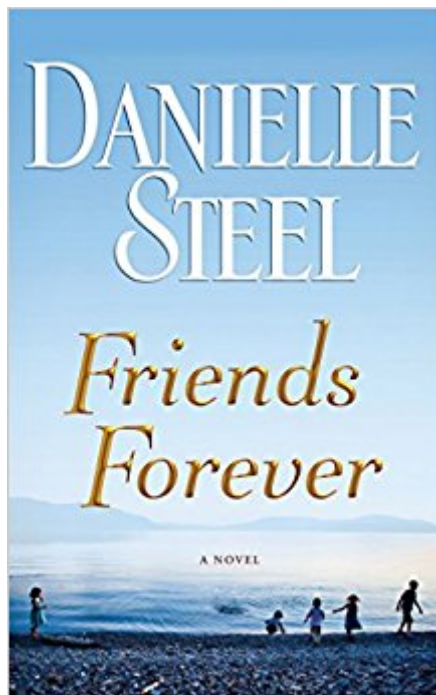


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Friends Forever: A Novel



Synopsis

Two girls and three boys, all with strikingly different looks and talents, meet at the Atwood school as young children. Together, they become an inseparable group—known to outsiders as “The Big Five”—and lean on one another through all the bumps and bends of childhood and adolescence. But when the tight-knit group graduates and scatters to different colleges, their lives diverge dramatically, and some of the friends are lost forever. Those who remain will struggle to understand that even bonds that once seemed unbreakable are not proof against tragedy—but that they can also transform into something new and entirely unexpected.

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Customer Reviews

Danielle Steel has been hailed as one of the world’s most popular authors, with over 600 million copies of her novels sold. Her many international bestsellers include *Betrayal*, *Hotel Vendôme*, *Happy Birthday*, *44 Charles Street*, *Legacy*, *Family Ties*, and other highly acclaimed novels. She is also the author of *His Bright Light*, the story of her son Nick Traina’s life and death.

Chapter 1 The admissions process to get into the Atwood School had eaten up six months of the previous winter, and driven each of the families nearly to distraction with open houses, meet and greets, intense interviews with the parents, sometimes two of them, and screenings of each child. Siblings had some preferential advantage, but each child was evaluated on their own merits,

whether he or she had a sibling in the school or not. Atwood was one of the few coed private schools in San Francisco—most of the old established schools were single sex—and it was the only one that went from kindergarten through twelfth grade, making it highly desirable for families who didn't want to go through the whole process again for either middle school or high school. The admissions letters had come at the end of March, and had been anticipated with the same anxiety as an acceptance to Harvard or Yale. Some of the parents admitted that it was more than a little crazy, but they insisted it was worth it. They said Atwood was a fabulous school, which gave each child the individualized attention they needed, carried enormous social status (which they preferred not to acknowledge), and students who applied themselves in the high school usually went on to great colleges, many of them Ivy League. Getting a kid into Atwood was a major coup. There were roughly six hundred and fifty students, it was well located in Pacific Heights, and the ratio of teacher to students was excellent. And it provided career, college, and psychological support counseling to the students as part of the routine services it offered. When the big day finally came for the new kindergarten class to enter the school, it was one of those rare, hot Indian summer September days in San Francisco, on the Wednesday after Labor Day. It had been over ninety degrees since Sunday, and in the low eighties at night. Such hot weather happened only once or twice a year, and everyone knew that as soon as the fog rolled in, and it would inevitably, the heat would be over, and it would be back to temperatures in the low sixties in the daytime, brisk chilly winds, and the low fifties at night. Usually, Marilyn Norton loved the hot weather, but she was having a tough time with it, nine months pregnant, with her due date in two days. She was expecting her second child, another boy, and he was going to be a big one. She could hardly move in the heat, and her ankles and feet were so swollen that all she had been able to get her feet into were rubber flip-flops. She was wearing huge white shorts that were too tight on her now, and a white T-shirt of her husband's that outlined her belly. She had nothing left to wear that still fit, but the baby would arrive soon. She was just glad that she had made it to the first day of school with Billy. He had been nervous about his new school, and she wanted to be there with him. His father, Larry, would have been with him, unless she'd been in labor, in which case their neighbor had promised to take him, but Billy wanted his mom with him on the first day, like all the other kids. So she was happy to be there, and Billy was holding tightly to her hand as they walked up to the modern, handsome school. The school had built a new building five years before, and it was heavily endowed by parents of current students, and the grateful parents of alums who had done well. Billy glanced up at his mother with an anxious look as they approached the school. He was clutching a small football and was missing his two front teeth. They both had thick manes of curly red hair and

wide smiles. Billy's smile made her grin, he looked so cute without his front teeth. He was an adorable kid and had always been easy. He wanted to make everyone happy, he was sweet to her, and he loved pleasing his dad, and he knew the way to do that was to talk to Larry about sports. He remembered everything his father told him about every game. He was five, and for the past year he had said he wanted to play football for the 49ers one day. "That's my boy!" Larry Norton always said proudly. He was obsessed with sports, football, baseball, and basketball. He played golf with his clients and tennis on the weekends. He worked out religiously every morning, and he encouraged his wife to do the same. She had a great body, when she wasn't pregnant, and she'd played tennis with him until she got too big to run fast enough to hit the ball. Marilyn was thirty years old and had met Larry when they both worked for the same insurance company eight years before when she got out of college. He was eight years older and a great-looking guy. He had noticed her immediately, and teased her about her coppery red hair. Every woman in the place thought he was gorgeous and wanted to go out with him. Marilyn was the lucky winner, and they were married when she was twenty-four. She got pregnant with Billy very quickly, and had waited five years for their second baby. Larry was thrilled it was another boy, and they were going to name him Brian. Larry had had a brief career in baseball, in the minor leagues. He had a legendary pitching arm, which everyone felt certain would get him to the major leagues. But a shattered elbow in a skiing accident had ended his future in baseball, and he had gone to work in insurance. He had been bitter about it at first, and had a tendency to drink too much, and flirt with women when he did. He always insisted it was just social drinking. He was the life of every party. And after Marilyn married him, he left the insurance company and went out on his own. He was a natural salesman, and had established a very successful insurance brokerage business, which afforded them a very comfortable lifestyle, and plenty of luxuries. They had bought a very handsome house in Pacific Heights, and Marilyn had never worked again. And Larry's favorite clients were the professional major-league athletes who trusted him and were his mainstay now. At thirty-eight, he had a good reputation and a very solid business. He was still disappointed he wasn't a pro ballplayer himself, but he readily admitted that he had a great life, a hot wife, and a son who would play ball professionally one day, if he had anything to do with it. Although his life had turned out differently than he planned, Larry Norton was a happy man. He hadn't come to Billy's first day of school because he was having breakfast with one of the 49ers that morning, to sell him more insurance. In cases like that, his clients always came first, particularly if they were stars. But very few of the other kids' fathers had come to school, and Billy didn't mind. His father had promised him an autographed football and

some football cards from the player he was having breakfast with. Billy was thrilled, and content to go to school with just his mom. The teacher at the door where the kindergarten filed in looked down at Billy with a warm smile, and he gave her a shy glance, still holding on to his mother's hand. The teacher was pretty and young, with long blond hair. She looked like she was fresh out of college. Her name tag said that she was an assistant teacher and her name was Miss Pam. Billy was wearing a name tag too. And once in the building, Marilyn took him to his classroom, where a dozen children were already playing, and their classroom teacher greeted him immediately, and asked him if he'd like to leave his football in his cubby so his hands would be free to play. Her name was Miss June, and she was about Marilyn's age. Billy hesitated at the question and then shook his head. He was afraid someone would steal his football. Marilyn reassured him and encouraged him to do what the teacher said. She helped him find his cubby, in the row of open cubbyholes where other children had already left their possessions, and some sweaters. And when they went back into the classroom, Miss June suggested that he might like to play with the building blocks until the rest of his classmates arrived. He thought about it and looked at his mother, who gently nudged him to go. "You like playing with building blocks at home," she reminded him. "I'm not going anywhere. Why don't you go play? I'll be right here." She pointed to a tiny chair, and with considerable difficulty lowered herself into it, thinking that it would take a crane to get her out of it again. And with that, Miss June walked Billy to the building blocks, and he got busy making a fort of some kind with the largest ones. He was a big boy, both tall and strong, which pleased his father. Larry could easily imagine him as a football player one day. He had made it Billy's dream since he was old enough to talk, and his own dream for the boy, even before that, when he was born a strapping ten-pound baby. Billy was bigger than most children his age, but a gentle, loving child. He was never aggressive with other kids, and had made a great impression during his screening at Atwood. They had confirmed that he was not only well coordinated for his size, but also very bright. Marilyn still had trouble imagining that their second son would be as wonderful as Billy. He was the best. And he forgot about his mother as he got busy with the blocks, and she sat uncomfortably on the tiny chair and watched the other children who came in. She noticed a dark-haired boy with big blue eyes arrive. He was shorter than Billy and wiry. And she saw that he had a small toy gun shoved into the waistband of his shorts, and a sheriff's badge pinned to his shirt. She thought that toy guns weren't allowed at school, but apparently it had escaped Miss Pam's attention at the door, with so many children arriving at the same time. Sean was also with his mother, a pretty blond woman in jeans and a white T-shirt, a few years older than Marilyn. Like Billy,

Sean was holding his mother's hand, and a few minutes later he left her to play in the corner with the blocks too, as she watched him with a smile. Sean and Billy began playing side by side, helping themselves to the blocks, and paying no attention to each other.-- Michael Kingcaid
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I loved it, the story and the characters. I've read most of her stories as a young adult and thought that's who her books were written for, your adults. But reading them again now, as an adult, a seasoned adult at that I realize that I was wrong. Her books were written for all, young and well seasoned. It takes a special author, such as Danielle Steel, to write stories that have special meaning to whatever part of life you're going through. I look forward to reading and rereading all her books I can get my hands on. Thank you Ms Steel. Next...

Why? I was looking for a light summer book, sometimes I do like her books for that reason. I don't think she's a good writer, but they are fun at times. This was terrible! I really don't know why I kept going. Besides the depressing death issues, we never actually got in the heads of any of the main characters (or any characters). It was like reading a time line--first this happened, then this happened, and then this happened. Why does she start so many sentences with the word "and"? I also took offense to the character of Izzie becoming a teacher, and being continually reminded that it was "beneath" her. She herself said she only fell into it. I guess being a teacher, it just pissed me off. Especially when her day ended at 2:30 and she was "free to enjoy the afternoon." She also kept alluding to the fact that the current generation of young people are all dying at an early age. Are there any facts to back this up? I know a lot of young people and they are not all dying. By the end of the book, I was actually hoping that the other two main characters would also die.

Danielle Steel is one of my favorite authors. I have been a fan of hers and read many of her novels over the last 20 years. Suffice it to say, I am hooked. Many of my favorite books are written by her. I recently finished her book, Friends Forever. Unfortunately, much of this current book did not engage me. The story was about five friends who met in kindergarten and become immediate friends through their childhood, teen and college years. They dubbed themselves the Big 5, and became inseparable. The cast of characters included them, their parents, stepparents, and siblings. What I

did not enjoy about this book was the pacing. The book moved too fast, rapidly changing from scene to scene. It was quickly flipping back and forth through the characters through time as they advanced from kindergarten to college. Much of the first half of the book was about the parents of the Big 5. This, in my opinion, made it very hard to get any true character development with many of the characters until the last 1/3 of the book. By this time, the story had quickly trimmed the cast down by moving rapidly through drug overdoses, suicide, and an accidental death, and funerals. The overall message was about the risky life choices of this particular generation. The events in the story did affect the lives of the characters. Unfortunately, due to its fast pace, the reader did not have time to feel it. This book could've been so much more. And has a great story line. Who didn't have the "Best Friends" in school. I enjoyed the last third of the book when we finally were left with one main character and her struggles. The book slowed down enough to look inside a couple of the character's motives, feelings, and decisions that they faced. As typically Danielle Steel novels go, it was an easy read. It had an ending that left you feeling good. Unfortunately, it did not capture my heart as some of her previous novels did.

Nice easy going book to read.. I enjoy all of her books. They are easy fat reading books that I download now on my iPad when I go some where . I would recommend this book for readers. They books will take about 7 to 8 hrs to read. Enjoy reading them. !!

Loved this book!!!! This is one of Steele's best and I have read a lot of her books. DS did what great authors do; they draw you into the story and you can't wait to see what happens next. I usually watch TV in the evenings but not while I was reading this book. I could not put it down. Another great sign of a good book is when it's over you want more. I literally screamed when I finished the book because I wanted more. And that is my only flaw with the book; I hated the ending***** Spoiler Alert***** once Paxton found Tony DS should have given us a few more chapters. How did Tony recover from his ordeal? How did they adjust together outside of Vietnam Nam ? And I would have loved to be a part of Tony's reunion with his son. I felt cheated because DS did not give us that. But overall one of her best novels. The Ring & The Promise are also 2 of her great novels.

Good reading again the history of the Russian Imperial Family. Russian ballet has always amazed me. This book describes what great sacrifice people make although sad that the younger generation oft time forget about their grandparents.

all three of the defendants got the death penalty, but later on the exiting governor of illinois got rid of the death penalty, so all sentences were commuted to life without the possibility of parole. all of them deserved the death penalty.debra evans was 9 months pregnant when her ex-boyfriend, her friend, and her friend's boyfriend - all losers - killed her and cut out her baby, who lived. they spared the ex-boyfriend's 17-month-old son, but killed her 10-year-old daughter and 7-year-old son. the boy's murder was especially heinous. her ex-boyfriend was just an angry, violent thug and her friend wanted the baby to please her drug dealer boyfriend.

This is one of my all-time favorite books. I don't read much war-time subject matter, but this story & the writing is absolutely fabulous! I can't count how many times I have re-read this. My paperback copy is falling apart. That's why I purchased this Kindle copy. I got out of my Danielle Steel faze when I was in my 20's, Except for this book. I re-read it every couple of years. I can't rave about it enough.

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