

Running Short

A short screenplay
by
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1 EXT. RUNNING TRACK - DAY

1

Two feet, bound in bright running shoes, run along between the white lines of a running track marked out on a humble oval. The feet pound into the turf.

Two knees, moving fast, leaping high into the air as the RUNNER tries to get every inch from every step.

Two arms, pumping hard, as the runner uses them to propel his legs faster and faster.

The feet move faster now as he accelerates his speed.

A second pair of feet hit the turf, further ahead in the lane. They land softer, more elegant.

The first set of knees leap higher now as the first runner accelerates even more.

A second set of knees now - also being raised higher as the second runner tries also to pick up the pace.

The first set of arms pumping harder, striving for every last ounce of energy.

The second set of arms, beginning to flail as the runner tires badly, losing their form.

The first set of feet now hit the track even harder as they catch up to the second set of feet.

The first set of feet now go past the second set of feet, sprinting towards the finish line.

The first runner, PATRICK, an athletic looking young man of around 17, throws his body forward as he breaks the finishing line marked by a white line across the track.

Behind we see the second runner, a pretty Indigenous Australian girl, JASMINE also around 17 slowing down as she too comes to the line.

Patrick immediately bends over, gasping for breath and wheezing.

Jasmine seems less exhausted and stands upright hands on hips, sucking in the oxygen.

From across the oval we hear a voice call.

JIM (V.O.)

Save something for Saturday.

JIM FISHER, the High School athletics coach stands nearby, stop watch in his hands. He looks at the runners, exasperated.

Patrick manages to raise his hand and wave at his coach.

Jasmine approaches Patrick, concerned at his continued wheezing.

JASMINE

You alright ?

Patrick just waves her away, still gasping for breath.

2

EXT. BACK OF GRANDSTAND - DAY

2

Patrick comes out of the humble change room at the school oval.

He carries a sports bag, his wet hair is combed and he is now dressed in his school uniform - shirt and pants, no tie.

Jasmine appears behind him from the girl's change room. She also has sports bag and has changed into her simple uniform.

JASMINE

Result will be different on the weekend.

Patrick turns to Jasmine. He tries to smile but he still looks a bit shaken.

PATRICK

No it won't.

The effort of speaking forces Patrick to cough.

Jasmine reaches Patrick, her face becomes more serious.

JASMINE

What happened out there ?

PATRICK

I beat you - that's what.

JASMINE

I meant afterwards. You were wheezing pretty bad.

PATRICK

It's nothing.

JASMINE

Do you have asthma ?

PATRICK

I used to. Anyway, it's none of your business.

Jasmine looks at him.

JASMINE

Sounds like you do. Have you been to your doctor lately ?

Patrick sees Jim approaching behind Jasmine and holds up his hand to silence her.

Jim is holding up his stop watch.

JIM

Best time yet. You two are looking great.

Patrick covers up his serious conversation with Jasmine with a quick joke.

PATRICK

(breaking into a smile)

And not just when we're running.

Jim smiles.

JIM

Now, on a more serious note. I've just been on the phone to the regional selectors and they say only the winners this year will go to the state finals. Not like last year. It's only the first boy and girl across the line.

PATRICK

Well then - you're looking at them.

JIM

I just hope you can run as good as you can talk.

Jim moves off leaving Jasmine and Patrick.

Jasmine watches Jim go. Beat.

JASMINE

He doesn't know does he.

PATRICK

No, and he doesn't need to. He'll just make a big thing out of it. It's not serious.

JASMINE

Patrick - Asthma is serious.

But Patrick is already walking off.

PATRICK

(calling back)

I'd race you to the bus stop but I already know I'd win.

Patrick turns and smiles back at her. He keeps walking.

Jasmine watches him go, a concerned look on her face.

3

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

3

The next day. The sounds of school recess, students chatting.

Patrick leans down at a water bubbler, taking a drink.

He looks up to see HEIDI standing in front of him. The "vampy" bad girl of the school, Heidi is wearing make up and has given her uniform a bit of a gothic twist. She smiles down at Patrick.

HEIDI

So, they tell me you're pretty good ?

Patrick looks up, a little confused.

HEIDI

At running, stupid. Got some big race on the weekend. Mr Fisher keeps going on about it - Patrick Bourke this, Patrick Bourke that.

Patrick smiles, enjoying the attention.

PATRICK

Well, he'd know.

HEIDI
Think you're pretty good, don't you ?

Heidi opens her hands to reveal a pack of cigarettes.

HEIDI
Want one ?

Patrick doesn't really know what to do. He hesitates.

HEIDI
Or are you scared ?

PATRICK
Just don't feel like it.

HEIDI
(starting to leave)
Your loss.

PATRICK
(quickly)
Alright. Give me one.

HEIDI
Not here dummy.

Heidi indicates for Patrick to follow her.

4 EXT. BACK OF SCHOOL BLOCK - DAY.

4

In the smoker's corner at the back of one of the school buildings a group of STUDENTS, boys and girls, are having a few secret puffs.

Heidi arrives in the group, Patrick close behind.

One of the other girls is a little suspicious.

SUZIE
Who's this ?

HEIDI
Forget it Suzie. He's with me.

The group reacts with a chorus of "Ooooh!", teasing Heidi.

Heidi takes a cigarette out and offers one to Patrick. Patrick takes the cigarette. Heidi lights Patrick's cigarette.

Patrick takes a puff and smiles at Heidi, trying to look cool. Heidi smiles back, lighting her cigarette. (PLEASE NOTE: In this scene we need to cheat all the smoking so the actors only look like they're smoking. We don't want the young actors actually having to smoke on the day.)

Suddenly Patrick begins to cough as the smoke irritates his lungs. He bends over, coughing and wheezing.

The other students begin to laugh, teasing him. Heidi stands up for him.

HEIDI

Shut up. He's just got something stuck in his throat. Shut up !

Suddenly one of the other students calls out:

WENDY

Prefect !

All the students quickly ditch their cigarettes. Heidi flicks her cigarette away and then quickly gets rid of Patrick's.

Jasmine appears from around the corner, a Prefect's badge on her jumper.

HEIDI

Come to join us Jazz ?

JASMINE

Didn't you hear the bell ?

HEIDI

No we're deaf, Miss Perfect.

JASMINE

That's Prefect.

Jasmine stands looking at the group. The other students realise she isn't leaving till they do so they troop off, led by an angry Heidi.

As the others leave it reveals Patrick, bent over against the wall again gasping for breath.

Jasmine can't believe it.

JASMINE

Smoking too ? You sure know how to impress a girl.

Patrick turns away, finding it hard to catch his breath. Jasmine goes closer.

JASMINE

Watch it Patrick. You could really get yourself in trouble.

PATRICK

I gotta go.

Patrick starts to leave.

Jasmine stands in his way, blocking his path.

JASMINE

Listen to me. If you keep going on like this and don't treat your asthma - something really bad will happen.

PATRICK

Like what ?

JASMINE

Like my cousin Matthew. He died of an asthma attack. And he wasn't much older than us. He died Patrick, you hear me ? It's serious.

PATRICK

You trying to scare me ?

JASMINE

No. I'm just trying to get you to treat your asthma seriously.

Beat. Patrick looks at her.

PATRICK

Like I said. I don't have asthma.

JASMINE

Patrick -

But Patrick just brushes past her and keeps going.

5

EXT. REGIONAL ATHLETICS MEET - DAY.

5

Establishing shot of Regional Athletics meet.

Races are already in progress and field events.

Young athletes warm up for their events, parents and other supporters mingle in the grandstand, chatting and cheering on their runners.

6 EXT. REGIONAL ATHLETICS MEET : OUTSIDE DRESSING SHED 6

Behind the grandstand Jasmine leans over her bag, finding her turbuhaler.

Jasmine sits and begins to use her turbuhaler correctly, preparing herself properly for the race.

Patrick comes around the side of the grandstand, looking for Jasmine. He is wearing a bright red running singlet.

PATRICK

Hey Jazz, we gonna warm up or what ?

Jasmine looks up to see Patrick.

Patrick is shocked to see Jasmine using the turbuhaler.

JASMINE

I told you I knew a bit about it.

Jasmine finishes. She shows the turbuhaler to Patrick.

PATRICK

You always take drugs before you run ?

JASMINE

Yeah, if you don't want to have an asthma attack in the middle of the race.

Jasmine is unimpressed. She can't believe Patrick would be such an idiot. Patrick just laughs.

PATRICK

See you at the finish line. I'll be the one who's already won.

Jasmine watches Patrick go, worried now. She places the turbuhaler back in her bag.

Jasmine sees Jim walking towards the track.

JASMINE
 (calls)
 Mr Fisher. Mr Fisher.

She sprints off towards Jim.

7 EXT. REGIONAL ATHLETICS MEET : NEAR RUNNING TRACK 7

Jim stops and turns as Jasmine races up to him. Behind them we see the Athletics meet continuing.

JIM
 Jazz, what is it ?

JASMINE
 Mr Fisher ...

JIM
 Yes, what's wrong ?

Jasmine looks over to see Patrick stretching near the fence.

Jasmine knows what she should say but she still can't bring herself to say it. Beat.

JASMINE
 Just wanted to know where we warm up ?

JIM
 (pointing)
 Over there. Go with Patrick. He'll show you.

JASMINE
 Okay.

Jasmine walks away slowly towards Patrick.

Jim watches her go. He thinks something is going on but he just can't work out what.

8 EXT. REGIONAL ATHLETICS MEET : STARTING LINE - DAY. 8

At the start line of the cross country course Patrick stands among ten or so other RUNNERS - boys and girls. Further down the line we also see Jasmine.

Above them a large signs reads - "Regional Cross Country Finals".

The runners bounce up and down on the spot, staying warm before the race begins.

Jim stands among a group of PARENTS and COACHES, watching on, stop watch at the ready.

Next to him we see a group of Jasmine's friends holding a sign, "Go Jazz".

The STARTER calls the runners to their marks.

Patrick bends down into a crouch, his ear cocked listening for the whistle.

Jasmine also goes into a crouch, arms a little raised.

The STARTER blows his whistle.

Patrick leaps off the starting line and sprints down the straight, trying to open up a lead before the tougher terrain.

He quickly establishes a lead, beating the others for pace.

Jasmine is back among the pack, the leading girl settled among the boys.

The crowd cheers their encouragement as the first runner, Patrick, disappears into the trees that mark the start of the course proper.

9 EXT. CROSS COUNTRY TRACK - DAY.

9

Patrick has opened up a comfortable lead early in the race and he bounds along a dirt track, among trees and around rocks.

We hear only his breathing now and see his POV as he runs through the trees, the sun beating down through the leaves on to his head.

Patrick leaps over a rock and turns up a steep hill, following the bunting marking out the course.

Again just his breathing and his POV, eyes fixed on the track ahead winding up the hill.

Patrick raises his arms and knees higher, struggling as the hill increases its angle.

Now his breathing becomes heavier, more strained, we can hear him beginning to wheeze as the asthma attacks begins to envelope him.

From his POV we see the track begin to tilt before us, swinging from side to side.

We hear only wheezing now as his POV tilts even further and suddenly points down towards the track and then just as quickly up at the sky, catching the sun between the trees.

Patrick has stopped caught in a full blown asthma attack. He staggers to the bushes at the side of the track and props himself up against a tree, gasping for breath, his face red and panicked.

Slowly he slips down, falling behind the tree, now obscured from the running track.

Up on the track one MALE RUNNER goes past and now another SECOND MALE RUNNER also keeps going, not seeing Patrick and not realising the danger he's in .

Now Jasmine reaches the spot where Patrick has fallen. She is the leading female in the race.

We see her POV as she runs and in the corner of her eye she sees a familiar flash of red, lying among the trees on the side of the track.

She comes to an abrupt stop and looks closer into the trees. She realises it is Patrick and races over to him.

She bursts through the bushes and kneels beside him.

Patrick looks up at her, his eyes are filled with panic. He is gasping for breath. He tries to talk but is only able to stammer out short phrases.

PATRICK

(gasping)

Don't know ...

(gasp)

what's ... wrong ...

(gasp)

can't ... breathe ...

Jasmine takes his hand and helps him sit up.

JASMINE

It's okay Patrick. I'm with you. Just stay calm, and try to breathe slowly. In and out.

Patrick tries to follow Jasmine's instructions. He breathes in and out slowly once then begins to wheeze again.

JASMINE

Slowly. In and out. I'll get help.

Jasmine looks back on to the track as another male runner, PETER, runs by.

JASMINE
(calling)
Hey Pete ! Stop !

Peter keeps running.

PETER
What !?!

JASMINE
It's Patrick. He's had an asthma attack.

Peter stops. He looks back to see Jasmine and Patrick in the bushes.

PETER
Jazz - I'll lose the race.

JASMINE
Pete - he could die. Go back and tell Mr
Fisher we need the Asthma Emergency Kit.

Peter, somewhat reluctantly, turns and sprints off back down the track.

Patrick is still struggling to breathe.

10

EXT. STARTING LINE - DAY.

10

At the starting line Jim stands with the group of Jasmine's supporters. They are chatting animatedly, looking out for any sign of the leaders.

Jim looks down at his stop watch.

JIM
They'd be about half way now.

Suddenly there is a voice behind them.

PETER
(yelling, exhausted)
Patrick Bourke's having an Asthma attack.
Jazz says we need the Asthma Emergency
Kit.

Jim and the group of supporters turn to see Peter standing behind them, panting for breath.

His first reaction is one of complete shock.

JIM

Asthma ?

Jim picks up the Asthma Emergency Kit bum bag from near a pile of sporting equipment near the finishing line.

JIM

(to Peter)

Show me where they are.

11 EXT. CROSS COUNTRY TRACK - DAY.

11

Jasmine still kneels beside Patrick who is still gasping for breath. His face is going blue now.

JASMINE

Patrick - you gotta listen to me now. Just relax and try to breath. You're making it worse.

(looking around)

Where are they ?

Jim arrives followed by a Race Official, Peter and Patrick's concerned mother, DEBORAH. Jim is carrying an Asthma Emergency Kit bum bag.

DEBORAH

Patrick ! What's wrong ?

JIM

Calm down Deb. He's having an asthma attack.

DEBORAH

Asthma. I didn't know ...

JIM

Neither did I.

JASMINE

(to JIM)

I need the blue puffer.

JIM

The quick reliever. Sure.

Jim kneels beside them and opens the Asthma Emergency kit. An Asthma First Aid Plan brochure is visible. Jim hands Jasmine the Blue Reliever Puffer.

Jasmine lifts Patrick's head and gives him the medication in the correct manner using a blue reliever puffer with a spacer. (1 puff, 4 breaths).

JASMINE

Just take four breaths after each puff Patrick. We do that four times then wait four minutes to see how you're going.

Patrick's breathing starts to improve slightly. He is still having problems speaking and looks distressed.

OFFICIAL

(to JIM)

I'll call the Ambulance.

JIM

Thanks Geoff. It's a pretty bad attack.

The OFFICIAL moves off taking out his mobile phone to call the Ambulance.

Close up on Patrick, his breathing continuing to improve slowly.

The concerned faces of Jim and Jasmine.

12

INT. ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DAY.

12

A short time later Patrick is on a stretcher being wheeled through the hospital Emergency Area by TWO NURSES.

Patrick looks very pale and has an oxygen mask on. His Mother is walking with the stretcher.

Jasmine and Jim stand nearby watching the stretcher go past. There is blood on Jasmine's legs.

JIM

What about you ?

JASMINE

Just scratched it, getting into the bushes.

JIM

You still better get it looked at. Could be infected.

Jasmine nods. Beat.

Jim looks at her.

JIM

They said you were in first place. Gave up your chance of running at the State Titles.

Jasmine lowers her head, she looks over towards where Patrick has left.

JASMINE

So did Pete. But he could've died.

JIM

No, he would've died, if not for you. I hate to think what would've happened if you hadn't seen him.

JASMINE

It was his red singlet. Saw it in the trees.

JIM

Why didn't he tell me ? How could he be that stupid ?

Jasmine eyes suddenly fill with tears.

JASMINE

It's my fault. I should've told you.

JIM

You knew ?

JASMINE

He was worried you wouldn't let him run.

JIM

Of course he can run. He just needs to take care of his asthma and see his doctor regularly.

Jim looks at Jasmine.

JIM
I let you run don't I ?

Jasmine is silent. Jim realises how bad she feels.

JIM
It's okay. He's alright. But next time if you know something - speak up, or someone could die.

Jasmine nods.

JIM
All that training - looks like neither one of you is going to the state titles now.

Out on Jasmine, bitterly disappointed, as Jim's words hit home.

13

INT. ROOM : ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DAY.

13

The next day Patrick lies in a hospital bed in a ward of the Children's Hospital. He looks much better than we saw him last but it's clear he hasn't completely recovered from his ordeal.

Jasmine enters, a big smile on her face. The feelings between these two are now out in the open.

JASMINE
How you feeling ?

PATRICK
Bit better. Still pretty shaky.

JASMINE
Well, you did almost die. Got a surprise for you.

PATRICK
What ?

JASMINE
Brought you a visitor.

Jasmine bounds over and pulls open the door. Standing behind it is KYLE VAN DER KYPE, Olympic hurdler, who also has asthma.

He smiles and makes his way over to Patrick.

Patrick is stunned.

PATRICK
Kyle Van der Kype !

JASMINE
The one and only.

Kyle reaches them.

PATRICK
What are you doing here ?

KYLE
Just visiting some friends and Jasmine
told me about what happened. Thought I'd
stick around and make sure you've got your
facts straight.

Patrick looks confused.

KYLE
I've got asthma too.

Patrick is amazed.

PATRICK
But you ran at the Olympics ?

KYLE
And you can too - if you treat your asthma
seriously.

Patrick looks away from Kyle. Beat. He sees a pen and a pad on the table
beside his bed.

PATRICK
Hey Kyle, can I get your autograph ?

Kyle looks at Patrick.

KYLE
Sure - if you promise you won't let this
happen again ?

Beat. Patrick looks guilty. He nods.

PATRICK
Learnt my lesson big time.

KYLE

Good to hear. And they've given you the
ammo to fight it ?

Patrick reaches over to a bag on the table beside his bed containing his
asthma medication. He pulls it on to his lap.

PATRICK

In here.

Kyle signs the autograph. He hands it to Patrick.

KYLE

Then here you go.

PATRICK

Awesome. Thanks !

KYLE

Look I gotta go. But nice to meet you two.

JASMINE

Thanks Kyle.

Kyle shakes Jasmine's hand. He turns to Patrick and shakes his hand.

KYLE

And I don't want to hear anymore bad
reports about you.

PATRICK

You won't Mr Kyle.

Patrick is embarrassed but Kyle just smiles.

KYLE

It's just Kyle.

JASMINE

(to KYLE)

I'll walk you out.

Jasmine shows Kyle out.

Patrick is alone. He looks down at Kyle's autograph. He gazes at it for a
long moment.

Patrick's POV of autograph. It reads: "To Patrick, Keep running ! Kyle
van der Kype."

Patrick glances back at his bag with the Asthma medication.

Patrick's POV of the bag.

14

INT. CORRIDOR - ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL : DAY

14

Jasmine sees Kyle out of the ward.

JASMINE

Thanks so much Kyle.

KYLE

No worries.

Kyle walks off down the corridor.

Jasmine catches the eye of a NURSE watching Kyle walk away.

The Nurse and Jasmine share a look. They smile.

NURSE

You get his phone number ?

Jasmine just laughs. She heads back towards Patrick's room.

Jasmine reaches the door to Patrick's room and stops abruptly. A close up on her face reacting to what she sees.

POV over Jasmine's shoulder: The reflection in the half open glass door of Patrick's room reveals Patrick is hesitatingly trying out one of the puffers.

A smile begins to grow on Jasmine's face.

FREEZE FRAME. CUE MUSIC. FADE TO BLACK.

TITLES:

This film is respectfully dedicated to Matthew Hayes and all other wonderful young Australians who have lost their lives through asthma.

Remember, Asthma should not stop you from doing what you want to do. Talk with your doctor, pharmacist or the Asthma Foundation.

Or call the Asthma Health Information line

1800 645 130

Thanks to the AAA Steering Committee