

ANCHOR BOOKS



eBooks

A Million  
Little Pieces

James Frey

a  
million  
little  
pieces

j a m e s f r e y



ANCHOR BOOKS  
A DIVISION OF RANDOM HOUSE, INC.  
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## Contents

[\*Title Page\*](#)

[\*Epigraph\*](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Part One](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Part Two](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Part Three](#)

[Chapter 17](#)

[Chapter 18](#)

[Chapter 19](#)

[Chapter 20](#)

[\*Acknowledgments\*](#)

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[\*Copyright Page\*](#)

The Young Man came to the Old Man seeking counsel.  
I broke something, Old Man.  
How badly is it broken?  
It's in a million little pieces.  
I'm afraid I can't help you.  
Why?  
There's nothing you can do.  
Why?  
It can't be fixed.  
Why?  
It's broken beyond repair. It's in a million little pieces.

## **Chapter 1-9**

# Chapter 1

I wake to the drone of an airplane engine and the feeling of something warm dripping down my chin. I lift my hand to feel my face. My front four teeth are gone, I have a hole in my cheek, my nose is broken and my eyes are swollen nearly shut. I open them and I look around and I'm in the back of a plane and there's no one near me. I look at my clothes and my clothes are covered with a colorful mixture of spit, snot, urine, vomit and blood. I reach for the call button and I find it and I push it and I wait and thirty seconds later an Attendant arrives.

How can I help you?

Where am I going?

You don't know?

No.

You're going to Chicago, Sir.

How did I get here?

A Doctor and two men brought you on.

They say anything?

They talked to the Captain, Sir. We were told to let you sleep.

How long till we land?

About twenty minutes.

Thank you.

Although I never look up, I know she smiles and feels sorry for me. She shouldn't.

A short while later we touch down. I look around for anything I might have with me,

but there's nothing. No ticket, no bags, no clothes, no wallet. I sit and I wait and I try to figure out what happened. Nothing comes.

Once the rest of the Passengers are gone I stand and start to make my way to the door. After about five steps I sit back down. Walking is out of the question. I see my Attendant friend and I raise a hand.

Are you okay?

No.

What's wrong?

I can't really walk.

If you make it to the door I can get you a chair.

How far is the door?

Not far.

I stand. I wobble. I sit back down. I stare at the floor and take a deep breath.

You'll be all right.

I look up and she's smiling.

Here.

She holds out her hand and I take it. I stand and I lean against her and she helps me down the Aisle. We get to the door.

I'll be right back.

I let go of her hand and I sit down on the steel bridge of the Jetway that connects the Plane to the Gate.

I'm not going anywhere.

She laughs and I watch her walk away and I close my eyes. My head hurts, my mouth hurts, my eyes hurt, my hands hurt. Things without names hurt.

I rub my stomach. I can feel it coming. Fast and strong and burning. No way to stop it, just close your eyes and let it ride. It comes and I recoil from the stench and the pain. There's nothing I can do.

Oh my God.

I open my eyes.

I'm all right.

Let me find a Doctor.

I'll be fine. Just get me out of here.

Can you stand?

Yeah, I can stand.

I stand and I brush myself off and I wipe my hands on the floor and I sit down in the wheelchair she has brought me. She goes around to the back of the chair and she starts pushing.

Is someone here for you?

I hope so.

You don't know.

No.

What if no one's there?

It's happened before, I'll find my way.

We come off the Jetway and into the Gate. Before I have a chance to look around, my Mother and Father are standing in front of me.

Oh Jesus.

Please, Mom.

Oh my God, what happened?

I don't want to talk about it, Mom.

Jesus Christ, Jimmy. What in Hell happened?

She leans over and she tries to hug me. I push her away.

Let's just get out of here, Mom.

My Dad goes around to the back of the chair. I look for the Attendant but she has disappeared. Bless her.

You okay, James?

I stare straight ahead.

No, Dad, I'm not okay.

He starts pushing the chair.

Do you have any bags?

My Mother continues crying.

No.

People are staring.

Do you need anything?

I need to get out of here, Dad. Just get me the fuck out of here.

They wheel me to their car. I climb in the backseat and I take off my shirt and I lie down. My Dad starts driving, my Mom keeps crying, I fall asleep.

About four hours later I wake up. My head is clear but everything throbs. I sit forward and I look out the window. We've pulled into a Filling Station somewhere in Wisconsin. There is no snow on the ground, but I can feel the cold. My Dad opens the Driver's door and he sits down and he closes the door. I shiver.

You're awake.

Yeah.

How are you feeling?

Shitty.

Your Mom's inside cleaning up and getting supplies. You need anything?

A bottle of water and a couple bottles of wine and a pack of cigarettes.

Seriously?

Yeah.

This is bad, James.

I need it.

You can't wait.

No.

This will upset your Mother.

I don't care. I need it.

He opens the door and he goes into the Filling Station. I lie back down and I stare at the ceiling. I can feel my heart quickening and I hold out my hand and I try to keep it straight. I hope they hurry.

Twenty minutes later the bottles are gone. I sit up and I light a smoke and I take a slug of water. Mom turns around.

Better?

If you want to put it that way.

We're going up to the Cabin.

I figured.

We're going to decide what to do when we get there.

All right.

What do you think?

I don't want to think right now.

You're gonna have to soon.

Then I'll wait till soon comes.

We head north to the Cabin. Along the way I learn that my Parents, who live in Tokyo, have been in the States for the last two weeks on business. At four a.m. they received a call from a friend of mine who was with me at a Hospital and had tracked them down in a hotel in Michigan. He told them that I had fallen face first down a Fire Escape and that he thought they should find me some help. He didn't know what I was on, but he knew there was a lot of it and he knew it was bad. They had driven to Chicago during the night.

So what was it?

What was what?

What were you taking?

I'm not sure.

How can you not be sure?

I don't remember.

What do you remember?

Bits and pieces.

Like what?

I don't remember.

We drive on and after a few hard silent minutes, we arrive. We get out of the car and we go into the House and I take a shower because I need it. When I get out there are some fresh clothes sitting on my bed. I put them on and I go to my Parents' room. They are up drinking coffee and talking but when I come in they stop.

Hi.

Mom starts crying again and she looks away. Dad looks at me.

Feeling better?

No.

You should get some sleep.

I'm gonna.

Good.

I look at my Mom. She can't look back. I breathe.

I just.

I look away.

I just, you know.

I look away. I can't look at them.

I just wanted to say thanks. For picking me up.

Dad smiles. He takes my Mother by the hand and they stand and they come over to me and they give me a hug. I don't like it when they touch me so I pull away.

Good night.

Good night, James. We love you.

I turn and I leave their Room and I close their door and I go to the Kitchen. I look through the cabinets and I find an unopened half-gallon bottle of whiskey. The first sip brings my stomach back up, but after that it's all right. I go to my Room and I drink

and I smoke some cigarettes and I think about her. I drink and I smoke and I think about her and at a certain point blackness comes and my memory fails me.

## Chapter 2

Back in the car with a headache and bad breath. We're heading north and west to Minnesota. My Father made some calls and got me into a Clinic and I don't have any other options, so I agree to spend some time there and for now I'm fine with it. It's getting colder.

My face has gotten worse and it is hideously swollen. I have trouble speaking, eating, drinking, smoking. I have yet to look in a mirror.

We stop in Minneapolis to see my older Brother. He moved there after getting divorced and he knows how to get to the Clinic. He sits with me in the backseat and he holds my hand and it helps because I'm scared.

We pull into the Parking Lot and park the car and I finish a bottle and we get out and we start walking toward the Entrance of the Clinic. Me and my Brother and my Mother and my Father. My entire Family. Going to the Clinic.

I stop and they stop with me. I stare at the Buildings. Low and long and connected. Functional. Simple. Menacing.

I want to run or die or get fucked up. I want to be blind and dumb and have no heart. I want to crawl in a hole and never come out. I want to wipe my existence straight off the map. Straight off the fucking map. I take a deep breath.

Let's go.

We enter a small Waiting Room. A woman sits behind a desk reading a fashion magazine. She looks up.

May I help you?

My Father steps forward and speaks with her as my Mother and Brother and I find chairs and sit in them.

I'm shaking. My hands and my feet and my lips and my chest. Shaking. For any number of reasons.

My Mother and Brother move next to me and they take my hands and they hold them and they can feel what is happening to me. We look at the floor and we don't speak. We wait and we hold hands and we breathe and we think.

My Father finishes with the woman and he turns around and he stands in front of us. He looks happy and the woman is on the phone. He kneels down.

They're gonna check you in now.

All right.

You're gonna be fine. This is a good place. The best place.

That's what I hear.

You ready?

I guess so.

We stand and we move toward a small Room where a man sits behind a desk with a computer. He meets us at the door.

I'm sorry, but you have to leave him here.

My Father nods.

We'll check him in and you can call later to make sure he's all right.

My Mother breaks down.

He's in the right place. Don't worry.

My Brother looks away.

He's in the right place.

I turn and they hug me. One at a time and hold tight. Squeezing and holding, I show them what I can. I turn and without a word I walk into the Room and the man shuts the door and they're gone.

The man shows me a chair and returns to his desk. He smiles.

Hi.

Hello.

How are you?

How do I look?

Not good.

I feel worse.

Your name is James. You're twenty-three. You live in North Carolina.

Yeah.

You're going to stay with us for a while. You okay with that?

For now.

Do you know anything about this Facility?

No.

Do you want to know anything?

I don't care.

He smiles, stares at me for a moment. He speaks.

We are the oldest Residential Drug and Alcohol Treatment Facility in the World. We were founded in 1949 in an old house that sat on the land where these Buildings, and there are thirty-two interconnected Buildings here, sit now. We have treated over twenty thousand Patients. We have the highest success rate of any Facility in the World. At any given time, there are between two hundred and two hundred and fifty Patients spread through six Units, three of which house men and three of which house women. We believe that Patients should stay here for as long a term as they need, not something as specific as a twenty-eight-day Program. Although it is expensive to come here, many of our Patients are here on scholarships that we fund and through subsidies that we support. We have an endowment of several hundred million dollars. We not only treat Patients, we are also one the leading Research and Educational Institutions in the field of Addiction Studies. You should consider yourself fortunate to be here and you should be excited to start a new chapter in your life.

I stare at the man. I don't speak. He stares back at me, waiting for me to say something. There is an awkward moment. He smiles.

You ready to get started?

I don't smile.

Sure.

He gets up and I get up and we walk down a hall. He talks and I don't.

The doors are always open here, so if you want to leave, you can. Substance use is not

allowed and if you're caught using or possessing, you will be sent Home. You are not allowed to say anything more than hello to any women aside from Doctors, Nurses or Staff Members. If you violate this rule, you will be sent Home. There are other rules, but those are the only ones you need to know right now.

We walk through a door into the Medical Wing. There are small Rooms and Doctors and Nurses and a Pharmacy. The cabinets have large steel locks.

He shows me to a Room. It has a bed and a desk and a chair and a closet and a window. Everything is white.

He stands at the door and I sit on the bed.

A Nurse will be here in a few minutes to talk with you.

Fine.

You feel okay?

No, I feel like shit.

It'll get better.

Yeah.

Trust me.

Yeah.

The man leaves and he shuts the door and I'm alone. My feet bounce, I touch my face, I run my tongue along my gums. I'm cold and getting colder. I hear someone scream.

The door opens and a Nurse walks into the Room. She wears white, all white, and she is carrying a clipboard. She sits in the chair by the desk.

Hi, James.

Hi.

I need to ask you some questions.

All right.

I also need to check your blood pressure and your pulse.

All right.

What type of substances do you normally use?

Alcohol.

Every day?

Yes.

What time do you start drinking?

When I wake up.

She marks it down.

How much per day?

As much as I can.

How much is that?

Enough to make myself look like I do.

She looks at me. She marks it down.

Do use anything else?

Cocaine.

How often?

Every day.

She marks it down.

How much?

As much as I can.

She marks it down.

In what form?

Lately crack, but over the years, in every form that it exists.

She marks it down.

Anything else?

Pills, acid, mushrooms, meth, PCP and glue.

Marks it down.

How often?

When I have it.

How often?

A few times a week.

Marks it down.

She moves forward and draws out a stethoscope.

How are you feeling?

Terrible.

In what way?

In every way.

She reaches for my shirt.

Do you mind?

No.

She lifts my shirt and she puts the stethoscope to my chest. She listens.

Breathe deeply.

She listens.

Good. Do it again.

She lowers my shirt and she pulls away and she marks it down.

Thank you.

I smile.

Are you cold?

Yes.

She has a blood pressure gauge.

Do you feel nauseous?

Yes.

She straps it on my arm and it hurts.

When was the last time you used?

She pumps it up.

A little while ago.

What and how much?

I drank a bottle of vodka.

How does that compare to your normal daily dosage?

It doesn't.

She watches the gauge and the dials move and she marks it down and she removes the gauge.

I'm gonna leave for a little while, but I'll be back.

I stare at the wall.

We need to monitor you carefully and we will probably need to give you some detoxification drugs.

I see a shadow and I think it moves but I'm not sure.

You're fine right now, but I think you'll start to feel some things.

I see another one. I hate it.

If you need me, just call.

I hate it.

She stands up and she smiles and she puts the chair back and she leaves. I take off my shoes and I lie under the blankets and I close my eyes and I fall asleep.

I wake and I start to shiver and I curl up and I clench my fists. Sweat runs down my chest, my arms, the backs of my legs. It stings my face.

I sit up and I hear someone moan. I see a bug in the corner, but I know it's not there. The walls close in and expand they close in and expand and I can hear them. I cover my ears but it's not enough.

I stand. I look around me. I don't know anything. Where I am, why, what happened, how to escape. My name, my life.