

Last legs

In a world with danger at every turn, two runners risk their
lives to remember normality.

EXT. CITY RUNNING TRACK - EVENING

Twilight. A dusky smog hangs low in the air. Distant fires cast an orange glow behind a jagged, windowless skyscraper, and smoke blankets the moon. There is no sound - no birds, not even dogs. No breeze stirs the air, no leaves line the pavements. All is still.

A SOUND. Faint, getting louder, the slap of feet on asphalt, rhythmical, perfectly in time. A runner, circuiting the track.

CLOSE UP: DIRTY, BLISTERED SOLES POUNDING THE TRACK

Feet hit the ground with monotonous, practised, precision timing, the runner's feet hardened and cracked. Long, pale legs, muscled and lean, streaked with filth. Clamped tightly around the runner's right leg is a medical bandage, worn and fraying, holding firmly a long steel steak knife. Its point gleams, the only thing left in this world with a sheen. It's oversized and ugly. It has no place on a runner's calf. It is a weapon.

A DEAFENING FOGHORN slams through the night, a long, low insistent and menacing roar that reverberates through the dilapidated buildings.

She keeps running, eyes never leaving the horizon. Past starting blocks, bleachers, an abandoned and lonely podium.

The runner continues her circuit, not missing a beat, deftly avoiding garbage, bottles, the carcasses of dead animals, with practised ease. She never looks down, her eyes alert and staring in front of her.

Ahead - a figure. Hooded and dark, waiting. The runner slows, stops, bends over her toes and breathes heavily, sucking the foul air into her lungs. She crosses to the side of the track and spits into the burnt-out grass. Her spit is grey, tinged with blood.

The hooded figure approaches her. He's barefoot, lean, silent.

The runner stands tall, facing him. The knife is no longer in its sheath, but gripped in her hand, its blade matching the gleam in her eyes.

MAN

You did extra. Kept me waiting.

She says nothing, knife pointing in his direction. He walks calmly towards her, arms outstretched. She doesn't flinch.

(CONTINUED)

MAN

Seriously, kid, why d'you make this
so difficult?

RUNNER

You weren't there when I came
round. So I did another.

MAN

And left me here, unarmed. You know
the fucking rules.

RUNNER

Yeah I do.

The knife is still aloft, inches from his face. He makes to brush her hand away but she bares her teeth and snaps, as if a dog.

MAN

Ok, ok. You're crazy. It's no big deal.

He bends down and starts to limber up, stretching sinew and string.

RUNNER

Felt good tonight. I don't want to go in.

MAN

Tough.

RUNNER

I could come with you. I can match.

MAN

No way babe.

RUNNER

Just a couple. I can match.

MAN

I said no. You need to go in.

The FOGHORN sounds again - quieter this time, in the distance. They both glance in the direction it came from. Both look afraid.

MAN

Any trouble?

RUNNER

No.

MAN

Good.

He holds out his hand. She hesitates, then hands over the knife. Their fingers brush for the briefest of seconds. He bends down and sheaths the knife into a matching bandage on his leg.

He straightens up. His face is relaxed again, smiling.

MAN

I promise I'll be on time tomorrow.

RUNNER

You can promise no such thing.

His smile falters, a tiny amount.

MAN

Go in.

He adopts a runner's stance and pads off lightly into the gloom. Soon his footsteps achieve the same consistent monotony of the runner's. Soon, they are silent.

RUNNER

Good luck.

She bends down, smooths the bandage on her leg, then slowly walks across the grass, leading into darkness.

CLOSE UP: THE RUNNER'S SOLES, WALKING RHYTHMICALLY THROUGH THE RAGGED GRASS

She steps deftly over broken glass bottles, cardboard, pieces of brick. An unidentifiable corpse of something once small and furry. Her footsteps barely make a sound, yet they are the ONLY sound.

Her rhythm changes. Faster. Only a tiny amount, but then more. Faster. Faster. The tip of her toe grazes a beer bottle, which rolls into a tin can. It's deafening.

Faster. She's practically jogging now. We can hear her breath. Her footsteps are uneven, uncertain, she stumbles on a piece of masonry and gasps.

She's running now, faster, faster. The sinews in her legs are pumping and stretching, the bandage working its way loose down her leg.

And now we hear ANOTHER SET OF FOOTSTEPS, running in tandem, speeding up in time, keeping pace. Getting faster.

CLOSE UP: THE RUNNER'S FACE, RIGID WITH FEAR

She breathes rapidly, in out, exhaling and inhaling, her eyes wide, her mouth a perfect o. Blood vessels rage in her forehead, sweat streams down her face as she thunders along. She glances behind her, her drenched hair whipping in her eyes.

In the gloom, a faint light can be seen, illuminating a door - a bunker. But it's too far away. On the runner's heels is a figure. A creature. Dark, big. It snarls, grunts, gains the distance, it's at her feet.

The runner screams. The scream echoes out into the night, echoing off bleachers, shattering the little glass left in the buildings.

CUT TO:

The Man. He freezes mid-run as the screams send shock waves past him. Deafening silence. Then the FOGHORN again, louder than it's ever been heard. He looks around, into the night. And then, one by one, like a row of runway lights, a series of red lights ring the running track. Pairs of lights. Eyes.

He bends down and retrieves the knife. Rubs the blade against his shorts. Looks around. And waits.

FADE OUT.