

Computer Machine

by
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FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Shelves stacked with books line the walls of an office. Tables are covered with open notebooks, papers, charts, and pencils. A frustrated women named SAMANTHA works at a table. Her clothes and hair are disheveled.

SAMANTHA

One plus four... Five... Seven plus, no Six... UHG!

A door opens. A heavy, bald headed man named MR.HARVINGTON emerges. He looks at Samantha in anger.

MR.HARVINGTON

Sam! Are you done with that budget yet?

SAMANTHA

Not yet sir. Our books are a mess. I'm going to need a little while longer to figure this out.

MR.HARVINGTON

The books are your job Sam, so if you can't give me the budget in ten minutes, you're fired!

Mr.Harvington SLAMs closed the door to his office. Samantha pauses to look at the books and papers in front of her in bewilderment. She puts her head down and begins to cry.

Another door opens. A well dressed MAN steps out and eagerly looks into the camera, smiling a sleazy toothy grin.

SLEAZY MAN

What's the matter Sam?

Samantha raises her head and looks up at this man.

SAMANTHA

MR.HARVINGTON said he's going to fire me if I don't give him the budget in ten minutes! But these books are so messy, there's no way I'll be able to get it done in time!

Samantha looks into the camera.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

What should I do?!?!

Both Samantha and the sleazy man look into the camera and smile. Cheesy MUSIC begins to play.

SLEAZY MAN

Sounds like you need a Computer Machine!

SAMANTHA

A Computer Machine?

SLEAZY MAN

A Computer Machine! Now you can organize your work and get it done a hundred times faster! Amaze your coworkers as you climb the corporate ladder!

SAMANTHA

Oh boy!

SLEAZY MAN

But wait, there's more!

SAMANTHA

There's more?

SLEAZY MAN

There's more! When you get your work done at amazing speeds, you'll be able to play games with your new Computer Machine! Try Mindwiper, the game that wipes your mind! Or Solitude, the game that makes you happy feel happy to be alone!

Mr.Harvington's door swings open. Both Samantha and the sleazy man look at him in surprise.

MR.HARVINGTON

Hey what's going on out here!

SAMANTHA

I just got a Computer Machine Mr.Harvington! And look! I finished the budget and managed to save us three million dollars!

Samantha hands Mr.Harvington a piece of PAPER along with huge stacks of MONEY. Mr.Harvington looks at the camera in shock and becomes uncharacteristically friendly.

MR.HARVINGTON

Wow Sam! Great work! You're promoted! And I'm giving you a raise!

Mr.Harvington slaps money into Samantha's hands.

MR.HARVINGTON (CONT'D)

But say, what can a Computer Machine do for a guy like me?

BENJAMIN (O.S.)

This is crap!

SLEAZY MAN

No worries my friend! With a Computer Machine, you'll see your company reap huge profits! Buy out your competitors, and be the only game in town!

MR.HARVINGTON

My good man, I'm going to buy a Computer Machine for each of my employees. No, make that three Computer Machines for all my employees! And maybe a few extra for myself.

Mr.Harvington stuffs money into the hands and pockets of the sleazy man. All three smile and wink at the camera. Their hands and pockets ooze with money.

BENJAMIN (O.S.)

God damn infomercials.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The back of BENJAMIN is seen in a sun lit bedroom pointing his finger against a knob on a box. He puts on his business coat on, grabs his briefcase, then exits.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

Cubicles line the hallways. Their walls have motivational posters and charts posted on them. One of the charts is a comparative line GRAPH, showing the profits of Benjamin's company and its competitors. The red line for Benjamin's company has been significantly higher and steeper than all the other colored lines for the past fifteen years. Every other line is flat or trending modestly downward.

As Benjamin walks down the hall and peers into cubicles, he sees EMPLOYEES hard at work.

INT. BENJAMIN'S CUBICLE - DAY

Benjamin sits down at his chair and eagerly reaches for a Notebook and pencil. He suddenly looks up at the sound of footsteps.

MR. STILLWORTH

Good morning Benjamin! I've been meaning to talk to you. I have a question about the budget.

BENJAMIN

For you sir, anything. What can I do for you?

MR. STILLWORTH

Well, I've heard about these things called Computer Machines.

BENJAMIN

Computer Machines?

MR. STILLWORTH

Yeah, fangled name if I ever heard one. But they're supposed to help businesses keep organized. Some of us in management were wondering about buying a few. They run about a thousand dollars each. What do you think?

BENJAMIN

With all due respect sir, I don't believe that they will work. People who are already disorganized and confused will only have a new tool to confuse themselves with.

MR. STILLWORTH

Well how about the budget? Say we wanted to get just a few and test them out? How many could we afford?

BENJAMIN

Oh boy, let's see here...

Benjamin flips through the pages of a notebook.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Well, at a thousand each we can reasonably afford about twenty if we take from the supply budget.

MR. STILLWORTH

Twenty it is then. I'll let the rest of the board know. Thanks Benjamin.

BENJAMIN

No problem, sir.

BENJAMIN goes back to reading the books and marking figures.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

Benjamin walks down the hall and curiously peers into cubicles. A hand full of employees have Computer Machines at their desks. Those without Computer Machines are seen reaching for books or writing down notes. Half of those who do have Computer Machines are filling out digital charts, while others are playing games. A few cubicles are empty.

Benjamin stops to look at a NEW GRAPH on the wall. The graph shows that his company's profits have sharply fallen in the past month, while each of the competitions' profits have risen. He lets out a sigh. The lights flicker.

INT. BENJAMIN'S CUBICLE - DAY

As Benjamin sits down, he lets out another sigh. He slowly reaches for his books and begins writing. He hears Mr. Stillworth entering the cubicle and looks up.

MR. STILLWORTH

I'm sure you know by now Benjamin.

BENJAMIN

HMMP, the books don't lie sir. What in the world is causing the profits to slip? We've been doing business the same way we always have.

MR. STILLWORTH

The board believes that we were victims of our own success. Word has it that the competition recently bought Computer Machines for all of their employees.

BENJAMIN

All of them sir? How could they afford that?

MR.STILLWORTH

Not wisely, they couldn't. They had their backs against the walls and took a huge risk and invested all of their R&D budget into buying the Computer Machines.

BENJAMIN

They're nuts sir! I'm surprised they aren't out of business yet!

MR.STILLWORTH

Regardless, the board is convinced that we need to buy Computer Machines for all of our employees too. Can we afford this?

BENJAMIN

No sir, we can't!

MR.STILLWORTH

We didn't think this would be an easy sell. Why don't you come have a chat with all ten of us board members.

BENJAMIN

If I have to...

Benjamin gets up with a look of annoyance on his face. He walks with Mr.Stillworth. The lights flicker.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

Mr.Stillworth looks into a cubicle and pauses. The cubicle has a Computer Machine. Its screen is displaying the face of an employee.

MR.STILLWORTH

ARG! Not him too!

BENJAMIN

Sir?

MR.STILLWORTH

Keep going Benjamin.

INT. BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING ROOM - DAY

Nine gray-haired MEN sit around a table. The same profits graph displayed in the hallways is displayed all over this room. Mr.Stillworth sits down with his fellow board members.

BOARD MEMBER 1

Benjamin, come in, come in. Glad you're here, we really need your opinion.

BENJAMIN

I'm happy to help sir, but from what Mr.Stillworth has already told me...

BOARD MEMBER 1

Wait Benjamin, there's more.

BENJAMIN

There's more?

MR.STILLWORTH

There's more. See, these Computer Machines are a bit of a mystery too us. Most of the people we initially gave them too are no longer with the company.

There is an uncomfortable grimace on Benjamin's face.

BOARD MEMBER 1

Right now we're losing money and people while our competitors are seeing an increase in output, revenues, and are hiring at an unprecedented rate.

MR.STILLWORTH

We agree it's pretty clear: we need more Computer Machines if we want to stay competitive. But we also want your blessing Benjamin.

BOARD MEMBER 1

You've been with us fifteen years and have never let us down.

BENJAMIN

I'm sorry sir, but I feel very strongly that these things would be an unwise and irresponsible investment that in the long run...

Board Member 1 pounds his fist against the table.

BOARD MEMBER 1

No! You don't understand! These trends will continue, and we'll be out of business within a year unless something is done!

BENJAMIN

But sir!

BOARD MEMBER 1

Benjamin, go find the money. We're calling the Computer Machine company.

INT. BENJAMIN'S CUBICLE - DAY

Benjamin sits at his chair cursing to himself. He flips through a notebook frantically before throwing it against the wall. He puts his head down on his desk.

A sound of gathering down the hall is audible. Then silence. The lights flicker. Footsteps approach. Benjamin lifts his head.

MR. STILLWORTH

They're here Benjamin. Why don't you come and have a look with me.

BENJAMIN

Sir, how could you let them treat me like that?

MR. STILLWORTH

I'm sorry Benjamin, but I agree with the rest of the Board. Our situation is desperate. Something has to be done. Now come on, let's go have a look at the Computer Machines. They'll cheer you up.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

Benjamin and Mr. Stillworth walk down the hallway. Benjamin looks into the cubicles on his way with a troubling look on his face.

BENJAMIN

Look at these cubicles. Are all these people really at lunch?

MR.STILLWORTH

No. They should all be here. I bet they're all in the lobby with the new Computer Machines.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Benjamin and Mr.Stillworth arrive at the lobby survey the scene. Cardboard BOXES are stacked, but no other employees are around.

BENJAMIN

They're not here.

MR.STILLWORTH

Don't tell me that they all left, just when we got the new Computer Machines! The sooner we get these installed, the better.

The sleazy man steps from behind a tower of boxes and walks towards Benjamin and Mr.Stillworth.

SLEAZY MAN

How are you handsome gentlemen doing! Glad to hear you've ordered all these fine Computer Machines. Don't forget to check out the Book of Faces. It's really popular with the Computer Machine users!

Mr.Stillworth whispers to Benjamin.

MR.STILLWORTH

I don't trust him, but right now we need to follow all leads. Take one of these boxes back to your cubicle with you, and see what this Book of Faces is all about.

BENJAMIN

Yes sir.

Benjamin sighs. He lifts a box and walks towards to his cubicle.

MR.STILLWORTH

Let me ask you something. You've been delivering Computer Machines to all these companies, what exactly do they do with them.

SLEAZY MAN

Well, I usually don't tell companies this, but since you've ordered so many, I'll tell you anything you want to know.

The sleazy man smiles a toothy grin. He folds his arms on top of a box, displaying his fancy gold RINGS to Mr.Stillworth.

SLEAZY MAN (CONT'D)

Most companies will give these to purge the company of, lets say, unproductive employees.

MR.STILLWORTH

Excuse me?

SLEAZY MAN

Lazy people will play games and stumble on to the Book of Faces.

MR.STILLWORTH

What exactly is the Book of Faces?

SLEAZY MAN

It's exactly what it says it is. It's where all the worthless and lazy employees go. They get sucked in, and the company doesn't have to pay them any more.

MR.STILLWORTH

So, you're saying that the bosses can identify who to fire based on their lack of attention to work?

SLEAZY MAN

No, I'm saying they literally get sucked into the Computer Machine. They become pieces of data on the Book of Faces.

MR.STILLWORTH

These things kill people?

SLEAZY MAN

No worries, just the lazy ones. And it's perfectly legal too because its their own fault. These things are meant for business after all. I remember delivering Computer Machines here before.

(MORE)

SLEAZY MAN (CONT'D)

Didn't you ever notice the lights
flicker?

Mr.Stillworth runs past the sleazy man, pushing him out of the way. The sleazy man falls backwards into the stacks of boxes. The sleazy man MOANS as boxes tumble onto him.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

Mr.Stillworth rushes down the hall towards Benjamin's cubicle. He frantically yells warnings.

MR.STILLWORTH

Everyone get away from the Computer
Machines! Stay away from the Book
of Faces! Benjamin!

The lights flicker.

INT. BENJAMIN'S CUBICLE - DAY

An out of breath Mr.Stillworth stands in front of Benjamin's cubicle and looks at the screen of the Computer Machine which displays Benjamin's face. Mr.Stillworth begins to cry.

MR.STILLWORTH

Oh no! He was sucked into the Book
of Faces! NOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

Mr.Stillworth punches the screen of the Computer Machine. His hand goes through it. It sparks.

MR.STILLWORTH (CONT'D)

Computer Machine!

FADE OUT.