

BABY KINTYRE
A CBC Radio Opera Serial
EPISODE TWO: HOW SWEET THE SOUND

CHARACTERS

Mary, a radio producer (non-singing)

John, an investigative reporter (non-singing)

Young Rita, age 10 (child soprano)

Wesely, Rita's Uncle (baritone)

Della, Rita's Aunt (soprano)

(Late summer, 2007/ John, an investigative reporter and Mary, a radio producer, have travelled to Medina, New York. They have worked tirelessly for the last month to uncover the identity of the mummified baby found at 29 Kintyre Ave. While that information remains elusive, they have managed to track down the sole surviving resident of the house from the twenties, when the baby was concealed. This is Rita Rich, a ninety-one year old who lived at the house as a child. With an underscore of musical themes from the opera, John and Mary prepare to begin the interview.)

John: *(spoken)* Yeah, this woman, Rita was actually ten years old in 1925. It was the floor of her bedroom where the contractor found the baby.

Mary: You're kidding. How did you find her?

John: Toronto records, mostly – birth and death announcements. That and a phone call from her relatives in Prince Edward County...told me she was down here in a senior's residence in Medina.

Mary: So does she know anything?

John: We should all be lucky enough to have this woman's memory, Mary. When I talked to her on the phone, she remembered the two phone numbers she had as a sixteen-year-old. If she knows anything about the baby, we'll know it, too.

Mary: All right, let's do it.

(The scene changes to a room in the Medina seniors' residence.)

John: So nice to finally meet you in person, Rita.

Mary: We're recording.

John: Just to set this up, I'm John, an investigative reporter. This is Mary, she's a producer with CBC Radio. She's making a documentary about the mummified baby.

Rita: (some pre-recorded response.)

Mary: Hello, Rita. Now we know you were sent to live with your Uncle Wesley and Aunt Della after your mother died. Can you tell us about when you first arrived at Kintyre? Describe it for us...paint a picture.

(Rita begins to talk about the house at 29 Kintyre. As she speaks, we hear the Young Rita singing in counterpoint to her words. The scene shifts back to the nineteen twenties as John, Mary and Rita fade into the future.)

Young Rita: What a lovely house you have,
Uncle Wesley.
I like your peach tree,
it looks so ripe...
for climbing!

(Wesley chuckles.)

And the hollyhocks stand tall,
for my arrival.
I'll call them my soldiers.
Mommy must have loved to visit here.

Wesley: We will miss your mother, Rita.

Young Rita: What a lovely house you have.
My favourite colour's yellow,
and the painting is so neat and spiffy,
You must be a very fine man,
Uncle Wesley.

Wesley: *(still chuckling)* That's kind of you to say, Rita,
you should tell that to your aunt.

Young Rita: I hope I'm not a burden here,
and I'll try not to be a pest.
Do you think that I'll be happy here,
Uncle Wesley?

Wesley: Oh, Rita, darling,
we're overjoyed to have you here.
There's nothing like a little girl

to brighten up a home.

When your daddy gets his barbershop
up and on it's feet,
then you will be with him.
But until then,
you'll bless this house,
and we will thank our lucky stars
that Ritzy Rita came into our lives.

Rita: *(giggling)* Ritzy Rita?

Wesley: Po-si-tute-ly!

(They both laugh.)

Wesley: Now, Rita. Don't be put off by your Aunt Della. She's a bit reserved, a little bit prudish, but you won't find a better woman anywhere.

Rita: I understand, Uncle Wesley.

Wesley: Well, then. Let's get a wiggle on.

Rita: *(giggling)* Wiggle on.

(Wesley and Rita climb the front steps and open the front door. Della is waiting for them.)

Wesley: Della, dear, I found this little ragamuffin on the street. Thought she looked cute so I brought her home.

Della: Oh, Wesley, stop your foolishness. *(to Rita)* Hello, Rita. My, my, I haven't seen you since you were a baby. You have grown into quite a little lady.

Rita: Thank you, Aunt Della.

Della: And so polite. You'll get along just fine here, Rita.
I always wanted a child of my own?

Rita: Why don't you have any kids?

Wesley: Rita, no, better not...

Della: No, it is fine, Wesley.
Rita, sometimes the Lord giveth,

and sometimes He taketh away.
It is not for us to question.
Some women are just not meant to be mothers.
Isn't that right, Wesley?

Wesley: Uh...yeah. That's right.

Della: Do you understand, Rita?

Rita: I think so.

Della: *(becoming more cheerful)* Wonderful. Wesley, please show Rita her room. Have you fixed that squeaky floorboard yet?

Wesley: *(slightly annoyed)* The floorboards are fine, Della. Just forget about it.

Della: We are really very happy that you are here, darling.

Rita: I'm happy, too.

Wesley: So come on Ritzy Rita, let me show you the Penthouse Suite.

(The scene switches to Rita's room in the attic.)

Rita: Uncle Wesley.
Is this for me?
There's a shelf for all my dolls.

Wesley: We'll see you at supper, sweetheart.

Rita: Thank you.

(Wesley exits, closing the door behind him. Rita opens her suitcase and begins to unpack her dolls.)

Rita: Oh, my little dollies,
welcome to your new home.
All my little babies in a row.
I'm so sorry we had to move,
but the Lord giveth and the He taketh away.

(She steps on the squeaky floorboard and giggles.)

Rita: There is a squeaky floorboard.

(She squeaks it again.)

Listen, my babies, *(squeak)*
the floor is trying to talk to us? *(squeak, squeak)*
Hello floor, how do you do?
I wonder what the floor is trying to tell us?
(whispered) Maybe it's a secret.

(She continues to squeak the floor and giggle as the music fades.)

END OF EPISODE TWO