



# Circle of Three: A Novel

*Patricia Gaffney*

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Few authors can capture with such grace and power the spirit and strength of women and the complexities of their relationships as Patricia Gaffney. Her sensational national bestseller, *The Saving Graces*, won the hearts of readers everywhere and propelled her into the first ranks of contemporary women writers with its vivid characterizations and brilliant depiction of the delicate yet resilient bonds of female friendship.

Now this gifted writer turns inward to illuminate the silken bonds of family in *Circle of Three*. Through the interconnected lives of three generations of women in a small town in rural Virginia, this poignant, memorable novel reveals the layers of tradition and responsibility, commitment and passion these women share.

*"Can grief last for a person's whole life?"* That is the question Carrie struggles to answer after the sudden death of her husband. For Carrie, grief and guilt are twofold: Though she mourns her husband, she also mourns the death of their love—an emotional erosion that occurred long before her husband's heart gave out. Struggling to go on, to support her vivacious, loving fifteen-year-old daughter, Carrie slowly shakes off the sorrow and depression that embrace her and begins a new life.

Complicating matters is Carrie's mother, Dana, an industrious, snobbish, yet sympathetic woman who tries to do what's best for herself and, unfortunately, for Carrie as well. It was fear of her mother's disapproval that drove Carrie away from her unforgettable first love, the soulful, passionate Jess, who has now re-entered her life.

Little does Carrie realize that her mother suffers miseries of her own. For Dana life is still as mysterious as it was in early youth. Like her only daughter, Dana has lived within the confines of a silent marriage, and she, too, mourns a painful loss—the disintegration of her relationship with Carrie. *"I'd give anything for the closeness we used to have. I love my daughter more than anyone else on this earth, but she won't let me in."*

At the end point of these two generations is Ruth, who silently copes with a double tragedy of her own, the loss of what she can never know—a real relationship with her father—and the emotional abandonment of her mother. *"She's still got me, but she's about half the mother I used to have. When Dad died I lost him and part of her. I'm almost an orphan."* A precocious girl quivering on the brink of womanhood, she is eager to discover who she is and what life holds, even if that knowledge will draw her away from the people she loves.

Through their stories, Patricia Gaffney explores the dichotomies inherent in all women's relationships—the tears and laughter, despair and hope, misunderstanding and compassion, anger and love—that sometimes divide them yet ultimately bind them together. Wise, moving, and heartbreakingly real, *Circle of Three* offers women of all ages a deeper understanding of each other, of themselves, and of the perplexing and invigorating magic that is life itself.

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