

# Friendships

by Kate Good

I always wanted a sidekick.

Sherlock had Watson. Nancy Drew had Bess. Shaggy had Scooby Doo (or maybe it was the other way around). Anyway, I wanted someone by my side, keeping me company.

My sister didn't seem too interested in the job. Neither were any of the kids in school. So, I found my own imaginary companions—books. Books never hurt my feelings or got mad, and they were always available when I needed them. I got along with others and I had friends. But I also spent a lot of time holed up in my room, reading and re-reading piles of books.

I longed for the epic friendships I read about in *Little Women* or *Anne of Green Gables*. I had fun with my friends. We hung out, watched movies, whispered about boys, and listened to music. But we weren't what Anne referred to as the "bosom friends" she discovered during her time on Prince Edward Island.

I entered high school resigned to the idea that the friendships I longed for, those full of great discussion, confession, and debate, were the stuff of fiction. I was pretty lonely that first semester of high school. Lunch time was the worst. I packed a book to read each day so that I could retreat into my imaginary friendship while everyone else seemed to have fun.

Books are great escapes, but they're not always good company. They pose great questions, they entertain, they teach, but they don't listen, laugh, or hug. I wanted the give and take of friendship, the fun of adventure, and the chance to just hang out.

And then sometime in the second semester things changed. Tiffanee and Heather were two of my first real friends. We met in social studies class while arguing about politics. Both were deeply opinionated, but also full of respect for other points of view, and, most importantly, they had great senses of humor. We quickly discovered that we enjoyed books, debating, and movies above almost anything else.

We weren't like most of the friends I read about in those saccharine preteen series such as *Sweet Valley High*. We didn't argue about boys or clothes or who was more popular. We argued fervently and probably pretty obnoxiously about faith, politics, and history. But we also really just enjoyed flopping on the couch

in Tiff's basement to watch a movie or talk about life in Heather's parents' kitchen.

We were solid friends through high school. I, certain now that the friendships I hoped for were possible, made other great friends during those years, too, though Tiff and Heather remained my closest. In college, Tiff and I eventually lost touch. But somehow Heather, in school in Georgia, and I, attending college in Virginia, kept track of each other. After college, she moved into a house I shared with other friends in Washington, DC. We picked up our deep friendship almost immediately.

Today, Heather and I are as much sisters as we are friends. I have a wonderful group of friends in Lancaster. But Heather, now married and living in DC, is often the first person I call about the very best and very hardest parts of my life. We also talk on the phone for hours about politics and family and our dreams.

Of course, when you know someone this well, it's hard to mask your shortcomings, irritations, and disagreements. We don't argue very often. But when we do, I have learned that our friendship, our deep trust and respect for each other, will help us remain friends, whatever the misunderstanding. We have learned that we must always talk through whatever bothers us, even if it's painful.

Similarly, when one of us is angry, hurt, or confused by another person or situation, we call the other knowing that she will ask gentle but direct questions that will cut to the heart of the matter. After letting me vent, she helps me figure out how to solve the problem without putting me down or letting me off the hook. Heather tells me when I've messed up, just as she reassures me when something isn't my fault. We are each other's counselors, confessors, and champions. This is the kind of friendship I dreamed of as a child.

I still love to read. But I also love to explore new countries and cities on vacation, discover new restaurants, see great movies, and have long conversations, all in the company of my friends. Each of these friendships is real, not the stuff of chick lit.

These wonderful people contribute a great deal to my life, often in very different ways. But Heather is, in Anne's words, my "bosom friend," a lifelong friend who stands by my side, makes me laugh, and doesn't let me get away with anything. 📖