

GOOD KNIGHT CYBERELLA

By

V.B. Rankin

GOOD KNIGHT CYBERELLA

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*For Alex and Lizzie,
be your own knights in shining armor
and keep yourself safe on the Internet.*

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Authors Note:

When my eldest child entered Middle School, I realized that I had a very rudimentary understanding of the mechanics of the Internet. To rectify this deficiency, I enrolled in the Cyber Patriot Initiative courses offered through the National Cyber Security Center (NCC) and earned the IT Fundamentals Pro certificate in May 2023. Behind the curtains, Information Technology can be very convoluted, dry, and takes a strong cup of coffee and dedicated cerebral acumen to understand the concepts. What children digest is the product of social engineering in micro-doses of flashy digital “candy;” watching reaction videos, unwrapping of toys, make-up tutorials, pranks, slime, ASMR, ad nauseum all with the nutritional value of Tom and Jerry Cartoons. Children are a prime demographic for marketing and frighteningly - predators. Even with screen time limits, site blocking and only allowing my kids to friend people they know; despite my best efforts randos are always popping up in my children’s games. The goal has shifted from me trying to protect my children to teaching my children how to protect themselves. This concept popularized by influencer Marcie Whalen, gives children the agency to recognize strange behavior versus stranger-danger. In François Truffaut’s 1959 film, *The 400 Blows* we see how the gravity of inexperience in making mistakes can be overwhelming to a child. Adding ubiquity and permanence of the internet can make youthful errors devastating. This is why I wrote *Good Knight Cyberella*

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with entertaining content that has a higher cerebral nutritional value. Basically, I didn't want to hide the "broccoli" in the pizza. I prepared the most delicious hilarious "broccoli" ever. I want kids to seek out knowledge and have the KSA's (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities) to sift through all the garbage entertainment marketed directly to them.

Note: Good Knight Cyberella was developed with assistance from Boulder Ensemble Theatre Company (BETC) of Colorado via the 2023-2024 Writers Group. A staged reading was held at the Lafayette Arts Hub on April 19, 2024.

Good Knight Cyberella had second development workshop with Aggregate Collective with a staged reading for the Loop Theatre Festival August 11- 14, 2025, at the Hivve in Grants Pass Oregon.

V.B. Rankin is a proud Dramatist Guild Member.

Time and Place

A fairytale world inside the computer.

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Cast of Characters

GOOD KNIGHT.	Princess in armor, the anti-sleeping beauty.
RAPUNZEL. internet.	Has a lot of hair, and 5G home
CYBERELLA.	Major FOMO.
Dancing Script Piggies:	
PACKET.	Builds firewall that blocks.
STATEFUL. activity.	Builds Firewall that monitors
PROXY.	Builds a Firewall that creates a space between internal and external networks.
Bitcoin Diamond Miners:	
BLOCK.	Doubles as malware.
CHAIN.	Doubles as viruses.
BANKSY.	Doubles as cyberattacks.
SNOW WHITE.	Neurotic about apples.
RED.	Needs to protect Gramma from hackers.
RUMPLESTILTSKIN.	IT help desk.
BEAUTY. crisis.	Having a Literature existential
PRINTS CHARMING.	Detective who uses multi-factor authentication to find Princess.

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ACT 1

SCENE 1

Set, costumes, and props should all be fabricated from recycled materials in an eco-chic way. All characters are on stage arranged in beautiful tableaux that shift focus through movement.

Curtains open, and we see GOOD KNIGHT clad in an armor of upcycled computer parts entering the forest crossing right to left. A costume note: Shared Armor will be helmet, breastplate and two gauntlets.

RAPUNZEL in tower center left bailing out buckets of “water” indicated by blue ribbons. Rapunzel’s wig is comprised of upcycled material to form dreadlocks.

RAPUNZEL. *(While guggling a glass of water behind tower flat, sound cues for water splashing.)* Help!!! *(Gurgle, gurgle)* Help!!!!

GOOD KNIGHT. Where are you? I hear you but I don’t see you!

RAPUNZEL. I’m IN the tower and it’s flooding with water.

GOOD KNIGHT. At your service! *(Good Knight with Rapunzel throws buckets of sparkly plastic blue ribbons over their shoulders until we hear a sound cue for water guggling down the drain.)*

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RAPUNZEL. *(In front of tower now.)* Oh, thank goodness you were here! I called Roto-Rooter an hour ago! My hair clogged the drain again. I almost drowned in my tower!

GOOD KNIGHT. Ah, this looks like the culprit. *(Holds up a big snarl of upcycled materials)*

PACKET. STATEFUL. and PROXY. *(Enter.)* EWWW! *(Cross stage and take selfie with snarl.)*

RAPUNZEL. Big hair. Big Problems.

GOOD KNIGHT. You have problems? Gosh, I thought I was the only person with problems.

RAPUNZEL. Everyone has problems. Seriously, everyone you meet today has their own private personal battles. What's troubling you? Also, not trying to be rude but what are you wearing?

GOOD KNIGHT. Oh, yeah. This. Let me preface by saying, my parents love me very much. Maybe even too much. When I was a baby, my Auntie Virus said I'd hurt myself before my 16th birthday and I'd fall asleep for a hundred years. Soooo, my parents make me wear this armor everywhere I go so that I don't get hurt.

RAPUNZEL. It's kinda like you're wearing a Faraday cage.

GOOD KNIGHT. What's a Faraday cage?

RAPUNZEL. Excellent question! Ok, have you ever shuffled your feet on carpet while wearing socks and then touched the fridge door and got a shock?

GOOD KNIGHT. No.

RAPUNZEL. Exactly! I knew you were in a Faraday Cage! It's a way to protect computers from both static and non-static electromagnetic fields. Microchips can be destroyed by as little as 200 volts.

GOOD KNIGHT. How many volts is static electricity?

RAPUNZEL. Well, it takes about 4000 volts to feel static electricity.

GOOD KNIGHT. Whoa!

RAPUNZEL. I know!

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GOOD KNIGHT. So, I must look like a crazy person wearing a tin foil hat to you?

RAPUNZEL. I was thinking you thought I was a total weirdo with all the hair.

GOOD KNIGHT. I think your hair is really cool.

RAPUNZEL. I think you are the shiniest person I've ever met, and I like the fact that nothing shocks you!

GOOD KNIGHT. My parents are obsessed with protecting me from everything *shocking*.

RAPUNZEL. Oh wow! My mom doesn't want me to get hurt either or make a mess. So, she locked me up in this tower to protect me and maybe the furniture too.

GOOD KNIGHT. Wow! We are basically like the same person.

RAPUNZEL. Totes! We should be best friends.

GOOD KNIGHT. Best idea ever! BFF's!

RAPUNZEL. Here's a friendship bracelet with an R on it for Rapunzel. That's my name. *(Extends hand to shake.)*

GOOD KNIGHT. And here's one with my initials. I'm Good Knight, but everyone just calls me G.K

RAPUNZEL. No J.K. G.K! It must be so cool to be able to explore the world safely in your armor.

GOOD KNIGHT. And I was just thinking, it must be so cool to have a tower all to yourself. It would be delightful to take off this armor and do some yoga or something.

RAPUNZEL. I have a Yoga/Pilates studio on the top floor! And like every streaming service. Netflix, Disney+, Hulu, Max. I have like 100 years of content. You'd never have to leave the 5G tower again.

GOOD KNIGHT. Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

RAPUNZEL. BFF brains telepathy!

GOOD KNIGHT. and RAPUNZEL. LET'S SWITCH PLACES!
(Jumping up and down.) EEEEEEE!!!! (Blackout, Costume change Rapunzel puts on armor over dress with hair hanging out the back).

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SCENE 2

In blackout we hear dial up modem screams and lights up on actors looking like they are screaming. SNOW WHITE center stage on stump as catafalque with BLOCK, CHAIN, and BANKSY weeping.

RAPUNZEL. What's going on here?

BLOCK. *(Very dramatically.)* She was eating an apple, and I told a joke and she choked!

BANKSY. An apple a day is *supposed* to keep the Dr. away!

CHAIN. Well, you shouldn't make people laugh while they're eating food. It's dangerous!

BLOCK. Why am I cursed to be so funny? *(Throws arms up imploringly.)*

CHAIN. You were killing it!

RAPUNZEL. How long ago did this happen.

BLOCK. I still have 3 minutes left for my 5 min stand-up set.

RAPUNZEL. She choked 2 minutes ago?!

CHAIN. Yeah, she didn't even get to hear the punchline.

RAPUNZEL. Wait a second. I think I can help! I'm going to try the Heimlich maneuver. *(Applies Heimlich maneuver to dislodge apple from Snow White.)*

SNOW WHITE. *(Holding up Apple with bite taken out.)* THIS WOULD MAKE A TERRIFIC LOGO!

CHAIN. Huzzah! You saved her.

BANKSY. How can we ever thank you?

CHAIN. Why don't you come by the cottage a pick out a fabulous diamond friendship bracelet.

SNOW WHITE. You saved my life. We can be BFF's. *(Walking while talking Rapunzel, Snow, and Block, Chain, and Banksy move to apron, and the party crosses left to right. In background, Packet, Stateful, and*

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Proxy run in and take selfies pretending to choke on apple and do Heimlich. They move stump Catafalque set piece.)

RAPUNZEL. Oh, I already have a BFF. (*Shows bracelet.*)

SNOW WHITE. That's ok. You can have lots of friends.

BLOCK. Diamonds are a girl's best friend. We're diamond bitcoin miners.

CHAIN. Hey, that reminds me we need to pick up more of Mrs. Lovett's Raspberry Pi's.

BANKSY. How many times do I have to say, no more getting Crypto from the crypt!

CYBERELLA runs over distressed and sits on a stump downstage left.

SNOW WHITE. Oh, pretty pink lady, why are you crying? It can't be that bad. Seriously, I choked on an apple, like 3 minutes ago. It can't be as bad as that.

CYBERELLA. Ok, when you put it that way, I guess it's not that bad. It's just the course of my whole life hangs on going to this party or not!

BLOCK. Oh, yeah life changing parties. I've had many parties that changed my life.

CHAIN. Legit!

BANKSY. FOMO is real bruh.

RAPUNZEL. So, why don't you just go?

CYBERELLA. In this!? I look like Macklemore was my Fairy God Mother.

CHAIN. Is that your grandma's coat?

CYBERELLA. See!

BLOCK. Hey, thrifting is in. It's so much better for the environment.

CHAIN. Yeah, fast fashion is the second leading consumer of water.

BANKSY. You *need* ethically sourced drip.

BLOCK. Also, thrift stores give jobs to people with disabilities.

CHAIN. Respect.

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CYBERELLA. Ok, ok, yes in my everyday life I will vow to “shop used” but, I’m going to a ball, folks! I need to dress to impress. (*Starts crying again.*)

BLOCK. Ohhh!!! No more tears.

CHAIN. You’re wasting water.

RAPUNZEL. Well, why don’t you wear this? (*Refers to armor.*)

CYBERELLA. A suit of armor?!

SNOW WHITE. Yeah, dudes love armor at a Gala.

BLOCK. It *is* really cool and shiny.

CHAIN. Yeah, I’ve never seen anything like it before.

BANKSY. (*Knocking on armor*) It’s super sturdy, and very well made.

SNOW WHITE. Honey, you’ll look crisp!

RAPUNZEL. You’ll definitely make an entrance, and it will cover your rags.

CYBERELLA. Also, this helmet will hide my face so that my wicked bonus mom and stoop sisters won’t recognize me.

BLOCK. Go on girl. Get in that Faraday cage.

CYBERELLA. Ok. Let’s do this!

Blackout Cyberella dons armor.

SCENE 3

RED and RUMPLESTILTSKIN enter.

RED. (*On cell phone*) Grandma, I repeat. Do not buy Best Buy gift cards and read the numbers to some rando overseas jailer. I’m not in jail! Grandma. Listen to me. I’m not in jail. It’s AI. AI! Artificial Intelligence. Yes, I know it sounded like me. It wasn’t me. It was AI. I’ll be at your house in 20 minutes. I love you. No, I’m not in jail. Yes. I’m wearing a sweater.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. You need to change her passwords.

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RED. Yeah, yeah. I gotta make another call first. (*Into phone.*) Hey, Elsa, I need your help. Contact Experian, Equifax and TransUnion and freeze my Granny's credit. Thanks. (*Hangs up.*)

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. You'll never guess my password.

RED. Let it go! What makes your password so strong? (*PACKET, STATEFUL, and PROXY saunter over and start circling Rumpelstiltskin while discussing best password practices.*)

PACKET. Well, a good password needs to be at least 12 characters long but 14 or more is better.

STATEFUL. A combination of uppercase letters, lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols.

PROXY. Not a word that can be found in a dictionary or the name of a person, character, product, or organization.

PACKET. Lastly, must be very different from your previous passwords.

RED. Yeah, yeah. I always do that. No nouns.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. And then let me guess. You save a word document to Granny's desktop emblazoned with "Passwords?"

RED. Uh,...maybe. Look it's hard for her to remember all those passwords.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. Do her a favor and label it something anything other than passwords. Like Fonts, or recipes, or any other super boring name that won't compromise her accounts.

RED. I never thought of that. Sort of like a Butter Cookie tin filled with buttons.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. If you really want something impressive, make an invisible file. (*Does a magic trick to make something disappear.*)

RED. How do I do that? (*Piggies speak impossibly fast.*)

PACKET. Create a file on your desktop.

STATEFUL. Click left, alt 255,

PROXY. Click properties, select the invisible icon. Boom.

RED. Wait, wait, wait, let me write this down.

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. Oh, just google it. Duh.

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RED. You are strangely helpful for someone who's so cranky.

RUMPSTILTSKIN. What do you expect? I'm at the IT help desk.

PACKET. Your grandma should use this password. (*Hold up huge sign with password on it.*)

RED. (*Quickly and questioningly.*) Capital R, lower case, vmp 135t, exclamation mark, 1t5, k, exclamation mark, n?

RUMPLESTILTSKIN. Ahhh! You little dancing script piggies. How dare you guess my password! (*Chases three script piggies away.*)

SCENE 4

PRINTS is calling out below 5G tower.

PRINTS. PARTY! PARTY! Party tonight at my house!

GOOD KNIGHT. A party! You need a secret password. Or even better an Access control list.

PRINTS. You're absolutely right! Wait! Who said that? Where are you?

GOOD KNIGHT. (*Popping out from behind tower.*) I did.

PRINTS. You should come to my party! Everyone's invited, but it's still *very exclusive.*

GOOD KNIGHT. If everyone is invited that really opens you up to a cyber security risk.

PRINTS. Such as?

GOOD KNIGHT. Well maybe, ARP spoofing. Hacker party goers will flood into your party, opening all the doors and eat up all your food and then take over your castle.

PRINTS. E Gads!!

GOOD KNIGHT. Or the hackers could do ARP poisoning. They take your address and change it, so all your friends think they are going to your Castle but really, they are going to a fake castle to get all of *their* information stolen!

PRINTS. Double E gads!! I can't do that to my friends.

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GOOD KNIGHT. You need to follow this cyber security check list.

(Air drops Prints list, Sound cue for ding.)

PRINTS. *(Referencing check list on phone.)* 1.) Hold party in the demilitarized zone. DMZ Check! 2.) Make sure firewalls are in place. Note to self: Call Packet, Stateful, and Proxy to set up firewall security.

Check! Yeah, yeah, yeah, I'll look at the rest later. I have everything for a birthday bash exceptyour name to put on the guest list.

GOOD KNIGHT. I'm G.K. but I'm not going to your party.

PRINTS. Ouch!

GOOD KNIGHT. I have way too much content to watch here. I'm going into troll mode and I'm not leaving this tower for 100 years.

PRINTS. Well, G.K. that makes me sad. It would be really nice if you attended the party to make your own memories instead of just consuming the memories of others. I'll put your name on the guest list, and I hope you'll change your mind.

SCENE 5

BEAUTY is surrounded by books and in an angsty frenzy pacing to and fro. Three pigs are building firewalls from upcycled materials.

BEAUTY. Books. Ah, books. More, books. More books. Some many books!

PACKET. Oh, beautiful girl why are you so stressed?

STATEFUL. Don't worry, I'm not going to ask you to smile,

PROXY.....because asking pretty girls to smile is cancelled.

BEAUTY. It's just that, now that I have moved into Beast's castle, I have access to the library, and I have so many books I can't decide which to read first.

PACKET. That is a seriously pumpkin spicy type of problem.

STATEFUL. That's half-caff, tall skinny, vanilla latte drama.

PROXY. That is so Ugg, and I don't mean the boots.

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BEAUTY. When I lived in the village, the book merchant maybe got a new book in like once a month. I could actually read and also have a life.

PACKET. You want me and my boys to go beat-up Johannes Gutenberg?

STATEFUL. ‘Cause, I’ll do it. I’ll throw the book at him.

PROXY. Yeah, I’ll press him -printing press him.

BEAUTY. No, no, it’s not like that. I love books.

PACKET. In Japanese they have a term for buying books one has no intention of reading and letting them pile up. It’s called, “Tsunodoku.”

STATEFUL. That’s cute. In Iceland they have a tradition called, *Jolabokaflod*. It means “*Christmas Book Flood*,” and Icelanders spend all night reading by the fire and sipping hot cocoa.

PACKET. Oh Iceland, hold my hot cocoa sippy mug. In Sweden they have a book reading holiday called *Laslov* and it lasts a whole week!

BEAUTY. I guess, I just realized the limitations of my life and that there is no way that I can possibly read all those books regardless of how many holidays I celebrate.

PACKET. The poet Sylvia Plath said, “I can never read all the books I want; I can never be all the people I want and live all the lives I want.”

STATEFUL. “I can never train myself in all the skills I want. And what do I want?”

PROXY. “I want to live and feel all the shades, tones and variations of mental and physical experience possible in my life. And I am horribly limited.”

BEAUTY. Oh, that resonates with me very much.

PACKET. Well, I have a tool that can help you.

STATEFUL. Is it a time machine?

PACKET. Sort of.

STATEFUL.

A time machine, no way. I was totally joking when I said time machine.

PROXY. Oooooohh, excellent! Is this like H.G. Wells style, or a TARDIS, or a DeLorean? Hot tub?

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PACKET. It's using AI.

STATEFUL. (*Indignant.*) ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE!

PACKET. Yeah, such as a Chat bot. Upon request, it can give you a summary of all the books you want to read.

STATEFUL. THAT'S CHEATING!

PACKET. No, that's research.

PROXY. Research stolen from other people!

STATEFUL. Cheater, cheater, pumpkin eater!

PACKET. Having AI write a paper and turning it in as one's own is cheating. It's called plagiarism. Also, presenting others' ideas without citing the source is plagiarism.

BEAUTY. I think you're missing the point. I *want* to read books.

PACKET. Excellent! AI can help you decide which book is the best use of your time for your needs.

STATEFUL. Why do I still feel like using Artificial Intelligence is like using steroids for nerds.

PACKET. Because it is.

STATEFUL. (*Aghast.*) I am absolutely gobsmacked! I have no idea how to respond to that.

PROXY. Well, you know what they always say. If you don't have anything nice to say...

PACKET. Say something funny?

PROXY. Nooo, don't say anything at all.

STATEFUL. You should tell that to Influencers.

PACKET. I bet AI knows what to say. (*Typing and reading*) What do you say when you don't know what to say?

STATEFUL. This is ridiculous. You're trying to win an argument by using a robot.

PACKET. According to Chat GPT, you should: "Take a moment to gather your thoughts and ask clarifying questions if needed.

PROXY. Indicate your interest in the conversation by asking the other person to share their thoughts or ideas.

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PACKET. Offer to help or provide support, knowing that's it is acceptable not to know all the answers."

STATEFUL. Aren't you just terribly smug. Come on Beauty, let's go find you a book the old-fashioned way by asking the Librarian.

PROXY. Yeah, let's go find books with the antiquated and racist Dewey decimal system.

PACKET. Are you going to the library in the Prints' Castle? I heard there's a Ball tonight. I'll come too!

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