

When Gertrude Grew Great

Gertrude was just an average kid with an average life. She lived in an average sized house in an average neighborhood in a totally typical town. At home, she helped out just enough to slide by. At school, she did just enough homework to stay out of trouble. She had straight 'C's in all of her classes.

One day Gertrude's teacher, Mr. Mister, stopped her after class. "Gertrude," he said, "I know that you can do better. I've seen the work you do in class, and some of it is amazing... way better than 'C' work." Gertrude knew that there were moments when she did try a little harder than what everyone expected, like when she put extra elbow grease into some of the dishes to make them *really* sparkle; or, when she took extra time with her handwriting on a few problems of her homework to make it look fancy. But she just didn't have confidence in herself. She didn't really believe that she could change; in fact, she was scared by the thought of having the power to become whatever she wanted. She had done just enough to get by for so long that being mediocre was her lifestyle. She stopped listening to Mr. Mister about half way through and just nodded her head until he stopped. Then, she walked out at an average pace.

That night, Gertrude had a dream. It was ten years into the future and she was still living with her mom in her average neighborhood. She could not find an average job, because even the average jobs were filled by above-average workers: people who did more than what was expected of them. Gertrude loved her mom, but she wanted more for herself. She wanted her own place, her own life. A voice spoke in the dream: "The present is nothing more than the outcome of the choices made in the past. The future will only be the results of the choices we make today." Gertrude began crying average sized tears, because she knew that she helped shape the world in which she lived, and the choices she made produced the options she had. She woke up with her pillow wet.

Gertrude was relieved to be back in middle school. She took a little more care in getting herself ready that morning, and she looked better than normal. She tried harder in school, and she felt smarter than usual. She helped more around the house, and she felt better than typical. Soon the pattern of success replaced the pattern of mediocrity, and Gertrude became great at everything. Sure, there were still lots of things that Gertrude struggled with, but just trying her best made her feel better when she didn't succeed, and Gertrude even became great at failing by learning from her mistakes.

Ten years later, Gertrude lived in an average sized house in an average neighborhood in a totally typical town. She was just the average adult, working much harder than average to earn an average living. But her happiness was above average, because her life was hers. She still visited with her mom quite a bit. But when she was done, she was happy to go to her own house. Gertrude was living the great life.