

WISH

An impossible dream.

*An extraordinary
journey.*



— a novel —

J A K E S M I T H

Advance Praise for *Wish*

“A moving and magical story about the things we hold most dear, *Wish* will grab hold of your heart.”

JASON WRIGHT,

New York Times bestselling author of *The Wednesday Letters*

“*Wish* pulled at my heartstrings like few books ever have. Baseball fan or not, you’ll find something to love. This story is a poignant reminder that life, like any great game, is less about the final score and more about how we play.”

KEVIN ALAN MILNE,

author of *The One Good Thing*

“*Wish* grabs ahold of your hand and beautifully walks you through baseball’s greatest potential. As a father who loves the game, I came away from the story realizing I have not wished enough in my life.”

DOUG GLANVILLE,

ESPN baseball analyst, author of *The Game from Where I Stand*,
and former MLB player

“Your one wish after finishing this novel will be that it had never ended. Jake Smith has written a heartbreaking—yet uplifting and totally enthralling—novel about fathers and sons and families. It’s a triumphant tale of the mysteries and wonder of our own humanity.”

DOUG STANTON,

New York Times bestselling author

“A delightful, remarkable debut novel, *Wish* reveals the power of faith and love in the most difficult of times. But it is more a story of hope than heartbreak. I recommend it highly.”

DAN WALSH,

bestselling author of *The Unfinished Gift*

“What a great read! It was like watching a dream come true before your very eyes. I thoroughly enjoyed it and highly recommend it.”

BOBBY RICHARDSON,

former New York Yankee ('55-'66) and World Series MVP ('60)

“The subject of bone marrow transplantation lies close to my heart, as my father received the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1990 for his pioneering work in the field. *Wish* captures the human story behind the science with remarkable insight and compassion. Anyone who has ever endured—or simply imagined—the emotional roller coaster of a critical childhood illness in the family will be deeply affected by this book.”

E. DONNALL THOMAS JR., MD

W I S H



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Wish

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JAMES McCONNELL LOVED THIS MOMENT, when the sinking, early May sun transformed the high school baseball field into Yankee Stadium, gilding the pitcher's mound and bases and each blade of moistening grass. With a golden brush, it painted over the field's blemishes, smoothed the pockmarks around third base, greened the scrubby grass in shallow center field, and refilled the crater consuming the right-handed batter's box. Everything softened and melted together in that evening glow, and the high school's small field, carved out of a northern Michigan swamp, became a place where professionals played.

The slanting sun sharpened his concentration. In the first base coach's box, he bent forward and rested his hands on his knees, legs spread wide, and studied the opposing left-handed pitcher. The teenager had just walked the leadoff batter in the bottom of the fourth inning on four straight pitches, and James recognized the pressure clenching in the pitcher's jaw. For most seventeen-year-olds, pressure meant mistakes. And James spotted one brewing in how the kid, lips mashed together in

frustration, took far too long getting the sign from the catcher. James figured a wild pitch was coming. That, or a medium fastball right down the middle, a perfect pitch to hit. Either way, he told the runner on first to be ready. Sure enough, the next pitch skipped in the dirt, low and away to the left-handed batter, but the catcher blocked it, keeping the runner at first base.

James straightened, and in the few seconds between pitches, he marveled again at the evening sunshine and how it always seemed to make his baseball career feel complete—from high school star at eighteen, to promising college standout at twenty, to part-time assistant high school coach at thirty-four. It created a moment that, unlike many others in his life, felt perfect.

The moment shattered.

The runner, shuffling back to first base after the pitch in the dirt, said, “Hey, Coach Mac,” and flicked his head toward the first base dugout.

A burgundy SUV streaked down a paved No Vehicles Allowed footpath that wound down from the school and around the track and softball diamonds. Greg’s car. A hand shot out the driver’s window with a frantic wave. The SUV dipped, threatening to veer down the grassy slope toward the baseball diamond, but the driver fought back, straightened it out, and jammed the brakes. Tires screeched.

James sprinted off the field.

He knew why Greg, the school’s athletic director, was there, and that perfect moment he treasured vanished. The golden light, the performance of his team, the eternal hope of an unlikely state title, his love of baseball—none of it mattered. Not anymore.

The cancer was back.