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SF PERUSALS

BABE, THE SHEEP-PIG

A Play

By David Wood

Adapted from the book *The Sheep-Pig*

by Dick King-Smith

SAMUEL FRENCH

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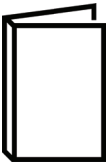
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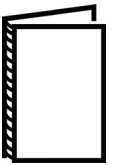
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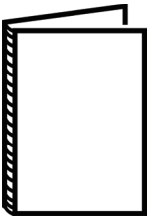
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Wood is called 'the national children's dramatist' (*The Times*). His plays are performed worldwide, and include *The Gingerbread Man*, *The Plotters of Cabbage Patch Corner*, *Save the Human* and *The Ideal Gnome Expedition*. Among his adaptations are eight Roald Dahl stories (*The BFG*, *The Twits*, *The Witches*, *Fantastic Mr Fox*, *James and the Giant Peach*, *Danny the Champion of the World*, *George's Marvellous Medicine* and *The Magic Finger*); Dick King-Smith's *Babe, the Sheep-Pig*; Eric Hill's *Spot's Birthday Party*; HRH the Prince of Wales' *The Old Man of Lochnagar*; Philip Pullman's *Clockwork*, Judith Kerr's *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* (Olivier Award nomination 2012), Sam McBratney's *Guess How Much I Love You*, the award-winning *Tom's Midnight Garden* (from Philippa Pearce's novel) and Michelle Magorian's *Goodnight Mister Tom*, which opened at Chichester, toured twice, played seasons at the Phoenix Theatre and Duke of York's in the West End, and won the Olivier Award 2013 for Best Entertainment and Family. His book, *Theatre for Children* (Faber) is a set text on both sides of the Atlantic. Film screenplays include *Swallows and Amazons* and the award-winning *Back Home* (from Michelle Magorian's novel). For the Queen's 80th birthday, he wrote *The Queen's Handbag*, broadcast live from Buckingham Palace Gardens to 8,000,000 BBC1 viewers. With composer Richard Taylor he adapted L P Hartley's *The Go-Between*, which won Best Musical Production, Theatre UK Awards 2012, and played a West End season at the Apollo Theatre, starring Michael Crawford, in 2016.

His children's books, many created with illustrator Richard Fowler, include *Mole's Bedtime Story*, *Funny Bunny's Magic Show* and *A Present for Father Christmas*, and he regularly visits schools with the message 'Books are Fun!' He also performs *The David Wood Magic and Music Show* in theatres all over the UK. As an actor David played on stage opposite Sir Michael Redgrave in John Mortimer's *A Voyage Round My Father*, on the big screen with Malcolm McDowell in Lindsay Anderson's *If...* and on the small screen, starring opposite Shelley Winters in *The Vamp*. He is a Trustee (and former Chair) of Action for Children's Arts, and President of The Story Museum. In 2004 he was awarded the OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours. Visit his website at www.davidwood.org.uk.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Soon after Dick King-Smith's *The Sheep-Pig* was published in 1983 my wife and I read it to our daughters. We all loved it and I was convinced it would become a classic. The successful film version entitled *Babe* further popularised the story and now I am proud to have been entrusted with its translation from page to stage. My hope is that amateurs and professionals, adults and children, will get as much pleasure from acting out the story as I have from adapting the book and directing the first production. This took place in traditional proscenium theatres, but I much look forward to seeing productions in arena spaces or in the round, which would be ideal for the Sheep-dog Trials and the Village Fair.

Settings should not be too complex or unwieldy. A large open space is necessary for the Sheep-dog Trials and the scenes in the Field. Small "gates" or fence sections could be useful in creating obstacles and pens and also the edge of the Field and Farmyard. The Stable loose-box and the Farmhouse could be small, movable trucks.

I have tried to keep the play flowing, without having clearly defined scene endings with black-outs. Narration helps this, of course, but it does mean that the cast must sometimes become scene-shifters, changing the setting in vision. This makes me wonder if the cast (most of them, anyway) should wear a simple basic costume, to which is added a head, a coat or an extra layer to suggest the characters. I also like the notion that the cast are understood to be storytellers as well as characters. Rather than trying to be naturalistic, a virtue can be made out of the fact that human beings are playing animals, in an imaginative way.

This, of course, applies to the movement too. All the animals should be on two legs, not four, and a language needs to be found to make this both amusing and acceptable, so that the audience can enjoy and believe in the characters, especially when they are inter-relating with human beings. The more stylized movement envisaged for the training sequences, the Rustlers' scene, the sheep-worrying, the death of Ma and the Nightmare should not be too choreographed, but integrated into the general movement style.

For the final triumphant performance by Babe and the Sheep I have suggested that the Sheep move in rhythmic precision, to music, in a way that is different from the other sheep-training sequences; I want it to seem almost magical, amusing too, a fitting climax to the play. Hopefully this will get over the "problem" that the audience is bound to know all will end successfully. If the situation lacks the tension of uncertainty, it could gain from witty execution.

Incidentally, the map of the Sheep-dog Trials course, to be found in the original book version of *The Sheep-Pig*, is a very useful guide.

Finally my thanks to Dick King-Smith for writing a splendidly theatrical story and for generously approving this adaptation.

David Wood

MUSIC USE NOTE

Optional incidental music, composed by Peter Pontzen for the original production, is available from Samuel French Ltd.

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BABE, THE SHEEP-PIG

First performed at the New Victoria Theatre, Woking on November 18th, 1997, as part of a tour, including a Christmas season at the Forum Theatre, Wythenshawe. The production, presented by Whirligig Theatre in association with Manchester Library Theatre and the Birmingham Hippodrome, was made possible by Barclays Stage Partnership, a sponsorship scheme from Barclays and the Arts Council of England. The cast, in alphabetical order, was as follows:

PUPPY 1, SHEPHERD, DUCK	Gary Bates
BABE	Karen Briffett
TV COMMENTATOR, VICAR, COCKEREL	David Burrows
SHEEP 1, CAT, DUCK	Emma Clayton
FLY	Mary-Ann Coburn
DUCK	Reece Cooper
DUCK	Amanda Kernot
MA, SHEEP-DOG, TURKEY	Kirsty Kinnear
FARMER HOGGET	Anthony Pedley
MRS HOGGET	Judy Wilson
KEYBOARDS	Cliff Atkinson

WEIGHT GUESSERS, STALLHOLDERS, NEW OWNERS, RUSTLERS, WORRIER-DOGS, NIGHTMARE ANIMALS and **OFFICIALS** played by members of the cast. **SHEEP** and **PUPPIES** were played by children recruited locally at each theatre

Director	**David Wood**
Sets and Costumes Designer	**Susie Caulcutt**
Director of Movement	**Sheila Falconer**
Music Composer	**Peter Pontzen**
Lighting Designer	**Robert Ornbo**
Sound Designer	**Mike Furness**
Associate Director	**Ben Forster**

CAST OF CHARACTERS WITH SUGGESTED DOUBLING

The original production employed ten actors and ten children. Companies with more actors available need not use these doubling suggestions. It would, however, be difficult to perform the play with less than ten principal actors.

Actor 1	**TV COMMENTATOR, VICAR, COCKEREL, NEW OWNER, RUSTLER, WORRIER-DOG, NIGHTMARE DOG**
Actor 2	**SHEPHERD, WEIGHT GUESSER, PUPPY 1, DUCK, RUSTLER, WORRIER-DOG, NIGHTMARE ANIMAL**
Actor 3	**SHEEP-DOG, WEIGHT GUESSER, TURKEY, MA, NIGHTMARE ANIMAL, OFFICIAL**
Actor 4	**OFFICIAL, STALLHOLDER, WEIGHT GUESSER, NEW OWNER, RUSTLER, DUCK, NIGHTMARE ANIMAL**
Actor 5	**OFFICIAL, STALLHOLDER, RUSTLER, DUCK, NIGHTMARE ANIMAL**
Actor 6	**SHEEP 1, STALLHOLDER, CAT, DUCK, NEW OWNER, NIGHTMARE ANIMAL**
Actor 7	**FARMER HOGGET**
Actor 8	**FLY**
Actor 9	**MRS HOGGET**
Actor 10	**BABE**

Actor 3 (**MA**) and Actor 6 (**SHEEP 1**) were joined by seven children to make up the flock of **SHEEP**. More might be possible. Actor 2 (**PUPPY 1**) was joined by three children who played the other puppies. Extras, children and adults, could be employed in the Trials scenes and at the Village Fair.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

The Showground of the Grand Challenge Sheep-dog Trials
The Village Fair
Farmer Hogget's Farm
- Stable interior (loose-box)
- Farmyard/Farmhouse exterior
- Stable interior (loose-box)
- Farmhouse interior
- Field
- Farmhouse interior
- Farmyard
- Field

ACT II

Farmer Hogget's Farm
- Field
- Farmyard/Farmhouse exterior
- Farmhouse interior
- Farmyard
- Field
- Farmyard/Stable interior (loose-box)

The Showground of the Grand Challenge Sheep-dog Trials
(including Farmhouse interior inset)

Photographs
The photographs in this Acting Edition are from the original designs and model by Susie Caulcutt and are reproduced by permission of the photographer, Robert Workman.



The Village Fair



Farmer Hogget's Farmhouse

For the Whirligig team, back on the road with this play—my thanks for all your support, skill and stamina over the years.

D.W.

ACT I

After a short overture, which might sound like a television introductory theme, we hear distant thunder and the sound of rain and wind.

A light finds a **TELEVISION COMMENTATOR** *with a microphone. He carries an umbrella.*

TV COMMENTATOR Welcome viewers, to the exciting closing stages of the Grand Challenge Sheep-dog Trials.

General lighting increases to reveal a field and a cloudy sky. Perhaps a banner proclaims "Grand Challenge Sheep-dog Trials".

A group of **SHEEP** *huddle restlessly upstage as a* **SHEPHERD** *and his* **DOG** *stand downstage. The* **SHEPHERD** *blows a whistle.*

As you join us, Mr Jones from Wales and his dog, Bryn, are starting their round.

The **DOG** *circles the field and begins to chivvy the* **SHEEP** *forward towards the first obstacle. As the round progresses, the* **SHEEP** *do not co-operate very well, occasionally scattering, with the odd* **SHEEP** *breaking away from the group. The* **SHEPHERD** *occasionally blows his whistle and shouts instructions — "steady", "stay", "down", "away to me" or "come by". Perhaps there is occasional applause from the crowd.*

Down from the Holding Post…the sheep aren't too keen… hardly blame them in this weather…through the Fetch Gates…one gone the wrong way, points lost for that…round the Handler's Post and away…looking a little ragged…through

the Drive Away Gates, nicely through, big crowd here today, they enjoyed that…towards the Cross Drive Gates…a mistake there, go on Bryn, get them back…good recovery…into the Shedding Ring, nicely, nicely…now the trickiest bit, shedding the sheep with collars…

The **DOG** *tries to separate the* **SHEEP***, who resist. They bunch and revolve.*

…that's a shame, he's lost points there…and finally, into the pen…yes, yes! Good effort, Bryn… Mr Jones will be happy with that.

Applause from the crowd. The **SHEPHERD** *blows his whistle. The* **DOG** *returns to him.*

SHEPHERD That'll do!

TV COMMENTATOR Here comes the score…

An **OFFICIAL** *holds up two cards with an eight and a five.*

DOG *and* **SHEPHERD** *exit and an* **OFFICIAL** *ushers the* **SHEEP** *off stage.*

Eighty-five! Puts them in the lead. A good score considering the appalling weather conditions. It's difficult to see that score being beaten, but here comes the last competitor to try to do just that.

FARMER HOGGET*, carrying his crook, and* **FLY** *enter and stand center.*

It's Farmer Hogget with Pig. A bit of a strange name that. And a surprise. Usually Farmer Hogget works with a dog called Fly…in fact, I think that *is* Fly.

Suddenly **FARMER HOGGET** *sends* **FLY** *to one side.*

Hallo, what's happening?

FLY *ushers on* **BABE***, who goes to* **FARMER HOGGET.**

Good heavens! I don't believe it! It *is* a pig!

After a stunned moment of silence, the sound of laughter from the crowd builds and builds as the sound of rain and wind recedes. **BABE** *looks apprehensive yet almost defiant.* **FARMER HOGGET** *stands motionless.*

The **COMMENTATOR**, *laughing, exits.*

Suddenly, at its peak, the laughter cuts out as the lighting changes, focusing on **BABE**, **FARMER HOGGET**, *and* **FLY**, *who breaks downstage.*

FLY *(to the audience)* That's my son. *(She looks at* **BABE**, *then back to the audience)* Well, my adopted son. And this is the most important day in his life. In Farmer Hogget's life too.

FARMER HOGGET Steady, Pig.

FLY He's my boss. Why, you may be wondering, has he entered a pig in the Grand Challenge Sheep-dog Trials?

Other members of the cast enter and stand facing the audience as the lighting increases a little.

(taking in the other members of the cast) We'll tell you. We'll tell you the story of...

ALL Babe, the Sheep-Pig!

Music as the cast swiftly change the scene. The banner disappears. The obstacles (fences or straw bales) are used to create homespun fairground stalls like ball-in-a-bucket, an **AUNT SALLY** *(stallholder poking his head through a hole in a funny picture and having children throw "wet" sponges at him), a bran tub, a simple hoopla, a home produce stall, and a stall with a sign saying "Guess My Weight", run by the* **VICAR**. *Perhaps his church is visible. The music might sound homespun too. Perhaps a small group of children play or sing throughout the scene. But we must be able to hear the dialogue.*

FLY *(to the audience)* It all started at the village fair.

Music continues as the village fair comes to life.

CHILDREN *visit the stalls.*

STALLHOLDERS Roll up, roll up!

Ball-in-a-bucket. Three throws for ten p!

Prize every time!

Hoopla! Hoopla! One ring over one bottle to win!

Bran tub! Bran tub! (*Etc. etc.*)

At regular intervals a high-pitched squeal is heard from the "Guess My Weight" stall, but we can't see what is happening because of the small crowd gathered round.

The **VICAR**, *holding a clipboard, makes notes.*

Once the scene is established, **FARMER HOGGET** *enters, carrying a basket of goodies covered with a cloth. He looks about for the home produce stall, sees it, and delivers the basket.*

Afternoon, Farmer Hogget. Oh, thank you! These look lovely. *(She starts displaying them on the stall)*

The squealing is heard again.

FARMER HOGGET *walks away from the stall. Suddenly a phone rings. At first* **FARMER HOGGET** *doesn't react, but then he stops and pulls out a mobile phone from his pocket. He is clearly unfamiliar with its working. He puts it to his ear.*

FARMER HOGGET Hallo?

The phone keeps ringing. **FARMER HOGGET** *looks at it, shakes it, then shakes his head. A* **CHILD** *nearby approaches, understands the problem, takes the phone, pulls out its aerial and presses a button. The ringing stops. The* **CHILD** *hands back the phone.*

(nodding appreciatively) Mmm. Darn thing. Free gift with the new Land Rover.

The **CHILD** *smiles and wanders off.*

(into the phone) Hallo?

MRS HOGGET *enters downstage in a separate pool of light. She talks into an ordinary phone.*

MRS HOGGET Is that you?

FARMER HOGGET Who?

MRS HOGGET You. Hogget, is that you?

FARMER HOGGET Aah.

Another squeal.

MRS HOGGET Are you there?

FARMER HOGGET Where?

MRS HOGGET At the fair.

FARMER HOGGET Aah.

MRS HOGGET Have you delivered my cakes and jams and pickles and preserves?

FARMER HOGGET Aah.

Another squeal.

MRS HOGGET What's the noise?

FARMER HOGGET What noise?

Another squeal, longer and louder.

MRS HOGGET *That* noise.

FARMER HOGGET *wanders over to the "Guess My Weight" stall. As he arrives, the crowd clears enough for us to see a pig—***BABE***—being held up over a pen or*

straw bale. Eventually **WEIGHT GUESSER 1** *lowers the pig out of sight, and the squealing stops.*

FARMER HOGGET Pig.

WEIGHT GUESSER 1 Twenty-eight pounds.

VICAR *(writing on his clipboard)* Thank you, Mrs Williams.

MRS HOGGET Pig? I thought 'twas a pig, I said to meself that's a pig that is, only nobody round here do keep pigs, 'tis all sheep for miles about.

WEIGHT GUESSER 2 *pays his money and lifts the* **PIG**.

More squealing. **MRS HOGGET** *reacts to the noise.*

What's it doing? Anybody'd think they was killing the poor thing.

WEIGHT GUESSER 2 *puts the* **PIG** *down. The squealing stops.*

WEIGHT GUESSER 2 Thirty-three pounds.

VICAR Thank you, sir.

FARMER HOGGET Got to guess its weight. Nearest guess wins.

MRS HOGGET What?

FARMER HOGGET What?

MRS HOGGET Wins what?

FARMER HOGGET Pig.

VICAR Afternoon, Farmer Hogget. Fancy a go?

FARMER HOGGET *(to the* **VICAR***)* Well...

MRS HOGGET What?

FARMER HOGGET Vicar wants me to have a go.

MRS HOGGET Go on then. I'd like a pig. We could feed 'un on scraps, he'd come just right for Christmas time, just think, two nice hams, two sides of bacon, pork chops, kidney, liver,

chitterling, trotters, save his blood for black pudding, lovely, you have a go.

FARMER HOGGET Aah. *(He manages to turn off the mobile phone and puts it in his pocket)*

MRS HOGGET *exits.*

Music as **FARMER HOGGET** *approaches the stall and gives the* **VICAR** *a coin.*

VICAR Thank you, Farmer Hogget. *(He indicates the* **PIG***)* Try your luck.

FARMER HOGGET *reaches over and gently but firmly lifts the* **PIG**. *They look at each other. The* **PIG** *doesn't squeal.*

Music and possibly lighting heighten the significance of the moment. People turn to look. All the other fair activity stops. A frozen tingly moment.

(quietly) Extraordinary. For everyone else he screams his head off. He seems to like you, Farmer Hogget.

We can tell that **FARMER HOGGET** *is thinking "I like him, too" but he doesn't say it.*

After a pause...

FARMER HOGGET Thirty-one pounds. And a quarter.

The lighting focuses down on **FARMER HOGGET** *and* **BABE**, *still staring at each other.*

The scene around them begins to clear in the half-light as **FLY** *returns to narrate.*

Music continues to echo the almost magical "connection" between **FARMER HOGGET** *and* **BABE**.

FLY The boss must have guessed right. Because that evening we had a new arrival on the farm.

Music as **FARMER HOGGET** *and* **BABE** *break their freeze.* **FARMER HOGGET** *either carries or accompanies* **BABE** *to a stable loose-box made of straw bales. The lighting suggests early evening.*

FARMER HOGGET *gently lays* **BABE** *down, then exits.*

BABE *nervously takes in his new surroundings.*

Suddenly **FLY***'s four* **PUPPIES** *enter and, curious, look over the side of the straw bales.*

PUPPY 1 What's that?

PUPPY 2 It's funny!

PUPPY 3 It's ugly!

PUPPY 4 It's horrible!

The **PUPPIES** *laugh unkindly.*

PUPPY 1 *(calling)* Hey, Mum, look at this!

FLY *joins them. She sees* **BABE.**

What is it?

FLY It's a pig.

PUPPY 1 What will the boss do with it?

FLY Eat it. When it's big enough.

PUPPY 2 Will he eat us?

PUPPY 3 When we're big enough?

FLY Bless you, people only eat stupid animals. Like sheep and cows and ducks and chickens. They don't eat clever ones like dogs.

PUPPY 4 So pigs are stupid?

FLY *(after a thinking pause)* Yes. Pigs are stupid.

BABE *looks up at her.*

PUPPY 1 It certainly *looks* stupid.

PUPPIES *(chanting)* Stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid!

FLY *hushes them.*

FLY *(to* **BABE***)* Hallo. Who are you?

BABE *(with an effort)* I'm a Large White.

PUPPY 1 Blimey! If that's a large white, what's a small one like?

The **PUPPIES** *roar with laughter.*

FLY Be quiet! Just remember that five minutes ago you didn't even know what a pig was. *(To* **BABE***)* I expect Large White's your breed, dear. I meant what's your name?

BABE I don't know.

FLY Well, what did your mother call you, to tell you apart from your brothers and sisters?

The memory of his siblings and his mother affects **BABE.**

BABE *(voice trembling)* She called us all the same.

FLY And what was that, dear?

BABE Babe.

The **PUPPIES** *giggle unkindly.*

FLY *(to the* **PUPPIES***)* Hush. *(To* **BABE***)* But that's a lovely name. Would you like us to call you that? It'll make you feel more at home.

The memory of home affects **BABE.**

BABE I want my mum.

After a brief pause, the **PUPPIES** *laugh again.*

PUPPY 1 Aaaah! He wants his mum!

PUPPIES *(chanting)* Mum, mum, mum, mum!

FLY Stop it. Go out into the yard and play.

PUPPIES Ohhhhh!

FLY Go on. Shoo!

The **PUPPIES** *exit.*

FLY *climbs over and joins* **BABE**, *who at first reacts nervously.*

Listen, Babe, you've got to be a brave boy. Everyone has to leave their mother, it's all part of growing up. I did so, when I was your age, and my puppies will have to leave me quite soon. But I'll look after you. If you like. *(She looks at* **BABE** *welcomingly)*

Pause. Then music as **BABE** *cuddles up to her.*

Suddenly **FARMER HOGGET** *and* **MRS HOGGET** *enter and make their way towards the loose-box.* **FARMER HOGGET** *carries a water-bowl.*

MRS HOGGET Well, what a turn-up. Never won nothing before, have you Hogget? Not a sausage let alone a whole pig!

They arrive and look into the loose-box.

Well, will you look at that! That old Fly, she'll mother anything, kittens, ducklings, baby chicks, she's looked after all of they, now 'tis a pig, in't he lovely, what a picture, good job he don't know where he'll finish up, but he'll be big then and we'll be glad to see the back of him, or the hams of him, I should say, shan't us?

FARMER HOGGET *puts down the water-bowl and gives* **BABE** *a friendly stroke.*

FARMER HOGGET Pity, really.

They start to leave.

MRS HOGGET *(with a laugh)* Wonder how I shall get him all in the freezer!

FARMER HOGGET *and* **MRS HOGGET** *exit.*

Music. The lighting fades a little more. It is night.

The **PUPPIES** *return and climb into the loose-box.*

PUPPY 1 Oh, Mum! What's that stupid Babe doing here?

PUPPY 2 Tell him to move over.

PUPPY 3 He'll wet the bed.

PUPPIES Ughhhhh!

FLY Hush. Don't be so rude. *(To* **BABE***)* If you want to do anything, dear, you go outside, there's a good boy.

PUPPY 4 *(threatening)* Yeah, you'd better.

All settle down.

FLY Night, puppies.

PUPPIES Night, Mum.

FLY Night, Babe.

BABE *(after a pause)* Night, Mum.

Music and lighting suggest the passage of time, from night through to dawn.

COCKEREL *enters, struts about for a while, then takes up a position of importance.*

COCKEREL Cock-a-doodle-doooooo!

Music as **FLY**, *the* **PUPPIES** *and* **BABE** *stir and stretch.*

FARMER HOGGET *enters. He goes to the loose-box and "opens" it.*

FARMER HOGGET Morning. Fly, come sit.

FLY *steps forward and sits. She nods to* **PUPPY 1**, *who joins her and sits. Then* **PUPPY 2**. *Then* **PUPPY 3**. *Then* **PUPPY 4**.

Pause. Then **BABE**, *unprompted, comes forward and sits too. All—dogs and the farmer—look at him, surprised.*

Fly, out!

FLY *goes "out" and waits. She nods to* **PUPPY 1**, *who follows. Then* **PUPPY 2**. *Then* **PUPPY 3**. *Then* **PUPPY 4**.

Pause. Then **BABE**, *unprompted, starts to follow.*

Not you, Pig.

BABE *looks appealingly up at him.*

Go on then!

BABE *joins the others.*

FLY Come on, Babe. We'll show you round the farmyard.

Music as **FLY** *leads the procession of* **PUPPIES** *and* **BABE** *round the farmyard. As* **FARMER HOGGET** *clears away the loose-box, the exterior of the farmhouse appears the other side.*

Once the scene is set, **FARMER HOGGET** *exits.*

The procession passes by **COCKEREL**. *All nod to each other.* **COCKEREL** *does a double take when he sees* **BABE**.

COCKEREL What-the-doodle? Who are you?

FLY *(returning)* Babe, this is Cockerel. Cockerel, Babe.

COCKEREL *(disdainfully)* Babe? How-do-doodle-doo.

BABE I'm a pig.

COCKEREL Yes. Cock-a-doodle-poooooooo!

BABE *looks affronted, but thinks better of replying.*

FLY Come on, dear. Take no notice.

COCKEREL *exits as the procession continues.*

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