

konshuu

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THIS WEEK'S SERIES

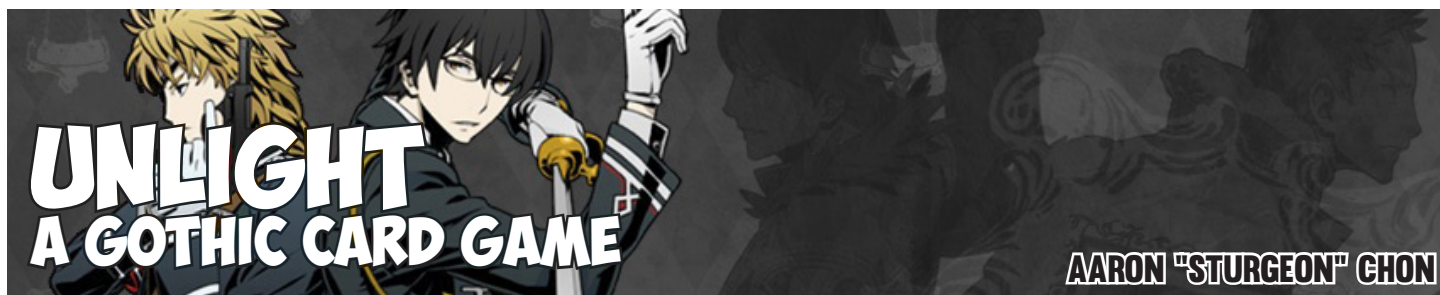
► ANIME SHOWING **AJIN: DEMI-HUMAN**

A student named Kei Nagai gets hit by a passing truck, only to learn that he is immortal. In his world, immortal beings are known as Ajin. While being immortal may sound like a blessing, Ajin are branded as dangerous in this world, so Kei feels he must isolate himself from the world. His best friend, Kaito, accompanies Kei deep into the mountains to avoid being discovered. Later, a group of Ajin who oppose humanity contact Kaito, and Kei struggles to pick a side. It becomes apparent that Ajin are capable of weaponizing their powers by manipulating a shadow that only Ajin can see. But Kei is special, as his black ghost moves of its own accord. Caught in the middle, Kei must avoid humans who only seek cruel experimentation, while also keeping distance from the cold and unfeeling Ajin.



Studio: Polygon Pictures
Original Creator: Gamon Sakurai





Collectible Card Games (CCGs) have been surging and waning in popularity, having transitioned to and dominating a large portion of the mobile game market. While the gameplay of each title greatly differs, they largely share the core mechanic of having randomized character draws, personal levels, use of the energy system that dominates social games, and giving advantages to those participating in micro-transactions. Admittedly, there has been a greater appeal to audiences in the East over the West, as titles such as The iDOLM@STER: Cinderella Girls, Fate Grand/Order, and Granblue Fantasy have been drawing in new players with every passing day, whereas others such as Devil Maker: Tokyo, Ayakashi Ghost Guild, and Electro Girl have sailed to the States and met their deaths due to corporate and financial reasons. In essence, the CCG market is highly competitive and can end titles that do not dominate without fear or favor, leaving nothing but the most successful titles. A slightly more obscure title, Unlight, although significantly different from the current meta of CCGs, has a cult following that only seems to be growing in size.

Unlight, by its own description, is a gothic card game marketed by the Japanese company Techway and currently has servers in Japan, Korea, China, and "International" (a fusion of the former French, SEA, and Thai servers). Unlike most CCGs, Unlight is not hosted on mobile, but rather, on web browsers, utilizing platforms such as Yahoo!, Naver, NicoNico, and Facebook. The game was originally a small startup produced by a team of five, but surged in popularity when it hit Taiwan; it is now the top-grossing game on Facebook in the entirety of Asia, which makes it surprising that it is so unknown in the West.

Unlight is the story of a doll like automaton, the player, who is a servant very recently created by the Saint of Flame, a mighty entity. In Unlight, there are two main worlds: the Mundane World, a medieval steampunk world torn by conflict, and the Astral Realm, the underworld inhabited by various creatures and where the majority of the game takes place. War heroes, royals, criminals, killers, and other individuals who have died in the Mundane World are transitioned to the Astral Realm with fragmented

memories of who they were and how they died. The player is tasked with guiding these individuals through the Astral Realm so that they can grow in strength and regain their memories, and, if they perform well enough, allowing them to return to the Mundane World.



Upon starting the game, the player will begin with one character at level 1, but will very quickly accumulate more characters and levels, having a party max of three characters. The game is divided into three primary battle modes: Quest, Duel, and Raids. The Quest is the most prominent part of the story, as all story progression occurs here, as does most of the battles. Duel is a series of lobbies where the player can engage other players in either in a 1 vs. 1 or a 3 vs. 3 setup. Raids are where exceptionally powerful monsters are spawned and players work together to defeat them before time runs out. In addition to the battling lobbies, players also have access to the Shop, which is the typical in-game currency shop, the Darkroom, where they can acquire new characters and other goods from the game using special currency called Darkroom Tickets, the Deck, where players can manage their characters and other cards, and the Library, where the player can check what characters, levels of characters, and stories of characters they have.

Each battle consists of the player's setup of 1-3 characters engaging 1-3 enemy characters or monsters across a number of turns. Each turn consists of four phases: the Draw Phase, the Move Phase, and two Attack/Defend Phases, with one Attack and Defend Phase for either side. During the Draw Phase, each side draws up to 5 action cards from the stage, as well as an extra action card from the player's stock, which is randomized if not customized. During the Move Phase, players may spend action cards to adjust the distance between the characters (Long, Medium, Short), rest, or switch out; the player who moves more goes in the corresponding direction and then gets to have their Attack Phase first. As one would expect, the Attack and Defend Phases are where action cards are spent to increase a character's attack or defense stat. Each character also has a set of abilities that are conditional on the types of action cards played in certain phases, which tend to change the flow of the battle entirely. When a character would lose all hit points following the Attack/Defend Phase, the turn ends immediately and another character must be switched in, unless there are no characters left, in which case that side loses.



Compared to most CCGs today, Unlight is a very different type of game, starting with the storytelling itself. While most games tell their story through the main questline, nearly all information on the world of Unlight is derived from the character backstories, which are detailed like small chapters in each level of their rare cards. On the subject of character cards, each character is as equally viable as any other, as they are not restricted by the tier system utilized by most CCGs such as UR/SSR/SR or stars. Each character has one to five levels when they are released, and over time, they get Rare releases that are stronger and include the aforementioned story arcs, meaning that essentially every character update contributes further to the whole of the story. With the current setup of the game, as long as a person owns any variant of a card, it is completely feasible to gain the strongest variant of the card as well simply by virtue of upgrading. Though

some characters are more difficult to obtain than others, their utilities in the game are only restricted by the amount of releases that they currently have available. The game updates on a weekly basis, switching the contents of the Darkroom as well as introducing new characters or new phases of characters, meaning that the game will continually be growing.

Like most CCGs, Unlight regularly has ongoing events that add variety to the game, but unlike most CCGs, these events are not so prominent that they wipe out the need to participate in the story questline. Unlight also rewards player loyalty, as the game's premium currency is easily obtained just by doing a quest or duel once per day, a rather easy task that motivates daily play. For those who are interested, there is a ranking system for people who participate actively in duels, rewarding the top few players with special equipment cards and such, in addition to other benefits. While micro-transactions are available in the game to make getting the characters you want easier, it is by no means necessary, as most, if not all, characters and features are available in the game's free-to-play mode. The possibility, however, is very enticing, seeing how high revenue has been for the company in terms of these micro-transactions.

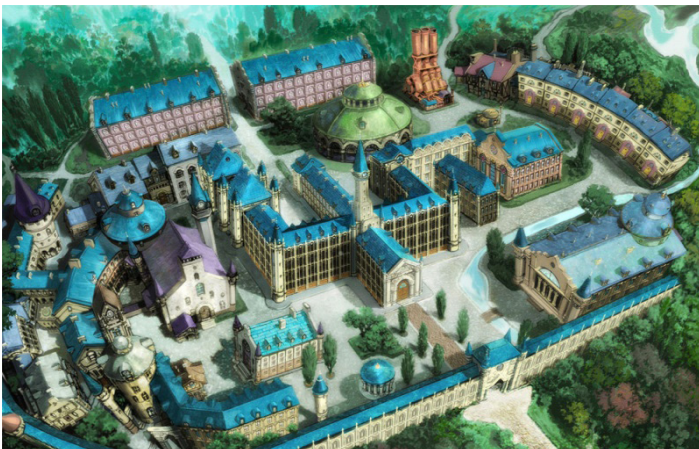
Additionally, one of the greatest parts of the game that is not inherently built into the game itself is the community that has formed around it. The game has a great appeal to it, which the creators attribute to the variety and livelihood of the characters in the story. Because of the way that the game is framed, trolling other players is basically impossible (but nobody tries to do so anyway, as the community is very supportive and shares quests to help one another with their story progressions). As opposed to the traditional CCGs which pander to males using fanservice, Unlight has a very straightforward gothic style of artwork that results in both male and female characters that are very appealing. Official character popularity polls indicate that male characters are more popular overall, evidence of a fan base that includes both males and females, which many games and series have been experiencing difficulty getting. In Asia, and even some parts of the States, Unlight has been booming in social media groups and has been a rising star among cosplay groups.

The reason why Unlight is not as prominent as it could be is likely due to its lack of advertising, as most people who learn about the game do so through spoken word. An enticing game that does not fail to satisfy, Unlight is a title that any fan of CCGs or the gothic genre should give a try.



Nowadays, there are a plethora of shooters, platformers, and open-world titles in the gaming world. Some of them take place in real life locations like Boston or Japan. Others take place in fictional places like the Mushroom Kingdom with magical elements like a beam sword or talking fairy. However, there's one magical element that's been noticeably absent from almost all of the games I have ever played: alchemy.

Mana Khemia: Alchemists of Al-Revis is an underappreciated role-playing game developed by Gust Corporation and released on the Playstation 2 and Playstation Portable. The game stars a quiet, silver-haired boy named Vayne who enrolls in an alchemist academy with his pet cat Sulpher. Although Vayne starts off timid and shy in the beginning of the game, he gradually gains close friends throughout each of his terms in school. Vayne's reputation remains a mystery throughout the story, but we quickly learn that Vayne's appearance can be rather deceiving, and that he actually unknowingly holds a deep secret. Looks like the quiet ones are always the ones who hold secrets, huh?



Similar to games like Persona 3 and Trails of Cold Steel, Mana Khemia: Alchemists of Al-Revis takes place in a school, and the player undertakes several assignments and courses throughout each semester. However, that is where the similarities end! These school assignments are unlike traditional homework, because these merciless alchemist

teachers will send you straight to dangerous areas like living forests and a graveyard of dragons. Unlike most games, characters in Mana Khemia never level up or gain experience. Instead, there is a special book called the "Grow Book" where you can spend points on skills and stat points if you have synthesized specific alchemy recipes. Wait, what? Alchemy recipes? That's right, your character progression doesn't involve mindless grinding, but instead focuses on gathering crafting materials to create new armors, weapons, and accessories! It's a neat little system that incentivizes exploration of new areas and careful usage of items.

Personally, the relationship between gaining power and crafting new items quickly becomes addicting in Mana Khemia. Searching for a specific item that allows you to craft a new recipe, which then grants you a new skill feels so nice and rewarding. Typically, grinding just involves beating up enemies over and over again in other RPGs, but that's not what Mana Khemia is really about. Synthesizing new recipes is fun, too. There's a minigame where the player has to correctly stop a spinning roulette in order to determine the overall quality and effects of an item, so you could even remake an item if you felt like its effects weren't potent enough or specialized correctly.

Gust Corporation usually makes turn-based RPGs, and Mana Khemia definitely fits that bill. Mana Khemia's battle system allows three characters in battle, but three more characters can switch in and out of battle during an ally or enemy's turn. There's a specific turn order in battle, but that turn order can change depending on each character's actions. For example, a specific party member can move other party members forward in the turn order, while another party member can use quick sword slashes that don't leave a lot of downtime between her turns. Sometimes, party members can even use spells that hit multiple times over the course of several turns. Each party member also has a special and flashy finishing move that they can use after a certain point in the story.



Unfortunately, the main problem with this game is its laughably easy difficulty. Although it's not easy to break the game by crafting overly powerful weapons since new areas are tied to story progression, in general, it's basically impossible to die in this game. However, the game does have a special feature which cranks up the difficulty. During exploration, the world changes from day to night in the field. In the daytime, monsters are slow, docile, and easy to avoid on the field, but at night, monsters have doubled stats and become much more powerful and aggressive. More often than not, encountering enemies during nighttime can lead to certain death. But all in all playing solely in nighttime is pretty masochistic, so I wouldn't recommend it. A lot of Gust Corporation games (Atelier Iris, Atelier Ayesha, Ar tonelico, etc.) have an easy difficulty, which may be a disappointment for some.

Still, Mana Khemia's cast of characters might make up for the relatively easy battles. Most of the playable characters in Mana Khemia are total oddballs, but it certainly makes for some hilarious and unrealistic situations. There's an 11-year old female swordsman who constantly fights anyone in her path, a senior who dubs himself "The Defender of Justice," a sleepy ghost who loves dolls, and even an alien in the party. But to be honest, a guy who calls himself "The Defender of Justice" and dresses up with a silly-looking mask is way more badass and comedic than all the rest. I mean, come on, who does that?



You can hang out with your friends during your free time in school, or you could alternatively spend your free time hunting monsters and gathering materials. Most of the time, your party members will go off on crazy adventures with you, reminding you of your silly, carefree times in high school. Spending time with your party members actually influences your ending, so be sure to spend the most time with your favorite party member!

Mana Khemia's music isn't super memorable, but it definitely has a cutesy feel to it that really adds to the school-like atmosphere. The happy-go-lucky nature of the music always made me hum to the tune of the school theme, and the comedic student life also paralleled the positive and upbeat music perfectly. The story can get dark at times, which can lead to some epic moments and exciting music. In particular, you should try listening to "Nefertiti" on the Mana Khemia soundtrack if you get the chance.



To be honest, there isn't exactly a sense of urgency within the game's giant school of alchemy. Antagonists don't appear until the very end of the game, and that's when the game kicks up the drama a bit. But really, if you consider the fact that this game is meant to emulate school-life, then there's no need for a power-hungry, destruction-bent villain. Mana Khemia 2: Fall of Alchemy also takes place in the same alchemist academy, but its cast of characters are a little more serious and edgy, which honestly ruins the light-hearted atmosphere that the first game built up.

Mana Khemia may not be perfect, but it really is a relaxing and fun game to play. It may not blow your expectations out of the water with its slow-paced story, but if you understand that these characters are basically living through school day by day, then it makes sense that each day isn't a crazy, action-packed adventure. In the end, Mana Khemia is that fantasy-like school experience involving magic that you always dreamed of, but never had.

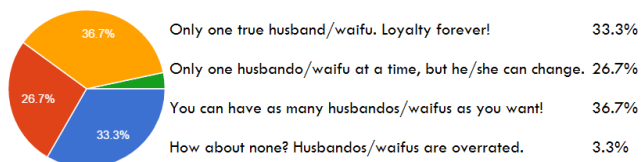
ANIME QUIZ

- Which Gundam series features the Lightning Gundam?
 - Gundam Build Fighters
 - G Gundam
 - Gundam Seed
 - Gundam Build Fighters Try
- In the anime No Game No Life, Shiro and Sora play several games throughout the show. Which one of these games did Shiro and Sora not play during the anime?
 - Blackjack
 - Chess
 - Rock paper scissors
 - Poker
- Which one of these shows does not belong?
 - Hikaru no Go
 - Slam Dunk
 - Haikyuu!!
 - Area no Kishi
- Which one of these video games never got an anime adaptation?
 - Tales of the Abyss
 - Hyperdimension Neptunia
 - Final Fantasy X
 - Blade & Soul
- Which of these anime series has the most episodes?
 - One Piece
 - Detective Conan
 - Doraemon
 - Naruto: Shippuden
- What prominent pizza company appears several times in Code Geass?
 - Domino's Pizza
 - Pizza Hut
 - Papa John's Pizza
 - Pieology

LAST WEEK'S POLL

What is your policy on having husbandos/waifus?

RESULTS



THIS WEEK'S POLL

Who is your favorite Tsundere voiced by Kugimiya Rie?

Vote now at: [J.MP/KONPOLL4307](https://j.mp/konpoll4307)

Answers: D, D, A, C, C, B

Konshuu proudly accepts
guest submissions from club members!
If you'd like to have content featured,
please submit to:
J.MP/KONSUB



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WEEKLY EVENTS

Anime Showings and Socials

9 Evans

Mondays, 7:00 - 10:00pm

Manga Socials

106 Dwinelle

Thursdays, 5:30 - 6:30pm

Game Nights

2030 VLSB

Thursdays, 7:30 - 10:00pm

WEEKLY SHOWINGS

Dimension W

Himouto! Umaru-chan

NEXT WEEK'S SHOWING: SHOWA GENROKU RAKUGO SHINJUU

