

## **A RUNNING MAN'S LAST RUN**

He was sure he had run nearly ten miles, barefoot and wearing only a pair of jeans that had become ripped at the knee. Racing through a pack of bushes, he fell into the thick ground, soggy and cold with sparse patches of grass. He lay still with his face sunk into the earth, his heart galloping. He rose slowly from the ground, dragging an exposed left knee that had become injured during the fall, and with trembling hands wiped thick chunks of the earth from his eyes. He sat back against a large rock on his good knee and with a most critical eye, looked around, quietly questioning his surroundings. His eyes quickly shifted to the pain coming from his knee. For a moment he watched the deep crimson matter ooze from the gaping wound. To ease the pain, he ripped the rest of the jean leg, grabbed some of the damp, thick earth and patted it on his wound; something he had seen in a movie. He moaned in a low tone as the application began to work its magic

Suddenly, he noticed the unusual calm around him. It was unsettling. All he could hear was the sound of insects hovering over a lake nearby. He hopped to his feet to get a closer view of the lake, a mixture of blood and earth sliding down his leg. The lake was motionless and dark, and reeked of carcasses and feces. Before his eyes a spec of bright light broke through the top layer of the lake. Then something arose from the lake and eventually revealed itself as the most beautiful light he had ever seen. He was in awe that something so horrid could produce something so beautiful. Then he noticed that as the light arose from the lake, the more beautiful his surroundings became, and the better he felt. He looked up toward the sky in reverence. His heartbeat slowed to a normal pace and he stood quiescent, embracing the scene.

“Honey? How do you feel?”

He opened his eyes and saw his wife standing over him. He slowly rubbed his hands down his face, thinking it all had seemed so real.

“Uh, fine. Just trying to wake up,” he managed to say. “What did the doctor have to say?”

“He said you’re going to be fine.” And then as if she couldn’t control herself, his wife dropped to her knees and buried her tear-stained face into the pristine white sheets that covered him, her left arm covering the part of his leg that remained.