agreed to conduct a joint expedition with volunteers from your Clans, to head to the valley and investigate what happened to the Mukado and why the environment is turning to stone. It is imperative that we solve this."

Mrs. Saito signaled for the slideshow to end and she turned her attention back to the Clans. She tightened her grip on podium and calmed herself as she stared directly at Oompa in the crowd.

"The Guardians to the Four Mythic Beasts are coming."

The crowd gasped, some shivered in their seats. The humans behind Mrs. Saito never saw fear from these huge creatures. Oompa just sat there quietly as the elders heckled him about the arrival of the Perez sisters. Without hesitation some ghostly hands raised up from the elders.

"I volunteer for this expedition." A crab said.

"No I will." A rabbit said. "Please, we don't want those girl's help."

Ren's whistle once again silenced everyone. They all look back at him with piercing glares, but he took another puff of his rolled paper.

"The Karasu will help the Kitsune keep the Guardians occupied while you do your joint expedition with the humans. But man, I wish I had enough of this sweet stuff pass around. It would help you all calm your nerves. Like, we need some cool heads because big things are happening. Those girls are not what we should fear. It's Madam

Mayweather. She gets involved that's when you know you're in over your heads."

"You're involved in this too Ren." Mrs. Saito said.

"Because you all are in as the Americans would say, in the frying pan now. Come my Kitsune friend, we must get ready. There are rumors of red eyes in the shadows within the city's alleys."

"Red eyes?" Mrs. Saito said as Oompa climbed the stairs.

"Yes, but as I said, it's just a rumor. I thought I share that with you... as a courtesy, considering..." Ren put out his rolled paper and flew away with Oompa following him, leaving everyone in silence.

TO BE CONTINUED...

