

**The
Bad Advice
of
Grandma Hasenfuss**

Anne E.G. Nydam

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The Bad Advice of Grandma Hasenfuss
An Epistolary Tale

ANNE E.G. NYDAM

From: dhasenfuss@something.com
Subject: **welcome back to technology!**
Date: Monday, October 12, 7:43 PM
To: melbahasenfuss@another.com

Hi Grandma,

I'm glad you got your e-mail fixed.

You didn't miss anything very exciting. School's not going so great right now. There's this kid who's giving me a hard time. Last week in PE I missed an easy kick in kickball and I felt like a total dork, and he started teasing me. And now every time he gets a chance he calls me a wimp, or makes fun of my name or something. There's a few other guys who hang around with him that are starting in on me, too.

But anyway, you probably don't want to hear about that stuff. Other than that I guess life is fine. I got 100% on my vocab quiz again on Friday. I went over to my friend Eric's house Saturday afternoon, but otherwise we had a boring weekend. Dad's going to bring home pizza for dinner tonight. Yum! I guess that's all the news here.

How's everything going for you?

- Danny

By the way, here's this week's new vocab list:
abominable, calumnies, effectual, guffaw, predicament,
rebuff

THE BAD ADVICE OF GRANDMA HASENFUSS

From: melbahasenfuss@another.com
Subject: **Re: welcome back to technology!**
Date: Monday, October 12, 9:51 PM
To: dhasenfuss@something.com

Dear Danny,

I, too, am glad to have the use of my computer again. It was quite exciting when the lightning struck, but you know very well I'm not one for too much excitement. All I want is a quiet life! I was just sitting at my computer looking up some crochet patterns, but there was a perfectly dreadful storm, with thunder and lightning zapping all over the place. Of course I counted the seconds between crash and flash, as I taught you, and I could tell the lightning was coming closer and closer. From my desk window I could see it striking up in the hills, and then on the other side of town, then just at the end of the street, then the tree on the other side of the parking lot.

Of course I should have shut down my computer, but I never think of that. Then there was a tremendously bright flash and simultaneously the bang like a cannon blast, and I jumped up as if I'd sat on a pin. The lightning came crackling through the wires into my computer and shot out through the cd drive like a white-hot electric snake. It came at me going for my throat, but luckily all my badminton practice came to my aid. Without hesitation I seized a large needlepoint cushion I'd made, and with one powerful and well-aimed swing I volleyed that lightning away from me!

Napoleon, who had been snoozing in the trombone, jumped up so high his back brushed the ceiling and his tail was bristled out bigger than an artificial Christmas tree. The lightning bounced around my study three times and knocked over my desk lamp, and then finally fizzled out on the floor. So luckily Napoleon and I were unhurt, but of course my computer was fried like an egg, and I had to

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get a new bulb and shade for my desk lamp, too. Oh well – these things happen, you know. Anyway, it’s good to be back in communication with you and your dad. I’ve missed our daily e-mails.

Congratulations on the vocabulary quiz. Good vocabulary is the key to success! At least, it can’t hurt, and if you can memorize all the spellings and definitions it just goes to show you can memorize whatever else you put your mind to, as well.

As for your objectionable classmate, of course I want to hear about “all that stuff.” You must tell me all the details so I can help you figure out how to deal with the problem. In the meantime, I hereby dutifully advise you to tell a trusted adult at your school. The teacher will speak with the boy, justice will triumph, and the problem will be solved. Edgar Middle School will again become the Utopian educational community it was meant to be. Voila!

Yours affectionately, Grandma

THE BAD ADVICE OF GRANDMA HASENFUSS

From: dhasenfuss@something.com
Subject: **jerks at school**
Date: Tuesday, October 13, 8:04 PM
To: melbahasenfuss@another.com

Hey Grandma,

You know I can't tell a teacher about John! Then everyone would call me a suck-up and tattletale as well as a wimp! A wimp and a nerd. That stupid vocab quiz just gave them something else to tease me about. I'm too bad at kickball and too good at spelling and stuff. Dad said I should just ignore them, but I bet Dad couldn't ignore someone whispering mean stuff in his ear every time he walks past. And don't tell me "sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me," either.

You said you wanted me to tell you all about it, so I'll list them.

There's John, first of all. He's tall, and wears all the coolest clothes, and sneers at everybody, even the people he calls his friends. He didn't used to bother me much, but last week in science he was dropping pieces of pencil lead and paper and stuff into the fish tank and I told him to stop, and he wouldn't, and I told Ms Diaz, and ever since then he's had it in for me. So you can see that I couldn't possibly tell a teacher about anything again or it will just be worse!

Then there's Rasheed. I'm stuck with him for my lab partner, and the whole time I was arguing with John about the fish he was clenching his fists and cracking his knuckles and looking like he would slug me if he thought he could get away with it. He scowls all the time and looks as mean as a Doberman dog.

Also, there's Austin, who's just a moron, and Marco, who's as big and tough as a high-schooler and cusses like – well, I'd be way too embarrassed to tell you the stuff he says, Grandma! That's a whole different sort of vocab talent! Then there's Connor, who looks like a sewer rat, and Brandon and Drew, who follow John around everywhere and agree with everything he says.

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There's a few girls who hang around John all the time, too, mostly Hannah and Madison. They act like all they care about is clothes and shoes and they giggle at the stupidest things.

PE is tomorrow and I know I'm going to mess up again and it'll be even worse. Probably the whole class will start teasing me, and John and Marco and the others will think they're so cool. I don't know why they're the popular group anyway, but they are.

Anyway, I had no idea the lightning came right into your house! Dad only said your computer short circuited or something. I'm glad you're okay. If you're that good at badminton I bet you'd be good at kickball, too. Then when John says "My grandmother can kick better than you," I'll know mine really can. :P

- Danny

THE BAD ADVICE OF GRANDMA HASENFUSS

From: melbahasenfuss@another.com
Subject: **Re: jerks at school**
Date: Tuesday, October 13, 10:17 PM
To: dhasenfuss@something.com

Dear Danny,

Yes, I rather suspected that you'd reject the idea of telling a teacher. And you feel sure that you're unable to ignore this John creature, either? You know those really are the two most sensible courses of action. However, if they cannot be done, they cannot be done, and we shall have to devise an alternate strategy.

As for sticks and stones, I quite agree with you. That is, I agree with you about the words. Brutal things, words. I once watched a verbal boxing match that left both combatants bruised and bloody. The first man, a professor of economics at our local college, accused the other, a politician fighting against a tax increase, of ignorance, and that was the bell for the first round. The politician led with an "I've had fifteen years of service to this community" to the jaw. But the professor shook it off and returned a sharp "studies indicate" followed, one-two, by a "9 out of 10 economists agree" that made the politician's eyes cross. The politician threw a "minor position at a minor institution," but it was a little wide. The professor dodged and parried with a "you insult our town's own highly respected college" that brought up an ugly welt on the politician's cheek. That's when the politician started fighting nasty. He aimed a "perhaps you can explain your failure to pay social security tax for your children's nanny" directly at the professor's solar plexus. I could see the breath go out of the professor, and he was utterly unable to put up any defense when the politician followed with a "people say you went to communist rallies when you were at college." The blood was pouring from the professor's nose by then, but he rallied and hit out with a well-aimed "why don't you tell everyone why your

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brother landed the contract for the high school renovation despite putting in the highest bid” that left the politician reeling. Pressing his advantage, the professor poured on the “corruption, arrogance, graft, and greed” and by the end of the drubbing the politician was out for the count with a black eye and a dislocated jaw. The crowd went wild. Each of us in the audience had a whole seat, but we only needed the edge...

But I digress. Let me just assure you that although your dad appears to have forgotten how upset he was when he was in sixth grade and Jeffrey Butchart called him “big-nosed frog-face,” at the time he would certainly have agreed with your assessment of words. They can absolutely hurt, and you, my dear, need a respite from persecution. Perhaps it would be best if you simply lie low and attempt to avoid John’s notice. I look forward to hearing how PE goes tomorrow, and whether it’ll be as dreadful as you fear.

As for our name, just remember that even though ignorant people may make fun of it, (yes, Jeffrey Butchart teased your dad about it, too) Hasenfuss is actually an exceptionally lucky name.

Yours fondly, Grandma

P.S. I did notice and appreciate your circumspection in the matter of rude language. Should you ever need to report on such dialogue, you may respect my old-fashioned morals by using %\$# and *@& and so on. I never say anything else myself, no matter how extreme the provocation.

THE BAD ADVICE OF GRANDMA HASENFUSS

From: dhasenfuss@something.com
Subject: **I hate PE!**
Date: Wednesday, October 14, 7:21 PM
To: melbahasenfuss@another.com

Hi Grandma,

PE was even worse than I thought! It was terrible! It was abominable! (See, I used a vocab word.) I tried to do what you suggested and lie low, but during kickball in PE I came up to bat, so everyone was watching me. I tried to kick just a mellow easy kick and maybe not give John anything to comment about, but it didn't help at all. I got tagged out before I got to base, and John said I kick like a girl, and everyone laughed. He's right. I'm an awful kicker. But John and his whole gang kept calling me Danielle and saying I was a girl, and saying "Poor Danielle has a fuss" and "Don't fuss, Hasenfuss!" And then when they picked teams for a second game Marco and Drew picked the girls before they picked me. I hate PE and I hate kickball and I hate John and I hate the whole stupid class!

Anyway, I hope you're okay. Are you kidding about the professor and the politician and Dad being called a frog-face? Dad says you're exaggerating again, but I believe you. Anyway, I believe mean enough words can hurt you that badly. I felt like I was getting punched in the solar plexus all through PE today. (I looked it up, so I know.)

Say hi to Napoleon for me.

- Danny

ANNE E.G. NYDAM

From: melbahasenfuss@another.com
Subject: **Re: I hate PE!**
Date: Wednesday, October 14, 9:53 PM
To: dhasenfuss@something.com

My dear Danny,

I'm very sorry to hear that you had such an unpleasant time in PE today, but I must beg you to give a little thought to what you're telling me. This John fellow obviously thinks nothing could be worse and more degrading than to be like a girl, and you appear to agree with him. You complain of this to me, a genuine female for the entirety of my extensive life? (Moreover, I've always been 100% satisfied with being a girl.) In your rush to consider yourself the victim you've lost sight of the feelings of others. How do you think the girls in your class feel when you boys use "girl" as a term of contempt? By accepting "girl" as an insult, you yourself insult any girls who hear it. Secondly, if the team captains picked girls before they picked you, that may imply that you're less than a star kickball player, but doesn't it equally imply that at least some of these girls they picked must be creditable players themselves?

"Kicking like a girl" is not necessarily such a bad thing - nor, indeed, is kicking like your Grandma. It wasn't so long ago that I had occasion to demonstrate that, and it's a shame you weren't there to see it for your edification. Last Fourth of July they had a swing band playing in the bandstand in the evening before the fireworks started, and everyone was dancing. I can still cut quite a rug, and I was dancing up a storm. Then all of a sudden there was a commotion where the fireworks were being set up. Some idiot had been smoking and threw a cigarette butt over near the fireworks and started one of the fuses. Even worse than that, the release mechanism hadn't been completed and the firework was about to detonate right on the ground with all sorts of people around. And of

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course it would probably set off all the other fireworks, too, and cause a dreadful explosion. The firemen were over at the hotdog stand getting their dinner before the fireworks were supposed to start, and there wasn't time for them to get back. So I didn't waste a second. I took careful aim, (in perfect time to the jitterbug, I might add), drew back my leg and kicked. I kicked off my shoe and it flew straight at the fireworks cannon and smacked into the release catch precisely as I had aimed. The release catch released just as the flame reached the end of the fuse, the cannon fired, the firework shot safely into the sky where it belonged, everyone cried, "Ooooh!" and "Aaaah!" and the day, or rather the evening, was saved. All because of a girl's kick. Let this be a lesson to you!

(Alas, my shoe was shot into the air with the firework and ended its dancing career in a blaze of glory. But, as you know, I'm never without a crochet hook in my hair bun, and I was able to whip up a replacement slipper for myself so that at least I didn't have to spend the rest of the evening dancing with one bare foot.)

I'm sorry to scold you, my dear, because you're my absolute favorite grandson, and not bad for a boy. In any case, we can't have you being bullied, so we need a new strategy. If lying low is impossible, perhaps you should try replying calmly and reasonably to John's calumnies. (See, I can use your vocabulary words, too.) Please remember, however, before you complain of insults, to think who else is being insulted by your attitude, and try respecting them.

Yours most affectionately, Grandma

ANNE E.G. NYDAM

From: dhasenfuss@something.com
Subject: **Help! It's getting worse!**
Date: Thursday, October 15, 8:33 PM
To: melbahasenfuss@another.com

Hi Grandma,

I didn't mean that girls are bad. Sorry if I offended you. I wish I had been there to see your awesome kick! And you're right about some of the girls being decent kickball players. I wish I were half as good as Hannah! But I don't think your advice worked out too well. In the hall before math today John and Connor came up behind me going, "Oh look, it's Danielle!" Brandon and Drew guffawed like they always do, and Austin shoved into me and made me drop my math book, and Connor said, "Oh, the poor little girl dropped her book."

So I tried to follow your advice and I answered, "There's nothing wrong with girls. I'd rather be a girl than be a boy like you. And Hannah's a lot better at kickball than Brandon and Drew, anyway." Hannah and Madison were there, too, by that time, and they frowned when I said that, and went into class whispering to each other, so I don't think they appreciated it. So I hope you do, Grandma! Because then it got even worse!

When I leaned over to pick up the book, one of those guys pushed me, and I stumbled forward and ran right into Mr Zangway, who was just coming to the door to see what was going on. I crashed into him and knocked him over! Then Rasheed, who was getting a drink from the water fountain in the hall, laughed so hard he squirted water out his nose all over the floor. This loser Kyle, who's always late to class, came dashing up just then because the bell was about to ring, and he slipped on the wet floor and went skidding down the hall, and his books and pencils flew up in the air and he crashed into two seventh graders at the door of their classroom. By that time everyone was laughing pretty hard, including me, but of course Mr Zangway was kind of mad, and when he yelled at everyone, John whispered sarcastically, "Way to go,

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Fussy-fuss. 100% on your vocab quizzes and always so cool, too,” and the whole gang snickered again and said “Don’t fuss, Hasenfuss!” and stupid stuff like that. So your advice didn’t help anything. I think I either need to get better at kickball or get worse grades!

By the way, we’re about to start a unit on advertising in social studies and I’m supposed to collect different kinds of ads. Can you send me some ads out of some of your magazines? Dad’s magazines are boring and have only the same sort of ads over and over, like banks and cars.

- Danny



ANNE E.G. NYDAM

From: melbahasenfuss@another.com
Subject: **Re: Help! It's getting worse!**
Date: Thursday, October 15, 9:27 PM
To: dhasenfuss@something.com

Dear Danny,

I shall certainly select some interesting advertisements from my magazines and get them into the mail to you right away. If you have any particular subjects or styles in mind, let me know.

There are several points of note in your narrative, but I'm in a hurry tonight as I have to leave in just a few minutes for a performance. I just got a call from a friend of mine in the house band at Carnegie's that their trombonist had an unexpected and tragic toothbrushing accident and they need me to fill in. I'm afraid I'm a little rusty, but I dare say I'll play well enough to please people who are busily eating their dinners and talking the whole time anyway. But I do need to change my clothes and dump the cat out of the trombone as soon as I finish this note to you, so I'll say only that I'm sorry you felt that school today was worse than ever. If the bullying has progressed from name-calling to pushing and shoving we must certainly find a way to put a stop to it without further ado.

Just remember, if you must improve at kickball, that can do no harm, but under no circumstances attempt to become worse at spelling or your other schoolwork. However much John and his henchmen tease you for academic prowess, I assure you that bad grades will provide no respite from your troubles. There are as many cruel names for poor students as there are for good ones.

Hastily yours, Grandma

THE BAD ADVICE OF GRANDMA HASENFUSS

From: dhasenfuss@something.com
Subject: **bad vocab quiz**
Date: Friday, October 16, 7:39 PM
To: melbahasenfuss@another.com

Hi Grandma,

How did your gig go? What was Napoleon doing in your trombone anyway? I hope you played well.

I was only kidding about getting worse grades and I didn't mean to flunk my vocab quiz, but those guys were messing me up again today! During English they were teasing me every chance they got. Austin, who was sitting behind me, kept poking me with his pencil and I was getting totally distracted. And he kept whispering stuff during the quiz so I couldn't concentrate. Finally I whispered "Shut up!" and of course Ms Tulip heard me and said, "Austin and Dan, you know there is no talking permitted during a quiz. You will both get zeros until you come after school and retake the quiz." I was so mad! And of course then John and the others just made fun of both of us for being stupid, so you were at least right about that, Grandma!

So I had to come after school and I just wanted to retake the stupid quiz and get out of there, but Ms Tulip made me and Austin quiz each other on the vocab words. Man, he's terrible! I mean, I knew Austin got pretty bad grades, but I had no idea what a terrible speller he is. I didn't want to give him any help at all, but Ms Tulip sat at her desk looking daggers at me with one eyebrow raised whenever I wasn't helpful enough. So we quizzed each other through clenched teeth, and of course it was mostly me having to quiz him, totally ticked off the whole time. Then finally she let us retake the quiz, and I got 100%, but I only get a grade of 80% because it was a retake, and Austin got 81% to begin with, which means 61% with the markdown.

But this is the kicker - I was seriously annoyed about the whole thing and packing up my backpack and heading out, when Austin came up behind me. I figured he would

probably poke me with the pencil again, or shove me or something, so I kind of hunched my shoulders and braced myself. And he did go shoving by me, but as he did he whispered, "Thanks for the help, Dan. 81%'s the best I ever scored on a vocab quiz." Can you believe it? I can't believe I helped one of that horrible gang! Man, I'm such a loser I help them after they ruin my grades! And we have a science lab test on Monday and I bet Rasheed's going to ruin that one for me, too. One thing's for sure, though, I'm going to study this weekend until my head explodes if I have to, to make up for having him for a lab partner.

- Danny

Here are the new vocab words for this week: amuck, brandish, commotion, flourish, sheepish, skulk

THE BAD ADVICE OF GRANDMA HASENFUSS

From: melbahasenfuss@another.com
Subject: **Re: bad vocab quiz**
Date: Friday, October 16, 10:06 PM
To: dhasenfuss@something.com

My dear Danny,

It is indeed frustrating to have your vocabulary quiz spoiled by someone else's misbehavior. How infuriating to have to go after school, and not get full credit for your answers, either! However, I'm not so sure that helping Austin was a bad thing. You may find that he won't look at you in quite the same light any more, and perhaps you might look at him in a different light, as well.

Now let me tell you about my gig. First you should know that Napoleon has taken to curling up in the bell of my trombone and napping there, I don't know why. Perhaps the metal warms up in the sunlight or something. At any rate, every time I want to play I have to dump him out first. So between that and changing my clothes and catching the subway to Carnegie's I barely made it in time, and the first set started immediately upon my arrival. That meant I didn't take the time to warm up properly before we began. The music started, I took a big breath and belted out my first notes... only it turned out that Napoleon had left a fair amount of fur in my trombone, and the fur went flying out and into the face of the woman at the first table below the stage. Well, apparently she was extremely allergic to cats and within seconds she had begun to sneeze hard enough to double her over... which was a good thing, because some utterly abysmal fool had brought a loaded gun into Carnegie's and managed to bang it against the edge of a table so it went off! It shot straight across the front of the room and would have hit the woman in front and almost certainly killed her if she hadn't happened to lean forward at just that instant with another tremendous Napoleon-fur-induced sneeze. The security guards were on top of the

idiot with the gun by the time the bullet ricocheted off the cymbal and struck the emergency exit sign stage right. That popped and fizzled sparks on the percussionist's head, but he appeared to notice neither that nor the dent in his cymbal, and kept right on playing while the audience went into fits. They were far too busy panicking to pay any attention to my first solo, but that may have been just as well since, as I told you, I was a little rusty. With the near exit light out of order they all ran helter-skelter back toward the main entrance, where the bouncers could assure them that the man with the gun was already ejected. So luckily everything soon settled back down, because as you know I don't care for such disturbances, and the set continued without further incident.

By the time I'd packed up and left Carnegie's for the subway station afterwards, it was well after midnight and most of the audience was already gone. The streets were pretty deserted and there was only one man, and it seemed like he was following me. And then I realized that I recognized him – it was the fool who'd almost shot the woman in Carnegie's - so then I knew he had a gun! I confess it made me a little nervous to know he was coming up closer and closer behind me with nobody else around. I don't know what a mugger would want with a trombone, but of course muggers can like jazz, too, and anyway, I thought he probably assumed I had a lot of money with me.

But less than a block from the subway station he suddenly lurched forward and fell on his face. At first I considered ignoring him, but after all, he hadn't tried mugging me yet, and maybe he wasn't really planning to at all. So I turned around to see what was the matter. He was lying on the ground clutching his ankle and moaning. Apparently he'd caught his toe on a crack in the sidewalk and twisted his ankle pretty badly. Well, I couldn't just leave the poor bloke all alone in a sketchy part of town late at night with a twisted ankle, so I went back to help

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him. He said he lived about half a block away and if he could just get home he'd be okay. I tried to offer him a shoulder, but he was too heavy for me, so after a little thought I let him use my trombone (in its case, of course) as a sort of crutch. I hated to see my poor case getting banged against the sidewalk, but after all, what are a few scuffs as long as the trombone is perfectly safe inside? When we reached his building he said, "Let me get my cousin to walk you to the station. It's not safe around here."

So the cousin came down to escort me to the subway station. He introduced himself as Tony and said, "You know an old lady like you shouldn't be walking around here alone."

I replied, "But I wasn't alone. Your cousin was right behind me."

He gave me a funny look and said, "Lady, my cousin is exactly the kind of dude I'm trying to warn you about!"

I nodded and said, "Ah yes, I thought he might be a mugger."

"Then why'd you help him?" he exclaimed.

"Because he'd hurt his ankle, of course!"

At that Tony laughed and said, "Well, maybe you're pretty smart or maybe you're just lucky, but either way I guess you're all right. Here's the station." I thanked him and he replied, "Thanks for helping my cousin. Maybe he'll remember it next time he's thinking of going out with that gun. He's really not all bad." What do you think of that?

As for the challenge of your upcoming lab test, no doubt you're right to study as if you'll have to do everything on your own. As everyone always says, if you want something done right, you have to do it yourself, and if your lab partner is as bad as you say, he'll be no help at all. However, you're an excellent student and I'm sure you can handle it, my dear!

Yours affectionately, Grandma

ANNE E.G. NYDAM

From: dhasenfuss@something.com
Subject: **soccer game**
Date: Saturday, October 17, 5:28 PM
To: melbahasenfuss@another.com

Hi Grandma,

It's not fair - I can't escape from John's gang even on the weekend! My friend Eric came over this afternoon and his sister's soccer team had a game, and he wanted to go over and watch for a while. So we biked over to the field when there was about 20 minutes left in the game. Well, it turns out John's friend Hannah is on the same team as Eric's sister, so John and a couple of the other guys and Madison were all there to watch, too. Eric and I climbed up the side of the bleacher to the top row and John didn't notice us at first. Our side was down 2-1 and we kept getting close, but just couldn't seem to score. Then Eric's sister got the ball and he started cheering her on, and that's when John and all those guys turned around and saw us.

I'm sure they would have said something mean anyway, but just then this bee started buzzing around. Eric's allergic to bees and he totally freaked out. All of a sudden he started screaming and jumping around and waving his arms like crazy and the next thing I knew, he flailed his arms into my face and knocked me over backwards, and I fell straight off the back of the bleachers! Of course by then John and every single other person at the game was staring at Eric the spaz, and everyone saw me flip right off the back like a total loser, and all the breath got knocked out of me, and John's gang was laughing their stupid heads off. I was so embarrassed I thought I'd die. And then everyone started cheering! I thought they were cheering because I fell! But when I picked myself up and climbed back onto the bleacher, Eric explained that our commotion had totally distracted the other team and in fact it had distracted everyone except his sister, who of course was used to ignoring him. And

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while no one was paying attention she was able to score a goal and tie the game!

By now there was only about 2 minutes left and John turned around and said, "Maybe if we push weenie Danielle off again we'll win the game!" Ha ha. But when his back was turned to sneer at me, Hannah made this kick that must have been about as good as yours at the fireworks! She scored, and we won! So that was good. But Eric went home with his family, and I had to bike home all bruised and sore. Ugh.

Just as I got home, Hannah came biking by and believe it or not, she stopped and asked if I was okay. So I said yeah I was fine, and then I said what an awesome score she made, and she grinned and said, "Maybe a bit better than Brandon and Drew, huh?"

I laughed sort of sheepishly, because she was obviously remembering what I said before math class the other day. Then she surprised me even more by saying, "Look, Dan, you want to kick better?" and she got off her bike and pulled a soccer ball out of her backpack and gave me a few pointers! So then I went in the back yard and practiced what she said for a little while before dinner, and I really do think I was doing better!

So maybe there's hope for me yet, Grandma. And I must admit it seems you may have been right about sticking up for girls. Hannah's never said two words to me before, so even if your advice just made things worse with John, I think it really helped with Hannah, anyway. But as for John, I bet he'll be teasing me worse than ever for falling off the bleacher, so if you have any more ideas for dealing with him, go ahead and tell me!

- Danny