

The Running Dream

Wendelin Van Draanen

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There is no doubt Jessica Carlisle's all-time favorite thing to do is run. A sixteen-year-old in high school, running seems to be Jessica's whole life. She is always working hard, striving to beat her opponents, and pushing to set a personal record and be the best runner she can possibly be. However, one day, when her school bus gets into a terrifying accident, Jessica's dreams suddenly seem to be too far out of reach. One of her teammates is killed and Jessica ends up with one leg; she is devastated and loses all hope. Jessica just wants to run, but it seems impossible now that she only has one leg. Although her doctor is optimistic about Jessica being able to make a full recovery, Jessica's mental health proves to be concerning. Depressed and unmotivated, she has a hard time getting used to her new disability and even starts to rely on her painkillers too much. When it is time to go back to school, Jessica's best friend, Fiona tries to help make her transition as smooth and comfortable as possible. Fiona supports Jessica throughout her whole journey and even helps come up with the idea to hold a fundraiser to buy her a prosthetic leg. During school, Jessica feels uncomfortable and out of place despite Fiona's efforts to make it more enjoyable. She quickly becomes friends with Rosa, a girl in her math class with cerebral palsy who teaches Jessica math and ultimately the importance of judging one based on their personality, not their looks. With the help of her friends, Jessica starts to slowly get out of her depression, and she becomes optimistic about the fundraiser and her possibly new prosthetic that will allow her to run again. Thanks to an anonymous donor who fulfills the goal of raising \$20000, Jessica is so thankful to receive the prosthetic that will allow her to run again. Jessica's only goal after receiving this prosthetic is to find a way for Rosa to get the feeling of passing the finish line with her. Jessica is more motivated and determined than she's ever been, and when she and Rosa finally cross the finish line together, Jessica realizes that her dreams, in fact, can come true.

This book was definitely one of those books where you just didn't want to put it down. The story was captivating and got very emotional and vulnerable at times. I liked this book because it was written in the sense that readers could relate to what Jessica was feeling. The book was so descriptive and easy to follow along, which made for a pleasant experience. There were a lot of ups and downs in this book and when I was reading it, I really got to understand Jessica's perspective and how she was feeling.

There were no parts of this book that I disliked. Apart from being slightly long, I enjoyed reading this story. I feel that this book would be the most appropriate for readers in the age range of 12 or older. It is a pretty easy read and there aren't many parts of the book that are too difficult to read or understand. This book would be good to give as a gift and I think that it should appeal to a wide age range of readers.

Recommended Titles:

The Crossover by Kwame Alexander

After the Shot Drops by Randy Ribay

Gym Candy by Carl Deuker