Poem deals with Kay meeting her birth mother for 1st time.
* Symbol of orchid - a gift from her mother - portrays difficulties in their relationship.
* 2 line stanzas create sense of coming together as the 2 women unite.

Keeping Orchids

The orchids my mother gave me when we first met are still alive, twelve days later. Although some of the buds remain closed as secrets. Twice since I carried them back, like a baby in a shawl, from her train station to mine, then home. Twice since then the whole glass carafe has crashed falling over, unprovoked, soaking my chest of drawers. All the broken waters. I have rearranged the upset orchids with troubled hands. Even after that the closed ones did not open out. The skin shut like an eye in the dark: the closed lid.

Twelve days later, my mother's hands are all I have.

Her voice is fading fast. Even her voice rushes through a tunnel the other way from home.

I close my eyes and try to remember exactly: a paisley pattern scarf, a brooch, a navy coat.

A digital watch her daughter was wearing when she died. Now they hang their heads.

and suddenly grow old – the proof of meeting. Still, her hands, awkward and hard to hold

fold and unfold a green carrier bag as she tells the story of her life. Compressed. Airtight.

A sad square, then a crumpled shape. A bag of tricks. Her secret life – a hidden album, a box of love letters.

A door opens and closes. Time is outside waiting. I catch the draught in my winter room.

Airlocks keep the cold air out. Boiling water makes flowers live longer. So does cutting the stems with a sharp knife.

Jackie Kay

This an “cutting stems” both harsh actions but keep flowers alive - decision to give up baby was right thing to do?