

Miracles happen!

April Poirer-Seguin always worried there was something wrong with her little girl, but medical tests all proved negative. Then seven-year-old Amber had a massive heart attack and slipped into a coma from which doctors said she was unlikely to recover. Not without a miracle . . .



"Amber's my little miracle child—she proved it twice!" says April.

"Now I know miracles do happen!"

Dr. Shaw, it's been more than 20 minutes . . .

April heard the pained resignation in the nurse's voice, then felt her own heart stop cold.

Frantically, April snapped her eyes back to the ER physician as he pumped desperately on seven-year-old Amber's chest. This can't be happening! April thought in horror.

Just hours before, the little girl had been writing out her Christmas wish list. Now she lay in an Ontario, Canada, hospital, limp amid

Holding hands, they prayed, "Please bring Amber back"

a tangle of tubes while nurses and doctors worked feverishly at trying to resuscitate her—and a chaplain solemnly administered last rites.

"Dr. Shaw . . ." the nurse repeated. "No!" April shrieked, sensing the nurse thought all was lost. "You can't give up on my miracle baby!"

Though April adored her four little boys, she'd always longed for a little girl. After her last child, however, she thought, It's not meant to be. Then, three days before surgery to have her tubes tied for health reasons, she learned she was pregnant—and later, that it was a girl! "My little miracle," April cooed when she first held Amber.

And Amber became the girly-girl April had always imagined—she loved dressing up her Barbie dolls. But as Amber grew, April and her

husband, Jack, noticed that she sometimes bumped into walls or jumped out of her chair for no reason. Other times, she complained that her heart was "running real fast, Mommy." Something's not right, April thought. But what?

One doctor after another ran tests, but they turned up nothing. "You're overreacting," one doctor told April. "Amber is fine."

Still, April couldn't shake the feeling that Amber wasn't all right.

A few weeks before Christmas, April and Jack had dropped the kids off at their Aunt Violet's house while they went shopping. "Please, Mommy, don't forget the Barbie skateboard!" Amber reminded her. "We won't," April promised.

Hours later, they returned, trunk crammed. "The kids will be happy, especially Amber," April grinned.

But her smile evaporated when they turned down Violet's street—and saw rescue trucks surrounding the house. Spotting Violet in the yard sobbing, April jumped out of the car, screaming, "What's wrong?"

"It's Amber!" Violet choked. "She collapsed and stopped breathing!"

"Where is she?" April shrieked. "On her way to the hospital," a paramedic said. "Her heart stopped, and we couldn't get it going."

"I have to get to her!" April wailed. As she and Jack raced to Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, April prayed, Please let her be okay!

And now, she was in the ER, holding Amber's tiny foot, cold to the touch, her little face gray-blue, her lips colorless. She looks empty, April anguished while pleading, "Please

don't let my little girl go!"

Dr. Shaw glanced at April, and ignoring the nurse—and evidence that after 20 minutes without air, no person could be revived—he applied the defibrillator paddles yet again, crying, "Clear!"

But April still didn't respond.

Over and over, Dr. Shaw pressed on Amber's chest and applied the shock paddles. After 40 minutes, "It's no use," one doctor said in despair. "No!" April moaned.

The chaplain moved to her side, and nurses and physicians sadly pulled off their latex gloves. But Dr. Shaw kept going. And suddenly . . . "I've got a pulse!" he yelled.

At that moment, Amber's body arched. Then she sank back down. "Is she dead?" April shrieked.

"She's in a coma," Dr. Shaw said, "but she's alive."

"Thank God!" April wept. But her relief didn't last long.

Cardiologists examined Amber, then told April and Jack, "Your daughter has arrhythmogenic right ventricular dysplasia, which caused her sudden cardiac arrest."

"Can you fix it?" April asked.

"Yes," the doctors said, "but . . ." Amber had gone so long without oxygen that her brain had begun to swell. Even if she survived, there was sure to be brain damage. "Expect the worst," they said. "Am-

ber could die at any moment."

"No!" April shot back. "She's my baby! I can't live without her!"

But as Amber lay unconscious, breathing with the aid of machines, Jack collected her four brothers and brought them to the hospital to see her—possibly for the last time. "Wake up," Lawrence, 14, Joey, 13, and Cody, 10, pleaded.

"I want Amber to come home," Ryan, nine, said.

"Me, too," April soothed. "We all just have to pray very hard."

And holding hands, they prayed, "Please bring Amber back to us."

But Amber didn't stir, and Jack took the boys home while April stayed by her daughter's side. "Come back to me," she cooed. "I don't care

if I have to take care of you forever as long as you come home."

April even placed Amber's glasses on her face, saying,

"Now when you wake up, you'll be able to see me right away."

But Amber didn't wake up. Not the next day or the day after or the day after that. By now, she had been unconscious almost 80 hours.

Have we lost you, my dear little girl? April despaired. "Dear God," April sobbed, "you made one miracle when you gave me Amber! Please give us just one more!"

Suddenly, a tiny voice croaked, "Mommy?"

And April saw Amber's eyes flutter open! "You're back!" April cried, hugging her. "Thank You, Lord!"

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Doctors were dumbfounded—especially when they discovered that Amber hadn't suffered any brain damage! They implanted a tiny defibrillator to keep her heart beating normally, and after a month recuperating, Amber went home!

Today, with medication and regular checkups, Amber is back to dressing up her Barbies—and April knows why. "Miracles do happen," she says, watching Amber play. "I know, God gave me the daughter I always wanted—twice!"

—Elizabeth L. Holzemer

Should you be concerned about a racing heartbeat?

In most cases, a rapid heartbeat is no cause for alarm, especially if you've just been startled, are anxious or in a hurry. "Even if you feel your heart racing for no apparent reason, it's probably nothing to worry about," says University of Florida

cardiologist Anne Curtis, M.D., of the American College of Cardiology. But if it recurs, she suggests talking to your doctor. And go to the ER if your heart races faster than normal for over an hour, or you feel faint or lightheaded or have chest pain.



Has a miracle happened in your life? Please send the details along with your name, address and phone number to: Miracles Happen, *Woman's World*, 270 Sylvan Ave., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. If we print your story, we'll pay you \$250. Submissions may be edited for style.