

Girl Runner

Carrie Snyder

Canadian author Snyder (*The Juliet Stories*) opens her novel in a nursing home, where 104-year-old Aganetha Smart, a former Olympian runner long forgotten, lives out the rest of her days until a young couple appears for an unannounced visit. Telling the staff they're making a film about female athletes, the two strangers instead take Aggie on a mysterious journey that jars loose a flood of memories that are revealed unsequentially but add up to a rich life filled with exhilaration—winning a gold medal for Canada in 1928, the first year women were allowed to participate in the Olympic Games—and unspeakable sadness: one by one, she has lost her extensive family to wars, illnesses, estrangement, and, finally, old age, bringing into sharp focus the pain she had been running from. VERDICT Snyder's well-crafted meditation on aging and loss sometimes feels burdened by the ghosts of Aggie's past to truly reach full sprint, but her inspirational protagonist pushing the boundaries of what was acceptable for women in the first half of the 20th century makes this novel a winner.

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