

The Elevator

By

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SCENE 1 - INTRO

NARRATOR

Once in a while you will meet strange devices, those who you have no control over, but those who quite possibly have control over you. Such is the case with a certain elevator in a most commonly overlooked residential apartment building in the busy metropolis of New York, just south of the Irish district of Inwood.

We see this story unfold through the eyes of a certain girl and her brother, ones that had immigrated from across the pond.

We join Sally, the daughter of a well-known philanthropist, as she takes one of her music students to her apartment for tutelage.

SFX - BUSY STREET NOISES AND WALKING

SALLY

Here we are again, West 121st and Lennox.

MICHAEL

Miss Sally, are we going to take a ride up in the elevator?

SALLY

I don't know how comfortable I am with taking a ride in those newfangled devices.

MICHAEL

But Miss Sally, you have to want to. It's the latest thing since motorized transport.

SALLY

And those things I'd rather not be in either.

MICHAEL

Why not?

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

What would happen if you got into an accident? They go so terribly fast and a horse and buggy collision couldn't be anywhere near as bad as all the bent metal and such, the likes of which come from motorized transport.

MICHAEL

Nothing more than I scratch, I would think. You aren't as high up as you would be on a horse.

SALLY

Too true, my dear boy. At any rate, I would rather not risk it.

DOOR KEEP

Good day Miss Owens.

SALLY

Hello Ralph. Good to see you. How are you doing?

DOOR KEEP

Well, Miss Owens. And yourself?

SALLY

Oh I'm quite pleasant at present. How goes your wife and children?

DOOR KEEP

Also doing well Miss Owens. Our eldest has gotten a job in a factory as a foreman. He's doing fine for himself.

SALLY

Good to hear.

DOOR KEEP

I shouldn't keep you longer. Best to get in out of the cold.

SALLY

Yes, indeed.

SFX - Door being opened and closed. Walking on marble

MICHAEL

Miss Sally, can we please please please use the elevator. At least just once?

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

Will you not cease to be so persistent?

MICHAEL

Not hardly, Miss Sally.

SALLY

Very well.

SFX - Gated door open

LIFT MAN

Good day, Miss Owens. I don't recall seeing you here before today. Trying out the elevator for the first time?

SALLY

Michael wants to ride it. It's not my preference. I think walking up the stairs to be quite healthy exercise. He is carrying his musical instrument in the case, though. It is rather clunky to haul up such a long flight of stairs you know.

LIFT MAN

Quite. Please mind the gate and come along.

SCENE 2

NARRATOR

And so Sally Owens and her student took a ride on the elevator.

Sally was not just excellent at music. She also was quite the talent when it came to art. Many had said her portraits looked so life-like that it was hard to imagine she did them herself by hand. Some thought they were just photographs. Her students were always in awe of her masterful talents. Quite often she would hire people to give them a chance at something better in life -- better than a factory job. The city still talked about the Triangle fire.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

As the hours passed, two of those new hires (although unbeknownst to them) were approaching the apartment building that evening, not sure what to expect, or why Sally Owens had taken interest in them.

MARY

I can't imagine why she called us here, Brother. I know we aren't poor, but we certainly aren't rich like her either. Maybe she knows I'm an artist too. Obviously not as talented as her. Maybe she wants me to gaze at true artistic perfection.

CEDRIC

Come on. We are going to be late. Stop talking.

MARY

But...

CEDRIC

You want to make a good first impression, don't you?

MARY

Of course I do.

CEDRIC

Then keep walking.

MARY

I can't wait until they put a train in here. I keep hearing they will put one in. Last I heard it wouldn't be until '25. It would be so much cheaper for us to ride and we'd be able to travel faster than the motor cars on the road.

CEDRIC

I know, Mary.

MARY

I know you know. I'm just rambling aloud.

(CONTINUED)

CEDRIC
Which you do much too often.

MARY
Oh shush, you.

CEDRIC
(Laughs) All right.

MARY
Well, here we are.

SFX - Door to building opens

DOOR MAN
Good day ma'am, sir.

MARY
Good day, sir.

DOOR MAN
I've not seen you two before.

MARY
Sally Owens sent for us.

DOOR MAN
Did she, now? She's a kind-hearted woman. She's always helping fellow citizens.

CEDRIC
Who said she was helping us?

DOOR MAN
Oh pardon, sir. I thought by your clothes...

MARY
It'll all right. We understand. This place is magnificent. Too much for the likes of us. Sure we have enough means, but not enough to live in a place like this.

DOOR MAN
Under the care of Miss Sally, perhaps one day.

CEDRIC
That would be the goal.

(CONTINUED)

DOOR MAN

Well come on in and do take the elevator. I'm sure you'd enjoy it.

MARY

You have an elevator?

DOOR MAN

Sure do, ma'am.

NARRATOR

So Mary and her brother Cedric proceeded into the apartment building. They were in awe at the mirrored walls and a giant crystal candelabrum above their heads. As the elevator had been in existence for more than fifty years, it wasn't necessarily a "new" technological advancement, however most buildings hadn't had them because they were built pre-invention. As the two entered the elevator, they were greeted by the uniformed lift man.

SFX - ELEVATOR GATE OPEN

LIFT MAN

Where to?

MARY

To Sally Owens'.

LIFT MAN

Sure thing. Mind the gate.

SFX - GATE TO ELEVATOR CLOSE.

LIFT MAN

It's the 15th floor. We'll get you up in no time at all. Is this your first ride on an elevator?

MARY

Yes, sir.

LIFT MAN

You are in for quite a treat, then.

SFX - ELEVATOR MOVING

(CONTINUED)

MARY

Oh my!

LIFT MAN

Yes, it gives you an odd sensation.
I was a pilot in the Great War.
Sometimes it makes me feel like I'm
flying, if only for a little while.

CEDRIC

You were in the Great War?

LIFT MAN

Yes, sir. I spent a great deal of
time in France.

SFX - ELEVATOR STOPS, DINGS, GATE OPENS

LIFT MAN

That a-way, ma'am. Sally's will be
the first on the left.

SFX - A FEW FOOTSTEPS, PAUSE, TURN

MARY

Thank -- oh he's already going back
down.

SFX - LIGHT CONVERSATION (MUTED), GLASSES

CEDRIC

Do you hear that?

MARY

It sounds like she is entertaining
some guests. Why would she have us
there if she has guests? I
certainly am not dressed for a
dinner party. I also am not born
well enough to not make a fool of
myself.

CEDRIC

I don't know Mary. I think we shall
soon enough know.

MARY

Yes, let's go in then.

SCENE 3

SFX - DOOR OPENS AND CONVERSATIONS/BACKGROUND NOISE BECOMES CLEAR AND LOUDER

NARRATOR

As soon as the two Irish siblings entered the room, they both gasped in surprise. Sally's guests were mostly upper-middle class, as much as the two could tell from the clothing the others wore. She had a gallery of art to their left and the room they had entered was very large and impressive. The walls were yellow and the floor, tiled. There were massive shelves in the room that housed some of Sally's sculptures and ceramic pieces.

MARY

Are you seeing what I'm seeing?

CEDRIC

Yes. The paintings are truly magnificent. I see some that are self-portraits, but they look so real.

MARY

As if you are looking at her through a mirror.

CEDRIC

And you see this one? It's a reflection of herself. It looks like actual light is flowing in, but it's paint. How does she make it look as though the sun cried onto it?

MARY

I don't know. (LONGISH PAUSE) What?

CEDRIC

Look at those dresses.

MARY

Oh my. I wonder why she decided to hang them up on the walls...as though they were art as well. I do love the silk ball gown with that white lace and gold embroidery and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARY (cont'd)
purple velvet shawl. They look
older though.

FEMALE GUEST
'Tis like a museum in here.

SFX - WALKING AWAY

SALLY
It might be. (chuckle) My father
has died, you see, and I've kept it
a secret for quite some time. He
had a great debt to pay and it was
all done for -- his entire empire.
All I have left is this apartment
and whatever is in it. Therefore, I
have hardly a cent to my name. I
could, of course, auction these
pieces off, but I couldn't live
without my work surrounding me.
They are like my children in a way.
I invited the two of you here
because I need someone to look
after my apartment for me while I
work. I'm going to have to find a
job to afford my lifestyle, which
isn't as extravagant as it once
was. I have taken music students,
but it isn't enough.

The owners of this complex,
however, assure me that if I can
pay only a quarter of what the rent
would typically cost, then I can
keep it as long as I like. I'm
looking for someone who can bring
up food for me, watch my paintings,
and keep the apartment in order as
much as possible. If you accept,
you can live here free of charge.

MARY
(whisper - to Cedric) Sounds too
good to be true.

CEDRIC
(whisper) Free rent?

MARY
Fine.

(CONTINUED)

CEDRIC

We'll do it.

SALLY

Thank you friends, for offering to so quickly help me. Once my guests disperse, I will set you on your first assignment as I try to find a job.

NARRATOR

As the guests left, a painting came into view. It was a large painting of Sally, but no one though Sally had painted it because it didn't look real. Real as if she could step out of the frame at any moment as her other ones did. The two siblings looked at it from a distance, but didn't bother to ask Sally who had done it, for she interrupted their thoughts.

SALLY

You may go where you like while I look for a job. I only ask that you bring up some meat from the lobby when I return. The clerk will know where it is. Here is the key to the apartment. I will be writing correspondences presently. I shall see you when you return. I would assume you'd need to get some belongings together to accommodate for your stay here. You can take these champagne glasses down with you. The apartment's restaurant was so kind to provide me with them.

SFX - CLANG OF GLASSES

MARY

Cedric, let's go on the elevator again.

CEDRIC

Sure!

SFX - EXIT ROOM, DOOR CLOSE, WALKING, PRESS BUTTON FOR ELEVATOR, DING, GATE OPEN

(CONTINUED)

WALLA

(Two ladies and a man talking to each other)

MARY

Excuse us.

LIFT MAN

Mind the --

SFX - TRIP, GLASSES BREAKING

LIFT MAN

-- step.

SCENE 4

NARRATOR

Mary and Cedric both were mortified as they tripped upon entering. Excess liquid from the glasses had splashed upon the passengers. To their luck, nothing broke.

Instead of yelling at the two Irish people, they laughed heartily at each other. Mary and Cedric were puzzled, but decided to laugh along with them. The uniformed lift man didn't show a hint of emotion, as if this sort of thing happened all of the time.

LIFT MAN

Once you get down to the lobby level, please get something to clean up the mess you've made.

MARY

Yes, sir.

LIFT MAN

Mind the gate.

SFX - ELEVATOR DOOR CLOSE, LIFT NOISE, DING, GATE OPEN

CEDRIC

(Whisper) How did that happen?

MARY

(Whisper) I don't know.

SFX - WALKING

(CONTINUED)

CEDRIC

I was even watching where I was going.

MARY

We both tripped at the same time. I can't explain it.

CEDRIC

Are you sure you want to ride it on the way up?

MARY

Do you really want to walk up fifteen flights of stairs?

CEDRIC

No, not really.

MARY

Then we're going back up on it when we get those meats.

CEDRIC

I forgot...did Sally tell us where they were?

MARY

The clerk.

CEDRIC

Oh yes, well then let's go to the front desk.

SFX - Walking. Bell ring.

CLERK

May I help you?

CEDRIC

Sally told us to get the meats.

CLERK

Right away.

SFX - PAUSE AND THEN CART ROLLING SOUND

MARY

That is quite a lot of meat.

CLERK

You do know why she asked for them, don't you?

(CONTINUED)

MARY

No.

CLERK

You might want to ask her, then.

CEDRIC

Oh, we have spilled some champagne in the elevator. The lift man said we should get something to clean it up. Do you have any towels we could use?

CLERK

Usually that is a job for our maids, but they have taken off for the night.

MARY

You have no after-hour maid service?

CLERK

We used to, before the Great War. We are starting to get back to our workforce. I'll be right back as I fetch the towels for you.

SFX - WALKING AWAY

CEDRIC

Why do I get the feeling someone is keeping a secret from us?

MARY

You get that feeling as well?

CEDRIC

Ever since we got here. I just didn't want to mention it. I didn't want to upset you.

MARY

You've done a fine job of that already.

CEDRIC

Come on, that's hardly fair.

MARY

I'm just saying how I feel. I wasn't sold on the idea of helping Sally. I mean, I wanted to help her, but what she was offering...

(CONTINUED)

CEDRIC

What else could we do? Mother and Father are depending on us to bring in money for the rest of the family. We can't just sit by and do absolutely nothing.

MARY

Yes, but she didn't mention anything about us getting paid.

CEDRIC

Stepping stones, Mary. Let this lead to bigger and better things. Sally is well known and respected. Having her on your memorandum.

MARY

True. I hadn't thought of that.

CEDRIC

I did.

SFX - WALKING UP

CLERK

Here are a few towels I found. I took the liberty of wetting one so hopefully you can dilute what had spilled.

MARY

Thank you.

CEDRIC

I'll get the cart later. I think we should clean up first.

SFX - WALKING

MARY

At least he was accommodating.

CEDRIC

Indeed. Can you get the button for the elevator?

MARY

Yes, one moment.

SFX - PRESS BUTTON. SOUND OF THE LIFT COMING DOWN, GATES OPENING.

(CONTINUED)

LIFT MAN

Mind the gate.

MARY

We will...and the step.

LIFT MAN

You can clean up while I keep the elevator down here. When you go take the towels back to whoever you got them from, I will be on my way back down. I have a buzz from a higher floor. I don't want to keep them delayed for too long.

CEDRIC

We'll be fast. (To Mary) Hand me that wet towel. I'll apply and you can use your towel to dry.

MARY

Okay.

SFX - SCRUBBING SOUND

LIFT MAN

I don't think scrubbing is the way to go about this. I do believe if you were to do that, you'd just set any stains in further. Try and mop up instead.

SCENE 5

NARRATOR

As the two siblings cleaned up as best they could, Miss Sally Owens was looking into what could possibly be taking so long.

She had since exited her apartment and was waiting at the elevator for the lift man. She tapped her fingers against her bare crossed arm, waiting impatiently. She was also quite hesitant to take a ride on the elevator again, but she feared she would miss the two if she took the stairs. She could tell Cedric enjoyed it and knew he'd want to ride on it again.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Eventually, the elevator made its way up to floor fifteen, and the doors opened for her.

SALLY

Good evening.

LIFT MAN

Good evening.

SALLY

Have you seen two people, a girl and a boy? They are teenagers I think. They are in my employ.

LIFT MAN

Yes, they are in the lobby.

SALLY

Do you know what's keeping them?

LIFT MAN

Perhaps you should come down with me and ask them yourself.

SALLY

Now there is no reason to be cryptic.

SFX - LIFT MOVING DOWN, STOP, DING, DOOR AND GATE OPEN

MARY

Hello Miss Owens.

SALLY

What happened?

CEDRIC

We accidentally tripped and splashed champagne inside the elevator. We cleaned up the mess though, and we are ready to pick up the meat cart.

SALLY

(non-challant)

It doesn't matter. I won't have any guests coming in now. I've found a job. It isn't much pay, but it will be good enough for me.

(CONTINUED)

MARY

What is it?

SALLY

I will be a receptionist for a construction business. They had openings for roofers, and when I went there to see if there was other work, they suggested the desk job. They were extremely desperate for dependable help. You two should go on up with the meat. I'll follow you up.

NARRATOR

Sally and the two siblings made their way into the elevator, and the whole way up Mary was in thought. She wondered why this woman would have need for a whole cartload of meat in her room. Once the elevator reached floor fifteen, the gates opened and no one tripped while exiting, much to the relief of the two Irish people. They followed Sally to her room as the lift man made his way back down.

They entered the room and saw a pile of bread and cheese.

SALLY

I make sandwiches right now, if you were wondering. It's why I needed the meat. The landlord has parties frequently and they've entrusted the catering duty to me. They supply me with goods and I provide them with the finished product. They said I could use part of that to pay my way, but it wasn't enough to cover all of my necessities so that is why I needed to secure a job.

SCENE 6

NARRATOR

The first day working for Sally was a dream to Mary and her brother. They expected to find a princess, only to discover a poor woman

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR (cont'd)
struggling to keep her legacy
alive. All the while, Mary seemed
to hear people singing in her head,
only when she traveled on the
elevator. They sounded sad, but she
couldn't make out anything more.

As the years passed, the trio
managed to have fun and Sally kept
painting. She finished a painting
every five years, and eventually
made enough money for the two to
move on in their lives. Mary had
caught the eye of a well-born man,
who didn't mind indulging her to
every convenience that could be
afforded.

Cedric moved forward as the manager
of the very same building that
housed Sally.

When Mary was old enough to have
grandchildren, she would tell them
about the fabulous parties held at
the home of Sally Owens and that
enjoyable elevator. It was in those
years that Mary was invited back
for a party, along with her
husband.

LIFT MAN
Mind the gate ma'am.

MARY
Thank you, sir.

LIFT MAN
Where to?

MARY
Sally Owens' please. Floor fifteen.

LIFT MAN
Right away.

SFX - ELEVATOR ACTION SOUNDS

LIFT MAN
Mind the gate.

(CONTINUED)

MARY

Thank you.

SFX - ELEVATOR GATE CLOSE AND WALKING TO DOOR, USE SAME SFX AS EARLIER. KNOCK ON DOOR, OPEN.

SALLY

Why Mary, what a pleasant surprise. And you've brought along your dashing husband, Frank.

FRANK

I'm glad to see you are doing well, Sally.

SALLY

Oh Frank, you know I wouldn't be doing well if it weren't for Mary's assistance years ago.

FRANK

I know, but I'm still glad you are back on your feet. Remember, I was a friend of your father's.

SALLY

He never mentioned his friends much, like anything else.

FRANK

You know I would have helped you if I knew. He was secretive about anything relating to his personal life.

SALLY

As am I.

MARY

We shouldn't keep you. We can socialize while you see to your other guests.

SALLY

Mary, you're the guest of honor.

MARY

I am?

FRANK

A little surprise I kept from you.

(CONTINUED)

SALLY

I would have had Cedric as well, but he couldn't make it. Quite a shame, I should say. Here, let me introduce you to my friends. I'm sure they would love to meet you.

MARY

I recognize some of them from other parties you have held.

FRANK

Yes, but you weren't married to me then. They will acknowledge you now and probably not even remember you from before.

MARY

Truly?

SALLY

Unfortunately, such is the way of the world. I do not like it, but it is what it is and I must follow.

FRANK

Mary, let's not argue. Sally, please proceed.

NARRATOR

And so Sally showed off Mary to her guests and they had a lovely night, all things considered. When Mary left the party, she took a glass of punch along with her, and punched the button for the elevator. It opened, and as Mary entered with her husband, she tripped, splashing punch all over a crowd of younger folks.

The punch flew over the elevator interior and Mary was washed in the recollection of her younger days, when she tripped with her brother Cedric.

SCENE 7

NARRATOR

As time had begun to pass, New York started to reach for the sky as Mary grew old. As she approached the old building, now turned hotel, she made her way into it. She wanted one last look at Sally Owens' apartment, which had been in her care since her passing. She was notified of a break-in a few weeks prior, but wasn't able to check into it until this very day.

She made her way slowly with the help of a cane, into the building which had developed into its own work of art. There were escalators everywhere and massive elevators. Those didn't impress her. She was still entranced with the little elevator she remembered.

She saw it, almost hidden behind a large potted tree. It was marked as a service elevator. It was hard for Mary to believe it once held glamorous party-goers and millionaires, yet here she was, one of those millionaires, ready to take a ride. She gulped down a drink from a water bottle she had been toting around with her. She pressed the button for the elevator and a uniformed man opened the gate.

LIFT MAN

Where would you like to go, ma'am? This is a service elevator, but if you are keen on the historic aspect of traveling in it, I'd be happy to oblige.

MARY

To Sally Owens'.

SFX - TRIPPING SOUND, WATER SPLASH

LIFT MAN

(distant)

You have to get on first.

(CONTINUED)

NARRATOR

The world goes white for Mary as she trips into the elevator. She can hear the people singing, but this time she can make out the words.

They say, "Look to the ceiling, look to the floor, get out of the door and you are on me once more."

The world is bathed in color again as the elevator doors open and Mary walks out. She makes the left down to Sally Owens' apartment. The hallway dark and unused, apparently being prepped for a remodel. The door to Sally's apartment is ajar and Mary walks in. The tiles to the floor are gone, gray cement peeks out from underneath. The walls are stripped of decorations. The tables are upside-down, and Mary notices a dusty painting leaning against one. She turns it over to see a large portrait of Sally that someone painted. It was ripped, and a long tear splits her face in two.

MARY

(strained)

Sally...

NARRATOR

As Mary smooths the canvas up to connect the two pieces of her face, she turns to the room that once held her beloved paintings. She gets up, turning to one solitary painting. As Mary looks at it, the painting Sally did of herself, she notices movement. Sally moves from the canvas and walks out of the painting. She beckons for Mary to follow her into the painting.

Mary does not hesitate, and once she does she sees that they are back in the 1920s. She sees familiar faces, including a youthful Sally, and her brother, and her late husband Frank.

(CONTINUED)

SALLY
Welcome back, Mary.