

## Unstoppable

*More and more, when I single out the person who inspired me most, I go back to my grandfather.*

*~James Earl Jones*

It's 1991, and I'm in fourth grade, wearing a dress that itches and shoes that pinch my feet. It's my first Sunday serving as an acolyte at church, and my stomach is in knots because I'm so nervous. I don't like crowds or being the center of attention, but I like the thought of being grown up enough to actually participate in the service instead of being asked to sit quietly in the back.

We practiced how to light the candles in Sunday school, but the teacher forgot one important detail. My flame goes out when I'm halfway down the aisle, and I freeze. My partner, the redheaded boy whom I think of as my future husband, marches right past me and lights his candle with no problems. I have no idea what to do next, but I can feel the tears welling up in my eyes. Then Grandpa Norm steps up next to me. He lights my flame and whispers in my ear, "It's okay. You've got this."

Nine years later, I'm completing a summer internship at my tiny hometown's newspaper office. Grandpa and Grandma, who've lived in the community for nearly forty-five years, are ecstatic. They invite me over for lunch at least once a week, enjoying the opportunity for some one-on-one time before I head back to college.

Grandma's cooking is delicious, as always, and Grandpa's enthusiasm for my reporting assignments makes me think that I can make it as a writer after all. My boss has me writing human-interest features on prominent community members, which means most of the people I spend the summer interviewing knew me when I was six and still refer to me as Norm and Minnie's granddaughter. Grandpa's probably heard all their stories before, but he eagerly awaits the publication of every issue to savor my byline.

Today, I'm a wife, mother, full-time freelance writer, and Grandpa's de facto IT girl. Grandma passed away almost ten years ago, but Grandpa is impressively active for a man in his early nineties. His interest in technology never ceases to surprise me, which is why I juggle my schedule for these impromptu visits to log him back into Facebook and help him print pictures of the great-grandchildren he adores. Somehow, deadlines seem insignificant compared to my favorite senior citizen's social-media addiction.

When the solution to the latest tech issue only involves a few keystrokes, I take my time. I make the text on the screen a little larger so it's easier to read with his failing eyesight. I add three new bookmarks so there are fewer clicks for him to make while checking his favorite websites. He watches in amazement, and then asks if my son is ready for the middle-school band concert next week.

At the end of our visit, we step outside to see his next-door neighbor and fishing buddy heading over for a chat. Grandpa brags that I'm a "computer expert" who is smart enough to fix anything. I blush, and then think of all the ways that my tech skills are still in need of improvement.

Suddenly, it occurs to me that this moment perfectly encapsulates our relationship. He's always believed in me, even when I didn't believe in myself. I give him a hug, promise I'll stop by next week to make sure the computer still works, and

drive away thinking how lucky I am to have someone in my life who remains convinced I'm unstoppable.

—Dana Hinders—

