



THE CRYSTAL OF MYNOS

BY REBECCA GOINGS



The dragon Mynos is on his way to join his mate, Malnan, for the birth of their offspring when he's suddenly hit with a magical shockwave so strong, it leaves no room for doubt what it means. His Crystal has been stolen.

Racing back to Castle Templestone, Mynos rallies every dragon to find it, knowing time is of the essence. Not only is the life of King Timothy in the balance, but whoever wields the Crystal can become a formidable foe. They soon find the talisman, but what they find is more than they bargained for. Not only is one mage focusing his power through the gem, but an entire army of mages has linked their consciousness with it!

Left and right, scores of dragons die from the incredible magic being wielded. Yet Mynos deftly avoids his own death, knowing that his own creation can never harm him. However, when the mighty golden dragon sees his own mate killed right before his eyes, can Mynos find it within himself to beat the army that's gathered to defeat him? And will he have the strength to go on knowing that he is now the last living dragon of Lyndaria?

LEGEND OF MYNOS NOVELS BY
REBECCA GOINGS



THE CRYSTAL OF MYNOS
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REBECCA GOINGS

the CRYSTAL
— of —
MYNOS

Prequel to the Legends of Mynos



THE CRYSTAL OF MYNOS
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Chapter One

Mynos flew out across the open ocean of the Silver Sea, a wide grin upon his ancient face. Gliding on the wind, the great dragon spread his wings wide, playing in the air currents and reveling in the feel of it. The sunlight glistened off of his golden scales, making them shimmer with their rainbow-like translucence as his massive body flew low over the water. Never before had Mynos felt such a delightful euphoria as he did at that moment. Malnan was waiting for him, waiting on the Isle of Dragons, the birthplace of all dragonkind. She was ready to lay her eggs, ready to start their family, ready to finally settle down.

Thinking of his mate, Mynos could almost smell her on the wind and urged his wings to beat faster. They had been through so much together, and now it was finally time to bring their offspring into the world. Mynos felt like a young wyrmling himself at the thought of becoming a father—of starting a family with Malnan. She was his life, she was his heart, and Mynos prayed to the Father of Dragons he would never be parted from her.

The golden dragon flew joyously over the open ocean when a magical shockwave struck him—hard. He faltered in the sky at the unexpectedness of it. Mynos couldn't stop his downward spiral and splashed helplessly into the calm waters of the ocean below. A colossal plume of spray shot into the sky as Mynos sank beneath the waves. Instinctively, the dragon knew exactly what it was.

His Crystal was screaming.

Bursting out of the water with another cascade of spray, Mynos turned in the sky and headed back toward the cliffs of Lyndaria. Sending a mental apology to his mate, he growled and rose higher and higher, gaining altitude while using his magical ability to gain speed.

King Timothy, ruler of the four realms and leader of the Order of the Wolverine, relied on the power of his Crystal to sustain his long life. If it had been taken from Castle Templestone, the king would die if Mynos couldn't find it in time.

The dragon's face hardened into a mask of fury. Once again his own happiness had to wait. The king needed him; Lyndaria needed him. But did anyone care about what

Mynos needed? He needed the comfort only Malnan could give him, yet the time spent with her was few and far between. Ever since Mynos had made his Crystal, it seemed as if he hadn't a moment's peace.

These thoughts plagued him as he raced back to the castle, and he wondered if his decision to make the Crystal centuries ago had been the wisest one. He admitted it now, that he had made his Crystal for selfish reasons. He couldn't be parted from Estriel, and that was the only real reason. Consecrating her body after she'd died resulted in the formation of the Crystal, what happened to every dragon upon their consecration. Estriel had always said a dragon's body should never be wasted.

Mynos remembered those words as he'd wept over her slain form, still bleeding from her mortal wound. He hadn't thought it possible for a mortal to slay a dragon, yet Estriel's lifeblood pouring on the ground was proof enough they could. With her final breath, his sister enchanted her own body, to ensure the gem borne of her would never be able to harm its creator. It was her last gift to Mynos as his golden tears fell from his eyes. The very moment Estriel was gone, the dragon consecrated his beloved sister's body, and thus the Crystal of Mynos was born.

Mynos remembered her bright eyes. She always seemed to know what he was thinking. Estriel had been a beautiful silver dragon, her own scales glittering with the same translucence as her brother's golden ones. Even now when the Crystal flared with its own inner light, it refracted the glow, making hundreds of rainbows dance on the walls. Mynos always smiled whenever he saw the twinkling Crystal, knowing a part of his sister lived on within its faceted depths.

Mynos had enchanted the Crystal with the power to enhance the user's own magical ability in an effort to teach and enlighten those who wielded magic. It's what Estriel would have wanted.

Thus, two centuries ago, Mynos had given his Crystal to King Timothy of Lyndaria, who prized peace and justice above all else. If anyone wanted to learn of magic, they journeyed to Castle Templestone to touch the fabled Crystal and study its secrets. Ever since the Crystal had known peace, its power had been sustaining King Timothy's life. But Mynos knew the king was dying. If the Crystal was no longer at the castle, there would be nothing to stop his rapid aging and his eventual, inevitable death.

It was known far and wide King Timothy had no living heirs, nor any relatives to ascend to the throne once he was gone. No doubt there would be squabbles, fights, and bloodshed to seize the throne of Lyndaria.

Pushing his body beyond its limits, Mynos strained to return to the castle. He had to find his Crystal at any cost!



Chapter Two

As soon as his feet alighted on the floor of his lair, Mynos channeled his magic, transforming his body from a dragon to a man. He groaned at the intensity of the magic he wove and the air shimmered and popped, pulsating around him like a living being. It wasn't long before the only remnants of his draconic form were his shining gold hair, golden-toned skin, and slitted metallic eyes that never ceased to unsettle anyone who looked into them.

A set of steps carved into the rock spiraled upward from the floor of the cave and Mynos bounded up them two at a time. They led to the castle high above, which sat proudly upon the cliffs overlooking the ocean. Leaping up the stairs, Mynos finally came to the top. He pushed the mechanism on the wall which opened the secret door in front of him. The large stone edifice rumbled to the side, revealing the ornate chapel of Castle Templestone beyond. Without hesitation, Mynos darted through the opening and closed the passageway behind him.

"Mynos!" yelled a handsome, dark-haired man sprinting up the aisle. Mynos recognized him as a knight from the Order of the Wolverine. "King Timothy just sent me to find you."

"Sir Benjamin! What has happened here?" The dragon spared him a glance, but didn't break his stride. The young Wolverine fell in step beside him.

"The Crystal has been stolen! When we realized it wasn't on its shelf in the Great Library, we closed the castle gates and took a head count, but the Crystal is nowhere to be found."

Mynos concentrated on his talisman, and heard its faint call, far away.

"It is no longer at the castle," Mynos said gravely. "Whoever has taken it must have had means to make a portal. The Crystal is hundreds of miles to the east."

Sir Benjamin stumbled at that revelation, having to trot to keep up with the long strides of the dragon's human legs.

"Is everyone present and accounted for?" Mynos asked, whipping around to face the shocked knight.

"No, sir. There is a Wolverine missing. Sir Vincent."

“Did he have a scouting mission this morn? Could he still be on the fields somewhere?”

“No. I saw him myself just before the Crystal was taken. He seemed worried and distracted. I didn’t think anything of it until the Captain declared him missing.”

“Has anyone come or gone from the castle that might have had access to the Crystal?” Mynos asked as they reached the Grand Staircase. He climbed them two at a time, making his way toward the royal apartments. Sir Benjamin followed.

“Lord and Lady Dufonte arrived this morning just after dawn, but we searched their entourage and everyone they brought with them. They are still at the castle.”

“Could they have smuggled anyone in?”

“It’s possible,” Benjamin conceded.

“Keep them here and don’t let them leave before the Crystal is found. Until we find out what happened to it, everyone is suspect.”

Nodding, Sir Benjamin raced back down the stairs.



King Timothy tried to crack a smile as the dragon walked into his chamber unannounced. He was in his bed, with strength enough only to lift his hand in greeting. His usual exuberant self was now wasting away while his body rapidly aged without the power of the Crystal. From the moment Mynos had given King Timothy his gem years before, he’d ceased to age, his sandy brown hair and well-kept goatee never grew any gray, even when his age surpassed those of his peers and beyond. Mynos’s heart sank when he gazed at his friend of the past two centuries. Timothy’s hair was a shock of white, his eyes unfocused and glazed.

“You have heard?” the king’s voice whispered, no longer booming with authority.

Mynos took his hand and knelt by his bedside. “I will find it again, Your Majesty,” the dragon vowed.

Nodding, Timothy coughed into his handkerchief and slapped away the hands of his two female nurses, who looked at him with pity and tears in their eyes.

“I’m not dead yet,” he barked at them, bringing a small smile to his lips. Even through the wrinkles on his face, Timothy’s smile revealed the handsome man he had once been. The nurses scoffed at him, but retreated across the room and continued to watch him worriedly.

“I need you to promise me something, Mynos,” the king demanded, his grip tightening on Mynos’s hand.

“What, Your Majesty?”

“Promise me when I’m gone, you will make sure the next sovereign of Lyndaria is fair and just.”

Mynos began to protest until the king held up his hand.

“I trust you, dragon,” the king rasped. “You know who my choice is for my successor.”

“Yes, I know,” Mynos whispered as he bowed his head.

“He will make a fine king, Mynos. We both know this. He is like my own son.”

“I will find my Crystal before that happens,” Mynos said without conviction.

“Do not fool yourself,” the king groaned. “You know as well as I that I am dying.

Even now I can feel my body wasting away. I have had a good, long life, Mynos. I am ready for death.”

A single golden tear escaped the dragon’s slitted eye at that moment and dropped to the floor, embedding itself into the stone. “You have been a good friend,” Mynos said.

“As have you, dragon.” They looked sadly at each other, both knowing it would be for the last time. “Go. Find your Crystal,” King Timothy whispered, his own tears falling freely.

“I will not fail you, Your Majesty,” Mynos promised as he stood, giving the king a deep bow before walking briskly from the room.



Chapter Three

Mynos wasted no time before he sent his rallying call to every dragon, young and old, not only to help him in the search, but also to have enough power to defeat the one who stole the Crystal. He knew whoever had stolen it must have some vestige of magical ability themselves, and just a little ability was all the Crystal needed to enhance the user's magic. They would become hundreds of times stronger, thus becoming a formidable foe indeed.

Mynos knew every single dragon felt the shockwave, the same one that tossed him out of the sky and into the ocean. Anyone familiar with magic would have felt it, the disruption in the magical flow around every living thing.

Sending his thoughts first to his mate Malnan, Mynos asked her to send her thoughts to others, and have them contact even more until every dragon far and wide knew of the theft from Castle Templestone.

That afternoon, as Mynos stood once again in his true form waiting in the fields beyond the cliffs, the others began to arrive. Some opened magic portals from their lairs to the castle, while others were close enough to fly there. Reds, blues, greens, and even a few black dragons circled in the sky, bringing shocked gasps from the Wolverines guarding the battlements of the castle.

Mynos was pleased. There was no chance the thief who had stolen his Crystal could possibly stand against an army of dragons. No chance at all.



"Did you know there were so many dragons in the world, Benji?" Sir William of Winterborne asked, his eyes bulging out of his head.

Benjamin gazed at the sky in awe and smiled the Captain of the Guard. "No I didn't, Will," he answered. "But I do know that with an army such as this, Mynos will succeed. He will bring the Crystal back."

"I do not doubt it," Sir William said with a shudder, once again gazing at the sky. His entire body trembled at the sight before him. "However, King Timothy will be dead

before he returns.”

“Do not think of such things.” Benjamin scowled.

“I only speak what we both know to be true.”

Benjamin didn’t answer his friend; he merely watched as Mynos launched himself into the sky to join his brethren. Suddenly Benjamin realized Mynos was the only golden dragon among them. He pondered that until his Captain’s voice interrupted his thoughts.

“The question is,” Sir William said, “who will be king after Timothy has passed?”

Benjamin shrugged and tried not to think about it. The last thing he wanted was for his sovereign to die, the man who had been like a father to him.

Who could possibly replace the noble and just King Timothy?



Malnan circled in the sky above Castle Templestone, her green scales glistening in the sunlight. She had just arrived, flying over the Silver Sea from the Isle of Dragons, her belly round with eggs. She was large and clumsy as she flew, and she knew Mynos would scold her for insisting on joining him.

At that moment, Mynos spotted her and jumped into the sky, his voice booming inside of her mind.

“Malnan, I told you to stay on the island!” he yelled at her mentally.

“I want to help you, Mynos!” she yelled back.

“Not now, not pregnant as you are!”

Malnan turned and beat her wings fiercely, holding her position in the sky as Mynos approached.

“You might need me,” she tried to reason.

“I have rallied the dragons,” Mynos said, circling her. *“You will not be needed.”*

Finally, Malnan’s worry for her mate broke through. *“You could get hurt!”*

“I will not be hurt, my love,” he told her soothingly. *“The Crystal cannot harm me.”*

“You can still be slain, Mynos,” she objected. Malnan mentally sent Mynos the images of Estriel, slain in her human form by a mortal, the man she had professed to love so many years ago.

“That will not happen.” Mynos heaved an inward sigh.

After agonizing moments of silence, Malnan finally acquiesced, nodding her delicate green head as she alighted softly on the ground. Mynos landed next to her and rested his head on her sleek neck.

“You have nothing to fear,” he told her out loud. “I want you to stay here at the castle, Malnan.”

Taking a deep breath, Malnan reluctantly agreed as Mynos gave her a loving smile. Once their goodbyes were said, Mynos leapt into the sky. The beautiful green dragon waited until the others had followed Mynos east before she too leapt into the sky and followed at a distance.

Mynos was her mate and he was in danger. She was *not* going to be left behind.



Chapter Four

Mynos flew over the King's Mountains and into the country beyond, leading throngs of dragons behind him. The call of the Crystal beckoned him through the night and into the early morning hours, getting closer and closer with every beat of his powerful wings.

Whoever had stolen the Crystal was not fleeing; they were holding their position in the high mountains on the eastern border of Lyndaria, as if waiting for him to come. It was unsettling to a degree, but Mynos was confident. He would retrieve his Crystal.

The sun peeked over the horizon when Mynos circled in the sky, alerting the others he'd found his talisman. A wide valley spread out before them as did a large army of men in formation, ready to fight. In their center stood a tall man, his hands glowing with the light of the Crystal. An army was the last thing Mynos had expected.

As soon as the dragons were spotted, the power of the Crystal was unleashed, surprising them with its fury. For the first time in his long life, Mynos felt the icy fingers of fear creeping up his spine. This was no ordinary army. It was an army of mages! And to his horror, every single mage was channeling their magic through the Crystal.

Lightning cracked out of a clear blue sky, striking one large blue dragon, and arching out to several others. Their shrieks could be heard above the booming thunder, and the dragons fell like stones to the valley floor.

Mynos stared at the slain dragons on the ground in shock and disbelief. How had this happened? How could mere mortals bring down five magnificent dragons?

The other dragons were taken off guard as well, never having seen their kind defeated so easily. In their moment of hesitation, the army on the ground attacked again. A massive fireball erupted from the man holding the Crystal, the intensity of the fire heightened by the power of the mages all focusing on it at once. It was huge—at least as large as twenty dragons—as it hurtled through the sky, striking and killing every wyrm in its path. It consumed them instantly until there was nothing left of their majestic bodies but ash falling softly down to earth.

Mynos didn't waste time wondering how the men had learned to link their minds and focus as one through the Crystal. It was incomprehensible the power they were

wielding. They had to be stopped.

Circling the army, Mynos bellowed, "Follow me!"

Dragons flew behind him as he sailed low over the trees. He felt the fires in his belly ignite, demanding to be released. As soon as he had the army in his sight, he exhaled mightily, shooting his own colossal plume of flame down upon their ranks. The other dragons followed suit, releasing their breath in kind, some with fire, some spewing acid, while others emitted a streaming cone of ice.

Scores of mages fell, but not enough. They were shielded by their combined magic, yet the surrounding trees had caught fire, turning the valley floor into a raging inferno.

The army released their magic through the Crystal again and again, and more dragons fell out of the sky. Not only was this army powerful, but it was also as if they knew a dragon's weakness, as if they knew exactly where to strike. The air pulsed and rippled like waves on the ocean, tossing dragons this way and that, slamming them brutally against the ground, some breaking wings, others breaking necks.

The wounded lay writhing on the ground, yet had no solace, as more lightning cracked down to finish them. In a matter of minutes, there seemed to be more dead and wounded dragons on the ground than there were in the sky.

As those remaining flew wide over the army, they used their magic to try to weaken the shield surrounding the men. While it slowly deteriorated, more dragons flew low over the valley, releasing their destructive breath, taking down more of the magic users.

Mynos spotted the one holding the Crystal in the middle of the fray. Paying no attention to the destruction around him, the man was concentrating solely on the glowing gem clutched in his hands.

Sir Vincent! One of King Timothy's own Wolverines had betrayed him.

Anger flared in the dragon's golden eyes as he wheeled in the sky, avoiding whatever spells they threw at him. At that moment, another fireball was launched, heading directly for him. It was traveling too fast, and seemed to follow him as he ducked and darted through the wind currents. Mynos's heart hitched. He wondered if this was the last thing he'd ever see.

Then unexplainably, the fireball exploded moments before it reached him! His eyes wide, Mynos watched as the remnants of the fireball burned in a rain of fire on the army below. He sent up a silent prayer of thanks for his sister's enchantment that prevented the Crystal from harming him.

With that thought firmly in his mind, Mynos knew what had to be done.



Malnan couldn't believe the sight before her as she flew unseen into the valley. Hot tears rolled down her face as scores of dragons fell from the sky, some shrieking at their inevitable demise, others dead before they even hit the ground. The carnage was unbelievable, as already many bodies of both dragons and men littered the ground.

Searching the skies, Malnan found Mynos easily enough, his bright golden scales glistening in the sun. Breathing a sigh of relief, Malnan knew Mynos was safe from the Crystal as he twirled through the air, the proof of Estriel's enchantment before her very

eyes. She watched as a huge fireball exploded and fizzled on the ranks of mages.

Screams of surprise could be heard on the ground. Malnan watched the mages stare in awe at the golden dragon who had defied their magic. She was too far away to be sure, but she could have sworn fear was etched on their faces.

Lightning and fire continued to pummel the dragons in the sky until only a scant few remained. Tears choked her at that point, hoping against hope that all was not lost. Seeing the dead on the ground, Malnan did the only thing she could do. Using her magic to hide herself from the eyes of the mages, Malnan dropped to the ground and instantly transformed her body, turning herself into a human.

Chanting frantically, Malnan consecrated body after body of the dead, leaving glittering gems in the grass behind her. If dragonkind was going to fall this day, Malnan was determined to keep their spirits alive through the talismans their bodies created. First a faceted blue stone, and then a red ruby, followed by a tear-shaped lavender jewel.

But at that moment, Malnan was spotted by the army of Mages.

With tears in her eyes, Malnan grabbed the lavender gem and frantically bonded herself to it, knowing it was now her only chance to survive. She felt the tugging of her soul as it joined with the jewel, only seconds before a thunderous fireball roared over her.

When the fire abated, only smoldering ashes remained in its wake.



Mynos spotted Malnan at the exact moment the mages did. He noticed all at once the magic she was weaving, as well as the lavender jewel she held in her hands. He tried to reach her in time, he tried to shield her from the army, but it was too late. The fireball consumed her, and within moments, Malnan was gone.



Chapter Five

Rage, pain, sorrow, and shock slammed through Mynos in that one agonizing moment. Flying low over the landscape, he searched the scorched earth, yet found nothing but seared dirt and flaming brush.

“Malnan!” he screamed in his anguish. *“Malnan! Noooo!”*

He didn’t even see a trace of the jewel she’d been clutching, just blackened soil where she had stood only seconds before. The fire didn’t leave a single trace of her body.

It struck the dragon that Malnan and the offspring she carried were dead.

Something snapped inside of Mynos. He no longer cared if he lived or died—he was determined that all in the valley would feel his wrath. Around him, the remaining dragons fell from the sky, screeching their final cries that echoed off the snowy mountains.

Mynos heard none of it.

Turning in the sky, he howled with a fury so strong the entire countryside shook at its intensity as he aimed straight for the remnants of the human army. They might be shielded from his magic, but they weren’t shielded from his mighty claws.

None of the mages were prepared for a dragon to so blatantly attack them, assuming the formidable power of the Crystal would keep them at bay. But this dragon was different. No matter what they cast, he seemed to shrug off their magic. Frantically they continued casting at him, but to no avail.

Flying into their midst, Mynos landed hard, crushing a few mages under his feet while spreading his wings and swinging his tail so hard he could feel their bones cracking and giving way from the force of it. Screams of pain rent the air making Mynos smile in his bloodlust, not caring any longer for the retrieval of his Crystal. These mortals had killed his mate—the only bright spot in his life—and they were going to pay with their *own* lives.

The mages scattered but had nowhere to flee. The terrain was ablaze from Mynos’s fiery breath, and the ground was covered with slick, green acid other dragons had breathed before their demise. Those who weren’t killed by Mynos’s assault fell shortly thereafter attempting to flee into the hellish landscape.

By the time Mynos finally came to his senses, both his talons and his jaws were stained red with blood. The only mortal still standing was Sir Vincent who was paralyzed with fear, staring aghast into the dragon's enraged golden eyes. Mynos could tell the traitorous Wolverine was no longer concentrating on channeling his magic; he was too frightened to do much more than tremble before the colossal dragon. He fell to his knees in surrender.

Without a single thought of remorse, Mynos inhaled and released his mighty breath one last time, engulfing Sir Vincent wholly and completely before he could even scream. When the dragon finally quenched the flame, nothing was left of the man. The only remnant Sir Vincent of Westchester left behind was the Crystal of Mynos winking innocently on the steaming soil.



Mynos hung his human head in sorrow as he stood on the battlements of Castle Templestone and gazed out upon the Silver Sea. It had been an agonizing three weeks since Malnan died, since every dragon died. Every one but him. As he thought more and more, it seemed Estriel's enchantment upon the Crystal was more of a curse than a blessing.

He hadn't died—hadn't even been hurt—and yet the cries of his brethren echoed loudly in his ears. Guilt such as he'd never known was riding him hard, for Mynos now lived with the knowledge that it was because of his talisman all of dragonkind had been killed. And he himself led them to the slaughter.

He tried to tell himself that he couldn't have known about the army of mages in that valley. He couldn't have known they'd succeeded in merging their consciousness to channel simultaneously through the Crystal. If he'd known that, he would have gone alone. He should have gone alone anyhow. He knew his talisman couldn't hurt him. Then again, he hadn't known such a massacre was even possible. Not by mortals.

Now the dragons were gone. Not one remained to fly in the sky, except for him. How could he live with such knowledge? Knowing that he was the last of his kind? There was no hope now, at least not for Mynos.

King Timothy had died not long after the dragon left the castle. In his absence, the nobles present at court squabbled over which family had the right to the throne. By the time Mynos returned with his Crystal safe once again, the fighting for the throne had grown rampant. Three duels and countless fistfights had been evidence of the attitude at the castle. However, all arguing stopped when the news spread of the carnage in the eastern mountains.

Regardless of the fact the eastern mountains were already named the Mountains of the Night due to their pitch-black soil, they were now being called the Dragon's Death Mountains—the black sand a seeming testament to the dragons' fire that had scorched the terrain.

Even in Mynos's grief, he was able to make King Timothy's final wishes known, and crowned Sir Benjamin as Lyndaria's new king. The news had shocked Ben, but hadn't shocked anyone else. They'd all seen the familial love between their king and the young Wolverine, as if Ben had been his own son, and knew Sir Benjamin would make a wonderful king indeed.

Mynos glanced down at his Crystal clutched firmly in his hand. He hadn't parted with it since that horrible day. He couldn't allow it to fall into the wrong hands again. He had to let King Benjamin know Lyndaria would no longer have its luxury.

It was time for the Crystal to rest.



Chapter Six

“Are you sure it must be this way?” King Benjamin asked as he walked with Mynos through the colorful gardens of the castle.

“Yes, Your Majesty,” Mynos said softly as he admired the flowers.

“Please Mynos, don’t call me that.”

“You are king now, Ben,” the dragon reminded him, lifting his human head to look at the young monarch.

“Yes, I know,” he answered, rubbing the pommel of his sword, refusing to take it off regardless of the fact that he was now royalty, no longer just a Wolverine. “But King Timothy was ‘Your Majesty.’ I’m simply Sir Benjamin of Stollinshire.”

Mynos smiled as he placed a hand on his shoulder. “You will get used to it, my son.” After a few moments of silence, he added, “I have enchanted my Crystal again for the first time since I created it.”

Ben looked at him in bewilderment. “Why?”

“Never again will a man be able to touch it and live. My Crystal will remember Malnan’s death and exact its revenge on any man who dares lay a hand on it again.”

“No one can ever touch it?” the king asked in shock.

Mynos shook his golden head at him. “No *man*. Only a woman will be able to survive the bonding of the Crystal.”

Benjamin’s thoughts were far away as the two of them continued to walk through the fragrant flowers. Taking in all that Mynos had told him was almost too much to bear. Tears collected in his eyes as he faced the dragon again.

“I will miss you, Mynos,” he said in a shaky voice.

“I will still be here.”

“Here, but not here,” Ben said, dropping his gaze.

“I cannot live as I am now.” The dragon sounded defeated as he stood there looking silently up at the sky, as if hoping to see something that wasn’t there. “But I will not leave Lyndaria completely defenseless. If I am needed, you will be able to bring me back.”

“Can I visit you?” Benjamin asked, his face hopeful.

“Any time you wish. I will still be able to hear you.”

Without warning, the newly crowned king of Lyndaria grabbed the ancient dragon in a tearful hug. “You will not be forgotten, Mynos. I will see to that.”

As they pulled back to look at each other, Benjamin saw the glittering unshed tears in Mynos’s golden eyes.



Setting the quill into the jar of magical ink, Mynos watched as the words he’d just written on the scroll began to disappear. The ink itself was a beautiful shade of silver, with flecks of light twinkling within, yet it could only be read by the light of the Crystal.

Rolling the parchment, the dragon placed it inside an ornate leather scroll case King Benjamin himself commissioned to be made for him. It was embossed with many dragons and etched with the words *Never Forget*. Mynos smiled sadly at that, knowing full well mankind *would* forget. Eventually.

He placed the case in a niche in the wall of his lair, then turned toward the mouth of the cave with the Crystal in his hand. There was only one place for the Crystal now, one place where no one would ever find it. He stared down at the glowing gem, wishing things could have been different.

Changing back into his true form, Mynos leapt from the mouth of the cave and spread his wings wide, making his final journey to the Isle of Dragons.



He found the cave easily enough, the lair where both he and Estriel had been born so many countless years ago. It was the perfect hiding place for the Crystal, as only dragons knew this isle existed beyond the dormant volcano of Aeryn Island in the Silver Sea. Mynos was the last of his kind—his Crystal would never be found.

Placing the Crystal upon the very stone Estriel’s egg had been perched centuries ago, Mynos could hear its many voices tinkling inside of his head. “*Mynos!*” they whispered. “*Give me peace!*”

“Rest now,” he answered. “You will not be disturbed here.”

“*I am sorry. So very sorry.*”

“I am, too,” he murmured forlornly as he turned to leave. “Sleep well, sister.”



Chapter Seven

When Mynos finally returned to his cave in the cliffs underneath Castle Templestone, he glanced one more time at the scroll case that contained the spell he had written. Now with his gem hidden, he knew it would be a very long time before anyone could figure out how to read the ink without the light of the Crystal. And he was looking forward to a long and peaceful slumber.

He'd told King Benjamin that he would be able to bring him back if he ever needed him again, but the dragon hoped it wouldn't be too soon. The spell on the scroll would indeed wake him, and hopefully when he awoke he would no longer be plagued with such overpowering guilt and loneliness.

What he had told the king was true; he could no longer live as he was. It was too painful living with the knowledge Mynos had, the knowledge that he was responsible...for everything.

Curling his huge body into a ball, Mynos breathed a sigh of relief, knowing he was giving himself the peace he craved. Whispering the words of an ancient elven spell, Mynos felt his body slowly hardening as it turned to stone. His last thought was of his beautiful mate Malnan, and he hoped for all he was worth that he would not dream in his stony sleep.



Hundreds of miles away, the Crystal of Mynos glittered wildly, casting thousands of refracted rainbows on the walls inside its cave on the Isle of Dragons.

"Sleep well, Mynos," its many voices tinkled to no one in particular as its light was suddenly extinguished, leaving nothing but silence and dark shadows within the cavern.



50 Years Later...

"Oh, Peter, look at this one!" An excited woman squealed as she held up a shining bauble from the jewelry vendor's cart.

Lord Peter of Evendria looked unimpressed. "It is too small, my love," he said to his wife, sighing as he took it from her to watch it wink at him in the sunlight.

"Ooh, how about this?" His wife suddenly gasped in awe as she lifted a large, tear-shaped lavender gem to her face. It fit into the palm of her hand and glittered magnificently in the sunlight, despite the fact that it had no facets.

"That is spectacular, Therese," Lord Peter whispered as he held it up to admire it. "It would make a lovely necklace, don't you think?"

Lady Therese of Evendria nodded furiously, rejoicing that her husband was in such a good mood to spend his money.

"How much for this one?" the man asked, holding up the lavender jewel to the vendor.

"Ah, you have marvelous taste, my lord. That piece is only five thousand gold ladies."

"Five *thousand*?" Lord Peter yelped before his wife nudged him painfully in the ribs.

"Pay the man, dear," she said sweetly as she grabbed the gem from his hands, marveling that it was so warm to the touch.

Lord Peter grumbled all the while as he ordered his footmen to pay the man from the large coin chests on his carriage.

"Where did you find such a large jewel?" he asked the vendor curiously.

"It was mined directly from the Dragon's Death Mountains. You won't find another one quite like it."

Lady Therese crooned to herself as she held the jewel close to her, still amazed at its warmth in her hand. "Yes, this jewel will make a perfect necklace!" She smiled with delight.

At that moment, Lady Therese heard a faint voice.

"*Mynos*," it whispered softly.

"Did you say something, dear?" she asked her husband who was overseeing the payment to the vendor.

"What? No, I didn't say a thing."

"Curious," the lady murmured, gazing down at the lavender gem. It sparkled, as if from its own inner light. "Curious indeed."

THE END... AND THE BEGINNING...



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Rebecca Goings writes both mainstream and inspirational romances. She has received both the Reader's Choice Award from eCataromance as well as the Golden Rose Award for her inspirational romance HEART OF GOLD for Best Inspirational Romance of 2005. Her novella SINCERELY YOURS also won two Honorable Mentions in the Golden Rose Awards, one for Best Inspirational Romance as well as one for Best Novella of 2005. SINCERELY YOURS was also a nominee in The Romance Studio's CAPA awards. Her novella UNDERNEATH THE MISTLETOE was a finalist in the RIO Awards for Best Story in an Anthology and her short fantasy story, THE CRYSTAL OF MYNOS, was in the top ten of the Preditors and Editors poll for Best Fantasy Short Story. The first novel in her Wolverine Chronicles, THE WOLVERINE AND THE ROSE, won the eCataromance Reader's Choice Award for Best Fantasy Romance of 2005.

She enjoys writing many different genres of romance, from historical to contemporary, and fantasy to paranormal. Her life's goal has been to become an author, and finally she is living her dream. She loves to crochet in her spare time, and watches many different TV series through NetFlix with her husband. She also homeschools her children and finds it to be one of the most rewarding things she's ever done.

Rebecca lives in the Pacific Northwest with her husband Jim, and their four children, two cats, a dog, and a lizard.



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