

The Play's the Thing - Scene 2

The sun is shining on the hillside. The scene is set on the verandah outside the room which was the scene for scene one. The setting is looking out over the hills. There is a strange sound in the distance. An elderly gardener is pushing a wheelbarrow. He looks up.

Mr Andrews (the gardener): Ooh, my arthritis! Ooh, I can hardly stand. (he gradually stands upright). Oi! Get off my azaleas!

Mr Andrews picks up a clod of earth from his wheelbarrow and flings it at a goat which is munching on some flowers. The goat exits, stage left. There is singing in the distance.

Mr Andrews: What's that? (the singing continues)

Michael: (in the distance) All I am is a lonely goatherd, Yay – odder – day odder yay hay hoo!

Mr Andrews: What's that? Goatherd? Well herd some goats then! (he fights off several more animals as they savage his flowers).

Michael: Good afternoon.

Mr Andrews: Hmph!

Michael: Good afternoon. I'm looking for the Princess.

Mr Andrews: Haven't seen her. Sorry. (he turns back to his work)

Michael: How can you be so sure? She was here earlier.

Mr Andrews: (whispering) Well, it's like this you see. When I came out here this morning, there was these two boys in the house. I could see they were up to no good, and so I observed them from a distance, all the time bending down, pretending to be tending my prize rhododendrons.

Michael: You what?

Mr Andrews: What you haven't seen my beauties? Follow me. (he makes to leave)

Michael: No! I'll see them later! What about the Princess?

Mr Andrews: Well, as I was saying, I was looking after my dahlias...

Michael: Rhododendrons?

Mr Andrews: That's right! I was looking after my bluebells...when I saw out of the corner of my eye...Princess Clara...heading for the kitchen.

Michael: Yes?

Mr Andrews: Well, that's it.

Michael: That's all you can remember?

Mr Andrews: Well...I might be able to remember a bit more.

Michael: Go on...

Mr Andrews: (scratching his head underneath his cap) Well...I can't remember any more.

Michael picks up a ball of string which the gardener is using to tie back some of the plants. He pulls the string away from the plants and wraps it round the ball. A strand is left hanging from the ball.

Michael pulls the ball of string back with his right foot and balances it on his instep. He chips it up and, tilting his head back, catches the ball on his forehead. He grabs the strand of string in his teeth, lets the ball drop almost to the ground, then swings his head to fling the ball to where the herd of goats are standing.

XabiAlonso traps the ball with his front right hoof, then chips it up and volleys it back to Michael, who brings it under control at his feet.

Michael: Have you seen the Princess.

Mr Andrews: I could do that once.

Michael: What?

Mr Andrews: Football. Good I was. Very good. Can't do it now though. Y'know, my knees. My eyes. My memory.

Michael: Your memory? What's wrong with your memory?

Mr Andrews: What were you saying?

Michael: Where is the Princess?

Mr Andrews: Oh yes!

Michael: What?

Mr Andrews: I don't know!

Michael: Aagh!

Freddy and Wil enter from the direction of the tennis court, accompanied by Hardy. Mr Andrews leaves across the far side of the garden, pushing his wheelbarrow.

Michael: Good game?

Freddy: Not bad. No Princess though. We thought she would come and make up a doubles.

Wil: We'd better find her. I hope she's not in trouble.

Hardy: Ah! She'll be fine! She's always wandering off. She'll be reading in the library, cooking in the kitchen, or trying to get out of the store cupboard.

(there is a distant banging sound)

Freddy: Yes, OK, I suppose we should stop worrying!

Michael: (looking thoughtful) I'd just like to know she's OK though.

Hardy departs across the far side of the garden, carrying his bag. As the stage lighting goes dim to signify the end of the scene...there is an enormous bang which appears to come from the right side of the stage. Someone screams.

Another loud bang Michael singing on the hillside. Jimi appears – wandering minstrel Finishes with a loud bang.