



## Annie's Achilles Heel

by Sue Hitchcock

The seventh child of a seventh child will be a witch.

Green-eyed Annie was the seventh child, but she had no intention of having seven children. Times had changed.

Annie's father went blind when she was six years old. She loved him dearly and read to him whenever he wanted, but poverty had driven her mother, Emma Jane, to throw in her lot with a religious group, the Brethren, who helped the family in numerous ways. When Annie's father died, a chance of a scholarship to a good school was out of the question. All the reading to her father had educated her beyond her means.

She was poor, but she was honest!  
Ain't it all a ruddy shame!  
It's the Rich what gets the pleasure,  
It's the Poor what gets the blame.  
It's the same the whole world over.  
Ain't it all a blooming shame.

No, no! Her mother made sure her girls were honest. Only drudgery was to be their lives, unless rescued by some kind, god-fearing man. How could Emma Jane keep them from the temptations around? Only by dipping them, especially Annie and Ivy, the youngsters in the river Styx, life after death in heaven, if they were pure.

Did Annie have an Achilles Heel? – maybe. Maybe it was the very need for impunity which prevented her from loving her daughters in their entirety. She only loved them when they were good.

There was a little girl, who had a little curl  
Right in the middle of her forehead.  
When she was good, she was very, very good,  
But when she was bad, she was horrid.

Annie's daughters talked about their father, when they grew old, but their mother was unmentionable. In her later years, she had forgotten who they were and they could only read the Good Book to her, to console her, lost in limbo.