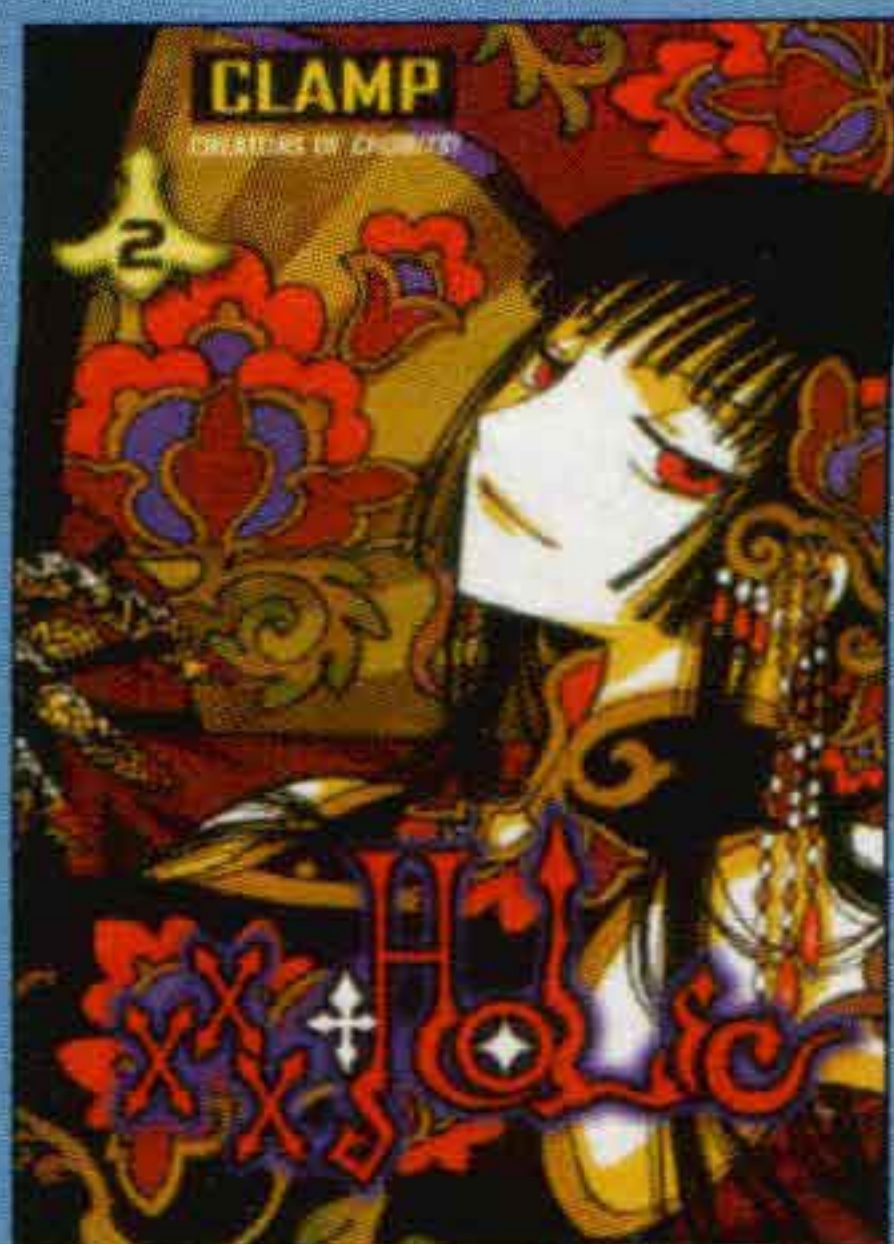


# xxxHOLIC 1 & 2

Be careful what you wish for...  
you might not be able to afford it!



YUKO ICHIHARA (NOT HER real name!) is an enchantress who sells wishes for a living. After touching a ward whilst running from a restless spirit, teenager Watanuki Kimihiro is literally dragged into her store and, before he knows what's happened, he's become Yuko's indentured slave. But as her cook and cleaner, Watanuki also gets a glimpse into another Tokyo, a much darker city where gods and spirits walk.

xxxHOLiC (pronounced '-holic' and named because it primarily deals with clients' addictions) is best summed

up as a collection of morality tales for the modern world. Some chapters follow Yuko's clients and show us the gruesome consequences of their actions – including a woman who is addicted to the internet and another who can't stop lying. Others follow Watanuki's exploration of Yuko's world, with him visiting fortune-tellers or participating in the hundred ghost story ceremony. In keeping with the gothic tone of the series, the art is heavy and, in places, genuinely creepy. There is very little shading and the use of black really accentuates the artwork.

For this series, CLAMP have left many questions unanswered, including the backgrounds of many of the main characters. Little is known about the alcohol-loving, opium-smoking Yuko, who can be solemn and mysterious and – a few panels and bottles of alcohol later – carefree and fun loving; making jokes at Watanuki's expense.

The first two volumes of the series also introduce Himawari-chan, Watanuki's would-be girlfriend, Watanuki's rival for her affection, the psychic archer Domeki, as well as Yuko's child-like assistants Moro-dashi and Maru-dashi (which, in Japanese, basically mean Streaking and Flashing!)

As a sister series to *Tsubasa RESERVoIR CHRONiCLE*, xxxHOLiC is packed with references to other CLAMP manga, from *Cardcaptor Sakura*'s wand and a Kero plush toy to a reference to Subaru Sumeragi (*X* and *Tokyo Babylon*) and the appearance of Kazahaya and Rikuo from *Legal Drug*. Can you spot them all?

Del Rey has done a superb job translating the series, and have included the original coloured panels from the Japanese release as well as comprehensive cultural notes after the story. Hardcore manga fans will also enjoy the Japanese preview, and the translators have also chosen to leave some Japanese text in the story.

A gothic extravaganza!

LESLEY SMITH

★★★★★

