

My Grandmother Complains

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I'll tell you why I wear my boots too tight:
First off, I'm vain—I like it when my feet
look smaller than they are, petite and slim.
I like their silhouette beneath my hem.
Your mother's feet are smaller than yours now
after that growth spurt in your clumsy stage.
Oh, don't pout, girl, don't be so sensitive.
I'll tell you what's wrong with the girls your age:
You blame The Media for every day
you wake up and don't think you're beautiful.
Not everyone is beautiful, my dear.
It's not a sin; the sooner you learn that
the better for the rest of us—but now
I've gone off track. What was I saying? Oh!
These too-tight boots. You think I didn't have
The Media when I was growing up?
We thought tight shoes made us look delicate.
We curled and dyed our hair and pinched our cheeks.
We painted lines along our calves when war
made nylon stockings scarce. The Media
you blame for all your ills is nothing new,
so stop your grumbling, for Heaven's sake.
You're lucky you're not cooped up in this home.
That school you go to isn't all that bad.
Your mother tells me you're not making friends.
Well, I told her, some lipstick wouldn't hurt.
You need to socialize with other girls
or date a boy or two, get out sometimes.
But if you want to throw your life away
on moping, be my guest. I'm almost dead.
I know my words don't matter anymore.
Oh, come back, girl, sit down now. Every time
we talk it seems you end up sniffing.
Don't be so sensitive. I'm old. If you
take what I say to heart, it's not my fault.
I only want what's best for you. All right?
Let's have a little chat without a fight.

I'll tell you why I wear my boots too tight.