

The Sacrifice
Subtitle: Moving On

I stare into the palms of my hand where three objects rest. I sacrifice these objects to move on from the bad omen which is my past; to remove the trauma which currently lives within the folds of my brain.

Let the sacrifice commence.

Object 1:

The Steel Chiming Heart

I avoid the items contained in the various boxes stored in the shelves of my nightstand dresser. There, I know I will find it — a seemingly innocent pink heart that fits in the palm of my hand and jingles like a baby rattle as you shake it. As it rings, it's meant to remind me of my grandma. I assume she expected me to ring it each time I feel lonely—to remember she's still there. I don't do that.

She's alive. I felt like I had to clarify that.

My brother and I received them on the day of our dad's funeral. Or, rather: "Celebration of Life". I don't often think back to that day. Or really any of those months. That was the first time we had seen our grandma that year. We'd usually see her at her country club's pool to which she'd always immediately hand us each an ice cream bar. Me, typically a Chipwich, my brother a Creamsicle. This time she had more than just ice cream; there was a whole bag of "goods". In this bag was a handful of objects she would soon give us to remind us of our dad. Like his old town newspaper features or medals from his swimming days. It also contained two paper weights containing our dad's ashes, and these two small chiming hearts. I would love to get rid of both these objects. Instead, I shove the paper weight under my bed, still in its box and hard structured paper bag, like a brand new pair of shoes you're waiting to grow into.

I continue the sacrifice. As the heart rings, I not only become aware of its painful memories, its presence beyond the box becomes clear to my brother. We silently acknowledge each other's discomfort. Or at least it feels like that. The silence grows thick, each breath becoming increasingly louder. An eerie stillness sets in. We don't talk about that day. Or our father. I wish we could talk to each other about him. I wish I allowed myself to think about him. It's been three years since. We only discuss the occasional childhood memory with him, although my heart still pounds each time I utter the word "dad" in front of him.

I should probably call my therapist.

Object 2:

Gold wallet

In the lower right corner of the white scalloped tray which sits on my dresser lives a small shiny gold wallet with a zipper. On top of it lives items that bring me more joy than an old wallet. Things like a pair of plastic white fangs I won at the arcade three summers ago, which I try on and admire in the mirror every month or so. I stare in the mirror adjusting my lips over the fangs, opening and closing my mouth to reveal my ferocious new pearly whites. I turn my back to the mirror and shove the fangs in my mouth as if hiding my magic trick from the crowd. I quickly turn around to reveal the chunk of plastic tightly forced under my upper lip.

My Aunt Heidi bought this wallet for me in fourth grade. I'm sorry, but what fourth grader wants to receive a wallet for Christmas? Not me. She bought me a gold one to match her silver one. She listened to the top 100 and knew all the celebrity news, far beyond page six. In short, she was "the cool aunt" so I didn't mind matching with her, but it was still one of those awkward presents you had to fake a reaction, claiming how much you've always wanted a wallet just like this one and you can't wait to use it next time you go to get ice cream with your friends!

My Aunt always worked in Manhattan, where we lived, so we saw her often. Sometimes she would stay the night with us, typically only on holidays though. About three years after I received the wallet, on a night my Aunt was staying over, she somehow found the small shiny gold wallet collecting dust under the couch in the living room. Her look of confusion and despair will forever be engraved in my mind. I have never felt so terrible. To be honest, when she showed me the wallet, I had no clue what it was. I once again had to create an elaborate lie as to how it ended up under the depths of our couch next to the yellow wiffle bat my mom was hiding from my brother so he couldn't swing it around the house again. My Aunt is one of those people who tries to make you feel bad when you do something to hurt her. "Oh, I guess you don't love me. Now I know you don't like anything I buy. Makes it easier for me actually, I just won't get you anything again" she would say, likely in that order, shaking her head to your obvious lies of admiration for the wallet.

While this was years ago, and she never brought it up since the fact, I still felt horrible everytime I saw her. I've cherished each gift I've received from her since, sending texts with photos of me wearing the socks she bought me the next Christmas.

She had a stroke last year, forever damaging the left side of her brain. She lives with my grandma in Cleveland now. The left side of the brain controls the right side of the body and speech.

I still don't use the gold wallet, it just sits there under my more favorable white fangs. At least she can't remember. Maybe that makes me feel worse.

Object 3:

Pink Crystal Bracelet

Everyone in my dad's family seems to have some sort of entity they can turn to in times of need. For my grandma, that's God. My dad always claimed he believed in some higher power, not God though. What he believed in seemed to confuse himself. His sister Jenny, similarly felt more connected to spirituality than religion. When she got diagnosed with cancer in 2020, she turned to holistic practices, like crystals.

My Aunt Jenny beat cancer the next year, until it came back again in 2025. This time she was told she'd only have a few months to live. This process of grieving was entirely different than my dad's. The worst day was the day I heard this news, not the day she passed. That day was fine. Losing my dad filled me with anger, feelings that persist now. Losing my aunt, on the other hand, just brought me utter sadness. I'm not a crier, as some say, so I was surprised, after the little crying I endured with my dad's death, how many tears I was able to produce this time. My chest grew heavy and my back ached. I could no longer focus in school and I actually started calling my mom each night to simply sob into the phone so I didn't feel so alone. All these tears, and processing my emotions the months leading up to her death allowed me to grieve before the moment I truly lost her.

She gave me a crystal bracelet in 2023 long after she first had cancer, and just months after my dad passed. With the bracelet came a long speech. A speech providing information as to what these crystals were meant to do and what crystals she turned to at different points in her life. I, shamefully, tuned out for most of it. Spirits and crystals and all that never clicked for me.

Now, the only object I have which physically reminds me of her is this bracelet. I'm picky, especially with jewelry, so I never wore it. It lives in the bottom of a small jewelry box, still in the mesh bag it came in.

I sacrifice these objects as they serve no purpose.

I couldn't let these people leave my life without having a physical reminder of them so I kept them. I hoard objects as "keepsakes". Instead I just hide them. I hide them, and when I find them they scare me.

I sacrifice these objects because I'm moving on.