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DANNY THE CHAMPION OF THE WORLD

by Roald Dahl

Adapted for the stage by

David Wood

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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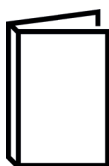
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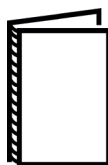


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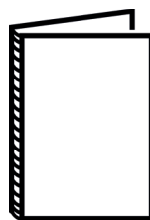
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ABOUT THE ADAPTOR

David Wood is often referred to as ‘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’s *The Old Man of Lochnagar*, Philip Pullman’s *Clockwork*, Judith Kerr’s *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* (Olivier Award nomination in 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 the Duke of York’s in the West End and won the Olivier Award in 2013 for Best Entertainment and Family.

His book, *Theatre for Children* (Faber & Faber, 1999) 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 eightieth birthday, he wrote *The Queen’s Handbag*, broadcast live from Buckingham Palace Gardens to 8 million BBC1 viewers. With composer Richard Taylor, he adapted L.P. Hartley’s *The Go-Between*, which won Best Musical Production at the 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 President (and former Chair) of Action for Children's Arts and a trustee 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

The play is written for seven actors, some of whom play several parts. (NB the original production used eight actors, which lessened the doubling requirement.) A larger cast is possible and could enhance the “community” feel.

Danny acts as narrator, and is able to come out of the action and go back in.

The play celebrates the strong, loving relationship between Danny and his dad. The most important character in the story, in typical Dahl fashion, is Danny, the empowered child – he is the main protagonist, who triumphs over adversity in an adult world.

The play also considers the responsibilities of parent to child and child to parent.

The play is also a celebration of a village community and its closeness.

Animal rights are also in the spotlight.

There are no songs, but incidental music will help set the mood and increase the tension. I envisage many sound effects. There are possibilities for puppetry.

To achieve certain vital elements of the story, such as the flight of pheasants, and their dropping from the trees, film or video could well be useful; if so, the use of slides to help convey some of the locations may also be a good idea.

David Wood

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DANNY THE CHAMPION OF THE WORLD

First performed by the Sherman Theatre Company at the Sherman Theatre, Cardiff, on 19th November 2004. The cast was as follows:

DANNY	Griff Jameson
DAD	Dafydd Emyr
CHARLIE KINCH	Iwan Tudor
RABBETTS	Gareth Wyn Griffiths
MR HAZELL	Nick Wayland Evans
DR SPENCER	Nia Davies
MRS CLIPSTONE	Llinos Mai
SERGEANT SAMWAYS	Matthew Bailey

Other characters played by members of the cast

Directed by Phil Clark
Designed by Sean Crowley
Lighting Design by Ceri James
Musical Direction by Paula Gardiner

GENERAL THOUGHTS FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Phil Clark's inventive premiere production employed actor/musicians, which contributed greatly to the overall style. Future stagings may well be more conventional, but many aspects of Phil's production are worth recording, because they so successfully helped translate the story from page to stage.

Recognising that much of the action focuses on the interior and exterior of the caravan, it was decided to set it centre, and it had the ability to stay upstage in the scenes at the filling station, and roll downstage when required. Furthermore it revolved to reveal the interior. In the Hazell's Wood scenes it was upstage, obscured by sliding scenery. The petrol pumps were to one side of the stage. This enabled Hazell's Rolls, which was a cut-out, to only partly enter, then "reverse" off. Charlie Kinch's taxi was also a cut-out. But Sergeant Samways' Austin Seven was a three-dimensional "working" car, able to be driven around the stage as required. However, it proved impossible to strap a bicycle to it, so the script was adjusted slightly – Sergeant Samways asked to borrow Dad's bicycle while his car was being serviced.

It was decided not to use the Austin Seven to pull Dad from the pit. One end of the rope was attached to a tree, the other given to Dad, who used it to heave himself up and out of the pit, helped by Danny. This proved quicker and perfectly acceptable.

We emphasised the strength of the local community, to show how much Danny and his father are appreciated in the village. This gave me the idea of involving the audience – as members of the community – and the scene opening Act II, in which they are asked to join the petition against the eviction, worked rewardingly well. And empowering the audience, by inviting them to help Danny sabotage Hazell's shooting party, worked a treat!

Casting Dr Spencer with a female actor (unlike the book) was very acceptable, although I can imagine other productions will successfully cast a male actor. But increasing the male/female ratio helped significantly create a community feel.

The production used some delightful puppets. There were chickens on rods, operated sometimes from off stage, sometimes on stage. And the "demonstration" chicken was a kind of glove puppet operated by Danny. There were also puppet pheasants,

some of which were operated on racks accommodating several, sitting on top of Hazell's Rolls and the caravan.

Video was very effectively used to help suggest the pheasants flying up. And slides were projected to help suggest the trees in Hazell's Wood. When Danny drives the Austin Seven, video was used in the background.

Danny also "drives" much of the play. Our actor was youthful but experienced, and it made me realize that the casting of Danny is very important. It might be tempting to employ a ten-year-old for authenticity and vulnerability, but it would be safer to use someone older in years and experience!

I was interested to witness the audience reaction to *Danny The Champion Of The World*, because it is unusual in that, unlike most of Dahl's children's classics, it uses no magic or fantasy. It all reads very "real", and needs to be played "real". There are, it is true, the trademark larger than life characters – the vindictive Mr Hazell (Dahl wrote great "baddies"!), the eccentric Dr Spencer, the patronising Council Officer – but the major success of the story, in my view, is the wonderfully warm central father/son relationship and the way Danny proves so much more sensible than the adults in resolving disputes. The audience, thankfully, responded to the "reality" of the situations. And, of course, there was much Dahl humour to enjoy and adventure to share. And the play does, I think, encourage children to think about the moral dilemmas posed both by poaching and shooting for sport.

By treating the story seriously, Phil Clark proved (as he has done many times before) that theatre for young audiences needn't be infused with enforced jollity or banal slapstick. If the story is strong enough (and in *Danny* Dahl has delivered magnificently), the theatre experience can be strong and undiluted. I hope that future productions of this play will both entertain young audiences (and older ones too!) but also make them pause for thought.

David Wood

SETTINGS AND DESIGN THOUGHTS

One of the main challenges will be to go between the caravan/filling station and Hazell's Wood, as speedily as possible. A revolve is one possibility, with the caravan and filling station as far down the revolve as possible, giving room for a screen backing, which comes into view when we revolve to Hazell's Wood.

The screen could be used for still or film/video images, which could be particularly useful during scenes on the road, notably when Danny is driving. They could also be used for Hazell's Wood, and to enhance the visual picture of pheasants flying and also dropping from their roosting places. There could also be slides for the occasional locations, such as the school hall or the village hall.

The convincing presentation of the pheasants is also a challenge, which could perhaps be made possible with a mixture of puppetry and film/video. The birds have to apparently fly, drop, fly out of Mrs Clipstone's pram and land on Hazell's car.

I suggest that the main set, incorporating the filling station and the caravan (exterior and interior) should be three-dimensional. The chickens run around freely (imagined or using puppetry). There are three vehicles. Maybe these can be cutouts. Maybe they can be more sophisticated and three-dimensional. They are Sergeant Samways' Baby Austin, Charlie's taxi and Hazell's Rolls.

A pit, in which Dad is trapped, needs to be realistically achieved.

David Wood

SUGGESTED CASTING INCLUDING DOUBLING

FOR A CAST OF SEVEN

Actor 1: (M) **Danny**
Actor 2: (M) **Dad/Shooting Party Guest**
Actor 3: (M) **Mr Hazell**
Actor 4: (F) **Dr Spencer/Gamekeeper 2/Head Teacher/
Shooting Party Guest**
Actor 5: (F) **Mrs Clipstone/Council Inspector/Shooting
Party Guest**
Actor 6: (M) **Sergeant Samways/Gamekeeper 1 (Rabbetts)
Ambulance Man**
Actor 7: (M) **Charlie Kinch/Teacher (Mr Jackson)/
Gamekeeper 3/Shooting Party Guest/
Ambulance Man**

FOR A CAST OF EIGHT

Actor 1: (M) **Danny**
Actor 2: (M) **Dad**
Actor 3: (M) **Mr Hazell**
Actor 4: (F) **Dr Spencer/Head Teacher/Gamekeeper 2/
Shooting Party Guest**
Actor 5: (F) **Mrs Clipstone/Council Inspector/Shooting
Party Guest**
Actor 6: (M) **Sergeant Samways/Shooting Party Guest**
Actor 7: (M) **Gamekeeper 1 (Rabbetts)/Ambulance Man**

Actor 8: (M) **Charlie Kinch/Teacher (Mr Jackson)/
Gamekeeper 3/Ambulance Man/Shooting
Party Guest**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

David Wood wishes to thank the Sherman Theatre Company for commissioning this play, and Phil Clark for directing a splendid premiere production.

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Samuel French Ltd acknowledges the publication of the original book *Danny the Champion of the World* by Roald Dahl by George Allen and Unwin in hardback format and Puffin Books in paperback format.

SEQUENCE OF SCENES

ACT I

Hazell's Wood	Wednesday evening
Caravan (exterior)	Wednesday night
Filling Station	Thursday morning
Caravan (interior)	Thursday evening
Caravan (exterior)	Thursday evening/night
Filling Station	Thursday night
Road	Thursday night
Hazell's Wood/Pit	Thursday night
Caravan (exterior)	Friday morning
Caravan (interior)	Friday evening
School Hall	Monday morning
Filling Station	Tuesday

ACT II

School Hall	Wednesday evening
Caravan (exterior)	Wednesday evening
Caravan (interior)	Friday afternoon
Road	Friday evening
Hazell's Wood/Clearing	Friday evening
Road	Friday evening
Hazell's Wood/Clearing	Friday night
Filling Station	Saturday morning
Road	Saturday afternoon
Hazell's Wood/Clearing	Saturday afternoon
Filling Station	Saturday afternoon

CHARACTERS

DAD (William)

GAMEKEEPER 1 (Rabbetts)

GAMEKEEPER 2

GAMEKEEPER 3

DANNY, aged ten

CHARLIE KINCH, the taxi driver

MRS CLIPSTONE, the vicar's wife

SERGEANT SAMWAYS, the village policeman, proud owner
of a vintage Baby Austin

MR HAZELL, the local landowner

DR SPENCER

COUNCIL INSPECTOR

HEAD TEACHER

SCHOOL TEACHER (Mr Jackson)

SHOOTING PARTY GUESTS

TWO AMBULANCE MEN

There is a male/female ratio problem when casting. For a cast of seven, if we were to observe exactly the gender of the characters in the book, we would need six male actors and one female.

I have suggested, to create roles for a second female actor, that **Dr Spencer**, **Gamekeeper 2**, **the Head Teacher** and a **Shooting Party Guest** be played by a female actor.

ACT I

Hazell's Wood

Twilight. The rustling of trees.

*In the shadows we are aware of pheasants strolling on the ground. The silhouette shapes of two **GAMEKEEPERS**, shotguns on their shoulders, wander through the trees, patrolling the wood. Another shadowy figure (**HAZELL**), enters the clearing. He looks at the birds, is pleased with what he sees, then goes to meet the **GAMEKEEPERS**. As they talk in a group, another figure (**DAD**), in dark clothes, creeps stealthily on all fours into the clearing. He throws something towards the pheasants, who react with a flutter of wings. The noise alerts the **GAMEKEEPERS**, who dash into the clearing. Torches flash as **DAD** retreats, keeping low and still.*

*The **GAMEKEEPERS** cock their shotguns and look around. **HAZELL** joins them. Suddenly **DAD** makes a run for it. An exciting chase through the trees. **DAD** trips and is nearly caught. **HAZELL** grabs a shotgun from one of the **GAMEKEEPERS**. As **DAD** escapes, **HAZELL** fires his gun at the retreating figure. He hurries off in pursuit, crossly chivvying the **GAMEKEEPERS**, who follow him.*

Music as the scene changes.

Caravan (Exterior)

Moonlight. Mist. An owl hoots. The glow of a paraffin lamp shines from the window.

DANNY *is sitting on the steps of the caravan, looking anxiously at the road ahead. He wears pyjamas and a sweater round his shoulders. Suddenly he thinks he sees something, stands and walks down the steps trying to see through the misty darkness. Nothing. Disconsolate and cold, he puts the sweater on and returns to his vantage point sitting at the top of the steps. He puts his head in his hands.*

Pause. Suddenly he hears footsteps. He looks up in anticipation.

DAD *enters, trying to tread softly. He wears a dark sweater, trousers and cloth cap.*

DANNY Dad? (*Relieved, he runs into DAD's arms*)

DAD Danny! What are you doing up?

DANNY I thought something awful had happened to you.

DAD You should be asleep.

DANNY (*upset and cross*) Where have you been?

DAD You must be tired out.

DANNY I'm not tired. I've been worried.

DAD I'm sorry.

DANNY Where have you been, Dad?

DAD Come on, Danny, back to bed.

DANNY *sulkily pulls away.*

DAD, *feeling guilty, but not wanting to talk further, goes inside the caravan.*

DANNY stays outside. Hurt and angry he sits on the steps. He voices his thoughts to the AUDIENCE.

DANNY I don't get it. What's Dad up to? He left me on my own. Why won't he talk about it? He's never done it before! Maybe he *has*, and I've never woken up before! No, he wouldn't. Would he? Not Dad. He's a great dad. Since Mum died he's had to look after me all on his own, cook the meals, do the washing. He's a great dad, he really is. He teaches me things. Like grasshoppers have their ears, guess where? ...In the sides of their tummies. But crickets have ears in their legs! He takes me hunting for birds' nests. We found a skylark's once, on the ground in a field, with six tiny eggs, all brown and white. But you mustn't touch them or their mother might abandon them. We made a kite out of some sticks and an old blue shirt. It's got a proper tail and a long string and it flies brilliantly, as long as the wind doesn't drop. Dad's great at making things. Last birthday he built me an amazing car out of bike wheels and old soapboxes. I whizz really fast on it, shooting down the hill. He's a great dad. He smiles with his eyes. All twinkly. You know how some people smile at you with their mouths (*He demonstrates*), but their eyes stay the same. That's not twinkly. Dad's twinkly. (*Pause*) He wasn't so twinkly tonight, though. More like shifty...

Suddenly an old hunting horn looms through the curtains covering the top half of the caravan's stable door, accompanied by a loud blowing sound.

DAD (*offstage*) Phoooooooooooo!

DANNY jumps, turns and sees the hunting horn pointing at him.

DANNY What are you doing?

DAD (*acting up well; unseen*) I is the BFG!

He pops his head out. He has changed out of his dark sweater.

I is the Big Friendly Giant! I is a-coming to blow this chiddler a wopsy dream. To cheer him up.

DANNY (*resisting joining in the game*) He only does it when the chidders are asleep.

DAD (*in character still*) This chiddler should be asleep. It's very late.

DANNY Yeah, well.

DAD (*coming out of character, but bright, trying to make peace*) Fancy a sandwich? Midnight feast? (*Holding out his hands, a sandwich in each*) Jam or cheese? Cheese or jam?

DANNY *tries not to show interest.*

It's strawberry.

DANNY (*softening a little*) Thanks. (*He takes the sandwich, and bites into it*)

DAD *starts eating the cheese sandwich. Pause.*

DAD You used to like me being the BFG. Telling you stories about him. (*Gradually getting into skilful storytelling mode*) Striding off to Dream Country, where the dreams mysteriously float around in the air like wispy, misty bubbles. Then he catches them in glass bottles and screws the jars down tight. And, in the dead of night, he goes prowling through the village searching for sleeping children. Because of his great height, he can reach up to their bedroom windows and (*demonstrating*) blow in the dreams...

DANNY *can't help himself joining in.*

DAD }
DANNY } (*together; a blowing sound*) Phoooooooooooo!

DAD And the child begins to dream a—

DANNY *smiles.*

DAD }
DANNY } (*together*) —fantastic, delumptious, wopsy dream!

Pause. DANNY's smile fades.

DANNY Where were you, Dad? You shouldn't just go off like that.

DAD I was in Dream Country.

DANNY No you weren't. What's the big secret? Why won't you tell me?

DAD I was, Danny. In my very own Dream Country. But it's too late now. I'll tell you tomorrow. Promise. Come on. Busy day tomorrow.

DANNY is coaxed inside the caravan.

The lighting fades and the scene starts to change.

Filling Station

A cockerel crows. Lights fade up slowly. Morning.

Two petrol pumps, a small wooden shed (office) and the workshop. A "Sorry, Closed" sign hangs over one pump.

Chickens scurry freely around the petrol pumps, clucking happily.

A saloon car, with a taxi sign on top, enters and stops at the pumps, making the chickens scatter. The driver, CHARLIE, loudly sounds his horn, then gets out of the car and shouts towards the caravan (which may or may not still be visible depending on the design, size of stage etc.).

CHARLIE Shop!

DAD and DANNY enter running from the caravan. Both are dressed in working clothes, overalls or somesuch.

DAD Sorry, Charlie. Late night! (He changes the "Sorry, Closed" sign to "Open")

CHARLIE (reading significance into this remark) Aha! No problem, Willum. Mornin', young Danny.

DANNY Morning, Mr Kinch.

DAD Danny will look after you, Charlie.

CHARLIE Okeydokey!

DAD goes to the shed and opens up, then crosses to open the workshop.

DANNY operates the pump expertly, carefully inserting the nozzle and turning on the petrol.

DANNY Fill her up, Mr Kinch?

CHARLIE That's it, Danny. Full tank. Long day today. Pick up Mr Pratchett from the airport, then take Mrs Witton to

her sister-in-law's, then collect the wife and the shopping from the market.

DANNY Nice day for it.

CHARLIE Ah. Warming up nicely. I like September.

DANNY Do you need oil, Mr Kinch?

CHARLIE No, no. "Oi'll" pay for the petrol, then "Oi'll" be off!
Ha, ha!

DANNY smiles, hangs the nozzle back on the pump and collects CHARLIE's money.

DANNY "Oi'll" get your change!

He goes to the shed.

CHARLIE Ha! Good one!

DAD returns from the workshop.

He's bright, your Danny!

DAD The light of my life, Charlie!

CHARLIE (*meaningfully*) Any joy, Willum?

DAD Eh?

DANNY returns, unseen by DAD and CHARLIE. He overhears their exchange.

CHARLIE Last night! Any luck?

DAD No, not a thing. (*Noticing DANNY*) See you, Charlie, have a good day!

He returns to the workshop.

DANNY Change, Mr Kinch.

CHARLIE Thanks, Danny. (*Getting in his car*) "Oi'll" be seeing you! Tata!

He drives offstage.

He disappears behind the workshop.

DAD *comes out of the workshop.*

DAD Mrs Clipstone, good morning!

MRS CLIPSTONE Hallo, William.

DAD *(looking in the pram)* Morning, Christopher! *(To MRS CLIPSTONE)* Eggs is it?

MRS CLIPSTONE Hope so. Danny's looking. He's a lovely boy, your Danny.

DAD Thank you, ma'am! I wouldn't disagree with that!

MRS CLIPSTONE *(excited)* William, I hear you, er...last night.

DAD Oh. Yes. *(He indicates to MRS CLIPSTONE to kindly keep her voice down).*

DANNY *appears round the workshop. He overhears.*

MRS CLIPSTONE *(softly)* Any luck?

DAD No, no! *(Seeing DANNY)* Ah, your eggs, Mrs Clipstone.

MRS CLIPSTONE Thanks, Danny. *(Paying him)* How's school? Enjoying it?

DANNY It's all right. But I'd rather be here every day, working with Dad.

MRS CLIPSTONE Oh. Nothing like a good education. *(Starting to go)* Eh, William?

DAD Right, Mrs Clipstone. I wish I'd had one! Bye.

MRS CLIPSTONE *(leaving)* Bye! Thank you.

She exits.

DANNY Bye! Bye, Christopher. *(Deciding to broach the issue)* Dad, what did she mean, "any luck"?

The sound of an approaching vehicle.

DAD *(let off the hook)* Hey up! Look, Danny, it's Sergeant Samways in his Austin Seven!

Enter SERGEANT SAMWAYS in his vintage Baby Austin. It splutters to a halt. A bicycle is strapped to the back.

(admiringly) Nineteen thirty-three—

DAD } *(together)* —and still running sweet as the proverbial
DANNY } nut!

They happily go to admire the car as SERGEANT SAMWAYS climbs out. He is in police uniform, carrying his helmet.

DAD Welcome, sergeant! My favourite customer!

SERGEANT SAMWAYS *(laughing)* It's not me you're so pleased to see, William. It's my pride and joy! *(He pats the bonnet affectionately)*

DAD Always pleased to see you *both*.

SERGEANT SAMWAYS And' ow's Danny?

DANNY Fine, thanks, sergeant.

DAD Got a problem?

SERGEANT SAMWAYS No, no. She's still running sweet as the proverbial nut.

DAD and DANNY *exchange a quick smile.*

But she's a bit slow starting from cold. Coughing a bit, you know.

DAD Cylinders might want decarbonising. We'll fix her up.

SERGEANT SAMWAYS Much appreciated.

DAD Our pleasure, eh Danny?

DANNY You bet. Can I back her into the workshop, Dad?

DAD If Sergeant Samways doesn't mind.

SERGEANT SAMWAYS She's all yours, Danny. I reckon as you knows as much about cars as your Dad. Knee-high to a grasshopper you were when you first took an engine to pieces and put it back together again! I'll never forget it. What were you, six?

DANNY (*smiling*) Seven.

SERGEANT SAMWAYS In you get, then.

DANNY climbs in.

Right. Ignition key on. Pull on the choke. Not too much. Right. Now press the starter button.

The car coughs and dies.

There's the problem, Willum. Try again, Danny.

This time the car splutters into life.

That's it. Can you find reverse? (*He looks in to check*) That's the one. Clutch down. A bit of accelerator and off you go!

The car starts to reverse.

Right hand down a bit! You got it!

The car retreats into the workshop.

Good lad! (*Quickly, to DAD*) Hey, Willum, a little bird tells me you were out last night... Success?

DAD No, 'fraid not, sergeant, I...

He is interrupted by the sound of an approaching car.

SERGEANT SAMWAYS Don't worry, I'll unstrap my bike.

DAD I'll give you a hand.

They disappear into the workshop as DANNY finishes parking the Baby Austin.

Enter a splendid Rolls Royce. At the wheel is HAZELL, the local landowner. He parks at the pumps. Then, seeing

nobody in attendance, he impatiently sounds his horn several times and steps out of the car.

DANNY *runs from the workshop.*

DANNY Sorry to keep you waiting, sir.

HAZELL *(throwing DANNY the key to the petrol cap)* Fill her up and look sharp about it.

DANNY Right, sir.

HAZELL And keep your filthy little hands to yourself, d'you understand?

DANNY What do you mean, sir?

HAZELL *(pointing a leather riding-crop at DANNY)* If you make any dirty fingermarks on my paintwork, I'll give you a good hiding.

DAD *has emerged from the workshop and overheard this threat. He runs to the Rolls, pushes DANNY to one side and faces HAZELL.*

DAD *(softly, controlling his anger)* I don't like you speaking to my son like that, Mr Hazell.

HAZELL *looks straight ahead, avoiding DAD's gaze, smiling smugly.*

You had no reason to threaten him. He'd done nothing wrong.

HAZELL *doesn't react.*

Next time you threaten someone with a good hiding, I suggest you pick on a person your own size, like me, for instance. Now go away, please. We do not wish to serve you. *(He takes the key from DANNY's hand and tosses it to HAZELL)*

HAZELL You'll regret that. No one crosses Victor Hazell and gets away with it. I have friends in very high places. You have been warned.

He climbs in the Rolls and drives offstage.

DAD *puts his arm round DANNY.*

DAD It's all right, Danny.

SERGEANT SAMWAYS *emerges from the workshop, pushing his bike.*

SERGEANT SAMWAYS There goes Mr Charm.

DAD He makes my blood boil. Just because he got rich brewing beer he thinks he rules the village. Coming here and bullying Danny. I'm not a violent man, sergeant, but next time I see that great glistening beery face I'll be sorely tempted to punch its fat nose.

SERGEANT SAMWAYS I sympathise, Willum. But watch it. He's a law unto himself, that one. I'll pick up my pride and joy next week. Bye, Danny.

DANNY Bye sergeant.

DANNY *looks at DAD, who is still furious.*

The lighting fades, except on DANNY.

As it fades DAD closes the workshop and the office, and hangs the "Sorry, Closed" notice on the pump, then enters the caravan

Meanwhile...

(sharing his troubles with the AUDIENCE) I've never seen Dad like this. He's never angry. That Mr Hazell's horrible, but he didn't hit me. There must be more to it. What's the big secret?

The light fades on DANNY.

As it fades, DANNY walks thoughtfully towards the caravan and steps inside.

Caravan (Interior)

Early evening. A paraffin lamp illuminates the table where DANNY and DAD sit eating.

DAD More baked beans?

DANNY Please.

DAD goes to the paraffin burner, picks up the saucepan and spoons out some baked beans onto DANNY's plate. Then he puts the kettle on the burner. DANNY eats in silence.

After a pause.

DAD Danny, about last night.

DANNY Where were you, Dad? What's the big secret?

DAD I was up in Hazell's Wood.

DANNY Hazell's Wood! That's miles away!

DAD Six miles and a half. I know I shouldn't have gone, and I'm very, very sorry about it. But I had such a powerful yearning...

DANNY Dream Country.

DAD *(with a rueful smile)* Yes.

DANNY What's so special about Hazell's Wood?

DAD spoons cocoa and sugar into two mugs.

DAD Danny, do you know what is meant by poaching?

DANNY Poaching? Not really, no. Except poaching eggs.

DAD It means going up into the woods in the dead of night and coming back with something for the pot. Something to eat. Poachers in other places poach all sorts of different things, but around here it's always pheasants. Lovely birds. Tasty too.

DANNY You mean *stealing* them? Poaching is stealing?

DAD No. Poaching is an art. That's how we country folk see it.
A poacher is a great artist.

DANNY So you were stealing pheasants in Hazell's Wood?

DAD I was practising the art of poaching. Not very successfully,
as it turned out.

DANNY Who do the pheasants belong to?

DAD Mr Hazell.

DANNY What, the man in the Rolls?

DAD *nods*. DANNY *is shocked*.

The kettle's boiling.

DAD *fetches the kettle, and pours water into the mugs.
Then he turns off the paraffin burner, sits and stirs the
mugs, then hands one to DANNY.*

DAD Cocoa.

DANNY (*quietly*) Thanks.

DAD Your granddad, my own dad, was a magnificent and splendiferous poacher. He taught me all about it when I was ten years old. I caught the poaching fever from him and I've never lost it since. Mind you, in those days just about every man in our village was out in the woods at night poaching pheasants. And they did it not only because they loved the sport, but because they needed food for their families. When I was a boy, times were bad for a lot of people. There was very little work to be had anywhere and some families were literally starving. Yet a few minutes away in the rich man's wood, thousands of pheasants were being fed like kings twice a day. So can you blame my Dad for going out occasionally and coming home with a bird or two for the family to eat?

DANNY No, of course not. But *we're* not starving, Dad.

DAD You're missing the point, Danny boy! Poaching is such a fabulous and exciting sport that once you start doing it, it gets into your blood and you can't give it up! Just imagine— (*He leaps up and graphically paints the scene*) You are all alone up there in the dark wood, and the wood is full of keepers hiding behind the trees. And the keepers have guns...

DANNY Guns! They don't have guns!

DAD All keepers have guns, Danny. To shoot the vermin, mostly, the foxes and stoats and weasels who go after the pheasants. But they'll always take a pot at a poacher too, if they spot him.

DANNY Dad, you're having me on!

DAD I'm serious! But they only do it from behind. Only when you're trying to escape. They like to pepper you in the legs at about fifty yards.

DANNY They can't do that! They could go to prison for shooting someone.

DAD (*speaking with excitement*) You could go to prison for poaching! Many's the night when I was a boy, Danny, I've gone into the kitchen and seen my old dad lying face down on the table... Go on, you be my dad! Over the table!

DANNY *smiles and bends over the table.*

That's it. And I'll be my mum! She used to stand over him digging the gunshot pellets out of his backside with a potato-knife!

He demonstrates on DANNY.

DANNY (*laughing*) It's not true!

DAD You don't believe me?

He tickles DANNY.

DANNY (*laughing more*) I believe you!

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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