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Freedom: My Book of Firsts

By Jaycee Dugard



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In the follow-up to her #1 bestselling memoir, *A Stolen Life*, Jaycee Dugard tells the story of her first experiences after years in captivity: the joys that accompanied her newfound freedom and the challenges of adjusting to life on her own.

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A Stolen Life, which sold nearly two million copies, told the story of Jaycee's life from her abduction in 1991 through her reappearance in 2009. *Freedom: My Book of Firsts* is about everything that happened next.

“How do you rebuild a life?” Jaycee asks.

In these pages, she describes the life she never thought she would live to see: from her first sight of her mother to her first time meeting her grownup sister, her first trip to the dentist to her daughters' first day of school, her first taste of champagne to her first hangover, her first time behind the wheel to her first speeding ticket, and her first dance at a friend's wedding to her first thoughts about the possibility of a future relationship.

This raw and inspiring book will remind readers that there is, as Jaycee writes, “life after something tragic happens.... Somehow, I still believe that we each hold the key to our own happiness and you have to grab it where you can in whatever form it might take.”



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Editorial Review

About the Author

Jaycee Dugard is the author of the memoir *A Stolen Life*, which tells the story of her kidnapping and eighteen years of captivity. Her second book is *Freedom: My Book of Firsts*.

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Freedom

Fly Me to the Moon

First time I flew in the plane I was six years old, and my mom had a boyfriend that was a pilot. I remember it was a little plane and I threw up. It wasn't the most fun I ever had for sure. I never flew again until eighteen years later, after my rescue.

The first time I flew in a big plane I was worried that same feeling of nausea would come back from my younger days. The chance to fly in a big plane far outweighed any fears I had, though, and I was looking forward to this new experience. I didn't want to think about being sick. I just wanted to fly!

Having a lot of time on my hands in the prison of Phillip and Nancy's backyard, I had a lot of time to dream and fantasize. One fantasy I had was having the ability to fly like Peter Pan. Often dreaming that with a little fairy dust I could fly myself home—Poof! . . . Tinker Bell, where are you? I would cry. But she never came.

I also imagined myself flying from city to city as a flight attendant one day. I thought it would be so much fun to see the world in this way. From London to Paris. Rome, Italy, Egypt. I have always wanted to see the pyramids. I did get to see the Mayan ruins on a trip to Belize. A group of us went to help a tiny village called Monkey River rebuild after the devastating hurricane that they were still recovering from. While there, we explored a pyramid called Altun Ha which means "stone water." It was amazing and so big. Climbing to the top I felt like a queen. But I digress. I will tell you more of this story later.

This trip was to be my first meeting with Nancy Seltzer. Our need for protection from the media was an obvious priority from the beginning of our recovery. We needed the time to focus on each other and not the constant hounding of the media we were experiencing. Some people wanted to help, and we got involved with one in particular that we thought we could trust. It didn't end up that way, and we didn't know where to turn for help after that.

Rebecca wanted to help but had her hands full with not only our therapy needs but also dealing with all the agencies and law enforcement involved with the court case against Phillip and Nancy Garrido, our captors. Her brother-in-law, an actor, knew of our plight and suggested a woman that he trusted in the business of public relations. Rebecca passed this information on to me and, together with my mom, we contacted Nancy Seltzer and explained our story. We asked for her help and, thankfully, she agreed and the rest is history. She did what she said she would and protected us from the media and those who were seeking to exploit us.

On the day of my first flight, we were actually met in the airport parking lot by a security guard and taken through a special way to avoid any press that was lurking. My story was still new then and in high demand. I

was accompanied on this trip by my mom and therapist Rebecca.

Once we boarded, I remember the flight attendant asking me if I was old enough to be sitting in the exit row. How funny she would ask, I thought. She said I looked like I was fifteen. No, I replied, I'm thirty! She was shocked. I don't look my age, apparently. Still don't to this day. The other day I was in Costco. They had the food samples out. I went to take one that looked like a health drink, and the lady at the booth stopped me and said, "You have to be over eighteen to drink that." What? Hello . . . I'm thirty-five! I also went to a wedding once and during the toast I was served Martinelli's sparkling apple juice instead of Champagne! I had even put on makeup! Come on, people, I am a grown-up! Anyways, I'm wandering again. The flight attendant did let me keep my seat.

Over the speaker system "Fly Me to the Moon," by Frank Sinatra came on. I looked at Mom, who was sitting beside me, and we shared a smile. Fly us to the moon, Frank, this is our song! That actually helped me to relax. Until we started to accelerate and actually take off. My hands and fingers dug into the armrest. My mom asked if I was okay, and with gritted teeth, I answered "Yep." Turns out, I was okay for the entire trip. I did some deep breathing and looked straight ahead the whole way. Landing made me queasy. I knew I had to take an airsickness pill next time. Rebecca recommended Dramamine. I have taken it ever since, and flights have become so much easier. I have also found a homeopathic remedy, MotionEaze, that works for me on short flights.

Nancy picked us up from the airport herself. Meeting her was like meeting an old friend. One that felt like I had known forever. Actually, with all the talks we had had over the phone up to that point, I really did feel like I already knew her and, most importantly, like I could trust her. So when we met face-to-face that day it felt comfortable. I knew she had our backs and would do all she could to protect me and my family from the prying eyes of the media. Her two beautiful dogs sealed the deal as they greeted us excitedly in the car. I knew right then she was a friend for life.

Later, getting to know Nancy, we decided she needed a nickname. Funny how a certain name can follow you. "Nancy" is that name for me. Although there has only been one "Bad Nancy," the new Nancy in my life wanted a name that didn't remind me of the old one. She said as a child she had had the nickname of Nanny Goat for her way of taking care of everyone she loved. So she became my Nanny Goat in more ways than one.

We stayed with Nanny Goat a few days. She introduced me to some people that would become very important in my life. One of them was Michael, who would take care of my finances, and another was Dale, who would represent me and my daughters in our lawsuit against the state. Our stay was very productive and a whole new experience of meeting people for me.

The flight back home was scheduled for nighttime, and we were a little late getting to our gate for the flight. As we walked through the tiny airport, I suddenly heard our names over the speakers. "Terry Probyn, Jaycee Dugard, Rebecca Bailey, please proceed to your gate." Rebecca looked scared as she ran ahead to ask them to stop. (Remember, the press was still hounding us. That very day a reporter from a tabloid had gone by Rebecca's house and asked where Rebecca was. The reporter told her fifteen-year-old who answered the door that he was with the FBI and needed to find her.) Guess what happened at the airport. No one even looked twice as our name was repeated over the loudspeaker again and again. Funny how I could be in plain sight and no one noticed!

I remember that day on the flight home, sitting there holding my mom's hand as we took off, and she said, "Look out the window." I said, "No I can't." I didn't want to be sick if I turned my head to look, and it was

scary being so high up from the ground. My mom promised me I would like what I saw. I turned my head and opened my eyes. I realized I didn't feel sick, so I looked out a little more and I saw diamonds twinkling, shining bright, but not in the sky. They were below me. Beautiful sparkling diamonds on the ground and me looking high above them. I forgot to be scared in that moment. I had never seen such a magical display of twinkling lights, even more brilliant than the night sky. From then on, I couldn't wait for my next flight. I still have to take Dramamine, but I enjoy flying more because I remember those twinkling diamonds. Happy memories help when you're afraid. I always try for a window seat so I can look out over the world. I never get sick of the sight.

I've been on many flights now and I've even flown all by myself. The first time I flew by myself was actually a pretty fun adventure, even though I didn't think it was at the time. For a while the thought of traveling alone was really scary. What happened if I got lost? What if I got on the wrong plane and ended up in a strange city? What would I do then? My mom and sister encouraged me to try it but only when I was ready. My sister, again the little one teaching the older one, told me it would be fun to travel alone. She thought I was more than capable of handling any situation that came up. Encouragement like that is what helps the most in new situations and adventures.

I got the chance to take this advice and encouragement sometime later. I was coming back from a visit to my sister's house. My mom was staying a few extra days, and I was planning on going on my first solo flight. I felt ready to face this new challenge.

The flight had a layover in Dallas. I had been on layovers before and knew the routine. The plane was late taking off, so I knew I had to run to my next flight when we landed. To prepare myself, I studied the magazine with the layout of the airport in it. I knew from previous flights that Dallas was a big airport with trains to take you from terminal to terminal. The first time I was in the Dallas airport the group I was traveling with got on the wrong train, and we ended up across the airport with five minutes to spare before our next flight. I was not going to do it again, especially not by myself! The man next to me saw me looking at the terminal layout and offered some helpful suggestions and helped me plot my course to the assigned gate. I was thankful because I would have been too shy to ask for help.

As soon as I was able to disembark, I ran for all I was worth to the gate assigned to my flight. I had checked my luggage, so I just had my purse and made good time. I even had to navigate the dreadful train. I finally made it to the correct gate only to find out that the gate had been changed! What the?! I ran to the next gate only to find out that my flight had been delayed anyway. Relieved but out of breath, I sat and realized that I needed to charge my phone because I had 10 percent power left. I walked to find an outlet to charge my phone. It was around 10:30 at night and my flight was rescheduled for 11:15 p.m. I thought I had a few minutes at least to charge my phone. (Why are iPhone batteries always running out when you need them the most?)

After charging for a bit, I decided to head back to my gate. Walking back, I became a little worried because the airport seemed deserted and some areas had cots out. Upon reaching my gate I saw there was nobody at the desk, actually nobody anywhere. Oh no, what should I do? I thought to myself, Don't panic. You can handle this. Like Dory says, "Just keep swimming, just keep swimming." I walked a few gates down and finally found somebody at a desk. I said, "Excuse me, but my flight was delayed and now there's nobody there. What happened?" She said, "Oh, the flight was canceled." Just like that, like it was no big deal. I'm in Dallas-Fort Worth and my flight has been canceled! I'm alone in some strange city airport! And where in the hell was my luggage? I felt like I couldn't handle it. But I knew there was nobody else to handle it for me. I was on my own and it felt . . . different.

I said, “Well, what am I going to do?” She didn’t really answer me and acted like she didn’t know. I didn’t really know if I should repeat my question or just continue to stand there. As I stood there, she handed me a bunch of papers she had printed out. She called them vouchers. She explained that one was for dinner tonight in the airport (even though all the stands had closed for the night) and a taxi ride to the hotel. I’m thinking to myself, Oh my God, I’m going to have to go to a hotel by myself and take a cab ride! She went on to say that there was one for another cab ride back to the airport in the morning, one for breakfast, and a voucher for a standby flight. I took the tickets from her and walked to the exit.

Looking up at the airport exit sign felt like a turning point. “Exit your old life,” it seemed to say. “Exit now and become . . . what?” Okay, I said to myself. Just keep swimming. I have never been so scared in my life . . . Well, that’s not true. I had never been in this kind of situation before was all. It felt scary and new and different. Sometimes I have to remind myself what I have been through. People tell me I am strong, brave, etc. To be honest, I usually just tell myself I am lucky. How funny is that to think I’m lucky after everything I have been through.

But on that day I did not feel lucky at all—just annoyed, frustrated, tired, and a little scared. I left the relative safety I felt in the airport and entered a hot, muggy unpredictable night. It was past midnight by this time. I didn’t know what I was supposed to do really, but luckily, there were a few taxis still outside at that time of night. I peeked in the open window and told the driver I had vouchers for a cab ride to this hotel in downtown Fort Worth. He said, “I can take you” in a heavy foreign accent. Okay, I told myself, this is going to be okay. Just stay alert. Be present. Stay in the moment. All things I had learned from Rebecca.

After what felt like hours of riding in a stranger’s cab, I thought to myself, Where is he taking me? Does he know where to go? Is he taking me somewhere to rape and kill me? In reality, though, the ride to the hotel was probably no more than twenty-five to thirty minutes. I gave myself permission to have all these thoughts because I felt like if I thought about all the things that could happen, then they wouldn’t. It’s the things you don’t think about that get you. Of course, nothing of the sort happened, but can you blame me for thinking of all the worst scenarios that could? How much bad luck can a girl have, though, right?

We arrived at the hotel. The cabdriver turned out not to be a serial killer but a very nice man. He asked if I would be returning to the airport in the morning and I said yes. He gave me his number and said to call when I was ready and he would pick me up. I thanked him and left the sanctuary of the cab to enter the jungle of a strange city. Well, it wasn’t quite the jungle, and it actually felt pretty safe. I walked the few steps and entered the still brightly lit lobby of my hotel for the night. I showed the desk my voucher and they gave me a room. I navigated my way to the elevator and was relieved to have already learned how to easily find my hotel room. Room 202 so that would put me on the second floor. Wipe the sweat from my brow for figuring that out.

By the time I reached my room, I had to go to the bathroom something fierce. Mother Nature is not kind. I realized she had given me my monthly gift and I had bled through my pants. Mother Nature also gives us brilliant ideas to deal with problems such as these. Since I had checked my luggage and was wearing the only clothes I had, I would wash my pants in the sink and hang them to dry, for surely they would dry by morning. (Which I forgot was already here at one in the morning.) But sometimes things are overlooked in times of crisis. I washed my pants in the sink and got most of the stain out. I hung them over the shower rod to dry.

I ate the meager snacks I had from my first plane ride and fell asleep quickly. Only to be woken up an hour later to the sounds of yelling from the room next door. I must admit at first it startled me with thoughts of bullets flying through the wall. But I told myself again to just chill out and go back to sleep. I finally fell

asleep again around 3:00 a.m. and woke the next morning to my alarm.

First thing I did was check my pants and yes, of course, they were still very, very damp. I had no other clothing to put on, so I put them on and tied my sweater around my waist. I called the number I had been given by the cabdriver the night before, and he said he would be there in fifteen minutes to pick me up. I got ready and went downstairs to meet him. By the time I got downstairs, there was a line of cabdrivers already in front of the hotel. One saw me and immediately descended upon me like I was some kind of tasty morsel for him to consume. I told him I had already called for a ride, but in their foreign language I don't know if they understood me. I kept saying, No, thank you, but he kept saying, No, that's not how it works. I was feeling very intimidated, so I called my cabdriver back and explained what was going on. He said, It's okay. Just go ahead and use the first cab in the line. I thanked him for his trouble and got into the cab. Who knew there was cab etiquette? I mean, shouldn't you just be able to get in any cab you want? So many rules to figure out sometimes. Why can't things just be simple?

On arriving back at the airport, I went into the security line thinking I had a plane ticket. The security officer informed me that I didn't have a ticket and said it was a voucher for a ticket and I needed to go to the airline desk. I went to the front desk and was told that I was going to be put on standby for the next available flight home. It came with a layover, too. Again what happened to simple? It turned out my flight had to go four hours in one direction and then back the same way two hours to get where I needed to go. It wasn't like I was going to a tiny airport, even. In fact, it was to a big airport in a major city. It seems like something is a little off in that thinking. The lady next to me told me she had taken a plane to a city in the Midwest and because of weather she had to land in a different city. She added that when she got to that city, the airline had to put her on a bus because they had no room on any planes to the city she actually needed to be in. She told me the bus ride took two hours and when she got there, she had to book a flight back to her car at the original airport where she was supposed to land. The airline had told her nowhere did her ticket say they had to fly her to her destination. I guess it might make sense to somebody, but it didn't to me. Five hours later, I finally arrived home, exhausted but very proud of myself.

Users Review

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