



SHANNON M. HARRIS

THE
DRAGON WITCH
TALES

AN UNEXPECTED BEGINNING

SUMMARY

Death ignited her powers. Love binds them.

Paisley's normal, boring life is shattered one evening when a strange, but sexy woman appears out of thin air in her living room and claims Paisley as her wife. Things spiral out of control when Paisley is informed by her mother that she is a witch that comes from a long line of witches, that other realms exist, and that the strange woman really is her wife.

As her choices slip from her grasp, Paisley must learn to navigate her new life, a new world, and a new wife. As if that wasn't enough, Paisley must deal with a growing attraction for a new woman in her life. Throw in a dragon egg, an angry queen, a traitor, and Paisley realizes she's going to have to learn to watch every move she makes.

As the push and pull between two women and her powers reach a standoff, Paisley makes a choice that will change the course of her life and the future of the world she calls home even if that means destroying her own happiness in the process.

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The DragonWitch Tales - An Unexpected Beginning

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Paisley stood with her back plastered against the wall leading into the kitchen, her eyes fixed on the scene in front of her. She blinked a few times to make sure she wasn't having a stroke, but every time she opened her eyes, nothing had changed. One minute, she was sitting on the couch with her cat Jynx watching a *Golden Girls* marathon, and the next she found herself in her current predicament. If she was asked, she would deny it, but at the moment *she* appeared in her living room, she peed herself a little. Anyone in her situation would have. Anyone.

The woman in front of her was floating a few inches above the floor, with her arms crossed across her chest. It was the craziest thing she had ever seen, and she had seen some crazy stuff in her thirty-two years. The woman looked like she had just stepped off the cover of a romance novel, and even though she was freaking out on the inside, Paisley couldn't help but be in awe of her sudden appearance.

The stranger was staring at her with an expression crossed between annoyance and amusement written across the sharp plains of her chiseled face. Long legs were encased in black leather pants and a pair of well-worn brown leather boots adorned her feet. A simple, long-sleeved gray tunic lay beneath a sleeveless red jerkin that was unbuttoned. A symbol she didn't recognize was stitched onto the right shoulder of the woman's shirt.

Brown leather cuffs wrapped each of her wrists, and a silver chain hung around her neck that disappeared inside her shirt. Paisley finally raised her head enough to lock eyes with the woman and gasped at the intensity with which the other woman was looking at her. It scared her and she tried to take a step back, realizing too late that she couldn't go back any farther.

Paisley gulped and took in the woman's short, shaggy black hair and brown eyes. Out of habit, she reached up and fiddled with her glasses. It was a nervous tick that she had tried for years to ignore, but after a while she'd decided to just roll with it. She was who she was, and saw no reason to apologize for that.

As the woman lowered herself to the floor, Paisley's eyes surveyed the room, looking for an escape route. If the woman could appear on a whim, Paisley's escape seemed slim. The stranger was the most beautiful and frightening woman she had ever seen. She counted to ten, then had to remind herself to breathe. *I can do this.* Whatever *this* was.

As taken with her as she was, she couldn't get over the fact that the woman had started to glow. Light literally was pouring from her slim frame. Paisley squinted as the light continued to seep out of her, and for some reason she couldn't look away from it. If she hadn't been so tired from work, she probably would have questioned everything that was happening. She wasn't exactly book smart, however she had common sense, and things weren't adding up.

As the woman's eyes continued to assess Paisley's body, she shivered and was starting to feel a bit self-conscious from her attention. The woman's gaze never wavered from its appraisal of her, and Paisley tensed when the woman's eyes locked with hers. She decided that enough was enough. Who the hell did she think she was, breaking into her home—because that was essentially what she had done—and ogling her? She could only take so much. "What do you want and why are you here?" When she didn't answer, only smirked at her, Paisley started to lose what sanity she had left. "Look—" Her words were cut off when her cell phone started ringing. She wished now she would have assigned distinct ringtones for different people. She was just moving to grab it when the woman reached toward the coffee table, picked it up, and answered it.

"Hello." Paisley bit her lip and backed up against the wall once more. The woman's voice, she knew, could melt butter. It was smooth, smoky, and sexy. Her knees wobbled a bit when the woman looked her way with a knowing smirk on her face. Paisley frowned and mentally gave herself a pep talk to stand her ground. When she held the phone out to her, Paisley did debate whether or not to take it, but the woman spoke again and waved the phone in the air. "Paisley, it's for you."

Considering it was her phone, she'd figured as much. She pushed away from the wall on shaky legs, stepped as close as she dared to the stranger, snatched the phone from her hands, and hightailed it back to her wall. "Hello."

"P.J., honey," her mom said. "Stay calm, and don't run. We'll be there in a few minutes."

Her mom hung up before she could answer. Knowing that her mom, and probably her grams, was on the way gave Paisley's confidence a boost. "That was my mom. She's on her way, so if anything happens to me, she knows you're here." The woman didn't acknowledge her words, only continued to smile at her. It was at that moment Paisley realized she had stopped glowing.

“What’s that supposed to be?” She pointed to a small table that sat across from the couch with just a hint of amusement in her voice.

Paisley narrowed her eyes at the question. A bit curious, she glanced to where she was pointing. “What’s what?” Even though the woman seemed to be able to perform magic, which should be impossible, she still hoped she wasn’t dealing with a weirdo. They came in all kinds of packages, even ones wrapped in form-fitting leather. “That’s a table.”

The woman rolled her eyes and sat down on the tan couch that took up most of the small living room, and continued to point at the table. “What’s that underneath?”

As Paisley glanced once more at the table, she noticed a black and white tail sticking out from under it. Paisley shook her head and walked to the table, knelt, and scooped Jynx into her arms. She had wondered where the little coward had run off to. If she knew she could have squeezed under there, she would have joined Jynx. “You must be stupid if you don’t know what a cat is.”

Before she even had a chance to turn around, the woman had taken Jynx from her arms and left one of her leather bracelets around Paisley’s wrist. “What... How did you do that?” It was like she had super speed. She tugged on the bracelet but it didn’t budge. It had somehow molded to her skin. Paisley tamped down the nausea that rose and took several deep breaths to calm her racing heart. “What did you put on my wrist?”

“You must be stupid if you don’t know what a bracelet is.”

Paisley squirmed at her voice. “Touché.” She walked slowly toward and around the couch, still messing with the cuff, then sat down on the edge of the matching recliner. Jynx was curled up in the she-devil’s lap, fast asleep. “Traitor,” she mumbled and fiddled with her glasses. Where was her mother?

“You’re not exactly what I was expecting.”

Her tone wasn’t one of disappointment, just resignation. *Well, screw her.* No one asked her for her opinion anyway, and she was the one who came in uninvited. Paisley knew she wasn’t up to supermodel standards, but none of her previous girlfriends had ever complained. Her complexion was a bit pale, but it paired nicely with her shoulder-length chestnut hair and her green eyes, which she inherited from her grams. Her glasses were also almost a genetic trait, but there was no way she would ever be able to wear contacts, and over the years, her glasses had become a part of her. “Sorry you’re disappointed. I didn’t invite you here.” She waved her hand in the air. “You may leave any time you want to.”

The woman leaned back on the couch and looked up at the ceiling. Paisley could swear she heard her count backward from ten. After a few moments, she sat up. “I can’t leave whenever I want, and if I did, you would be coming with me.”

She had some nerve. “I don’t know who the hell you think—” Paisley whipped her head around when she heard tires screech outside her house. Not a minute later her mother and grandmother burst through the front door. They looked at the scene before them, then at each other. It would have been comical, except for the expression on their faces.

“Well,” Grams said. “This isn’t exactly what I was expecting.”

“I would say not,” her mother said, pointing to the couch. “For one thing, that’s a woman.”

Paisley looked between them, then finally found her voice, breaking the silence that had descended on them. “So. Could someone please explain to me what’s going on here?” She hoped her voice sounded as calm as she tried to project it, but when her mother walked across the room, sat down on the arm of the chair, and wrapped her arm around her shoulders, she figured she had failed. She watched, her unease growing, when Grams sat down on the couch.

“So,” Grams said. “What’s your name and what are you doing in my granddaughter’s house?” You could always count on Grams to get straight to the point.

The woman turned to her. “My name is Lana.” Grams gasped, stood up from the couch, and started pacing. From the way her mother was gripping her shoulder, Paisley deduced this couldn’t be good news.

“Mom, my shoulder.”

“Sorry, dear.” She jumped up from the chair and grabbed Paisley’s wrist, disbelief written across her face.

“What?” Paisley forced down the panic that started to rise in her chest.

“P.J., what have you done?” Grams accused, her voice rising.

If they were freaked out maybe she should be, too. *Play it cool. Play it cool.* It was the mantra that was playing on a loop in her mind. “It’s just a cuff. Although, it is a bit suspicious that I can’t get it off.” *Play it cool.*

“Honey,” her mom said. “You won’t be able to get it off.”

Without warning the entire exchange hit Paisley the wrong way and she glared at Lana. “It’s all her fault!” She would take the blame for most of this. “One minute she’s floating, looking all evil, and the next thing I know, she grabs Jynx from my arms and leaves this cuff in her place.” She shoved the cuff toward her mom’s face, then pointed at Lana. “You don’t look so scary without your light show and all the theatrics.” Lana sat there, unmoving, with that damned sexy smile on her face.

“Kate,” Grams said, addressing her daughter. “This is out of our hands. All we can do now is explain everything to P.J., since Lana couldn’t, or wouldn’t, take the time to.”

Lana fidgeted on the couch, and it was the first time since she had appeared that she looked uncomfortable. “Well. I think I should be going. Ladies, I will leave you three to talk. Paisley.” She stood up, sat Jynx on the couch, lifted Paisley’s hand, and placed a tender kiss on the palm. “I’ll see you later.” She winked, then disappeared. *Disappeared.* Paisley clutched her offending hand to her chest and took several breaths to calm her racing heart. After her heart rate returned to normal, she looked at her mom and grandma, who didn’t look fazed in the least about what had just happened. *What the hell?* She stood up, then quickly sat back down.

“Paisley,” her mom said. “We need to talk.”



Paisley ran her hand through her hair and regarded the two of the three most important women in her life, the absent one being K.G. “How can you two be so calm? Do you realize what just happened? It’s not possible. I mean really, this is crazy. Not crazy good, or crazy bad, just crazy.” She waved her hand in the spot that Lana had disappeared from. She took off her glasses and rubbed her eyes before replacing them on her face. Her hands were shaking so badly she slipped them beneath her legs.

“P.J.,” her mom said.

She shook her head, stood up, and glared at them. “I’m not done yet.” She stuffed her hands in the pockets of her lounge pants. “First some scary, sexy woman just appears in my living room unannounced—and out of thin air, I might add. Who. Was. Glowing.” She started pacing. “I mean. Who does that? Light was literally pouring from her. Then she puts this cuff on my wrist, and apparently, by the way you two are acting, I should be even more freaked out about it than I am. Then”—she held up her hand to ward off their questions—“she just vanishes. Poof. Gone. But you two don’t seem bothered by *that* at all. Tell me, how many people do you know that can just disappear and appear on a whim, hmm?” She stalked back to the recliner, flopped down, only to miss the chair completely and land with a thud on the floor. Mustering whatever dignity she had left, she hauled herself up off the floor and settled back down on the chair. She was having one weird-ass day. Stranger than usual. She sighed. “What does this cuff mean?” She sniffled, and shot them both a glare she hoped told them to stay where they were.

Grams bit her lip. “Sweetheart, we have a lot to talk about. We probably should have had this conversation a long time ago. We just never thought...I mean...you never showed any sort of ability whatsoever.”

Paisley furrowed her brow and frowned. “Ability?” She scratched her nose. “I think I need a drink.” She stood up before they could protest and headed to the kitchen, returning shortly with three bottles of water, handing one to each of them before she sat back down.

“Honey,” her mom said. “I think we need to talk about what you consider a drink.”

Paisley ignored her and took a long swallow. “I have one question for now. Just one.” They both nodded for her to continue. “What does this cuff have to do with anything and what does it mean? I can’t get it off.”

Grams smiled sadly. “It’s meant to form a bond between both wearers.”

“Ooo-kay. What kind of bond are we talking about? What does that mean for this...Lana person and me?” Was this really happening? Maybe she was dreaming. She pinched her arm, and hissed when it stung. Her mom coughed and she swung her gaze back to them.

“Well—”

“It’s like this, honey—”

Paisley clinched her fists. “Just spit it out!”

“It means you’re married.”

“She’s your wife.”

It took her a minute to absorb what they had said, and even when the words registered they still didn’t make sense. She had to have misunderstood, but when she looked between them and saw the look on both their faces, she knew she had heard correctly. *Play it cool*. After all, it was just a bracelet. That she couldn’t get off. But still. “Okay. Maybe we got ahead of ourselves. Maybe, just a bit. Let’s start over.” She scrunched her nose up trying to remember something Grams had said. “You said something about an ability. What was that about? And for the record, I don’t know why it was such a big deal that she was a woman. You know I’m gay.”

“I can’t believe you’re joking about all of this,” Grams said.

She giggled, then quickly tamped it down. “I’m freaking out on the inside.” Neither one looked convinced.

Her mother eyed her intently, then spoke. “Promise not to interrupt us.”

“Yes.”

“I’ll let your grandmother start.”

“P.J., you have to understand what we’re about to tell you is the truth. No matter what we say. It is the truth. If nothing else, please believe and remember that.”

Paisley gripped the arms of the recliner. “Okay.” From the look on Grams’s face, this was going to be even wilder than Lana appearing in her living room.

Grams smiled. “Let me start by saying that I loved your grandfather, and I know Kate loves your father. All our marriages and the marriages of every other female in our line were predetermined. Arranged, if you will. We never knew who our husbands were going to be, or when they would come to us. And there is a reason we never got to pick our husbands. From as far back as our line has been written, every female in our family has been blessed with an ability of some sort. Powers. Your great-grandmother had the ability to heal the human body. Her mother, your great-great-grandmother, had the ability of a seer. As for myself, I can be in several places at a time, a sort of cloning effect. Our abilities are rare and varied, and must be maintained. Because of the need to nourish our powers our marriages have to be with men who can guarantee our offspring will enhance, or at the very least carry on, the abilities we have been given.” She rubbed her palms on her pants. “I say men, because that is the way it has always been. As much as the world has progressed, it is still not possible for two women to have a biological child of their own.”

Powers. Paisley ran her hands through her hair. What the hell was going on? How in the span of an hour could her whole world be turned on its end? It was her first instinct to believe they were playing an elaborate trick on her, but that thought was squished by the look in her grandmother’s eyes. This was happening. “That’s why you were both surprised when you saw Lana?”

“Yes. This is where things will get tricky, and you must suspend your belief in the reality you’ve always known just a bit. We knew our husbands would come from another realm, one where magic is commonplace, we’ve just never been there ourselves. We are not allowed to cross the barrier between worlds. Only the women of Dangor—the other realm—are allowed to travel freely through the barrier. But the men...once they come through, they can’t go back. The men who agree to wed us give up their lives and their families in Dangor to have another one with us in this world. That is the reason we were shocked to see a woman.”

“But, you spoke to her on the phone.”

“To be honest, that didn’t even dawn on us. We still expected a man until we laid eyes on her. Lana will be able to come and go through the barrier as she sees fit. That also means that you will be able to go with her. The only

way she could have come through to claim you is with the King's Council's approval. This is the first I have heard about a same-sex union."

Paisley adjusted her glasses. "Wait. If the cuff forms a bond, why aren't you two wearing one?"

Her mom smiled. "When we got married, we forfeited the cuff for a wedding band. The cuff is the tradition in Dangor, rings are the tradition in our world."

Paisley shook her head. She loved them dearly, but how could they really expect her to believe everything they were saying? They'd never mentioned any of this before, nor had Paisley ever witnessed anything odd concerning them. "Let's just assume, for the sake of discussion, that I believe all this arranged-marriage-from-another-realm stuff. A same-sex union...that's not the only reason you were shocked by Lana. What is it?"

"If I'm not mistaken, Lana is the name of King Perry's second born, and his only daughter. From time to time we get progress reports on the happenings in Dangor," Grams said.

Kate wrung her hands. "I don't mean this the wrong way, P.J., but what in the world would Lana want with you? Never in our line have we ever been matched with royalty, and to be frank, she has to be at least ten years younger than you."

Well, hell. What could you say to that reasoning? It hadn't escaped her notice that Lana did look young. She knew she should have been offended by her mother's words, but she didn't know why she would have been chosen either. "Surely, if she wanted to, she could take the cuff off and pick someone else." All three shared nervous glances. "Right?" *Play it cool.*

Her mom shook her head. "That's not the way it works, P.J. Once the bond has been made, it cannot be broken."

"No." She shook her head. "That doesn't make sense. Don't I have to agree to this before the bond can be made? Where is my consent in this entire debacle?" She hadn't been selective in her dating choices to just throw her life away to a stranger.

"Your bond would have been made a long time ago," Grams said. "Bonds are not made on a whim. They are divinely done. It is destined from your birth who will become your partner. Some bonds are made for the good of the people, some are made for the good of the few, and some bonds are made for the good of the two people involved. In your case, I'm not sure what the bond was made for. But I do know this: no matter if you both wanted to, that bond is secure and no one will be able to break it."

"So, that's it then? I'm stuck with her?" How could everything suddenly go bat-shit crazy? She took a deep breath. "I don't understand how this can be happening. I don't have any sort of ability. I'm just me: Paisley Jane. And both of you know I would never agree to marry a man, no matter what happened. I always thought I would marry for love."

"Actually..." Lana said from behind Paisley, making her jump in her chair.

Paisley glared at her and grabbed her chest. "Don't do that. You just can't appear and disappear on a whim." *Holy hell.*

Grams pushed off the couch and stood up. "What do you mean, 'actually'?"

Lana stepped around the recliner and leaned against it. "Paisley probably doesn't even realize she has any power. At least not until we go back to Dangor. There, her powers can be realized." She grinned down at her.

"She may have powers and not even know it?"

"Yes, she could. Look, I know I've probably upended everything, but I didn't have a choice. This way she is protected. Now she has the protection of the Royal Elite Guards."

Grams's eyes widened. "Why would she need their protection?"

"There are a lot of tales in my world. Some are true and some are simply myths. However, there is one story everyone seems to agree on because it has never been discounted. It is said a woman will be the one to bring the kingdom into turmoil, and this woman will hold power unknown to many." At the same time Lana sat down on the arm of Paisley's chair, Paisley stood up and moved away from her. Being so close to her was putting Paisley on edge. Lana smirked at her but continued with her story. "Some are aware of her and will never stop hunting her, while

others couldn't care less about her existence. The Brotherhood of the Realm is among those hunting her. What I want to do is teach Paisley of her abilities and allow her to grow in her powers."

Paisley's mom stood up. "That's all well and good, but how do you know Paisley is that woman?"

"Kate," Grams said.

"Mom is right. How do you know that that's me?"

Lana seemed to be choosing her words carefully. "To be fair, we don't know it's you. But rumor has it that this woman will come from a different land, and since I am your chosen partner, it all has sort of fallen into place."

The story kept getting crazier by the minute. Paisley adjusted her glasses and bit her lip. At this point in time, she would have to consider every angle. "Okay." She sighed. "Honestly, do you three realize how insane this sounds?" When no one answered her, she threw her hands in the air. So, that's how they were going to play it? Whatever. She couldn't fully trust Lana, but she didn't know that she wasn't telling the truth. Nor could she fully trust her family. She turned toward her mother to get the attention off herself. "Mom, you never told me what your ability is." Changing the subject was an ability she had mastered a long time ago.

"I don't have one."

Lana cocked her head. "You don't?"

"No. That's why we always figured P.J. never showed any signs."

"It could be that her and your abilities just haven't been realized yet," Lana said.

Grams waved her hand in the air. "I thought it was just dormant in them. That has been known to happen."

Lana shrugged, walked to the couch, and sat down. "I'm not really sure then." She grabbed Paisley's arm and pulled her down beside her.

Paisley debated jumping up, but Lana smelled amazing, like a combination of honey and vanilla. Lana seemed to sense her struggle and slipped an arm around her shoulders to hold her in place. The hand rubbing her shoulder sent shivers down Paisley's spine. As soon as Paisley leaned closer to Lana, she received a glare from her mom and promptly pulled away from her a bit. "So, what happens now?" Paisley asked.

"You'll come home with me of course," Lana stated matter-of-factly.

"No," Mom and Grams said at the same time.

Paisley ignored them. Her house wasn't a dump, but it was older and small. An upgrade could be nice... Maybe Lana had an appealing alternative. It never hurt to listen to all possibilities before making an informed decision. "Where do you live?"

Lana's whole face lit up. "I have a house on Dangor Lake. It's not big, but it's home. Imagine waking up with a view of the Matek Mountains every morning. It's breathtaking."

Paisley grinned right along with her. That sounded nice. A lake view and a view of the mountains. She could imagine the multitude of colors that would splatter the morning sky. She scrunched her nose when it hit her that Illinois didn't have any mountains, and for the life of her she couldn't recall ever hearing about the Matek Mountains. She searched her memory for a clue when something Grams had said pulled at the forefront of her memory. *Another realm*. She pulled away from Lana and looked her in the eye. "Where are the Matek Mountains located?" When Lana's eyes widened, she looked to the other two women, but neither one was looking at her. Paisley stood up. "Well?"

"The Matek Mountains are in Dangor. My home country. You do know where Dangor is, don't you?"

"No, I don't recall." Paisley's words were clipped. She ran her shaking hands through her hair. None of this could be real. How could it? Everything seemed to click into place. "I need to sit down." Before she could sit back down on the couch, her mom grabbed her arm and settled her down in the recliner. "Where is Dangor again?"

Lana jumped up. "She doesn't know?" Kate shook her head and Lana turned toward Paisley. "I think I'll really take my leave now and let the three of you discuss matters." She took a step toward Paisley. "I will be back later." She placed a chaste kiss on Paisley's cheek and promptly disappeared.

She could feel the kiss all the way to her toes and felt certain her cheek shouldn't be tingling where Lana's lips had been. This was a nightmare. "This is really happening?" She had some crazy shit happen in her life. K.G.,

her ex and best friend, was one of them, but what was happening now took crazy to a whole other level. “Dangor?” She wasn’t sure she wanted to know, but she needed all the facts.

Her mom started. “We should have told you years ago about what was happening and what could happen. I am so sorry we didn’t. It was my responsibility to inform you, and I have failed you. And yes, this is really happening.”

“The Realm,” Grams said, “is another dimension that the men in our family, and now Lana, of course, are able to travel through. The men who cross over can never go back. I see questions behind those captivating green eyes of yours. I don’t know why our family was chosen for such extraordinary gifts, but it has always been this way and we have never taken them for granted. Your grandpa once told me that traveling through to our world was the scariest thing he had ever done in his life, but that he wouldn’t trade it for anything.”

Paisley wiped a tear away. His death last year of a heart attack had shocked everyone, and they were still dealing with his passing in their own way. “What did Lana mean when she said I would go home with her?” Moving didn’t faze her, but moving to another realm did seem a bit excessive, even for her standards.

They both fidgeted. “I can only reason that she wants you to go back with her.”

Paisley rolled her eyes. “Yes, Grams, I got that, but what does it mean?”

Kate tilted her head. “We don’t know. You’ll probably want to ask her that. It might ultimately mean you will be living with her. The men come to the women they are betrothed to, so I can only assume that you will go with her.”

By their words and their actions, they were stuffing everything into a neat and tidy box. This wasn’t a story they were retelling; this was her life. “What happens if I don’t want to accompany her back? What if I refuse?”

“I...don’t know,” Grams said. “No one has ever refused a joining before. It’s part of who we are. It makes up our lifeblood. We should have told you earlier to help you get used to the idea, but over the years no one came for you. It’s obvious now that the reason she didn’t come earlier is because she’s at least ten years younger than you. She simply hadn’t been born yet. As the years passed, we just figured no one was coming for you. Even your father had started to wonder. You should talk to him as soon as possible.”

“Honey,” her mom said. “You seem to be taking all of this rather well.” She smiled, but the tone of her voice conveyed an entirely different meaning.

How was she supposed to act given the circumstances? They’d had years to adjust to everything, and now they expected her to take in everything in a matter of hours. What she wouldn’t give to go back in time and continue to watch *The Golden Girls* with Jynx on the couch. She glanced at the clock. “It’s late and I think I should sleep on all of this. Maybe by tomorrow morning my brain will have caught up with everything that was discussed. After everything that’s happened, I wouldn’t say no to dinner, either.”

When they hesitated to leave, Paisley stood up, kissed them each on the cheek, and pushed them toward the door. “Really, I’ll be fine.” She closed the door after they had walked through, then leaned back against it and let her body slide to the floor with a thud. After a few minutes of silence, she lay down on the floor and traced the patterns on the ceiling with her eyes. She smiled when Jynx licked her face then settled her weight on her chest. “Jynx, remember when I said we needed more excitement in our lives? I lied.”



Beep...Beep...Beep

Paisley burrowed deeper into the covers and pretended that the alarm wasn’t going off. She snuggled under the warm blanket and closed her eyes in anticipation of a few more minutes’ sleep.

Beep...Beep...Beep

She sighed and rolled over, pulling the covers from her face, and blinked at the red numbers taunting her on the alarm clock and frowned. Now, she knew she was still dreaming, because that couldn’t possibly be the right time. She lay still staring at the blinking numbers until her brain finally caught up with what her eyes were seeing. It couldn’t possibly be a quarter to nine in the morning. “Shit.”

She flung the covers off and jumped out of bed. She could have sworn she set it for seven. She hopped around on one foot until both legs were in her jeans, and pulled them up and over her pink boy shorts. She fumbled with the zipper and looked from her legs to the bed, then back to her matching pink bra. Wait a minute. How did she get into bed with all her clothes off? The last thing she remembered was falling asleep on the living room floor. *What the what? Play it cool. Play it cool.*

She grabbed her white T-shirt that she normally wore to work and pulled it on over her head. The RiversEdge was one of only two bed and breakfasts in her small town. The hours were decent and the pay was good, and since she only worked four days a week it was the perfect combination for her. She flung her door open and was halfway down the hallway when she skidded to a stop and sniffed the air. Bacon. Considering she didn't have any bacon in the house it was quite odd, but she figured maybe her mother had come to fix her breakfast. But, no, that wouldn't be right. Her mother would have woken her up for work.

She couldn't find any fault with someone cooking bacon for her, until she stepped into the kitchen and came to a complete stop. Lana stood at the stove in a pair of tight, black leather pants and a brown and red long-sleeved shirt. The sleeves were pushed up her forearms. Today her short hair was put up into a small ponytail and it all looked so domestic. Paisley frowned when Lana turned around to greet her.

Lana pointed her spatula at the table. "Sit down. Breakfast is almost done." She turned back to the stove.

Paisley noticed she was flipping hash browns, and licked her lips. She loved hash browns. Why did her life have to be so complicated suddenly? "Why didn't you wake me? I have to work. I don't even know you. You need to stop coming into my home unannounced. It's rude and that's not even considering that it's against the law."

Lana picked up a piece of bacon and nibbled on it. "You're not hungry?"

At that moment, Paisley's stomach decided to show its displeasure and Lana grinned at her. Paisley eyed the plate of bacon and eggs Lana set in front of her. When she reached for the plate, Lana's smile was almost blinding but before she could say anything, Paisley picked the plate up and headed toward the back door. "See you later."

She walked as fast as she could, without disturbing her plate, and slid into her car. Setting the plate on the passenger seat, she flung the car into reverse and spun out of the driveway. She was tempted to look in the rearview mirror, but she couldn't care less whether Lana was following her or not. Bonding bracelet or not, she didn't know Lana and she wasn't sure she wanted to.

The events from the day before were still hard to fathom. Truth be told, she would have never believed a story like that from her mom and grams if Lana hadn't appeared in her home beforehand. She loved her family, but the story was beyond far-fetched, even by her standards. Add to that the fact that she was supposedly married, and it was almost too much for her to handle. She would try to reserve judgement until she had a chance to talk with her family in more depth. She hoped they showed a little bit more concern for her well-being instead of just throwing facts at her.

It wasn't until she was halfway to work and had finished most of the bacon that she realized it was Monday. She didn't work on Mondays. At the next stop sign she turned left toward her parents' neighborhood. As she neared their house, she noticed Uncle Cliff's camper parked beside her dad's Jeep in the driveway. That was odd, considering he and her father shouldn't have been home from their annual fishing trip until Saturday.

She pulled into the drive, killed the engine, and ate the rest of her breakfast. She moaned when the first bite of eggs passed her lips. They were cooked to perfection, as was the bacon. It made her sick to think how perfect Lana seemed. She knew looks could be deceiving, but she bet the hash browns tasted amazing as well.

Paisley frowned when her mother pulled back the living room curtain for the third time, and with a groan she stepped out of her car before her mom came out and got her. Bracing herself for whatever would come, she climbed the porch steps and walked to the front door. Deep in her gut she knew that what would happen inside the house would be life-changing, even more so than what had already occurred the previous day. Before her hand touched the doorknob, the door swung open, and her mother grabbed her and drew her into a hug.

"Sweetheart, how are you this morning?" She pushed her to arm's length and ran her eyes along Paisley's body. When she was satisfied, she pulled Paisley through the open door and deposited her on the couch beside her grandmother.

Paisley adjusted her glasses, then scratched her nose. "I slept okay, all things considered, and Lana made me breakfast." At Lana's name, they both frowned.

Grams patted her knee. "Well, that was nice of her. So, she came back after we left?"

Paisley shrugged and bit her lip. How much should she tell them? "I don't know when she came back or if she even left. The last thing I remember is falling asleep on the living room floor. When I woke up, I was in my bed." She decided to leave out that she was practically naked.

"That's nice, dear."

Paisley regarded her grandmother. "Dad and Uncle Cliff came back early?"

Her mom sat down on the recliner across from the couch. "I called your dad last night and they both insisted on coming back early. They're not here now, though. I asked them to give us today to talk to you and they both agreed. But, your dad has a lot he wants to talk to you about." She stood abruptly and headed out of the room only to return a few minutes later carrying a wood box, roughly the size of a shoe box. When she set it on the coffee table, Paisley leaned forward to get a closer look. Numerous, differently shaped squares and circles were cut into the surface of the wood. She wasn't a hundred percent sure but it looked like cherry wood. Honeysuckle vines lined the edges of the box and wrapped around the lid. Again, looks could be deceiving, but by the wear and rust on the hinges, the box was old.

Paisley looked from her mom to the box, when her mom pulled her necklace off. A small key dangled from the simple silver chain. Ever since she could remember her mom had always worn the key around her neck and she had never seen her use it before. It always held an air of mystery to her, and now she wished she never had to know what the key was for and she wasn't at all sure she was ready for what was in the box. She took several deep breaths when her mom placed the key in the lock on the box and opened the lid. Paisley squinted and tensed, but when nothing happened she felt a bit let down.

A hardback-sized, black leather book and several different pieces of jewelry were nestled inside the box. Grams reached into the box and lifted out a necklace that had a square-shaped ruby dangling from the silver chain. Paisley eyed the stone, then the hands that held it, and couldn't help the sadness that overcame her. She reached for her grams's hand and ran her fingers over her palm. Where had the years gone? Her grandmother was eighty-five. Every inch of skin was wrinkled and weathered, but still as soft as ever. Grams wrapped her fingers around Paisley's hand and tapped her chin, then smiled. When hundreds of memories flooded her mind it suddenly hit Paisley: what would she do if she went to Dangor and something happened to her grandmother? She didn't think she would be able to survive that.

"Sweetheart," Grams said. "I know what you're thinking and you need to stop right now. Life is a cycle. A cycle that doesn't end for anyone and life is meant to end. But rest assured, I am not done living yet. We have plenty of time."

Paisley sucked in a breath and held the tears at bay, but smiled and kissed Grams's palm before pointing to the necklace. "What are you going to do with that?"

"It's for you. Here." She handed it over. "Put it on."

Paisley accepted the necklace and slipped it over her head. When nothing happened, she looked up. "Was something supposed to happen?"

Mom shook her head. "We weren't sure if it would. The necklace is one that has been passed from generation to generation. There is more power in that pendant than any of us combined could ever create."

Paisley laughed to ease the tension that suddenly flared up in her. Good grief, if it held that much power, why would they give it to her to begin with? "So, I guess I shouldn't lose it then? Huh."

"It would be best not to, dear." Grams winked.

"I'll guard it with my life, Grams." Kate pulled the book out of the box, closed the lid, then set the book on top of the box. The leather was weathered, but looked to be in good shape, and had the same honeysuckle patterns that were etched onto the box. Something told her this wasn't an ordinary box or book. She was quite confident she could have been Sherlock in another life.

Her mom opened the book and flipped through the pages until she found the one she was looking for. “Paisley, this book is our heritage. It contains everything that has ever been written about our family and the abilities they have received. This is not a joke and something you must always take seriously. No one, and I mean no one, outside of this family should ever be allowed to see this book. Do I make myself clear?”

It was the first time she had ever heard such passion in her mother’s voice. She pointed to the book and her mom nodded. She flipped through the pages and frowned. All the pages were blank. “I don’t understand?”

“You will.” Grams handed her a pen. “On that page, I need you to write your full name, age, birthdate, your parents’ full names, your grandfather’s full name, and mine. Underneath that you need to write Lana’s name, then a short biography about yourself. It only needs to be a couple of paragraphs.”

“Okay.” Paisley bit her lip and accepted the pen her grandmother handed her. Her hand hovered above the pages. For some reason, it felt wrong to be writing in the book, but she shook off the nerves and wrote down what they asked her to. When she reached the biography, she hesitated. It would have helped if she could read what others had written about themselves. She didn’t want to write the wrong things down. She scribbled a few things, then handed the pen to her mom, but as soon as her mom took the pen, she grabbed Paisley’s hand and without warning produced a knife and slid the blade across her palm. Paisley hissed in pain as the blade tore her flesh.

Her mom turned her hand over and allowed the blood to drip onto the page she had just written on. The blood soaked the paper and spread out, devouring her words. *Good grief.* Paisley yanked her hand back and squinted at her mom. This was some weird shit. What had she gotten herself into?

As she traced the wound with her fingertip, it started to heal. Where once there was a deep, angry gash, one would have to look closely to even see the faint scar that now dotted her palm. “How?” Her mom winked and closed the book, only to reopen it a second later to the first page, then started flipping through it. Every page was filled with writing and pictures of different women. Some of the languages she recognized, others she didn’t.

“This is our heritage,” Grams said. “The book will only reveal itself, or its secrets, through a blood sacrifice from our line.”

Paisley glared at them. “You could have warned me.” All of a sudden, this felt too real.

Her mom waved her hand in the air. “You’re fine.”

“Whatever.” Paisley slumped back on the couch and glanced out the window. There was no turning back now. If she had any reservations before, they had all been thrown out the door. She still wasn’t sure what it all meant. Sure, she knew that magic existed now, but that still didn’t explain so many things. She was a nobody. There wasn’t anything special about her. What she did know was that she was...a witch. In a long line of witches, including her mom and grandma. *Holy shit. Play it cool.* She fiddled with her glasses before pushing them back up the bridge of her nose, then turned and faced them both. She needed more answers. “Not to worry. I’m good. I just needed a minute.” She pointed to the book. “What does all this mean? What is to be expected of me?” Those two questions seemed straightforward enough. Dozens more lingered on her tongue, but they could wait.

“P.J., your grandma and I were talking last night and we don’t want keep anything else from you.”

“Okay.” That didn’t sound good at all.

“If you had shown signs of your powers before now this wouldn’t be so difficult. As it is, I don’t know anybody in our line that has come into their powers at the age of thirty-two.” Her mom waved her hand in the air and took a deep breath. “We think Lana may be right about your powers manifesting themselves in Dangor. As much as it pains me to say this, we believe your best chance will be to go back with her. Learn from the people there and learn from her. She has the means to protect you that we never will. Let her protect you.”

“Just like that?” How could they be so nonchalant about everything? They may have had years to become comfortable with their purpose in life, but she’d only found out about hers the day before. She needed her family right now, not some stranger, and she needed them to be on her side. Instead, it felt like they were throwing her to the wolves. Granted, Lana was an attractive wolf, but she was still a wolf.

“Lee.”

Paisley jerked her head up at Grams's voice. Only her grandpa had ever called her Lee, and to hear it coming out of Grams's mouth felt wrong, but it also meant that whatever she was about to tell her was important. She was glad she was sitting down. Grams slipped her hand into hers and squeezed.

"Sweetheart, you are a part of something. Something far bigger than any of us. You are part of a legacy and as such you will show only respect to it. Do not do anything to draw disrespect upon it or our family. Once you wrote in the book, you signed your fate. You cannot turn away from your powers, and you cannot run away from this. If you have any questions do not hesitate to ask me or your mother. We will gladly answer them." She squeezed once more, then released her hand.

She loved both her grams and her mom, but just like Lana, they had also sealed her life to something without asking her permission first. She wasn't sure how she felt about that. Fate. That was only a word she read in books. It shouldn't have any bearing on real life. At least not her life. How did everything get so screwed up? She dug her fingernails in to the couch cushion before she said something she would regret. She loved them both too much to do that. "May I look at the book?"

Mom held up her finger. "Hold that thought." She then walked out of the room.

"Grams, what if I can't do this? What if I fail? What then?" She choked back a sob and rested her head in her hands.

"Oh, Paisley. That won't happen. For one, you're too smart to allow that to happen. For two, you come from a long line of strong women, magic notwithstanding. Draw from them, and as much as I hate to admit it, draw from Lana. I am sure she is a fine woman, but first and foremost you have been and always will be my girl." Paisley raised up and grabbed her into a hug, only pulling back when her mom walked back into the living room carrying a container filled with chocolate cupcakes.

"I made these for you last night. Take them and the book home. Eat and read. Trust me, P.J. It's what you need right now and if Lana is there, share the cupcakes with her." She winked.

"What about the book? May she see it?"

"You can let her look at the book, because you are bonded to her, but all she will see is blank pages. Only one that has sacrificed blood can see what has been written."

"So, if she was to let her blood soak into the pages, she would be able to read them too?"

"Well, no," her mom said.

"Oh. Okay. That's awesome." Awesome and frightening at the same time. They both laughed, but Paisley couldn't even muster up a smile. She picked up the tray of cupcakes and the book.

"When you get home, take a shower, eat, and read. It will do you some good." She let her fingers linger on Paisley's cheek. "I love you."

"I love you, too, but I won't be able to read most of what is written."

"Not now, but you will be able to. In time."

Paisley readjusted the items in her arms. "What do you mean?"

"Over the coming days, you will start to adjust to the different languages. Your brain will decipher them for you." Her mom patted her on the back. "Call us tomorrow."

"All right. Shower, eat, and read. I can do that." She hugged them both before stepping out of the house and walking toward her car. She set her belongings on the passenger seat letting her finger linger along the spine of the book, then jerked her finger back and grabbed the pendant around her neck when it felt like it was getting warmer. She pulled it out of her shirt and let it rest against the fabric. She shook her head, backed out of the driveway, and headed toward her house. What the hell had she gotten herself into?



Instead of going home right away, Paisley drove to the nearest park. She needed a moment to herself, and the water always had a calming effect on her. Her mom never understood the appeal, but her dad had her in the water only a few months after she was born. Next summer they had planned to learn to surf together. It was going

to be the first family vacation they'd had together in years. She'd even convinced K.G. to take a week off work and go with them. The plans were made, and the hotel and surf lessons were booked. Those plans were shot to hell now. This time next year she would probably be in Dangor.

After pulling into an open spot and turning the car off, she grabbed the book off the seat beside her and walked toward the hill overlooking the river. She took a moment to appreciate the stillness of the water before sitting down at an empty picnic table. Her fingers lightly thumped against the cover of the book, but she couldn't bring herself to open it. The women inside the pages were special, and had something unique to offer the world. Paisley wasn't sure she would ever measure up to their standards. Did her mom and grams even realize the pressure they were putting on her? Did they even care?

Her family had always been supportive of her, and she guessed that's why it felt now like they were abandoning her to a life she never asked for. Without taking her feelings or concerns into account they'd decided what was best for her. They just expected her to go along with everything that was happening. Her life wasn't anything fancy, or exciting, but it was her own life, to do with as she wished, with whomever she wished. Now all that had changed, in what amounted to a blink of an eye.

She closed her eyes and enjoyed the cool breeze that whispered through the trees, only to snap her eyes open a moment later when the sound of giggling reached her ears. A mother and a small boy were perched on the picnic table near hers eating ice cream. The carefree looks on both their faces caused a deep ache to grow in her chest. She'd always wanted kids, but now she didn't know if that would be possible, or if she would even want kids with Lana. Lana who was a stranger, a princess, and according to everyone, her wife.

She traced around the edge of the cuff with the tip of her finger. On one hand, it felt like it had always been there. On the other hand, she wanted to grab a knife and try to cut it away. This would have been a vastly different situation if she would have been asked, or at the very least, told what would happen when it was slapped on her wrist. Who knew all it took was a nondescript piece of jewelry to flip the switch on someone's life?

She took several deep breaths, breathing in the freshly mowed grass, trying to slow the pounding of her heart. Besides being married, she was a witch. A legacy witch, at that. *Jesus*. This stuff wasn't real. How could it be? What she needed was someone to talk to, but she knew K.G. was still at work and she was the only person she would be able to talk things over with who wouldn't think she was crazy. Because crazy was exactly how she felt. She slipped her glasses off and rubbed her eyes. After a few minutes of staring at the blurry water, she put her glasses back on and opened the book. No time like the present to delve into an unknown world.

Every page had a woman's picture on it, and she wondered if someday her picture would grace these pages as well. She steered clear of her mom and grandma's section. The last thing she wanted was to learn any more about them right now. She skimmed the biographies and skipped over the languages she couldn't read, before coming to a stop on a page that held a photo of a woman who looked like her. Emily Harger was the name printed at the top of the page. Her great-great-great-great grandmother. Except for Paisley's glasses, the resemblance was uncanny and a bit eerie.

Emily was ninety-two when she died, and had two children. Her powers were manifested by her emotions and she had a knack for creating power orbs. Paisley frowned. Whatever they were. She tore her eyes away from her picture and skipped down to her biography and read.

I refused to write my biography when I was first approached to do so. I was a scared fifteen-year-old whose mother thrust her into this crazy life. And yes, I do mean crazy. Now I am twenty-four and still don't completely grasp what is expected of me and what my powers fully are. I was hesitant when I first learned of my family's secrets and what that would mean for me, and I still am. I don't fully embrace the fate I was given, but I also will not throw it away. It is a gift that very few are allowed, and I would be a fool to not try and make it work.

My suitor came through the barrier when I was eighteen. I've known him for six years and we've finally gotten into a groove with our lives. We love each other but aren't in love—and I'm not sure we ever will be—but he is a good man and a wonderful father to our two little girls. This life was pushed on him as much as it was me. We both knew what was at stake and decided to stick it out. I think we'll be okay. At least it feels that way. Falling in love never really

appealed to me, so I'm not bothered by our situation. Others might be and I can't speak for them. I can only urge you to consider all your options before making a decision concerning your future. This life isn't for everyone, even if that's what they tell you.

My mentor told me I should try and give anyone reading this a piece of advice. I don't feel I am qualified for that, but I will heed her wisdom. Don't be afraid of this new world or adventure, but take everything with a grain of salt. No two witches are alike and no two fates will ever mirror the other. Wherever or whenever you learn of your destiny, you don't have to like it or even want it, but think long and hard before you turn your back on it. A few witches have done just that and lived to regret it. I learned the hard way that those closest to you don't always take your feelings into consideration. My mentor has been an amazing friend and has led me through every obstacle I have ever encountered, unlike my mother. Find someone who will stand in your corner and wish for your success. Good luck; you're going to need it. But remember, you're exactly where you should be and what the world needs right now.

Paisley shut the book and rested her forehead atop it. She wasn't sure she was as strong as Emily to live in a loveless marriage. She knew it would be wasteful to throw the gift she'd been given away, but so far, she had never showed any signs of being anything other than normal. For her, that's what was making everything so hard to believe. How could she accept the fact that she was a witch when she didn't feel any different than she did a couple of days ago? Maybe if she would exhibit some ability it would make it a bit easier for her to tolerate. Fully accepting what was happening, without any proof of what she was capable of, was a tall order. And that wasn't even taking Lana into consideration.

She groaned, then stood up, glancing once more at the woman and young boy, who had settled down on top of the picnic table and were looking up at the sky. Her dad used to bring her to the park and do the exact same thing. It was hard to believe she would never have that. She was only thirty-two and it felt like her life was ending instead of beginning, and that was not how she wanted to live. She wasn't sure she would ever, could ever, accept being thrown into this world without a safety net, but given how everything had happened so far, she wasn't sure she had a choice.

From now on, she would listen to her family and try to see it from their point of view, try being nicer to Lana, and make a point to visit K.G. in the coming days. They had both been so busy lately, but a K.G. hug was exactly what she needed right now, and if she did have to go to Dangor, she wanted to spend as much time with her best friend as possible. As she started the car and pulled out of the parking spot, she hoped that if Lana was still at her house, she'd at least made dinner. She was starving, and while she could make a meal out of the cupcakes, she hoped she wouldn't have to.



About the Author

Born near Chicago, but raised in Southern Illinois, where she still lives, Shannon spends her free time writing. When she isn't writing, she enjoys binge watching fantasy, science fiction, or true crime shows.

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Check out Shannon's other books

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Ex-mercenary, Lanis Welsh, is finally at a place in her life where she is content with what and who she is; High Priestess Anya's Protector and Lover. After an unexpected request, she has no choice but to leave Anya's protection in the hands of someone else and travel back to the one place that holds nothing but bad memories. When she is manipulated into signing an oath she has no desire to fulfill, she questions the very truths she has built her life on. As strangers become friends and enemies become allies, Lanis must face the demons from her past. It doesn't take her long to realize there is more going on than anyone could have ever foreseen and nothing and no one can be trusted.

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Every Stitch tells a story.

Avery Michaels has longed to work in the fashion industry since she was six years old. Now at thirty-two she's fed up with her job as a food critic and signs up with an employment agency that promises to find anyone their dream job.

She is thrilled when she gets an interview with the fashion house of her choice, Catherine Davenport Designs. There's only one problem. For the past six years, Avery has had a massive crush on Catherine, one of the hottest fashion designers of the past two decades.

In the midst of a new job, nosey friends, Catherine's meddling daughters, difficult co-workers, and a dachshund named Polly, Avery also has to contend with a new woman that enters Catherine's life.

From the Start, Avery knows winning Catherine's heart will be no easy feat. When curve ball after curve ball is thrown her way, does she scrap her design or make it work.

Other books by Sapphire Books Publishing

The Dreamcatcher - ISBN - 978-1-943353-67-5

High school is rarely easy, especially for a tall, somewhat gangly Native American girl. Add a sprinkle of shyness, a dash of athletic prowess, an above-average IQ, and some bizarre history that places her in the guardianship of her aunt. Then normal high school life is only an illusion.

Kai Tiva faces an uphill struggle until she runs into Riley Beth James, the extroverted class cutie, at the principal's office. Riley shows up for a newspaper interview, while Kai is summoned for punching out a classmate.

Riley is the attractive girl-next-door-type whom everyone likes. Though a fairly good student, an emerging choral star, and wildly popular, she knows she'll never live up to her older sister. She makes up for it with bravery, kindness, and a brash can-do attitude.

Their odd matchup is strengthened by curiosity, compassion, humor, and all the drama of typical teenage life. But their experiences go beyond the normal teen angst; theirs is compounded by a curious attraction to each other, and an emerging, insidious danger related to mysterious death of Kai's father.

Their emerging friendship is tested as they navigate this risky challenge. But the powerful bond forged between them has existed through past lives. The outcome this time will affect the next generation of Kai's people.

In the Direction of the Sun - ISBN - 978-1-943353-65-1

"The emotions flying between the two women who tell their story here is as dramatic as the Appalachian Trail and as tumultuous as the Atlantic Ocean. These natural elements are a perfect backdrop for the revelations of love which both repel and engage them."

– Jewelle Gomez, author, *The Gilda Stories*

Steady and smart, Alex McKenzie is settled into a comfortable life in her beloved hometown of Stockbridge, MA. Everything Alex thought she knew about life and about herself changes the moment Cate Conrad blows into town like a warm breeze. Alex falls head over heels in love with the free-spirited artist and sailor but there's one problem: Cate's complicated past makes it impossible for her to open her heart completely and so she does what she's always done—she runs away. Devastated, Alex tries to heal her heart by literally walking away from her life to hike the famed Appalachian Trail while Cate takes to the water. The unexpected turn of events shows Cate and Alex how fragile life is and how love is the all that really matters.

Lavender Dreams - ISBN - 978-1-943353-59-0

When Sarah Chase got on the ferry to Bainbridge Island, she left her lover, her job, and her past behind. She didn't know that in the course of one day she would meet a woman who might be the girl of her dreams, change her career path, create a new family, and find herself in a fairytale mansion with two of the quirkiest little old ladies imaginable.

When Butches Cry – ISBN – 978-1-943353-57-6

Reveling in her contrariness, Traf's got no time for 'good' women who conform. She competes with men, wears male clothing, and steals their jobs. A fighter, damn the consequences, she's totally unsuited to the mundane role of a

mid-twentieth century Azorean woman. Traf dreams of going to America where women do as they like, make their own money, and live without the permission of men.

Emotionally damaged by past relationships, Ana is convinced she's hopelessly inadequate. She joins an unprecedented type of private club, a group of women loving women calling themselves Troublemakers. The golden-haired beauty could have her pick of lovers, but her heart yearns for the mischievous butch with dark, brooding eyes. Fascinated by Traf since they were schoolgirls together, Ana knows her crush is hopeless; how could such a cocky, not to mention arousing, woman ever love her?

Gossip, sexism, priests, the US Air Force, and even their families, oppose them at every turn. Battling to exist in peace, Traf, Ana, and the other Troublemakers develop a unique subculture of support for each other, but no one is prepared

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