



SAPPHIRE *and* SAGE

KAYLEIGH GRIAN

Will their bloodline survive?

Sapphire and Sage

Kayleigh Grian

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*This is for everyone who believed in me and my yearning to finish
a book.*

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Chapter One: Sage's Packet

As she jogged up the driveway, Sage brushed her sweat soaked bangs off her forehead with the back of her hand. She glanced down at her watch and smiled; she'd just beat her previous record by a full two minutes. She did a little victory dance and jogged the rest of the way up the stairs, stopping when she noticed the padded manila envelope propped up against her door. The mailman wouldn't have dropped the mail off this early, it was only a few minutes past 7am.

Sage tugged the earbuds out of her ears and picked up the envelope, checking for a return address but the only thing written on the package was her name scrawled in some sort of calligraphy type writing. She wondered who would have placed it there and why they hadn't just mailed it to her. She shrugged and tucked it under her armpit and unlocked her front door.

As Sage stepped into the kitchen she inhaled the scent of coffee and smiled. She loved the way it felt to curl up on the couch with a hot cup and just savor the quiet before getting ready for the day. Her routine jog in the morning left her mind clear and she could just relax and enjoy the coffee. Usually. This time instead her mind kept going to that envelope, almost as if it were calling out to her to open it. Curiosity got the best of her and she wandered over to the counter where she had left it.

Inside the envelope there were several items. The first that caught Sage's eyes was a photo of two girls that appeared to be around two years old. What really got her attention was the redhead in the picture looked like her when she was a toddler, but she didn't know who the other girl was. Sage turned the photo over to see if there was any writing on the back and was disappointed to find it blank. She wondered if this had been a reprint or something, as there wasn't even the date mark older pictures had when developed at a photo processing center, nor the name of said center. It was completely void of any markings. She flipped it back over and

studied the picture once more. The two girls looked close. They seemed happy too.

Sage set the photo on the kitchen counter and pulled a letter out of the packet. She glanced down at the signature in hopes of recognizing who had sent the package but the name didn't ring a bell. Just then the coffee pot beeped at her, letting her know that it was finished brewing the next pot. She took the photo and the rest of the envelope's contents and set them on the breakfast table, then poured herself another cup of coffee. She had a feeling she was going to need it.

There was something about her favorite coffee cup and the way the heat from the coffee warmed the ceramic that brought her comfort. She loved the way it felt against her hands. She took another whiff of the coffee and plopped herself down in one of the chairs at the table, ready to read the letter.

Dear Sage,

I'm sure by now you are starting to wonder what all of this is about. This is not how we planned to tell you, but unfortunately we didn't have a choice. You are coming up on your 25th birthday and certain things must be set in motion before that day. The life you have been living up to this point has not been what you thought it was. The parents that you grew up with were not your biological parents. You also have a twin sister.

Both you and your sister were adopted by separate families after your biological parents were murdered. It was known by both the families who adopted you, that prior to your 25th birthday, you would be told the truth about your life and your real parents. Both agreed to this. Unfortunately, the parents who raised you passed away in the accident and cannot be there with you to help with the shock you must be feeling with all of this information.

When you turn 25 you, and your twin, will inherit a legacy that has spanned several centuries. There is a manor on a large parcel of land that belongs to both of you. It is located along the shores of Hannah's Lake. There is much more for you to learn about, your past and your family's history, but that will come later. For now, it

is imperative that you and your twin sister return to the manor as soon as possible.

Enclosed you will find a picture of the two of you just prior to the murders as proof that we have contacted the right person. The redhead in the photo is undeniably you. Also included are all of the legal papers you'll need as evidence to the property discussed and that you, along with your sister, now own it. We have also included maps and directions to the property.

We urgently remind you that you must return to this property as quickly as possible as we have a large amount of ground to cover in the coming weeks. Again, we realize that this must be a lot to take in, and apologize for the flood of information we are giving you. If there had been another way, we assure you we would have taken it.

Deepest regards, Angela and Lyle Foster

Sage stared at the letter for several minutes after she finished reading it. Then she gulped down her coffee and read the letter again. She was just as confused when she finished it the second time. She had a sister? A twin at that? The parents she grew up with weren't her real parents? She had an estate up at Hannah's Lake? So many questions started swirling in her mind until they all began to jumble together and made absolutely no sense. This had to be a joke right? One of her friends must have thought it'd be funny, maybe they had some kind of birthday party planned for her up at the lake. It would have cost them a fortune to rent one of the properties up that way though. Maybe several of them had all pitched in for a weekend or something. That had to be it.

But if that was what it was about, why include the picture of her and another girl? And why say that they were twin sisters? A fake deed and letter stating she had inherited the place from some long lost relative would have worked much better than trying to convince her that she was adopted and had a twin out there somewhere. The more she thought about it, the more things didn't make sense. She decided to check with one of her closet friends, who just happened to be a paralegal as well. If it was all a birthday prank, she'd know and could tell Sage before she made a fool of herself. If

it wasn't a prank, she would be able to go over the documents and let her know if they were legit.

Sage glanced at her watch and realized all of that would have to wait. If she didn't jump in the shower and get ready soon, she was going to be late for work. Sage had been having a hard time getting up in time for her daily jog and still make it to work on time lately. If she was late again her boss would throw a fit! Sage raced up the stairs and jumped in the shower. As she started to wash her hair she let her imagination run a bit wild. She started thinking of the possibilities that had arrived with that envelope. What if she really did have a twin out there somewhere? Could that be why she always felt as if she was missing a piece of herself? Everyone always says there is a connection unlike any other with twins.

She had always hated being an only child growing up, and it was even worse after her parents had passed away in the car accident. She didn't know of any other family. Both of her parents had been only children as well so there were no aunts and uncles, no cousins either. Her mom's parents had passed away before Sage was born, as had her father's dad. Her grandmother on her dad's side died when Sage was 13, so when her parents died it left her alone. She joked a bit after their funeral that the family must have some sort of curse that causes them all to die young. Although it was a joke, she often wondered if she'd meet the same fate.

Shit! She had let her mind wander too far again and realized that the water was no longer hot, but lukewarm at best. She was going to be late again. Sage turned the shower off and did her best to wring the water out of her auburn hair before wrapping a towel around it like a turban. She toweled off as quickly as possible and ran to her room to get dressed. As she headed out the door, hair sopping wet, she shoved the envelope into her over-sized handbag so she could show her friend after work. She didn't bother to call ahead to say she was going to be late, her boss would just have that much more time to come up with horrible things to say to her. She hated her job, but she needed the money to pay the rent and other bills, so she put up with it.

Chapter Two: Bad Day

Sage glanced at the clock on the dash as she pulled into her parking spot at the local dollar store where she was a cashier. She was ten minutes late. Slinging her purse over her shoulder, she said a silent prayer that her boss would let it slide. The pay was crap and most days her boss was a complete ass, but she couldn't afford to lose this job. There's no telling when or if she'd be able to find another one. Businesses along Main Street were closing left and right. Those that managed to keep their doors open were often laying off employees. She kicked herself for not going to college after high school like her parents had wanted, though she had her doubts lately if that would make much of a difference in this economy.

Sage breathed a sigh of relief as she pulled the door open and peeked by the register. She didn't see her boss in the area and hoped that meant he hadn't noticed she was late yet. She half walked, half jogged down the far left aisle on her way to the backroom to clock in. Just as she was about to reach the door way her boss stepped out with his arms crossed over his chest. The look he gave her reminded her of the cartoons she watched as a kid where a character would get so mad smoke would come out of their ears. He was not happy with her one bit.

"I'm so sorry, Mr. Fritz, I-"

Mr. Fritz cut her off before she could finish explaining, "Save it Sage. I don't want to hear your flimsy excuses. I warned you last time you were late that if it happened again you were gone. I'm not your friend, I'm here to make money and I can't do that when I don't have a cashier."

"But I was only a few minutes late."

"Don't be stupid girl, haven't you heard the expression 'time is money'? Just before you walked through the door a couple of grannies walked out when they saw no one was at the counter. For all you know they could have been big spenders!" Mr. Fritz sneered

at her.

Not likely, Sage thought, *how much could two little old ladies possibly spend in a dollar store?* Besides, she hadn't seen anyone near the store as she was pulling in. He was probably lying to her just because he could. She didn't think it would help but decided to try pleading with him, she just couldn't lose her job. "Please Mr. Fitz, I promise it won't happen again. I really need this job."

"What do I look like to you, a charity? Just how many chances am I suppose to give you? You obviously have better things to do than come to work. And I'm sure there are plenty of others out there who 'need' this job too. Ones who will be glad to have it and show up on time."

"Fine," Sage replied. With that she turned and started walking towards the exit.

"Where do you think you're going?" Mr. Fitz asked as he grabbed her arm.

"Umm...you just fired me, remember?" Sage said through gritted teeth as she removed his hand from her arm.

"Yeah but I need you to finish the shift. How was I suppose to know I'd have to fire you today? Now hurry up and get over to the register."

Sage couldn't believe her ears. He wanted her to finish working the day, after the insults? What the hell was this guy thinking? You don't fire someone and then expect them to finish out the day.

"Screw you, Mr. Fitz. Work the register your damned self!" Sage had been wanting to tell him that for months but couldn't risk it until now. With that she turned and walked out the door leaving Mr. Fitz's jaw dropped as he stared after her.

The high Sage got from telling Mr. Fritz off didn't last long. As she got into her car she began to wonder what the hell she was going to do now. For months she had been keeping an eye out for other job openings in the hopes she could quit but hadn't seen anything in paper that didn't resemble illegal or unsavory activity. Sure there were a few listings for "dancers wanted" at the local clubs but that really wasn't something she could ever see herself doing.

She decided to call her friend Lila and see if she could meet up for coffee or lunch later. Sage hoped Lila could look at the paperwork in the packet she received and tell her if it was some sick prank or not. When she reached Lila's voicemail she left a message and decided to head home until she heard back from her. She knew the responsible thing to do would be to check the job listings one more time just in case something had been posted in the last couple days. Perhaps after that she might even go for an extra run today to blow off some steam.

As she headed home, Sage drove on auto-pilot. Her mind was occupied with thoughts of the mysterious packet, her possible twin sister, and the loss of her job. A car horn behind her jarred her from her thoughts and she realized the light had changed to green. Thank goodness the roads were pretty empty, otherwise she might have wrecked. She just couldn't concentrate and she had a pretty good feeling she wouldn't be able to until the mystery was solved.

She decided to just stop by Lila's work, at least she could drop the legal stuff off for her to look through whenever she got a chance. They could always meet up after she got off work. It would probably be quicker that way, and Lila should have some idea about the papers by the time they met up. With that thought she did a U-turn at the next intersection and headed towards the attorney's office where Lila worked.

When Sage got to the law office, Lila still hadn't finished her meeting so she just left the paperwork with the secretary and a message for Lila to call her as soon as she could. She really hoped that Lila would be able to make sense of it all. The more Sage thought about it, the less it felt like a birthday prank planned by her friends. It just went a bit too far for it to be by them. They weren't usually the pranking type. It had definitely been an odd day so far.

As she left the law office, Sage decided to hang around town for a bit in case Lila got done soon. Otherwise she'd have to head right back into town. With prices the way they were and her new unemployed status, she really couldn't afford to waste the gas. She remembered there was a book store down the street and decided

to see if she could find a book to keep her company for a bit. Sage loved to read as a teen but hadn't really had the time for it since her parents died. It was definitely something she missed. *Well I should have time to read a few books now that I don't have a job*, she thought to herself bitterly.

As Sage walked into the bookstore, she smelled the all too familiar scent of old books. E-readers might be one of the newest gadgets around, but there was nothing like the feel and smell of a book that had weathered time. She just couldn't see herself giving that up. Though she had to admit being able to carry hundreds, even thousands of books in something that weighed less than a paperback did have some appeal.

A woman's head poked around one of the shelves and asked, "Welcome to The Story House. Looking for anything in particular?"

"Not really, just kinda browsing. Haven't had much chance to read lately."

The head disappeared for a moment before the clerk walked out from where she had been restocking the shelf. "I might be able to help you find a few books you'll like. You have a favorite genre or author?"

Sage thought for a moment before replying, "Well I like fantasy novels. That and books with vampires, witches, and things like that."

The clerk, Emma according to her name tag, swept a lock of gray hair out of her face. She motioned for Sage to follow her towards the back of the store. "Well then, you are in luck. We have quite a collection of both. We even have some that are older and out of print."

Emma led Sage through several aisles of book filled shelves until they reached a little cubby in the back of the store. There was a coffee table as well as several over-sized chairs covered in various fabrics, none of which matched the others. Next to a couple of the chairs were end tables with a lamp and two drink coasters each.

"Feel free to bring a few books over here. Sit and browse through them I'm sure something will tickle your fancy." Emma nodded towards the chairs before making a grand sweeping gesture, not

unlike the one models on the TV game show *The Price is Right* make. “And here we have quite a few paranormal books I think you’d enjoy.”

Sage glanced at the shelves Emma indicated. Most of the books were fairly new with flashy covers, but the bottom row housed several older books. The covers were simple, yet elegant, with gold or silver designs over a solid color. No pictures to distract the eye, just the title and author’s name. These were the books that held Sage’s attention, almost as though they were a treasure she’d discovered. She knelt down to get a better look at them.

“I’ll leave you to it then. Let me know if there’s anything else you need.”

Before Sage could turn around to thank her, Emma had already disappeared behind the next row of bookshelves. Sage turned her attention back to the books on the bottom shelf. She ran her fingers across the spines before grabbing an armful to take back to the reading cubby.

She settled into a black and red plaid covered chair and opened the first book from the stack. It was mostly about ghosts and how to get rid of them. She skimmed through the pages but it didn’t hold her interest for long and she quickly moved on to the next book in the stack.

Sage repeated this several times until she was on the next to last book, titled *Witches and Those Who Hunt Them: A Brief Journey Through the Years*. It started with the more well known witch hunts such as the Salem Witch Trials and Sage quickly became engrossed in the book. She had always been fascinated by the idea of witches and magic. Obviously such things weren’t real but that didn’t stop her from thinking that it would be wonderful if they were.

Chapter Three: Time for the Truth

Several hours later Sage was in the middle of reading a journal entry from a girl whose mother had been drowned in a lake to prove she was a witch when Lila finally called her back. She hadn't realized how much time had passed and was shocked to discover it was past five o'clock. The two made plans to meet at a cafe a couple blocks away. She returned the stack of uninteresting books to their shelf and gathered up her belongings. Sage made her way to the front of the store and hoped Emma was still working. She wanted to purchase the book on witches and thank her for letting her read through it in the back for so long.

"Leaving already?" Emma asked as she popped up behind Sage. Startled, Sage dropped the book. "Oh you scared me!"

"I just knew you'd find something back there to pique your interest." Emma winked at Sage as she picked the book up. "Shall I ring this up for you then?"

"Definitely! I'm really enjoying it. The journal entries are especially fascinating," Sage replied as the two made their way to the register at the front of the store. "Thanks again for letting me sit in the back and check it out."

"You are more than welcome my dear. Feel free to come back and browse our selection any time. I'm sure we have a few more books similar to this one. I'll keep an eye out for them if you'd like so they'll be ready for you on your next visit."

"That would be wonderful, thank you." Sage swiped her debit card as Emma wrapped the book in tissue paper and tied the package closed with twine. Sage was impressed with the extra effort, not many stores would take the time for such things.

Emma offered her a warm smile as she handed the wrapped book to her. "Take care dear, and please be sure to visit us again."

Sage thanked the woman again and headed for the cafe to meet Lila.

Sage arrived at the cafe before Lila so she took the liberty of ordering coffee for the both of them. When the waitress asked if she wanted any creamer she made a face and shook her head. She never could understand how someone could ruin the wonderful taste of coffee with all that extra nonsense. No thank you, she would take hers black, strong and hot. Thankfully, Lila agreed.

Just as she was about to pull the book out and start reading again, Sage noticed Lila come through the cafe door and motioned her over. She was desperate to find out if Lila had made any sense of the documents in the packet. Lila flashed her a dimpled smile and bounced over to their table.

"You are not going to believe what I found out," she gushed as Sage stood to hug her. "It's true! All of it is true!"

"Wait...what? Are you sure? All of it?"

"As far as I can tell everything is legit. The deed, the will, all the legal papers in that file are originals and they aren't forgeries. As for the adoption I wasn't able to completely verify it because adoption records are sealed, but there was a couple murdered up at Hannah's Lake around that time. I found an article on their deaths, but there wasn't a mention of any children. Maybe they were worried about the killers coming after them in case they witnessed something?" Lila took a swig of her coffee and let Sage process the information.

"This is crazy. Why would my parents not tell me they adopted me? Especially if they knew I'd find out eventually as the letter said?" Sage's mind was spinning with all the questions from earlier coming back.

"Maybe they planned to but the accident happened before they could."

"I guess that's possible, but something about it just doesn't add up for me." Sage downed the rest of the coffee in her cup and signaled the waitress for a refill.

Lila pulled the documents out of the folder and laid them on the table before replying, "Well the paperwork on the land

shows it went from Justin and Jasmine Evans, the couple who were murdered, to Angela and Lyle Foster. From there it was passed to you and a Sapphire Wakely, which I'm guessing is the other girl in the photo." She waited until the waitress refilled their cups before continuing, "the only way for you to know for sure is to either petition the court to get the adoption record unsealed or go out to the land and talk to these people. They may be able to explain what really happened."

"I know but I just can't help feeling that this is some kind of trick or something. But I guess you're right, the only way to find out is to go."

"Are you going to be able to take time off of work to go up there and figure all this out?"

"Oh God! I totally forgot to tell you!" Sage exclaimed, a bit too loud causing some of the other customers to turn and stare. Sage lowered her voice a bit, "I was fired this morning, and can you believe that rat tried to get me to work today anyway!?"

"Are you freaking kidding me? What a douche!" Lila exclaimed, shaking her head in disbelief. "Look, I'm sorry you lost your job, but you were too good to be working there anyway. Now you can find something much better suited to you."

"You're right. I hated working there and dreaded going in every morning. But what if I can't find another job? You know how hard they are to come by these days. I've got enough in savings to last a month or so but not much after that. Maybe I should have worked the shift, maybe he would have changed his mind about firing me by the end of the day."

Lila reached across the table to lay a comforting hand on Sage's arm. "Hey, you can't think like that. No paycheck is worth putting up with that prick. Worst case scenario you can come stay with me for a while. I've got a spare room and we can stay up late like when we were teens."

Sage smiled, letting her fears melt away. "And this is exactly why you've been my best friend for as long as I can remember. You always know what to say to cheer me up. Up for a road trip?"

“Oh hon, I so wish I could go with you, but there is no way I can get the time off of work. The firm is handling a huge case and I’m gonna be working overtime for the next few weeks.” Lila glanced down at her watch before adding, “in fact, I have to head back to the office. I just wanted to make sure to get these back to you and let you know they are real. But I’m only a phone call away if you need moral support while you’re out there.”

“Oh, I didn’t mean to pull you away from work. Thank you though for checking these out for me. You can be sure I’ll definitely be calling you with updates once I get out there and find out what this whole mess is about.”

“Any time. You know I’ve got your back.” Lila tossed a ten on the table to cover their drinks plus tip and stood to leave. “Quit stressing yourself out. Everything’s gonna be okay.”

Sage stood and gave Lila a hug goodbye. “Stay awesome. Good luck with your case! Now go before I kidnap you and drag you out there with me.” And with that the girls headed their separate ways.

Once she got home from the cafe Sage went for another run. She needed to blow off some steam and nothing soothed her like a hard, long run. Some referred to it as a ‘runner’s high’ but to her it was just a calming peace she felt where she could forget about her worries and stop thinking for a while. Sometimes she’d work out issues in her head while she ran, but not today. Today the run was just about letting go. Once she hit her stride, she just concentrated on the sound of her feet against the pavement, the beating of her heart and breathing in and out. She was in a world of her own where nothing else mattered.

She ran until the inkling of exhaustion started to hit her. That was her clue she needed to head back to the house before her body gave out. She’d learned from the past. Not long after her parents’ accident she had ignored that inkling many times and had had to sit on the curb to recover for a while before she could even walk home. Sometimes she’d cave and call Lila to come get her, but mostly she didn’t want her friend to worry about her so she’d sit and wait it out.

Sage slowed her pace down as she turned back to the house, first to a slow run then to a jog and eventually a walk. The cool breeze felt good against her sweat covered skin and she smiled as she felt the goosebumps flash across her body. This was exactly what she had needed.

After her run Sage soaked in a bath for a while, letting the hot water soothe her tired muscles. She replayed the days events several times and decided to head up to the lake the next day so she could get some answers. If she really did have a twin sister she didn't want to waste any more time getting to know her. They had already lost 22 years. She started to wonder what her sister might be like. Based on the picture she had they weren't identical since they had different hair colors when they were younger, but would she recognize her if she passed her on the street? Did they have similar features? What is her life like and has she always known Sage was out there somewhere? Did she try to find her?

Soon the water grew cold and Sage's skin had begun to resemble raisins so she climbed out of the bath and headed to bed. Though sleep didn't come easily for her she eventually drifted off. Dreams of fire, demons and the lake drifted through her as she dozed causing her to toss and turn for most of the night.