



# Marshallmark

## 2022 CHRISTMAS MOVIES

WHEN YOU CARE ENOUGH  
TO READ THE VERY BEST  
(AND SEE THE VERY WORST  
IN PHOTOSHOP)



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**IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR** when the Marshallmark Channel presents its semi-family-friendly holiday shows with extraordinary (we mean extra. ordinary.) plots for your viewing (well, really reading) pleasure. This year's vapid yet addictive offerings include...



Not to be outdone by Top Chef, Iron Chef, or The Great British Baking Show, Lea stars as both the contestant and comedian host of CHRISTMAS COOKING feast for the holidays. This episode's challenge is "Prepare a 2022 meal in a 1960's kitchen." Beware the ghosts of kitchen past's high jinks as we discover which stove eye works tonight. Is the oven heating or haunted? Will Adam, the resident handy spirit be able to repair everything in time for all the

Marshall children to come home for Christmas? This episode is rated R for spooky language conjured up by the kitchen chaos and many inedible charred meals.

CHRISTMAS COOKING will be followed by ICE NOT INCLUDED. A warm holiday classic since the Marshalls never own a working ice maker since Adam will not stop, collaborate, and listen. Lea knows if there is a problem, yo, he will solve it. So, she has just pretended to be in ice cube-free Europe for the past 30 years. But now that she is addicted to fancy ginger beers, someone must remember to pick up a bag of ice from Publix. Will it all melt into one large chunk that has to be ice picked apart? Stay tuned for a chilly conclusion and a violent ice-pick scene to chill even the warmest hearts.



A YOGA PANTS CHRISTMAS will feature Lea wearing yoga pants every. day, even though she never attends yoga class. Follow her Instagram page to see how she effortlessly makes these look like an acceptable wardrobe choice for all events. This show is sponsored by Athleta, bringing athleisure and comfort to this un-fashionista.

The Marshallmark Channel presents a timeless (because their calendars are so full, they are time-less) tale in AN EMPTY NEST & FULL CALENDARS CHRISTMAS of a high school theatre teacher and a workaholic who commutes daily to a small town about an hour away. But unfortunately, he cannot convince her to move to that small town even though they make earth-friendly compostable plastic at Danimer Scientific in that aforementioned small town.



This local high school theatre teacher has written a play and is working on her second tome in WRITE BEFORE CHRISTMAS. The ROYALTIES from these playwrighting adventures will find this playwright traveling across the pond to London in June. Her first trip overseas in 35 years. She will have several visitors during her double fortnight stay. We await the bawdy sequel of NINJAS IN LONDON to happen in late June 2023.

It was AN UNEXPECTED YEAR indeed. Full of joy & sorrow, both commemorated in Lea finally getting the ampersand tattoo (or marshallmark) she has been planning since she turned 50 (5 years ago). Adam is now the only tattoo-less Marshall. In a year full of unexpected travails, their beloved 15-year-old rescue husky, Kodie the Narnia dog, passed through the wardrobe into the land of eternal Christmas. If your theology does not include all dogs going to heaven, don't watch this holiday tear fest.



Lea's mother warned her 33 years ago to "not get married in December because you will never take an anniversary trip." So, the Marshall will "celebrate" 33 years of marriage on December 30th with Adam going to work and Lea cooking dinner at home (well, using the broiler and that one element that works on the stove; see the previous CHRISTMAS COOKING episode for details). Lea's father's warning to "stay away from that big city yankee" also went unheeded all those years ago. Will this DECEMBER BRIDE never listen? With an attitude like that, she probably has a tattoo.







This holiday homage BEST CHRISTMAS PARTY IS NO CHRISTMAS PARTY features the elusive search for a silent night at home so the Marshalls can finally catch up on The Rings of Power series. And by "night at home," we mean Adam being home from work before Lea's school teacher's 9 pm bedtime. Plus, it isn't easy to find a holiday party outfit when one's entire wardrobe is featured in A YOGA PANTS CHRISTMAS.

The empty nest Marshalls spend Thanksgiving in Winchester, KY, whilst their three children have their own Thanksiblings celebration in Los Angeles (hosted by Maxx). The elder Marshalls then go over the river and through the woods to catch a Furman football playoff game and make an impromptu visit to an Improv show where they are both featured storytellers. So WE ARE NOT TRAVELING CROSS COUNTRY CHRISTMAS features them at home for the holidays. But they won't be alone...



So it is TIME FOR THE KIDS TO COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS guest starring all three Marshall young adults coming home from afar. Millie from Pittsburgh, where she is teaching at Duquesne University and working on a Ph.D. dissertation; Rosalea from her graduate program through Wheaton College at HoneyRock in Wisconsin; & Maxx from sunny Los Angeles, where he is working as an assistant to an independent filmmaker. This show will not feature Adam playing the guitar or singing (or will it?)



You receiving this card is A MARSHALL CHRISTMAS MIRACLE. Every year we swear (a lot) and say this is our LAST YEAR of cards, and then suddenly, Lea has an epiphany how we are a Hallmark movie: running a small theatre program—threatened by bureaucracy and greedy corporations. Adam can sometimes be an Adamneezer Christmas joy denier. Plus, with a simple face swap app, the same lovable "actors" can appear in every Marshallmark movie. Here we are again sending out these missives, much to Adam's embarrassment and our bank account's detriment. But in a year where we relied on the love and prayers of so many friends and family, we cared enough to send our very best or at least our wordiness...



## LEA'S (always too LONG) LAST WORDS OF 2022

hey friends and family, we made it through this not quite hallmark movie of a year. YAY US! i want to thank my yoga pants, who have been with me through thick and thicker, & my new tattoo (sorry, dad). in case you missed my tattoo announcement or saw it on my lower arm, it is an ampersand (the & symbol) tattoo. i have a LONG love of ampersands for holding two different ideas together. plus the "yes, &" first rule of improv (and this year was a lot of improvisation). ampersands also represent the messy middle of a story. somewhere after once upon a time & LONG before a happy ending. keeping our stories going, even when we don't see all LONGINGS fulfilled. & yet, He is good & the story is not over. i am finding that my stories never end the ways i envision. it takes LONGER, is 1000% more difficult, & requires me to trust more & talk less, but i know everything sad will come untrue & be more beautiful for the tears that rinsed clean my vision & washed away my foolish pride. we live in the ampersand of it all. saying "yes, &" to all that comes our way. knowing it will all be made well.

my word of the year is LONGING. it comes from old english, '*dwell in thought, yearn*'; related to the dutch *langen*, '*present, offer*' and german *langen*, '*reach, extend*.' how often i have yearned to reach beyond the present offerings. i don't think i am alone in LONGING for all to be made new, for glimpses of goodness in the land of the living, & to know all will end well on the LONG road we are traveling. can we live, love, laugh, & LONG together? all the most interesting stories are stories of LONGING & searching. the joy of being seen & found in that searching.

*"We search for a good self to be and for good work to do. We search to become human in a world that tempts us always to be less than human or looks to us to be more. We search to love and to be loved. And in a world where it is often hard to believe in much of anything, we search to believe in something holy and beautiful and life-transcending that will give meaning and purpose to the lives we live."* {from *The Longing for Home: Reflections at Midlife* by Frederick Buechner}

2022 was a year of learning to sit in the present uncomfortable dark moments, LONGING for glimpses of a bright future. trusting in a God who has been my very present help for half a century to show up strong & loving. & He has shown up. in every plot twist. filling my every LONGING with sure

& steady hope. with constant & comforting friends. & surprising me with joy. i am not brave or non-complaining in my LONGING, but i have been confident that no story He writes ends with ashes. there is beauty everlasting ahead. we never LONG in vain. He binds up the brokenhearted, shines in the darkness, and instead of magically whisking us out of all sorrows (which would always be my preference), He walks with us through the shadows. the road is LONG, but we are not alone. our LONGING for Home and wholeness was answered by a Savior who left His home to come and be Emmanuel, God making His home WITH us in our LONGINGS.

*"He comes to us in the brokenness of our health, in the shipwreck of our family lives, in the loss of all possible peace of mind, even in the very thick of our sins. He saves us in our disasters, not from them. He emphatically does not promise to meet only the odd winner of the self-improvement lottery. He meets us all in our endless and inescapable losing."* {robert farrar capon}

each passing year gives me more to worry about. but as i am learning (& sharing with anyone willing to listen), *"worry is an investment, of two of my most precious resources: time and energy, in a future that i do not want."* this has helped curb some of my fretting. another help is a \$20 bluetooth sleep mask & good audiobooks playing to keeps my mind from racing when i lay my head down (at promptly 9 pm on school nights.) i highly recommend these audibles: *everything sad is untrue* by daniel nayeri, *this tender land* by william krueger, *bomb shelter* by mary laura philpott, and anything greek mythological by stephen fry.

one decades LONG LONGING (see what i did there?) is on the calendar for june 2023. I AM GOING TO LONDON. alert the new monarchy. after three decades of mortgages, moving, babies, too many books bought, braces, summer camps, teenagers' cars, and a 1960's house falling apart around us thwarting any overseas traveling, it is happening. thanks to some additional work writing plays and modules for theatre teachers for the past few years (plus, i am reasonably sure adam has padded my "get lit in london" savings account). i plan to see ALL THE PLAYS, drink all the teas, and do a c.s. lewis oxford tour or two. if you have any more suggestions, please let me know.

in the pursuit of alliteration, i had a second sinus surgery at shands in september. so, we have reached the age when surgery updates come in holiday cards. sigh. i was told the medical students watching were impressed with the amount of stuff in my head. i took that as a compliment and a sign

of a lifeLONG commitment to educating young people. sadly, my sinuses continue to be, in the words of my LONG-suffering ENT, "a shakespearean tragedy." i LONG for a day of no more coughing. the past three years haven't been a good time to be a chronic cougher. as you can imagine.

nadia bolz-weber, founder of the *house for all sinners & saints* in colorado, says she loves the carol *o, holy night*. especially this line: *long lay the world in sin and error pining*. pining means *failing gradually in health or vitality, especially from grief, regret, or LONGING*. i often feel this regret, failing, & pining heavily. the following line is *till He appeared and the soul felt its worth*. my soul doesn't feel very worthy these days when i look at my incomplete to-do list, resume, bank account, unclosed rings on my apple watch, image in a mirror, or when i say or do all the wrong things. epic failures, endless pining. nadia continues, "*My soul can never feel its worth if it has to earn it.*" His appearing means failings, weakness, and mistakes can be where God enters in. lowliness & despair is when He can work in us. we feel our worth best when (as the song continues) "*we fall to our knees.*" in humility. in desperate "i just can't do this anymore. i need help" moments. when LONGING seeps in from our own (or someone else's) foibles and failures, let's be grace-full to our own souls (& everyone's soul) and celebrate being beloved humans in whom God's grace is always at work.

another hymn for this LONGING season is by charles wesley...

*come, thou LONG expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins, release us; let us find our rest in Thee.  
israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth Thou art;  
dear desire of every nation, joy of every LONGING heart.*

i find that i need a constant release from my fears & sins. perhaps because most of my sins are from fear. afraid that i won't get/be/have enough when there is love enough & overflowing grace for us all. i've been trying to have "gracious assumptions" as a default this year. assuming that others are trying their best, not against me, or winning the race of life as i struggle for last place. everyone needs the same care/mercy/hope i LONG for. EVERY. ONE.

i hold on to worry when i don't trust God. i hold on to anger when i don't trust God. i hold onto envy or feel threatened when i'm insecure, & i am insecure when i don't trust God (shocker). choosing to trust God gives me gracious assumptions to listen to others and understand before trying to be understood. trusting God to redeem and make all things right in His time

and ways. it is a lifeLONG process of releasing and unclenching my hands and heart. knowing my LONGINGS are answered & filled by & in Him.

i also love the line, *"let us find our rest in Thee."* rest has become a necessity this year (i've ignored it far too long). i have a "slight" addiction to getting things done (hello, my name is lea, here is my infinite to-do list.) this year health concerns made me sabbath for a season. sabbath has several meanings: *"stop," "rest," "worship," & "delight."* slowing down my racing pace is the only way i have time to love God, those around me, and myself well. *"hurry is incompatible with love, joy, & peace."* {john mark comer} i need sabbath time to find & savor the goodness, to bring my best & kindest self into each day. a slow pace & margins in my days, weeks, years is a work in progress for this hurry addict. *"Rest and laughter are the most spiritual and subversive acts of all. Laugh, rest, slow down."* {anne lamott} i do love to be subversive. & sabbath rest has soothed some LONGINGS in good ways. sabbath is ultimately about trusting that God is at work, so i can rest.

many of you have brought joy into my LONGING heart this year. you have prayed for us, mailed cards, sent food and provisions, cleaned our house, mowed our lawn, or just listened to me through the phone or text feed. we are grateful. life is hard & our LONGINGS are not in vain.

c.s. lewis said this about LONGINGS, *"For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited.... At present we are on the outside, the wrong side of the door. But all the pages of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so. Someday, God willing, we shall get 'in'... We will put on glory... We want to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it."*

One Day we will LONG no more. we will be a part of all the beauty, the glory, finally united forever. we will "get in" because Christ came to us. He LONGS for us & with us. His Light breaks through the LONG darkness.

LONG on, my friends. we beLONG to each other here, to Him eternally, & i am glad to be in such company now & forever.

*lea noblin marshall* december 2022

*O Lord, all my longing is before You, and my sighing is not hidden from You.*

psalm 38:9