


A GIRL'S GUIDE TO BEING FEARLESS

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A teal-colored background featuring a stylized, high-contrast map of the world. The landmasses are rendered in a lighter shade of teal, while the oceans are a darker shade. The map is centered and occupies most of the frame.

Tired of trying to cram
her sparkly star-shaped
self into society's beige
square holes, she chose
to embrace her ridiculous
awesomeness and shine
like the freaking supernova
she was meant to be.

-Unknown

Chapter 1

A LETTER TO THE SISTERHOOD



DARLING READER,

Congratulations on an excellent choice of book. We hope you enjoy every last page, even the ones you find challenging. Which might include these first few. Sorry.

First up, a small confession: we've misled you with the title. Being 'Fearless' isn't actually a thing. You can't be a properly functioning human being and feel no fear at all. It's a perfectly normal – and *sometimes* useful – emotion. Love it or loathe it, fear will keep showing up in your life, to some degree or other, forever.

Our goal with this book isn't to rid you of it. Quite the opposite. We want you to feel fear. Often. We'll explain ourselves in Chapter 9, but basically it's a sure-fire sign that you're pushing yourself to be better. And that's something you should want to do every day. Not better than 'her' of the telly, or 'her' on Instagram, or even 'her' at school. But better than the version of yourself that you were yesterday.

Our goal, instead, is to help you acknowledge fear when it shows up. Shake its hand. Give it a front row ticket to watch you cracking on *in spite* of it... and occasionally glance in its direction to give it a cheeky wink, so it never forgets who's running the frickin' show.

So, yeah, we want you to feel fear. And while we're at it, there are a few other things we want for you, too.

From time to time in the years to come, we hope you'll be treated unfairly. Perhaps you'll miss an opportunity through no fault of your own or get blamed for someone else's mess. And we hope these things happen frequently enough that you'll come to know the value of justice. We hope you'll learn a bonus lesson when

you're out the other side – how to shake it off and move onwards, with a beautiful smile on your beautiful face.

We hope that, at some point, your bestie lets you down. Sure, you'll feel awful but, fingers crossed, it'll teach you the importance of loyalty. And, sorry to say, but we also hope you'll feel lonely now and then. Not big bouts of loneliness, they're plain horrible, but long enough stretches for you to learn never to take friends and family for granted.

We also wish you bad luck – again, from time to time – so that you'll be conscious of the role of chance in life and understand that your success isn't always deserved. . . and that the failure of others isn't always deserved either. And when you lose, which you will (frequently), we hope some of your opponents gloat over their victory. It'll be during those times that you'll understand the importance of winning with grace.

We hope you'll be ignored so you know the importance of listening to others, and we hope you'll feel just enough pain to learn compassion.

We wish you illness, both minor and major. An occasional toothache, migraine or period pain will be enough to remind you to appreciate the fact that most of the time your body does a marvellous job of getting you around town. Please don't take this next sentence the wrong way, but we also wish you something more substantial; a recoverable health scare that truly knocks you for six. Once you've crawled yourself back to wellness, we're confident you'll have a refreshed attitude to the simple miracle of being alive.

Mentally, we wish you an occasional bout of something that robs you of your mojo – temporarily, of course. An episode of sadness

can have rejuvenating properties. Learning to cope with your thoughts is one of life's biggest challenges, but luckily for you, that's what this book is all about.

At school, we hope there's at least one subject you hate, probably taught by a teacher you loathe. Time will surely drag and you'll struggle to see the point of being there. . . until later in life, when you attend boring management meetings chaired by incompetent bosses, and you'll realise those hateful lessons were excellent prep.

Career-wise, we hope you don't nail every job interview you sit through and that, on occasion, inferior colleagues get promoted ahead of your brilliant self. There'll be a lesson to take away. . . though we're not entirely sure what that one is. Temporary gnashing of teeth is okay, but contrary to popular belief, the best revenge isn't to let their tyres down. It's to truly shine at work and make your employer wonder how the hell they could have got it so wrong in the first place.

And if we could be granted two more wishes, we'd save the biggest till last.

Firstly, love. We sincerely hope you fall headlong into the stuff, and that one or two of those relationships come to an end. We hope it feels like your life has been torn apart. . . and that's good, because it basically will have been. And after weeks of sobbing, we hope you learn to move on. Stronger, with lessons learned, and a sharpened ability to find better, longer-lasting love. We truly hope your bad experiences don't stop you loving in the future. Rather, they make you better at loving. We hope you twig that moving on and living well really is the best revenge. Our hope (and it's a biggie) is that you realise that being nasty to someone who broke up with you might – just *might* – mean they were right about you all along.

Which brings us to bereavement. Once again, please take this next sentence in the manner in which it's intended: we hope that, on occasion, someone close to you passes away. Elderly great-grandparents might be easiest to cope with, but sometimes, beautiful girl, it's going to have to be closer than that. And it'll be gut-wrenchingly painful. We hope that you'll wrap yourself up in the love of those around you. And that, in time, you'll heal and move forward, holding them tightly in your heart and accepting that that's simply how the circle of life rolls around. One day, it'll be you who's gone and that gut-wrenching feeling will pass down to the next generation, as it has since humans were invented.

The point is that whether we wish these things or not, they're 100% going to happen. Every single one of them. Indeed, some will happen several times.

People may call these occasions 'tragedies' or 'plot twists'. We just call them 'the facts of life'.

Life isn't fair, but then, if you stop and think about it, nobody ever said it was. Try starting from the position that life isn't ever going to be fair and you'll feel your anxiety wash away.

Sure, some people seem to have more of it to contend with, but adversity is a consequence of being alive. And whether you benefit from it will depend upon your ability to see the message in the misfortune.

Oh, and one last thing: remember, there is one fact that often gets forgotten. It's this: life also has its ups. Loads of them. Don't forget to relish those.

So much love, Suze and Dr Andy

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