

Maybe in another dimension

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Kapitel 7: This was your home

Erik needed to leave the lab for a moment. All of this was just too much. First, he had to see Charles die two times and now his best scientist friend was telling him that Charles No. 3 was actually Charles, but in a more different version than everyone had thought. Killing other people.

He was standing in the hallway, staring at the grey floor. It was the hallway that lead to Cerebro and Erik wondered, if Charles No. 3 was able to use it. After what Beast had said, Charles No. 3 was capable to do even more than just sit behind a machine and talk to other humans or mutants. In other words: Charles No. 3 was a threat. A dangerous one no one was able to predict.

Without telling Mystique or Beast he left the cellar and went upstairs. On his way he saw a lot of children and teachers – some of them curious, most of them afraid. And again Erik asked himself, if he's doing the right thing or if he should just leave and let the others handle whatever will arise. Charles was alive – at least in a form of a clone – and that was all that mattered, right? But then again: If this clone was something different than Charles, something more murderous and bloody-minded, then he needed to be stopped. And the thought that someone else was going to interfere in this whole disaster to prevent Charles No. 3 from doing anything stupid made Erik's stomach twist. If this clone has to find an end, Erik wanted to be the one doing it.

In the end he was standing before Charles' room. The door was closed and nothing could be heard behind it. Absolute silence. The only thing that was in Erik's ears was his hammering heart. If this clone really was Charles – what is he going to do? And what if he was not – what is he going to do?

Without waiting another couple of unnecessary thoughtful moments, he knocked. And waited. But there was no answer. Was he not allowed to come in? Did Charles No. 3 already looked into his head and knew what he was going to do before he himself even knew? God, Erik wished for his helmet. Why did he left it at that island? He should search for it. It was, after all, an element of safety. Something that made Erik calmer when he was around Charles. And even when he was not, because one could never know when Charles was using Cerebro.

But maybe he was asleep? Erik knocked again, this time a little bit more aggressive. But again no answer. So it was the former: Erik was not allowed to come in. But did

that ever stop him? No, not really.

“Charles, I’m coming in now”, Erik declared and opened the door. It wasn’t locked, but that wouldn’t have made any difference. The lock was made of metal.

When he entered the room, he looked for those brown locks but found none. Not on the bed, not in the bathroom, not on the balcony. Charles wasn’t in his room. But didn’t Beast said that he isolated himself upstairs? Then again, Erik remembered that Charles was visiting the kitchen from time to time. So, Erik left Charles’ bedroom and headed straight to the kitchen. Two mutants were sitting there – a big shiny man and a woman with short hair. But no Charles.

“Is the professor here?”, he asked but got not answer. Instead they looked at each other and left the room without a word.

“What the –”, Erik cursed and looked around. But no sign of Charles. Wasn’t he also reading a lot of old books to regain some of his memory without breaking into someone’s mind?

So the search continued and Erik went for the library. He was glad that he remembered where everything was. The school had been – after all – a home for Erik. If only for some weeks.

But in the library, he only found some students who were chatting about a book. The moment, Erik walked in, they stopped talking and looked at him with big eyes.

“Did you see the Professor?”, Erik asked again without hesitation. The students blinked a few times until one boy shook his head.

“Where is he?”, he tried again, but the teenagers just looked at him with frightened eyes. “God damn it! Has anyone seen him at all?!” , Erik began to lose his temper and took a step towards the group. But before he could make another threatening step, in hope to get an answer, he felt the mental nudge. The comforting, soothing one.

“Please, my friend, don’t eat them”, came Charles’ calm voice in his head. “I’m upstairs. In your room.”

With an annoyed snort, he left the library and took two steps at once while running up the stairs. Only when he arrived at the hallway to Charles’s and his bedrooms, he needed to remind himself that it was no longer his room he was heading to. That he no longer lived here and that he wasn’t going to go to Charles to chat about mutants above a good old chess game with a Martini in his hand.

When he arrived at his old room, he opened the door and immediately was surprised by the familiar look of it. Some things changed, like the bed or the TV and phone. But everything was still there where Erik remembered it was. Astonished, Erik stayed in the middle of the room and didn’t recognise Charles sitting at the window.

“When I entered this room, I remembered it immediately”, the telepath began to talk

with his soft and calm voice. "My old self rebuilt it the same way it used to be, I suppose. I heard the building was destroyed after the events of Apocalypse."

Erik turned around to look into those ocean eyes. Blue and glistening, like they always had been. "You remember Apocalypse?"

"No, not really. Hank told me about it, but it's more like reading it in a book. The story of someone else."

"I'm sure Hank told you why the school was destroyed", Erik muttered and felt his heart getting heavier.

Charles stayed silent for a second before he stood up and straightened his cardigan. Seeing him standing up so easily was still a strange sight for the metal bender. "He said you were involved in the events. But not how far and what you had to do with him."

The statement made Erik laugh. "Oh great, he left the important part out."

"I didn't want to hear it", Charles interrupted the sarcastic laughter. "I remember some things about you. That we had something special and you hurt me after that. But I don't care about the details."

Erik stopped laughing and made a sinister face. "You should."

Charles No. 3 turned around and looked out of the window. Silence stretched through the room, while Erik mustered his back. Seeing him standing and with hair made him feel lighter, happier even. It was something Erik took from him and that he has now regained. But the constant fear inside his head made him remember that this wasn't the real Charles. The Charles he knew, the one he shared a lot of feelings with, is dead. Buried underneath the ruins of a laboratory.

"Raven, my sister, said that she also hurt me a lot in the past and that she was sorry. And Hank was very sad when we talked about the past, too. I also saw a wheelchair standing in my room. Another, older one in the basement. You said that I wasn't supposed to walk. I take it that I was paralyzed back then." Finally he turned around again and looked Erik deep in the eyes. "All I got until so far were terrible news, my friend. Starting with the fact that I'm just a clone. That I lost my memories to a former life. That this life was all but happy. That it was actually pretty horrible considering that I was crippled, had no hair and had no one dear to me in my age. Why did I never marry? Or had children on my own? Why is everyone so sad when talking about me and my past? Is it because I'm just a clone and not the 'real' Charles Xavier? Or is it because of something else? Was my life that miserable?"

Charles stayed calm though he talked about such stressing things. Erik didn't know what to say. Except for the truth. That – yes – Charles' life was shaped by numerous disastrous events. And most of them were linked to Erik. But he said nothing.

"I take your silence as a yes", Charles No. 3 sighted. He blinked a few times while

staring to his feet. "I don't want to know about the past. I don't want to remember those horrible things."

After this statement, Erik found his voice again: "You have to. You need to! It's what formed you over the years and made you who you ... were. Are. I don't know."

"Is that the reason why you're here?" A little smile formed around on this face. "I'm Charles Xavier, but a different version as it seems. I don't want to know how you compare me to my other self. I'm me. Nothing more, nothing less. Please, accept that, my friend—"

"Stop calling me that", Erik snapped and balled his hands into fists.

"But you are my friend. Are you not?" There it was again. Charles' innocent voice with that slight accent that had made Erik docile in the beginning. Right now he wasn't so sure if the effect had worn off after all those years or if it got even worse considering that he hadn't had any contact to an innocent version of Charles in recent years. Whenever they have met, Charles had glared at him. And with good reason.

Erik didn't know what to do. He wanted Charles No. 3 to remember. Remember who he was, who Erik was. What they were for each other. And that nothing will change after that horrible incident, because the relationship with Charles was always something he could hold on to. Even though they weren't always on good terms, he was still glad he had the Professor. But now? Now there was a man, looking like Charles Xavier, acting like him but refused to be him.

"I am", Erik breathed. "But not the way you'd think."

"In fact, I don't know you. But since you were the only person I could remember...", suddenly he came closer to Erik, looking for his eyes. "... I think of our friendship as a deep one."

"And here you are mistaken", the metal bender said in a low voice. But Charles came closer nonetheless.

"I saw how you were shaken by my death. That you felt horrendous guilt and that you considered staying with my dead body." Charles No. 3 stood before Erik, but didn't touch him. And he was glad that they didn't touch. Standing so close to him was more than enough. "Don't tell me that we weren't close friends if it's evident that we were."

"But we weren't. We didn't like each other – not always, but most of the time. Because we had differences we weren't able to resolve. You have to remember that. You can't pretend it all never happened, because you refuse to acknowledge that bad things happened. At least for the sake of Raven. Or Hank." Saying their human names made Erik cringe, but Charles seemed to refuse to call them by their mutant names. Or didn't even know about them. "Or the school."

Charles No. 3's eyes shone even though the weather was cloudy and almost no sunlight touched the room. He stared into Erik's eyes, but said nothing. Was he

wandering through his mind again? Was he thinking about Erik's recommendation? Before Erik could add anything on the topic, he felt warm fingertips on his palm. The eye contact between them didn't perish.

"Ignorance is a bliss, Erik. And I'll take that gladly. Just this one time in my life. Let me be happy", he whispered into the sticky silence of the room. "I want to live another life, begin anew. Without all of the burdens from my horrible past."

Again, Erik was lost for words. He understood what Charles No. 3 wanted. Erik himself often wished for a numb heart. Or to forget what happened in his life. His dead mother, his dead family and his dead visions about a future for mutant kind that probably will never exist. But he would also lose all of his beautiful moments: happy scenes with his mother when he was young, coming home to Magda and pretending to be someone else or laughing with Charles when he was still able to do so. All those happy memories he had with Charles were now... gone. At least for Charles.

The grip around his hand became stronger. The warmth of Charles No. 3 fingertips spread through his whole arm. Touching him felt... different now. Touching him at all felt strange. When was the last time they had touched each other's hands?

"I want to get to know you, Erik. Again. Maybe we can resolve those differences now?", Charles said so quiet that Erik had to concentrate on his voice even though they were standing so close to each other.

And before Erik could give in – give into that warmth, the scent of his beloved friend, the loving idea that was standing behind those beautiful words – he reminded himself that he was the one who made Charles suffer all those years. "If you don't remember me properly, then it should stay that way. It's probably better like that. You don't need to get to know me, believe me. It's best if I just go and let you live your life then."

The comfortable atmosphere was turning cold into a second. Charles No. 3's face hardened and he let go of Erik's hand as if he burned himself.

"Funny how you cite Hank. He said the exact same thing about you... and I", he spoke in a stern voice. "You want to leave again? When you left three days ago I thought you'd never come back. Hank told me that the probability was high. That made me so sad I didn't even understand why, considering that we just met. And now you've come back... for what? Telling me to forget you once and for all?"

And here it was again. Charles on the verge of tears. And though it still was just Charles' clone and not the real Charles, it had the same effect on Erik as in the past: Avoid and just leave. Because seeing his friend cry was always something very unsettling for the metal bender that he couldn't handle.

"Believe me, if I tell you, that it's the best for you if I'm not in your life."

And without waiting for an answer, Erik just left the room. Again he let Charles down. But he seemed okay. There was no monster. No bad guy. Just a version of Charles that

was still full of hope and love when it came to Erik.

When he was sitting in his car, he saw Charles standing on a balcony staring down with a destroyed look on his face.

Erik did it again. And so he left.