

Закр́тый клуб

# Читаем вместе по-английски

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**'The Longest Ride'** by Nickolas Sparks



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# **Lesson 34**

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**The Longest Ride**

*Chapter 17, Part 2*

# The Longest Ride

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## Chapter 17, Part 2



# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- “You can live without me,” Ruth says to me.
- Outside the car, the winds **have died down** and the darkness seems less **opaque**. This is moonlight, I think to myself, and I realize that the weather is finally clearing. By tomorrow night, if I last that long, the weather will begin to improve, and by Tuesday the snow **will be melting**.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- For a moment, this gives me hope, but as quickly as it comes, the feeling **fades away**. I will not last that long.
- I am weak, so weak that even focusing on Ruth is difficult. The inside of the car **is moving in circles**, and I want to reach for her hand to **steady** me, but I know that's impossible. Instead, I try to remember the feel of her touch, but the **sensation eludes** me. "Are you listening to me?" she asks.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- I close my eyes, trying to **make the dizziness stop**, but it only increases, colored spirals **exploding** behind my eyes. “Yes,” I finally whisper, a dry **rasp** in the volcanic **ash** of my throat. My thirst **claws at** me with a **vengeance**. Worse than before. **Infinitely** worse.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- It's been more than a day since I've had anything to drink, and the desire for water **consumes** me, growing stronger with every **labored** breath.
- "The water bottle is here," Ruth suddenly says to me. "I think it is on the floor **by** my feet."

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- Her voice is soft and **lilting**, like a melody, and I try to **latch on to** the sound to **avoid thinking** about the obvious. “How do you know?”
- “I do not know **for sure**. But where else can it be? It is not on the seat.”



# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- She's right, I think to myself. It's likely on the floor, but there is nothing I can do to reach it. **"It doesn't matter,"** I finally say **in despair.**
- "Of course it matters. You must find a way to reach the bottle."
- "I can't," I say. "I'm not **strong enough.**"

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- She **seems to absorb** this and remains quiet for a moment. In the car, I think I **hear her breathing** before I realize that it is I who has begun to **wheeze**. The blockage in my throat has begun to form again.
- “Do you remember the tornado?” she suddenly asks me. There is something in her voice **imploring** me to concentrate, and I try to **figure out** what she’s **referring to**.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- The tornado. It means nothing at first, and then, slowly, the memory begins to **acquire** shape and significance.
- I'd been home from work for an hour when **all at once** the sky turned an **ominous shade** of grayish green. Ruth stepped outside to **investigate**, and I remember **seizing** her **by the hand** to drag her to the bathroom in the center of the house.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- It was the first tornado she'd ever experienced, and though our house was **unharmmed**, a tree down the street had been **toppled, crushing** a neighbor's car. "It was 1957," I say. "April."
- "Yes," she says. "That is when it happened. I am not surprised you remember. You always remember the weather, even **from long ago.**"

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- “I remember because I was frightened.”
- “But you remember the weather now, too.”
- “I watch the Weather Channel.”
- “This is good. There are many good programs on this channel. There is sometimes much to learn.”
- “Why are we talking about this?”

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- “Because,” she says to me, **urgency** in her tone, “there is something you must remember. There is something more.”
- I don’t understand what she means, and in my **exhaustion**, I realize I suddenly don’t care. The **wheeze** grows worse and I close my eyes, beginning to float on a sea of dark, **undulating** waves. Toward a distant horizon, away from here. Away from her.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- “You have seen something interesting lately!” she shouts.
- And still, I **drift**. Outside the car. Flying now. Under the moon and stars. The night is clearing and the wind has died, and I’m so tired I know I will sleep forever. I **feel my limbs relax** and lose **heft**.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- “Ira!” she shouts, the panic in her voice **rising**. “There is something you must remember! It was on the Weather Channel!” Her voice sounds **far away**, almost like an echo.
- “A man in Sweden!” she shouts. “He had no food or water!” Though I can barely hear her, the words somehow register. Yes, I think, and the memory, like the tornado, also begins to **take shape**. Umeå. **Arctic Circle**. Sixty-four days.



# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- “He survived!” she shouts. She reaches for me, her hand coming to rest on my leg.
- And in that moment, I **stop drifting**. When I open my eyes, I’m back in the car.
- **Buried** in his car in the snow. No food or water.
- No water...
- No water...

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- Ruth leans toward me, so close I can smell the **delicate** rose notes of her perfume. “Yes, Ira,” she says, her expression serious.
- “He had no water. So how did he survive? You must remember!”
- I blink and my eyes feel **scaly**, like those of a **reptile**. “Snow,” I say. “He ate the snow.”

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- She holds my gaze and I know she **is daring** me to **look away**. “There is snow here, too,” she says. “There is snow right outside your window.”
- At her words, I feel something **surge** inside me despite my weakness, and though I am afraid of movement, I nonetheless **raise** my left arm slowly.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- I **inch** it forward on my **thigh** and then lift it, moving it to the **armrest**. The **exertion** feels **mammoth** and I **take a moment** to **catch my breath**. But Ruth is right. There is water **close by** and I **stretch** my finger toward the button. I'm afraid the window won't open, but still I stretch my finger forward.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- Something **primal keeps me going**. I hope the battery still works. It worked before, I tell myself again. It worked after the accident. Finally my finger meets the button and I push it forward.
- And like a miracle, **bitter cold** suddenly **invades** the interior. The **chill** is **brutal** and a **dab** of snow lands on the back of my hand. So close now, but I am facing the wrong way.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- I must **lift my head**. The task seems **insurmountable**, but the water **calls out to** me and it is impossible not to answer.
- I raise my head, and my arm and shoulder and **collarbone explode**. I see nothing but white and then nothing but black, but I **keep on going**.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- My face feels **swollen**, and for an instant, I don't think I'll make it. I want to put my head back down. I want the pain to end, yet my left hand is already moving toward me. The snow **is already melting** and I can feel the water **dripping** and my hand **keeps moving**.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- And then, just when I'm **on the brink of giving up**, my hand meets my mouth. The snow is wonderful, and my mouth **seems to come alive**. I can feel the **wetness** on my tongue. It is cold and **sharp** and heavenly, and I feel the individual drops of water trace a path down my throat.



# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- The miracle **emboldens** me and I reach for another **handful** of snow. I swallow some more and the **needles** vanish. My throat is suddenly young like Ruth, and though the car is freezing, I do not even feel the cold. I take another handful of snow, and then another, and the **exhaustion** I felt just a minute ago **has dissipated**.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- I'm tired and weak, but this seems infinitely **bearable by comparison**. When I look at Ruth, I can see her clearly. She's in her thirties, that age when she was most beautiful of all, and she **is glowing**.
- "Thank you," I finally say.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- “There is **no reason** to thank me.” She shrugs. “But you should **roll up the window** now. Before you **get too cold.**”
- I do as she tells me, my eyes never leaving hers. “I love you, Ruth,” I **croak**.
- “I know,” she says, her expression tender. “That is why I have come.”

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## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- The water has restored me in a way that seemed impossible even a few hours earlier. By this, I mean my mind. My body is still a **wreck** and I am still afraid to move, but Ruth seems comforted by my recovery. She sits quietly, listening to the **chatter** of my thoughts. Mostly I **am preoccupied with** the question of whether someone will ever find me...

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- In this world, **after all**, I've become more or less invisible. Even when I filled my **tank with gasoline**—which **led to me getting lost**, I now think—the woman behind the counter looked past me, toward a young man in jeans. I've become what the young are afraid of becoming, just another member of the **nameless elderly**, an old and **broken man** with nothing left to offer to this world.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- My days are **inconsequential, comprising** simple moments and even simpler pleasures. I eat and sleep and think of Ruth; I **wander** the house and stare at the paintings, and in the mornings, I feed the **pigeons** that gather in my backyard. My neighbor complains about this. He thinks the birds are a **disease-ridden nuisance.**

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- He may **have a point**, but he also **cut down** a **magnificent maple tree** that **straddled** our properties simply because he was tired of **raking** the leaves, so his judgment isn't something that I consider **altogether trustworthy**. Anyway, I like the birds. I like the gentle **cooing** noises they make and I **enjoy watching** their heads **bob up and down** as they **pursue** the **seed** I **scatter** for them.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- I know that most people consider me to be a **recluse**. That's how the journalist described me. As much as I **despise** the word and what it **implies**, there is some truth to what she wrote about me. I've been a **widower** for years, a man without children, and **as far as I know**, I have no living relatives.



# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- My friends, **aside from** my **attorney**, Howie Sanders, **have long since passed away**, and since the media storm—the one **unleashed** by the article in the New Yorker—I **seldom** leave the house. It's easier that way, but I frequently wonder whether I should have ever talked to the journalist **in the first place**.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- Probably not, but when Janice or Janet or whatever her name **was showed up at the door unannounced**, her dark hair and intelligent eyes **reminded me of** Ruth, and **the next thing I knew**, she was standing in the living room. She didn't leave for the next six hours. How she **found out** about the collection, I still don't know.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- Probably from an **art dealer** up north—they can be bigger **gossips** than schoolgirls—but **even so**, I didn't blame her for all that followed. She was doing her job and I could have asked her to leave, but instead I answered her questions and allowed her to **take photographs**. After she left, I **promptly put her out of my mind**.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- Then, a few months later, a **squeaky-voiced** young man who described himself as a **fact-checker** for the magazine phoned to **verify** things that I had said. Naively, I gave him the answers he wanted, only to receive a small package in the mail several weeks later. The journalist had been **thoughtful** enough to send me a copy of the **issue** in which the article appeared.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- **Needless to say,** the article **enraged** me. I **threw it away** after reading what she'd written, but later after I'd **cooled down,** I **retrieved** it from the **trash** and read it **once more.** **In retrospect,** I realized it **wasn't her fault** that she hadn't understood what I'd been trying to tell her. In her mind, after all, the collection was the **entirety** of the story.

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## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- That was six years ago, and **it turned my life upside down. Bars went up** on the windows and a fence **was installed** that circled the yard. I **had a security system put in**, and the police began **making a point** to drive past my house **at least twice a day. I was deluged with** phone calls. Reporters. Producers.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- A **screenwriter** who promised to put the story on the big screen. Three or four lawyers. Two people **who claimed to be related, distant cousins** on Ruth's side of the family. Strangers **down on their luck** and **looking for handouts**. In the end, I simply **unplugged** the phone, for all of them—**including** the journalist—thought about the art only **in terms of** money.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- What **every last** person **failed to see** was that **it was not about money**; it was about the memories they held. If Ruth had the letters I wrote her, I had the paintings and the memories. When I see the de Koonings and the Rauschenbergs and the Warhols, I **recall the way** Ruth held me as we stood **by** the lake; when I see the Jackson Pollock, I **am reliving** that first trip to New York in 1950.



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## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- We were halfway through our trip, and **on a whim** we **drove out to** Springs, a **hamlet** near East Hampton on Long Island. It was a **glorious** summer **day** and Ruth wore a yellow dress. She was twenty-eight then and growing more beautiful **with every passing day**, something that Pollock **did not fail to notice**.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- I am convinced that it was her elegant **bearing** that moved him to allow two strangers into his studio. It also explains why he **eventually** allowed Ruth to purchase a painting he'd only recently completed, something he seldom, **if ever**, did again. Later that afternoon, **on our way back to the city**, Ruth and I stopped at a small café in Water Mill.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- It was a **charming** place with **scuffed** wood floors and **sun drenched** windows, and the owner led us to a **wobbly** outdoor table. On that day, Ruth ordered white wine, something light and sweet, and we **sipped** from our glasses while **gazing out** over the Sound. The breeze was light and the day was warm, and when we spotted the **occasional** boat passing **in the distance**, we'd wonder aloud where it might **be headed**.

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## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- **Hanging next to that painting** is a work by Jasper Johns. We bought it in 1952, the summer that Ruth's hair was **at its longest**. The first **faint lines** were beginning to form at the corners of her eyes, adding a **womanly** quality to her face. She and I had stood atop the Empire State Building earlier that morning, and later in the quiet of our hotel room, Ruth and I **made love for hours** before she **finally fell asleep in my arms**.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- I could not sleep that day. Instead, I stared at her, watching the gentle rise and fall of her chest, her skin warm against my own. In the **dim surroundings** of that room, her hair **splayed** over the pillow, I **found myself asking** whether any man had ever been as lucky as I.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- This is why I wander our house late at night; this is why the collection **remains intact**. This is why I've **never sold** a single painting. How could I? In the oils and **pigments** I store my memories of Ruth; in every painting I **recall** a chapter of our lives together. There is nothing more **precious** to me.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- They are all I have left of the wife I've loved more than life itself, and I will continue to stare and remember until I can do it no more.
- Before she passed, Ruth sometimes **joined me** on these late-hour wanderings, **for** she, too, **enjoyed being drawn back in time**. She, too, liked to **retell** the stories, even if she never realized that she was the **heroine** in all of them.

# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- She would hold my hand as we wandered from room to room, both of us **reveling** as the past **came alive**.
- My marriage brought great happiness into my life, but lately there's been nothing but sadness. I understand that love and tragedy **go hand in hand, for** there can't be one without the other, but nonetheless I **find myself wondering** whether the **trade-off is fair**.



# The Longest Ride

## Chapter 17 – Ira – Part 2

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- A man should die as he had lived, I think; in his final moments, he should be surrounded and comforted by those he's always loved.
- But I already know that in my final moments, I will be alone.

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