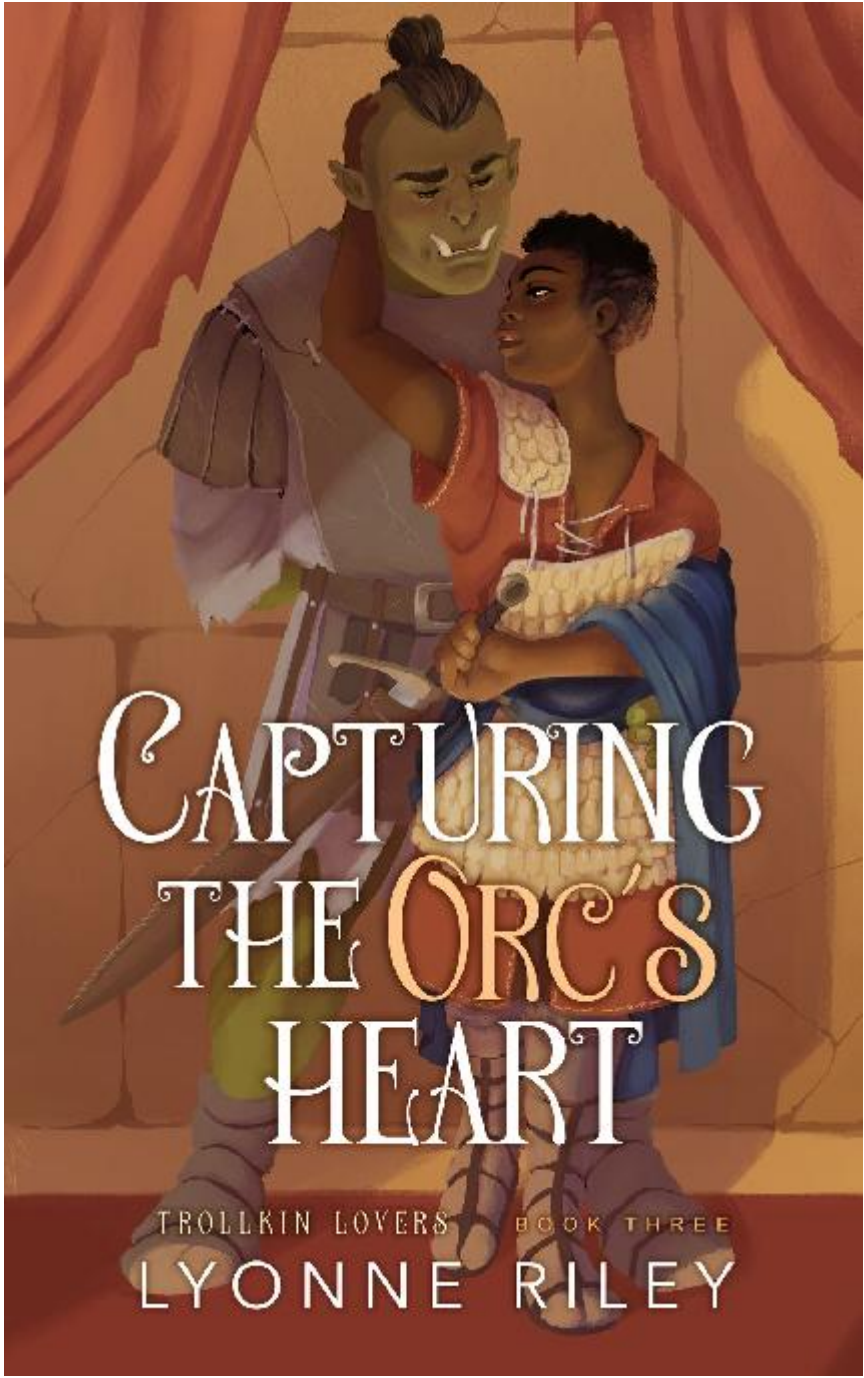


# CAPTURING THE ORC'S HEART

TROLLKIN LOVERS      BOOK THREE  
LYONNE RILEY



CAPTURING  
THE ORC'S  
HEART

TROLLKIN LOVERS BOOK THREE

LYONNE RILEY

# CAPTURING THE ORC'S HEART

---

TROLLKIN LOVERS

BOOK THREE

LYONNE RILEY

Cover art by Rowan Woodcock

Spot illustrations by Keith Montalbo

Copyright © 2023 by Lyonne Riley

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

# CONTENTS

[Introduction](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 17](#)

[Chapter 18](#)

[Join My Newsletter!](#)

[Also by Lyonne Riley.](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

## INTRODUCTION

Dishonored and heartbroken, the orcish Lieutenant Agkar has just transferred to the inhospitable desert of the Hazrain—a neutral zone between human and trollkin—to work in the city guard. But he despises his new superior officer, Captain Zirelle Mastair, a human woman who gets to boss him around day in and day out.

The tough-as-nails Captain Mastair doesn't care much for the impertinent orc lieutenant either, who gets in the way of her all-important work. Yet she senses a deep wound underneath his hard exterior that speaks to her own. What scarred him so much that he came to the barren desert to escape it?

While on a mission to track down a fugitive, the captain and the lieutenant are stranded in a cavern hideout. Will all of their pent-up frustration with one other finally burst?

## CONTENT WARNINGS

- Alcoholism
- Violence
- Mentions of slavery

- Power imbalance
- Assassination (off-screen)
- Mentions of drugs and drug use
- Accidental pregnancy
- Mortal wounds
- Breeding

## CHAPTER 1

---



### ZIRELLE

There's a new guy coming in today, or so they tell me.

"Be nice, Captain," Corporal Jar'kel says.

I give him a withering smile. "I'm always nice." We both know this isn't true, but the one-tusked troll doesn't argue. I might be human, but he's still my underling, and he knows better by now.

"However..." Jar'kel sniffs the air. "You reek like alcohol today. Perhaps this is not the best way to greet the new lieutenant."

Right. Last night I stayed out drinking until I'd forgotten all about the pile of paperwork waiting for me on my desk. When my mind was finally numb and quiet, I stumbled back to my little house outside the barracks and passed out in my hammock. That's not helping me much this morning. My head is still hammering, and my blood feels too thick, but it was worth it just for the rare sense of calm I managed to feel without the needs of this great city hanging over my head.



That's the cost of the position that I wanted so much, the one I've fought so hard for, and I will keep paying the toll.

I sigh. "The lieutenant's going to be here regardless of how I smell. There's nothing to do about it now." I sign off on some papers and add them to the outgoing pile. "Where's he coming from?"

Jar'kel shakes his head, clearly unhappy with what he's about to say. "The frontier. Part of the expansion effort."

That's just lovely. Though tensions in Attirex have eased a little since the war officially ended, we humans won't forget how the trollkin razed our towns to the ground. And yet I have to treat them as if none of this happened. Here in the city guard, we are a part of our respective nations and yet separate. Even if our peoples fight, we don't. That's the agreement—but it doesn't mean we have to like each other. As long as we do our jobs, we can keep the peace in our city.

"It's time," Jar'kel says. "He should be arriving any minute."

With a grunt of acknowledgment, I rise from my chair and we make our way to the ancient throne room, where some monarch ruled over the Hazrain once upon a time.

Recently, a bitchy old trolless retired, vacating her position. It's critical to keep a balance of humans and trollkin on staff, so now they're bringing in her replacement. I know the position's been hard to fill with all the best recruits out on the frontier, occupying their new stolen territories. Whoever we get will be someone who wasn't wanted anywhere else in the Grand Chieftain's empire, so I have very low expectations.

I'm surprised at who walks in the room.

He's big, bigger than any orc I've ever seen, with both sides of his head shaved and his hair pulled up in a high topknot, which makes him look even taller. He has a commanding face, with a big square jaw and sculpted cheekbones, and large tusks that pull up his lips on either side of his mouth. He looks on the young side for his rank, but his uniform is covered in patches and medals. He's accomplished a lot in spite of his youth.

Right away I'm certain that this new orc lieutenant will not be a positive addition to our team. From his walk, from his posture when he comes to a halt in front of us, I can tell he has an ego on him.

And he has a haunted look in his eyes I don't like.

"Welcome," I say in Trollkin, his native language, and hold out my hand. As the first in command, it's my job to begin the introductions. I expect him to say the token *thank you*, spoken in Freysian, back to me.

"Thank you," the lieutenant says—in Trollkin. I glare at Corporal Jar'kel. These are the rules. This is how we acknowledge one another's place here and our agreement to keep the peace together.

"The lieutenant doesn't speak any Freysian," Jar'kel dutifully explains.

I huff. "You brought me someone who can't even talk to half the locals?"

The lieutenant glances between us, irritated that we're talking around him.

"You will have to learn how to speak Freysian to do your job properly," I say in his native tongue, leveling a glare on him. "What was your name?"

He bristles all over, but he'll understand soon enough that even though I'm human, I'm still his superior, and not even an impertinent look in someone's eye is acceptable to me. We run a tight ship in the Attirex guard.

"Agkar," the orc says, lips tight. "Lieutenant Agkar."

"Lieutenant Agkar." I give him a curt nod. "Welcome to the Hazrain. May your sword stay sharp and your armor never rust." It's a traditional greeting here in the desert, where we are constantly pelted by the wind and rough sands.

"Thank you for the warm welcome, sir." I know he's only saying it because he has to. "I look forward to working with you."



## AGKAR

It was one of the most bald-faced lies I'd ever told. *I look forward to working with you.* There's nothing I look forward to less than working side-by-side with this woman. This *human* woman.

Captain Zirelle Mastair. She carries a coldness in her nearly black eyes that I return in kind. She has deep brown skin and curly hair, and holds herself with a superiority that immediately grates on me. I will not be looked down upon by a human like I'm a dog to do her bidding.

She wants me to learn to speak her tongue, too, as if I would ever stoop to wrap my mouth around those slippery

syllables. This captain is sadly mistaken if she thinks I'm here for language lessons.

Now that the formalities are over with and we've all shaken hands, it's time to get to work. At least I can lose myself in that.



I must admit that despite having to trek through the endless desert to reach it, Attirex is a beautiful city. Crimson and emerald tents spread across the sand like a great blossoming flower, seething with activity. Everything is decorated with gold, from the canopies to the statues to the women. Orcs, trolls, and humans alike wear earrings of gold, necklaces of gold, bracelets and anklets and rings of gold. There is an unexpected, mysterious beauty to the low-set, clay buildings and high, curved archways. The whole city breathes as if it were alive.

As I travel down rows and rows of tents, I pick up a scent I've never smelled before—something spicy and sweet and a little herbal that seems to emanate from everywhere and nowhere at once. It's so unlike anything I've experienced that for a moment, I forget about the loss and dishonor that led me here. I'm swallowed up by the strangeness of it, the beauty of it, the exotic and foreign idea of humans and trollkin both traversing the same streets and visiting the same shops.

I thought that perhaps, in this great, bustling city, I might be able to find peace. Perhaps I could abandon this sick feeling in my chest and discover my salvation—but after meeting the captain today, I have my doubts.

My very first task is paperwork, of all things. Hundreds of shipments travel through Attirex every day, and some are brought here and searched for goods that might raise the alarm. I'll be made aware of any suspicious cargo and asked to weigh in on what should be done with it. Mostly, we want to ensure people paid their taxes, as that is what supports our efforts here to keep the peace in the first place. On top of playing lawman, I also get to be a glorified tax collector.

Thrilling.

Fights break out frequently between humans and trollkin around the city—as expected—and it's up to the city guard to quell them. Repeat offenders end up in the stocks for everyone to see and mock and occasionally, they even throw produce. Humiliation is one of the best deterrents.

We're also tasked with keeping tabs on the various criminal elements that call Attirex home. They lurk beneath the city, only emerging to take advantage of merchant caravans and smuggle goods in and out. It's a constant drain on us to search the tunnels and monitor known hideouts.

I've only been on the job a week when I hear the captain call over my shoulder. "Ah, Lieutenant." It's hard to mistake her voice—the tenor isn't deep, but it has a richness that can carry a long distance without being loud. "The very orc I've been looking for."

I turn around, not even attempting to mask my annoyance at the interruption. I've already been introduced to the captain's style. She likes to have her hands in a little bit of everything, micromanaging us into doing each task exactly to her specifications. It's a thorn in my side I can't pull out. I already miss Gagzen, the frontier town where I was the top of the food chain and I could run my ship however I chose. I

didn't bother my soldiers as long as they completed their duties. Captain Mastair won't even let us take a lunch unless it's our scheduled shift.

“Hello, Captain,” I say in Trollkin, smirking down at her. It's hard to be intimidated when I stand a solid foot and a half taller than she does. ...