

THE NAMES THEY WERE GIVEN

by Krista Mathews

GLOSSARY

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This book is a work of fiction. Obviously. It's set in a mythical island-nation based on the author's love of classical culture and childhood in the islands of Hawai'i. Characters, names, places, events, Powers and forms of government are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Mostly it's the latter. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

Dedicated to Erin, my first fan and the first to read this book. Thank you for your years of encouragement and really thorough email notes. You kept me writing.

Chapter One

The Storm Siren



Delle was surfing when the storm siren went off, sitting on her board just past the break. There wasn't a cloud in the sky.

Another drill, she thought, and lifted her face to the rising sun. It was warm and bright and the last thing she wanted to do was rush back to her school to sit around a courtyard having safety procedures recited at her, but the last time she'd skipped a drill, there had been a lot of emphatic arm waving and fairly specific threats of expulsion.

So she caught the first decent wave in, cutting over the churning water, the smell of the salt air and ocean spray nipping at her face. Her school was ridiculous. This island had never—not once in its whole history—been hit with a hurricane or tidal wave. They would have been better running a drill for what to do when civil unrest led to full out war. Or maybe how to handle ambiguously ominous deadlines. Those, at least, would be practical.

She jumped off with an easy splash and trudged up the beach, board tucked under her arm to grab her linen bag, and glanced back at the water, feet sinking deeper into the sand. The sun had lunged up over the horizon, bright orange bursting around the closest island's silhouette, casting the sea in its strange, filtered light. There wasn't another person in sight.

She wanted to stay forever.

But the alarm blared on, blocking the typical smack of morning waves, so Delle turned back to what was sure to be a thrilling day of standing around the school courtyard being lectured. Maybe she should grab a snack, she thought as she put her board away in the school's shiny rack. She'd only had a couple figs before going out this

morning. She pulled her cotton pants and tank top over her swimsuit, and stepped into her sandals to head inland through the lush, green chaos of trees around the beach.

It took ten minutes before the greenery abruptly cut away to reveal the towering, pristine wood buildings of her school. A massive crowd of students milled around on the tidy grass outside, spanning the entire thirty-foot gap between the dorm and science building, stretching back to the edge of history building and forward into the courtyard. Everyone from the smallest five-year-old to the most senior nineteen-year-olds seemed to be there, almost all wearing sleep clothes.

Typical drill: rush everyone out into the open, vulnerable. The stupidity shouldn't still surprise her.

She found a spot in the back of the crowd, and only realized she'd ended up next to Hether Senator when the other student dragged her eyes over Delle's damp hair and ruffled appearance in restrained exasperation.

"You shouldn't surf in the morning," Hether said.

"Noted."

"It's a rule."

"I've heard."

Hether's shoulders tensed under her blue pajamas. Her narrow face was just pretty enough that she didn't have to worry about it, and just interesting enough that Delle liked looking at it: her high forehead, long nose, and serious mouth offsetting the careless brightness of her hair. Her brown eyes could go from easy confidence to weary judgment in a flash—Delle had been ignoring both these expressions for years, a smile on her lips.

Hether said, "It's important for people to know where all the students are for instances like this. What if we needed to find you?"

"I assume you'd tell someone you suspected me of surfing."

"You should take this more seriously. You're the reason we're doing this drill again. You and your revolt," Hether said, and Delle's

smile turned a little more genuine, the drying ocean salt making her skin feel brittle.

"It wasn't a revolt."

"You yelled, 'We'll be safer if we flee' during your sailing class, and led the six-year-olds you were teaching out past the break."

Delle twisted her long, wet brown hair into a bun and jabbed a hair stick through it. The story was mostly accurate.

On the other side of Hether, Kristin Light, a thin girl with sharp, delicate features and shining black hair, dragged her blue eyes over to Hether and said with a note of boredom, "This is why poor people shouldn't be let into our schools."

"Kristin—" Hether sighed, annoyance still evident.

"It's true," she drawled. "I heard they had her teach sailing because she couldn't afford tuition. She was probably trying to kidnap one of the kids and ransom them for money." She smiled condescendingly at Delle. "That's what poor people do."

"Only ambitious poor people. Kidnapping takes a lot of planning," Delle said, going up on her tiptoes to peek over the heads of the people in front of her. She couldn't see anything other than the leafy trees near the buildings.

The island of Inquis housed only one thing of significance: this elite boarding school where children from some of the richest and most powerful families in the Consortium came to learn. They were from all of the island-states, dark skinned kids from the north, pale ones from the west, redheads and blondes and brunettes from across the Domean Sea. It was such a mix of people and culture and languages that no one really stuck out. Well, that wasn't totally true. Delle sort of stuck out since her guardian had either bribed or blackmailed someone for her spot. She'd never bothered asking which.

With such an abundance of important people's kids in attendance, safety was the school's highest priority, so it wasn't exactly a surprise to have to repeat this weather drill. The last time they'd done it, the staff concluded that at least ten students would have died had

there been a real storm. That all ten had been with Delle at the time mattered little.

“Attention. We are beginning,” announced a loud, unfamiliar male voice that stilled the crowd. “I am Greg Captain, of the Consortium Navy. This is not a weather drill.”

Uh oh. Whispers exploded as kids turned to each other with questions, a plethora of native languages cropping up in the excitement. The clicking dialect of Kukulos mixed with the ancient Ombras tongue and Consortium common whispered through the older kids, but Delle froze, the shifting students letting her glimpse the couple dozen men and women in Navy uniforms in the courtyard not even a hundred feet away.

Not good.

Unable to stand still with tension building inside her, Delle hurried over to the low, decorative rock wall about twenty feet to her right, just behind the assembly that surrounded the garden the younger students maintained to learn about nature and harvests. She climbed on the wall, holding a pale, sloping tree branch for balance, and saw students jammed all the way to the middle of the quad, but what she hadn’t seen until now were the dozen soldiers in full uniform standing beside a pale-looking Mr. Principal. Tension burst into full-blown anxiety.

“We have heard reports that the Universe has hidden amongst you,” Greg Captain said, casually stomping on years of taboo. A collective shudder pulsed through the students, who all seemed to take a step back. Most whipped their heads around like the Universe was a wild boar they could spot instead of a teenage girl. Delle clutched at the balancing branch, and swallowed back a wave of irrational hope that no one else shared or wanted to see.

“Boys, convene in the cafeteria. Girls, line up by age on the mountain side of the courtyard. Youngest closest to the ocean. Now.”

Everyone jerked to move to their assigned locations, but the rush caused confusion, and the fear made people clumsy. The well-

educated, polite students clumped together with their friends, clutching each others hands and whispering questions.

“I thought the Universes were dead,” a girl said to her friends near where Delle crouched on the wall. They all looked pale and unsure.

“The parents are,” a boy said. “But Vira could be here. Hidden.”

“You think she’s going to try to kill us?”

“The soldiers will kill her first. We’ll be okay.”

“But the deadline’s this year. If the Thrones aren’t filled—”

“We can’t give them that power again!”

The rest of the conversation faded, white noise that rushed past Delle, who stayed poised on that lava rock wall, trying to figure out what to do.

Less than one percent of the population of the island-nations had a Power. Most people could go their whole lives without meeting someone who had one, especially since the Third Rising ten years ago. It was illegal for all but a few Power families to use their family-specific skillset. All known Powers were monitored closely. But no one had been content simply to monitor the Universes, one of the Three Families that used to rule the Consortium. After the Rise, they’d been hunted, stripped of their wealth and authority, and mostly killed. For the Navy to acknowledge that any of them were still alive, especially for them to admit the Universe might be at this school of wealthy, privileged children, something huge had to have changed.

And that meant that a lowly Traveler like Delle would be a suspect, detained and tested or whatever it was they did. She’d heard enough stories from sailors about the raids during the Rises. This wasn’t going to end well for her.

A single guard pointed the line of boys across the fresh cut grass to the cafeteria. Four soldiers carefully corralled the girls, swords in hand.

“Your questions will be answered after the verifying,” Greg Captain said, but by then fear had caught fire with the crowd, who asked louder and louder questions. The captain’s control of the school