

## Turbulent Passions

### Chapter One

“You don’t dictate to me!” Sapphire shouted. Her ire rose to a fever pitch and she lost her temper. The air in the room shifted and a blast of cold shoved at Aries. Her imposing brother never budged. Had it not been for the ruffling of his black hair, she wouldn’t have even realized she’d done it.

“Don’t use your powers against me, Sister. We both know who’ll win in a fight.”

Aries would win, of course. He was the stronger of them, not because he towered over her, though at well over six feet of solid muscle he definitely towered, but because his powers had always dominated. Even as kids he’d been able to defeat her whenever she challenged him. Sapphire’s ire dissipated and she collapsed into the nearest chair. “I’m so tired of fighting with you. Why must we be so secretive?”

Aries went to her, no doubt hearing the defeat in her voice, and crouched low. “You know the why of it. It’s not my choice to keep you from running free. There’s little we can do. All it would take is you losing your temper one time and the world would know our secret. We can’t risk it.”

“How do we know they’d turn on us, Aries? We’re only guessing. Maybe they’d embrace our differences.”

“You’re not thinking clearly. We both know the truth. Our personal history is proof. If anyone knew about us, the life we’ve built would be lost.”

She snorted. “What life? I live in isolation. Never experiencing anything beyond our woods and this...fortress you’ve built. I’m withering away. I can feel it.”

Aries cupped her cheek and smiled. “You’re being overly dramatic, Sister. You’re no more withering than I. Trust in me to know what’s best. Have I steered us wrong yet?”

She knew he was right, but it didn’t make it any easier to live with the knowledge that she was a veritable prisoner in her own home. “I suppose not. It’s just so stifling. Don’t you ever wish for more? A wife? Don’t you miss our old ways?”

“I’d be lying if I said I didn’t miss Mom and Dad. I’d give anything to see my old friends. But wishing won’t make it so. This is our life now. We need to get used to that.”

The mere mention of the way Aries used to be reminded her of Julie, her dearest friend. She still remembered Julie’s infectious laugh, nights spent cramming for tests and attempting to figure out who held the title for hottest guy on campus. It’d been exhilarating to have that little bit of normalcy in her life. With Julie, she wasn’t special, she was just another college girl. She hadn’t seen any of her old college friends in the five years since her parents’ horrible death.

Tears sprang to her eyes. Aries swiped the moisture away. As always, he took her pain and troubles onto his own shoulders. She hated being weak around him. He was always so in control. Why couldn't she learn to be that way?

“What has you upset?”

“I miss Julie. I miss Mom and Dad. I miss all of it. I'll never know if Julie married Gregory. We used to dream about having a double wedding.”

“And I'll never get to throw Gregory a killer bachelor party.” His voice hardened. “I understand your pain. I feel it, too. We can't change the past.”

She swallowed hard and attempted to gain control over her emotions. It was difficult to think of her old life. It always felt like shards of glass flayed her heart when she brought forth memories of what she'd once had. But if Aries could shut off that part of himself, she could as well. Sapphire summoned a measure of strength and blew a small draft of air over Aries' cheek, kissing him with the soft breeze. It was the closest she could get without breaking down into a puddle of tears. She stood quickly and announced, “I'm going for a walk. I need some fresh air to clear my mind.”

Aries rose and brushed a hand over her hair in a familiar, soothing gesture. “Take your time, but keep your mind open to me, Sister. I have some documents to go over, but later we can get some dinner in town.”

“Thank you, Brother. Sorry for being such a baby all the time.”

His smile was indulgent. “You're stronger than you think, Sapphire.” He winked and added, “After all, you are my flesh and blood. My twin.”

She was smiling when she left the living room. As she opened the door to the back gardens, Sapphire inhaled the fresh scents surrounding the grounds of the main house. She was always more comfortable among the trees and animals. Aries' overly large house made her feel as if she were wearing a noose. There were too many rooms filled with mementos of days long past. Anytime she spent more than a few hours there, she was reminded of things she could never have again. It was why she'd insisted on her own place when they'd moved to Waverly after their parents' death. She needed fresh surroundings, things without so many memories attached. Aries seemed happy to surround himself with their parents' pictures, her father's favorite chair, her mother's prized piano. But every time she saw those things, her heart nearly shattered.

The fresh scent of lavender drifted over her skin, and a gentle fawn tiptoed from the tree line. Sapphire held out her hand and let the animal sniff her. Assured she was no threat, the graceful creature allowed Sapphire to pet her. She stroked the speckled fur, and a measure of peace stole through her.

After only a few minutes, the animal scampered off, and Sapphire started down the path into the woods, toward her favorite clearing. Halfway there, a new, unfamiliar smell alerted her to

danger. She walked a few more feet, cautious now, her mind open to her brother as he'd instructed, when suddenly her foot caught on something hard and she tumbled forward.

Her face hit the dirt first, and she yelped as the point of a rock dug into her cheek.

"Sapphire! What is it?"

Her brother's worried voice was clear in her mind. "Nothing, you big lug. I fell, nothing more."

"Are you certain? I can come for you."

"Don't you dare. I feel silly enough."

She heard him chuckle, but he stayed a silent watcher inside her mind. Ever protective. Always keeping her safe.

Sapphire rose to her feet and looked back to see what she'd tripped over, and lost her voice entirely. A hand? She bent, pushing away the tall weeds and uncovered a man. His face was dirt-streaked, his clothes bloody and torn. She sniffed the air and took in his warmth. He was alive. She should tell Aries. He would know what to do. For some inexplicable reason, she didn't want her brother to intrude, though. She wanted time to inspect this stranger without her brother hovering.

She stepped forward, closing the gap between them, and knelt beside the large, black-haired man. She lifted her hand and pushed at the air. A gust blew over his face. Sapphire was spellbound as the man moaned. Another manipulation of the wind and the man's eyes shot wide open.

His hand snaked out and, with no effort at all, he rolled and pinned her beneath him, holding her completely at his mercy. She started to scream, but the blazing heat in his silver gaze stopped her. His brows scrunched as he looked her over from head to toe. His body, muscular and powerful atop hers, turned her bones to liquid. His hot, curious gaze traveled over her blue sundress and dark hair as if he were committing her form to memory. Or was he attempting to recall how he knew her? She wasn't sure. He was the first to speak.

"Who are you?"

She didn't hesitate. "Sapphire. Who are you?"

His frown grew fierce, but it was his silence that frightened her. She swallowed hard and wondered if she should summon her brother after all. Finally, the stranger answered.

"I don't know."

"You don't know your name?"

He shook his head and looked her over again, his gaze stopping on her bosom. Heat traveled over her skin when he stared at her there. “Why are you staring at me like that, and why don’t you know your name?”

His gaze flew to hers. He looked at her oddly, as if both amused and apprehensive. She hastened to reassure him. “I promise not to hurt you, stranger, though you are on private land.”

Several more seconds of silence passed before he finally stood. He reached a hand to her. Sapphire took it, strangely at ease with him. He pulled her to her feet and stroked the scratch on her cheek. “Did I do this?”

She wanted to laugh. He couldn’t know, but the tiny scratch was the least of her injuries over the past five years. She’d gained worse sparring with her brother. She was far stronger than the stranger realized.

“The scratch will heal,” she reassured him. Sapphire pointed to the knot on his head. “Any nausea or dizziness?”

He touched the spot in question and frowned. “Not particularly. Just a hell of a headache.”

“I took some first aid classes once. You could have a concussion.”

He swiped a hand over his face and winced. He held out both hands, palms up, and showed her the scratches there. “This is going to sound like a lie, but I don’t know my name and I sure as hell don’t know where I am.”

He was telling the truth. She could see it on his face. Deception was easy to detect in someone without psychic powers. But that still didn’t answer what she was supposed to do with him. Aries wasn’t going to be pleased. Sapphire frowned. Aries didn’t have to know everything. For the first time since her parents’ death, Sapphire wanted to do something impulsive, a little daring, and she didn’t need Aries there to ruin it.

She smiled at the stranger. “You appear to need help. Food first, I think. A shower and clean clothes wouldn’t do you harm, either.” Sapphire started back the way she’d come. “Come, I’ll take you somewhere safe.”

“Why are you helping me?”

That stopped her. She turned and smiled. “It’s the right thing to do, isn’t it?”

He shrugged. “Most folks don’t bother doing the right thing.”

She laughed. “I assure you, I’m definitely not most folks.” Then she walked away, leaving him to either follow or fend for himself.

He followed.

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