

The Little Things  
By  
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## PLAY BREAKDOWN

### CHARACTERS

MINERVA SPENCER  
She's

A sarcastic young woman with a sharp tongue.

grieving the (supposed) death of her high school sweetheart, Ben Crawford. She has to play nice with her family and the guests, so she can get through the party.

JASPER CORBIN

A friend of Grace's, who is going through his own grief. He came to the party as a favor from Grace, but his curiosity about Minerva makes him stay.

RASHIDA SPENCER

The mother of Grace and Minerva. She wants her daughters to be happy and live a comfortable life and will do anything to make sure that happens...anything.

GRACE SPENCER

Minerva's older sister, who is the "perfect lady" in the eyes of everyone she's around, and she just wants Minerva to follow in her footsteps.

BEN CRAWFORD

The long lost love of Minerva. He's a rebel who inspired Minerva to seek freedom from her family. He was forced into the army after high school and moved to California after his service.

CATERINA BELUCCI

Minerva's best friend in the entire world. She introduced Minerva to Ben. While Caterina supported her relationship with Ben, she believes that Minerva should move on.

**SETTING**

The play initially takes place in the Spencer house, which is located in Chicago, Illinois. The home is fully decorated, from room to room, to fit the Christmas spirit. The setting switches over to a small bar in Indiana. It's dreary and doesn't seem to be emitting the Christmas spirit.

**TIME**

The story takes place on Christmas Eve during the 1950s.

**SYNOPSIS**

The Spencers are throwing their annual Christmas party. Instead of enjoying her time at the party, Minerva Spencer is busy dodging her mother's attempts at matching her up with rich men. She ends up discovering that her deceased lover, Ben, is actually alive. She sets out to find him with the help of her sister's friends, Jasper.

**MUSIC**

(All of this is being played by Minerva on the piano)

"Silent Night"

"Christmas Blues" by Dean Martin

"Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas" by Frank Sinatra

**THEMATIC MESSAGE of your play. What idea/value/lesson do you want your audience to walk away having learned?**

We have to be willing to let go of those people and things from our pasts. It frees us. It frees us of that pain and opens us up to new possibilities.

ACT 1

**Scene 1**

*LIGHTS UP on the Spencer household. It's eight o'clock in the evening on December 24th. The Spencer family is hosting their annual Christmas Party. EVERYONE is gathered around the living room as MINERVA finishes playing "Silent Night" on the piano. Once she's done, they applaud and continue socializing amongst each other. Minerva moves through the crowd, trying to meet CATERINA by the front door.*

JASPER

*Approaches.*

You did a very good job.

MINERVA

Thanks.

*Minerva continues walking towards Caterina but is stopped by GRACE.*

GRACE

Oh, Minerva! Your performance was just delightful.

MINERVA

Thanks, Grace. I-

GRACE

*Hugs her tightly.*

You know, little sister, I was just talking to some of my pals from Harvard and they enjoyed your performance so much that they wondered if you'd agree to having a....piano lesson with them.

*Winks.*

MINERVA

That sounds splendid.

GRACE

Great! Well, I will be right back to introduce you.

*Grace leaves.*

*Caterina cannot help but crack up.*

MINERVA

*Looks at Caterina.*

I'm glad I can send you home happy.

*Walks over to Caterina.*

CATERINA

It was quite a performance you put on out there, Minnie. I can't tell which was better: your piano playing or your acting?

MINERVA

I swear, she wears so much perfume you'd think we lived by a landfill.

*Minerva hugs Caterina.*

Are you sure you can't stay longer?

CATERINA

No can do. I gotta get home to my folks.

*Starts putting on her coat.*

Dad's been cooking in the kitchen all night and you know he ain't got a lick of taste buds. The last thing I need is for Santa to be giving me coal because of some burnt cookies.

MINERVA

Before you go off saving your Christmas, can you save mine by staying?

CATERINA

*Rolls her eyes.*

Minnie, your family ain't that bad.

MINERVA

You've been around us for twenty years and still can't see what goes on behind the curtain?

CATERINA

True.

*Wraps her scarf around her neck.*

Why don't you find something to distract yourself?

MINERVA

Like what?

CATERINA

What about.....

*She scans the room and her eyes land on Jasper.*

Mr. Brown Eyes over there.

*Minerva looks over towards Jasper, who is talking to some of his and Grace's mutual friends. She scans him from his combed-over hair to his glasses to his blue suit and red tie to his sleek black shoes.*

MINERVA

Seems like a stiff.

CATERINA

“Stiff”?

MINERVA

Stiff. Anybody that hangs out with Grace is a stiff one way or another. Besides, the only brown eyes I'd want to get lost in are long gone...

CATERINA

Minnie.... I-I didn't mean to-

RASHIDA

Hello, girls.

*Sees Caterina dressed.*

Leaving so soon, Caterina?

CATERINA

Yep. I gotta get back home to my parents, Mrs. Spencer.

RASHIDA

Well, I hope you enjoyed the party.

CATERINA

I did- it was marvelous.

RASHIDA

Great. I hope you and your family have a wonderful Christmas.

CATERINA

Same for you, Mrs. Spencer.

*Turns to open the front door. She gives Minerva one last hug and whispers in her ear.*

It's almost over. Just hold on.

*Pulls away.*

Merry Christmas.

RASHIDA

Merry Christmas, dear.

*Caterina leaves out the front door and closes it behind her.*

RASHIDA

*Gently grabs Minerva by her forearm.*

Come with me, sweetheart.

*Rashida guides Minerva back into the living room.*

RASHIDA

*Fixes Minerva's hair.*

They just loved you out there, Minerva. All night I've been swarmed with compliments about you.

MINERVA

Was that before or after they complimented Grace?

RASHIDA

After.

*Scans Minerva's attire.*

That wouldn't be the case if you looked more presentable.

*Fixes her clothes.*

Now, I didn't spend ten dollars on this dress just to have you slouch in it.

MINERVA

I'm sorry, Mom. It's just a bit too tight and much.

RASHIDA

Well, Minnie, we gotta show off the merchandise one way or another.

*Looks around the room.*

I'm guessing you haven't mingled with any of these bachelors.

MINERVA

I thought you were gonna let me take my time.

RASHIDA

That was when you were eighteen and you told me you would try.

MINERVA

I did try, but it just feels so wrong to move on without him-

RASHIDA

It's been ten years, Minerva- almost eleven. I may not understand what kind of hold that boy had over you, but this needs to end.

MINERVA

*Glares at Rashida.*

This isn't like your divorce with Dad, Mom. The love of my life died. I just can't "end it" without constantly thinking about what might have been.

RASHIDA

Why don't we relieve ourselves of the past for a moment and look toward your future.

*Turns Minerva towards the five eligible bachelors across from them.*

RASHIDA

Look. That boy-

MINERVA

Ben.

RASHIDA



Ben couldn't provide you with stability. He wouldn't have been able to give you the life you deserve. Those boys can, and just to satisfy you, I threw in a surprise for you.

*Minerva looks at the small group and notices someone in particular is there.*

MINERVA

You invited Otis Humphrey?

RASHIDA

What's wrong with Otis? He's a Harvard graduate, a golf pro...

MINERVA

Stuck up, self-absorbed, and a complete jerk. The last time you set me up with him he wouldn't stop talking about his boats and summer homes.

RASHIDA

And if you charm him, those can be your boats and your summer homes.

MINERVA

He's a sleaze ball.

RASHIDA

A refined sleaze ball, who can give you the life you deserve.

MINERVA

If those are my options, I'd rather have nothing.

RASHIDA

Minnie, just give him a chance.

MINERVA

Oh, I will. Right after I down a bottle of wine and Grace's gingerbread cookies.

*Minerva leaves Rashida and walks towards the kitchen. She opens the kitchen door, which swings inwardly, and hits Jasper. Minerva gasps. She looks on the otherside and finds Jasper on the floor. He's holding his now bloodied nose and wailing in pain.*

MINERVA

Oh my God. I am so sorry. I didn't see you there. You just came out of nowhere and I-

JASPER

Can you just get me a towel please?

MINERVA

Yes. Yes, I can.

*She helps him off the floor.*

Don't worry. I'll fix you right up.

*Minerva and Jasper walk into the kitchen. The door closes behind them.*

## **SCENE 2**

*LIGHTS UP on MINERVA and JASPER in the kitchen. Minerva is washing her hands in the sink, and Jasper is sitting on one of the kitchen stools beside her, with a damp towel pressed up against his nose.*

MINERVA

I am so sorry. I'm usually never this clumsy or destructive. I just had a lot on my mind and-

JASPER

*Cuts her off.*

Minerva.

*Minerva looks at him. He removes the towel from his nose.*

You've been apologizing for the past five minutes. Trust me, you're forgiven.

MINERVA

*Turns off the faucet.*

How do you know my name?

JASPER

Your sister. She talks about you all the time, and...she was right. You're hot and cold: you go from wanting nothing to do with me one minute to hounding me with attention the next.

MINERVA

Well, I'm sorry if I'm just not in the mood to hear your cliché pickup line.

JASPER

"Pickup line"? It was just a compliment. Can't a man just compliment a woman on her talent?

MINERVA

Not when the man has ulterior motives.

*She's just about to reach for the paper towels, but JASPER stops and  
hands  
her one.*

MINERVA

Thank you. All the men here, outside of my father and his friends, are here to fulfill my family's need for me to be tied down. It's not an assumption-it's a fact! I will apologize for being rude earlier, but I won't apologize for what I think. If you had no intention of picking me up, then you wouldn't be here.

JASPER

Why are you so defensive?

MINERVA

Why are you so invasive?

JASPER

You have this brick wall around you that is only kept up for men. You don't want your mother or sister setting you up with anyone, and you shy away from opportunities where you could meet somebody.

MINERVA

Oh, so I have to be open to every invitation of being a wife stuck at home, giving birth to ten kids, and having no life outside of my family?

JASPER

Who is he?

MINERVA

What?

JASPER

Either, you're married to the idea of being with a certain guy or the idea of dying alone. You don't seem like the kind of person happy with being by yourself, so I'm betting on the former.

*Minerva is speechless.*

JASPER

Now, I'll ask again. Who is he?

MINERVA

*Sighs.*

Ben. His name was Ben Crawford. We met at my old high school- he was seventeen and I was fifteen. My friend, Caterina, and I were tutoring some of the freshmen. My mom told me to come straight home. I was about to, but then, Ben showed up in that classic beaten up Fairlane. He wasn't like the other boys at our school. He didn't have a nice house, he didn't have parents, nor did he have a set track for the future. He had a free-spirit and this passion to change things. That afternoon, he came by to give Caterina a lift home. He took one look at me and asked-

BEN

*Voiceover*

You need a ride, princess?

MINERVA

He had my heart from that moment on. After scoring a detention for starting a food fight in the cafeteria, I was his girl for a solid year. When he graduated, he had to go to Korea. I wrote to him every day for three years, but he never wrote back. One morning, I just woke up with this burning hole in my heart and knew he was gone. He didn't have a family, his friends lost touch with him, and nobody ever talked about him, again.

*Minerva goes quiet.*

JASPER

I'm sorry.

MINERVA

It's fine. I just have to forget about him, like everyone else.

*Minerva holds her hand out for the towel.*

*Jasper gives it to her. Minerva turns on the faucet and rinses the blood out of the rag. Jasper leans against the counter next to her. The two don't speak for a minute. Suddenly, Minerva realizes something.*

MINERVA

Wait a second!

*She shuts the faucet off and throws the rag in the sink. Spins her body around to face Jasper.*

How did you know that I had another man on my mind?

JASPER

I am glad you asked.

*He stands up straight.*

Before I went to Harvard, I used to live in Marseille, France- I was born and raised there. My grandfather would always say to me, “méfiez-vous des petites choses”: “beware of the little things”. In his mind, it was the little things about a person that told you who they were. From your dismissive attitude to your defensive behavior, you were definitely not interested in meeting anyone because you'd rather be with someone else.

*Minerva just stares at him.*

Follow me.

*He walks over to the kitchen's interior window and opens it. Minerva follows him. The two look out the window at the crowd in the living room.*

Pick one person out there.

MINERVA

*Looks around.*

Uhh.....Otis.

JASPER

What do you think of Otis?

MINERVA

He's smart and selfish.

JASPER

How did you come to that conclusion?

MINERVA

My mom set me up with him at my Aunt Joyce's wedding. All he could talk about was himself.

JASPER

Okay. I want you to look at him with blind eyes.

*Minerva looks at Otis. He's talking to the older male guests.*

Pay very close attention to him.

*Minerva looks closer at Otis' figure. Her attention turns to the glass he's holding.*

MINERVA

His hand is shaking!

JASPER

And what does that tell you?

MINERVA

He's scared?

JASPER

Exactly! Otis hides behind his wealth and status so that he doesn't have to address the fact that he has poor social skills.

*Closes the window's shutters and turns to Minerva.*

Now, what did you think of that?

MINERVA

How hard did I hit you with that door?

*Before Jasper can respond, GRACE enters.*

GRACE

Minerva, Mom needs-

*She sees Minerva with Jasper and how close they are. She comes to a full halt.*

I see you and Jasper have gotten...acquainted.

*Winks*

*The two look at one another. They talk in unison.*

JASPER

No! No, no! Minerva and I are just talking. I was just telling her about a piano scholarship.

MINERVA

No! No, no! See, it's a really funny story. I ended up hitting him with the door.

GRACE

*Blows them off.*

Sure. Anyway, Mom needs you to get the cookie recipe.

MINERVA

Can't you just get it?

GRACE

I would, but it would also be a perfect opportunity for you to talk to Ivan Weddington.

*Nudges Minerva's shoulder.*

MINERVA

As pleasant as that sounds, I have no idea where the recipe tin is.

GRACE

You would if you'd cook like you're supposed to, Minnie.

*Leaves.*

*Minerva rolls her eyes and looks for it.*

JASPER

You don't cook?

MINERVA

I was never interested in it, so I don't do it.

JASPER

What about cleaning or-

MINERVA

So, your name is Jasper. You gotta last name?

JASPER

Corbin.

MINERVA

Foreign name for a foreign man. How fitting.

JASPER

I thought "Mr. Brown Eyes" was a lot better.

MINERVA

*Shoots him a glare.*

Okay, Brown Eyes. Do you mind helping me out?

JASPER

Where do you want me to look?

MINERVA

You're tall enough, so check above the sink.

*Jasper walks over to the sink and checks the top two cupboards. Outside of the cluster of mugs, he is able to spot a red rectangular tin in the back. He takes it, examining it.*

JASPER

Is this it?

MINERVA

Nope. That's my grandma, Farrah's tin, but you can check.



*Jasper opens it and goes quiet as he sifts through it.*

JASPER

Minerva. Does your family normally keep your mail in this tin.

MINERVA

What?

*She drops everything and walks over to Jasper.*

Let me see.

*Jasper gives her the tin. She takes out the series of envelopes addressed to her.*

There must be about seventy of these.

JASPER

And you've never seen these before?

MINERVA

No, I haven't.

*She looks at the pile in her hands before giving them back to Jasper.*

This is giving me the heebiegeebes. Can you read them for me?

*Jasper nods and takes them. He randomly picks out one of the envelopes and opens it. Minerva paces. Jasper does a quick scan and his eyes widden.*

MINERVA

*Looks at him.*

What? You look like you just saw a ghost.

JASPER

More like I'm reading from one.

MINERVA

What?

JASPER

*Reads the letter aloud.*

Dear Minnie,

I'm happy to hear that you didn't get caught by your parents. God only knows what they would've done. I wish I was there to see you. It makes me miss the times you and I would sneak out and go skinny dipping in the lake.

I miss you, Minnie. I'm sorry I got to cut this short, but just know I love you.  
Ben.

MINERVA

Ben? Did you just say- No! That's not right. Ben, never wrote back to me.

JASPER

Minerva-

*Minerva snatches the letter from his hand and reads it.*

MINERVA

Read another one.

JASPER

*Hesistantly complies. He takes another envelope from the stack. Once it's open, he reads.*

Dear Minerva,

I don't know if it's something I said or did. Maybe, you found someone else. Either way, Minerva, I still love you and I miss you.

Ben.

MINERVA

This isn't happening, it's not happening, it can't be happening.

JASPER

Why don't we just sit-

MINERVA

*She glances over at the pile on the counter. She picks up and hands the letter on the top to Jasper.*

That was delivered yesterday. Read it to me.

JASPER

Minerva, I-

MINERVA

Please. I need to know.

JASPER

*He takes it and opens it. Reads.*

Minerva,

It's been awhile since we've last spoken. You probably have a lot going on, Princess, so I'll keep it short and sweet. I'm in Indiana on vacation, and I feel like seeing a familiar face for Christmas this year. Meet me at our spot at 9:45 pm. If you don't come, I understand, but I want to see you, Minnie.

Ben.

MINERVA

*Her voice cracks and cries start to peak through.*

Oh my God.

*She quickly looks at the clock hanging next to the door- it's eight-fifty.*

JASPER

*Puts the letter down on the counter next to the others. He steps towards Minerva, trying to comfort her.*

Hey. I know this is a lot, but let's sit down and think this over-

*Minerva inhales her cries and takes the letters from him. She storms past Jasper.*

JASPER

*Calls after her.*

Minerva. Minerva!

*She leaves the kitchen, and Jasper runs after her.*

### **SCENE 3**

*LIGHTS UP on MINERVA entering the living room. JASPER is right behind her, but stops at the doorway. The guests are still conversing amongst themselves and the other Spencers. Minerva, without losing any of her pace, walks over to the snack table and picks up an unopened bottle of wine.*

*She walks over to the empty center of the room and smashes the bottle on the floor. The entire room goes silent and looks at her. RASHIDA and GRACE step forward to address her.*

RASHIDA

Minerva Charolette Spencer. Have you lost your mind?

MINERVA

No, but you have definitely lost yours.

RASHIDA

Excuse me?

MINERVA

*Holds up the letters.*

For ten years, I thought my life had lost its meaning. For ten years, I felt like my world had come to an end. For two years, I thought Ben, the love of my life, was dead. For ten years, you lied to me in my face!

*She throws them at Rashida.*

RASHIDA

Minerva, I know you're upset, but this is not the time nor place-

MINERVA

You didn't even have the decency to burn them. You kept all of these on the top shelf in Grandma Farrah's tin. It wasn't enough that you let me walk around here like a corpse. You're making me walk around like a fool, too. Right, Rashida?

RASHIDA

You are walking on thin ice, Minerva. I suggest you-

MINERVA

What?! Worry about how my hair, dress, or how these pompous lowlives see me? Guess what, Rashida- I couldn't give a damn!

*Everyone in the room gasps.*

GRACE

Minerva, let's step outside for a bit and get some air.

MINERVA

You knew about this, too. Didn't you, Grace?

*Grace is quiet.*

My own flesh and blood. Who would've thought that my biggest enemies would be my own family, who have watched me struggle to get out bed in the morning, cry myself to sleep, and waste away for as long as I have. It's okay. None of you will ever have to watch me or "worry" for me anymore because I'm leaving.

*Minerva goes to the front door. Minerva grabs her and grabs someone else's coats. She puts hers on. Rashida and Grace rush over to stop her.*

RASHIDA

Minerva, where are you going?

MINERVA

I'm going to Indiana to meet Ben.

GRACE

Minerva, think rationally about this.

MINERVA

Oh, I am thinking rationally. I'm thinking a lot more rationally than I have in years! I want nothing to do with any of you, traitors!

RASHIDA

Minnie, at least don't go alone. Let me take you at least.

MINERVA

Oh, I'm not going alone.

*Shows off that she's holding Jasper's coat.*

Jasper's taking me.

RASHIDA and GRACE

Jasper?!

MINERVA

Yep. He's gonna drive me.

*Looks back at him.*

Right?

*Jasper looks around the room- all eyes are on him. He looks back at Minerva. She mouths out "please".*

JASPER

*Sighs. He joins Minerva by the front door and takes his coat. He throws his coat on quickly.*

Of course.

MINERVA

*Minerva opens the front door now that the both of them are dressed and no one is getting in their way. She looks back at everyone.*

Merry Christmas and all of you can get bent!

*She walks outside.*

JASPER

*Stands in the doorway.*

It was really nice meeting you, Mrs. Spencer.

MINERVA

*Calls from outside.*

Jasper!

JASPER

Coming!

*He leaves, closing the door.*

#### **Scene 4**

*LIGHTS UP on the inside of the Lucky Clover. The bar is dreary and almost barren. There are only three people there: the bartender- a buff, forty-something year old man with a goatee- and two fifty-something truck drivers, who are sitting at the bar counter. Outside of the glass clattering and*

*the truck drivers' conversation, with one another, the entire place was quiet.*  
*Minerva and Jasper enter. Just as Minerva predicted they came early, but instead of ten minutes, she had five minutes to spare. They sit at a table on the right side of the room.*  
*Jasper keeps looking around.*

JASPER

How often did you say you and Ben come around here?

MINERVA

Whenever we felt like not coming to school.

*She looks at Jasper.*

Are you okay?

JASPER

*Looks at her and gulps.*

I'm just not used to places like this.

MINERVA

*Giggles.*

I can tell. You've been acting nervous since we got out of the car.

JASPER

Are you practicing our little trick?

MINERVA

"Our"? I thought that was you and your grandfather's thing.

JASPER

It was. Now, it's just my thing.

*Minerva rests her hand over his. Jasper lightly squeezes her hand.*  
*Minerva pulls away quickly.*

MINERVA

I want to apologize for dragging you into all of this.

JASPER

No, it's fine. At least now, people can't say that the party was boring.

*The two laugh. He looks at her hand.*

Minerva, are you nervous?

MINERVA

Nervous? What do I have to be nervous about? The love of my life is about to walk through those doors, and we're finally gonna have our happily ever after.

JASPER

Your hand is shaking.

MINERVA

What if he doesn't recognize me? What if he's disappointed in me for not finding the letters sooner?

JASPER

Minerva, all of that was out of your control.

MINERVA

That's just an excuse. The universe may work in a certain order, but that doesn't mean we have to conform to it all- Ben taught me that.

JASPER

Do you always follow what Ben says?

MINERVA

Ben is very smart and aware of the world. If it weren't for him, I would've ended up like Grace a long time ago.

JASPER

I don't know about that-

MINERVA

Well, you don't know much about Ben or our relationship either, Jasper.

JASPER

Actually, I know a lot more about it than you think-



MINERVA

Because of what, Jasper? The way my eye twitches or how my eyes gleam when I talk about him?

JASPER

That's not fair, Minerva.

MINERVA

You know what's not fair- standing in the corner of a party just judging people based on only what you see. You say I've got this "brick wall" that wards off men, but you have one up that wards off people.

JASPER

I told you that in confidence.

MINERVA

Just like how I told you about Ben and I in confidence. You're sitting there acting as if you know everything there is to know about us.

JASPER

Minerva, I may not know the specifics of you and Ben's relationship. After hearing about the skinny dipping, I don't wanna know. However, I do know that even a blind person can see that this guy's got you on a leash. I do know that it's crazy to put all of your hopes and dreams into a guy you haven't seen or spoken to in ten years. Do you really think he's gonna be the same? Do you really think he's just gonna walk in and you two can just pick right back up from where you left off?

*BEN enters and locks eyes with Minerva.*

MINERVA

*Looks back at Jasper.*

That's for me to know and only me to find out.

*She stands from her seat and takes her coat.*

Thanks for your help, Jasper. Now, goodbye.

*Minerva leaves Jasper and walks over to Ben. The two embrace as Jasper watches. Jasper leaves the table and sits at the bar.*

BARTENDER

*Walks over to Jasper.*

What can I get you?

JASPER

What do you have for a man, who's alone on Christmas Eve and was dragged along by a woman just so she can reunite with her highschool sweetheart?

BARTENDER

*Eyebrows shoot up. He pats Jasper on the shoulder.*

Heartbreak Hotel comin' right up.

*He leaves Jasper.*

**Scene 5**

*LIGHTS UP on MINERVA and BEN at one of the tables in the front. Minerva is finishing up on filling Ben in on everything that happened before they met up.*

MINERVA

Now, I'm here.

BEN

Wow. You really said all that?

MINERVA

Yeah. Honestly, I should've done it a long time ago. All that weight I've been carrying for the past twenty-eight-years has been lifted, and I can finally spread my wings and fly.

BEN

*Laughs.*

Well, don't fly too far, Minnie.

MINERVA

You got nothing to worry about, Ben. I will only fly to the beat of your drum.

BEN

As you should.

*Calls over to the bartender.*

Calvin, scotch on the rocks please.

*The bartender nods and starts making his drink.*

MINERVA

*Calls out to the bartender, too.*

Get me one of those, too!

BEN

*Grasps her hand and mouths out, "water", to the bartender. He looks back at Minerva.*

You don't need any of that, Minnie. That stuff will make your pretty eyes turn red and your pretty face turn green.

*Minerva nods.*

Now, I invited you here to ask you about California.

MINERVA

You live in California?

BEN

Yeah. I got a nice job as a marketor for Coke. Heck! I'm pretty sure I'm getting a promotion once the break is over.

MINERVA

I thought you hated California.

BEN

I used to. That was before I served. I swear, being surrounded by nothing but the dead bodies of people you kicked it with hours before and bombs trying to blow your limbs off really opens your eyes to everything. That whole ruffraff nonsense I was on was an act-I was just scared. I was scared of pushing myself because I didn't think I was good enough. Making it out of that hell hole proved to me that I was worth it, so I pushed for it. I pushed to get all those things I never had growing up.

*The bartender puts their drinks on the table and leaves.*

Now, look at me: I got a great job that pays well, a house on the hill, and a nice red corvette. No one is looking down on ol' Ben anymore.

MINERVA

Ben, I'm really happy that you've found success, but did you really do it so no one thought less of you?

BEN

That's the only way to be free, Minnie. You can't just bite the hand that feeds you and think you're gonna get anywhere. You gotta flow with the current, doll. If I have to put the guitar down and crack open some books so that I can survive out here, then I'm crackin' open those books. You gotta do what you gotta do to get what you want. Because of everything with your family, you should understand.

MINERVA

I do, but I only got by that way. I wasn't actually being myself.

BEN

But, that's surviving, Minnie. You have to lose something in order to gain something much better in return.

*He drinks from the glass leaving it half full.*

MINERVA

What will I have to lose next, Ben?

BEN

Pardon?

MINERVA

I gave up my relationship with my mother and sister just to get here, so what else do I have to give up if you want me to go to California with you?

BEN

Not much else after that.

*He laughs.*

I'm the one that's gonna end up losing. I'm gonna have to get you a whole new wardrobe, give you money for groceries, and pay bills for two people.

MINERVA

You don't have to do all that. I'll just get a job as a waitress for a bit-

BEN

Waitress? Doll, I'm probably getting promoted to chief once I get back. I can't have my woman waitressing. You might as well just stay at home.

MINERVA

Ben, work is work, and I don't plan on just staying at home cooking and cleaning everyday.

BEN

Minnie, if you want me to marry you, you gotta prove that you can be a good wife for me.

MINERVA

In order to be a "good wife" for you, I have to put my life on hold just to serve you- Oh my goodness.

BEN

Minnie?

MINERVA

I already have.

BEN

Minnie, what're you talking about?

MINERVA

I put my whole life on hold so that I could never move on and forget about you, like everyone else has. I've remained that same naive girl for years instead of blossoming into the strong woman I was meant to be. It was all because I was scared to let you go.

BEN

And I love that girl, Minerva. I always have.

MINERVA

Because you knew she would follow you to the ends of the Earth at the snap of your fingers, Ben.

*Takes his drink and drinks it.*

BEN

Minerva-

MINERVA

*Finishes it and slams it down on the table.*

Why didn't you come to see me?

BEN

Minerva, your mother would've never let me past the front door.

MINERVA

But, like you said, "you gotta do what you do to get what you want." I left my life behind, so I could just see you because you were what I wanted. If you wanted that girl as badly as you said, she would've been the first thing you went to. Not California.

BEN

I had to make something of myself, Minerva. I couldn't just knock on your door and say, "hey, Princess. I'm back. Let's start our lives together." It wouldn't have been enough for you.

MINERVA

That would've been more than enough, Ben. Seeing your face, hearing your voice would've been enough for me, and you know that. I thought you knew that. In fact, I thought I knew you.

BEN

You do know me, Minnie.

MINERVA

No, I don't. Jasper was right...

BEN

Who's Jasper?

MINERVA

I was foolish to think that you'd be the same boy I fell in love with.

BEN

I'm still that boy, Minerva.

MINERVA

No, you're not. I should've known that the moment you called me "doll". I used to be your princess, and now, I've been demoted to your doll.

BEN

Minerva, it's just a pet name.

MINERVA

A pet name that really showed how you see me and may have seen me from the very beginning.

BEN

Minerva, you're blowing this out of proportion.

MINERVA

No, I'm not. I'm just putting an end to it.

BEN

*Scoffs. He stands from his seat and takes his coat.*

Minerva. I've entertained this rollercoaster of yours for too long. Now, are you coming with me to California or not?

MINERVA

I'm not.

BEN

Come on, Minnie. You have nothing to go back to now. You might as well see this through.

MINERVA

It's surviving, Ben. You have to lose things in order to get something much better. Right now, I'm letting you go so that you and I can find better.

*Ben doesn't respond. He puts on his coat and digs through his pockets, pulling out some cash to pay for their drinks. He puts it on the table, and he turns to leave.*

MINERVA

*Calls after him.*

Oh, Ben.

*He turns around.*

The next time a lady asks for a drink, you give her a drink.

BEN

Goodbye, Minerva.

MINERVA

Goodbye, Ben.

*She watches Ben leave the bar.*

**Scene 6**

*LIGHTS UP on JASPER sitting at the bar counter. After drinking five glasses of “The Heartbreak Hotel”, Jasper is a mess- his hair is in disarray, his suit jacket is hanging on the back of the stool with his coat, and his tie has come undone. The truck drivers and the bartender kept a close eye on him.*

TRUCK DRIVER #1

*Catches the bartender’s attention.*

Is he alright?

BARTENDER

*Shrugs.*

Gave the kid our special, he’s been downing it like it’s water.

*The three older men look over at Jasper.*

JASPER

*Sings “Christmas Blues” to himself.*

Quand quelqu'un vous veut, quelqu'un a besoin de vous, Noël est une joie. Mais les amis quand vous êtes seuls, vous trouverez que c'est seulement une chose pour les petites filles et les petits garçons.

(When somebody wants you, somebody needs you, Christmas is a joy of joy. But friends when you're lonely, you'll find that it's only a thing for little girls and little boys.)

TRUCK DRIVER #1



What in the world is he singin'?

BARTENDER

You act like I know how to speak gibberish, Frank.

TRUCK DRIVER #2

It's French, you uncultured swines.

TRUCK DRIVER #1

And what in God's name do you know about French, Carl?

TRUCK DRIVER #2

Only that it's one of the most beautiful languages in the world. Three years ago, I was down in New York around this time and got to meet one of them Frenchies. She was so beautiful. Her voice, her eyes, and just her-oof! She just blew me away. I think her name was Edith, but you know my ol' rusty mind forgets, but my heart plays it on repeat.

*Sighs.*

*The bartender and other truck driver look at him dumbfounded.*

TRUCK DRIVER #1

*Slaps him upside the head.*

What did I tell you about keepin' things to yerself?

*The truck drivers bicker as the bartender continues with his chores. MINERVA walks over to the counter and stands behind Jasper.*

MINERVA

Jasper.

*Jasper turns his head around slightly and turns it back around after seeing it was her.*

I'm sorry for all those things I said. I'm even sorry for dragging you out all the way here and just abandoning you like that.

*He still doesn't speak- he just hums.*

You were right, okay? He wasn't the same guy I fell in love with. You were even right about looking for the little things in people- it really is a life saver.

*Jasper stands his ground.*

Look. I know, you're angry with me and have every reason to be. But that doesn't mean you have to be cruel.

*Jasper just sips from his glass.*

Jasper, don't shut me out. Say something, say anything. Show me the little things about everyone here. Berate me for being such an idiot. Tell me how you knew that Ben and I wouldn't work. Just talk to me.

*He didn't say a word. Minerva begins to walk away.*

JASPER

I was supposed to get married three years ago.

*Minerva stops. She looks at him.*

Her name was Isabelle Armel. We were together for four years before our engagement. I thought everything was fine. I didn't think to ask her about how she was feeling or what was going through her head. All I knew was that I was that I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her. That thought- that hope kept me standing at that altar for two hours, waiting for her to show. She never did. One of her bridesmaids found a letter she left for me. Not only did she not love me at all, but she "met" someone else. I haven't seen her or my family since then. Honestly, I've been hiding out in a small apartment in Chicago, so I don't have to see that pity in my mother's eyes.

*He finishes his drink.*

*Minerva walks over to him, again, and sits in the stool next to him.*

JASPER

*Takes off his glasses and looks at them.*

When my grandfather warned me about the little things, I thought he was just telling me to look out for all of the bad qualities in people. It wasn't until I sat on the stairs of that church reading her letter that I fully understood what he meant- be careful of the little things that over shadow the bad because they cloud your judgement. All those things I adored about Isabelle blinded me

to the fact that she was settling for me. It showed everytime we were talking. She would be nodding and listening to everything I say, but her eyes always wandered over my shoulder, searching for more.

*Looks at Minerva.*

I knew your reunion with Ben wasn't going to turn out well because I saw that same, clouded glimmer in your eyes that I had on my wedding day. I didn't want you to get hurt, like I was.

MINERVA

Thank you, and I'm sorry for all those hurtful things I said. I-

JASPER

I heard you the first few times. Trust me, I'm the one who should be apologizing. I posed my fear onto you. I made you fall into this mindset of being judgemental about everyone you meet. Frankly, you were right. I'm the one with the brick wall up.

MINERVA

We both do, and we'll break them down together.

*The two smile and embrace each other.*

TRUCK DRIVER #2

*Crying.*

How beautiful....

TRUCK DRIVER #1

Carl, will you knock it off. You're ruining the moment.

*Minerva and Jasper look back at each other and break out of their hug.*

MINERVA

So, what do you want to do now?

JASPER

Well, I'm afraid we can't go back to our mother's house- for the night at least.

BARTENDER

If you two thinkin' about staying here, I got a room in the back with two cots.

MINERVA

Really? Thank you so much!

JASPER

*Pulls out his wallet.*

How much would that be for the night.

BARTENDER

It's fine. From the shit you two went through, you can use a break. Call it an early Christmas gift.

JASPER

*Stunned.*

There's gotta be some way we can repay you.

MINERVA

*Looks around the room and her eyes land on a piano in the corner.*

I may have an idea.

*Minerva goes over to the small piano and takes a seat in front of it. She blows the dust off of the cold keys before playing "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas" for everyone. Jasper walks over to her and leans against the corner watching her play. The two truck drivers take their beers and grab two seats in the front. The bartender's stern face melts into a smile as he cleans up the rest of the dirty glasses. The lights begin to fade as the music fades with it.*

THE END