

Book Review: Counting Miracles  
By Nicholas Sparks

I did not read any of the 24 previously published novels by author Nicholas Sparks, mostly because I was aware of their overly sentimental, sometimes bordering on romantically sappy, storylines. But the promo for “Counting Miracles” intrigued me.

“When his (Tanner Hughes) grandmother passes away, her last words to him are find where you belong. She also drops a bombshell, telling him the name of the father he never knew—and where to find him.”

Okay, sounded interesting, so I bit.

But it didn't taste very good.

Tanner Hughes was raised by his grandparents, following in his grandfather's military footsteps to become an Army Ranger. His whole life has been spent abroad, and he is the proverbial rolling stone: happiest when off on his next adventure, zero desire to settle down. But his grandmother's deathbed disclosure sends him off to Ashboro, North Carolina in search of a man he never knew.

At this point, I'm into the story. Why wasn't Tanner ever told the truth? What will his search look like? My curiosity was piqued.

But then Tanner gets to Ashboro and almost immediately becomes attracted to and involved with a woman (Kaitlyn Cooper), and the narrative bogs down into a courtship between a lifetime roamer and a divorced mom of two kids. And the dialogue between them is so syrupy and transparent my eyes often glassed over.

Then there are chapters introducing Jasper, an 83-year-old man with a dog (Alpo) almost as old who lives nearby in a cabin. He's obsessed with saving the rare but recently seen white deer. He's also ill. Dying. Kaitlyn is his doctor, but that relationship is barely explored. Instead,

the narrative focuses on Jasper's backstory but contains far too many references to Christian themes and direct quotes from New Testament scripture.

That's NOT what I signed on for.

So, I got midway through the book and cut my losses. The narrative continued to plod along at glacial speed, and the childish dialogue between Tanner and Kaitlyn while preparing a roast chicken dinner was too much to take.

If you're into these over-the-top, double box of Kleenex novels, then you'll probably enjoy it. For me, however, I shall resume my streak of not reading any Nicholas Sparks novels.

Two stars, only because the first chapter or two lured me in. But it was lights out after that.