

HORSE BOY

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HORSE BOY

*The Lorian Stones*

A PREQUEL



LEW ANDERSON

## PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Ahrel	(ah-REL)
Ariel	(AR-ee-el)
Balbon	(BAL-bon)
Barloff	(BAR-loff)
Braegon	(BRAY-gun)
Chala Kon	(CHA-la KON)
Chia	(CHEE-a)
Gorron	(GOR-ron)
Grimalkyn	(GRIM-ol-kin)
Horgol	(HOAR-gol)
Hornin	(HOR-nin)
Jori	(JOR-ee)
Ka Ra-Han	(KA-ra-HAN)
Kiana	(KEE-anna)
La-aki	(La-A-kee)
Mersha	(MER-sha)
Mya	(MY-ya)
Pallen-dore	(PAL-len-DOOR)
Parsi	(PAR-see)
Pharen	(FAIR-en)
Ra-el	(RA-EL)
Sasson	(SA-son)
Seela	(SEE-la)
Sheeshak	(SHEE-shak)
Taffa	(TAF-fa)
Terren	(TER-ren)
Tolhoff	(TOL-hoff)
Tortums	(TOR-tums)
Wodin	(WO-din)
Zeljin	(ZEL-jin)



# TOKEN & Beyond



The Great Sea

Marr

Lowlands of Marr

Cliffs of Mardy

Swamp of Wodin

South Token

Meer's Point

North Token

Fields of North Token

Carm River

Token River

South Token River

The Forbidden Grasses

The Western Hills



*For Aoden,  
And all who enjoy the well-worn path into the land of story*

*Special thanks to Bradley J. K.  
for all the decades of friendship and encouragement*

## PREFACE

After completing my account of the Lorian Stones, my life came into imminent danger from which I had to flee. Finding sanctuary beneath the earth, along with other souls threatened by the same powers of evil, I had the distinct privilege to meet the remarkable character, Mr. Pernipity Snarls.

While hiding out together in preservation of our lives, he, being of Grimalkyn descent, thoroughly enjoyed engaging me with the histories of Loria and the surrounding kingdoms. Many a nights we sat beside our fire, he with his long pipe and I with my pen and paper, recalling the glorious adventures recorded in the numerous books he had acquired throughout his years as a rare book collector.

The following account, according to Mr. Snarls, occurred four cord and four, that is 24 years before the tragic fall of Loria. Because it bears significance to my account of the Lorian Stones, I have chosen to record it to the best of my ability as told me by Mr. Snarls himself.

Sincerely,  
Lew A.

## PROLOGUE

**W**ithin a room of polished stone, long-fingered hands shifted a column of swirling green fog. Dark eyes watched the rising column twist and twirl until they could see two men beneath a balmy night sky, their figures lit by a three-quarter moon. A giant black bird circled above them, its silent shadow passing unnoticed. The long fingers moved, tilting, then slanting. The great bird swooped low, its ear listening.

“Ready up three ships... fully armed,” said the taller of the two. “The unwary fool sails on the morrow. We’ll sail at dusk.”

“Hey oh, Commander,” answered a stout man in uniform.

“Choose only loyal,” the taller said. “Our idiotic king shall find nothing but death. When this doltish journey ends, so shall the line of Elgin.” He paused to look out over the vast city shimmering below. “And Gelden... jewel of Mersha... shall finally have one worthy of her glories.”

“Yes, Commander. What shall I tell the captains?”

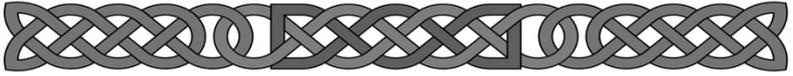
“That we sail in secret escort... protecting our cherished king from pirates.”

“Yes, sir.”

The taller glared down at the man in uniform. “Remember, Captain, fail me not... and the daughter is yours.”

“Hey oh, Commander.” The man snapped straight, expanding his chest. “I... will not fail.”

PART I  
THE GIRL



1 THE TERREN

“Faster, Faster!” A teen boy clung to the side of his horse named Faster. The panting beast galloped hard through the open land where stalks of long grass slapped the boy’s tawny skin. In their wake, the shadow of a terren eagle skimmed, gliding like an evil ghost over the forbidden grasses.

Just ahead, glistening in the morning light, flowed the Token River, beyond which lay the protection of the forest and the land of the Token—the boy’s home.

The massive eagle tucked its wings to swoop, thrusting black talons forward, eager to tear the sinewy boy from his horse and feed him to its voracious young.

In desperate earnest, the lad clutched the leather net that wrapped the steed’s sweating body—a netting made by his own hands, a netting that wrapped all around and up the neck. He could ride in a dozen places, even underneath if danger demanded.

He glanced back to see the giant eagle begin its dive, hearing once more his mother’s words of warning. He knew the danger of entering the open grasses.

*But the girl...*

“Mighty Ra-el,” he prayed, shifting up onto the horse’s back, “I bid you... guide now... my blade.” Pulling the sword from over his shoulder, he pressed tight to the quaking muscles, bounding in rhythm to the thundering hooves, breathing in the smell of leather and sweat.

“Ride steady,” he said, his cheek pressed to the lunging neck, urging the beast, its nostrils flaring wide with fear. “We... can do this.”

The first dive had been a sideward strike. But the brave boy had remained atop his faithful horse, waiting till the sharp talons were just two arms away before dropping to Faster’s side. The jagged claws of death seized only empty air, skimming horse and boy. The terren’s angry screech seemed to still echo in the morning sky.

Now he rode, waiting as his horse heaved, hooves flinging sand and soil, pounding their way to the towering trees of Token. He watched the raptor pull its wings, diving from behind, aiming now for both him and his horse. It would knock them to the ground, kill the horse and carry the boy off. Kill him... like it had his father.

“Turn yo, then tso!”

The horse quickly turned left. The eagle shifted, its huge wings spreading to adjust, slowing its strike. Faster then jolted right, forcing the bird to again adjust its dive.

In a sudden twist, the boy spun himself to now face the leering claws of death, his feet tucked into the netting. With his back to the horse’s head, he readied his sword, its wyre-skin handle sticking firm to his sweaty palm, his lean muscles taut.

“Be with me... Father,” the boy huffed in pray. “Give me strength.”

Thundering onward, horse and boy rode as one, as if born of the same blood on the same day. He tucked his feet further into the leather netting, rising in rhythm to Faster’s gallop, rising till he stood, knees bent, eyes fixed on the swooping creature now a knife toss away.

The huge bird thrust its talons forward, its black feet spread wide.

“Drop your head and ho!” the boy shouted.

Dropping his head, Faster locked into a sliding halt. The boy flopped back, landing flat against the horse’s neck. The eagle struck in a rush of wind. The boy thrust, his blade piercing inner flesh. Ragged talons scraped his ribs and face. A screech of terror rippled the land of grass. But he held his sword tight, his arm jerking hard up over his head. A talon tore his skin from armpit to forearm. He cried out. Coarse feathers struck his face as the bird flew past.

Lungs heaving, he clutched the leather net, his fingers still tight about his sword. The blade had gone deep. Staring upward, he watched the huge wings beat the air, the dark gray terror soaring high into the morning sky. A trail of red fell like ribbon, a ribbon of death, of blood fresh from the heart.

A stunned moment passed, then they galloped toward the river, the dark shadow drifting west till the land of the grasses lay still. Soon the waters of the Token washed the weary hooves and bleeding wounds—wounds of triumph.

Still breathing hard, the young teen knelt in the river, watching the blood from his arm swirl off with the water’s cleansing flow. *Red Blood*, he mused, named for the night his mother gave birth to him, the night the moon glowed red like blood. His father had taken the new Token child out into the cold winter’s night and held him toward the sky. His frail flesh shone red in the moon’s eerie light, vapor steaming from the naked child—the first born of the Token New Year.

“Red... Blood...” he said slowly, his tone somber, “tole of the Token... curse of Teel.”

Faster gave a quick snort, shaking his head wildly.

“It’s what they call me, Faster. It’s who I am.”

Again the horse shook his head, the long chestnut mane flipping about. Red chuckled, watching the wise steed scan the sky, light-brown eyes searching. The morning sun enhanced the sleek, buckskin-colored body, its rays shimmering on the beautiful chestnut mane, legs, and long flowing tail.

“You did good, my friend,” Red said, lowering his arm into the current, blood still freely swirling with the water’s flow. “I

should have... kept keener watch.”

A silver fingerling struggled against the steady current, its slim form fighting to stay behind a smooth rock. Downstream the larger fish fed where the Token met the Carm.

“The way of all life...” Red mused, watching the little fish in constant struggle. “Give in... and you’ll be swallowed up before Faster can stomp all four hooves.”

The horse watched the reddened current, giving a quick snort and shake of his head.

“I know,” Red said, clenching his teeth in a pain-filled grimace. “Marm’s gonna word-whip.”

He stood and with hands trembling, opened a small leather pouch fastened at the base of the horse’s neck where it met the chest. Taking out a smaller pouch, he loosened the strings and sprinkled a fine gray powder over his wound. It burned. He groaned, fighting back tears, the intense pain screaming. He moaned a quick prayer, the blood still dripping too fast from his arm, his whole body quivering at times. He knew pain, knew it well, but he’d learned to take it, to move beyond. But today it came with troubling thoughts, foreboding thoughts streaked with fear.

Soon the bleeding slowed, the gray powder clotting the wound.

Faster drank more and then snorted toward the trees, the towering trees that spread out over the blessed land of North Token. Red gave a nod, washing his chest and face one last time, careful not to wet the wound. He breathed hard through clenched teeth, quivering fingers feebly trying to tuck a flap of skin over the jagged rip inside his arm. He grimaced, eyes shut tight, and for a time just stood, breathing fast through his nose, teeth still clenched.

Slowly taking his sword, his father’s sword, he rinsed it in the current, watching the terren’s blood cling to the blade as if reluctant to admit defeat.

“We pierced a terren,” he said to his horse, a broad smile replacing the grimace. “Fought arm to arm with the ruthless lord of the sky.” The terren eagle was the giant death-bird of the

## THE TERREN

grasses and beyond, the feathered demon that killed grown men, warriors even. He smiled at his horse. “Brought down by Red Blood, that *curse-burden* boy of North Token... and his faithful steed... Faster the grand.”

The horse shook his head, flinging drops of water that sparkled in the morning’s golden light.

Red sighed, glancing back the way they had come. “My gratefulness, O Guider Ra-el.” He studied his wounds. “You are the sword of my soul, my strength of arm, my arrow of deliverance.”

Hands still quivering, he wiped the blade, glancing toward the sky. Blood from his wound soaked the wyre-skin on the handle. “I held it, Father...” he said softly, “held it strong.”

Sheathing his sword, he grimaced again, his keen eyes looking back over the grasses, the face of the girl filling his mind.

## 2 THE GIRL

**M**orning fires brewed blackened pots as shafts of light angled through the lingering smoke. High in the towering trees birds whistled and chirped when Red and Faster rode into the cluster of mounds, huts, and tree homes of North Token.

“Them be terren wounds,” an old man, face wrinkled like tree bark, muttered through yellowed teeth. He spat, tossing a pebble at Red, the stone striking the boy’s calf. “Yus feeling pity for them terrens, tole boy?” Red ignored him, dropping gracefully from Faster’s back. The horse gave the old man a hardy snort, then went to find some grain.

“Red Blood!” His mother, or marm exclaimed, her shrill cry silencing the birds. She stood stunned, her face stricken. “Did I birth you to ride the grasses? What have you done?” A crowd gathered.

“Plead pardon, Marm.” Red bowed his head. “Out hunting.” He said nothing of piercing the giant eagle, though everything in him yearned to declare the feat, something he’d never heard done before. *Especially the way we did it*, he thought. He looked at the gathering crowd. *Wouldn’t believe me anyway... and only make Marm fuss up more.*

Some standing near murmured insults. One scrawny old woman in rough-spun cloth proclaimed, “Best be a terren just

take the vex-some tole.” She wagged a long wooden spoon at Red. “‘Twe better for us all, pray Moc Bol.”

Red said nothing.

Tears filled his mother’s lovely eyes. Tall and slender, she was still declared by many to be the gem of North Token. After his father’s death, every eligible man came calling, but she wouldn’t yield up her love.

When the crowd finally returned to making breakfast, mending leathers, weaving cloth and tending animals, his mother dressed his wounds. She explained again how the Token are people of the trees, not the grasses. Red peered out from within their tree home, a fine home built inside a giant oak, hollowed by his father’s strong hands.

The Token were hunters and farmers, tilling only the lands between the giant trees and the river. They entered the fields together with watchmen always at their posts. Only Red ventured beyond, but always with Faster, the horse he’d rescued from the Token River that fateful spring when the floods had come. He had found the young colt caught in the sinking sands, buried till only eyes and nose remained. Red nearly died freeing the animal, but never once rued the day.

Faster wasn’t like the Token horses—simple and slow, work horses meant for pulling wagons and plows or dragging logs. He was fast and quick, jumping fallen trees almost the height of Spar, the tallest Token of the clan. And best of all... Faster knew speech.

“Aaah!” Red groaned as his mother cleaned his arm. The wound looked rough—a jagged gash, skin open and oozing.

“I’ll get Mender.”

Soon Mender came with her teen daughter Parsi. Together they sewed the skin, packing the wound with hot herbal mash, wrapping it in leaves beneath a strip of wool. Ointment covered the burning scrapes on his chest and face.

Red watched Parsi move gracefully alongside her marm. She had long chestnut hair like Faster’s tail—twirly, thick and glistening. And just like Faster, the light-colored ends hung uncut, free to grow. Her soft-brown eyes were warm like the

evening sky, her skin tan like a doe in spring. She, like him, had reached her full-moon, the time of double sevens, the time when the boys would choose their mate. He met her eyes as she glanced his way, knowing her deepest hope, and her darkest fear. *The fight will be hard, he mused. Black Claw is strong... his heart cruel.*

“Parsi will be back on the morrow,” Mender said, “if La-aki grants you yet another day.” Mender spoke harshly but with care. She and Red’s marm were dear friends. “And keep it dry... no swimming!” She then whispered a warning to his marm, to beware the terren’s black heat.

Red watched them leave. In two days would come the palledore, the time boys became men, fighting to win their chosen, wrestling for the girl who would become their mate. He glanced at his arm, now deeply regretting the terren encounter.

*Should I tell her?* Red pondered, longing to tell his mother how he had pierced the terren, but thinking more of the girl. Hair like the sand, skin like the wheat fields in fall, and eyes unlike any—one bright blue like the morning’s new sky, the other a glistening green, both like the polished gems traded for tools and weapons of iron. Again she filled his mind, her winsome smile following him, holding his gaze as he rode away.

### 3 SHIPS

**A** runner came panting out the words while a dark sky rumbled overhead.

“Ships at Marr... huge. Armored men... long hair, light and yellow.” The runner gasped and heaved, hands on his knees. “Balbon the Bull... has called war!”

The Token stood beneath their trees, their trees of life and protection. The leaves fluttered as a wind blew, swirling smoke and dust.

*Ships? From where?* The Token River, dividing the forest from the grasses, joined the Carm, which flowed into the sea. The Marr lived at the sea. *Could these ships sail up the river... up to Token?*

Red stood beside Faster, both listening to the runner’s frantic words and the talk of light-haired ones. Again her face appeared, her blue and green eyes held in terror, yet watching him ride, charging through the river, shooting his bow.

Red hoped his marm would not ask about his bow, left where he’d seen the girl... about to be killed on the sand.

“You are to join Balbon at Meer’s Point,” the runner panted. “Assemble there tonight.”

Red strained to understand the events of the day and the words of the runner. Red stains soaked the leaves and cloth. He saw Parsi watching, angst twisting her lovely face, tender heart listening to the troubling news.

*Light-haired ones...* Red knew of whom they spoke. That morning, in the dawn's first light, he and Faster had rode, following the Token River, riding into the sun. He rode until he neared the Carm—the river to the sea. He liked it there where the two rivers met. Life was there—animals of air and land and sea all met to feed, to kill, to be killed.

He went to hunt, hoping to shoot a deer or a red leaper, something large enough to feed them for more than one day. That's when he saw the terren, its foot on the girl, crushing her where the rivers met. Its dark brown form loomed, pressing her into the sand, its huge beak poised to tear her flesh.

"Go, Faster, go!" Horse and boy sped over grassy clods, streaking like an eagle's shadow in the morning haze. Red shot when he reached the Token's edge, his arrow striking the wing. The giant bird turned to face horse and boy, opening its hooked beak, shrilling the air. Red shot again, his arrow passing just underneath, for the terren leapt high, wings spread wide. The arrow struck the sandy bank just beyond the girl.

She saw him riding, her eyes of spring and sky, her hair like twirls of sand and milk. She watched him shoot a third just as the horse sprung from the bank, gliding over the water's edge before its tumultuous plunge. The great bird shrieked, leaping high and catching wind. Sand swirled as wings pummeled the air, a sunken shaft jutting from the creature's chest.

"Swim, Faster!" They had to reach the bank before the bird found air. Red pulled his bow, trying to aim in rhythm with Faster's lunging, hooves splashing through the shallows of the Token.

The river widened where it met the Carm, no deeper than the horse's shoulder. Red followed the bird with his aim as it rose high, holding his shot, awaiting the return. But the bird climbed higher and then sailed for the western hills, the roosts of the dreaded terren.

The wet horse nudged the girl with his nose, water plopping onto her scuffed chest and face. She lay silent, eyes wide, watching the strong, lean boy who scanned the sky, bowstring taut.

Red slid from his horse and stood staring at the girl on the sand. Bloody scrapes marred her arms and legs. She held his gaze, her gem-colored eyes so bright and clear, her skin so fair.

“Are you hurt?” Red asked. She only stared, still eyeing this boy with his strange bow, his pants of leather, his tawny chest and arms bare. She then rose with a grimace, legs weak and trembling, body swaying. Her eyes fluttered and she swooned toward Red. He dropped his bow to catch her tender frame. For a moment, she hung limp as if dead, her full, wavy hair covering her face. But then she awoke with a start, looking long into his light-brown eyes.

“Your horse... is fast,” she said, her voice weak. She spoke Token, yet not like him. For a time she just gazed at him, then her smooth lips parted. “You saved... my life. Accept my solemn appreciation,” her voice smoother now.

Red looked to see men running up the sandy shores of the Carm, most waving swords or spears, their long golden hair flapping.

“You must beware the terren,” Red said, staring into the eyes that shone like gems. “They rule the sky. Drop from the clouds.”

The girl nodded, glancing upward, then at her wounds.

The men came shouting, turning from the Carm to run up along the Token. Red flung himself up onto Faster, glancing back as his horse thundered up the bank. He would not cross the Token River till he was far from the light-haired men. He saw her raise a bruised arm, and then she smiled... the smile that captured his heart.

## 4 NIGHT RIDE

The men assembled with weapons ready, their leathers coiled and dark. Red saw the fear in Tanner's eyes, his only friend since life began. Tanner already had his full-moon, but waited to choose his mate, waiting till the day of her full-moon, the day the boys would fight. But today he would learn war.

Red watched as the men said their goodbyes, Tanner fighting off fear. They would run through the evening into the night to reach Meer's Point. They didn't know their enemy—the light-haired men. This threat came fresh with terror.

Red said nothing of the girl and the terren and the men on the Carm. They were but two hands full, maybe twelve. The girl spoke Token. *Ships on the sea?* he pondered. *Those men had no ship, only a long boat.* He had followed them, watching from a distance, watching them carry the girl back up the Carm.

Then the terren struck.

The Token men ran single file beneath the great trees, chanting hushed moans of war songs long ago passed down. When the fires died low and the women wept inside their homes, Red slipped out into the night. He reached for Faster just as Parsi touched his arm.

“It needs to heal,” she said, her voice soft, yet firm. “You cannot go to war. It is forbidden.”

Parsi’s beauty beckoned all the Token boys in the northern wood. Her eyes and lips spoke gentle calm into the darkest day. Her form and grace could weaken the strongest boy. On the day of her full-moon, the fight will be hard and long.

“I’m not riding to war,” Red said. “Tell no one I left.”

“Where *do* you ride?”

Red shook his head and pulled himself up onto Faster.

“If I don’t come back...”

She stiffened, her eyes widening.

“I’ll come back,” Red said quickly. “And will fight... if they let me.”

She held his gaze for a time, then looked away.

Faster walked with careful steps, weaving through the massive trees of Token. Red gave Sop a nod as he rode past the watcher’s tree. It wasn’t the first time he had ridden out by night.

Red was a tole—a reject from birth, born when the moon was full and red, born of the god Teel, the one who conjures up tricks, sets traps for well-meaning men, foiling dreams and breaking hearts.

“Curse bringer...” he said with a sigh. “Have I brought this? Am I truly a son of Teel?”

The horse gave a quick nicker, shaking his head vigorously.

“And what of you, faithful friend? Of what god are you?”

Red gave the horse a hearty pat. “Ra-el himself, a-sure. A worthy gift you are.”

Flicker beetles danced over the fields at the edge of the towering trees, their lights blinking and swirling. Horse and boy paused to listen to the numerous sounds filling the fields and watery shores beyond. Croaks and calls mingled with the murmuring flow, the breeze rustling the tall heads of grass and reed.

“What do you think of her, Faster?” Red said, keeping his voice low. The horse bobbed his head, giving a low whinny. “Of

what land do they come?" He studied her features once more, recalling every detail within his memory. Never had he seen such light skin, and those sprinkled spots that dusted her little nose and cheeks. "Why are they here?" he mused aloud. "Where do they belong?"

*Where do I belong?*

Although brown-haired like all the other Token boys, Red had a streak of light blond that hung near his left eye, an obvious stigma to accompany his blood-moon birth. Together, with skin a lighter shade as well, these ill-omens marked him for pain and trouble, a boy doomed to live alone.

"They will forbid me, Faster... I've heard them talking... won't let me fight."

Faster gave a quick snort.

"Tanner can't break him... he's too big... too mean."

Recently, Parsi's father warned he would strike if Red came near his daughter. Most of the men wanted to forbid him the full-moon ceremony, to ban the blood-moon boy from choosing a mate and becoming a warrior. While his father had lived, no man dared speak such things, but now...

Red watched the clouds roll across the moon as he rode into the fields of Token. The river and beyond—the land of the grasses—was never safe, either by day or by night. The terrens came by day, soaring in the clouds, striking with talons of death.

A faint, painful memory of his father flashed. Red pushed it away.

At night, the prowls roamed, the fierce beasts that walk with silent steps. Red wished he had his bow.

"A blade is better at night," he said, his voice low. "But it's for you I fear." He looked toward the river shimmering in the moon light. "Follow it?"

The horse paused to lift its nose, sniffing several times. Then with a low grunt, they pressed on.

In near silence they crossed the Token, its cool waters swirling over Faster's back. When they reached the bank, the mighty horse paused again to sniff the rising night air.

"Let's follow to the Carm. Maybe they've camped."

## NIGHT RIDE

Horse and boy moved with caution beside the flowing water. Lightning flashed in the southern sky, the sky over Marr and Meer's Point. *Will there really be war? Red pondered. Have the light-hairs killed the Marr? The Marr don't fight. They're fishermen, sea dwellers.*

The moon came and went, peering through the dark clouds that rode the sky. The night sounds of unseen creatures rose and fell with the breeze as the two journeyed toward the Carm. Red searched the bank till he found the spot, the place he'd met the girl. His bow and arrow were gone. He stood in the essence of the sacred memory till he felt her hair against his face. Again her smile came.

They turned and traveled the Carm north, following the prints that told the story. Then Faster stopped. Red didn't ask, knowing his horse sensed something. He listened, sniffing the cool night air.

"Smoke," he whispered.

On they moved in silent rhythm, following the sandy banks of the Carm, slowly onward till a fire flickered up ahead.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lew Anderson grew up enjoying the backwoods of his family's farm. With trusty knife and bow he'd walk beneath the trees, losing countless arrows aimed at illusive prey. Now married with four adult children, he and his family spent six years in Northern Asia helping impoverished schools while teaching English. Returning to his home state of MN, he then pastored a small church. He has an M.A. in cultural studies, and still enjoys knives and bows and roaming the woods.

“When the last two boys were young, I started *The Lorian Stones Trilogy*. One of the greatest joys in my life was to read fresh written chapters as they sat, wide-eyed, wondering what would happen next.

Many underestimate their hidden talents, fearing failure or criticism. I hope these stories encourage you to explore and uncover those riches—to dream big, to work hard, and to never give up no matter what the opposition.”

## OTHER BOOKS BY LEW ANDERSON

*Tombs of Dross* - The Lorian Stones Trilogy vol. 1  
*Battles Grim* - The Lorian Stones Trilogy vol. 2  
*Pillars and Power* - The Lorian Stones Trilogy vol. 3  
*Horse Boy* - Prequel to The Lorian Stones Trilogy  
*The Fire Between Us* - Action Romance Novella  
*Misty Grey* - YA Action Romance