

The Drama King

By Arghya Dey

Characters (in order of appearance):

1. Mr. Ray (A man in his sixties, with grey hair)
2. Danny (A young man)
3. Dorothi (A middle-aged woman)
4. Mary (A young woman)
5. A young man
6. A little girl
7. A principal of a school
8. A woman around 40 (the principal's wife)
9. An old man
10. A young man (the old man's son)
11. The old man's son-in-law
12. Dr. Hussain (A handsome man in his forties)

Act 1:

Scene 1:

[Mr. Ray's bedroom. It is night. Mr. Ray is lying on the bed. A table-lamp is resting on a table, beside the bed. It is illuminating the scene with a dim light. There is a chair beside the bed, adjacent to the table. The table is full of books, newspapers, pens, pencils, erasers, pads and various other items.]

[Danny enters]

Danny (whispering): Mr. Ray, get up, now! Mr. Ray!

Mr. Ray (In a drowsy voice): Who are you? What do you want?

Danny: I am Danny, don't you remember me? I am the main character of your best drama. Don't you remember a bit?

Mr. Ray: What rubbish are you talking about? Are you a thief? Here is nothing for you. Go to another house.

Danny: I am not a thief. Look at me, Mr. Ray. You are dreaming now. Your subconscious mind wants you to remember me.

Mr. Ray: I am getting old. The doctors say that I had a car-accident before which I remember nothing. How do you think that I can remember you?

Danny: Because I am the main character of the best drama that you have ever written in your lifetime. You also thought about a new drama centered around my character, remember?

Mr. Ray: Don't disturb me, just let me sleep.

Danny: You are sleeping, actually. Do you want to know where you got the idea of mine? Then you must listen carefully.

[Dorothi enters]

Dorothi: Wait, Danny. You cannot claim yourself as the best character. Yes, the drama you were a part of was the most critically acclaimed. But how dare you think that you are the best?

Danny: It's ridiculous, Dorothi. Don't boast about yourself too much. You are nothing compared to me.

Dorothi: Don't you remember me, Mr. Ray? I am Dorothi. The character of your life! Oh! How fantastically I was created. I will be the main character of your drama. You should abide by your own promise.

Danny: Liar! She's lying, Mr. Ray...

Mr. Ray: Stop it. Just stop it. Now leave me alone.

[Mary enters]

Mr. Ray: Who are you now? Are you also a creation of my imagination?

Mary: Partly yes, Mr. Ray. I am Mary. But you were inspired to create me by a real-life incident. I am the character of your heart! But I suppose they are babbling that they are the most important ones.

Mr. Ray: Yes, you are right, young lady. You seem to be more intelligent than them.

Mary: So, I suggest you to listen carefully to all of our stories. They are actually facts...the incidents that inspired you to create our existence in your masterpieces...the incidents that are available to only your subconscious mind.

Mr. Ray: I find it quite absurd. But I am now curious about your story. Please continue.

Mary: It was raining cats and dogs. A man was walking down the street with a little girl. They both were wearing raincoats.

[Curtains down]

Scene 2:

[A street. It's raining. Daytime. A man and a girl are walking along the street. The man seems to be about thirty-five. The girl is around ten. They are both wearing

raincoats. The girl has a school-bag at her back. Mr. Ray and Mary are sitting in two chairs in a corner of the stage. There is a shaded closed shop beside the path.]

[The man and the little girl stop under the shade.]

The man: I'm sorry, my dear. I should have listened to your mummy when she asked me not to take you to school in this awful weather.

The girl: It's ok, papa. I promise I won't get cold.

The man (while unfastening her school-bag): Oh! Sweetie! (kissing her forehead) My sweet little girl has now grown up (disheveling her hair with hand). Ahem! (clearing his throat) Now on a serious note, what is your first paper in upcoming exam? Have you got the routine yet? I'll have to spend some time looking after your studies.

The girl: No, I still haven't got it. But I am studying hard. Our school miss says that I am the best student of our class. Mummy checks daily if I've done my homework. You need not worry, papa.

The man: Oh! What about Sasha? Are you still not friends?

The girl: How do you know, papa? Did mummy tell you?

The man: Yes, I heard that you two are not friends anymore. Is it true, dear?

The girl: (while sobbing in almost indistinct tone) Yes, papa.

The man: But she was your best friend, wasn't she? What happened in between you?

The girl: Please don't ask more, papa. I don't want to tell.

The man: Ok, don't tell. The rain is not heavy now, I suppose. Let's walk again. Come on, hurry up. You don't want to be late for school, do you?

The girl: (while putting her bag on) Papa! (In an emotional tone)

The man: Yes, dear.

The girl: Am I really your daughter, papa?

The man: (trying hard to look normal) Yes, dear, you are. Why are you asking about this silly thing, dear?

The girl: Promise that you won't tell mummy.

The man: Yes I do, dear.

The girl: This Monday I was playing dumb charades with my friends. Sasha was also there. After the game was over, Sasha wanted to tell me something in private. I went along with her to the corner of the playground. Then she told me

that I am not your daughter (breaking in sobs) and that you found me in a dustbin. Is it true, papa? (crying)

The man: Not at all, dear. Sasha doesn't know a thing...

The girl: She told me that someone had told her that. But when I asked who did it, she said that she had promised to not mention the person's name to me. Can you imagine it? Sasha & I were meant to be best friends forever. (sobbing)

The man: Oh, dear! You have grown up. Please don't cry like a child. Look, you should have trust in me, ok?

The girl: Ok.

The man: Honey, what she is telling....well, what she has heard is actually not true. Somebody may have done this kind of a prank. You can't blame Sasha for that. Ok, honey! And Sasha has done the right thing by not telling you his or her name. It shows that she can keep her promises, which is a really great quality. Don't break your friendship, honey. You don't want to repent later for losing your best friend, do you?

The girl: (Hugging the man firmly) I love you, papa!

The man: (wiping her tears away) I love you too, dear.

[The man exits with the girl]

Mary: Mr. Ray, this incident made you create my character. And you were also influenced by some other incidents that made me look more sprightly and colorful.

Mr. Ray: But I don't understand. This is a conversation between a daughter and her father, well he may or may not be her biological father, but still he looks so caring to her. Now, as I can see you, you are a pretty young woman. Why would I build you from this incident which has no connection to you at all?

Mary: My character is a complex one. This is a day from the childhood of the character that she had to face. But this incident does not tell everything about me. It is just a piece of a large chocolate-cake.

[Dorothi enters]

Dorothi: May I come in?

Mary: Yes, Dorothi. Please come.

Dorothi: (Looking at Mary) Did I interrupt your story, dear?

Mary: Not at all, Dorothi. Well, I was about to leave. (Mary stands up) Please, be seated, Dorothi.

[Mary exits]

Dorothi: With your permission, I am going to tell you about the real incident that made my existence possible in your virtual world.

Mr. Ray (yawning): Ok, continue.

Dorothi: So, will you give my character a chance to be the lead of your new drama?

Mr. Ray: I will think about it later, just tell your story. I am feeling fatigued. It feels strange that I am actually sleeping while mostly I can't due to insomnia.

Dorothi: Ok, think later. Here is my story.

[curtains down]

Scene 3:

[An office. Daytime. A lot of books are piled up in the shelves behind the chair which is possessed by a middle-aged man. In front of him, there is a large table which is full of files, pens, papers and a globe. There is an empty chair before him, in the opposite side of the table. As before, Mr. Ray and Dorothi are sitting in the chairs in a corner of the stage.]

[A gorgeous woman around forty enters]

The man: Come. Please be seated here (showing the empty chair with hand-gesture).

The woman: (Furiously) What is the meaning of this kind of practical joke?

The man: Please, calm down. This is not house. Here, I am the principal of the school where you are just a guardian of an undisciplined student.

The woman: Shut up. Don't dare call my son undisciplined. What do you mean to say? Even if he is not disciplined, is it my fault? And you are a great man, aren't you? Do you even love your son, honey? We could have discussed about it in our house. You don't have the right to humiliate me every time (Her voice is full of rage as well as sorrow).

The man: You should not take it personally. As I am the principal of this school, it is my duty to look after each and every one of the students as my own children. What my son has done is a serious issue. For other children also, I would have called their parents or guardians. I have done exactly the same thing in this case. You must understand this, dear and co-operate with me. You'll not let your son rot, will you?

The woman: Oh my gosh! Now don't start the drama again, for Christ's sake. Don't you know how busy I am all day and night? What salary do you get from this meager job? I have to work in a thread-mill to make our both ends meet. Who will give the compensation for this one shift wasted in babbling with you?

The man: Look, you must listen carefully. Your son was fighting with another kid and both suffered from injuries. I have called their parents also. They'll meet me tomorrow. You must not get emotional.

The woman: Tell me one thing. Would you have done the same thing in case of your daughter?

The man: Yes, of course. But my daughter is not a bully like your son.

The woman: So, now he is my son and she is your daughter. Wow! I almost forgot that! I almost forgot that she was your illegal child. Oh! What a kind-hearted man you are to take liability of a bastard! Your daughter is an angel and my son is Satan, isn't it, mister?

The man: Please stop it, I can't take it anymore. I still feel guilty for my sin that caused you so much pain. I am sorry. But please don't bring my daughter in this case. I can't tolerate it. It was my fault, not hers.

The woman: You have to tolerate it for your whole life (In a quivering tone).

The man: It is getting too personal. I don't intend a guardian-meeting to turn into a sadist blame game. Listen, you should stop pampering our son. He is becoming a rogue day-by-day.

The woman: He is just a kid, honey. I had rebuked him and he promised that he would not do it again. As a parent, you are also as responsible as I am. At least try to be responsible about him and stop accusing me. (sobbing)

The man: Don't cry, dear. (Hugging her) I will try to be a better father and a better husband (emotionally).

The woman: I have said a lot to you today. Please don't mind. They are words out of my mouth, not from the bottom of my heart. And she is also my daughter.

[They kiss passionately]

[Both leave the scene]

Dorothi: What do you think about it, Mr. Ray? Do you remember this incident?

Mr. Ray: I don't. But I feel a connection between two incidents.

Dorothi: That's for you to know. But apart from this incident, there are also several ones that were in your mind when I was evolving in you. So, will your new drama be focused entirely on me?

Mr. Ray: Don't forget that I have to listen to one more story which will be told by the young man....I forgot his name.

Dorothi: Danny.

Mr. Ray: Yes, Danny. He will also want to have a say about this. So, please leave and bring him to me. I don't know why but I am feeling more and more interested. Why is that, Dorothi? They are mere incidents, aren't they?

Dorothi: Yes, Mr. Ray. Now I am leaving. Danny will be here anytime. Wait for him.

[Dorothi exits]

[Curtains down]

Scene 4:

[A bedroom. It is morning. An old man is reading a newspaper sitting on the bed. There is a table beside the bed and some chairs are scattered here and there. The table has some books and a table-lamp on it.]

Old man (talking to himself): Oh! What a bad morning it is to be lonely in the house! They all have their duties to perform, but no time to have a look at this old man....to look after him properly. Everybody has the right to be busy except me. Oh God! Just take me to your abode. I feel tired to live acting like I am really alive.

[Ting tong. Ting tong ting tong...the doorbell is ringing]

Old man: I am coming (in a loud voice, while getting down the bed slowly). (Putting the newspaper on the table, talking to himself in a moderate voice) The prince has arrived, finally. Oh! Is it the right time to be home?

[exits the scene]

[returns to the scene after some moments, with a young man. The young man seems to be drunk judging by his staggering motion.]

Young man: (In a drunk voice) How are you, old man? Where is my mom?

Old man: Oh! What a bad smell! Have you imbibed again? How many times have I told you not to enter into my house when you are drunk? And where were you? In those late night parties with your loafer friends?

Young man: Don't brag too much, dad. Yes I am a little bit of alcoholic. But I drink spending my money. It's none of your business, dad.

Old man: Oh, really? What do you do to earn money? Every time you ask me for the money, don't you?

Yong man: Your money...my money. I am your son, dad. Now tell me, where is my mom?

Old man: She will be here anytime soon. Didn't I tell you that she was going to visit her daughter and son-in-law in town? I had told you to be here so that I won't have to be alone in this house. And what did you do? (Repeating with stress on each word) What...did...you...do? You went again to those late night parties! You don't have a little bit of sympathy for your old dad, do you? Now get lost out of my eyesight. I don't want to see you now.

[Tyres screeching]

[The old man and the young man are both silent. Ting tong ting tong...]

Old man: Take rest in the other room. I think your mom has come with my daughter and son-in-law.

[both exit]

[The old man enters into the room with his son-in-law.]

Son-in-law: You know my condition, sir. The scripts that I am writing for movies are all getting rejected. No one is really interested to deviate from the hit formula. Nobody wants to experiment with a new idea.

Old man: Don't lose heart, my boy. And please don't call me 'sir'. I am not your teacher any more, am I? Please call me 'papa'. I know that you are going through a bad patch. It happens. You will get up on your feet once again.

Son-in-law: It's my old habit, papa, to call you 'sir'. Old habits die hard. I also hope that my days will be golden again. But now I am in a terrible condition. I am burdened with bank-loans. I don't know how to get rid of them. Will you help me please, papa? I promise that I will repay it later.

Old man: I am sure you will repay it. Don't hesitate, my boy. I will give you the amount that you need. Now tell me about my daughter. Is she fine?

Son-in-law: Yes, she is. I take care of her. But she takes care of me more. You know, sometimes we have conjugal arguments. But they are natural, aren't they?

Old man: Yes (smiling). Sometimes I feel that you could have been my son, not that drunkard.

[The young man enters]

Young man: Don't dare you call me drunkard, dad (furiously). And are you giving money to this bastard?

Old man: Mind your language. He is at least an honest person.

Young man: Shut up, dad! Just shut up. You don't give money to me easily. I have to brag a lot. And when this jerk comes to you for money, you become so bountiful. It's ridiculous, old man.

Old man: Don't talk to me like this.

Young man: Yes I will!

[The young man pushes the old man aggressively. He falls down with his head colliding against the edge of the bed. There is blood dripping on the floor.]

[All characters exit the scene except the old man. He is fixed in his present condition.]

[Mr. Ray, Danny, Dorothea & Mary enter the scene]

Mr. Ray: So which of them inspired me to create you, Danny?

Danny: The old man's son-in-law.

Mary: So, what do you think, Mr. Ray? Who will be the pivotal character of your next drama?

Mr. Ray: None of you. May be it is Jack.

Danny: Who is Jack?

Mr. Ray: I can't remember properly.

[Curtains down]

Act 2:

Scene 1:

[Morning. A drawing room with a sofa and some chairs. Dr. Hussain, a handsome man in his forties, was sitting on the sofa, beside Danny.]

Dr. Hussain: Oh! What a great performance you all delivered! It was amazing to watch the family drama to bring back the lost memory to Mr. Ray, one of the best dramatists of this era. But sadly, it didn't work. It's ok. At least you guys tried.

Danny: We have been all going through a tough time. After Mr. Ray was almost killed by his short-tempered drunkard son, nothing remained same. His son is in prison. When Mr. Ray got back from his unconscious state, we were all very excited. But his memory betrayed him, and all of us. It's unbelievable to watch such a great dramatist in this miserable state.

Dr. Hussain: Your make-up was excellent. Nobody could have recognized you in this get up. And how could you deliver dialogues in such a different voice? In fact all of you were brilliant. I was a little bit of tense that it would take a toll on his heart. But finally, nothing happened.

Danny: Thanks doctor for your permission to carry on our endeavour and your support.

[Mary enters]

Mary: Doctor, when you were introducing me to my own father, I could not hold back my tears. My father was keen to meet all of us, but it seemed that he was not the same person who used to love us so much....

[Dorothea enters]

Mary: (Looking at Dorothea) Mummy, I know how much you miss the old papa. I always felt that you had a great quality to be an actress. When papa asked you lying on the hospital-bed how he got his head-injury, you said that it was due to a car-accident. I know how hard it was for you to try to look so normal, not mentioning that it was his own son, not a mere car, who did this to him....
(breaking in sobs)

Dorothea: (With tears in her eyes): Baby! (With a sophisticated smile to suppress her tears flowing down the cheeks) Your idea of using fake names for all of us in the drama really worked! It was an idea that I never thought of. Although my husband has no memories about us, he came to know our names when he met us in the hospital. If he became aware that we were actual human beings, not some characters from his imaginary world, it would have been a problem for all of us.... (Looking at Danny) And you are more than my son, Danny! I am so proud of all of you. At least my husband now remembers something...

Dr. Hussain: Wait! What are you talking about? Did he remember anything from the past? I did not notice it.

Danny: I also did not. So, was it successful? But how could I have no hint of it?

Dorothea: He mentioned Jack. Jack was the name that he had shortened to call his son Jacob when he was a kid. What a strange incident it is! He could remember

none of us except Jack, the person who tried to kill him. It makes no sense, does it?

Dr. Hussain: He might have loved him the most, more than all of you. But if it is true, then I would congratulate Danny for recreating the incident in his mind, as perfectly as possible. But how could you do it? As I heard, you were in the room for only a few minutes before Mr. Ray lost his consciousness.

Danny: Yes you are right, doctor. But I am very close to this family. I know how they interact with each-other mostly. I just used my imagination to create the incidents that took place before my arrival. And Jacob also helped me to build this scene.

Dorothi: What! Jacob helped you! Why?

Danny: He is not the same Jacob anymore. He has changed himself a lot. He really repented for what he did.

Dr. Hussain: Now let's hope that everything returns to normal. I pray to God that Mr. Ray, one of the greatest dramatists of our time, gets back his memory fully.

[Curtains down].

The End

