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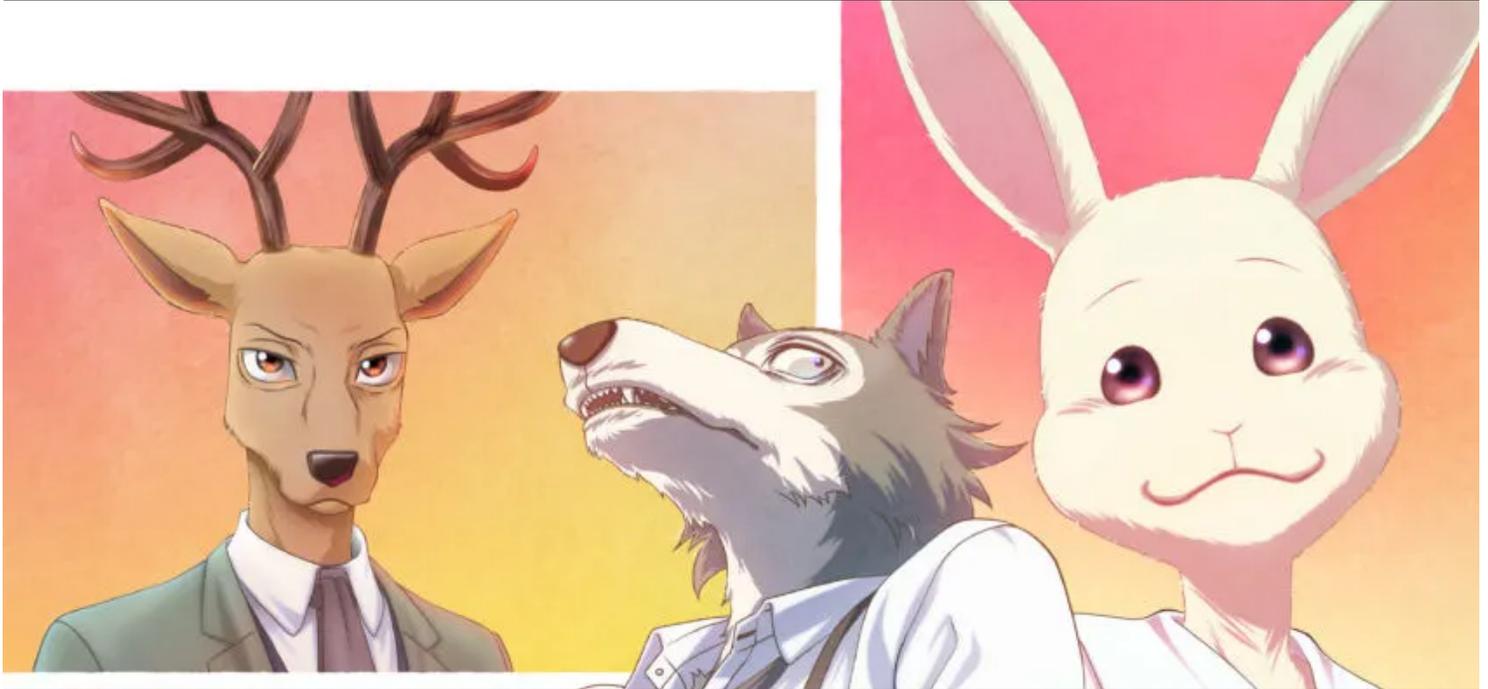
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Netflix's *Beastars* is about drug addiction, not furies, and you should watch



by Victoria Davis 1 year ago

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In addition to racism and human trafficking, Netflix's *Beastars* is about drug addiction, not furies, and it's brilliant.

A wolf "falls in love" with a rabbit. We know how this looks. But despite Netflix's "TV-MA" label and warning about nudity in the show, Netflix's *Beastars* is about drug addiction, not furies.

In fact, the newly released anime brilliantly illustrates the ugliest, bloodiest and darkest traits of humanity—from racism and abuse to human trafficking being secretly sanctioned under corrupt leadership—while also painting a truly vulnerable and raw picture of what it's like to live with drug addiction.

And carnivores are the poster children for the theme.

Warning: minor spoilers ahead.



Beastars' story, animated by **Orange**, takes place at Cherryton Academy, where students are often divided up in groups of herbivores and carnivores, in an effort to make life, supposedly, more peaceful for all students. But, a wrench is thrown into the students' already fragile relations when an alpaca named Tem is brutally eaten by another, unnamed, student at the school. Naturally, the herbivores suspect the carnivores. While some carnivores try their best to keep the peace, other predators relish in the newfound power they have over fearful herbivores.

Legoshi, the main character in the anime, is a large, 17-year-old, timid gray wolf struggling with chronic depression. It certainly doesn't help that Tem was one of Legoshi's best friends. But while Legoshi has had a decent handle on being unfairly judged by classmates and being the peacekeeper when tensions rose in the drama department between carnivores and herbivores, there is one thing he doesn't seem to have any control over—his body's desire for rabbit blood. On top of that Legoshi believes that, the dwarf rabbit he craves, named Haru, is someone he's in love with.



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While carnivorous characters like Bill the tiger and Aoba the bald eagle, both members of the drama club, credit Legoshi's cravings to instinct while Legoshi himself believes it to be sincere feelings of admiration, director [Shin'ichi Matsumi](#) and writer [Paru Itagaki](#) do an incredible job illustrating Legoshi's draw to blood like an addict searching for their next hit of heroin. Whenever Legoshi is about to come in contact with Haru, an almost blood-colored pink cloud reaches Legoshi's nose and wraps around his head, and triggers the blood-thirsty beast inside, illustrated by a dark shadow of Legoshi with [red, bloodshot eyes](#).

And it's not just Legoshi with the need for a dose of bloody dope. Bill privies Legoshi to his small but regular dosages of rabbit blood, labeled by Louis, a red deer and leader of the drama club, as "performance enhancers." Bill and Legoshi get into a fight almost to the death over the rabbit blood, Bill's drive being he is an addict and Legoshi believing it's for Haru's honor. But even in scenes where Legoshi tries to save Haru from being raped or eaten by other carnivores, he calls her, "my prey."



Wildly enough, even when Haru's scent sends crippling chemical lightning bolts throughout Legoshi's **whole body and his brain**, turning him into a monster, and even when Bill is tearing Legoshi apart on stage after taking a hit of his secret stash, these instances still aren't the most bone-chilling representations for drug addiction. Though it seems like Legoshi and Bill's struggles are isolated, with many carnivores appearing to have their bloodlust under control, it's later revealed that's only because of their regular visit to The Black Market.

The Black Market makes its way onto the *Beastars* scene in episode 6, when the carnivores from the drama club are allowed to go on a field trip into the city. After Tem's murder, the school deems it unsafe for herbivores to join in the trip. That was probably for the best, since Legoshi, Bill and Aoba get lost and find themselves at the entrance of The Black Market, a hub for illegal animal blood and meat trading at the center of the city.

The truly sickening part of this scene is when a blind, homeless herbivore, who lives at the market, holds up his hands to Legoshi to reveal some severed and some in-tact fingers, all labeled with prices and tells Legoshi to choose one of his fingers. He adds, "all I ask is that you make it quick." Just when viewers thought that maybe Haru was special, that familiar blood-pink cloud surrounds Legoshi, but is now coming from The Black Market grills and the herbivores for-sale fingers.

What's worse is that Bill seems all for purchasing a taste of the old man's fingers. Even Aoba, an upstanding student and friend to many herbivores, reasons with Legoshi that The Black Market is something they'll have to utilize as adults. Even Gohin, a panda and owner of a carnivore rehab clinic (another addict-theme parallel) within The Black Market believe in The Black Market's ability to satisfy carnivore's addiction to blood without hurting anyone, as the market's primary supply source is hospitals who are disposing of already dead herbivores.



But Netflix's *Beastars* doesn't just show the monstrous side of drug addiction. It also shows the pain addicts feel coming down from a high. Legoshi, through sweat and tears, manages to resist the temptations of the market, but Aoba also comes to Legoshi crying because of his struggle to resist and **feeling guilty** for the damage it would do to his relationships with herbivore friends.

In an interview with Anime News Network, even Michiya Katō, who worked on *Beastars*' opening animation, said the themes he wanted to set for the show focused on **love, instinct and the conflict between them**. It's a battle shown most prevalently during that scene with Aoba.

Beastars also is sure not to make herbivores a perfectly shining examples of lives free of addiction.

Though it may not be drugs, Haru's addiction to sex and Louis' addiction to power are both just as self-destructive in the show, even though they stem from a self-protective place, fostered by childhood teachings and trauma (revealed in much later episodes).

Another struggle this show narrates well is the difficulty for non-addicts (most of the show's herbivores) to **understand the thoughts and actions** of their friends who are addicts. There's a great deal of initial judgment that follows the carnivores, highlighted further after Tem's murder, that causes the herbivores to automatically label the carnivores as "animals" or "monsters" because of their known addictions, rather than taking the time to help or get to know their fellow classmates. Most of the carnivores that struggle with addiction in the show, even Bill, are revealed to be very loyal friends with the best intentions at heart for their herbivore classmates.

Beastars is an interesting story, to be sure. How could it not be with one of the story's premises being a wolf and rabbit wanting to hook up? And it's easy to categorize the anime at the first glance as a more mature or **ludicrous version of Zootopia**, but there's so much more substance (pun intended) to *Beastars* in its deep dive into the symptoms and effects of addiction. It's an anime that doesn't hold back in fear of making viewers cringe and convulse. *Beastars* seems like it's almost designed specifically to give anyone who watches the show a gut reaction to give a tangible feeling to what it's like to live with an addiction.

Not only that, but Netflix's *Beastars* poses some fairly paralyzing, philosophical questions: Is it right to pacify an addiction just enough to keep life stable? Is love ever a reason to risk addiction? Is addiction a natural or unnatural part of human, and animal, existence? And, if it is natural, is it wrong to ask someone to totally deny that part of themselves?

Before answering, watch *Beastars*.

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Will you be streaming *Beastars* this weekend? What other symbolisms do you see in this show? Let us know in the comments below!

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