

Magic Knight Rayearth

Volume 3

Lucy Robin

Intro

Hikaru, Umi, and Fuu have leveled up their armor and weapons and even gained giant robots to fight with! But this isn't a game, or at least, not one anything like what the girls expected. Why were they really called to Cephiro? Can they fulfill Princess Emeraude's wish?

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

Background

- The chapters in this volume ran in Fall and Winter 1994 thru to March 1995
 - The anime was already airing by October 1994, so pre-production on that must have started earlier, and DANG that's a lot going on at the same time!
 - Sailor Moon had a similar production situation where they kind of tapped it for a multimedia extravaganza really early and the TV anime was developed kind of simultaneously?
 - In video game history terms, FF6 had come out, but not the ground-breaking 3D-ish FF7
 - We were still on Dragon Quest 5, which had come out in 1992, 6 would come out in '95, btw
- I still remember what an impact the end of part one had on me as a kid, but let's not get too ahead of ourselves! Lucy, what happened in volume 3, the end of the first Rayearth series?

Summary

- Volume 3 puts us right back into action, as the knights are attacked by Ascot, a child Zagato has sent to kill them.
 - I would be remiss if I did not mention that Ascot looks very much like Porom from Final Fantasy 4, a character that starts out as comic relief and ends up as a bit of a gut-punch, but also has similar brown hair and poofy clothing.
- Ascot casts a spell that summons a monster out of a portal!
 - It attacks all three girls, and Ascot comments they are so weak, it's pathetic that Alcione lost to them.

- Hikaru asks him if he's a friend of Alcione, but he says he'd never be friends with someone like her.
 - My edition has him calling her crazy.
- Hikaru unleashes Fire Arrow against the monster, which possibly destroys it or possibly sends it back to its dimension...it's not super clear which.
- Either way, Ascot summons a new monster. This one is also a fire type, so Hikaru's spells don't do much against it, and in fact seem to make it stronger.
- Fuu's realizes her powers also won't help much, since her wind is likely to just fan the flames instead of diminishing them.
- Of course, that leaves Umi...but she's busy communing with the Mashin Selece (or Ceres or whatever).
 - Selece tells Umi that if she wants to be a magic knight, she must prove herself. She must demonstrate her strength of heart.
 - Umi snaps out of her trance as Hikaru and Fuu fall beside her. They're injured, possibly unconscious, and being taunted by Ascot.
 - He says he hates weaklings like them.
 - And like Alcione, who must be extra weak to have been defeated by the likes of them.
 - That's why Zagato *got rid* of her.
- Enraged by what he's done to Hikaru and Fuu, Umi goes on the offensive, attacking Ascot's monster with her Water Dragon spell.
 - The monster disappears, and Ascot curses her for destroying his friend (which I guess answers our question about what's happening to his defeated monsters).
- He summons another monster, which Umi also defeats. Enraged, Ascot summons a whole crew of monsters.
 - Umi defeats most of them, but a few make it through her spells, and attack her.
 - They're pushed back by Guardian Wind--Fuu has managed to cast a new spell!
 - She and Hikaru use some of their remaining strength to protect Umi, and she's able to attack the monsters using her sword.
 - Umi's holding her own, but she's getting farther and farther from Hikaru and Fuu, who have fallen unconscious again. When Ascot notices how determined she is to protect them, he instructs his monster to finish them off--
 - To pull them apart like little dolls.
 - Umi screams at them to stop, and Ceres' voice comes to her again, telling her to show her power, her strength of heart.
- Ascot continues to taunt Umi, saying that Hikaru and Fuu were stupid to use their last bit of strength to defend her, instead of helping themselves.

- Umi demands Ascot apologize, then rushes him, casting Water Dragon again. He summons more monsters to protect himself, but she cuts right through them, until she's standing over him.
- She towers over him, powerful and imperious. Again, she tells him to apologize.
 - When Ascot asks what for, she says he insulted her best friends, and she won't let him get away with insulting them.
 - That's when Ascot shoots back that she's the one who is destroying *his* friends.
- And Umi SLAPS him. How he could dare force his friends to fight like that?
 - She asks if he wants his friends to be injured, even destroyed, and of course he doesn't...
 - So doesn't he understand how she feels when he hurts her friends?
 - If he hates to have his friends hurt, she begs him to let her friends go
 - And surprisingly, he does.
- With the other two safe, Umi asks him if he really considers the monsters his friends, and, crying, Ascot explains that he does.
 - He says that everyone tells him he can't be friends with monsters, that they are too weird to be worth his time, but no one understands that his monster friends are actually nice.
 - Touching one of the monsters gently, Umi says she understands. The monsters were also worried about *him*. They care for him just like she cares for Fuu and Hikaru.
 - After finally getting his name, Umi asks Ascot why he's attacking them.
 - Apparently, Zagato said that if the girls become Magic Knights, they will all be in trouble.
 - He goes on to explain that he is a Palu, which we can infer is someone who can summon monsters.
 - Like a summoner from Final Fantasy!
 - He was called to the castle by Zagato, who asked him for help.
 - He didn't mean to betray Cephireo, but Zagato promised that he could keep his monster friends at the castle with him.
 - His monsters are always getting treated badly, and accused of things, so he jumped at a chance to be with them.
 - Umi asked if they've ever caused problems or hurt anyone, and he says they always listen to him and would never hurt anyone.
 - Well then, Umi says he should stand up for them. By allowing Zagato to use the monsters for his bidding, Ascot's letting them be made into bad guys, which just makes everything worse.

- She explains that even though she just met Fuu and Hikaru, having them beside her helps her be stronger, and helps her like herself more and more.
 - He and his friends just need to look out for themselves and their own happiness.
 - Still crying, Ascot apologizes for attacking them, and Umi apologizes for hurting his friends before getting to know them.
 - Suddenly, Umi is consumed by light. Her armor and swords transform, and the same happens to Hikaru and Fuu.
 - Selese speaks to her, and tells Umi that the strength of her feelings for her friends have proven that she has what it takes to be a Magic Knight.
 - The dragon then transforms into a giant robot!
 - They have very 80s giant robot looks, kind of Dancouger meet Aura Battler Dunbine? Bellbottom-y legs, very armor-centric design principles, and a lot of dragon aspects to the head/helmet part
 - Fuu and Hikaru regain consciousness as Selese tells Umi that despite everything, her heart is not quite ready yet. But, it will return when the time is right. And with that, it disappears into the gem on Umi's breastplate.
 - The girls celebrate, and also process this new information that the Mashin are, gasp, giant robots!
 - Umi explains that Ascot is actually no longer an enemy, and his apologies to them (while looking very adorable and sad, I might add).
 - We see his eyes and they are kinda of cat-like slitted pupils, a design element I really love.
- Back at Chateau Zagato, they are aware that one of the Mashin has been awakened. However, a new challenger presents herself, saying that of course a kid would fail. Zagato should have sent her from the beginning!
 - She's wearing a sexy outfit that is very 90s-fantasy-anime. It's like a bikini, but also a giant cloak. I...kind of love it?
 - There are like, stockings with seams on BOTH sides too
- The knights leave Ascot in the underwater temple (at his request), and continue on their way.
 - They decide that after they fix this issue with Zagato, they'll enlist Clef's help to find somewhere where Ascot and his monsters can live together in peace.
 - Mokona pops up to agree, and Umi jumps on it, asking where it conveniently disappears to whenever there is a battle.
 - Mokona looks very intense and angry for a second...but just ends up kissing her cheek.
 - As Umi continues to bicker with it (or...at it?), Fuu remarks how high up they are now.

- Sure enough, their winged platform has taken them very high into the sky. The girls freak out a bit, but Fuu points out that if they fell from this high, at least they'd black out before dying.
 - God I love Fuu
 - Have we mentioned the comic relief action shots? Usually in SD/chibi form? Keeps the tone light and builds the friendship dynamics
 - My edition has this whole 'we'll be putting on our halos before we feel anything! With them enacting this as SD/chibi angels, did yours preserve that gag?
 - Lucy
- Hikaru spots a floating mountain that kind of resembles a large crystal, and Fuu reacts to it, going into a trance the same way Umi did at the water shrine.
- She flies away from them, and Mokona stops Hikaru from trying to restrain her.
- Sure enough, they land at a large shrine within the mountain. But before they can catch up with Fuu, Hikaru and Umi are greeted by the lovely lady we saw talking to Zagato...well, this can't be good.
 - She introduces herself as Gardina, and although the girls at first don't realize she's an enemy, she pretty quickly reveals herself as one of Zagato's minions.
 - She's Caldina in my edition! And she has a heavy Osaka accent and kind of stereotypical money-minded brazen lady Osaka stereotype that is a liiiiittle throw-backy in a bad way paired with her darker or 'tanned' skin, but they kinda love her despite being on the opposite side and I know Lucy and I kinda love her too.
- Meanwhile, Fuu makes contact with the shrine's Mashin, a giant four-winged bird named Windom.
 - When Hikaru and Umi appear before her, she tells them that the spirit has spoken to her, but instead of answering, they attack her!
 - Gardina reveals herself, and explains that she's a charmer and an illusionist. Umi and Hikaru are under her control, and she's instructed them to kill Fuu.
 - When Fuu asks if she's one of Zagato's minions, Gardina explains that's actually just doing this for the money. But she has a proud work ethic, so they had better get to business.
 - Hikaru and Umi attack Fuu, who manages to hold them back, but only barely.
 - She hears Windom's voice as she's fighting. Like Umi, she must prove the strength of her heart in order to become a Magic Knight.
 - Fuu understands how this works. In Cephire, the strength of one's heart is everything, and the power of her belief can change the future.
 - With that, she casts Binding Winds to hold her friends in place, so she can attack Gardina directly.
 - Gardina is impressed--and pretty supportive--but she's not out of tricks yet. This time, she casts her spell on Fuu, using her to attack her friends.

- She taunts Fuu, but as Fuu hears Windom's voice again, her resolve is steady.
 - She resists the spell, and casts her own Emerald Tornado on Gardina instead.
 - Battered, Gardina asks how she managed it, and Fuu explains that she used her heart. Gardina's just working for Zagato, she's not willing to risk her life for him. But Fuu would be willing to give up her own life in order to save her friends.
 - Gardina assumes they've been friends forever in that case, and can't believe it when Fuu says they've only known each other for a short time
 - but Fuu explains that it only means she has more to look forward to learning about them. Her heart is set on fighting beside them.
- Of course, that means that if Gardina is intent on hurting them, Fuu is prepared to kill her.
- **Fortunately** for everyone involved, Gardina is definitely not ready to lay down her life for Zagato.
 - Plus, Fuu impressed her. Gardina isn't sure if it's a good or bad thing to be so devoted to something that you'd give your life for it, but she's found Fuu's passion much more inspiring than anything Zagato has said.
 - But, even she doesn't know what Zagato's real goal is.
 - Fuu finds this surprising. They had been under the impression that Zagato wanted to rule Cephire, but Gardina says that's not really it.
 - After all, ever since Princess Emeraude's prayers lost their power, Cephire is a monster-filled mess!
 - HMMM
 - Whatsmore, she asked him once why he didn't let Emeraude continue praying to keep the land in check, while he took over control of everything, but he told her there's something more important than Cephire at stake.
- As Fuu contemplates this revelation, she and the other knights are consumed by wind, and their swords and armor transform.
- Windom appears before her again, and turns into a robot with wings and a bird-like headpiece.
 - Then Windom disappears into her gem, as Selesse disappeared into Umi's.
- Umi and Hikaru wake up, and at first freak out about Gardina, but Fuu explains that everything is ok now.
- **In** her prison, Emeraude calls out to the Magic Knights.
 - (Not literally, though, it's more like she's talking to herself.)
 - She wants them to hurry, before it's too late...

- Zagato is watching
- He asks her if she suffers. She simply begs him to stop, before Cephireo is destroyed.
- But Zagato says his heart will not change. No matter what happens to their world or the people in it, it won't change how he feels.
- He recognizes that two of the Mashin, Selece and Windom, have been awakened. That leaves only one Mashin, the one that rests in the shrine of fire.
- But, he has another minion on the ready, and Emaurade recognizes Lafarga, the captain of her inner guard. Zagato has put him under a spell, and he instructs Lafarga to bring back the heads of the Magic Knights.
- Emeraude begs him not to go, but Lafarga doesn't seem to even hear her.
- **Meanwhile**, the girls noticed that of the three main landmarks they could see when they fell to Cephireo--the sea, the floating mountain, and the volcano--two of them contained Mashin. They've arrived at the volcano, and sure enough, there's a shrine there.
 - Before they go in, they are admiring how their weapons have changed. Fuu's sword is very long now, but despite that, she says it barely weighs anything.
 - Umi asks to hold it, and when she takes it, it feels like it weighs a ton! And when Fuu tries Umi's sword, it turns to water in her hands.
 - Hikaru's not surprised. Presea said that the weapons were made especially for them, and only they could wield them; this must be what she meant.
 - Their armor has also changed a lot. While it looks like a lot of additions to their outfits, it's light and soft, more like cloth.
 - I really love the progression of their armor.
 - It looks increasingly Saint Seiya-esque which is a compliment because that is some glam design!
 - They all thank Mokona for guiding them on this journey to becoming Magic Knights, since they must be so close!
 - They also ask if it knows where to find Zagato, but it insists that it does not.
 - Suddenly, there is a great noise, and flames erupt, circling around Hikaru.
 - This is pretty freaky, but at least we've seen a similar thing happen two other times by now.
 - She gets sucked into the shrine, and the doors close behind her. Fuu and Umi try to follow, pounding on the doors, but they are burning hot and won't open.
 - Inside the shrine, Hikaru encounters a creature that looks like a wolf or a lion. It has a mane of fire, and a large horn in the middle of its forehead.
 - Of course, it is the Mashin from the shrine of fire, and its name is...Rayearth.
 - Like with the other two, Rayearth asks Hikaru to present proof of her strength of heart in order to become a Magic Knight.
 - It passes through her, and Hikaru follows it outside, where she finds Umi and Fuu lying injured with Lafarga standing over them.
 - We haven't mentioned it yet but he's SUCH A JOJO

- He introduces himself as a Dal, a warrior who lives by the sword alone, no magic--but when Hikaru asks if he's one of Zagato's henchmen, he hesitates.
- Once she confirms that she is in fact a magic knight his hesitation is gone. His orders are to destroy them!
 - Hikaru manages to avoid his first attack, but his sword cuts through rock like it was nothing.
 - She continues to dodge his blows, but his attacks hit her friends instead, so Hikaru stands in front of them.
 - Umi and Fuu call to Hikaru to move, and Rayearth tells her that if she doesn't step aside and leave them to their fates to save herself, she will die
 - but Hikaru is determined: she will protect them at any cost
 - All three will go home to Tokyo together!
 - And what's more, since Lafarga won't use magic, neither will she!
 - She rallies against him by sword alone! That kendo practice really coming in handy!
 - She does have one trick up her sleeve, though whether is a trick or just her own incredibly kind heart coming through is hard to say:
 - She brings up princess Emeraude, asking if she's okay and declaring her intent to save her and all of Cephire!
 - This REALLY throws Lafarga off
- Umi sees an opening and is about to cast a water spell, but Rayearth stops her, this is Hikaru's fight.
 - And it doesn't look great for Hikaru, he overpowers her.
 - But his own weapon was lost in the tussle, so he reaches for hers to strike her down--
 - And is burned by the flames of this weapon meant only for Hikaru to wield!
 - This snaps him out of the spell Zagato put on him
 - His concern for Emeraude is strong, but he also doesn't seem to remember anything that has happened at first...
 - Then he remembers Zagato taking Emeraude away, and stopping him when he fought back to save her.
- With that, the girls' armor changes again, over several pages of majestic swooshes and elemental effects, finally landing them in their most Saint Seiya-esque outfits so far!
 - They look fierce--both fashion-wise and in terms of battle-readiness.

- Finally Rayearth is revealed in giant robot armor mode, big and majestic but with wolf ears that CLAMP always refers to as 'cute' when discussing the art for Rayearth.
 - AND NOW the mashin seem to think it is time. They ask our heroines, young girls from another world, summoned by the pillar, to don them and become true magic knights.
 - Symbols (that include 6 pointed stars) appear on both the gems on their chestplates and the girls' weapons, the 'key' that connects them, and they are swept up into the giant robots!
 - This is shown to us in a way that is familiar to some super robot anime viewers but maybe not easily readable to people who aren't familiar with that genre, because they aren't sitting in pilot's seats pulling levers, but are in kind of elemental spheres, shown mostly just as figures floating, while the Mashin move according to their wishes.
 - Since we have less than half the book left, we know there isn't too much time left for them to have giant robot battles, but it definitely means we're out of grounded 'real robot' territory and into more metaphysical and emotional space here.
 - There's a comedic moment when Umi, in Windom, stomps around angrily after Mokona, who seemed happy to take them to Zagato now despite not knowing where he was earlier.
 - Then they are off!
 - They even remark on how they feel like they are just flying, not flying inside an airplane-sized robot suit.
 - And Fuu can see without glasses.
 - But as they fly, they can't see any kind of fortress or anything...
 - EXCEPT THEMSELVES!
 - No, it isn't another test, it is just that what they thought was boundless sky is in fact a giant mirror reflecting the sea
 - The way the sea acts like a mirror reflecting the sky, in the real world!
 - To get to Zagato, they must break through the looking glass!
 - All three use their magic and it works!
 - Beyond the shattering glass there's a nexus of crystal.
 - And standing on a floating island in front of it is Zagato--and his own dark-colored giant robot suit!
 - He welcomes them with a deceptively gentle expression.
 - But immediately dons his own 'mashin'
 - He says he constructed it himself, a creation using all of his strength and power, meant to destroy them!
 - Although it is a robot battle kicking off, we see it at least partially as the girls with swords and armor standing together against him.

- As they clash together, Emeraude cries out to stop it...but no one hears her.
- They send magic attacks at each other, and she keeps begging--if this goes on any longer, she pleads, "I will--"
- Zagato, for his part, is fighting with all his power. He says that he'll shatter the legend with his own hands, whatever it says!
 - And boy does he send an attack called 'Dark Impact Lexus' in my edition, which is rough for such an impactful moment!
- Battered, the girls rally. They pump each other up, remembering that if they save everyone, they can go home! They've made it this far together, there's no way they won't finish this together.
 - And they demand Zagato explain his actions.
- And...he says a few words. 'Why must SHE pray for Cephiro's peace?' he asks. 'Why must Emeraude alone keep praying for Cephiro?'
- This is where things start to go off the rails. After all, we never knew his motivation. And he was so very close to her. Should it have been such a complete surprise when he goes on to say, face tormented with emotion, that the pillar is not free. She is fated to do nothing but serve that role, praying for stability for Cephiro.
 - Why, he asks, must she alone be shackled to this fate?
 - And he attacks with a spell intended as a deathblow.
 - The girls have no response to his words. All they know is that they can't lose, they need to all go home together!
 - They mount a final attack, a spell that merges their powers together into a spiral of light.
 - It is enough, he's defeated, blown away by their power
 - But as he disappears, his face is gentle and sad, as he implores Emeraude to live free.
 - From her prison, she screams in horror at his death, crying for him by name over and over.
- The girls don't see this. They are so relieved that it's over and they can finally go home!
 - They also don't see Emeraude twist and grow from a diminutive, childlike figure seated on a lotus to a more adult form--in elaborate but sinister armor.
 - She's focused on one thing: the magic knights
 - While the girls are so excited to come to the crystal castle and save her, make her wish come true, and go home--she is ready for them, a creature of beauty and rage.
 - They were expecting the tiny figure who called out to them at the Tokyo tower, not this tall and imposing figure who listens stony-faced as they recount their deeds.

- When they get to how they defeated Zagato, she cannot control her fury any longer.
 - Screaming at them that they are the ones who killed her beloved Zagato and she will make them pay, her own giant robot suit emerges like a leviathan from under the floor of the waterfall room.
 - The girls are sucked back into their own Mashin as the castle collapses around them.
 - Emeraude grabs Zagato's giant sword and faces off. Her Mashin is a beautiful centaur-shaped thing with hair. (a little it 5 Star Stories in fact!)
 - The girls do NOT understand why this is happening, but they do understand that her attacks are incredibly dangerous.
- As she fights them with a ferocity they can barely counter, let alone match, they start seeing an apparition of the diminutive Emeraude who called them there.
 - This is the one they remember! And she's calling to them now!
 - But she insists the one that is still trying to kill her is ALSO her.
 - Shades of Hinoto's two selves?
 - As they fight, she explains that it is all her fault. She called them here to clean up her mess, because, you see, her prayers stopped working when she was no longer fully focused on Cephire's well-being alone.
 - She fell in love with Zagato, and had her first selfish desire, and it destroyed everything, despite how hard she fought against that emotion. She couldn't deny herself this one thing. She loved him more than Cephire.
 - She shut HERSELF away from him in hopes she could forget him and make her prayers work again.
 - None of it was Zagato's fault. It couldn't possibly have been. If she had been willing, she could have prayed from any confinement he'd put her in, after all.
 - No, he was only trying to save her life--
 - FROM THE MAGIC KNIGHTS
 - Which she called to Cephire as a failsafe--to KILL HER.
 - The legend's vagueries now make sense.
 - Emeraude begs them to kill her before she loses herself entirely, and wills for the utter destruction of Cephire--even as her twisted other self tells them how she's going to make them suffer agonizing deaths.
 - Hikaru cries that they just can't do it! The girls are heartbroken and horrified by the truth laid bare before them. They were here to grant her wish!

- But Emeraude's only wish now is to die and be with Zagato, free to think only of him, together forever, even if it's really just a moment of selfish freedom.
- And in shared anguish, the magic knights Mashin sweep up into elemental forms, a great bird, dragon, and wolf again, and combine into one REALLY BIG SUPER ROBOT--
- And in a classic samurai duel moment, stark on a white background across a double page spread, this combined form and Emeraude's centaur robot advance on each other, but it is Rayearth, Windom, and Seresu that are triumphant, breaking them gem on the other's chest.
 - And even the grown-up Emeraude's face becomes gentle and grateful as she dies, as she joins Zagato in death, consumed in light...
- Light that also transports our three heroines back to their school field trip at the Tokyo Tower, to the same instant in which they left!
 - The girls cling together, weeping, inconsolable.
 - In the middle of all of these school kids having a normal day, they alone suffer the weight of what they have been through, what they have done--and Hikaru cries 'It's not fair!'
 - But that's it. The end. There is no reply to soften the blow.

Discussion

- THAT. ENDING.
- Yes, oh my god. And we got to it so fast. Which, after X, felt a little strange, but it seems realistic to me. They haven't really been in Cephireo very long, so it fits that there are so many unanswered questions by the time they get to the castle. But like...god, my heart.
 - I remember that I was shocked and devastated and totally absorbed in this ending when it came out. I also think I had book 4 already when I read this, so I knew it wasn't the END-end, but...
 - Yeah, it was completely not what I had expected, especially since it's such an abrupt change. Not to say they didn't build it up--they definitely had hints here and there that something was not what it appeared. Zagato's evil face looked sad half the time, and we could tell some pieces weren't adding up...but still.
 - I don't remember my full reaction when I first saw this, but I was definitely not expecting this twist. And there are kind of two levels to it. I think you can see the twist that Zagato loves Emeraude coming, and I think I'd half expected a tragic love story...but not tragic in the same way, really. The tragedy isn't that they were

star-crossed lovers who could never be together, it's that she was never expected or allowed to be her own person.

- Such a bold move. To have the whole story feel formulaic--and then to find out that was all set up on purpose; the problem wasn't just what was currently happening, but the root of WHY the current issues were transpiring. Monsters and destabilization were what the people of Cephira suffered, but those things happened because an unfair system required the sacrifice of one girl's autonomy. And since that was completely taken for granted as just video-gamey worldbuilding, we see this scenario play out: the damsel in distress was actually the villain, she needed to be saved from herself, and keeping our heroes in the dark was the only way to get them to do what had to be done--if those three young women were brought in to murder a girl like them, could they have come together and grown to embody all the positive qualities they needed to to command the powers required to deliver the coup-de-grace?
- Yeah, it's a lot more murder than I had remembered, really. Like I totally forgot that Alcione got straight up dissolved, and they were definitely killing a bunch of Ascot's monsters, and only seconds later were able to convert him as an ally (or at least not an enemy).
 - Also interesting that people FROM Cephira almost certainly couldn't kill her, since they loved her so much, so an outsider made the most sense. What a TWIST on the isekai/sucked into a video game type meta story!
- There's also this extra level of betrayal. Not only are things not what we expected, and much more complicated than the twist we thought we saw coming, it is so much bigger for the girls. This has all happened so fast for them, and Princess Emeraude was set up as this kind of constant. She brought them there, she was the one who could send them home, and along the way she was built up as this pure, inherently good being. But it turns out she was just a kid (or a woman) in a completely unfair situation.
 - It isn't like twists this dark were unheard of in shoujo manga--in fact, lots of shoujo manga is dark and series on a level that shounen rarely touches
 - But this kind of plot twist REALLY reminds me of their influences, like Devilman, or even Ideon (Tomino's big celebrated anime after the original MS Gundam, where the super robot ends all of reality by the end.)
 - It's interesting to me that this came out really close to when Neon Genesis Evangelion was produced, which in my mind also stands out for going much darker than I had expected a mecha show to go. Was this actually pretty typical of mecha shows, do you know?
 - NO Evangelion ushered in a new era of anime! It is pretty infamous for this.

- It WAS in the footsteps of Ideon, which Hideaki Anno deeply admired, but it was an entire level more thoughtful and cerebral than mecha anime had been, even ones that were fairly dark. There's dark as in 'has sad or deep topics alluded to' and there's dark as in 'explores some previously uncharted depths of the human experience' lol
 - And yeah, I think you could see it as the 90s were a time when like, this new wave of people who had grown up with pop culture that pushed deeper AND pop culture that was delicious but only surface-level and were really inspired by both--like we did!
- And the last panel just being these girls returned to our world forever changed, but NO TIME to explore what happens to Cephireo or any of the people they met! AAAAH!
 - I KNOW OMFG. It was so hard to put this book down and not immediately pick up the next one.
 - ...imagine being an elementary-schooler reading this and not knowing if it would continue!
 - They did have the next series announced REALLY FAST and honestly probably had already announced it before that chapter ran, but STILL! STILL!!

●

- Did they read 'Those who walk away from Omelas' by Ursula K Leguin?
- HAVE YOU?
- Okay so I'll summarize it, and also tell you that I've had to read it in class--or really had the pleasure of reading it--many times. But the first time, in high school, when it was presented to me by my beloved Mz Perryman, who said she wanted to be Ursula K Leguin when she grew up (despite being pretty much her contemporary) I immediately thought of Magic Knight Rayearth.
- So here's the gist:
 - In this short story from 1973, which is more of a parable really, the author described this city, Omelas, that is so perfect and delightful. AS she describes how great it is, she even admits that the reader likely won't even be able to believe in such a utopia until they hear about its one atrocity.
 - Which is that to preserve the perfect joy and happiness of everyone else, one child must be imprisoned in abject filth and misery.
 - All citizens are told the truth about this arrangement upon growing up.
 - Everyone is shocked, but most people just acquiesce to its utility and inevitability.

- But...some people walk away. They cannot live in a utopia that rests on this ultimate injustice.
- And no one knows where they go. The author cannot even describe the place they are walking to--but the ones who walk away from Omelas seem to know where they are going.
- That's it. It is guaranteed to raise ethics discussions in classrooms.
- It changed me as a person, cemented in me many beliefs I have, and made me find some answers to my own questions about utility and justice.
- And I'm going to do something we haven't done since Tokyo Babylon, when I explained what an onmyoji was and had to read the very funny entry on Abe no Seimei's grudge match. I'm going to read you something lifted directly from wikipedia because it is just too good.
- Le Guin stated that the city's name is pronounced "*OH-meh-lahss*".^[4] Le Guin hit upon the name of the town on seeing a road sign for [Salem, Oregon](#), in a car mirror. "[... People ask me] 'Where *do* you get your ideas from, Ms. Le Guin?' From forgetting Dostoyevsky and reading road signs backwards, naturally. Where else?"^[5]
- "The central idea of this psychomyth, the [scapegoat](#)", writes Le Guin, "turns up in [Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*](#), and several people have asked me, rather suspiciously, why I gave the credit to [William James](#). The fact is, I haven't been able to re-read Dostoyevsky, much as I loved him, since I was twenty-five, and I'd simply forgotten he used the idea. But when I met it in James' '[The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life](#),' it was with a shock of recognition."
- The quote from William James is:
- Or if the hypothesis were offered us of a world in which Messrs. [Fourier's](#) and [Bellamy's](#) and [Morris's](#) [utopias](#) should all be outdone, and millions kept permanently happy on the one simple condition that a certain lost soul on the far-off edge of things should lead a life of lonely torture, what except a sceptical and independent sort of emotion can it be which would make us immediately feel, even though an impulse arose within us to clutch at the happiness so offered, how hideous a thing would be its enjoyment when deliberately accepted as the fruit of such a bargain?^{[5][6]}
- So, we still have three more volumes, so it's too early to do a big series discussion...but we need to discuss the Destiny Elephant in the room.
 - I had trouble not stargazing to this ending (or middling, I guess?) when we were discussing X. Specifically, Kanoe and Hinoto.
 - Like...the dynamic is very similar. It's not romantic love, but there's the same push and pull. Kanoe is set up as evil, and by the end you realize Hinoto may have actually been the villain all along...or at least, was a lot more antagonistic than we had expected.

- And of course there's the fact that Kanoe is actually trying to defy destiny to save her sister.
 - Rayearth hasn't touched as much on Destiny as X, at least so far, but that's really what we're talking about when we talk about the pillar, isn't it?
 - Which yes, we'll definitely talk more about after we finish the rest of the series. But Rayearth got to it's Destiny Shit much faster than X (obviously), so when we wonder how X might end...it can't hurt to look at how Rayearth handled things.
- I think Rayearth is really something special. And there's only so much we can say about the story up to this point--we know there are three more books and that this basically leaves off on a cliffhanger, but if we discuss just this part, as if that were the actual ending--DAMN!
- I think that it's easy to write this off as 'power of friendship stuff for girls.' Focusing on the qualities that friendships, or abstract concepts like 'hearts' and 'dreams' should have, making the the source of otherwise ill-defined 'powers' that seem to be used in place of actual, like negotiations let alone boy-coded violence...yeah, that reminds me of American 80s toy-commercial cartoons we grew up with, and how empty that stuff can feel. But this I think is tighter than that, more intentional. The storytelling--through the art itself, the panel layouts, the emphasis put on moments--really carries a lot of weight here.
 - yes, the power of friendship gives Umi a giant robot—but this comic SELLS that as big, beautiful, sweeping, important!
 - the fights are so detailed and impressive that the danger feels real, so their powers have impact, and the emotions behind them have weight.
 - Lighter fare can have these same themes done in a very different way—again, lot of the american-made 80s 'girl' cartoons, where nothing is grounded enough to build much foundation on, let alone any kind of towering structure—
 - but rayearth has a structure that is intentionally built to evoke video games, on a base of emotion that was meant to connect with its audience, and manages to subvert both in an effective, respectful way!
 - By respectful, I mean that it isn't making fun of the reader for having certain expectations, there's no sneering in the mis-direction.
 - It caught the reader off-guard (though we did suspect something because of what our supporting cast left out)
 - And it caught our heroes off-guard!
 - But by the end, it was internally consistent enough to feel inevitable, the way a classical tragedy should.
 - Even if it wasn't the only conceivable way this could have ended, it was the way that made sense with the story thus far.
 - And I am really impressed with the guts it took to put this in Nakayoshi!

- Sailor Moon of course had twists and turns with what side characters were on, and who begat whom, and all kinds of high drama.
- But this was so TIGHT!

Outro

In our next episode, we'll be discussing The One I Love, and then more Rayearth! With our anniversary episode in there somewhere.

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, 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!