

To watch or not to watch: that is the question. “Watch what?” you must be wondering. I am talking about the closing credits in the movies, commonly known as “endo-roru” in Japan. Yes, that’s right! It’s that very long list of names after names of every single person who worked as a cast or a crew member in making a movie.

A couple of years ago, I had an opportunity to play a small role in a movie as one of the classmates of the main character. It was my first time to experience a movie shooting, and I must say, I was amazed at how much time and hard work went into filming even the shortest and the simplest scenes. However, what surprised me the most was to see how many people were actually involved in the process. Aside from the actors, the directing staff, and the camera crew, there were people in charge of make-up and hair styling, choosing costumes, controlling light and sound, making props, keeping time, monitoring the screen, and the list goes on and on. It was so interesting and fascinating to watch what they did, completely unnoticed behind the scenes, yet absolutely indispensable. Without them, the movie would not have been possible.

This experience changed the way I looked at things dramatically. Before, I was only interested in the completed version of a movie and the big names that appeared in the title. I never knew or appreciated the contributions made by people who remained unseen and unknown. I will be honest. I was one of those people who chose not to watch the credits. I thought that they were long and boring, and they didn’t mean anything to me. Now that I fully understand their significance, I watch them with attention and respect for every name I see, smiling as I imagine these people, busy at work, moving about behind the scenes.

Now, I also realized that this idea is not just about movies and the crew members. Look around us. Every item we use in our everyday lives is the collaboration of efforts made by countless numbers of people. For example, the food we eat comes from the store where someone unpacked the food products from the boxes and arranged them on the shelves. But before that, someone transported them from the market to the store in a truck. And before the food got to the market, it was grown on a farm or processed in a factory where many more people worked to produce the goods. And this applies not only to the products, but also the services we receive. How about the people who collect trash for us? And people who supply us with clean water or electricity? And people who repair and maintain bridges, railroad tracks, and highways? If all of these people’s names were included in the “credits,” can you imagine how long the list would be?

This is about people who work hard behind the scenes that we often overlook. We take for granted that our lives are supported and made possible by so many people, their time, and their energy. We don’t know their names, and we’ll probably never meet them in person, but they are the heroes who play a significant role in our lives. And not so far in the future, you and I will also join this list of supporters, doing something that will help and improve the life of someone we don’t know. Maybe someone who lives on the other side of the globe! Isn’t it so exciting to think that we are all connected like this? I can’t wait to find out what I will be doing and how I can contribute to the world. After all, we may not all become famous superstars, but what each of us can do as “unknown heroes” will be just as valuable.

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The Unknown Heroes