



Over the Wall
CHRIS FABRY



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Over the Wall

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“MOM, SOMETHING AWFUL has happened,” Jamie Maxwell said, her voice shaking. Her hands were also shaking, almost too much to hold her cell phone as she hurried toward Chad Devalon’s crashed car.

“Where are you?” her mother said, her voice even and unemotional, though Jamie could tell she was trying hard to stay in control.

Jamie had said nothing to her parents about her test drive in the Devalon car. She now knew that had been a mistake, and she’d hear it from both her mom and her dad when she saw them.

“I’m headed over to the hospital in a few minutes,” Jamie said. “Could you meet me at Memorial?”

Her mom hesitated. “Are you all right?”

“I’m fine, Mom.”

Chapter 1

Ambulance Chase

“Okay, we’ll go right over there.”

Jamie had beaten the others calling 911 when Chad Devalon crashed, telling the dispatcher their location at the track as the car teetered on its top in the infield. Chad’s father, Butch Devalon, and the owner of the Devalon racing team, Shane Hardwick, raced toward the car along with the track manager, who carried a fire extinguisher.

“Chad!” Butch Devalon shouted, and Jamie thought it was the worst sound in the world to hear a father yell his child’s name into a wrecked car.

Chad wasn’t talking or moving that she could tell—a bad sign.

Mr. Devalon fumbled with the window net, trying to reach the six-point harness.

“Hold up,” Mr. Hardwick said, releasing the window net easily.

“He’s right,” Jamie said. Her voice sounded strange, as if even speaking to someone who’d been in racing as long as these two was sacrilegious. Something inside took over, and she spoke, her voice stronger. “We should get the car off its top before you release him. You unbuckle that strap, and he’s going to slam straight into the roof.”

The track manager agreed. “Yeah, I’ll get my truck.” He returned with a Ford F-250, spinning his tires in the infield grass, a chain clanking in the bed.

By then, the swirling siren of the ambulance wafted over the track like a song.

“I don’t need no ambulance,” Chad muttered.

“Just hang in there, Son,” Mr. Devalon said.

Jamie had seen the swagger and the strut of Butch Devalon nearly all her life. Her dad had raced against him, first in trucks, then moving their way up the NASCAR ladder to the cup races. When Mr. Devalon didn’t finish first or even in the top 10, he was still the picture of self-confidence. Every step said, *I’m number one, even if I didn’t win today*. In interviews, he made sure everyone knew the other guy never actually *won* the race—he *lost* it. He’d made a mistake or the team had done something wrong. He let everyone know he should have been in the winner’s circle—and would be next time.

However, the swagger was gone—at least temporarily—as Mr. Devalon told his son to keep quiet. He seemed scattered, not knowing what to say or do.

“Blood’s running to my head,” Chad said, a little stronger now.

The track manager hooked the chain to the car and gently pulled it until the wheels slammed onto the grass.

Butch Devalon unhooked the harness and popped the steering wheel, but the roof was so dented that

Jamie wondered if they could squeeze Chad through the opening.

She turned and waved at the ambulance as it came through the front gate and onto the track. When she looked back, they had Chad sitting on the ground and were taking off his helmet.

The paramedics arrived and moved everyone away. Chad protested louder now, telling the men he was fine and there was no reason for them to be here. They pointed a light at his eyes and tried to keep him still, but he kept pushing them away.

“Let ’em take a look at you,” Mr. Hardwick said. “It’s for your own good.”

“I’m telling you, I’m okay,” Chad said. But when he tried to stand, he screamed in pain and his legs gave way.

The paramedics put him on a gurney and loaded him into the ambulance.

Butch Devalon got in the back with Chad and glanced at Jamie. He tried to smile, but lines of worry creased his face.

Jamie ran through the gate and up the hill to her car. Her cell phone rang as she pulled out behind the ambulance.

“Jamie, it’s Cassie,” her friend said. Her voice felt like a cool breeze on a sweltering day. “I heard something was wrong.”

“How did you hear that?” Jamie said.

“Your mom called the prayer tree, and we’re at the top of the list. What’s going on?”

The prayer tree. Cassie made it sound like a living thing. Basically it was a list of names and phone numbers people at their church called when somebody found out they had a disease or went into rehab or had a teenager in trouble. Jamie called it the “gossip bush” just to make her mom mad. As far as she knew, this was the first time she had made the list, though she figured the guy in Florida, Tim Carhardt, had been on one of the branches.

Cassie Strower was Jamie’s best friend. As kids they’d spent summer nights camping out and winter nights at sleepovers. They still had their nails done together on special occasions, but they’d grown apart the more time Jamie spent racing. Cassie was the “perfect” daughter. A strong Christian. She was the kind of girl Jamie figured her mom *wished* she had. That halo over her head was the only thing Jamie didn’t like about Cassie. She had a dependence on God that Jamie knew she would *never* have.

“I can’t talk now, Cassie. I’m on my way to the hospital. Just pray for Chad. He’s been in an accident at the track.”

“Got it,” Cassie said.



CHRIS FABRY is a writer, broadcaster, and graduate of Richard Petty Driving Experience (top speed: 134.29 mph). He has written more than 50 books, including collaboration on the *Left Behind: The Kids*, *Red Rock Mysteries*, and the *Wormling* series.

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