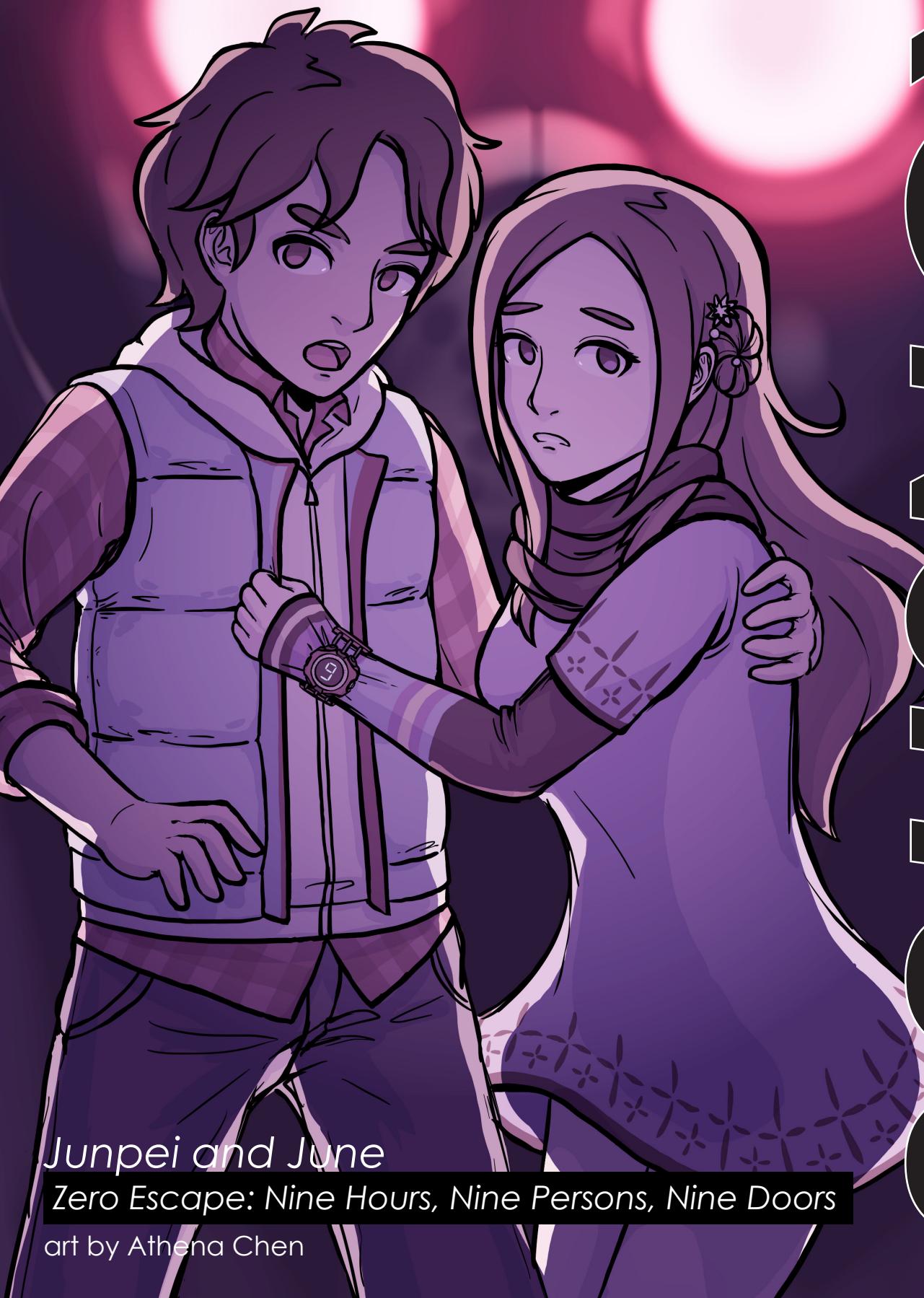


vol.50 #07
Visual Novels

KÔN
Z
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H
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G



Junpei and June

Zero Escape: Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors

art by Athena Chen



MATOU SAKURA, SABER, AND TOHSAKA RIN

Fate/Stay Night

Art by Theo Rai



WHY THE KFC DATING SIM IS ACTUALLY AMAZING

NEIL FRYDENDAL

1ST YEAR, INTENDED COMPUTER SCIENCE

STAFF WRITER

We without a doubt live in the best timeline.

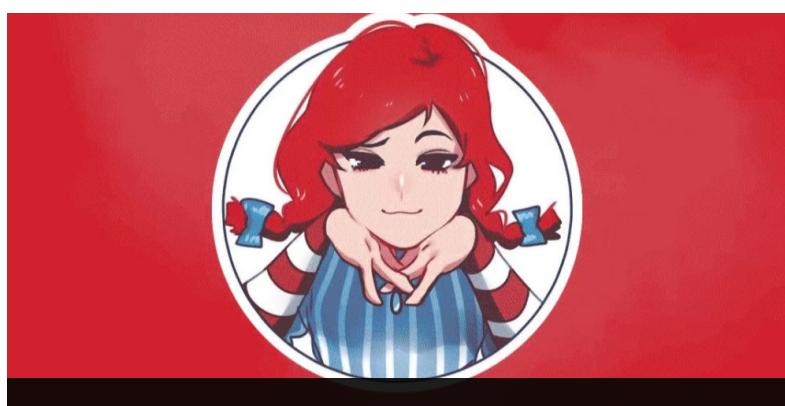
Warning: *I Love You, Colonel Sanders!* spoilers abound.

If you had told me a decade ago that KFC would in 2019 release a dating simulator parody game where you can romance Colonel Sanders, I wouldn't have believed you, but here we are. *I Love You, Colonel Sanders! A Finger Lickin' Good Dating Simulator* is a real game that exists. And actually, I was only 8 back then, so I would've had no idea what you were talking about, but hypothetical scenario continuity issues aside, it is quite the unexpected occurrence. But occur it did! KFC, a massive mainstream American fast food restaurant chain released a dating sim game. Ahahaha! Even after playing the game, I still find it hard to believe. And it's a great game too! I loved the 4 or so hours it took me to complete it. So today I wanna talk about why I liked the game and what its existence means in the bigger picture.

While I did enjoy the game, that was only because I came at it from the correct perspective. If you go in wanting an actual dating sim game that takes itself seriously, then you're going to be left disappointed. I mean you can only romance one person! However, if you see the game for what it is: a memey dating sim parody game that exists (mostly) just to advertise KFC, then you'll have a great time—just like I did! Especially since genuine hard work went into this game. The developers clearly respected the project and took it seriously—even though

it's basically just a weird ad—and that's plain to see within the first minute: *ILYCS!*'s opening is graphically and aurally stunning with wonderful animation and a catchy song as it introduces the game's cast. As for the rest of the game, *ILYCS!*'s artwork stands out as being amazing, especially the spritework. I just love Miriam and her cute self. The music's great too. As for the writing, it's quite memey but also pretty great. The game's humor isn't the most highbrow, but it's definitely consistently funny. I was also pleasantly surprised that the game isn't a cakewalk and is actually somewhat challenging. I even had to reload a few times to win and get the best ending. Lastly, when it comes to options, *ILYCS!* is pretty standard with volume balancing and window size settings, but it also has a fast-forward button for dialogue, and that was much appreciated by my completionist self.

Fun meme gameplay aside, though, there's another reason why I enjoyed *ILYCS!* so much: because of what it represents culturally. Being a weeb is becoming more and more socially acceptable, and I love it! In just the last few decades, the stigma around nerds has gone from suffocating to barely being a thing, and I can't wait until it doesn't exist at all! Tons of mainstream entities

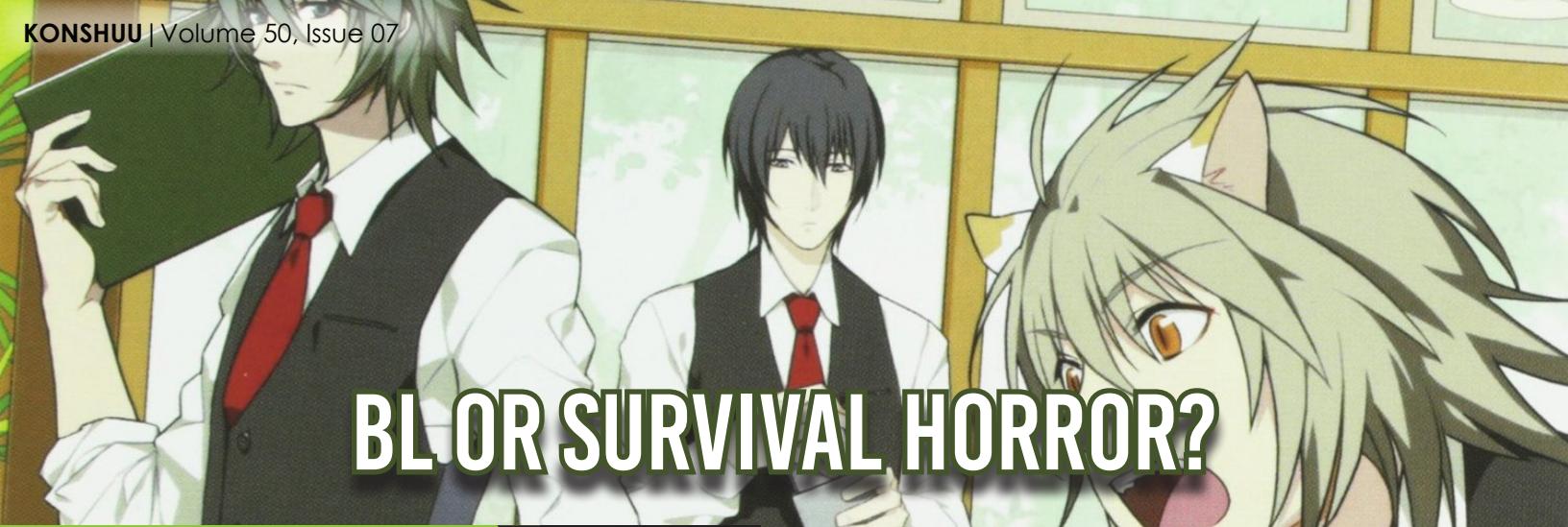


100% canon, baby!

are coming out as anime fans, from fast food companies like Arby's with their constant cardboard-food designs and Wendy's with anime Wendy and now KFC with this game to celebrities like Kim Kardashian with her Zero-Two-inspired pink hair and Michael B. Jordan saying *Naruto: Shippuden* is his favorite anime to countless pro athletes doing *Dragon Ball Z*-inspired celebratory dances. Because of the internet, we're living in a different time than even just a few years ago, and I'm sure where we'll go from here will be even better!



Tell me she isn't the purest cinnamon bun you've ever seen.
You can't!



BL OR SURVIVAL HORROR?

RACHEL MIN

1ST YEAR, INTENDED COMPUTER SCIENCE

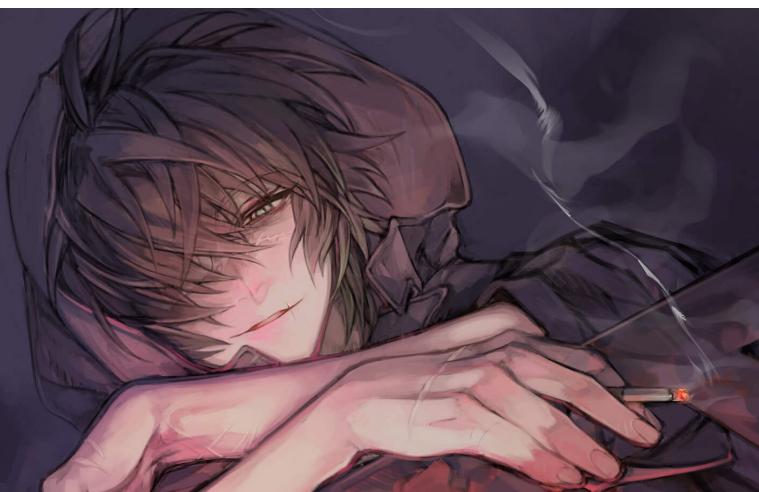
STAFF WRITER

I've never played sweet pool before

Nitro+Chiral claims to be a company that produces BL visual novels. To this date, they've released four main titles, their most famous titles being *Togainu no Chi* and *DRAMAtical Murder*.

You may recognize Nitro+Chiral by its parent company, nitro+. nitro+ has created many famous titles such as *Steins;Gate* and *Chaos;Head* and has also had a hand in creating titles such as *Madoka Magica*.

You may also recognize nitro+'s penchant for adding edge and horror to their franchises while luring people in with promises of cute characters. Nitro+Chiral stays true to their parent company.



Most of Nitro+Chiral's VNs have relatively benign plots. *Togainu no Chi* follows a guy named Akira as he is forced to participate in a competition to avoid being arrested. The protagonist of *DRAMAtical Murder*, Aoba, fights his way into the city of the bourgeoisie, so he can bring down an evil corporation. But the plot is obviously not the main focus of these VNs. Like every other BL VN, the main objective is to successfully romance a character and live happily ever after.

Or at least that's what Nitro+Chiral wants you to think.

The real objective is to avoid getting brutally tortured and/or murdered. These aren't BL VNs, they're survival horror games.

Togainu no Chi and *DRAMAtical Murder* are riddled with death traps. Bad ends could mean anything from getting brutally slashed, stabbed, decapitated, amputated, amongst other things. One end even sends you into an eternal blood hell. One would normally play VNs thinking "How do I romance my favorite character?", but with the Nitro+Chiral titles, there's the added question of "How do I survive?"

And then there's *sweet pool*, in which Nitro+Chiral seems to have briefly forgotten that they weren't actually supposed to be making a survival horror game. At first glance, *sweet pool* has the makings of a stereotypical VN—a school setting, a childhood friend, etc—but within the first few scenes, *sweet pool* bolts off in a direction nobody imagined it could go. Suddenly, the main character starts hallucinating scenes out of some hellscape, water starts turning into blood, and gore starts dropping out of nowhere.

Long gone are those days where failing a romance route ends in simple heartbreak. In the eyes of Nitro+Chiral, failing to fall in love is the end, the annihilation of all the hope and joy in the protagonist's life. You fall in love, not for the sake of falling in love, but for the sake of not being wiped from the face of the earth. The heart-warming and sexy scenes granted for surviving the VN are simply incentives.

Fact: Japan's visual novel market is huge. Are Nitro+Chiral and nitro+ trying to tap into the VN market by adding romance to their survival horror games and marketing it as a BL VN? Does Nitro+Chiral just want to be a company that produces edgy BL VNs with intense horror elements? Am I reading too much into this?

Whatever Nitro+Chiral's intentions are, it seems to be working seeing as they're profiting enough to release another visual novel next year. By the looks of it, it's another survival horror game.



THE GIRL THAT MADE ME 25% STRAIGHT IS THE OTOME GAME'S MC?! THE ANATOMY OF ANEZAKI NOZOMI



MARC CASTILLO

4TH YEAR, MICROBIAL BIOLOGY

LAYOUT EDITOR

I used my Layout Editor powers to make this issue possible

I consider myself a veteran among the niche and battered Otome Game community—joining failed localization kickstarters, crying in the face of warped CGs because the company used all their money on VAs and spending tons of money on games split in three when it could have been just sold as one—yep, all those good stuff.

As masochistic as I seem maybe, I never expected that my favorite otome game would be a free doujin game of all things. *Watashi no Real wa Juujitsu Shisugiteiru* which roughly translates to “My offline life is working out way too well” is a free doujin game released by Tetroscope that seem to defy the laws of even paid Otome games. Let me just describe how impossibly good this game is: it has a gorgeous animated opening song, amazing storyline that never seem inflated for the sake of padding time, CGs that would make Otomate cry, a unique soundtrack and a cast of well-rounded characters—all these created by a two-man team kaiso and ne-on.

moving on to the titular character of this series is the main protagonist, Anezaki Nozomi. Nozomi is a seemingly perfect 2nd year student who has excellent grades, beloved by her peers and voted as the vice-president of the student council. However, once at home, Nozomi removes her Umaru-chan disguise and dons her “No more 3d” shirt and with a PSP on hand, proceeds to romance her 2d boyfriend “Walt-sama.” While other games claim that their superior husbands are what makes their series iconic, the hilarious internal dialogue of Nozomi is the bread and butter of this series. Spewing out such iconic lines such as “3D boys are unburnable trash,” “The best defense against a yandere is an LCD screen” and “Don’t underestimate the girl that graduated high school 200 times (in otome games),” Nozomi is a sage that every jaded otome gamer should follow. By the end of the series, Nozomi feels like the funny and quirky friend in your friend group that just the sheer act of conjuring memories of her will make you laugh to high heaven.

However, it's not just her personality that is endearing to me. Nozomi has an assortment of cute clothes that ranges from pure and natural to chic and cool (in fact, she has 13 unique clothing sprites). It definitely adds to the charm if your MC is trendy and follows the Korean 10-step beauty routine (yup, she also has a sprite with face mask on).



What hit me the most was how relatable Nozomi's past was, as she was also never the trendy kid in class before high school. I played this game during my sophomore year HS, aka my “Dark ages” when I wore the same hoodie-to-class everyday and was an out-and-out weeb. Watching someone similar to me like Nozomi who changed herself from an ugly duckling into a social butterfly gave me the courage to change myself little by little. I cannot stress how much Nozomi has helped me bring myself back up during my high school blues.

So yeah, I wouldn't mind being straight for Nozomi. She was my role model and my long-distance friend that I never had. I do hope more people will want to play this game—I mean, it's free



EDITOR PICKS: FAVORITE OTOME GAMES

BROUGHT TO YOU BY: MARC CASTILLO



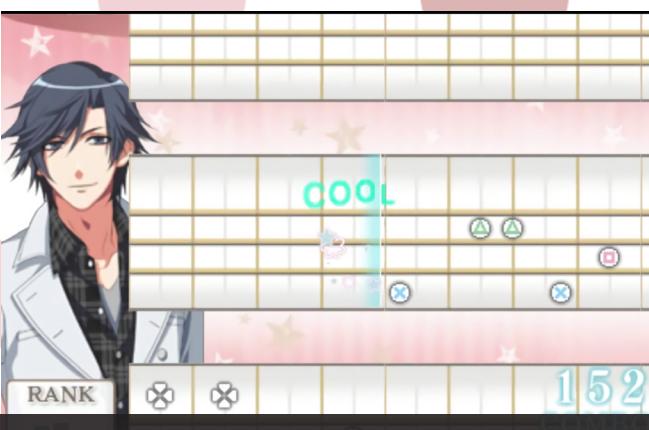
Tokimeki Memorial Girl's Side: ~3rd Story~ (DS/PSP)

Oh~ the great *TokiMemo* series, the progenitor and trailblazer for many visual novels. *TMGS3* is the third installment in the *TMGS* series set in the legendary Habataki High School. As tradition from the *TokiMemo* series, the story starts by recounting a local legend about star-crossed lovers that through the power of a certain magical jinx, in this case, the primrose by the old church, were able to reunite and proclaim their eternal love. You, the protagonist, moves back to town and transfers to Habataki High School where you meet various colorful characters, such as your two delinquent childhood friends, the troubled piano prodigy, the reliable student council president, and many more. Unlike modern otome games, *TMGS3* returns to the otome game roots with its RPG-esque stat grinding with minimal choice selection (Yes, Otome games were originally RPG-like: see *Angelique*). What makes *TMGS3* unique is that you feel the actual progression of time as a high school student as you navigate through seasonal school events such as cultural festivals and summer breaks. At some point, I was just having fun living as a high school student with my two cute girlfriends that I almost broke up with one of the capture targets. I actually felt a sense of emptiness once I finished this game, akin to graduating from HS, as I did learn to love dearly all the characters.



Shinigami to Shoujo (PSP/PSV)

I like to call this game: "the most light novel-like, otome game." Story-wise, this is probably the strongest and most compelling otome game I've played. *Shinigami to Shoujo* features the tragically beautiful and sickly Tohno Sayo, who for some unknown reason, has been living alone with his older brother, who is a children's story writer, for some number of years. One evening after school, she meets a mysterious foreigner who calls himself a "shinigami." Reminiscent of her brother's picture book, the "shinigami" is set on finding the "most beautiful word that exists" in order to become a true death god. Each of the capture targets deals with their lack of this "beautiful word" and learns to accept this void to create a new identity for themselves. The game is less about the romance but more focused on the mysteries shrouding the town, for example, who is the mysterious shinigami that appeared before Sayo? Why is Sayo sick in the first place? And why can't anyone see Sayo's brother except for her despite him being a well-known author? I recommend this game for people who like mystery with a huge payout after finishing the whole game.



Uta no Prince-sama! (PSP/PSV/Switch)

Yeah this game is mediocre at best, but Nanami Haruka does not deserve the M*ry Sue discourse all the time. She is a strong, independent woman who learned how to play the piano and create music by herself and she doesn't need no man in her life. You see her life's ups and downs and the frustration of not being good enough that all of us can relate to. Let her be an independent career woman Broccoli!

Also, imagine a man who is tone deaf playing this rhythm game where you need to get an A or above score to get the best end--needless to say, I cried so much not because the plot was great (it was bad), but because the rhythm game was hell.

STAFF PICKS: FAVORITE VISUAL NOVELS

Camp Buddy



Shao-Lon Yeh

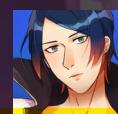


Camp Buddy is about wholesome friendship and making the best memories possible with the people that you love. <3

Hatoful Boyfriend



Elliot Lu



Zero Escape: Zero Time Dilemma



Alexus Lopez



Cute robots. Sexy anime boys AND girls. COOL puzzles. The premises of the ZE series are super interesting and the pseudoscience works for me more than most games.

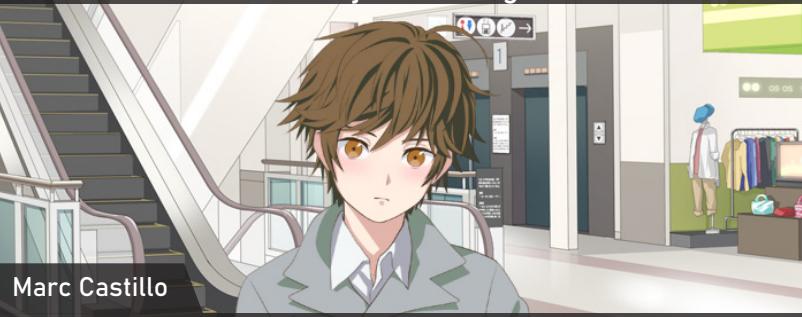
9 Hours 9 Persons 9 Doors



Athena Chen



Watashi no Real wa Juujitsu Shisugiteiru



Marc Castillo



Already talked about why I love this game in the past article so husbando analysis time. Anesaki Shun is best boi. I mean, he won the character popularity poll so I know what I'm saying. Anyway, Shun is a domestic husband that can cook, can take care of you when you're sick and can even be your personal hairdresser. Did I say that he can also do makeup? He is also a top-tier self-aware tsundere that makes you melt whenever he blushes.

HuniePop



Neil Frydental



HuniePop's match-3 system—which has a surprising amount of depth—is insanely fun quite addictive, and on top of that, it's a dating sim game where you get to date your choice of 12 amazing women, from the blue-skinned alien best girl to a cute as hell tsundere queen. How could you not love this game?

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SHUU IWAMINE
Hatoful Boyfriend
Art by Elliot Lu

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