



chapter eleven, GONE GIRL

LITTLE THINGS MATTER

**With Brinley never home, Davina decided not to spend her days in the apartment either.** Everything felt o about it, like a stillness of no humanity had fallen over it; no one stayed there, as if it were abandoned. Constantly, it gave her chills so she did everything in her power not to stay there and instead stay with her other friends.

It was fine if Brinley wanted to spend time with the ex-Avengers. It was fine if she would rather spend time with an ex-assassin and a hacker she knew in high school. It was fine if she wanted to never see Davina – that was fine. They were still best friends, they were still roommates and that wasn't about to change...was it? No, it couldn't.

The diner always made her feel like home. It reminded her of being a teenager, alone because her mother was always out and she refused to live with her father, working with Rosie day a er day and Conrad popping his head in and staying during the a ernoon a erschool, doing his homework and studying like the studious boy he was. It explained how he was in the five percent of their class while Davina was nowhere near that – Rosie was always a mystery.

Rosie Harlan had always been especially secretive when it came to her family. They knew she had a younger sister named Mariana, her parents were still together but their relationship had always been strained, and that she o en stayed with her aunt and uncle; who she favored more. But she didn't like talking in depth about them, they didn't know anything more about her. She lived alone now, still worked at the diner, and she never seemed lonely.

And Apple's Eye Diner was still her favorite place. Better than her own place of work, with Stevie and his constant nagging about dating, and better than her own silent apartment.

"Hey there, Vinie," Conrad slid into the booth across from her, signature grin on his face, "What's on your mind?"

Davina smiled back at him, shaking her head a little and waving o her thoughts, "Oh, nothing. How's your job?"

"Ah, yes," Conrad started o in a high voice, "My amazing, wonderful job. No but really – I love it. I mean, it's just a boring desk job but my co-workers are great. They've been helping me settle in and everything."

"Mhm," Davina hummed, nodding along, "That's nice of them. I so hope that I'll get that once I finish college and quit at the flower shop."

"Awe, but you love it there. Just you and Stevie a lot...alone...no one else around to see anything that happens..." Conrad teased, laughing when Davina hit him lightly.

"Shut up. Those are the worst shi s. I thank God every day I get to work with Macy and not Stevie. He's – He's the worst. He's gotten worse. Like, last week I was working with him and he kept trying to touch me and kiss me that eventually I just had to work in the back – and you know how much I hate working in the back," Davina said, "I feel bad for making Owen deal with that."

Conrad shook his head, "Just give the word and I will beat that guy's ass."

"Oh, no. No, no, no, no," she shook her head wildly, "You are not getting anywhere near him. If he found out that I sent you...I'll probably be fired."

"Good thing there'll always be an opening for you here," the light voice of their blonde friend broke in. Rosie Harlan took a seat beside Davina and smiled at them, a sparkle in her eyes as she was glad to see them there, "What will it be today?"

"Hey, Rosie," Conrad greeted her, "How've you been?"

Rosie hu ed at them, rolling her eyes too, "Well, I was supposed to have a date last night but the guy bailed. And I don't just mean that he le me waiting for an hour – I only stayed for half of one – but he texted me later apologizing and saying there was an emergency. So, of course, I stalked his Instagram a bit and found out the emergency last night was a party with some of his bros."

"Man, that sucks," Conrad said with a face of disgust, "What a fucking asshole."

"I know," Rosie said before sitting up straight again, "But I'll be fine. Just a little pissed right now because I fucking shaved for this date. Like, I thought I was gonna get some and then I didn't even get dinner!"

"Oh, that's the worst," Davina sympathized, "I mean, you remember the time I went with Penny to the movies and when we got back to my place I thought we were gonna do it but then she said she was physically disgusted by me but loved my personality...that was the worst."

"When was this? And who's Penny?" Conrad questioned, looking at the Royce woman.

"A couple years back," she waved it o, "And Penny was my kinda ex-girlfriend."

Conrad nodded in understanding and Rosie sighed. "Okay! Food anyone? Or do you guys just wanna sit around and loiter?"

"I'll have a grilled cheese," Conrad said, "And a Coke to drink."

Rosie nodded and wrote it down and when she finished Davina started, "I think I'll go with a burger today. Milkshake, of course."

"A burger? Davina Royce who are you? My friend would never get anything but her regular chicken strips," Rosie teased and Davina rolled her eyes.

"I've been coming here more which means I've been eating chicken more. I'm tired of it and want a burger so let me live my life in peace, yeah?" Davina faked anger and the other two laughed.

"Alright, alright. You do you, girl," Rosie put her hands up in surrender before turning her attention, "And you, Mister Beauregard, here I thought you hated grilled cheeses. What happened to you in California?"

Conrad chuckled, "Yeah, my uh, my ex was a fan of them so he cooked them a lot. Guess it grew on me."

There was nothing else said on the topic as it was obvious he wasn't to speak nothing more about it. Rosie just nodded. "Alright, I'll have them out as soon as I can," and she stood up.

"Awe, but Rosanne – can't you stay?" Conrad pouted, showing o his dark eyes that always made men melt. And women. Really, no one could resist.

Rosie snorted, "That ain't gonna work on me, big boy. And don't you dare call me by that wretched name. It's banned from the diner."

"But do you have to leave us?" Davina begged as well, looking up to her blonde haired friend.

"Yes, you children, I have to work. Alas, not all of us have the day o," she dramatically sighed.

"Hey! I have a shi later. Til closing, actually," Davina said.

"That's nice, dear, but I really must get back to waiting on others. You aren't my only customers, you know, and I've spent too much time with you," Rosie reminded them.

Conrad sighed, "Alright. If you must..."

"Oh, I must," and with one last smile, Rosie turned away from them and went to the counter.

Davina came home to an empty apartment a er her shi and she didn't bother calling out for Brinley that timet was no use; the girl was probably spending the night at Desmond's and there was no reason to give herself false hope for a response. She didn't even check on the room, she just went straight into her own and showered to clean herself from the words of Stevie that day.

Macy was there as well, which made it easier, but not anything she wanted to go back to. Still, he tried to grab her hand or her waist to direct her towards him, maybe hoping that if she stared into his terrible eyes they would fall in love and get married, though that would never happen. There was no attraction present.

A er her shower, she got to work on her assignments from college and studying. She tried not to be swayed from the stillness, tried to get chills as they brought her back to a worse time of loneliness and overworking herself, never finishing her work for high school and continually failing tests and quizzes because she never had time to study – always busy with something else.

She remembered her mother draped on the couch and she would put a blanket on her. Sometimes there was a bottle of (probably) stolen liquor, and sometimes she was naked with another man beside her.

She tried not to think about it because it made her feel so bad, so she didn't question it. Didn't give into it. And she turned o the light and went to bed.

The last thing she expected was for Wanda Maximo to show up at her door one day, completely out of the bluehat was apparent as she stared at the woman for a moment in confusion when she swung open the door, not even taking into account the look on the woman's face.

"Wanda...what – what are you doing here?" Davina asked first, allowing her inside, "And how did you even know where to go? Did you stalk me here?"

"Brinley told Desmond and he told me," Wanda answered, looking around – obviously chilled by the stillness of the place – before looking back at Davina, "Have you seen Brinley recently?"

Davina frowned, going into the kitchen grab herself a drink. "No. I thought she was spending the night at Desmond's."

"We haven't seen here lately," Wanda told her, "And Bucky was getting worried because it's been a week since she's come around and that's not normal."

At that, she couldn't help but snort. A tinge of bitterness – jealousy – to it as she said, "Trust me, I know that she's been spending time over there."

Then, Davina turned around to look at Wanda, "But what do you mean that she hasn't been there? Hasn't she just...I don't know, sleeping on the couch?"

Wanda shook her head, "She stormed out a er an argument she got into with Bucky and we knew it would probably be a couple days – it's happened before – but then three turned to five and now it's been a little more than a week."

Davina frowned again, realizing something, "It's been about a week since I last saw her. I just – I didn't even think anything of it."

"Do you know where she could be?" Wanda ventured, hoping that the woman was okay. A er all, she had been a great friend to her.

"No," Davina confessed, "I mean, she doesn't hate her family or anything, but she never goes there unless it's a holiday really. And she doesn't know anyone outside of New York, I don't think. She could just be at a hotel."

"But why? She's not mad at you, so why would she go to a hotel?" Wanda questioned.

"I don't know. I – oh my God, Brinley...she's, she's really missing, isn't she?" Davina asked, feeling terrible for not realizing it sooner. There was no sign of life, everything in her room was completely normal – she hadn't even taken a bag with her.

So where was she? Where did she go?

"I, I think so now. I o ered to come over here to check and make sure that she wasn't angry with any of us, but she's – it doesn't feel like she's been here in a while," Wanda admitted.

"Yeah," Davina agreed absentmindedly.

"Has she ever done this before?" Wanda asked her carefully and Davina shook her head.

"Never."

"Well," Wanda pursed her lips, deciding, "Desmond's a great hacker so he can go into street cameras and try to find her. It'll – it'll be okay, Davina."

"Yeah," she repeated.

God, her friend went missing...and she hadn't even realized. She was too wrapped up in a jealousy about never spending time with her that she didn't even realize that Brinley was gone. Gone.