



PORTAL WATCHERS OF TELBA BOOK 4

THREE
IMPOSSIBLE
TASKS

SUSAN LYTTEK

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Telba Book 4

Susan Lyttek

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Characters

Portal Watchers—Garth Vieta, Ne-tel Di'in, Bern Fallon
Tel—Holy and perfect creator of the world
Nevv Vieta—Prophet. Brother of Wirth and Murenn
Subja—Semi-eternal queen of Telba
Let—The king of demons
Vil—Once human servants of the queen
Wirth and Mara Vieta—Garth's parents.
Jana Vieta—Garth's sister
Quizon Vieta—Garth's baby brother
Murenn Vieta—Oldest Vieta brother
Filia Vieta—Murenn's wife
Kattya (deceased) and Som Fallon—Bern's parents
Gunston Di'in—Ne-tel's father
Telya (ne Fallon) Di'in—Ne-tel's mother, Som's sister
Alatel Di'in—Ne-tel's twin
Foon and Bela (ne Di'in)—Ne-tel's uncle and aunt
Fortuna and Ki'ri—Ne-tel's cousins
Jata—Foon's loyal servant
Captain/Shipmaster Yom—A seafarer
Dral—Firstmate of Yom
Masa—Leader of the children of the North
Tilee—Masa's sister
Nelas—Queen of Telantia and Bern's grandmother
Nellie—Granddaughter of Nelas and Bern's cousin.
Crown Prince Xant and Princess Merinda—Nellie's
parents, Bern's uncle and aunt
Java—Telantian priest
Fallon—Boy of the North whose family crafted ships
Prophet Quizon—Prophet who wrote the Advice
Maeve—Leader of a band of pirates
Aidan and Anah—First people on the first world
Parep—Son of Amma

Amma of Telantia—Parep's mother

King Evad—Historical leader of Telantia and prophet

Wal—Prophet and leader across the stars

Fent—Elderly soldier

Haime —Elderly bard

The Portal Watchers of Telba Series

Portal Watchers
Heartbeat of Fear
Wrestle the Stars
Three Impossible Tasks
Outside Space and Time
Sum of All Expectation

Dedication

To the two at home who endured my obsessed state while I was writing this: my hubby, Gary, and my son, Karl. I thank Gary for last minute runs for food when I forgot to cook and just being amazing. I love you, honey. I thank my son Karl for helping me come up with horrific scenarios for my characters as well as picking up emergency bubble teas to keep me fortified. You two are wonderful and have no idea how grateful I am.

And, as ever, for the triune God who has given me the need to write and the love of story. You, my Lord, have woven those aspects into me so intently that I cannot imagine life without them. I will eternally thank you for that!

PROLOGUE

What can I do, Tel? There are so many creatures and you tell me of more coming. I am but one man. The Northern children help, but we are still too few for the creatures here and in the waters. What if I were to lose one of your dinosaurs?

Nevv walked the perimeter of the retreat as he prayed. It had become his custom, although to walk the circumference took an entire day.

Suddenly, he became aware that he was not alone. He heard a gentle tread behind him, matching his pace. No one came this way. *Guard me, Tel.*

"I do, Nevv. And I listen."

Nevv stopped and turned. A Man of gold, glowing and bright, approached him. Nevv could barely look at him. He wanted to bow down, to run away, and to hug him all at once. Instead, Nev stood there as Tel approached.

"Walk with me, Nevv."

Nevv walked, barely aware of his feet touching the earth beneath him.

"You need more people. Prepare for them. Find wood to build with and caves to shelter. Find seed for gardens and drill wells for water."

It sounded too good to be true. Why would so many come to help him? "My Lord, why will they come? They have not before."

The Man put a hand on Nevv's arm and they rose above the world. "The fallen one has been busy. He has worked through his subjects to open a window, to imitate what I have done and am doing."

The Golden One pointed east to the horizon. There, a beam of red light crackled, beginning at earth and heading into the sky. It seemed to wrench the view apart and leave it partly torn.

"That's wrong," Nevv gasped.

"Of course."

That his Creator wasn't surprised calmed the prophet. "But why?"

"Evil must have its day. That is the way of things. Many I would call, many who would serve me, will not see truth without it." The Golden Man pointed northwest.

Again, a red beam split the horizon.

"Another?"

Without speaking, Nevv's companion pointed south and east as a third shaft of red light tunneled upward.

"Three windows?"

"And three dinosaurs. Three that I would never wish upon my people, but I will use them to wake up my children." The Golden Man put a hand on Nevv's shoulder, and the prophet felt power crackle through him. "Here is my message. Share it with the Portal

Three Impossible Tasks

Watchers.”

Nevv felt rather than heard the words. His eyes widened. “But...but what you would have them do is impossible.”

1

“The woven cord must unwind to strengthen my people. Do not fear, Telba, I hold all the ends of the cord in my mighty hand.” Prophecy of King Evad the Mighty

Garth finished his chores for the day. He thought about seeking Bern and Ne-tel, but his mother looked incredibly uncomfortable. He had seen her adjust her position twenty times in as many minutes. “I’ll mind the store for a while,” he told her. “Why don’t you rest for a bit?”

She sighed heavily, her shoulders dropping. “Oh, thank you.” She leaned over the cradle next to her and rubbed little Quizon on the stomach. “This little one takes a lot out of me.”

His dad, Wirth, and Ne-tel’s father had gone to the new northern port. The plesiosaurs, it seemed, were adept at corralling schools of fish, including some rarer varieties that people on the Gold Coast paid well for. They were in the process of working out some trade deals with Yom and the children of the North with their sailing aptitude. The opportunity promised to become quite lucrative. At least, his dad was hoping it might.

Since his Uncle Murenn had gone to support the

queen, his dad didn't have as many opportunities for trade. Garth could tell Dad was worried and hoped this new venture did what they needed it to do.

For now, he dusted the counter and rearranged the products. There was always a chance that one of the villagers would suddenly need some extra grain or a bolt of cloth.

He'd been there about an hour. Old Tante Zila had come in for a tincture for her arthritis, but otherwise it had been quiet. Even though relaxing, he couldn't help wondering about the dinosaurs. At least his Uncle Nevv was no longer alone in caring for them.

As he prepared to close up shop, his mother came back in, Quizon wrapped to her chest in swaddling, sleeping soundly.

"Mom! I thought you were resting."

She rubbed her eyes. "I was. I had a dream, a horrifying dream. There were teeth and blood. So much..." She covered her eyes as if to block what she had seen. "But then a giant hand came in and threw you at those same teeth. I think I screamed. But then the teeth disappeared." She closed the gap between herself and Garth. "I had to see if you were all right." She hugged him sideways.

"Mom! What if someone came in?"

The door jingled. "They'd say she was being a good mother." A familiar dark brown face with shockingly yellow hair smiled at him.

"Uncle Nevv! It's good to see you." Garth gently shrugged off his mom and went to clasp his uncle's

hand.

The man's traditional smile dropped. "You may not think so. I believe your mom's dream true, in a way, and related to the senser she's holding." The prophet turned the OPEN sign on the window to CLOSED. "Bern and Ne-tel will be here soon."

Nevv gave his sister-in-law a half hug before leading her and the sleeping baby to a chair. "Remember, Mara, as long as Garth is in the will of Tel, he will be fine."

Two knocks sounded on the door before it opened.

"Hey, Garth! Nevv said you needed us." Ne-tel took one of the free candies off the counter.

Bern arrived behind his cousin.

"Not me, so much," Garth confessed. "Nevv needs us."

Nevv stepped forward. "That is correct. I need the three of you here." He looked from young man to young man, his gaze resting on each of them for a few moments as if to lay a burden on each. "The queen has been busy, my portal watchers. She has opened three windows and brought dinosaurs through. Each of these creatures is naturally violent and evil, hand-picked by Subja to terrorize all of Telba."

"So what do we do?" asked Garth.

Nevv shrugged. "'We' is an interesting term in this instance. Tel has an impossible task for each of you. Ne-tel, you must take to the seas to recruit an army. Bern, you will go to an imaginary country and reawaken them.'" He turned to Garth. "My dear

Three Impossible Tasks

nephew, you might have the most difficult, Garth, you must enter the abode of evil to steal the means to turn bad to good.”

2

“In the beginning, Tel. Whether the beginning of Telba, the beginning of the world that was, the beginning of the heavens or the beginning of you. Tel is the beginning.” The Song of Joy, verse 2

“But will we help each other?” asked Bern.

Nevv shook his head. “Not this time. Nor is the separation something to fear as it has been previously. Tel says he will hold the ends of your cord in his hands.” Nevv held his hands out to the young men. “Each of you will go in your own way. Each of you will use the connections and the knowledge you forged previously. But who you will bring in to help, who you will trust... That you must surrender to prayer. But remember, through it all, wisdom and error, Tel will walk beside you.”

Ne-tel used his height and leverage to jump backwards into a seated position on the counter. When he noticed the other two boys glare at him, he rolled his eyes. “What? I figure we’ll be getting a lot of instructions so I decided I would get comfortable.” He leaned toward the free candies before Bern slid them out of his reach.

“You got strong and lean on the ship. Don’t rely

on your own strength, cousin.”

The silence hung heavy on the air for a moment. The prophet sighed and joined Ne-tel on the counter. “It won’t be quite how any of you think. Other than what I said before, you can’t know what the other is doing. But obviously, you are all going to need more instruction than what this message conveyed. I will give those instructions to you one on one.” He raised his hands heavenward and flexed his wrists to send up a mist of holy fire. “As this fire can bless or curse, so you might see these tasks. But remember, whatever you do, you do for Telba, for Tel, and for the dinosaurs you have already saved.”

The prophet lowered his hands and looked at the youth on the counter next to him. “You might as well be first, Ne-tel.” Nevv pointed to the doors on either side—one to the outside and the other to the Vieta home. “Stay close. But do not listen. What I have to say to Ne-tel is for him alone to share with whomever Tel designs.”

“I don’t mind if my friends know,” said Ne-tel, reaching again for the candy jar.

Nevv moved it to the other side of him. “You might not, but Tel would. You will tell people within your mission and only them.”

Garth’s mother pushed herself from the chair. “The two of you might as well come into the house. I did make cookies earlier.”

The other two portal watchers followed Mrs. Vieta into their home. Nevv waited. Once the click of the door had ceased to echo and he could no longer hear

voices, Nevv began.

“Are you ready, Ne-tel, to hear the impossible task that Tel has given you?”

3

“As long as death, evil and destruction exist, so will I. They are my food and sustenance.” Queen Subja

Ne-tel couldn't imagine what the prophet would ask him to do. Well, Tel really. He had been home less than a fortnight since following the plesiosaurs. He had survived the sea, the Vil, and the cold. And Nevv had repeatedly used the word 'impossible.'

Figuring the prophet would stick to what Bern recommended about keeping sweets from him, Ne-tel gave a half-hearted grab for the treats. To his surprise, the prophet held out the bowl.

“Your choice, Ne-tel. Your cousin is right, it would be better if you limited your indulgences, but you can choose.”

Surprised at being given the option, Ne-tel accepted the bowl, but then put it behind him. He wasn't hungry, not really. He wanted something to do, something to occupy his thoughts. “I'll wait.” He swung his legs to keep something moving. “What does Tel have for me to do?”

The prophet didn't speak for a moment. Then he tilted his head to look up at the ceiling. When his eyes glazed over, Ne-tel realized the man was not looking at

anything on Telba. His gaze went beyond.

“Ne-tel, you have forged ties during your recent travels. You have also created enemies. You need to use both of those to serve my purposes and bring about my true kingdom here.” The prophet took a breath, and then stretched his arm out as an arrow.

“Follow your father and Garth’s father to the port where my name was proclaimed. There, seek the sailor and assemble your crew. You have been called to sail to the Gold Coast and harvest my remnant. They will be my army and cast off the evil that has crept into this world.” Slowly, the prophet’s head lowered, he dropped his arm and his eyes cleared. “Did you get that?”

Ne-tel shrugged. “Some of it?” He hopped off the counter and walked around the room, avoiding the displays. “I’m going to sea again with Captain Yom and heading to the Gold Coast.” He paused and picked up a hammer, running its shape between his fingers. “I will be part of an army?” He set the hammer back down and walked back to the counter, picking up paper and pencil. “I’ll write down everything Tel told you to tell me. I have a feeling if I leave it to memory, I’ll forget something.”

Bern was the next to have an audience with the prophet.

Nevv removed an imaginary hat and bowed as Bern entered the room.

Three Impossible Tasks

The young man blushed. "That's right, you would know, wouldn't you?" Nevv recognized his role as a Portal Watcher. The prophet's deference was both sobering and humbling, but still Bern teased his elder.

The prophet righted himself and looked Bern in the eye. "Nothing is hidden from Tel."

In the corner of the shop, near the counter, was a small table and two chairs. Usually, this was where Mr. Vieta would have his customers sit while they worked out details of large purchases. Bern, feeling a bit overwhelmed, pulled out the closest chair and dropped into it.

Prophet Nevv followed his lead and sat in the other one.

"For your cousin and my nephew, I have to spell out what Tel wants of them. They need to learn the details of their impossible task. You, though..." the man paused, his voice dropping. "I think you know. I think ever since you found out who you were, you have known this day would come."

Bern nodded. "They can't stay hidden. They can't avoid their role anymore."

Nevv agreed. "You have to convince all of Telantia to show their survival to Subja. You have to get them to agree to put themselves in danger. Many will likely die. But if they remain hidden, all will perish. Subja has opened her own windows and will continue to do so. She will unleash whatever terrors she can find until all of Telba bows to her."

The young portal watcher rubbed his temples scrubbing away a headache. "I know." He looked