

The Long March

FADE IN:

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Classic midwestern Christian funeral home: burgundy wallpaper, walnut baseboards, and several generic horse paintings.

Several OLDER FOLKS in formal attire form a line leading to an open casket. There lies Martin's MOTHER, 91, with angelic white curls framing her weathered face.

Just before the casket is MARTIN CLEARY, 61. He is large in girth and height but a gentle giant. He shakes people's hands as they come by.

MAN IN SUIT

So sorry, Martin. She was a good woman.

MARTIN

Thank you.

MAN IN WOOL COAT

Hi, Martin. How you holding up?

MARTIN

Just fine, thank you. Thank you for coming.

MAN IN WOOL COAT

She lived a good, long life?

MARTIN

Is that a question?

MAN IN WOOL COAT

No.

Martin's attempt at levity fails.

MARTIN

There are refreshments in the room to your left.

Martin shakes a couple more hands, and the line dries up. SARAH, 32, long dark hair flowing over her black dress, makes her way to Martin.

Sarah hands him a cup of coffee.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH

I can take over for a bit if you want to sit down.

MARTIN

No, no. I'm just fine.

SARAH

You sure?

Behind Sarah pokes out the cute little face of LILY, 5.

LILY

When's great-grandma going to be better?

SARAH

Ah, sweetie.

Sarah brushes the hair from Lily's face.

SARAH

(to Martin)

Sorry, we're still working on it.

MARTIN

It's OK. I don't mind the idea that she's only sleeping.

CALVIN, 36, cute in a wall-street douche kind of way, approaches Martin and Sarah, half staring at his phone.

CALVIN

Hey Martin. Tough stuff.

MARTIN

Yep.

CALVIN

(to Sarah)

Are we about ready to wrap this up?

Calvin speaks to Sarah in a hush-hush off to the side way, though Martin can clearly see and hear him. Martin turns away towards his mother.

SARAH

I'm not sure. I'd like to stay and help clean up.

CALVIN

(annoyed)

Fantastic.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SARAH

Why don't you head home?

CALVIN

We drove together.

SARAH

I'll get a ride with my Dad. No reason for both of us to stay.

CALVIN

All right, if that's what you want. I'll see you at home.

Lily detaches herself to Sarah and clings on to Calvin.

LILY

I go with Daddy.

Calvin pulls her off and pushes her towards Sarah.

CALVIN

No, you stay here with Mommy.

Calvin pats Lily on the head like a dog and leaves.

SARAH

Let's go see if we need to put more cookies out.

Sarah takes Lily's little hand and leaves.

AT THE CASKET

We look up at Martin from the POV of the casket. He looks like a man who has emptied his well of tears and is now just so tired.

Into view comes ROGER, 58, considerably smaller than Martin, but a presence in his own way.

ROGER

Hi, Mom. She looks good. They did a nice job.

MARTIN

You made it.

ROGER

Traffic, you know how it is. Good turnout?

MARTIN

Yep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FUNERAL HOME

Martin and Roger turn away from the casket and take in the now-empty room. Other than two flower bouquets lending a splash of color, it's pretty bleak.

ROGER

I feel like I should apologize or something.

MARTIN

For what?

ROGER

For not helping with Mom more. You know, towards the end.

MARTIN

No, it's all right.

ROGER

It's not that I didn't want to be there-

MARTIN

It's OK. I wanted to. I wanted to take care of her.

Roger pats Martin on the shoulder, heads to the snack room.

Martin turns to look at the casket one more time.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A blustery wind blows through the old cemetery, gray snow piles linger around the faded headstones.

Martin, Roger, and four other men carry the casket to it's final resting spot.

INT. MARTIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

MARTIN 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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, eyes wide open

END MONTAGE

INT. MARTIN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

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

TITLE: THE LONG MARCH

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.

INT. MARTIN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY (LATER)

Martin dusts an already spotless bookshelf.

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

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 with which the curtains move.

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

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

EXT. MARTIN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

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. Greta pouts. Martin pats his pockets for cash.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAIME

Sorry, I mean senior citizens.

MARTIN

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

Martin shuffles back to the house, feeling feeble.

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Martin pulls up in his Roadmaster to an impressive two-story. Sarah and Lily 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY
Molly, I see Molly.

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

MARTIN
Where are you going?

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
How you holding up, Martin?

MARTIN
Just fine.

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CONTINUED:

TRUMAN

Cold enough for you? Course this is hardly the coldest winter we've had, not nearly close. I was just telling one of 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.

Martin goes limp and 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.

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CONTINUED:

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, and they pull back
the can lids.

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 relieved 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.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)