

FOR WHEN SHE COMES

A three-minute monologue

By JANE CAFARELLA

Drama

Catherine's monologue from the play *e-baby*

CATHERINE, an Australian expat lawyer living in London, sits alone late at night, examining a box of infants' clothes. She selects one tiny dress and holds it to her face and inhales, telling the child she longs for what she can't yet tell her husband.

Sandalwood...for the moths.

I bought this for you a few years ago now.

I haven't shown Daddy.

It's a private thing.

I'd been to see a work friend who'd just had a baby and she let me hold him while she went to the loo.

Beat.

It happens every time...I find myself feeling things...things I can't describe.

She inhales the scent of the dress again.

I remember reading about a mother who'd lost a child.

A motorcyclist knocked the little girl off her bike. She was only eight.

By the time she got to the hospital the child was dead.

The mother used to go to the little girl's wardrobe and smell her clothes...just to inhale her scent.

She puts the dress down carefully, reverently.

One good thing about growing older – nobody invites you to baby showers anymore.

Sometimes I just didn't go. Made some excuse about work.

Mimics

"You career girls! You'd better watch out or you'll leave your run too late."

"Oh, you and Harry are so good with kids, Catherine. You should have some of your own!"

"Okay Mum, just popping down to Harrod's to pick up some kids!"

"Oh no...you should to go Marks and Spencer's. They've got them on special there!"

There's always some jerk: "Well, if you need any help..."

Eighteen IVF cycles over 11 years, in five different countries!

I lose my memory. I'm exhausted.

Not as...capable...

All those needles!

She picks up the infant dress again, caressing it tenderly.

But there are other women who can help...who can carry you.

I haven't explained it to Daddy yet.

Our bun...her oven.

Fondling the dress

Baby clothes never really go out of fashion.

She sighs. A noise? She stops and listens. No one's there.

Mum says it's the silence you notice when your kids leave home.

There's silence when they never arrive, too.

She inhales the scent of the dress once more.

Wistfully – then passionately.

One day this will smell of vomit and pooh and talcum powder and I'll be sick of washing it, and when you're too big for it, I'll put it back in the box, and when you're a teenager, I'll take it out and show you and say, "Look how tiny you were!"

And you'll say, "Aw, Mum – I can't believe you kept that!"

336 words

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