

Rainbow Baby

(a 5 minute monologue)

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Setting: A church hall room, evening.
Props: A pile of old costumes waiting to be sorted and repaired, an unpicker, a handbag, a handwritten letter.
Character: SYLVIA, a 50 year old woman, neatly dressed.

Sylvia, who adopted Polly 18 years ago, prepares for a visit from Polly's birth mother. She stands with an opened letter in her hand.

SYLVIA

Oh yes. I remember everything about that day. You were wearing red. Funny, I thought, Polly suits red too. A sort of velour dress - the label stuck out at the back. I had this terrible urge to walk across the Courtroom and tuck your label in. *(SYLVIA looks down at the letter and reads from it)* "All I want now is the simplest thing in the world - to love my own child." *(she exhales, then folds the letter up)* Easy to write. You don't love at the drop of a hat. It's hard work. You're up all hours, you go without, you worry yourself sick. You have to earn it.

(SYLVIA puts the letter back into her handbag, brushes down her skirt and tests out a welcoming smile) I always had a feeling you'd turn up one day. Just a hunch, you know. I'd have invited you for tea, but Jim's a bit touchy at the moment - one of his moods about Polly and the future and everything. Then I had a brainwave. Why not meet you at the Wednesday Club? Much more informal. A lot easier for all concerned.

(SYLVIA starts to rifle through a pile of costumes) Excuse all this mess, by the way. We're right in the thick of it. 'The Live Wires' hit the Brighton Dome next week. Wonderful name, isn't it? Live Wires. Jim thought it up. He's marvellous at scrabble. Polly's the star, of course. She's written most of the songs herself. Yes. And she paints. And she plays the piano. *(pause)* You did see Polly, didn't you? In the red skirt and Paisley top? Not easy to miss, is she? All that energy. All that talent. Real talent. I mean, the others are good, of course. But Polly . . . well, Polly shines.

Oh go on; let's sneak a peak at them rehearsing. I can never resist it. She's written some wonderful poetry. Yes. Actual poetry. I know it's not Shakespeare or anything, but she's got a very good ear for rhyme. *(SYLVIA pulls a greetings card out of her handbag)* I think this one's her best so far. She wrote it for my birthday. Only two spelling mistakes and one's an apostrophe; they don't really count, do they? *(SYLVIA recites proudly from*

memory) "My Mum loves tea, and she loves me. My Mum has a handbag, and loves my Dad. When we go out, I laugh and shout. But my Mum is best. She's got a blue dress."

(long pause, SYLVIA's face drops) Not exactly your cup of tea, is she? Oh, there's nothing I don't know about disgust. I've seen it on some of the best faces - out shopping, down the pictures, at MacDonalds. What's so wrong with her, for heaven's sake? She hasn't got two heads. Polly's Polly. I wouldn't want her different. If she was like everyone else she'd be . . . odd.

(SYLVIA distracts herself by rifling through costumes) You've done well for yourself, though. A University Professor. Very impressive. Ambition's a good thing. I try and drum that into Polly. I know she'll never be prime minister or anything, but so long as she's doing her best, we're happy.

(SYLVIA grabs a torn silk dress triumphantly) Ah! *(she checks the material for flaws)* This'll do for the petticoat. I wonder if there's enough for a pair of ballet pumps too? I never throw anything away, you know. It's against my religion. Every piece of material's got potential. You just have to see it.

(SYLVIA holds onto the dress and searches for the unpicker) Not that we always see eye to eye. Oh no. That would be asking too much. Clothes! Don't get me onto clothes. If there's one thing I won't tolerate that's indecent clothing. Specially for a girl like Polly. Well, I mean it's asking for trouble. All the other girls of her age, they've got their A levels and boyfriends and career prospects. But my Polly, she's got nothing but her innocence and trust. If that was taken away from her, if some unscrupulous . . . *(pulls herself together)* I like her to look decent. You know - nothing popping out that shouldn't, everything in its place.

(SYLVIA sits and starts unpicking the seams of the silk dress) Jim's a generous man. Never made me feel any less a woman for . . . *(pause)* He used to call me the Queen of all creation. *(laughs)* We'll adopt, he said. Simple as that. But what with his diabetes and everything, well, they wouldn't let us have a baby. Not a healthy baby. And then they told us about Polly.

(she opens the locket around her neck to reveal a small photo which she squints down at) Look at her. Pretty as a picture. Little fists curled up like a boxer's, legs not quite long enough for her baby-grow. *(she closes the locket)* And I said to Jim, she's ours. And he didn't say no. My Jim never said no. We both felt it, you see. I can't explain. It was like peeping at a flower that's all closed up and going to die from lack of water. And there we were, holding this precious little bud, knowing we were going to give her a second chance. *(pause, takes the letter out of her handbag again and reads it)* "A second chance?" Yes. I suppose we all deserve a second chance. *(Lights fade to black out)*

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