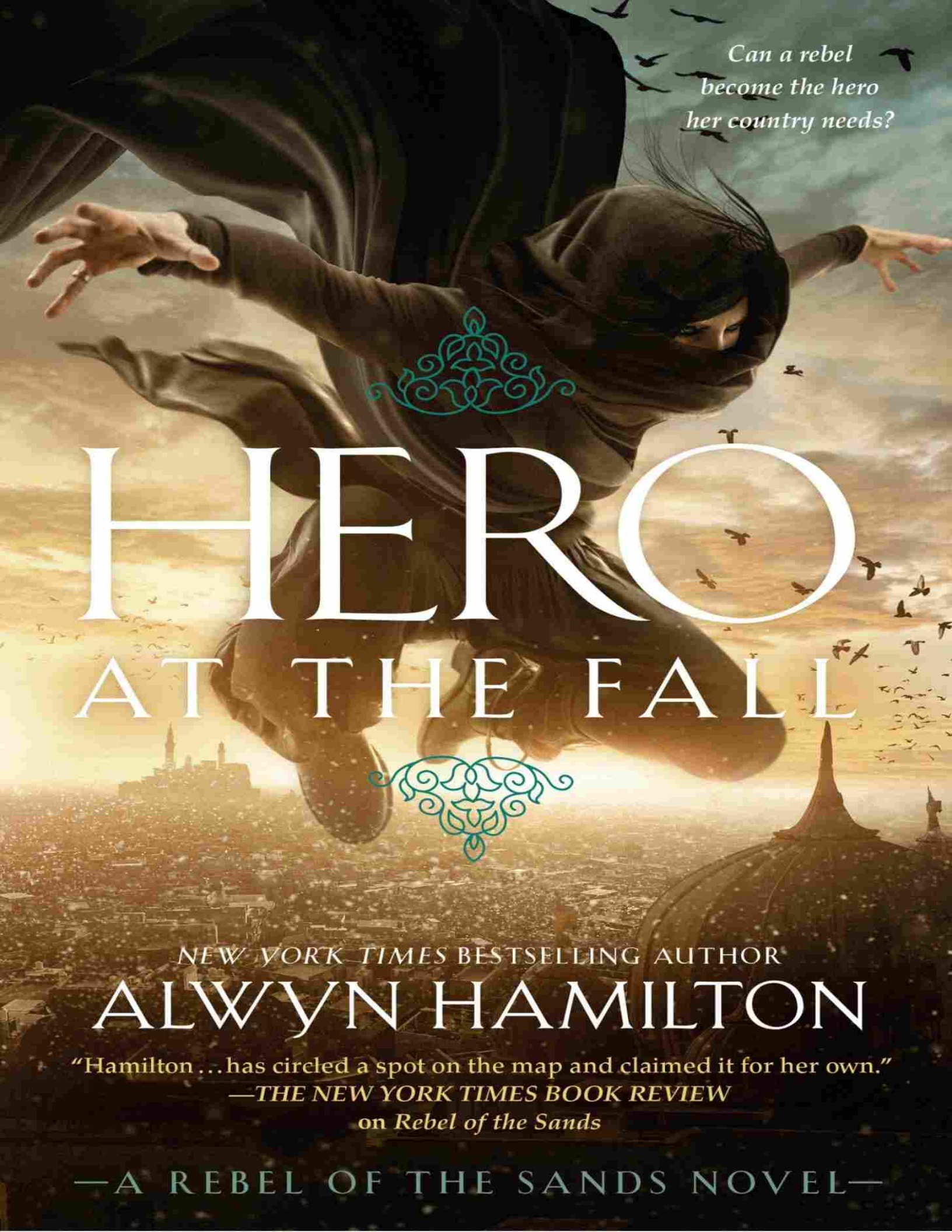




*Can a rebel
become the hero
her country needs?*

HERO AT THE FALL

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

ALWYN HAMILTON

"Hamilton ... has circled a spot on the map and claimed it for her own."

—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

on Rebel of the Sands

—A REBEL OF THE SANDS NOVEL—

Praise for the Bestselling REBEL OF THE SANDS series

“A winning bit of storytelling . . . Hamilton . . . has circled a spot on the map and claimed it for her own.”

—*New York Times Book Review* on *Rebel*

★ **“Romantic, thrilling, hilarious . . . great fun.”**

—*Kirkus Reviews* starred review of *Rebel*

★ **“Atmospheric . . . a riveting tale.”**

—*Booklist* starred review of *Rebel*

★ **“[A] gem of a book.”**

—*BCCB* starred review of *Rebel*

★ **“Readers will be drawn into the story and won’t want to put this book down.”**

—*School Library Connection* starred review of *Rebel*

★ **“Superlative.”**

—*Kirkus Reviews* starred review of *Traitor*

“Riveting.”

—*BuzzFeed* on *Rebel*

“A bright and bold fantasy.”

—*USA Today’s* Happy Ever After on *Rebel*

“Vivid, romantic, and wildly entertaining. You will cheer for Amani the whole way.”

—Rae Carson, bestselling author of the Fire and Thorns trilogy

“A **stunning** debut full of **irresistible energy, heart-stopping action**, and a new voice that sings.”

—Alison Goodman, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Eon* and *Eona*

“Hamilton creates a robust mixture of gritty reality and fantasy, delivering a **satisfying beginning** to what promises to be an **electrifying series**.”

—BookPage on *Rebel*

“A **perfect combination** of American Westerns and Arabian myths . . . Fans of **Sarah Maas** and **Victoria Aveyard** should give this one a try.”

—VOYA on *Rebel*

“**Strong and exciting** . . . full of compelling twists and turns, and the ending will leave readers **highly anticipating the final volume**.”

—Booklist on *Traitor*

HERO AT THE FALL

A REBEL OF THE SANDS NOVEL

ALWYN HAMILTON



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Version_4



For Molly Ker Hawn.
For being the first to fall in love with Amani's story.
And making all of this possible.



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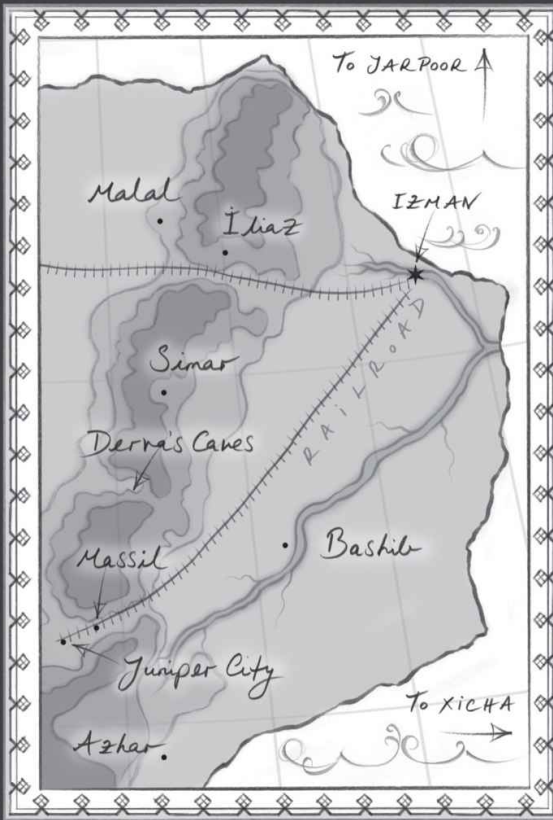
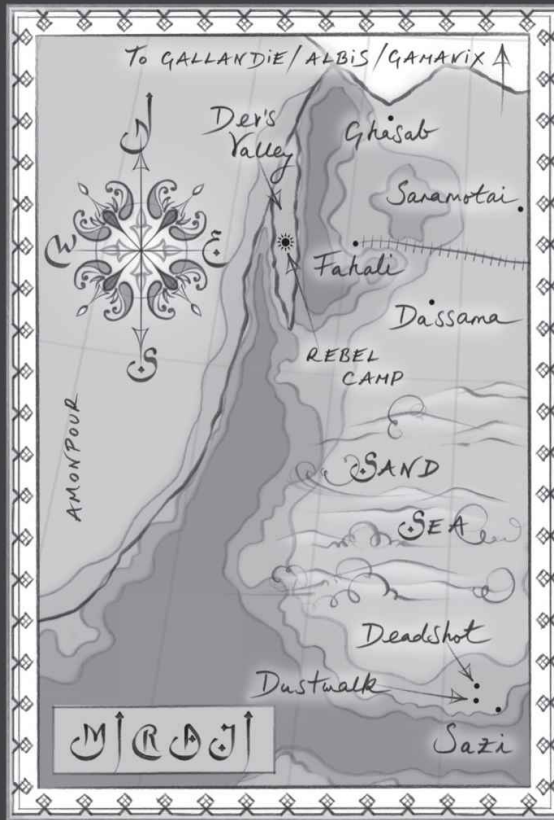
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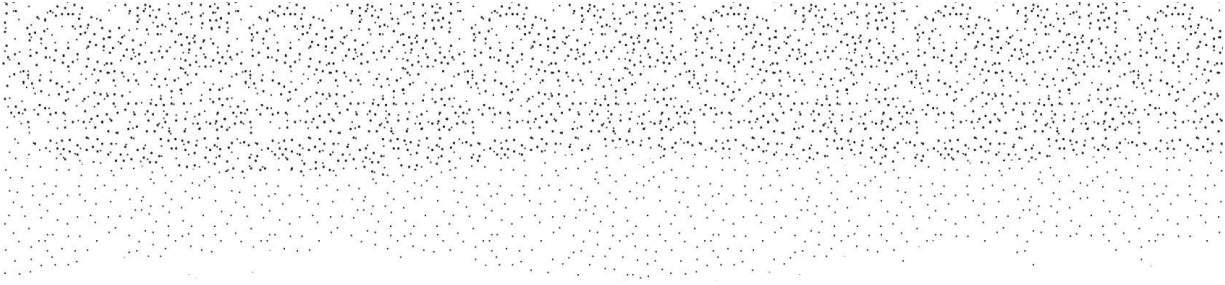
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Excerpt from Rebel of the Sands





CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE REBELLION

Amani Sharpshooter, Demdji marked by blue eyes, able to control desert sand, goes by the moniker of the Blue-Eyed Bandit. Current de facto leader of the Rebellion in absence of Prince Ahmed. Seventeen years old.

Prince Ahmed Al-Oman Bin Izman The Rebel Prince, leader of the Rebellion. Currently captured. Nineteen years old.

Jin Prince of Miraji, brother of the Rebel Prince Ahmed, full name Ajinahd Al-Oman Bin Izman. Nineteen years old.

Prince Rahim Prince of Miraji. Half brother to Ahmed and Jin. Full-blooded brother of Leyla. One-time military commander of Iliaz. Currently captured. Nineteen years old.

Shazad Al-Hamad Daughter of a Miraji general, among the original members of the Rebellion, well-trained fighter, strategist. Currently captured. Eighteen years old.

Sam Albish Army deserter turned thief. Can walk through stone. Eighteen years old.

Tamid Amani's former best friend, Holy Father in training, walks with a limp due to a deformity at birth. Seventeen years old.

Delila Demdji marked by purple hair, able to cast illusions out of light in the air, Ahmed's sister by blood, Jin's sister by adoption. Currently captured. Fifteen years old.

Hala Demdji marked by golden skin, able to twist people's minds into hallucinations. Nineteen years old.

Izz and Maz Twin Demdji, marked by blue skin and blue hair respectively, able to shapeshift into any animal form. Seventeen years old.

Navid Imin's husband. Captured. Fate unknown.

Sara Guardian of the Hidden House in Izman.

Fadi Shira's son with the Djinni Fereshteh. Demdji born with blue hair. Named after his grand- father. Smuggled out of the palace to safety.



NORTHERN MIRAJI

Sultan Oman Ruler of Miraji, Ahmed and Jin's father.

Leyla Daughter of the Sultan, and full-blooded sister of Prince Rahim. Skilled inventor. Betrayed the Rebellion. Fifteen years old.

Lord Bilal Emir of Iliaz. Currently dying of a long-drawn-out illness. Nineteen years old.

General Hamad General feigning loyalty to the Sultan. Shazad's father.

Samira Daughter of the deceased Emir of Saramotai. Newly appointed leader of Saramotai in the name of the Rebellion. Seventeen years old.



THE DJINN

Bahadur Immortal Djinni. Amani's Father.

Fereshteh Immortal Djinni. Fadi's father. Killed so that his energy could be turned into electricity in the Sultan's machine. The First Djinni to die since the First War.



THE LAST COUNTY

Farrah Al-Fadi Amani's aunt, eldest sister to her mother.

Asid Farrah's husband, a horse trader in Dustwalk.

Nasima One of Amani's young cousins.

Olia One of Amani's young cousins.

Fazim Al-Motem A resident of Dustwalk. Formerly Shira's lover. Amani's enemy.

Noorsham Demdji marked by blue eyes, able to produce Djinni fire that can annihilate a whole city. Born in the mining town of Sazi. Missing since the battle of Fahali.



THE FALLEN

Zahia Al-Fadi Amani's mother, hanged for the murder of her husband.

Hiza Amani's mother's husband. Not Amani's father by blood. Killed by his wife.

Nadira Ahmed and Delila's mother by blood, killed by the Sultan for bearing a child to a Djinni.

Lien Xichian woman, wife of the Sultan, Jin's mother by blood, Ahmed and Delila's mother by adoption. Died of an illness.

Bahi Childhood friend of Shazad, disgraced a Holy Man, killed by Noorsham.

Prince Naguib Al-Oman One of the Sultan's sons, army commander. Killed by the Rebellion in the battle of Fahali.

Malik Al-Kizzam Usurper of Saramotai. Killed by Shazad.

Ranaa A young Demdji who could conjure light in her hands. Killed in a skirmish.

Sayidda A spy for the Rebellion in the palace. Tortured to insanity in the Sultan's machine. Killed in the flight from the rebel camp.

Mahdi Sayidda's lover. Betrayed the Rebellion to try to save Sayidda. Killed in the flight from the rebel camp.

Ayet, Uzma, and Mouhna Wives of Prince Kadir. Tortured to insanity in the Sultan's machine.

Shira Amani's cousin. Wife of Prince Kadir. Sultima. Executed by order of her husband for giving birth to a Djinni's child.

Prince Kadir The Sultan's eldest son, Sultim, heir to the throne of Miraji. Killed by the Sultan.

Imin Demdji marked by golden eyes, able to shapeshift into any human form, Hala's sibling. Executed in order to save Ahmed, assuming his identity.



MYTHS & LEGENDS

First Beings Immortal beings made by God, including Djinn, Buraqi, and Rocs.

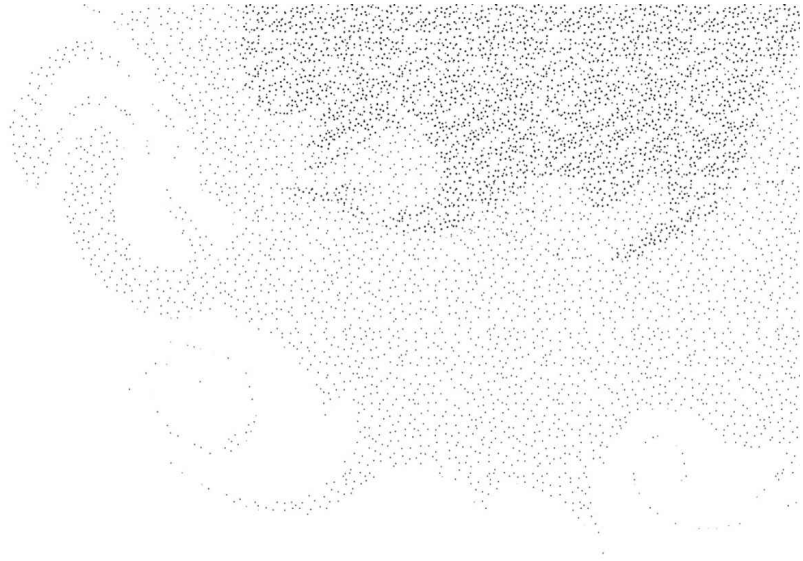
The Destroyer of Worlds A being from the darkness of the earth who came to the surface of the world to bring death and darkness. Defeated by humanity.

Ghouls The Servants of the Destroyer of Worlds, includes Nightmares, Skinwalkers, etc.

The First Hero The first mortal created by the Djinn to face the Destroyer of Worlds. Made out of sand and water and air and brought to life with Djinni fire. Also known as the First Mortal.

Princess Hawa Legendary Princess who sang the sun into the sky.

The Hero Attallah Lover of Princess Hawa.



ONE

I woke from a sleep filled with nightmares to the sound of my name.

I was already reaching for a gun when I recognized Sara's face above me, swimming in and out of focus as my eyes blurred with exhaustion.

My grip on the trigger eased. It wasn't an enemy, just Sara, the guardian of the Hidden House. She was holding a small lamp that lit up only her face. For a moment she looked like a disembodied head floating in the dark, like the ones in the dream that was fading now as I woke:

Imin wearing Ahmed's face going willingly to the executioner's stage.

My cousin Shira screaming her defiance as she was forced to her knees in front of the block.

Ayet, with eyes full of madness, awaiting the death that would come from having her soul drained out of her.

Ranaa, the Demdji child who had carried the sun in her hands and died by a stray bullet in a battle she shouldn't have been fighting.

Bahi, who'd burned in front of me at my brother's hand.

My mother, who'd swung from a rope back in Dustwalk for shooting her husband, the man who'd never been my father anyway.

People I had watched die. People I had let die. The accusation was all over their faces.

But Sara was real. Sara was still alive. And so were others.

When the Sultan ambushed our camp in the city, many were captured. But there was only one execution.

Imin. Our Demdji shapeshifter.

Imin had died wearing Ahmed's face to deceive the Sultan and all of Izman into thinking the Rebel Prince was dead, while Delila cast an illusion to hide her real brother, still jailed with the rest of the Rebellion's leaders.

Ahmed was still alive. So was Shazad, our General, even if she didn't like being called that. We needed her back to lead us in the fight against the Sultan. And Rahim, another of the Sultan's sons who had held a grudge against our exalted ruler since he caused his mother's death. He was our key to a whole army in the mountain who had never been loyal to the Sultan, but to him instead.

And now it was up to me to rescue them and all the other captured rebels. With the help of a handful of others who'd escaped capture that night: our reluctant Prince Jin, our professionally difficult golden skinned Demdji Hala, our shapeshifting twins Izz and Maz, and our semi-reliable foreign thief Sam. Not exactly an army, but it was what we had left.

I'd fallen asleep in a chair in some corner of the Hidden House, our last refuge in Izman, where what was left of the Rebellion had retreated. A faint glow coming in through the window danced across Sara's face, enough for me to see the worry etched there. Her hair was tousled from a restless night, and a dark red robe hung loosely over her nightclothes, like she'd tied it in a hurry.

It must have been dawn. My body still felt heavy with exhaustion, like I'd slept only a few hours. But I reckoned I could sleep a year and I still wouldn't shed this tiredness from my bones. It was the exhaustion of pain and of grief. My side still throbbed from the effort of using my powers a few hours ago, and for a second my vision tilted dangerously to one side, like I might lose my footing.

"What's happening?" My voice came out a croak as I stretched my aching body, still sore from being cut open by my aunt just yesterday. A necessary evil to get out the iron the Sultan had put under my skin to keep me from accessing my Demdji power. "Is it morning?"

"No, it's late. I got up because the baby was fussing." As my eyes slowly adjusted, I noticed the sleeping infant balanced in the crook of her left arm. It was little Fadi, my cousin Shira's newborn Demdji son. If there was any justice in the world he'd be with his mother now. But Shira had lost her head on the chopping block, too. I remembered the accusation in Shira's gaze in

my nightmare. That her son would grow up without a family, all because of me. “When I woke up, there was . . .” Sara hesitated. “I think you’d better see for yourself.”

That didn’t sound good. I pressed my palms against my tired eyes. What else could *possibly* have gone wrong in the last few hours? Behind my lids I saw Imin’s head falling onto that stage all over again. I dropped my hands away from my face. Better to face reality than nightmares. “All right,” I said, slowly getting to my feet. “Lead the way.”

Cradling the small, blue-haired Demdji in her arms, Sara led me up the dark, winding staircase to the rooftop that gave the Hidden House its name. The garden that topped the flat building was surrounded on all sides by trellises thick with flowers that concealed the house from prying eyes and kept Sara and all the women under her charge safe.

I knew something was wrong before we fully emerged onto the roof. It was late at night. But there was a dim glow outside, like the red of an angry dawn, that didn’t make any sense this near midnight, not even in summer.

Sara reached the roof ahead of me and then quickly stepped out of the way, giving me an unobstructed view. And I saw what she was talking about.

The city of Izman was domed by fire.

Rippling flames hung over my head and to every side of us, like an immense vault placed over the city. I could just see the stars on the other side, but it was like looking through warped glass; they were blurry and indistinct. To the west I could see the fire arching down toward the walls of the city, and to the north, it plunged down toward the sea. A memory came to me from nowhere, of my mother in our kitchen when I was little, slamming a glass over a beetle as it scurried across the kitchen table, capturing it inside. I’d watched curiously as the thing scrambled up the side of the glass frantic and confused. Trapped. Staring up at the dome of fire over us, I understood that little Dustwalk beetle pretty well right now.

“It’s magic,” Sara said, gazing grimly up at the stars through the sheen of flames.