



BITS AND PIECES

BY LINDSEY HOLT

In the beginning, all I could see were the pieces. For me, it started with a single moment in time. Letters formed words. Words formed a sentence. “There’s been an accident; your sister didn’t make it.” That single devastating sentence was followed by the sound of my heart silently shattering into a million pieces. More pieces than I could ever count. For months, I couldn’t seem to move. There were too many pieces. Pieces everywhere. I felt like one of those cartoon characters who gets steamrolled. So I just laid there in flattened pieces and focused on remembering to breathe in and out. In and out. Breath by breath. Day by day. Piece by piece. Until one day I discovered that I had just enough strength to sit up and look around. Looking at the pieces around me. What a hopeless mess. I couldn’t clean it up. I couldn’t fix it. The broken pieces were all that was left of me. So, the only choice was to gather the pieces. To collect all the fragments of myself. I spread my shaking arms out wide and tried to hold it all. Like carrying a load of laundry – a sock drops, but when I stoop to pick it up, two shirts fall out the other

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side. Pieces slipped through the cracks and just kept falling. I tried to hold the jumbled pieces together, but nothing fit the way it used to. All the king's horses and all the king's men... One wrong move and everything could come tumbling and crashing down again. Fragile. Shatter-hazard. Pieces upon pieces. Like a stack of paper thrown into the air and gathered back together, not a single piece of me is where it used to be. A song came on the radio at work the other day. One I can't sing with my sister anymore. I trailed off mid-sentence with my boss as the pieces I usually grip so tightly began slipping out of my grasp. I went and stood in the supply closet and let a few tears slide between the cracks to water the pieces of my heart that lay at my feet. The song ended. I wiped the tears. I picked up the pieces, and I went back and finished giving my report. Day by day. Piece by piece. Sorting through the pieces of her life. Books, notes, buttons, clothes, music, jewelry, papers, knick-knacks. The pieces that shaped her life now shapeless without her. Looking at it all, my core trembled like plates shifting in the earth. Cracks spread through the pieces of my heart. Pieces split into more pieces. How would I possibly decide which of her pieces to keep? My arms were already overflowing with all the broken pieces of me. I didn't know if I could carry any more. But I couldn't throw it all away. Her most treasured pieces were stored, ready and waiting for her, in heaven. The pieces she left here are just temporary. But I still live in this temporary world, so they mean something to me. I carry a piece of her with me every day. Yes, in my heart, but also physically with me. The color blue. A piece of her jewelry. A shirt or scarf that was hers. Her birthstone, her fingerprint. I wish I could carry all her pieces, but I can't even seem to manage my own. So, I just hold a little piece here and wear a little piece there. Not enough to keep her here in this world, but enough to keep her with me, here, in this world. Just a piece. I'm no good at juggling all my misfit pieces. But I'm okay with that. Most days I simply celebrate the fact that I am not still flat on the ground somewhere, just trying to remember to breathe. In and out. But the

days I wake up feeling shattered and flattened all over again are okay, too. One day, one piece at a time. I'm learning to be honest with myself about what my fragile self can handle. I've had to set some important pieces down. But I've learned to cherish and hold dear some other pieces of my life. I know I won't be in pieces forever. And I know that through God's grace, I will even find some healing and wholeness on this side of heaven. But for today, it's okay that I don't always know what to do with all these bits and pieces.