

Maybe in another dimension

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Kapitel 1: The beginning of the end

Sometimes, when you think everything goes the wrong way and anything can't get worse, it always gets worse. Like when you thought you had a sister, which will stay by your side forever and then wanders off, because she isn't satisfied with the way you treat her. Or when you thought you had a best friend for life, who will betray and abandon you the moment you let him know that you see things differently. Or when you thought legs and hair would be anything but a matter of course.

When Charles drank the rest of his outrageously expensive Whiskey and looked out of the window right into the dark, rainy sky, all that came to his mind were his bad life choices. Sure, Raven came back after the events of Apocalypse and trained his students into something that he refused to call "soldiers" – but it was nothing like before. Of course, there was the school, the kids, his other friends and a bank account full of money, which normally would make people enormously happy. But when you have no opportunity to spend the money or get any feeling out of it, money really can't buy you happiness. The school was nice and gave Charles a feeling of usefulness. When he gave lessons to the kids, he forgot for a moment that he was just a bald guy in a wheel chair between a handful of young people, who still have to reach their full potential, while he was at the end of his best years.

And the more the Professor stared out of the window and thought about all the hassles in life, he wondered what his best friend would think of him, if he saw his somberly state. He would probably go nuts and tell him to pull himself together. But everyone needs to get depressed from time to time. Especially when you're crippled and lonely.

Maybe it was the whole Whiskey bottle he emptied within an hour or his dark thoughts that he didn't notice the group of people approaching the school. It was already too late, when Hank entered his room, shouted something about leaving right now and grabbed his wheel chair. All Charles could focus on was his friends' blue fur that was hanging into his eyes. When they reached the hallway to the stairs, he saw the strange intruders storming into the building. They wore white plastic devices around their heads, which made it impossible to enter their minds. Strange, thought Charles, as he was pulled by Hank to another direction. It reminded him of the odious helmet that made his beloved friend feel like a dead man. Maybe it was something similar? Or Charles was just too drunk to manipulate those soldiers. After all he couldn't even see them without a tiny blur to their silhouettes.

He heard the screams of his students down the hall, while Hank tried to get him to safety. They seemed to run towards the escape tunnels that Charles had advised to

build after the whole school was destroyed. What a good plan that was.

Charles tried to sober up, but the whole world was still spinning around him. It was like a dream – everything happened so fast and slow at the same time, he couldn't recognize what those all-in-white-people exactly did. They didn't shoot, although they were carrying weapons.

"Hank", murmured Charles when they reached an empty room. "What happened?"

His heart was racing but his eyes felt like they would shut at any minute. In contrast, Hank seemed to explode any minute.

"I don't know who they are", he began, as he managed to put a huge cupboard in front of the door, "but they surprised us by storming into the house from the backyard. No one saw them coming."

He opened the windows and looked outside, as if jumping out of the second floor would be a solution. Maybe for him, but not for Charles. It was Hanks disappointed voice that got him out of his thoughts:

"You're drunk again, aren't you?"

A faint smile came to Charles face, while the footsteps and screams outside of the room began to get louder. "Maybe", was all he could say that wouldn't sound like he was already at the edge of fainting.

The professor wondered why those strange humans were trying to attack his school. And how they got here. What they wanted.

Suddenly the doors were thrown open and a group of all-in-white-people began to shoot. Blue fur was covering him in a second, but it was in vain: Those weren't normal bullets – these were little syringes filled with a blue liquid. Charles saw how Hank got to the ground, gasping in pain. The humans aimed their devices at Charles neck. Then his vision began to blur. Hands were grabbing him.

And then everything went black.

It was rather a beautiful day in autumn, so Erik decided to go into the tiny garden he had created a couple of months ago in front of his equally tiny house. As he was harvesting some leaves off the ground, he thought about Magda and Nina. He missed them deeply but the pain in his heart began to fade every day. His life as Henryk – which felt like another lifetime – seemed to fade, too. En Sabah Nur gave him powers beyond his beliefs and gave him the chance of revenge that he needed, but after he tried to kill everyone that was once dear to him, Erik had to stop. He saw what he had become and it was the exact opposite of that, what Magda would have wanted. She accepted him the moment they met and Erik was grateful for that. Still, he had the feeling that he didn't deserve her. Or anyone else.

Charles offered him to stay at the school after the events of Cairo. A tiny part of him wanted to stay. Wanted to go back to Westchester County and live a happy life next to his beloved friend. But then he remembered their different views on mutant kind and how they would argue every day. Erik was sure it would have ended the same as back in Cuba: a hurtful separation. And after losing his whole family, his life and almost his will to live, he didn't want to lose another thing that was dear to him. So, the best idea was leaving the things that are precious to avoid losing them in the first

place. If it was his choice to leave, a parting seemed less painful, then it would have been, when it was forced by another person or thing.

Living in a city with other mutants seemed fine. Genosha was nice – their own little island nation where no one will disturb them. Erik was their leader and he had the feeling, he did the right thing. It was not the best solution for mutant kind, but it was a peaceful way to remember the humans that they exist. And wasn't that what Charles always wanted? A peaceful solution? Erik smiled to himself thinking of his friend while he saw the similarities in their way of living: Erik was a leader of mutants and Charles was a leader of mutants. They both were living separate ways but somehow very identically.

Erik grabbed a fistful of leaves when a young female mutant showed up and attracted his attention.

"A blue man and that shapeshifter woman are on the way to you! Do you await them?" Before Erik could answer the obviously stressed lady, Beast and Mystique showed up around the corner. They looked kind of pale and tired.

As soon as Mystique stood in front of Erik – around three arm lengths safety distance – her whole face crumbled into something that he would have described as 'not amused'.

"We need to talk", was all she said, before she passed him and entered the tiny building without asking for permission. Beast waited for an unnecessary polite moment and looked Erik straight in the eyes until he followed wordlessly Mystique into the house.

Erik's eyebrows shot up. "Please", he said more to himself as to his guests, "come in." The woman who announced the unexpected guests was still standing in front of Erik's yard, so he dismissed her with a slight nod. Without a word she turned around and went back to the alley she came from. Erik could only hope that she kept the arrival of two 'enemies' to herself; otherwise he assumed half of Genosha will stand in front of his house in about ten minutes.

When he entered the living room and closed the door behind him, Mystique and Beast already stood in the middle of the room inspecting his few belongings. It looked like they were searching for dangerous weapons he held in store just in case a war might rise when he is in the shower.

"What gives me the honor?", asked Erik sarcastically and crossed his arms. "It's rare that I get visitors, especially those of your kind. Let me guess: Is it about the school? Did I miss a room to build? Or do you want another floor?"

Mystique pressed her lips in a thin line and frowned, while she searched for Erik's eyes.

"I try to ignore what you just said and go straight to the point", she hissed in a dangerous tone. "We need your help and I won't take no for an answer."

Erik's eyebrows shot up. "Oh, is that so? Well then", he said, shuffled to the main door and opened it, "goodbye then."

"This is not funny", started Beast to speak for the first time of their visit and clenched his fists, while he approached two steps to Erik. "Charles is in real danger and we don't need your attitude! Raven, this was a mistake. I know you had high hopes about him, but no – just no!" His voice went higher with every word while Erik's face went darker.

Slowly, he closed the door again and let his hands fall to his sides. He looked to Mystique, then to Beast. A bad feeling made his way through his spine. "What happened...?"

"Are you willing to listen and help us?", asked Mystique in a hasty tone. "We need to know You're on our side before we tell you the details. You're not the trust worthiest person. But you're as strong as you're in constant anger – and that's what we need right now."

The corner of Erik's mouth twitched. "If you don't trust me, then you shouldn't ask for my help. But sure, keep going. Where's Charles?"

"We don't know", Beast said. And before he could continue, Mystique interrupted him. "We know exactly where he is. But we can't get to him."

"He was kidnapped?", pressed Erik. "How did that happen? He is a telepath. Whoever is near him won't get very far." And then, within a second, all the worst-case scenarios flew past his eyes: Charles was wounded. Unconscious. Hurt. Or something equal as bad as that, so he wasn't in the position of manipulating the enemy.

Beast chewed on his lower lip and it looked like he almost ripped it from his chin. "The people that took him wore devices around their heads. I assume they had the same effect like your helmet."

"Bullshit", said Erik and crossed again his arms in front of his chest. "My helmet is one of a kind."

"Maybe not?", Mystique cut in. "You don't know who had his hands on your helmet and it's powers when you were in prison, do you? Maybe they found out what makes it special and developed some kind of technology. You remember Trask? He was all in with his robots. We know shit about other companies and their electronic stuff."

"What we know", sighted Beast, while he obviously tried to calm himself, "is that Charles is held hostage in a facility on a deserted island near the west coast. We don't know who they are or what they want from him, but they stormed into the school, took him and left. No one was severely hurt or got killed. Their main goal wasn't to destroy us. There's a high probability that they just came ... for Charles."

Erik tightened his eyebrows and also began to chew on his lower lip. His heart began to pump faster in his chest, while he processed the new information. "...Did they hurt him?", he asked in a quiet voice.

Mystique raised her shoulders and looked to the floor. Beast gave an angry snort. "Probably not."

"*Probably?* What do you mean with *probably*? Where were you when they got their dirty hands on him?" Erik's mind went wild while he thought of Charles alone in a room with no one around to help him.

"I was there with him, but I was knocked out before they took him! They shot with strong sedatives!"

"Beast, I swear – ", Erik began and made a large step towards the blue fur man. The metal in the room began to shake and tiny pieces already flew around.

"Stop that Erik, Hank isn't to blame", Mystique shouted, "He gave his best to rescue Charles but was overwhelmed by their syringes. And on top of that Charles was very, very, *very* drunk. He probably could have helped himself a little bit more if he weren't in such a bad shape."

For a long moment no one said anything until Erik found his voice. "*Was zur Hölle?* Now you blame him for his own kidnapping? How drunk was he that – "

"He just was, okay? The important thing here is: We need to get Charles out of the facility!", Mystique interrupted Erik's helpless talk. "Will you help us or not?"

Erik grabbed into his short auburn hair and pulled desperately. "I can't believe this ... You don't know what they will do to him, do you? What if they will use his powers? Like Apocalypse did. Then we're all screwed." He sighted defenseless and walked around the tiny coffee table in front of his worn-out sofa. "How long is Charles already missing?"

"... three weeks", mumbled Hank; knowing already how Erik will react to that answer. "What?!", came the predicted answer. "He is already three weeks in their labs? Are you kidding me?"

"We tried to help him on our own first, okay?", screamed Mystique in a high-pitched voice. "We needed to find out who they were and what will await us there! But then we failed and couldn't get Charles out. But we know he is still alive, I felt his mental nudge at some point when we were near the island."

"Wow", breathed Erik and squeezed his eyes with his fingers. "Of course, they won't kill him. If they wanted him dead, they already would have done that in the school."

Resignation came over him as he sat down on the sofa. Neither Beast nor Mystique said anything while he rubbed his head in frustration.

"They will hurt him...", mumbled Erik so quiet, both had to lean in to understand him. "They will hurt him."

"Erik, if you help us, we might come in time to help him get out and – ", began Mystique but was interrupted by Erik's desperate and angry voice.

"You already waited three fucking weeks! Do you think they just ate cake and drank tea with him in that time?", he shouted and gesticulated with his hands in the air. "For god's sake, he already suffered, I'm sure of it!"

"And will you do something about it, god damn it?", Mystique shouted back at him and grabbed the backrest of the sofa.

"Of course I will", he hissed and got to his feet. "I will kill them all."

He knew Charles would be last person on earth to be okay with Erik killing a whole island of scientists, but after what he learned about those people, the urge to end their miserable lives was something very satisfying inside his mind. In the past years he often thought about Charles and how he was doing, but never felt the necessarily to actually check on him. Now that he left his friend not long ago on amicable terms and saw how his other friends failed to rescue him, Erik's first instinct was to help. For the first time in what felt like an eternity he wanted to be there for Charles. And get him out of those hell labs. It has always been his fault when something bad happened to his friend. So helping him was the least he could do now that he was in danger – again.

"It's an island, don't forget that", Beast said while they sat in his research lab and determined the few information they got of the facility. "We're trapped if something happens to the jet."

"I can levitate myself and float over the ocean if it's necessary", Erik said dryly and played with the end of a map. "Wear a lot of metal on your body. Then you don't have to worry about any jet."

Beast hesitated for a way too long second. "No, thank you. I still don't trust you."

"Rather die in that hell then let me help you?" A smile crept in Erik's face. "Why am I here again?"

"To help us and now shut up and listen to Hank", came Mystique's voices as she was followed by a couple of students. A few of them Erik already knew but forgot their names. The girl who took Apocalypse down was there, too. Suddenly he was glad to wear his helmet. It was the first thing he took with him when he left Genosha and went with Beast and Mystique.

"What are the kids supposed to do?", he asked and pointed with his chin towards the group of young people.

"They will come with us", Mystique explained and led them further into the research lab. "They all have talents we might need."

Erik raised an eyebrow and watched the red-haired telepathic girl, which stood in a lonely corner and looked like as if she wanted to disappear immediately. "If you have a strong telepath with telekinetic powers with you, why would you need me? She can manipulate everything, not only metal."

"I know it always hurts you almost to death when you have to work with other people. But I also know that after you learned about Charles' situation, you have in mind to go to the island all by yourself and I don't need to be a fortune-teller to tell you that this will be your death. So, just do us all a favour, behave and do what you're supposed to do."

The white-haired girl – Ororo was her name? – chuckled and followed Mystique after her great speech to a couple of boxes with uniforms in it. Everyone took a suit that made Erik's heart go warm and his eyes go blind. They were so ugly like they always were – with black and yellow and basic stitches that looked like some of the kids had sewn them together – but they were what Erik also once had worn all those years ago and somehow it was a heart-warming memory. Because it belonged to a time when he was still with Charles. A time where he was more than anger and bitterness. Where he did more than make him cry and suffer. A time where they both laughed and had a great time as brothers. Or friends. Or whatever it was what they once had.

"Sure, Mystique, whatever you say", Erik said with a crooked smile and chose not to go further on the topic.

"We will fly over the facility with the jet", explained Beast and tried to get Erik's attention back, "The building has a large roof where we can enter. From there we can only assume what will be inside. Last time they shot with syringes and other devices with sedatives. The guns have no metal, be warned."

Erik nodded while half his concentration was already on that mission.

"We will go west, Mystique and Scott will take the north, Jean and Ororo will go south and the rest will take the east route. Got it?"

Again, Erik nodded and tried to be convincing, although he didn't even know who was supposed to go where, because he sucked at names. Beast explained something about the devices on their heads. Then what they wore and Erik couldn't care less. He will kill them, no matter what they will wear or what they will say or do. They took Charles and that was their first mistake.

When Erik gathered all his things back at Genosha for the mission, he felt into a mournful silence. Why wasn't he with Charles when it happened? Was it again his fault? If he just stayed with him, maybe he could have prevented Charles kidnapping. Maybe it would have been different. But instead he was at Genosha and probably

thought about another war for mutant kind while his friend got hurt and dragged off. *This time shall be different*, Erik thought while he chose to sleep with his helmet on his head. It was not like he didn't trust Charles, but now that the probability was high that his telepathy might get hacked, Erik needed to be sure. Needed to be sure that Charles won't get any more into his head than he already was.