

Arcana Magi Pure Vol.6 - c.3

by H-M Brown

Kiba the dog, elder of the Inu Clan, stood before the stage of the theater. In the stands, there were very few members of other Clans, animals of the forest that gathered in the wake of a horrific revelation. Many of them shivered, looking around the open air above them. Even Kiba himself felt his knees quiver, despite the stern face he put up. He approached an orb and with hand shaped Mana; he tapped it with the elder of the Kitsune in mind. He waited patiently, when the face of a fox appeared.

"Nemo." Kiba said.

"Kiba, I'm sorry. The city is in chaos and we have a mass exodus here at the shrine. Most of the elders are with me. You need to bring anyone who is with you immediately here."

"How is my group and followers doing?"

"They're fine. They've sent scouts with the Higurashi throughout the city to help guide other Clans over here."

"Good." Kiba turned his head at the crowd, and he nodded. "I'll lead everyone I have here over."

"See you then Kiba."

Daimon, a large cicada, elder of the Higurashi, flew over to Kiba. "What happened?"

"The elders have gathered at the Shrine of Four Mythic Beasts. They're waiting for us. We need to take everyone with us."

"Very well." Just as Daimon faced the crowd to get their attention, a rabbit stumbled from the top of the stairs of the theater and tumbled halfway down. He was helped up by a turtle, his face terrified, ignoring the pain.

"The mist is coming."

Everyone looked at each other, trembling even more.

"Elder Michiko? Is she okay?" Kiba said, and the rabbit fell into

tears.

"They all turned to stone." He buried his face in and Daimon lifted him with his hand shaped Mana.

"Anybody who can fly carry who you can, Kiba?"

"Everyone follow me!"

The white mist appeared at the top of the theater. Those who flew carried whoever they can into the air. The rest followed Kiba, however many kept going forward onto the stage, panic and screaming, when Kiba led a group to the right of the stage and up the side stairs to an opening.

"NO!" Kiba said looking back using his hand shape Mana to pull his group through the opening. "Don't let fear cloud your sense of direction!"

Kiba watched in horror as the mist formed a large hand. Its finger reached out to the panic group and consumed as though it was grabbing an object. Their screams rattled Kiba's ears. Their bodies contorted from the pain of their flesh turning slowly to stone.

"KIBA!" Daimon said breaking Kiba from his shock.

The elder dog landed on the ground outside the theater and saw the mist sliding along the wall and covering the trees and shrubs. He ran fast, scooping any slow Clan members and headed towards the city.

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The streets were filled with animals of the forest. All in a panic trying to find a direction. Mixed among them were members of various Clans that lived in the forest. They tried their best to remain organized, trying to find a place to hunker down, and remain hidden from the people. The Inu Clan and the Higurashi clan guided the groups through the city avoiding cars that screeched to a halt. A truck slammed into a wild deer denting its exhausted. Kiba and Daimon arrived with the survivors in tow. Everyone did their best to navigate their way to the Shrine of Four Mythic Beasts as the sky darkened above by the birds in flight.

"It's the Karasu Clan!" Kiba said to Daimon as he turned the corner.

"They're heading for the Shrine Kiba."

"Just great." Kiba picked up speed as the shrine was within running distance.

There was a mass exodus of mythical creatures and animals all slowly gathered at the entrance. The foxes, big and small, used their hand shape mana to point which direction to send each creature. Daimon and the cicadas flew over everyone but just under the Karasu Clan where Ren directed his crows. Daimon leaned over to the elder crow as they looked out at the chaos in the city and the white mist just beyond the borders.

"Do you know anything about this?" Daimon said.

"If I did, everyone would be dead." Ren said ignoring Daimon's sudden glare. "Why are we heading for the Shrine of Four Mythic Beasts?"

"The theater fell. That white mist suddenly came and turned most of us to stone. Kiba got as many of us out as he could."

Ren dove down where he saw the elder fox, Nemo stood before other elders of the Clans. He landed beside an exhausted Kiba, with Daimon attaching himself to the side of the hill.

"How many Clans made it out of the forest?" Nemo said and Kamoto stepped forward.

"Most of the Kame Clan made it out by way of the ocean along with other water based Clans. Any of us caught in the land made our way here, but we're still trying to a final count."

"Okay." Nemo said and the elder boar looked down with tears trying to keep his emotions in control. "We the first hit. A lot of my members were turned to stone. We where caught off guard. I don't how many of us are left, we just scattered."

"I'm sorry for your loss Kenichi." The elder fox said and Kiba took a deep breath and regained some energy.

"Would someone tell me, what just happened outside the city? I lost a lot of my people, we even lost the nursery."

"We don't know." Nemo said. "It was sudden. The Society..."

"Forget the Society." Kenichi said with a snort. "They're busy helping their own. We need to take of our own."

Suddenly the sound of a match lit up and caught everyone's attention. Ren lit up his pipe, taking puffs to ignite the contents. With one puff, he expressed dissatisfaction.

"Yes. Let's just ignore them, and not ask for their help." Ren's sarcasm angered the elders. "Or we can put aside our pitiful egos and team up with the humans to survive this mess. Unless you know how to get rid of this mist."

Nemo and the elders stood there quietly, not a single one proposed an idea. Nemo shook his head in understanding and looked at Ren.

"I will talk with the humans. If any of you wish to join, come with me."

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Akane and Sayako led the Cooking Club through the streets of the city. Each with their Wisp crow in their arms, there were people out in the streets, confused and lost. Some forest animals lay dead from being trampled or struck by vehicles. Tomiko did her best to keep her composure, and Takashi placed his hand on her shoulders.

"It's alright. We just have to get home, right Ayane?"

"Right." Ayane said and turned to the mess that was left behind. Her mind could not process a thought after seeing the white mist outside the city. She looked at the people helping the injured. The area was silent. Hardly anyone was talking, but there was something strange that got on Ayane's nerves. The silence. She turned her head to her friends. They were watching their surroundings. That was what got to her. That sudden wariness that there is something more here than what they see.

As soon as everyone walked past an alley, there was a loud thud behind them. They all turned around and saw a woman rolling to a stop. Ayane navigated her way through her friends and watched the female shiver on the ground. While Hideki looked out at the alley, Ayane and Sayako hurried over to check on the woman. Despite her injury, the woman was shivering with eyes glazed.

Hideki stood in front of the girls, with his Wisp Gon in hand. Peering inside, they saw a pair of red eyes emerge from the shadow

inside. It just stood there, looking at the edge of the light. Gon noticed and lifted his up to the sky.

"It's that thing again, and its getting dark soon."

"I hate autumn." Sayako said as she and everyone stood ready to fight the creature in the alley.

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Mayumi and Emi led Rumiko and Keiko through the stoned forest. The stone animals they passed by showed pain. It was difficult for the girls to grasp. Looking at the mist around them, pushed away by the twins, did not help ease Rumiko and Keiko's fears. Rumiko placed her hand on Mayumi and made them all stop.

"Let's turn back." Rumiko turned on the radio she carried. "We're not going to make. We've been walking a long time and the sun is setting early."

"But we're so close." Mayumi said and Emi nodded.

"No, I agree." Keiko said, looking at her green color version of Emi's costume. "This is not a game. People died."

"We don't know if they died." Emi said.

"Their faces sure look dead to me." Rumiko said pressing the tracker button and picked up the radio.

"Rumi-chan." Mayumi said but was answered with disapproval shake of her head. She clenched her hand and turned to Emi. "I want to keep going Emi. Find an answer to this but..."

"I know." Emi said approaching her sister while Rumiko talked on the radio. "Maybe we can ask Mrs. Saito when she picks us to at least let us see the valley. We should see it from the sky and get an idea of what's going on."

"You think so?" Mayumi said and turned to Keiko.

"It wouldn't hurt to ask, and we can get out this."

Rumiko got off the radio and approached the girls.

"Mrs. Saito is on her way." Rumiko looked up at the opening above the trees. "There seems to be enough space to climb the ladder."

"Climb the ladder?" Mayumi said.

"It's alright." Rumiko said patting Mayumi's shoulder as the

sound of the helicopter grew loud. "Just take your time and use your Mana to stick to it."

"Okay."

The helicopter arrived, hovering above the girls. The wind made them shield their eyes, but there was no dirt or debris picked up because of the stone around them. Keiko started first and Rumiko second. The twins soon followed, and Mrs. Saito helped each girl up. Inside the copter, Rumiko handed everyone headphones and they talked to Mrs. Saito.

"Are you girls okay?"

"Yeah."

"That was really stupid of you girls to do. Never do that again. You could have gotten killed."

"We're sorry." Mayumi and Rumiko leaned forward.

"Can you fly use near the valley?"

"No, we have to get back to the city right now."

"We don't want to land, we just want look from above."

"We don't have time for this."

"Please." Emi said. "We just need to know what happened to the Mukado."

"Ma'am." The pilot said. "Where do what to go?"

Mrs. Saito looked at the girls. She looked at the mist covered forest and followed it to the mountains. They were that close to the area, but there was something about the valley that got her. Her mind fought between returning or going forward, but that valley, that mountain, she did not like what she saw.

"We go back to the city now."

The girls threw their bodies back on their seats, Mayumi crossing her arms looking out at the valley. As the helicopter turned around to face the city, Mayumi's arms slowly lowered. Her eyes stared at the top of the mountain. She could not her body. Her heart pounding, she wanted to scream.

"So this is what my daughter sewed for you?" Mrs. Saito said lifting up Rumiko's purple colored outfit. "At least you're not running around in leatards like Emi's old outfit"

As Emi blushed from the giggling, Mrs. Saito reached to Mayumi's blue outfit to take a look and she noticed Mayumi leaning forward. She grabbed the twin and pulled over with the help of Emi and Keiko. Rumiko waved her hand in front of Mayumi's eyes and she looked out the window.

"I think it's the valley?" Rumiko noticed Mayumi staring at it. "She is being drawn to it."

"Speed it up pilot!" Mrs. Saito said but the helicopter jerked forward to a full stop.

Everyone fell over on top of each other and immediately threw on the seatbelts. The pilots struggled to move forward as the city ahead moved further away. Mrs. Saito saw Mayumi's hand press on the window and grabbed the twin by the shoulders.

"Look at me Mayumi." She moved Mayumi's head to face her and she saw Mayumi's tears fall over her fingers.

"Sis." Emi said as she hugged her. "I got you. Fight it! I won't let them turn you the way they did to me. You hear me. Fight it!"

The helicopter spun around and was pulled toward the valley. Everyone screamed as Mrs. Saito prepared the girls for a crash landing.

"Ma'am, brace for impact. We'll try to land right side up!"

"Try everything you can!"

And the helicopter disappeared in the white mist, with the sound of a loud bang echoing inside the valley. The mist parted ways exposing the helicopter laying on its side in a slant. Emi opened her eyes and she carefully climbed out. She collapsed on the floor but was careful not to walk too far to keep everyone that was not Mayumi from turning to stone. But once the mist cleared away ahead of her, she dropped to her knees with instant tears as soon as she saw the centipedes.

Memories of her time with the Mukado Clan, all that she went through at the hands of goddess Hikari, for these beasts who wanted a safe clean home, they stood before her as stone. Mrs. Saito climbed out helping Keiko as Rumiko checked on the pilots.

"Are they okay Rumiko?"

"They're breathing, but I don't know how bad the injuries are."

"I'll get them." Mrs. Saito saw Keiko hugging Emi. She looked up and saw the stone centipedes. "The Mukado."

"I'm sorry Emi." Keiko said and the twin cried out lurching over pounding the floor. She hugged Emi as tight as she could, trying to get her to calm down, but Emi could not stop.

"Emi, we need to focus on Mayumi."

"Mayumi...?" Emi wiped away her tears. "Mayumi?!"

Emi got up to her feet and saw Mrs. Saito checking her sister's pulse.

"She's okay." Mrs. Saito said checking Mayumi's glazed eyes.

"But Mayumi's not responding."

"She is responding." Emi said looking out at the mist hiding what is beyond there. "I can sense a shrine over there."

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As the mist slowly surrounded the city, there still untouched land on the opposite side of the city. Beyond the city limits, there was a prison facility hidden within the hills. The guards from Society were posted at the gate. Buses and trucks rolled inside. Prisoners lined in shackles and loaded onto the bus one by one. The truck however, continued past them. It circled around the facility where a large interior gate opened up. The truck stopped before another gate and waited for the first to close.

After the truck made it past the checkpoint, it drove by other trucks loading up former members of the Clans of the forest and the ocean, small in size to pack in the numbers. Members of the Inu Clan served as guards guiding each criminal onto a truck. The truck that had just entered was waved by a guard to a large hanger. By count there were twenty-five dogs of various sizes all watching the door open slowly. The truck reversed with its back door open, and the sounds of growl from the dogs drown out the voice of the prisoner. His voice did its best to overpower the canines but they kept his speech from reaching the prisoners and a guard spoke.

"Give it up Satoshi. Nobody is going to hear you speak."

"Don't talk to the Elder!" A guard from behind said.

As soon as the guards stood before the truck's door, a large cat turned around. Satoshi smiled looking up at the now darkening sky.

"But they will hear me..."

The canine used his hand shaped Mana to close the lower half of the door.

"...for patience is finite..." The door completely shut and Satoshi looked out the window. "...and all will look to me to lead the way to salvation."

TO BE CONTINUED...

