

THE DESTINED DIVINES

Behind-the-scenes



Behind-the-Scenes

Dear Reader,

I'm so excited to share this in-depth spoiler filled guide to *The Destined Divines* with you. If you haven't read *The Destined Divines* yet, I highly suggest you do so before you dive into this guide.

Get your copy of *The Destined Divines* here: <https://books2read.com/u/braE8A>

This Guide Contains

Cast of Characters

Characters Taken Out

Inspired Scenes

Deleted Scenes

And More!

I hope you enjoy the behind-the-scenes information and deleted scenes! If you do, please let me know on social media [@jjotisauthor](#) or send me an email. jjotisauthor@gmail.com I'd love to hear from you.

Happy reading!

J. J. Otis

THE DESTINED DIVINES

Cast of Characters



Meg – From the start, I wanted Meg to have anxiety and to show her struggles with it, but it took some time to get it right. My friend Meghan-Margret inspired Meg’s first name, and my best friend of twenty-nine years, Christine, inspired Meg’s last name. When I first had the idea for this book, I sent Meghan and Christine an email summarizing my idea. I asked, “Should I do this or forget it about it?” They both immediately responded and said, “Do it! I need to know more!” Because of them, I wrote the first draft. Meg went through many changes, but I’ve always seen her as a strong, determined, and kind young woman.



Landen – My husband (Reid) inspired some parts of Landen and his last name, Reed. Joe McIntyre (member of New Kids on the Block) also inspired some small pieces of Landen. He went through many changes because he wasn’t coming across on the page as I saw him in my head. Beta readers didn’t like him at first, so I had to work on making him more likable. To me, he’s a complicated but kind and sweet guy. Hopefully, you’ll get to know him more in book two.



Gage – He was a late addition. After making some major changes, I found that I needed someone to be a mentor character to help Meg discover things. So along came Gage. He didn’t have a name for a long time, though. I called him “the guy” and “Delia’s friend” for quite a while. Finally, after the hundredth time of looking at boys’ names, I saw the name Gage and immediately knew that was his name. 😊 In one draft, The Torven killed Gage at Epic Flame. Beta readers didn’t like this at all, and when I started plotting out book two, I realized I needed Gage, so he survived. With Gage, I wanted to show that a girl and guy can have a platonic relationship. I’ve always seen Meg and Gage as friends. A good friend of mine from college inspired a little bit of Gage, and I see my friend like a brother, just as Meg sees Gage as one.



Wynne – She was also a late addition. At first, she was a girl that I just had appeared for a moment to talk to Meg a few times, but she vanished each time, and Meg didn't know who she was or if she imagined her. And at the end, she showed up to say they needed to help her in Dark Boston.



Tommy – Years ago, I watched *General Hospital*, and the moment I saw the actor Bryan Craig as Morgan Corinthos, I couldn't believe it. Bryan looked almost exactly how I saw Tommy in my head. Initially, Tommy was part of the antagonist team when it was a mystery. He didn't get along with Landen at all, and he had a thing for Meg for a while. But then Tommy redeemed himself and helped Meg and Landen. He also fell in love with Jade. And Tommy wasn't as quiet and shy at first, either.



Jade – Have you ever seen *The Good Witch*? I see Jade like the actress Bailee Madison who plays Grace. Jade has a little bit of me in her because of her love of books and escaping into them. Sometimes Jade would rather live in a world of books than in her own world. In the first draft, when it was a mystery, Jade was Meg's twin sister, and she fell in love with Tommy, who was actually obsessed with Meg for a while. Jade has always been a strong, intelligent, loyal, and quiet character who knows what to do to help those she loves.



Delia – Originally, her name was Delilah, and I changed it to Delia. A girl who bullied me for years in school inspired Delia. So, in the beginning, she was much meaner. Betas, my CP, and my editor said she was too much of a "Mean Girl," so I toned her down as much as I could. She also wasn't a witch for a while. It wasn't until later that I decided I needed her to be from the secondary world. But she's always been obsessed with Landen. In some drafts, Delia even dated Landen and drugged him with love potions to keep him from leaving her. The song *Black Magic* by Little Mix inspired Delia's love potions.



Jacen – Have you ever seen *Pretty Little Liars*? The actor Tyler Blackburn who played Caleb on the PLL show inspired some of Jacen’s appearance. I can totally see Tyler in this drawing. Can you? In early drafts, Owen turned into Jacen ([see info about Owen below](#)). I came up with Jacen Blackwell as the alias for Jacob Edwin so The Torven could be in the high school to search for witches. And I just realized how close Blackwell is to Tyler’s last name. I didn’t do that on purpose, I swear. 😊 When Meg first runs into Jacen (Jacob) on the first day of school, he notices how much she looks like Tura and knows she’s a witch just from this observation.



Tura O’Danen – Unfortunately, I don’t have a drawing for Tura. So here’s an inspirational photo from Pinterest that I used for her. I named Tura after a dear friend of mine. I’ve always loved her name and thought it was a unique and beautiful name. Like my friend, Tura is kind, generous, and strong.



Sloane (Meg’s dog) – Through the years, as I wrote *The Destined Divines*, our black Labrador, Macie, always hung out with me. She inspired Sloane. Macie passed away at the age of eleven in October 2021, soon after *The Destined Divines* was released. We miss her every day.

Characters Taken Out

Alex – He was Jade’s younger brother. He was 16 years old, gay, an Empath, and socially awkward. Alex is a bit of a combination of two characters you might know. Think of Alex P. Keaton from *Family Ties* (if you’re old enough to remember that show) and Sheldon Cooper from *the Big Bang Theory*. Beta readers didn’t quite get Alex because he was so proper, but I loved writing him. He was fun to write, and he challenged me. Alex also helped Meg with her internal arc. Unfortunately, I couldn’t fit him in the end battle scene and several other scenes throughout the book, so I had to take him out while cutting words before querying. I literally cried when I delete him from the book. 😞

Ben – He was Landen’s best friend and a unique character. There was a cool twist with him and Rachel with what they were essentially. They weren’t witches, but they helped the witches. Unfortunately, I had to take him out because of adding some other characters like Wynne and Gage. I couldn’t fit him in and having him made the battle scene at the end much more complicated. **Book Two Hint:** I modeled a character in book two after Ben.

Rachel – She was good friends with Landen and Jade, and she dated Ben. They all grew up together. She was also a unique character. Like Ben, she wasn't a witch, but she helped the witches. I had to take her out because of adding some other characters like Wynne and Gage. Plus, it made little sense not to have Ben and keep Rachel. **Book Two Hint:** I modeled a character in book two after Rachel.

Owen – He was originally Jacob (host of The Torven) disguised by a glamour ring. He worked at the diner, and Meg worked there, too, so he could keep an eye on her. But when I decided Meg needed to have an injury from the car accident with JD, she couldn't work at the diner. And because she couldn't work there, I needed a way to integrate Jacob (host of The Torven) into the group of friends. So I came up with Jacen Blackwell as the alias for Jacob.

Originally a Mystery

It originally started out as a mystery. The very first draft had Landen sitting on the manor's porch steps covered in blood. Then the rest of the book was a flashback to how he met Meg, them finding the secret passages and room, and then someone "dying." There were lots of twists. There was a scene where Delia had a gun, and Meg hid in the passageways to get away from her. Delia didn't know about the passageways. Ultimately though, as I revised it, the more I realized it had paranormal aspects to it, and it evolved into the Paranormal Fantasy it is now. Maybe one day I'll write another mystery or a paranormal mystery. 😊

The Magic System

When I decided Meg was a witch, I knew I needed to develop a magic system, and it felt extremely daunting. Unfortunately, in November 2017, I lost my engagement and wedding band. 😞 For our 15th wedding anniversary, Reid wanted to get me a new ring, but I didn't want to have just diamonds in case we found my original rings. So I looked into what stone represented a fifteenth wedding anniversary (we celebrated 15 years in April 2018), and I ended up going down a rabbit hole about gemstones and crystals. As I read about the moonstone (Meg's birthstone), Reid sat down next to me and asked what I was doing. I told him my idea for the magic system, and he said, "You know there's a sunstone. One witch could have a moonstone, and the other witch could have a sunstone." Talk about a lightbulb moment! I immediately started reading about sunstones and made a list of other crystals I could use for the other witches. This is why I've mentioned in posts and at *The Destined Divines* release party that my husband inspired the magic system. I've always loved the original TV show *Charmed*, so I also took some inspiration from that. It took me several weeks to research crystals and decide how I would use them as part of the magic system. It took even more time to determine what gifts to use with certain crystals and what sort of gifts each sister line would have. (i.e., Those from the line of Seren have gifts of the mind such as telekinesis, premonitions, etc.). Overall, I think it all paid off. I hope you like the magic system, and I can't wait for you to see how those in Dark Boston use crystals in book two. If you'd like, I can do

another behind-the-scenes guide for book two and go into more detail about the magic system and the Five Sisters. Let me know if you'd like me to do this.

The Secondary World

At first, there wasn't a Dark Boston, but then I heard a song called *My Destiny* by Katharine McPhee, and it inspired the secondary world where the Five Sisters came from. In earlier drafts, the secondary world was more fantastical. My developmental editor pointed out that having a fantastical world like the one I had didn't fit the tone and genre very well, so I had to change it. She gave me some feedback and comments, and I just couldn't come up with anything. I sent my CP Katerina a message and showed her my editor's feedback. Katerina said, "Oh, so something like *City of Bones*." It clicked when she said that, and I thought of *Darker Shade of Magic*. I immediately knew Boston would be the alternate city since my fictional town of Port Paxton is very close to Boston. I had to come up with a name for it, though, so I sent my editor a message asking if I should give it a unique name or something like Dark Boston. I literally came up with that name as I typed the message to my editor. She liked Dark Boston, and it stuck since the alternate Boston is a desolate city with warring witches and shifters. Katerina then helped me brainstorm about Dark Boston. You'll get to go to Dark Boston with Meg and her friends in book two and find out more about it. 😊

Developing the Divine Symbol

I wanted something unique with meaning, so I searched the internet for days trying to decide what to use. I sent my CP Katerina a few hand-drawn symbols, but nothing seemed right. Finally, I found a tattoo with a crescent moon with the rose compass sun next to it. It had Celtic knots inside the moon. At the time, the book's title was *Rhythm of the Stars*. I didn't want the Celtic knots inside the crescent moon, so I thought, why not put stars instead to represent each of the Five Sisters. 😊

Why does The Torven call Meg, little star?

While writing a scene, The Torven called Meg little star, and the nickname stuck. I liked The Torven having a special name for her. When I chose the names for the Five Sisters, I came across the name Seren. The name means star. Meg is from Seren; hence, The Torven calls her little star.

Halloween costumes

Two songs by Joe McIntyre inspired Meg's Supergirl costume. Joe McIntyre's love and time in the theater and Broadway also inspired Landen's costume. Can you guess who he's supposed to be? Wynne says Gage isn't wearing a costume, but I actually always pictured him wearing something similar to Patrick Swayze in *Dirty Dancing*.

Dedication & Easter Eggs

If you didn't catch it, I dedicated the book to the members of New Kids on the Block (NKOTB). Why? Several people bullied me throughout my school years. NKOTB was a light in the darkness for me. Read the dedication, and you'll understand more. 😊 There are also Easter eggs that refer to each member of New Kids on the Block throughout the book. Only a true Blockhead will find them all. #loveeternal

Inspired Scenes

Chapter 15 Ouija board during Halloween party – A freaky Ouija board experience I had my freshman year of college inspired this scene.

Chapter 16 At the Lighthouse – A song by Shawn Mendes called *In My Blood* inspired the lighthouse scene with Meg and The Torven.

Chapter 26 Epic Flame Premonition when Meg fights The Torven while Landen performs on stage – When I saw the video for *Stitches* by Shawn Mendes, this scene came to me like a movie in my head. I wrote it in about fifteen minutes while listening to the song on repeat. Each time I sent my manuscript to a CP, beta reader, or editor, I prayed they'd like it because I didn't want to take it out. Thankfully, everyone loved it. 😊

Chapter 30 Meg and Landen dancing at the winter formal – When I heard Ed Sheeran's song *Perfect*, I could see Meg and Landen dancing to it and knew I had to fit it in somewhere.

Chapter 30 Meg and Landen in the car after winter formal – In early drafts, I had a scene with Meg and Landen in a car, and they weren't on good terms because of a disagreement. I wanted to keep the scene, but I knew I needed to revise it somehow and make it a mirror moment to Meg's accident with JD. While making dinner one night, I had my phone playing music on shuffle. A song called *Fighting Gravity* by New Kids on the Block came on. It's a song I've heard a hundred times, but this time a scene came to me with a truck spinning toward them and Meg using her gift to stop it. I made a quick note on my phone, so I could revise the scene later. Now it's one of my favorite scenes.

Chapter 38 Meg and Landen in Epic Flame (before The Torven attacks) – I refused to delete this scene when a few people suggested I take it out. Why? Because it was the very first scene I saw when the idea for this book came to me. When I heard a song called *Not Over You* written by Dave Harris and Rob Thomas (performed for charity by Ashlynn Huff and Joe McIntyre), I saw a movie in my head of Meg and Landen in Epic Flame. They were alone and arguing in the middle of the dance floor. Meg felt like she needed to protect Landen from something. I knew Landen was a musician right away because he held an acoustic guitar in his hand. As they argued, he tried to win Meg back because something had pulled them apart. This scene changed in every draft, but to me, this scene started everything. This is why it's always been Meg and Landen's story. It started with them.

Okay, now we're on to the deleted scenes. I hope you enjoy them. If you'd like me to do something similar to this guide with book two, please send me a message on Instagram or email me, and I'll put something together before I publish it so you can all have it when I release book two.

****Please be kind and keep in mind, all of these scenes are from early drafts.****

The Destined Divines Deleted Scenes

Waltz Scene With Alex

Author's Note: Remember how Meg teaches Gage to waltz? It was originally Alex! I needed a scene where Meg and Gage could connect after the asylum so he could show her the audio clip of Laurelanna. I also needed 1. To mention Meg dancing more and 2. Landen to find out about Meg going to the asylum. So I decided to bring back one of my favorite scenes that I had Alex in, but changed him to Gage. I hope you enjoy this early version of it!

“A simple way to think of the steps is a box or square.” I cross the dance studio to Alex.

“A square.” Alex nods.

“You hold my hand, and your other hand goes here.” I guide his hand to the correct position. “Shoulders down.” I gently push them down. “Wow, you're tense. Try to relax. Chin up.” I smile up at him. “Step to your left. Now, back with your right foot and to your right. Last forward with your left foot. Good, we're going to do that again, but we'll add a little more to it.”

After a few minutes of practice, I turn the music on. “Remember one, two, three,” I say in tempo to the music.

Alex tips his head in understanding and takes my hand. He has the steps down but is stiff like a robot. If I could help him relax somehow, it'd work much better. As we move around the room, I notice Landen in the mirror studying us. His expression seems to be what I'm thinking, so I stop the music with the remote.

“How about we try something like—?”

“No club dancing.”

Landen steps away from the wall. “Meg didn't say that. She's trying to get you to loosen up. You're as stiff as the tin man in Oz.”

I conceal a smirk, then pretend to rub my nose.

Alex holds his head up high. “And I sincerely appreciate it, but I'll continue with the waltz.”

“No problem. Let's—.”

The music comes back on, and I lift my gaze to find Landen striding across the floor towards us with confidence.

“Watch. You need to glide and keep your shoulders down more.” He pulls me into his arms and leads me around the studio with such gracefulness I’m awe-struck. “It’s not just the steps.”

Landen’s strong, warm hand on my back sends energy throughout my body. Something ignites inside me as we dance. I’m on fire, yet peaceful.

“I see.” Alex studies us closely.

“Your turn.” Landen steps away from me.

My heart drops, and the energy leaves me. I’m colder without his touch.

Alex glances at his phone and strides over to me. “I’m sorry, I need to go. Could we reschedule?” He gazes down at me with kindness in his amber eyes.

“Oh yeah, sure.”

“Remember, your walls won’t safeguard you but only cause more suffering.”

“Alex—.” I twist my finger on a loose thread of my sweatshirt.

“Have a good night.” Alex hurries out of the studio and closes the door behind him.

Meg talking with Jade in kitchen

Author’s Note: My developmental editor said that scenes in ordinary places like the kitchen, bedroom, etc., are too mundane, and if you can change it up, it’s best to have scenes in other settings. So I cut the below scenes with Meg and Jade in Meg’s kitchen. **FYI**, the scene in Jitters when Meg first meets Jade and Wynne was a late addition while I worked with my developmental editor. It wasn’t how she met in earlier drafts. In the deleted scene below, Jade apologizes for running Meg down. Initially, they met when Jade had her nose stuck in a book and rammed into Meg, who was watching Landen and Delia argue in the school hallway.

“Hey, thanks for coming over.”

“I’m eager to find out as much as you and Landen.” Jade swings into the room on her crutches.

“We can sit at the kitchen table if you want.”

“Perfect.” She sets down her bag and leans the crutches on the table, then sits and slides her laptop out.

“Want some tea?” I put the blue teapot on the stove and glance over my shoulder at her.

“Sure.”

“What kind? Mint, lemon, earl grey, green—.”

“Could I have earl grey and mint?” Jade taps on her laptop and glances up at me.

“That sounds kind of good. I think I’ll try some too. Thanks again for helping. I wouldn’t know where to begin to look for information on Tura.”

“Oh, it’s nothing. I love research.” She pushes her hair back as she leans forward, squinting to see her laptop. Pulling out a case, she puts on her pink glasses and glances around. “May I use your bathroom?”

“First door on your right.” I tip my head as she hobbles down the hallway. “Shame, shame for not using your crutches.”

“Shhh, I’m not going far.” She grins at me.

My phone buzzes with a message from Uncle Blake saying he’ll be home a little late. I sigh and get our tea ready, then set it down on the round walnut table. The kitchen window showcases the small fenced-in backyard. Spots of light in the sky peek out from the clouds, and the crescent moon has a soft glow. The oven timer beeps, and I remember the cookies I’d put in before Jade got here. I grab a potholder and pull them out. The sweet chocolate aroma fills the house.

A chill in the air rushes over me like a wave, and the room sways. Closing my eyes for a minute, I inhale and allow it to escape again. I need to sleep. After taking a sip of the tea, its warmth spreads inside me. When Jade emerges from the bathroom, she plops down on the chair and takes a drink of her tea.

“Mmmm, yes.” She gives me a thumbs up. “Do I smell cookies too? You’re spoiling me.”

“Thought it would be a small way to thank you, and I have a craving,” I admit.

“Thanks. I am too.” Her nimble fingers drill away on the keyboard of the laptop.

I sit down at the table next to her. “Do you think we’ll be able to figure out anything about Tura?”

“I hope so. Did you make the account on the ancestor site?” She sips more tea.

I slide over a piece of paper to her. “Yeah, here’s my log-in info.”

“Thanks.” She continues typing but glances over at me. “I still feel bad about running you down. I love reading because it’s therapeutic for me, but I need to stop reading and walking at the same time.”

“No big deal. I was distracted too.”

“Reading?”

“Not exactly.” I stare into the mug. An image of Landen arguing with Delilah floats before me.

Gage & Meg at Halloween Party

Author's Note: I had to cut this scene because of rearranging other scenes and changes with Gage's character. At first, he wasn't in the circle of friends, but then when I added Wynne, I changed it so he could be in the group. But I still had Landen and Gage dislike one another. The below scene takes place at the Halloween party where Gage wants to talk with Meg about being a Divine Witch. Oh, also remember Delia is Delilah. They mention her in this scene.

Gage grins and walks past me toward the giant desk in the study. "Great costume. It's very fitting for you."

"Your costume isn't something I thought you'd choose."

"Why? Am I not dashing enough?" He leans close and smells of fresh wintergreen.

"That's not what I meant." I gaze up at him.

"I needed a costume with a mask to get in here and crash the party. If Ben, Landen, or anyone knew I was here, they'd throw me out. The store in town only had this left. So I'm the Phantom of the Opera or whatever." He holds the cape open wide, then wraps it around himself and hides most of his mask and face with it.

"Doing that makes you look more like Dracula." I can't help but chuckle at him.

"Yeah, well, I've never seen it before. So do you remember?" Gage winks.

"My dream?" He nods and motions for me to sit, but I don't move. "Delilah just left. There was a huge fight and—."

"I know I saw the whole thing. Nice moves, by the way. D, didn't have a chance against you."

"Why didn't you step in and—?" I cross my arms over my chest.

"Yeah, right. Advertise that I'm here so Landen, Ben, and Tommy can gang up on me. No thanks. D, can take care of herself. Besides, she's the one who got herself into the mess. I told her to stop, and she wouldn't listen."

"Then why did you help her? Did you use black magic?"

"No." Gage shakes his head and waves his hand in front of him, then holds a finger to his lips. He goes over to a chair where a backpack sits and opens it, then pulls out some shiny pink stones and sets them down around us in a circle.

Meg & Gage in school basement

Author's Note: Meg and Gage met in the school basement a few times until I figured out a way that they could meet at Gage's house instead. I had to take the below scene out due to changing scenes around, and the two of them first talking about Meg being a Divine in Gage's attic after The Torven attacks Meg on the lighthouse.

The stairway is dark and dank as I descend into the school's basement. There's a plink, plink sound of water dripping somewhere nearby as I study the maze of narrow hallways ahead, and the throbbing apprehension inside me increases. Which way did Gage say to go? I rack my brain. The lights above flicker and fade to a dimmer glow, so I push the button for the flashlight on my phone, then go to the text message he'd sent me. Five turns in total. Why couldn't we meet closer to the exit? Trudging through the cement labyrinth, I pass a furnace room, some storage areas, and several other closed rooms. At last, I stop and open a door. Gage jumps, then relaxes as I enter the room and the white light of the Dome of Silence.

"Geez, warn a guy next time by knocking."

"Sorry. Why here?" I drop my backpack on the floor.

"I have the key to this one." He grins.

"How?"

"Long story. Come on. Have a seat." Gage taps the tabletop.

The small storage room holds old props and costumes from musicals and plays. Gage sits at a square card table on a metal folding chair in the center of it all. I slide the other chair out and sit across from him.

"So, any new gifts yet?" He rests his elbows on the table and leans toward me.

"Levitation."

"Cool! Let me see you levitate something."

I glide a finger along my necklace. "I . . . uh, I levitated while I was trying to meditate."

"Even sweeter! Show me."

Sighing, I bring my legs up on the seat and cross them. I close my eyes and breathe in but sneeze from the overpowering mustiness and dust.

"Sorry." I concentrate and try again, but I shake my head after several minutes. "I'm too tired."

He waves a hand to dismiss my apology. "It's okay. Keep working on it so you can do it faster and easier. The more you practice, the better you'll become at controlling your gifts."

"Is there a way to control premonitions?"

He sits back in his chair and shakes his head. "Sorry, that one comes when necessary. Did you have another?"

"Not yet. I did some research and read a little bit about the five women. What else can you tell me? What's The Torven?"

Premonition about being in car with Landen

Author's Note: I honestly forgot about this premonition, and I wish I could have kept it in. It hints at the truck losing control in front of them after the winter formal.

I rush into the house and toss my bag down. When I enter the kitchen, an image flashes before my eyes.

I'm in the passenger seat of a car. A storm rages, and rain beats on the windshield so hard it's difficult to see. Lightning brightens the road as a truck spins out of control and flips towards me. The second before impact, it disappears.

I gasp and collapse to my knees. The cool wood floor by the fridge brings me back, and I inhale sharply, wringing my shaking hands. These premonitions are becoming more intense. I wish I knew how to deal with them.

Meg & Gage run into The Torven at school

Author's Note: Due to recent heartbreaking events and not wanting to cause anyone further stress or triggers, I've decided not to share this actual scene with you. However, I will give you some info on it. This scene was in a draft before Jacen was part of the group. I took it out for several reasons. One reason was to keep as much violence out of the school as possible. There's a fire in the winter formal scene, and it takes place in the gym, but no one is hurt (the DJ is only unconscious). Also, I needed to keep readers guessing who The Torven was possessing. Having it confirmed to be a "he/him" host cut down the suspects. In this scene, Meg and Gage come up from the school basement and run into the host of The Torven. They battle it, and both get hurt. Gage gets knocked unconscious, and Meg gets sliced in the arm by a shard of glass. After taking this scene out, I realized I still needed a scene to add tension and to have The Torven attack again, so I added the scene where The Torven comes to the cave, and Meg lures it out to the beach to protect Landen and Charlotte.

Delilah (Delia) Dies

Author's Note: As you can see by the title of the scene above, at one point, Delia died. She had information and was going to tell Meg, but The Torven got to her first. The goal of this scene was to make Tommy a red herring. Meg, Gage, and Tommy all end up suspects in Delia's murder too. Again, remember Delia is Delilah in this scene. And lastly, Meg is sick so that's why Gage says she looks and sounds horrible.

Just before midnight, I step down the stairs toward the waterfront. The beach is eerie, with black water lapping on the sand. Something in the sand sparkles, so I stoop down to pick it up. A glittery pink phone rests in my hand, and I touch the home button. The screen flicks on and shows a picture of Delilah and a woman with honey blonde hair and bright blue eyes.

"Meg?" I spin around to find Gage.

"I found Delilah's phone." I hold it up for him to see.

"Where'd you find it?"

"In the sand right there."

"You shouldn't have come. You look and sound like shit," Gage says.

"I feel like it."

A tortured scream pierces the air, and I turn to see two figures on the trail leading to the lighthouse. One drops to the ground, and the other darts away.

"Delilah!" Gage sprints down the beach.

Feeling exhausted already from riding my bike here, I follow at a slower speed.

As I get closer, several footprints line the sand, but one set of prints lead away, then stop. Only The Torven could disappear like this. But why? What did Delilah know and want to tell me?

Bright moonlight shines down on Delilah, who lies crumpled on the ground, covered in blood from a deadly gash across her throat. Some other cuts and stab wounds are visible. Delilah's gray eyes stare blankly at the ebony sky, and her open lips appear as if she wants to say something. I close my eyes, hoping to rid my brain of the image.

"Meg?"

I whip around to find the owner of the voice. "Tommy, what are you doing here?"

"I couldn't sleep, so I was taking a walk." He steps around me, and his eyes widen. "I heard a—"

"Gage and I heard it too and ran over here."

"There's so much blood. Is she—?" Tommy asks.

“I don’t know. We just got here.”

Gage kneels beside Delilah, rocking back and forth, shaking his head with tears on his cheeks.

Tommy nods in understanding and trudges through the sand, then kneels by them.

He presses his fingers to her wrist, then flicks his gaze over to me. “Call 911 or your uncle.”

“What do I tell them?”

“She’s dead,” Tommy tells me.