A Hypothetical

What would you do if you knew you could not fail?

Jun 27, 2025

Hi there!

The summer after I graduated from high school, I stayed with my godfather and his family in Sydney. I got to spend my days with his kids and drinking coffee and soaking in the Australian sun. My godfather has a favorite brand of tea and on each of the tea tags there would be a different saying or inspirational quote. This was one of them:

“What would you do if you knew you could not fail?”

I want you to use this as a prompt to dreamstorm1.

a photo from a recent trip to Montana

Before I go any further — lets do the housekeeping.

First, if you are not already a subscriber and you resonate with any of the following descriptors, consider joining the cooperative: (1) Early-career professional; (2) Feminist; (3) Do-gooder; (4) Former Gifted Kid; (5) Overachiever; or (6) Capitalism-hater.

Second, if you like what I am saying and it makes you think of someone in your family/office/friend group, send it their way.

Share Femme Futures Cooperative

Third, I say some personal and vulnerable shit every week. Say some vulnerable shit back. It’s called a community.

Leave a comment

Okay — back to it.

My answer at 18: I would learn how to surf.

I craved the quiet stillness of being out on the water just beyond the breakers. I craved the feeling of the sun hot on my back and the ocean cool on my legs. That summer, while I was living in Sydney with my godfather, I would go to the beach with him while he surfed and I would never get in the water. I knew where I would fail: I don’t like swimming in general and in the ocean in particular. I still have never even tried to learn to surf. (Yet.)

At 25, when I consider that question, I think about getting good at the things I care about. Maybe I would invest in writing by taking a course in my community and committing to this year’s National Novel Writing Month. I could commit to taking my climbing more seriously and try to climb outside more often.

The question that I am left with is, “Why not?”

There are two ways that my brain wants to go with this. The first is the path of least resistance, aka. the excuses. I am really good at coming up with reasons why not to do the thing that I am craving. It is easy to come up with a long list of how I could fail.

Author Amie McNee spends a chapter of her book “We Need Your Art” trying to defang the notion of failing. Her arguments make sense, because what even is failing really? I understand it in theory, but when I think about failing, I still feel the lump in my throat. My excuses keep me from having to face the physical sensation of failing.

The other direction that asking myself “why not” can take me is the more productive path. I can push myself to consider the obstacles in my path and devise ways around them.

If I really want to write a novel, but I know that I burn out on writing 10,000 words a day consistently after about three weeks, there are a couple of tools that I can reach for. First, I can lower my goal and accept that writing every day is not sustainable for me. It is okay to fail and try again. I can try Amie’s “Two Week Reset” and spend some time at my “bare maximum”. There is also the fact of the matter that I have proven to myself that I am capable of long pushes in other areas of my life, be it job hunting for six straight months or consistently publishing newsletters for over a year.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Hi there! Remember a while back when I shared this letter from my friend? I would love to keep the From a Friend series going.

If you want to challenge yourself to write a letter to the Femme Futures community, please reach out to me. I am happy to be sent completed works or to help you brainstorm a piece.

There are no age/gender/occupation restrictions.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

<3 Zoe

I don’t know how you would react to the question: “What would you do if you knew you could not fail?”

That being said, I bet I am not alone in how I react to it. I wonder though if you can make something beautiful from the process of (1) dreamstorming, (2) dream-quashing, and (3) dream-planning.

All my best,

Zoe