

[twenty five] finding erik

NOVA DIDN'T TELL ANYONE where she and Hank were going as they snuck out of the mansion with the jet in the early hours of the morning. A little bit drunk, a lot of anger and the need to find Erik lead to her and Hank stealing the jet and going on a two-man mission to find Erik and deliver the news of Raven's death.

She didn't even tell Peter where she was going, and as she passed the infirmary and saw him sleeping soundly, she knew that she probably should have told him what she was planning on doing. She reasoned with herself that she didn't want to wake him, and so she and Hank set o .

It wasn't hard to find Erik, whose hiding place had been ransacked by Jean mere hours before Nova and Hank arrived. When they landed the jet, Nova half-expected Erik to crush them to death, but when they had landed safely, the two of them walked sullenly towards Erik's camp.

"Where are the rest of them?" his voice asked.

"No, we're alone," Hank replied, spotting Erik walking towards them.

"What, no Charles?" Erik asked. "If you're looking for Jean, she's gone."

"No, we know that," Nova replied.

"Then why are you here?" Erik asked.

"You have eyes and ears around the world to help you find mutants for this place," Hank said. "I want you to help me find Jean."

"I've no reason to find her," Erik said.

"Not for me," Hank replied. "Do it for Raven."

"Did she send you?" Erik asked.

"You don't know?" Nova asked, tearing up slightly. She expected that he wouldn't know, but hearing it confirmed sent a fresh wave of pain through her chest.

"Know what, Nova?" Erik asked.

"Raven's dead."

"Jean killed her," Hank added.

Erik looked away and Nova saw his eyes fill with tears as he turned and leaned against the side of a helicopter that had been grounded during Jean's attack. A tear ran down his face and Nova took a step forward, placing a hand on his shoulder.

"I need you to help me find Jean," Hank said.

"If I find her, I'll kill her," Erik warned.

Hank nodded. "I know."

Nova swallowed the lump in her throat. She didn't want to kill Jean. She didn't want anybody else to die, but she was dangerous. She wasn't in control of herself, fuelled by anger and rage, which was a dangerous combination for someone with as much power as she had.

She didn't realise that Hank was filled with such a bloodlust until that very moment, but now that she was here, she knew that if she was to save Jean from death, she needed to stick with them. There had to be a way to save her that didn't involve killing her, because she didn't think she could stand to see anyone else die.

Erik turned to look at her. "Is that why you're here? To find her?"

"I came to tell you about Raven," Nova replied. "That's all I'm here for, but I want to find her. I just... What if we can save her?"

"How?" Hank asked. "She's too powerful, Nova. Even for us."

"I know," she replied. "But is it really worth losing anymore friends."

"She was your friend," Erik said. "Not mine. Raven was my friend."

"Raven was my friend too," Nova retorted. "She was like a mom to me, Erik. You think her death doesn't hurt me? It does, and I'm pretty sure I've messed up my relationship with Charles because of this."

Erik sighed, and pulled Nova into his arms. Regardless of what happened between he and Charles or anyone else, Nova would always be the innocent child he remembered so fondly from her childhood. She would always be the girl who called him 'Uncle Erik' whenever she saw him, not understanding that he was anything but a family man.

Losing his wife and daughter had made it all the more clear that Nova was as much his family as they had been, and regardless of his various arguments with Charles and his own ideologies, he would always care about her.

She accepted Erik's hug and pressed her face into his shirt. It felt weird, hugging him now that she knew he was related to Peter, and the urge to tell him was strong. However, she refrained, because it was Peter's secret to tell and if he didn't want to, she wasn't going to take that away from him.

Instead, she just accepted Erik's embrace, a welcoming gesture to keep her together while she was falling apart.

"Are you staying?" he asked.

Nova nodded. "Yes."

"Charles will be looking for you," Erik said.

"If he is, that's surprising," Nova replied. "I think he hates me."

"He'll never hate you," Erik told her. "That's one thing that was always crystal clear."

Erik remembered meeting Nova for the first time. It was at the covert CIA facility that was later destroyed by Sebastian Shaw and his men. Charles had brought her with him because he didn't have a babysitter on such short notice. At six years old, she was the most intelligent little girl Erik had ever met, and despite his resolve to get revenge on the man that ruined his life, regardless of what stood in his way, that little six year old girl stole his heart.

Now she stood before him, a married woman with a mind of her own, and she was as much his equal as Charles once was. He remembered how terrified she had been when the facility was invaded by Shaw and his men, but how Raven had been the one to step up and look a er her, even though she didn't need it. Nova nearly brought the building down around them in her terror.

Erik lead Nova and Hank into his camp, and as it grew dark, they sat around a small fire talking. Nova had a blanket wrapped around her shoulders, twisting her wedding rings around her finger nervously.

"Did Raven su er?" Erik asked.

"Not for long," Hank replied.

"I know we've had our... di erences in the past, but—"

"We both love Raven," Hank finished.

Erik nodded. "Yes. Yes, we did."

One of Erik's mutants walked up to them. "There's been a sighting of the girl."

"Where?" Erik asked, as Nova sat up a little straighter.

"New York," the woman replied. "We'll have eyes on the ground when we get there."

Erik looked at Hank and Nova, who both nodded. They were going to find Jean.

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