

Maybe in another dimension

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Kapitel 5: Who are you?

When Erik woke up, they were still in the air. The constant shaking of the cold floor of the jet woke him up. At first, he looked around and noticed that Mystique was sitting right next to him, holding the huge folder of Charles's documents. And right after thinking about Charles his eyes began to burn and his chest to ache. Mystique looked into his direction and blinked a few times before she spoke to him in a quiet voice.

"How?", was all she asked. Erik needed a second to react to that one-word question.

"What how?", he asked back in a raspy voice. His bones still hurt and his whole body felt weak. The flying noise of the jet made his head buzz.

All of the sudden the powerful shapeshifter Mystique became Charles' little girl as she looked to the staple of documents in her arms. It took her apparently a lot of effort to build a coherent sentence. "How did he die...?"

Erik examined her and asked himself if it was the right time to tell her the truth. And if not – when would have been the right time? His eyes wandered through the jet. Empty seats after empty seats. Finally, in a dark corner near Hank's thousands of board computers, sat Charles No. 3. He still looked pale and stared at his feet. He didn't move at all. Just sat there and stared. Erik wondered for a moment what he was thinking about or if he was thinking at all because somehow this person – even if he looked like Charles – appeared to be alien.

After a long moment of silence, Mystique kicked Erik's shin. "Tell me how!", she demanded in a louder, but shakier voice.

"He killed himself", breathed Erik; his eyes still lingering on Charles No. 3. "They wanted to use him as a weapon and parted his mind from his body to abuse his powers."

Suddenly the whole jet became even quieter than before. Even Hank seemed to listen now. Where were the kids? The other mutants? Took another plane?

"Oh god", hiccupped Mystique and pressed the documents closer to her chest. "Did you see it? Were you with him? How did it happen?"

And suddenly blue eyes lifted and looked directly into Erik's. Without breaking the contact, Erik nodded. "He killed his own mind. Without it, his body broke down and the machines overrode. Everything exploded. In the end...", Erik needed to swallow to avoid shaking in his voice, "... he killed himself and almost everyone involved in that moment."

"Did he tell you all of that?", Beast asked from the cockpit. Erik felt the jet sinking. They would arrive soon at the school.

"I was in his mind... he told me his plan in his last moments."

Suddenly Mystique shifted in his seat, so Erik had to break the eye contact from Charles No. 3, who looked more shocked with every minute.

"You were with him and didn't stop him?!", she shouted with a desperate tone. "Was there no option to save him? Was he really left to die in the end?!"

A tiny part of Erik knew that she was just sad and shocked by the story, but the bigger part of him became angry by the accusation.

"You chose to run away instead of helping him!", he shouted back and straightened up, although he was still sitting on the ground. "You waited three whole weeks to rescue him! You didn't do anything to help him! So – yes – in the end, all I could do was watch him die! And let me tell you this: it will haunt me forever! You want to know how he died? Yes? I tell you how!" And with that he forgot himself completely in that sadness that turned into rage. "He destroyed his own mind, bleeding from his nose, his eyes, his mouth and ears! He suffered so long and, in the end, he had to suffer even more to the point where he was almost gladly taking death as the last resort! And after I had to watch him die, I had to look in his dead eyes! Don't you dare accuse me of not helping him – because where were you?! Where the fuck were you –"

"Erik", came Charles' quiet voice from the other end of the jet. "Don't."

Mystique was now crying desperately and just held on to the documents. Beast was nervously holding the wheel. Erik didn't notice that the whole jet was shaking because he couldn't control his powers. Blue eyes looked tired in his direction.

Two words, thought Erik. Two words and he felt like crashing into thousand pieces. Charles No. 3 was still looking at him as if he was expecting him to finally let go of all that rage and sadness. But Erik wasn't ready. Not now. Not yet.

But he did let go of the jet, so Beast was able to fly properly again.

The rest of the flight was held in silence, only interrupted by the silent hiccups of Mystique.

When they arrived, the sun shone above their heads. The school was filled with little

children and some teachers. Erik watched them with swollen eyes. As if Beast had read his mind, he spoke to him very quietly:

"We didn't want to alert all of them and trigger a panic. Only the teachers knew that the Professor was kidnapped. The children thought he was on a business trip."

"How very clever of you", Erik answered sarcastically. "And what will you tell them about him?" He pointed at Charles No. 3, who was very still standing next to Mystique. The tired expression was still in his face, but also a huge amount of amazement. Erik could only snort. "He doesn't even remember his own home. Look at him. He looks at the school as if he is retarded."

Beast adjusted his glasses and pressed his blue lips together. "Why do you speak of him like that? Aren't you happy that Charles isn't... dead? That there is still a Charles left?"

Erik felt a laughter coming out of his mouth even if he didn't feel like laughing at all. "You speak of him as if he is a new species." His eyes began to burn whenever he looked into the direction of the imposter. "He is not Charles. Charles is dead. He killed himself. I saw him dying."

"This may be only a clone, but still – it's Charles", Beast sighed and stepped aside to go to Mystique. "I will check the folder if I can find new information. And I will look through the video data I could rescue. After that we will see. In the meantime... we will tell everyone that the professor is ill and that he needs some rest. Hopefully that will keep the children at bay."

"Good luck with that", Erik hissed and looked to the jet. "Did you get my helmet?"

"Of course not."

"Great", was all he said after another loss of something he held dear and was now lost. His head hurt so bad, Erik wanted to go home. There was no need for him to stay at the school. A version of Charles was there. And apparently everyone was happy with that solution. So, Erik walked away from the group and towards the end of the landing field.

"Where are you going?", Beast yelled after him. Just before Erik could decide whether to jump off the school roof or just fly back to Genosha, Mystique was getting in his way. "Running away again?"

She knew exactly where to poke to evoke a reaction. "I never ran away from anything."

"You did", she corrected him in a venom spitting tone. But her eyes were still red from all the crying, so she came off less as fierce as she might have liked it. "You ran away when Charles needed you the most. And now he does again and you're sneaking out the backdoor again!"

Erik wanted to argue that Charles was the one who had sent him away at the beach and that Erik had refused to come back the last few times because going into retirement wasn't an option but never ran away from responsibilities, as Charles No. 3 came closer. Every word that Erik wanted to say was now stuck in his throat.

"Is this where we live? In a school?", he asked in an innocent tone. "Are we teachers?"

Again, Erik felt rage coming up his spine. This wasn't Charles. Not at all.

"You are a professor, Charles. This is your school. Don't you remember?", Mystique told him in a very Raven manner; full of love and care.

Blue eyes brightened. "My school? I own a school?"

"You really don't remember...", she mumbled, but still smiled in the clone's direction. "But don't worry, you will regain your memory somehow!"

Charles No. 3 was still looking at the huge building with pure amazement. "Am I... am I rich?", was all he said after that.

Mystique chuckled and seemed to have forgotten that this Charles was not her brother. "You're rich. Very rich."

"That's amazing", Charles No. 3 said and smiled.

Erik had to leave after that. Seeing him smile was nothing he could bear right now. So, he left with a dramatic swung to his feet and flew away. All he could hear was Mystique's angry moaning and Charles' still astonished voice: "He can fly? That's incredible!"

On his way back to Genosha, Erik wondered if this clone was just a baby version of Charles, because the constant amazement was something he remembered very clearly of the real Charles in the first months of their encounter.

When he arrived at his current home, a lot of his people asked him what happened and where he was. But he went straight to his house, locked the door and let himself fall face down on his bed. He stared at his nightstand for the next hours and thought about all the things that happened in the last days until he fell asleep out of exhaustion.