

The Race of Her Life

“Adele! Come on, wake up! You have *practice* this morning.”

Fourteen-year-old Adele Trisk stirred in her bed and groaned. “Ooh ... with summer break, I forgot. Can I skip it, Mom? Maybe not run so much over summer?”

“When you’re pursuing athletic goals, Adele, there is no such thing as a vacation. You have to practice every day.”

Adele yawned, sat up, and stretched.

“When you decided to become a competitive runner,” her mother continued, “you knew there were going to be many sacrifices, but you committed to the coaching, and nothing could change your mind. Don’t waste all this training just because you don’t feel like running today.”

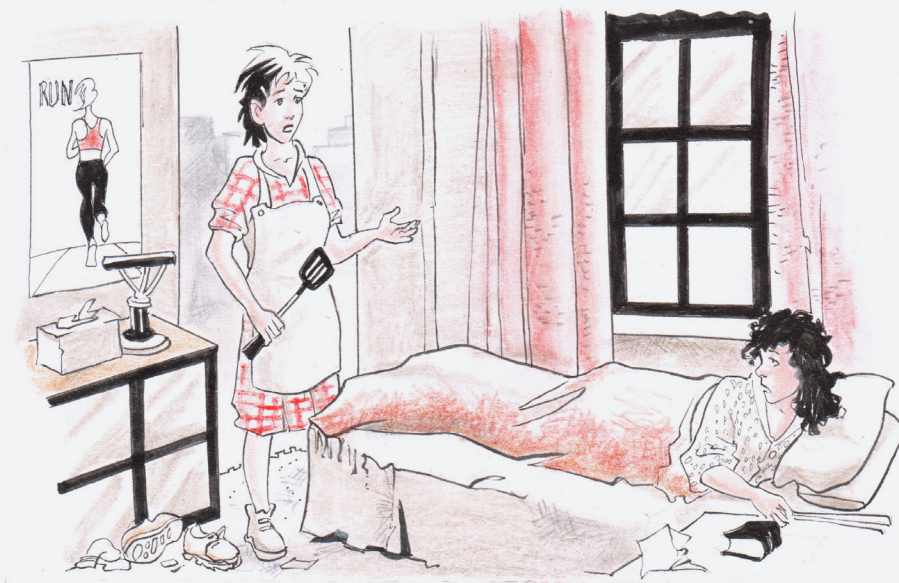
“You’re right, Mom.” Adele had been training for nearly two years, with a goal to one day participate in international competitions, and she was now one of the best on her team. Although these years had not been without their difficulties and sacrifices, she felt a sense of personal accomplishment.

After her early morning run, Adele rested on a park bench and thought of what her mother had said to her. Back at home, she told her mother, “Thank you for helping me get moving this morning even when I didn’t feel like it.”

“Well, you have persevered with this tough program, and you are succeeding,” said her mother. “That is commendable.”

Adele thanked and hugged her mother, then bounded out of the door for the gym to train with the rest of her team. While she and the other five girls on the team were waiting for their coach to arrive, they noticed a new girl standing near the doorway. She looked about fifteen and was dressed in the team’s training outfit.





“Team, I’d like you to meet Lina Colwich,” the coach said when he entered the gym. “She recently transferred here from another team. Please take the time to get to know her and make her feel welcome.”

Intrigued, the rest of the team stood silently assessing the newcomer. This was the first time someone had joined the team in over a year. The coach blew his whistle, and all attention turned toward warm-up exercises and drills.

At the end of practice, Adele decided to strike up a conversation with Lina. She was hesitant, as Lina was older than her and had seemed confident during practice. Mustering up courage, Adele approached her.

“Hi, my name is Adele.”

“Well, I guess you already know mine is Lina,” the girl answered with a quick smile that welcomed friendly conversation

“What brought you to our team?” Adele asked.

“My dad recently transferred for work,” said Lina. “This is the only team in the area that is at the level of competition for which I’ve

been training. The adjustment with the move has been difficult, and I wasn’t sure how I’d feel about a new team as I was with my previous team for over five years.”

“I’m sorry if we didn’t seem more, umm ... *welcoming* initially,” said Adele. “We haven’t had anyone new join the team in quite a while. I guess we’ve gotten comfortable with our crowd. Anyway, I’m glad you can join us ... and see you at practice tomorrow, right?”

Lina smiled. “Right!”

* * *

A few weeks later, Adele’s mother told her, “Your coach called and asked if we could show up at the gym a little earlier

tomorrow for practice. He wants to talk to you.”

Early the next morning, Adele went to the gym. Lina was waiting too.

“Good morning,” said the coach. “I’m sure you’re both wondering why I asked you to come in early.”

The girls nodded.

“A talent scout will be attending a competition—a five thousand meters race—that I would like both of you to participate in. I’ve talked with your parents, and they have agreed to your involvement, but the final decision is yours. Both of you have impressive times, and you’ve been consistent in your improvement, but if you want to participate, your training schedule will be more rigorous for the next few weeks. I’m confident you’ll continue to progress.”

Adele and Lina looked at each other in astonishment at this unexpected but exciting news. A talent scout’s presence at a competition was overwhelming, and Adele wondered whether anything would come of it. While she enjoyed running and always did her best, she was one of the youngest on the team. By the time the coach finished explaining about the competition’s training regimen, the rest of the team began arriving for practice.



When practice was over, Adele sat silently on the bench. Lina interrupted her thoughts. “Hey! What’s up, Adele? You seemed a bit distracted today.”

“Um, I guess I’m still trying to wrap my head around the upcoming competition.”

“Me too. But we’re in this together, right? If there’s anything I can do to help, let me know.”

Adele mustered up a smile “Thanks, Lina. I’m glad we have each other. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

* * *

And the great day finally arrived! Adele was nervous, but that did not diminish her excitement about the event. The coach came up to her along with Lina.

“We’ll have to get to the track early,” he said. “We can do a few laps and preparatory stretches to make sure you are warmed up.”

Lina did not respond. She was feeling unwell. Unbeknownst to the coach, she had sprained her ankle during practice the day before. It had not hurt her much, so she kept the injury to herself. Now it was hurting more than it had yesterday.

“Is your ankle all right, Lina?” the coach asked as they began their warm-up exercises. “It looks as though...”

“Huh? Oh! Yeah ... it’s fine.”

Coach wasn’t so sure. He called the doctor over to look, and the doctor said the sprain would take at least a week to heal.

“Additional strain on it now could increase the injury and even cause permanent damage,” he said.

With the race set to start in a couple of hours, there was no way Lina could compete.

“I know you must be disappointed,” Coach said. “But your well-being is

more important than this race. There will be other opportunities.”

Lina nodded and bit her lip in disappointment, but beyond her own disappointment, she knew Adele needed her support.

“I’m so nervous,” Adele whispered to her once the coach had gone to confer further with the doctor. “I was relying on doing this with you. I don’t know if I can do it on my own.”

“Of course, you can. You’ve been training hard for this; we both have. So go out there and show them you can win!”

“But I wasn’t expecting to be doing this alone.”



“You’re not alone, Adele. We’re all here to support you. Whenever I’m nervous at a competition I block out all the crowds, the other racers ... in fact, just about *everything*. I remind myself that I run because I *enjoy* it, and I’m excited to see how I can do this time around. Praying brings me calm and helps me focus too.”

“Thanks, Lina. I’ll remember that.”

Adele found a quiet corner, closed her eyes, and focused on her love of running and prayed for the perseverance needed to complete the race. Soon her pre-race jitters faded, and she felt confidence take over her mind as she positioned her foot on the starting block. The starting pistol sounded, and Adele set off. It was a long race, and even as she struggled to keep up her pace, she could sense her team’s confidence and support. She also knew that no matter the outcome, she had given her best.

As she began the final lap, her body became weary, and she worried that she would not have the energy to complete the race.

Jesus, give me strength! she prayed.

Suddenly, as the finish line came in sight, she no longer felt tired. She rounded the last curve behind several runners,

and with a sudden burst of speed, she sprinted toward the finish line.

It was not until the crowds cheered that she stopped and realized that she had won the race!

“I knew you could do it!” Lina exclaimed. “You held strong throughout and pushed hard that last lap. You were amazing!”

“Having your support made all the difference!” Adele said.



Delight filled Adele’s heart as she received her medal. But beyond the accolades, she had found something more important that day—the support of friendship and the confidence that only comes from Jesus, a friend who would be giving her the strength to persevere through any challenge and win the race.

