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Tina Fey

Bossypants



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deliriously funny.”
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Bossypants



A Reagan Arthur Book
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[**Begin Reading**](#)
[Table of Contents](#)
[Copyright Page](#)

*For Jeanne Fey:
Happy Mother's Day. I made this out of macaroni for you.*

Introduction

Welcome Friend,

Congratulations on your purchase of this American-made genuine book. Each component of this book was selected to provide you with maximum book performance, whatever your reading needs may be.

If you are a woman and you bought this book for practical tips on how to make it in a male-dominated workplace, here they are. No pigtails, no tube tops. Cry sparingly. (Some people say “Never let them see you cry.” I say, if you’re so mad you could just cry, then cry. It terrifies everyone.) When choosing sexual partners, remember: Talent is not sexually transmittable. Also, don’t eat diet foods in meetings.

Perhaps you’re a parent and you bought this book to learn how to raise an achievement-oriented, drug-free, adult virgin. You’ll find that, too. The essential ingredients, I can tell you up front, are a strong father figure, bad skin, and a child-sized colonial-lady outfit.

Maybe you bought this book because you love Sarah Palin and you want to find reasons to hate me. We’ve got that! I use all kinds of elitist words like “impervious” and “torpor,” and I think gay people are just as good at watching their kids play hockey as straight people.

Maybe it’s seventy years in the future and you found this book in a stack of junk being used to block the entrance of an abandoned Starbucks that is now a feeding station for the alien militia. If that’s the case, I have some questions for *you*. Such as: “Did we really ruin the environment as much as we thought?” and “Is *Glee* still a thing?”

If you’re looking for a spiritual allegory in the style of C. S. Lewis, I guess you could piece something together with Lorne Michaels as a symbol for God and my struggles with hair removal as a metaphor for virtue.

Or perhaps you just bought this book to laugh and be entertained. For you, I have included this joke: “Two peanuts were walking down the street, and one was a salted.” You see, I want you to get your money’s worth.

Anyone who knows me will tell you that I am all about money. I mean, just look how well my line of zodiac-inspired toe rings and homeopathic children’s medications are selling on Home Shopping Network. Because I am nothing if not an amazing businesswoman, I researched what kind of content makes for bestselling books. It turns out the answer is “one-night stands,” drug addictions, and recipes. Here, we are out of luck. But I *can* offer you lurid tales of anxiety and cowardice.

Why is this book called *Bossypants*? One, because the name *Two and a Half Men* was already taken. And two, because ever since I became an executive producer of *30 Rock*, people have asked me, “Is it hard for you, being the boss?” and “Is it uncomfortable for you to be the person in charge?” You know, in that same way they say, “Gosh, Mr. Trump, is it awkward for you to be the boss of all these people?” I can’t answer for Mr. Trump, but in my case it is not. I’ve learned a lot over the past ten years about what it means to be the boss of people. In most cases being a good boss means hiring talented people and then getting out of their way. In other cases, to get the best work out of people you may have to pretend you are not their boss

and let them treat someone *else* like the boss, and then that person whispers to you behind a fake wall and you tell them what to tell the first person. Contrary to what I believed as a little girl, being the boss almost never involves marching around, waving your arms, and chanting, “I am the boss! I am the boss!”

For me this book has been a simple task of retracing my steps to figure out what factors contributed to this person...



developing into this person...



who secretly prefers to be this person.



I hope you enjoy it so much that you also buy a copy for your sister-in-law.

Tina Fey
New York City, 2011

(It's so hard to believe it's 2011 already. I'm still writing "Tina Fey, grade 4,
room 207" on all my checks!)

Origin Story

My brother is eight years older than I am. I was a big surprise. A *wonderful* surprise, my mom would be quick to tell you. Although having a baby at forty is a commonplace fool's errand these days, back in 1970 it was pretty unheard-of. Women around my mom's office referred to her pregnancy as "Mrs. Fey and her change-of-life baby." When I was born I was fussed over and doted on, and my brother has always looked out for me like a third parent.

The day before I started kindergarten, my parents took me to the school to meet the teacher. My mom had taken my favorite blanket and stitched my initials into it for nap time, just like she'd done for my brother eight years earlier. At the teacher conference my dad tried to give my nap time blanket to the teacher, and she just smiled and said, "Oh, we don't do that anymore." That's when I realized I had old parents. I've been worried about them ever since.

While my parents talked to the teacher, I was sent to a table to do coloring. I was introduced to a Greek boy named Alex whose mom was next in line to meet with the teacher. We colored together in silence. I was so used to being praised and encouraged that when I finished my drawing I held it up to show Alex, who immediately ripped it in half. I didn't have the language to express my feelings then, but my thoughts were something like "Oh, it's like that, motherfucker? Got it." Mrs. Fey's change-of-life baby had entered the real world.

During the spring semester of kindergarten, I was slashed in the face by a stranger in the alley behind my house. Don't worry. I'm not going to lay out the grisly details for you like a sweeps episode of *Dateline*. I only bring it up to explain why I'm not going to talk about it.

I've always been able to tell a lot about people by whether they ask me about my scar. Most people never ask, but if it comes up naturally somehow and I offer up the story, they are quite interested. Some people are just dumb: "Did a cat scratch you?" God bless. Those sweet dumdums I never mind. Sometimes it is a fun sociology litmus test, like when my friend Ricky asked me, "Did they ever catch the black guy that did that to you?" Hmmm. It was not a black guy, Ricky, and I never said it was.

Then there's another sort of person who thinks it makes them seem brave or sensitive or wonderfully direct to ask me about it right away. They ask with quiet, feigned empathy, "How did you get your scar?" The grossest move is when they say they're only curious because "it's so beautiful." Ugh. Disgusting. They might as well walk up and say, "May I be amazing at you?" To these folks let me be clear. I'm not interested in acting out a TV movie with you where you befriend a girl with a scar. An Oscar-y Spielberg movie where I play a mean German with a scar? Yes.

My whole life, people who ask about my scar within one week of knowing me have invariably turned out to be egomaniacs of average intelligence or less. And egomaniacs of average intelligence or less often end up in the field of TV journalism. So, you see, if I tell the whole story here, then I will be asked about it over and over by the hosts of *Access Moviatown* and *Entertainment Forever* for the rest of my short-lived career.

But I will tell you this: My scar was a miniature form of celebrity. Kids knew who I was because of it. Lots of people liked to claim they were there when it happened. I was *there*. I *saw it*. Crazy Mike did it!

Adults were kind to me because of it. Aunts and family friends gave me Easter candy and oversize Hershey's Kisses long after I was too old for presents. I was made to feel special.

What should have shut me down and made me feel "less than" ended up giving me an inflated sense of self. It wasn't until years later, maybe not until I was writing this book, that I realized people weren't making a fuss over me because I was some incredible beauty or genius; they were making a fuss over me to compensate for my being slashed.

I accepted all the attention at face value and proceeded through life as if I really were extraordinary. I guess what I'm saying is, this has all been a wonderful misunderstanding. And I shall keep these Golden Globes, every last one!

Growing Up and Liking It



At ten I asked my mother if I could start shaving my legs. My dark shin fur was hard to ignore in shorts weather, especially since my best friend Maureen was a pale Irish lass who probably doesn't have any leg hair to this day. My mom said it was too soon and that I would regret it. But she must have looked at my increasingly hairy and sweaty frame and known that something was brewing.

A few months later, she gave me a box from the Modess company. It was a "my first period" kit and inside were samples of pads and panty liners and two pamphlets. One with the vaguely threatening title "Growing Up and Liking It" and one called "How Shall I Tell My Daughter?" I'm pretty sure *she* was supposed to read that one and then talk to me about it, but she just gave me the whole box and slipped out of the room.

Dear Ginny,

I finally got my “friend” today!! Yay!! It’s about time! If I roller-skate while I’m MEN-STRU-HATING, will I die?



Dear Pam,

Of course you can roller-skate! Don’t be silly! But be careful of odor, or neighborhood dogs may try to bite your vagina. Friends forever, Ginny



Dear Tabitha,

Sometimes I get stomach cramps on the first day of my period. My mom showed me some stretches I can do, but I also heard that drinking peach schnapps will work.

Dear Ginny,

Schnapps will work. Act like you’re putting orange juice in it, but then don’t.

Dear Pam,

I’m supposed to go to a pool party this week, but my “Aunt Blood” is still in town. Can I go?

Dear Tabitha,

Of course you can still go! Modess makes great feminine-protection products that are so thick and puffy, you’ll be super comfortable sitting on that bench near the pool telling everyone you’re sick.



“Growing Up and Liking It” was a fake correspondence between three young friends. Through their spunky interchange, all my questions and fears about menstruation would be answered.

“How Shall I Tell My Daughter?”

As I nauseously perused “How Shall I Tell My Daughter?” I started to suspect that my mom had not actually read the pamphlet before handing it off to me. Here is a real quote from the actual 1981 edition:

A book, a teacher or a friend may provide her with some of the facts about the menstrual cycle. But only you—the person who has been teaching her about life and growing up since she was an infant—can best provide the warm guidance and understanding that is vital.

Well played, Jeanne Fey, well played.

The explanatory text was followed by a lot of drawings of the human reproductive system that my brain refused to memorize. (To this day, all I know is there are between two and four openings down there and that the setup inside looks vaguely like the Texas Longhorns logo.)

I shoved the box in my closet, where it haunted me daily. There might as well have been a guy dressed like Freddy Krueger in there for the amount of anxiety it gave me. Every time I reached in the closet to grab a Sunday school dress or my colonial-lady Halloween costume that I sometimes relaxed in after school—“Modesssss,” it hissed at me. “Modesssss is coming for you.”

Then, it happened. In the spring of 1981 I achieved menarche while singing Neil Diamond’s “Song Sung Blue” at a districtwide chorus concert. I was ten years old. I had noticed something was weird earlier in the day, but I knew from commercials that one’s menstrual period was a blue liquid that you poured like laundry detergent onto maxi pads to test their absorbency. This wasn’t blue, so... I ignored it for a few hours.

When we got home I pulled my mom aside to ask her if it was weird that I was bleeding in my underpants. She was very sympathetic but also a little baffled. Her eyes said, “Dummy, didn’t you read ‘How Shall I Tell My Daughter?’ ” I had read it, but nowhere in the pamphlet did anyone say that your period was NOT a blue liquid.

At that moment, two things became clear to me. I was now technically a woman, and I would never be a doctor.

When Did You First Know You Were a Woman?

When I was writing the movie *Mean Girls*—which hopefully is playing on TBS right now!—I went to a workshop taught by Rosalind Wiseman as part of my research. Rosalind wrote the nonfiction book *Queen Bees and Wannabes* that *Mean Girls* was based on, and she conducted a lot of self-esteem and bullying workshops with women and girls around the country. She did this particular exercise in a hotel ballroom in Washington, DC, with about two hundred grown women, asking them to write down the moment they first “knew they were a woman.” Meaning, “When did you first feel like a grown woman and not a girl?” We wrote down our answers and shared them, first in pairs, then in larger groups. The group of women was racially and economically diverse, but the answers had a very similar theme. Almost everyone first realized they were becoming a grown woman when some dude did something nasty to them. “I was walking home from ballet and a guy in a car yelled, ‘Lick me!’ ” “I was babysitting my younger cousins when a guy drove by and yelled, ‘Nice ass.’ ” There were pretty much zero examples like “I first knew I was a woman when my mother and father took me out to dinner

to celebrate my success on the debate team.” It was mostly men yelling shit from cars. Are they a patrol sent out to let girls know they’ve crossed into puberty? If so, it’s working.

I experienced car creepery at thirteen. I was walking home from middle school past a place called the World’s Largest Aquarium—which, legally, I don’t know how they could call it that, because it was obviously an average-sized aquarium. Maybe I should start referring to myself as the World’s Tallest Man and see how that goes? Anyway, I was walking home alone from school and I was wearing a dress. A dude drove by and yelled, “Nice tits.” Embarrassed and enraged, I screamed after him, “Suck my dick.” Sure, it didn’t make any sense, but at least I didn’t hold in my anger.

Thankfully, blessedly, yelling “Suck my dick” is not the moment I really associate with entering womanhood. For me, it was when I bought this kickass white denim suit at the Springfield mall.



I bought it with my own money under the advisement of my cool friend Sandee. I wore it to Senior Awards Night 1988, where it blew people’s minds as I accepted the Sunday School Scholarship. That turned-up collar. The jacket that zipped all the way down the front into a nice fitted shape. The white denim that made my untanned skin look like a color. Just once I’d like to find an Oscars or Emmys dress as rad as this suit.

Suburban Girl Seks Urban Health Care

It may have been a mistake to have my first-ever gynecology appointment in a Planned Parenthood on the north side of Chicago. I was twenty-three and honestly, there was no need. My whole setup was still factory-new. But I had never been and I had some insurance, so why not be proactive about my health like the educated young feminist I was? I slipped on my pumpkin-colored swing coat with the Sojourner Truth button on it and headed to their grim location in Rogers Park. All the windows were covered, and you had to be buzzed in through two different doors. This place was not kidding around.

I sat among the AIDS posters, proudly reading Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*. Maybe later I would treat myself to sweet potato fries at the Heartland Café!

I was taken to an examining room where a big butch nurse practitioner came in and asked me if I was pregnant. “No way!” Was I sexually active? “Nope!” Had I ever been molested? “Well,” I said, trying to make a joke, “Oprah says the only answers to that question are ‘Yes’

and ‘I don’t remember.’ ” I laughed. We were having fun. The nurse looked at me, concerned/annoyed. “*Have* you ever been molested?” “Oh. No.” Then she took out a speculum the size of a milk shake machine. Even Michelle Duggar would have flinched at this thing, but I had never seen one before. “What’s that device f—?” Before I could finish, the nurse inserted the milk shake machine to the hilt, and I fainted. I was awakened by a sharp smell. An assistant had been called in, I’m sure for legal reasons, and was waving smelling salts under my nose. As I “came to,” the nurse said, “You have a short vagina. I think I hit you in the cervix.” And then I fainted again even though no one was even touching me. I just went out like she had hit a reset button. I’m surprised I didn’t wake up speaking Spanish like Buzz Lightyear. When I woke up the second time, the nurse was openly irritated with me. Did I have someone who could come and pick me up? “Nope!” “You’re going to have to make another appointment. I couldn’t finish the Pap smear.” “WHY DIDN’T YOU FINISH IT WHILE I WAS OUT?” I yelled. Apparently it’s against the law. Then she asked if I could hurry up and get out because she needed to perform an abortion on Willona from *Good Times*.

All Girls Must Be Everything

When I was thirteen I spent a weekend at the beach in Wildwood, New Jersey, with my teenage cousins Janet and Lori. In the space of thirty-six hours, they taught me everything I know about womanhood. They knew how to “lay out” in the sun wearing tanning oil instead of sunscreen. They taught me that you could make a reverse tattoo in your tan if you cut a shape out of a Band-Aid and stuck it on your leg. They taught me you could listen to *General Hospital* on the radio if you turned the FM dial way down to the bottom.

Wildwood is a huge wide beach—the distance from your towel to the water was often equal to the distance from your motel to your towel. And “back in the day” the place was packed exclusively with very, very tan Italian Americans and very, very burned Irish Americans. As a little kid, I almost always got separated from my parents and would panic trying to find them among dozens and dozens of similar umbrellas.

One afternoon a girl walked by in a bikini and my cousin Janet scoffed, “Look at the hips on her.” I panicked. What about the hips? Were they too big? Too small? What were *my* hips? I didn’t know hips could be a problem. I thought there was just fat or skinny.

This was how I found out that there are an infinite number of things that can be “incorrect” on a woman’s body. At any given moment on planet Earth, a woman is buying a product to correct one of the following “deficiencies”:

- big pores
- oily T-zone
- cankles
- fivehead
- lunch lady arms
- nipples too big
- nipples too small
- breasts too big
- breasts too small
- one breast bigger than the other
- one breast smaller than the other (How are those two different things? I don’t know.)
- nasal labial folds
- “no arch in my eyebrows!”
- FUPA (a delightfully crude acronym for a protruding lower belly)
- muffin top
- spider veins
- saddlebags
- crotch biscuits (that’s what I call the wobbly triangles on one’s inner thighs)
- thin lashes
- bony knees
- low hairline
- calves too big

- “no calves!”
- “green undertones in my skin”
- and my personal favorite, “bad nail beds”

In hindsight, I’m pretty sure Janet meant the girl’s hips were too wide. This was the late seventies, and the seventies were a small-eyed, thin-lipped blond woman’s paradise. I remember watching *Three’s Company* as a little brown-haired kid thinking, “Really? This is what we get? Joyce DeWitt is our brunet representative? She’s got that greasy-looking bowl cut and they make her wear suntan pantyhose under her football jersey nightshirt.” I may have only been seven or eight, but I knew that this sucked. The standard of beauty was set. Cheryl Tiegs, Farrah Fawcett, Christie Brinkley. Small eyes, toothy smile, boobies, no buttocks, yellow hair.

Let’s talk about the hair. Why do I call it “yellow” hair and not “blond” hair? Because I’m pretty sure everybody calls my hair “brown.” When I read fairy tales to my daughter I always change the word “blond” to “yellow,” because I don’t want her to think that blond hair is somehow better.

My daughter has a reversible doll: Sleeping Beauty on one side and Snow White on the other. I would always set it on her bed with the Snow White side out and she would toddle up to it and flip the skirt over to Sleeping Beauty. I would flip it back and say, “Snow White is so pretty.” She would yell, “No!” and flip it back. I did this experiment so frequently and consistently that I should have applied for government funding. The result was always the same. When I asked her why she didn’t like Snow White, she told me, “I don’t like her hair.” Not even three years old, she knew that yellow hair is king. And, let’s admit it, yellow hair does have magic powers. You could put a blond wig on a hot-water heater and some dude would try to fuck it. Snow White is better looking. I hate to stir up trouble among the princesses, but take away the hair and Sleeping Beauty is actually a little beat.

Sure, when I was a kid, there were beautiful brunettes to be found—Linda Ronstadt, Jaclyn Smith, the little Spanish singer on *The Lawrence Welk Show*—but they were regarded as a fun, exotic alternative. Farrah was vanilla and Jaclyn Smith was chocolate. Can you remember a time when pop culture was so white that Jaclyn Smith was the chocolate?! By the eighties, we started to see some real chocolate: Halle Berry and Naomi Campbell. “Downtown” Julie Brown and Tyra Banks. But I think the first real change in women’s body image came when JLo turned it butt-style. That was the first time that having a large-scale situation in the back was part of *mainstream* American beauty. Girls wanted butts now. Men were free to admit that they had always enjoyed them. And then, what felt like *moments* later, boom—Beyoncé brought the leg meat. A back porch and thick muscular legs were now widely admired. And from that day forward, women embraced their diversity and realized that all shapes and sizes are beautiful. Ah ha ha. No. I’m totally messing with you. All Beyoncé and JLo have done is add to the laundry list of attributes women must have to qualify as beautiful. Now every girl is expected to have:

- Caucasian blue eyes
- full Spanish lips
- a classic button nose
- hairless Asian skin with a California tan
- a Jamaican dance hall ass
- long Swedish legs

- small Japanese feet
- the abs of a lesbian gym owner
- the hips of a nine-year-old boy
- the arms of Michelle Obama
- and doll tits

The person closest to actually achieving this look is Kim Kardashian, who, as we know, was made by Russian scientists to sabotage our athletes. Everyone else is struggling.

Even the Yellowhairs who were once on top can now be found squatting to a Rihanna song in a class called Gary's Glutes Camp in an attempt to reverse-engineer a butt. These are dark times. Back in my Wildwood days with Janet, you were either blessed with a beautiful body or not. And if you were not, you could just chill out and learn a trade. Now if you're not "hot," you are expected to work on it until you are. It's like when you renovate a house and you're legally required to leave just one of the original walls standing. If you don't have a good body, you'd better starve the body you have down to a neutral shape, then bolt on some breast implants, replace your teeth, dye your skin orange, inject your lips, sew on some hair, and call yourself the Playmate of the Year.

How do we survive this? How do we teach our daughters and our gay sons that they are good enough the way they are? We have to lead by example. Instead of trying to fit an impossible ideal, I took a personal inventory of all my healthy body parts for which I am grateful:

- Straight Greek eyebrows. They start at the hairline at my temple and, left unchecked, will grow straight across my face and onto yours.
- A heart-shaped ass. Unfortunately, it's a right-side-up heart; the point is at the bottom.
- Droopy brown eyes designed to confuse predators into thinking I'm just on the verge of sleep and they should come back tomorrow to eat me.
- Permanently rounded shoulders from years of working at a computer.
- A rounded belly that is pushed out by my rounded posture no matter how many sit-ups I do. Which is mostly none.
- A small high waist.
- A wad of lower-back fat that never went away after I lost my "baby weight." One day in the next ten years, this back roll will meet up with my front pouch, forever obscuring my small high waist, and I will officially be my mother.
- Wide-set knockers that aren't so big but can be hoisted up once or twice a year for parades.
- Good strong legs with big gym teacher calves that I got from walking pigeon-toed my whole life.
- Wide German hips that look like somebody wrapped Pillsbury dough around a case of soda.
- My father's feet. Flat. Bony. Pale. I don't know how he even gets around, because his feet are in my shoes.

I would not trade any of these features for anybody else's. I wouldn't trade the small thin-lipped mouth that makes me resemble my nephew. I wouldn't even trade the acne scar on my right cheek, because that recurring zit spent more time with me in college than any boy ever did.

At the end of the day, I'm happy to have my father's feet and my mother's eyes with me at all times. If I ever go back to that beach in Wildwood, I want my daughter to be able to find me in the crowd by spotting my soda-case hips. I want her to be able to pick me out of a sea of highlighted-blond women with fake tans because I'm the one with the thick ponytail and the greenish undertones in my skin.

And if I ever meet Joyce DeWitt, I will first apologize for having immediately punched her in the face, and then I will thank her. For while she looked like a Liza Minnelli doll that had been damaged in a fire, at least she didn't look like everybody else on TV.

Also, full disclosure, I *would* trade my feet for almost any other set of feet out there.