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March 9, 2021

Dear Friends,

[This essay](#) (How to Practice) by Ann Patchett is transcendent. It is glorious. It is a must-read.

It's about letting go. And so much more.

*"This was the practice: I was starting to get rid of my possessions, at least the useless ones, because possessions stood between me and death. They didn't protect me from death, but they created a barrier in my understanding, like layers of bubble wrap, so that instead of thinking about what was coming and the beauty that was here now I was thinking about the piles of shiny trinkets I'd accumulated. I had begun the journey of digging out."*

After my mother died in 2015, John drove to her house to begin to clear it out.

It was padlocked. A large notice on the door informed us that it had been seized by the reverse mortgage company and sold at auction for pennies--with everything inside. Family photos, paintings I

had done when I was a teenager, sets of china, Madame Alexander dolls and numbered prints of Sallie Middleton paintings my father had bought for my mother, all her furniture, clothing, jewelry--everything. All gone. All we could do is peer in through the windows at what would soon be gone forever.

At the time, it was devastating. I would wake up in the middle of the night thinking about something that had been in the house that I would never see again, that I had wanted, that I felt connected to in some ineffable way, my heart racing. I felt mortified at the idea of strangers sifting through our lives, throwing precious photographs away, and taking a lifetime of beloved things to the dump or selling them on the driveway.

And now, six years later, I see it (mostly) as a gift, a lesson, a knowing, a recognition. Perhaps that is why the Ann Patchett essay resonated so much with me.

*"I found little things that had become important over time for no reason other than that I'd kept them for so long: a small wooden rocking horse that a high-school friend had brought me from Japan; two teeth that had been extracted from my head before I got braces, at thirteen; a smooth green stone that looked like a scarab—I couldn't remember where it had come from. I got rid of them all."*

Once, on a flight to Helsinki, I read an entire book. And I read it again on the flight home. It was Richard Leider's "Unpacking Your Bags: Lighten Your Load for the Rest of Your Life." It was about what we carry with us, what weighs us down.

Lighten your load.

## LINKS YOU MIGHT ENJOY

*By the way, I don't ever use affiliate links. Ever.*

Are you forgetting things? Me, too. [This might help you](#) feel better about that.

I love [this new postage stamp](#), coming out this summer. It was created by [Rico Lanáat' Worl](#), who is the first [Tlingit](#) and Athabascan artist to be featured by the USPS.

[This accounting of my mental health challenges](#) just came up in my Facebook "memories." It might be helpful to you if you are feeling overwhelmed, as many of us are, entering this second year of the pandemic.

Every white woman [needs to read this](#). And again.

[Are you as weary as I am?](#)

One of the things I read every day is Lit Hub Daily. Perhaps you will also enjoy it, too. You can sign up to receive it at the [Lit Hub website](#).

I also get Katie Couric's daily newsletter, [Wake-Up Call](#), which gives me highlights of what's happening in the world around me.

## FREE THINGS!

**FREE WRITING PROMPTS FOR 2021** - Do you want to get back to a consistent writing routine in the

New Year? I am offering free writing prompts **every Monday-Friday** in 2021. If you'd like to receive them, you can do so in either of the following ways:

**By text:** Text "writing prompts" to me at 828-248-7513 to sign up for free. Your first prompt will arrive via text the day after you sign up (Monday - Friday).

**By email:** [Go here](#) to sign up for free. Your first prompt will arrive the day after you sign up (Monday - Friday). We added this method because some of you couldn't participate by text. I hope it is helpful!

Please be safe. Double mask. Stay home when you can, regardless of what the politicians are saying. We'll get through this together.

I'll see you on Friday from my Orange Desk!

Patti

Sent to: \_t.e.s.t\_@example.com

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