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WE THREE HEROES

THE MEDORAN CHRONICLES NOVELLAS

LYNETTE NONI



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WE THREE HEROES

THE MEDORAN CHRONICLES NOVELLAS

LYNETTE NONI

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great storytelling



CROWNS
AND
CURSES

A NOVELLA OF
THE MEDORAN CHRONICLES

One

Delucia was dreaming again.

Tonight, it was a good dream. She was flying on the back of a mythical draekon, high up in the sky, the sun bathing her skin and reflecting off the crimson scales beneath her.

Glancing down, she could see the whole of Tryllin laid out, from the harbour all the way up to the palace and beyond. If she squinted past the glow of the shining city, she could almost see the balcony of her bedroom jutting out from the eastern tower. But she cast her eyes away. Right now, her life at the palace didn't exist. Here and now, she had no responsibilities, no duties, no obligations. Soaring high above the city, she wasn't a princess—she wasn't the heir to the human throne of Medora. She was nothing. She was no one.

She was free.

Then the clouds swept in, stealing the sunshine, and suddenly the draekon beneath her vanished. With the powerful beast no longer keeping her aloft, Delucia began to fall.

An endless scream left her lips as she plummeted towards the city that was no longer shining, but shadowed by darkness. Fire—there was fire everywhere, smoke rising to the heavens. It burned her skin and clogged her throat, choking her screams, allowing the cries of others to reach her ears as she fell closer and closer to the ground. The city itself seemed to be screaming in pain—along with all those trapped within it.

People—those were Delucia's people.

And they were dying.

A thunderclap sounded, the noise so loud it pierced Delucia's ears and drowned out the screams. Lightning streaked all around her, so bright it was blinding, taking with it the vision of the burning city. All that remained of her senses was the ringing in her ears, the scent of smoke, the wind tearing at her body, and the scorching heat of the embers that were now nearly within reach.

Her sight cleared just in time to see the single image, one almost as shocking as the end of her beloved Tryllin.

It was a man—a man standing at the steps of the palace, a crown of golden hair atop his head, eyes blazing like the fires surrounding him.

His face—Delucia had never seen such a face. He was so beautiful it hurt to look at him. And yet, she could feel the emotion pouring from him, the disgust, the loathing. It was like oil coating her skin, suffocating and poisoning her from the outside in. Because somehow she knew that this beautiful man considered her amongst what he detested. Like the city dying around them, he wished for her to suffer the same fate.

And as she fell close enough for his golden eyes to lock on hers, the last thing she saw was his satisfied expression as he witnessed her death.

Delucia sat up with a gasp, her hand flying to her pounding chest. Panting loudly, she tried to steady her breathing, allowing the early morning light streaming into her bedroom to soothe her.

“It was a dream,” she whispered to herself. “Just a dream.”

But... it had felt so real.

Her doubt was enough that she pushed back her covers and rose on shaking legs, staggering towards her balcony. Only when she looked upon the beauty of Tryllin laid out across the horizon did she utter a sigh of relief.

No smoke, no fire, no shadows, no storm.

Indeed, there was not a single cloud overhead, the rising sun hinting that it was going to be a glorious day.

Finally, her heartbeat began to calm. Unable to help herself, she let out a quiet laugh, wondering what had possessed her to think it had been anything other than a fantasy conjured by her sleeping mind.

“Something amusing, Princess?”

Startled, Delucia spun around to find her stern tutor at the entrance to her room. The bushy-haired woman had one grey eyebrow arched and was clearly waiting for an answer. “Just a dream I had, Mistress Alma,” Delucia said, fidgeting with the edge of her nightgown.

“A dream?”

Delucia knew better than to answer truthfully, the warning in Alma’s voice enough to prompt caution. But she couldn’t help herself. “I was flying on a draekon, until I wasn’t, and then I saw a man, only he wasn’t a man at all.”

Alma’s eyebrow arched even higher, enough that it was like a baseless

triangle resting above her eye. “A man who is not a man? What madness is this you speak?” Delucia bit her lip as she considered the swiftly fading dream, the vision losing clarity the longer she was awake. Given the ending, she didn’t want to recall most of what she’d seen, what she’d felt. But fading or not, she still felt certain enough of her answer to say, “I think—Mistress, I think he was a Meyarin.”

Alma’s second eyebrow rose to meet her first. “Draekons and Meyarins? Gracious, child. You’re thirteen years old—such nonsense should be beyond you.” Her forehead crinkled, the lines deep with age. “I take it Master Ying is to blame for filling your mind with such tales of whimsy?”

“It was only a dream, Mistress,” Delucia said quietly, feeling a stab of worry. She didn’t want Master Ying to get in trouble—not again. It wasn’t his fault she was always begging for stories from the time when Meyarins and draekons had ruled Medora. Millennia may have passed since either of the immortal races were last seen, but unlike most humans, Ying was not as quick to dismiss or forget legends of the past. And since he was charged with educating Delucia on the history of their world—amongst other things—he was the best chance she had to learn what no one else would teach.

Of course, it helped that Ying himself was just as fascinated by the ancient immortal beings as Delucia was. She knew he would love to hear about her dream, unlike the strict Mistress Alma, who was looking at her with clear disapproval.

“Princesses do not dwell on dreams,” Alma said. “What you envision while sleeping is no one’s business but your own—and it’s to stay that way. Do you hear me?”

Delucia decided not to remind Alma that she’d only been answering the question asked of her. Instead, she ducked her head and replied, “Yes, Mistress.”

“Good,” Alma said brusquely. “Now get dressed, child, or you’ll be late for breakfast.”

As Alma turned and left the room, Delucia looked out at the view again, a sense of melancholy settling over her. While the latter half of her dream had turned into a nightmare, the beginning had been wonderful. The sense of freedom she’d felt while soaring the skies—oh, how she longed to close her eyes and return to that moment.

SCARS
AND
SILENCE

A NOVELLA OF
THE MEDORAN CHRONICLES

One

Jordan Sparker's throat was dry and his hands clammy as he followed his best friend through the silent halls of the Library.

Alex kept sneaking glances at him, her eyes red and puffy but her lips curved up in a smile, as if she couldn't believe she was walking next to him. She wasn't the only one. Had this been only an hour ago, he wouldn't have been ambling so sedately at her side—he'd have been trying to kill her.

When Alex flicked her gaze his way yet again, he was careful to paint a grin on his face, the action feeling foreign to his mouth; to his heart. He couldn't recall the last time he'd smiled genuinely of his own free will.

... He couldn't remember the last time he'd done anything of his own free will.

With a shuddering breath, Jordan forced away the intruding dark thoughts. He was no longer Claimed by Aven, Alex had seen to that. A puppet no more, and yet he couldn't help fearing the lingering pull of the phantom strings; couldn't help dreading the mental tug from a mind much more powerful, much more ancient, than his own.

For five weeks Jordan had been Aven's to command, to control. But as he and Alex reached the foyer of the Library and started up the staircase leading out onto the academy grounds, he reminded himself that she'd rescued him from the prison of his own mind; he reminded himself of what she'd told the Meyarin prince in the mentally fabricated rose garden of Chateau Shondelle:

"You're done, Aven," Alex had said. *"You have no more power here."* And just like that, she had used her gift of willpower to transfer the blood-bond over to herself, and soon afterwards she'd freed Jordan completely. His mind was his own again, battered and scarred as it now was.

The damage, at least, was on the inside. And that was where it would remain. Because each glance Alex sent his way told him how relieved she was to have him back—but also how worried she was. And for good reason, Jordan could admit, since the two of them had cried in each other's arms in the aftermath of his mental liberation. She more than anyone else knew exactly how it felt to be robbed of her own will and forced to carry out Aven's bidding. Even if she'd only been Claimed for a short amount of time, she *knew*.

But... she also *didn't*.

She had no idea what Jordan had gone through. What scars he now bore, hidden deep inside.

No one knew.

And, as far as he was concerned, no one was *going* to know. Because this was his burden to bear. Alex had her own demons she had to face—boy, did he know that was true—and she needed the full support of not just him, but Bear and D.C. as well. Until Aven was defeated once and for all, their entire focus had to be on helping Alex. Nothing could get in the way of that. Jordan wouldn't allow anything to be a distraction—especially whatever it was he felt simmering deep inside him.

“Ready to face the music?” Alex asked as they stepped off the staircase and onto the ground floor of the Tower building, her voice soft but not soft enough to keep from startling Jordan. He covered his knee-jerk reaction by running a hand through his hair, messing it up even more than it already was.

“You think they're still serving food?” he asked in return, offering what he knew would be considered a typical response from him. A normal response.

Her answering chuckle told him he'd done the right thing, and he slung an arm around her shoulders, drawing her close as they stepped outside and onto the snow-covered grounds.

Jordan inhaled deeply as they crunched their way along the icy path towards the food court, the frosty air burning his lungs and making him feel alive—fully alive—for the first time in five weeks. He was grateful for the warmth of the thick Myroxtreaded clothes he wore, but a larger part of him wanted to shred the wintry Meyarin outfit and all that it represented, even if it meant running stark naked through the snow.

That, he thought, would be one hell of an entrance.

But with Alex currently nestled into his side, he prudently decided to remain decent, at least until he was back in his dorm room.

The grounds were devoid of people as the two of them hurried towards the large building in the centre of the academy, with all the students having returned from holidays and now in the food court for the welcome back dinner. As they moved closer and closer, Jordan felt his heart rate increase, wondering what reception he was about to receive, wondering how he could possibly face his friends after what he'd been through—after what he'd *done*.

But then they were entering the doors of the food court and it was too late

to second-guess whether they should have gone straight to the dormitory building instead.

Jordan's skin crawled as the sounds of hundreds of students washed over him, so at odds with the peace of the Library or the quiet of the snowy grounds. Laughter, cheering, teasing—there was so much *noise*.

Overwhelmed, it took a concerned squeeze of Alex's arm around his waist for Jordan to snap out of his frozen state. He forced himself to take a deep breath, remembering where he was. Remembering *who* he was.

"You have no more power here."

Alex's mental words replayed in his mind, and Jordan felt his body relaxing once more. This wasn't just his school—it was his home. These people, even the ones he didn't know well, they were his family. He wouldn't allow Aven to take that from him. Not anymore.

"You have no more power here."

Smoothing his expression as the last of his momentary panic subsided, Jordan looked down at Alex and smiled. Her eyes narrowed a fraction, as if she could see how much the effort cost him, how fake it was, but then something caught her eye and she squeezed his middle again before tilting her head towards the far side of the room.

Jordan followed her gesture and his breath caught at the sight of Bear and D.C. sitting alone together, their heads bowed and their faces pinched with worry. Whether that was because they were anxious for Alex's return from Meya, or a result of their fear for what Jordan himself might be going through at Aven's hands, he wasn't sure. But regardless of the nerves humming underneath his skin, he wasn't going to make them wait a moment longer.

Disentangling from Alex so that they could move easier through the throngs of students, Jordan followed in her footsteps as they passed table after table. It was surreal that no one looked up at him, that no one cried out in alarm, that no one knew just how dangerous he'd been to all of them the last time he'd been in this building. He'd been a walking weapon. At any time, Aven could have ordered him to commit untold acts of violence. But no one here knew that.

Except... some of them *did*.

Jordan felt the shocked eyes of the headmaster and key members of the teaching staff land on him. Marselle half rose out of his seat, as did Hunter and Caspar Lennox, but Alex caught their movement too, and a quick but firm swipe of her hand through the air had them slowly lowering again. Jordan

wondered if she realised just how much they trusted her, just how much faith they had in her, that they were willing to allow what they presumed was an enemy to walk amongst them. That kind of influence—she really had no idea.

But Jordan couldn't focus on the academy staff right now, not when he and Alex were only a few tables away from their friends.

“Yo, Sparker!” Blink called out loudly from where he was seated with a group of their fourth-year classmates. “Did you catch the Warriors’ game last night, bro? When Simmons was hovered into that korack’s nest, I was sure we were done for, but—”

Blink continued speaking, but Jordan didn't hear another word he said, since both Bear and D.C.'s heads had jerked up at the exclamation of his name. The looks on their faces—Jordan felt all the air leave him in a rush.

Fear.

Denial.

Wonder.

... *Hope.*

The two of them looked between Alex and Jordan and rose from their chairs—Bear slowly, but D.C. with so much force that the seat skittered back and almost went crashing to the ground. And yet, neither of them left their positions by the table, just as neither of them blinked, as if fearing he would disappear like a mirage.

Since Jordan was behind Alex, he couldn't see her expression. But whatever she silently communicated to their friends had Bear's shoulders slumping with relief and D.C. throwing a shaking hand over her mouth, tears filling her eyes.

HEARTS
AND
HEADSTONES

A NOVELLA OF
THE MEDORAN CHRONICLES

One

Pain

Overwhelming, unending *pain*.

That was all Bear felt—agony the likes of which he'd never experienced before.

His eyes snapped open, a moan leaving his mouth as anguish rippled through his body.

"He's awake, Fletcher—do something!"

"Hold him down, Declan, we need to keep him still. Hunter, hand me—no, not that—yes, that one."

Bear moaned again, deep in his throat, when lightning scoured up and down his leg. His stomach heaved, his nerves were on fire. Sweat dotted his forehead but ice was running through his veins. He started struggling, pushing against the hands that pressed him down, needing to escape the daggers of flame stabbing from his foot all the way up to his knee and beyond.

"Easy, Bear," said the first voice again, from right above him. "Easy."

Bear twisted under hands that were unyielding in their grip. He fought to open his eyes, his blurry vision catching sight of a familiar face looking down in concern.

"Declan... hurts..." Bear couldn't even utter a whole sentence, his slurred words barely a gasp of pain.

Black dots began to creep in, and Bear saw Declan straining to keep him in place as he writhed on the Medical Ward bed.

He remembered trees, heat, running. One misplaced step, then the crack of his bone snapping, echoing through the forest.

He remembered Alex and Hunter, their faces pale as they worked to strap his leg, to keep him calm. As they carried him through the woods, fleeing from the Jarnocks who hunted them.

He remembered biting through his lip to keep from screaming, the slightest movement prompting waves of torment.

He remembered finally finding the Library doorway and returning to the academy—then the euphoric oblivion of Fletcher's pain relievers.

Pain relievers that had now stopped working.

“Can’t you put him under again?” Declan asked the doctor, his steady onyx gaze remaining on Bear—calming, soothing.

Hold on, Declan seemed to be willing him. *Just hold on*.

That was the last Bear saw, the last he heard and thought, before another sharp lance of pain spiked enough for him to cry out, his eyes rolling to the back of his head as he returned to blissful unconsciousness.

A voice came to Bear as if from far away, low and deep, breaking through the haze of sleep.

“... and I’m still angry at him. It was one thing to give me Sarinpox—especially since I was the idiot who ignored the ‘QUARANTINE’ sign on his door and let myself in. Serves me right, really. But did Kaid have to borrow General Aesopheles right before they shut the place down?” A grumbled sound, and then, “We’ve been back so many times to look, but nope. Can’t find him anywhere. Limited edition, too, and lost to the ruins of Heartstone Grove. Probably forever.”

Bear fought to open his eyelids as he heard Declan’s annoyed sigh. But then, in a tone that held a hint of amusement, the other boy said, “I guess that’s one way to solidify a friendship. Share a disease, share an action figure, then lose both and be stuck with each other.” A snort. “Don’t tell Kaid I said that last part. He’s sensitive these days, especially since the girl he’s head over heels for is too busy saving the world to date him. Poor baby.”

Bear’s lips curled upwards and he was finally able to open his eyes, blinking against the bright lights.

“There you are,” Declan said, reclining in the seat beside Bear’s bed, his long legs stretched out, his broad shoulders seeming too large for the chair. “Bout time you decided to wake up. I was running out of stories.”

“How long have I been out?” Bear said, his voice a harsh, grating sound.

“A few hours. It’s morning.”

Morning. That was more than just a few hours. Bear must have slept all through the night.

“What—” He coughed, trying to clear his dry throat, but it felt like he was swallowing gravel.

With more grace than someone so large should command, Declan stood and ambled across the room, returning with a glass of water. He moved

closer and held the straw up to Bear's mouth, as if helping a child in need of coddling.

Bear pointedly took the glass from him and rasped, "I didn't break my hands."

"You're welcome," Declan simply said.

Tossing the straw and instead downing long, deep gulps of the soothing water, Bear only spoke again once the glass was empty, his voice no longer quite as hoarse. "What are you doing here?"

An amused laugh. "Way to make a guy feel welcome."

A hint of warmth prickled Bear's cheeks. "Sorry. That's not what I meant."

Humour still lit Declan's dark features as he said, "I know." His easy grin proved he wasn't offended. "I'm here because Fletcher had to go help Luranda with something but didn't want you to wake up alone. I swung by to check on you right as he needed to leave, so I offered to stay."

"You didn't have to do that."

Declan shrugged, his shoulders like mountains moving up and down. "It's Sunday. I don't need to be anywhere else in a rush."

Sunday. Bear was supposed to go to Graevale with Alex today. With Jordan and D.C. stuck in detention, he was all Alex had.

Pushing back his covers, Bear swung his legs over the side of the bed. He was still wearing his clothes from yesterday—including his lucky jeans, as he'd called them, though now he felt a name change might be in order.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa—what do you think you're doing?" Declan demanded, standing in front of Bear with his hands on his hips and a scowl on his face.

"I have somewhere to be," Bear answered. Flexing his leg, he felt a twinge of pain—a tired kind of ache, like he'd overused a muscle—but otherwise Fletcher's Regenerators had worked miracles overnight.

"Yeah, you do," Declan said, pointing a finger back at the bed. "Fletcher says you're to stay here until he checks you over."

"I'm fine."

"You snapped your fibula in two last night." With emphasis, Declan repeated, "In *two*, Bear. The meds work fast, but you still have a few days of healing before you'll be fully recovered."

Bear ignored him and placed his feet on the ground, rising carefully. The moment he put weight on his injured leg, the tired ache flared into a bolt of pain, enough for him to utter a muffled curse and collapse back onto the bed.



Lynette Noni is known for her best-selling young adult fantasy series, *The Medoran Chronicles*. *Whisper* is the first book in her new series.

Lynette grew up on a farm in outback Australia until she moved to the beautiful Sunshine Coast. She has always been an avid reader and most of her childhood was spent lost in daydreams of far-off places and magical worlds. Now she creates her own fantasy worlds and enjoys spending time with the characters she meets along the way.

Lynette loves to chat with her readers—connect with her online:

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THE FINAL BOOK IN
THE MEDORAN CHRONICLES

VARDAESIA

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EMBRACE THE WONDER

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