

Fall 1986

## Runner in March Rain

Cleopatra Mathis

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## *Runner In March Rain*

I think now I must earn the land,  
earn star and snow and sleep. And wide awake,  
earn it past sorry. So when it's too cold  
I rise and crack the ice and blow  
smoke against the wood and become the one  
who runs face-up in sleet  
for the needle in the breath of it,  
proof in the rasping. I run until the dark  
recedes. And make myself  
repeat the hill  
until the trees take shape,  
until the word I run with  
fixes this place in time.

What I owe  
is the feed-me, the shudder of asking.  
I owe my weight, what other  
price for the personal:  
water no longer water  
but the ghostly forms it represents, the past  
clotted or released in the road and ditch and air.  
Silence is what I owe.  
And I can't define it—no more than hilltop,  
no more than another mile  
will cure the head's black ache,  
hatless in the cold,  
dumb for the hammer.

I run in a glass house, I beat  
this house of wish and doubt  
until it crashes, until it shatters.  
Here's empty, here's necessary  
in the crucial rain-blind panting, the trick  
to be still and keep my panic  
from the deer in the green-cracked field.  
They own the earth rights  
to the season breaking.