

ALL THE MISSING PIECE

by Julianna Keyes

EXCERPT

I undo my seatbelt and shove open the car door. Maybe it's the cool air or the terror still pumping through my veins, but my exposed skin pebbles with goose bumps. I round the car but I'm still half-blind; the truck is right where he stopped, emerging from the invisible lane and pointed straight at me, the glaring light making it impossible to see. The silhouette of a figure starts to approach. It's like a scene from every alien abduction movie, and I'm the newest test subject.

"Do I know you?" he asks.

I freeze. It's that precipitous moment where I can climb into my car and drive away, or turn back and have this conversation. Yes, I'm Reese Carlisle. Yes, I was at the prison visiting my criminal father. No, I don't know where the money is. No, I didn't kill my brother.

"Who do you think I am?"

He takes a few steps toward me and my muscles tense, preparing to run. Right. Like I'm going to lead him on a chase through a corn field. I stopped running years ago.

"Denise," he says.

The world stops spinning.

Only Doug knows Denise. And I can't think of a single sane reason Doug would be parked along a dark country road on a Saturday night, accidentally scaring the crap out of me.

Except... he doesn't sound like Doug.

He comes closer and I shift away, moving the glare of the headlights from my front and his back to right in between, and I see who it is.

The stranger.