

## [eight] cerebro back in use

"YOU KNOW, I SAW YOU GUYS on the TV," Nova said, as she sat in the back seat of the car. "Real bang-up job you did there, lads."

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"Shut up," Logan said. "What would you have done differently?"

"Uh... maybe not let Raven or Erik escape?" Nova replied. "Pretty silly thing to do, don't you think? You know, considering she's the key to everything or whatever it was that you said and Erik's a bit of a loose cannon."

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"Nova, you're not helping," Charles said.

"Oh really, am I not?" Nova asked. "Well, I really don't understand how you expect me to be helpful when you let me here while you went to Paris and completely mucked up the whole thing and potentially did even more damage to our futures."

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Hank rolled his eyes. "Stop sounding so British."

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"Perks of having a British dad, love," Nova replied, patting Hank's cheek affectionately. "I was teaching Peter British slang."

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"Lord help us all," Charles muttered. "There's a duo I never want in my house together."

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"Too bad, I invited him for dinner next week."

"You did what?"

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"Relax, no I didn't," Nova said, laughing. "But you should've seen your face. Priceless."

"I take it you had fun?" Hank asked.

"Too much, it seems."

"Actually, I did," Nova replied, ignoring Charles's comment. "I played ping-pong with Peter yesterday evening and lost so he asked me on a date because I said the winner gets whatever they want."

"No, no, absolutely not."

Nova was very tempted to kick the back of Charles's seat, but refrained. "And why not?"

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"Because you're still a child."

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"A child that you let with people you had just met."

"Touché, but that's not the point."

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"Dad!"

"Nova!"

He mocked her tone as he said her name, and she scowled. "I'm not a child."

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"She says, as she sits there and pouts like one," Hank said.

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Nova smacked his arm. "Dude, not helping."

"Alright, alright, can we save the family feud crap for later?" Logan asked. "We have bigger things to worry about."

"Yes, like how we are supposed to unscrew the screw-up that you idiots caused."

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"Nova!"

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When they got back to the house and walked through the doors, they made it into the foyer before Charles collapsed in pain and let out a strangled yell. All jokes from the car aside, Nova's face fell and she rushed towards her father.

"Dad?" she asked, crouching beside him. "Dad, what's wrong?"

"What happened?" Logan asked.

Hank helped Charles to his feet. "Come on. Up."

Nova helped Hank lean her father against the wall carefully as Logan asked, "Why can't he walk?"

"He needs his treatment," Hank replied. "It's okay, I'll make it stop. I'll get it."

Hank sprinted for the stairs and Nova sat beside her father, whose expression was wrought with pain. She hated seeing him like this, especially given everything that had happened in the last forty-eight hours. He was a good man. He didn't deserve this much pain.

Logan crouched down beside Charles. "Hey, hey, pull yourself together. It's not over yet."

"You don't believe that."

Logan looked confused. "How do you know?"

"As these go..." Charles said, pointing at his legs. "This comes back," he pointed at his temple. "They all come back!"

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Nova flinched at her father's outburst, but Logan kept his expression neutral. "Look, I'm... I'm still here. She's still out there. But we need your help, Charles. Not like this, I need you. We can't find Raven, not without your powers."

Hank came rushing back downstairs with the needle. "I added a little extra 'cause you missed a dose."

"Charles," Logan said slowly, begging with the man not to inject that serum into his veins.

Nova looked at her father. "Dad..."

Charles looked between Nova and Logan, both of whom were looking at him like he was the only thing left in the world that could save them. After a moment's hesitation in which he fought with himself over the urge to go the extra few millimetres and sink that needle into his skin, Charles closed his eyes and dropped the syringe down beside him. He felt Nova's shoulders fall in relief and she reached for his hand.

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"Hank, Nova, do me a favour," he requested. "Would you help me to my study, please?"

"Alright," Nova said, and with Hank's help, she got Charles onto his feet and they headed for his study.

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Once inside, Charles leaned heavily against the desk as Hank opened the closet doors, revealing Charles's old wheelchair. "Are you sure about this?"

Charles shook his head. "Absolutely not."

Once seated in his wheelchair, the four of them headed down to the labs below the house, and when they stepped out of the elevator, Nova shuddered. "God, it's been a while."

"When was the last time you were down here?" Logan asked, as they walked towards Cerebro.

"The last time we went looking for students," Hank replied.

"A lifetime ago," Charles added.

Stopping before the doors, Charles performed a retina scan and the cool female voice said, "Welcome, Professor," before the doors opened and allowed them to enter the room. Stopping before the machinery, Hank turned it on cautiously as Charles reached for the helmet.

"Raven's wounded, she won't be moving fast," Hank said.

Charles blew dust off Cerebro and sighed. "These are muscles I haven't stretched in a long time," placing Cerebro on his head, Charles instantly let out a groan as the voices came back to him, invading the peace he had built up over the years. "God!"

All around Nova, the room was red, the voices of the mutants crying out in anguish as Charles began to lose focus. Reaching for her father's hand, Nova felt him squeeze her fingers and she winced slightly at the sensation.

Logan realised that Charles was losing focus when he saw Nova wince. "Charles!"

Unable to handle Cerebro in that moment, Charles let out a yell and the machine's dials shattered, glass flying forth as Charles cried out.

Logan pulled Nova backwards out of instinct to keep her away from the glass, and Charles scrambled to take Cerebro off his head.

"Charles!" Hank exclaimed. "Charles, it's alright. I'll go check the generator."

"I'll come help," Nova offered, placing her hand on her father's shoulder. "We'll be right back."

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