

The Long March

INT. MARTIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

MARTIN, 65, a formidable man, sits up in bed reading.

He gives up, places a bookmark in the middle of his book, and sets it on his nightstand on top of four other books, all with bookmarks midway.

He turns off the lamp, slides down into bed and stares at the ceiling.

MONTAGE

-He rearranges the pillows

-He stares out the bedroom window

-He takes the top blanket off his bed

-He enters his bedroom, flushing noise behind him

-He lies in bed, eye wide open

END MONTAGE

INT. MARTIN'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Martin sits at attention on his couch. He flips through the channels, never staying on anything longer than a second.

Martin walks to his bay window, looks out over the quiet, peaceful street as snow falls on the suburban lane.

INT. MARTIN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Martin wakes up in his recliner, book on the floor, glasses on his chest. It takes him a moment to realize where he is, when it is. He sighs in recognition that it is just another day.

TITLE: THE LONG MARCH

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Martin pulls up in his Roadmaster to an impressive two-story. SARAH, 31, and LILY, 5, rush out the front door.

INT. MARTIN'S CAR

Sarah and Lily slide into the back seat.

SARAH
Morning.

LILY
Hi, Grandpa!

MARTIN
Hi, Bubba. No Calvin?

SARAH
Don't start.

MARTIN
Just a question.

Sarah and Martin lock eyes in Martin's rearview mirror, she fights back a smile.

EXT. ST. PAUL'S-DAY

People matching the drab colors of winter shuffle towards the main entrance of the one story brick church.

Martin, Sarah, and Lily join the stream.

MARTIN
Back in the herd.

SARAH
Dad, people can hear you.

MARTIN
Humph.

LILY
Molly, I see Molly.

SARAH
OK!
(to Martin)
Save me a seat.

MARTIN
Where are you going?

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CONTINUED:

SARAH

Taking Lily to her classroom, then I'm helping get ready for youth group. I should be in by the sermon.

INT. ST. PAUL'S NARTHEX (CONTINUOUS)

MARTIN

Why don't you duck out at the sermon? It's the worst part.

SARAH

I'll be in when I can.

MARTIN

I think we should stick together, solitude invites chatter.

Sarah pats him on the shoulder and they get separated in the crowd. Martin looks around, surrenders to entering the nave.

ST. PAUL'S NAVE

Martin sees groups of people congregating towards the front of the aisle. He accidentally makes eye contact with a bright-eye MIDDLE AGED WOMAN, then quickly slides into the last pew.

Disaster of social interaction avoided. He sits and sighs in relief...not seeing TRUMAN on the other side.

TRUMAN

Martin. Cold enough for you? Course this is hardly the coldest winter we've had, not nearly close. I was just telling one my grandkids about the '76 blizzard, that was real snow.

MARTIN

Jesus.

TRUMAN

What?

MARTIN

I was praying.

TRUMAN

Now they close schools if there's even the chance of snow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Martin goes limp, lets the chatter happen.

INT. CHURCH KITCHEN - DAY

Sarah and LAUREN, 34, put on latex gloves in the 1950s kitchen. Sarah seems distracted.

LAUREN
But did you see her?

SARAH
No, I guess I missed her.

LAUREN
Her? It! I swear it was looking at me.

SARAH
Oh my God.

LAUREN
Like she was ready for a pelvic exam.

Lauren snaps her gloves.

LAUREN
What are we doing?

SARAH
Tuna duty.

Sarah pulls down a dozen cans of tuna from the cupboard.

LAUREN
Ugh, it's too early for fish.

SARAH
What would Jesus do?

LAUREN
He'd at least have wine.

SARAH
Youth group's heading out right after the service.

Sarah puts a giant bowl between them, they pull back the can lids.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAUREN

I bet Pubic Polly is going.
 Seriously, if that dress was any
 shorter-

SARAH

Do you think it's weird that
 Calvin never comes to church with
 us?

Lauren freezes, conversation whiplash.

SARAH

Sorry, I didn't mean to blurt it
 out like that.

LAUREN

He's busy, right? It's not a big
 deal. You don't want to force him
 to come.

SARAH

I just...I used to feel
 embarrassed or guilty when he
 wouldn't come to church with us
 and I would have to make up an
 excuse and I would wish that he
 would come and I just realized
 that I feel relived when he says
 he's not coming and if that's how
 I feel, maybe that says something.

LAUREN

You know who else says something?
 The little old ladies that keep
 asking me why I'm not married yet.
 That ring is a shield and don't
 you forget it.

SARAH

I guess.

Sarah and Lauren each FLERP a can of tuna into the bowl
 at the same time.

ST. PAUL'S NARTHEX

Martin listens to PASTOR VERN's sermon with his arms
 crossed. Is he angry or just falling asleep? Hard to say.

Paster Vern, mid-50s, loving all the attention,
 dramatically concludes his sermon.

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CONTINUED:

PASTOR VERN

It is easy this time of year to focus solely on Easter Sunday. I have heard it said by some that Lent is a time of preparation for the resurrection of Christ. I say we are asked to look inward, to fast, to pray, in this time not to make ready for celebration, but to face the consequences of our human weakness. To remember how our sins lead to the ultimate betrayal.

Sarah joins Martin in the pew.

PASTOR VERN

We enter this world unclean. We are baptized that we may enter the Kingdom of Heaven but that does not shield us of our unclean ways or bar us from temptation. We are weak, we fail, we sin and we must remember in the weeks leading up to the resurrection that first comes the darkest day, a day for which we all share guilt, the day of our savior's crucifixion.

Pastor Vern closes his notebook.

PASTOR VERN

Now turn to your neighbor for the sharing of the peace. Peace be with you.

CONGREGATION

And also with you.

Martin awkwardly shakes the hands of the COUPLE in front of him.

MARTIN

Peace be with you. Peace be with you.

INT. MARTIN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Martin dusts an already spotless bookshelf. The top shelf holds a large photo of Sarah and Lily and a smaller photo, a YOUNG MARTIN in his Navy uniform. He moves the picture of himself so it's slightly behind the photo of Sarah and Lily.

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CONTINUED:

Martin pulls open the curtains in front of the bay window, then shuts them, then opens them, paying attention to the rod and the ease to which the curtains move.

A scraping noise outside stops his curtain inspection. He looks out to see JAIME, 14 and her sister, GRETTA, 10, at the end of his drive shoveling the sidewalk.

This does not make Martin happy. He grabs his coat.

EXT. MARTIN'S HOUSE - SAME

Martin hastily makes his way down the driveway towards Jaime and Gretta.

JAIME

Careful, Mr. Cleary. It's slick.

MARTIN

Jaime! Hold up a minute!

JAIME

What?

MARTIN

I said just wait a minute now.

Martin reaches the two youngsters.

MARTIN

You don't have to do that.

JAIME

It's OK, I don't mind.

MARTIN

That's very nice but I can do this myself.

JAIME

Oh no, it's really packed down.
I'll do it, I don't mind.

MARTIN

I might not go anywhere today
anyway.

JAIME

Better safe than sorry.

Jaime resumes shoveling. Gretta pouts. Martin pats his pockets for cash.

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CONTINUED:

MARTIN

Look, I'm sure I have some cash on me somewhere. We'll just say you did the whole job.

JAIME

That's OK. I do it for free for all the old folks in the neighborhood.

Martin grimaces.

JAIME

Sorry, I mean senior citizens.

MARTIN

That's just fine. Thanks then, I guess.

INT./EXT. MARTIN'S GARAGE - DAY (LATER)

Martin stands in his clean garage, door up, examining the bits in his drill kit. To the back, an orderly tool bench, to the side, a couple trash cans and a four-tiered shelf with random stuff on it.

Jaime and Gretta come in, dragging their shovels behind.

MARTIN

You girls cold?

GRETTA

Yes!

JAIME

No. We're good. What's all this stuff?

Jaime picks up a pair of old binoculars from the shelf.

MARTIN

I've been doing some cleaning out and have some bits and pieces I need to get rid of.

GRETTA

Why?

MARTIN

Just don't need them. If you see anything you want, take it.

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CONTINUED:

Fishing lures, baseball caps, a u-pipe, duct tape...the random treasures of a garage. Jaime picks up a baseball cap.

JAIME

Can I have this?

MARTIN

Sure! Take two.

JAIME

Just one's fine.

Gretta grabs the u-pipe.

GRETТА

This is cool.

JAIME

You don't even know what that is.

GRETТА

So? Can I have more than one thing?

MARTIN

Sure.

Gretta grabs a couple cassette tapes.

JAIME

We don't have a cassette player.

GRETТА

We do in the van!

JAIME

Oh. Bye.

MARTIN

Bye.

Martin pushes the items on the shelf together to remove the gap left by the rehomed goods.

INT. MARTIN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Martin and Lily sit on the couch, lights from the TV illuminate their faces.

LILY

Are mermaids real?

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