



The Tenth Circle by Jodi Picoult

Illustrations by Dustin Weaver

Publication info: New York : Atria Books

Publication year: 2006

Pages: 385 p.

ISBN: 9780743496704

Book Jacket Summary

"Trixie Stone is fourteen years old and in love for the first time. She's also the light of her father's life - a straight-A student; a freshman in high school who is pretty and popular; a girl who's always looked up to Daniel Stone as a hero. Until, that is, her world is turned upside down with a single act of violence ... and suddenly everything Trixie has believed about her family - and herself - seems to be a lie." "For fifteen years, Daniel Stone has been an even-tempered, mild-mannered man: a stay-at-home dad to Trixie and a husband who has put his own career as a comic book artist behind that of his wife, Laura, who teaches Dante's Inferno at a local college. But years ago, he was completely different: growing up as the only white boy in an Eskimo village, he was teased mercilessly for the color of his skin. He learned to fight back: stealing, drinking, robbing, and cheating his way out of the Alaskan bush. To become part of a family, he reinvented himself, channeling his rage onto the page and burying his past completely ... until now. Could the young boy who once made Trixie's face fill with light when he came to the door have been the one to end her childhood forever? She says that he is, and that is all it takes to make Daniel, a man with a history he has hidden even from his family, venture to hell and back in order to protect his daughter."

Synopsis

Fourteen-year-old Trixie has been a ghost for fourteen days, seven hours, and thirty-six minutes now, not that she is officially counting. Trixie's protective father has been consumed with attempts to shield her from a new life, one that includes a boy with a proprietary hand around his daughter's waist. But Daniel Stone never for a moment suspected that the same boy might inflict upon his daughter the worst possible harm. Could the boy who once made Trixie's face fill with light when he came to the door have drugged and then raped her? She says that he did, and that is all it takes to make Daniel, a man with a past hidden even from his family, consider taking matters into his own hands in order to protect his daughter.

This is a novel about the unbreakable bond between parent and child, the temptation to play God, and its dangerous repercussions. Using her sensitive, wise touch, Jodi Picoult once again probes deeply into the love and anguish of a young girl and her family. This time, she has added the innovative element of embedding a graphic novel within her text. They are at once the professional work of her character, Daniel Stone, and a unique insight into his fractured and desperate heart.

Reviews

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Some of Picoult's best storytelling distinguishes her twisting, metaphor-rich 13th novel (after *Vanishing Acts*) about parental vigilance gone haywire, inner demons and the emotional risks of relationships. Comic book artist Daniel Stone is like the character in his graphic novel with the same title as this book once a violent youth and the only white boy in an Alaskan Inuit village, now a loving, stay-at-home dad in Bethel, Maine traveling figuratively through Dante's circles of hell to save his 14-year-old teenage daughter, Trixie. After she accuses her ex-boyfriend of rape, Trixie and Daniel, whose fierce father-love morphs to murderous rage toward her assailant unravel in the aftermath of the allegation. At the same time, wife and mother Laura, a Dante scholar, tries to mend her and Daniel's marriage after ending her affair with one of her students. Picoult has collaborated with graphic artist Dustin Weaver to illustrate her deft, complex exploration of Daniel and his beast within, but the drawings, though well-done, distract from the powerful picture she has drawn with words. Laura and Daniel follow their runaway daughter to Alaska, at which point Picoult drives the story with the heavy-handed Dante metaphor not the characters. Still, this story of a flawed family on the brink of destruction grips from start to finish.

From Library Journal

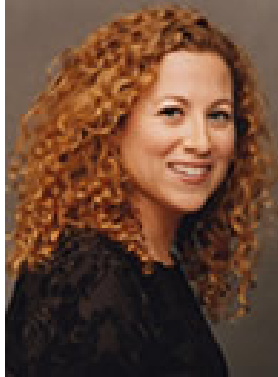
When a comic book artist married to a Dante scholar writes a graphic novel, what better title than *The Tenth Circle*? Of course, Daniel Stone feels he's descended into hell when his 14-year-old daughter, Trixie, is date raped by Jason Underhill. Despite his soft and gentle Maine demeanor, Daniel had a wild and violent past growing up in Alaska, and letting the police investigation proceed is setting off a rage he had long suppressed. The night of the attack, he also learns his wife, Laura, is having an affair. Hell would be preferable. Picoult's (*Vanishing Acts*) latest novel actually features Daniel's artwork in a tale that parallels his real life, and readers are drawn into the mystery surrounding the events of the rape and its subsequent effects on all concerned. What truths will be revealed? And who, ultimately, will find justice? Picoult had this reader up until the very end of this fast-paced tale. As with her previous novels (e.g., *My Sister's Keeper*), Picoult doesn't guarantee a happy ending, but something here just missed its mark. Still, this best-selling author is going to be in demand.

From Booklist

There are no black and whites in Picoult's latest novel, except for the drawings that graphic artist Daniel Stone inks. Stone, a former bad boy who grew up among the Yup'ik Eskimos in Alaska, now lives a sedate life in Bethel, Maine, with his college-professor wife, Laura, and his 14-year-old daughter, Trixie. But the night Trixie's ex-boyfriend, Jason, rapes her at a party is the night Daniel's carefully ordered life falls apart. Daniel is forced to acknowledge that he's ignored the distance growing between him and his daughter and that his wife, a Dante scholar at a local college, is having an affair. After the rape, Trixie's classmates turn on her, and even her best friend, Zephyr, sides with Jason, a school hockey star whose future seems bright. When Trixie claims she was drugged and the evidence backs her up, the tide turns against Jason, and another tragedy sends Trixie fleeing Maine for her father's childhood home of Alaska, forcing Daniel to confront demons he'd hoped he'd left .

Film Adaptation- June 2008 Lifetime TV movie

Kelly Preston - Laura Stone , Ron Eldard -Daniel Stone , Jamie Johnston- Jason Underhill
Michael Riley- Mike Bartholomy , Haley Beauchamp ... Zepher Santorelli , Geordie Brown -
Moss Minton, Brittany Robertson - Trixie Stone



Biography Author Website <http://www.jodipicoult.com>

Jodi Picoult, (born May 19, 1966) is the bestselling author of fifteen novels. Born and raised in Nesconset on Long Island, New York, Picoult wrote her first story at age 5, entitled "The Lobster Which Misunderstood." She studied writing at Princeton University, and graduated in 1987. She published two short stories in Seventeen magazine while still in college. Realism - and a profound desire to be able to pay the rent - led Picoult to a series of different jobs following her graduation: as a technical writer for a Wall Street brokerage firm, as a copywriter at an ad agency, as an editor at a textbook publisher, and as an 8th grade English teacher - before entering Harvard to pursue a master's in education. She married Tim Van Leer, whom she had known at Princeton, and while she was pregnant with her first child she wrote her first novel,

In 2003 she was awarded the New England Bookseller Award for Fiction. She has also been the recipient an Alex Award from the Young Adult Library Services Association, sponsored by the Margaret Alexander Edwards Trust and Booklist, one of ten books written for adults that have special appeal for young adults; the Book Browse Diamond Award for novel of the year; a lifetime achievement award for mainstream fiction from the Romance Writers of America; Cosmopolitan magazine's 'Fearless Fiction' Award 2007; Waterstone's Author of the Year in the UK, and a Vermont Green Mountain Book Award. Most recently, she wrote five issues of the Wonder Woman comic book series for DC Comics. Her books are translated into thirty four languages in thirty five countries. Two - The Pact and Plain Truth - were made into television movies; a third, The Tenth Circle, will air on Lifetime this summer. My Sister's Keeper is currently in development at New Line Cinema, with Nick Cassavetes directing and Cameron Diaz starring. She and Tim and their three children live in Hanover, New Hampshire.

Bibliography (Novels)

Handle with Care	2009
Change of Heart	2008
Wonder Woman: Love and Murder	2007
Wonder Woman	May-August 2007
Nineteen Minutes	2007
The Tenth Circle	2006
Vanishing Acts	2005
My Sister's Keeper	2004
Second Glance	2003
Perfect Match	2002
Salem Falls	2001
Plain Truth	1999
Keeping Faith	1999
The Pact	1998
Mercy	1996
Picture Perfect	1995
Harvesting the Heart	1993
Songs of Humpback Whale	1992

Author Interview with BookHelp Web <http://book.consumerhelpweb.com/>

*Picoult defies genres to tell stories that explore relationships, families, and morality. In 2003, her novels won a New England Bookseller Award for Fiction and a Romance Writers of America award for "Best Mainstream Fiction Novel". More importantly than literary awards, however, Picoult's books strike a chord with their readers and resonate with meaning for all who read them. Picoult took the time to answer a few questions from BookHelpWeb before leaving on a 50-city tour to promote her latest book, **The Tenth Circle**.*

BookHelpWeb: *Your readers are very loyal. I've heard you described as "kind, normal, and sweet" by a fan who has met you. What's the most rewarding part about interacting with fans?*

Jodi Picoult: I think that the one missing ingredient in publishing novels is figuring out how your books affected the masses who read it! Sure, we get sales figures, but a number isn't quite the same as hearing from the victim of a date rape who's read **The Tenth Circle**, and comes to hold your hand and tell you that because of your book, she's finally told people what happened to her. Or the suicidal teen who reads **The Pact** and decides that she doesn't want to wind up like Emily after all. Those are the moments that I have to catch my breath, because when you write fiction, you don't necessarily expect to change someone's real life. I love that my fans are willing to go wherever I take them; not many writers have that kind of freedom...but they trust me to provide them with the best story I can at any given moment, and they let me choose the venue for it. We've got a pretty amazing partnership!

BHW: ***The Tenth Circle** forges out into new territory with the integration of a graphic novel. What inspired such a move?*

Jodi: Graphic novels are the first genre I've seen in fiction that's truly NEW and respected. They even have their own review section in the **NYT Book Review** - and if that isn't acceptance, what is? Plus, they've evolved over the years dramatically. When I started **The Tenth Circle** I was thinking of the stories we tell ourselves, and how we choose to tell them - a major theme in the novel. I wondered what would happen if I included a character who wasn't particularly good communicating with language, but instead, used art to express himself, and had done this in the past as well. In the case of **The Tenth Circle**, the graphic novel is a vehicle for you to understand Daniel Stone's reaction to his fourteen-year-old daughter's date rape -- which he can't express with mere words. The art shows you what he fears the most; what he hopes; and ultimately, whether or not his relationship with his daughter can be mended. A lot of people think **The Tenth Circle** IS a graphic novel - it's not. It's a Jodi Picoult book that happens to have some illustrations in it...and most readers I've spoken with find it a really intriguing way to read a book, and to learn more about the characters inside it.

BHW: *Is there a story that you'd love to write but don't think you'll ever be able to? What is it and what keeps you from it?*

Jodi: I haven't found it yet, to be honest. Some stories are harder than others - for example, the ones that deal with children in distress who happen to be the same age as my own children. But thankfully, I haven't found a story line that is too emotionally difficult to write. In fact, if I did, I'd probably FORCE myself to write it, because I'd think there was then a very good reason for me to work through the difficulty.

BHW: *What's the most amusing thing that has happened to you while researching a book?*

Jodi: Lots of remarkable things have happened - from living with the Amish to ghosthunting to learning how to make a zip gun from an inmate in jail. But the FUNNIEST thing that happened came when I was researching **My Sister's Keeper**. I was working with a firefighting team - had my own turnout gear, was riding on the truck in the middle of the night, sleeping at the fire station, etc. -- and we got a call for a fire. Now, when you are en route to a fire, you are already on the truck out the door and then dispatch patches the address up to you...well, that address sounded AWFULLY familiar. Turns out the home belonged to the parents of a little boy in my son's class who was the BIGGEST bully that year, and had been tormenting him. So I got out of the engine and thought, for just a moment, "Oh, let it BURN!"

BHW: *Which book of yours turned out the most differently from what you thought it would be when you started?*

Jodi: I know the endings of most of my books when I start writing, so not many of my books deviate that far. However, when I started writing **Vanishing Acts**, I was writing an entirely different book. I had gotten about 150 pages into it, and my agent had read those pages and liked it -- and yet, I felt like although it was good, it wasn't GREAT. The whole time I had a voice in my head saying, "I was six years old the first time I disappeared...HELLO?? Listen to me!" So finally I sat down one day and wrote forty pages in that voice...and she turned out to be the narrator of *Vanishing Acts*. I read it and said to myself, Oh, I get it...THIS is the book I'm SUPPOSED to be writing!

BHW: *You've done some fascinating things to research your book. Now that **The Tenth Circle** is to the printer, what type of research trips do you think you'll need to make for your next book?*

Jodi: I write a full year ahead, which means **NINETEEN MINUTES**, my 2007 book, is done. So I've been doing research for my 2008 book...which will involve an inmate on Death Row...who wants to donate his heart, post-execution, to the family of his victim. This creates enough of an uproar within the prison...but then the inmate begins to heal others he comes in contact with; he gets a ragtag group of felons believing everything he says. But when the prison chaplain starts wondering if this man might not be a messiah...everything he knew for sure - his faith, his God, his trust in the American system of justice - is turned upside down. I'm hoping this book will explore the nature of faith and forgiveness, and whether or not it's right to believe what we're told is right...or if we need to figure things out for ourselves. For research, I've taken two trips to Arizona's death row. The most jarring moments in my research trip? Speaking at great length to a condemned man "who was convicted of murdering someone by shooting battery acid into his veins" yet who also called me Ma'am and explained that he doesn't swear, because it's disrespectful. And talking to the warden in the death chamber: I was having trouble juggling notebooks and papers, and leaned against the closest surface to take notes more easily-only to realize I was sprawled across the lethal injection gurney.

Discussion Questions (from BookBrowse.com)

1. In Chapter One, Laura says "God, according to Dante, was all about motion and energy, so the ultimate punishment for Lucifer is to not be able to move at all." (p. 16) How do you feel about this concept of hell as the inability to take action? What do you take from this? How does this theory translate into modern-day life?
2. Why does Daniel find villains interesting? Daniel describes Duncan as "a forty-something father who knew that getting old was hell. Who wanted to keep his family safe; whose powers controlled him, instead of the other way around." If "power always involved a loss of humanity," then how does this comic book character maintain his humanity? Compare and contrast Daniel with the character he creates in his comic strip.
3. Early on, Daniel and Trixie seem to have the ideal father-daughter relationship. During Trixie's examination, Daniel reflects that he and Trixie would play the alphabet game with superhero powers. What superhero powers did Daniel wish he had? Why do you think these were so important to him? What does that reveal about his character? Trixie's?
4. It is said that a rape victim is revictimized by the initial examination. Do you think this is true for Trixie? Why do you think the police detective doubts her accusation against Jason?
5. In popular culture, the husband is more often portrayed as the cheater, and the wife typically as the one who makes career sacrifices for the family. Does Daniel as a character seem emasculated by the way these roles are reversed in The Tenth Circle? Why are stay-at-home fathers seen differently by society than mothers who raise their children full time?
6. In Chapter Four, regarding trauma, Picoult writes, "It was a catch-22: If you didn't put the trauma behind you, you couldn't move on. But if you did put the trauma behind you, you willingly gave up your claim to the person you were before it happened." Which characters would agree with this statement and why?
7. Trixie is consistently revictimized at school, and her own best friend doesn't believe that infidelity. What does this story say about whether or not we can recapture our past? How does Daniel's childhood figure into this theme?
8. Does a victim get justice when the perpetrator takes his or her own life? When Daniel abuses Jason, is he helping or hurting Trixie? When Trixie runs away, did you believe that she killed Jason? What did you think about this surprise ending? How can you map the breakdown in trust between these relationships: Trixie and Jason, Laura and Daniel, Daniel and Trixie, Trixie and Zephyr. How has this breakdown contributed to the demise of all parties?
9. How did Daniel's artwork, embedded inside The Tenth Circle, affect your reading experience? In what ways does reading the graphic novel give you insight into Daniel's behavior during the narrative part of the novel?
10. In the story there is a thread of control -- characters losing and gaining control over their lives and their environments. Discuss what control means to each character.

11. After Daniel takes his revenge, does he believe he is more of a superhero? Does he really think he has avenged Trixie? What is the story saying about retribution?
12. Why is snow symbolic in the story? What other symbols are there?
13. Trixie is haunted by Jason's ghost. Is this a figment of her imagination or a manifestation of guilt?
14. she was raped. If Trixie's school was a kind of hell for her, then what would Dante say about her situation and the best way to get out of it?
15. Discuss reality versus perception, intention versus action. Why are Trixie's and Jason's versions of what happened so different? Whose do you believe is the truth? Do you think there IS a definitive truth?
16. After Laura and Daniel have a romantic episode, Daniel continues to express his resentment for her infidelity. In that moment his sexual urge is not to make love to her but to "take her back." How does his urge compare to Jason's urge in raping Trixie?
17. Throughout the story Trixie is struggling to get back to her life prior to the rape, and similarly Daniel and Laura are trying to return to a place in their marriage prior to Laura's

Discussion Questions (from Jodi Picoult's website)

1. Daniel says, "the real mistake he made...was believing that you could lose someone you loved in an instant, when in reality, it was a process that took months, years...lifetime." How does this apply to his relationship with his wife? His daughter?
2. In what way does the graphic novel complement the story that's being told in the narrative novel? Do you believe that there are many different ways to tell a story? To what end does the art in *The Tenth Circle* support this? Are there spots where the drawn story deviates from what you learn in the written narrative, and if so, is this important?
3. Jodi Picoult often gives her characters names that are extremely significant to the story. Of what significance is the family name 'Stone'?
4. In Dante's *Inferno*, God takes away Lucifer's ability to make choices - his free will - and this is represented as the ultimate hell. Do you agree? Why or why not? What inaction on the part of Daniel can be compared to this?
5. Each of the main characters in *The Tenth Circle* makes one significant mistake that comes back to haunt them. What are these mistakes? Who do you think suffers the most for this, and who changes the most as a result?
6. On page 30, Trixie talks about not controlling her own destiny. Do you believe that we "get what's coming to us", as Dante suggested...or that we can change our circumstances? How do the actions of Trixie, Laura, and Daniel support or refute this?
7. How does Wildclaw's loss of humanity (p.32) when angered or afraid reflect itself in Daniel's personality and what we know about Daniel?

8. In both Yup'ik folklore and graphic art, people have the ability to reinvent themselves by morphing into different forms. Daniel, too, has a history of violent behavior that he's successfully repressed...until his daughter's raped. Is it realistic to think that this might be a permanent change, or are older incarnations of personality always simmering just beneath the surface?
9. How does Trixie's rape affect the fragile web of the Stone family? Do you think they would have been able to grow and move on without a catastrophic event like a rape occurring?
10. Is Trixie to blame for the set of circumstances in which she finds herself?
11. On page 94, the judge refuses the attorney's request for house arrest for Jason so that the star player could play hockey. Do you agree with his decision? Do you think this is art imitating true life? Can you give examples.
12. Dante perceived the circles of hell as a learning process for his central protagonist and for the reader, the former of whom is the Christian everyman whose status as a sinner and need for redemption is reflected in all humans. His nine circles of hell do not include betrayal of self...this is Picoult's invention of a tenth circle. Do you agree that lying to oneself is the worst betrayal of all? How do Daniel, Trixie and Laura's actions support or refute this claim? Does this novel suggest ultimately that it is possible, once you've crossed into that tenth circle, to seek redemption...or are we doomed to make the same mistakes over and over?
13. What do you think happens to the Stone family after the book ends? Which character, in your opinion, has learned the most...and which has learned the least?
14. A recurrent theme in many of Picoult's books involves how far a person will go for the sake of love. Does this theme explain the actions of the three protagonists? Does it excuse their actions?

For Further Reading

Just Listen: a novel by Sarah Dessen

Inexcusable by Chris Lynch

Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson

The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big, Round Things by Carolyn Mackler

Red carpets and other banana skins : the autobiography by Rupert Everett

Sticky Fingers by Niki Burnham

Lucky; and The Lovely Bones by Alice Sebold

We Were The Mulvaney's by Joyce Carol Oates

Billie Standish Was Here by Nancy Crocker

The Slow Moon : a novel by Elizabeth Cox