



I AM WEARING A SWEATSHIRT I bought in 1999, and I can't wait to see which objects will become artifacts next. There was nothing holy about this garment in the last paragraph of the millennium. It is the same "charcoal heather" favored by flotillas of college freshmen who do and do not want to be seen.

Twenty-five years hence, this sweatshirt is the epicenter of sentiment. It was born before the world ever heard the words "war on terror" or "crunchwrap." The world did not even know if it would be permitted to remain a world much longer, what with that googly-eyed year 2000 leering over the balcony.

I may well have been wearing this sweatshirt when my mother and I prepared for Y2K. We were sufficiently concerned to purchase one 32-ounce box of Cheerios and a can of tuna fish the size of a Volkswagen, and also to rent Cher's entire cinematic oeuvre. By the time we reached the scene in *Moonstruck* where the old man yells "somebody tell a joke!", the survival of our species was looking pretty promising.

We have made it another quarter-century, and so has my sweatshirt. It is the dowager of my wardrobe, spared the rough and tumble-dry life of upstarts like the socks covered in smiling cheeseburgers. It has borne witness to four cats, six *Lord of the Rings* films, and eight insulin pumps, only seven of which have been dropped into the toilet. The sweatshirt has retained its shape despite the bespoke sandblasting of many tears, eleven consecutive years in New Jersey, and an estimated nineteen square feet of cat hair.

The sweatshirt has remained so youthful that it is conceivable I could sell it for tens of dollars. I would sooner pawn my Magic 8 Ball or surrender my stockpile of Cheerios. I would not even accept its genetic twin, indistinguishable to the naked eye.

This is the sweatshirt that has watched smiles graffiti the corners of my mouth until I had to befriend being forty. Its shoulders felt the first frizz of victory when I grew out a haircut

best described as "mutant radish." It remembers my grandfather's laugh, the first poem I got published, and the friend who took me by the elbows to say, "Your love does not return void." I am still trying to figure out what that means, so it is helpful that the sweatshirt was there to hear it too.

All of this bodes bodaciously for the mundane sundries of today. The God Loves You coffee mug will remember mornings when my mother made me laugh so hard that I went airborne. The rose quartz heart will turn from trinket to touchstone, hidden in my desk by a bodhisattva disguised as a Board member. A stress ball shaped like a pancreas will squeeze the hand of the doctor who looked in my eyes. Even the grocery list—cottage cheese, Cherry Zero, Cheerios—will remind me that one handwriting runs through the whole scuffed notebook.

Sometimes I let life in on the secret. It will be entitled to enhanced affection simply by enduring. By the time I retire these new underpants, I will be five strawberry moons and twenty *Fast and Furious* movies older. One model of can opener waits dutifully in a million drawers, but only mine will remember the night I spilled minestrone on every square inch of linoleum. I expect my plain brown tabby to snore in my lap for the better part of two decades, until she can no longer keep the secret that the better part is always in progress. I will not sweat the swagger of time. ❄