

MY CHILD
a one act play

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My Child

Two women sit at either side of a stage, each under a spotlight which alternates between them as they speak. One is in her mid to late 30's but looks far older than her years, the other is a 15 year old who looks somewhat younger.

Marie: It was the worst day of my life.

Sitting at my sister's bedside. Watching on as she cradled her newborn baby in her arms. Her third newborn baby.

Tears of love brimmed from her eyes. And her husband's. And little Katie, oh, you should have seen her face light up when she saw her new baby brother! Bobby was too young to understand what was going on really, but even he had a look of wonder and awe on his face the first time he laid eyes on this little miracle! You could just feel the love pouring out from all of them to the new addition to their family.

I loved him too. And still do of course, after all he is my nephew. But...but I hated him as well...

It's the most awful, selfish thing to say, but it's true. I hated him. And I hated my sister and her husband and Katie and Bobby. I hated them because they were a family. A loving family. And that was the one thing I'd never have.

She had three children. I had none, and I never would have. How was that fair? How was there any justice whatsoever in that? It was the one thing in the world I wanted and she had it three times over.

But now...now my bitterness and jealousy is a thing of the past. Because now it might be my turn! My turn to finally become a mother. My turn to finally have the one thing I've always wanted.

A child.

My child.

Katie: It was the worst day of my life.

I knew something was wrong. I'd known it deep down for weeks, but I ignored it. I thought that if I did that it would just go away, but it didn't. It's still there. (*Places her hands on her stomach*) Growing day by day. Week by week. Curled up without a care in the world. Unlike me.

We didn't have a condom. I didn't want to risk it, but he said we'd be alright. He said he'd waited long enough. We'd been going out for a month and he didn't think he could wait any longer. So...I did it. I believed him. I went along with it.

I was stupid. I was an idiot. And now I'm paying the price for it.

He's not. He's gone now. Told me to get rid of it or he'd dump me. So I told him I didn't know if I wanted to get rid of it. So he called me a whore. And then I dumped him. Tossler.

I thought maybe my parents would be supportive. I mean, they'd be disappointed of course. I'm 15, I have my GCSE's coming up. If I kept the baby I'd never be able to go to uni or have a decent career and I'd never be able to go out with my mates anymore because I'd be up all night changing nappies and mopping up sick. But even so I thought they'd still love me. I mean, I'm still their daughter. Dad said I'd always be his little Katie no matter what. And Mum was quite young when she had me, ok, not 15 but still, it would have been tough for

her. So surely they'd see past all their disappointment and look after me when I needed them the most?

Turns out they wouldn't. Chucked me out on the streets. Said I'd brought shame on them. Told me they couldn't believe I'd been so stupid. Dad was practically chucking my stuff out the door, I'd never seen him so mad. (*Becomes tearful*) And Bobby and Jack, my little brothers, they were crying and Mum was hugging them and telling them it would all be alright. But she wasn't hugging me. She wasn't hugging me! And I was the one who needed a hug!

They sent me to stay with my Aunt Marie. Just until they "sorted their heads out". Or rather until I sorted myself out.

So that was it then. No boyfriend. No family besides one sad and lonely aunt. Just me. Me and a child.

An unwanted child.

My child.

Marie: Katie turned up on my doorstep tonight.

She was in tears. Carrying bags in both hands and a rucksack on her back. Mascara streaming down her face, her eyes red and streaming.

She'd turned up like this before of course. When she was a little girl she used to run away from home all the time. It was after her little brother Bobby was born and she said her mum and dad didn't want her any more cos they had him now. And I'd always give her a hug and tell her that of course her mummy and daddy wanted her and they loved her just as much as they did Bobby but he needed a bit more looking after because he was little.

I loved doing that. It made me feel like a mum. Just for a while. And then when her own mum eventually came to take her home I'd end up feeling slightly deflated. Obviously I didn't know then that I couldn't have children but the urge was still there. (*Reflective*) It's always been there. Ever since I was a kid, playing with my dolls house...

Anyway, I'm digressing. I knew it was serious this time. Katie wasn't 6 years old anymore and I'd never seen her in that state. So I let her in. Led her to the sofa. Sat her down and gave her a hug before asking her what was wrong. And she told me.

She was pregnant.

I was shocked. I mean, I knew she had a boyfriend but I never thought that they would...not at that age. She's 15! Still only a baby in my eyes! And her parents!

So I asked her what they thought. And what her boyfriend thought. And she told me they'd all disowned her for it. The boyfriend walked away and so did her parents when she needed them the most.

I would never do that to my child.

Katie: I told her everything.

And she listened to me. She supported me when no one else had. She told me she loved me and she'd stand by me no matter what. She'd help me raise the baby and look after it for me if I wanted to stay at school and she'd give me money to help support it. Which would be good for her I guess. She can't have her own children and she's always wanted them. Mum said it made her depressed and bitter and her husband left her because of it. And I would so love to make her happy, what with all she's done for me.

But I can't do that. And I told her so.

I told her that there's no way I can be a mum. I'm 15, I can't even look after myself! Ok I've had my little brothers to play with and tell stories to but the second they needed changing or feeding I could hand them straight back over to my mum. Plus you have to be responsible, and I'm not responsible. When I was 9 my dad got me a tank of fish and they all died 'cause I kept forgetting to feed them! You can't do that with a baby!

I told Marie all this and she tried to tell me it was all going to be alright but I knew it wasn't. I knew there was no way on earth I could have this baby. Particularly with virtually no support from my family.

And that's when I made the decision.

I was going to get rid of my child.

Marie: I went ballistic!

She told me she was going to have an abortion. That she wasn't ready to be a mother and everyone was against her so the only real solution would be to kill the baby. And I went ballistic.

I would have killed to have what she did. And she was prepared to just throw it away as if it were nothing!

I screamed at her. And it all came out. All of the feelings of resentment I'd been harbouring for years towards her, my sister and any other woman who had ever had a child. I told her how I felt sick whenever I saw a pregnant woman in the High Street, or a mother with a pram. I told her how I'd scan the windows of Mothercare for what seemed like hours on end, picking out toys and pyjamas and little booties for the baby I'd never have. I even told her of my feelings of jealousy and resentment when I saw my own sister cradle her children, time after time after time. Something I'd never told anyone in my life because I'm so ashamed to ever have even thought it!