

Mummy's Little Box

"Don't touch my box," the mother said crossly.

"I just want to see it again," the little girl said, stretching her rather dirty, rounded fingers up towards her mother's dressing table.

"I've told you over and over again that it's very old and I don't want you to break it."

"Just play the music, please, Mummy," the little girl said.

With a rather desperate sigh, the mother wound the box, lifted the lid, and let the gay tune tinkle out in the air. Perhaps it would keep the child quiet so she could finish getting ready to go out.

The little girl listened for a moment to the much-loved tune, then began her little dance around her mother's room. As she whirled slowly, the familiar things that spelled Mummy seemed to disappear. The bed with its satin coverlet piled high with lace pillows, the divan in the corner where Mummy read sometimes in the afternoon, her bright, blonde hair spread out on the gay silk pillows, the perfume bottles, sparkling and gleaming on the dressing table: all the sights and smells of Mummy.

She was in another world, the little girl, an enchanted garden where Mummy laughed her tinkling laugh and danced

with the big man. The little girl always thought her Mummy's eyes looked like two bright blue lights on the Christmas tree then. The little girl remembered the big man, although she had only seen him once or twice. He seemed too big, too loud, too noisy. He looked at her with such cold eyes, and only seemed to be around when Daddy was gone and Mummy had one of her parties.

The little girl whirled and whirled, pretending her plain cotton dress was one of Mummy's beautiful dress-up gowns. She always thought Mummy looked just like an angel then, when she was dressed in her velvets, or satins, or laces. Her blonde curls were like a golden crown, almost brighter than the jewels that glowed around her throat.

The little girl could remember when Daddy had given some of the jewels to Mummy, and how excited she had been when she had opened the gaily wrapped boxes. The little girl didn't know just



Mary Cuddy

when Mummy had gotten the little music box, but it seemed to have appeared one day after the big man had been there. Mummy seemed very fond of it.

I wonder when Daddy will be back this time, the little girl thought. When he's gone, Mummy hardly ever stays home, and I really don't like ole' Mrs. Warren here. She's so bossy.

Suddenly the door to Mummy's room burst open, and Daddy stood there. He looked very tall and very stern, just like he did when he was going to scold the little girl. She knew Mummy and Daddy were going to start yelling at one another again, saying many words she

didn't understand. Still the little girl could feel the hate and jealousy that raged about them.

She kept whirling as the box finished its tune, trying to shut out the sound of their loud voices. They'll stop in a minute, she thought, and then Daddy will pick me up and give me a big hug.

She peeked at them once, quickly. Daddy was shaking Mummy, her blonde curls tumbling around her shoulders. The little girl looked away as she saw one of Daddy's big arms come swinging up, his huge fist doubled up . . .

A crash echoed through the room; the music stopped abruptly.

The little girl was picked up in her Daddy's big arms, and he spun her away through the door. But not before she had seen Mummy, her bright, blonde hair stained with what looked like strawberry jam, her half-open eyes looking like cold blue marbles, lying on the floor.

All her perfume bottles were in a shattered mass, cosmetics and powder spilled over all. Beside Mummy lay her little box, her treasure, broken into tiny fragments. It looked like a giant with angry feet had stomped on it again and again.

"Mummy," said the little girl.

poet's corner

The Keeper

Lighthouse blinks
 nearer nearer nearer
 Foot-prints sink into water-tide patterns
 Mist gathers on fly-away hair
 Pockets welcome cold hands
 as
 Confederate fog blankets the beach
 Lighthouse blinks
 home home home

--Barbara Kellog

Sequestration

Keep on keeping on rain
 mist over hulking tenaments
 as barrel fires burn in vacant lots
 for junkie's cold veins
 hollow windows follow prostitute's gain 'n' hustle

Rain
 mist over pigeon coop
 child's wing of roof-top refuge
 coos muted in bongos throb
 from the street

Rain
 mist over beggar
 robbed of sight and tin-cup
 his torment reaching deaf-ears
 as foot-falls splash through puddles debris

Rain
 mist over huddled fetal shapes
 on damp stair-wells
 shattered wino bottles
 glisten neon blue

Keep on keeping on

--Barbara Kellogg

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