

the hub

*A chatroom before the Internet became capitalized, before social media,
before normative, societal pressures and toxic masculinity found it in hiding.*

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Character Breakdown

QUEST – male, 35, a large man-child, main operator of the chat

AMI-CHAN – female, 12, but claims to be 13...and then 14...

TJ – male, 15, a horny gamer (also plays JERRY/male)

CHIBI – genderqueer, 14, an operator of the chat (also plays EN/male)

ANDI - female, 15, a tomboy

PIKAPIKA – gender unknown, age unknown, a furry (also plays SPIKE/male)

HAMSTERGOKU – male, 20, a geek, an operator of the chat (also plays TOM/male)

MARISSA – the real AMI-CHAN

The place An online chatroom, most likely IRC

The time 1999

Production notes

The only set for The Hub should be a couch.

On one side of The Hub there is a girl's bedroom with computer and computer chair. This is the space where MARISSA, the "real" AMI-CHAN sits, as she is online. On the other side of The Hub should be another computer desk and chair where other characters, but namely, TOM, the "real" TJ, sit when they are online.

The use of a projector to display the log in screen and other noted texts is not necessary but strongly recommended to enhance the world of the play.

Online chat terms

IDLE: Sometimes characters will go IDLE to the side because they are away doing something else, probably in the real world or in another chat.

When characters speak one-on-one, it is a private message (PM). The switch between the main chat and a private message can be signified by transitional lighting.

Characters use emoticons that best fit their personality. This can be interpreted however physically needed during the performance, much like an action or beat.

Prologue – Genesis

Years before.

QUEST appears in his bedroom. He is an unsightly man: tall, wide, and without any sense of style. He is innocence as an adult, a large child with a perpetual smile and rosy cheeks. He walks to his computer desk. An unearthly light seems to follow him where he goes, as if his room is a vacuum and he is floating in space.

He outstretches his hands to touch the computer. The light of the screen shines and illuminates. This is his first act as creator. He grazes his hand over the computer – the internal fan begins to hum and the machine awakens.

He begins typing like a maestro. He is building things. The space beyond the room begins to slightly grow with the light of the screen.

Figures begin to appear. The space would feel like a void of nothing, except that each figure moves fully and freely, and the physicality of their movements makes the space feel real with a sense of the ground and air. The light and weight of the room have changed significantly.

QUEST sits back staring at the screen, admiring what he has created. After a moment, his hands hover over the keyboard and types softly a simple sentence. As he types, he whispers: “Hello World.” He hits enter.

1

1999. MARISSA runs into her room, and flings her coat and backpack on the bed. She turns to her bedroom door and yells downstairs.

MARISSA

OKAY MOM.
GOING ONLINE.

OKAY MOM.

JUST TELL ME WHEN DINNER'S DONE.

MARISSA closes the door and runs to her computer. As she falls into her chair, she is already typing. The computer spurs with the sounds of connecting to a dial up connection through the phone line. She squirms with anticipation.

MARISSA

C'MON...c'mon... you jerk!!

FINALLY.

MARISSA begins quickly typing and clicking the mouse. She opens up the chat application on her desktop. A log in screen is projected and text begins to quickly scroll:

***Now talking in The Hub*

***Topic is "Y2K? More like, Yeah, Okay. Bite me.*

***Set by Quest on Mon Mar 14*

AMI-CHAN runs into The Hub. The AMI-CHAN who runs into the chat room is the complete opposite of MARISSA, the awkward, dumpy pre-

teen girl we see sitting at the computer. AMI-CHAN is a more physically fit, pretty teenager with the charm and magnetism of a character right from a TV show. PIKAPIKA, HAMSTERGOKU, and CHIBI, and ANDI are already in the chat hanging out. TJ is IDLE.

Heyyy everyone, I'm here!
AMI-CHAN

Pika??
PIKAPIKA

AMI! :D
CHIBI

CHIBI and AMI-CHAN hug.

I MISSED YOU.
CHIBI

I MISSED YOU TOO!
AMI-CHAN

WHY ARE WE YELLING?
HAMSTERGOKU

Where's TJ?
AMI-CHAN

He was just talking right before you came...
HAMSTERGOKU

Hmm.. o_o;;
You know, he's ignoring me. I CAN FEEL IT.
Does anyone know anything??? Hammy???

HAMSTERGOKU

Uhh...no...

Gomen nasai Ami-chan ^^;;;

ANDI

TJ's clearly out with his friends.

Everyone laughs nervously.

HAMSTERGOKU

I mean, it can happen.

We can make friends in real life.

We all want that. Haha.

...Right?

CHIBI

Well we ARE going to have to start...

AMI-CHAN

Don't you dare say it!!!

ANDI

You know ignoring it won't help.

CHIBI

You can't ignore it if we're all nuked into oblivion at midnight.

AMI-CHAN

How're you all so sure it will happen?

ANDI

Because my mom has been stockpiling cans in our garage for months.

CHIBI

Because nothing good lasts.

AMI-CHAN

It can't happen because I just found a place I belong!

PIKAPIKA nods furiously.

PIKAPIKA

Pika!!!

AMI-CHAN

Plus Quest doesn't seem to be worried.
I really think we'll be okay.

ANDI

You're so young, so hopeful. I miss that feeling.

HAMSTERGOKU

C'mon man. Don't ruin her yet. Ami is like 12.
Let's not warp her brain yet.

AMI-CHAN

No I'm not! I'm...13.

ANDI

Could've sworn you were 12....

AMI-CHAN

No. I turned 13 this year. ^^;;;

ANDI

Oh...

HAMSTERGOKU

Well, when I was 13 I was a giant baka. (*weeaboo talk for idiot, pronounced bah-kah*)

ANDI

You're not Japanese.

HAMSTERGOKU

You don't know that. :P

CHIBI

Your real name is Josh.

*AMI-CHAN, PIKAPIKA and CHIBI
giggle.*

HAMSTERGOKU

DAMARE!!! (*weeaboo talk for stop, pronounced dah-mah-rey*)

HAMSTERGOKU pulls out a frying pan. He begins to chase CHIBI. PIKAPIKA laughs hysterically.

ANDI

Jesus fucking Christ.

HAMSTERGOKU

We're just having fun Andrea. :P

ANDI

DON'T call me Andrea.

PIKAPIKA

Pika!

MARISSA's mom calls. MARISSA huffs.

MARISSA

Ohmygod!

AMI-CHAN

I'll brb guys!

MARISSA

WHAT!!!

MARISSA leaves her room. As soon as AMI-CHAN goes IDLE, TJ wakes up from IDLE mode.

TJ

Andreaaaa...

ANDI

Oh fuck off TJ.

TJ

Make me. :P

ANDI

Wouldn't you rather kiss your 10 year old girlfriend?

HAMSTERGOKU

Hey now.

TJ

You're a real classy lady.
She isn't my girlfriend, fyi.

ANDI

Yeah and I'm POSH SPICE.

TJ

Ahahahah. That would be impossible.

HAMSTERGOKU

She was just here. Asking about you.

TJ

She was?

HAMSTERGOKU

Yeah. Scroll up.

TJ

....
O_O;;

ANDI

You are so predictable, you know that?
You fall for any girl that joins this chat.
You're gonna chase everyone away.

TJ

I didn't chase you away.

ANDI

...
You're such a motherfucker.

HAMSTERGOKU

Guys c'mon don't make me boot you both out.

MARISSA quickly returns to her desk. AMI-CHAN wakes up from IDLING and spots TJ.

MARISSA

TJ!!!!!!!

AMI-CHAN

TJJJJ!!!!

She runs and wraps her arms around him.

TJ

Oof.
Hey.

CHIBI

Aww I thought we were gonna boot some people...

ANDI

Yeah. Come on.
Kick them out.

ANDI points at TJ and AMI-CHAN.

CHIBI

I had other people in mind...

CHIBI grins at PIKAPIKA.

HAMSTERGOKU

I wouldn't do that.

CHIBI boots PIKAPIKA. A second later, they come running in.

PIKA. PIKAPIKA

*CHIBI boots them out again.
PIKAPIKA comes running in.*

Stay.
Out!! CHIBI

*CHIBI boots them out again. As
PIKAPIKA comes running in,
QUEST enters.*

Quest! CHIBI/HAMSTERGOKU

*QUEST sees PIKAPIKA looking
disheveled. He walks up to
PIKAPIKA and hugs them.*

Everything okay? QUEST

PIKA!!! :(PIKAPIKA

How many times have I asked ya'll to lay off Pik? QUEST

Sorry Quest. CHIBI

And it's deader than one of my cat's farts in here.
Guys, come on. What is it? A school night? QUEST

Well technically... AMI-CHAN

I don't wanna hear it! You guys are HERE. In the HUB.
We don't want boring. EVER.
TALENT SHOW. NOW. QUEST

QUEST snaps his fingers and the lights go dim. The room becomes like an intimate club with smooth music. Everyone takes a seat, whether on the floor, the couch, or possibly pulling up a chair.

QUEST

FIRST UP we have The Hub's resident boy-wonder-gamer... TJ!

TJ resists at first, but everyone (especially AMI-CHAN) cheers. TJ stands up front, psyching himself up.

TJ

Okay. Okay. I got this...

If you drop soap on the ground, does that make the floor dirty... Or clean?

Everyone gasps.

HAMSTEGOKU

Mind...blown.

ANDI

Is this even a talent?...

TJ

If pizza comes in a square box... why is it a circle, and served in triangles?

AMI-CHAN

He's right!!!

PIKAPIKA

Pika...

TJ

And for my finale...

If the devil punishes people for being bad, doesn't that make the devil... Good?

Everyone erupts in cheers.

QUEST

Next up we have... HamsterGoku!!!

HAMSTERGOKU

No way I can follow that.

AMI-CHAN

Yes you can!! Go for it Hammy!!

HAMSTERGOKU

If you think so...

HAMSTERGOKU awkwardly stands in front of everyone. After a moment of building confidence, he begins to gently sing Moonlight Densetsu, the opening to Sailor Moon, in fluent Japanese. Everyone, especially the girls, look surprised and pleased. When he finishes, AMI-CHAN jumps up and excitedly hugs him. TJ looks jealous.

AMI-CHAN

That was incredible!
I never knew you liked that show?!

HAMSTERGOKU

It's my favorite.

AMI-CHAN

MINE TOO.

TJ goes IDLE.

QUEST

Okay you two. Flirt later.
Chibi, you are UP!

CHIBI

I was born for this moment. Get ready guys, because I have never shown anyone this before-

QUEST

Yawn. I'm done with this.
Talent show over. What's on Cartoon Network?

CHIBI

WHAT?

HAMSTERGOKU

Reruns of Speed Racer right now.

QUEST

Ooooh. Let's talk about that.

QUEST jumps down on the couch, PIKAPIKA immediately jumps down next to him. Everyone begins chatting at each other in a flurry of noise – they all look happy, content, cozy. AMI-CHAN looks around concerned.

AMI-CHAN

Where's TJ?

HAMSTERGOKU

Um...well, he's pretty active in the videogames chat right now.

AMI-CHAN

Oh. But we're having fun in here...

QUEST

Meh. His loss.

HAMSTERGOKU

He tends to do that.

AMI-CHAN

Do what?

ANDI

Come and go.

Shift to the Videogames chat. TJ, HAMSTERGOKU, ANDI, SPIKE, and EN are in a circle chatting.

EN

There is no way Squall is a better character than Cloud. Are you fucking kidding me?

TJ

Hahahah. Did I make you mad?

SPIKE

This always happens when a new Final Fantasy comes out. Everyone says it's the best one.

TJ

It IS the best one.

EN

You're crazy if you think ANY game Square makes will ever top Seven.

SPIKE

That one sucked too!
The game play was just shit.
At least Eight had some good scene cuts.

ANDI

But they were sooo long.

EN

And basically just Squall being a big pussy.

TJ

Whatever dude.

HAMSTERGOKU

You're just into that mushy stuff.

AMI-CHAN enters.

TJ

Maybe I am.

HAMSTERGOKU

Heya Ami!

Everyone except TJ looks at her. She awkwardly waves.

AMI-CHAN

Hey everyone...what's up?

HAMSTERGOKU

Just talking about how Final Fantasy 8 was the BEST GAME EVER.

SPIKE

Worst game.

AMI-CHAN

Never heard of it...

EN

Do you live in Africa or something?!

AMI-CHAN

No...I live in Ohio.

*EN and SPIKE look at each other.
They make mocking faces and laugh.*

HAMSTERGOKU

Oh, Ami...we gotta get you to play one of them.
I might be able to rip you an ISO!

ANDI

That's impossible, she's on dial-up.

SPIKE

Plus she wouldn't know how to fucking use an emulator.

AMI-CHAN

I'm sure it's not hard...

EN

Hahahah. Ok, what do you even play?

AMI-CHAN

Umm. I've never really owned any kind of system.
I like playing Solitaire. And Mindsweep...
Um.

My little brother has a GameBoy but he won't let me touch it...

I watch Pokemon! I love Pokemon!

But you've never played it?
SPIKE

No.
So?
AMI-CHAN

So why the fuck are you in here?
SPIKE

Before she can answer, she is booted out. TJ rushes up and grabs SPIKE.

Hey asshole.
TJ

Come on dude. We like you here. Don't make me kick you out too.
SPIKE

Then what? You'll have no one in here!
How do you expect to have ANY convos when you kick all the newbies out?
TJ

Who cares.
SPIKE

What was she going to talk about? How cute Jigglypuff is?
EN

AMI-CHAN re-enters.

Sorry. I got disconnected.
AMI-CHAN

How can someone be THIS stupid?
EN

You guys can keep talking. I won't interrupt this time...
AMI-CHAN

TJ rushes out.

Did TJ just leave?!
AMI-CHAN

EN

I dunno, why don't you follow him and find out?!

EN boots AMI-CHAN out again.

HAMSTERGOKU

You don't have to be such dicks.

EN

Yeah, well, all you Hub people are freaks.

ANDI

It's kind of requirement.

SPIKE

Didn't you used to date that guy?

ANDI

Unfortunately...

EN

What a loser.

ANDI

Yeah, he fuckin' was...

EN

No, I meant you. Like who dates someone online? Are you that ugly in real life that you can't date a real guy?

ANDI stands there, trying not to show she was hurt by this comment.

HAMSTERGOKU

Hey fuck you asshole.

SPIKE

It's cool, Andi can take it.

EN

Yeah she's like us, not some lame girl...

HAMSTERGOKU walks up to ANDI, who by this point has gone IDLE.

Don't listen to these jerk offs.
Are you okay?

HAMSTERGOKU

ANDI doesn't answer.

Andi?

HAMSTERGOKU

HAMSTERGOKU reaches out to her, but as he does, ANDI vanishes, signaling she has logged offline entirely. HAMSTERGOKU pulls his hand back.

A private message. AMI-CHAN runs up to TJ, who is facing away, and taps him shyly.

AMI-CHAN

TJ! Are you okay?
I feel like you're avoiding me...o_o;;

TJ

I'm not avoiding you.

AMI-CHAN

Then why did you leave the Hub?

TJ

I didn't leave. I just didn't feel like getting into one of Quest's antics again.
Plus you seemed pre-occupied with Goku...

AMI-CHAN

We were just talking.

TJ

You seemed real flirty.

AMI-CHAN

I'm that way with everyone!
Not flirty...
I mean. I just like being friendly.

TJ

Well some people may take that the wrong way.

AMI-CHAN

I'm sorry...
I'm not used to any of this.
When I'm with you guys, I'm so happy.
I get carried away, then I embarrass myself.
You guys probably think I'm just some stupid kid.

TJ

No one thinks that.
I mean you are really hyper.
But it's cool. It's cute.

AMI-CHAN

Really?!

I mean, haha. ^_^;;

I feel silly because I don't know any of the videogames you talk about.

TJ

Well I don't watch like Sailor Moon or any of those cute cartoons you and Chibi are always screaming about...

AMI-CHAN

I don't care about that!

TJ

Well you can tell me how to watch it.

And where to start.

AMI-CHAN

WELL.

It comes on channel 32.

Oh, wait. You're in Oregon. Um. I mean, it's 32 for me...

TJ

I'll find it.

AMI-CHAN

Oh my god!!! T_T

Thank you!!!

You're so nice!!!!!!!

TJ

Heh. You're the only person who will say that.

AMI-CHAN

No way!

TJ

Didn't anyone tell you? I'm the asshole of the chat.

AMI-CHAN

Nobody has said that to me.

TJ

No but you'll see it.

People talk to me like I am.

AMI-CHAN

Well next time they do I'll beat them up!

TJ

Haha you don't have to do that...

AMI-CHAN

Yes I do!

People just don't understand. You may SEEM like an asshole.

But you're really funny! And smart. And nice. And really adorable!

TJ

You barely know me...

AMI-CHAN

But I can *tell* you're good person.

You're really nice to me TJ.

Um.

I *like* you.

TJ

You do?

AMI-CHAN

I have for a while.

Please don't feel weird.

TJ

No...

I like you too.

AMI-CHAN

REALLY? :D

TJ

Yes! I'm so glad you said it first.

AMI-CHAN

Ahhhh I can't believe this!!

*A distant voice, MARISSA's mom,
begins calling out: "DINNER. HEY.
DIINNERRR..."*

Ami...you're 14, right?

TJ

Yeah...yes!
Why?

AMI-CHAN

Nothing, it's stupid.
Have you ever had a boyfriend?

TJ

Never.

AMI-CHAN

This amuses him.

Then I guess I'm your first boyfriend.

TJ

AMI-CHAN is speechless. Before she can begin to form a response, her mom's voice calls out again, "DINNERR!!!!!"

I am so so so so so so sorry.
I will be RIGHT BACK.

AMI-CHAN

MARISSA stands up from her computer and yells back at her mom.

MARISSA
OKAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAY.

MARISSA

MARISSA walks over to her bed, and in a sudden realization of what has happened, she smiles and excitedly falls onto her bed. She squeals with delight.

MARISSA jumps up quickly and runs over to her computer. AMI-CHAN hurriedly runs back into her PM with TJ.

Wait. TJ!!!!

AMI-CHAN

She runs up and kisses him.

Okay!!!
I'll be on later!

AMI-CHAN

*AMI-CHAN runs away and
MARISSA logs back off, leaving TJ,
alone. MARISSA exits the room for
dinner. Her room disappears.*

*TOM, the real TJ, appears in his
bedroom. He is a chubby sixteen
year old, his face covered with a
poor attempt of growing a beard. He
leans back in his chair, and slowly
spins himself. He stares up at his
ceiling dazed.*

QUEST sits on the couch. PIKAPIKA sits on the ground.

QUEST

I'll never forget the first time I saw him...
 It was Tuesday, March 18, 1985.
 His name was Lion-O. Lord of the Thundercats, wielder of the mystical Sword of Light.
 Fate brought us together.
 His mane was a deep, deep orange, like my favorite color.
 His skin, so tan like milk after a bowl of Waffle Crisp.
 His voice was commanding, adult
 But somehow, soft when he spoke to his friends.
 His eyes...I had never seen a cartoon with such tender, piercing eyes.
 But what made me fall in love was his strength, his leadership
 Despite being just a child.

...
 Basically, when his ancestral home of Thundera was destroyed
 He was sent in a capsule to Third Earth.
 The capsule was supposed to keep him from aging.
 But it failed to do so.
 So while his body grew, mentally he remained a twelve year old.
 And though all the other ThunderCats looked to him to be a leader, he needed their
 guidance, their friendship, to be that leader.

...
 This was the show that started it all for me.
 Without it, I don't think there is any...this.
 To this day... even as I started new obsessions with other TV shows
 I have always had a soft spot for ThunderCats.
 For him.
 The thing is, it couldn't have been any other character.
 It had to be him.
 I needed to see his eyes, his tender eyes.
 I needed to see all of the other characters take care of him.

QUEST is quiet for a long time.

PIKAPIKA

Pikapika?

QUEST smiles.

QUEST

Nothing. I'm just thinking.

Pi...ka...? PIKAPIKA

Sure. QUEST

PIKAPIKA crawls up onto the couch and faces QUEST. QUEST reaches his hand out and gently strokes PIKAPIKA's cheek. PIKA closes their eyes and leans into QUEST's hand, like a cat leaning into an owner's hand. Slowly, PIKAPIKA lays their head on QUEST's lap. QUEST strokes PIKAPIKA's hair.

Pik? PIKAPIKA

It's been quieter around here. QUEST

Pik. PIKAPIKA

QUEST
Maybe I'm being unreasonable.
You can't expect to have people in here all of the time.
I just...don't want to lose this place.
I don't know what I'd do without it.

Pik... PIKAPIKA

QUEST
Right, except you.
You were one of the first.
And you're still here.
Why are you still here?
Do you feel this place is...
Good enough?

PIKAPIKA sits up and nods furiously.

Piiiiiiikapikapikapika...!!!! :D :D

PIKAPIKA

Yeah.
I think so too.
Thank you.

QUEST

PIKAPIKA lies back down, and closes their eyes. QUEST does as well. Silence, until CHIBI enters, followed by HAMSTERGOKU.

That was SO GOOD.

HAMSTERGOKU

Meh. It was predictable.

CHIBI

You mean to tell me,
You knew he was going to detonate his OWN Gundam?

HAMSTERGOKU

I mean, at least there was lots of good gore :D

CHIBI

HAMSTERGOKU stops CHIBI and quietly points at QUEST and PIKAPIKA. They silently laugh.

This is the moment I've been waiting for...

CHIBI

CHIBI sneaks up behind the couch. She pulls out a cartoonish red, large stick of dynamite. She lights the fuse, and shoves it behind PIKAPIKA's back pocket. CHIBI runs to HAMSTERGOKU, and they crouch. QUEST wakes up, grabs the dynamite and throws it in the distance. An offstage boom is heard.

Dammit Quest!

CHIBI

QUEST
Ya'll can try to kill me but I'll just come back stronger than before.

PIKAPIKA
PIK! :P

HAMSTERGOKU
Where is everyone?

QUEST
No clue.
Ami and TJ were slobbering all over each other earlier.
Almost lost my cookies.
Almost.

HAMSTERGOKU
Awwwwwwwww.

CHIBI
WHAT?

QUEST
Oh. Yeah.
Ami and TJ are a thing now.

PIKAPIKA
Pik?!?!?

CHIBI
GAAAAAAHHHH

HAMSTERGOKU
Chibi, we all saw it coming.

QUEST
They were thirstier around each other than Niagara Falls.
Ain't no way the barrel wasn't falling over that edge.
Who wants to go mess with the goth hackers in the Berlin chat?

HAMSTERGOKU
UM YEAH.

CHIBI
What about Andi?!

HAMSTERGOKU

What about her? Andi's tough. She'll be ok.

QUEST

Are we going or not?!

CHIBI

Then you're fucking blind.
Because she hasn't been "ok."
She's been pretty distant since he and her... broke up.

*QUEST, becoming antsy, begins to
do random physical acts: jump rope,
hula hoop, juggling?*

HAMSTERGOKU

I did notice she hasn't been on as much...

CHIBI

Exactly.
And honestly, relationships in this chat room have never ended well.

QUEST

Nobody?!

QUEST pulls out a cane and top hat.

QUEST

HEEELLLOOO MY BABY
HEELLLOOOO MY HONEY—

HAMSTERGOKU

It's just an online fling. It's not like it's real

CHIBI

All of this is real.

PIKAPIKA

Pik!

QUEST

We need to talk about our annual New Year's blow out!!!
Chibi, did you start the playlist yet?

CHIBI

I don't want Ami to go through what I went through...

QUEST
Helllooo? The annual playlist?

HAMSTERGOKU
What do you mean?

CHIBI
Do you remember Piro?
She was one of the first people to ever join the Hub.
I joined around the same time.

HAMSTERGOKU
Piro?!
OH. YES.
I remember her!!!
She got me into Gundam, Bebop... all these rad shows.

CHIBI
Yeah. Me too.
Well we were really really close.

HAMSTERGOKU
I had no idea.
She was pretty quiet...

CHIBI
Yeah.
Remember I was always quiet in here? It's because I just PMed with her all day.
Eventually we even started voice chatting.

As CHIBI speaks, QUEST slowly goes IDLE, until he eventually just logs off. PIKAPIKA watches him.

CHIBI
But then I fucked it all up.

HAMSTERGOKU
Oh come on. I'm sure it's more complicated than that.

CHIBI
Well like I started talking to her about meeting.
She wasn't super far, she was in New Mexico and I was only, you know, in Texas.
But she'd never really respond when I'd bring it up.

So one time on the phone, I brought it up again and I was very direct.
She finally answered, and said yes, let's start planning this, let's meet.

HAMSTERGOKU

That's when she stopped coming here.

CHIBI

...

Yeah.

And she didn't answer her IMs, her emails.

I tried calling the voice chat program and it said the account didn't exist anymore.

She just...left.

HAMSTERGOKU

Chibs...I'm so sorry.

CHIBI

She knew everything about me.

I typed my life away, every little detail, with her.

Hours and hours of sitting here.

My dad and I got into fights because of how much time I spent on here.

But I did it because I thought on the other end, someone was there with me.

HAMSTERGOKU

Chibs...I'm so sorry.

CHIBI

She knew everything about me.

I typed my life away, every little detail, with her.

Hours and hours of sitting here.

My dad and I got into fights because of how much time I spent on here.

But I did it because I thought on the other end, someone was there with me.

HAMSTERGOKU

Maybe she got scared?

CHIBI

I think about it all the time.

Her parents were religious nutjobs.

Maybe they saw our logs. What we said to each other.

And I wonder if she'd still be here if I didn't press her to meet me.

HAMSTERGOKU

I mean, some people just do better here.

They want to be intimate, to have that mental connection.

And only that.

Ami may just need to find this all out for herself...

CHIBI

Quest, have you talked to her yet? Quest?

...

That motherfucker!

Why does he always do that?!

5

Afternoon. MARISSA is woken abruptly by banging on her bedroom door. She sluggishly sits up in bed.

MARISSA

Ok, ok. I'm UP.

NO Mom! I'm busy today!

I have plans!

You don't understand, everyone is waiting for me!!!

MARISSA jumps out of bed, runs directly to her computer and logs on.

*Projection: **Now talking in The Hub*

***Topic is "Insanity does reign here, it pours."*

***Set by QUEST on Tues Mar 22*

AMI-CHAN runs into The Hub. ANDI, HAMSTERGOKU and TJ are playing Marco Polo. HAMSTERGOKU is blindfolded.

AMI-CHAN

Hiiiiiiii friends!!!! :D

HAMSTERGOKU

MARCO.

AMI-CHAN spots TJ and runs up to him, hugging him.

AMI-CHAN

TJ!!!!!!!!!!!! ^_^

TJ

Haha. Hi ^_^
It's late, isn't it?

HAMSTERGOKU

Are we still playing???

ANDI

I guess not...
But if I were you I'd keep the blindfold on.

HAMSTERGOKU takes the blindfold off. ANDI sits down on the couch.

AMI-CHAN

Yeah, hahah.
I slept in.
I never do that!

TJ

Awww, were you that tired sweetie?

AMI-CHAN

Hehe...yeah ^^;;

ANDI

BAAAAARF
Can't you two sick puppies take that cutesy stuff somewhere private?

TJ

Screw you dude.

HAMSTERGOKU

I think it's adorable.
I'm so happy for you kids.

TJ

You know, I'm 15. I'm not a kid.

HAMSTERGOKU

In Hub years, you're still a kid.
When you're 20 like me, I'll stop calling you kid.

QUEST enters, yawning and stretching. He walks up to HAMSTERGOKU, who hands him a cup of coffee and a paper.

QUEST

Gooooood afternoon, my adoring family.
And what have we got in the news here?

HAMSTERGOKU

Just these two melting in the middle of our chat room.

QUEST

Ze du not know how to controlz themselfz.
They are...le horny.

HAMSTERGOKU

Le horny.

TJ

C'mon Quest....

AMI-CHAN is deeply amused by this, but TJ looks tense and embarrassed. QUEST puts his arm around AMI-CHAN.

QUEST

Ehhh mademoiselle?

AMI-CHAN

Oui monsieur?

QUEST

Have you, as we sayz in our'zome country...
Saida oui oui to ze peepee?

ANDI

Wee wee.

PIKAPIKA

Pikapika.

TJ

Oh my god fuck all of you!

TJ quits the chat.

AMI-CHAN

Wow...
I am like, so sorry. O_o;;
I don't even know what just happened.

QUEST

Eh, don't worry about him.

He always takes things so seriously, then gets over it later.

HAMSTERGOKU

Classic TJ.

AMI-CHAN runs after TJ.

ANDI

That poor fucking girl.

The Hub dims out and light shift to AMI-CHAN and TJ as they enter a PM. TJ sits on a beanbag wearing headphones and aggressively playing a videogame. AMI-CHAN softly approaches him. Despite her light tap of TJ's shoulder, he spins around in anger and shock.

TJ

WHAT

AMI-CHAN

Hey...
I just wanted to see if you were okay. o_o;;

TJ

Does it look like I'm okay?

AMI-CHAN

No...I'm sorry.
I just wanted to talk to you.
You left upset.

TJ

Yeah, Quest really pissed me off.

AMI-CHAN

He was just playing.

TJ

Well it was really embarrassing.
Him and Goku always seem to pick on me.
And you kind of just stood there.

AMI-CHAN

I'm...really sorry TJ.
I didn't know what to do...

TJ turns and continues to play his game. AMI-CHAN looks down, trying not to hold back tears. TJ struggles to ignore her but turns around. He gets up and hugs her.

TJ

Hey, hey...
Look, I'm sorry.
I have an anger problem.
I get really angry at things and it's hard for me to stay calm when stuff like that happens.
I've always had that, even since I was little.
I...didn't mean to take it out on you.

AMI-CHAN

It's ok.
I just hate seeing you upset.
When you're upset, I get upset.

TJ

Really?

AMI-CHAN

Yeah.
Because I care about you.
And I hate seeing people I care about feel pain.

TJ

You're... so sweet.
No girl I've dated has ever been as nice as you.
Usually they figure something's wrong with me then leave me.

AMI-CHAN

Oh I'd never do that. Never!!
I wouldn't give up on you.
I'd fight for you!

TJ

Oh, wow :O

AMI-CHAN

I fight for people I love.

And, of course, that includes you ^^;;
My cutiebear.

TJ

Haha
I like that nickname :D

AMI-CHAN

Cutie bear ^ _ ^

TJ

What should I call you?

AMI-CHAN

Hmmm...I dunno ^^;;

TJ

Well, do you have a favorite animal?

AMI-CHAN

Oh my god
Well, I love penguins!!

TJ

Penguins?
That's so silly
But it fits you perfectly.
My little cutie penguin.

AMI-CHAN

!!!!
I love it!!!!

As AMI-CHAN and TJ talk, AMI-CHAN can hardly sit still at her computer desk. She spins around, and covers her face with her hands.

TJ

Hey, Ami?

AMI-CHAN

Yeah? ^^

TJ takes AMI-CHAN by the hand, and kisses her. At her desk, MARISSA covers her face with her

What're you doing that for?
TJ

^____^;; sorry
AMI-CHAN

Heh.
It's okay.
TJ

Okie. :3
AMI-CHAN

They resume kissing. TJ's hands again roam, and AMI-CHAN tries to tolerate this, until one hand begins to slide up her shirt.

OO.....
AMI-CHAN

?????
Obviously I'm doing SOMETHING wrong. :p
TJ

Nononononononononono!!
You're not!
You just surprised me ^^.....
But it's TOTALLY ok!!!
AMI-CHAN

I don't think it is...
...
Do you not want me to kiss you?
TJ

I do! I do!!
I just wasn't expecting, you know...
I guess I just wasn't...I'm being silly.
It's fine.
AMI-CHAN

You sure? TJ

Yeah ^_^ AMI-CHAN

Ok. TJ
I took my shirt off.
Now I'm kissing your neck.

O...okay. AMI-CHAN
Now I'm touching your chest.
It's really nice ^^;;

Heh. TJ
I pull your shirt off...

^^... AMI-CHAN
,,,

I unsnap your bra. TJ
I kiss your chest. :))

OO;; AMI-CHAN

Heh. I hope you like that. TJ

Yes. AMI-CHAN
I do. ^^;

Okay, good. TJ

Now I stick my hand...
Down there. O_O

AMI-CHAN

Oh my gosh ^^;;;;

TJ

Do you shave?

AMI-CHAN

What?

TJ

You know, like down there.

AMI-CHAN

Oh.
Uh...no, not really...

TJ

Oh.

AMI-CHAN

Is that...good?

TJ

Oh
Yeah.
That's fine.

AMI-CHAN

Ok...

TJ

I take off my pants.

AMI-CHAN

o_o;;;;

TJ

...
Are you taking this seriously?

AMI-CHAN

Yes! I am.
...
Ooooh. :)
I put my hands in your boxers.

TJ

Oh yeah.
Ami, I'm very hard.

AMI-CHAN

Oh wow.
That's good.

TJ

What about you?

AMI-CHAN

I feel good.

TJ

Are you wet?

AMI-CHAN

Yeah.
Totally.
Very ^^;;;

TJ

Awesome.
This is nice. :)

AMI-CHAN

Yeah.
It is :)

Will you kiss me?
Down there?

TJ

Sure...
I kiss you down there.

AMI-CHAN

As AMI-CHAN says this, TOM stands up from his computer desk and exits the room. She waits for a response.

TJ?
TJ? o_o;;;

AMI-CHAN

TOM returns to his room and sits back down at the computer.

Hey.

TJ

Are you okay? Where'd you go?

AMI-CHAN

I had to go... satisfy myself o_o;;;

TJ

Oh. ^^;;;;

AMI-CHAN

That was really nice, Ami.

TJ

He hugs her and kisses her. She appears surprised. He is glowing, like someone we haven't met or seen before.

AMI-CHAN

Yeah...it was.

TJ

Do you mind if I return to my game?

I kind of left them all hanging during this mission...

AMI-CHAN

Yea...yeah.

Of course.

You go ahead.

TJ

Okay, great! :)

I'll talk to you tomorrow, sweetie.

Oh and Ami?

AMI-CHAN

Yeah?

TJ

Can you send me a photo soon?

She nods, he smiles. TJ logs off, exiting with a confident stride. AMI-CHAN stands alone.

6

MARISSA is in the middle of figuring out how to connect an old digital camera to her computer. After several moments of trial and error, she gets it to work.

She stands a distance from the computer camera, and begins to pose: cute photos, serious photos, things a teen would think look romantic or sweet.

She goes to look at the photos on the computer: as she scans them, she becomes increasingly upset and angry. None of them are good. She tries taking photos again, and again, and again, and again.

None are ever good enough for her. She hates her appearance that much. Nothing is "Ami-Chan."

Opposite MARISSA: ANDI walks into her room and her screen lights up. The sound of repeated messaging sounds. She sits down. ANDI enters the message, and EN and SPIKE are there.

ANDI
Hello...?

EN
Ahahah there she is!

ANDI
What the fuck do you twats want?

SPIKE

We're just bored.

EN

Yeah and we kind of just knew you'd be on.

SPIKE

It's not like you'd be up to anything else, right?

ANDI stands, frozen. EN and SPIKE circle her.

EN

Not like you have any friends or anything.

SPIKE

Just constantly on here, talking about all the ~video games~ you claim you play.

EN

You're just desperate for some attention.

SPIKE

Some dddddick.

EN

The only kind you'll ever get will be here.

SPIKE

Can you send us a pic?

EN

Maybe one of your tits?

SPIKE

You gonna say anything?!

ANDI

Yeah.

If you two are so horny just go back to fucking your sister.

EN

We'd rather beat off to a fat chick.

SPIKE

C'mon, send us something nude.
It'll be the most action you ever get.

ANDI

Go..
GO TO HELL!

ANDI pushes them aside and runs out, exiting. EN and SPIKE stand there, grinning. They exit.

ANDI sits at her computer crying. MARISSA lies on her bed crying.

MARISSA

He can't ever see me.

ANDI

What am I supposed to do?

MARISSA

I want him to see me. But...

ANDI

Everywhere I go...

MARISSA

I can never live up to Ami...

ANDI

I'm not cute like her, I'm not as fun as I think I am...

MARISSA

He said he liked me, but he meant her

ANDI

I should just start again.

MARISSA's screen lights up randomly. AMI-CHAN enters online, she is searching. ANDI appears.

AMI-CHAN

Oh Andi...thank god!!!

ANDI

Oh.

AMI-CHAN runs up to hug ANDI, who stops her from touching her.

AMI-CHAN

Sorry. ^^;;

ANDI

Oh my god. Stop apologizing for everything.

AMI-CHAN

It's a bad habit, I know...
Why does it make you so angry?

ANDI

I don't know.
Probably because I say it a lot to people too.
Especially my mom.
But I realized I was being stupid and stopped.
She can fuck herself.

AMI-CHAN

God.
You know, you're so cool Andi.
I bet you're like...so popular at your school.

ANDI

Haha yeah, that's right. Popular me.

AMI-CHAN

Then maybe you can help me...

ANDI

Okay.

AMI-CHAN

I'm having some problems...with a boy.

ANDI

Yup.

AMI-CHAN

It's kind of embarrassing.
I feel like it's not what I expected.

ANDI

Not surprised.

AMI-CHAN

Some of it's really nice. Like really nice.
But I'm scared.

ANDI

Of?

AMI-CHAN

He wants to see me. The real me.
And I don't think I can do that.

*ANDI's tone changes from
flippant to deadly serious.*

ANDI

See you how?

AMI-CHAN

Like a picture.
If he sees it he'll know how ugly I really am.
He can't know how ugly I am, he'll break up with me!

AMI-CHAN begins to cry.
ANDI's disgusted.

ANDI

Stop it, stop it!
Ugh. No boy is worth this bullshit.
Ami, you may be fooling everyone else but you aren't fooling me.
I've seen you on other message boards.
I actually think we used to go on the same one.
Sailor Moon World?
Your username was MercuryRhapsody513.

AMI-CHAN

Yeah...
And?

ANDI

Just last year you were telling everyone it's your 12th birthday.
Now you're 13...or 14...or whatever.

AMI-CHAN

...
No, I'm---

ANDI

I SAID STOP IT.
You're just a kid.
You want to hang around here playing grown up, teenager, whatever
Do you know how much I wish I could go back to being you?
Being 12? Being carefree?

AMI-CHAN

So what if the real world sucks? This...this place is different.

ANDI

Hah!
That's what I thought.
Turns out, everyone else in the "real" world is here too.
And they have even more of a reason to be mean

Because you can't see their face.
And maybe they can't see yours, but they know their words hurt.
I've been able to forget the things people have said to me
But somehow, when I SEE their words...that burns
Right
Into my brain.
...
Ami...if you're unhappy out there, in that real world...
You'll be unhappy anywhere.

AMI-CHAN doesn't answer.

ANDI

Do you even care what I am trying to tell you?
I'm giving you a very real warning.

AMI-CHAN

...
I don't know what to say.
Maybe...you just don't want anyone else to date TJ.

ANDI

UGH!!!
I wish I could reach through this screen and SLAP YOU.

AMI-CHAN

Just...leave me alone!!!

*AMI-CHAN quickly logs off.
MARISSA begins sobbing at her
desk. ANDI begins to yell by herself,
as if screaming into an empty chat
can somehow still reach AMI-CHAN.*

ANDI

DUDE. SURE. RUN the fuck off! I'm used to it, Ami. You haven't been here long, but you'll learn. It's safe here for only so long, before people find out you're wanted nowhere, and people suck anyhow.

*The same night, back at The Hub.
It's very late, and QUEST, TJ
HAMSTERGOKU and PIKAPIKA
are IDLING. ANDI enters.*

ANDI

No one is ever around when I log on...
Oh well.

*ANDI crouches down and runs her
hand down her left wrist. She begins
to cry. HAMSTERGOKU "wakes"
up, and notices ANDI. He
immediately rushes to her.*

HAMSTERGOKU

Andi!!!!
You're never on this late...
What're you doing?

ANDI

Oh.
Hey.
Neither are you.
Are you stalking me or something?

HAMSTERGOKU

No.
I...

*He notices her wrist. He pulls her
up.*

HAMSTERGOKU

What on earth is this??!?!
Andi???
Answer me!

ANDI
What're you gonna do?
Tell my mom?

HAMSTERGOKU
I could.

ANDI
How?

HAMSTERGOKU
Maybe...I'll ask TJ?

At the mention of TJ's name, ANDI begins sobbing. Unsure of what to do, HAMSTERGOKU tries to pull her in for a hug, but she pushes away.

ANDI
DON'T YOU DARE TOUCH ME.

HAMSTERGOKU
Andi...
I hate seeing you like this.
Please...
I care about you.

ANDI
Oh wow.
How nice.
So now you wanna "date" too?
And then what?
Dump me when you see a picture of me?

HAMSTERGOKU
What.
Of course not...I don't-

ANDI

How can you care about me when you don't really know me?

HAMSTERGOKU

I do know you. You're Andi, of the Hub.

I've known you now for...

Two years.

You're the funniest person I've ever met.

ANDI

We've never met.

HAMSTERGOKU

Haven't we met here?

Is this not you?

ANDI

No, it isn't.

Andi is a funny bitch who, yes, will curse like a sailor if you piss her off.

Who dances to new wave and makes the best jokes.

But...ANDEE. Andrea.

She...weighs over 250 pounds. She is covered in acne.

She isn't funny. She's ugly.

Her existence is funny.

People love to laugh at her.

They call her whale and dumpy and fatso.

HAMSTERGOKU

We don't care about that here.

I don't.

ANDI

You would. Believe me, you would.

I don't trust anyone *THERE*

And, I don't think I trust anyone here.

HAMSTERGOKU

But

ANDI

Did it ever occur to you that not everyone in here is happy?
Quest makes us feel soooo good about ourselves.
But he can't keep this shit up forever.
The high has worn off.
I don't care who I am here, because I'm still ME.
And who I am, no one wants.
Online, offline, I don't matter.
There are no worlds left for me.
...
I have nothing left to say.
Goodbye.

HAMSTERGOKU

ANDI!!!!

*ANDI exits. HAMSTERGOKU
begins to panic. He runs up to an
idling QUEST and shakes him.*

HAMSTERGOKU

QUEST. QUEST.
QUEST.
QUEST.
QUEST!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
WAKE THE FUCK UP!!!!!!!
CHIBI?!?!?!?
TJ?!?!?!?!?
PLEASE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!
IF YOU DON'T HURRY, ANDI---
Please, JESUS CHRIST.
Fuck.
Fuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuckfuck SHIT.
QUEST!!

HAMSTERGOKU exits.

MARISSA wakes up from her bed and slowly sits up. Her mom pounds loudly on the door.

MARISSA

YEAH. I know it's today.

No I won't spend all day on the computer.

I swear.

...

Hey, Mom?

Do you think when we go out today, we could stop at Toys R Us?

I want to get a game.

It's called Diablo 2.

No, it's not violent.

It's like, fantasy.

I just want to play it!

Okay.

Thank you.

MARISSA crosses over to her computer and logs on. AMI-CHAN enters The Hub. QUEST, PIKAPIKA and CHIBI are there. TJ is IDLING.

CHIBI

MY LOVE!!!!!! :D

AMI-CHAN

Hi Chibi! :):)

QUEST

Ami in tha house!!!!

What's my fav girl up to this beautiful Saturday?

AMI-CHAN

Well I WANTED to spend all day watching this new anime I got...

But my lame mom is dragging me to some family thing.

QUEST

Pfff.
Don't go.

PIKAPIKA

Pik.

AMI-CHAN

I gotta.
It's the only way I can get her to buy me Diablo 2. >:3

CHIBI

WHAT?

AMI-CHAN

I wanna play it with TJ.

QUEST

Awww. Like little dates.

AMI-CHAN

Exactly! ^_^
Hehe.

CHIBI

But you'll still be around, right? :(

AMI-CHAN

OF COURSE.
I will always be a Hubbian.

QUEST

Good.
Cause if you ever leave...
We'll find you.
Muahahah.

AMI-CHAN

The only way I'm leaving this place is if the internet exploded.

QUEST

Then I think we're good.

PIKAPIKA

Pika.

TJ "wakes" from IDLING.

TJ

Um, guys.

Did any of you scroll up in the chat last night by any chance?

QUEST

No...

CHIBI

I wasn't here.

AMI-CHAN

Me either.

What's wrong?

QUEST stares straight ahead. As he "reads" what he sees, his appearance turns serious.

CHIBI

Quest??

TJ, what happened?

TJ

Andi...

She left.

CHIBI

She logged off?

TJ

No, like she...

Quit the hub?
AMI-CHAN

Like...
TJ

Killed herself.
...
...
QUEST

No.
Andi would never do that.
Never.
NEVER.
Right? Chibi?
AMI-CHAN

...
I don't know if I'd say "never" ...
CHIBI

...
What.
AMI-CHAN

She hasn't...been the same.
Since the breakup.
CHIBI

What're you saying.
TJ

...
I'm gonna kill you.
CHIBI

TJ didn't do this.
Not on purpose.
AMI-CHAN

CHIBI

He changed her.

AMI-CHAN

We don't know if she really did, did kill-

CHIBI

QUEST SAID SHE DID.

AMI-CHAN

HOW DOES HE KNOW.

CHIBI

Are you seriously questioning if he KNOWS?!

TJ

WE NEED TO CALM DOWN.

WE HAVE NO IDEA IF SHE REALLY DID

CHIBI

WHAT IS HAPPENING

This is our world you guys!

This is US we're talking about.

This is my HOME.

My FAMILY.

This isn't supposed to happen!

...

Why aren't you more angry?!

QUEST

ALRIGHT.

ALRIGHT.

STOP IT.

QUEST kicks everyone out of the chat and "locks" it so no one can enter. He paces, breathing heavily.

*Projected: **The topic is “Tonight’s the night. See you soon, space cowboy.” Set by HAMSTERGOKU, Fri Dec 31.*

HAMSTERGOKU lays down on the couch and stares up at the ceiling. PIKAPIKA enters The Hub and quietly approaches HAMSTERGOKU.

PIKAPIKA

Pik.

HAMSTERGOKU gently sits up and wipes his tears.

HAMSTERGOKU

Hey buddy.
Haven’t seen you in a minute.
Everything going ok?

PIKAPIKA

Pik... :/
Pikapika?

HAMSTERGOKU

I...would say I’m the same.
I don’t know what happened that night, Pik.
She never talked like that.
And then suddenly...
...
And since then I’ve been scanning all of the newspapers in North Carolina.
That’s all of the info I have.
TJ didn’t have shit. That asshole.
Only that she lives...lived...in North Carolina.
...
I can’t fucking stand it!

Quest seemed SO SURE but I just don't know!
All I do is re-read our logs.
Trying to make out the times when she was trying to tell us something.

PIKAPIKA

Pik...

HAMSTERGOKU

All I feel is this heavy pit in my stomach.
I don't want to eat or sleep.
If I could've done something, that was my moment.
I want to tell her I care!
Why can't she know that I care?!
And where the fuck is Quest?!
Where is he?! What the fuck is wrong with him, doing that to us.
...
Have you spoken to him?

PIKAPIKA

Pika.
Pika?

HAMSTERGOKU

No.
I haven't seen him in a month.
But a week after...you know
This place wasn't locked up anymore.
I've just been operating since.
Alone.

PIKAPIKA

Pika....

HAMSTERGOKU

He'll be back.
This is his home.
He has to come back at some point.

PIKAPIKA

Pikapika.

HAMSTERGOKU

That's true.
It is the holidays.
I'm sure he wants to spend it with his family.

PIKAPIKA

PIKA.

HAMSTERGOKU

You know what I meant!
We ARE his family.
He'll come around.
He never misses New Years.
It's his favorite.
And this is a big one.

PIKAPIKA

Pikapika...

HAMSTERGOKU

Don't be scared.
It's just a number.

PIKAPIKA

Pikapika.
Pikapikapikapikapika-

HAMSTERGOKU

DAMN IT, shut up!!
Now you're starting to make ME worry!
Who knows, maybe the world WILL end tonight.
Maybe it's for the best!

PIKAPIKA cowers.

HAMSTERGOKU

Ah I didn't mean it...
...
God damn it I am such a fuck up.
...

Here....

*HAMSTERGOKU walks over to
PIKAPIKA and hugs them.
PIKAPIKA looks surprised.*

HAMSTERGOKU

Look...

We have no idea what's going to happen.
But it'll take more than a new millennium to take away the Hub.
You got that?

PIKAPIKA nods.

HAMSTERGOKU

I'm not like a huge believer in things.
But I've felt like there was a reason I ended up here.
Like it was meant to be.
And...
I just have this feeling that this place
whatever it is...was made for the future.
And I'm part of it.
That sounds stupid.

*PIKAPIKA shakes their head 'no.'
CHIBI enters.*

CHIBI

Oh hell no.

PIKAPIKA

PIKA.

*CHIBI walks towards
HAMSTERGOKU and PIKAPIKA
with the intent to push them apart.
PIKAPIKA looks nervous and tries
to run away but HAMSTERGOKU
clings to them and raises his hand to
stop CHIBI.*

HAMSTERGOKU

WAIT.

CHIBI

Why're you protecting that thing!?

HAMSTERGOKU

Why're you always so mean to them???

CHIBI

Because...

Because I always felt like Quest...liked you more.

The most.

*PIKAPIKA shakes their head 'no'
again.*

PIKAPIKA

Pikapikapikapikapika!

HAMSTERGOKU

Chibi...

CHIBI

I feel like Pika, you always put him first.

And we, I, didn't.

We were all so preoccupied with our own shit,

And we didn't realize that we took this place for granted.

We took Andi for granted.

And Quest.

And now they're both fucking GONE.

What're we gonna do?!

*CHIBI begins to sob.
HAMSTERGOKU outstretches his
arm, his other still around
PIKAPIKA.*

HAMSTERGOKU

Come here.

*CHIBI quickly walks into
HAMSTERGOKU's arm and the
three embrace, tightly. Together they
shift down to their knees and stay
together in a huddle.*

CHIBI

He's gone. Forever.

HAMSTERGOKU

Don't say that.

CHIBI

It's been a month!

HAMSTERGOKU

A month is nothing. It's not forever.

...

You said we never put him first.

Maybe it's time we do.

PIKAPIKA

Pika!

HAMSTERGOKU

Somehow... we need to tell him we need him back.

No, want him back.

So we can know he is okay.

Because WE are worried.

CHIBI

How do we do that?

*HAMSTERGOKU thinks for a
while.*

I don't know.

HAMSTERGOKU

Pika...

PIKAPIKA

AMI-CHAN and TJ enter.

Guys...

AMI-CHAN

Barf :P

TJ

Grow up dumbass.

HAMSTERGOKU

I haven't seen you say a word about Andi.

CHIBI

That's not true. :O

AMI-CHAN

No. Him.

CHIBI

ME?? You've barely been in here!

TJ

I don't know if you noticed but a bunch of shit has gone down lately preventing that.

CHIBI

Hey fuck you too.

TJ

Cool it TJ

HAMSTERGOKU

No YOU cool it

TJ

You know you always act like you need to be in control of everything
No one asked you to.

CHIBI

He's literally an OP you fucking idiot!

TJ

I meant like, our emotions, and shit.
You think you're like our dad.
It's not cute or funny.

HAMSTERGOKU

What the hell happened to you man?
I remember when you came in-

TJ

Okay so like when you were still young-

HAMSTERGOKU

Fuck you!
You were like thirteen.
You didn't know shit.
All you knew was videogames, Dragon Ball Z, and shitty ass Eminem songs.

TJ

Your point?

HAMSTERGOKU

You were a cool kid. Really funny and insightful.
I used to love when you logged on.
I think your parents letting you loose on the internet to do whatever you want warped
your brain.
Too much porn
Learned how to jerk off.
Maybe puberty hit you a little too hard.

CHIBI snorts.

AMI-CHAN

Okay guys...

TJ

Okay?
I'm sorry I grew up?
I'm only 15. It's not like I'm 50.

HAMSTERGOKU

Well you sure act like it.

TJ

Are you done?

HAMSTERGOKU

No, you asshole freak pervert.

TJ

Yeah well at least I'm not basically 20 and hanging out with teenagers.

HAMSTERGOKU

...

CHIBI

...

TJ

...

AMI-CHAN

GUYS PLEASE.
I'm begging you
All of this fighting isn't good.
What would Quest be saying if he saw this crap?

PIKAPIKA

Pika.

*PIKAPIKA runs over to AMI-CHAN.
They hug.*

TJ

He'd probably fart on one of us.

CHIBI

And then lick us.

Everyone is quiet.

HAMSTERGOKU

I wonder what he's doing right now.

AMI-CHAN

I can't picture it.

Him, living in the real world.

Like, grocery shopping or doing laundry.

CHIBI

We will wait here. As long as it takes.

TJ

Hopefully we're still here tomorrow...

PIKAPIKA

PIKA.

HAMSTERGOKU

You guys, it's just a NUMBER CHANGE.

Do you think the government wouldn't be smart enough to prepare for something like Y2K?

CHIBI

I trust my pet snake more than I trust the government.

HAMSTERGOKU

You kids are stressing me out.

TJ

Well, you've got...

10 hours to go.

!!!
PIKAPIKA

TJ!
CHIBI

TJ
I'm just joking! :P
Geeze.
You guys never seem to get that about me.

As the group continues to speak, TJ wanders around. Eventually he goes IDLE.

CHIBI
Maybe the world should end.

HAMSTERGOKU
THAT'S WHAT I SAID.

AMI-CHAN
I don't want the world to end.
I like it :(

CHIBI
Meh.

AMI-CHAN
I know a lot of things suck.
But finding this place has made everything better.

PIKAPIKA
Pika.

AMI-CHAN
There's something about it.
Not just meeting all of you,
Who I love so much.
But its like finding this space made the...universe bigger, if that makes sense?

^^;;

HAMSTERGOKU

There are a lot of possibilities.
And it's all so new.
Which is why, I think, we need to protect it.

CHIBI

Protecting from who?

HAMSTERGOKU

I don't know really.
People who suck?

CHIBI

That's a challenge.

HAMSTERGOKU

People with no imaginations.

PIKAPIKA

Pik.

CHIBI

If we survive Y2K...

AMI-CHAN

CHIBI.

CHIBI

WHEN we survive Y2K, let's bend the millennium.
Point it towards us.
And declare WE are controlling the next 1000 years...
We can do anything here, we have the power.

AMI-CHAN enters a PM with TJ.

AMI-CHAN

Hey there cutie bear.
I know you probably don't want to hear me say it again
But none of it is your fault.

TJ

I can't help it.
And now I feel like everyone's eyes are on me
They hate me, more than they did before.
Quest is gone and I'm probably the reason why.

AMI-CHAN

TJ no—

TJ

Like what is the point of any of this?
Why do I keep coming?
I fuck up at school, at home...
I come here just to feel the same way
I know I can be a real jerk
But I'm not Hitler!
I started coming here just to have fun
And now its always drama
Which I get BLAMED for.

...
I end up feeling worse when I'm here
Not because of you
You're probably my only friend left in this place
I don't even know why I come back
Maybe I won't.

AMI-CHAN

No!
Please, please don't leave : (

TJ

Why?

AMI-CHAN

Because... we all have a place here.

TJ

Yeah and mine is being the whipping horse.

AMI-CHAN

No...it's not that...

TJ

Then WHAT IS IT?

AMI-CHAN

I don't know!

But it's not that!

Why do we need to know?!

Why can't we just be happy being us?!

TJ looks at AMI-CHAN stunned. He goes up to AMI-CHAN and holds her face in his hands.

TJ

Hey, I'm sorry.

I can't help how I feel.

AMI-CHAN

I know you have self-esteem issues.

I just wish I had some power...

Like some crazy magical power

That took all of that away from you.

And that you could always be happy.

TJ

You'd use such an incredible power on me?

AMI-CHAN

Yes.
You're my soul mate.

*TJ looks into AMI-CHAN's eyes,
then leans in to kiss her. As they kiss,
TJ becomes touchy. He runs his hand
down to AMI-CHAN's chest.*

AMI-CHAN

TJ, I can't right now. ^^;;

TJ

Why?
It's the end of the world.
You don't want to spend it with me?

AMI-CHAN

Of course I do...

TJ

Okay.
What is it this time, then?

AMI-CHAN

I just don't know why you have to say things like that.
"It's the end of the world."

TJ

I'm joking.
Do you really believe that shit?

AMI-CHAN

Do you?

TJ

Would it be the end of the world if we couldn't log on?

AMI-CHAN

To me it would be...

TJ

You gotta grow up and get off of here sometime Ami...

AMI-CHAN

I guess...

TJ

I want to experience more of the real world.

AMI-CHAN

Am I not real to you?

TJ

Of course you are.

I just wish I could see you somehow.

Will you send me a picture of you soon?

AMI-CHAN

I'm trying.

I don't have a camera. ^^;;

TJ

I told you I could just send you one.

AMI-CHAN

No it's okay-

TJ

Maybe we can meet up!

AMI-CHAN

I don't think my parents would let me...

TJ

You're being really weird and difficult about this and that's surprising.

AMI-CHAN

TJ, don't hate me...I—

I want to see your face!

TJ

I'm not 14.

AMI-CHAN

TJ doesn't respond.

Please...please don't hate me.
Please?

AMI-CHAN

How...old are you?

TJ

AMI-CHAN doesn't respond. A long, long silence. She begins to cry. He signs off. MARISSA sobs in her chair.

MARISSA sits in her chair, face in hands, as she cries.

A countdown begins. MARISSA looks up at her computer. 10 seconds to Y2K...5, 4, 3, 2, 1...Happy New Year!!!

The room brightens, and QUEST pushes through the door into the room, his arms loaded with plastic grocery bags, out of breath. He dumps all of the bags on the floor.

QUEST takes off his coat and begins to unload the bags. The rustling of the bags stirs MARISSA. She swings her chair and sees QUEST. She watches him, silently.

QUEST sits down on the bed, and reaches over to a drawer and pulls out a device to check his blood sugar. He then pulls out a vial and syringe and preps it. He injects the syringe.

...Quest?	MARISSA
Oh. Hey Ami.	QUEST
Why...are you in my room?	MARISSA
Girl this is my room.	QUEST

And is this how you plan to start a new millennium?!

MARISSA

Where are you?! Are you okay?!
Are you coming back to the Hub?!

QUEST

I wasn't planning on it

MARISSA

Because of Andi?

QUEST

I saw into the millennium that night.
It wasn't pretty.
I saw a future of ThunderCats reboots and more bad Star Wars movies.
There wasn't any room for us.

MARISSA

So you just up and leave us? We've been worried sick about you! Pika especially!

QUEST

The point of The Hub was for you to NOT worry about me.
No drama. Just another way to exist.

MARISSA

That was never going to be the case.
Now it's more my life than anything.
I don't know how else to live anymore.
And now I've lost TJ...

QUEST

TJ was half way out of it anyway.
I wouldn't be surprised if you ever heard from him again.
He just wants a normal life.
He's boring.
You aren't boring, Ami.
Marissa.
Can you do something for me?

MARISSA

Anything.

QUEST

Whatever it is that you learned in The Hub
Not TJ, not even...Andi...
But that thing you felt, whatever compelled you to come, to return
whatever you've taken inside of you,
Can you take it and make more if it?

MARISSA

I don't know how to make websites or chats.

QUEST

Not like that.
Make it outside, online, wherever.
Make some more of it, and make it better.
Make a place for Pika.
Make it safe.

MARISSA

Are you really not coming back, ever?

QUEST

I can't.
It hurts too much.
I need to be by myself for a while.
Maybe I'll move to LA and become an animator.
Or become a walk around character at Euro Disney.
I can't outrun the real world, may as well find a job.
My parents would be proud.

*QUEST puts his coat back on.
MARISSA doesn't know what to say.
She tries to hug him but he steps
backwards, he is floating away.*

QUEST

I'm sorry I couldn't make it a better place for you or Andi.

MARISSA

It isn't your fault!

And...I realize what Andi was trying to tell before she left.

She was trying to protect me, the way you protect us.

It's inevitable that what happens in the world will be part of the Hub.

But The Hub can still exist Quest!

It can be everything we've ever wanted!

We can fill it only with what is good, and tender, and kind.

I believe that.

To the deepest core of my being, I believe that.

The Internet is limitless in what it can do.

Chibi and I have a plan for the future.

The Hub in the new Millenium.

And I believe it can be good for humanity--

*But as she talked, he has floated
away.*

*The Hub. TJ, CHIBI,
HAMSTERGOKU and PIKA are
talking as AMI-CHAN enters.
Silence. TJ goes to exit.*

TJ...please-
AMI-CHAN

TJ stops.

I just wanted you to like me.
AMI-CHAN

...
TJ
I did like you.

AMI-CHAN
Then why did you need a photo of me?

TJ
Because...
It's stupid. Forget it.

*He shakes his head and exits. CHIBI
and PIKAPIKA run up to AMI-
CHAN.*

HAMSTERGOKU
He was never one of us anyway.

AMI-CHAN
Are you all mad that I lied? :(

CHIBI
Ahahah. No.

HAMSTERGOKU
Everybody lies on here. :P

PIKAPIKA

Pika.

AMI-CHAN

It was kind of a big lie.

CHIBI

It was never a lie to begin with
You were just giving us the version of you that you wanted to give.

HAMSTERGOKU

Plus you're a lot of fun

PIKAPIKA

Pikapika :D

AMI-CHAN

I do feel like TJ belonged here though :/
He just didn't want to admit he needed to be here.

CHIBI

You're being too generous

AMI-CHAN

But it's what Quest would've wanted.

HAMSTERGOKU

We can wait forever to find out what Quest would "want"
I think we should start focusing on what we want.
What does Ami want?

PIKAPIKA

Pik...

The chat disappears. AMI-CHAN disappears. MARISSA gets up and leaves the room. Time passes.

MARISSA walks back into the bedroom. She is now 22, wearing trendy clothes, clearly more confident than when she was 12. Her computer is replaced by a laptop.

She barely looks at her surroundings and instead pulls out her iPhone, and begins casually scrolling.

TOM, now 26, walks out and stands on the opposite end of the room from MARISSA, looking ahead. He wears designer clothes with a pair of Ray-Bans on his head.

TOM

Thomas James is feeling fucking psyched for Cory's bachelor party in Las Vegas. Sigma Phi 08 boys back together!!!!

MARISSA laughs to herself, and then begins typing on her phone.

MARISSA

Hope you have a romantic weekend with your bros.

TOM

Real funny you dummy :P

TOM walks away, and MARISSA continues scrolling.

HAMSTERGOKU walks out to the same spot TOM was just in. He hasn't changed much: instead, his love for things anime seems to have grown.

HAMSTERGOKU

Josh B. Saiyan is thinking about maybe joining OK Cupid...thoughts?

MARISSA begins to respond excitedly.

MARISSA

OMG Hammy...go for it.

HAMSTERGOKU

Hehe, Hammy. Haven't heard that one in forever. Well Ami...if you say so, I'll give it a try.

MARISSA

Of course you'll always be my HamsterGoku!!! I refuse to call you anything else. :P

HAMSTERGOKU

Hehe. Thanks Ami. I hope you're doing well these days...

They both smile. HAMSTERGOKU exits. MARISSA continues scrolling, until a sound on her phone tells her she's received a message. It's from JERRY. He walks out, dressed similar to how TOM was earlier.

JERRY

Hey.

MARISSA

Um...hi?

JERRY

Wats up...

MARISSA

Who are you?

JERRY

Friend of Tom's...
Ur kinda cute...

MARISSA

Th...thank you....?

JERRY

Oh wait...
I just clicked on r profile...
its just a picture of ur face?
Why no full body pic? Too fat?

MARISSA

GO AWAY.

JERRY

Too bad, u had potential.

MARISSA

I said GO THE FUCK AWAY!

MARISSA, upset, throws her phone. JERRY disappears. She holds herself, shaken. A few moments later her phone lights up with another notification for an email. Unable to resist, she gets up and looks at her phone. When she realizes what it is, she smiles. CHIBI enters, wearing a black apron and looking disheveled.

CHIBI

AMI!!!! ***hug***

I'm so glad you emailed...It's weird because when you did, I had thought of you recently... isn't that funny? Anyway I'm glad you found me. I must be the last person on earth who has refused to jump on the Facebook wagon. Ugh. Like I don't need people being able to click through my entire life and stare at a picture of my face all day long without me knowing. Maybe I'm just bitter...I feel like MySpace happened, and then Facebook, and suddenly the internet was weird but not in that fun way. We just...comment on things now. There's no creation, no mystery. Do I sound like an old person? Fuck. I'll stop ranting.

God it's just...so good to hear from you. There's nothing really new with me... Still in Texas. I work at a Whole Foods in the bakery department. I. Fucking. Hate. It. So. Much. You don't know hell until you've had a 40-year-old crusty rich lady scream at you because her child's precious vegan cupcake touched the non-vegan cupcakes. But at least the pay is pretty decent. Other than that I don't do too much...I take care of my bearded dragon, Petunia, and I read a lot. I'm still writing fanfiction lol.

And to answer your question... I don't have Quest's email. The last time I tried (which had to be like ten years ago) I got a bounceback.

Did I...ever tell you about that time Quest convinced all of those pedophile Nazis in the Ecchi porn chat that he was a cop and he knew where they lived? And that he was seizing their chatroom for evidence? They handed it right over to him! Then we fucking deleted it! Man that was so fucking funny...I think it was before your time.

I think Quest knew. He must've sensed something big was going to happen after everything with...Andi... But what I don't understand is why he never came back. Why he didn't tell us. Or bring us where he was going. He just abandoned us.

I'm sorry I'm ranting. My break is over, so I have to run for now...I'm so glad we're talking again. Love you lots, Chibi.

CHIBI disappears. MARISSA continues to lie there for a while, until suddenly she gets up and begins digging through a box next to her desk. She pulls out a giant, chunky Dell desktop computer and begins connecting it to the wires at her desk. She's in a groove, like she knows by now exactly what to do.

Projected above her, she looks on her desktop and finds an icon that reads "THE HUB." She double clicks it. Text begins to scroll.

***Now talking in The Hub*

***Topic is "Happy Birthday To The Hub!"*

***Set by CHIBI on Thurs Oct 23 2003*

AMI-CHAN walks into the emptiness of the hub.

HELLO???

AMI-CHAN

This is so...What am I thinking?

MARISSA

This looks so weird...
There isn't even anyone here to kick me out.
I wonder if I stay a while, someone would actually come in...

AMI-CHAN

Man that's such a dumb idea.

MARISSA

Heeeelllloo...Quest? Pika?

AMI-CHAN

This is silly.

MARISSA

*MARISSA clicks and begins typing.
She changes the topic of the chat:*

***Topic is "AMI-CHAN was here."*

***Set by AMI-CHAN on Sun Apr 11 2010*

Should we go?

MARISSA

Yeah.

AMI-CHAN

Bye bye.

MARISSA's eyes meet AMI-CHAN's for a moment. She then clicks out of the chat and AMI-CHAN disappears. MARISSA shuts down the computer, turns off the lights and closes the door. END OF PLAY.