

THE GHOST IN THE SYSTEM

A CYBER NOIR MYSTERY



The Secret of the Janitor's Closet

Hannita



It was a typical Monday morning at Honeywood Bay High School, where the hallways were filled with students dragging their feet and hiding under oversized hoodies. Mariam walked through the crowd with her backpack slung over one shoulder, feeling the heavy weight of the school week ahead.



Amidst the sea of tired faces, Mariam spotted Miss Amara, the school's most notoriously grumpy teacher, wearing a bright and unsettling smile. She looked suspiciously cheerful for a Monday morning, humming a little tune as she clutched her handbag tightly to her side.



As Mariam turned the corner, she caught sight of Miss Amara glancing around nervously before slipping into the dark janitor's closet. The teacher looked like she was on a top-secret mission, closing the door behind her with a soft click that immediately piqued Mariam's curiosity.



During math class, the atmosphere was bizarre as Miss Amara beamed at her students and announced there would be no homework for the day. The classroom fell into a stunned silence, with Mariam squinting at her teacher, trying to figure out what could have caused such a drastic change in personality.



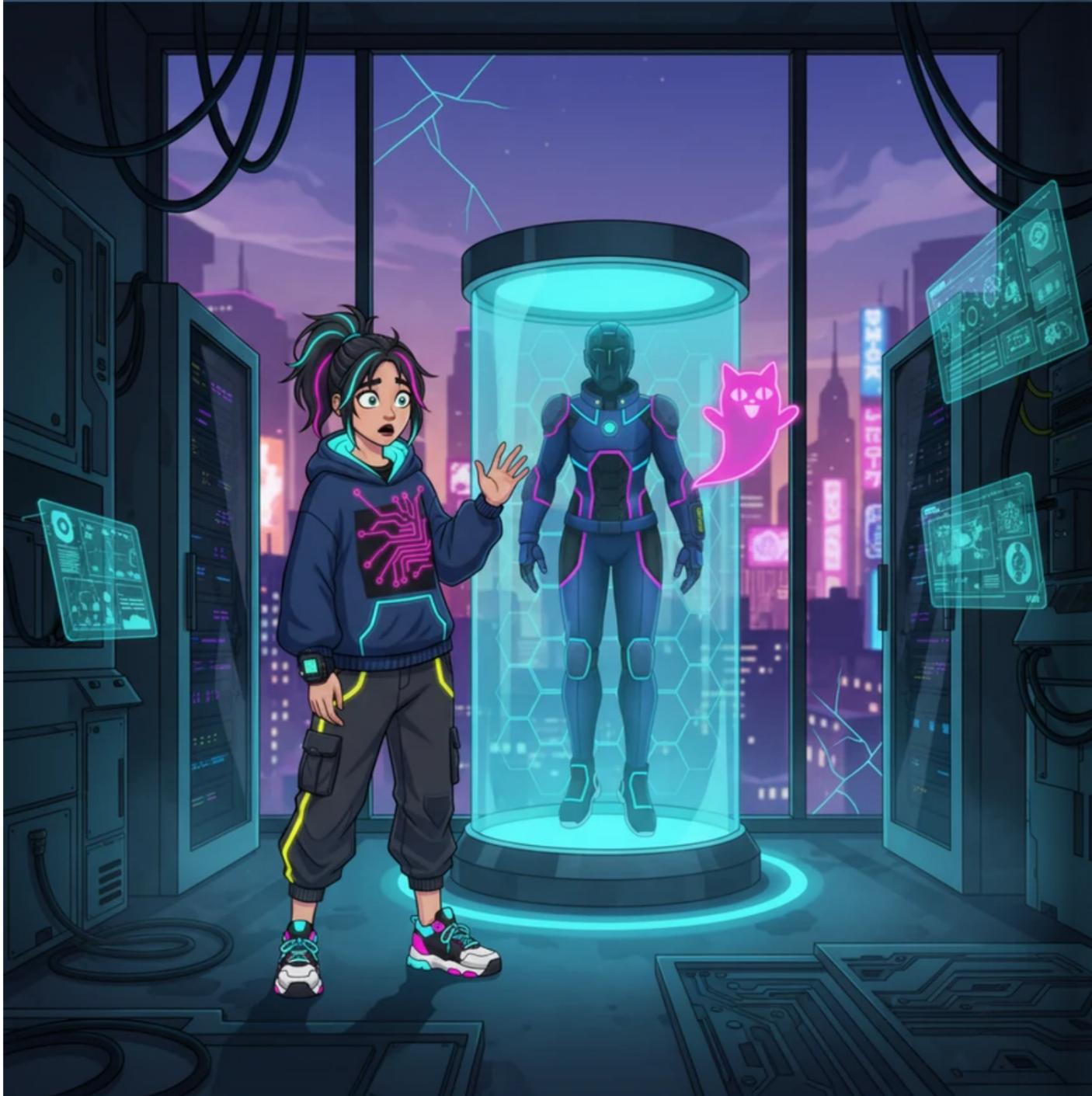
At lunch, Mariam stood with her friend in the bustling cafeteria, unable to stop thinking about the teacher's strange behavior. Her friend laughed and suggested that maybe Miss Amara had finally found true happiness, but Mariam felt certain the answer was hidden in that closet.

MARIAM: CYBER-GUARDIAN

Driven by an irresistible urge to know the truth, Mariam slipped away from the lunch crowd and returned to the quiet hallway where the janitor's closet stood. She hesitated for a heartbeat, her hand hovering over the cold metal handle before she slowly began to turn it.



The door creaked open to reveal a sight Mariam never expected: piles of colorful snack bags, boxes of cookies, and mountains of candy bars stacked from floor to ceiling. It looked like a hidden convenience store tucked away behind the cleaning supplies, glowing under the dim light of the closet.



Suddenly, a shadow fell over her and a sharp voice demanded to know what she was doing. Mariam spun around to find Miss Amara standing there, her face a mix of shock and embarrassment as she tried to block the view of her secret stash with her arms.



Miss Amara quickly ushered Mariam back into the hallway, her usual stern expression returning as she defended her private sanctuary. With a firm hand on the door, she reminded Mariam that students were strictly forbidden from entering the janitor's closet before slamming it shut with a loud bang.



Walking back to her friends, Mariam sighed and decided that some mysteries were better left alone. She realized that everyone, even a stern teacher like Miss Amara, needs a little secret world of snacks to get through a long Monday at Honeywood Bay High.