



Golden gifts

In these pieces of passed-down jewellery are the stories behind the lives lived in them

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I just bought myself a ring. It's a band of rounded gold. This ring, like lots of the things I buy, isn't essential, but just something I've seen and had to have. In the lead up to my birthday every August, I buy myself something precious, a proper present to myself. I'm a Leo baby, ruled by the sun and drawn to anything that is gold and glitters. Over the years I've amassed a little collection of gold jewellery that I've bought for myself. It's always been a motivation for me, I knew that I wanted to work hard so I could buy my own jewellery, never dependant on a man to do so. But the thing is, I don't really wear it. Sometimes I might pop pieces on for an occasion because they match an outfit or that I fancy finally wearing them but they are not what I wear every day and live my life in.

What I buy for myself very often stays inside my jewellery box because what I actually wear, day to day, all once belonged to the women in my family. My mother's gold hoops, her heavy heart-shaped drops and emerald Claddagh are a part of my daily ritual of getting dressed. As is my grandmother's ring that I wear on my hand every day. Tiny diamonds and a thick gold

band is one of the most important things I own. She bought it for herself in the '70s and I love how it looks like a cascading champagne tower of sparkles as it catches the sunlight.

She gave it to me for my 21st birthday, it was something she had been saving for me. It's been there for everything since, I wore it on my first date with my boyfriend, to important interviews and years later it was there pressed tight between our palms as I held my grandmother's hand at my grandfather Poppy's funeral. It binds us to each other, even though we're oceans away.

There is a special sense of significance attached to items once worn by the people we love. I find myself rolling the loop of my mother's hoops in my ears while I write or finding new ways to wear the trinkets of my childhood given to me by both my grandmothers. They continually remind me that we're all the product of the women that came before. We inherit their stories as we write our own. At the end of everything is what has come before, these are the women who paved the way for me. I know that the jewellery they all have given me is precious not because they're gold, but because they are theirs.

I went gold panning once as a child. Crouched down in a stream of water, finding a little bit of light in the dirt, I thought this fleck of gold was the most glorious thing I could hold. A fleck of brilliance amongst the earth, it was hot in my hand and all I wanted to do was bite it to see if it was real. It sat in a vial for a while amongst my special things,

them. Gold things, like all beautiful things will always be precious. As we go back to dust and dirt and earth, gold is always protected and passed on. Polished and preserved for our daughter's daughters, we wear rings and lock chains that belong to women we may have never met.

I'm wearing my new ring while I write this,

"My mother's gold hoops and Claddagh ring are a part of my daily ritual of getting dressed"

but like so much from childhood it was lost, not special enough to be saved. Not like the things that had been given to me from my grandmothers and Mum. Their jewellery then only worn alone in my bedroom, too precious to take outside like the blue glass crystal cuff or the faux pearl beads - they didn't cost much but were invaluable.

In these pieces of passed-down jewellery are the stories behind the lives lived in them, everything from the sacrifices to the celebrations. I wear them to feel close to

it's weighing down my fingers on the keyboard and distracting me as I type. On the other hand is my grandmother's ring catching the late summer sunlight. Maybe this is my new ring's story, the words it witnessed being written after being bought for a birthday. This ring - like the other little things that I've saved up and bought for myself - is fun but perhaps one day, it will be something more to someone else. One day, when I give it away as a gift to my child, perhaps I'll show them this story and it will forever stay a treasured trinket. ♦