



Ai Enma
Hell Girl
Art By Jen Zhao

KONSHUU

vol. 54 #4
Psychological Horror





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Weiss Schwarz
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The Seven Deadly Sins

GENSHIN IMPACT

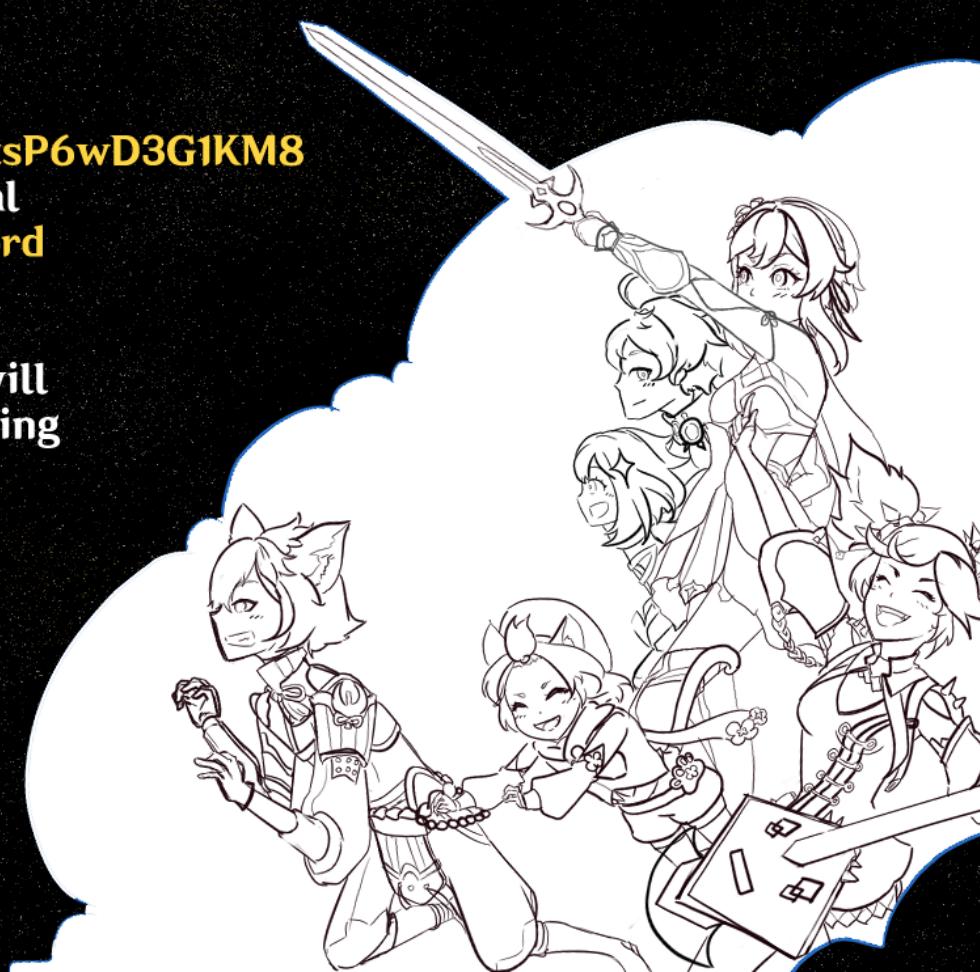
STORY QUEST CHALLENGE

- ★ Watch how the story begins and the latest submission.
 - ★ Make your own response clip to continue the story with any format:
 - +IN-Game clip
 - +short animation
 - +cosplay
 - +meme
 - ★ Submit your clip to <https://forms.gle/2Vt68tsP6wD3G1KM8> to be added to the official timeline in the CAA Discord #caa-challenges
- Submissions and prizes will be revealed in the upcoming Anime Destiny, Nov. 7th!

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+ MYSTERY PRIZES

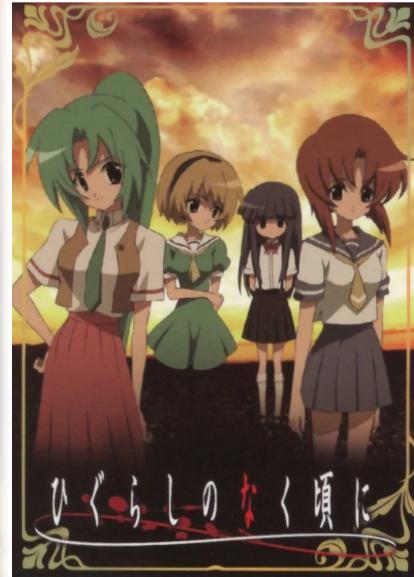


THIS MONTH'S FEATURED SERIES!

ANIME RECOMMENDATION

HIGURASHI NO NAKU KORO NI (WHEN THEY CRY)

Higurashi no Naku Koro ni presents a time-looping horror series wherein the anxiety derived comes not from whether or not something will happen, but rather how it happens. The second season, *Higurashi no Naku Koro ni Kai*, twists the events into an incredibly compelling narrative about ending said loop. As a whole, one of the better horror anime series out there.



2006-07, Studio DEEN
Directed by Kon Chiaki
26 episodes (s1), 24 episodes (s2)

ANIME RECOMMENDATION

BOOGIEPOP WA WARAWANAI BOOGIEPOP PHANTOM

With a distinctly dark atmosphere, *Phantom* features episodes which may initially seem episodic, but eventually weave into a cohesive point. Tonally reminiscent of works such as *Paranoia Agent* and *Serial Experiments Lain*, yet narratively tying into its namesake novel series, *Boogiewoman* is a particularly unique piece of animated media.

2000, Madhouse
Directed by Watanabe Takashi
12 episodes





WHY YOU SHOULD BE A HIKIKOMORI



KEV WANG

2nd Year, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science

"I am the wisest man alive, for I know one thing, and that is that I know nothing." - Plato

Writer

MILD SPOILERS FOR WELCOME TO THE NHK

In order to get the full experience of watching *Welcome to the NHK*, I became a hikikomori. I holed myself up inside my apartment, ate unhealthy instant food, stayed up to ungodly hours playing video games and watching anime, and even skipped classes to really experience being a true NEET. After going through all of this, I can positively conclude that everyone should be a hikikomori.

Being a hikikomori, first of all, is more a mentality than any set of actions. It requires an immense amount of willpower and self-discipline. There's nothing stopping you from opening your door, walking out, and being a productive member of society, yet, a hikikomori is able to stay put. But if you are an aspiring shut-in, don't be discouraged! It's a tough habit to form, but it gets easier the more you do it. Before you realize, the unhealthy living and constant screen-time will turn your mind into sludge, the shame of letting down everyone around you will be replaced by utter lethargy and indifference, and you'll be so uncomfortable with the idea of being around other, real humans that the possibility of going outside is completely out of consideration.

"But Kev," you may (ignorantly) ask, "why in the world would you want to be a hikikomori?" The answer to that is simple: the world outside is cruel. In the show, as the main character Sato goes through his journey to escape from hikikomori-ism, his experi-



ences reaffirm the one truth that he knew all along: humans suck. You can put in effort to work and improve your life, but for what? People will still laugh at you behind your back. The happy illusion of friends on the internet will still dissolve when you discover that the cute catgirl you met is actually your male otaku neighbor. Women (and men!) will pull you in, tempt you, deceive you with kindness and the illusion of emotional connection, then abandon you in one fell swoop.

I think that Sato's fundamental error is assuming that the NHK was trying to hurt him. If there really was a secret organization that was specifically trying to keep me indoors, alone, I would be glad for their service. They would be doing a social and moral good. By encouraging humanity to interact online, with anonymity and the ability to be whoever they want, life would be so much easier, so much more painless. Human conflict could be reduced to harmless rants on public forums, friends could be made from across the world, and enemies from next door could be avoided with just a few clicks. On the internet, you don't have to scamper across the street to avoid making eye contact with the girl you got rejected from last weekend, you can just block and unfollow her. In a utilitarian sense, this is absolutely maximizing happiness.

But, if all of that is true, why does it sting so much when you see others having fun? Why is it so gratifying to cry along with Misaki, devastated by the realization that she almost lost Sato? Why is the pull of passions and aspirations so strong, when the future is uncertain? Why do we seek genuine human connection when we know that someone will get hurt along the way? I don't know, but there's something fundamentally human about opening that door and facing the harsh sunlight. So now that you have no excuse to stay indoors, go out and live your best life. You owe it to yourself.





Isabella
The Promised Neverland
Art By Skylar Li

Skylar Li

UMINEKO NO NAKU KORO NI - AN EXERCISE IN STORYTELLING



MAX R.

3rd Year, Japanese

I sure hope you like spoilers.

Writer

gamemasters act as writers and are necessitated to avoid logic errors (inconsistencies), to which the cast then acts largely as chess pieces, actively manipulatable in composing each episode's storyline, just as characters would be to any writer. Meanwhile, witches' conceptual representations mirror various roles involved in both the creation and consumption of fiction; endless witches, powerful within their own realm, are akin to main characters and their influence within their narratives; voyagers (Bernkastel, Lambdadelta) on the other hand, migrating freely between multiverses to appease boredom, are comparable to readers drifting between different stories and possibilities, whereas creators (Featherine representing Ryukishi himself), demonstrating near omnipotence, are reminiscent of authors penning fiction. Only contributing to the self-awareness is the introduction of incarnations of Knox's (Knox) and Van Dine's (Will) commandments of mystery writing, their existence meant to provide structure and create nuance in both readers' and in-universe characters' theorycrafting while proving the series to still be, for the most part, a 'proper' mystery.

In the final episode, a major portion of the cast is besieged by a colossal swarm of theory goats who embody readers' perspectives and interpretations about previous chapters; the ensuing onslaught between the goats and main cast acknowledges many ideas that actual readers from an outside perspective of viewing the story may have conceived. Battler's conception of a happy conclusion is mutilated, its existence rattled under weight of other contradicting theories on part of said readers, threatening that the story be turned into an eternal chess board, truth forever concealed to be defaced by suppositions of onlookers. This goes hand in hand with Schrodinger's cat box, a paradoxical thought experiment pertaining to ideas of multiple valid truths existing concurrently with veiling of the definitive truth, that pervades the series in its entirety, making for an interesting exercise in storytelling as characters repeatedly dispute the cat box's (*Umineko*'s episodes') contents. A cat box is precisely what the series is, particularly in regards to the less-fortright and more open-ended kinetic novel, ultimately remaining a game board for readers to openly discuss their theories and rationale in a manner analogous to much of the series. Of course, the series tackles significantly more than anything I mention, but all of the aforementioned elements coalesce in a kaleidoscopic tapestry of metafiction woven from the threads of mystery, a maelstrom of a journey that overall makes for one of the most headache-inducing, yet worthwhile experiences I have had in either medium. It is something that I will most certainly revisit someday as there is undoubtedly plenty that I have missed and also much that I may never come to understand. I can confidently say though that **one does not regret reading *Umineko no Naku Koro ni*.**

STRUCTURAL SPOILERS FOR UMINEKO

The profound impact of my initial reading of Ryukishi07's *Umineko no Naku Koro ni* has, even years later, never faded from my mind. Albeit flawed and long-winded at a staggering 100-150 hours, I hold utmost respect for the series and recommend the original kinetic novel in conjunction with the manga as the optimal method of consumption (avoid the anime at all costs); they have their own strengths, the former being more detailed and including a soundtrack, whereas the latter is briefer and succeeds more on a visual front as a potentially more thrilling experience panel to panel while also adding extra content to tie off the final episode. All things considered, I regard *Umineko* as an essential reading for anyone seeking mystery and migraines.

I could describe the experience of consuming *Umineko* as a duel, both literally and in-series, between author and reader, as well as a mystery about mysteries that simultaneously contains many psychological horror and fantasy elements. The entire painstaking journey in search of truth: the process of carefully thinking through each and every detail, taking notes and determining plausibility for speculations is, in itself, a major cornerstone of *Umineko*. Ryukishi has tendencies to toy with his audience and deliberately eases readers in with lighter, even uplifting scenes, only to follow through with calculated backstabbing of them, all the while grinning in delight (at least that is how I envision him). This is coupled with continual unreliable narration, which often induces incorrect or incomplete conclusions, turning the reading process itself into a mind game. The initial conflict between Battler and Beatrice of whether each episode is 'solvable' through logical explanations parallels the dynamics present between the work and its readers, said readers either pushing themselves to challenge the series as a mystery or giving up and admitting to it being fantasy.

It also goes to say that *Umineko* is metafiction at its core, breaking the fourth wall and frequently having characters straight up debate plot details of previous chapters, contesting their own theories concerning the events of each. Logic and argumentation manifests as metaphysical blades of red, blue and golden truths used to oppose and conceptually deny the existence of others and their ideas. The gameboard, consisting of the events of each episode, very much resembles the process of writing;

PARANOIA AGENT: THE BAT, THE MASCOT, AND THE MUSHROOM CLOUD



BLAKE MORRISON

2nd Year, English and Japanese

But *what would you do* if Oski walked up to you and started whispering sweet nothings in your ear?

Writer

Knowing that *Paranoia Agent* is the only TV anime that Satoshi Kon ever directed, I had high hopes going into it. If you Satoshi Kon stan out there are already getting your pitchforks ready after reading that, then please rest at ease. I think *Paranoia Agent* accomplishes most everything it sets out to, but I just can't help but wish it set out to accomplish more. This anime gets weird, but I kept wanting it to get weirder. It gets dark, but I felt like it could always have gotten a little darker. It brings up psychological topics I find fascinating, such as defense mechanisms, the collective unconscious, and national trauma, but I'd argue it doesn't go far enough with them.

To explain how I got such lofty expectations for *Paranoia Agent* in the first place, let's take a close look at its opening. We press play, some psychedelic-yodeling-pop (?) song starts playing (the lyrics are about atomic mushroom clouds, natural disasters, the inevitable death and decay of all things, and living in blissful denial of all these horrors), and then we're shown a montage of the main characters laughing while they are either in the process of what looks like committing suicide or standing in the middle of desolate locations. There's even a shot of the lyrics' aforementioned atomic mushroom cloud near the end. The shared laughter of the characters in the face of (or denial of) these horrors makes for an unsettling first impression, serving as a microcosm of the show itself: a look into how personal psychosis ties into trauma on a social and even national scale... or so I thought until I finished the show.

You see, I had this expectation not only because of the opening but because *Paranoia Agent* employs a wide cast of characters, practically introduces a new one every episode, and for some episodes switches to an entirely new cast of characters that never appear again. Based on this breadth of character studies, I took *Paranoia Agent* to be less about the depth and development of individual characters and more about the social environment and patterns they make up. On the other hand, there's still a central plot that revolves around Sagi Tsukiko, the first victim of Shounen Bat, and Maniwa and Ikari, the two detectives who are charged with investigating her case. Since it's eventually revealed that Shounen Bat is actually Sagi Tsukiko's projection of her childhood trauma onto an imaginary assailant, it may be tempting to call her the central character that all the side characters revolve around, but Sagi herself only has around the same depth as any other character who serves as the focus of a given episode. Rather than a narrative center, Sagi feels more like a jumping off point for the characters that follow, and yet

SPOILERS FOR PARANOIA AGENT

Psychologically troubled characters, dark humour, some not so dark humour, a talking mascot character that's actually an in-universe mascot character that really shouldn't be talking, and a world that gets warped and twisted by the psychological troubles of the characters. These are the key ingredients that make up *Paranoia Agent*, the 2004 TV "psychological horror" anime directed by the late great Satoshi Kon. Though I wouldn't call *Paranoia Agent* a psychological horror. It's less of a horror and more of a thriller with dips into the surreal and avant garde. To recap, most of *Paranoia Agent*'s thirteen episodes are episodic stories tied into the mystery of the so-called Shounen Bat, a juvenile who goes around whacking psychologically distraught people with a baseball bat. These distraught people are our main characters, all of whom are unreliable narrators to others and or themselves. As it unfolds, the story seemingly delights in withholding straightforward answers to its mysteries, but the ending nonetheless ties things up quite neatly, but perhaps too neatly if you're anything like me. That said, if you haven't seen this show yet and this sounds like anything you may enjoy, please stop reading now and go watch it.



the show still attempts to tie up all the narrative threads with the resolution of her story. And even more galling, this show that has delighted in ambiguities, magical realism, and the unreliability of any given character, ends with an explanation of Sagi's trauma in the most reliably straightforward fashion possible: when she was a kid her dog died, it was her fault, she blamed it on a imaginary assailant, that assailant is Shounen Bat, and it's her acceptance of her guilt and grief at long last that destroys him. Roll credits. But that's not exactly how the show ends because if it was, I wouldn't have bothered to write this article. No, it ends with a hint at what I expected from the show all along: an exploration of individual trauma that extends to a social and national scale. To explain what I mean, I think it's best if I take you through the scene shot by shot. I encourage you to rewatch the scene after reading this.



In the show's final episode, fed by the anxieties and malaise of all the side characters and society at large, Shounen Bat turns into a gigantic Maromi, the talking in-universe mascot character, and then into a bulbous and swelling black mass that consumes everything around it (not unlike a certain scene from *Akira*). Once swept up in this current, Sagi returns to the scene of her past, to the death of her dog, the simple incident that served as a push for, if not exactly the cause of, the psychoses of all the other characters. Sagi then accepts responsibility for her dog's death, and we cut to a shot of Shounen Bat's shadow disappearing. We then cut to Sagi flipped upside down in the black current. The current then vanishes, releasing all the people it had swept up in its wake. We then cut to a montage of images of all the main characters obscured by rushing black lines at once evocative of the black current from before and also of interlaced vhs scan lines. Accompanying this rush of images is audio of the characters laughing that then accelerates until it all sounds and looks like a fast-forwarded vhs tape. A flash of white. Then a cut to blurred blackish greenish lines reminiscent of scanlines once again (watching this show on an old CRT television back when it first aired must have been an experience), and we realise this is a shot of the ocean only after the audio of lapping waves fades in and Sagi's body appears floating up from the frame's bottom. We cut to above water as



Sagi surfaces from the water. She opens her eyes. We cut to a POV shot of the sky above her. The moon is in its waning half phase. We cut to a wide shot of Sagi floating in the ocean with the city skyline on the horizon, smoking from the devastation of the black mass that just tore through it. We then cut to Ikari, the older detective, resurfacing from the subway onto the ruined city streets littered with unconscious pedestrians, trashed vehicles, uprooted buildings, and shattered streets. He remarks, "It's just like after the war."

"Yeah," I said while watching, "It really is, but where the hell is that mushroom cloud from the opening? Did Satoshi Kon really chicken out at the last moment?" My earlier comparison of Shounen Bat's transformation into a distended black mass to *Akira*'s famous Tetsuo mutation scene wasn't based on visual similarity alone. Many anime show us visions of the apocalypse, and many of these visions are rooted in the nuclear destruction that only Japanese society has ever experienced. Perhaps this horrific history is why so many anime deal with the apocalypse, why we have gotten so many visions of it in anime such as *Akira*, *The End of Evangelion*, and even in a Miyazaki work with *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind*. But it is only in this near final scene of *Paranoia Agent* that we get a hint about how the chaos of this show is "it's just like after the war," about how Japan's national trauma of nuclear annihilation may have ingrained itself so deeply in the society's psyche that manga and anime and all otaku culture could even be considered a coping mechanism for that senseless slaughter borne out of the flash before the mushroom cloud. This is what *Paranoia Agent* could have touched upon with just a little more courage, this is the Pandora's box it nudges at but never opens up. Some might prefer such subject matter to remain an undertone and not the subject of exploration in their anime, but I disagree. If only *Paranoia Agent* did not end here but then plunged into the depths of this true psychological horror, except it's more fundamental than even that. It's the naked and panting and clawing horror that we could all be annihilated in a white hot millisecond of atomic death.

But hey, isn't Maromi cute?

THE CONTRASTING YET FASCINATING DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS OF GX



TONY T.

2nd Year, Intended Economics and Data Science

Whatever happened to all the NEX cards?

Writer

I don't hold much nostalgic reverence for *Yu Gi Oh! Duel Monsters*. At best, I consider it a cheesy mediocre battle shounen heavily shilling a popular card game. At worst, it is utterly boring, with filler arcs literally interrupting serious canon storylines halfway through with tangentially related material. Moreover, the protagonist is incredibly uncompelling and goes through very little development, with almost every major conflict happening when he is possessed by a completely separate character. It may be because it was before my time, but *Yu Gi Oh! Duel Monsters* is an incredibly lacking piece of media to me.

In complete contrast, I view *Yu Gi Oh! Duel Monsters GX* as one of my favorite anime of all time. Dareisay, if I considered psychological horror to truly be a real genre classification of media, *Yu Gi Oh! Duel Monsters GX* would be atop my list of favorites in said genre. In almost every way that I consider the original *Yu Gi Oh! Duel Monsters* to have failed, *Yu Gi Oh! Duel Monsters GX* succeeds. It is, however, still a glorified toy commercial (though, in this case, I bought hook, line, and sinker into GX's line of cards).

The main premise of GX is downright absurd. Instead of the ancient mysticism of the original, GX takes place in a high school wherein the students study the titular card game, sponsored by the main rival of the original series, Kaiba Seto. Following the extremely popular original series, it is admirable that it does not directly follow the same characters, instead taking place in the same universe a decade later, with only brief cameos from some of the original cast. Yet, GX's premise is so utterly absurd that it could only come from the same creative minds. Following an extremely laid back tone, the first 100 episodes of *Yu Gi Oh! Duel Monsters GX* feature two 50 episode narrative arcs, but said arcs are not incredibly high stakes. For the most part, the initial half of GX is far more reminiscent of a modern slice of life than anything, albeit extremely silly. A testament to how GX doesn't take itself seriously is that at one point, a main character is said to have broken a bone next to an excavation site and obtained a transplant in the form of a dinosaur fossil. This character is, thereafter, said to possess dinosaur DNA, and ends all his sentences with -don or -saurus. Sporting a goofy tone, the first half of GX is a fun, though at times tonally inconsistent, slice of life that I cannot help but enjoy. This is in part due to

nostalgia bias, but I'd like to think that it isn't only that.

However, the real reason I even write about this series in the context of psychological horror comes in the third season of GX. Though I wouldn't dare call it incredibly complex or deep (though I avoid the latter tag for almost any media), the third season of *Yu Gi Oh! Duel Monsters GX* is a wonderful coming of age story that features a good deal of introspection for the protagonist. In fact, if you took the script of certain episodes, replaced context-relevant words like "card" or "duel", with more mundane vocabulary, you would probably end up with the script of the last two episodes of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. The word "subversive" is grossly overused, but the way in which the protagonist's traits are analyzed fits that tag to a t. Yuki Judai enters the third season of GX as something of a trope-laden battle shounen protagonist, but leaves it a fully realized character with serious dilemmas. Sandwiched in between is a complicated and somewhat messy, though ultimately competent series of events which portray traditionally heroic traits as antagonistic, with the protagonist even assuming the primary antagonist role for a stretch of episodes.

The fourth and final season, then, reconciles both aims of the series in a meaningful way, presenting a short 20-ish episode sequence of episodes which puts a capstone on every character's growth throughout the entire series, with a strong focus on the future and life beyond education. As a (somewhat) recent graduate of secondary education, the themes of reaching for wider and farther goals particularly resonated with me in a recent rewatch. In particular, a set of scenes in this part of the series strongly evoke anxiety in the viewer, in both traditional narrative ways and in more bizarre metatextual ways. Notably, an entire two episode sequence occurs with a full plot mountain-esque dramatic structure culminating in an emotional payoff, only for a villain to literally reverse the show itself and start the entire sequence over.

Collectively, though, *Yu Gi Oh! Duel Monsters GX* is an incredibly strange and downright inconsistent beast that I have a hard time recommending. As a show whose strongest parallels are, in my opinion, *K-On!*, *Yu Yu Hakusho*, and *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, GX is hard to describe in a limited space. Take the utterly scattered nature of this article, along with the fact that I would call GX simultaneously one of my favorite slice of life anime, an anime that induced paralyzing anxiety in myself, and an exploration of how passion is critical to success, as evidence that GX's seemingly diverse set of objectives actually culminates in something rather meaningful. Not bad for a glorified literal toy commercial.

Staff Picks:

FAVORITE INSANE CHARACTER

ZERO

DRAKENGARD

TOMMY NUNO

Zero was a double-take after finding out how much more... expressive...she was in the English dub of Drakengard 3.

TOMINO YOSHIYUKI

TONY T.

The man, the myth, the legend. Tomino, more like Top Kino.

PUNPUN ONODERA

OYASUMI PUNPUN

MITCHELL MADAYAG

Where do I even start?

THE SERVANT

ULTRA DESPAIR GIRLS

MIRANDA ZHANG

No thoughts, hope only.

YUMEKO JABAMI

KAKEGURUI

KAI WU

She's just a little crazy and quirky

HANSEL AND GRETEL

BLACK LAGOON

IHSAN AHMED

Neglect and trauma during their childhood has left them with dissociative identity disorder.

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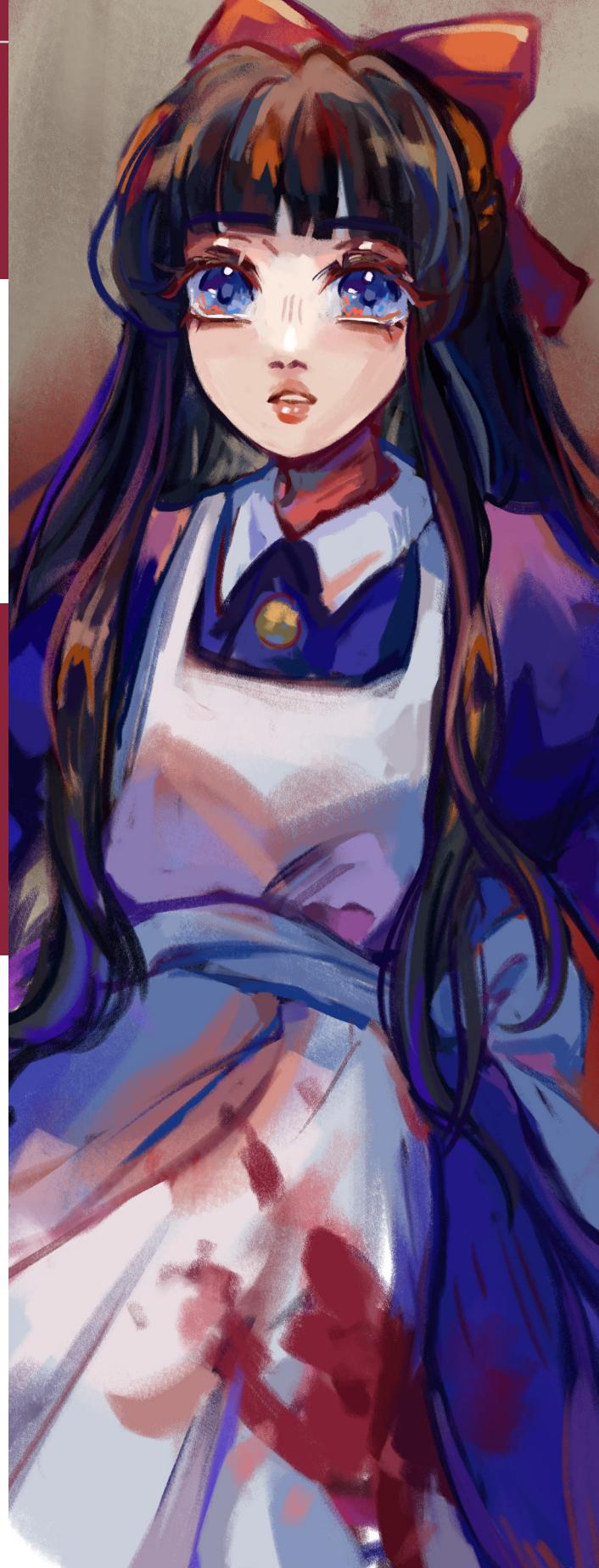
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Aya Drevis

Mad Father

Art By Kai Wu