Закрытый клуб

Читаем вместе по-английски

‘The Longest Ride’ by Nickolas Sparks

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Lesson 9

The Longest Ride

Chapter 3, Part 2

The Longest Ride

Chapter 3, Part 2

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- But the girl on the railing interested him. There was something different about her, though he couldn't **pinpoint** what. Maybe, he thought, it was the **unguarded,** almost **vulnerable** way she **stared into the distance.** Whatever it was, he sensed that right now what she really needed was a friend.

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- He **considered going over** to talk to her, but he **pushed aside** the idea as he focused on the bulls **in the distance.** Despite the arena lights, it was too dark to **make out** all the details, but he **searched for** Big **Ugly Critter** anyway. They would forever be linked, he thought, and he wondered idly whether the bull **had already been loaded up.**

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- He doubted the owner of the bull had planned to drive all night, which meant the animal was here, but it still took some time before he was able to **locate** him.
- It was while he was staring at Big Ugly Critter that the drunk ex-boyfriend **had walked up.** It was impossible not to **overhear** their conversation, but he reminded himself not to **get involved.**

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- And he wouldn’t have, **at least** until the huge **brute** had grabbed her. By then, it was obvious she didn’t want anything to do with him, and when he heard the blonde’s anger **give way to** fear, Luke **found himself pushing away** from the railing. He knew his decision would probably **backfire on** him, but as he stepped toward the two of them, he thought again of the way she’d looked earlier, and he knew he didn’t have a choice.

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- Luke watched as the drunk ex-boyfriend **stalked off,** and he turned to thank his fellow riders **for coming over.** One by one they **drifted away,** leaving Luke and Sophia alone.
- Above them, the stars had multiplied in the **ebony** sky. In the barn, the band finished one song and **eased into** another, an older classic **by** Garth Brooks.

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- With a deep **sigh,** Sophia **let her arms fall** to her sides, the autumn breeze lifting her hair gently as she turned to face him.
- “I’m sorry you **were dragged into** all this, but I want to thank you for what you did,” Sophia said, a little **sheepish.**

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- Closer now, Luke registered the **unusual** green color of her eyes and the soft **precision** of her speech, a sound that made him think of **faraway places. For a moment,** he found himself **tonguetied.**
- “I was glad to help,” he **managed.**

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- When he said nothing more, she **tucked a loose strand** of hair behind her ear. “He’s… not always as crazy as you probably imagine he is. We **used to go out** and he’s not too happy I **broke up with** him.”
- “I **figured,”** Luke said.
- “Did you… hear everything?” Her face was a **mixture of embarrassment** and **fatigue.**

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “It was **kind of hard** not to.”
- Her lips **tightened.** “That’s what I thought.”
- “If it makes you feel any better, I promise to forget,” he offered.
- She **gave a genuine laugh,** and he thought he **heard relief** in it.
- “I’m going to **try my best** to forget all about it, too,” she said. “I just wish…”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- When she **trailed off,** Luke finished her thought for her. **“It’s over and done,** I’d guess. At least for tonight, anyway.”
- She turned, **taking her time** as she examined the barn. “I sure hope so.”
- Luke’s feet scraped at the ground, **as if trying** to **unearth** words in the **dust.** “I **assume** your friends are inside?”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- Her gaze flickered over the figures **milling around** the barn doors and beyond. “A bunch of us are here,” she said. “I go to Wake Forest and my roommate at the sorority decided that what I really needed was a girls’ night out.”
- “They’re probably wondering where you are.”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “I doubt it,” she said. “They’re having too much fun for that.”
- From a tree bordering the corral came the sound of an **owl** calling from a low-hanging branch, and both of them turned at the sound.
- “Do you want me to walk you back inside? **In case** there’s any trouble, I mean?”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- She surprised him by shaking her head. “No. I think it’s best if I **stay out** here for a little longer. It’ll **give Brian a chance** to **cool off.”**
- Only if he quits drinking, Luke thought. **Let it go.** It’s not your business, he reminded himself. **“Would you rather be alone,** then?”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- A look of **amusement flashed** across her face. “Why? Am I boring you?”
- “No,” he said, shaking his head. **“Not at all.** I just didn’t want _”
- **“I’m kidding.”** She stepped to the railing and **propped her elbows on the fence.** She leaned forward and turned toward him, smiling. **Hesitantly,** Luke joined her at the railing.

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- **In the distance,** she **took in the view**, appreciating the gently **rolling hills common to** this part of the state. Luke studied her features silently, noting the small **stud** in her **earlobe**, trying to **figure out** what to say.
- "What year are you in college?" he finally asked. He knew it was an **inane** question, but it was all he could **come up with.**

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “I’m a **senior.”**
- “That makes you… twenty-two?”
- “Twenty-one.” She **half turned** in his direction. “And you?”
- “Older than that.”
- **“Not by much,** I’d guess. Did you go to college?” **“It wasn’t really my thing.”** He **shrugged.**

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “And you ride bulls **for a living?”**
- “Sometimes,” he answered. “When I **stay on,** that is. But **other times,** I’m just a toy the bull gets to play with until I can **get away.”**
- She **raised an eyebrow.** “You were pretty impressive **out there** today.”
- “You remember me?”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “Of course. You were **the only one** who rode them all. You won, right?”
- “I had a pretty good night,” he **admitted.**
- She brought her hands together. “So it’s Luke…” “Collins,” he finished.
- “That’s right,” she said. “The announcer **was going on and on** about you before your ride.”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “And?”
- **“To be honest,** I **wasn’t paying much attention.** At the time, I didn’t know you**’d end up coming to my rescue.”**
- He **listened for** traces of sarcasm but **detected** none, which surprised him. **Hooking a thumb** toward the tractor tire, he **pointed out,** “Those other guys came over to help, too.”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “But they didn’t **intervene.** You did.” She let the comment sink in for a moment. “Can I ask you a question, **though?”** she **went on.** “I’ve been wondering about it all night.”
- Luke picked at a **sliver** on the railing. **“Go ahead.”**
- **“Why on earth** would you ride bulls? **It seems like** you could get killed out there.”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- **That's about right,** he thought. It's what everyone wanted to know. **As usual,** he answered it **the way** he always did. "It's just something I've always wanted to do. I started when I was a little kid. I think I rode my first **calf** when I was four years old, and I was riding **steers by** the third grade."
- "But how did you start **in the first place?** Who got you into it?"

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “My dad,” he said. “He was in rodeo for years. **Saddle bronc.”**
- “Is that different than bulls?”
- “It’s **pretty much the same rules,** except that it’s on a horse. Eight seconds, **holding on** with one hand while the animal tries to throw you.”
- “Except that horses don’t have **horns** the size of **baseball bats.** And they’re smaller and not as **mean.”**

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- He considered it. **“That’s about right, I’d guess.”**
- “Then why don’t you compete in saddle bronc **instead of** riding bulls?”
- He watched her brush her hair back with both hands, trying to **capture** the **flyaways.** “That’s **kind of** a long story. Do you really want to know?”
- “I wouldn’t have asked if I didn’t.”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- He **fiddled** with his hat. “It’s just a hard life, I guess. My dad would drive a hundred thousand miles a year going from rodeo to rodeo just to **qualify for** the National Finals Rodeo. That kind of travel is hard on the family, and not only **was he gone** almost all the time, but **back then,** it didn’t pay much. After **travel expenses** and **entry fees,** he probably would **have been better off** working **minimum wage.**

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- He didn’t want that for me, and when he heard that bull riders **were about to** start their own tour, he thought it had a pretty good chance to be successful. That’s when he got me into it. There’s still a lot of travel, but the events are **on weekends** and usually I can get in and out pretty quick. The **purses** are bigger too.”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “So he was right.”
- “He had great instincts. About everything.” The words came out without thinking, and when he saw her expression, he knew she**’d picked up on** it. He sighed. “He **passed away** six years ago.”
- Her gaze didn’t **waver,** and impulsively she reached out, touching his arm. “I’m sorry,” she said.

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- Though her hand **barely grazed** his arm, the sensation **lingered.** “It’s okay,” he said, **straightening up.** Already he could feel the post-ride **soreness settling in,** and he tried to concentrate on that instead. “Anyway, that’s the reason I ride bulls.”
- “And you like it?”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- That was a **tough one.** For a long time, it was how he'd defined himself, **no question about it.** But now? He didn't know how to answer, because he wasn't sure himself. "Why are you so interested?" he **countered.**
- "I don't know," she said. "Maybe because it's a world I know nothing about? Or maybe I'm just **naturally** curious. **Then again,** I might just **be making conversation."**

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “Which one is it?”
- “I could tell you,” she said, her green eyes **seductive** in the moonlight. “But how much fun would that be? The world needs a little mystery.”
- Something **stirred in** him at the **veiled** challenge in her voice.
- “Where are you from?” he asked, feeling himself **being reeled in** and liking it. **“I take it** you’re not from around here.”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “Why would you think that? Do I have an accent?”
- “I suppose that **depends on** where you’re from. Up north, I’d be the one with the accent. But I can’t really tell where you’re from.”
- “I’m from New Jersey.” She paused. “No jokes, please.”
- “Why would I joke? I like New Jersey.”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- **“Have you ever been** there?”
- “I’ve been to Trenton. I **rode in** a few events at the Sovereign Bank Arena. Do you know where that is?”
- “I know where Trenton is,” she answered. “It’s south of where I live, closer to Philadelphia. I’m up north, by the city.”
- “Have you been to Trenton?"

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “A **handful** of times. But I’ve never been to the arena. Or to a rodeo, **for that matter.** This is my first time.”
- “What did you think?”
- “Other than being impressed? I thought you were all crazy.”
- He laughed, charmed by her **frankness.** “You know my **last name,** but I didn’t catch yours.”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “Danko,” she said. Then, **anticipating** his next question: “My dad is from Slovakia.”
- “That’s near Kansas, right?”
- She **blinked.** Her mouth opened and closed, and just as she **was about to** explain the concept of Europe to him, he **raised his hands.**

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “Joking,” he said. “I know where it is. Central Europe, part of what was once Czechoslovakia. I just wanted to see your reaction.”
- “And?”
- “I **should’ve taken a picture** to show my friends.”
- She **scowled** before **nudging** against him. “That’s not nice.”
- “But it was funny.”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “Yeah,” she **admitted.** “It was funny.”
- “So if your dad is from Slovakia…”
- “My mom is French. They moved here a year before I was born.”
- He turned toward her. **“No kidding…”**
- “You sound surprised.”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “I don’t know if I’ve ever met a French Slovakian before.” He paused. “Hell, I don’t know if I’ve ever met someone from New Jersey before.”
- When she laughed, he felt something relax in him, and he knew he wanted to hear the sound again. “And you **live close by?”**
- “Not too far. A little north of Winston-Salem. I’m right outside of King.”

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Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “Sounds **fancy.”**
- “That’s one thing it isn’t. It’s a small town with friendly people, but that’s about it. We have a ranch up there.”
- “We?”
- “My mom and I. Well, actually it’s her **ranch.** I just live and work there.”
- “Like… a real ranch? With cows and horses and pigs?”

The Longest Ride

Chapter 3 – Luke – Part 2

- “It’s even got a barn that makes this one here look new.”
- She surveyed the barn behind them. “I doubt that.”
- “Maybe I’ll show you one day. **Take you horseback riding** and everything.”
- Their eyes met, holding for a beat, and again she reached out to touch his arm. “I think I**’d like** that, Luke.”

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