

A Very Lovely Dress

A short play
By D. Richard Tucker

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CAST

SARAH, Female, teen or early twenties, young and bright, but respectful

TAILOR, Male, middle aged, gentle and quiet

Setting: A Tailor's shop represented by a sewing machine and table.

Time: The present.

Lights up on small, dark tailor shop, represented by an old sewing machine sitting on a small weathered table, with a small stool next to it. In the opposite corner is a dress hanging on display. SARAH enters quietly, looking for the TAILOR, Not finding him, she walks around the room exploring it. Noticing the dress, she approaches it with wonder, and just as she's about to reach out and touch it, the TAILOR enters, carrying a new spool of thread.

Hello?

TAILOR

(startled)

Hi.

SARAH

You must be Sarah.

TAILOR

Yes.

(referring to the dress)

Is this it?

SARAH

Yes.

TAILOR

SARAH

It looks very pretty.

TAILOR goes to the sewing machine and uses the new spool of thread to thread a needle. SARAH fights to contain her delight over the dress.

TAILOR (cont'd)

Is this your first time in the Capitol, Sarah?

SARAH

(enthusiastic)

Oh, yes. I can't stop looking around. All the big buildings, the beautiful parks.....all the people. Everything is so amazing.

TAILOR

It's very busy this time of year. Tomorrow it will be even more crowded.

(pause)

Are you here alone?

SARAH

Yes, my family was unable to come.

TAILOR

Your family?

TAILOR moves to the dress and removes it from its hanger.

SARAH

My mother, my father. I have two brothers – younger than me. They're bringing in the harvest and so they couldn't leave the farm. Bernardo said he would even be videotaping tomorrow's ceremony. He's going to send a tape to my parents so they can see.

TAILOR carries dress back to the stool and sits, working on the dress. SARAH wanders downstage and looks out a "window."

SARAH (cont'd)

Oh! You can see the square from here! There's the fountain...and the monument. And that's where the motorcade will stop. Oh, and that's where the Prime Minister will be standing. This is exciting.

TAILOR

Are you ready? For tomorrow?

SARAH

I think so. We practice every day. In the morning and in the afternoon. Bernardo has taught me how to hold the flowers, how to bow before the Prime Minister, how to present the flowers....I'm very nervous.

TAILOR

That's understandable.

SARAH

Bernardo has been very strict. He insists that everything be just so.

TAILOR

He's like that – he just wants things to go well.

SARAH

Sometimes after supper, I rehearse in my room. I want to make sure I don't make a mistake. I do it just like Bernardo taught me. I hold the wreath of flowers like so.

SARAH holds out an imaginary wreath and acts out the instructions as she says them.

SARAH (cont'd)

I take two steps forward.....Then I bow to the Prime MinisterThen I take three steps towards him.....And then lower my headAnd present him with the flowers.

TAILOR

I'm sure you'll be fine.

SARAH

The dress looks very lovely. Do you make many dresses?

TAILOR

Not like this.

SARAH

Is this the first one that-

TAILOR

No, I made one before, two years ago. For a wedding.

SARAH

A wedding dress?

TAILOR

No....no, it was for the singer at the wedding. When the Governor's son got married.

SARAH

For the...Oh!

(SARAH's demeanor changes for a moment)

I saw that on television, on the news. I remember her. You made that dress?

TAILOR

Yes.

SARAH

It was very pretty. That was - ...I remember. And this dress is-

TAILOR

Just like it, though a different fabric.

SARAH

(pause)

It's a great honor to wear this dress.

TAILOR

It's only a dress.

SARAH

No. It's an honor.

SARAH turns away and looks out the window. Then TAILOR sews for a moment.

TAILOR

(pause, without looking up)

Are you ...are you sure that you want to do this?

SARAH

Do what?

TAILOR

The presentation.

SARAH

Well... of course. Why wouldn't I?

TAILOR

It's...it's just that.... Well, it's not for everyone.

SARAH

Do you think ...I'm not-

TAILOR

No, not at –

SARAH

Do you think I'm not good enough for -

TAILOR

No -

SARAH

You think I might make a mistake?

TAILOR

No, Sarah, no. That's not what I'm saying. I just ...well, I was hoping you weren't doing this because-

SARAH

This is an honor for me - the most important thing I've ever done.

TAILOR

Yes, I just-

SARAH

I'm here to honor my people, to honor God. I've always heard of patriots...of freedom fighters. I always wished I could do something for my people, even something little – like this.

TAILOR

Yes –

SARAH

I was deeply moved when they asked me to do this.

TAILOR

Yes....yes, I'm sorry.

SARAH wanders around for a moment.

SARAH

Did you know her?

TAILOR

Who?

SARAH

The girl. The girl who wore the other dress...and sang at the wedding.

Yes.

TAILOR

Was she nervous?

SARAH

Very nervous.

TAILOR

Was she....? No, that would be silly. She was a beautiful singer, and I'm just a country girl.

SARAH

Actually, she was much like you, yes.

TAILOR

But she had to stand up and sing before all those people and I'm just here to carry flowers.

SARAH

(finished sewing)
It's a big job, Sarah. You are representing all of us. It's only natural to be nervous. Anybody would.
(holds up the dress)
What do you think?

TAILOR

It's lovely. Is it finished?

SARAH

I just need to measure the length and hem it up.
(hands her the dress)
Try it on.

SARAH tries on the dress over her clothes.
TAILOR moves stool into center of room.

SARAH

It's a very lovely dress. This fabric is so pretty..... and so soft to touch.

TAILOR helps SARAH up onto stool.

TAILOR

I'm glad you like it.

TAILOR kneels down to measure the length of dress and marks with pins.

SARAH

It's almost a shame.

TAILOR

Shame?

SARAH

That it will only be worn once. Just for tomorrow.

TAILOR

Yes. I suppose so.

TAILOR continues pinning it up.

SARAH

Sometimeswhat would have happened if I had not been chosen? If I had stayed in the country, working the farm. I wonder....

TAILOR

It's not too late to change your mind...

SARAH

No! I want to do this! I may be nervous, but everyone is counting on me. By this time tomorrow, people will be saying "Good job, Sarah, we are proud of you. You looked so beautiful in that lovely dress."

The TAILOR pins the dress in silence for a moment.

SARAH (cont'd)

When you say "it's not too late...."

TAILOR

There was one...she was very proud to be chosen. She tried very hard, rehearsed diligently, but the day before ... she became afraid, and chose not to go.

SARAH

What happened?

TAILOR

She went back to her parents... crying... ashamed. They told her it was alright, some one else could do it.... but they weren't convincing enough.

I don't understand.

SARAH

The TAILOR has finished pinning the dress and stands up.

TAILOR

I think, deep down, they had hoped she would do it...but they didn't want to tell her that.

SARAH

What happened?

TAILOR

The next morning she was gone. She went back...

SARAH

To fulfill her duty?

TAILOR

Yes.
(slight pause)
Turn around and let me see.

SARAH turns. TAILOR examines the length.

SARAH

Who was she? The girl who...?

TAILOR

She was the singer. At the wedding of the governor's son.

SARAH

What did her parents.....?

TAILOR

We sometimes wish she hadn't.

SARAH

She was your daughter?

TAILOR

(nods, then a pause)
We watched her climb the stairs, wearing the dress I had made for her. She approached the microphone, and though I know she was nervous, her voice was strong and clear – her song was the most beautiful thing I've ever heard.

SARAH

So it worked out?

TAILOR

Sometimes I wish that I'd been stronger the night before. That I had held her tightly and told her that it didn't matter. I wish I had been more convincing

The TAILOR helps SARAH come down from the stool.

SARAH

You mean, you didn't want her to serve her people this way?

TAILOR

I didn't want to pressure her into being less than true to herself.

(pause)

Does it fit all right?

TAILOR returns stool to original location.

SARAH

Yes. It's very comfortable...though it seems to be too big. Here – around my waist.

TAILOR

It has to be. So you can wear the belt underneath it.

SARAH

Oh, yes. I forgot.

TAILOR

You can take it off now.

SARAH takes off the dress and holds it reverently.

TAILOR (cont'd)

I'll finish the hem and press it for tomorrow. The dress will be brought to your room tonight.

TAILOR approaches SARAH.

TAILOR (cont'd)

And here in the sleeve....

(shows her the inside of the sleeve of the dress)

Is a little seam. Bernardo will run a wire through here and then at the end he'll fasten the detonator, so it'll always be near your hand.

I see.

SARAH

TAILOR takes dress and returns to the sewing machine.

Thank you.

SARAH (cont'd)

SARAH turns to go, and then stops.

Do you....do you miss her?

SARAH (cont'd)

TAILOR nods.

But....you were proud of her?

SARAH (cont'd)

TAILOR nods.

SARAH (cont'd)

(pause)
It really is ...a very lovely dress.

TAILOR stares at the dress in his hands.
SARAH exits as the lights fade out.

END.