

Tsubasa

The Complete Series

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Introduction

Anyone here a closet fan of [Quantum Leap](#)? Raise your hands. I admit, I loved that show beyond all reason, and would frequently catch reruns whenever possible. Who didn't wonder what it would be like to travel to another place and time and influence the course of history? Well, CLAMP has decided to take on an ambitious and exhilarating project for any fans of their work that jives with Quantum Leap's simple premise leading to a myriad of stories. These master manga creators have decided to take all of their worlds, speculate on how they might've gone differently, and let loose their imaginations in creating just as many alternatives as they can come up with.

The framework for **Tsubasa: Reservoir Chronicles** takes its cues from CLAMP's early series, **Cardcaptor Sakura**. As with every page in **Tsubasa**, though, everything's a bit skewed. Here is Sakura, Syaoran, and their fellows, but Sakura is a noble princess and Syaoran a common but brilliant son of an archaeologist. As the series progresses, many familiar faces will reappear, from every CLAMP series, except that this time around they'll be different. In the end, Tsubasa is an exciting way to explore the "what if" scenarios so many readers like to ponder about their favorite series while still following a new storyline with new characters. For those worried about reading the series with no prior knowledge of CLAMP's universe, in general it's not a problem for enjoying the story as it unfolds. While the volumes are full of winks and nudges to other works, the drama and tensions always work on their own, and Del Rey Manga has worked hard to provide the best story notes they can to help you link series and understand references.

Speaking of Del Rey, they've definitely pulled out all the stops in launching their relatively new manga line, and **Tsubasa** is an excellent example. Beginning right off with an explanation of honorifics (including the meaning-laden lack thereof in intimate conversations), they also include at the end of each volume a short biography of the creators, a summary of related past works, some of the most useful translation notes I've ever encountered, and a preview of the next volume. If all of their series are this well produced, they'll win all the hearts of newbies and fans alike.

Art

The artwork in this series is definitely the usual CLAMP combination of excellent layout and character design, but they've managed to push themselves toward a wonderfully fluid style that distinguishes Tsubasa as a new level for the artists. Drawing inspiration from designs all over the world, they've created a unique series of costumes and patterns that reflect the eclectic and varied worlds they've invited the reader to visit. The depth of story information gathered from garments and scenery make the series lush with detail and information while at the same time maintaining a simplicity of shape and line that links everything together easily across the page and panels. If anything, their trademark characters have gotten even simpler allowing a shift in the width of a line to indicate sorrow or anger-- no small feat.

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Tsubasa Volume 1
ISBN: 0345470575
By CLAMP
Del Rey Manga, 2004

Friends across the class lines, exuberant Princess of the Clow Sakura, bursting with love for her more reserved friend Syaoran, travels to his dig site to admit her feelings. When she arrives, however, she sets off a chain reaction in the ruins that flings both she and Syaoran out of their world into the clutches of a mysterious witch (for those wondering, she is Yuko, star of CLAMP's related series [XXXholic](#).) Although at first she seems a threat, it turns out Yuko is more of a guide to set them on their path journeying from one parallel world to the next. Their quest? In the magical blast, Sakura lost all of her memories and falls into a stupor, and each wisp of personal history has been transformed into a feather and scattered across the worlds. Syaoran, understanding that any quest must always end with a price paid, agrees to the witch's terms: once they gather all the lost fragments, Sakura's memory will be whole, but for one memory her memory of Syaoran. Determined, Syaoran is joined by two misfits from two other worlds along for the ride for their own reasons, the cheerful and powerful magician Fai and the grumpy warrior Kurogane, and the witch gives them Mokona, a rotund creature for communicating between dimensions. Their first stop? The Hanshin Republic, a world obsessed with a baseball team and where everyone is protected by their own personal god.

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Tsubasa Volume 2
ISBN: 0345471822
By CLAMP
Del Rey Manga, 2004

The second volume gets right into the action when, new to the Hanshin Republic (a poke at how the residents of Tokyo tease the folk of Osaka), our quartet soon realizes that this world of personal gods and street gangs is going to be tricky to navigate. Lucky for them, they are given information and place to stay from a young married couple, Sorata and Arashi (familiar faces from **X/1999**). The ever chipper Mokona insists he sense a feather somewhere nearby, but as it seems to reside in one of the worlds many gods, he cannot figure out which god it belongs to. In their search, Syaoran is drawn into a popular form of street fighting when he attempts to protect a young man, but as he tries to help, he finds himself being noticed by both the leader of a gang and this world's most popular singing idol - what's a boy to do? This world of people and their protector's is reminiscent of Philip Pullman's world in the **His Dark Materials** trilogy, and the idea is always a fun one to entertain. This volume also shows that while CLAMP can be serious when they want to, they have no intention of ignoring a good joke when they can get it in (once again, the translation notes at the back help immensely in getting each jibe.) All the members of the team are getting to know each other, and while Fai's calm acceptance of new situations and Kurogane's tendency to attack anything unknown wouldn't seem to complement each other, they're learning to trust Syaoran's steady hand. The final note of this volume holds a scene that this grand journey may not be so accidental and that someone out there is pulling the strings, and not in Syaoran's favor.

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Tsubasa Volume 3
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By CLAMP
Del Rey Manga, 2004

As the group travels on to the next world, one feather under their belt and Sakura mercifully awake, CLAMP takes this opportunity to take on a classic manga tale full of evil overlords, honest and noble magical heroines, and a medieval landscape. Welcome to the town of Ryonfi in the country of Koryo, ruled over by a greedy despot who maintains control through threats and military force. One girl, Chu'nyan the daughter of a murdered local priestess, stands against the corruption. Of course, Syaoran and his fellows plop down right in the middle of a fight and are mistaken for the mysterious Amen'osa, agents of the government rumored to arrive to keep an eye on and if necessary remove corrupt officials. With the help of Mokona and Yuka, the travelers realize they must aid Chu'nyan in her fight in order to retrieve another lost feather. This volume allows a little more time for interaction between all the characters, and as tidbits of their histories come to light each character grows a little bit more intriguing - each has secrets. Since Sakura has awoken, Syaoran is constantly reminded that she does know remember him, and the flashes of his own memories of their time together is enough to make your heart break just a little bit with each unshared memory. The finish of this volume seems to be starting a pattern of cliffhangers and our team may have defeated all the forces against them, but another may be just around the corner.

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Tsubasa Volume 4
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By CLAMP
Del Rey Manga, 2004

Starting off gently, this volume gives our heroes a bit of a rest as they encounter a world in which they don't have to struggle or search for a feather, just swim. Of course, having free time on their hands is a double-edged sword - while they have the time to get to know each other, Syaoran has time to linger on what he's lost in his bargain, and he begins to see that while Sakura doesn't remember him, she does feel his absence in her memories and cannot help but wonder about the blind spot. As they arrive in their next world, they use Sakura's amazing luck to gamble for enough money for new clothes - this world is amusingly akin to the fantasy European 19th century kingdoms that dominate costume drama in manga, and everyone is dressed in dashing garments right out of Grimm's fairy tales. Just as in a fairy tale, the town they've arrived in is haunted by a malevolent spirit of the golden-haired princess of ages past infamous for leading away the town's children. After guessing that the next feather will somehow be wrapped up in this town's legends, the group tries to uncover the truth behind the tall tale, but when Sakura disappears, it seems the fairy tale is a lot more substantial than they were led to believe.

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