

Excerpt from *Destiny Awaits* by Jaidis Shaw:

Sunlight caught the crystal that hung from the rear view mirror, and rainbow bursts of color radiated throughout the car. My parents and I had gotten up early so that we could make the three-hour drive to my uncle's house, but from the line of backed up traffic in front of us, it seemed that it would take us longer. I leaned back in my seat and let the music blaring in my earbuds help pass the time. My mother turned in her seat in the front, and I glanced at her. Seeing her mouth my name, I pulled one side of the earbuds out of my ear.

"What did you say?" I asked.

"I asked if you were hungry," she replied. "Your father thinks that we should get off the interstate at the next exit and grab something to eat while the traffic clears up."

"Sure, that's fine with me. It's a good idea, anyway, since Uncle John turned vegetarian. There's no telling what he's going to try to get us to eat."

My father's hearty laugh rumbled through the car. "Do you remember that rolled up spinach thing he tried to feed us last time?"

"How could I forget?" I said.

Mom sprung to her brother's defense. "It wasn't so bad."

"Then how come you didn't eat it? I saw you slip it to the dog when you thought nobody was watching." My father glanced at my mother while she tried to come up with a retort.

"If you saw that, then it's obvious that I wasn't sneaky enough." She crossed her arms over her chest and stared out the window.

My dad laughed as he flipped on the turn signal and merged into the right lane, coming to a stop behind a logging truck. I looked at the long logs protruding from the flatbed. "It always makes me nervous when they hang off like that," I said. A shiver raced through my body.

"It's okay. They make sure to load them on so that they won't come off," my dad reassured me.

I opened my mouth to reply but stopped when I heard a screech of tires behind us. Turning my head, I locked eyes with the man in the driver's seat of the truck that was hurtling toward us. The truck slammed into the back of our car, and my mother's scream echoed in the tight space around me. A shower of white stars filled my vision as pain ripped through my shoulder and cut off my own scream. As the darkness closed in around me, I heard the faint shrill of sirens in the distance.