

Silent Whispers: *The Things We feel*

Lyrice M. Starling

A YA/Adult Fiction Novel

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Dedication

Some people hear your words.

The rare ones hear everything you couldn't say.

For the ones who listened, guided, and stayed—

Thank you for helping me find the whispers beneath the noise.

Silent Whispers series is a work of fiction. While inspired by emotions, experiences, and observations from my own life, the characters and events within these pages are their own.

Psychics claim to see the future. I don't. I just notice the things everyone else ignores. Fear has a smell. Grief changes the temperature of a room. Lies scrape across my skin. People call it psychic. They're wrong. If I had to explain it... I'd say the world is constantly whispering. Most people never hear it. I never learned how to make it stop.

The engine hummed beneath my feet, steady and familiar, as I guided my Beetle down Greenville Avenue.

The world outside my windows felt louder than usual tonight.

Dallas always changed after dark.

During the day, Greenville was just another street. Cars rushing by. People going somewhere. Everyone wrapped up in their own little lives.

But at night...

Nighttime belonged to different people.

The restaurants glowed brighter.

The sidewalks filled.

Music spilled out of open doors.

People laughed like they didn't have a single problem in the world.

I slowed slightly as I passed the familiar signs and glowing windows, watching people step out of restaurants with full stomachs and easy smiles.

I wondered what it felt like to be that carefree.

To laugh without checking the mood of the room first.

To walk into your own house and not immediately know what kind of night it was going to be.

My fingers tightened slightly around the steering wheel.

Then I forced myself to relax.

Not tonight.

Tonight I was driving.

Tonight I was away.

That was enough.

My car wasn't much to look at.

At least, most people wouldn't think so.

She was a 1973 Volkswagen Beetle with metallic purple paint and black polka dots scattered across her body.

A little ridiculous.

A little different.

A little impossible to ignore.

Kind of like me.

The paint wasn't perfect. There were scratches. There were places where age showed.

But she was mine.

Every rattle had a reason.

Every little sound had a story.

I knew when she needed something before most people would even notice there was a problem.

My dad taught me that.

Cars were honest.

People weren't always.

A car didn't tell you everything was fine while making a terrible noise underneath the hood.

It didn't smile at you while something inside was breaking.

It just told the truth.

I turned the corner and saw it.

The Chili's.

The original one on Greenville Ave.

The one that somehow felt like it belonged to another world.

A world where people met friends after work.

Where families laughed over dinner.

Where nobody was afraid of what waited for them when they went home.

My stomach betrayed me immediately.

The Awesome Blossom.

Just thinking about it made my mouth water.

That giant fried onion covered in crispy goodness.

Completely unnecessary.

Completely amazing.

A tiny piece of happiness on a plate.

I almost laughed at myself.

Almost.

Because happiness came with a price tag.

And right now, my money had a more important job.

Gas.

Gas meant freedom.

Gas meant I could get away when I needed to.

Gas meant I had somewhere to go when home became too heavy.

Gas did not mean an Awesome Blossom.

I sighed and kept driving.

Maybe someday.

The farther down Greenville I went, the brighter everything became.

More cars.

More people.

More life.

I wasn't old enough to be part of it.

Not really.

I wasn't there to go into the bars or stay out until sunrise or pretend I didn't have responsibilities waiting for me.

I was just passing through.

A ghost watching everyone else live.

And honestly?

That was okay.

Sometimes it was easier to watch happiness than to try to find your own.

The road stretched ahead of me.

The engine hummed.

My headlights cut through the darkness.

For a few minutes, everything was exactly what I needed it to be.

Predictable.

Safe.

Quiet.

And then...

I saw the red lights.

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