

Arcana Magi Zero + Pure - c.8

by H-M Brown

As the Society called for reinforcements, Alysia and Megumi waited patiently for Emi to finish talking to her mother. They saw the horrified look in Mrs. Akamatsu's eyes as she heard her daughter give an abridged account of what happened to her and Mayumi. Tears fell down and she shook her head side to side. She looked at Alysia and Megumi with mixed emotions. She planted her hands on Emi staring into her eyes.

"How? Your eyes." Mrs. Akamatsu approached Alysia and Megumi and looked at their eyes as well. "What have they done to you girls?"

Alysia looked away, unsure of how to express herself as Megumi prepared to talk but Emi stepped in.

"We have to go to the Manasphere now."

"Right." Megumi said and walked past Mrs. Akamatsu. She stood next to Emi ready to open the portal. "It's been a long time since I opened the portal. I can't believe that memory returned."

"Alysia?" Emi said and the girls watched her struggle to say something to Mrs. Akamatsu."

"I...I'm..." Alysia stepped back, her eyes trembling. She felt liked she was being judged even though Mrs. Akamatsu has not said anything to her. Just as Mrs. Akamatsu reached to her with her hand, Alysia walked away from her. "Excuse me."

"Wait." Mrs. Akamatsu said as the Society approached them. "Don't do this. Let the authorities go into the Manasphere and get Mayumi back."

Megumi paused for a moment, understanding Mrs. Akamatsu's concern, but looking back at the Society, she shook her head in rejection. "They could go in, but they are connected to the Manasphere. They'll fall into madness and it will alert the

Arcadians.”

“Then let an adult who can.”

“Excuse me.” One of the Society soldiers said. “We can't allow you girls to go into a dangerous area. We have already informed the triage that you will four will be arriving.”

“See.” Mrs. Akamatsu said. “Let them handle this Manasphere and rescue Mayumi.”

“I'm sorry ma'am. But we don't have the orders to go into the Manasphere.”

“My daughter is in there. She's been kidnapped!”

“I understand, but the city is consolidating all able bodied personnel. There is an invasion force in the city.”

“Invasion force?”

“Who?” Alysia said.

“More of those Nocturne have arrived, we have been ordered to get you all to the triage where evacuation are underway.”

Emi approached her mother. “We don't have time for this. Mom?”

Mrs. Akamatsu looked at Emi and received daughter's hug. “I will rescue Mayumi. I promise, and I'll tell you everything. Everything.”

Emi and her mother looked at each other. Emi slipped her arms away. She felt a slight tug of her mother's hands, but pulled herself away.

Alysia spoke as Megumi opened the portal shocking the Society. “It's okay, Mrs. Akamatsu. We know our way around. We will rescue Mayumi.”

As Alysia jumped into the portal, Emi looked one last time at her mother, frozen in shock at what was happening, unable to respond or do anything.

“Stop!” The soldiers said hurrying to grab the girls.

“Emi.” Megumi said.

“Right.” Emi jumped in and Megumi followed.

The portal closed on the Society and Mrs. Akamatsu calmed herself. “Emi's all grown up.”

"Ma'am." The soldiers said getting Mrs. Akamatsu. "I'm sorry I wasn't fast enough."

"Find a way my daughters and those girls back."

"We'll do what we can." The soldier said getting on the radio and reported what just happened and another soldier escorted Mrs. Akamatsu to the triage.

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Mayumi stood alone in the Manasphere. Grey Mana was everyone for as far as the horizon. She stood still like a statue, unable to move or express emotion. Her brain pulsated, struggling to make her body move naturally. To do something. Instead, her memories wandered as far back as the first day she and Emi saw Mana. The fear in her sister's eyes as they struggled to understand what it was. It was the most important day her life as everything she experienced led to this moment.

Every facet of her experience, from training with Nina, to talking to Alysia and Megumi over the phone, to fighting Emi, to her friends at the Cooking Club was relived, but one thing she had in consistently in mind, was to scream. Scream at how unfair everything was. What she gave up to protect Emi, to save Emi from all of this. All of this effort just to have her sister home safe.

Her thoughts asked. "Why me? Why am I going through all of this? Why am I getting hurt?"

The same questions rambled over and over as voices began to whisper in her ear. There was wind around her, but not the same type of wind in the real world. She sensed what it was but could not physically express what she felt on her body. The wind gently caressed her, trying to ease her pain. Mayumi started feeling the movement of her muscles, her fingers twitched. The Vermillion hairclips fought back to control her like shackles pinning her to the floor.

Mayumi stopped, and instead allowed the wind to guide her. She dug deep into her soul, as her the madness of the Manasphere entered her mind. One side had to give to the other and Mayumi let her mind fall into the overwhelming crush of the information feeding

to her. Focused on her soul, she saw the grey Mana moving around. It was as if life was around her, living things. Her mind however, could not grasp the creatures' true form. It was incomprehensible.

The pain became prominent in her mind and body. She felt movement, compelled to suppress the madness. With all of her strength, she moved her hands onto the hairclips and struggled to pull them off. Her mind slipped further and further away to a near infantile state, the floating spirits around her were to frightening to look at. Her soul, her spiritual connection, grew stronger that she synchronized it with her mind. A light growled built up under her breath. The hairclips jostled. Tears fell down her cheeks. And with a roar, she pulled the hairclips out.

Mayumi dropped to her knees screaming and crying in pain of the madness. Her spiritual energy exploded with an image of what she could make out of the creatures to allow her to look at them and visualize. The energy spread across the entire Manasphere for as far as it could go. Mayumi fell on ground. Her hand over her pounding heart, gasping for breath.

Her blurred vision came back into focus. She saw a pair of grey paws. It was a four legged-animal with long floppy ears. The front paws acted like hands despite its feet like feature. It had a long tail and grey eyes. Grey fur with a white stripe. It also looked angry.

It spoke, with an adult man's voice. "What have you done to us?"

Mayumi struggled to speak, or move when another creature approached her. It was identical to the grey creature but in lavender and purple and grey eyes. And it spoke with an adult woman's voice. "Her mind is broken Barel."

"Marel?" The grey creature. "What happened to you?"

"It would appear that we have been given a physical state."

Marel stood before Mayumi and checked on her health. "Her mind reached a childlike state while channeling her spiritual Mana to free herself from Vermillion."

"I see. This was the best she could to visualize us, but how did we end up stuck with these bodies."

"As a priestess of the wind, she attuned to us."

A crowd began murmur as they emerged from the grey Mana. They were all sorts of different creatures. Small and furry-like creatures. All confused at their appearance, they gathered around Mayumi as she laid before them struggling to recover.

"Young priestess." Marel said. "We are the Mana Spirits. Inhabitants of the Manasphere."

"Ma... Mayumi..." She struggled to lift herself up but collapsed. The wind surrounded her getting Barel's attention and he nodded. "The spirit of the wind here in the Manasphere is also attuned to her."

"Her soul is separated." Marel said using her energy to analyze Mayumi's soul. "This is why she is in pain. We must focus Irydia's Blessing upon this child and restore her soul to her body."

All of the Mana Spirits united together, and their collective energy called out to Irydia's Blessing. The energy and spirit of the wind created a hand. Lifted Mayumi up and reached into the gem containing her soul. It gently removed Mayumi's soul out. There was signs of life threatening injuries visible on her soul. It shocked Marel, but she kept focus. Irydia's Blessing and the spirit of the wind, healed Mayumi's soul. The gem was removed first, and Mayumi's vermillion costume changed back to her regular costume. Everyone carefully placed the soul back inside her body and lowered her on to the ground. Her eyes closed, her breathing restore to normal. Marel stood by her side, gently rubbing Mayumi's forehead.

"I will stay with the priestess as she recovers, Barel."

"Very well." Barel turns to all of the Mana Spirits. "Scout out the others and see how far the priestesses energy reached. We need to count how many of us have been given this form. Watched out for the outsiders. They must not know what has happened to us."

All of the Mana Spirits nodded, and ran or flew off across the Manasphere.

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Keiko nursed the cut on her arm. She heard voices not far away, but it was the sound of panicking. She walked up the slop and saw medics pushing gurneys, carrying babies, and sitting the injured

onto wheelchairs. A female medic noticed her and hurried to her aide.

"I have an injured girl here!" The medic said approaching Keiko. "It's okay, we'll take care of you."

"I need to tell someone from the Society."

"Sorry, but they're all being deployed to the city. There is an invasion force marching towards this shrine and we are evacuating everyone."

"I can help fight."

"You're just a kid. This is not a game. Come with me."

Keiko listened and followed the medic. She was led to a seat where the medic opened up a first aide kit. She looked at the wound and saw how deep the cut is.

"You need stitches." The medic applied disinfected and wrapped a gauze over the wound. "Unfortunately, I don't have the stitches with me and the doctors are busy with the seriously injured patients. Perhaps the Society medics could help you. Where are your parents?"

"I... I don't know."

"It's okay. Once we settle in the new triage area, we'll try and find your family." The medic waved an officer nearby. "This girl is separated from her family."

The police officer nodded. "I'll take her to check in."

"Please, I need to see someone from the Society. I have to tell them about these people I saw."

"They are very busy preparing to fight the Nocturne reinforcements."

"Reinforcements?"

As Keiko continued to explain what she heard from Darius and Myrianna, she noticed Takashi in the distance walking towards a group of people.

"Sakuraba-san!" Keiko ran towards Takashi waving, ignoring the police officer following her. She stopped before Takashi and realized that was his family he is with. Takashi told his parents that she's with him, and as they talked with the officer, Keiko told Takashi what

she heard.

"That sounds like the Arcadians the Perez sisters told us about while you were with Emi in the city." Takashi looked back at his family as they bowed goodbye to the officer. "We have other problems as well."

"Yeah, the Perez Sisters and Akamatsu twins are taken into custody. We got separated. Is as trying to find them, but the Society was searching for me."

"Tomiko is missing also."

"What?"

"She was in shock when she heard what happened to family. When these evacuations started, my parents went to get her and she was gone."

"Where is everyone else?"

"Hideki left with the Karasu Clan after we freed the imprisoned people with grey eyes. Akane and Sayako are with Rumiko at a medics station to tend to her wounds."

"Where do we begin?"

"We search for Tomiko." Takashi looked at Keiko's staff. "Do you know how to do communication like a radio through spells?"

Keiko nodded. "Yes. But I don't know if Rumiko, the Perez sisters and the twins have that ability."

"We can give it a try."

TO BE CONTINUED...

