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The house that truly stood the test of time. This house was not kept up by luxury renovations or restoration hardware furniture. The house was pretty practical. Nothing big, nothing small. It was a home made up of memories and love. As much as the whole house was lovely, the most special place lived underground. Under two flights of stairs sat the most iconic basement. It was an archive of time. The decorations were frozen in time from the 1990's. Fashion pieces, board games, and other knick-knack items. Everything was filled with memories and quality taste.

Walking down the stairs felt like entering a sacred space. It felt as if I was going through a transition from the present into a place of complex history and meaning. At the middle landing of the stairs you were greeted by a life-size cement statue of a young girl. She was posed in a friendly way, with a large ear-to-ear smile engraved on her face. She was fascinating to me. I always stopped by at the stair landing and took in all of what she represented. I loved seeing her, it felt as if she was a close friend. Despite her personality being a fiction of my imagination, she felt real and meaningful. She was the first figure to greet you into the special space, asserting that this basement was intentional. She put it out there that this is a place where everything had intent and mattered, each special object carried presence.

Beyond her was a closet, though "closet" was a loose term to describe this nook in the wall behind a door. Opening the door was like entering into a private annex of the garment district in New York City. It wasn't a space for storage, but a preservation space for all the unique items my great-grandmother owned. The stoles would always be the first thing to catch

my eye. These were not something that impressed me, the way they appeared as a real rodent disgusted me. These mink stoles asserted dominance in the closet. The glossy fur and glass eyes unblinking made me feel uneasy. This taught me that fashion wasn't always chic and playful. These fashion statements felt violent and morally complicated. This, though, gave me a new sense for my great-grandmother's confidence. She wore her minks unapologetically as a statement.

Her coats were never trend-driven. They were classics and each one had its own story. These coats outlasted trend cycles and were always fashionable. One coat was purchased as a wedding gift, another when she gave birth to her first child, and for her 50th birthday. These jackets were massive, and there are pictures of my small child self drowning in the fur. Being gifts she appreciated through multiple decades taught me the idea of investment pieces. I learned early that true fashion wasn't about ordering a new top for every occasion, it was about owning pieces that survived decades, as it was never meant to be temporary.

Past the closet sat the bar. It was large, many shelves, and all gold. It wasn't filled with alcohol but with objects that told stories. Being raised in the great depression led my great-grandfather to keep tennis balls stuffed with cash under the bar in case of another economic recession. New Year's top hats, one for every year since the 1990's, documenting time through celebration and tradition. Wedding invitations are preserved long after the event's time, often collecting dust. This collection displayed a relationship with nostalgia, how objects become symbols once their function expires. Like the garments in the closet, these items held memories, despite being out of use for years.

Across from the bar was the stage. This stage, now looking back on it, was really just around 2 inches elevated from the rest of the floor. But to me, I was on top of the world. It was

my very own Madison Square Garden. How big the stage was never mattered. What mattered was the way I felt performing on it. I wanted my creativity to be seen. Whether it was a fur coat fashion show or me singing Justin Bieber's new hit song, this stage was where I shined.

As my great-grandparents aged, the basement was slowly used less and less. One day, when a broken pipe provoked a flood, decades of memories slipped away. The coats and important items were rushed out of the basement. Beyond that, the archive dissolved. No one rebuilt the space. “It wasn’t necessary” was what my grandmother said. The house was being prepared for sale, so to re-build what was once there would be a waste. The newly renovated basement had just a couch and plain gray walls. It may have physically been the same space, but it felt completely different. I felt as if no one else cared about what the space once was. It was my childhood, but to everyone else, maybe it was just a room full of clutter.

After my great-grandmother’s passing her belongings were laid out. Pass down, sell, or donate were the three big piles filling the house. The experience of her jewelry laid out on the kitchen table felt less of mourning, but more like the curation of my dreams. Brooches, bracelets, rings: each piece was special, carrying a story. Jewelry, unlike clothing, was fashion's most intimate artifact. To have a piece of someone's jewelry was the most meaningful.

I immediately gravitated to a ring. Small, featuring a single diamond set into white gold. It felt like luxury. I analyzed it carefully, noticing a tiny engraving on the inside: 14k. At that moment, I didn’t understand what that symbolized. My grandmother laughed when she saw what I had chosen. “Of course you pick the real one,” she said. “Always the best taste”.

That moment instilled a foundational idea in my head. Taste is not taught through instruction but through exposure. I didn’t pick up the ring because I knew it was valuable; I

chose it because it felt intentional. That ability to recognize quality without knowing its price was inherited.

The Jackets told another story. They were structured, heavy, and unapologetic. Their silhouette was more important than comfort. These accessories were shaped to claim authority in any room. These jackets demanded presence. They weren't just a fashion statement, but a sense of dominance.

The handbags were where my obsession truly began. The Fendi baguette bags were compact but powerful. They weren't built to carry everything, only what mattered. They taught me that fashion is about editing. Deciding what deserves to make it. I begged each time to take them home, I wanted these bags so bad. They weren't trendy when I first laid my eyes on them, but ten years later, they were all the buzz in the media. This confirmed my idea that luxury trends will always last through the decades. They were immune to falling off in the fashion industry.

That basement was my original classroom. I learned that fashion isn't just about clothing but memory, power, and inheritance. It taught me that objects can hold memory. What we choose to keep represents more about us as individuals. Now, that space is gone. The house has been sold to another family. And both my great-grandparents have passed away. But their influence lives in me forever. I understand how things can hold memories that can be passed down generation to generation.