

SCRIPT

# Chandrasekera and the Crown Jewels

a DCS Monologue

Part of the 'Dear Children, Sincerely ...' project



written by  
**RUWANTHIE DE CHICKERA**

Based on interviews conducted through  
the DCS theatre research project

stages  
theatre  
group

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**Chandrasekera and the Crown Jewels – a DCS Monologue**

First public performance 2016

A Stages Theatre Group presentation

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Stages Theatre Group Presentation  
First performed in,  
Kigali, Rwanda, July, 2016  
Ubumuntu Festival of Humanity

## **An Introduction to the *DCS Project***

### **‘Dear Children, Sincerely...’ a conversation across generations**

#### **What is the *DCS Project*?**

“**Dear Children, Sincerely... a conversation across generations**” (or the *DCS project*) is a research theatre project begun in Sri Lanka in 2015 by Stages Theatre Group. *DCS* collects the stories and experiences of the generation born in the 1930s and takes them to the present-day audiences in the form of storytelling and live performance.

Under the *DCS project*, short performance pieces are created from extensive conversations conducted with senior citizens, with each performance piece not more than 15 minutes long. These stories stand alone as individual performance pieces and can also be linked together to create longer theatrical productions.

Between 2015 and 2020, through the *DCS project*, over 70 senior citizens of Sri Lanka were interviewed and performance pieces created from these conversations.

The *DCS project* has also been implemented in Rwanda, Palestine, Pakistan, the UK, Serbia and DRC.

#### **The *DCS Monologues***

The monologues under *DCS project* (the *DCS Monologues*) are personal stories of individuals who belonged to the generation born in the 1930s. Each *DCS monologue* tells us the story of one such individual. Together they give us some historical perspective on what people consider important, what people easily forget and what they find unforgettable.

*A Tamil sportsman who left the country after securing a Gold Medal for it, an old lady displaced for the first time at the age of 90, a faithful butler who observed the infamous attempted Military Coup, a woman lawyer heading the country’s first Disappearance Commission, a doctor who trusted her family inheritance to a riotous drunk...* These are but some of the *DCS Monologues*.

*Chandrasekera and the Crown Jewels* is one such monologue.

## **An Introduction to *Chandrasekera and the Crown Jewels***

This *DCS Monologue* is based on a conversation with Dr. Vimala Ganeshanathan.  
Interview conducted by Ruwanthie de Chickera.

### **About The Play**

Two old friends – a Sinhalese and a Tamil – recollect their experiences of the communal riots that erupted in the capital of Colombo in Sri Lanka in July 1983. Over a horrifying period of 5 days, over 3000 Tamils were killed and 150,000 were made homeless. ‘Black July’ marked the beginning of the 30-year civil war that then tore Sri Lanka up.

In this little play, two old friends reminisce the horrific events of the five-day pogrom. How the Sinhalese mobs took to the streets – rioting, looting, burning ordinary Tamil people, some of them their neighbours.

The Tamil and Sinhala ladies recount a story of tenderness and humour that occurred in the madness and terror of the riots.

### **Performance History**

Directed by Tracy Holsinger

First performed by Tracy Holsinger  
Ruwanthie de Chickera  
In Kigali, 2016

Next performed by Tracy Holsinger  
Tehani Chitty  
At the Visual and Performing Arts Campus  
Colombo, 2017

For more detailed insights on this play, including the back story about how it was made, an analysis of all its design elements, its production video, soundtrack, publicity campaign, all press reviews and audience comments, and more, please visit its production page on the Stages Theatre Group website [www.stages.lk](http://www.stages.lk)

# **Chandrasekera and the Crown Jewels**

**Characters** Two old friends - an elderly Tamil lady and an elderly Sinhala lady

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*The Sinhala Lady is on stage. She is ailing and weak. The Tamil Lady enters and sits by her side. There is a sadness between them.*

Old Sinhala lady: Tell me a story. I need to hear a story.

Old Tamil lady: What kind of story?

Old Sinhala lady: A funny story. *(pause)* Oh! Tell me, tell me the story about Chandrasekera.

*Pause.*

Old Tamil lady: 1983...

Old Sinhala lady: 1983... I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry...

Old Tamil lady: We've been through this before. It was not your fault.

Old Sinhala lady: It was my people.

Old Tamil lady: They are no more your people than they are my people.

Old Sinhala lady: I'm sorry I was not there.

Old Tamil lady: You were studying in France.

Old Sinhala lady: Yes, but you were all alone with those... three tiny tots... and ... *(blankly)*  
Where the devil was Raj men?

Old Tamil lady: Raj was in England on Sabattical.

Old Sinhala lady: Yes. Yes. Yes. And you were in that lane next to the school...

Old Tamil lady: College Avenue...

Old Sinhala lady: College Avenue...

Old Tamil lady: The whole town burnt down except our lane. Except College Avenue. And that was because of Chandrasekera.

Old Sinhala lady: God bless Chandrasekera. *(She settles down)* Now, tell me the story. From the beginning, and with all the funny bits...

*Pause.*



Old Tamil lady: Now then... So you remember the young man who used to live next door? Those wild parties?

Old Sinhala lady: Of course...

Old Tamil lady: We used to see all sorts of females coming and going and spending almost sometimes the whole night there...

Old Sinhala lady: ... Utter tramps...

Old Tamil lady: ... And we used to wonder how we are going to live like this Saturday after Saturday. With the noise and the drinking...

Old Sinhala lady: ... Yes I remember...

Old Tamil lady: Now he had a caretaker... and his name was Chandrasekera...

Old Sinhala lady: God bless Chandrasekera...

Old Tamil lady: ... Chandrasekera is why I am here today. Chandrasekera is why my children are here today. *(pause)* On the day of the riots – when the mobs were coming, and looting and burning houses and burning people on the road... on that night when we saw the mobs coming towards us – all those people with swords and flaming torches and ... and madness in their eyes... On that night... when the rest of the town burnt to the ground, Chandrasekera stood on his balcony, drunk as a lord, bottle in his hand, shirt undone, sarong raised up to here! He just stood there on that balcony and he just screamed. He screamed and cursed at anyone who tried to come down our lane... He screamed the most terrible filth. I couldn't even understand what he was saying. He shouted and shouted and he wouldn't stop. *(pause)* And no one, not one of those men in that mob dared come down our lane...

Old Sinhala lady: ... Cowards...

Old Tamil lady: ... Ours was the only road in Mt. Lavinia that was not burnt. The only one. And there were five Tamil families down that lane...

Old Sinhala lady: ...five Tamil families?

Old Tamil lady: Ours and four others. I could see the mobs beyond him. I was watching. That was all I could do.

*Pause.*

Old Sinhala lady: Now I wanted a funny story no...

Old Tamil lady: The neighbors came to me after that... we all got on very well; they came and said “we will look after the house, but...but for your sake and the

*children, please go... to the refugee camp”, “if the thugs come back, we won’t be able to protect you...”* But Chandrasekera said - *“Don’t go. I will look after you. Don’t go.”*

Old Sinhala lady: Bless that man...

Old Tamil lady: ...Drunk as a sailor. But the neighbors were harassing me to go... they were too scared... so I took the children and all and went to the refugee camp.

Old Sinhala lad: I’m sorry I was not there...

Old Tamil lady: ...In a way I was glad I went. I was the only doctor there. And inside was misery. 4000 refugees. People with burns, cuts, broken limbs – people had jumped barbed wire, had been stabbed, children with diarrhea... I remember this one little girl... she attained puberty... right there. She was so horrified she sat in the camp and refused to get up...! She was so traumatized...!

Old Sinhala lady: You know what? Tell me about your mad maid Soma...

Old Tamil lady: ...My mad maid Soma... Oh! She was a warrior! She loved my children...

Old Sinhala lady: ...She adored you!

Old Tamil lady: ... She bossed me! *“I will look after your children. You look after your patients.”* She would tell me.

Old Sinhala lady: She came with you...

Old Tamil lady: ...She did. She came with me to the camp. The only Sinhalese there. Amidst 4000 Tamils.

I told her... *“You will be the only Sinhalese. Don’t come.”* She said... *“Who will look after the children? You will be with the patients. I am coming.”*

Old Sinhala lady: What a woman...

Old Tamil lady: ...I told her *“for goodness sake don’t say you are a Sinhalese”*.

Old Sinhala lady: Did she know any Tamil?

Old Tamil lady: Not a word... In the camp she stood in the queues, picked up the food for us, cleaned the place, looked after the children, and helped me with my patients. She didn’t open her mouth... I was so scared she would. But she didn’t... I was so scared for her, you know, because the people there were maddened. They were maddened. They had lost everything to the Sinhalese mobs. If they found out she was Sinhala... I was so scared...

What courage... I miss her.

- Old Sinhala lady: Tell me the funny bits will you...
- Old Tamil lady: The funny bits! ... Ah! One of my patients – told me - “*I was driven out of the house, and I had to come...but then I had not paid rent for six months...*” she was almost happy... Then another family, they must have been from one of the new churches...
- Old Sinhala lady: ...Oh god, evangelists...
- Old Tamil lady: ...They got their whole house burnt and all but finally they arrived at the camp in a van which had this saying... “*Jesus is coming*”... it was so funny you know...
- Old Sinhala lady: ...Jesus is coming! But he didn’t, did he?...
- Old Tamil lady: ...Not to the camp, he didn’t... oh dear, oh dear...

*They both laugh.*

- Old Sinhala lady: Now, tell me about Chandrasekera...
- Old Tamil lady: He was so upset I was going. He kept telling me not to go. I had my *thali kodi* with me and I had some jewelry. I didn’t know what to do with it. I didn’t want to take it to the camp... where could I keep it? I could not think of anyone to give it to. I had a road full of neighbours. Nice good middle class Sinhala people, but... (*pause*) I could not bring myself to give it to any of them.
- Old Sinhala lady: Instinct?
- Old Tamil lady: And I was right... you know... It happened to my friend. It happened to many people I know...
- Old Sinhala lady: ...It happened to many people I know...
- Old Tamil lady: She gave her jewelry to an engineer. And he denied it. A lot of educated Sinhala people denied it...
- Old Sinhala lady: ...Shameful... (I’m so sorry)...
- Old Tamil lady: ...So I don’t know why but I took everything I had. I... took a bag and I took it to Chandrasekera.... I took it into his small room...
- Old Sinhala lady: ...You went into his room?
- Old Tamil lady: ...There was just a bed in it. No chair or anything. He told me to sit down on the bed (*pause*) and I felt so squeamish... I could only think... how many

women would have slept in this bed... but I sat down... and I handed him the jewels. He looked so shocked. Then he turned around and raised his sarong and put it... 'somewhere'.

When I came back from the camp it was three days later. He was so happy to see me. And again... he turned away, pulled up his sarong and... you won't believe it. They were warm..!

*They both hoot with laughter.*

Old Sinhala lady: Oh stop it!!

Old Tamil lady: ...He would have never taken them out...

Old Sinhala lady: ...Stop! Stop!!...

Old Tamil lady: ...For three days... he would have been so uncomfortable. Imagine...

Old Sinhala lady: ...Crown jewels...

Old Tamil lady: ...Oh bless him. Bless that man. He was not even educated. He could have denied the whole episode, but he didn't. And it was so funny the way he turned away, hitched up his sarong and... steaming! ...

Poor man must have been so terrified about keeping that gold. He would have slept like that. Probably not changed his clothes. Sat on it... bless him...

He was very fond of my children...very fond of them... he used to make kites for them...

*Pause*

Old Sinhala lady: Bless men like Chandrasekera.

Old Tamil lady: Bless him.

**END**

## **Production Credits**

*Chandrasekera and the Crown Jewels* was first performed at the **Ubumuntu Festival of Humanity** at the **Genocide Memorial Amphitheatre, Kigali, Rwanda** in July 2017 with the following cast and crew.

### **CAST**

Tracy Holsinger with Ruwanthie de Chickera (English) – 2017

Tracy Holsinger with Tehani Chitty (English) – 2017

### **DESIGN TEAM**

<b>Director</b>	Tracy Holsinger Ruwanthie de Chickera
<b>Designer</b>	Tracy Holsinger Jayampathi Guruge
<b>Composer/ Sound Design</b>	Ranil Goonawardene

### **PRODUCTION TEAM**

<b>Stage Manager</b>	Akalanka Prabhashwara
<b>Backstage</b>	Prabhath Chinthaka Praveen Tilakaratne
<b>Lights</b>	Jayampathi Guruge Saman Malalasekera (2016)
<b>Sounds</b>	Pemanthi Fernando
<b>Make-up</b>	Nilmini Buwaneka (2016) Sanjeewa Upendra (2016) Jayampathi Guruge (2017)
<b>Front of House</b>	Sanda Wijeratne
<b>Production Team</b>	Nilmini Buwaneka (2017) Malshani Delgahapitiya (2016)

	Anila Sadasivan Krishnamma (2016)
<b>Admin Team</b>	Miranga Ariyaratne Pemanthi Fernando Sanda Wijeratne
<b>Sponsors</b>	Gehan Gunatilleke Radhika Hettiarachchi Rebecca Owen Sanda Wijeratne
<b>Publicity/Media Team</b>	Gihan de Chickera Deandra Bulner Pemanthi Fernando Pia Hatch
<b>Graphic Design</b>	Venura Navod Balasooriya (2016) Ruvini de Silva (2016) Deshan Tennekoon (2020)
<b>Souvenir Team</b>	Ruwanthie de Chickera Dharini Priscilla Pemanthi Fernando Piumi Wijesundara Praveen Tilakaratne Venura Navod Balasooriya
<b>Photography</b>	Prauda Buwaneka Pramila Samarakoon
<b>Video</b>	Prauda Buwaneka
<b>Video Editor</b>	Jithendra Vidyapathi
<b>Producer</b>	Pemanthi Fernando (2017) Dharini Priscilla (2017)

The following artists contributed to the making of this script:

<b>Writer</b>	Ruwanthie de Chickera
<b>DCS Interviewee</b>	Dr. Vimala Ganeshanathan
<b>DCS Researcher</b>	Ruwanthie de Chickera

For more detailed insights on this play, including the back story about how it was made, an analysis of all its design elements, its production video, soundtrack, publicity campaign, all press reviews and audience comments, and more, please visit its production page on the Stages Theatre Group website [www.stages.lk](http://www.stages.lk)

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