Dankie Auntie
A Play

Characters: Pearly Heavens
            Grand Ou Dame
            Papa Oupa
            Voice of Interrogator
            Children (any number will do)

This play is dedicated to all the little children of South Africa who have to grow up in the midst of war, and those who, like Mita, will not live to see peace.

SCENE 1

Song from a lone wailing voice as lights rise. The stage is quite stark, devoid of any sets. Centre stage, which is the middle of this bare room, is a big chair on which sits Pearly Heavens, a little girl of about nine. She looks a bit puzzled, and seems to be overwhelmed by the immenseness of the room. On the floor, not far from the chair, the sun reflects bars from an unseen window. There is a crackle from a sound system. Pearly starts. It is through this system that the voice of the Interrogator is heard. He will not be seen. At the same time the song stops. Note that throughout this scene lights remain more on the dim side since this room hasn’t got enough windows.

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1 Production note: The Interrogator may actually be represented by his silhouette on the stage, rather than just his Voice. In this case even in the flashback scenes he does not go out. He moves to some corner and becomes a spectator. The audience must always be aware of his presence.

DANKIE AUN TIE was first performed at the Grahamstown Festival on July 12, 1989, with Rehane Abrahams as Pearly Heavens, Lindy Bacela as Grand Ou Dame and Sabata Sesiu as Papa Oupa. It was presented by Umanyano Players, and various boys and girls from different Cape Town communities played the role of Children. The production was choreographed by Mandla Mdlalose and Jasmin Honore, music composed by Sabata Sesiu. Directed by Mavis Taylor.

VOICE (hesitantly): I am sorry Pearly dear... I hope the noise was not too sharp for your delicate ears.

PEARLY: Please, can I have my doll back now?

VOICE: May I. And no, you will not have your doll back now. Not until you answer all my questions.

PEARLY: But I have answered. You keep on asking the same things all the time, and I answered everything.

VOICE: Not to our satisfaction. I can see through you, you know. I know all your tricks.

PEARLY: I am tired of sitting here... all day long... day after day.

VOICE (sweetly): I understand that, my dear. You should be tired of sitting there all day long, day after day.

PEARLY: I want to go home.

VOICE: Not until you have answered all our questions. You see, my dear, we know that there is a lot you are not telling us.

PEARLY: I want to go back to Grand Ou Dame and Papa Oupa and the children. I want to play.

VOICE: I am sure you do. I am sure you do. But Pearly dear, you are your own jailer. Confess and you are free to go.

PEARLY: What about hopscotch?

VOICE (coaxingly): Yes, what about hopscotch? Tell me about hopscotch, Pearly Heavens.

PEARLY: I want to play hopscotch!

_She stands up and plays the game on the reflection of the bars._

VOICE: Wait! That won’t do, my girl. You can’t trick me that way. There is more to this than meets the eye.

PEARLY: Come, let us play hopscotch.

VOICE (very angry): Sit down, damn you! Who gave you permission to leave your chair?

_She, with a hurt look, goes back to the chair._