

**THE WEDDING DRESS**

by

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**Format:** Short Film Screenplay, 5 pages. **Genre:** Drama.

**Logline:** Needing a scary Halloween costume for a first date, a college student rents a wedding dress from a hospice charity shop. With one condition: she must put the dress on and visit the original owner, a patient in the hospice.

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**EXT. BRITISH TOWN HIGH STREET - LATE AFTERNOON (PRESENT DAY)**

Two female dressed-down Uni students around 20 YO, **KATE** and **PAULA**, amble along the pavement. They carry small backpacks.

PAULA

What about tonight? Got plans?

KATE

That guy Alex, from the Genetic Pathology lectures, he asked me out on a dinner date.

PAULA

He's cute! Fancy restaurant?

KATE

City Pizza. He's poor, like us.

PAULA

At least it's quasi-artisanal, not publicly listed big corporate pizza.

KATE

What about you? What are you doing?

PAULA

The astrophysicists are having a planet alignment Halloween party in my dorm. I'm going as a zombie-alien, a novel life form that devours male flesh to survive. Drop by with Alex if he turns out to be a lousy kisser.

KATE

I need to find a good Halloween costume. What would scare the crap out of a guy on a first date?

They draw level with a **HOSPICE CHARITY SHOP**. In the window, on a mannequin torso, is a radiant white wedding dress. Kate and Paula stop at the sight, look at each other.

PAULA

Bingo! And about your size too!

**INT. HOSPICE CHARITY SHOP - MOMENTS LATER**

A gloomy, dusty charity shop filled with assorted clothes, books, bric-a-brac. Standing behind the counter at the back is **DOROTHY**, late 60s, gray hair, perceptive eyes. Through spectacles perched on her nose, she reads the horoscope page of a tabloid newspaper open on the counter.

She looks up over her glasses as the door opens and an invisible BELL TINKLES. The girls enter, approach Dorothy.

KATE

I'm wondering, is it possible I could rent that wedding dress overnight?

DOROTHY

I'm sorry but rental isn't part of the hospice shop's business model. Three hundred pounds and it's yours.

Kate considers her opening gambit.

KATE

How about this: I buy it on my card, bring it back tomorrow. Then you credit my card back two hundred and eighty, less any wear and tear.

DOROTHY

That's very creative.  
(thinks about it)  
Okay, just tonight. But there's one condition attached.

KATE

What's that?

DOROTHY

You have to put the dress on now then walk around the corner and visit the young woman that donated it.

KATE

Deal! Do you have a changing room?

Dorothy gestures to a curtained alcove with a mirror at the side of the shop. Kate pulls at Paula's sleeve.

KATE (cont'd)

Come on, I need you to do my makeup.

#### **SOME MINUTES LATER**

Paula steps from behind the closed curtain, sweeps it back to reveal... Kate, transformed into a stunning bride.

KATE

(to Dorothy)

First contract step complete! So who am I visiting?

DOROTHY

Go around the corner to the hospice and ask for Eloise. I rang, they're expecting you.

**INT. HOSPICE NURSING STATION - SOME MINUTES LATER**

A **DUTY NURSE**, female 40s, sits behind the station counter. Kate comes to the counter in the wedding dress. The nurse stands, beams as she takes in the splendour of the dress.

KATE

I've come from the hospice shop. I'm here to see Eloise.

DUTY NURSE

I know. She's in room six, down the corridor. Just knock and go in.

Kate walks in the rustling fabric down a silent, carpeted corridor. At a door marked **6**, she knocks gently, enters.

**INT. HOSPICE PATIENT ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Alone, in a hospital bed, is **ELOISE**, a gaunt pale woman, mid-20s, a bandana covers a head supported by pillows. She looks at Kate who comes to stand by the bed. Eloise speaks with a weak, soft but stoic, still coherent voice.

ELOISE

Aren't you too old to be trick or treating?

KATE

I rented your dress for tonight. Well, technically, I bought it.

ELOISE

And you look so pretty in it. It makes me so happy. I was going to get married then this bullshit happened.

KATE

Do you know how long you have left?

ELOISE

From the amount of morphine I need, not so long. And when you don't eat any more, the clock is ticking.

KATE

Has the groom stayed by you?

ELOISE

He visited today but I know him. He's just going through the motions for our families, waiting to get it over with. He'd still marry me but I don't want to put him through that just for a saccharine tabloid hospice story. So tell me, why do you need my dress?

KATE

I'm going on a first date with a guy.

ELOISE

That'll scare the crap out of him.

KATE

That's the idea. It's Halloween.

ELOISE

The perfect night to become a ghost.

KATE

I can't stay long now but can I come back later, to sit with you and chat?

ELOISE

I'd like that. Nights are lonely. I don't really sleep. Just drift in and out of reality on the morphine.

**INT. PIZZA RESTAURANT - NIGHT (A FEW HOURS LATER)**

ALEX, early 20s, sits alone, sips coke, watches the door. He's dressed as the Grim Reaper, skull face makeup, black clothes, black cloak, long pretend-scythe against the table.

Kate enters wearing the dress, spots Alex who is clearly rattled by seeing a bride. Kate sits opposite, is serious.

KATE

The grim reaper. Nice touch with the scythe. Alex, you look tense.

ALEX

It's ironic but my life just flashed before my eyes. When's the ceremony?

KATE

I know a local vicar. He can marry us tomorrow. You don't look okay, Alex.

ALEX

I've broken out into a cold sweat.

KATE

I know it's a little rushed but we can really commit. Skip sinful sex.  
 (bursts into laughter)  
 Just messing with you, Alex. But you should have seen your face.

Alex relaxes his tense body, exhales.

ALEX

I feel relief... The astrophysicists are having a planet alignment party. We could go there after we eat.

KATE

Alex, you're a cute guy, although your kissing skills are still an unknown. You go to the party. There's someone I really need to visit later.

ALEX

My reaper lips might surprise you.

KATE

I'm sorry, Alex. Death's cold embrace just isn't for me tonight.

**EXT. OUTSIDE THE HOSPICE CHARITY SHOP - DAY (NEXT MORNING)**

Back in everyday clothes, Kate and Paula stand somberly looking at the wedding dress, now back behind the window.

PAULA

You were there all night?

KATE

There was a armchair next to the bed. I fell asleep in it. When I woke up, she'd stopped breathing.

PAULA

What did you do?

KATE

Got the duty nurse who called the duty doctor in. He signed the death certificate. I left before the family arrived. The very last thing Eloise said to me was: "Put the dress back. I plan on haunting it. I want to be in it for at least one wedding".

**THE END**