

750 Words

Protesting the Rules

by

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Sally Zabrowski slipped through the door, praying her mom was too busy to notice. The Zabrowski family rules included a 9 p.m. curfew on school nights. Grandma's cuckoo clock was declaring 10 p.m. as Sally tiptoed to the living room to begin her homework. Mom was reading a book in the overstuffed recliner.

"Sally, do you know what time it is?"

"I'm sorry, Mom. We were studying, and I forgot my watch."

"What were you studying?"

"We were doing math problems."

Mom turned slowly toward the coffee table where Sally's math book crowned the top of the stack of school books.

"May I see your math paper?"

Sally was caught. She and Joan spent the evening surfing the web, watching videos on YouTube, and swapping texts with friends. No math problems were solved, but Sally added two friends and gained ten Likes on her latest Facebook post.

“Sally, breaking our rules is unacceptable. Lying about breaking them is even worse.”

“I’m sorry, Mom. I’ll do better.”

“You made that promise the last two times you were late. Rules keep you safe and help you schedule time to complete your homework. You’re grounded for two weeks. Your friends may come to see you, but you will not be visiting them.”

“But, Mom, what about the football game Friday night? And Joan’s sleepover?”

“You won’t be going.”

Sally stomped up the stairs and flopped on her bed.

“Parents. Ugh! That’s just not fair!”

The rules bridled her life unmercifully, and Sally decided it was time for action. She would show Mom and Dad. Sally sent messages to her friends, inviting them to join her cause.

After school Friday the girls scrunched into the den with poster boards, markers, and tape. They made colorful signs while Sally explained her plan.

The Zabrowski home was on a busy street, and Sally hoped to bring attention to her plight. She and her friends marched in a circle at the end of the driveway, waving the signs as cars whizzed by. Some drivers slowed for a look, honked at the girls, and waved. Others drove away, laughing and shaking their heads.

A white haired man tapping his cane approached the protesters. Grandpa Zebadiah Zabrowski sat on the large rock beside the mailbox and removed his red straw hat. He wiped his gold-rimmed glasses with a checkered handkerchief then turned toward Sally.

“Sally Zabrowski, what’s all the ruckus?” Grandpa asked.

“I’m protesting the ridiculous rules Mom and Dad make up. I’m twelve now. I should be able to do as I please.”

Grandpa read the signs, “Parents unfair to kids! Down with the rules! Freedom now!”

He waved at a driver who slowed to give Mrs. Jones safe passage across the street with her baby stroller. Five-year-old Jimmy Jones followed behind on his bicycle.

“I think I understand the problem. Come, and sit beside me,” Grandpa said.

He patted the stone. Sally joined him and watched several moms crossing the busy street to the neighborhood park on the corner.

“Grandpa, it’s a good thing we have the crosswalk and stoplight. Otherwise, how would people walk to the park?”

Grandpa nodded.

“Children love to swing, climb, and slide. You know, Sally, it’s a shame they don’t realize how bad rules are. Look at the tall fence separating the playground from the street. Those children are not free to roam as they please. They aren’t allowed to choose playing in the street over running in the park.”

“But, Grandpa, the children might run in front of a car. They don’t know about danger or when it’s safe to cross the street. The fence lets them play and keeps them safe.”

Grandpa put his arm around Sally’s shoulders.

“You know, Granddaughter, you might be on to something. Are you saying the parents know best? Parents should restrict the children to the playground?”

“Yes.”

“But that’s a rule, and your protest signs tell me rules are unfair and should be removed.”

“Not all rules are bad—”

Sally stopped. She understood the message her wise grandfather was sharing.

“Grandpa, you tricked me. The Zabrowski family rules keep me safe because I don’t

know enough yet to decide everything for myself.”

“You are one smart girl. What do you say we end this protest? While you clean up, I’ll walk to the store and buy ice cream sandwiches for you and your friends. Deal?”

Sally shook Grandpa’s offered hand then smothered him with a hug.

“Deal, Grandpa. You’re the best.”