

AURORA

by

Travis Opgenorth

t.opgenorth@gmail.com
818-632-9037
@northwordent
WGA West Registered: 1905237

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

LAUGHING from the nurses station echoes down the hall pulling at BRIAN's attention. He's 35, slender and clean cut. His tired eyes turn back to face the DOCTOR, 40s.

BRIAN

I can't do it again. Not here...
And I want her to feel comfortable.

DOCTOR

We can manage that better here.

BRIAN

We'll manage it at home.

Doctor hangs a look on Brian for a moment. His mind is set.

DOCTOR

Okay.

Doctor hands a PATIENT RELEASE form to Brian. He signs it.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - LATER

From one of the rooms, Brian pushes CHLOE, 8, hairless, emaciated cancer patient, in a wheelchair down the hall.

INT. HOME - CHLOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

A child's artwork taped to the walls. Photos under the dresser's glass top - echoes from a past life. Among them are photos of JACKIE, late 20s, Chloe's mother, with a younger, healthier Chloe.

Brian and his mother, SUSAN, 60, get Chloe comfortable in her bed while a HOSPICE NURSE sets up Chloe's IV and monitoring equipment. The heart monitor is on but MUTED.

CHLOE

Feels good to be home.

Brian smiles warmly.

Next to Chloe lies a hardcover book with a photo of the Aurora Borealis on the cover. Susan innocently moves it. Chloe reaches out.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Leave my book.

Susan tenderly places it back beside Chloe.

BRIAN
Anything you want to do tomorrow?

CHLOE
I'd like to see the world.

BRIAN
(laughs)
I don't think we could do that in a day.

CHLOE
How about... Norway. We could get there in a day.

BRIAN
What's in Norway?

CHLOE
My book says it's one of the top places in the world to see the northern lights. That's something I'd really like to see.

Brian's warm smile turns tight-lipped as he finishes tucking her in, avoiding eye contact.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Susan enters and sets down two mugs of hot coffee when she sees Brian staring out the window.

BRIAN
It's such a simple ask.

His voice quivers, eyes welling up with tears as he struggles to finish his thought before losing it.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
She has days left... And I... I have to tell her no.

It's gutting him and he can't hold his emotions back. Susan embraces him, doing her best to comfort him as he sobs.

INT. HOME - CHLOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Chloe sleeps peacefully with her Aurora Borealis book open on her lap.

Brian sits bedside staring at an Apple Watch cuffed to his wrist.

INT. START-UP OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Exposed brick industrial space. Desks arranged in an open-floor, bullpen, setup.

BRIAN'S BOSS
Fifteen years.

BRIAN'S BOSS, 40s, addresses Brian and a dozen CO-WORKERS, 30s, at their desks.

BRIAN'S BOSS (CONT'D)
Dan, Lisa, Brian, you three have been here since the beginning... Dan and Lisa both came to us from out of state, so thank you two for taking that leap and sticking with us. And Brian...
(then)
You've lived here your entire life, right?

BRIAN
(self-deprecating)
Never left.

BRIAN'S BOSS
(joking)
So we know he's not going anywhere... But seriously, thank you guys, and here's a token of our appreciation.

THE BOSS' ASSISTANT, 20s, hands out Apple Watch boxes to DAN, LISA, and Brian. Brian looks at the image on the box.

INT. HOME - CHLOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brian still sits staring at the Apple Watch on his wrist... tick-tock.

Shaking it off, he gets up and removes Chloe's hand from the book. The pages flop closed revealing an inscription on the inside cover which reads: "Happy Birthday! Keep looking up. Love, Mom."

He sets it on the bed-side table and gently kisses her head before walking out.

INT. HOME - OFFICE - NIGHT

Brian, at his computer, researches Virtual Reality equipment.

Moments later, he creates a post on Reddit - "I'm seeking VR footage from the world's most beautiful places to share with my terminally ill daughter. Please send links to download."

He then adds, "Specifically the Norwegian Aurora Borealis. Deep thanks."

He waits a moment then reaches out to close the laptop but stops when, surprisingly, a reply comes in. Curious, he clicks the link.

INT. HOME - CHLOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Chloe lies in bed as Brian changes her vitamin bag and checks her stomach port.

BRIAN
That feel okay?

CHLOE
Yeah.

BRIAN
I have something for you.

Brian steps out of the room. After a moment, he returns with a pair of VR headsets and his laptop.

Chloe perks up, curiously excited.

CHLOE
VR headsets?

BRIAN
Yeah. And I'm getting VR footage from around the world. I've already gotten a dozen.

He sets everything on the bed, pulls up a chair, and opens the laptop to show her the list of video files he's received.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
It's not traveling the world, but I thought we could do it from here, and...

CHLOE
I love it.

BRIAN
Where do you want to start?

Chloe looks at the list. Then...

CHLOE
That one. Hot-air balloon ride
in... Cappa...

BRIAN
Cappadocia. That's in Turkey.

CHLOE
Okay.

Brian sets her up with a VR headset. Moments later, she's surrounded by breathtaking VR footage from a hot-air balloon soaring over the sculpted terrain of Cappadocia. Dozens of other hot-air balloons speckle the sky.

Both Brian and Chloe sit swiveling their heads around as they watch the VR footage

CHLOE (CONT'D)
This is amazing.

BRIAN
Almost feels real, doesn't it.

CHLOE
It's too safe to be real, Dad...
but it is amazing.

INT. HOME - CHLOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Brian sticks a postcard from Cappadocia, Turkey to the wall. He turns and smiles back at Chloe. She gives him a thumbs up.

BEGIN CHLOE'S BEDROOM SEQUENCE:

Brian and Chloe, each with VR headsets on, swivel their heads around as they watch...

VR footage - walking the glacier tunnels of Vatnajökull, Iceland.

Brian receives and organizes more video links.

Brian and Chloe watch...

VR footage - walking the Piazza San Marco in Venice, Italy.

Brian changes Chloe's IV bag while she looks around with her VR headset on.

Brian holds a bucket as Chloe vomits into it off the side of her bed.

VR footage - Halong Bay, Vietnam.

CHLOE (V.O.)

Wow.

Brian sticks a Halong Bay, Vietnam postcard to the wall among a half-a-dozen others.

VR footage - Serengeti National Park, Tanzania. A family of giraffes grazes all around.

Chloe, sitting in bed with her VR headset on, giggles.

CHLOE

They're so cute.

(tilting her head up)

Oh... My... gosh... Dad.

BRIAN

I see it.

VR Footage - scuba diving at the Great Barrier reef. Vibrant fish swim past as a giant manta ray glides by overhead.

Brian sits in bed, arms wrapped around Chloe as she shivers in her sleep.

VR footage - The Glowworm Caves of Waitomo, New Zealand.

Chloe sits in bed, mouth agape as she looks around.

CHLOE

This... is... amazing.

Brian sticks a Waitomo, New Zealand post card to the wall among dozen's of other postcards.

Chloe watches from bed as Brian checks his e-mail for new video links.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Any of the northern lights?

BRIAN

Not yet...

(weighing heavy)

We'll get one soon.

Brian searches the list.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

How about the temples at Petra,
Jordan?

Chloe lies back and exhales.

CHLOE
Not today. I'm tired.

BRIAN
Okay.

Brian watches as Hospice Nurse adjusts Chloe's IV drip and monitors her pulse.

HOSPICE NURSE
That better?

CHLOE
Yeah.

Chloe takes a deep, relaxing breath and settles into her pillow. Brian looks on, the weight of the world crushing him.

VR footage - the stone temples of Petra, Jordan.

Chloe lies in bed with the headset on. She barely moves as Brian silently sits next to her looking all around. His hand covers hers in the bed.

Brian sticks a Petra, Jordan postcard to the wall and stoically steps back...

Every inch of the wall is covered with postcards - dozens of them - from all over including Lake Bled, Slovenia, Isle of Skye, Scotland, The Great Wall of Beijing, China, Angkor Wat, Cambodia, Denali, Alaska....

END SEQUENCE:

INT. HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brian wakes and rolls out of bed.

INT. HOME - CHLOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brian walks in and finds Chloe sleeping. He checks the heart monitor - still beating, but it's weak.

After a moment, he wraps her little hand with both of his.

INT. HOME - CHLOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Brian stands in the doorway watching as Hospice Nurse and Doctor check on Chloe.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Susan and Brian languish for a moment before Doctor comes out of Chloe's room and approaches Brian.

DOCTOR
It's the final stages.

Susan uncontrollably whimpers. Brian nods, eyes welling.

INT. HOME - CHLOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Brian sits bedside clutching Chloe's hand as she lies in bed. Her arms shake involuntarily. Her breathing is labored and sounds congested - the death rattle.

INT. HOME - CHLOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Brian works on his laptop checking newly received video links. Frustrated, he doesn't see what he's looking for.

He clicks over to Reddit and posts a new comment to his VR thread: "Urgent!!! Norwegian Aurora VR, please!"

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Doctor, Hospice Nurse, and Susan wait in silence.

INT. HOME - CHLOE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Brian lies in bed next to Chloe, his head resting on the pillow next to hers.

Her shaking has eased. The death rattle is barely audible... Then it stops.

SILENCE.

Brian lifts his head, eyes searching Chloe's face.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Brian steps out of Chloe's room. Saying nothing, he lumbers over to Susan and embraces her.

Doctor and Hospice Nurse take their cue and migrate into Chloe's room.

As Brian and Susan hug...

PRE-LAP SFX: A DIN OF MINGLING VOICES RISES...

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

TIME-LAPSE as FRIENDS and FAMILY gather, filling the room around Susan and Brian as they hold their embrace. This is the funeral wake.

Framed photos of Chloe, healthy and vibrant, stand displayed on the tables and shelves throughout the room. With hair and glowing skin, she looks like a different person.

BACK TO REAL TIME as Brian steps away from Susan. A FAMILY FRIEND watches him walk off. She turns to a 2nd FAMILY FRIEND.

FAMILY FRIEND

At least it's been a few years
since Jackie died. Could you
imagine? That, then this?

Second FAMILY FRIEND shakes her head.

INT. HOME - OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Brian closes the door, shutting out the noise from the wake.

Sitting down at the desk, he opens his laptop and checks his e-mail.

There, at the top of the list is an unread e-mail with the subject line: "Norwegian Aurora Borealis".

Brian deletes the e-mail. Then, he deletes all the video files.

Opening his browser, he pulls up his old Reddit chain and posts a new comment: "Thank you all for sharing. We no longer need anymore videos."

Staring at the screen for a moment, he's about to close his laptop when a new response pops up - a sad-face emoji.

Then another sad-face emoji pops up.

Then another response: "Condolences".

Brian sits for a moment, thinking. Then, he closes his laptop.

INT. HOME - CHLOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

The house is quiet. Brian faces the postcards on the wall. One-by-one, he pulls them down and sets them in a shoebox on the dresser.

Taking the Cappadocia, Turkey card off the wall, he pauses and stares at it, losing himself in thought. Then, he turns his wrist and eyes the Apple Watch... tick-tock.

INT. START-UP OFFICE - BRIAN'S BOSS'S OFFICE - DAY

Brian's Boss enters. As he sets his satchel and jacket down, he finds an Apple Watch and a letter on his desk, the top line of which clearly reads: "Letter of Resignation."

BRIAN'S BOSS

Brian?

Brian's Boss steps out of his office into the main office floor. He looks to Brian's desk. It's cleared off.

FADE TO BLACK.

The blackness holds a moment, then... vibrant rays of blue and green streak past growing in intensity. This is...

EXT. FROZEN WILDERNESS - NIGHT

The Aurora Borealis lights up the sky, an ethereal rainbow moving in waves. Brian, unshaven, looks skyward in awe.

BRIAN

Amazing.

The shoebox rests half out of his backpack which is covered with sewn-on patches from a dozen different countries.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: AURORA

FADE OUT.