

'Before You Go' an open letter

It seems that death is the only thing that's guaranteed in this life.

That's why loss is a universal experience. No amount of anything can save you from it, yet it still leaves us all feeling so alone. Isn't that ironic? It's the feeling lonely in a crowded room. Maybe because it doesn't actually make any difference who else is there. It's all tunnel vision. You're surrounded by people telling you that time heals all wounds, but your wounds are still bleeding. They never stopped. Because loss isn't a wound, it's a great big gaping hole in your heart. Now everything beats slower. Breathing is harder. But you keep breathing nonetheless. It's the baggage you carry. Life just becomes heavier.

'Before You Go' grew from a heartbreak like that. A love like that. A time in my life when the only thing that eased the ache, was writing. I wrote poetry, everyday, to the one that I lost. In states of anger, in sorrow, in confusion, in denial. My 12 step program for grief was made up of thousands of words on hundreds of pages.

There was no structure, no plan. It was just a consistent pouring of pain, like rain and wet ink.

Then it began to ease. The writing wasn't as intense anymore. My love of life somewhat returned. But still the struggle felt never-ending. I guess it shifts from feeling like a waterfall, and instead becomes more like waves. Some days it's stormier than others. Some days we play the blame game. The frustration that comes with feeling like you were left behind. The loss of faith in a universe that can bless us with loved ones, only to then take them away later down the line. Some days there's crippling guilt. We don't talk much about that. It hangs over you like dark clouds. The sadness stops being as raw, but you feel guilty for it. You feel like you should be sad, and it's wrong that you're not. Every smile and laugh tastes of betrayal. And you fear moments of joy, because they make you feel like you're forgetting. Moving on from pain, makes you feel like an ugly person, because it fools you into thinking that you're moving on from who you lost... when all you want to do is hold on so tight that the skies have no choice but to open up and shower you with the past.

I set aside my pages for a while. They never existed to turn into songs, they were just there. Until this year. Now, pandemic excluded, I don't think 2020 was a "worse" year than others. I think it was a tipping point. The volcano burst due to the instability of major systemic issues that should have been addressed a long time ago. There is always a cause and effect. 2020 is the effect of decades of negligence. We lost and, are still losing, a lot of people to a virus that is causing global despair. And I'm not just referring to covid-19.

I was thinking about Breanna Taylor and George Floyd. And I was thinking about their families. I was thinking about Naya Rivera. Kobe and Gigi Bryant. Chadwick Boseman. All the people who die of cancers, accidents, diseases, police brutality, school shootings. I was thinking about death. I was thinking about all those left to pick up the pieces. I was thinking about this universal experience.

Truthfully, I don't want the narrative of these tracks to solely form themselves around my personal experience. That's why I'm somewhat hesitant to speak too specifically about it. I want them to exist as shoes for every individual listener to step into themselves. For every listener to connect to, without the influence of my own story in their minds. Because we all have our own — in some way, shape or form.

The vulnerability that comes with opening up through art is terrifying, but it makes it feel real. Which reminds me that the preciousness of life, is what makes it feel so special. We don't have forever. Our time together isn't infinite. If nothing else, let this year be a reminder of that. All we have is right now. Be courageous. Be honest. Believe in your work. Believe in your worth. Do what makes you happy.

Tell people you love them, before they go.