

## The attic

I had postponed this as much as I could, but having gotten rid of his clothes and most of his books downstairs, I decided to head to the attic. I had expected Dad to leave it in a wild mess, but he had actually gotten rid of most things. I rummaged through some boxes, and came across old skates, pictures, and my high school yearbook.

I looked at those funny hairstyles and messages, wishing me all sorts of things. “Follow your dreams” was one of them. My dreams, which dreams? The dreams I had 20 years ago, when I was 17. Would I be happy if these dreams had come true today?

“Be yourself, stay true to yourself”. Mmm. Again, true to myself, as if my seventeen-year-old high-school senior self was worth reenacting everyday. I was glad I had not reenacted my teen years for everyone to endure.

“Hope you find happiness and love”. Happiness, ok. Love? Really? Find it, where? At the park? In the fridge? Why not just create love, find it in myself? Dad would probably be groaning in heaven, his one and only child, a single woman of thirty-seven, with no intention of ever marrying. His last name now gone, no one to carry it forward, no one to prove to future generations that once we had been a real family.

I hadn't found love, but if I could go back to my seventeen-year-old self, I would ignore all of this advice and stick to one, the one my father would repeat over and over, ever since mom had died. If you can only be one thing in life, be kind. To everyone, especially to yourself. Love may find you, love will require lots of work, and you can't always afford it. You don't always have the time or the energy to love, and you can't just put that love away when you can't find a home for it. But kindness – anyone can try to be kind.