

**Award Winning Author**

**Reese Haller**

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***THE  
WATCH  
KEEPER***

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Personal Power Press, Inc.

Merrill, MI

# **The Watch Keeper**

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## Prologue

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High school is a trying time for many teens, especially the newcomers, “freshmen” as they are called—foreigners, or even aliens, who enter a new realm of existence. Easy to spot, these aliens are, with their mouths hanging open and their eyes wide as they stare in wonder at a whole new world. They stand in awe of the other students who move with authority through the halls, have filled-out shapes, and even sport facial hair. The newcomers amble through the narrow corridors, struggling to find their way. New rules are in place, many of which they have yet to realize. They have unexpectedly, unknowingly, and for some unwillingly, entered an environment where the bigger, stronger, and faster are in charge.

Enter into this world a boy who is more skin and bone than anything else, of medium height, with still-soft smooth skin and sand-colored hair that barely touches his ears. He even looks like a newcomer, with his brand new white tennis shoes, an Eddy Bauer back pack that makes him lean to one side when he walks, and light-blue jeans that barely stay up—not because they are too baggy but because he lacks the girth to hold them up—and a tie-dyed t-shirt.

This thin, lanky being is the oldest of two boys in a family with a soft-spoken social worker for a mother, a small-business owner for a father, an outgoing brother four years his junior, and a frail little grandmother who lives by herself just a few blocks from the school. He's a country boy who loves to climb trees, swing from the branches of tall oak trees and fish in the pond out back. He is one of the newcomers, a foreigner who is about to enter an alien world that is far more scary than he imagined.

He is Romeo Planke.

# Chapter 1

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“Enemy ships in section four!” shouts a desk officer. “Forty or fifty battle planes will be in striking distance in less than a minute. The scanner is also detecting—”

A screeching alarm pierces the officer’s final words. The battalion commander yells, “All hands to battle stations.”

A flurry of activity commences as soldiers race out of various caves to their battle-ready positions among canyon rocks and sandbag-fortified bunkers. The soldiers are strategically positioned between two massive canyon walls in what was once a vast gorge of the planet’s largest river. Now a desert planet, Sandor’s temperatures rarely dip below one hundred and fifteen degrees.

The Sandorian soldiers are prepared to defend their arid planet because of a valuable natural phenomenon, an ancient passageway to far-reaching worlds, located within the canyon walls. To the left and right of the soldiers are rock walls stained a vibrant red from the river sediment deposited thousands of centuries past, their razor-sharp edges honed by hundreds of years of wind and sand whipping through the canyon. The walls extend several hundred meters into the air. Behind them is the entrance to a cave that leads to an ancient portal to the stars. The portal provides anyone who steps through its opening instant access to planets throughout the entire universe. Referred to by the Sandorians as the central distribution zone, the portal has been left under their protection. For centuries now the Sandorians have guarded the portal and kept its location a secret from those who would use it to travel to distant planets only to conquer them. In front of the brave Sandorian soldiers stands such an enemy, the mighty Gor.

The Gor is a warrior race that lives to conquer or destroy. If they cannot dominate and control, they crush and demolish. They strive to possess what is not theirs and take what others have whenever possible. Central to their genetic makeup is a raw, uncontrollable desire to fight.

They battle to the death with little care or concern for life. They live to die in battle and are honored when they do.

The Gor warrior not only desires to fight, it is built for it. A typical warrior stands three meters tall, with a lizard-like head and a gorilla-shaped body. It has no hair, scaly pale skin and four massive arms. The warrior's sheer power and strength is matched by its intellect and cunning. The Gor are feared by all because they are strong, built to fight, and intelligent.

The location of the central distribution zone is actually a major benefit for the soldiers. The blistering heat of the desert world requires the Gor warrior to shed its usual armor, which is impossible to penetrate with a handheld weapon. The incredible size of the Gor is also a problem in the heat. They have the potential to overheat quickly and need large amounts of water to keep their strength, a major weakness the Sandorians plan to exploit.

The Sandorians' goal is to keep the Gor warriors at a distance with laser blasters and photon mines. A long battle would benefit the Sandorians by wearing out the Gor in the desert heat. A short battle, especially a hand-to-hand battle, would surely lead to the death of thousands of Sandorian soldiers and a Gor victory.

“Hundreds of pods are being released from their airships, Commander,” comes the cry through the audio headsets.

Every soldier looks to the sky as they hear their commander’s reply. “Destroy them as soon as they enter the atmosphere.”

Double blasters atop the rock walls begin filling the air with green laser bursts. Pods explode and flames cover the afternoon sky like a second sun in the baked desert air. The blasters continue their assault as pod after pod bursts into flames. Plumes of smoke blanket the sky, blocking the morning sun and making it difficult for the soldiers to see beyond the canyon walls. The blasters at the canyon peak persist in delivering the laser bursts, even though it is impossible to see if any pods are being hit or even still entering the atmosphere.

“Cease fire!”

Even with the winds blowing through the canyon, several minutes pass before the thick smoke begins to clear. The soldiers stand ready. An eerie silence falls upon the canyon as the winds subside. The smoke clears slowly, and as it does, an image of astonishing proportions comes into view.

In the canyon, less than fifty meters from the entrance to the central distribution zone, stands a massive Gor fleet. The pods entering the atmosphere were only a brief distraction to allow the Gors' supply ships carrying thousands of warriors and heavily armored tanks to slip beneath the radar undetected. The battle tanks stand twenty meters high, with laser cannons protruding from all sides. The clouds of smoke give way to a vision of these towering machines and thousands of warriors covering the canyon floor and part way up the walls. Dressed in black battle armor, the Gor warriors flood the canyon like the raging river that once filled the gorge, only now the river is black.

The Gor bellow their battle cry. The red rocky canyon walls begin to vibrate under the warriors' cries. Shards of rock fall to the canyon floor, landing at the feet of the Sandorian soldiers. A quiver of fear runs through them. The Gor sense their fear and scream all the more. The mega-laser guns aboard the battle tanks open fire on the soldiers, and the cunning Gor move in.

Frozen in fear at the sheer magnitude of the army advancing upon them, the Sandorians hesitate. The Gor do not. The entire warrior mass opens fire. With laser blasters in each of their four hands, the sky turns green. One segment of the warriors takes aim directly at the

soldiers, the other targets the canyon walls. A shrewd and unexpected strategy begins to unfold. A shower of razor-sharp rocks falls upon the Sandorian soldiers below, ripping chunks of flesh from their bodies. Those who are not pummeled and torn by rocks are blown to pieces by the mega-laser cannon or pierced by an individual blast. The smell of blood quickly fills the air and the Gor howl a second battle cry.

“Fall back!” the Sandorian commander cries as he witnesses the decimation of his troops. “Fall back to the secondary position!”

“Commander Urs, what do we do now?” A unit officer quivers uncertainly before the commander. “They destroyed more than half our forces in one strike.”

Commander Urs turns slowly to face the officer. “Send a distress signal. We need the Watch Keeper, now!”

