= Don 't Take It Personally , Babe , It Just Ain 't Your Story =

don 't take it personally , babe , it just ain 't your story is a 2011 indie video game by Christine Love . Intended as a spiritual sequel to Love 's Digital : A Love Story , the game was developed over the course of a month and was released as a free download on April 4 , 2011 . Don 't take it personally is a visual novel , with the majority of the plot taking place outside of the player 's control except for key decisions . It follows a new high school literature teacher in 2027 over the course of a semester , with the ability to see private messages between students at any time without their knowledge . It deals with themes of privacy and relationships in the future . The game was received positively , with critics praising the interplay between the metafictional elements of the story and those of the game itself , with special acknowledgment reserved for the writing .

= = Gameplay = =

Don 't take it personally is a visual novel , or interactive fiction game where the majority of the story is told through still images of the speaking characters in front of anime @-@ style backgrounds with text overlaid . The player 's viewpoint follows one character , the teacher in a school , with the player seeing his thoughts as well as his and the other characters ' statements . The player advances the conversations the teacher is in or witnesses at will , but cannot go backwards and has little control over what any of the characters , including the teacher , are saying except at a few key moments . At these points , the player is presented with two or three choices for what the teacher says ; which option is chosen can change what path the plot takes , in either a minor or major way .
In a departure from most visual novels the player can also see , at any time , the equivalent of texts and Facebook postings between the students on a school social network called AmieConnect (often shortened to " Amie ") , as well as conversation threads on a 4chan @-@ like imageboard that serve as foreshadowing for future plot points . These extra conversations take place in parallel to in @-@ person conversations between characters , occasionally at the same time ; the player is notified anytime a new text message or post is made . A single playthrough of the game takes " over an hour " .

= = Scenario = =

= = = Setting = = =

The game is set in a private high school in Ontario , in 2027 . The player follows a new 11th @-@ grade literature teacher at the school , John Rook , who has recently had his second divorce and is undergoing , in his words , a " bizarre midlife crisis " that has led him to quit his career in computers and become a teacher . The students in his class are Arianna Belle @-@ Essai , Kendall Flowers , Taylor Gibson , Charlotte Grewal , Isabella Hart , Nolan Striukas , and Akira Yamazaki . Rook and all of the students have school @-@ issued computers , which the students use to communicate between each other in private and public messages . Rook , and therefore the player , can see all of the messages that the students send , even the private ones ; the school administration has told Rook that it is for monitoring online bullying , and that he is not to let anyone know that he can see students ' private messages .

= = = Plot = = =

Soon after the game opens , the player learns that Kendall and Charlotte have just broken up out of a lesbian relationship , while a few weeks prior Taylor and Nolan had broken up out of a heterosexual relationship . Arianna develops a crush on the teacher , which in the player 's first decision point Rook can reciprocate or not . Akira soon comes out as gay , finding to his dismay that everyone else already knew . He then attempts to enter into a relationship with Nolan , who is

unsure how to respond ; Rook can encourage him to try it out or let him decide on his own , but he enters a relationship with Akira regardless .

The next day , Isabella misses a meeting she set up with Rook , and does not return to the class . Through Amie texts and wall posts , the other students insinuate that she committed suicide , while the school is unable to provide Rook with any contact information for her . Class continues without her , and a little while later Arianna , if the player rejected her earlier in the game , makes another attempt to have a relationship with Rook . The player may choose to accept or reject her again . Through Amie , Rook learns that both Charlotte and Kendall wish to resume their relationship , and can influence Charlotte to try again or not , which changes whether or not they get back together . Taylor jealously and unsuccessfully tries to drive a wedge between Nolan and Akira .

As the end of term approaches , Rook begins getting strange emails about Isabella 's death , and begins seeing shinigami figures . Upset by these occurrences , when Akira 's mother asks to speak to him concerning misuses of Amie , he assumes that she has found out that he is spying on the students ' conversations . When he meets her , he finds that Isabella is alive and had simply moved away ; the students made it look like she was dead via Amie as a prank that got out of control . Furthermore , they already knew that he could see their messages ; Akira 's mother explains that the students have no idea of online privacy , having always had technology like Amie , and assumed that anything they put online might be read by anyone . The game ends with Rook having a casual lunch with the students , a date with Arianna , or neither , depending on the choices made during the game by the player .

= = Development = =

Don 't take it personally was developed over the course of a month , and was released as a free download on April 4 , 2011 . It was written and developed by Christine Love , with artwork made for the game by Auro @-@ Cyanide , artwork licensed from Tokudaya and Kimagure After , and with music licensed from Rengoku Teien and propanmode . It was created using the Ren 'Py engine . It was Love 's longest game to date , and her first attempt at a game with a branching storyline . It was intended as " a spiritual sequel of sorts " to Digital : A Love Story , a 2010 game by Love . The game was made for NaNoRenO (National Ren 'ai Game Writing Month) , a month @-@ long contest in the vein of National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) where developers attempt to create a visual novel in one month . Love 's favorite character to write was Kendall .

= = Reception = =

Don 't take it personally was chosen as a " freeware game pick " by IndieGames 's Michael Rose , who said that it was worth playing through multiple times in order to see the different paths the story takes depending on the player 's choices . Pete Davidson of GamePro noted the game as an example of the " creativity " missing in many large @-@ budget titles , and praised the story , calling Love " a writer first and a game developer second . " Alec Meer of Rock , Paper , Shotgun described the game as " a game about love , sex and the internet " that was " capable of being profoundly moving " and was about " what it is to feel like someone ? s kicked me straight in the heart . " He praised Love 's ability to use dialogue to effect an emotional response , though he noted that the game seemed to lose some of its impact in the final chapters and felt that the use of the " 12chan " threads as a Greek chorus was " perhaps a meta @-@ layer too far " .

Aaron Poppleton of PopMatters called the game " a meditation on privacy in the modern age " and " one of the more thoughtful games to come out in a long time . " He criticized the art direction of the game , saying that the limitation of creating the game in a month led to poor artwork and an unpolished presentation that lets down the possibilities of the story . He did note that the story and writing of the game made the downsides of the game " almost entirely a moot point " , and that it is a very strong game . Pete Davidson of PC World , in an article about the treatment of sexuality in video games , called out the game as an example of a game that used sexual themes maturely to explore love and relationships . Emily Short of Gamasutra , in a discussion about the game , said

that it was definitely worth playing and full of " charming characters , colorful dialogue , and important questions " , but criticized the uneven exploration of issues regarding privacy versus personal boundaries . She said that the game 's lack of focus on Rook 's issues with personal and professional boundaries was a weakness in the story , given that the distinction between boundaries and privacy was crucial to the plot . Love collated common criticisms and reviews of the game on her blog , summarizing that while it was less praised than Digital : A Love Story , most players seemed to like the way she wrote the relationships and overall story , though her portrayal of Rook was weak and that many players seemed to miss that he was intended to be " an absolutely awful teacher " and that the potential relationship with Arianna was intended to be creepy and make the player feel bad . She also noted that her use of licensed artwork was detracting from the game 's potential in comparison to the reaction to the custom works .

The Daily Telegraph gave the visual novel the award for " Best Script " in its video game awards of 2011 , stating that " Love 's layered narrative of a high school teacher embroiled in his student ? s worries goes places most mainstream video games wouldn 't dare . "