

Ghostly Glitches

written by

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INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

An array of colorful knit animals decorate a home office, lit by a cozy lamp and moonlight. A crusty old PC sits on a desk next to a half-finished knit bunny, yarn, and needles. 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 phone rings, interrupting Marge's thoughts. She answers it, looking annoyed.

MARGE

Hello?

BRIAN (V.O.)

Marge, it's Brian. Why is the payroll feature still not working? I gave you more than enough time to get this done.

MARGE

Brian, I'm doing my best. This old computer is giving me some issues.

BRIAN (V.O.)

I don't want to hear excuses. Get it done tonight or there will be consequences.

BRIAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'm going to bed now. I expect results by morning.

Brian hangs up, leaving Marge staring at the phone in frustration. She turns back to the computer and taps "Enter".

Log output of a software application streams down the screen, ending in an error paired with technical gibberish.

MARGE

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 payroll data 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 remaining tea 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, takes the tea cup, 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)
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. I'm not haunting your rust bucket computer 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 through the doorway, crashing to the floor, and 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 computer 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 knit animals
on a shelf.

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

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 working 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 find 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 grabs a knit monkey 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 spreadsheet. A button underneath says "Click to Send Payroll Data."

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 nooooo!

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. HALLWAY - DAY

The old, burnt up computer is being carted down a corporate hallway.

GHOST'S VOICE

I heard they were cancelling the
project anyway.

GHOST OF MARGE'S VOICE

(echoing)

I hate computers.

The computer gets dumped in a trashcan.