

They're Everywhere, They're Everywhere

Circles / Spheres Abound

I see them, I dream them

All these things are round:

Onion Rings, Olympic Things

Floats upon the Pool

Bike Wheels, Ferris Wheel

An OLD Kitchen Stool

Birthday Cake, Crater Lake

Donuts in a Shop

Silo, Bubble Blow

Cans of Soda Pop

Hay Bales, Chasing Tails

Ripples on a Pond

Blood Cells, Wishing Well

Rings that Seal the Bond

Sunflower Field, Rain Shield

Things that all Tell Time

Water Drop, Lollipop

"Don't You Do It" Sign!

Mixing Bowls, Port Hole

Records and CDs

Moon Shot, Big Pot

Gumballs and Smarties

Tail Light, Satellite

All that Pocket Change

Flying Saucer, Cup and Saucer

OTTO the Orange

Half Circle, Full Circle

Circle Made with Pi

Earring Loops, Hula Hoop

I Could Go On....

BUT WHY?

Donna Atwood

## Train Cars and Tumbleweeds

We used to cartwheel.... remember?  
Our preferred mode of transport at nine or ten.  
Tumbleweeds crisscrossing the playground,  
Flashes of shorts showing under our skirts,  
Our feet drawing perfect circles in the air.

We would cartwheel together,  
But not like cart wheels, side by side,  
More like a bicycle-  
One wheel following the other  
Watching one another for the perfect flight and landing.

We were unbreakable,  
Our bare feet or sneakers flung at the sky  
Tan shoulders and narrow hips like springs  
Connected to arm and leg spokes,  
Perfectly balanced around our spinning centers.

When did we stop?  
It was around the time we  
Got our ears pierced – I remember the ice cube  
And what felt like a nail puncturing my earlobes,  
Surprised at how tough my skin was.

Swabbing with alcohol every four hours,  
We looked in mirrors for the first time,  
Twisting the new gold circles  
Around in the healing holes  
Feeling important in our reflections.

Suddenly we were walking quietly on the playground,  
Heads down or together,  
Noticing boys,  
Hoping they were noticing us, and the  
Glint of our earrings in the sunlight.

In high school, the only circles were in geometry,  
Or the circular keys on noisy typewriters,  
The steering wheel gripped tightly in driver ed,  
The larger and larger hoop earrings hated by our teachers  
And the heavy class rings worn proudly senior year.

Finally able to wear pants to school,  
And with title IX at our backs,  
We looked at colleges  
And dreamed of careers and marriage,  
Not ready for either.

No longer cart wheels or bicycles,  
We were more like train cars  
Flying along the tracks,  
Feet anchored to the rails  
Not able to see what lay ahead.

Our faces tipped toward the sky,  
Long hair blown back  
Behind our impaled ears,  
We glanced back at tumbleweeds,  
As we hurtled toward the inevitable.

What happened to the last 40 years?  
We see each other at reunions  
And share the realities of our adult lives -  
Jobs, marriage, kids, divorce, but still,  
We used to cartwheel in perfect circles.

Remember?

Nancy Dickerson

## A Focus on Locus

A directed line segment is a **vector** by name.  
Both length and purpose it can rightfully claim.

Two non-parallel plane **lines** with no objective in view;  
So with no meaning in mind they are definitely askew.

A **circle**, however, has a point for reference focus.  
Without magic, no “hocus pocus,” it has its locus.

No thickness does it have, not even the center included.  
No beginning, nor end, inside and outside excluded.

If you could add a third dimension, it would be clear  
The “transformation” of the **circle** is now into a sphere.

Push a **circle** from both sides and the oval you get  
Is called an **ellipse**, but with two points of focus for this point set.

Pull the ends of two collinear diameters apart and wide  
And you get a **hyperbola**, but what’s inside or outside?

Eccentricity deviation, major, minor or transverse axis;  
A **circle** doesn’t need these words for it’s shape to practice.

Just go round and round, and repeat if you must.  
A **circle**, how large or small, is a design you can trust.

To find a **circle**’s area and circumference the Egyptians weren’t dumb.  
They used a factor close to 3, and just a bit more as a “rule of thumb.”

$x^2 + y^2 = r^2$  is the beginning Cartesian form we use.  
But  $r = k$  is also a **circle** if radian language we choose.

Push a **circle** in on the right, don't be straining;  
You'll get the image of the moon that is waning.

Push a **circle** in on the left, again not very taxing,  
the image you have is the moon that is waxing.

I **circle** has influence and even some friends.  
Who's in and who's out on you depends.

Arctic and Antarctic are **circles** on a map;  
But they're hard to find looking under an ice cap.

Another thing about **circles** is justification why  
We add to our conversation the Greek letter  $\pi$ .

That's the reason we **circle** March 14<sup>th</sup> as  $\pi$ -day,  
When reference to **circles** are words we say.

Now vocabulary like radius, diameter and circumference  
Only are related to **circles**, other shapes we give indifference.

Douglas Hatch

# *The Circle*

by John E. Lutz

OFTEN, TO ME, I find my thinking moving in straight lines, starting at point x and ending at point y, a straight line:

- ◆ linear thinking framed by logic, such that if  $a = b$ , and  $b = c$ , then  $a = c$ ;
- ◆ starting at step one, wrapping up before moving on to step two, with no time for creative jockeying;
- ◆ like driving the highway from here to there with no detours or diversions.

BUT OFTEN, TO ME, more of life can be symbolized by a Circle, having no bounds:

- ◆ creation or nature, like the Circle, having no end, infinite in any direction;
- ◆ a large Circle of light revealing a larger Circle of darkness that encompasses it, and life and being and the orbs enveloped in a great mystery;
- ◆ an enigma typifying something of the vastness of the flow of nature, as cosmic emotion to the Roman augur.

AND OFTEN, TO ME, the Circle stretching in every direction, or spinning, becomes as and is a sphere:

- ◆ bending at every point about its surface, every point at the top, and yet no one point at the top;
- ◆ likewise, the bottom, with the implausibility of differentiating a sphere's top from its bottom;
- ◆ the futility of gripping a sphere or spotting its nib, to learn the meaning of life, where it begins and where it ends.

◆AND OFTEN, TO ME, like the Circle or sphere, I am unable to grasp the boundlessness of time:

- ◆ this present momentary slice of time I now live, never to be repeated in all eternity;
- ◆ having import to me only after I have lived it -- passing over and beyond me and taking part of me with it;
- ◆ but always a new day, with yet un-lived time endlessly sprouting, and me alive in its callowness and freshness.

BUT OFTEN, TO ME, time is incapable of being seen, unthought about, and seemingly everlasting as I live through it:

- ◆ while here, treated with seeming indifference, but ached for when gone and converted to yesterday or last year;
- ◆ former times enriched by the presence of kinship, friendship, great happenings, forever gone except for my memory of them;
- ◆ that which existed before the present -- time gone past -- days impossible to preserve.

OFTEN, TO ME, I see time as the Circle and, with its unbounded existence, am bemused by its straight line progression through my life:

- ◆ unable to look past my existence to see its omnidirectional bearings -- its future unknown to me, and in truth, not yet existing;
- ◆ clutching my beginning, not comprehending its endlessness, forevermore being part of its eternity;
- ◆ boundless infinity -- no beginning, no ending -- newness of day, memory of past, future undisclosed -- such is the Circle.

## Circle of Life

An orchard in front and a home filled with love,  
Red poppies in spring and the sun up above.  
A couple with dreams... their future so bright.  
So many plans...everything right.

The laughter of children, the rooms filled with song,  
It all seemed so perfect...where did it go wrong?  
But life isn't fair; it's random and tough,  
And the good years they had, were just not enough.

Now the orchard is barren and where it once stood  
Is a forest primeval...a jungle of wood.  
The windows are boarded and no one's aware  
As the daffodils bloom in the midst of despair.

But someday in the future a young couple sees  
This house that has slept all these years 'neath the trees.  
And with dreams and a plan, this house tired and worn  
With love in their hearts, soon will be reborn.

Red poppies in spring and the sun up above,  
And this home will once more be filled with much love.

Doris W. Still

## Pondering the Use, Misuse, and Abuse of the Circle

Gather a round, ye scholars profound

And consider the circle before us

A geometric shape to confound

With questions extemporaneous.

Why are my acquaintances called “a circle of friends”

When we all are a bunch of squares?

The reasoning escapes me as to the trends

In using geometry without any cares.

Why do we “circle the wagons”

When we need to establish a line of defense?

Our arguments are going to be draggin’;

Circular reasoning makes not one bit of sense.

Why be cautious when traversing a traffic circle?

For cars will wheel in and out

Requiring the skill of Angela Merkel

To negotiate E.U. membership doubt.

With all kinds of triangulation

And geometric theorems galore,

I consider self-strangulation

Just to exit onto Interstate 4.

One false move and you'll find  
Multiple drivers dancing fandangos  
Creating outcomes of this kind:  
The circle morphed into Wrecktangles

And why is it called "a dress circle" at a show  
When it is a semi-circle at best?  
Does it not mean those seats ought to go  
To folks who are only half-dressed?

And why say that pies are round?  
"Not so," did Euclid declare,  
"To my way of thinking I found  
That really pie are square."

So, pardon the puns put in play;  
Full circle we come to the tour de force:  
The Queen knighted the circle today  
And named him "Circumference," of course.

Martin A. Sweeney

## Stonehenge

Ninety-three rocks in concentric rings

Megalithic mystery

Place of healing?

Place of worship?

A monument to man's lust for immortality?

A tribute to the Circle of Life?

Prehistoric pillars of bluestone arranged in a circle upon a chalky English plain

Astronomically aligned at mid-summer and mid-winter solstices

With the corresponding circle in the heavens emitting light and heat

Massive mystery

How did Paleo-muscle move the stones

From far away Wales?

Thousands pulling, straining for a common cause

An ineffable show of unity

In making a sacred landscape

Sarsens and lintels

In the most perfect geometrical shape

Without a beginning or an end

On a sphere traveling through the void

For what?

For a Neolithic Leader's vision?

Certainly an enigmatic sign...

Of circular reasoning

Martin A. Sweeney

## Roundabout

I travel the narrow back ways in the Ring of Kerry,  
where tall shrub and stone walls are edged perfectly,  
past ruins of round towers, forsaken houses, slouched barns,  
huddles of sheep, a farmer's horse and washtub buggy.

Skirting Killarney at Ballydowney heading for Portmagee,  
are block white letters on the gray macadam road  
-traffic calming  
and a caution with black rotating arrows warn in a yellow field.  
Ahead is a cipher imbedded in an ancient code:  
an Ogham tree, a neolithic henge where the seasons are bound,  
a runic compass, a Saxon sunburst on a cobbled shield,  
a Celtic Cross laid by a saint on pebbled ground.

I am a robed monk turning the wheel in meditation around  
an earthen maze, reciting a litany, the golden rule:  
stay left, yield to the right, clockwise clockwise.  
A spell to exorcise a serpent in a whirlpool  
chasing its tail; and here conflicting signs are found,  
each pointing in an opposite direction to a single destination:  
the same town in a different place,  
the play of a mirror, the curvature of space.

Cars and lorries, in a ceili mór, are brief partners apace  
in a motorway reel. Leaving Ballydowney  
below the Reeks through passes for Portmagee,  
I travel the narrow back ways in the Ring of Kerry  
on a tangent to the circumference of the rising sea.

Gary Weatherby

*The Telephone Closet*

*By Meghan Aagaard*

“This is it.” Sheila smiled as she ran her hand along the painted wall. The dull yellow paint flaked a bit, feeling dusty beneath her manicured nails.

Had it truly been fifty years since she had last walked these halls, the carefree optimism of her university days now a faded ghost?

Her husband John and the tour guide stopped, perhaps pretending to be as awed as she felt.

“This was my old hallway,” Sheila said. She was sure now. The stairwell that ran down the eastern side of the building, and the cozy wing with eight wooden doors leading off of it. Her sophomore living quarters, in disguise, and much quieter than the last time she was here.

“It’s a beautiful building,” the tour guide chirped. She looked at Sheila and John. “Like you said, it used to be a dormitory, but now it’s administrative offices.”

Amazingly, the little closet still stood there, on her left. Sheila touched the door, still narrow and wooden, folding out to reveal a small janitor’s space. Suddenly the colorless linoleum floor seemed to swim up before her, and she held onto the knob with a firmer grasp.

“This was where the phone was,” she murmured. It had been a black rotary telephone that sat on a shelf in the booth; a lifeline to the outside world when she was an undergraduate, both giddy and numb from days of strangers, late night confidences, textbooks and professors.

The closet where she had sat for precious minutes at a time, talking to her mother down in Long Island. To her sister Ann, older than her by four years. Ann, who was married and pregnant when Sheila had started her third semester away.

“I sat in here and talked to my sister, right after she gave birth to her baby girl....my first niece.” Sheila reached inside the closet now, grasping for a cord that was no longer there. Echoes of hushed voices and ringing dials filled her head.

She stopped. Her husband was looking strangely at her; the student standing politely, if awkwardly, over to the side.

Sheila pulled at the ring on her finger, brushed an invisible curl off her temple. “And I was so sad, so jealous, stuck here in a dorm room while my sister was off having babies. It was very hard on me. And that baby girl...”

She licked her lips. Why hadn’t she thought to have a cup of coffee earlier with John? “She died, years ago... my niece.” Her tears were falling in earnest now as John came over to stand by her.

All because of that telephone closet, tucked into an old dorm hall on the hill.

*In A New Soil*

*By Meghan Aagaard*

“If you can guess what I have in my pocket, you can have it.”

There was an impish glint in his eyes as Donal paced back and forth on the deck of the *Perseverance*.

Mairead stood at the rail. Her face was turned away from Donal’s, out towards the everlasting horizon of the Atlantic. There was nothing ahead but the gray blue plains of an ocean that went on for ages. At first, such emptiness had been jarring, and odd. But after four weeks, Mairead could scarcely remember anything else.

“A seashell from Cobh,” Mairead said, squinting at what might have been a pair of dolphins racing through the distant waves. *Cobh*. She tried not to think on it too much. The shore of that distant Ireland would never again greet her eyes.

Donal chuckled. He reached into his pocket as if to draw out some object, then paused.

“No.”

“A biscuit, to toss to the gulls later?”

“Now Mairead, would I waste a good biscuit like that? No, not a chance. Keep guessing.”

“Alright then...how about a shilling? To buy an apple with after we reach port?” She smiled, imagining the taste of something so crisp and fresh.

Donal closed his eyes dreamily. “Mmmm...no. I'm going to attack the first apple we see when in Baltimore.”

Mairead took her hands off the rail, where she had been absentmindedly rubbing a knot in the wood. One of the sailors was mopping the deck, although truthfully, she couldn’t see the point. Between the storms and the mist, it seemed to Mairead as if the deck got plenty washed.

“Is it a key?” They had only been married for two months, but already Mairead knew that Donal was particularly nervous about losing a hold on such things.

Donal’s expression froze for a moment. Then he shook his head, relaxed.

“No, it’s not that. Need a hint, do you?”

“No, I do not need a hint, *Donal*,” Mairead replied, wrapping her woolen shawl more tightly around her shoulders. “We haven’t brought many things with us. I’ll puzzle it out sooner or later!”

She had a sudden unpleasant thought, thinking of the roaches that plagued the steerage cabins. “It’s not...*alive*, is it?”

Donal smiled. “Not exactly. But you’re getting closer.”

“Well then!” She returned her husband's smile, ambling about the deck, careful to avoid the sailors who were in turns cleaning and sleeping under the clear sky.

“Lord, I’m knackered,” Donal said, closing his eyes and pretending to fall asleep. “You’re taking ages.” He leaned lazily against the rail.

“I bet you’ve got nothing in there,” she said, poking him in the side. “You’re all blather. Likely it's nothing more than an old shoe strap.”

Donal straightened up and dug into his pocket. “Is not. Close your eyes, and hold out your hand.”

Mairead felt a dozen or so tiny pieces fall into my palm.

“*Seamsóg*,” Donal said as she opened her eyes. “Wood sorrel seeds. I gathered them last May, before we were married. I thought that you could plant them, when we get to America.”

Wood sorrel. The flower of St. Patrick. Those beautiful little heart shaped green leaves that popped up along rocks, fields, and woodland crags all over the countryside.

Mairead closed her hand gently around the precious seeds. A little bit of Ireland.

She smiled up at Donal, and slipped the handful of delicate seeds into the pocket of her skirt, where they could wonder and wait, until they came alive again, in a new soil.

## Calculate to the Last Digit

By Dale Harris

“Looks pretty good,” I said, casting a discerning eye at the table.

“Yes,” Scott replied in a low voice as he inspected the specimen. Near him on the table was an odd array of items that included several knives, some small pieces of wood (maple, I think) and four eighteen-inch rulers. He stood there, hands on the table as he leaned back and forth, checking from different viewpoints. This he did for what seemed a long time, until I thought I should prompt him. This was all new to me so I was sort of flying blind.

“What do you think?” I asked, wondering what his response would be.

“First we have to find the center.”

I nodded, and then extended a finger.

“Right about there?” I offered.

“Right about?” he asked, almost indignant.

“Well, yeah, I mean that looks close...”

He cocked his head and raised his brow, his gaze boring into me.

“All right, all right, all right, all right... but we’re not talking perfectly circular you know.”

“Never is. Block up”

So, according to the briefing he had delivered there was to be no deviation from the process. True, we weren’t dealing with a perfect circle, but I had been assured that the formulae would still apply, and provide the most accurate locus for the knife, when the time came. Speaking of that even the selection of knife would be crucial.

I blocked up, meaning that I gathered the eight custom manufactured wooden blocks. All of them were two inches by two inches. Two of them were four inches tall; two were four and one-eighth inch tall. Another two were four and a quarter inches, and the last two were four and three eighths. I wouldn’t have been able to tell that by looking, so I was inwardly

grateful that they were labeled. I set the two four-inch on either side of the subject, some ways under the diameter.

“Ah,” Scott breathed, “The first chord.” He picked up a ruler and set it on the two blocks, then extended his hand like a surgeon waiting for the next instrument. I handed him one of the four and one eighths that he placed near his side of the “circle” as it would be referred to until the end of the procedure.

I noted the position of his block and set the other three and an eighth as directly across from his as I could eyeball. Another ruler came onto these two blocks.

“Pretty good,” Scott said, “Much closer than the last time.” There was no mirror handy but I’m sure my face was a study in ignorance, and quite likely a bit of trepidation.

Holding a block and the ruler together he lined it up, perpendicular to the first ruler, at exactly nine inches. I adjusted the block on my side and slowly withdrew my hand, after which Scott fine-tuned the placement.

“We have the first coordinate,” Scott announced, satisfied for the moment. He did the lean/angle thing again.

“Okay, where do you want the next one?” I inquired, a little intrigued.

He snorted softly. “You know it doesn’t matter.”

I actually didn’t know that at all, so I sighed a little and set the first block of the next height near the second block of the second height. Scott smiled like a chess player smelling a checkmate.

“Okay,” he whispered, and set the corresponding piece opposite my placement. I handed him another ruler, which he set as the first one.

“Let’s finish it,” he said, and placed a block of the last set. I positioned the final one and Scott set the last ruler, again perpendicular to the previous one, and making the adjustments so that it met right at nine inches.

I looked at what we had and saw the logic, finally. Math *does* work.

“Get a pick ready,” Scott said. He was leaning again, but this time it was in order to view the procedure from directly overhead.

We had set two rulers perpendicularly to two others. Where these two intersected indicated the center of our circle. Scott hovered and then slowly held out a hand.

I passed him a singular toothpick (round, per specification), and he deftly moved it one-handed to a vertical position, and slowly lowered it to the rulers’ intersect point. He eased it in and released it, like a champion Jenga player. With extreme care he removed the rulers in reverse order of application, and then all the blocks save two. These he reset on either side of the circle, and rested one ruler on them. Slowly, Scott moved the ruler up to the toothpick, lifted his hands away, and began to breathe again.

He didn’t say anything for a while and I was starting to get a little scared, so I asked him what was next.

“We mark for eight.”

“Okay, um, how do we go about that?”

He looked at me with a frown and picked up two blocks, taller than those currently in place. He set a ruler on them at an approximately perpendicular position to the one established, checked the setting, and adjusted to ninety degrees relative to the first.

“Cut?” I ventured tentatively.

Scott shook his head in disgust and reached for more toothpicks. He held them out to me.

“Mark these four.”

I poked a pick in the four positions, in the prescribed pressure/twist manner. Scott then removed all the blocks and rulers and reset one pair, using two adjacent toothpicks as reference points and laying a ruler between them. He then crossed that ruler with another, lining up with the center pick.

“In an isosceles right triangle a line drawn from the center of the hypotenuse to the point at the base of the right angle will bisect the angle, giving two forty-five degree angles. Put a pick there.”

I put another toothpick on the edge of the circle. We repeated this procedure three more times until we had eight toothpicks equidistantly spaced around the circumference of the circle, and of course the one at the center.

It looked good to me, and I turned to Scott, but he was inspecting the knives with a critical eye. Finally he picked up a boning knife, slim and with some flexibility. He held it for a moment, but then set it back down in favor of an eight-inch chef’s knife. I was puzzled and apparently obviously so.

“Meringue cannot be trusted,” he said simply.

He bent to make the first cut.

“What?” I said, appalled. “We go through all this so you can make a free-hand cut? Use a ruler!”

“This is where the artistry comes in,” he said and slid the blade across the far side of the flaky crust against the toothpick there. He drew the blade slowly, just shy of the center pick and on to the opposite side. He moved one pick-arc, counter-clockwise, placed the point of the knife at center, plunged and drew it again, slowly enough to impress Stephen King proud. Or perhaps Julia Child.

He set down the blade, yellow lemon curd and a streak of white along its length. He picked up a triangular serving tool, worked it under the arc of crust and slid it towards the center.

I had something of an epiphany when he lifted the segment, holding it up so I could see clearly. It was ephemeral and yet infinite; I was awestruck. Scott smiled slightly and made the declaration, so softly I almost didn’t hear it.

“The value... of pie.”

The Circle is Broken  
By Helen Leet

As Kate hurriedly dodged people on the crowded street, she was surprised how excited she was about the luncheon. After nearly forty years of friendship, her close circle of friends was meeting for lunch at the Circle Diner in Circle City, better known as Pottsville, North Carolina. After graduating college, they had gotten together yearly for a number of years. Some of them have been neighbors and have remained local. The last time the circle of friends met was three and a half years ago.

The group consisted of five women, while actually six; but Kate chose to eliminate Jessie in her mind. She doubted that Jessie would dare to show up today after what she had done to Kate three years ago. Kate still felt pain when she thought of Jessie's betrayal. Within the group Kate and Jessie had been the closest buddies since they were young children. They had been fierce basketball players in high school and college, winning titles for their respective alma maters. Kate sighed. When she let herself think of Jessie, she was often overwhelmed with sadness. Tears stung her eyes. She hated to admit how much she missed Jessie's friendship. She forced herself to picture her other four friends.

She laughed as she thought of Sally. Sally is the glue to their group. She married right out of high school, and is the mother to six children. Her husband is a policeman, and they somehow manage to live on his salary. Sally flits from part-time job to part-time job, but does not remain in any one job for very long. Presently, she is working as a teacher's assistant in the local elementary school. She has a bubbly personality and a warm, caring heart. She is pretty much loved by everyone.

Jen is a gem. She lives locally and is the owner of the popular Circle Diner in the center of town. It is a fifty's style diner and still has the small juke boxes at each table. Walking into her diner is like stepping back in time. Jen is married to Bob, who owns the local construction company. Her two sons are employees in their dad's business. Jen wants grandchildren so badly, but so far the boys are not cooperating. They change girlfriends almost as often as construction sites.

Trish lives in the state's capital, Raleigh. She is a fashion designer. In her younger years she had been a world renowned fashion model. Her husband, Trent, is a famous designer. They are often on trips to Europe and the Orient. They chose not to have children, so they can concentrate on their careers. Trish missed their last get-together, so Kate is wondering if she will actually show up today.

Brenda is a cardiac and thoracic surgeon and works at a hospital in Raleigh. She is married to Ken, a farmer. How they had all laughed when she told them she was going to marry a farmer! He has a huge dairy operation, and has over 3000 head of cattle. They have four children, all boys.

Brenda is a delight to be with, always upbeat, and always giving everyone the benefit of the doubt. Brenda had advised Kate to forgive Jessie, because if she did not, the anger and hurt would tear her apart. Kate was never very good at taking advice.

Kate is a lawyer, single, and for the past two years has been the practicing district attorney for their county. When the circle of friends last met three and a half years ago, Kate had been so happy. She was sure that she was madly in love with Daniel Fry, a handsome, suave, successful entrepreneur. They had been in a relationship for about two months, and Kate had been flying high on love. She had even loaned Daniel \$8000 to invest in his latest hedge fund.

As she reminisced, Kate hesitated outside the Diner entrance. Three months after the circle of friends had met for their get together, Daniel called Kate, telling her he had something he had to discuss with her at dinner. Kate had taken extra time to dress just right that night. She had convinced herself he was going to propose. She still remembered her shock, when Daniel confessed to her that he had fallen in love with Jessie, and was leaving her. He and Jessie were flying to New Orleans to celebrate. Kate was crushed. Jessie had called her later that night, but she had exploded in anger, and had actually told her she wished she would drop dead. Kate's eyes filled with tears, and her heart still felt as if it were sliced with a knife when she remembered Jessie's betrayal. Jessie had tried to call her, email her and had even written a letter, which Kate had burned without reading. Despite Brenda's advice to forgive Jessie, Kate just could not do it.

When colleagues recommended she run for the district attorney position, she threw herself into the race with vigor. Now her job consumed her life. She was determined never to be hurt like that again. Kate wiped her eyes, took a deep breath, and forced a smile on her face as she entered the Diner.

"Over here, Kate!" yelled Sally in her cheerleader voice. Kate hung her coat up quickly, and headed to the large table at the back of the Diner. As she approached, she took inventory of the group. My God, even Trish is here, marveled Kate. The women all jumped up to give her a hug and warm greeting.

As Kate settled into her seat, she noticed there seemed to be a tension in the air. Was it her imagination, or was everyone looking expectantly at her. "What? Do I have egg on my face or something?" she asked jokingly. The group laughed nervously. Kate felt on guard.

"Kate, we are all your friend, you know that, right?" Sally began.

"Oh, for God's sake, Sally. Don't be so dramatic" Trish commented. "We are not in high school anymore. Just tell her!"

Kate felt her stomach clutch. "What do you have to tell me?" she asked nervously.

Sally said, "We did this for your own good. We are just sick over you and Jessie still being at odds. . ."

"What she is trying to tell you, Kate, is that we contacted Jessie. She is coming today. It is time for you to forgive and forget, and for our circle to be complete again. " Jen said matter of factly.

Kate was shocked. "You contacted Jessie behind my back and asked her to come today?"

How could you? You know how she betrayed me! I don't think I can be a part of this, "and she started to get up from her seat. Brenda and Trish, on either side of her, grabbed her arms and told her to "stay put."

Brenda said, "Kate, after talking with Jessie, we realize she did you a big favor. Daniel was a fraud. He latched onto Jessie because he found out about her wealthy parents and her lucrative trust fund. By the time they had been together six months, he had totally cleaned out her accounts. She lost thousands of dollars! Hundreds of thousands, Kate! He simply left you and pursued Jessie, because he realized there was more profit there. She saved you from that fate, Kate. You should be thankful, instead of condemning her these past few years. "

Kate's mouth went dry. She remembered Daniel explaining to her why he needed that \$8000. She had never contacted him to try to recoup that money. Her injured pride would not allow her to try to contact him or Jessie. Kate looked around the table. Five pairs of eyes were watching her, waiting for her to respond. She lowered her eyes, and said softly, "I never knew that."

Brenda lightly touched her arm. "Kate, Jessie told me she tried to contact you several times to try to get together and hash things out, but she never heard back from you. She said she wrote a long letter explaining everything, but still nothing. Did you get that letter, Kate?"

Kate nodded. "I burned it. I never read it." She wanted to get angry, to be indignant. How dare they interfere in this, but now she just felt ashamed and felt sorrow for her friend's loss. "Daniel borrowed \$8000 from me for some hedge fund he told me. I never saw that money again. Did Jessie take him to court?"

Trish laughed a cynical laugh. "How do you take a man to court when he has fled the country? Who knows where Daniel Fry is? That probably was not even his real name! But that is not even the half of it!"

Sally could not contain herself any longer. "I'll say! He also left her barefoot and pregnant! Jessie is a single mom to a young son. It has been a struggle for her, getting her finances back in order and raising her son."

Kate felt as if she had been kicked in the stomach. Her face became very pale. Brenda quickly grabbed her drink and offered it to Kate. "Here, take a sip, you need it! Sorry to put you through this, Kate, but we all felt that we needed to mend our broken circle. We all miss Jessie, and we know you do, too, but you are just too stubborn to admit it. "

"I guess I deserve her hatred, "a soft voice said. The group startled and looked around to see Jessie standing there, holding an adorable, young child with auburn curls. Jessie looked older than most of them at the table. Her face was drawn and she was very thin. She smiled weakly. "Sorry, Kate. I wanted to see you so badly, but I guess this was not a good idea after all. You look like you have seen a ghost."

There was a hushed silence, all eyes were on Kate. Her eyes were only on the handsome little boy, and somewhere in the back of her mind, she was thinking sadly, that he could have been

her child. Kate let her eyes meet Jessie's. She could see the longing in Jessie's eyes. She wanted Kate to forgive her, to talk to her.

Sally jumped up and grabbed that little boy into her arms. "Come here, you sweet little thing." She looked at the group, "don't worry, he knows me." She turned to Kate and Jessie. "You two need to go to that little back room and have a talk, no hitting or slapping allowed. Go!" She actually gave them marching orders and pointed toward the back room that was reserved for private meetings. The others just sat and stared.

Kate found her tongue. "Come on, Jessie. I realize now that this encounter is long overdue." She stood up and faced her friends at the table. "None of you are allowed to eavesdrop on us. Understood?" She used her best district attorney voice. They all nodded.

Kate looked at Jessie, who now had tears in her eyes. "Let's go, Jess!" The two women walked side by side, but avoided touching each other. After they had gone, Sally said. "It'll be alright. They will make up, I know they will. This was the right thing to do!"

Jen said worriedly, "I hope so. I love Jessie, but I would hate to lose Kate's friendship after all these years."

Brenda said, "She needed us to intervene. She could not do it herself, her pride would not let her. Now that she knows what happened, she can learn to forgive."

"I hope you're right!" Trish said.

"I hope they don't take too long, I'm getting hungry!" Brenda quipped. They all laughed, thankful for the release of some of the tension.

Kate and Jessie sat at the small round table in the private room. "I am so sorry, Kate. I have no excuse for my behavior. I knew it was wrong when Daniel began to come on to me. . ."

Kate said angrily, "Oh, am I to believe he came on to *you*! Jessie, do you realize I thought he was going to propose to me the night he told he that he loved you instead of me? God, I felt so foolish and stupid!!" Tears began to run down her cheeks.

Jessie said, "Daniel is very good at what he does. He is a professional con man, and he conned me completely! The only good thing he did was leave, and he gave me my son, Conner. Kate, I have always loved you, and I have missed you terribly. I can understand if you do not want to have anything to do with me, but I surely could use a good friend about now. I would love to have someone to help me raise Conner. You don't have to answer now, but will you consider it? I really want you to be a part of our lives. To hell with Daniel. I have a great commercial artist job with a local company. I want to move back to Potttsboro. Kate, can you ever forgive me, and be my friend?" Jessie's voice was pleading.

Kate looked into her eyes, and they stared at each other for a long minute. Kate took a deep breath, stood up, and put out her arms, "Come here! I have missed you so!" Jessie practically flew into her outstretched arms. As they hugged, they could hear Brenda's voice calling back to the group, "They made up! Thank God, now we can eat!"