

[\(IA audio recording\)](#)

although i present as the size of a (petite) fourth grader, i've only ever forged friendships mature and outsized, re-imagined, decadent, larger-than-life—i lost my given family far too young, and continue to navigate mid-life without the known societal anchors of a partner or children or extended family, or even in-laws, if you can imagine—but i never, ever wished to be without beloveds, and never, ever could have envisioned a friendship like this.

enter k: the one who never waivers at the gravity of my nontraditional circumstances, the intensity of my need to feel connected—while many in my life have become more tentative or grown avoidant in the face of my paths looking increasingly different, k asks me further & deeper, and again—she shows up naturally and frequently, and refracts back to me the ways that she's considered my perch in ways others haven't (or haven't yet conveyed); we share a myriad of group texts, social circles, and dynamics, but in every one: she's also my constant, my ballast, my guiding north star.

i can't believe, but i can't remember our first date, but it was a blind book club set up in a new york city apartment during our twenties—she was newly engaged and i churning through a thirteen year relationship; both of us working to rise up the stories of others (not yet ready to pen or claim our own), each of us suffering from anxiety and wondering about which bonds to believe in. i was struck by her observational wit, moxie, and comfort with her life—soon, she ever-so-subtly inspired me to purchase a cat off of ebay.

i had, on the face of it, many friends from book clubs in the city—but k and i continued, together: to notice the details, celebrate the joys, acknowledge the sorrows, and all along—witnessing when norms no longer felt normal. we've never faltered or looked away, we've only ever looked on.

like gayle & oprah, aminatou & ann, it's a hybrid mothersisterbestieconfidant; k and i have suffered separately & together without each of these kinds of roles, and so: we've created something even more potent, even more ours.

now we're bicoastal, steering fiercely independent ships, and yet threaded in ways we never let fray—k is a single mother, a writer, an activist, and the unanimously most effervescent presence on any rooftop, road trip, or first date; and i'm a single orphan, business owner, researcher, and storyteller—the one who writes handwritten cards to k's every alter ego and assures her i'll drive her to the hospital no matter the matters, no matter our ages.

we wear matching jewelry, sport vastly different histories and shoe sizes, and share effortlessly, but purposefully the penchants and absurdities of every candidate on our respective dating rosters—which contender has been recently benched, retired, or earned a surprising new place in the lineup. we exchange emails addressed to any current offenders whenever uncertain or unsettled—but send them instead to one another, and respond with the utmost of knowing and care.

our rituals have risen naturally and taken hold without expectation or drama or fuss. (there was that one time when i suggested we send texts upon each takeoff/landing, but, well...)

during a particularly traumatic thanksgiving season of mine, i hopped a plane to k, ashamed not to have an obvious place to be, but instantly: seen and held and folded into the days (and even a couple of the nights, much to the horror of man in the boat shoes' & unexpected ass tattoo (also to my joyous heckles)) in fact, nowhere else existed.

the same weekend, a peaceful morning drive was re-routed by an estate sale (k lives for taxidermy and unexpected adventure, i quite like to haggle & capture the footage)—we culled together every dollar in our shared custody, and strapped a regal reindeer into the backseat next to her perfectly radiant daughter who named it raspberry without hesitation.

with our two dear ones in the rear view mirror, k casually asked if i would serve as her daughter's jewess godmother, a gift and honor which continues to bring me exponential pride and joy each time i'm reminded of it—a grounding i didn't know i could feel, a footing i'll never take for granted—a future that matters, and one that makes only the most perfect of sense after all of the others we've carefully caught and released, known and lost, and together, held sacred.

there's that platitude about friends as chosen family, and for some of us there's simply no other option. so many times i've declared to k—i love and i cherish her—even more than family.