

# Shared Space

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*Mac/PC. Done at request for fic or art about "Mac, PC, and a shared external hard drive".*

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# 1 - Shared Space

It's a little unusual for Mac to outright invite him over like this, PC muses, waiting patiently at the door. They've been spending an almost startling amount of time together lately, but it usually starts off with Mac's vague suggestion that they "chill" or "hang out" or some equally slang-ridden version of "share a network for a while". Once in a proverbial blue moon, he'll actually swing by PC's office at closing time and either go home with him, or bring him home. But this time, PC got an email about it, a little advance notification for once, that had dropped into his inbox at work.

>>To: [your\\_personal\\_computer@aol.com](mailto:your_personal_computer@aol.com)  
>>From: [iMail@mac.com](mailto:iMail@mac.com)  
>>Subject: *busy tonight?*

*hey PC, you coming over tonight? i have a surprise. think you'll like it.  
see you after work.*

<3 mac

Characteristic, slightly maddening lack of capitalization aside, it was an intriguing little message (and he had to admit that the ASCII heart in the tagline had made him smile). Coming from Mac, "a surprise" could be just about anything. The last one had been that picture book, which at first he'd almost dismissed as a vanity project (ooh, look what I can do with my fancy iPhoto thing) but which had grown on him as he'd started to recognize the sincerity behind it.

The phrasing in the email didn't suggest it expected any response, but loose ends make him squirm, so he noted 'Visit Mac' in his calendar for later that day and replied back anyways.

>>To: [iMail@mac.com](mailto:iMail@mac.com)  
>>From: [your\\_personal\\_computer@aol.com](mailto:your_personal_computer@aol.com)  
>>Subject: *Re:busy tonight?*

*Oh, you and your 'surprises'.  
I will see you this evening.*

*Take care (and a "<3" for you as well),  
PC*

The doorbell is echoing faintly through the house, and on one side of the door is a curious PC. On the other is Mac, who finds himself having to do something he very rarely does – he has to make an effort to be cool. Not "cool" in the hip-and-happening sense, mind, but in the calm, composed, West Side Story sense. He has high hopes for this surprise of his, but the truth is that he doesn't understand PC as well as he'd like to. This is kind of inevitable – it just makes it hard to predict how he'll react to things.

Well, he isn't one for a lot of hesitation, so finally he takes a deep breath and opens the door, replacing

PC's view of flat and white with one that has a lot more blue to it. And a grin. He's nervous, after all, but he's also kind of excited.

"PC," he greets him warmly, and PC smiles back. Hm. Mac looks a little more enthused than usual, he thinks, though that's not such an easy measure to gauge on him. He's a pretty enthusiasm-prone guy, after all, especially compared to the crowd PC's used to working with. But he seems particularly cheery tonight, and it's a little contagious as PC lets himself be ushered in, increasingly curious as to what's awaiting him.

Mac is taking note of all this. PC's in a good mood. Good. Had he come over tired or irritated from work (it happens; he really wears himself out there sometimes, and from what Mac's seen, doesn't get nearly enough credit), Mac might have held off on this. He's taking something of a risk, after all. And the truth is, for as daring and secure as Mac tends to come off, he isn't as much of a risk-taker as people might think. It's not that he's averse to it – there are just very few risks out there for him. In some respects, PC's a much bolder machine than he, because when PC downloads something, it might be harmless or it might put him out of commission for a week. When PC plugs in a new peripheral, it might work fine or it might need a whole arsenal of drivers. Mac's never known that kind of uncertainty. He's compatible with practically everything – just not always with PC. Hence the nerves.

He takes a deep breath, does his best to minimize that anxiety (at the very least, he can Hide it well), and paces idly over to lean against the back of the couch. "Make yourself at home," he offers. "Do you want anything?"

Maybe he's not hiding it quite as well as he thinks. Or maybe PC's just very perceptive. (PC sort of likes that second theory. It's flattering.) In either case, something is clearly up, and Mac is trying to play it off as nothing, and PC knows better. But he's well-mannered, in spite of his growing curiosity, and shrugs off his coat, hanging it up neatly by the door.

"Oh, no thanks."

There is a short lull, and finally PC's need to know gets the better of him.

"What's the surprise?"

Mac swallows. Well, sure, PC. Just throw it right out there. No working up to it or anything but it's not his fault, and Mac knows that. He'd be curious too. And he probably wouldn't have been as patient about it as PC has so far, so he'll give him credit for that.

He's got butterflies in his processor. High-speed, rapidly firing butterflies. But he smiles and beckons PC over, latching onto his hand when he comes closer.

"Close your eyes," he instructs, "and follow me."

"This is a little silly," PC observes.

Mac does not want to come off as silly. Not now. "Just follow me, okay?"

Silliness or not, PC follows. He keeps his eyes closed, but arguably cheats a little, bringing up his stored

floorplan of Mac's place. They're going, he manages to determine, towards his "office" – which isn't much more than the corner where Mac keeps most of his stuff. There are stacks of books and magazines, mostly guides to programs PC's never so much as run demos of, and a whole collection of peripherals. Mac has a neat little set of flash drives, all different colors and models. He hangs them up like keys along a rack over his desk, and PC has always found that rare bit of organization endearing.

"Okay," Mac finally says, bracing himself as they stop. "You can look now."

PC looks. His eyes go sort of wide.

"Oh," he states, blinking. "Well. I didn't know Firefox took that sort of uhpromo shot"

Mac tries not to roll his eyes. "Not the poster. Lower. On the desk."

"Oh." PC redirects his attention, away from Firefox's well-displayed interface, and peers curiously at the thing on the desk. It's white and rectangular and sort of reminds him of that one little cousin of Mac's that he met a few years ago. Spunky kid, for her size. He's pretty sure that's not what he's looking at, though, and studies it a few more moments.

"It's nice," he finally says, nodding thoughtfully, a finger to his lower lip. "What is it?"

Never before has so much nervous buildup ended so anticlimactically. Then again, it hasn't really ended yet. Mac had gone into this ready to explain a little; he just has to explain a little more than he'd planned. That's fine.

"It's an external hard drive."

PC looks slightly concerned, because he is, and tries to find a delicate way of phrasing this.

"Is something wrong with your primary one?" And if it was, wouldn't PC have been the first to notice?

Mac lets out a short burst of laughter, simply out of surprise. Count on PC to break the tension without even trying to, he thinks, fingers raking his hair back out of his eyes. "No---no. That one's fine, trust me." (PC is immensely relieved.) "No, this is just---this is extra. Additional space."

"Ah." PC nods. "That makes sense. I've seen your filesizes before." He's not exactly sure what ".psd" means, but he's come to know that it's almost always very big. The same goes for all that iStuff Mac's always messing around with. Mac's programs may be enviably slim, but they have some pretty massive outputs sometimes.

Mac rubs the back of his neck. He is very rarely nervous, but when he is, he gets fidgety. "Actually that's not why I got it. I mean, not the only reason. Not the main reason."

PC can't remember the last time he saw Mac flustered. It's unexpected, but it's also rather charming, in its own way. He waits patiently for him to go on, because if storing one's things isn't the main reason to buy extra storage, then what in the world *is*?

Mac swallows hard, then looks up, a tentative smile tugging at his lips. “It’s not just for me. I actually was thinking we could share it.” PC blinks; Mac goes on, words coming out quick, keeping up his momentum. “You’ve been spending the night a lot lately, and---remember how last week there was that whole thing with you waking up here, and your files being at your place, and you were gonna be late for work---“

“I got to work on time,” PC points out, in his own defense.

“Yeah, but my point is, if you’d had the files here to start with, you wouldn’t have had to run around like that – it would have been way more convenient.” He’s getting to his point here, and has to pause to breathe, because he’s pretty sure he’s starting to ramble. “I just figured you could keep some of your stuff here, and we wouldn’t have to worry about that happening again. I’ve got it hooked up to my wireless, so you can get into it whenever you’re over”

The ball’s in PC’s court now, and he trails off, watching for a reaction.

PC, at the moment, thinks Mac phrased it right from the start – this is quite the surprise. And kind of a big one. Keeping some of his files here, all the time it’s the computer equivalent of leaving an extra toothbrush over. At this rate, Mac’ll be inviting him to keep a spare interface or two in the dresser, just in case he needs to get changed before work some mornings.

He can safely say he didn’t see this coming.

And it’s not like it was the easiest thing for Mac to offer, either. Just because he gets along with everybody doesn’t mean he shares his disk space at the drop of a hat. Or at all, historically. He’s certainly never tried with PC, partially because of his own hang-ups (he likes his personal space, even if he doesn’t always come off that way) and partially because he wasn’t sure it would even work. But he’s checked and rechecked the specs on this, and he already knows PC has no trouble accessing his home wireless when he’s over. This is technically possible. PC just has to say yes. And Mac, for any number of reasons, really really wants him to.

PC must be thinking along similar lines, because when he finally does say something, that’s the first thing he asks.

“Are you sure I’d be able to access it?” Hard drive space – that’s pretty personal, even if this one is external. It’s hard to imagine he and Mac, with their fundamental differences, being able to keep things on the same drive.

Mac anticipated this. “You can try it out, if you want. It’s all hooked up. I dunno, you might have to run a network wizard or something to get in initially, but once you’re in”

Once he’s in, it’ll be as much his as Mac’s.

Wow.

He has to know if this is true, so he runs that wizard, checks the box that lets him share files and drives, and how about that – there it is. His system recognizes it as “E:”; Mac’s gone ahead and subtitled it

“Shared”, the reality of which makes his processors warm in a very nice way. There are already a few things being stored on it, a few familiar formats and a few he knows he couldn’t read if he tried.

“Ah the files I have that you don’t have applications for, and vice versa keeping them on the same drive like this they won’t corrupt each other or anything, will they?” It’s not such a strange worry. He’s never really come in close contact with Mac-specific files (except for some of the hardware, but that’s another story entirely).

“They’ll be fine.” Mac has done his research. “They’re just sharing space – it’s a neutral framework. I mean, I’ve gotten .exes for you and put them on flash drives – you could do the same with my files. There’s no compatibility issues for something like this.”

They have had their share of compatibility issues, so this is a very nice thing to hear.

“If you’re worried about privacy, you can just, like, make yourself a subfolder, and I’ll stay out of it,” Mac adds. Actually, PC isn’t really worried about that. If he does have any sensitive information to store, it’s probably in Excel format, which Mac can read but tends to avoid like the plague. More than that, he trusts Mac. Maybe he should say that more often, he muses.

Though he has to admit, the subfolder idea is nice. He’ll keep that in mind.

Mac looks like he’s waiting for PC to say something, and he is – what does PC think about the whole thing? Is it a yes? Please?

“I think” PC starts. Mac pulls in a deep breath. He can’t read PC’s expression.

“I think this is a good idea.”

Sure, he has his concerns, and there’s no guarantee it’ll work out. But it makes sense. And even more than it makes sense, it feels right, and far more natural than he ever imagined cross-platform file sharing could. A part of him’s saying yes because it’s rational – because he doesn’t want to have another of those frenzied mornings, rushing around and trying to get his files in order with half of them completely out of his reach.

Another part of him’s been saying yes since he saw the label “Shared” on that drive, and is saying it even more emphatically because of the hopeful look on Mac’s face when he responds.

Mac, meanwhile, is vaguely aware that he may be overreacting. It’s just a shared drive, after all. It’s not like PC’s moving in or something – not completely, anyways. Just a little bit.

But hell, it really makes him happy. It also makes him want to kiss PC, which he acts on, lips pressed in a warm smile against PC’s.

PC smiles back, then kisses back, and they sort of drift between those two actions till Mac finally breaks it off with a laugh of simple, honest relief. PC said yes. He really said yes. He can’t get over that.

They curl up together on the couch that night, and Mac helps PC move some of his files, tucking them onto the drive alongside Mac’s. Everything fits.

A week or so later, Mac is on that drive, trying to remember what he titled that unfinished iMovie he was working on the night before, when he sees his name and pauses.

“For\_Mac.pdf”.

The file info tells him PC made it (which, logically, he already knew, but felt compelled to check). PC's still at work, and he's faced with the question of what to do now. For\_Mac. For him. And it's a PDF, which he knows is unusual for PC – but then again, PC knows how much Mac dislikes working with Word unless he really needs to. The choice of format makes the file all the more inviting.

Well, he reasons, PC wouldn't have named it that if it was supposed to be private. If anything, it looks like just the opposite – like a note left for him.

He double-clicks.

*Dear Mac,* it starts. *It is a note.*

*This drive is working out wonderfully. I just thought I should let you know.*

*Thank you for the space.*

*And thank you for letting me into your space, in general. I am finding that it is a good place for me to be.*

Mac is utterly touched, by this point.

*I am considering getting a drive like this, myself. For my home. I know you don't come over very often, but when you do, you are welcome to keep some of your files there as well. Perhaps we could even try remote networking some time, if you're compatible with it. Let me know what you think.*

*I have already thanked you for sharing your space. I would like you to know that you are welcome into mine as well.*

He feels like his processor's going a mile a minute, but in the best way possible.

*Sincerely,*

*Your PC*

*(P.S.: <3)*

Mac invites him over that night. They share the drive. They share a movie on the couch. They share the bed.

They fall asleep tangled up in each other, hopelessly connected.