

## [one] every story begins somewhere

1958:

**NOVA WAS BORN IN 1956.** Her parents were thrilled to welcome a baby girl into their family, after trying and failing for so many years to fall pregnant and have a child. Nova was a miracle, blessing her parents with something that they had wanted for so long. But not everything was as it seemed. Nova was different, and her parents did not know about her abilities.

She was two years old when her powers showed themselves. She was only a baby, barely speaking or walking, and yet she managed to survive a car crash that proved fatal for her parents. The paramedics and the firefighters on the scene were dumbfounded when they found an infant in the wreck of the car, perfectly unharmed save for some respiratory issues caused by smoke inhalation.

They didn't know what to do with her, so a firefighter offered to take her to the nearest orphanage, where she would hopefully find a family to love and care for her. It wasn't until Charles Xavier caught wind of a 'miracle child' from the news that he decided to investigate. He tracked down the child and found her at the orphanage, right where the firefighter had left her.

He was led down a hallway towards a room that he noticed was far away from the other children's rooms. "Why so secluded?"

"She's... different," the matron said. "We don't exactly know what it is, but we figured it was best to keep her away from the other children until we know exactly what it is we're dealing with."

The nurses had no idea how to handle the child, because although they didn't know it, her mutant gene had come into power and had begun to show itself. When Charles was shown into the girl's room, he found her bouncing in her crib, giggling uncontrollably as she appeared to float for a few seconds longer than normal before returning to the mattress and bouncing again.

Charles turned to the nurses. "Could I have a few moments alone with her?"

They were all too eager to get out of the room. When Charles was alone with the girl, she stopped bouncing and looked at him expectantly. He took off his jacket and draped it over the arm of the chair in the room before walking towards the girl.

"Hello," he greeted. "What's your name?"

The girl simply stared.

"You don't have a name?" Charles asked.

The girl said nothing.

Charles raised his eyebrows. "I saw you bouncing. Do you like bouncing?"

The girl nodded.

"I like bouncing too," Charles replied. "Can you tell me your name, and maybe we can bounce together?"

"Nova."

"Nova?" Charles repeated. "What a beautiful name. It's a pleasure to meet you, Nova," he held out his hand. "Charles Xavier."

The girl looked at his hand in confusion.

"You shake it," Charles said, joining his two hands and pretending to shake hands. "See? Like this. Now you try."

Nova held out her hand, and as she shook Charles's hand, something strange happened. For those few seconds that Charles was touching her, he felt the atmosphere around him shift. He suddenly felt lighter, like if he jumped he could touch the ceiling, but when he released the girl's hand, the feeling faded.

"You're a mutant?" Charles asked.

She babbled away nonsensically. Charles realised he wasn't getting anywhere, so he concentrated and looked inside the girl's mind. There wasn't much in there, because she wasn't old enough to comprehend her thoughts just yet, but Charles could see flashes of various scenes from the child's life.

A woman laughing as a man tossed a baby up in the air and caught her, repeating the action over and over again; the same woman reading a story to the girl as she curled up in the woman's arms; getting into a car and setting off on a journey; the screech of tyres, the deafening sound of a horn, a crash, and then nothing.

Charles snapped out of Nova's mind in surprise. That wasn't what he was expecting when he looked into her mind, but after a second to compose himself, he went back in to find out the rest of the story.

There was a flash of purple light, surrounding the girl in her car seat, and Charles watched from the girl's point of view as the debris and the wreck from the car didn't seem to be able to harm her. In fact, nothing happened to the girl. She had produced some sort of force-field around herself to protect her. When the chaos calmed, the force-field vanished, and when Charles heard the sirens, he returned to the present.

Nova was looking at him. "You friend?"

"What?" Charles asked. "Oh, yes. I'm a friend."

"Charlie," Nova said, pointing at him.

"No, no," Charles said. "Charles."

"Charles," Nova repeated. "Friend Charles."

"Yes," Charles nodded. "How would you like to come and live with me, Nova?"

"Live?" Nova asked. "In house?"

"Yes, in a house," Charles replied. "A big house with plenty of space to play."

"Hidey-seeky!" Nova exclaimed, covering her eyes with her hands. "Peek-a-boo!"

"Yes, we can play all of those games," Charles said. "Would you like that?"

Nova jumped again, tiny fists clutching the rail of her crib. Charles watched as she floated into the air, releasing the crib as she giggled at him. "Upsy-downsy!"

Then she sneezed, falling from the air so suddenly that Charles almost didn't have time to catch her. She landed in his arms, and he shook his head in amusement at this tiny child, already possessing a power far greater than she knew. Although he wasn't equipped to deal with a child, Charles knew he couldn't leave her in this orphanage. He couldn't let this girl grow up in a world where people like her were feared and scorned.

He placed her back in her crib. "You wait there, okay?"

She looked up at him, her brown eyes filled with wonder. "Okay."

"I'll be right back," Charles said. "Is that alright?"

She nodded. "Back soon?"

"Yes, very soon," Charles assured her.

He then left the girl in her room, finding the matron waiting outside. When he emerged, they all snapped to attention and waited for him to speak. Charles smiled at them. "Is there somewhere we can discuss matters of adoption?"

"You want to adopt her?" asked the matron. "Are you sure?"

"Quite positive," Charles replied with a nod. "What papers do I need to sign?"

Once they were signed, and Charles was the legal guardian of the newly-named Nova Xavier, he took the girl home. He swore to himself that day that he would never let her know the hardships that he had faced with being a mutant, and for the next few years, he managed quite well.

But everyone falls to the deep end at some point, and in 1962 Charles Xavier took the dive into depression and despair.

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