



Nova and the Bigger Picture



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A Cheat Code Story

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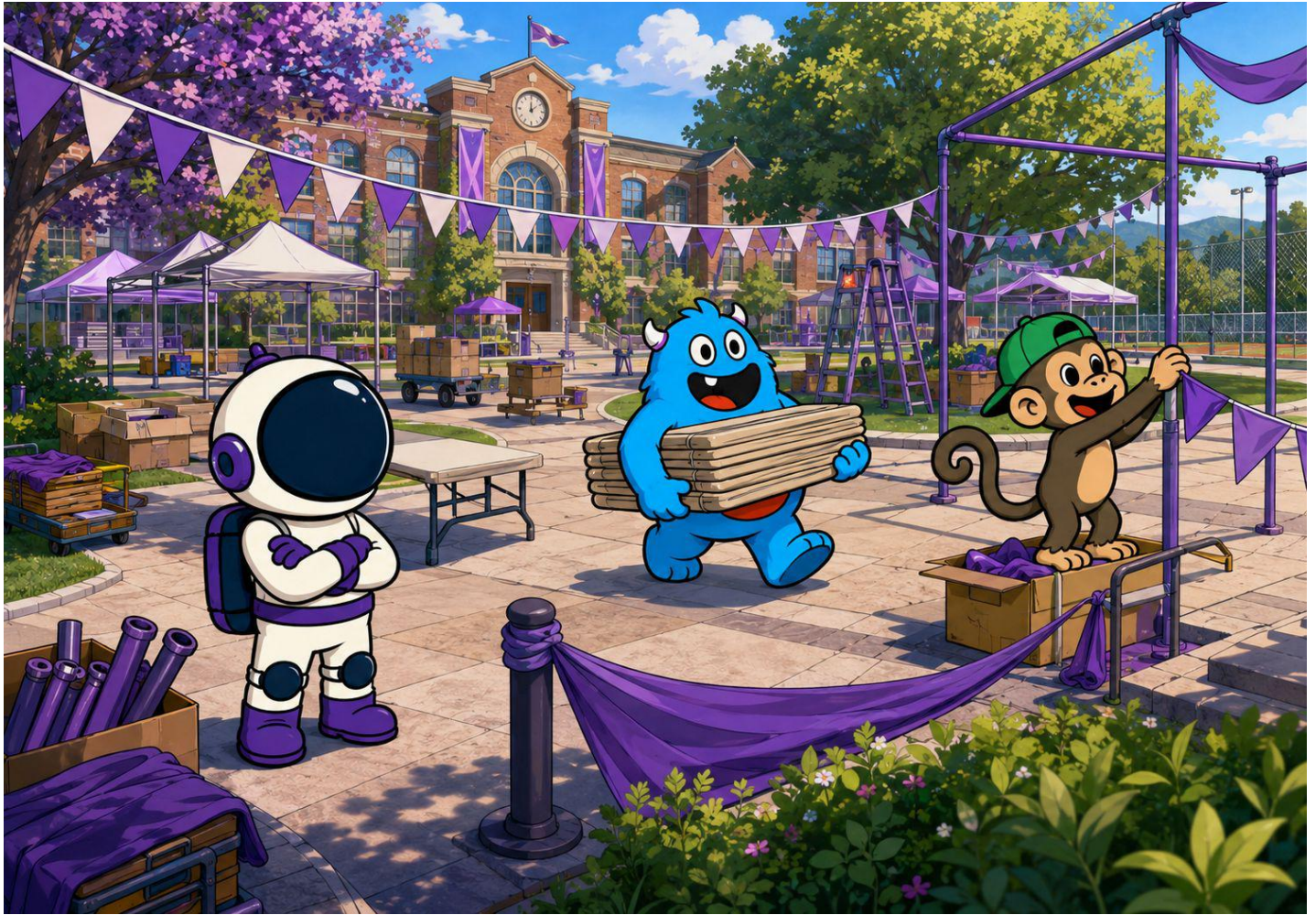
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**Nova and the
Bigger Picture**



The Maplewood Academy Spring Fair was the best day of the whole school year.

There were games, food, a stage with a real sound system, and a face-painting booth that always had a line. Setting it all up was half the fun — and this year, **Nova, Chomp, and Chip** had shown up early to help.



By the time the gates opened, everything looked ready.

Booths lined both sides of the path. The food table sat right in the middle where everyone could find it. The stage was set up near the back. The face-painting booth was tucked in a quiet spot away from the noise.

Ms. Luma cut the ribbon, and the crowd rushed in.



Within ten minutes, the fair had turned into a tangle.

The line for the ring toss curled into the line for the duck pond. The food table sat right where the path split, so half the crowd couldn't get through. The stage had started its first act but nobody could see it from the entrance because three booths were in the way.

And the face-painting booth? Nobody could find it at all.

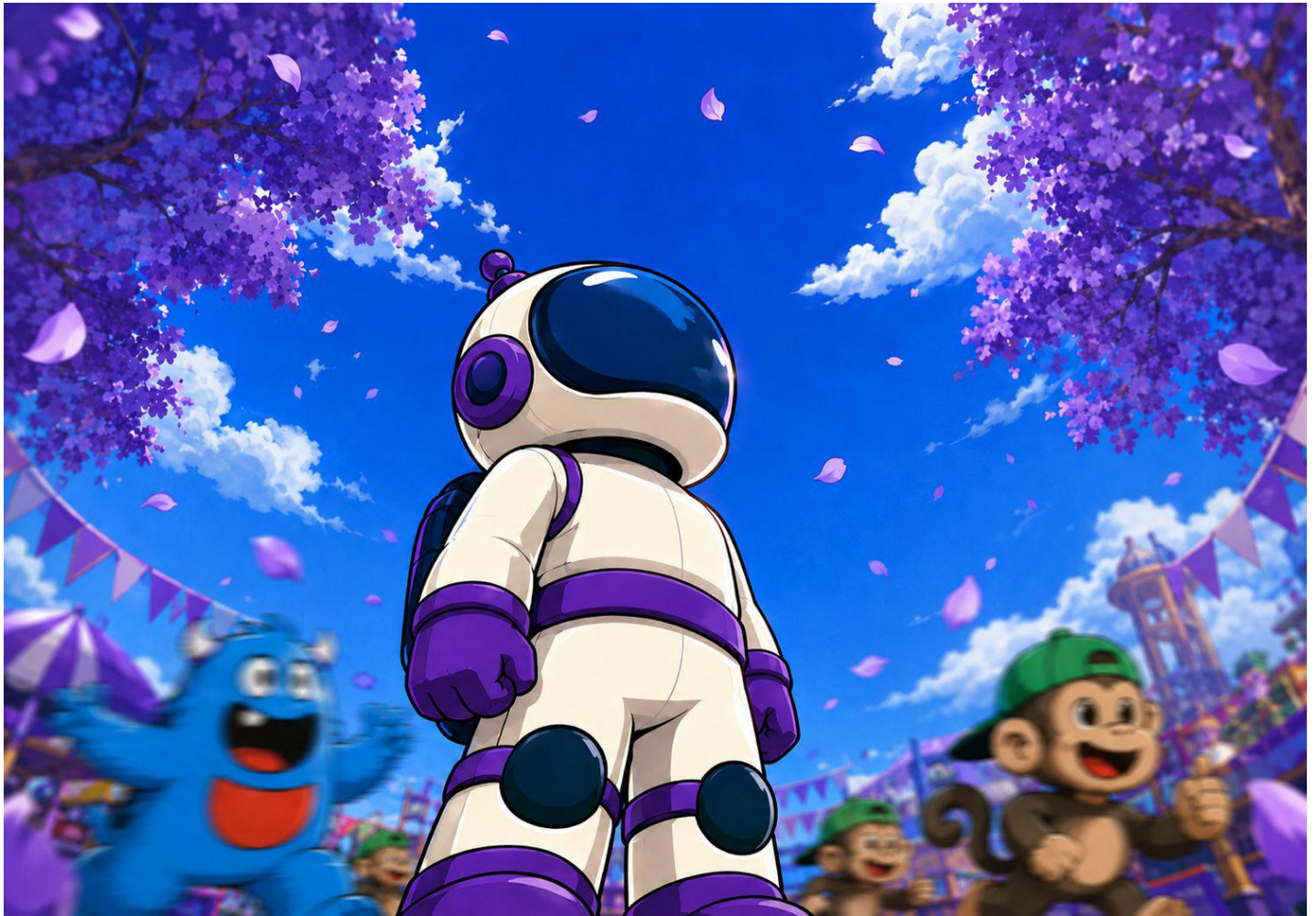


Ms. Luma stood in the middle of it all, looking around.

"Something isn't working," she said. "But I can't tell what."

Chip looked left and then right and then left again. **Chomp** offered to move the food table but couldn't figure out where it should go instead. He picked it up anyway, then put it back down in the exact same spot.

Everyone was too deep inside the problem to see it.



Nova stood at the edge of the path and looked at the fair. Then she looked up.

The fair made sense to whoever had drawn it on paper. But from inside it, you couldn't see how the pieces connected. You couldn't see where one line ended and another began. You couldn't see what was blocking what.

From the ground, all you could see was the piece right in front of you.



She reached into her suit pocket and pulled out her Kodex. She snapped it onto her wrist over her glove, and the screen blinked on. Then, she entered a sequence, pressing each key with calm precision.



The Kodex pulsed. White light bloomed across the screen turning purple at the edges. A few pixel sparks drifted upward before dissipating.

A low hum came from the jetpack on her back. Then it lifted her — smoothly and steadily — up off the ground.



From twenty feet up, the fair looked completely different.

Nova could see the whole layout at once — every booth, every line, every path. She could see exactly where the food table was splitting the crowd in two. She could see the face-painting sign hidden behind a banner. She could see three empty feet of space on the left side of the grounds that nobody was using.

The fair wasn't broken. It just needed to breathe.



Nova came back down slowly and landed at the edge of the path.

"I've got it," she said.

Chomp and **Chip** turned.



"The food table needs to move to the left side, against the fence. That opens up the whole center path." She pointed. "The face-painting booth needs to come forward — right there, where everyone can see it from the entrance." She pointed again. "And the ring toss line needs a rope guide so it doesn't curl into the duck pond."

Chomp was already heading for the food table.



It took eleven minutes to make all three changes.

Chomp moved the food table. **Chip** relocated the face-painting booth and repainted its sign with a fresh coat and a little extra flair. **Nova** strung the rope guide along the ring toss line herself, moving quickly and precisely.



When they stepped back, the fair had untangled itself.

The center path was open and wide. The face-painting booth had a line twelve kids deep within two minutes. The ring toss and duck pond ran side by side without touching. And everyone could see the stage.



*"How did you know what to change?" **Chip** asked.*

*"I went up high enough to see all of it at once," **Nova** said. "From down here you can only see what's right in front of you. From up there you can see how everything fits together — or doesn't."*



Chip thought about it. *"So the fair wasn't the problem."*

"The fair was fine," **Nova** said. *"We just couldn't see it clearly from the inside."*

Chip pointed at her jetpack. *"I want one of those."*

Nova smiled inside her helmet. *"You've already got something better."*



The Spring Fair ran for three more hours. The ring toss ran out of rings. The face-painting booth ran out of paint. The food table ran out of food.

But the stage never ran out of an audience.



Ms. Luma found **Nova** near the end of the afternoon, sitting on the edge of the stage watching the last act.

"Good thinking today," Ms. Luma said.

"I just went high enough to see the answer," **Nova** said.

Ms. Luma nodded. *"That's usually all it takes."*

There's always another moment to share with the
Cheat Code crew. Join us for all their stories!



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