

THE
WATCHERS
TO CAPTURE
THE WIND



DEIRDRA EDEN



ROUGH MATTER™

To Capture the Wind

by

Deirdra Eden

Book Four of *The Watchers Series*

————— *For the Original Edition* —————

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DEDICATION



Thank you to all who helped in the editing and production of *The Watchers, To Capture the Wind*. Thank you also to my friends and family who helped me stay positive through my creative drought and encouraged me to keep going.

CHAPTER ONE

AWAKEN

Aura was near. I could feel her powerful energy swirling around me. Sun filtered through the clean oval windows in hot rays. The curtains were neatly piled on the table beside the bed. Aura must have thought it would awaken me faster by having the windows completely exposed to the invading sunlight.

Everything hurt, especially the sun in my eyes. I couldn't lift my arms yet, though I screamed inside, straining to break out of the survival sleep paralysis. 'Tis always a little frightening when the mind awakens before the body.

Her gentle hand pushed back my hair. The scent of fresh rose oil flooded all my senses signaling she was here. Last I remembered she was injured too, but she must have awoken before me. The women folk of our kind tend to heal faster. I focused on her. She was completely glorious. Light beamed off her immortal frame and radiated like fire in her hair which cascaded over her shoulder as she leaned over me.

Aura gasped. "Azrael, you're awake!" She nearly fell on my chest. It was a good thing I was immortal and didn't need air or I would have suffocated under her eager embrace. "Oh, my dear, Azrael. You are finally awake." She released me and kissed my hands. I couldn't lift my arms on my own, but she pressed my palm against her ivory face.

Renewed energy flushed through my hand and filled my body with the powerful essence of wholeness.

We were both warriors, and moments like this with her would always be fleeting as we prepared for another battle or mission. This was the life of the Watchers. Earth was our battleground. Until the Earth was cleansed from the Shadow Legion, we would sleep by our swords and live as vagabonds, traveling to wherever the druids sent us.

Right now, Aura was at my side and, for this moment, I could pretend she was all mine before I had to give the world back their champion. I had been fighting for so many centuries that it was hard to imagine any other way. She made me believe again that one day this madness on Earth would be over and we could start our life, free of crisis, death, and chaos.

She stood and the sun beamed past her and beat on me like a hot iron rod. I winced at the sudden light. I opened one eye to see her with her hands on her hips. "It's time to go, Azrael. The Shadow Legion doesn't sleep, and the world needs us."

I protested by closing my eyes again as if I was sleeping. Aura ignored this and shoved woolen socks onto both of my feet. She wasn't gentle about it either. She pounded on my boots and tied the laces.

"How is your shoulder?" she asked.

I stopped mock snoring and found the strength to push myself upright on the bed and stretch the new muscle. It was as if I had never endured the injury. "Do we have matching scars?" I

asked, mostly to see if she had gotten enough sleep to heal herself. The white canvas dress she wore had been neatly stitched back together where the mace had torn it.

She put a hand on her shoulder where the Shadow Lord had broken her collarbone. “I’m fine,” she said quickly—too quickly, like she was trying to hide pain and be strong as usual.

I raised one eyebrow in disbelief.

“I awoke from survival sleep three years before you did,” she explained.

I ripped the blankets away from myself. “How long have I been asleep?”

“Twelve years.” She shrugged her slender shoulders nonchalantly. This was her first time in survival sleep as opposed to revival sleep after she died. Apparently, she didn’t realize we overslept. Either that or our injuries had been worse than I thought.

I slid out of the bed and my boots hit the wooden floor of my ship in the familiar echo of sea life. “Zacaris is going to have a fit.” I looked around the cabin. Not much had changed in this small room we had been cocooned in, but who knows how things had changed in the outside world while we had been away.

Aura nodded. “And Zacaris is not going to be happy when I tell him about Alamar.”

That half-wit pirate was the least of our worries. I stood and stretched my arms and back. I took my first steps, measuring my strength after not walking for twelve years. Aura insisted on bracing me. I tried not to put too much weight on her as I steadied myself, not because she wasn’t strong, but because I didn’t want her to know how weak I still felt.

Aura took a stifled breath. “Finding Alamar and bringing him to the Sanctuary was my first mission and I failed. What if the Shadow Legion finds him first and convinces him to join their side?”

She was always too hard on herself. I tried not to think about Alamar joining the Legion. I knew what the Legion had to offer—power, wealth, women, and validation for doing everything pirates like to do. Temporarily, they had a much more attractive offer than Aura and the druids. In the end, the Legion and all who followed them would be defeated. I didn’t tell Aura this, but losing Alamar to the Legion would be devastating to the Watchers, especially since we desperately needed him in the upcoming naval battle.

“This isn’t your fault,” I told Aura and tried to hide the annoyance in my voice at Alamar. “Every Watcher makes their own choices and Alamar chose to be stupid.” I wanted to use another word to describe Alamar, but I made a point not to swear in front of Aura. “That seadog is probably still on his ship somewhere getting drunk and entertaining himself with his own illusions. I doubt the Shadow Legion will ever find him on the open ocean.”

My simple answer didn’t seem to make her feel better. She looked at me with wide eyes as if trying to dissect my thoughts for any hidden meaning behind what I said. By the way her expressions changed many times, I could tell she was replaying everything that happened with Alamar in her mind. I didn’t know how to put it simpler—Alamar was an idiot.

Finally, Aura rested her worry-free gaze on me. “Everything is going to turn out the way it is supposed to,” she said.

I wondered if she was trying to convince me or herself, but it didn’t matter because she was smiling now. I stepped toward her and touched her arm, strong and powerful, yet graceful and swift.

She was an Immortal now. I hadn't really gotten a chance to appreciate that yet. She was still the same woman I had fallen in love with many times. Now that she chose to come back as one of the Immortals, her life would be filled with unspeakable horrors and suffering. But that didn't matter to her. She was dedicated to her king and the cause of the good Watchers who had not fallen.

I was sure she would have stayed in the safety of Neviah. That is why I hadn't waited for her after the assassins in England took her life. I was ashamed that she had waited for me to awaken when I had not waited for her. "You haven't left me this whole time I was in survival sleep." It wasn't a question. I knew. I had never met any woman more devoted than her. She would sacrifice herself without question and consider it an honor. This made being her guardian a little unnerving. Not only did my animal companion and I have to protect her from the Legion—and pirates, but we had to protect her from herself.

"I have something of yours," she said and held out my signet ring to me. The gold ring with the arrow and rose crossed over a shield had been in my family for generations. Aura explained, "When I fought the Shadow Lord on Drakeland, he showed me this ring as proof you were dead."

I took it and slid it onto my hand where it felt familiar. "I have a ring of yours too." I opened a box next to my bed. The rainbow jewels glistened in the light coming through the window.

"My rainbow ring!" she cheered. "The Queen of the Fairies gave this to me. I haven't seen it since I was a mortal. I thought I lost this forever!"

I shrugged my shoulders like it was no small feat, but I had spent months looking for it. I was about to ask where my cat was when she asked, "What did you dream about?" I could tell by her tone she was expecting a tale of epic adventure.

"I don't remember," I answered honestly.

She pulled back with her lips slightly open in a gasp. "How can you not remember?"

I shrugged my shoulders, but that seemed to only make her more dissatisfied by my answer. She sucked in a deep breath, and I could tell one of her rants was coming. She needed to rant every once in a while. It was good for her—like letting off steam so she didn't blow up.

"I don't understand how you cannot remember." She breathed and started to pace. "You were moaning and clutching your chest like something was wrong. Your hands were clenched so tight I thought your veins would burst. It was horrible seeing you like that. You mumbled phrases that made no sense." She turned to me and met my gaze. I could see my reflection in the wide mirror of her horrified eyes. "And you kept repeating the word 'Moloch'."

The Shadow Lord's name caught me by surprise. My eyes seemed to fill with blood and all I could see was the color red. I blinked but remained masterfully calm as not to alarm Aura.

"You don't remember any of that?" She looked shocked as she examined my lack of outward reaction.

"Nope," I lied. Well, technically I didn't lie. I really didn't remember any of those nightmares, thank goodness. However, the name Moloch was forever etched on my soul, an embarrassing stain of my past life.

Aura paced into a spot of sunlight beaming through the window. The rays hit her sparkling skin, scattering heavenly light around the cabin of the ship. She was going on again about my nightmares and facing Zacaris. She paced out of the light and the room suddenly seemed black in

contrast. As if giving me an emotional whiplash, she paced back into the light and I almost stopped breathing. It was like being surrounded by the warmth and glory of the governing star, Kolob, except more arousing.

“Are you even listening?” She caught me off guard.

I nodded and tried to look more alert as I took in her celestial beauty. She had no idea what her Lifelight was doing to me. The sun hit her young Lifelight and reminded me that she was still in her childbearing years. Guilt hit me at the realization that if she married me, she would never be a mother. I hadn’t told her this yet, but it would be impossible for me to have children. My creation ability was taken. I had only myself to blame for that, though I resented the Shadow Legion, especially Moloch, for the loss.

I couldn’t help but wonder if Aura wanted children. Would she still want to marry me if she knew I couldn’t have children?

She stopped pacing and stood next to me. “We need to ready the ship,” Aura said, anxious to start her next battle.

I wrapped my arms around her to keep her there and leaned in to kiss her. She looked pleased to accept my kiss.

“Ahem. Am I interrupting anything?” I recognized Baby’s voice interrupting us before I could finally kiss Aura. Normally I wouldn’t care if anyone saw me kiss Aura, but he was way too perverted, and I didn’t want to give him any ideas. Besides, I knew he would attempt to follow through with his threat of trying to steal Aura from me.

Aura cheered in delight when she saw him. “Baby!”

The big tiger changed his smug expression and turned all kitten-cute and fluffy-like as he bounded toward Aura. She wrapped her arms around him and ran her fingers through his fur. Tigers don’t purr, but Baby knew how to fake it to please Aura.

“I think she likes me better than you,” Baby said with a bantering whip of his ring-striped tail.

“Is that so?” I asked in a low voice, sounding like a challenging growl.

“I’ve had her all to myself since she awoke three years ago and she still acts like this every time she sees me,” my cat taunted me.

Aura looked from me to Baby. “What is he saying?” she asked. She had always been fascinated by the way I could talk with my animal companion.

“He says you took really good care of us,” I said quickly.

“Liar.” Baby smirked.

“Aw,” Aura cooed and scratched Baby between the ears. “And Baby took good care of me,” Aura replied.

Baby gave me a smug glare, but this wasn’t over yet.

“I couldn’t help it,” Baby said with false innocence. There was no one else to keep her company. You were knocked out and, because of your lousy seamanship, we landed on a sandbank several leagues from the Sanctuary.

“That’s real funny.” I said sarcastically.

“What’s funny?” Aura asked, her hands now in an eager clasp.

“He says we are not at the Sanctuary,” I told her.

Aura nodded. “Even with my immortal sight, I can barely make out the Sanctuary in the distance.”

It couldn’t be true. I had us on a straight course for the island.

“Take a look for yourself.” Baby nodded toward the door.

The ship creaked as we made our way to the salt-stained deck where the sunlight fully bathed me. The ocean lapped against the side of the boat, now caked in a ring of seaweed. Sure enough, the boat had run aground on a sandbank. Our island Sanctuary was in the distance.

“Told you,” Baby said, and waved his tail like a banner through the air.

I hated it when he was right.

“You were in no condition for navigation when you set the course for the ship,” Aura said.

We were close enough to the Sanctuary that someone should have noticed us. “I wonder why the other Watchers didn’t come for us,” I said.

Zacaris would have never let us both stay on the same ship while we were vulnerable in survival sleep. He did not even like Aura and I being in the same country as it put the power of Starfire in danger, or at least that’s what he thought. Even if Eva had convinced Zacaris not to send one of us to another Sanctuary, Zacaris would have made sure we were under the protection of the Watchers at the Sanctuary, not out at sea. This made no sense.

Aura’s large round eyes gazed out at the Sanctuary with what I recognized as homesickness. “With all the security the druids place around the island, someone should have noticed us.”

She was right. Judging by the state of the ship, we had been here a while. Why hadn’t anyone come for us?

Where had all the Watchers gone?