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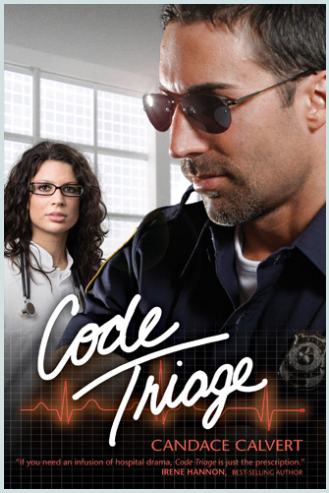

Code Triage

Mercy Hospital #3

Dr. Leigh Stathos likes her ER shifts fast, furious, and adrenaline-infused—"Treat 'em and street 'em"—with no emotional complications. Life's taught her a soul-rending lesson: nothing lasts forever, including marriage. And the clock is ticking toward the end of hers.

Candace Calvert

Candace Calvert is an ER nurse who landed on the "other side of the stethoscope" after the equestrian accident that broke her neck and convinced her that love, laughter—and faith—are the very best medicines of all. The inspirational account of her accident and recovery appears in Chicken Soup for the Nurse's Soul and launched her writing career.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions for individual reflection or for discussion within your book club or small group.

Note: Book clubs that choose to read Code Triage and would like me to "attend" your get-together, please e-mail me at Candace@candacecalvert.com. I'll try to arrange a speakerphone conversation to join your discussion.

1. In the opening scene of Code Triage, off-duty police officer Nick Stathos faces danger to aid a young mother at risk of losing her children. He stubbornly insists, "I don't give up. Ever." What does this scene say about his character? his background? values? Considering those things, were you surprised to learn that Nick's marriage was ending because of his infidelity? Discuss.

2. The reader first meets ER physician Leigh Stathos as she's attempting to pump the stomach of an overdose patient, a woman despondent over her husband's affair. Leigh's manner is firm, professional, and emotionally neutral. How does this differ from her "gut-level" internal reaction to the woman's situation? What does that—and Leigh's eagerness to complete the divorce and move away from San Francisco—tell you about her character? Did you see a conflict in the personalities of Nick and Leigh Stathos?

3. What was your initial reaction to Samantha Gordon? Were the scenes from the point of view of "the other woman" effective for you as a reader? Why do you think they were included?

4. Secondary characters played significant roles in Code Triage. Who is your favorite? Cappy Thomas? Harry or Antoinette McNealy? Maria? Caroline? What did that character add to the story?

5. What impact did her sister's impending divorce have on Caroline? Do you think it's true that there is a "ripple effect" of divorce? How so?

6. How did the unlikely friendship of Tag and Frisco add to the story? Did you see a parallel between Leigh's need to give her horse "a cushion of space" (an empty stall beside his) and her own approach to relationships? Discuss.

7. Leigh knew she was pregnant when she and Nick separated, but she

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

never told him. If she had, do you think it would it have changed things? If so, how?

8. In the scene where they prepare an anniversary dinner for the McNealys, former chef Nick tells Leigh that recipes are built around a "central ingredient." His statement reminds Leigh of their Christian counselor's advice regarding a successful marriage: to have God at its center. What importance do you place on shared faith in a marriage? Have you seen wounded relationships heal as a result of "putting God at the center"?

9. After the ER shift that included a hospital shooting, Leigh tells Riley that she intends to go someplace where "even God can't track me down." Golden Gate Stables has become her comfort and refuge when troubles crowd in. Do you have a place like that? Do you feel God's presence there?

10. A nurse struggling with her ability to set aside personal feelings to care for Kurt Denton, the man who killed a coworker, asks chaplain Riley Hale, "How do I do this?" Riley's answer is "One step at a time." How does that answer relate to Riley's own struggle as a victim of crime? What do you imagine the future holds for this character?

11. A lemon tree and a dining room table become important motifs in the story. In your opinion, what the does the tree symbolize? Can you compare the significance of a table in Nick's life to the significance in Leigh's? How important was a family table in your childhood? Is that different now?

12. When abused orphan Maria finally breaks her silence, she tells Leigh that "we don't have to be afraid," because God will "always be here . . . forever and ever." Why did that statement affect Leigh so deeply?

13. How did you feel about Sam Gordon at the story's end? Are you hopeful for her future? Why or why not?

14. The epilogue brings together characters from all three Mercy Hospital books, reunited at a beach wedding. Did that make for a satisfying ending? Were there any questions that you felt were left unanswered at the story's end? Discuss.

Thank you for reading Code Triage. Send me a note; I'd love to hear from you.

Warmly,

Candace Calvert

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