



Sisterhood Everlasting

By Ann Brashares

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

Four friends

One sisterhood

Ten years later, the story continues

On the cusp of turning thirty, Tibby, Lena, Carmen, and Bridget are now living separate lives, out on their own. Yet despite having jobs and men that they love, each knows that something is missing: the closeness that once sustained them. Carmen is a successful actress in New York, engaged to be married, but misses her friends. Lena finds solace in her art, teaching in Rhode Island, but still thinks of Kostos and the road she didn't take. Bridget lives with her longtime boyfriend, Eric, in San Francisco, and though a part of her wants to settle down, a bigger part can't seem to shed her old restlessness. Then Tibby reaches out to bridge the distance, sending the others plane tickets for a reunion that they all breathlessly await. And indeed, it will change their lives forever—but in ways that none of them could ever have expected.

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Editorial Review

Review

“A deftly told narrative of finding one’s adult self.”—*Entertainment Weekly*

“[Ann] Brashares nimbly ages her characters, nicely capturing late- twentysomething concerns about marriage, motherhood, and careers as well as love’s enduring power.”—*Booklist*

“Poignant . . . Brashares’s literary response will satisfy readers longing for ‘just one more’ story about their favorite fictional friends.”—Bookreporter.com

“Brashares expertly taps into the difficulties of carrying childhood friendship into the trials of adulthood.”—*Library Journal*

“Touching . . . resonant with female friendship.”—*The Washington Post*

About the Author

Ann Brashares is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, *The Second Summer of the Sisterhood*, *Girls in Pants*, and *Forever in Blue*, which comprise an internationally bestselling, award-winning series that has inspired two major motion pictures.

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Once, when she was thirteen, Carmen remembered turning to Tibby with her CosmoGirl magazine in one hand and her eye pencil in the other and declaring that she could never, ever get sick of doing makeovers.

Well, it turned out she could. Sitting in the makeup chair in early October in a trailer parked on the corner of Bleecker Street and the Bowery in the East Village of Manhattan, getting her hair blown out for the seven millionth time by a girl named Rita and the foundation sponged onto her face for the eight millionth time by a girl named Genevieve, Carmen knew it was just another mile on the hedonic treadmill. You could get sick of anything.

It was true. She’d read an article in Time magazine about it. “You could even get sick of chocolate,” she’d told her mother on the phone the night before.

Her mother had made a doubting sound.

“That’s what I read, anyway.”

Being an actress on a TV show, even a moderately good and successful TV show, involved a few minutes of acting for every few hours you spent in the makeup chair. And even when you were done with the makeup—temporarily, of course; you were never done with the makeup—there was still a whole lot of sitting around drinking lattes. That was the dirty secret of the entertainment industry: it was boring.

Granted, Carmen didn't have the biggest part in the show. She was Special Investigator Lara Brennan on Criminal Court. She showed up at least briefly at a crime scene in almost every episode and sometimes got to appear as a witness on the stand.

"Eyes up," Genevieve said, coming in with a mascara wand. It was rare that Carmen needed a prompt. She knew exactly which way to turn her eyes for each portion of the mascara application. If she didn't stay ahead of it, Carmen feared she'd end up like one of the many dolls she'd mangled as a child with her constant brutal efforts at grooming.

Carmen studied her hair in the mirror. She'd never thought she'd get sick of that either. She squinted down the highlights. They were a little brassy, a little bright this time. She would have liked to go darker, but the director wanted her light. Probably because her character's surname was Brennan and not Garcia.

Carmen jiggled her phone in her hand and thought of who to call. She'd already spoken to Lena once and her agent twice. Her mind summoned a glimpse of Tibby's face, more out of loyalty than an expectation of actually talking to her. Since Tibby had moved to Australia with Brian almost two years before, Carmen had almost given up hope of reaching her in real time. Tibby's move had been hasty, somewhat disorganized, and just . . . far. The sixteen-hour time difference was a constant impediment. Tibby had gone from place to place at first and didn't get a landline until long after Carmen had given up on the idea. International calls between their cellphones were plagued by stupid complications, mostly on Tibby's side. In a couple of weeks. In a month. By next spring. Those were the times when Carmen told herself they'd resume regular contact. Carmen often thought of hauling over there for a visit. This past June she'd staked out a date on the calendar, and Bee and Lena had instantly agreed to the scheme. When she'd emailed Tibby about it, Tibby's return had come more quickly than usual. "Now's not a good time."

Carmen took it personally for once. "Did I do something?" she'd asked in her next message.

"Oh, Carma, no. You did nothing wrong. Nothing. Just busy and unsettled here. It'll be soon. I promise. I want to see you and Len and Bee more than anything else in the world."

And there was Bee. Carmen hadn't seen her since Bridget's last swing through New York over the Christmas holidays, but there were long periods when Bridget and Carmen talked every day—that is, as long as Bee hadn't lost her phone or neglected to pay her bill for too long. Bee was the best possible distraction from an hour in the makeup chair. But Carmen hesitated to call her now. It had been awkward between them for the last few weeks, since Bee had effectively called Jones an asshole.

Well, to be fair, Bee hadn't just come out and said "Your fiancé is an asshole." In fact, to be fair, it was Carmen who'd called him an asshole and Bee who'd lost no time in agreeing with her. But Carmen was allowed to say Jones was an asshole. She was the one marrying the asshole.

Carmen's phone rang, saving her the trouble of dialing anyone, and she snapped it up. The earphones were already stuck in her ears. She was one of the few people she knew who answered the phone as she checked the caller ID, not after.

"Hey, babe."

"Hey, Jones."

"In the chair still?"

“Yep.” Jones was in the business, so he knew how it went. Besides, he’d called her half an hour before.

“How late are you shooting tonight?”

“Till around seven, Steven said.”

“If you can, cut out a little early and come directly to the Mandarin, all right? It’s the pre-party before the big Haiti benefit. It’s important for you to at least show.”

“It won’t make a difference to Haiti if I don’t get there in time for the pre-party.” It was one of three benefits they had on the calendar that week.

“It’s not about Haiti,” Jones said, as though she were being dense. “It’s about the Shaws. They invited us, and I don’t want to stiff them. She’s probably going to be head of production by next year. We’ll be out of there by eight. Nobody’s going to stay for the whole thing.”

“Oh. Of course.” Cynical though she was, Carmen never remembered to be quite cynical enough. Why would she think the Haiti benefit was about Haiti and not about the Shaws? Why would she think the gala was about the gala and not about the party before the gala? If not for Jones, she could have been one of the boobs who thought it was about Haiti and stayed for the whole thing.

It was endlessly tricky being in the know. It was a state Carmen had achieved with a certain bravado, but she found it difficult to maintain. Without Jones, she could easily slip out of the know, relapse into her natural eagerness, and probably never get hired for another part in her life.

“It’s a game and you play it,” he often told her when she felt discouraged or repulsed. “If you want to succeed in this business, it’s what you do. Otherwise, you gotta pick a different business.” He was thirty-nine years old to her twenty-nine. He’d been doing it for sixteen years, he always reminded her. But he didn’t need to tell her. Whether or not she liked it, she was perfectly good at playing the game when she chose to.

“I’ll try to be there before seven,” she said.

Carmen felt vaguely dissatisfied as she ended the call. It wasn’t that Jones didn’t care about charities. He did. Every month he put five percent of his earnings into a charitable fund. You couldn’t fault him for that.

“Was that your boyfriend again?” Rita asked.

Carmen nodded distractedly. Sometimes it was hard to know what you could fault him for.

“He’s an executive at ABC, isn’t he?”

She nodded again. Everybody in this business was looking for another contact.

“Lucky you,” Rita said.

“Yes,” she said. And not just because he was her boyfriend, but because he was her fiancé. If she was lucky, then she was extra lucky.

And what if she wasn’t lucky? Then what was she?

Lena put her feet up on her desk. The pink polish her sister, Effie, had applied to her toenails during her last visit had long since started to chip. Lena balanced a sketchbook on her knees and began to flip through it.

She'd promised herself she'd clear out her apartment today. She was committed to filling a couple of trash bags with stuff—her place was too tiny to store anything extra—but of her twenty-seven sketchbooks, she hadn't yet been able to throw away even one. This one, for instance, was an old one. On the first page was a pencil sketch of Mimi, Tibby's old guinea pig, fat and asleep in her shavings. As long ago as it was, Lena vividly remembered the joyful chaos of pencil lines that had gone into sketching those shavings. There was a drawing of Bridget at sixteen, knees up on the couch, watching TV with a tipping sombrero on her head. It must have been a week or two after she'd gotten back from her soccer camp in Mexico. It was a loose pencil sketch, and Lena smiled at the hatching lines she'd used to represent the suntan on Bee's cheeks. Every few pages was one of the inescapable drawings of Lena's feet. There was a half-finished sketch of grumpy morning Effie at fifteen, too grumpy to let Lena finish it. There were three studies of Carmen's hand from when she still wore a mood ring and bit her fingernails. How could you throw this away?

The later sketchbooks would be easier, Lena decided. They were mostly just feet and dated from about two years earlier, when Lena had mostly petered out on drawing. Instead, these last couple of years she had been putting her energies into her paintings, which were composed, formal, and largely abstract. You weren't going to build a career out of making messy little sketches of your friends and family and your feet.

Why all the drawings of her feet? They were not her best feature, probably her worst. They were size nine and a half, ten in some shoes, and prone to sweating when she was excited or nervous. Her toes were kind of long, especially the second and third—the Home and the Roast Beef, as Tibby's mother would call them. The only advantages her feet had going for them as subjects was that they were attached to the bottoms of her legs and at enough distance that she could look at them from different angles. They were living and stayed still when she told them to, and they didn't charge modeling fees. She imagined the far future if anybody ever cared enough to look back at her drawings. This girl really had a thing for her feet, they would think. Maybe she would throw those last two sketchbooks away.

The phone on her desk rang. She plucked it from its cradle without moving her sketchbook. She didn't have caller ID (it added \$6.80 a month to her plan), but she knew it was almost certainly one of three people: her mother, her sister, or Carmen. Whichever one it was, she was on her cellphone, she was in a hurry, and she was calling to "check in."

Lena cleared her throat before she hit the talk button. It wasn't a teaching day, so she hadn't spoken to anyone yet, and it was already three o'clock. She hated getting busted for that.

"Hey, Lenny, it's me. Were you sleeping?"

Damn. "No. Just . . ." Lena heard an ambulance and a lot of honking through the phone. "Where are you?"

"On Greenwich Ave. I just got a facial. I look scary."

It was either Carmen or Effie; still too noisy to tell which. Lena held the phone between her shoulder and her ear and went back to flipping pages. "What are you doing tonight?"

Three of many words were intelligible: "theater," and "benefit" and "Jones." It was Carmen.

"Great." Lena couldn't pick which of those words summoned the worst thing.

“Jones bought a table.”

Yes, she could pick. The worst was Jones.

“I would have invited you, but you wouldn’t have come.”

“That’s true.”

“And you are . . . staying home and watching a movie with Drew.”

“Yes.” Sometimes Carmen made it easy for her.

“That’s just sad.”

But never that easy.

“No, it’s not sad. It’s what I like to do. Anyway, we can’t all be rich and glamorous.”

“Len, I’m not demanding glamour. You’re just not allowed to be that boring.”

Lena laughed. “Hey, did you do the kissing scene yet with the renegade cop?”

“No, that’s Friday. He has terrible breath.” Carmen’s voice was swallowed by what Lena guessed was a bus plowing by.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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