

DANNY My Dad used to say the same thing! I heard some private called him “Sir” once – and didn’t he go off his rocker, “Sir” he yelled “Sir!, I ain’t no officer son, I WORK for a living!”

JOE What was your Dad like?

DANNY When we saw him he was real good, always looked after us, made sure we had what we needed, washed where we had to and was respectful to Mum. He was away a lot though- in the great war and so on. Mum didn’t like that.

JOE I don’t suppose she did, It’s the fate of a soldier’s wife, to wait and worry, most can cope alright, but I seen some, go to pieces. (*Apparently upset*) It’s just terrible, they go right to pieces.

DANNY (*DANNY offers JOE a water bottle to change the subject*) Water?

JOE No thanks boy, you keep it. A soldier only needs a three things: (*He counts them off on his fingers and when he realizes there are more than three he is embarrassed and hides his fingers*) a rifle, ammunition, water, food and sleep- In that order! You keep that in mind and you will do well. How much ammo have you got?

DANNY 50 rounds.

JOE Is that what they issued you with?

DANNY Yes, that’s all we got.

JOE You haven’t fired a shot then?

DANNY (*Uncomfortably*) I haven’t had a chance yet!

JOE Let’s see your rifle son. Atten...SHUN! For inspection. Po...rt ARMS!

DANNY goes into an automatic inspection mode. He stands to attention, opens the breach and waits for JOE to inspect it. He then realises that JOE is still on the bed and steps toward him to show him the mechanism. JOE meanwhile is visibly impressed at this soldierly display and looks closely at the rifle.

JOE Very good boy, very good. This is what you use eh? Look after your rifle boy, it can be your best friend out here. Look after your rifle so it can look after you. A good clean weapon son! I bet your sergeant was proud of you. (*He notices DANNY is still at attention*) Stand easy boy, stand easy. (*He returns the rifle*)

DANNY If he was, he never said so.

JOE Sergeants are all the same, they can’t be seen to praise you too much, you might get the idea that you are as nearly good as them! (*pause*) Is this your first battle boy?

DANNY We got here this morning, I still haven’t seen any of the enemy. I saw the smoke and the explosions and the dust and all. But I haven’t seen one face to face.

JOE Don’t worry about seeing them too much boy, just make sure they can’t see you!

At that moment there is a single shot as a sniper takes advantage of him passing in front of the window. DANNY drops to the floor and covers his head.

JOE That swine has been at it all day! You all right boy?

DANNY I’m fine, just fine (*embarrassed at his fear, he nevertheless edges cautiously around the window and tries to look through using a piece of a broken mirror*)

JOE He is up in the bell tower of that church, see it?

DANNY Oh yes, right up the top. (*Just as he drops his arm another shot rings out.*)

JOE He’s fast too!

DANNY (*Visibly shaken*) Too right! Someone’s going to have to fix him. Fix him for good. (*He sits down and places his rifle across his knees*) I reckon it is about 150 yards, what do you think?

JOE Yeah, about that. You gonna have a go at him?
DANNY *(affecting bravery)* Sure I am, they didn't give me this for rabbits did they?
JOE *(chuckles)* No boy, but you be careful – that sniper didn't get his job for his looks either!
DANNY *(adjusts the sight)* 150 yards. *(Checks the magazine and operates the bolt mechanism.)*

DANNY stands and presents his rifle as if he was shooting at the wall, goes to take a quick step sideways, falters and then presses his back hard against the wall.

JOE Why don't you try to distract 'im?
DANNY How?
JOE Step back from the other window, and shoot at something he can see, something that will move. Then off a quick shot at him while he is looking at what you shot at.
DANNY OK, I can do that. There is a car with an unbroken window across the street.
JOE Can he see it?
DANNY Probably.
JOE Probably ain't good enough. Look for something else. Try to find something that gets him looking well away from us here.
DANNY There is a shop sign hanging outside a window down the street.
JOE Shoot at that then. Careful boy, don't let him see you, step back a bit.

DANNY steps back, fires, reloads steps forward, swings his rifle higher fires and instantly drops to the floor as another almost instantaneous shot is heard. Blood appears on his temple and he holds it and scrabbles his way toward the wall out of the line of fire.

JOE Boy? Are you still with me? Boy? Boy?
DANNY *(Irritated)* Stop calling me that, my name is Danny.
JOE *(relieved)* Sorry Boy, er... Danny, I thought you had bought it.
DANNY I'm right as rain *(A bit too bravely, as if to convince himself)*
JOE You copped a bit there Danny, Let me have a look at it. It's alright. You'll be fine Danny, it's just a scratch. That should give you a nice little scar there, something to show the girls down the music hall. This one of mine is useless for that – a man would have to take his shirt off for anyone to see it.
DANNY Did I hit him?
JOE No boy, you made 'im duck though, fair put the wind up 'im "E'll be a bit more careful now, so watch your step lad.
DANNY Damn *(examines his bloodstained handkerchief closely.)*
JOE Keep that on there pressed hard Danny boy, it'll stop the bleeding soon. I remember one time when we was with General Burrows in Kandahar those Afghanis could put up a fight, let me tell you. My mate Jock – We called him that cos he was Welsh *(laughs at his own joke, but DANNY is too self absorbed to notice)* Anyway, Jock caught a splinter like that and I stopped the blood with me kerchief. I just stuffed it in the hole and tied it on. He says "Thanks Joe" and carries on shooting the buggers. He got his guts skewered in the Sudan three years later, so it never does any good to help some folks. No good at all. Not in the long run anyway.

The Sudan was a funny place, the flies and the heat. I liberated an enemy pay office there once, there were stacks of wog money piled high on the table – Well I grabbed a stash of it and shoved it in my pockets, then a few days later I caught

dysentery. I had no bog paper so I 'at to use the wog money – It cost me 250 piastres every time I did a shit! (*Laughs and begins drift away*) I went back later and tried to get the money back, but the wogs had taken it all! Poor buggers must 'ave really needed the money. The things a man will do if he 'as to eh? (*Fading*) It was a funny place.

DANNY Oi! Don't go to sleep there. You might never wake up. (*Tries to think of something to engage the man*) What's your name? What's your regiment?

JOE Sgt Joseph Archibold McAndrew of the Prince of Wales' Own Danny boy and very proud of it too.

DANNY (*Smiles*) "McAndrew" that was my mum's maiden name! A pommie outfit hey? (*indicating his red coat*) Jeez they make you wear that to fight?

JOE A man should do his fighting and dying in his best clothes, so said my dear old Dad. They got him in Kandahar you know, (*pulling himself up proudly*) died of the flu, I never saw him but the RSM told me he was done out in his best bib and tucker and looked a grand sight to see.

DANNY Sorry to hear that. My family were all soldiers too - my Grandad died in the Sudan. And my Dad was hit by a sniper in Ireland.

JOE Sniper hey? I don't like them. Not at all. I couldn't see myself doing that. It's not what I call real soldiering, sort of sneaky like. Not like the way it should be done at all. If, you are going to kill someone you should look at 'im square. That's the honest soldierin' way to do it. Straight up and down as me Dad used to say. Stand up and let 'em know who's against them. Of course it's all changed now (*trails off*) I remember once in Egypt. That was a bad show. A lot of good boys there did their utmost for King and country. Damn snipers....(*More Gunshots and the sound of a round ricocheting in the room*)

DANNY (*Angrily.*) That sod! We have to get him, he's going to *kill* someone if we don't!

JOE (*Smiles*) I think that is his plan yes... But maybe we can get him together...

DANNY Together? How?

JOE Well this arm is pretty near useless, but my eyes are as good as ever. Do you think you can hold the rifle while I look down the sight?

DANNY Sure, but you'll be taking an awful risk, that sniper will see you and you'll cop it like I did, maybe worse!

JOE Just let me worry about that boy. Get that rifle ready.