# HBGAMES.org

*The Ezine!*

Happy New year

Game Over

## Feature Review:

# SUPER MARIO RPG
## ☆ THE SEVEN SAGES ☆

U Division Games

C-Division Works

# HB GAMES
## ENVISION ○ CREATE ○ SHARE

Thanks for sticking around for what is now our... well, ninth issue of the ezine if we could those old days back in 2005/2006 when the old PDF issues were still all the rage. This issue is more feature-filled than the last one, and there are some new additions, but hopefully for better rather than worse. The ezine has, at time of writing, been read over 600 times, thanks for all the views guys. My hope is that .org will once again be reknowned for the quality of it's online publication as well as the forums themselves. We need your input though! Not just your submissions, but your suggestions, for improvements and changes.

This month also sees the introduction of the Classifieds section - if you don't know what it is then check it out. It's just a little cool feature to let people advertise recruitments for games, demos, etc, with links to articles. Essentially, it is the same as the classifieds section of a printed newspaper.

This month's focus has largely been around the new year. It's 2010! I can't believe how fast the shift from one decade to another and to yet another has gone, but one thing's for sure, 2010 will be our best year yet with the team the site has put together now. We are stronger than ever, and the only way is up.

Thanks for reading the ezine, hope you enjoy it, but most of all thank you to the people who contributed to this issue (credits on the final page).

# CONTENTS

## REVISED EDITION

This issue of the ezine has been recut and edited to a different format to what it was originally released in. The original version should still be accessible at www.hbgames.org, but this issue, created in May 2013, is more accessible and more professional in it's appearance and composure.

This may be done for older issues of the ezine in future, providing this one goes down well.

Thank you to all those who contributed to the original issue, and to all those who read this revision.

*Amy Pond*

# LAST YEAR ON .ORG

What a year! I thought this might be a good time to look back on what has easily been our most successful year as a forum. 2009 was our fifth year as a community and our first under our new name.

## JANUARY
As a new year dawned with a bit of a dwindling forum a group of staffers wanted to bring a new focus for the site and take it in a better direction. Discussions spread across the staff forums...

## FEBRUARY
Despain tries to come back to the forums as if nothing happened. He is turned away. +1 rep from the outside community.

## MARCH
The pixel art forums are changed for the better in a HUGE upheavel leading to improved quality and a new look for the boards.

## APRIL
Luminier and Surmuck decide to leave the site to pursue new adventures together in America. Amy, Perihelion, and Arbiter rise to global moderator status to take their place.

## MAY
The name and focus change are finalised. Welcome to **HBGAMES**. An event highlights how inactive the staff are. Something needs to be done... Arbiter is made an administrator to help cope with lack of active admins.

## JUNE-JULY
The second annual ORGy awards are held - our most successful yet.

## SEPTEMBER
Amy rises to Administrator status and rules with an iron fist.

## OCTOBER
Hallowe'en 2009 is organised and released in one night, proving the ability of the staff and the strive to build a great community.

## NOVEMBER
New forum themes are made and released, and the first issue of the eZine is finally unveiled after being made on a day.

## DECEMBER
Once again the staff pop out an amazing theme for the forums - just in time for Christmas. New mods come flooding in - we are more active than ever before.

Thanks to everyone this year who helped the forums reach our first 500,000 posts (though technically this is 1,000,000! Unbelievable, but true. RMXP.net reached 360,000 posts, and the old hack of 2006 really made a dent.) Thank you to the staff for being active again and making this the best community for gaming.

But most of all, thank you to you, the general userbase of .org for making this community what it is today. Onwards and upwards ~

# RPG Mechanics: Game Over

If you're on this forum, you know what a Game Over is (at least I hope you do) but I'm going to define it anyway because it'll make me feel smarter (don't judge me). A Game Over is a screen that pops up under certain conditions that causes the player to lose some progress. Game Overs are most prevalent in RPG's and Platformers, but even across these two genres they come in vastly different forms, and seeing as this article's about RPG Mechanics I'm going to limit this to only RPG Game Overs.

Let's start about Basic Game Over. Basic Game Over is the Game Over the dinosaurs invented because they had terrible hardware and had difficulty running Pac-Man. This usually occurs when you lose a battle in an RPG and causes you to fly back to the title screen... and start back up from your last save point.

No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.

This method of Game Over is terrible for several reasons. The first is that RPG's very rarely autosave and often use savepoints. Now that's a problem in and of itself, as save points are obsolete systems only used because it'd have been too tasking on old hardware to allow you to save whenever you wanted. Now they're kept around as a poor design decision in order to allow for even more poor design decisions, they simply have no purpose- not even in preventing system abuse as Pokemon has proven that forcing a save before a particular event is handy a cure for it. Getting a Game Over in an RPG means going back to your previous save point, losing whatever progress you've gained since then, and having to start all over again. Yay.

The second reason is that you're punishing the player, which defies one of the most important risk and reward laws which I'll discuss some other time, but to summarize- the only one who should punish a player is another player (it makes more sense if you're into the competitive scene). You shouldn't ever penalize a player for failing, because they've already lost their time, effort, and options in failing. By showing a Game Over screen and sending them back to the start, you're penalizing them by a huge amount. The third reason is that it causes you, as the designer, to be more mentally susceptible to poor design decisions. You don't really want the player to see a Game Over... so let's make the basic enemies really weak. Well then you have enemies that aren't fun to fight. Well, let's compensate with bosses then, and just have a bunch of really hard bosses then, that'll help right? If your RPG is plot-based (it probably is) then you probably have cutscenes before boss battles, and if they're unskippable you fall into the trap that is making the player repeat a cutscene over and over while they cry their own organs because they've lost eight times.

But... how else do I handle a player dying? There is a revolutionary idea that comes from ancient texts, scribbled upon cave walls in a secret location that nobody's ever dared to look. We call it the Arcade. The solution? It's the continue button that pops up whenever you lose, allowing you to jump back to what you were doing. Did you just lose against that overpowered boss? Press continue. Don't make it a half-reset, where they lose their items or MP or whatever, I

mean a full battle reset. Let them try again. Do not show them the Basic Game Over screen. Adding just a Continue button evolves it from your Basic Game Over to your Proper Game Over. But be sure to ask if they really want to return to the title screen, because if they accidentally hit anything they're going to be angry.



*Hitler's last act on Earth was to create the RMXP gameover screen*

If you don't want to do that, jump them back to the start of a room (which might be handy for bosses if you don't want flee-able ones). Send them to an Inn (which is still annoying, but they keep their progress). There are options, you simply have to utilize them.

Basic Game Overs are obsolete reminders of the T-Rex. They need to go. Yes, you might have to go beyond the bounds of RPG tradition, but RPG tradition has a bad tendancy to suck because the only reason half of it exists is because hardware was made out of tin cans back in the days. Sometimes, you need to break away from tradition. One step at a time. And I really hope your first step is that traditional Game Over screen because I hate those.

- **Reygekan**

# THIS YEAR ON .ORG

We have some big plans in store for 2010 on .ORG. Here's the lowdown.

## The 3rd .ORGy Awards

The first half of the year will see the 3rd annual .ORGy awards. Last years were immensely successful if I do say so myself and certainly got people posting and interested in the site! If you have suggestions for them this time around don't be afraid to post in the suggestions boards by the way.

A full list of last year's winners can be found here: viewtopic.php?f=185&t=66107 There were rather a lot!

## Name Change

In August .ORG will become Great British Games, or GBGames. All Americans will be banned from the forums, and all wording around the site replaced with the appropriate British counterpart.

This will coincide with the reorganisation of all forums so that the titles of the forums spell out "QUEENIE 4 EVA".

## New Acquisations

In September .ORG will buy out RPG Revolution, Yoyogames, and Wikipedia, officially forming GBRevolution, GBMaker7, and GBPedia.

## Youtube

In October we plan to acquire Youtube in a multi-billion pound deal. The low worth of the dollar should make this step quite easy. We will merge Youtube with the site, creating GBGamesTube.com.

## Motoring

November will see GBGames purchasing the shattered company General Motors creating the Great British Gaming General Motorcar Corporation. New models will include the beautiful Perihelion LX 2.0 litre, with an "re", and the stunningly powerful Arbiter monstertruck and Lyra roadster (also available as a Hybrid).

## World Domination

Finally, December will see GBGames purchasing all remaining shares in Planet Earth Ltd, the company which secretly owns and runs the Earth. This will see the rebranding of Earth as Great British Gaming Corporation Holy Terra I. Canada will be replaced with a Rec Room, and China deleted from the Earth in an accidental admin cockup.

Problem?

# Super Mario RPG
## The Seven Sages

A friend of mine once quipped that making a fan game was akin to shooting yourself in the foot before running a race. You can still win over the public's expectations, but it's harder since that product will always be compared to its commercially produced parent. And for many young independent game developers and simple hobbyists, that is a tall order.

Despite running on a wounded foot Seven Sages keeps pace rather well with its commercial brethren. The Seven Sages stays faithful to the Mario RPG formula quite well by offering simple and immersive gameplay, enwrapped in charming kitsch, and smattered with lighthearted moments of meta-game humor. U Division in partnership with C Division offer up a fan game that is a playful lighthearted romp very much in the spirit of prior Mario games.

Using rips from Mario games past, Seven Sages' developers took advantage of Nintendo's large body of work to fill their tribute game with immersive details. From title screens to battle animations to the game map itself, Mario and friends have a full range of animations and expressions. The developer employs this vast wealth of poses and animation with impressive comedic timing and all around effective presentation. Animations in general were pretty clean, well timed, and executed effectively.

The heart of this game's charm though lies in its cut-scenes and sprite choreography. The story is cutely written and well adapted to the genre.

There are no dragging scenes, no extended prologues and intros, and no attempts at the overly dramatic. The scenes are pithy with plenty of gameplay in between each of them, and most importantly they are funny and cuddly as a fabric softener bear. The cut-scenes are so endearing in fact that they carry the rest of the product. The humorous ambiance is only further reinforced by the Developer's cute NPC's and humorous Easter eggs. By far the most effective draw to continue playing the game lies in its story and execution.



Aside from charming cute story and solidly produced scenes, Seven Sages follows Mario's formula of diverse but simple gameplay for a casual experience. The game offers a decent library of little mini games and puzzles throughout the experience. These little side dishes keep the game fresh and add an extra incentive for exploration for the intrepid among us.

On the flipside of that coin it can be easily said that like other Mario RPG games it is a jack of all trades, but master of none. It dabbles in puzzles but has no difficult puzzles. It dabbles in turn based battle, but it has no depth. In short, the game is simple and a casual play at best, but perspective begs us to ask, "What Mario RPG game wasn't?"



The game, however, is not without its hiccups and flaws. The simple difficulty of the game is made into an utter cakewalk by some of the badges and the rewards from them can be reaped right away. If you want to make this game super easy just get the fertile flower badge and the mushroom badge and let that bad boy run for a few hours while you go do some chores. When you return you'll be up to your eyeballs in all the mushrooms and fire flowers you will ever need making it easy to mow down all that are foolish to stand in Mario's way. Some of the touted features such as the suits were too simple and had wasted potential that could have brought some life to a rather pedestrian and anemic battle system. The worst of the downsides though, is this game is still nagged by game breaking bugs.



Despite its flaws The Seven Sages is well worth the playthrough for its charm and cute wit, solely. And though the game is a simple casual romp it is definitely immersive and fun. Other than the aforementioned hiccups the game is consistent and solidly produced, and U Division has proven responsive to updating and fixing bugs as they are reported, which will inevitably lead to a bug free release in the future.

See the hbgames.org project thread at this link for more info about this completed game.

There are many more completed games in the projects sections now, be sure to try them out! We'll be reviewing more in later eZines but don't just play what we tell you.

Review by *Sophist*.

# *Dawn*

*(Or, ode to a nick in IRC that never says anything and is probably a bot)*

I do not think she'll listen
I doubt she even cares
But when I see her standing there it makes me
think she's unaware
That I even exist
Her eyes glisten
A cliche, yes, but cliche does not detract from
her beauty
Her hair
Oh god her hair
It shines out, in all it's colours
Yet it is not dyed
Or styled
She does not need to try
As Mary Poppins nicely put
Practically perfect in every way
Perfection is what I see
I doubt she even noticed me
I am all alone
Sitting here, without a home it seems
While she, out there, her beauty gleams so
bright
She is so right, so divine, so special
But not to me
Not for me
Pretentious as it seems,
She stays with me but only in my dreams

# An Interview with Supershigi (a.k.a. Miss Matcha)

&lt;Guardian&gt;
First question: You are known as Miss Matcha on hbgames.org, correct?

&lt;supershigi&gt;
yup

&lt;Guardian&gt;
m'kay, making sure. ^_^; Second question: How did you first get interested in making games?

&lt;supershigi&gt;
Well, I started writing a story a long time ago, but I didn't really know what I was going to do with it. I had always imagined turning it into a video game, but I just assumed that I wouldn't able to do something like that. I mean, I'd taken a few computer science classes in college, but I figured it was just way too much work. The story ended up being about 150-200 pages long, and it kind of just sat there unused for a while. Then I found out about rpg maker, and the idea of making the game suddenly seemed like a possibility. SNES was my favorite console, so the idea of making a 16-bit style rpg was very appealing as well.

&lt;Guardian&gt;
Question #3: When did you first become interested in the audio/sound/music aspect of games? Was it something you were doing before that carried over to making games or was it something you developed?

&lt;supershigi&gt;
Hmm... I think I've been interested in that all my life. I've loved video game music since I was a little kid. I used to record Megaman 3 music onto a casette tape and listen to it later.

I play piano by ear, so I'd learn all my favorite video game songs and play them for fun, hehe. But I came from an area that was very rigid about careers... there was a big emphasis on going to a 4-year college and becoming a laywer, doctor, or engineer, so it never even occurred to me that I could have a career related to music. I always just did it on the side for fun. Like when I was procrastinating writing papers during college, I'd mess around on Cakewalk making video game type music.

&lt;Guardian&gt;
Fourth question: How did you first get started making video game music?

&lt;supershigi&gt;
Well... back when I was in college I composed a ton of music for fun. During that time I also put together a CD with a bunch of random songs on it, and I gave it to a friend in japan who worked for a teen magazine. She (without telling me) forwarded that to a bunch of record companies there who subsequently called my parents offering me auditions. So I flew to japan during my spring break to audition with a bunch of record labels, which was a lot of fun. I actually got offered a contract as a singer, but i ended up turning it down for a variety of reasons. But I realized at that point that having a music-related career was actually something i could/should be pursuing. After returning to finish college, i worked at a japanese company as their sound director. I hosted an audio talkshow, did all the sound engineering stuff, and composed a bunch of music for them. During that time, a friend of mine asked if

I'd be interested in composing the soundtrack for a game he was consulting for. I had a lot of fun with this project, and the company liked my work, so they continued to hire me as a composer/sound designer for several of their subesequent projects. I guess that's how it got started.

Guardian>
Question #5: Do you have any education related to game making or audio/music/sounds? Did you take any college classes related to the field you're in right now?

<supershigi>
I took piano lessons for about 11 years... I was classically trained, although admittedly I'm terrible with sight-reading. >_< I usually play everything by ear... my teachers hated that, hehe. In college I actually majored in international relations and business... but I took a couple computer science courses (C++, LISP, etc.). The rest, I pretty much taught myself. I think when it comes to audio, a lot of it is just learning as you go. Everytime I'd get a new program, I'd basically learn how to use it just by composing a new piece... if I needed to figure out how to do something, I'd look it up as I encountered it. I've also spent a lot of time in studios, so I try to learn from watching and asking a lot of questions ^_^

<Guardian>
Question 6: What's your most favorite and least favorite thing about working in the gaming industry?

<supershigi>
I think my favorite thing about working in the game industry is that you get to be creative for a living. I feel very blessed to be in that position. I know a lot of people who hate their jobs or are really bored with them, but i love what i do and i couldn't be happier with that.

I think my least favorite thing about the game industry (which is actually probably a problem with many other industries as well), is the big business aspect of it. Once things get corporate, a lot of that pure creativity gets squashed due to political and/or financial reasons.


Melolune
by supershigi

<Guardian>
Question 7: Is being involved in the gaming industry hard?

<supershigi>
Hmm... well like every other industry, it's got its ups and downs. I think the biggest challenge for me is the need to be creative even when you're not in a creative mood. For example, if you're a fairly prolific composer, you kind of have to train yourself to be able to compose even when you're not feeling it. Video games have a lot of creative elements... and i'm sure many of you know that you're not always going to be in your most creative state. I often struggle with that. My best stuff comes on the fly when i'm just naturally feeling it and i happen to get a song in my head. But when you have deadlines to meet, you have to be able to produce.

&lt;Guardian&gt;
Question #8: Do you often play the games you've worked on?

&lt;supershigi&gt;
Oh yes, definitely. :) I love Plants vs. Zombies, haha.

&lt;Guardian&gt;
Question #9: What's your favorite color?

&lt;supershigi&gt;
lavender

&lt;Guardian&gt;
oo, nice color. It's so boring when people are like "blue" or "green" or "red". XD OK next question (#10): If you could go back and change one thing you did, would you?

&lt;supershigi&gt;
Man, these are tough questions. Yes, but i don't really like thinking about that stuff... b/c invariably i end up regretting a bunch of other things. I also think that if i go back and try to change something, i might jeopardize the good things that exist now. So basically, i'm sure i could come up with something i'd want to change... but i try not to dwell on it.

&lt;Guardian&gt;
Question 11: Was it hard getting into the gaming industry?

&lt;supershigi&gt;
Hmm... it's definitely something you have to work at a lot. It took me a while to build up my resume... the first game contract I did for free. After proving that i could do a good job, i was offered more contracts and through those jobs i met a lot of great people and got a lot of good experience. After a while, people start referring you.

I guess the hard part for me was being taken seriously. I look young, and i'm a girl... and i think a lot of people thus assume one of two things:
1.) i don't know what i'm doing
or 2.) i got the job b/c someone hooked me up.

Even though i show them my portfolio, it takes so much time for them to realize that i actually know what i'm doing. I've had several incidents where someone would take seriously the advice of some random guy who had no idea what he was talking about... over something i had to say, even though i had a ton more experience. But i usually think that if you're good at what you do, that'll eventually come through.

&lt;Guardian&gt;
Question #12: What's been your favorite project so far?

&lt;supershigi&gt;
Probably my most recent ones... I really enjoyed working on Plants vs. Zombies, and I'm really enjoying The Blue Star. Concerning PvZ... I had a lot of creative freedom, so I was really able to be wacky with the music. Plus, the game is just so unique and funny, and it inspired me... so writing the music came fairly naturally. I like working on my own game b/c ... well, it's so much fun being able to create your own world - adding personality to all your characters... putting little cameos here and there... creating the twists and surprises. I'm enjoying it so much. (Maybe too much... I hurt my wrist after working 13 hours in a row... i now officially hate clicking priorities and passabilities)

<supershigi>
okiedokie

<Guardian>
What advice would you give someone who's trying to get into the audio/music/sound industry?

<supershigi>
Well for starters, it's really important to hone your craft. You want to be making music as much as you can. A great way to learn, is to listen to music that you like, and try to recreate it. In doing so, you'll learn so much about the structure of those pieces, the tricks the composers used to get those particular sounds, etc. The more you create, the more you'll be able to develop your own style, which is probably the most important thing. You want to have your own voice. I can't tell u how many times i've heard tha t- "find your own voice", because there are a ton of people out there who want to compose for games, but many times they just try to copy a generic orchestral soundtrack or electronic piece... and the people who are selecting a composer for their game can't differentiate. But if you have your own recognizable style, people will remember you. So that's the first thing.

The second thing... is to try your best to build up experience. Try to find indie projects to work on, offer to do your first job for free to get your foot in the door, be passionate about showing people what you can do, and be a nice person. No one likes working with someone who is difficult.

Also, be prepared. Whether it's having a demo CD on hand, or an up-to-date business card, make sure you're ready if the opportunity comes up. Personally, i'm not into networking... i really love talking to people, but networking always feels really fake to me... so I just try to be myself.

<Guardian>
Question #14: What advice would you give someone who's trying to get into the gaming industry?

<supershigi>
I think it's a good idea to do what you can to get your foot in the door... several people I know took jobs as game testers before moving up in the company even though their real passion was game design or music. In doing so, they were able to meet people and establish their work ethic within the company. People knew they were reliable and passionate about games, so they were in a better position to be chosen for a different position later on. It also depends what your particular area of interest is... whatever your area of expertise you want to hone your craft and get as much experience as possible. One of my friends worked as a programmer at several tech companies prior to getting into the game industry. Many artists will work on several projects, and once they have an impressive portfolio they get picked up by a game company.

<Guardian>
Any final words before we leave?

<supershigi>
hmm... to everyone who is reading ... keep on creating :)

# "What was your favourite moment of 2009?"

The ORGy awards for me definitely. They were fun to do even if it was a lot of repetitive work. A few niggles here and there but it turned out cool in the end ;o
- **Commodore Whynot**

The site change is up there, but the name is also pretty awesome.
- **Atlet**

I think the biggest thing has been the switch from just RM* to other game makers. It really broadens our focus, which is good considering RM is starting to fade out and it's fun to experiment and learn about different makers. :)
- **Guardian**

i liked it when onideus mad hatter hacked the forums on april 1st

...oh, right, and sophist and i getting together was pretty ok too (I GUESS)

i forget that that is kind of a forum event >_>

another event i was proud of was wyatt taking my admin spot

he's done so well ;o; i'm swollen with pride ;o; (and other feelings >.>)
- **Venetia**

orgy awards and name change
also the day I was made a sponsor I guess :p
- **dust**

the day moog became a music mod again
possible futures opened itself to me
jesus came
- **Samot**

My favorite thing was when that cunt Twirly came back because I missed him so.

Fuck everyone else and Merry Christmas
- **Skyler**

Twirly coming back was a pretty major event.
- **Commodore Whynot**

My favorite thing that happened was meeting all of you. :3
- **Bacon**

ORGies. I love them...wait - I mean the ORGies. Yeah, winning that award was the coolest thing.
- **Afrodesiac**

Things are going to happen again and again and history created.
- **seomul**

Seomul's post
- **Atlet**

# CLASSIFIEDS

## DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

Official .org D&D game. Check out thread for more info. viewtopic.php?f=95&t=68625

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## WRITE FOR US

Wanna be in the ezine? Got something important to say? Check the link for more info. viewtopic.php?f=202&t=68881

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## IN DIRE NEED

Do you have the original ezines saved to your PC? We need your help! If you find them... PM them to us. viewtopic.php?f=202&t=68915

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## GOT IDEAS?

Wanna improve the site? We want your input! viewtopic.php?f=3&t=68199

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## TOWEL FOR SALE

Good for occasional hyper-space travel. Strawberry flavour. Colour may vary depending on time ordered. Asking price: per request. Telephone 0800-TOWEL.

## HAVE A BALL

The annual Shadow Fanclub Christmas Ball takes place on December 25th at #hbgames on irc.slacked.org. Don't miss out.

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## ADVERTISE HERE

Your advert within these fine pages. Up to 20 words and a title recommended. Low price of 1/6d pd. Contact Commodore Whynot. Can include a link.

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## Weekly Music Workshop

Samot needs YOU to check out the weekly music workshop. viewtopic.php?f=938&t=57994

_____

## You have to wash the car

Take the kiddies to the park, don't marry her, fuck me

_____

## OBITUARIES

Etheon doth hammered betwixt two planks

Mister Sophist doth murdereth twice of the curling iron

Lord Arbiter doth leap from tower of height to death of blood and gore

The Madame Venetia doth drowneth at thy own hands

## HOROSCOPES

### Aries
You will feel a slight tingling sensation in your back and lower ribs. Seek medical attention. Avoid ancient cities.

### Taurus
This year will be a load of bull.

### Gemini
Gemini? What is Gemini?

### Cancer
You will contract a new strain of IronyAids(tm).

### Leo
You will miss out Pisces to fit the rest on the page.

### Virgo
What are you, a thunderbird?

### Libra
You will become able to see traps with amazing ease.

### Scorpio
Dans le sud, el Scorchio! Dans le nord, el Scorchio!

### Sagittarius
Somebody will spell your name right.

### Capricorn
Capricorn what I thought Sagittarius was the end of the year what are you doing here o.O

### Aquarius
This is the dawning of the age of you.