

I WAS GOING TO END ON "EMPATHY", AT LEAST UNTIL I COULD GET ON A COMPUTER AND DO MY OWN TYPING, BUT THESE "HUNDRED POETS" REALLY CAME UP AND I HAD TO COME UP WITH FOUR POEMS. HAD TO! EVERYONE KNOWS BRANDON'S THE BEST. GOT TWO DOWN. TWO MORE TO GO. NOT TOO SHABBY.

BUT I'M CLOSE TO TEARS HERE.

I ALWAYS WONDERED WHY MARATHON RUNNERS GOT ALL WEEPY AND WEAK AT THE FINISH LINE. FALLING AROUND. BOOBING ABOUT SHIT. BUT I THINK I SEE NOW.

EVERY OUNCE OF ME WANTS TO STEAL THE SHOW, TO BE THE LIFE OF THE PARTY, CHEER UP EVERYONE WHEN I HIT THE GATE. BUT THE CLOSER I GET THE MORE I WANT TO COLLAPSE.

I'M SCARED. THAT'S PART OF IT. WHY AIN'T I HAPPY?

I'VE BEEN RUNNING. RUNNING RUNNING RUNNING. PUSHYOG, ARM CURLS, LEGS, POEMS, ESSAYS. GOING GOING GOING.

SOMETHING DON'T WANT TO STOP RUNNING BECAUSE IT'S A FRAID. A FRAID OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN. WILL I COLLAPSE?

YOU HEAR ABOUT IT. TRAGIC SHIT. "RELEASED AFTER TWENTY YEARS, WRONGFULLY ACCUSED, AND HAS A HEART ATTACK." "DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER AFTER 25 YEARS. DIES." "HAS A STROKE. ON LIFE SUPPORT. JUST RELEASED FROM PRISON," ETC.

WE GOTTA MAKE IT TO SPITE THE INJUSTICE. BUT THE MAKING TAKES ITS TOLL.

MY BRAIN HURTS. MY HEART HURTS. MY STOMACH.

I FOCUS ON THESE PAINS, LIKE ONE WOULD MAKE A CLAY POT ON ONE OF THOSE TURNSTYLES. WET CLAY. HANDS ALL GOOPY. TURNING TURNING. PRESSURE HERE. PRESSURE THERE.

I'M AFRID IF I LET GO OF MY SCULPTURE, CLAY AND SLIME WILL JUST FLY ALL OVER THE PLACE. PLOP. SPLASH.

CAN I CRY; COULD I EVEN CRY AND BREAK DOWN THE DAY I'M RELEASED? LIKE, MAYBE I'M UNABLE. OR, MAYBE IF I DO, IT WILL SET BAD PRECEDENT. NO ONE WILL UNDERSTAND.

A MARATHON RUNNER. ONE SEES THE MILEAGE AND SWEAT PRECEDING THE COLLAPSE. A RELEASED PRISONER. ONE DOESN'T SEE NOTHING EXCEPT... A PERSON. A PERSON WHO ATTEMPTS A SPRINT ONE HUNDRED YARDS BEFORE THE FINISH LINE. BECAUSE HE MUST PROVE HE'S NOT BROKEN.

HE RUNS PAST THE FINISH LINE. GETS A JOB AND A GIRLFRIEND. THEN FALLS OVER AT A LATER DATE. WHEN NO ONE'S LOOKING. AND ITS HIS "WEAKNESS" BLAMED. NOT THE MILEAGE HE RAN; THE BRAVE FACE HE PUT ON TO SPITE THE OPPRESSOR AND CONSOLE HIS LOVED ONES.

IF I FALL HERE, IF I COLLAPSE RIGHT NOW, NO ONE WILL HELP ME. NOTHING WILL HAPPEN. I'LL JUST LIE. LAY FALLEN UNTIL I COULD GET BACK UP. OR DIE.

AND, AGAIN, THE BEAUTY OF THE HUMAN CONDITION COMES TO ME. THESE PACKAGES OF BLOOD AND BONE ABLE TO CREATE EMOTIONS. AND SHARE THESE FEELINGS WITH EACH OTHER.

ITS NEVER ABOUT WHAT WE'RE GOING THROUGH. ITS ABOUT CREATING PIECES, PRETTY PIECES, AS WE GO ALONG. SIMPLE.