

Arcana Magi Zero + Pure - c.2

by H-M Brown

"What have I told you about Pyro Maelstrom?" Alysia and Megumi landed on the roof.

"You realize that monster destroyed a chunk of the town right?" Alysia led Mayumi to the Akamatsu Twins and Keiko.

"Well, yes but you could have hit innocent people."

"There were innocent people in that mon—"

"Excuse me." Mayumi said getting Alysia and Megumi's attention. "Is it really you? Are you Alysia and Megumi Perez?"

Alysia and Megumi looked at Emi and Mayumi, they did not notice Keiko behind them. Mayumi approached them; her memories of their faces from the texts they received from each other had come alive. She was about to touch Alysia's face when she felt a poke from Emi.

"Oh." Mayumi stepped back and bowed. "I am Mayumi Akamatsu."

Emi bowed. "I am Emi Akamatsu. It's pleasure to meet you."

"I am Megumi Perez." Megumi bowed and used her hand to direct the twins to Alysia. "And this is my sister—"

"I am the Guardian of the Four Mythic Element's Alysia Perez. Its a pleasure to meet you. I hope we do our best and work hard together."

The girls smiled awkwardly watching Alysia bow in a perfect angle and Mayumi spoke.

"You don't have to be that formal to introduce yourself."

"But isn't this the correct way?"

"Not in this situation." Mayumi pointed to the destruction around them and noticed Keiko watching them. "Oh. Sorry Shining Star."

"It's okay. I understand." Keiko approached the Perez sisters to

introduce herself. "Forgive my lack of formaility, I am Keiko Urashima. Shining Star."

"Are you some kind of superhero?" Alysia said looking at Keiko's costume.

"Technically yes." She looked at Alysia's costume and noticed the wings on her back. "Do you have a code name?"

"No. Meg and I keep our hero stuff a secret."

"I see." Keiko looked out at the city and all the sisters gathered behind her. "Do you know what you have done?"

"Yes." Megumi said closing her eyes. "We connected the Manasphere to our world. When my soul returned, all the memories of the past fifty years are in me now."

Alysia looked to Keiko. "But that's just a piece of the experiment. Valdegaurd has a bigger plan, but no one knows, not even the Arcadians themselves."

"Okay." Keiko looked down the street and saw people wandering around aimlessly. "The Nocturne changed. Whatever the grey mana did they've become more dangerous than before."

Alysia lowered her head. Her eyes caught Mayumi's attention. Alysia looked up and smiled, but her eyes showed Mayumi there was pain.

"We need to talk." Mayumi approached Alysia but Keiko turned to the girls.

"Now is not the time."

"But..."

"She's right." Emi said. "We have to help the people below. We also need to find a way to free the people who turned to Nocturne."

"Right." Mayumi said and looked at Megumi. "Is this something the Nocturne do?"

"I found out about it on my way to the Shrine of Hikari, but this is something they do."

"They're very resistant to spells."

"They're weak to fire." Alysia said watching purple beams and magic spells flash throughout the city.

Emi turned to Alysia. "But there are people in those bodies."

"And...?"

"Don't you think we should rescue them?"

"Look at what that big one did to the town. How many people died from that?"

"I know... but..." Emi closed her eyes and clutched her shoulders.

Keiko approached her. "You're right; they were still people, but sometimes... I don't know how I can say it any easier. I had my share of these choices, and they're not easy."

Keiko turned Emi to face the devastation. "This is the big picture. If we don't stop the Nocturne, even if means killing the people inside, all of this is gone, and all the people and the Clans are gone. It's not fair, but this reality."

"There has to be a way."

"Well the Nocturne are weak to fire." Alysia said.

"But fire kills." Emi looked to Alysia.

"I don't think fire worked the way it did with the Nocturne."

"You're right." Mayumi said. "It removed the skin and exposed the people."

"So there is a way to free the people." Emi's eyes glowed and the girls began to think.

Megumi took the Tome of the Artisan and flipped the pages. "Perhaps if we control the fire, focus it on the skin; we can move the people out."

"Okay." Mayumi said. "We should find someone from the Society and let them know that the Nocturne is weak to fire."

Keiko nodded. "If we see any Nocturne on the way, we give it a try."

"Let's go." Megumi said and clicked her feet. "MANA GLIDER!"

Megumi flew in the air and Alysia followed her. Mayumi and Emi joined them with small wind-like bracelets around their wrists and ankles. They looked back and noticed that Keiko was on the roof.

"Don't worry about me, I can jump rooftops." Keiko watched Megumi press her hand on the book and a giant red bird flew out of her magic circle. It landed beside her and lowered its head. "Thank

you.”

The girls flew over the city heading toward a helicopter that was hovering nearby.

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The Cooking Club, Sayako and Rumiko arrived at the Shrine of Four Mythical Beasts. The giant crows landed at the entrance lowering their heads to let the teens off.

“Thank you.” Hideki said and everyone watched them fly off. With his Wisp Gon in hand, he led everyone to the shrine.

When they arrived at the steps, they saw all of the soldiers from the Society and the Clans. Large animals side by side with humans, helping the injured and evacuees up the stairs to safety. As they climbed the stairs, the noise of the crowd grew loud. They stepped aside making way for ambulance workers running down the stairs.

“Hurry, there are more people with rot coming in.”

Ayane paused and looked back. A memory flashed in her mind and saw a vision of purple liquid on a tree. She shook her head.

“Are you okay?” Takashi said.

“The Manasphere vision again.” Ayane ran past everyone. “I saw what he was talking about.”

Everyone followed her to the top. Upon arrival their eyes grew wide. Triage everywhere. Injured people were on mats were missing limbs, with rotted purple flesh dripping where their limbs were. Tomiko covered her mouth as she saw a little boy received a tourniquet over his elbow. Sayako stepped forward and watched a man cry over a woman as the doctor covered her still body with a blanket.

“Oh my...”

Takashi's fist shivered. “This is just like the Kappa Festival.”

“Hey!” And adult from the distance pointed at the teens.

“Someone take the children to the processing area. We have to reunite them with their families.”

And it hit everyone, except Rumiko. They have not seen their families in a since everything happened. It got each of them nervous and Ayane turned to everyone.

"Let's find our families. Make sure they're okay and we meet at Perez-san's house."

Hideki separated from the group. "I'll get Ren and tell him what happened."

"Okay." Takashi said and noticed Tomiko's eyes frozen on the people.

"This is horrible."

"I know."

"Was being a Wisp not enough?" Tomiko hugged the crow in her hands tight. She turned to Rumiko and scanned the costume she wore. "I wish can be like you and cast spells."

"I'm sorry." Rumiko said. "I want to say you have to be born with Mana, but now..."

Everyone turned to Ayane.

"Those Arcadians changed the rules."

"Excuse me." A female soldier arrived with a giant fox behind her. "Please follow us to processing. We'll get you back to your families in no time."

Everyone nodded, and followed their escorts. As they walked past tents, the devastation was greater than they thought. With so many injured people. Ayane noticed some people covered in grey mana just like her and Rumiko. They were not attended to and Ayane looked at the fox.

"They look like they need help."

"We have them isolated for now. We don't know what the effects of the grey mana does."

Without realizing it, Rumiko and Ayane were separated from everyone. Their friend looked back as the fox nudged the girls away.

"Wait." Takashi said to the woman. "We need to stay together."

"I'm sorry, but they have to be quarantined."

"It's Takashi." Ayane said waving.

Takashi saw fear in her eyes and he wanted to get her away, but Rumiko stood closer to Ayane and nodded to him as though she said Ayane was safe with her. He stopped, and watched the girls follow the fox to the quarantine area. Takashi stayed with Sayako and

Tomiko and followed the soldier to the processing area.

They arrived in the area where there were only children. Many of them crying. Siblings hugging each other. Sayako noticed a girl staring out, unfazed by everyone around her. They stood in single file before a table. A man typed on the laptop and looked at Takashi.

"Name?"

"Takashi Sakuraba."

Everyone watched a moment as the man scanned through the screen and nodded. "Your family is here and accounted for. They are at the triage."

Sayako and Tomiko smiled. Tomiko was next and she gave her name. As she waited, a voice in the distance was heard.

"I'm looking for my daughter Sayako. SAYAKO!"

"Dad?" Sayako looked at the entrance as a couple of soldiers approached him to keep him out.

"Sir, we can't have you disturb the children here. Many are in shock."

"Dad?" Sayako approached the entrance and recognized him. "DAD!"

"SAYAKO!" He broke free and rushed to his daughter. They hugged each other, and held tight. "Are you okay?"

"Yes." Sayako pulled herself back and looked him the eyes. "I was helping my friends fight the Nocturne."

"Those creatures."

"Yes." Sayako saw her fathers eyes tremble. "What happened? Where's mom? Where's brother?"

Her father's eyes welled with tears.

"Did those things... kil—" She was buried in his arms as he heard his cry.

"I stabbed one of them, but there was another behind us. I did my best to protect them."

As Takashi and Tomiko watched Sayako cry in her fathers arms, a couple of soldiers approached Tomiko.

"Tomiko Kobayashi?" A woman said.

"Yes."

"Please come with us. We would like to talk to you privately."

Tomiko followed them. She looked back Takashi scared. They were far away and Takashi had a flash of memory. When he first met Tomiko at the Cooking Club. Full of joy and wishes. He saw all of his other friends from the club, Hideki, Ayane, and Mayumi. As a team, with plans, having a good time. The memory faded to Tomiko dropping to her knees, tears falling down non-stop. Her hands clutched her shoulders, she struggled to release a scream. Her eyes locked into place, and her hands dropped. Sayako in the distance noticed this and she clutched her father's arms tight. Takashi ran to Tomiko and slid right next to her.

"Tomiko?" He shook her shoulders and there was no response. "TOMIKO?!"

He looked up to the adults and the woman told him. "The family's house was in the blast zone when the giant monster fired that beam. The house was found liquefied. No survivors."

Takashi's eyes grew wide. He looked down as his heart skipped a beat. He shed a tear and helped Tomiko to her feet.

"I'll take her to my family. Please. She knows us and needs to be around people she knows."

The soldiers looked at each, and nodded. They escorted them away. As they passed by Sayako and her father, Takashi looked back as to give an invitation, but he was not sure if they should come.

"You know him Sayako?"

"He's from the Cooking Club. I'm friends with them. I should be with them."

"You can see them after they settle down. Give them space."

"Sayako?" Takashi said. "We'll meet at Perez-san's house as planned."

"Okay." Sayako watched on as Takashi guided Tomiko to his family.

TO BE CONTINUED...

