

*Wyndano's  
Cloak*

by  
A. R. Silverberry

Tree Tunnel Press  
Capitola, California

This book, including characters, incidents, and dialogue, is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Wyndano's Cloak. © 2010 by Peter Allan Adler, writing as A. R. Silverberry. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, or otherwise, without written permission from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For additional information or permissions, contact Tree Tunnel Press, P.O. Box 733, Capitola, CA 95010

ISBN - 13: 978-0-9841037-6-8

ISBN - 10: 0-9841037-6-7

Library of Congress Control Number: 2009931576

Cover and interior illustrations © 2010 by Sherry Adler.

All rights reserved.

Published by Tree Tunnel Press,

P.O. Box 733, Capitola, CA 95010

First Edition. Printed in the United States of America

0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*For my mother,  
more wonderful than Mother.*

*And for Sherry,  
who walked with me in Aerdem.*



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WYNDANO'S *CLOAK* grew with the care and support of many people. I am deeply indebted to my wife, Sherry, for believing in me, pulling me through the dark moments, and listening to me prattle for five years. She provided an astute perspective on my characters and audience, and how these relate to larger questions about politics and society. She did more tasks on this novel than I can list; the book would not exist without her. Under her artful hand, Jen sprang onto the cover.

A world of thanks go to my editor, Walter Kleine, for making the editing process painless. He helped me tighten, clarify key points, and clean up little details without losing sight of the whole. His devotion to the story was miraculous.

Heartfelt thanks go to my cousins, Elisa Adler and Selena Jayo, for enthusiastically critiquing the novel, giving suggestions for pruning, pointing out where to make improvements, and helping me sort out my concerns. The wonderful writers Andrea Walker, Delight Reimers, and Ruth Lofsted helped me grow into a writer. I will treasure our evenings at Borders, and the friendships forged there.

I'm grateful to Madison and Dave (M<sup>2</sup> Productions) for creating such a powerful book trailer. Linda Joy Kattwinkel provided legal counsel; Alan Gadney gave needed marketing guidance. My brother, Mark, was a sounding board, and seemed to have the right ideas to get me back on track. Dr. Lena Osher answered medical questions, and Dr. Joan Baran clarified early child development questions. You helped make it real.

Oceans of appreciation go to my neighbors, Cathy and Chad; and to Irene Archer (interior design); Ian and the gang (exterior design); Chris and Bill (LaserLight); Alisa Davies; Roy Wallace; Anna Storck; Diane Whiddon-Brown; and the other Mark, for putting the book first.



# *Part One*







## *The warning whispered in the leaves*

rustling in a windless dawn. Jen always knew it would come, but the danger had drifted to the back of her mind like a fading nightmare, leaving only a vague clutching beneath the common activities of the day.

She'd been running along the western side of King's Loop, dawn just pushing above the Aedilac Mountains. Silhouettes streaked by, a farmhouse, a barn, a peach orchard heavy with fruit. Her hair streamed behind, catching the wind like a sail. She almost flew, feet barely touching the ground.

Kicking up a cloud of dirt, she veered off the road and cut through a meadow. She spread her arms, feeling the waist-high grass brush her palms as she whizzed by. Leaving the meadow, she ducked into a thicket of trees, dodging low-lying limbs with the thrill of a bird that's found its wings.

She broke into a clearing and headed toward a stream. With a surge she leaped over the water and made for the lone oak near the bank. Here, a ring of rocks collected water in a quiet pool. Only a few hungry skeeter hawks skated across the surface, looking for an early breakfast. Ducks slept in the grass.

They raised their heads and started waddling toward her as she untied a leather pouch.

Taking out a handful of breadcrumbs, she flung it to them. They scrambled with straining necks and blaring trumpets. She threw some toward a runt standing uncertainly on the side, but a big white quacker beat him off with a showy rattle of wings.

Jen pretended to slip the food back in her pocket and waited until the others glided into the water. Then she poured the crumbs into her hand and held it out. The runt hesitated, then crept forward until his beak nibbled her palm.

“You’re small,” she said softly, “but you can be quick. Dart between them.”

When the food was gone, she leaned against the tree. King’s Loop looked like a ribbon from here, winding through farm and woodland until it met the great gates of Glowan. There it zigzagged through the little town until it came to the Rose Castle, shining like a jewel in the rising sun. The sheer cliff beyond beckoned. She looked away and exhaled, sighing with frustration and longing.

That was when she heard the whispering. Alert, she backed away from the tree and studied it at a crouch. The air was still. The grass motionless. But the leaves stirred and fluttered. Words floated down. At first they were indistinct, as if someone called through a distant snowstorm. One word emerged clearly, and an icy finger traced down her spine.

She heard her name.

She backed away until she squatted on some rocks that extended into the pool. Every muscle—sun-hammered and wind-hardened like metal in a forge—was poised to spring. Phrases whispered down. The only sense she could make was that something was coming. Something dangerous.

She thought of her family. Fear tightened around her

## *Hyndano's Cloak*

heart. She was a hair's-breadth away from running to them. Her feet stayed rooted to the spot. Maybe she'd hear more.

A small splash made her look at the pond. Two more followed, as if someone had thrown pebbles. Nothing had fallen into the water. But ripples spread out and ran into each other. More splashes erupted like tiny volcanoes, until the whole pool was agitated with colliding rings. A circle of calm emerged below Jen's feet, pushing the waves back. Pale and ghostly, a face rose from the muddy bottom of the pool until it floated just below the surface. Little hills and valleys lined the features of an old woman, as if olives lay under the skin.

"Medlara." Jen spoke under her breath, unwilling to believe her friend could hear her.

Medlara smiled, but her expression hardened. Words whispered from the pool. Jen leaned forward, straining to hear. She got little more than fragments, as if a storyteller jumbled the pieces of a tale. One phrase repeated, like a riddle. "If you meet . . . a harp, you must . . . If the worst happens, seek the answers—"

Jen dropped to her knees, hoping to catch more. Medlara's hands appeared just below her chin. She clasped them, and lifted her eyes as if she were imploring Jen. She mouthed two words. They might have been, "Forgive me."

Streaks of blue snaked and flowered in the water, as if someone had dropped in dye. Tendrils of mist rose from the surface and licked the ring of rocks. Soon the whole pool was covered. Spilling over the edge, the cloudy vapor surrounded Jen. She backed onto the shore, but the stuff sprouted up on all sides, walling her in, and formed a ceiling above. It crept along the ground until it met her feet. There it paused like an undulating sea.

Jen studied the mist. "She's trying to show me something. But what?"

There was no time to wonder. Fog rose before her like a giant shadow. Black. Forbidding . . .

She stepped back. Looked behind for an escape route. The fog surged forward and pulled her into the inky darkness. She could no longer feel the ground, as if everything solid and beautiful that she cared about was being ripped away. She tried to scream but terror rose from the pit of her stomach and froze in her throat.

The rest was a dizzy kaleidoscope of tilting and falling, of wandering lost, with no way out, no way home, no way back to a world of light and love, until the mist melted away and she collapsed, shaking in a pool of sweat.

How long she lay there she couldn't say, but at last she stopped trembling, her heart slowed, and she gulped some big breaths of air and rose. She staggered to the pool. It looked ordinary enough now. A handful of skeeter hawks glided peacefully on the surface.

The morning sun of Aerdem sparkled on the stream. A few birds sang in the tree. Shaking off numb shock, she splashed water on her face, wiped her hands on her breeches, and ran for King's Loop. She streaked through the fields and leaped onto the road, where a few farmers were carting goods to market. Tearing past them, she was vaguely aware they'd stopped to bow to the king's daughter.