



The Eighty-Yard Run

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Christian Darling returns to the football practice field of a Big-Ten university where fifteen years earlier he experienced his greatest achievement in life--an eighty-yard run during scrimmage. Details of the moment when he felt invincible and invulnerable rush back to him, followed by the story of his subsequent career, all in a reverie.

Although Christian's girlfriend, Louise, had been impressed, his final two years as a starter produced no further moments of glory. The bid for stardom failed when another back, an All-American, joined the team after Christian's moment of triumph.

After marriage, Christian and Louise moved to New York, where he spent a few happy years as a sales representative for her father's company, until the crash of 1929 left him unemployed. Louise joined the editorial staff of a woman's fashion magazine, and Christian found solace in drinking.

Louise blossomed in her new environment, giving parties for artists, poets, intellectuals, and labor leaders. Although these events bored him, Christian could not entirely ignore his own inadequacy. Still in love with Louise, he took temporary sales jobs, and finally accepted one as a traveling agent for a custom clothier, a job that brought him back to his alma mater.

Recalling his triumph, Christian has a moment of insight, of recognition: He had not adequately practiced for New York City, for 1929, or for the change of a girl into a woman. His effort to relive the momentary invincibility that came to him fifteen years earlier astonishes a young couple who have noticed him on the practice field.

Narrated with admirable economy from Christian's point of view, the story touches upon the themes of lost youth, unfulfilled potential, and the alienation that develops in relationships when one partner outgrows the other.

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