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## The Woman Behind the Runhole



BY THERESA NICHOLSON



**MAYBE YOU'VE SEEN ME**, hands shoved in my pockets shivering in the pre-dawn dark at the start line before a race, dressed in civilian clothes and waiting with my phone to catch a few photos of the start of the race. Or later in the day, at a checkpoint, spreadsheet in hand, re-calculating estimated arrival times, and staring down the trail willing runners to emerge from the woods.

I spring into action when my runner arrives, and I try to assess his mental and physical condition in the few seconds I have while he grabs what he wants from the bins of snacks and gear that I offer.

A smack on the ass and he's off again, and I'm back in the car to meet him at another checkpoint, or maybe the finish.

Always the finish, no matter what.

Sometimes, if I'm lucky, I can catch a nap between checkpoints, or before heading to the finish.

Most of the time, I miscalculate the drive time, and can choose to sleep or eat, but not both.

I try to get just enough of each to function before heading to the finish.

**At the finish, I sit. I pace.  
I stare into the blackness and search  
for the twinkling of a headlamp.**

Sometimes I chat with others who wait, especially if they happen to have a dog with them.

Our dogs are too big and too sensitive to bring to races, and I miss them when we're away.

And then suddenly, I know he's about to arrive.

Don't ask me how...I just know.

I stand and watch down the dark trail for the twinkle of the headlight I know will appear, and sure enough, within a few minutes it does.

He's finished the race, and is returning from whatever consciousness he's been living for the last several hours.

We don't speak much during his transition back to reality, that will come later when we're alone together, when he tells me all the incredible things he saw or did during the race.





I take it all in.

I imagine what it's like to run an ultra.

I imagine what it feels like to run and feel the joy that he does.

That's not in the cards for me; I was born with a disability that will not allow me to run. So I listen intently, close my eyes, and imagine I was there.

He talks to me about all of his runs, because I ask him to.

I want to get close to that joy, even if I can't have it for myself. And I learn a lot. And meet a lot of runners. And a lot of Runholes.

Maybe you've seen my name on the Runhole Facebook page. I'm an admin there, and I often like posts, but rarely comment.

Maybe you read the articles at Runhole.com. As the editor of that website, every one of those articles has my hand in it.

Some of my ideas were used in the creation of Runhole.

**I'm not a runner, but I AM a Runhole.**

I want to get close to the joy, even if I can't have it for myself.

