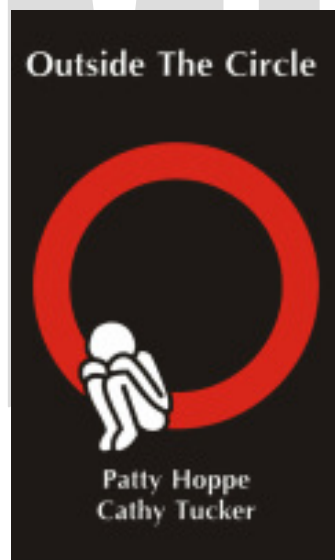


HAVE YOU EVER BEEN BULLIED?

Read the new novel written by authors Patty Hoppe and Cathy Tucker that portrays a realistic scenario of bullying at a fictitious high school:

Outside the Circle

Part One: Bullied and Betrayed
Part Two: Rescued and Redeemed



- Jamie Callahan, a promising teenage volleyball player, has faced almost daily bullying after an accident kills both her drunk driving mother and a popular classmate. Trying to leave the tragedy behind them, Jamie and her father move from Knoxville to the small fictional town of Merrell, Tennessee.
- They encounter even more problems in their new environment, and both father and daughter continue to feel like outsiders in their new home.
- A disaster strikes the high school after which the students rally round their surviving classmates and create a new beginning, one they pledge will create an atmosphere of tolerance.

Outside The Circle



Patty Hoppe
Cathy Tucker

Bullied

The high school day began as usual for Jamie Callahan with groups whispering and low murmurs following her from class to class. No one cared that she was a volleyball star—just the daughter of a drunk driver who had killed one of their own. As a result, her father makes a critical decision that will haunt both of them.

Betrayed

With a move to a new city and a fresh start, Jamie and her father face critical decisions in their new school and workplace. Bullies do not appear just on school grounds, but often on job sites, too. In the end, both face their worst nightmares. How the two confront their situations will mean the difference between life and death for the students of Merrell.

Cover image by Amanda Davis



Outside The Circle

by Patty Hoppe and Cathy Tucker

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Patty Hoppe and Cathy Tucker

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Our families and friends who form the best support system anyone could ever want.

Part 1: Bullied and Betrayed

Prologue

KNOXVILLE NEWS SENTINAL

Metro Section

Wednesday, January 6

Driver/Pedestrian Killed in Suspicious Accident

KNOXVILLE. Late this afternoon, Knoxville resident Cecilia Callahan, age 38, was killed when the car she was driving struck a pedestrian, rolled down an embankment, and hit a cement post. The pedestrian, Knoxville East High School sophomore Kurt Matthews, age 16, was pronounced dead at the scene. Callahan, the driver, was taken to Knoxville General Hospital, where she underwent emergency surgery. She was pronounced dead three hours later without regaining consciousness.

According to witnesses, Callahan appeared to swerve while traveling north at a high rate of speed. She struck Matthews who was crossing in a clearly marked pedestrian crosswalk.

One volunteer ambulance driver described the scene as, "The bloodiest I've ever witnessed in ten years. The smell of alcohol was everywhere." Following the fatal accident, northbound Highway 441 was closed for several hours. The accident is currently under investigation by the Sheriff's Department, headed by Sheriff Sam Wheeler.

KNOXVILLE NEWS SENTINAL

Metro Section

Thursday, January 14

Two Deaths Linked to Drunk Driving

KNOXVILLE. The Knoxville Sheriff's Department today announced the cause of the fatal accident last week on Highway 441 was alcohol related.

Two people—Cecilia Callahan and Kurt Matthews—were killed in the one car accident. Callahan, the driver, registered .20 on a blood test administered at Knoxville General Hospital after the accident. It was not her first DUI violation.

Sheriff Sam Wheeler headed up the investigation. At the press conference this morning he said, "It's another tragic

case where an irresponsible driver, who should not be on the road, kills a totally innocent young person. Maybe now the state legislature will consider criminal sentencing for drunk drivers."

Callahan, a real estate salesperson for Southern Ridge Realty, leaves behind a husband and daughter. Matthews, a sophomore at Knoxville East High School, leaves a father, mother, and two brothers. A memorial service will be held for him at the high school auditorium on Friday at 6:00p.m.

“Ladies, write the names of your mothers and fathers on the last lines of the emergency card. Be sure to put both their home and work numbers in the correct places. I want to contact them when I need helpers for team dinners before our games,” directed the coach of the Knoxville Wolves, a junior pro volleyball team. “If all the blanks aren’t filled in, you won’t have your uniform for the first game. Then, hand in your packet, and hustle over to the practice court. We’ve spent too much time on these forms already. ”

Sophomore Jamie Callahan slowly wrote in her father’s name and number, skipping the lines for information about her mother. Without making eye contact with the coach, she handed in her packet. Securing her blonde ponytail against the top of her head, she moved to the north end of the gym to practice her serves.

A tall brunette, several teammates trailing behind her, stopped behind Jamie just as she tossed the white volleyball into the air, right hand raised to smack it over the net. A hand snaked out from the group to stop her serve. The leader leaned over to whisper, “What’d you do, Jamie, when you couldn’t fill in all the blanks. Your mother can’t help you anymore. She caused enough trouble, don’t you think?”

She stopped speaking as a teammate, black dread locks bouncing, stepped between the two volleyball players. Arms on slim hips, she effectively ended the one-sided conversation, “Kristen, nothing to do? Working on your hits wouldn’t hurt your chances of playing in a game anytime soon.”

The group of girls glared at the slim black teammate before they moved to the other end of the school gym.

Tomi Brandon turned to look at Jamie, who had dropped her hands and stood motionless behind the serving line, a dazed look in her eyes. She put a protective arm around her friend’s shoulders.

“Tomi, I can’t stay on this team. It’s not just Kristen and her gang of bullies. The whole team hates me.”

“Just what Kristen hopes you’ll say. You’re going to start Friday ‘stead of her. With you out of the way, she’ll take over your position.” She shook her head. “The rest of the team wants to win; they don’t care about anything else during the season.”

“No, it’s more than that. You don’t have to listen to the whispers when you walk by people you thought were friends.” She hiccupped. “You should hear the nasty things they say.”

“Hello! Remember who you’re talking to, Jamie. I’ve been there. I didn’t know anyone when we moved here from Chicago. I was sure nobody wanted to be friends with a Black athlete from the North and a female at that. If it hadn’t been for you, I don’t think anyone would talk to me today.”

“Are you kidding? Once they saw how you hit those aces, they’d have begged you to be on varsity.” She shook her head. “You had to battle for yourself, but I’m fighting a ghost. How can I do that?”

“Having a problem, girls?” As they both shook their heads, a sharp look from the assistant coach swiftly ended their conversation.

An hour later, after a last whistle blast, the team huddled around Coach Mitchell. “Remember to work this hard Friday night,” she cautioned the volleyball players. “They’ll be a tough team to play first game of the season. Now hit the showers.”

The hot, sweaty group left the floor, laughing as they walked toward the locker room. Jamie, ignoring the others, continued to practice her serve.

“Jamie, I know what you’re doing. Hiding out here isn’t going to help,” advised Tomi.

“I’m not hiding. I just want to be sure I’m ready for Friday night. I’ll be there in a minute.”

“You might fool the others, but I know you better. You’ll hit balls until your arm’s sore and everyone’s left the locker room. I’m not leaving you alone. I’ll wait for you so we can walk home together.”

“No, I forgot my history book. I’m going to have to go back to my locker after I shower.”

“No problem. I’ll grab my English homework at the same time. Can you believe we have to read fifty pages tonight?”

“I might as well stop here, anyway. This isn’t doing me any good. Race you to the hottest shower,” challenged Jamie as she dropped the practice ball into the silver cylindrical bin.

“No fair. You’ve got a head start. Your legs are longer than mine,” laughed Tomi as the two friends sprinted toward the varsity locker room.

The two girls walked toward Jamie’s school locker on the second floor, hair wet from their showers. Tomi pointed to her left, “Look, the cheerleaders’ve already put the motivational signs on the lockers for tomorrow. Wonder what yours’ll say?”

She heard a gasp from Jamie. She saw her friend rip off newspaper articles and a bright green sign, crumpling them in her fist.

“What are you doing? Let me see ‘em,” demanded Tomi coming up behind her friend.

“No! You’ve seen ‘em before. They’re the same ones over and over.” Jamie whirled to confront her friend, tears forming in her hazel eyes. “I told you I didn’t want to stay on this team.”

“You’ve got to learn to ignore them. But this is a new low, even for them. Let me see that sign,” ordered Tomi as she wrestled the crinkled sheet of paper from her friend. She read out loud as she smoothed out the wrinkles. “Drinking + Driving = Murder. Do yourself and us a favor. Quit the team.”

“See what I mean? They’ll just gang up on me during the game, and they’ll make me look stupid. I’ll be lucky to get my hands on a ball long enough to serve,” Jamie sobbed. “I know all the ways a team can punish a player when they want.”

“We’ll tell Coach Mitchell.”

“Right. Like that’s going to stop anyone.”

“Well, you sure can’t go on like this.” Tomi ticked off her points, one by one on her fingers, as she continued, “You can’t talk about your mother without crying. You’re still having those nightmares. You’re so afraid to go to sleep, you’re getting deeper circles under your eyes than a raccoon. You can’t talk to your dad. Girlfriend, you need to get some help.”

“You promised you wouldn’t tell anyone.”

“I haven’t, but you can’t go on like this. You won’t make it through the rest of the season.”

“I couldn’t make it through *anything* without you, Tomi. You’re the only one who understands me.”

“We’re more than friends, Jamie. I thought we’d decided we’re sisters.”

“Maybe you should change your mind. Your locker’ll be decorated like mine next.”

“I’ll just ignore it. Hello. Reality check. I’ve had experience with name calling and nasty signs back in Chicago. This isn’t the only school with bullies and mean girls.”

Jamie’s sniffles interrupted her friend. “It’s hard to ignore people when they’re saying ugly things about my mother.” She grabbed her friend’s hand. “All I know is I couldn’t go to school without you. We’ve got to make a pact never to separate.”

“We’ll go to the same college. We’ll be roommates. Nobody’ll come between us,” predicted Tomi.

“Sisters forever,” they said in unison, linking arms and walking off together. Only her friend’s strong arm prevented Jamie from looking back at her locker.

“Jamie, your cell’s ringing,” yelled her father from the kitchen later that evening. “Why don’t you answer it? You left it in the kitchen” he added impatiently.

“I’ll get it, Dad,” she yelled from her room as she walked toward the kitchen, snatched it from the table and headed back to the privacy of her bedroom.

“Hi, Jamie.”

“Hi, Tomi, what’s up?”

“*Something that’s not going to make your day.*”

“*Your parents didn’t really decide to go away this weekend, did they? We have a big game Friday, remember?*”

“*Well, I’m going away, but not this weekend.*”

“*It sounds like you’re crying. What’s wrong?*”

“*That’s what I’m trying to tell you. We’re moving.*”

“Away from Knoxville? You just moved. I thought your family liked your new house. Will you be closer to us?”

“Not quite. We’re moving back to Chicago.”

“No! This is a joke. Right?”

“My parents were out of town all week. I thought they went on business, but they were looking for a house.”

“What’s the rush? Can’t you at least wait ‘til the end of the year?”

“My dad’s got another promotion, and we’re leaving right away, even before the end of volleyball season.”

“No!” she screamed. “Don’t they care if they ruin your life and mine?”

“The good part is we’re going back to the same neighborhood. I’ll go to my old school, just like before. Same school, same teachers, same volleyball team. I’ve already talked to my old coach.”

“No! You can’t move. What’ll I do? Who’ll I talk to? You won’t need me for a friend any longer,” yelled Jamie. Sniffles could be heard on both ends of the line.

“Jamie, are you okay? I heard you scream. What’s wrong?” asked her father as he rushed into her room without knocking.

Covering the phone with her hand, she responded dramatically, “Nothing. Everything. My whole life’s down the drain.”

“It can’t be that bad. Hang up and tell me what’s wrong,” ordered her father. Taking the phone from her hand, he barked his message, “This is Jamie’s father. She’ll call you back.”

Then, he clicked the phone off and threw it on the bed as he turned to face his obviously distressed daughter. “Who was that? What’d she say to you?”

Flinging herself face down onto her bed, Jamie mumbled, “Tomi. She’s moving back to Chicago.” She turned her tear-streaked face toward the wall. “My life’s over.”

“Jamie, turn over so I can talk to you.” Her father sat on the edge of her bed, waiting for his racing heart to return to normal. “No wonder I’m getting gray hair,” he mumbled.

Jamie rolled over, her face red and tear-stained.

“That’s better. I’ve been waiting for the right time to tell you something. Guess this’s as good as it’s going to get. You know I’ve been looking for a new job, and I finally found one. I think we’ll be moving--probably right away--as soon as I can arrange things. That should make you feel a little better.”

“You just don’t understand. You never do.” Jamie sat up, tears running down her face. “Nothing’s going to make my life better--except to go back in time and change everything. Why did all this have to happen to us? What did we do?”

Her father looked at her and for a moment saw a toddler crying because she fell off her new two-wheeled bike. Shaking himself from his memory, he answered, “It wasn’t your fault, Jamie.” He put an arm around her and leaned over to snatch a wad of tissues from the box sitting on the nightstand next to her bed. “Things look bad now, but one day you’ll look back and wonder why you were so upset. You’ll like Merrell. It might be smaller than Knoxville, but they play volleyball there too.”

“Great. Another team to paste more nasty messages on my locker.” She sniffled.

“Everybody isn’t like the girls on this team. They won’t know a thing about you unless you tell them. It’ll be up to you.”

“What’ll I say if they ask about my mother?”

“Tell the truth. Say she died. They’ll probably be too embarrassed to ask any other questions, if I know kids,” said her father. “You can’t get in trouble if you tell the truth.”

“Dad, that doesn’t help. Wait ‘til you’ve got a problem some time, and when you ask for help, I’ll say something to you like ‘tell the truth; it’ll make you feel better.’” She flung herself crosswise on the top of her bed. “This is why I can’t get along without Tomi. She listens to me.”

“They’ve got cell phone towers in Merrell. You can call each other. She can visit you in the summer. ‘Sides, you’ll make new friends.”

“Do all parents have the same lines? Do you take classes?” Her father coughed to cover the start of a smile. “Tomi’s parents said the same things when she left Chicago. It didn’t help her either.

Now she's going back. I've lost my best friend." She dabbed her tears with her fistful of tissues. "It won't be the same. No matter how much you try to explain it away, you can't make it right."

Her father leaned over to look her in the eye. "It might not be the same, but different isn't always bad. Merrell'll just be a different place."

"I'll never be happy in Merrell. They probably don't even have electricity."

Christopher smiled at her prediction, "Merrell's a small town, but not that small." He added, "It'll be a new start for both of us. It hasn't been easy for me either. Things aren't the same at work. My circle of friends hasn't exactly stood by me either. If your Uncle Dave wasn't around occasionally, we'd be almost totally on our own."

"It's still not the same. You're an adult. You don't need friends."

Her dad smiled, but it didn't reach his eyes. "That's not true. We were both glad to have some after your mother's accident." He patted her on the shoulder. "You'll make new friends." "You'll look back at today, and wonder why you didn't want to move even sooner."

"No. I won't."

"Want to make a bet?"

She thought for a moment, a greedy look coming into her eyes, "How much money are ya' willing to risk?"

"Not money. If you lose, I'll lose too." When Jamie looked at him, he explained, "I'll just have to give you the money to pay your debt to me."

Jamie smiled weakly. "We need some kind of symbolic prize."

"I've got it." Her dad snapped his fingers. "If I win, I'll make your favorite dinner. If you win, you have to cook mine."

"I know, lasagna, garlic bread...."

"So, do we have a deal?" interrupted her father, hand outstretched.

"Get ready to put on your apron. I know I'm going to win," Jamie said as she shook hands to seal the bet.

“Well, the sooner we get moving, the sooner one of us’ll win.”

“Guess you’re right, Dad. I’ll start packing, but I want to call Tomi first. She’s probably going crazy wondering what’s happening here.”

“Then I’ll get back to my work that you interrupted. Crisis ended for now,” her dad said. He patted her awkwardly on the back and walked to the bedroom door.

Hesitating for a second, he turned around to hear Jamie say, with a new tone in her voice, “Hi, Tomi. You’re not the only one with news. I won’t have to worry about the team anymore.”

Shrugging, he left, closing the door, his daughter’s voice mumbling quietly into the phone behind him. “Hope I make it to graduation without a nervous breakdown. It’s not easy living with a drama queen,” he mumbled under his breath as he returned to his den.

Chapter One

The hot morning sun peeked through the off-white vertical blinds of Jamie's bedroom, waking her and striping the walls with a warm coral. She hardly recognized it without the usual posters decorating the walls or her stuffed animal collection sitting on shelves over her dresser. As she stretched, she sleepily looked out the long narrow window to the tree-filled park across the street from her large Knoxville apartment.

A queasy feeling prompted her to hold her stomach as she remembered this was the day she and her father would drive their new burgundy Dodge van to Merrell, Tennessee, a small town in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains. It would become their new home.

She remembered how little time she had left in this place she had called home for so many years. It had been, at times, a place she was proud to bring friends for gossip sessions or popcorn on movie nights. Then, in one instant, her life had changed forever. The apartment on Sycamore Lane that had once been a refuge from the word of school and unwanted questions, turned into a mausoleum, void of warmth and hope.

She was surprised at how soundly she had slept, especially since she had spent the night camping on the floor. Though the tragedy with her mother had happened four months earlier, most of her nights were still marked by nightmares.

Her life had changed in other ways also. At her insistence, her dad had advertised and sold her desk, where she'd spent hours writing stories and composing poetry. Until that ONE evening. She'd closed that part of her life—just as she'd shut her unfinished diary, turning the brass key in the lock and tossing it into the trash.

She pulled her long fingers through the mangled mass of thick strawberry blonde hair that fell over her shoulders. Lying back against the pillow, images moved slowly through her head, like the frames of her father's old 16 mm projector. Flashing red lights illuminated a darkened street. The screeching of paramedics' vehi-

cles merged into a sea of curiosity seekers scrambling to gawk at the accident scene.

As she stared up at the alabaster ceiling in her almost empty bedroom, she felt an eerie cold breeze blow across her face. She gasped, sitting up as icy fingers danced up knees, silently staring at the securely shut and locked bedroom window.

“It’s the big day,” her father yelled out in forced cheerfulness as he barreled obtrusively into her room.

“We leave in one hour,” he ordered. Then, remembering this was his fragile daughter and not the men who worked under him, he lowered his voice. “How was it spending the night in an old army sleeping bag?” He moved to lift her off the beige Berber carpeting.

“Okay, but I wouldn’t want to use it very often. I’ll be glad to get back in my own bed.” Jamie gathered up the thin blue blanket and pillow she had placed on top of the still zipped bag and cradled the soft bundle under her left arm.

“Does that mean you’ve finally accepted our move? You know I wouldn’t do it unless I was sure it’s the only solution.” Her father took her right hand and squeezed it, remembering her emotional reactions after he’d announced their move from the only place in which she’d ever lived. A fifteen year old did not want any changes in her life, he knew, except when it came to clothes and boyfriends.

Jamie shrugged a non-committal response to his question. As his daughter stumbled down the hall and into the bathroom, he remembered a conversation he’d had weeks ago right in this same long and narrow corridor that split the apartment into the sleeping and living quarters.

Under the pretense of returning some fishing equipment borrowed so long ago that Christopher no longer recognized it, his brother David, who had a successful medical practice in Nashville, had visited one Sunday. David’s plan was to talk his older brother out of making a move so near the end of the school year. “Jamie’s had enough upheaval for now. You can’t ask her to accept another change,” he insisted.

Christopher responded while looking sternly into his younger brother's eyes, "You haven't lived through what we have. It's been especially hard on Jamie. Your kids are younger so you can't imagine how cruel some teenagers can be. Wait 'til something similar happens to one of yours."

"I can't believe it was bad enough to uproot your daughter from her school and for you to change jobs. Didn't you register a complaint with the school?"

"Of course, but you've forgotten how it was, David. They teased and hurled insults. When that wasn't enough, they resorted to leaving nasty messages everywhere they could."

He stopped and stared at the floor as he shook his head in disbelief. "Some jerky kid even glued newspaper articles about her mother's accident all over her locker." He ran his fingers through his own graying hair, a contrast to the neatly cut and totally black hair of David. "No. She's been through enough. It's time to cut our losses and leave."

David sighed. "You've both been through more than anyone should ever have to. I know my kids wouldn't survive if they had to move from the only place they'd ever lived. Away from all of their friends."

"Well, I don't know that we've any real friends here anymore." A grimace of pain crossed his face. "Anyway, it's a done deal. The landlord's canceled our lease, and my new job starts next week. I haven't worked as a foreman for many years, but they promised overtime and good benefits.

"Believe me, I appreciate your concern, Dave, but remember we're not your patients. We're not running away. We just need to start over."

He stopped to pat the back of the shorter man whose blue eyes matched his own. "Jamie and I have talked a lot about moving. She's finally come to understand it's our only option. I think the last locker incident finally convinced her..."

The sound of Jamie shouting for him to find some soap for the shower dragged him back from his recollections. He had been staring out sightlessly at the large picture window that ran across the

length of the long living room at the front of the building. His wife's favorite dogwoods were covered with buds, a first hint of spring. "Hold on. Guess I packed everything away," he answered from the hall.

He moved to find his shaving kit, tossed among the myriad small items in a box with "Tappan Microwave" printed on the outside. It was one of many stacked on the living room floor. Retrieving the hotel-sized bar of soap, he knew Jamie wouldn't mind that he hadn't taken the time to go down to the van to find the carton where he had stuffed the rest of their usual toiletries.

He knocked on the door to the small but newly tiled bathroom and placed the soap into the wet hand Jamie thrust out of the narrow opening. Christopher recalled the excitement with which his wife had decorated their entire apartment with the Colonial pieces, many of them family heirlooms. Her Virginia upbringing had influenced her selection of mahogany and cherry end tables, plant stands, and shelves. All were tastefully arranged, in a way that would impress even a professional decorator.

Oddly enough, she had even spread her decorating scheme into the bathroom. Standing outside the closed door, he could visualize the antique cherry quilt stand which doubled as a towel rack, and the mahogany colored frames outlining the floral prints she had inherited from her grandmother. After she had convinced the landlord to give them two month's rent free if they remodeled the outdated and shabby room, it was, for a while, the space in which she took the most pride.

Selecting new burgundy and green tiles and coordinating linoleum to complement a new cherry vanity and triple mirror was a painstaking task. Not long after she ordered these new items, however, she had lost her interest in decorating. Once again, Christopher and Jamie were forced to finish one of her projects. Jamie became so adept at cutting tiles and mixing grout that her father told her even David Bromstead would be proud.

Heaving his wide shoulders in a moment of regret, Christopher checked his silver Timex before he carried the few remaining cartons to the first floor stoop, just below their apartment. He stepped

gingerly around the newspaper strewn across the top step. Setting the boxes down, he picked up the front page of the *Knoxville News-Sentinel*. Peering up at him was a headline that increased the sick feeling he had tried to ignore for the last months: “State Legislature Cracks Down on Drunk Drivers.”

“Not again. I’d better get rid of this before Jamie sees it,” he said to himself as he angrily scooped up the flimsy pages, folded the paper in half and placed it at the bottom of the recycling bin next to the cement curb in front of their apartment.

He knew he couldn’t protect his daughter permanently from the harsh realities of life in the twenty-first century. The media was everywhere, and concern about drunk driving was an issue that wouldn’t and shouldn’t be ignored. But he felt helpless. He hadn’t sheltered her from the ugly talk and innuendoes of the last months any more than the barren trees had sheltered the crocuses on the front lawn from the record breaking April snowfall.

Jamie, covered in her favorite zippered chenille robe, stared down at her father from the dirt smudged window. She watched him stuff a newspaper under others stacked neatly in the blue plastic bin. Strange, but she hadn’t noticed how gray his straight hair had become in the last months. She realized she hadn’t seen him smile lately, even when she told one of her corny jokes.

Sliding open her bedroom window, she yelled down to him as he stood below, “Dad! I’ll be ready in about twenty minutes.” She pulled the thick green towel from her head, shook out the excess water from her hair and re-positioned it like a cape over her shoulders. She waited until he looked up and waved in her direction.

Returning her focus to the steam filled room, Jamie wiped off the mirror to reveal a younger, more fragile replica of her mother’s face. Hazel eyes framed by full straight eyebrows looked back at her. A light peppering of freckles covered her upturned nose, and her perfectly shaped lips were positioned in a slight smile. As she watched her reflection, it faded. A new wavy image slowly formed in the steam covered mirror. The blurry face of a young girl appeared, shimmered and shifted.

Tears slipped from her frightened eyes, as Jamie used a finger to wipe them. In horror she looked at the liquid dripping from her finger to pool on the tile floor. She shook off the sight to nervousness over the impending move.

The slamming of the heavy steel door of their apartment pulled her back to the reality of the bathroom.

It wouldn't take much for life in Merrell to be better than this, she thought to herself as she finished dressing for the trip.

Chapter Six

“Class, don’t forget the quiz tomorrow covering the triangle similarity theorems,” teacher Patricia Strzyzewski shouted above the din of student chatter and the rustle of jackets and book bags as students positioned themselves by the classroom door, prepared to bolt from her geometry class and head to the last hour of the day. Jamie, slipping the navy and black Eastpak over her small shoulders, headed for the door, the last person to leave the sun-filled room.

She was alone again. While others gossiped and giggled in groups of two, three, or more in the large commons area, she maneuvered her solitary path through the maze of strange and unfriendly faces. Wistfully, she thought back to a time not so long ago when she was part of a group of close friends, not a loner who received no party invitations and shared no secrets about the previous weekend in the time between classes.

In Knoxville, despite her mother’s occasional drinking lapses, their apartment became a meeting place after a spring league volleyball game or school dance. There wasn’t one person in Merrell who asked where she lived. No one cared about her social life.

Heading closer to the bright green locker that housed the English paperback for her next class, Jamie slowed her usually quick pace. Ashleigh stood at her locker, only a few away from Jamie’s. Laura and Reid leaned on the partially open door, shielding their friend from classmates. Their temporary lockers, placed in a darkened end of the English wing, were the most remote in the school. Their odd placement was a result of the first phase of the Merrell Company’s remodeling project that had been underway for almost two years.

Wanting desperately to avoid the girl who had warned her about talking to her boyfriend Brad, Jamie quickly made a mental list of excuses she could give Mrs. Marshall for not having her novel in class. She hated to be the one to put the look of disappointment on her favorite teacher’s friendly face. It happened whenever a student offered tired reasons for not participating in class discussions or not doing homework. Weighing her options, Jamie decided to risk the

humiliation she knew she'd feel when Ashleigh and company glared at her in their usual condescending way. She walked slowly toward her locker like a prisoner on death row.

As she twisted the dial on her locker, the crowd of girls turned to her with a genuine look of surprise on their overly made-up faces. Ashleigh wiped her mouth with the back of her hand as she turned away. A flash of silver drew Jamie's attention away from the guilty look on Ashleigh's face. Ashleigh tossed the container into her locker and slammed the door. The girls glanced Jamie's way as they picked up their backpacks, but refused to make eye contact with her. Ashleigh brushed past her with her unusual "let's get out of here" look directed toward her companions.

The distinctive all too familiar smell of liquor stung Jamie's nose as they passed in front of her. "Oh, God," Jamie whispered. "The most popular sophomore in school is drinking between classes.

Squirring uncomfortably at her desk in English class, Jamie stared at her dog-eared paperback, twisting her ponytail with her free hand. She stared at the pages, but she saw nothing but a group of girls circled in front of a locker. She missed the answers to the last of the study guide questions for *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She totally missed the last question Mrs. Marshall asked the student in front of her. Her mind whirled at the thought of girls like Ashleigh risking their reputations as social leaders in the small school by drinking between classes. Surely she wasn't the only one who knew about their behavior.

Mrs. Marshall interrupted Jamie's musings as she asked her, apparently for the second time, the next of the discussion questions typed neatly on the cream colored paper sitting atop Jamie's desk, "What remaining code of childhood did Jem break after Dill arrives unannounced in Maycomb that summer day?"

Jamie felt layers of red move from her forehead down to her shoulders as she made the instant connection to what had just happened in the hall and to this section of the novel.

"Uh, the remaining code of childhood? I guess it would be whether Jem should turn in a friend by telling Atticus that Dill is there," Jamie answered, hoping it would satisfy her teacher. How-

ever, Mrs. Marshall believed in all students making personal connections to the issues in the literature they were studying.

Please let her ask someone else the follow-up question that she and every other student knew was coming, Jamie asked in silent prayer. But on a day where good fortune was not smiling on her, Jamie sank deeper into her seat as her teacher directed her soft brown eyes toward her and asked, “And what do you think, Jamie? Is there ever a time when someone should tell on a friend?”

Jamie felt a sea of eyes observe her every movement as she stutted through her answer. “It depends. Uh...If it would save someone’s life or keep someone from doing harm to herself...” Jamie stopped, her voice choking on the words that had a totally different meaning to her than to the others in class. “Uh, then, I guess it would be okay.”

Was it her imagination, or did she actually feel the laser-like burning of Ashleigh’s mascara fringed eyes directed toward her. It was as if she dared Jamie to break that code herself. By some supernatural force, Jamie lifted her head and directed her gaze toward her threatening classmate. She was not surprised when she encountered the hostile stare of Ashleigh, mirroring Jamie’s own discomfort as she shifted her position on the hard wooden seat.

Fortunately, Mrs. Marshall moved to another student. Jamie sighed in relief and tried to look as invisible as possible for the last class of the day.

The rest of the hour passed by, but Jamie had no idea what material was covered in the class that she usually found so challenging and interesting. As she crammed her text books into her back pack, she pulled out the hot pink flyer she’d picked up from a table in front of the athletic director’s office. It was an advertisement for the area’s Junior Pro Volleyball Team and contained a list of practices and try-outs for the Mustangs.

Smoothing the wrinkles from the sheet, she made up her mind to attend the first practice that night. She’d check out the competition. If she didn’t totally embarrass herself, then maybe she’d try out for

the team. After all, her last year's coach said she had college scholarship possibilities. Sure bets were better, but possibilities were better than nothing. If the coach hadn't already picked the team before the try-outs, she had as good a chance as anyone of making the final cut.

"Where've you played volleyball before, Jamie? Were you on a varsity team at your old school?" asked Pam Bennett, physical education teacher and Mustang coach.

She leaned down and raised her voice to carry over the girls' high-pitched voices ricocheting around the gym. "I'm glad you showed up for practice."

"I played junior varsity, but they told me at the end of last year that I might be too short to play this year, unless I grew, especially since I was a blocker," replied Jamie, scuffing her tennis shoe on the edge of the highly polished, but worn wooden floor.

"I guess you've grown a little since then. You're not too short now, and your skills are good. Are you going to try out for the team? I'm the coach, you know," explained the teacher, her watchful eyes never leaving the players warming up in front of her. "We play during the high school off-season to keep everyone in shape."

"I guess I hadn't thought about it, but if you think I can, maybe I will," replied Jamie. "Yes, I will."

"It's a good way to meet some girls at a new school, and it's quite an honor to make the team. Besides, we need a blocker. I think with your instincts, you'd be good at that position. College scouts always attend our games too. Think about it. Tryouts are next week. First we'll have a few practices like this one. Hope to see you there," the coach smiled as she blew her whistle to signal the start of the drills.

"What did Coach Bennett want, Jamie?" questioned Reid as they dressed after showering, the last two students in the steamy locker room. "You aren't in trouble are you? She never spends more than a couple minutes talking to anyone. I didn't think she knew that many words."

“She wanted me to promise to try out for the Mustangs,” answered Jamie.

“Are you going to? It’d be great if you did. We’re supposed to have a good team this year, maybe even make it to the state finals.”

“I’d already started volleyball practice at my old school before we moved, so I guess I’ll try here too.”

“We have the greatest new uniforms this year, just like those at UT. I think they were embarrassed to have us play in the old ones—especially after the big fight over building this new gym,” said Reid as she pulled the red cable knit sweater over her head, muffling the last part of her sentence.

“What’d ya’ mean, new gym? It doesn’t look new,” questioned Jamie, brushing the tangles from her damp hair, but looking at Reid in the mirror.

“Just take a look at the outside. It’s a palace compared to the way it was before. They were going to redo the football field again for about the millionth time, but the gym was a dump. A group of parents embarrassed them into fixing the old wreck up before it fell down.

“They ran out of money before they got to the inside, but they did fix the roof and the windows. It was so cold in here before, sometimes we had to wear coats at practice.” Reid grabbed her book bag and her jacket at the same time.

Jamie nodded absently as they walked around the wooden floor to reach the dark blue doors leading to the back parking lot. She turned back to look at the deserted gym, full of shadows from the late afternoon sun. The fresh white paint of the ceiling was covered with lacy webs of sunlight, looking almost blood-red in the reflected light.

A shiver ran down Reid’s back.

“Are you alright?” asked Jamie as she looked strangely at her teammate.

“Don’t think I’m crazy. Just for a minute the sun on the ceiling looked like blood.”

“Blood? Where’d that come from?”

Reid waved off the question. “Too much forensic TV. Forget I said anything.”

“I can if you can,” responded Jamie. “This isn’t exactly New York City.”

“My brother’s going to pick me up. Wan’ a ride home? Reid asked as her focus returned to her friend.

“No, my dad’s picking me up. Don’t forget about the math problem tomorrow.”

“I’d probably gotten them all wrong last time if you hadn’t helped me. My math grade’s never been so good,” smiled Reid.

“Math’s easy. You just have to do the same thing over and over. Geometry’s not even a problem. But then, when am I ever going to use it? Can’t you just see me getting turned down for a CEO job because I didn’t know enough about hexagons?”

“Or not getting a date for prom because you don’t know the hypotenuse of a square?” Reid laughter trailed after her.

“It’s not a square, it’s a triangle,” yelled Jamie as Reid climbed into a white Saturn, covered with rust and football bumper stickers.

Left alone in the rapidly cooling afternoon, Jamie rebalanced her book bag and pulled the edges of her short brown jacket together as she thought back over their conversation. It was weird that she and Reid both seemed to have premonitions. It did feel good to have a friend, especially one who did not know anything about her past. If only she could be sure it’d stay that way, she could relax and begin to enjoy her life.

It was possible that things would work out in Merrell as her father kept promising her. At least life was simpler here. The only decision she had to make was whether or not she should try out for the volleyball team. That would be an easy one, she thought as she glimpsed her dad’s van entering the parking lot. She smiled to herself as she climbed into the front seat of the van. If she had anything to say about it, Ashleigh wouldn’t be the only star on the team.

Allusions Research Activity One: *Outside the Circle*

In order to add to your knowledge bank, practice Internet researching, and use proper citations, complete the following activity.

Directions *Research through legitimate sites on the Internet the following allusions made reference to in this novel. Paraphrase or copy exactly two lines of IMPORTANT information about each. Then, in the space provided, write a CORRECTLY structured and complete citation for each. Follow the directions of the teacher about how to determine which Internet sites are best to use and model the citation after the MLA style for citations provided.*

1) Smoky Mountains: p 11

Citation: _____

2) David Bromstead: p 14

Citation: _____

3) DUI law: p 18

Citation: _____

4) Tennessee Volunteers: p 20

Citation: _____

5) ESPN: p 29

Citation: _____

6) To Kill a Mockingbird: p 33

Citation: _____

7) BMW: p 36

Citation: _____

8) Oprah Winfrey: p 40

Citation: _____

9) Maya Angelou: p 73

Citation: _____

10) Nikki Giovanni: p 73

Citation: _____

LYRICS AS POETRY: A FOLLOW UP TO *READING OUTSIDE THE CIRCLE*

--The authors of this book were in part inspired by the lyrics to the Mariah Carey song "Outside." Look at the author website under "Young Adult" to view the lyrics and listen to this song. The website address is www.writeoffthebookshelf.com

--Then, with a small group or partner (your teacher will decide which), search for a video that provides SCHOOL APPROPRIATE lyrics and a performance of a song that could also act as an inspiration for any one of the topics of this novel:

- Friendship
- Betrayal
- Dangerous behavior
- Bullying
- Coping with tragedies
- Parent/teen relationships

--Complete a short presentation of this song to class by

-Playing/showing it to class

-Providing the lyrics to the class by projecting or printing

-Interpreting the lyrics

-Explaining why the song provides inspiration for a novel with these topics

--You **MUST** show the video and the lyrics to the teacher before the presentation

**Bonus: You may create your own SCHOOL APPROPRIATE slides for the video that reinforce the theme of the song

Create an Ad Campaign for *Outside the Circle*

Directions: *After reading the novel *Outside the Circle*, in a group the teacher or the students create, develop an ad campaign consisting of any/all the following elements. The teacher will direct you as to which and will provide a rubric by which the ad campaign will be scored. Each group will present its campaign to the class.*

- A 30 second Public Service Announcement film/TV spot against bullying or drunk driving
- 8 x 11 inch flyers that appeal to a target audience of high school students (sample on other side of this sheet)
- A postcard with a relevant graphic and text that could be mailed to anti-bullying groups asking them to read the novel
- A 30 second radio spot that appeals to a high school audience and focuses on the anti-bullying message of this book. Include sound effects and/or music that enhances the message.
- Any kind of print ad that you design (a mini-billboard, a bumper sticker, a sample blog page, an ad for a newspaper or magazine, etc)