

AmeriCorps Jog

*Pass Christian, Mississippi*

*March 2006*

i've decided to go for a run  
light blue sneakers, gray emblem shirt  
inside out: plastic sticks to my sweaty skin

my legs feel longer here

maybe it's the ground  
feels like it's further apart  
and i have to jump, consecutively  
until it looks like running

the beaded sidewalks of Tuesdays  
no longer fat are broken  
by flooded moments of history  
- if i stop it will sink in  
i will sink in  
to what has happened here

keep running--  
emblem inward,  
longer legs aching  
to keep going  
past the deserted bank,  
past the x-marked lifeless houses,  
past the church  
of postmodern worship  
where people still pray

## Waiting Runner

to the gods who have forsaken them

keep running--  
through street lights fallen  
like insect segments in  
a backyard sandbox  
don't dig too deep  
in the sandpit at the park:  
the neighbor's dolls  
and the park's gymnasium poles  
slumber in tangled roots  
of future erosion

keep running--  
no one is watching  
no one will know  
if the ground  
swallows you  
mating with the remainder  
of the dead and long dead

you turn at the thought of  
no one  
you wish there were noises  
squirrels or sparrows or  
even strangers along the street

keep running--  
cracking purple parade  
beads of the past  
into pebbles  
of forgotten memories

## Waiting Runner

don't bother stopping at  
the corner  
unless you need the practice  
of stopping and starting  
like the lapping breath  
of the Gulf waters  
spitting and spewing, before  
it can breathe.

keep running--  
emblem covered.

this is not your world:  
- except now  
but you're running:  
and you have someplace to go.

## Waiting Runner

leave a message at the tone

he's walking around the bedroom,  
the bathroom, the sofa  
looking for the  
long brown hairs  
I've left behind

he doesn't want to have  
to explain them to her  
or make up stories...lies  
of where they're from

it's a warm summer day  
we hold hands while  
we walk around the winery  
and I get drunk on each  
small taste of what it is like  
to hold hands and be with him  
publicly

when we return to his house  
there is a message on his machine  
and I smile- incredulous that he  
even has a machine

but when he presses play  
my smile wanes;  
her sweet, little five-year-old voice  
-so gentle, so genuine  
though clearly so coerced  
starts : "Hi Daddy, um daddy,

## Waiting Runner

there's a car in the driveway  
I've never seen before, Daddy.  
Daddy- whose car is that?"

and my eyes grow wide  
but he brushes it off  
he lights a candle and turns  
the lights down low  
and leaves every trace of her  
right where it is  
while we maneuver into  
his bedroom

and when I'm gone  
he looks for me  
or at least  
each stray hair that  
I shed involuntarily  
that might have littered  
their happy home.

Mémère

Her skin was like a snake's,  
just waiting to peel off.

Her breath smelled  
of cough drops and  
nicotine.

She would sit at the  
square kitchen table  
with a bright lamp, bent  
over her newest old puzzle.

They say she had a  
quick temper  
but I imagine she had  
some patience that  
got lost in a glass  
of gin,  
but I never saw  
her drink...

She was a feminine mystique,  
small and mysterious.  
She'd disappear for hours  
in their brown boat of a car,  
warming the cover of the  
yellow pages that pushed  
her up above the wheel.

In pictures, she was a  
movie star with chestnut curls

## Waiting Runner

and hickory eyes,  
the stick of a cigarette  
between pursed lips.

She died, like a cat,  
and each time, we sat  
by her bed, waiting.  
On the seventh time  
she pulled me closer by  
my eight-year-old arm

In my memory she makes me  
promise that I'll never smoke  
but she didn't actually say anything

She looked at me, long  
with her hickory eyes  
wide and frightened  
and she coughed beneath  
her mask, barely breathing  
through the straw of  
her diseased throat.

The Chess Player

At our wedding,  
your brother joked  
about your  
rule-meister  
tendencies  
and the crowd laughed  
with warm smiles  
knowing you  
so well

he mentioned  
how you *always* read  
the rules, in fact  
you used to hide the rulebooks  
and study them beneath the sheets  
to somehow  
find a way  
that no one expected

and you've succeeded  
once again

like the lawyer  
it seems you were  
destined to be  
you've found  
a loophole  
a lie  
a Pharisaical  
argument



## Waiting Runner

to justify  
your choice

you see  
as always  
four steps ahead  
and act the martyr  
and lay blame  
first quietly  
then loudly  
then quietly again  
and at all points  
forgetting to share  
the whole truth

but you're four  
steps ahead  
watching the pieces  
move to  
your satisfaction:  
nobody  
the wiser

but wisdom  
will come  
when you least  
expect her  
like a move of  
a pawn from  
a novice player,  
unaccounted for  
in your desire to

## Waiting Runner

reach checkmate  
and she will  
- one day -  
lay your king  
to the board.