

**DANIEL LIGHT AND THE CHILDREN OF THE ORB
SERIES**



**BOOK ONE
THE MIRACLE OF MIRADOR**

**BY
C. MICHAEL PERRY**



DEDICATION

*To Robert G. Peck Jr. Charles W. Whitman and Max Chatterton Golightly,
the men who first placed deep inside of me a love for writing and where it comes
from.*

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NOTE: **M**L after each chapter, are the initials “M. L.” standing for **M**iraden **L**ight, the historian of the Realms.

CHAPTER ONE THE ENCHANTER AND THE ORB

THERE WAS SOMETHING moving through the bright green of the forest, far below, as Miraden cruised along high above it in his bluebird form. The thing below was almost bright yellow and it bounced and waved as it streaked along the trail through the Forest of Hope. Miraden thought he should get a better look at it. The Orb had told him so. He suddenly swooped down a thousand feet, and not just because of the yellow thing.

He had seen something else, something Dark and black, moving toward and now paralleling the bouncing yellow thing. It was this Dark thing that had drawn Miraden in pursuit of the yellow thing. He knew that now. It had been a feeling. A premonition. An almost-voice from the Crystal Orb.

He swooped again and after his stomach and his vision returned to him, for he was not truly a bird, but a human masquerading as a bird, the yellow thing came into focus. It was human hair, on top of a human head, on top of a young boy's body. He was dressed in a simple tunic and breeches with knee-length, soft, brown boots.

On Miraden's previous pass northward, just within the last hour, he was sure he had seen this same mop of yellow on top of a very naked body as it splashed and swam in the waters of the Crystal Lake, near to this very glade, by the northeast shores of the Peninsula of Hope. He was sure it was the same boy! Had the Dark thing been there, too? Was it watching this boy? Tracking? Following? Why? What was the Orb was trying to tell him? It was most cryptic sometimes.

Who had sent it? Why had he not seen it? It had to have been lurking in the shadows even while the boy swam, or why else would Miraden have been drawn to, or even paid attention to this unremarkable boy? How else could the Enchanter have felt the presence of the Dark? Had it drawn Miraden from his cave atop the pinnacle? The presence of the boy could have drawn him out! But the presence of the Dark certainly would have.

Why have I come across this boy several times already today! Miraden alighted on a high branch, wobbling and watching. He studied. He witnessed the Dark thing creep up on the boy. He wanted to shout, to warn, but his beak and bird body limited his abilities to respond.

The boy stopped, still, and looked to the side of the trail. The as yet unseen black thing crouched lower into the underbrush, pressing itself against the earth. Not a sound. Not a snarl. Not even a breath to warn the boy of its imminent attack.

Miraden wished he had his wand handy. Then he could put up a warding around the boy. But wings handily prevented him from grasping anything. No one that young deserved to be eaten by... whatever it was. Then he saw the boy crouch down, too. It appeared to Miraden that the youth had heard the thing that was tracking him. Or maybe he smelled it. Or sensed it? He didn't understand how, but the boy acted as if he had. The youth quietly drew his long knife out of its thigh sheath and held it at the ready.

Suddenly the boy stood, knifepoint angled to the sky. Simultaneously, the black thing sprang from its crouch. The boy shouted. A wish? A hope? A prayer? A pulse of light came unexpectedly from the knifepoint. It radiated out around the boy like a bubble, flowing around him incredibly fast. The black beast hit the bubble and bounced over it and the boy, and into the underbrush on the other side of the trail.

The boy, inside the bubble now, seemed awestruck. He kept looking around him as if to see the Enchanter that had cast a spell to save him. For only an Enchanter could do it. He must have seen nothing but empty forest and sky, tinged red by the bubble of protection that was keeping him

strangely safe. He faced straight forward again, looking down the path in the former direction of his travel. He went to pull the knife back to his chest and hold it there, but he hesitated. Would the bubble disappear if he withdrew his knife? He tested it, slowly retrieving it a knuckle at a time. The bubble held. The boy sighed.

The beast snarled and launched himself once more at this impertinent human youngling. Miraden wondered why the beast had not sensed the magic powers of the boy? Beasts, especially Dark ones, avoided magic and Enchanters at all costs. Were the powers Miraden's? If not, where had they come from? This should have been an easy kill. A tasty youngling for the wolf. But again, the beast was repelled by the bubble of red. It landed back near where it had begun its attack. How could this boy be an Enchanter? There hadn't been any new Enchanters since before the Great War -- eight hundred years ago.

Miraden swooped and glided to another spot in one of the trees overlooking the battle scene on the trail. He was confounded that this boy had escaped his notice, and destruction by the beast. He should know if there was any magic in the land. It was his duty; his responsibility; his mission; his privilege. The child was handsome and sturdy, about ten or eleven -- maybe twelve years old. He seemed very at home in his present defensive stance against the wolf. Well-practiced. The knife seemed to be just an extension of his arm and hand.

Curious.

Miraden also wondered why the wolf was not with his pack. This must be a rogue, because they rarely hunted alone. Or could it be...? Could this be the offspring of...? If so, there was more than danger in the woods! The Dark was indeed present and embodied in the form of this wolf -- even in daylight in the Forest of Hope! But the wolf was not magical or it would have been able to subdue the boy easily. It was only a servant of the Dark; an offspring of one of the Darkest creatures to ever hunt the Realms.

Old alliances had not only returned to the Realms -- alliances that had once almost destroyed everything that Miraden and his fellow Enchanters held dear -- this was an escalation. There had been no attacks in years. At least not since the battle on the Isle of Fear fifteen years ago. Why now? Darkness was about to strike again. That is what the Orb had wanted to tell the old man.

Miraden decided to continue watching. He must find the source of this magic before he returned to his cave at the top of the Pinnacle of Perfection. He must know who this lad was, why he was here and what magic he possessed; why the Dark had taken such an interest in this particular boy; and what the origin of the wolf itself, was. The Orb had given him enough notice to set off the Enchanter's alarms and cause him to seek it out. From the astonished look on the boy's face, Miraden sensed that the boy didn't know how this had happened anymore than the bluebird in the tree did -- or the wolf, for that matter.

The wolf snarled, the boy cringed and the beast leaped again and landed solidly on top of the red bubble. Its paws sizzled as they were scorched by the heat of the warding. Before the wolf could leap off the bubble the boy thrust his knife upwards, through the bubble and into the belly of the wolf. Another howl, for the pain in its paws and its belly precipitated the wolf's return leap to the ground. It limped its way around the bubble snarling and barking and yipping, as if calling for help. Help from who, or what?

But Miraden couldn't transform. He was thirty feet up and sitting on a twig! If he landed below, the wolf could get him before he was able to transform. If he transformed, would there be enough energy inside him to complete the task?

The boy's eyes followed the eyes of the beast -- for knowledge of a beast is in its eyes. His father had taught him that. Every motion, every bristle of the fur, the cant of the head -- everything tells you something. The boy was revolving within the bubble to face the wolf as it staggered around

him. The boy was patient. He was waiting for the right moment. He knew it would come. He knew the beasts of the forest almost as well as his father did.

The wolf lost its footing as its hind end collapsed, suddenly, onto the ground. Then it surprisingly marshaled strength from somewhere and leapt again. Its muzzle sizzled against the outside of the warding. It howled in pain. The boy timed his strike and stabbed his knife out through the magical membrane once more as the beast practically impaled itself on the point, which found its way through the ribs of the wolf to its heart.

It hung limply at the end of the boy's weapon. As the boy was pulled tightly up against the warding from the inside, due to the weight of the wolf, he shook his blade with both hands to rid it of its passenger, as if having skewered something through a fence. The body of the wolf slid off and thudded to the ground with two gaping and bleeding wounds through the chest and abdomen.

There was another strange howl -- not an animal's cry, not possibly the wolf -- but a wail of pain and anger and outrage. It ripped through the branches of the trees, knocking off leaves and a small bluebird, unseen by the boy, who flapped madly in the ensuing wind to regain its purchase on a tree branch. The gale screamed past the ears of the lad, but the bubble broke the wind's force as it came harmlessly by the boy inside it. Miraden saw the bubble tilt and roll a little under the assault of the wind as he regained the branch.

Then all was quiet again. There was no wind like that in this forest that was natural. It had to be Darkness. Miraden knew that this was indeed the workings of Darkness. His brother, Tophet, the Sorcerer of the Dark, was again rearing his malevolent and spiteful head to try to overthrow the Enchanter of Light.

The boy pulled his knife back through the strange membrane of the bubble and looked at it. It appeared that he did not believe that he had just done what it seemed to him he had done. Even with the confirmation of the creepy and noisy wind -- or his own eyes. But the blood of the wolf was there. On the blade. It was unmistakable. Its body was still and silent on the side of the trail outside the bubble. The boy was miraculously safe inside the bubble. Then it hit him.

His shoulders began to heave a little. His breathing became rapid. He felt a power coursing through him. Was it just heightened nerves or adrenaline that pumped through him now? Magic? He didn't know what caused him to feel so elated and so fearful at the same time. He just knew that he felt that way.

The bluebird watched the boy as, separately, they both marveled at the event that had occurred. Miraden could see it in the boy's body and face -- the questions, the wonder, the fear. Miraden wanted to throw a spell at the bubble to make it disappear. But magic was somewhat limited in his transformed bluebird state, so the bubble did not budge. It did not change colors. It did not collapse or expand or pop.

The boy held his knife up again letting his eyes feast on the bloody gleam of its blade in the sunlight, slightly tinted red by the bubble that was also blanketed in red with the seeping and surrounding pools of the blood of the wolf. Some overpowering feeling shot through the boy. He shuddered and startled as the bubble disappeared around his knifepoint, and then fell away, vanishing somewhere into the ground.

The boy turned around several times searching for the now vanished warding. Finding no evidence of what had happened to him, he leaned down and, with an obviously practiced stroke, slit the wolf from neck to tail. He cut out the innards and left them on the side of the trail. The spot of death on the trail was stained with the wolf's blood. So were the boy's clothes. He resheathed his long-knife. Then he grabbed a hold of the forepaws and the hind legs and struggled the carcass up and over his shoulders, as he had often seen his father do, and started off in the direction from which he had come.

Miraden, the bluebird, was dumbfounded at the young boy's skill with that knife in handling the slain wolf. He had also seen the warding disappear, seemingly not at his own (or the boy's) command; but at the instigation of some other power, unseen and unknown.

As the boy trudged off towards the Crystal City, for that is where he had come from, Miraden leapt into flight and followed for a while until he was sure where the boy was heading. His guess had been right. There was something strangely familiar about the boy, but the old Enchanter couldn't exactly place it.

Miraden headed south, toward home. Excited at the possible prospects of another Enchanter, but worried as to just whose power had been at the root of the magical incident in the forest.

End of Preview
128 pages of excitement to go!