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# CAPITAL GAINES

SMART THINGS I LEARNED DOING STUPID STUFF

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This book is a love letter . . .

To Jo, of course. You are the best part of me, the  
best part of this crazy life we are living.

To Drake, Ella, Duke, and Emmie. You are my greatest  
achievement. I look at you four and the whole world feels  
cracked open: beautiful and innocent and true.

To my parents and sister and Jo's parents and sisters. We would  
not be us apart from you. You have shaped us in so many ways.

To my best friends, each one of you, in every season of my  
life. Those days were my training ground for all that was  
to come: the good, the bad, and the just plain dumb.

To Magnolia, my favorite team I've ever been on.  
There's hope in each of you. The work you do makes me  
confident that tomorrow will be even better than today.  
And you know what? We're just getting started.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

I've never been one to give luck much credit, but you've got your hands on this book for one reason or another, so let's just assume this has happened for a reason. That said, for this period of time that we're together, I'd like to be your coach and have you on my team! I'll always shoot you straight. To start, your time as a spectator has officially ended - I'm putting you in the race. I want us to work this thing out together, side by side. I'm going to run this leg of the race with you, but get ready because in the end, I'm going to hand you the baton.

Sincerely,

- *Chief*

## FOREWORD BY JOANNA GAINES

As you may have already heard, choosing the cover photo of this book was quite the process. At first, I was like everyone else when I told Chip he needed to pick a “safer” option. I told him no one would get the raw and candid one, and it may be a bit confusing for the actual cover. But the more I would hear Chip talk about why he loved this picture so much, the more I started to see his point of view.

For one thing, you can clearly see the wishbone-shaped scar on his forehead. He got that scar after doing something that was pretty stupid, but the life lesson not only marked him but changed him forever. This experience seems to be perfectly embody the subtitle of this book. He also loved the idea that this picture was shot on the farm, on the way to photoshoot—hat on backwards, no makeup, no touch ups, no fancy camera lights, just a man on his ATV, riding through a pasture.

This reminded me so much of when Chip talks about how life isn't about arriving at the farm; instead it's what happens *on the way* to the farm. For us, the farm is our dream. Most people have an ideal life that they imagine for their future. Something that they work toward and dream of. This is what the farm represents to us.

And yet the point Chip makes is that life didn't start here. We didn't get happier, we didn't become the people we were always meant to be,

once we got to the farm. All those things were worked out during the journey that led us there—*that* was the essential part. That was where the endless choices existed, the ones that determined who we were going to be and what kind of story we were going to tell with our lives. You can arrive at your dream a lot of different ways, but you also arrive there as a different version of yourself based on whatever pathway you choose.

I love this book for a lot of reasons, but mostly because it's about what happened *on the way*. Chip is a good man. I could not be more proud to be his wife, antics and all. But he didn't land on the farm and suddenly become the hardworking man of character he is. He, like all of us, was forged in the daily choosing.

This book inspires me once again to live even more intentionally *on the way*. None of us have arrived; we are all just figuring this thing out as we go. But being by Chip's side, I can't help but want to live braver, to dream bigger, and to hold family even closer.

My hope is that when you read this book, you are reminded to not let your mistakes or shortcomings define you. In fact, I hope you see that these are the actual opportunities for you to choose to be the person you always hoped to be.

TO ENJOYING THE JOURNEY!

—JOANNA

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Thank you to these creative minds. Without your help this book would just be a dream.

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| My Book Club, My Rodeo Clowns

Joanna | for icing my drinks and sharpening my pencils

*There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under the heavens:*

*a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,  
a time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build,  
a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance,  
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,  
a time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,  
a time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,  
a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.*

ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8

*PART 1*

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# A TIME TO LEARN

## FAILURE TO LAUNCH

I was a normal kid as far as I knew. I didn't feel any different from the kids in my first-grade class. I rode the bus just like everyone else, traded baseball cards during recess, and never let my mom send me to school with a sack lunch on pizza day.

Despite the striking similarities between me and my classmates, one simple fact set us apart: I had yet to learn my ABCs. In case you accidentally glossed over that first paragraph, I was in the *first* grade. I wasn't three or four. I was seven-and-a-half years old. Yet here I was struggling to read basic sentences.

The first-grade teachers at my elementary school split their classes into four different reading groups. At first, I didn't think anything of it. They were just different teams with cool bird mascots. There were the Eagles, the Falcons, the Blue Jays, and of course the mighty Penguins—the group I was a proud member of. I was the only penguin in Mrs. Redding's class, although there were definitely a few others scattered throughout the first grade. I'm not sure exactly how she decided

who went into which group, but I do know that when it was time to read, the penguins were ushered out of our individual classrooms and into the gym. And just so you're getting the full picture here: it was a great big gymnasium holding about fifteen kids, some of which had been diagnosed with actual learning disabilities.

And *me*.

I knew it wasn't "normal" that I couldn't read yet, but it never occurred to me that it was something to be embarrassed about. It's possible that the other kids in my class made fun of me as soon as I skipped off to the gym, but if they did, I never knew it. In fact, the thought of that happening never really crossed my mind. My positive outlook has blinded me to plenty of things over the years. Maybe it also protected me at times from the things that I didn't need to see.

Have you ever heard the phrase, "looking at the world through rose-colored glasses?" Well, if there ever was a poster child for this, it would have been me. And even now, I am just fine seeing the world through these lenses. This typically leads me to see the best in people, rather than the worst.

I've always had the ability to play things to the positive. Here's how that mind-set played out back in first grade. Kids can be cruel. So looking back, there's a decent chance that at least one of the kids in my class was calling me names while I was off learning to recite my ABCs. But rather than think about these possibilities, I was excited that I was invited to the gym in the first place. Honored even. Look, any chance I got to go to the gymnasium was a win in my book. I loved getting to see the other penguins. We really only got good time together on Thursday afternoons from one until two forty-five. I'd walk in there and be like, "Whaaat? Where have you guys been? Wait, do you get to hang out in the gym *all* week? How did you score that? Luckies!"

Looking back, I'm not sure if the act of labeling our group as Penguins was random or not, but the symbolism isn't lost on me. All the other bird species in my first-grade reading class could fly—except penguins. Penguins are flightless birds. But that doesn't mean they're "less than."

They're actually incredible birds. They do exactly what they're made to do. So while I was happy as a lark to be a penguin, I sure hope my gym mates never let that label define them. I hope they realized that despite the fact that penguins can't fly, they can do something those other birds can't do.

*Penguins can swim.*

Some of the greatest success stories of all time come from people who were misunderstood or even miscategorized. Maybe their strengths weren't noticed or valued. Perhaps they got a slow start or went about things in an unusual manner. They somehow didn't fit into the world's narrow definition of what constitutes achievement or success. I've listed just a few of them in the sidebar on this page.

## FAMOUS FAILURES (PENGUIN EDITION)

- Walt Disney. He was told *that* he didn't have enough imagination and therefore was fired from his newspaper job at the *Kansas City Star*. Can you believe that? *Walt. Freakin'. Disney.*
- Albert Einstein. The person who allegedly didn't speak until he was four years old and didn't read until he was seven (sound familiar?) basically invented science.
- Oprah Winfrey. She was supposedly fired from her job as a reporter because she couldn't separate her emotions from her work. And wouldn't you know it? That same inability to separate work and emotion was one of the qualities that made us all fall in love with her. That attribute made her stand out among a world of journalists.
- Michael Jordan—the man, the myth, the legend. He was cut from his high school basketball team and still went on to become arguably the greatest basketball player of all time. You know *he* believed he could fly.

I really could share stories like those all day long. They're my favorite kinds of biographies to read and the types of tales I can't help but recount to anyone who will listen. The journey of some underdog slugging and fighting all the way to the top against all odds is infinitely more inspiring to me than the story of a golden child who was born with all the right stuff.

So maybe Mrs. Redding and the other first grade teachers were onto something. Maybe they intentionally categorized me and my gym buddies as Penguins because they saw something unique in us. Or maybe this is just the way my mind works. I've got a glass-half-full outlook on life. I tend to believe I can truly do or be anything. There are no limits to the things I believe I can accomplish. So yeah, I have a low tolerance for people who tend to disqualify themselves from ever amounting to much before they even try or for people who are constantly their own worst critic.

I realize you didn't sign up for a motivational speaking course, but I'm going to take some liberties here and suggest that if there are external voices telling you that you're nothing special or that you'll never amount to anything, you should probably choose some different people to surround yourself with. And if that unkind voice is your own, I'd like to encourage you to start challenging those thoughts.

You were uniquely created for a purpose. I have no clue what that purpose is for you specifically, but I am perfectly confident that you do, in fact, have one. And you would be wise to stop being your own biggest obstacle. Your purpose is just like mine. It's big, and it's important, and there's no one else anywhere on the planet who can fulfill it.

So quit jacking around and go get after it.