

THE PERSONA ISSUE

CAL ANIMAGE ALPHA presents

# konshuu

Volume XLVII, Issue X



**SHADOW MAYA**

**Persona 2**

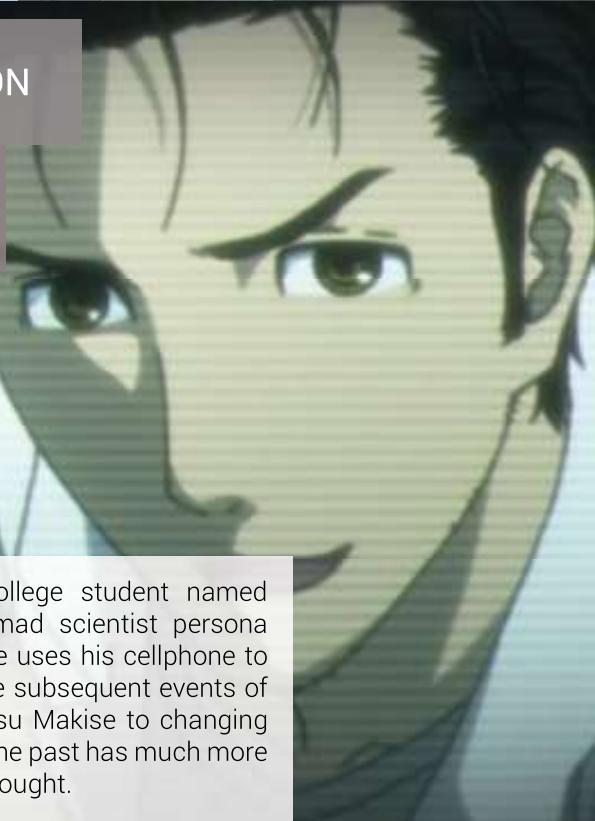
Art by Jamie You

# THIS WEEK'S FEATURED SERIES

## ANIME RECOMMENDATION

**STEINS;GATE**

*Steins;Gate* is about a university college student named Rintarou Okabe who takes on the mad scientist persona Kyouma. Throughout the series, Okabe uses his cellphone to send e-mails to the past, changing the subsequent events of the future. From saving scientist Kurisu Makise to changing Akihabara, Okabe finds that changing the past has much more serious consequences than he once thought.



Summer 2011, White Fox  
Directed by Hiroshi Hamasaki



Spring 2018, White Fox  
Directed by Kenichi Kawamura

## ANIME RECOMMENDATION

**STEINS;GATE 0**

**SPOILER ALERT:** The following contains spoilers for *Steins;Gate*. Alpha world lines, beta world lines, Okabe's known time and space far beyond any individual should. But his biggest regret is not having been able to save Kurisu. *Steins;Gate 0* shows us the world where Okabe first failed to save her. Only time will tell what Okabe will do from here on out, but to Okabe, even time is not on his side.

# The Best and Worst of LGBTQ+ Representation in JRPGs

**SPOILER WARNING:** *Persona 4*, *Persona 5*, and *NieR: Automata*.



**ELIJAH BARTOLOME**

2ND YEAR, COMPUTER SCIENCE

P4 and P5 fall short in LGBTQ representation.

GUEST WRITER

I love *Persona 5*. I love its addicting gameplay, stylish menus, interesting dungeons, and its characters. I love its story and themes: breaking free from social norms in order to progress into better social standards. But for its theme of freedom, it falls short in one aspect: its LGBTQ representation.

Let's look at one example: the main character's (MC) sexuality. For a character whose arcana is the Fool and therefore has unlimited potential, his potential seems to be strictly heteronormative. All positive romances are with females only, including some adults. But while Atlus seems to even step over the dangerous grey line between adult-adolescent relationships, the developer for some reason fears stepping over the rainbow line for gay relationships. In fact, the only LGBTQ representation is an offensive caricature in Shinjuku where two gay men with a heavy lisp force Ryuji away from the MC, implying sexual harassment.

It's shown in a humorous context, but it is saddening that a series that was once progressive (i.e. allowing a gay relationship with Jun in P2) has actually regressed in this regard in P5. Despite all this, P5 demonstrated a shimmer of hope for the community with Morgana. Morgana the cat struggles with identity throughout the game and continually doubts what he really is. While there is the obvious humanistic theme where Morgana identifies as a human, there is also a subtle gender theme where, despite Morgana having a feminine voice and name, still identifies as male. Although P5 is imperfect with its LGBTQ themes, it does some exploration of queer themes.

This dissonance between social themes is also apparent in P4, exploring sexuality and identity with the characters Kanji and Naoto. Kanji struggles with sexuality; Naoto struggles with gender norms. Both are maturely resolved by the end of their dungeons, but afterwards, their themes are mainly ignored or

even contradicted by the rest of the game. The biggest offender of this aspect is the continual fetishizing of Naoto's feminine body (i.e. her boobs in a hot springs episodes) despite the game making progress that Naoto refuses to accept feminine norms that females cannot be detectives.

Why does Atlus always seem to criss-cross over the boundary that is social commentary? I believe they are afraid of alienating the mainstream audience. After all, Japan is not known for being completely safe for the LGBTQ community. Now before you say, "Stop pushing your western (lol, like the West is perfect for LGBTQ people too) values on Japan," let me say that I am free to complain to what I perceive are faults to Japanese society like I can complain to faults to Western society. Humanistic values should be global and not one region should be exempted just because of "cultural norms."

*NieR: Automata* should be held as the standard for Japanese role-playing games in the context of LGBTQ representation. Not only can you appreciate the sexy character design of 2B, but you can also enjoy the progressive, sex-positive, and queer themes of the game! Best of both worlds! All of humanity is dead, and all you have left are sexually-ambiguous androids and machines left to inhabit the earth. And thanks to the brilliant mind of Yoko Taro, this setting is used to its fullest potential, with *NieR: Automata* exploring themes rarely seen in other JRPGs. Adam and Eve, lacking genitals, struggle with finding gender identity. Machine lifeforms try to mimic (sometimes to hilarious results) current social norms, usually failing to do so (I could write another essay on the machines acting out Romeo and Juliet). Homoeroticism is casually explored and not represented "weirdly" (a la P5) with 2B's cooperative who confides with 2B about being rejected by another female android. This is how JRPGs should treat LGBTQ people!

I love video games. I love the *Persona* series. Yet, Atlus needs to double-down on those social themes that they take pride in. I can fight God as a final boss, but I can't have a gay relationship and gay people can only be treated as sexual assaulters? Atlus, you're creating the best JRPGs right now. I know you can do better than this.

THE

## PERSONA

## SURVIVAL GUIDE

ANDREW OEUNG

3RD YEAR, EECS

Resident JRPG expert.

STAFF WRITER



You've decided to start playing *Persona*? Take this survival guide. I'll be talking about where to start in the *Persona* series and how to succeed.

First off, please do not start playing the spin-off games. While they may be fun, games like *Persona 4 Arena* or *Persona Q: Shadow of Labyrinth* are not indicative of the mainline *Persona* games. The barebones plot and labyrinthine design of *Persona Q* bear no resemblance to entries like *Persona 3*, *Persona 4*, or *Persona 5*. Those are meant as fanservice for existing lovers of the *Persona* franchise. Playing without any knowledge of the characters negatively affects your enjoyment! If you want to start a *Persona* game, you should start playing *Persona 3* or *Persona 4*, and save *Persona 5* for last. *Persona 5* revolutionized the gameplay aspect of the series, so backtracking to play the aged *Persona 3* or *Persona 4* would be a bad idea.

Now, let's say you pick up *Persona 3* and *Persona 4* and select Hard Mode. Get ready to have a rough time! In the *Persona* series, it's Game Over when the main character dies. It does not matter if the rest of the characters are alive: the main character means everything. We've all had those moments where we spend hours traveling through a dungeon, only to game over from an instant-death spell that immediately kills the main character. But there is a very simple way to prevent this in *Persona 3* and *Persona 4*! Run past all the enemies until you reach a teleporter, save, and then start grinding. The protagonist's running speed is way faster than any shadow, and so avoiding them when you want is trivial. If you die from an encounter, you will not lose any significant progress either. Disclaimer: this will not work very well in *Persona 5*, but to compensate, the game is much easier.

Next, you may be asking: how do I actually fight properly? In the turn-based combat system of the series, there are several types of attacks. The variety depends on the entry you are

playing. *Persona 3* has slash, strike, pierce, fire, ice, electric, wind, light, and darkness attacks. *Persona 4* condenses the slash, strike, pierce attacks into the umbrella term of physical attacks. These attacks are connected to summoned spirits called Personas. The main character collects and uses them to unleash these powers, but only a handful can be active at any given time.



The *Persona* series is all about having the right attack for the right job. A boss that primarily uses physical attacks might be trivialized if you bring a Persona that repels physical attacks. If a boss is only weak to electric attacks, you better make sure that you have an electric spell! A great way to address this would be to find or create a Persona that is capable of learning several elements. For example, in *Persona 3*, early-game Personas Lilim and Pale Rider can learn ice, fire, wind, and electric spells.

There are a few other universal rules as well: magic is strong early-game, physical is strong late-game, and debuffs/buffs are strong at all points in the game. The most important goal in combat is to build towards flexibility. Your party members can only use one Persona, so they each have a defined role.

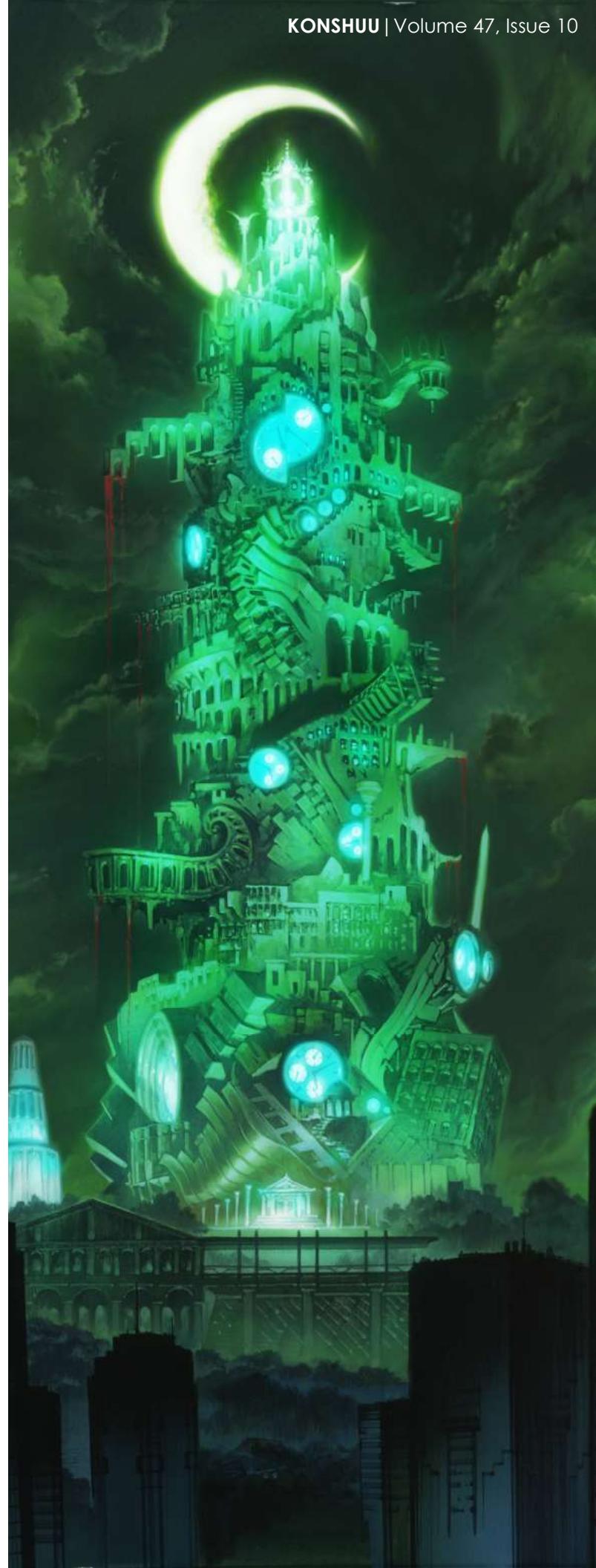
However, the main character is not bound by these rules. Thus, it's important that he should be able to play the role of a physical attacker, a healer, or a spellcaster all at once. If you play on harder difficulties, this will be vital to your success, especially in boss fights. Lastly, don't forget to have a healer in your party!



A turn-based veteran might be able to acclimate to the unforgiving combat system of the *Persona* series, but few have ever experienced the Social Link system (known as the Confidant system in *Persona 5*) before playing *Persona*. The Social Link system is straightforward: if you spend time with other denizens of the town and form bonds with them, these bonds will strengthen your combat abilities. But the game doesn't tell you a crucial fact: these bonds may be locked by your main character's attributes! In each game, the protagonist must level up traits like Knowledge, Courage, and Charm in order to level up certain Social Links. For instance, in order to start the Lovers Social Link with Yukari Takeba in *Persona 3*, you need to have max Charm. That's not very easy! In *Persona 3*, it is extremely difficult to max all Social Links within a single playthrough. You have a one-week leeway, which means that without the help of a guide, it is effectively impossible. *Persona 4* and *Persona 5* make it much easier to max Social Links without a guide.

The important tip for maxing Social Links is simple: don't waste time. You need to plan for the short-term as well as the long-term in order to accomplish a max Social Links playthrough. Prioritize completing Social Links that have a shorter time limit, and make sure that you can spend time with a Social Link for each day of the week. In the early stages of the game, prioritize increasing your attributes over leveling up Social Links. Every game requires you to have max attributes before maxing out Social Links, so the earlier the better! In *Persona 5*, the Fortune and Temperance Social Links make it a piece of cake to max all Confidants in a single playthrough, so be sure to finish those as soon as possible.

There you have it! These are all the general tips for succeeding in the *Persona* series. Remember: if you ever struggle with a boss or dungeon, reevaluate how you're approaching it!



STAFF PICKS

# FAVORITE PERSONA



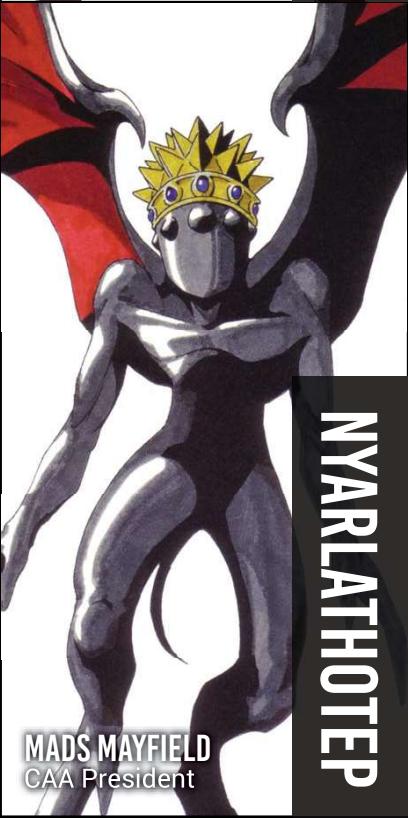
AMATERASU



JOHANNA



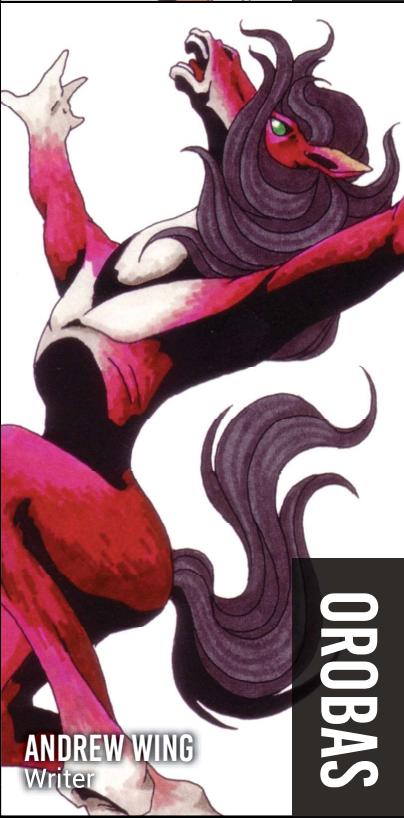
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ANDREW OEUNG  
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# Dear Konshuu-sensei

Got a question about school? Need some advice? Don't worry, Konshuu-sensei is here for you! This advice column features answers to questions that our readers posed last week.

Ask a question at [tinyurl.com/konshuusensei](http://tinyurl.com/konshuusensei) and you could be featured in the next issue!

## Best-Friend-kun

Hey, I heard about Konshuu-Sensei from Protag-kun, and I wanted to ask something. Is it possible for me to be Protag-kun instead?

You are already the Protag-kun in your own story.

## Protag-kun

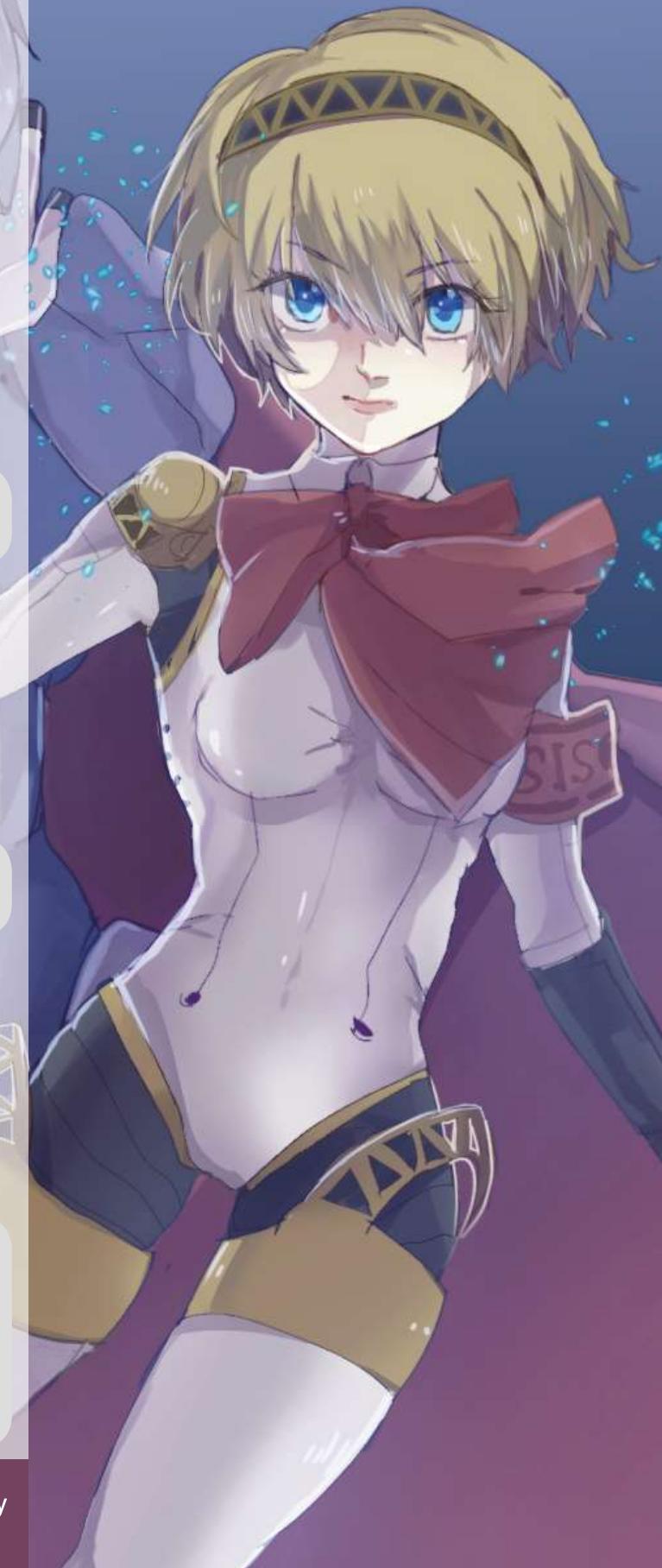
Recently, my friend Best-Friend-kun has been acting up. It's like he wants to be the protag. How do I tell him he can't be the protag?

You don't have a right to tell him he can't be protag. So don't.

## Best-Friend-kun

Protag-kun and I got into a fight. I beat him up real bad and he had to go to the hokenshitsu...and it made me happy. Am I a bad person?

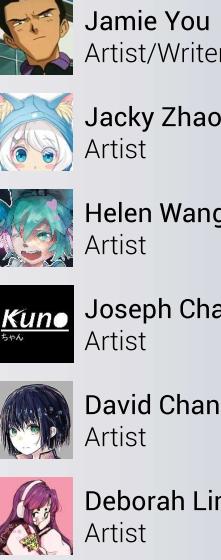
Well, I'm not here to judge if you're a good or bad person. And while I don't encourage beating others, and am slightly concerned that you were happy as a result, I do suggest trying to live your own story and leave Protag-kun to his.



**Disclaimer:** Konshuu-sensei is not responsible for any consequences that result from following their advice.

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## CLUB EVENTS

Konshuu accepts guest submissions from club members! If you'd like to have content featured, please visit:  
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