

konshuu

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THIS WEEK'S SERIES

► ANIME SHOWING THUNDERBOLT FANTASY

Dan Fei and her sibling of the same clan are tasked with protecting a legendary sword, the Tiang Xing Jian. In order to keep the sword from falling into evil, manipulative hands, Dan Fei and her brother Dan Heng each protect different parts of the sword. An opposing clan named the Xuan Gui Zong are after the sword, and subsequently chase the brother and sister whose parts are divided among them. While they kill Dan Heng and take the sword's hilt, Dan Fei slips through their fingers and enlists the help of wandering strangers, Shang Bu Huan and Lin Xue Ya. Thunderbolt Fantasy is notable for its use of live-action puppetry, an atypical medium, and also its legendary writer, Gen Urobuchi. Considered by many to be one of the best shows of the season.



Studios: Nitroplus and Pili International Multimedia
Original Creator: Gen Urobuchi

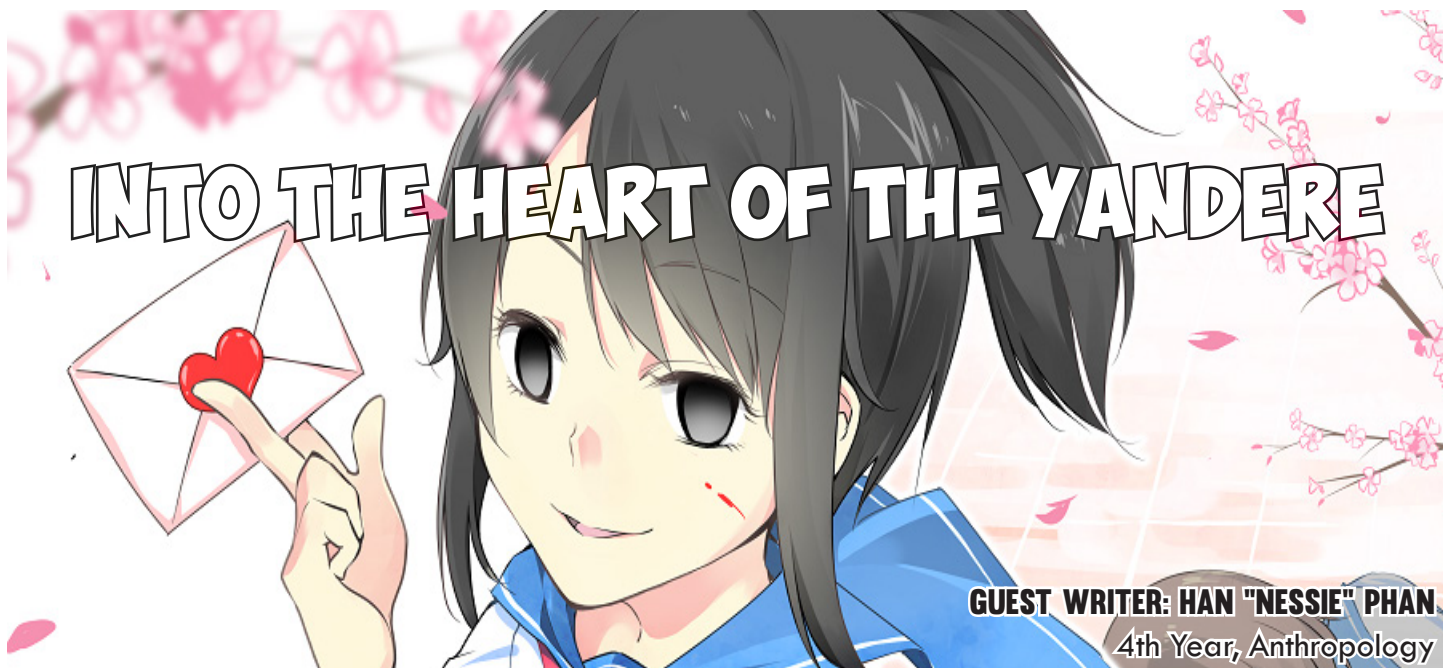
MANGA RECOMMENDATION



TOMO-CHAN WA ONNANOKO!

JOSH "BUBEEZ" ROQUE

Tomo Aizawa wants to be noticed by Juunichirou Kubota, her childhood friend who sees her as just that: a friend. Tomo has a boyish haircut, is in the boy's club for karate, and attracts her female classmates unknowingly and unwillingly--- for all intents and purposes, the school regards Tomo as a male, and Kubota is no different. Tomo confesses to him, but since Kubota has no romantic interest in Tomo, at least nothing obvious, he treats her confession like a high-five. Tomo then beats him up, badly. Tomo tries to act more feminine while also picking fights, beating up Kubota and excelling in the destruction of rival sports teams. The main force of this comedy is its character interactions: Tomo's best friends half-heartedly try to help fix her image, and Tomo herself is a likeable meathead. An easy manga to pick up, and genuinely hilarious, despite the shortcomings of the premise.



TW: Blood, Abuse, Murder

Out of the four most popular anime girl archetypes, the yandere has always been my least favorite for reasons I thought were obvious. Yandere characters are violent and harmful, resorting to toxic methods of manipulation when she does not get what she wants. To me, such a person would have been thrown into the bucket from the moment I sensed her arrival in a new anime series. And yet, the yandere has maintained a popular fanbase since its conception, supporting a wild fantasy in the anime community I would prefer not to venture into. This past summer opened my eyes to a brand new world with the help of a friend and Yandere Simulator.

For newcomers, a yandere is a character type who initially appears sweet until they become romantically obsessed to the point where they will resort to violence or other means towards others for their love. The most popular (and extreme) character recognizable as a yandere would be Yuno Gasai from Mirai Nikki, who displays cruel and life-threatening behavior towards her foes. Other characters include Kotonoha Katsura from School Days and Lucy from Elfen Lied.

These characters go as far as referring to their crush as the love of their lives and will stop at nothing to be with them. Murder comes secondhand, which they are quick to resort to outside of the love interest's view. God forbid their crushes from ever finding out about their violent side and pray that if they do, they will accept it as endearing.

In the video game "Yandere Simulator," the player is thrown to the world of the yandere protagonist who loves a boy named "Senpai." However, she quickly finds that the popular boy is friends with several other girls who also have a crush on Senpai. With the help of a morally gray NPC named Info-chan, she sets out to reroute a designated love rival before they can confess their feelings. Methods that she can use include straight on murder (with a lovely variety of tools and techniques), demonic possession, defamation, kidnap (and mind break), matchmaking, and so on.

Now there are several other elements of the game like leveling up specific helpful skills by studying or reading manga, taking panty shots from other girls to sate Info-chan's demands, hiding from the (indestructible) delinquents who hang out by the incinerator, the police... but the main story line focuses on keeping other girls from her beloved. Failure to do so or failure to keep a positive reputation (which will surprisingly lower if her clothes are bloody) will result in a game over. Oh, and Senpai can never see the player commit a murder, which is harder than it looks. And you cannot murder Senpai; apparently he does not like that.

My tale began during the summer of '16. I received a snapchat from a close friend; the image was of a CG animated girl standing over the body of another girl in a pool of blood with the caption "I found a new game." Immediately, I locked my phone screen and continued on with my life. Within a few days, I received the second offense: a video of the girl picking up another girl by

her feet and throwing her off the roof over the railings. It opened a dialogue that started out with terms I cannot say on a family friendly newsletter that loosely resembled a “what in tarnation?” After several weeks of meme-worthy conversations, I gave in and played the game with my friend by my side— my very own knowledgeable Info-chan.

I started out as any noob would; I spent twenty minutes designing my own character and senpai using cheats, and I wasted another lifetime confused over the selection of panties that granted you slightly better stats. I went with the Lewd Lacy Panties for its bonus ability: Yandere-chan will leave less bloody footprints. Clearly, I was in it to win it.

The rest of my first day went on as I expected. I struggled to stab students quickly with a screwdriver and ditched classes to burn my bloody clothes in the incinerator behind the school, mopping up blood before the rest of the kids were released for lunch and screaming when my clothes became dirty again during the cleanup. Honestly, it was boring. There was no joy in aimlessly chasing down students and laughing maniacally to improve my sanity meter. That is, until I met Rival-chan.

She stood eternally under the cherry blossom tree in the courtyard next to a circle of friends, lamenting on how Senpai doesn't notice her feelings despite being childhood friends. Rival-chan is marketed as a tsundere, yet her sweet nature and cute characteristics (and strawberry blonde pigtails) caused me to hate her immediately—for who can resist a girl like that, especially a plain faced (black haired, ponytailed) yandere who never had a conversation with Senpai? I decided then on to get rid of her, enraptured with the idea of being alone with Senpai.

But there was a fatal flaw in my plan that my friend forgot to tell me about: you can not kill Rival-chan. The game was incomplete, which I knew of, updating sporadically and adding new features monthly. Though who would have guessed that Rival-chan was immortal? Certainly not I who spent hours practicing techniques on other (mini) love rivals which furthered and nurtured my obsessive goal. Certainly not I who became so engulfed into the game that I could see nothing over my protective nature about Senpai. I even tried the demonic ritual which slaughtered anything in its path, wasting precious hours on mastering the summoning which I learned

through YouTube videos. Senpai saw my new hideous form on my last round before dinner time, and he was horrified, breaking my heart and resulting in my final “gameover.”

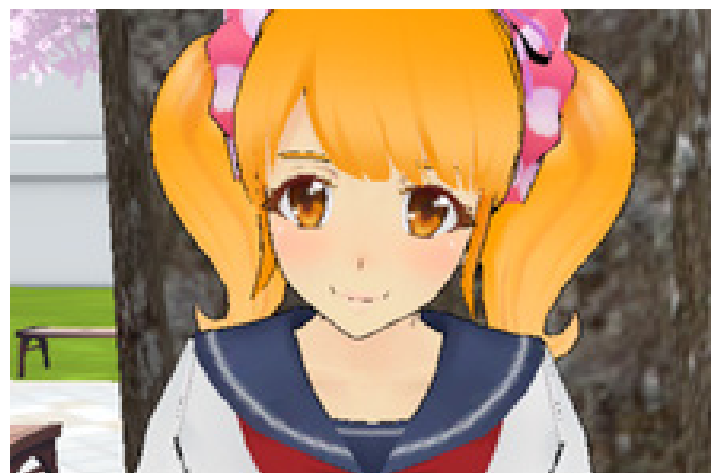
As I sat back against the chair, fingers trembling, heart pounding, I reflected on what a monster I had become in the name of love. Something close to jealousy towards a fictional character changed me subtly, and then repetitive action left me impassive about bringing harm to my fellow classmates. It was Senpai's disturbed cry—his “Stay away from me!” that ended my era of inhumanity. This is what yandere feel and fear, I realized. Hashtag relatable.

Note that Rival-chan has a name now and her redesign gave her the full tsundere make over, which is actually my favorite archetype. Yet here we are.

After experiencing the difficult life of a yandere, I now appreciate and empathize with these complex characters. But it wasn't eternal devotion to a lover that awakened my understanding, it was their rivals. It's the beautiful and irresistible Rival-chans that cause an endless void of hopelessness that could only be cured with my own hand. It's the darkness that creeps into your being after finding that you may not be the princess for your Senpai's happily ever after. It's those despicable people (heathens) who stand in the way of your love that haunts my true ending.

I left my friend's house that day with the burden of knowledge, finally understanding my most reviled archetype and her appeal after experiencing it firsthand. And I have not played that game since then.

Till death do us part, senpai.





With the release of Trails of Cold Steel II less than a week ago on PS3, the Cold Steel trilogy flies under the radar as a premiere Japanese RPG, or JRPG for short. But what sets Trails of Cold Steel apart from any other Japanese game? What makes it any different from Hyperdimension Neptunia, for example?

RPGs are known for anime cliches and that is the cold, hard truth. The terrible ones borrow heavily from anime tropes and pander to a niche audience in order to reap a small profit. The average ones occasionally have potential, but fall short due to failed execution or budget problems, among other things. Even the decent ones have a few tropes in them. What separates good characterization from bad characterization is the way that the creators undermine or subvert tropes in order to provide depth to characters: Trails of Cold Steel is a perfect example of this.

it are the countries of Liberl, Erebonia, Crossbell, and the Calvard Republic, along with other smaller countries. Zemuria was your typical allusion to Europe, with warring states, monarchies, and a dichotomy between the aristocracy and the commoners. But Zemuria underwent an “Orbal Revolution” when Professor C. Epstein discovered the existence of “orbital energy,” or magic, which could be channeled into mass-produced objects known as orbments. With the invention of orbments, innovations like interstate travel, orbital weaponry, and orbital transportation quickly became widespread and indispensable to the citizens of Zemuria over the course of fifty years. Orbital advancements are made even during the series itself: for example, orbital radios and orbital bikes are invented during the Cold Steel trilogy, while orbital cars are invented during the Crossbell duology.



Trails of Cold Steel, developed by Nihon Falcom, is part of the Trails series, also known as Kiseki in Japanese. The entire series, currently made up of eight games, takes place in the continent of Zemuria, and within



Within Zemuria is the Erebonian Empire, a country teeming with nobles and famous for its military prowess. Trails of Cold Steel takes place in Erebonia, with Rean Schwarzer as our protagonist. The majority of the story takes place in Thors Military Academy, a military school located in the small town of Trista.

Unfortunately, this school setting seems a bit cliché, but *Cold Steel* takes advantage of this setting in order to brilliantly develop the side characters. Day after day, the player can walk around and talk to a random person and be rewarded with interesting and meaningful dialogue. By talking with various characters after every event, the player starts to develop interpersonal relationships with them and even watch them grow over time. These side characters are not exactly flat, either. I watched a stuck-up noble reflect upon his actions of hubris over time and repent for his mistakes through good deeds and kindness— and he wasn't even a main character!

As for the main characters, *Trails of Cold Steel* comes with a large cast of nine main characters, which eventually grows to eleven later on. Initially, these characters seem stereotypical, but some of them develop over time and really make the player appreciate the character complexity present within the game. For example, one main character named Machias Regnitz is the son of a governor who harbors a vehement hatred towards any and all nobility, so much so that it blinds him. By the middle of the game he opens up and explains why his family was irreparably torn apart by the desires of the nobility. It essentially feels like the player is befriending these students through the eyes of the protagonist, Rean himself, because the player is learning about their interests, their anxieties, and their (oftentimes) regretful past.



What makes *Trails of Cold Steel* stand out is that its side characters feel alive and live on without the intervention of the main character. Both major and minor characters tend to resolve their own problems and issues on their own, without Rean's assistance.

Viewing their day-to-day activities as a bystander contributes to increased individuality, something that other games like *Skyrim* honestly lack. Guards in *Skyrim* will always regurgitate the same lines, no matter how you interact with them. In contrast, a student in Thors Military Academy might worry over her now-distant relationship with her childhood friend and seek to correct it.

The liveliness of the citizens can even be extended to the world in which they live in. In Thors Military Academy, Rean's class ventures into various cities in order to learn about the surroundings, local conflicts and culture of each town. It is effectively an unconventional hands-on approach of teaching students, in that it is a significant departure from conventional, classroom settings. The cities themselves are extremely varied, ranging from an industrialized city centered around an arms-manufacturing mega-corporation to a vast area of highlands.



I have talked all about the characters, setting, and plot, but what about the battle system? *Trails of Cold Steel* uses a turn-based style with a mixture of strategy and new elements. Players fight on a grid-based battlefield, and can move a certain amount of tiles to reposition or attack enemies. Moving, casting, or attacking uses a certain amount of “delay,” which can be extended or shortened depending on the circumstances. Each character also has unique abilities called “crafts,” offensive moves or support-type buffs that must use craft points (which are obtained through attacks or being attacked.) At max craft points, characters can use an ultimate move called an “S-Craft,” a flashy ultimate move that is typical of modern JRPGs. Overall, *Trails* uses a fairly conventional gameplay system that does the job well enough.

I have saved the best for last, because the Trails series is known best for its amazing music. The developers themselves are pioneers in video game music, because Falcom was responsible for producing the first video game music CD's and the first to add vocals to game music. Nowadays, these ideas are fairly commonplace, but Falcom popularized these innovations after their success and growth in the 1980s. Falcom's musicians are so renowned that they even have their own professional sound team for video games called Falcom Sound Team jdk! Battle tracks can range from fast-paced jazz music to intense techno-style music, but all of them turn out to be masterpieces that fit the tone and mood of the situation. Normally, the player would expect a standard fast-paced generic rock song, but this series always manages to make its songs memorable and even profoundly impactful at times. It's quite hard to describe the evocative feeling emanating from songs made by Falcom Sound Team jdk, but "The Azure Arbitrator" in Legend of Heroes: Ao no Kiseki and "Inevitable Struggle" in Legend of Heroes: Zero no Kiseki might be able to capture this feeling if your interest is piqued.

I have barely scratched the surface for this long-spanning series, but hopefully Trails of Cold Steel should not appear as "just another JRPG," but instead as a promising one! It certainly is not flawless: the graphics leave a lot to be desired, for one. Still, the characterization, world-building, and lore are absolutely brilliant.



THIS WEEK'S POLL

So sweet and tasty they'll make your heart melt! Which of these is your favorite japanese sweet?

Submit now at: [BIT.LY/KONPOLL4402](https://bit.ly/konpoll4402)

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REGULAR WEEKLY EVENTS

Anime Showings and Socials

183 Dwinelle

Mondays, 7:00 - 10:00pm

Manga Socials

Location TBA

Thursdays, 5:30 - 6:30pm

Game Nights

103 Moffitt

Thursdays, 7:30 - 10:00pm

WEEKLY SHOWINGS

91 Days

Love Live! Sunshine!!

NEXT WEEK'S SHOWING: MACROSS DELTA

