<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0MbWYX20Hk>

**Cardcaptor Love Heart**

*Life is like some kind of drama*

*That just doesn't make sense*

*And it's like so damn annoying*

*'Cause it makes me so tense*

*But you know*

*Ever since the day you smiled at me*

*I have grown*

*To accept the way that my life is now*

*For now I see it clear*

*There's nothing left to fear*

*You gave me hope to continue on when I was not sure how*

*You are the reason why I'm me*

*And why now I have the strength to believe*

*I was so lonely till you came*

*Without you I would not be the same*

*You set me free from my damn cage*

*And because of you I can turn the page*

*I wonder what is next to come*

*There is nothing that we can't overcome*

Chapter 11: Seeing Ghosts

Love Heart stood in Syaoran’s backyard with the sealing staff in hand. Nearby Confidence was practicing on some martial arts training equipment Wei had set up for her.

“Alright, here goes,” Love Heart held up one of the talismans, or ofuda, that Syaoran had given him. He threw it forwards and struck it with his staff, "Obey the command! Wind Flower, Come Forth!" There was a small whoosh of wind and the talisman fell to the ground.

Syaoran retrieved the talisman as Love Heart sighed, “That was pathetic. Why won’t it work for me?” Love Heart stared at his staff.

“You’re using the right incantation, it even sounds like the right language,” Syaoran said, “how do you know the right words?”

“Because, ha! Care Bears, ya! Know every, hrrr! Language!” Confidence dodged around the spinning dummy and blocked the last blow. “Thanks Wei,” she stepped back and bowed to the older man.

“It’s part of how we need to help people all over the world. Care Bears can speak and understand any language through magic, though we all hear it in English... I think. I mean everyone hears what we’re saying in the language that’s easiest for them to understand but I have no idea if we speak English when it’s just Care Bears or if we have a language unique to ourselves,” Love Heart shook his head, “But yeah that’s why I can say your incantation in the right language.”

“May I offer a suggestion?” Wei spoke up.

“Of course, Wei.” Syaoran stepped back. Wei had been his martial arts teacher so he still respected his opinion.

“I think the issue is that the words don’t mean anything to you, Love Heart.” Wei walked over to him, “Though I lack the potent abilities of most of our family I do know a fair bit about how magic works: incantations have to have some personal meaning to the spellcaster to have their greatest potency.”

“So what do those spells mean to you, Li?” Confidence walked over, swiping her forehead from the practice session.

“These incantations were taught to me by my mother,” Syaoran looked at the talisman in his hand, “They’ve been passed down through our family since Clow Reed.”

“And as such they have a legacy that means a lot to the Li family, the potency amplified by the continuous teachings passed down from parent to child,” Wei turned to Love Heart, “As for the Clow Cards, the staff was created with the intent of being a tool for the future Cardcaptor therefore you can draw out far more power with borrow spells than normal, especially because Clow Reed was a prodigious sorcerer in his time he could bend some of the normal rules of magic, but some day you will need to create your own spells if you want to maintain their power.”

Love Heart sighed and sealed the staff, “Not sure what I can do about that. My dad mostly taught me how to control and project my magic but he said he’s too out of practise with anything Clow related and mom told me that unicorn magic is based more on instinct and feeling than worded spells so not much to go on there.”

“Then maybe try to invent your own,” Syaoran said, “Find some words or phrases that mean something to you and go from there, or try to put into words your experience with the Clow Cards.”

“I’ll think about that, but I need to head home now. I’ll see you later, Li,” Love Heart turned to leave with Confidence not far behind him.

“Not bad for a day’s training,” Confidence put her arms up so she could breathe easier, a bit winded after her practise, “So how’s Sweet Heart doing?”

“Better, she’s eating supper with us again but still not talking much,” Love Heart sighed, “We just have to give her more time.”

Confidence Heart nodded, “OK. Can I ask you a favor, Love Heart?”

“Of course. What is it?”

Confidence stopped walking, “Tomorrow’s my mother’s birthday... we’re going to visit her...”

“Oh. Ohhhhh,” realization dawned on Love Heart as he turned to face her.

“I’d like you to come with us since you never got to meet her.” Her ears drooped

“Is that alright? I mean isn’t it a family thing?”

“Sort of, but I asked my dad and Tori’s bringing Julian so...”

Love Heart gave a weak smile and took Confidence’s hand, “Yes, I’ll come visit her with you.”

Confidence’s ears stood up, “Really? Thank you!” She gave Love Heart a kiss, “We’re leaving right after lunch, just come by my house and we’ll drive there.”

“See you tomorrow,” Love Heart kissed her back before they split up and headed home.

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Sweet Heart ate in silence but her presence at supper was a huge comfort, even though she didn’t say anything other than asking to be excused once she finished. Love Heart decided to stop at her room on the way and knocked on her door.

“Sweet Heart, are you awake?”

“Yeah, I’m awake.” Sweet Heart’s voice sounded far away.

“Can I come in? I want to talk.”

There was silence for almost a full minute before the door opened and a very dejected looking Sweet Heart answered from her unlit room. She gave a weak smile, “Hi.”

“Hi, can I come in?” Love Heart repeated. Sweet Heart just nodded then turned the light on before going to sit on her bed. Love Heart looked around the room, it was oddly clean but he supposed Sweet Heart hadn’t been doing much else locked in her room, he saw Wish Bear’s Clow Card sitting on one of her pillows as he sat next to her.

“So how have things been going with Dr. Parker?”

“Alright, I guess,” Sweet Heart picked up The Wish Card and stared at it, “she says I shouldn’t feel ashamed of myself, even if it was all my fault...”

Love Heart put an arm on her shoulder and could tell she wanted to flinch away but instead leaned up against her older brother, “I’m sorry for shutting you out but...” she extended a wing around him, “ever since that day I was so scared you’d just disappear and when I saw you fall over the cliff again...” she was shaking trying hard to hold in the tears.

“Go on, let it out,” Love Heart patted her shoulder.

Sweet Heart burst into tears and flung herself at Love Heart, burying her face in his chest, “Oh stars I saw you dead! I couldn’t handle it I almost lost you again, WAAAAAAAAAA!” She pounded her brother on the chest as she bawled.

Love Heart hugged her and stroked one of her wings, “I’m here, Sweet Heart. I’m not going away. I promise.”

Sweet Heart finally calmed down and snuggled into her brother’s chest, “You’re here. You’re alive. I’m sorry.”

“Apology accepted, for everything,” Love Heart felt her let go as she fell backwards onto the bed.

She still held The Wish Card in her hand and stared at the unmoving bear picture that had been one of Love Heart’s closest friends, “Do you think Wish will forgive me?”

Love Heart reached over to take the card and get a good look at it, “I know she will. What did Dr. Parker say about the whole time rewind thing?”

“She said that it took a lot of courage to try and fix my mistake, but I feel like a scaredy-cat for not just staying and trying to make things right the first time around,” Sweet Heart sounded dejected as she let her arms fall to her sides and just stared at the ceiling.

“You’re not a scaredy-cat,” Love Heart smiled and handed the card back to her, “A lot of people would love to get a second chance and we’re all still alive because of you. Don’t ever tell yourself you don’t deserve this. I promise we’ll free Wish Bear once this is all over and things will be better.”

“Promise?” Sweet Heart looked up from The Wish Card.

“Promise.” Love Heart nodded, “Now I’m going out with Confidence tomorrow but I’ll see you later.” He stood up and walked to the door, “Want the lights off?”

“No, but thank you, Love Heart. “

Love Heart shut the door behind him and sighed before he returned to his room, finding Kero and The Jump still there.

“Is she any better?” The Jump asked.

“Getting there, but I guess I hoped this would go faster,” Love Heart sighed and grabbed a small game console he hadn’t touched in months to try and relax as he lay down.

“Don’t worry, we won’t let The Clow Cards do anything like that again,” Kero assured him, “So did you bring me any dessert?”

“You could have gone down yourself, mom might have something if you go down now,” Love Heart didn’t look up from his game. Kero just grinned and shot downstairs.

“Honestly, that guardian beast has a one-track mind,” The Jump shook its head in mock despair. That got a chuckle out of Love Heart.

OoOoO

“You sure you want me to come?” Kero was riding in one of Love Heart’s vest pockets as he walked over to Confidence’s house.

“Yeah, just got a feeling something’s going to happen today. I mean The Shield tried to lock up her mom’s jewelry box so one of the other cards might try something today. Just stay quiet and out of sight if nothing happens and I’ll buy you some chocolates on the way home,” Love Heart pushed Kero’s head back into the pocket as he reached Confidence’s house.

Confidence was waiting for Love Heart outside while the rest of her family was already in their car. She smiled as she approached Love Heart, “Thanks, I was kinda worried you wouldn’t come.”

“I get it,” Love Heart hugged her then saw the sparkles in her ears, “You’re wearing your mom’s earrings again?”

“Yeah,” Confidence touched the stud in her right ear, “I want mom to see how much I’ve grown up, that I’m becoming a woman even without her.”

“You are,” Love Heart kissed her which made her tail wag.

\*HONK\*

The car’s horn made them both jump as Tori called out the window, “Make out later, we need to go!”

“Alright,” Confidence huffed but led Love Heart to the back car door. They sat in back with Confidence’s father while Tori drove and his boyfriend Julian sat in the front passenger’s seat.

They had to drive clear across town to get where they were going as the cemetery was at the edge of town near a river. Love Heart stayed silent as they walked around the plots until they found the grave. Confidence crouched in front of the headstone which had her mother’s name: NATASHA AVALON.

“Hi mom,” Confidence touched the top of the headstone, “Happy birthday. I wanted to show you how much I’ve grown up, see,” she touched her piercings as she began to tear up, “I got my ears pierced like I wanted to when I was a kid and I have a boyfriend, here,” she motioned for Love Heart to step closer, “His name is Love Heart, I think I told you about him before. I started sewing again because of him and... and...” she started crying softly, “I wish you could have met him.” She rubbed her hands into her eyes and let Love Heart help her to her feet.

They retreated some distance away while Tori and her father said their own messages. Confidence calmed down enough to talk. “It was before we met, it was a car accident when she was out getting groceries.” She clenched her fists, “I remember being so mad the asshole who hit her survived, why should this jackass live when my mom had to die because of him!” her shout drew attention from other over visitors but she paid them no mind, “I just... I miss her so much. She taught me how to sew and put me in karate classes when I started getting into fights at school so I could learn how to control myself.” She wiped the tears from her eyes, “I miss her so much every day I wish she could have met you and see how I’ve grown up.”

“I bet she can,” Love Heart gave her a kiss on the cheek.

“Thank you, Love Heart,” Confidence leaned up against him, her eyes closed.

“Cassandra...”

Confidence’s eyes shot open and her ears perked up, “Mom?” She turned and saw a ghostly image of a young woman with long black hair in a flowing white robe.

“Confidence?” Love Heart hadn’t heard the voice, which was barely above a whisper even to her.

She pointed wordlessly and Love Heart turned to see the apparition and was startled, even more so when Confidence took off after it. “Wait!” Love Heart took off after Confidence before she slowed down enough for him to catch up.

Confidence just stood there as Love Heart stood behind her, “What was that?” She asked, “I thought I saw mom...”

Love Heart hugged her from behind, “It’s alright,” He felt her shake as she started to cry.

“Did you see her?” Confidence’s teary gaze was still fixed on where she had seen her mother a moment ago.

“No, I saw my sister.”

“What?” Confidence carefully turned around without dislodging Love Heart’s embrace, “But she’s still alive.”

“Maybe,” Love Heart averted his gaze for a moment until Confidence turned his head back towards her and saw he was getting misty-eyed too.

“Love Heart, what’s wrong?”

Love Heart sighed, “When you were talking about your mom I started thinking about Sweet Heart, or about who she was before summer and when she originally opened The Clow Cards. She used to be so cheerful and energetic, always wanting to play or hang out with friends when she wasn’t doing her chores, how she used to look up to me and call me ‘big brother’. But now... I feel like I lost the little sister I grew up with and all I’m left with is a broken shell trying to put herself back together. Even before she broke down when she saw me fall now I can see she was never smiling, not for real anyway, just putting on a face and trying to bury her fears. I look at her now and I feel that she’s so far away,” his eyes leaked tears as he spoke, “I miss her. I miss the little sister I used to have and am trying so hard to get back. I’m sorry it’s stupid since she’s still alive but-”

“It’s not stupid,” Confidence hugged him tight, “I get it, Tori and I were different people after mom died, I buried my ‘feminine aspects’ like sewing and stuff so people would see me as tough and not bully me and Tori... we barely talked and he stopped teasing me.” She chuckled mirthlessly, “He only starting calling me ‘squirt’ again when you found me and we started feeling better. But I get it. You lost someone close to you too.”

Love Heart smiled and wiped some tears away, “Thank you. I mean I knew it would happen: we grow up, stop being innocent to the stupidity and cruelty of the world. But it wasn’t gradual, to me she was a happy-go-lucky cheerful little girl one day and the next a barely in control nervous wreck that had fallen to pieces.” Love Heart pulled Confidence closer, finding comfort with each other.

“Hey!” Kero poked his head out of Love Heart’s vest pocket, “You’re squishing me!”

Both glared at the guardian beast as he floated up and out, “Way to ruin the moment, Kero,” Love Heart said.

Confidence swiped at him but Kero easily dodged the unenthusiastic blow, “So why interrupt us?” she demanded.

“You both saw something different didn’t you? It sounds like a Clow Card.”

That got Love Heart’s attention as he and Confidence stepped away from each other, “Which card? I didn’t sense anything.”

“It’s like The Mirror Card, hard to sense while it’s in disguise,” Kero pointed to where it had been, “Most likely it’s The Illusion Card.”

“Right, better call the backup,” Love Heart fished out his Heartphone and dialed Syaoran’s number.

“So what’s the Illusion Card do, I mean besides impersonate my dead mom,” Confidence clenched her fists.

“When it’s out and running free it takes on the appearance of whatever’s on the viewer’s mind, that’s why you saw your mom and Love Heart saw his sister,” Kero said.

“Yeah, can Wei drive you? Good, see you soon,” Love Heart hung up, “Li’s going to be here shortly, anything else we should know about The Illusion?”

Kero turned to Love Heart, “It’s usually nocturnal but it might have been draw here by you coming with Confidence’s family.”

“So we’ll have to wait till night,” Confidence folded her arms, “Good, I’ll just go let dad and Tori know.”

Kero watched Confidence march off, “She’s fired up.”

“I think she’s mad about The Illusion looking like her mom,” Love Heart watched too, “Guess we’re going to camp out here in the cemetery.”

Confidence got into a short argument with her brother and father for a minute before she stomped back to Love Heart, “Dad said we’re not waiting here all day,” she folded her arms and huffed.

“So we’ll come back tonight,” Love Heart pulled out his phone again, “I’ll let Li know.”

“Promise?” Confidence asked.

“Promise,” Love Heart finished texting Li.

Confidence smiled, “Thanks,” She gave Love Heart a kiss on the cheek which made him blush slightly.

“Let’s go, Kero,” Love Heart motioned for Kero to follow them back to the car.

OoOoO

Love Heart arrived at the graveyard after sundown in his battle costume with Confidence who wore the same outfit she had worn when they were going after The Shadow Card. Syaoran was already there in his own robes, arms folded.

“What took you?” he asked.

“Had to convince dad to let me go,” Confidence cracked her knuckles, “Alright lets track down this card!”

Syaoran gave Confidence an odd look then turned to Love Heart, who had Kero riding on his shoulder, who just nodded. “Alright,” he pulled out his compass.

"King of gods gods command god,

Appear from all directions,

Gold, Wood, Fire, Earth, Thunder.

The new command:

Soft Thunder

Spinning Thunder."

A dome of light shined on the board then fired off a beam.

“That way!” Confidence shouted then took off before anyone could stop her.

“Hey wait!” Love Heart was hot on her trail with Syaoran right behind him.

Confidence kept following the bright beam of light until she saw the apparition again and heard her name faintly on the wind. She bared her teeth and jumped over the metal fence and landed on the riverbed, seeing the image of her mother floating over a river.

She was still standing there, shaking, as Love Heart and Syaoran ran up behind her. Love Heart had released the staff on the way and Syaoran drew his sword as they leapt the fence and stood a short distance behind Confidence who was near the river’s edge.

Confidence was shaking as she faced The Illusion, “Why?” The image seemed to quirk an eyebrow at Confidence, “Why are you mocking my mom?”

The Illusion drifted closer and offered a hand to Confidence, beckoning her to step towards the water. Confidence was crying now, “No! You’re not her I know you aren’t her! I remember being with her after the accident! She wouldn’t try to lead me to my death or show up to mock me!” She pointed accusingly at the apparition, “Are you doing this to hurt me specifically or just because you like tormenting people? Just stop it!” She stomped her foot, “I want to remember her as the kind woman she was, not some specter.” Her tummy symbol was glowing from beneath her clothing, “I won’t let you mock her memory! Care Bear Cousin countdown! 4! 3! 2! 1! Care Bear Cousin Call!”

Syaoran jumped back in surprise as a wavy blue beam shaped like a musical scale fired from Confidence’s tummy and struck The Illusion. It seemed to wince as it flickered under the assault from her stare until the image dissolved and left only a shifting pattern of a mosaic floating above the water.

Love Heart seized his chance and ran forwards, the staff raised over his head, “Illusion Card! I command you to return to your power confined! Illusion!” He swung forwards and The Illusion was sucked into its card in a series of black beams arcing through the air.

Love Heart reached up to grab the card then ran over to Confidence who was shaking, “Confidence?” he touched her shoulder.

Confidence rounded on Love Heart and pulled him close, softly crying into his shoulder. “Thank you,” she whispered.

“Thank you, too,” Love Heart kissed her softly on the side of her head.

Syaoran had stepped back over the fence with Kero to watch, “What was that?” the boy asked.

Kero didn’t turn his gaze from the pair as he spoke, “Love Heart told me, it’s called the Care Bear Stare, or the Care Bear Cousin Call. They basically project a ‘good feelings’ ray at someone which can hurt beings without hearts or project their feelings into them. He used it on The Windy to show his dedication to protecting his family and that’s how he got it to surrender. I think Confidence used it to show The Illusion how it was hurting her.”

Syaoran didn’t know what to say as Love Heart and Confidence returned to the safe side of the wrought iron fence.

“Ready to go home, Li?” Love Heart asked.

“Yes,” Syaoran nodded.

Love Heart signed his name to The Illusion before he summoned a cloud car to drive them all home.