

BANK SHOT

Valerie Pankratz Froese

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Dedicated to John Matthews, a teacher ahead of his time.

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1 **Outside** **MY LITTLE WORLD**

“C’mon, go hard. You’re almost done!” Coach A encouraged as we finished the last set of lines.

I reached the end, along with my best friend, Hala. With my hands on my knees, I bent over and breathed hard. It was done. The last tryout for the grade eight girls’ basketball team was finished. I had given my best. Now the wait to see who made the team would feel like forever.

“Great job, girls,” Coach A said as the last group finished up. “Bring it in.”

We gathered around Coach, most of us still panting. Coach A had worked us hard today. I think she wanted to see who was willing to push themselves and who could dig down deep. With twenty girls trying out, she had to find a way to make cuts.

“I want to thank all of you for coming out on your lunch hour to try out for the team. I wish I could keep all of you, but I can’t. The list will be up tomorrow at noon and practices will start the following day.”

Bank Shot

Hala and I looked at each other and smiled. We were both excited about playing together. Hala had played the year before. She would make the team for sure. I hadn't tried out the year before and really was not very good at all. When I'd wanted to try out in grade seven, mom had told me that my family duty came first and she needed me to look after my little brother, Rory. When I had tried to ask again, she put her hand up like a stop sign. The discussion was over just like that. Now, in grade eight, I had tried out without telling her.

We all rushed into the change room and quickly got ready to head back to afternoon class.

"I can't wait until tomorrow," Jenna said. "Why can't she just tell us now?"

"I know," Rachel added. "It's torture!"

We all laughed in agreement. As we left the gym, Jenna swatted me playfully with her gym bag.

"You did good, Jo," she said.

"Thanks, Jenna," I replied.

I smiled as I walked down the hall. The routine of tryouts and the fun with the girls had been great. It was new to me to be a part of something outside my world of studying and taking care of Rory.

Not everyone could handle my little brother. He was not good with new people. After one of the babysitters had grabbed his arm and left a bruise, Mom would not leave him with anyone but me. Lucky me.

Outside My Little World

I loved Rory, but with Mom starting work early and getting home late, I wasn't free to do any of the extra school clubs. That's just how it was.

Hala had begged me to try out for the team, even when I said I couldn't. Finally, I had given in. Lunch hours I could do. I thought it would be fun. I didn't think I would make the team, so then at least I could tell Hala I had tried. I hadn't counted on the feelings I had, working hard and getting to know the girls. Now, I wanted more than anything to make the team. But I had no idea what I was going to do if I did.