

The Contents We Carry

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I'm scared that if I die tomorrow, people will only remember me for the things in my purse. Some parking tickets, an old cheese stick, one single googly eye, a sunglasses case because I lost the sunglasses, an earring missing its earring back, and a few coins. And no one will care about the purse itself. All of it has a ridiculous story behind it, but none of it holds any significance. The thing is, there is nothing significant to remember me for. I'm just a normal, everyday person. I make no impact on the world. I wake up, go to work, come home, sleep, and repeat the cycle the next day. I don't have a long list of all the accomplishments I've made so far in my life. No awards, no plaques, no medals, no trophies, no moments in my life where the world suddenly aligned on its axis, all because I was there in that exact spot at that exact moment. Honestly, all I have to my name is my name. Maybe a participation trophy or two, because at the end of the day, I'm participating in this game of life, but aren't we all?

And what if nothing echoes after me? Like I'm a dead end, but you can't turn back around. My life could be summed up by all of the clutter, the things I forgot to clean out, the proof that I was here but not why. I want to believe that there is more to me than the things that fall to the bottom because I will never search for it again. The routines and receipts, all the things that can fit into a purse. But some days, it feels like significance is something people are born with, but I'm just trying to get through my day without losing another earring back.

I'm scared that I take up space but never will take shape, that I move through the world without leaving a mark. I pass people on the street, exchange polite words, a slight smile, maybe even a nod, and go on about my day, and nothing ever seems permanent. I'm afraid that being

quietly kind, ordinary, and respectful doesn't have an impact on other people. That the days that I can walk around without falling apart are the only thing people won't remember me for.

I'm scared that significance is something most people are born with, and I'm not like most people. It's something you're supposed to live with loudly and proudly, but I feel like I'm not even living because I don't feel like I actually have significance. Or maybe it's something you're supposed to learn, and I missed that lesson. I'm afraid that my routines are all anyone would see: wake, work, sleep, and without realizing that I drag myself to complete those routines like a checklist. Maybe my life seems small from the outside, and people will never know how large it is on the inside.

I'm scared that I've been wrong about what matters. Maybe significance isn't something you chase, but something that you collect, like all the things in my purse collecting dirt. The googly eye that made someone laugh during a craft, the cheese stick I grabbed on the way out because I was in a rush to get somewhere, the parking tickets showing I was even there at all, the earring back that stayed out longer than it was supposed to. All of this proves that I was out, living, maybe imperfectly, but I was still existing.

I'm scared that I am ordinary, but in a good way. But what if ordinary is an unofficial synonym for human, completing the same pattern every single day. Waking up, trying at existing and carrying small items in your purse may be the most significant thing in your life.

I'm scared that I'm living life right in all the wrong ways. If I die tomorrow, the world won't collapse, but maybe it will soften in the spot where I once stood. A conversation will be missing a piece, there will be a gap in a routine, someone will remember a certain way I said a word. Maybe that is the echo that will follow after me, maybe that is the mark.

I'm scared that I've misunderstood what a finished life looks like. Maybe it isn't the measurements of accomplishments or trophies. Maybe it really is just the evidence that we were somewhere at all. The folded receipts after being handled gently and pushed around while looking for something. The wear on my wallet from being pulled out and the outside of my purse from being set down so many times. The small things that once made me laugh. All of the proof that I really went somewhere and meant something to anyone at all.

I'm scared that if my purse were opened up and emptied out on the table, all anyone would ever see is clutter to them. They wouldn't see it as proof that I was living. They would see proof of errands I ran, forgetfulness, and my small and unimpressive days where I can never seem to accomplish anything at all. The lining will be stained with something I don't ever remember spilling. There's a pen running out of ink, and it barely writes, a random receipt where I spent probably too much money, and a crumpled gum wrapper I meant to throw away. It's heavier than it looks and carries meaning, stretched at the seams more than it should be.

I'm scared no one will see how it mirrors me. Overstuffed, worn at the corners, holding onto things long past their usefulness. They won't realize that everything in there was once chosen, once held a certain significance to me. It was all once needed, once touched by my hands. Even the most insignificant items still tell a story, that I was somewhere specific, on a specific day, being a specific person, holding a specific meaning.

I'm scared they will see it as junk. They wouldn't see the meaning it holds because to them it's trash, but to me it's evidence that I was somewhere and I did mean something to someone. The cop who gave me the parking ticket, the cashier who handed me the receipt, the place I was on the way to when I grabbed the cheese stick, and the person I did a craft with using

googly eyes, I held significance to them. And it reflects on me that I mean something to someone, anyone at all.