Dress of White Silk

By Richard Matheson

Quiet is here and all in me.

Granma locked me in my room and won't let me out. Because it's happened she says. I guess I was bad. Only it was the dress. Momma's dress I mean. She is gone away forever. Granma says your momma is in heaven. I don't know how. Can she go in heaven if she's dead?

Now I hear Granma. She is in momma's room. She is putting mommas dress down the box. Why does she always? And locks it too. I wish she didn't. It's a pretty dress and smells sweet so. And warm. I love to touch it against my cheek. But I can't never again. I guess that is why Granma is mad at me. But I amnt sure. All day it was only like every day. Mary Jane came over to my house. She lives across the street. Every day she comes to my house and play. Today she was. I have seven dolls and a fire truck. Today Granma said play with your dolls and it. Don't you go inside your mommas room now she said. She always says it. She just means not mess up I think. Because she says it all the time. Don't go in your mommas room. Like that.

But it's nice in mommas room. When it rains I go there. Or when Granma is doing her nap I do. I don't make noise. I just sit on the bed and touch the white cover. Like when I was only small. The room smells like sweet.

I make believe momma is dressing and I am allowed in. I smell her white silk dress. Her going out for night dress. She called it that I don't remember when.

I hear it moving if I listen hard. I make believe to see her sitting at the dressing table. Like touching on perfume or something I mean. And see her dark eyes. I can remember.

It's so nice if it rains and I see eyes on the window. The rain sounds like a big giant outside. He says shush shush so everyone will be quiet. I like to make believe that in mommas room. What I like almost best is to sit at mommas dressing table. It is like pink and big and smells sweet too. The seat in front has a pillow sewed in it. There are bottles and bottles with bumps and have collared perfume in them. And you can see almost your whole self in the mirror.

When I sit there I make believe to be momma. I say be quiet mother I am going out and you can not stop me. It is something I say I don't know why like I hear it in me. And oh stop your sobbing mother they will not catch me I have my magic dress.

When I pretend I brush my hair long. But I only use my own brush from my room. I didn't never use mommas brush. I don't think granma is mad at me for that because I never use mommas brush. I wouldn't never.

Sometimes I did open the box up. Because I know where Granma puts the key. I saw her once when she wouldn't know I saw her. She puts the key on the hook in momma's closet. Behind the door I mean. I could open the box lots of times. That's because I like to look at mommas dress. I like best to look at it. It is so pretty and feels soft and like silky. I could touch it for a million years.

I kneel on the rug with roses on it. I hold the dress in my arms and like breathe from it. I touch it against my cheek. I wish I could take it to sleep with me and hold it. I like to. Now I can't. Because Granma says. And she says I should burn it up but I loved her so. And she cries about the dress. I wasn't never bad with it. I put it back neat like it was never touched. Granma never knew. I laughed that she never knew before. But she knows now I did it I guess. And shell punish me. What did it hurt her? Wasn't it my mommas dress?

What I like real best in mommas room is look at the picture of momma. It has a gold thing around it. Frame is what Granma says. It is on the wall on top the bureau.

Momma is pretty. Your momma was pretty Granma says. Why does she? I see momma there smiling on me and she is pretty. For always.

Her hair is black. Like mine. Her eyes are even pretty like black. Her mouth is red so red. I like the dress and it's the white one. It is all down on her shoulders. Her skin is white almost white like the dress. And so are her hands. She is so pretty. I love her even if she is gone away forever. I love her so much. I guess I think that's what made me bad. I mean to Mary Jane.

Mary Jane came from lunch like she does. Granma went to do her nap. She said don't forget now no going to your mommas room. I told her no Granma. And I was saying the truth but then Mary Jane and I was playing fire truck. Mary Jane said I bet you haven't no mother I bet you made up it all she said. I got mad at her. I have a momma I know. She made me mad at her to say I made up it all. She said I'm a liar. I mean about the bed and the dressing table and the picture and the dress even and everything. I said well I'll show you smarty.

I looked into grammas room. She was doing her nap still. I went down and said Mary Jane to come on because Granma won't know.

She wasn't so smart after then. She giggled like she does. Even she made a scaredy noise when she hit into the table in the hall upstairs. I said you're a scaredy cat to her. She said back well my house isn't so dark like this. Like that was so much.

We went in mommas room. It was more dark than you could see. I said this is my momma's room I suppose I made up it all

She was by the door and she wasn't smart then either. She didn't say any word. She looked around the room. She jumped when I got her arm. Well come on I said.

I sat on the bed and said this is my mommas bed see how soft it is. She didn't say nothing. Scaredy cat I said. Am not she said like she does.

I said to sit down how can you tell if it's soft if you don't sit down. She sat down by me. I said feel how soft it is. Smell how sweet it is.

I closed my eyes but funny it wasn't like always. Because Mary Jane was there. I told her to stop feeling the cover. You said to she said.

Well stop it I said. See I said and I pulled her up. That's the dressing table. I took her and brought her there.

She said let go. It was so quiet and like always. I started to feel bad. Because Mary Jane was there. Because it was in my momma's room and momma wouldn't like Mary Jane there. But I had to show her the things because. I showed her the mirror. We looked at each other in it. She looked white. Mary Jane is a scaredy cat I said. Am not am not she said anyway nobody's house is so quiet and dark inside. Anyway she said it smells.

I got mad at her. No it doesn't smell I said. Does so she said you said it did. I got madder too. It smells like sugar she said. It smells like sick people in your momma's room. Don't say my momma's room is like sick people I said to her.

Well you didn't show me no dress and you're lying she said there isn't no dress. I felt all warm inside so I pulled her hair. I'll show you I said you're going to see my mommas dress and you'll better not call me a liar.

I made her stand still and I got the key off the hook. I kneeled down. I opened the box with the key. Mary Jane said pew that smells like garbage.

I put my nails in her and she pulled away and got mad. Don't you pinch me she said and she was all red. I'm telling my mother on you she said. And anyway it's not a white dress it's dirty and ugly she said. Its not dirty I said. I said it so loud I wonder why Granma didn't hear. I pulled out the dress from the box. I held it up to show her how it's white. It fell open like the rain whispering and the bottom touched on the rug.

It is too white I said all white and clean and silky.

No she said she was so mad and red it has a hole in it. I got more madder. If my momma was here shed show you I said. You got no momma she said all ugly. I hate her.

I have. I said it way loud. I pointed my finger to momma's picture. Well who can see in this stupid dark room she said. I pushed her hard and she hit against the bureau. See then I said mean look at the picture. That's my momma and she's the most beautiful lady in the world.

She's ugly she has funny hands Mary Jane said. She hasn't I said she's the most beautiful lady in the world!

Not not she said she has buck teeth.

I don't remember then. I think the dress moved in my arms. Mary Jane screamed. I don't remember what. It got dark and the curtains were closed I think I couldn't see anyway. I couldn't hear nothing except buck teeth funny hands buck teeth funny hands even when no one was saying it. There was something else because I think I heard someone call don't let her say that! I couldn't hold to the dress. And I had it on me I can't remember. Because I was grown up strong. But I was a little girl still I think I mean outside.

I think I was terrible bad then. Granma took me away from there I guess. I don't know. She was screaming god help us it's happened it's happened. Over and over. I don't know why. She pulled me all the way here to my room and locked me in. She won't let me out. Well I'm not so scared. Who cares if she locks me in a million billion years? She doesn't have to even give me supper. I'm not hungry anyway.

I'm full.