

THE LONGEST WALK

Written by

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INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING

Warm and maternal, LYNN (74), is bundled up reading a NEWSPAPER by flashlight - there's something child-like and fragile about her. In spite of being indoors, her breath clouds in the crisp air. Dim SOLAR POWERED LIGHTS litter the room.

LYNN

(Reading the headline)

Nay-tion pre-pars. Prepares. For
second may-jor Flare in two years.

She struggles to hold the paper in her left hand - a stroke survivor. A patterned KNOCK. KNOCK-KNOCK. KNOCK, and the jingle of KEYS stirs Lynn.

RENEE (35) hardened by survival and still learning, barrels into the room. Rushes like their lives depend on it, because they do.

RENEE (CONT'D)

I got a car. Grab your stuff.

LYNN

Are we coming back?

RENEE

No.

Renee sets a timer on her Casio digital watch. Counting down from...

RENEE (CONT'D)

We've got seven hours to get to the
hospital in Winnipeg before the
flare hits.

Renee takes Lynn's wrist, sets a 7 HOUR COUNTDOWN on Lynn's watch too.

RENEE

Just in case.

LYNN

In case what?

RENEE

(Re: the watch)

In case one of them fails.

Renee grabs an already packed backpack by Lynn's door.

Lynn looks around - what's even worth taking? She looks to...

A framed PHOTO on her nightstand of Renee's SISTER, GRACE (2), a jovial YOUNG LYNN (43), and TODDLER RENEE (4) - mother and daughter indeed.

EXT. DARK CITY - LATER

A rickety 70's DIESEL SEDAN cruises through the near EMPTY DARK STREETS. A SHANTY with solar string lights touts a sign "HOT MEALS 4 BATTERIES - NO MICROS!". ABANDONED TESLA'S with broken windows turned into houseless encampments. PEOPLE huddled around TRASHCAN FIRES for warmth. Two DESPERATE FOLKS rob a YOUNG MAN of his canned food. *This is the near future - life since the first Flare - and it's BLEAK.*

The sedan breaks from the metropolis onto an OPEN ROAD. Nothing but FIELDS and DARKNESS ahead.

INT. DIESEL SEDAN - LATER

Renee's COUNTDOWN reads: 02:58:56

She white-knuckle drives. Lynn in the passenger seat.

LYNN

Where's...

(Blanking on her name)

Where's your sister?

RENEE

(Correcting her)

Grace. She died.

LYNN

When?

RENEE

Two years ago.

LYNN

How?

RENEE

In the first Flare.

LYNN

I don't understand.

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP-BEEP!

RENEE

Shit.

Renee picks up an odd, jury-rigged handheld device from between the seats. A small screen indicates TWO HEARTBEATS. One of them beats dangerously fast. The beeping a WARNING.

LYNN

Breathe.

RENEE

I'm trying.

Renee presses a button. The alarm goes silent but the heart rate continues to flash in ALARM. She stashes the monitor.

LYNN

You should have left before.

RENEE

Adele wasn't able to push your visa through 'til today.

LYNN

Why?

Renee forces a grave smile. Chooses not to answer.

LYNN

Hun... How did you get the car?

Renee tenses - far more than she was comfortable with.

RENEE

Don't worry about it.

But mothers *always* know - even in Lynn's state.

LYNN

Does Adele know?

RENEE

No. And she can't know. She'd never forgive herself. She can't know. Okay?

Lynn nods.

RENEE

Okay?

LYNN

Okay.

Renee glances at a well-worn THOMAS GUIDE MAP on the dash open to a highlighted route.

LYNN
Do you two want to have kids?

RENEE
We'd like to but... first things
first.

Lynn looks out the window. The moon high. She hums a tune...

LYNN
(Singing)
In the night we see the oval
moooon. Going round and round in
tuuune. And the ball of su-un in
the day. Makes a boy, or.. girl and
girl want to say...

Renee breaks into a reluctant smile. Joins in...

BOTH
(Singing)
Find a ringgg. Put it ooon. And it
goes round and round as it spins a-
long with a ha-ppy sound as it
goes. Along the ground, ground,
ground for you know that this is
really love. In the night-

FLASH! A bolt of LIGHTNING STRIKES the earth down road. Renee
and Lynn freeze - like rabbits that have sensed a predator.
The roll of THUNDER. Renee's eyes glued to the horizon.

RENEE
I hope that's just the weather.

A long, tense SILENCE.

The sky above them lights with the most MAGNIFICENT AURORA
BOREALIS ever. Green, magenta, violet, and blue bands cover
the sky.

RENEE
Fuck.

Lynn stares in AWE. It is utterly STUNNING.

Renee grabs the heart rate monitor. Watches closely. Tosses
it down. Focuses on the road.

LYNN
The only time I saw... this, is the
night you were... conceived.

RENEE
That's ironic.

The car's HEADLIGHTS and DASH-LIGHTS FLICKER. Then... they go DARK. The ENGINE SPUTTERS. STOPS. And now they're left COASTING AT 75 MPH without power steering.

RENEE
NO. NO. NO.

LYNN
RENEE!

TIRES ON GRAVEL.

The headlights FLICK back ON. A SIGN RIGHT IN THEIR PATH. She TURNS the IGNITION.

RENEE
Come on.

The engine SPARKS TO LIFE. She gasses it to SWERVE.

Tires on asphalt. FISHTAILING. But the tires... CORRECT.

Headlights on the road. Only to shut OFF.

RENEE
God damnit.

The engine DIES.

She BRAKES. The car HALTS. Renee and Lynn catch their breath. The magenta, blue, and green light from the AURORA still washing over them - and continues throughout.

Renee TURNS the key. NOTHING. Tries again. Not even a click. Keeps trying.

RENEE
This isn't possible.

She grabs the heart rate monitor. Hovers it over her mom's heart. An indicator light goes YELLOW - not good.

Renee hovers it over her own heart. RED.

She pulls her jacket to the side, exposing a small disc shape underneath her shirt - a PACEMAKER. She TAPS it.

LYNN
(That's futile)
Renee.

RENEE
Stay in the car.

Renee shoves a folded piece of TINFOIL under her shirt over the pacemaker. Grabs a FLASHLIGHT.

EXT. RURAL ROAD/INT. DIESEL SEDAN - MOMENTS LATER

Renee pops the HOOD. Flashlight on the engine. Checks her watch.

02:42:01

RENEE
CAN YOU TURN THE KEY?

LYNN
Turn the key...

Lynn looks around confused.

RENEE
Mom?

Lynn, helpless.

Renee pops her head back in the car.

RENEE
(Annoyed)
Just turn the key.

Frustrated, she demonstrates for Lynn.

LYNN
I'm sorry.

Lynn, painfully aware of her shortcomings.

RENEE
It's okay. Just turn this key
forward when I tell you to.

Lynn nods.

Renee returns to the engine.

RENEE
Go ahead.

With the hood up, Renee does not see...

Lynn, tearful. Quiet. Masking her emotions from her daughter.

RENEE
Are you doing it?

LYNN
I think so.

RENEE
Yes or no?

LYNN
Yes.

Renee breathes in, losing her patience. But then notices...

A corner-seam of the BATTERY blinks RED from within - WTF.

She touches the battery. Something's off. She picks it up...

The ENTIRE CASING of the car battery lifts to reveal a MICRO-BATTERY attached by rigged wires to the battery terminals. The red light, a MALFUNCTION WARNING on the micro battery's indicator. A FUCKING WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING.

RENEE
Oh my god.

Renee tries to bottle a meltdown. Can't. Because this means they're DEAD IN THE WATER.

LYNN
Hun?

RENEE
He gave me a car with a mother
fucking micro-battery.

She RIPS the battery from the engine.

RENEE
FUCK!

Lynn gets out of the car.

LYNN
What's wrong?

RENEE
I told you to stay in the car!

Renee rushes her mom. Man-handling her back in.

LYNN
Renee.

Renee closes the door. All the commotion upsetting Lynn - like an overwhelmed child.

LYNN
Just talk to me.

Renee gathers herself. Hurries around the car, passing Lynn.

RENEE
Stay here.

Renee breaks into a light jog. Headed in the direction they came from.

Lynn alone in the car, tries to keep it together.

EXT. DOWN ROAD - A LITTLE LATER

Renee jogs to the front of the LARGE SIGN they nearly hit. One of those big green city marker signs that reads:

"HOPE 3, WINNIPEG 99"

She reads the sign. Checks her watch...

02:37:19

She jogs back toward the car. Winces in pain and taps her chest.

INTERCUT INT. DIESEL SEDAN

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP! Lynn picks up the heart rate monitor. Another warning.

LYNN
(For Renee)
Breathe.

Renee slows down a moment. JOGS. Determined to get back to the car.

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP! Lynn GETS OUT OF THE CAR.

It's so dark. Lynn runs her hand along the car to help guide her. Unsteady on her feet. But determined to get to her daughter. She TRIPS. FALLS.

Dirt GRINDS into her palms. On all fours. Lynn struggles to stand. FALTERS.

RENEE (O.S.)

Mom!

Renee GRABS Lynn. Helps her up.

RENEE

I told you to stay in the car!

Lynn breaks down.

LYNN

You were just gone!

Renee softens. Embraces her.

RENEE

Shhh. It's okay. I'm here. Come on.
It's not safe out here.

Renee helps Lynn into the passenger seat.

As Renee comes around the front of the car, she looks ahead of them. Eyes the AURORA with concern.

INT. DIESEL SEDAN - MOMENTS LATER

Renee climbs into the car. Silences the heart rate monitor. Checks her watch: 02:32:11 remaining.

RENEE

There's a town a few miles up the road. It'll probably take me forty minutes to get there on foot. That leaves us less than two hours.

LYNN

-Renee.

RENEE

Another thirty to get help. Thirty back on foot. Unless someone can get me here sooner. That's one hour left.

LYNN

How far to... Canada?

RENEE

Don't worry about it.

LYNN

We don't have enough time. Do we?

RENEE

We'll make it work. There's always
a way. Here.

She unclips the sheathed KNIFE from her hip. Hands it to
Lynn.

Lynn gives her a look - *What am I supposed to do with this?*

RENEE

We don't know who's out here.

LYNN

What about you?

RENEE

I'll feel safer knowing you have
it. I still got a little pep in my
step.

She mimes putting her fists up for a fight, playful.

LYNN

Always a fighter.

Renee grabs her messenger bag, shoves the heart monitor into
it.

RENEE

For the love of god stay in the
car.

Renee moves to leave.

LYNN

Renee. Do it... if you can.

RENEE

What?

LYNN

Have kids. It's the most meaningful
and hard and rewarding thing I've
ever done. It made this whole...
crazy life... make sense.

(Beat)

Even Grace.

Renee kisses her mom on the head.

RENEE

I'll be back the second I get help.

LYNN

Don't run.

RENEE

(Lying)

I won't.

Renee closes the door and turns to go.

LYNN

Renee. I'm sorry I gave you a bad...

She puts her hand on her heart.

RENEE

Don't be. I'll be back.

Lynn watches Renee disappear into the darkness.

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD - LATER

Renee jogs. It's pitch black, save the soft glow of the aurora. She pulls the heart rate monitor from her bag.

A steady beat from Lynn's signal. Her own signal, too fast. Out of breath. She slows. Grows aware of how alone she is.

Checks her watch: 01:49:07

She looks around - *where the fuck is Hope?*

CRACK! A nearby branch breaks - a person, predator? Renee freezes. Waits. RUSTLING.

Renee readies herself into a fighting stance. NOTHING.

She turns. GASPS. Clutches her chest.

Ahead of her, a POSSOM scuttles across the road. Carrying a BABY POSSOM on its back.

RENEE

Jesus christ.

But it draws her eye to... In the distance: a LIGHT flickers through the trees. Signs of life - literally Hope.

Renee RUNS toward it.

INT. DIESEL SEDAN - SAME

Lynn checks her watch. A growing look of concern on Lynn's face - they're running out of time.

EXT. HOPE - LATER

Renee slows down and spots...

A defunct GAS STATION and a couple buildings. Solar string lights strung between them.

She approaches. But something is off...

Broken windows. Trash. The place looks like it was ransacked months ago.

But then... a faint VOICE. Coming from the defunct gas station. She hurries toward it.

INT. DEFUNCT GAS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Bare shelves, animal droppings, empty, unlit fridges. Renee enters through the open door.

RENEE

HELLO?

On a shelf, an AM/FM RADIO wired to solar string lights - presumably where it's getting it's power. It blares an EMERGENCY BROADCAST TONE interrupted by STATIC.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

(Through the radio)

-Emergency broadcast. NASA released-
... -initial calculations-... -off-
-ng flare-... -hit-... -10:22PM
mountain time-...

Renee clicks from her countdown to the actual time... 9:11PM

RENEE

No. No. No.

Renee DARTS outside as the announcer trails off.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

(Through the radio)

-US-Canadian border-... - to close-

EXT. HOPE - MOMENTS LATER

Renee runs, searching the abandoned buildings for something, *anything* that will help her get back to Lynn sooner.

INT. DIESEL SEDAN - SAME

Lynn looks at the countdown... 01:28:03

Something about Lynn seems clear, lucid. She gets out of the car.

INTERCUT EXT. HOPE/EXT. DIESEL SEDAN

Renee spots... The wheel of a BICYCLE under a tarp leaned against a shack.

She LUNGES to grab the bike.

Lynn leans on the hood of the car. Opens her jacket. Unbuttons her shirt to her sternum. Exposing the oval shape of her PACEMAKER above her left breast, just under the skin.

Renee MOUNTS the bike. LEANS into the pedals. Barely moves...

The tires FLAT. Peeling off the rims.

RENEE

Fuck!

Renee FORCES the pedals. Metal rims GRIND on asphalt. She yells. THROWS the bike to the ground.

Lynn UNSHEATHES the knife that Renee gave her earlier. STEADIES the tip of the knife over the side of her pacemaker.

Renee RUNS in the direction of the car, away from Hope. The regulator BEEP-BEEP-BEEPS in alarm - her heart rate becoming too elevated. She ignores it. Controls her inhale... exhale.

Lynn inhales. SLICES into the thin layer of skin around the pacemaker.

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP-BEEP! TWO ALARMS sound. Renee STOPS, panicked. GRABS the regulator from her bag.

Lynn's heart rate RACES on screen.

RENEE

No.

Lynn grimaces in AGONY as she forces her fingers into the INCISION she's made. PULLS OUT her PACEMAKER. A WIRE still connected to her heart.

Renee SPRINTS. Regulator still in hand. PANICKED.

Lynn takes the knife... SEVERES the pacemaker wire.

BEEEEEEEEEEEEEP! Renee HALTS.

Lynn's heart rate FLATLINES.

RENEE (CONT'D)

NO!

Renee RUNS AS FAST AS SHE CAN. Desperate.

Lynn presses a bundled scarf to her chest as she slides back onto the hood of the car.

She reclines against the windshield. WOOZY. Fishes something from her jacket pocket...

Renee DOUBLES OVER. GASPING for air. BEEEEEEEEEP! She SILENCES the alarm. Breaks down. SOBBING.

Lynn pulls the photo of herself, Grace, and four-year-old Renee from her jacket pocket.

Lynn looks at the photo. Presses it to her chest. She relaxes onto the windshield. Looks up and watches the AURORA.

Under that same AURORA, Renee stands. Looks up. The aurora washes over her. Her silent, tearful goodbye.

The AURORA reflected in Lynn's eyes. She hums the familiar tune they sang earlier...

LYNN

(Find a ring...)

Hmm-mm mmm...

Her humming continues over...

Renee, as if connected by some cosmic chord, sets the heart rate monitor down. Takes one last look in the direction of her mother. Turns back towards Hope and carries onward alone.

LYNN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*(For you, know that this
is, really love.)*

Hm-mm, mmm mm mm mm, mm-mm mmm.

CUT TO BLACK.