Going the Distance

Riya spent the first week of high school trying to keep her head above water. She was overwhelmed by the huge building. She decided that she would memorize where her classes were and then pretend that the rest of the place didn't exist. All the different hallways and wings were too much to think about, let alone commit to memory.

In P.E., Coach Wallace sent her reeling when he announced that everyone had to run one mile around the track outside.

Riya searched the faces of her classmates for signs of panic. There was nothing she dreaded more than having to run a whole mile. To Riya, a mile was used to describe long distances. It was ten miles to her grandfather's house, and that always seemed like a long way, even in a car!

When Coach Wallace blew his whistle, Riya figured she would be left in the dust. However, while some of her classmates edged ahead, others actually lagged behind. It's just the beginning, she thought. I'll come in last for sure.

Riya started using a mind trick on herself. She stopped thinking about the word mile. Instead, she focused on reaching the shadow cast on the track by an oak tree up ahead. Then she concentrated on jogging to the spot where the track curved. After that, she tried to see if she could complete her first lap. One lap turned into two, then three, then four. When Coach Wallace gave her a high five and said, "Nice work," Riya was shocked. She never would have guessed that she had just run a whole mile.

As Riya walked back to the school building after P.E., she noticed that she felt less overwhelmed by its size. Maybe she would come to know the place, one lap at a time.