

The Night Marcher

By

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1. INT. OAHU HAWAIIAN HOTEL LOBBY- DUSK

WIDE SHOT OF

The lobby of the Oahu Grand Hotel. A great open space of polished wood and stone, gleaming with the reflected light of a dying sun. Glass double doors stand sentinel at the front, with a great desk beside it. Around are scattered chairs and tables of wicker, and beyond an open floor full of plants and high windows. The space is spanning, designed to accommodate high traffic of tourists, coming and going as they please, milling about the space. To its far side, along one wall, are several elevators. Tiki statues stand sentinel all around the lobby. Now it is empty, and the only human soul about is a bleary-eyed CLERK.

PAN IN

on the clerk, and the desk he inhabits. He is tall, thin, and impeccably dressed in a suit and tie. The clerk checks his watch, desperately awaiting the end of his shift.

CLOSE ON

a clock behind him reads "6:16."

ZOOM OUT

as through the doors emerge a bickering couple, their dispositions matched poorly by their garish and colorful floral clothing. There is a man, CHARLES ROMERO, around fifty-five. He is short, and lanky. His thinning, greying hair hangs off his head in haphazard wisps, the result of careful combing, undone gradually by winds. He looks haggard, and seems vaguely disconcerted upon entering the lobby. Beside him is SUZANNE ROMERO, around the same age as her husband. She is taller than her husband, and looks younger. Although, seemingly not by much, as her face is etched with lines of stress and age, and her hair shows thin in several places. The pair are engrossed in a disagreement as they drag themselves and their luggage to the desk.

CLERK

Help you?

Charles drops his bags on the floor beside him, and gives a look of relief to the clerk.

CHARLES

Please. I'm Charles Romero, this is my wife, Suzanne. We need a room.

CLERK

I'll presume to say you have a reservation?

CHARLES

I would hope so.

Charles shoots a look at Suzanne, who glares back at him. Charles look back at the clerk, expectantly. The clerk darts his eyes to a computer on the desk, and quickly types in the name "ROMERO." After a moment, he looks back up at Charles.

CLERK

Room 237, sir.

CHARLES

Obliged.

The clerk gingerly hands Charles a roomkey off of the wall.

CLOSE-UP

on the key, which Charles clasps in his hands, before picking up his bags, and wandering across the lobby. The camera follows his aimless journey, before panning back to Suzanne, who remains in place.

SUZANNE

Charles! We don't know where the elevator is!

CHARLES

I can find it on my own! I don't feel like troubling the man.

Suzanne looks over at the clerk. He offers another courteous smile, behind which he restrains less polite comments.

CLERK

It's the first door on your right.

SUZANNE

Thank you.

Suzanne walks in the opposite direction of Charles, finding the elevator on the far side of the lobby. She presses a button, and waits impatiently for the door and her husband. Charles ambles over to her side, and the elevator door opens. The pair step inside.

2. INT. ELEVATOR- DUSK

Suzanne and Charles stand in the elevator. They stand slightly apart, and neither looks at the other. Charles looks up at the ceiling, while Suzanne stares straight ahead.

SUZANNE

You didn't have to be so rude to the bellman.

CHARLES

Rude?

SUZANNE

What is it with you? So confrontational with everybody. You know that's the reason Bob Clayton fired you.

Charles looks down from the ceiling, his expression suddenly severe. He looks at Suzanne, surprised, hurt, and angry all at once. Her gaze stays fixed on the door, eyes glassy and cool. She knows what she has said, and does not care.

CHARLES

You promised me you wouldn't start in on that. And I wasn't fired. I'm taking a sabbatical.

Suzanne stays quiet. The elevator comes to a stop, and the doors open. She steps out, followed by Charles, after a moment's hesitation.

3. INT. HALLWAY- DUSK

The pair walk in silence down the length of a snaking hallway, with walls made up tackily in bamboo, and a carpet bearing a multi-colored palm frond pattern. The camera trails behind them, at ground level. Eventually, the two reach the door of their room. Suzanne stands in front of the door, waiting for Charles. Charles unlocks the door, struggling for a moment with the key in the lock. After some prying, the door forces open. Charles looks at Suzanne triumphantly, as though unlocking the door is irrefutable proof of his own competence. Suzanne says nothing, and the pair step inside the room.

4. INT. HOTEL ROOM- DUSK

A WIDE SHOT

of the hotel room. The room is small, but neatly kept. The furniture is more restrained than the decor in the hall and lobby, with the traditional hotel room trappings of a single large bed, a desk against one wall, and an off-brand TV atop a wooden cabinet. There is a bathroom immediately off to the side. The difference between this room and others comes at the windows. Looking out into the twilight is a glass sliding door, and thin white curtains. The sun casts its rays across the room, lending strange shadows to the furniture. Charles drops down the luggage once again, and smiles, walking to the door. He opens it, letting a gentle night breeze waft into the room. Beyond the door is a balcony, looking out at a serene golden-sanded beach. Charles stands in the doorway, and looks back at Suzanne.

CLOSE

on Charles.

CHARLES

Don't you remember why we came now?

Behind Charles, the soft crashing of the ocean's waves on the sand dunes can be heard, as well as the distant cry of a gull. Switch to a MEDIUM SHOT as he walks back to Suzanne, taking her in his arms.

CHARLES

I don't feel like fighting, do you? We came so that we could spend time together again.

SUZANNE

You can't expect this to fix everything.

CHARLES

I didn't say it would. But it could be a start. Isn't that what matters?

Suzanne breaks away from Charles, turning her back to him. He frowns.

SUZANNE

I'm sorry for what I said earlier. I know what happened at work isn't your fault.

Suzanne turns around, and smiles at Charles. She puts a hand on his face.

SUZANNE

We're here for you... for us. Maybe out here, you can finally get some sleep.

CHARLES

Well, it isn't as though I have a big presentation to worry about.

5. INT. HOTEL ROOM- NIGHT

A full moon has risen over the beachside. Stars have come up in the sky, like pin-holes in the curtain of night. They cast an eerie glow over the room, as Charles lays on his side, wide awake. Beside him, turned over in the other direction, is Suzanne. She is fast asleep.

CLOSE ON CHARLES

His eyes are restless, roving from one side of the room to the other. ZOOM OUT as Charles turns over, looks at her, and sighs. He sits up, and looks out at the night. Insomnia has claimed him, as it has often. He swings his legs over the side of the bed, and sits on its edge, contemplating. After a moment, he stands, and makes his way across the room. He stops at the glass balcony door, and slides it open slowly, casting the occasional cautious eye to Suzanne, wary not to wake her.

6. EXT. HOTEL ROOM BALCONY- NIGHT

TRACKING SHOT behind Charles as he walks out onto the balcony, and stands at its edge, crossing his arms and bracing himself against it. The camera moves to his side as he steadies himself, watching the waves and listening to the dull, repetitious sound of the tide. Beyond, there is a distant sound like drums. Charles seems to hear it, and strains his ears, trying to figure if there is another sound, or only his mind. He looks out to the left, toward rolling green hills. The sound, imagined or otherwise, appears to have its source in those hills. A voice calls out to the right of him.

OLD MAN

You hear the night marchers.

Charles, startled, whips his head to the right. Standing on the balcony of the room beside his own is a tall, ethereal-looking old man, a phantom stranger, a spectre of the chill night air. The man looks as though he blow into place by the wind and surf. He wears a shawl, wrapped around traditional

Hawaiian clothes. Charles offers a slight smile at the man, who does not return it. He looks out, grim-faced, to the horizon, to the hills.

CHARLES

Are you going to follow up on that?

OLD MAN

You hear the night marchers.

Charles arches his eyebrows, studies the man for a moment, and then looks out at the sea. After a moment, the man looks there also.

CHARLES

I hear drums.

OLD MAN

I know. I hear them too. As do all who cannot find rest in a late hour.

CHARLES

Where are they coming from?

OLD MAN

The hills. The memory of the very land itself. On the darkest, longest nights they come from the hills. They are the legions of the past... great and ancient warriors. They are the spirits of those killed in great battles, spending their eternity forever marching to the next battle.

CHARLES

When will that battle come?

OLD MAN

It never shall. And yet they march forevermore, seeking an unknowable foe.

CHARLES

Hmph. Maybe I'll pop up and say hello.

The old man shakes his head solemnly.

OLD MAN

None may ever see the night marchers. Any mortal man who looks eyes with a marcher will be seen as a

challenger... and will extinguished
like their torches at dawn.

CHARLES

Torches?

OLD MAN

Each marcher bears a torch, their
guide through the night. Heed the
light of the torch.

Charles snorts slightly, and looks up into the hills. There is no light. He looks over to the other balcony, intending to say something snarky to the old man. But the old man has gone, leaving only the curtains of the next room on that balcony, tangling and weaving in the wind. Charles turns around, moving back inside. However, a single light flickers in the hills. Charles pauses, seeing it from the corner of his eye. He pauses for only a split-second before telling himself it is a trick of light. But his reason fades when he sees another light, small, bright, and determined. And another, and another, until a chorus of ghostly flame like will o' the wisp makes faint lines along the hillsides.

CHARLES

There are those who would see that as
an omen...

Charles steps inside the hotel room, and grabs a pair of neatly folded pants off of the desk. He shuffles his way into them, putting them on over his pajamas.

CHARLES

... but not you, Charlie boy.

7. INT. HOTEL ROOM- NIGHT

Charles buttons his pants, and then makes his way to the door, wriggling into a pair of sneakers laying haphazardly across the ground. Charles opens the hotel room door, casting a look at the bed before he does.

CHARLES

It's not too late to try and get some
sleep...

Charles slips out the doorway, closing the door behind him. As he does, some words are faintly audible.

CHARLES

... who am I kidding.

8. EXT. HILL-SIDE- NIGHT

A wide-shot of Charles walking alone, shrouded in shadow, along a dirt road carved into the side of a winding hill. Trees blow and bend in the wind to both sides of him, the wind talking through him, whispering warnings. Further ahead, the drums can be heard, much louder than they were from the hotel. The dirt road winds into a crag of the hill, spiraling upward. It is from upward that the drumming comes, descending down the mountain, coming toward Charles. It is slow, but unrelenting. The road is black, save for the cool light of the moon, cracking through the trees. Charles stops ahead of the pass, standing in a place between trees where the moon shows clearly down. Charles stands beneath this marquee moon, hesitating. The drums beat louder, and draw closer.

CLOSE ON

Charles' face, beaded with sweat. His eyes stare straight on toward the drummers' path, unflinching. He must know. He must see.

CLOSE ON

Charles' left hand at his side, clasping open and shut nervously. His hand glistens slightly with a thin sheen of sweat.

CLOSE AGAIN ON

Charles' face, as his eyes suddenly reflect a gleaming light. A torch.

ZOOM BACK OUT

to a medium shot, as from over the horizon, down the rocky pass, Charles sees a torch. And with the torch, a torchbearer. The headman of the night marchers, an ancient Hawaiian warrior, a torch in one hand, a club carved of wood and adorned with the teeth of shark in the other hand. The marcher wears the cloak and headress of a royal chief of war, and walks down the mountainside with determination. As he steps further down, out of the distance and dark and toward a light and the foreground, we see he is transparent, an apparition. Charles watches the marcher, transfixed. The marcher gazes down the road, seeming briefly to lock eyes with Charles. Charles seizes up, and dives to the side of the road, hiding behind a tree.

PAN UP

to the crag, as the procession begins. The headman has made his way down the pass, and behind him, dozens of torches glow. These torches cast a murky light on the warriors, some fifty of them. Each wears ceremonial clothing like their leader, and walk in single file, with torch-bearers alternated with a drummer. They move like clockwork, gliding down the hill without looking down to assure their footing. This ghastly parade passes down the road without hindrance, for there is no one to halt them. As the headman passes by the tree behind which Charles hides, he seems to stop for a moment. Behind the tree, Charles braces himself, closing his eyes tight. But the marchers continue to move, either unaware of Charles, or uncaring. We see the rest of the procession move by in shadow, obscured by the trees as Charles continues to hide. As the last passes, Charles ducks his head out, checking if the coast is clear. The march is distant now, and none would seem to be able to see him. They have come to a fork in the road, and have taken a path leading away from the hotel. Charles walks out into the road, watching them fade from view. As the last marcher fades, he turns around, looking at Charles directly. It is the headman, somehow having mystically moved to the back of the procession. Charles runs for cover once again, and slumps to the ground against a tree. He covers his face with his hands in despair.

CHARLES

They've seen me... they'll kill me...

Charles stands. He looks around wildly, a glint of madness behind his eyes.

CHARLES

... they have to find me.

Charles stumbles out into the road, and breaks into a dead run back toward the hotel, taking the other forking path of the road. The camera follows his desperate run, Charles losing composure with each step.

9. INT. HOTEL ROOM- NIGHT

The hotel room is quiet, and Suzanne sleeps calmly. The door swings open, crashing into the wall with a loud thud. Charles stands in the doorway, panting. Suzanne sits bolt upright, and looks at her husband, a sleepy daze leaving her rapidly as she assesses Charles' face and comes to understand the situation is serious.

CLOSE ON

Charles, his face wild and paranoid.

CHARLES

We have to leave. Now.

SUZANNE

Leave? Whatever for? We just...

Charles walks briskly into the room, grabs the luggage off the ground, and tears open the cabinet, plucking clothing from it. He throws down the luggage on the bed, and opens it. Charles throws the clothing back into the bags, without looking back at Suzanne. She creeps toward him, trying to follow his erratic movement, determining if she should be worried.

CHARLES

You've got to call a cab, straight away. Get us out of here.

Suzanne grabs Charles arm as he is zipping up the luggage. He looks up at her, still frantic.

SUZANNE

Charles, what's happened?

CHARLES

They're coming for me.

SUZANNE

They?

CHARLES

The marchers! They've come! The drums, Suzanne, can't you hear them?

Charles stops what he is doing completely. He and Suzanne listen to the night for a moment, but hear nothing save for the relentless wind.

SUZANNE

Charles, I don't hear anything.

CHARLES

They're waiting for me. I can't let them find me! Call a cab!

Suzanne looks at her husband. She has elected to be worried, but only for him.

SUZANNE

Charles, no. I'm not calling anyone. We're not going anywhere.

As Suzanne speaks, Charles moves for the door, carrying the luggage. He stops when she finishes, and looks at her as though she is insane.

CHARLES

We can't stay here! If you want me to die, fine!

Charles throws Suzanne's luggage back on the bed, and storms out of the hotel room, leaving the door wide open. Suzanne moves across the bed, grabbing the telephone on the bedside table. She dials 9-1-1.

SUZANNE

Hello, operator? Yes, I need the police. My husband, he's... he's had a psychotic break.

10. EXT. HOTEL- NIGHT

Charles stands in front of the hotel, clutching his luggage in one hand. It is ill-packed, with pieces of shirts jutting out from several places. His eyes dart nervously between the hills and the road. After a moment, a cab pulls up. Charles walks to the cab, which rolls down its window.

CABBIE

Where to?

CHARLES

Get me to Honolulu, as quickly as possible.

CABBIE

That won't be cheap...

Charles jams his hand into his pocket, and emerges with crumpled bills. He throws them all into the cab. The cabbie looks down at the bills, and then up at Charles.

CHARLES

I don't care. Go.

CABBIE

You're the boss.

Charles gets into the cab, which speeds off into the night.

11. INT. HONOLULU HOTEL- NIGHT

At a desk even more solitary than that of the Oahu, another

clerk stands hunched over a desk, with a single lamp and a wall sconce serving as his only light. This lobby is small, consisting only of the desk, an elevator, and a set of doors leading into the rest of the hotel. The doors outside briefly illuminate as a cab pulls up in front of the hotel. We see Charles get out of the cab, before throwing open the hotel's door with all of his earthly vigor. The clerk looks at Charles, disinterested at first. He looks Charles over, quizzically, trying to figure out what's drawn someone to the hotel at this hour.

CHARLES

Give me a room.

CLERK 2

Sir...?

CHARLES

A room!

CLERK 2

Sir, at this time of night, I...

CHARLES

I'll pay cash.

Charles walks to the desk, and produces another wad of bills from his pants, slamming them down in front of the clerk. The clerk looks at the bills, and then back at Charles.

CLOSE ON

Charles' face. He is even worse off than in the previous scene, his eyes marked with desperation.

CLERK 2

Room 101.

The clerk slides Charles a keycard, which Charles takes. He holds the card as though it is life itself, moving quickly to the door into the rest of the hotel. He disappears behind them, watched by the clerk. The clerk shakes his head, and returns to work.

12. INT. OAHU GRAND HOTEL ROOM- NIGHT

Suzanne stands against the wall, watching two police detectives rifle through Charles' abandoned possessions on the desk. The detectives are RAY CAMERON, a man of around fifty, with a lean build and steel-grey hair. He is wiry, but muscular, and wears a trenchcoat. He surveys the scene

without much interest, while his partner, IZZY COHEN, sifts through Charles' belongings. Izzy is in his mid-thirties, short and stocky, a native Hawaiian. As Izzy examines the items, Cameron looks over at Suzanne.

CAMERON

Is this the first time this has happened?

SUZANNE

No... Charlie... my husband... he... this... this is why we left. He got let go... from work, because he did something like this, because he flipped... I... I should've...

Cameron walks over to Suzanne, and puts a hand on her shoulder.

CAMERON

You couldn't have known your husband would have a schizophrenic episode and running screaming into the night.

IZZY

That is hard to plan for...

Izzy turns his attention to Suzanne's luggage, which he is about to open when he finds something more interesting lodged outside it.

IZZY

Ms. Romero...?

Izzy plucks a shark's tooth from the luggage.

CLOSE ON

the tooth, as Izzy holds it up, showing it to Cameron and Suzanne.

IZZY

Where did this come from?

Izzy's question is interrupted as another officer enters the hotel room, drawing the attention of Izzy, Cameron, and Suzanne.

CAMERON

What is it, Raimi?

RAIMI

Clerk at the Honolulu Hilton called in. Said he had somebody check in who matches Romero's description.

IZZY

Well, he sure is fast. (to Cameron)
We'd better get after him.

CAMERON

(to Raimi) Bring around my car.

Cameron and Izzy exchange a nod, and go for the door, which Raimi holds open. Suzanne follows them, grabbing her shoes.

SUZANNE

Wait, let me come with you.

CAMERON

Ms. Romero, that isn't procedure...

Suzanne give Cameron a withering look, and he nods. Izzy steps out the door with Raimi, while Cameron holds the door for Suzanne.

CAMERON

After you...

Suzanne walks out, followed by Cameron, who shuts the door behind him. The camera lingers on the door as we transition to

13. INT. HONOLULU HOTEL ROOM- NIGHT

The door of Charles' hotel room, before panning across to the rest of the room. It is sparse. There is only a single bed, a small table with a phone, a television set, and a chair, facing the window. In the chair sits Charles, alternating his gaze between the door and the window. These windows have thick blinds, which Charles has slanted open. They cast shadows of night across the room, and across Charles' face.

CLOSE ON

Charles' face, his eyes still darting back and forth. He is waiting for any sign of an intruder, and beside the chair is his suitcase. There is a creak. Charles grabs the case, wielding it as a shield. There is no further sound. Charles relaxes, putting down the case. He lets out a deep breath, and sinks into the chair. And then the door is ripped off its hinge with a spectacular crash that sends it soaring across

the room, colliding with the television set, sending sparks across the room. Charles stands straight up, and the camera pans to the doorway. In it stands the headman of the marchers, still brandishing his club. Charles steps back, stumbling against the chair. He throws up his hands.

CHARLES

No! No! You can't have found me here!

The headman says nothing, and moves across the room. Charles has backed into the corner. The headman glides over the debris of the TV set and the door without pause, passing through them. Soon, he stands before Charles, towering over him. The headman raises his club, and Charles screams. The camera pans to the wall opposite them, where the shadow of the headman and Charles can be seen, mingled with the shadows from the blinds, as the club comes down. Charles falls silent, as drums become audible, distantly. Rain begins to fall, as the camera pans to the window.

14. INT. HONOLULU HOTEL ROOM- LATER

The window is shattered now. Pan across to the rest of the room, similarly in disarray. The chair is overturned, and the suitcase lays across the ground, a trail of clothing spewing from it like viscera. There is no sign of Charles or the headman. Pan to the doorway, where Izzy stands. He takes a brief survey of the room before entering, moving with caution. He draws a flashlight from his pocket, trying to find some clue, some hint of what happened. There is nothing. Izzy makes his way to luggage, looking it over as well. Behind him, Cameron enters with Suzanne.

CAMERON

Thrill me.

IZZY

There's nothing here.

SUZANNE

Are you sure we've got the right room?

Cameron looks around the room, and then looks back at Suzanne. She looks at him, and then the floor.

IZZY

There is one thing...

CAMERON

That being?

IZZY

I could swear I hear drums...

Pan back to the broken window as the wind picks up, blowing around the blinds. The window looks out at the city, and beyond it, the sea. And to the far horizon are the hills, upon which a solitary torch gleams, before fading out of sight. And from the hills are the sound of drums, growing ever further away...

CAMERON

That's odd...

IZZY

Why's that?

CAMERON

Because I could swear I hear them too...