

# Arcana Magi Pure Vol.5 - c.4

*by* H-M Brown

Ren sat before a campfire, licking up a piece of white paper that he was rolling up. Perched in the trees were crows, but further away, hidden in the shadows were bigger, unique crows; human-shape in visual, but crow nonetheless. Across from Ren, beyond the flames stood Mayumi and the Cooking Club, Emi and Sayako, Keiko and Rumiko. He lit the piece of paper and inhaled it. His slowness tried the patience of Rumiko, a sense of urgency at the revelation of what happened in America. Yuri's ghostly hand patted Rumiko on the back to calm her. Ren let out a puff of smoke that did nothing.

Ren looked at Hideki receiving cold looks from Mayumi. The energy emanating from her has an awkward atmosphere contained within their area. Despite what Ren was told regarding America, the mysterious shadow attacking the Cooking Club and Sayako, and the goddesses invading the twin's dreams, he was more concerned about the tension building from Hideki's truth. There was an aura of uncertainty of what the teens want to say or do. It was powder keg ready to explode.

"So," Ren said taking another puff, and exhaling the smoke. "leave."

Everyone gawked at Ren's comment.

"Are you serious?" Rumiko said. "We have a problem on our hands."

"I don't care, you all have serious baggage here and messing with my shui."

Mayumi took a deep breath and walk away from the Cooking Club to Keiko and Rumiko, Emi followed leaving Sayako in the middle. She looked back and forth, but since she has neither say, nor any knowledge she just followed Emi.

"I am tired." Mayumi said. "I don't care at this point, I have more

important things to worry about than who Hideki is.”

“I’m sorry.”

“No you’re not.” Mayumi said and turned her attention to Ren. She raised her hand up showing the grey Mana with Emi and the crows began cawing aloud.

“Hmm...” Ren said taking another puff. “So that is what it looks like.”

Ren approached them looking closely to the Mana. He placed his hands on the Mana and let the mist roll off his wings. He then addressed Keiko and Rumiko without looking at them.

“Have you two felt anything unusual since you saw this?”

“No” Keiko said and Rumiko nodded.

“Well...” Rumiko said. “It does seem thick.”

“Indeed, I mean just look at this.” Ren lifted the Mana up, as though holding a rock. “I can physically hold it. This is awesome.”

“But are they going to be okay?” Keiko said.

“Hmm...” Ren said taking a puff of smoke. He waved his wing to draw the twins over to him and they approached him on the other side leaning close. The crow examined their eyes, looking at the every corner for anything. He opened their mouths and found nothing. He analyzed their arms and legs for any sores. “They look fine, but the question is ladies, how do you feel?”

“I feel fine.” Emi said.

“Yeah me too.”

“Nothing unusual, muscles, bones, and headaches?”

“No.” Mayumi said and Emi agreed.

“How about mentally?”

Mayumi and Emi became quiet, they struggled to explain but Ren raised his hand up to make them stop.

“I see.” Ren stood up. “The goddesses did something to you both, and from what you told me, they may have found a way to capture you two through your minds, and you may not be aware of it.”

“The orichalcham.” Emi said.

“Perhaps, but that is something to keep in mind.” Ren hopped

away from the twins with his wings behind his back, deep in thought. "It would be safe to assume, that everything that has happened, the dreams, an American city missing, and these shadow monsters, are connected."

"But how?" Takashi said and Ren looked at the twins.

"There something about the twins we are not seeing. Something... unique." Ren stared at the grey Mana around the girl's bodies. He nodded. "That Mana is the key."

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Back at Fugu-Sempai, everyone broke into groups, keeping silent. The restaurant was not open yet, but Ayane stood behind the counter preparing tea for everyone. She was quiet as she saw Hideki and Mayumi alone in a booth talking. The club leader could not hear their conversation, but could see the tone in their faces that they are settling their differences. When Mayumi looked in her direction, Ayane gave a nod and a light smile. She saw the satisfaction in the twin's eyes. Mayumi patted her hand on Hideki's as he nodded and they both smiled. Ayane placed the teapot and cups on the tray when Mayumi approached her.

"Are you okay Ayane?"

"Yes." Ayane walked around the counter, and Mayumi followed her. "Is everything good with you and Hideki?"

"I'm still mad but, I forgive him." Mayumi watched Hideki sit in the booth with Emi, Tomiko, and Keiko. "Honestly, I really feel this was not the right time to talk about this. There is so much happening that the last thing we need is be against each other."

"Yeah, you're right, but still..." Ayane looed directly into Mayumi's eyes. "after everything you went through, I felt this was something you shouldn't have added to your problems."

Mayumi nodded and smiled. "Thank you. Let me help."

Ayane and Mayumi together served tea to their friends. As soon as everyone settled down, Emi got up and stood beside Mayumi and Ayane. Everyone had their attention. Mayumi spoke.

"There are too many questions that need answered and standing here is not going to get us anywhere."

“Mayumi and I,” Emi said. “have agreed that we will go on an trip to the valley that we keep seeing in our dreams. Whether you come or not doesn't matter, we're both going and find out what happened, especially to the Mukado.”

“I want to say you're both crazy.” Rumiko said. “But, this is a crazy situation we are in. I'll go with you.”

“Me as well.” Keiko said and she got up with Rumiko and they stood beside Mayumi and Emi.

“Anybody else?” Emi said and Ayane stepped forward.

“Actually, we thought it over, and we decided that we're going to try to become Wisps and learn to fight against Magi.”

“Really?” Mayumi said and saw the Cooking Club nodded.

“Me too.” Sayako said. “Hopefully in exchange for Ayane to stop asking for more funds at the next meeting.”

“Hey!”

Everyone laughed, and Mayumi and Emi stepped back. They both stood before all their friends. There was a feeling that a heavy boulder was removed from their backs. They did not feel alone for once. They felt safe and confident. They both bowed.

“Thank you very much.” Their act caught everyone off guard. They all got up and returned the gesture with a bow.

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At mid morning, the sound of a doorbell made, Natsume navigate her wheelchair down the hall. Her mother was on the phone yelling about what happened in Newark. It made her nervous. The doorbell rang again, and she strolled over to the door. She opened it and Mayumi waved hello.

“Mayumi.”

“I brought some friend over if you don't mind.”

“No please come... in...” Natsume rolled back as Emi stepped inside with Keiko and Rumiko. Emi's presence caught Mrs. Saito's attention. Just as Mrs. Saito stood up, Mayumi stood in front of Emi with a defensive glare.

“Would you girls like some tea?”

“Yes.” Emi said and Mrs. Saito walked by the girls, planting her

hand gently on Emi's shoulder. She gave her comfort smile, but her eyes grew wide when she looked at her hand.

"Your Mana."

"Our Mana." Emi said and Mayumi waved with an awkward smile.

Moments later, Mrs. Saito had her arms crossed hearing their story, and their plans. The girls could feel the intense apprehension of their idea to go to the valley. It was like they were confronting their own mothers. However, Emi was not waiting for Mrs. Saito's response.

"Saito-san..." Emi said to Natsume.

"Please call me Natsume."

"Natsume, I need an outfit."

"Actually," Keiko said. "we all do. We don't what were up against, if we run into the Mukado."

"You can't go." Mrs. Saito said.

"You can't stop us."

"You're Shining Star, you know better than them how dangerous this is."

"Yes, but I also know that staying here is just as dangerous. There is nowhere safe for the twins, not us if they should fall."

"That's why the Society—"

"Failed." Rumiko said. "Remember what happened at the shrine—"

"I remember, I don't need some kid to lecture me."

"Kid?"

"Yes, kid. Which is what all four of you are, children. This is something us adults will take care of." Mrs. Saito calmed down and lowered her crossed arms. "Look, we are planning to go the valley ourselves and find out what is going on. You girls can stay here where it is safe. There is something out there turning the landscape to stone, and people are disappearing."

"And these shadows," Keiko said. "what are you doing about them?"

"We have patrols searching for them in cooperation with the

Clans. Everything will be all right, you girls do not need to fight and risk your lives. If you want Mayumi, Emi, I can have guards assigned to you both.”

“Thank you.” Mayumi said.

“But we can take care of ourselves.” Emi said.

The twins, Keiko and Rumiko approached Natsume and she led the girls to her room for fitting. Mrs. Saito stood there shaking her in disbelief. She took her phone, dialed, and spoke.

“I’m going to need some guards for the Akamatsu Twins.”

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The crows perched on the branches, quiet as can be, watched Ren stood at the top of the hill, overlooking the entire town. He can sense darkness growing bigger. There was an animal instinct of fear building up. Despite taking a puff of his rolled up paper, he knew no one, not even his own Clan, was safe from whatever is out there. When he moved his wings, the crows leaned waiting to see what happens next. It was nothing. Ren had a lot on mind not that Mayumi and Emi have grey Mana. He had never seen this before and wants to do research in the library, but the Clans will not let him and he knew it. As he moved his wings once again, the crows leaned forward expecting to hear his words, instead he inhaled his rolled paper.

“Would you do something?” A female crows said, making the others cover her beak. They saw Ren lift his head, look back at them, and remove a pair of headphones.

“Oh, hey, how long have you been there?”

“Are you serious!?” The crows said.

“So, are the preparations ready?”

“Yes.” The female crow said. “The Wisps are ready for their partners.”

“Good because my students are arriving.” Ren made his way into the forest and the crows flew past him through the trees. As he continued through the dirt path, more crows emerged from behind the bushes, as big as cars. The path grew wide as Ren continued and humanlike crow jumped with the power of its human like legs onto

the tree tops. One after another, with the look of ninjas, jumping branch after branch. without disturbing the leaves. Ren emerged out into the wide and with a smile he spoke.

“Welcome my students.” Ren opened his wings wide as the crows flew out of the trees. There before him stood the Cooking Club and Sayako, with bookbags in tow, watching the birds of all sizes fly over them. “These are my Wisps.”

TO BE CONCLUDED...

