

Shards of the Heart

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Chapter 1 - Waking in the Unknown

He woke to cold stone against his back and the faint scent of damp concrete. The ceiling was low, the walls bare, the air heavy. He did not know how he got here. Nothing in his memory explained it. No flash, no accident, no fight. Only a sense of weight pressing down on his chest. Utter confusion in his mind, a fog clouding his memory.

He called out. His voice echoed and disappeared. Footsteps answered-long, measured, indifferent. A guard appeared, shadowed in the doorway, silent. Or at least he assumed he was a guard by the way he was dressed. He asked the man why he was there. The guard didn't answer. He only said, "You're here until you're not. That's all you need to know." And then he was gone, leaving the man alone with questions that had no shape. The man sat on the ground, cold stone still on his back and confused beyond all belief.

Chapter 2 - The Vase Destroyed

Later, the guard returned, carrying something wrapped in rough beige cloth. The man's mind tightened with curiosity. At least he would get closer to why or how he was here he believed, it was something.

He unwrapped it himself. In his hands he held a glass vase, shaped like a heart, delicate and perfect. The man ran his fingers along its smooth surface, mesmerized. It was completely translucent, clear in color you might say.

Before he could ask a question, the guard slammed it to the floor. Glass exploded in a thousand pieces, glittering like frozen fire all over the cell floor.

The guard knelt, hands behind his back, and slid a small tin toward the man. "Put it back the way it was using this glue. Then you leave."

The man stood back up walked over to the cell door slamming it shut. No explanation, no comfort. Only shards of glass littered on the floor, silence, and a task he could not yet understand.

Chapter 3 - The First Attempts

He knelt on the floor and began picking up pieces, trembling. He tried to remember the vase's exact shape, but it slipped through his mind like water. He still didn't know why he was here and honestly most memories before waking up were very hard to recall. But he knew one thing: if he completed this task he could leave, so he decided to focus on that.

He pressed edges together. They fell apart. He pressed again. They fell again.

He cut his fingers. Blood mingled with fragments. The glue covered his hands, drying in some parts and getting deep in his finger nail grooves.

At night, he remembered her laugh, soft and unexpected. He couldn't name her. Couldn't place her face fully. Only the feeling: the warmth of someone who once belonged to him. And the sharp cold of her absence. But again, he wasn't sure why these memories were coming or who she even was anymore.

He whispered into the darkness, "Tomorrow I'll fix this, tomorrow I'll get out of here."

Chapter 4 - The Glue That Never Holds

He tried the glue the guard had left him again and again, but something about it just didn't work. It worked on his fingers, sticking skin to skin, catching tiny fibers of hair, but never on the glass. No matter how carefully he applied it, the shards slipped away.

Each day he carved tally marks into the wall, a record of failure. He thought maybe if he didn't make it out of here it would comfort the next soul to be in this cell and let them know people had come before him, offering a glimmer of hope.

Sometimes, he thought of asking the guard for better tools. The guard never responded. Only watched through the small slot in the door, expressionless.

He often called out to the guard for help, further explanation as to why he was here, but nothing. The Guard would stand in the doorway, no facial expressions to be found and no words slipping out his mouth.

Chapter 5 - Breaking Again

Anger finally overtook him.

He slammed the fragments onto the floor, smashing what little progress he had made on today's effort to re create the heart shaped vase.

He screamed at the guard, begging for answers. "Why? Why me? Why this?"

The guard looked through the slot, silent. No explanation. No judgment. Only the quiet inevitability of someone who had seen this before.

The man curled on the floor, breathing heavy, the shards pressing into his palms, his knees, his chest. He realized that some things could not be fixed the way they once were and this task started to feel more and more impossible with every passing day.

Chapter 6 - A Shift in the Light

Morning came through the small window. Light spilled across the fragments on the floor.

He noticed how the broken edges caught it, scattering color across the walls. Shards of rainbows danced in the gray room. Although the glass fragments had become a daily obsession never leaving his mind, somehow now observing them in the sunlight they held a certain beauty.

For the first time, he saw the beauty in the brokenness of the vase. For just a split second his mind had perceived it as something other than an annoying, confusing and frustrating task.

He remembered her again for a brief moment, the curve of her smile in sunlight, her eyes catching the light just so. The thought of her would come and go. He didn't necessarily try to think of it, but it would come and go when it pleased. It was a moment that caused him distress at times, but pulled him away from the task of the broken glass.

He needed to approach this task differently, he couldn't keep trying the same thing day in and day out. So he sat, he thought and he planned. Something inside him shifted later that day. Maybe it wasn't about making it the same. Maybe it was about making it *something*. He wouldn't know if that would work, but if he could get it close enough, maybe the guard would let him go.

Chapter 7 - Building Something New

He began to piece the shards together differently.

Not the original shape. Not the perfect heart. Something jagged, uneven, yet whole.

The glue held, barely, in places it hadn't before. He used the sunlight to dry the glue, before putting it on the cold ground and in the shadows. It was about new ideas and approaches, and it seemed to be working. Somehow, the imperfect arrangement worked and came together.

It didn't feel like submission or failure. It felt... new but whole. The pieces that once fell constantly to the floor covered in dry glue, now suddenly held. He could feel his mood lightening and where there was once despair, now had a seed of hope. Hope that this cell wouldn't be his final resting spot.

Chapter 8 - A New Heart of Light

The sculpture was finished. Nowhere close to the original shape and glimmer but finished none the less.

It was not a heart. Not really. Curves and angles defied expectation. Some edges jutted awkwardly, others curved into gentle arcs. But when light hit it just right, the whole thing shimmered like a constellation fallen to the floor.

He touched it gently, feeling the warmth of something resilient, something that had survived fracture and chaos. Something that without his new way of thinking and tactics, would have never existed. Honestly at this point he was content with it. There would be no re tries, no more painstaking work into fixing it back to the original. If he was never to leave this cell, he was content with that.

Chapter 9 - The Guard's Return

Suddenly, the guard slammed the cell door open. The guard entered. Quiet. Observant.

He examined the sculpture. He did not ask why it wasn't the same. He did not criticize. He nodded.

"You can leave now" he said.

The man's chest tightened. Not with relief, not with triumph, but with recognition.

The door unlocked.

The Guard motioned for him to leave, handing him the new vase to take with him.

"But you said I couldn't leave unless I put it back the way it was" the man said

"You were the one that put yourself in this cell, you're not our prisoner. You were free to leave whenever you wanted, you just simply never tried. You believed my instructions were the only way out." The Guard said calmly.

The man sat thinking and uttering to himself "I guess I never even tried to open the cell door now that I think about it".

Chapter 10 - Carrying the New Heart

He stepped into the hallway. Light hit him like a hand, warm and unyielding. He carried the shards, now formed into something new, something he could call his own.

He still did not know how he got here. He did not know why. The memories of a woman still flashing in and out of his mind at times.

But he didn't need to understand, it is what it was.

Some things don't need answers. Only acceptance. Some decisions you make, put you in a cell, on a cold floor with a guard telling you to fix a broken vase.

The newly free prisoner walked forward down the cell hall. With each step, the shards caught the sun, scattering color onto walls, floors, and the world outside. A new heart made of fragments, cracked and nothing unlike the original, but beautiful in its own new way.

And for the first time in a long time, he felt whole.

Author's Thoughts

This story comes from a simple truth: after heartbreak, your heart can't go back to what it was. Some pieces are gone forever. But what you *can* do is rebuild. Not the same, not perfect, but something new, something yours.

Life doesn't give answers for why we lose love, or why things break. But it does give a chance to carry the pieces forward and sometimes, that's enough.