

Sorry, Right Number

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Screenplay abbreviations are simple and exist, in this author's opinion, mostly to make those who write screenplays feel like lodge brothers. In any case, you should be aware that cu means *close-up*; ECU means *extreme dose-up*; INT. means *interior*, EXT. means *exterior*, BG means *background*; POV means *point of view*. Probably most of you knew all that stuff to begin with, right?

ACT I

FADE IN ON:

KATIE WEIDERMAN'S MOUTH, ECU

She's speaking into the telephone. Pretty mouth; in a few seconds we'll see that the rest of her is just as pretty.

KATIE

Bill? Oh, he says he doesn't feel very well, but he's always like that between books . . . can't sleep, thinks every headache is the first symptom of a brain tumor . . . once he gets going on something new, he'll be fine.

SOUND, BG: THE TELEVISION.

THE CAMERA DRAWS BACK. KATIE is sitting in the kitchen phone nook, having a good gab with her sister while she idles through some catalogues. We should notice one not-quite-ordinary thing about the phone she's on: it's the sort with two lines. There are LIGHTED BUTTONS to show which ones are engaged. Right now only one — KATIE'S — is. As KATIE CONTINUES HER CONVERSATION, THE CAMERA SWINGS AWAY FROM HER, TRACKS ACROSS THE KITCHEN, and through the arched doorway that leads into the family room.

KATIE (voice, fading)

Oh, I saw Janie Charlton today . . . yes! Big as a *house!* . . .

She fades. The TV gets louder. There are three kids: JEFF, eight, CONNIE, ten, and DENNIS, thirteen. *Wheel of Fortune* is on, but they're not watching. Instead they're engaged in that great pastime, Fighting About What Comes On Later.

JEFF

Come *onnn!* It was his first *book!*

CONNIE

His first *gross* book.

DENNIS

We're gonna watch *Cheers* and *Wings*, just like we do every week, Jeff.

DENNIS speaks with the utter finality only a big brother can manage. 'Wanna talk about it some more and see how much pain I can inflict on your scrawny body, Jeff?' his face says.

JEFF

Could we at least tape it?

CONNIE

We're taping CNN for Mom. She said she might be on the phone with Aunt Lois for quite awhile.

JEFF

How can you tape CNN, for God's sake? It *never stops!*

DENNIS

That's what she likes about it.

CONNIE

And don't say God's sake, Jeffie — you're not old enough to talk about God except in church.

JEFF

Then don't call me Jeffie.

CONNIE

Jeffie, Jeffie, Jeffie.

JEFF gets up, walks to the window, and looks out into the dark. He's really upset. DENNIS and CONNIE, in the grand tradition of older brothers and sisters, are delighted to see it.

DENNIS

Poor Jeffie.

CONNIE

I think he's gonna commit suicide.

JEFF (turns to them)

It was his *first* book! Don't you guys even *care*?

CONNIE

Rent it down at the Video Stop tomorrow, if you want to see it so bad.

JEFF

They don't rent R-rated pictures to little kids and you know it!

CONNIE (DREAMILY)

Shut up, it's Vanna! I *love* Vanna!

JEFF

Dennis —

DENNIS

Go ask Dad to tape it on the VCR in his office and quit being such a totally annoying little booger.

JEFF crosses the room, poking his tongue out at Vanna White as he goes. THE CAMERA FOLLOWS as he goes into the kitchen.

KATIE

. . . so when he asked me if *Polly* had tested strep positive, I had to remind him she's away at prep school . . . and God, Lois, I miss her . . .

JEFF is just passing through, on his way to the stairs.

KATIE

Will you kids *please* be quiet?

JEFF (glum)

They'll be quiet. *Now*.

He goes up the stairs, a little dejected. KATIE looks after him for a moment, loving and worried.

KATIE

They're squabbling again. Polly used to keep them in line, but now that she's away at school . . . I don't know . . . maybe sending her to Bolton wasn't such a hot idea. Sometimes when she calls home she sounds so *unhappy* . . .

INT. BELA LUGOSI AS DRACULA, CU

Drac's standing at the door of his Transylvanian castle. Someone has pasted a comic-balloon coming out of his mouth which reads: 'Listen! My children of the night! What music they make!' The poster is on a door but we only see this as JEFF opens it and goes into his father's study.

INT. A PHOTOGRAPH OF KATIE, CU

THE CAMERA HOLDS, THEN PANS SLOWLY RIGHT. We pass another photo, this one of POLLY, the daughter away at school. She's a lovely girl of sixteen or so. Past POLLY is DENNIS... then CONNIE . . . then JEFF.

THE CAMERA CONTINUES TO PAN AND ALSO WIDENS OUT SO WE can see BILL WEIDERMAN, a man of about forty-four. He looks tired. He's peering into the word-processor on his desk, but his mental crystal ball must be taking the night off, because the screen is blank. On the walls we see framed book-covers. All of them are spooky. One of the titles is *Ghost Kiss*.

JEFF comes up quietly behind his dad. The carpet muffles his feet. BILL sighs and shuts off the word-cruncher. A moment later JEFF claps his hands on his father's shoulders.

JEFF

BOOGA-BOOGA!

BILL

Hi, Jeffie. He turns in his chair to look at his son, who is disappointed.

JEFF

How come you didn't get scared?

BILL

Scaring is my business. I'm case-hardened. Something wrong?

JEFF

Daddy, can I watch the first hour of *Ghost Kiss* and you tape the rest? Dennis and Connie are hogging *everything*.

BILL swivels to look at the book-jacket, bemused.

BILL

You sure you want to watch *that*, champ? It's pretty —

JEFF

Yes!

INT. KATIE, IN THE PHONE NOOK

In this shot, we clearly see the stairs leading to her husband's study behind her.

KATIE

I *really* think Jeff needs the orthodontic work but you know Bill —

The other line rings. The other light stutters.

KATIE

That's just the other line, Bill will —

But now we see BILL and JEFF coming downstairs behind her.

BILL

Honey, where're the blank videotapes? I can't find any in the study and —

KATIE (to BILL)

Wait!

(to LOIS)

Gonna put you on hold a sec, Lo.

She does. Now both lines are blinking. She pushes the top one, where the new call has just come in.

KATIE

Hello, Weiderman residence.

SOUND: DESPERATE SOBBING.

SOBBING VOICE (filter)

Take . . . please take . . . t-t . . .

KATIE

Polly? Is that you? What's wrong?

SOUND: SOBBING. It's awful, heartbreaking.

SOBBING VOICE (filter)

Please — quick —

SOUND: SOBBING . . . Then, CLICK! A broken connection.

KATIE

Polly, calm down! Whatever it is can't be that b —

HUM OF AN OPEN LINE

JEFF has wandered toward the TV room, hoping to find a blank tape.

BILL

Who was that?

Without looking at her husband or answering him, KATIE slams the lower button in again.

KATIE

Lois? Listen, I'll call you back. That was Polly, and she sounded very upset. No . . . she hung up. Yes. I will. Thanks.

She hangs up.

BILL (concerned)

It was Polly?

KATIE

Crying her head off. It sounded like she was trying to say 'Please take me home' . . . I knew that damn school was bumming her out . . . Why I ever let you talk me into it . . .

She's rummaging frantically on her little phone desk. Catalogues go slithering to the floor around her stool.

KATIE

Connie did you take my address book?

CONNIE (voice)

No, Mom.

BILL pulls a battered book out of his back pocket and pages through it.

BILL

I got it. Except —

KATIE

I know, damn dorm phone is always busy. Give it to me.

BILL

Honey, calm down.

KATIE

I'll calm down after I talk to her. She is sixteen, Bill. Sixteen-year-old girls are prone to depressive interludes. Sometimes they even k . . . just give me the damn number!

BILL

617-555-8641

As she punches the numbers, THE CAMERA SLIDES IN TO CU.

KATIE

Come on, come on . . . don't be busy . . . just this once . . .

SOUND: CLICKS. A pause. Then . . . the phone starts ringing.

KATIE (eyes closed)

Thank You, God.

VOICE (filter)

Hartshorn Hall, this is Frieda. If you want Christine the Sex Queen, she's still in the shower, Arnie.

KATIE

Could you call Polly to the phone? Polly Weiderman? This is Kate Weiderman. Her mother.

VOICE (filter)

Oh, jeez! Sorry. I thought — hang on, please, Mrs. Weiderman.

SOUND: THE PHONE CLUNKS DOWN.

VOICE (filter, and very faint)

Polly? Pol? . . . Phone call! . . . It's your mother!

INT. A WIDER ANGLE ON THE PHONE NOOK, WITH BILL

BILL

Well?

KATIE

Somebody's getting her. I hope.

JEFF comes back in with a tape.

JEFF

I found one, Dad. Dennis hid em. As usual.

BILL

In a minute, Jeff. Go watch the tube.

JEFF

But —

BILL

I won't forget. Now go *on*.

JEFF goes.

KATIE

Come on, come on, come on . . .

BILL

Calm down, Katie.

KATIE (snaps)

If you'd heard her, you wouldn't tell me to calm down! She sounded —

POLLY (filter, cheery voice)

Hi, mom!

KATIE

Pol? Honey? Are you all right?

POLLY (happy, bubbling voice)

Am I *all right*? I aced my bio exam, got a B on my French Conversational Essay, and Ronnie Hansen asked me to the Harvest Ball. I'm so all right that if one more good thing happens to me today, I'll probably blow up like the *Hindenburg*.

KATIE

You didn't just call me up, crying your head off?

We see by KATE'S face that she already knows the answer to this question.

POLLY (filter)

Heck no!

KATIE

I'm glad about your test and your date, honey. I guess it was someone else. I'll call you back, okay?

POLLY (filter)

'Kay. Say hi to Dad!

KATIE

I will.

INT. THE PHONE NOOK, WIDER

BILL

She okay?

KATIE

Fine. I could have *sworn* it was Polly, but . . . *she's* walking on air.

BILL

So it was a prank. Or someone who was crying so hard she dialed a wrong number . . . 'through a shimmering film of tears,' as we veteran hacks like to say.

KATIE

It was not a prank and it was not a wrong number! It was someone in *my family!*

BILL

Honey, you can't know that.

KATIE

No? If Jeffie called up, just crying, would you know it was him?

BILL (struck by this)

Yeah, maybe. I guess I might.

She's not listening. She's punching numbers, fast.

BILL

Who you calling?

She doesn't answer him. SOUND: PHONE RINGS TWICE. Then:

OLDER FEMALE VOICE (filter)

Hello?

KATIE

Mom? Are you . . . (She pauses) Did you call just a few seconds ago?

VOICE (filter)

No, dear . . . why?

KATIE

Oh . . . you know these phones. I was talking to Lois and I lost the other call.

VOICE (filter)

Well, it wasn't me. Kate, I saw the *prettiest* dress in La Boutique today, and —

KATIE

We'll talk about it later, Mom, okay?

VOICE (filter)

Kate, are you all right?

KATIE

I have . . . Mom, I think maybe I've got diarrhea. I have to go. 'Bye.

She hangs up. BILL hangs on until she does, then he bursts into wild donkey-brays of LAUGHTER.

BILL

Oh boy . . . diarrhea . . . I gotta remember that the next time my agent calls . . . oh Katie, that was so cool —

KATIE (almost screaming)

This is not funny!

BILL stops laughing.

INT. THE TV ROOM

JEFF and DENNIS have been tussling. They stop. All three kids look toward the kitchen.

INT. THE PHONE NOOK, WITH BILL AND KATIE

KATIE

I tell you it was someone in my family and she sounded — oh, you don't understand. I *knew* that voice.

BILL

But if Polly's okay and your mom's okay . . .

KATIE (positive)

It's Dawn.

BILL

Come on, hon, a minute ago you were sure it was Polly.

KATIE

It *had* to be Dawn. I was on the phone with Lois and Mom's okay so Dawn's the only other one it *could* have been. She's the youngest . . . I could have mistaken her for Polly . . . and she's out there in that farmhouse alone with the baby!

BILL (STARTLED)

What do you mean, alone?

KATIE

Jerry's in Burlington! It's Dawn! *Something's happened to Dawn!*

CONNIE comes into the kitchen, worried.

CONNIE

Mom? Is Aunt Dawn okay?

BILL

So far as we know, she's fine. Take it easy, doll. Bad to buy trouble before you know it's on sale.

KATIE punches numbers and listens. SOUND: The DAH-DAH-DAH of a busy signal. KATIE hangs up. BILL looks a question at her with raised eyebrows.

KATIE

Busy.

BILL

Katie, are you sure —

KATIE

She's the only one left — it had to be her. Bill, I'm scared. Will you drive me out there?

BILL takes the phone from her.

BILL

What's her number?

KATIE

555-6169.

BILL dials. Gets a busy. Hangs up and punches 0.

OPERATOR (filter)

Operator.

BILL

I'm trying to reach my sister-in-law, operator. The line is busy. I suspect there may be a problem. Can you break into the call, please?

INT. THE DOOR TO THE TV ROOM

All three kids are standing there, silent and worried.

INT. THE PHONE NOOK, WITH BILL AND KATIE

OPERATOR (filter)

What is your name, sir?

BILL

William Weiderman. My number is —

OPERATOR (filter)

Not the William Weiderman that wrote *Spider Doom*?!

BILL

Yes, that was mine. If —

OPERATOR (filter)

Oh my God, I just *loved* that book! I love *all* your books! I —

BILL

I'm delighted you do. But right now my wife is very worried about her sister. If it's possible for you to —

OPERATOR (filter)

Yes, I can do that. Please give me your number, Mr. Weiderman, for the records. (She GIGGLES.) I *promise* not to give it out.

BILL

It's 555-4408.

OPERATOR (filter)

And the call number?

BILL (looks at KATIE)

Uh . . .

KATIE

555-6169.

BILL

555-6169.

OPERATOR (filter)

Just a moment, Mr. Weiderman . . . *Night of the Beast* was also great, by the way. Hold on.

SOUND: TELEPHONIC CLICKS AND CLACKS.

KATIE

Is she —

BILL

Yes. Just . . .

There's one final CLICK.

OPERATOR (filter)

I'm sorry, Mr. Weiderman, but that line is not busy. It's off the hook. I wonder if I sent you my copy of *Spider Doom* —

BILL hangs up the phone.

KATIE

Why did you hang up?

BILL

She can't break in. Phone's not busy. It's off the hook.

They stare at each other bleakly.

EXT. A LOW-SLUNG SPORTS CAR PASSES THE CAMERA NIGHT

INT. THE CAR, WITH KATIE AND BILL

KATIE'S scared. BILL, at the wheel, doesn't look exactly calm.

KATIE

Hey, Bill — tell me she's all right.

BILL

She's all right.

KATIE

Now tell me what you really think.

BILL

Jeff snuck up behind me tonight and put the old booga-booga on me. He was disappointed as hell when I didn't jump. I told him I was case-hardened. (Pause) I lied.

KATIE

Why did Jerry have to move out there when he's gone half the time? Just her and that little tiny baby? *Why?*

BILL

Shh, Kate. We're almost there.

KATIE

Go faster.

EXT. THE CAR

He does. That car is smokin.

INT. THE WEIDERMAN TV ROOM

The tube's still on and the kids are still there, but the horsing around has stopped.

CONNIE

Dennis, do you think Aunt Dawn's okay?

DENNIS (thinks she's dead, decapitated by a maniac)

Yeah. Sure she is.

INT. THE PHONE, POV FROM THE TV ROOM

Just sitting there on the wall in the phone nook, lights dark, looking like a snake ready to strike.

FADE OUT

ACT II

EXT. AN ISOLATED FARMHOUSE

A long driveway leads up to it. There's one light on in the living room. Car lights sweep up the driveway. The WEIDERMAN car pulls up close to the garage and stops.

INT. THE CAR, WITH BILL AND KATIE

KATIE

I'm scared.

BILL bends down, reaches under his seat, and brings out a pistol.

BILL (solemnly)

Booga-booga.

KATIE (total surprise)

How long have you had that?

BILL

Since last year. I didn't want to scare you or the kids. I've got a licence to carry. Come on.

BILL AND KATIE

They get out. KATIE stands by the front of the car while BILL goes to the garage and peers in.

BILL

Her car's here.

THE CAMERA TRACKS WITH THEM to the front door. Now we can hear the TV, PLAYING LOUD. BILL pushes the doorbell. We hear it inside. They wait. KATIE pushes it. Still no answer. She pushes it again and doesn't take her finger off. BILL looks down at:

EXT. THE LOCK, BILL'S POV

Big scratches on it.

EXT. BILL AND KATIE

BILL (low)

The lock's been tampered with.

KATIE looks, and whimpers. BILL tries the door. It opens. The TV is louder.

BILL

Stay behind me. Be ready to run if something happens. God, I wish I'd left you home, Kate.

He starts in. KATIE comes after him, terrified, near tears.

INT. DAWN AND JERRY'S LIVING ROOM

From this angle we see only a small section of the room. The TV is much louder. BILL enters the room, gun up. He looks to the right . . . and suddenly all the tension goes out of him. He lowers the gun.

KATIE (draws up beside him)

Bill . . . what . . .

He points.

THE LIVING ROOM, WIDE, BILL AND KATIE'S POV

The place looks like a cyclone hit it . . . but it wasn't robbery and murder that caused this mess; only a healthy eighteen-month-old baby. After a strenuous day of trashing the living room, Baby got tired and Mommy got tired and they fell asleep on the couch together. The baby is in DAWN'S lap. There is a pair of Walkman earphones on her head. There are toys — tough plastic Sesame Street and PlaySkool stuff, for the most part — scattered hell to breakfast. The baby has also pulled most of the books out of the bookcase. Had a good munch on one of them, too, by the look. BILL goes over and picks it up. It is *Ghost Kiss*.

BILL

I've had people say they just eat my books up, but this is ridiculous.

He's amused. KATIE isn't. She walks over to her sister, ready to be mad . . . but she sees how really exhausted DAWN looks and softens.

INT. DAWN AND THE BABY, KATIE'S POV

Fast asleep and breathing easily, like a Raphael painting of Madonna and Child. THE CAMERA PANS DOWN TO: the Walkman. We can hear the faint strains of Huey Lewis and the News. THE CAMERA PANS A BIT FURTHER TO a Princess telephone on the table by the chair. It's off the cradle. Not much; just enough to break the connection and scare people to death.

INT. KATIE

She sighs, bends down, and replaces the phone. Then she pushes the STOP button on the Walkman.

INT. DAWN, BILL, AND KATIE

DAWN wakes up when the music stops. Looks at BILL and KATIE, puzzled.

DAWN (fuzzed out)

Well . . . hi.

She realizes she's got the Walkman phones on and removes them.

BILL

Hi, Dawn.

DAWN (still half asleep)

Shoulda called, guys. Place is a mess.

She smiles. She's radiant when she smiles.

KATIE

We *tried*. The operator told Bill the phone was off the hook. I thought something was wrong. How can you sleep with that music blasting?

DAWN

It's restful.

(Sees the gnawed book BILL'S holding) Oh my God, Bill, I'm sorry! Justin's teething and —

BILL

There are critics who'd say he picked just the right thing to teethe on. I don't want to scare you, beautiful, but somebody's been at your front door lock with a screwdriver or something. Whoever it was forced it.

DAWN

Gosh, no! That was Jerry, last week. I locked us out by mistake and he didn't have his key and the spare wasn't over the door like it's supposed to be. He was mad because he had to take a whiz real bad and so he took the screwdriver to it. It didn't work, either — that's one tough lock. (Pause) By the time I found my key he'd already gone in the bushes.

BILL

If it wasn't forced, how come I could just open the door and walk in?

DAWN (guiltily)

Well . . . sometimes I forget to lock it.

KATIE

You didn't call me tonight, Dawn?

DAWN

Gee, no! I didn't call *anyone!* I was too busy chasing Justin around! He kept wanting to eat the fabric softener! Then he got sleepy and I sat down here and thought I'd listen to some tunes while I waited for your movie to come on, Bill, and I fell asleep —

At the mention of the movie BILL starts visibly and looks at the book. Then he glances at his watch.

BILL

I promised to tape it for Jeff. Come on, Katie, we've got time to get back.

KATIE

Just a second.

She picks up the phone and dials.

DAWN

Gee, Bill, do you think Jeffie's old enough to watch something like that?

BILL

It's network. They take out the blood-bags,

DAWN (confused but amiable)

Oh. That's good.

INT. KATIE, CU

DENNIS (filter)

Hello?

KATIE

Just thought you'd like to know your Aunt Dawn's fine.

DENNIS (filter)

Oh! Cool. Thanks, Mom.

INT. THE PHONE NOOK, WITH DENNIS AND THE OTHERS

He looks *very* relieved.

DENNIS

Aunt Dawn's okay.

INT. THE CAR, WITH BILL AND KATIE

They drive in silence for awhile.

KATIE

You think I'm a hysterical idiot, don't you?

BILL (genuinely surprised)

No! I was scared, too.

KATIE

You sure you're not mad?

BILL

I'm too relieved. (Laughs) She's sort of a scatterbrain, old Dawn, but I love her.

KATIE (leans over and kisses him)

I love *you*. You're a sweet man.

BILL

I'm the boogeyman/

KATIE

I am not fooled, sweetheart.

EXT. THE CAR PASSES THE CAMERA and WE DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JEFF, IN BED

His room is dark. The covers are pulled up to his chin.

JEFF

You *promise* to tape the rest?

CAMERA WIDENS OUT so we can see BILL, sitting on the bed.

BILL

I promise.

JEFF

I especially liked the part where the dead guy ripped off the punk rocker's head.

BILL

Well . . . they *used* to take out all the blood-bags.

JEFF

What, Dad?

BILL

Nothing. I love you, Jeffie.

JEFF

I love you, too. So does Rambo.

JEFF holds up a stuffed dragon of decidedly unmilitant aspect. BILL kisses the dragon, then JEFF.

BILL

Night.

JEFF

Night. (As BILL reaches his door) Glad Aunt Dawn was okay.

BILL

Me too.

He goes out.

INT. TV, CU

A guy who looks like he died in a car crash about two weeks prior to filming (and has since been subjected to a lot of hot weather) is staggering out of a crypt. THE CAMERA WIDENS to show BILL, releasing the VCR PAUSE button.

KATIE (voice)

Booga-booga.

BILL looks around companionably. THE CAMERA WIDENS OUT MORE to show KATIE, wearing a sexy nightgown.

BILL

Same to you. I missed the first forty seconds or so after the break. I had to kiss Rambo.

KATIE

You sure you're not mad at me, Bill?

He goes to her and kisses her.

BILL

Not even a smidge.

KATIE

It's just that I could have sworn it was one of mine. You know what I mean? One of mine?

KATIE

I can still hear those sobs. So lost . . . so heartbroken.

BILL

Kate, have you ever thought you recognized someone on the street, and called her, and when she finally turned around it was a total stranger?

KATIE

Yes, once. In Seattle. I was in a mall and I thought I saw my old roommate. I . . . oh. I see what you're saying.

BILL

Sure. There are sound-alikes as well as look-alikes.

KATIE

But . . . *you know your own*. At least I thought so until tonight.

She puts her cheek on his shoulder, looking troubled.

KATIE

I was so *positive* it was Polly . . .

BILL

Because you've been worried about her getting her feet under her at the new school . . . but judging from the stuff she told you tonight, I'd say she's doing just fine in that department. Wouldn't you?

KATIE

Yes . . . I guess I would.

BILL

Let it go, hon.

KATIE (looks at him closely)

I hate to see you looking so tired. Hurry up and have an idea, you.

BILL

Well, I'm trying.

KATIE

You coming to bed?

BILL

Soon as I finish taping this for Jeff.

KATIE (amused)

Bill, that machine was made by Japanese technicians who think of damned near everything. It'll run on its own.

BILL

Yeah, but it's been a long time since I've seen this one, and . . .

KATIE

Okay. Enjoy. I think I'll be awake for a little while. (Pause) I've got a few ideas of my own.

BILL (smiles)

Yeah?

KATIE

Yeah.

She starts out, showing a lot of leg, then turns in the doorway as something else strikes her.

KATIE

If they show that part where the punk's head gets —

BILL (guiltily)

I'll edit it.

KATIE

Night. And thanks again. For everything.

She leaves. BILL sits in his chair.

INT. TV, CU

A couple is necking in a car. Suddenly the passenger door is ripped open by the dead guy and we
DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KATIE, IN BED

It's dark. She's asleep. She wakes up . . . sort of.

KATIE (sleepy)

Hey, big guy —

She feels for him, but his side of the bed is empty, the coverlet still pulled up. She sits up. Looks at:

INT. A CLOCK ON THE NIGHT-TABLE, KATIE'S POV

It says 2:03 A.M. Then it flashes to 2:04.

INT. KATIE

Fully awake now. And concerned. She gets up, puts on her robe, and leaves the bedroom.

INT. THE TV SCREEN, CU

Snow

KATIE (voice, approaching)

Bill? Honey? You okay? Bill? Bi —

INT. KATIE, IN BILL'S STUDY

She's frozen, wide-eyed with horror.

INT. BILL, IN HIS CHAIR

He's slumped to one side, eyes closed, hand inside his shirt. DAWN was sleeping. BILL is not.

EXT. A COFFIN, BEING LOWERED INTO A GRAVE

MINISTER (voice)

And so we commit the earthly remains of William Weiderman to the ground, confident of his spirit and soul. 'Be ye not cast down, brethren . . . '

EXT. GRAVESIDE

All the WEIDERMANS are ranged here. KATIE and POLLY wear identical black dresses and veils. CONNIE wears a black skirt and white blouse. DENNIS and JEFF wear black suits. JEFF is crying. He has Rambo the Dragon under his arm for a little extra comfort.

CAMERA MOVES IN ON KATIE. Tears course slowly down her cheeks. She bends and gets a handful of earth. Tosses it into the grave.

KATIE

Love you, big guy.

EXT. JEFF

Weeping.

EXT. LOOKING DOWN INTO THE GRAVE

Scattered earth on top of the coffin.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE GRAVE

A GROUNDSKEEPER pats the last sod into place.

GROUNDSKEEPER

My wife says she wishes you'd written a couple more before you
had your heart attack, mister. (Pause) I like Westerns, m'self.

THE GROUNDSKEEPER walks away, whistling.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A CHURCH DAY

TITLE CARD: FIVE YEARS LATER

THE WEDDING MARCH is playing. POLLY, older and radiant with joy, emerges into a pelting shower of rice. She's in a wedding gown, her new husband by her side.

Celebrants throwing rice line either side of the path. From behind the bride and groom come others. Among them are KATIE, DENNIS, CONNIE, and JEFF . . . all five years older. With KATIE is another man. This is HANK. In the interim, KATIE has also taken a husband. POLLY turns and her mother is there.

POLLY

Thank you, Mom.

KATIE (crying)

Oh doll, you're so welcome.

They embrace. After a moment POLLY draws away and looks at HANK. There is a brief moment of tension, and then POLLY embraces HANK, too.

POLLY

Thank you too, Hank. I'm sorry I was such a creep for so long . . .

HANK (easily)

You were never a creep, Pol. A girl only has one father.

CONNIE

Throw it! Throw it!

After a moment, POLLY throws her bouquet.

EXT. THE BOUQUET, CU, SLOW MOTION

Turning and turning through the air.

DISSOLVES TO:

INT. THE STUDY, WITH KATIE

The word-processor has been replaced by a wide lamp looming over a stack of blueprints. The book jackets have been replaced by photos of buildings. Ones that have first been built in HANK'S mind, presumably.

KATIE is looking at the desk, thoughtful and a little sad.

HANK (voice)

Coming to bed, Kate?

She turns and THE CAMERA WIDENS OUT to give us HANK. He's wearing a robe over pajamas. She comes to him and gives him a little hug, smiling. Maybe we notice a few streaks of gray in her hair; her pretty pony has done its fair share of running since BILL died.

KATIE

In a little while. A woman doesn't see her first one get married every day, you know.

HANK

I know.

THE CAMERA FOLLOWS as they walk from the work area of the study to the more informal area. This is much the same as it was in the old days, with a coffee table, stereo, TV, couch, and BILL'S old easy-chair. She looks at this.

HANK

You still miss him, don't you?

KATIE

Some days more than others. You didn't know, and Polly didn't remember.

HANK (gently)

Remember what, doll?

KATIE

Polly got married on the five-year anniversary of Bill's death.

HANK (hugs her)

Come on to bed, why don't you?

KATIE

In a little while.

HANK

Okay. Maybe I'll still be awake.

KATIE

Got a few ideas, do you?

HANK

I might.

KATIE

That's nice.

He kisses her, then leaves, closing the door behind him. KATIE sits in BILL'S old chair. Close by, on the coffee table, is a remote control for the TV and an extension phone. KATIE looks at the blank TV, and THE CAMERA MOVES IN on her face. One tear rims one eye, sparkling like a sapphire.

KATIE

I *do* still miss you, big guy. Lots and lots. Every day. And you know what? It hurts.

The tear falls. She picks up the TV remote and pushes the ON button.

INT. TV, KATIE'S POV

An ad for Ginsu Knives comes to an end and is replaced by a STAR LOGO.

ANNOUNCER (voice)

Now back to Channel 63's Thursday night Star Time Movie . . .
Ghost Kiss.

The logo DISSOLVES INTO a guy who looks like he died in a car crash about two weeks ago and has since been subjected to a lot of hot weather. He comes staggering out of the same old crypt.

INT. KATIE

Terribly startled — almost horrified. She hits the OFF button on the remote control. The TV blinks off.

KATIE'S face begins to work. She struggles against the impending emotional storm, but the coincidence of the movie is just one thing too many on what must have already been one of the most emotionally trying days of her life. The dam breaks and she begins to sob . . . terrible heartbroken sobs. She reaches out for the little table by the chair, meaning to put the remote control on it, and knocks the phone onto the floor.

SOUND: THE HUM OF AN OPEN LINE.

Her tear-stained face grows suddenly still as she looks at the telephone. Something begins to fill it . . . an idea? an intuition? Hard to tell. And maybe it doesn't matter.

INT. THE TELEPHONE, KATIE'S POV

THE CAMERA MOVES IN TO ECU . . . MOVES IN until the dots in the off-the-hook receiver look like chasms.

SOUND OF OPEN-LINE BUZZ UP TO LOUD.

WE GO INTO THE BLACK . . . and hear

BILL (voice)

Who are you calling? Who do you *want* to call? Who *would* you call, if it wasn't too late?

INT. KATIE

There is now a strange hypnotized look on her face. She reaches down, scoops the telephone up, and punches in numbers, seemingly at random.

SOUND: RINGING PHONE.

KATIE continues to look hypnotized. The look holds until the phone is answered . . . *and she hears herself* on the other end of the line.

KATIE (voice; filter)

Hello, Weiderman residence.

KATIE — our present-day KATIE with the streaks of gray in her hair — goes on sobbing, yet an expression of desperate hope is trying to be born on her face. On some level she understands that the depth of her grief has allowed a kind of telephonic time-travel. She's trying to talk, to force the words out.

KATIE (sobbing)

Take . . . please take . . . t-t-

KATIE, IN THE PHONE NOOK, REPRISE

It's five years ago. BILL is standing beside her, looking concerned. JEFF is wandering off to look for a blank tape in the other room.

KATIE

Polly? What's wrong?

INT. KATIE, IN THE STUDY

KATIE (sobbing)

Please — quick —

SOUND: CLICK OF A BROKEN CONNECTION.

KATIE (screaming)

Take him to the hospital! If you want him to live, take him to the hospital! He's going to have a heart attack! He —

SOUND: HUM OF AN OPEN LINE.

Slowly, very slowly, KATIE hangs up the telephone. Then, after a moment, she picks it up again. She speaks aloud with no self-consciousness whatever. Probably doesn't even know she's doing it.

KATIE

I dialed the old number. I dialed —

SLAM CUT TO:

INT. BILL, IN THE PHONE NOOK WITH KATIE BESIDE HIM

He's just taken the phone from KATIE and is speaking to the operator.

OPERATOR (filter, GIGGLES)

I *promise* not to give it out.

BILL

It's 555-

SLAM CUT TO:

INT. KATIE, IN BILL'S OLD CHAIR, CU

KATIE (finishes)

-4408.

INT. THE PHONE, CU

INT. KATIE'S trembling finger carefully picks out the number, and we hear the corresponding tones: 555-4408.

INT. KATIE, IN BILL'S OLD CHAIR, CU

She closes her eyes as the PHONE BEGINS TO RING. Her face is filled with an agonizing mixture of hope and fear. If only she can have one more chance to pass the vital message on, it says . . . just one more chance.

KATIE (low)

Please . . . please . . .

RECORDED VOICE (filter)

You have reached a non-working number. Please hang up and dial again. If you need assistance —

KATIE hangs up again. Tears stream down her cheeks. THE CAMERA PANS AWAY AND DOWN to the telephone.

INT. THE PHONE NOOK, WITH KATIE AND BILL, REPRISE

BILL

So it was a prank. Or someone who was crying so hard she dialed a wrong number . . . 'through a shimmering film of tears,' as we veteran hacks like to say.

KATIE

It was not a prank and it was not a wrong number! It was someone in *my family!*

INT. KATIE (PRESENT DAY) IN BILL'S STUDY

KATIE

Yes. Someone in my family. Someone very close. (Pause) *Me*.

She suddenly throws the phone across the room. Then she begins to SOB AGAIN and puts her hands over her face. THE CAMERA HOLDS on her for a moment, then DOLLIES ACROSS TO

INT. THE PHONE.

It lies on the carpet, looking both bland and somehow ominous. CAMERA MOVES IN TO ECU — the holes in the receiver once more look like huge dark chasms. We HOLD, then

FADE TO BLACK.