

Begin to free yourself from obligation and start making choices.

A Little Book of **PERMISSION**



S E S O U R W I N E

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Permission



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For all those who try

“Books say: she did this because. Life says: she did this. Books are where things are explained to you; life is where things aren’t. I’m not surprised some people prefer books. Books make sense of life. The only problem is the lives they make sense of are other people’s lives, never your own.”

Julian Barnes, *Flaubert’s Parrot*

Foreword

I wrote this little book as a gift to my younger self. An imagining of sitting down beside her some time between the ages of twelve and yesterday and giving her my permission to let go of some stuff she worries about.

I have always disliked being told what to do. Ever since I can remember I wanted proof that my teachers were qualified to teach me, or that my bosses deserved the right to direct me. As life progressed and school changed to university, then on to work, and as my career expanded there were always the imposition of more ideas and the expectations of new people, institutions, clubs, events, and all sorts of gatherings and communities determined to tell me how it was supposed to be. How I was supposed to be. I felt many needed to be challenged.

By the time I jumped out of regular employment and started to work for myself I was exhausted. I imagine myself now like one of those Arthurian knights who believed they could only earn their valour and honour when they had

defeated all the challengers who showed up to fight them. A lot of challengers showed up, years worth. Many got in some good hits. And no matter what happened the knights wouldn't stop. Only darkness would pause the struggle. Like those knights, I just kept showing up for the fight. Each day I awoke often bruised and stiff and made my way back into the ring. The thing was, it might not have been the right arena.

I wrote this book when I was forty-five years old. For me that means, give or take a couple either way, forty years of fighting off everyone else's idea of what I was to be doing, feeling, wanting, hoping, building and loving. There was so much energy spent fighting them off.

But I realised I had conditioned myself to be defined in the negative. I am not that. I don't want that. I will not think that. You can't make me do that. I don't accept your idea of how it should go... I had used all my resources to not be something. By not focusing on what to become, I unintentionally became one of those silly knights, walking into the ring for the next battle for some promised future-perfect ending. Even though I was successful in my campaign for autonomy, I had very little left over of myself for an investigation into the creation of what I wanted to be.

A path you don't want to travel doesn't have to be cleared.

I think now about the others who fought so many of those battles before. I think about whether I was fighting for

freedom I already had. I think about how much time I would have saved if I had only given myself permission to know I didn't have to be any of those things I was fighting off. I wish I had known that I had the right to say the magic word "No" to any of the invitations to step into the ring. I don't know what I thought I would have lost by not going in there. I would have still fought a lot of the fights. They were worth it, but not all of them. I regret the energy I gave away researching the arguments that were supposed to free me from each should or have to. I wish I had spent more energy nurturing things within myself. Energy learning exactly who I was instead of harnessing my resources to fight for who I was not.

I wrote this book because I wanted to give myself permission to remember that I do get to choose where my effort goes. I know my experiences will be different from yours. There is no way I could pretend to write the perfect list for you and get in all the permissions you need. I know it's not always about self-permission. There are times when you are not safe or free to choose or refuse. My only hope could be to inspire you when you can. A hope that maybe there is just enough here to spare you some effort. A hopeful offering to save you time to get on with being you. There are a lot of things on this list worth doing, but you've got to choose those for yourself.

So here is my little book of permission to find your No's a bit faster than I did. Your time is limited. Spend it on something that is meaningful and beautiful to you.

Have to...

Should do...

Required to...

Must be...

Ought to...

Need to...

Duty to...

Let's get this over with and save you some time.

You don't have to abandon yourself.

You don't have to accept it as well meaning.

You don't have to accept the invitation.

You don't have to accommodate the request.

You don't have to agree with my position.

You don't have to always be nice.

You don't have to approve.

You don't have to ask me that.

You don't have to attend.

You don't have to be a warrior, a poet,
or a success.

You don't have to be appropriate.

You don't have to be approved of.

You don't have to be ashamed.

You don't have to be aware of your
surroundings.

You don't have to be better.

You don't have to be calm.

You don't have to be careful.

You don't have to be compassionate.

You don't have to be curious.

You don't have to be diminished.

You don't have to be fair.

You don't have to be first.
You don't have to be flattered.
You don't have to be found.
You don't have to be grateful.
You don't have to be gracious.
You don't have to be hurt.
You don't have to be in love.

You don't have to be in touch.
You don't have to be invited.
You don't have to be jealous.
You don't have to be loud.
You don't have to be moved.
You don't have to be on your best behaviour.
You don't have to be pleasing.

You don't have to be poor.
You don't have to be powerful.

You don't have to be prepared.
You don't have to be pretty.
You don't have to be quick.
You don't have to be quiet.
You don't have to be ready.
You don't have to be responsible.

You don't have to be right.

You don't have to be run ragged.
You don't have to be scared.
You don't have to be seen and not heard.
You don't have to be strong.
You don't have to be successful.
You don't have to be the model minority.
You don't have to be the one who saves me,
or my wonderwall.

You don't have to be there.
You don't have to be touched.
You don't have to be virtuous.
You don't have to be vulnerable.
You don't have to be worthy.
You don't have to because...
You don't have to believe me, like me,
listen to me, or cook me dinner.

You don't have to break.
You don't have to break the mould.
You don't have to breathe through your nose.
You don't have to build it.
You don't have to burn it all down.
You don't have to buy what's on offer only
once at this special price.
You don't have to call.

You don't have to calm down.
You don't have to calculate the risks.
You don't have to capture, keep, or take it.
You don't have to capture the moment.
You don't have to care.
You don't have to cause a riot.
You don't have to change.

You don't have to charge.
You don't have to cheat.
You don't have to chew with your mouth shut.
You don't have to colour your hair.
You don't have to come along.
You don't have to come back.
You don't have to come play.

You don't have to come when they call or
answer the door.

You don't have to complete me.
You don't have to compromise.
You don't have to conquer the world.
You don't have to crawl on your knees.
You don't have to cross every 't' and
dot every 'i.'
You don't have to curse him.
You don't have to cut your hair.

You don't have to dance all night.
You don't have to die for it.
You don't have to dig the graves.
You don't have to do it alone.
You don't have to do it for her.
You don't have to do it for him.
You don't have to do it for me.

You don't have to do it for nothing.
You don't have to do it tomorrow.
You don't have to do it with style.
You don't have to do it your way.
You don't have to do just one more.
You don't have to do the dishes
right-this-minute.
You don't have to do your hair.

You don't have to downsize.
You don't have to earn it.
You don't have to eat right.
You don't have to eat what's put in
front of you.
You don't have to eat your vegetables.
You don't have to eavesdrop.
You don't have to exercise.

You don't have to explain.

You don't have to extend the invitation.

You don't have to fake an orgasm for the sex to be done.

You don't have to feel it.

You don't have to feel this.

You don't have to feel your pain.

You don't have to fight.

You don't have to find grace.

You don't have to find some way out of here.

You don't have to finish.

You don't have to fit in.

You don't have to force it.

You don't have to follow.

You don't have to follow the recipe.

You don't have to follow suggestions.
You don't have to forgive, forget, and make
amends.

You don't have to get in the game.

You don't have to get into the groove or prove
your love for me.

You don't have to get it in writing.

You don't have to get it right.

You don't have to get married.

You don't have to get on with it.

You don't have to get out of bed.

You don't have to get real.

You don't have to get something for
everything.

You don't have to get that taken care of.
You don't have to get up early.
You don't have to give it a name.
You don't have to give it away.
You don't have to give me strength.
You don't have to give them something to cry
about.

You don't have to give to the poor.
You don't have to give up.
You don't have to give way.
You don't have to go.
You don't have to go grey.
You don't have to go home.
You don't have to go in.
You don't have to go outside.

You don't have to go quietly.

You don't have to go to sleep.

You don't have to go to church, synagogue,
temple, mosque, or the gym.

You don't have to Google it.

You don't have to gild the lily.

You don't have to have a bucket list, let alone
check anything off.

You don't have to have a destination.

You don't have to have a goal.

You don't have to have any fucks left to give.

You don't have to have anyone on your side.

You don't have to have children.

You don't have to have heard about it, read
about it, or watched it.

You don't have to have it to be happy.

You don't have to have more.

You don't have to have one story.
You don't have to have one truth.
You don't have to have permission.
You don't have to have proof.
You don't have to have the right words.
You don't have to have time on your own.
You don't have to hear their point of view.
You don't have to help me help you.

You don't have to hide your smarts.
You don't have to hide.
You don't have to hold it in.
You don't have to hold my hand.
You don't have to hold steady.
You don't have to honour your father.
You don't have to hug it out.

You don't have to hurry up.

You don't have to hurt someone.
You don't have to hurt yourself.
You don't have to improve yourself.
You don't have to join in.
You don't have to judge.
You don't have to juggle all those balls.

You don't have to juice your meals.
You don't have to jump when I call you.
You don't have to just do it.
You don't have to just get a grip.
You don't have to just get a job.
You don't have to justify your actions.
You don't have to keep in touch.

You don't have to keep it down.
You don't have to keep it safe.
You don't have to keep it in.

You don't have to keep it up.
You don't have to keep moving.
You don't have to keep the peace.
You don't have to keep track.

You don't have to keep the stanzas equal.
You don't have to keep up with them.
You don't have to kiss the stranger because
your Mom said so.
You don't have to know every detail.
You don't have to know what's next.
You don't have to know where you are going.
You don't have to know you are lost.

You don't have to know you're beautiful.
You don't have to know your place.
You don't have to know yourself.
You don't have to lead.

You don't have to lean in.
You don't have to learn from this.
You don't have to learn your body.

You don't have to leave it behind.
You don't have to leave the last bite.
You don't have to leave with the one who
brought you.
You don't have to leave.
You don't have to let it go.
You don't have to lie.
You don't have to like how I touch you.

You don't have to like jazz.
You don't have to like the taste of it.
You don't have to listen to me.
You don't have to listen to your gut.
You don't have to listen to your heart.

You don't have to listen up.
You don't have to look at the moon.
You don't have to look away.
You don't have to look back.
You don't have to look handsome.
You don't have to look it up.
You don't have to look me in the eye.
You don't have to look up.

You don't have to lose weight.
You don't have to lose yourself.
You don't have to love the one you're with.
You don't have to make an effort.
You don't have to make an excuse for them
or yourself.
You don't have to make art.
You don't have to make due.

You don't have to make good choices.
You don't have to make it all about you.
You don't have to make lemonade.
You don't have to make me feel better.
You don't have to make plans.
You don't have to make that call.
You don't have to make them comfortable.

You don't have to make them understand.
You don't have to manage the schedule.
You don't have to mansplain it.
You don't have to meet me.
You don't have to miss me.
You don't have to miss out.
You don't have to mourn everything.

You don't have to move ahead.

You don't have to move on.

You don't have to move over.
You don't have to need less.
You don't have to not argue.
You don't have to not feel that way.
You don't have to not have any more kids.
You don't have to not need it.
You don't have to notice.

You don't have to pay attention.
You don't have to pay the ferryman or
the piper.
You don't have to pay the price.
You don't have to pay your dues.
You don't have to point it out.
You don't have to pretend they weren't
important.
You don't have to pretend it didn't happen.

You don't have to pretend you agree.
You don't have to pretend you aren't angry.
You don't have to pretend you aren't excited.
You don't have to pretend that you are.
You don't have to profit from your dreams.
You don't have to protect me.
You don't have to prove it.

You don't have to punch a clock.
You don't have to put it in a museum.
You don't have to put it off until a better time.
You don't have to question everything.
You don't have to question your motives.
You don't have to question your worth.
You don't have to quit.

You don't have to raise your hand.

You don't have to reach out.

You don't have to read about it first.

You don't have to read all about it here.

You don't have to realise it right away.

You don't have to recognise it yourself.

You don't have to regret it.

You don't have to remember how many
there's been.

You don't have to remember their names.

You don't have to risk it.

You don't have to RSVP.

You don't have to save for your retirement.

You don't have to save yourself for marriage.

You don't have to say anything for yourself.

You don't have to say good-bye.

You don't have to say hi.
You don't have to say you love me.
You don't have to say your prayers.
You don't have to schedule yourself, your kids,
your staff until you are spinning with busyness.
You don't have to see clearly.
You don't have to see the beauty.
You don't have to see the stars.

You don't have to see the world.
You don't have to see this.
You don't have to see.
You don't have to send a card.
You don't have to send a check.
You don't have to send a present.
You don't have to send love.

You don't have to send money now.

You don't have to send prayers.
You don't have to send wishes.
You don't have to set an alarm.
You don't have to settle.
You don't have to settle down.
You don't have to share the experience.

You don't have to share your story.
You don't have to share.
You don't have to shave.
You don't have to show up.
You don't have to shut it down.
You don't have to sing a note.
You don't have to sit it out.

You don't have to sit on the bench.
You don't have to sit still.
You don't have to sit through it.

You don't have to slow down.
You don't have to smell this.
You don't have to smile.
You don't have to sound the right way.

You don't have to speak the language.
You don't have to spell it right.
You don't have to spice up your life.
You don't have to stand firm.
You don't have to stand for something.
You don't have to stand to be counted.
You don't have to start.

You don't have to stay at that job.
You don't have to stay away.
You don't have to stay banished.
You don't have to stay calm.
You don't have to stay ignorant.

You don't have to stay longer.
You don't have to stay married.
You don't have to stay over.

You don't have to steal.
You don't have to steer.
You don't have to stop being so dramatic.
You don't have to stop being so loud.
You don't have to stop feeling so sad.
You don't have to stop it.
You don't have to stop this.

You don't have to straighten up.
You don't have to stretch.
You don't have to surrender.
You don't have to swallow your pride.

You don't have to take a chance.

You don't have to take a sad song and
make it better.
You don't have to think it's funny.
You don't have to take everyone with you.
You don't have to take it deeper.
You don't have to take it home.
You don't have to take one for the team.
You don't have to take that call.

You don't have to take your time.
You don't have to tame your ego.
You don't have to taste it.
You don't have to tell me my place.
You don't have to thank me.
You don't have to throw it out.
You don't have to throw the ball again.

You don't have to touch your toes.
You don't have to touch.
You don't have to treasure it.
You don't have to trust your body.
You don't have to try and stop me.
You don't have to try so hard to be valuable.
You don't have to turn away.

You don't have to uncover your desires.
You don't have to under-price your
competition.
You don't have to underscore the error.
You don't have to understand.
You don't have to undo your past.
You don't have to value it.
You don't have to varnish the truth.

You don't have to verify it.

You don't have to venerate it or make it sacred.

You don't have to vote.

You don't have to vouch for them.

You don't have to wait.

You don't have to wait for it to happen
on its own.

You don't have to wait for the invitation.

You don't have to wait until next time.

You don't have to wait until you're more
qualified.

You don't have to wait your turn.

You don't have to wake me up.

You don't have to wake up.

You don't have to wage war.

You don't have to wander.

You don't have to want more.

You don't have to want to.

You don't have to want to make a difference.

You don't have to want what I want.

You don't have to want it at all.

You don't have to waste it.

You don't have to water it down.

You don't have to weaponise it.

You don't have to wean yourself away.

You don't have to wear it this way.

You don't have to wear the right thing.

You don't have to wear your heart on your sleeve.

You don't have to wish they were here.

You don't have to wish everyone on Facebook
happy birthday.

You don't have to work for your equality.

You don't have to work it out.

You don't have to wonder.

You don't have to workshop it.

You don't have to worry about letting anyone
down.

You don't have to worry about being soft.

You don't have to worship anything.

You don't have to yearn.

You don't have to yell.

You don't have to zip your lips.

You don't have to zone out.

Now.

What will you do?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SL Sourwine lives beside a shingle beach on the edge of the English Channel trying to keep all of the bits of her passions moving in approximately the same direction. This involves lots of walking with her Old English Sheepdog companion Alfred. Building a twenty-year career in international horse racing with only her passion for horses, the sport, and an English degree, her experiences ranged from being the volunteer flower gardener at the tiniest of courses in Saskatchewan, Canada to being involved with a winner at Royal Ascot. Going on to start her own consulting company, the freedom to work on innovative projects led her to founding a new technology company and to finally start to get some books out of her head and onto paper.

Follow along as she decides what it is that she's doing with her own permission:

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