

The Offshore Accounts

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/2311889) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/2311889>.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	X-Men: First Class (2011) - Fandom , X-Men: Days of Future Past (2014) - Fandom
Relationship:	Erik Lehnsherr/Charles Xavier
Characters:	Erik Lehnsherr , Charles Xavier , Azazel (X-Men) , Alex Summers , Angel Salvadore , Hank McCoy
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Mob , Erik is Crushing Harder than a 12-year Old Girl , Charles is a Professor , Charles is a Tease , Erik Has Feelings
Language:	English
Series:	Part 5 of The Associates
Stats:	Published: 2014-09-15 Completed: 2016-09-22 Words: 12,976 Chapters: 9/9

The Offshore Accounts

by [ikeracity](#), [Pangea](#)

Summary

A collection of ficlets in **The Associates** 'verse, usually posted to tumblr first before being cleaned up and archived here. Will be updated as need be!

- Translation into 中文-普通话 國語 available: [The Offshore Accounts](#) by [Glacier](#)

Charles/Erik - Erik catches Charles playing football

Rare is the day Erik actually makes it out of the office by 5:00 let alone dream of leaving any earlier, so when he sticks his head into the break room around 3:00 and sees that even his underlings are bored—Alex is in the midst of making some kind of tower out of candy wrappers from the vending machine, and Angel is actually snoozing where she's curled in one of the armchairs—Erik figures he can, for once, get away with ducking out early. There's nothing pressing left that requires his immediate attention, and his schedule tonight is clear of any meetings or personal house calls.

Charles should be home by now and the thought of surprising him is far more pleasing than it probably should be, but Erik's long since given up on any remains of self-denial when it comes to the correlation between Charles' happiness and his own satisfaction. He swings back through his office, shuffling together a stack of papers and slipping them into his briefcase, floats the short, finely-linked chain that hangs on the hook near the door, and then locks his office up for the night.

Erik whistles once for Rosie, and a second later he hears the excited scuffling of nails on the floor as the Doberman comes pelting out of the direction of Azazel's office, stubby little tail wagging madly. She knows better than to jump up on him when he's dressed like this, but Erik allows her to lick his hand and then ruffles her ears as he snaps the end of the chain onto her collar with his powers.

Since he has to pass by Azazel's office anyway to get to the elevator, Erik pauses in the doorway, Rosie coming to an obedient stop by his leg. "What were you doing with my dog?"

Azazel has the look of man who has spent the past two hours playing solitaire and isn't particularly bothered by his boss catching him—figuratively, for once, in this case—red-handed. "Nothing, nothing," he says with a sly grin, "just teaching sweet Rose a new trick."

"The last time you said that, it was when we left her with you for the day when we went to Six Flags and then Charles and I came home to discover Rosie was capable of using and flushing the toilet."

"Makes life easier, no?" Azazel grins. "Watch. Charles will love this trick. Rose," he calls, and beside Erik Rosie's ears perk up. Azazel forms a gun with his forefinger and thumb, pointing it at her from across his desk. "*Bang.*"

Rosie immediately presses her ears down flat against her head and then rolls over onto the ground, somehow making the entire act very dramatic, her paws up in the air.

"...Really," Erik says flatly after a long pause, and at the sound of his voice Rosie leaps back up to her feet, tail wagging and nosing at his pant leg. "No, do not smear your snot on me." As much as he—*grudgingly*—loves her, he does not need a large imprint of her nose on everything he owns. So far, this is a losing battle.

"Good dog, Rose," Azazel says with a veritable cackle, digging into one of his side drawers and tossing her a treat. She leaps up to catch it, swallowing it down in a second. Erik always wonders if she even tastes the treats she inhales.

"That had better not be bacon-flavored," Erik mutters, even though he actually doesn't care. "You're going to make my dog fat."

"I thought it was Charles' dog," Azazel grins.

Erik sighs. "I'm leaving," he says, giving Rosie's leash a gentle tug with his power to get her to come stand by his side again, "you know how to reach me if anything comes up."

"Have a good night, boss," Azazel says, flicking him a one-fingered salute, "and goodbye, sweet Rose."

"Her name is *Rosie*," Erik corrects him for the one thousandth time, even though he's almost positive that the only reason Azazel continues to say her name wrong is to get Erik to say the name *Rosie* out loud, endlessly entertained by the fact that Erik now owns a dog with that name.

Ignoring Azazel's laugh, Erik heads for the elevator with Rosie pacing along evenly at his side, leaving the chain of her leash limp with slack from where it connects to her collar and where Erik holds the other end with his powers hovering near his hip. His thoughts are already at home where Charles is, and all of the things they can do with both of them home so early tonight.

"Come on," he tells Rosie, "let's go see Charles." At Charles' name Rosie gives a happy little hop in her step, though she doesn't surge ahead like she used to. Training her to heel had been an interesting process, but Erik is largely pleased with how quickly she learns and how, though he'll never speak this out loud, she's honestly a good dog.

Half an hour later, however, when Erik unlocks the front door and releases Rosie off her leash at the same time, allowing her to bound excitedly inside, they're greeted by silence.

"Charles?" Erik calls, even when he doesn't feel the usual warm telepathic brush against his mind and when he stretches his power out through the house, he can't feel the metal band that's always warm on Charles' wrist. He can hear Rosie's nails clicking through the house as she searches for her favorite person, but it's very obvious that Charles isn't here.

Erik has a certain degree of paranoia—he wouldn't be the city's most feared and respected mob boss without it—but he's calm as he does a slow circuit through the living room, stepping over a chew toy or two, and then moves on to the kitchen. He mentally reviews Charles' schedule, but he's certain that Charles didn't have any late board meetings or extra tutoring sessions tonight.

There are no signs of a struggle, but that hardly means anything these days. There has to be *something*, though, because Charles is far too intelligent to let himself get kidnapped without leaving some kind of clue so Erik can follow him.

He's sliding one hand into his pocket, ready to pull out his phone and get Azazel, when Erik notices the note tacked onto the front of the fridge on top of the vastly ignored HOUSEHOLD RULES list meant for Rosie. As soon as he recognizes Charles' messy scrawl and not the cold, impersonal typeset of a ransom note, Erik will deny later that he lets out any kind of small breath in relief. He quickly moves across the room to read it, though why Charles didn't just *text* him like a normal 21st-century being is beyond him.

Gone down to the park! -CX. There's a small heart drawn in front of the C.

It's not one of their codes, so Charles must really be down at the park that's a couple blocks from their house. Erik looks over at Rosie, who is watching him from the doorway to the living room, head tilted inquisitively and still puzzled by Charles' absence. Erik doesn't blame her; Charles always beats them home and Rosie is accustomed to being greeted with kisses and a belly scratch and generally doted on as soon as she clears the doorway.

"Time for a walk," Erik tells her, floating up the leash in midair again invitingly, and Rosie spins around in a circle excitedly before sprinting over and allowing him to snap it back onto her collar.

Two blocks is a fast, easy distance to cover with Erik's long strides and Rosie trotting happily alongside him. The park is a small affair nestled in the heart of the neighborhood on what was previously a wide, empty lot, with a small, wandering trail circling its edges while in the middle is a sand pit with a small playground for children and a wider, grassier area that is generally used as a sports field. It's a weeknight but there are plenty of kids running around on the playground, shrieking with laughter, and Erik gives Rosie's leash a gentle tug in warning when her ears go up in interest.

"Let's find Charles," he reminds her, and that's all it takes to get her back on track, whole body practically wiggling in glee before she settles, sharp and alert.

Erik passes up the playground and makes for the field, where it looks like a group of people have gotten together a pickup soccer game. He has no doubt that this is where his missing telepath will be, and sure enough when he reaches forward with his metal sense he locates Charles' metal band, warm like always and when he strains, Erik can also feel that it's pressed up against a pulse that is elevated from the exertion of running back and forth across the grass chasing a black-and-white ball.

They come to a stop on the edge of the field to watch, and Rosie whines when she recognizes Charles, currently in control of the ball and laughing as he narrowly evades being trapped between two defenders on the other team, marked by their lack of red mesh scrimmage jerseys over their t-shirts. "Sit," Erik orders her absently, and Rosie obeys, sitting down next to him but still leaning forward with her ears up, every inch of her body attuned to Charles, trained on him like a homing beacon.

Erik can sympathize.

Charles flies down the field with the ball, outstripping the defenders, and Erik takes a good, long moment to size Charles up and admire his stocky but fit physique, and the way his broad shoulders fill out his t-shirt and how his thighs flex gloriously while he runs—and it should

be illegal for him to be wearing those *white*, of all colors, gym shorts, because the way his ass fills them out in the back is unfair.

He must have projected that last thought a little too loudly because Charles falters for a half-second right before he drives the ball towards the goal, marked out by two small orange cones, and it gives the goalie enough time to read right through him and dive in the right direction to make the save.

All of Charles' teammates groan while the other team cheers, but Charles is already tripping into Erik's head, his mind curling around Erik's with surprise-delight-affection, pressing phantom kisses across Erik's face. *Hello, darling, you're home early today—oh, you don't need me for something do you?*

No, Erik replies, *there's nothing going on at the office*. He sends an image of Rosie's puzzled face when she couldn't find Charles at home. *You worried the dog*. Underneath that, buried deeper down, is the added, *You worried me too*, but Erik doesn't let that part project.

Naturally, Charles reads right through him. *Poor darlings*, he murmurs as the goalie launches the ball back across the field and everyone sprints to follow it, though he does sound apologetic. *I would've texted you but I figured I'd still beat you home anyway after this. The Biology Club felt like a game of football and I couldn't say no.*

Thanks for the note anyway, Erik answers dryly.

Just in case, Charles says cheerfully, and he gives a wink and blows them a kiss as he runs by. *We won't be much longer.*

We'll wait, Erik answers idly, showing Charles that he's really in no hurry. It's a nice afternoon, warm but with no humidity, and there's a cool breeze blowing too. Erik can only really think of a few other things that are better than watching a flushed, sweaty Charles running around in athletic gear, and all of them still have a lot to do with a flushed, sweaty Charles.

Picking up on that last thought, Charles laughs. He's come to a stop at about midfield, resting while the ball is kicked around closer to the other goal and waiting for it to come back his way. While Erik watches he deliberately bends over under the guise of stretching, sticking his perfectly round ass out in those obscene white shorts. *You'll have to tell me all about that later, darling.*

Charles, Erik growls, mostly to get him to laugh again and is rewarded when Charles does just that, straightening again and throwing a cheeky grin over his shoulder.

I'll see you soon, he promises, and then allows their connection to drift off while he refocuses on the game.

Erik and Rosie stay on the sidelines to watch. Both teams seem pretty evenly matched, though it soon becomes clear that some of the students are better suited to their microscopes in the lab than playing sports—Erik makes a point of grinning widely at Hank McCoy when the grad student catches sight of him and goes pale, and Erik has to muffle a snort when a

second later McCoy practically faceplants into the grass, ball rocketing past him during his distraction to the disappointed shouts of his teammates.

Charles is noisy, which shouldn't surprise Erik given how loud he can get in bed, but it's nevertheless charming to hear him shouting orders and directions at his teammates when they have the ball, and riling up his opponents all while he dives into the thick of the action, blocking passes there or swooping in to steal the ball almost fearlessly and narrowly missing several collisions. The game turns into less of a scoring game and more of a game of passing and keep-away, the ball just getting knocked back and forth while everyone but a couple of the defenders stand still as the students begin to tire out. Charles keeps up with them easily even though he's got a handful of years on even the grad students, and it's ridiculous how proud that makes Erik, like he's a parent at a little league game.

Generally every emotion Charles makes Erik feel is ridiculous, because he once swore to never get attached to anyone and allow anything to cloud his judgement. Charles *himself* is ridiculous, but Erik has never loved anyone more.

You're ridiculous too, Erik, Charles says with fond amusement, flitting through Erik's thoughts like he belongs there, and he does. He's always in Erik's thoughts, and Erik is lucky enough that sometimes that means literally, too, so Charles can read in his head what Erik's too wary and guarded to say out loud, where words can be taken and used against him. In his mind it's safe, just between him and Charles, which is all that really matters.

Erik can tell Charles doesn't entirely mean to project the sensation of his blush, the feeling all soft and warm with affection so potent it makes Erik's chest hurt, and he brushes a feather-light sensation of a kiss on Erik's cheek before turning back to the game again. Erik digs his heels into the grass, even though he vanquished the instinct to run a long time ago.

At one point Charles makes a dive for the ball, throwing out one leg and sliding a few feet across the grass on his knee to kick the ball away from a girl who's finally broken away to attempt a goal. Erik is joltingly reminded of how Charles had barely been able to put weight on that leg after being shot, and for a moment he holds his breath, half-expecting a cry of pain.

"No fair, professor!" someone else calls, but everyone is generally laughing while Charles climbs back up to his feet with a grin. "We agreed on no sliding tackles!"

"Sorry, Chloe," Charles answers with a laugh of his own, pleased with himself, "I can't help but want to prove that I'm still just as spry as you lot."

Be careful on your leg, Erik warns him, not quite able to banish the image of Charles limping around the house with his cane from his mind. It's been a few months since the shooting happened, but Erik sometimes wakes up in the middle of the night in cold sweat. Too close. That had been far too close to the chest.

Charles looks over at him from across the field as he wipes his leg off. He has a long streak of green staining his white shorts now and his expression is perfectly solemn, at odds with everyone else's carefree faces, though fortunately no one seems to notice. *I always will*, he

promises gently with a wave of assurance so strong that it smoothes out the rougher edges of Erik's anxiety and Erik immediately, foolishly, feels better, *don't worry*.

"Alright," Charles calls out loud cheerfully, "I know most of you still have lots of homework you need to get done, like the essay for my class, for example—" a bunch of the students groan good-naturedly, "—so how about one last round, winner-take-all, first team to score wins?"

"Let's do it!"

Everyone spreads out, Charles starting with the ball and passing it sideways to Hank. Hank fumbles with it for a moment, but then gains a little confidence as he brings it under control, moving up the field. A defender rushes at him and Hank shoots the ball backwards but Chloe intercepts it on the way, and the back-forth gameplay that soccer is infamous for begins. It reminds Erik a little of ping pong at times, though he's sure Charles would have a lot to say on the subject if he ever dared the voice the thought.

Erik keeps his eyes mostly on Charles, admiring the way he moves and the way his body works, always in motion even when the ball is on the opposite side of the field. There's always something inherently graceful and poised about Charles no matter what he's doing, even though he's a self-described harebrained clutz, which never fails to make Erik roll his eyes. Charles can get amazingly scatterbrained, especially when he's deeply entrenched in his research and forgets to eat, but he's not clumsy. Erik can attest to that.

The game ends when one of the girls on Charles' team slams the ball past the goalie and scores, and all the players break out in cheers. Erik continues to wait patiently while Charles goes around congratulating his teammates and thanking everyone for coming out, giving out a few last-minute reminders to those who are in any of his classes and helping retrieve the orange goal cones and collect the mesh jerseys. The students all scatter, walking off in twos and threes to find where they all parked on the street to get back to campus and apartments, and finally Charles is turning back to Erik and Rosie, holding his arms out wide with a grin to match.

Erik drops Rosie's leash and she's off like a bullet, barreling across the field to Charles. He drops down to one knee just before she reaches him and she knocks him over with force of her impact, climbing on top of him and licking his face relentlessly while he laughs. Hands shoved into his pockets, Erik approaches at a much more reasonable pace, trying not to smile but his lips twitch once or twice, helpless in the face of the upwelling of pure tenderness that swamps him as he watches Charles wrestle around in the grass with their dog.

"Good game," he says calmly when he comes to a stop next to where Charles has finally flopped down on his back panting in the grass, Rosie lying perpendicularly across his chest with her tongue lolling happily.

Erik willingly loses the battle not to smile when Charles grins up at him, blue eyes bright and happy and just a little knowing, but he finds that he doesn't really mind, not if it involves Charles. Erik smiles back, his chest aching again with how much he loves Charles, and then bends down to help get Rosie off him and pull him back up, so they can all go home together, where their little family belongs.

Charles/Erik - Charles is the only one who can make Erik wait

The other patrons know better than to approach him.

Erik Lehnsherr isn't known for his patience, least of all during business—and he certainly looks like he's here for business tonight, standing by the bar and nursing a drink, dressed impeccably in his perfectly tailored suit, his disarmingly handsome face icily expressionless. Even the barkeep is wary, keeping one eye on Lehnsherr's drink but otherwise making no move to attempt small-talk even though Lehnsherr is a regular and has been for the past ten years.

Every time the door opens, all gazes in the room flicker between the newcomer and Lehnsherr, watching and waiting. Is this the man who dared make Lehnsherr wait? Is this the woman who's left Lehnsherr hanging for almost an hour now?

Each time, Lehnsherr doesn't even look up and a silent collective sigh of relief can almost be felt throughout the room. They all know it's without hope, however. Sooner or later Lehnsherr's mysterious partner will arrive, and no doubt they'll all be wanting cover.

Lehnsherr checks his watch. Adjusts his cufflinks. Sips his drink. All casual, easy motions, performed with no hurry or change in expression. They do nothing to dispel the notion of underlying impatience, and what has to be underlying fury that the gestures must be hiding.

And then he looks up, straightening.

All eyes fly back to the door. It opens a second later, admitting a windswept and devilishly handsome man who strides in with a bounce in his step, as if unaware of the death sentence he's stamped on his own forehead. His eyes light on Lehnsherr at once, who still looms imposingly at the bar, and a smile blooms on his face as he strides over.

Everyone watches while trying to seem like they aren't. This is it. Lehnsherr will have the poor fool gutted.

"Sorry I'm late," he says, and he isn't speaking loudly at all but in the anticipatory silence of the room he might as well be shouting. "That last Q-and-A ended up going a little longer than I expected. I'm glad I stayed, though, she brought up some excellent points on the new reform."

And then, to the muffled sound of several jaws dropping open, Lehnsherr *smiles back*. "Another quarter hour and I would've sent Azazel to find you," he answers, but the words are warm and teasing, amusement glimmering like hidden gemstones in otherwise barren rock. "Luckily for you, I know your tendency to be...caught up in things."

"Lucky me," the other man parrots dryly, but then leans up expectantly into Lehnsherr's personal bubble of space and is granted a kiss; short and chaste, but there's deeper emotion behind it if the way Lehnsherr's fingers brush gently along the other man's wrist means anything at all.

"Dinner's waiting," Lehnsherr says when they part, and his hand drops next to rest at the small of the other man's back, ushering him down along the bar and past their captive audience towards the private dining rooms in the back of the restaurant, safe from prying eyes.

Lucky him indeed is the opinion of everyone present once the two have vanished from view, for lucky is the only word to describe the only man in the city who can keep Erik Lehnsherr waiting, earn a *smile* for finally showing up, and live to tell the tale.

Charles/Erik - Erik comes home after a long day

The house is dark when Erik lets himself in, moving careful and slow with the combination of not wanting to be loud and his own weariness that tugs at his bones and makes his muscles lax, drained of strength and energy. Today has been impossibly long, the meeting with the Luciano syndicate running far later than either sides had anticipated, both parties stubborn and unwilling to yield. Erik had won out in the end, refusing to cede any territory and making it very clear that he had the power and resources to crush Luciano and his men if it came down to direct conflict.

They'd come to a shaky, tenuous agreement at long last, neither side fully satisfied, but Erik had been all too eager to get out of there and go home. Right now he wants nothing more than Charles, their bed, and his pillow, in that exact order.

Normally the sound of the front door opening is always cause for Rosie to come running to investigate, but so far there's no sign of her; no click-click-click of nails on the floor heralding her approach. Erik fumbles with the lock for a moment, crunching it into place with his powers with perhaps a little more force than necessary, and then moves off down the hall, cursing under his breath when he accidentally knocks into the side table.

He steadies it before it can topple over and cause even more noise, setting his briefcase down on top of it. There's a faint glow of light coming from the living room so curiously, Erik makes his way towards it, wondering if Charles actually stayed up to wait for him. He comes to a stop in the doorway of the living room, and once his eyes adjust Erik has to give a fond smile at the scene that greets him.

Charles is sprawled out on his back on the couch in nothing but his boxers and a thin t-shirt, hibernating laptop perched on his stomach while one arm is thrown up limply across his face, fast asleep. Rosie is curled up at the other end of the couch next to his feet, though she's lifted her head with her ears perked by the time Erik arrives in the doorway, alerted by all the noise he'd made but unwilling to abandon Charles. She stares across the room at Erik solemnly, happy to see him by the way her stubby tail wags, but still keeps her spot next to Charles even though she knows she's not allowed up on the furniture.

Erik feels some of the weight lift off his shoulders as he studies Charles in the glow of the single lamp left on in the room, content that his little family is warm and safe, far away from any of the underworld scum of the city. He walks across the room, reaching over to scratch Rosie behind the ears while she sniffs at him and licks his hand but keeps his gaze on Charles, watching his chest rise and fall with the slow, deep breaths of sleep.

He can't help reaching out with his other hand to trace the soft, pale and freckled skin of Charles' forearm leading up to the silver band at his wrist that glints in the light. Charles shifts slightly at the touch, his telepathy flickering through Erik's mind and immediately judging him as a familiar, non-threat, so Charles settles again with a soft sigh.

“Stay here,” Erik murmurs to Rosie, giving her one last pat before dragging himself away from the couch. Rosie watches him go, still sitting up and alert, but she’s good—she stays, guarding Charles while Erik moves back down the hall and into their bedroom.

He strips out of his suit quickly and efficiently, leaving everything in a pile on the floor that would no doubt make Azazel weep but Erik hardly cares, not when he’s this tired and has a soft, warm telepath waiting for him. He digs through one of their drawers—it’s hard to tell in the dark—and finds a pair of boxers and pulls them on, pausing only to yank back the comforter and sheets on the bed before stumbling back out of the bedroom to return to the living room.

Charles and Rosie are exactly as he left them, and Rosie watches intently as Erik carefully lifts Charles’ laptop away, closing the lid and setting it down on the coffee table out of the way. Then he leans over Charles, gently pulling his arm off his face and bending down to press a kiss against his throat, right over his steady pulse.

Hm? Charles wakes slightly, though his mental voice is heavy with sleep. Erik feels him rifle through his mind in another quick brush of telepathy, but his arms lift automatically to wrap around Erik’s neck. *Welcome home.* He pushes a warm feeling of *glad-love-missedyou-hi* over to Erik, and Erik smiles again.

“Hold on to me,” Erik murmurs, and Charles doesn’t answer but Erik feels his grip tighten just a little. He slides his arms between Charles and the cushions, scooping him up in one smooth motion and wobbling only a little as he straightens.

Charles turns his face sideways to press his nose into Erik’s chest, letting out another soft exhale that makes Erik laugh. There’s nothing quite like a sleepy telepath, warm and pliant and tactile as an octopus.

“Come on,” Erik says to Rosie, jerking his chin forward, and Rosie unfolds herself and leaps down from the couch, leading the way back to the bedroom in a happy trot. Erik follows behind her more slowly, careful with his burden and twisting sideways in order to avoid knocking either of them into the wall when he passes through doorways. He reaches back absently with his power and clicks off the lamp in the living room to plunge the house into full darkness.

It’s only a few more steps to the edge of their bed, and Erik puts a knee down on the mattress to lever himself up, letting Charles’ solid weight bear them both down forward onto the soft sheets. Charles shifts, scooting himself backwards towards the pillows, and this is why Erik has learned to change out of his day clothes before attempting to carry Charles to bed—Charles clings onto him and drags Erik with him, pulling Erik down into the bed too.

Erik goes willingly and they arrange themselves comfortably on their sides, Erik throwing one leg across Charles’ and Charles snuggling in close to Erik’s chest, plastering their bodies together. Erik reaches down to throw at least one sheet across them and then drops his arm down behind Charles’ back to hold onto him and keep him close. He ends up with his nose buried in Charles’ hair and he inhales deeply, breathing in the clean, fresh scent of Charles’ shampoo that has become so familiar and comforting, something that means *home*.

The end of the bed dips when Roise hops up, and Erik doesn't have the heart to tell her to get down as she curls up by his feet. He'll let her get away with it this time. She's been good, keeping Charles company all night while Erik was gone, and never mind the fact that she's always good and Erik is always telling himself that he'll let it slide this time.

Goodnight, he presses gently into Charles' mind, his projection skills far more refined compared to what they were back when he and Charles first met. He bussess a kiss against the top of Charles' hair and then lifts his chin so that Charles' head tucks beneath it.

Love you, Charles conveys, not exactly in words and more through the feeling of it, because it's not something they say aloud, leaving it implied; but as Charles pours warmth and contentment into Erik through their mental bond, Erik feels like he could immerse himself in Charles forever. They don't need to say the words, not when it's something so fundamentally true it feels like it's wired in Erik's bones, intrinsic as his marrow.

Erik lets the feeling reverberate between them, wrapped together mentally as they are physically, and they drift off to sleep at last, lulled by the tides of *safe, happy, love*.

Charles/Erik - One missed call

Chapter Summary

Charles gets out of class to find he has one missed call from Erik.

Charles had been nursing a minor headache all afternoon, so when his students started to pack up a few minutes early as they always did, he let them go. As they piled out the door, he erased his notes on the board, turned off the projector, and shut down the computer. Gathering his things, he flicked the lights off and closed the door.

Outside, he pulled his phone out of his bag and was surprised to see that he had one missed call from Erik. It had come in thirty minutes ago, right in the middle of Charles's lecture. He frowned—Erik never called during a class. He had Charles's schedule so he knew when Charles wouldn't answer.

Unless something had happened. Unless he'd needed Charles.

Heartbeat picking up, Charles strode rapidly down the hall toward his office. He itched to call Erik back immediately, but if there really *was* something wrong, he didn't want to deal with it in a hallway, in full view of passing students and professors. In any case, it was probably nothing. If something really had happened, Azazel or Alex would have come to pick him up. They wouldn't have stopped at just one phone call.

Still, Charles's gut churned uneasily. Ever since he'd met Erik, he'd learned that breaks in routine were dangerous. Breaks in routine meant something was off.

"Professor Xavier!"

He continued walking, hoping whoever was calling his name would think he hadn't heard them and give up. No such luck—footsteps hurried up behind him, and a moment later, Hank was at his side, smiling. "Professor! I've been meaning to catch you all day. Do you have a minute? I wanted to talk to you about the lab results—the mass spec spat out some peaks I didn't recognize—"

"Later," Charles cut in. When Hank faltered, Charles made an effort at softening his tone and paused to grab Hank's shoulder and squeeze it gently. "I'm sorry, it's just not a good time right now. I have a call I need to take and I'm already late. Send me an email tonight and I'll get back to you, all right?"

"O—okay."

"Perfect." Charles smiled wanly. "I'll see you later."

He could feel Hank's curiosity and confusion as he hurried away, but he didn't have time to deal with that at the moment. He slammed into his office, shoved the door shut, and then dialed Erik's number, his heart galloping in his chest. Nothing was wrong, he told himself. If something was wrong, he would've heard about it, right? But he couldn't fathom why Erik had called him in the middle of class. The unexpectedness of it made him nervous.

"Hello?"

"Erik!" Charles let out the breath he'd been holding. "Is everything all right?"

"Everything's fine." In fact, Erik sounded as if he was in a fairly good mood. "I closed a deal with an associate, and we had a celebratory drink. When are you coming over to the office? Aren't you done now?"

"I am," Charles harrumphed. "But I still have some paperwork to deal with. Why did you call me?"

"Call you?"

"Earlier. Half an hour ago, in the middle of my class."

"Oh, that." Erik sounded vaguely sheepish. Just when Charles was about to demand if he was really all right, Erik admitted, "I missed your voice. I called so I could hear your voicemail message."

For a long, long moment, Charles just stood there, a tangle of emotions trapped in his chest. He couldn't speak, overcome with a hot, ridiculous fondness for this silly man he called his own. Erik had called just to hear his voice. They'd hardly been apart for a day and Erik had *missed* him.

"That's...so sappy I need a minute," Charles said finally.

"Shut up," Erik muttered.

"Honestly, that's the most sentimental thing I think I've ever heard anyone say. So you *do* have a heart underneath the tough façade."

"Say one more word and you're not invited over anymore."

"Invited over to where?" Charles laughed. "We live together, you idiot."

Erik hung up. Rolling his eyes, Charles called him back and said, when he picked up, "I'm sorry, I was just worried something had happened, okay? I'm glad you're all right."

"Fine," Erik said grumpily.

"I'm sorry I laughed at you," Charles soothed, biting back a smile. "Can I still come over after I'm finished?"

"Only if you bring food," Erik grumbled.

“Pizza?”

“Fine.”

“I love you,” Charles cajoled. “You know that.”

“Just bring the pizza,” Erik growled, and hung up again.

Charles laughed and went to dial the pizza parlor.

Charles/Erik - "Wrong hole!"

Chapter Notes

Written for the [Smut Sentence Starters](#) meme for the prompt "Wrong hole!"

"Wrong hole!" Charles says suddenly, so stricken that Erik immediately freezes. "You have to do it right or otherwise it'll hurt."

"I know how to do it," Erik snaps tersely, "and I thought I *was* doing it right."

"You aren't," Charles says at once, and then lifts a brow when Erik shoots him a look. "I think I would definitely know better in this case, don't you think?"

You think you know better in every case, Erik thinks very loudly, *and we both know how wrong **that** is.*

"Just let me do it," Charles says, exasperated and choosing to ignore Erik's mental aside. "It'll go quicker than you trying to fumble around with it."

"Fine," Erik says, sorely tempted to stalk away. "I don't see why you had to get plastic instead of metal."

"It was the only one in stock that didn't look utterly ridiculous, believe me," Charles says, "and it was time for a new one so I couldn't wait. We can go online together later and shop for one that has all the metal you like."

"Consider it a date," Erik answers flatly, and Charles rolls his eyes.

"Romantic." He straightens, giving Rosie a pat on the head. "There you are, darling. Now your collar won't be tight enough to choke you. It's the fourth hole, not the third hole," he adds to Erik, showing him the buckle. "It looks slightly looser on her but if you use the third hole I've noticed that she tends to get short of breath easier."

"No more Petco collars at all, then, if they're not fitting her properly," Erik says darkly while Rosie wags her stubby tail and licks his hand. Fortunately her leash is still metal, at least, so Erik clips the end onto the plastic hook on the collar with his powers. "Shall we?"

Charles double-checks that the car's locked and then loops his arm through Erik's. "Let's go for a walk," he says for Rosie's benefit, so that her ears perk up and she bounds ahead in excitement towards the little path that circles the pond, leaving Charles and Erik to stroll along arm-in-arm in her wake.

Charles/Erik - "I think the condom broke."

Chapter Notes

Written for the [Smut Sentence Starters](#) meme for the prompt **"I think the condom broke."**

"I think the condom broke," Erik says without preamble.

"What?" Charles demands, scandalized. "So does this mean-?"

"There's probably going to be twins," Erik agrees with a nod.

"I can't believe it," Charles says in awe, trying to wrap his brain around it. He walks further into the room, dumping his satchel on the side table and kicking off his shoes before skirting around the couch to sink down beside Erik. "This changes everything."

"I know," Erik agrees, lifting an arm so Charles can snuggle into his side, "especially since Mark is still in a coma."

"Now I'm mad I had to stay in the lab late," Charles complains, "I would've told Hank I had an appointment or something if I'd known this episode was going to be such a huge twist."

"I told Azazel that Rosie had to go to the vet," Erik admits, and Charles has to laugh at the mental image of feared mob boss Erik Lehnsherr lying to his second-in-command so he could go home to catch an episode of his favorite soap opera.

Not that Charles has any room to talk. They've both become a little obsessed, especially since they'd originally only watched an episode at random a few weeks ago while crashed out on the couch after a long day, zoned out and mindless. They'd watched a second episode a night later as more of a joke to poke fun at the storyline and dramatics, but then they'd watched a third. And a fourth. And a fifth.

Two months and box sets of the first three seasons later, Charles thinks it's official that they're no longer watching as just a joke. What's really amusing is how much *Erik's* gotten into the storyline too, which is something Charles never imagined happening for *any* kind of show. Erik's never shown much interest in TV, and digs his heels in at even taking Charles to the movie theater to see the latest action flick. But he's just as hooked as Charles is on this silly little soap opera full of cliches and plot holes, and isn't afraid to admit it—at least only to Charles, where his secret is definitely safe.

"Don't worry," Erik tells him, "they're re-airing the episode again at 11."

“Good,” Charles declares, reaching across him to grab the bowl of popcorn, “don’t tell me anything else.”

Charles/Erik - AU of the AU: Erik takes Rosie to Veterinarian!Charles

Chapter Notes

Based on and inspired by [garnetquyen's comic strip](#) that was just too hilarious to pass up! :')

He has Angel do the research, figuring she's the one most likely to actually *call* the place and talk to someone rather than just reading Yelp reviews online. She's efficient as ever, and gets back to him that afternoon, sliding into his office and dropping a printed-out brochure on top of his desk with a flourish.

"You're gonna want to take her to this one."

Erik raises an eyebrow. The logo for Happy Pets Vet Clinic blares up at him in bright font, bordered on either side by clip art of a smiling cat and a smiling dog. "I want a seasoned *professional*, Angel, not someone who just wants to give every animal they meet a hug."

"Rosie does need a hug, don't you, baby," Angel says, bending down to do just that as Rosie happily trots over from her bed by the window to greet her. "Read the brochure, Erik. This vet knows what he's doing."

Scanning through the pamphlet does at least confirm the vet responsible for the tragic business name at least has all his degrees and certifications in order, if the short bio on the back page is to be trusted. Charles Xavier, D.V.M. almost sounds like he's *overqualified* to be running a place called Happy Pets Vet Clinic. The tiny *M* insignia in the bottom corner means he's a mutant, too, so Angel really has done her homework.

"Trust me," Angel says, looking up from scratching Rosie's ears to grin at Erik, "you're *really* gonna want to take her there."

"Fine," Erik relents, because he's expecting a phone call from the senator he keeps in his back pocket any minute now, "make an appointment, and put it on my schedule once it's confirmed."

"You got it, boss," Angel says with a mini-salute, giving Rosie one last pat before swanning her way back out of his office to do his bidding.

Angel's never let him down before, so Erik forces down his skepticism and shoves the brochure into a drawer of his desk, and by the time his desk phone rings with a call from a

very nervous elected official, Erik's put the entire matter out of his mind.

*

Rosie's appointment turns out to fall on the following Tuesday, which according to Angel was the first available appointment time she could be squeezed in. Angel herself can't come since it happens to be her first day off in two weeks, so bright and early Tuesday morning Erik finds himself outside the Happy Pets Vet Clinic with Rosie, Azazel, and Alex.

"Why exactly do I have to be here?" Alex asks, blinking the sleep out of his eyes.

"If Rosie poops, someone has to pick it up," Azazel says with a shrug, not even looking up from his phone.

Alex scowls, looking like he'd love nothing better than to tell Azazel to go fuck himself.

"Why are *you* here?" he asks instead, because he knows better.

"...Moral support," Azazel decides on with a grin after a few seconds, and even Alex looks dubious.

Ignoring them, Erik gives Rosie a gentle tug on her leash and walks her towards the front doors of the clinic. She obediently falls into step beside him, alert and attentive but calm and at ease as Erik pulls open the door with his powers to usher him inside, Azazel and Alex filing in behind them.

At first glance, the front room of the clinic is chaos. Animals of every kind, ranging from rodents to reptiles, fill glass tanks that are stacked neatly along one entire wall. The front desk has three different bird perches along its counter, and two separate fish tanks. There's an entire apparatus-*thing* in one corner housing at least five different cats, all of them staring at Erik and Rosie suspiciously as they come to a halt in the center of the room. An orange-haired vet tech who looks just as half-awake as Alex does is on the phone behind the desk, trying to jot notes down with a pen that the large green parrot on the closest bird perch is leaning over to gnaw on at the same time.

The door on the other side of the room that presumably leads back to the examination rooms opens, and out steps the most ridiculous-looking man Erik has ever seen in his entire life. He's in a white lab coat, but there's an iguana with a head the size of Erik's fist sprawled out across his shoulders, and a giant white cockatoo perched on his head, nestled in his floppy brown hair. He's holding a plump corgi under one arm and in his free hand he's carrying a clipboard, which he quickly crosses over to the front desk and puts down in front of the vet tech.

"I'm going to need new orders on all these when you have a minute, we're running low," he says, and the poor kid behind the desk nods absently as he tries futilely to yank his pen away from the parrot again. The man with the cockatoo on his head turns around, and when he

catches sight of Erik and Rosie he smiles. “Hello, welcome to our pet clinic. Please excuse us, we’re a little short-handed today. My other vet tech Hank is out with a cold.” He shuffles the corgi in his arms around in order to be able to offer Erik his hand. “I’m Dr. Charles Xavier.”

“Erik Lehnsherr,” Erik says as his something inside his stomach flutters wildly as they clasp hands to shake. Charles’ palms are broad and warm, covered in just as many freckles as the ones dotting the bridge of his nose and beneath his vivid blue eyes and somewhere in the back of his mind Erik is furiously indignant—Angel hadn’t mentioned the vet was absolutely *gorgeous*.

“And this must be Rosie,” Charles continues brightly, letting go of Erik’s hand to offer it out to Rosie. It takes all of Erik’s might not to keep his grip. “Oh, aren’t you a darling?” he says with a laugh as Rosie licks his fingers, before turning to curiously touch noses with the corgi. “She’s stunning, Mr. Lehnsherr.”

Erik snaps out of his strange daze. “Please,” he says, putting on his best smile—never mind that Angel always says it makes him look like a lecherous shark—and leaning forward a little more into Charles’ space when he straightens. “Call me Erik. And I’d like for you to be my—I mean *Rosie’s* personal doctor forever.”

“What?” Charles asks distantly, looking up at him with a slightly confused, slightly mesmerized expression, but then the cockatoo on his head screeches loudly at Erik, making them both jump as it flaps its wings wildly and snaps its stubby beak at Erik’s face. “Oh, enough, Logan!” Charles says, broken from the spell. He steps neatly out of Erik’s personal space to fuss with the bird, moving over to the counter and cajoling it into transferring onto the last empty bird perch. “Sorry about that,” he says over his shoulder, clearing his throat, “Logan’s usually very polite, I don’t know what’s gotten into him.”

“It’s fine,” Erik says absently, gaze running down the length of Charles’ back. He wishes the lab coat wasn’t long enough to cover—and therefore obscure—Charles’ ass.

“Ah,” he hears Azazel murmur appreciatively somewhere behind him, “spring has come.”

“I’m going to murder Angel,” Alex mutters.

“Well, Erik, we have a few forms we like you to fill out on your first visit,” Charles says, grabbing a packet of papers sitting in a tray on the counter and turning around to hold them out to Erik with a more composed expression, “and once you take care of that, just let Sean know and he’ll take you on back to one of the examination rooms.”

Azazel reaches around Erik to grab the papers. “We will be handling the forms, Dr. Xavier,” he purrs, giving Charles a very obvious once-over as he shoves the packet into Alex’s hands, “you can take Erik back right now in the meantime.”

“I see,” Charles says slowly, gaze flickering between the three of them.

“I have a full schedule today,” Erik says smoothly, stepping up to take Charles gently by the elbow and steer him towards the door, “so my associates are here to help make things run a

little faster.”

“I suppose that’s fine,” Charles says, eyebrows raised, but he gently shakes himself loose from Erik’s grip and steps forward to lead the way. Erik lets him go, gliding after him with Rosie at his side. Charles opens the door for them and gestures them in. “Head on down to room D. I’ll be right in, I just need to get these two settled.” He jerks his chin to the iguana on his shoulders and the corgi still happily hanging in his grip.

“We’ll be waiting,” Erik assures him with another slow smile, and Charles throws him another curious look before heading down a different hallway.

The door to the waiting room swings shut, cutting off Erik’s view of a winking Azazel exaggeratedly waving goodbye and a grumbling Alex settling down in one of the chairs to fill out the paperwork. Erik takes Rosie down to the fourth examination room, taking off her leash once they’re inside and leaning against the counter to wait, mind whirling as Rosie starts sniffing around.

He’s not sure whether Angel deserves a pay raise for finding this place, or a pay dock for not explicitly mentioning the vet in question is exactly Erik’s type. She clearly thinks she’s funny, trying to play matchmaker, only Erik can’t find it within himself to be as annoyed as he probably should be—Charles is too perfect.

They’ll have to do some digging. For starters, they’ll have to make sure Charles is clean—no associations with any of the other organizations in town, and no chance connections to the police. Knowing Angel, she probably has a manila folder already sitting on her desk with all pertinent information because she’s anticipating Erik asking.

But Erik will also need to know more. Charles’ habits. Favorite restaurants. The way he likes his coffee—or tea, maybe, going by the accent. Does he live in the city, or make a commute every day? Clearly he’s an animal lover, but does he love sports? Books? Collecting stamps? Does he even like men? It will be admittedly disappointing if he doesn’t, but if he does...

That front waiting room is crowded, with all of the tanks and animals squeezed in together. Erik will have to take a look at his accounts and see how large of a donation he can afford to make to the clinic, so in turn Charles can afford to move into a bigger space. Clarice knows a good real estate agent; Erik will have her put them on it, and find Charles something better that’s also even deeper within Erik’s territory. That Erik has gone this long without realizing the existence of this little clinic on the edge of his realm is nearly unforgivable.

Erik’s jolted from his thoughts as the door opens and Charles comes back in, sans iguana and corgi. He’s carrying a new clipboard and Erik straightens to smile at him, but as soon as the door snaps shut Charles tosses the clipboard onto the examination table and folds his arms.

“Is this some kind of test?” he asks flatly.

“Test?” Erik asks, faintly amused. He thinks he knows where this is going.

“You’re obviously from the mob,” Charles says in a clipped voice, “so I’d like to know if this is some kind of test, and if you’re trying to see if you can intimidate me for some kind of

racketeering scheme.”

Erik laughs. “That’s a large assumption, Dr. Xavier. Clearly intimidation won’t work on you.”

“I’m obligated by law to inform you I’m a telepath,” Charles says tightly, “so I know who you are, Mr. Lehnsherr.”

A telepath. How *interesting*, Erik thinks, loudly enough to make Charles blink. “Erik,” he corrects Charles pleasantly, “and isn’t it against the law for you to be reading my mind?”

“Not if I feel the need to protect myself,” Charles says warily, and Erik doesn’t blame him—one huge telepathy lawsuit would probably put this little clinic under. Luckily for him, Erik isn’t interested in suing.

“Don’t worry, Dr. Xavier,” Erik says, stepping towards him slowly, broadcasting all of his motions in case Charles is still feeling cornered. “I’m not here to extort you. I really only did come to make sure Rosie is up to date on her vaccinations. You have my permission, this time, to read my mind to see for yourself.”

Charles visibly makes the decision to stand his ground as Erik approaches, squaring his shoulders and keeping his arms tightly folded, even when he has to tilt his head back a little in order to maintain eye contact. Erik doesn’t feel Charles in his mind, but that just means Charles is powerful, which at this point is just icing on a very appetizing-looking cake. Erik lays out his thoughts in order for easy reading—that Charles is a telepath is making it *so* much easier to get everything out on the table—and grins when Charles suddenly flushes.

“I—I don’t *date* my patients,” he sputters, taking a step back and turning to fumble with the pages of his clipboard, flustered.

“Then it’s a good thing I’m not your patient, isn’t it,” Erik says, still grinning. If Charles wasn’t interested, he would’ve brushed Erik off with a *sorry, I’m straight*.

“I don’t date my patients’ *owners*,” Charles says pointedly. “And certainly not mob bosses.”

“Now that’s unfair,” Erik says, spreading his arms. “I’m very interested in putting you on retainer as Rosie’s vet.”

“Then you can call the office whenever you’d like to make an appointment like everyone else,” Charles says dryly, turning around to face him again. He’s composed himself, but his cheeks are still slightly pink. “I already have a job, Mr. Lehnsherr, I’m not looking to be hired.”

“Erik,” Erik reminds him again patiently. “And fine, I’ll do that.”

“And if you don’t respect my boundaries I can make you forget about this place entirely,” Charles says grimly, even as he allows Rosie to lick his palm. “I will not be intimidated into a relationship.”

“But you *can* be *convinced*,” Erik says triumphantly with another grin. “And I wonder, are you powerful enough to make everyone in my organization forget your clinic too? My

employees are the ones who referred you to me, after all. Even if I mysteriously forget, they won't, unless you have a far reach."

Charles harrumphs. "Good luck," he says shortly, bending down to run his hands along Rosie's back and flanks, feeling out her muscles and bone structure. "And I don't have to explain my mutation to you."

"Certainly not," Erik says breezily. He grabs onto the metal clip of the clipboard and floats it over to Charles just as he straightens to reach for it.

Charles snatches it out of the air, pulling a pen out of his front pocket and scribbling down a few notes. "You know, most people get nervous when a telepath threatens to erase their memories," he says without looking up, "and I can't tell if you aren't because you really don't care, or if you're just plain arrogant."

"You could always read my mind and find out," Erik says, and Charles scoffs.

"No thank you. Come here, Rosie, step onto the scale for me, there's a good girl."

"Maybe next time," Erik says idly.

"Boundaries, Mr. Lehnsherr," Charles says frostily, gaze fixated on the scale's digital numbers until they even out with Rosie's weight. He writes that down, and then pulls out a penlight to check Rosie's ears and nose.

Erik swallows down a laugh. He can definitely play the long game. If Charles was truly uncomfortable, he'd do exactly as he's warned and erase himself and the clinic from Erik's mind. Until that happens, Erik can work on wearing him down.

"I'll need a copy of Rosie's papers," Charles says, either unaware of or flat-out ignoring Erik's thoughts. "She's in good health right now physically, but I'll need a record of her vaccinations and other shots she's had in order to see where she's at with those, and if and when she needs another round."

"Do you have an email?" Erik asks slyly. "I can have them scanned to you."

"There are business cards out at the front desk that'll have the office email on them," Charles says flatly. He checks off a couple boxes, and continues in a businesslike tone, "Are you giving her regular heartworm prevention and flea medication?"

"No, I'll need your recommendations for those," Erik says, patting Rosie on the head as she comes over to stand beside him again. "Please."

"Sean can help you with that. We sell a few brands here at the front desk." Charles makes another note on the sheet. "Alright. Unless you have any more pressing questions, I think that concludes Rosie's checkup."

What's your number, Erik thinks loudly, just to make Charles narrow his eyes. "No, I think we're good for now," he says out loud, grinning and holding out his hand. "Looking forward to working with you, Dr. Xavier."

“I’m sure,” Charles answers dryly, shaking his hand. “Front office is down the hall to the left. I have more patients to see. Have a nice day, *Erik*.” He leaves, practically scurrying out of the room and Erik waits until the door has shut again to let out a low laugh.

“This is going to be fun, Rosie,” he says to her as he clips her leash back onto her collar. Erik has always enjoyed a good chase, and all the more when the prize is worth it. Charles is already doubly so. Rosie wags her tail and licks Erik’s hand, so Erik pulls open the door. “Come on. Let’s go get Azazel and Alex. We have some planning to do.”

Charles/Erik - AU of the AU, Part 2: Erik sends flowers to Veterinarian!Charles

Chapter Notes

Based on and inspired by [garnetquyen's second comic strip](#)! Thank you, Q! <3

The bell over the door to the flower shop jingles softly as Erik pushes open the door to the flower shop, greeted by a strong blast of the scent of freshly cut flowers. Every inch of space of the tiny shop is covered by bright blooms in every color, shape, and size, some categorized by species but others carefully displayed in artful arrangements. It's perfect.

"Welcome to Jubilee's Fresh Flowers, sir!" the young girl behind the counter chirps as he approaches, the name tag on her apron naming her Jubilee herself. "What can I help you with?"

Erik lets his gaze slide slowly across the bright spools of ribbons on the wall behind her, next to a display of cards with themes ranging from condolences to happy-birthdays to I-love-yous, before finally settling on Jubilee, who waits patiently, still smiling. "Hello. Are you proficient in flower language?"

"Of course," Jubilee answers, brightening, "definitely. We can arrange a bouquet to take on any special meaning you'd like."

Erik grins. "Excellent." He brings his hand out of the pocket of his coat, slapping a crisp \$100 bill down on the counter. "I want something that says 'I want to date you, and I promise endless nights of fucking.'"

"Sir?" Jubilee says, some of her cheer faltering as she's somewhat taken aback by his directness. Erik is used to that kind of response, and luckily he knows the solution to it.

Still grinning, Erik slides the \$100 bill sideways with two fingers, fanning out the other four bills stacked beneath it so Jubilee can see all \$500 on the counter in front of her. "Keep the change."

“There’s a good girl, Suri,” Charles coos to the tiny puppy currently wriggling happily in his arms, her little nose going a mile a minute as she sniffs at the white sleeve of his vet coat. “Your stitches are healing nicely, your owner is going to be so happy to see you when she comes to pick you up tomorrow!”

“Charles, you have a flower delivery!” Sean shouts from the front waiting room, his voice echoing down the long hall and into the kennel.

“Oh?” Charles calls back, somewhat bemused. It isn’t his birthday, or even any kind of holiday that would warrant flower-giving as far as he knows. He hasn’t performed any kind of life-saving surgery on anyone’s pet in the last month or two, either, so that rules out any thankful owners too. “Thank you, Sean, I’ll be up in a moment. Does it say who it’s from?”

“Ah, well,” Sean answers, and now he sounds like he’s trying not to laugh, “it looks like Mr. Lehnsherr sent these.”

Erik. Charles resists the urge to heave a sigh. He should’ve known.

Once pocket-sized Suri is settled back comfortably in her temporary kennel with a little cone strapped safely around her neck to keep her from picking at her stitches, Charles makes his way up to the front office, arms folded. He should’ve guessed Erik was behind this right away, given how relentless the man has turned out to be—he’s worse than a dog with a bone.

“Alright,” he says as he steps out into the little area behind the front desk, “let’s see it.”

“You kind of can’t miss it, man,” Sean answers, and he’s right.

The bouquet itself is huge, towering on the counter in an enormous blue vase that’s so wide Sean had to move some of the empty bird perches in order to accommodate it. The flowers themselves are admittedly beautiful, the colors vibrant and delicately arranged to compliment each other, with a matching pink ribbon tied in a perfect bow around the neck of the vase. The whole front office now has a gentler, fresher fragrance than the usual cat-dog-and-bird smell thanks to the flowers, and Charles inhales it deeply despite himself.

“Who delivered this?” Charles asks, noting that whoever it was hadn’t stuck around. It’s surprising Erik himself isn’t hanging over the counter next to the flowers.

“I don’t know,” Sean says with a shrug, “I think it was just a delivery person. He’s a mob boss, right? I bet he has a ton of people for deliveries.”

“You’re probably right,” Charles answers absently, reaching forward to carefully dig the little card that’s settled between some green leaves. It has hearts all over it, so this should be good. He opens it warily, greeted by the sight of Erik’s precise, spidery handwriting:

Charles,
I hope you take my meaning.
Regards,
Erik

“Meaning...” Charles says slowly, looking from the card to the flowers.

“What’s it say?” Sean asks, trying not to sound overly interested as he feeds Logan a treat to keep the cockatoo from nipping at his fingers.

Carefully, Charles looks over the flowers in the bouquet again, this time studying them each specifically. There are six different types of flowers overall, which accounts for why the arrangement is so huge. And *meaning*...

Thanks to a childhood spent in high society, Charles is familiar with flower language. The pink ranunculus down in the front mean *I’m dazzled by your charms*, and the striped tulips mean *you have pretty eyes*. The white calla lilies mean you’re beautiful. The Indian jasmine tucked up next to them mean *I’m attracted to you*, and the jonquils on the other side mean *love me*. And the red and white roses bunched in the center of the bouquet usually mean *unity*, but in this case Charles has no doubt he can take them to mean, quite literally, *let’s fuck*.

“Oh,” Charles says dryly, “of course.”

*

Erik has left his phone number for Charles no less than a dozen times, but so far Charles has refused to call him and isn’t about to start now. He’s content to wait Erik out on this one, and isn’t entirely surprised it only takes Erik two days to finally call, and because Sean is a traitor he forwards Erik straight from the front desk phone to Charles’ extension back in his office.

“Hello, Charles,” Erik purrs when Charles picks up, and Charles rolls his eyes.

“Hello, Mr. Lehnsherr. How can I help you?”

“Rosie sneezed a couple times earlier, do you think I need to bring her in?” Erik asks innocently.

“If it was only a couple times I’m sure she’s fine, Mr. Lehnsherr,” Charles says dryly, “she was probably just sneezing because she picked up dirt or dust in her nose.”

“Did you get my flowers?” Erik says next, since he’s about as subtle as a brick to the face.

Charles is tempted to say no, but he doesn’t want to be responsible for whatever wrath Erik might rain down on the poor delivery kid if he thinks they weren’t delivered. “Yes, I did.”

“Did you like them?” Erik says, sounding deeply amused.

“They were nice,” Charles says blandly, glancing at the little card covered in hearts that he’d stuck in his pen jar. “I think you missed Valentine’s Day by a good four months, though.”

“So you wouldn’t be opposed to flowers on Valentine’s Day?” Erik asks, sounding far too anticipatory about a holiday that won’t come back around for another eight months.

Charles sighs. “What do you want, Mr. Lehnsherr?”

“Erik,” Erik corrects him calmly. “Did you get my meaning?”

“Yes, *Erik* . Loud and clear.”

“Good,” Erik says, pleased.

“I don’t date my clients, Erik,” Charles reminds him, though he’s smiling just a little bit.

“I’ll wear you down one day,” Erik says, his own grin evident in his voice. He doesn’t sound particularly disappointed to hear Charles is still turning him down, but he never is—if anything, the more Charles turns him down, the more determined Erik seems to become to finally win him over.

“Doubtful,” Charles says, even though the unfortunate part of all this is he’s afraid it might be starting to work. Erik isn’t shy about what he wants, but he’s never been overly aggressive with his advances; the flowers are actually his boldest gesture yet, aside from all the usual innuendo he drops into every conversation they have. He’s stupidly attractive and though Charles has never looked into his mind too closely on the occasions Erik has shown up at the clinic, he can tell Erik is far sharper than he pretends to be.

But there’s no telling what Erik will do if Charles does finally agree to go on a date with him—or, god forbid, sleep with him. Somehow Charles can’t imagine himself holding Erik’s attention very long. He’s a vet with a small but busy clinic, and Erik is a mob boss, of all things. He’s afraid of actually falling for Erik, only for Erik to turn around and dump him on the wayside once he’s gotten what he’s wanted.

Charming criminal mastermind or no, Charles doesn’t want to be *used*.

“I have a lot of plans,” Erik says, so confident it should be annoying, “you’ll see.”

“Oh,” Charles answers, amused even though he shouldn’t be, “then I suppose I will.”

Charles/Erik - AU of the AU, Part 3: Charles and Erik meet at the dog park

Chapter Notes

Based on and inspired by [garnetquyen's third comic strip](#)! You spoil us, Q! :')

“There you go, Oxbow, Suri; you guys play nice, alright?” Charles has barely unclipped the leashes from the dogs’ collars before they’re both off like a shot, sprinting across the open, green grass of the dog park while nipping at each other playfully.

Charles straightens slowly, starting to coil their leashes in his hands. The park is mostly empty in the late morning, most of the early risers already gone home to go about the rest of their day. There are a few other people and dogs scattered throughout the grassy enclosure, but Oxbow and Suri seem content to pick up a stick to tug between themselves, and Charles laughs as the much-larger Oxbow nearly ends up tugging little Suri off her feet as he pulls.

A blur of black heralds the arrival of a new dog, and Oxbow and Suri pause in their game to sniff the newcomer eagerly, all tails wagging. Charles frowns, because the new dog, a gorgeous Doberman, seems familiar. She must be one of his clients.

Then it clicks as she does a quick circle around Oxbow in order to sniff at Suri, her bright tags glinting in the sun. It’s Rosie, and if Rosie’s here, then that means—

“Charles!” Erik Lehnsherr walks across the grass towards him with a wide grin, one hand lifted in a wave. “What a coincidence!”

If this is truly a *coincidence*, Charles will eat his own shoe. “Hello, Mr. Lehnsherr.”

Erik comes to a stop beside him, taking off his expensive-looking sunglasses. He’s dressed down today, at least, in a simple black v-neck, the short sleeves only highlighting his muscular arms; for all intents and calculating purposes, he looks like a regular civilian and not the crime boss he truly is. “I didn’t know you own dogs too,” he says, even as his gaze flickers across Charles.

“Ah, no,” Charles says. He hasn’t seen or heard from Erik in a couple weeks, now, after he’d sent over that ridiculous bouquet of flowers—he’d seemingly run out of his thinly-plausible excuses of worrying after Rosie’s health to call the clinic for a chance to talk to Charles. Charles had been beginning to wonder, with a small tinge of disappointment that had been surprising and not entirely welcome, if Erik had finally lost interest. He’s not sure how he

feels now, either, to have been evidently proven wrong: Erik's definitely still interested, if the current of his thoughts is to be believed. "I'm only looking after them for my friends today."

"I see," Erik says, absorbing that information and filing it away. Charles wonders if he should warn him to stay away from his friends or not. "And please, like I've always said, just 'Erik' is fine."

"Alright, Erik," Charles says, huffing out a rueful laugh. They're not at Charles' clinic so they're not exactly speaking vet-to-client right now anyway.

"Well, since we're here," Erik says, and Charles braces himself. Here it comes. "Why don't we go get lunch together? I know a very good restaurant nearby that allows dogs out on the patio."

"I don't know about that, Erik," Charles says dryly, keeping his eyes on the dogs. Suri has picked up the stick again and now Oxbow and Rosie are chasing her in circles around the play area, trying to win it back.

"Come on, Charles," Erik cajoles, "it'll be fun. And besides," he adds, as if he's the telepath here, "I'm not your client today."

Charles sighs, though whether he's annoyed at Erik or with himself for warming to Erik, he doesn't care to examine closely. "You are persistent, you know that?"

Erik laughs, grinning again. "So I'm told."

Charles doesn't reply at first, and they settle into a silence that isn't entirely uncomfortable. Despite his unwavering intent, Erik doesn't push, his mind calm and at ease as he turns his attention briefly back to the dogs. Charles eyes him out of the corner of his eye while trying not to be obvious about it, still hesitant and wary.

Erik is definitely still interested in him, there's no denying it, but Charles knows there's no way he can trust it. Erik is a powerful mob boss who no doubt has all kinds of connections and people in his pocket. He could have anyone in the city on his arm, so why he's choosing to pursue a vet with a small clinic is beyond Charles—there's nothing for Erik to gain from it. It can't even be about Charles' last name Xavier, either, since Erik is sure to know by now that Charles was written out of his mother's will ages ago when he chose to go into animal science rather than major in business. He has no idea, then, what Erik wants.

"Orion!" Someone across the dog park calls, breaking Charles out of thought. "Come on, buddy, time to go home!"

"What are you really doing here, Erik?" Charles asks carefully, breaking the silence.

"Just taking Rosie out on a walk," Erik answers easily, "and hoping to spend some time with you."

Charles doesn't quite read Erik's mind, but Erik keeps his surface thoughts open as if to invite Charles to take a look. "Well, you're out of luck. My friends are expecting me back

with their dogs soon, I only have them for the morning.”

It’s partially true: his friends *are* expecting Oxbow and Suri back, but not until the early afternoon so there’s technically enough time for him and Erik to get lunch first. But Charles wants to see how Erik reacts, and hopefully it’ll give him some kind of insight. He could just read Erik’s mind, but if Charles stops respecting his own boundaries he set up himself for his telepathy now, then it’ll be a long, slippery slope from here on out.

“Oh,” Erik says lightly. His thoughts tinge with disappointment, but there’s no hint of annoyance or impatience. “That’s too bad.” He grins, teasing. “Perhaps next time. You won’t be able to avoid me forever, Charles.”

“I can avoid you for as long as I want,” Charles points out, though he smiles back despite himself.

Erik laughs. “That’s true. But I hope at some point you’ll stop wanting to, with enough repeat exposure.”

“That sounds like brainwashing, or perhaps Stockholm Syndrome,” Charles points out, but he’s still smiling.

“I was thinking more along the lines of...an irresistible magnetic pull.” Erik wags his eyebrows suggestively, using his powers to rattle the leashes in his and Charles’ hands.

“Incorrigible, maybe,” Charles corrects him, and Erik laughs again. Oxbow, Suri, and Rosie barrel past them, and Charles uses the momentary pause to come to a decision, taking a quick breath. “You can take me out to dinner next weekend. If you’re free.”

“I can, can I,” Erik drawls, amused, but his thoughts are triumphant and pleased, already thinking about calling someone named Alex and telling him to clear his schedule for next weekend. Charles fights not to react, oddly flattered. “That works out perfectly. I’m free next Saturday night.”

“Okay,” Charles says, hoping his tone doesn’t betray how his own thoughts have gone into overdrive. Next Saturday gives him a full week to mentally prepare to go on a date with a mob boss. Or to come up with an excuse to cancel. He has plenty of time to decide. “This is casual,” he warns, because while it appears he’s crazy enough to suggest a date in the first place, he’s not completely lost all rationality. “We’re keeping this casual.”

“Casual,” Erik repeats with a smirk. “I can do casual.”

“Good,” Charles says. He doesn’t want Erik arriving with...certain expectations. Maybe if they go on this one date together, they’ll both finally come to their senses—Erik will finally realize how ordinary and far removed from the world of the mob Charles is, and Charles will hopefully be able to pick up on some kind of habit that makes Erik unappealing. They’ll go their separate ways at the end of the night and that will be that.

Pulling out his phone, Erik taps on the screen a few times before offering it out to Charles, the new contact window open and waiting. “It’ll be easier to coordinate with each other if I

have your number.”

“Right,” Charles says after a beat of hesitation, accepting the phone and entering his contact information. Now his phone number is in a mob boss’ contact list. Great.

“Thank you, Charles,” Erik says as he takes his phone back. He sounds calm, but without meaning to he radiates satisfaction. “You won’t regret it. We’re going to have a good time.”

“I’ll hold you to it,” Charles says, keeping his voice lofty. “Well, I’d better get going.”

“Rosie, *heir!*” Erik says, and Rosie immediately breaks away from romping with Oxbow and Suri to dart back to Erik’s side, sitting down obediently as Erik uses his powers to clip her leash back on. “We should get going too.” He smiles, sliding his sunglasses on so Charles is treated to a double reflection of himself, eyeing Erik skeptically.

“Okay,” Charles says, unmoving. It’s going to take a bit more time to round Oxbow and Suri up, so he might as well see Erik off first.

Erik lingers for a moment, presumably raking his gaze across Charles one last time. “I’ll text you later in the week,” he says at last, “and we can come up with a plan for Saturday.”

“Alright,” Charles agrees neutrally. “Sounds good.”

“Enjoy the rest of your day, Charles,” Erik says as he and Rosie turn to go, his voice heavy with promise, “and I’ll be seeing you again soon.”

Well, Charles thinks as he watches Erik leave, distantly aware of Oxbow and Suri trotting back over to him, tails wagging. *Fuck*.

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