

Arcana Magi Pure Vol.5 - c.3

by H-M Brown

Fugu-sempai Restaurant, owned by the Nakamura family, has one of the best fugu dish platters in Japan. Their signage had an American appeal to it, even though the menus are written with Japanese text. A neon sign flashed 24/7 and on the wall, were photos of Japanese celebrities and taped behind glass next to the cash register were yen bills marked as the first pays. A map of New Jersey posted on the wall marking all diners within the state. Next to that map, a marker board read 98.3% fugu success rate.

When Sayako looked at the menu, it was complete with traditional Japanese dishes, nothing American. She looked around the restaurant again seeing waitress dressed as American as they can be. However, her curiosity came to an end as the Cooking Club stared down Hideki, whom sat at the far end of the table they were given. A waitress placed glasses of water with lemon wedges for everyone and they waited for her to finish. Takashi took the lemon edge and squeezed the juice out of it, drawing everyone's attention, except Ayane. Hideki felt Ayane's stare. He did not know where to begin. The waitress turned to Ayane.

"You're mother called a taxi for your friends. They are expected to return home soon, so no orders tonight."

"Thank you." Ayane said, without looking at waitress. As soon as the waitress left, the club leader clasped her hands together, and the crow stuck its head out watching out for the waitress and patrons. "Explain."

"My name is Gon." The crow said. "I am Hideki's wisp."

"Wisp?!" Ayane said and Gon raised its wings when a patron turned to their direction. Ayane whispered. "Wisp?"

"We merge with certain items and become weapons. It's a new technique the Karasu has been testing out. It's an exhaustive spell,

but it does work."

"So," Takashi said. "you are Magi Hideki."

"No, I'm not." Hideki said. "My sister was."

"Sister?"

"Hotaru died before I started my first year here. She served the Karasu Clan and Ren. I learned that was a Magi when my life was in danger. She changed into this costume and cast all these spells. I got to meet the Karasu and Ren and Gon became my friend. Then I found out about how all the clans treated the Karasu and my sister. I didn't understand, but when she died in combat helping out the Inu Clan, they acted like she didn't exist, because she was a Karasu. They never gave Hotaru credit for saving them and the city. When I reached puberty and found that I couldn't see the Mana. I couldn't get a chance to continue what she started, helping people."

"Until Ren came up with a plan to arm non-magi Clan members with a new spell he made; Winds of Change. We then fuse into an ordinary object and turn that into shield, armor, weapons. Ren offered this to the Clans but they rejected it due to fear of an arms race. They voted the spell as forbidden and any human caught using it will be... will be Purged."

"Wait a minute," Tomiko said. "I thought that Purge was forbidden."

"Not under this circumstance." Gon lifted his head watching the crowd and turned back to everyone. "Non-Magi are not supposed to know magic exists, and this spell can only work in tandem with non-Magi. There are limits, which we tried to tell the Clans. Only a select few of us Karasu can genuinely make the spell work because of the intense amount of energy needed to cast this spell. Second, we still have free will, we can refuse the wielder for whatever reason we desire and can break free. Since the wielder is a non-Magi they can't control us through Mana."

"Also," Hideki said. "if any Magi or Clan member picks up a Wisp Weapon, the Wisp will automatically eject from the Spell."

"But it was not good enough for the Clans." Gon said leaning back.

"You can't blame them." Takashi said and took a sip of lemon water. "Imagine if the government found this out, they'll hunt you all and capture you, then force you, or even brainwash you into being weapons."

"We are aware of the risks Sakuraba-san, but Ren sees something big happening and we wanted the non-Magi to be just as ready as the Magi."

"Hideki," Ayane said with an expression slowly falling into sadness. "I understand why you had to keep it a secret from us, sitting here. What I don't understand is why didn't you tell Mayumi? She had been carrying the burden of being Magi since the first day we invited her to join the club."

"More like kidnapped." Tomiko said with a smile and Takashi finished his drink, ignoring her joke.

"This is not funny!" Ayane's turned to Tomiko silencing her. "She needed a different type of friend, one who understood her situation and feelings, and you were right under her nose."

"I know, I know, but the Clans and the Society could not know that I had access to the Wisp, so excuse me if avoiding Purge was my top priority."

Ayane calmed down, and she nodded. "Sorry. It must have been hard on you as well."

"It was, even though it was my choice, I had to endure it."

"Well," Tomiko said leaning close to the crow and poking his head. "now we know why you always hang out on the window outside."

Everyone sat there quiet at the revelation. The waitress waved for their attention and Gon ducked under the table slipping into Hideki's shirt.

"The taxi is here."

"Okay." Ayane said and her friend got up waving goodbye. Ayane sat quiet as each one waked out the door, but Tomiko turned back and returned. She gave Ayane a hug and a comforting smile. "I'll see you later."

"Good night Ayane." Tomiko walked out the door and

approached the taxi. After Sayako and Takashi entered the Taxi, Hideki offered Tomiko to enter first. Tomiko instead, slapped him in the face. Her angered eyes pierce him like a dagger, keeping him quiet. "You owe everyone an apology, and you better tell the twins the truth about you. Understand, friend."

Hideki nodded, and Tomiko nudged him to go inside the taxi before her. Tomiko looked back at Ayane quietly walking to the back of the restaurant and she entered the taxi, wishing she could do more.

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Mayumi and Emi stared at each other in the girl's restroom. They were dressed in their school uniform and saw Mana surrounding their bodies. It was unusual, a feeling of déjà vu waft in the air. However, this was completely new to them. Mayumi gripped her shoulders as Emi's lips moved trying to ease her fear. Mayumi did not understand what this stuff was. Her hands held up, shivering like a leaf in the wind; the Mana dripping off her fingers. She ran away in a panic, ignoring Emi's pleas.

Mayumi ran as fast as she could; out of the school, across the grounds, out into the street. As she climbed up the sidewalk's hillside something strange happened. She found herself staring out at a valley. She turned around and saw a forest. The change of scenario disrupted her sense of direction. A female voice called out to her with gentleness.

"My priestess. I am Kurai, goddess of the dark."

"Dark?" Mayumi sad taking a step back.

"Hikari, goddess of light has deceived the people. She is a threat to—"

"Shut up!" Emi said from behind Mayumi. She stood next to her sister looking out at the valley. "Who are you?"

"Emi?"

"Don't be fooled. This is the same words Hikari used on me. Listen to my voice."

"Don't listen to her Priestess, she is a follower of Hikari. She is deceiving you."

"I am your sister Mayumi, trust me?"

"Trust you?" Mayumi stepped back. "After everything you did."

Emi lowered her head and nodded. Mayumi continued."

"You didn't trust me. You fought me. You hurt people, and caused people to die."

"I know."

"See?" Kurai said from the valley a pair of hands emerged gently caressing Mayumi's face. "She hurt people."

"She wanted to bring light to the people." Mayumi said and Emi looked up at her.

"Mayumi, get away from her!"

"Yes." Hikari said placing her hands gently on Emi's face. "Get away from her, and join us."

"No!" Emi pulled herself away but her pajamas changed to her orichalcham outfit. She lifted her arms up in shock that she was back in her attire.

"See?" Kurai said to Mayumi. "She dons the poison that would kill everyone."

"Why?" Mayumi said as her pajamas turned into the orichalcham outfit, colored black and purple. "Why didn't you trust me?"

Emi shook her head, clenching her gloved hands. She focused her thoughts and with gentle eyes she spoke.

"Mayumi." Tears welled and her hand reached out. "I'm sorry I hurt you. I'm sorry I did not trust you. You endured so much for my sake, and I was blind by my fear and misplaced trust in Hikari."

Mayumi reached out to Emi, but hesitated to touch her sister's hand. Kurai's gentle hands slide over Mayumi's fingertips.

"She is just tricking you."

Mayumi's tears fell as she stared at Emi, resisting Hikari's approach. She placed her hands on Emi's palm and her sister gripped them tight. They pulled each other into their arms, ripping away from Hikari's and Kurai's hands. They hugged tight creating a force of energy that pushed the goddesses back. They were both covered in clean and unclean Mana. Both Mana suddenly turned grey, and distributed evenly between them.

The twins woke up in their beds, huddle in the corner unaware they were moving in their sleep. They were looking at each other across the room. Emi pounded the wall in frustration, but she heard Mayumi whimper. She turned the light on and saw Mayumi's hands shivering. Emi made her way to Mayumi and took her hands to stand her up. Holding each other's hands they saw the grey Mana surround them. The morning sun broke through their bedroom window, and somehow, they felt calm.

"Emi, did we, did we beat them?"

"No." The dream is fresh in my mind."

"Same here." Mayumi looked at her hands. "It felt weird wearing that outfit. For a second it felt good, felt... secure, but..."

"I know, that's how I felt when I wore it, but it's a lie. The goddesses are a lie."

Mayumi pulled Emi into her arms, gently stroking her hair.

"I forgive you. You don't need to feel guilty anymore. What matters is that you're with us again."

Emi closed her eyes and wrap her arms around Mayumi. She felt Mayumi's chest heaving, she felt her own heartache. They whimpered in each others eyes as grey Mana surrounded them. They pulled back from each others arms and stared at the Mana cascading from them.

"It's grey." Emi said.

"I don't get it." Mayumi looked at her hand. "It feels like warm water."

"Yeah." Emi flexed her fingers. "It does."

"We'll go to the shrine and ask Nina."

"Okay."

* * *

With the morning now in full brightness, Mayumi and Emi sat before the television near their table. With breakfast in hand, Emi switched channels over and over, much to Mayumi's frustration. Mayumi placed her food down and reached out for the remote, but Emi resisted. They started pushing each other, which grew into grunts, and suddenly screams.

"You girls better not be fighting over the television." Their mother said and the twins stopped. The girls turned to the TV, watched the commercial end, and the news began.

"Change." Emi said aiming the remote, but Mayumi raised her hand up.

"Wait." Mayumi said, raising her hand to stop Emi.

"Mysterious muggings continued last night as a couple were found huddle on the floor traumatized. Eyewitness' reported that there was a strange pair of red lights in the shadows prior to the attack, however, no one was able to get an actual visual of what the attacker looks like."

Mayumi's phone buzzed and the screen read Tomiko.

"Hello." Mayumi said.

"Are you watching the news?"

"Yes," Mayumi said as Emi turned to her. "It's those muggings again."

"No... no not that." Tomiko said and Mayumi switched her settings to conference so Emi can hear. "Change to Morning Nihon, you have to see this."

Emi changed the channel to the show and on the screen read 'American City Disappeared'.

"American authorities are investigating the sudden disappearance of Newark, New Jersey. The city with a population of 275,000 vanished fifteen minutes ago. Reports of trains and vehicles falling into the large chasm where the city once stood resulted in casualties. First responders are—"

Emi took her phone and typed in the text mark to Alysia.

[Your city disappeared. Is everyone okay?]

After the phone acknowledged the text was successfully sent, it suddenly sent a warning that there was no signal to that region.

"We can't contact Alysia or Meg-chan." Emi looked at Mayumi and her sister turned to Tomiko on her phone.

"Tomi, call the Cooking Club and tell them we are having a meeting, I'll contact Keiko and Rumiko."

"Okay, we're going to meet with Ren's Clan."

“What?” Mayumi said looking at Emi confused.

“It's Hideki. He's with the Karasu Clan. He fights for them.”

Mayumi and Emi's eyes grew wide, unsure of how to react to this revelation.

TO BE CONTINUED...

