

Magic Knight Rayearth

Volume 5

Lucy Robin

Intro

As the girls fight to defend Cephire, they begin to wonder...with such a high price to pay, is this land truly beautiful?

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

Check-In

- How are you holding up, Lucy?
- I know we're both kinda tired from really boring domestic life stuff
- I'm exhausted, but that's because I had real, actual human friends stay at my house this weekend. And we went on a series of adventures to buy a new couch and then dispose of our old one. It was fun, but now I would like to sleep for a week, please.
- My life is absorbed by book promo--I have to make TWO videos this week and I have made ZERO videos before so. I mean. They'll be the two best videos I've ever made at least, right?

Background

- We're in mid-to-late 1995 here.
- So, around volume 6-7 of X
- 8-9 of RG Veda
- But I believe this was a time when CLAMP had...some trouble.
- That's a lot of books to be working on at once, plus the amount of work they were doing for the Rayearth anime (which was more than they'd later do for other productions)
- Still less crazy productive than they had been only a year or so earlier, when everything was still in flux and their star was on the rise
- Their star was definitely up there!
- But from interviews, it seems like maybe the first round of burnout and physical suffering bit around this time. I've seen mentions of video game addictions and stuff, and I don't know if any of that is precisely true, but I can imagine how much pressure they were under, and while they were maybe past the worrying-about-finding-a-day-job-soon and sleeping-under-their-desks-in-a-studio-apartment phase, that doesn't mean the amount of work was doable.

- This wouldn't be the last time they were affected by overwork.
- And it may be more relevant to our discussion of the last volume, but I thought I'd bring it up here, too.

Summary

- This volume begins where the last one ended: with Lantis' ominous statement that he will *end* the legend of the magic knights.
- Speaking of the knights, they are all suited up because Cephire is being invaded by not one, but two roads! The girls expressed in the last volume that they don't want to fight anyone without knowing their true motives...but they may not have a choice.
 - Inside Fahren's ship, which you may remember is shaped like a dragon, Princess Aska is very cocky. She's dreaming of all the things she'll do with Cephire once it belongs to her--she even jokes that she'll make Sang Yung (her adorable attendant) a room out of his favorite peach pastries.
 - You know who she reminds me of, with her "I WANT THEM!" demands?
 - Akira's moms from 20 Masks/Man of Many Faces!
 - OMG you're right!
 - However, she's deterred slightly when she spots the other approaching ship. It belongs to Chizeta, and is shaped like an oil lamp straight out of the Arabian Nights.
 - She actually notices it looks like the...gravy-boat serving thing that is on curry packaging, to serve Japanese curry out of! Which doesn't mean they're not a threat, of course, to her ambitions.
 - Tatra and Tarta are also aware of Fahren's ship. Tatra thinks their dragon is cute, but Tarta is in no mood to deal with her frivolity.
 - Tatra is just kind of always in her own world, enjoying everything like she's just window shopping instead of getting ready to go into battle. It is a very over-the-top sister dynamic they have there, with Tarta so hot-headed.
 - So very true.
 - They are both surprised to see the magic knights--in their mechs, of course--waiting for them. Princess Aska is quite taken with them, and declares that she wants them, even though her attendants try to convince her that they're too ridiculously huge to keep around for fun.
 - On Chizeta's ship, the sisters decide to send out their own spirits to combat the Mashin. They summon their Djinn, which...are pretty much what you would expect, and definitely one of those problematic elements we were talking about.
 - They look like very stereotypical djinn or genies; very muscular men with no legs, heads that are bald except for a ponytail at the very top, and very pointy beards.
 - Disney's Aladdin had been out for 3 years and likely inspired these designs, though Disney artists were of course inspired by turn-of-the-last-century illustrators from the West...yeah.

- The knights don't know quite what to make of them, as they're played pretty comically...that is, until they unleash a combined energy attack at the Mashin.
 - Umi counters with her Water Dragon attack, but the djinn slurp the water up instead of being injured by it, much to Umi's annoyance.
 - As the countries size each other up, we learn that the djinn are guardian spirits for Chizeta's royal family. But, Fahren has a trick up their sleeve, as well.
 - Despite some warnings from her old-guy attendant, Princess Aska casts an illusion spell. She summons...a giant version of Sang Yung!
 - God, this kid really is so iconic! Like, literally; his face is so simply drawn he's more of an icon of a character than a full character.
 - Oh, and she uses a brush and ink to 'paint' the illusion spell, shades of the Magic Paintbrush classic Chinese fairy tale!
 - The Djinn and the giant Sang Yung fight each other, which is convenient for our heroines, but both countries have now demonstrated that they are represented by someone with a strong will. Someone who may be capable of becoming the pillar of Cephiro.
 - Finally Princess Aska has had enough, and makes the giant Sang Yung unleash an epic Godzilla-like breath attack. It knocks out the djinn, but the effort was too much for Princess Aska, and she collapses as well. With both their leaders unconscious, the reads begin to disappear.
 - And where was Autozam in all this? Well, it looks like Eagle is still unconscious, drained from his last fight with the Mashin.
 - Geo and Zazu are concerned. Apparently Eagle likes to nap on his days off, but this is strange behavior when they're in the middle of an invasion. They worry he might be keeping something from them.
 - Geo sends Zazu off to tend to their mechs (he even bribes him with a bottle of wine--yay underage drinking, I guess?)
 - Although, Clef also looks like a kid despite being old AF, so I guess Zazu could be any age.
 - Also we don't know what the drinking age is in Cefiro or Autozam!
 - Funny story I was asked to change art and wording in my book that implied underage drinking, even though the characters are purple goblins. SO WHO KNOWS
 - After he leaves, Geo notices that Eagle looks like he's awake. But he's maybe not fully awake, because he reaches out, and calls for Lantis. He mumbles a few things about Cephiro and something he must do, before Geo succeeds in waking him up for real.
 - Eagle is troubled when he learns how long he's been unconscious, but when he asks Geo if he said anything in his sleep, Geo says no.
 - A good friend (or maybe a good friend who's good at managing his own unrequited feelings I DUNNO LUCY DID YOU GET THAT VIBE?)

- Maaaaybe? I wasn't sure if he was having minor jealousy feels or just, like, friendly-concern feels. But I could see it either way.
 - Geo tells Eagle to keep him informed of his battle plans next time, and leaves him alone.
 - Looking thoughtful, and maybe a little sad, Eagle repeats Lantis' name again, and says he's sorry.
- We go back to our girls, greeted by Mokona, and they are relieved that their enemies don't...really seem all that menacing.
 - In my version Umi refers to the illusory giant San Yun as a 'giant jiangshi, a kind of CHinese folklore hopping vampire creature that's often depicted wearing the era of clothing and the silk cap his outfit is modelled on
- And it is kind of a light, comical moment...
- But then we get this sequence of panels as the girls walk away
 - Where we see tiny mokona kind of...noticing the mashin?
 - And then a close up on the mashin faces
 - A close up on Mokona's trying-to-be-serious marshmallow creature face...
 - And a DOUBLE PAGE SPREAD OF THE MACHINE GENUFLECTING IN A CIRCLE AROUND TINY, TINY MOKONA
 - Before they shimmer back into their own pocket dimension
 - The girls call to Mokona, who scampers off to rejoin them
- And we aren't given any time to think about that VERY WEIRD thing that happened VERY LARGE and took up A DOUBLE PAGE SPREAD-----
- ---Because the girls run into Lantis.
 - And more comic relief ensues as Mokona snuggles up to Lantis and Primera, the super pretty little fairy lady, tries to fight off this *new challenger*...only to get sat on.
- Lantis doesn't give a shit and just walks away, draws his sword, and summons a big black mecha horse, which he rides off into the...ether? Space?
 - I am a bit lost about what is actually going on cosmologically and I don't think it really matters.
- We see that Clef has been watching him ride into the..vortex, or whatever.
- And we flash back to when Clef was training Lantis
- Clef praises his strength, and tells him his magic could make him an 'El', his swordsmanship a 'dal', but he is the only 'Kyel' in Cephiro
- And states how impressed he is with these two brothers, Zagato and Lantis--which one will surpass him first?
- Lantis is humble enough to remind Clef that he's been his teacher, and he's still the greatest sorcerer in Cephiro, how could they ever surpass him?
- And here Clef gives us an interesting speech. He says:
 - "Cephiro is the world of the will. The power of a spell, its efficacy, its effects that cannot be known until later...all these things are determined by the strength of one's heart."

- “And those who have a wish for themselves are stronger, still. Like Zagato is now.”
- Lantis is stricken. He asks if Clef actually knows about Zagato and Emeraude?
- Clef doesn’t answer directly. Instead he delivers us another interesting speech.
- “Look! Our world is so beautiful. There is neither natural disaster nor war. The people all live in peace. Cephiro is built upon, and kept peaceful by, the power of a single girl’s heart. But who will stand up for that girl’s happiness?”
- He goes on to say that the brothers and Emeraude are all so dear to him, he wants them all to be happy.
- But, shades of certain other CLAMP characters before him, he says that happiness is different for each person.
 - If the princesses’ greatest wish were granted, she’d never forgive herself for the pain it would cause others.
 - “SOme among us cannot be happy even if our wishes come true.”
 - And he asks Lantis, “Is this world truly all that beautiful?”
- These words echo as we see a glimpse of a scene we were not privy to before. Zagato informing Emeraude that Lantis has already left Cephiro (for how long, we do not know)
 - Emeraude wishes she knew why, but bids Zagato to just let him do what he needs to do.
 - They exchange tender, tragic glances, before Clef shows up and accidentally ruins the moment.
 - He asks Zagato if he has something he’d like to tell him, but Zagato just hurries away.
 - Instead, it is Emeraude who wants to talk to Clef.
 - And she tells him she’s going to summon the Magic Knights
 - He knows what that means. He begs her not to.
 - But she admits she’s in love with Zagato and this is the only thing she can do about it.
 - Clef says she can’t be blamed for wanting happiness, it is clear he wants to avert this tragedy somehow--
 - But she insists on going through with it, because “Even if everyone else could forgive me, I could never forgive myself. To be happy, knowing all the while that our people were unhappy...”
 - And as she seals herself away in her watery prison, she tells him to do...pretty much everything he did in the first half of Rayearth
 - And sends Mokona down in a beam of light
 - And finally asks him to tell them that she’s sorry.
- Presea stirs Clef from his reverie to tell him the Magic Knights are back.
- When asked if he’s all right, he just says that he wants them--all his former pupils, the Magic Knights...to be happy.

- AND we get 2 pages that look SO MUCH LIKE X as Clef's words echo in thin, vertical panels across a LOT of ink and shattered glass and a big image of Emeraude crying. Is this world beautiful??
- Clef tells Presea that he'll tell the next Pillar candidate the full story so that no one will be destroyed by the burden again.
- Ferio agrees that the tragedy must end with his sister, even if all this disclosure means that the next pillar refuses.
 - They all know that means that they agree: the world should crumble rather than be made stable through someone being forced to fulfill this role.
- Meanwhile, it appears that Zagato is out riding his black horse through lightning storms and craggy mountain peaks--looking for the Pillar's Path.
 - We don't know how that fits in with his stated goal of ending the legend of the magic knights, but at least WE know what he's doing!
- In Autozam, Eagle is very 90s-ly hooked into what I can only describe as magic internet to spy on the Castle in Cephiro. The image is totally clear, describing it is a nightmare, most fo Rayearth is like this--seriously if you haven't actually read these yourselves, it has that 'very atmospheric rather than grounded' shoujo quality moreso than RG Veda or X, both of which have it a BIT.
- Eagle and Geo are discussing their plans--which aren't exactly to destroy this castle-made-of-psychic-energy or the eggshell-like-barrier around it--
- And end up discussing Lantis, who gave them intel about Cephiro back when he lived there!
- Eagle is very cheerful about explaining that Lantis has gone home to Cephiro, but Geo can tell he's faking it. Is he really okay with tracking Lantis like this?
- After all...Lantis was only ever relaxed when he was with Eagle, he really trusted him.
- Geo tilt's Eagle's face up to look him in the eye as he says the two of them aren't so different, Lantis and Eagle...never willing to back down or compromise.
- Eagle smiles a little more genuinely when Geo says they're just totally pigheaded!
- Geo had been certain that Lantis was staying in Autozam for good...so he was surprised when he left.
- Eagle remembers Lantis telling him he was leaving--that his brother Zagato had known this would happen, this tragedy with Emeraude, and that he must have fought for his own wish, to free the princess.
- Eagle pulled Lantis in for an embrace, and held him as he broke down thinking about the tragedy.
- Lantis told Eagle then that the pillar system is wrong and he's going to end it.
- But back with Geo, in the present, we get some insight into Autozam itself.
 - It is, as the name kind of implies, a mechanistic, industrial, polluted place. Everything runs off the psychic energy that powers Cephiro, but through machines and chemicals that are destroying the land.

- Despite everything Lantis said, Eagle feels that Autozam desperately needs Cephiro's pillar system.
 - If Emeraude's heart could keep the skies so clear and blue, she must have had a very pure heart. He wants to figure out how to use this system to clean up Autozam before it's too late for them.
 - Geo drops that Eagle is the son of the 'president of Autozam' and the invasion was Eagle's idea! Even if it means destroying Cephiro and betraying Lantis.
 - Geo doesn't understand how he can be okay with that.
 - But Eagle looks seriously, even harshly into the distance and says that he has his own wish, and nothing will change that.
- After all that heavy stuff it's nice to see our returning heroines get a hug from Caldina!
 - She informs us she's originally from CHizeta herself!
 - After all, she's a travelling dancer~
 - SO why, Fuu asks, is she not travelling now?
 - Some comedic moments tell us that this may be because of a blossoming romance she's having with LaFarga.
 - LaFarga would like to be a serious character so he moves on to ask them if they'd seen Lantis. He explains he's always outside the castle somewhere, and he's really made no attempt at being a team-player with the others.
 - In fact, he suspect he may be a spy for Autozam--
 - But Hikaru denies this loudly!
 - Everyone is shocked by her behavior, including herself! AFter all, she doesn't know why she feels so strongly. She just does.
- Okay so now we get a cute spread where our not-very-serious-anatagonists, Aska and Tarta, are on facing pages both yelling in frustration about how much of a fiasco that last battle was. They both re-state their goals and, after some comedy, forge their paths for their ships to follow to Cephiro!
- Lantis doesn't know this is happening, but he does see that Cephiro is crumbling, bit-by-bit, under his feet.
 - He can't find the path, and can't stop thinking about what his failure to find it could mean, who could get hurt...
 - And that includes Hikaru, who's name he doesn't even know
 - But he thinks that her gaze was like Eagle's...
 - And he describes that, in my edition, as 'The Look of Someone with Unparalleled Strength of Heart'
 - Which is very poetic but confuses me since...isn't this statement in fact drawing a parallel between their two hearts???
 - Maybe weird word choice in english there!
 - Translation is hard!

- Yeah, my version says “the eyes of someone with a heart stronger than *anyone* else’s. Which is equally contradictory, so I have to assume it’s kind of intentional?”
 - If anyone has this in Japanese and would like to snap a picture of this page so we can compare wordings, that would be lovely.
- Hikaru is still thinking about Lantis, too.
 - She’s almost certainly feeling the effects of a crush, but she’s unused to this and concludes she’s just hungry and invites Mokona to go have a snack with her!
 - But she remembers that Mokona doesn’t eat.
 - In fact, she thinks of how Mokona is one of a kind, all alone here.
 - And reminds Mokona that SHE and the other girls are their friend!
- The other girls are looking for her after she ran off earlier, embarrassed by her loud and unexpected defense of Lantis, and they somewhat-correctly assume she’s hungry, too.
 - As they look for Hikaru, they discuss their guilt, and their feelings about Cephiro’s system.
 - Umi says ‘It sounds like the pillar is just a sacrifice in the name of peace and safety.’
 - Fuu asks if she’s noticed that Clef never calls Cephiro ‘beautiful’, even though it WAS, back when they saw it before...
 - And muses that maybe he understands how conflicted they are about the system.
 - **STill**, they’re outsiders. On some level, it isn’t their choice to decide what is good or bad about the place, is it?
 - Fuu worries that to some of the people of Cephiro, they’re just murderers. After all, they’ve never met ANY of the other people.
 - She even considers that maybe, considering what they had to do, that was engineered.
 - **WHy**, she asks Umi, does *she* want to keep fighting for Cephiro?
 - And Umi answers, easily, that she wants to protect everyone they do know here. That’s all she knows, and all that matters.
 - Fuu agrees with that reason. She never wants to feel so much regret again. She wants them all to be happy.
 - They wax poetic about their beloved Hikaru, who always puts others before herself--
 - But both agree, in all seriousness, that they are not super big fans of the pillar system.
- **Before** that conversation can go any further, their Mashin’s voices declare that a road is closing in!
 - The girls think about how they’re going to fight for themselves, for their own hearts, as they call upon their armor

- We get a very cute moment where Umi stops everything to try to give Hikaru some candy since she must be starving.
 - But there's no time to feed Hikaru!
 - ASka shows up first and uses even more advanced illusion magic than the paint-brush, this time ensnaring Umi in magical thread that turns her Mashin into a puppet!
 - Aska makes Celes dance and, less hilariously, attack the others.
 - Though seeing the different poses Aska makes paralleled with the big robot suit doing them was very charming and well done!
 - Umi tries to resist, to fight back, and at first it doesn't do much
 - Though we see that ASka's eyes have slit cat pupil's like AScot's as she struggles to keep control
 - But Umi thinks about her stalwart decision to fight for what's in her own heart, and uses the ice blades of her magic to cut the stings and free herself from the spell!
 - Somehow it seems like San-Yun was more psychically drained by this than Aska, though, hm...
- The Chizeta sisters watched the whole thing and are able to figure out that the Mashin are from Cephiro after all, not Autozam...
- Speaking of Autozam, Eagle is also approaching on his own road.
 - And he does something...strange
 - He punches his road THROUGH the other two
 - This seems to really mess up Tatra and Tarta--even making the less serious sister have to step up for a moment to face him before she collapses
 - Unfortunately for Eagle, this also messed him up, too.
 - Geo gives him some of his own psychic energy to wake him up, rather than allow his mind to be fried or too connected to the ship he used to do this wild-ass thing.
 - When he awakens, Geo and Zazu are freaking out about the risk he took, but he just smiles since they've overtaken the other two antagonists and won't have to worry about them any more~
- The girls see all this from afar, with no real idea of what's happening to the people in the ships on these 'roads'
 - But Hikaru rushes forward to confront them to do SOMETHING--
 - And somehow
 - She and Rayearth are able to get onto the road from Autozam. Disappearing from her friend's view, and appearing personally before Eagle's battleship.
 - He's profoundly affected by her being there, with a full page to show that as she realizes that Eagle is piloting it, he also realizes that she's a magic knight, and their gaze maybe is similar, and is at least meeting.

- But there's no time for them to say or do anything before the danger of what she did catches up with her, and she screams as she's hurled back out.
- Fuu catches her with gentle winds, and the girls retreat
- Eagle thinks about how Lantis told him the Pillar of Cephiro must take the Pillar's Path to undergo trials...and wonders, as Geo tends him, about how she just punched into his road...
- While back at the palace, Lantis unexpectedly picks up Hikaru's limp form to tend to her!
 - He tells Fuu that healing magic won't help exhaustion, which is what she's suffering from after using too much of her heart's power--what the people of Autozam are calling psychic energy.
 - He has the other girls lead him to their room to lay her down...
 - All the while thinking about how Eagle must be here for the power of their pillar system.
- And before the volume ends, we get one final page
- Mokona before the Mashin, who appear to be giving a...report about what just happened???

Discussion

- SO THAT'S A BIG MYSTERY HUH! And I cannot pretend that I haven't read this before and don't know what's going on, but...had I been a kid reading this for the first time I dunno what I would expect at this point!
- (lucy responds)
- I think this volume has SO MUCH PACKED INTO IT--fewer big spreads though not ~none~ but maybe I saw a few more panels that seemed less-fully-toned than their standard from this time? More experimental or even throwback to RG Veda with inking techniques. The storytelling is mostly amazing, with maybe a liiiiittle more exposition than usual, but that's balanced out with some purely visual moments that are important but kind of blink-and-you'll-miss-it, so that's kinda cool. Like, characters being VERY explicit about their challenging the Pillar system, then kind of...mysterious moments between Mokona and the Rune Gods/Mashin? Interesting contrast! Again, the kind of misdirection they've been using in this series, which I think may trick a younger reader but only in the magic-trick kind of way, rather than being mean-spirited and disrespectful of the reader. Though your mileage may vary.
 - Yeah, I really liked how you pointed out that one moment, when Clef is thinking about the tragedy that happened to Princess Emeraude, and the spread felt very X-like.
 - As always, they are so good at using the light or darkness of a page to convey the tone, and whole this series is certainly not as light as some of their later works, it's light enough that those darker moments really do hit.
- Chizeta problematic corner:

- I mean. Its going for 1001 Nights, pre-islamic 'middle eastern' orientalist motifs here
- And that has its own trouble
- BUT there's an unfortunate 'the women are sexualized, desirable, wild, ornamental, and beautiful' and the 'men are grotesque and bad' thing that imperialist countries levy on anyone else that crops up here
 - It feels unintentional to me, but it's there and it will suck to encounter for a lot of readers and ugh. The joys of imperialism and racism.
 - Yeah, just because it's not *malicious* doesn't mean it's not still *harmful*, or, at best, *troubling*
 - Though, I do think it's worth remembering that CLAMP is at least trying to display non-Japanese cultures in relatively relatable ways, which is not something you always see in anime and manga.
 - The representation here could definitely be better, but I know these characters also meant a lot to folks who were just happy to see any brown people in anime. I think it's ok and important to both love these characters *and* acknowledge the problematic aspects. We all contain multitudes!
- I love how much they're discussing different layers of the injustice of their system in each volume!
- And WOW a lot of ideas they explore in X and RG Veda come up here too!
- That idea that someone's wish may not really make them 'happy', that their 'happiness' may not be compatible with others' happiness, that there can be irreconcilable zero-sum games in our lives...
- Very interesting
- Also the kind of over-simplified but still heartfelt environmental issues?
- Yeah, I always forget how much Rayearth really does line, symbolically or tonally or whatever, with their other major works from this era. The things you mentioned, and also general ruminations on love (the good and bad parts), are so iconically CLAMP.
- Rayearth really does kind of have it all!
- I just want to read more! I want to finish this RIGHT NOW--but I guess it'll take a week. And we'll see if we need an extra wrap-up episode before or AFTER we start watching the anime, because I know they differ a lot and we'll have THOUGHTS and FEELINGS--especially since i've never seen the anime before??

Outro

In our next episode, we'll be discussing the final volume of Rayearth! But, don't worry, we've still got the tv series, the OVA, and hopefully the game, so there's plenty of Rayearth to come.

Until then, you can follow us on twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram @Clampcastpod, on Facebook as Clampcast in Wonderland, and on our website clampcastinwonderland.com.

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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!