

#1 New York Times bestselling author

NORA ROBERTS

M Y S T E R I O U S

Containing three classic novels, *THIS MAGIC MOMENT*,
SEARCH FOR LOVE and *THE RIGHT PATH*

NORA ROBERTS

M Y S T E R I O U S



Silhouette® Books

Published by Silhouette Books

America's Publisher of Contemporary Romance

If you purchased this book without a cover you should be aware that this book is stolen property. It was reported as "unsold and destroyed" to the publisher, and neither the author nor the publisher has received any payment for this "stripped book."



SILHOUETTE BOOKS

MYSTERIOUS

Copyright © 2003 by Harlequin Books S.A.

ISBN 0-373-21812-5

The publisher acknowledges the copyright holder of the individual works as follows:

THIS MAGIC MOMENT

Copyright © 1983 by Nora Roberts

SEARCH FOR LOVE

Copyright © 1982 by Nora Roberts

THE RIGHT PATH

Copyright © 1985 by Nora Roberts

All rights reserved. Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilization of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the written permission of the editorial office, Silhouette Books, 233 Broadway, New York, NY 10279 U.S.A.

All characters in this book have no existence outside the imagination of the author and have no relation whatsoever to anyone bearing the same name or names. They are not even distantly inspired by any individual known or unknown to the author, and all incidents are pure invention.

This edition published by arrangement with Harlequin Books S.A.

® and TM are trademarks of Harlequin Books S.A., used under license. Trademarks indicated with ® are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office, the Canadian Trade Marks Office and in other countries.

Visit Silhouette at www.eHarlequin.com

Printed in U.S.A.

CONTENTS

THIS MAGIC MOMENT	9
SEARCH FOR LOVE	201
THE RIGHT PATH	339

**Praise for #1 *New York Times*
bestselling author Nora Roberts:**

"The publishing world might be hard-pressed to find an author with a more diverse style or fertile imagination than Roberts."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Roberts' bestselling novels are some of the best in the romance genre."

—*USA TODAY*

"Move over Sidney Sheldon: the world has a new master of romantic suspense, and her name is Nora Roberts."

—Rex Reed

"Nora Roberts just keeps getting better and better."

—*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

"Roberts is indeed a word artist, painting her story and her characters with vitality and verve."

—*Los Angeles Daily News*

"Roberts...is at the top of her game."

—*People magazine*

"Nora Roberts has a talent for delivering the best."

—*Affaire de Coeur*

"Roberts has a warm feel for her characters and an eye for the evocative detail."

—*Chicago Tribune*

"Everything Nora Roberts writes turns to gold."

—*Romantic Times*

"Nora Roberts' gift...is her ability to pull the reader into the lives of her characters—we live, love, anguish and triumph with them."

—*Rendezvous*

"John Grisham, watch your back!"

—*Entertainment Weekly*

Dear Reader,

Before Nora Roberts became the publishing phenomenon she is today, she started her career as a writer of category romances for Silhouette and as such, developed a large and loyal following. One of the most exciting things about her romances are her irresistible heroes, and in this special collection, we bring you three fascinating men of mystery in three enthralling novels.

In *This Magic Moment*, business was all ambitious Ryan Swan had on her mind when she ventured to the home of the intriguing Pierce Atkins. But how was she supposed to work with this mesmerizing man when all she could think about was the way he looked at her—and the way he kissed her...?

Search for Love is the timeless tale of one woman's journey to discover her family roots. But Serenity Smith never expected to encounter the arrogant Count de Kergallen. Nor did she expect to be so attracted to the man who suspected her motivations from their first heated glance.

What would you do if you found yourself on a darkened beach in the arms of a dangerous stranger? Morgan James gets the chance to find out in *The Right Path*. But will she survive the passion and peril that mystery man Nicholas Gregoras brings to her life?

We are delighted to bring you these three novels, available again for the first time in a decade. We think you'll agree that even during her early career, Nora Roberts was the quintessential storyteller.

Happy reading!

The Editors
Silhouette Books

NORA ROBERTS

M Y S T E R I O U S



Silhouette® Books

Published by Silhouette Books

America's Publisher of Contemporary Romance

If you purchased this book without a cover you should be aware that this book is stolen property. It was reported as "unsold and destroyed" to the publisher, and neither the author nor the publisher has received any payment for this "stripped book."



SILHOUETTE BOOKS

MYSTERIOUS

Copyright © 2003 by Harlequin Books S.A.

ISBN 0-373-21812-5

The publisher acknowledges the copyright holder of the individual works as follows:

THIS MAGIC MOMENT

Copyright © 1983 by Nora Roberts

SEARCH FOR LOVE

Copyright © 1982 by Nora Roberts

THE RIGHT PATH

Copyright © 1985 by Nora Roberts

All rights reserved. Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilization of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the written permission of the editorial office, Silhouette Books, 233 Broadway, New York, NY 10279 U.S.A.

All characters in this book have no existence outside the imagination of the author and have no relation whatsoever to anyone bearing the same name or names. They are not even distantly inspired by any individual known or unknown to the author, and all incidents are pure invention.

This edition published by arrangement with Harlequin Books S.A.

® and TM are trademarks of Harlequin Books S.A., used under license. Trademarks indicated with ® are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office, the Canadian Trade Marks Office and in other countries.

Visit Silhouette at www.eHarlequin.com

Printed in U.S.A.

CONTENTS

THIS MAGIC MOMENT	9
SEARCH FOR LOVE	201
THE RIGHT PATH	339

Also available from Silhouette Books by

NORA ROBERTS

GOING HOME

Containing MIND OVER MATTER,
UNFINISHED BUSINESS and ISLAND OF FLOWERS

TABLE FOR TWO

Containing SUMMER DESSERTS
and LESSONS LEARNED

DANGEROUS

Containing RISKY BUSINESS, STORM WARNING
and THE WELCOMING

TRULY MADLY MANHATTAN

Containing DUAL IMAGE
and LOCAL HERO

ENGAGING THE ENEMY

Containing A WILL AND A WAY
and BOUNDARY LINES

Coming in September:

LOVE BY DESIGN

Containing LOVING JACK
and BEST LAID PLANS

Coming in October from Harlequin Books:

LAWLESS

The Harlequin Historicals tie-in to LOVE BY DESIGN

Be sure to look for more Nora Roberts titles
in your local stores, or contact our
Silhouette Reader Service Center,
U.S.A.: 3010 Walden Avenue

P.O. Box 1325, Buffalo, NY 14269

Canada: P.O. Box 609, Fort Erie, Ontario L2A 5X3

Visit Silhouette at www.eHarlequin.com

THIS MAGIC MOMENT

Chapter 1

He'd chosen it for the atmosphere. Ryan was certain of it the moment she saw the house on the cliff. It was stone gray and solitary. It turned its back on the Pacific. It wasn't a symmetrical structure, but rambling, with sections of varying heights rising up here and there, giving it a wild sort of grace. High at the top of a winding cliff road, with the backdrop of an angry sky, the house was both magnificent and eerie.

Like something out of an old movie, Ryan decided as she shifted into first to take the climb. She had heard Pierce Atkins was eccentric. The house seemed to testify to that.

All it needs, she mused, is a thunderclap, a little fog and the howl of a wolf; just some minor special effects. Amused at the thought, she drew the car to a stop and looked the house over again. You wouldn't see many like it only a hundred and fifty miles north of L.A. You wouldn't, she corrected silently, see many like it anywhere.

The moment she slid from the car, the wind pulled at her, whipping her hair around her face and tugging at her skirt. She was tempted to go to the seawall and take a look at the ocean but hurried up the steps instead. She hadn't come to admire the view.

The knocker was old and heavy. It gave a very impressive thud when she pounded it against the door. Ryan told herself she wasn't the least bit nervous but switched her briefcase from hand to hand as she waited. Her father would be furious if she walked away without Pierce Atkins's signature on the contracts she carried. No, not furious, she amended. Silent. No one could use silence more effectively than Bennett Swan.

I'm not going to walk away empty-handed, she assured herself. I know how to handle temperamental entertainers. I've spent years watching how it's done and—

Her thoughts were cut off as the door opened. Ryan stared. Staring back at her was the largest man she had ever seen. He was at least six foot five, with shoulders that all but filled the doorway. And his face. Ryan decided he was, indisputably, the ugliest human being she had ever seen. His broad face was pale. His nose had obviously been broken and had reknit at an odd angle. His eyes were small, a washed-out brown that matched his thick mat of hair. Atmosphere, Ryan thought again. Atkins must have chosen him for atmosphere.

"Good afternoon," she managed. "Ryan Swan. Mr. Atkins is expecting me."

"Miss Swan." The slow, barrel-deep voice suited him perfectly. When the man stepped back, Ryan found herself fighting a reluctance to enter. Storm clouds, a hulking butler and a brooding house on a cliff. Oh, yes, she decided. Atkins knows how to set the stage.

She walked in. As the door closed behind her, Ryan took a quick glimpse around.

"Wait here," the laconic butler instructed and walked, lightly for a big man, down the hall.

"Of course, thank you very much," she muttered to his back.

The walls were white and draped with tapestries. The one nearest her was a faded medieval scene depicting the young Arthur drawing the sword from the stone, with Merlin the Enchanter highlighted in the background. Ryan nodded. It was

an exquisite piece of work and suited to a man like Atkins. Turning, she found herself staring at her own reflection in an ornate cheval glass.

It annoyed her to see that her hair was mussed. She represented Swan Productions. Ryan pushed at the stray misty blond wisps. The green of her eyes had darkened with a mixture of anxiety and excitement. Her cheeks were flushed with it. Taking a deep breath, she ordered herself to calm down. She straightened her jacket.

Hearing footsteps, she quickly turned away from the mirror. She didn't want to be caught studying herself or attempting last-minute repairs. It was the butler again, alone. Ryan repressed a surge of annoyance.

"He'll see you downstairs."

"Oh." Ryan opened her mouth to say something else, but he was already retreating. She had to scramble to keep up.

The hall wound to the right. Ryan's heels clicked quickly as she trotted to match the butler's pace. Then he stopped so abruptly, she nearly collided with his back.

"Down there." He had opened a door and was already walking away.

"But..." Ryan scowled after him, then made her way down the dimly lighted steps. Really, this was ridiculous, she thought. A business meeting should be conducted in an office, or at least in a suitable restaurant. Show business, she mused scornfully.

The sound of her own footfalls echoed back at her. There was no sound at all from the room below. Oh, yes, she concluded, Atkins knows how to set the stage. She was beginning to dislike him intensely. Her heart was hammering uncomfortably as she rounded the last curve in the winding staircase.

The lower floor was huge, a sprawling room with crates and trunks and paraphernalia stacked all around. The walls were paneled and the floor was tiled, but no one had bothered with any further decoration. Ryan looked around, frowning, as she walked down the last of the steps.

He watched her. He had the talent for absolute stillness, absolute concentration. It was essential to his craft. He also had the ability to sum up a person quickly. That, too, was part of his profession. She was younger than he had expected, a fragile-looking woman, small in stature, slight in build, with clouds of pale hair and a delicately molded face. A strong chin.

She was annoyed, he noted, and not a little apprehensive. A smile tugged at his mouth. Even after she began to wander around the room, he made no move to go to her. Very businesslike, he thought, with her trim, tailored suit, sensible shoes, expensive briefcase and very feminine hands. Interesting.

“Miss Swan.”

Ryan jolted, then swore at herself. Turning in the direction of the voice, she saw only shadows.

“You’re very prompt.”

He moved then, and Ryan saw that he stood on a small stage. He wore black and blended with the shadows. With an effort, she kept the annoyance from her voice. “Mr. Atkins.” Ryan went toward him then, fixing on a trained smile. “You have quite a house.”

“Thank you.”

He didn’t come down to her but stood on the stage. Ryan was forced to look up at him. It surprised her that he was more dramatic in person than on tape. Normally, she had found the reverse to be true. She had seen his performances. Indeed, since her father had taken ill and reluctantly turned Atkins over to her, Ryan had spent two entire evenings watching every available tape on Pierce Atkins.

Dramatic, she decided, noting a raw-boned face with a thick, waving mane of black hair. There was a small scar along his jawline, and his mouth was long and thin. His brows were arched with a slight upsweep at the tips. But it was the eyes under them which held her. She had never seen eyes so dark, so deep. Were they gray? Were they black? Yet it wasn’t

their color that disconcerted her, it was the absolute concentration in them. She felt her throat go dry and swallowed in defense. She could almost believe he was reading her mind.

He had been called the greatest magician of the decade, some said the greatest of the last half of the century. His illusions and escapes were daring, flashy and unexplainable. It was a common thing to hear of him referred to as a wizard. Staring into his eyes, Ryan began to understand why.

She shook herself free of the trance and started again. She didn't believe in magic. "Mr. Atkins, my father apologizes for not being able to come himself. I hope—"

"He's feeling better."

Confused, she stopped. "Yes. Yes, he is." She found herself staring again.

Pierce smiled as he stepped down to her. "He phoned an hour ago, Miss Swan. Long-distance dialing, no telepathy." Ryan glared before she could stop herself, but his smile only widened. "Did you have a nice drive?"

"Yes, thank you."

"But a long one," he said. "Sit." Pierce gestured to a table, then took a chair behind it. Ryan sat opposite him.

"Mr. Atkins," she began, feeling more at ease now that business was about to begin. "I know my father has discussed Swan Productions' offer with you and your representative at length, but perhaps you'd like to go over the details again." She set her briefcase on the table. "I could clarify any questions you might have."

"Have you worked for Swan Productions long, Miss Swan?"

The question interrupted the flow of her presentation, but Ryan shifted her thoughts. Entertainers often had to be humored. "Five years, Mr. Atkins. I assure you, I'm qualified to answer your questions and negotiate terms if necessary."

Her voice was very smooth, but she was nervous. Pierce saw it in the careful way she folded her hands on the table.