

Hanging a play for radio

By Kay Adshead

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Cast

Annie Small	Woman in her nineties
Annie Smart	Woman in her forties
Annie Sharp	Girl of sixteen
Young Annie Small	Girl of sixteen
Little Annie Sharp	Precociously bright girl of seven
The Hanging Man is	
Robbie	
David	
Patrick	

All other parts to be played by the company.

Scene 1

In the far distance a saxophone...it travels closer and closer before it is swallowed by

sound picture – old peoples home, heard slightly in distort, breakfast being served, newspapers handed out, the clatter of plates, cutlery, the clamour of voices.

It fades to background.

In foreground a canary sings in a cage.

Annie Small
(inner voice, reading slowly)

A man,

as yet...
unidentified,

with no
distinguishing
features

was found

Annie Small, Annie Smart, Annie Sharp

Hanging...

Sound picture changes to inside a train. Canary continues to sing.

Annie Smart
From a tree

by a railway line

a spot
notorious

Annie Smart, Annie Sharp
(Voices mix.)
as a meeting place
for courting couples

Sound picture changes to a wood. Canary continues to sing.

Annie Sharp
The exact
time
of death
is not known

(Saxophone.)
(In there separate imaginings)

Annie Small
I can see him

Annie Smart
the shadow of him,

Annie Sharp
dangling
against
a screaming moon.

Annie Small
He swings
now and then

Annie Sharp
like
a
circus acrobat,

Annie Small
the wind
makes the branches
bob

Annie Smart
and
the dirty rope
twists.

Annie Small
The old tree groans.

Annie Sharp
He scares
away
the crows

Annie Small
but a squirrel
hides nuts
in his patch pocket

Annie Sharp
a ladybird
rests
on his blue lips

Annie Smart
chrysalis
in his
eyelids.

Annie Small, Annie Smart, Annie Sharp
(reading)
An appeal
has been launched
to establish
his identity

(Pause. They all gasp.)

Annie Small
My lover!

Annie Smart
My son!

Annie Sharp
My brother!

Annie Small
Robbie!

Annie Smart
David

Annie Sharp
Patrick!

The Hanging Man

Annie Small, Annie Smart, Annie Sharp
Is Mine!

Scene 2

Saxophone – wood, early evening, mid summer.

Young Annie Small
There are two moons!

Old Annie Small
She's me.
I'm sixteen

Young Annie Small
Look -!

Old Annie Small
through
the Giant oak,

the Moon
and it's ghost

Robbie
There's more
than two,

every planet
has a moon,

Jupiter
has Ganymede
and Callisto

Mars
Phoebus and Daimios

Saturn's
largest moon
is Titan.

There might
be a
million moons

bibbing and bobbing
In the Milky Way

we just
can't see.

Old Annie Small

I knew
there was
one moon!

But

that night
it had
a ghost!

Robbie

How
do you know
this place?

Young Annie Small

Everyone knows
The Giant Oak

in Waiting Wood,
it's secret

(he chuckles)

Old Annie Small

His laughing
hurt me

Robbie

Come here!

(slight pause)

You're not
a human girl
at all;

your bones
are too small,

You're an elf.

Old Annie Small

(whisper)
Earth kisses

Young Annie Small

You mustn't...

Robbie

What?

Young Annie Small

(whisper)
Your tongue

Robbie

(tenderly)

Elf lips...

elf ears...

elf eyes...

Horsehair!

Young Annie

(upset)

No

Robbie

Let me

untie it

then

(he does so)

Oh!

Young Annie Small

What
are you doing?

Robbie

Smelling you

(A train rumbles by)

Old Annie Small

It was
mid summer,
I could smell
wild rose,
honeysuckle,
the soft
dry earth,
and his
sweet
dampness

Robbie

Elves
have three nipples.

Old Annie Small

To prove,
he had
to take
a peek

Young Annie Small

Don't cry

Robbie

You are so...
strong.

Old Annie Small

He suckled me
as if
he had
the right.

I could count
his eyelashes,
silky
and
vermilion.

His mouth
astonished.

Robbie

Don't stop me

Don't look away

Old Annie Small

Elf slime
between my thighs,

anyway,

that wetness
wasn't
human!

Robbie

Has no one
touched you there
before?

Have you
touched yourself?

Old Annie Small

He knelt.
I was
in the embrace

of the
Giant oak.

It's hundred
leafy arms
were squeezing
my soul

out,
up,
into the night
in warm breath,

past
the writhing torso
of the oak,

the panting clouds,

up to the Moon's
vanished ghost.

I let him
lap.

He might have been
a gentle deer
with that auburn hair.

Shame
was left behind,
with the
chamber pots

Robbie
I won't hurt you

(Saxophone)

Scene 3

You think
I mean
to let
some Posh Get
with a twiddle tash
and a turd for a brain

give me
orders!

Never again!

"Never mind
you leave
your boot mark
on your dead chums face"

What's left
of it.

Piggy's legs
wouldn't go,
couldn't,
he shook
from head
to toe.

"Advance soldier"
and twice more
then,
as an example_
a bullet
between his eyes,
like a dog.

Old Annie Small
Afterwards
sharing a Weights
in the dappled moonlight

Robbie
I came
eyeball
to
eyeball
with a Kraut,

just him
and me,

both lost
in the
pissing rain,

our feet
sinking slowly
into crap,

trying
not to advance.

We stood
it seemed
for Eternity

rifle but
to rifle

And
I could hear
some Kraut twat
shout

"Advance! Advance"
only in Kraut,

and in that
moment
we shared
a look,

poor brothers both
defying orders,
choosing
to spare
each other's
miserable life.

Revolution!
Hands across Nations!
Workers hands!

The way
to change
the world!

Old Annie
For me
the world
had changed

but
by his tenderness.

Robbie
The Ruskies
got it right

and the
Frogs
before them

Start
with the King
and Queen,
the courtiers
Earls and such,
and Generals,
all Knobs
who ponce off the poor

I'd build
a scaffold
in every Town
and hang
the soddin' lot!

Old Annie Small
His eyes
shone
like an animal
in the moonlight.

Robbie
Come away
with me?

Young Annie Small
Away?

Robbie
Yes,
the pisspots
won't miss you

Her Ladyship
can rake
her own
bedroom grate,

warm the pan,

stir laudanum
into his cocoa,

turn the mattress,

scrape cum
off her
crisp white
sheets

Come Away.

Young Annie Small
Where?

(a train thunders by)

Robbie
See that,

let's hop on

and find
ourselves
at

Newstart!

(he darts in and out of bushes...teasing)

or

(moving away laughing)

Equality for All!

(further)

or better still

Power to the People!

(he is laughing, breathless, running into the distance, shouting)

Tomorrow-
same time
and place!

Run away with me!

(from the far distance)

Run away,
Annie Small!

Scene 4

Old Annie Small

I didn't
think twice

Why would I?

What
would I leave
behind?

A shelf bed
in an attic,
a horsehair
blanket.

My life
could fit
in a
portmanteau

My savings
I kept
in the toe
of my stocking;

where
it made
a blister.

I
could be ready
for the revolution

in a
twinkling,

(very softly)

in

the twinkling
of an eye.

(Saxophone)

Scene 5

Old Annie Small

No Moon
yet

at
the Giant oak.

Eager oak.

Waiting for Robbie.

Early,

back
in threadbare brown,

cuffs too short
but the skirts length's
fine,

and good polished boots
I'd swiped!

And I thought
about my uniforms,
best black worsted
starched cuff and collars

hanging side by side
in the chambermaids closet

twin skins
of Annie Smalls'
old life,
made to measure
before the Revolution,
Meek and Mild

(Young Annie Small laughing. Soft wind through branches of the tree)

Young Annie Small

(to the tree)

Sounds like your singing

A hymn

Old Annie Small

And I
imagined myself

Robbie's bride
under it's
Cathedral branches

Looking up

hugging its
warm trunk,
the altar,
where lovers
carve their hearts
and their initials

and the tree moss
grows soft
against my cheek

and a thousand
flowery
leaf hands
scatter
their confetti
whispering

"Up, up.
Come up
to meet
the Cardinal Moon."

And the
ecstatic
hour passed.

(Saxophone)

Scene 6

Young Annie Small
(whispering)
Robbie?

Old Annie Small
He's late,

one moon,
a crescent,
dodging cloud.

It's dark
and a cool wind
blows

Young Annie Small
Robbie?

Old Annie Small

Never late.
Never.
Not in a month
of moonlit nights,

but that
was before...
the Revolution.

Kept in?

Who would dare?

An accident!

A brawl,
a hit to the head,
a fall!

Young Annie Small
(to herself)

No! Please No!
Robbie?

Old Annie Small
No good
going anywhere,

we could
miss
each other,

the hawthorn
and the blackberry
grow so thick,

And
you can't see
the road,

can't see
the house

only
high up
the railway line

and the thundering train.

Young Annie Small
Oh, Robbie;
my hearts
turning
to stone.

Old Annie Small
The foxes came

and glowered,
they wanted
to cock their legs
against the tree,

and the vixen,
wanting to scratch
her back,
on the knotty bark,

and her cubs
wanting to frolic
in the bower

and the hedgehog,
the rabbit,
the squirrels
and the mice

(a train pounds by)

The soldier beetles,
the leatherbacks,
woodlice
and the grubs

all came.

And at last

came...

the sun!

Young Annie Small
(soft, distanced, changed)

I can't
go back,
I pinched
their bloody boots,

they'll lock
me up.

I'll stay
here,

under
The Giant oak,
very quietly,
no one
will see,
curl up,

and try to die.

Old Annie Small

He'd been
on one
of those trains
I bet

stowed away
in the coal hole

on his
way
to
the Revolution

without
me,

somewhere
or
other

(Saxophone)

Scene 7

Old Annie Small

I waited
another night,

the moon
was full
and ripe,

stripped naked
and danced
the Fandango
with a
Roebuck
deer,

drank dew
ate oak leaves,

climbed
the muscly branches,
one knotty little arm
over brown leg,

blood on the bark;

and
watched the sun
rise,
straddled
a far reaching
oaky limb,

bobbing
over

the myrtle
and the pear

sparrows
in my hair,

squirrels
at my toes-

The Giant Oaks Bride,

before
getting dressed,
and walking
back to...
the Big House.

(Saxophone)

Her Ladyship

Well,
send her down
to the scullery
then.

Old Annie Small

(a whisper)

The last
scullery maid
came
to a sticky end
at Bridesby Fair.

No surprises there.

Her Ladyship

Really,
servants
do love
to dramatise,
it's because
there's nothing
going on
in there
dreary
little lives.

(trundling freight train)

Old Annie Small

No revolution
for me Robbie,

scullery maid
to laundry hand
to kitchen maid

and then
a kitchen maid
all my days.

No more kisses,

only you Robbie,
and the soft eyed
deer

(A train goes into a tunnel)

Young Annie Small
Sometimes
I forget
which is
which.

(It lets of a high-pitched whistle)

Scene 8

Sound picture- back in council home, the trains whistle becomes a scream of rage, a flurry of background activity, carers being called, injections ordered etc.

Old Annie Small
(in a fury)
Why?
Why say
to run away?

Voice 1
What's the matter,
Miss Small?

Old Annie Small
He could
have had me
anyway

Voice 1
Be a good girl

Old Annie Small
Moist
moonlit nights
under
The Giant oak

till I was ruined

Voice 1
Not like you
to make a fuss

Old Annie Small
...and hung myself,

Old Annie Small

Like
rotten fruit

(Sound change-inside a train)

starting to smell

starting to smell
in the sun

Starting to
attract the flies

Scene 9

(Mobile phone rings)

Annie Smart

(brusque, into phone)
Yes?

(slight pause)

He'll have
to wait.

Get out the china, Stef,
and the best green tea

Ask about his wife

Annie Smarts inner voice

I'm nicely turned out

Annie Smart

He won't catch breath

Annie Smarts inner voice

This season's hair

Annie Smart

Or last year's legal fees
that's another one
he tries on me

Annie Smarts inner voice

Cunning make up.
Frosted.
Frosty!

Annie Smart

Distract him
with a Selfridges
digestive

Annie Smarts inner voice

Pant suit by Armani

Annie Smart
Or get your tits out!

Annie Smarts inner voice
Silk shirt, M&S

Annie Smart
anything!

Annie Smarts inner voice
Shoes and bag,
Versace
a tad racier
than you'd expect

Briefcase, a present,
Obligatory laptop

Annie Smart
(impressed)
Really?
I'm curious
I can't fit
her in
before the 6th

but pencil in
the little witch,

send her
a fruit basket,

it wouldn't hurt
to have her business.

Annie Smarts inner voice
Husband in finance,
rock solid marriage
rural family home,
with paddock.
Two daughters,
Rosalind and Caron,
in famously exclusive
private school,
modern motto
"Excel Everyone (with dosh)".
A Porsche for fun,
minimalist City flat
thriving law businesses

Annie Smart LLC MA BAL

Making a fortune
out of
the high moral ground

Reputations
careless words
overheard and sold
to the newspapers.
Truth or lies?

Annie Smart
(into phone)
Let them dig,
sure
they'll hit shit

I've no
sympathy
with
the silly
bitch

Annie Smart inner voice

And most recently
a local council star
singled out
by Party Top Brass
for A Future!

A safe local seat,
and who knows?

(sounds of train)

(intense)
No! Don't.
No,
don't look today!

They'll have
cut him down
now anyway!

Coming up now,
the next stretch
of line,
past the cottages,
an incline
where the trees
thicken
and the land dips.

Don't look down!
Try not to!
Move away from the window.
Read the paper.
Fiddle with your rings,
your shoes,
your things.

Don't look!

Don't look!

Annie Smart

(into phone)

Well

I'll look into it

but tell them

it all

happened

so long ago,

there's not enough interest

to make it

worth our while

(train)

Annie Smarts inner voice

I've seen him

most days

most journeys

but

I first saw

the Hanging Man

twelve years ago

16th of Jan

I was

taking the train,

to the new offices

easy commuting

hoping to spend

more time

with my family

He'd have been

21 then

my son.

It was

his birthday

Scene 10

Panting, a Young Annie Smart is running through woodland. It's very early morning, pitch black, winter, she is in great pain.

Annie Smarts inner voice

Out of the house,

the click of the latch

makes it

turn in its sleep,

I hold my breath,

the night air stings

I'm running

over the misty fields
stumbling.-
a bloody knee,
trying to zig zag
down to
Waiting wood,
to the Giant Oak

Blazing shameless
and golden
under the autumn moonlight

(she arrives, the moaning increases)

Young Annie Smart
Oh. Oh.
Oh

Annie Smarts inner voice
The months-
Smock frocks
“You look like a hippy, poppett”

Turning the radio up
to vomit
“Annie, you’ll damage
your hearing
darling”

Never guessing-
“Annie doesn’t
like boys,”
their laughing

All that waiting,
till then
that night-
and the sudden
strange
and ancient pain.

Out of the dark
out of bed
a flood
between my legs

(Young Annie’s groaning intensifies)

Annie Smarts inner voice
(a whisper, quickly)
Started as a fumble
Gabby’s sisters 21st
we were in the back room
the kid’s room
lights off
brandy and babycham
playing darts.
Bull’s-eye!

A boy in a red jumper
who smelt of soap

Then home.
Told off
for giggling.

(Young Annie Smart panting)

I pull down
my pyjama bottoms
my back pressing
into the trunk,
the toothwort
and the fern,
knees up
and push,
toes bruising
the speckled
toadstool,
grunting,
the smell, damp
and female,

fists, grazing,
clenched teeth,
temples like
taut rope,
sweating
grunting
grinning,
old instincts
out of the night
under the moon

then

a cry
I can't
control!

(Young Annie Smart cries out)

A bloody bulge
between my legs

becomes a head.

A tiny body plops
onto the earth
like a landed fish
onto a riverbank.

No cry,
a ball of flesh
a bloody sticky mess.

Then
in a sudden moonbeam,
there
on the bed of rotting oak leaves

a perfect baby boy,
furled
bloody and waxy,

tiny hands and toes,
eyes closed,
as still
as marble.

Stone seconds
seem like hours

I cut
the umbilical cord
with mother's
kitchen scissors
expertly,
as practiced,
swaddle
the tiny animal thing
in my pyjama trousers.

It's hot.

Find the kindest bush
dense, low down,
without prickles,
glossy green leaves,

the scent of a
coming
winter
breaks my heart,

and push
the baby in
so it is
hidden from all eyes.

I call him

David

my David

Then, slowly, turn away

(Slow steps in undergrowth. A very faint, very weak, cry, - a mew, animal like. Footsteps stop.)

Annie Smart

No

No

My heart stops

my blood pounds
my scalp tingles
It can't be
I didn't
I couldn't hear

(More footsteps moving away, another fainter mew)

An animal maybe,
hedgehogs
mew like kittens,
or a stray
fox cub

*(Footsteps again moving off...pause...the faintest of cries then breath and frantic running
stumbling panting)*

I run,

(sound of thunder and lightning, torrential rain)

run away
from the cry,
the whole world
is sobbing
screaming;

twisting
through the weeping tangle
bleeding
bare legged,
cut feet,
slipping
on fallen leaves,
bumping
into the blackness
panting, moaning,

(she pants)

At last!
The house
At last!
I'm back
Am I?
Nearly back
to my old life

(the click of the latch)

My life before secrets

The latch
squeezed
then tip toe in.

Lock out
the night!

The cry!

The bloody scissors?

Wash them now?

Later!

Wrap them in kitchen towel

Mop between my legs,

The torrents
washed away
my blood.

Put the sopping tissue
in a plastic bag,
tie it tight
then in the bin

(A creaking stair)

Mother

Annie, darling?

(pause)

Young Annie Smart

I fancied a snack

(A laugh from her mother's bedroom, Young Annie Smart opens her bedroom door)

Annie Smarts inner voice

My bedroom-
everything the same,
but changed,

a strange smell,
a pool of water
on the floor-
mop it with
toilet roll,

the bloodied pyjama jacket-
wrapped
and ready for the bin.

(running water)

A discreet wash
so's no tell tale signs
on sheets.

TCP on scrapes;
trousers for the next few days.

Next morning
getting ready for school,
the shower,
like the storm,
won't wash

out of my head,
that cry.

(Sound of train)

Scene 11

Annie Smart

(into phone)

Darling

I forgot to tell you

Rosie

might need picking up

from the stables

but she'll ring.

(Pause-sound of train)

There's nothing in
we'll eat out sweetheart,

that's the best thing

Chez Nous of course,

Oh, I don't know,

do we need a reason?

(she laughs)

Because it's Monday

Because I love you.

Annie Smarts inner voice

(off the phone)

My perfect husband

My perfect children

My perfect job

A perfect life!

(chuntering train with squeaky wheels)

What happened?

No baby found

Days...

Weeks...

Not in the local paper

Months pass.

Years!

(the squeak of the wheels sound like a babies mew)

And

I hear the cry
often;

the same cry
in a restaurant
gossiping
over a late lunch,

I might turn

my head
and look

on a beach;
at the end
of a long drive,

or at night,
after love

But the years
become

Years and years.

Until you think,
did it ever really happen?

Did it?

Could it?

Then

a noose
round my heart

The Hanging Man

Am I
a murderess?

Or
worse

a mother
who kills
her own
defenceless child?

A monster!

What happened
in the minutes
after I turned and ran?

How could I?

How could I?

Scene 12

Little Annie Sharp (*seven years old*)

potato head
tall as a house
elephant feet
burps like thunder
smells like...?

sleet...?
peat...?
cake!

Annie Sharps inner voice

Chocolate cake!
Oh,
and
Forget-me-not
Eyes!

(Sound picture-outside, countryside, late afternoon, winter)

Little Annie Sharp

(after him, running, out of breath)

Can I come
Patrick?

Patrick

No

Little Annie Sharp

Why?
(she giggles)

Annie Sharp

Winter,
the air
cuts
like a knife,
scarf and hat
and woolly tights,
a coat,
bottle green
with a button missing

Patrick

(grinning)
You know why,
cheeky
little madam.

Little Annie Sharp

Who is she
this time?

Is it her
from number six
with the big bazookas?

Patrick

(teasing)
Could be.

Little Annie Sharp

She got them
for Christmas.
They came in

scented tissue paper,
with instructions

(Patrick laughs)

Is it
that redhead
from the offy?

Patrick
Don't tell me,
it's a wig

Little Annie Sharp
Can I come
half way?

Patrick
Half way
then home,
it's cold
enough
to snow

Little Annie
I'll race
all the way
so's not to meet
the boogie man

Annie Sharps inner voice
The boogie man
lived deep
in the woods
in the old railway sidings.
He ate raw rat
had blood
round his chops
and did rude things
to nasty brats
like me

Patrick
You're getting heavy
Annie Sharp

Annie Sharp inner voice
On my tall
brother's shoulders
I was
a seven year old
giant.

(softly)

I spy
with my
little eye.

H was for Horizon

Patrick
The further you walk
towards it,
the further away it gets.

Annie Sharp
A wonderful thing
it seemed

Patrick
The world is big,
I want to see
it all,
feel it
smell it.

I want
to bathe
in the Ganges,

under a hot
orange sunset.

To feel
the cool sand
of the Sahara
slip through
my fingers;
and smell
the night desert

To strike a light
on
The Great Wall
of China

To wait
for the moon
at
Machu Pichu

Little Annie Sharp
Don't you like
our hills,
Patrick?

Patrick
I want
mountains

Little Annie Sharp
What about
the little houses?

Patrick

Nosey
with their net
curtains

(they share a giggle)

Little Annie Sharp
And the fluffy
clouds

Patrick
I want
an empty sky
so big
and blue
it makes
you cry

I want sea

I want infinity

Little Annie Sharp
Lifting me down
his arms massive
his blue eyes
gentle,
but hungry

(Patrick is galloping down hill. Little Annie Sharp, well joggled, is hysterical with laughter)

Patrick
(tipping her down)
Right
that's it
off home

Annie Sharp
A narrow footpath
a stride wide
by a stripped
winter field
hard bare and brown.

Holly
and mistletoe
grew
on either side,
making arches
so
we played
kiss chase,
I was
always caught,
or
winter weddings
I was
always bride

Little Annie Sharp

Is it
Posties eldest
girl?
With the legs
and blue brace?

Patrick

No!

Little Annie Sharp

Who is
your girlfriend
Patrick?

Patrick

(laughing)

You are
sweetie

Annie Sharp inner voice

We kissed.
I giggled
at his
new bristles
He stroked
my head
with his
big
bear's paw.

Annie Sharp

I ran
to the bottom
of the hill.
He watched
and waved

Then

like many times
before, trusting,
turned
up the path.

I didn't move.
I looked up to the hill,
I saw the sky
black with the promised snow,
I looked down
to Patrick's path
with it's ribbon
of last winter sunlight

(Little Annie giggles)

I would follow him
to The Giant Oak

and see my rival

(Little Annie Sharp is crawling through undergrowth so as best not to be seen. She is full of suppressed giggles)

Annie Sharp

Once in the wood
it wasn't hard
to hide,
the trees, though bare,
were thick,
the bushes icy wide.

As darkness quickly fell,
shadows became woody monsters
horned and tailed
and winged and scaled.
and twisting through the icy mesh
of frosted ivy
I lost my way.

(The sudden flap of wings as a large bird breaks cover, Little Annie Sharp starts)

I saw
hoar
breath
and felt
hot eyes.

(animal noises)

I ran
till I stumbled
and fell.

(Little Annie Sharp, breathless, panicked)

The wood stops
for the Giant Oak.

There it was,
a skeleton of itself
in the Moonlight.

On every branch
from massive leafless limb
to tiniest twig
a billion starlings
perched and chirped

(Sound of starlings)

Little Annie Sharp

A bare bird tree,
a frosted feather tree
a winter-winged tree

Annie Sharp
Alive
and singing
to the shivering stars.

The moon shifts
and I see Patrick
leaning against the trunk
like it's Lord
hands above his head
ankles crossed
the jut of cheek
and chin
biceps calf and thigh
all painted with silver moonbeam.

(Little Annie Sharp sighs)

My darling brother
Lord of the Winter Night.

Then
from the shadows
comes

a man
bearded
and tall

(The singing of the starlings gets louder)

he stroked
my
Patrick's hair

then
hugged my Patrick

(The singing gets louder)

and then kissed him

(Louder still)

and then...

(Mass fluttering of many wings. A billion birds taking flight from the tree)

The swirling sky
was black
with birds
blotting out
the moon

(Little Annie Sharp starts to sob violently and scream over and over, then runs away)

Patrick
(*Calling in the distance*)
Annie...
Annie...

Annie Sharp
A gentle
snowflake,
and another,
as big
as 50p
bits,
making
a curtain,
shutting
out
the cries.

I ran
away from
The Skeleton Oak
and Patrick

through the winter wood
past the bare brown field,

(*she is panting, crying*)

I clawed up the hill
on hands and knees
like a sick cat

to Granny's kitchen,
and home
to Dad.

I told them
I had seen
Patrick
with the Boogie Man,
I told them
what
they had done
that night
under the Tree,

I shivered and coughed
and cried
and screamed
and swore
and was slapped,
but
I didn't sleep,

until
I told them

Everything.

Scene 13

(saxophone)

Annie Sharp
Upstairs in bed
much later

(click of latch)

I hear
the click
of the latch
and Patrick's return;
with those feet
he couldn't be quiet.

I hear the row
the shouting
and the blows,

I hear chairs
knocked over
and a smashed vase,

(Patrick sobs)

and I hear
Patrick sobbing,
my darling,
and
my heart breaks.

(saxophone)

In the morning,
he was gone,
and
everything
was changed.

The world
was white

painted over,
unfamiliar

Most of his room
was cleared.

Some stuff taken

The rest
put in boxes
and taken
to the shed

a muddle
of footprints
in the snow

drag marks
cutting through
grass
to brown sludge

Little Annie Sharp
Where's Patrick?

Annie Sharp
I asked
that question
Every day...
Every day...

Little Annie Sharp
(a *timid frightened voice*)
Where's Patrick?
When's
he coming home?

Annie Sharp
Granny eyes
were red
She put
her fingers
on her lips

Dad
never mentioned
his only son
again

What's the matter
with the girl?

he said

Lost her tongue?

Why's she shake?

Where's her smile?

Little Annie Sharp
(smaller voice)
Where's Patrick?

Annie Smart
Gone
said Granny

Where?

Where could he go?

He was only a boy

What did he eat?

Where did he sleep?

Why did
I tell?

It might
have been
our secret
under the snow.

Gone
said Granny
one
bad tempered
Sunday

And

It's all
your fault

Scene 14

(saxophone)

(Three sets of footsteps on cobblestones)

Annie Smart
It's night

Annie Sharp
The town,
our town,
shut up
and gone home.

Annie Smart
There's
been a thaw,
melted ice
flows
down drains
to the sewers
and the sea

Annie Small
Shops
battered down,
not a light
at a window

Annie Sharp
'Cept Fancy Goods,
(Sound of musical box)
where
the musical box chimes.

Annie Small
The ballerina pirouettes
forever

Annie Sharp
the painted
fairground horses
carousel,

Annie Smart
and the bears
slowly dance.

Annie Sharp
It's like
a ghost town.

Annie Small
Leaves
blow about
in the gutter,
making whispers

(a distant call)

Annie Sharp
Far, far away
someone
calls out
from the hills;

Annie Small
but
no one
answers

(more footsteps-business like)

Annie Smart
The Town Mortuary-
erected
by the good burghers
of the town;
a Victorian building
stone, blackened;
by a century's smog.

Annie Small
The mills
long gone.

Annie Smart
Gothic front entrance
displays
the civic sense
of humour;

grinning
stone skulls
held
by nubile imps
and elves...

Annie Sharp
stone, ivy,
roses, berries

Annie Smart
...watched
by a curious deer,
hedgehogs
hares and mice;

Annie Small
at four corners,
oak leaves;

Annie Smart
and presiding
over all,
The Grim Reaper
faceless and robed
with his sharp scythe

Annie Sharp
Where someone's
scratched-
I love Baz

Annie Small
We go in
the side entrance,

three carved
Angels

stone feather
wings,
hold
a scroll
which says-

Annie Small, Annie Smart, Annie Sharp
"Merciful Forgiveness"

Annie Sharp
Three of us,-
come to claim

The Hanging Man
trying
not to catch
each other's eye

(heavy door creaking open,- three sets of footsteps up echoey stone steps)

Annie Smart

A flight
of stairs,
three slits
for windows
let in
a slice
of moonlight,

Annie Small

a mean slice.

Annie Smart

At the top,
a police constable
stands against
a stained glass window
of
The Tree of Life,
bearing
apples, plums;
pineapples and pears;
and exotic birds
with
rainbow plumage,

Annie Sharp

The moonlight
catches
the particles
in the coloured air,

Annie Small

so he looks
like
a phantom.

Annie Sharp

he says

Annie Small, Annie Smart, Annie Sharp

(softly)

Can I have
your name
please?

Annie Small

Annie Small...

Annie Smart

Annie Smart...

Annie Sharp
Annie Sharp.;

(following said quickly)

Annie Smart
A tiny
old lady
in black,
poor looking
and straight backed,
surprisingly
spry
on her pins,
pink cheeks,
determined,
unsmiling.

Annie Sharp
A rich bitch
in a smoky
grey
fur coat
and hat,
arrived in a Mercedes
mouth like
a gash
claw nails,-
sweat
on her top lip.

Annie Small
A young girl,
maybe sixteen,
pretty thing,
skinny
like they are,
lots of earrings,
her name
on a heavy
gold chain
hair scraped back,
young eyes full of pain,
scared stiff.

Annie Sharp
What's that
funny smell?

Annie Smart
Chemicals;
formaldehyde
I believe
is used
in the...

Annie Sharp

she wishes
she hadn't
started this

Annie Smart
...preservation
of...
...cadavers.

Annie Sharp
She
pulls up
the collar
of her coat
to hide
her face.

(Door creaks open, male footsteps)

Annie Sharp
A tall grey man...

Annie Small
We're told
to wait

Three wooden
church chairs-
a ledge
for dusty hymn books,

Annie Sharp
Through
the crack
in his door

you can see
a blazing log fire,
a desk,
family photographs;

standing up,
applying lipstick
in a silver compact,
a blonde.

(The door is discreetly shut)

Annie Sharp
He
could have done
with a shot
of that...

Annie Smart
I'm sorry?

Annie Sharp

Formaldehyde!

(Majestic ticking of a grandfather clock)

Annie Small
Behind us
a great clock
separates
the seconds

Annie Smart
We three rivals
sit waiting

Annie Sharp
to identify
the body

Annie Small
to claim
the Hanging
Man

(whispered)
My Lover!

Annie Smart
My son!

Annie Sharp
My brother!

(The sombre tick-tock of the old clock)

Annie Sharp
Where do...?
Where are the...?

(Pause)

The old lady
coughs

Annie Small
I've been
told
there are
refrigerated
compartments
in the very
bowels
of the building

Annie Smart
No!

Annie Sharp

She
almost howls.

Annie Smart
I specifically
requested
they
lay him out

I...
I hope
you don't mind

Annie Sharp
She blushes

Annie Smart
Less gruesome
somehow,
I thought...

Annie Small
More dignified

Annie Smart
Yes
more...
dignified

(Pause. The incessant tick-tock, tick-tock)

Annie Sharp
Half an hour
now

Annie Smart
They promised
there wouldn't
be a wait

Annie Small
Perhaps
if you knocked
at his ...

(Three loud raps)

Annie Sharp
No answer,
she pushes
the door.
It's locked

Annie Smart
Constable!

(her voice resonates eerie and echoey)

Annie Sharp
We all jump

No answer

(The ticking of the clock gets louder)

Annie Small
A large
black door

(and louder)

Annie Sharp
As her red talons
reach
for the eagles claw
knocker...

(Ticking louder still, a creaking door opens)

Annie Small
...the door

(Ticking deafening by now)

opens
by itself

(The old clock suddenly stops ticking)

A massive room
oak panelled
with three arched windows

Annie Sharp
On
one wall
a modern mural,
a perfect
red circle
entitled
"Eternal Love"

Annie Smart
At the centre
four brass griffins,
bearing church candles
flicker
in the sudden draught,

Annie Small
and surround
an open coffin
on a bed
of acorns.

(Three sets of stealthy footsteps approach the coffin. Saxophone)

Annie Smart
At that moment
we had no choice

Annie Small
our hearts
led
us to the casket.

(three beating hearts)

Scene 15

Saxophone underscoring next section as they creep towards the casket.

Annie Smalls inner voice
(a whisper)
Robbie?

Did you go
to fight
in Spain?

The steppes
did you fret?

Come back

after all
the years

thinking
to find me
waiting still
under
The Giant Oak

and

with the
heady scent
of honeysuckle
poisoning the night

tortured
with guilt

did you
take off
your belt
and...?

Annie Smarts inner voice
(a whisper)
David?

(saxophone)

What happened?

Were you found
by animals
and...

No!

No!
Don't think it

or did
a soft eyed
doe
on an outing
with her fawn
take the tiny babe
and raise
him
with her own?

My sweet boy
man at last

knowing he was different

hanged
his poor human bones!

Or

did some kind soul
walking their dog
at dawn
hear the faint cry
claim
my darling
as their own and
take you home
to love

overhearing the tale
of your
abandonment

sick with grief

and shocked
you return
to your birthplace
and maddened
then...?

(saxophone)

Annie Sharps inner voice
(a whisper)
Patrick?

Annie Sharps inner voice
Did you come back
from banishment
from China, India and Rome
stand looking
at the house
see us
through curtains
acting out
our shadow life
without you

and reaching
the spirits end

go back
to The Giant Oak
one frosty night
that promised snow
and...?

(Beating hearts stop. Silence. They whisper)

Annie Smalls inner voice
Three of us

Annie Smarts inner voice
peer

Annie Sharps inner voice
into the casket

(saxophone)

Annie Small
Robbie?

(saxophone)

Auburn hair

Eyes green
as glass

Robbie!

(saxophone)

I waited
a long time
Robbie

under the oak tree

back at the big house
summer after summer

I waited a lifetime

(saxophone)

Were there others?

Taken, like me,
to the Giant Oak Tree.

Made
to surrender
left wounded

(saxophone)

you might as well
have ripped
out my heart
with your hands
and fed
it
to the crows!

(saxophone travels away)

Why,
why
did you leave me?

(voice travels in)

The Hanging Man
A letter

Annie Small
Why leave
without me?

The Hanging Man
I re-read
the letter

(reading)

I don't know
where I'll be
or what I'll do

It's not fair
to ask you
to give up
everything
simply

to be with me

I know
you won't agree

I'm writing
this letter
to save arguments

(not reading)

No, cut that

(reading)

perhaps
I'll ring

(not reading)

No,
no half promises,
that's pathetic.

(reading)

I hope
we both
find
what we're
looking for.

Annie Small
(urgent, confused, angry)

Did you find
your revolution,
Robbie?

Did you
escape a bullet
only to catch cold

get sick
cough blood

ask comrades
to find a tree
to bury you

and on the grave
did you have etched...?

The Hanging Man
...Forgive me!

I lick
the envelope

put it between
the salt and pepper pots
a ceramic sun and moon
and tip toe to the door,

the click of the latch
makes the house
turn
in it's sleep,

I fancy
I hear her
call out
in her sleep.

On the street
the hot sun
knocks me out,

early morning

it's going to be a scorcher.

I cross over to the cool side,
the shady side
great leafy green trees linking arms,
their roots
bursting
through the dusty paving,

And I quicken my step
frightened
she's watching me,
frightened,
she might follow,

then

turning the corner
I run,
my heart's pounding,
and I laugh,
I can't stop laughing,
I don't know why
'cos I feel sad,

thinking of her
curled up
asleep and dreaming.

Annie Small
What was I?

A mouse!

To be
picked up

and petted

and put back
in its hole

Forgive you!

I should
forgive you?!

Anger's
the only thing
you left me
Robbie

What
will I have,

to take
to the grave,
if I give
that up?

The Hanging Man

Love.
we made love,
the last night
or rather
we fucked
under a tree
under the moon.

It was fantastic

Annie Small

I wasted
my life
for one night

Wasted my life
Waiting.

(saxophone)

(a sort of scream, with passion)

I should
have found
my own revolution

(saxophone)

(with fury)

Five bobs
worth of train
might have
bought me
a life!!

(saxophone)

The Hanging Man
In the station cafe
I drink bitter coffee,

and try to eat toast,
it sticks in my throat.

I can still
taste her.

she smelt of summer.

I can still feel
her sweet smallness,
her dampness,
under my fingers,

and then I'm sobbing,
I mean
my whole body
heaving
up and down,

and the lady
serving the tea
says,

"Are you alright
love?",

and I want
to go back,

find her still sleeping,

I want her to wake
and hold me
and kiss my head
and stroke my hair
and tell me
not to be
a silly boy,
we'll be
together forever
of course
we will,

but the train's impatient.

I pick up my things
sobbing
like a baby

(The train chunters out of the station with its squeaking wheels, like the mew of a child)

Annie Smart

No, no
I can't bear it

Annie Small

Sssh!

Annie Sharp

Take my hand

Annie Small

Have courage

Annie Sharp

Open your eyes

(the train has gone, silence, then saxophone)

Annie Smart

David?

(saxophone)

David!

(saxophone)

Hair like coal
strong nose
stubborn chin
I see
myself
in my son
grown.

His eyes
are his own

The Hanging Man

My mother!
I can't remember
when I last saw her.

She opened the door
an inch
on a rusty chain,

expecting trouble.

(saxophone)

I hardly know her

without her painted eyebrows,
in her slippers
She's let her blonde hair
go grey

(saxophone)

It's evening.
It's been a trudge
from the station,
and though
I've no bags
I'm worn out.

I let her fuss

shaking the rain
off my coat,

taking off my shoes,

plumping cushions,
opening cupboards,
juggling kettles
and pots and pans,
and getting something
bubbling on the stove,
And
her delight touches me,

then

the questions run out.

We eat in silence,
I remember
the click
her jaw makes
when she chews,
she has bags
under her eyes,

and her hands shake

I tell her
I can't stay the night,
I'm catching
the night train
to the coast,

It was nice of me
to call in,
she says,
to go out
of my way.

She wants
to walk back with me
to the station,

to see me off,
she tries to get her coat,
I put my hand

over the coat rail,
and I say No!

It's dark
and
it's like a ghost town.

She waves
at the door,
her lips move
but
make no sound
she's trying to find words,
I know that
but I pull
up the collar
of my coat
against the tripling rain
and turn away.

Annie Smart
(struggling to find the words, agonised)
I was young,
so young,
David,
I didn't have a plan.

Days
became weeks
and months
and I tried
to pretend
it couldn't happen,

wouldn't,

couldn't,

but I
felt another
heart beat
in me

and I was terrified.

I'd hide
in the library,
find books
to steal
take home
and secretly read,

then tear
them up
burn them,

rip the cover
from the spine

watch the leaves
flame dance

And that
black night
was a dream,
a nightmare

I remember
sitting high on a branch
of The Giant Oak Tree
watching
myself give birth,
cutting the cord-
watching myself
turn
screaming-
running away,

It was a fight-
the night
or me –
the night won!

I couldn't forget you,

because
I could still feel
your heart
beat in me,

your small heart
beating with mine,
beating
with the
what might have been,

through the years
like the tic toc
of a terrible clock,

or a bomb,

another minute
without you,

another hour
year,
a lifetime!
A lifetime!

without you!

(Annie Sharp sobs passionately)

Annie Sharp
Patrick?

(saxophone)

Patrick!
Tall as a house

(saxophone)

The Hanging Man
The train got in
at 5am

The station was deserted
a disgruntled phantom porter
went to get the key
to The Gents Waiting Room

Of course
it smelled of pee.

The walls
were covered in graffiti
and the little drawings,
tags and boobs and fannies,
dirty ditties
hearts and hairy willies,

and on the wooden benches
decades of initials
painted over with gloopy green gloss.

At 6am
I left the station
and walked down
the steep hill,
pulling my coat
about me,
my nose and cheek pink
where the wind bit,

and I remembered
lumbering down a grassy green hill
with her on my shoulders,

her laughing,
fingers clasped under my chin.

I remembered
my hands
on her thigh.

I spy...
something beginning-

Did she cry,
reading my letter?

I wondered,
how she had

spent the day
the night,
could she sleep?

Below and ahead
was the coast
and the boats,

the ship.

I took
in a deep
salt breath
and thought,
this
is the future!

(saxophone)

Later in harbour
on deck,
my mobile rang
(again)
I thought she'd texted

"Why leave me?"

"How could you?"

"Where are you?"

but
looking back
perhaps
I dreamt that.

Of course
it wouldn't be
the end,

couldn't be,

I loved her,
I'd be back
I knew that.

I'd never seen
such an empty sky
or sea.

Infinity
would be terrible
without her,
and anyway
in the wind,
I heard

her whisper.

(sound of wind)

Annie Sharp

(whispering)

I was scared

I had to tell

I had to

I thought telling
would save you.

save you,
save us,

from the boogie man!

(saxophone)

I didn't know
there
was no boogie man

(saxophone)

I didn't know
there is no boogie man!
There is no boogie man!

(climactic saxophone- a whole reprise. Strong wind blows)

Annie Sharp

And suddenly
from each acorn
under the casket
a shoot
and then
a sapling grew

(explosive sounds)

Annie Small

bursting out
from the
cold stone

Annie Smart

and then
a young tree
straight and strong,

Annie Sharp

until
the great hall
was a Forest
of young oak,-

Annie Smart
pushing
their
sinewy limbs
against
the arched windows
trying to reach
the blazing moon.

Annie Sharp
And with the trees
came the birds;

Annie Smalls
the sparrows
blue tits
and the finch

Annie Smart
the blackbirds
thrush
and nightingale

(a billion singing birds)

Annie Sharp
So the air
was full of
birdsong

(In the distance two pairs of approaching male footsteps-through wood)

Annie Smart
And from
the casket
sprang
the tallest straightest tree;
A Giant Oak

Scene 15

Saxophone. Sound dissolves to Waiting Wood at night, birds, and wind, far away a chuntering train.

(they whisper)

Annie Sharp
A mouse
squats
on my shoe

washing
his whiskers

He winks

Annie Smart
The moon gapes

Annie Small
In Waiting Wood

Annie Smart
Look!
The
Hanging Man

Annie Sharp
There're two!

Annie Small
One swings
from the branches
like a pendulum

Annie Sharp
And his shadow!

Annie Smart
His Ghost!

Annie Sharp
I can climb
the oak tree.
Watch!

(she readies herself)

Annie Small
There are
footholes,
feel
with your toes

Annie Smart
Here,
take the scissors.

Annie Small
Higher
and higher
she climbs,
one knotty little arm
over brown leg

Annie Sharp
ouch!

Annie Small
blood
on the bark

(she stops climbing)

Annie Sharp
Now?

Annie Smart

No, wait

Annie Small

She takes off
her fur coat

and lays

it

on the damp earth

Annie Smart

Now,
cut him down!

(With difficulty the scissors cut through the rope; the thud of the body hitting the earth, bird's flap, the squeak and squawk of disturbed creatures)

(Annie Sharp laughs)

Annie Small

What?

Annie Sharp

(a whisper)

She looks...
funny
without her coat

Annie Small

(a whisper)

She looks
young

Annie Smart

There...

There...

Annie Small

She smooths
back
The Hanged Man's
hair

Annie Sharp

Washes
his face
with her
tears.

Annie Small

Loosens his shirt

Kisses his brow

A lifetime
of kisses.

Annie Sharp
The old woman

puts her hand
inside his shirt.

Annie Small
He's still warm.

Annie Sharp
Her fingers
trace
his lips;

Annie Small
The same
sweet smile

Annie Sharp
And then
softly...
his thigh.

Annie Small
For a while
the young girl
looks

nothing else-

then,

she kneels,
takes his
big hand
in hers

and buries her
soft head
in his chest.

Scene 16

Saxophone. The three women caress The Hanging Man, alternately soft, sensuous, tender, sexy their voices overlap.

Annie Small
how firm
and hard
he feels

Annie Smart

how soft
and sweet

I can count

his eyelashes

Annie Sharp
He smells
of warm peat

Annie Small
wild rose
and
honeysuckle

Annie Sharp
still
the same
elephant feet

Annie Smart
tiny hands
and toes

eyes closed
as still
as marble,

Annie Sharp
the jut
of cheek
and chin

painted

with silver
moonbeam,

Annie Smart
lying there
on the bed
of fur

and rotting
oak leaves

Annie Small, Annie Smart, Annie Sharp
Lord of the Night

(sudden cawing)

Annie Small
Three black crows.

Annie Sharp
Watching.

Annie Smart

Their beaks
bloody
from the
nights kill.

(Annie Small claps her hands)

Annie Small

Shoo!

(the flapping of wings)

Annie Smart

Go on
off with you!

(the flapping of wings)

Annie Sharp

Away!

(the flapping off wings)

Male footsteps, through the wood then over stone, then the creaking of a large oak door.

Scene 17

Mortuary

Male Voice 1

You are Annie Small?

Annie Small

I am

Male Voice 1

Do you recognise
the man
found hanging
from Giants Oak
in Waiting Wood?

(fade into)

Male Voice 1

You are Annie Smart?
Do you recognise
the man
found...?

(fade into)

Male Voice 1

You are Annie Sharp?
Do you...?

Annie Small

No!

Annie Smart
No!

Annie Sharp
No!

Annie Smart
One
eyebrow arches

Male Voice 1
No?

Annie Small, Annie Smart, Annie Sharp
No!

Annie Small
Not my lover!

Annie Smart
Not my son!

Annie Sharp
Not my brother!

Annie Small (inner voice)

I would imagine
after his travels
Robbie thought
to look me up,
but by then
there was another girl,
not me,
but good enough,
and so
he married,
settled down
had children
and grew fat.

Sometimes
in his sleep
he would whisper
my name.

Annie Smart (inner voice)

I will go back tomorrow
search
for the laurel bush
with
it's glossy green leaves,
and try to find my son.
Let them make of it
what they can.
I will find
my baby,

my precious David,
and bury him
properly,
so we
can rest.

Annie Sharp (inner voice)

And
someone must know
where Patrick is.
I'll ask questions
put adverts in newspapers
go on T.V.
put his picture
on every lamp post
from here to...
Infinity.
I won't give up
until I find him.

(Saxophone)

Scene 18

Annie Smart

Outside
the wind
has changed

Annie Small

Warm
and westerly

Annie Sharp

Still
we'll pull our
coats about us.

Annie Small

The young girl
in her thin clothes
shivers,

Annie Smart

Can
I give anyone
a lift?

Annie Sharp

Her long
tapered nails
on the handle

of the silver sleek
car

(The car door opens, they get in)

Annie Small
Suede seats

Annie Sharp
Fur cushions

Annie Small
on the back
window
a nodding
fox

(The soft purr of the car's engine)

Annie Smart
The car
disappears
up the empty
streets
into
the misty
darkness

Annie Smart
(from inside car)
I can smell spring

Annie Small
Waiting Wood
is beautiful
in the spring.

Annie Sharp
Is it?

Annie Small
A carpet
of bluebells!

(pause)

Annie Sharp
I wonder who he was

Annie Smart
Mm?

Annie Sharp
The Hanging Man?

(Saxophone plays)

Scene 19

The Hanging Man
I like
to play sax,

always have,
I've always
been happy
doing that.

The other stuff
love and life
I was never
very good at

The usual tale
loved somebody
lost somebody
found!
Then lost again

(saxophone plays, it is beautiful, poignant, heart rending)

The usual tale.