

Maybe in another dimension

Von ellenchain

Kapitel 9: If you don't stay, I will

It was like the weather was equal to Erik's mood: rainy. Cloudy. Cold and uncomfortable. Two weeks passed by since Charles had died and Charles No. 3 had took his place. After the second week Erik still couldn't get a night full of sleep. Horrible dreams and the constant reminder what happened made him feel worn out. And there wasn't even a grave for Charles where Erik could go to mourn over his death.

On one of those rainy afternoons, Erik was sitting with a group of other mutants under a big pavilion chatting about their next plans while it was raining like waterfalls. Erik suddenly felt again unfamiliar metal. But this time no jewellery that Raven was wearing. More like buckles on a bag. Or on a belt.

"Someone is entering Genosha", a young lady with weak telepathic powers said with a serious voice. "I can feel him."

"Him? Who is it?", another mutant asked and stood up to look through the pouring rain.

"I don't know", she said and also stood up. She searched for Erik's eyes who nodded in her direction. Promptly, she made her way into the rain and went searching for the intruder. Erik made himself be ready for whoever it was that dared to enter his territory.

It took her a few moments until she came back with a horrified look. "Magneto", she shouted over the rain and finally arrived at the pavilion. "I don't know who it is – but he looks exactly like... like the professor!"

"The professor?!", someone exclaimed with a hysterical tone. "Fuck, what's he doing here? Shit, what should we do, Magneto? We're at his mercy right now! You don't have your helmet and our telepaths are too weak for him! He will destroy us!"

"No, it can't be the professor! He was walking! And with hair!"

"Impossible? Did he find a way to heal himself?!"

"No way – maybe it's an imposter?"

"Shapeshifter?"

"Possible..."

Erik stopped listening after the woman had announced Charles No. 3. The hysterical voices made him even more nervous. Especially when a figure arrived around the corner, stepping through the deep mud with a lot of difficulties and carrying a tiny bag over his shoulders. He was soaked from the rain, his hair was falling into his eyes and with every step he seemed to almost fall over. Charles No. 3 had a lot of difficulties to move at all without falling face down into the dirt.

"It's him, no doubt!", someone screamed and was ready to fight. Another mutant started to summon his powers and was already flowing into Charles' direction.

"Stop!", Erik managed to shout just in time to prevent anyone from attacking the telepath.

Curious and doubtful eyes looked to their leader.

"He is no threat. At least... not now. If he wanted us dead, we'd already be", the metal bender explained and stepped out of the rain. The truth behind his words made him shudder, while he floated over the muddy way. When he was near Charles, he landed right beside him.

"What are you doing here?", Erik asked in a loud voice to be heard over the rain. He couldn't believe his own eyes: Charles Xavier, wet and full of dirt, was standing in Genosha. Alone.

It took Charles a few moments to regain his voice. He was pretty out of breath. The walk had been apparently already too much for him. "God damn it!", he cursed, "If I had known that this place is such a mess when it rains, I would have come when it wasn't raining!"

Erik heard a lot of mutants talking and coming out of their houses. Charles was already getting too much attention for Erik's taste.

"You didn't answer my question", he continued without showing a reaction to Charles No. 3's statement.

Blue eyes blinked into his direction through wet strands of hair. "What do you think? You don't want to stay at the school – then I will stay at... What it's called? Gen...sha?"

"Genosha", Erik corrected surprised. "It's... Genosha."

"Great! Does Genosha also have houses? With roofs? Or do you all live outside?", Charles whined and whipped his wet hair out of his face only to let it fall back when he was grabbing his tiny bag that was equally as wet as him. Erik also started to feel the cold water run over his back, so he just nodded and led the way to his house. With one

look into the direction of his people they stayed silent. No one attacked them. Good thing I'm such a strict leader, Erik thought while he made his way through the mud. Charles was still having problems with the path, so Erik took his tiny, but heavy back with his powers and continued walking. Charles didn't say anything. Maybe he did, but the rain was so loud that Erik might've not heard it.

As soon as they arrived at the house, Charles sighted contently. "The rain is truly horrible", he said with a shaky voice. "God that was a ride..."

Erik put down the bag near the cloak hanger and watched Charles trying to get out of his muddy shoes. Those expensive Italian shoes were ruined.

"I have a few questions for you, but I guess, you want to get out of those clothes first", Erik asked and gesticulated towards Charles' appearance.

"Please", was all he said. And it was such a tender 'please' that Erik found himself unable to resist and help Charles get out of those shoes. He himself was pretty wet and now almost equally dirty.

"You can take a shower upstairs. I'll give you something to change." He sounded way bitterer than his intention was. And he wasn't sure why.

"Thank you", Charles murmured but didn't move. So Erik led him upstairs to the bathroom.

They walked in complete silence but Erik saw that Charles was inspecting the house. He was looking at all the furniture and things Erik owned. When they arrived at the bathroom, Erik told Charles to undress and give him the clothes to dry them. And without hesitation, Charles began to undress himself in front of Erik.

"You can... give me the clothes after the shower", the metal bender muttered after realising that Charles was already on his trousers.

"Okay", he answered as casually as possible. His cheeks became redder with the second.

"Take what you need." After that, Erik disappeared into his bedroom and searched for something to wear for Charles and then for himself. He decided that it wasn't necessary for him to shower as well. Dry clothes had to be enough.

When he came back, the bathroom door was wide open but Charles was apparently under the shower. Erik lurked into the room and only saw the steamy glass of the shower but no essential parts of Charles. Carefully, he laid the clothes next to the sink and retreated immediately. Sure – he has already seen Charles naked. But that was 20 years ago and in the middle of an exhausting road trip where neither of them cared about anything at all. They even slept in one bed at those horrible hotels completely naked or with just a bath robe. In retrospective that was ... very intimate. But they trusted each other completely. Even in such moments they felt cosy around each other. But that was a long time ago.

Now a clone was standing under his shower. Charles No. 3 came out of the bathroom around ten minutes after Erik had left him the clothes. The metal bender had made some coffee and was standing in the kitchen area. Charles came closer with Erik's clothes on and Erik had to be honest to himself: it was a very comforting sight. The still slightly wet hair, the thick sweater and –

“Where are your pants, Charles?”, Erik asked desperately not to look at his naked legs. Thank god the sweater was long enough to cover the rest.

“Your waist is much smaller than mine, Erik. They don't fit me. But it's okay... I'm just a bit cold.” He rubbed his arms.

Erik sighted. He didn't think of that. “Go to the couch. I'll get you a blanket.” On his way to the bedroom he grabbed Charles' wet clothes and put them into the washer. They were too dirty to just let them dry. On his way back, he hold the blanket tight to his chest.

He stopped in the living room right behind the couch. Charles was sitting there and looking around the room. The whole scene was so surreal. This had to be an illusion. Or a trick.

When he stepped in front of the couch, Charles smiled at him and took the blanket. He wrapped himself up with it instantly. Erik didn't say anything and headed back to the open kitchen. He knew Charles didn't like coffee as much as he did, so he put up some hot water and made tea. On the other hand – this wasn't Charles. It was a version of him. Maybe this one liked coffee?

“No, thank you, a tea would be lovely”, Charles No. 3 suddenly said in a calm voice.

Erik tensed immediately. He wanted to shield his mind.

“You're thinking very loudly, my friend. I don't mean to do any harm or to overstep your boundaries. Those thoughts of you are just coming straight into my ear, like a phone call from another person on the street. I just happen to hear them”, he clarified like he did all those years ago. So, explaining like he's talking to a child was still a trait of him.

Erik didn't bother to answer; Charles had probably already heard his thoughts about 'not stepping over boundaries'.

“I believe you have some questions”, the telepath assumed eventually and waited patiently for his tea. When Erik finally arrived with a mug in his hand and passed it to Charles, he sat down in front of him on the old wing chair and nodded.

“Indeed. Let's begin with the reason you're here”, he started and sipped his coffee that was already beginning to get cold.

“Oh, I already gave you my reason, but I assume the rain was very loud so I might

repeat myself: If you're not staying at the school, then I will stay at Genosha."

Erik remained silent for a moment and took another sip from his coffee. He thought about Charles' words and decided that he didn't understand a word.

Charles chuckled. "You know, I talked to Raven about you. Why you were so angry at me and why you refused to stay at the school or at least in my proximity, when you were so clearly attached to my old self."

"I wasn't –", Erik started but was interrupted by Charles, before he could avoid the elephant in the room.

"She told me that we were both stubborn and didn't listen to each other's standpoints back then. Things went pretty bad and we both kind of regretted how things have turned out. In the end whether you nor I were willing to quit their current life. And it turned out that we both loved and hated each other at the same time. We knew we wanted to be together but we also knew that it won't work."

Erik felt his eyelid twitch. "Now if that wasn't a good résumé of our relationship", he said sarcastically. "That still doesn't explain why you're here."

"No?", Charles probed. "I think it's obvious. I don't remember anything, Erik. And that means that I don't remember why I never came to you." Suddenly he frowned. "Regarding my former inability to walk I might see the reason why I never came to Genosha. I mean – no wheelchair would have gotten through this pile of mud."

Erik's eyes widened a bit. Was that... was that supposed to be a joke?

"You can't stay here", the metal bender finally whispered. "You can stay the night if you want, because it's already late and the weather is horrible, but you can't stay here permanently."

Charles expression turned bitter. His frown got deeper. "Why not?"

That made Erik laugh nervously. He almost broke his mug in his hands when he pressed his fingers together. "Because someone has to be at the school. You're their leader, I'm the leader of Genosha. You can't just ... walk to the enemy."

"I don't think we're enemies, Erik", he murmured, but Erik didn't let him finish.

"Maybe you don't think that. And maybe me neither. But a lot of other mutants do. You're a threat to them and if I didn't interfere before they would have killed you on sight."

Red lips were pressed together. Dark lashes blinked a few times. "Did I hurt them in any way? Back then?"

"No... But you're a strong telepath and they fear you. Because you could do anything with them."

"I could. But I won't."

Oh, how Erik loved this sentence. Whenever it came out of Charles' beautiful mouth, his first instinct was to make it shut again.

"Do I really need to explain why they fear you nonetheless?", Erik sighted and put down his mug on the little coffee table that was separating the two mutants.

Charles looked into his tea. "Maybe another time."

"Fine, maybe another time. Do you want to stay the night? Or do you want me to bring you home? We can drive and..." The words stayed stuck in his mouth as he was thinking about a way to bring Charles home. "How did you even come here? With one of your cars?"

Blue eyes looked up. "I wasn't so sure if I could still remember how to drive. So I took the train. And walked."

Erik stopped breathing for a while. Only after a few seconds, when he felt his lungs ache, he found new oxygen. "That... that'd take hours."

"Yes, indeed, I was on my way for about, hm, I guess six hours. And at this point I might state that I'm really tired, but I owe you an explanation, so I'll rest later. After all, I came with the intention to stay. And right now that seems to be impossible – at least from your side."

"What the –?" Erik was lost for words. And yet they came out like a waterfall after realising that Charles had travelled six hours in the rain to get to Erik. "Where is Raven? Or Hank? Why didn't they drove you? Or brought you here with the jet – I mean, we have enough space to land. You'd rather walk all this way through the rain? And you only came with one tiny bag with the intention to stay? Where is all your other stuff? You can't be serious!"

Charles didn't reply immediately and his frown softened. He waited a few moments and watched the tea in his mug, until he finally spoke again. He suddenly looked like a child. Even more so when his words were so soft that Erik didn't understand him at first. "They don't know I'm here."

"... You're kidding."

The telepath smiled weakly. "No. They don't know I'm here. With you. I left before the sun rose with only light luggage. When Raven returned from a trip a few days ago, she looked very sad. So I asked her what was wrong but she just said that she was sorry and that she didn't know what to do. So I looked into her mind and –"

"You can't do that without her permission", Erik interrupted his friend with stern words. But Charles shook his head.

"I needed to. I was so worried about her. And I didn't dig very deep. Just the surface. But then I saw that she met you. And you talked about us. She wore my form; that wasn't really nice of her because it unsettled you a lot."

"God, Charles, you...", but the metal bender didn't say anything further. He circled his temples with his fingers to calm down.

"To make it short: I saw where Genosha was and that you were living here. And it looked nice. At least in Ravens memory when the sun shone. This", and with that he gesticulated towards the window where the rain was still pattering, "is not nice."

"Okay", Erik began with a quick hysterical laugh. "You can't stay here. Especially when whether Hank nor Raven know that you're here."

"I'm not a child that ran away from home. I'm a grown man and I can decide on my own." Charles voice suddenly changed a lot. The tone was... demanding.

"I know that but still: you can't just leave your own property. What about the school? The children? And what about your ideals?" He took Charles' silence as a good indicator that he was winning the argument. "Because let me tell you this: We're fighting here real fights. We're not waiting until someone gives us what we want. We take what we deserve. If you stay, you have to fight, too. My ways are far more ruthless than yours. People will die. Your beloved humans will die. Mutants will die."

"Why do they have to die?", Charles asked as if he really didn't know.

"Because war is like that. People die for our greater cause. Mutants have to be free. Without humans oppressing them."

The telepath snuggled a little bit deeper into the blanket as if he didn't want to hear the truth about war. "But we're free. I don't see any difference between mutants and humans. I was able to do anything up until now without restrictions. And ... Genosha seems to be free, too."

"Because we fought for it, Charles! That's why I told you to remember the past – nothing here was given to us for free! Or just because we asked nicely! We had a terrible war, a lot of mutants died – for this exact freedom."

Erik's head hurt. And judging the look on Charles' face, his head was hurting, too.

"I will call Raven to inform her that you're here. And then you can stay the night if you want, but tomorrow morning you'll be gone", Erik informed Charles like a parent lessoning a child.

And suddenly the only answer he got was a nod. No more words were said. He looked into his mug, sad and down, until he drank the last sip. It hurt Erik to see his friend like that; again rejected. He headed to the phone and dialled Ravens number.

His thumb was hovering over the last digit.

Wasn't this the chance he always wanted? His dream that Charles would come to him one day and share his ideals. And finally see that war sometimes is the solution. That threatening and killing humans was sometimes necessary. Of course not always: Since Erik was living peacefully in Genosha he knew that both ways had its appeal. That Charles' way was also a solution. Both of their ideals were sometimes true. And now Charles was sitting in Erik's clothes on Erik's couch in Erik's house with Erik's blanket over his legs saying that he wanted to stay. With Erik.

Eventually, Erik put the phone back. Raven and Hank probably already knew that Charles was here. Where else would he have gone?

"Did you change your mind?", the familiar, calm voice came from behind Erik. When he turned around he saw into those blue eyes that were directed at him with hope.

"I did. But only for now. We have to see if this is going to work. You don't know me... after all." And that was something that made Erik gloomy.

"That's why I'm here. I want to change that", Charles said with a light tone. A faint smile came to his lips. "When I woke up, all I knew was my name and yours. Not even my sister's. Or my best friend's."

It hurt in Erik's chest to be reminded of that day. But at the same time he felt the warmth from Charles radiating.

"You're special to me, Erik. And I want to know why. Maybe we can find... a way to make this work. I can feel that you want that, too."

Erik couldn't help but smile at that. And then he noticed that Charles was projecting his feelings on him in that moment.

"Okay, there have to be rules", the metal bender began with a shaky voice. "I don't have my helmet, so you have to stay out of my head. Permanently. Got that?"

"What helmet?"

"Doesn't matter. Will you stay out of my head?"

Charles considered it for a few seconds, then nodded. "But I can't rip my ears off when you're thinking so loudly."

"I will try not to scream while thinking", Erik joked dryly, which made Charles chuckle. A faint heat crept up Erik's cheeks at the sight of it. "Rule No. 2: This is my house, my village, my people. And if we're going to war, then it's like that. I will listen to you when you have a different opinion but in the end – I decide."

To Erik's surprise, Charles nodded nicely. He really couldn't remember anything before the incident.

“Rule No. 3: You will tell Raven and Hank that you’re here and you will visit them from time to time. I don’t want them to think I lured you in my house and chained you to some pipes in my cellar.”

“Why... Why would you do that? And why would I let you do that? I’m a telepath, you can’t do anything I don’t want”, Charles objected and played with the seam of the sweater.

“That was a joke... Of course I wouldn’t chain you – “, Erik sighted. “Just visit them, ok? Tell them you’re here.”

“But then they will come and want me to go back.”

Erik smiled while he took the mugs and placed them into the dishwasher. “I thought you’re a grown man? If you object to go back, they have to accept that you will stay here.”

Charles eyes got wider. “So”, and suddenly small hands grabbed at Erik’s shirt around his back. “I’m allowed to stay here?”

The slight touch gave Erik goose bumps. When he turned around, Charles still hold on to his shirt and looked up at him with those eyes he recognised from 20 years ago. And before he could wonder when he stopped naming Charles ‘Charles No. 3’, he tried to smile and said:

“Yes.”