

Ghostly Glitches

written by

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INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

An array of colorful crocheted animals decorate a home office, lit by a cozy lamp and moonlight. An old iMac decorated with crochet sits on a desk next to a half-finished crocheted bunny, yarn, and a crochet hook. A gray-haired, hunchbacked MARGE, 70's, hunts and pecks furiously on the keyboard, while beads of sweat collect on her forehead. A certificate on the wall reads:

"Certificate of Completion, Margaret Needlesworth, Computer Programming Fundamentals II, Sunville Community Center"

The shrill ring of the phone shatters the peaceful symphony of hunt-and-peck key clicks.

INT. MODERN INFLUENCER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

BRITTANY, a social media influencer in her 20's, strikes a pose on a faux fur beanbag, her trendy office awash in pastel hues and the glamor of a ring light. With one eye on her phone's camera and another on her follower count, she initiates a call.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION:

Brittany's perfectly glossed lips break into a pout as she launches into her predicament.

BRITTANY

Marge, sweetie, the gossip update for the latest Love Seeker episode isn't up yet! My followers are about to go on a digital riot.

MARGE

Brittany, I'm pushing this old Mac harder than a donkey on a steep hill.

BRITTANY

Marge, I literally can't even. This FOMO pandemic is gonna get me hashtag cancelled.

MARGE

But...

BRITTANY

And remember, Marge, slay queens never sleep!

Brittany disconnects, her manicured fingers snapping a post-call selfie for her Insta story.

MARGE
Hashtags and hooley...

Marge clicks "Enter" and log output of a software application streams down the screen, ending in an error paired with technical gibberish.

MARGE (CONT'D)
This never happened at the community center. Not once. This computer must have a mind of its own.

ON THE SCREEN:

I do

Marge shakes her head, bleary-eyed, then deletes the words.

A bespectacled, pot-bellied, bearded man, HENRY, 70's, stumbles past the door with his cane, delivering a steaming cup of coffee.

HENRY
Marge, did you forget to retire?

MARGE
Hey, the instructor said I had a knack for this. I just have to figure this out.

He spins away. Marge seizes the cup and sips, her eyes locked onto the screen.

MARGE (CONT'D)
Henry, you're my angel. All hell will break loose if I can't get this update uploaded in time.

Henry points to a switch near the door.

HENRY
You don't need this on, right?

MARGE
Don't touch that switch! I forget what it controls. For all I know, that switch could turn my pacemaker off. Do you want to turn my pacemaker off?

HENRY

Oh c'mon love, it has nothing to do
with your pacemaker.

MARGE

Henry...

HENRY

Okay, okay! I'll leave it alone.

The thumps from Henry's cane grow distant as Marge tries to google the latest error message. She spots an ad for a sale on yarn and clicks on it.

ON THE SCREEN:

Take a break?

Marge cocks her head, her brow furrowing. She adds the word "what", then pauses again and deletes all the words again.

Marge looks again at her search results and clicks on a selection which mentions "Troubleshooting". The first recommendation is to run a virus scan. Marge diligently opens her virus scanning software and starts a scan.

She sips her coffee as the virus scan finishes. A massive list of viruses appears. Marge turns toward the door.

MARGE

Honey? You just go to bed without
me!

The thumping of a cane approaches, and Henry stumbles back into the room. Marge seems lost in thought, her eyes moving about the screen indecisively. Henry cranes his neck over Marge's shoulder.

HENRY

It's saying you got some viruses.
You gotta take care of that.

Marge nods perfunctorily, her eyes locked forward.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Marge, did ya hear me? I read those
viruses can get into our bank
accounts.

MARGE

Look, Henry, I know what I'm doing.
It's my job.

HENRY
I was just...

MARGE
(swiveling)
Mansplaining me? Do I really
deserve that?

Henry lowers his head in shame.

HENRY
Sorry.

MARGE
Look, Henry, I do computers. You
don't. Trust in my ability, okay?

Henry nods weakly and stumbles away.

Marge swivels back to her computer, considers, then clicks
"Ignore All". She sighs in relief at a message saying "No
threats reported".

She clicks to close the window and another cryptic error
message pops up.

ON THE SCREEN:

Just reboot. Trust me.

Marge types. "Who is this?"

COMPUTER
(speaking aloud in a
echoey voice)
You don't have to type you know.

MARGE
Are you from Nerd Patrol? My last
computer came with a Nerd Patrol
subscription.

COMPUTER
No, I'm a ghost in the computer.

MARGE
(toward the door)
Henry, are we still subscribed to
Nerd Patrol?

HENRY
WHAT?

MARGE
NERD PATROL!

HENRY
WHAT'S TURD PATROL?

MARGE
NERD, HENRY! NERD PATROL!

HENRY
No, we don't have that anymore.

COMPUTER
I'm not a nerd. Well... I'm a ghost
of a nerd maybe. But I assure you,
I'm not on nerd patrol.

MARGE
(toward the door)
I need something stronger than
coffee, Henry!

Marge's eyes narrow at the computer.

MARGE (CONT'D)
Nerd Patrol always told me to
reboot.

COMPUTER
Look, I know what I'm doing. I was
your predecessor, who died trying
to meet that glamor girl's
deadlines. I'm not haunting your
rust bucket iMac for fun, y'know.

MARGE:
I'm supposed to believe you're
dead? Is that it? Well I have a
deadline, and I'm dead tired. How
'bout ya leave the living in peace,
dear?

The computer begins to rattle. Marge yelps and jumps.

MARGE (CONT'D)
What the hell is going on? Is this
some kind of computer ghost
exorcism?

COMPUTER
How can you talk to me that way?
With that coffee breath? I'm just
trying to help!

The rattling eventually dies down.

COMPUTER (CONT'D)
Wait, is that your spit on my
screen? I can't do this.

Silence.

Marge dares to breathe, looking tensely around the room. She gathers the courage to wipe a spot on the screen with her sleeve. A large pile of discs and books fall from flailing arms through the doorway, crashing to the floor. She shrieks.

HENRY
Crap, sorry!

Marge holds her hand to her chest and breathes heavily, glaring toward Henry in disbelief. Henry shakily props his cane against the wall and, after some additional strain getting to his knees, starts collecting what he dropped.

HENRY (CONT'D)
I went looking for the stuff Nerd
Patrol left us, like the virus
checking stuff.

MARGE
You scared the daylights out of me,
Henry. And that software is old.

Henry, on all fours, leans over to offer her a thin book. Marge walks over and looks down at him, shaking her head.

HENRY
Here's the manual for the computer.

MARGE
That's not going to help. Look
Henry, you don't understand this
stuff.

Henry goes quiet, and finishes collecting his everything. Marge starts helping him up.

HENRY
I just figured...

MARGE
(patting his back)
That's okay, boomer. There, there.

Henry is again at a loss. Marge hands him his cane and he thumps away, a little less chipper. Marge returns to her seat.

MARGE (CONT'D)
So, eh...

COMPUTER
Yes?

MARGE
You're a...

COMPUTER
A ghost, yes.

MARGE
But, well... uh.

COMPUTER
Talk to me. I'm here to help you.

MARGE
Do you... look like Patrick Swayze?

An uncomfortable silence.

MARGE (CONT'D)
Are you... there?

COMPUTER
(imitating)
Are you... really that shallow?

Marge's eyes lower.

COMPUTER (CONT'D)
I do look a little Patrick Stewart,
if that works for ya? Anyway, I'm
not here to fulfill your ghostly
celebrity crush fantasies. Do you
want my help or not?

MARGE
Help with what?

COMPUTER
Avoiding my fate! I had a deadline
too, once. And now I'm stuck in
this rust bucket iMac forever.

MARGE
Oh, I see. But, will rebooting hurt
you?

COMPUTER
Who knows? Let me try something.

The computer shuts down.

Marge waits. Nothing.

Marge looks around. She gets up and adjusts some crocheted animals on a shelf.

She sits back down, eyeing the computer, sipping her coffee once more.

Marge presses a key on the keyboard. Nothing.

Marge presses the power button. Nothing.

MARGE

Oh, this won't do.

Henry peeks in, sees Marge's tears forming, then approaches her, rubbing her shoulders.

HENRY

What's wrong, love?

MARGE

Oh, Henry! I've been at it all night trying to get this working and the computer just... shut down and I'm so tired and might actually be hallucinating.

HENRY

Hmmm, let me take a look.

Henry leans over and starts experimentally tapping the buttons on the computer and keyboard.

MARGE

Stop that Henry...

HENRY

Back in the day, ya just had to hit the right spot.

Henry persists and hits the computer in different spots, still tapping the buttons.

Marge reaches down and brandishes a riding crop, whipping Henry with it twice on his rear. Henry spins around, shocked.

MARGE

When I say stop, you stop, Henry.
Got it?

Henry nods cautiously.

MARGE (CONT'D)
Now go and get me something...
anything... that'll keep me awake.

Henry obediently makes his exit, his cane thumping soon receding. Marge stows the crop and grimaces, then turns her attention back to the dead computer and stares hard. Her shoulders then slump, and she thinks.

MARGE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, but I just could not
meet the deadline. I had some
errors and then the computer shut
off and... Yes, maybe I'm not that
good of a programmer but I've been
working so much lately and...

Marge's knuckles whiten.

MARGE (CONT'D)
No.

Marge shakes her head.

MARGE (CONT'D)
Margaret Bethany Needlesworth, you
will not let this happen. You most
certainly are not a good
programmer, but, darn it, you've
survived worse. You don't give up.

Marge leans down to the dead computer.

MARGE (CONT'D)
Hey!

No response.

MARGE (CONT'D)
Henry may have been on to
something...

Marge grabs a crocheted monkey, adorned with the word "CODE", and smacks the computer with it.

MARGE (CONT'D)
Hey! Are you in there? You're just
going to abandon me? Patrick?

No response.

Marge smacks the computer with the monkey again.

COMPUTER
(groggily)
Stop that!

The ghost's perspective shows relentless earth-shattering booms with each impact with the monkey.

COMPUTER (CONT'D)
Okay, okay, STOP! I'm awake!

Marge taps her foot as the machine boots back up. Marge checks for her code. The file is empty.

MARGE
All my work. Gone. I knew rebooting
was a bad idea.

Marge's face falls into her hands.

COMPUTER
Don't worry. I remember everything.
I think.

MARGE
You think? I typed so much!

Marge looks skeptical. The computer rattles again.

MARGE (CONT'D)
Okay, okay, let's just get this
done.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- Text code streaming across the screen
- Marge monitoring and occasionally correcting, working as a team.

MONTAGE END

The screen shifts to display a website control interface with a button that says "Click to Update Gossip"

Marge raises her arms with joy and relief, then checks a clock on the wall.

MARGE (CONT'D)
And not a moment to spare! My
goodness.

Henry stumbles in with his cane, also wearing a ghost costume, and starts flipping the lights on and off.

HENRY
 Waaaaake Uuuup Maaarrrrge!! Ooony
 noony noooooo!

Marge screams!

MARGE
 STOP! STOP!

Henry stops. His ghostly head lowers in guilt.

Smoke rises from the computer, and it shuts down again.

MARGE (CONT'D)
 Oh my god, NO!

Marge clutches her chest, grimaces in pain, and collapses over the keyboard, her eyes wide and lifeless.

CUT TO:

INT. GLAMOROUS STARTUP OFFICE - DAY

Brittany, in her on-brand pastel athleisure, struts past an IT worker. Her oversized sunglasses barely mask the interest when she spots Marge's cheerfully adorned iMac.

BRITTANY
 Hey, isn't that Marge's retro tech?

IT WORKER
 Yep, just got it working again so I
 can wipe it before recycling.

BRITTANY
 Wait, let me check something...

She delicately perches in front of the iMac, drawn to the "Click to Update Gossip" button. She taps it. A sparkling notification lights up the screen with a cheery chime: "Gossip Updated Successfully."

BRITTANY (CONT'D)
 (rolls eyes)
 Took her long enough...

Brittany flounces off, leaving the IT worker and Marge's iMac in her glittery wake.

The echoey voices of the two ghosts can be heard from the iMac.

GHOST'S VOICE

I'm so sorry, Marge.

GHOST OF MARGE'S VOICE

She couldn't code her way out of
her designer handbag. Hmph!

FADE OUT