

Dans le Petit Bois

("In the Little Wood")

France : 1995 : dir. Mamouda Zekrya Boulé :

: 18 min

prod: : scr: Boulé & Jean-Stéphane Bron : dir.ph.: Felix von Muralt

[Natacha Nazarieff](#); [Ophélie Babel](#)

Anthony Renaud

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	□	≠	Z	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Radio Times note:

"Short film about a child's loss of innocence
[sic] "

"Short film about a young girl's discovery of sex" is what the *Radio Times* meant to tell us. But that is what's meant these days by "innocence", isn't it? – gratuitous ignorance about sex, a state of blindness we still revere as a virtue.

The girl in question is meant to be about 14, and a sultry, leggy creature she is too. Somewhere in the campagne she spends a bored summer afternoon with her sister of about 7. Their game of tag is interrupted when a youth (the actor is clearly over 18) rides up on his bike. The girl contrives an injured foot, and wafts back her tenuous summer dress to display for his approval the texture of her glowing thighs. He offers her a ride on his bike, which she all too readily accepts, and they set off for the destination of the title.

But their privacy is soon invaded by the younger girl, who has followed them. Craftily, the 14-year old proposes a game of hide-and-seek, and in no time is being pursued giggling through the woods by the youth. He catches her and, as they say, nature takes its course. But their tryste in the grass is observed by the younger child, who responds (this is the 1990s, let us not forget) by curling up into a ball of trauma, sucking on her thumb. The three of them trudge sulkily back to the village, but the older girl will not let the younger accept a ride home on the youth's pillion. We all know where *that* leads to, don't we!

On the face of it, this film purports to be a languorous bucolic episode in the "**CIDER WITH ROSIE**" vein, but whereas Laurie Lee's book celebrated rustic sexuality as healthy and life-affirming, this has the undertone of "doing dirty things one knows one shouldn't", and the girl's post-defloration mood leaves us in little doubt she wishes she'd never trespassed "**DANS LE PETIT BOIS**" (the title itself a fairly self-evident *double entendre*). And although it's made manifestly clear she herself was hungering for sexual experience, and engineers events to that conclusion (no loss of "innocence" on her part, at least), the youth is cast sufficiently older than her that we can read it as an episode of sexual exploitation by the male, if we're minded politically so to do.

This is a silly and trite little film with no more understanding of adolescent sexuality than one could have expected back in the 1920s. Not only is it dishonest or equivocal, it has a definite leering quality to it – the camera gulps down every glimpse of Nazarieff's silky brown thighs, her billowing summer dress, hungers for the moment those soft white cotton knickers will be peeled away. It is at the same time voyeuristic and faux-naïf, a very unappetising combination. But this is where decades of regressive sexual thinking, and appeasement of the Family Values lobby, have brought us – we're back to the days of coy gymslip porn once again. Perhaps we want our 14-year old girls to stay "innocent" – that way they won't know why we're looking at them so intently, will they? *Not recommended.*

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