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Dear Girl,

growing up I always felt an injustice that my brothers were treated preferentially just for being boys. Whilst my mother was caring and kind, my father was very strict and my two brothers enjoyed teasing and bullying me and were given favorable treatment – simply for being born “a boy”.

My father came from- Iran, where a man’s life is worth more than a females. This is confirmed by their judicial system which imposes harsher penalties for the murder of a man, than it does a women whose life is worth less, in terms of a monetary penalty anyway.

Whilst there was no open verbal expression of boys being better, this belief was projected through our daily life- such as the expectation that I had to help my Mum around the house (which I felt compelled to as did all the house work alone), and that my brothers were exempt “let them go, they’re boys “was an expression that I used to hear a lot. On top of that my brothers were commended for being good in Science and Math, and I was laughed at for being poor in these subjects whereas my strength in English and Drama were dismissed as being unnecessary.

An unforgettable moment was failing an exam at age 11 and my father not speaking to me for a month. Not only did I have my own failure to deal with, but the feeling of not being good enough projected by my father absolutely crushed me. And there were constant beatings and living in fear. With me being the most outspoken, I bore the brunt of my father’s outbursts.

Being so frustrated with family life, school life was an extension of this chaotic and traumatic time, and I spent my early school years bullying younger kids in the way my brothers bullied me, and later being bullied myself for being dark skinned, “paki” was a word that got thrown around a lot.

I guess it was these experiences that made me feel that I somehow didn't belong. Not in my family, not in my school, and my views always seemed to be at contrast to the majority. In school I was voted the person "most likely to be notorious". I was the person who spoke up, who challenged the status quo and as a result the one who ended up getting in a lot of trouble.

I wasn't academic and scraped by at school. At 16 after deciding I didn't want to go forward with education I took a job working in a clothes shop. It was so mind numbingly boring, it propelled me to go back to school and try again. I worked non-stop at my A Levels and surprised everyone by getting 4 B grades and getting into a top University- This wasn't because I was interested in education, this was just a ticket to leave my home town and have chance at a more interesting life. This was a pivotal moment in my life, as I learnt that hard work and determination can change your destiny and put you on a far more positive path, even if I was against the "system", I decided I was going to play it to my advantage.

At University I graduated with a 2:2 in Journalism and after interviewing for a number of publications, I realised that the salaries were so low, I would need to rely on my parents for assistance to pay the rent.

So I decided instead to choose a career as a headhunter where I could earn enough money to be self-sufficient. In 2008 I moved to Germany and opened a branch where we turned over 1 million Euro in the first 12 months working as the Managing Director. After becoming bored with recruitment, I started my own business in 2018 and turned over 1 million Euro within the first 18 months, this time as the business owner, not an employee and at the same time growing my own brand - that is now recognized worldwide.

Today my father tells me how proud he is of me, this biggest regret is in how he treated me. My brother achievements pale in comparison to mine. This isn't about gloating, my successes are personal and I have never told anyone the journey that brought me here. This is about recognizing that what we suffer makes us stronger if we choose strength over fear. It was the knock backs I got that made me unafraid to take a risk, to challenge the status-quo and be fearless.

Another skill that I developed over the years that helped me get where I am today is a highly developed intuition. When you see the ugly side of life, you can develop an intrinsic intelligence that helps you determine when something or someone is to be invested in or avoided. I have always listened to my inner voice and when I met my husband and felt how “good” his energy was, and got the idea for my business and felt how much potential it had, I went for it.

So my advice to you is don't let your negative experiences beat you down, use them to raise you up, for you are stronger now than your contemporaries. Use your experiences to allow your intuition to guide you. Finally, don't feel the need to conform, being the rebel worked out for me. Always question the narrative and live in your truth.

With Love, R. M.