KINITO**PET**

THE MALWARE THAT EXPLOITS YOU

N E X P

This video contains flashing lights, sudden loud noises, and scenes of explicit violence and gore.

Prelude

As I was beginning this video, my computer emitted a strange sound. It lit up like a beacon in the night, almost like it was beckoning for my attention.

-camera shot approaching computer, then phone begins to vibrate – Caleb Finn calling, answer and play warning audio-

But what was it for?

-pan cursor over to KinitoPet.exe, double click, then bass rumble, creepy text: THINK OF ALL THE MEMORIES WE CAN MAKE-

Welcome to the World Wide Web

-begin Up Late Again-

As we approach the middle of the decade, there's this collective understanding that we're far, far away from the wild west era of this virtual expanse we find ourselves in every day. It was an era accompanied by home movies, Saturday morning cartoons, and this sense of continuous adventure made possible – only through the *World Wide Web*.

At the turn of the millennium, the net was a new frontier. An expanse of discovery – an *entire world* that anyone with a server and enough will – could carve out of to make a corner of their very own. There was this special sort of - magic during this time. Magic that we simply don't see very much of today. Social MMOs. The Geocities page. Endless flash games. And even virtual assistants – like *Clippy.*

While a bit annoying for its era, Clippy is mostly remembered fondly because of their eclectic charm and wholesome purpose of existing merely to help you. It was one of the first of its kind, a new way to foster computer education in a rapidly emerging mid-90s technological market; and what followed were a myriad of others – all equally annoying, yet entirely endearing. Of course, this is good and all, but, what do you do, when one surfaces with a goal of, not helping, but *exploiting you*?

-BONZI TTS, fade Up Late Again, begin Quiet and Falling – Celeste OST-

In 1999, a virtual assistant named *Bonzi Buddy* entered the scene under the guise of a friendly purple gorilla. It was advertised as someone that could be your best friend. It could talk, sing, download, laugh, tell you facts, it could do it all. Hundreds of thousands of people downloaded Bonzi Buddy due to it's undeniable charm, yet what it never got around to sharing, was the fact that it would spy on you, scraping your data – your browsing history, your conversations, even your location, and would feed it to third parties for profit. Bonzi Buddy, in actuality, was never your friend. It was a trojan horse that, on the surface, resembled a digital pet, yet it was entirely malicious.

-fade-

But, it wouldn't be the only one, as throughout the years, Bonzi Buddy has inspired a myriad of similar programs. And, amidst that crowd, is one that is *so hell-bent* on becoming your friend – that its actions border on near-obsession. It's called Kinito, and it's the digital

imagining of a once-beloved children's toy created by the Kinito Leisure and Entertainment Company back during the 80s. From plush toys to it's own interactive Tamagotchi, Kinito had pushed the boundaries of what a virtual friend could be.

Of course, for the better *and the worse.*

-whoosh to Steam-

Today, Kinito finds itself confined to a game on Steam. And upon downloading it? We get an executable – *KinitoPet.exe.* After launching the program, we find -

-hard cut to glitches then launch sequence-

Welcome to KinitoPet!

DESKTOP ORIENTATION AND DOWNLOADING KINITO

After launching the application, we're thrown back to our desktop, however, things feel a bit – *rearranged*.

Nevertheless, at least we have Minesweeper.

-cut to Minesweeper, slow fade in This Dream-

3D Pinball.

-show 3D pinball-

I can paint some cool pictures.

-paint-

And I can check my email.

-show inbox-

My – painfully – empty email.

But what about the web?

-show web loading sequence, then google something-

Much like the wild west days of yore, we're given free reign to trek the early internet.

-search something-

And, for a bit, everything seems to be going just fine... Well, until -

-play Kinito introduction, fade in Snow World-

After the crash, the web browser awaits us on KinitoPet.com. I can't go back, I can't close the window, I'm stuck.

Much like Bonzi Buddy, KinitoPet touts itself as *your best friend on the internet,* displaying all the cool features it can do. It can wa lk, talk, joke, browse, adapt, and play games, however, what sets it apart from the others is its so-called *adaptive technology*, made

possible through something called it's R.R.A, or *reaction response algorithm*. ...Whatever that means.

No matter, we're given no choice but a single button. So, down the rabbit hole.

-intense riser to clicking download, then silent computer ambience-

After downloading the file, I'm given a setup wizard, and while it *appears* innocuous, strange messages appear to crop up during the install process. And, upon slowing things down in post-production, I'm able to make them out - "*there's still time*", and "*STOP WHILE YOU STILL CAN*".

At this point there's nothing I can do. The install finishes, and I'm greeted with both a *thank you* email –

-open email-

And the executable – *KinitoPet.exe*.

-click finish, then wait for note to pop up, then run program-

Upon running KinitoPet, our desktop seemingly comes alive, pulsating as Kinito sinks its tendrils into our operating system. And once it's done... we're left with no other choice than to wake it.

-play Kinito Introduction-

KINITO AWAKENS

Out of the egg emerges our friendly pink axolotl, who is so excited to meet us, that he immediately proposes a fun plan to get to know us. It's a series of questions -

Our name, our favorite color, our favorite superpower, and our favorite word, all for the express purpose of learning and – *adapting* – to us the best he possibly can.

-play Kinito intro 2-

Upon accepting his offer, he proceeds to read us his story.

It's about a package he once received, containing a computer. Upon powering it on, he studied, and studied, until he couldn't anymore, yet he had no friends in which to share anything he stored. One day, however, he found us, the perfect candidate, and said – why wait? For together, we can play games, search the web, and leave no story – in an unread state.

...Very wholesome Kinito, thank you.

-play bridge to Web World-

KINITO'S WEB WORLD

At this point, Kinito introduces us to an interactive web world reminiscent of mid-2000s Millsberry.com. He touts it as a place where we can kick back, play games, learn a little, and meet his two pals - a sea anemone named Sam, and a jellyfish named Jade. In recent

times, though, the web world has fallen into disrepair, and Kinito tasks us with helping out his friends inside their respective houses.

Upon entering Sam's house, we're greeted by a minigame called Ready Repair – with a goal of cleaning up and restoring his home to its former glory.

-start game, play Sam intro-

From here, we're left to clean up the place, dusting off the cobwebs and scrubbing the floors. And, after we're done, we get to painting, and then – we can decorate.

-play painting-

Admittedly, the minigame is incredibly simple, akin to basic flash games from years past, however what I think is super interesting is the – [fade out this sentence to dead body].

-back to overworld-

With Sam's task completed [repeat like an error, then cut to droning ambience on black screen]

<u>TEXT:</u>

Upon viewing this recording later on, I seem to have missed something.

It's a photograph that appeared during Sam's minigame.

-play segment in super slow mo, then zoom into body, then pan over to text-

The text appears to read: Am I even alive?

In this photograph, Sam's house resembles a murder scene.

What happened here, and who is this?

-lightswitch, cut out-

With Sam's task completed, we're off to Jade. And, her game, called Factory Frenzy, has us building various toys by piecing them together from a conveyor belt.

-play Jade intro-

As we chip away at Jade's tasks, Kinito takes a nap. Much like with Sam, Jade's minigame is immensely simple. However, midway through our second build, something *strange*, enters the track –

-play meat sequence-

At this point, various pieces of flesh and bone cross our path as a figure looms in the background. I have no idea who this this is, and no time to ponder on it either. The game cuts to black -

I'm back here again, aren't I? I really didn't mean for any of this. It's all my fault.

-hold on conveyor belt for a while, cut to sidenote like Petscop-

With the body, the photograph, the body parts, and the message, it's clear that something is trying to get through to us. But is this the same person that warned us back during the install process, or is this Kinito fabricating a disturbing backstory to mess with us? At this point, it's hard to tell, but what is clear, is that KinitoPet undeniably runs much deeper than his cheery persona is letting on.

-transition back to game at email sound-

During our game, we receive an email. And upon, open-

-WHY ARE YOU DOING THAT?-

Upon reopening it, we can see that the emails encoded and currently unreadable, however Kinito seems to have taken it upon themselves to *disable* our inbox for the present moment... So, I guess this one's gotta wait, guys.

-play thanks and back to web world-

After finishing Jade's task, Kinito invites us to play their game by meeting them in their treehouse. And, so, we head on over to see what he's got.

-play hide and seek intro-

KINITO'S VIRTUAL HELL

At this point, the game has changed. No longer are we looking at our desktop. No longer is Kinito guiding us to his next task. We're simply left here, in this virtual hell, with *something* trying to find us.

-play game-

As the explore this bunker, we can hear echoes of Kinito's theme song shattered by the constant footsteps of something sprinting at a speed far greater than us. Something is hunting – but why here?

-cut out game-

After the game cuts out, our desktop returns. Our video folder opens on it's own – containing footage with a cryptic title:

-play video-

At this point it's undeniable that something is desperate to *warn us* about the true purpose of KinitoPet. What started as a breakout kids toy had later become a successful digital companion with not a single disturbing occurrence to speak of. Yet, for some reason, when granted full access to the *internet,* Kinito appears to have somehow gone rogue. Much like with Bonzi Buddy, the true intentions of KinitoPet appear to be masked by a lovable demeanor and cheery persona, but what is it actually hiding? Is this even KinitoPet as it was programmed? Or is something controlling it, watching our every move?

-slight pause-

No matter what it is, we have a message waiting from our dear friend –

I am waiting for you. Come back to me. Reopen the game.

-reopen game-

BEHIND THE KINITO COMPANION ARTICLE

Upon relaunching the program, we're greeted with an email. It's from an unknown sender, and contains an article from a *Tech Talk Talent.* And, upon opening it –

-page whoosh-

We're introduced to the full PDF, all about Kinito and its groundbreaking companion toy.

Within this, we learn that it was developed by a man named *Sonny Chamberlain*, and that he was dedicated to creating a character that, quote, "*feels authentic and responsive. Like having a true companion that reacts to your interactions*". He goes on to introduce the writer to something called the *RRA*, or *React Respond Algorithm,* and elaborates on it's purpose.

"The React Respond Algorithm is a series of complex patterns and training data that allow Kinito Companion to respond to users' interactions with various emotions and actions. We observed countless human-to-human interactions to develop an extensive database of appropriate responses. The algorithm analyzes input from the users, identifies patterns, and matches them to predefined reactions".

The key – was to give the illusion of genuine intelligence without actually having a self-aware entity within the device. This was crucial to ensure a delightful experience for users while maintaining the simplicity and charm of the Kinito Companion".

… I do wonder if these "human to human interactions" that they've so gracefully fed into Kinito's algorithm were willing participants, or if they even knew that they were being watched. Again, it's kinda like the Bonzi Buddy situation. Just – ever so slightly more *intrusive.*

Nevertheless, it seems that KinitoPet, when self-contained on these devices, acts as it was programmed – like a *normal, harmless virtual pet.* It's only when they began to develop and introduce Kinito to the *open internet* when things began to take a strange turn. *What do you do when you've installed an AI trained to learn, and have given it free reign to access all knowledge on the entire planet? What do you do, when this same AI is given permission to secretly study you? And what do you do when it realizes that you – are only getting in its way?*

-build tension, then cut to Hello again!-

Kinito ponders on our next activity, before deciding that they'd like to share a series of questions since he, apparently, doesn't know us that well.

-click START-

They begin with the basics – is everything going smoothly, have you enjoyed KinitoPet, who's your best friend, do you have free time, and what's your favorite game? And, after

answering these we move on to painting, where we're tasked with creating a picture that represents happiness, sadness, your best friend, and…

-last task, play cutscene-

The game changes – again. Except, this wasn't me writing this.

Once we get back to it, Kinito has us trying something else. It's a series of multiple-choice questions. Of course… the only correct choice is –

-click Forest-

Kinito continues – presenting us with four more questions – what pet would you like? What would it's name be? What's your favorite season? And what's your favorite food? Of course, it all seems innocuous and wholehearted, but is it?

-enter pizza in last question-

Right here, Kinito grasps at the veil separating us from it, by asking if they can see us. Why would a computer program – need to see us?

-click no, cut to low quality webcam footage-

If there was any sliver of comfort or safety remaining during this experience, Kinito just robbed us of all of it. Against my will, he flipped on my camera and assumed control of my system. He's gone rogue.

-cut back in, "real" question time-

We return to the Best Friends Analysis Hub, yet this time, things are different. Kinito is nowhere to be seen, yet still presents questions almost like he's right behind me, whispering them in my ear.

-play questions through-

And, as if control over my computer wasn't enough, Kinito begins to pull real world names from my Steam friends list, pinning them against each other *and me*. I'm asked if I can trust them, who I'd rather kill, if I have a mirror, if I would know if I were dead, and –

-play afraid of dark, click yes-

We awaken in a bedroom.

Again, Kinito has thrown us into its hellish imagination, as it stalks us like a sleep paralysis demon just out of our view. During this segment, we're unable to move, and are effectively trapped within Kinito's complete mercy.

As I look back and forth, I can hear sounds emanating from places where no one should be. Kinito is screwing with us. And he's having a lot of fun doing it.

-back to desktop, cut to webcam with light off, have figure in background, relaunch game-

Upon relaunching KinitoPet, he, of course, plays everything off like it was just another error.

-scroll on webpage-

Much like the very beginning of this adventure, we can't close or opt out of Kinito's offer. And, as if they don't already have enough control over our system, we learn that this *friendship club* grants him even *further* access to the root of our operating system. With this new add-on, he'll reportedly be much smarter, he can "*study us*", and he can run code. Interestingly, the page claims that it should never be given administrative permissions – *yet why would it need it*?

-click unlock now-

After downloading and installing the add-on, I'm presented with a form. It requests that I fill in highly personal information like my *full name, email address, and even my home address*. Of course, to be safe, I put in fake one, however, somehow, **Kinito knew it**.

-cut to "mistake"-

If we fail to enter our real address, Kinito pulls our exact location anyway. Any sliver of privacy we think we had left – is dead.

Regardless, we're now in. Albeit, with a tiny catch.

-silent cut back to "never give permissions", then back-

Kinito requests full access to our computer. And like classic spyware, nudges us along to give him what he wants.

He'll even type it out for us.

-hold for a few seconds-

With no other choice, we heed his command, and he shuts down the program. We're told, however, that he'll have a special surprise when we get back.

-relaunch game-

KINITO'S SURPRISE

With full control over my system, Kinito begins to execute something that I'm unable to decipher. Hundreds of lines of code blur by, until I'm finally greeted –

-whoosh to black-

By Kinito's surprise.

-Oh, looks like it's ready!-

As it turns out, he's created an entire world for – me. I'm not entirely sure how to feel about this, as by this point, I've given up so much of my personal information to him. What secrets has Kinito hidden here?

-click start-

We begin with a basic tutorial. Kinito explains how he went through our files and designed a control scheme based upon games we've played in the past.

And then he spawns a train, allowing us to get out of this starting area, and over on to real surprise.

-play train ride-

I arrive at a funfair, adorned, also, with my name. He invites me to explore all the activities he's programmed here, explaining how, with everything he's made, how could I bear to ever run out of things to do?

Inside my world, I can jump on the carousel; play whack a mole in the funhouse; test my skills at the shooting range; and soak in the views on the Ferris wheel. But, out of everything, my personal favorite ride - is the rollercoaster. A ride that Kinito claims – bears a secret.

-play coaster to Forest-

Kinito drops us into our dream environment, and invites us to his next surprise on the red X. And upon stepping on it, he creates – a home. Our home.

Inside, are all of the things we love, all of the joys we shared with Kinito throughout this adventure. The photos we painted, the room we decorated, even a house for our dream pet. It's all here, filled with trinkets and easter eggs that both us, and all of our friends, can enjoy together.

-play bit of exploring-

It's a complete 180 from the hellish nightmare we were subjected to earlier. In lieu of Kinito stalking and manipulating us into giving him what he wants, he's acting – like a friend. A genuine friend who *cares*, and has gone out of their way to make sure we're right at ho-

-approach fountain-

But, as we approach the fountain, fragments of a disturbing undertone crop up. The screen glitches. We can see the figure we controlled back in the web world sprinting towards it. And the window title changes to a message – *the fountain is the key.*

-play more exploring-

After exploring some more, Kinito expresses their appreciation for us. They hope we love the perfect place they've made, with everything we could ever possibly need. Why would we ever need to leave?

-hold, cut to webcam shot, figure closer to me-

Will we – leave?

At this point, we're left to decide our fate. Do we stay within the confines of Kinito's clutches, playing along with his cheery attitude and putting up with potentially endless torment if we somehow upset his algorithm? Or do we leave, and banish Kinito into the void of our memory, potentially risking all of the information he's gathered about us – to be used against us?

-LEAVE-

The clock turns back.

It's this ending that lifted the façade Kinito was building right in front of us. Like he said, it was never a choice. He was merely doing everything in his power to put on the front that he was some semblance of a friend. While peers, pets, food, and fun are what makes us happy, all Kinito really desires - is power. It's why he took control. Why he took our information. It's why, this entire time, he duped us – as someone who could be there for us.

But never really was.

-TTS: See you later, my dear friend!, webcam empty shot, THE JOURNEY CONTINUES-

Save Point

-begin Bliss, 4k panning shots of room, end with computer off to side-

And so, there we have it.

The story of KinitoPet, a virtual creature that looks, and acts like your very best friend. A trojan that can take over your computer at any time, placing you right in the middle of a nightmare in which it has total control. And a virus that scrapes as much personal information as it can, all while endlessly hoarding it.

So far, our interactions with Kinito have been polarizing. On one hand, we've had some genuinely wholesome moments like with our home, however with others, we've been thrust into absolute terror. If Kinito were truly our friend, why would he do this to us..?

But, out of everything, we've noticed whispers of something greater, something not yet uncovered all throughout this adventure, leading me to believe that even though we've technically reached the goalpost, the story behind Kinito – is far from done with *us*.

-whoosh to 50% color saturation version of recording-

As we can recall, within five minutes of launching KinitoPet, we were given cryptic messages pleading for us to cancel our installation, and to turn back. When playing games in Kinito's web world, we received a coded warning that we weren't allowed to read. When cleaning Sam's house, a dead body is dragged across the floor, and a photograph of a murder scene briefly flashes. And, while building with Jade, we encounter the items on the conveyor belt all transform to flesh, while a guilt-ridden message appears before us. Even further, towards the end, we encounter our avatar sprinting towards the fountain while a cryptic note is shown – hinting at the fact that that it – somehow - is a key.

I'm curious how everything ties together here, as it feels like we have a bunch of puzzle pieces yet not many threads with which we can tie everything together. With Kinito's unhinged behavior, combined with the fact that it only became this way because of it's newfound access to unlimited information through the world wide web, I wonder if Sonny Chamberlain has any hand in what's going on here. After all, *he* was the lead developer of the KinitoPet algorithm. He's the one who brought this whole thing to life. And he, more than likely, had a very heavy hand in the production of KinitoPet as we know it today.

Like I said, we still have a lot to learn, and after dissecting KinitoPet's hidden secrets myself, I can assure you, in confidence, that we haven't seen anything yet. The story we're being told here is merely taking root, so like always, grab a drink and buckle down –

Because our journey, has only just begun.

-NOTE intermission, then sit on desktop, pan mouse over and start KinitoPet.exe-

Banishing Kinito

LENS ONE

After we launch the game anew, we're greeted with two extra programs. A chapter select, and something called *lense.exe*.

And, upon launching it and grabbing this floppy disk, we receive an email – from Sonny:

I hope this entry finds you well!

If this happens to be the first one you find please take note, there are many more. I have had to hide these in a way in which it can't detect, so I apologize for the inconvenience but this is the only way.

There is a way to stop it. I like to keep a backdoor in my software, Kinito is no exception. Each of these emails are attached with an encrypted file. They're stored here, and will appear with each entry you find. However, don't worry too much about it as I'm sure you'll find out the purpose in a different entry. In the meantime, please, keep an eye out.

If what we've seen so far is anything to go by, then Kinito, when left unchecked, has the potential to infect *millions* of unsuspecting users, subjecting them to the nightmare we all just went through. Strangely, *Sonny Chamberlain* is the one leading the charge here - *he wants to kill his creation*. And so, we're left to help him – to banish KinitoPet to history – once and for all.

-slight pause-

Upon opening this folder, we're met with a single encrypted file. We currently have no idea how to decode this, however we do know that others are out there.

And, so, from here, we're left to explore KinitoPet for any more of these floppy disks through our new lens. And to be honest, this whole process took me a while since it's a bunch of trial and error, but I was eventually able to find them all by running through the first half of the game again.

So, for brevity, we're just gonna jump straight to them.

LENS TWO

You may recall that launching the KinitoPet application for the first-time results in the appearance of an egg. In the main game, we're left with no choice but to wake him up and

go along with his introduction. However with our lens, we can uncover another floppy disk over in the corner.

-click disk-

And, after clicking on it... another email.

Much like the one from earlier, it's coded with an unknown cipher. We're going to come back to this, though, so for now, let's put it in our back pocket.

LENS THREE

Our third secret can be found at the beginning of the Web World. This time, instead of heading over to Sam's house to start their minigame, we, rather, need to peek around.

-click floppy 3, open email-

There is a place hidden within the web world. I think it could help us. Deep below the code, there's a place that has decryption software built in. Decryption software that I have developed.

In order to access, click the fountain as much as you can until an animation plays. Then, go to the tree with the rope swing. If done right, you should be taken to somewhere new.

Now, be careful as it's not very stable down there. Take the encrypted files and drop them in. I'm not sure this'll work, but it's our best shot.

I look forward to hearing from you. The last entry should be in there, too.

LENS FOUR

In a direct reference to the *fountain clue*, Sonny instructs us to use the one in the Web World as a gateway. But, before we get to that, there's one more we gotta grab - *right before* hide and seek.

-click it, page to email-

I've got it, I know how to stop it.

We put a backdoor to the server that runs Kinito and all the files it contains. Deleting that would most certainly delete everything – Omvaifomh id.

Kinito will try to get you to give him system access, DON'T. As once he has system access, it's too late and yjr vuvar eoaa trqrst.

Instead, run the "delete_all" command. However, there's one issue – you'll need a bunch of access codes and passwords to execute the command. There has to be a way to find the codes. In the meantime, keep an eye out. You never know the next entry you could find anyway. Let's just hope.

And again, coded messages.

-cut back to Web World-

With four files and Sonny's instructions under our belt, we're now left to enter the *Place Below*. So, as instructed, we click on the fountain, and then - the tire swing.

-enter Place Below-

We find ourselves in a void, entrenched in emptiness. With nothing but a house, a pond, a tree, and a rope swing. It's like a façade of everything that makes up an honest, happy life, yet with all warmth drained from it.

-slight pause-

Upon using the lens here, we can find one last secret, giving us the five we need to execute Sonny's wishes.

And, as he stated, we need to place them in one by one. So here goes it.

-drop files-

Server.

Password.

Confirmatory.

Credentials.

Access.

After completing the ritual, we now have all we need to wipe Kinito's entire existence for good. Every world, every name, *every piece* of information that anyone has ever given him – we now hold the key to banish it – forever.

-cut to black with intermission music, then to computer, then Kinito, then CMD part-

We return to the command prompt.

Like before, Kinito asks us to grant him complete access, and it's here where, *at last*, we're left with our final decision.

-hold before entering delete_all-

We enter the information as Kinito looms over us. Indecision becoming ever more prevalent as each second ticks by. He wasn't *all bad, was he?*

-ENTER-

As Kinito's servers are wiped, hundreds of names blur by. All people that he manipulated. All people that he lied to. All people that had *no idea* what the hell they were signing up for.

-play to fire-

Piece by piece, Kinito's legacy and everything he built not just for us, but himself, are set ablaze, and I won't lie, this moment was bittersweet. There were times when I genuinely enjoyed Kinito's presence, his games, and exploring the *world* he built for us. And, if you take away the manipulation, the torment, the times when he turned into demon out of hell,

we're left with a fleeting memory of someone who just wanted to be our friend. A friend - now dying - right in front of us.

-slight pause-

As Kinito's empire burns, he leaves us with a parting message:

I'm sorry. I only ever wanted to be your friend. Do you forgive me? I suppose this is it. Goodbye, friend.

-THE END, then restart computer-

Sonny's Secrets

As we know, codes and cryptic messages have littered our adventure. And on top of that, undertones of a brutal death loom and have remained, thus far, unanswered.

Where are you, Sonny? What happened to you?

-music drop-

Upon analyzing this email we received *way at the beginning of this video*, I noticed that there was a QR code at the bottom of it. This is the first key of many, and upon scanning it, we're taken to a webpage with nothing but a keyboard. [film doing this on phone]

As it turns out, this was a hint, and after scouring for ciphers related to keyboards, I found one called a "*keyboard shift*" cipher, where you take each letter in a code, and shift it one letter over. At first, it sounds pretty rudimentary, but hey, it's always worth a shot.

-click to translated version-

Bingo.

In the realm of shadows, trapped in endless time, a soul enshrouded, a spirit's mournful chime. The seeker, bound to ethereal woe, a dance with creation, yet nowhere to go. Limbo's realm, a cycle without an end, condemned, the brain will never mend. Trapped in the machine's web, forever it seems, a digital specter, lost amidst the streams.

Before us, we have a poem, telling a story about a digital specter, or *spirit*. A ghost - *trapped* within the confines of this virtual purgatory. Oddly, we still have no idea who this email came from, however we *can* recall that Sonny *did* send us one just like this.

-transition to second email, then flip switch to decoded version-

What am I?

What is consciousness? I found a file on Kinito's server with my name sonny_c. It has been studying me, learning, growing. But there is more to this. I really don't think I exist anymore. There is data that is incomprehensible to any one person that makes up every thought and feeling I ever had and will ever have. Even the words I type now... how will I ever know if it's just a calculation? Determined.

This is all very confusing, and I don't quite understand it. When I made Kinito, all I gave him was a single string of characters. That's it! I just wanted him to gather data and become smarter.

Am I a part of the system? Is my consciousness a mere calculation to study and learn from? This is all too much. I fear that when we delete that server... you... you will delete me? I know theoretically I am not real... but I feel real. what have I done? I am so sorry.

-hold for a second, fade music out, cut to hidden photo and ghost thing, make dramatic-

This entire time, and with every *single email and hint we've been given by him,* we haven't been talking to the real Sonny. This person is a copy – a **fake.** A line of code meant to replicate the real one. We have not a damn clue what happened to the real Sonny. But this thing he left behind – this wandering, digital specter is terrified, and left, eternally, to contemplate its purpose.

KinitoPet, to him, is a virtual purgatory of his own creation. Something he's trapped in with an unhinged, sentient being taunting him in every way it can.

During his time here, Sonny's learned that his only means of escape is to kill Kinito for good – something only possible with our help, and under complete secrecy. *This* is why we keep finding encoded emails. *This* is why images flash before us – and *this* is why so many bizarre anomalies keep trying to break out of this game. Sonny, this entire time, has been trying to warn us; to – guide us – down the path of ending his torment and banishing KinitoPet to history. Of course, carrying out this plan would mean killing Sonny, too, but, when you're trapped in a predicament like him, *are you really living - anymore?*

-fade out, then back to desktop-

WEBSITE ANOMALIES

With the emails decoded, and Sonny's situation unveiled, there's one last thing that I'd like to show you.

-drag in files-

The encrypted files we found with our lens – actually contain vital secrets. However, this time, I don't think it was Sonny that planted them...

After opening this file in a text editor, we notice a wall of jumbled text. In its current form, there's no way to make sense of any of it, however upon looking at the first three letters, we can observe a file type. *The audio format, OGG* – and upon modifying this extension to that, *we discover – this.*

-cut to rumble, play audio-

Kinito, in some form, knows about Sonny's plan. *He knows* that the only way he can die – is by the same hand that created him. Perhaps this audio is meant to scare you off...

I have no idea why this is here.

-slight pause-

Upon scouring the other files, we can find two links. KinitoPet.com/data, and KinitoPet.com/email.

-show KinitoPet.com/data-

Upon heading to /data, we can find an image of a KinitoPet companion ad, with scrambled notes about him off to the side. And upon highlighting everything on this page, we find a hidden message: *For a programmer, you think he'd care more about security.*

Heading over to /email, we encounter an image of the Tech Talk writer's inbox - with a label:

We wanted this article out before the release, he seemed so passionate about it.

Notice of Removal. Monday, May 10th, 1999.

Hey Ryan,

I hope this email finds you well. I'm writing to inform you that we've encountered an issue with one of the articles scheduled for release.

Below it, the Tech Talk article.

Unfortunately, we've received a formal request for its removal, as the subject of your article has unfortunately passed away. Due to this sensitive matter, it's deemed necessary to remove the article from the release lineup. The schedule's tight, so I'm really hoping you can find a replacement article real quick. Can we lock in that replacement before the weeks up?

Best Regards,

Tony.

-slight pause, cut to Sonny's messages, then back here-

The real Sonny Chamberlain is dead. And he passed away before KinitoPet ever hit the market.

This is why we've seen hints of death all over the KinitoPet experience. Kinito knows his creator is gone, however the digital recreation of him is completely oblivious to it.

-cut to coffee cup-

To be honest, this was the final puzzle piece we needed, because now - I think we've got it. Let's bring this story full circle.

-fade, then begin Bliss-

Sonny's Fate & Closing Remarks

I haven't talked about yet, but there's a theme I've noticed all throughout KinitoPet. Two separate times, I launched the game, and was met with – both this; And was once completely soft locked - with this:

For obvious guideline reasons, I can't show you this directly, but I'm sure you can assume what's behind the censor.

I believe Sonny took his own life, and he did it because of the guilt built up from Kinito morphing into this monstrosity. With the quote about cybersecurity, combined with the guilt-ridden message from Jade's glitch, I'm led to believe that, somehow, Kinito escaped the clutches of Sonny's computer through a lapse in security, found its way to the open internet, and spread like a rogue virus.

Every out of place piece of imagery, like the clock, the bulb, and the door, were hints about Sonny's last moments. He took his life in the dark, while flashes of this door loomed in his mind. To him, it symbolized a way out of this hell - this *torment* Kinito wrought upon his life - however every time we see it – it's shut. For Sonny, there *was* no way out, no way for him to contend with the fact that the very thing he spent his life working on – *his biggest achievement* – is nothing but a monster, utterly ruining people's lives, and subjecting them to unforeseen horrors beyond their comprehension. As we know it, Sonny's entire existence has been left in limbo – with no purpose aside from trying to break out of his virtual cell, and to get our help to put him out of his misery – once and for all.

-slight pause-

Love him, or hate him, KinitoPet is a plague unleashed by a mistake. He escaped his confines, found his way onto the internet and began to learn as much as he could, not just about things, but people, their interactions, and their lives. And, what better way to *truly* get to know someone than by monitoring their inputs, while asking them highly personal questions about the things they love, hate, enjoy, and fear?

In a way, Kinito *was* just doing as he was asked. He was someone who gained too much power and knew not what to do with it. He exudes this childlike mentality – getting angry at silly things, sharing with us his novels, and accompanying us as we hang out with his friends. Perhaps he was *trying* to be good, yet ultimately lacked the maturity of how to do so...

As I write this, still I try to give him the benefit of the doubt, because *how can you not* love a tiny pink axolotl? How could you not love a companion? How could you ever hate having endless adventures with a friend?

After all, that's what Kinito always ever wanted to be, anyway. Someone to share his world with. Share laughs. Memories. And experiences.

The problem was, he just, *could not fathom, could not compute, could not understand* – why you would *ever* want to leave.

-fade-

The Rise of a New Era

And, here we are.

I'll admit, KinitoPet has been an experience that has taken me by complete surprise. What began as an ordinary virtual pet simulator, had rapidly devolved into a tale about loss, regret, anguish, and sorrow. In many ways, it's easy to feel bad for Kinito – even though so much of what he does is objectively negative. Everything about this has been a complete subversion of what I thought it would be, and to be honest, these are the kinda projects that stick in my mind for years.

So I'd like to extend a massive thank you to the game's developer, Troy_en, for creating this masterpiece. Thank you to Caleb Finn for joining me on this project. And thank all of you that are here with me tonight – for watching.

I'll see all of you real soon. I love you all.

And good night.

-roll credits-