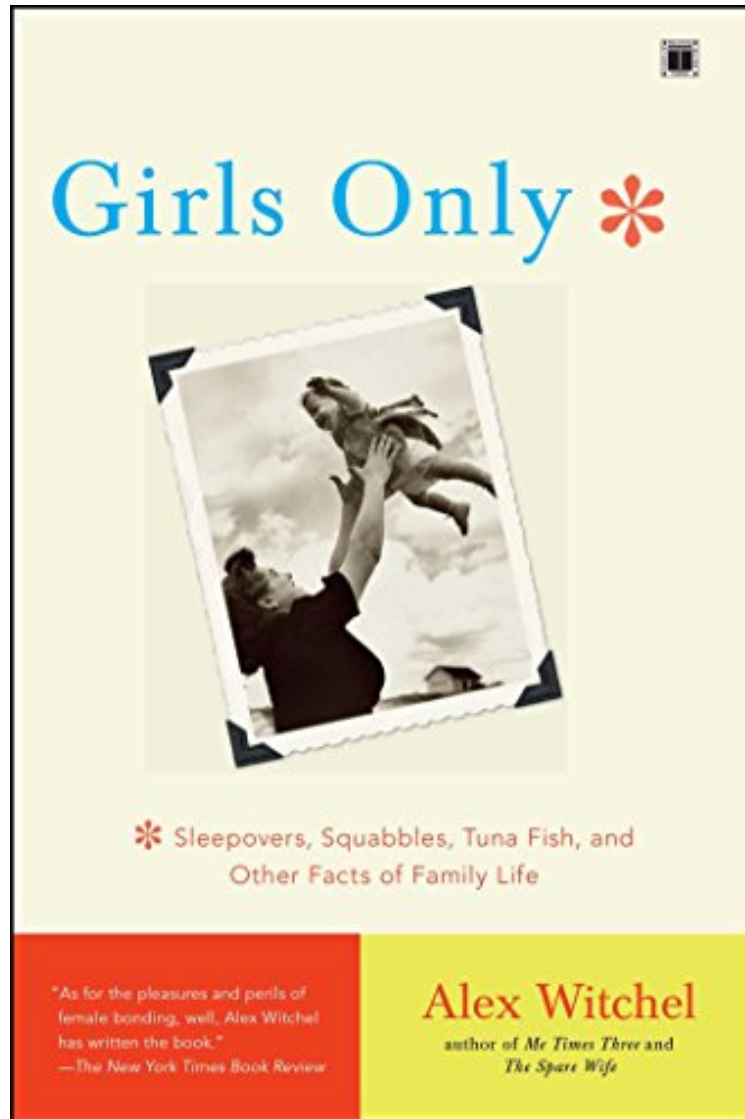


[Free pdf] Girls Only: Sleepovers, Squabbles, Tuna Fish, and Other Facts of Family Life

Girls Only: Sleepovers, Squabbles, Tuna Fish, and Other Facts of Family Life

Alex Witchel

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Alex Witchel : **Girls Only: Sleepovers, Squabbles, Tuna Fish, and Other Facts of Family Life** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Girls Only: Sleepovers, Squabbles, Tuna Fish, and Other Facts of Family Life:

"What I learned from my father was the boys' lesson of dealing in the world -- trust no one and win the first time. What I learned from my mother was the girls' lesson -- trust no one and win the first time, but just in case you don't, come home, eat something, talk about it, have a drink, cry a little, then go back out there and try again." Armed with these family tenets, Alex Witchel goes soul-searching and shopping with the ever-present help of her mother, Barbara, the "human Swiss Army knife who can do it all," and her sister, Phoebe, Alex's perpetual rival and best friend. These three form a family within a family, and with a passionate unity they offer each other sharp, witty, and (occasionally exasperating) insights on everything from men, pedicures, and careers to sibling rivalry, the challenges of stepparenting, and the pains of aging and loss. Insightful, poignant, and hilarious by turns, *Girls Only* is a memoir that celebrates the one thing that remains "for women only"...mother/daughter/sister love.

"As for the pleasures and perils of female bonding, well, Alex Witchel has written the book." - The New York Times Book "A glorious celebration of mom." -- The Boston Globe "A gifted writer.... Witchel has an ability to write about mothers, daughters, and sisters in a way that evokes a sense of connection." -- USA Today "A blast to read." -- Pittsburgh Post-Gazette "Wickedly funny and poignant...An utter delight, *Girls Only* is tea at the Stanhope in the raucous, irreverent, and ultimately delicious company of those who know you best and love you most." -- BookPage "In *Girls Only*, Alex Witchel's beat is her own family. What a good reporter she is! Her book is sweet and tough-minded, funny and serious." -- Susan Isaacs "Wickedly observant...Ms. Witchel is sardonic, mournful, and hilarious, sometimes all at once...In an era of mom-bashing, it's refreshing to read about a passionate mother-lover." -- The New York Times "My mother will wish Alex Witchel was her daughter. This loving, witty, and wise book is a tribute to life with Mother. It's not for girls only, it's for anyone who loves his or her family." -- Wendy Wasserstein

About the Author Alex Witchel is a staff writer for The New York Times Magazine and also writes "Feed Me," a monthly column for the Times Dining section. The author of the novels *The Spare Wife* and *Me Times Three*, she lives in New York City with her husband, Frank Rich. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Introduction I am the oldest child, and even though I have a sister and two brothers, I have always considered myself the only child. Surprised? Don't be. There isn't an eldest child alive who doesn't secretly think the same thing, and though I can't speak from experience, I suspect the babies of the family feel the same way. It's those middle children who would object, but the poor things have no choice. They've got to do something to get attention. My family has its own unique configuration, which goes like this: First, there is me. First child, first grandchild, eyewitness to the tiny apartment before the first house -- not to mention all those long-gone relatives the rest only know from home movies, the ones with the red lipstick and flabby upper arms, which never stopped them from wearing the latest in strapless taffeta. Three years after me came Greg. I have promised to leave him out of this tale as much as possible since, as a classic middle child, his way of getting attention is to demand none. But here's where it gets interesting. In a marked departure from her early sixties' peers, my mom decided, after she had two children, to renounce Donna Reed as a role model and earn her doctorate in educational psychology. So until I was ten the only intruder in my world was Greg. But, alas, my father, Sam, who works on Wall Street -- though you could pay me a million dollars and I still couldn't explain what he does -- always felt it was his personal mission to remedy the Holocaust by being fruitful and multiplying. So, when my mom finished her degree, she went back to work and back to babies. Phoebe was next. I came home from the fourth grade for lunch one day and there she was in her brand-new crib. Bright red and screaming so hard that all the cords in her newborn neck stood out. And you know what? She wasn't making a sound. None at all. Which tells you everything you need to know about being a middle child, with the added indignity of being the second middle child. Emmett came three years later, on New Year's Eve. I was thirteen by then and more concerned that the color of my choker match my bell-bottoms than about an occurrence as mundane as the arrival of a new baby had become in our house. The most attention I paid him was being the only one with the grace to faint dead away at his circumcision, which, quaintly enough, was held in our Scarsdale living room, right in front of the grandfather clock. I couldn't help but think of the prayer that Orthodox Jewish men say, in which they thank God they were not born women. Fools! Anyway, now the lineup was even: two girls and my mom, two boys and my dad. One family of a girl and a boy, then a second one ten years later. But almost from the start, it seems, we broke on gender lines rather than age. The boys raked leaves, shoveled snow and threw softballs. They learned to talk about the stock market and where to gas up the car for less. The girls set the table, cleaned up and went shopping. We learned to talk about feelings and which department store had the best Clinique bonus. The only politically correct thing in our house was being a Democrat. The boys meant business, in our family, and my father was the CEO: What did you get on your report card? How much is your allowance and why do you need more? Who won the War of 1812? But the girls meant home. They were the ones who asked: How did you sleep? What did you dream? Can I borrow your pearls? What I learned from my father was the boys' lesson of dealing in the world -- trust no one and win the first time. What I learned from my mother was the girls' lesson -- trust no one and win the first time, but just in case you don't, come home, eat something, talk about it, have a drink, cry a little, then go back out there and try again. What can I say? I enjoyed being a girl. So that's how it happened, with no conscious decision on anyone's part, really, that as the years went by, my mom, my

sister and I formed our own family within the family. Girls Only. Copyright 1996 by Alex Witchel