

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Lilies of the Paddock

by Andrea Lemon

EXTRACT

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CHARACTERS

- LIL: Mid 50's. Warm woman. Born, raised and married into the land. Generally conservative but with a big sense of humour, and capable of coming out with surprising statements. Family is her first concern.
- KATE: Late 20's. Lil's daughter. Born and raised on the land, but has been away for some years. A blunt woman, with radical leanings and a generous nature.
- ANNIE: Mid 20's. Lil's daughter-in-law. Born and raised in the city. Has married into the land. A gentle woman. Eager to fit in, but fiercely defensive of her rights and her family.
- RON: Late 50's. Lil's husband. Born and raised on the land. Conservative. Wry sense of humour. Quietly enjoys being the centre of attention.
- JACK: Early 30's. Lil's son. Annie's husband. Born, raised and inherited the land. A more modern man than his father; he knows the politics and tries..but doesn't always succeed.
- TOM: 14 months. Annie and Jack's son.

RENE: Mid 50's. The MC of the show. Frustrated actress. Very community minded. An organizer.

In the original production the actress who played RENE also played a number of story-telling roles:

BESS

BETTY

MARY

MARCE

DOT

JOAN

HILDA

MARJ

The actress who played LIL also played:

LEX

JEAN

The actress who played KATE also played:

SHEILA

The actor who played RON also played:

JACK

TOM

The action of the play takes place at a local community concert.

1.

LILIES OF THE PADDOCK

ACT 1. SC 1. RENE'S STORY.

AS THE LIGHTS GO DOWN, RENE ENTERS AREA 1, DRAGGING A VACCUUM CLEANER. SHE IS DRESSED TO THE NINES.

RENE: Hello everyone..and welcome to Lilies of the Paddock. It's just marvellous to see so many people here tonight, supporting the girls. Babs! How's the new baby? Shirley..Max! Goodness, everyone's here tonight! It's just wonderful. Because tonight is the girls' night. We've taken time off from the kids and the cooking to put together a beaut show. And a big warm thanks to all the hubbies who have been so helpful and uncomplaining when they've had to put the dinner on! SHE LOOKS AT THE TABLE, AREA 2, WHICH IS EMPTY.

Has anyone seen Lil and Annie..and Kate?

GRUNTS FROM BACKSTAGE.

Oh..they're getting ready for the first number, of course! Silly me. Here I am, meant to be hostessing the evening, and I don't even know who's doing what. But don't you worry.. I've got the running order taped to the back of my vaccuum cleaner.

SHE BEGINS TO BATTLE WITH THE VACCUUM CLEANER IN THE HOPES OF GETTING SOME CLEANING DONE

Just a bit of cleaning up left to do. Time was at a premium, and we ran out. Yes..so we've got songs for you tonight, and I'll be telling some stories..all about the girls..put together by the girls.

SHE IS HAVING DIFFICULTY PUTTING THE VACCUUM CLEANER TOGETHER

Actually, I feel terribly privileged to have been asked to hostess this evening, because I'm not a bona fide local..as I guess you all know! I mean, I see myself as a local..but nobody else does! I mean, I've been here twenty-five years now..and I figure I've done my apprenticeship. But everyone says you have to be born here to be a real local.

SHE HAS HAD SOME DIFFICULTY FINDING THE 'ON' SWITCH, BUT FINALLY STARTS TO VACCUUM

I remember when I first came here as a young bride, fresh from the city, they'd say to me, "We're starting crutching next week, Rene". Well..I was much too frightened to ask what they meant. I never dreamt it had anything to do with sheep! (she roars with laughter)

Oh god! There were alot of things I had to get used to moving to the country..like always worrying about bushfires, and droughts, and floods. But the biggest thing I had to get used to was having my husband home every day for lunch!

Honestly..I make a dreadful farmer's wife. Me cook!? I've only just mastered the art of scones! So the major obstacle I had to overcome was dinner parties. The first one I held..oh..I invited fourty people! Talk about chopping your nose off before you can walk! Anyway, Joe said, "No worries. We'll just kill a few chooks." A few chooks! There were twelve of them! I was horrified. I'd never killed a thing in my life. Poor little darlings. I made sure Joe did the dirty work. But I had to pluck them, didn't I? There were feathers and insides from the chook shed to the front door. And they stuck to my scuffs something awful!

SHE HAS TAKEN THE BRUSH END OFF THE VACCUUM CLEANER AND IT ACCIDENTLY SUCKS HER CHIFFON SCARF INTO ITS BELLY. SHE PROCEEDS TO DISEMBOWELL THE VACCUUM.

Ah dear..I do feel a bit isolated here at times. I think the theatre is what I miss the most..so one has to make one's own! And then there's always some committee or other wanting someone to do something. And that's usually me. If I'm not child-bearing, I'm office-bearing! (she roars)

And the kids love it here. Especially my daughter. She loves the wide open spaces. Looking out on greenery, she says. Every time she comes home she says, "wish I could stay here". But that could never happen. The boys will stay and work the farm. But the girls have to fly the nest.

SHE HAS FINISHED THE VACCUUMING, AND PACKS IT AWAY

Are you ready then Ron?

RON ENTERS, LOOKING A LITTLE EMBARRASSED, AND MOVES TO THE PIANO. RENE MOVES TO THE DRUM KIT.

Beaut. Then I'd like to introduce the first song. It's called "Bloody Good Scones and Tea".

SHE COUNTS IN THE SONG. THE OTHERS ENTER WITH THE MUSIC, WEARING GUMBOOTS, AND WITH TEAPOTS, TEACUPS, PLATES OF SCONES AND RUBBER GLOVES ON THEIR HEADS:

"BLOODY GOOD SCONES AND TEA"

1. A new day is just beginning on the farm
 The cows to milk
 The chooks to feed
 The dogs to tell to get away back.
 A coupla hours down the shed and she'll be right mate
 We'll have brekky
 A coupla bits of toast, some scrambled eggs and a cup of tea.
 "I carted 600 bales before breakfast this morning"
 Oh get away back!

2. How about we go and do some fencing
 We can be back in time for morning tea
 And then we'll go and spray some weeds.
 Not like some folks I know
 Whose motto is give weeds a go
 Never chopped a thistle or pulled ragwort in their lives.
 "The next door neighbour's got enough blackberries on his
 farm to keep him in jam forever"
 Oh get away back!

CHORUS Mum makes bloody good scones and tea
 Yes mum she makes bloody good scones and tea.

3. What's for lunch mum
 Cold meat and salad love
 Beauty mate that's last night's tea
 Switch it onto the ABC.
 Just in time, market report

Lambs are up and spuds are down

After lunch I'll go to town, I'll pay the bills and do
the rounds.

"The next door neighbour subdivided his farm and he got
200,000 for the lot!"

Oh get away back!

4. An afternoon is just beginning on the farm

There's still so much we have to do

And visitors arrive at two.

Rinse the vat, collect the eggs

Mend the holey trouser leg.

Who's arrived? It's Jean and Gordon.

Heat the scones and put the tea on.

"Visitors always know the right time to arrive"

Afternoon tea time!

CHORUS

TAP BREAK

5. Milk again then time for tea

Mum's cooked a roast for me

The tele's on, we watch news hour.

The beans and peas and spuds are ours.

What's for dessert? Trifle and custard.

Oh mum you know we hate custard

Then we'll have a cup of tea and do the dishes straight away.

"By the way mum..what did you do today.."

MUM: Well..I got up at 5.30, lit the stove, made sure the kitten wasn't locked in the back porch, got the old man a cup of tea, put the washing on, woke the kids up, went to let the chooks out, started the machines off, fed the dog, checked the washing, woke the kids up again, made breakfast, thought about standing on my head, hung the washing out, made morning tea for the workers, got lunch ready, watered the veges, put lunch on, wrote out the shopping list, mended the hole in your trousers, and vaccuumed the carpet, picked up the mess you left before the visitors arrived, fished the cat out of the vat before the tanker arrived, gave Jean and Gordon a cup of tea, showed them around the garden, then wrote out the jam recipe for Jean, (SHE IS SPEEDING UP AND THE OTHERS ARE CLOSING IN ON HER) put my boots on and started the poddies off, then went to pick up the kids from the school bus, put tea on, gave the cat a kick in the ribs for getting under my feet, sat down made a cup of tea...
 PAUSE..

CHORUS Mum makes bloody good scones and tea
 Yes mum she makes bloody good scones and tea
 Thanks mum..thanks mum..yeh thanks mum..
 MOOO

ACT 1.SC 2. THE GOOSE AND THE BABY.

WHEN THE SONG FINISHES THEY ALL TAKE A BOW AND BEGIN TO SHED THEIR VARIOUS INSTRUMENTS AND COSTUMES. KATE, ANNIE AND LIL THEN MOVE THROUGH THE AUDIENCE TO AREA 2, CHATTING EXCITEDLY ON THE WAY. WHEN THEY ARRIVE AT THE TABLE, THEY DRAG OFF THEIR GUMBOOTS, KATE GIVING LIL A HAND WITH HERS. LIL AND ANNIE UNPACK THEIR SUPPER: A THERMOS, CUPS, MILK ETC. KATE SIMPLY SITS AND ROLLS HERSELF A CIGARETTE.

ANNIE: I don't know how anyone could do that for a living!
 LIL: You did fine Annie. Now that Rene's seen what you can do, she'll have you in her clutches for the next twenty years!

KATE: God forbid!

LIL: Kate, give me a hand with these boots will you?

ANNIE: I haven't done anything like this for about twelve years.

KATE: What was the last thing you did?

ANNIE: The King and I.

LIL: What did you play?

ANNIE: I was a concubine.

LIL: What did your mother say?

ANNIE: Not much! (they laugh)

ANNIE DIVES INTO THE BASKET AND PULLS OUT A COVERED PLATE.

AS SHE WHIPS OFF THE TEA TOWELL:

ANNIE: Surprise, surprise!

SHE REVEALS A PLATE OF SCONES.

KATE: Oh, it's bloody tea and scones. Perfect! Annie you know the right dish for every occasion, don't you?

ANNIE: I don't know about that..

KATE: (jokes knowingly) What, haven't cooked your goose yet?

ANNIE: (mortified) Oh..not the goose!

LIL: Are you still putting that off?

ANNIE: Trying to forget about it.

KATE: And the goose is getting fatter and fatter..

ANNIE: It eats more than Jack.

KATE: That's impossible. My brother's a pig.

LIL: You'll just have to do it Annie.

ANNIE: Why doesn't Jack?

KATE: He's initiating you into the wonders of country life.

ANNIE: But even if I could start with a very small chook it might help.

KATE: Ah no..it's the deep end or nothing.

LIL: That's right.

KATE: Hey, maybe Tom could do it.

LIL: The child is only fourteen months old..

KATE: Well..you could always throw him at the goose with a knife in his hand!

LIL: Kate!

ANNIE: That's not exactly my idea of good child-raising.

KATE: It was a joke..

LIL: It's not a nice business though, is it?

ANNIE: I really don't think I can do it.

LIL: I remember one time when Ron's cousin was up..and he'd shoot anything that moved..

KATE: He'd try to..

LIL: Well, he wasn't very popular up here. Anyway..he shot a black swan.

ANNIE: Oh no..

LIL: These two swans had been on the lagoon, you see. And he proudly brought this carcass in, and I looked at it, and I