

# Lucy?

By Emma C. Rhode

Featuring characters from  
“The Running Dream” by Wendelin Van Draanen

“Gather ‘round runners! The track meet’s about to start!” Kyro called to the team.

We all assembled a circle around him and held hands.

“You’ve all been training and working towards this moment for a long time. So, we’re gonna get out there and show ‘em what we’re made of!” he energetically said as he made eye contact with every one of us.

“Let’s do it for Lucy,” his face crinkled with sadness and looked up at the sky. I closed my eyes and bowed my head.

“She and Jessica’s leg were taken from us in that car accident,” Kyro continued.

There was a moment of silence before he shouted: “Let’s do this!”

We all hollered and bounced up and down. I saw my parents standing up in the bleachers, smiling and waving at me to get my attention. I cheered my friends on in all of their events. The ball was in my court now. I made my way over to the starting line for the 400-meter race. I ensured my prosthetic leg was on tight and would not get loose. The five other girls were staring at it, but I was used to it. Butterflies filled my stomach and my heart was pounding so fast, I thought it was going to pop out of my chest.

As soon as I heard the gunshot, I dashed forward and I sliced to the left side of the track. I was the 4th in line and the first girl wasn’t a long way ahead. I needed to get up there. I accelerated my pace and was in third place. I kept a steady pace until one girl attempted to pass me, so I ran faster. It was crucial that I saved every ounce of energy for the last 100 meters. Halfway through the race, the girl ahead of me started to slow down and when I passed her, she was panting and her face was scrunched up with pain. The girl in the first place was about 10 meters ahead. I began coming up short on breath, but I didn’t care, I continued onward. And then the dreaded Rigor Mortis Bend was coming closer. The place where your stomach feels like jelly and you are greeted with a headwind. It’s the last turn until the finish line. My lungs ached for air and my quads turned to cement as I tried to catch the girl ahead of me. My calf felt like lead and I wanted to collapse right on the track. In the corner of my eye, I saw my parents on their feet, hands in the air, screaming something, but their words were muffled and carried out by the wind.

And then I saw her. Lucy was standing at the very top of the hill, by a tree. The whole world seemed to disappear as if it was just Lucy and I. But how? Her long, golden hair and her white, glossy silk dress flowed in the wind. Her sun-kissed skin gleamed and fit perfectly with her profound, sapphire blue eyes. Seeing her made me realize even more what a mess I was. She was smiling at me and afterward, she moved her lips.

“Finish what you started,” I heard her say as though she were directly alongside me, whispering in my ear.

Out of nowhere, I felt a burst of energy blazing throughout my entire body. I blinked the sweat out of my eyes, pumped my arms, and stared straight at the finish line. I pounced forward, picking up speed by the second. My stride grew and I stretched out like a cheetah hunting its prey. I passed the girl ahead of me with 50 meters left. My legs felt like they were ablaze and my lungs were giving out, but I

propelled myself forward, harder than I ever have before. I zoomed across the finish line and it took a few yards for me to come to a complete stop. Bent down with my hands on my knees, I gasped for air.

My teammates ran onto the track to me, cheering “Jessica! Jessica!”

The salty taste of sweat filled my tongue and I could hear applause coming from the stands. Exhausted, I managed to stand up and turn around.

I looked at the top of the hill next to the tree and Lucy was gone.