

I Will Always Love You

Written by

Songbird

Inspired by a true story
(And the Whitney Houston song)

FADE IN :

SUPER: 1972

INT. - DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Several young NURSES, attired in the uniform of the day - starched whites are going about morning office chores. There is a whisper of conversation and tittering among them. Something important seems to be afoot. One of the Nurses stands out, petite, blonde, vivacious, this is SALLEE WEST (20s). Her co-worker, ANGELA BROWN (30s) works nearby.

ANGELA

The new doctor should be here any time now.

Sallee continues her work, seemingly uninterested.

SALLEE

Um hmm.

ANGELA

It's not every day we get a new boss. Hope he's nice - not a jerk like the last one...

All activity stops as the door opens and in strides DR. PHIL VINSON, (60s) distinguished, starched lab coat, not a hair out of place. Behind him, a YOUNG MAN 30s, this is DR. JAMES KING, the walking epitome of tall, dark and handsome.

DR. VINSON

Good morning ladies! I want to introduce the newest member of our team. This is Dr. James King who comes to us from the distinguished Loyola School of Medicine.

ANGELA

(whispering to Sallee)
Fancy pedigree. And he looks like he just stepped out of GQ Magazine.

SALLEE

Well, looks don't make the man, or so they say.

ANGELA

(wryly)
Well, they don't hurt the man either.

Both women smile expectantly as Dr. King nods and speaks to each of the nurses. Sallee's face flushes as Dr. King finally approaches and takes her hand in his.

DR. KING

And you are?

Sallee doesn't respond but continues to look at him. Angela answers his question.

ANGELA

This is Sallee. Seems the cat has her tongue this morning. She's your new nurse.

Sallee comes back to the real world.

SALLEE

Oh yes, I'm sorry. I'm Sallee. It's nice to meet you.

DR. KING

Ah, my Girl Friday. It's a pleasure, Sallee.

As Sallee continues to smile and nod, another YOUNG WOMAN, JULIE (20s) tall, blonde, model-perfect enters the room. Dr. King turns, beaming at her.

DR. KING (CONT'D)

I'd like everyone to also meet my fiancée, Julie. We're getting married next month.

Applause breaks out as Sallee's face falls a bit but she extends her hand and a welcoming smile to Julie.

FADE TO:

SUPER 1982

A montage of Sallee (now 30s) and Dr. King (early 40s), working together, cut with his young children coming to the office, giving Sallee a hug as she hands out treats as well as Dr. King presenting her a Christmas gift - Sallee always with a look of adoration and longing for him on her face. CLOSE on Angela who's been witness to Sallee's longing for ten years. She shakes her head and returns to her work

FADE TO:

SUPER 1992

INT. MEDICAL OFFICE - DAY

A YOUNGER WOMAN (20s) Dr. King's new wife, visits the office holding their newborn. Sallee kindly cooing to the new baby, but still with look of hurt and longing on her face as Dr. King and his wife exit the room. The ever-present Angela still a witness.

ANGELA

She's young enough to be his daughter.

Sallee shrugs sadly.

SALLEE

But he looks happy. That's all that matters, right?

ANGELA

And what about you? Are you happy?

SALLEE

Sure. I have a job I love. Why wouldn't I be happy?

Angela shakes her head, confounded and returns to her work.

FADE TO:

SUPER 2002**INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY**

Dr. King (now early 60s) exits a patient room, Sallee (50s) sits at the office desk, charting.

DR. KING

Sallee, could I ask something? You know I'm going to the beach for vacation next week.

Sallee looks up with a flash of hopeful anticipation.

SALLEE

Of course.

DR. KING

Would you mind keeping an eye on my house while I'm gone?

(MORE)

DR. KING (CONT'D)

Now that I'm a bachelor again,
there's no one to make sure
everything is cared for while I'm
away. You're the only person I
trust to ask.

A beat as Sallee deflates.

SALLEE

Sure. I'll be glad to, Dr. King.

DR. KING

(smiling)

Thanks Sallee, that's my girl.
Always there to make my life
easier.

He rises and enters another patient room, leaving Sallee with
the now familiar and long-perfected look of longing.

FADE TO:

SUPER 2012

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

Dr. King lies in a hospital bed. 70+ years old now, graying,
frail, ill. The doctor has become the patient. The door
cracks open and Sallee(now 60s) first peeks in and then
enters. He smiles weakly.

DR. KING (CONT'D)

There's my girl.

SALLEE

How are you feeling?

DR. KING

With my hands, as always.

Sallee smiles at his humor.

SALLEE

That's an old joke, Doctor.

Dr. King smiles at her.

DR. KING

Well, I'm an old man.

A beat as he looks to Sallee and then slowly extends his hand
to her, obviously waiting for her to take it. Sallee
hesitates, but then gently places her hand in his.

DR. KING (CONT'D)
 Life hasn't been fair to you. I haven't been fair to you. I've always known. It's always been you that was there for me. No matter what. The best friend I've ever had. But I never...

A beat as he tears up a bit.

SALLEE
 Dr. King, please. My life has been spent as I chose to live it.

DR. KING
 Sallee, for forty years, you've never called me anything but Dr. King. Please, after all this time, it's okay to call me James.

Sallee lowers her eyes, self conscious.

SALLEE
 It doesn't seem right. I think I'll just stay with Dr. King.

Dr. King smiles sadly at her and nods his understanding. CLOSE on his hand as he squeezes hers more tightly.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A crowd of mourners say their last goodbyes as they begin to disburse. A lone figure remains, dressed in black, a veil covering her face. It is Sallee. She makes her way to the casket, alone now. From Sallee's POV her hand reaches out and gently touches the polished wood.

SALLEE
 (V.O.)
 For forty years, I've watched you from afar, like a silent spectator in the theater of life. You were never mine, but I was always yours.

CLOSE on Sallee's hand as a single tear falls.

SALLEE (CONT'D)
 I will always love you...James.

FADE OUT.