

# A Million Pieces

by Amye Archer

"A Million Pieces"

## **Start**

It doesn't sound like you might think. Angie closes her eyes tight, pulls in different directions on her long brown ponytail, presses the flashing green start button, and listens to the buzz of the machine before her. One might imagine that a device such as this one may sound like a vacuum, a whirling sucking noise escaping from a series of complex knobs and tubes. Angie, herself, once imagined it as simple as the summer afternoon hum of her mother's avocado green Hoover, with a dull-white hose and a shiny silver nozzle. But the truth is somewhere in between.

## **Somewhere in Between**

The early abortion machine vacuum aspiration procedure is one of three available options to end an early pregnancy. This early abortion method can be used 5 to 12 weeks after your last menstrual period. This procedure is quick (5 to 15 minutes) and can be safely completed in a regular medical office or clinic. This procedure is also sometimes referred to as early abortion, aspiration abortion, machine vacuum aspiration or vacuum aspiration. Before the Procedure, an osmotic (cervical) dilator may be inserted into the cervix to slowly dilate its opening either a day before or hours before a machine vacuum aspiration abortion. Also, pain or sedation medication might be provided orally or intravenously. Vasopressin (or a comparable medication) could also be mixed with the local anesthetic to lessen or slow bleeding at the injection site on the cervix.

Angie closes her eyes for this part.

## **This Part**

Today's girls all look the same. They march in, one right after another, hopping up on the white crinkling tissue paper, and are eaten by the sounds. Angie isn't even sure if one leaves and a new one enters. They blend together like paper-dolls, clinging to one another, connected, braided. This morning, while one of them lies with her legs in a V, the alarm goes off. Bells ring, phones jump alive, lights flash. The young woman slips her white hand into Angie's hot palm. Every hour Angie and her co-worker, Dr. Joe, must reset the broken security system. But now, Angie is handcuffed to the patient by fear. Dr. Joe curses under his thick Jersey accent and resets the alarm himself. Now he must scrub back in. Angie waits, her stony resolve is the young girl's only tether to reality. *How did I get here?* Angie whispers out loud.

### **How She Got Here**

She was drowned in her bathtub, Angie remembers, but never tells anyone. She imagines the memory a cloud, vaporizing into the thin air around her. It's in the darkest of nights, the deepest of depressions, that it comes back, like a flashlight swooning over a dead body. Her mother's long, slippery fingers. Her three-year-old neck, smooth and smelling of Ivory soap. Mr. Bubble nearby, staring at her with caution. Angie's brown ringlets dipped forward like a crane over and over, until they pool around her like blood. The water is warm, like sweat, like urine, like anything from inside the body. Her mother is crying. Her father is screaming, their voices collide in the air and break into a million pieces.

### **A Million Pieces**

Angie lives in a broken life.

