

# Arcana Magi Zero + Pure - c.4

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The sounds of trampling horses vibrated the ground. Nemo the giant fox, Kiba the giant dog, and Kenichi the giant boar, rolled by causing the pebbles and leaves to be pushed aside. Kameto the large turtle and Daimon the large cicada rode on Kiba's back. They both looked above and watched Ren the giant crow flying through the sky blending with the night. Kiba came to a stop. He sniffed the ground with Nemo. Everyone waited patiently and Nemo turned to them.

"I got Satoshi's scent." Nemo ran left. "This way."

Kiba growled. "I can't believe he was in Madam Mayweather's tent and we didn't pick it up sooner."

Everyone followed and watched as the location of natural trees shifted to stone. They past by animals. New statues lined up frozen in a moment in time. Kenichi slid to a halt. His eyes grew wide.

"No..."

Kiba approached him. "What happened...?"

Before them were deer, young and old. The largest of them, a stag, broken in pieces.

"The Sika Clan." The elder dog approached the children. Their bodies twisted and faces showing pain. "They're wiped out."

"Kiba..." Nemo said from a distance. "We will mourn them later. We're going to lose Satoshi's scent."

Kiba turned to the elder fox "I want his neck for this."

"We must abide the rules..."

"What rules!?" Kiba approached Nemo but Kenichi created a hand from mist and held the elder dog back. "Satoshi threw away the rules the moment caused all this."

"And we need information about the Arcadians from him."

"I have to agree with Kiba. We have your Guardians on our side; they can provide all the information we need on them."

“Wait a moment.” Kameto said. “Just because they became Arcadians doesn't mean they know everything.”

“Kameto is right.” Daimon said. “Valdegaurd is kept hidden; of course she wouldn't just say anything to anybody.”

Kiba and Kenichi looked to each holding back their anger. Ren landed before them with his long pipe in his mist hand.

“Like, I'm feeling you guys hashing the moment here.”

Kenichi growled. “Not now bird. Why are you bothering with us?”

“I have as much a stake as any of you.”

“Like letting children go into combat... hypocrite.” Kenichi walked past Ren. “And don't get me started on you giving magical items to the normal humans. Your Wisps.”

Kiba walked past Ren. “Your next after Satoshi.”

Nemo stood beside Ren and the crow just takes another puff of his pipe without a care.

“Nemo... we need to strengthen our relationship with all humans and build good karma.”

“We?”

“We.”

“Hmph... your intentions are valid, but trust is fragile. You know better than all of us.” Nemo ran off to catch up with the other elders.

“This is why we are in the mess we are in now, Nemo.” Ren watched the elders become distant. “Fragile trust in humans!”

As Ren flew off into the air, Nemo caught up to Kiba and Kenichi. Kameto turned to the other elders.

“Ren is right.”

Kiba growled. “Don't you think I know that?”

“The Arcadians got us good.” Daimon said. “The Kinomoto Family and the Neko Clan betrayed us.”

“That girl...” Kenichi's eyes turned to the elder cicada. “...Rumiko Johnson. She is a part of that family right?”

“Yes. She's like family to us.”

“How much did she know?”

"I don't know."

Kameto immediately intervened. "Don't try to pin all of this on one child."

"I'm... not." Kenichi lowered. "Damn that bird is right. These kids... they..."

"They have no idea how awful this world is." Kameto said and Daimon nodded.

Ren spoke from the sky. "Do not underestimate children."

Everyone looked up.

"They are scared, but when they experience life, they learn fast. Faster than any school textbook. My advice... instead of yelling at them, instead of threatening punishment, stand before the children and asked... 'What have you learned from this experience?' and let them talk... and you listen."

"Heh..." Kiba smirked and Nemo turned left at a fork in the road.

Everyone kept up with Nemo until the scent led them to the edge of the city. The elders sniffed the ground and found Satoshi's scent into the stoned woods. Carefully navigating the stoned bushes and twigs that sharp as knives, they noticed blood dripping off a stoned leave. Kenichi sniffed it.

"Satoshi."

Everyone continued forward out to an opening. It was cliff a overlooking the city. The blood continued over the edge where the elders saw magic spells fly into the air, exploding like fireworks. Purple beams sweeping over buildings melting the structures. As Kameto and Daimon disembarked Kiba, one of the buildings collapsed on top of another building. Their ears picked up the sounds of people screaming. Kenichi looked directly down at the cliff as Ren flew past him.

"Satoshi." The elder boar looked to his right and saw a path leading down. He led Kiba and Nemo below where they all met with Ren. Daimon flew down with Kameto on his back. They approached Daimon gasping for air as his body laid up the back, impaled on the stone bushes and thorn vines. Blood dripping into a puddle painting the stone ground red.

“My soul...”

The elders looked at each other puzzled and Nemo leaned closed to Satoshi's lips.

“Yukito...”

“Yukito?” Daimon said. “Who's that?”

Ren spoke. “Elder of the Neko Clan who died during World War II.”

“Karin...” Satoshi said and his eyes froze in place. His breath exhaust one last time.

“Hmph...” Kiba said. “Lucky.”

“ 'My Soul.' He said.” Ren's mist hand rub under his beak as he thought of Satoshi's words and Kameto approached him.

“You think there is a connection?”

“He meant Madam Mayweather... Satoshi Hamazaki, her husband?” Ren looked at the corpse and his eyes grew wide. “You don't think the Arcadians took Hamazaki-san's soul back in time and planted it into Yukito?”

Kiba sniffed Satoshi's body. “I do detect Arcadian scent on its fur.”

Nemo turned to Ren. “According to the Guardians, Valdegaard removed the souls and inserting them in the shrines in the past.”

“That means...” Daimon said. “they took Satoshi Hamazaki's soul and inserted it into Yukito's soul when he died.”

Kenichi growled. “We weren't born yet when Yukito died, so we never knew what he looked like. It never even occurred to us.”

Kameto examined Satoshi's eyes. “Except the Neko Clan.”

“When we were all becoming elders.” Kenichi roared at the corpse. “You played us!”

“We never questioned the Neko Clan's choice.”

Nemo looked down. “It was never our business to question a Clans choice.”

Ren refilled his pipe, and lit it. He had been quiet staring at Yukito's body. The elders watched him take a puff. His eyes made them shudder, they realized why.

“You were close to Madam Mayweather and Hamazaki-san.”

“The greatest regret I ever made....” Ren took another puff. “And they still forgave me. I never deserved their friendship.”

Nemo stood next to Ren. “We were young... and stupid.”

“Heh... To hear her words one more time.” Ren looked at Nemo. “My Clan is not rejoining.”

“We didn't ask... but I appreciate the help you all have provided.”

Ren looked to the elders and they nodded.

“Help us carry Satoshi back to the shrine, so we may return him to the Neko Clan.”

“Of course.”

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Takashi and Hideki searched around the tents where people with grey Mana were being interrogated. Two crows, Gon and Takashi's Wisp, arrived landing on their shoulders.

“The Wisps are heading to meet with your friends.” Gon said and Takashi nodded.

“Thanks.”

“What's happening?” Gon looked at the guards dragging a woman out of a tent.

“The Society is interrogating people with grey Mana and placing them in holding area.”

“Why?”

“Because of the Arcadians. Whatever they did—”

Hideki raised his hand up and everyone ducked behind a box. Couple of guards with a police officer walked by talking.

“So the mayor is really going through with martial law.” The guard said to the officer.

“Yes. We should receiving our Kevlar armor and stronger weapons soon.”

“It will be a pleasure working alongside you.”

“I'll do my best against magic.”

Hideki and Takashi looked at the guards and policeman walking away. They looked to each other surprised at what was going on. Without saying a word, they continued their search. It was long and

tiring. Gon looked up at the sky and sensed dawn was approaching. It was hard for him to tell as the stars looked unusual.

“Why is that star east? It should be the west.”

Takashi and Hideki looked up but there was nothing strange about.

“It looks fine.” Hideki said.

“Hmm... Sayako mentioned that earlier.”

“It's been a long night and the sun is going to rise. Lets get our focus back to finding the twins and the Perez sisters.”

They reached the end of the camp and there was only forest ahead. Takashi's Wisp flapped its wings, looking deep inside. The boys approached the edge of the forest. There was a faint light in the distance. They turned to each other.

“Only one way to find out.” Takashi said, leading Hideki and the Wisp inside. They carefully navigated through the leaves. Twigs snapping, barely any around them. Upon a single touch, the tree felt like a statue. Takashi stumbled back, accidentally jabbing his arm into stone branch. Hideki hurried Takashi into the light and looked at the wound.

“It's okay. A quick bandage will do.” As Hideki and Gon ripped the sleeve off, Takashi looked toward the light and his eyes grew wide.

There was a pond of grey Mana surrounded by spotlights. Scientists were analyzing the mist, with computer monitors and chemistry sets. They noticed the boys on the other side. When Takashi and Hideki took one step, the sound of a click froze them in place. The guards had rifles aimed at them as the crows attempted to fly off, by they were snagged by a spell, pulling them back to the guards.

“Easy.” Mrs. Saito arrived from a path. “They're civilians.”

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Sayako struggled to keep Rumiko steady as her friend showed signs of passing out. She saw foxes and dogs gathered by a bench in a panic. Sayako paused for a moment but Rumiko held her hand to ease her alarm.

"It's Nina and Goro." Rumiko smiled as she collapsed to the ground.

"Rumiko!" A fox said running towards the girls with a dog following her.

"Are you... Nina?" Sayako said to the fox.

"Yes." Nina looked at Rumiko. "What happened?"

As Sayako was about to speak, guards talking in the distance got her attention. Goro spoke.

"Something is wrong." Goro looked to Sayako in a panic.

"The Society are torturing people like Rumiko and they have Ayane in a holding area with other people and the... and the..."

"Okay," Nina said. "Calm down. Look at me."

As Sayako looked at Nina, the foxes and dogs lined up in front of Goro. It was like watching soldiers ready for battle. A couple of larger foxes arrived, they carefully propped Rumiko on Goro's back.

"Can you run?" Goro said to Sayako.

"Yes."

"We'll cover you." The lead dog said.

"Be careful." Goro said. "The humans are not themselves."

"Let's go." Nina said to Sayako tugging her clothes.

As Nina and Goro lead Sayako and Rumiko to safety, the Society guards arrived to the growling of foxes and dogs, channeling their Mana.

TO BE CONTINUED...

