

Cardcaptor Sakura

Volume Number 1

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Intro

This episode can only be listened to by someone with the potential for magical powers. If you're listening to this, you may be...a Cardcaptor!

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

Check-In

- Major, major shout-out to Robin for writing like 95% of this episode. I just started my second-to-the-last term of Business School, and I started a new job (in publishing!), and I had to re-do my school schedule at the last minute. So my week has been rough. But now I'm taking Spanish, so...yay?
- It was a joy to write and research for this episode. I'm so glad that this will be a Magical Girl Year and I hope that can give us all some much-needed morale
- Because I have a bit of a heavy heart right now. Our beloved mascot, the toughest little rat I've ever had, Tomax "The Nose" Paoli, also known as Office Max, died yesterday in my arms.
 - He was older than most rats, especially rats who were just rescued out of a feeder tank at a reptile store, can dream of, and he enjoyed all his favorite foods and activities up until the day he died. I'm really going to miss him.
 - It is hard to record without him on my lap, but I'm going to try to just lose myself in the joy of our topic today.

Background

- Cardcaptor Sakura is an absolute mega-hit of a shoujo manga that began its 4-year run in Nakayoshi in May 1996.
 - If you recall our timeline, Magic Knight Rayearth wrapped up in...April 1996.
 - So that means that they were developing Cardcaptor Sakura WHILE THEY WERE FINISHING RAYEARTH PART 2!
- Rayearth's development was a big change for CLAMP, remember. Nakayoshi is a magazine for like, elementary school girls (as usual, we mean 'marketed to', not 'can only be read by' or 'is only read by'--shoujo and shounen are marketing demographics, not Holy Writ, and while we're not here to double down on gendered marketing, it is in play for the advertisers who keep magazines afloat.)

- CLAMP both found their own way to make a series aimed very young AND pushed the envelope—giant robots! Video game references! The heroines killed the princess to save her! Rayearth was not a typical Nakayoshi manga.
 - Though what IS (or WAS) a typical Nakayoshi manga...well, that was in flux at the time.
 - We're bringing this back to Sailor Moon, of course.
 - Because Nakayoshi was launched in the 50s, and the idea of what a 'typical shoujo manga' is has fluctuated a lot over the years!
 - In the 50s, they ran Ribon no Kishi (Princess Knight) by godfather of manga Osamu Tezuka, in the 60s they ran manga by equally legendary Shotaro Ishinomori, and of course in the 70s they ran the charming and influential (especially in Europe) Candy Candy!
 - But fairy tales and exotic western-aesthetics kind of fall aside and by the 80s CLAMP and Nakayoshi editors would describe their 'typical' fare as stories about school girls falling in love for the first time. Sometimes comedic, sometimes sappy, or even sporty, and often genius.
 - But Nakayoshi's editor-in-chief in the late 80s-early 90s, Yoshio Irie, had taken a BIG chance on Sailor Moon as a vector into more fantasy/sci-fi for that young female audience, and boy did that pan out in a BIG WAY!
 - Rayearth was editor Hideki Yamanouchi's attempt to follow up (that's better than 'replace') Sailor Moon with a fresh new comic from fresh new faces.
 - Of course CLAMP had already completed a master work and spent nearly 10 years on epic fantasy and horror comics, but they were not a household name, especially not for kids and families, until Magic Knight Rayearth.
 - And after Magic Knight Rayearth...they were asked to follow up with something new themselves!
 - And that was Cardcaptor Sakura.
 - So from May 1996-June 2000 Cardcaptor Sakura enchanted the pages of Nakayoshi magazine, and became even more popular than Magic Knight Rayearth in terms of sheer circulation numbers!
 - More than that, Cardcaptor Sakura won awards for its manga and also its 70-episode anime adaptation, and launched movies, TEN video games, drama CDs, countless kinds of merchandise—and is STILL a pop culture phenomenon with themed cafes, museum and gallery shows, and even a sequel series—which we'll kind of pretend doesn't exist for now due to the constraints of our self-imposed format, sorry folks!
 - There are over 17 million copies of Cardcaptor Sakura in print
 - Considering how 10,000 copies of any given book is kind of hard—this is a massive success.
 - Think of how many readers have fallen in love with these characters, this premise, this story!

- And so many people fell in love with CLAMP through this manga and its anime adaptation.
- Rayearth had been a big break—this was them breaking their own records.
- And that is interesting because it was an even bigger departure from their established themes than Magic Knight Rayearth.
- The hero of Cardcaptor Sakura, the eponymous Sakura herself, is an energetic fourth-grader who becomes a magical girl.
- In interviews, they don't say anything about it being mandated by the editors that they aim younger and lighter—it seems like it was their own idea, even though Ohkawa wasn't deeply into magical girl stories. She could understand why readers—the readers she wanted to connect with—would be, and that's what would count.
- I think a running theme for this year will be Magical Girls.
- Because that term carries a lot of weight—many connotations for many people—and we probably need to do some disambiguation.
 - Sailor Moon really reinvigorated that genre.
 - I know I said a lot about this in the Rayearth episode, but it is interesting, I think, to discuss how atypical Sailor Moon was?
 - She's older, she's part of a big team—influence from Go Nagai's not-at-all-shoujo-work Cutey Honey for the long-legged sexy glamor and also from like, all sentai and tokusatsu shows for the color-coded team and monster of the week villains really comes through—and Rayearth kind of plays off of that, with color-coded teenage girls very overtly fighting bad guys with magical weapons.
 - Cardcaptor Sakura actually reconnects with earlier magical girl works in terms of how young and cute and, well, witchy the magical girl is.
 - In fact, they'd originally considered making her more overtly a witch-themed heroine!
 - So many contemporary comics artists I know describe themselves as deeply influenced by Magical Girls. And usually they explicitly mean Sailor Moon and Cardcaptor Sakura—which, fair! They are extremely influential and excellent, and especially in the US where they were some of the prettiest, most aesthetically-feminine, most engaging cartoons/comics aimed at girls that were even accessible, they were kind of all we had.
 - But depending on what you count and how you trace things back, Magical Girls could originate with, like, Kaguyahime from the fairy tale, or even Alice in Wonderland, a classic beloved in Japan.

- Usually, however, people cite gag-manga-master **Fujio Akatsuka's** *Himitsu no Akko-chan* and [Mitsuteru Yokoyama's](#) *Little Witch Sally*, from 1962 and 1966, respectively, as the origins of the genre.
 - It is notable that *Little Witch Sally* was directly inspired by the American 60s TV witch romantic comedy *Bewitched!*
 - And also that the genre was all about 'majokko'--or little witches at the time!
 - That being said, there is some very Princess Knight/*Ribbon no Kishi*-esque aesthetics in live action magical girl *Poitrine* that really makes me feel like you can't discount the knight influence, or even the aesthetics of non-magical-girl-shoujo-titan *Rose of Versailles* on this genre.
 - By the 80s, the witchiness had been modernized into largely girls having powers bestowed upon them by like...aliens and fairy aliens and otherworldly sources.
 - And also instead of cheeky comedy, we were deeply in the anime-as-toy-commercial zone, so shows like *Magical Angel Creamy Mami* and *Magical Star Emi* and *Magical Fairy Persia* and...*Fancy La La* and *Minky Momo*--they were very much about selling plastic versions of the cutely designed devices or jewelery that the girl used to access their powers.
 - I assume that really is because of the cultural impact of the Ultraman color-timer as a marketable object?
 - That you don't just sell ultraman dolls (or Creamy Mami dolls) but also his transformation device for kids to use in more theatrical play?
 - Also the visuals and cultural power of idol singers really got established in the 70s and 80s, and I...cannot imagine that is not a huge part of why so many Magical Girls have a performance element?
 - Creamy Mami is a great example of course, since she is an idol singer, but *Magical Emi* is a magician-themed magical girl.

- And a lot of magical girls in the 80s were pre-teens who transformed into a more grown up version of themselves (which is an element of Sailor Moon, too, though often forgotten!)
- So probably the 70s super hero stuff and Gravure Idols and UFO mania and Sanrio's cute character goods revolution all came together into this extremely aesthetically pleasing genre of shows that were meant to sell cute stuff to little girls...
- BUT I think it's important to know that part of the legacy of these shows is also that the show-runners had their own interest in cute girls.
 - And idol culture is a part of that—actual kids being marketed as singers/performers not just because of their talents but because of what they could be seen as representing, a promise of like... 'purity' and beauty that's completely inaccessible and uh, untarnished, but still consumable?
 - Because while on some level idol singers are kind of thought to be like, for kids their own age to watch and be fans of...no one is confused about how much \$\$ there is in their older male fans.
 - Here's where 80s magical girl anime intersect with otaku culture to create, well, moe.
 - Big-eyed girls in frilly outfits who are so young and pure and innocent that they exist

in a strange kind of fantasy of what a girl could be.

- And that appeals to folks who see themselves as girls and want to ascend to that level of sparkle, and also to people who're just kind of attracted to that for whatever reason.
 - It could get explicitly pornographic, like in the VERY influential hentai/OVA shorts collectively known as 'Lemon People'
 - But many of the creatives who worked on that stuff also worked in mainstream anime.
 - And they brought their gaze, their interests, and their passion.
 - The pluses and minuses of the otaku mindset.
- Cardcaptor Sakura may have had a huge crossover audience, but from the ground up CLAMP built this to be for the intended audience of elementary schoolers
 - Cardcaptor Sakura is not from the 80s. It is a VERY 90s property—Sakura-chan rollerblades to school!
 - And I think, considering the boom of more elementary-school-aged magical girl series that hit in the early 2000s, especially the very toy-driven Pretty Cure, that Cardcaptor Sakura had some serious impact in the manga and anime world
- Cardcaptor Sakura is about 4th-graders. They picked that age because they felt that much younger would give them less freedom for what she could believably do, and much older and she wouldn't feel as definitely like a child.

- In an interview, Mokona said that Ohkawa told her not to use ‘tsurime’ (the kind of upturned almost cat-like eyes that look so pretty on Kamui and even Hikaru) and indeed, the eyes in Cardcaptor Sakura (and especially of Sakura herself) are so soft and gentle and full of light in a much more approachable, almost sappy way. (That’s tareme, btw, if you like keeping track of this stuff.)
 - The craft, the skill, the sensibilities of CLAMP are all here, but in a way no one had seen before—in a way that was far, far more Nakayoshi.
 - They worked hard to develop a new style for a new feel, and hopefully it was also a little easier to use after X and Rayearth just worked them to the bone.
 - That’s interesting! I know the difference in eye shape is one of the things that really sets their post-CCS stuff apart from their pre-CCS stuff, at least for me. There are some outliers before that, but it really shows a shift. I didn’t realize it was quite so intentional.
 - There are characters who do hearken more to the trime eye shape—like Touya—so its clear they’re leaning into the different personalities those shapes communicate in a like, ‘this is a convention of the genre’ kind of way, whereas they were playing against type with Hikaru being so sweet (though she is fiery and a tomboy i guess!) and even Subaru having those eyes. I know I have a preference ha ha ha
- Cardcaptor Sakura was a huge hit in our own childhoods. While we were a little older than the target audience when it came out in America in the year 2000, my little brother was pretty much exactly her age and connected HARD.
 - We’d been watching and collecting Sailor Moon in various formats, and it felt SO natural to start grabbing Cardcaptor Sakura
 - Like with Sailor Moon, Mixx (an earlier incarnation of controversial comic company Tokyopop) published Cardcaptor Sakura in 7x10 inch floppy comics that would be on the shelf with X-Men and Batman.
 - We thiiiiink we might have seen the Fox Kids re-cut version of the anime, which was called Cardcaptors, before we read it but I’m not sure because we really were going to the comic shop and picking up new comics once a week? So it’s entirely possible we grabbed the comics first.
 - I didn’t ever read it in floppies, but I started collecting it graphic novel form, and I know for a fact I was reading the manga (and watching the anime subbed) before the Fox Kids version hit the airwaves, because I remember all the lead up and anticipation to that.
 - I definitely grabbed the manga as kind of a replacement for Sailor Moon, which was winding down at the time (or at least was between graphic novels). I needed that magical girl fix!
 - Bilingual tankobon from Kodansha were an experiment they were trying around that time, and we grabbed a couple of those to learn from! I don’t think they

- published any bilingual editions past like, 2001 but they did a little Ge Ge Ge no Kitaro, Oh My Goddess, and Love Hina among other things.
- Sakura was eventually released in smaller, more substantial graphic novel formats and has been rereleased periodically. I have Dark Horse's 4-volume omnibus set, Lucy is reading the old Mix/Tokyopop editions!
 - It...is an experience, let me tell you. The printing is so murky and dark!
 - You are free to upgrade to better versions if its not enjoyable!
 - Now, with our American childhoods we can only speak to the ways it hit here, but this series had a huge impact worldwide and we're hoping to hear from people who can regale us with their own stories!
 - We know that the UK got a more complete but still edited version of the anime in 2001, and that it was one of the few anime to air there so it has a special place in the hearts of a certain generation.
 - There's SO MUCH TO SAY about Cardcaptor Sakura—but we'll pace it out a bit as we cover this series this year!

Summary

- We enter the story on a dark, mysterious night...
 - The moon is a crescent over the Tokyo tower
 - And a rabbit creature with attitude skids to a stop on a rooftop—pursued by a small figure with a decorative hat and shoes!
 - The creature jumps away, but we see the pursuer more fully now—
 - An adorable little girl in a flashy outfit, with a cute teddy-bear-like thing perched on her shoulder! She herself is perched precariously on a railing. What is this tiny child doing out on the roofs of Tokyo at night?
 - Fighting this rabbit creature, obviously. It leaps at her but she's nimble! Her teddy-bear-like sidekick calls her Sakura.
 - Sakura has a cute bird-headed staff that she uses while she speaks an incantation command to the creature to 'show its true form', ending with the power word "RELEASE!"
 - —Which doesn't work!
 - The rabbit creature is unimpressed by her efforts so far, but her little sidekick reminds her to use a card.
 - She speaks some words of command to what looks like a long tarot-shaped card, and strikes it with the head of her staff calling out its name—Windy! The Windy card sports a pretty lady with a very air-elemental look, gentle in contrast with the intense (though cute) look of the creature Sakura is battling.
 - CLAMP drew some very beautiful swirly wind effects here, issuing from the rectangular surface of the card, as the Windy card creates a kind of whirlwind around the rabbit creature and binds it.
 - When she commands it to finally return to its true form again, it does indeed shrink down to a tarot-like card itself!

- She poses with a V-for-victory hand gesture, smiling as if for a photograph while holding the card—the Jump card, with the rabbit creature picture in the celestial framing artwork that marks every card.
- This scene is interrupted by the ringing of—
- –An alarm?
 - We pull back to see that final image on an old chunky CRT TV screen
 - While a sleepy Sakura turns off her alarm
 - She narrates to the reader in first person, introducing herself as Sakura Kinomoto, a fourth-grader at Tomoeda Elementary school. She’s an energetic kid who doesn’t like math but loves music and PE—
 - And she’s going to be late again if she doesn’t hurry!
 - Still, she takes the time to stop and eject the vhs tape that was showing her filmed escapade from the night before—her sidekick can’t help himself from re-watching it just to see how handsome and cool he looks—because she needs to return it to Tomoyo-chan!
 - That’s her best friend, and the one who made the video. Video, not a movie—because it all actually happened!
 - Sakura’s narration merges comically with the action as she introduces her sidekick, Kero-chan!
 - WHO informs us he’s actually named Cerberus (keroberos) and doesn’t love his cute nickname.
 - But she can’t tell us the long story about what he actually is, because, again, she’s going to be late!
 - She runs downstairs to breakfast, where her sarcastic big brother Touya makes fun of her ungainly stomping.
 - Their father, a kindly man with glasses, who happens to be an Archeology professor, sets down a home made breakfast for her and drinks in the adorable scene of his kids squabbling harmlessly—
 - But Sakura does not appreciate Touya’s ribbing, and tells us that he’s mean, he’s a second-year high school student and that someday

she'll grow up to be bigger than
him—bigger than a telephone
pole—and she'll squash him!

- But she does love her sweet father—and her mother, who is deceased but still has an honored presence at the family table through a framed photograph.
 - Sakura is 10 years old, and her mom died when she was 3, so she doesn't remember that much about her.
 - But she informs us that she's not lonely! Because she has her dad! And her annoying brother! And Kero-chan!
- So if the VCR and CRT TV didn't cue you in that this was a 90s series, the fact that Skaura straps on adorable little roller blades should!
- See, she isn't worried about being late to school. She just wants to keep pace with Touya because he rides his bike to school with his friend Yukito, on whom Sakura has a VERY BIG CRUSH
- And no wonder! He's sweet and mild where her brother is kind of a spicy grump. While Touya makes fun of her, Yukito shows endearing concern, and when they part ways he tosses her a little candy!
 - Also he like, rides on the back of her brother's bike, which I know from Nozaki-kun is now illegal? But very adorable.
- Her best friend, Tomoyo Daidouji, a classically beautiful Japanese girl with long black hair and a gentle expression, is charmed by HER being charmed by Yukito's present.
- Sakura returns the tape and Tomoyo praises her for being so beautiful in it, which emabrasses Sakura a bit—
 - But Tomoyo insists she should be proud of her true calling as the heroine called upon to gather the cards and save the world from certain doom—the only one who can do it!
 - She delivers this speech looking starstruck, swept away by the romance of the concept, while we have a very X-like dark tone and

an ominous earth behind her (as well as the Jojo-infamous 'go go go' sfx.)

- And thus we're lead into a short flashback
 - Where Sakura explains that 2 months ago, when she'd JUST started 4th grade, she found an old book with an ornate cover in her dad's library (and we see the book called 'The Clow' with a lion-headed, celestial seal on the front)
 - When she touched it, it began to float, then emit light, and Kero emerged from the cover illustration...
 - She says he's the Beast of the Seal and his true form is much bigger but he's running low on power
 - Like the chibi 'energy saving mode' that the characters in Wish had!
 - Kero always says his true form is pretty cool, but so far she has to take his word for it.
 - Also he has a pronounced Osaka accent, because 'the book was in Osaka for a while', he says.
 - Anyway, she took his existence pretty well, probably because of his loud and friendly manner and the fact she kiiinda assumed he was a toy at first—but she also didn't have much time to worry about any of this because he explains to her that the book is currently empty—it is supposed to hold a deck of cards created by someone named Clow Reed—and these cards are not only alive, but now that they've escaped they'll create havok—even evil!
 - Sakura's ideal of evil is bending a flower or not doing her homework, but Kero-chan insists it's more world-threatening stuff than that!
 - We do get a peek at someone completely draped in wizardly robes encircled by floating cards, standing before a big magic circle with esoteric symbols...who may just be Sakura's imagining of Clow Reed?
 - Kero further explains that each card has a special name, form, and magic.
 - For example, Windy has power over Wind, and Firey over fire.
 - They're so powerful that pretty much nothing else can defeat them—
 - And he was placed on the cover to seal them inside!
 - So...why aren't the cards in the book still, she asks?
 - Well...Kero admits that maybe the cover was more comfortable than it looks and maaaybe he...was asleep on the job.
 - But he moves on to sum everything up for her: only someone with magic can open that book

- And since she opened it—she must have some magic!
 - He asks her her name, and when she replies, he forges a contract between Sakura and the book, using a little winged, bird-themed key.
 - When he shouts ‘release’ the key transforms into something he calls a staff but which could be magic wand or baton-sized, and implores her to grab it!
 - A magic circle appears beneath her as she reaches for it, and then it is done!
 - That’s how she became a Cardcaptor!
- Thinking back on it, Sakura thinks maybe Kero-chan tricked her, and Tomoyo replies that he’s very talented.
 - She’s the only one who knows about Kero-chan and the whole magic thing!
 - She’s a little rich girl, her mom heads a huge...electronics? Telecommunications? Corporation
 - The girls have been in the same class since 3rd grade and are very close—Tomoyo is her biggest fan!
 - Even though she’s only caught 3 cards so far.
 - Tomoyo really is very invested in Sakura and her heroics to the point of being a little obsessive and embarrassing—after all, Sakura is kind fo down-to-earth and sporty, but Tomoyo wants to capture her escapades on film and make sure she looks as cute and cool as possible doing it—so she designs and sews her new outfits for each outing!
 - As she says ‘When you do special things, you simply must wear special clothes!’
 - Sakura thinks she’s a good friend, but a little weird.
 - And to highlight the difference between the girls, we next see Sakura dominating in PE class!
 - Tomoyo thinks she’s pretty darned good at sports—and so is her big brother, who they can see playing soccer on the adjacent field.
 - Tomoyo is blushy while looking at Touya—but Sakura only has eyes for Yukito who trips on his way over to say hi! Oh no! Touya gives him shit (to Sakura’s horror) but there’s no time for Sakura to intervene—
 - Because a giant bird is flying overhead, causing a kind of wind tunnel effect that flattens all the kids!
 - They’re fine, but only Sakura could see that it was a giant bird causing it—so it must be a Clow card!
- Later, Sakura, Tomoyo, and Kero sit around in her room discussing what to do next—when her dad shows up with a snack, almost discovering Kero is alive!

- Sakura has to pretend to be working on her Osaka-accented ventriloquism to shake him off the trail
 - A fun piece of story-telling in a silent medium like a comic that gives us an impression of how Kero sounds!
- Sakura, wearing a Spring-themed outfit Tomoyo made for her, meets up with her at the school later that night.
- Tomoyo is dropped off by her fabulous all-female bodyguard squad, of course, who will also come pick her up later.
- Sakura thinks that's impressive, but Tomoyo thinks magical powers are impressive.
- She flatters Sakura, who demurs, but shifts into badass mode when the big bird strafes them again.
 - Sakura is ready this time, she tries to use her staff—and the Windy card—to seal this creature back into its card form, but before Kero's warning to not use Windy—
 - —she ends up with a lot of blow-back!
 - Poor Sakura is blown away, and tiny Kero barely catches her midair.
 - Is Tomoyo okay?
 - Oh she's fine—she caught it all on tape!
 - Sadly, though, Sakura did NOT catch the card.
 - And she's not as amused by the footage of her failure as Kero-chan is, watching the video back in her room later that night.
 - Kero explains that of course WIndy wouldn't be effective against the Fly card—because Fly is nested UNDER Windy!
 - Sakura used WIndy to catch the other cards she has (The Jump and the Wood, which we have NOT seen yet!)
 - But WIndy is pretty chill and just went back into the book on her own, basically.
 - He talks about the personalities of the other cards—Wood is also pretty friendly, but Jump was combative and kinda dumb.
 - Sakura is a bit let down that the card she caught was maybe not as big a challenge as it felt, but she supposes Fly must be a jerk like Jump, right?
 - Only...Kero says no, its usually pretty chill itself!
 - So something's up. And normally they could use the cards to do a divination reading (like with tarot cards) but with only 3, that's not gonna happen...
 - Sakura asks if they could potentially do a love reading someday?
 - Kero doesn't get the importance of this, but recalls she's very het up over some friend of her brother's who he just can't manage to remember.

- Sakura gushes over Yukito for a bit, but realizes its pretty late and she has to go to bed!
 - Before she does, Kero-chan reminds her to make sure she's written her name on the cards, because that's how she can make sure they'll listen to her.
- Sakura has a dream...about a bird with an injured wing.
 - And while this has pretty obvious implications for her magical predicament, she doesn't have time to consider them because while she did remember to write her name on her cards—she did not remember to take her skates home from school when she put them away before battling the Fly card last night!
 - Which means she has to deign to ask her brother for a ride...
 - Luckily that means he can bring her to the high school to watch Yukito help out with the kyuudo club!
 - That's Japanese-style archery
 - Yukito is apparently good at just about everything, but doesn't actually belong to any of the clubs, he just helps out.
 - Sakura loves watching him, but her good time is cut short because the bird shows up AGAIN!
 - This time her big brother grabs her, and while he makes fun of how she's too heavy to blow away, it was still a very sweet big brotherly thing to do.
- So Sakura takes another crack at capturing this card, in a cute new outfit and with Tomoyo recording as usual.
 - Despite only having those three cards, one of which is useless to her in this case, she has a plan.
 - And she executes it! She has the Wood card, who manifests as a kind of dryad, create a net of branches to catch the bird.
 - And then Sakura shows the bird kindness and gentleness, asking it about its injury!
 - This calms the bird down, and it shrinks into a cute bird she tenderly cradles in her arms. Now that it trusts her, the bird returns to a card state on its own!
 - The card has a tear in it!
 - But when she writes her name on the card, magic surrounds her and the card is good as new!
 - Kero considers that her prophetic dream, which helped her help the bird, might mean she has more magic powers than he thought, but he doesn't share with her or us exactly what that could mean.
 - Instead he encourages her to find out how to use the card—
 - Which ends up adding wings to her staff making it function like a witch's broom!
- The next chapter starts with Sakura and her school friends—she's SO excited because they get to swim in PE that day!
 - Well, she's excited until they start to share spooky rumors about someone's big sister being grabbed mysteriously in the pool!

- Apparently it's just started happening—and Sakura imagines a spooky ghost and her enthusiasm is dampened.
 - Scary stories are not her thing.
- But she's brave and come PE class, she jumps in the pool and starts swimming.
 - Unfortunately the fun is ruined when Chiharu, her friend with the pigtails, is dragged under water.
 - Sakura is a strong enough swimmer to dive down and investigate, and sees a kind of whirlpool formed around Chiharu's leg!
 - She tries to pull it off, but the whirlpool leaves Chiharu and comes for her instead!
- She comes to under the watchful eye of her PE teacher and all the other students—apparently it was Tomoyo who saved her despite being a weak swimmer!
- Kero is unimpressed with what this story says about Sakura as a problem-solver, but before they can go into it much, Touya comes home to eat the pancakes she's making—using her own allowance!
 - She raises a fuss, but when Yukito arrives right behind him, she changes her tune and actually offers to bring some up to them for a snack!
 - And this after being reluctant to share with Kero-chan!
 - Mind you, I would love to eat a stack of pancakes right now all by myself, too. I wish I had gone swimming and then got to eat a stack of pancakes. Ideal day.
 - Truly!
 - Sakura takes the pancakes upstairs, and when she realizes she can't knock on the door while carrying a tray of pancakes, Yukito just KNOWS she's there and opens the door for her!
 - How perfect can he be!
 - She's ready to float away on a cloud after this, but instead she has to figure out what to do about this Pool Problem
 - Kero figures it's the Watery card, which is bad news because that's one of those important elemental cards and is not only powerful but kind of a brat! Water doesn't have an easy-to-catch form, after all—it's water! And this is vicious water,
 - No card she has—Jump, Fly, Wood, and Windy—is particularly helpful.
 - Sakura is preoccupied with this problem even during baton twirling practice at school...she's afraid if she doesn't figure out how to capture that card soon, someone might actually drown!
 - Again, Yukito saves her mood—he offers to treat her to a snow cone soon to thank her for the pancakes!
- And that also gives her an idea!
 - That night, she's ready to go! Dressed in a cute jester-themed outfit and using a special cell phone (which was impossibly advanced for 1996 and very throw-backy for now) she and Tomoyo have a PLAN!

- Which is that she gets the card to chase her, which since its water looks like she's being chased by a very thin tsunami that can turn corners.
 - These panels GO HARD and you get some seriously good magic action here, as it chases her—into the cafeteria and into the walk-in freezer!
 - Where it freezes into a kind of ice sculpture version of itself, and we can see a pointy-eared (and toothed!) ice nymph kind of creature, posed reaching out at her!
 - Subdued in this form, she's able to return it to a card, and now she has TWO of the four elements!
 - And while Tomoyo and Kero-chan are impressed with her quick thinking, Sakura chalks it all up to Yukito mentioning ice!
- The next chapter begins with one of her friends (Naoko, the one with the glasses) walking home a bit late when she sees a ghost looming over a lake!
 - Like, a one-eyed stylized goopy obake-style ghost
 - And Sakura-chan cannot handle this story—it's summer break which is the spooky season in Japan.
 - This happened in the park near her house, with a slide shaped like a penguin with a crown (which they call the Penguin King)
 - And it upsets Sakura so much to think about that she throws her baton TOO HIGH and has to go get it back—using the jump card (out of sight, of course!)
 - While up in a tree, she sees Tomoyo finishing up choir practice in a second-story classroom—and begs her to walk home with her because she's just too freaked out!
 - In fact, the whole crew of girls walk home together! Sakura scoots slowly on her skates to stay close to everyone, and they get past the Penguin King just fine...but when they walk past the lake, they all see SOMETHING
 - But they don't all see the same thing!
 - Sakura herself sees a faint apparition of a lady.
 - At home, in the bath, Kero asks her why she's totally chill about fighting Clow Cards but freaked out by a little ghost story
 - And she says that the cards she understands, but ghosts are a total unknown.
 - This reminded me a little of Shuichiro's attitude to supernatural things and magic.
 - Anyway, Sakura knows people have long claimed to see ghosts in that park—but out past the lake by a big tree, not ON the lake.
 - So...maybe this is actually just a Clow Card after all?
 - Kero can't think of which one it might be, but doesn't rule it out.
 - If only she had the Firey card, under which his Sun-powers are nested, then maybe he could return to his True Form and help out a little more—after all he's pretty darned big in that form!
 - Down at dinner, Sakura's dad has switched out the photo of her mother for one taken when she was about 16 (which...is how old she was when they got married. He was 25.)

- I wouldn't write it but oh well.
 - Yeah...it's a choice. I'm sure we'll touch on this again at some point!
- Sakura's mother was a model and so they have a ton of photos, and he switches the photo out every day and tells her so many stories about this kind, beautiful woman, so Sakura feels some pretty deep love for her even though she died when she was so young.
- Tomoyo sends Sakura a fax, which is the quaintest 90s thing ever but also wild because like, we never had a fax machine in...our rooms? But Maybe this is a special fax machine from Tomoyo's mom's company.
 - She's inviting her to go to the summer festival—whiiiiich is being held at THAT PARK so she understands if maybe Sakura doesn't want to go...
- But of course they'll go! Chaperoned by her big brother (and Yukito!) who look adorable in their yukata. They're all dressed in their summer matsuri best!
 - Sakura guilt trips her brother into buying them all caramel apples
 - But he shows concern for Yukito, who he just calls Yuki—is one caramel apple enough for him to eat?
 - Sakura defends his honor but both Touya and Yukito himself are like “NO SERIOUSLY HE EATS A LOT way more than Touya”
 - And Yukito explains his daily intake of : a good breakfast, some bread at second period, two bento, an omelet after school, and then dinner.
 - Touya sagely insists that Yukito just gets bad mileage.
- Before they can investigate this any further, there are screams from the lake!
 - Again, everyone saw a different thing.
 - But this means Sakura wants to get serious—and of course Tomoyo wanted her to come not just for fun, but for Clow Card business!
 - Changed into a diamond-patterned outfit, Sakura steels herself for investigating the lake in Cardcaptor mode, once everyone else has cleared off.
 - Tomoyo has a cute compact-shaped cell phone/pager to share with her so they can communicate...because they'll need something where Sakura is going: under the water!
 - She uses Watery to make an air bubble she can breathe in for a short time while she checks things out.
 - At first she sees a burst of light—then a figure:
 - HER MOTHER! Looking exactly how we saw her in that last photo!
 - All Tomoyo sees from up top is a page ‘It's my mom!’ so she can't see that down there, Sakura is embracing this apparition. She looks so happy...
 - But when Kero-chan tries to go in after her, he's repelled!

- But of course she doesn't hold it against them!
 - She will accept the cookies and flower though~
 - Kero really is worried that he's pushing her too hard, and she appreciates his concern, but the truth is she NEEDS to know whether this is a Clow Card or a real ghost.
 - She does remember Touya telling her that her mom went to a beautiful place in the sky once Sakura was grown up enough she didn't have to watch over her so closely.
 - So if she's in the lake now, Sakura needs to know what she's trying to tell her.
 - In a new umbrella-themed outfit and fitted with a walkie-talkie this time, Sakura, Tomoyo, and Kero-chan all head back to the lake!
 - This time even Tomoyo can see a vision of Sakura's mother—looking just like the photo Sakura showed her—in the lake.
 - Hmmm.
 - Sakura uses Fly to meet her—but she grabs her and pulls her down into the lake!
 - Struggling, Sakura tries to get the apparition to answer her and explain what it wants, but it just pulls her down deeper and deeper.
 - Finally she fights her way up to the surface and confronts the fact that her mother would never do this to her, just like Yukito said!
 - And that breaks the illusion!
 - There's a great panel where we see a kind of celestial pattern filled into the outline that had been her mother's form in the panel right above it.
 - So creepy!
 - She uses Watery to dive down and retrieve the card that's in the lake, and she seals it back into its card, which now has that same pattern on it.
 - This is the Illusion card, which shows people what they most fear, most expect, or most desire.
 - That's why everyone saw something different—and why Kero and Tomoyo could see Sakura's mother, too, once that's what they expected to see.
 - Kero thinks he was repelled from helping her...basically because she didn't WANT him to help; she wanted to be with her mom.
 - But now she's just glad her mom ISN'T actually stuck down there and can be in the beautiful place in the sky instead. She's honestly relieved.
 - Tomoyo points out that she's probably worried her mom a bit with her recent antics, nearly drowning again!
 - But luckily she's brought along a dry change of clothes—even frillier than the current outfit!

- Which earns a pratfall from Sakura.
 - Back at home, it's another normal, hectic morning at the Kinomoto household, but Sakura still has time to say good morning to her mother's photo like usual.
 - Only this time Touya is shocked to see his mother's spirit greeting Sakura, as well, though of course his little sister can't see her.
 - She admits to him that she was a liiiiittle worried and just wanted to check in, but seems like Sakura's doing fine after all!
 - Aw!

Discussion

- Okay first off that did make me cry this time. The family dynamic is very rich and sweet and a little painful, you know?
 - I love how the dad is just glad his kids are there for each other, loudly bickering at the kitchen table.
 - And they obviously love each other even if Touya shows this through teasing that she does not appreciate.
 - It helps to have him as a contrast with Sakura, her dad, Tomoyo, and Yukito who are all just darlings.
 - Yeah, I love Touya. I don't have any siblings, but I've always liked to imagine that he'd be the kind of big brother I'd have.
- Sakura-chan narrates the first chapter! So intimate and charming! It really makes it feel like a Nakayoshi comic, if that makes sense? So conversational and directly connecting with the child reader. Almost like she's narrating an anime about herself, or writing a journal as she lives her day, though there's no diegetic reason for the narration—that is, she isn't ACTUALLY keeping a diary I don't think? It's narrated as things happen, totally in synch.
 - Yeah, it feels very much like the beginning of Sailor Moon to me, which I think also starts with being late, and with that kind of self-narration going on.
 - I think the closest we've come to this tone was the early CLAMP school titles, and this does have its gag manga moments that keep it light and snappy.
 - In general the page layouts favor comedic beats and very graphic, text-inclusive comic story telling whenever possible, which contrasts with the flowing fantasy art and almost glass-like panels for action scenes and serious scenes.
- To follow up a tiny bit on our Jojo x CLAMP episode, Touya and Yukito attend Seijo High School, and Seijo is spelled with the kanji for Star and the Jo from various Jojo names, so like...its Jostar High School and we just have to accept this. We can battle it out about whether they're Jojo or Devilman analogues later, but for now just...Jostar High School.
- So I have to admit that I'd NEVER seen her as a little witch type, but now I can't unsee it!
 - Her 'wand' serves as a witch's flying broom, too, once she applies the 'Fly' card to it!

- Yeah, same! I was distracted by how much pink there is, but the bones are really very witchy. Metaphorical bones, I mean. Of the character type. But literal bones would make it witchier...
- I think the cards aren't just drawn in directly, they're like...applied on? So like, maybe manipulated using a xerox machine and pasted in? Not digitally, which would be much easier these days...I'll see if I can find anything about this.
- This was almost certainly our first CLAMP manga and certainly our first CLAMP anime!
 - And boy do I still love it!
 - It's like coming home—do i say that with every title?
 - This one is really very comforting though.
- Yeah, I'm still not sure which CLAMP series I discovered first. It was probably CCS, but I wasn't actually very into it at first. I think I read a volume or two, and then eventually came back to it after watching the Rayearth anime, and completely fell in love. All I know is, I have some dvds of the anime that I watched over, and over, and over again, and I remember having to get fansubs of the movies because the anime was still coming out here.
 - I mostly read the manga as it was coming out, and I still have the original volumes. They have held up much better than my Sailor Moon volumes, which I think had an unfortunate run-in with the lower levels of backpack strata.
 - But, I'm jealous that you're reading the omnibus version, because this old printing is ROUGH. Everything is dark, and murky, and small. It's hard to tell what's going on sometimes.
- Hey Lucy I love Yukito so much!
 - Haha yeah, I was very excited to see him--well, and everyone one, but I'd forgotten he was so present so early on.
 - He's super important! He keeps inspiring Sakura to figure out the puzzles of these cards...HMMMM
- Honestly, it was so good to see all these characters again!
 - Sakura is such a delightful heroine. She's determined and optimistic, and not without faults, but still feels like she can kind of do ANYTHING, you know?
 - I'm also really fond of Tomoyo. When I was first learning to sew, I improved by making costumes for friends for basically just the cost of materials, and I made a lot of costumes for my friend Tori in particular (hi Tori!). I very much felt like Tomoyo at that time, staying behind the camera while also really having fun dressing up my friends.
 - Also, does the Darkhorse version actually spell Kero's name as Cerberus? The Mixx version stuck with the phonetic Kerberos, and I remember as, like, a tween, feeling very proud that I could tell that, duh, he's named after Cerberus, from Greek Mythology.
- Also everyone in Sakura's family are named after flowers—she's cherry blossoms of course, Touya are peach blossoms, Fujitaka, her father, is wisteria, and her mother, Nadeshiko, is, well, Nadeshiko—"Yamato nadeshiko" is like....PHEW that's a term, it's like, a metaphor.idiom for the idealized Japanese Woman? We sometimes call this plant the 'fringed pink' in English. It's a dianthus, like carnations.

- Remember when I said Cardcaptor Sakura was award-winning?
 - Well, Cardcaptor Sakura won the Seiun award for best manga in 2001 after it had wrapped up.
 - The Seiun award by the way is a Japanese speculative fiction prize that has a manga category; this has come up on our podcast before (in the bonus episodes) because while its first year, 1978, Keiko Takemiya's Terra E won this prize, and both Rumiko Takahashi and Katsuhiro Otomo's names come up frequently, we discussed Hagio Moto's X+Y and that win in 1985—her third win, by the way.
 - Side note: The Seiun award also has like, a wildcard 'free nomination' category that begun in 2002, for things like rocket test flights and achievements in robotics, and like—the Gundam statue—that I must point out was awarded in 208 to Hatsune Miku, in 2015 to the TV Drama Aoi Honoo which is about the cohort of animation students in the 80s who grew up to become most of Gainax, from the POV of Kazuhiko Shimamoto. In 2021, it was awarded to amabie, youkai who is supposed to ward off epidemics, and and think maybe she doesn't deserve so much credit but who am I to besmirch the reputation of a monster who's just trying her best?

Outro

In our next episode, we'll be discussing volume 2 of Card Captor Sakura. Which will hold true for a while, so if you haven't read CCS before, now's your chance!

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 post monthly bonus episodes on things like Rumiko Takahashi, Dragon Ball Z, and Carebears. The three genders. You can also support us 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!