

The Dreamland Sagas

Book One: The Sagas Begin



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DEDICATION PAGE

This book is dedicated to my wonderful daughter, Kristal, and her three exceptional children, Titus, Constance, and Evie.

ABOUT THE DREAMLAND SAGAS

This collection of short stories aimed at two overlapping audiences; children ages 3-7, to be read as bedtime stories, and early readers aged 5-9 who are ready to explore imaginative adventures on their own.

This book contains 20 short stories, each aimed at sparking the audience's imagination and designed to be read in ten to twenty minutes.

Woven into the stories are examples of positive behavior and character that will reinforce children's honesty and respect for others. There are no witches, dangerous animals, monsters, or other characters which could cause nightmares in young children.

Hopefully, the Dreamland Sagas can become a part of your child's bedtime routine and encourage them to fall asleep quickly so they can join their friends in Dreamland.

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Dreamland



CHAPTER 1

Meeting Harper, Remy, and Millie



Harper, Remy, and Millie are not your typical stuffed animals. They possess the ability to come to life in Dreamland. Oh yes, Dreamland is real. You can visit it each night while sleeping, but it hides during the day, just like night does.

During the day, when daydreaming or playing, Harper, Remy, and Millie are exactly like all your other stuffed animals. The magic begins when you fall asleep, with these little mice tucked into their beds and snuggled up by your side. Before you know it, you will wake up in Dreamland, ready for a new adventure.

Harper, Remy, and Millie began taking children to Dreamland long ago—before you were born, before your mom and dad were born, and even before your grandparents were born.

The three mice were made in 1900, at the turn of a new century, in a small village in the foothills of Boise, Idaho. Jack, a young toymaker, stocked shelves and sold toys at a toy store. He loved creating toys and delighted in seeing joy on children's faces.

Jack Drapkin and his wife, Kristal, had three children—Evie, Constance, and Titus.

With snow all around their little cabin, Kristal at the sewing machine, and the children tucked in bed, Jack would create toys on his small workbench. He had noticed that small stuffed animals like mice, hamsters, and puppies were the most popular in the store.

"I'm going to create the cutest stuffed toys anyone has ever owned!" he declared one evening.

"And I shall help you," smiled Kristal.

That evening, Jack and Kristal began. They worked well into the night. Eventually, Kristal got tired. She kissed Jack on the cheek and went to bed. Soon after, Jack began yawning. It didn't help that he was cozy in his chair near the fireplace. He soon put his head down on the workbench and fell fast asleep.

In olden times, people did not dream unless the Sandman visited them. And the Sandman only came to your house when everyone was sleeping. Unlike Santa Claus, the Sandman could not visit every home in one night, so people did not have dreams every night.

With everyone in the Drapkin house fast asleep and, as the Sandman was in Idaho, he stopped by to sprinkle dream dust on them. When he got to Jack, he accidentally spilled dream dust on the cute mice Jack had drawn.

Jack began to have the most colorful dream—he was in Dreamland, and the mice he had drawn came up to him.

"Hi, I'm Harper, and this is my sister Remy," said one of them.

“Wow, you can speak!” exclaimed Jack. “You look exactly like the mice I was drawing.”

“Well, when you were young, you probably saw us in Dreamland and remembered us,” Remy replied. “The Sandman spilled dream dust on our sketch, which means that whenever anyone sleeps near us, they can join us in Dreamland, even if the Sandman didn’t visit their home.”

Harper added, “Dreamland is usually just for kids, but you design toys for kids so you can enter too, even though you’re a grown-up.”

“I remember visiting Dreamland when I was young,” Jack said. “I guess now I go somewhere else when I dream.”

“You’re correct,” said Remy. “Dreamland is just one part of Dreamworld, which has many different lands. When you sleep, you go to one of those. They can be fun, but Dreamland is the nicest, safest, and best—there are no monsters, witches, or ghosts. There are lots of places to travel, adventures to be had, and creatures to meet.”

“How long have you lived in Dreamland?” asked Jack.

“Ever since we can remember,” said Harper. “But time is different in Dreamland. So, instead of having the past, present, and future, we can visit all three anytime.”

Remy added, “We would show you around, but it may be best for you to wake up now while we are fresh in your memory so you can finish the sketches and make us into real stuffed animals.”

“Yes,” said Harper, “and please make nice beds for us to sleep in before we travel to Dreamland.”

Jack woke up with memories of the dream. It was one of the most realistic dreams he had ever had. He had forgotten what a beautiful place Dreamland was. Then he looked down at his sketches and noticed a small pile of sparkling dust on each drawing. He paused. Had it all been a dream, or did it really happen?

That night, Jack finished his sketches of Harper and Remy, and, in the morning, gave them to Kristal so she could make the two mice with her sewing machine.

While Kristal was lighting the fire to make breakfast, she ran out of matches and was about to throw the empty matchbox in the fireplace.

“Wait,” said Jack. He took the box from her hand and smiled. “This is the perfect size for Harper and Remy’s beds! Do you have another one?”

While Jack worked at the toy store that day, he kept thinking about how real his dream had seemed. He could not wait to get home and see what Kristal had made.

Sitting on his workbench were two large matchboxes. Kristal had drawn three mice pedaling a three-mouse-powered bicycle under the Royal Star Brand on each box. Jack slowly opened one and saw Harper snuggly under a blanket, smiling at him. He opened the second and found Remy tucked into bed, smiling, too.

Although Jack had left his wife detailed sketches of Harper and Remy, he was surprised at how much they looked like the mice from his dream. During dinner, he showed Harper and Remy to his children, Evie, Constance, and Titus, and told them about his dream.

"I love them!" squealed Constance.

"Can we have them, Dad?" asked Titus.

"Well, I was planning to take them to the store tomorrow to see if Mr. McGraw wants to order them," began Jack. But he changed his mind when he saw how disappointed the children were.

"Titus, since you're the oldest, you can pick which mouse you want to sleep with tonight," Jack said. Titus picked Harper. Constance was happy because, secretly, she wanted Remy anyway. Jack could tell Evie was not happy being left out.

"Evie, I only had time to design two mice, but I will make your mouse soon," said Jack. Evie seemed happy with that.

For the first time in ages, the children had all their chores done, their teeth brushed, their faces washed, and they were in bed even before Kristal had to ask them.

In the Drapkin house, the children gathered each evening to listen to a story. Jack often made up stories based on the toy store's stuffed animals. This evening, he spoke about Dreamland and meeting Harper and Remy. He also told them what Remy had said about being able to visit Dreamland if the mice were nearby.

Constance and Titus could not wait to fall asleep. As soon as the story ended, both children said they were tired and ready for bed.

Titus sat in bed and took Harper out of his matchbox.

“Please take me to Dreamland and show me around,” he begged.

Harper smiled up at Titus in response. Before Titus fell asleep, he pretended that Harper was walking through dunes and that Harper could fly wherever he wanted.

Constance settled into bed, pretending her blankets were knee-high soft green grass that she and Remy were walking through to find Titus and Harper.

After a while, both children grew tired, so they tucked their new little friends into their matchbox beds and fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER 2

Dreamland



Within minutes of falling asleep, Titus was standing on the beach looking out over the ocean. He was excited because the nearest ocean in the real-world was almost 400 miles away from where they lived in Idaho.

“Isn’t the sea pretty?” said Constance.

Titus looked to his right and saw his two sisters holding hands. They were watching the seagulls swooping over the waves as they looked for small fish to eat.

“Constance, how did we get here?” asked Titus. “The last thing I remember was putting Harper in his bed near my pillow.”

“Yep,” came a voice. “Then you fell asleep, so now you’re in Dreamland.”

Titus turned around to see Harper and Remy standing right behind them.

“Harper, how did you get so big?” exclaimed Titus. “You’re almost the same size as me!”

“Well, yes,” said Harper. “Whenever you visit Dreamland, we become the same size as our real-world friends.”

“How did Evie get here without a Dreamland friend?” asked Constance.

“She can share our magic until she gets her own dream starter friend,” Harper explained.

“So, what part of Dreamland are we in?” Titus asked.

“Harper and I live in Puffin Village, which is on the other side of the dunes behind us, heading east,” said Remy. “To the north, up the coast, is the town of Willetts, where the squirrel clan lives. To the south is Ploverville, where the kittens live, and the ocean to the west is called Shearwater. The beautiful island of Sanderling, home of the puppies, is about 50 miles out to sea.”

“Shall we go to our house for tea and cookies?” suggested Harper.

“Sure,” said the kids.

They all walked up the dunes towards Puffin Village. In the center of the village was a large fountain and shops made from driftwood boards with windows of water-worn glass. Lanes, paved with sand and broken shells, radiated in all directions from the village center.

They walked up a lane, which led into the hills surrounding the village. Hundreds of little burrows were dug into the hillside. One burrow was exceptionally large and ornate.

“Remy, who lives there?” asked Constance.

“Mr. Downing, the mayor of Puffin Village,” said Remy. “He’s going to Willets this week to meet with the mayor of the squirrels. Last week, a young squirrel knocked over Mr. Springer’s nut cart. Instead of apologizing, the squirrel raced up a tree trunk and jumped from tree to tree until he was out of Puffin Village. Mr. Downing is going to collect payment for the spoiled nuts.”

After a ten-minute walk, they arrived at Harper and Remy’s burrow. The children sat at the dinner table while Harper lit a fire in the fireplace and Remy lit the stove.

Homes did not have electricity because it was still 1900 in Dreamland. Although electricity was invented in 1882, it only reached Dreamland in 1903, when kids in the real world started getting electricity in their homes and dreaming about things like electric lights, stoves, and heaters.

The water was soon boiling, and Remy served tea while Harper took the cookie jar down from the cupboard and handed out peanut butter cookies.

“These are delicious,” said Titus. “Can I have another, please?”

“You can have as many as you want,” smiled Harper. “After all, it’s your dream.”

“I like this tea. What’s it called?” asked Constance.

“Dandelion tea,” replied Remy. “We use the whole plant—petals, stems, roots. One dandelion makes enough tea to last a month.”

Titus had six cookies, Constance had three, and little Evie surprised everyone by eating eight. Evie's favorite words in Dreamland seemed to be 'more, please'.

After tea, they explored the house. On the ground floor was the kitchen, library, and living room.

Next, they went down a rickety wooden staircase to the cellar. Remy lit a candle made from beeswax and an old yo-yo string. The cellar was large and damp, and in between tree roots were shelves lined with jars. They were filled with a variety of yummy-looking treats—cherries in a reddish liquid, peanut butter, and grape jelly. There were also cans of peas, corn and string beans, and burlap bags of many different types of nuts.

Then they climbed up to the bedrooms and bathroom on the second floor.

Titus looked out of a window. "Harper, why is there an old ship in your backyard?"

"During a large storm a few years ago, a wave brought the ship over the dunes and left it there," said Harper. "Do you want to go aboard?"

With shouts of glee, the three kids rushed down the stairs and were soon climbing the ship's ladder.

The ship had three masts with the sails wrapped up, a large deck, and the captain's quarters in the back.

“This is great!” said Titus. “All the charts and furnishings are still here. What happened to the captain and crew?”

“We don’t know,” said Remy. “The ship washed up just as you see it, and we never located the owner.”

“Do you think we can sail to Sanderling Island someday to see the puppies?” asked Constance, her eyes shining with excitement.

“Sure, all you have to do is dream about it when you fall asleep, and the ship will be ready to go,” responded Remy.

Titus, Constance, and Evie explored the ship. Below the deck were cannons, hammocks for the crew to sleep in, a galley to cook food, and a large area stocked with all kinds of provisions.

Titus climbed up the tallest mast and made his way into the crow’s nest. From there, he could see Puffin Village, which looked like the center of a wagon wheel with roads going in all directions.

“Harper, do you think this was a pirate ship?” asked Titus, looking thoughtful.

“It could have been,” answered Harper. “We found some treasure aboard, which is now hidden in a cave.”

“Can we go looking for the hidden treasure today?” Titus asked excitedly.

“We should probably make that a different dream,” said Harper, chuckling. “It’s a long walk, and we’ll need to gather supplies.”

As Titus climbed back onto the deck, he heard a noise.

“That’s your alarm at home telling you to wake up,” said Harper.

“But I don’t want to leave,” protested Titus with a pout. “I like it here, and there is so much to see!”

But before Titus could say another word, he woke up in his bedroom.

CHAPTER 3

The Birthday Party



Titus could not wait to return to Dreamland! After dinner and baths, Titus, Constance, and Evie gathered around Jack to hear another story. Afterward, when they settled down to sleep, Constance tucked Remy into her matchbox, and Titus did the same with Harper.

They were so excited about revisiting Dreamland that they fell asleep just as they put their heads on their pillows.

“I think Titus, Constance, and Evie might be coming to Mayor Downing’s birthday party today,” said Harper, while they waited for the kids to return.

“Yay! It’s always great to have new friends to share birthday cake with,” exclaimed Remy.

Puffin Village was big on birthday parties. The whole village celebrated in the village center, no matter whose birthday it was, as the weather was always perfect in Dreamland (unless, of course, you dreamt about cold and rain). Mrs. Wilson, owner and chief baker at Mrs. Wilson’s Bakery, always made a large cake.

Titus, Constance, and Evie arrived in the middle of a crowd of mice wearing colorful outfits. They all seemed to be waiting for something to happen.

Constance turned to a mouse in a beautiful floral dress with a yellow straw hat and whispered, “Hi, have you seen Harper and Remy?”

“Yes, they’re over there,” said the mouse, pointing. “But you’ll have to wait until the mayor has given his birthday speech.”

Before Constance could say another word, a booming voice caught her attention.

“Ladies and gentlemice,” Mayor Downing exclaimed, “today we are gathered to celebrate my birthday. It seems like only yesterday that I came to live here in Puffin Village. Since then, we have had hundreds of children from the real-world visit, and I’m very grateful for all they have taught us.”

Mayor Downing explained, “Many grown-ups don’t realize how much children can teach us. They learn new things every day and like to share what they learn. If grown-ups took the time to listen properly to children, they would learn new things too. Grown-ups have so much in their minds that to make room for new stuff, they must move old stuff into the storage section of their brains. Children can help grown-ups remember the things that they’ve stored.”

Mayor Downing could talk for hours, so before he could continue, Mr. Springer, the town’s roasted nut vendor, started singing Happy

Birthday. Everyone joined in, including the children. They sang so loudly that they drowned out the rest of the speech.

The mayor gave up trying to talk. He grinned, bowed, and went to cut the cake. While Mrs. Wilson passed out generous slices, Harper and Remy made their way to the children.

“Hello,” said Evie.

“Would you like to meet the mayor?” Remy asked.

“Sure!” exclaimed Constance.

“Can we eat our cake first? Do you have any ice cream? Also, can we have seconds?” Titus blurted out.

“Titus, you haven’t even eaten the first slice yet,” said Constance, rolling her eyes.

After everyone had eaten two cake servings with chocolate chip ice cream, they walked to the mayor.

He was a robust mouse, shorter than Harper but far rounder at the waist. He wore a black coat with tails and a gray vest with a silver watch chain attached to a button; the watch rested in his right-side vest pocket. Titus noticed that the mayor’s tail poked out between the coattails. He started to giggle because every time the mayor spoke, his tail moved around and sometimes got tangled up with the coattails. The mayor also had the longest set of whiskers Titus had ever seen. He figured the mayor put wax on them because they curled up on both sides and were almost as high as the mayor’s ears.

“Harper, who do we have here?” asked Mayor Downing.

“These are my friends from the real-world,” Harper explained. “This young lady is Constance, this young gentleman is Titus, and our little friend with cake all over her face and a dab of ice cream on the end of her nose is Evie.”

Constance did her best curtsy, Titus bowed deeply, and Evie licked her lips and wiped her nose on her sleeve.

Evie needed to go to the bathroom, so she told Constance that she would wake up and call her mom. Within seconds, Evie disappeared from Dreamland. She must have also woken Constance up because she disappeared too.

The mayor looked at Titus and said, “Do you need to return as well?”

“Nah,” Titus said. “Today is Saturday, so I’m not in a rush to wake up.”

“Harper and I are traveling to Willets to collect money from Mayor Bushytail of the squirrel clan. Would you like to join us?”

Titus nodded eagerly. He was always up for an adventure.

“Harper, please introduce Titus to some of your friends while I get ready to travel,” Mayor Downing announced. “I’ll meet you at the train station in one hour. I have reserved a sleeper car big enough for all of us.”

Harper took Titus back to the stage in the village center, where birthday cake crumbs and icing were spread all over the table and on the ground.

“Looks like all the cake is gone. Any ice cream left?” asked Titus curiously.

“No, that’s gone too, but there’ll be lots to eat on the train,” said Harper.

As he spoke, Mr. Springer, the roasted nut vendor, approached.

“You must be Titus,” said Mr. Springer. “I knew your father. He was a great kid. I haven’t seen him since he grew up and stopped coming to Dreamland.”

“Father never mentioned Puffin Village,” said Titus.

“Oh yes, this was before Harper and Remy joined us,” said Mr. Springer. Then he smirked, “Your father was quite a little adventurer.”

“Do you remember any stories about him?” asked Titus.

“Well, once he and Squirrely, from Willets, were getting supplies from Mr. Nordmo’s General Store for a trip to Ploverville to see the kittens,” said Mr. Springer. “After they loaded their supplies in a horseless carriage that your dad had dreamt up for the trip, everyone in the village was there to see them off, as it was the first horseless carriage we had ever seen. “

“Squirrely was in front, turning the crank, and your dad was pushing the gas pedal. The car started so quickly that the crank spun, and

Squirrely was tossed into the air. He landed in the water fountain way over there. Your dad laughed so hard, he woke up, and he and the car disappeared from Dreamland,” said Mr. Springer, giggling at the memory.

Titus wanted to know more but just then, Constance came into his room to wake him for breakfast.

CHAPTER 4

Puffin Village



After breakfast, Titus, Constance, and Evie went outside to do their chores. It was freezing, and the snow was piled high, but the sun was shining, and it looked like it would be a beautiful day.

Titus took two pails to milk the cow, and Constance had a basket for the eggs. Little Evie was all bundled up with her hand-me-down coat from Constance, her pink gloves, and a matching hat knitted by her mother.

While Constance and Evie collected eggs, one rolled under a loose plank on the floor.

"Titus, please get the egg," Constance asked.

"Sure," he agreed. As he lifted the plank, he saw an old shoebox tied with a string. He untied it and opened it. Inside was a small, old, tattered, brown squirrel with a blue vest and a bushy tail.

Titus and Constance looked at each other.

"This must be Dad's stuffed animal for Dreamland!" exclaimed Constance.

“Let’s ask him about it and his adventures in Dreamland when he gets back from work,” suggested Titus.

After doing all their chores in the barn, cleaning their rooms, and doing home-school studies with their mom, it was almost time for their dad to come home. Titus and Constance helped their mother set the table for dinner while Evie nibbled cut carrots in her chair. Kristal had cooked a roast with potatoes from their garden, carrots, and homemade bread. Between the smell of the fireplace, cooked roast, and homemade bread, they could hardly wait until dinner.

Eventually, the front door opened, and Jack came in quickly to keep the snow and wind out of the house.

“Dear, everything smells great! You must have been cooking all day,” Jack said to his wife, kissing her.

“It wasn’t that bad. Titus and Constance helped,” said Kristal.

“You kids are great,” said Jack, tousling Constance’s hair.

Once they had sat down for dinner and said prayers, Titus and Constance both started talking at the same time.

“Dad, I was in the barn searching for an egg when I found this squirrel,” Titus declared, pulling the animal from his pocket.

“Titus, it’s a bit late in the year for an Easter egg hunt,” chuckled Jack.

“No, Dad, I wasn’t hunting for eggs. I was fetching one that had rolled under the barn floorboards,” Titus explained.

Jack took the squirrel toy, brushed off some dust and straw, and said, “I haven’t seen Squirrely since I was a kid. When I started high school, I put him in a shoebox for safekeeping and completely forgot about him.”

Titus and Constance looked at each other, then at their dad, and at the same time, they both asked, “Was Squirrely the mayor of Willets?”

“No, he was just a student like me. Wait!” Jack exclaimed. “How do you know about Willets?”

Titus and Constance laughed and explained that they had visited Puffin Village last night.

“Squirrely’s real name was Jim Bushytail. Everyone called him Squirrely because he was always getting into trouble,” Jack added.

Kristal looked at her husband and children, and said, “I think I missed something here. What are you all talking about? I never went to that part of Dreamland.”

“Dreamland is very large,” said Jack. “Chances are you went to a different part. Did you have a stuffed animal to sleep with when you were young?”

“No,” said Kristal. “I slept with my favorite blanket.”

“Well, that explains it,” Jack continued. “You need a stuffed animal to get into this part of Dreamland.”

“That’s true,” Constance said, nodding. “Remy told me that if you go to Dreamland by yourself, you can end up anywhere. But, when you

travel with a Dreamland partner, you go to places where everything is fun and safe, and there are always new adventures to experience.”

That evening, after the kids had cleared the table and got ready for bed, Jack told them a story.

“Seeing Squirrely reminds me of an adventure I had when I was your age, Titus,” started Jack. “The two of us had just finished riding the rapids in an old canoe. We pushed the canoe onto a small beach and started looking around. When we had climbed up the riverbank, we saw the canoe floating downstream.”

“What did you do?” asked Constance, fascinated.

“Well,” said Jack, “seeing a long vine hanging from a nearby tree, I grabbed it and swung out over the water, yelling a Tarzan scream as loud as I could. But I soon learned that it wasn’t a vine at all! I had grabbed the nose of a very tall garaffant.”

“What’s a garaffant?” asked Titus, his eyebrows furrowed together.

“Imagine a giraffe, but instead of a long neck, it has a long nose like an elephant. It’s the same color as an elephant, too. Anyhow, when I grabbed the garaffant’s nose, I made him sneeze, and he shot me into the river, past the canoe. It was so fast, it was like being fired out of a cannon.”

Constance giggled.

“I got into the canoe and rowed back to shore. Squirrely ran down to meet me, and when he saw me, he fell on the sand laughing so hard he

almost couldn't catch his breath! I got mad since I had just risked my life by being launched into the air by a strange-looking animal. I could not see what was so funny. Squirrely managed to stop laughing long enough to tell me to look at my reflection. Besides being soaking wet, I had a large glob of purple garaffant slime covering my hair, and a wriggling fish was stuck in it! I laughed so hard that I woke myself up," Jack told them, chuckling at the memory.

The kids laughed.

"Okay, now it's time for bed," Jack said.

"Wait," said Titus. "You can't stop there; what else happened?"

"I'll try to remember more stories," Jack promised. "But now it's time for you to sleep and make your own dreams."

Jack carried Evie to her bed. Kristal took Titus and Constance to their rooms and tucked them in. With Harper and Remy safely in their matchbox beds, the kids went to sleep as fast as they could.