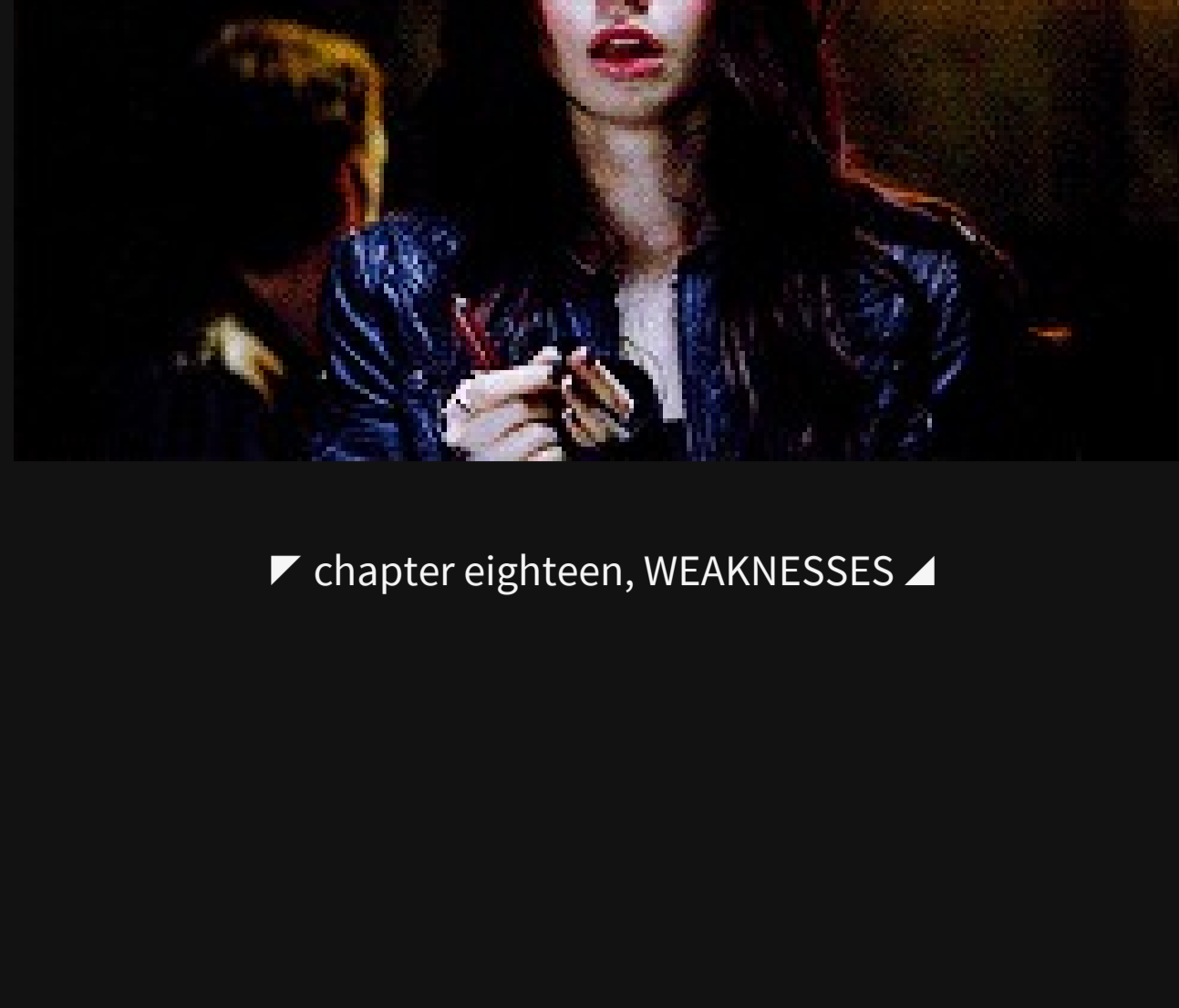
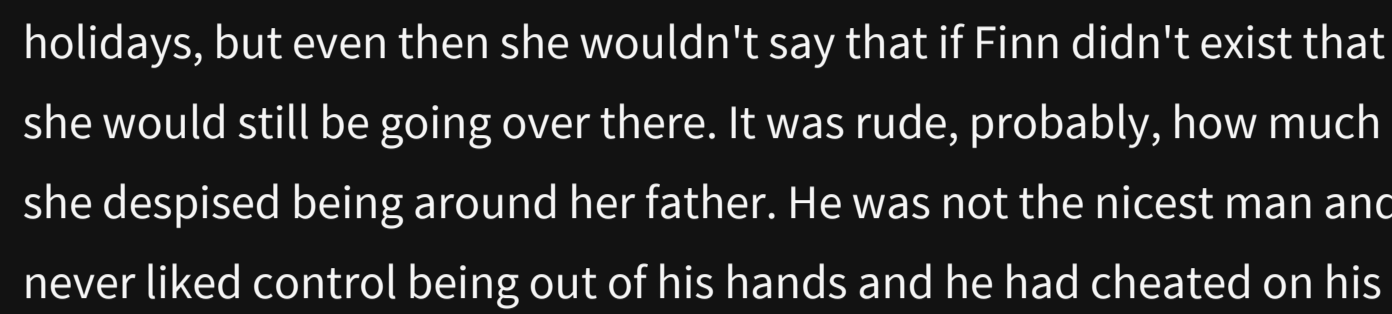


❏ xviii. WEAKNESSES ❏



❏ chapter eighteen, WEAKNESSES ❏



Davina didn't go to her dad's house voluntarily a lot on her own. Thanksgiving and Christmas were special circumstances, being holidays, but even then she wouldn't say that if Finn didn't exist that she would still be going over there. It was rude, probably, how much she despised being around her father. He was not the nicest man and never liked control being out of his hands and he had cheated on his first wife, but Davina didn't hate him and it was probably rude to think that if her little brother existed then it would be many years since she would have last seen her father.

Probably after she finished college she would've cut ties with him. Continue working at the diner for however long it took until she learned that with her degree she could not work anywhere but the diner and realize her passion for teaching and go back. Every Thanksgiving, not just the last one, would be spent at the diner with Rosie and Conrad if he stayed instead of going to California. She would have her small group of friends and no one else, no family to fall back on.

Lucy was nice, but she and Davina both knew that if Finn didn't exist they would never speak to each other. Lucy would stay with her father and live in the house with no one else to care for and have a lonely life while Davina went around trying to be happy and sometimes succeeding. It was sad thought, and it made her feel bad that she hadn't reached out to Lucy when Finn was in juvie but she couldn't change the past.

That had already happened and he was home now, so Davina liked to think that everything was okay now. It wasn't true, no matter how much she wanted it to be, because nothing could ever be that simple, could it? Finn was piled with schoolwork now because their dad convinced Lincoln High – because he was still going there even after everything, even though Caden was still attending there ("I can't leave Tessa," Finn explained) – that Finn could handle taking two years at once. And plus, he had the money to make it happen.

So, her little brother, who was never interested in school which was clear with the too easy classes he took (and how he had trouble not failing them) was finishing his sophomore year online while attending junior classes. It was safe to say that he didn't have much free time anymore.

And, it seemed, that he was back with Peter, which Davina had a lot to say about. The boy had come crawling back to Finn – again, mind you – with an apology and poor Finn just had to accept it. That was the downfall of Finn Patterson; he forgave too easily. While Davina could never hate anyone and the thought of saying something mean or doing something to hurt someone, Finn forgave anyone who apologized and it was somewhat truthful.

It was just their weakness, their soft spot, and both recognized that one day it would stab them in the back. Until then, they condoned it. Davina didn't know which was worse; forgiving or sores. At least, Brinley called it a sore.

The house looked pristine as usual, though. Landscaping was done perfectly, which she knew that Lucy was proud of, and the fresh paint of the house – Finn told her that Lucy had it redone a few months ago – made it stand out almost the other houses that while nice, weren't bold in their color anymore.

Using her key, she opened the door and looked around, remembering for a moment that this was the first time she had stepped foot into the house since the day of Finn's trial. She swallowed, it was okay. She was fine. Her brother was back and everything was fine and she didn't have to think about it anymore, didn't have to think about everything that happened in his absence.

"Hello?" Davina called, knowing that while her father was still at work, Lucy was home. She was always home and Davina felt sympathy for her, it must be so lonely always just stuck inside the house. At least she had a book club, that was nice.

"He's upstairs," Lucy appeared from the kitchen, a soft smile gracing her features. Age was kind to her.

"Thanks, Lucy," Davina smiled back at her, "I think that Finn's planning on spending the night tonight."

Lucy waved her off, "He's already decided on it. Don't worry, I know you all think that you have to step around me because I don't want him leaving, but it's fine. Really. He's stayed here long enough, he needs to get his life back."

Davina softened and she felt even more sympathy for Lucy because it was true. Everyone only spent hours with Finn and sent him home because of course they did; his parents wanted him there. Well, Lucy wanted him there, and everyone knew it so everyone accepted it but longed to see more of him.

"I'm sorry," Davina apologized.

"For what? I missed him, yes, but I'm not locking him in here – I never had. I just, I liked being able to wake up in the middle night and go in his room and see him there. It wasn't a dream, he's really back, but he needs all of his life back, which includes sleeping on your couch," Lucy explained. "Now, go on, he's been bouncing on the walls the whole day."

Davina chuckled softly, nodding at Lucy and doing something unexpected and bringing the woman into a hug. It seemed that Lucy was shocked at the action as well and she froze before returning the gesture. Davina pulled away first and started up the stairs. She didn't think to knock before opening the door and when she did she found her baby brother making out with Peter Parker. Full on lip locking and she couldn't help the "OH MY GOD!" that came from her lips.

Finn and Peter broke away quickly, both staring at her with wide eyes. "Davina!" Finn exclaimed.

"Lucy never said that you had company over, I would've knocked otherwise," Davina grumbled, glaring at Peter.

Peter laughed awkwardly, "I might've come through the window..." he explained sheepishly.

"Well, you can leave that way too," Davina snapped before feeling guilt, "Sorry, I just – you understand why I'm not your biggest fan."

"Davina," Finn warned her, standing up from his bed, "There's no need to be rude."

She sighed, "I know."

"We all know why you don't like him, and why Asher wants to burn him alive every time she sees him," Davina snorted at that, "but can we move past it? He's my boyfriend and if that changes anytime soon I will personally take action against him myself."

"I'm still here, you know!" Peter called and Finn looked back at him.

"And we've been over this before but I'm just explaining it all to you," Finn said back before turning to Davina again, "Trust me, if he hurts me again I'm hurting him more."

"Not on your own. I'll be there and so will Brinley and probably Tessa," Davina said decisively.

Finn rolled his eyes in part annoyance and part adoration, accompanied by an eye roll. "Whatever, let me say goodbye to him real quick and then we can leave."

Davina wrinkled up her nose as Finn went over to Peter and kissed him again before leading him to the window. He then picked up his bag and smiled at Davina, going to the door with her.

"I'm telling Lucy that Peter snuck in," she said casually as they started down the stairs.

"Davina no!"



Davina walked with her hands in her pockets, trying to escape the harshness of the cold air, as she strolled beside Brinley and Finn. Even though it was cold and she could feel her face numbing – especially her nose – she didn't mind it. She remembered to times before, when Finn was a freshman, when they did this constantly. Something so mundane that got warped his sophomore year as he just showed up to their apartment for work and again now, returning back to the simple life they had before.

"I went to see Rosie yesterday," Finn told them as he looked around the streets of New York. He started having an appreciation for them now that he was free.

"Oh yeah?" Davina asked, "Did she try and convince you to get your job back there?"

"Among other things. Said that she didn't have any help and really needed to me, which I get – I do, but I can't right now and I told her that," Finn said before muttering, "Wish I did have the time."

Davina looked at him, "I know you do, kid, but think of it – next year will be a breeze."

"Yeah, but I want that now. I miss the diner. I miss working those long ass hours even though they were shit and the pay was terrible. I miss spending time with Rosie and seeing Johnny, even if he's the fucking worst. I just...I miss everything," Finn said sadly.

"And I'm sure that they all miss you and the diner wishes you could be there," Brinley said, "But that isn't how things work right now. You should just focus on school, we don't want you falling behind."

Finn snorted, "Believe me, my teachers are not allowing that. They say that if I get believe an 85 I have to drop my other class online in their subject. Which I get, but still."

"That's just how it works," Brinley shrugged.

"How's Tessa?" Davina asked, wanting to end the painful subject. She didn't want her brother to look at the downside of everything, instead just wanting him to focus on all the positives.

"She's good. Like, really good," Finn smiled, "She likes this guy. They aren't dating or anything and she doesn't really want a boyfriend right now, but she says he's cute and I'm hoping to meet him soon."

"Don't ruin it for her," Davina warned him.

"Me? Never! I'm just gonna explain that if he hurts my friend that I've been to juvie and will fuck his shit up," Finn shrugged nonchalantly.

"You went to juvie over false drug charges," Brinley deadpanned.

"Yeah, I know that, Asher, but he doesn't which means that it'll scare the shit out of him and make sure he stays in shape," Finn said, "Oh! And she has a new friend – Rylie – she's pretty cool."

"She your friend too?"

"Kinda. We're getting there, but it isn't quite there yet, but soon," Finn explained. "But she's good for Tess and I'm glad that she found someone to help her when I couldn't be there."

There was a bit of silence after that, but Davina sucked in a breath and said, "Well that's good. I'm glad that Tessa's doing better."

Finn nodded in agreement, "Me too. Especially since she dated another dick after Caden."

"Really?" Brinley asked incredulously.

"Yep. But whatever, they're cool now and Tessa still thinks of him as a friend, so it isn't that bad I guess. I have yet to meet him too, but I will," Finn grinned.

"And you'll give him the shovel talk which includes mentions of going to juvie?" Brinley asked, unimpressed.

But Finn just smiled brightly, "Yep!"

Davina laughed and Brinley rolled her eyes, shaking her head and Finn joined in on his sister's laughter. Soon after, Brinley followed and it felt so nice.

They were close enough that Davina could see her apartment building. They turned but Davina froze. All good things came to an end, and it seemed that her ending was the woman sitting on the steps who stood up at the sight of her.

"Oh, Davina, look how you've grown," the woman said in a soft voice, once she used long ago when Davina Royce was Davina Patterson.

"Fuck," Finn muttered to himself and Brinley stared at the woman with a stone cold expression.

Davina's mouth was agape as she just stared at the woman who had led her, who had destroyed her even when she hadn't realized it. To the woman who gave her life but made it a living hell.

"Mom?"