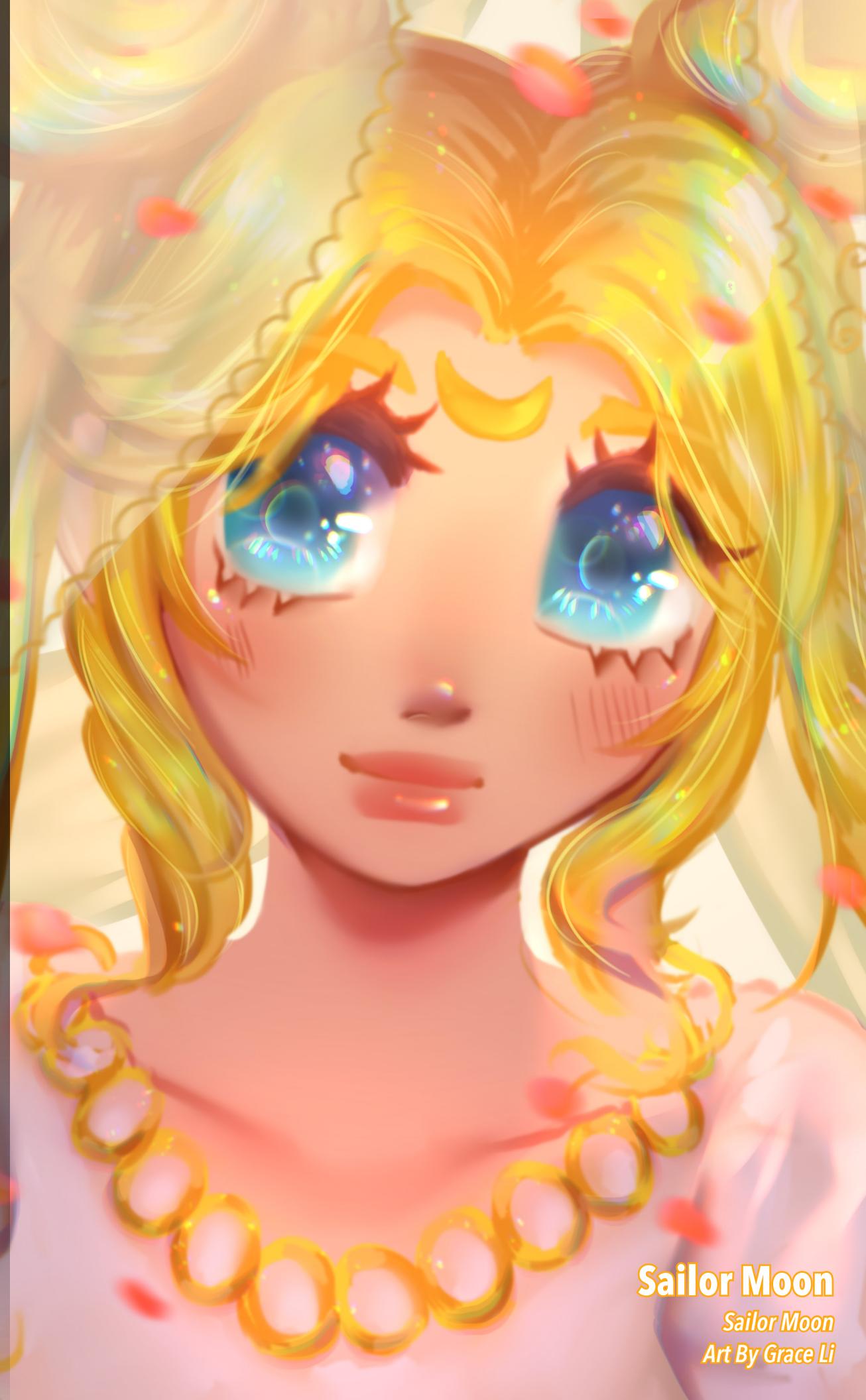


KONSHUU

First Anime

vol. 52 #3



Sailor Moon
Sailor Moon
Art By Grace Li

THE PURSUIT OF UNDERSTANDING



NICHOLAS WONOSAPUTRA

2nd Year, Intended MCB Neurobiology

To the beginning

Writer

SPOILERS FOR BLEACH & OREGAIRU

I don't remember when I first heard of "anime," but I do know that I was made aware of the fact that there was a specific type of cartoon with a common visual aesthetic and place of origin (Japan) all the way back when I was still finishing elementary school. Back then, I had a few friends that were big fans of shounen anime, and I'd hear them mention shows like *Dragon Ball* and *Bleach*.



Finally, one night I noticed that Toonami was airing an episode of *Bleach*, so, in an attempt to see what that "anime" stuff was, I gave it a watch. I then witnessed two men with bare chests, loose robes, and contorted masks stare each other down while holding their ridiculously enormous swords in the middle of a white void. To my 10-year-old self, that scene was off-putting because it felt like the show was trying way too hard to make cartoons mature, and lacked the comedic aspects and versatile character designs of western cartoons.

As a big fan of *Hot Wheels: Acceleracers* and having watched a couple of episodes of *Naruto* and *Avatar: the Last Airbender*, I had already seen shows that succeeded in balancing comedy and mature themes, even if I had trouble fully grasping those themes at the time.

Now, I'd like to point out that my current self recognizes *Naruto* and *Avatar* as anime, but my younger self understood those

shows to be cartoons due to their cuter and more malleable character designs. Nowadays, I also don't have the same problems with *Bleach*, as part of my confusion at the time stemmed from having no idea that shows with narrative continuity even existed and that I lacked the context to understand it.

Regardless, as a kid, my impression of anime was that it was all just edgy teenage boy power fantasies. Ones that I had no interest in.

However, that all changed during a trip to Indonesia, where my almost-13-year-old self was mesmerized by three shows: *Inazuma Eleven*, *Oregairu*, and *Terror in Resonance*.

I could write multiple articles on each of these shows, but I only need one word to rationalize my fascination: Understanding.

I watched *Inazuma Eleven* with my younger brother, as it's a show that's targeted towards kids, and has a similar visual aesthetic to *Pokémon*. Despite its bubbly exterior, it was my first exposure to a show with narrative continuity, and I realized that shows like this have ample time to explore character arcs, giving the audience a chance to become invested in understanding characters.



I watched the tennis episode of *Oregairu*, and despite the lack of English subtitles, I recognized its tonal consistency, vibrant colors and grounded characters. Later, I found that it was a story all about the pursuit of a genuine relationship founded upon understanding one another.

The nail in the coffin was a single ad of *Terror in Resonance* that I saw at my cousin's house. Its color palette was drab yet exciting, and the spray painted word, "VON" stayed in my head all the way back home, and I desperately searched for some way, any way, to watch this show. I wanted to understand these characters. I wanted to watch anime.

A TRIGGERED LOVE



MITCHELL MADAYAG

1st Year, Undeclared

Dub = Sub

Writer

October 2015, on an undesirably cold afternoon in the city of Davis, California, a young naive me was “busy” procrastinating from doing my mundane 8th grade English essay. Scrolling through various Team Fortress 2 YouTube videos on my outdated iPhone 4, I noticed a very...risqué thumbnail in my list of recommended videos. The thumbnail in question consisted of two cartoonish females in revealing outfits wielding what seemed to be halves of a scissors, a sight that’s bound to catch the attention of any pubescent boy. Not even bothering to read the title, I curiously clicked on the video to see an epic fight I’ll never forget. How these girls were able to trade blows and wear skimpy clothes while sustaining little damage was a mystery to me, but it was exhilarating. Upon finishing the video, I felt this need to watch more of this sexy actiony goodness. I looked in the description and found the show’s name: *Kill la Kill*.

The YouTube algorithm, as mysterious as it is, had blessed me (or cursed depending on how you look at it) with the spark that would ignite my burning passion for weeb culture (very cliche, I know). I’ve avidly watched *Beyblade*, *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, and *Pokémon* before, but it never occurred to me then that these cartoons were originally produced in Japan. I did some research and found out that these types of shows are called



“anime.” Further research brought me to a certain sketchy site starting with a “K” that had the full season of *Kill la Kill* I was looking for.

Kill la Kill honestly went beyond my expectations and in hindsight, was a great “real” anime to start with. I didn’t know at the time, but the show prided itself on parodying general anime stereotypes from the scandalous clothing to the “never before seen” revenge plot, meaning that future animes I would watch would be somewhat similar to *Kill la Kill*, albeit in a less exaggerated way. Also, the way the visuals occasionally broke from detailed and flashy to simple and goofy, especially during best girl Mako Mankanshoku’s hallelujah moments, had a nice resemblance to the kid cartoons and Americanized anime I had grown up with previously. Ironically though, the anime did often reuse shots and animation as seen in said kid cartoons and anime, but it wasn’t something I noticed when I first watched it.



I guess I was able to become the avid anime fan I am today after first discovering the greatness of *Kill la Kill* through general internet surfing. You could even say *Kill la Kill* was the Trigger for this love of weeb culture. I later went on to see *Dragon Ball Z*, *JoJo’s Bizarre Adventure* and the even more bizarre *Bobobo-bo Bo-bobo*. I rarely rewatch anime shows, including some of my all time favorites, but *Kill la Kill* is an exception that I’m always down to binge and relive all the lovable gags, fanservice, and action. Don’t lose your way, *Kill la Kill*.

YAOI IS THE ONLY THING I REMEMBER ABOUT OWARI NO SERAPH



ERIK NELSON

3rd Year, Mathematics and Music

I have a Mika body pillow

Writer

MENTIONS OF BL SPOILERS FOR OWARI NO SERAPH

This is how I discovered anime: I was in high school, and one day I was sitting next to a girl in Mandarin class. She was drawing some anime guy in a white cape. I thought anime was stupid, but I thought the design was cool, so I asked her what it was. She said it was Mika from *Owari no Seraph*. I doubted I would actually watch it, because after all, anime was stupid. That weekend I went home and somehow remembered what *Owari no Seraph* was and watched a horrible pitch shifted version on YouTube. Somehow I actually liked it and watched the whole thing. I instantly became a weeb and fell in love with the show. The opening and ending are still favorites to this day. I also fell hard for Mika. He's beautiful and I love him, he'll always be my one and only anime husband. Him and Yuu are a perfect match though, I'm jealous of Yuu, but they're together (almost canonically even), and nothing can change that. Mika will always be someone to be admired from a distance. Mika and Yuu together will always be admired from the 3-dimen-

sional world, as a 2D projection of a platonic ideal. This brings me to why I remember *Owari no Seraph* at all, other than it being my first anime.

Upon an attempted rewatch, I realize *Owari no Seraph* is pretty boring, generic, and cringy. There's nothing outstanding about it except music, background art, and Mika. Shinoa is the only character besides Mika who's not annoying and cringy, but she's not particularly memorable. I don't know how in the world I was obsessed with this show for years. Actually, I do, since all I (or I daresay most people, maybe I'm wrong though) cared about was MikaYuu. It's such a wholesome ship though. For anyone who hasn't seen the show, the main character is Yuichiro Hyakuya, and the other main character is Mikaela Hyakuya. They were both children at the Hyakuya orphanage. There was a sudden apocalypse caused by a virus which killed everyone over the age of 13. Then vampires took over. Yeah it's a really convenient almost unbelievably cringy premise, but anyway, the entire orphanage along with the rest of society is enslaved by vampires, who use them as "livestock" for blood. Yuu and Mika plan an escape with the rest of the orphanage. They make their escape and everyone except Yuu is brutally murdered by a vampire, Ferid Bathory. Yuu escapes and joins a demon army to get revenge on vampires. Mika is turned into a vampire. They find out about their existence later on, and vow to find each other.

This sets up their "romance," which is in quotes since it's not confirmed but strongly hinted at/baited. They're soldiers on two sides of a conflict wishing to be reunited with their childhood friend/love. The ambiguity in their relationship is actually quite interesting. It could be seen as the mangaka being a



His aesthetic and essence of being still speaks to me to this day



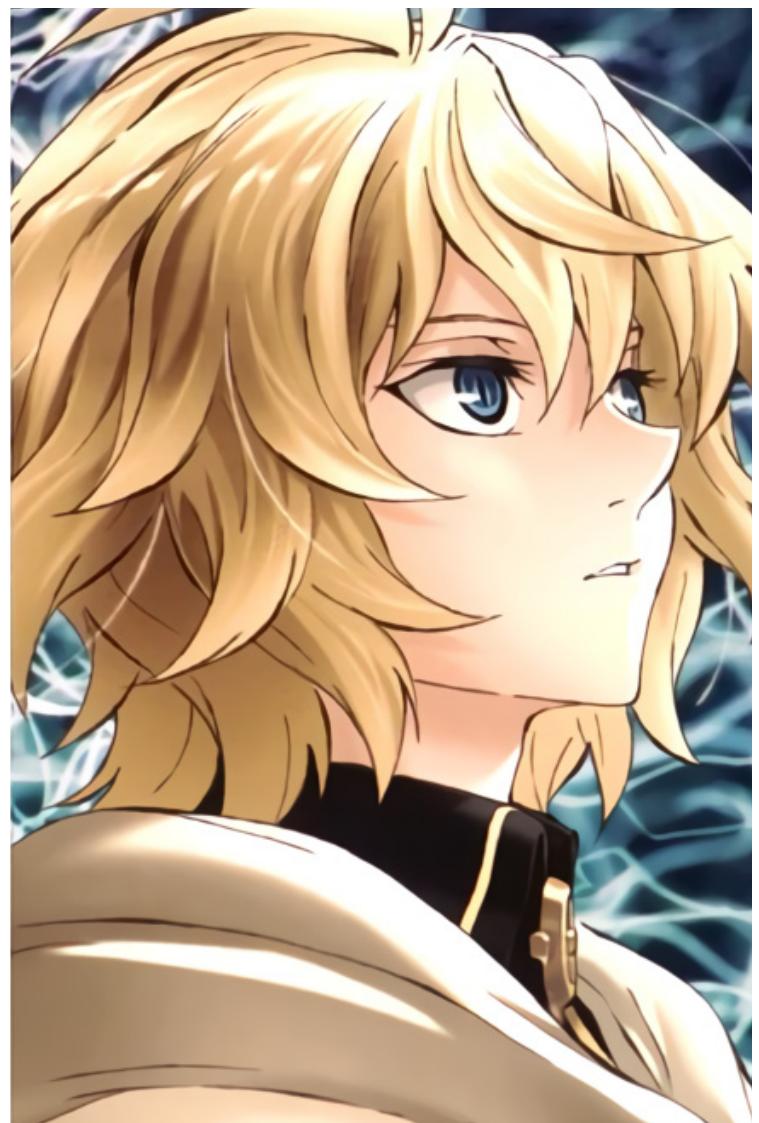
typical mangaka and refusing to confirm relationship status, or even being afraid of having a gay relationship in a shonen manga. However, whatever the case may be doesn't actually matter to my analysis. To me the lack of clear canonizing of their relationship presents an interesting philosophical problem. In a recent chapter of the manga (I don't read it, I just read the wiki summary), Mika told Yuu "I love you," before dying (?) (spoiler alert) but their relationship is still not confirmed, since they are "family" after all, even if adopted. It could be familial love, or love between good friends. They hug, hold hands, and are obviously extremely close and "love" each other very much. But this is also true of, for example, Frodo and Sam from *Lord of the Rings*, who aren't romantically attracted to each other but are simply very good friends. So the question is, where does romantic love begin and other forms of love end? I think the only answer is, each person in the relationship knows, but to outsiders it could be confusing. But sometimes the people themselves don't even know. Also, there are cultural forces that influence these relationships. But here are some interesting questions: If Mika and Yuu kissed would that confirm their relationship? Would introducing sexuality into their relationship make it "officially a romantic relationship?" Would this imply that romantic relationships must have sexuality as a part of them? This conclusion would be controversial. Are Mika and Yuu confused about their relationship, or do they know exactly what it is? If they are in a romantic relationship already, and they both know it (supposing the mangaka did not tell us), then this would show there can be non sexual romantic relationships.

Of great interest to me is the kind of emotions that draw people together into entanglement with each other. The psychological basis of Mika and Yuu's relationship seems to be some



sort of familial or platonic love, but this can also evolve, since they go through a lot together. I know different kinds of love have been a discussion in philosophy for thousands of years, and I've read about quite a bit of that, but boundary cases of categories are always interesting. Finally, a rhetorical question, why is the fanbase seemingly insistent that if their relationship were canonized, it must imply sexuality? That says about the society we live in.

This brings me to the appeal of Yaoi (for me) and why I have remembered Mika for so long. It presents an idealized and simplified version of what a romantic relationship would be like. Only one aspect, the connection between the two people, is focused on. This is the "purest" form of love, transcending reality and biology and sexuality and such things. However, this isn't realistic and should be only treated as a philosophical idealization of a certain idea. Or else you'll look cringe in real life with a body pillow trying to marry it.



I still love Mika and what he represents, but I'm 3D, he's 2D, we were never meant to be together. His 2-dimensional form will always be part of me, but I must subsume it and face the 3-dimensional world around me.

A DARK(ER) BEGINNING



NEIL FRYDENDAL

2nd Year, Undeclared

Live by the dub, die by the dub.

Writer

As a child, I grew up watching *Pokémon*, *Yu-Gi-Oh! 5D's*, and *Dragon Ball Z Kai* and *GT*, but I had no idea they were foreign—I just saw them as other cartoons, so they don't count. My introduction to anime came in 6th grade when I took a Japanese class for the first time and learned about the medium. At the same time, my now best friend told me there was this anime called *Darker than Black* that she just loved and wanted me to see, so I watched it, and boy, what an anime to mark my descent into weebdom with!

Darker than Black is a sci-fi action anime that follows protagonist Hei as he takes on missions for the mysterious organization called the Syndicate. These missions often revolve around special individuals called Contractors, of which Hei is one himself. In exchange for the loss of their emotions, which makes them coldly logical, Contractors are granted a superpower. In addition, every time they use their power, they must pay some price, hence the name 'Contractor'. These contract payments can range from as simple as smoking a cigarette to as serious as having to self-harm. The various Contractors that Hei encounters—the best of whom is definitely the absolutely based November 11—with their varied powers and contract payments, make the show continuously engaging and fresh.



Fortunately for Hei, though, he doesn't have to deal with all of these Contractors on his own. The water medium Yin, the body-swapping Contractor Mao, and the crafty but only human Huang are Syndicate coworkers of his that often help him out



on missions and greatly spice up the dynamics of the show. Additionally, it's not like the Syndicate is the only shady organization in town. There are lots of different teams and conflicting interests and it's super fun to watch everything play out. What are the Syndicate's goals? What are Hei's? What exactly are Contractors? The show slowly explores these questions while having various smaller arcs, and then in the end it all comes together, making for quite the enthralling watch.



As for the 2nd season, *Gemini of the Meteor*, it has its issues, including sidelining multiple previously important characters and a pretty ambiguous ending I wasn't a huge fan of, but in the end it's certainly worth the watch to continue the story. Additionally, 4 OVA episodes, *Darker than Black: Origins*, aired after and bridge the gap between the 2 seasons, bringing the series up to a total of 42 episodes. Not the shortest anime, but certainly not too long either. Great for a beginner. Great for anyone.

I'm sure some people don't even remember their first anime, but *Darker than Black* has always stuck with me over the years. That's partly because it's just a good show, but it's also because it was novel for me. It has nothing to do with it being an anime, but I hadn't really watched such a serious show before. A show where there were real stakes and characters actually died. A show where things sometimes ended with a sad conclusion. A show that had a pretty complex plot where I really had to pay attention to understand everything that was going on. It was a great experience for me and made me want to watch more anime and more adult shows, so it'll always have a special place in my heart. Definitely check out *Darker than Black* if you haven't already seen it already.

Staff Picks: FIRST ANIME

SPIRITED AWAY



ATHENA CHEN

OWARI NO SERAPH



ERIK NELSON

KILL LA KILL



MITCHELL MADAYAG

TERROR IN RESONANCE



NICK WONOSAPUTRA

KATEKYO HITMAN REBORN!



SOPHIA XUE

FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST:BROTHERHOOD



MIRANDA ZHANG

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Aphrodite
Cyberteam in Akihabara
Art By Tammy Lee

