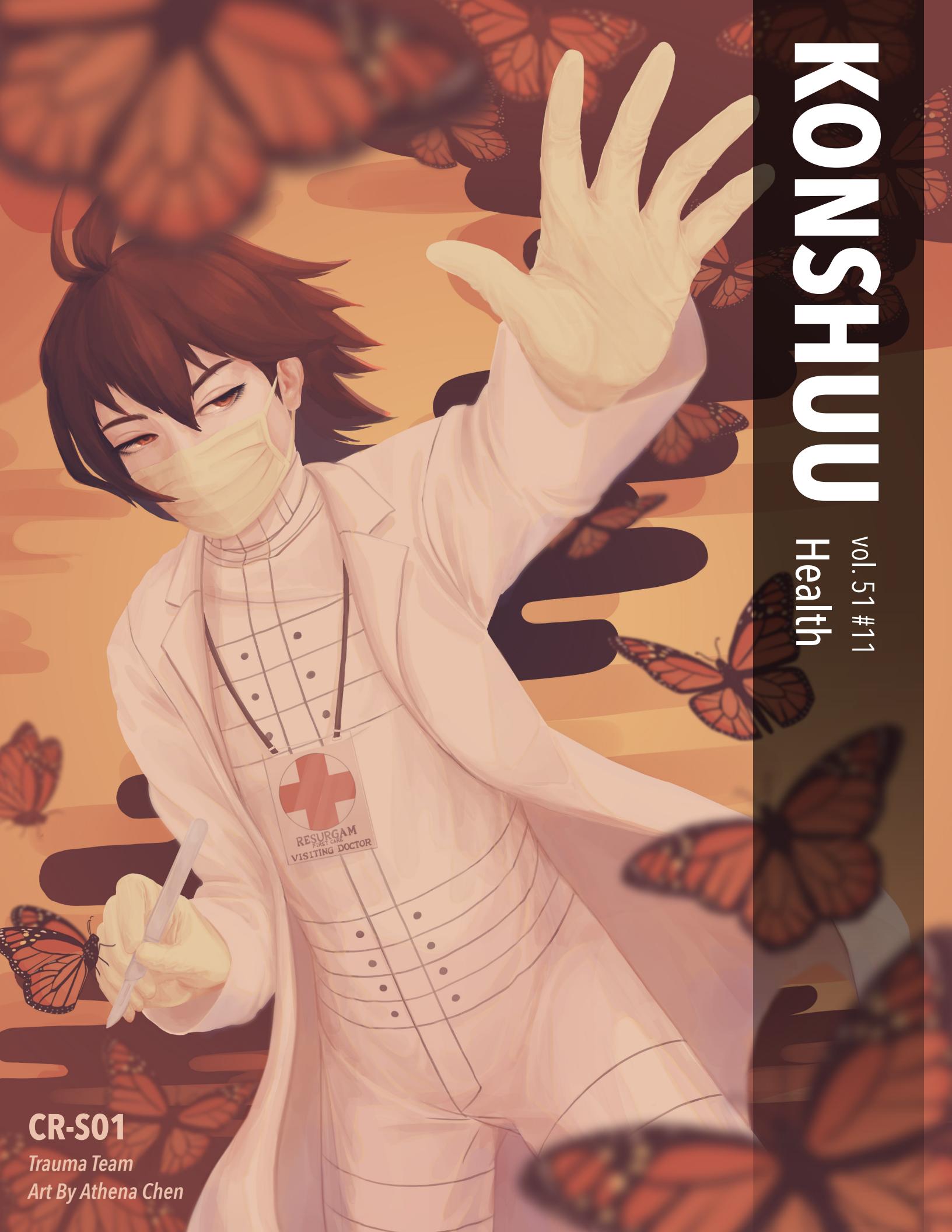


# KONSHUU

Health

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**CR-S01**

Trauma Team

Art By Athena Chen

# A DIFFERENT KIND OF MEDICAL DRAMA



**NICHOLAS WONOSAPUTRA**

1st Year, Intended MCB Neurobiology

Flatten the curve y'all.

**Writer**

As an aspiring physician, I've always had a soft spot for medical dramas and health-related edutainment. However, when most people in the states think of medical dramas, their minds typically wander to American shows like *The Resident* and *The Good Doctor*, myself included. I enjoy watching a few episodes of these shows every once-in-a-while as I find their parallel storytelling structure and character drama to be refreshing, and my own personal interest in working in a hospital and saving lives encourages me to watch with particular scrutiny to spot any useful, or potentially dubious, information.

At their heart, dramas revolve around their characters, and medical dramas are able to explore the human psyche through placing their characters in especially vulnerable positions. Whether they're patients or doctors, their insecurities and regrets are forced to the forefront as they walk the tightrope between life and death.



*Black Jack*, a manga series written and illustrated by the creator of *Astro Boy*, Osamu Tezuka, in the 1970s, maintains this level of character drama, but in a different context.

*Black Jack* is a unique take on an episodic adventure manga in that it follows its titular main character, an infamous, unlicensed surgeon, as he performs impossible surgeries for ludicrous prices.

Due to its episodic nature, *Black Jack* is a bit of a tonal anomaly. In proper Tezuka fashion, there are various instances of serious character moments and sparks of humor. The latter is propelled by the series' comic relief character, Pinoko, Black Jack's assistant and adopted daughter. Meanwhile, the heavier aspects of *Black Jack* are driven by Black Jack and his past. By learning more about Black Jack, the audience begins to see his "miracle surgeries" and the characters he's performed these surgeries on in a new light.



For instance, there's something to be said about the parallels between Black Jack's origins and that of Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*. As a child, Black Jack's body was nearly ripped to shreds by shrapnel after accidentally setting off a still-activated mine buried on the shores of Japan. However, due to the genius of Dr. Honma, Black Jack survived a miraculous operation with a skin graft from an half-African friend of his, which is why his skin tone is darker on one side of his face. And out of respect for his friend, Black Jack refused to have these skin tones color-matched. His partially white hair was supposedly caused by stress and shock. As for his mother who was with him on that day... she fell into a comatose state and eventually passed away. Black Jack's patchwork appearance evokes similar imagery

to common interpretations of Frankenstein's creature, and the characters also have similar character arcs. While the creature gets what he wants by killing Victor's loved ones, Black Jack likewise uses dubious means to save people. This is due to his lack of a surgical license, making him essentially a part of the medical black market, regardless of his intent. On top of that, Black Jack and the creature are also unable to find love. Similar to how the creature's creator, Victor, destroyed the almost finished partner, Tezuka goes out of his way to present various love interests for Black Jack, all of which are fleeting, as they are typically patients destined to die, or Black Jack comes to the conclusion that they shouldn't be together for the greater good.

A typical Black Jack is as follows: Black Jack and Pinoko are visiting a new place for one reason or other, an accident happens, someone is injured and on the brink of death, Black Jack offers to save them but for a ludicrous price—typically around 30 million yen or 300k usd—and then Black Jack either is successful in saving them or fails to do so. Another common variation of this format includes terminal illnesses.

Now, the reason why Black Jack charges these exorbitant prices is to remind patients and their families about the priceless-ness of human life, and is the broader thesis of the series. In reality, he only charges the rich and greedy with these prices, while those who can't afford the initial price often don't have to pay him back in full, or sometimes don't have to pay at all.

I personally found out about the original *Black Jack* through its recent prequel, *Young Black Jack*, which features a Black Jack in his last year of medical school during the time of the Vietnam War. What's especially interesting about this prequel is that it is vastly different from the original in tone and scale. It goes without saying that the mangaka for the prequel isn't Tezuka, as *Young Black Jack* functions more like a battle manga as op-



posed to a character drama. There's fun and interesting side characters and clearly defined villains and rivals, all working in tandem to push Black Jack towards realizing the corruption of the medical bureaucracy and choosing to become a medical mercenary.

While young Black Jack shares his design with his older counterpart, the mystique and iron will of the original is thrown out the window in favor of a cocky, naive pretty boy who thinks he can take on the world. That said, *Young Black Jack* gives its audience far more insight into Black Jack's struggles to become a physician he can be proud of, and is actually introduced as a medical student constantly studying to become a better surgeon.



And while the original made references to *Frankenstein*, *Young Black Jack* chooses to go a completely different route, making blatant references to the New Testament, with a crown of thorns often adorning Black Jack's head as he does miracle surgery after miracle surgery. *Young Black Jack* paints him as a messiah, but doesn't fail to include the ultimate sacrifice that messiah must make, and, in *Black Jack*'s case, the sacrifice is to give up on his dream to become a doctor. Legally, anyway.

# WHAT IF SOME PEOPLE DIDN'T DIE WHEN THEY WERE KILLED?



**NEIL FRYDENDAL**

1st Year, Intended Computer Science  
Izumi best girl.

**Writer**

## 1ST EPISODE SPOILERS! 1ST EPISODE SPOILERS! 1S

Lots of series explore our human mortality, but none do it quite like *Ajin: Demi-Human*. The basic premise is quite simple: some people—when they die—come back to life. These people are called ajin, and they’re living among us. The 1st ajin appeared over 17 years ago, and since then, 46 ajin have come to be known about publicly. Because of their abilities, ajin are seen as inhuman and treated without basic rights in Japan. If you’re found to be an ajin, the Japanese government will ruthlessly attempt to hunt you down and capture you. Your normal daily life is over, and

you have to react drastically to survive. So what would you do? Would you try to run away? Go somewhere where no one knows you? Or maybe somewhere where they’re more ajin-friendly? Who would you trust in this insane scenario? Your family? Your friends? Or would you take on this task entirely on your own? And most definitely, what would you now do knowing that you could no longer die? Would you use your powers towards your own selfish ends? Or would you strive to save others’ lives?

*Ajin* explores all of these questions and more as it follows protagonist Kei Nagai after—you guessed it—it’s discovered that he’s an ajin. The amazing thriller is thought-provoking, action-packed, and perfectly dark, and it all comes packaged in this great story that’s driven by stellar characters, Kei among them. I cannot praise it enough. To me, it’s peak seinen. The story is so intense and fast, but it’s grounded in these likable and interesting characters that make us care about what’s going on. Despite the supernatural premise, everyone feels real, so that makes it easy to become invested. My favorite character is easily Izumi Shimomura, one of the government agents tasked with tracking down Kei, but Kei, Kaito, Kou, Satou—they’re all great! The manga, which has been running since 2012, is pretty clearly in its climax and close to finishing, and I just can’t wait to see how everything ends! It’s such a brilliant series that’s never boring, even for a moment.



So how can you consume this amazing series, you ask? Well that's a great question! The manga—written and illustrated by Gamon Sakurai—runs in Kodansha's monthly *good! Afternoon*, but non-Japanese-speakers like myself (yes I'm a fake weeb) can get the English version—translated by Alex Ko Ransom and lettered by Hiroko Tsuruoka—monthly from Crunchyroll, comiXology, or Book Walker and in volume-form whenever they're published by Vertical. We're up to 15 volumes now! But looking at the chapters not collected, we're probably getting at least another 2 volumes before the series ends. And since I'm trying to credit everyone involved with the series, it's worth noting that the original writer for the series was actually Tsuina Miura (and Sakurai was just illustrator), but for whatever reason, Miura quit after just the 1st volume, so Sakurai took over as both illustrator and writer. I don't know how much Sakurai was involved with the development of the original premise (if he was at all), but he's certainly carried the amazing writing of the series forward another 14 volumes after, and for that, he deserves to be lauded. Not to mention his great art.

Of course, I couldn't talk about *Ajin* without mentioning the anime. Made by Polygon Pictures, directed by Hiroyuki Seshita (Chief) and Hiroaki Andou, written by Hiroshi Seko, and with music by Yugo Kanno, the *Ajin* anime is absolutely amazing! It comfortably sits in my S-tier on my anime tier list. It's 2 seasons of 13 episodes each + 3 OVAs, so 29 episodes total, and they're all great. Additionally, the show was actually also shown as 3 movies that came out in theaters around the same time that the show was airing. However, the movies cut scenes for time (or rather, the show's seasons had added scenes), but either way, the show is the superior version of the story because it's more complete, so there's no reason to watch the movies. (Although they are included in the Season 2 Blu-ray, but only in sub. So bizarre.)

I need to mention, though, that the anime does heavily diverge from the manga. The changes begin small in late Season 1, but they compound and compound to the point that Season 2 is mostly anime-original and goes in a very different direction from the manga. And from everything I've read online, I think I'm literally the only person alive who prefers the anime. Don't get me wrong, I absolutely also love the darker route the manga took and would totally be on-board with an *Ajin: Brotherhood* that started either completely from the beginning or from late Season 1 and that followed the manga exactly, but regardless of any of that, I will still always prefer the anime-original route for 2 main reasons, among other smaller things. To be nonspecific, firstly, there's a battle scene that the anime changed from the manga because it was apparently too graphic for TV, and while people cry censorship (and I agree in principle), I found the anime's version of the event way cooler than the manga's version, so :shrug:. Secondly, in the anime, a spe-



cific interaction between 2 characters is expanded upon as the 1st character having a crush on the other, but in the manga, it's just an interaction with no deeper meaning. However, me being the romance junkie that I am, I vastly prefer the anime because of this. Additionally, and this doesn't have to do with plot points, but there are also a lot of people who dislike Polygon's 3DCG art style: 1. Just because it's 3DCG and not 2D animation, but also 2. Because it's more generic and looks pretty different from the manga. However, the 3DCG takes maybe an episode to get used to and actually serves the anime quite well, and furthermore, generic things become generic for a reason: because they're good. Anime Izumi is straight bangin'! Look at her manga counterpart! I like the manga's grittier art style, but I'd be lying if I said that I was upset that the anime looks different. And lastly, the anime is an anime. It has animation, music, and voices! Johnny Yong Bosch, Bryce Papenbrook, Todd Haberkorn, and Cristina Vee are all great as Kei, Kaito, Tosaki, and Izumi, respectively, but my god—Pete Sepenuk steals the show as Satou. His performance is downright unsettling and makes the great character that much better. And yes, I'm a dub watcher. The sub is probably great too, but I just haven't seen it. I also haven't seen the Japanese live-action movie. I wonder if that's any good ...

One last thing: Vertical made quite the interesting translation decision with the official English title: *Ajin: Demi-Human*. For those who don't know, the Japanese word "ajin" directly translates to "demi-human" in English, but rather than translate away "ajin," they kept it, using it as a loan word interchangeably with its translation of "demi-human." Netflix then thankfully followed suit with the anime's translation, giving us a cohesive series translation (sometimes that doesn't happen). If I had to guess, Vertical probably kept "ajin" because it sounds cool as hell, and I don't blame them. I'm sure the added flexibility with word choice made dubbing the show slightly easier too. I'm just glad that they translated the word at all. I hate this new "Hashira" trend. They're Pillars! Stupid Viz and Aniplex translators. Anyway, watch and read *Ajin* if you haven't already. It's amazing!



# NK, Killer T, and White Blood Cell

*Cells at Work!*

Art By Tammy Lee

## Staff Picks:

# HEALTH IN ANIME

### BLACK CLOVER



NEIL FRYDENDAL

*Asta's unwavering will to continue fighting even after the loss of his arms is one of the most powerful moments of mental fortitude I've ever seen in anime, and it's exactly why Asta is such an amazing character and protagonist.*

Like hell I'm gonna give up!

### HANBUN NO TSUKI GA NOBORU SORA



ABEER HOSSAIN

*The anime deals with a critically ill girl who has been stuck in hospitals for nearly her whole life and how the illness and having to stay at the hospital has affected her life.*

### A SILENT VOICE



LEA NAKATSUKASA

*Shoko Nishimiya, a deaf girl, and Shoya Ishida, her former bully, become friends and struggle to break past their mental health issues. Super moving movie.*

### BAKEMONOGATARI



NERISSA HSIEH

*Bakemonogatari expertly encapsulates subtle nuances of the effects of trauma and abuse. From Senjougahara to Hanekawa, this anime is able to showcase how people handle trauma differently, and is able to evoke great empathy within its viewers.*

### STARS ALIGN



KATE BUSHMAREVA

*Stars Align's mature and understanding treatment of issues with gender and sexual identity is a pleasant surprise upon first watch. It explores the effects of heteronormativity on mental health and family relationships, and does so in a way that is incredibly rare and tasteful for modern anime.*

### ORANGE



ABEER HOSSAIN

*Orange focuses on the effects of suicide on others and how it can lead to further depression and suicide among friends and family.*

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**Yami Kawaii Fashion**  
Art By Elliot Lu