

"Ready for the Storm"

by  
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EXT. A WAR-DESTROYED CITY - EARLY EVENING

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JACK, 35, and his eight-year-old daughter, GWEN, stand hand in hand looking out over the wasteland that was a large city. The twisted, blackened remains of once-impressive buildings are everywhere. Fly- and rat-covered dead bodies - now a part of the food chain - litter the ground. Many are just skeletons, picked clean and left to rot.

Eyes wide, father and daughter stand still. Their clothes are tattered, more holes than fabric, and stained with sweat from the constant heat. They are filthy, their hair matted to their heads. Smears of dirt are all over their skin. Their faces are drawn from exhaustion. Jack sports many days' growth of beard.

There is an odd, threatening rumble not too far off, a combination of thunder, hammering rain, and erratic, destructive lightning bolts.

They watch this with sad eyes.

A bad storm is coming. Lightning tendrils shoot out from the multicolored clouds that puff up and expand with every bolt that lights up the sky.

Frightened, Gwen looks up at her anxious father.

GWEN

It's coming, isn't it, Daddy?

JACK

Yes.

GWEN

What are we gonna do?

JACK

What *can* we do?

GWEN

Shouldn't we find shelter - a place to hide?

Jack looks around at the desolation.

JACK

Do you see any. . . any at all?

(longish beat)

We'll have to ride out the storm here.

(CONTINUED)

Gwen flinches at another, closer, and louder thunderclap. Buckets of sizzling water pour in sheets from the colorful clouds.

GWEN

But the rain *burns*.

JACK

I know it does. I'm sorry.

Gwen looks confused.

GWEN

You didn't do anything.

Jack smiles a weak smile.

JACK

My generation did.

GWEN

But not *you*.

Jack sits down on the scorched earth. Gwen kneels beside him. They look into each other's eyes. They have been through so much.

JACK

You don't remember rain like it used to be, do you?

The sizzle of the falling rain grows louder.

GWEN

No.

(beat)

Was it nice?

JACK

(fondly)

Oh, very nice. It was *cooling*. It made plants grow.

(chuckles)

It got your hair wet and ran down your cheeks.

GWEN

(amazed)

*Without* burning?

JACK

Yes. Your. . .

(chokes up a bit)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK (CONT'D)

Your mother and I used to listen  
to it rain back when we lived in  
the old house. . . before the  
world went mad.

(beat)

Do you remember her?

Gwen winces at a closer thunderclap.

GWEN

A little. I remember how pretty  
she was.

Jack reaches out to stroke his daughter's dirt-stained  
face.

JACK

(teary)

You look more like her every day.

Embarrassed, Gwen looks down.

The loudest thunderclap yet sounds. Both Jack and Gwen  
look at the source and shiver. The electrified clouds of  
many rotating colors are quickly coming closer, and the  
burning rain has intensified to the point where neither  
can see through it.

Gwen looks at her dad.

GWEN

It's so close!

(beat)

Can we outrun it?

JACK

Not this time.

GWEN

(hopefully)

Could it *miss* us?

JACK

No.

The cloud cover begins to widen even more, stretching  
horizontally as far as can be seen.

Gwen speaks to try to calm herself.

GWEN

Daddy, please tell me what it was  
like before everything bad  
happened.

(CONTINUED)

Jack sighs. His eyes drift as he recalls.

JACK

The world was a beautiful place.  
There were *seasons*.

GWEN

What were they?

JACK

The weather would change every few  
months. Sometimes it would be  
cold, sometimes hot.

GWEN

It's *always* hot now. I hate it!

The biggest thunderclap yet sounds, louder than several  
cannons.

Jack kneels in front of Gwen.

JACK

The storm will be here any moment.  
We'd better get ready.

GWEN

(confused)

Ready? There's no shelter. You  
said so yourself.

Jack slowly nods.

JACK

There's. . . *some* shelter.

GWEN

Let's go!

Gwen begins to stand, but her dad lowers her back to the  
dirt. He briefly hugs her.

JACK

We don't have to go anywhere.  
There's no shelter for us, just  
for you.

GWEN

What do you mean?

JACK

I will be your shelter from the  
rain.

(CONTINUED)

The storm comes even closer, the clouds and lightning bolts changing colors every few seconds, winds picking up. The sound of the rain grows in intensity.

GWEN

No, Daddy. It'll burn you, and you'll die.

JACK

Better that one of us lives.

GWEN

But -

JACK

I couldn't do anything to save your mother and your brother from the bombs. I *am* going to protect you.

GWEN

But. . . how?

JACK

I'll cover you so the rain falls on *me*. I'll be like a blanket.

GWEN

But you'll die!

DADDY

Perhaps, but *you* will live.

Gwen vigorously shakes her head "no."

JACK

You've barely begun your life. It's the only way.

GWEN

No, Daddy. Please!

Jack grabs his daughter by her little shoulders.

JACK

(sternly)

I'm your father. You will do as I say.

There is the loudest clap yet.

(CONTINUED)

GWEN  
(longish beat;  
reluctantly)  
Yes, sir.

Jack smiles.

JACK  
Good girl.  
(beat)  
When the rain ends, I want you to  
get up and leave me here.

GWEN  
Leave y-

JACK  
If I'm not dead, I'll be nearly  
so. I'll be of no use to you -  
only a burden.

Gwen begins to cry. Jack wipes a dirty tear from his  
daughter's cheek.

JACK  
You need to *run*. Run until you  
can't run anymore. Find other  
people.

GWEN  
Other. . . ? But we haven't seen  
anyone in weeks!

JACK  
There *must* be other people. Find  
them! I don't want you to be  
alone. You help them, and,  
hopefully, they'll help you.  
(beat; choking up)  
Tell me you'll do what I say.

Gwen bites her lip.

GWEN  
(sniffles)  
I will.

DADDY  
Good girl.

The electrified clouds are nearly on them. The pouring  
rain can be heard sizzling on contact with the buckled  
pavement of the city. Some of it eats away at the  
skeletal remains of a once-young boy.

(CONTINUED)

Jack points to the ground.

JACK

Get down. Hurry!

Gwen drops, face down, to the dirt. Jack gently lies on top of her, stretching his limbs out as much as he can to become a bigger "blanket." Finally happy with what he has achieved, he stops and stays still.

JACK

(through tears)

Goodbye, little one.

The storm is seconds away. The winds whip many kinds of debris at them, all of it dead and rotting. Jack tries to ignore it and keep being a blanket for Gwen.

GWEN

(hoarsely)

Goodbye, Daddy.

The storm reaches them. Every raindrop that hits Jack burns him on impact. He screams in agony as it sizzles past his ragged clothing, through his skin, and into his bones. Gwen winces at every sound he utters.

She lies below her father, weeping for his inevitable loss and her solitary future.

FADE TO BLACK.