

Hugo Jackson



# RUIN'S DAWN

The Resonance Tetralogy: Book Three

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Book 3 of the Resonance Tetralogy

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Contact the author through their website: [hugorjackson.com](http://hugorjackson.com)

Chief Editor: Sara-Jayne Slack

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To those who are gone,  
who brought us light,  
may we create a future  
built with the strength of your love

# Prologue

“**H**ow much did your father tell you about Nazreal, Faria?”  
“Only what you heard before he died. The rest... I still don't know. There was nothing left for me to read from, no time to learn before the Dhrakan siege, and I remember very little of my mother. You're all I have, all anyone has, of the history.”

“I see. Do you feel ready?”

“I have to be. I've been healing enough. I want to hear everything, Osiris. All that you can tell me.”

“All right. Please, sit. We will be here a while.”

“I have time.”

“For now, at least.”

# Chapter One

A ball, small and wooden, rolled clumsily down a sloping sand bank in the desert of burnt red. It hissed and bobbed quietly across the shifting surface, leaving a light, broken trail in its wake. The young fox at the top of the dune smiled playfully as it gained speed, then slid to a halt a few feet from his home. Not much older than two, his bright blue eyes were alight with glee.

He sprinted down the bank as fast as his stubby, uncoordinated legs would carry him. Misjudging his own momentum, however, he tripped at the base of the dune, rolling twice head-over-heels to land neatly on his back, staring into the brilliant clear sky. Stunned for a moment, he wriggled around to sit facing his house, a modest, squat building of red sandstone with semi-circular windows and a lush, billowing tree breaking through its roof. He brushed the sand from his ears with a tiny huff of frustration. Thankfully his mother and father, although talking by the window, had not seen him fall, or they would cordon him inside again.

A bright glint in his mother's hand caught his eye, a shimmering blue shard of rock.

The magic crystals!

He had seen her make brown plants green with it, and she was the one who had grown the massive tree that stood in the centre of their house. His father was just as skilled, having made small shelves come out of the wall, and made a chair appear from a pile of sand, which he compacted and hardened with little more than a flick of his wrist.

The young fox rocked onto his hind paws and picked up his ball again. Shielding his eyes from the sun, he assessed the dune he wished to conquer.

He had an idea.

While his parents talked, he trotted boldly and unnoticed into their small kitchen, his eyes on the chunk of crystal he'd found last week while digging. It had a smooth, pointy section poking out of a rocky hemisphere, glistening with blue iridescence. It was his favourite discovery, and he'd screamed excessively (although still not enough to convince them otherwise) when his parents said he couldn't play with it, and placed it on a high shelf. They would probably say no to his current plan as well, but they were conveniently inside, rapt in each other's conversation, so for now he would just play, and surprise them later.

The shelf loomed over him, austere and forbidding, shielding his prize.

His mouth lolled open in concentration as he reeled his arm back, then tossed the ball up as high as he could. It bounced lightly off the wall at just the right angle, toppling the rock from its hemisphere and sending it tumbling down. Aidan caught it, barely, and the ball bounced off his head with a hollow *thunk*. He withstood the urge to cry out, because his plan was worth more than to be discovered.

Collecting his mildly traitorous ball, and with tail flicking confidently, he marched back outside. He was almost giddy, his breath pushing from him in hurried, whispered laughter. This was going to be the best thing they'd ever seen; he knew it!

After clambering to the dune's summit (planting his face in the sand three times on the way and treading on his tail once), he twisted the ball down, so it made a little nest-like indentation and stayed put. This was his fifth or sixth ball, as he had a habit of losing them between boulders, or sometimes the desert lizards would mistake them for eggs and carry them off, leading to a wild chase that his parents often got involved in and didn't find very amusing, (although neither did Aidan after the second theft).

He'd seen his mother use the crystal before; she held it to the leaves and ran her paw over it in a certain way. Within moments the plant had turned green and crisp. His father had done the same with the shelves and chair, but all he'd done was hold it to the wall and push.

The kit turned the sparkling lump of crystal over in his hand and pouted. It wasn't as smooth and shiny as his parents' rock. He ran a digit along the planed surface, then tried to dig his claw between it and the bulbous rocky protrusion it was stuck within. The stone tickled his finger, and although he couldn't see it move, he could almost *feel* it about to come free at any moment. He pushed harder, pressing his pads to the blue, willing the mineral deposit to fly off the end.

What occurred was slightly different. It happened so fast he barely knew what he did. Within a second, a spark fizzed at his finger and the rocky half twisted and elongated to a perfect hexagonal prism, with pointed ends. He blinked at it for a moment and turned it over, examining every surface.

*Now* it looked like his parents' crystal: exactly what he wanted. He shook his paws excitedly, keeping a firm grip on his prize.

He knew from experience that sandcastles couldn't be made from dry sand because it all slid into a pile, but he didn't have any water. If the sand was hard, like rock, then he could shape it like his father had when making the chair. Standing atop the dune and thinking about his father's actions, he stuck one end of the crystal into the sand and pressed down hard.

He lifted his paws away for a second to view his progress. Nothing but a barely visible blue glint, embedded in the sand. He gave a frustrated huff, then dug it free and pressed down again, focusing on the dune below, and how he could make his ball run more exciting. He remembered running his finger along the pretty wave carvings by the elders' hut, thinking how fun it would be to slide all over them if they were huge and climbable. Large, undulating waves and curves, slopes of all sizes, spread before him in his mind's eye.

*BOOM.*

His parents sprinted outside, fur on end.

Towering before them in newly-hardened sandstone was an enormous, uneven ball run, and standing atop it was their son. The force of the transformation had left him a little shell-shocked, but he picked himself up and shook his head free of the ringing in his ears. He waved to his parents, who could only blink in reply. A triumphant giggle rippled down to them as Aidan reached for his ball.

If his mother's eyes had been any wider, they would have dropped into the sand. His father kept looking the structure up and down, examining the surface with disbelief. Neighbours from nearby homesteads peered around corners at the rumble, and were equally shocked.

"Aidan..." his mother called. "Did... did you do this?"

He nodded proudly. "Look!" he beamed, before dropping his tiny wooden sphere into the top of the run.

As his parents watched the ball sweep, twist, and slide jovially towards them, the young fox put his paws on his hips and admired his work with an enormous, satisfied grin.