

『 v. BLAME GAME』



▸ chapter five, BLAME GAME ◀

LITTLE THINGS MATTER

Davina wasn't used to being alone. Not in her adult years, when she went to college with a roommate and then a year when she moved back home for a short period of time. Yeah, home with her mom was more lonely than filled with the presence of another person, but Davina was rarely ever home herself – now she was old enough to go wherever she wanted and stay with whoever without the concern of someone else's parents.

She remembered in high school when she tried staying over at Conrad's house. That had failed miserably because his parents were scared they were going to sex (as if!) and because they couldn't get in contact with her guardian, seeing as Anna Royce wasn't even in New York at the time. Somehow, she had ended up in Jersey and decided to stay there for a few weeks. Davina pretended like she didn't notice.

And then Rosie was a definite no-go during those years. Rosie Harlan lived alone, estranged from her family, but she didn't even like having company. There was also the fact that while Davina considered herself a friend of the girl, they weren't terribly close. It was more of work with a dash of personal, nothing like what she had with Conrad.

But then she became a grownup and didn't have to worry about concerned parents. Brinley got her own place and Davina found herself spending many nights there before the arrest of her mother, which was a dark time in itself. Everything continued to fall into place and suddenly, when her mother was officially locked away and Davina was still trying to pay for this apartment but not finding the money (dinners didn't pay well), Brinley brought up the idea of the Royce girl officially moving in. Becoming roommates.

It made sense, they were practically living together already, and it felt almost liberating to say goodbye to that old apartment she grew up in with her mother. Well, sometimes. Other times she stayed with her father in a lavish home in the suburbs with her step-mother and younger brother. It wasn't her and it wasn't Finn. It was never Finn. Finn, despite always growing up in a house like that, never liked the suburbs; he always preferred the city with Davina. It made her heart swell, really.

And having Finn around meant she was never lonely. Brinley stayed around a lot and Finn was always around a few school or work, spending countless nights. She didn't have time to be alone and fill something sinking in her chest, there was always another person around to distract her. Striking up conversations, watching mindless TV shows, something to where she didn't have to think about the important things.

Like Wendy being Wanda Maximoff, the former Avenger and newfound war criminal. Like how she flirted with a criminal who was in New York and apparently, probably not leaving any time soon. And how she agreed not to tell anyone, to keep the secret until the grave because she was Davina Royce and Patterson's usually kept their words. Most of the times, ignoring vows like 'til death do us part' of course.

Or how Finn was still gone and Conrad never called anymore. Strange, really, how someone who used to be so important became almost nothing. He used to be her best friend, was her first kiss, and there was a time where she thought she couldn't live without him. Then he moved away and life got in the way even though they promised to never lose touch...but it happened anyway. Conrad was living his life in California and she was living hers, they didn't have time for each other anymore.

And she had Brinley, did have Finn, so she was okay. She wasn't alone, she had people. But Brinley was pulling away and Finn, not that he had a say in the matter, and Rosie had never been one of her best friends even if they were fairly close so Davina was left alone. Friday night, lying on the couch and watching TV. Flipping through channels because nothing appealed to her. Usually, she would be doing this with Brinley and even though they would continuously bicker and never decide on a show because that's just who they were, it was still wonderful. More than wonderful. Truly amazing.

Now, Brinley was spreading her wings and making her friends and Davina wouldn't hold her back. She wouldn't guilt her friend into staying in with her if she didn't want to, that wasn't her. It really wasn't. So Brinley was okay and it was just her, Davina Royce. Hanging to herself because she was just so bored and frustrated because of that and not used to the loneliness anymore.

If she were younger, still back in that old apartment with her mother, this would be a normal occurrence. It would be her life and she knew how to handle it. She would be unfazed by it, albeit a little sad. She would do homework and chill in the living room, cook herself dinner and sleep early because there was nothing interesting to keep her awake, so why not sleep the treacherous night away?

But she was not younger, she was twenty-six and it had been many years since then. Now she had a roommate who actually showed up most every night, not counting the ones when she stayed with a one-night stand, and a brother who often spent his nights with them. There was rarely a night to be alone with them around, so she never felt that way anymore.

Now she did.

She forgot how terrible it was.

But then there was a knock at the door and Davina frowned. Brinley didn't knock, there was no need – she had a key. Everyone who regularly came to their apartment had a key and Rosie never came over. Rosie went home to her boyfriend every night, exhausted after work. Plus, Davina was sure her shift wasn't even over yet.

Getting up off the couch, Davina pulled down her sweater that pushed up as she stood and went over to the door. Opening it, she frowned when she saw her brother's ex-boyfriend (did they even make it official?) on the other side. Most of the time, she would have moved out of the way immediately and let them in – this was not like most times.

"Peter," she addressed him, still frowning and not moving out of the way, "What are you doing here?"

He looked up at Davina looking nervous, leg practically shaking. "Hey, Davina, I was just – I was just wondering if you talked to Finn. If you went to go see him," he said.

A spur of anger flourished inside her. Rarely did she become so angry at another person and most times it died out in seconds, this stayed for a moment longer before dispersing. After all, she could never really hate anyone. But Peter, she felt, had no right to be asking about her brother after everything. After he broke up (still, were they even together? Like, as boyfriends?) with Finn and left him right before his trial.

Yet, here he was now. Asking about Finn as if everything was all fine and dandy when it wasn't and he should know that. Because it should be so obvious that he should have never come to visit her after everything. "Yes, I have," she answered him curtly, wanting the boy to leave quickly.

"How – How is he?" Peter asked carefully, meeting her eyes again. Doe brown, innocent eyes, staring back into hers and she looked away from him.

"I don't think you have the right to ask that, considering all that happened," Davina told him, her voice lacking most sympathy since she tried hard not to show any. Some crept out, because of course it did, but she tried to mask it as much as she could.

"I know," Peter admitted, shocking her, "But I can't – I can't visit him because I wanna make sure that he's okay."

Davina sighed, already cracking. He was never good with anything close to resembling a guilt trip. "Of course he's not okay, Peter. He's in juvie and you were probably the best thing to ever happen to him, he was so excited after he kissed you for the first time – know that? And now he's alone in there because of you, because of Caden. He's not okay and he won't be for a while."

She tried to make her words nicer, not as harsh sounding as they could've been. She didn't want to crush him completely, but judging by the deflated look on his face, she didn't entirely succeed. She swallowed, God how she disliked that look. It was terrible and made her feel sad, guilty. She didn't want to feel guilty because of this, seeing as there wasn't even a good reason to.

"Look, I'm not trying to blame everything that's happened to him on you, or say that he's completely miserable because of you. That's not true and saying it is it completely unfair. But he isn't good, that's the thing, and you made him feel amazing. I don't know why you broke up with him and I don't know how bad he really is, but don't blame yourself too harshly," she tried to lessen the blow more, but she wasn't exactly good at comforting when she barely knew the person. And she definitely didn't know much about Peter.

"I thought it would be for the best – I don't think that's exactly right anymore," Peter attempted weakly to defend himself.

Davina shook her head, "No, I don't think it was. But I've never understood how someone could hurt someone they loved – or really liked – for the greater good, or whatever. That's just me."

"But I didn't want to hurt him," Peter snapped up, looking into her eyes, "I just – I didn't think I could do it."

"And now you do?" Davina questioned, he opened his mouth but no words came out, "Exactly. You still don't know. That's okay, you're like sixteen or something. You don't have to have everything figured out by now. But just promise me you'll stay away from Finn until you know what you want – what you really want. And that you won't go changing your mind the next minute."

He nodded solemnly.

"Peter, I want to hear you say it."

"I – yeah, okay. I won't. But, shouldn't I?" Peter asked.

She shook her head, "Going to see him will only make everything worse, especially if you aren't even sure that you could ever have a relationship with him ever again. I make a mistake last time bringing the two of you back together when he wasn't ready, when you weren't even ready apparently, I won't make it again. I won't let you hurt my brother."

She wouldn't fail her brother again, she thought to herself.

"I don't wanna decide everything for you, but I will protect Finn. He's my brother and I've been lacking recently," she then sighed, "Look, I liked you, Peter. I did. I thought you were one of the good ones and I still think you can be – but not now. Now, you need to live your life and decide what you want. If that involves Finn or not. Come back when you've decided."

Peter nodded mutely and she felt guilt rise inside her for chewing the poor kid out. Well, not exactly chewing, but making him feel bad about himself. He didn't deserve it, but she had to say it. For Finn. "Bye, Peter," she said.

"Yeah, bye," he agreed, walking away.

Davina watched his retreating figure and went back inside of her apartment to the loneliness. She brought a hand through her hair as she went back to the couch, this time throwing a blanket over her. She could learn how to be alone again, it would be okay. Over time, it would become okay again. She could get accustomed with this life again if need be. It was only for a year, then Finn would be back and he would keep coming over. Hopefully, anyway.

She could hold out for a year.

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