

"With This Ring"

by
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INT. UPPER-CLASS RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

1

SALLY, a pretty 30-something widow, and KATE, her gray-haired 60-ish mother-in-law, sit at a small table amid the well-dressed diners. Some light piano music plays in the background as uniformed waiters hurriedly mill about the tables. Sally is seen to be wearing her wedding band on a gold chain about her neck. She and Kate speak between bites of their lunch. Sally is picking at her food, not really hungry.

KATE

I see you're wearing your wedding ring on a *chain* now, dear.

SALLY

That's right, Kate.

KATE

Phil's been gone for nearly a year, honey. I'm sure he'd want you to move on with your life.

Annoyed, Sally puts her fork down abruptly. She speaks a bit too loudly for the quiet restaurant.

SALLY

Why does everyone keep *saying* that?

(beat)

When you lose *your* husband, *then* you can tell me how I should be behaving.

Some of the other diners notice Sally's anger and try to watch her out of the corners of their eyes.

KATE

(sotto voce)
People are staring.

SALLY

I don't care.

KATE

I was only -

SALLY

I know. I know. Sorry.

(beat)

I'm sure Phil *would* want me to move on, but I can't yet. I *will* . . . in time.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

I'm sorry I upset you.

SALLY

I shouldn't have jumped down your throat like that. I know you care about me.

KATE

You're the daughter I never had.

SALLY

(growing misty eyed)
With no family, when I've needed a shoulder to cry on, you've always been there for me. Thank you for your support.

Kate reaches across the table to hold Sally's hand.

KATE

Thank you for *yours*.

SALLY

I *did* take the ring off my finger.
I should get *some* credit for that.
(beat)
I'll *eventually* put it away for keeps, but for now, it makes me feel good to have it close to my heart.

KATE

Then that's where it should be.
(beat)
It *is* lovely.

SALLY

Did you ever see the engraving?

KATE

I don't think so.

Sally pulls the chain out to its full extent and looks down at the ring.

SALLY

It says "Always and Forever, Phil
and. . ."

She gasps and lets go of the chain.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

What's wrong?

SALLY

It *doesn't* say that!

KATE

What?

SALLY

The *engraving*. It doesn't say that anymore!

KATE

How can that be? Something like that doesn't change.

SALLY

Well, it *has*.

KATE

What. . . What does it say now?

Again, Sally pulls the chain to its fullest extent and looks at the wedding band.

SALLY

(teary eyed)

"Help me."

FADE OUT.

Sally is noticeably distraught and agitated.

SALLY

This *can't* be happening.

KATE

Calm down, dear. You *must* be imagining it.

SALLY

See for yourself.

Sally extends the chain again, this time toward Kate, who puts on her glasses to look at the ring's engraving. Kate is amazed.

KATE

You're *right*. But how. . .

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

It's Phil! It *must* be!

KATE

What are you talking about?

SALLY

He's communicating with me from
. . . from Heaven.

KATE

Through a *ring*?

SALLY

It's not *any* ring. It's my *wedding band*. He put it on my finger at the church five and a half years ago.

KATE

Sally, as much as I'd like to believe the idea that my son is capable of communicating with you from beyond -

SALLY

Do you have a better idea to explain the change in the engraving?

KATE

Well, no, but -

SALLY

Something must be *wrong*. He's not resting in peace.

KATE

How can he *not* be? His life insurance has left you very wealthy. What could keep him from resting in peace?

SALLY

It must be the way he was buried.

KATE

What?

SALLY

Maybe how he was laid in the ground isn't quite right. Someone made an error.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Cemeteries don't make mistakes
like that.

SALLY

Then it must be Mr. Hudson's
fault.

KATE

The funeral director?

SALLY

It's the only explanation.

KATE

He's a professional.

SALLY

Well, *someone* messed up or Phil
would be at peace.

Sally takes her cell phone from her coat pocket and
begins dialing.

KATE

What are you doing?

SALLY

I'm calling Mr. Hudson.

KATE

Why?

SALLY

Because I want to see him and. . .
who. . . who's the guy in charge
at St. Joseph's Cemetery again?

KATE

Paul Morton. Why?

SALLY

I want to see both of them at
Phil's gravesite right away.

KATE

You can't be serious?

SALLY

Don't I *look* serious?

She gestures at their waiter, who is passing. He stops
before the table.

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

Waiter, the check please. We have to go. Something's come up.

WAITER

Right away, madame.

He quickly walks off.

KATE

Sally, calm down. You're not thinking straight.

SALLY

I'm thinking very straight. Phil needs me and those two men are going to help me help Phil.

She looks down at her phone. She closes it angrily.

SALLY

No bars.

(beat)

I'll call him from the car. Morton is likely already at St. Joe's.

She wipes her mouth with her napkin and stands.

SALLY

Are you coming with me or do I need to do this myself?

FADE OUT.

It is a beautiful day as Sally pulls her car up on the road by her husband's gravestone. As she parks, Kate - sitting beside her - speaks.

KATE

What do you plan on telling them?

SALLY

That something's wrong, and they need to fix it.

KATE

And how will you explain how you know that something's wrong?

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

I'll show them the ring.

KATE

You can't do that! They're liable to think that you've gone over the bend.

SALLY

Why? The ring is a *real* thing. So is the new inscription.

Sally looks about and sees two older men standing by a gravestone.

SALLY

There they are - by Phil's stone.

She parks the car. The ladies hurriedly get out of the vehicle and head toward HUDSON and MORTON. Hudson speaks as they meet.

HUDSON

Mrs. Hollister, my office told me that you had a matter you desperately needed to speak with me about.

SALLY

That's right.

(beat)

You remember my mother-in-law, Kate?

HUDSON

Of course I do. Good afternoon.

KATE

Mr. Hudson, Mr. Morton.

MORTON

What can we help you with?

SALLY

My husband was buried incorrectly.

MORTON

I'm sorry?

SALLY

Something wasn't done right.

(CONTINUED)

MORTON
(prompting her)
What?

SALLY
I'm. . . I'm not sure.

MORTON
I don't understand. How have you
come to this conclusion after
nearly a year?

SALLY
I. . . I have my reasons.

MORTON
I *assure* you that he was buried
with every care and according to
every rule in the book. Everything
was double- and triple-checked
before he was laid to rest.

SALLY
Then it must be something with
your funeral home, Mr. Hudson.

HUDSON
My parlor has been in business for
more than twenty years. As Mr.
Morton does here, we make
absolutely certain -

SALLY
I want Phil dug up.

HUDSON
We can't do that.

Kate grabs Sally's arm, but she doesn't budge.

KATE
(sotto voce)
Let's go, dear.

SALLY
Why *can't* he be dug up?

HUDSON
It's against the law, for one.

SALLY
I'm his *wife*. I'm giving you
permission.

(CONTINUED)

HUDSON

It doesn't matter who you are.
It's still illegal.

MORTON

There are health issues of
concern. Your husband *has* been
buried for some time.

SALLY

Neither of you will do what I ask?

HUDSON

Do you want his body exhumed so
you can have it buried somewhere
else? *That* we could arrange.

SALLY

No. I want to be sure that he was
buried properly. That's all. After
the problem is fixed, I want him
to be buried again right here.

MORTON

Then I'm afraid that's impossible.

Kate grabs Sally's arm again, with the same result.

SALLY

Neither of you has someone who can
do this?

MORTON

Not for the reason you've
mentioned. No.

HUDSON

I'm afraid I have to refuse as
well.

Sally grows noticeably angry.

SALLY

I see.

(beat)

Then give me a shovel. *I'll* do it.

MORTON

As the caretaker here, I can't
allow that.

SALLY

Then I'll use my bare hands!

(CONTINUED)

Sally drops to her knees and starts digging in the dirt covering Phil's grave. She grunts and weeps as she digs, throwing clumps of earth behind her. The others look on, amazed.

MORTON

Mrs. Hollister! *No!*

SALLY

I'm coming, Phil. No one else will help you, but *I* will!

MORTON

You need to stop that right *now*.

Sally turns just a bit to look at him.

SALLY

No!

HUDSON

You're desecrating your husband's grave.

SALLY

I'm *saving* him.

HUDSON

I'm calling the police.

KATE

Sally, you *have* to stop. Do you want to go to jail?

SALLY

I don't care! If going to jail will save Phil, I'll go.

KATE

If you're in jail, who will help him?

Understanding her mother-in-law's argument, Sally slowly and reluctantly stops. She sniffs and rises to her feet.

SALLY

(beat)

I guess you're right.

MORTON

I can fix your husband's gravesite. You'll never know anything happened.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (5)

3

SALLY

Don't bother. I'm going to talk to a lawyer, a judge, *whoever* I need to. Phil's body *will* be exhumed. He *has* to rest in peace!

FADE OUT.

4 INT. KATE'S BEDROOM - LATER

4

Sally is lying on Kate's bed, and Kate is offering her a pill.

SALLY

You know I don't like to take pills.

KATE

It's just a mild sedative - perfectly harmless. My doctor gave them to me when I was having trouble sleeping back in August. You *need* to rest. It's been a rough day.

SALLY

But I have to call people and arrange for Phil to be -

Kate gently puts her hand on Sally's shoulder.

KATE

Later. You get some rest and, when you wake up, we'll plan what to do.

FADE OUT.

5 INT. KATE'S BEDROOM - LATER

5

Kate is gently shaking a smiling Sally awake.

KATE

Honey?

Sally murmurs as she starts to awaken.

KATE

It's time to wake up.

Sally yawns, stretches, and starts coming to.

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

Do I *have* to?

KATE

(chuckles)

Yes.

(beat)

You were *smiling*. Were you. . .
dreaming about Phil?

Sally quickly sits up on the bed.

SALLY

What time is it?

KATE

A little after 7:00.

SALLY

Why'd you let me sleep for so
long?

KATE

You looked so peaceful.

She starts to get off the bed.

SALLY

I have to make some phone calls.

KATE

We can do that *tomorrow*. It's too
late now.

Alarmed, Sally quickly feels amid the covers.

SALLY

Where's my ring?

KATE

Around your neck - right where you
put it.

Sally grabs at the ring and sighs in relief.

KATE

Are you hungry?

SALLY

I *sure* am. We didn't really have
lunch.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

I was going to order a pizza.
Would pepperoni be OK?

SALLY

That sounds *great*. My stomach is growling.

KATE

I'll have to go and get it. This place doesn't deliver. Do you want to come with me?

Sally stretches and yawns.

SALLY

(beat)
I'd rather stay here. I'm still kind of groggy.

KATE

If you say so. Will you be OK alone?

SALLY

Just fine. You go. By the time you get back, I'll be even *hungrier*.

FADE OUT.

With a start, Sally awakens from an unexpected catnap. Feeling something is wrong, she quickly turns on the bedside lamp and looks at the ring's inscription. She sees that it has changed *again*.

SALLY

Oh my God!

We see that the inscription now reads, "Help me, Sally. Please."

She pauses, thinking.

SALLY

(beat)
A *shovel*. That's all I need.
(long beat)
The *garage*.

FADE OUT.

7 EXT. KATE'S DRIVEWAY - LATER 7

Kate pulls her car into the driveway, the headlights shining on the garage door. Confused, she looks about.

KATE
Her car's gone.

She turns off the ignition and gets out of the car.

KATE
Did she. . .

Kate reaches through the open car window and presses the garage door opener. The door clangs open. No car.

Kate calls out.

KATE
Sally! Sally!

She notices an empty spot among some tools hanging on the garage wall.

KATE
(long beat)
The *shovel*. Why would she. . . St.
Joe's! She's gone to St. Joe's!

She jumps in her car and turns on the ignition.

FADE OUT.

8 EXT. ST. JOSEPH'S CEMETERY - LATER 8

The crickets are chirping, and the full moon is shining down on the gravestones. Kate is parking her car as she hears Mr. Morton call out. She sees that he is waiving a flashlight to draw her attention.

MORTON
Mrs. Hollister!

Distraught, she quickly steps from the car and hurries to him.

KATE
I'm glad you got my message. The
police should be here soon.
(beat)
Is. . . Is Sally here?

(CONTINUED)

MORTON

Right where you'd expect her to be.

Silently, they walk to Phil's grave, the flashlight beam illuminating their way. Kate is shocked to see that the gravesite is all dug up, as it was before Phil was buried. Morton shines the flashlight's beam into the hole in the ground, as we begin to hear faint cries from Sally.

Sally, covered in muck and dust, is lying on the lid of her husband's coffin, desperately trying to open it. She has torn some of her fingernails off from trying so hard. The blood from the wounds is smearing the coffin with red. Sally is weeping hysterically.

SALLY

Phil, I *can't* get this open. I can't *reach* you. Help me! Help me *please!*

As Sally weeps even more, she draws up into a fetal position on the coffin's lid. We see the shocked expressions on Kate's and Morton's faces as we hear the wail of approaching sirens.

FADE OUT.

A bustle of activity. SGT. CONRAD, a uniformed officer in his late 40s, speaks with Kate, who is trying to hold herself together. She grasps a clump of moist tissues in her right hand. Her eyes are red from crying.

CONRAD

The doctor has given her something to calm her down.

KATE

Thank you, Sergeant.

CONRAD

He's also bandaged her fingers to stop the bleeding.

Kate dabs at her eyes and sighs.

KATE

The poor girl.

(CONTINUED)

CONRAD

In all my years on the force, the sight of your daughter-in-law stretched out on that casket is the strangest, *saddest* thing I've ever seen.

KATE

It's been a rough time for her lately. . . for both of us.

CONRAD

That was her husband's grave?

KATE

Yes - my son. He died about a year ago.

CONRAD

Cancer?

KATE

(beat)
Yes.

CONRAD

My big brother died of it eight years ago. You have my sympathies.

KATE

Thank you.
(beat)
Will Sally. . . face charges?

CONRAD

No. Mr. Morton has decided not to press any.

KATE

(relieved)
Thank God for that.

CONRAD

He did say the gravesite will need to be completely done over, and that *will* be expensive.

KATE

We'll pay for it.

CONRAD

I'll let him know.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

May I take Sally home now? I can care for her for the next several days. My husband's away on a business trip.

CONRAD

Of course.

(beat)

The doctor has suggested that you consider getting her some psychiatric care.

KATE

I only want what's best for her.

FADE OUT.

Sally, lying on Kate's bed, can be fairly well seen in the glow of the moonlight and streetlights. Several of her fingers are bandaged.

She wakes with a start, and then - realizing where she is - relaxes. She anxiously squints and looks at her ring.

SALLY

Oh no!

(reading)

"Sally, I need you."

She unsteadily rises from the bed, the sedative still in her system. She is briefly startled by her reflection in Kate's bureau mirror.

SALLY

I look like *hell*. Where does Kate keep her hairbrushes?

She opens the top bureau drawer to reveal a collection of wedding bands. Confused, she picks up a few and lets them sift through her fingers.

SALLY

What the. . .

The door opens, and Kate walks in. She flips on the light switch. Sally squints from the sudden change in illumination.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

You're awake, sleepyhead.

(beat)

I see you've found my stash.

Sally gestures at the open drawer.

SALLY

All these. . . are yours?

KATE

(chuckles)

You might say they're *yours*.

SALLY

I don't -

KATE

Eight of them, all with different inscriptions. I never dreamed you'd be such an easy target. I've only used *three*.

SALLY

Why?

KATE

To play with your mind and make you doubt reality.

SALLY

Who made them?

KATE

It was easy to find a jeweler who'll keep his mouth shut for the right price. What I paid is *nothing* compared to what I'll be . . . inheriting.

SALLY

(beat)

Phil's life insurance money?

Kate nods.

KATE

After your little stunt at the cemetery, the doctor has recommended that you see a psychiatrist.

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

That doesn't get you the money.

KATE

No, but *this* will.

She raises her hand to reveal a gun.

KATE

I've seen your will. I *witnessed* it. Everything you have goes to me, as your nearest living relative.

Kate waves the gun at Sally.

KATE

Back up.

Sally takes some steps backward. Kate approaches the bureau and, smiling, starts rummaging through the gold bands.

KATE

I'm actually rather proud of my plan. All I had to do was agree with you that the ring's inscription had changed and you never suspected me of anything.

SALLY

Money is *that* important to you?

KATE

When you don't have it, it's *very* important.

SALLY

But this is a nice house. You and your husband are comfortable.

KATE

That's not enough nowadays! You need more than *comfortable*.

She takes a single ring from the drawer and holds it up.

KATE

Here's your original ring.

(beat)

Maybe you'll want to be buried with it?

(CONTINUED)

She tosses it in with the other rings and slams the drawer shut.

KATE

(beat; sarcastically)
"She must have found the gun I keep for protection," I'll cry to the cops. "I never thought she was in such shape that she would take her own life." *Boo hoo!*

SALLY

You're just going to shoot me?

KATE

A quick press of *your* fingers onto the handle after you're dead and - *voila!* - suicide.

Gun held high, Kate takes some steps towards Sally. Suddenly, she slips on something. She cries out and falls to the floor. The gun discharges, the bullet hitting her in the head. Sally rushes to her. She feels for a pulse, and finds none. Blood is oozing from Kate's head wound.

Sally looks about, not believing what has happened.

SALLY

In the head - where she was going to shoot *me*.

She sees a wedding band on the floor. She picks it up and looks at the inscription.

SALLY

My ring. This must be what she slipped on.

Sally looks at the bureau drawer holding the wedding bands.

SALLY

But she closed it up in the drawer with the others. I saw her do. . .
(long beat)
Phil?

She clutches her wedding band in one hand and brings it to her face. A tear streams down one cheek. She speaks with difficulty.

(CONTINUED)

SALLY
Thank you, sweetheart.
(beat)
Thank you!

FADE TO BLACK.