

[twenty three] an unexpected tragedy

JEAN LEFT THE MANSION a er causing Scott to fall unconscious, and when he woke up and informed Charles that Jean was going to find her father, Charles immediately called the team back together to go and find her. As they flew the jet in the direction Charles told them to go, Raven seemed suspicious.

"How do you know where she's going, Charles?" she asked. "If you can't track her, how do you know where she is?"

"You know how," Charles replied.

"Jesus Christ," Raven said. "What did you do?"

"I protected her."

"From the truth," Raven said. "There's another word for that."

Nova could sense the unease between the three older mutants. There was an edge of mistrust between them now that it was revealed that Charles had kept Jean's past from her as a means of protecting her. Nova knew that it was probably in her best interests that he did so, but keeping a life-altering event subdued in her subconscious was bound to cause an unimaginable fallout when it was finally released.

As they landed the jet in Jean's old neighbourhood, Nova reached for Peter's hand. She had a bad feeling about what was going to happen, because if it was true what Charles said, then Jean really was more powerful than all of them. ^a

Nova saw Jean emerge from a house as they approached, walking into the middle of the road and facing them. "You shouldn't have come here."

"Why is that?" Charles asked. "We've only come to bring you home, Jean."

"I don't have a home," Jean snapped. "You made sure of that."

"Look, your father couldn't handle you and we took you in," Charles replied.

"You told me my father was dead and you used me for my powers," Jean said.

"No, that's just not true," Charles replied. "That's not what happened. Jean, we can help you. I can help you, but you have to listen to me."

"No. No, I don't," she replied.

"Scott," Charles whispered.

Scott stepped forwards and Jean walked towards him. "He lied to me, Scott. About everything."

"We'll figure everything out together," Scott said. "Just come back to me. Remember, you said you'd always come back to me. Come back to me."

Sirens wailed in the distance and Nova's eyes widened. Scott said, "Jean," but his voice went unheard over the sirens.

Jean closed her eyes. "Stay away from me. Stay away from me. Stay away from me!"

She let out a yell and flung her hand out towards the approaching police cars. They crumpled under her power and flipped over. Charles said, "Stop her, quickly!"

"Charles, wait, wait!" Scott exclaimed.

Everything happened so fast. Kurt teleported towards Jean and the two of them disappeared in a cloud of blue. The side of Jean's house exploded, sending debris flying everywhere, and time slowed down for Peter Maximo .

A bolt of lightning was trailing from Storm's fingertips as Scott tackled her out of the way, Raven and Nova were flung backwards from the force of the explosion, and Peter ran up the flying debris towards Jean. ^a

She swept the debris out from beneath him and Peter let out a worried yelp as he fell, hit the ground and went flying across the ground, too fast to slow himself down. He rolled over and over until he finally came to a stop, lying there unconscious in the bushes. ^a

"Peter!" Nova yelled, watching him disappear from view. ^a

She ran a er Peter, rushing towards him. When she found him, covered in cuts and blood, she dropped down to her knees beside him and whimpered. "Oh my God, please don't be dead. Please, please don't be dead."

She felt for a pulse, and fortunately, she found one, weak as it was. She let out a sob and dropped her head into her hand, the other squeezing Peter's. "Jesus Christ." ^a

Peter stirred slightly, eyes fluttering. "Nova?"

"I'm here," she said. "I'm here."

"M-Maybe it's time to move on," Peter whispered. "This shit hurts." ^a

Nova let out a tearful laugh. "You're gonna be okay, I promise."

"W-Where's Jean?" Peter asked.

"I don't know," Nova replied.

"You need to find her," Peter breathed. "Help her. I'll be al... alright."

Peter's eyes closed again and he passed out. Nova grit her teeth, hating that she was about to leave him and go a er Jean. Creeping back towards the road, Nova saw Jean standing in the middle of the street, Raven walking up to her slowly. ^a

Unfortunately, Charles hadn't seen Nova and didn't realise that she was living in the moment rather than standing frozen like everyone else. From where she stood, Nova watched as Raven approached Jean slowly, her mouth moving as she spoke to the girl, trying to talk her down.

Nova watched Jean clutch her head before she let out another cry of, "Stop!"

Despite watching it happen, time slowed down for Nova as she watched Raven go flying backwards, landing hard on the back of a truck. At first, Nova thought she was okay, but then she saw the blood; the spikes protruding from Raven's chest and the look of utter shock on her face as pain flared through her body. ^a

"NO!" Nova screamed, the sound drawn-out and heart wrenching.

Jean approached Raven and her eyes cleared, revealing the real Jean, but she said nothing as she looked once at Raven and then flew into the sky, disappearing from view. Time unfroze and Nova watched Hank rush towards Raven, shielding her body from view as she took her final few breaths.

Sinking to her knees, Nova let out a scream and everything that wasn't fixed down went flying away from her. She couldn't get the image of Raven flying backwards out of her head. If only she'd been quicker; she could have saved her. She could have caught her before she hit the spikes and she would still be alive. Hank wouldn't be crying over her body and Nova wouldn't be on her knees in the middle of the road, mourning the loss of the woman who had been more than a mother to her since she was a child. ^a

Raven had been everything - a mother, a sister, a friend, and her death hit Nova hard. As she leaned forwards and let the asphalt bite into her skin, she let out a sob that ripped through her entire body.

Raven was gone.

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