Long Jog

Joshua Matthews
Dordt College, joshua.matthews@dordt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege
Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol42/iss2/7

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pro Rege by an authorized administrator of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.
The Long Jog

Josh Matthews

Wearing tights in the night
for the sake of observers,
I used to make the long jog
around the familiar circular
course enclosing our town’s
only body of water, a run that
sought to achieve the hormonal
surge of euphoria on display
in the movie Rocky II, in which
Rocky races through the mean
streets of Philadelphia so
awesomely that he inspires
a whole troop of children—a la
the Pied Piper of Hamelin—to bound
with him over wood benches, race through
tunnels, and charge up the stairs of city hall,
declaring to all the victory of the Jog
as if the world should flood
itself with the sweat of happy runners
and the sound of cheering children.

My jog never featured sycophantic kids
or horn-happy montage music.
Instead I sucked wind hard
and felt like collapsing after
the first lap. Those who run know
the call to quit incessantly trumpets from
every cell in the body, as if we were
not made to pound pavement or hack up
and gulp down our own phlegm. Worse
than that were the Rockys who
passed me every night. I did not follow
them with glee, as those movie
kids did, but groaned and spat, then
dashed after them fast to pass them
up and demonstrate to those
bastards how sloth and cowardice
felt. I would not slow for them ever—no
dream of a run together up the stairs of any
stone symbol of government—rather, they deserved
to consume the crud kicked up by my shoes.
The hope of a long jog is a vain one, 
the all-consumptive race to nowhere 
but the surgeon’s table for artificial 
joints and knees, and the extra 
calories that will find their way to 
hips and guts, no matter what. 
I run no longer. I have given that up. 
I have heeded the urge of the voice 
in the heart of my cells and the wood 
and the stone. I return to the natural 
call of the wild and reject the everyday 
circles and nineteen seventies fantasies of 
endless running. Yes, around that old course 
surely Rocky still jogs, vainly calling fools 
like me and children to hear 
his montage music and follow along. 
As he and his own run around the water, 
they may want to show up each other. 
But I will lean and loaf and play and eat. 
By them I will be passed up no more.