



Ruled

Caragh M. O'Brien

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The bracelet sits in his pocket, patiently waiting to be slipped around Gaia's wrist. Leon needs to see her again. He finds out that Gaia is delivering a baby in the village, and he makes the trip to visit the sixteen-year-old midwife—only to find that the birth is not going too well. The bracelet—and what it means to the both of them—will have to wait.

This short story takes place during the time between the second book in the Birthmarked trilogy (*Prized*) and the final book (*Promised*) and offers a rare glimpse into the mind and heart of Leon Grey.

Ruled Details

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From Reader Review Ruled for online ebook

Jennifer says

Much too short for my liking, but it was a good way to reacquaint myself with the characters before I start book 3.

Stacey says

I loved this little story between the books. It gave a little more depth to Gaia and Leon's relationship, and kind of let us know how things were between them during the years before their journey to New Sylum. I also enjoy a good birth story, so loved that it took place at a birth.

Gracie says

MUST. HAVE. THIS. BOOK. PRONTO. UGH!

Myrza H Darmaditya says

Just marry him, Gaia!

Katy says

2.5 stars - Hmm... This novella was kind of weird...

First of all, it took me a while to remember which brother Peter was... And once I did, the whole scene with Peter and Leon was just odd and misplaced. I didn't get the feeling that they were pals, but it didn't really seem like they were rivals either.

It was kind of cool that we got to watch a quick scene with a childbirth, considering what Gaia does. But Adele's reaction to Leon was also a little strange, and I couldn't tell if it was because she was delirious after childbirth or if it was because of a previous grudge. And the novella offers no explanation, leaving us to wonder.

And it was weird because after the childbirth, one minute Peter was there, then Leon sat down and closed his eyes, and I don't know how long passed before Gaia appeared, but we didn't really see Peter leave the scene, though I assumed he did. I'm going to guess he's wandering around or that he's sitting on the canoe waiting for Leon to show up to go back?

But we saw a sneak peek romantic scene with Leon and Gaia, so I guess we'll see how Promised will turn out.

Butterfly says

2.5 maybe? I wasn't exactly expecting this but...well...I don't really know.

Clare Cannon says

This brief interlude in between books two and three of the Birthmarked trilogy gives insight into Leon's desire to be accepted by the people of Sylum, and the continual frustration that he is not. We also see his longing to elicit Gaia's commitment to their relationship, and his efforts to be patient with her and with himself. In this brief episode nothing is achieved toward either goal, yet neither is anything lost. It does help us to understand Leon better, and gives some perspective to his seemingly rash attitude in book two.
www.GoodReadingGuide.com

This book is published by Tor as a free e-book at <http://www.tor.com/stories/2012/09/ruled>

Ley says

Great, quick read!

Carla says

Yes, she should just marry him!

Flying Off The Shelves says

This review is of the trilogy as a whole as well as per book/short story. Enjoy!

I went into this series expecting the same old drivel we have come to know as YA dystopian fiction, happily I was surprised. The themes in this story are quite on point when we speak about people's rights bridging this topic across gender rights, to parental rights to caste systems. These are the themes that really gripped me. They were extremely well developed, much more so than one would expect in YA fiction.

The first part of the trilogy, we are focused on a patriarchal society with strict caste systems. The elite exist in the Enclave and the serfs exist outside the Wall. The main character is a teen-aged midwife whom according to their society must take the first three babies from the mothers she assists and "advance" them to the Enclave. Do not worry this isn't Soylent Green. They are "advanced" to join the elite families. We see how this theme comes into play when Gaia must "advance" her first baby. This scene was emotional and heart wrenching but almost fell flat for me. As a new mother, you would have to kill me before taking my child. And while the mother was sufficiently upset, I felt like Gaia got away too easily. I suppose that goes to show just how downtrodden these women were.

Personally, I was not very fond of the characters. I found them flat and wanting of a metaphorical burger. The only character who gained any depth was the main character, Gaia. The other characters went through various hardships which increased their interest for me but they just didn't do anything that made them special to me. I presume this was to keep the story focused around Gaia Stone and the issues she becomes aware of. To name a few of the issues that you see in this first book and carried through to the end:

Genetic diversity
Parental rights
Medical care
Societal responsibility
Resource management
Environmentalism
Caste Systems
Government Corruption
Big Brother/Eye in the Sky

While she started out trying to save her parents (like so many stories of this ilk), it becomes about these issues. Her soul purpose I feel is to humanize the issues for us by coming into contact with the various, yet plain characters in situations where these issues rule their lives.

To conclude the first installment of this trilogy, Gaia ends up in the Wasteland on a veritable suicide mission. Do not fret this is not really a spoiler as we all knew this was going to happen. What I really appreciated is that this book can stand alone! The additional books are great but if you found out you didn't really like this trilogy you don't feel like you HAVE to read it to the end. I found it incredibly satisfying.

Tortured picks up where we left off in Birthmarked but from a different point of view, Leon's. I feel like this bridge story was good except that it was exceptionally short. The one thing I really didn't like is that the other promotional material after this story was larger than the story itself! Story-wise, I really did enjoy getting the perspective of Leon. Personally, I feel like we missed out learning more about the Protectorat, his staff and his family. Granted torture is really horrible but I would have liked to see if his Stepmother/Mother, Genevieve came to him before finally helping him. Whether his siblings ever tried to help. I also eventually would love to see more from Myrna Silk. She has such potential to be an amazing character. Overall, very enjoyable and currently available for free on Amazon!

In the second part of this trilogy, Prized, leads us into a matriarchal society! I was really excited about this because so often we hear of patriarchal societies in fiction going bad it was interesting to see the flip side. There are many parallels to the society of the Enclave, probably because that is our judgement point. Just like in the first story we have a leader that is out of control. Gaia, of course, can't help herself and blows up their society through her lack of integration. This is a double edged sword as far as I am concerned because it is through her lack of respecting their society she causes many incidents. While many of these incidents were good in that they had to happen for the story not only to progress but also to discuss the various issues, they didn't have to happen that way. If she had even a slight respect for the new society, she would have been less careless, and caused less harm. This book in particular shows how while most YA fiction has a coming of age story, this one doesn't. Although Gaia does become older and goes on to take on responsible roles. I do not feel as if she has really grown. It's more of a by accident or happen stance that she progresses at all. There are a few exceptions to this thought, such as the baby she saves in the first book, but there aren't many. There are many more parts of this story that show she is the same from beginning to end, such as her interactions with Leon and her other beaus.

The second bridge story really brings the romance in this trilogy to the front. I loved how Leon came to love Gaia in a more complete adult way. However this also shows Gaia's immaturity when you view her actions in their relationship. I feel like her most adult action in their relationship is to not agree to marry him right

away. She shows she isn't ready over and over again. This story though shows that Leon definitely is getting there. This story was much more enjoyable than the other bridge story. However this one has the same problem, the promotional materials are longer than the story. I like this story more for the fact that it feels more complete.

To conclude this trilogy we have the matriarchal society joining the patriarchal society which are both dying out from lack of genetic diversity. For the patriarchal society, this is due to the age old problem of the pigs being more equal than the other farm animals (See Animal Farm). The Enclave sees themselves as high above those outside the wall and backed themselves into a genetic oubliette. Their answer is to increase the children coming in from outside the Wall. For the matriarchal society, this comes from environmental contamination and strict social roles that require "perfect" families. They backed themselves into dying out through fear of change and the accepting that they were just going to die out. After many, many more confrontations and conflicts they do merge as a complete society and our enemies get their comeuppance which is great. There was one particularly dreadful part of this book just before the end that will haunt me forever. As you get to the end you will immediately know to that which I speak. For the person going into reading this, be prepared and don't eat anything while reading the very end. I frequently had to put the book down to deal with my own reaction. Once that scene was over we finally get our happily ever after/beginning.

Overall this story gains a four rating not for its characters, but for its story telling and gripping themes. The style, themes, and feel remind me directly of *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. In fact, I would treat this trilogy as a companion to Ms. Atwood's book as many of the themes were similar in both. I found that this trilogy focused on so many issues in complex ways was fantastic, but I fear I am noticing a new trend in YA fiction. I fear YA fiction may be moving away from dense multi-dimensional characters with great plots and themes to a series of transparent characters that are disposable stand-ins for displaying themes and opening a discussion of issues. The lack of depth in the characters really made the last book of this trilogy a struggle to complete. Not because it wasn't good, it just wasn't emotionally rich enough to keep me wanting more. Even that scene to which I spoke, wasn't as emotional for the character as I feel it should have been. Looking back, I can say that I certainly felt enough for both the character and myself for that scene! All together this trilogy is definitely worth reading and even more so if you are part of a book club or have an interest in human rights. These themes will give you ideas and you will want to talk/debate them out. Happy reading!

Read more reviews at <http://flyingofftheshelves.blogspot.com>

Lesley says

Really look forward to reading the final book. Just love Leon!

Sonia Perez says

So Ruled is the short story that takes place between the second and third book of *Birthmarked*. It is told in Leon's perspective and gives you an inside look on his head as he is conflicted about Gaia. He is feeling uncertain and unsure of her feelings for him. He does not need to be afraid, I suppose it's impossible to stop; when you love someone you can't help it at all really.

It is very sweet. I have issues with the shortness of it. I mean if you're going to make a book from the love

interest of the protagonist couldn't she at least make a little more of a story so we can bask in more But oh well. I'll just have to be patient. It is good, 3 out of 5 stars.

Camille says

Marry him!

Karen says

Very sweet story from Leon's point of view. You really see how much he adores Gaia!

Carina Olsen says

Ruled is a short story set between Prized and Promised. It's told from Leon's point of view. And I adore Leon. I'm still upset about the second book in this series; Prized. But I did love the first one, Birthmarked. Disliked Prized because of stupid love triangles, like all books have these days. But still. Super excited for book three, which I'm starting today :) Anyway. Time for my review of Ruled :) Won't be very long, since the short story isn't that long.

I'm not sure how to feel about this short story. I love Leon. I adore him. He's so kind and gentle and sweet and loving. But I hate Gaia. I really do. She has no feelings in her heart at all. I don't think she cares for Leon. Not really. And that does break my heart. Because Leon deserves so much love. He's an amazing guy, and I hate that she treats him like this. It isn't fair. Not at all. And I'm not happy about it. Doesn't make me love the books. It just makes me heartbroken. But still. I love Leon.

And I love reading from Leon's point of view. Kind of wish the books had been from his point of view. Cause he really is an amazing character. I didn't like the beginning of this short story. Because Peter is there. And I don't like him. Not much. Plus, he's annoying. I actually didn't like this short story very much. It's only heartbreaking and sad. But still giving it four stars. Because I loved Leon so much, and this story is interesting :) You should read it if you have read the other books. Truly.

This is my favorite quote from this short story: "The more he thought about it, the more Leon hated being on a string. He wondered why it wasn't the other way around. Why was he always the one who was begging? He didn't actually beg. He never would. But it felt like that." I love it because it's true. Gaia was such a fucking asshole in book two. She should be BEGGING him to be with her. And she isn't. Asshole. I am still not forgiving her :\ Leon is too good for her. Sigh. Too much drama.

And this quote. "He would never hurt her now, but still she didn't care enough for him. He didn't know if she ever would. He couldn't understand this sick thing inside him that made him love her so intensely even when she kept holding back the last sliver of herself." My god. I am HATING Gaia. Sigh. Do not understand why I'm still reading this series :\ Oh, well. I do love the story :) And the writing. And I love Leon. And oh. If Gaia doesn't make up for it in book three I will not be happy.
