

© 2006 BY ROALD DAHL NOMINEE AND DAVID WOOD

Rights of Performance by Amateurs are controlled by Samuel French Ltd, 52 Fitzroy Street, London W1T 5JR, and they, or their authorized agents, issue licences to amateurs on payment of a fee. **It is an infringement of the Copyright to give any performance or public reading of the play before the fee has been paid and the licence issued.**

The Royalty Fee indicated below is subject to contract and subject to variation at the sole discretion of Samuel French Ltd.

|                                                                           |        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Basic fee for each and every performance by amateurs in the British Isles | Code M |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|

The Professional Rights in this play are controlled by CASAROTTO RAMSAY & ASSOCIATES LTD, National House, 60-66 Wardour Street, London, W1V 4ND

**The publication of this play does not imply that it is necessarily available for performance by amateurs or professionals, either in the British Isles or Overseas. Amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised in their own interests to apply to the appropriate agents for written consent before starting rehearsals or booking a theatre or hall.**

ISBN-10 0 573 15016 8

ISBN-13 978 0 573 15016 6

The right of Roald Dahl to be identified as author and David Wood to be identified as adapter of this work has been asserted by the Owners in accordance with the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988

It is a condition of the issue of a performing licence for this play that the names of Roald Dahl and David Wood should appear in print of equal size and prominence and that the one is never mentioned without the other on all programmes and publicity material for productions

Please see p.iv for further copyright information

## DANNY THE CHAMPION OF THE WORLD

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

|                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|
| Danny            | Griff Jameson        |
| Dad              | Dafydd Emrys         |
| Charlie Kinch    | Iwan Tudor           |
| Rabbetts         | Gareth Wyn Griffiths |
| Mr Hazell        | Nick Wayland Evans   |
| Dr Spencer       | Nia Davies           |
| Mrs Clipstone    | Linos 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

## COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

(See also page ii)

This play is fully protected under the Copyright Laws of the British Commonwealth of Nations, the United States of America and all countries of the Berne and Universal Copyright Conventions.

All rights including Stage, Motion Picture, Radio, Television, Public Reading, and Translation into Foreign Languages, are strictly reserved.

**No part of this publication may lawfully be reproduced in ANY form or by any means—photocopying, typescript, recording (including video-recording), manuscript, electronic, mechanical, or otherwise—or be transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, without prior permission.**

Licences for amateur performances are issued subject to the understanding that it shall be made clear in all advertising matter that the audience will witness an amateur performance; that the names of the authors of the plays shall be included on all programmes; and that the integrity of the authors' work will be preserved. The Royalty Fee is subject to contract and subject to variation at the sole discretion of Samuel French Ltd.

In Theatres or Halls seating Four Hundred or more the fee will be subject to negotiation.

In Territories Overseas the fee quoted above may not apply. A fee will be quoted on application to our local authorized agent, or if there is no such agent, on application to Samuel French Ltd, London.

### VIDEO-RECORDING OF AMATEUR PRODUCTIONS

Please note that the copyright laws governing video-recording are extremely complex and that it should not be assumed that any play may be video-recorded for whatever purpose without first obtaining the permission of the appropriate agents. The fact that a play is published by Samuel French Ltd does not indicate that video rights are available or that Samuel French Ltd controls such rights.

## INTRODUCTION

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**

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

Dad (William)  
 Gamekeeper 1 (Rabbets)  
 Gamekeeper 2  
 Gamekeeper 3  
 Danny, aged 10  
 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.

## 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 (Rabbets)  
 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 (Rabbets)/ 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 première production.

Cover illustration by Quentin Blake from *Danny the Champion of the World* by Roald Dahl, published by Jonathan Cape. Reprinted by permission of the Random House Group Ltd.

---

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.

## 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

## 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 |

## GENERAL THOUGHTS FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Phil Clark's inventive première 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.

Recognizing 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

## OTHER PLAYS AND MUSICALS BY DAVID WOOD

### Aladdin

The BFG (based on the book by Roald Dahl)

Babe, the Sheep-Pig (based on the book by Dick King-Smith)

Babes in the Magic Wood

### Cinderella

Dick Whittington and Wondercat

Dinosaurs and All That Rubbish (based on the book by Michael Foreman)

Fantastic Mr Fox (based on the book by Roald Dahl)

Flibberty and the Penguin

The Gingerbread Man

Hijack Over Hygenia

The Ideal Gnome Expedition

Jack and the Giant

Jack the Lad (co-written with Dave and Toni Arthur)

James and the Giant Peach (based on the book by Roald Dahl)

Larry the Lamb in Toytown (co-written with Sheila Ruskin, adapted from the stories of S.G. Hulme-Beaman)

Meg and Mog Show (from the books by Helen Nicoll and Jan Pienkowski)

More Adventures of Noddy (based on the stories by Enid Blyton)

Mother Goose’s Golden Christmas

Noddy (based on the stories by Enid Blyton)

Nutcracker Sweet

Old Father Time

The Old Man of Lochnagar (based on the book by HRH The Prince of Wales)

Old Mother Hubbard

The Owl and the Pussycat Went to See ... (co-written with Sheila Ruskin)

The Papertown Paperchase

The Pied Piper (co-written with Dave and Toni Arthur)

The Plotters of Cabbage Patch Corner

Robin Hood (co-written with Dave and Toni Arthur)

Rupert and the Green Dragon (based on the Rupert stories and characters by Mary Tourtel and Alfred Bestall)

Save the Human (based on the story by Tony Husband and David Wood)

The See-Saw Tree

The Selfish Shellfish

Spot’s Birthday Party (based on the books by Eric Hill)

There Was an Old Woman ...

Tickle (one act)

Tom’s Midnight Garden (based on the book by Philippa Pearce)

The Twits (based on the book by Roald Dahl)

The Witches (based on the book by Roald Dahl)

Theatre for Children—Guide to Writing, Adapting, Directing and Acting  
(written with Janet Grant, published by Faber and Faber)

ACT 1  
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 sulks and 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 (*off*) 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 chidder 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 chidder 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 } (*together, a blowing sound*) Phoooooooooooo!

Dad And the child begins to dream a ——

*Danny smiles*

Dad } (*together*) — fantastic, delumpious, 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)* Ah! 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 Winton 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!" pay for the petrol, then "Oi!" be off! Ha, ha!

*Danny smiles, hangs the nozzle back on the pump and collects Charlie's money*

**Danny** "Oi!" get your change!

*He goes to the shed*

**Charlie** Hal! 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!" be seeing you! Tata!

*He drives off*

*Danny looks pensive. He turns towards Dad in the workshop. Dad is busy*

*Suddenly Mrs Clipstone enters pushing her pram. We hear her baby crying*

**Mrs Clipstone** Hush, Christopher, hush! *(Seeing Danny)* Good-morning, Danny!

**Danny** Hallo, Mrs Clipstone!



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. Kneehigh 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 off

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 Charr.

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 sympathize, 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 ...*

**Danny** (*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 splendid 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!

Dad Towards the end, he was so covered in tiny little white scars he looked exactly like it was snowing.

Danny I don't know why I'm laughing. It's not funny. It's horrible!

*He sits again*

Dad "Poacher's Bottom" they used to call it.

Danny "Poacher's Bottom"?

Dad And there wasn't a man in the whole village who didn't have a bit of it one way or another. But my dad was the champion. Drink your cocoa!

*Danny takes a sip*

Danny So last night you were poaching Mr Hazell's pheasants.

Dad Trying to. Last night was the first time for nine years. Since your mother died. You see, I made a vow I'd never do it again till you were old enough to be left alone. But last night I had this tremendous longing. I just couldn't stop myself. I'm sorry.

Danny You might have got "Poacher's Bottom".

Dad I was very careful!

Danny But why does Mr Hazell have all these pheasants? With keepers guarding them?

Dad Good question. Wealthy idiots like *Mister Hazell* rear pheasants just for the fun of shooting them down when they grow up. *Mister Hazell* spends a fortune every year buying baby pheasants from pheasant farms, and keeps them in pens until they're big enough to be put into the woods. Then his keepers feed them twice a day on the best corn until they're so fat they can hardly fly. Then *Mister Hazell* invites his equally rich and equally idiotic friends to join him for the so-called fun of blasting them out of the sky. They call it sport.

Danny Is that why you don't like Mr Hazell?

Dad (*carefully*) That's the main reason, yes.

Danny But you kill the pheasants too.

Dad Not for the cold-blooded fun of it! I've told you, poaching's an art. And a real poacher never shoots a pheasant, never uses a gun.

Danny How do you do it then?

Dad Ah. These things are big secrets. Very big secrets indeed. But I reckon if my father could tell them to me, then maybe I can tell them to you.

Danny Yes, please.

*Dad gets up and opens the top of the caravan door to check no one is listening, then returns to the table*

Dad First big secret. (*Confidentially*) Raisins.

Danny Raisins.

Dad Ordinary raisins. My old dad discovered that pheasants are crazy about raisins. Throw them a few and they'll fight over them.

Danny And then you grab them?

Dad No, no. Far too noisy. They'd squawk and flap. And the keepers would hear. Listen. Next big secret. My old dad's Method for Catching Pheasants

Number One. The Horse-hair Stopper.

Danny The Horse-hair Stopper.

Dad Right. You soak a few raisins in water overnight to make them plump and juicy, then push in a half-inch length of horse-hair.

Danny Where do you get horse-hair?

Dad From a horse's tail, of course. It's easy to pull it out as long as you stand to one side so you don't get kicked.

Danny Go on.

Dad You leave a little bit sticking out on each side of the raisins. That's all you do.

Danny Then what?

**Dad** When evening comes, you creep up into the woods, making sure you get there before the pheasants have gone into the trees to roost. Then you scatter the raisins. And soon, along comes a pheasant and gobbles one up. Then, and this was my dad's great discovery, the horse-hair makes the raisin stick in the pheasant's throat. It doesn't hurt him, it simply stays there and tickles. But after that, believe it or not, the pheasant never moves his feet again! He's rooted to the spot! And there he stands, pumping his silly neck up and down like a piston. All you have to do is quickly nip out of hiding and pick him up!

**Danny** Really?

**Dad** I swear it! It's brilliant! My dad was a genius to discover that. Method Number One.

**Danny** What's Method Number Two?

**Dad** Ah. Number Two's a real beauty! Dad called it "The Sticky Hat". I remember him trying it out on a huge white rooster from the back yard.

**Danny** (having an idea) Would it work on a chicken?

**Dad** Don't see why not.

*Danny jumps up and goes to open the door*

(Laughing) Take the torch!

*Danny comes out of the caravan shining a torch. He chases some chickens, who squawk and scuttle away. Eventually he catches one and returns to the caravan*

*Dad has gone out and sat on the steps. He is cutting the corner off an old envelope*

*Danny joins him on the steps. He holds the chicken (a puppet, which he manipulates)*

*The scene continues outside the caravan, in the moonlight*

#### CARAVAN (EXTERIOR)

**Dad** I remember when Dad brought in the rooster — Mum had a fit! "Horace", she shouts, "take that filthy bird off my table!"

*Danny holds the chicken, which is trying to escape. Its head darts up and down, looking round and about. Clucking noises*

But then he showed her "The Sticky Hat" and she soon calmed down.

**Danny** Go on, then. Show me.

**Dad** Right. Dad had discovered that if you put a paper hat over a pheasant's head ...

*He pops it over the chicken's head. The chicken immediately stops moving and clucking*

See?

**Danny** She's gone all still!

**Dad** Exactly! Cover its eyes and no bird'll run away. You just pick him up! And bob's your uncle! One for the pot!

*He removes the hat and the chicken starts moving and clucking again. Then he pops the hat back. The chicken is still again*

**Danny** That's brilliant! But why's it called "The Sticky Hat"?

**Dad** Well, you put a little smear of glue inside, then press it into the ground and pop a raisin or two inside. Then you lay a trail of raisins along the ground leading up to it. Pheasant comes along, pecks away, pops his head in the hat, the glue sticks, head up and ...

**Dad** (together) Bob's your uncle! One for the pot!

**Danny** Did you use "The Sticky Hat" last night?

**Dad** I was going to. But I got there too late. The pheasants were already going up to roost. That shows you how out of practice I am.

**Danny** If you ever want to go again, I won't mind, Dad.

**Dad** Do you mean that? No, no, it's unfair ...

**Danny** As long as you tell me beforehand. And as long as you don't get "Poacher's Bottom"!

**Dad** You sure you won't mind? If I promise to tell you.

**Danny** No. (Pause) Go tonight if you like.

**Dad** Really? No, I...

**Danny** Go on.

**Dad** (tempted) Well, it's a long walk — but there might just be time ...

**Danny** Well, then. (Idea) And I could come too.

**Dad** Ah.

**Danny** We'd make a good team.

**Dad** Well, I reckon you're just a bit young to be dodging around up there in the dark.

**Danny** Your dad took you at my age, didn't he?

**Dad** Well, one day, eh? But I'd like to get back into practice before I make any promises, you understand?

**Danny** Yes.

**Dad** (*meaningfully*) Thanks, Danny. (*He puts his arms round him and squeezes affectionately. Then he removes the paper cap from the chicken*) You'd better put her back

*Danny nods and takes the chicken back behind the workshop. Dad goes inside the caravan, returns with his dark sweater and puts it on. He tucks a bag under his sweater*

*Danny returns*

Are you sure about this?

**Danny** Of course. Good luck!

**Dad** Thanks, Danny. And don't stay up late. I'll be back by half past ten at the latest. Promise.

*They hug*

*Dad puts on his cloth cap, leaves the caravan and sets off*

*Danny watches him as he goes*

**Danny** (*sharing his thoughts with the audience*) Well, it's only fair he has his fun. (*He sits on the steps*) But that poaching's a bit of an eye-opener. I had no idea. At least he's told me about it. (*He yawns, then sees the envelope corner and picks it up, with a smile*) The Sticky Hat! You'd never think that would work. (*He yawns*) Happy hunting, Dad.

*As the Lights begin to fade, Danny nods off to sleep. Time passes. The Lights fade up again. Danny wakes with a start*

**Danny** Dad?

*He looks round, but there is no sign of Dad. Danny looks inside the caravan. The paraffin lamp is still lit. He looks at the clock*

Ten past two!

*He checks Dad's top bunk with the torch. It is empty*

Oh, Dad. Half past ten at the latest, you promised. Where are you? What's happened? "Poacher's Bottom"? Or worse? (*He looks out of the door*) What if he's lying in Hazell's Wood, bleeding to death? No, don't be silly. But where is he? (*He makes a decision*) Right, Dad. I'm coming to find you. (*He puts on a sweater*) Torch.

*He takes it, then leaves the caravan. He sets off, then suddenly stops*

But it's six and a half miles! It'll take ages to get there. Should I phone the police? No, that's stupid. They might put Dad in prison. (*A sudden idea*) Maybe I could ... No, I couldn't ... Why not? It's an emergency! ... Go on then!

*He shines the torch towards the garage and sets off*

#### FILLING STATION

*Danny opens the workshop door and goes inside. We hear him get in the Baby Austin and slam the door*

*The headlights light up*

*A cough from the engine. Another cough*

**Danny** Come on, pride and joy, please.

*The car splutters into life*

Clutch. First gear. Clutch and accelerator. Hang on, Dad. I'm on my way.

*Slowly the car leaves the workshop. Danny concentrates hard behind the wheel. The noise of the engine increases as he goes into second gear and drives forward to the road leading to Hazell's Wood*

#### ROAD

(*This could be a screen behind*)

*In the moonlight, Danny drives the Baby Austin towards Hazell's Wood. Because he is small he has to stretch to see over the steering wheel. He drives with great care and concentration. He is fearful yet excited*

*High trees pass by on each side. Danny consciously keeps over to his left side. Suddenly we hear and see a car approaching from behind. Its headlights reflect on Danny, who tries to squeeze over, more to the side. The car roars past*

*The car continues. Perhaps it changes into third gear. Perhaps a fox dashes out and is nearly run over*

*Suddenly we see headlights shining in Danny's eyes, as we hear the noise of a car approaching, coming towards him. Noise and light increase. Danny is dazzled. The car flashes past and speeds up the road behind*

**Danny** Police! (*Suddenly realizing*) It might be Sergeant Samways! And I'm in his pride and joy! He might have seen me!

*He carries on a while, then turns off onto a track and stops*

*In the distance a police siren wails*

He's coming back!

*Danny turns off the headlights and sits in the darkness*

*The noise of the police car engine and siren approaches, the car zooms past, and the sounds recede*

*Danny, relieved, after a pause, turns on the headlights again and drives carefully over the bumpy track leading to ...*

#### HAZELL'S WOOD/PIT

*Danny parks the Baby Austin at the edge of the wood, turns off the headlights and gets out of the car. He turns on his torch, then bravely and nervously advances into the wood, creeping between the trees*

**Danny** (*trying not to call too loudly*) Dad! Dad! Are you there?

*No reaction. More searching*

**Dad!** It's Danny! Please tell me where you are! Please answer! Dad!

*He stands still to listen for a reaction. None comes. More searching as Danny moves further into the wood*

**Dad!**

*Suddenly a muffled sound halts Danny in his tracks*

**Dad** (*off*) Here!

*Danny listens*

Over here!

*He looks around*

**Danny** Dad?

**Dad** (*off, a little louder*) Danny? I'm here.

**Danny** (*trying to place the sound*) I'm coming, Dad. (*He walks carefully forward, shining the torch*)

*Suddenly ...*

**Dad** (*off*) Stop, Danny, stop!

*Danny stops, but can't see Dad*

**Danny** Where are you?

**Dad** (*off*) Down here. Come forward slowly.

*Danny edges forward*

Careful! Don't fall in! It's a pit. A man-trap.

*Danny finds the pit, kneels, and shines the torch down. We can't see Dad*

**Danny** Oh, Dad.

**Dad** (*off*) Hallo, my marvellous darling. Thank you for coming.

**Danny** Did they dig the hole to catch people?

**Dad** (*off*) Yes. And I was stupid enough to fall in.

**Danny** Are you all right?

**Dad** (*off*) I think I've broken my ankle.

*Shadows of Gamekeepers 1 (Rabbits) and 3 appear behind the trees*

*Torchlight*

**Danny** Does it hurt?

**Gamekeeper 1** That way, quick.

**Dad** (*off*) Yes, it hurts a lot. But don't worry about that. The point is....

*Danny suddenly sees the approaching Gamekeepers*

**Danny** (*urgently*) Shut up, Dad! (*He quickly snaps off his torch and runs for the cover of the trees*)

Dad (*off*) ..... Eh, what's up?

*The Gamekeepers arrive. They shine a torch down the pit*

Gamekeeper 1 Well, well, well! I thought I heard something!

Gamekeeper 3 The squeal of dirty, stinking vermin.

Gamekeeper 1 Look at it. Skulking like a cornered rat!

Gamekeeper 3 Come on, show us your miserable, weasly face.

Gamekeeper 1 Oh, shy are we?

Gamekeeper 3 I'll pepper it with shot. That'll shift it. (*He raises his shotgun*)

Gamekeeper 1 No, no. We'll leave him here to stew. The boss can find out who he is.

Gamekeeper 3 Yeah. Hey, vermin! Guess who's coming back with us to fish you out?

Gamekeeper 1 Mr Victor Hazell himself to say hallo to you.

Gamekeeper 3 And he hates poachers.

Gamekeeper 1 I hate to think what he'll do to you when he gets his hands on you! Scum! (*He hawks and spits down the pit*)

*Laughing, the Gamekeepers exit through the trees*

*Danny tentatively emerges from hiding, then returns to the pit. He shines the torch*

Danny Come on, Dad. Got to get you out before they come back. Hold my hand. (*He stretches down*)

Dad (*off*) Thanks, Danny.

*With a great effort, using both hands, Danny pulls*

*Dad's head appears*

Ow! Hang on! (*One hand clings onto the edge*)

Danny Have a rest, Dad.

Dad (*in pain*) I don't think ... Ah! ... My ankle, Danny. I'll never be able to walk back.

Danny Dad, I brought the car! Sergeant Samways' pride and joy.

Dad You what?

*He falls back into the pit*

(*Off*) Ow!

Danny I wanted to get here quickly!

Dad You're crazy. You might have been killed.

Danny Well, I wasn't. Come on, try again. (*He stretches down*)

Dad (*straining*) You're amazing, Danny.

Danny Come on, up!

*Dad's head appears again*

Dad Thank you!

*But again he falls back*

(*Off*) Ow! It's no good. I'll never get out of here without a ladder.

Danny What about a rope?

Dad (*off*) Well, yes, but we haven't got a rope.

Danny There's a tow-rope in the car.

Dad (*off*) Brilliant!

Danny Stay there! (*He runs towards the car*)

Dad (*off*) I haven't much choice!

*To music, Danny rescues Dad. He starts the car and backs it nearer the pit. Then, leaving the engine running, he finds the tow-rope, attaches it to the tow-bar, then takes the other end and throws it down the pit. He returns to the car, then drives it slowly forward*

*Dad is pulled out of the pit. He tries to stand, but cannot. Danny helps him hop to the passenger seat and climb in. Then Danny collects the rope, gets in the car and, turning on the headlights, drives off*

*After a pause, the Gamekeepers enter, leading Hazell to the pit. They gleefully approach. Hazell rubs his hands in anticipation*

Hazell Good work, Rabbits! I told you a pit would do the trick. (*Shouting down the pit*) Hey, you worm. I'll make you squirm, thieving little parasite! Poaching deserves punishment and punished you will be! (*To the Gamekeepers*) Torch! Shotgun! (*The Gamekeepers both pass him a torch*) No! You shine the torch! Give me the shotgun!

*The Gamekeepers shine the torches down the pit. Hazell cocks the shotgun and takes aim. He moves the shotgun as he scans the pit*

(*Realizing*) What! What! Ahhh! You idiots! Fools! Imbeciles! He's escaped!

*He angrily pushes the Gamekeepers. Gamekeeper 3 drops his torch in the pit. He bends to look for it*

Stupid! Dunderheads! Grrrrh!

*Hazell pushes Gamekeeper 3 into the pit*

Gamekeeper 3 (off) Aaaaaaaah!

*Gamekeeper 1 beats a hasty retreat*

Hazell Rabbetts! Come back! Come back!

*Hazell chases Gamekeeper 1 (Rabbetts) off as ...*

*The lighting fades, and the scene changes ...*

#### CARAVAN (EXTERIOR)

*Early morning. Dad is lying on a blanket in front of the caravan, propped up against the steps. Dr Spencer is attending him. During the scene she stils Dad's trouser leg revealing a large bruise, then straps his lower leg to a splint*

Dr Spencer But great heaven's alive! He can't do that! Victor Hazell can't go digging tiger-traps in the woods for human beings. It's monstrous! Dad Monstrous, yes, Doctor. Hazell's a monster, all right.

Dr Spencer (pressing Dad's ankle) Does that hurt, William?

Dad Ooh! Yes.

Dr Spencer Not surprised. It's broken all right.

*Danny enters, having come from the workshop*

Danny I phoned the hospital, Dr Spencer. The ambulance is on its way.

Dr Spencer Well done, Danny. And well done rescuing your Dad.

Dad Couldn't have got out without him.

Dr Spencer Hand me those scissors, please, Danny. In my bag.

*Danny does so. Dr Spencer attacks Dad's trousers*

It's diabolical, William. Thanks, Danny. It means that decent folk like you and me can't even go out and have a little, er... "fun" at night without risking a broken leg or arm. We might even break our necks! Hold still, William.

Danny (incredulous) You don't mean ... You surely don't do it too, Dr Spencer?

Dr Spencer Well, I have been known to indulge in a bit of (*whispering the word*) poaching, Danny. Great fun. Ticking the odd trout.

Danny Ticking them?

Dr Spencer Trout love a little tickle! Doze off, they do. Then you can flip 'em out of the water.

Danny Really?

Dad Not as easy as it sounds. I've tried!

Dr Spencer You were always better at pheasants, William. Where's that splint? (*She finds it and starts applying it*) I was never much good with pheasants. Lie still, William.

Danny What method did you use?

Dr Spencer Raisins soaked in gin. Meant to make the pheasants tiddy! Doesn't work!

*Dad laughs*

Keep still, William.

Dad They have to eat at least sixteen gin-soaked raisins before they get tiddy. My old dad tried it out with roosters.

Danny Dad uses The Sticky Hat.

Dr Spencer Ah! (*Admiringly*) The Sticky Hat!

Dad Didn't get a chance tonight, thanks to Hazell's trap.

Dr Spencer I never did like that Victor Hazell. He needed an injection once. I saw him through the window, driving up to the surgery in his whacking great Rolls. My old dog, Bertie, was dozing on the doorstep, and, would you believe it, Hazell didn't step over him, he kicked him out of the way with his riding boot.

Dad He didn't?

Dr Spencer (*finishing off the splint*) He did, the brute.

Danny What did you do?

Dr Spencer I left him sitting in the waiting room while I picked out the oldest, bluntest needle I could find. Then I rubbed the point of it on a nail-file to make it blunter still. By the time I'd got through with it, it was blunter than a ball-point pen. Then I called him in and told him to lower his pants and bend over. Go on, Danny, you be Hazell.

*Danny smiles and bends over. Dr Spencer demonstrates*

Then I rammed the needle into his fleshy backside and he screamed like a struck pig!

*Danny enjoys screaming. Dad laughs*

Dad Hooray!

*Distant sounds of the ambulance approaching*

**Dr Spencer** He's never been back since. For which I'm truly thankful. Ah, here's the ambulance. Now, Danny ... *(She takes a bottle of pills from her bag, and hands them to Danny)* Look after these for when your dad gets home. Sleeping pills. He might need them.

Danny Thanks, Dr Spencer.

*Two Ambulance Men enter with a stretcher and lift Dad onto it*

**Dr Spencer** *(confidentially leaning down to talk to Dad)* And William, seriously, don't start planning revenge on Hazell. He's a nasty piece of work, no mistake, but don't push him too far. He might ... You know what I'm talking about.

Dad Yeah, yeah!

**Dr Spencer** Right, let's go.

Dad See you later, Danny.

Danny Good luck, Dad.

*The stretcher party leaves*

*Danny watches them go. He walks downstage and shares his thoughts with the Audience and the chickens, which he feeds as he speaks*

What did Dr Spencer mean? "Hazell might ... You know what I'm talking about." I don't know what she's talking about. Hazell might what? *(He sighs)* Another Big Secret.

*He throws some chicken feed behind the workshop. The chickens exit in pursuit*

*Danny looks at the sleeping pills and decides to put them in the caravan*

*As he goes in, music suggests the passing of time, as the Lights brighten*

*Later that morning ...*

*Suddenly, squawking chickens flutter from behind the workshop*

*Danny comes out of the caravan to investigate. He meets the Council Inspector, who enters hurriedly, escaping the chickens. She is fastidiously dressed, but wears muddy boots. She carries a clipboard*

**Danny** What's going on?

**Inspector** Sorry, dear. I just popped round the back and met your wildly-free range chickens. Bit muddy round there.

**Danny** *(not pleased)* Can I help you?

**Inspector** I hope so, dear. *(Showing her badge)* I'm from the Council. Is your mum in?

**Danny** No, she's dead.

**Inspector** Oh, I am sorry. *(Looking at the clipboard)* Silly me. I mean is your Dad in?

**Danny** No, he's — *(deciding not to mention the hospital)* out.

**Inspector** Are you on your own?

**Danny** Yes.

**Inspector** Shouldn't you be at school?

**Danny** Well, maybe. But I'm looking after the filling station till Dad gets back. *(Reluctantly)* He's at the hospital.

**Inspector** *(making notes)* Mmm. I see. Well, maybe you could just show me the caravan.

**Danny** Why?

**Inspector** Just to check it's a fit place for humans to live in.

**Danny** What do you mean?

**Inspector** *(brightly)* We don't allow people to live in dirty broken-down shacks these days.

**Danny** It's not dirty! Or broken-down! It's my home!

**Inspector** Of course, dear. I'm only joking. Can I have a peep inside?

**Danny** S'pose so.

*The Inspector climbs the steps and looks inside*

**Inspector** Mm. Very snug. Sleep in here do you?

**Danny** Of course.

**Inspector** And eat? How do you cook?

**Danny** Paraffin burner.

**Inspector** I see. No electricity then?

**Danny** Not in here, no.

**Inspector** What about light? How do you see to do your homework?

**Danny** Paraffin lamp.

**Inspector** Ah, yes. I can smell it. *(She comes down the steps)* Do you wash, dear?

**Danny** Of course.

**Inspector** I can't see a bath!

**Danny** Dad heats a kettle of water, then gives me a good scrub standing up. Don't need a bath.

*The chickens return*

**Inspector No.** I see. (*Making notes*) Good. Well, thank you, dear. That's all I need. Do these chickens always run around like this? Good-morning.

*The Inspector exits*

*Danny watches her leave, treading carefully through the chickens. He is worried*

**Danny** (*to the chickens and the Audience*) What was that all about? What did she want? (*Imitating the Inspector*) How do you have a bath? Do the chickens always run around like this? (*Answering as a chicken*) Cluck, cluck, yes, well actually we do, your ladyship, cluck, cluck, 'cos we live here, cluck, cluck. (*As Danny*) Better tell Dad tonight.

*The Lights fade as the scene changes ...*

# CARAVAN (INTERIOR)

*That evening, Dad and Danny are eating, sitting in each other's normal places. Dad's lower leg is in plaster*

**Dad** (*very cross*) How dare they send someone round to snoop on us? Saying it's dirty in here!

**Danny** She said that bit was a joke.

**Dad** Bloomin' cheek. Before your mum died I promised her I'd look after you properly.

**Danny** And you do, Dad.

**Dad** I do the washing—I used to wash your nappies, I scrub the floor, change the sheets every week, and now you're older, you do your bit. It's spotless in here! How dare they?

**Danny** More baked beans, Dad? (*He goes to the paraffin burner and helps himself to a spoonful*)

**Dad** No thanks, Danny. That was great. You're a great help! I'm proud of you.

*Danny clears the plates*

**Danny** How's the ankle?

**Dad** Hardly hurts at all. (*He stands to prove it. He stamps his foot*) Ow! Well maybe just a little. And it itches under the plaster!

**Danny** You'd better have a sleeping pill.

**Dad** No need. I'll sleep like a top.

*Danny wipes the tabletop with a cloth*

(*Watching Danny*) Dirty, she said. I don't believe it. (*Thinking*) Wouldn't it mind betting Hazell's behind this.

**Danny** Hazell? No, it was the Council.

**Dad** But who put the Council up to it? Eh? Hazell. Just the sort of mean trick that fat slug would pull. One day I'll get him, you wait.

**Danny** Careful, Dad.

**Dad** What?

**Danny** I heard Dr Spencer warn you about Mr Hazell. About not trying to get revenge. She said Hazell might do something. She said you knew what she meant. And you said yes you knew what she meant. But I don't know! I don't know what she meant! I'm always the last to know. It's another silly Big Secret you don't share with me! And I don't like it! It's not fair! It sounds very serious and I'm just left in the dark. What might Mr Hazell do? Tell me! How can I help when I don't know what the hell is going on? (*He is near to tears, having exploded for the first time*)

*Silence*

**Dad** You're right, Danny. You're always right. I shouldn't hide things from you. I wanted to protect you, but I've ended up getting you worried. What do you want to know?

**Danny** Why do you hate Hazell so much? It's not just his money or that he's rude. There must be something more. What's the big secret?

*Dad nods*

**Dad** He's a roaring snob and he's very nasty, but yes, there's more. He owns all the land for miles around. Not just the wood, everything on either side of the valley. Everything except this little patch where we live. The filling station and the caravan.

**Danny** Who owns this bit?

**Dad** We do. But Mr Hazell wants it. Nothing would please him more than to get his podgy hands on it. And greedy men like Hazell are ruthless. They won't live and let live. They stop at nothing to get their way. That's why I dislike him so much. Now, early night. For both of us. Weekend tomorrow. Lots of customers. I'm going to hobble back to work.

**Danny** It's all right, Dad, you rest. I'll hold the fort.

**Dad** Well, thanks Danny.

**Danny** I'll enjoy it ...

*The Lighting changes as Danny steps forward and talks to the Audience. Behind him, the scene starts to change*

And I *did* enjoy it. Mrs Clipstone came for more eggs. Mr Kinch filled up his taxi. And lots more villagers popped in. But now it's Monday morning. Dad feels strong enough to work, and he says today I've got to go to school....

Danny exits, as we hear ...

#### SCHOOL HALL

*The sound of children singing a hymn echoes through the auditorium*

#### Children

All things bright and beautiful  
All creatures great and small  
All things wise and wonderful

*As the Lights, including the house lights, fade up, the Headteacher and another teacher (Mr Jackson) are revealed in assembly, singing the final line*

The Lord God made them all

**Headteacher** This morning, boys and girls, is a special morning. Settle down. No talking. This morning we have two "visitors" with something very exciting to talk about. So sit up straight, legs crossed, arms folded. Gillian, I'm not telling you again, stop doing that to Brian. (*She nods to the other teacher*) Thank you, Mr Jackson.

*Mr Jackson goes offstage to collect the visitors*

Now, let's give a warm St Wilberforce School welcome to our visitors.

*She encourages the Audience to applaud*

*Mr Jackson returns, leading Hazell and Gamekeeper 1 (Rabbets)*

**Hazell** Thank you, Headmistress. Good-morning, children. My name is Mr Hazell. Like you I started off from very humble beginnings, but I worked hard and became very successful, brewing beer. You may have noticed me diving in my very expensive Rolls Royce. Nice, isn't it? Now, this coming Saturday it will be October the first. Anyone know what's so special about October the first? Well, I'll tell you. It's the start of the pheasant shooting season, and, as is customary, I shall be inviting to Hazell Hall, my country seat, all my distinguished friends, Dukes and Lords, Barons and Baronets, that sort of chap, to what is generally accepted as the best Pheasant Shooting Party in the county, country more like. And this year, some of you kiddies are invited to join in the fun.

*The Headteacher and Mr Jackson react, pleased*

Now, this is Mr Rabbets, my Head Gamekeeper, and he'll tell you a bit more.

*He pushes Gamekeeper 1 forward*

**Gamekeeper 1** Right. Yes, well, what the boss ... Er Mr Hazell ... wants is for some of you kids to be beaters. What beaters do is come up to Hazell's Wood, where all the pheasants are, and when all the boss's ... Er Mr Hazell's posh guests are ready with their shotguns, you start yelling and shouting and bashing away at the undergrowth, to make the pheasants fly up ready to be shot.

**Hazell** Show 'em, Rabbets. Give 'em a demonstration.

**Gamekeeper 1** (*embarrassed*) Right, sir. (*He starts yelling and miming the "beating"*)

**Hazell** That's enough. So we want some volunteers. Who would like to be a beater? Hands up!

*Suddenly he is interrupted by a voice (Danny's) from the Audience*

**Danny** No! Do your own dirty work!

*Hazell looks up*

**Headteacher** Who said that?

**Danny** Murderer!

**Headteacher** Daniel? Sit down and be quiet.

**Danny** No, Miss. It's wrong. Shooting beautiful birds for fun! It's wrong!

**Headteacher** Quiet! Mr Jackson!

*Mr Jackson hurries into the auditorium to restrain Danny.*

**Danny** Murderer!

**Hazell** Who is that boy?

**Headteacher** Daniel, he ...

**Danny** They haven't done any harm! Why shoot them? Shoot him instead!

*Mr Jackson is dragging Danny towards the front*

**Hazell** (*realizing*) The boy from the filling station! I know you.

**Danny** And I know you, Mr Hazell. And I don't like what you do.

**Headteacher** Daniel. SHUT UP!

*Danny is quiet*

I'm very sorry, Mr Hazell. I'm quite sure we have many children who will be delighted to be beaters. I'll be in touch.

**Hazell** Very well, Headmistress.

*Hazell and Gamekeeper 1 (Rabbets) turn to go*

*Gamekeeper 1 exits*

*Hazell turns back*

And I hope this rude boy won't be allowed to get away with his wild interruption. He must be punished.

*He exits*

*Mr Jackson brings Danny up onto the stage*

**Headteacher** Daniel, how dare you behave like that when we have visitors.

**Danny** But, Miss ...

**Headteacher** No buts, Daniel. You were very rude. I quite understand you feel strongly about shooting birds for sport. Many people agree with you it is unacceptable.

**Danny** It's wrong, Miss ...

**Headteacher** But it is not illegal, and you cannot just shout and scream at people like Mr Hazell because you don't agree with them. We live in a community, Daniel. We have to get along. Live and let live. Civilized behaviour. Now, hold out your hand.

*She produces a cane. Danny hesitates*

Now!

*Danny fearfully holds out his hand. The Headteacher raises the cane. As she goes to strike ...*

*Black-out*

*A high-pitched sound of pain echoes around as the scene changes ...*

FILLING STATION

*Dad and Sergeant Samways, with his bike, are talking near the petrol pumps*

**Dad** Barbaric it was, Sergeant. They shouldn't be allowed to hit children.

**Sergeant Samways** Danny all right?

**Dad** He's not complaining. But you can still see the mark on his hand. It's not right.

**Sergeant Samways** I got caned once. Old Hotty Wootton, the teacher, he used to sit on my desk when chatting to the class, you know. So one day I overfilled the inkwell — you remember them inkwells we used to have?

He sits down and gets an inky bum! Ha, ha. Then I gets a sore bum!

**Dad** Danny wasn't even misbehaving. Just standing up for what he believes.

**Sergeant Samways** And standing up to Hazell, by the sound of it.

**Dad** (smiling) Well, yes.

**Sergeant Samways** (pointing to Dad's splattered leg) And you've been in the wars too, eh Willum? In Hazell's Wood?

**Dad** Yes.

**Sergeant Samways** Be careful, Willum. You know what he's like.

*Dad nods*

**Dad** And I'm sorry your pride and joy's not serviced yet, what with one thing and another ...

**Sergeant Samways** No worry, no hurry, Willum. I'll be back in a day or two. (Looking off) Ah, speak of the devil ... watch it, Willum.

*As he cycles away, Hazell enters in his Rolls. He gets out of the car*

*Dad tries to keep calm*

**Hazell** (with a supercilious smile) Afternoon.

*Dad nods*

(Knowingly looking at Dad's leg) Had an accident, have we? Or a fall, perhaps?

**Dad** Mr Hazell, I thought I made it clear that I have no wish to serve you.

**Hazell** You made it perfectly clear that you have no wish to serve me. But I wish to serve you — with this!

*He throws a letter at Dad, climbs back the Rolls, then drives off laughing*

*Dad opens the envelope as ...*

*Danny comes from the caravan with a cup of tea*

*Dad starts to read*

*Danny Tea, Dad?*

*Dad nods an acknowledgement, but reads on, shocked*

*What is it?*

*Dad Letter from the Council. (He hands it to Danny)*

*Danny (reading)* "It has been decided that your caravan is unfit for human habitation." What does that mean?

*Dad Read the last bit*

*Danny (reading)* "The Council will compulsorily now confiscate your land and sell it to the highest bidder. Signed, Councillor Clark." Dad?

*Dad Hazell's won. Four weeks notice. He's getting rid of us, Danny. We'll have nowhere to live ...*

*The Lighting fades*

END OF ACT I

ACT II  
SCHOOL HALL

*The House Lights stay up as Mrs Clipstone and Dr Spencer enter, carrying clipboards. Dr Spencer claps her hands for silence*

**Dr Spencer** Thank you. Thank you. (*When the Audience is quiet*) Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls. Thank you for coming. It's very gratifying to see so many of you here this evening. Nearly the whole village seems to have taken the trouble to come. I think most of you know I'm Dr Spencer, and this is the Vicar's wife, Mrs Clipstone. What many of you may *not* know is that William, who runs our filling station, and his son Danny, have been served an eviction order by the Council. In four weeks time they must leave their caravan.

*A voice (Charlie's) is heard from the Audience*

**Charlie** It's outrageous! The Council can't just kick them out!

**Dr Spencer** Thank you, Mr Kinch. But I'm afraid the Council can do just that.

**Charlie** But how can I run a taxi service if I have to drive miles into town for petrol?

**Dr Spencer** Indeed, Mr Kinch. But it's not just the inconvenience. It's the effect on William and Danny, two of our village's most popular residents. Mrs Clipstone.

**Mrs Clipstone** Thank you, Doctor. We feel it is quite unfair for William and Danny to be forced out of their home.

**Charlie** Hear, hear!

**Mrs Clipstone** So we are starting a petition of protest to the Council, saying (*reading from her clipboard*) "We, the undersigned, deplore the Council's unfair decision and demand that they reconsider and allow the filling station to remain open and William and Danny to stay in their caravan". We'd like you all to show your support by signing the petition as you leave.

**Charlie** I will, that's for sure.

**Mrs Clipstone** Thank you, Mr Kinch.

**Dr Spencer** Please, everybody, if you agree, raise your hands now.

*The Audience, if necessary encouraged by Charlie, raise their hands*

Excellent, thank you. I know that William and Danny will be delighted to have your support.

*Charlie leads the Audience in applause as ...*

*Dr Spencer and Mrs Clipstone leave*

*The Houselights fade and the scene changes to ...*

CARAVAN (EXTERIOR)

*Evening. Danny, in his pyjamas, is doing his homework, sitting on the steps of the caravan. Dad comes out of the caravan with two mugs. He still wears his plaster cast*

Dad Cocoa.

Danny Thanks, Dad.

Dad Nearly finished your homework?

Danny Yes.

Dad Better get a move on. Be dark soon. *(He leans against the caravan, deep in thought)*

Danny *(after a pause)* It's good about the petition.

Dad *(not really hearing)* Mmm.

Danny If everyone signs, maybe Mr Hazell will have to back down.

Dad Maybe.

Danny *(realizing Dad is thinking)* Dad.

Dad What?

Danny What are you plotting?

Dad Me? Plotting?

Danny I can tell.

Dad I'm not!

Danny Tell me. No more secrets. You promised.

Dad *(with a smile)* I was just thinking ...

Danny What?

Dad Dreaming, really.

Danny Not the BFG again?

Dad No, no. I was thinking about Hazell's Shooting Party on October the first.

Danny Go on.

Dad *(smiling)* Wouldn't it be marvellous to somehow magically find a way of poaching so many pheasants from Hazell's Wood that there wouldn't be any left for the shoot. To somehow knock off a couple of hundred birds all in one go! So Hazell's party would be the biggest wash-out in history!

Wouldn't it be terrific? All those posh dukes and lords and local bigwigs arriving in their flash cars. Hazell strutting around like a peacock welcoming them. Then up to the wood with their guns, the beaters beating and yelling — and not a single pheasant flies up! What a triumph! What a victory! And Hazell's face redder than a boiled beetroot! Wouldn't it be great!

Danny You're not serious.

Dad No, Danny, of course not. It's hard enough catching *one* pheasant, let alone two hundred. I've got a broken ankle to prove it. But it's a lovely thought. Come on now, bedtime.

Danny How is your ankle?

Dad Throbbing a bit.

Danny Better lie down. And take a sleeping pill tonight.

Dad No. Can't be doing with those things. Come on, inside.

Danny *(suddenly)* Dad, suppose ...

Dad *(warning)* Danny ...

Danny No, Dad, listen. I've got an idea. Your sleeping pills. Is there any reason why they wouldn't work on a pheasant?

Dad No chance, Danny. No pheasant in the world's going to swallow one of those lousy red capsules!

Danny But if we opened up the capsules and put the powder in some *raisins*, maybe ...

Dad *(softly at first)* Oh, my darling boy. Oh, my sainted aunt! I do believe you've got it! I do, I do, I do! *(His mind races as he thinks it through)*

Danny You reckon it might work?

Dad It'll work all right! Put the powder in two hundred raisins, scatter them round the feeding grounds at sunset, then walk away. Then, after it's dark and the keepers have gone home, back into the wood — the pheasants would be up in the trees by then, roosting — then the pills start to work — pheasants start feeling groggy — wobbling and trying to keep their balance — then they all topple over unconscious and fall to the ground! Dropping out of the trees like apples! And all I'd have to do is go round picking them up!

Danny Can I do it with you, Dad?

Dad And there's no chance of being caught! Just stroll through the woods dropping a few raisins here and there. The keepers wouldn't notice a thing!

Danny Will you let me come too, Dad?

Dad Danny, my love, if this thing works, it'll revolutionize poaching!

Danny Yes, Dad, but can I come with you?

Dad Come with me?

*A moment of uncertainty for Danny ...*

My dear boy, of course you can come with me! It's your ideal! You must be there to see it happening! Now then, where are those pills?

*He heads for the door*

Danny Shouldn't we try it out?

Dad How?

Danny Like your Dad used to!

Dad

| (together) Chicken!

*Dad rushes inside the caravan while Danny heads for the chickens. He chases them from behind the workshop and eventually catches one. He brings it back to the caravan, and goes inside*

#### CARAVAN (INTERIOR)

*Dad is working at the table, with the bottle of sleeping pills, a packet of raisins, and a pair of scissors. Danny holds the chicken, which clucks*

Dad *(as he carefully divides a capsule, then puts some powder in a raisin)* There are fifty capsules, so if we divide the powder from each one among four raisins, we can get two hundred.

Danny Will that be enough powder to send the pheasants to sleep?

Dad Of course! A pheasant's much smaller than a man!

*He has prepared a raisin. He holds it in the outstretched palm of his hand*

Now, chick chick, here's a tasty titbit for you.

*The chicken examines it*

Danny Go on, it's scrummy!

*The chicken suddenly pecks at it and swallows it*

Dad

| (together) Yees!

Danny

*The chicken is still animated*

Danny Doesn't look too sleepy.

Dad Give her time! Give her time!

*They watch the chicken*

Danny *(a thought)* Dad.

Dad Yes?

Danny Two hundred raisins aren't going to get you two hundred pheasants.

Dad Why not?

Danny Because surely the greediest birds will gobble up about ten raisins each.

Dad You've got a point there. But somehow I don't think it'll happen that way. Not if I'm very careful and spread them out over a wide area.

Danny And you promise I can come with you?

Dad Absolutely. And we shall call this method The Sleeping Beauty. It will be a landmark in the history of poaching! Exciting, isn't it?

Danny Mmm. Bit scary too!

Dad No time to be scared. We've got to make our plans. The Shooting Party's on October the first.

Danny Saturday. When do we do the job?

Dad Friday. We've got two days to get ready. And Danny ...

Danny Yes?

Dad Not a whisper of this to any of your friends at school.

Danny Course not. Hey, Dad, look!

Dad What?

*Danny indicates the chicken. It is asleep. They both smile, delighted*

Dad

| (together) The Sleeping Beauty!

Danny

*The Lights fade. Danny grabs some dark clothes and steps outside the caravan to talk to the Audience. Meanwhile Dad sets to work on the raisins inside. Two days have passed*

Danny *(putting on his clothes over his pyjamas)* Tonight's the night! We've been working really hard. Dad even let me take the day off school to make sure we got the raisins ready in time. It's really fiddly, opening the capsules, dividing the powder, cutting a slit in the raisins, putting the powder in, then sewing them up.

*Danny, dressed, goes inside the caravan. Dad is finishing off the preparations, using a needle and thread*

Dad Your mum was wonderful at sewing things. She'd have had these raisins done in no time. Made all my clothes, you know, Danny.

Danny Even socks and sweaters?

Dad Yes. Great knitter. She'd sit here, needles flying in her fingers so fast you couldn't see them. I used to watch her and she used to say, "We'll have three children. A boy for you, a girl for me, and one for good measure."

*He pauses. Danny senses Dad's continuing grief*

Danny When Mum was here, Dad, did you go out poaching?

Dad (*smiling*) Yes. At least twice a week.

Danny Didn't she mind?

Dad Mind? Of course she didn't mind. She came with me!

Danny She didn't!

Dad She certainly did. Every single time until just before you were born. She had to stop them. She said she couldn't run fast enough!

Danny Did she come with you just because she loved you, Dad. Or because she loved poaching?

Dad (*proudly*) Both, Danny, both. She was a great sport, your mother. (*Finishing the last raisin*) Right. All done. Let's go. Operation Sleeping Beauty!

*Music as Dad and Danny finish dressing for the trip, collect the raisins in a bag and leave the caravan. Perhaps Danny puts the "Sorry, Closed" sign on the petrol pump. Perhaps Dad feeds the chickens. Then they begin to walk down the road to Hazel's Wood, as the scene changes*

## ROAD

*It is still light. Dad and Danny walk. After a pause ... Danny is somewhat nervous*

Dad (*brightly*) How do you feel, Danny?

Danny Terrific. (*After a pause*) Do you think they might've dug any more of those pits?

Dad We'll keep a good lookout, don't you worry.

*The sound of a bullfrog croaking*

Do you hear that?

*They stop. Another croak*

Danny Yes.

Dad It's a bullfrog calling to his wife. He does it by blowing out his dewlap and letting it go with a burp.

Danny What's a dewlap?

Dad The loose skin on his throat. He can blow it up just like a little balloon.

*Another croak*

Danny What happens when his wife hears him?

Dad She goes hopping over to him, happy to be invited. But often he's so pleased with the sound of his own voice that his wife has to nudge him a few times before he'll stop his burping and give her a hug!

*Danny laughs. Another croak*

We men aren't so different from the bullfrog, I reckon.

*Another croak. They walk on*

Wild animals teach us lots about ourselves, you know.

Danny Pheasants aren't really wild, are they?

Dad Course they are.

Danny But not Mr Hazel's pheasants. You said he buys them as chicks and feeds them. Like pets almost.

Dad Ah yes. But the law says they're wild birds. They only belong to you when they're on your own land. Even if you've paid for them.

Danny Really?

Dad Like trout. If a trout swims out of your stretch of water into someone else's you can't say, "Hey, that's mine. I want it back".

Danny So, say if one of Mr Hazel's pheasants flew away and landed on the filling station ...

Dad It would belong to us.

Danny Really?

Dad Yes. Till it flew back again! Come on, this way.

*The lighting changes as Dad and Danny change direction and the scene changes to ...*

## HAZEL'S WOOD/CLEARING

*Dad takes Danny's hand as they creep carefully into the wood, trying not to make a sound*

*Suddenly they see a Gamekeeper through the trees. Dad gestures to Danny and they both throw themselves to the ground and lie still. The Gamekeeper walks a few paces towards them, then turns and exits*

*Dad and Danny crawl on hands and knees. Eventually they reach the edge of the clearing where suddenly they see, in the shadows of the surrounding trees, a large number of pheasants strutting about. Dad points them out to Danny. They watch in delighted anticipation*

*Dad looks around*

*Suddenly another Gamekeeper appears from behind a tree. Dad pushes Danny down, then flattens himself. The Gamekeeper strolls through the clearing and exits*

*Dad carefully takes out the bag of raisins. He throws one into the clearing, then another. Small flurries of wings as pheasants find them and eat them. Dad throws a few more, further away. More pheasants react and eat*

*Suddenly the Gamekeeper appears again*

*Dad and Danny react, keeping low. This time the Gamekeeper stays in view, looking in the other direction. Dad carefully throws more raisins. The pheasants react. Then, as the gamekeeper turns his head to look behind him, Dad takes the whole bag, and in spite of Danny's worried look, throws a huge handful of raisins into the clearing*

*The pheasants react with a loud flurry of wings as they rush to find the raisins*

*The Gamekeeper's head springs round as he hears the sound. He cocks his gun. Dad and Danny duck down again. The Gamekeeper seems to be suspicious. He walks forward into the clearing, surveys the scene, then turns, with his back to Dad and Danny*

*Dad motions to Danny to follow. They crawl away on their hands and knees and exit. The Gamekeeper uncocks his gun as he takes another look, then exits, in the other direction*

*The lighting changes as the scene changes*

ROAD

*Dusk. A hedge*

*Dad and Danny enter breathless. They sit down by the hedge*

**Dad** We did it, Danny! We pulled it off! Doesn't that make you feel good?

**Danny** Terrific. Bit scary, though!

**Dad** Ah, but that's what poaching's all about! It scares the pants off us. That's why we love it! (*Producing apples from his pocket*) Cox's Orange Pippin?

**Danny** (*taking one*) Thanks.

**Dad** Shake it.

*They both shake their apples*

*Can you hear the pips rattling?*

**Danny** Yes.

**Dad** That means it's ripe!

*They take a bite of their apples*

*Gamekeeper 1 (Rabbits) enters. Dad sees him*

**Dad** (*urgently*) Look out. Sit tight and don't say a word.

*He takes another bite of apple and puts on an unconcerned expression. Gamekeeper 1 approaches. He stops and looks down at Dad and Danny*

(*Overtly friendly*) Good-evening.

**Gamekeeper 1** (*unsmiling*) I know you. I know the both of you.

*Pause. Dad eats his apple*

*You're from the fillin' station. Right? And that's your boy, what give us all that lip at the school. Right? And you live in that filthy old caravan. Right?*

**Dad** Questions, questions. Is this a quiz?

*Gamekeeper 1 spits. It lands near Dad's foot*

Charming.

**Gamekeeper 1** Beat it. Go on. Get out.

**Dad** This happens to be a public footpath. Kindly do not molest us.

*Gamekeeper 1 shifts his gun from one arm to the other, threateningly*

**Gamekeeper 1** You're loiterin'. With intent to commit a nuisance. I could run you in for that.

*Danny looks nervous*

**Dad** No, you couldn't. We're just having a rest before walking home.

**Gamekeeper 1** I see you broke your foot. You didn't by any chance fall into a hole in the ground, did you?

**Dad** Why don't you leave us alone? We're doing no harm.

**Gamekeeper 1** You watch it. Or I'll break your other foot for you.

*He sniffs, then walks away and exits*

**Danny** He's called Rabbits.

**Dad** Mm. Nasty bit of work.

**Danny** Will he come back?

**Dad** Doubt it. Gone home for his tea. Don't worry about him.

*The light has faded*

Come on, Danny. It's getting dark. We're going back!

*Music as they get up and start walking. As they approach Hazell's Wood they take out torches and turn them on*

*The scene changes to ...*

#### HAZELL'S WOOD/CLEARING

*Dad and Danny arrive at the clearing. There is no sound of any pheasants. Moonlight shines through the surrounding trees. Dad and Danny shine their torches on the clearing. They speak in whispers*

**Danny** Are they all roosting, Dad?

**Dad** Yes. High up in the branches.

*They turn off their torches*

This will be the first time in the world that anyone has tried to poach roosting pheasants! And it's all thanks to you, Danny. Now let's wait for them to fall like raindrops from the sky.

*Pause*

**Danny** Dad.

**Dad** Yes?

**Danny** When birds roost in trees, they go to sleep, right?

**Dad** Right.

**Danny** So why don't they topple off the branches? We would if we tried to sleep up there.

**Dad** Birds have claws and long toes. They hold on with those.

**Danny** So why should the sleeping powder make them fall down?

*Pause*

**Dad** Well, it makes them sleep deeper.

**Danny** But if they're holding on with their claws ...

**Dad** You might be right.

**Danny** In which case, my idea won't ...

*Dad and Danny look at each other, momentarily discouraged*

*But then ...*

*A soft thump is heard as a pheasant falls; and another, and another*

*Danny shines his torch*

Look, Dad! It's working!

**Dad** Beautiful! It's beautiful!

*More and more thumps as more and more pheasants fall*

Yes! Yes!

**Danny** It's raining pheasants!

*Exciting music as Dad and Danny step into the clearing as pheasants rain down*

**Dad** It's a triumph!

*He takes out two sacks from under his coat and hands one to Danny. They start picking up the pheasants and filling the sacks*

*What would Mr Victor Hazell think if he could see this?*

**Danny** Don't think about it, Dad!

**Dad** I can't help it, Danny! It's just what I wanted! It's a miracle!

*Suddenly, as they continue stuffing the sacks, a voice (Charlie) rings out*

**Voice (off)** Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's all this then?

*Dad and Danny freeze*

*Somebody (Charlie) enters the clearing*

**Voice** Just as I thought! Caught red-handed!

*Dad and Danny look round*

Ha, ha, ha! Got you! Fooled you!

*It is Charlie*

**Dad** Charlie! Thank heavens it's you. It's all right, Danny. It's Charlie.

**Danny** Mr Kinch! What are you doing here?

**Charlie** Brought the taxi, just like I said I would! You need it by the look of things!

**Dad** Sorry, Danny. I forgot to tell you.

**Danny** Another secret, Dad?

**Dad** Not really. But I knew we couldn't carry this lot on our own!

*He stuffs the remaining pheasants in the sacks*

**Danny** So you knew about Dad's poaching, Mr Kinch?

**Charlie** Course, Danny. I've poached more pheasants in my time than you've sold gallons of petrol! But never as many as this in one go! I reckon as this is a record!

**Dad** And it's all thanks to Danny, Charlie. He's Champion of the Village! **Charlie** He is indeed. Come on, I'll give you a hand. The taxi's over there.

*He and Dad drag the sacks towards the taxi and exit*

*Danny steps forward and talks to the Audience as the scene changes*

**Danny** Trust Dad not to tell me Charlie Kinch was coming. My heart was thumping like crazy when I heard his voice. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's all this then?" Ha! Something else Dad hadn't told me. Another big secret. Mrs Clipstone was in on it too! The Vicar's wife! We drove straight to the vicarage and left the pheasants with *her*! For safe keeping! Dad said the Vicar's very fond of roasted pheasant for his dinner! Anyway, we came home and went to bed and now it's Saturday, the day of the Shooting Party. The day Mr Hazell gets his come-uppance, we hope.

*The scene has changed to ...*

# FILLING STATION

*Morning. Noise of activity in the workshop. Danny removes the "Sorry, Closed" notice as Dr Spencer enters, with her doctor's bag*

**Dr Spencer** Danny! Good-morning!

**Danny** Morning, Dr Spencer.

**Dr Spencer** (*warmly shaking Danny's hand*) Congratulations, my dear, well done!

**Danny** Eh?

**Dr Spencer** The Sleeping Beauty! Brilliant! Your Dad rang me with the splendid news! A brilliant ideal! Why didn't I think of it myself?

**Danny** Well, it was thanks to your sleeping pills.

**Dr Spencer** You're a genius, Danny!

*Dad emerges from the workshop, wiping his oily hands*

**Dad** Too right, Doc. I told him he's Champion of the Village!

**Dr Spencer** Of the Village? He's Champion of the County! Hail to thee, Champion Danny!

*Danny laughs*

Now William, look. (*She brings out the petition forms from her bag*)

**Dad** What's that?

**Dr Spencer** The petition, William, the petition. Everyone's signed, some people twice! I'll deliver it to the Council and hope they see sense.

*Dad looks at it*

**Dad** Well, thank you, Doc. It's great to know we've got so much support. Eh, Danny?

**Danny** Great.

*Enter Sergeant Samways on his bicycle*

**Sergeant Samways** Morning, all!

**Dad** | (*together*) Morning, Sergeant!

**Danny** | (*together*) Morning, Sergeant!

**Dr Spencer** Hallo, Enoch. How are you?

**Sergeant Samways** Right as rain, thank you, Doc. (*To Dad*) How's my pride and joy, William?

**Dad** Just finished her, Sergeant. Cough's gone. She's running —

**Dad** | *(together)* — sweet as a proverbial nut!

**Dad** Bring her out for the Sergeant, please Danny.  
**Danny** Right, Dad.

*He runs to the workshop*

**Sergeant Samways** What do I owe you, Willum?

**Dad** No charge, Sergeant. My pleasure. Anyway, I kept you waiting for her.

**Dr Spencer** Maybe you'd like to sign the petition, Enoch. To let William and Danny stay at the filling station.

**Sergeant Samways** Ah yes, I heard about that. I'm all for that.

*He signs the petition, and Danny drives the Baby Austin out of the workshop*

**Dr Spencer** Thanks, Enoch.

**Sergeant Samways** Pleased to help, Doc. I hope it works, Willum.

**Danny** Your pride and joy, Sergeant!

**Sergeant Samways** Thanks, young Danny. I'll give her a test run and then come back for my bike. 'Bye all.

*He drives away*

**Dad** | *(together)* Bye!

**Danny** | *(together)* Bye!

**Dr Spencer** Bye Enoch!

**Danny** *(seeing something off)* Look, Dad. It's Mrs Clipstone, with Christopher.

**Dad** *(looking at his watch)* Excellent! Bang on time! What a woman! This is her sixth delivery this morning!

**Dr Spencer** How do you mean?

**Dad** There's only one way of delivering pheasants safely.

**Danny** And that's under a baby.

**Dr Spencer** Under a baby?

**Dad** In a pram.

**Danny** With the baby on top!

**Dr Spencer** What a brilliant idea!

**Danny** Right through the village!

**Dad** Bold as brass!

**Dr Spencer** Good for her!

**Dad** We're storing the pheasants in the workshop.

**Danny** Why's she running, Dad?

*The sound of a baby screaming*

**Dr Spencer** And why's Christopher yelling his head off?

**Dad** Maybe he's having a fit? Just as well we've got a doctor handy.

**Danny** Dad, it might be serious.

**Dad** It will be if she gives the game away. Stop running, Mrs Clipstone!

*Suddenly Mrs Clipstone enters on the run, pushing the pram, the baby screaming*

**Mrs Clipstone** Help! Help!

**Dad** What is it?

**Mrs Clipstone** They're pecking him to pieces! Christopher!

*She lifts the baby out and runs to safety as Dad and Dr Spencer look in the pram*

**Dr Spencer** Great Scott! The sleeping pills are wearing off!

**Dad** Look out! They've woken up!

*Pheasants start flying up and out of the pram. Chaos as they rise flapping and land on the workshop and the pumps. Flurry of wings*

*Dr Spencer checks the baby as Danny takes cover with Mrs Clipstone*

*But suddenly pheasants start flying out of the workshop too*

**Danny** They're coming out of the workshop now!

*More flurry of birds. They land on the pumps and the workshop*

*At last the birds are all settled. Dad emerges from behind the pram*

**Dad** Best laid plans ...

*He starts to laugh. Everyone joins in*

*Are you all right, Mrs Clipstone?*

**Mrs Clipstone** It's Christopher I'm worried about.

**Dr Spencer** He's fine. No damage done! Eh, Christopher?

**Danny** He's never sat on an exploding mattress before!

*Everyone is laughing, as a release from the shock*

**Dad** I should have thought. Sleeping pills always wear off by next morning.

*Suddenly the atmosphere changes as Hazell arrives in his Rolls. Seeing the pheasants, he gets out of the car, seething with fury. He is dressed in his expensive, vulgar Shooting Party gear*

*The others watch wide-eyed*

**Hazell** (apoplectic) H-h-h-d-d-d-y-y-y-st-st-st-m-m-m-ph-ph-ph-ph-ph..... (He is trying to say "How dare you steal my pheasants!")

*He looks madly from pheasants to Dad, eyes popping and lips foaming*

(Trying to say, "you'll pay for this!") Y-y-y-p-p-p-f-f-f-th-th-th... (At last) M-m-m-ph-ph-ph-pheasants! MY PHEASANTS!

**Dad** (appearing to stay calm) But they are *not* your pheasants. They're mine.

**Hazell** Don't lie to me, man! I'm the only person round here who has pheasants!

**Dad** They are on my land. They flew on to my land, and so long as they stay on my land they belong to me. Don't you know the rules, you bloated old blue-faced baboon?

**Hazell** How dare you!

**Dad** How dare you!

*They square up to each other. The talk over each other*

**Hazell** You're a thief. I've never liked your attitude, and I'm pretty sure it was you who we caught in Hazell's Wood the other day, and you won't get away with this (etc.)

**Dad** Why don't you just drive off in your fancy big car and leave us alone? You've always disliked us and been rude and nasty, and these pheasants are *mine* (etc.)

*Dr Spencer steps between them*

**Dr Spencer** Mr Hazell, please calm down, and William, come on, let's discuss this in a sensible way (etc.)

*Danny and Mrs Clipstone watch. Mrs Clipstone shields Christopher from the noisy scene*

*As the row continues, Sergeant Samways enters in the Baby Austin. Hearing the row, he stops, climbs out, puts on his police helmet and approaches, and makes himself seen*

*Immediately all fall silent*

**Sergeant Samways** (adopting his formal policeman persona) Well, well, well. What, may I ask, is 'appening around here?

**Hazell** I'll tell you what's happening around here. These are my pheasants, and this rogue has enticed them out of my woods on to his filthy little filling station!

**Sergeant Samways** (surveying the scene) Hen-ticed? Hen-ticed them, did you say?

**Hazell** Of course he enticed them.

**Sergeant Samways** Well now, this is a very hinterestin' haccusation, very hinterestin' indeed, because I ain't never 'eard of nobody hen-ticin' a pheasant across six miles of fields and open countryside. 'Ow do you think this hen-ticin' was performed, Mr 'Azell, if I may hask?

**Hazell** Don't ask me how he did it because I don't know, but he's done it all right! The proof is all around you! All my finest birds are sitting here in this dirty little filling station when they ought to be up in my own wood getting ready for the shoot!

**Sergeant Samways** Am I correct, am I absolutely haccurate in thinkin' that today is the day of your great shootin' party, Mr 'Azell?

**Hazell** That's the whole point! (He prods Sergeant Samways with his finger) And if I don't get these birds back on my land quick sharp, some very important people are going to be extremely angry. One of my guests, I'll have you know, Sergeant, is none other than your own boss, the Chief Constable of the County! So you had better do something about it fast, hadn't you, unless you want to lose those sergeant's stripes of yours.

**Sergeant Samways** Now just one minute, please. Am I to understand that you are haccusin' this gentleman here of committin' this hact?

**Hazell** Of course I am! I know he did it!

**Sergeant Samways** And do you 'ave any hevience to support this haccusation?

**Hazell** The evidence is all around you! Are you blind or something?

*Sergeant Samways bristles. Dad steps forward*

**Dad** (politely) Surely you know how these pheasants came here?

**Hazell** Surely I do not know.

**Dad** Then I shall tell you. Because it is quite simple really.

*Danny, Mrs Clipstone and Doctor Spencer look concerned. Is Dad going to admit the truth?*

They all knew they were going to be shot today if they stayed in your wood, so they flew in here to wait until the shooting was over.

**Hazell** Rubbish!

**Dad** It's not rubbish at all. They are extremely intelligent birds, pheasants. Isn't that so, Doctor?

**Dr Spencer** They have tremendous brain-power. They know exactly what's going on.

**Hazell** Balderdash! It's a conspiracy!

**Dad** It would undoubtedly be a great honour to be shot by the Chief Constable, and an even greater one to be eaten afterwards by Lord Thistlethwaite, but I don't think a pheasant would see it that way.

**Hazell** You are scoundrels, both of you! Rascalions! Sergeant, the Council has issued a four week eviction order on this thief and his brat of a son. I order you to kick them out right *now*!

*Mrs Clipstone dashes forward*

**Mrs Clipstone** You can't do that! What about the petition?

**Dr Spencer** Yes, indeed! *(She produces the petition)* All the villagers have signed it, and nothing can happen till the Council considers it.

*Hazell grabs the petition. He looks at it, then ferociously tears it up and throws it to the ground*

*All the adults start shouting together*

|                         |                     |                                                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Hazell</b>           | } <i>(together)</i> | } That's what I think of your pathetic petition ... |
| <b>Mrs Clipstone</b>    |                     |                                                     |
| <b>Dr Spencer</b>       |                     |                                                     |
| <b>Dad</b>              |                     |                                                     |
| <b>Sergeant Samways</b> |                     |                                                     |

Why don't you just leave us alone?  
That's not fair! You can't do that ...  
I don't think you should've done that,  
Mr 'Azell ...

*Suddenly Danny intervenes*

**Danny** Quiet! Stop it! Please!

*All, surprised, stop and listen*

All this shouting and arguing. It won't get us anywhere. It's just silly.

**Hazell** *(about to explode)* What?

Danny Please, Mr Hazell, listen. You want the pheasants for your Shooting

Party. Dad and I don't want to lose our home. Right? *(To the others)* I suggest we all do our best to try and get the pheasants to fly over the road, drive them back on to Mr Hazell's land.

*Pause*

**Sergeant Samways** That sounds hemimently sensible to me, Danny. Willum?

**Dad** Fair enough.

**Sergeant Samways** Mr 'Azell?

**Hazell** It'd be a step in the right direction.

**Danny** And, in return, Mr Hazell, please will you let us stay here?

**Hazell** *(after a pause)* It's nothing to do with me.

**Danny** I think it is, Mr Hazell. The Council will listen to you.

**Hazell** Well, I ...

**Dad** *(producing the eviction order)* You could tear up the eviction order for a start.

**Sergeant Samways** Sounds fair to me.

**Dr Spencer** An excellent compromise.

**Danny** Please, Mr Hazell.

**Hazell** Oh, very well.

**Danny** *(racing into action)* Right! Come on, everyone! Shoo! Shoo!

*He starts shooting the pheasants. Hazell watches as a frenzy of activity begins. Everyone starts trying to dislodge the pheasants and shoo them over the road here!*

**All** *(except Hazell)* Shoo! Off you go! Beat it! Over the road! Get out of here!

*They clap, holla, find implements to create a noise, and rush around, encouraging the pheasants to leave*

Come on! Shoo! Scarper! Scram! Vamoose!

*Suddenly all the pheasants lift off in a flock, hover above, then plummet down on to Hazell's Rolls, covering the roof and the bonnet*

**Hazell** Not on my car, you idiots! They'll ruin the paintwork!

*The others can't help smiling at Hazell's discomfort. They try unsuccessfully to shift the pheasants*

All (except Hazel!) Shoo! Shoo! Go on! Up! Up! Up! (etc.)

Eventually ...

**Sergeant Samways** Sorry, Mr Hazel, we've done our very best to encourage these birds over the road, but they're too ignorant to understand.

**Hazel** They're on my car!

**Sergeant Samways** At least they're back on your property, sir. That's a fair result. I'd get in and drive 'er away quick!

*Hazel moves towards the car. Danny grabs the eviction order from Dad*

**Danny** Don't forget to tear this up, Mr Hazel. You promised.

*He holds out the eviction order to Hazel, who grabs it*

**Hazel** If you think I'm going to tear this up now, think again! The eviction order stands.

*He gets in the car and drives off, with the pheasants still covering the car. The others shake their fists in frustration*

*As the scene clears and the Lights fade, Danny steps forward to talk to the Audience*

**Danny** (sadly, defeated) Trust Mr Hazel! He won't give up! But the sight of all those dozy pheasants on his precious Rolls was a laugh.

*Dad approaches*

Sorry, Dad.

Dad You did your best, Danny.

Danny Looks like no pheasants, no home.

Dad Well, the pheasants don't matter. And Dr Spencer's going to stick the petition back together, so fingers crossed, we've still got a chance, son.

*He gives Danny a squeeze, then exits*

**Danny** (to the Audience) And, in the meantime, it's nearly the start of Mr Victor Hazel's Shooting Party ...

*The lighting changes as the scene moves to ...*

## ROAD

*Danny has moved to one side, or into the auditorium*

*Hazel enters and suddenly sees the Audience*

**Hazel** Aha! The beaters have arrived! Splendid! (With oily and patronising bonhomie) Welcome, kiddies. I'm sure you're going to have a jolly time. This will be a day you'll never forget. Now, before we take you up into Hazel's Wood, we're going to give you a practice in the finer skills of beating. (He looks around) Rabbetts? Where are you, man? (To the Audience) Excuse me. Stay there. (Calling) Rabbetts!

*He exits in search*

*Danny quickly returns*

**Danny** (urgently to the Audience) Hey, listen, everyone. I've had an idea. I don't think any of us really want this Shooting Party to go ahead, do we? Eh?

*Hopefully the Audience agree*

Well, listen, if we all go along with this beating practice, if we pretend to be on Hazel's side, I'm sure we can stop the Shooting Party happening. OK? Trust me! You see, what we'll do ...

*He looks off and sees Hazel and Gamekeeper 1 (Rabbetts) returning*

He's coming back! Please! Pretend you're on his side!

*He speedily exits or returns to the auditorium to become one of the Audience*

*Hazel and Gamekeeper 1 (Rabbetts) enter*

**Hazel** (to the Audience) Right. Beater training. So, beaters, first of all, please stand up! Come on. Everybody up.

*The Audience stands*

Splendid. Rabbetts, over to you.  
**Gamekeeper 1** Right, boss. (To the Audience) Now your job is to scare the birds to make 'em fly up. So first, please stamp your feet. Go on! Stamp, stamp, stamp!

*He demonstrates and the Audience join in*

Yes. Good. Good.

**Hazell** Next you make a whooping noise. (*Thinking how to describe it*) Like a police car siren.

*He demonstrates*

Who, whoo, whoo, whoo! Everybody!

**Audience** Who, whoo, whoo, whoo!

**Hazell** Yes! You've got it! Excellent.

**Gamekeeper 1** And then you clap. Hard, like this! (*He claps quickly, several times*) Everyone!

*The Audience claps*

Thank you. That'll work a treat.

**Hazell** Well done! Well done! Now, let's put it all together. Here we go. Rabbits!

**Gamekeeper 1** Stamp!

*He leads the stamping*

**Hazell** Whoo!

*He leads the siren-noise*

**Gamekeeper 1** Clap!

*He leads the clapping*

**Hazell** (*quietening the Audience*) Perfect! Outstanding! Thank you. Sit down again, please. We'll see you in the wood. Come on, Rabbits, time to meet our guests.

*They exit*

*Danny returns to the stage*

**Danny** (*to the Audience*) Great! Thank you. Now, listen. Here's the plan. We all go to Hazell's Wood —

*The scene changes to ...*

### HAZELL'S WOOD/CLEARING

**Danny** (*continuing*) — and get there before the Shooting Party. Then we start beating early, so all the pheasants fly up and escape before the shooting starts. So everyone, very quiet until ...

*He sees Hazell approaching, and hides*

*Hazell enters, leading some members of the Shooting Party into the wood. All are dressed for the occasion and carry shotguns*

**Hazell** (*unctuously*) My dear Sir Godfrey, Lady Thistlewaite, Lord Thistlewaite, Councillor Clark, you are most welcome! This is a great season for pheasants, a very great season indeed! Please, follow me, there are drinks this way. A glass of chilled champagne? Or some mulled wine, perhaps? This way, please!

*He leads them off the other side*

*Danny returns "leading" the Audience to the edge of the clearing where pheasants are strutting about in the shadows of the surrounding trees*

**Danny** (*whispering to the Audience*) Here we are! This is it! Everybody, please, quietly stand up!

*The Audience stands*

Ready! Steady! Beat!

*He leads the Audience, stamping, whooping, and clapping. The pheasants all react. They fly up, off and away*

We did it! Yeah!

*He leads the Audience, cheering. Suddenly he sees the shooting party returning*

They're coming! Shh! Stay standing! Shh! Good luck!

*He hides, or slips into the Auditorium*

*Enter Hazell and Gamekeeper 1 (Rabbits), leading the Shooting Party. They all gather*

**Hazell** My lords, ladies and gentlemen. The moment we have all waited for has arrived. Please prepare your shotguns.

*The Shooting Party cock their shotguns in readiness*

Good sport, everybody. Rabbetts!

*Gamekeeper 1 (Rabbetts) steps forward*

**Gamekeeper 1** (to the Audience) Beaters stand by! Beaters, BEAT!

*He leads the Audience. Stamps. Whoops. Claps. Nothing happens. The shooting party silently ain, but no birds fly up*

**Hazell** (whispers) Rabbetts, what's going on?

**Gamekeeper 1** Nothing, sir. Don't understand it.

**Hazell** Again!

**Gamekeeper 1** Beaters, BEAT!

*He leads the Audience again. Stamps. Whoops. Claps. Nothing happens. The shooting party members relax their aim. They turn to Hazell*

**Shooting Party 1** What's all this, Hazell? Where are the pheasants?

**Hazell** Sir Godfrey, please ...

**Shooting Party 2** Sheer waste of time! Not a single bird!

**Hazell** Lord Thistlewaite, I'm sure ...

**Shooting Party 3** Absolute wash-out! Time to go!

**Hazell** Lady Thistlewaite, let's try again...

**Shooting Party 4** Disgraceful! I've had enough.

**Hazell** Councillor Clark, no, don't go please! (To all) Stay for another glass of champagne!

*The guests start towards the exit, muttering*

**Shooting Party 1** Never liked the man!

**Shooting Party 2** Jumped-up little upstart!

**Shooting Party 3** Won't bother to come again!

**Shooting Party 4** What a shambles!

*They exit*

*Hazell is left alone, humbled. He turns on Gamekeeper 1 (Rabbetts)*

**Hazell** Rabbetts!

**Gamekeeper 1** Sorry, boss. Nothing to do with me, boss.

*He exits hurriedly*

*Hazell turns his attention to the Audience*

**Hazell** (realising the truth) It was YOU! How dare you sabotage my Shooting Party! How dare you make me a laughing-stock! It's not funny!

*Hopefully the Audience starts to laugh*

It's not funny! Shut up! (He shakes his fists)

*Danny appears*

**Danny** It wasn't their fault, Mr Hazell. (To the Audience) Sit down, everyone, please. (To Hazell) It wasn't their fault. It was my idea to do the beating early.

**Hazell** I might have guessed. Like father like son. Trouble.

**Danny** I didn't want those pheasants shot, in cold blood, just for fun. Maybe I shouldn't have helped them escape and maybe Dad shouldn't go poaching on your land, though it's gone on for years and doesn't really do much harm. All right, we were wrong. But not as wrong as you, Mr Hazell, just because you're rich, thinking you can do as you please, dig pits to catch people in, send spies to look at the caravan and get the Council to try and throw Dad and me out of our home. That's wrong. Just because you want to own all the land, you try to get your hands on ours. That's not fair. You're a bully, Mr Hazell, and I don't see why you should get away with it.

*As he speaks, Dad, Mrs Clipstone with her pram, Charlie and Dr Spencer silently enter and stand protectively behind him*

My dad's worth a hundred of you, Mr Hazell. He's kind. He helps people. He's looked after me since I was a baby. The village like him. And they don't like you. 'Cos you think you're special. Not one of us. Why can't you live and let live? (Pause) Let us stay here — please?

*Hazell stands motionless*

**Dad** Well said, Danny.

**Charlie** We're right behind you, lad.

Mrs Clipstone The whole village is behind you, Danny.  
Dr Spencer Well, Mr Hazell?

*Hazell thinks, then pulls out the eviction order*

Hazell It's quite clear. That filling station, that caravan, they don't meet the regulations. It's the law! There's nothing I can do.

Dr Spencer What regulations?

Hazell It's in black and white, I tell you. (*Reading from the eviction order*) No electricity in the caravan. No running water. Unhygienic chickens running loose. It's quite clear. Unfit for human habitation. Four weeks notice.

Mrs Clipstone There's electricity in your workshop, isn't there William?  
Dad Of course. Couldn't fix the cars without it.

Danny (*an idea*) Couldn't we wire up the caravan from the workshop?

Mrs Clipstone I'm sure the Electricity Board could easily do that.

Dr Spencer And there's water by the petrol pumps, isn't there?

Dad Yes. There's a tap and a fire hydrant.

Danny Couldn't we extend the pipe to the caravan?

Dr Spencer The Water Board could do that with the greatest of ease.

Danny And couldn't we build a proper run to keep the chickens in?

Charlie I'd be glad to give you a hand with that. Bit of wire, few pieces of wood. No problem.

Dr Spencer No problem indeed. And four weeks in which to complete the work. Well, Mr Hazell?

Hazell It's not as simple as that.

Dad I think it is, Mr Hazell.

Danny Please, Mr Hazell.

*Pause*

*Hazell looks round. The villagers are implacable*

*Suddenly Hazell tears up the eviction order, temporarily defeated. He stalks out.*

*All cheer and surround Danny*

Mrs Clipstone Well done, Danny!

Charlie That showed 'im!

Dr Spencer I think he'll keep a low profile, for a while at least!

Dad Thank you all for your support.

Danny (*to the Audience*) And thank you, too! For helping save our home!

*All applaud the Audience*

Dr Spencer Happy William?

Dad Of course, Doc. But sad too.

Charlie How come, William?

Dad Sad that we've nothing to show from Danny's brilliant Sleeping Beauty Method! We deserved just a few spoils, didn't we?

*The others laugh*

Mrs Clipstone I wish now I hadn't delivered them in Christopher's pram!

Dad Christopher. Is he all right?

Mrs Clipstone Sleeping like a baby.

Danny Well, he is a baby!

Dr Spencer You know—I have a hunch!

Charlie What sort of a hunch, Doc?

Dr Spencer Don't you think some of the pheasants might have been greedier than the others? Might have gobbled up more than their share of raisins?

Dad We did think of that. Eh, Danny?

Danny Yes.

Dr Spencer I wonder, Mrs Clipstone, would you mind terribly if I asked you to lift Christopher out of his pram for me?

Mrs Clipstone As long as he doesn't wake up! (*She carefully lifts the baby out*)

*Dr Spencer pounces on the pram, and lifts out some pheasants*

Dr Spencer I knew it! I don't think these will ever wake up.

Dad Aha! Marvellous, Doc. How about two each?

*He starts to hand them round. General delight*

*Enter Sergeant Samways in his Baby Austin*

With our sincere and grateful thanks!

Sergeant Samways 'Allo! What's all this then?

*Dad turns and see Sergeant Samways. The others look somewhat sheepishly guilty. Does the policeman's arrival signal trouble?*

Dad (*approaching*) Sergeant! You're just in time!

*He hands him two pheasants*

**Sergeant Samways** (*after a pause – how will he react?*) My, my, Willum. You've come up trumps this time!

**Dad** Thanks to Danny!

**Sergeant Samways** Thanks, Danny!

**All** Thanks, Danny!

*As everybody divides the spoils, saying their thank-yous and goodbyes, Danny comes forward and talks to the Audience*

*The scene changes back to ...*

#### FILLING STATION

**Danny** It's great living in a village. Sharing the good times. Helping each other through the bad times. I expect Mr Hazell will rear his ugly head again someday, but I think we're safe for now.

*All except Dad have exited*

*Now Dad joins Danny*

**Dad** Thanks, Danny. Your Mum would be proud of you.

**Danny** And of you.

**Dad** (*smiling*) I've done my best.

**Danny** Are we a team from now on?

**Dad** The best team. Top of the league!

**Danny** No more secrets?

**Dad** No more secrets.

**Danny** Except poaching secrets.

**Dad** Just between us!

**Danny** You know what, Dad?

**Dad** What?

**Danny** You're sparky! I like that. Not everyone's dad is sparky.

**Dad** And not every dad has a son who's the Champion, not of the village, not of the county ... **DANNY, THE CHAMPION OF THE WORLD!**

*They hug*

THE END

## FURNITURE AND PROPERTY LIST

### ACT I

#### HAZELL'S WOOD

*On stage:* No properties required

*Off stage:* Shotguns (**Gamekeepers**)  
Torches (**Gamekeepers**)

#### CARAVAN (EXTERIOR)

*On stage:*

Caravan with steps leading down. *Inside caravan:* table laid with two plates and paraffin lamp, hunting horn, 2 sandwiches, paraffin burner with saucepan of beans, spoons, kettle containing water, two mugs, cocoa powder, sugar, torch, old envelope, scissors, bag, clock, bunk-beds, cloth

#### FILLING STATION

*On stage:*

Two petrol pumps. *Over one pump:* sign reading "Sorry, Closed" on one side and "Open" on the other  
Several chickens (puppets)  
*In shed:* money

*Off stage:*

Saloon car, with a taxi sign on top (**Charlie**)  
Pram with a soft toy and egg-box in it (**Mrs Clipstone**)  
Vintage Baby Austin with bicycle strapped on back and tow-rope inside (**Sergeant Samways**)  
Rolls Royce (**Hazell**)

*Personal:*

**Charlie:** money  
**Hazell:** car key, leather riding-crop

#### CARAVAN (INTERIOR)

*On stage:* No further properties required

#### CARAVAN (EXTERIOR)

*On stage:* No further properties required

# Danny the Champion of the World

## FILLING STATION

*On stage:* No further properties required

## ROAD

*On stage:* No further properties required

## HAZELL'S WOOD/Pt

*On stage:* No further properties required

*Off stage:* Torches (Gamekeepers)

## CARAVAN (EXTERIOR)

*On stage:* *In front of caravan:* blanket  
Doctor's bag for **Dr Spencer**. *In it:* bottle of sleeping pills (capsules containing powder), scissors  
Leg splint  
Chicken feed

*Off stage:* Stretcher (Ambulance Men)  
Clipboard and pen (Council Inspector)  
Badge (Council Inspector)

## CARAVAN (INTERIOR)

*On stage:* No further properties required

*Personal:* Dad: crutches, watch

## SCHOOL HALL

*On stage:* No further properties required

*Personal:* Headteacher: cane

## FILLING STATION

*On stage:* *In caravan:* cup of tea

*Off stage:* Envelope containing council letter (Mr Hazell)

# Furniture and Property List

## ACT II

## SCHOOL HALL

*On stage:* As ACT I

*Off stage:* Clipboards (Mrs Clipstone and Dr Spencer)

## CARAVAN (EXTERIOR)

*On stage:* As ACT I  
*On steps:* homework for **Danny**  
*Inside caravan:* two mugs

## CARAVAN (INTERIOR)

*On stage:* As ACT I  
*Inside caravan:* packet of raisins, needle and thread, bag

## ROAD

*On stage:* No further properties required

## HAZELL'S WOOD/CLEARING

*On stage:* As ACT I  
Pheasants (puppets)

*Off stage:* Shotgun (Gamekeeper)

## ROAD

*On stage:* Hedge

*Personal:* Dad: apples, torch, two sacks  
Danny: torch

## HAZELL'S WOOD/CLEARING

*On stage:* No further properties required

*Off stage:* Sleeping pheasants (Stage-Management)

FILLING STATION

*On stage:* As ACT I  
Implements to create noise

*Off stage:* Doctor's bag containing petition forms (Dr Spencer)  
Bicycle (Sergeant Sanways)  
Pram containing baby and pheasants (Mrs Clipstone)  
Rolls Royce (Hazel)

*Personal:* Dad: eviction order  
ROAD

*On stage:* No further properties required

HAZEL'S WOOD/CLEARING

*On stage:* No further properties required

*Off stage:* Shotguns (Shooting Party)

FILLING STATION

*On stage:* No further properties required

LIGHTING PLOT

Practical fittings required: paraffin lamp, car headlamps on Baby Austin

ACT I

*To open:* Twilight. Shadow effect on trees

Cue 1 **Hazel** hurries off in pursuit. Music.  
*Crossfade to moonlight, mist exterior  
with paraffin lamp glow within the caravan* (Page 1)

Cue 2 **Danny** is coaxed into the caravan.  
*Slow fade down* (Page 4)

Cue 3 Scene change. Cockerel crows  
*Slow fade up to morning exterior* (Page 4)

Cue 4 **Danny** looks at **Dad**, who is furious  
*Fade to a spot on Danny* (Page 10)

Cue 5 **Danny**: "What's the big secret?"  
*Cross-fade to early evening caravan interior,  
paraffin lamp glow. Moonlight exterior* (Page 10)

Cue 6 **Danny**: "Happy hunting, Dad."  
*Fade lights to suggest time passing* (Page 16)

Cue 7 **Danny** nods off to sleep  
*Fade up lights with paraffin lamp glow. Moonlight exterior* (Page 16)

Cue 8 **Danny** goes inside the workshop. Sound of car door  
*Car headlamps on* (Page 17)

Cue 9 Sound of approaching car  
*Car headlamps reflecting on Danny* (Page 17)

Cue 10 **Danny** continues driving: when ready  
*Car headlamps shining in Danny's eyes* (Page 17)

Cue 11 **Danny**: "He's coming back!"  
*Cut Baby Austin headlamps* (Page 18)

- Cue 12 Noise of Police car recedes  
*Baby Austin headlights on* (Page 18)
- Cue 13 Dad: (off) "I think I've broken my ankle."  
*Shadow effect on Gamekeepers* (Page 19)
- Cue 14 Danny collects the rope and gets in the car  
*Baby Austin headlights on* (Page 21)
- Cue 15 Hazel chases Gamekeeper 1 off  
*Cross-fade to early morning exterior* (Page 22)
- Cue 16 Danny enters the caravan  
*Brighten lighting* (Page 23)
- Cue 17 Danny: "Better tell Dad tonight."  
*Cross-fade to early evening caravan interior* (Page 23)
- Cue 18 Danny: "I'll enjoy it..."  
*Fade to spot on Danny DS* (Page 27)
- Cue 19 Children: (singing) "All things wise and wonderful."  
*Cross-fade to school hall interior. Bring houselights up* (Page 27)
- Cue 20 The Headteacher raises the cane as if to strike  
*Black-out* (Page 30)
- Cue 21 High-pitched sound of pain. When ready  
*Fade up general exterior* (Page 30)
- Cue 22 Dad: "... nowhere to live..."  
*Fade lights* (Page 32)
- ACT II
- To open: General interior with houselights*
- Cue 23 Dr Spencer and Mrs Clipstone exit  
*Fade houselights and cross-fade to evening exterior* (Page 34)
- Cue 24 Danny goes inside the caravan  
*Cross-fade to caravan interior* (Page 36)
- Cue 25 Dad and Danny: "The Sleeping Beauty!"  
*Fade lights* (Page 37)
- Cue 26 Danny steps outside the caravan  
*Spot on Danny DS* (Page 37)

- Cue 27 Danny goes inside the caravan  
*Fade up general lighting inside caravan and light exterior* (Page 37)
- Cue 28 Dad: "Come on, this way."  
*Shadowy woods effect* (Page 39)
- Cue 29 The Gamekeeper exits  
*Cross-fade to dusk continuing a slow cross-fade throughout scene to moonlight exterior and shadows* (Page 40)
- Cue 30 Danny: "... gets his come-uppance, we hope."  
*Cross-fade to morning exterior* (Page 44)
- Cue 31 Hazel exits. All shake their fists in frustration  
*Fade to spot on Danny* (Page 52)
- Cue 32 Danny: "... Victor Hazel's Shooting Party..."  
*Cross-fade to general exterior* (Page 52)
- Cue 33 Hazel leads the Shooting Party off to the other side  
*Shadowy effect on woods* (Page 55)
- Cue 34 Danny moves forward to the Audience  
*Fade to spot on Danny* (Page 60)

## EFFECTS PLOT

### ACT I

|        |                                                                                                                                                    |           |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Cue 1  | To open ACT I<br><i>Rustling of trees</i>                                                                                                          | (Page 1)  |
| Cue 2  | Hazel fires his gun<br><i>Gunshot</i>                                                                                                              | (Page 1)  |
| Cue 3  | Scene changes. Moonlight<br><i>Owl hoot</i>                                                                                                        | (Page 1)  |
| Cue 4  | Danny enters the caravan. Lighting fades<br><i>Cockerel crow</i>                                                                                   | (Page 4)  |
| Cue 5  | Charlie enters in a taxi and sounds the horn<br><i>Car horn</i>                                                                                    | (Page 4)  |
| Cue 6  | Mrs Clipstone enters with a pram<br><i>Baby cry</i>                                                                                                | (Page 5)  |
| Cue 7  | Mrs Clipstone : "... was disturbing his concentration."<br><i>Crying intensifies</i>                                                               | (Page 6)  |
| Cue 8  | Danny: " Boo! Boo!"<br><i>Baby gurgle</i>                                                                                                          | (Page 6)  |
| Cue 9  | Danny: "...she mean, 'any luck'?"<br><i>Approaching vehicle</i>                                                                                    | (Page 7)  |
| Cue 10 | Dad: "... 'fraid not, Sergeant, I ... ?"<br><i>Approaching vehicle</i>                                                                             | (Page 8)  |
| Cue 11 | Dad: "... bird off my table!" Danny holds the chicken<br><i>Chicken clucking</i>                                                                   | (Page 14) |
| Cue 12 | High trees pass Danny as he drives. A car approaches<br><i>Car engine roars past. After a pause a car approaches and speeds up the road behind</i> | (Page 17) |
| Cue 13 | Danny stops the car<br><i>Police siren wail in the distance</i>                                                                                    | (Page 18) |
| Cue 14 | Danny turns off the head lamps<br><i>Noise of police siren approaches, zooms past and recedes</i>                                                  | (Page 18) |

### Effects Plot

69

|        |                                                                                                            |           |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Cue 15 | Dad: "Hoora!"<br><i>Distant sound of ambulance approaching</i>                                             | (Page 24) |
| Cue 16 | Danny enters the caravan<br><i>Music to suggest the passing of time, then chicken squawks and flutters</i> | (Page 25) |
| Cue 17 | Danny exits<br><i>Sound of children singing a hymn echoes</i>                                              | (Page 28) |
| Cue 18 | Headteacher raises the cane. Black-out<br><i>A high-pitched sound of pain, echoing</i>                     | (Page 30) |

### ACT II

|        |                                                                                       |           |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Cue 19 | Dad is working at the table. Danny holds the chicken<br><i>Chicken cluck</i>          | (Page 36) |
| Cue 20 | Dad: "Operation Sleeping Beauty!"<br><i>Music</i>                                     | (Page 38) |
| Cue 21 | Dad: "... don't you worry."<br><i>Bullfrog croaking</i>                               | (Page 38) |
| Cue 22 | Dad: "Do you hear that?" They stop<br><i>Bullfrog croak</i>                           | (Page 38) |
| Cue 23 | Dad: "... just like a little balloon."<br><i>Bullfrog croak</i>                       | (Page 39) |
| Cue 24 | Dad: "... burping and give her a hug!"<br><i>Bullfrog croak</i>                       | (Page 39) |
| Cue 25 | Dad: "... from the bullfrog, I reckon."<br><i>Bullfrog croak</i>                      | (Page 39) |
| Cue 26 | Dad throws a raisin into the clearing<br><i>Small flurry of pheasant wings</i>        | (Page 40) |
| Cue 27 | Dad throws a huge handful of raisins into the clearing<br><i>Loud flurry of wings</i> | (Page 40) |
| Cue 28 | Dad: " We're going back!"<br><i>Music</i>                                             | (Page 42) |
| Cue 29 | Danny: " In which case my idea won't ..."<br><i>Soft thumps of falling pheasants</i>  | (Page 42) |

- Cue 30 **Danny:** "... gets his come-uppance, we hope." (Page 44)  
*Noise of activity in the workshop*
- Cue 31 **Danny:** "Why's she running, Dad?" (Page 44)  
*Baby screaming*
- Cue 32 **Dad:** "Look out! They've woken up!" (Page 47)  
*Flurry of pheasant wings*
- Cue 33 **Danny:** "... out of the workshop now!" (Page 47)  
*Flurry of pheasant wings*

A licence issued by Samuel French Ltd to perform this play does not include permission to use any incidental music specified in this copy. Where the place of performance is already licensed by the PERFORMING RIGHT SOCIETY a return of the music used must be made to them. If the place of performance is not so licensed then application should be made to the PERFORMING RIGHT SOCIETY LTD, 29-33 Berners Street, London W1T 4AB.

A separate and additional licence from PHONOGRAPHIC PERFORMANCES LTD, 1 Upper James Street, London W1R 3HG is needed whenever commercial recordings are used.

## PROJECTION PLOT

### ACT I

- Cue 1 **Danny** leaves the workshop in the Baby Austin  
 Film projection of a diving background through high trees.  
 See description pages 17-18 (Page 17)

### ACT II

*No cues*