Gather Up the Fragments
By Sheryl D. Gillilan

Journal Entry #1
Sometimes words are so heavy that when they fall, they split time into Before and After.
“Yes, I am attracted to men,” my husband says.
I expect the wind chimes outside my bedroom window to clang discordantly and the house to shake. I brace for signs of a public emergency -- a massive power outage, the shrill warning of my smoke detectors, or sirens wailing down the hill as paramedics rush to my rescue.
Instead, our children continue to sleep peacefully and the wailing I hear is coming from me. Is this the only proof that my husband has just wielded a time cleaver and hacked off 15 years of my life?

Journal Entry #2
I am remembering a conversation I had with my son when he was seven. I walked into his bedroom and he peered down at me intently from the top bunk.
“Mom,” he said. “Are you the Tooth Fairy?”
Caught off guard, I lightheartedly replied, “Of course I’m not the Tooth Fairy! Do you see wings sprouting from my back?”
“That’s not what I mean. I want to know the truth. I want to know if you’re the Tooth Fairy.”
“You want to know the truth,” I reiterated.
“Yes,” he replied adamantly.
“You really want to know? Okay,” I said reluctantly, “I am the Tooth Fairy.” He wailed inconsolably.

Journal Entry #3
It is Valentine’s Day and the TV announcer gleefully breaks this fictitious news: “Barbie and Ken are breaking up because Ken is on his way to San Francisco with G.I. Joe.”
I have a wicked urge to steal a Ken doll and rip his head off.

Journal Entry #4
I am reading an article about quilts from the 1800’s. It references a particular quilt with letters sewn together in horizontal rows. “With some effort,” the author suggests, “you can discern that the words say, ‘Gather up the fragments, let not things be lost.’”

Journal Entry #5
I am so very, very sad. Not only am I grieving the loss of my marriage – but also what I will miss in the future.
I wanted to grow old with my husband.

Journal Entry #6
I’ve been thinking about how much fun it would be to have a fun-loving gay guy as a close friend. One who did not vow to be my soul mate in front of 200 people.

Journal Entry #7
I’m reading another article about quilting. It says that really good quilters know how to use ugly colors – otherwise known as zingers -- to their advantage. “Zingers,” the article says, “enhance other colors and take your breath away with the strength and vibrancy they add to a quilt.”
Oh, Lordy. You have to work really, really hard to use zingers successfully, or it looks like you failed Color 101 and your quilt should be in the Last Chance Sale bin.

Journal Entry #8
I cannot hold my equilibrium. I seem to be doing okay, and then I’m paralyzed. I feel like the center of a kaleidoscope and the colors are swirling around me in a twisted, over-caffeinated sort of way.

Journal Entry #9
I cannot gather up the fragments.

Journal Entry #10
I had a fascinating dream last night (Freud would have loved it). I was looking for an elevator to get back to my hotel room with my husband and I couldn’t find the right elevator. I kept thinking, “My husband must know I’m lost by now since I have been gone for so long, but he won’t know where to find me.” And then I looked out on the street through the suddenly glass elevator and saw him walking down the street talking on his cell phone. He was walking with a man I didn’t know. I started pounding on the elevator glass to tell him where I was but he didn’t hear me.

Journal Entry #11
The kids are worried. They want to know why their father and I are sleeping in different rooms. We have offered up some plausible excuses, but they are insufficient. My daughter keeps saying to me, “Mom, I feel like there’s a question I want to ask you but I don’t know what it is.”

Journal Entry #12
We have spent the week cleaning out our bedroom, bathroom and closet so that house remodeling can proceed. It is time for me to start reconstructing my physical space in the midst of the emotional turmoil caused by my husband moving out.
I need space that is only mine, where I cannot hear betrayal reverberating in the walls. I need a womb.

Journal Entry #13
Everything is torn apart. The walls are down to their studs. There is plaster dust everywhere. My space is crowded and chaotic. My attention is pulled in myriad directions: plumber; electrician; dry-waller; tile setter. It is so much a reflection of my self that it is hard to look at and live in.
On the other hand, I bought a new bed today and hung my bright, floral sheets out on the line to dry in the breeze.

Journal Entry #14
My friends came over today to help me re-paint my new space. I chose colors that pulse triumphantly in their decorator shades of August Morning, Firecracker, and Violet Eclipse. All those colors make my eyes happy.

Journal Entry #15
My divorce became final today, two years later. It is somewhat unnerving that a piece of paper can innocently arrive in the mail and legally terminate a marriage that took years to build.
Epilogue
It has been 11 years since I wailed at that yawning chasm splitting apart my life. My kids are now young adults who are smart, funny, and well-adjusted, and my former husband is married to a man. I revel in an unmarried, creative, fulfilling life – although I do hope that it will someday include a heterosexual man who is also my best friend.

I have gathered up the fragments, and marvelous gifts have been found.