

Mr. Miracle: A Christmas Novel

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Debbie Macomber, the author of *Love Letters*, *Mr. Miracle*, *Blossom Street Brides*, and *Rose Harbor in Bloom*, is a leading voice in women's fiction. Nine of her novels have hit #1 on the New York Times bestseller lists, and three of her beloved Christmas novels have been hit movies on the Hallmark Channel, including *Mrs. Miracle* and *Mr. Miracle*. In 2013, Hallmark Channel began production on the original series *Debbie Macomber's Cedar Cove*, based on Macomber's *Cedar Cove* books. She has more than 170 million copies of her books in print worldwide.

Chapter One

This wasn't the way it was supposed to happen. Six years out of high school, Addie Folsom had envisioned returning home loaded and driving a fancy car. Instead, she was limping back in a twenty-year-old Honda with close to three hundred thousand miles and her tail between her legs.

So much for the great promise of moving to Montana and walking into a get-rich-quick opportunity. She'd left Washington State with such high hopes . . . and ended up living in a leaky trailer and waiting tables in a run-down diner. It took all six of those years for Addie to admit she'd made a very big mistake. Pride, she'd learned, offered little comfort.

Oh, she'd returned home for visits at least a couple times a year. When asked pointed questions about her work in the silver mine, she'd made sure her answers were vague.

Then, last summer, her chiropractor father had died unexpectedly of a heart attack.

Addie had adored her dad as a child, but the moment she'd hit her teen years, their relationship had deteriorated. She hadn't repaired things before he'd passed away so suddenly. In retrospect, she suspected she and her father were too much alike. Both were stubborn and headstrong, unwilling to admit when they were wrong or make the effort to build bridges.

They'd argued far too often, her mother stepping in, seeking to make peace between her husband and her daughter. How sorry Addie was for the strife between them, now that her father was gone.

For now, she was home for good. Addie parked in front of the single-story house where she'd spent the first eighteen years of her life. She loved that it had a front porch, which so many of the more modern homes didn't. Normally, the Christmas lights would already be up. Her father had always seen to that the Friday after Thanksgiving. This year, however, the two arborvitae that bordered each side of the porch seemed stark and bare without the decorative lights.

Her mother must have been watching from the living-room window, because the minute Addie climbed out of the car, the front door flew open and Sharon Folsom rushed out with her arms open wide. "Addie, Addie, you're home."

Addie paused halfway up the walkway and hugged her mother close.

Sharon Folsom brought her hands up to Addie's face and smoothed back her dark brown hair. Her mother's chocolate-brown eyes, a reflection of her own, held her gaze with an intensity of longing.

Addie found she couldn't speak. It felt so good to be home, to really be home.

Her mother hugged her even tighter this time. "You said you were coming back, and I'd hoped . . ." She left the rest unsaid.

"I'm not returning to Montana this time, Mom."

"Oh Addie, really? I couldn't be happier. So you decided you are definitely back to stay?" She wrapped her arm around Addie's waist and led her up the porch steps. "It's so wonderful to have you home, especially at this time of year . . . it's the first one that's so difficult, you know."

The first Christmas without Dad.

"I talked to your uncle Roy," her mother said.

"Yes?" Addie tried hard not to show how anxious she was to hear what her mother had found out.

"He's pleased to know you're interested in health care. Your dad would have been so happy; that was what he always wanted for you. Roy said once you get your high school diploma, he'll do everything within his power to get you the schooling you need. He's even willing to hire you part-time while you're in school and to work around your class schedule."

Addie hardly knew what to say. This was an opportunity she had never expected. More than she could ever hope would happen. Now it was up to her not to blow it.

"Aren't you excited?"

Again, her throat tightened and she answered with a sharp nod. She knew that no matter what she hoped to accomplish, she'd need her high school diploma. One class credit was all she needed. Why she'd dropped out when she was so close to graduation was beyond her. How stupid and shortsighted she'd been. Her one missing credit was in literature, so she'd found a class she could take at the local community college.

B-o-r-i-n-g!

As a high school sophomore, Addie had been assigned to read Moby-Dick. Because of her dyslexia, she was a slow, thoughtful reader, often using her finger on the page to help her keep track of the words. Then to be handed that doorstop and work her way through it page by excruciating page had been pure torture. Following Moby-Dick, she'd been completely turned off to reading in general . . . although lately, after her television had

stopped working, she'd gotten a couple books at the library and enjoyed them immensely. Finding pleasure in reading had given her hope that maybe . . . just maybe she could return to school.

"I already signed up for a literature class. It starts this week, which I understand is a bit unusual; apparently, it was delayed until a teacher could be replaced." Addie had thought she'd need to wait until mid-February, when the second semester began. This class was perfectly timed for her.

"You enrolled already?" How pleased her mother sounded, and her face brightened with the news.

They were inside the house now, and after removing her coat, Addie tucked her fingertips in the back pockets of her jeans. Standing in the middle of the kitchen, she looked around and breathed in the welcome she found in the familiar setting. Her mother had placed a few festive things around the house to help celebrate the season. The Advent wreath rested in the center of the kitchen table. The first purple candle had been lit.

When she was growing up, it'd been a big deal to see who got to light the candle every night at dinner, Addie or her brother. Generally, Jerry was given the honor. Oh, how her brother had loved lording it over her. He lived in Oklahoma now, was married, and worked as a physical therapist for a center that trained Olympic athletes. He'd always been athletic himself, just like his best friend, Erich Simmons, who lived next door. The two had been inseparable; any mental image of her brother also conjured up his constant sidekick and the way she'd humiliated herself over Erich.

At one time Addie had thought Erich Simmons was the cutest boy in the universe. He was a star athlete, class valedictorian, and the homecoming king. Addie hadn't thought of him in a long time and didn't know why he'd popped into her head now. As a teen, she'd idolized Erich and hadn't bothered to hide the way she felt. He, unfortunately, found her hero worship highly amusing. Oh, there'd been the usual antics when they were kids. Her brother and Erich had wanted nothing to do with her, despite all her efforts to follow them around. It wasn't until she was fourteen and fifteen that she'd viewed Erich in a different light and sent him valentines and baked him cookies. It embarrassed her no end to remember what a fool she'd made of herself over him, especially since he treated her like a jerk.

"Addie?" Her mother broke into her thoughts. "You look a million miles away."

"Sorry, Mom."

"Bring in your suitcases. I've got your old room all ready for you."

It felt wonderful to be home.

Addie unloaded her car, which, sadly, took only a few minutes. Everything she'd managed to accumulate in six years was contained in two suitcases and a couple boxes. When she

finished unpacking, she headed directly for the garage.

Her mother found her there ten minutes later. "Addie, my goodness, what are you doing here?" she asked. "I've been looking all over the house for you. Are you hungry? Would you like me to fix you something to eat?"

"In a little while."

"What are you doing?"

Addie stood in the middle of the garage, surrounded by several clear plastic boxes she'd brought down from the shelves. Her father had been a whiz at organization, a trait she'd inherited. "I'm looking for the outdoor Christmas lights."

Other Books

It's Better This Way, NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER · After her marriage ends, one woman's struggle to pick up the pieces finally leads to a new beginning—but is the past truly behind her? In this poignant novel, #1 New York Times bestselling author Debbie Macomber explores the powerful intersections of love and family. "This deeply emotional tale proves it's never too late for love."—Publishers Weekly (starred review) It's been nearly six years since Julia Jones had her heart broken. After her husband became involved with another woman, she did everything she could to save their marriage, to no avail. The couple's two daughters continue to stand by Julia in the wake of their father's behavior—and they've had a tough time getting along with the other woman who's become their stepmother. Distraught after selling the family home, Julia moves into a condominium complex that offers the warmth and charm of a fresh start. Now, having settled into her new community and sold her successful interior design business, she's embraced a fulfilling new life, one that doesn't seem to need a man in it. Her beloved father's trusty saying is ringing truer than ever: It's better this way. But when Julia meets a handsome new resident in the building's exercise room, she can't help but be drawn to him. Heath Wilson is a welcome change from the men she's encountered on the occasional—mostly disastrous—dates her sister has eagerly planned for her over the years. As she and Heath, a divorcé himself, begin to grow close, their friendship blossoms into an unexpected love. However, they soon realize that combining families proves to be a challenge, even though their four children are adults. When a dramatic revelation threatens the happiness they've found, Julia and Heath must reconcile their love for their children with their love for each other. If they can't, their bright future together may be nothing but a dream.

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