**Sorry, Right Number**

Stephen King

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 close-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.

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 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.

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 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 JEFF CONNIE about God except in church.

Then don’t call me Jeffie.

Jeffie, Jeffie, Jeffie.

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

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

They’ll be quiet. Now.

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

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.

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

Shut up, it’s Vanna! I love Vanna!

JEFF CONNIE (DREAMILY)

JEFF Dennis—

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

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 . . .

KATIE Will you kids please be quiet?

JEFF (glum)

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.

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

JEFF BOOGA-BOOGA!

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

How come you didn’t get scared?

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

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

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-yearold girls are prone to depressive interludes. Sometimes they even k . . . just give me the damn number!

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

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

BILL

617–555–8641

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

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.

SOUND: THE PHONE CLUNKS DOWN.

INT. A WIDER ANGLE ON THE PHONE NOOK, WITH BILL VOICE (filter)

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

VOICE (filter, and very faint)

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

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 JEFF goes.

We see by KATE’s face that she already knows the answer to this question.

In a minute, Jeff. Go watch the tube.

JEFF But—

BILL I won’t forget. Now go on.

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?

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! I will.

INT. THE PHONE NOOK, WIDER She’s not listening. She’s punching numbers, fast.

Who you calling?

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

KATIE 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.

BILL 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.

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

It’s Dawn.

BILL KATIE (positive)

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.

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)

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?

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?

NIGHT 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 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. 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.

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 EXT. AN ISOLATED FARMHOUSE 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 KATIE BILL KATIE Why did Jerry have to move out there when he’s gone half the time? Just her and that little tiny baby? Why?

Shh, Kate. We’re almost there.

Go faster.

CONNIE Dennis, do you think Aunt Dawn’s okay?

ACT II

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 I’m scared.

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

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.

KATIE 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 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. Well . . . hi.

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

She smiles. She’s radiant when she smiles.

DAWN (fuzzed out)

BILL Hi, Dawn.

DAWN (still half asleep)

Shoulda called, guys. Place is a mess.

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

Just a second.

She picks up the phone and dials.

INT. KATIE, CU Oh! Cool. Thanks, Mom.

INT. THE PHONE NOOK, WITH DENNIS AND THE OTHERS He looks very relieved.

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—

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

KATIE 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.

Hello?

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

DENNIS (filter)

KATIE DENNIS (filter)

DENNIS Aunt Dawn’s okay.

INT. THE CAR, WITH BILL AND KATIE They drive in silence for awhile.

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.

You promise to tape the rest?

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

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,

KATIE (leans over and kisses him)

BILL but I love her.

I love you. You’re a sweet man.

I’m the boogeyman!

KATIE I am not fooled, sweetheart.

JEFF BILL I promise.

JEFF I especially liked the part where the dead guy ripped off the punk rocker’s head. JEFF holds up a stuffed dragon of decidedly unmilitant aspect. BILL kisses the dragon, then JEFF.

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.

Booga-booga.

BILL looks around companionably. THE CAMERA WIDENS OUT MORE to show KATIE,

wearing a sexy nightgown.

He goes to her and kisses her.

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.

BILL

’Night.

JEFF

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

BILL Me too.

KATIE (voice)

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? She puts her cheek on his shoulder, looking troubled.

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.

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

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 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 BILL (smiles)

KATIE a few ideas of my own.

Yeah?

Yeah.

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. 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? 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.

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.

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.

KATIE I do still miss you, big guy. Lots and lots. Every day. And you 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.