

THE ELEVATOR OR: HOW I LEARNED TO ALWAYS TAKE THE STAIRS

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

A sporty compact car SCREECHES to a halt in the parking lot.

INSIDE THE CAR

a string of rosary beads dangles from the rear view mirror.

EXT. CAR - MORNING

SALLY, 25, pretty, leaps out of the car, and in her rush accidentally steps on a piece of dog shit.

SALLY

Shit!

Sally tries to scrape the shit off her shoe with a pen from her bag. She smells the pen, almost gags, and throws it away like she was holding a live snake.

Sally looks down at her watch...

SALLY

Shit!

... and hustles toward the

BUILDING ENTRANCE

where a throng of SMOKERS is gathered outside. Employees enter and exit the building through a CLOUD OF SMOKE.

Sally jogs up the steps and waves through the smoke, searching for the doors.

VOICE

Morning, Sally!

Sally tries to locate the VOICE FROM THE SMOKE.

SALLY

(coughing)

Hello? Is someone there?

JANET, 30, emerges out of the smoke cloud.

JANET

Happy Monday.

SALLY

Oh... Hi Janet, you heading up?

JANET
 Soon as I finish this carton of
 cigarettes.

Janet holds up a GIGANTIC CARTON OF CIGARETTES.

SALLY
 Okay, then. See you tomorrow.

Janet flicks some ashes.

JANET
 Make it Wednesday.

Sally smiles, turns, and BUMPS into another CO-WORKER.

Sally SCREAMS, startled. The co-worker is wearing a GAS MASK.

CO-WORKER
 Oops, sorry Sally, didn't mean to
 scare you.

Sally just stands there. She has no idea who this person is.

The co-worker realizes the above and removes the gas mask.

DOUG, 25, warm smile, waves at Sally, who immediately begins playing with her hair... someone's got a crush!

SALLY
 Oh, sorry, Doug... I didn't
 recognize you through your mask.

DOUG
 You really should get one, Sally.

SALLY
 I know. I keep meaning to.

DOUG
 Sally, do you smell something?

Doug starts SNIFFING the air. Sally cringes, glancing at her shoe.

SALLY
 What? No? Why? Do you smell
 something?

DOUG
 Something smells terrible.
 Absolutely terrible.

SALLY
It's probably the smoke.

DOUG
Yes, you're right, Sally. It probably is.

A sigh of relief from Sally. Doug hold up his watch and taps it.

DOUG
We better get a move on. The big meeting starts in 10 minutes.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

Sally and Doug enter the building. Doug immediately stops.

DOUG
Okay, it's definitely not the smoke because I can still smell it.

Sally cringes again.

DOUG
Well no time to deal with it now. We'll have to investigate this foul odor after the meeting.

Doug heads for a STAIRWELL on the left.

Sally glances down at her shoe, then back up at Doug.

Sally darts for the ELEVATOR on the right.

DOUG
Where are you going, Sally?
There's no time for the blasted elevator! We've got to take the stairs!

SALLY
Thanks Doug! I'd rather take the elevator this morning!

Doug marches over to Sally, who inches backwards, trying to conceal the smell.

DOUG
Nobody in their right mind would rather take our elevator, Sally.

SALLY
The elevator isn't THAT bad, Doug.

DOUG
Sure, when it's working. But we
both know how often that is.

Doug starts SNIFFING again.

DOUG
Oh my goodness. It smells like--

SALLY
--shit... we're going to be late!
Gotta go!

Sally hurries off.

SALLY
I'll see you at the meeting! Save
me a seat!

DOUG
Alright, Sally! But you really
should take the stairs!

Doug shakes his head disapprovingly. SNIFFS.

DOUG
HMMMMM... The wretched stench is
gone. What in the Sam hell is
going on around here...

Doug looks around covertly, then heads back toward the
stairs.

EXT. ELEVATOR - MORNING

Sally pushes the button. Looks at her watch. Then at the

NUMBERS ABOVE THE DOOR

as they slowly count down. There are only four floors but
it's taking FOREVER to move between them.

SALLY
Okay, any day now...

The elevator finally arrives at Sally's floor... but the
doors won't open. Sally pushes the button several times.

SALLY
Come on, come on!

The doors STILL won't open. Sally MASHES the button.

SALLY
Open! Why won't you open!

DING!

Sally perks up as the elevator makes a sound... but the doors STILL won't open.

SALLY
Sonuva bitch!

INT. BOARD ROOM - MORNING

The meeting is starting.

Sally & Doug's BOSS, 50, scans the room. Every seat around the large conference table is filled... except for the empty seat next to Doug.

BOSS
Has anyone seen, Sally?

DOUG
Yes, she's coming. I just saw her.

BOSS
Well where is she?

Doug looks around anxiously.

DOUG
I'd rather not say if that's okay.

BOSS
It isn't.

MURMURING FILLS THE ROOM. A long beat then...

DOUG
Sally took the elevator.

EVERYONE IN THE ROOM GASPS.

BOSS
She did what? Why on Earth would she do that? Did she forget we have a meeting?

DOUG
I told her to take the stairs but she wouldn't listen.

BOSS
And you just let her take it???

Everyone stares at Doug. The Boss shakes his head.

BOSS
I expected more from you, Doug.

Doug sulks down into his seat.

BACK TO THE ELEVATOR

Sally is STILL waiting for the elevator to open.

She is now slumped on the floor with her back against its doors, SOBBING uncontrollably.

SALLY
Why? Why won't you open?

DING!

The doors start opening slowly. REALLY SLOWLY.

Sally spins around and pulls herself up.

SALLY
Finally!

Sally waits for the doors to open enough to get through.

She starts pulling on them to speed things up.

SALLY
Come on! Open!

The doors finally open up enough for Sally to squeeze herself between them.

She gets stuck in the middle, but is able to finally slide through after a considerable amount of difficulty.

Her forward momentum carries her to the back wall of the

INT. ELEVATOR

Sally braces herself against the wall. She PANTS, out of breath, then walks over to the control panel.

Sally pushes the button for the FOURTH FLOOR... but the doors still haven't finished opening all the way... so all the button does is LIGHT UP.

Sally hits the CLOSE DOORS button to speed things up but it's useless -- the doors just keep slowly creeping open.

Sally SIGHS and retreats to the back of the elevator.

She slumps down to the floor with her back against the wall, resigning herself to another long wait...

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

The meeting is in progress.

The Boss points at an impressive looking pie chart.

Doug glances at the empty seat beside him.

BACK TO ELEVATOR

Sally is asleep on the floor. She twitches, talking in her sleep:

SALLY

I don't know what the smell is...
make love to me, Doug...

Meanwhile the elevator doors FINALLY finish opening. DING!

Sally wakes up, startled. She gets up. Stretches. Let's out a big YAWN as she trudges over to the control panel.

Sally reaches out her finger to push the FOURTH FLOOR button:

SALLY

Please... please... please...

Sally pushes the button. DING!

THE DOORS ACTUALLY SHUT!

Sally bursts into tears of joy, spinning like a school girl...

SALLY

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

... but then stops, noticing that the elevator hasn't started moving.

SALLY

No! Why aren't we moving? I
pushed the button!

She pushes the button again.

SALLY

See? I'm pushing it right now!

Sally pleads with the elevator as though it's alive:

SALLY

Please! I pushed the button!
Please start moving! Or let me go!
I can still use the stairs!

INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

The meeting has ended. Everyone files out of the room.

On Doug's way out the Boss stops him:

BOSS

Doug, if you see Sally, tell her
I'd like to see her in my office.

DOUG

Sure thing, will do.

Doug GULPS as he exits the board room.

BACK TO ELEVATOR

Sally pushes the button over and over again like a mindless zombie. Until finally...

DING!

The FOURTH FLOOR number on the display above the doors LIGHTS UP. A strange WHIRRING sound begins, followed by THE SOUND OF GEARS MOVING.

Sally backs away from the panel, holding her hands out for balance as the elevator FINALLY starts moving.

SALLY

We're moving!

Sally turns and talks to people that aren't even in the elevator:

SALLY

See you guys? I told you! I told
you we's start moving soon!

Sally turns to a different imaginary person:

SALLY

You owe me twenty bucks, Phil.

INT. DOUG'S CUBICAL - NIGHT

Doug is typing on his keyboard.

BEEP!

Doug's email pops up: "YOU HAVE A NEW MESSAGE."

Doug clicks on the message. It reads:

"THERE IS A PROBLEM WITH THE ELEVATOR. PLEASE DO NOT USE IT UNTIL YOU RECEIVE NOTIFICATION THAT THE PROBLEM HAS BEEN FIXED. THANK YOU."

Doug SIGHS.

DOUG
Poor, Sally.

Doug glances at his desk clock. It's 5:00pm.

Doug logs out of his computer, grabs his coat and his briefcase, and says goodbye to a heavyset woman on his way out of the office.

DOUG
Night Anne, see you tomorrow.

BACK TO ELEVATOR

as it slowly climbs. The sound of SCREECHING METAL. Sally holds onto the handle bars for dear life.

SALLY
Please God let me make it to the fourth floor alive and I promise to always take the stairs! Even if I lose my legs in a freak accident!

THE OVERHEAD LIGHTS START FLASHING.

All of the numbers on the control panel LIGHT UP AND ROTATE IN A CIRCULAR KALEIDOSCOPE PATTERN.

THE ELEVATOR SHAKES VIOLENTLY AND BEGINS SPEAKING TO SALLY IN AN EVIL POSSESSED DEVIL VOICE:

DEVIL VOICE
GOD? THERE IS NO GOD! ONLY
ELEVATOR!

SALLY
No! I did everything you asked of me! I pushed the button!

DEVIL VOICE
JOIN US! BECOME ONE WITH ELEVATOR!

SALLY
Never! I will never join you!

DEVIL VOICE
(sniffs)
WAIT! WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

SALLY
Oh my God! It's fucking dog shit!

DEVIL VOICE
IT SMELLS TERRIBLE! ABSOLUTELY
TERRIBLE!

SALLY
Yeah, no shit Sherlock!

DEVIL VOICE
YOU SHOULD HAVE TAKEN THE STAIRS!

SALLY
I KNOW! GOD!!

Sally pulls a LARGE CROSS out of her handbag and waves it around wildly.

DEVIL VOICE
WAIT!! WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?!?

Sally points the cross at the control panel.

SALLY
I'm taking the Goddamn stairs!

Sally HURLS THE CROSS at the control panel.

The cross LODGES IN IT, severing the panel in two.

The control panel becomes ENVELOPED BY A WHITE LIGHT.

SPARKS START SHOOTING OUT OF IT.

THE OVERHEAD LIGHTS INSIDE THE ELEVATOR EXPLODE.

Sally ducks down into a ball, covering herself from the falling shattered glass.

THE NUMBERS ON THE DISPLAY

above the door START ROTATING. FASTER AND FASTER.

DEVIL VOICE
NOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

AN EXPLOSION OF LIGHT erupts out of the top of the building.

THE GROUND QUAKES AS THE LIGHT SLOWLY DISAPPEARS INTO THE HEAVENS ABOVE.

And then it's QUIET. Maybe somewhere... A DOG BARKS.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. ELEVATOR - MORNING

DING! The doors slide open.

Sally stands at the center of the elevator.

She looks like she just got back from VIETNAM.

Her face is BLACK WITH ASH. Her hair is a mess.

She marches out of the elevator.

She turns and sees a big "2" on the wall that tells us the elevator IS ONLY ON THE SECOND FLOOR AFTER HER WHOLE ORDEAL.

SALLY
MOTHERFUCKER!

INT. STAIRWELL

Sally is FINALLY taking the stairs. She passes a "3" on the wall on her way up. Gets to "4". KICKS OPEN THE DOOR.

INT. BOARD ROOM

Sally enters the board room.

It's empty.

SHE SPITS OUT A LOOSE TOOTH.

INT. KITCHEN

Sally shakily fills a cup of water from the water cooler.

She SLURPS it down like she's been stuck in the desert for six weeks.

Janet enters the kitchen.

JANET

Sally! Where have you been? I've
been worried sick!

(beat)

Jesus... you look like shit!

Sally grabs Janet by the collar and shakes her.

SALLY

I do NOT smell like shit!

JANET

Hey! Easy! I said look like shit!

You smell fine!

Sally SNIFFS herself. Let's go of Janet's shirt.

SALLY

Really?

(crazed, laughing)

I don't smell like shit! I don't
smell like shit!

(realizing)

I still might have a chance with
Doug!

JANET

Are you feeling alright, Sally?

SALLY

I'm fine. I feel fine. Why?

Janet looks at Sally. SHE LOOKS LIKE A FUCKING GHOST.

JANET

No reason. It's... it's good to
see you back, Sally.

SALLY

Speaking of good to be back: what
are you doing here?

JANET

What do you mean?

SALLY

You said you wouldn't be back until
Wednesday.

Beat.

JANET

It's Thursday.

Beat.

SALLY
Of course it is.

Janet gives Sally a concerned look, leaves the kitchen.

Doug enters right after Janet exits.

DOUG
Sally! Thank heavens you're
alright!
(whispers)
The boss has been looking for you!

Beat.

SALLY
Dog shit.

DOUG
Excuse me?

SALLY
Dog shit.
(beat)
That's what you smelled on Monday.
(beat)
I stepped in it.

DOUG
Oh...
(glad to know what it was)
... I knew I smelled something!

Doug and Sally share an uncomfortable silence. Beat.

DOUG
You know Sally... you could have
just told me the truth. I could
have worn my gas mask!

Long beat as this dawns on Sally.

An even longer beat as Sally's sacrifice for him finally
dawns on Doug.

Doug steps forward. Embraces Sally.

DOUG
Thanks for taking the elevator.

Doug kisses her. Sally melts into Doug's arms...

... and as he's holding her Sally's nose suddenly twitches. She clearly smells something foul... and it's DEFINITELY coming from Doug.

SALLY

Doug?

DOUG

Yes, Sally?

SALLY

Can I borrow your gas mask?

DOUG

Of course. When do you need it?

Sally gets another whiff of Doug. Almost gags.

SALLY

As soon as possible.

DING!

FADE OUT.