

Arcana Magi Pure - c.5

by H-M Brown

Mayumi and Emi exited their rooms and looked at each other. There was nothing to say. It would just become another argument. Emi however, took her sister's arm and looked at the bandage. Her normal green eyes stared coldly at the wound made by one of the large centipedes. Mayumi realized there was some sense of emotion from Emi wanting to come out. Her sister placed her hands over the wound with gentleness. Two bands of light appeared over both wrists like bracelet, yet never touching her skin. They rotated in a circle revealing strange text that was not part of any language.

"Mend." Emi said with a cold voice.

Mayumi winced from the pain of her skin tightening and stretching. When Emi stopped, Mayumi removed the bandaged. The burn she received from the centipede was gone. She looked up to her sister who walked toward the stairs.

"What was that around your wrists?"

"My soul."

With Emi out of sight, Mayumi struggled to comprehend what she just heard. It left her more questions about this goddess Hikari. She hurried down the stairs and grabbed Emi before she entered the dining room.

"What happened last night?"

"It's alright Mayumi. The ritual went well and I am a priestess now."

"It's not and you know it."

"I'll admit. Watching my soul go through the trial was painful. It was as if I was at two places at once. My heart really hurt when my soul returned, but I endured it and passed. Now I can fulfill my duty as Hikari's priestess and bring light to the world. We should hurry and eat. We'll be late for school."

"Emi..." Mayumi really wanted to repeat everything she said yesterday, but at this point, it felt useless. She really did not want to lose her sister to this dangerous force, but the last thing she wanted

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was to lose her ability to talk to her. To create a distance where Emi would never come to her when she needs her. That would take away any chance of changing Emi's mind about Hikari. "Thank you... for healing my arm."

"You're welcome." Emi walked to the dining room ready to have breakfast.

* * *

It was the end of the school day and all the students left the homeroom. Mayumi and Emi stepped out of the door together when suddenly Ayane stood before Emi nearly running her over.

"Mayumi, are you ready to cook?"

"Excuse me?" Emi said taking a step back.

"I see you cut your hair. It's amazing."

"Uh... Ayane..." Mayumi leaned to the side behind Emi and waved.

The Club leader looked at the sisters and her eyes grew wide at what she saw.

"You're both clones!"

"We're twins!"

"Oh..." Ayane smiled. "How cute? Would you like to join the Cooking Club?"

"Cooking Club?" Emi turned to Mayumi. "You joined the Cooking Club?"

"Well I guess you could say that."

"That's great." Emi said shocking Mayumi. "I'm glad you found something to do. You're probably going to make more friends then."

"You two must do all kinds of stuff together right?" Ayane said.

"We're kind of..." Mayumi said.

"...trying to do our own thing now." Emi said. "I'm actually on the track team so I'm sorry, I can't join your club."

"Aww... you two would have looked cute in matching outfits. Oh well one will have to do. Let's go." Ayane pulled Mayumi without giving her a chance to say something to Emi. She pulled her across the hall and down the stairs all the way to home economics room. Ayane led Mayumi inside waving hello. "We're here!"

Mayumi stood by the wall, twisting her hands. She saw Takashi standing next a boy with a smile that said he did something wrong and a girl with light and dark brown hair that made her looked electrocuted.

"Hello. My name is Mayumi Akamatsu."

"Oh..." The boy said crossing his arms. "We have ourselves a keeper. I am Hideki Yoshida. I see you keep yourself in shape."

"What?" Mayumi's face blushed when she saw Ayane punch him in the face.

"Show some respect!" Ayane pulled him into a headlock and left gasping for air. "Say you're sorry."

"I'm... I'm... can't breathe."

"Don't worry about him." The girl said approaching Mayumi. "My name is Tomiko Kobayashi, future World Steel Chef."

"World Steel Chef?"

"You don't watch the show? World Steel Chef? It is the greatest competition for over fifty years. Sanctioned by the world's greatest culinary organization... Feeeeeast. I will be its grand champion."

"I see." Mayumi looked at the club and found herself among an unusual group. She felt out of place. They started passing around aprons, preparing all the equipment, and washing their hands. Ayane tied an apron around Mayumi catching her off guard. Mayumi sensed something weird about the room. She turned to the window and saw a grey crow perched out the window. It looked like the same crow from yesterday.

"Hey Mayumi." Hideki said. "What are you looking at?"

"That crow." She pointed at the bird.

"Oh that's just our little neighbor. If he's bothering you just smack him away like this." Hideki approached the window, opened it, and he swat it away like bug. "See?"

Mayumi hurried to the window and saw the crow flying in a circle. For some odd reason Mayumi wondered why it was not flying away.

"That was cruel."

"Not as cruel as Takashi's cooking." He smiled closing the

window and Mayumi giggled.

"Watch it Yoshida." Takashi said in the distance and Hideki walked passed Mayumi with a wink.

Mayumi turned to the club and saw them having fun. Poking and prodding each other as Ayane pulled out a recipe for them. She smiled realizing that she was in good company.

"Don't just stand there Mayumi." Tomiko waved. "We're can't start without you."

* * *

Late in the afternoon at the Shrine of Four Mythic Elements, Nina tried out the cookies Mayumi made and her head shook. She stepped away from the bag, struggling to get the taste out. Nina looked up to Mayumi, in her school gym clothes, taking the cookies away from her, and receiving a stare that could kill her.

"You need more work Mayumi."

"It was my first time." Mayumi placed the cookies in her bookbag and walked to the middle of the open floor surrounded by trees. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Mayumi focused her breathing, drawing in all the energy she felt around her. The wind and the air moved around her body. The flow wedged between her fingertips. It was a strange feeling she experienced. Like it was one with her body. It frightened her and yet felt right. Without thought or instruction, she pulled the air with the Mana and held it in the palm of her hands. She opened her eyes, staring at the ball of air. Solid and warm, she smiled at her success. That was until it warped and burst, knocking her on the ground. "I... I had it. What did I just do?"

"You harnessed an element. It seems you can control the wind."

Mayumi's hands shook for a bit. It was not nervousness or fear that caused it, but excitement. She curled them into a fist and stood to her feet. Mayumi raised her hands up when a large fox appeared with a wooden box on his back.

"Oh good" Nina said. "It's here."

"What's that?" Mayumi said when the fox stood before her. She knelt down and took it. When the fox quietly left, Mayumi opened it

and found old parchment, a brush and an inkbottle.

"You're going to draw a magic circle."

"Huh?"

"From what you did yesterday with your hands, we can't risk getting you injured anymore. This circle is common among the Miyazaki-clan, but it is rare among Magi to use. It's fast. It requires very few words to chant, and draws jealousy out of everyone. Don't expect to make many Magi friends with this."

"So how do I do this?" Mayumi sat on the bench and took out the paper and brush.

"Draw a circle first using the very tip of the brush. Channel your Mana while doing so. Since you summoned the wind, use that as your guide."

Mayumi channeled her Mana and placed the brush on the paper but created a large blot ruining it. She crushed the paper and tried again. This time droplets fell down at the edges of the paper.

"Come on!"

"Mayumi!" Nina said throwing the ruined page away. "You must relax. Focus."

"I am!"

Page after page, each drawing was a failure. When she channeled Mana her hands would shake. When summoning the wind, the air would push the paper around. She threw the brush on the floor landing in front of a pair of feet.

"You'll never help your sister if you give up so easily." A female said picking up the brush.

Mayumi and Nina saw a black haired girl accompanied by a large white dog. She had a ponytail and wore a blue skirt with a white blouse, red ascot, and a brooch with a blue gem embedded. She placed her bookbag on the floor, and with the dog, they bowed. Mayumi and Nina got up and bowed back.

"My name is Keiko Urashima and this is my teacher Goro."

"Please to meet you." He said.

"My name is Mayumi Akamatsu and this is Nina."

"You're from the Inu?" Nina said.

"Yes." Goro said. "We are here on behalf of Inari Shrine. We've come to form an alliance regarding this girl's sister."

"Wait are you...?"

"I'm Shining Star."

"You look so different." Mayumi looked her hair. "Didn't you have dog ears?"

"Hee hee... it's part of my transformation spell. Don't you have one?"

"No. Though I don't like the idea of running in around those tacky outfits."

"Please ladies." Goro said. "If we can get to business, I would like to hear her story. You'll have plenty of time to talk about fashion later."

"Oh right. Sorry Sensei."

Mayumi told her story about everything. It left Keiko trembling from the idea that Emi's soul was actually taken out of her body. She never thought such a thing was possible. Goro walked around a bit with his head down and sat before the ladies.

"This is worse than I could imagine. You're sister actually agreed to that?"

"Yeah."

"You realize that fighting her is inevitable."

"I know. That is why I'm trying my best to learn everything I can, even Purify. But I don't know if that would work on Emi."

"Unless your sister shows resistance or the will to reject what she accepted, purification would not work. This corrupted Mana and power she embraced cannot be removed until then. I'm sorry but we of the Inu must do everything we can to stop her and false goddess Hikari."

"I understand."

"Mayumi." Keiko said.

"I... I just wish killing wasn't the answer."

"Don't think like that!" Keiko said with her arms crossed. "I wanted this alliance because I know what it felt like not knowing about Mana. When I first saw Mana I was scared too. I felt lost

because nobody saw it. I lost all of my friends because of this. I was so alone until I met Goro. Now, I fight to protect people and their friends as Shining Star. Your sister is alone and relying on the Mukado for help. She was not fortunate to have met Goro and I don't want to see anything bad happen to her because she was scared. So no, killing her is the last we'd want to do, if it goes beyond our control and the world would be destroyed. But there are others who will, and that's why we want to form this alliance."

"To be fair." Goro said. "This goddess Hikari is not a natural goddess. She may not even exist. We have to know who or what she is before we can engage in battle. I would suggest that you learn Purification no matter how useless you think it is. It may prove useful at some point in the battle ahead."

Mayumi looked at the litter of paper throughout the floor. She received the brush from Keiko and took it. With Emi on her mind, Mayumi nodded. She turned to Keiko and Goro with a focused look, and she sat on the bench ready to draw again.

"Let's do our best Mayumi."

"Thank you. I know we can save Emi."

* * *

Back at home, late in the evening with the weekend set. Mayumi sat on the couch with a blanket over her body. Emi approached her munching on a charred cookie and her head shook. She sat next to Mayumi looking at the television show of a female samurai and a female ninja fighting each other. Emi took the remote but Mayumi snatched it away.

"I'm watching that."

"No fair Mayumi. Island Heart is on."

"It's a rerun. We're stuck with Dynasty Sisters."

"Great." Emi took another bite of the charred cookie and winced.

"You don't have to force yourself. I know the cookie is bad."

"You'll get better at it." Emi finished eating the cookie and laid back on the couch. She watched the two women on the television fighting each other. Her eyes shifted to Mayumi, who watched intently, focused on the plot. "Will we end up like them? Fighting

each other as sisters?"

"If you keep going the path you took, then yes."

"So you don't have a problem fighting me?"

"No Emi. You made your choice and I've made mine."

"I could fight you now you know."

"But you won't."

"How do you know?" Emi leaned closer to face her sister and Mayumi looked her in the eyes.

"Because you would not have saved me from the Mukado when they attacked yesterday. You would have killed me then or forced me to serve Hikari. Your heart is good, but you don't really know what you want. I know you're scared inside and just wanted someone to give you answers."

Emi pulled away from her sister and slid away from her with a pout. They just sat there quietly watching the samurai and ninja reveal themselves to the shogun as sisters and banding together to fight despite their differences. Emi watched the event unfold and wiped a tear from her eye.

By the end of the show, Emi's head landed on Mayumi's shoulder. Mayumi's eyes opened and smiled at the peaceful face of her sister. It was a frightening week with the coming days ahead so uncertain. But for this one moment, Mayumi was happy to see her sister the way she was before they discovered Mana. Mayumi threw her blanket over her sister. She gave some slack to allow Emi to wrap herself in it. Mayumi pulled out the parchment paper with the magic circle incomplete but there was a little Mana on the ink. She looked up at the ceiling and smiled knowing that she has new friends and allies. She was not alone.

Mayumi closed her eyes and fell asleep with a sense of comfort and warmth of security, knowing she and Emi were together for this moment as sisters.

THE END.

