

The Running Dream Study Guide

The Running Dream by Wendelin Van Draanen

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Plot Summary

In "The Running Game" by Wendelin Van Draanen, Jessica is hospitalized after an accident. A vehicle crashed into her bus after a track meet and she is now missing one of her legs below the knee. She ran a 400 m race in 55 seconds flat during her last meet, but now it takes her five minutes to move 20 feet.

She heals quickly and her doctor is pleased with her progress, but her mental state isn't doing so well. She slips into depression. She is frustrated because she knows that she is supposed to appreciate all that her family and friends are doing to help her adapt to her situation, but she feels as if she is a stranger in her own house.

Learning to live without her leg isn't the only battle that Jessica faces. She also has to ward off medication dependency. Her family tries to help her with this, but Jessica feels very abandoned and angry. Deep down, she knows her family is right.

Her best friend, Fiona, tries to pull her out of her depression by taking her out to lunch. As she showers, Jessica begins to see some benefits in her situation. She is happy she didn't lose an arm. Going back to school is difficult. The other students don't really know how to respond to her. They stare too much or pretend she doesn't exist. The entire track team has a party for her at lunch and it makes Jessica feel as if she fits in after all.

Her math teacher makes her sit next to Rosa, a girl with cerebral palsy. At first Jessica is hesitant to do this since she doesn't want to be linked with the handicapped, but she realizes this is wrong. When she gets to know Rosa through passed notes, she discovers that she likes the girl.

Whenever Jessica starts feeling better about her situation, something knocks her back down. She fits in all right at school, but she finds out that the insurance companies won't pay for her bills so her parents have to fight in court. Her father is putting in long hours at work to pay the bills.

Jessica gets fitted for a prosthesis and walks pretty well with it. Fiona and her coach tell her about a special running leg. Her team has decided to fundraise to get her one. She can't run, but she can still be part of this team, which is like a family. Jessica continues healing and the team works on raising money.

She gets her running leg and it feels like her life has been handed back to her. By this point, Jessica is good friends with Rosa, and she wants to share give her something special. She decides to train so she can race in the River Run - a ten-mile run. She will push Rosa in a wheelchair so Rosa can experience what it's like to cross a finish line.

The run is brutal but Jessica does it. As she crosses the line, she realizes that she can do anything. Her race is just beginning.



Part 1 - Finish Line

Part 1 - Finish Line Summary

In "The Running Game" by Wendelin Van Draanen, Jessica is hospitalized after an accident. A vehicle crashed into her bus after a track meet, and she is now missing one of her legs, below the knee.

Jessica feels as if her life is over. Her right leg is missing below her knee. The doctor comes in to check on her and he seems pleased with how her leg is healing. Her heart is breaking because she will never run again.

Jessica is a runner. She has been one since a race in third grade. It's what makes her feel alive and whole. Things are different now that she's stuck in bed with the knowledge that she won't ever run again.

Hank comes in to talk with Jessica about getting a prosthetic leg. She doesn't want to think about it. She and her mom learn that it takes up to six months for the swelling to go down enough for a prosthetic, but she will probably heal quicker. She doesn't care since she can't run anyway.

Jessica shuts her eyes and remembers a race in which Vanessa Steele races against her. She appreciates the competition since they are both determined to win and it makes her run her best. As the race begins, Jessica is calm. At the very last second, Jessica wins. The run was a personal best for her. It was also the last race she ever ran.

Jessica hears voices around her and one of them is her father talking with Dr. Wells. Her father sounds educated, and she knows he's a self-employed handyman so this isn't in his general area of expertise. She also realizes that she can't be fixed.

After waiting for a long time for a nurse to answer her call, Jessica is desperate to go to the bathroom. She tries to make it on her own by using her crutches. She ran a 400 m race in 55 seconds flat a few days prior, but now it's taking her five minutes to move 20 feet. In the bathroom she looks at herself for the first time and she realizes how unkempt and weak she is. She falls over and a nurse has to come help her.

Jessica relates her life at the present to the last stretch of a race. It's a time when everything is against you. She calls it the Rigor Mortis Bend. All you have left is determination.

The room in the hospital is filled with flowers that were sent to encourage Jessica to get well. She can't get well, though, because she is not sick. She is crippled. Her mom tries to feed her, but she doesn't have much of an appetite.



After five days in the hospital, everything is beginning to look and smell stale. Jessica's mother wants her to spend more time with her 13-year-old sister, Kaylee. She doesn't want to freak out her sister, and she knows that she herself is freaked out. She's a junior in high school.

Physical therapy is exhausting. The therapist asks Jessica's mom to encourage her. Her best friend comes to visit, and she talks about the accident. She mentions Lucy, and Jessica suddenly remembers what happened in the accident.

Fiona fills Jessica in on what happened after the accident. Lucy is dead and the driver who hit their bus had bad brakes. A driver missed the turn and hit their bus. Fiona comforts Jessica until it's time for her to leave.

Jessica is exhausted, but she can't sleep without her pain medication. The doctor is very pleased with how she has progressed. Kaylee comes to visit her, and she is able to joke around with her sister. Jessica really feels exhausted from the effort of pretending that she has strength.

Chapter 13 - Jessica's parents encourage her as she does her physical therapy. One time, after a session, Fiona answers the phone when it rings. It is Gavin Vance, the mayor's son.

Chapter 14 - For the first time since the accident, Jessica really feels hungry. Her mother brings her in some food, and her first bite is amazing until it is interrupted by excruciating pain in her leg. It's a phantom pain. After that, she isn't hungry anymore.

Chapter 15 - She dreams that it's a beautiful morning, and she is out running with her dog. They are both enjoying the day as they run together.

Jessica has persuaded her mother that she doesn't need to stay at the hospital at night anymore. She misses her mom, but she knows her mom is getting exhausted. She feels alone and trapped. At this point, Jessica has been in the hospital for eight days. It feels like forever.

Fiona comes for a visit, all dressed up. She has just been to Lucy's funeral. Jessica realizes that it's a selfish thought, but part of her wishes that she had died herself. She thinks that Lucy was lucky not to be in pain.

Fiona wipes her tears away and tells Jessica happy she is that she is alive. This makes Jessica feel even more guilty for her selfish thoughts. The two gossip for a bit. Fiona says that she misses Jessica at school and asks when she is coming back. Jessica realizes that she is far from ready to return to school.

Dr. Wells is very proud of Jessica and he tells her that it's time for her to go home. She is reminded of all the things that she cannot do at home.



Jessica's mother is extremely excited that she is going home. Her father helps her into the car, and things that used to be simple seem much more difficult now. Both her parents support her as she figures out how to get into the car.

As they turn into her street, Jessica begins to feel nervous. There is new ramp Jessica refuses to use. She makes her way up to the house with her crutches. By the time she moves through the front door, she is in a lot of pain. She wants to collapse until she smells some of her mother's wonderful spaghetti sauce and hears her dog. She suddenly realizes that there is no place like home.

When Jessica's sister comes home after school with a group of friends, everybody feels awkward. She tries to speak to them normally, but her voice comes out sounding angry and annoyed. Jessica takes a medication then retreats to the family room.

Jessica learns how to maneuver around her house. Her family has obviously gone through a lot of work to make the house easier to navigate. She is frustrated because she knows that she is supposed to appreciate it all, but she feels as if she is a stranger in her own house. Jessica is very irritated, and she begins to turn away her friends.

The only time Jessica feels better is when her medicine kicks in. She begins to push the clock on her pain medications. When she asks for a refill, her parents realize something is wrong. They tell her that they aren't going to refill it.

In pain, crying, and moaning from lack of sleep, Jessica's mother comes in to comfort her. Jessica tries to persuade her mom that she needs her medications, but her mother points out that the medication is very addictive and she can't get dependent on. Jessica feels very abandoned, angry, and withdrawn, but she also knows that her parents are correct about the medications.

After a few days without the medications, Jessica is still feeling down. At night, Jessica gets up because she has to go to the bathroom. She hears a noise and finds her mother crying over a picture album. It's a picture of Jessica in her racing outfit with her medals. They to cry together and hug each other.

Part 1 - Finish Line Analysis

As the book opens, the main character, Jessica, is ready to check out of her own existence. She is in a hospital setting, and she has very clear and obvious support from her mother and father. She also has a doctor who is encouraging her. The reader discovers that she has no right leg under her knee. While everyone is reassuring her, the news is devastating to Jessica. The reader finds out that she is a runner so a loss of part of a leg really makes her feel as if her life is over.

The reader discovers that running is more than just an obsession with Jessica. She has been thrilled with running since she was in third grade. She loves to win, and she loves to feel the wind against her body. It makes her feel alive and revives her soul. Now that she's in the hospital with no leg, she feels as if she isn't alive anymore.



Medically, Jessica is doing extremely well. She doesn't really care, however. If she can't run, she doesn't care how long it will take for her to get better. She isn't even interested in getting a prosthetic leg.

Jessica remembers what it was like when everything was functioning properly. As she relives her last race, the reader gains insight into her personality. She loves running for the sake of running, and she also loves the competition of the sport. She competes against others, and she also competes against herself. She ends the chapter with the comment that it was the last race of her life. Or finish line. This is symbolic of the fact that she feels her life should no longer go on.

The reader gets an understanding of the support Jessica's family has for her in Chapter 5. Her father is a simple, self-employed handyman. He has taken the time to research at home so that he really understands her situation and what's best for her. Jessica listens to him as he is talking with the doctor, and she realizes that he sounds like an expert.

The reader begins to see some of Jessica's determination in Chapter 6 as she makes her way to the bathroom on her crutches rather than waiting for the nurse. It's somewhat of a disaster, which also shows the reader how weakened she is.

Jessica brings in her running background by equating her life at the moment to a racing phenomenon that she calls Rigor Mortis Bend.

Everything seems to be negative in Jessica's life. She doesn't appreciate the hospital, she has a hard time dealing with the smell of flowers, and she doesn't appreciate the food. However, she shows an appreciation and respect for her mother as she tries to eat the food offered to her even though she doesn't really want it. As each chapter unfolds, the reader is reminded of the tight family bonds.

Jessica has many friends, and this is reflected by the amount of calls that she is receiving. It also shows the depths of her depression since she doesn't want to talk to anyone. She doesn't even want to talk with her sister, which concerns her mother. It's not because she doesn't like her sister. It's because she wants to protect her sister. She, herself, feels unnerved about the situation she is in, and she doesn't know how 13-year-old Kaylee is going to handle it.

Jessica begins physical therapy, and the reader is reminded of her determination in the past with the running, but now sees a stark contrast in her lack of enthusiasm in regards to her physical therapy. Once again, her parents are the ones who support her and encourage her. Her best friend comes to visit her, and there is an awkward moment as she sees her best friend wearing shorts. It reminds Jessica of what she is missing. Her friend is thankful that she is alive instead of dead like Lucy. This triggers Jessica's memory, and she relives the accident and all its devastating details.

As Jessica relives the horrific accident, her best friend is there to help support her. She is faced with the reality of the accident, and she also shares the reality of her injury with her best friend as she turns back the covers and shows her friend her leg. While it's hard for the two of them together, her friend Fiona shows her support.



Taking care of her injury isn't an easy task. Not only does she have to accept the fact that she doesn't have a leg, but she had to learn how to take care of the stump. Her doctor is pleased with her progress in healing, but she has a hard time seeing the value of it. Once again, the reader is reminded of how close the family is as Jessica goes out of her way to make her sister feel comfortable during a visit. She exhausts herself as she jokes around and tries to pretend that everything is fine.

Jessica is showing that she has a clean dose of reality when the boy that she admires so much calls her on the phone at the hospital. The reader also understands the depth of her depression and the harsh reality that she has to face when she turns down future opportunities to talk with the boy because she is unwilling to discuss the accident.

Jessica is beginning to get a bit better. However, just when things are going well, reality interferes and she is struck by phantom pain. The depression threatens to take over again.

In her dreams, Jessica is able to escape to a world that is pure and right. In her dreams, she has the freedom to run with both of her legs, enjoying life and nature with her dog.

Everything is perfect in her dreams, but in her reality, everything is stark. She is alone in the hospital, having sent mother home. She can't sleep, and life without her leg is an existence that she is stuck with.

As Fiona comes to visit with her after the funeral, Jessica realizes that she doesn't want to face her own future of physical rehabilitation and her life without running. She knows that it is selfish, but she almost wishes that she was dead. She envies Lucy.

There is a subtle shift in the mood of the hospital as Jessica experiences some normalcy for the first time since her injury. She and her best friend get to gossip for a bit. The mood shifts once again when Fiona asks Jessica when is going go back to school. Jessica doesn't think that she can face life in school since she can barely get across the room now.

Jessica hasn't done a thing in her opinion to improve her status. However, her body has been healing on its own. The doctor tells her that she is ready to go home, but she isn't sure if she's ready for it.

Going home is an exciting occasion for Jessica's parents. She is faced with her first conflict as she tries to transfer herself into the car. Her father's slow driving emphasizes how precarious their situation is.

Although she knows she is an invalid, Jessica doesn't want to face up to the fact that she isn't whole. Her family has built a ramp for her, but she is determined not to use it. This is the first sign that she might consciously do something to help herself heal. She makes it into the house on her own, even though it exhausts her. She is rewarded by a sense of familiarity and feeling that she belongs.



Things are familiar, but they are different. Kaylee comes in with her friends, but the atmosphere is very strained. Jessica finds herself sounding angry and annoyed even though she doesn't mean to come across that way. She retreats, alone with her pain medications. This is a minor foreshadowing of problems yet to come.

Being home is familiar to Jessica, but it's also different. Furniture has been rearranged for her ease of access. She knows this is done out of love, but she still has a hard time appreciating it. She shows signs of depression as she turns away those who want to help her, yet she craves their attention.

As foreshadowed in Chapter 22, Jessica begins to have a problem with her pain medication. She is becoming addicted to it. Her parents show some tough love when they take the medication away from her.

On top of everything else she is going through, Jessica now has to deal with pain medication withdrawal. Her mother empathizes with her, but explains how detrimental it would be if she allowed herself to remain addicted. She has enough respect for her parents to listen to them and understand that they are doing out of love for her.

Depression regarding her situation is becoming overwhelming. Jessica's mom reaches out to her, but Jessica, herself, doesn't know what it will take to make things better. She notices a bit of improvement in her healing. One night, when she can't sleep, she comes across her mother looking at the picture album. They both have an in-your-face awareness of everything they have lost. It can't be verbalized, and they take solace in each other's arms.



Part 2 - Headwind

Part 2 - Headwind Summary

The dog wakes her up early every day because he's used to running with her. When he does this, it makes her want to cry. She can't handle his disappointment so even though it hurts her, Jessica gets out of bed to play ball with him. She throws the ball from the porch until he is satisfied. Things go all right until she sees a runner.

As she heads inside, Jessica bumps into Kaylee. Her sister doesn't really want to talk with her. When she confronts Kaylee about Kaylee's behavior, her sister points out that she isn't nice. Fiona calls and tells Jessica she is taking her out to lunch. She struggles up the stairs to shower and wishes she had lost an arm instead of a leg. At least that way she could get into the shower. Finally, she figures out how to get into the shower by grabbing the head door brace and flinging herself in. Jessica develops a new appreciation for her hands and arms.

Jessica's mother comes home while she is in the shower. She freaks out because Jessica went up the stairs by herself with no one home. Jessica reassures her and shows her mother how she got into the tub by reversing her steps and getting out of the tub. It hurts, but she doesn't mind because she is showing off. Her mother is thrilled that she is going out to lunch with Fiona.

As the girls leave for lunch, Jessica realizes how worried her mother is. She realizes the last time she drove away with Fiona, she came back over a week later, missing some body parts. She calls home to reassure her mom and realizes that now things are changing. It's time for her mother to relax, and for Jessica to step up to the game.

Fiona and Jessica wait 20 minutes to get a table. Jessica surprises Fiona by asking her about school. Together they decide that Jessica will go back to school the very next day. It's a Friday so she will have all weekend to recover. Fiona tells Jessica that Merryl is now dating Gavin. Jessica asks how track is. She asks if Marcy picked up her leg, meaning the leg of the race. When she and Fiona realize what she said, they both start laughing. Jessica knows that she has turned a corner in healing. It feels really good.

Chapter 7 - When they return home after lunch, Fiona tries to help Jessica organize her schoolwork. There is too much to realistically catch up on. She says she will talk to the teachers to see if they could cut down some of the assignments. She leaves suddenly, and Jessica knows her friend well enough to realize that her friend is going to make her return to school a celebration. Fiona says she will come by the next day. Jessica realizes what an amazing friend she has.

Chapter 8 - Sleep is elusive due to the butterflies and panic arising in Jessica. At breakfast, Jessica wishes that her sister would appear so that she could talk to her about the conversation the day before, but she doesn't come in until the last minute.



Jessica finds out that her father is upset at the coach, but she doesn't know why. Kaylee apologizes for what she had said the day before. Fiona shows up, and they go off to school.

Chapter 9 - Jessica is a bundle of nerves when they reach the school. It's later than they had planned because everything takes longer with one leg. Fiona is pushing her in a wheelchair because she is sore from the day before. Jessica is very embarrassed about her situation. She knows her accident wasn't her fault, but still, she is mortified to be seen with only one leg.

Chapter 10 - It's very difficult for Jessica as she wends her way through the school. Jessica sees all the signs and balloons that Fiona put up around the school, and that makes her feel better. Fiona tells her that Gavin helped her set everything up. When Jessica gets into her first classroom, she doesn't know where to sit. Her teacher brings a desk over to her. Fiona talks with the teacher about the assignments, and the teacher says they will work something out.

Chapter 11 - Jessica doesn't feel like she fits in the school naturally. She becomes more vocal with her teachers about the assignments, taking the role over from Fiona. Most of them are willing to work with her. A teacher asks her about her parents, and she thinks this is strange since he doesn't even know her parents. Then she realizes that he is a parent himself so he relates. At lunch the entire track team had a party for her, and it made Jessica feel as if she really does fit in after all. During the party, she asks the coach why her father is upset with him. She finds out that there is a problem with the insurance.

Fiona is not in Jessica's math class so she has to face the class alone. The teacher is one of her toughest. She asks Jessica if she is going to sit with Rosa. The girl is a special needs girl who sits in the back of the classroom. At first, she doesn't want to sit with her because she doesn't want to be labeled as a special needs student. As she thinks about it more, she realizes that Rosa must feel like that sometimes. Rosa helps Jessica realize that she is actually lucky because someday she will get out of her wheelchair.

After school, Fiona and Jessica run into Meryll and Gavin. Fiona really lights into Meryll for missing the track party. Jessica realizes that it doesn't really bother her if Gavin is with someone else, especially if he's attracted to someone like Meryll. She is over him.

Jessica's mother explains that the man who hit her didn't have insurance and his widow is fighting against payments. The school district and the bus company are both claiming no-fault so no one is covering the bills. Jessica's mother asks her not to bring this up in front of her father, and Jessica realizes that it will not be difficult since he is working late in the day and leaves early each morning. She realizes that he's doing it so he can pay the bills.

It's a Saturday and Jessica is doing homework. To her surprise she actually enjoys it. She always hated it before, but now she realizes that it's something she can do. She's



learning how to get around, and even rediscovers crawling to her mother's dismay. Her leg is getting much better, and she begins to think about prosthetics for the first time. She is anxious to get going with the new leg.

Part 2 - Headwind Analysis

Even when she was in the hospital, Jessica was thinking about her dog. She truly loves him. He wakes her up every day so they can go running. Now, while she loves to be with him, his enthusiasm makes her sad. She loves him so much however, that it motivates her to get out of her bed and play with him. Watching him chase balls distracts her enough to enjoy their morning time together until she sees someone doing what she wishes she could still do - the man is running.

The atmosphere the house is changing. Jessica wonders why her sister is so grumpy, and gets a reality check when her sister talks back to her telling her that she is the one who changed. She realizes that her sister is right. Fiona realizes there's a problem, too. Being the good friend that she is, she forces Jessica to go out in public with her. She knows that the depression isn't healthy for her friend. Just as the dog inspired Jessica to get up and play in the morning, Fiona inspires Jessica to get herself clean so she can go out. She doesn't want to let down the people who love her. She is rewarded by a sense of accomplishment and she makes it up the stairs.

Jessica shows that she is up to facing a challenge as she tries to get into the shower. At first she wishes that she lost a hand rather than her leg. During the shower, she starts thinking seriously about her body parts and how they all work together. She begins to realize that her situation isn't so terrible. Instead of wishing she was dead like Lucy, she now relishes being alive, and she is thankful for the body parts that she does have. It's one of the first times that she focuses on the positive rather than negative and which she doesn't have.

Jessica's mother is very protective of her. While she is happy to see that her daughter is making headway on her own, she is also frightened about what might happen. The two talk openly about their feelings, and Jessica gets ready to face the world.

As Jessica heads out to lunch with Fiona, the reader sees Jessica analyzing what her mother is going through. It offers a new perspective on the accident. Up until this point, the reader has mostly seen the accident from Jessica's vantage. Now, there is a new understanding of how it affects her family. Running is still her passion, and she uses running to symbolize what she and her mother are going through. Jessica compares it to a race at the track. It's time for her mother's race to be over, and it is time for her to pick up the baton and carry on.

In the restaurant, Jessica begins to see how others will react to her. Some stare too much, and some act as if she's invisible. Fiona is with her every step of the way. It surprises both of the girls when Jessica begins to ask about school. This shows a huge step in her healing. Not only has she showered and dressed herself for going out, but



she is actually in public and asking questions about school. Even though Jessica doesn't want to admit it, both the girls know that the longer she puts off going back to school, the harder it's going to be. Fiona encourages her. When the conversation accidentally leads to an awkward situation, the girls are able to laugh about it. For the first time in a long time, Jessica is beginning to feel normal.

Fiona is almost like a second mother to Jessica. She helps her organize things, and she helps reassure Jessica. Jessica's mother is very grateful for Fiona, and Jessica is also.

Jessica is very nervous about going back to school. In the morning, she wants to back out. Even though she is so agitated about the situation, she still focuses on her family. It bothers her that she's not getting along so well with her sister, and she is concerned about the fact that her father seems upset about something. She also cares about Fiona, and that is the catalyst that gets her out of the door. She knows she will let Fiona down if she doesn't show up for school.

Both big details and little details bother Jessica as she gets ready to go into the school. She knows the accident wasn't her fault, but she feels a personal embarrassment about the way she now appears.

On one hand, going back to school is nice. On the other hand, it's completely unnerving. People react differently, and Jessica finds that she is limited by her situation. She tries to figure out where she now stands regarding class work and classroom settings. Fiona is right by her side to help her out.

Chapter 11 - By the middle of the day, Jessica is feeling very out of place. She sees people differently. She understands why they are reacting to her like they do, and she doesn't blame them, but it's so hard. When a teacher asks about her family she is reminded of how her accident impacted so many people. When she is feeling down and depressed by all that she is experiencing, the track team comes to her rescue. Maybe she can't run, but she still has a support group comprised of others who have a passion for the sport.

At the end of the day Jessica has to go to math class alone. The teacher wants her to sit next to a student who is handicapped. Jessica feels some panic as she realizes she might be labeled like the other girl. By now, however, her experiences have taught her to look at other people differently. She didn't like it when people ignore her, and she realizes that she never gave the other girl chance in the past. When she sits down next to her and gives her a chance, she realizes that not only can they communicate well, but the girl actually encourages her.

After school Jessica is walking with Fiona. They see Jessica's old crush, Gavin, walking with a Merryll. There is a hint that Fiona is interested in Gavin, but she doesn't act on it because she knows Jessica has a crush on him. Jessica has the realization that since the accident, her perspective on things has changed. She no longer has a crush on Gavin.



Jessica progresses throughout the day. She successfully makes it through her school day, and she has a welcoming home to go to. Her open relationship with her mother allows her to freely discuss concerns on her mind. She asks her mom about the insurance, and she realizes that her father is working very hard to help pay the bills for the accident. Her parents want to protect her from that knowledge.

As the days go by, Jessica realizes that she has new priorities in life. For once, she actually appreciates to her homework. She is learning not to take anything for granted. She realizes that there is hope in her future, and she has enough determination and enthusiasm to make her future brighter - beginning immediately.



Chapter 3 - Straightaway

Chapter 3 - Straightaway Summary

While Jessica is in science class, she gets a note stating that she is supposed to go to Dr. Wells' office. The report is excellent. She is ready for a prosthesis. After talking with the doctor, they decide to use Hank Kruber, the man that she had originally referred to as Hankenstein, for her prosthesis. They got an appointment for the very next day in the morning.

Chloe, the receptionist, doesn't look like a typical office/nurse worker. She tells Jessica that she relates to her. She is a below-the-knee amputee herself - a result of cancer that she had when she was a child. As she walks away, Jessica is flabbergasted.

Following Chloe into the room for the appointment, Jessica watches her walk. It's very difficult to realize that she has prothetic. The doctor measures her stump, and Jessica recognizes many of the tools from her father's trade. He asks her what type of shoes she likes to wear, and she shows him her running shoe. He carefully explains everything he is going to do as he measures for the prosthesis. Nothing hurts, and the measurements go smoothly. Jessica finds out that she will have her prosthesis in about a week. She leaves the office feeling hopeful.

Jessica wants to get back to school as quickly as possible. She missed math the previous day, and she didn't want to miss it again because she has trouble with it. At school, she tells Fiona everything that happened at the appointment. During math, Rosa tells her that she missed her the previous day. She says that she was concerned. This makes Jessica feel good. As class begins, the teacher tells the students to turn in their homework. Jessica knows this is a problem because she didn't do much for homework at all.

As the teachers looks at her paper, Jessica feels that the teacher is doubtful, disappointed, and a bit resentful. Rosa offers to help Jessica with her math after school. She makes excuses because she really wants Fiona to help her. Rosa tells her to call if she needs help, and Jessica agrees. The world looked good when she went into class, but now it's hard again.

Jessica works hard on her homework, but she doesn't feel like she has gotten much accomplished. She is specifically concerned about her math. Fiona is not available when she calls her. Jessica decides to ask for help the next morning, but Fiona oversleeps, and they don't have time during classes.

Jessica doesn't know what to do about her math, and she is frustrated that she has to eat alone since Fiona is busy. She wishes that she had called Rosa. As she thinks about Rosa, she remembers that Rosa eats in room 402. Jessica goes to the room, and



everyone welcomes her. She asks Rosa if she would be willing to help her with the math, and Rosa agrees.

Rosa is a big help. She tells Jessica to call her anytime if she needs more help with math. She says that she could come to her house and states that she would love to meet Jessica's dog because the dog seemed so happy. When Jessica asks how Rosa knew about that dog, Rosa tells her that Jessica used to run by her house every morning. She explains that her house is the one with the fountain, and Jessica realizes that they are practically neighbors.

As Jessica goes to sleep that evening, she has her running dream again. She wakes up crying, like usual, but this time she realizes that the dream is a bit different. She saw the fountain in her dream, and she saw Rosa waving to her from her porch. In a way, she feels a bit invaded with this new twist on her dream. Sherlock tries to get her to play with him, but she tells him that they will have to play later that day. As she leaves, she has the thought that she could walk the dog over to Rosa's some time. The thought makes her happy.

Fiona seems different when Jessica sees her - kind of radiant. Jessica doesn't believe her when she says that nothing is going on, and she finally tells Jessica that she will see what's up when she sees her coach. He has something amazing to show her. The coach is on his laptop, and he shows her a video on YouTube. It's footage from a big race. Jessica looks closely at the runners, and she sees that one of the runners is running on curved, spiked feet. He is a double below-the-knee amputee running on prostheses. He was running against runners with regular legs.

Jessica feels overwhelmed. Not only can the man run, but he can run fast. The coach shows Jessica videos of other owners who use prostheses. One is a girl her age that runs on a track team, and another is a runner who runs marathons. Jessica is impressed not only with their running, but with the fact that they don't bother hiding their prosthesis. Kyro asks her if she would want a prosthesis like that. He tells her that they had a team meeting, and everyone decided to help raise funds to buy her a running leg. Jessica doesn't even know what to say, she is so overwhelmed.

Jessica has a hard time believing that she might someday run again. She shows her mother the videos, and she tells her mom about the fundraisers the team have planned. She overhears a conversation between her mother and her father that she wasn't supposed to hear. Her father is wondering how in the world the team is planning to raise \$20,000. Her mom says that the hope is important, and they shouldn't let their doubts show. The father points out that they can't even cover the bills they already have, much less additional ones. They talk about lawyers and insurance. Jessica feels very guilty. She feels like a huge burden to everyone in her life.

The price of the prosthesis is overwhelming to Jessica, and she points out the cost to Fiona. It doesn't faze her best friend one bit. Fiona points out that people will want to help her because she has been through a tragic situation. She is real flesh and blood. Jessica, not so optimistic, is very aware of the harshness of reality.



After school, Jessica goes for a socket fitting. She asks the doctor what he knows about the running legs. During the appointment, Jessica's mother asks the doctor if she can have a private word with him about administrative matters. Jessica realizes this is probably about money. She tries not to hold onto the dream of running again. She reminds herself that she should be focusing on walking. In one week, she will have the opportunity to walk again.

The week is long because Jessica has to go through some tough situations. She is invited to a track meet on Thursday, and there is a fundraiser carwash on Saturday. She appreciates the fact that she is still part of the track team, but she isn't sure about the reality of it. Thursday's track meet is at home, and it's against their greatest rivals. Jessica thinks about the sport, and she realizes that people don't understand running. It's a sport that focuses on the body and the mind. Her mother says that she was born a runner. Her sister always hated it. For her, it is extremely natural, and she suffocated without the ability to run. She pictures herself in the future, running. She wants to believe that they can come up with the funds, but she still doesn't believe it will happen.

After school, Jessica is standing near the tennis courts, mentally unable to go down to the track field. Shandall sees her standing there and understands that she is having a hard time. She encourages Jessica. As she thinks about the track and their team, Jessica knows that her team might not have the best equipment, but they are like a family. Shandall goads her into going down to the field by telling her that the Vanessa will be there, acting like Jessica never existed. This gets Jessica moving toward the field.

Jessica joins the team for the pre-meet huddle then she goes over to Rigor Mortis Bend so that she can cheer for Fiona. After a while, she gets tired so she goes over to the bleachers. As she crosses the track to the bleachers, she feels that people are watching her and talking about her, but then she thinks she may be imagining it. When her event takes place, it's very difficult. A woman talks with her, and she realizes that it's Vanessa's mother, Claudia. She tells her how sorry she is about the accident, and Jessica realizes that she is very sincere. Vanessa wins the race and comes over to her mother, complaining. She pretty much blows off Jessica. Claudia apologizes to Jessica for raising such a self-absorbed daughter. Jessica is stunned by the entire situation.

After the next race, Jessica goes over to talk with Fiona. She runs into Gavin along the way, and she finds that he is very enthusiastic about track. He tells her that he used to be fast in elementary school, but his family isn't very athletic. After he leaves, Jessica goes over to tell Fiona about Vanessa's mother. She tells Fiona not to tell other people what happened., saying it would be bad karma. Jessica continues cheering for her team.

Jessica continues watching the races and cheering for her team. As she is cheering, Vanessa catches on one of the hurdles. After the race, the coach comes over to Jessica. He tells her that Vanessa is telling the judges that she was planted on the sidelines as a distraction. Together they go over to talk to the judges and the other team's coach. Even though she knows it's not her fault, Jessica apologizes to Vanessa



for being a distraction. Vanessa asks why she is even there. Kyro stands up for Jessica, saying that she is still part of the team. Jessica doesn't feel as if she really is part of the team, though. She feels like it's just a fantasy.

In math class the next day, the teacher asks Jessica when she is going to go back to her old seat. Now that she uses her crutches all the time, she doesn't need the table with the wheelchair. Jessica tells her that she doesn't want to go back to her old seat because she likes sitting with Rosa. The teacher tells them that they have to stop writing notes. Rosa thanks her, and Jessica feels happy for the first time since the track meet.

Jessica is subdued as they drive to Hanks. She is worried that the processes won't work. Her mother reminds her of Chloe, and this makes her feel better. The fitting goes extremely well. Her brain still thinks that her foot is there, so this makes it easier to maneuver the prosthesis. Hank makes some adjustments, and she practices maneuvering the foot. Tears fill her eyes as she realizes that she is walking once again.

Jessica practices walking, learned about dealing with life with a prosthesis, and Hank makes adjustments for another hour, but she walks out of the office. Her mother gets her some warm-up pants with zippers that she can wear over the prosthesis. She shows off for Fiona once she gets home, and they talk about when she's going to get her permanent leg. Fiona tells her that she has to show up at the car wash the next day. Jessica agrees.

As Jessica puts on her uniform for the car wash, she feels very uncomfortable. She throws her warm-up pants over her shorts, and they make her feel better. Her father drives her to the car wash, and she sees the banners. It feels strange to see her name on the sign. She's encouraged as she thinks about Chloe and the YouTube athletes.

Her teammates want to see her new leg, and they have different reactions to it. The girls seemed a bit revolted by the leg, but the boys think it's really awesome. The whole team is there to support her - some are washing the cars and others are at the bake sale table. After a while they realize the only people stopping for the car wash are friends of the team members and those related to them. One of the vaulters suggests that Jessica wear her shorts and hold up a sign so that people can remember why they are holding the fundraiser. At first, she doesn't want to do this because it makes her feel like a beggar. They agree that she should hold up a sign that says "I want to run again." That states the facts without begging. Jessica agrees to stand up there with a sign.

The idea works very well. After Jessica stands out with the sign, there is a steady stream of customers. Most of the people didn't even really care about getting a car wash, they just wanted to donate toward the cause. They come to Jessica with stories of loved ones. It is a bit awkward, but she understands why they are talking with her. Gavin shows up, and she is embarrassed to be seen like this. His girlfriend gives him a brownie, he talks with the coach a bit, then Jessica notices that he goes across the street and takes a picture of the fundraiser. She really doesn't want to be seen like that in the school newspaper and plans to tell him on Monday that she doesn't want him to use the pictures.



The fundraiser is successful, and the team raises \$867.50. Even Jessica's father is impressed. That night, Jessica has a hard time sleeping. She can't regulate her temperature, and she has her running dream again. This time in the dream, she is clomping along, and Sherlock is barking at her, trying to get her to go faster. In the morning, her mother wakes her up with a phone call. Fiona is calling to tell her to look at the newspaper. There is an article about her on the front page of the community section. It has a huge picture of Jessica - the one that Gavin took the day before. The article is good, but it feels strange to Jessica. Her mother tells her that she should call Gavin to thank him. Jessica isn't really sure how she feels about him.

Jessica does try to call Gavin, but she keeps getting his message machine. Each time, she hangs up. Finally, on her third try, she leaves a message with her phone number at the end of it. She's not sure why she left her phone number. On Monday morning, he comes over to talk with her, and she feels flushed. She enjoys laughing with him, and feels awkward when he leaves. She feels like she's an idiot.

As she walks around the school campus, Jessica works on steadying her gait. By Thursday, she is able to leave her cane back at home. Jessica was sure the newspaper article would raise funds for her cause, but by the end of the week, it only brought in another \$40.00. This makes her feel down, but Rosa encourages her.

The track team is loading onto the bus for an away game. Jessica is filled with fear, even though she isn't going with them. She is just watching them. The accident is still very real to her.

The next appointment with Hank goes very well. He is very impressed with her progress. As he makes adjustments, he talks about the newspaper article. Hank tells her he thinks she will be running soon if she keeps up the progress. The week has been hard, and Jessica doesn't feel as enthusiastic as Hank sounds.

Chapter 3 - Straightaway Analysis

Things are going faster than Jessica expected. During school, she discovers that she has a doctor appointment. Even when she tries to hurry, it takes a bit of time since she still is trying to maneuver on one leg. Jessica shows that she is willing to listen to others and heed their advice. She agrees to go see the man that she privately calls Hankenstein, even though she doesn't have such a great memory of him from her hospital days. She knows that he might be the best doctor for her. Her mother is very supporting, and seems to sense her feelings. She's happy her daughter is trying the place out, but also offers alternate opportunities if her daughter would be more comfortable. In the waiting room, Jessica looks at an older couple and sees how unhappy they are. She know she doesn't want to end out like them. Even as she is working on her own mind frame, she gets some hope in the form of the secretary. She seems completely normal, yet she, too, has a prosthesis.



The appointment goes smoothly, and Hank is friendly towards Jessica. He is professional, but he also cares about her feelings. When he finds out that she usually wears running shoes, he makes that part of the plan for making a leg for her. He explains the entire process in great detail so she knows what is going on. She talks easily with him, giving him a chance. Overall, the experience is extremely positive, and Jessica is filled with hope.

Jessica is very behind on her schoolwork. Even though she has stated that in the past she didn't care much about homework, she still shows great concern for her grades. Math is particularly challenging for her. She goes out of her way to make sure she doesn't miss more classes than necessary. Jessica is truly distressed when the teacher collects their paperwork because she knows that hers is not up to par. Rosa offers to help her, but Jessica isn't quite ready to open up to a new world yet. She prefers to stick to what's familiar. She turns down Rosa's offer, hoping that Fiona can help her.

Jessica discovers that sticking with the familiar isn't always the best choice. She was banking on Fiona's help, but Fiona wasn't available. This forces Jessica into a corner where she is desperate for help and realizes what she gave up when she turned down Rosa's offer. She changes course and goes over to Rosa for help. The experience is surprisingly nice. She meets some of the other students with special needs, and they are friendly. Jessica feels very welcome in the lunchroom where they are all eating. She even discovers that it's getting easier to understand Rosa when she talks. In the past, Jessica noted that before her accident she hadn't even been aware that Rosa really existed. This is emphasized when Rosa points out that she used to watch Jessica run every morning with her dog. This is the first time that Jessica realizes that they are nearly neighbors.

Rosa is now part of Jessica's dreams and it's somewhat unnerving to her. She appreciates familiarity, and she doesn't seem to appreciate changes, even good ones. Still, after her initial discomfort, she shows that she is willing to make some changes. She shows this by considering taking her dog on a walk to see Rosa.

This chapter is life changing for Jessica. She knows she loves running, she has lost the ability to run, but she hasn't considered other runners who might have faced obstacles. Her coach opens her eyes to others with similar situations to hers. He shows that they have overcome obstacles in their life to thrive and succeed. As he is talking, Jessica not only has hope for her future, but she is reminded of how incredible the track team is. They are all willing to go out of their way to work together as a unit to help her run again.

Back at home, Jessica shares the news with her parents and sister. Her mom and sister are very excited, but her father is skeptical. He is the one that is working extremely long hours to pay off the bills that she isn't supposed to know about. He knows the reality of the situation, and the reality is that a running prosthesis is going to cost a ton of money. Jessica overhears her parents talking about the situation, and she is filled with guilt about the entire situation even though it's not her fault.



Jessica is very realistic about her situation. Her best friend is a go-getter and a dreamer. The two balance each other well.

At the beginning of the book, the doctors were telling Jessica that she did have a good chance of healing quickly. This is proving to be very true. On the way to the doctor's, Jessica refrains from talking with her mother about the pricing of the doctors and prosthesis. They are relationally close, but this is a subject that she's not willing to talk about yet. Jessica realizes that she needs to take things one step at a time - sometimes, quite literally. It's only a week until she begins to walk again.

The week is very tough for her mentally. The track team is supporting her, and now it's her turn to support them. She's invited to track meet on Thursday, and then she's supposed to go help out with the fundraiser on Saturday. She thinks about running and how much it means to her. Living a life without running still seems like a death to her. She notes her sister isn't like that at all, and she doesn't understand how anybody could not like running. To her, it's a full body sport that pushes her limits physically as well as mentally. Even though she feels like she is dying without running, money is the real barrier to healing.

Each time she is sinking into despair throughout the book, Jessica is rescued by someone who reminds her of how much she is loved. At times it's her parents or her sister, at times it's Fiona or Rosa. This time it's Shandall. Jessica is trying to go to the track meet, but she is mentally blocked from going down to the field. Her friend and teammate knows just what to say to inspire her to get down to the meet. Jessica is driven to join the others even though she can't run. It's her way of persuading herself that she still belongs.

The track meet is as difficult as she anticipated. It's particularly difficult when she has to watch Vanessa run in the race in which she once excelled. As she tries cope with these feelings, Vanessa's mother talks with her, and it takes her mind off what's going on at the track for a while. The woman is so kind and understanding. She is the complete opposite of her daughter. There is a stark contrast between the relationships of Claudia and Vanessa and Jessica with her own mother. When Claudia apologizes for the way she brought up her daughter, Jessica is completely flabbergasted.

Jessica tells Fiona what happened, but she doesn't do it for shock value. In fact, she makes a point of telling Fiona not to tell other people about what happened. After they talk, Jessica talks with Gavin. Although she has decided that she is over him, she seems to keep running into him and learning more about him. She likes what she sees, and this confuses her.

When Jessica tells Fiona not to tell other people about Vanessa and her mother, she mentions that it would be bad karma to talk about it. During the next race, Vanessa trips over a hurdle and loses the race. This re-emphasizes the idea of karma. She was nasty to Jessica, and she reaped the rewards.



The day after the track meet, Jessica is having a hard time facing her math teacher. She's in a bad mood because she doesn't feel as if she belongs anywhere. The teacher asks her if she is going to move her seat, and she says that she is going to stay with Rosa. She realizes that she truly wants to remain by the girl who she hadn't even known existed before her accident. It makes her feel good inside to know that she made this decision.

Going to the doctor is unnerving. She's nervous about whether or not she's going to be able to handle it. Once again, she is down but someone comes to encourage her. This time it's Chloe. Everything goes as smoothly as could possibly be expected. Jessica is strong, and she's a competitor. Her brain seems to know how to work with her body. The doctor says this is going to be a huge element in her healing, and it will be much easier for her than for many others. She takes the first step. In the shower near the beginning of the book, she developed a new appreciation for her arms. Now, she has a new appreciation for walking.

In track, the members worked as a family and as a team. Now, in the doctor's office, it's a different type of team. Hank, Jessica, and her mother work together for a long period of time to work out the kinks with the prosthesis. By the time they leave, Jessica is walking out. She shows off to Fiona, and she even agrees to wear the track uniform to the car wash the next day. For the first time since the accident, she is going to look as if she is part of the team.

It comes as a jolt to Jessica when she puts on her uniform. Things are not the same as they were before. She feels herself slipping into her depression, but she is pulled out of it mentally by the hope given to her from the YouTube videos and from Chloe. The thoughts makes her feel much better, and she is ready to face the day with a positive attitude.

At the car wash, everybody wants to see her leg. Some are repulsed, and others think that it's awesome. Either way, everybody still shows for their support. Sales don't go so well, and Jessica is faced with a new psychological challenge. They are all working and doing their best to raise money for her, but it's not working. People aren't seeing what they are supposed to support. She's asked to stand out by the road with her prosthetic leg showing. It's a tough mental quandary. Her leg is not something she wants to show off, and she doesn't want to feel like a beggar. However, it is a problem, and showing her leg to people is the only way that she is going to get the funds that she needs to run and live again. With the support of her friends, she agrees to do it.

The fundraiser gets the attention that the team is looking for after Jessica decides to stand by the road in her shorts. People come to her and talk to her about their loved ones who have lost limbs. It's difficult for her to hear, especially when she has to listen to the stories about those who lost limbs during the war. However, she knows that it's important.

The results of the carwash are encouraging. They make almost \$1000. Jessica begins to feel more hopeful. Once again, she has her dream and it is evolving. This time, she is



wearing a steel pipe leg. She can't go fast enough to please her dog. She is woken up by the phone call from Fiona telling her to look at the newspaper. Gavin had written an article about the fundraiser situation, and it is printed in the regular newspaper. She has very conflicting emotions. Jessica didn't even want her picture in the school paper, and now it is public for the entire community. However, she is very appreciative to him, and the article is well-written.

In Chapter 22, Jessica is confused by her own emotions regarding Gavin. She enjoys talking with him, and she enjoys laughing with him. But he's dating someone, and she feels like an idiot for the way she acts when she is around him. Things have been going well for a little while now, but the newspaper article doesn't bring in much more money. Hope seems so far away sometimes.

Jessica seems to be doing well most of the time. She drives around with Fiona, and she goes to the track meet, but as she watches her team members board the bus, she is filled with fear. The accident is a very true part of her life, and she revisits it regularly. She feels as if it has robbed her of her future.

While Jessica might be doubting her future at the end of the chapter 23, Hank seems to have high hopes for it. Jessica has a hard time dealing like he does. The week has been too difficult for her mentally.



Part 4 - Adjusting the Blocks

Part 4 - Adjusting the Blocks Summary

Chapter 1 - Jessica whispers to Sherlock, asking if he wants to go outside. She wants to see if she can run. The running idea doesn't go well, and Jessica reminds herself that she should be happy that she can walk. Rosa calls out to her, and they talk about running. She tells Rosa how much she loves feeling the wind on her face when she's running. Rosa points out that the finishing line is also the starting line.

Chapter 2 - In math class, Rosa writes a note and asks Jessica which she prefers, running or racing. Jessica writes back that she prefers running. She'd never thought about that before.

Chapter 3 - By Tuesday, the track team is getting discouraged because donations are not coming in. Kyro gives them a pep talk about team spirit, that he shows them a stack of envelopes that have come in from the office. They had gotten misplaced. People had been donating after all, and they now had \$4,765. In addition to that, they have an anonymous donor who offered to match the pledges up to \$10,000. The coach closes the meeting by telling them that the local television station wants to do a story on the team.

Chapter 4 - The team members love showing off in front of the television crew. Jessica finds that she doesn't mind being interviewed at all. After the interview, she runs into Gavin. The two head over to the track, They talk about running and cheer for the team. Fiona does a wonderful job, and Jessica instinctively celebrates by hugging Gavin. She apologizes and hurries away.

Chapter 5 - It is a great day at the track, and when Jessica gets home she finds the news van at her house. She hears her dad telling them about the insurance problems. Jessica doesn't want the news crew to cover this part of the story because she thinks it will detract from what her friends are doing for her. Her father explains the seriousness of the situation. She apologizes, and she also realizes how this is going to affect her future.

Chapter 6 - Jessica spends the evening trying to figure things out. She talks to her parents, her sister, her best friend, and even her dog. Her father asks about Lucy, and Jessica thinks that he wants to talk to her parents about the insurance problems. He tells her that he's trying to help them.

Chapter 7 - Kyro invites Jessica to the prelims over the weekend, but she's not ready to get back on the bus. Instead, she stays home and gardens with her mother. She thinks about the seasons of life. Her mother is very happy, loving her time gardening with her daughter.



Chapter 8 - Fiona does very well at the track meet, and Jessica asks her all about the meet. She wants know everything that happened. Fiona and Gavin join Jessica for lunch in Rosa's room.

Chapter 9 - On Tuesday morning, during the first period, announcements are read. The prom is coming up, and tickets are on sale. The announcements also highlight the Channel 7 news special program featuring the track team that evening. During math, Jessica writes a note to Rosa telling her her worries about the interview. Rosa reassures her. The teacher finds the note and reads it.

Chapter 10 - The news coverage is perfect. All the facts are laid out, and the seriousness of the insurance situation does not take away from the segment highlighting the way the team is helping Jessica. Jessica feels very positive about the entire situation.

Chapter 11 - The day after the news is very upbeat. After school, Jessica goes over to Rosa's with Sherlock. After two hours of mathematics, Jessica is beginning to understand how math works. When she goes home, her mother asks Jessica why Jessica hadn't mentioned that her friend had cerebral palsy, and she tells her mom all about her friend.

Chapter 12 - Jessica has lunch with Rosa before the test, and the two of them brush up on their math facts. She comes out of the test feeling that it was pretty easy. They're so busy talking, Jessica almost forgets that she has a doctor's appointment. Fiona is taking her, and Gavin comes along as well. Jessica wishes that Rosa could come, also.

Chapter 13 - The appointment goes well, but Jessica is beginning to wish that her friends weren't there as they see her stump. Through conversation, Jessica learns that legs can be covered with fabric for decoration. She doesn't want that on her regular leg, but she thinks it would be a great idea to have flames on her running leg. As Jessica watches Gavin and her best friend drive away after they drop her off, she thinks about what a wonderful time they all had together.

Chapter 14 - Upon reflection, Jessica realizes that Gavin wants to spend time with Fiona. This hits her hard. To deal with her mood, she wants to run, so she goes for a walk instead. Jessica realizes what a great friend she has, and she is determined to support her no matter what. Fiona calls and asks if she can come over. When she arrives, she asks Jessica if she would mind if she went to the prom. Jessica tells her that she's happy for her, and she asks if he asked Fiona to the prom after he dropped Jessica off on Friday. This confuses Fiona. Then she realizes what Jessica is saying and clarifies that she is going to the prom with Mario.

Chapter 15 - Monday is a great day. Jessica earns her first A on a math test. She talks to another classmate who struggles with math, and she recommends Rosa as a tutor. She knows that he is going through all the same emotions that she had when she originally met Rosa, and she encourages him to give Rosa chance. Later in the week, she sees Rosa working with the boy.



Chapter 16 - The track team has another meeting. They discuss uniform returns, the banquet, in running leg money. They now have \$15,000, and the anonymous donor is still going to send \$10,000. The extra money will go towards paying medical bills. Jessica tells the coach that she will be at the track the next year.

Chapter 17 - Jessica has the money for her leg, but her stump is still changing so she's not ready for a prosthesis. She has to wait until the end of June or early July to get it. Fiona and Jessica both get jobs at the movie theater. It's the end of July when she finally gets called for her fitting. Her new leg is amazing.

Chapter 18 - Jessica is excited about her new leg and shares her excitement with Fiona. When they get to work that night, things seem a little bit strange. Jessica discovers that it's a surprise party for her. Hank is that the party, and they hand her a box. It's her running leg. It doesn't have flames on it, but it has signatures from the entire track team. Jessica dances the night away.

Part 4 - Adjusting the Blocks Analysis

Chapter 1 - Running isn't the only thing Jessica missed since her injury. She particularly missed running with Sherlock. He protects her and plays with her, and she wants to reward this. Now that she is feeling better, she is raring to go. Just as he was her incentive to go out and exercise in the yard, now he is her inspiration to go out and try running in the neighborhood. It doesn't work, but this time she doesn't fall into a state of depression. Rather, she reminds herself of how lucky that she is that she is even walking. She comes to this point on her own, without anyone else pointing out her.

Rosa has expressed an interest in running and in meeting Sherlock. Jessica's efforts to exercise with Sherlock does not remain unrewarded. Rosa is outside, and now she has a chance to introduce her dog to her friend. They talk about running, and Jessica admits that she really loves to feel the wind on her face. When Rosa points out that the starting line is the same line as the finish line, she is talking about the symbolism. Rosa embraces that symbolism, but it makes Jessica feel a bit uncomfortable. She never thought about running that way.

Chapter 2 - Rosa and Jessica's friendship keeps growing. They continue to pass notes in math class. Rosa asks Jessica if she prefers running or racing. Once again, Jessica appreciates the fact that Rosa makes her think about things that she might not otherwise consider. She answers back stating that she loves the running.

Chapter 3 - The roller coaster ride of hope continues. The fundraising doesn't appear to be going well, and now the coach want to hold another meeting. Jessica feels embarrassed about the fact that so much attention is being made over her. She knows she wants to run again, but she's embarrassed that the team is going to have to have a pep talk because they aren't making enough money to help her. She goes from a low to an extreme high as they discover that more funds are coming in than they realized. Jessica feels the support of the team once again, and she also feels the support of the



community. She is growing and adapting to the situation, too. Back at the car wash, she didn't want anyone to see her leg. Now she is volunteering to wear shorts and show her leg on local television.

Chapter 4 - In a way, Jessica's publicity is a way to give back to the team. The team members seem to love having the opportunity to show off a bit. Jessica, herself, is getting more comfortable in front of the camera. In this chapter, Jessica's feelings for Gavin continue to evolve. She realizes that she has a wonderful time talking with him and laughing with them. She gets so involved with cheering at a track meet that she forgets herself and instinctively hugs him. This embarrasses her so she leaves. She can't believe she did that, especially since he has a girl friend. This shows that Jessica has respect for other people.

Chapter 5 - The television crew is at Jessica's house when she goes home. She doesn't mind showing them about her life. She only wants to use the story for good, however. When she finds out that her father is talking about the negative insurance issue, she is upset. After her dad explains the reality of the situation to her, they both realized that maybe they should have been open with each other for a while. Just as things are going well for Jessica, she faces a harsh reality. All the things she counted on for her future are really nebulous. This is tough to face.

Chapter 6 - Jessica questions her father's motives when he asks about Lucy. This is one of the first signs of a breach in the solidarity of their family unit. She doesn't trust that he will be working for the good.

Chapter 7 - While Jessica supports the track team, she still isn't ready to face the school bus. Instead of going to prelims, she stays home to plant the garden with her mother. They have a lot of work piled up since the accident threw them all off course. She sees life as seasons, and she wonders if older people think of their lives as seasons. She's worried that her own life will be full of winter, and she tries to cling to the sunshine that she sees in her mother.

Chapter 8 - Jessica didn't go to the track meet, but it doesn't mean she doesn't care about what happened. She wants to know every little detail. Jessica notices that Gavin hasn't been around his girlfriend very much recently. When she has lunch with Rosa, and Fiona and Gavin join her, it makes her feel happy. The reader also sees how it makes Gavin happy, and it makes the reader wonder whether he's just interested in expanding his horizons by getting to know new people or maybe he has an interest in something else such as Fiona or Jessica.

Chapter 9 - The morning announcements highlight the prom, and Jessica is very aware that her situation is different from others. She realizes that most likely she will not be attending the prom. This is hard enough to deal with, but the other announcement is about the television newscast that evening. This makes her very nervous because she is wondering what they will show. She shares her concerns with Rosa, and her teacher finds the note, which fills Jessica with foreboding.



Chapter 10 - The author has built up attention in the book in regards to the newscast so the reader almost as nervous as Jessica when the show comes on. The description of the broadcast is so succinct that the reader feels as if they're watching it live. The chapter opens with tension, and it ends with relief.

Chapter 11 - Jessica is not alone, and she gets to celebrate the wonderful newscast with family and friends alike. Her math teacher even shows some signs of empathy. Jessica shows a change in her relationship with Rosa, too. When Rosa initially offered to help her, she was hesitant. Now when she offers, Jessica is eager to go to her friend's house to work on math together.

When she gets to the house, Rosa's mom calls it a party, and there is food for them to munch on while they work. She asks to talk to Jessica's mother on the phone. Although it's never stated out loud, it's obvious to the reader that this might be the first time ever that anyone has ever come over to hang out with Rosa. After Jessica gets home, her mom asks her about the situation. It's obvious she has been told that Rosa has cerebral palsy. This leads to a good discussion on handicaps and how they affect a person and how people perceive the person.

Chapter 12 - All of Jessica's hard work has been reported. She actually has an easy time with the test. She is very thankful to Rosa, and she wishes that Rosa could join her when she goes to the doctor's later.

Chapter 13 - Jessica is so comfortable with her fitting appointments that she doesn't really think about what's going to happen when she allows Fiona and Gavin come with her to the appointment. She suddenly sees the situation through their eyes while she is in Hank's office, and realizes that her leg stump still looks pretty intense. Her friends stick by her, and it doesn't turn them away from her.

Chapter 14 - When Jessica realizes that Gavin might have an interest in her best friend, she struggles mentally. Right overcomes wrong as she realizes that her friend is wonderful, and she has no right to interfere with anybody's relationship. When the truth comes out - that Fiona is dating Mario - she is very relieved. However, her actions reveal a deep insecurity. Fiona picks up on it, and she reminds her friend that the loss of a leg doesn't mean that she's not worth dating.

Chapter 15 - Chapter 15 revolves around success. Jessica has done very well on her math exam. She is also able to persuade someone else to give Rosa a chance. That seems to mean as much or more to her than the grade on the test.

Chapter 16 - While the last chapter revolves around success, Chapter 16 revolves around hope. The team has raised enough money to cover the leg. Jessica is ready to run again, and now she's indebted to the entire team so she has to go through with it.

Chapter 17 - Most of the excitement of the year is over. Jessica does her best to adapt to life with her disability, acting as normal as possible. She doesn't even bring up the fact that she has a missing leg when she applies for a job. She can't wait to get going on her running leg, but she understands that some things take time. When she is told that



her running leg will take a bit longer, she is disappointed, but she isn't angry. Instead of focusing on the negative, she relishes the positive. Her other new leg is wonderful. She is able to walk much more smoothly.

Chapter 18 - As always, one of the first people to learn about the new leg is Fiona. They celebrate together as they go to work. Jessica notices that something is amiss, and when it turns out to be a surprise party for her, she is overwhelmed by the love and generosity emanating from her family and friends.



Part 5 - Starting Line

Part 5 - Starting Line Summary

Kyro and Hank work with her, and after three sessions, she figures her running leg out. She realizes how out of shape she is, but she knows that she can get back into shape. She's thrilled she can run.

Jessica has her running dream again. She heads back to the house, and she realizes that this time the dream is real.

As Jessica and Sherlock run past Rosa's house, Jessica begins thinking about her friend. Jessica's own life is back on track, that Rosa is still stuck in her wheelchair, invisible to most people. She doesn't want to leave Rosa behind.

Jessica runs into Gavin while she is testing a new idea- running with a wheelchair. He tells her he broke up with his girlfriend, and at the end of the chapter they kiss.

Jessica tells Gavin that she thought he had a thing for Fiona. She tells him about her idea for Rosa. She wants to run a race with the girl so that she can experience crossing the finish line. He decides to train with her.

Her parents see everything out the window. Jessica explains everything to her father, and he says he can do some things that will help the wheelchair work better.

The rest of the summer is wonderful. Jessica spends her time running and training. She visits Rosa and gets permission from Rosa's mother to run in the race with Rosa. Rosa is ecstatic. Jessica gives Rosa a run around the block, and it's completely exhausting. She wonders how she's going to make it the full 10 miles of the race.

Everyone is counting on her, and Jessica knows that she can't back out. She asks her coach for help. He agrees to come up with a training schedule for her.

Training is intense. Gavin joins her, and it helps. People in the town start recognizing her and calling out to her, offering encouragement. Jessica has a big concern. She doesn't want people focusing on her during the race. It's really all about Rosa.

Someone calls the television station, and they want to cover the race. Jessica emphasizes that it's about Rosa, not about her.

Chapter 11 - During one of her morning runs, Jessica stops by the graveyard. A woman comes to the grave, and Jessica greets her. It's Lucy's mother. The mother tells Jessica that Jessica's father has been extremely helpful, helping her out with legalities. The family now has enough money to create a scholarship in Lucy's name.



The school year starts out well. Jessica doesn't have to make up schoolwork, she just has to keep up. Everyone treats her normally except for Meryll, who is nasty. She tells Jessica that Gavin is only dating her because she is his community service project. Gavin reassures her that there is no truth in the statement, but it's hard for her to believe.

Three days before the River Run, Jessica is very concerned that she isn't going to make it through the race. Her coach reassures her. He has her run around the track. She feels completely free without the wheelchair and relishes the running. When she comes back, he notes that she isn't even breathing hard, and she ran a 60.2 without any effort. This bodes well for the track season.

Jessica is raring to go on race day. Ms. Rucker is also running the race. Jessica, her friends, and the teacher are wearing one of the "Root for Rosa" T-shirts. The starting gun goes off.

Jessica has never started a race like this. At first, the running is downhill and quite easy. She goes faster than she planned. This catches up with her later, and she struggles to keep running while pushing Rosa. The crowds support her and cheers her on, calling out Rosa's name. As they cross the finish line, Jessica reflects on her life.

Part 5 - Starting Line Analysis

Up to this point, Jessica has done extremely well with her healing process. Her running leg is probably the most important element of her healing for her, but she has a hard time adjusting to it. Once again, she works hard to figure it out, and she relies on the support of the experts who can help her. The solution is mental. Once she realizes that running is no like walking, everything falls into place and it works.

The dream sequence has come to completion. Each time the reader reads about the dream, there is some variation. The variation in this chapter is a happy one. The reader discovers that the dream is now reality.

Jessica's life is back on track, but she is thinking about Rosa. Jessica has shown great strength of character and consideration for others throughout the book. This continues in Chapter 3. She doesn't want to leave Rosa behind as she symbolically runs ahead.

People have been going out of their way to help Jessica as she heals, and now it's her turn to help someone else. She has the idea of pushing Rosa in a wheelchair through a race. This is a huge decision for Jessica because she has never run that far on her new leg even without pushing something. As she experiments by pushing her own wheelchair, she runs into Gavin. They talk seriously for the first time, and they realize there has been a lot of miscommunication. They kiss, and Jessica is now free to enjoy the relationship. The barriers have been broken down.

Jessica tells Gavin about her plan, and he is in full support. He wants to do something for Rosa, too, and he also wants to help Jessica. He does this by helping her train.



Chapter 6 - Jessica's parents have seen the whole thing between her and Gavin. The reader has seen some tension between Jessica and her father in this book, and Jessica is wondering how he will feel about her new idea. Surprising her, he offers full support. This is another reminder of how Jessica frequently misreads her father.

The rest of the summer is wonderful thanks to Jessica's idea and the support of the people around her. Her father really helps with the wheelchair, Hank gives her some suggestions that make long-distance running easier, and her relationship with Gavin is going well. She avoids Rosa, not because she wants to ignore the girl, but but because she wants the running idea to be a surprise. She realizes that this might not be the best idea since she needs permission from Rosa's mother and Jessica realizes that she should really make sure that Rosa, herself, wants to do it. She goes to their house and tells them her idea, trying to sell it. Rosa is ecstatic. Her mother gives her permission, taking a step of faith.

When Jessica has doubts about her situation, she knows she can't back down. There are too many people relying on her now. She pushes herself physically and mentally, asking for help along the way. She trusts her coach to help her, and she is willing to do the work that it takes to get rows across the finish line.

Months prior, Jessica was hesitant to have people see her without full pants on. Now, she is in their training with everyone without worries regarding her appearance. They accept or easily, and help her reach her goal. She finds support from her family and friends as she did before, but this time she gets support from even more people. The entire town seems to be cheering her on. She knows they are proud of her, but this actually causes her some distress. She doesn't want the focus to be on herself. She wanted to be on Rosa. With her friends, she comes up with a plan to draw attention away from herself and onto Rosa.

The news crews hear about what she is doing, and they support her and her effort to bring Rosa to the forefront. Jessica is now bringing awareness to handicaps by showing that everybody has some sort of disability. This is how people should view others. They should focus on the person, not the disability.

At the beginning of the book, Jessica is In a depressed state. She envies Lucy because she is dead and doesn't have to worry about rehabilitation. Now Jessica feels guilty for feeling that way. She realizes that life is a gift. When she talks with Lucy's mother, she also finds out that her father has reached out to help other people, even as he has worked so hard on facing the family's personal own obstacles.

Everything seems to be easier than the year before. Jessica looks almost completely normal now that she has her new leg, and her schoolwork is easier for her this year. Everything seems to be going well until Merryl knocks her down verbally. This shows that it's easy for Jessica to fall back into feelings of inadequacy. She's human enough to still have this weak area.



Jessica has certain insecurities, and she is willing to share them with the right people. She doesn't tell everybody, but she shares her feelings with her coach, who still supports it. Her unselfish actions, training to help Rosa, have benefited her personally without her realization. She is getting her own speed back on the track, and it looks like it's going to be a promising track year.

The coach tells Jessica that she will do fine in the race, especially when she is feeling with the "race-day magic." He is right, and Jessica is feeling it. Her math teacher from the previous year runs the race, also, wearing the Rosa T-shirt. This shows a connection at a human level, emphasizing that it's important to get to know people personally and not take them at face value.

Jessica gets through the race by sheer willpower and dedication to her cause. She knows how important it is to get Rosa over the finish line, and she goes through agony in order to make this happen. She thinks about Rosa's statement from months before. The finish line is the same as the starting line. She knows that as she takes Rosa across the finish line, she never has to fear anything again. She's attained this goal, and will achieve her future goals. She has a full life ahead of her to embrace, and she has the mental and physical ability to do it. Her race is just beginning.



Characters

Jessica

Jessica is a junior in high school and she is an avid runner. On her way home from a track meet where she beat her own personal best time, a vehicle runs into her bus, leaving her with out a leg. She has a great support system made up of family and friends. They help her cope with her situation, and she also has her own personal determination which helps her adapt to her new life without a leg. She works hard to move as well as she can on a prosthesis. She also learns what it's like to experience life with a handicap. People treat her differently. She befriends a girl with cerebral palsy and now that she has more of an understanding of the other girl's disability and the repercussions of that. Even when she is doing better, she is dedicated to helping the other girl. Jessica is unselfish and hardworking. She wants everyone to realize that it's best to look at individuals for who they are, not what they're disabilities are.

Rosa

Rosa is the girl that Jessica meets in math class. She has cerebral palsy and her brain is amazingly sharp. However, her body is not strong and she has to stay in a wheelchair. The girl sees life differently from others and she is always asking Jessica questions that challenge her to think. Rosa has a gentle spirit and she's full of laughter and love, but most people don't give her a chance. She is also willing to try new things. Jessica wants to give Rosa the experience of crossing a finish line after a race, and Rosa is more than happy to let Jessica push her in the wheelchair throughout the race. Rosa understands her limitations, and she understands that people have a difficult time with others who are handicapped. She is not resentful about it. As Jessica gets better and has more freedom, she goes into some situations where Rosa can't go and Rosa never begrudges her ability to do these things.

Dr. Wells

Dr. Wells is the physician who refers Jessica to the prosthesis doctor.

Mom

This person is a constant support for her daughter. She helps and guides her. She also works on the paperwork end of her husband's business.



Dad

This person works as a handyman. He puts in extremely long hours to help cover his daughter's medical bills.

Hank

Hank is the prosthetist who wants to make a fake leg for Jessica.

Kaylee

Kaylee is Jessica's sister. She is 13 years old and goes to middle school.

Fiona

Fiona is Jessica's best friend who visits her in the hospital. During her visit, Jessica remembers the accident.

Lucy

Lucy is the girl who died in the accident. She was sitting right in front of Jessica.

Gavin Vance

Gavin Vance is the mayor's son. He called Jessica while she is in the hospital to see if she will do an interview for the school paper. She declines.

Vanessa

Vanessa was one Jessica's main rival on the track. She is very selfish and mean.

Claudia

Claudia is Vanessa's mother. She is embarrassed by her daughter's self-absorbed behavior.

Chloe

Chloe is the receptionist at Hank's office. She too has a prosthesis. She offers Jessica hope.



Oscar Pistorius

Oscar Pistorius is a double below-the-knee 400-meter sprinter. He is an inspiration for Jessica.

Ms Rucker

Ms. Rucker is the math teacher. She is strict and doesn't show much compassion.

Eric Hollander

Eric Hollander is the boy who listens to Jessica's recommendation to use Rosa as a math tutor.



Objects/Places

Hospital

The hospital is the place where Jessica goes after her accident and begins to rehabilitate.

Bus

The bus is what Jessica was on when the accident occurred. She was coming home from a track meet.

Harken Street

Harken Street is where Jessica lived. Her house looked the same when she came home, but it had a new ramp.

Track

This is the place where Jessica feels most alive.

Wheelchair

The wheelchair is what Jessica uses when she needs to move around without using her crutches. She uses one on the first day back to school. Rosie tells her that she is likely to be getting a prosthetic leg soon so she can get out of it.

Angelo's

This is the restaurant that Jessica goes to with Fiona. She goes there on her first trip out of the house after the accident.

Math Classroom

The math classroom is where Jessica first meets Rosa and begins a friendship with the girl.

Hank's Office

Hank's office is where Jessica goes to get a prosthesis. It's very white and chalky.



Running Prosthesis

These are special appendages that look like sickles and hooks. They are spiky padded pieces of curved metal that allow leg amputee's to run.

Cerebral Palsy

This is a disease that Rosa has. It occurs in children from birth to three-years-old. It affected her body so she can't walk, but it didn't have any effect on her mind.

River Run

This is the 10-mile race at Jessica joins. She wants to push Rosa in wheelchair through the race to enjoy the riveting experience of crossing a finish line.



Themes

Running

Jessica is a runner. She doesn't run just because she thinks it will keep in shape. To her, running is the breath of life. Her mother jokes that she was born to be a runner. She knows that running is not for everyone. Some people, like her sister, count every step that they take one running, finding it agony. Jessica does not understand this, just as she knows other people can't understand how she enjoys running so much. The fact that she is a runner is the same fact that makes the story so strong. When her leg was taken away from her, Jessica lost her ability to run. Lucy literally lost her life, but Jessica felt as if her life was lost, also, since she couldn't run. Throughout the book, the reader comes to understand the camaraderie that comes along with being part of the track team. The reader identifies the physical and mental struggles that come along with running, and sees how the determination to cross the finish line is the same determination that helps Jessica begin to run once again.

The author uses running to symbolize periods of life. There is a starting point, and there is also the Rigor Mortis Bend - points in a person's life where everything seems against you, and you only survive by willpower and determination. This part of running comes right before the finish line. Rosa points out that the finish line is the same as the starting line. When Jessica finishes the race with Rosa, she reaches her goal of getting the handicapped girl across the finish line, but she also knows that it the starting line for the rest of her own life, and it's something to be embraced.

Friendship

Sometimes friendship can be found in places where you least expect it. Jessica has a really wonderful best friend named Fiona. She visits her in the hospital, and she is a good enough friend that she forcefully takes Jessica out of the house when she realizes that Jessica is slipping into a depression. She goes out of her way to help Jessica get back into the swing of things and adjust to school.

Back at school, the math teacher makes Jessica sit next to a girl named Rosa. This girl has cerebral palsy, and she is difficult to understand. She and Jessica write notes to each other, and a friendship begins to build. Fiona has been such a good friend to Jessica that it's difficult for Jessica to get used to the idea of doing things with someone else as well. She is also a bit worried about how others will perceive her if she hangs out with a handicapped girl. Once she let go of these insecurities, the two develop a beautiful friendship in which they help each other. Rosa is Jessica's motivation to run and train hard after she gets her new running leg. She wants to help her friend experience something that she won't ever be able to do on our own. Jessica wants to get Rosa across the finish line. Rosa has things to offer in the friendship, too. She is a



genius at math, and that is something that Jessica will never be able to understand fully on her own. Rosa helps Jessica with the math.

Perspective

A major theme in this book is perspective. When Jessica is in the hospital at the beginning of the book, she feels as if her own life is over. In fact, she wishes that she was like Lucy, who died in the accident. When she visits Lucy's grave months later, things have changed in her life, and she feels guilty for thinking that way in the hospital. Her perspective has changed. Opening her mind to new ideas and concepts and seeing things from a different perspective is a major part of Jessica's healing process. When she tries to take her first shower and has a difficult time getting in, she suddenly begins to realize what it might have been like if she had lost an arm. It would have been very difficult. With this new perspective, she is thankful that she has her arms.

Becoming handicapped herself gives Jessica a new perspective on others with handicaps. People stare at her, or they ignore her. She realizes that she is guilty of ignoring other people with handicaps. She never knew Rosa, even though they were in the same math class. She never gave Rosa a chance because she was difficult to communicate with, and she couldn't do things other students did. When Jessica came to know Rosa, she realized how wrong this was. It became her goal to have people see other individuals as people rather than as people with handicaps. Even when things were difficult for Jessica, thanks to her new perspective, she realized that they could have been much worse. Her leg was gone, but she has the opportunity to get out of the wheelchair. She knows that Rosa never will get out of hers. This new perspective helps Jessica reach out and help others so that they can make the most out of their own situation in their own life.



Style

Point of View

The point-of-view of the novel is the first person. Since its in the first person, the reader can really connect to Jessica, seeing her doubts, insecurities, and her courage firsthand. Jessica is a runner struggling to heal. Since the family is so close, Jessica talks with them and listens to their suggestions and advice. She tries things that she wouldn't generally try such as going back to Hank for a prosthesis. Her willingness to try along with their support, help her achieve her goal of running again.

The author highlights not only the Vicky's dialogue, but also her introspective thoughts. Through this, the reader understands that she isn't always upbeat and lighthearted. She has to really work on being kind to others around her. Jessica finds it hard to let others see her leg and her own inadequacies, but she knows it's all part of the process of becoming the person she will be for the rest of her life.

She has a strong sense of self, and shows enough negative traits to be perceived as human rather than some paragon of virtue that turns the reader off. This is shown when she is hesitant to sit with Rosa because she doesn't want to be labeled by the other students.

By the end of the novel, the reader is completely connected to Jessica due to the first-person writing approach. The connection is so solid that when Jessica crosses the finish line, it feels like a personal triumph for the reader. As she states that the finish line is really her beginning, it makes the reader want to stand up and cheer then watch to see what she will do next in life.

Setting

"The Running Dream" by Wendelin Van Draanen opens in the hospital. The first portion of the book shows Jessica as she struggles to move from her bed to the bathroom. When Jessica leaves the hospital, she goes to her home, which could be any type of rural or suburban house.

Her family is not poverty stricken, but they also don't have excessive funds. Neither does the school. Other schools around them have better tracks, but her school doesn't have the money for that. Instead, their team excels thanks to the closeness of the runners. Jessica goes to Hank's office on a regular basis for fittings. Everything in that office is white and chalky. She lives in an area where it is safe for her to go and run by herself even when it's early in the morning. The town is small enough that the people in it know one another and recognize her as she goes out to run.



Language and Meaning

The language in "The Running Dream" by Wendelin Van Draanen is very relaxed and easy to read. Difficult words are sparse and they are used in context so that it's easy to understand them. The main character is a girl in high school and the words chosen in the book reflect that. There are no trendy words, which means this book is evergreen. The book is also very clean and even when Jessica is in the most vile temper, she never resorts to swearing.

Jessica is a runner and so there is a wide range of running vocabulary. Since she has lost a leg and is frequently in doctors' offices, there is also a bit of medical jargon. Rosa constantly jots notes to Jessica, inspiring her to think beyond the average situation. This book entices the reader to do the same through its language and introspective looks.

Structure

"The Running Dream" by Wendelin Van Draanen contains five sections. Each section is between 60 and 100 pages long. The parts are labeled with running terms.

Part 1 is entitled Finish Line. It has 26 chapters in it, and each chapter ranges between one page and three pages.

Part 2, entitled Headwind, has this team chapters, which range between two and five pages.

Part 3, entitled Straightaway, consists of 24 chapters that range between one and five pages each.

Part 4, Adjusting the Blocks, consists of 18 chapters. Each chapter ranges between one and six pages.

The final section of the book is Part 5. It's entitled Starting Line. The 15 chapters in this part mostly range between two and four pages long. However, the very last chapter is nine pages long. It's the longest chapter of the book.

After the last chapter of the book, the author has a page of acknowledgments. This is followed by a brief page about the author.



Quotes

"I cry myself back to sleep, wishing, pleading, praying that I'll wake up from this, but the nightmare always awaits me." (Part 1, Chapter 1, The Running Dream, p. 3).

"I am a runner. That's what I do. That's who I am. Running is all I know, or want, or care about." (Part 1, Chapter 2, The Running Dream, p. 6).

"I start paying attention to all my movements. How one arm complements the other." (Part 2, Chapter 3, The Running Dream, p. 72).

"Everywhere I go, I feel like the elephant in the room." (Part 2, Chapter 11, The Running Dream, p. 99).

"But... but if I start sitting with special needs kids, that is what people think." (Part 2, Chapter 12, The Running Dream, p. 106).

"I suddenly really get that I am lucky. I'll never do a 55 flat in the 400 again, but I will stand on my own again." (Part 2, Chapter 12, The Running Dream, p. 127).

"And then the camera pulls back and I see that there are two of the spiky padded pieces of curved metal and that they're attached to...legs." (Part 3, Chapter 6, The Running Dream, p. 144).

"That's the funny thing about running. The deceptive thing about it. It may seem mindless, but it's really largely mental. If the mind's not strong, the body acts weak, even if it's not." (Part 3, Chapter 10, The Running Dream, p. 157).

"My mother says that I was born a runner; that I entered this world wanting to get up and go." (Part 3, Chapter 10, The Running Dream, p. 157).

"Going over the finish line must be wonderful....It means you finished...It's symbolic...because it's also the starting line." (Part 4, Chapter 1, The Running Dream, p. 214).

"I'm thinking Rosa and I could do the River Run together." (Part 5, Chapter 7, The Running Dream, p. 297).

"That wasn't a finishing line for me...This is my new starting line." (Part 5, Chapter 15, The Running Dream, p. 332).

Topics for Discussion

Why was Jessica's injury so devastating for her?

How did your family show her their support?

How did her friends and teammates show her their support?

What inspired Jessica to think about running the River Run?

What was unique about the relationship between Jessica and Rosa?

In what ways did Rosa inspire Jessica?

How did Jessica show her appreciation for Rosa and how did this affect everyone around the two girls?