

## [sixteen] a trip to cairo sounds nice

**NOVA SENT KURT** up to the second floor, where the control system was, as she, Jean and Scott headed for the cell door. Nova stood before the door, and now that they had turned off the generators and cut off the electromagnetic field surrounding the cell, she let out a yell and the door exploded inwards, creating an escape for those inside.

Scott whistled. "That was awesome."

"Thanks," Nova breathed, shaking out her hands. "Feels good to make something explode."

"How did you do that?" Scott asked.

"Uh, I just thought about it and gravity pulled it apart," Nova shrugged.

Raven appeared at the hole Nova caused and Jean said, "We know where the professor is."

"I think we might have a way out of here," Scott added.

"Well, you've been busy," Raven commented.

"We had a little help," Nova smiled, spotting Peter behind Raven. "Oh, thank God."

She ran at Peter and hugged him fiercely, clinging to the back of his jacket. He caught her and smiled as he reciprocated the gesture, hugging her tight against his chest. "Hello to you, too, my love."

"I'm so glad you're okay," she whispered.

"I'm fine," he promised. "Are you okay?"

Nova nodded. "I'm okay."

"Let's go!" Scott shouted.

Nova grabbed Peter's hand and they started running down the corridor. As she was running, Kurt appeared right in front of her and she let out a startled yell. "Ah! Jesus!"

"Oh, sorry!" he exclaimed, chasing after them.

"This way," Scott said, leading them down a corridor.

When they reached the hangar they found earlier, the door opened after some tinkering from Hank, and they walked inside. Nova, who was still holding Peter's hand, looked at the jet parked in the middle of the room.

"Nice," she commented.

"Hey, Hank, you think you can fly this thing?" Raven asked.

"Yeah, I can figure it out," Hank replied.

"Hey guys," Scott called, opening a container. "Flight suits."

Raven stepped forwards and looked at the suits before turning to Hank. "You got your warplane. Let's go to war."

Donning one of the flight suits, Nova caught Raven's eye and knew exactly what she was thinking. The last time Raven had worn a suit that matched her allies, she had been in Cuba and had been forced to decide between Charles and Erik. That particular event hadn't gone very well, so it was blatantly obvious that she was hesitant to be a part of a team again.

One look from Nova, however, changed her mind. Raven could see that the girl needed her. They all did, and she could see that as clear as day in Nova's eyes as the girl helped Peter get into his suit after he struggled for a moment.

Before they boarded the jet, Nova finished helping Peter into the flight suit after he tried to use his super speed and got stuck. When he was fitted in his suit, she reached up, grabbed the back of his neck and pulled him down to kiss her. He seemed surprised at first, but melted into the kiss and snaked his arm around Nova's back, arching her body as he leaned into the kiss. When they pulled away, he grinned crookedly at her.

"Not that I don't appreciate that, because I do, but what was that for?" he asked.

"I thought I was going to lose you today," Nova replied quietly. "I never want to feel like that again."

Peter kissed her forehead. "I promise you won't lose me."

When they boarded the jet, Nova sat down beside Peter, across from Raven, Jean and Scott. Kurt was on Nova's right, and as Hank took off and flew the jet out of the hangar, Jean turned to Raven.

"Were you scared?" she asked. "That day in DC, were you scared?"

"No," Raven replied bluntly, before she continued. "But I was scared on my first mission. I was on a plane like this with my friends. About your age. We called ourselves the X-Men," she leaned forwards to look at Scott. "Your brother was there. We used to call him Havok. He was a real handful, but... when it came down to it, he was very brave."

"What happened to the rest of the kids who went with you?" Kurt asked. "The X-Men?"

"Hank and I are the only ones left," Raven replied, a hint of sadness and regret in her voice. "I couldn't save the rest of them. I told you, I'm not a hero."

"Well, you're a hero to us," Jean told her. "Seeing you that day on TV changed my life."

"Mine too," Kurt added.

"Mine too," Nova said, smiling at Raven.

"Mine too," Peter chimed in. "I mean, I still live in my mom's basement, but everything else is, uh, oh, it's pretty much the same. I'm a total loser."

"You're not a loser," Nova told him softly, taking his hand.

Peter smiled at her. "You're probably the only one that thinks that."

"I'm sure I'm not," Nova replied. "You're anything but a loser, Peter. And besides, I love you as you are, so don't ever change."

"Oh, I amend my previous statement," he said. "I'm a total loser with a super hot girlfriend and I still don't know how that happened."

Laughter erupted from the others and Nova smiled as she shook her head in amusement. She looked over at Peter. "I love you, you know?"

"Well, it's a good thing I love you too," Peter replied, kissing the back of Nova's hand. "Otherwise that would be very awkward."

The rest of the trip was quite quiet. They talked quietly among themselves, but nobody really felt like trying to lighten the mood. Where they were going, it was bound to be dangerous, and as Nova sat there holding Peter's hand, she looked over at Jean. She was the same age as Nova was the day that she met Peter and broke into the Pentagon, her first real taste of what Charles had always told stories about.

They were just kids, being sent into a warzone, and as Hank flew the jet down through the clouds over Cairo, he said, "Seventh wonder, twelve o'clock."

Raven got to her feet, as did Nova, and when she looked through the front window, her eyes widened. All throughout the city, metal clouds were swirling. There was only one person who could possibly have been responsible for this, and that was Magneto.

"He has the professor in the centre of the pyramid," Jean said. "He's going to transfer his consciousness into the professor. If he does that, he'll have the power to control every mind in the world."

"Then we can't let that happen," Nova replied.

As they rounded one of the pyramids, Moira asked, "What the hell is that?"

A bubbled of metal had provided a barrier around whatever lay inside, and Raven's eyes darkened. "It's Erik."

Peter shot to his feet and appeared beside Nova, looking through the window.

Raven turned to the team. "You guys help Nightcrawler get into the pyramid. Get Charles. I'll take care of Erik."

"How are you gonna get through that?" Hank asked.

"I can get you in there," Peter said, and when Raven gave him an incredulous look, he hastened to continue. "I came here for him. Let me help you."

"I can help too," Nova added.

"The rest of you, get Charles on this plane and get him out of here," Raven instructed.

"We're not leaving without you," Kurt protested.

"Don't worry," Peter said. "We'll catch up."

"Hold on," Hank said, turning the jet in midair and bringing it down to land. When they all stepped down, Raven took control once more.

"Hank, you go with the kids. Moira will be waiting on the plane."

"Wait," Scott called.

"What?" Nova asked.

"Not all of us can fully control our powers," Scott said.

"Then don't," Raven replied. "You need to embrace them. We all do."

Raven turned into her normal self and Nova smiled. She really was the hero everyone wanted her to be, regardless of how much she hated it. She turned to Peter, winking at him. "I'll clear you a path. Be ready."

Nova smiled at the kids before she took off towards the cloud of metal, flying towards it and creating a tunnel around her and towards the centre, allowing Peter ease of access. When she touched down inside the bubble, she saw Erik floating in the centre, and not a second later, Peter and Raven were beside her.

A protective field surrounded Erik, and Peter walked around it slowly, pushing on it to try and get inside. Even Nova's powers wouldn't work, no matter how hard she tried.

"The magnetic field is too strong," Peter said. "I can't get us in there."

"Erik!" Raven yelled.

He turned to face them. "Mystique?"

Raven shook her head. "I know you think you've lost everything, but you haven't. You have me. You have Charles. You have Nova," she paused as she looked at Peter. "You have more family than you know. You never had the chance to save your family before, but you do now. That's what I've come here to tell you."

"Please, Erik," Nova called out to him. "I know you're better than this. Please... Please don't let him take my dad away from me."

Erik's eyes softened as Nova spoke, before he turned to Peter. "And you?"

Nova watched Peter carefully as he spoke. "I'm your..." he trailed off and reached for Nova's hand, squeezing it gently as he said, "I'm here for my family, too."

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