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Poems

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Rally Round

The war continues 
And we must not forget 
How to sharpen our spears. 
To order them like lasers 
To know beyond belief— 
The rebels are still in the fields.

We remain 
The sweat of the first morning dew 
Grains of wheat 
Arrows of living gods 
Constant images in the yard 
Confirmations 
Conspiracies of dark old men 
Uprisings 
On the route to revolution 
In the tradition of always readiness 
Rising from ashes and embers 
Siempre, returning to the source/

We are the progeny of the People’s cries 
The answer to their anguish 
The function for their futures—

Oye,
The high tree says he sees far, 
The walking seed says 
He sees farther 
I tell you 
Behind the mountains 
are mountains growing— 
These are crucial themes to remember 
And this a critical thing to know, 
Iron will cut iron.

Lasana M. Sekou
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Parable - III

Oh life, said the old man 
give me the strength to face you 
for you haven’t got the face 
to give me strength.

Aleem Mazzabe
London, England

I Am The Long Distance Runner

I am the long distance runner 
I glide like a gazelle 
Over rocks and rills 
Sprinting through the chill morning dew 
And the darkest nights 
Quick and with a big stride 
To the tune of trot, trot, trot 
That only a runner knows.

I am the long distance runner 
I sprint through the cold 
Brisk air and my shoulders 
Rumble in their sockets 
But my elbows with 
Tight fists keep them moving 
Cutting through the air 
Swishing away the freezing rain.

I am the long distance runner 
My long legs and feet streak through 
The crisp snow in pitter pats 
Searching for the black asphalt jungle 
Chopping through the tunnels, 
The viaducts, over the bridges 
And canals of my inner thoughts 
To a higher plateau 
That only a runner knows.

I am the long distance runner 
Who runs in the frosty cold 
Of the morning and night 
Shivering my belly off 
But I know as soon as my 
Heart beats like a kettle drum 
In my chest 
I will be hot as the tropics 
At high noon drenched 
In my white T-shirt and shorts.

I am the long distance runner 
Who stampedes his grief into the earth 
As the mind transcends the body 
And clocks in with nature’s harmony 
Gliding over trees 
Chirping with birds 
In a world of euphoric madness 
That only a runner knows.

I am the long distance runner 
A familiar sight to motorist 
But a stranger nevertheless to most 
Who is driven and obsessed 
To run day in and day out 
Until the heart swells with excitement 
In the cutting wind 
In the drenching rain 
In the blinding snow 
In the loneliness of being alone.
Running to the tune
That only I hear
And the long distance runner knows.

I am the long distance runner
Who loses no time
But lets fly with a dozen rifles
Firing into my own world
As I leap over frost-bitten grass
Onto the trails of life
Going my rounds in dreams
And whistling with birds
Turning at lanes and corners
Without knowing that I
Streak across brooks, rivers, streams
That only a frost pain suffering runner
knows.

I am the long distance runner
Who knows it's a treat to be
Out under the sun
Without a soul to break
My stride through the cobweb
Of landmark - swishing, swishing along
Slapping my feet in symphony
With my puffing breath
Numb! Everything numb!
But good because
It's numb before coming alive
No numb after being alive
But only the long distance runner
knows.

Janet R. Griffin
Howard University

The Survivors

Let the dry grass burn in the wind,
And the sand shift and remold,
And the bleached bones
That once ran free in the wind
Among the thorns,
Lie scattered like disjointed dolls,
Discarded...
No more fear of fang or claw;
Far beneath the burnt-out grass
Wind cool passages...
And furtive life is there,
The unquenchable stream of life, persisting
Since long before articulated limbs
Were first established on the earth,
Surviving burning wind
And changing current and flood,
Waiting, waiting
To emerge, as from bomb shelters;
Let the strong wings circling on the rising
draft
From their cool cliff face
Above the chasm,
Wheel, eyes piercing and probing
For movement on the ground,
Strike on the iron beak!
Rape by the claw!
Again and again...
But there, in the cool tunnels
Life will be renewed,
And the survivors will emerge,
Year after year,
Age after age!

Nathalie V. Cole-Johnson
Monterey, Ca.