

woman sheepishly popped her head into our computer store one day, and approached me at a counter.

“This may be a stupid question,” she began, “but I was wondering if you sold power bars here.”

“That’s not a stupid question,” I beamed. “Of course we sell power bars! Just follow me, and I’ll show you our selection.” I walked her over to a shelf replete with a variety of power bars, in all configurations and sizes. “Is there anything particular you had in mind?” I queried.

“Um...” she grinned. “This isn’t quite what I had in mind. I was looking for a power bar—you know, those high-energy nutritional chocolate bars.”

Silly me.

ast week, I installed a computer for a co-worker. It was the very first computer she had ever used, and she was excited to learn everything she could about the machine. While she would accept a few pointers from me, however, she was of an independant mind and was adamant that she teach herself. She rushed me out of the house so that she could immerse herself in her new, digital world.

The next morning, she called me, quite concerned. She said her monitor was looking a bit fuzzy, and wanted to know if she needed to buy an antenna for it.

"Hi there! Tech Support," I began, cheerily as always. "What can I help you with?"

"Well, I'm having trouble with file transfers to a remote computer. I've read the manual, but nothing seems to be working."

I launched into a line of regular questioning. I verified the procedure the customer was using. Everything was fine. I had him check the preferences. Everything was fine. I had him check the modem's physical connections. Everything was fine.

"Have you had any other problems connecting with this system?"

"Connecting?" said the customer, incredulously.

"Yes," I reaffirmed. "Other than trying to transfer a file to this system, do you have any other problems after connecting to the remote system?"

"I just start your program and try to transmit the file," he replied. "You mean I have to call the other system first? How do I do that?"

I am sending you this letter in a bogus software company envelope so that you will be sure to read it. Please forgive the deception, but I thought you should know what has been going on at home since your computer entered our lives two years ago.

The children are doing well. Tommy is seven now and is a bright, handsome boy. He has developed quite an interest in the arts. He drew a family portrait for a school project. All the figures were good but yours was excellent! The chair and the back of your head are very realistic. You would be very proud of him.

Little Jennifer turned three in September. She looks a lot like you did at that age. She is an attractive child and quite smart. She still remembers that you spent the whole afternoon with her on her birthday. What a grand day for Jen, despite the fact that it was stormy and the electricity was out.

I am also doing well. I went blond about a year ago and was delighted to discover that it really is more fun! Lars...I mean Mr. Swenson, the department head, has taken an interest in my career and has become a good friend to us all.

I have discovered that the household chores are much easier since I realized that you don't

mind being vacuumed but that feather dusting made you sneeze. The house is in good shape. I had the living room painted last Spring. I'm not sure if you noticed it. I made sure the painters cut air holes in the drop cloth so you wouldn't be disturbed.

Well, my dear, I must be going. Uncle Lars...Mr. Swenson, I mean, is taking us all on a ski trip and there will be packing to do. I have hired a housekeeper to take care of things while we are away. She'll keep things in order, fill your coffee cup, and bring meals to your desk, just the way you like it. I hope you and the computer have a lovely time while we are gone. Tommy, Jen and I will think of you often. Try to remember us while your disks are booting.

Love, Melinda  
(Your Wife)

Tech

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