

[eighteen] all's well that ends well

NOVA DROPPED DOWN to the ground and was joined by Erik and the other girl, who looked at her awkwardly. She must have been fighting on Apocalypse's side, because she looked rather sheepish when she caught Erik's eye.

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Nova smiled, but it came out as more of a wince. "Hi," then she turned to Erik. "Thank you."

"Are you alright?" he asked, genuine concern laced in his voice.

"Yeah," Nova nodded. "But my dad... Oh my God, dad!"

She raced towards the building, running up a set of invisible steps conjured with her mind, and joined Hank and Moira in the room they had been hiding in. She saw Moira performing CPR on Charles and she dropped to her knees.

"We've lost him," Moira said.

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"Dad," Nova cried, tears filling her eyes. "Dad, wake up," his hair was gone, and Nova realised that it must have been caused by Apocalypse trying to put his consciousness into Charles. His eyes remained closed as she placed her hands on his cheeks and sobbed. "Dad, wake up. Dad, wake up, please!"

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"He's gone," Moira whispered.

"Dad," Nova cried. "No, dad, wake up! Wake up! He's not gone!"

"No, he's not," Jean confirmed. "I can still feel him," she crouched down beside Nova and placed her hand on Charles's cheek. She closed her eyes and a er a moment, Charles let out a breath.

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Nova gasped. "Oh my God."

Charles smiled. "Thank you, Jean."

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"Charles," Moira said. "Charles, do you know where you are?"

"I'm on a beach," Charles replied. "In Cuba, with you."

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"What beach?" Moira asked.

Charles reached up and touched Moira's cheek, returning to her the memories he had stolen so long ago for her own safety. When Charles removed his hand, he whispered, "I'm sorry. I should never have taken those from you."

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"Hold on!"

Nova jumped as Kurt woke up behind her and shot upright, looking around in a panic. "What did I miss?"

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Nova chuckled dryly as a tear rolled down her nose. Charles turned to her and noticed her eyes sparkling with tears, reaching up to brush them away. In Nova's head, she heard his voice. It's okay.

I thought I'd lost youshe replied.

You'll never lose meCharles replied. I'll always be with you.

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Nova reached for her father's hand. And I'll always be with you.

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Returning to the mansion was hard, especially when they found it in ruins, but Jean, Nova and Erik worked together to rebuild the house as it was. Nova's gravitational powers maintained the support of the house as Jean and Erik reconstructed the building, returning it to its former glory.

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Peter stood nearby, watching his girlfriend work with a lovestruck expression on his face. His leg was wrapped in a cast, and a er a minor surgery to fix the majority of the damage, Nova had taken to being his nurse, spending most of her time with him.

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Ororo appeared behind him, looking up at Erik. "Mystique told me he is your father. Are you gonna tell him?"

"I might," Peter replied. "One day. I think, for now, I'm just gonna stick around here for a while."

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"For her?" Ororo asked, her eyes shi ing to Nova.

Peter smiled. "Yeah, for her."

Nova lowered herself to the ground, heading first to Erik, who she embraced tightly. Peter smiled at the exchange, realising that if the day ever came where he told Erik that he was his son, family dinners wouldn't be so bad.

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Once Nova finished speaking to Erik, she approached Peter, who held out his arm as she approached. "Hey, Zero."

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"Hey, Speedy," she greeted, wrapping an arm around his waist. "You okay?"

"I am now you're here," he replied, kissing the top of Nova's head.

She grinned. "You're so cheesy. Have you taken your meds?"

"You mean the painkillers that don't actually kill the pain?" Peter asked. "They just mildly repress it for twenty minutes until my metabolism burns through them? No, I haven't."

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Nova rolled her eyes. "You're so annoying. Come on, I'll show you my room. You can rest for a while."

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"I don't need rest," Peter replied, as he hobbled towards the house.

"Yes, you do," Nova laughed. "Come on, stop being so slow."

"Hey!" Peter said, sounding o ended. "I am notslow."

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Erik stuck around for a while, remaining at the mansion until things cooled o in the media, before he headed o on his own, like he always had. Nova didn't get to see him go, because she and her friends were congregated in the basement training facility of the mansion.

A er the battle with Apocalypse, Charles made the decision to reform the X-Men out of new members, deciding to train them to be ready for battle in case a situation like that which occurred in Cairo ever happened again. The first person he asked to join the team was Nova, who accepted almost immediately. She had wanted to follow in her father's footsteps for so long, and now that he was giving her the chance, she wasn't going to let it slip through her fingers.

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She wanted to make him proud. That was all she ever wanted to do, and she would do that by protecting the human race from threats they could not face alone. Although humans had done nothing to aid mutants in their existence, they shared the same home planet and needed to protect it. Nova wanted to use her powers for good, and as she stood in a line with her friends, she couldn't help but bite her lip in anticipation.

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There was Peter, freshly healed from his broken leg, Jean, Scott, Kurt and Ororo, all standing in a line as Raven paced back and forth before them. She would be overseeing their training, getting them battle-ready and preparing them for whatever threats they may have to face. Hank stood just behind Raven in Beast form, ready to o er his input as needed, but Raven seemed to have it handled.

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"Forget everything you think you know," she said. "Whatever lessons you learned in school, whatever your parents taught you. None of that matters. You're not kids anymore. You're not students. You're X-Men."

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She turned to look at Hank, who pushed a button on the console before him and dimmed the lights in the room. Nova turned to look at Peter, who winked at her as he put on his goggles. She smiled in return as they turned to face the wall, which had opened and was allowing training robots to march out towards them.

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She could feel the nervous energy radiating from her friends as they all prepared for their first day of training, and when they launched into an attack on the robots, Nova had never felt more alive.

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