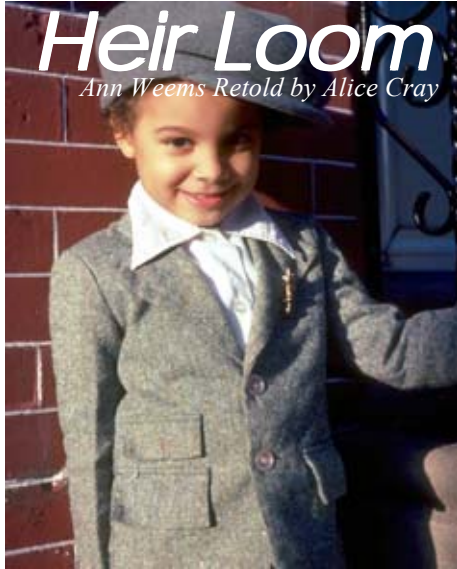


Things That Matter Most



It had belonged to Great-grandmother and he knew he must be very careful. The vase was one of mother's dearest treasures. She

had told him so.

The vase, placed high on the mantle, was out of the reach of little hands, but somehow he managed. He just wanted to see if the tiny little rosebud border went all around the back. He didn't realize that a boy's five-year-old hands are sometimes clumsy and not meant to hold delicate porcelain treasures. It shattered when it hit the floor, and he began to cry. That cry soon became a sobbing wail, growing louder and louder. From the kitchen his mother heard her son crying and she came running. Her footsteps hurried down the hall and came around the corner. She stopped then, looked at him, and saw what

he had done.

Between his sobs, he could hardly speak the words, "I broke... the vase."

And then his mother gave him a gift.

With a look of relief, his mother said "Oh, thank heavens, I thought you were hurt!" And then she held him tenderly until his sobbing stopped.

She made it very clear - he was the treasure. Though now a grown man, it is a gift he still carries in his heart.

.....
Both stories, slightly edited, are from "More Stories For The Heart," Multnomah Publishers Inc. Pictures added.

That Little China Chip

Bellie B. Youngs



One day when I was about nine years old, my mother took a trip into town and put me in charge of

my brothers and sisters. As she drove away, I ran into her bedroom and opened the dresser to snoop.

There in the top drawer, beneath soft, wonderful-smelling grown-up garments, was a small wooden jewellery box. I was fascinated by its treasures-the ruby ring left to my mother by her favourite aunt; pearl earrings that once

belonged to my grand-mother; my mother's own wedding band, which she took off to do farm

chores alongside my father.

I tried them all on, filling my mind with glorious images of what it must be like to be a beautiful woman like my mother and to own such exquisite things.

Then I saw there was something tucked behind the piece of red felt lining the lid. Lifting the cloth, I found a little white chip of china.

I picked it up. Why in the world did my mother keep this broken thing? Glinting slightly in the light, it offered no answers.

Some months later, I was setting the dinner table when our neighbour Marge knocked at the door. Mum, busy at the stove,

Continued On Page 2

That Little China Chip

called to her to come in. Glancing at the table, Marge said, “Oh, you’re expecting company. I’ll stop by another time.”

“No, come on in, Mum replied. “We’re not expecting anyone.

“But isn’t that your good china?” Marge asked. “I’d never trust kids to handle my good dishes!”

Mum laughed. “Tonight’s my family’s favourite meal. If you set your best table for a special meal with special guests, why not for your family?”

“But your beautiful china!” responded Marge. “Oh, well,” said Mum, “a few broken plates are a small price to pay for the joy we get using them.” Then she added, “Besides, every chip and crack has a story to tell.”

Reaching into the cupboard, Mum pulled out an old, pieced-together plate. “This one shattered the day we brought Mark home from the hospital,” she said. “What a cold and blustery afternoon that was! Judy was only six, but she wanted to be helpful. She dropped the plate carrying it to the sink.

“At first I was upset, but then I told myself, ‘I won’t let a broken plate change the happiness we feel welcoming our new baby.’ Besides, we all had a lot of fun gluing it together!”

Marge looked doubtful.

Mum went to the cupboard again and took down another plate. Holding it up, she said, “See this break on the edge here? It happened when I was 17.”

Her voice softened. “One fall day my brothers needed help putting up the last of the fall hay, so they hired a young man to help out. He was slim, with powerful arms and thick blond hair. He had an incredible smile.

“My brothers took a liking to him and invited him to dinner. When my older brother sat the young man next to me, it flustered me so, I nearly fainted.”

Suddenly remembering that she was telling the story to her young daughter and a neighbour, Mum blushed and hurried on. “Well, he handed me his plate and asked for a helping. But I was so nervous that when I took the plate, it slipped and knocked against the casserole dish.”

“That sounds like a memory I’d try to forget,” said Marge.

“Oh, no,” countered my mother. “As the young man was leaving, he walked over, took my hand in his and laid a piece of broken china

in my palm. He didn’t say a word. He just smiled that smile.

“One year later I married him. And to this day, when I see this plate, I fondly recall the moment I met him.”

Seeing me staring, Mum gave me a wink. Then, carefully, she put the plate back, behind the others, in a place all its own.

I couldn’t forget about that plate with the missing chip. At the first chance, I went up to Mum’s room and took out the little wooden jewellery box again. There was the small shard of china.

I examined it carefully, then I ran to the kitchen cupboard, pulled over a chair, climbed up and took down a plate. Just as I had guessed, the chip my mother had so carefully saved belonged to the plate she broke on the day she met my father.

Wiser now, and with more respect, I cautiously returned the chip to its place among the jewels.

The love story that began with that chip is now in its 54th year. Recently one of my sisters asked Mum if someday the antique ruby ring could be hers. My other sister has laid claim to Grandmother’s pearl earrings.

As for me, I’d like Mum’s most precious keepsake, a memento of an extraordinary life of loving; **that little china chip.**

⁴Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, ⁵Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; ⁶Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; ⁷Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**