

The Grooming of Alice



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The first day of the summer vacation between eighth and ninth grades, Alice, Pamela, and Elizabeth decide they have to get in shape. "However you look when you start ninth grade, that's how people will think of you for the next four years," says Pamela. And they all begin jogging three miles every morning. "It's going to be the most exciting summer of our lives," Pamela says. And Alice hopes it will be. But things keep happening that no one counted on. Alice knows that she is going to be a volunteer -- with her friend Gwen -- at the hospital; but she doesn't know that along with the satisfaction of doing something useful she can also find an unexpected sorrow. And she certainly doesn't know that trying to decide alone how to handle a Pamela-emergency can be a big mistake. Pamela doesn't know that she will be spending the summer dealing with the results of her parents' separation. And Elizabeth does not know that trying to be thin -- and trying to be what everyone wants her to be -- can almost lead to disaster. Mixed with the problems and the complications the summer brings are moments of fun, moments of learning that variety is the way of nature -- beauty comes in more than one form -- and moments when all three girls see the future in whole new ways. There are also moments of stress and change for Lester, Alice's brother, and for her father. Though nothing works out quite as planned, the end of summer does find everyone in better shape -- mentally if not

physically.

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