

STILL BORN

A play by Phil Lewis

Additional dialogue by Joy Tilbury

This play requires permission to perform and a performance fee

SHORTENED SAMPLE VERSION

For full version please contact:

publications@phil-lewis.net

Approx. 9 minutes.

CAST:

DAWN: Any age over 40

SET:

Single chair and spotlight.

Large sheet on the stage floor.

STILL BORN

(OPENING MUSIC.

LIGHTS UP ON DAWN ENTERING, IN A DRESSING GOWN. SHE ARRANGES HERSELF IN A POSE – EITHER ON THE CHAIR, OR ON THE SHEET ON THE FLOOR.

AS SHE SPEAKS, SHE ALTERS THE POSE, AS IF BIDDEN BY AN UNSEEN VOICE. THERE ARE LONG PAUSES BETWEEN SENTENCES, NORMALLY JUST AFTER SHE'S CHANGED A POSE. THIS ADDS TO THE VISUAL ASPECT OF THE PIECE.

IF POSSIBLE, THE LIGHTING CAN CHANGE BETWEEN EACH POSE. SOMETIMES DARK AND SULTRY. AT OTHERS BRIGHT AND GLOWING)

DAWN: It's coming, I can feel it. Have to move.

(SHE SUBTLY MOVES HER LEG OUT STRAIGHT)

Don't change the face. Grit and bear it. The pain will subside. Here it comes.

(SLIGHT GRIMACE)

There it goes. The one, and only advantage of not being pregnant.

After the lost of my child I've thrown myself into work even more. The long moments of solitude while posing has led to far too much introspection. Too much time reliving the pain. Too much time to think. I thought I needed another hobby, profession, what ever. So I joined the Open University.

English Literature, I chose. I was inspired by the movie Educating Rita. Ruby Fruit Jungle and all that.

They won't let me bring my books in and read while I pose. It means my eyes are always looking down and I can't find anyone that would hold the book up to the right level for me. Also, someone has to turn the pages. No. Reading while I work is a no go. At least I can keep my mind occupied by thinking through my course work and task set by my tutor.

It's a distraction that helps at times. But I need much more than that if I'm going to get over this period of my life. The University thing was my sister's idea.

They've been very supportive in all this. I suppose that is to be expected, they are my sisters after all. But it doesn't go without saying that not all people behave they way they should do.

Denise is a selfish and self-centred as they come. She of all people I'd expect to be smug and relieved I'm still childless. Be she has been the real rock. Whether that is because she is secretly pleased this has happened and the guilt of feeling that way has to manifest itself somehow, I don't know.

I've had counselling. They call it that, but all I seem to get is a series of questions asking me questions about how I feel. I know how I feel, tell me how to stop feeling this way I do.

When am I going to stop feeling utterly miserable every waking moment?
How can I stop thinking of a still born child that never was?

One way is to try for another baby.

The big question is whether I SHOULD try for another child. My husband wants to, but can I go through all that pain and anguish again? I don't think so. Not for a long while, anyway. And given that history is repeating itself through my sisters, can I really put myself through that trauma when the odds are stacked against me?

The phrase a rock and a hard place spring to mind.

But there is one other solution. Something my sisters' haven't tried, but I think I can.

Adoption.

The trouble is, because of the perceived ideas of a still life model, I'm not sure if that would be held against me. Know what I mean. Don't you have to be an upright citizen and a fit person for a parent?

I can't see the adoption agency accepting a mother that goes out at night and takes her clothes off in front of strangers.

See! I'm saying it now. The very concept I've argued against all my life – even I'm believing it now. Nudity does not make me an unfit mother. The opposite – it's a steady job, with a steady income.

We'll see. I need to get a few months under my belt first. My second job needs to be carefully considered. Perhaps the University thing may give me credibility, especially if I can prove I've achieved something with a degree, or even a certificate.

I suppose it's like going legitimate after all these years. Jeremy has a suitable job, I'm sure. It'll be up to me to prove I could make a good mother.

We'll see.

I don't like the poetry. There's a lot of it in English literature. When I say I don't like it, I don't ever understand it. If you don't understand something, you can never appreciate it, can you?

I mean...."I wandered lonely, as a cloud...." What does that mean? If you live in England you know clouds are never lonely, there are thousands of them, mostly full of rain.

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays
many parts, his acts being seven ages."

Now, I can relate to that, sort of. It's something I have experienced, you see. The man of many parts bit. Except that I'm a woman, but you know what I mean.

The entrances and exits. I do that here on my own stage. I come on and I go off. Sometimes to applause. Not very often and not recently, but it has happened.

As to meaning merely players, that mean fate, doesn't it. We're all in the hands of fate. A vast game is being played by the Gods and we're merely players, or pawns.

I certainly feel like that. To be offered the chance of a baby and then have it snatched away, how much more of a pawn could I be in that scene?

Again, you see...I don't understand Shakespeare. The flowery words of yesteryear do not strike any resonance in today's world. Sure, for the pure aspect of only poetry, there is a rhythm and style, but as far as relating to the here and now. I just don't have the time to disconnect from my tight reality to absorb the imagery. Perhaps one day.

Ten minutes to go and I can go home.

EDITED