

heart
on a
tripod



Kaia Sand

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* a dust/e-chap
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Cover art: **Gifts from the Earth**

by Jessica Berg Swanson.

Gratitude to Susana Gardner, editor of *Dusie*, for her leadership, vision, and day-to-day panache. Gratitude to all the participants of the *Dusie Kollektiv*. Gratitude to my family. Gratitude to Jules Boykoff, Meg Eberle Ainsworth, and Michael Glaser for feedback on this poem. Some public heckling also provided useful feedback. Gratitude to CE Putnam for using a piece of this poem on a postcard for the Subtext Reading Series. Gratitude to Sam Ladkin and Sara Crangle for providing me the first opportunity to read a draft of this poem at the Cambridge Poetry Summit. The title of the Summit anthology, *further evidence of nerves*, and a wood carving duplicated on the cover, proved generative for this poem.

for Jules

June 2006

Portland, Oregon

A Dusie Kollektiv Chapbook



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cagey lungs, I forgot about you

until my photographic heart snapped

with a shutter your negative

exposed breath, not a stutter

but three notes, a glance in, &

breath held like a tarn

in a fell, & breath out

a hem on fire, a dark skirt

raising red, fire rising

on the threads, every vein

trafficking blood, arteries

export for the heart that shoots

the slabby liver in successive

stills, moving in, moving toxic

& out & impossibly so—

the runner prints her track

by looping track, pink glistening

tissue tolerant to her

demands, robustly cellular

her glorious photogenic heart

a starlet before a strobe

beyond Olympian festivals

simply endless training

& the blood will come

as it always does. sickness

in organs is their alternative

behavior. a clutter of blood

a nerve made timid by a pin

a cellular heap of a windbag lung

vertebrae furious like a cactus

I shall grow old

blood warms my hand that writes
above my pulse covered
in skin, a pulse taps
sixty as the runner touches
her wrists fits the body she chose
but her body is Olympian & not
alone when heart muscles heave
side-by-side, when all the legs move
in stride, another runner
& her legs become her legs
become a heap of bodies &
hopeless. bodies hit bodies
& they fall that way

a slice of a heart might reveal me
inside the custard of fat that is
human, though hooves don't speak
for the cross-sectioned deer—
yellow & pancreatic & possible
these are my organs & I
have never seen them. though
I did see a woman's heart beneath
her sternum, I lifted her
small clavicle, her fingernails painted
pink & dead. no organ
where it should be, so singular was she
if I could smell my heart:

these are my organs & I like them

they do travel well but are imprecise

& my body grows to fill

a field that awaits it

the runner touches her breast

divide sun & moon

at the intimacy. no one touches

noon. 'when lipstick wore terror'

as it always does, our seductive

clothing. the communiqué of this skirt

is not that—I know the man in the film

who wore dresses to the grange

his desire to be a woman

& thus glamorous in that way

lipstick nicking a neck like a heart

a dark skirt burns up

my big-booted gait prints script
in the mud. hazy hailstone, lazy eye
the glint of glamour:
swaddled in seduction, wear
a communiqué, walk it. the blood
will come, as it always does —
lavishly. these flames form my frame
form the runner, as she trains
again, no longer hopeful
with Olympics, just a body
patient with itself, its daily strides

nerves made brave by a pin, toes
of straw, a gumshoe heart
a stunted stent in feeble flesh
this arm, the branch the artist claimed
as a cathedral, still, impossibly
so, every living thing, impossibly so—
these flames form my frame

Notes

Image of a runner is a likeness of Mary Decker Slaney, middle-distance runner extraordinaire.

'when lipstick wore terror' is from a likely misremembered headline I read in the *Washington Post* several years ago.

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