

Baylorian

2007

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The Baylorian is produced by students in the Department of English at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. Submissions are accepted from members of the UMHB community (faculty, staff, students, and alumni) each year.

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Andrew J. Smiley

Inconsiderate

Spring is called
 The flowering time,
 Full of days heavily soaked
 By the oil and water of sky and sun
 Meeting at dawn and dusk,
 Seductive sights and scents in plenty,
 Days when Nature bursts her banks,
 Days when lovers chase every fluttering whim.
 In the spring
 Love's sweet dew-droppings
 Bubble up with streams of sugared whimpers
 Sailing from mouth to ear,
 Snagging on the lobes.
 The display repeats from year to year
 As furtive, fertile hopefuls
 Put on butterfly wings
 Destined to disappoint,
 Brush up pungent hackles
 That crackle with imagined virility.
 In the spring
 To the bereft consumer
 Whose heart-purse is penniless,
 Young love is a locked store's window.
 Oh, to be deaf, mute and blind.

Charlotte Kunz

13.1

The clouds hung in a thick, grey blanket over the hills and the angry wind whipped leaves in mini-whirlwinds through the street. A low growl of thunder could be heard in the distance. Our feet pounded the pavement with fury, and determination was plastered on our faces.

My shirt read "13.1 and still smiling," but I wasn't smiling anymore. My face was damp, a mixture of sweat and the rain that had been threatening to pour at any minute. A different part of my body screamed in pain with every step I took. Step. My left ankle. Step. My right calf. Step. A stitch in my side. Step. A gasp for air. I came to ignore the constant pain. It was encouragement to move faster, if anything. To cross the finish line before the next person because the pain that would come if I didn't was worse than any pain I was feeling now. This pain was temporary—it would be over at the end of the race. That pain? That pain was permanent. It haunted you until the next race, until the next time to push yourself to the extreme, to break one more personal record.

Mile four. Step up the pace. My pink tennis shoes hit the ground harder as I dug into my reserve. The pace clock flashed 34:32. Decent enough. I allowed a smile to play at the corners of my mouth, tempting the ever present rain to come. Why was I out here? I didn't even know anymore. It started sometime back in middle school. I'd been running this race of self-worth since middle school. I think someone called me fat. Or maybe they just looked at me the wrong way. That set into motion a series of events that ended with me, on mile four, praying to God for strength.

Around a corner I can see a girl with a ponytail coming out of her pink hat. She becomes my competition, several yards in front of me. She's no longer human to me; she is simply competition. She is what I'm racing against. *I should've trained more*, I think. I'd been training for this for eight years though, so more training wasn't really an option. My thoughts raced back to those training sessions. Dangerous sessions. Torture.

That's what it really was. Betraying my body. Two o'clock in the morning. Alarm going off. I'd shut it off quickly and then lay in bed for minutes that felt like an eternity praying that my family on the other side of the house didn't hear it. I hardly dared to breathe. Another minute clicked by on my clock and I sighed in relief. Out of bed, already dressed, into my blue, beat-up running shoes. Out the window. It was routine. And then I'd hit the pavement under the dark, moonlit sky. I ran to erase my memory, to erase my hurt, and give my mind a chance to cease to ache. I ran, and I ran, and I ran. Three o'clock turned into four o'clock. The morning was grey, just like I felt on the inside. No emotions, just me and the ground. It couldn't judge me, it couldn't stare at me as I turned a corner or laugh at me as I ate by myself at lunch.

Mile eight. The pain has ceased. Or maybe it hasn't. I've just hit a point where I don't feel anymore. It's called a runner's high, and right now it's my savior. The girl with the pink hat is still in front of me. I'm closer to her now than I was before, though. She's the competition; she's what motivates me to give a little more. Running is my solitude. It's my moment alone to think. It's cheap therapy. Much cheaper than the shrink that was paid way too much to "help" me. Help me through what? I wasn't sick. *Anorexic with bulimic tendencies*, they said. I wasn't bulimic. People who were bulimic threw up. I didn't ever throw up. I ate. And then I ran until I couldn't feel anything anymore. *How does that make you feel?* If he asked me that again I think I might have ripped the pencil out of his hand and shoved it up his nose. How would *that* have made him feel? He told me to think of the thing I loved most in the world—I thought of horseback riding. If I couldn't get better, he was going to take that away from me. I think he thought it was motivation. I considered it blackmail and did my best to aggravate him. I stopped seeing him soon after that.

Mile eleven. Two more to go. My mile time slowed down considerably after I passed the pink-hat-girl. The only person that could serve as much motivation to run faster is far away and I'm starting to feel the pain again. I've had a dull ache in my side since mile nine. So much for a runner's high. Apparently that only lasts so long. My lungs and legs scream

at me to stop. It's so loud it's almost audible. *Leave me alone! There is nothing wrong with me!* I remember screaming that at my parents one night. I can't remember what made me scream it though, because it had not been warranted. I lived under a façade for awhile after I stopped going to the shrink. I think I had even tricked myself into believing I was okay. I even stopped "training" late at night and then crawling back into bed for a few hours sleep before school in the morning. I'd even gained back the twenty-five pounds I'd dropped in one month. Something provoked it again and all of a sudden, I was definitely not okay anymore. My face wore dark circles like costume make up. My heart wore bruises. I was sick and it was time for me to admit it.

Mile thirteen...mile thirteen! Almost there. I didn't think I'd ever make it this far. I thought I'd be weak and stop around mile six. I'm not weak anymore though. I had a revelation and saw where I'd end up if I kept spiraling down. I was in a dressing room with my mom telling her that the extra-small shirt I had on made me look fat. She pointed to my hip bones that stuck out at sharp angles and told me that those were not fat; they were disgusting because they were too skinny. I broke down then and there. I began eating healthily again and eventually started to gain weight again. I can't say it was easy. I can't say that I will ever truly be "okay" or "normal." But what is normal anyway? I will deal with my dirty little secrets until the day I die.

My mom told me the other day she was sorry. Sorry for not realizing something was wrong sooner. Sorry for not getting up when she heard me moving around in my room in the middle of the night. I think she wanted to believe that nothing was wrong as much as I did. She said she still worries about me, especially when I started running again. "It's different this time," I tried to explain to her. I'm not running to achieve something anymore. I'm running because it makes me feel alive. It gives me satisfaction to know that I can run thirteen miles and that I can have the victory of finishing. Running isn't the enemy anymore; it's the support system.

13.1 miles. I smiled.