

Magic Knight Rayearth

Volume 1

Lucy Robin

Intro

Nakayoshi asked CLAMP to pitch a magical girl series. They gave them three best friends, magical giant robots, and subverted JRPG expectations!

We're Lucy and Robin, and we'll be your guides through CLAMP's Wonderland!

Check-In

- Shout out to the CLAMP book club that's listening to us!
- Hit our first Patreon goal! The podcast now pays for itself (though not for us haha)
- Snow!
- I had to rewire my brain to research this one!!
 - I loved Magic Knight Rayearth when I first read it. It was more like the super hero comics I loved already, plus giant robots, plus just way more girls and pretty boys than I was used to being treated to.
 - Reading American comics was always a push-pull for me. I loved so much about them--speculating about the uses and drawbacks of superpowers, the political drama with aliens and demons and sometimes literally the president of the United States, the interpersonal stories about people trying to protect the same population who hated and feared them...
 - But with a few notable exceptions, they weren't made to focus on or appeal directly to an actual little girl.
 - Certainly not a baby queer girl.
 - Rayearth...did. AND it had giant robots and magic swords and big sad eyes.
 - So i was all over it.
 - I was also reading this around the time I had access to more video games, which helped its relevance to me, too.
 - How about you, Lucy? Do you remember how you felt about Rayearth?
 - I know I saw the anime first, and it must have been when I was in middle school...so like around 1999. I'm pretty sure I watched it dubbed, and I don't think I realized it was connected to other CLAMP things. It's possible

I actually watched it before getting into CCS, but I'm not positive. This could actually be my first CLAMP work?

- I watched Rayearth before playing many video games. At least, not the kind of jrpgs Rayearth is inspired by.
- However, it still reminded me a lot of fantasy adventure stories. And the fact that it was girls going on the adventure didn't really strike me as notable, since I'd grown up reading *Dealing with Dragons* and other books that had really prominent, practical, non-nonsense girls on fantastical adventures.
- Now it impresses me just so much more. Before reading this volume, I forgot they did so much literal fighting, and not just magical-girl-with-a-wand fighting.
 - Not that magical girls aren't badass, but the Rayearth girls are literally taking down monsters with swords and arrows.
- Anyway, I have a lot stronger memories of revisiting it in college, when two friends and I cosplayed the main trio (I was Fuu). By then I had the manga, and I really connected with a lot of the themes...most of which I've forgotten by now. I don't remember the anime at all at this point, so it's going to be interesting when we eventually watch it and talk about the differences.

Background

- Before we talk about Rayearth, we have to set the scene a little bit.
- Backing up to 1991, when a little manga you may have heard of was launched in Nakayoshi--Sailor Moon.
 - Nakayoshi is a shoujo manga 'phone book'-style magazine (that is, one of those big phone-book sized monthly publication that usually came packaged with 'furoku' (little extras like paper dolls, cards, stationary, etc) to encourage kids to buy their own instead of just all sharing the same copy.
 - It was founded in the 50s and still circulates 100,000 copies a month.
 - That's nothing compared to the ONE MILLION COPIES it was circulating in 1993, however, when it reached its peak. That was SHounen Jump numbers.
 - These days comic magazine circulation is way, way down
 - WHich I think is important to keep in mind throughout our podcast and also part of why we are so pushy about buying books!
 - COmics will die if we don't buy them, and while going indie can work for a select few, it tends to be even more starvation-wages than industry jobs, and I suspect employs even fewer if we're talking about absolute numbers of people making rent.
 - Part of why Nakayoshi was selling a million copies in 1993 was Sailor Moon.
 - It was a phenomenon.

- THEY ALSO WERE INTRIGUED because damn, you want that young audience.
 - Not only because they were maybe already feeling a little burn-out with adult themes and violence, but also...
 - Because growing your audience is how you survive!
 - Kids...as a kid-lit person I can tell you that no one gives a shit about books like kids. Didn't you? We did, that's why we're still talking about our favorite books as kids!
 - The older the audience, the fewer books they have time to read...is my charitable thing to say about adults. Who could also just...stand to do more reading.
 - It's great to get into a perspective that isn't your own! Great to learn new things and expose yourself to new ideas and go on a fun adventure and cry for someone who isn't yourself and maybe learn about yourself too!
 - And also like, escape into another world completely on your own. Or with friends through audiobooks and reading aloud. This has turned into an add for reading. Today is the perfect day to order a book from anywhere that isn't Amazon. *finger guns*
- ANYWAY they started developing Magic Knight Rayearth.
 - Ohkawa says, in her interview with Animerica in 1996, that she thinks that without Sailor Moon, they never would have been able to sell a comic with giant robots in it to Nakayoshi.
 - She is probably right.
 - Bandai and Sunrise still gender giant robot toys and shows heavily in order to keep little boys buying the crap out of them. There's a lot of weird gendered marketing/weaponized sexism going on in these industries that really limits what ends up being published or marketed.
- And Magic Knight Rayearth has giant robots in it.
 - In fact, they combined a bunch of their favorite things to make something they felt was a good balance of elements that could just possibly make it work for Nakayoshi (especially in a post sci-fi/sentai-tinged magical girl world thanks to Sailor Moon): Role-playing video games, sentai hero team dynamic and color-coding, giant robots, high

fantasy designs...and of course it is also full of their trademark themes and atypical relationships.

- It is very consciously using the structure and tropes of JRPGs (which they played a lot of.)
 - I kind of love Ohkawa saying that she doesn't have good reflexes so RPGs are a good bet for her. Same, Ohkawa, same.
- We would now also probably classify it as an 'isekai' story--that is, they are normal teens who go to another world where magic exists, and is heavily inspired by video games. But this was almost 20 years ago, and Wizard of Oz did the same thing (and Alice in Wonderland before that!) so it isn't as though this basic premise is a modern invention.
 - It is even referencing video games through JRPGs not MMOs, so while it felt very fresh at the time it's weirdly right in line with one of the more...bloated genres in anime right now, alas.
- ANYWAY Nakayoshi went for it, and CLAMP took on another major project right when X was gaining momentum and Tokyo Babylon was wrapping up.
 - Magic Knight Rayearth ran from 1993-February 1995, and by the time it wrapped up they had already agreed to fast-track a sequel series for Nakayoshi so starting MARCH 1995-April 1996, they blew through another entire series!
 - Both were collected in 3 tankoubon each, 6 in total
 - It is often re-issued this way, though about 10 years ago Darkhorse released some very good-selling omnibuses that are now out of print.
- Cute fact! The 'Rayearth' part of the name is something Ohkawa credits to Takeshi Okasaki.
 - Not the guy who created Afro Samurai, different guy
 - This is the guy who did Elementalors and Explorer Woman Ray
 - They asked him to come up with something that sounded like a car name!
 - ...THIS IS BECAUSE all the characters are named after cars (well, the Japanese names for different makes/models, often those did not survive localization) because, according to Ohkawa, they felt that kids had a hard time memorizing names in katakana (this simplified characters used to write foreign words, so she definitely meant foreign 'fantasy'-sounding names) and figured that if they had car names as a frame of reference, that would help!
 - God, same. I am so bad at katakana.

- They put a ton of effort into picking colors and design elements ahead of time to make the different sides of the various conflicts distinct, and to distinguish between the characters in the color artwork as well as black and white manga interiors.
 - There is a character named Serio who has a green theme and a scar on his face.
 - They..say that is because they had a green Serio with a big scratch on the front.
 - I think this is very, very cute.
 - **OMG**
 - Besides the comic series, a very successful TV anime AND OVA series AND multiple video games also came out over the years, but we'll talk more about those as we get to them in the timeline!
 - Magic Knight Rayearth represented a lot of firsts for CLAMP. Their first big series that was a wholly original pitch and wasn't rooted in the CLAMP-school doujin-verse. Their first series running in a magazine with mostly elementary school girl readers. Their first big anime hit.
 - There is a statistic from Dark Horse estimated about 200,000 copies of Magic Knight Rayearth have been sold in the US alone.
 - It is beautifully illustrated--Ohkawa says it's very representative of their mid-career style--and packs a LOT of punch into 6 tight volumes.
 - So let's get started with number one and dive right into the world of Cephiro!

Summary

- **Alright, lets go!**
- **The book opens with a beautiful flower. Inside it is a girl with long blonde hair, who is praying.**
 - She calls to the "Legendary Magic Knights," asking them to save her world, and a pillar of energy leaps from the jewel on her forehead, ascending into the sky.
- We follow her plea to Tokyo Tower.
 - Multiple schools are apparently visiting the tower today, and we focus on a group of girls.
 - One of the girls, Hikaru, is very energetic and cute. Her friends are all kind of over Tokyo Tower, but it hasn't damped her enjoyment at all.
 - I'm guessing schools in Tokyo end up going there all the time, so it's kind of old-hat, whereas I'd definitely be like **OMG TOKYO TOWER**. But I mean, that may be partially because of CLAMP...
 - ...ok very because of CLAMP.
 - Hikaru runs out of change for the telescope she's using to sight-see, and a passing girl from another school, Fuu, fills it up for her.
 - Fuu is very lovely and polite, and maybe thinks Hikaru is a little kid.

- As Hikaru is going to thank Fuu, she sees another group of girls from yet another school.
 - One girl, Umi, catches her eye for being especially pretty and glamorous
 - Hikaru is a little impressed in general because the other two girls are from fancy private schools.
- Anyway, the three girls spot each other, and then a light appears. It's blinding, consuming the tower, and for a moment they see the girl, and hear her voice. Again, she asks for the Legendary Magic Knights to save her world.
- The floor below them turns to water, and Hikaru, Umi, and Fuu are swallowed up
- The water releases them moments later...but they're not at Tokyo Tower anymore. In fact, they're falling through the sky!
 - And what's more, the scenery around them looks completely different. Hikaru spots three landmarks: a volcano, an ocean, and a mountain floating in the sky.
 - There are also, like, dragon-looking things in the sky below them, and ho boy lots of fantasy world nonsense. It's great.
 - As the girls are panicking about the, you know, probably-falling-to-their-deaths thing, they are saved by a giant flying fish.
 - Their arrival has not gone unnoticed. We see that they are being watched by an ominous man in an ominous room wearing an ominous cloak.
 - He observes that Princess Emeraude--the girl we saw before--used the last of her power to summon the Legendary Magic Knights...but he's doubtful that these children are really qualified to be magic knights.
 - Back in her flower (which may or may not be a metaphorical flower), Princess Emeraude continues calling for the Magic Knights.
 - Meanwhile, the flying fish brings our heroines down to the ground, where they continue to (rightfully) panic and try to figure out where the heck they are.
 - They have some theories...maybe the volcano is an erupting Mt. Fuji? But no, it's pretty clear they're no longer in Tokyo.
 - They also introduce themselves, and we learn that Hikaru has an affinity for animals, as she's able to communicate with the flying fish.
 - They're all fourteen and in eighth grade, which surprises them because Umi and Fuu had definitely both assumed Hikaru was younger than them.
 - They get on her for being baby-faced...and speaking of baby-faced, a boy in elaborate robes appears.
 - He most definitely looks younger than all of them, but nope, he's actually 745 years old. He's also surprised that the Legendary Magic Knights are so young.
 - He explains that he's the one who sent the flying fish--Fyula--to save them. But, he's not the reason they're here. They were summoned here--to Cephire--by Princess Emeraude. They are her champions: the Legendary Magic Knights.
 - Hikaru thinks this is awesome, while Umi and Fuu wonder if they've wandered into some video game or something.

- He tries to explain more, but the girls start begging the flying fish to take them home. In response, the boy returns the fish to its Pokeball--I mean to the gem in his staff.
 - He explains that they can't return to their world. The only way they can return home is if they save Cephiro.
 - Naturally, the girls are pretty upset by this. Fuu has a group project due tomorrow, and Umi has a fencing match in two days, but Hikaru really brings the tone down by pointing out that, if they can't go home, they can't see their friends and family again.
- Back in his evil lair--which actually looks like a really relaxing circular meditation room, complete with walls of waterfalls--we see Ominous Man again. Apparently, his name is Zagato. A figure seen through the waterfall asks what he has seen in his water mirror.
 - Zagato explains that the Legendary Magic Knights have been summoned.
 - It looks like there are multiple people just beyond the wall of waterfalls, and they discuss how unfortunate this is. Apparently Princess Emeraude's powers were stronger than they thought, if she can still work to help Cephiro even from within her prison.
 - They're worried that these three might be *the* legendary knights, who will be able to revive the "mashin."
 - Robin, does your version use this term? It's definitely a pun on "machine," right?
 - Yes its definitely a pun on 'machine' in English. My edition uses 'Rune God' citing that most english-language editions of Rayearth do, but has a translation note explaining that the kanji are ma (like, evil but also magic) and shin (god) but yes, it's got punny kanna reading.
 - Yeah, Rune God seems very familiar to me.
 - Zagato's not worried about all this, though. He says that Emeraude's chosen ones are merely children, so there's no reason they should be able to revive the mashin. But, they have been met by Guru Clef--the young-looking old guy who we saw earlier--so they might as well deal with this problem now.
 - He sends Alcione to deal with them. She's a sexy lady in very sexy...armor?
 - She's always reminded me of Kanoe. Well, I guess Kanoe has always reminded me of her, since I definitely saw the Rayearth anime first.
 - Also flashbacks to Miyuki-chan!
- Meanwhile, the girls are still trying to piece together what happened. They remember hearing a voice when they were swept away at Tokyo Tower.
 - Clef explains that the voice they heard was from Princess Emeraude, the Pillar of Cephiro. Before she was imprisoned, their world was peaceful, and all creatures lived in harmony. But ever since she was captured, the world has gone to chaos.
 - As if to prove his point, a big one-eyed monster attacks.
 - Clef fights it off easily with a lightning spell, and explains that the monsters are also new.

- Hikaru asks why chaos fell when the princess was captured, and Clef explains that her title as “pillar” isn’t just a metaphor--she is literally the support structure keeping their world going through her prayers.
- In Cephiro, everything is controlled by ones’ will, and belief is power.
- It was through her belief that Princess Emeraude protected the world, but that all stopped when the priest Zagato abducted her.
- The girls ask why Clef can’t just find her using his powers, but apparently it’s not that easy. Zagato is the second most powerful person in their land, after Princess Emeraude herself.
- Clef is about to say more, but he stops himself. Instead, he explains that the princess saw the three girls in the prophecy, and brought them here to save Cephiro. Only once they fulfill their duty and restore the princess, will they be able to go home.
 - Prophecy alert! Prophecy alert!
- Hikaru is still pretty excited about all this, even though the other two point out how much it feels like a video game. They also wonder why they were chosen as the knights, instead of some local hero from Cephiro.
- This is a fair point, but Clef explains that many people have already tried to save the princess, but so far no one has succeeded.
 - We see an image of lots of armored figures, including feminine ones, with weapons and resolute poses, that have either been lost or are still embroiled in this conflict somewhere.
 - Clef says Only the legendary knights can win, and they must come from *outside* Cephiro to be able to revive the masha.
- Before anything else, though, he decides they are not properly dressed for battle.
 - There are some gags here where he inspects Hikaru’s skirt, Umi calls him a pervert, etc etc, which he resents, but he eventually magics them up some armor.
 - It doesn’t replace their school uniforms, but it does make them look a whole lot cooler!
- When he finds out they don’t know magic, he casts a spell to transfer magic to them. Apparently magic chooses the user, and they are chosen by three different kinds.
 - Hikaru gets fire, Umi gets water, and Fuu gets air or wind or whatever.
 - Clef explains that magic in Cephiro is controlled by the heart, and depending on someone’s strength of will, their magic can be very weak or very strong. Clef thinks they have a lot of potential as magic users.
 - Umi is excited to finally be a witch and use magic for everything, but Clef explains that you can’t use magic needlessly, or you risk it rebounding on you.
 - Fortunately, he can teach them how to control their magic. He starts with Hikaru, helping her focus on the new magic within her. She can feel it, and can almost vocalize it..
 - By the way, whenever Clef uses magic he says a spell out loud.

- Unfortunately, before he can help the other two girls connect to their magic, there is a disturbance in the force, and a cute animal informs Clef that one of Zegato's disciples is on their way.
 - Clef summons a griffin to take the girls away. He tells them his name--finally--and that he's sworn to protect and guide them.
 - He tells them to go west, to the Forest of Silence, and find Presea. She will give them weapons, and they must trust Mokona.
 - As the girls fly off, Alcione appears before Clef. Apparently they've met before...we learn that Clef trained Alcione to protect Princess Emeraude, before she betrayed him to work for Zagato.
 - They fight, but after trading a few spells, Alcione summons a giant two-headed dog to fight Clef, so that she can pursue the magic knights.
- Safe on their griffin, the three girls are concerned about Clef, especially when there is a loud, bright explosion behind them.
 - They don't get very far before Alcione catches up to them, attacking them with an ice spell.
 - Hikaru wants to go back and make sure Clef is alright, but Fuu points out that it was Clef's wish for them to escape. If they go back now, they'll be going against his wishes, and if they really care about him, they need to continue with their mission.
 - It isn't looking good for our heroes (they don't have enough experience points to face an enemy this strong!), but fortunately Hikaru still remembers what Clef taught her. She unleashes her own attack: fire arrows!
 - Alcione's stead--and possibly Alcione herself?--dissolves, and Hikaru collapses, having exhausted her magic for now.
 - They're not sure what to do next. Clef said to head west, but how do they know which way is west? Does the sun set in the east like on Earth? They have no way of knowing!
 - Fortunately, the griffin seems to know the way, and Hikaru can communicate with it. It reminds her of her dog back home, Hikari.
 - Umi says that when they get home, Hikaru should introduce them to her dog...and this cheers Hikaru up. They're thinking positively now!
- However, things are not looking great for Princess Emeraude. She's still calling out for the magic knights, but Zagato appears before her, telling her she's wasted the last of her power summoning the knights. She's no longer a princess, and soon the knights will fail, leaving the mashin asleep.
 - Crying, Princess Emeraude asks Zagato why he's doing this...why doesn't he care what happens to Cephire?
 - Zagato just...smiles.
- Meanwhile, the griffin has taken our girls to a forest (hopefully the *right* forest), where they find a house.
 - They try calling for someone, but no one answers. Fortunately, when they try the door, it opens.

- They feel a little bit bad about going in uninvited...but we're following video game logic here, and it's their job to be adventurous!
- They explore the house until they find a study, which has a cute rabbit-looking creature sitting at a desk. They try to ask it if it's Presea, but before it can respond, a cage falls down, trapping the trio.
- They hear laughter, and a woman runs up, boasting about how she's finally caught Mokona in the act of messing up her study.
 - She has lots of plans for punishment, including a problematic plan involving a Native American headdress and some very reductive imagery...why CLAMP? Why?
 - Especially since like, this is a dumb fantasy world and she shouldn't even know Native American stereotypes so it's very immersion-breaking.
 - However, her plans are quickly thwarted when she realizes Mokona (the cute rabbit-like creature, it turns out) is still at her desk throwing around papers.
 - It takes some explaining (and some more problematic daydreams), but the girls manage to convince her that they are not the ones messing up her study. In fact, they just arrived in this world!
 - It turns out this lady is Presea, and she partially believes them because they were able to open her door. Apparently it's a *special* door that can only open with a specific key
 - (which sounds like most doors, but there's definitely magic involved, since the girls got in without the key)
 - Presea raises the cage, and welcomes the girls as the Legendary Magic Knights. She explains that she's the Chief Pharle of Cephire--a weapons maker.
 - She will be happy to make them weapons to help on their journey, but they won't come free.
 - She can lend them weapons for now, but they will have to gather the material for their own weapons. Presea makes weapons special for each individual person, and for the knights, she will make weapons using *escudo*, a material that will allow the weapons to evolve with the will of the user.
 - These weapons are apparently key to using these "mashin" we keep hearing so much about. Presea is surprised when the girls don't know what she's talking about, but they explain that they had to leave Clef in a hurry, and he didn't have time to explain everything.
 - She doesn't explain everything either, though, and instead prepares them for their journey to the Legendary Spring Eterna, where they can find the *escudo*.
 - Apparently many warriors have searched for this material...but none have ever returned.
 - Cheery!

- She's confident the Legendary Magic Knights will be just fine, though, and she helps them pick weapons for the journey...or rather, be picked *by* weapons, as the weapons are drawn to each girl in turn.
 - Also, to make travel easier, the weapons will be stored in the gems on their gauntlets.
 - This is extra important because apparently magic doesn't work in the forest. The only reason the griffin was able to get here was because of just how strong Clef's magic is. But basically, Hikaru's new magic powers won't be much use for this part of their quest.
 - Presea sends them on their way with Mokona as a guide. Apparently it has all the essentials they need, and although it can only say "puuu", Hikaru has no problem understanding it.
 - As they head off, Presea prays to Princess Emeraude, hoping the girls will be safe.
- The girls head out, but don't get too far before they start to get nervous. Umi is especially concerned that Mokona doesn't seem to know the way (Hikaru says it's just excited to be adventuring with them), and realizes that Mokona supposed to provide them with all the essentials they need...but it doesn't exactly have a backpack or anything on it.
 - Fortunately, Mokona does seem to know the way after all, and the girls run after it.
 - Unfortunately, they run right into a monster. Of course, Hikaru's powers won't work this time, but the girls are able to summon their weapons.
 - We get a better look at them this time. The weapons chose them for a reason.
 - Hikaru, whose family runs a kendo dojo, has a broadsword.
 - Umi, who we already know does fencing, has a rapier.
 - And Fuu, who we learn takes archery, has a bow and arrows.
 - The monster is pretty scary, but the girls are unphased, and they work together to bring it down.
 - It's a really good bonding moment, and the girls decide they will be friends forever--and Fuu and Umi designated Hikaru as their little sister.
- Mokona reappears--apparently it had been hiding--but before they can celebrate too much, an ominous shadow appears.
 - Oh no, it's another monster! And this one looks even bigger and badder than the other one!
 - The girls are raring to fight it, but before they can attack, the monster is slit in half from behind.
 - The monster collapses, and a swordsman with a very anime cross-scar on his cheek appears.
- And that's its for volume one!
 - Mine version (which is one of the Tokyo Pop releases) does have a little omake comic at the end, where the four members of CLAMP basically just introduce themselves and explain their roles in the comic process. Okawa writes it, Mokona

does the character designs and backgrounds, Sastuki is assistant designer and production coordinator, and Nekoi does editing and art direction (and the chibis).

- Apparently Nekoi is also the one that designed Mokona
- They also talk about their love of video games (especially Sonic, even though the games are too hard for them to beat), and the release of the Rayearth video game for the Sega Saturn.
- Like with other omake comics, we're not sure how much of this is translated from the original version, and how much is completely fabricated, so take this area with a grain of salt. It sure is cute, though.

Discussion

- **FIRST OFF** let's talk about the girls!
 - They are so great!
 - I think about that quote from Naoko Takeuchi about Sailor Moon, that she created characters who she'd like to be her friends?
 - This feels like that--they have distinct personalities and flaws, but you'd be in good hands with them as your little core friend group.
 - Hikaru!
 - In my edition in the very beginning, her school-mates say that everyone in her all-girl's school has a bit of a crush on her because she's a tomboy and so earnest
 - I think she's the most like a typical shounen protagonist, or fired-up video game hero!
 - Even her gender-neutral name fits that.
 - I love her so much and would already fight to protect her but honestly she's so much tougher than me it isn't funny.
 - Yeah, my version had that like about them all crushing on her, too! Very cute. Very Utena.
 - I think when I first encountered Rayearth, Hikaru kind of got on my nerves, but now I *love* her.
 - Fuu!
 - What a funny character! The way she's overly polite but also always making kind of silly jokes? So she embodies this big contrast between being kind of a perfect shy sweet beauty-type, and being just so eccentric and weird!
 - I love how often she brings up video games
 - And how friendly she is with everyone
 - She's really not shy, is she?
 - Not gonna lie, in love with her.
 - Yeah, I'd forgotten she had so much personality! I'm always drawn to the kind of mature, kind of shy, glasses-wearing characters, but Fuu is so much more than that! She's really funny and really unflappable.
 - Umi!

- She's SLIGHTLY A BITCH but she's YOUR best bitch, you know?
 - Like, kind of rich a spoiled and imperious, but her heart is actually in the right place and she'd use all her Karen energy on behalf of people who need help, not just selfishly.
 - She's a cool cosmopolitan 90s Tokyo Girl and i may be more in love with her this time than i was as a kid?
 - Yeah, I also love her a lot more now than I did originally. I think she kind of annoyed me when I was young...she really does have snobbish energy, but it's more like she won't take any shit, and she's comfortable being in control.
- The introduction of Mokona!
 - Who kind of replaced the puffer fish as their mascot?
 - I'm not 1000% i'd want a cute mascot character named after me in my work, but if it's my pen name anyway.....maybe its fine?
 - And Satsuki has Satsuki named after her
 - Yeah, I was thinking about that...and it really makes me wonder if they've ever snuck their real names into their series. Like is one of them named Hikaru or Sakura or something?
- Did it remind you of old school JRPGs?
 - Haha yes, but more so now then when I first watched it. Now it reminds me of Tales of Destiny and Final Fantasy 9, both of which I hadn't played until we became friends in high school.
- I was wondering whether you can detect an Alice in WOnderland theme here, too? Mokona is like the white rabbit, right? I'll keep track of that for the Rayearth wrap-up episode!
 - Ooo cool!
- What about the sexy babes in this! Pretty reminiscent of the sexy babes in sailor moon, so not super jarring, right?
 - Yeah...Alcione definitely had...what did we call it, soul-sucking-death-bitch energy? She has that. Feels very sentai.
- We did not mention how Zagato is a smouldering CLAMP hunk
 - He's very Ashura-O, a little Dark Fuuma
 - Oh yeah, 100%. I get a lot of Taishakuten from him.
- So, I kind of have a rant about the character design in this!
 - RG Veda had very ornate character designs for some of the cast, too, but some of the mains here have piles of jewelery and drapery and hair--really complex outfits.
 - Which are a PAIN to draw over and over again, or to keep consistent!
 - I am notorious for not being able to keep things consistent >>
 - So often comic characters are a little more pared-down in terms of design.
 - And anime characters, who will be drawn THOUSANDS OF TIMES will be even simpler
 - With....exceptions, of course.

- BUT video games, where you either have a 3d model or sprites with limited animations, and you can afford drastically more complex designs.
 - Hence the way that video game characters are often PILED with accessories and jewelry and armor and just CRAP.
 - And I think they were playing with that here!
- That being said, I am impressed with how economical the art is.
 - Style-wise, it is still very close to RG Veda and X--the way the eyes are drawn, the inks are still on the heavier side of shoujo.
 - But here they are creating a whole new world and they do manage to sell you a fantasy adventure--without so many detailed backgrounds?
 - SO many white backgrounds, or flowers blooming across the page to add emphasis or help you pause and appreciate the sweetness of a character.
 - But it works because they are using a lot of techniques I associate with shoujo--lots of close-ups, compositions that are meant to pull you into an emotional story beat rather than just portray action
 - But they still have really fun action when it counts!
 - And the magic effects are luscious!
 - When Hikaru uses magic, it is so powerful!
 - Despite what I said about game art character design allowing for more ornate stuff, in-game art at the time was so low rez that this might have felt especially thrilling for gamer kids who could only imagine this level of emotional impact and detail from a sequence like that.
 - There were a couple pages I really took note of in terms of how they just really worked overtime to do multiple things at once:
 - When Clef is explaining to the girls that they cannot go home, we get this double-page spread with no backgrounds and no real blocking.
 - On the right (read first) we have an inset panel of Clef saying 'we need you to save cefiro'
 - But most of the real-estate is taken up by Hikaru's face in close up, and she has this incredible expression that's thoughtful, worried, maybe resolute?
 - On the opposite page, we see all 3 girls standing together, floating over the background image which is the same size as Hikaru's face--which is Emeraude in profile, turned up to the heavens in prayer.
 - And it no only makes this moment a full story beat, so we understand how important what Clef is saying--and remember that we've head the Princess say the same words before
 - But also draws a connection between Hikaru and Emeraude
 - By showing their faces as equal sizes, it really singles out Hikaru as more of a main character.

- And she is. The other two are very important, but she's our perspective character, she's who we started out with and who we focus on the most.
- And no descriptions of the comic ever hammer that home, because they shouldn't! The trio is so important! But in reading it, you find this out, and this moment is one of the places that communicates that.
- Then the next two pages....are the scene where you watch Zagato walk through his waterfall room to have an audience.
 - So we just had this spread of FACES and we're wrapped up in their FEELINGS
 - And now we're pulled back, distant, just observing this mysterious and ominous figure.
 - Whose thoughts and feelings we do not know.
- AND DANGIT i think it's effective!
- Yeah, a thing that really stood out to be that is has a lot of little layered conversation. You get this way more in manga than anime, for obvious reasons, but I think also way more in shoujo than shonen. So many of the comedic beats and story development are in little side conversations that are happening the corners of other panels. You can get the story without them, but it doesn't have the same flavor, and that's one reason I kind of prefer shoujo manga over anime adaptations.
- I think CLAMP's done that in other stuff, but I was really aware of it in this series, so I'm guessing the genre is letting them add more of it. Or it's my own confirmation-bias. Whichever.

Outro

In our next episode, we'll be discussing Rayearth volume 2! Until then, you can follow us on twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram @Clampcastpod, on Facebook as Clampcast in Wonderland, and on our website clampcastinwonderland.com.

You can support us on Patreon, where we have a few levels with different perks, such as bonus episodes. Our Kamui-level Patrons got to join us in early February for a little movie night for Robin's birthday, and we hope to be able to do something like that again! You can also support us by making purchases through our Bookshop.org store, or just by writing a review or sharing this podcast with your friends.

Thanks for coming with us on our journey through CLAMP's Wonderland!

Until next time, remember that everything will be alright—

—and try not to lose an eye!