

Missing Puzzle Piece by Savanna Galloway

I don't remember things.

Remembrance is a gift, you see. Something that one is either born with, or without. And if one is lucky, remembering the burning color of the sky at sunset or the tangy taste of a favorite childhood food will stick. And even as vision fades and taste buds weaken, the memory of these things will still exist. But some of us are not so lucky.

I struggle.

I struggle to remember my father's birthday and the last conversation I had with my favorite uncle and what my brother had said to me to calm me down the night I cried so hard that I collapsed on the bathroom floor and wondered why things were so god damn difficult.

I struggle to pinpoint the day it all went wrong; the day I couldn't tolerate the pain in my heart anymore so I began replacing it with the pain I caused on my body because anything, anything, could be better than the 1st degree burns on the inside of my scalp or the valves in my heart that were frozen shut from the cold.

But I remember, the day I began to remember.

Otherwise known as the day she came into my life.

I don't know what it was about her that triggered something within me. I don't know how she managed to temporarily extinguish the flames in my mind or melt the ice in my heart or make me think that I wasn't so worthless after all.

Because I finally remembered.

I remembered everything.

But, what I remembered the most, was the day she left.

I remembered how the embers in my mind sparked back to life and lit my head on fire and how the ice in my heart that she had melted into warm water froze up once again, stronger than before. How the concept of worthlessness had slipped out of the grave she had buried it in and grew wings that made it fly around and occupy every crevice in my soul. I remembered that while I was falling in love, she was thinking of ways to tell me she wasn't.

I remembered everything.

The ghosts of remembrance haunted me for months and rented out the space in my mind only to paint the walls black and replace the furniture with negativity and make me forget what happiness felt like. I forgot what happiness felt like.

The only thing I was sure of remembering was the way it hurt.

Remembering isn't supposed to hurt.

Knowing isn't supposed to break femurs and tear ligaments and inflict the sheering pain of heartbreak that would travel from the aching mind all the way to the cracked bones.

It is supposed to heal scrapes and bruises and stitch together broken pieces of the heart, it is supposed to hatch the cocoon of love and light and release beautiful butterflies into the mind, it is supposed to instill the feeling of worth into every capillary, every joint, every cell in the human body.

It is supposed to make us feel whole.

I was never familiar with this feeling, this feeling of having every single puzzle piece accounted for and mended together to form an incredible masterpiece called love. Something in my life had always been missing, the puzzle I've spent 17 years tediously building always had a single missing piece that I just couldn't seem to make fit.

I'd climbed every icy mountain of heartbreak, I'd hiked every scorching desert of despair, I'd scaled every rocky wall of disappointment and crossed the deepest darkest oceans of nothingness to return home without my missing piece.

But you see, what you need the most isn't something hidden, something you'd have to spend decades searching for and breaking bones and shredding muscles to only one day hope to find. What you need most doesn't require a vintage magnifying glass or an expensive microscope to uncover, it doesn't desire contact lenses or x ray vision to discover.

The missing puzzle piece will slide out from the dust under the couch, it'll shut off its camouflage and stand out against the hard tile floor, it'll complete your puzzle of life. With time.

And for some people, this puzzle piece will appear with sparkling brown eyes and the most beautiful smile you'll ever see and will eradicate every single feeling of worthlessness embedded in the skin and destroy the correlation between remembrance and pain.

For some people, this puzzle piece will demolish the pain of every previous heartbreak and kill the weeds of hatred and plant the seeds of endless, unconditional devotion.

For some people, this puzzle piece will introduce a love so incredibly breathtaking, so unbelievably pristine, that no pain could ever amount to the pure happiness it creates.

I am "some people".

My missing puzzle piece didn't extinguish the burning flames that charred my mind, she constructed walls around my brain and kept the AC on at all times to ensure the flames could never spark back to life and light my head on fire yet again. My missing puzzle piece didn't melt

the ice in my frozen heart, she built an everlasting fire that would never allow the temperature to drop below 32 degrees Fahrenheit to make sure my cardiac valves could never freeze shut. My missing puzzle piece didn't bury the feeling of worthlessness that coursed through my veins, she burned its pieces and blew away its ashes to secure the notion that this feeling could never grow wings and fly around my soul, spreading its hatred everywhere it resides. My missing puzzle piece showed me the difference between temporary lust, and permanent love.

My missing puzzle piece has made me whole again and now I cant remember what being broken feels like.

Remembrance is a gift, you see. Something that one is either born with, or without. And if one is lucky, remembering the burning color of the sky at sunset or the tangy taste of a favorite childhood food will stick. And even as vision fades and taste buds weaken, the memory of these things will still exist. And now, because of my missing puzzle piece, I remember everything.