

[two] a knock on the door

1973:

CHARLES XAVIER FOUNDED Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters in the year of 1965, but due to the fact that during that year, America assumed a direct military role in the Vietnam War, a lot of the young mutants who were eligible to fight for their country were drafted and sent to fight. Because of this, the school was unable to function, and nine year old Nova was left with a father who was still processing his paralysis and a house that had once been filled with life was now empty and cold.

For eight years, Nova Xavier and Hank McCoy did their best to keep the house from falling into disrepair, but it seemed that no matter how hard they fought, the cobwebs and the dust inevitably came through as the victors, with a thin layer of dust settling on every surface and cobwebs clinging to the corners of the house, taunting the two of them every time they saw them.

Since being adopted by Charles in 1958, Nova had grown and continued to practice with her powers. It took them a few years to figure out exactly what Nova could do, because Charles figured that she had some sort of telekinetic ability, but it wasn't until they explored her powers further that Charles realised that the girl could control gravity.

It was remarkable what she could do, and Charles knew that one day she would be incredibly powerful. From lifting small objects to crushing them to nothing, Nova explored the range of her abilities, seeking to better herself and learn to control them.

They practiced with her powers, and when Nova was seventeen years old, she was already proving that she would be a great mutant one day. Charles had sunk into a depression, still hurt by the events that occurred in Cuba in 1962, and although Nova and Hank pretended that everything was fine, each day that Charles remained incapacitated by grief worried them.

One morning, however, everything changed.

Nova was sitting on the stairs of the mansion's foyer, a book floating in front of her face while she picked at a sandwich she had made. She hadn't done much that day besides float up into the upper corners of the room and get rid of a few cobwebs that had been bugging her for a while, so she was passing the time by reading.

There came a knock on the door, which surprised Nova. The book she was reading dropped to the stairs with a thud and she rose to her feet. Nobody ever called on them anymore. The school was closed, the house so run-down that it almost looked derelict, so people tended to stay away and never knocked on their door.

"I've got it!" Nova shouted.

"No, Nova!" Hank McCoy replied, rushing towards the door. "I'll get it."

Nova jumped, using her powers to propel her, and somersaulted over Hank's head, slowing him down by making the gravity around him a lot denser. He growled. "No fair."

Nova reached the door and opened it, revealing a man she didn't recognise. "Who the hell are you?"

The man wore sunglasses so Nova couldn't get a good look at his face, but she could tell from the way his eyebrows raised that he wasn't expecting her when he knocked on the door.

Hank pushed Nova out of the way and took her place by the door. "Can I help you?"

"Uh, yeah," the man replied. "What happened to the school?"

"The school's been shut for years," Hank replied. "Are you a parent?"

The man chuckled. "I sure as hell hope not. Who are you?"

"I'm Hank," Hank answered. "Hank McCoy. I look after the house now."

The man removed his sunglasses. "You're Beast? Look at you. I guess you're a late bloomer."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Hank said. "But I'm gonna have to ask you to leave."

He tried to slam the door, but the man caught it. "So where's the professor?"

"There's no professor here," Hank said. "It's just me and Nova."

"Nova?" the man asked, looking like he'd seen a ghost. "As in, daughter of Charles Xavier, Nova?"

"Yeah, that's me," Nova said, waving her hand above Hank's head. "Nice to meet you."

The man tried the door again, but Hank held fast. "You're pretty strong for a scrawny kid. Come on. Sure there's not a little Beast in these?"

"No, he's not here," Hank replied, struggling to hold the door closed.

"Come on, Beast," the man taunted. "Come on, Beastie."

"No," Hank groaned.

"Yeah, that's not a good idea," Nova said.

The man pushed open the door and Hank bumped into Nova. "Hey, I said the school's closed. You need to leave."

"Not until I see the professor," the man replied.

Hank grabbed the man by the shoulder. "There's no professor here. I told you that."

"Look, kid," the man said. "You and I are gonna be good friends," he punched Hank in the face. "You just don't know it yet."

"Dude!" Nova exclaimed, crouching down beside Hank as he clutched his face. "What the hell?"

Hank groaned, his face turning blue as the man jogged up the stairs. He pushed Nova away. "Get back."

"Hank, calm down," Nova said. "Come on, man, please don't turn blue."

It was too late. Hank had already turned into his alter-ego, Beast, and chased after the man. Nova got to her feet and chased after them, racing up the stairs. She heard the clashing and crashing that came with an altercation, before a loud yell filled the hallway and the man came flying overhead.

Nova managed to catch him before he hit the ground, so ending his fall with her powers, but Hank leapt on top of him and flung the man the remaining way down the stairs. He hit the table in the middle of the room and lay there as Hank jumped on the chandelier and suspended himself by his feet, claws raised towards the man as he growled.

"Hank?" Charles called, and Nova saw him descending the stairs. "What's going on here?"

"Professor?" asked the man.

"Please don't call me that."

"You know this guy?" Hank asked.

"Yeah, he looks slightly familiar," Charles replied. "Get off the bloody chandelier, Hank."

The man looked up at Charles. "You can walk."

"You're a perceptive one," Charles replied.

"I thought Erik..."

"Which makes it slightly perplexing that you managed to miss our sign on the way in," Charles continued. "This is private property, my friend. I'm gonna have to ask him" he pointed at Hank, "to ask you to leave."

"Well..." the man sighed. "I'm afraid I can't do that, 'cause, uh... because I was sent here for you."

"Well, tell whoever it was that sent you that I'm... busy," Charles responded.

"That's gonna be a little tricky," the man replied. "Because the person who sent me... was you."

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