

CCS Volume 5

Episode 67

Lucy

Robin

(FYI this episode is a little more off-script than usual, since we had Alan make a guest appearance without really scripting it beforehand, and we also skipped some sections for time)

Intro

Our little circle of magical people is getting bigger and bigger...but what are they all gathering for?

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

Check-In

- Not much to report, since we're recording this episode literally right after the episode on volume 4...so lets just get into it!

Background

- Quick timeline check-in: this tankouban came out in 1998, which means at this point Clover is a few years deep, the CCS anime will start in the same year, and we're getting close on the heels of Angelic Layer in '99. We're also on the other side of the X Movie, the Rayearth OVA, and the CLAMP School Detectives anime, so CLAMP is definitely killing it on a few different fronts.
- To put this in the context of other Magical Girl shows, the Sailor Moon manga and anime both wrapped up in 1997, which was the same year we got Utena. We're still a few years ahead of aughties classics like PreCure and Princess Tutu.
- (robin I came up with series from memory, so it's possible I forgot something significant? I don't think this needs a super lot of effort, I just wanted to give a snapshot)

Summary

- This volume opens with a family trip! The Kinomoto family, with the addition of Yukito because of course, are spending a few days in a summer home owned by one of Fujitaka's colleagues.
 - Naturally, Sakura is very excited. The place is pretty big, Western-style with a traditional peaked roof (though three of them, very modern design) and nestled in the woods cozily.
 - But, as everyone disperses to explore the area, Sakura notices that her father looks a little sad. And of course, he's brought a picture of her mother.
 - He tells her to go take a look at the REALLY big house down the way.

- When she walks by the legitimately HUGE house—like, big multilevel McMansion thing—a nice old man spots her, and ends up asking her to stay for tea.
- She ends up having so much fun visiting him that she goes back to see him the next day.
- This time, as they sit down to tea, he looks a little sad, and tells Sakura that she reminds him of his granddaughter. Unfortunately, she passed away many years ago, but he tells Sakura not to be sad, because her smile is wonderful.
 - My book actually says “a smile is a girl’s best feature” which...puke
 - I’m less hard on this than Lucy, because while it’s been an important conversation for women to speak up that being told to smile by strangers is incredibly invasive and dehumanizing—as though their outward appearances positive effects on men are their value in the world—this to me feels more like a rerouting away from qualities that would be LESS accessible for a kid to possess—like poise or refinement or beauty.
 - Yeah, it really was the “best feature” wording that just got my hackles up, because girls can have SO MANY good features like being intelligent and strong and just UGH. This is not directed at CLAMP, they’re fine, society is just exhausting.
 - I think in terms of physical features, something you can control is much nicer to compliment than something you can’t. Agreed maybe we don’t need to focus on that for girls exclusively, but it just doesn’t bother me much here.
- Sakura certainly doesn’t mind it, and is cheered up by his words. She remembers to give him the cookies her father sent with her.
- Looking a little sad, the old man asks her about her father, and Sakura happily describes him. He seems glad that she likes her dad, and compliments the cookies he made.
- The old man then shows Sakura his granddaughter’s room, and has a gift for her—a lovely dress that used to belong to his granddaughter.
 - It is an over-the-top fantasy mix-and-match of features from like, 50 years of fashion, but its lovely and has a very classic children’s book feel, with big pantaloons and a bonnet-like hat.
- She also notices a picture on the wall—a drawing of a rainbow that his granddaughter drew, and which the old man clearly adores.
 - It does look like a photo of a crayon rainbow by the way!
- Sakura quickly rushes home—where I’d like to point out that Touya is the only one who seems at all concerned about how much attention this random old man is paying to this CHILD HE DOESN’T KNOW. But no time for stranger-danger, Sakura rushes to ask Kero for a way to repay the old man. And they come up with the perfect thing.
- The next day, Sakura returns to see the old man one last time before they head home. She thanks him for spending time with her, and tells him that his granddaughter must be in the same beautiful place as her mother. She also asks him to go up to his granddaughter’s room and look out the balcony.

- Once she's left, Sakura uses Watery to make an arc of water in front of the shining sun, which of course creates a beautiful rainbow for the old man, just like his granddaughter used to love.
 - This is shown on a double-page spread with lovely prismatic effects in toner, so it is quite spectacular despite being in black and white!
- On the balcony, the old man is joined by a surprisingly familiar face...it's Sonomi, who you'll remember is Tomoyo's mother and Sakura's mom's cousin. Surprise, this old man is actually Sakura's great grandfather. Which makes him seem a little less creepy, at least.
 - They agree that maybe Fujitaka isn't so bad. After all, as Sonomi says, he is the one Nadeshiko chose.
- As the family drives home, it's pretty clear that while Touya also had no clue about this old man, Fujitaka was perfectly aware of who lived in the giant house.
- Next, Sakura's class is all abuzz because the school talent show is coming up, and they're going to be putting on a play!
 - The play they're doing is a version of Sleeping Beauty, and the parts are being assigned at random by Mr. Terada and Kaho.
 - Shaoran is dubious of this whole endeavor because he still doesn't trust Kaho...and it seems like he might have the right idea, because she cryptically tells him "it's just a little longer..." before the class is given over to general chaos about the casting results....
 - ...Because the teachers did not separate the roles out by gender, which leads to some delightful results.
 - Most notable, Yamazaki is the evil witch, Sakura is the prince, and Shaoran is princess Aurora.
 - Honestly, this play already sounds amazing.
 - Kero is a bit unsure about these decisions, but Tomoyo is ALL OVER IT and is making the costumes for at least the prince and princess roles, if not everyone else (it is not 100% clear.)
 - The day of the play rolls around, and pretty much everyone we love is in attendance (except Sakura's dad, who has to work).
 - That even includes Kero, who insisted on being brought along so he can finally meet this Kaho Mitsuki character he keeps hearing so much about.
 - Well, mostly he just wants to see the play, but he does say that power seems to be collecting in this city...so it's at least 50/50 work and pleasure, I'd say.
 - Touya and Yukito are there, of course, and Touya's been tasked with photography for Dad's sake.
 - Everyone looks amazing, but Sakura and Shaoran are especially well-dressed, because of course Tomoyo made their costumes—she says Sakura's took her two whole days! Which is NO TIME for cosplay, but hey, she's amazing.
 - This makes me wonder how quickly she NORMALLY finishes all Sakura's costumes, and weep at her swift sewing skills

- Shaoran is feeling pretty self-conscious and basically refuses to go on, but once Tomoyo points out that Yukito is in the audience, and would be so sad if the play were canceled...he perks right up.
 - In fact his 'enthusiasm meter' (as shown with a little graphic) shoots through the roof when Yukito cheers him on, and he delivers a...spirited performance, stomping around the stage and YELLING his lines forcefully.
 - Everyone else just rolls with it.
- The play progresses, and Yamazaki is doing a great job as the evil witch. Sakura is also a wonderful Prince, completely embodying the ideals of Princess Sapphire (from Princess Knight) and Lady Oscar from Rose of Versailles. Poor Shaoran is certainly trying his best, but it turns out his acting is...pretty wooden and yelling-oriented.
 - This is exactly how i recall all elementary school plays, only usually they're mostly SHaorans with one or two Yamazakis.
- When Shaoran plays out the scene where the princess pricks her finger on the spindle of the spinning wheel, he...seems to actually stab his finger on the prop, and Touya and Yukito are a bit concerned for him.
- As the play goes, Kero is hanging out in the control room with Tomoyo (she's acting as the narrator), when they receive a surprise visitor.
 - It's Kaho, which would not normally be weird...except she's not here to see Tomoyo. She's here for Kero!
 - WHAT????
- Meanwhile, Prince Sakura has defeated the evil queen and is about to wake Princess Shaoran with a kiss (something Big Brother Touya is not at all happy about in the audience), when suddenly...everything goes dark!
- Sakura and Shaoran are alone on the dark stage, but only long enough for Shaoran to identify the work of a Clow Card...before he too disappears into darkness, leaving Sakura all alone.
 - Kero and Kaho are also alone in the dark (I guess Tomoyo got swallowed up, eek) but that gives them a moment to talk.
 - Kero recognizes her strong power...and he thinks she's the one with the power of the moon, born opposite him, with the shared responsibility of protecting the Clow Cards. Yue.
 - She says she's here because she knows something is going to happen. She doesn't know what, but it seems like something bad.
 - But, they both agree that they think Sakura can handle it, when it comes.
 - Speaking of which, Sakura is kind of rightfully panicking as she realizes she's completely alone. All her classmates have disappeared, and while she knows Kero must be in the control room with Tomoyo, she has no way of getting there in this complete darkness.
 - Just like in volume four, when everyone was 'erased'--this is kind of her worst nightmare.

- But after a moment of feeling overwhelmed, she rallies. She knows this is a Clow Card, which means it's her responsibility to deal with it.
- First, she tries to determine how deep the darkness is using Wood's vines...but it doesn't seem to have an end.
- Next, she concentrates to see if she can guess the name of the card...and correctly guesses Dark, which does make the lights come back...for a split second, that is, before the darkness is complete again.
- Discouraged, Sakura starts to panic again, especially when she notices that she is also starting to disappear. Up until now, she's at least been able to see herself, but now even she is being swallowed by the darkness.
- But, she steels herself, and trusts in her own powers, and says some powerful words of encouragement to herself–
 - In the Darkhorse volume, it's translated as "I'm sure I'll be all right"
 - In the TP version it's "I know I'll be ok," so same sentiment really
 - Anyway, and a light starts to glow from inside her!
- And just light that, a form emerges from Sakura, coalescing into a beautiful woman with light hair and regal clothing. Light.
 - For the first time, a card SPEAKS to her, and she says she's been inside Sakura's heart all this time, ever since she accidentally let all the cards escape.
 - She's been waiting for Sakura to realize she was there, and to refuse to give up.
 - What can brighten the darkness, the card asks?
- LIGHT! Sakura calls to the card, and the darkness is banished, instead taking the shape of another woman. Dark, the twin card to Light.
- They are parallels of each other, Light powered by the Sun and Dark powered by the Moon.
 - Sound familiar?
 - But, Dark wasn't trying to hurt Sakura...this was just another test to see if Sakura is powerful enough to wield the Clow Cards. But ultimately, Yue is the one who will decide..
 - Sakura recognizes that name from when Kero mumbled about them in his sleep, but she doesn't know anything about them. When she asks, Dark tells her that Yue is someone by her side.
 - Of course, this is confusing and troubling, but Light tells Sakura not to worry. Even without Light inside her, Sakura has her own light, and her own invincible spell.
- And just like that, the lights come back on!
 - Sakura is overjoyed, and hugs Shaoran, who has reappeared beside her
 - Everyone seems confused, but Kaho and Kero explain to Tomoyo (and thus, us) what happened. Apparently only people with powers were aware of the darkness; everyone else didn't sense any time passage.

- Speaking of these two, they were monitoring Sakura' progress (and giving useful exposition that we didn't bother to quote, sorry). They're glad Sakura is ok, anyway.
 - Kero asks Kaho if she plans to interfere with Sakura, but she says she has another role to play.
 - Ha, "role to play," they're doing a play...I get it! That might just be a TP translation pun, though.
 - Mine has it too!
- Alright, the final chapter in this volume begins with Sakura dreaming about the moon.
 - In the dream, she's staring up at a big full moon behind a tori gate. And she's not alone--there's a figure silhouetted against the moon, someone adult-size with long flowing hair. In the dream, she knows who they are, but before she can say their name..
 - She's woken up by Mr. Terada, because she definitely fell asleep in class, woops.
 - He's really nice about it, but Sakura is super embarrassed. Walking home later with Tomoyo, she explains that it's not that she didn't get enough sleep last night, but she keeps having this same dream about the moon.
 - Tomoyo asks if it's one of those precognitive dreams Kero talks about, and Sakura isn't sure, but apparently Kero got real quiet when she mentioned it.
 - Which, I'm editorializing here, but that does seem like a bad sign for someone as talkative as Kero...
 - But more than that, Sakura has a funny feeling. And apparently she's not the only one!
 - Shaoran hops down for a tree (as you do) and shows her that the Compass is just glowing. Apparently there's a presence that is so powerful that the compass is overwhelmed and completely useless.
 - My TP version has apparently given up on whatever name they were using for this thing before, and I have some feelings about the quality of their Style Guide, but whatever.
 - Sakura concludes that this means someone really powerful is around, but before they can speculate further, Yukito walks up.
 - Both Sakura and Shaoran get all blushy at seeing him; even more so when he invites them and Tomoyo to get cake on their way home.
 - As they eat, he compliments them on their performances in the Sleeping Beauty play. He took lots of pictures.
 - He also mentions how he was so surprised when it went dark there in the middle.
 - UH OH
 - UH OH
 - Naturally this very interesting tidbit is interrupted by Toya, who apparently counts this cafe among his many part time jobs.

- After some bickering with Shaoran, he leaves them with their cake, which turns out to be really delicious!
- And to make our, like, love-heptagon even more complicated...Shaoran gets all blushy when he sees how happy Sakura is about the cake.
- Both Touya and Tomoyo notice this, and Shaoran runs away, but just then Kaho appears.
 - Man, people just congregate wherever Toya works...he must be good for business. I hope all these places are paying him well.
 - Dude you know they're not, or else why would he have to work so many jobs? Poor guy. Shame on you, bad labor market.
- Kaho asks Sakura to sit with her, and she reveals that she knows about the Clow Cards. She's also involved with them. Sakura wants to know how she's involved, but Kaho just says that she'll know soon.
- She also asks Sakura if she knows about Yue.
- Sakura does, but she can't get info out of Kero...all she knows is what the cards told her, that Yue is "always by her side."
- And Kaho says yes, Yue, the Judge, is right by her side...
- Meanwhile, at the other table, Shaoran (who came back, I guess) is none too happy about Sakura sitting with Kaho.
 - He and Tomoyo watch as the light from the Compass gets brighter, and Shaoran says it's not reacting to a card, but to an especially strong magic user.
 - But, Yukito comes up to tell everyone that fresh cakes just came out of the oven, so I guess that's it for cryptic conversations, at least for now...
- Shaoran is grumbling about how naive Sakura is, trusting Kaho and all, but Tomoyo points out that Sakura is just like that. But, she wonders why he's giving Sakura advice...and worrying about her...as his rival, shouldn't he be wanting her to disappear, instead?
 - Yep, Shaoran, Tomoyo is totally onto you.
 - He denies everything, including the idea that he'd just want his revival to disappear, but yeah...
- Meanwhile, Yukito and Kaho are making pleasant conversation, when she tells Yukito to take care of Touya...and after a beat where he has to catch on, he smiles and says he will do his best.
- When Yukito then asks Sakura if she wants some of the cake that just came out of the oven, and takes her hand, Sakura realizes something. When she held Kaho's hand earlier, it felt just like holding Yukito's...
- Kaho tells Touya that he still hasn't told Yukito what he wants...and then she looks ominously at Yukito and Sakura and says "just a little longer..."
 - Nonstop cryptic meddling, huh?
- Back at home, Kero is like...communing with the Clow Cards book, or whatever.

- He says that they'll have all the Clow Cards soon, and with each new card his powers are growing...but so are Yue's.
 - He can still feel Yue's presence, but he felt it most strongly at the talent show.
 - He repeats that very X-like prophecy, that when the seal on the Clow Cards is broken disaster will befall the world, and adds that the time of judgment for Sakura will be soon.
- OK, back at the cafe, where I swear ALL THE THINGS ARE HAPPENING, Tomoyo goads Shaoran again about having feelings for Sakura.
 - He's definitely not admitting it, but he definitely looks uncomfortable...
 - Tomoyo takes off, and Shaoran and Sakura walk home, with Yukito and Kaho a bit behind them.
 - With the barrier of space between the groups, Sakura tells Shaoran what she and Kaho talked about. How she's involved with the Clow Cards, and how she mentioned Yue.
 - Shaoran does know a bit about Yue, but apparently there's not much to tell. They are the called The Judge, and are powered by the Moon. Clow Reed made Kero and Yue as opposites to protect the cards. However, he doesn't know what Yue is supposed to judge, since apparently Clow was very vague about that.
 - But Sakura has the Clow Cards book, doesn't she? The moon on the back cover is Yue, just like the creature on the front cover is Kero.
 - Now, we know the cover is blank because Kero is out in the world, but Sakura says that the back cover is also blank...there's no moon on it.
 - Except for those smaller moons that are part of the magic circle or whatever, I guess.
 - Anyway, this must mean Yue has also taken solid form,
 - HMMM
 - But, their conversation is rudely interrupted...by fire! Like, literal fire, surrounding them and Yukito and Kaho!
 - Oh no! What will become of our heroes! Find out in volume 6!

Discussion

- THE PLAY:
- Hey guess who's popped in to chat with us? It's our resident Shaoran-apologist, Alan!
- So Robin, do you think Sakura-the-Prince is an Utena reference? Or one of the various things that influenced Utena?
 - Yeah less Utena because of the timing with the poofy shorts and the hat, its more princess sapphire from ribbon no kishi. And Lady Oscar from Rose of Versailles, to a lesser degree. I think this predates Utena being in pop culture, so it's more like TWO great girl princes rocked our world in 1997!
- In general I think the play is the best fucking thing ever. As I said in the summary, like...this is somehow the loveliest little production ever and also exactly as bad as elementary school plays are.

- I can't ever forget a few of my own little bro's talent shows where some kids just SHONE, like Yamazaki. Remember when [Name Redacted] did an..interpretive dinosaur toy rendition of Weird Al's Jurassic Park song?
 - Switching the roles for Sakura and Shaoran felt like a nod to their unconventional love triangle and also how he's kind of a sensitive boy and she's an athletic, heroic little girl—thing you might miss.
 - Most importantly, it captured something about Shaoran's character: he gets kind of aggressive when he's scared. That's his bad acting in a nutshell, but it's also why he's kind of a little jerk who then runs away from his feelings.
 - Yeah, that's all part of the, like, sensitive and failable part of Shaoran that makes him a likable and relatable character instead of just, like, something Sakura has to overcome.
 - Hisashi eguchi yes
- OH GOD WHAT CAN WE TALK ABOUT THAT ISN'T STARGAZING AHHHH
 - So this volume was A LOT. It really feels like things are ramping up.
 - So, quick, what do we know?
 - Yue is also out being physically in the world, just like Kero, apparently
 - Disaster is coming, and also judgment. So very X.
 - But, everyone involved seems to think Sakura can handle it, which is good...
 - Kero's being kind of shady about it, though.
 - Kaho is SOME KIND OF SHIT
 - But...Yukito also noticed the inference of Dark, so...what's up with that?
 - I had totally forgotten how ominous this series was, and I am loving it. I also love how much they really treat Yukito and Touya as a couple. Like, sure, you could hand-wave most of this...but it is not subtle.
 - I mean at this point Touya's X is like, giving him away to Yukito so yeah.
 - One thing I did not somehow realize until now is that Yue and Cerberus parallel the eastern/western magic combo that is Clow Reed....and the english translations totally ruined this for us. Thanks, assholes.
 - I do enjoy these chapters where the cards aren't actually being used for any kind of fight, though. It's nice that sometimes they can just make rainbows and stuff.
 - Yeah, like I said in last episode—Sakura can be trusted with the Erase card, you know? She uses a vicious water monster to make a rainbow.
 - I love that Tomoyo is just so generally supportive of Sakura. She is not at all jealous that Sakura likes Yukito, or mad when she gets paired up with Shaoran, or upset now that Shaoran is exhibiting feelings for Sakura.
 - And I'm going to try not to stargaze here, but I can't wait until we get to the anime and can see how this may contrast with another character...
 - I want to talk a little more about the Light and Dark card section. First of all—wild new things were introduced! Sakura had a card inside her (really adds new meaning to believing in the heart of the cards) and that card...talked! And connected with her! And was like a guardian to her??? THAT IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM HOW THE OTHERS HAVE BEHAVED. This card seemed to be rooting for her, and very clearly represented a

figure encouraging her growth. Very family-like. So different from most super hero powers even in magical girl material!

- But I really wanted to talk a bit about the artwork here, since obviously this is a podcast and you can't see it but it's still so important to comics.
- So remember that Sakura is a very 'white' comic, as CLAMP said their fans noticed back when it debuted. That is, the white of the page is very prominent, with thin wispy lines and very little black or toner (the gray tones used for shading)--unlike X, which was so 'dark' that some of their contemporaries (like Araki, the man behind Jojo) assumed they were men! (this is mostly a shoujo/shounen style breakdown rather than a 'women can't use too much ink because of weak arms that can't lift a burdened brush' or something)
 - Anyway, these last three volumes each had an inky, inky story--the Shadow card, the Test of Courage which was in a dark cave, and now this, the Dark card.
 - That meant that when the Dark card took over, they showed it as just all-black backgrounds, ink knocking out everything but the few figures who were not subsumed (like Sakura)--and since they needed to show her glowing eventually, they used more toner than usual to really sell the lighting.
 - It has the effect of feeling more lively, more carved-out, and really intimate and touching, I think? Like you are alone in a dark space with Sakura, lit up by a small flame?
 - It helps sell the emotions and the magic of her words.
- So, we can't do it properly because we do know what's coming, but let's go over some possible theories...
 - Shaoran did reappear "at her side" after the lights came back on...
 - But like, Kero did literally say that Kaho is Yue, and she didn't contradict him. She didn't outright confirm that she was Yue, though, just that she had the power of the moon...I guess?
 - And Touya AND Yukito are always at her side....HMMMMM
 - So is Tomoyo, I guess, but Kero has said multiple times that she has no magical power. COULD THAT ALL BE A RUSE?
 - Fun to have this little twist where a character with an ominous role is revealed to be someone we already know. THE SUSPENSE!
- And our card count! We only got 2, but WHAT A TWO
 - Windy
 - Watery
 - Wood
 - Jump
 - Fly
 - Illusion
 - Flower
 - Thunder
 - Sword

- Shadow
- Mirror
- Shield
- Maze
- Erase
- Glow
- **Light**
- **Dark**
- Did we mention they're incredibly hot and have big lesbian co-queen vibes? Because they do. I want to be them or be between them I don't know.
- Anyway, this was quite a volume! I can't wait for the next one!
- And one final note. Sakura's magic words, Zettai Daijoubu da yo! Are of course part of our sign-off. We just say 'everything will be all right' which is another perfectly fine translation of daijoubu da yo—but because her words have been introduced, we're adding teh definitely. Even if we don't always feel it. Even if it might not be true. Because we have to have hope. Thank you, Sakura, for that reminder.

Outro

In our next episode, we'll be discussing volume 6!

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 definitely be alright—

—and try not to lose an eye!