

Project Chaos Shift

Chapter 1 – Storm Approaches

Nova sets the hard drive on top of the computer case and looks up at the middle aged red fox with a look of pity on his face. "I'm sorry Ms. Bow, but it's a mechanical issue." Standing on the other side of the counter, Ms. Bow's expression does not change a face that Nova knows all too well. The look that reads 'I'm a bitch that hasn't exploded yet, like a can of shaken Coca-Cola that is about to be opened. "So what does this mean?" Ms. Bow says with her eyes locked on the dust coated hard drive. "It means the only way we can obtain your data is to send it to a company that will dismantle the hard drive and get the information off the potentially damaged plates. It's a very expensive process." Nova pats his left paw on the side of his leg to get the dust off from him and clears his throat before confirming the price. "1600 dollars." Ms. Bow's eyes widen and look up at Nova. "Well, it's a good thing I bought the extended warranty." Nova rests his paw against the edge of the counter top, imagining the cold pressurized can of Coca cola under his paw. "The warranty will cover all the parts and labor required to get your computer up and running properly again, but data recovery is not covered under the warranty." Nova flicks one of his claws up, imagining the Coca cola can spraying in the air and foaming all over the floor. "What! Not covered? It has to be covered, that's why I bought the warranty!" Ms. Bow's ears twitch randomly as bursts of angry blood begin to fill them. "Of course we'll-" Ms. Bow cuts Nova off mid-sentence to continue her rant. "This is my business computer. I absolutely HAVE to get the data off this thing, and YOU are the one that will do it for me." Ms. Bow exclaims as she points directly at Nova. Since Nova has explained the same situation to many other customers, he flips his muzzle into cruise control and lets his mind drive a different path. "Configuring a backup from day one avoids these situations from occurring. However, we offer this solution to those who did not perform any backup to rely on." Nova's mind takes a detour if he wants either grilled steak or chicken for dinner, perhaps both? "So you're saying it's my fault? YOU guys are the ones that sold me a defective machine, so it's YOUR problem now!" Ms. Bow clenches her teeth together in fury. Something clearly snapped in her head while being caught up in the moment. After a quiet pause of the two staring at each other, Nova's mind throws the idea of adding bacon into his grilling concoction and pulls out a work order form from under the counter and sets it down next to the computer. "...So, is that a yes on the data recovery?" In a spike of anger, Ms. Bow throws the hard drive right at Nova, hitting him square in the chest. Of course it hurt, but the sudden surprise caused Nova to back up a couple of steps. His tail instinctively flings upward, knocking papers off of the printer behind him. "Crazy bitch! What the hell is wrong with you?" Nova's voice had a slight wheeze as the wind was knocked right out of him. Nova's mind was yanked right out from his dinner dilemma and was focused on what the crazy fox would do next. Ms. Bow had a look of shock on her face as if she suddenly realized what she had just done "Did you just call me...a bitch? Let me speak with your manager!" Nova, now annoyed that one word took priority over being hit with a hunk of metal, raises his paw to rub the spot on his chest where the hard drive struck him. "psh! Go get the manager yourself, I'm done with you." Nova turns away from the counter and enters his computer repair lab where he can be alone and away from the angry red fox.

Nova sits down on the nearby office chair and pushes his foot paws off the floor to roll him over to a computer repair that is doing updates, he stares at the screen and takes the opportunity to cool himself down and reflect. "She must have been having a bad day or something, but throwing a hard drive at me? Calling her a bitch is certainly within line." Nova sighs and slouches in his chair, then suddenly jerks back up from the jolt of pain in his chest. "Ouch! Did I get any marks from that?" Nova uses his claws to sift through his fur and sees a few tears in his skin, a thin line of blood emerges from the cracks "well, at least I can use this as insurance if they threaten to fire me over this." Nova's ears rise up as he picks up the sound of his voice being heard from outside his workstation, the manager was about to barge in. "Alright Nova." The manager Dave, a baboon, approaches Nova from behind and pulls up the other office chair nearby and sits down beside him. "I heard the commotion from my office and figured I would be called out at any moment. I got her side of the story." Sounding surprisingly calm, Dave leans in to look at Nova's eyes "But calling her a bitch, that isn't like you at all." Feeling more comfortable with his tone, Nova turns towards Dave to look right at him and pops his chest out, showing him the marks "She probably left out the part where she threw her hard drive at me." Surprised, Dave's eyes widen as he leans back in his chair. "You're bleeding!" Nova looks down and sees that a couple streaks of blood began to clot up his fur, the damage tells the whole story. Nova gently pokes the blood with his claw. "I guess were going to have to fill out a report for legality?" Dave's chair squeals as he leans back further "Actually, you can just go home for the day, and don't worry about the money, you will get paid for the rest of your shift." An instinctive smile grows on Nova's face, his tail wagging happily as he gets up from his chair. "That's awesome!" Dave concludes their conversation with a wink. Nova wasn't bothered by how odd Dave was acting; getting a free paid day off is something he wasn't going to question. As Nova exits his workstation, he expects to see Ms. Bow right outside waiting for him, to his surprise, she is already gone and the store has only a few furs wandering around the store playing with the display computers. Wondering if she really is gone, or just went somewhere else in the store, Nova pokes his head back inside the computer lab to ask Dave only to find he had disappeared as well, he then turns back to observe the store for a few moments. "hmm" Nova tilts and scratches his head. "Achoo!" Nova lets out an obnoxiously loud fake sneeze and discovers no disruption in the store. "If that's the case, then I may as well go somewhere a little more interesting." Nova walks to the exit of the store and sees Ms. Bow entering her car from across the parking lot; Nova takes off running towards her. "Excuse me, Ms. Bow! You almost forgot-!" Just as Nova catches up to her car, Ms. Bow already began to drive off with a squeal in her tires to avoid any more confrontation with Nova. "...Your receipt." With a sudden surge of energy, Nova sprints with an incredible speed towards Ms. Bow's car, the muscles in his legs inflate just before he jumps 50 feet into the air and lines up to land on Ms. Bow's car. A familiar song plays loudly from somewhere outside; Nova realizes it's his alarm clock.

Nova opens his eyes to a blank wall right in front of him and stares while he listens to the tail end of what sounds like a Muse song playing on the radio. He sighs, thinking about how his dream will likely be the most interesting part of his day. "And that was 'Time is Running Out' by Muse. Time wasn't the only thing running out because we actually had a few brown out reports just now as thunderstorms make their way towards us. I haven't heard anything yet but it sure is starting to cloud up over here."

Nova's ears turn towards the alarm clock when he hears the chance of storms being announced. Despite the danger they can have, he loves the smell, sound, and sheer beauty of them. "Time?" Nova turns his head to look at the clock and sees 8:07 displayed on the alarm clock. With a grunt, he stretches his legs out, but his approaching yawn is cut prematurely to a deep ache in his chest. "Ouch! What the hell, did I manage to hurt myself in my sleep?" Nova lifts up his blanket and sits up against the head of his bed to examine his chest. Unlike in his dream, there are thankfully no cut marks from any hard drive that hit him. In fact, there weren't any marks on him at all. "Maybe I hit myself or just moved the wrong way." It wouldn't be the first time Nova woke up with a pain, but it's usually in his neck instead of his chest. As long as the pain doesn't get any worse throughout the day, it's usually from a night time struggle. Nova extends his arm to shut off the radio and sets his foot paws onto the floor, his pads immediately feeling the cool sensation from the hardwood, step three in his wake up routine. Being prepared for the pain this time, Nova feels the yawn coming back for its next attempt, so he stretches his arms and bulges his chest outward. This position doesn't seem to hurt so much. Nova opens wide and exhales deeply, his muzzle exhausting what he expects to be some foul smelling morning breath. Feeling much more content, Nova finally steps from out of his bed and rips open his curtains, squinting at the sudden burst of sun light he just let in. "Hmm, any signs of that storm?" Nova leans to the right to peek outside and sees nothing but grey from the distance. "Plenty of time to make it to work before any rain comes."

Scratching his still tired eyes on his way down the stairs, Nova heads over to the kitchen for his final and favorite part of waking up, making coffee. He opens the cupboard door and unveils an entire shelf of different coffee flavors and varieties, and hovers his paw from side to side as he tries to figure out which flavor he wants. "One that won't take away from the boldness, but will accent it well." With a shrug, Nova grabs a twist tied bag of beans labelled 'Chocolate Bliss' a dark roast with cocoa powder added into it. He cups the bag into his right paw, and uses his left paw to undo the twist tie, flicking it onto the counter. Nova closes his eyes and raises the bag up to his nose, inhaling deeply as he squeezes the bag to waft up the air. A smile grows on his face and his tail quivers as his lungs fill with the strong nutty aroma of chocolate bliss. "Never....gets....old" Feeling cleansed from the inside out, Nova shifts over to the coffee maker and pours the beans into the top. A Breville that is fully automated, a simple push of a button does everything from grinding to brewing. While waiting for his cup, Nova grabs the stereo remote sitting right next to the coffee maker, and hits a single button to fade in his music. If Nova ever has to wait for more than 30 seconds for anything, that remote will always be in his possession to play his metal, which explains why the remote always ends up in the most random of places. Slowly shifting his waist from side to side and twirling his tail to match the tune, the randomly shuffled Octaviarium plays in the nearby living room. "Oats and bacon!" Nova runs a few steps and slides himself over to the fridge to take out his bacon, and knocks the door closed with his curled tail as he fumbles in the cupboard to grab a frying pan.

Once Octaviarium picks up after the nearly 8 minute long ambient intro, he sings along while flipping the bacon in his frying pan, but won't be satisfied until it reaches the point of having a slight crunch on the edges. "As far as I can tell, my food is almost done!" Nova changes the lyrics of the song while singing out loud to narrate his actions. Despite what he thinks, Nova is clearly a morning furry. He dances and sings after only being awake for nearly 20 minutes. His bed head and sleep filled eyes read

groggy, yet his smile and energy tell a story of running in the park carefree. Nova grabs a nearby plate from above, and begins to serve his breakfast. Nearly drooling from the smell, his tongue flops out from the right side of his muzzle as he leaves the kitchen. With his attention fixated only on the food, Nova forgets his mug of coffee on the kitchen counter after only a few sips were taken. He leans forward on one leg and extends his arm out to set his plate down in an exaggerated manner, but the deep ache within his chest catches him off guard while stretching. Staring down at the floor, the plate only drops a few inches before landing on the table in front of him and Nova yelps from the sudden pain. Freezing in the incredibly awkward position, he listens to the sound the plate makes. No shatter, no food splats, just a solid clunk. Nova tilts his head upward to peek eye level at the table right in front of him and sees the food on the plate only shifted to one side. "Food is okay, but am I?" With the pain only erupting in certain positions, Nova believes it to be some deep muscle that isn't used often has been pulled or knotted. If the pain doesn't go away in 3 days, an appointment with the doctor will have to be scheduled just in case. Carefully, Nova retracts his legs back together and stands straight up like a soldier. "Just be careful, so long as I don't make any sudden movements, I should be okay." Keeping aware of his posture, Nova carefully sits down on the table chair and looks down at his food, steam rising up to his eyes. "Mmmm." The delightful view of Nova's breakfast clears his mind from the ache and fills his attention solely on the food. Despite the chest ache putting Nova's day to a rough start, he hopes this will put him back on the right track to a more enjoyable day. Without the use of any utensils, Nova digs in to nourish himself before heading off to the day of work he has ahead of him.

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The moon's glow is swallowed from the darkness of the storm clouds, rain continues to hit Nova's front door in waves from the wind gusts. The door quickly opens only a quarter swing and Nova slips inside, trying to keep the rain outside where it belongs. He is completely soaked and dripping. One paw wipes the water from out of his eyes while the other searches the wall for the light switch. "Wow, absolutely pouring out there!" The light turns on just as Nova uses his feet paws to slip his shoes off. He makes his way into the washroom, his feet paws squishing with each step. The husky in the mirror looks more like a drowned rat, his grey fur several shades darker from being saturated with rain. Nova tilts his head towards the sink and rings his hair poof out from between his paws. Looking back up into the mirror, Nova giggles at his reflection as he managed to transform his hair poof into a mow hawk. A style he would never go for. Nova takes a few steps backwards and counts down from 3 "Whoooo!" He shakes himself to get the worst of the water out, drips flinging onto the walls and mirror. Nova walks out of the washroom looking like frizzy pom-pom, but has a smile on his face. He likes the cooling sensation that the rain gives him. As long as he doesn't have to go anywhere formal, he sees no reason to try and hide from rain.

Since there are errands to run tomorrow, Nova figures now will be the best time to take advantage of the down time. Munching on some popcorn while watching a movie on the couch with a

view of the storm beside him sounds like the perfect way to end off his evening. He approaches his tall shelf filled with videogames, DVDs, and Blu-Rays, and scans through them. As perfect as the atmosphere is for a horror movie, Nova craves for explosions and gunfire. He taps his claw over one of his most favorites 'Terminator 2: Judgement Day'. "Nah, I would be too pissed if the power cuts out half way through. I need something with great action, but weaker story." Moving his claw over only 1 case, he pulls out 'Terminator 3: Rise of the machines'. Carrying it with him to the kitchen, Nova opens his pantry and grabs a bag of pre-made popcorn that had been sitting in there unopened for a couple months. Since it's just him, there is no need to pour it into a bowl. Nova gently bites onto the 'Terminator 3' Blu-Ray case to hold it in his muzzle, and shakes the bag of popcorn while going back onto the living room. He throws the bag of popcorn at the couch, and then quickly turns around plugging his ears, waiting for an imaginary explosion with popcorn shrapnel to bounce off his back.

After popping the Blu-Ray disc into the player, Nova hops onto the couch and places the bag of popcorn onto his lap just as the explosive movie menu rolls. Stuffing his face with the crunchy goodness, Nova watches the menu loop once before hitting play to further amp him up for the movie. Pressing play on the remote, the room becomes silent other than the sound of rain hitting the window next to him. Nova looks at the empty couch beside him and thinks about how much he would like to have some company with him. The time he spent with his friends after his shift was definitely the highlight of his day, but being the only one that lives in his house can be a little lonesome from time to time. However, he does appreciate the quiet down time. "Just have to make the best out of everything." Nova takes advantage of the empty couch by putting his feet up so he can lie down while watching the movie.

The dampness of his fur gets the best of him, so Nova grabs the blanket sitting beside the couch and lays it over himself, but nearly chokes on his popcorn from the sight of seeing Arnold Schwarzenegger put on a pair of star shaped sun glasses. Shifting his body around to get comfortable, Nova enjoys the movie while his tiredness begins to fight him.

The conversation between Arnold and John turns into random words, eyes are getting heavy...

Eyes close, the sound of bullet shots and words yelling turns into ambience.

Taking a deep breath, Nova puts both his paws onto the steering wheel and looks at the fur standing beside him from outside the car. "It might take some getting used to, but practice makes perfect." Nova rubs one of his fingers over the Porsche logo in the middle of the steering wheel before honking good bye. His body firmly presses into the leather seat as the car roars loudly and speeds down the country road.

Nova's body jerks awake suddenly, the thunder from outside must have woken up. He is barely able to make out what scene he is at with his movie as his eyes struggle to open fully.

The hallway Nova had been running through doesn't seem to have an end, The wooden doors on his left and right keep shutting as he passes by them, there is no time to try to pry them open as the shadow figure catches up from behind him, he is too scared to see how close it approaches him. In the distance, one door glows with light. The door remains open as Nova approaches it, and he runs through it without even thinking.

Now a bright beautiful sunny day, Nova turns around immediately but sees no door behind him. Instead, he sees his crush sitting on a parkway bench. With a slight giddy feeling inside him, Nova walks towards his crush to join him on the bench. "So you chase after the ball, but you don't want to bring it back to me?" Nova tilts his head in confusion, and speaks the first words that come to mind. "It just disappeared, I can't find it." Nova's crush simply giggles at him. "We'll get it later; let's just relax a little first." Tail wagging happily, Nova sits down beside him and smiles contently as his crush's warm paw holds onto his. The sight of their paws holding is something Nova thought he would never see. Looking back up, their eyes lock onto each other and they pause a few moments. His crush leans towards him and Nova follows, tilting his head for a kiss.

Nova wakes up from the bright flashes of lighting from outside, the deep rumbles have a few second delay. Letting out a big yawn, Nova sees the movie's menu playing on the screen. "I must have been out a while." His blanket is no longer covering him, but instead is scrunched up between his arms and legs; he had been cuddling it in his sleep. Looking down, Nova sees the bag of popcorn had fallen onto the floor and spilled a little. Not caring about that, Nova closes his eyes in hopes he can continue his dream right where it left off. A flash of lightning strikes with a thunderous clap without any delay. The noise scares Nova enough yelp and sit upward on the couch, a shatter is heard from upstairs. "Aww, crap!" Thinking a picture must have fallen off the wall, Nova walks upstairs to clean up whatever mess had been created. Since his eyes are used to the dark and can see enough to make out shapes and objects, he didn't want to turn on the lights and blind himself. Nova's bedroom is the only place with a glass picture frame, so he walks in and scans the floor for any broken objects.

His heart nearly breaks through his rib cage as he hears what sounds like fast approaching footsteps from behind. DeJa Vu floods Nova from his hallway dream, his only instinct is to run inside his bedroom, and find a weapon to defend himself with. An empty mug on his desk is the only thing within arm's reach. Nova grabs the mug with one paw and uses the other to close his bedroom door and buy him a few seconds, but it's too late.

While closing the door, it gets whacked with a stronger force from the other side. The door strikes Nova square in the head and he falls onto his back, losing grip of the mug on his way down. It's pretty clear that Nova is being robbed, but he doesn't care about anything in his house, he only hopes that the intruder will just leave him alone and not hurt him. Feeling dizzy, Nova's words are slurred and are difficult to understand. "Don't hurt me! Just take whatever you want and go, please!" The intruder didn't say a word, but the footsteps slowed down to a walk and stopped right beside him. Trying his best to keep his vision in focus, Nova tried to get a glimpse of who had broken into his house, but all he could see is the outline of a black figure. It stood right beside him and paused for a few moments, Nova raised his paws over his head to protect himself, peeking between his arms to continue to get a glimpse of the

intruder. He sees what he thinks is the outline of a head with spikes coming up from the back. Nova can only imagine some horrible monster, or thief wearing some mask to cover his identity. "What do you want from me?" Without a word, the black figure lowers itself towards Nova. All he can do is close his eyes and pray whatever happens won't hurt him. Nova feels both his paws being grabbed, and a strong weight coming down onto his chest, the same spot he had been feeling the pain all day.