



HURT VILLAGE

BY KATORI HALL



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

HURT VILLAGE
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World Premiere originally produced by
Signature Theatre Company, New York City
James Houghton, Founding Artistic Director
Erika Mallin, Executive Director

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HURT VILLAGE received its world premiere at the Signature Theatre Company (James Houghton, Founding Artistic Director; Erika Mallin, Executive Director) in New York City on February 27, 2012. It was directed by Patricia McGregor; the set and projection designs were by David Gallo; the costume design was by Clint Ramos; the lighting design was by Sarah Sidman; the sound design was by Robert Kaplowitz; the wig and makeup designs were by Cookie Jordan; the original music was by Luqman Brown; the fight director was Rick Sordelet; and the choreography was by Daniel Price. The cast was as follows:

COOKIE Joaquina Kalukango
CRANK Marsha Stephanie Blake
BIG MAMA Tonya Pinkins
BUGGY Corey Hawkins
TOYIA Saycon Sengbloh
CORNBREAD Nicholas Christopher
EBONY Charlie Hudson, III
SKILLET Lloyd Watts
TONY C Ron Cephas Jones

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

COOKIE — (13 years old) Crank and Buggy’s daughter, precocious and gifted, a wannabe rapper, just wants to get out.

CRANK — (late 20s) three years clean off of crack, hustles the government and does everybody hair in the neighborhood, cranky, has been taken in by Big Mama, used to date Buggy.

BIG MAMA — (55 years old) the matriarch of the family and respected hard-working pillar of the community, Buggy’s blood grandmother.

BUGGY — (late 20s) a soldier returning home from the Iraq War with a haunting secret.

TOYIA — (late 20s) the fast-talking, loud-mouthed upstairs neighbor, works as an exotic dancer at the local “shake junt,” Cornbread’s “babymama,” calls herself a feminist.

CORNBREAD — (late 20s) mixed-race or “high yella,” FedEx employee and small-time drug dealer (also called “doughboy”), not-so-secretly in love with Crank.

EBONY — (late teens) neighborhood comedian and small-time doughboy, a Tony C crony.

SKILLET — (early to mid-teens) badly scarred from a childhood accident involving a skillet, speaks really slowly.

TONY C — (early 40s) The “Kang” of the doughboys and controls the crack houses in Hurt Village.

PLACE

Hurt Village. Memphis, Tennessee.

TIME

The end of summer. Second Bush Dynasty.

HURT VILLAGE

ACT ONE

Prologue

“The Past is Prologue”

Dusk. Somewhere the sky is falling into the ground. Bits and pieces of magenta, peach, and coral hues make the broken bits of beer bottles and crack vials glow with a stardust twinkle. No grass. No one. Dust rolls across this beautiful broken land like wisps of cotton candy blowing in the country wind. Except cotton candy does not exist in this modern-day wasteland. Nothing even remotely related to sweetness exists here. A crooked, dented, weather-beaten sign that says “Hurt Village” sways in the wind. A two-tiered housing project served up Southern-style. Shattered windows. A constellation of garbage and debris. Broken-down burned-out cars. Dingy, tattered shirts and socks hang on for dear life to sagging clotheslines. The ghosts of hopscotch marks fade into the ground. A fading graffiti tag that says, “Das Haus des jammers” is splashed across one of the crumbling walls of the project. It looks as if a wrecking ball has already slammed through the sides, exposing the units. The faint outline of the Memphis Arena Pyramid glistens into existence in the distance. In the emerging darkness, a chorus of children sweetly sings:

CHILDREN.

Hurt Village is falling down, falling down, falling down
Hurt Village is falling down, my fair bitches
Hurt Village is falling down, falling down, falling down
Hurt Village is falling down, my fair bitches.

(Lights up on Cookie, a thirteen-year-old flat-chested woman-child with a colorful array of barrettes hanging onto her greasy plaits. She is beating on the army green electric utility box in the front yard area with her small fists. She provides a steady bass accented by a quick rat-tat-tat at the end. As she flows, the sky drops further into the land, until — one by one — the unit lights of the housing project flicker on to light the night.)

COOKIE.

This be the war/ungh/this be the war/ungh
This be the war/ungh/this be the war/ungh, ungh
This be the war/ungh/this be the war/ungh
Ungh/

You can't see the stars no more/
Just the bling from the dreams of souls searching for the
same thing/
For a lift of light from cavin' ceilings/
This my ode to project people strugglin'/
Mamas and fathers hold yo' daughters/
I'm precocious/most here know this and they know I spit the
illest shit/
I spin ghetto tales that'll make you weep/
My lyrical lullabies'll knock yo' ass to sleep/

'Cause I be the street storyteller/
Runnin' crackers through my hellah/
Ringin' the bells and yellin' through the wire like Mariah/
Having CNN on fire/

Bye bye to crumblin' walls/
Bye Bye to Auction Street/
Bye Bye too many sold/
Bye Bye too many beat

They makin' niggahs extinct/
too many drugs in the jail meat/
Chickenheads ain't comin' home to roost/
And Welfare man stopped sellin' Juicy Juice/

Ain't gone have nobody to play with afterwhile/
... while ... while

HURT VILLAGE

by Katori Hall

WINNER OF THE 2011 SUSAN SMITH BLACKBURN PRIZE

5M, 4W

It's the end of a long summer in Hurt Village, a housing project in Memphis, Tennessee. A government Hope Grant means relocation for many of the project's residents, including Cookie, a thirteen-year-old aspiring rapper, along with her mother, Crank, and great-grandmother, Big Mama. As the family prepares to move, Cookie's father, Buggy, unexpectedly returns from a tour of duty in Iraq. Ravaged by the war, Buggy struggles to find a position in his disintegrating community, along with a place in his daughter's wounded heart.

"... ferocious and expansive ... The signal achievement of the play ... is to stare irony down and make grit seem true again ... passionate, rhythmically eloquent explorations of tragedy and hope ... This is theater that throbs with life, and quickens the pulse and mind."

—**Time Out New York**

"... terrifically exciting work by a playwright with something to say."

—**Variety**

"A dense, rich, musically audacious piece."

—**New York Newsday**

"The playwright juggles characters and narratives like as many balls, keeping them all up in the air with skill."

—**The New York Post**

Also by Katori Hall

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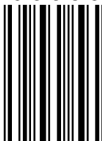
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