

pieces  
of US

*For Lois. For Tal. For Jon*  
*For those who love their friends*

First published in Great Britain in 2025 by Simon & Schuster UK Ltd

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1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

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London WC1X 8HB

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Simon & Schuster Netherlands BV, Herculesplein 96,  
3584 AA Utrecht, Netherlands. [info@simonandschuster.nl](mailto:info@simonandschuster.nl)

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

HB ISBN 978-1-3985-3567-1  
eBook ISBN 978-1-3985-3569-5  
eAudio ISBN 978-1-3985-3568-8

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Typeset in the UK by Sorrel Packham

Printed and Bound in the UK using 100% Renewable Electricity at CPI



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**SIMON & SCHUSTER**

London New York Amsterdam/Antwerp Sydney Toronto New Delhi



# funeral for a friend

*Louis, I can't make up my mind how I want to remember you; the smiling face when you walked up to me in the park, or the boy I saw dancing, so happy and carefree, on my TV. Who knew when we agreed to write our story, that those points would be the bookends of our lives and the pages what we shared in between.*

*I hope you may read it one day, wherever you may be – in that box, hiding behind that red curtain, sitting cross-legged with your keyboard on that conveyor belt.*

*I would die laughing.*

*I would die crying.*

*But you already are.*

*Louis, I am here, I promise. You would see me if you could open your eyes one last time. You said I was the quiet one. Jonas the Writer. Jonas sitting in a night club, writing, or reading books under the light of*

*his torch. Out of the way, if not out of sight. That is why I am where I am now, at the back of the crematorium, staring at the backs of heads of strangers.*

*You would love what your dad just said; that he could always tell when you were home, because he'd hear your keyboard whenever he came through the front door, and you singing along, or shouting out your lines from Macbeth, or some other play he'd not heard of. He's glad he has the videos of you. He's going to play one, now.*

*They've connected a VCR to the crematorium's TV screen.*

*He's got the tape here somewhere. Should have put it into the player before, shouldn't he.*

*He had it here, ready, in its box.*

*He's sorry. He's very sorry, now searching behind the lectern, asking your mum.*

*It's in his bag. In his bag on the floor.*

*And now he's reached down and can't get it out for shaking.*

*Says he's a mess – Louis would usually do these things.*

*He just handed the tape to someone I don't know in a black suit.*

*I think I heard a bird sing, or was it the whine of the VCR, because there you are, up there on the TV, microphone in your hand, sitting on the edge of the bath.*

*It looks weird, but it was the best room for acoustics.*

*You nod at the camera, mouth, 'Ready?'*

*There's no reply, just your smile partially hidden behind the mic.*

*'This is a song. This is a song me and Jonas wrote together. I should just sing it, shouldn't I?'*

*A metronome clicks, you nod to the time, then start singing, reading*

*lyrics written on a sheet of paper out of shot.*

*No one else knows that. No one knows that piece of paper is there. Except me, because I wrote them, and I'm the one holding the camera.*

*Louis, we didn't write that song to make anyone cry. But they are. Between the black and grey coats, your dad is now in the front row with his arms around your mum and Caroline.*

*The heads are nodding. I know you'd love it if they started tapping their feet or dancing. I'm sure they are enjoying it, but they have no idea what the song is about. They don't know it's about a girlfriend neither of us ever had. That I wrote it waiting for you one lunchtime in the college canteen.*

*We recorded it on a Tascam Portastudio.*

*So good our friends asked us for copies, said we would make it.*

*It was just us having fun, not trying to be famous.*

*But it's your death that makes you famous, Louis.*

*On this TV.*

*In this room.*

*And at college. So many pictures of you. On the noticeboard, in the corridors, and on the common room walls.*

*No one throws darts at you.*

*No one draws a moustache.*

*Just people saying they knew you, met you, can remember the exact time, like I've heard people say about when Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. It's okay, they can think that if they like, that they knew you, if it makes them feel better. Even if it doesn't work for me.*

*Louis, the video is nearing the end, you've gone, just wriggly lines and then a blank screen.*

*Someone just coughed.*

*And a girl just screamed your name.*

*Liam and Freddie are here, Chloe too. I can't work out if I'm not speaking to them or if they aren't speaking to me.*

*Silence.*

*Still silent. The VCR player just clicked and people are looking at each other like no one knows what is supposed to happen next.*

*Or they don't want it to happen.*

*There's a shuffle of feet. I think I hear wheels squeak, or was it another bird?*

*Curtain opens.*

*Is that it, over?*

*Your life.*

*You only touched eighteen.*

*Barely remembered seventeen.*

*But there's a difference in the way we feel and touch.*

*You loved those lines I wrote.*

*But they weren't supposed to be about you.*

*Do you want me to stand up and say them? Before you go. Before they wheel you away?*

*You know I'd hate the attention – Jonas the Writer. Jonas the boy sat on his own in the college canteen. Jonas, the boy who was so alone until he met you.*

*But I would. If you wanted. Anything. Shit, Louis, of all the things, we never talked about this. We just loved the song. 'Funeral for a friend'. We never actually thought there would be one.*

*Ha, you'd like that line. Some of the best ones are accidents, that you know.*



*Louis, it's still not too late, I could make a run for the front, I could stand there by your box, and put faces to some of these strangers.*

*I can't, but in my mind I am.*

*And I'm telling them.*

*I'm telling them this –*

*That I loved the way you ran out of college at the end of summer term.*

*I loved the way you jumped off the wall, and shouted, 'Freedom!'*

*I loved the way you waved to me across the street.*

*I loved the way you sat with me and read lyrics on the park bench.*

*I loved the way your face scrunched up when you laughed.*

*I loved the way your eyes watered when you stopped.*

*I loved the way you would say my name even when it was obvious it was me you were talking to.*

*I loved the way you were good at everything, but still spoke to everyone.*

*I loved the way you didn't have to fight.*

*I loved the way you didn't have to swear.*

*I loved all these things. I loved everything.*

*All this love, but still I'm here. Rooted to the spot.*

*I can't walk, can't think, can't talk. But I so want to. I want to go up to your mum and Caroline, I want to tell them I'm sorry. I want to help them. But I can't. Can't look at them in the street. Can't look at your tower block, let alone climb the flights of stairs that lead to your door. Some people might think that's selfish, but I'm only telling the truth. Because the reason I can't speak to them is that every time I see them, I see pieces of you.*