

## [twenty four] bury a friend

"**WE ARE ALL AT WAR... AT WAR WITH OURSELVES**, and Raven had been waging that war for most of her life. I hope now she's found peace. Raven died doing what she did best: helping a friend. A friend in need. She is not gone. She lives on, through me, through us, and through the spirit of the X-Men."

Nova stood before Raven's grave long after the funeral was officially over. She was buried the day after her death, and with Peter in the infirmary recovering, Nova had never felt more alone as she stood beside her father. Scott, Storm and Kurt were to her right, umbrellas shielding them from the rain, which seemed a fitting forecast for the tone of the day.

Walking back inside with her friends, Nova was about to head down to the infirmary to be with Peter when she heard a voice ask, "Is it true?"

"Is what true?" she asked the young mutant.

"Jean killed her?"

That question stunned the four friends, who didn't know how to answer that. Yes, Jean had killed Raven, but it wasn't truly Jean. Scott stepped forwards. "She didn't know what she was doing. Jean lost control, but she's still Jean. She's still our friend. We can still help her. We can find her and bring her home. That's... That's what we're gonna do, okay?"

Nova bit her lip before turning to Storm. "I'm going to see Peter."

Storm nodded and Nova made her way to the infirmary. Peter looked severely worse for wear as she approached him, various bandages wrapped around different parts of his body. Nova smiled as she walked towards him, and when he heard the noise his head tilted to the side.

"Hey," he greeted, trying for a smile but wincing, making it more of a grimace. "How are you holding up?"

"We just buried Raven," Nova said, her voice barely there as she spoke, the strain of the lump in her throat almost suffocating. "She was like a mom to me, Peter."

She sat down on the edge of Peter's bed and he reached for her, placing his hand on her leg and squeezing. "I'm so sorry."

"I watched it happen," Nova whispered. "I watched it happen and I could have done something but I didn't. I didn't move. If I'd have just done something—"

"Hey, you can't think like that," Peter said, shaking his head slightly. "If you think like that, it'll destroy you."

"It already has."

Peter sighed. "Nova, I am so sorry, but you can't put this on yourself."

"Yes, I can," she replied. "I was the only one who could see what was happening. I was the only one that could have saved her and I didn't. I let her die."

"That's not true," Peter said, desperately trying to keep Nova from losing herself in her grief. "That's not true and I know Raven wouldn't blame you."

"She should," Nova said bitterly. "I let her die. I mean, it's destroyed Hank. I passed the kitchen on the way down here and he's just... he's just sitting there in the dark, wallowing in his grief."

"He needs someone to be there for him," Peter said. "Just like you do, and you've got me."

"I'm sorry about what happened to you," Nova whispered, squeezing Peter's hand. "I'm so sorry."

"It's okay," he replied. "It's not the first time this has happened."

"You could've died, Peter," Nova said. "This whole thing... This whole thing would never have happened if not for..."

"If not for what?" Peter asked, as Nova got to her feet and headed for the door. "If not for what?! Nova! Nova, come back!"

Nova walked up to Charles's study, finding him sitting at his desk. He looked up when she entered. "Nova, are you alright?"

"This would never have happened if you hadn't messed with Jean's head," Nova said, her voice dangerously low. "You pushed down all that anger and grief. She was eight years old, so where the hell was it supposed to go?"

"Please, Nova, I've already dealt with this from Hank," Charles sighed.

"Did he tell you the same thing?" Nova asked. "I bet he did. If you hadn't messed with Jean's head, this never would have happened. Raven would still be alive."

"Don't you dare put this on me!" Charles snapped.

Nova flinched at the tone of his voice but didn't back down. "Who am I supposed to put this on, Charles?" for the first time since she was two years old, she called him by his name to his face. "Who's at fault here?"

"Nobody," Charles replied. "What happened was an accident."

"An accident that never would have happened if not for you!" Nova shouted.

In her anger, the objects on Charles's desk began to rise. His eyes widened. "Nova, calm down."

"Calm down?" she asked. "Calm down?! Raven's dead! She'd dead, and you know what? I blame myself. I watched it happen, I could have saved her, but then I started thinking, where did all of this start? What happened in our lives to bring us to that very moment, and it all led back to you."

Charles's expression was so broken that Nova almost felt sorry for him, but her rage blinded her to anything other than the anger she was feeling, resentful towards Charles. It wasn't that she necessarily hated him, because he was her father, but this all started with him.

"You really think I wanted this to happen?" Charles asked. "Raven was my friend—"

"She was my friend too!" Nova yelled. "She was like a mom to me, and I'd never had one of those before and now she's gone!" she let out a strangled sob. "She's gone."

"Nova..."

She turned on her heel, walking away as she slammed the door shut behind her. She didn't know where exactly she was going until she ended up in the kitchen. Hank was still sitting at the table, a shattered whiskey bottle in front of him.

"Hank?" she asked quietly.

When Hank looked up at her, all he could see was the seven year old girl who crawled into his bed on those nights where the wind howled outside the house, seeking the comfort he offered. Looking at her, the girl who had known Raven a lot longer than he had, made his heart break all over again.

"Nova," he said.

Reaching into Charles's whiskey cabinet, Nova pulled out a bottle and two glasses. Placing them on the table, she poured the whiskey until the glasses were nearly half full and then replaced the stopper in the bottle.

Sitting down beside Hank, she wrapped her fingers around the glass. "So... You spoke to Charles?"

"What did he tell you?" Hank asked.

"Nothing I didn't already imagine," Nova shrugged. "I don't want to blame him, but..."

"I do," Hank replied. "Come on, Nova. You're smart. Surely you can see that this all started with him?"

"Yes, but... I blame myself, too," Nova said.

"Why?" Hank asked.

"Because I could have saved her," Nova whispered. "I could have caught her, but I was just... frozen."

Hank reached over and placed his hand over Nova's. "This was not your fault. Don't you dare put this on yourself."

Nova sighed. "I... I miss her. I didn't realise just how much of an impact she had on this place until she was gone."

"I know," Hank replied. "You know, she told me she loved me."

"She did?" Nova asked, her bottom lip trembling.

Hank nodded. "Before she... I could barely hear her."

"She did love you," Nova said. "I could tell. Peter could, too."

"Yeah, and now she's gone," Hank replied.

Nova looked at the whiskey in her glass. "Erik doesn't know."

"What does he have to do with this?" Hank asked.

"He was her friend too, Hank," Nova said. "He deserves to know, and it's better to hear it from us."

Hank nodded. "Alright," he raised his glass. "To Raven."

Nova raised her own glass. "To Raven, and to you, Hank. The last of the first class."

"No," Hank said, shaking his head. "The first class died with Raven."

Nova sighed. "To Raven. X-Woman, hero, mother..."

"Inspiration," Hank added. "To Raven."

**someone on tumblr said that peter maximo only got 17 minutes and 30 seconds of screen time in all three of the movies he was in and he deserved much more**

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