

POWER
OF
GODS

BOOK TWO OF
LEGACY OF THE WATCHERS

N a n c y M a d o r e

PROLOGUE



Fort Greely, Alaska

Present day

Amanda awoke with a start and bolted up in bed.

“Who’s there?” she cried, looking frantically around the room. Shadows loomed, startling her before she recognized them for what they were; a pile of laundry sitting on the back of a chair and her favorite dress, retrieved that very day from the dry cleaners, hanging on the door.

She paused, searching her memory. She’d been jarred from her sleep by the sound of someone calling out her name.

Yet she appeared to be alone in the room. Amanda faltered, reluctant to accept that it was only a dream. It seemed so real! She could still hear the distinct, imploring tone. It was a woman’s voice. Her mother’s?

Amanda brushed this disturbing thought aside and slowly lay back down, pulling the covers up all the way to her chin. Her mother—what

an idea! Amanda didn't believe in ghosts. It must have been her own voice she heard, calling out in her sleep. But why would she call out her own name?

As Amanda attempted to soothe herself with this most logical explanation, she kept an uneasy eye on the shadows lurking all around her. She felt disproportionately unnerved—all the more so because she wasn't prone to bad dreams or wild imaginings. Something had spooked her out of a deep sleep, and whatever it was seemed to be lingering, like an ominous presence. She had the distinct and persisting impression that someone was there, watching her.

"Tommy...?" she called out weakly, but the preposterousness of this struck her before the word was even out of her mouth. Tommy would not waste his time!

This involuntary thought brought Amanda up short. Why had she thought of it like that? Suffice it to say that Tommy wasn't the sort of man to watch a woman sleep—nor was he the type to lurk around in the dark playing tricks. He was too time conscious for that.

And much too self-absorbed.

Amanda huffed at herself testily. She hated it when she got like this. It was his leaving so soon after their lovemaking. He'd said it was because he needed to get up early, but her alarm clock worked just as well as his. What did it mean? Was it possible that Tommy was tiring of her already?

Amanda instantly rejected this possibility. She'd given him a night to remember if Cosmo could be trusted (and Amanda had been relying on their advice for too long to consider that they couldn't). She'd deliberated over every detail, from the long, false eyelashes to the back breaking stilettos. She shuddered with pleasure, recalling his expression when he saw her in the little pink lace teddy that left nothing to the imagination. He'd responded like a wild boar at a

picnic. But then he left so quickly after! She couldn't help feeling a little resentful. Here she was, working her ass off (literally) to make each and every encounter more exciting for him and what, meanwhile, was he doing for her?

Yet Amanda was confident that she would win him over in the end. Oh, she was well aware of that dowdy little waitress in Delta Junction who was after him but, compared to Amanda, she was merely ridiculous. Of course looks weren't everything, but in this woman's case they amounted to nothing. Amanda and her best friend, Catherine, had become regulars at the restaurant where the waitress worked, solely for the pleasure of picking her apart. Amanda couldn't even remember the woman's name; she began calling her 'Flo' early on, and it stuck. How could Tommy settle for a washed up old waitress named 'Flo' after having Amanda?

Amanda was starting to feel better. Even though he wasn't good at showing it, Tommy *had* to be falling in love with her. She knew he was proud of her—she could tell by his self-satisfied expression whenever people watched them come into a room. She stood out in every crowd, with her long, blonde hair and voluptuous figure. In addition to being one of the best looking women in the region, she loved him, blew him and made him laugh. Really, what more could a man want?

Amanda rolled over in her bed restlessly. Normally, thinking about Tommy could soothe her no matter what was happening around her, but she was still feeling uneasy. She sat up, glancing at the clock. It was three in the morning. She looked around the room again, examining every shadow scrupulously. She couldn't shake the feeling that someone was there in the room with her, watching her. She snapped on the light and fished through the top drawer of her bedside table for a small bottle of pills. Finding it, she dropped one of the little blue pills on her palm, tossed it in her mouth and swallowed it,

washing it down with water from a glass on the table. Then she shut off the light and lay back down, trying to think happy thoughts about her future with Tommy while waiting for the pill to kick in.

But her eyes kept wandering back to the shadows hovering all around the room. Had they changed position since she'd looked at them last? Amanda chided herself inwardly. When had she ever been afraid of shadows? Yet she *was* afraid. The room suddenly felt too close. She recalled turning up the heat before going to bed—perhaps the room was too warm. She threw back the blankets and snapped on the light once again. She walked to the window and paused uneasily before raising the blinds. She turned, looking around the room again in an effort to get a reign on her fear. Failing this, she turned back toward the window and jerked the cord, making the blind fly up with a loud clang. Her heart stopped. There were *two* faces reflected in the window—hers, and...something else.

Amanda spun around, a small, involuntary shriek escaping her lips. There was nothing behind her! She turned back to the window, dreading what she might see, but now there was only one ghostly white image reflected there, and that was her own. She turned back toward the room again, scanning every nook and cranny.

“Who’s there?” she croaked, too terrified to move. The image—though she’d only seen it briefly—was still fixed in her mind. It was too terrible to forget. And it had been hovering so close to her—almost touching her! She shivered at the thought. The large, dark eyes—and those teeth!

The better to eat you with, my dear.

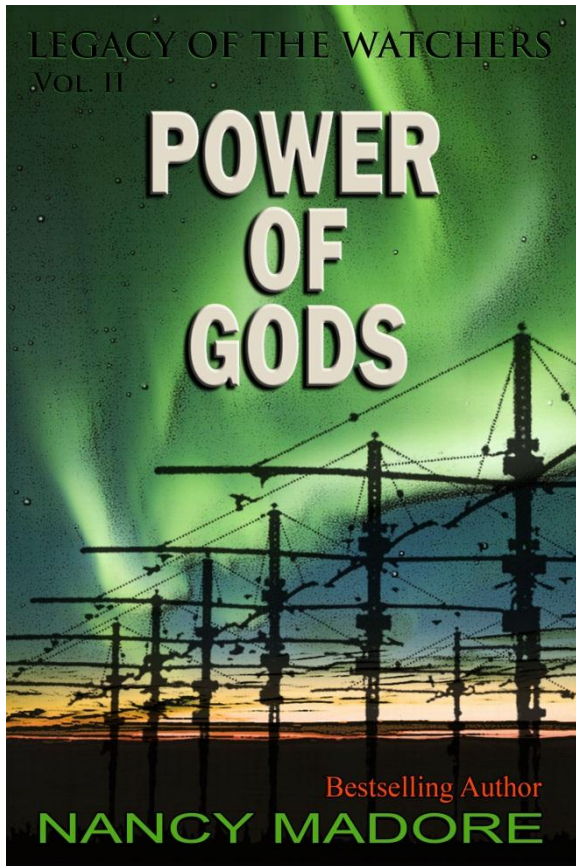
Amanda made a little sound, like a whimper, and leapt from the window to her bed. Very slowly, with dread, she bent down over the side of the bed to look underneath.

All she saw were shoes and dust bunnies.

Amanda got back out of bed and crept, on tiptoe, through her apartment, turning on every light switch she passed as she made her way to the living-room. Making it there in one piece, she picked up the remote and turned on the television, stealing anxious glances around the room. The apartment immediately came alive with the comforting sounds of what appeared to be a talk show. Amanda sat on the couch, feeling a little bit calmer as she absently began flipping through channels. She had the sudden urge to call Tommy but decided against it. Like Cosmo pointed out, she didn't want to appear 'needy.'

A familiar scene from the movie, *Pretty Woman*, flashed on the screen, and Amanda put down the remote. She'd seen the movie a hundred times before, but the sight of Julia Roberts flinging an oyster across a crowded restaurant was strangely comforting. Her little apartment seemed unnaturally bright with all of the lights turned on, and the blue pill was definitely kicking in now. Amanda stared dully at the television until she eventually drifted back to sleep.

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