Betty Friedan speaks at the 150th anniversary Of the first Women's Rights Conference

With an elegant sniff you greet the crowd like a hound who's just found home.
Too frail to stand, you sit behind a microphone in the ruined Wesleyan Chapel, a ferocious midday sun beating down through the absent roof.
It was here those uppity sixty-eight first claimed the right to vote.

In two days' time they made a revolution, trying their voices in the echoing hall while braced for ridicule — those women who owned nothing, not even their heavy layers of clothes (petticoats tangling around their thighs, bodices blooming with sweat while stays and corset laces punished every breath).

It's odd to find you so delicate (forgive me— almost lady-like), your features arranged more decorously than in those madcap newspaper shots that always seemed to catch you with your mouth out of alignment and your hair askew. Still, it's clearly you, the famous bags beneath your eyes plumped up with memories that you retrieve like sweets from some soft, capacious handbag.
"It was work," you say, recalling those days of wild invention — the meetings, speeches, lawsuits — "But, oh! it was so much fun!"

The secret's out, what kept you going and kept them going, those women exalted by heat and the thrill of possibilities, the ones who rarely
smiled for their sepia photographs.

Today I hear them laugh.

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