

# The Runner

by Clifford Larkins

In early morning I ran  
blindly into mist and fog  
and at night, through engulfing darkness  
I ran, stumbling, reaching,  
the obstacles unimaginable,  
but I ran determined not to stop.  
Other runners followed close behind  
breathing the stale odor of despair.

Around the rain-soaked paths we pushed,  
the pack thinning, the darkness prevailing.  
I slipped and stumbled once again  
reaching, only to grasp the cold remains  
of a previous failure. On I ran,  
the cold rain changing to a cold mist,  
the fog lifting, slightly.

Around another turn  
and at last, a blade of grass.  
Up over the last hill,  
the air clear now,  
the others had faded.

I could see the finish line,  
and my prize  
now lay before me.  
I staggered through dense overgrowth  
slicing away at weeds and ferns  
till, finally  
I had run my course. My prize was there waiting,  
its radiance blinding.

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