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You Gotta Have Friends – Randee Dawn

Interesting  April 5, 2025

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"You gotta have friends," Bette Midler sang in 1972. Likewise, the theme song to *The Golden Girls* starts out, "Thank you for being a friend." Whether you have "besties" or "BFFs" or just old-fashioned buddies, pals, or sisters-from-another-mother, the truth is that we all are much better off when we are surrounded by friends.

It's also been scientifically proven: Studies regularly point out that having friends and confidants keeps you both mentally and physically healthier – and less likely to become depressed. But open a book, watch a movie or tune into your favorite TV show, and the subject almost always seems to be about the drama of romance. Romantic love is important – but who says we can't also love our besties?



I know I do. The friendships I've forged in my lifetime – especially the ones I've had since I was still in school – ground me. These are people who knew me while my cement was still wet, when my foundations were being forged. As an adoptee, I also place high value on the notion of *found* family, which usually means your circle of friends. I was chosen to be raised by parents who didn't conceive me; I later chose to forge lifetime bonds with those I value most highly. Family can be more than biology, which I've known since my earliest days.

This is why, as a veteran entertainment reporter for outlets including *Variety*, the *LA Times* and *Today.com*, I love writing about friendships. Movies, TV shows and books often emphasize romance – but I try to seek out the stories being told that underscore how your friends matter as much if not more than your partners. Last year, I wrote a story for the *LA Times*' *Envelope* ([link](#)) about friendships in award-season movies – *Nickel Boys*, *Memoir of a Snail*, and *Will & Harper* to just name a few. Each of those movies featured characters who survived thanks to their friendships, even as their blood relations often abandoned them.

So when it comes to writing my books – I have one funny fantasy out now, the Amazon bestseller *Tune in Tomorrow* ([link](#)) and three novels publishing in 2025 – the power of friendship fuels my storytelling. My newest novel, which came out in early April, is a rock 'n roll dark fantasy called *The Only Song Worth Singing* ([link](#)). In it, I focus on three men who've been friends since they were children, making music outside of Dublin. As adults they're still hanging out, but now they're in a rising band – and about to face some serious challenges on their first tour in America. Along with their shared history, music is their common bond; their songs are a private, shared language between them. So when they're beset by mythical Irish creatures who turn their lives upside down, they have to lean on one another in order to survive.

They only do this because of the strength and belief of their mutual friendship. Each of them annoys the other in some small way – Ciaran thinks he's more important than he is; Malachi lives in his head; and Patrick is just plain *odd* – almost otherworldly. But when real danger – not the kind involving groupies, but life-and-death situations – approaches, all of that falls to the wayside. Together, they do the one thing humans can do that mythical creatures can never understand: They make magic of their friendship.

Hokey? Sure, a little. But friendship is worth being corny over. It's intangible. It isn't easy to measure. It

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sometimes more than even is clarity, mal and Patrick really, they are stronger when they are together, and when they can lean on one another. It's enormously valuable to have someone who cares who you are, but who will also tell you when you're going down the wrong path. Friends have a way to access your soul in ways that your relatives, teachers, religious leaders and bosses never can – because again, you chose one another.

I started writing *The Only Song Worth Singing* long before there was an open discussion about the loneliness epidemic in men – so it's not in response to that. But I did grow up with an adoptive father who had no friends, and a mother who warned me that a grown adult who couldn't sustain a friendship was waving a red flag. I've always felt empathetic to those who can't call on friends to help them or provide counsel – even if they're responsible for their own alienation. Society allows women to be emotionally open, which helps them make friends at any age. But society is less forgiving of men seeking emotional support or just some good, normal times with men their own age. Too many men grow up stunted and afraid, in constant fight-or-flight mode when it comes to interacting with other men as friends, often listening to all the wrong advice-givers about what it means to be "manly." Knowing how important friendships are for both mental and physical health, this should ring alarm bells.

There's a new movie about to be released starring Tim Robinson and Paul Rudd – and it's not only called *Friendship*, it's about a connection between two men that goes spectacularly wrong. Dark and funny, it looks to explore the opposite of the connection Mal, Ciaran and Patrick have in *The Only Song Worth Singing*. But it *is* a take on male friendship I haven't seen before, with trailers suggesting that men can be as harsh and exclusionary as women can be when they shut someone out. Watching the trailer reminds me again how thrilled I am that a movie about me and my besties would be really, really boring. We're connected. We talk. We visit. We share. And we live without drama.

And that's sometimes the best thing a friendship can be: Something you settle into, a blanket on your shoulders. Keeping you on the right track – safe, sane, and happy.

For more about Rande Dawn, be sure to visit my website ([link](#))! Pick up a book, read an article or join my newsletter!