

THE MARATHON MAN

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Johnny ran.
that was his problem,
he was what the staff called a runner
logical since he ran whenever he could ---

one minute
they thought they had him
three ways to Sunday
tied to the bedpost
with someone else's soiled sheets;

then they'd no sooner turn around
and he'd be up to his Harry Houdini
routine all over again.

even the aides admitted he was pretty smart
for being a retard;
all the rest of them would sit and rock.

but not Johnny
he'd jump up
dart this way and that.
then the next thing you know

he'd find an open door
or leap through a window

and he'd be clocking the mile
on the institution's main drag
at three-point-ninety-two
like the long distance runner
he longed to be.

they tried vinegar spray,
four-point restraints,
even leaden shoes.

nothing slowed his free stride
until they placed electrodes on his hide
and shocked him.

shocked him silly.

now he's on the back ward
rocking to and fro
to and fro
to and fro . . .

