

System Restore

By sakayume

Submitted: March 29, 2007

Updated: March 29, 2007

PC's immune system has always been lousy, but Mac's never seen him this bad. (I am on such a kick with these two.)

Provided by Fanart Central.

<http://www.fanart-central.net/stories/user/sakayume/44541/System-Restore>

Chapter 1 - 1

2

It was an utterly typical evening, quiet and unremarkable, when the whole mess started. The bulk of the day was behind them, with little left to do but kill time till it was time to turn in for the night. Both of them had ended up on the couch; initially, PC had tried to work at Mac's desk (he'd always felt that Excel was a fundamentally desk-y program), but the setup was too unfamiliar, too casually disorganized, and he'd eventually given up on it to join Mac instead.

Now, *his* tasks, those were couch-y ones. Occasionally, PC would find himself distracted by Mac's half-stifled laughter (Youtube, he was guessing; at least he was considerate enough to use his headphones when PC was trying to work) or by the glitter of some iSomething doing...whatever it did. They were connected, if only in a casual background sort of way, sharing Mac's wireless. With both of them consigned to their own personal spheres of interest, there wasn't any real reason for the network, but the days of needing a reason had passed some time ago. By then, it just felt comfortable, and came as second nature whenever PC was over.

Normally, Mac could exert some remarkable self-control when PC seemed very busy and just let him be. But he'd been doing so for close to an hour by that point, and even with the IM chatter, he craved a little real interaction. (He'd tried to snuggle up to PC once before, when they were both working just like that, but it'd ended in PC running a little too warm to focus and asking Mac ruefully to give him more space, at least until he'd finished his spreadsheet.) Besides, PC had an odd, unexpected fondness for those image macros with the cats, and Mac had stumbled upon a good one a while earlier and minimized it to show him later. For as long as he'd been sitting still, this was 'later' enough by his standards.

"Hey, PC," he spoke up, slipping his headphones off to rest around his neck. When PC didn't respond right away, he didn't think much of it; how anyone could get engrossed in anything from the Office suite was beyond him, but it *was* PC. When that moment stretched just a little too long to be chalked up to preoccupation, or even general lag, Mac blinked and tried again, this time with a light tap on the shoulder as punctuation.

"PC?"

That seemed to do it, more or less, because PC blinked as well and shook his head quickly, trying to clear it. Had Mac been talking to him? Somehow he hadn't even realized. And when, he wondered with an absent glance to his clock, had it gotten so late? It didn't seem right – but he was still too young for 'senior moments', and entertained only a moment's worry before looking over. Mac relaxed visibly when he did (for a second there, he'd thought PC was frozen, something they hadn't had to deal with in a good while) and scooted closer, bringing Preview to the forefront to show off the picture he'd found.

"Made me think of you," he explained with a smile, hoping PC wouldn't get fussy about being briefly distracted from his work for something like this. Mac just couldn't keep to himself for so long in one sitting; it made him an ace at networking, but at the cost of occasionally overstepping a boundary or two. As it were, PC was probably in need of a little break anyways, and leaned over to see what Mac had. Or started to lean over, anyway. About halfway there he paused, blinked, and turned away to cough into his

hand, shoulders hunching.

Mac was instantly concerned, and not without reason. PC got sick way too easily (even the Vista upgrade hadn't remedied that, after he'd finally disabled the overbearing Guardian out of sheer frustration) and while sometimes it was just a fleeting bug or minor glitch, he'd been there for a few cases that weren't. For someone who'd grown up without ever really seeing what a virus could do – his whole family shared his general immunity to most of them – it'd been downright scary the first time PC locked up. And from what he'd heard, he hadn't even witnessed the worst of it; those had happened before they really knew each other, a few versions back, when PC's defenses were even less developed and hacking was the trendy thing to do. As far as those viruses went, he'd only heard stories, but he still flinched whenever PC showed any signs of trouble.

"Hey---whoa, hey, PC? You okay?" he asked, setting a hand on the other's back as he struggled to catch a breath. Mac wasn't the only one who got freaked out when this happened, but PC was a little more used to it, and tended to react more with resignation than with panic. It took another minute of coughing, but finally he managed a nod, clearing his throat, gesturing breathlessly that he was okay. He wasn't entirely sure about that, though. That had felt like the onset of...something, and with how he'd been lagging sporadically all night (he'd mostly been able to hide it), he had a few reasons to be worried. But Mac worried more than he did. No sense making that worse.

"Fine," he answered hoarsely, blinking a few times in the groggy aftermath that had left him with. "I'm fine, just...mmf." Initially, he'd intended for the 'mmf' to come out as 'just dust in the fans', but he suddenly felt too weary to finish the sentence, slouching in his seat. Mac, while still not well-versed in everything that went on with PC – not by a long shot – recognized that weariness. Something was burning up PC's RAM faster than he could deal with, and he swallowed back a wave of nervousness, leaning over to press the back of his hand to PC's forehead.

"You're running hot," he noted with a frown. PC tried to say something, to point out that he was always warm in comparison to Mac, but again he found himself too tired to speak up. No – not tired, exactly. But like his processors were slow, sluggish. It was frustrating, and he closed his eyes, trying to sort things out. He was distantly aware, as he did, of Mac working off his tie, unbuttoning his shirt, saying something all the while about trying to cool him down. He nodded, because that seemed like the right response, and because Mac seemed to have a point – he felt decidedly unwell. Even with high-strain apps running, he shouldn't have been so warm, and he knew it.

"I think I'm coming down with something," he mumbled in a moment of lucidity, opening his eyes again. Judging from the worry on Mac's face, he'd come to the same conclusion, and hopped off the couch so he could ease PC to lay down.

"Just take it easy – okay, buddy? Stay with me," he added, watching PC's eyelids droop again, his display wavering in a very troubling fashion.

"Trying," came the groggy reply. He *wanted* to stay with Mac, he thought dazedly. He really did. But he was so weary, and staying focused was such a strain...

"I'm just...going to rest for a while," he managed, words slurring together, eyes refusing to stay open. "Don't...worry."

He thought he saw blue – but was it Mac's-shirt-blue, or error-screen-blue? – and then it all faded to black.