

The Seasoned Runner

Running silently through the dry air and blazing hot sun, contemplating the dark crevices of a past that has left only tattered pieces flapping on a clothesline, I am brought back to this familiar place; yet it looks new at the same time. A young man, younger by twelve years, brings me water. He also looks familiar, yet we have only just met. He reminds me of what I was once looking for; he shows me what I still want. Underneath the millions of stars in this big Colorado sky, I see a flash of what could be. Base training.

The color of the leaves change as the color of my skin fades. Emotions are whipped around like those fallen leaves in this unpredictable wind. The warm is sweeping out to make room for the inevitable cold. The young man still calls on me. He shows the compassion of a wise old man; yet there is so much he does not understand in his youth. Our passion drives me forward despite that little voice trying to caution me. The electricity of this time of year creates an unsettling that I can't seem to calm on my run. Peaking.

I stand naked in my vulnerability, stark against the barren overcast day. The snow crunches under my feet as I set out on my run, breathing out mist in crisp cold air. I still speak with the young man who has moved on to new possibilities, a reminder that nothing stays the same. Sad and introspective, I realize my youth is leaving me; I am no longer the innocent free spirit I once was. Everything holds a deeper meaning. This is both comforting and disturbing because somehow it seems to leave less room for mistakes. The stakes are higher now, and the consequences affect me on a deeper level. My heart is beating but I am still, afraid to make any movements that could send me spinning. Tapering.

The trees are budding now. The young man has a new girl who resembles me when I was twenty-three. She has that youthful spring in her step that I have lost. She is also a runner. He seems happy. As the dew twinkles on the blades of grass, I make my way along my running path. It is no longer quiet. Birds are chirping and paddles are splashing in the lake next to me. The warmth of the sun serves as a blanket over my once shivering heart. The race is done, but my sinewy muscles have more strength now. As I let the young man slowly fade into my past, I am no longer running away from pain. Instead, I am pacing myself and pushing forward at a nice clip with renewed anticipation. Of what, I do not know. I no longer look for anything in particular. I am just running and enjoying the scenery along the way, no finish line in sight. Recovery.