

A decorative flourish consisting of symmetrical, swirling lines that form a rectangular border around the top half of the page.

A TASTE OF

POWER

A large, elegant decorative flourish that starts from the right side of the word 'POWER' and curves around it, extending towards the right edge of the page.

DIVIDED



POWER DIVIDED

THE EVOLUTIONARIES BOOK 1

S.BEHR

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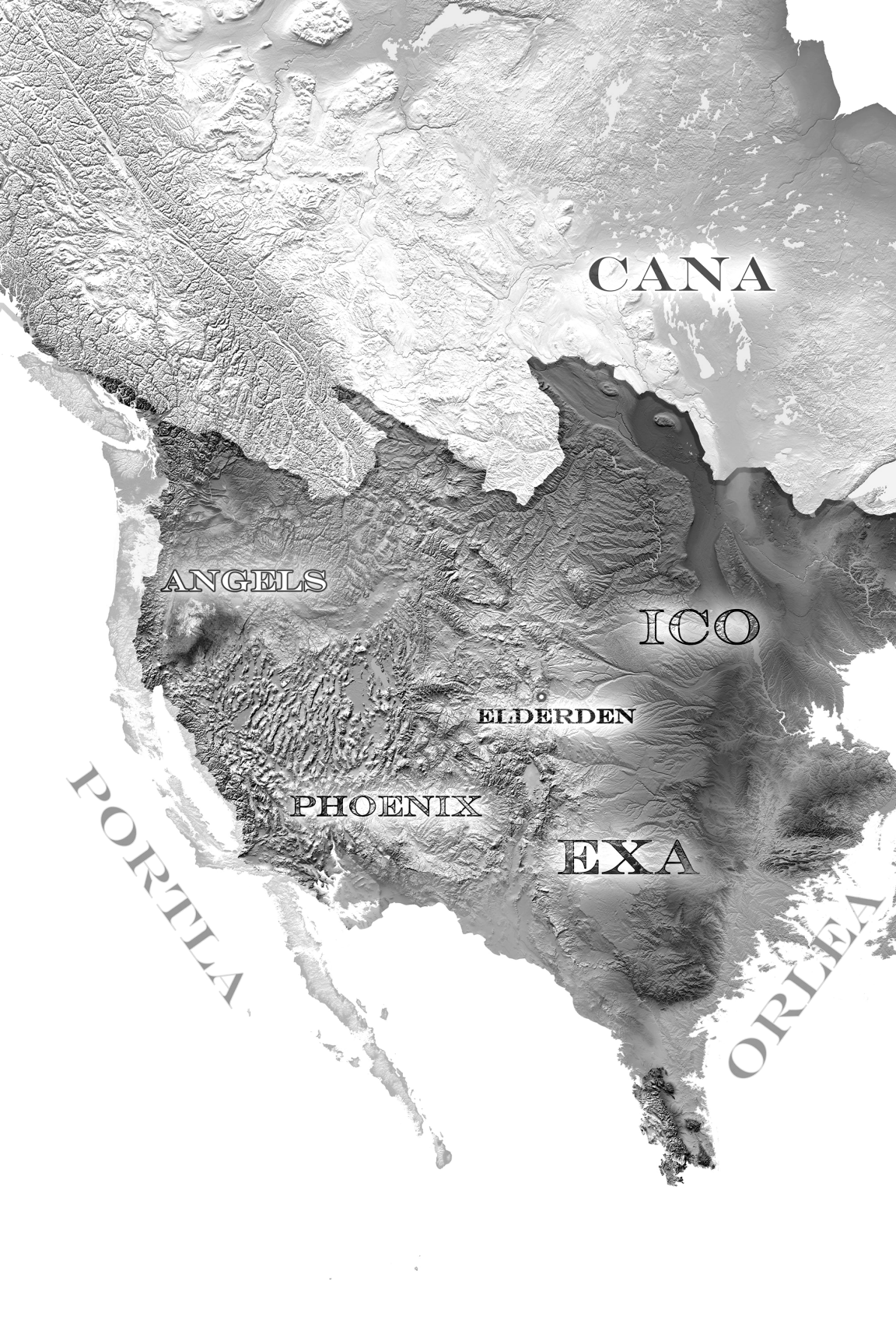
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*This Book is Dedicated to
Howie and our family, for never letting me give up.
Violet for being the Dream.
Mabel for being the spark,
And
To Gina for showing me the way.*





CANA

ANGELS

ICO

ELDERDEN

PHOENIX

EXA

PORTIA

ORLEA



NEYR

MAIE

HATTAN
CITY

THE UNION OF THE NINE REALMS OF
AMERA

CREST OF NEYR



1

What had I done?

One single, horrifying moment, and that was it. Not in the dark of night or some far away meadow thick with fog from a storm, but here in the King's Palace—the only place I'd ever called home.

Today was my Criterion, the test that all citizens of the Realms of Amera have to take to prove their worth, the first step to finding your place in our society. I thought I had been prepared; I was wrong. Everything was, even the way the sunlight filtered through the air and cast the illusion of a perfect day full of hope and celebration. A façade twisted into a cruel, frozen moment.

I imagined these tests a thousand ways. But not once did I ever dream, there would be a pool of blood creeping toward me. I didn't think I was capable of something like this, but I was, and there was nothing I could do to take it back.

Amera is a land of people who do extraordinary things from living on the ocean floor to moving boulders with a single thought. But no one can turn back time.

In the space between confusion and chaos, a shudder flickered through the leaves surrounding us as if the trees themselves were disgusted by what they just witnessed.

"Henry!" my mother cried.

Blood dripped in a slow trickle from my father's chest, pooling around him like a scarlet shadow. A spray of a dozen new branches

had erupted from the ancient oak tree engulfing an even older Chrysler Tower. They impaled my father's body pinning him helplessly to the floor from his right knee to his chest.

I didn't know what shocked everyone more, the fact that their king lay dying or that his daughter was the cause.

My father, my hero, was soaked in blood, cradled in the arms of the most gifted healer of not only our realm but all nine realms of Amera. The woman he loved, the queen who is his other half.

My mother concentrated; her eyes shut tight as she pushed the boundaries of her abilities to slow the blood draining out of his body. It was slipping away faster than her energy could stitch the frayed tears in his muscle, bones, and flesh. His hunter green vest turned a sickly brown, and his skin ashy, but his violet eyes were still shockingly bright and staring at me, mirroring my horror.

"Please, Papa, don't leave us," I begged the wind, the trees, mother nature herself. At that moment, I would have given anything to trade places with him.

Guilt seized my body with a grip so tight my chest burned, as if my heart tried to beat for us both. An inhuman cry pierced the silence. When I gasped for air, I saw the look on my grandmother's face and realized the sound had come from me. Until this moment, The cast of people who had been there from when my testing began: the council, my professors, my family, and the press corps who had been chosen to document the day were now joined by what seemed like the entire palace staff. They stood frozen in a collective gasp of shock, but those gasps now descended quickly into a dizzying melody of shrieks and sobs.

The balcony where we stood is shaped like a wing. It's sixty feet wide and stretches twenty feet from the doors of the great hall outward into the sky hundreds of feet above the lower forest. But despite the open air, it felt choked and congested when everyone started to move.

It took a long moment for me to realize my grandfather had begun barking orders. "Ameli, inform Healer River to ready the healing room. Have them send a hover bed now! General Kocur, clear the room and sequester the others. Captain Rall, contact the High Council."

My grandmother was on her knees, holding her son's hand, while everyone else scrambled into action, moving across my field of vision

with purpose. Everyone except for me. I just stood there. My grandfather had given everyone a task, but he didn't spare me a single glance. His lack of acknowledgment confirmed my crime.

Fear, confusion, and despair each took their turn in my heart. Nothing made sense. How could I be capable of this?

Neyr Realm was created by people who shared a common ability to manipulate elements in the environment, specializing in plants. We call it Conjuring, and it feeds all of Amera. A gift that is life-giving and considered harmless. But this haphazard shoot of branches came out of a nightmare looking like dirty frozen lightning.

How could it have been created by me? I had never had this kind of power. But I saw it appear with my own eyes and felt it explode out my own skin. The energy that escaped me caused this; I knew that, although I didn't understand how.

Looking at all the people around me, I saw pain, and even fury on their faces. How could someone so wonderful as their king be struck down for no reason at all? And I was the cause of all this desperation and grief. But how and why?

Every single one of my seventeen years of life my parents had loved me, sheltered me, worked to save me from myself, to keep the knowledge of my stunted gifts from shaming my family's name. This shouldn't be possible.

Ten generations in a row of my father's family had produced a succession of kings and queens, and my mother came from one of the original founding families. Together they produced me, a Legacy Princess. Although they were rare, there had been other legacies throughout our history, and even now I was one of only three in the Amera. Like them, my birth had been celebrated not just in my realm, but in all of Amera. To some, I was supposed to grow up to be the greatest anyone had ever seen. But my parents had always shielded me from those pressures. Rumors about me became common, and they had always run the gamut. I had heard everything from special secret abilities to being as powerless as a first-generation human. My parents' position had always been to say nothing. That Neyr Realm, then Amera would know when I was ready.

But I wasn't, and now everyone would know.

There would be no hiding this—the first murder in centuries. The death of a king by his own daughter. I nearly choked on the bile in my throat as the weight of all of this hit me. Suddenly every fear and thought of self-doubt I ever had, paralyzed me.

Is there a word for what I have done?

What would happen to me? There were no prisons, no place for criminals in the here and now. Those existed only in ancient stories from the civilization that had covered the earth before the long dark of the last ice age. After the Warming and the Divide, they became nursery rhymes to keep young children from misbehaving. Where would they keep me? Would they exile me, or would the punishment be death?

If my mother could not save him, it would be my fault; I would be the reason that the world would be deprived of his greatness, not only because of his abilities but because of his genuine love of his people, his realm, and his family.

He can't be dying. My fingers trembled, my mind rejecting the thought even as my father's blood continued to inch toward me, and suddenly, I knew, there wasn't a word foul enough for what I was.

"Please, Henry, stay with me," my mother whispered, clutching my father's wounds as his blood oozed through her fingers and stained her dress. My sorrow, which I thought could go no deeper, cut me nearly in half when I realized my father would never see his twins born. My siblings still waited inside my mother; I had stolen the future not only from my own father but theirs as well. This family would never be whole without him.

My legs became jelly underneath me, and only the determination in my mother's eyes kept me standing.

Tears streaked my mother's face, yet somehow, she still radiated hope. In a land full of remarkable abilities, hers were to heal. But there was more, unlike the gifts like telekinesis, or growing gardens with a thought, her greatest gift was a power you couldn't see and required no special gene. Her grace and optimism was like the sun itself. The people loved her not for what she could do for them, but how she could inspire a realm.

How many times had I heard her say? “Any problem can be solved with hard work, collaboration, and time.” It was practically her motto. It had been my mantra.

My entire life, I had only wanted to make my parents proud, to be a triumph rather than a burden. But I knew that would never happen now because even with all these people working with everything they had to save him, we were running out of time.

“*Violet,*” I heard someone say not with my ears, but from inside my head. I recognized it instantly, but I couldn’t stomach the sound of my own name.

“*No, please,*” I thought back to the voice that no one knew about but me. After hearing it my entire life, it was as close a friend as anyone could have. The only problem was, it wasn’t real. At least that’s what every test I endured when I was three years old confirmed. Just as every pause in my parents’ looks ever since has made me wonder if they believed me when I said the voice was gone.

“A figment of my imagination, just a child’s imaginary friend,” was my perfected reply if it ever came up. When my parents stopped asking, so did I, and I just accepted it for what it was, another part of my flawed, imperfect, self. Just another lie in the mask of who I appeared to be. The only difference was no one knew he still spoke to me. Not my parents, not Ameli, not even my best friend, Lily.

“*What—what’s wrong?*” his voice stuttered as if my brain had just woken up to what I had done.

“*Everything,*” I thought miserably. I hadn’t felt myself move, but my back was against the wall as I slid into the shadows of the hall, away from the cries on the balcony. I could no longer see my parents through the circle of council members and healers who remained by my father’s side. They watched and waited as my mother worked on him. Some seemed stunned into statues while others were chopping at the branches still trying to make sense of what happened.

The madness in the great hall was disorienting. Doors were slamming, echoing off the carved wooden surfaces thirty feet in every direction. Everyone seemed to be talking, crying, and scrambling all at the same time. It felt like even the walls around me were crying for the fallen king.

Despair washed over me, followed by panic. What if it happens again?

"I can't breathe," I thought.

"Yes, you can," the voice answered.

"This can't be happening."

Before I even knew what I was doing, my true colors revealed their ugly shades. I was no great future leader. I was not even a worthy daughter. I was a coward, and I did what cowards do best. I ran.