

THE LONG WAY OUT

By Jon Wang

INT. BLACK

ANNIE (V.O.)

A week ago, a hurricane formed in the Atlantic.

EXT. ANNIE'S HOUSE - STORMY DAY

Annie is rushed out of her house by her mother, MARY, while her father, GARY, sits in the family car, waiting for them both. Mary hurries Annie, but Annie pushes Mary away from her and gets into the car.

EXT. CAR - CLOUDY DAY

A car moves along a empty road. The area appears to be quite desolate, suggesting no one really knows about the area.

ANNIE (V.O.)

I didn't want to move. I could only take what was necessary, what was vital. To me, that was everything we left behind.

INT. CAR

Annie sighs as she watches trees slip by in a daze. She looks at her father, who is busy driving, then to her mother, who is asleep.

ANNIE (V.O.)

I hate my stepmom.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ANNIE'S BACKYARD - DAY

ANNIE (V.O.)

When I was 13, my mom left.

Thirteen year old Annie sits alone on her bed as her parents on the floor below yell and yell. A door slams shut, and Annie jumps to her feet. Running down the stairs, she sees her father, hands on his face, crying on the kitchen table. She looks out the window and sees her mother hailing a cab. Annie takes off full speed to catch her mother. Rushing out the front door, she sprints out to her mother, who is already in the cab. Nearly tripping a few times, Annie runs out onto the street, watching her mother drive away, and breaks down in tears.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - EARLY NIGHT

Annie emerges from her sleep to jumps and bumps in the road. She sits up straight in the seat and leans forward to talk to her parents.

ANNIE

Dad? Where are we?

GARY

Don't worry Annie. Its just a shortcut I know about. We'll be able to skip the gridlock on the freeways.

Annie shrugs and turns to Mary. Mary sits looking out the window but is finding it hard to keep steady with all the bumps in the road.

ANNIE (V.O.)

Mary and I kinda had a falling out.

As the car drives, thunderclouds and lightning are not far away. The hurricane appears to have caught up with them.

EXT. CAR - RAINY NIGHT

It is raining heavily, and the wind howls. Annie draws a frowning face on the fogging window. Turning back toward her parents,

INT. CAR

ANNIE

Dad? How much further?

MARY

Be patient. We'll get there when we get there.

GARY

Don't worry. We're almost there. Just beyond a bridge.

MARY

Annie, just sit still. Look out the window or something.

ANNIE

Mary, there's nothing to look at! All there is darkness and rain!

MARY

Annie, I know leaving your home behind you is tough, but-

ANNIE

How would you know what its like?! You've barely lived there for a year!

GARY

Hey! No need to raise our voices!

That one moment of distraction causes Annie to see something in front of them- a tree, blown down by the wind.

ANNIE

DAD! LOOK OUT!

Gary turns and immediately the situation dawns on him. He quickly grabs the wheel and makes a sharp left.

EXT. CAR

Gary swerves the car, and narrowly avoids the fallen tree. However, the rain on the road makes the road slippery, and the force of the wind starts to push the flailing car, and the car starts to slide.

INT. CAR

Gary furiously tries to regain control of the car, but he looks up to see another fallen tree. It is too late to avoid it.

EXT. CAR

The car's right side rides up the tree, causing the entire car to flip and slide down the road upside down. The car makes a roiling stop after sliding for quite a bit, leaving a trail of wreckage in its wake.

INT. TOTALED CAR

The barely conscious and bleeding Annie finds herself upside down in the car, held up by her seat belt. Undoing her restraint, she falls heavily to the ground, wincing in pain. She tries crawling out, but blacks out short of the opening.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TOTALED CAR - RAINY AND WINDY - EARLY MORNING

Although it is morning, the clouds and hurricane let only trace amounts of light on the scene. Annie slowly wakes up, and takes the situation in. As

she gets up, she winces, and stares into the darkness of the car. It is still raining heavily and is very windy.

Annie slowly crawls out, bleeding, with bits and pieces of glass on her. Her clothes are ripped, her head is bleeding, arms bloodied, yet, she is alive. Regaining her composure, she suddenly remembers her father and mother.

ANNIE

DAD! MARY! DAD!

In the wreckage, a groan. Annie kneels down and sees the bloodied bodies of Gary and Mary. Gary appears unconscious while Mary is panicky.

MARY

Annie? Annie! Are you alright?! What happened?! Your father-

ANNIE

Mary! Can you get out?

Mary moves a bit, but winces and stops.

MARY

Annie! I can't feel my legs!

Annie gets up and goes over to the other side. She kneels to see what is wrong, but it is too dark to see anything.

ANNIE

Hang on! I'm gonna pull you out!

Annie grabs Mary's hands and starts to pull. Mary comes loose and Annie falls back in shock. Mary's legs are broken and bloody. Annie quickly moves Mary to the other side of the car where the wind is blocked, keeping them relatively dry and protected against the wind.

Annie takes off her sweater and rips it into pieces, using the sleeves to create makeshift tourniquets. Then, finding pieces of debris, Annie also creates makeshift splints, tying the straight pieces of debris to Mary's broken legs. Mary manages to smile weakly.

MARY

I didn't know you knew how to give first aid.

Finishing, Annie looks up.

ANNIE

There's a lot you don't know about me.

Annie stands up to retrieve Gary who is still unconscious. Annie, albeit panicky, manages to keep her cool and slowly pull Gary out. She puts him under the cover of the wreckage, and checks him for bodily injury. She stops, and pulls her hand away. It is covered in blood. She looks at Gary, who is extremely pale.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Oh my-

Annie quickly puts her ear to Gary's mouth, and hears the quiet but strained breathing of her father.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

MARY! He's hurt bad! We need an ambulance!

Annie suddenly remembers about her phone, and pulls it out of her pocket. It has been crushed from the crash.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Mary, do you have a phone?

Mary checks her pockets, then turns back toward Annie.

MARY

I think its still in the car.

ANNIE

We need to get help. You also need to keep you two warm and away from the rain.

Mary motions to the grove of trees lining the road.

MARY

We can take shelter in there.

Annie turns back toward Mary and nods her approval.

INT. TREE GROVE

Bringing Gary over next to Mary, she turns to her.

ANNIE

I'm going to go look for the phone and supplies.

MARY

Okay.

Annie leaves to go and Mary yells after her.

MARY (CONT'D)

Be careful!

EXT. TOTALED CAR

Annie runs back toward the car and starts picking up baggage and moving them to the side for transportation. She takes out some clothes and puts them on to keep herself warm. She wraps her hands and knees in clothing to protect

against glass and kneels down to see into the wreckage. In the darkness, she spots the car's emergency kit. Grabbing it, she opens it to find bandages and a flashlight.

Wasting no time, she puts the kit with the pile of baggage and pulls out the flashlight. Kneeling back down to look into the car, she searches for the small rectangular box that would ensure their survival.

INT. TOTALED CAR

In one heart stopping moment, she sets her sights upon it. Peeking out from the front seat is the phone. She quickly snatches it, and presses a few buttons. Nothing. Annie frustratingly tosses the phone back into the car. The phone slides for a bit, then lands next to a small fire, being fed by gasoline dripping down from the car. Annie catches sight of it, and her eyes follow drips of gas. With each drop, the fire grows bigger. Realizing what this means, Annie's eyes get big.

ANNIE

Oh no.

EXT. TOTALED CAR

Quickly pulling out from the car, still clutching the flashlight, Annie grabs a bundle of clothes and bandages and makes a mad dash for the grove.

INT. TOTALED CAR

The drops of gasoline feeding the fire start increasing, and the fire starts to reach up toward the source, as if trying to drink it all up. With a final drop, the fire catches fast.

EXT. TREE GROVE - MORNING

Annie thrown to the ground as the car explodes. Annie gets back up, and the light of the flames shines on her damp figure. Clearly shaken, Annie picks up her dropped belongings and takes it over to Mary and the still unconscious Gary.

MARY

Annie! Are you alright?!

ANNIE

The phones aren't working.

Annie kneels down to wrap Mary's legs in gauze, but Mary reaches up and hugs her tightly.

MARY

I'm just glad you're alright.

Annie appears surprised, and cautiously hugs her back.

At that, Mary breaks down in tears. Annie looks at her endearingly, finally breaking the wall between them.

ANNIE
Mary. Mary. MARY!

At that, Mary looks up at Annie.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
I'm going to walk. Dad said that we we're not
that far away, right?

Annie looks at Mary determinedly, who gives in.

MARY
Take- take this. Follow the road. And be
careful.

Mary hands some clothing to Annie, who wraps it around herself and smiles at her.

ANNIE
I'll be right back.

With that, Annie, starts running into the rain.

FADE TO:

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD - STORMY MORNING

The rain pours ever harder as a dark individual walks against the wind on a empty road. Annie is bundled with clothes for warmth, and the rain and wind don't seem to be letting up. As she walks, she comes across a river. Due to the hurricane, the river has swollen to the point where it is nearly overtaking the road. Taking it in for a moment, she continues along the path.

Annie, body scrunched to keep warm, walks to a point in the road and stops. In front of her lies a bridge, though very dangerous as water from the river smashes against it. The bridge starts to look unstable, but is the only way across the river. Annie pauses, then starts to walk across the bridge.

EXT. TREE GROVE

Mary sits huddling with the still unconscious Gary to keep each other warm. Mary looks at Gary, who's health is obviously declining.

ANNIE
Annie... please hurry.

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD

As the water continues to attack the bridge, Annie begins to trudge faster, as if sensing something will happen. Out of the corner of her eye, she notices something.

Although she runs as fast as she can, it is not enough. Flying debris sweeping Annie off of the bridge. Into the river like nothing.

EXT. WATER - STORMY MORNING

Annie resurfaces the icy water and frantically tries to find something to grab hold of. Unable to find anything, she continually bobs under and above the water, flowing with the current.

ANNIE

Help! Help!

Annie's cries are drowned out by the water. Annie notices a piece of driftwood, and she grabs on, hanging for dear life.

Annie sees a small sandbar coming up along the side of the flood, and realizes this might be her chance. Kicking as hard as she can, she starts moving toward the sandbar. However, the current strong, and its very difficult. Annie almost falls back under a few times, but she manages to stay up.

At last, Annie lands on the sandbar. The river splashes at her, almost as if trying to reclaim its victim. Freezing, drenched, and tired Annie climbs to the top of a sandbar and, surprisingly, back onto the main road. She lays on her back, unable to move any farther.

The rain and wind only make things worse. Annie starts to drift off into sleep when suddenly - a military humvee nearly runs her over, screeching to a stop at the last moment.

If Annie is scared, it is pretty hard to tell. She is tired to the point where she accepts death. A guardman jumps out of the humvee to investigate. As he leans in close to pick her up, she musters the strength for a single word.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

H-Help.

The guardman turns back toward the humvee, motioning towards it, and another guardman jumps out, grabbing a stretcher and quickly helping the first move Annie onto it. They move her into the humvee, and Annie smiles at the two guardmen.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Thank you.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TREE GROVE

Several guardsmen bring stretchers and medical equipment to the grove where Mary and Gary lie. Mary looks up to witness a profound sight - Annie, completely fine, and successful at that. As the guardsmen take the two away, Annie runs to Mary giving her a tearful hug.

ANNIE (V.O.)

Losing whatever possessions I left behind
before the storm, it was worth what I found
after it.

FADE OUT.