

DANNY BOY

© by

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DANNY BOY

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DANNY BOY

CHARACTERS

DANNY MORGAN, twenty year old part-time soldier.

MR. BRAMHALL, pompous area manager.

MISS PRINGLE, frosty-faced manageress of shoe shop.

DAVE, Danny's lecherous mate.

SUSAN, Danny's girlfriend.

MAM, gentle mannered northern lady.

DAD, antagonistic stepfather.

MAJOR THOMAS, Territorial officer.

(Apart from Danny it is possible to double the other male and female characters thereby reducing the cast to three in number)

DANNY BOY

PROPS AND CLOTHING LIST

DANNY	Army clothing, army rucksack, map case, coin, sheath knife on belt, prop to resemble mouse (kept in rucksack).
MR. BRAMHALL	Suit worthy of area manager, cigar.
MISS PRINGLE	Black dress, black spectacles, clipboard.
DAVE	Boiler suit, chewing gum.
SUSAN	Raincoat (covering party dress).
MAM	Overcoat, headscarf, handbag with purse containing money.
DAD	Overcoat, scarf, flat cap.
MAJOR THOMAS	Officer's uniform, cap, cane.

DANNY BOY

“DANNY BOY” was born when the author read the following small clip in a newspaper :

"MOORLAND HUNT FOR MISSING TROOPER.

More than 200 people hunted across the rough moor land in Wenslydale, North Yorkshire, yesterday for a part-time soldier, 20 year old Trooper Colin Jones, who vanished during a map-reading exercise a week ago. Police said there was now little hope of finding him alive following several days of bad weather”

In other words the theme of DANNY BOY, the loss of a young man on a weekend exercise, is factual, though the characters are not, having been born in the author's imagination.

The play revolves around a central area of rocks on the moors (created perhaps by throwing an army camouflage net over tables, chairs, etc.) where Danny arrives expecting to find a rendezvous point, and flashbacks are used in two side areas of the stage by means of cross fading the spots. Danny steps into one or the other of the side areas to re-enact the events leading up to his present predicament and in the final part of the play where Danny's mind begins to break down the characters from the past drift into his central area.

The final conflict of mother and Major Thomas urging Danny to either kill or not kill his one source of food (the mouse) needs a lot of rehearsing and must begin with a slow metronome effect building up to the crescendo where Danny throws away his captive.

If the play is tried with just three actors (it is possible) then simple clothing must be used to suggest the characters and in the final lines of the play the two inciters, Mum and Major Thomas must turn their backs on Danny to give the voices of Mum and the stepfather.

TONY BREEZE.

DANNY BOY

DANNYBOY

(The action takes place on the moors somewhere in Britain. References to any locations may be changed to suit the playing locality. The stage lights rise. LT 1. There is the sound of the Danny Boy tune being played on a flute. The stage is bare apart from a central outcrop of rocks, which can be easily created using an army camouflage net over desks, chairs, etc. The tune fades to the sound of the wind whistling. DANNY enters through the audience. He is tired and wet, wearing army apparel and carrying an empty rucksack and a map case. As he comes towards the stage he is slowly clapping and chanting a football slogan.)

DANNY:

Clapping.) Leeds United! Leeds United! *(He drops his rucksack and slumps exhausted on one of the rocks.)* Phew! You made it son, I didn't think you would but you made it. *(Looking around him.)* Now then, where's he got to? Baron? Sergeant Baron? It's Danny Morgan Sarge... Are you there?... Come on Sarge, it's me last R.V Sarge? Stop prating about, it's wasted on me, I'm shattered, honest I am ... come on you bugger, show yourself...if this is one of your camouflage jobs I think it's marvellous - you're too good for me - but I want to get back ... it'll be dark at this rate ... you've got to get back as well as me you know, if I'm late you're late with me. *(Fed up.)* That's all I needed, fun and games with the sergeant ... I can wait as long as you can, it's no skin off my nose ... I'll probably catch pneumonia if I haven't already caught it...come on Serge, there's a queue of brass monkeys out here looking for the welders, I'll be joining 'em soon. Do you want me to start worrying? Is that what you want? All right I'm worried - I've wet me pants - are you satisfied? If you want me to beg I'll beg. *(Drops onto knees.)* I'm on my knees Serge begging, is that sufficient? Bloody sadist! It were right what they said, you were drummed out of the S.S. for cruelty! Sergeant, your favourite Territorial is waiting to go home, d'you hear? *(More thoughtfully.)* You do hear Serge, don't you? *(The thought begins to dawn on him.)* Maybe he i'n't there? Where else is he going to be? Fool's Nook they said, so what's this when it's at home? Then why i'n't he here to meet you? ... Probably gone off for a pee or something ... Maybe you're early? That's it, you're too good for them - or late. *(Taps watch which isn't working properly.)* He might have got fed up and gone back on his own - without me? He wouldn't dare. I don't know though, I can just see his face: "Test of your initiative, Morgan, can't give you everything on a plate now can we?" If he has he'll get a piece of my mind, sergeant or no sergeant. You are at the right place aren't you? *(Checking map)* ... Eighty-five degrees...there i'n't another outcrop like this round here, not so's you'd notice... one way of checking - compass *(Looks for it through pockets)*... where the? *(Checks bag and finds it empty and open)* ... Aw no! I don't believe it - compass, sandwiches, the lot gone - what an idiot! *(He pauses momentarily depressed.)* You needed that son - not to worry, the sergeant'll have one when he gets here... if he gets here. Maybe I should just head for

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civilisation? Can't make me mind up ... I know what you need - a bit of scientific analysis. *(Taking coin out of pocket.)* Heads I stay, tails I go... *(He throws it up into the air but it comes down in a crevice and he can't find it.)* I might have known - I've lost that buggger now. *(Aside to the heavens.)* Have you gone off me or something? I must have trod on a black cat or broken a mirror or something ... can't remember walking under any ladders... What would me Mam tell me to do? "Compromise" that's what she'd say, "If you can - compromise"...Right then - I'll give him ten minutes then I'm off on me own. *(He goes to sit on a rock.)* This is just great ... sitting on top of a mountain in the middle of December, can't think of anything I'd rather be doing ... me Dad'll kill himself when he finds out ... not that he's me real Dad, me Mam married him when I were ten and I never got on with him that well ... It were him who got me me first job, three years ago it were... "Time you got yourself a job," he says. "Is it that late," I says. He says " I don't want any of your lip, your mother's supported you for seventeen years, it's time you supported her for a change. " "I'll buy her a crutch," I says. He didn't like that much but there again there isn't much about me he does like. In the end I went for a job in a shoe shop - it were the area manager I saw... *(DANNY moves to the right of the stage. The stage right area is illuminated. LT 2.)*

MR. BRAMHALL: What do you want to work in a shoe shop for?

DANNY: I don't know - it's a job i'n't it?

MR. BRAMHALL: It's a job, yes, but don't you want more out of life than that? Have you no secret ambitions? To be a manager? Or even an area manager like me?

DANNY: If you like.

MR. BRAMHALL: But why the shoe trade? You must have a reason. Is it to give yourself a better standard of living? To meet a better class of people? To broaden your intellectual and emotional horizons?

DANNY: I just want to sell shoes.

MR. BRAMHALL: Yes but why shoes? Why not televisions or washing machines or even aspidistras?

DANNY: I can't see there's much call for aspidistras.

MR. BRAMHALL: You're not trying to be funny I hope?

DANNY: I'm not, I don't have to try, me mates say I'm funny without trying.

MR. BRAMHALL: *(Slowly.)* Yes... well ... I think we'll give you the benefit of a six month trial period and we'll see how you get on after that. You can report to Miss Pringle, the manageress, at eight thirty on Monday morning... and by the way Mr. Morgan it is only a minor point but we at Sampsons do like our staff to maintain certain standards of dress.

DANNY: How d'you mean?

MR. BRAMHALL: Socks.

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DANNY: Socks?

MR. BRAMHALL: Yes, socks.

DANNY: What about them?

MR. BRAMHALL: You're not wearing any

(Exit Mr. BRAMHALL. DANNY moves back to the centre. LT 3.)

DANNY: I wasn't an' all, I'd clean forgotten them in the rush. I spent all that weekend thinking about the coming Monday morning me first job - just imagine it - money, real money in me pocket - not something handed out by the dole office ... I worked out all the things I were going to buy - clothes ... stereo ... records... I couldn't make me mind up whether to go for a Rolls-Royce or a two-fifty Suzuki. On the Sunday night I had this dream about the manageress, Miss Pringle... I were picturing in me mind's eye what she would be like ... tall, I thought, and slim, the mature type that wears black dresses and silk underwear ... not like our Susan, she's not what you'd call mature - she keeps putting her chewing gum back in the paper for later on and things like that... I were just dreaming about what Miss Pringle were going to do to me in the stock cupboard when Monday morning comes around sooner than I expected - I'd gone and overlaid and it were well after eight-thirty by the time I got to the shop... You should have seen me face when I got me first look at Miss P - legs like a sparrow and breasts like two fried eggs sliding down a wall!

(DANNY walks to stage left where MISS PRINGLE is up a small ladder with a clip board checking stock. DANNY coughs but she takes no notice. LT 4.)

DANNY: Excuse me.

MISS PRINGLE: I'm afraid we aren't open yet, Sir - nine o'clock we open - if you'd just care to wait outside we'll deal with you immediately upon the stroke of nine.

DANNY: You don't understand.

MISS PRINGLE: I understand perfectly well, Sir, you must be in a very great hurry, but we cannot begin serving until nine o'clock - rules are rules as I'm sure you'll appreciate.

DANNY: But I don't want to buy anything.

MISS PRINGLE: You don't?

DANNY: No. I've come about the job - Mr. Bramhall sent me - I'm the new assistant.

MISS PRINGLE: *(Eyeing him up and down disbelievingly.)* You?

DANNY: Yes, Mr. Morgan. *(Extends hand which she ignores.)*
Danny Morgan. You must be Miss Pringle.

MISS PRINGLE: You're late.

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- DANNY: I know - I overlaid - it won't happen again.
- MISS PRINGLE: It won't. Well then I suppose we'd better find you something useful to do - have you any previous experience of the retail trade?
- DANNY: Sorry?
- MISS PRINGLE: Selling have you done any selling before?
- DANNY: I haven't ... I once had a paper round but I don't suppose...
- MISS PRINGLE: Er ... no ... you'll be all right if you just remember that whenever you are in doubt you must seek advice and just remember that the Company is always right.
- DANNY: Don't you mean the customer?
- MISS PRINGLE: I mean "Company..... there's far too much of this customer's rights business goes on today the less they know of their rights the better. Don't worry you'll soon learn, one or two "Procoms" under your belt and you'll see what I mean.
- DANNY: "Procoms?"
- MISS PRINGLE: Professional complainers we get lots of them in here..... they spend two or three pounds on a pair of slippers and expect you to be able to dig the garden in them. If you let them they'll be back forever wanting to change things just because something's got a little scratch or a seam lose doesn't mean they can waste our time for ever with it ... you've got to be hard with them, call their bluff if they start threatening you with solicitors or small claims courts just give me a shout ... I'll soon sort them out.
- DANNY: Right.
- MISS PRINGLE: You can start by helping Mr. Grainger in the stock room, he's sorting out some of next season's range You get half an hour for lunch but you can sort that out with him. (*DANNY starts to move.*) By the way Mr. Morgan, Mr. Bramhall mentioned your unfortunate omission, at the interview, with your footwear.
- DANNY: Oh you mean the socks? Yes I'm sorry about that.
- MISS PRINGLE: It seems you do not learn easily, Mr. Morgan.
- DANNY: I'm all right today, both socks well and truly on ... see.
(He lifts his trousers to show his socks.)
- MISS PRINGLE: But what about your shoes, Mr. Morgan?
- DANNY: Shoes, Miss Pringle?
- MISS PRINGLE: Yes, Mr. Morgan, shoes. They are odd are they not?

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DANNY: Oh my God, so they are!

MISS PRINGLE: You'd better select a pair from last season's stock and we can deduct it from your wages. We can't have you selling shoes in odd shoes yourself, now can we?

DANNY: I suppose not.

MISS PRINGLE: Get on with it then.

(DANNY moves back to the centre and the lights change back to the moors scene. LT5.)

DANNY: So that's where me first weeks wages went. I didn't half feel a burke ... but then I'm used to that by now. There isn't anything, that has to be done that I can't do the wrong way round... I can guarantee it...you imagine a job to do, any job, and I can guarantee I'll do it arse about face like the toast rack that I once made for me Mam at school by the time I'd finished it the gaps were that small that you couldn't fit a slice of bread in it I didn't realise till I got it home me Mam weren't bothered though, she just stood there with the toast rack in one hand and the slice of bread in t'other she looks at the toast rack and she looks at the bread and you know what she says? "Never mind", she says, "It'll do for letters." She's nice like that, our Mam. I'm not bad at everything though take running for instance I were one of the best runners we had at our school ... used to win no end of cross-countries the trouble were that I were always getting lost... whenever they said turn left and second left I couldn't remember whether they said first left first or second and whichever way I chose I were never right. That's why I joined the Territorials, 'cause I wanted to be good at something. So when they asked me which one I wanted to join I said "I want the best." So they said "S.A.S.?" and I said "Yes." I didn't even know what it meant they sent me along for load of fitness tests and things and really put me through it, but I enjoyed it, see? I enjoy anything that's physical in the end they must have thought "We're not going to get rid of this bugger" so they let me join ... me? S.A.S. Territorial I ask you. I were right proud they promised me a uniform and everything the first one I told were me best mate Dave

(DANNY moves to stage right and that area is lit up. He stands still and is approached by DA VE. LT6.)

DAVE: What's this then?

DANNY: What's what?

DAVE: Can't you pluck up courage to go in?

DANNY: In where?

DAVE: In chemists of course. Are you shy?

DANNY: I'm waiting for Susan.

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DAVE: I'll bet you are do you want me to go in for you?

DANNY: Eh?

DAVE: I'm not shy. How many do you want?

DANNY: How many what?

DAVE: Come off it, son, this is Dave you're talking to, you don't have to try to con me never con a conner.

DANNY: It's just your filthy mind.

DAVE: What's filthy about it? There's nothing filthy about my mind a good honest upright citizen I am this bird were only telling me last night how upright I were! Here did you hear this one about the bloke with a twitch in his eye? He were arrested by the Police and when they told him to turn out his pockets he had fourteen dozen contraceptives on him. You know what he says when they asked him for an explanation? "You try walking into a chemists," he says, "and asking for an aspirin when you've got an affliction like mine!" Do you get it? Affliction? He had this twitch you see....

DANNY: All right.

DAVE: Well don't strain yourself. What's up, have you found ten pence and lost a quid?

DANNY: I were trying to work out how to tell our, Susan something.

DAVE: What're you going to tell her? Don't tell me ... it's all off, you've found yourself a rich young widow and you've seen the error of your ways?

DANNY: No.

DAVE: You can't go shopping with her on Saturday 'cause you're coming to the match with me?

DANNY: No ... I've joined the army

DAVE: You've done what?

DANNY: Not the regulars, the Territorials.

DAVE: Part-time privates? What did you want to do a stupid thing like that for?

DANNY: I just felt like it.

DAVE: You did, did you? And what about your responsibilities?

DANNY: What responsibilities? You sound just like our Susan.

DAVE: It's weekends when they go off playing soldiers - what about

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the lads?

DANNY: They'll have to get by without me.

DAVE: Without the star winger? Come off it.

DANNY: It's only occasional weekends, I can play some weeks.

DAVE: They won't like, it'll put your team place in jeopardy.

DANNY: There's got to be more to Sunday mornings than chasing a piece of leather round a football pitch.

DAVE: What will Susan say?

DANNY: Not a lot.

DAVE: Do you get paid for it?

DANNY: As long as you do so many a year.

DAVE: Do you get to drive a tank? I've always wanted to drive a tank.

DANNY: There's more to it than tank driving you've got to learn radio electronics, map reading, rifle drill....

DAVE: Rifle drill? Sounds dangerous to me playing with guns.

DANNY: It's not dangerous. Do you think I'd be doing it if it were dangerous?

DAVE: And that's what you want to do at weekends? I can think of better things to do with me time.

DANNY: I'll bet you can. (*Sees Susan approaching.*) Look out, here she comes Hello love.

(*Enter SUSAN, pecking DANNY on the cheek and ignoring DA VE.*)

SUSAN: Hello Danny. (*Coldly.*) Dave.

DAVE: All right Susan? Danny were just telling me about some news he had for you.

SUSAN: News? What news?

DAVE: I think I'd better be getting along leave you two love birds together.

(*Exit DA VE.*)

DANNY: (*To retreating DA VE.*) You just wait.

SUSAN: What was he on about? What news?

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DANNY: It's nothing. Can we walk for a bit?

SUSAN: Walk where?

DANNY: Anywhere as long as we get away from here.

(They move slightly.)

SUSAN: What's got into you?

DANNY: Nothing, I'm perfectly all right.

SUSAN: What was Dave on about? What news?

DANNY: All right. I did have something to tell you but I were going to break it to you more gently.

SUSAN: Well go on then, I'm waiting.

DANNY: Remember me saying I were going to look for a spare time job?

SUSAN: Yes, you said you fancied being a barman or something like that.

DANNY: That's right.

SUSAN: Well, we'll need all the money we can get if we're going to raise that deposit.

DANNY: Well it's the something I've got.

SUSAN: What "something?"

DANNY: *(Hesitating.)* I've joined the Territorials.

SUSAN: The what?

DANNY: The Territorials.

SUSAN: That's the army isn't it?

DANNY: Yes, but it's not full time only part-time, at weekends.

SUSAN: What? Every weekend?

DANNY: No not 'every', only odd ones. I knew you'd take it the wrong way.

SUSAN: Which way do you expect me to take it? Why didn't you discuss it with me first? You said we were going to discuss everything from now on.

DANNY: I was going to discuss it.

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SUSAN: Oh aye after the event. You've done it now, signed your life away I suppose. How many weekends is it, this Territorial thing?

DANNY: Only twelve.

SUSAN: Only?

DANNY: And you have to go on so many exercises.

SUSAN: And what am I doing while you're away playing soldiers?

DANNY: It's not "playing soldiers." That's just what Dave said. It's fulfilling an important role in the defence of this country.

SUSAN: You sound just like one of them adverts on the tele ...
"Join the Army and see the world!"

DANNY: You do so, even in the Territorials you sometimes get a chance to go overseas.

SUSAN: Overseas now is it?

DANNY: That's only later on after you've been trained ... I've got to learn all kinds of things yet.

SUSAN: I see. And what happens if there's a war then? Where does that put you?

DANNY: You're just the reserve, the standby. They don't send you to the front line or anything.

.SUSAN: Don't they?

DANNY: No.

SUSAN: Well what's the point in training you then?

DANNY: Well you've got to be as good as regulars, haven't you, just in case?

SUSAN: Just in case? I see. I wish you'd asked me first.

DANNY: Why should I have to ask you?

SUSAN: I should have thought that would have been obvious.... here you are going off leaving me every weekend....

DANNY: It's not every...

SUSAN: No matter You're still going away and I'm to hang about like I don't know what waiting for you to come home ... shouldn't I have some say in it?

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DANNY: It's only the occasional weekend.

SUSAN: And what if I said that to you?

DANNY: What?

SUSAN: That I was going off gallivanting with my friends all weekend while you had to stay at home? What would you say to that?

DANNY: But you wouldn't.

SUSAN: Why wouldn't I?

DANNY: Because you haven't got any friends !

SUSAN: I what? How dare you! You take that back!

DANNY: I didn't mean what I meant was....

SUSAN: I know what you meant. It's a get at my mother again isn't it? You know I can't leave her on her own one day you'll be old and then you'll realise.

DANNY: *(Aside.)* Not if I can help it. *(To SUSAN.)* Look, I'm sorry I didn't mean it you know I don't like arguing.

SUSAN: For something you don't like, you seem to do plenty of it.

DANNY: I'm sorry. *(Putting his arm round her.)* Give us a kiss and tell us you forgive us.

SUSAN: *(Shrugging him off.)* I'll do no such thing. In the street? In broad daylight? Somebody'll see us.

DANNY: I'm not bothered come on.

SUSAN: Get off.

DANNY: I thought we were engaged?

SUSAN: Well?