

# THE LAST TODIE

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TO JIM

# ONE

## LAST YEAR: OCTOBER 5

I'm about the same height as Sarah Dietz, with the same shoulder-length brown hair, so I knew no one would pay attention as I broke into her house.

It looked a lot like mine. Tan house on a large lot on a street of cloned homes. Her family was gone, or else they'd have the same black Lexus or BMW parked in front.

As soon I was through the front door, I pocketed Sarah's spare key. A few steps later and I was in front of the beeping alarm. 3-6-12. So easy, I didn't even need to write it down. Within seconds, the house was filled with silence.

House as tan inside as it was outside. Dark-brown leather

furniture in the living room off the foyer. Creamy brown walls. I turned into the office. Built-in bookcases. Lots of leather-bound books. A few golf trophies.

We'd agreed: we wouldn't steal anything that insurance and an AMEX card couldn't replace, so I ignored the golf trophies. Except. I pulled one of the golf clubs out of the mini hands of a golden golfer. It slid out, leaving the little man in midstroke without a club.

The three-inch gold club fit into the pocket of my black sweater. First score.

This was as easy as Sarah Dietz after she drinks a couple of beers.

## SATURDAY NIGHT: APRIL 2

"More, Harper?" Alex didn't bother to wait for my response before he topped my glass with whiskey from his dad's stash, along with a splash of Coke.

"Good boy," I said. I propped my feet up on the edge of the navy-blue ottoman and sank back against the pillows of the matching couch in the Conways' basement. Alex put the bottles on a side table before crashing down next to me. The jolt caused me to spill my drink on my sweater.

"Sorry." Alex reached out to wipe the alcohol off my chest. I swatted his hand away and said in a purposefully bored tone, "Touch me again and I'll break your wrist." I looked away from him like he was an insect under my sneaker.

He put his hands up in mock surrender before leaning back. He put his arm on the couch back behind us, and I leaned away from him.

Paisley giggled from across the room where she knelt on the floor with Benji. He had a white cable in one hand as he tried to attach an iPad to the TV while Paisley looked over his shoulder like a fluffy blond-haired puppy in a flouncy polka-dot skirt. The curve of her hips and her tiny waist were perfectly accented by her tight white cardigan, like a pinup girl who had landed on the demure side of the retro calendar. Alex was checking her out, but her eyes were only looking at Benji. She giggled again, her blond hair brushing against his dark-brown hair.

“The mating cry of girls everywhere,” Alex said. “The drunken giggle. A playful tap. You know what it’s code for?”

“Just shut up and drink,” I said. The whiskey burned a path from my throat down to my stomach as I sipped. I waited for it to burn through my fingers. My toes.

I glanced at my watch. Sarah had been gone for forty-five minutes. She should be back any minute, unless she’d decided to wimp out and not break into Gin’s house. Maybe she’d gone home and was curled up underneath the covers of her bed, hoping we hadn’t noticed she’d skipped out.

Gin. Saturday night would be a lot more fun if he were here instead of spring skiing with his family. I glanced back at Paisley and Benji, who were lounging in front of the TV, ice cubes clinking in Alex’s glass next to me. Nerves flittered in my stomach. Was Sarah still in Gin’s house? She better follow the rules.

“The show’s primed to go!” Benji crowed and stood up, pulling Paisley along with him. She giggled again, and he stooped down to kiss her. Alex’s knee bumped mine, and I jerked my leg away.

I took another sip of whiskey.

Paisley and Benji collapsed on the other side of the sectional couch as some episode of a web series overtook the TV and sound system.

“Pretty awesome sound, huh?” Alex said. He tried to stare into my eyes.

“Like I care.”

“Took Benji long enough to set it up,” Alex said, loudly enough for everyone to hear. “Good thing you weren’t needed to rebuild the carburetor in the Chevy earlier today.”

“Sorry I missed it. It would have been fun to work on it again with you and Uncle,” Benji said, briefly looking at Alex but then glancing away. I glanced between them, so alike in many ways, with the same chocolate-brown hair and blue eyes. But Alex was definitely the alpha in their relationship. I glanced back at Alex, noting the smug smile smeared across his face.

“Did you get the Chevy running again? I love old clunkers,” Paisley said.

“It’s a ’67 Chevy, not an old clunker,” Alex said.

I held back a snort and Paisley gave me a sweet smile. She’d noticed Alex’s dig toward his cousin. *Way to stand up for your boyfriend, Pais*, I said in my mind and held up my drink to her in a mock toast.

Alex was about to say something when there was a knock on the sliding glass door connecting the basement to the backyard. “Our girl is back!” Alex said as he sprang up and opened the door. Sarah sauntered in and struck a pose, raising a Louis Vuitton tote bag into

the air. “Success!” She bowed, her hands brushing the floor as she leaned over.

Paisley and Benji clapped while Alex grabbed Sarah around the waist and gave her a big kiss. But as he let her go, his eyes found me. I gave him a sarcastic smile and took a gulp of whiskey.

“So how was your haul?” I asked. I kept my voice cool and unconcerned as I waited for her to brag she’d stolen something from Gin’s room, just to mess with me.

Sarah upended the tote bag onto the ottoman in front of me.

Benji picked up a Rolex with diamonds on the watch face. “Good score!”

“I can’t believe Gin’s mom left that in plain sight in her bedroom.” Sarah rolled her eyes dramatically as she spoke.

“Will we be able to pawn that? It’s distinctive,” I said, wondering why Gin’s mother hadn’t worn the watch on their ski trip. She had squealed when she opened it two months ago on her birthday and claimed it would never leave her wrist. Gin had nudged me with his hip and muttered in my ear, “Until my dad gives her something more blinged out.”

Sarah knelt down and pulled a flash drive out of the mixture of drugs (Ritalin and Valium), a pair of platinum candlesticks, and a pearl-inlaid box about the size of a deck of cards. Nothing looked as expensive as the watch.

“What do you think is on this?” Sarah’s face dimpled as she flipped the flash drive up in the air a few times. Her hazel eyes sparkled. “I found it in his dad’s bedside table.”

“That has to be irreplaceable,” I said. My hands curled into fists.



We'd promised, back when we started the thefts, that we wouldn't steal anything that wasn't easy to replace. "There could be something important on that."

Sarah smirked at me. "They'll notice the burglary. Unlike some people."

I flinched and hoped the expression didn't flash across my face. My parents hadn't filed a police report or told their friends about our house being burglarized when we went to New Hampshire for my grandfather's funeral. But they'd noticed the theft.

They'd reacted to the theft.

They just thought they knew the culprit—and it wasn't me. Or Alex.

Or anyone in my clique.

"I'll get my laptop from upstairs. Let's see what's on the flash drive." Alex's steps were steady even though he'd had several whiskey and Cokes. I looked back at Sarah, returning her defiant stare.

She glanced at the ground. "We can return it after we check it out," she said. Her eyes flicked to a framed photo of Alex and his dad on the wall. A smile blossomed over her face.

"Gin had some interesting photos of you in his room," she said.

Paisley gasped. "Harper! Did you and Gin take some special photos?"

A snort escaped from me before I had a chance to repress it. "No, Pais."

"I wouldn't have thought he'd be into forest green either," Sarah said. "I enjoyed his room. But you'd know more about it since you spend more time there than I do."

The ice cubes in my glass clinked as I took another sip, thoughts

whirling through my mind. Sarah invading Gin's space rankled me, and I tried to figure out why. If Alex had gone into my bedroom when he burglarized my house, he hadn't left any signs or anything out of place. He'd emptied the liquor cabinet and broken the lock on my parents' medicine cabinet upstairs, clearing that out as well. He'd even stolen aspirin and over-the-counter cold medicine. He'd rifled through my mother's jewelry box, leaving most of it behind but snagging a few rings and a pair of diamond earrings.

But my room, and more importantly Maggie's, seemed untouched. Part of me knew Alex had snooped in my room. So I shouldn't be surprised Sarah had done the same. Although I'd ignored her bedroom when I broke into her house.

Paisley vibrated in place. "So what was the photo?" she asked.

A small smile crossed my lips. Of course she'd focus on the photo. "Sarah probably saw one of us after one of Gin's soccer games last year. It's a great photo." Maggie had taken it with her new phone and texted it to us immediately after and then emailed it. Then she printed it at a pharmacy and gave us both copies. Gin had framed his, while mine was on a bulletin board in my room.

A series of thuds told me Alex was on his way back to the basement. He set up his laptop on the bar on the far side of the room, and Sarah tossed him the flash drive. Benji joined him.

Paisley was saying something about her blog when Alex let out a loud chortle.

"Find anything interesting?" Sarah asked, and she slinked toward the boys, swinging her bony hips. Paisley and I followed.

Alex laughed. “Guess who sees himself as an amateur Larry Flynt?”

“The king of porn from that movie?” Paisley asked as Alex turned the screen in our direction.

I glanced at the scene and then averted my eyes. “I didn’t need to see that!” I wanted to scrub the image of Gin’s mother posing naked for the camera from my brain. Her fake assets were clearly displayed, as was the glittery watch on her wrist. Alex turned the screen back around to face him. “There are some folders labeled ‘financial docs’ too. Wonder if they contain more porn?”

“We need to take that back,” I said. “Gin won’t be cool with this.”

“You mean you’re not cool with this,” Sarah said under her breath.

“Screw you.” I faced Sarah, and she pivoted toward me with her shoulders straight. I stared at her, and she looked away after she’d made eye contact, reaching one hand up to twist the hair at the end of her ponytail.

“Girls! Let’s get some Jell-O, or at least a camera, before you get into a girl fight,” Alex said. “Are you sure you need to wear those sweaters if you fight? You should take them off first.”

I shoved my temper back down inside me.

Alex moved next to Sarah and put his arm around her. She gave me a smug smile. “Harper’s right,” he said, and the smile vanished.

“About what?” Sarah asked.

“We do need to return this,” Alex said as he looked into Sarah’s eyes. “Since you took it, you should take it back.”

“Only if you come with me.” She gave him a flirty smile.

“You might be able to talk me into that,” he said, and so she stretched up on her tiptoes and kissed him.

“We can re-create some of the photos,” she whispered as they broke apart. She grabbed Alex’s hand.

“See you freaks later.” Alex pulled the flash drive out of his laptop before following Sarah out the door.

Paisley squealed as they left. “Do you think they’re going to—”

Benji said no at the same time I said yes. Paisley laughed and twirled around. I imagined particles of whiskey swirling in the air around her.

“So creepy,” she said.

“I guess it’s a new place for them,” Benji said. “They like to do it in weird places. Remember when the janitor almost caught them in the boys’ room at school last month?”

“On that note, I’m going home,” I said.

# TWO

## LATER THAT NIGHT

I propped my bike up against the side wall of the garage and quietly shut the door behind me as I entered the kitchen. The crisp night air hadn't obliterated the whiskey warmth tingling in my legs.

There was a light on in the breakfast nook. Crap. I told myself to walk steady and tall.

I wasn't drunk. Really.

My shoulders relaxed when I caught the glint of light bouncing off curly red hair. Maggie. I flipped the light switch, making the light go off briefly before turning it back on.

Maggie turned, and a smile spread across her face, lighting up green eyes just like the ones I see in the mirror every day. I paused for

a moment. Her eyes seemed so innocent versus the reflection I'd seen staring at myself the past few years. I shook my head, telling myself I'd had too much to drink if I was drunk enough to think I'd ever felt as innocent as Maggie. "Everyone's asleep," she signed. Her hearing aids were on the table in front of her, next to a half-full cup of hot chocolate.

I nodded, and I signed back while also speaking out loud. "Why are you still up?"

"Don't feel like sleeping yet. We were arguing about a CI again."

"I'm sorry I wasn't here to run interference."

Maggie looked resigned, and I could imagine the discussion she'd sat through. It'd be the same as last week. My dad would say they didn't think she was a candidate for cochlear implants when she was a baby, but now she was. Of course she'd want to be able to hear, or at least have some sort of approximation of hearing. Maggie would argue that she was happy the way she was.

Except I hadn't been here to tell my father that Maggie was old enough to have a say in the surgery, and he'd yell at me to butt out.

"I told my doctor I didn't want the surgery. He won't go through with it unless I want it. Dad isn't happy." Maggie's jaw took on the determined set I recognized. It was the look she had when she'd decided she was going to throw out all of the blue crayons when she was five, and when she'd decided she was going to move all of my old Nancy Drew novels to her room when she was nine.

"You don't need to convince me, Mags. I'm on your side." Her shoulders relaxed, and she slumped back in her chair. She reached

out and picked up her hot chocolate. “Hey, your nails are pink! That’s a first.”

“I thought Ella and I were just going out for pizza for her birthday, but her mother took us out for manicures too. My toes are purple.” Maggie blushed slightly as she signed.

“I love it! Should we do something like that for your birthday next month? Or go back to that escape room place you loved? Think we could solve the puzzle in less than an hour again?” I sat down next to her at the table.

Maggie shrugged and looked down at the red place mat.

I motioned to get her attention. “What’s up?”

“I wanted to go to the ice cream house with my friends from school for my birthday, but Mom thinks that’s not big enough. She wants it to be memorable.”

“Yeah, she went wacky over my thirteenth birthday too,” I said. “Do you remember? We had that big pool party at the club.”

“Didn’t you do that last summer for your sixteenth?”

“Yeah, except my thirteenth was pool-and-pineapple-themed.”

Maggie’s whole face lit up. “That’s right! I remember the pineapple cake. But why did you pick it? You hate pineapple.”

“I’ve always hated it. I didn’t eat any at the birthday party either,” I said. “Someone handed me a slice of cake after I’d blown out the candles, and the sight of the pineapple slices on top made me gag.”

“Harper...” Maggie trailed off.

“What?”

“Your signing is a little sloppy.”

“Sorry, Mags.”

“Are you drunk?”

“Nah, just had a little bit. Don’t you worry about it.”

“Daniel was over for a while tonight.”

“I didn’t realize he was out of rehab.” I glanced over at the family portrait on the wall of the breakfast room. It was about ten years old. Three-year-old Maggie and six-year-old me were wearing matching pink dresses with flowers in our hair. Nine-year-old Daniel had a matching flower in the pocket of his charcoal gray suit, which matched our dad’s. Mom’s hair was curled over her shoulders. We all looked angelic. Perfect from the outside, polished. Like an apple secretly rotting from the inside out.

My attention snapped back to Maggie, who signed something for the second time.

“He was just visiting and making amends. Again. He went back. He has another three weeks. Or months. Three something.”

“Then I’ll just catch him next time he comes by to apologize.”

“Harper!”

“Just kidding, Maggie. Maybe we can stop by and see him next week. I’m pretty sure they have family visiting hours. The last rehab place did.”

She nodded at me. I gave her a quick hug after I stood up. “See you tomorrow, tiger. Don’t stay up too late.”

“Night.” She turned back to her cocoa.



# THREE

MONDAY MORNING: APRIL 4

“Hey, killer.”

I didn't have to look around the door of my locker to know Alex was leaning against the expanse of gray metal running down the hallway.

“What's up?” I didn't bother with any sort of enthusiasm, not even to glare at the sophomore girl in an almost-too-short-for-the-dress-code khaki skirt giving Alex a shy smile as she walked by. His spine straightened slightly as he noticed, but otherwise he didn't react. He didn't push one of the curly strands of chocolate-brown hair off his forehead or flex his arm muscles like he did last year before he started hooking up with Sarah.

“You’re looking good these days,” Alex said. He eyed my fitted red button-down shirt where it fastened across my chest. I regretted stuffing my navy school cardigan onto the top shelf of my locker instead of wearing it.

“What do you want? And chill with the flattery. It won’t get you anywhere.” I shut my locker after shoving my U.S. history textbook into my bag.

“So I have an idea, and since you’re the devious one in the group, I wanted to talk it over with you,” Alex said. “Plus, flattery will get me everywhere. Got me out of a pop quiz earlier today.”

“Coach Johnson’s health class? Please.”

“Nah, not his class. Ms. Erikson’s English class. She practically swooned when I told her I was taking care of my sick mother instead of studying last night.”

“Your mother moved away years ago!”

“Erickson’s new and doesn’t know that,” Alex said. He had his I’m-king-of-the-school look on his face. He followed alongside as I walked toward my next class. His mother escaped town when we were nine and left Alex with his dad when she took a job in Panama. Or Peru. Some country that started with a P. She stops by every summer and sends a gift on his birthday.

“Really, let’s talk.” Alex shoved me into Coach Johnson’s office, which was empty, even though the door was open. He followed me in and pulled the door shut behind him.

“I have to get to class. If I get detention, I’ll be late for practice,” I said. My soccer coach is serious about us being on time, and being

late usually means being benched for the next game. There's no way I'd open the door to Sarah starting before me, even though our coach would pull her after a few minutes and put me in after he'd made his point.

"Don't worry. I know where Johnson keeps his excuse slips, and he signs them in advance. You're covered."

I sat on Coach Johnson's desk as Alex sat in his chair across from me in the small office. "Go for it. Although if I get in trouble, I'm taking you down with me."

"I would expect nothing less," Alex said. "So—my idea."

He glanced at the door and scooted closer to me. "We've hit up all our houses, right?"

"Yeah," I said.

"So we need a new challenge. Something more difficult than just entering our own homes," Alex said.

"We need to be careful," I said. "Someone's going to catch on. The police will connect the break-ins back to us. Eventually. Someone's going to figure out we're all friends."

"You've already been thinking about this." Alex sounded like he approved. "I've thought of that too. Which is why I have a new idea. Something that will throw suspicion off us."

I motioned for him to go on.

"We need new targets. Options not too close to us. But look around—we have plenty of leads."

"Explain." I crossed my legs at the ankle, and Alex leaned in so closely he touched my knee. "It's simple: let's find out who's going out

of town and break in to *their* houses,” Alex said. “If we listen, we can find new houses.”

“Hmm.” My legs brushed against Alex’s shirt as I recrossed my ankles and leaned back against the desk. “You know, the girl whose locker is next to mine is going to Disney World next week. I know her locker combo—and she keeps a spare key in there.”

“How do you know her combination?” Alex asked.

I shrugged. “She kept whispering it at the beginning of the school year. She’s not very good with locks—she still has trouble opening it. She wanted to get her lock swapped out with a key. She’s in my web design class and asked for next week’s assignments so she won’t fall behind.”

“Do they have an alarm?”

“No idea. But we can always bolt if they do.”

“Sounds like a plan,” Alex said. “But we should up the ante a little bit. Steal some bigger items.”

“But with the same terms.”

“Do you mean only stealing replaceable things?” Alex turned his head slightly as he studied me.

“Yeah.”

“For sure. Those are easier to fence anyway. Less distinctive. Unlike the stupid Rolex Sarah stole. Did you know those have registration numbers? I checked. It could be traced back to us, so I need to figure out how to off-load it.”

I shrugged. “Put it in a donation box or something?” It’s not like we needed the money, although it would buy a lot of beer. Since it was

the off-season for Alex, and always the off-season for nonathletic Benji and Paisley, they could take something stronger without running the risk of failing a team drug test. Not that I did drugs, period.

“Nah, that’d be a waste. I’ll think of something.” He leaned in closer to me. “I’m taking some stuff from Sarah and Benji’s hauls to pawn to the city tomorrow. You want to come?”

I shook my head. “Practice game against the B team.”

“That’s why I stopped playing soccer. You’re bananas for playing year-round.”

I shrugged. “The Earth would stop rotating if I quit.” My father’s if-you-quit-soccer-my-head-will-explode expression from when I brought up not playing spring soccer crossed my mind. I knew he wanted to be able to brag about his daughter getting a full athletic scholarship to school, and playing for the best club in the area, along with being a four-year high school starter, were the first steps.

“So when does what’s-her-name fly to Florida?”

“Saturday morning.”

Alex’s smile was feral. “Then let’s hit it up Saturday evening or Sunday. I’ll text later, and we’ll set something up.”

“I’ll need to get the key,” I said, thinking of my weekend plans. I was supposed to take Maggie to her soccer game on Saturday morning. Other than that, the time spread out before me in a blank canvas. A project with Alex sounded like the perfect way to fill some time until Gin returned.

“Can you get it Friday afternoon after practice?” Alex asked. “After she leaves for the week?”

“We’re practicing across town.”

“Maybe you can leave a book behind and have to swing by? Doors don’t lock until five, and, besides, you can always sweet-talk the janitor into letting you in again.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” I said. “Now write me a pass so I can get into class.”

“What’s the rush?” his voice was a little husky.

I laughed. “Drop the Don Juan act and help me out. I need to do well in this class.” I didn’t add that history was actually my favorite. I even finished the reading ahead of time.

“If you insist.” Alex’s hand brushed my knee as he reached under and pulled open a drawer. He extracted a stack of yellow slips and filled out my name. He was right; Coach Johnson had already signed them.

“Here you go.” As he handed me the slip, he gave me the same look I’d seen him give Sarah before, as well as countless other girls crushing on him. “Although, we could have some fun.”

I stood up and pushed him backward. “Save it for someone else. Your charm doesn’t work on me.”

Alex gave me an exaggerated sigh and put his hands over his heart, but he stepped out of the way. I left the office without looking back.

## LATER MONDAY EVENING

I’d left my laptop open on my desk and facing the bed. The icon for a video chat program popped up. I dropped my novel for English, which

I hadn't opened, although I'd stared at the front cover of hypnotic circles within circles for a while, and jumped across the bedroom.

I accepted the request from "SuperGin" and swiveled my laptop to face the other direction so I could sink down into the leather desk chair.

"Hey," Gin smiled at me from some ski resort in Canada. Light green walls behind him showed off his skin, permanently a few shades darker than my summer tan. A knit navy beanie covered his close-cropped black hair. A white headboard and a painting of a sunset adorned the wall behind him.

"Hey yourself. Having fun on the slopes?"

"You know it. Snowboarded from eight a.m. until they closed and kicked me off the mountain."

"Wish I was there." I smiled back at Gin, feeling as if the sun had just come out after a thunderstorm.

"Maybe I'll convince my parents to invite you next year." I laughed before being able to gasp out, "Good luck." I imagined Gin's dad's reaction to bringing his son's girlfriend to something he referred to as "family time." I'd long ago realized that was code for "no Harper."

"So how's it going? You piss anyone off since we last talked?" His eyes studied me, clearly expecting me to answer yes.

I relaxed into the chitchat, recounting my day to Gin, until he asked the question I'd been waiting for. I stiffened in my chair.

"So did Sarah do it?" He glanced around and relaxed slightly, like he was confirming he was alone.

“Yeah,” I said. “She kept to the rules and returned your key and code to Benji. It’s back in the box. So we’re all good.”

“What’d she take?”

“Well...” I picked up a pen from my desk and clicked it open and then clicked it shut.

“Come on, Harper, don’t fail me now. Just say it.” There was a serious note under a joking tone in Gin’s voice, like he’d wanted me to bring this up ever since we started chatting. I put the pen down and picked up a pencil sharpener shaped like a robot and then put it down too. I took a deep breath and heard Gin take a similar breath on the other side of the connection.

“Your mother left her diamond watch behind.”

“Fuck.” He squeezed his eyes shut and tapped his head with the palm of his hand.

“Want me to return it? I can.” I almost added, “Just like the flash drive,” but I bit the words off before they exited my mouth. Gin didn’t need to know we’d seen some *bam chicka bam bam* photos of his mom. I crossed my fingers under the desk, hoping he wouldn’t work out that I was accidentally-on-purpose leaving something out.

Gin eyed me across our respective Wi-Fi networks like he knew I was leaving something out. “Maybe...”

My voice sounded slightly breathless as I broke in. “Alex still has everything. He said he was going to pawn it later this week. The rest of the stuff wasn’t that big a deal. Some candlesticks. Small stuff.”

Gin was silent. He sported a pensive look as he weighed his



options. I wished he was close enough to touch instead of having to talk across hundreds of miles.

“You’re so good at the whole thinking before leaping thing... Sorry, didn’t meant to say that out loud,” I said.

Gin snorted. “Don’t worry about the watch,” he said. “It makes the burglary believable.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah.” He didn’t sound sure to me, and he still looked tentative. I was about to call him out on it but then he said, “So, you have a game tomorrow, right?”

“Yeah, and Maggie’s playing on Saturday. She might even start.”

“Fantastic! Tell her—”

“Gordon, I need you. Now.” Gin’s mother’s voice screeched through the speakers. She must have been standing on the other side of his laptop, because I could see her reflection on the wall like a shadow puppet show.

“Sorry, I have to go. See you Sunday?” He leaned in closer.

His face covered my entire screen.

“Of course.” I said, even though Sunday was six long days away. “Let me know if you change your mind—” He winked at me and was gone.

I sighed, wishing we’d had our usual game of “No, you log off first.” The heaviness surrounding me all day fell over me again like early morning fog. Should I really break into Marisa’s locker, let alone her house? I should have asked Gin what he thought. He always sees things I miss.

Why was I worrying about this? It's not like we were hurting anyone. Look at what happened when my house was hit. Daniel would have gone back to rehab anyway. Granted, he hadn't stolen anything this particular time, but it's not like my parents would have trusted him again anyway.

It's not like he hadn't stolen from me before. Like the birthday and Christmas money I'd saved up when I was fifteen. The Vicodin from when I'd broken my arm. Besides, he needed to go back to rehab. He'd slid back into his world of hard-core drugs. It was inevitable.

Marisa's house was a challenge, and Alex had promised we wouldn't liberate anything her family couldn't replace.