

Creative writing on what a woman can do

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



“ Sit down, child,” said Nana, her voice full of kindness. I rolled my eyes a bit; I’m thirteen already, I thought, I’m not a child. However, I acquiesced to my grandmother’s request and sat down next to her. The wooden chair creaked under my weight, indicating it was on its last legs. I really did not want to be here; I had other things to do. It was the summer before high school, and so I wanted to hang out with my friends, talk to Derek about whether or not he liked me too, and everything else that did not involve hearing Nana’s boring old stories about life in the 1950s. My mom asked me to, though, and said that if I spent some time with Nana, I’d get to stay out late this weekend. In the interest of this transaction, I said ‘ yes.’

So here I was, sitting on a creaking decades-old chair in my grandmother’s house, looking around at her china and her vinyl, and getting ready for the snoozefest to end all snoozefests. Head resting on one fist, elbow up on the table, I greeted Nana with a bored look.

“ How are you doing, young lady?” Nana asked, interested.

“ Fine, I guess.” I replied curtly. I really didn’t have anything interesting to say to her, at least not that I wouldn’t have to explain in detail to her. She still didn’t understand the Internet anyway.

“ Everything going okay with school? How are your friends?”

“ Again, fine.”

“ Your mother was telling me about you running for school board president, I’m very proud of you. That takes incredible initiative to run such a campaign.”

“ It wasn’t anything, I just put up some flyers and gave a speech. Tony Hutsel won, anyway.” Even though I was still bored and a bit irritated at Nana’s attempts to dig into my personal life, the loss had hurt me a bit, and it was audible.

“ Oh? And what did he do?”

“ Nothing, just asked his friends.” My elbow was off the table now; my anger had started to rise. This had all happened a few weeks ago, and I’d tried to forget it, but Nana reminding me reopened that old wound. “ It wasn’t even as if he wanted the job, he just wanted to put it on his resume so he could get into a good college.”

“ Isn’t that what you want, too?” Nana asked.

“ Well yeah, but I actually wanted to do stuff as school board president too. I thought it’d be fun, and I’d find ways to make life a little easier for everybody at school.” I’d actually put forth a pretty good effort at the time, and this was just reminding me of it. When I ran for school board president, I was passionate, driven; it was the most I’d worked for something up to that point.

“ Why did you lose?”

“ Tony Hutsel was more popular, I guess, but I’m popular too! Only reason I can think of is because they didn’t think a girl would be able to handle the responsibility,” I replied indignantly.

My Nana reached hand forward and placed it over the one I was resting on the table, and gave it a sympathetic squeeze. Her eyes glinted with a

knowledge of what I was going through that surprised me greatly. “ Darling, I think I know exactly what you mean. When I was a young woman in the ‘ 60s, I wanted more than anything to be a reporter. I wanted to learn about the world and tell people what I saw. I wanted to find the truth in things and reveal them to the public. I loved doing journalism in my high school and college days, but when it came to the working world, I could never find a job in journalism. Every place I went to, they would assume I was applying for a secretary’s job; I would look around at all the cubicles to find men, all men, in suits, wandering around offices and stealing looks at me when they thought I wasn’t looking. I eventually took one of those secretary positions and made my living, but.... I always wondered what it would be like to chase my dream, instead of watching all the other men do it for me.”

Nana’s story surprised me; I mean, I knew that sexism existed back then, but it hurt to see Nana so personally affected by it. Because she was a women, she was robbed of the chance to pursue her dream. In a way, I felt that had happened to me too; losing out on the school board presidency robbed me of the chance to learn about politics, even in that limited degree. Looking at Nana’s face, I saw a slight sadness behind her old, kind eyes; they were glimmering with love for me, but I could tell that she still thought back to her dream every once in awhile.

I lifted my other hand and placed it atop Nana’s, so hers was sandwiched between mine. I gave her a smile. “ I’m sorry Nana. I’m glad you understand, though.”

She smiled and gave a little chuckle. “ Oh, it was the way things were back then. Doesn’t mean I have to like it, however, and it doesn’t mean that you can’t go after what you want. You just have to show them that, woman or no, you can do the job better. I know I could have reported the socks off any man in that office, but they just sauntered around, drinking and slacking off, and got away with it because they were men. They ruled the roost, and I was just the skirt at the desk that they ogled because they thought it was their right. Well, they didn’t want the job half as much as I did, and I can guarantee your Tony Hutsel will just slack off at his job too.”

Hearing these words comforted and empowered me in a way I hadn’t thought possible. Nana was speaking a lot of sense, and it was clear that Tony Hutsel and the other boys at my school tended to be like the reporters at her job – boyish, crude, always willing to put me down. Instead of anger, that thought filled me with an unexpected resolve. “ I’ll run next year,” I told Nana, “ and they won’t know what hit ‘ em.”

Nana returned my impassioned gaze with a knowing, proud smile. “ That they won’t, my dear. I know what you can do, and they will find out just the same.”

About an hour later, my mom came to pick me up. For the first time, I didn’t run to the car. At the end of the day, I gave Nana a big hug and a kiss goodbye, and her words rang in my ears the whole car ride home. I know what you can do. I know what you can do. And suddenly, I knew too.