

Dear Nando,

I am not sure where to begin. My name is Katherine Ashmore, and I am writing to you because you have to be the one man who has influenced me so greatly in such a short space of time. Ever since I read about your life altering Andean 'adventure', I have been so attached to your personal story.

Words seem an insignificant way for me to express the strength and courage that you showed me whilst reading about your devastating but exhilarating story. Ever since you were first mentioned, your incredible presence, strength, devotion, empathy, determination, courage but most of all your soul allowed me or rather forced me to look up to the incredible man that you were and still are.

I know that you do not like to be considered a hero, but you truly are one, to me. It is hard for me to explain what I felt when reading your story. One thing I did know for certain was that you saved those who were unable to save themselves. You became their savior. Where they were unable to climb because they were too weak, you became their strength. When they were unable to face another moment because they were haunted by the fact that rescue would never come, you gave them hope. When the truth for survival seemed inconceivable, you allowed them to see the light in an idea that seemed so horribly dark... you gave them life.

As selfish as it may sound, I needed you to survive the most. I needed you to prove to me that you were the hero who would lead the other 15 people back to their homes. Just as you kept the other men on the plane from giving up hope or giving up on life, their most precious possession, you were the one who made me read on. Line by line I was overwhelmed by your determination to survive. Your selflessness allowed you to put your feelings of failure and helplessness aside, for your father. You were no longer surviving for yourself; you were surviving for your father.

You are a man who has made history. Not because you were determined to make headlines or because you were hoping on becoming a celebrity. It is because you put the lives of others before that of your own. Your mental, spiritual and physical strength allowed you to soar over that immense peak in the Andes to freedom, to life.

I want to thank you for being such an enormous inspiration to me. You have taught me to never give up, because in giving up, you are leaving behind those who need you. Nando, you never gave up, and because of that you have given life to fifteen other people, people who thought that they would never escape that aircraft which seemed to have given them a death sentence.

You are an incredible man whom I wish all the happiness in the world to.  
Thank you Nando.

God Bless you and your family.

Yours faithfully, Katherine Ashmore