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WITH NADINE SCHIFF

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The  
Secret Language
of
Girlfriends



TALKING LOUDLY, LAUGHING WILDLY,
AND MAKING THE MOST OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT
FRIENDSHIPS

 HYPERION



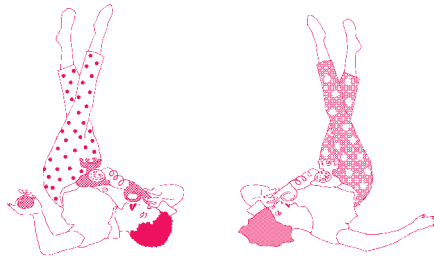
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Chapter One-

The Broad Squad



Broad Squad: A group of girlfriends who totally have your back ...but always put you out in front. No matter the call you can always rely on her. Used, but never abused.

JUST AS WOMEN need more than one color of lipstick and nail polish in our beauty arsenal, so too do we all need our broad squad to get us through the insanity of our lives. As modern divas, we exist in crisis mode most of the time. When you consider the tribulations of marriage, children, divorce, re-marriage, promotions, and firings, it's amazing we all aren't

taking part in daily meltdowns. (Which of course we are, which is why we need to carry a cell phone at all times to call one another). Add to the drama-queen list the traumas of botox, men, reunions, men, not to mention short skirts being back in style, and it's not exactly headline news we all need a team of girlfriends to survive life in the "pink zone."

Your broad squad should be a highly trained special unit-heat seeking missiles trained in pleasure seeking and covert male surveillance. As your allies and accomplices for life, they should always make you feel cherished and pampered, like the babe magnet you were born to be. The truth is, if real life didn't get in the way, your broad squad could spend years together, yakking it up about everything from politics to religion, career aspirations to hair length. A good broad squad possesses a variety of skills, including but not limited to: how to wreak revenge on an evil boss, how to sniff out if your man is cheating, and how to free you from a boring dinner party in less than ten minutes.

Even though we all speak the secret language of girlfriends, at times we require a particular dialect. Hormonal mood changes (from that time of month to the dreaded "change") have their own languages, distinct from, for example, those languages of

bathing suit season (and its requisite exposure of our dimpling thighs). Thus, we need an array of those girlfriends with diverse talents always at the ready.

Let me clarify. Having a full-on broad squad isn't like needing a fifth for mahj andle any situation on her own. Lucky you! But others of us have different specialists on call for each situation. Whether you have five girlfriends or one, here are the bottom-line needs of every girlfriend's Broad Squad:

❧ *The Old Friend* ❧

The Old Friend: The girlfriend who convinced us we looked beautiful on prom night even when we wore those braces and stuffed athletic socks in our bras for enhanced cleavage.

There's a saying: "Make new friends, but keep the old; one is silver and the other's gold." Every broad squad needs that one friend who goes for "the gold." She's the one we bonded with in pajamas, while drooling over some teen idol's glossy photos on a Saturday night sleepover. We yapped on the tele-phone three times a day about absolutely nothing, although we were sure we were in the middle of some life altering drama.

CONFIDENTIALLY YOURS

To console one friend's aching heart on a night too cold to go out on the town, a group of college girlfriends threw an "Estrogen Party." Decked in their comfiest pa-jamas and frizziest bed heads, the girls were greeted at the door by a sign reading "Ovaries Only." They concocted and drank girly cocktails, cosmos and Georgia Peaches, and listened to a specially selected play list of exclusively female pop stars. The dangerous combination of catchy pop music and vodka prompted some girls to bust out their karaoke skills. Martinis in hand, the girls danced the night away to Janet, Christina, and Madonna, and even capped off the night with a snowball fight. The guest of honor forgot all about her less than worthy ex and remembered what a blast it is to hang exclusively with the girls.

Our oldest friend is our walking memory book, the one who reminds us of the embarrassing nick-names and outrageous hairstyles of our past. She is our hope chest; the girlfriend who thinks of us as her good china and crystal glasses. Unconditionally

caring, she believes in our C-rating (i.e. cuteness factor) even as our body parts surrender to gravity. Vickie is my oldest friend, my protector and guardian since the third grade. Together, we trail-blazed a ridiculous style-path from Girl Scout uniforms to poodle skirts to cowboy vests and tie-dye T-shirts, without ever reporting one another to the fashion police.

Well, except that one time. As a flat-chested, no-hips teenager I was desperate to transform myself into a Marilyn Monroe pin-up girl. With no gel bras or water fillers to expand on what Mother Nature had clearly forgotten, I took the do-it-yourself route. I stuffed every pair of athletic socks I owned into my bra and panties, hoping to fill out my chest, hips and tush. My new headlights positioned under a royal blue angora sweater, I thought I was one hot mama. That is, until Vicki informed me that the other kids were writing in her Year Book that I looked like a walking sock puppet. Mor-tified, my socks went back into my drawer-and I became as God intended to me to be.

At school, Vickie and I majored in each other, faithfully recording each other's periods in our school binders. Clueless

moments...which unfortunately exist in abundance. Besides the belly laughs and the secret language we share, together we can eat a giant tuna casserole or a huge bowl of shrimp dip in one sitting. If I have taught them anything, it's that good food and best friends always have a way of showing up at the party together.

It's-Not-a-Party-Without-It Shrimp Dip

Formerly, Aunt Vrony's Dip

2 8-oz. pkgs. of cream cheese (full strength, notlite)

1/4 cup of milk (1% is fine)

1 cup of Parmesan cheese

2 Tbsp Miracle Whip salad dressing (not mayo!)

2 tsp. crushed garlic

2 4-oz. cans of de-veined shrimp

1/4 tsp of paprika

sprig of parsley

Mix with electric beater on medium until soft, creamy and totally blended.

(Use fingers to taste.)

Add in the Parmesan cheese and crushed garlic; blend with mixer.

Drain shrimp, keeping a little of the juice for flavor.

Fold shrimp and juice into mixture.

Taste again liberally, then garnish with paprika and parsley.

Chill for about 1 hour.

Serve with Triscuts, or your favorite dipping crackers, chips or veggies.

Now that my daughters are getting older, they're moving up the hit parade charts into the 'best friend' slot as well. (Yes it's possible to have three best friends.) Dany, now the CEO of her family, bosses me around and keeps me totally grounded. My 18-year-old A.J. is a free spirit who dances to the tune of her own drummer. These best friends both love grilling me about my younger days and plying me for my most em-barrassing

SECRET LANGUAGE GLOSSARY BOX

The great part about sharing a secret language is that it only takes a few words to convey a huge idea. Here are some of the phrases we use in our girlfriend lexicon.

I'm Upset

CODE FOR: The world is now all about me. Do not talk about you. In fact, don't even mention you. At this minute I have no patience for rational thought. Simply agree with me, and tell me you'd feel the same, even though your gut tells you I'm probably suffering from temporary insanity.

I Need to Talk

CODE FOR: Drop every-thing and come over imme-diatly. Pretend that you under an hour. If you cannot see me in person, and must speak over the tele-

capable of doing whatever it takes if I just put my mind to it. Her optimism is not only infectious, but inspiring. Even when Jillian is not physically with me, her can-do voice pops up into my head in moments of crisis.

🌀 Say Yes Girlfriend 🌀

The 'Just Say Yes' Girlfriend:

The girlfriend on your team who celebrates the essence of you every day.

Accessories: Glittery shoes, henna tattoos, and one hot concert ticket

This is the broad in our squad who is our 'just say yes' girl, even when all around us people seem to be saying no. She's the

one who gets us revved up about sewing new slipcovers for the couch, even though we failed home ec. and barely notice the melted Raisinette stains anymore. When we're determined to be depressed, she shows up at our door, ordering us to ditch our big bag of M&M's (and our bathrobe) for a night embarrassing karaoke.

Broad Squad Additions

Her enthusiasm for us this is so unconditionally infectious, we could tell her our most depraved secrets and her response would be to love us even more. I think of my friend Donna as the social director of my broad squad. She is always the one who convinces me to leave my work and family

(cont.)

have all day to listen to me, even though you know I'll blow it out in under an hour. If you cannot see me in person, and must speak over the telephone, (a totally second best choice) make sure I cannot hear you opening your email, or washing dishes while I'm catharting.

I Don't Have Anything to Wear

CODE FOR: I'm stressed, fat, old, ugly and cannot abide standing under fluorescent lights to try anything on. What I want is for you to lend me a perfect outfit with matching shoes. Girlfriend code dictates an open closet policy.

Do I Have Food in My Teeth?

CODE FOR: You are so close to me, you can actually tell me the truth about that little piece of spinach caught in the gap

or boost my sluggish metabolism, and I'll follow you anywhere. But even though I'll put my credit card 'down' for a natural elixir guaranteed to 'up' my mood, I don't like being held captive by all the sensible rules for staying healthy. Eating a lettuce sandwich while visualizing my glass half full leaves me feeling grumpy, hungry and emotionally empty.

❧ *Karen's Guide to Girlfriend's Good Health* ❧

👉 **FOR A LONG LIFE, EAT LOTS OF CANDY.** That's right. There's something about sweets. They both mellow me out and give me a little zing, all at the same time. Even those I can't believe you have to go to Harvard to figure out that dark chocolate is a stress reliever. All you have to do is take one bite, and you instantly feel a little closer to Nirvana.

👉 **LAUGH!** Take a Girls Night Out where the focus is getting a belly laugh. Laughter rallies your hormones, and helps your body fight off bacterial intruders. So rent a funny video, watch your favorite sitcom, or buy season tickets to your

local comedy club. (Alternatively, you can just hide behind the door and watch your husband try and take care of the kids for an hour. That's a comedy routine all by itself.)

👉 **JOIN A GIRL BAND.** It's never too late to become Melissa Ethridge or Sheryl Crow. There's research to support a finding that women who play a musical instrument stay healthier longer, because they get out of their own minds when they groove to the music.

👉 **THINK NEGATIVELY.** Yes, you heard me! Forget all this positive stuff. As crazy as it sounds, researchers have actually found that people who are pessimistic and expect everything to go wrong have less anxiety because their expectations are low. So follow your mother's lead and get started worrying! Don't look for happiness. Apparently, it will only make you miserable.

👉 **CELEBRATE YOUR WRINKLES.** What's the deal with botox-freezing your face so you can't smile or cry? Scientists tell us to just load up the cake with those candles, girl! If you