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Forgotten Lyrics

A Watersong Story

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Capri, Maryland: Five Years Ago

Prologue: Blackness

Salt water filled his mouth as Daniel gasped for breath. Over the sound of the boat's engine and the crashing waves he could hear the girls' crying, so he knew they were alive. The moon was hidden behind the clouds overhead, and he wiped the water from his eyes, squinting in the darkness.

As Daniel treaded water, he scanned the icy waves for any sign of his brother or the girl he'd seen swimming before the accident. The only thing he could clearly see was the white hull of the boat, smashed on the huge jagged rocks protruding from the water.

"John!" Daniel shouted into the night.

When his brother didn't answer, Daniel tried shouting again, louder this time. When John didn't answer, Daniel dove underwater, searching the bay for his brother.

In the pitch-darkness of the water, he thought he saw a shimmer, just a tiny glint of light that caught his eye. He swam after it, hoping it was a bit of starlight breaking through the water and catching on the silver chain John wore around his neck.

Daniel swam after the phantom light until his lungs were about to burst, forcing him to swim up for air. Just as his head broke the surface of the water and he gasped for breath, something hit him. A searing pain sliced through his shoulder, and then everything was blackness.

1. Cellar

Lydia Panning pushed open the door to her grandma's house, the hinges creaking open with an angry squeak, and tossed her duffel bag on the floor. While Lydia liked to think of herself as a notch above the average college student, she still couldn't resist bringing her dirty laundry with her whenever she came back from Sundham University.

"Nana?" Lydia called out when Delia didn't respond to the opening door. "I'm home."

Delia's old Mustang was in the driveway, so she knew her grandma was there. Since she still hadn't answered, Lydia set about poking around the house for her.

The living room was cluttered with antiques, and every time Lydia visited, she swore there were at least five new pieces added to Delia's extensive collection.

A warped mirror hung on one wall, catching Lydia's eye. It had a funhouse effect on her face, stretching her elfin nose and small lips into gargantuan proportions. But that's not what grabbed her attention.

Something just beneath the surface seemed to be moving, almost swimming behind it. Tentatively, she reached out to touch it, and instead of hard glass, it was pliable, like gelatin.

The mirror left her fingertips wet, and white and purple smoke instantly swirled around inside it. Then, suddenly, an androgynous face formed in the mirror, like it was flying at her, with its mouth hanging open wide.

"Hello?" Lydia asked, unruffled by the sight of a wraith forming in a mirror. "Can you speak?"

The face continued to float there for a few seconds, saying nothing, and then disappeared in a puff of smoke.

“I guess not.” Lydia shrugged and dropped her hand. “I’ll try again later.”

After a childhood spent with Delia, she’d gotten used to that kind of thing. Her grandma had taught her that more often than not, specters like that just needed help, and they acted out because nobody noticed them.

No matter how frightening or horrible a monster may seem, Delia believed that nothing was beyond saving.

Lydia stepped away from the mirror, almost stumbling over a spinning wheel behind her. She caught it just before it fell, which was good because Delia would have her hide if she broke another antique.

As she was righting the spinning wheel, Lydia heard a loud thump coming from downstairs, and she scolded herself for not realizing it sooner. Obviously, her grandma would be down in the cellar.

She went out the front door, steeling herself against the chilly April air. The weather was getting warmer, but there was a bite to the wind that blew through her pink sweater.

Around the back of the quaint little blue house was a set of double doors leading down into the cellar. The doors were made of snakewood, which meant that along with having a unique beauty in their marbled grain, they were very strong and impossibly heavy. Delia had chosen them specifically so they would keep the contents of the basement safe.

But Lydia hated going down in the cellar because of them. When she grabbed the brass handle to pull them open, they barely budged.

Her grandma often said that Lydia was small enough to put in her pocket, and Lydia's petite frame was no match for the doors. Standing just over five feet tall, Lydia still liked to believe she had the upper body strength of a lion, but against the doors she felt more like a kitten.

With some doing, she finally managed to get one open and hurried down into the cellar before it slammed shut on her. The scent of flower petals and burning leaves immediately washed over her—the familiar aroma of Delia's safety potions.

In each of the four corners of the room were small wooden bowls filled with twigs, herbs, and a pool of liquid. That was what gave off the strong scent, and that was what kept the cellar dry and safe.

Lydia's grandma's cellar had to be unlike any other cellar she'd ever seen. The ceilings were very high, almost twelve feet, and it was warm and bright, no matter the season. It was as large as the house above them and filled with bookshelves that ran from floor to ceiling, which explained why Delia couldn't see her as Lydia descended the stairs.

“Who's there?” Delia asked, hidden somewhere among the shelves.

“It's just me, Nana.”

“Lydia?” Delia exclaimed, and then she rounded a corner and smiled broadly at her granddaughter.

Her wavy blond hair had a few more gray streaks in it than when Lydia had seen her last, but Delia kept it long and frizzy the way she always had. She wore jeans and an old paint-splattered U2 T-shirt—her standard uniform for when she was hanging out at home.

“Hi, sweetie!” Delia hurried over and embraced her tightly. She was an especially strong woman, even though she was nearly fifty-seven. “I didn't know you were coming home today!”

“Yeah, I decided to last minute,” Lydia said once she’d untangled herself from her grandma’s hug. “I didn’t have much homework this weekend, so I thought, why not?”

“Your laundry was probably piling up, too, I bet?” Delia asked with a knowing look.

“Maybe.” Lydia gave her a sheepish smile, then quickly changed the subject. “So what are you doing down here?”

“Oh, just some straightening up and rearranging.”

Delia walked back down to the shelves she’d been working on, and Lydia followed her. Several piles of old books were stacked up on the floor, leaving two shelves totally empty, aside from a large amount of dust and cobwebs.

“Do you want some help?” Lydia asked.

“If you want to, that’d be nice. You can dust the shelf where the grimoires were. I need to sort them out myself.” Delia picked up a book with a human face carved in the leather cover, and the spine audibly cracked when she opened it. “Some of these . . .”

“What?” Lydia asked when her grandma trailed off.

“They’re useless.” Delia tossed the book down on a pile. “I don’t know why I keep them around, but I’d feel terrible about throwing them out. So instead I just keep moving them, dusting them off, and putting them back on the shelf where no one will ever read them.”

Lydia climbed on a wooden stepping stool so she could reach the shelves. An old T-shirt had been ripped up to make a dust rag, and when she wiped it across the wood, a plume of dust came up in her face. Lydia brushed it away, making sure to shake out anything that landed in her short black hair.

A small spider climbed out of a web, hurrying to get away from her rag, and Lydia carefully picked it up and moved it to a lower shelf so she wouldn’t accidentally crush it.

“You know, you really ought to get a bookstore for these or something,” Lydia said. “You shouldn’t just keep them in an old cellar.”

Delia had crouched down to sort through the books, and she glanced up at Lydia. “You always say that, but it’s a nice cellar, and they do just fine here.”

“I know that you take good care of them, and they’re safe here,” Lydia said as she dusted. “But there’s so much information, and I think it’d be better if there was, like, a store or a library so it’d be easier for people to access this information.”

“I don’t want just anybody in here pawing around the books.” Delia picked a large brown book that was so thick, she had to use two hands. “This book right here, it’s six hundred years old and has a spell on how to raise the dead. I can’t just have some Joe Schmoe off the street picking this up, now, can I?”

“Well, no,” Lydia admitted. “But maybe you could keep dangerous books in back or something.”

“I’ve got things under control. When I die, and you inherit all of this, you can open a bookstore if you want.” Delia gestured widely to the room, referencing the hundreds of books that filled her cellar. “But for now, we’ll keep things the same.”

“I just worry that people might not be able to find you or the books if they need them.”

“Those who need me always find me,” Delia said matter-of-factly.

Lydia stopped dusting and turned back to her. “How can you be so sure?”

“I just am.” Delia shrugged. “Take today, for instance—a girl came in looking for my help. I don’t know how she found me, and I didn’t ask, but the point is that she found me.”

“What did she need help with?” Lydia asked.

Delia shook her head. “I don’t know exactly. She wouldn’t really say. She hinted at a few things about curses, but she wouldn’t get more specific. She was a little skittish.”

“Who was she?”

“She didn’t say her name, and I didn’t ask.”

“Was she human?” Lydia pressed.

“I don’t know. I don’t think so.” Delia paused for a moment and stared off in thought. “She was a really gorgeous girl. Just breathtakingly beautiful. Long brown hair, and these big doe eyes. She was just . . . stunning.” She looked up at Lydia with a rueful smile. “Not that you aren’t pretty; this was just definitely supernatural.”

Lydia smirked. “I’m comfortable in my own prettiness, Nana, but thank you.”

“But I don’t know *what* she was.” Delia scratched her head and her brow wrinkled in frustration. “I don’t think I’ve encountered anything like her before.”

“And you couldn’t help her?” Lydia asked.

“No. She refused to go into specifics, and I couldn’t give her anything, with info that vague. She seemed like a real sweet girl, but there was definitely trouble after her.” Delia straightened up and rubbed her arms, as if she suddenly felt a chill.

“She had that look in her eyes, the one your mom has when she’s on the run from some new idiot boyfriend of hers,” Delia went on. “When she’s looking for safety but is too afraid to ask for it.”

Lydia’s mother had been only sixteen when she had her, and while her father had been considerably older, he didn’t feel he was fit to raise Lydia himself. So that left Lydia in the care of Delia most of the time.

Her mother had a bad habit of getting involved with all the wrong kinds of people and disappearing for long stretches at a time. Then she'd show up out of the blue, often with bruises, sometimes with track marks, and then she'd be gone again. Now it had been over two years since Lydia had seen her mom.

"So what happened with this girl?" Lydia asked. "Did she just leave?"

"Yeah." Delia let out a resigned sigh. "I couldn't help her, and she didn't want to stay. So there was nothing more I could do."

"But you said she's in trouble."

Delia nodded. "She is, but I can't force help on her. She'll come back when she's ready."

"*If* she's ever ready," Lydia clarified.

"That's true. Some people never are," Delia agreed thoughtfully.

Though neither of them said it, Lydia knew they were both thinking of her mother.

"Anyway." Delia turned to Lydia and forced a smile. "I think you've helped me enough for one night. It looks pretty good down here. Why don't we head upstairs, and I'll make you something to eat? You're wasting away."

"Okay." Lydia set aside her rag and climbed down off the stool. "That sounds good."

"So what are your plans for this weekend?" Delia looped her arm around Lydia's shoulders as they weaved their way through the piles of books.

"I didn't have many," Lydia said. "I think I might visit my friend Marcy."

"Marcy? That girl is weird."

Lydia laughed, a tinkling noise that always sounded like it belonged more to a fairy than to a human, even to her own ears. "Nana, *we're* weird."

"I know," Delia said as they climbed the stairs up out of the cellar.

2. Anthemusa

Daniel Morgan stood on the docks next to Aiden, watching John help Zoë and Mackenzie climb into his grandfather's speedboat. The moon was full above them, but Daniel could see dark clouds moving in, blotting out the stars. The wind across the bay was growing stronger, but John and the girls seemed oblivious.

"John," Daniel said, "I don't think we should be doing this."

"Of course we should!" John assured him with a boisterous laugh. "Grandpa left me the keys for a reason." He held out the boat keys jingling against the purple rabbit-foot key chain.

Even though Daniel was five years younger than John, he was taller than him by almost two inches, and he stared into John's bleary hazel eyes with unease.

"You're drunk, John," Daniel told him. "You shouldn't be driving."

"I'm not drunk," John insisted, but he swayed as he spoke. "You're sober." He laughed, then glanced back at the boat to see if the girls enjoyed his joke as much as he did.

"That's my point." Daniel turned to Aiden. "Aiden, help me out here."

Aiden shrugged and smirked. "If John says he's good to go, he's good to go."

"Oh, come on." Daniel lowered his voice so John would be less likely to hear and protest the truth. "You saw him take, like, three shots right before we left the party."

"It's a boat. It's not like he can run over somebody," Aiden said. "You'll be fine."

Daniel wanted to yell at him. Aiden was supposed to be John's best friend, and he was way more sober than John. He should've been helping Daniel out, but instead he had a bemused smirk plastered on his face as he watched the scene unfold.

Zoë slapped the side of the boat, trying to get their attention. The moonlight made the diamond clips in her short blond hair shimmer, and her dazzling smile had begun to look annoyed.

“Are we going or not?” she shouted.

“In a second! Keep your panties on!” John laughed again, then turned his attention back to Daniel. He put his hand on his shoulder and leaned in, like he was about to whisper words of wisdom to his brother. “These girls are ready to party. I’m going out there, showing them a good time.” Then he looked over at Aiden. “Are you guys with me?”

Aiden shook his head. “I’m gonna pass. I’m freezing my nuts off already.” He had his arms folded across his chest in an attempt to fight the cold.

“You drove us out here, but you’re not coming with?” Daniel asked in disbelief.

They’d been at a party when John had gotten the great idea that they should go out boating, and while Zoë had been the only one actively encouraging this idea, Aiden seemed to go along with it because he thought it was funny. So he’d offered to drive them all out to the docks, and the five of them had crammed into his sports car.

Now, in the cold darkness of the bay, Aiden apparently realized that the joke wasn’t actually funny enough for him to follow through with it. Unfortunately, it was too late, and now Daniel was stuck out here.

“Nah.” Aiden shook his head. “I think I’m gonna go back to the party and see if I can get warm with the hot Puerto Rican girl.”

“What about you, Danny Boy? Are you wussing out on me?” John asked.

Daniel groaned at his brother’s pet name for him. “Yeah, I’m in.”

“Whoo!” Zoë cheered. “Let’s get this started!”

“Have fun, bro,” Aiden told John, who jumped gleefully into the boat, making Zoë laugh.

“How are we gonna get home?” Daniel asked as Aiden started walking back to his car.

Aiden shrugged. “Call a cab.”

“Come on!” John yelled. “Let’s go!”

Sighing, Daniel climbed into the boat. He didn’t really want to go, but Aiden had a point.

They were going out on the water, so they probably couldn’t get into any real trouble. Besides, if he went with John, he would be there to handle things if they got out of control. And if everything went fine, then maybe Daniel could even have a little fun.

When John started the boat, Daniel offered to drive so that John could have some alone time with Zoë, but John immediately dismissed him. Even though Zoë was sitting shotgun, Daniel made sure to stay up by John until they made it out of the close quarters of the docks. Miraculously, John managed to get out to the open water of Anthemusa Bay without crashing into other boats.

As soon as he could, John kicked the boat into high speed, making Zoë squeal with delight. Since John had handled the docks okay, Daniel relaxed a bit and went to sit down in the backseat next to Mackenzie.

The wind whipped over them, blowing Mackenzie’s auburn hair out behind her. She stared straight ahead, and when Daniel glanced over at her, he couldn’t tell if she was enjoying the ride or not.

Before tonight, he’d never even met her, and he’d only spoken a few words to her at the party before they left. He was here because of John, and she was here because of her friend Zoë. They had that much in common, at least.

The boat lurched to the side, and Daniel slid across the bench into her.

“Sorry,” he said and tried to scoot away.

“It’s okay.” She smiled demurely at him, and then neither of them said anything for a few minutes. “It’s cold back here.”

Mackenzie was wearing a light jacket, but it was freezing out on the boat. Daniel looked over at her and noticed her shivering a little.

“Here.” He pulled his hooded sweatshirt up over his head and held it out to her. “You can use my hoodie.”

“Won’t you get cold?” Mackenzie asked, looking at his T-shirt.

“I’ll be fine,” he insisted.

“Thank you.” She put on his sweatshirt, then settled in the seat next to him. “So, you’re John’s little brother?”

He nodded. “Yeah.”

“You look alike,” Mackenzie commented. “He’s, like, a shorter, stockier version of you.”

Daniel and John shared the same unkempt dirty blond hair and the same hazel eyes. Daniel was muscular, but he was leaner than his brother. John was broad-shouldered and bordering on husky. They were both quick to laugh, although John may have been a little bit quicker.

“It’s funny, because you’re taller than him,” she said.

Mackenzie brushed a hair out of her eyes, and Daniel realized that she was rather beautiful. Something about that simple gesture—the way her slender fingers brushed up against the pale skin of her forehead—disarmed him, and it took him a second to answer her question.

“I had a growth spurt last year,” Daniel said. “And now I’m six-foot.”

“How old are you?” Mackenzie asked.

“Fifteen.”

She narrowed her eyes, almost as if she didn't believe it. "I thought you were older than that. I think it's because you have mature eyes."

"Thanks. I think." He smiled. "How old are you?"

"Eighteen," Mackenzie said proudly. "I'm a senior."

"Cool," Daniel said and did his best to look equally proud. "I'm a freshman."

"You're cute," Mackenzie said with a hint of sadness in her voice. "But it would never work out between us. I don't date younger guys."

"Neither do I," Daniel replied.

She raised her eyebrow. "So you only date older girls?"

"No, I just don't date younger guys," he quipped.

Mackenzie smiled but didn't laugh. "Funny."

"Have you been friends with Zoë for a long time?" Daniel asked.

"Since grade school."

He looked ahead to where Zoë and John were talking and laughing. "So does it ever get easier?"

"What?" Mackenzie asked.

"Being the sober one." Daniel looked back at her.

"Well, I'm not *completely* sober, but . . ." She sighed and considered it. "I don't know if it gets easier. Most of the time it's fun, but sometimes I do get sick of being the reasonable one while everybody else has fun."

They'd gone farther out in the bay, almost to the point where it became the ocean. Daniel was about to suggest that John turn around, but John made the same decision himself and turned

the boat back. They'd been zooming past Bernie's Island, and John began driving in fast circles around it.

Bernie's Island was a small island, just big enough for a cabin, a boathouse, and lots of trees. The only inhabitant was an old British man named Bernie McAllister, and while he'd become a bit of a hermit in his later years, everyone in town knew of him because of his island.

"Whooo!" Zoë yelled, holding her arms high above her head as John whipped around the island.

"Zoë!" Mackenzie shouted, her eyes fixed on the bald cypress trees that extended beyond the edges of the island. "Quiet down. You're gonna wake up Mr. McAllister."

"Who cares? He should wake up and enjoy this glorious night!" Zoë smiled radiantly back at her best friend. "You need to live a little, Mackenzie!"

"Yeah, whoooo!" John joined in and did a fist pump, but he steered away from the island, going back toward the mainland.

"Maybe they're right," Daniel said.

"You think we should wake up an old man?" Mackenzie asked in surprise.

He laughed. "No. Maybe we should loosen up. Have some fun."

"Wanna do a shot?" Mackenzie asked and pointed to the oversized purse sitting on the bottom of the boat. "I think Zoë has a bottle of vodka in her purse."

Daniel shook his head, smiling mischievously. "I meant, why don't we break some rules?"

Mackenzie appeared intrigued. "Like what?"

"Like your rule about not dating younger guys."

"I don't know," she said with faux-seriousness. "That's a pretty big rule."

"Well, maybe we could start simple," Daniel suggested. "With just kissing younger guys."

Mackenzie pretended to think about it, but when he leaned in toward her, she didn't move away.

Then the boat suddenly jerked to the side, nearly tipping so it was completely vertical. Daniel grabbed onto the boat with one hand and Mackenzie with the other to keep her from going overboard.

"Shit, John!" Daniel shouted once John had righted the boat. Somehow, both John and Zoë had managed to stay aboard, and Daniel made his way up front, meaning to talk some sense into his brother. "Slow down! You're gonna flip the boat."

"Everything's fine, Daniel." John brushed him off. "Go sit back down."

"Why don't you and Zoë sit down for a while?" Daniel asked. "I'll steer, and me and Mackenzie can sit up here."

"I got it," John snapped. "Stop acting like Mom. I'm fine."

"Yeah, Danny Boy." Zoë giggled and swayed with the waves. "We got this."

"Zoë, come back and sit with me before you fall over," Mackenzie said.

When boat lurched again, Zoë really did almost fall over, and Daniel grabbed the waistband of her jeans just in time to keep her from going over. Mackenzie put her arm around her friend's waist and led her to the back, where she could hold on to her.

"Great," John muttered after Zoë had gone back. "Now you scared the girl away."

"Look, now you can go back and sit with her and put the moves on her." Daniel was hovering over John, practically talking in his ear. "Wasn't that your reason for taking the boat? She's good to go, John."

"Yeah, well, I would've, but you ruined it." John glared up at him. "I'm not gonna let her think that I'm letting my kid brother boss me around."

“She doesn’t even—” Daniel was in the middle of arguing with his brother when he glanced out to the open water in front of them as the boat’s light flashed on something.

A girl swam right in front of them, her head and shoulders above the water. Her eyes were wide in surprise, and they were about to hit her.

3. Reverberation

“John, watch out!” Daniel yelled, and he grabbed the wheel, jerking it to the side just in time to keep from hitting the girl.

It happened in seconds—the jerk of the wheel, the boat veering to the side, Daniel seeing the jagged rocks jutting twenty feet above the water—but time seemed to slow. The moments felt endless, and Daniel felt frozen in them, unable to move fast enough to change anything.

The boat careened to one side, and Zoë screamed as she was flung overboard. Daniel had been hanging on to the wheel, trying to steer them to safety, but as the boat tipped to the side, he was just trying to grab on to something to keep from going over.

He heard the crunch of metal as the boat slammed into the rock, and his fingers slipped from the wheel. Gravity seemed to suspend itself, and suddenly he was in free fall. For what felt like minutes—but was probably only a split second—he floated and hovered above the boat. John had already let go. Screams were echoing in Daniel’s ears, but he wasn’t sure if they were his own or John’s.

Then, all at once, gravity kicked back in, flinging him painfully against the boat. His right side slammed sharply against something, and his head smacked into the dashboard.

When it all finally came to a stop, the boat was still tilted to the side, perched at an odd angle as it hung from the rocks, slightly suspended above the water. Daniel was on the deck of the boat, crumpled between the front seats, and when he opened his eyes, everything was blurry for a second. A ringing in his ears blocked everything out, but when it finally stopped, his vision cleared, and he heard a girl softly weeping.

“Is everybody okay?” Daniel asked, trying to push himself up.

The boat was swaying slightly, and it moved even more, the hull creaking and groaning against the rock as the weight shifted. The engine was still running, with the propeller rattling loudly.

“Help,” Mackenzie whimpered.

Daniel sat up slowly, his body aching, and looked around. The windshield had been smashed out, and there was blood all over the glass and the dashboard. At the back of the boat, Mackenzie was pinned against the backseat by all the gear that had been flying around, but John was nowhere in sight.

As soon as he saw the blood, his adrenaline kicked in, pushing away the confused fog that had been muddling his thoughts. He slid down toward the back of the boat to Mackenzie, and the frame groaned in protest.

“I’ll get you out,” Daniel promised Mackenzie as he crouched down on the seat beside her. He started to pull everything off her, but it was mostly light life jackets.

She shook her head. “It’s my leg. There’s something wrong with my leg,” Mackenzie said in a tight voice.

An old blanket his grandpa kept on board had fallen across her lap, and when Daniel pulled it back, he instantly saw the problem. The boat’s grapnel anchor had her left leg pinned down. It was only thirty-five pounds, so it wouldn’t be that big a deal to lift it off her, except one of the hooks had gone straight through her calf muscle.

“Oh, shit,” Daniel whispered.

“What?” Mackenzie asked, instantly terrified. “What is it?”

“*Mackenzie!*” Zoë screamed from the water. “Mackenzie! Where are you?”

“I’m up here!” Mackenzie shouted. “I’m still on the boat!”

“I’ll get her out in a second. She’ll be okay,” Daniel said, speaking loudly to be heard over the engine.

“Holy shit,” Mackenzie said when she looked down at her leg for the first time.

“This is gonna hurt like hell, but I’m gonna get it out fast, okay?” Daniel said, but she stared down at her leg with abject terror. “Mackenzie. Look at me.” She did as she was told, her wide brown eyes fixed on his. “I’m going to take it out. But everything will be okay. Just keep looking at me. Okay?”

She nodded, with tears streaming down her cheeks. “Okay.”

He took a deep breath, then grabbed on to one of the anchor hooks. When he began pulling it, Mackenzie cried out in pain, and the boat jerked.

For one horrifying second, Daniel was afraid the boat would plummet to the water before he could get the anchor out. There was no way she’d be able to swim with that thing lodged in her leg.

He and Mackenzie froze, waiting for the boat to settle, and when it didn’t fall into the water, they both began to breathe again.

“Mackenzie?” Zoë shouted. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” Mackenzie cried.

“It’s just one more good tug, and then . . .” Daniel gritted his teeth and yanked it free. This time the boat only swayed a bit, and it seemed they would be safe for at least a couple more minutes.

Blood poured from the wound as Mackenzie sobbed, and Daniel quickly wrapped the blanket around it. He secured it with a rope, tying it just above the hole in her leg to slow down the blood loss.

“What’s going on up there?” Zoë asked.

Daniel carefully leaned over the edge, not wanting to upset the boat, and then peered down to the water. The bay was farther below them than he’d thought. The boat must’ve started going up the slanted the rock face, almost like a ramp, until the sharp tip of the rock had broken through the hull. Now the boat was hanging on it, and the groaning and creaking of the frame was the sound of the crack in the hull tearing further.

A few feet away, Zoë was treading water, staring up at the boat dangling precariously above her.

“Have you seen John?” Daniel asked, now that the immediate crisis of getting Mackenzie free seemed averted.

“No, I haven’t.” Zoë shook her head.

The boat suddenly rocked, without either him or Mackenzie inciting it, and it jerked them to the side. He grabbed the edge and realized they needed to get off immediately. The only thing worse than being on a boat stuck on a rock was being in a boat sinking to the bottom of the bay.

“Zoë, I need you to help me with Mackenzie,” Daniel said. “She’s not going to be able to swim really well, and she’ll need your help.”

He grabbed a life jacket and tossed it down to Zoë, then he helped Mackenzie put one on. Her hands were trembling too badly to do up the buckle. His hands were slick with blood from her leg, but he managed to keep them from shaking.

Zoë came as close to the boat as she felt safe, so she could grab Mackenzie as soon as she got in the bay. Daniel wrapped his arms around Mackenzie's chest, looping his arms underneath hers, and he carefully lowered her down. She gasped when she finally dropped into the freezing waters.

The boat shifted because of the weight change, and Daniel grabbed on to the side to keep from tumbling face-first into the water. He could've jumped down after them, but since the boat was at a higher vantage point, he wanted to be able to scan the water for John.

Besides, he wanted to turn off the boat and silence the incessant rattle of the motor so he'd be able to listen for his brother.

"Go, swim to shore," Daniel commanded, once Zoë had a hold of Mackenzie's life jacket.

"Aren't you coming with?" Mackenzie asked.

"No. I have to look for John," he said. "Get out of here and get help."

With the girls swimming off to safety, Daniel tried to stand up on the side of the boat to get a better look out at the bay. The moon had gone behind the clouds, and he could barely see anything.

"John!" Daniel shouted. "John!"

He couldn't hear well over the engine, so he tried to climb up to turn it off. The boat was now hanging almost completely vertical, and the deck was slick with water. He had to grab the front seat to try to pull himself up, but then the boat jerked again.

He lost his grip and fell back, nearly landing on the anchor he'd pulled out of Mackenzie's leg, and then the boat really lurched. There was no way it could stay up here much longer, and if he tried to climb up again, he'd only succeed in making the boat fall.

With the boat slipping, Daniel decided it was time to abandon ship. He jumped off, splashing into the bay, and it was even colder than he'd imagined; the icy water froze him through his core. Salt water filled his mouth as he gasped for breath.

He wiped the water from his eyes, squinting in the darkness. As Daniel treaded water, he scanned the waves for any sign of his brother. He tried to figure out how long it had been since the accident, since John would've been thrown from the boat, but it was impossible to tell. It felt like it had been only a few minutes, but it could've been as long as a half hour.

But either way, it was too long. John was in serious trouble if Daniel didn't find him immediately.

"John!" Daniel shouted into the night, his teeth chattering from the cold. "*John!*"

When his brother didn't answer, Daniel tried shouting again, only louder this time. The engine roared and shook, making the metal frame rattle against the rock, and he hoped that it was just that John couldn't hear him over the boat.

But Zoë had been able to hear Daniel and Mackenzie just fine. He could even hear the girls crying as they swam to shore. If John wasn't responding, it was because he was unconscious or underwater. Or both.

Daniel dove down under the waves, searching the bay for his brother. In the darkness, he thought he saw a glint of light that might be the silver chain John wore around his neck. He swam after it, chasing the only hope he had.

Above him, the boat hung perilously on the rocks above, and the vibrations of the engine made its grip even more tenuous. As Daniel plunged into the murky depths of Anthemusa Bay, the speedboat broke free.

Oblivious to the commotion above him, Daniel swam after the phantom light. His arms and legs were going numb from the cold, and his lungs burned.

He swam upward at the last possible moment, and just as he surfaced, gasping for breath, the boat was upon him. There was a searing pain as the propeller blade sliced into his shoulder, and then everything was blackness.

4. Salvage

As she pulled him onto the rocky shore that surrounded the bay, Aggie was certain that she was too late. She'd stayed away, but when she'd seen the blood, she knew she had to do something. He wouldn't survive unless she intervened, and even now it looked like he still might not.

"Wake up," she begged, making her voice as sweet and enticing as she could. She slapped his cold cheek gently as she cradled his head in her hands. "Oh, please, wake up. I didn't mean for this to happen. I swear."

Daniel leaned forward, coughing up sea water, and Aggie let out a sigh of relief. Not breathing may have been the biggest of his problems, but it definitely wasn't the only one. The propeller had really done a number on him.

Both of his ears were bleeding, and he had a horrible gash running from just behind his right ear to the middle of the back of his skull. His shirt had been completely shredded in the back, and while Aggie hadn't gotten a good look, she could see it was stained with his blood, and his shoulder was torn up.

"You're okay, you're gonna be okay," Aggie promised him when his eyes opened.

Those were the same eyes that had locked on hers when she'd been in the water. She hadn't seen the boat at all, not until it was too late and it was coming right for her. But as soon as Daniel saw her, he'd jerked the boat to the side, trying to save her.

And now he'd ended up like this because he'd wanted to protect her. She couldn't leave him like this, even if that was what her sisters would want her to do. She refused to.

"John," he whispered.

“What?” Aggie asked, leaning closer to hear him better.

“John,” he repeated, louder this time. “Where’s John?”

“I don’t know.” Aggie shook her head. “I don’t know who that is.”

“My brother.” Daniel coughed, and then tried to sit up. “I have to find my brother.”

“No, you can’t go back out there,” Aggie told him and pushed him back down. “You need to get help. You’ll die if you go back out in the water.”

She scanned the shore for the two girls he’d been with, but they were gone. Aggie had no idea where they had gone or how they’d left. Her attention had only really been focused on Daniel. Since he’d been the one to try to save her, she had to return the favor, but she didn’t owe the other passengers anything.

“John!” Daniel shouted, and he tried to push against her. “*John!*”

“John’s gone,” Aggie told him, speaking as firmly as she could. “He’s gone, okay? Now we need to save you.”

“No.” He fought Aggie, even though he barely had any strength and was trembling in her arms.

“Shh, okay? Just calm down,” Aggie said, making her voice lyrical, but he didn’t seem to notice. “*Come now, weary traveler, I’ll lead you through the waves.*”

Instead of calming down the way Aggie had thought he would, Daniel only became more fervent in his struggles. He grabbed the front of her dress, balling up the wet fabric in his hand, and stared up at her with a fresh intensity.

“Listen to me, I have to find him. He’s my only brother, and it was my fault,” Daniel said, his voice cracking as he spoke. “I crashed the boat, and I can’t lose him. Please. You have to help me.”

“I’ll help you,” Aggie said, brushing his hair back from his forehead. “What’s your name?”

“What?” he asked.

“What’s your name?” she asked again, louder this time.

“Daniel.”

“Daniel.” She took a deep breath, still stroking his hair. “You’re dying, and I have to get you out of here. We can’t help your brother. He didn’t make it. But none of this is your fault, okay? You didn’t do anything wrong.”

He stared at her, his expression unchanged, with his fist still balled up, and for a minute she thought he hadn’t heard her. Then a single tear slid from his eye.

“We need to get out of here,” Aggie said again.

She stood up and tried to help him to his feet, but Daniel was either unable or unwilling to stand. When she tried to take a step with him, he tumbled back down on the rocks.

“Leave me,” Daniel said when she crouched down next to him. His eyes were pleading with her. “Leave me here to die.”

And she actually considered it. She’d done her part. She’d pulled him from the water, and if he wanted to be left here, that was his problem. Even helping this much had already put her at risk.

Aggie had been gone for a few days, so her sisters would be looking for her soon, and it would bring all kinds of unwanted questions if they discovered her in Capri. And if she actually answered their questions, it would mean the end of her. They would destroy her if they knew what she was up to.

Until this, she’d been doing so well, doing her best to stay below the radar everywhere she went. She’d only planned on being here a couple hours, not long enough to leave any kind of

trace for her sisters to find. Right after she had spoken to the witch, she'd meant to leave, but the full moon had made the night swim too enticing, and she couldn't resist.

And now she was in this mess. Aggie should be moving on instead of helping some boy, but she couldn't bring herself to leave him. She didn't want any more people to die because of her.

"I can't leave you," she said finally. "But I have no idea what I'm going to do with you."

With or without his consent, Aggie was determined to save him. Daniel had apparently gone into some kind of shock, and she had to pick him up, because he wasn't moving.

If she wanted to save him, she would need someone else to help her, but who did she know in Capri?

5. Ameliorate

Lydia always slept better at home. Maybe it was because she didn't have a roommate snoring loudly, but Lydia liked to think it was because of how safe she felt here.

Nothing ever seemed to touch her grandma's house, despite its supernatural contents (or more likely because of them). But no place in the world felt safer. She could sleep soundlessly and wonderfully all night long.

Or at least usually she could.

"Lydia, get up," Delia announced as she slammed open her bedroom door.

"Why? What? Is there a fire?" Lydia sat up in her bed and squinted at the bright light spilling around her grandma from the hallway.

"No, there's no fire," Delia said. "We just need to be up."

"Why? What for?" Lydia looked over at the alarm clock next to her bed. "It's, like, two in the morning. Why do we need to be up?"

"Just wake up and meet me downstairs in five minutes," Delia said, then she disappeared.

Lydia yawned and looked over at the blue troll doll standing on her dresser, the jewel in its stomach glinting from the hall light. It smiled brightly, as if it didn't know that she'd just been awoken from this really great dream about a cute guy in her English class.

"You're entirely too happy about this," Lydia told the doll, then got up out of bed.

She went to the bathroom and smoothed out her black hair, which somehow had gotten so messy from sleep that it stuck up all over the place almost as bad as the troll doll's did.

Delia had instructed her to wake up, but hadn't told her if she needed to be dressed for this mystery occasion, so Lydia decided to pass on the clothes and went in her plaid pajama pants and T-shirt.

When she came downstairs, she discovered Delia sitting at the dining table drinking a cup of coffee. She wore the same U2 shirt from earlier but paired with a pair of pajama shorts for bed, so Lydia wasn't completely off base in her attire.

"There's a pot of coffee in the kitchen if you want some," Delia said.

"Do I have time for a cup?" Lydia asked.

Delia shrugged. "Maybe."

"What's going on?" Lydia asked. "Why are we awake?"

"I just had a *sense* that we should be," Delia said. "You know how my senses are."

Lydia had spent her whole life hearing about Delia's *senses* and following up on *hunches*. Most of the time they turned out to be right. Delia hadn't ever really explained what they were, other than some type of feeling, and Lydia guessed that her grandma had some kind of mild psychic abilities.

"I don't know, Nana," Lydia said as she glanced around. "It seems like your senses might be wrong this time."

Just then the doorbell rang, a loud booming noise that echoed through the whole house.

"Never doubt your Nana," Delia said with a sly smile. "Now get the door."

When Lydia opened the front door, she found the most beautiful girl she'd ever seen. Her long chestnut waves framed her face, and the porch light made her hair positively glisten. Thick lashes hooded her russet eyes. Her tanned skin was impossibly smooth, making her look almost

unreal, like she was a hallucination or a CGI creation. The pale blue dress she wore was soaked, so it clung to her curves, and the fabric dripped water on her bare feet.

It was a few seconds before Lydia even noticed the bloody boy in her arms, and even then she couldn't form the words to speak.

“Who are you?” Lydia asked finally, sounding far more in awe than she would've liked.

“I'm . . .” She seemed to hesitate, then the boy in her arms groaned, and she glanced down at him. “I'm Aggie, and I need your help.”

“Lydia, let the poor girl in,” Delia commanded.

She'd gotten up from the dining room table and was on her way over when Lydia opened the door wide enough so Aggie could come in. She had to step carefully to keep from knocking him against the door frame.

Aggie didn't look much more than eighteen or nineteen herself, but she carried the injured boy with surprising ease. He was much taller than her, with his long legs dangling over one arm, and he appeared strong and muscular, so he had to be heavy, but she didn't seem to notice.

“Lydia, get a blanket so we can lay him down,” Delia said.

Lydia ran to the hall closet and grabbed an old blanket. When she returned, Delia had her head to the boy's chest, listening for his heartbeat while Aggie held him.

“Do you need me to get your kit?” Lydia asked as she spread the blanket out on the floor.

Delia shook her head. “Not yet.”

Aggie lowered the boy down on the blanket. One of his arms flopped to the side, and, almost delicately, she laid it across his stomach. Delia and Aggie knelt on either side of him so they could inspect him, but Lydia stayed standing, hovering beside her grandma.

He seemed to be drifting in and out of consciousness, but when he was out, his face relaxed, and Lydia realized that he was younger than she'd originally thought. He would probably grow up to be a handsome man, but now his features still had the softness of a boy's.

His skin was ashen, and his lips had a cerulean hue to them. Lydia couldn't be sure if that was because he was soaking wet and it was forty degrees outside, or if it was something supernatural.

"So, what are we dealing with here?" Delia asked, holding her hand against her forehead.

"Um, his name is Daniel," Aggie said. "He's lost some blood, and he was in the water for longer than he should've been."

Delia lifted up his right arm so she could get a better look at his wounds. His shoulder and his upper back were mangled, and Lydia could see the muscle protruding through the tears in his flesh. When Delia touched a gash, Daniel moaned softly.

"What did this to him?" Delia asked.

"Was it a werewolf?" Lydia asked.

Aggie shook her head. "No, it was just an accident. He was run over by a boat propeller."

"Is he . . ."—Delia attempted to give Aggie a knowing look—"*anything*?"

"What?" Aggie asked.

"Warlock, vampire, troll, nephilim, et cetera?" Delia elaborated.

Aggie shook her head quickly. "Oh, no, no, he's mortal. He's just a human."

"I need to find him," Daniel mumbled, then turned his head to the side. His eyelids fluttered but didn't open. "I have to get him."

"What's he talking about?" Delia asked.

"His brother," Aggie said. "He was in the accident with him."

“And he’s not here?” Delia asked.

“No,” Aggie replied simply, and Delia didn’t press it further.

“Has he been asleep the whole time?” Delia lifted one of his eyelids, checking for something. Daniel weakly swatted at her, so she took his hand, gently holding it. “Shh, it’s okay, sweetie. You’re safe, and we’ll take care of you.”

“He was awake, but he’s been going in and out for a while,” Aggie said. “I thought he might be in shock or something.”

“He may be,” Delia agreed. She leaned closer to him, still holding his hand, and she stroked his damp hair. “Daniel, can you hear me?”

“What did I do?” he mumbled again and began moving. He turned his head to the side, and then he opened his eyes wide, looking completely stricken. “What have I done?”

“Daniel, everything’s going to be okay,” Delia said. He tried to sit up, and she put a hand on his shoulder, holding him down. “Daniel, you need to stop moving. You’re hurt.”

“I’ve tried singing to him to calm him down, but it doesn’t seem to help,” Aggie said.

“Nana, do you want me to get your kit?” Lydia asked.

Delia thought for a second, then looked up at her. “No. Not the kit. Go upstairs to the bathroom and get the salve out of the medicine cabinet. It’s in a purple glass jar on the top shelf.”

Lydia hurried upstairs. Since her childhood, she’d been helping assist her grandma in all kinds of situations like this. When she was done with college, she hoped to officially start apprenticing with her. But right now she was satisfied to help in any capacity, even if it was just using the bathroom sink for support as she stretched to get a jar off the top shelf.

When she came back downstairs, she found everyone in much the same position. Daniel was still moaning, and Delia was crouched over him trying to calm him, while Aggie looked on.

“Here you go,” Lydia said as she handed her grandma the jar.

“Thank you, my dear.” Delia propped Daniel up so he was lying on his side. “Aggie, can you hold him?”

Once Aggie had him, Delia opened the jar of salve and scooped some out with her hand. It reminded Lydia of petroleum jelly, except it had a bluish tone to it. Lydia had a feeling that if they turned out the lights, it probably would glow in the dark.

“Is that supposed to heal him?” Aggie asked as Delia rubbed it in Daniel’s wounds.

“Not exactly,” Delia said. “It’s to slow the blood loss and help with the healing process, but it’s not a cure.”

She made sure to get some in all his wounds, and she even put some inside his ears, since he was bleeding from them. By the time she was finished, she had used almost the entire jar.

“What else do you need?” Lydia asked.

“Nothing,” Delia said and carefully lowered him back down on the blanket. “There are some things that magic can’t fix. For that, we need the hospital.” Then she looked up at Aggie. “Can you help me take him out to the car?”

Aggie nodded. “Yeah, of course.”

Delia wrapped the blanket around him, because he’d been intermittently shivering. It would also help with the bleeding, which had already stained Aggie’s dress all down the front.

Aggie slid her arms underneath him and picked him up like he weighed nothing. Delia grabbed her purse and slid on a pair of tennis shoes, then led them out to her ’76 Mustang in the driveway. She opened the passenger door and pushed the front seat forward so Aggie could lay him in the backseat.

“Lydia, why don’t you get in back with him?” Delia said.

Lydia climbed in back and carefully arranged Daniel. She rested his head on her lap, and he groaned, so she apologized and tried to comfort him.

“Are you coming with?” Delia stood just outside the car and spoke to Aggie, who stared into the small back window to where Lydia sat with Daniel

“I can’t.” Aggie shook her head. “I’ve already been here for too long.”

“So you’re leaving town tonight?” Delia asked.

“I have to.”

“Well, I’ll be here, if you ever want to stop back,” Delia told her.

Aggie smiled at her. “Thank you, but I don’t think I will.”

“I didn’t think so.” Delia moved toward the car, then paused and turned back to Aggie.

“Thank you for helping him. I don’t know what happened out in the bay tonight, but I have a feeling that you aren’t in the habit of saving strangers.”

“I’ve been trying to change my ways lately.” Aggie paused, and when she spoke again, her voice was almost like a song. “But it would be better if you forgot me, if you all never even remembered that you saw me.”

Daniel had begun stirring on Lydia’s lap. He opened his eyes, looking right up at her, but it didn’t seem like he was seeing her. It was more like he was looking right through her.

“Where am I?” Daniel asked. “What’s going on?”

“Nana.” Lydia leaned forward in the seat. “We should go. I think he’s waking up.”

“If you—” Delia glanced back at Lydia for a second, and when she turned back, Aggie had disappeared into the night. “And she’s gone.”

Delia went around and got in the car. As soon as she turned it on, the Rolling Stones came blasting out of the stereo, but she quickly turned it down.

“Was that the girl that stopped by earlier today?” Lydia asked as they drove to the hospital.

“Yes, it was.”

“*What* is she?”

“I have no idea.” Delia glanced back at her. “How is he doing?”

“Not good, actually.” Lydia had tried holding his hand, but it didn’t help. He was shaking badly, and he kept turning his head from side to side and groaning. “What should I do?”

“You can try singing to him,” Delia suggested. “Aggie said she tried it.”

“Yeah, and it didn’t work.”

“Well, that was before I put the salve in his ears,” Delia said. “It’s worth a shot. I can’t get to the hospital any faster than I’m already going.”

So Lydia gave it a shot. With one hand, she held on to his arm to keep him from rolling off her lap, and with the other, she stroked his hair. Softly, she began singing “Puff, the Magic Dragon,” her favorite song from childhood, and hoped that everything would be all right.

6. Infirmity

The plastic chair was making her butt go numb, but Lydia barely noticed. Her legs were crossed underneath her, and she wasn't sure if that was making it better or worse. Delia kept shifting her weight in the chair next to her, so it was probably a bit harder on her than it was on Lydia.

“Do you think he'll be okay?” Lydia asked.

“I don't know,” Delia replied honestly, and Lydia would never expect anything less from her grandma than total honesty.

Lydia had been staring at the empty hospital room across the hall from her. The bright blue door had been left open, so she could see the stark white room within. She looked away from it now to turn to Delia.

“You don't have a sense about it?” Lydia asked.

“No.” Delia had leaned back so her head rested against the wall behind them, and she shook her head. “I don't always have senses, you know that. Sometimes they come, sometimes they don't.”

“How come I don't have them?” Lydia asked.

“Well, your mother didn't have them, so that's part of it. And your father . . .” Delia let out a long breath. “He probably blocked a few things out.”

“Did your mother have them?”

“She did, but my aunt didn't. Some people have them. Other people don't.” Delia shrugged. “There's not always a rational explanation for the supernatural. But that's kinda the point.”

During the car ride over, Daniel's had blood had stained Lydia's shirt, so one of the nurses had given her scrubs to change into. She stared down at the oversized shirt, absently picking at a loose thread.

"Don't you ever worry?" Lydia asked.

"Of course I worry about *some* things. Was there anything in particular you had in mind?" Delia turned her head so she could look at her granddaughter.

"That I'm not right to be apprenticing with you," Lydia said, speaking softly as she stared down at her lap.

"Well, first of all, you're *not* apprenticing with me right now," Delia said. "We both agreed that you'd finish college before you went into the family business. And second, why would I even think that?"

Lydia lifted her head, staring at the empty room across from them again, and sighed. "I don't think that I could've done what you did tonight."

"With Daniel?" Delia motioned to his room behind them. "Of course you could've. You practically *did* do everything I did."

"No, Nana, I didn't." She turned to her grandma, her brown eyes sad and worried. "I didn't even know he was coming. If I had been there by myself, maybe I wouldn't have woken up or Aggie wouldn't have known how to find me."

Delia frowned as she studied Lydia. "Where's all this coming from?"

"I don't know." Lydia shook her head. "I shouldn't even be talking about it now. It's just . . ." She sighed. "Sometimes I feel like I don't belong in this world *or* the supernatural one."

The door to Daniel's room opened, interrupting their conversation, and a doctor and a nurse came outside, talking to each other in hushed tones. Since they'd wheeled Daniel into the

room, Lydia had seen the same doctor going in and out many times, but he'd never spoken to them or even acknowledged them.

Lydia leaned forward, trying to overhear what he might be saying to the nurse, but they spoke too quietly, and what little she picked up was unfamiliar medical jargon that meant nothing to her.

The nurse departed, following an order the doctor had given to her, but he stayed behind, pausing in front of the open door to Daniel's room. As he scribbled something on the patient chart, Delia saw her chance and stood up.

"Excuse me." Delia cautiously took a step toward him, and when the doctor looked up at her, she leaned forward and glanced down at this name tag. "Dr. Rice, is it?"

"Yes?" He turned to face her and lowered the chart, folding it against his chest.

Lydia took this as a good sign, so she hopped up from the chair and went to stand behind her grandma. She peered around her, so she could see into the room to where Daniel lay in the hospital bed. Machines next to him were beeping and humming, with wires running to his chest and temples. An IV ran from his arm to a clear bag, dripping liquid slowly into him. He looked so sad and alone, lying in the room by himself.

"I was just wondering if you'd be able to tell us how Daniel was doing," Delia said.

He eyed her and glanced over at Lydia, who straightened up and stopped staring into Daniel's room. "Who are you?"

"I'm Delia Panning, and this is my granddaughter Lydia," Delia said.

"Hello," Lydia said, smiling politely at him.

"You're not his family, are you?" Dr. Rice asked.

Delia shook her head. “No, we’re not. But we found him. We brought him in, and I know there’s a whole doctor/patient confidentiality thing, and we don’t want any details. We’ve been waiting here for hours, and all we want is to know if he’ll be okay.”

He didn’t answer right away. Instead, he opened the chart again and looked through it, making a note in the margins.

“Where did you say you found him again?” Dr. Rice asked.

“On the side of the road near the bay,” Delia said, going with the story they’d told the nurse and the police earlier. “We think he must’ve pulled himself out, then just collapsed.”

Delia had an unofficial promise with any supernatural element she helped that she wouldn’t reveal them to the mortal world, so she couldn’t tell anyone else about Aggie. Besides that, she couldn’t really explain the unexplainable.

“On the side of the road?” Dr. Rice lifted his eyes from the chart, giving Delia a skeptical look. “Why were you out driving around?”

“Late-night craving for Häagen-Dazs,” Delia said. “We were on our way to the convenience store.”

“So you’re no relation to him?” Dr. Rice asked and closed the chart again. “You don’t even really know him?”

“Not that well,” Delia admitted.

“Listen, ma’am—”

“Delia,” she corrected him for calling her ma’am.

“Delia,” Dr. Rice said before continuing. “I appreciate what you did, and it really is honorable that the two of you were good Samaritans like this, but I can’t just go handing out information to total strangers.”

“We’re not *total* strangers,” Lydia interjected.

“I know what you’re saying,” Delia said. “And I understand privacy and confidentiality more than you know, believe me. But we only want to know that the person we helped tonight is going to make it.”

Dr. Rice seemed to consider this, but then he said, “If his mother were here, she could give me consent, but without that . . .”

“But she’s not here,” Delia said.

“No, we’ve been trying to get hold of her but haven’t been able to,” said Dr. Rice. “After her, the next of kin listed is his brother, who’s missing, and his grandparents. We did get hold of them, but they’re on vacation and won’t be able to get here anytime soon.”

“No,” Delia said. “We talked to the police earlier after we brought Daniel in, and we told them what we knew. They said they were going to get in touch with her and go back out to the bay to look for his brother.”

Dr. Rice nodded, then finally answered her question. “He should be fine.”

“He *should* be?” Delia pressed.

“You said you just wanted to know if he was fine.” Dr. Rice gave her a hard look.

“I do. That’s all I want. But ‘*should* be fine’ doesn’t sound like a definitive answer to me,” Delia said, defending her position. “I should be married to George Clooney, but I’m not.”

“I shouldn’t be telling you any of this.” He let out a deep breath and shook his head. “His hypothermia is under control, and the lacerations on his back and shoulders are stitched up. The issue is head trauma. We won’t be able to know the extent of it until after we run a few more tests, but so far, his brain activity seems good.”

“So, he *should* be okay,” Dr. Rice reiterated. “But I can’t say for sure. He isn’t completely out of the woods yet.”

Delia smiled at him. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” Dr. Rice said, returning her smile. “Now that your questions have been answered, I need to attend to my other patients.”

“By all means,” Delia said.

He started to walk away, but Lydia stopped him before he got far.

“Wait,” she said, and he turned back to her. “Is it okay if we sit with him?”

“What?” Dr. Rice asked.

“I know strangers aren’t supposed to be allowed in patients’ rooms, or at least that’s what I’ve heard before,” Lydia explained. “But I was wondering if it would be all right if we sat in with Daniel, at least until his mom or somebody comes. I just don’t think it’s right for him to lie there alone. Somebody should be here when he wakes up.”

“Go ahead,” Dr. Rice said. “Go on in.”

“Thank you,” Lydia said.

When she went into his room, at first Lydia just stood at the end of the bed, watching him breathe. They’d shaved the back of Daniel’s head so they could tend to the wounds, and the combination of the bright red gash and dark black stitches looked particularly gruesome cutting across the back of his head.

The weird part was that they’d left the front hair long, so his bangs fell across his forehead. His skin was ashen, and again Lydia was struck by how young and innocent he looked in repose. Watching him like that, alone and badly injured, just barely out of boyhood, she thought few things had ever looked more tragic to her.

She might've stayed that way for hours, hovering at the end of the bed, but Delia suggested that she have a seat. Lydia let Delia have the more comfortable stuffed chair, while Lydia brought in a hard plastic one from the hall.

They both sat with him like that for a long time. The nurses would come and go, checking on Daniel, then flitting out. He rarely stirred. Sometimes his eyes fluttered, and occasionally he'd moan, but that was the extent of it.

As time wore on, Delia was growing stiff, so she said she was going to the cafeteria to stretch her legs and get some coffee. She offered to get Lydia something, but Lydia declined the offer.

"How's he doing?" Delia asked when she returned a half hour later.

"The same." Lydia had moved to the more comfortable chair. She was curled up, her knees pulled to her chest, while she watched the stranger sleep.

"Has his mother been in? Or any of his family?" Delia asked, leaning against the wall.

"Nope." Lydia moved so she was sitting up more. "A girl stopped by, though. She said she was in the accident with him."

Shortly after Delia had left, a girl had hobbled into the room. One of her calves had been wrapped in a bandage, and she used a crutch to help her. She hadn't stayed long, and she hadn't said much, mostly just sniffing as she stared at Daniel.

"What she'd say about it?" Delia asked.

"Not a lot. She mostly just cried and said he saved her life. She said he didn't even want to go on the boat and kept trying to talk his brother out of it, but he wouldn't listen."

"Did she say if they found his brother?" Delia asked.

“No, but I’m not sure if she’d know one way or the other.” Lydia looked back at her grandma. “Do you think that’s why his mom isn’t here?”

“Why?”

“She’s out looking for his brother or something?” Lydia asked. “Because I can’t imagine why else a mother wouldn’t be down here, when her son is lying in the hospital in a condition like this. *Somebody* should be with him.”

“Well, somebody is.” Delia smiled warmly at Lydia and sat down in the plastic chair next to her. “You’re here.”

“It’s not the same,” Lydia insisted.

“He needs somebody that cares, and you care.” Delia reached over, brushing the bangs back on Lydia’s forehead. “Earlier you asked if I was worried that you could do what I do, and I’ve never worried for a second. And *this* is why.”

“This?” Lydia asked.

“Sitting here with a stranger all night, just to make sure he’s not alone,” Delia said. “You have a sense of responsibility and right and wrong that’s vital to doing what I do. What *we* do.”

“But I don’t have the sense like you do, Nana,” Lydia said. “I’m fascinated by the supernatural world, but I’m not part of it.”

Delia laughed softly at that. “Oh, sweetie, you are a part of it. Premonitions don’t make you a part of it. You have the aptitude, knowledge, and such a vast understanding of it. But most importantly, you have the heart for it. You have the openness and compassion that both worlds thrive on. You were meant for this.”

“You really think so?” Lydia asked.

Delia smiled reassuringly at her granddaughter. “I do. And when I’m gone someday, and you’re doing this on your own, I won’t have a single worry. You were born for this, and you’ll be great at it.”

“I hope so.”

“I know so,” Delia insisted. “I love you, Lydia, and I am so proud of you.”

“I love you, too.” Lydia smiled, and Delia kissed her on the top of the head.

Lydia offered to switch chairs, but Delia insisted she was fine. Daniel stirred a bit more, and as time went on, he seemed to get more coherent. He began singing fragments of a song to himself in a low, out-of-tune mumble.

When he first started, Lydia had gotten up so she could lean over the bed and try to decipher the song, but she could only get a few words and phrases. “Poor voyager,” “weary traveler,” and “through the waves” were the only bits she got really clearly. But it didn’t sound familiar to either Lydia or Delia.

A few hours later, Daniel’s mother finally arrived, saying she’d taken the phone off the hook and didn’t know anything was wrong until she checked her messages when she woke up for the day. She seemed a little annoyed with Lydia and Delia’s presence, so they left her alone to be with her sleeping son.

7. Six Weeks Later

Lydia parked her car on Main Street across from the Capri Public Library. As soon as she got out, the warm summer air blew over her, and she breathed in deeply, loving the scent of fresh-cut grass mixed with the salty aroma of Anthemusa Bay.

While she enjoyed being at Sundham University, it was a bit farther from the sea than Capri, and she missed the smell of the ocean.

She was about to cross the street when she just happened to glance back at Pearl's Diner. It was a somewhat run-down restaurant but it served delicious food, although Lydia was in no mood to eat. It appeared to be Delia's goal to fatten her up over summer break, and Lydia had already eaten more for breakfast than she normally did in a day.

But it wasn't the food that caught her eye—it was a patron. Pearl's had booths in front of the large windows that faced the library, and sitting in the first booth was Daniel, eating a bowl of soup by himself.

He looked different from how he had when she'd last seen him. His hair was shorter, growing out from where they'd shaved it in the hospital. He appeared thinner too, and his face especially seemed gaunt. Snaking out from under the sleeve of his T-shirt she could see a dark pink tendril of his fresh scars. But he was up moving and eating, so he had to be okay.

Lydia hadn't seen him since the hospital, and she couldn't resist going in to talk to him. She was almost beaming when she walked over to the booth, and he looked rather startled when she sat down across from.

“Daniel, hi. How are you?” Lydia asked cheerily.

“Hi . . .” Daniel trailed off and gave her a confused smile, and up close she saw the dark circles under his eyes. There was a hollow look to his eyes, almost like he wasn’t completely there.

She rested her hand on her chin. “You don’t remember me, do you?”

“Sorry. No,” he said sheepishly. “Should I?”

“Probably not,” Lydia admitted. “The only time we met, you weren’t awake that much.”

“Okay. Now I’m really confused, and a little scared,” he said, but he was still smiling.

“The night of your accident. I took you to the hospital. Well, me and my grandma did.”

“That was you?” Daniel asked, and his confusion fell away to awe and gratitude. “Sorry, I never got a chance to thank you. I wanted to, but I never got your names, and then everything was just such a mess afterwards.”

“I would imagine,” Lydia said. “Don’t worry about it.”

“You saved my life. *Thank you.*”

She smiled at him and was taken aback by his sincerity. “You’re very welcome. You look good. So everything must be going okay?”

“It’s pretty good, I guess. Everyone seems really impressed about how well I’m doing.” That was what Daniel said, but there was a flatness in his words, like he wasn’t really doing all that well.

“So you’re healing up okay?” Lydia asked, trying to find out the truth.

“Yeah.” He nodded. “I have to go in for another surgery, but they say it’s minor, so . . .”

“Minor is better than major,” Lydia said.

He stared down at the cup of clam chowder in front of him, stirring it absently. “I used to come here with John all the time. This is the first time I’ve been back since he . . .”

“I’m sorry about your brother,” Lydia said gravely. “I went to school with him, and I didn’t know him that well, but he seemed like a nice guy.”

John’s body had turned up a week after the accident, caught in an old fishing net at the bottom of the bay. Lydia had been back at college by then, but Delia had called and told her about it. The police believed that he’d been knocked unconscious in the accident and drowned.

The funeral was a few days later, and Lydia thought about going to it. She and John had been in the same grade, but they’d run with vastly different crowds. It wasn’t until Delia told her about the funeral notice that Lydia had put it together that the John Morgan she knew was Daniel’s older brother. Her only real connection to him was Daniel, and Daniel didn’t even remember her.

“It’s not true what they’re saying about him,” Daniel said, lifting his head so his forlorn hazel eyes met hers. “In the paper, after the accident, they called John a drunk and said he partied all the time. And it’s not true.”

“Okay,” Lydia said, because she wasn’t sure how else to respond. The John she knew in high school *had* been a partier, and the police report in the paper said he’d been drinking the night of the accident, but she wasn’t about to contradict Daniel. Not now.

“I mean, he was drunk that night.” Daniel leaned back in the booth and rubbed his temple. “And he was drunk more often than he should’ve been. But that’s not *all* he was, and that’s not who he used to be.”

“Who was he?” Lydia asked gently, encouraging Daniel to let out some of the things he was clearly keeping bottled up inside.

“He was funny, and he was really generous, and he just wanted everyone to be happy.” His jaw was set, and Lydia thought Daniel was trying not to cry. “My old man left a couple years

ago, but before he did, he used to drink all the time. He used to beat on my mom, but when he started coming after me, John would stand up to him. John would take it so I didn't have to.

"My dad was a mean drunk, but John wasn't like that." Daniel shook his head. "John was just trying to have fun. He just drank to escape when things got hard, and I know that it wasn't the right way to do things. And I told John."

He wiped at his eye and leaned forward on the table. "I told him he shouldn't drink so much. That night, when we went out to the boat, I told him not to, but he didn't listen. And he was my older brother. What was I supposed to do?"

Daniel looked at Lydia then with tears standing in his eyes. The anguish in his face was overwhelming. He so desperately needed the answers to his questions, to find some absolution for his brother's mistakes, and for himself for being unable to save John.

"You did everything you could." Lydia reached across the table and squeezed his hand. "You did everything right. Your brother was a good guy, but he made a mistake that night, and that's not your fault. And one mistake doesn't make him a bad person."

"Sorry." Daniel sniffled, then pulled his hand back, looking embarrassed by his display of emotion. "I just wish I remembered what happened better that night. So much of it is missing."

"Maybe I can help," Lydia said. "What do you remember?"

She made the offer before she thought about it, but now that she had, she wondered if it was such a good idea. She wanted to help him, but parts of the night felt like a blur to her, too. The only thing she remembered with real clarity was being at the hospital with him. She didn't even know why she'd woken up in the middle of the night anymore.

“I remember getting on the boat and then being out on the water. I was talking to Mackenzie,” Daniel said. “Then . . . the next thing I remember is waking up in the hospital with my mom and her telling me what happened.

“I’ve pieced together a couple things from talking to Mackenzie—she was one of the girls on the boat that night,” Daniel explained. “She and her friend swam back to shore, while I stayed out looking for John, but I don’t remember any of that. The boat must’ve hit me, but I don’t know how or when.

“And I guess I never found John, so I swam back to shore somehow.” He shook his head. “But that doesn’t feel right to me. I never would’ve left, not until I found John. I would’ve drowned out there before I gave up.”

“Maybe someone helped you,” Lydia suggested, and something about that idea made her head tingle, as if deep down she knew she’d gotten it right. “We found you on the side of the road, but who’s to say another person hadn’t taken you that far, then run to get help? They probably just never came forward.”

“Maybe,” Daniel said, and that seemed to satisfy him a bit.

“I know things are hard now, and they don’t seem to make sense,” Lydia said. “What you’ve been through was really terrible, but you were really brave that night. Mackenzie told me how you saved her and helped her friend Zoë. And how old are you?”

“Fifteen,” Daniel said.

“You’re *only* fifteen,” Lydia said, genuinely impressed. “It hurts now, but it won’t always hurt. And you’re strong enough to make it through the pain.”

“Yeah?” Daniel asked, and there was a hopeful glint in his eye, a little spark that proved he hadn’t given up yet.

“Definitely.” Lydia smiled at him. “I’m really glad that I met you that night, and I’m even happier that I saw you today. You’re a really good guy, Daniel.”

“You’re leaving?” Daniel asked as she got up. “Aren’t you gonna get some food?”

“No, I was actually on my way to the library to visit a friend of mine who works there.”

Lydia pointed to it. “Then I saw you, so I thought I’d stop in.”

“I can buy you lunch,” Daniel said. “It’s the least I could do after you saved my life.”

“I would, but I just ate. Maybe another time,” she said.

“Sure,” Daniel said. Lydia had turned to walk away when he asked, “Hey . . . did I say anything that night?”

She paused at the end of the booth and turned back to him. “No, not really. Why?”

“I just feel like something’s missing, like something important happened, or . . . I don’t know how to explain it.”

“Something did happen, and you can’t remember it,” Lydia pointed out.

“No, I know, but it’s more than that. I get that I can’t remember stuff because of the head trauma, but this feels like something *different*.” He waited a beat before adding, “Almost . . . mystical.”

Lydia tilted her head. “What do you mean?”

“The best way I can describe is it’s like . . . it’s like I have a song stuck in my head, but I can’t remember the words,” Daniel tried to explain. “There’s like a fog blocking out the lyrics. They used to be right on the tip of my tongue, but the more time that passes since the accident, the more I forget them.”

“You did sing something that night,” Lydia said, remembering the hospital room and Daniel’s half lyrics.

“I did?” he asked hopefully.

“Yeah. When you were in the hospital bed, after they’d fixed you up, I was checking on you, and you kept singing . . .” She stopped, trying to remember. “It was . . . something about tired, or . . .” She furrowed her brow in frustration. “Now I can’t remember. I’m sorry.”

He tried to cover up his disappointment. “It’s okay. It was a while ago.”

“Yeah, it was,” Lydia said, but she didn’t think that was it. This felt like something different. Like a shadow had been cast over the memory, hiding it from her. “Well, I am sorry.”

“Don’t be. You already helped enough,” he said.

“Anyway, take care of yourself.” She smiled at him, then walked away. She’d made it a booth down before she changed her mind and turned back to him. “Be careful. My grandma has always said that Capri attracts all kinds of trouble. And I wouldn’t want any trouble to get after you.”

“I will be careful,” he assured her. “And you be careful, too.”

Epilogue: June of This Year

“Aggie, just come back and talk to us,” Thea insisted from behind her, but Aggie refused to turn around and face her sister.

The rocks poked sharply into her feet, but Aggie didn’t mind. Most of Anthemusa Bay was surrounded by soft beaches or docks, but at the south end, the coast was lined with cypress trees and jagged rocks up to the cove at the mouth of the bay.

Her sisters Thea and Penn had taken her out tonight “to talk,” leaving their other sister, Lexi, behind. Penn kept trying to talk her into going out to the cove, but Aggie refused to go any farther. She liked the way the rocks felt underneath her feet as she stood at the edge of the bay, with the water just lapping up to her ankles, making her skin flutter and tingle.

If this was how things had to be, then this was where she wanted it to happen.

Above her, the moon shone brightly, with only a thin black crescent missing from it. The night felt still, almost eerily so, and Aggie tried to relish the moment, cherishing the tranquillity of the water around her, the stars above her, even the scent of the ocean and the trees.

Out in the bay, between where she stood and the cove, she could see the jagged rocks jutting out from the water, marked off by lighted buoys. It was here in this bay she’d swum five years ago, rescuing a boy she was afraid would get her caught.

In fact, none of her sisters had ever found out about her clandestine trip to Capri. She hadn’t met many people, and those she had, she’d tried to make forget her. Still, when the sirens had moved here at Penn’s insistence a few weeks ago, she’d made sure to go by the name Arista, so she couldn’t trigger any memories.

She'd done all these things to keep herself safe, to keep her small treasons hidden. But in the end, it didn't matter. Penn never found out about her clandestine visit, and here they were anyway.

"*Aggie*," Penn called to her, and her voice was too sweet, too lyrical.

Every word Penn had spoken to her in the past few months had been dripping with venom. That was how Aggie knew tonight was the night. Penn hadn't been this nice to her since . . . well, since before Aggie could even remember anymore.

"I didn't want to come here, Penn," Aggie said finally.

"You've come this far," Penn said. "Why not go a little farther?"

Aggie heard the splash of water as Penn walked by, going out deeper until the gentle waves were rolling past her. Then Penn turned to face her, and despite all Penn's attempts to look sweet and innocent, Aggie could still see the wicked glint in her sister's dark eyes. The moon shimmered on Penn's long raven hair, reminding Aggie of the way the light reflected on the waves.

"Let's go for a swim," Penn said in the same sweet way she had earlier.

"Come on, Aggie," Thea chimed in, but her huskier tones weren't able to fully cover up her unease.

Thea walked out into the edge of the water and stood next to Aggie. She tried to give Aggie a reassuring smile, but it faltered just slightly. Besides that, Aggie knew her well enough that she could see the intention in her sister's eyes.

"I expected this from Penn," Aggie said, casting a cold gaze on Thea. "But from you? You've betrayed me, Thea."

"I—I . . ." Thea stammered. "This isn't my fault."

“Nothing ever is,” Aggie replied.

“I told you that you needed to stop it and try to get along with her, but you didn’t. You just kept provoking her!” Thea insisted.

“It’s true,” Penn said, and any trace of sweetness had disappeared, although she could never completely lose the velvet edge to her words. “You’ve been a real bitch, Aggie.”

Aggie snapped her head to the side, turning her glare to Penn. “Why? Because I didn’t want to destroy everything around me just because I can? Because I decided I didn’t have to live like that anymore?”

“You will live however I tell you to live, and you’ll like it,” Penn said, a smile twisting up the corners of her full lips.

“You are such a *bitch*,” Aggie groaned. “And I am so sick of doing things just because that’s the way you say they should be.”

“And I am so sick of you!” Penn shouted, and her dark eyes shifted into yellow-green, changing their shape slightly. “I’m so sick of all your whining and complaining and all your stupid crap! You are so holier than thou it’s disgusting. You’ve forgotten your place.”

“*My* place? I am your *older* sister, Peisinoe!” Aggie shouted, refusing to be deterred. She’d bitten her tongue so many times before, she was surprised she hadn’t bitten it right off, and she wouldn’t do it anymore. “Or have you forgotten? Have you forgotten everything we were?”

“*Peisinoe?*” Penn laughed darkly at her old name and began walking through the water toward her, her long strides leaving a rippling wake.

“Arista. Adria. Aglaope.” Penn listed names that Aggie had once gone by. “Aggie, my dear naïve sister. Who gives a crap who we were lifetimes ago? Do you remember who we *are*?”

Penn stopped right in front of her. She was so close that, to onlookers, it might appear that they were about to kiss, but Penn's smile was far too vicious for that and her teeth were much too sharp.

"I am not you." Aggie raised her chin defiantly. "I am not like you, and I never will be. I'm only sorry it took me so long to realize how much of a monster you truly are."

"Penn, maybe we shouldn't do this," Thea said, trying to interrupt. "The moon is almost full."

"Thea, either help me or shut up and stay out of my way," Penn snarled.

Penn's yellow-green eyes were far more animal than human, but they were more soulless than any creature on earth. As Aggie stared into them, refusing to look away or even blink, she knew that Thea was standing beside her, and she hoped that for once—just *one* time—Thea would do the right thing and stand with her.

But then she heard the sound of the water splashing, and her heart sank. Thea had retreated back onto the land, leaving Aggie alone with Penn, and she knew she wasn't coming out of this alive.

"If you're gonna kill me, then just kill me," Aggie said. "I don't want to spend the rest of my life staring into your dead eyes."

"As you wish." Penn smiled wider, revealing more teeth than a beautiful girl like her should have. "But I want you to know that I'm going to enjoy this."

"I know," Aggie said. "And I want you to know that I'll see you in hell."

Penn laughed, a dark cackling sound, and that was the last thing Aggie ever heard. She didn't want to see her sister coming at her, so she looked up, staring toward the heavens, when Penn attacked her, ripping her life from her.

Aggie fell back into the waves, her blood mixing with the ocean she'd loved so deeply, and her eyes were open, staring up to the moon above. As the life drained from her, she sank beneath the surface and the water filled her empty lungs. For the first time since she was human, Aggie felt at peace.

Also by Amanda Hocking

Switched

Torn

Ascend

Wake

About the Author

[insert author photo. Credit: Mariah Paaverud with Chimera Photography LLC]

AMANDA HOCKING is the author of the *New York Times* bestselling Trylle trilogy and six additional self-published novels. She made international headlines by selling more than a million copies of her self-published books, primarily in e-book format. She lives in Minnesota, where she's at work on the next book in the Watersong series.

This is a work of fiction. All of the characters, organizations, and events portrayed in this story are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

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