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Dramatic Publishing



THE DREAM THIEF

A Play in Two Acts
by
ROBERT SCHENKKAN



Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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(THE DREAM THIEF)

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ISBN 0-87129-951-8

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For Sarah and Joshua,
who've already made their daddy's fondest dreams
come true, just by being born.

THE DREAM THIEF was premiered by First Stage Milwaukee at the Todd Wehr Theater, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts in Milwaukee, Wis., November 1998. The production was directed by John Vreeke and included the following artists:

CAST

Young Chaos (Teddy Cast) PHILLIP (PJ) BERNIS
Jamie (Teddy Cast) HAL BROWN
Daddy/Sandman TODD DENNING
Jamie (Blankie Cast) CHRISTOPHER FEIEREISEN
Young Chaos (Blankie Cast) NATHAN GRIFFITH
Susan (Blankie Cast) EMILY HABANEK
Susan (Teddy Cast) SARAH HORN
Doctor Hunt/Winken/Night Terror/Bedbugs/
Ambulance Attendant/Hamlet. RAY JIVOFF
Doctor/Rem/Chaos (voice) MICHAEL LAGUE
Hop Along. AARON OREAR
Nurse Rictus/Ambulance Attendant/Doctor Peck/
Night Terror/Bedbugs/Night Hag/Blankie . . . TYNE TURNER
Blinken/Dream Thief/Unicorn/Bedbugs. RODD WALKER
Mommy/Twinkle. JOANNE GELLMAN WOODARD

PRODUCTION STAFF

Scenic and Costume Designer RICK RASMUSSEN
Lighting Designer MICHAEL ROURKE, USAA
Sound Designer DOUGLAS H. HILLARD
Fight Choreographer TODD DENNING
Production Stage Manager BRADLEY E. BINGHEIM

THE DREAM THIEF

A Play in Two Acts

For as few as 8 actors (3 children, 5 adults)*

CHARACTERS

SUSAN, 8. Bright. Resourceful. The eldest child. A bit bossy at times. Very loving.

JAMIE, 5. Susan's brother. Loves karate, Spider Man, and science. Curious. Brave. But likes to have his "blankie" with him.

DADDY, 35-45. A writer. Pleasant. Funny. A bit scattered.

MOMMY, 35-45. Captain of the ship. Goodhearted.

DOCTOR, 45-60. Well-intentioned, but too busy to pay the proper kind of attention.

AMBULANCE ATTENDANTS, 20-35. Think juggling Karamazov brothers. Should be able to sing and dance (soft shoe).

NURSE RICTUS, 40-50. Very big. Very scary smile.

DRS. HUNT / PECK, 30-40. Well-educated and very ignorant.

THE DREAM THIEF, age indeterminate. Big. Agile. A good mime.

WINKEN / BLINKEN, 20-40. Caribbean. Good voices.

UNICORN, 20-60. African-American. Bluesy.

HOP ALONG, age indeterminate. A duck-billed platypus.
Wears cowboy clothes. Speaks in a western drawl and sounds a little like Sylvester the Cat.

GREEN EGGS & HAMLET. The Prince of Denmark.
Blonde. Brooding.

SANDMAN, mid-30s to late 40s. A shabby figure wearing the leather headgear of a W.W.I pilot. Former chief comptroller of Nod. Big. Heavyset. Smart but scared.

REM. Sandman's friend. Mutt (smaller) to his Jeff. Looks like a hallucinating speed freak. Always wired.

CHAOS. A voice. Powerful. Seductive. Angry.

NIGHT TERRORS. Small. Ugly. Impish. Think Bosch.

BEDBUGS. Horrible insect-like things.

TWINKLE, mid-30s to late 40s. A diva on the downside of her career. Zaftig. Proud and slightly ditz. Good comedienne.

THE NIGHT HAG, ancient. Half woman, half bull. All ugly.

CHAOS, as child of 4. Wild hair and strange eyes.

* As much as possible, these roles should be double, triple, and quadruple cast.

ACT ONE

SETTING: *A variable unit setting which can evolve, melt, and transform seamlessly from one location to another, as in a dream. At the top, we are at home. A bed. A window. A clock. A refrigerator.*

AT RISE: *House and stage lights on. SUSAN and JAMIE appear from the wings. Both children are wearing pajamas. SUSAN carries a worn purple teddy bear and Jamie carries his ever-present blanket or "blankie." They look at each other and nod, then turn to the audience.*

JAMIE. Once upon a time, not too long ago or very far away, in a place very much like here ...

SUSAN. ...there lived a girl named Susan...

JAMIE. ...and her brother, Jamie...

SUSAN. ...little brother, Jamie...

JAMIE. ...younger brother, Jamie...

SUSAN/JAMIE. ...and their mommy and their daddy.

(Stage lights dim. Night. A starry sky. MOMMY and DADDY lie in bed. A clock ticks. A dog barks.)

SUSAN. They were very like you, like most families.

JAMIE. And they were very happy, until one day...

SUSAN. ...until one night...

SUSAN/JAMIE (*whispering*). ...something happened.

(DADDY is increasingly restless, tossing and turning. Sound of wind. Hoofbeats in the distance, growing closer. The SHADOW of a huge HORSE appears, the NIGHT MARE. The HORSE neighs. DADDY sits up. The HORSE disappears. DADDY rubs his face and looks at the clock. MOMMY stirs.)

MOMMY. You OK, honey?

DADDY. Yeah, I guess. Just can't sleep.

MOMMY. Need anything?

DADDY. Maybe I'll get a glass of milk or something.

Don't worry about it. I'll be OK. I just... (Goes to refrigerator and opens the door. He stands in the light, staring.) I just can't sleep.

ENSEMBLE (*whispering*). Can't sleep./ Just can't sleep./

Sleeeeeeep./ Can't sleep.

MOMMY. Rise and shine!

(Lights up. Morning. MOMMY enters in bathrobe, SUSAN and JAMIE burst in wearing school clothes and carrying backpacks. Hectic breakfast preparations. DADDY remains standing by the refrigerator throughout.)

SUSAN. Seven times seven is forty-nine. Morning! Anybody seen my math homework? (*To herself*.) Seven times eight is...*fifty-five?*

JAMIE. Spiderman! Spiderman! Morning! (*Putting on his shoes.*) Is this the right foot?

SUSAN. Mommy?!

MOMMY. I'm sure it's where you left it.

JAMIE (*confused*). It's left?

MOMMY. No, that's right.

SUSAN. Seven times eight is *fifty-five*?

MOMMY. Fifty-six.

SUSAN. Fifty-six? I hate math.

MOMMY. OK, who wants what?

JAMIE. Cereal!

SUSAN. Pop Tarts. If I don't turn in my homework today,
I don't get my multiplication license.

JAMIE. Spiderman! Spiderman! (*Karate chopping.*) Hai!
Hai! Hai!

MOMMY (*to DADDY*). You want coffee, honey?

SUSAN. Mommy, I know I left it right here on the counter.

MOMMY. Well, it didn't grow feet and walk off. You
guys want a hard-boiled egg in your lunch?

SUSAN (*looking at JAMIE*). Unless somebody took it!

JAMIE. Hai-yah! Ha! Ha!

SUSAN. Stop!

MOMMY. Spiderman! You know the rules, no karate in
the kitchen and not on your sister.

JAMIE. I didn't take her dumb homework.

MOMMY. Eggs, yes or no?

JAMIE. Yes, ma'am.

SUSAN. Seven times eight is fifty-six. Fifty-six. I *hate*
multiplication tables. (*Squeezing past DADDY to get to*
fridge.) Excuse me, Daddy. I think they were invented to
torture kids!

JAMIE. Hai-yah!

MOMMY. It's chaos around here! (*To DADDY.*) Did you
say you wanted coffee?

JAMIE. What's chaos?

MOMMY. My life. Did you want an egg?

JAMIE. I said yes.

MOMMY. I don't like that tone, young man.

JAMIE. Sorry.

MOMMY. I've got an audition this afternoon, so I can't pick you guys up.

SUSAN. Who's picking us up?

MOMMY. Mrs. Bedermutt.

(SUSAN and JAMIE hold their noses and gasp for air.)

JAMIE. No!

SUSAN. Not "Beetle mouth"! Pleeeease!

JAMIE. No way!

MOMMY. What are you making such a fuss for? Mrs. Bedermutt is very nice and I don't know what we'd do without her. OK, maybe she could use a breath mint now and then, but she's very nice.

JAMIE. Why do you have to go to a stupid audition anyway?

MOMMY. Because I have a life beyond Pop Tarts and scrambled eggs. Because I'm a trained professional with a career.

SUSAN. What's the audition for?

MOMMY. Baby wipes.

SUSAN/JAMIE. Baby wipes!/ Oohh, gross.

MOMMY. All right, it's not Hamlet, but it's a living. Sort of.

JAMIE. What about my science project?

MOMMY. What about your science project?

JAMIE. I think it's due today.

MOMMY. *Today?* What was it?

JAMIE. Duck-billed platypuses.

MOMMY. What?

JAMIE. We're studying Australia. Actually, they're kinda cool.

SUSAN. "Actually, they're kinda cool."

JAMIE. That's not funny!

MOMMY. Don't tease.

SUSAN. Jeez, I was just making a joke. (*Putting milk back in fridge.*) Excuse me, Daddy.

JAMIE. Well, it wasn't funny to me!

SUSAN. OK! OK! OK!

MOMMY. Kids—*enough*. Honey, are you all right?

(*DADDY doesn't move. Everyone notices.*)

SUSAN. Daddy?

JAMIE. Dad?

DADDY (*turns, seems lost*). Sorry. What?

SUSAN. Earth to Dad. Hellooo.

MOMMY (*hugs DADDY*). You OK?

DADDY. Just ... tired. Gathering a little sheep's wool.

JAMIE. Cool! Can I see it?

DADDY. It's just an expression, Jamie. It means ...
ummm ... (*He can't find the words. He looks over to MOMMY for help.*)

MOMMY. You want me to call the doctor?

DADDY. Nah. It's probably just a viral thing. I'll get a nap later.

(*A DOCTOR rolls the bed D. DAD moves to the bed. The KIDS watch.*)

JAMIE. Is Daddy OK?

MOMMY (*not with confidence*). Sure. Sure. OK. Duck-billed platypuses.

(Lights down on kitchen, up on doctor's office. The DOCTOR tucks DADDY into bed.)

DOCTOR. Can't find a thing. Blood pressure's good. Your ticker's solid. Might run a CAT scan just to be sure.

DADDY. CAT scan?

DOCTOR. Precautionary measure.

DADDY. I just can't sleep, is all.

DOCTOR. Well, I can give you something for that. (*Starts writing a prescription.*)

DADDY. Maybe it's just some kind of ...mid-life crisis or something. I'm about due, I guess. Overdue maybe. Midnight thoughts in the long watches of the night.

DOCTOR. What kind of thoughts?

DADDY. Oh, you know, dreams...deferred. Diminished. Defunct.

DOCTOR. Things OK at home?

DADDY. Kind of a good news/bad news situation, I guess. After twenty years we're unburdened by any romantic dreams about each other.

DOCTOR. What's the good news?

DADDY (*smiling sadly*). That is the good news.

DOCTOR. Ahh.

DADDY. I'm also having trouble with... I'm having trouble with *words*. I can't seem to put 'em together, all of a sudden. Small problem for a writer. Of course, there are some critics who claim I've never been able to do

that very well! (*Laughs at his own joke. The DOCTOR doesn't.*)

DOCTOR. You working pretty hard these days?

DADDY. Oh, you know. (*Getting back to his fear.*) It's like that toy. What's it called? Jamie has one. It's a black ball and you ask it a question and turn it over and the answer floats up out of the dark. Only sometimes now, nothing floats up. Just more dark. What's it called?

DOCTOR. Maybe you should take some time off.

DADDY. See, I can't remember what it's called. That's so weird.

DOCTOR. I forget stuff all the time.

DADDY. If I could just sleep.

DOCTOR. Well, we can fix that. (*Tears off prescription pad.*) Take two of these and call me in the morning.

(*The DOCTOR starts moving offstage. MOMMY enters and gets into bed beside DADDY. Office becomes bedroom. Night.*)

DOCTOR. Call two of these and take me in the morning. Take my calls in two mornings with these. These two takes call me. In the morning. Call takes! Morning me! Two tall cakes! Morning! Morning! Morning!

(*The clock hands spin wildly. The sound of hoofbeats and again, the SHADOW of the NIGHT MARE, this time with the SHADOW of a RIDER, a capped, hooded figure. DADDY tosses and turns in bed. Exhausted, he goes to the window. The SHADOWS vanish. MOMMY sits up bleary-eyed.*)

MOMMY. Honey? You OK?

DADDY (*gestures helplessly*). I... mmm ... the ... MMMM.

(He falls. MOMMY jumps out of bed and rushes to him.)

MOMMY. Help!

(An ambulance siren wails. A pulsing red light bathes the stage. TWO ATTENDANTS run in, grab the bed, swing it up by DADDY, toss him on it and roll him around. MOMMY runs alongside.)

ATTENDANT #1. Make way, please!

ATTENDANT #2. Coming through! Look out!

ATTENDANT #1. Watch yourself! Let's go!

ATTENDANT #2. Make way!

ATTENDANT #1. Make waves!

ATTENDANT #2. Full speed ahead!

ATTENDANT #1. Darn the torpedoes!

ATTENDANT #2. Darn your socks!

ATTENDANT #1. Sock your darns!

ATTENDANT #2. Watch your back!

ATTENDANT #1. Back your watches!

ATTENDANT #2. Whack your batches!

ATTENDANTS #1 & 2. Look out!

MOMMY (*to DADDY*). It's OK, honey, I'm right here!

(SUSAN and JAMIE hurry out in their pj's and watch in horror as DADDY is wheeled into the hospital. A flurry of movement.)

SUSAN. Mommy?!

JAMIE. Daddy?!

SUSAN. What's going on?!

JAMIE. Is Daddy OK?!

SUSAN. Mommy?!

ATTENDANTS #1 & 2. Clear the tracks!

(The ATTENDANTS grab an imaginary cord and a very real—and very ear-piercing—steam whistle erupts. The ATTENDANTS break into soft shoe and do a quick chorus of “Chattanooga Choo-Choo” as they spin DADDY around the stage and then off, followed by MOMMY. The stage is empty except for SUSAN and JAMIE. They look around nervously.)

HOSPITAL LOUDSPEAKER. Doctor Hunt to the ER. Code Red. Doctor Peck to the ER. Code Red. Hunt and Peck, please, to the ER. Code Red.

(JAMIE starts to sniffle. SUSAN starts a schoolyard chant to cheer herself up.)

SUSAN. Tick-tack-toe/ Three in a row/ Barney got shot...

SUSAN/JAMIE. ...by a GI Joe./ Momma called the doctor and the doctor said,/ “Ooh, Barney’s dead.” *(Uncomfortable silence.)*

JAMIE. Susan?

SUSAN. Yeah?

JAMIE. Blankie’s kinda scared.

SUSAN. That’s OK. So’s Teddy.

(NURSE RICTUS steps out of the dark.)

NURSE RICTUS. Susan? James? (*The CHILDREN turn away from RICTUS. She crosses to the other side.*) Are you Susan and James?

JAMIE. Jamie.

SUSAN. We're not s'posed to talk to strangers.

NURSE RICTUS (*kneels down, extends her hand, and talks in her "little people voice"*). I'm not a stranger, lambykins, I'm Nurse Rictus. Don't you want to see your daddy? I can take you to him right now if you like.

JAMIE. I want to see Daddy! (*Starts to go to RICTUS but SUSAN pulls him back.*)

SUSAN. What's the password?

NURSE RICTUS. Password?

SUSAN. We have a password.

NURSE RICTUS (*through gritted teeth*). "Please and thank you"?

SUSAN. We'll wait here. Thank you very much.

MOMMY. Kids! There you are!

(*MOMMY comes onstage. RICTUS exits quietly.*)

SUSAN. Mommy!

JAMIE. Where's Daddy?

SUSAN. Is Daddy all right?

JAMIE. I wanta see Daddy!

MOMMY. OK. OK. We're gonna go see Daddy in a minute. All right? We just... I need you both to be good little soldiers, OK? Daddy's real tired right now, and they've given him some medicine so he's a little groggy.

JAMIE. What's "grobby"?

SUSAN. "Groggy."

JAMIE. I asked Mommy.