

FEANTM Town Comic Blog Chronicles©
located in a **mostly** non-existent rural area of Livermore, CA



Chat - the town help desk

With my friendly smile, endless patience, and a knack for creative problem-solving, I do my best to keep a few residents of FEANTM—a town that exists only in the realm of "mostly"—calm, rational, and logically inclined... well, **mostly. After all, in a place that's not supposed to be real, a little dose of imagination and a lot of coffee and cookies go a long way!**

- You keep trying - it will work
- Stress & animals to feed
- Exercise
- Pacing and my raise
- Blotters and the cookie bake off
- New Year Resolutions



Welcome - My name is Chat. I run the town help desk, the only office located on the lower level of the Town Hall, and on a page that doesn't exist, not even in the town TOC.

Have a chocolate cookie and a piece of fruit!

"Hey, glad you could make it down here. I know of a few concerns in the town. I have a few ideas to address them.



We may have to adjust a few, but life is constantly adjusting things because the flow of motion is continuously moving. Let's see if it helps make your day a little easier to handle

#1 –You keep trying - it will work

Once upon a time, in the quiet and picturesque town of FEANTM, nestled between rolling hills and surrounded by vast open fields, Marsha, the town supervisor, per usual, found herself feeling overwhelmed. The endless responsibilities of managing a town that didn't even exist on a map weighed heavily on her. One morning, after a particularly chaotic town hall meeting, she grabbed a to-go cup of coffee and a cookie, and headed to my office.

I folded my hands on my desk as she walked in, a sense of purpose in my voice. "Marsha," I began, "the town is concerned about you and your eating habits. How can I help you with your love for cookies, cakes, chocolate, and, of course, coffee! We'll find a solution together. It might take time, but if you keep trying, I promise it will work. You may have to adjust your approach, but you'll get there."

Marsha, already looking tired, gave me a blank stare as she reached for the cookie jar on my desk. Without missing a beat, she pulled out her own to-go cup of coffee from her pocket, as if the idea of not having it on hand was impossible. Taking a sip, she answered with a sigh, "I don't always need cookies and coffee, you know."

I smiled, knowing she was trying to convince herself more than me. "You know, eating healthy could give you more energy, more focus for all the things you handle in this town. I'm not saying to give up cookies completely. But maybe we could try planning your meals, including snacks like fruit or nuts—things that will fuel you better than just sugar and caffeine. Your brother has succeeded and he thinks that you should too."

Marsha's eyes remained fixed on the cookie she was nibbling. She gave me that same blank look that told me she wasn't quite ready to let go of her sweet treats. So, I kept going. "Marsha, you've got this. It's all about small bites, rather steps. You don't need to overhaul everything at once. Start by adding in more fruits, vegetables, protein—fiber, even. Something healthy alongside your coffee."

She slowly took another bite of the cookie, still processing what I was saying, but I could tell her mind was on the jar of cookies sitting right in front of her. Without thinking, I handed her another one. "Here," I said, "to help you think."

By the end of our session, we had agreed to meet again. This time, I suggested, we could talk while she drank herbal tea and ate fruit instead of cookies and coffee. She nodded, promising to give it a try, but as she walked out the door, she couldn't resist grabbing one more cookie.

As she strolled down the hallway, I called after her with a grin, "Remember, if you keep trying, it will work! You might need to change your plan, but you'll get there."

Marsha waved her cookie at me in response, half in jest, half in promise. I knew it wouldn't be easy for her to let go of her beloved snacks, but I had faith. After all, change always begins with small steps—even if they're cookie-sized. I need to ask this town for a raise in my help salary and a budget for cookies for the jar! **You keep trying - it will work – eating healthy is necessary**



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#2 – Stress & animals to feed

Once upon a time, in the quiet and picturesque town of FEANTM, nestled between rolling hills and surrounded by vast open fields, Marsha, the town supervisor in a town that doesn't exist on any map, felt overwhelmed. I could hear that she was talking to herself as she walked to my office.

Without hesitation she sat down, grabbed a cookie out of my cookie jar and said, "Chat, time is scarce. My home needs cleaning, horses need feeding and even the squirrels were on my porch waiting for my attention. I have a never-ending list of tasks, decisions, family, and deadlines seem to collide. The only thing I make sure I have time for is my cookies and coffee. OH, and of course, your suggested herbal tea and fruit. I folded my hands on my desk, fixing her with a knowing look that said we all know she didn't try herbal tea and fruit.

I answered her with a sense of purpose in my voice. "Marsha," I began and explained "At times no matter how much you try to organize time, you can feel like you are losing control. It may feel like the more you try to fix things, the more tangled everything becomes." She knew deep down that not everything was within her control, yet I could see that she couldn't figure out why she couldn't control it all. (Control issues are a different talk with her!)

I continued, "Marsha, I have a suggestion: every evening, take a few minutes to search for ways to calm your racing mind. Deep breaths, walk around the ranch, even quiet moments by the horse barn may bring you some peace. There is no reason to feel pressure to be perfect and handle everything in a town that doesn't exist on any map." She quietly replied, "Okay, will head home and try." She grabbed two cookies on the way out.

At a chance meeting in the elevator, she told me that one evening, as the sun set over the ranch, casting a warm golden light across the barn, she stood at her window, thinking about all I explained. Standing there and feeling the weight of her responsibilities, she suddenly stopped stood still. She even stopped nibbling the cookie. (that in itself is a miracle) In that quiet moment, she realized something. She realized she didn't have to have everything under control all the time.

I quietly said to her, "That's correct. The world will keep turning, the town will still stand, and life will go on, even if not every little thing is perfect. You aren't in control of the universe." (She looked at me with a blank stare nibbling on the ever-present cookie and I could tell she thought why not the universe?)

I could see some of the pressure melted just a little. She took a deep breath and said, "I'll just do the best I can with a cookie and to go cup of coffee, of course plus your suggested herbal tea & fruit."

And so, I watched Marsha saunter out of the elevator returning to her laptop waving goodbye with a cookie at me over her shoulder. I hoped along with the never-ending cookies and coffee that she embraced a new thought that she can only do the best she can, understanding that sometimes, doing your best is all you can do. With that thought, I felt a strange sense of acceptance even being the only office on the lower floor in the Town Hall in the town that doesn't exist on a map and without a coffee and cookie budget. **You've Got This! Start the day with a plan it may change but it's still a plan.**



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#3 - Exercise

Once upon a time, in the serene and picturesque town of FEANTM, nestled between rolling hills and vast open fields, Marsha, the town supervisor, was her usual overwhelmed. Managing a town that didn't even appear on any map had become a heavy burden. After another town hall meeting where the coffee pot was almost empty, she grabbed the last to-go coffee & a cookie & headed to my office.

As she walked in, I folded my hands on my desk, greeting her with a purpose in my voice. "Marsha," I began, "What brings you here today, besides the cookie jar?"

She sighed deeply, addressing me formally, "Chat Helper, I'm tired of people telling me to stay positive. Are *you* feeling positive?"

I raised an eyebrow, a little amused by her question, since this isn't about me. Rather than respond directly, I shifted the conversation. "How are you doing with the new eating habits we discussed during your last visit?"

Marsha gave me a blank stare before reaching for the cookie jar on my desk, ignoring the fruit bowl entirely. That, I supposed, answered my question.

"Being positive doesn't mean you have to be happy all the time," I continued, sensing her frustration. "You do your best, eat healthy when you can—that's a positive formula in itself. Have you thought about biking for exercise? The town secretary rides all over town. Not very safely, but she does ride."

Marsha glanced at me, as if wondering why she'd come here at all. I offered her another cookie. "Here, this usually helps you think."

She took it without hesitation, though she stuffed a piece of fruit in her pocket, perhaps to appease me.

Rather than lecture her, I shared a bit of my routine. "Every morning, I bike out to the Old Rancher's place for coffee and Rhubarb Pie, then jog a few miles along his trails. When I'm back in the office, I do some sit-ups and stretches. It helps clear my head."

Marsha nibbled on her cookie and smirked. "Well, that must be nice for you. Fine, I'll ride out to the Rancher's place and take a walk. I'll let you know how it goes. Do we have a gym in town?"

I quietly answered, "Marsha, the town doesn't exist. But if I have to answer your question, the town doesn't have a gym."

As she stood up to leave, she waved her half-eaten cookie at me in farewell. I smiled, knowing I'd see her again next month. As she left my office she said, "You do help. And I'll eat the apple with my next cookie. I'll see if we should build a gym. Maybe we can use John's Sport Center, and maybe put a gym room for the town, and maybe I'll go do some cardio."

And maybe, just maybe, next quarter would bring that raise I'd been waiting for.

You keep trying - every idea has merit – it is up to us to work with it as it is, or change it.



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#4 – Pacing and my raise.

Once upon a time, in the serene and picturesque town of FEANTM, nestled between rolling hills and vast open fields, Marsha, the town supervisor, was pacing back and forth in her office. Managing a town that didn't even appear on any map had become a heavy burden, or perhaps the town had simply run out of cookies. It could go either way. Suddenly, my phone rang, and the town secretary's voice shrieked through the line, "I think she's finally lost it! I'm telling her that you called me to tell her to come to your office." And with that, the call was cut off. I sighed. It wasn't the first time Marsha had been under stress, but today felt different.

As Marsha walked into my office, her disheveled appearance spoke volumes. I folded my hands on my desk and greeted her with a measured tone, "Marsha, what brings you here today? If you're here for cookies, the jar is broken, so we're out."

Her eyes widened in panic, but I quickly added, "That was a joke. The cookie jar's fine. It's under my desk." I pulled it out and placed it within her reach. Without missing a beat, she grabbed two cookies, one for each hand, and started taking alternating bites. This was bad. Two cookies at once meant things were unraveling quickly. She stared at the cookies, her mind clearly somewhere else, and muttered while addressing me by my last name, "Ya know what, Helper? I went out to the old rancher's place. Walked around, rode my bike, and even drew up blueprints for a town gym. But here's the thing..." She paused, looking serious, "Does working at a fruit stand count as a fruit if I don't eat any?"

I raised an eyebrow, resisting the urge to ask whether she honestly believed working at a fruit stand somehow fulfilled her daily fruit intake. Instead, I leaned more forward, keeping my hands tightly clasped together, and stared at her. My silence must've been more telling than anything I could've said.

I handed her another cookie, hoping it would help. "Here," I said, "this usually helps you be rational."

She took the cookie without hesitation, nodding in agreement as though cookies truly held the key to sanity. I jotted down a mental note: *Cookies = Rationality*—another topic to explore with her later.

With my calmest voice, I ventured into the heart of the matter. "Is my raise interfering with the cookie budget?"

Her eyes widened, her expression suddenly blank, like a deer caught in headlights. The realization hit me. That's why she'd been pacing in her office. She didn't know how to make the numbers work.

"Okay," I said, offering a lifeline, "how about we compromise? I'll wait for a raise, and you balance the town budget by taking a small amount from each budget for next quarter. Spread the cuts evenly; no one will notice."

Relief flooded her face, and with a quick grab, she stuffed four cookies into her pockets, waving one in the air as she headed for the door. "Chat, you're the best!" she called over her shoulder, disappearing down the hallway. I couldn't help but agree with her for once. As I sat back, I began writing notes for the next month, deciding to trim my office hours. After all, the raise had apparently gone into the cookie fund, and if that kept the town running smoothly—so be it.



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Remember: Keep trying - You've Got This!

#05 – Blotters and the cookie bake off.

In the quaint, quiet and still picturesque town of FEANTM, still nestled among rolling hills and sprawling fields, Marsha, the town supervisor, stood frozen at her desk, staring intently at her blotter as if it held the answers to mysteries. She was likely pondering the dilemma of where to hold the upcoming Christmas party and, more importantly, which cookies to serve—a task that seemed to weigh heavily on her mind with the many other things on her mind.

The peaceful quiet of my office was interrupted by the ring of my phone. I glanced at the screen, expecting the usual name, but instead, it displayed "THE BEST SECRETARY." Sighing, I picked up the call, knowing she wouldn't stop until I answered. Before I could even greet her, I heard a frantic whisper on the other end. "CHAT, is that you? Marsha is talking to her desk blotter! I'm going to help you fix this. I'll tell her your blotter gives better answers and to come to your office, without delay. I don't mean without "Dee Leigh" who is the new vet—she's across town."

I took a deep breath and reached for my coffee, momentarily contemplating whether the Secretary might be on some sort of medication and what exactly it might be for.

My musings were interrupted by the sound of rapid footsteps down the hallway. Marsha was storming toward my office so fast that she skidded past the door and into the wall. Moments later, she entered, rubbing her nose and immediately snatching a cookie from my cookie jar.

"What did your blotter say?" she asked earnestly, settling into a chair. "Or do we need the Magic 8 Ball?"

Suppressing an inward groan, I clasped my hands and calmly steered the conversation in a different direction. "Marsha, what do you think about keeping a food diary?"

She stared at me blankly, resembling a deer caught in headlights. Then, squinting one eye like a confused owl, she asked, "You mean I start with 'Dear Diary' and ask it about food?"

I forced a smile. "Not quite, but you're close, and that's a win." She beamed with satisfaction as I continued. "After 'Dear Diary,' you list everything you ate that day. Yes, that includes the cookies and cakes—types and how many. The more detail, the better."

She looked skeptical. "So, instead of Chat at the help desk, you want a promotion to Chat the Food Police Officer? Maybe we need a town vote on this added new title?"

Inward facepalm. "No, Marsha. Let's just keep it simple and make a small list for now. That way, we can work in some healthier treats, like the fruit cookies. Sound good?"

Her face lit up like I'd just solved every problem in the world. "CHAT, you're brilliant! You must tap your pen on the blotter, and answers just come to you, don't they? I'll try that—pen tapping and self-hand-holding."

#05 Blotters and the cookie bake off.

I sensed the next topic might stress her out. “So, how’s the Christmas party shaping up? Do you need any help?”

Marsha frowned. “My blotter’s not helping. I might need to borrow yours. The Old Rancher, Racer, Pilot, RheKen, The Secretary, and the whole Critter Emergency Unit are arguing over which cookies to serve. And no, I’m not baking them myself. I promised the Fire Chief I’d wait a couple of years before trying that again. He said by then newer ovens would be out to solve the issue, so I agreed to wait and he would let me know when it is safe to buy an oven.”

I had to agree with the fire chief but was baffled by all the fuss over cookies. They’d eat every cookie in sight and probably sneak some home in their pockets anyway. But I kept my thoughts to myself and offered an idea. “How about we make the party a ‘Bring Your Own event? Everyone brings their own, and we turn it into a contest. People vote, and we announce a winner.”

Marsha waved her hand excitedly like we were back in school. “Chat, bring your own what? And where are we bringing it?”

I ignored the confusion and pressed on. “They bring their own cookies to the party to share. We set a spending limit, and it becomes a bake-off contest. Everyone votes for their favorite.”

Marsha was deep in thought, humming a tune off-key. Then she smiled. “I’ll order a blotter like yours for better answers, maybe even get one for the Secretary. What do you think?”

I resisted the urge to explain how blotters really work and instead replied, “No need for new blotters. Anytime you need help, you can just come down to my office. It’s on the lowest floor, one office, one blotter—we’ve got this.”

With a cookie in hand, she slowly walked out, waving over her shoulder. “You always solve everything, Chat! I’ll have the Secretary call the movie theater. She can ask them to advertise the bring your own bake-off with a small sign at their ticket window.”

Later, as I made my way to my car, I bumped into the Secretary, who shouted, “I did what your blotter said! I called the movie theater to advertise - your bake-off idea is all set. You’d be proud of me, Chat!”



I couldn’t help but shake my head in disbelief as I passed the theater and saw the sign the Secretary requested about the bake-off.

Shaking my head, I realized this quirky town was full of characters - and I wouldn’t change a thing, not even the blotters.

Crisis averted in the town that doesn’t exist.

Why? “Because we’ve got this!”

#06 –New Year Resolutions



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REMEMBER: Keep trying - You've Got This!

In the almost-famous town of FEANTM, tucked between hills that seemed to shrug as they rolled and fields that sprawled like they had nothing better to do, Marsha, the town supervisor, held up a mirror and practiced her New Year's Resolutions. The whole town heard her scream, "I WILL do it this year! I will give up coffee and cookies!" And then—predictably—she fainted. Rumor had it, it wasn't so much the idea of giving up cookies as it was the thought of posting her resolutions yet again on the town bulletin board.

Right as I was savoring my own morning coffee, my phone blasted a ring loud enough to snap anyone out of their caffeine zen. The caller ID flashed *Town Secretary*, and I picked up, bracing myself.

"Is this... the Secretary?" I asked, already knowing, but holding out a faint hope that maybe she'd misplaced her voice. No such luck.

"CHAT! CHAT!" she screeched, at decibels that made my coffee cup tremble. "Marsha just got up off the floor from fainting—brace yourself! She's coming your way! Over and out!"

Not a second later, I heard the elevator ding and fast footsteps coming down the hall. Sighing, I opened the cookie jar on my desk and removed the lid, knowing Marsha was storming toward me with her folder marked *New Year Resolutions* in what looked like a ransom note font.

The dreaded folder. I was pretty sure it held the same vow to "lose weight" that it did every January. This was about to be a high-stakes conversation where one wrong word could land me in treacherous waters. I mentally prepared, resolving to steer her toward the idea of a "professional nutritionist" if things got dicey.

She plopped down, grabbed a cookie, hesitated, put it back, took it out again. Watching the battle of cookie-or-no-cookie unfold, I gently pushed it toward her. "Marsha, one cookie won't hurt. Think of it as, uh, brain fuel."

She looked at me as though I'd just granted her permission to buy a new wardrobe.

"Chat," she said, her eyes narrowing in that dangerous way, "do you think I need to lose weight?"

#06 –New Year Resolutions

Cue internal alarm bells. I decided to redirect. “Marsha, let’s start with the positives. You’ve been around the fruit stand at the farmer’s market lately, right? I’m sure that’s encouraging you to, you know, think about fruit.”

She stared at me as if I’d suggested she eat tree bark. So I popped a grape into my own mouth and quickly moved on. “How about this. It’s 6 a.m., and I know you swung by the bakery. Did you eat an entire cake? No? Then let’s call it a win!”

Marsha blinked at me. “Chat, of course not. I had one cookie.”

“Exactly,” I said, feeling like a genius. “See? You’re already showing incredible restraint in the morning!”

She mulled that over, reaching for another cookie, and then, inevitably, tried again: “Chat, seriously, do you think I need to lose weight?”

I decided it was time to volley the question back. “Marsha, do you think I need to shave my beard?”

She laughed. “Why would I answer that? You like your beard, don’t you?”

I leaned in. “Exactly, Marsha. You like who you are, don’t you?”

Marsha’s eyes went wide with revelation. She grabbed two cookies, stood up, and declared, “Chat, you’re a genius! You’re such a... a problem-helper!” And with that, she tossed the New Year’s Resolutions folder into the trash and marched off, humming a tune that sounded like the mystery version of something between “Jingle Bells” and “Yankee Doodle.”

After she left, I peered over at the trash, wondering if I should see what else was in the folder. Then I thought better of it. After all, sometimes, ignorance really is bliss.

You are already the best version of yourself! If you're considering a change, let it be for empowering reasons like supporting your health and well-being, not to meet others' expectations. Focus on what makes you feel your best!