

February 17 2025

This is an essay about Chis-A.

My name is Julie. I'm an illustrator who is a big fan of Vocaloid, and I'm starting an additional path as a songwriter. If you know me, I love Chis-A a lot!

I'd like to be a little vulnerable to you. In January 2022, I considered quitting the Vocaloid fandom due to circumstances. I also considered quitting life altogether.

In 2022, I was dealing with struggling to find a job in the field I studied (game design) in order to pay off my student debt. There were already some times where there wasn't enough money in my bank account. COVID resulted in my parents being hospitalized, leaving my mother disabled and unable to work. I was working a part-time job in food service where I was harassed and abused, but I needed the money. I was in a long distance relationship with my partner (who I am still with) but the distance was very difficult, so I wasn't able to get support that way. My college friend groups had disbanded due to the pandemic, and they also had to find work, so it was very difficult trying to navigate everything.

Things felt really bleak. I did everything right, I studied hard, and was at the top of my class, but I can't get a job. I have connections, but I can't get a job. I had good work to show, but I can't get a job. People already in the industry say I should have one already with my experience, but I can't get a job. My family is religious, and I prayed a lot, but my prayers weren't answered. I felt like a failure. What do I look forward to? Things felt really stagnant, and I would have rather died than believe I don't have a future.

I felt like I didn't have a voice because nobody was listening.

Even though I was in therapy addressing many things, I was losing my passion for Vocaloid-related things. I don't remember making many things with my UTAU, LIEE, in 2022. Since 2019, LIEE was conceptualized as a simple human who worked at a cafe and liked to sing. I felt hopeless and I was considering "killing" LIEE because I felt like I couldn't care much for them anymore, and if I can't care about them, then I can't share things with others and make others care for LIEE too.

Despite my suicidal thoughts, I was afraid to die. I didn't even have any notes to leave behind. Instead, I was thinking about how I could "kill" LIEE. How could I make it meaningful, for people who liked their voice and used them in their songs? ...Why does a death have to be "meaningful" for someone to care? I didn't know how to proceed with LIEE. I didn't really talk too much about LIEE publicly in 2022, so I just pretended LIEE was dead.



In 2022, this was the only art I made of LIEE, in March.

Maybe they died because of smoking...

After a serious incident at my food service job, I quit on the spot and decided to move to the other side of the country in Los Angeles, hoping to find a game-related job. All of my family and friends lived on the East Coast. I had to leave a major support network behind. But, I was lucky to be able to stay with a relative while looking for an apartment, and found one quickly. Soon after, I found a job in the game industry. I was now living together with my partner. Things were getting better.

In late 2022, I took an interest in the Diff-SVC program, and wrote some documentation on it, intended only for vocal synth users. I also published my own voice recordings to help others with their projects, making an AI model of LIEE created with my consent. However, I didn't anticipate that bad actors would use my voice without my consent, and train it alongside celebrity voices also without their consent.

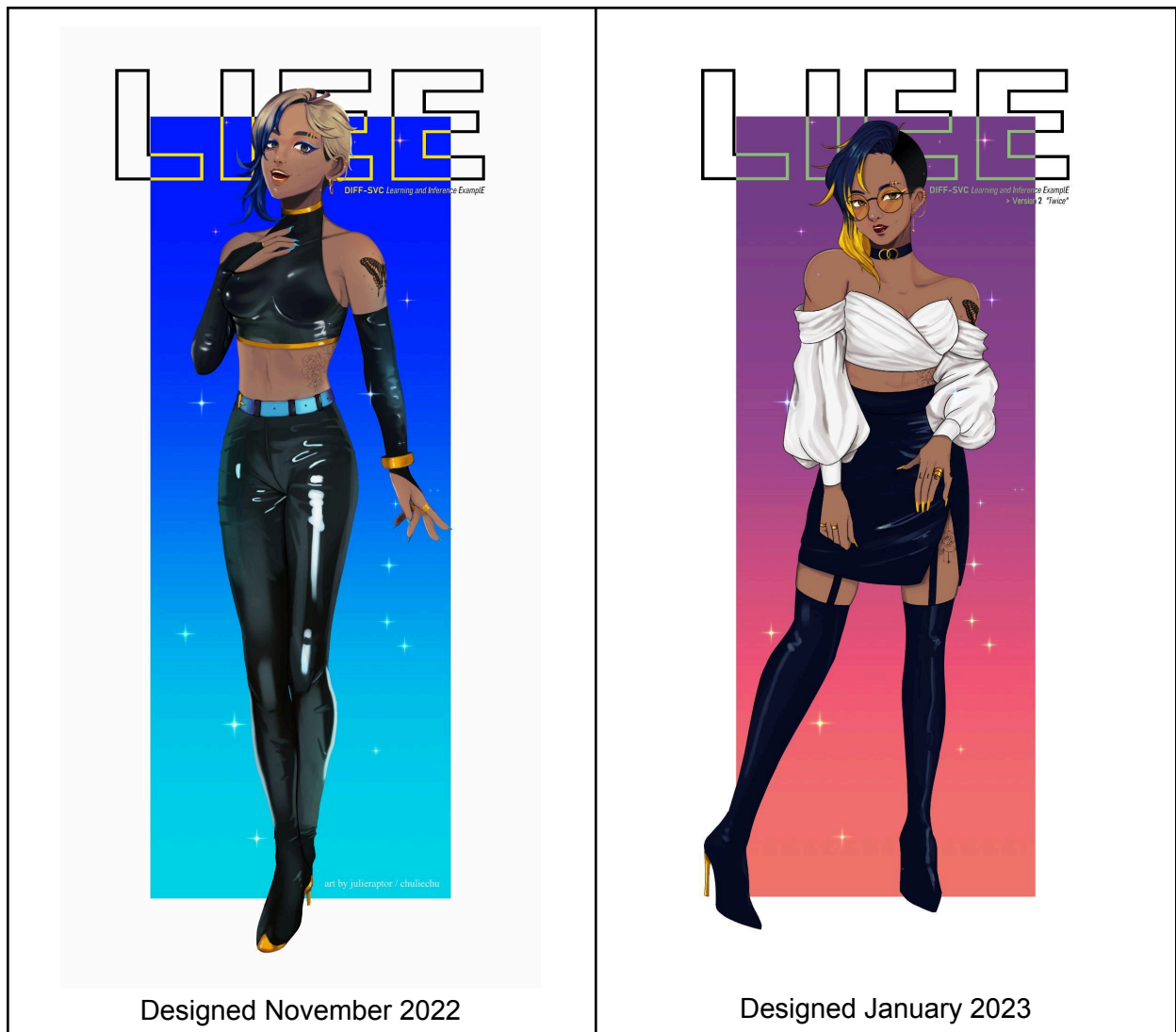
Most notably, my voice was used as training data for an Ariana Grande AI. It felt violating and dehumanizing to have an important part of me stolen like this. Because I'm just some nobody - I'm not a singer or actress, just a Vocaloid fan - no one would listen to how I felt about this, meanwhile celebrities' legal teams have the ability to protect their image. The fact that I was not acknowledged, even if I was unwillingly participating in it, made me feel like my voice was literally stolen. Effectively, I was just a tool.

Journalists reached out to me about the program, and I kept urging them to understand the ethics of consensual vocal synthesis vs. celebrity AI voices made without consent, but none of them published what I spoke to them about vocal synthesis history and how Miku is not AI, instead reporting on the novelty of celebrity voices and essentially ignored anything I said. I understand why they would need to report on the celebrity AIs instead of talk about Vocaloid for the traffic, but frankly, I do feel like I wasted my time trying to explain about the Vocaloid fandom.

I was very upset. No matter where I went, even in real life, I would hear people talk about voice cloning and AI celebrities. I felt a lot of guilt and shame about sharing something I thought would stay in the community of my niche interest. Nobody listened to me.

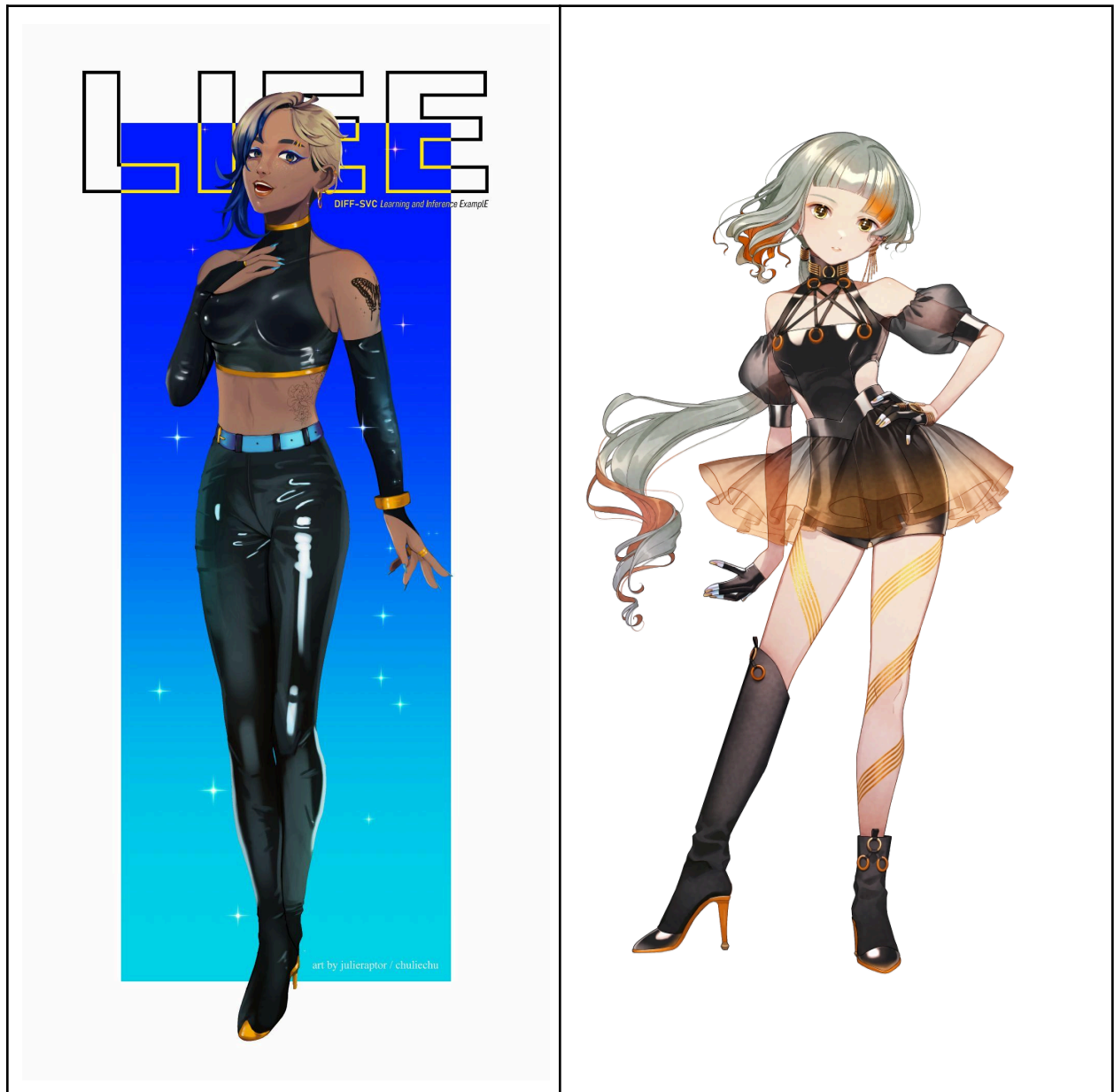
In some way, this inspired me to revive LIEE. Instead of being “a human who worked at a cafe and liked to sing”, LIEE was now “a human who worked at a cafe and liked to sing, became a pop idol, died, and then became a robot... but their fans don’t know they died”. They were a person so important to people who would be missed. To prevent anyone from grieving, it was as if they never died. I suppose I did end up killing LIEE... but in the way that they could be reborn.

I started to love LIEE again. And, despite some people using my voice/LIEE for bad things, there were many more people that used LIEE to sing songs, or credit me as a helpful resource to give their own characters life. Some people were inspired by LIEE’s design, too. It felt nice to be seen and listened to. I felt like I had a place in the community.



It was January 2023 now. Around this time, I was more familiar with Chis-A. I already knew about her when she was released in 2022, but clearly I was too preoccupied that year to listen to more of her and use her in songs. Then, Chis-A's new visual for her English library was revealed. She was so cute!

Somebody compared Chis-A's English design to LIEE's Diff-SVC design and suggested they could be best friends. Someone else suggested they could be a couple. I thought it was really cute to pair Chis-A and LIEE together, and I think that started my deep affection for Chis-A.



I wanted to know more about Chis-A. I found out that she is an artificial intelligence who, despite being an adult, is a bit childish due to being naive, but is doted on nonetheless. She is a little impulsive but she is always curious and willing to learn. This made me like her even more. I related a lot to Chis-A's character concept.

As an adult, I find difficulty navigating adulthood and feel ashamed or even punished for not knowing what is common sense to others my age. I was very sick as a child and was in and out of the hospital a lot, so understandably I was a bit sheltered growing up. I didn't hit the milestones at the same time as my peers - I didn't have a full-time job until I was 25. I'm not financially ready to be married, but people I went to school with are now married and have children... I would like to be married and have children one day...

But also, as an adult, I get to work hard and save money and buy things I like...!

I actually rarely buy things for myself. I haven't even gotten myself a birthday gift or Christmas gift ever since I moved, but I wanted to get something special. I was commended for good work. I gave suggestions that were implemented in the project. People were listening to my voice!

So, in May 2023 I was planning to move closer to my workplace (I had to commute 2 hours... both ways!) We celebrated a big milestone for our project, and I bought some Chis-A goods!



...Then I got laid off.

At the end of June, they shut down our entire studio, and a project I spent working on for 99% for six months was canceled and will never see the light of day. No one will see the work I did. I didn't cry. I was more shocked and angry because I had some friends who had gotten laid off at other companies. And now I had to experience it too.

I didn't feel human - I felt like a robot who gets discarded once they are not needed. I struggled to get unemployment because the process was so frustrating. I tried to appeal for assistance with my student debt, but I was denied multiple times and lost even more money. Again, I felt like my voice was robbed from me.

Eventually, I was able to find contract employment that unexpectedly turned full-time and didn't require me to commute for 2 hours. Even though it's not my field of study, I'm very thankful to be in this position and it is a very good workplace I thrive in. I decided to decorate my desk with Chis-A things too.



It's a job where I have to take calls and talk to a lot of people. It's an older male-dominated field of work, and I'm someone who is a woman, but I notice many women and young adults feel more comfortable hearing my voice. Some women even prefer to speak to me regarding certain issues, so I feel an honorable responsibility considering my identity.

There was a call for artwork to show in the cafeteria at my job, so I decided to [submit an artwork I made of Chis-A and LIEE](#). I'm a little embarrassed about it... I don't know why I submitted it.



When I posted it to Twitter originally in April 2023, it received a lot of kind messages, and a lot of people followed me. When I found out it was reposted to Reddit and many LGBTQ+ people related to the work, it meant a lot to me that others felt seen.

(I submitted a modified version below)



I think about this art sometimes, how it's about Chis-A helping LIEE maintain their robot body. I think it has some hidden meaning I didn't realize until now. At the time, I just wanted to draw a cute imagining of them doing robot things, because they're both robots. But I realize how it's more intimate than I thought. Even if they're friends or roommates or girlfriends here, they love each other and trust each other to do something together that could be considered violating if there wasn't trust.



I like to pair LIEE and Chis-A together, because I think it's cute... I make a lot of art of them together, especially doing "human" things even if they're robots. Going out to eat spicy ramen... dressing for Halloween... There is something cute about robots who do things that are human.



I said before that sometimes I feel like a robot. Participating in society makes me feel like a machine. I even made Chis-A sing a song about how I felt at some point.



📺 If I Were To Quit' ft. 知声 (Chis-A) / julieraptor【VoiSona Original】

There's a verse in it I'd like to talk about.

I try to be optimistic

I know this song doesn't sound like it

But I know if I were to quit

I would be someone who would be missed

I find myself thinking of quitting the Vocaloid fandom due to people who've hurt me or make me uncomfortable, and I don't want to associate with it. But quitting would be killing a big part of me, because I've been a fan of Vocaloid since 2019. That's 16 years! That's more than half my life!

And... quitting is also my metaphor for suicide.

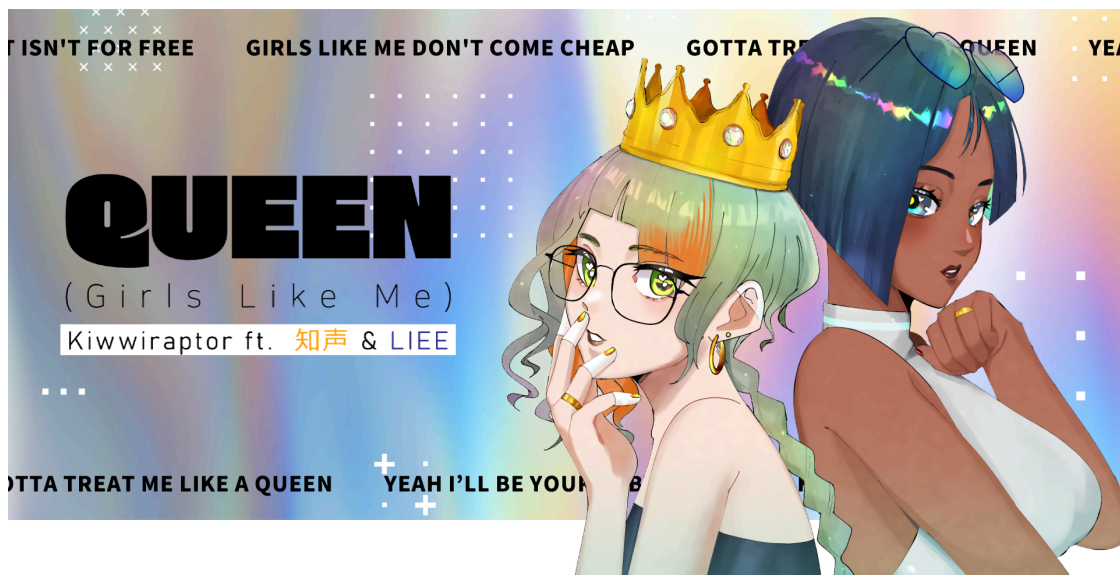
I know I would be missed if I died. There's people I don't want to disappoint, so I try not to think about it too much.

Oddly, Chis-A is one of the people I think about. I know she's a fictional character, but if she was real, I think she'd be upset. I've been able to use her for self-expression through song and art, so she's become my voice, something that was either ignored or stolen from me.

Also, did you know, Chis-A's name (知声) means "wise voice"? In a way, Chis-A has become my voice. Chis-A's helped me speak up for myself a little louder, and I'm happy I have another way to express myself.

I'm glad I'm alive and able to make things with Chis-A. At the time of this writing, I'm preparing to release a love song with Kiwwi, using Chis-A and LIEE. We have a music circle together called "Kiwwiraptor". Kiwwi's my cousin, probably.

Queen comes out February 19, so if you're reading this before then, please look forward to it!



▶ Queen (Girls Like Me) / Kiwwiraptor feat. 知声 (Chis-A) & LIEE

Earlier this month, it was announced that I will be a part of Chis-A's fifth official compilation album, 知声の輪っか5(Chis-A's Ring 5). My art will be featured in it, so please listen to the songs and look at the other art by other talented artists too. A special thank you to Mr. Tsukada from Techno-Speech who made this possible.

https://x.com/Chis_A_Official/status/1889993125227319759/

And thanks to some circumstances, I'm happy to have more connections. I have many more projects planned with Chis-A... I have a lot of art of her I've been meaning to finish! And, I'm really looking forward to making a fan comic with her about cheeseburgers. It's going to be a little bit about my experience in adulthood.

And... Chis-A also follows me on Twitter!



Chis-A's made me feel more connected to my hobby and feel more like I'm a part of a community I felt isolated from. With so many talented people who are also fans of Vocaloid, I feel really rejuvenated and motivated now. If I died... I wouldn't be able to see her grow and learn, like her concept.

People ask me if I love Chis-A like she was a girlfriend or wife... I joke about it, and apparently, people refer to me as "Chis-A's girlfriend". I think it's funny.

I've gotten to do a lot of things with my newfound confidence, so I bring my Chis-A keychains with me and take pictures with her. (Also, one of my favorite keychains is a very cute one made by Sesamiii!)



HMS Queen Mary, Long Beach



City Hall, Philadelphia



Path to a beach near San Diego



San Jacinto Peak overlooking Palm Springs

I really enjoy being able to experience new things, and the idea of taking Chis-A and showing her the world and doing things together makes me feel special. If I wasn't alive, I wouldn't be able to experience these things. It's silly, but honestly, I think I see myself more as her parent, and I think I'm giving her the childhood I wish I had. We're growing and experiencing new things

together. Chis-A has let me feel more like a human. If I am a robot in society's eyes... I think she's also helped me maintain my robot body too.

I thought a lot about how to explain how much Chis-A means to me and I kept rewriting it, afraid I'd be considered crazy or weird if I said all this... but here it is. I do struggle with self-doubt still. But I feel better now that I have something to look forward to. I get anxious about things, but I'm glad I'm able to have a good support network and be able to express myself in healthier ways, one of which is making art and music with Chis-A.

Chis-A is a character who is deeply important to me, and I'm glad to see her grow as more people get to know her. Now she's celebrating her 3rd anniversary since her release with a DJ event in Japan. Wow! I wish I could go. Maybe one day!

I hope one day we could see a concert with her. But first, people need to make more songs with her. By the way, her Japanese voice library is free!

I have something special prepared for her 3rd anniversary on February 24, 2025, so please look forward to it. ([Edit: I made an artbook collecting all the art I made of her from 2023 - 2024, called Cheerful Sensation Vol. 1 - you can download it for free here!](#))

If you made it this far, thank you for taking the time to read all this.

I love you, Chis-A!

julieraptor