

Dream-Story

By

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BLACK

In the BLACK, MARTIN (mid-30s) wanders, unassured. There is no PATH, no DIRECTION that doesn't lead to more BLACK.

In the distance, though, bathed in a single SPOTLIGHT, is a simple PLAYGROUND, made up of all the normal trappings: slide, swing-set, see-saw, etc. Martin nearly runs in desperation (finally, *something*)

However, upon approach, Martin sees a small FIGURE, SWINGING. A young boy, maybe? The figure's movements are sprightly, like a child's, but on closer inspection, the figure has a large mane of frizzy WHITE HAIR.

Martin moves closer and sees more clearly the figure swinging. This is MARTY (mid-80s), who looks very similar to Martin, if only aged two-fold. Marty's face is covered in WRINKLES and his WHITE HAIR spreads in all directions. He wears a T-SHIRT and scuffed JEANS, as if he were dressed like a young boy. Martin approaches with CAUTION.

MARTIN

Who are you?

Marty's PACE on the swing QUICKENS, and he flies HIGHER AND HIGHER.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Should I be concerned?

Marty slows, still swinging, but as if in SLOW-MOTION. Slower and slower, he eventually STOPS. He looks at Martin and speaks, but his voice is that of a YOUNG BOY.

MARTY

Let me out. Please. Let me out.  
Please.

Martin attempts to calm Marty as Marty repeats his chant.

MARTIN

(over Marty)

It's all right. Just shh, shh. You'll  
be fine. Don't speak.

Backing away, Martin looks around, NERVOUS. He seems worried that something in the BLACK may AWAKEN from the SOUNDS.

But as Martin backs up, SHUSHING Marty, Martin begins to SHRINK in size. Marty's voice escalates to a SCREECH.

MARTY  
LET ME OUT! LET ME OUT! LET ME OUT!

MARTIN  
(backing away still)  
No, don't. Just be quiet. For me.  
You'll wake him up.

MARTY  
YOU WON'T LET ME BE! LET ME OUT! LET  
ME BE! LET ME OUT!

On the last syllable of Marty's SCREAMS, the swing-set COLLAPSES, dropping Marty to the floor. The spotlight INVERTS and points UPWARD, toward the SURFACE of an OCEAN up above.

With the spotlight, GRAVITY inverts as well, and both Marty and Martin FALL UP, CRASHING through the surface of the ocean.

INT. OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

Martin finds himself in the FAR DEPTHS of the OCEAN, unable to breathe. Out of breath, he STRUGGLES to the OCEAN SURFACE, so far in the distance.

As he swims, he sees CORAL growing out of his hands. He reaches up to feel his face, out of which grow large CORAL REEFS. The pores of the CORAL begin to spew BLOOD and PUS, as if they were open zits. Martin is obviously in PAIN.

He SWIMS toward the surface in vain, it moving away with every stroke, when in the distance he hears a MUFFLED GROAN, a WHALE'S ROAR. We see a SHADOW of a LARGE BEAST flip and charge toward Martin.

He sees it, too. He FLAPS HIS ARMS WILDLY, doing whatever he can to get to the surface. He doesn't bother to look anywhere but his goal: the SUN-STRICKEN SURFACE.

He hears the GROAN again. Desperately, he looks from LEFT to RIGHT, but NOTHING. Back to the surface.

The GROAN deepens in BASS - it repeats rhythmically, OVER and OVER and OVER.

He takes his first stroke when he sees in front of him, the OPEN JAWS of a 50ft. BARRACUDA, SWALLOWING HIM WHOLE.

SLAM CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Martin wakes up, PANTING and SWEATING. The ALARM on his phone is going off. As he shuts it off, getting ahold of himself, we see the time is 6AM.

On the bedside table, he sees a NOTEBOOK. He angrily opens the drawer of the table and THROWS the notebook inside, SLAMMING the drawer shut.

Martin gets out of bed and heads for the shower.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

It's a sea of CUBICLES, customer service agents occupying each one. The lot of them have HEADSETS, through which they all speak to different customers.

Martin is one among many agents. He's perched in his own cubicle, on his own phone call, BORED out of his mind. He delivers his responses to the customer's inquiries almost by rote, while he sketches a FLIPBOOK of a FISH on a sticky-notepad.

MARTIN

(on the phone)

Yes, two weeks... You can request that from our design team, if you wish. They'd be happy to assist you... It's like a personal contact, yes... They will work hard, though, to get the design you want... Of course, you too. Thank you for calling. Have a great rest of your day.

Martin hits a button on the keyboard in front of him - the phone call disconnects.

He adds the final touch to the FISH cartoon on the sticky-notepad, then he goes to the beginning and begins the ANIMATED FLIPBOOK.

It is of a fish, a helpless GUPPY, swimming and swaying in a CIRCLE, ROUND and ROUND.

But the appearance of a SMALL MAN in the CENTER of the fish's circle startles Martin. He didn't draw that.

The fish becomes more FEROCIOUS as the man becomes more

defined, more of a CARICATURE of Martin. The fish snaps its JAWS, full of large TEETH, as Martin's caricature expresses HORROR, FEAR.

The JAWS of the BEAST open wide and snap SHUT on Martin's caricature.

Martin suddenly hears Marty's boyish voice off-camera.

MARTY (O.C.)  
Let me be, let me out!

It's coming from the other side of the cubicle wall! Martin jolts upright and peers over cautiously.

He sees his two coworkers in the neighboring cubicle, JACK and FRANK, in the middle of a CONVERSATION. They're both LAUGHING.

JACK  
(to Frank)  
'Let me be!' she's screaming, 'Let me out!' And I'm saying, 'Come on! Just a quickie!'

FRANK  
I almost envy you. My wife hates getting tickled.

JACK  
Envy me? Don't. Unless you're willing to take the bad with the good. I haven't been laid since the in-laws came to visit.

Martin, relieved at mis-hearing the voice, sinks back in his chair while the conversation continues.

FRANK  
I actually like my in-laws. They don't really live up to the stereotype.

JACK  
Oh, yeah? We all can't be so lucky. Mine're always coming over, hounding me about future jobs. Like, hello! I got one! But they want someone better - better qualified, someone with goals. They're always going on about goals.

FRANK

(beat)

'Haunt' you?

JACK

What?

FRANK

It sounded like you say 'haunt' you -  
they '*haunt*' you.

JACK

'Haunt'? What? No. *Hound*, Frank,  
*hound*. They hound me. You can't haunt  
someone about their goals.

(beat)

Though I wouldn't put possession past  
'em. They definitely wanna take over.

Martin listens to the two of them CHUCKLE. On his computer  
screen, Martin sees another CALL is coming in.

As Martin adjusts his HEADSET and prepares to answer, the  
CONVERSATION between Jack and Frank continues in the  
neighboring cubicle. Martin can still hear them behind the  
wall.

JACK

I swear, I've never dealt with in-laws  
this bad.

FRANK

(doubtful)

Never?

JACK

Closest would be Annie's.

MARTIN

(into headset)

Hello. Thank you for calling World  
O'Paint. My name is Martin. How can I  
help you?

JACK

Nothing, though, compares to  
Jennifer's.

MARTIN

(into headset)

I'm sorry, ma'am, but I'm not

authorized to give any advice on design.

FRANK

That's a bummer, man. Has it been long?

MARTIN

(into headset)

We do have professional artists that you can contact, but I, unfortunately, am not one of them.

JACK

Close to nine months now. But if I don't do something now, I'll be locked down and miserable.

MARTIN

(into headset)

Thank you for calling. I hope you have a great rest of your day.

Martin DISCONNECTS the call.

FRANK

It's a cliché, but there are more fish in the sea.

JACK

And they're all sharks.

Martin listens to the two LAUGH. Frustrated, he rips his headset off his head and STORMS OUT of his cubicle, passing Jack and Frank.

FRANK

That guy gives me the heebies.

JACK

He acts like a baby.

Frank and Jack continue their conversation as Martin SLAMS open the door to the bathroom.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Martin LAYS AWAKE in bed, EYES WIDE OPEN, afraid to fall asleep.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Martin pours a DOUBLE SHOT of whiskey in a glass. Out of a cabinet, he grabs a bottle of SLEEPING PILLS.

First, the sleeping pills. Then, the whiskey.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Martin is PASSED OUT in bed - though his sleep is sound. His face TWITCHES and brow FURROWS.

CUT TO:

BLACK

Martin is surrounded, again, by black. He looks LEFT, RIGHT, IN FRONT OF HIM, BEHIND HIM. NOTHING surrounds him - NOTHING is everywhere.

A CREAK is heard, METALLIC but SMALL, RHYTHMIC.

Turning around, Martin sees it: the PLAYGROUND. Marty is swinging as usual, the rusty metal causing the CREAK. Though the playground is far, Martin can hear the distant voice of Marty.

MARTY

He's a failure. And he won't let me out. He's a failure. So he won't let me out.

Martin BOOKS IT in the OPPOSITE direction. Martin looks back as he runs and sees the spotlight quickly DIMINISH into the black. The volume of Marty's voice, however, does not fade with it. Instead, it GROWS.

Beside Martin, OUT OF BREATH, appears the very same PLAYGROUND, Marty swinging HIGHER and FASTER, as do the PITCH and SPEED of his VOICE.

MARTY (CONT'D)

He won't let me out. And he's a failure. He won't let me out. So he's a failure.

Martin RUNS, again, in the OPPOSITE direction. No point.

He runs through the blackness, but it's as if he were running in a large HAMSTER WHEEL, for the playground, from above, DESCENDS and heads, inevitably, for Martin's path.



Marty, from the swing, TAUNTS Martin in a sing-song tone.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Na, na, nana, na. A loser, a loser.

Marty STICKS his tongue out and BLOWS RASPBERRIES with the rhythm of his swinging. Marty SHOUTS in the interim.

MARTY (CONT'D)

You *suck*, Martin!

Martin falls to his knees before the swing-set, begging for PEACE and MERCY. He begins to SHRINK.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Aww, look at the lil-dick bitch baby over here. Lil-dick want a cease fire?

MARTIN

(crying)

I'm sorry. But, please. Stop.

MARTY

You want me to stop, lil-dick? Shrinky-dick, right? You're shrinking, lil-baby. Is the shrinking proportional?

Martin refuses to answer. The ANGER rises in his face, and the shrinking SUBSIDES.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Bitch-made, aren't ya? Bitch-made, in and out.

Marty LAUGHS, but what comes out is the laughter of FRANK and JACK.

MARTIN

Excuse me?

The shrinking having STOPPED, Martin is now stricken with a sudden influx of GROWTH. Martin's size very quickly overtakes Marty's. Marty's speed on the swing, as does his voice.

MARTY

(slow-motion)

Bitch-made.

Enough.

Martin stands in front of the swing, towering above it. As Marty comes forward, Martin JETS out his arm, CLOTHESLINING Marty.

Marty SLAMS to the ground, UNABLE TO BREATHE. Martin walks over to him and places the HEEL of his shoe on Marty's NECK.

MARTIN

Little brat. You'll show respect.

It's difficult for Marty to respond between the GASPS for air. But he's able to squeeze out:

MARTY

Thank you.

Marty, then, sticks out his TONGUE to touch the tip of Martin's shoe. In doing so, his body is transferred through Martin's foot inside Martin's body.

Martin COLLAPSES to his hands and feet. He GAGS as TEARS comes to his eyes.

In his mouth, his TEETH begin to SHARPEN. He can feel them with his TONGUE. He SCREAMS in PAIN.

His LEGS have FUSED as have his FINGERS. Tearing through his shirt, PUSHING out of his BACK, is a disturbing, flesh-colored DORSAL FIN.

SLAM CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Martin WAKES in a COLD SWEAT, PANTING. He checks the time on his phone: 5:30AM.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Martin finishes VOMITING in the toilet. He rips off a piece of toilet paper and wipes his mouth, tossing away the used TP afterwards.

He FLUSHES.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Martin sits on the edge of his bed, deep in thought. His phone BUZZES. As it lights up, we see the time is now 7AM. The text is from Jack: "Boss is wondering where you're at. Sick day?"

After a beat, Martin picks up the phone and shoots out a text: "I quit. Tell the boss."

Once the text is sent, Martin SHUTS OFF his phone and opens the drawer of his bedside table. From it he pulls out the NOTEBOOK from earlier.

Inside are all of his DOODLES, SKETCHES, but also BEAUTIFUL DRAWINGS and PORTRAITS.

Martin opens to a black page and begins to draw.

THE END.