
DUDLEY MUTATINA



THE EMOTIONAL PROCESS OF AN
EMOTIONALLY STUNTED INDIVIDUAL



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A wave

A tingling sensation

Courses through my body.

My face feels hot

The air leaves my lungs

A storm swells in the pits of my stomach

My heart beats against my chest like a bass drum in 1812

Told to keep time

Oh little drummer boy

I fight back the waterworks with every ounce of strength within me.

I won't cry here

I can't cry here

I won't cry here

I can cry here

I won't cry here

I should cry here

I won't cry here

I don't want to shed anymore tears over this

I'd hoped they'd just evaporate over time

But the floodgates are cracking with each word

Like a 100-year flood about a thousand years overdue

My chest feels tight

My breath staggers like a group of friends after a night of drinking

Breathe in

Look away

A jar of candy. What kind?

Breathe out

Look away

Some knick knacks and doodads to busy myself

Make brief eye contact

Avert your eyes
Blue wall
White wall
Blue wall
White wall
Blue painting, silver flowers
Look in, breathe away
Look out, breathe—
—Wait
What?
Oh, that's right,
No crying here
Don't speak
I struggle to hold myself together
A delicate balance
Don't speak yet
If I open my mouth
If I keep talking
My stream of consciousness will overtake the barriers
Until my eyes overflow
I know it's what you want
It's what I want
Then why don't I want it?
If the pain is so real,
Why am I smiling?
Holding back a smile, because it feels poorly timed
But it helps to mask the pain
Funny how tears tear away my insides
Only to rebuild, reinforce
Make me stronger.
Does feeling mean I'm alive?

“How did you feel?”

“A penny for your emotions?”

For two cents and you can hop aboard my train of thought

Do I even know?

No, I know

I think I know

I think I feel—

No, maybe I felt—

No, I *feel*—

No, wait. Did I even feel?

How can I tell?

What do I do then?

Cool, calculated, chaos filled with calamity

I don't want to shed a tear

What's the point?

“There is a point,” I tell myself

“There was never a point,” he responds

“Does there need to be a point?” they say in unison

Let me point you—

us..?

we..?

—in the right direction

I shed tears to shed the layers of my emotions.

Why can't there be another way?

Is spilling water the only way to show my pain?

Is that the human condition?

Never was there ever a safer spot to be

I don't know how to feel—

I mean, *how* I feel.

But I do

But I don't

But I do
You don't
I do
You don't
But you do
But I do
Don't I?