



DANNY BOY

JO-ANN GOODWIN

'Medieval and modern and real. It's also bloody funny – *Canterbury Tales* if Chaucer had had a taste for Doncaster fry-ups and Class A drugs' STELLA DUFFY

JO-ANN GOODWIN grew up in Sheffield and Doncaster and studied English at Hull University. She followed this with an M.Phil. in Dickens at York. Now a full-time journalist, she has previously worked for the Labour Party. Jo-Ann is married and lives in North London. She is currently working on her second novel. *Danny Boy* was longlisted for the Orange Prize.

Further acclaim for
DANNY BOY

'A fast-paced but thoughtful and moving spin on the spiralling-out-of-control theme. Think a spiritual *Trainspotting*' *The Face*

'Danny gradually reveals himself to be a bruised romantic. He possesses a cynical charm, grudgingly conceding to the reader emotional depths he hides from his mates. What emerges is a clash that is comedy, brutal and poignant' *Express on Sunday*

'Excellent . . . A mesmerizing read' *The Big Issue*

'Jo-Ann Goodwin has tempered her own savagely down-at-heel tale with a gleaming thread of redemption, and in her nineteen-year-old anti-hero Danny McIntyre, an unbreakable spirit. She has also a lyrical way with language that elevates the novel way above its street setting . . . Goodwin's first novel drags you deep into a vibrant realm from which there is no escape. And you don't need to approve of drug culture to appreciate it' *Daily Mail*

'Goodwin writes consistently scintillating prose. The pages are peppered with sly references to Freud, Milton, the Bible, Irvine Welsh and Quentin Tarantino' *The Times*

'A gutsy foray into the grime of a drug user's underworld. This surreal slice of life is redeemed by a sense of hope and some upbeat humour' *Mirror*

'The inventiveness of Danny's vernacular – a mix of northern dialect, drug argot and, of all things, Spanish – and the evocation of sudden, convincing moments of pathos mark *Danny Boy* out' *Times Literary Supplement*

‘You will seriously enjoy this book’ *Pulp.com*

‘Beneath the harsh reality there is something much deeper going on: a host of rich symbolism and religious iconography which gives the book a mythical resonance . . . Goodwin has come up with a formula for the perfect book’ *The Big Issue in the North*

‘Goodwin differs from [Irvine] Welsh in that she has created, in Danny and his friends, individuals that the reader can care about and cheer on as the sad, sick world throws its worst at them . . . *Danny Boy* is an unflinching and honest début by a natural storyteller’ *Tribune*

‘Streetwise . . . and very readable’ *Daily Telegraph*

‘A new generation of British writers has been playing with the forms of violence and brutality – pain as comedy and savagery as high art. In *Danny Boy*, Jo-Ann Goodwin goes one better, she adds a lethal dose of compassion to the mix, a much-needed undercurrent of grace to temper the pain. Danny McIntyre is a street-smart, thieving, heart-breaking bastard. And he’s beautiful. And he has a heart’

STELLA DUFFY

‘Danny . . . is a wonderful creation, with a nicely misanthropic and bitterly funny stream of consciousness . . . Does for Doncaster what Irvine Welsh did for Edinburgh . . . A terrific début’ HELEN ZAHAVI

danny boy

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To Gilmar Cruz Silva

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chapter one

IT'S FUCKING FREEZING. THE RAIN IS HALFWAY THROUGH my jacket, and every so often I have a sort of mini spasm, a jerk of the backbone, like some half-arsed break-dancer. I know junkies whine – permanent residents in self-pity city. But I'll tell you, it's not an easy life.

Given the choice I wouldn't have moved today. I'd have stayed in bed with Regina, got a bit of breakfast out of her and started out leisurely. Maybe gone down the market for a couple, maybe just gone home to chill out. But I don't have no fuckin choice, do I? Thirty-six hours since the last jag and I feel like shite. My kidneys are aching. I don't know why, but they are. And the cold; oh, the cold. I had a bath at Reg's. I thought I was going to have a cardiac when the water hit me, but once fully submerged I was OK. But then the fuckin hot water ran out, didn't it? I suppose I'd known, theoretically, that if I got in I would, at some time, have to get out. But dear God, save us, the shivering, shaking, snivelling misery of it all. Desperate to get dry and get me clothes on, but too fuckin feeble to hack it. Oh, I tell you, it's a killer.

Anyway, that's what I went through at Regina's place.

Normally I wouldn't have bothered, but I felt so fuckin' ackie. For a start I stank of her, not something to cart round for the rest of the day. I mean, Reg is OK, as far as it goes, which is strictly not the daylight hours. Secondly I stank anyway. The thing about starting to withdraw is you sweat – buckets of it. I hate it. This morning, my side of Reg's pale pink sheets were a sight to behold. Sodden, with a sinister-looking brown ring spreading round the edge of the wet stuff. She knew better than to say anything. Anyway, I had to get up. You can't sleep in a fuckin' puddle, and it was freezing. Every time I turned over it was like falling into cold water. Even so, it took me a fair while to get going. The thought of what was coming was a major disincentive. Optimistically, it's going to be at least one o'clock before I plane out. Possible fuck-ups taken into consideration, it could be tomorrow, which doesn't bear thinking about.

The plan is simple enough. I've got the cash, which must be counted as a major plus, and I know who's got the gear: Tinnsey did a chemist last week and is still playing Wall-Street games with the DDA box. It's a bull market, and Danny MacIntyre has just put in a mega-bid for worldwide diconal stocks. Buy! Buy! Buy! But, but, but, Tinnsey's a twat. He may have shifted the box to safer territory; he may have contracted out the whole retail operation; he could have got lifted; he could have OD'd in the overexcitement. Who knows? There's only one option, and that's to get on the bus and find out. The crucifying thing is, if I don't score I've added another hour plus to the tally of misery.

Oh fuck, where is this fuckin', bastarding bus, and why am I stood with this bunch of cripples and losers? What is it about buses? Do they have a social-rejects-only policy? 'Sorry, you're too normal, you can't get on this

bus.' I mean, fuck me, I'm in a state, right enough, but compared to the rest of the crips in the queue I'm Michael Jordan. I fuckin hate this. 'Waiting for the Man'. Nearly thirty years since Lou wrote that and personally I'm sick of fuckin waiting. What's happened to progress and the market? All this shite about pushers at the school gates, I wish to fuck it was true. Fat fuckin chance. Instead you're chasing all over town and – witness today's nightmare – shithole pit villages beyond, begging and grovelling. Dealers are so crap; I could do that job with one hand tied behind me back. Maybe I could get the dinos together and set up . . . Oh, at fucking last. Never has a lover greeted his lass with more sincerity and affection than I give to thee, single decker, Donny Dodger, number 29 bus for Rossington. Get out the way, crips. If I have to kill every last one of you, I'm getting on this fuckin bus.

Of course Tinnsey would have to live in Rosso, wouldn't he? I mean, there's no fuckin shortage of competition, but Rosso could truly lay claim to being the arsehole of South Yorkshire. Twenty-five minutes of pure purgatory – and we're talking each way here – and finally we arrive in the badlands. My bones feel like glass, I just can't cope with it. There are monsters out there who'll rip your head off for not being one of the tribe, and weird women with funny stiff hair. But you can't look too long, it's dangerous.

They built the place on a grid system, and Tinnsey's is on Seventh Street. So it's going to take me another ten minutes to walk it from here. Oh, let him be in. Oh, please God, let him be in. I can't bear it, I honestly can't. Then there's his house. I can't remember the fuckin number. You can usually tell a junkie's house from the general shite and filth about. Garden full of weeds and dog turds, no curtains, filthy toddler in the window, door with a spyhole

at the top that's been kicked in once too often. But here you wouldn't know, you honestly wouldn't.

The whole place is full of mutants. They all dress the same: bleached-out denim, bleached-out hair, backed up by the dead-eye stare. It's the land that time forgot and no fucking joke. They pile on the bus on Friday night and head for Donny and the heart of metropolitan glamour. After that it's pretty straightforward. First head for the market pubs and get as pissed as cunts. Whilst you're staggering round the market with your mates you're obviously on the lookout for anyone who's not from Rosso. If you're lucky enough to find some poor bastard from Edlo or Askern you naturally smack his teeth straight down his throat. Next move is to stagger to the nearest club, hoping to find something shaggable. At 3 a.m. you totter off for some speedy scran, which you stuff down your face in preparation for chucking up in the taxi back home. The entire fuckin village will probably end up on the *X Files* or something, cos this lot are beyond the laws of nature. You wouldn't want to accuse them of keeping a welcome in the hillside neither. They'll fuckin kill me if they find out I'm from town, and I don't know if I can fake the accent. Oh Christ, here we go.

'Alrate, marrer, thou nos Tinnsey?'

'That twat's off 'is box, foteen, marrer.'

Pissed it, absolutely pissed it, ya shit-thick Rosso bastard. See you in town an I'll have your balls for breakfast. Please let him be in. Answer the door, you cunt, you can't be that stoned already.

'Alrate, Danny, how's it goin?'

'Pretty plaza. Bit of business, Tinnsey. Can I come in?'

'It'll have to be quiet; June's been up all night an the kids are giving her jip.'

June, as scrawny wet and dismal as a wanking

pensioner. Three kids, all under five, all disgusting. Just get in there and give me the gear, Tinnsey. I know as I follow him in it won't be that simple. The smell of nappies and dog nearly knocks me backwards, and there's stringy June and the three brats, half-naked and covered in welts and spots. It's no surprise Tinnsey's a smack-head, I mean, you couldn't face this lot on reality, not a chance.

Getting gear off Tinnsey is like being at the court of Louis XIV. I observe the formalities, ask about the kids (who gives a fuck), his mam (ditto), the success of the chemist job (more interesting) and his general health (crap). This takes twenty minutes of bleedin agony. The sweat inside my clothes is meeting the rain on the outside. Finally I judge the time to be right.

'Any gear about then, Tinnsey. We're talking proper paper; I've got the dinos.' He keeps his eyes averted, attention bent on crafting his roll-up.

'Not really, marrer. I've shifted it away, like.'

I feel my heart lurch, but keep the affable expression stuck on my face. I'll pay the power-tripping bastard for this one day. I get out my wallet and count 500 quid in tens and twenties.

'Come on, Tinnsey, stop arsing about.' For a long moment he just sits there, looking shifty, and then, finally, he makes up his mind. I've joined the charmed circle; he's going to let me buy.

'What you after, mate? I've got smack, morph, powder and amps, pinkies, phy tabs, phy amps, peach palf and a bit of coke. That's the grade-one gear, plus there's a lot of rammy stuff about – DF118s, naps and the like – but you'll not be wanting, to my mind that's strictly jayjay stuff.'

'How much for the dikes and the smack? White smack, pharmy, right?' He nodded. 'I'm looking to buy a bit.'

Tinnsey's prices weren't that bad, not that I cared much.

I'd cleaned out Regina's handbag *en route*, besides which I had dinos from a couple of enterprises earlier in the week. The wash of relief from knowing he had the gear was enough to take out every other consideration. Twenty-five dikes and six grams of white should do it.

My works was flashing the minute I grabbed the gear out of his hands. Four dikes first jag, that's right enough. With dikes it can be a thin line between planing and OD'ing, but four should see me cruising. June made some whiney remark about not wanting me to hit up in front of the kids, but both Tinnsey and I told her to shut the fuck up. It took me a while to get a vein; it always does when you're strung out, when you really want it. The kids made it worse; the eldest kept asking if he could hold my quiet. I kept telling him to fuck off, but it had no effect. In the end I got in such a state I backhanded him, which on reflection I should have done in the first place, cos it finally got rid of the little bastard. And then . . . and then I got it – the dark red rushing into the barrel to lie with the pink. Dike Utd, the colours of the world's best team. I put it in slowly – you got to treat dikes with respect – and then flushed it. I couldn't stop once I'd started; I was on my fourth flush when it hit and the world turned over.

June made tea while I packed my stuff. I was chatting to Tinnsey, just rabbiting really, about various mates and downtown stuff and whether the Queen should come to the St Leger. He's all right really. Could do better than fucking June. I mean, he's got the gear. He could get almost anybody, yet he's stuck with that clapped-out old tart. Anyway, she made some tea, as I've already said, which I drank before I left, with many a formal thanks and lots of 'Any time, marrer. Pleasure to do business.' Greasing up to Tinnsey is good policy; he's a total cunt, but he gets a lot of gear, and in a way he's grateful to

anyone who comes out to Rosso and gives him a bit of human contact, and takes his mind off his fuck-awful wife and the howling brats. Leave her, mate, why don't you just do it? Town's full of sixteen-year-olds desperate for their first hit.

Anyway, Tinnsey's fuck-ups aren't my problem. I saunter through Rosso in the early sunshine, and there's a garden that's escaped the mutants, full of little gold and purple flowers. I pull up a few for Reg, or maybe for Janey. For somebody anyway. There's nobody else at the bus stop, and I hope it's a while, I want to have a smoke (gear always makes you smoke more – tastes better you see) and think about things.

By the time the trusty Donny Dodger has carried me back to home turf, I can sense I'm losing it slightly. I'm precise about these things because it's important. Two and a half hours at Tinnsey's, forty minutes' journey and the dikes are wearing off. I'm not turkeying, but I'm sliding perilously close to normality. That golden beneficence and euphoria is leaving. I can't go to one of the oh so many junkie houses about, because whoever I land on will demand a hit as ground rent, and I haven't been through the Rosso horror show just to give it away. Janey, sadly, also falls into this category, being a bit partial herself, which is a pity, cos I quite fancy seeing her. Going home runs the distinct possibility of bumping into the creature from the black lagoon, and if anything can ruin your drugs it's her. So it looks like Reg's lucky day. She'll be made up.

I was going to give her the flowers, but I lost them somewhere. I was still feeling good enough to buy her a half of vodka, though. I like vodka with orange juice when I'm planing; it's clean and healthy. Reg reminds me of a puppy, you know. Sort of pathetically grateful and excited to see you, wriggling and squirming, not quite daring to

get too close, but heart-flipped with desire. We all know what to do with puppies: they're cute and cuddly and you stroke and snuggle with them, then you kick them in the gob to get rid, because they just won't go away if you ask nicely, and eventually they learn. After a while, all you have to do is look the wrong way and they go all quiet and terrified, just waiting for the slap. That's how it is with Reg. I don't enjoy it much; she's too supine, too wretched and beatable. If you're going to get something out of beating up women, then it's only any good if they fight back a bit. You want to feel the surrender, the muscles straining, the snarling mouth and hating eyes. Something worth breaking. If they don't fight, then they're not worth much more than a casual backhander; there's no sex and no science in it.

Anyway, I digress. As I say, Reg was chuffed as little apples, just couldn't believe her luck. Danny Boy two nights in a row, and one of them a Friday. The angels were singing for her. She started trying to cook for me, but I stopped all that and told her I was after a jag and then I'd think about it. She's very good when you're hitting up. It's a neglected branch of the service industry, but Reg could operate nicely as a shooting-gallery hostess. And she's learnt it all by hard work and careful observation, cos, astoundingly enough, she's not interested in taking gear. I've offered once or twice. You know, you get these fits of ridiculous stoned generosity, but she's never been tempted. She's quite classy like that. One of the reasons I've put up with her for so long.

Anyways, as I was saying, she's got a professional flair. She got me a quet, a spoon, hot water and a mat to put me works on. Quietly and efficiently, which I appreciated. She then held my quet and rubbed up my vein. There's one just down near my wrist which is a real contender if you