

# Running for Relief

At the call to line up, I tighten my shoes  
A wave of apprehension washes over me  
The fear of failure  
Of not being able  
To finish the race  
Surging forward in the mass of bodies  
I withdraw inside myself  
Listening to the music  
Establishing a rhythmic pace  
  
Within minutes my legs are burning  
And I'm panting hard  
It's the hills that kill me  
And I feel like giving up  
The sun beats down  
And I long for the next cup of water  
I dream of a shower  
And ponder what I might eat later  
  
Just a few more measured minutes  
The sight of the finish line  
A surge of adrenaline and relief: it's over  
And as I cross the line in thankfulness  
I offer up a prayer  
For those who have no choice  
But to keep running

Tying my baby to me, I grab what I can carry  
Fear threatens to overwhelm me  
Cold, stark, fear  
Of not being able  
To protect my child  
Surging forward in the huddle of villagers  
I withdraw inside myself  
Not listening to the distant gunfire  
Or the whimpering of frightened children  
  
Within minutes my legs are burning  
And I'm panting hard  
But it's the hills that offer safety  
And I know that giving up is not an option  
The sun beats down  
And I wonder where we will find water  
Will our rice crop survive  
And how long will this food last?  
  
Just how much farther must we run?  
Where will all this end?  
A surge of anxiety sweeps over me again  
And as I climb the next hill  
I offer up a prayer  
For safety for us all and for the strength  
Just to keep running