

FINAL STRETCH

Written by

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EXT. TREE-LINED STREET - DAY

A prosthetic leg -- from the knee down -- hits the sidewalk at a jogging pace in a pair of worn, matching sneakers. The determined teenager, 17, is covered in sweat that soaks her t-shirt and shorts. CHLOE gulps air as she goes, unsteady on her feet.

MONTAGE - CHLOE HAS PT WITH STEPHANIE

- - Stephanie fitting prosthetic to Chloe.
- - Chloe walking between bars.
- - Chloe walking solo, while Stephanie watches.
- - Chloe jogging on a track.

Chloe reaches an intersection and barely glances to make sure there's no traffic before she crosses. She tries to pick up the pace, but stumbles. She frowns and slows back down to a jog.

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY CLINIC - DAY

STEPHANIE, an upbeat woman in her 30s, helps Chloe along between two stability bars. Chloe is in the prosthetic and stumbles as she takes a step. A look of pain crosses her face.

CHLOE

I can't do it!

STEPHANIE

Of course you can. Just take your time. You'll get there.

EXT. TREE-LINED STREET - DAY

Chloe's strides are more steady as she turns up a driveway towards a small house. She slows up the walk and heads inside.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Chloe sits at the table and fidgets with her plate. There's a clatter in the kitchen behind her. She looks towards it.

CHLOE

Mom? Are you sure I can't help?

JANELLE, a tired woman in her 40's, appears holding a casserole dish. Her clothes are wrinkled. She sets the dish on the table and offers her daughter a strained smile.

JANELLE

Of course not, honey. You need to sit and rest.

Chloe stares at her plate. Beneath it is a colorful flyer for a charity marathon. She bites her lip.

CHLOE

Mom?

JANELLE

Yes, honey?

Chloe squirms in her seat and picks at the edge of the flyer. Janelle serves their dinner.

CHLOE

There's... this, uh, charity thing I want to do.

JANELLE

That's great, sweetheart!

CHLOE

Yeah, it's for uh, people with disabilities. Like me.

Chloe looks up at her mother, who watches her expectantly. She picks up the flyer and hands it over.

JANELLE

This is a race.

CHLOE

I know, mom. Stephanie says--

JANELLE

You tripped going up the stairs last night.

CHLOE

I'm getting better every day. It's not for another month. Mom, this is to help people like me, I really want--

Janelle crumples up the paper and sets it aside. She picks up her fork and stabs at her food.

JANELLE

We need to talk about colleges. You need to start putting in applications.

CHLOE

I've got a whole year to apply to schools.

JANELLE

I picked out a bunch of online schools-

Chloe looks up sharply at the word 'online' and drops her fork.

CHLOE

Mom, I've got a whole year. This race is next month.

JANELLE

You need to be thinking about your future. A future your father isn't here to see.

Chloe jerks up from her chair, knocking it over. She storms out of the room.

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY CLINIC - DAY

Chloe sits on a bench, next to Stephanie. They're hunched over a clipboard as Chloe fills it out.

CHLOE

So you'll be able to drop it off on your way home?

STEPHANIE

Yes. I promise. You brought the registration fee?

Chloe pulls an envelope out of her backpack and hands it over to Stephanie.

CHLOE

Tyshawn lent me the last bit. My mom...

Stephanie takes the envelope.

STEPHANIE

I take it the talk didn't go well?

Chloe shakes her head.

CHLOE

No, she wouldn't even talk about it. I don't get her! She knows how much better I've been doing.

STEPHANIE

She just worries about you. Chloe... I'll submit this, but I really want you to talk to her about this.

Chloe stares at her feet.

CHLOE

I guess.

INT. CHLOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Janelle sets a basket of clothes down on Chloe's bed. She picks up a couple shirts to put away, but spots the registration form on the desk. She picks it up.

She reads the form. Her grip on the paper tightens, crumpling it. She storms out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Chloe comes in, sweaty from another run. She passes through to the kitchen first and doesn't notice her mother sitting in a chair. Janelle holds the registration form, furious.

Chloe returns with a glass of water.

JANELLE

Chloe, we need to talk.

Chloe recognizes the tone of voice and stops.

JANELLE

I thought I made it clear that I didn't want you to do this race.

CHLOE

It's for a good cause!

Janelle leans forward in the chair, shaking the paper.

JANELLE

You could get hurt!

CHLOE

It's a marathon, mom! You run at your own pace!

JANELLE

I don't care. You're paying money to put yourself at risk. Do you have any idea how reckless that is?

CHLOE

Stephanie thinks I'm ready.

JANELLE

Stephanie isn't your mother, Chloe!

Janelle stands up and thrusts the form at her daughter.

JANELLE

You will drop out of this.

Chloe squares her shoulders and glares at her mother.

CHLOE

No, I won't. I'm going to run and I'm going to finish.

Her voice gets quieter as her bravado leaves her.

CHLOE

I was really hoping you'd be there, mom.

Janelle shakes her head. She turns to a photo of Chloe's father on the wall.

JANELLE

I can't bear the thought of you getting hurt, Chloe. I won't do it.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL RUNNING TRACK - DAY

Chloe sits at the edge of the track stretching as TYSHAWN, 17, dressed in athletic gear walks up. He brightens when he sees her.

TYSHAWN

Well there's my track star.

Chloe throws a protein bar at him. Tyshawn deftly catches and promptly opens it to begin eating it.

CHLOE

You're late.

TYSHAWN

And you're still waiting.

Chloe flashes a grin at him as she gets to her feet. She starts to jog and he follows, keeping pace.

TYSHAWN

How'd it go with your mom?

CHLOE

She found the form.

TYSHAWN

Shit.

CHLOE

She expects me to drop out.

TYSHAWN

Knowing you, you ain't gonna.

Chloe pushes herself to run faster and Tyshawn easily follows.

TYSHAWN

Is she gonna come to the race?

CHLOE

No. She's convinced I'll hurt myself.

TYSHAWN

You tell her 'bout your work with Stephanie?

CHLOE

Yeah. And all the training we've done. Everything! She just won't listen.

Chloe's prosthetic lands wrong and she falls. Tyshawn is right there by her side, concerned.

TYSHAWN

Hey, hey, you all right?

More embarrassed than hurt, Chloe won't look at him.

TYSHAWN

Talk to me, Chloe.

CHLOE

Maybe she's right.

TYSHAWN
Nuh-uh, don't talk like that.

CHLOE
I fell yesterday, too, 'shawn.

TYSHAWN
So? You're doin' way better than
you were. Better every day. You and
me, out here every day.

Chloe looks up at him and smiles weakly.

CHLOE
Promise?

Tyshawn stands and offers her his hand.

TYSHAWN
Promise.

EXT. MARATHON STARTING LINE - DAY

In the midst of the crowds of participants and onlookers,
Chloe stands with Stephanie and Tyshawn.

CHLOE
I'm not sure I can do this.

TYSHAWN
Of course you can.

STEPHANIE
We'll be waiting for you at the
finish line.

CHLOE
I wish my mom was here.

STEPHANIE
I know you do.

Tyshawn grabs Chloe suddenly in a fierce hug.

TYSHAWN
We got you. You'll do great.

Chloe smiles weakly and hugs him back. Stephanie squeezes her
shoulder.

CHLOE
Thanks, guys.

Stephanie and Tyshawn leave. Chloe stares into the crowd.

CHLOE
Why couldn't you be here, mom?

EXT. MARATHON - DAY

Chloe's BREATHING heavily as she runs. Other participants stream around her, staggered. Her pace is uneven, but she's determined.

Her prosthetic leg lands uneven and she falls. Her hands go out to catch her as she lands and cries out in pain. Chloe grabs at her good leg.

CHLOE
Shit!

Other people part around her. She looks down, her hand coming away with blood. She starts to cry.

CHLOE
Mom was right... I shouldn't have done this.

A few people slow, but awkwardly move on past the crying teenager.

CHLOE
What was I thinking?

Sniffing, Chloe gets to her feet. She's unsteady and it takes her a couple of tries. She looks off to the sidelines.

CHLOE
Maybe I should-

A younger girl jogs past on a pair of prosthetics. She moves slow, but at a determined pace. She's running with an older sibling or parent, who offers encouraging words. Chloe sniffs, rubbing at her nose. She squares her shoulders and turns back to the race.

EXT. MARATHON FINISH LINE - DAY

Stephanie and Tyshawn stand with others at the finish line. Most people have gone their separate ways, but a number of stragglers continue to cross. Tyshawn holds flowers.

TYSHAWN
Think somethin' happened?

Stephanie cranes her head, looking.

STEPHANIE

I don't know...

Chloe comes around a corner with a limp from the cut on her leg. Stephanie looks concerned, but both she and Tyshawn grin big at seeing her.

STEPHANIE

Chloe!

TYSHAWN

You can do it!

They both cheer her on. Chloe, hearing them, gets a renewed energy and quickens her pace. She crosses the finish line and practically falls into Tyshawn's arms. He hugs her tight.

STEPHANIE

Your leg-

CHLOE

I fell...

STEPHANIE

We'll get that looked at, but first-

TYSHAWN

Oh, yeah!

Tyshawn steps back, steadying Chloe on her feet. He puts the crushed flowers into her hands. Stephanie steps back and reveals a sheepish-looking Janelle.

Chloe opens her mouth...

JANELLE

Chloe, I...

CHLOE

Mom?

The two stare at each other. Chloe clutches the flowers tightly. Janelle steps forward and awkwardly pulls her daughter into a hug.

JANELLE

I'm so sorry. I-

Chloe chokes back a sob.

CHLOE

It doesn't matter! I'm just so glad
you're here!

JANELLE

I shouldn't have tried stopping
you. You were right.

Tyshawn and Stephanie look at each other.

TYSHAWN

So, uh, we're gonna head to the
car. We'll meet y'all at dinner,
okay?

Chloe looks over her mother's shoulder at Stephanie and
Tyshawn.

CHLOE

Yeah, I'll see you guys there.

Stephanie and Tyshawn leave as Chloe hugs her mother tighter.

JANELLE

Your father would be so proud.