

Finding Jupiter Deleted Scenes: Halloween

By Kelis Rowe

Greetings,

If you're here, you've already read the background. If you haven't, head over to my newsletter and catch up. Read the deleted scenes background and subscribe for exclusive news and updates on Finding Jupiter and my next novel. [Sign up here.](#)

Enjoy!

The Letter

[Author Note: This scene got cut, because there wasn't a place to fit Jupiter's summer camp into the shortened version of the story. I really tried to keep it in there, but we only had three weeks of time to fill and she couldn't be gone a whole week.]

I hadn't expected to receive any mail. My mom sends a science magazine and a beauty magazine every year, but since my entire world imploded last week, I made no assumptions. Today at mail call, I receive two big yellow envelopes and one small box. The two envelopes are from my mom and Orion, and the box is from Briana. While my brain still wants to fast-track Orion and this entire summer into my past, my heart literally longs to read his letter and wrap myself around what I'm sure will be sweet words. I decide to open his envelope last.

Briana sent me a four-ounce bottle of Avon SkinSoSoft with a note that says,

Dear Junior, Grown-ups suck. So do mosquitos. There's not much you can do about the grown-ups, but mosquitos be damned. Apply the contents of this bottle liberally to exposed skin at dusk. Thank me later. Love you now, and always. Bri

My mom sent me a used National Geographic magazine from 1988, my birth year, that's all about the history of wool, and a 2002 issue of Honey Magazine with Beyoncé on the cover. There's no note. She'd simply written 'Enjoy!' on the back of the envelope.

I wait until lights-out to open Orion's package. I could tell there's a CD inside when I got it, so I put brand new batteries in my Walkman before bedtime duties. When all the campers in my cabin are tucked into their bunks, I read them a bedtime story. Usually, I read several stories aloud, but I only read one tonight, because I have a letter and a CD burning a hole into my brain. As soon as the last camper has announced her goodnight to the cabin, I put my head under the covers, flick on my book light and open the envelope. Two photographs slide out of the folded

letter. The first is a photo of us. It's the selfie Orion took in the treehouse. We look so happy. Blissfully ignorant that everything was about to go up in flames. The other photo is a selfie with Orion's face squeezed between the sweet fuzzy faces of Jinx and Lotus. I can't stop smiling. I unfold the letter.

Dear Jupiter,

I miss you. There is so much I want to say to you that has to be said in person. I'm scared because I feel like when you left, you really left, and I don't know how I'm supposed to go back to being in a world that doesn't have you in it. It's you and me, Jupiter and Orion, in the stars together. Remember? Please let me see you when you get back.

I hope the CD makes you smile. I love you. Me

His handwriting is neater than any boy's handwriting should be. I read it several times before folding it back up and putting it away. I put the disk into my Walkman. There's no writing on the disk nor on the case. Part of me hopes he put a blank disk in the envelope by mistake. I'm supposed to be mad at him, but the letter is already making it feel impossible. I turn off the book light, place my headphones over my ears and press play. By the time the third track begins, it's clear that Sweet Caroline is the only song he burned onto this disc. Just as Orion had hoped, this CD makes me smile, remembering how hard we laughed together when we sang to each other. I listen to it over and over again and cry.

The Break-Up

[Author Note: This was the most tender break-up I've ever read, but it felt too finite, and was in the middle of the book. It was either move it to the end and break them up and write a hopeful epilogue, or save this emotion for another section of the book and cut the scene. So glad to be sharing it now, because I teared up again just reading this. Break-ups are hard, especially when it's the situation and not the person that causes it.]

I leave this treehouse empty every summer. I take down all the artwork from the clothespins on the rope that criss-crosses the room. I move all the art supplies, the fan, the boom box and the portable lights into the storage room under our carport. I stand in the middle of the empty room and look around and thank my father, aloud, for wanting this magical space for me. He didn't even know how much I would depend on this place for survival. Standing in the center of this empty room today is different. It feels like a long goodbye. Like I'm saying goodbye for real this time. Like, for the first time, I'm not taking him with me.

I step out onto the treehouse porch and see Orion standing in the middle of the yard, looking up at me. I haven't seen him since the dinner at his house. I look at him, dumbfounded, not sure what to say. He shoves his hands into his pockets.

"Hi," he says. "I didn't see your mom's car out there and you didn't answer the door, so I came through the fence."

I gesture for him to join me in the treehouse, but he shakes his head, looks down and tries to push his hands deeper into his pockets. I climb down and meet him in the middle of the yard. We hug instinctively. I wait until his hold loosens around my waist, then I caress his shoulders and let him go.

"How was camp?" He asks.

“Good.”

“Get anything interesting in the mail?”

“Yes.”

“I miss you so much,” he says, his eyes burrow into my soul. I look back at him, speechless. His eyes roam around my face and find their way back to mine. He reaches out and slides his fingers between mine. He does it slowly enough where I can move my hand away if I want to, but I don’t. Instead, my fingers curve to his.

“I miss you,” I say, “But I’m so...”

“No. Please don’t ...” He squeezes his eyes closed. “You don’t owe me anything. I should be apologizing to you. I know...about the accident...my dad...I know what happened,” he says.

“Yeah. That night when you left, he had a lot of explaining to do. My mom saw the picture you left and had twenty questions. The first one was were you his daughter,” he says and screws his face up. I mirror his expression.

“Oh my god, I would die,” I say. We both laugh.

“As you can imagine, we were both relieved by his answer,” he says. “My mom was pretty upset, though,” he says, and looks down at his feet. “She left.” It takes a moment for the words to register.

“What? She didn’t know?” I say.

Orion shrugs. “She will come back. I just think she needs some time to process everything. It’s a lot.” I nod and don’t say anything, because I can’t think of what to say.

“Did you know?” I ask. It’s the one thing that I’m still not sure of. He had so many opportunities to tell me about the coincidence with my birthday, and the day Nora died, but he

never did. I want to hold him, and comfort him about his mom leaving. She is sunshine. Orion looks at me, He looks at me, confused.

“When we met,” I clarify. “Did you know who I was?”

“No,” he says, shaking his head earnestly. “I swear I didn’t know. When I found out about your birthday, I wanted to tell you about Nora so bad. But you were finally talking to me, and it was such a good feeling. I didn’t know how you would take it. I had planned to tell you every time I saw you after that night. It was so stupid. I will never forgive myself for making everything worse for you,” I squeeze my fingers around his and nod. “I was gonna tell you,” He continues. “That night after dinner. That’s why I wanted to take a walk with you. I had no idea about everything else that was going on. I get why you couldn’t trust me with anything, but when I realized you were walking around hurting like that, because of my dad— because of me. That messed me up.” He releases my fingers and takes my hand into both of his. It’s such a simple gesture, and it makes me want to let myself love him. We stay like that for a while, silently looking at our hands.

“You didn’t know,” I say, to reiterate for myself, and to reassure him. Orion looks to the sky and then at the garden and begins to walk towards it, bringing me with him, by the hand.

“When I saw you crying...I never want to be the cause of your tears.” He stops as we reach the garden. I face him and take both of his hands in mine.

“Orion, look at me,” I say. He does. “I’m okay. I will be okay.” He nods.

Orion looks down and squeezes his eyes together so tightly, as if he’s making a wish— as if doing so will make everything better when he opens them again. He squints at me when he opens his eyes. He waves a flying insect away from his face as he reads the metal sign hanging

on a screw on the house behind the garden. The edges of the sign have rusted to a bluish red patina that matches the bricks on the house.

“I didn’t notice that the last time we were back here,” he says. The sign is a scripture from the bible, Genesis 1:29. My mom isn’t religious, but she was raised in the Baptist church. The book is sacred in ways that she’s quick to admit she doesn’t understand, but she respects it and thinks it’s significance makes the practical parts worth paying attention to. Genesis 1:29 justifies her diet. There’s another verse from Revelations that she likes, that Rastafarians paraphrase, ‘herb is the healing of the nation’, that justifies her practical use of cannabis, but there’s no sign for that one.

Orion reads the sign aloud, “And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.” He looks at me with his eyebrows raised into a question. I smile and say, “My mom is a vegetarian. She eats fried chicken once a month, though. She says she can’t forget what fried chicken tastes like, so to curb her desire for it, she eats it on the last Saturday of every month. It’s like her monthly sabbath to show reverence to her favorite meat.” Orion smiles, an impressed and impressive smile and nods his approval. I chuckle and add, “She says eating fried chicken once a month doesn’t make her a carnivore nor does it negate her vegetarianism, rather, it just makes her a perfectly imperfect human.” I roll my eyes. He holds my gaze until our smiles fade. We are both painfully aware that our time together is coming to an end. This horrible, wonderful summer is almost over.

“What time is your flight?” He asks.

“Six. Everything is packed. I shipped some stuff ahead. So, I’m ready,” I say, attempting to sound casual, as if my heart isn’t breaking. Orion’s hands are in his pockets and he’s looking

out at the herb section of the garden in front of us. Bees and butterflies flit around the echinacea flowers and the lavender. I look towards the side fence where the honeysuckle grows and notice movement over there too. I envy the simplicity of the life of bees. I don't have pockets and don't know what to do with my hands so I just wring them as we wait together in silence.

“Please tell me we can keep in touch. I need to know I can still see you...on school breaks and holidays,” Orion says.

“Orion.” My heart cracks open for this boy. Any tender feelings I have are still raw and tinged with anger and frustration at how cruel the universe has been to him. To us. All he wanted to do was to love me. All I wanted to do was let him. I thought this would be easier. How can we ever be together now? Every time I look at him I think about his father, and how we'll never know if he could have saved mine— not really. Every time I look at Orion, I think about how his father left my mom and me to possibly die. Even if we tried to make it work, there are still so many what-ifs and unknowns that we'd have to accept. How is that even possible? We are forever bound and forever apart. We exist in the same universe, among the same stars, but perpetually separate— like Jupiter and Orion.

“Come here,” I say and walk towards the clearing in the garden. I grab my mom's blanket from the storage bench, shake it out and spread it on the ground. I sit down and lay back onto the blanket, then pat the space beside me, inviting him to join me. With no hesitation, he is lying beside me, on his back-- eyes facing the sky.

“We had a great summer together,” I say. “The Summer of Summers. A tragic summer love song, written in the stars.”

“I want a lifelong love song with you.” Orion folds his hands beneath his head.

“A lifetime, Orion?” I say, not because I don’t believe he means it, but I just can’t believe he said it. Especially now, when we are clearly so over.

He turns his head to look at me. “I know you think I’m being dramatic, but it’s how I feel. Yes, a lifetime.” I look at him and wish we could start over as people with no shared histories.

“There will always be a part of me that feels jerked around or somehow manipulated by your dad or by fate or by something I can’t explain,” I say as I sit up.

I continue in almost a whisper, “My father died, Orion. None of us will ever know the real reason my dad’s car rolled. Clearly your dad feels responsible somehow, so much so that he actually believes that Nora’s death was karmic justice for his sin. My tuition is his penance. My mom might be able to see beyond what I see and forgive him because she partly blames herself, but I’m just not there, Orion. I don’t know if I ever will be.” I stop speaking because I feel anger rising. None of this is his fault. Everything is fucked up. Nobody and everybody is to blame. I look down at Orion. His eyes are closed. “I look at you...I don’t even know why you like me so much. You deserve ...” I search for the right words and I keep failing. I take a deep breath and try again.

“You’re so good, Orion. You see the bright side of everything. You see the best in everyone. You see the best in me. Even with all that has happened these past few weeks, I know what it feels like to be loved because of you. The truth about our families will be the truth forever. How can any kind of relationship sustain itself in the face of such a cruel reality? How can love...how can your love survive that?”

Orion is quiet. For a long time, the sound of cars driving by on the main road and the occasional bird song are the only reprieve from the silence that stretches out between us.

Orion sits up and waits for me to meet his eyes. “I love you,” he says. It is such a measured, sure declaration of love that I stop breathing. His restless eyes search my face. I wonder what he sees.

“I love you, Jupiter,” he says, and I exhale. You don’t have to say it back. I just want you to know that I love you. I believe in my heart that you love me too, and believing it is enough for me right now.”

I’m afraid that if I look at him, he will see how much I actually do love him and how much I want to trust that that’s enough. But this is where we end. I know that whatever I’m feeling is useless now. Everything is fucked. Why doesn’t he see that too?

“I will love you forever,” he says. I’m silent.

He doesn’t deserve a lie right now, but I can’t tell him the truth.

“I believe you.” I can’t look away from his eyes. Deep down, I want him to know I love him, but saying it will only make it harder to say goodbye. I hope he can look into my eyes—look into me and see the truth. He kisses me with an urgency that takes me by surprise. I lean in and return his kisses and we fall back onto the blanket in a tangle of tongues and arms and legs. His free hand roams down my body from my breast, to my waist, my thigh and back up again to cradle my head. My body aches in places he has squeezed too hard, but I don’t say anything. He rests the full weight of himself on top of me and I hold onto him and return his kisses, breathless and wishing I could melt into him. We can’t get close enough. He stops kissing me abruptly and raises up on his arms. His body is angled over mine and our faces are too far apart. I try to pull him back down and closer, but he resists. There is so much pain in his eyes that it makes my own eyes sting with tears. His eyes begin to water and he lowers his body onto mine. Then he slides down until his head rests on my stomach, which is quickly wet with his tears. I stroke his hair and let my tears come.

“Do you want to go inside?” I ask. I can’t say the words. I can’t give him what he needs right now, but I can give him something we both want, one last time. He doesn’t answer.

“My mom isn’t here. We could...” I say.

“No,” he says, cutting me off. “Can we just lay here for a little while?” He asks.

I sink my fingers into the thick hair on top of his head and feel his scalp against my fingertips. I wish I had some kind of magical power that could soothe away his pain. His head rises and falls with my breathing. The ground is hard. I’m uncomfortable, but I don’t move. I don’t say anything. We both lay still and quiet for a long time, knowing that once we get up, our summer will have come to an end.

Halloween

[Orion's grand gesture felt too big to leave here. You'll see what parts I kept for the ultimate ending of Finding Jupiter. But just WAIT until you see how the original ended. You'll have to wait until March, but it's so John Hughes and so worth it.]

Every year, the graduating class gets to camp out on the green on Halloween night. It's one of the biggest privileges every senior looks forward to. We roast marshmallows, watch Hocus Pocus until sundown, followed by The Craft when it's dark, tell spooky campfire stories and there are always responsible amounts of one or two banned substances circulating. This year it's raining outside, so we're having a sleep, which means smoke detectors, which reduces banned substances to the liquid variety.

Spider webs, pumpkin lantern and fuzzy spiders are the sum of our attempts to decorate The Badger Den. The orange light from the huge chandeliers hanging from the forty foot ceiling reflects off the windows and wood floor where they peak through between massive Persian rugs are enough to make the nearly hundred-year-old hall look spooky on any given rainy night. As usual, most of us opted to be witches— about fifty-fifty the Wizard of Oz kind and The Craft kind, which is now playing on the big TV near the big, stone fireplace.

There's a spirited game of Uno going on, as well as quite-possibly-drunk Twister, a handful of girls are attempting backbends and handstands, and a growing group is practicing dance choreography. I'm curled up in the corner of Old Faithful, the leather couch that has survived almost two decades in The Den, painting my toenails black.

"Oh my god!" Briana shrieks from the opposite end of the hall. Everyone looks over to see what she's screaming about.

"You guys?" She says, speed-walking in my direction and waving girls over with her.

“Ray? You really need to see this,” she says and pulls me by the wrist, almost dragging me from the couch over to one of the computers in the den.

“Chill, Bri!” I say, holding the nail polish up, reflexively, to keep it from spilling, “What is it?” I ask, curious, but mostly annoyed by her interruption. I twist the top back on the nail polish and inspect my toes for damage.

“You guys!” She says, and holds up her flip phone. She announces that Mo just told her to find a video on YouTube. Only a handful of girls have followed us over to the desk. Bri’s exuberance isn’t a nuance on campus, so a lot of us are skeptical about how exciting whatever she’s excited about really is.

“Bri, this better not be that clown in the swing video, we’ve seen it one million times by now,” I say.

“Shhhh, trust me, just watch,” she says and presses play on a dark video of a stage in a dive bar or something. She moves some girls out of the way and roughly guides me by the shoulders into the chair in front of the screen.

Orion enters the screen, crosses the stage and sits on a stool holding his guitar. My stomach flips. I look for the title of the video -- For Her. My ears ring a little bit as my heart beats outside my chest.

“But ...he only sings for Jinx and Lotus,” I say to myself, and a few girls ask me to repeat myself, but I don’t answer. I glance around the room to make sure I’m really here and that this is real. But everything else fades to black and there’s just this computer and Orion in the big box on the screen.

“A special person once told me that one day was the last time you played outside with your friends, and none of you even knew it was the last time. You never get a chance to say

goodbye to your childhood. It just fades away in fragments without anyone noticing. One day you look up, and it's over." The sound of Orion's voice makes my heart swell. I tug at the black lace choker that's suddenly making it harder for me to breathe. A wave of chatter spreads his audience and Orion nods his head in agreement.

"I know right?" He says, chuckling. "She was always saying deep shit like that." He pauses and looks down for a few seconds before he continues.

"You rarely remember last times. Them first times though?" A beautiful smile washes over his face and he shakes his head as the laughter crescendos throughout the space around me, and in the video.

"Until the day I die, I will remember every single first we shared," he says. High-pitched whoops and grunts of approval.

"It's funny what you can do in a room full of people that you can't seem to do in front of one person," he says, and raises his eyebrows as if he's waiting for something to sink in. Again, laughter erupts from his audience.

"Nina Mosely. I see we got some Love Jones fans in here tonight." He laughs. I haven't talked to him since he left my backyard this summer. He's already changed so much. I don't see a trace of the nervous boy I met at Crystal Palace. This boy on stage with his guitar is confident. Easy. I hadn't realized how much I really miss him until this very moment, when I hear his laugh.

"Alright. Now for the reason I'm up here. Without further ado, this song goes out to the person who lit up my summer days and made my summer nights glow. To my girl from outer space. If you look up on a clear night, you might see her in the sky."

When Orion plays the first three notes on his guitar, I recognize the song. When he sings the first line, my face is wet with tears within seconds.

“I never dreamed you’d leave in summer.” His voice is smoother than I remember. He’s more beautiful than I remember. He goes on singing, and I go on crying. I feel someone pull up a chair beside me and wrap an arm around my shoulder and lay her head on my shoulder. It must be Bri. A hand materializes in front of me holding a Kleenex that I take and dry my face, but it’s a futile act because tears are running like a faucet. “Why didn’t you stay?” He sings the last line of Stevie Wonder’s song, and you could hear a pin drop in the entire universe. Then his audience burst into applause and the video abruptly comes to an end. I don’t know how long they’ve been reacting, but the high shrieks and awes from the girls in the room rush me, suddenly. I look around and see that Briana, still holding me, is crying and it seems there’s not a dry eye in Badger Den. Everyone’s face looks like a sentimental version of that Scream mask. Someone has already reached around me and pressed play again. I hear Orion’s voice again, and I am overcome with tears again. I get up and head towards the doors leading to the sleeping porch. Bri follows close behind me.

When the doors close behind us, I lean against the wall beside them. I close my eyes to slow my hysterical breathing. At some point, I must have done. Wall slide, because after a few breathes, when I open my eyes, I’m hugging my knees, and Bri is sitting on the floor beside me.

“He seriously loves you, Ray.”

“What am I supposed to do with all these feelings, Bri? I can’t love Orion. I can’t.”

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