



Dream
Watchman
Quest for the
Missing Talisman
Book I



TINA ROBERTS



Dream Watchman

Quest for the Missing Talisman

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A Novel

Tina Roberts



Strategic Book Group

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For Mother

A special acknowledgement is extended to my godmother for her devoted guidance and leadership throughout my life that has steered me in a positive direction both as a writer and a professional.

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INTRODUCTION

D*ream Watchman: Quest for the Missing Talisman* is a story about a young woman, Emily Rollins, who comes to a crossroad in her life when a dream takes her to a place of illusion and fantasy, opening to a world of powers beyond human capability. As she becomes fully encapsulated in the dream, a seventeenth century warlock, the Dream Watchman, is unveiled, and a chain of unusual events starts to unravel mysteriously. He creates a magical web setting—one trap after another—for Emily to stumble upon. She is lured back and forth between reality and the dream world, in pursuit of a mystical talisman, which holds the secret connecting the characters to a journey. The dreams lead her to forsaken places, beyond normalcy. Concurrently, the story reveals a string of instruments that awaken timeless treasures, fictional cities, and creatures who viciously threaten Emily's life. This passage of time brings forth haunting experiences and hidden worlds. Most importantly, the story is about love, family, friends, and the prosperity found through the riches of living.

CHAPTER I

hundreds of stray wolves surrounded the dark misty forest in a hunt for Emily Rollins, who left no shadow of traceable footsteps that could be sniffed by the noses of such cold killers.

Tired and hungry, Emily would not stop running until she found protection and safety away from the confusing confines of this dreary, Arctic maze that appeared to be the end of the earth. She ran for her life through a strange forest, until she came to the edge of a coved lake winding around the tip of the foothills. There was nowhere else to run, except to the edge of a bank that led to the water. Either she could turn back now to run north or find a way to cross the lake, which spanned ten miles in each direction. A transforming sky with cobalt arrays of grey and blue lights reflected off of the water. She continued to run along the bank in silence until she cut the side of her leg on a tree branch. The fresh blood immediately drew the attention of the wolves. They viciously came closer, led by their keen sense of smell.

Emily looked up at the sky for a sign that would tell her which direction to run or how to get to the other side of the lake. Just as she turned away from the water, one of the wolves attacked her and dove for her throat. She ducked instinctively, and the wolf fell briskly into the windblown lake with a mighty splash. Clearly hysterical, she stood up and stared at the blood-thirsty, red-eyed wolves eye to eye while they continued to surround her. With nowhere else to turn, she took mini steps backwards until she reached the edge of the bank at the shoreline of the lake.

“You are surrounded, Emily,” the leader of the wolves said, “with nowhere else to run, and you have come to the end of your destiny.”

“Leave me alone!” she shouted back to the wolf. “I will make it out of this forest alive if it is the last thing I do!”

“We have been ordered to destroy you,” he said. “We cannot allow you to leave the forest alive.”

“I did not ask to be here, and I do not care about your orders,” she said. “Tell the leader of darkness that he cannot dictate the course of my life, that it is not at his disposal.”

“Emily, you broke our rules when you became the Beholder, by accepting the responsibility of leading people of light,” he said. “They look up to you, and our leaders of darkness want you eliminated. You have brought change that has confused even the people of darkness. There are some who now see glimmers of sunlight in their eyes.”

“People have the right to choose who they wish to follow,” she said. “Do not come any closer, or I will jump in the lake to swim to the other side.”

“Surrender now, Emily,” he insisted, “lest my pack of wolves charge you with vengeance until you are dead, because you will be eaten alive.”

Behind Emily as she stood on the bank, the Dream Watchman began to rise out of the lake with the look of a monstrous devil, glaring at the back of her. Rolling waves of water parted as his body grew taller, until he stood in the middle of the lake. His explosive presence stopped her dead in her tracks when she turned and noticed him. She stood transfixed with a dreadful expression on her face when she heard the echoing sound of his arrival and saw the massive size of this phenomenon.

Emily’s hair blew with the tumultuous winds that screamed through the trees, until this supernatural wonder began to walk slowly one step at a time on top of the water. Her eyes could only bulge with surprise over this gigantic spectacle, which floated towards her like a tidal wave about to erupt. Unbeknownst to her, the feral wolves howled as they answered to the call of their master. He was the mighty keeper who protected

these creatures. He gave them food and shelter in winter, when the snow was too thick to find prey to eat.

Just when she thought she was going to be their next meal, a voice called her name loudly. “Emily!” the Dream Watchman shouted, as he reached for her to take his hand. “Take my hand before the wolves make a meal out of you!”

She was startled as she woke up from a nightmare. She was with Joshua at the bottom of the water well in Liberty County. This was no ordinary water well. It was a fantasy land of picturesque landscapes they had never seen before or even knew existed below the surface of the earth.

“Thank God you are alive!” Joshua exclaimed in a concerned tone of voice.

“What happened?” she asked. “How long was I unconscious?”

“I do not know—five or ten minutes maybe,” he said. “Your foot slipped on the ladder, and there was an astronomical blast of wind, which took you by storm.”

“Help me onto my feet please,” she said. “I am all muddy, and I just had the strangest dream again.” Joshua Coleman held his hand out as a crutch for Emily to grasp as she lifted herself from the ground.

“Em, was it him again?” he asked.

“Yes, it was the Dream Watchman!” she said. “In this dream he was an enormous giant able to walk on water. Just as he was about to save my life from a pack of wolves, I woke up here at the bottom of the water well with you leaning over me.”

“I promise I will never leave you, Em,” he said. “We are in this together, and we had better find what we are looking for quickly.”

“This place is an unbelievable fairy land, and it is a world of its own,” she said. “How could such a place exist underneath the water well on my grandmother’s farm?”

“That is a good question I wish I had the answer for, Em,” he said. “There is enough sunlight here; at least we will not have to use the flashlights.”

“I wonder how much time we have before the sun goes down,” she exclaimed. “I do not wish to be here when night falls,” he said.

“We may not have a choice, Joshua,” she said. “We cannot leave until we find the first amulet, Goodwill.”

Emily and Joshua walked for miles taking in the beauty of the colorful trees and flowers. When daylight was coming to an end, they felt tired and weary from the journey. She was exhausted and she could see that Joshua felt the same way, not to mention they did not know what they had gotten themselves into with this world beneath the world. All of the fantasy books she had read over the years, reminded her of creatures who lurk in the darkness. She imagined this colorful world of beauty transforming into a pit of obscurity, as she saw bans of fog rising from the ground. They had a few provisions in their backpacks, two canteens of water, a couple of flashlights, and some extra batteries for backup. Suddenly, Joshua came to a halt.

“Something is out there,” he exclaimed. “Can you hear it?”

“What is it?” she inquired in a whisper, stopping in her tracks next to him. “I hear footsteps.”

“I hear a lot of footsteps that do not sound like the patter of little feet,” he said.

“Can you tell if they are animal or human?” she asked.

“Whatever they are, they are BIG and coming towards us,” he said.

“Hurry, let’s hide behind that tree,” she said. Emily ran quickly towards the tree and Joshua followed.

Unexpectedly, the tree coughed loudly. “Cough—cough—cough,” the big tree said.

“Did I just hear this tree cough?” he asked.

“Quiet, Joshua,” she exclaimed, “or they will hear us.”

“They hear you anyway, and they know that you are here,” the big tree said.

“Who said that?” she asked.

“I told you—it was the tree talking,” he whispered.

“They are coming for you,” the big tree said.

“Who are they?” she asked.

“A people you cannot escape,” the big tree said in a massive tone of voice.

“There are hundreds of them,” Joshua said. “Are these the pack of wolves you were dreaming about, Em? I read that dreams can sometimes mean something else in real life.”

“The wolves in my dream were ready to eat me alive,” she said; “these people look like they want to bury us alive.”

“They are covered in mud,” he said. “What are they?”

“I do not know,” she replied, “but we better make a run for it!” Emily and Joshua started to run, although they quickly came to a halt, after the discovery of being surrounded by Mud-people.

“Do not come any closer,” she said, holding up her hand to form a stop sign in front of the strange group of people.

“What do you want from us?” Joshua shielded Emily when the leader of the Mud-people stepped forward.

The Mud-man stood tall and dark though he displayed no sign of danger. “We are not here to harm you,” said Esron.

“Who are you and what do your people want from us?” Emily asked.

“I am Esron, leader of the Mud-people,” he answered. “We are the people of the past Raywood, and we are here to help you.”

“Hey buddy, do not come any closer,” Joshua said with a protective tone in his voice.

“We know that you seek Opticleeze, the one-eyed cyclops,” Esron said, as he stopped in his trail towards Emily and Joshua.

“Why are there so many of you?” Emily asked.

“These are my people, Emily; they go where I go,” he said as his people stood all around him. “We have waited here in the water well for hundreds of years for this day to come.”

“How do you know my name?” she asked.

“The same way you are able to read my mind,” he replied. “We know who you are; you have come into our world in search of the cyclops.”

“Esron, my grandmother never mentioned anything about Mud-people beneath the water well on her farm,” Emily said.

“I knew your grandmother, great-grandmother, and great-great grandmother,” he said.

“You are lying; she would have told me about you,” she said.

“Emily, you were too young to know anything about me; the Mud-people; or the first amulet, Goodwill,” he said. “You could not know us until it was your time.”

“What do you know about the amulet called Goodwill?” she asked. “Do you know where it is hidden?”

“Yes, my people and I can show you the way,” he said, “but we cannot go beyond the Crescent River.”

“Why not?” Joshua asked. “How can you help us if you cannot take us to the first amulet, Goodwill?”

“Our purpose is to lead you to the Crescent River,” said Esron, “but it is as far as we can take you.”

“How far is it to the Crescent River?” Emily asked.

“It is only a few miles away,” Esron replied. “When you cross the bridge that leads into the Valley of Darkness, Opticleeze, the one-eyed cyclops, will be waiting by a pool of fire. There, he has guarded the first amulet, Goodwill, for hundreds of years. Emily, you will have to use the Knife of Stone to release the Sword of Raywood in order to defeat him. Once he is defeated, you will have to remove a hair from his head and place it within the amulet, Goodwill, to activate its powers.”

“I have never used a sword in my life,” she exclaimed.

“Do not worry, your magic powers will illuminate immediately when the sword is released,” he said with great confidence. “From the moment it touches your hand, you will know exactly what to do with it.”

“Then we shall follow your lead to the Crescent River,” she said. “The Knife of Stone is here in my backpack. I will do everything in my power to use it for the purpose of releasing the Sword of Raywood.”

“Follow me,” he said. Emily and Joshua followed Esron and the Mud-people through the night towards the Crescent River. His people carried torches of light that lit the path leading to the bridge that crossed into the Valley of Darkness.

As they walked, the landscape was filled with fog and mist that faded into the cold blackness of the earth. The trees appear to be shadows in the wind with eyes and ears that could see and hear everything we say, she thought.

Joshua was quiet and patient as she admired his courage for joining her on this journey. In all truth, she knew that she was the only person obligated to the promise she had made to her dying mother twenty-four hours prior. Joshua and she had not seen each other for a long time until two days ago. She was surprised that there was enough love between them that he was willing to put his own life on the line for the sake of herself and her mother. Just then, a shockingly strange howl came out of the forest.

“I do not like the sound of this; what is it?” Joshua asked Eson as they all slowed their pace towards the bridge.

“Do not be alarmed,” he said; “it is the wolves.”

“What do they want from us?” Emily asked.

“Fresh blood mostly,” Eson answered. “If we ignore them, maybe they will go away and we will not have to kill them.”

“Oh, my God!” Emily was alarmed. “There’s a whole pack of them just as they were in my dream.” The wolves formed a parallel line as a barricade to block off entry towards the bridge. They growled persistently in a threatening nature that Eson did not appreciate.

Everyone came to a complete stop. Joshua and Emily were shocked because they were both thinking of her dream of wolves. They looked at each other, but there was not much time for conversation. Eson took another stand as the Mud-people followed his lead to battle the wolves. He pulled a spear from his back, and his eyes changed sharply into cold, white fireballs of unbelievable marble. Joshua and Emily ducked as they examined the changed eyeballs of all of the Mud-people surrounding them.

“It is this woman’s destiny to cross the Crescent River,” Eson shouted out to the wolf who appeared to be the leader of the pack.

“We have been ordered to stop her,” Wolverine said. “If you and the Mud-people get in our way, we will slaughter you one by one.”

“If it is me they want, I cannot let the Mud-people risk their lives for us,” Emily said.

“Em, what are you saying?” Joshua asked in a concerned voice. “We cannot fight a hundred wolves with just the two of us.”

“I want Esron to know that we can fight our own battles if we have too,” she said.

“Mud-people are already dead, Emily,” said Esron, “and it is our duty to see that you cross the Crescent River.” The red-eyed wolves began to move in closer to the group surrounding Emily and Joshua.

A strike of lightening was cast upon the sky, and the clouds raced behind roars of thunder. Esron and the Mud-people did not become frightened of the wolves’ challenge for a fight, which was likely to be deadly.

“I am warning you, Wolverine; cease your attack now, or we will be forced to destroy you,” he shouted. Esron threw his spear aiming for it to land at the center of the battleground.

Emily stood beside Joshua as she began to reach for the Knife of Stone in her backpack. “The Knife of Stone is all we have, Joshua, aside from the provisions and a couple of flash-lights,” she said. “We have no other weaponry to fight these animals.”

“We will have to use our faith,” he said, “and the strength of our hands to protect ourselves the best way we can, Em.”

The wolves were a hundred yards away from the Mud-people, who surrounded Emily and Joshua. Their mouths foamed with the essence of territorial aggression. Eager to respond to the dominant behavior of the wolves, the Mud-People grew fangs and claws as they approached the battleground in front of them.

Esron swiftly slashed Wolverine with the claws of his right fist, and the battle between Mud-People carrying spears and wolves with vicious teeth began. Some of the wolves fell quickly to their deaths in bloodshed, while several of the Mud-people vanished at their destruction into dust. Emily held the Knife of Stone close to her chest unknowingly generating a shield around her and Joshua. “They are fighting, Em,” Joshua said as he stayed close to Emily.

“Look, the Knife of Stone has created a shield around us,” she said.

“How can that be?” he asked.

“I do not know—it is magic,” she said. “I wonder if it will help Eson to destroy Wolverine quickly.”

The Knife of Stone flew out of Emily’s hand and out of the shield around her and Joshua. It glowed profusely in the darkness of mid-air until Eson connected to its power. As soon as he grasped it with his hand, he was able to use it to stab Wolverine in the heart. Wolverine was immediately dead, and the battle was over as Eson enjoyed the kill of an enemy he had long fought.

He and the remaining Mud-people watched the other wolves run away leaving many from their pack as dead, wasted spoil. “The shield is disappearing,” Joshua said to Emily. “The fight is over and we have won,” she said; “look—the wolves are running away.”

“You are free to cross the bridge now that Wolverine has been destroyed,” Eson said walking closer to Emily and Joshua. “Here is the Knife of Stone, which I believe belongs to you.”

Eson returned the Knife of Stone. “Thanks, I will keep it safe in my backpack,” she said. “The Mud-people—are they alright?”

“Some of us have been injured, but we will survive this life after death,” he said; “we will wait here for the coming of the Water-people.”

“Who are they, and why are you waiting for them?” she asked. “They are the people of past Raywood, who have been sent to free us,” he said. “They will wash away our mud, so we can go on to the next life.”

“I am glad you are not stuck here forever,” Joshua said.

“Just until the Water-people arrive,” Eson replied.

“I hope they get here soon,” Emily exclaimed. “Is there anything we can do to help?”

“The God of Light has already given the order,” he said; “therefore, they should be here soon.”

“Well I hope for your sake it is not another one hundred years,” Joshua said.

“Do not worry about us,” Eron insisted; “you must be on your way now.”

“That was amazing—the way you killed Wolverine back there,” Joshua exclaimed.

“I could not have done it without Emily and the Knife of Stone,” he said. “It was her thoughts that guided the knife straight into my hands.”

“I only thought about whether the Knife of Stone could help you,” she said. “I had no idea it would really happen.”

“Emily, it is your thoughts that drive your magic powers into fruition,” he explained. “You must be careful—your thoughts are very powerful.”

“I will keep that in mind,” she said. “Thank you for guiding us here.”

“Thank you very much; your kindness will not be forgotten,” Joshua added.

“Take care of her, Joshua; she is a priceless jewel that cannot be replaced,” he said.

“Joshua, we have to go,” Emily reminded him.

“I am ready when you are, Em,” he said.

Emily continued to express gratitude. “Thanks again, Eron; you are good people in my book!”

“And you as well. Remember, after you cross the bridge and come to the pool of fire, Opticleeze, the one-eyed Cyclops, will be waiting on the other side,” he said. “You must use the Knife of Stone to release the Sword of Raywood. Do you know how to do it now, Emily?”

“Yes, I believe I do,” she replied. “If I use my thoughts to do the steering, my magical powers will become fruition by using the Knife of Stone.”

“That is right,” he asserted. “Just remember to always stay focused.”

“I will and farewell,” Emily said to Eron as she and Joshua departed from the Mud-people.

They crossed the bridge connecting the Crescent River to the Valley of Darkness. Immediately, they noticed a pool of fire burning in the distance. “I know this is not a time for rest, but

I am very hungry, Em,” Joshua exclaimed. “Can we stop for a moment to eat something?”

“How can you be hungry after seeing so much blood by the Crescent River?” she asked.

“We have not eaten all day, and I did not expect to be here this long,” he said. “I never imagined this water well would be a bottomless pit leading to never-never land.”

“I am sorry I got you into this mess, Joshua,” she said with a distressed expression on her face.

“There is no need to apologize, Em,” he said; “it was my choice to join you on this adventure.”

“We should stop here where there is a little light coming from the sky. I have beef jerky and crackers—I am sorry we do not have anything more appetizing,” she said. “I grabbed everything I could think of that was nonperishable in Mama’s kitchen before we left.”

“Yummy—beef jerky and crackers would be more than enough,” he said. Emily and Joshua sat quietly by a solemn tree that stood silent. They shared beef jerky and crackers with thankful expressions upon their faces.

The Valley of Darkness reflected dark blue skies, leafless trees, and gray terrain. There were no stars and very little light except that which came from the pool of fire. “I miss California, and my whole life has changed in a matter of two weeks,” she said.

“I miss it, too, and I have only been gone for a few days,” he said.

“I still do not know what is happening with Mama’s condition,” Emily said, “but I know I want her to live to see tomorrow.”

“She will live to see tomorrow, Em,” he said looking Emily straight into her eyes. “We will accomplish everything we have set out to do—I promise.”

“You are right, Joshua; water wells are not supposed to be bottomless pits,” she said. “We have entered a world we did not anticipate could exist, but we have a mission to complete.”

“It is my guess we have about a mile to walk before we reach the pool of fire burning above the hill over there,” he said pointing to the pool of fire.

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“I would say that you are right again,” she said. “Since we have come this far, we should not be afraid. Besides, I have the Knife of Stone in my possession.”

“We better get going—the sooner we find the first amulet, called Goodwill, the sooner we can get out of this dreary place,” he said.

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