

Annie Boggis Act 2 Scene 5

SARAH HARDING's back yard. She is pegging out washing.

Offstage ANNIE calls for her son. She gives the customary loud note on the first syllable, followed by a long drawn out falsetto scream on the second:

ANNIE (of): Re-hhhaggeee! Re-hhhgggeeee!

She enters and repeats the cry. She is in her own back yard next door

SARAH. Oh please Annie don't. . . pleased don't . . .

ANNIE. He's not hiding in your yard is he?

SARAH. No. He isn't

ANNIE. I bet he is.

SARAH. I tell you he isn't.

ANNIE. He'd better show himself quick. I want him!

SARAH. Yes, I heard you say so. Well I haven't seen him.

ANNIE. Right. Re-hhhgggeeee!

SARAH. Oh come on round and look if you're that suspicious.

ANNIE. I'll take your word for it . . .

SARAH. Come round! Back gate's open . . . come and look.

ANNIE moves round to her. She looks in again.

ANNIE. Well where is he then?

SARAH. I don't know. Is he with Eva at the stall?

ANNIE. Eeeee-waahhhh!

SARAH. Give over! My head's like suet pudding.

ANNIE. And whose fault is that?

SARAH. That beer was off. I swear it was. It looked a bit cloudy from the start. He's no right serving it in that condition. I feel like my father when mother used to say: 'put your head under the tap, Bernard, your eyes re like piss-holes in the snow'.

REGGIE sneaks quietly on stage, sidling towards safety.

ANNIE. There! There you are! Come round here. Come into Mrs Harding's.

SARAH. Annie, I've got to do this . . .

ANNIE. It won't take a moment. Come on. I'll not keep t e l l i n g y o u . . .

REGGIE moves a little closer.

Yes, I'm not surprised you keep your distance you devil The bobby's been at the door. Bobby Machin's been round for you. They'll have you in the cells . . . locked up in the dark with nowt to eat . . . they will!

SARAH. What's he done then?

ANNIE. He was caught learning a gang of the little ones how to fish in the canal.

SARAH. Is that all? I'm astonished Bobby Machin said a word then. If he catches them he usually passes his helmet round for ha'pennies.

ANNIE. I'm trying to learn him to act right! Anyway it wasn't all. . . was it you filthy animal? See . . . he thought I wouldn't know the rest. Bobby Machin told me. He was getting those little children . . . those little nine year olds . . . oooh you beast . . . getting them to repeat e rhyme after him. Look at him. He knows what I'm talking about.

SARAH. Surely it's not the end of the world . . .

ANNIE. You can hear it. Because he's going to say it. He's going to stand there till he's said it out loud. You dirty minded mongrel . . . you're going to say it in front of Mrs Harding, now!

SARAH. I'm sure I don't want to listen . . .

ANNIE. And just the first bit . . . d'you hear? Just the first bit.

Say it. Say it.

REGGIE (mumbles): I wish I was a little mouse . . .

ANNIE. Louder!

REGGIE. I wish I was a little mouse . . .

ANNIE. And the next bit. . .

REGGIE. To run up mother's clothes . . .

ANNIE. That's it! No more!

REGGIE. And see the hairy tunnel . . .

ANNIE. Enough!

REGGIE. Where dadder's chuff-chuff goes!

She runs at him to take a swipe but REGGIE is off.

ANNIE. I said enough! (To SARAH:) I only meant you to hear the first bit. (After REGGIE:) You wait! You wait!

SARAH. It's a long time since I heard that one.

ANNIE. You've heard it?

SARAH. And so have you.

ANNIE. I have never listened to that sort of thing in my life!

SARAH. Haven't you? I used to wring it out of my brothers. All them songs they used to start off and not finish. I used to shut them in the bedroom till they told me.

ANNIE. Oh what I have to contend with! And if Arthur was here all he'd say is: 'Follow Jesus What good's that to kids?'

SARAH. Well, if we all followed Jesus we wouldn't have any kids.

ANNIE. What?

SARAH. He didn't did he? None that they mention in the Bible anyway,

ANNIE is shocked but has to laugh.

That's better.

ANNIE. Only you could say that!

SARAH. I dare the thunderbolt I do.

ANNIE. If I'd known what was going to happen in my life. I know what people think about me. I'm weary. I'm weary of it all.