



# Heart of a Lion: A Lone Cat's Walk Across America

*William Stolzenburg*

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Late one June night in 2011, a large animal collided with an SUV cruising down a Connecticut parkway. The creature appeared as something out of New England's forgotten past. Beside the road lay a 140-pound mountain lion.

Speculations ran wild, the wildest of which figured him a ghostly survivor from a bygone century when lions last roamed the eastern United States. But a more fantastic scenario of facts soon unfolded. The lion was three years old, with a DNA trail embarking from the Black Hills of South Dakota on a cross-country odyssey eventually passing within thirty miles of New York City. It was the farthest landbound trek ever recorded for a wild animal in America, by a barely weaned teenager venturing solo through hostile terrain.

William Stolzenburg retraces his two-year journey--from his embattled birthplace in the Black Hills, across the Great Plains and the Mississippi River, through Midwest metropolises and remote northern forests, to his tragic finale upon Connecticut's Gold Coast. Along the way, the lion traverses lands with people gunning for his kind, as well as those championing his cause.

*Heart of a Lion* is a story of one heroic creature pitting instinct against towering odds, coming home to a society deeply divided over his return. It is a testament to the resilience of nature, and a test of humanity's willingness to live again beside the ultimate symbol of wildness.

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