

Eastern Illinois University

The Keep

Undergraduate Honors Theses

Honors College

2018

And She Runs

Caroline Collet

Follow this and additional works at: https://thekeep.eiu.edu/honors_theses

 Part of the [Playwriting Commons](#)

AND SHE RUNS

A Play About More Than Track

by

Caroline Collet

Email: cjcollet@eiu.edu

Phone: 779-233-1255

Cast of Characters

Grace Ipsig: high school senior, fiercely competitive.

Colleen "Jonesy" Jones: high school senior, confident about running, not as sure about everything else.

Hannah Ipsig: sophomore, younger sister, great teammate.

Lizzie Schmitt: senior, Coach's daughter and tired of being treated differently because of it.

Coach Schmitt: Great coach and teacher. Pushes her athletes to be the best at any cost.

SCENE

An older but very well-kept high school track, nestled between the school building and a small neighborhood. There is a "Home of the 20xx 2A State Cross Country Champions" sign proudly displayed.

The State Meet is held at a newer facility that belongs to a nearby university.

TIME

The present.

ACT 1Scene 1SETTING:

The beginning of practice, the week before Conference. HANNAH and GRACE are waiting for their watches to get location and listening to COACH explain the workout.

COACH:

C'mon ladies, Conference isn't until next week. A hard Tuesday workout is not the end of the world. Here's what you've got: Group 1, four 800s at threshold pace with 1 minute rest, then four 200s try to make each one of those faster. Group 2, same thing, except you have 5 800s. Hannah, Grace, you have six 800s, two 400s, and we'll see from there, but I'd like some 200s as well. Keep it consistent. It should be a hard effort.

GRACE:

Do you think I'll be okay to do the whole workout, Coach?

HANNAH:

You better be, because I am not doing this freakin thing alone, Grace.

GRACE:

Calm down, dude, I'm just asking. I'm not about to re-injure myself the week before Conference.

COACH:

You'll be fine. Stop snapping at each other and go warm up, please.

HANNAH:

Sorry Coach.

(HANNAH and GRACE warm up. JONESY enters in a rush.)

JONESY:

Hey Coach, what's the plan for today?

COACH:

Hey there! How was school today?

JONESY:

Not bad. If you could convince Ms. Applebaum that track is a totally valid thing to write all my essays about that would be great though. She's always like, "Miss Jones, is that really the best you've got? This is the fifth essay you've written about a track meet." And I'm always like, "Miss Applebaum, every track meet is different!"

COACH:

Well, maybe I'll try and get her down here when we host Conference next week.

JONESY:

You're the best! Now what's the workout today?

COACH:

I just told everybody, we're doing 800s at threshold pace. I'm going to put you with group 1, so you're only doing 4, but your threshold is gonna be a lot faster than most of that group, so you're gonna let them start, wait 5-10 seconds, and then catch them.

JONESY:

Sounds tough...I love it! Why can't I just run with the faster group though?

COACH:

I was gonna ask if you wanted to do that, but they already left for their warmup. Jonesy, I know you have some stuff going on at home, but practice starts at 3:15 for everybody.

JONESY:

I'm sorry Coach, but my grandma's in the hospital and--

COACH:

It's okay, you're not in trouble. I'm just asking you to let me know beforehand if something comes up. I need to know if you're going to be late.

JONESY:

Sure thing Coach.

(She does some plyos and dynamic stretches to prepare for the workout.

LIZZIE returns from her warmup.

She is about to say something to Coach, but changes her mind. She stretches and waits for the other girls to finish their warmup. GRACE and HANNAH return, and surreptitiously check GRACE's phone.)

COACH:

Grace! What did I say about bringing your phone to practice!

GRACE:

But--

COACH:

Nope. Whatever it is, it'll still be there after practice, and you can check it then.

GRACE:

Fine. Sorry.

(puts phone back in bag)

HANNAH:

We were looking at the new rankings going into conference--

COACH:

Rankings don't mean anything. You're going to run the same workout today no matter where you fall on the list. You both need to get out of your heads and just run your own race.

HANNAH:

I know.

COACH:

Thank you, Grace. Okay ladies, lets get ready to roll.

(COACH works on something on clipboard,
or maybe looks up the rankings on her
phone. Out of earshot)

GRACE:

Geez, worried about Conference much? She hasn't been this
uptight since—

(since GRACE got hurt.)

HANNAH:

Yeah.

(They stretch and roll out. It
is a routine they do every day
before they run. Purposeful but casual.)

GRACE:

So how was school today?

HANNAH:

It was okay. My A days aren't terrible.

GRACE:

Algebra any better today?

HANNAH:

Not really. And I think Jake is still copying my answers,
even though I barely got a B on the last test.

GRACE:

He's just trying not to fail it again. He was definitely
in my class, and then he failed, and they put him back in
Algebra 1, and now he's doing Algebra 2 again.

HANNAH:

If he wasn't such a jerk I'd almost feel sorry for him.

GRACE:

Ever since he quit cross to play soccer he thinks he's something special. He's going to some college I've never even heard of though.

HANNAH:

If he passes Algebra 2 this time! (*Beat.*) Did you have Coach's class today?

GRACE:

Yeah. I think that's part of why she was so annoyed with me earlier. I wasn't exactly paying attention in class. I mean, to be fair though, I have her right before lunch, and you know I have physics right after lunch, and I was trying to get the lab report done so I'd actually have time to eat

HANNAH:

I thought you said you were basically done with the lab report?

GRACE:

I said basically..

HANNAH:

GRACE:

HANNAH:

GRACE:

Don't say it! I know, okay, I don't need to hear the same lecture from you and mom.

HANNAH:

I didn't say anything!

GRACE:

Yeah but you did

HANNAH:

I'm not saying anything. Did you eat lunch today?

GRACE:

Actually yeah. Did you?

HANNAH:

Um, yeah?

GRACE:

Celery sticks don't count unless they have peanut butter with them.

HANNAH:

Yeah! I had, like, half a sandwich and apple slices! You don't have any room to talk about weird eating habits you know.

GRACE:

That's only on meet days though.

HANNAH:

Yeah but seriously who eats strawberries with-

COACH:

Alrighty, ladies, I hear a lot of chatter so you must be ready to go. Go ahead and do 10 minutes warmup and be ready for some 2's and 4's when you get back.

HANNAH:

Are the 4x8 girls running with us today?

COACH:

No, I separated it to three groups. The other girls are doing a very similar workout though.

GRACE:

So it's just us?

COACH:

Just you two! And I want to see some good teamwork today. It's a workout, not a race.

(They run. COACH watches them go for

a moment, then turns to LIZZIE, and JONESY, who has just returned from her warmup, and talks them through the workout plan.)

GRACE:

"Conference Distance Crew" L O L

HANNAH:

Yeah.

GRACE:

I'm pretty sure anyone else would like, actually cry if they had to run the 2 mile and the mile in the same week--

HANNAH:

Some of them complain about having to double the 4x8 and the 800--

GRACE:

--let alone the same day

HANNAH:

--but to be fair, I think all of them run a faster 800 than me, so I guess it works for them

GRACE:

Whatever. You don't know what tired really is unless you're a distance runner.

(Beat. A comfortable silence. Mentally preparing for the workout while their footsteps sync in a familiar rhythm.)

HANNAH:

Is the Norton's house for sale?

GRACE:

What?

HANNAH:

There's a sign in the yard.

GRACE:

That's weird. Cailey hasn't said anything about moving.

HANNAH:

Maybe her parents are moving once she graduates. Ugh that would suck. It's like, going off to college and never really getting to come home again because home is somewhere else unfamiliar.

GRACE:

That would be the worst! Like, not even being able to see your friends over breaks and stuff? I'm glad I'm the oldest because we're not going anywhere until you graduate.

HANNAH:

They better not go anywhere until after I graduate college.

GRACE:

Have you thought about where you want to go yet? I mean you still have tons of time but...

HANNAH:

Yeah no not really. I don't even really know what I want to do yet so like I don't even know what I'd be looking for, you know? Besides like, track, but Coach is always telling us "don't go to college just to run, it's higher education"

GRACE:

Yeah you still have plenty of time to figure that out though.

HANNAH:

It's gonna be so weird without you home next year.

GRACE:

HANNAH:

GRACE:

Yeah. Anyway, lets kick this workout's butt. It's a fast one.

(They begin the workout. COACH's focus shifts to GRACE and HANNAH, stopwatch

and clipboard in hand.)

JONESY:

I don't get why she won't put us in the same group. Literally, we're all running at the same level.

LIZZIE:

I swear, she plays favorites like crazy. And like, you'd think I'd be one of them, but no.

JONESY:

It is kinda weird that Coach like, ignores you almost.

LIZZIE:

It's whatever. I mean, I'm used to it. God, I can't wait to run for somebody that I don't live with.

JONESY:

Have you signed yet? I heard you were looking at Northern and then somewhere out of state?

LIZZIE:

No, neither one is offering me a lot of scholarship and Mom—uh, Coach says if I run well at State I can get them to change their minds before I commit. I'm kinda freaking out though because I feel like I'm running out of time and I'm just gonna end up stuck here running for funsises at the junior college until I can transfer, but like, I need to get out of this town, ya know?

JONESY:

I'm definitely ready to be out of high school, that's for sure. But I'm staying close for my Gramma. Unless. Oh nevermind.

LIZZIE:

Unless what?

JONESY:

Uhm, I've been talking to a coach and he might be coming to see me at Sectionals. It's not for sure yet, so like don't say anything, okay? Please?

LIZZIE:

Ohmy gosh yeah I won't say anything. But like, he's not from—

(JONESY nods.)

LIZZIE:

OhmyGOD that's so exciting!!! That is literally the best thing I have heard all week. I'm so proud of you oh my god! Let me know when you hear for sure about Sectionals!

JONESY:

Girl, you're more excited for me than I'm excited for me!

LIZZIE:

Yeah?

JONESY:

Yeah I'm like 75% terrified 25% excited

LIZZIE:

Ha I guess I would be too if it were me. Anyway, have fun with these 800s.

JONESY:

You too!

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 2

SETTING: The end of practice, the week before Conference. LIZZIE, JONESY, HANNAH, and GRACE are doing crunches, situps, pushups, etc. GRACE has her shoes off.

HANNAH:

So, how was the workout for you guys?

LIZZIE:

Uh, mine was alright.

JONESY:

Yeah mine was solid.

LIZZIE:

How was it for you?

HANNAH:

I felt really great today, actually. Threshold pace felt like, slow almost.

GRACE:

Yeah, my legs felt great, but my ankle was flaring up a little, so I just played it safe.

LIZZIE:

Make sure you get to the athletic trainer before they leave. Or at least grab ice.

JONESY:

We should probably all grab some ice anyway. You know a lot of college teams do like, team ice baths after workouts.

GRACE:

That's crazy! Ice baths are the worst.

HANNAH:

Yeah, but they're good for you.

LIZZIE:

Well, the training room is gonna be locked in like, fifteen minutes, so we better hurry up with abs if we want to get in there.

JONESY:

Hey Grace? Did you get your essay #3 back from Ms Applebaum?

GRACE:

No, but I think she posted grades online. I wish she'd just give us the papers back, 'cause like, she'll post it online with no explanation but I want feedback instead of just a number.

JONESY:

Does she even give feedback about the writing or just the topic though? Because I feel like all she ever writes on mine is basically "don't write about track so much" and like, what else am I supposed to write about? She doesn't need to know about like, what's going on with my family.

GRACE:

Oh god yeah. Like, she loved my first essay, because you know she picked the topic, but then on both the next ones I got worse grades and I'm like 99% sure its because she doesn't understand track, and that's the only thing that's like, personal enough, but also like something I want to talk about.

JONESY:

Like, it's not my fault she doesn't get it!

HANNAH:

Which English classes does she teach again?

JONESY:

Oh I keep forgetting you haven't had her yet! She does AP English, Creative Writing, and I think sometimes English 4?

HANNAH:

Yeah I'm in English 3 right now. I guess I'll have to deal with her next year probably.

LIZZIE:

She's not that bad.

GRACE:

She's a harsh grader.

HANNAH:

She probably just seems like that because you took Coach's class last year and she let you write about running for like every project.

GRACE:

I mean, what else am I supposed to write about? Between cross and getting hurt and everything, running was like, the defining thing in my life and Coach gets it!

(LIZZIE laughs and tries to hide it by coughing.)

GRACE:

What?

LIZZIE:

Nothing.

JONESY:

(JONESY looks down at her phone, and then bolts out.)

Sorry y'all gotta go. Good job today!

HANNAH:

What was that about?

LIZZIE:

Maybe her grandma called. She's in the hospital, you know.

HANNAH:

Oh no I didn't know. Is that why she's been late to practice so much?

LIZZIE:

Yeah, she lives with her grandma, so she's dealing with a lot right now.

HANNAH:

Oh my god. Do you know what's wrong?

LIZZIE:

No, she hasn't really said anything about it. I don't even know if she knows.

GRACE:

Dang that sucks. Well, I gotta go get ice before the training room closes. I'll wait for you by the cafeteria doors, Hannah.

(GRACE exits.)

HANNAH:

I'm almost done. (to LIZZIE) She's always in a hurry. Like, just chill for a minute.

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 3

SETTING: CONFERENCE MEET. Lizzie is warming up for her first race of the evening, the 3200.

LIZZIE:

1:20 2:40 4:00 5:20 1:20 2:40 4:00 5:20 One twenty two forty 4 minutes five twenty oh no wait that's later for the mile. That's for the mile! Cmon lizzie bee focus on the two mile!! Breathe. (*she takes a few controlled breaths*) Okay. Okay. Okay okayokayokay. One thirty three minutes four thirty six minutes seven thirty nine minutes ten thirty twelve! No big deal, just nice and consistent. Yeah.

COACH:

Hey there Lizzie bee! You ready?

LIZZIE:

I think so. No, yeah. I'm ready. It'll be good.

COACH:

Hey, hey. Lizzie, you're going to be fine. You're going to hit the times. Just compete.

LIZZIE:

I will.

(LIZZIE is finishing her warmups. The starter calls the 3200 to the line and lines up the runners. On your mark, and the gun. at the gun, LIZZIE takes off running and COACH cheers aggressively—it's almost like she's yelling at her more than cheering for her. While she runs, a wild debate rages at the team camp.)

GRACE:

Why the hell can't we run a 4 x 8? Seriously, if any team should have one out there, it's us. We're the reigning cross country champs for god's sake!

HANNAH:

If the 4 x 8 and the two mile weren't back to back...

GRACE:

That's bullshit. The only reason Coach isn't making Lizzie run the 4 x 8 is because she wants her kid out there proving that she's more than just a team player and she can actually hold her own as an individual athlete. Let's face it, Liz is good, but she's not that good. Her only chance of realistically winning anything at state is in the relay, and it's hurting the team to not run us in a 4x8.

HANNAH:

I mean, we're still running a 4x8. And they're doing pretty great. For freshmen, especially.

GRACE:

But that 4x8 is my only chance to double. There's no way she expects me to run the--

HANNAH:

But you're expecting Lizzie to do an even shorter turnover between the relay and the two mile?

GRACE:

It's different!! She's like, a long distance runner. The 800 is nothing, especially if she leads off. Then she has the whole rest of the relay and the 4x1 to recover. The 800 and the mile only have the 200 between them--

HANNAH:

Aren't the 300 hurdles in there too?

GRACE:

I don't know maybe but like, even if they are, they're both super short races. And like, Lizzie's not going to win the

two mile, but if we put her on the relay instead, we could win the relay. It's just smarter for the team!

JONESY:

Are you complaining about the 4x8 again?

HANNAH:

She—

GRACE:

I'm not complaining, it's a better idea than what we're doing now. You know it. You could probably win the 800 and the 4x8 and be the undisputed fastest 800 runner in the state.

JONESY:

I'm trying to focus on the mile a little more this year. I've heard that college coaches are wary of 800 specific runners.

GRACE:

Really? The 800's like, your thing though. And I think it's one of the most difficult races to run so like why would coaches not want 800 runners?

JONESY:

Too specialized and not strong enough to be good cross runners. If I can be a good miler too it'll prove that I'm a strong runner.

HANNAH:

You were 4th at the state cross country meet I think that proves you're totally a strong cross country runner.

JONESY:

I don't know, I'm just saying that's what I've heard. Now, you wanna quit complaining about your teammate and just support her? I don't see you out there doubling the two mile and the mile.

(They watch the race for a little while, cheering encouragingly when she comes around.)

GRACE:

I still don't see how coach can justify putting her in the two mile and mile when we would totally destroy any other 4x8 if she'd run all of us together.

JONESY:

We get it, you want to win. Look, we all do, but this is Conference and it's her chance to prove to Coach that she can win something worthwhile, okay? Can you imagine all the pressure she's under all the time, with her mom being the coach? Just think about like, if your dad coached you guys.

HANNAH:

Don't even suggest that. I literally have nightmares about it.

GRACE:

If he wasn't related to me, he'd be a great coach, probably.

JONESY:

But he is, and that's probably how Lizzie feels about it, so maybe don't blame her for it.

GRACE:

But she's the one who keeps going on about how she's gonna do the mile and the two mile, has been since cross got over, practically.

HANNAH:

You're just jealous because she has a chance to be a defending champion in something in track this year and you blew it running yourself into the ground last year.

GRACE:

Shut up, Hannah

(JONESY anticipates and distances herself.)

HANNAH:

The warning signs were all there and you ignored them so you could have your little martyr moment at Conference and then cry about it the whole time I was at State. I made finals, I medaled, as a freshman, but the article in the paper was more about you than me! And even in the bullpen, everybody asked me about my sister, and how she's doing, and dad came down harder on me, and started making those stupid comments about—

GRACE:

SHUT UP! I'm the one who broke my leg will you stop making this about you?? I had to STOP RUNNING for LITERALLY MONTHS and you're trying to complain to me about it?!

HANNAH:

You get more attention for not running than I get for running well. It's not fair!

(Lizzie finishes the race, in first, definitively. Give her a minute to catch her breath, maybe grab her water bottle, take off her spikes and put her regular shoes on, throw a tshirt over her jersey.)

COACH:

Hey hey hey that was good!! Smart race. We'll talk about it a little more once you get that cooldown in, okay? Remember you don't have as long as you normally would until the mile. Roll out as well! There's a foam roller up at the team camp.

LIZZIE:

Thanks. Yeah, will you be at the camp or down here? You know what I'll just come find you. Yeah.

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 4SETTING:

After the mile: COACH is congratulating JONESY, while LIZZIE, GRACE, and HANNAH are hunched over, breathing heavily and congratulating each other.

JONESY:

Thanks coach! Now, can I go call my-

COACH:

It'll only take a minute. Now, I could have sworn I had this pulled up on my phone earlier today.

JONESY:

I don't care about the conference record. I won, that's good enough for me.

COACH:

Here it is, here it is! Now, the Conference record was set—you ready for this—it was set in 1987, and it was a 5:18.77. And you just crushed it, with a 5:10! Jones, that is fantastic! I'm so proud of you!

JONESY:

Was it really a 5:10?? I thought I got in at 5:09?

COACH:

Either way, that's a big accomplishment. I'll let you know as soon as results go up, okay? Now go get that cool down in!

JONESY:

Shouldn't I wait for everybody?

COACH:

Go change your shoes, they'll catch up.

(She goes to her bag and
grabs her water bottle and
her phone. Calls her Grandma.)

JONESY:

Hi! Hi Gramma guess what? Huh, yeah the big meet was today. No, not that one, the other one. Conference. Yeah. Yeah no, mom was at work, and dad—I think he's here somewhere, but I'm not sure. No I wanted to talk to you—how are you? No, Gramma it's fine, I'll have other meets you can come to. What? I thought that you were coming home on Monday? Oh. Well. I'll be fine don't worry about me. Yeah, how late are the hospital's visiting hours again? I'll try to make it before then! Okay love you too, Gramma! Bye.

(She changes her shoes while
COACH talks to GRACE and HANNAH.
LIZZIE is standing there, but it
is clear she is not being addressed.)

COACH:

Great teamwork out there ladies! Hannah, that's a PR for you, right?

HANNAH:

Yeah! By like 8 seconds!

COACH:

There you go! How's you feel?

HANNAH:

It was great! I mean it hurt, but like, in the good, I'm working hard kind of way.

COACH:

Great! I think this puts you in a great place for Sectionals next week, Hannah. Now, go change your shoes and get a cool down in. Grace? How did that feel? That's your fastest mile in a while.

GRACE:

It was good, but I think I could've gone faster. I should have won, but she just flew right by me like it was nothing.

COACH:

Jonesy is an 800 runner. She has a strong finish. You still ran a good race, you just know that you need to start your kick a little sooner now, right?

GRACE:

Yeah, I-

COACH:

Excellent. Now get that cooldown in and get ready for the 800. Just shake it off and focus on the next race.

LIZZIE:

Mom?

COACH:

What was that, Lizzie?

LIZZIE:

It wasn't that bad! It was the same time I ran last week and I had a great two mile today, I mean I won it.

COACH:

Stop making excuses. You let *five* runners finish in front of you. Now, your teammates are great athletes, and if you were taking this seriously you would be next to them, not 10 steps behind them. You practice with them every day. I don't understand why you can't be right there with them.

LIZZIE:

They were all on fresh legs! I've already run twice as much as they have and I'm tired! Mom, I tried! And I still ran well!

COACH:

Are you really happy with what you ran today?

LIZZIE:

Well

COACH:

Are you really satisfied with running a "good enough" race? That mentality is not going to get you to your goals, Lizzie.

LIZZIE:

I know!! I know! I'm just saying I was—

COACH:

Yeah. You were tired. Okay. And we just give up when we're tired. This is Conference, Lizzie. This is crunch time, and if you can't commit now, I don't know that you're going to. Go cool down. I might need you in the 4 x 4 later.

LIZZIE:

What?

COACH:

You heard me. Go cool down.

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 5SETTING:

Practice on Thursday before Sectionals. GRACE, HANNAH, and JONESY are at the track.

HANNAH:

It's definitely not smart I don't know what Coach is thinking.

GRACE:

Seriously. We only had to go three and Lizzie is doing like, at least twice that. I don't even know how long that loop is.

JONESY:

Like, it's the day before Sectionals. What's this gonna do for her? Nothing. It's not fair. Not fair at all.

HANNAH:

Lizzie's been struggling all year and I bet it's cause she's overtrained.

GRACE:

Dad says we should all be training more like Lizzie. He thinks Coach is shortchanging us.

HANNAH:

Hah. Mr. I-was-running-100-mile-weeks-in-high-school thinks everyone should train exactly like he did because if it works for one person it works for everyone, right? UGH.

GRACE:

Shit is that him talking to Coach?

HANNAH:

What's he doing here? We drove to school today we don't need a ride home

JONESY:

Isn't there the parents meeting about volunteering at Sectionals tonight?

GRACE:

Yeah but—

HANNAH:

Um maybe that's it.

JONESY:

Oh hey, Lizzie's almost back! LIZZIE!

(LIZZIE joins them. She is tired.)

LIZZIE:

Hey

HANNAH:

How was your run?

LIZZIE:

Long.

JONESY:

Did you do the Lincoln Loop?

LIZZIE:

Yeah. Hey, is that your dad?

GRACE:

Yeah.

HANNAH:

Unfortunately.

LIZZIE:

Is he here for the meeting?

GRACE:

I guess so. I don't know why though. The only time he cares about us running is when there's something in it for him.

HANNAH:

Maybe he thinks he can convince Coach to make us run the Lincoln Loop before Sectionals. Which sucks, Lizzie. It sucks you had to do that.

LIZZIE:

It could be worse.

JONESY:

Well, anyway, y'all want to do a pasta night tonight? Gramma said I should invite somebody over, so I thought we could do a pasta night like during cross.

LIZZIE:

Oh, is your Gramma home?

JONESY:

Actually, no, which is probably why she wanted me to have people over. She feels really bad that I'm at home by myself most of the time.

LIZZIE:

Oh, I'm sorry. Is she doing better?

JONESY:

The doctor says she might be able to come home next week. I hope she can watch me run at State...

(Pause.)

HANNAH:

So, should I tell Mom we're going to Jonesy's for dinner?

GRACE:

Uh, sure! I mean yeah!

HANNAH:

Okay I'll text her. Is coach still over there?

GRACE:

Nah they went inside for the meeting I guess.

LIZZIE:

So what time should we come over? Or should we just all go together after practice?

JONESY:

I still have to pick up garlic bread so how about 6:30?

LIZZIE:

Oh is there anything I can bring?

JONESY:

If you want to bring pasta sauce I think I'm almost out actually, but it's no big deal-

LIZZIE:

No I can bring some that's no problem!

HANNAH:

Mom says she's going to send some dessert with us.

GRACE:

What? What's she making?

HANNAH:

I don't know she didn't say.

GRACE:

Well, tell her to make something out of that recipe book I got the other day because it has like, healthy desserts and stuff.

HANNAH:

Okay whatever, as long as it's not whatever you made the other day that was pretending to be dessert and definitely wasn't.

GRACE:

Um, those were brownie bars, and they weren't that bad.

HANNAH:

They definitely were that bad.

JONESY:

It's okay guys, I'm sure anything your mom bakes is going to be delicious!

LIZZIE:

Yeah remember when your mom would bring cinnamon rolls for us for after morning runs? Those were so good!

GRACE:

Oh yeah! I miss when I could eat whatever and not worry about gaining weight.

HANNAH:

Oh my god shut up!

LIZZIE:

We're all doing enough mileage and everything I'm pretty sure we can all eat whatever we want.

GRACE:

I know I know I'm just saying like I think about it more now than I used to you know?

HANNAH:

It's like the only thing you ever talk about. Calories this, abs that, drink more water, and you keep baking food and then never eating any of it!

GRACE:

It is not! And I'm just trying to be smart and eat healthy! Like, you've seen what they serve in the cafeteria it's not like we have a lot of great options unless we make them ourselves.

LIZZIE:

Yeah. Mom's always on my case. Sometimes she won't put money on my lunch account because she's convinced the school lunches are too unhealthy.

JONESY:

I mean she might not be wrong about that but like, eating a kind of unhealthy lunch is better than no lunch.

GRACE:

Is it though? I mean, as long as you eat breakfast.

HANNAH:

Oh, like you ever eat breakfast!

GRACE:

I'm not saying me, I'm saying-

JONESY:

That's messed up that she won't pay for your lunches.

LIZZIE:

I mean, she'll let me grab an apple and peanut butter or like, one of those protein shakes. It's not like there's a lock on the refrigerator.

GRACE:

I can't even imagine living with Coach. Like, my dad is basically trying to coach me but I don't think I could do it if he was actually my coach.

LIZZIE:

Every day is one day closer to graduation!

GRACE:

Are you going to keep running?

LIZZIE:

I haven't signed anywhere but yeah. Coach is still hoping that we can get them to offer me more scholarship money if we keep waiting but like, I'm getting scared they're gonna think I'm not interested.

GRACE:

You should just do what you want to do! It's your college career, not hers. She already ran and won all those awards or whatever. If she's trying to make you into a little mini version of her she's just holding you back from being you, you know?

LIZZIE:

Exactly! God, why are parents like that?

HANNAH:

Our dad and your mom are like, the same person. Can you imagine if they had kids together?

GRACE:

Oh God. We'd all be dead by now.

LIZZIE:

We would have been running 5ks when we were in diapers.

GRACE:

And there would literally be locks on the cabinets and the fridge, not that it would matter because the only dessert in the house would be that stupid dark chocolate.

HANNAH:

Instead of a living room, we'd have like, a gym in our house. And like, we'd all get up and run together as a family. Ewww.

LIZZIE:

Hah, your dad does the dark chocolate thing too? My mom read that article about it and has stopped buying anything except the super dark chocolate. Like, even for when I made chocolate chip cookies for your birthday, Jonesy.

JONESY:

Those were good though! Maybe we can make cookies tonight after pasta!

HANNAH:

That sounds fun! Oh hey though we should probably get going so we can shower and stuff before dinner. You said we can come over at like 6:30?

JONESY:

Yeah. I'll look and see if I have stuff for cookies and I'll text you guys if we need anything. See you soon ladies!

(JONESY exits.)

GRACE:

Hey Lizzie?

LIZZIE:

Hey what?

GRACE:

Do you know where Jonesy's running next year? I know she's been getting some offers but like, do you know where from?

LIZZIE:

Um. She's been keeping that pretty quiet, and I'm sure she has a good reason to. I mean, with everything she's got going on with her family and stuff she probably has a lot of pressure on her.

GRACE:

Yeah. Yeah. I get that. I just hope that she's not giving anything up because she feels like she should stay close to home because like, she has so much potential and she could go almost anywhere she wanted to, honestly.

LIZZIE:

She definitely could go anywhere, and I think she'd be fine anywhere she decides to go. God, I wish I had my life that together. I'm not even fine here!

GRACE:

Same.

HANNAH:

Same.

GRACE:

Oh shut it, you have so much time to figure all this out! We have like, weeks.

LIZZIE:

Yeah you'll be fine. I'll see you later, now!

(LIZZIE exits.)

HANNAH:

Have you decided where you're going yet? I know you really want to go to Minnesota but their coach was a little weird.

GRACE:

Yeah. He just would not stop asking me questions about the injury and recovery and food intake and stuff and it was just like?? Really personal stuff and he was just asking away.

HANNAH:

Well, eating disorders are a big deal, you know, and I know you do a good job hiding it, but if you don't start eating normally again once track season's over, it's going to hurt you.

GRACE:

First of all, just because I'm counting calories does not mean I'm anorexic or something. I'm just trying to lose the weight I put on when I was injured, and besides, even Runner's World had an article about getting to your race weight. I am totally in a healthy range. And seriously, let's be real. If I even mention ice cream again, Dad is going to go off on some big long spiel about how I need to be more careful about what I put in my body and how the pros would never eat the way I do and damn it! I'm running the fastest I ever have! I'm not going to give that up because of somebody else's opinion on how skinny I am! I'm doing this for myself!

HANNAH:

Can't I just be worried about you without it turning into a huge drama? I'm not saying go out and gain a bunch of weight I'm just saying maybe maintain it instead of trying to be down another 3 pounds every week! Like, you're already tiny!

GRACE:

I am not!

HANNAH:

Yes, you are, and let's just end this here because I want to go home and shower before we go to Jonesy's. And you are going to eat dinner tonight.

GRACE:

Fine. Whatever. And yeah, I'm not that rude, of course
I'll eat whatever Jonesy makes for us. God.

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 6SETTING:

Sectionals. GRACE and JONESY cross the finish line of the 1600 at nearly the same time, followed closely by LIZZIE and HANNAH. COACH stands at the line with stopwatch and clipboard, frantically scribbling times.

COACH:

Yes! Now those are the girls that won the cross country title! I am so proud of you! That was a great race for everyone!

HANNAH:

Thank you.

JONESY:

What was our time, Coach?

GRACE:

Did we get it?

COACH:

Well, you are all definitely going to State!

GRACE:

Yeah but did we get the record?

(JONESY spots someone offstage, waves and gestures and then goes to them.)

JONESY:

I'll be right back! Don't cool down without me!

HANNAH:

Is that the coach that's recruiting her?

LIZZIE (*reverently*):

Yeah. I hope it goes well for her.

GRACE:

Wait what school is it? Did you know?

HANNAH:

I think that's a Colorado jacket!

GRACE:

Holy shit.

LIZZIE:

Yeah. I hope they sign her.

HANNAH:

That's amazing.

COACH:

Alright ladies! That was a fantastic race, but you still need to cool down! Jonesy,--Jonesy?

LIZZIE:

She's talking to a college coach.

COACH:

Make sure she gets a cool down and is ready for the 800. And make sure you're there to cheer for her.

LIZZIE:

Why wouldn't I be?

GRACE:

So who won? I mean I know it doesn't really matter but if it's a school record it does, so...?

HANNAH:

It looked like Jonesy crossed first, but I was behind you guys so I don't know.

GRACE:

God.

COACH:

Don't worry about it. Get out of those spikes and get cooled down and get ready for the 800. You too, Hannah.

HANNAH:

I thought you were going to scratch me out of it because I ran the 4 x 8 earlier?

COACH:

Well, how do you feel?

HANNAH:

Tired. I don't know if I can do another fast 800, Coach.

COACH:

I'm going to leave you in it for now, but come find me after you cool down and then we'll see how you're feeling, okay?

HANNAH:

Okay.

(COACH leaves and eventually comes back with results that get taped up. HANNAH, GRACE, and LIZZIE are changing out of their spikes.)

GRACE:

Did anybody see the clock?

HANNAH:

You know I never look.

GRACE:

I don't get how you can just not look. Like, don't you want to know?

HANNAH:

I mean, yeah, I want to know, but not until I'm done. It's not all about the times, it's about competing with whoever's out there next to you.

GRACE:

I have to know. Like, if I could have every 200, I would.

HANNAH:

Yeah, we all know you're obsessed with the numbers.

GRACE:

I am not! I just like knowing where I'm at.

LIZZIE:

I think it's more important for like, the two mile and cross country though. The mile just goes by so fast.

GRACE:

No, the 800 goes by fast. It's so funny when sprinters try to say it's long and there's like a pace and stuff because it's honestly just like, a sprint.

LIZZIE:

Ha, no thanks. I'll stick to the two mile. Okay I gotta get up now or it's not going to happen. I'll do like, a lap around the school and then catch you guys on my way around, okay?

HANNAH:

Sounds good. And hey, great job today!

LIZZIE:

Thanks, you too!

(LIZZIE exits.)

GRACE:

Hey are those the mile results?

HANNAH:

I don't know.

GRACE:

SHIT!

HANNAH:

What?

GRACE:

We all broke the old school record! But Jonesy won by—
ready for this? 3 tenths of a second.

HANNAH:

Wait what was my time??

GRACE:

5:07! Dude I am totally going to break 5 at State. We ran 5:04! Hey, do you think it would be weird for me to try to go talk to the Colorado coach? I mean, I know it's late, and they're here to talk to Jonesy, but like, we just ran basically the same time.

HANNAH:

Did you even apply there?

GRACE:

Well, no, but like, maybe I could transfer there after a semester or something. It's Colorado! Like, them and Oregon are the like distance runner's dream. Nike! Altitude training!

HANNAH:

I wouldn't. Like, if they come talk to you then that's cool, but like, I thought you were pretty much set on Minnesota?

GRACE:

I mean, I love Minnesota, but their coach was a little weird, remember?

HANNAH:

Honestly, he was probably just worried about how freakin skinny you are.

GRACE:

Can you not leave that alone for like, one second? I'm fine.

HANNAH:

Maybe you've convinced yourself you are, but I bet you would have won today if you would have eaten something.

GRACE:

I'm still faster than you. And that was a PR. It's not my fault I'm faster than you.

HANNAH:

That's not what I'm mad about!

GRACE:

Yes, it is. When I was hurt, you were the fast one and you were Dad's favorite and you got the newspaper articles, and now I'm the fast one again and you're just jealous!

HANNAH:

I don't do this for the attention like you! I do this because I actually love what I'm doing.

GRACE:

I do this for attention!? You think I would put myself through all this if I didn't love it? I have sacrificed like everything else so I can be the best runner I can be. I'm not—I don't need—I

HANNAH:

Doing something to be the best and doing something because you love it are two totally, completely different things! I would still run if I could only run like, a 7 minute mile, and you look down on anybody slower than you.

GRACE:

Somebody's gotta be the best though, little miss "competition not time"

HANNAH:

But—

GRACE:

Nope. You don't get to be competitive and say you only do it for fun. That's not how it works!

HANNAH:

Whatever! Fine! Just leave me alone!

(HANNAH storms off. JONESY enters cautiously after seeing HANNAH rush by.)

JONESY:

Everything okay?

GRACE:

I don't know. She's all mad at me.

JONESY:

I'm sorry. I mean, you ran a great race though, so at least you can celebrate that, right?

GRACE:

Yeah, I guess.

JONESY:

Well. I guess we should cool down. Have you seen Lizzie?

GRACE:

Uhm I think she went to cooldown already. Coach seemed kinda mad at her almost.

JONESY:

She's way too hard on her.

GRACE:

I think it would be fine if she was just her coach or just her mom but she like, doesn't separate them. She's like, always in Coach mode.

JONESY:

Yeah! It's so messed up.

GRACE:

I mean, my dad is always in coach mode but like, he's not actually my coach so...

JONESY:

He's really strict though, isn't he? Is that why you've been being so careful about what you eat lately?

GRACE:

What? I mean yeah he's strict but like—

JONESY:

Sorry, I didn't mean—I just—

GRACE:

No, it's fine. Let's just go find Lizzie and cool down.

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 7

SETTING: State Meet. Prelims day. The Ipsig sisters and COACH are approaching the start/finish area. The girls are wearing their team warmups.

HANNAH:

Grace, that's the fourth time you've checked your bag. I'm pretty sure you have everything.

GRACE:

I'm just making sure I didn't drop my roller.

HANNAH:

It's still in your bag.

GRACE:

And—

HANNAH:

and your bag is still zipped all the way up.

GRACE:

Thanks.

COACH:

How'd you girls sleep last night? You ready to run fast today?

(HANNAH and GRACE murmur a noncommittal yes.)

COACH:

That didn't sound awfully enthusiastic. You got breakfast, right? I have snacks in my bag if you need anything.

GRACE:

I'm good.

HANNAH:

Maybe after the race. I don't think I could eat anything this morning.

COACH:

You still have plenty of time before you run. You need to eat something.

HANNAH:

I know, I know. I usually do but—

(LIZZIE enters.)

LIZZIE:

So, if I PR I can do it?

COACH:

Don't worry about times so much. You're here to compete.

LIZZIE:

Yeah, yeah, but I need to know how many people I need to beat to medal out of the slow heat.

COACH:

Just be in first, and then you don't have to worry about trying to count.

LIZZIE:

I mean, yeah, that's the goal but I'd still like to know.

COACH:

Lizzie! Don't overthink it. Besides, you need to worry about the mile today before you get worked up about the two mile.

(JONESY enters, putting her phone away.)

COACH:

Gramma doing alright? Did your family make it down today?

JONESY:

They're on their way now actually. And yeah, she's doing a lot better now, thanks.

COACH:

Glad to hear it! Alright girls. I want you to stay indoors and out of the sun until you hear first call, which

should be around 11:15, and then you go warm up and check in. I've got to go check on the field event girls, but I know you'll be fine. You're all going to be great. I know we talked a lot on the way here, but I really want you to work as a team and remember what you've been able to accomplish this year when you trust yourself and your teammates. Remember, you run this show.

HANNAH:

Wait, so we're just on our own for the rest of the day?

COACH:

You can come find me if you need me, but I have a whole team here, not just you guys. And you know what you need to do. Those poor freshmen in the 4 x 8 are totally overwhelmed right now.

LIZZIE:

You'll be fine. We've got it covered, Han.

JONESY:

And you were here last year, right?

HANNAH:

It's just—it's different.

JONESY:

Different because this year we're all going to be next to each other on the top of the podium!

COACH:

See, you're going to be fine. Don't think about it, just go out and run like you have been all year!

(COACH exits.)

JONESY:

Seriously, we're going to be fine.

GRACE:

Easy for you to say.

JONESY:

Excuse me?

HANNAH:

Grace!

GRACE:

Well, I mean, you're going to be fine. You're already signed to your dream school.

HANNAH:

If you would just talk to the coach you would be too! Just talk!

LIZZIE:

Hey! Hey! I know we're all nervous and stuff, but taking it out on each other isn't going to solve anything!

GRACE:

Oh yeah, whatever, Coach.

LIZZIE:

Oh come on.

GRACE:

What? You sound just like her.

HANNAH:

Being reasonable while you freak out does not automatically make her sound like Coach.

GRACE:

I am not freaking out. You're the one who raised your voice.

JONESY:

Okay, signing to Colorado does not guarantee that I'm going to be fine. At all. But right now, at the State meet, is not the time and place to be worrying about that! Like, just appreciate it! This is the last time all of us are going to get to run together as teammates. By the end of this weekend we're going to be graduated, except Hannah, and so could we please just get over ourselves and end this on a good note? Please? Guys, this is a really big deal

to me, my family came and everything, and I just want it to be good. Please.

LIZZIE:

Oh my god I forgot that graduation is Sunday. Yeah, guys, can we just make these last few days good?

GRACE:

Whatever you say, Coach!

HANNAH:

Oh my god Grace.

GRACE:

No, it's fine. I mean I'm fine.

HANNAH:

Clearly, you're not.

LIZZIE:

Just drop it, okay?

JONESY:

You two figure out whatever family drama you need to, I'm going to go make sure my Gramma knows where the wheelchair ramp to the bleachers is. I don't need to deal with this today.

(JONESY exits.)

HANNAH:

Great going, Grace.

GRACE:

Why're you looking at me?

HANNAH:

Running is like the one and only thing going right for her right now and you have to go and turn that into something negative. Just because you're miserable doesn't mean you get to make everyone around you miserable.

GRACE:

I'm not trying to make everyone miserable! What, am I not allowed to have a bad day?

HANNAH:

Not today, no. Come on, I know this is important to you, too.

GRACE:

Yeah, it is, and I'm really nervous so can you just leave me alone?

HANNAH:

I'm trying to help!

GRACE:

And you can do that by not snapping at me, okay?

HANNAH:

You know what, fine.

LIZZIE:

Okay, great! Awesome. Let's find somewhere to set our stuff!

(JONESY enters.)

JONESY:

There's a really nice spot in the shade over there. I know Coach said inside, but it's so crowded in there already that I don't know if that's a good idea.

LIZZIE:

Let's look inside and if we can't find a spot we can go over there.

GRACE:

(the others probably don't hear)

Alright, Coach.

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 8SETTING:

Before finals for the 1600. All of them advanced. LIZZIE has already run the 3200 and is tired and trying not to show it. GRACE's body has not recovered from prelims and she is exhausted but won't admit it. HANNAH and JONESY are comparatively energetic and alert. COACH is almost more nervous than the runners are. She paces back and forth with her clipboard, stopwatch, and two water bottles.

COACH:

How are we feeling ladies?

(All respond: good, fine, fast, etc.)

COACH:

Good, good. Lizzie, how are you feeling?

LIZZIE:

Uh, I think I'm fine. If I can do what I did this morning this mile'll be good.

HANNAH:

You're gonna run great! That surge with 3 laps to go was perfect, you always run so smart!

LIZZIE:

Thanks! I was just trying to get around that group in front of me.

COACH:

Yes! That's exactly what you need to do. Today is just about competing. The times aren't as important as place today. A lot of these girls ran the two mile, everybody ran prelims, everybody's tired, but you girls. You're my cross country champs, you've got the endurance to go out

there and blow them all away. Remember, work together, run smart, run fast!

GRACE:

Hey Coach? Do you have Gatorade or anything to drink? I think I'm a little dehydrated.

COACH:

Here you go! Does anyone else want some? I have one more here and I have more on the bus.

(GRACE takes it and opens it, but
if she drinks any, it's only a tiny sip)

JONESY:

Can I have one for before the 800?

COACH:

Of course! You'll have time in between. But don't worry about that, alright? Just focus on the race happening now. One thing at a time.

JONESY:

One thing at a time.

HANNAH:

Do you think that Kate Stanley is going to be able to come back from that two mile?

LIZZIE:

She was totally limping off the track so I don't know.

HANNAH:

That's crazy though like what a finish. I can't believe that Danielle didn't make finals in the mile, like, with a two mile like that, how did she not?

GRACE:

She probably ran what she thought was "fast enough" to make it and she took it too easy.

LIZZIE:

I mean, if you can call that easy. I barely finished ahead of her.

GRACE:

You know what I mean.

JONESY:

Hey, that was prelims though. This is the important one.

COACH:

You took the words right out of my mouth. Don't overthink it, girls, just go out there and give it your best. You know what to do.

LIZZIE:

Mom?

COACH:

What, Lizzie-bee?

LIZZIE:

I'm nervous.

COACH:

You're going to be fine, kiddo. Just give it your best, and that's all we can ask for, right? Hey. Come here. You're going to be just fine.

(COACH gives her daughter a hug.
She goes to the start/finish line
with a big smile and a positive
gesture for the other girls.)

JONESY:

This is it ladies! Good luck!

GRACE:

Thanks girl, you too.

HANNAH:

Good luck!

LIZZIE:

No matter what, I'm really proud of all of you. But let's go kick some ass, okay?

(They laugh as they line up for the last run-out before the race. GRACE lags behind. HANNAH slows down and goes to her.)

HANNAH:

Are you okay?

GRACE:

Yeah. I'm tired from yesterday, but everybody is, so it'll be fine. Right?

HANNAH:

Yeah.

(They line up in order on the line. HANNAH glances at GRACE, but chooses to compete for herself. JONESY is laser-focused on the race. LIZZIE has her doubts but is fighting through it. GRACE is fighting with her body to stay upright and moving.)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 9SETTING:

The finish line. COACH is cheering and celebrating, clipboard and stopwatch forgotten, hugging HANNAH and JONESY, who crossed the line together and immediately celebrate and congratulate each other, and when LIZZIE crosses the line, she joins them. It takes a moment for them to realize that GRACE is still running.

HANNAH:

Oh my God!! We did it!!

JONESY:

Hannah!! That was freaking amazing!

COACH:

I am so proud of you! I could not have asked for a better race for you!

HANNAH:

Lizzie!! Great race babe!

JONESY:

Good job! Hey, you're done! You did it.

(LIZZIE sprawls on the ground.)

LIZZIE:

Oh God I'm so tired.

COACH:

I'm proud of you, kiddo. C'mon, get up, it'll hurt worse if you stay down there.

JONESY:

Guys I'm literally so excited I'm so proud of us!

HANNAH:

Wait, where's Grace?

(They all look. GRACE, visibly upset, struggles to the finish and collapses over the line. HANNAH and COACH rush to her and try to help her, but GRACE pushes HANNAH away and refuses to take COACH's hand. HANNAH hovers uncertainly for a bit, and then goes back to help LIZZIE up, and LIZZIE, JONESY, and HANNAH walk off together.)

COACH consoles GRACE, who eventually gets up and accepts a hug, but then walks away alone.)

(END OF PLAY)