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*Dramatic Publishing*

# Danny, King of the Basement



Comedy/Drama by  
David S. Craig

“Everything that you want a show for young audiences to be ... written with insight and compassion.” (*Toronto Star*)

Winner of the Dora Mavor Moore Award  
(Toronto’s Tony Awards) for Outstanding  
Production in Theatre for Young Audiences and the  
Canada Council Children’s Theatre Prize.

## Danny, King of the Basement

**Comedy/Drama. By David S. Craig.** *Cast: 2m., 2w.* This heartwarming story about a boy who creates an imaginary world to deal with the instability and hardship of his daily life is a powerful, yet playful, play that truthfully explores issues related to child poverty and homelessness and ultimately demonstrates how the power of friendship can change lives. Ten-year-old Danny “Delco” Carter is the “king of moving.” In two years, he and his unemployed mother have moved more times than most kids lose teeth; there’s just never the money to pay the rent. When Danny moves to upscale Clinton Street, the kids he meets have more material things, but they have bigger problems than just being hungry. Penelope’s parents are separated and are using her as a go-between because they won’t talk to each other. Angelo’s dad is scary; he sounds (and looks) like a dinosaur. But Danny creates a sense of community that allows his friends to cope with their problems and, ultimately, to help Danny—because Danny’s challenge isn’t losing a home—it’s gaining one. “Shines a penetrating light on the mindset of a wanting kid.” (*Winnipeg Free Press*) “It succeeds in entertaining middle-schoolers while compassionately depicting challenges many children cope with daily, and silently.” (*The Seattle Times*) *Modular set.* *Approximate running time: 55 minutes. Code: DF2.*

*Cover: Roseneath Theatre, Toronto. (l-r) Yannah MacIntosh, Ron Gabriel, Jennifer Dean and Gil Garrat. Photo: Tom Sandler.  
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# **Danny, King of the Basement**

Comedy/Drama

by

**DAVID S. CRAIG**



**Dramatic Publishing Company**

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(DANNY, KING OF THE BASEMENT)

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*Danny, King of the Basement* was commissioned with support from the Laidlaw Foundation and developed with a grant from the Canada Council Creation Program. The play was produced by Roseneath Theatre, an award-winning, Toronto-based professional family theatre.

*Danny, King of the Basement* premiered at Young People's Theatre in Toronto on November 4, 2001.

### CAST

Louise..... Jennifer Dean  
Danny ..... Gil Garratt  
Penelope..... Yanna McIntosh  
Angelo..... Ron Gabriel

### PRODUCTION STAFF

Playwright/Producer ..... David S. Craig  
Director/Dramaturg ..... Richard Greenblatt  
Production Designer..... Anjelija Djuric  
Composer ..... Richard M. Sacks  
Lighting Designer ..... Christina Cicko  
Stage Manager ..... Kathryn Westoll  
Study Guide ..... Pat McCarthy, Paula Owolabi

# Danny, King of the Basement

## CHARACTERS

*(In order of appearance.)*

### **PRINCIPLE ROLES:**

LOUISE  
DANNY  
PENELOPE  
ANGELO

### **FUNCTIONARY ROLES:**

BILL \*  
STREETCAR DRIVER  
PENELOPE'S MOTHER  
TAXI DRIVER  
DINOSAUR \*  
ANGELO'S FATHER \*  
PRINCIPAL \*  
RADIO BROADCASTER \*  
DOCTOR  
NURSE

## CHARACTER NOTES

The functionary roles marked with an asterisk (\*) are taped offstage voices. The nurse and the doctor were played by the actors playing Angelo and Penelope, concealed in white gowns, hats and surgical masks. The other roles were played by actors playing the principle roles, as practical, carrying two-dimensional cartoon cut-outs or puppets. This maintained the integrity of the principle roles as three-dimensional characters and added to the theatricality of the production.



## AUTHOR'S NOTES

This play is set in Toronto, and all the places named refer to real locations in that city. This was to emphasize to Toronto audiences that Danny's story was real and current. Producers mounting a production in other locations can alter these references so that audiences in their community can have the same experience. The play also refers to hockey players and a movie star, which can be updated as appropriate.

# Danny, King of the Basement

## PROLOGUE

AT RISE: *Toronto. The present. A Thursday before dawn in late autumn. Offstage, a man snores loudly. LOUISE enters cautiously pulling a large, broken, rolling suitcase.*

LOUISE (*whispering*). Danny ... Danny ... Danny!.

DANNY (*sleepily appears*). Huh?

LOUISE. It's time.

DANNY. Huh?

LOUISE. Moving time.

DANNY. Why?

LOUISE. Because.

DANNY. Why because?

LOUISE. Because I don't want to wake Bill.

DANNY. Why?

LOUISE. Because he didn't turn out to be Prince Charming did he?

BOTH. No.

DANNY. I gotta pack. (*Disappears.*)

LOUISE. Make it fast.

DANNY (*off*) I can pack faster than it takes to change a light bulb.

LOUISE. Yeah, yeah.

DANNY. I can pack faster than it takes to tie a shoelace.

LOUISE. OK, OK.

DANNY. Faster than it takes to—

LOUISE. Danny. Hurry up. If he wakes up—

DANNY. Ready.

*(DANNY reappears with a shopping cart.)*

LOUISE. You can't take all that.

DANNY. It's my stuff.

LOUISE. You can't take it.

DANNY. I'm not leaving without my stuff!

*(The snoring stops. They freeze. Snoring starts again.)*

LOUISE. OK, OK.

DANNY. What are you worried about? He'll sleep through anything.

*(An alarm clock rings loudly. It stops.)*

BILL. *(off)*. Hey! Louise!

*(They look at each other in terror.)*

BOTH. Window!

*(They climb, run, pull and carry their bags/shopping cart out the window and onto the street. STREETCAR DRIVER enters in a streetcar, "St. Clair Eastbound," and glides to a stop.)*

DANNY. Hey, Mum. Streetcar. C'mon.

LOUISE. All right, all right ...

STREETCAR DRIVER. Hey. You can't bring that stuff on. It's rush hour.

LOUISE *(brash)*. That's perfect. We're in a rush. C'mon, Danny. Excuse me. Could we have a little space in here? Thank-you.

*(They squeeze on. Their faces appear in a window. LOUISE in front, DANNY behind, the streetcar's bell rings, and they move off.)*

DANNY. That was so fun.

LOUISE. I'm glad you think so.

DANNY. We made a clean getaway.

LOUISE. Yeah. I'm good at escaping.

DANNY. C'mon, Mum. You love moving.

LOUISE. No. You love moving, and we move too much.

DANNY. I'm the king of moving.

LOUISE. It's not good for you. It's been seven times in three years.

DANNY. Eight times in two years. But who's counting.  
(*Leaning out the window.*) Hey truck driver! (*Mimes pulling a horn cord. A big air horn blows back.*) Yes!

LOUISE. Danny Carter get your hands in the window. You're getting your jacket all dirty.

DANNY. It's not a jacket, it's a super-coat.

LOUISE. I wish.

DANNY. So where we going? Let's go to Robertson House.  
They gotta big TV.

LOUISE. I've rented a basement apartment.

DANNY. Another basement?

LOUISE. This is a good one, Danny, first class, blue chip, solid gold. It's got no mold, no bugs and a window you can actually see through.

DANNY. I hate basements.

LOUISE. You're gonna love this one. But first we're going to Human Resources.

(*NOTE: In the United States, change "Human Resources" to "Unemployment."*)

DANNY. Why?!

LOUISE. To get a job, Mr. Banker. We're broke. How do we get there?

DANNY. Streetcar to Yonge Street and then subway south Summerhill, Rosedale, Bloor, Wellesley, College, Dundas, Queen and walk west. Or, we could streetcar to St. Clair West and subway south Dupont, Spadina, St. George, Museum, Queen's Park, St. Patrick, Osgoode and walk east. Take your pick.

LOUISE. You're amazing.

DANNY. No, you're amazing.

LOUISE. No, you're amazing.

DANNY. OK, I'm amazing.

LOUISE. I better call your school and tell them you're not coming back. Is there anyone you want to say goodbye to?

DANNY. No.

LOUISE. What about that boy, Ahmed? You were friends with him, weren't you? *(Beat.)* Danny?

DANNY. Hey, truck driver. *(Mimes pulling a horn cord. A big air horn blows back.)* Yeah.

*(The streetcar, with everyone inside, moves off.)*

# ACT I

*(Clinton street. Afternoon. There are steps up to PENELOPE's front door, #92, and there are steps down to the basement apartment, #92B. Beside PENELOPE's house, at ground level, is ANGELO's front door, #93. PENELOPE'S MOTHER enters followed by PENELOPE.)*

PENELOPE. Mum ... Mum ... Mother!

MOTHER. What?

PENELOPE. I want to talk.

MOTHER. Penelope, I've taken you to the shoe store, I've taken you to the coat store, and today, I took you to the hairdresser. Now Mummy needs you to play outside.

PENELOPE. What about ballet?

MOTHER. I'll call you a taxi.

PENELOPE. But there's no one to play with.

MOTHER. What about Angelo?

PENELOPE. A boy? You want me to play with a boy?

MOTHER. It won't hurt you.

PENELOPE. Oh, yes, it will. Playing with a boy is torture. Playing with that boy is death.

MOTHER. Penelope, if you don't stay outside and play, I will cancel your ballet classes, cancel your acting classes and I will stuff all your movies into the garburator.

*(PENELOPE gasps.)*

MOTHER *(cont'd)*. Have a nice time, sweetie.

*(MOTHER exits. Door slams. PENELOPE pulls out a cell-phone.)*

PENELOPE. (*quickly*). Mum, please don't hang up, please don't hang up, pleeeeeeease ... Thank you. I really want to go back to my old school ... Well, I want to discuss it again ... Because my friends are all there ... Why can't we afford it anymore? ... But he never ... OK ... OK ... OK! (*Hangs up. PENELOPE dials a number on her cellphone.*) Hi, Daddy ... it's me. Please call. It's really, really, really important. Love you.

(*ANGELO staggers in with a colossal hockey bag on his back. PENELOPE watches.*)

PENELOPE (*cont'd*). You dropped something.

ANGELO. Yeah right.

PENELOPE. You did. I swear. It's right behind you.

(*ANGELO looks. It's not there. PENELOPE laughs.*)

ANGELO. Thanks, Penny.

PENELOPE. Did you score? You didn't, did you? Ooooooo, your dad is going to get reeeeeeeeeeely angry. He's going to yell and scream and blow a hole in your roof. And then you'll cry, boo-hoo, like you did the last time.

(*ANGELO drops his bag and walks towards PENELOPE, who screams and runs up her stairs.*)

PENELOPE (*cont'd*). You can't come up here. It's private property. You can't, you can't, you CAAAAAAAAN'T!

(*ANGELO turns away in disgust.*)

PENELOPE (*cont'd*). Did you see my shoes? They're new.

ANGELO. Who cares.

PENELOPE. And I got a new coat. And I got my hair done. In a real salon. Cost a hundred and forty dollars.

*(ANGELO snorts.)*

PENELOPE *(cont'd)*. It did.

ANGELO. A hundred and forty bucks for that?

PENELOPE. It looks great.

ANGELO. Maybe for your old school.

PENELOPE. What do you know? You didn't even notice.

ANGELO. Oh, yes, I did. I noticed right away because your hair SUCKS!

PENELOPE. Shut up, Angelo.

*(TAXI DRIVER enters in a roaring taxi and squeals to a halt.)*

ANGELO. Ooooh, a taxi. Going back to the hair butcher?  
Good idea 'cause everyone at school is going to laugh.

PENELOPE. Yeah well at least I'm popular. At least I've got friends. At least I'm not a loser.

TAXI DRIVER. Where to?

PENELOPE. Pia Bauman Dance Studio, *s'il vous plaît*. Bye, loser.

*(PENELOPE rides off in the taxi with TAXI DRIVER.)*

ANGELO *(shouting after)*. I'm not a loser. I scored a goal.  
*(To himself.)* Almost. *(Shoulders his bag and opens his front door. Fearfully.)* Dad? Dad?

*(A DINOSAUR roars, and its shadow appears in the window.)*

ANGELO *(cont'd)*. I'm home. *(Exits.)*

*(DANNY enters at a run, wearing a knapsack and pushing his shopping cart. He crosses the stage and suddenly slams on the brakes. He backs up to #92, runs down the stairs to check the basement door. It's locked. DANNY returns to his cart and pulls out a microphone.)*



DANNY. Game Agent D. Delco on site at 92B, for basement, Clinton Street. Visual contact confirmed, but door locked, repeat, door locked. Request hyperlink for key, repeat, need key now.

*(DINOASAUR roar. ANGELO comes out with a bag of garbage. DANNY hides.)*

ANGELO. OK, OK, I said I'll do it. Sheesh.

*(ANGELO drops the bag in a garbage can, but then notices DANNY's cart. He walks over and picks up the microphone.)*

ANGELO *(cont'd)*. Hello? Hello? *(Checks to make sure he's alone.)* I'd like a large pizza with double pepperoni and—

DANNY. Hey. Are you an agent?

ANGELO. What?

DANNY. A game agent.

ANGELO. No.

DANNY. But you were using the uplink.

ANGELO. I was pretending.

DANNY. Perfect! What's your disguise?

ANGELO. Disguise?

LOUISE *(off)*. Danny!?

DANNY. Over here. See that woman?

ANGELO. Yeah.

DANNY. She's a game agent disguised as my mother. Watch.

*(LOUISE enters pulling her suitcase.)*

LOUISE. Please tell me we're here.

DANNY. We're here.

LOUISE. Thank you. My dogs are so sore, they're barking. I'm bagged. The bag's bagged. We're both bagged. *(Laughs. To ANGELO.)* Hi. I'm Louise. I'm Danny's Mother.

DANNY. See what I mean?

ANGELO. I got to go.

LOUISE. Hold on. You didn't tell me your name.

ANGELO. I'm Angelo.

LOUISE. Pleased to meet'cha, Angelo. We're moving into 92B. Maybe Danny can walk to school with you tomorrow.

ANGELO. There is no school tomorrow.

LOUISE. No school?

ANGELO. It's a PA day.

*(NOTE: In the United States, change "PA day" to "professional development" or "PD day.")*

LOUISE. Is there a breakfast program?

ANGELO. A what?

LOUISE. A food program for kids who need breakfast.

ANGELO. I dunno. *(Exits.)*

LOUISE. He seems nice.

DANNY. Don't ask him that.

LOUISE. Ask him what?

DANNY. If there's a breakfast program.

LOUISE. Why not?

DANNY. It'll blow my cover.

LOUISE. Did you tell him I was disguised as your mother?

DANNY. Maybe.

LOUISE. Danny. I may not be a saint, but I am your mother.

DANNY. You got any food?

LOUISE. You hungry again?

DANNY. Yeah, but who's counting.

LOUISE *(moves the bags inside as she speaks)*. Let's put the bags inside and go to the store.

DANNY. You go and I'll watch the stuff.

LOUISE. Don't you want to see inside?

DANNY. I'll wait out here.

LOUISE. Just take a peek.

DANNY. Mum, I'm starving.

LOUISE. All right, all right. We'll have our first meal in our new home. What'll it be? Chicken? Steak?

DANNY. Yeah right. How about salami?

LOUISE. OK, and eggs and cheese and bread—

DANNY. We've only got seven bucks.

LOUISE. Seven?

DANNY. We had to take the TTC twice and you didn't get a job. Just get salami and eggs.

*(NOTE: "TTC" stands for "Toronto Transit Commission," change for local community.)*

LOUISE. How about cheese instead of eggs?

DANNY. Eggs are cheaper. What about potatoes?

LOUISE. Baked potatoes and butter.

DANNY. Butter costs like three bucks!

LOUISE. I've got some butter packets in my purse.

DANNY. OK! Salami, eggs, potatoes, and if there's money left over, ice cream!

LOUISE. Danny, do I look like a dough head. If there's money left over, I'm buying carrots.

DANNY. Mum ...

LOUISE. And you're going to eat them. *(Hand out.)* Let's have the money, Mr. Banker.

*(DANNY carefully counts out six dollars and ninety-eight cents from his purse.)*