

DOPE, MAN

Written by

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Logline: A young coach recruits an impressive athlete, determined to bring popularity and seriousness to hobby horsing.

EXT. TRACK - EARLY MORNING

The sun slowly creeping up. Frigidness you can see your breath in.

AUSTIN (19) an impressionable frat boy, shivers in his tracksuit as he walks onto the track. A lane is already prepped with hurdles.

At a bench in the distance is JULIAN (24) a stern, self-devoted, perfectionist in shorts and an athletic quarter zip. He seems to be prepping electrolytes of some type.

Austin arrives at the bench and tosses his bag down. He yawns very audibly and Julian glares at him. He shoves the prepped drink into Austin's chest and puts his hands in his pockets.

Austin drinks it, choking down each sip.

JULIAN

No, please, take your time.

Austin starts chugging it, coughing as he finishes.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

(under his breath, but
audible)

Always so goddamn slow.

Julian stares out at the track, just waiting. Austin sets the cup on the bench and stares at him, longing for something besides disdain.

He pushes his feelings aside, starting towards the track.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Forgetting something?

Austin turns around and walks to the bench. A HOBBY HORSE is propped up against it. He snatches it and walks back.

EXT. TRACK - MORNING

In the distance a small blur becomes Austin as he gallops forward at an insane pace.

JULIAN

HIGHER KNEES!

He jumps over the first hurdle. Heaving.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

C'MON! AGAIN!

Julian is completely riveted, hands on his hips and brows furrowed. Austin jumps the second hurdle, stumbling landing.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
WHAT WAS THAT?

Austin's face now gleams in the sunlight, there's no difference whether the dripping wet are tears or sweat.

He jumps over the third hurdle. Then the final one, knocking the top hurdle.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
ARE YOU JUST FUCKIN' AROUND? ONE
MORE LAP, LET'S GO!

Austin drags himself around the track once more as Julian fixes the hurdles. As Austin comes around he slows to a stop.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Good god, now what are you doing?

Austin unzips his jacket and tosses it to the ground. His tank top is *soppingly* stuck to his body. From afar, he glares at Julian who shows zero care.

He readies himself up and takes off. Air flies through his hair and pushes the dripping sweat like rain on a car window.

He jumps over the first one. Done. Then the second. Then third. Then fourth.

His breath slows as he heaves over to a satisfied Julian.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Was it that hard? You only did
fifty laps today.

Austin's glare returns. He CHUCKS the hobby horse at Julian, the pole nearly missing his face.

Julian stomps towards Austin and grabs him by his collar.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
You little shit, don't fuck around
with me. You should be grateful for
this opportunity I'm giving you.

AUSTIN
Grateful? Are you serious? Do you
know how fucking stupid I look?
This is ridiculous.
(breaking free)
(MORE)

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

I can't believe I even stayed this long, I fucking quit. I'm done!

He laughs in disbelief and walks away, snatching up his bag and jacket. Julian lets him leave.

EXT. TRACK - AFTERNOON

Austin runs the track alongside his teammates, faster than everybody else, but, still, not as fast as earlier.

On the other side of the track Julian talks to the girls team, sprawled across the track and stretching. He's still stern, but softer with them. Austin has to look away.

He sits down next to NOAH (20) lazy but clever, throwing and catching gummy bears in his mouth.

NOAH

You're insane, man. Coach Russ said I gotta *actually* train on my own like everyone else but, like, I really don't wanna.

Austin isn't paying attention.

NOAH (CONT'D)

That's just so much work. Next he's gonna ask me to stop drinking.
(nudging Austin)
Dude are you listening?

AUSTIN

No, sorry.

NOAH

Ok well did you go to calc yesterday cause I slept in.

This breaks Austin's daze.

AUSTIN

You slept in? Noah that class starts at four.

NOAH

I had a late night.

Austin returns to his distraction. Julian.

AUSTIN

Can you be serious with me for a minute?

NOAH
Yeah, for sure.

AUSTIN
(looking at Noah)
For real dude.

NOAH
Yes, yes, I'll be serious. What?

AUSTIN
I quit my sessions with Julian this morning.
(watching Julian)
But I'm thinking of going back.
(pause)
I don't know what to do because he's brutal and it's just humiliating, but, there was just something that always happened during those sessions. I can't explain it. I'm never as good here as I am with him. I never get that same *feeling*.

Noah stares at him, kind of weirded-out.

NOAH
Yeah... I think you might just be gay.

AUSTIN
That's not funny.

NOAH
(fighting a smile)
I'm not joking.

Austin's humorless. Noah gets serious.

NOAH (CONT'D)
I don't really know what to tell you cause it probably is just your (messing with him) *intense sexual feelings* for him, but just see how it is at the meet this weekend. Maybe it's, like, intimidating with him watching you, or something. But, he can't watch you here,
(gesturing to the girls)
so...

Austin settles on that, only option to wait and see.

EXT. TRACK - MORNING

Athletes and coaches from different schools are crawling around the grounds, families and students fill the stands.

Austin walks towards his team warming up. Julian faces the bench, messing with something. He turns around, poker face.

JULIAN

Good luck.

Austin watches him walk away towards the girls team. He takes a sip of his drink.

EXT. TRACK - LATER

Austin readies himself at the starting line. His eyes search the mass and find Julian, who's already locked onto him. He breathes deeper, slower, feeling himself rev up.

The race starts and he takes off. He immediately takes the lead, cleaning the first hurdle. The second. And the rest.

He powers through the finish line, first place with no hurdles knocked. His team rushes to him, celebrating, but he looks around for...

Julian, walking away to the side of the stands.

EXT. SIDE OF STANDS - MOMENTS LATER

Julian stands facing away, hands in his pockets. Austin walks up, unsure what to say. He opens his mouth, but then closes it.

JULIAN

Good job. Guess you're good on your own then.

But that's not true.

Austin walks around to face him.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

In a makeshift dressing room Austin analyzes himself decked out in equestrian attire: white breeches, black boots, a show coat; all squeezing the life out of him.

Julian opens the door, holding a clipboard. Austin looks up at him.

For brief moment Julian looks at him proudly. His dream is finally coming into fruition. Austin longs at him like a hopeful child.

JULIAN

Okay, you're on in ten so you better be ready.

The moment's over.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Some of these little girls out there are pretty good, but we're gonna bring it home. Oh, there were some changes to a few rules.

Austin tugs at his collar, starting to feel lightheaded.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

You have to finish under a minute thirty to be considered, but that shouldn't be an issue...

Austin breathes rapidly. He takes off his helmet and sets it down. Julian reads off the changes.

AUSTIN

(faintly)
I, I, I can't...

Austin leans on the desk.

JULIAN

(not paying attention)
Cantering... no. Oh, gallops have to be high enough...

AUSTIN

I can't go out. I can't do this.

Julian still doesn't listen.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

Listen to me, I'm not doing this!

Julian looks up. Dead eyes. A SLAP across Austin's face. He stumbles and catches himself, pulling himself up on a chair.

JULIAN

(sternly)
Look at me.

Austin gasps for air. Julian leans over, hands on his knees.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Look at me.

Austin can't calm himself down. Julian lifts Austin's chin up. He stares up at him, then pulls away.

Julian mumbles under his breath and starts searching through his bag. Austin tries to breathe slower and leans back, closing his eyes.

Just calm down. Just breathe. In and Out. In. Out.

AUSTIN

FUCK!

A sharp stab shocks Austin into consciousness. Julian is kneeling down by his side, shooting a needle into his arm. Instinctively, Austin yanks it away and screams.

JULIAN

You're just making it worse!

Blood spurting out of his arm, Austin tries to cover it with his hand.

AUSTIN

WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING?

JULIAN

Just sit back down! C'mon, you're getting blood everywhere!

Austin fumbles away from him, towards the door.

AUSTIN

YOU'RE FUCKING INSANE!

Austin stares at him in horror and heartbreak. He struggles to open the door. A SCREAM from outside. The door shuts behind him.

Great. Now Julian doesn't have a competitor. He looks at the blood all over the classroom and his face, only a small drop on his sleek tracksuit.

He wipes his face and lingers on the blood-stained hobby horse by Austin's helmet.

INT. GYM - DAY

Julian strides into the bustling gym, helmet on and hobby horse in hand.

ANNOUNCER

Next up we have Austin Mitchell!

Julian takes his place, even breaths and stable heartbeat. This was all meant to be. And he's off.

His gallop is brisk but graceful, Austin is *nothing* compared to him. He leaps over hurdles and lands softly on the gym floor. This is his destiny fulfilled.

Lost in his trance, Julian doesn't notice police entering the building as he reaches his grand finale. He slows to a stop, the happiest he's ever been. He smiles at the judges.

An OFFICER walks up behind him and grasps his arm. His daydream interrupted. No. This isn't right. Not now.

He struggles as his Miranda rights being read fade into the background and he's swarmed. His dream engulfed.