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Gothic Novel

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### The Girl with the White Dress

In a small, remote community, away from the influences of the city, people rushed to the cover of their homes to avoid the imminent storm brewing over the horizon. Doors were slammed shut and windows were closed. The cobblestone roads were dead silent save for the low moaning of the wind slicing through the trees. The light from the sun slowly vanished and was replaced with an unsettling veil of darkness that grew thicker and thicker as the storm clouds grew, consuming the expanse of the sky. Not one soul was in sight, with the exception of one girl who rushed to close her shutters as if to block out the horrors of the storm. Fisting the string in her hand, she paused to look out at the sky as the ominous clouds slowly descended upon her. Growing uneasy, she tightened her grip on the string but froze when movement on the street caught her eye.

Black hair swayed around a lonely figure standing in the middle of the pathway, her pale skin barely visible behind the curtain of darkness. A plain white dress covered her frame, practically blending in with the light complexion of her face and legs. It appeared as though the phantom were glowing against the dark atmosphere surrounding her, looking almost unreal. However, the appearance of the ghost was not the most foreboding concern to the terrified youth staring wide eyed at the sight before her, but how her gaze was returned. Only piercing eyes were visible through the dancing strands of pitch black hair, searing themselves into the mind of the trembling form behind the shutters. The young girl

quickly snapped the shutters shut, huffing and puffing with a feeling of terror burrowing itself deep inside her stomach. She rushed to her bed and trembled in fear all throughout the night.

The next day, the storm ceased to exist. Puddles between the slabs of stone and the sound of water dripping onto the ground from the rooftops were the only indicators that one had passed through the town. The young girl walked cautiously out of the house, eyes darting in every direction. The lonely spirit's appearance was burned into her memory. The trip to the market was uneventful. The townspeople greeted her and bustled about the roads, resuming their lives from yesterday as if nothing happened. However, the girl could not continue on as they did. She felt as though a presence had latched itself onto her back, refusing to let go. The apparition was nowhere to be found even though the fear of her presence remained.

At the market, the grocer welcomed the young girl. She quickly thanked him and rushed through the market, looking for nothing in particular. The sky was much brighter now, casting a morning glow onto the ground below. Weaving her way through the tents, the girl came across a single store that the light refused to shine on. A sign stuck out the front showing what appears to be voodoo doll on the cracked wood. An invisible string seemed to pull the young girl towards the store and she began walking towards the door that seemed to not fit into the door frame.

A bell chimed as the girl walked in. The interior of the store was murky and dark. The only source of light was from the cauldrons behind the wooden countertop, emitting various colors in eerie distortions. An old, plump woman came out from the back room at the sound of the bell chiming. Potion fumes trailed behind her as she casted her sharp gaze at the girl. She settled behind the counter and began to add crushed up spices into the mixture, her attention now seemingly fixed on the task at hand.

The girl uncomfortably averted her gaze to the various bottles stacked onto the crooked and uneven shelves nailed to the wall. Each bottle glowed faintly, casting eerie shadows along the wall. The lighting against the onlooker caused her face to warp, accentuating and understating her features. One vial caught her interest as the thick red liquid swirled inside the confines of the glass. The calligraphy on the bottle curled and twisted in a wicked art as it seemed to move against the liquid.

“So you have taken interest in the *Elixir of Vitro*. An interesting choice for one so young.” The girl snapped her head around only to see two cold steel eyes. Before she could retort, the old woman cut her off. “It appears as though you are haunted by a demon, not any different from the common folk.” The brewer then shifted her gaze to the mysterious potion. “The *Elixir of Vitro* removes the demons from your conscious, but there are consequences to this alteration in your person.”

The girl gazed upon the potion with desire. She knew she had no money on her, but it did not change her next course of action. Her hand struck out like a viper and clasped around the vial. She then turned and bolted out of the dark shop. The old woman remained still behind her countertop, a wicked grin split across her withered face.

The houses and tents were a blur as the young girl sprinted past them. She clutched the bottle to her chest as if it were a prized gem. An old abandoned house stood in a valley on the outskirts of town where no one travelled by frequently. Entering through the broken doorway, she found a moth eaten rug, sat down, and began fumbling with the rubber stopper wedged into the vial. If one were to peer through the broken window, he would think the young girl was crazy flailing her arms around. Finally removing the stopper, the girl quickly lifted the glass to her lips but paused in hesitation. The red contents swirled in the movement, trying to inch closer to her tongue. Eyes squinting in contemplation, she slowly lowered her hands and looked up.

Past the broken frame of the of the house, by the wood line, a lone figure stood still; only her hair brushed against the wind. Just like the night before, the phantom did nothing but stand there, staring. Only her eyes poked through the thick curtain of hair. Then, she took a slow step forward and began approaching the abandoned house.

Terror boiled inside of the girl's stomach as she quickly downed the contents of the bottle, unable to take her eyes off the sight in the woods. The youth then dropped the vial, causing the glass to shatter on the ground. Her vision went blurry but the ghost was no where to be found. The woodline devoid of life. A twisted cry ripped through the girls lip as she clutched her stomach in pain. Her eyes glazed over and she reached out for a broken shard of glass, twirling it between her fingers like a toy. In the reflection of the glass, a distorted figure could be seen, but all too recognizable to the girl. The phantom returned the gaze, her hair swept clear from her visage to reveal that the mad girl holding the glass shard shared the same face.