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Category: Writers & Authors

Story Title: The Unstoppable Train of My Second Act

Story / Journey:

Picture the runaway locomotive 777 from the 2010 film *Unstoppable*—39 cars, no driver, barreling at 70 mph through Pennsylvania with unrelenting momentum.

Have that image in your mind?

Now, envision the women conductors such as Christine Aldeis, an engineer for the Santa Fe Railway in the 1970s, and Bonnie Leake, an engineer for Union Pacific in 1974, to name a few. These bold, courageous women blazed trails through an industry that never expected them.

For fifty years, I avoided being like them, believing my success lay in supporting others from the sidelines.

Born into a generation of modesty and discretion, I was told to keep my ego in check, and never, ever brag. So, I became the quiet girl who found success in the shadows, convinced I was happy being a follower. But that little voice—the inner critic who learned to use her power for good—kept reminding me: Lead by example. Lift other humans high.

Use your superpowers to accomplish greatness.

I chugged along.

I'd never used the term unstoppable to describe myself, but deep down I knew it applied to me. The answer arrived one morning at 4 a.m., wide awake in the darkness, when I finally stopped making excuses for playing small. In that quiet hour before dawn, truth has a way of breaking through like a locomotive announcing its presence, unmistakable and impossible to ignore. I realized I'd been waiting for permission that would never come—approval to step forward, to claim my own vision, to stop deflecting praise onto others when I'd done the work too.

Building Momentum

The forward movement of a train's rolling stock gradually builds, as did my self-confidence and the ability to recognize my potential. Each metaphorical car became a receptacle of experiences accumulated over the years: the project I'd led but let someone else present, the promotion I'd screened myself out of, the ideas and advice I'd offered to managers who spoke them aloud.

I'd convinced myself I was happy being a follower.

Now, my life's accomplishments and plans put me in the driver's seat for this second act. I'm mentoring women in my industry. I wrote the book I'd outlined in ninety days, but never believed anyone would want to read it.

I got in my way most of the time and prevented my best version from being set free. I thrived as a card-carrying member of the self-sabotage club, a practitioner of "fake it till you make it," for the sake of humility.

My preferred motto, written by the great female author A.J. Sherwood, remained at the forefront of my mind: "Underestimate me, that'll be fun." It became my quiet rebellion against all those years of making myself smaller.

The Turning Point

Ego and humility have been in constant conflict within me, and I'm here to say there is a time and place for both. I learned I could lead by example while staying true to my authenticity. I no longer had to hide behind the work of others because my ability to see potential in people, to build momentum, to keep moving when others stalled—that was leadership too.

Moving Forward

Others acknowledged my capacity to succeed far sooner than I did. They saw someone who could lead without needing to stand at the front of the line, someone who'd champion others while moving her own locomotive forward.

So, you see, I am unstoppable. Not because I'm the loudest engine or because I finally conquered my doubts, but because I'm moving forward anyway, pulling others along, showing them what's possible when you board that early morning train to your second act.

You never know who you'll influence along the way. But that's the beauty of being unstoppable—you keep moving, and others see their own locomotives reflected in yours.

What momentum have you been building without even realizing it? What would happen if you stopped waiting for permission and started moving forward?

Your train is already on the tracks. It's time to take control.