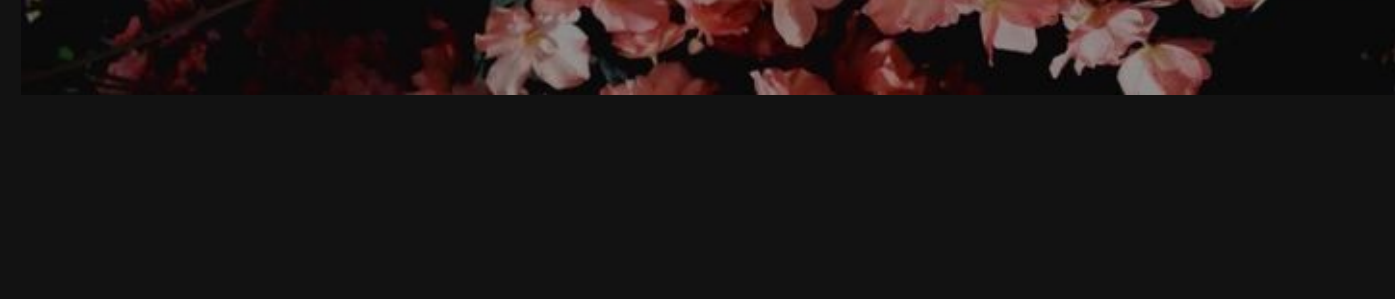


## XX. THIS LOVELY FEELING



chapter twenty, THIS LOVELY FEELING



**With Wanda's hand intertwined with her own, Davina felt a little less tense.** Still, her shoulders were held tight and she bit her lip in anticipation, anxiety raking through her because she knew a bad reaction would come. She knew it. Even though she had let herself believe that Anna Royce loved her daughter, would change for her, it simply wasn't the truth.

Anna Royce loved the idea of Davina, loved to prey on her inability to let people suffer in the world. Latched onto her compassion and manipulated it in her favor, counted on the fact that Davina could never let her go. Counted on Davina always being there to help her even when it didn't suit her. Even when she would be the one getting hurt. Anna relied on Davina withering away because of work to support her lifestyle. She couldn't imagine a life where that wouldn't be her daughter, a life where Davina shut the door - slammed it in her face, closing her away and hiding her in the past.

And Davina never imagined herself shutting the door either. This was her mother, and here she was willing to let go of her. It was almost a dream, to finally be able to say goodbye to Anna. Not just her mother, but her father as well. She had dreamed from a young age being able to say no to them and turn them away, building her life up from the ashes which they burned her to.

"You're okay, you can do this," Wanda whispered encouragingly to her, and Davina turned to give her a smile. To ease her worries more, she pecked the woman on the lips, savoring her for a moment.

The bell on top the door chimed and, as she had done every other time it happened, Davina's head whipped back to see Anna Royce standing there. She looked positively awful. The worst that Davina had ever seen her probably, and Wanda couldn't help but let out a little sco. It was just an act; play the victim and get what you want.

Anna smiled at her daughter and went to the booth where they were sitting, taking the opposite side. "Davina, I was so relieved when you reached out to me," she said and immediately she felt guilty.

It was for the best, she knew that, but she still felt so terribly guilty. She shouldn't though, and the way Wanda squeezed her hand she agreed, but still her gut clenched and heart ached to call out and help her mother. But no, she couldn't. She had to shut the door, had to let go and move on.

"Yeah, I didn't want to leave you without an answer," Davina nodded.

Anna's smile faltered for a moment and Davina understood that she was beginning to doubt that Davina would help. She was beginning to doubt if her daughter had really changed, and changed so drastically to where she would now turn away her own mother.

"Well, you shouldn't keep me waiting then," Anna joked, trying to ease her doubts by convincing herself that no, Davina would never leave her in the dark without anything. This was her daughter. She had known Davina since birth and knew that she could do no such thing.

"I shouldn't, that would be cruel," Davina agreed, "But it would've given you the same message."

And the happy façade fell. "Davina?" Anna softly prompted.

Davina swallowed before continuing, "I can't help you, mom. I'm in college again and I don't have any money to spare. There's no place in my apartment for you either and I'm not leaving Brinley without a roommate."

"Davina..."

"I've helped you so many times before, but now I just can't. There's nothing I can do," Davina finished off, taking a moment to calm herself as Wanda rubbed circles in her hand with her thumb.

"Davina, please, think about what you're doing," Anna pleaded lowly, "Think about what you're saying."

"I have. I've thought about this a lot and I've come to the conclusion that I can't do anything for you. Sorry," Davina added the last part not for Anna, but for herself. To ease her guilt for turning away Anna.

"Davina, I am your mother," Anna tried to get her to reconsider and Davina wanted to sco, wanting to rant about how many times she had been the one to take care of Anna - not the other way around. To recount the many times when Anna ran off to Jersey or Maine on a drunk binder. But, she bit her tongue.

"And I've already helped you before, I can't anymore," Davina responded.

"It doesn't matter how many times you've helped me in the past, I need your help now," Anna growled.

Davina shrugged, "You're not my problem anymore."

"You can't do this to me - we're family," Anna attempted again.

"I know. Believe me, I'm never going to forget you, I can't, but that doesn't mean I have to stay here and help you. We both know that you won't change, no matter how many times you tell me. I'll give you money and you'll place it on your tab and drink it all away. Nothing has changed, it never will, and I'm done pretending."

Anna glared at her, "You've always been such an ungrateful child. I have done so much for you, and this is how you repay me?"

"What have you done for me? You let me to clean up your vomit, to get a job when I was sixteen so that I could pay all the bills because you didn't have a goddamn job. You made me raise myself, made me afraid to go home. You made me give up the college of my dreams because then no one would be there to take care of you. Without me, you would've been out on the streets longer before now. You would've gotten a longer sentence and still be in jail. I have done more than enough for you - you're the ungrateful one."

Davina let it sit for a moment, taking a breath as she thought over what she had said. She hadn't meant to go off, but she had bottled it up for too long and it finally just came out. But her chest felt lighter, she felt better, and the guilt piling in her stomach disappeared.

Anna sat there, glaring at Davina but she didn't care anymore. She felt a sense of freedom, as if she had just been freed from chains that had been holding her for years. And in a sense, there had. She smiled, truly happy and she looked at her mother.

"Have a good life, mom, but never contact me again. I can't do anything more for you."

And with that, Davina stepped out of the booth with Wanda following her. She gave one more look back to her mother, pursing her lips for a moment before turning around and walking out the door, all while still keeping a grasp on Wanda's hands.

When they got outside Anna pecked her cheek. "I'm proud of you," she complimented her and Davina smiled and turned to give her girlfriend a kiss.

"Thank you. I feel so free now...I like it," Davina confessed and Wanda smiled brightly at her.

They walked, enjoying the crisp cool air around them as she reveled in the moment and the feeling. She didn't think about life with Anna, she didn't even consider her for a moment. She was done. That chapter of her life was done, she was free from her mother. She looked over at Wanda again and thought about how it had only been a year since she met the woman and how much she had changed her life.

Her heart burst with love, admiring her for a moment and thanking every god in the universe for giving her Wanda. She thought about the night they met, how nervous Wanda had been and how sad she had been. She remembered how she rambled and how Wanda chuckled at her, and she thought about how they had grown.

Her life was much better. She felt happier, lighter, and she never wanted to come down from this. And, as she looked at Wanda, she knew she never would.

END OF THE NIGHT WE MET.

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