

# CHILDREN OF KILLERS

BY KATORI HALL



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CHILDREN OF KILLERS  
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*Dedicated to the million lost in Rwanda, 1994*

CHILDREN OF KILLERS was first commissioned and produced by National Theatre Connections, London, England, in 2011.

The New York premiere of CHILDREN OF KILLERS was presented by the Castillo Theatre (Dan Friedman, Artistic Director; Diane Stiles, Managing Director) and produced by John Rankin III, in October 2012. It was directed by Emily Mendelsohn; the set and video design were by Joseph Spirito; the lighting design was by Nick Kolin; the fight choreography was by Theik Smith; the choreography was by Paloma McGregor; the costume design was by Kerry Gibbons; the sound design was by Michael Walsh; the musical direction was by David Belmont; and the stage manager was Ben Rodman. The cast was as follows:

VINCENT .....	Terrell Wheeler
INNOCENT .....	Sidiki Fofana
BOSCO .....	Melech Meir
MAMA .....	Suzanne Darrell
FÉLICITÉ .....	Naja Jack
ESPERANCE .....	LaTonia Antoinette
EMMANUEL .....	Khadim Diop
VINCENT, SR .....	Raphael Agbune
THE GUHAHAMUKA .....	Edgar Cancinos, Kimarra Canonnier, Franceli Chapman, Rain Jack, Lorenzo Jackson, Lauryn Simone Jones, Niara Nyabingi, Andrea Rachel, Mariel Reyes, Starshima Trent

The audio of the President of Rwanda was voiced by Bernard Tarver, and the audio of the radio announcer was voiced by John Rankin, III.

## CHARACTERS

VINCENT — 18 years old, son of “The Butcher.”

INNOCENT — 15–18 years old, the peacemaker of the group.

BOSCO — 15–18 years old, charming and energetic, yet carries the seed of extremist hatred in his heart.

MAMA — Vincent’s mother.

FÉLICITÉ — 5–14 (age very flexible), Vincent’s young sister.

ESPERANCE — 19–20 years old, a survivor of the 1994 genocide, the older sister of Emmanuel.

EMMANUEL — 15 years old, called “a child of bad memories” (*enfant mauvais souvenir*); a product of rape; is slowly dying of AIDS; Esperance’s younger brother.

THE GUHAHAMUKA — the silenced (can be played with as few as 3 and as many as 10).

VINCENT, SR. — “The Butcher.”

## PLACE and TIME

Rwanda. Yesterday.

/ indicates overlapping of dialogue.

— indicates interruption.

Guhahamuka — *the point of speaking where words cease to exist. It is where breath refuses to make syllables, amounting to silence and emotion instead.*

# CHILDREN OF KILLERS

## Scene 1

*A field in a rural village. A futbol game. A group of boys playing barefoot.*

INNOCENT. Pass it! Pass it!

BOSCO. Pass the bloody ball, Vincent!

VINCENT. No! Hell, no!

INNOCENT. But you always get to score!

VINCENT. This is World Cup, yo!

BOSCO. The best players always pass! They know how to attack together.

VINCENT. No, they don't. They take it to the goal.

BOSCO. Bloody hell, just pass the bloody ball!

VINCENT. Vincent the Invincible never passes! *(Kicks it past the invisible goalie. He scores. He dances around and around in jubilation.)*

BOSCO. Awwwww, meeeeen. You only score 'cause we don't have a goalie.

INNOCENT. *(Out of breath.)* I am too-too tired. *(Falls out on the grass.)*

VINCENT. Get up! Get up! Get up, Innocent. We not finished yet! *We gonna rock this field, like a nigga shoot to kill.*

INNOCENT. VINCENT.

Oh my God. *Rock it like a soldier and like no nigga will.*

BOSCO. Been watching too many rap videos on YouTube?

INNOCENT. He thinks he's the Jay-Z of Africa.

BOSCO. You think Jay-Z will ever come to Rwanda?

INNOCENT. Why would he need to come to here? He already has his Beyoncé. When will I get me my Beyoncé?

VINCENT. When you get a new face!

BOSCO. Ohhhhhh!

INNOCENT. Wha, wha! What are you talking about? I have a beautiful face. (*Stands there showing his face in profile.*) I could model. Rwanda's Next Top Model, yo.

VINCENT. Modeling's for girls.

INNOCENT. That is what you think. I will be the next Djimon Hounsou. Look at that face. Look at these abs. Could cut a diamond. (*They laugh.*)

BOSCO. Innocent, quit your dreaming and pass the bloody ball! (*Innocent passes it to Bosco. Bosco does a quick loop or figure-eight around the other boys.*)

VINCENT. Oh, look at that! He's on his World Cup grind!

BOSCO. Next time the World Cup comes back to Africa, I'll be ready.

VINCENT. You think you can bob and weave as good as me? (*Lunges toward him and tries to swipe the ball away.*)

BOSCO. (*Quickly dodges him.*) Nope, better!

INNOCENT. Ahhh ha ha ha ha! He schooled you. He schooled you.

BOSCO. What'd you learn, Vincent, huh? What'd you learn? (*Bosco is running toward the other end of the field.*) Look at the way I make love to this ball. Look how she do what I say? This ball's my bitch!

INNOCENT. He's been practicing.

VINCENT. I can see that.

BOSCO. I'm World Cup-bound!

VINCENT. World Cup, my ass!

BOSCO. World Cup, oh! I'll be ready for it next time. When they come back to Africa I'm gonna be World Cup, yo! (*He scores!!! He plays to his imaginary audience. Making crowd sounds:*) Ahhhhhhhhhh! Ahhhhhhhhhh!!! (*He takes a bow. Then realizes that he's stepped into a pile of cow dung.*)

Awwwww, meeeeeeen. Meeeeeeen. Meeeeen! (*The other boys laugh.*)

VINCENT. They say it is good luck to step in the shit of a cow.

BOSCO. Who say this?

VINCENT. The ancestors.

BOSCO. Eh-eh! They never know what the hell they are talking about. (*Continues to inspect his feet.*) Meeeeeeen. Meeeeen!

INNOCENT. Whoever's cow made that was loved.

BOSCO. Now I got to pick this shit out from between my toes. This is bloody disgusting.

INNOCENT. Be happy that you don't have to pick it out of your teeth.



VINCENT. *(Takes the ball and bounces it on his knees. The boys continue laughing. With a start:)* Eh-eh, what time is it? *(Bosco reaches into his pocket and he pulls out an iPhone. Vincent runs to get something out of his backpack.)*

INNOCENT. Eh — Where did you get that iPhone from?

VINCENT. Knowing you, you must have stolen it.

BOSCO. Ay, I'm not no pickpocket!

INNOCENT. Then how you get it?

BOSCO. I took it out of that American's backpack. At the cabaret.

INNOCENT. So how you no pickpocket?

BOSCO. I didn't pick it out his pocket, I picked it out his bag.

Differences, my friend Innocent. Differences.

INNOCENT. You are a consummate thief.

BOSCO. Well, a young man has to be good at something.

VINCENT. 'Cause you're certainly not good at futbol. *(Vincent has taken out his transistor radio and is trying to get it to work.)*

INNOCENT. *(Playing with the ball.)* Vincent, we still have a score to settle!

VINCENT. Time to hear the news.

BOSCO. Ah, the old man is trying to hear the news.

VINCENT. Call me an "old man" one more time, and I'll beat you like a old man should.

BOSCO. Awwwww, / meeeeeeeen.

INNOCENT. You can't get the news out here. You can never get the radio to work up here. *(For a moment the channel clears. A song from a pop singer like Beyoncé pours through the speakers. \* Bosco and Innocent start to grind it out.)*

BOSCO. Even in the most remote hills of Rwanda there is [singer]. *(Innocent starts to sing the song, but another song riding on the wind catches his attention. The village is wailing. Vincent turns off the radio.)*

Eh-eh, why you / turn it off!

VINCENT. Shhhhhhhh, be quiet, yo.

BOSCO. Wha, wha? *(There is singing coming from way off. Way off deep in the valley.)* Why in the bloody hell are they singing?

INNOCENT. I don't know.

BOSCO. What / is it?

INNOCENT. If you would just quit your yapping for just a few seconds maybe / we could hear.

VINCENT. The song. Sounds / familiar.

\* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.

BOSCO. It's the —

VINCENT. *(Interrupting sharply.)* Ssshhh listen! *(The village continues to sing. A deep wail. Beat. Innocent and Vincent look at each other.)*

INNOCENT. Could it be —

BOSCO. True?

VINCENT. I thought I would never hear that song.

INNOCENT. Never thought I'd hear it in my lifetime.

BOSCO. It's the song of —

VINCENT and INNOCENT. Machete season.

EMMANUEL. *(Offstage.)* I got MTN credit! Zazu credit! Orange credit! *(A young boy, Emmanuel, is selling cell phone credit. He is wearing a bright yellow jacket. He is of similar age to the boys, but much more slight. He has the sickness. Emmanuel is out of breath from his climb to the top of the hill.)*

BOSCO. Eh-Eh! Emmanuel! It true?      INNOCENT. Emmanuel!!

EMMANUEL. That what they say. The village is celebrating. We all heard it on the radio.

INNOCENT. We didn't.

BOSCO. Your radio's for shit, Vincent.

VINCENT. Fuck off, Bosco.

BOSCO. *(Laughing.)* I gotta call my mama. Emmanuel, I need a SIM card.

VINCENT. iPhone take MTN SIM?

BOSCO. I got it unlocked, yo.

VINCENT. *Butter!*

EMMANUEL. 1,000 francs for a SIM. But for you, Bosco, I'll take 1,500.

BOSCO. Eh-eh! That not no steal.

EMMANUEL. I know you got it.

BOSCO. 1,100.

EMMANUEL. 1,300.

BOSCO. *(Fast.)* 1,250.

EMMANUEL. *(Fast.)* 1,300.

BOSCO. *(Faster.)* 1,251.

EMMANUEL. *(Even faster.)* 1,350!

BOSCO. *(Sucks his teeth and gives him the francs. The wailing in the village gets louder.)* You should be the president of Uganda as slick as you are. *(Hands Emmanuel the francs from his pocket.)*

INNOCENT. My mama used to sing this when she rocked me to sleep. I was only this high. "When they come home this will be

riding on the wind.” (*He sings the song, he knows it well ...* ) Isn't it the most beautiful song you ever heard, Vincent? (*Vincent is visibly shaking.*)

EMMANUEL. The president just announced it. They start the release on Friday.

INNOCENT. Friday?

VINCENT. So soon?

EMMANUEL. So soon. (*Acknowledging him.*) Vincent.

VINCENT. Emmanuel. How's your sister?

EMMANUEL. Esperance is cool.

BOSCO. (*Rolls his eyes.*) What are you going to do when you meet your papa, Innocent?

INNOCENT. Man, I don't know. Maybe I'll —

BOSCO. Hug him?

INNOCENT. No, I will let my sisters hug him. That is for the girls to do.

BOSCO. Maybe you'll —

INNOCENT. Bring him out a Primus beer!

BOSCO. Mama said that was my papa's favorite. Primus.

INNOCENT. Rwanda's favorite beer.

VINCENT. It's Rwanda's *only* beer.

INNOCENT. Well, my auntie will make a jerrican of banana beer to celebrate.

BOSCO. Well, I'm coming over there then!

INNOCENT. I can't believe it. I can't believe they are coming home!

BOSCO. Our papas are finally coming home.

INNOCENT. No longer will we have to run the streets hungry.

BOSCO. Or steal potatoes from other people's fields.

INNOCENT. Or raise our young brothers.

BOSCO. Or give our sisters away at weddings.

INNOCENT. Or be the men of the house.

EMMANUEL. (*Wryly.*) The killers are coming home. (*Beat.*)

BOSCO. Ah-ah, why you call them that? They not that.

INNOCENT. Well, technically —

BOSCO. Technically they *are* that, but you didn't have to *call* them that.

EMMANUEL. Well, I'm a blunt boy.

BOSCO. Blunt?

EMMANUEL. I'm just saying.

BOSCO. You're not *saying* anything —

# CHILDREN OF KILLERS

by Katori Hall

6M, 5W (doubling, flexible casting)

The president of Rwanda is releasing the killers. Years after the Tutsi genocide, the perpetrators begin to trickle back into the country side to be reunited with their villages. A trio of friends — born during the genocide's bloody aftermath — prepare to meet the men who gave them life. But as the homecoming day draws closer, the young men are haunted by the sins of their fathers. Who can you become when violence is your inheritance?

*“... disturbing [and] powerful ... Ms. Hall's play concerns the generation of kids who were too young to participate in the slaughter, though not always too young to be victims of it. [This] tough subject is handled with a simplicity and specificity that impress. ... You leave CHILDREN OF KILLERS with the unhappy sense that while the bloodletting has long since ended, the genocide will be reaping victims in Rwanda for years to come.”*

—The New York Times

**Also by Katori Hall**

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