

MARK J. SPINICELLI

CATCHING  
A  
MIRACLE



# Catching A Miracle

Mark J. Spinicelli



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## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to those brave individuals who have been forced to battle a disease that takes so many lives each year, and to the families who walk the difficult path with them.

*Catching A Miracle* was created to offer hope, encouragement, or at least thought-provoking entertainment.

The notion that a cure is out there is not far-fetched. A number of recent advances could turn this fictional read into reality. A 2011 report claimed scientists at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada, discovered the cure, but it has yet to materialize. Israeli scientists have found rat cells secrete a substance that destroys cancer cells in humans.

*Catching A Miracle* is the first of a trilogy:

### ***Catching A Miracle***

To Kristen Elizabeth Spinicelli

*When God reaches down into the garden of humanity, he always grabs the brightest flower.*

### ***Catching A Miracle: The Hunt For Hans***

To Joseph "Joe" Carney

*You were right, I became everything others said I could never be.*

### ***Catching A Miracle: Sparrow in the Fog***

*For my wife, Susan.*



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Alton Gansky, who took time away from being a professor to help me with the entire *Catching a Miracle* trilogy. His talents enable us to provide this story and trilogy.

David Gentilella of DIGITTO Media for leading the way in getting this book from manuscript to the book you see now.

Finally, the reason for this story, my loving sister Kristen and my mentor Joe Carney, both of whom succumbed to cancer in 1985. Kristen was a nurse who specialized in treating children with brain damage. Her "kids," as she called them, were her life and she is buried next to many of them in Orlando.

Joe Carney was the man who would tell an eighteen-year-old high school drop-out that what I had to do was go out and be everything people said I could never be, successful.

Kristen and Joe have been the driving force that makes us wonder when we hear, "There's nothing more we can do." Will you accept that, or simply stand with us and say, "I bet you are wrong."?

To me, *Catching a Miracle* is more than a book, it is a blueprint to another way.

## SYNOPSIS

Under the watchful eyes of Dr. Gregory Wall, eight-year-old Shelly White and her best friend and roommate, Kristen, fight for their lives at St. Theresa's Hospital for Children. After Dr. Wall has tried everything, Shelly's cancer disappears overnight in what becomes the hospital's first miracle. Yet as Shelly leaves the hospital, she sees Dr. Wall rush to Kristen's bedside, where her best friend loses her battle against cancer.

Thirty years later, Dr. Shelly White works alongside her mentor in order to save other children. At a fundraiser to honor Kristen, she meets advertising executive Nicholas Harris, who along with his father, Salvatore, will change her life and possibly wipe cancer off the face of the earth. With the help of Nick and his father's high-profile friends, an idea becomes a quest to find a cure.

*Catching A Miracle* is a unique and fast-paced story of compassion, intrigue, and power about a group of people who each have a reason to stop a killer... by trying a different approach: greed.



# CHAPTER 1

**October 1972**

From the doorway of Room 1604 in the children's ward, Nurse Doris Powers watched the celebration in the reception area a short distance down the hall. A child going home was always a reason to celebrate.

Nurse Doris smiled and waved to some of the parents she had grown to know, all the while keeping a keen eye on the pale little girl lying in the bed a few feet away. Above the bed loomed machines monitoring her vital signs. The readings were not good. The children's laughter in the lobby faded from Doris' ears as she focused on her patient. The child lay unconscious, curled in a fetal position.

The celebration was almost over, the eight-year-old honoree whisked away in her wheelchair by her mother as smiling children chattered and waved goodbye. Doris saw right through the smiles on their faces and knew they wished with all their might they were going home too. But few ever did. The nurse's eyes locked with those of the brown-haired girl in the wheelchair as if thanking each other for sharing the past four months of their lives.

A sound snapped Doris' attention back to the patient in the bed. It was a sound she had been dreading, a sound she desperately wished she would not hear.

The monitors shrilled.

Her patient was flat-lining.

Doris punched the room's intercom button. "Code blue 1604! Code 1604."

A moment later, a calm, authoritative voiced oozed from overhead speakers. "Code blue, 1604. Code blue, 1604."

The ten-year-old's eyes twitched. Her body shook. She soiled the bed.

Doris pushed back the bed curtain, the side table, and anything else that might hamper the code team's action.

"She's coding!" Doris told the first doctor to enter the room.

Dr. Gregory Wall studied the monitors. He stood tall, calm, his face an impassive mask, but his eyes told the real story. Wall was black, in his thirties, and just a year out of the Navy Medical Corps, and, at six feet two inches tall, could be a bit intimidating. Yet he was a champion for children, and every pain they felt hurt him.

The rest of his medical team appeared at the patient's side. One pushed the crash cart into the room.

Wall rattled off commands. "Adrenalin. Five hundred CCs."

A second later one of the resuscitation nurses handed Wall the demanded drug.

"Okay, little one," he whispered, "let's not ruin a perfectly good day." He stabbed her chest with the needle. "C'mon, give me something ..."

"We're losing her." Doris' words were steady but awash with fear.

Wall swore. "Compressions."

An intern began CPR.

Wall called for the defibrillator and with practiced motions placed the paddles and sent an electrical charge across the child's heart.

She gurgled. The monitors showed no heartbeat.

"Clear!" Hands raised in the air and bodies moved from the rails. The girl's body jumped again from the electrical surge, then shook as it fell back on the sheets. The doctor tried again to revive her. No change. She went limp. The team bowed their heads. An intern took notes while a nurse wiped a tear from her eye. Dr. Wall faced Doris.

"We could try ..." he offered.



Doris shook her head. She was young, just 27, but had been a nurse long enough to know the truth. "She's gone, Doctor."

He laid a hand on the dead child's head. Doris saw it shake. She had once asked him if he got used to the pain and death. "The day I get used to seeing children die is the day I leave medicine forever."

"Sometimes the Lord gives us miracles, Doctor. Sometimes he takes the little ones home," Doris said. "It's time to let go."

"There was nothing more I could do," Dr. Wall said. A tear formed in the corner of his right eye. "Five months of treatment and we end up losing her."

"You did everything right, Doctor." She placed her hand on his. "Remember, the first rule of medicine is that patients die. And rule number two?"

"You can't change rule number one." He nodded.

"I'll get a gurney." She stood up and rubbed the small of her back. "You okay?"

"I just want to stay with her a few minutes," he said as the light over the bed began to flicker. He looked at Doris Powers and then up at the bulb. She smiled.

"If you're up there, child, how about fixing that thing, would you?" she asked with eyes to the ceiling. The bulb went dark, flickered again, and returned to a bright, steady light. They both smiled. "See that, Doctor Wall?" the nurse said. "She made it."

\*\*\*\*\*

In the lobby, the party atmosphere turned to dread, at least for those old enough to know what was happening.

The guest of honor stretched her neck to see what room was causing all the commotion—her old room. That's what she'd feared. A pit formed in her stomach. She was so frightened for her friend that she wanted to scream. She wanted to run back to her room and help. Tears leaked from her eyes as her mother pushed the wheelchair faster toward the exit.

## **JUNE 1972**

The linoleum floors of the hospital appeared to gleam with enthusiasm about the little feet that now walked their pathways

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