

Touch

Written by Kimberly Dorn

"My family, the Uesugis, and our neighbors the Asakuras had three kids born in the same year. There's me, Uesugi Tatsuya, my twin brother Kazuya, and our neighbor Minami. We've always been good friends, but one day we realized that one of us was a girl."

"Minami makes wishes, and Kazuya makes them come true. What's wrong with that?"

Touch could be described as the story of a love triangle punctuated by baseball games. It's based on the Shogakukan-award-winning manga by Adachi Mitsuru, a colleague of Takahashi Rumiko's at Shounen Sunday, who unfortunately doesn't get much attention in the English-speaking world.

Despite being twins, the Uesugi brothers are opposites at the beginning of the story. Kazuya has played baseball seriously for years and is now an ace pitcher of a calibre that comes along once in a decade. His twin brother Tatsuya has wasted what talent he has watching tv and reading manga all day. Their social standing follows from their efforts: Kazuya is the school's celebrated golden boy, and Tatsuya is the maligned 'idiot older brother.'

Their neighbor Minami is athletic, smart, popular, and responsible, just like Kazuya. It's for her sake that Kazuya's worked so hard, because she dreams of watching someone close to her get to Koushien, the national high school baseball championship. Indeed, everyone around them (including their parents!) assume Minami will end up with Kazuya. But Minami's also the one who pushes Tatsuya when most people have given up on him.

The main questions driving the plot are: Will Kazuya get to Koushien? Will Tatsuya find a way to move out of Kazuya's shadow? Which brother will Minami choose?

Originally aired: 1985-1987 (101 episodes). The first season (1-26) reaches a stopping point of sorts, so the club needn't commit to the whole series.

WARNING: There are considerable spoiler risks, so please don't read plot summaries. If you read them anyway, please don't tell anyone else what happens.

Screening advice: skip episodes 13 and 21. Although this dissertation reviewer has read most of the manga, she's only seen the first season of the anime and can't speak for the rest.

Important life lesson I learned: When trying to make the game-winning hit, imagine the girl you love is directly in the path of your swing.

Oh, and K-/J-pop singer Younha recorded a cover in 2005 of the first opening theme, for what that's worth.