

Gallow's Bell

Full treatment by Hannah Bradshaw Lozier

Gallow's Bell is a visual novel. Players play as Tomohisa, a sixteen-year-old Japanese girl who must solve a crime her girlfriend, Maya, has been implicated in to prove her innocence.

Story

Gallow's Bell is set in the near future, in the fictional town of Midorigawa, Japan. Fifty years before the game's start, scientists invented the Aggression Aptitude Test (AAT), allowing citizens to be sorted by levels of interpersonal aggression. The AAT is now standardized, and at a young age, children are sorted as either Doves (fundamentally passive) or Hawks (fundamentally aggressive). Though there is an equal number of both on Earth, Japanese society is particularly unwelcoming to Hawks, who are viewed as disruptive, violent, and needlessly hostile.

Protagonist Tomohisa is a Dove who is dating a transfer student named Maya, a Hawk. Both attend Midorigawa's only high school, and dream of moving to a metropolitan center like Tokyo or Osaka, where they can be open about their relationship. But when another student is murdered on campus, Maya comes under suspicion as the town's only Hawk. In order to protect her, Tomohisa must investigate the student's murder and find the real culprit, before the townsfolk decide to take justice into their own hands.

Through her investigation, Tomohisa learns that the student murdered – Himura Akari – may have been killed when she discovered that she had mistakenly been sorted as a Dove as a child, when she was actually a Hawk. This discovery forces Tomohisa to reckon with what the Dove/Hawk system truly means – both for individuals, and society as a whole – and brings her into direct conflict with community leaders.

Characters

Main

- **Tomohisa** (友久) is the primary protagonist of the game. She attends Midorigawa High School as a junior, and lives with her single mother, Karasu. Tomohisa is estranged from her father, who is a Hawk – her “mixed” parentage makes her the talk of her small town, as does her unconventional beauty, and her outspoken, curious nature. Tomohisa is capricious, sarcastic, and quick to anger, but also tires of conflict quickly, and would much rather retreat inward than address things that bother her. She struggles to form meaningful bonds with others, but is fiercely loyal to the few friends she has. Due to her natural curiosity, she often finds herself wondering about the secrets in her small community.

- **Maya** (マヤ) is Tomohisa's girlfriend, and the lead suspect in the murder of Himura. She is an exchange student at Midorigawa High School, where her foreignness makes her an object of curiosity and ridicule for much of the student body. In the past, she has been suspended for getting into fights with students who bully her. Unlike Tomohisa, Maya is a girl of few words; when she speaks, she tends to be brusque and concise. Though many students perceive Maya as rude, Tomohisa knows this is because she's shy about her Japanese, which is sometimes clumsy or inaccurate. With Tomohisa, Maya is sweet-natured, attentive, and protective, frequently prioritizing Tomohisa's happiness and safety far above her own.
- **Fujioka Mio** (藤岡実峰) – 'Fujioka-sempai' to Tomohisa, 'Mio-chan' to Reina – is the President of Student Council, and the primary antagonist of the game. Immensely popular and tremendously intelligent, Fujioka's cool, unyielding personality and disdain for Hawks leads her to champion the idea of Maya as the person responsible for Himura's murder. As the game progresses, it becomes clear that she knows who the true murderer is.

Supporting

- **Himura Akari** (日村あかり) is the murder victim. A student at Midorigawa High School, Akari was a *yanki* and an outcast. Though she and Mio were close in elementary school, they drifted apart in middle school, partially because of Mio's desire to be popular. Akari was loudly anti-Hawk, and frequently bullied Maya, which led to several physical altercations between the two. Despite being a Dove, Akari was fearless, boisterous, boastful, and aggressive.
- **Reina** (玲奈) is Tomohisa's ex-girlfriend and best friend. Known as the "princess idol" of Midorigawa High School, Reina is the Student Council Vice President, and is extremely popular in spite of – or, perhaps, because of – her laidback demeanor. Reina is friendly, charming, and relatively carefree; she dreams of one day moving to Tokyo to become an artist. She is extremely socially intelligent, and acts as a valuable ally to Tomohisa.
- **Karasu** (カラス) is Tomohisa's mother. A social pariah – once for her marriage to a Hawk, now for her status as single mother – Karasu struggles with depression, and can be equal parts withdrawn and overbearing. However, she is an outspoken advocate for her daughter, and loves her deeply. When Maya becomes a suspect in Himura's murder, Karasu offers to help her run away. When Maya expresses her desire to stay with Tomohisa, Karasu does what she can to help with their investigation.
- **Fujioka Keika** (藤岡桂花) is Mio's mother. A teacher and sociologist for over 20 years, she is the local administrator of the AAT, and personally scores all of them. Her husband, Akitoshi, is the local chief of police. Though Keika initially appears sweet-tempered and polite, she is well-known to be passive-aggressive, even cruel, especially when her authority is questioned, or her competence is challenged.
- **Fujioka Akitoshi** (藤岡彰敏) is Mio's father, and the local chief of police. Although he is sympathetic to Tomohisa's circumstances, he is deeply anti-

Hawk, and is positive – in spite of the evidence – that Maya is to blame for the unrest and conflict within Midorigawa. Without hard evidence to the contrary, he is determined to arrest her for the murder of Himura.