



IreAnne Chambers



REALMS  
OF

White Crescent

A "FANTASTICAL" MAJESTIC ESTATES SHORT STORY

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Realms of White Crescent

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## **Dedication:**

To the family I love and my best friends of forever.

## **Author's Note:**

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Realm of The Great Comet - 1811

Laila dashes up the spiral staircase of White Crescent Manor. Silk fabric, lace, and chiffon slink and twine between her petite legs with each step. She must reach the top to get past the whistling white blaze in the caverns below. Why did Inga choose Bodnar? Laila's amethyst glimmer threatens to engulf the Crescent's passages. No one must see her essence. Displaying her true heart now will result in pain. Pain for her sisters, pain for Inga, pain for Bodnar, her hero of Gold. Only he's *not* her hero. His scepter belongs to Inga now. It's Inga's emerald glimmer that envelopes the ancient hall of their ancestors. It's Inga's jade lips that touch Bodnar's. He can't be hers now. Ever.

~\*~\*~\*~

Bodnar raises his head from Inga's delicate kiss to see into the blue eyes of the belle who chose him. Inga's mint scent eases into his space while snow-colored hair tangles with her emerald glimmer. White heat from the sacred theater flows from the Crescent's tail. Nikon stands at attention by his side. Bodnar's view follows the descent of his brothers lining the wall on one

side of the grotto. One by one, they draw their sword in silent salute. First, Nikon's Platinum, Aran's Silver, Lir's Copper, Calvus' Steel, and last, his father's Iron. Inga's sisters take their positions opposite each hero. Except one lavender aura leaving the procession draws Bodnar's attention. Laila. Why is she leaving their ceremony? It's almost her turn to choose a hero.

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Laila closes the door to her waterfall crest. Its soothing trickle dampens the last of her raging core. Ava's long ruby-tipped nails slip between the door and wall. "Laila, what's the matter with you? You left in the middle of the ceremony. The protector had to allow for postponement. The choosing is not complete."

"I had to."

"What do you mean?"

Her sister's red glimmer still shines from the ceremony and reflects against the clear water of Laila's crest. "Ava, why are you here? You picked your hero. You should be with him."

"Yes, I will be once the ceremony is complete. I'm happy to report I've chosen Platinum."

"Nikon? Ava, I had no idea you nursed a tender for him."

"You do know the tribute of the kiss was established by our forefathers for a reason."

Laila has no desire to debate her sister's explanations for allowing all the King's sons to kiss her at every opportunity. "You should not have avoided the heroes' tributes while Inga expressed hers."

Laila's essence tightens its grip and strangles her from the inside out. If only her yearnings could have moved her to allow it. If only her fear didn't hold her back. If only the Decrees could be loosened. If only. She can barely speak. "Are any heroes left?"

"One. To be chosen at the conclusion tomorrow. And yes, he's yours."

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Bodnar heads straight for the waterfall crests of the inner sanctum of White Crescent Manor. Its nooks and crests hide at random, but he knows exactly which one is Laila's. Exactly when it appears. They've been best friends since leading strings. Why would she leave their ceremony? She must choose her hero. He wants to share in the joy of her choice.

The door to Laila's crest forms in front of him and she exits the minute he reaches it. She's crying. "What's happened? Are you ill?"

"No." Laila shakes her head. "Maybe."

Bodnar wipes each tear away with his thumbs cupping her face between his palms. "What is it? Let me help."

Laila stares at the ground between them. Bodnar lifts her chin and looks in her eyes, amber eyes with hints of lilac. Her long lashes are damp from her tears and he cannot hold back from bestowing tribute to her violet lips outlined in black. The moment he does, he knows the answer to his question. Her kiss is not like Inga's or any of her sisters. It's want. Need. Desire.

Bodnar's reaction is instant. He pulls her against his chest and deepens his kiss. Laila's arms wrap around his neck. Not what he expected. Amethyst glimmers encase them. One taste of her tongue mingling with his and he's lost. Why didn't he see it before? The pull of her essence meshes with his as lavender currents of color ebb and flow throughout the halls of the entire Crescent. He doesn't hold back. She doesn't either. All the Realm of the Great Comet will know their transgression. He doesn't care.

~\*~\*~\*~

"Come in, child." Embla's crystalline, diamond glow encompasses both of Laila's parents.

She studies each of them in preparation for the downcry she knows is coming. Guilt and despair goad the deepest pit of her core. How could she allow Bodnar to kiss her? How could she allow herself to respond? Her glimmers were seen throughout the Crescent. Not only the Crescent, every Tink in the realm must know by now.

Her father's bronze scepter pounds the floor. Laila jumps and wobbles to the side.

"Not so harsh, Myron, dear. She's young. I will set her to rights. Go. Be with your super heroes of the realm. We shall join you soon."

"As you wish..." Her father kisses the cheek of her mother, his belle of long ago. "My diamond of the first water." Rays of white glimmer cascade throughout her parents' crest.

Forget guilt and despair. Her father's whispered words against Laila's temple as he passes, churns to muck what's left of her stomach. "Duel of Heroes, it's your only hope."

"He's right, Laila." Frea slips between Myron and the door. Sapphire bangles jingle on her wrists.

Ava slides in behind her. "I agree."

Laila swallows hard. "The Duel of Heroes has never been requested."

"Ava and Frea." Embla's voice is mother-stern. "Have you not heroes to attend?"

"Yes, Mama." Ava bows and curtsies. "Of course, Mama." Frea does the same.

"Well? Shouldn't you be attending them? Your sister and I will manage. Go."

Freya and Ava file out. Freya winks. Ava mouths "duel." Laila stares at the floor.

"Laila, sit by me. Near my falls." Embla pats the seat next to her. "Come."

Laila does what she's told. Laila always does what she's told. She takes a deep breath and waits. Her mother smooths back the long, black locks of her hair and lifts her daughter's chin.

Laila stares into gray, peaceful eyes. Here it comes. "Does your essence cry out for this hero, Bodnar?"

Tears form in the corners of Laila's eyes then fall, one at a time. Control is lost. Her mother pulls her close in a tight embrace. "A Duel of Heroes it will be."

~\*~\*~\*~

The protector stands in the center of the grotto. Bodnar scans the theater. Tinks from every corner, crevice, and crest in the entire realm have come to watch the first Duel of Heroes ever required.

Bodnar listens. The protector recites each hero's name and the belle who chose him. "Nikon the Platinum to Ava of Ruby." Nikon and Ava meet in the center where Nikon hands Ava his Platinum scepter and pays tribute to her. "Aran the Silver to Frea of Sapphire." Frea accepts the Silver scepter. Her sapphire glimmers envelop them both the moment Aran bestows his tribute to her turquoise lips. They move next to Ava and Nikon. The protector's even-toned dialogue continues. "Calvus the Steel to Korrina of Topaz." Bodnar watches each of his brothers relinquish their respective scepters of privilege, pay tribute, and then escort their belles to seats in the front row. He sees Inga sitting next to her mother. She refuses to look at him. Laila is next to her father. Bodnar's eyes lock with hers and her glimmers begin to flow. She breaks their connection.

The protector finishes the recitation by naming each parent. "King Orvar the Iron with Queen Cassia of Opal. Prince Myron the Bronze with Empress Embla of Diamond." Each of them nods acknowledgment.

The protector stretches out his bejeweled Scepter of Realms and motions Bodnar to stand in one corner. "Bodnar the Gold." The protector turns to his brother and does the same in the

opposite corner. "Lir the Copper." The theater is silent. No one moves. Not one hush. Bodnar surveys the audience. This Duel ends one of two ways. Death or banishment. How can they ask him to fight his brother to the death? He begs the protector for silent direction. Nothing.

"Begin!" The protector steps back. Lir pulls his saber and attacks. Bodnar blocks. Lir attacks, Bodnar blocks.

Green and purple glimmers mix together against the white grotto walls. The Tinks begin to murmur. Bodnar tries to ignore it. The display of both belles' essence mixed together confuses him. Of one thing, he is clear. He will not kill his brother.

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"We must stop this!" Laila leans forward and waves for her sister's attention.

Embla elbows Inga to force her to respond. "I have nothing to say to you."

"You can't mean that. Bodnar will never kill Lir. Does your essence care so little for him?"

"My essence, dear sister, was in bliss. Until you broke our bond with a bond of your own."

"Inga, you knew I wished for Bodnar. Why are you doing this?"

"You can't have the King's firstborn. You are second to me. Firstborn belongs with firstborn."

"Inga, you always preferred Lir."

"No, I *always* took advantage of his tributes. It's the only way to know if your essence can bond with your hero. I would never choose against the Decrees."

"Belles, enough! What's done is done." Embla looks at one daughter and then the other.  
"Look at your heroes. Look at them fight!"



Laila doesn't want to see. The smack, smack, smack of the blades is enough to break her.

A smile spreads across Inga's face, brilliant and content.

"Mama, she's enjoying this. Please make it stop."

"Inga? Do you wish to see a hero's death?"

That removed her stink of pride. "Of course not, Mama."

"Laila? Are you sure you wish to relinquish your claim to the golden scepter, your claim to his firstborn privilege? To relinquish this great honor to Lir the Copper?"

"I refuse to watch my hero die. Do what needs done."

Embla leans close to her father's ear. "Myron, signal the protector."

Inga's brilliant and content smile spreads again.

~\*~\*~\*~

A long tail of white fire burns across the black sky, slow and steady. The protector's concoction enabling their descent to this blue water realm called Earth. And also, a sign of remembrance for the Tinks. A remembrance of their amethyst princess. The one who sacrificed a claim to firstborn privilege, so that he may live.

Bodnar returns his attention to his belle as she stares up into the stars of the midnight sky. The same belle who purchased him out of the Duel of Heroes, saving him from certain death. The same belle whose lips are changed to pink instead of violet. The same belle whose tributes still send him sinking into bliss of a different kind now that they reside here. One hundred phases will pass comfortably, thanks to the protector's arrangement of provisions during their banishment.

"I can't believe it will be a hundred phases before we see them again." Laila snuggles against him on the lawn of their new residence, White Crescent Castle. A fitting name for their new crest.

Bodnar cradles her in his arms. He can still see the flecks of lilac in Laila's amber eyes. Thank the protector, he didn't remove all the aspects of their essence in his efforts to hide them with the humans. "Do you regret it?"

Laila reaches up and pulls Bodnar's face close to hers. "I'll let you decide." She presses her lips to his and proceeds to fill his essence with all the water color brilliance her true heart can give.

No. No regrets.

TO BE CONTINUED...

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### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

IreAnne Chambers' book contain the spirit and tone of the traditional regency with the promise of mystery, adventure, and mishap intermixed to create a happy ever after with plenty of fun and surprises along the way.

She looked to her Scottish and Irish heritage and discovered the name Eireann (Erin). Eire mean Ireland in Gaelic and IreAnne was born after a quick search of the internet yielded zero hits.

IreAnne also enjoys writing poetry and song lyrics, but her love for the regency romances of Jane Austen, filled with dashing heroes and feisty heroines, spurs her desire to write in this category. As Novelist and Nobel Prize Winner Toni Morrison said, "If there's a book you really want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it." IreAnne does just that.

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