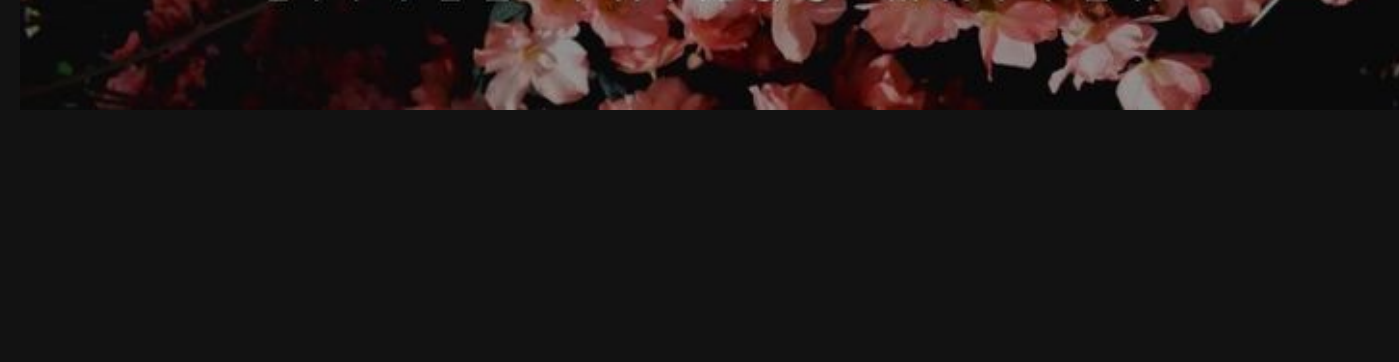


## 【 xiii. NEVER LEAVE AGAIN】



▸ chapter thirteen, NEVER LEAVE AGAIN ▾



**After a week of searching, Davina decided to stop staying at Desmond's house and return to her apartment.** Staying there

wouldn't bring Brinley home any faster and she was getting tired of staying in the guest room while simultaneously kicking Sam out and leaving him to the couch. It wasn't fair to them and she had her own place to stay which meant she didn't need to stay there, so she le.

Stevie barely talked to her anymore at work and she was too stressed about Brinley to care about it. Really, she didn't mean to be so harsh on the poor man but she was so fed up with him and she wanted everything to stop. So, she stopped it.

The apartment still held the stillness that made her sick to her stomach but it was getting easier to bare. She hated sitting in the living room while she did her homework because it just reminded her more of Brinley and how they used to sit there together while she graded with a comedy going on the background. So, she sat on her bed and watched House, MD instead. The apartment stayed quiet and she didn't leaving her room if she could help it because it all looked so lonely.

Wanda checked up on her every day and often spent long hours to the night there with her so it wouldn't be so lonely. It was comforting but she couldn't help but feel like a nuisance.

"You really don't have to do this," Davina told her on the fourth day, letting the girl pass into her apartment. "I'm not going to fall apart on my own."

"I know, but I worry, and so does Steve. He worries about everyone he meets, though, so I guess it isn't fair to say that. He keeps wanting to come over with cookies or some other goodie to see how you're doing," Wanda told her, "The man loves to cook."

"I've noticed," Davina commented, "And tell Steve that I'm fine, because I am. I'm okay on my own."

Wanda studied her for a moment as they went to her room because that's where she was directed every time. She knew that Davina hated every other part of the apartment so she didn't comment on it or bring any attention to the fact. "Just because you're okay on your own doesn't mean you have to be alone," Wanda reminded her, "I used to think that because I had Pietro, I didn't need anyone else."

Davina felt immediate sympathy for the girl. Wanda rarely talked about her brother, it was too hard, and when she did it was always serious and brought pain to her face. "I'm sorry," Davina said routinely, as she always did when he was brought into the conversation.

"What for? You didn't do anything to him...you never even met him," Wanda tried to smile, "I miss him so much, V."

"I know," Davina said, because in a way she did. Her own brother was gone, but that did mean she could compare her situation to Wanda's. Wanda's brother died; hers was just in juvie. Finn was coming back, Pietro never would. "But what...what changed? What made you realize you needed more people?"

"His death. I...couldn't handle it on my own, even though I tried so hard to move on, I couldn't. I let Clint in first – he was grieving for Pietro like me – and he helped me realize that I need other people," Wanda explained, "You can't go through on your own."

"And I'm not going through this on my own. I've talked and let others in. I mean, we talk about it," Davina ordered, getting under her covers and ordering for Wanda to do the same.

Wanda took up her order and went under the covers, "But what about your other friends? The waitress...does she know that Brinley's missing?"

Davina looked down. She hadn't told them anything, she hadn't even seen them since she realized that Brinley had gone missing. God, she really was a terrible friend, wasn't she? "No," she confessed, "I didn't want to worry them, and Conrad was never really close with Brinley. She came into our group maybe a year before he left for California."

"That doesn't mean he doesn't care about her. I've only known her for a few months and I'm worried, just like Bucky and Sam. That's not an excuse," Wanda said gently.

"I don't know," Davina sighed, "I just – I haven't told them and I haven't been hanging out with them and I've been avoiding the diner like the plague. I just, I don't know what to say as an explanation or how to tell them that I haven't even filed a missing person's report because Desmond's looking into it."

Wanda frowned, not saying anything for a moment before giving Davina a hug, something that she quickly leaned into. "Thanks," Davina told her sincerely as her eyes were closed.

"No problem," and Wanda held her tighter.

They stayed there for a moment before Davina began to move away and Wanda removed her arms from the woman. "I needed that," Davina smiled at her and Wanda returned it. She also did not melt at the sight of seeing Davina's hair slightly messed up.

"I don't mind. Steve always says that hugs are the best remedy," Wanda told her, thinking back to the days right after Pietro's death when he would hug her every time they saw it each other. She had to admit, while she enjoyed the comfort, it was a bit annoying. She never said anything because Steve was just trying to help.

"Well, Steve's right," Davina chuckled, "But I just – I feel like a terrible friend, you know? I'm her roommate and I didn't even realize that she's gone. I was so caught up in bitterness that we never hung out anymore, throwing myself into hanging out with Rosie and Conrad, that I just – I didn't even notice. I wrote it off as her staying with you guys because she likes you more."

The confession left Wanda shocked. She frowned at the Royce woman. "You are Brinley's favorite person in the universe. She always talks about you with such respect and awe...she loves you. Don't ever think that she's trying to replace you by coming over to see us."

Davina sighed, "I know that it's stupid, especially now, but I just – it's usually just Brinley and I. We would hang out all the time before she got in touch with you guys. We would stay up for hours just laughing at reaction videos on Youtube and traveling all around New York to find the best diner – not counting Apple's Eye because that's obviously the best. And-And we would spend every Thanksgiving together, I would just go over to my dad's for dinner. But this year she went with you guys and I went to the diner because I didn't have anyone to celebrate with. It was so stupid, and now she's gone."

Wanda hugged her again, which she really needed. "It's not stupid, V, it's how you feel," she whispered, "It's okay to feel things."

"But she's gone, Wanda, and we don't even know if she's going to come back or when," Davina began to cry. She just wanted her friend back but her friend had left – she had gone missing.

The tears poured down onto Wanda as she cried for her friend. The first time she truly cried over it because she didn't want anyone to hear at Desmond's and wanted to pretend that nothing was wrong at her own. But here she was, breaking down because it hurt so much. She just wanted Brinley back but she couldn't do anything.

Then, there was a knock at the door. Davina parted from Wanda at the sound of it and she wiped away the rest of the tears. "I'll – I'll go get the door, you can stay here," Davian choked out.

She went to the door and opened it without a mess and clothes that Davina had never seen her in with a mess and tears in her eyes. "Hey there, V," she said and immediately, Davina engulfed her in a hug as both of them began to cry.

"You're back," Davina cried, "Oh my God, you're back! I missed you so much, I love you so much. Please don't ever do that again, please!"

"Never," Brinley agreed, "I'm never leaving again. I missed you too and I love you. I love you so much and I'm so sorry that I ran away. I'm never leaving again."

Davina gripped her tightly, holding onto the reality that her friend came back, Brinley was back. Tears were flying but she didn't care, her friend was back. That was all that mattered in the moment. Not some jealousy, not Wanda, just them. Brinley mattered so much and she was back and Davina was never going to let her go again.

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