

Born to Run

The elevator doors glide shut in front of me. I lean forward, put my forehead against the cool metal and shut my eyes, try to breathe. "Fuck," I whisper softly to myself, "I just lost my job."

A few days earlier, Brad and I are sitting in some McMenamins somewhere, washing down tater tots with IPAs. I am engaged in my two favorite pastimes: bemoaning my love life and running my hands over the satisfying spikiness of my newly shaved head.

"I got some great advice once," Brad tells me. "You just have to run – run hard after your goals, stay focused on them and pursue them tirelessly." He picks up his Terminator and sips it with the demure verve of a musical theater man.

"While you're pursuing what nourishes you, at some point you'll look over and realize that there's someone running beside you. Just stay focused on being yourself and achieving your goals, and love naturally follows."

I set down my glass. "That seems easy for you to say, Mr. Buddhist-with-a-great-boy-friend-and-a-fulfilling-career."

Brad smiles. "Well, yes, it's easy to say and hard to demonstrate. Worth a shot, though, isn't it?" He takes the last tater tot, and I smile back.

Flash forward to now, when I am standing in the lobby of the building that, up until



REMEMBER TO BREATHE

by Nick Mattos

If I run at full sprint after the things that nourish me. I won't just find love – the life I dream about will naturally follow. Being myself and staying motivated to achieve my goals are the causes that lead to the effect, victory. This is easy to say and hard to demonstrate ...

45 minutes ago, was my office. The elevator bell chimes behind me, I hear the cables stretch as the car ascends, but I don't move. After holding a huge and crazily diverse array of jobs since age 15, I am now one of the almost 13 percent of Oregonians who are unemployed.

I look at the fake potted plant, the intentionally innocuous office art, stand wide-eyed with my back to the elevator door. *What the fuck do those 13 percent do with themselves?* In front of me are beige walls and industrial carpet, all around me the smell of clinical cleaning products, at my back the elevator humming and groaning.

My eyes close – *What the fuck do I do with myself?* I think, inhaling sharply.

Ding! sounds the elevator, and I open my eyes. *This*, I think – and I run.

I dash outside, onto Fourth Avenue with the junkies and the homeless people. My Frye boots pound against the pavement and I fly past street kids, canvassers, a man playing buckets like drums. My leather bag slaps my back as I bound up the stairs of the Morrison Bridge, the bridge only crazy people walk across – appropriate because at this moment I am so crazy, this man in suit and tie running across the commuter bridge, slowing to a stop, doubled over, lungs burning.

I stand upright, panting. I look to the west, the huge buildings of downtown, the mansions on the hill. To the east are warehouses, coffee houses, the great glass spires of the convention center. I look to the north, and perhaps it's the exertion or the overwhelming loss of groundedness, but the only thing that passes through my mind is love

– *My god, I love this city.*

I didn't just move to Portland – two years ago, I ran for my life and ended up here, in a tiny studio with no job and a futon by the window to sit on while I wrote. Somehow, that guy evolved into me, here on the Morrison Bridge – and I got here by running at a full sprint after my goals, by tirelessly pursuing the life I dreamed about.

I look to the south and realize that Brad is right. If I run at full sprint after the things that nourish me, I won't just find love – the life I dream about will naturally follow. Being myself and staying motivated to achieve my goals are the causes that lead to the effect, victory. This is easy to say and hard to demonstrate – but fuck, it's worth a shot, the only shot I have left. And that is the most beautiful and exciting thing about it.

The cars zip by and the wind whips my face. With sharp teeth, I smile a free man's smile at the river, the tall buildings of the west, the warehouses of the east, the wind. I smile at every car, sweaty in my suit and with nothing left to lose, and slowly make my way home.

NICK MATTOS is learning how to balance being a recessionista and a bon vivant. He is the Portland correspondent for the NYC men's fashion blog *HommeBoy.net* and the co-editor of the literary zine *When to Change*.

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