

## [nineteen] peter's plan

1985:

"HEY, HEY, HEY, HEY, HEYHEYHEYHEYHEY—" ↵

"Oh my God, shut up!" Nova groaned, throwing a freshly-laundered shirt at Peter.

He dodged it with ease, but it got him to shut up. Picking up the shirt, he eyed it for a moment before he gasped. "This is mine! How did you get it?"

"Being fast isn't always the trick," Nova replied. "Sometimes you have to be sneaky."

"Well, I want my shirt back," Peter said. "But you look cute in it so you can keep it."

"Make up your mind," Nova laughed, using her powers to put the rest of her clothes away in the wardrobe. "Anyway, you were saying something? Or sounded like you wanted to say something?"

"Yes," Peter said. "I wanted to know if you were free tonight. I know you are but now you've got plans with me."

"What plans?" Nova asked.

Peter grinned. "Just wear something pretty."

"Pretty?" Nova repeated. "I don't do pretty."

"Yes you do," Peter replied. "Jean and Ororo said they'd take you shopping." ↵

"But I hate shopping."

"Just go," Peter said. "Jesus, you're so difficult."

Nova grinned. "It's all part of my charm."

"Anyway, I'll see you tonight," Peter replied. "Gotta go."

He raced out of the room and Nova was left alone. Jean and Ororo called on her in the middle of the morning and dragged her to campus to the mall, where they spent most of the afternoon shopping. Nova didn't do much, letting Jean and Ororo do all of the work, and when they returned to the mansion late that afternoon, they insisted on helping her get ready.

"What's going on?" Nova asked, as Jean applied makeup to her face. "Why are you doing all this?"

"You'll find out," Jean promised. "Just sit still so I don't poke you in the eye." ↵

"Poke me in the eye and I'll throw you out the window," Nova replied. ↵

Jean laughed. "Just sit still and nothing will go wrong."

When she was dressed and ready, Nova looked at herself in the mirror. She was wearing a silver dress that Ororo had picked out, which she said 'complimented her skin tone very nicely', and her hair was pulled back over her face slightly, her curls falling past her shoulders. Jean had even forced her into a pair of heels, strappy silver things that Nova just knew were going to cause at least one broken bone if she wore them for longer than two minutes.

"You won't fall over," Jean said. "Just trust us." ↵

"Alright, why am I all dressed up?" Nova asked. "What's Peter planning? Have I forgotten something important?"

"Probably," Ororo said.

"Yeah, you're right," Nova said. "I forget everything." ↵

"Well, you'll figure it out in about ten minutes," Jean said. "Time to go."

"Go?" Nova asked. "Go where?"

Ororo and Jean grabbed her by the hands and pulled her from her room. Stumbling along after them, Nova tried to keep up on her heels, but even as she walked, she knew it was worthless attempting to get down the stairs.

"Alright, alright," she said. "We're going down, I get it."

She used her powers to carry herself down the stairs, waiting for Jean and Ororo at the bottom. They then grabbed her hands again and pulled her in the direction of the gardens behind the house. Nova had absolutely no idea what was going on, wondering what exactly Peter was planning, and as she was pulled across the gardens towards the trees, she raised her eyebrows.

"You guys are freaking me out," she said. "Tell me what's going on."

Jean and Ororo stopped suddenly. "There, we've done our part. Time for you to go."

"Again: go where?" Nova asked.

Ororo pointed at the trees. "That way. You'll know when you see it." ↵

"I don't like this," Nova said. ↵

"Just go," Jean laughed.

Nova rolled her eyes. "Thanks for all the help today."

"You look great," Ororo said.

"You're a knockout," Jean agreed. "Go, go."

"Holy shit, fine," Nova said. "See you guys later." ↵

She walked through the trees in the direction Ororo had sent her in, finding herself in one of the larger clearings between the trees. Peter was pacing around anxiously, and when Nova saw him, she stopped dead. There were lanterns floating around them, lighting up the clearing a pale orange.

"Peter?" Nova called unsurely. "What's going on?" ↵

He turned to her and his eyes widened. "Oh, you're here. You're here! You look amazing, by the way. That dress looks really good on you, and it's a great colour, you know? Matches my hair." ↵

"Peter, slow down," Nova said, laughing as Peter talked too fast for her to understand fully. "Breathe."

Peter took an over-exaggerated deep breath. "Alright, I'm calm."

"What are we doing here?" Nova asked, looking around.

"Oh, right," Peter said. "Uh, happy twelve year friend-a-versary!"

"Um... what?"

"It's the exact date that we met twelve years ago," Peter said, smiling proudly. "Don't tell me you forgot." ↵

"If I told you I forgot, would you be mad?"

"Nope," Peter replied. "Anyway, it's been twelve years since we first met and, you know, broke into the Pentagon and all that, so I figure it was probably a good way to start this."

"Start what?" Nova asked. "Why is everyone acting so weird today?"

She was sure that she heard distant laughter, but when Peter grinned, all she could focus on was him. "Weird? No one's acting weird. Why would we be acting weird?" ↵

"You're doing it again," she told him, laughing. "Slow down."

"I don't do slow," Peter said. "I mean, I didn't, until I met you, and then I realised that maybe there are things in life worth slowing down for. Like... Like when we're laying in bed together and you're asleep and you just look so peaceful, if I could slow down time and live in those moments for longer, I would." ↵

Nova smiled as Peter took her hand in his. "And there have been a lot of great things that have happened to me since meeting you. I mean, obviously meeting you was the best thing to ever happen to me, and I'm so glad I did meet you because my life is so much better now that you're in it. I don't tell you enough how much I love you, but I'm hoping this does the trick." ↵

Peter fished around in the pocket of his jacket and Nova furrowed her eyebrows. When Peter pulled out a small box and dropped to one knee slowly, he let go of her hand and opened the box. ↵

Inside was a ring.

His smile could have rivalled the sun with how bright it was.

Nova's breath hitched in her throat.

"Nova Xavier, will you marry me?" ↵

my BABIES

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