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MORNING STAR

BOOK
III
OF THE
RED
RISING
TRILOGY

PIERCE
BROWN

*Author of Red Rising
and Golden Son*

MORNING STAR



Pierce Brown



DEL REY
NEW YORK

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Published in the United States by Del Rey, an imprint of Random House, a division of Penguin Random House LLC, New York.

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This book contains an excerpt from the book *Iron Gold* by Pierce Brown. This excerpt has been set for this edition only and may not reflect the content of the final edition.

ISBN 9780345539847

Ebook ISBN 9780345539854

randomhousebooks.com

Book design by Caroline Cunningham, adapted for ebook

Cover design: David G. Stevenson and Faceout Studio

Cover illustration: David G. Stevenson

ep+a_rh_4.1_141943056_c0_r20

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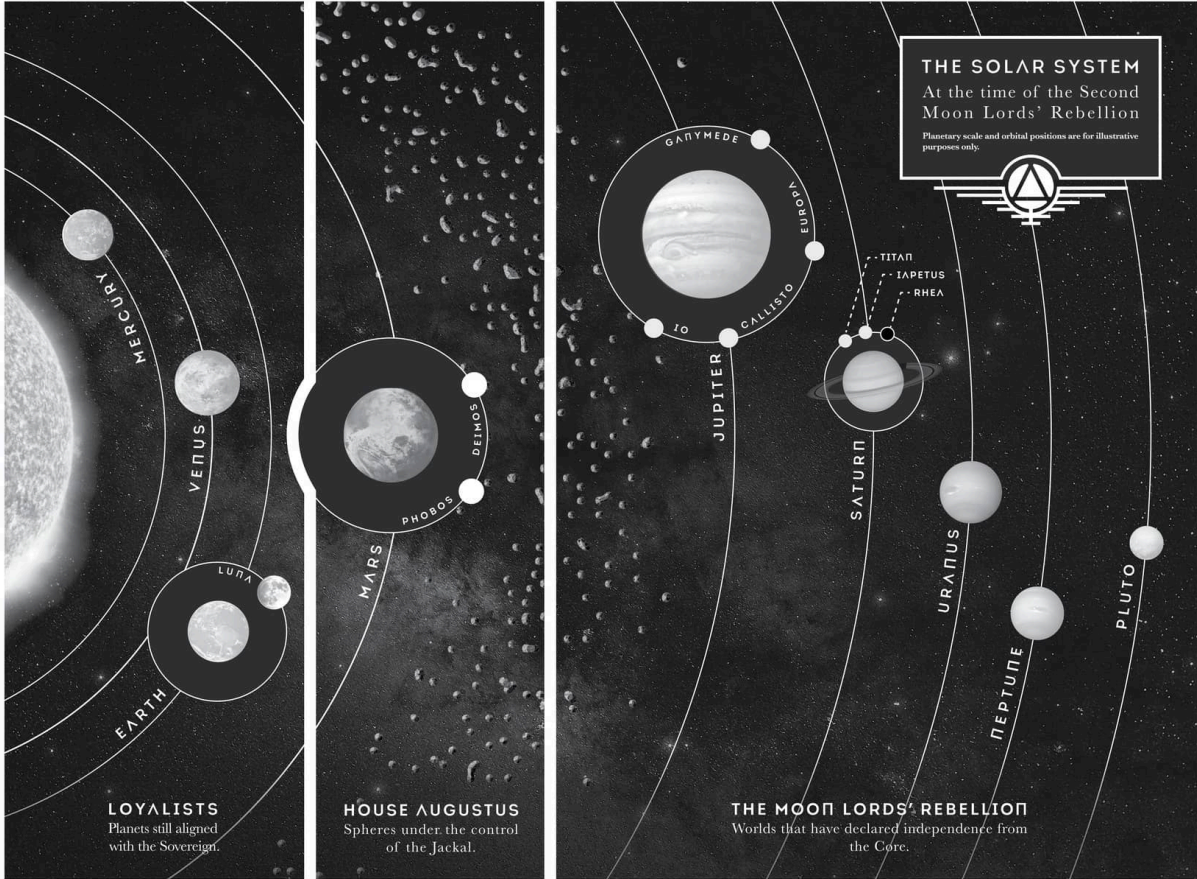
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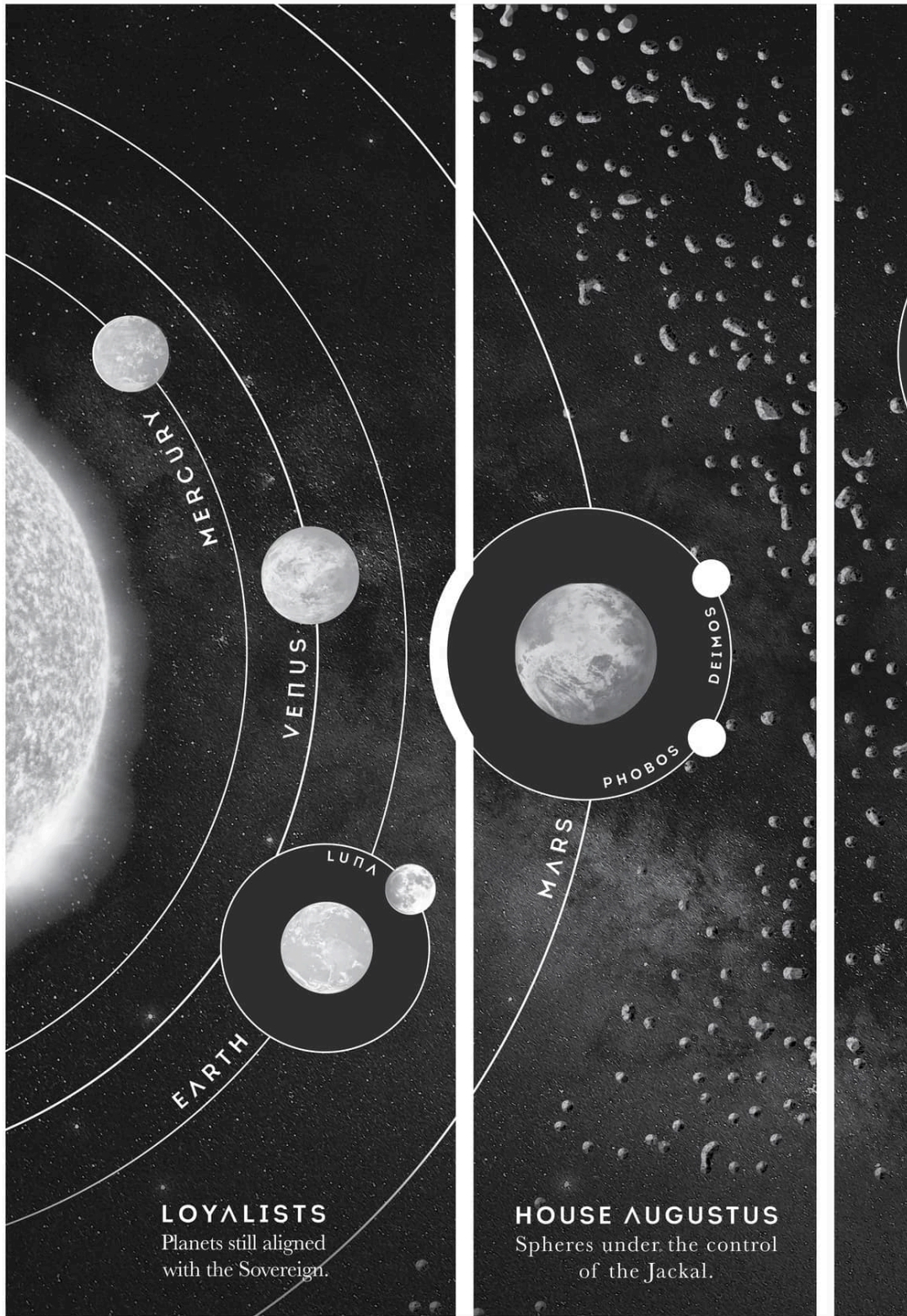
Acknowledgments

By Pierce Brown

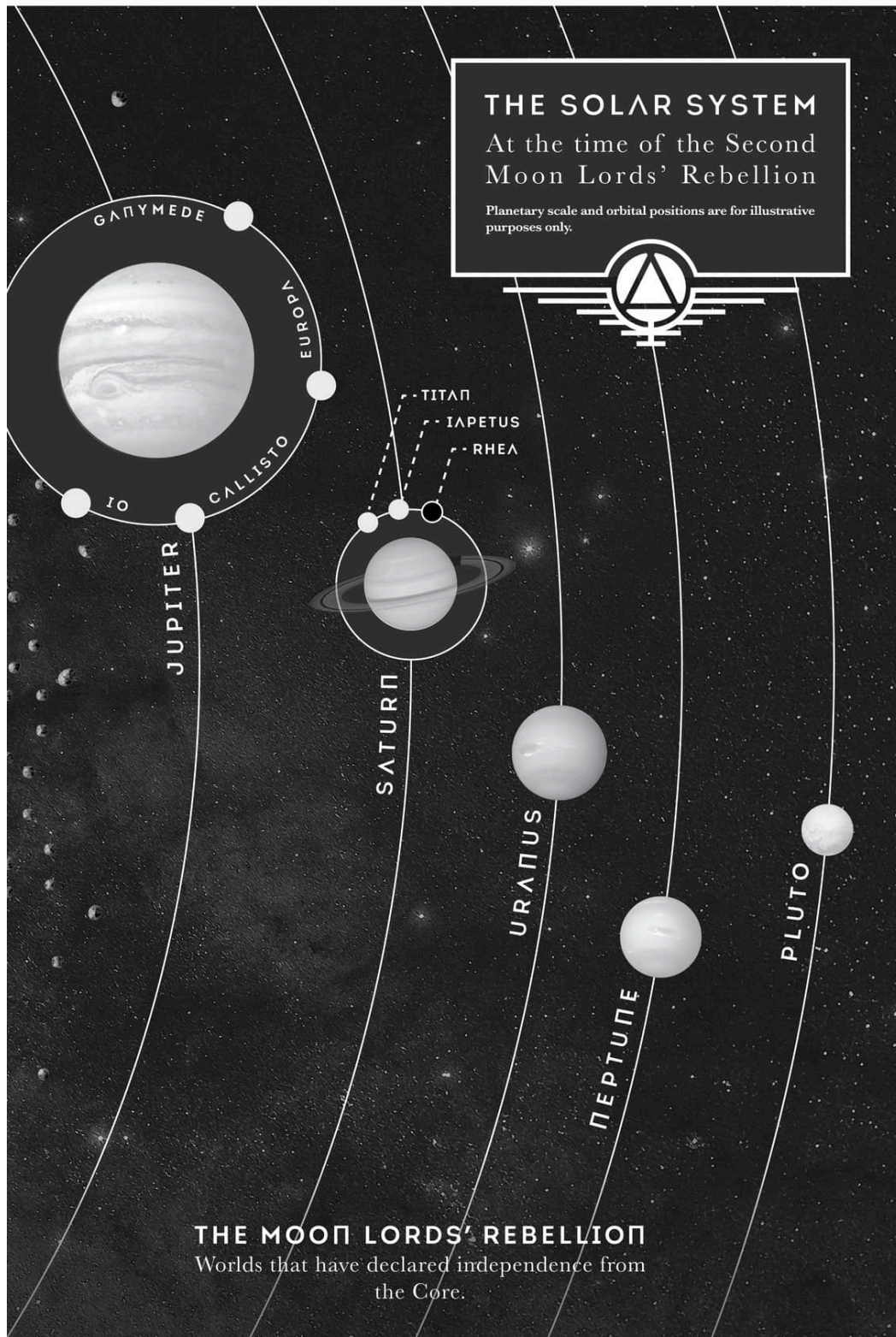
About the Author

Excerpt from Iron Gold





Detail left



Detail right

THE STORY SO FAR...

Red Rising

Darrow is a Red, a lowly miner slaving away below the surface of Mars. He toils to make the surface of his planet habitable for future generations, but he and his kind have been betrayed: the surface is livable and ruled by the unscrupulous Golds. When they hang his wife for voicing rebellious ideas, Darrow joins a revolutionary group known as the Sons of Ares. With the help of the Sons, Darrow is physically transformed into a Gold and sent to take the Society down from the inside.

He enters the Institute, a training school for the Gold elite that turns spoiled teenagers into the best warriors in Society. There Darrow learns the ways of warfare and how to navigate through the often treacherous—but sometimes genuine—friendships and complex political climate of the Golds. Only by changing the paradigm and relying on his new friends is Darrow able to best the Institute and all of its dangers.

Golden Son

From his victory at the Institute Darrow wins prestige and a position in the employ of the ArchGovernor of Mars, Nero au Augustus. However, he finds that it is difficult to live up to his own legend, as Darrow is unsuccessful at the Academy, where Golds train in ship-to-ship combat. Bested by a familial rival of his employer, Darrow's worth quickly declines in the eyes of the ArchGovernor, until that is, Darrow gives the power-hungry Gold what he wants: civil war.

Playing the Augustus clan against the Bellonas, Darrow throws Society into disarray, sowing the seeds of chaos everywhere he goes. After amassing an impressive army and some dubious allies, Darrow leads a successful assault on Mars, ousting the Bellonas from control of the planet. But at the Triumph held to honor his military victory, betrayal once again rears its ugly head and all that he has worked for is

undone. His friends and allies killed or missing, Darrow is captured and his secret identity is discovered; the fate of the rebellion balances on a razor's edge....

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Golds

OCTAVIA AU LUNE Reigning Sovereign of the Society

LYSANDER AU LUNE Grandson of Octavia, heir to House Lune

ADRIUS AU AUGUSTUS/JACKAL ArchGovernor of Mars, twin brother to Virginia

VIRGINIA AU AUGUSTUS/MUSTANG Twin sister to Adrius

MAGNUS AU GRIMMUS/THE ASH LORD The Sovereign's Arch Emperor, father to Aja

AJA AU GRIMMUS The Protean Knight, chief bodyguard to the Sovereign

CASSIUS AU BELLONA The Morning Knight, the Sovereign's bodyguard

ROQUE AU FABII Emperor of the Sword Armada

ANTONIA AU SEVERUS-JULII Half sister to Victra, daughter of Agrippina

VICTRA AU JULII Half sister to Antonia, daughter of Agrippina

KAVAX AU TELEMANUS Head of House Telemanus, father to Daxo

DAXO AU TELEMANUS Heir and son of Kavax, brother to Pax

ROMULUS AU RAA Head of House Raa, ArchGovernor of Io

LILATH AU FARAN Companion of the Jackal, leader of the Boneriders

CYRIANA AU TANUS/THISTLE A former Howler, now a lieutenant of the Boneriders

VIXUS AU SARNA Former House Mars, lieutenant of the Boneriders

Mid- and LowColors

TRIGG TI NAKAMURA Legionnaire, brother to Holiday, a Gray

HOLIDAY TI NAKAMURA Legionnaire, sister to Trigg, a Gray

REGULUS AG SUN/QUICKSILVER Richest man in the Society, a Silver

ALIA SNOWSPARROW Queen of the Valkyrie, mother to Ragnar and Sefi, an Obsidian

SEFI THE QUIET Warlord of the Valkyrie, daughter to Alia, sister to Ragnar

ORION XE AQUARIII Ship captain, a Blue

Sons of Ares

DARROW OF LYKOS/REAPER Former lancer of House Augustus, a Red

SEVRO AU BARCA/GOBLIN Howler, a Gold

RAGNAR VOLARUS New Howler, an Obsidian

DANCER Ares lieutenant, a Red

MICKEY Carver, a Violet

I rise into darkness, away from the garden they watered with the blood of my friends. The Golden man who killed my wife lies dead beside me on the cold metal deck, life snuffed out by his own son's hand.

Autumn wind whips my hair. The ship rumbles beneath. In the distance, friction flames shred the night with brilliant orange. The Telemanuses descending from orbit to rescue me. Better that they do not. Better to let the darkness have me and allow the vultures to squabble over my paralyzed body.

My enemy's voices echo behind me. Towering demons with the faces of angels. The smallest of them bends. Stroking my head as he looks down at his dead father.

"This is always how the story would end," he says to me. "Not with your screams. Not with your rage. But with your silence."

Roque, my betrayer, sits in the corner. He was my friend. Heart too kind for his Color. Now he turns his head and I see his tears. But they are not for me. They are for what he has lost. For the ones I have taken from him.

"No Ares to save you. No Mustang to love you. You are alone, Darrow." The Jackal's eyes are distant and quiet. "Like me." He lifts up a black eyeless mask with a muzzle on it and straps it to my face. Darkening my sight. "This is how it ends."

To break me, he has slain those I love.

But there is hope in those still living. In Sevro. In Ragnar and Dancer. I think of all my people bound in darkness. Of all the Colors on all the worlds, shackled and chained so that Gold might rule, and I feel the rage burn across the dark hollow he has carved in my soul. I am not alone. I am not his victim.

So let him do his worst. I am the Reaper.

I know how to suffer.

I know the darkness.

This is *not* how it ends.

PART I



THORNS

Per aspera ad astra

1



ONLY THE DARK

Deep in darkness, far from warmth and sun and moons, I lie, quiet as the stone that surrounds me, imprisoning my hunched body in a dreadful womb. I cannot stand. Cannot stretch. I can only curl in a ball, a withered fossil of the man that was. Hands cuffed behind my back. Naked on cold rock.

All alone with the dark.

It seems months, years, millennia since my knees have unbent, since my spine has straightened from its crooked pose. The ache is madness. My joints fuse like rusted iron. How much time has passed since I saw my Golden friends bleeding out into the grass? Since I felt gentle Roque kiss my cheek as he broke my heart?

Time is no river.

Not here.

In this tomb, time is the stone. It is the darkness, permanent and unyielding, its only measure the twin pendulums of life—breath and the beating of my heart.

In. *Buh...bump. Buh...bump.*