

Arcana Magi Zero + Pure - c.12

by H-M Brown

Mrs. Saito led the surviving families of the Cooking Club, Sayako's father, and Keiko's parents. They all watched police officers and the Society armed and suited up. Adult animals followed while the young and cubs continued helping the medics escort the civilians further into the foxes land. There was a large tent up ahead. Doctors exited out. Arriving from a path was Hideki and his parents. They looked like experienced soldiers to the parents. Mrs. Saito opened the tent and led everyone inside. Hideki, Takashi, Sayako and Keiko stood in front of the adults and their eyes lit up.

Lying on the bed was Marissa with a neck brace staring at the ceiling. She was with Arturo and Mrs. Akamatsu. Mrs. Saito approached him.

"Thank you for coming." Arturo said and Mrs. Saito bowed.

"I brought them all like you asked."

Arturo stood up holding on top Marissa's hand. "I apologize for our daughter's role in this mess."

Mrs. Saito translated to the families. They stood there.

"Our daughters were... forced against their will serve Valdegaurd. It was because of her, that all of your children got caught in this mess."

The families remained silent.

"My wife and I rescued our daughters from her control, and we paid a price." Arturo pointed to Marissa. "But, we have a feeling that this will not be enough for you to forgive."

The teens shook their sides to side and they immediately turned to their parents.

Takashi spoke. "It's not their fault."

"TAKASHI!" Mr. Sakuraba said. "You knew these things and kept it from us."

Mrs. Sakuraba spoke. "You risked your life without us knowing. What if you died?"

Mrs. Urashima approached Keiko dressed in her costume. "What are you wearing? I still don't understand."

Hideki spoke. "Please, understand. We were just trying to help Emi and Mayumi."

Mr. Yoshida spoke. "By getting people who do not practice magic involved? You know better than to do that."

"Father, please."

"Not another word."

Mr. Sakuraba crossed his arms. "And what of the Kobayashi Family? They're all dead and their daughter, Tomiko, is an orphan now."

Marissa spoke. "I'm sorry."

Arturo stepped aside and everyone turned to her.

"I tried my best. If this what my daughters brought on your families... then I have failed as a mother. I tried to find out what happened to them. I reached out to them... but the pain they were experience was to great for them talk. Valdegaurd tortured my babies. She hurt them and crippled their souls." Marissa's tears fell. "They're not children anymore, their women now. They're too young to become women, but I have no choice. It was the only way I can get them to overcome their pain."

Marissa's turned to the teens. "I'm sorry, all of you."

Mrs. Akamatsu approached the parents and bowed. "I did not know what happened to my daughters until now, and right now they are with their daughters fighting against the Arcadians in the Manasphere. Mayumi was kidnapped and Emi made a decision despite the risks. I cannot look at my girls as children anymore."

Mrs. Akamatsu turned to Marissa. "From one mother to mother, I am not angry at your daughters or your family. I lay no blame on them or you. There is nothing to forgive. My anger is Valdegaurd and the Arcadians. They took our daughters and took them away from us. Our daughters will return."

"And what of daughter?" Mrs. Nakamura said. "They don't know

that Ayane and Tomiko are in there, or that other girl."

Sayako spoke. "Rumiko Johnson."

"Her."

Marissa turned her eyes to Mrs. Nakamura. "My daughters know the Manasphere and how it works. They'll know if the girls are there."

A pair of medics arrived. "We're ready to transport the patient."

Mrs. Saito nodded. "Proceed."

As the medics prepped Marissa, Mrs. Nakamura spoke. "How did you get injured?"

"Valdegaud brainwashed my daughter into attacking me and she broke my spine." Marissa looked Mrs. Nakamura in the eyes. "Alysia's heart shattered at that moment, everything that was my daughter was robbed from her very soul."

"I'm sorry."

"Please, give me your hand." Marissa received Mrs. Nakamura's hand and felt nothing. "I know my daughter's are going to be all right, and I know they will find your daughter and her friends. They will return them home."

The medics were ready to move Marissa to the gurney. "Excuse us."

As Mrs. Nakamura stepped back, her husband took her hand. Everyone watched the medics move Marissa onto the gurney and strapped her down. They remained silent and watched her, Arturo and Mrs. Akamatsu exit the tent. Takashi, Hideki, Sayako, and Keiko followed leaving their families behind. The Nakamuras left and walked with the Perez and Mrs. Akamatsu. Mrs. Nakamura looked back and saw the families walking behind them.

Mrs. Saito stepped aside. "If you all follow the medics, they will escort you to the far end of the shrine grounds."

"Wait." Marissa said.

"I have a better place."

"We don't have time for this."

"Please, the cave is the right place for them."

Mrs. Saito's eyes grew wide and nodded to the medics. "Take

them to the Miyazaki Family cave. I will take my leave now."

As Mrs. Saito bowed, Takashi spoke. "Where are you going?"

"To save the city." Everyone watched Mrs. Saito head in the direction to the city to fight the Nocturne.

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"More humans." A growling voice spoke.

Ayane opened her eyes and sat up. She turned to her right and long faced creature with grey and teal fur. She screamed and stumbled over Tomiko waking her up. The creature approached, leaning close to her face. It had a pair of legs and arms with four finger. It walked like ostrich twisting it thin neck observing her. When Tomiko looked up, Ayane covered mouth muffling her scream.

"Fro," A man's voice said. "stop frightening the children."

Ayane and Tomiko turned around and saw a human with grey hair and eyes dressed in a business suit. They noticed his pointy ears and his eyes were like a cats. He extended his hand out to help them up.

Ayane slid back dragging Tomiko with her. She raised her arm up and shield appeared before them. "Arcadians?"

"Mana Spirits. My name is Eryn Hall and this is Fro."

"You understand Japanese?"

"We understand all language across all universes."

Tomiko removed Ayane's hand. "Universes?"

Fro spoke. "The mist is dissipating. We must inform the others."

"Hey!" A female voice called out to everyone.

They saw a blue plushy with a puffy tail and floppy ears hop towards them. Ayane and Tomiko leaned back and watched it look up at Eryn Hall and Fro.

"Wow, how did you guy look like that?"

Eryn Hall spoke. "Dari, Apparently the blast subsided when it reach us. We were able to control our own appearance and not the Priestess'."

Fro turned to Dari. "The mist is starting to dissipate within the blast radius. A boundary is establishing itself. We are getting separated from our people within the Manasphere."

"Size?"

"4397 acres."

"Wow that's big." When Dari turned to Ayane and Tomiko, she hid behind Eryn hall's leg. "More girls."

Ayane laughed at her. "That's ridiculous."

Tomiko pointed with a smile. "A walking plushy? How did you become that?"

Fro chuckled. "If you're not treated like a doll, then you're just a joke."

"This isn't fair. I didn't ask to look like this."

Ayane relaxed helped Tomiko to her feet. "I am Ayane Nakamura."

"I'm Tomiko Kobayashi. Where are we?"

Eryn Hall bowed. "You are in the Manasphere. The source of all Mana."

Fro growled. "Or what's left of it."

Ayane approached the Mana Spirits. "What happened?"

Dari waved to follow. "We'll explain everything. Right now we need to take you to the academy before Valdegaurd finds you."

Eryn Hall nodded. "Agreed."

Ayane and Tomiko looked at each other and followed the Mana Spirits.

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Emi stared at Victoria lying on a bed held down by a barrier from the Mana Spirits. Her hand shivered at the thought of killing her, but she resisted the urge. She held back her tears as she remember everything she had done with the Mukado Clan, the people she turned into followers. Fighting Mayumi.

"Emi?" Mayumi said approaching her. "Are you okay?"

"It's so tempting." Emi looked at her sister. "To kill her right now."

"The Mana Spirits are taking care of her. They will bring justice to the Arcadians." Mayumi took Emi's hand and walked her away.

"Everyone is waiting for us. Karin is awake now."

Mayumi and Emi walked down the hall looking at all the rooms.

Emi looked down at her school uniform. "Seriously, I have no idea why you would choose this setting when your mind exploded."

"I couldn't help. I was in a lot of pain."

"I know, it just seems like there were better ideas."

"Like what?"

"I don't know, like maybe a spaceship and were in outer space, or maybe giant robots."

Mayumi chuckled.

"What's so funny?"

"I bet it's because you want to wear a tight outfit."

"What? No?" Emi saw Mayumi staring her down. "Yes."

"I knew it." Mayumi turned the corner. "You liked wearing that Orichalcham outfit and it's stuck on you since."

"Hey that outfit actually makes me run faster than the costume Natsume made me when headed for the valley."

"Really?" Mayumi arrived in the infirmary.

"Yeah, I'm going to have Natsume modify it for me. I'm the fastest on the track team after all."

Just as Mayumi was going to open the door they heard a familiar voice.

"Mayumi!" Rumiko waved getting their attention. "Emi."

"Rumiko?"

Emi noticed Rumiko carrying a Mana Spirit and smiled. "Another cute Mana Spirit."

Eira spoke. "Don't even try it."

Mayumi looked at Rumiko. "How did you get here?"

As Rumiko explained what happened to her, Ayane and Tomiko, Karin spoke. "Hey, we don't have time. We have to walk. Valdegaurd will catch on and come for us."

Everyone gathered around Karin with the Mana Spirits. She wrapped her arms around her waist, staring at the ground. After taking a deep breath she looked up at Alysia and Megumi. "My memories returned."

Alysia smiled. "That's great."

"No, it's not." Karin looked up. "Valdegaurd has playing us like

toys.”

Megumi spoke. “How?”

Karin turned to Mayumi, Emi, and Rumiko. “I’m from the Byakko Universe. It’s similar to your world, the Seiryu Universe, but different.”

Rumiko sat down. “Another world?”

Alysia nodded. “Yes. There are five, Byakko, where Karin is from, Seiryu where we are from, Suzaku, Genbu and K?ry?. If you access the Infinite Knowledge in your minds you’ll see.”

“One thing at a time.” Rumiko took a deep breath.

Karin hugged herself. “I serve Valdegaurd.”

Everyone looked at Karin and Megumi sat next to her. “Not anyone, you’re not under her control.”

“No, I mean I served her under her military.” Karin stood up and looked out the window. “Valdegaurd rules the entire Byakko Universe. She turned the entire world into a military state. Everyone is born a soldier. I was ranked a cadet upon birth and parenting is against the law. The military are my parents.”

“How?”

“No one knows. History was erased for the most part. All we know was that Valdegaurd drove off the dragon clans with her military might and we came to accept her as our savior.”

Mayumi leaned on a desk. “Dragon clans?”

“Actual dragons. The ones you read in your books.”

Emi eyes grew wide. “No way.”

“Our military was technologically advanced and we all love what Valdegaurd does. We all looked up to her. We had peace. Food. Arts. Free speech, even criticizing her. She taught us all Arcadia. Preached to us of this wonderful we can attain if we work hard. We wanted this world so much.”

“What happened? How did she end up like this?”

“She had this idea. She called it a Magical Girl.”

“Did you say Magical Girl?” Ayane said from the door.

Everyone turned and saw Ayane and Tomiko enter inside with Eryn Hall, Fro and Dari.

Mayumi, Emi and Rumiko approached Ayane and Tomiko. After they told everyone about where they went and what happened, Karin's eyes trembled. "They believe in us."

Alysia looked at Karin. "Sorry for stalling."

"No, it's okay. I just hope your timeline wasn't altered by that mysterious Arcadian. Thank you, Ayane and Tomiko. I'm glad to know there are people in my world that believe us." Karin tightened her fist and looked at everyone. "Valdegaud came up with a morale boosting program where the military had selected girls to serve as a special unit. She classified us as Magical Girls. I was the first captain and we were specially trained in magically enhance costumes and weaponry. We never questioned where she got the idea from."

"Our popularity grew. We were for the people, the citizens who served at low level positions, from farming to manufacturing. They were the most vulnerable to dragons and traitors. As a result, we were considered the people's soldiers, praised and loved equally as Valdegaud, and they gave her thanks for creating us. Their loyalty still lay with Valdegaud, but she didn't see it that."

Alysia spoke. "Arcadia?"

"Yes. The public believed in the Magical Girl more than Arcadia, and Valdegaud did not like it."

Ayane nodded and Tomiko noticed her.

"She confronted us and demanded that we obey her. I assured her on behalf of all Magical Girls that we were loyal to her, but she wanted proof. She wanted us to execute a group of salvagers who raised a flag in our name. We refused... because we're not murderers. There was no justice in this demand. So she deemed us enemies of the state. We were being executed one by one. Hanging. Stomped on by Golems. Shot. Two of my squad members were... vivisected in front of the crowd. Valdegaud was beyond anything I ever saw. We were no match."

Karin covered her mouth taking short breaths. She felt Alysia's hands on her shoulders. "So I confronted Valdegaud and we fought. We overchanneled and ended up her in the Manasphere."

Unfortunately for me, the Infinite Knowledge drove me into madness and my memories became buried. That was when Valdegaurd took advantage of me and brainwashed me.”

“I’m sorry.” Alysia pulled Karin closer.

“Valdegaurd learned as much as she could hold in her mind and discovered she could make Arcadia a reality. But because we were trapped here, there was not much we could do except to attain knowledge.”

Emi spoke. “The experiments.”

“Yes. With five universes under her control, she could establish Arcadia here, but there was one problem.” Karin pointed at the girls. “Your world is opposite of us. She realized by her standards and definition, you were all naturally Magical Girls.”

Rumiko sneered. “Ridiculous, that’s just fiction we make up in comics and stories.”

“In your world maybe, but Valdegaurd see you as a real threat. This whole plan, what she’s done to us, was to subjugate us as her soldiers. She had been learning about the other universes, their technologies and creatures, everything. She has been trying to build an army with the Nocturne of the Genbu Universe. Acquired mind altering technology in the Suzaku Universe. Seiryu has nothing to offer except ideology.”

Alysia leaned back. “Ideology?”

“Yes. Arcadia is more than just some place. It’s an idea, but she wants the physical place to back it up. The Manasphere is perfect. By linking our universes to here with a stable portal, there is actual evidence of Arcadia existing. It’s not enough, because of us.”

“If she linked it to our world, we would fight back.”

“Right, so she experimented with time travel. The rule is that you cannot go back in time physically in your native universe, but you can physically go back in another person’s universe. Valdegaurd needed to erase the concept of the Magical Girl and replace it with another type. The Magical Fairy. A fixture of Arcadia. Like angels but hers to control.”

Tomiko raised her hand. “Why doesn’t she kill us like she did to

your friends?"

"There were only a little under a hundred of us, there are millions of you. How would the public respond if she killed each and every one of you? Arcadia doesn't sound like a very nice place to live." Karin looked at the Perez sisters and the Akamatsu twins. "The costumes she outfitted us in, and the removal of our souls, was to make us into her Magical Fairies. She sent Alysia and Megumi's souls back in time to initiate the ideal of Arcadia, through spirituality. She needed priestesses to brainwash the masses. That was Emi and Mayumi. Finally, she needed to connect Seiryu and the Manasphere so the followers would believe that Arcadia, the Manasphere itself, existed. That was where vermillion and orichalcham comes in. Alone they contain the purest of Mana and impure Mana, but when put together, they become Irydian, named after the goddess of Mana, Irydia."

Eryn Hall spoke. "I see."

"Drop Irydian in a mixture of pure and impure Mana, instant Manasphere. Now you have followers and an army of altered Nocturne."

Eryn hall nodded. "Bring the Manasphere to the people."

"Then the Irydian would be forged into this armor called the Brace created in the Suzaku Universe and make us wear it where to become Magical Fairies. We would fall under absolute control. We would enforce her laws and ideals in all of the universes." Karin paused for a second and shivered. "We would have no control over our bodies, but we will remember our actions under her commands."

Alysia spoke. "Take your time."

Rumiko crossed her arms. "What does my mom have to do with this? Why did she recruit all these people?"

"Because they had theories and ideas. Scientists, Philosophers, innovators... when they overchanneled and entered the Manasphere, Valdegaud offered them a chance at success in their own worlds. To make a name for themselves among their colleagues. You can't just execute a plan without actual research and results. We were all just lab rats. For me, the Perez Sisters and the Akamatsu twins, we were

experiments for Victoria Powers. You were the experiment of Kinomoto."

"That's my mother! She would never agree to... that." Rumiko felt Ayane's placed hand on her shoulder. "I'm not an experiment"

"I'm sorry, but it's the truth. I don't know the details; Kinomoto said something about Circular Magi in your world being as big threat as the Magical Girl.

Megumi shook her fist. "Yeah, we're not popular in our world."

Rumiko nodded.

Karin looked at them. "I'm sorry, people can be cruel. Still, Valdegaurd brought her in, that means she has something to offer in this grand plan."

Alysia got up and turned to everyone. "Okay, so let's smash her grand plan."

Megumi crossed her arms. "How?"

"Maybe kick her out of the Manasphere. Like Ayane and Tomiko said, that resistance force destroyed the portal so she can't come back."

"Except she can enter in and out of the Manasphere remember. You, me, Karin and the Arcadians have equation spells to do that. She'll just come back here anytime."

Karin smiled. "Then send me home."

Everyone turned Karin. "What?"

"You all think Valdegaurd will stay here if I'm home helping the resistance destroy her plans. They'll raise the Magical Girl flag for me and call to arms. Alysia and Meg just have to send me back to the correct time. If I open a portal myself, I might accidentally fall in another point of time and destroy my universe."

Emi looked at Eryn Hall. "We can take Victoria back with us to answer for her crimes."

Megumi nodded. "The only problem is that Valdegaurd and the Arcadians will come here to stop us. They're not going to let Karin and Victoria go us with all that information they have."

Fro spoke. "Then leave that to us. We have been trying to find a way to drive them out of our home."

"She's been difficult to fight." Eryn Hall said at Mayumi and Emi.
"Many of our people died just to protect all of you."

The girls nodded and the Mana Spirits hesitated. Barel spoke
"Are you sure we should do this Eryn Hall? They're still children."

Alysia approached him. "Not anymore. Valdegaurd saw to that."

The girls looked down and Mayumi stood by Alysia side. "I'll
fight. I'm not a kid anymore, so I'll show her what an adult can do."

Each girl stood behind Alysia and Mayumi, and Eryn Hall
nodded.

TO BE CONTINUED...

