At 11:45 on Sunday, I was on a phone call with Near. They'd just taken a large overdose of codeine and guanfancine. I saw a photo of the noose.

30 minutes into the call, Les Voyages De L'âme by Alcest started playing at the other end. I wouldn't hear their voice again.

"Near took their own life". That's how a news article would phrase it. Suicide is a voluntary action, a problem with oneself. Implying nobody is to blame but the victim and perpetrator, one and the same.

But that's not how human brains work. We are not cold, calculating machines. We are a product of our environment. We are shaped by our experiences. A single, powerful traumatic event can change a person forever. So can a million small ones. This is not a weakness of the mind, it is a fundamental part of what it means to be human.

Near was a brilliant mind in a corner of the web all too often rife with toxicity and harassment. Despite this, they continued to pour their life into the one thing they loved: emulation and retro gaming. Developer of the bsnes, higan, and ares emulators, Near was a relentless force for accuracy in the formerly haphazard world of emulation. Working out the most elusive hardware glitches and corner cases, they advanced the world of SNES emulation by leaps and bounds. They also recently released their ultimate labor of love, a [fan translation](#) of Bahamut Lagoon that might well be the most exacting and meticulously crafted language adaptation of a video game of the era.

Near was also an incredibly kind, funny, and welcoming person. I'd known them for several years, but after they moved to Tokyo a few years back we started talking more often. One of the most modest people I've ever known, they were unlikely to suggest hanging out in person, but never rejected an offer. I wish I'd done that more often. We've had long text conversations, and shared many stories.

Near did not commit suicide. Near was murdered. Victim of a lifetime of harassment. After an abusive childhood, and followed by community toxicity, Near was eventually targeted by Kiwi Farms. Members of that website make a sport of preying on the less fortunate, on those in positions liable to being emotionally abused. And they do so relentlessly. From the comfort of anonymity, of sitting in front of their computer thousands of kilometers away, they take glee in slowly destroying the psyche of others, bit by bit. To death, if possible.

Near survived that. Many wouldn't, but Near was strong enough to overcome that level of emotional abuse. But Kiwi Farms is relentless. Not to be defeated in their pursuit of utter emotional and psychological destruction, they went after who Near treasured most: their friends. Doxing some, directly harassing others, and even specifically seeking out suicidal people to target.

That broke Near.

After falling down a spiral of depression and eventually breaking off contact with everyone last year, I feared for the worst. Eventually, they were luckily able to get

Unfortunately, medication can be a fickle beast. It didn't work forever. The looming threat of Kiwi Farms, of their power to destroy not just Near but also their friends, caused them daily anxiety that just wouldn't go away. Worried that their friends would feel burdened by their condition again, Near decided to avoid the subject. I only found out about this relapse today.

To the people of Kiwi Farms, this is a videogame. That the people on the other side of the screen are real makes no difference. They delight in the kill counter going up just like an FPS player would. Lacking in any empathy, they have no regard for the damage they inflict on others.

Why do we tolerate this? "Harassment", "online bullying". How are these any different from terrorism, from someone grabbing a gun and taking the lives of others? Why does it matter that a physical bullet was not involved? The objective and the end result are the same. Saying Near "took their life" is giving these people an out for their actions, which directly resulted in the intentional death of a person.

Some of you may be aware of Near's notoriously paranoid opsec. After getting to know them, it became clear this was a defense mechanism; a product of all the abuse they received over their entire life. I was perhaps one of the few lucky enough to exchange deeply personal stories with them, yet I never knew their full name - because I didn't need to. But they'd have told me if I asked. Near is anything but cold and distant in person; those attributes were necessary façades grown in response to lifelong harassment and abuse.
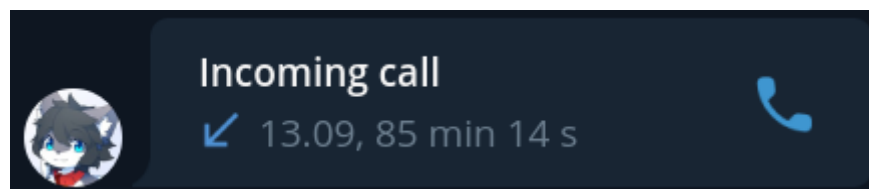
We, as the internet community, need to take a hard look at what it means to continue to tolerate the existence of these communities and the actions of those in them. Not just Kiwi Farms; sites like that serve to concentrate people like this, but they exist across all communities and social media. Being passive about this problem means being complicit.

DreamHost, you are the Kiwi Farms domain registrar. CloudFlare, you protect Kiwi Farms against attacks. You both share responsibility in not just Near's death, but also others, as well as the pain and harassment of thousands more. Is this the image you want to maintain? Is the income worth the weight on your conscience?

I last saw Near on June 9. We had sushi in Akihabara, and then sat down for a cup of coffee. I was a bit busy that day, but I was looking forward to inviting them over to hang out again soon.

Les Voyages De L'âme kept playing on repeat at the other end of the call for another hour.

I couldn't bring myself to hang up.

Incoming call
↙ 13.09, 85 min 14 s

Published on behalf of a mutual friend of Near and I, who wishes to remain anonymous for their own protection. -marcan