



# RUINED

BY LYNN NOTTAGE



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



RUINED received its world premiere at The Goodman Theatre in Chicago, Illinois, on November 8, 2008. It was coproduced by The Goodman Theatre (Robert Falls, Artistic Director; Roche Schulfer, Executive Producer) and Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer). It was directed by Kate Whoriskey; the set design was by Derek McLane; the costume design was by Paul Tazewell; the lighting design was by Peter Kaczorowski; the sound design was by Michael Bodeen and Rob Milburn; the original music was by Dominic Kanza with lyrics by Lynn Nottage; the production stage manager was Kimberly Osgood. The cast was as follows:

SALIMA ..... Quincy Tyler Bernstine  
JOSEPHINE ..... Cherise Boothe  
JEROME KISEMBE/SOLDIER ..... Chris Chalk  
MAMA NADI ..... Saidah Arrika Ekulona  
SIMON/SOLDIER/MINER/  
AID WORKER ..... William Jackson Harper  
FORTUNE/SOLDIER/MINER ..... Chiké Johnson  
CHRISTIAN ..... Russell Gebert Jones  
COMMANDER OSEMBENGA/SOLDIER ..... Kevin Mambo  
MR. HARARI ..... Tom Mardirosian  
PASCAL/SOLDIER ..... Ali Amin Carter  
SOPHIE ..... Condola Rashad

The Goodman Theatre/Manhattan Theatre Club coproduction of RUINED subsequently opened Off-Broadway in New York City at City Center Stage I on February 10, 2009. The production stage manager was Donald Fried; the assistant stage manager was Alison DeSantis. The cast remained the same, with the exception of:

PASCAL/SOLDIER ..... Ron McBee

## **CHARACTERS**

SALIMA

JOSEPHINE

JEROME KISEMBE

MAMA NADI

SIMON

FORTUNE

CHRISTIAN

COMMANDER OSEMBENGA

MR. HARARI

LAURENT

SOPHIE

AID WORKER

SOLDIERS

MINERS

## **PLACE**

A small mining town in the  
Democratic Republic of the Congo.

# RUINED

## ACT ONE

### Scene 1

*A small mining town. The sounds of the tropical Ituri rain forest. Democratic Republic of the Congo.*

*A bar with makeshift furniture and a rundown pool table. A lot of effort has gone into making the worn bar cheerful. A stack of plastic washtubs rests in the corner. An old car battery powers the lights and audio system, a covered bird cage conspicuously sits in the corner of the room.*

*Mama Nadi, early forties, an attractive woman with an arrogant stride and majestic air, watches Christian, early forties, a perpetually cheerful traveling salesman, knock back a Fanta. His good looks have been worn down by hard living on the road. He wears a suit that might have been considered stylish when new, but it's now nearly ten years old and overly loved. He brushes travel dust from his clothing, and takes a generous sip of his soda.*

CHRISTIAN. Ah. Cold. The only cold Fanta in twenty-five kilometers. You don't know how good this tastes. *(Mama flashes a warm, flirtatious smile, then pours herself a Primus beer.)*

MAMA. And where the hell have you been?

CHRISTIAN. It was no easy task getting here.

MAMA. I've been expecting you for the last three weeks. How am I supposed do business? No soap, no cigarettes, no condoms. Not

even a half liter of petrol for the generator.

CHRISTIAN. Why are you picking a fight with me already? I didn't create this damn chaos. Nobody, and I'm telling you, nobody could get through on the main road. Every two kilometers a boy with a Kalashnikov and pockets that need filling. Toll, tax, tariff. They invent reasons to lighten your load.

MAMA. Then why does Mr. Harari always manage to get through?

CHRISTIAN. Mr. Harari doesn't bring you things you need, does he? Mr. Harari has interests that supercede his safety. Me, I still hope to have a family one day. *(Christian laughs, heartily.)*

MAMA. And my lipstick?

CHRISTIAN. Your lipstick? Aye! Did you ask me for lipstick?

MAMA. Of course, I did, you idiot!

CHRISTIAN. Look at the way you speak to me, *Chérie*. *Comment est-ce possible?* You should be happy I made it here in one piece. *(Christian produces a tube of lipstick from his pocket.)* Play nice or I'll give this to Josephine. She knows how to show her appreciation.

MAMA. Yes, but you always take home a little more than you ask for with Josephine. I hope you know how to use a condom. *(Christian laughs.)*

CHRISTIAN. Are you jealous?

MAMA. Leave me alone, you're too predictable. *(Mama turns away, dismissive.)*

CHRISTIAN. Where are you going? Hey, hey what are you doing? *(Teasingly.)* *Chérie*, I know you wanted me to forget, so you could yell at me, but you won't get the pleasure this time. *(Christian taunts her with the lipstick. Mama resists the urge to smile.)*

MAMA. Oh shut up and give it to me. *(He passes her the lipstick.)*  
Thank you, Christian.

CHRISTIAN. I didn't hear you —

MAMA. Don't press your luck. And it better be red. *(Mama grabs a sliver of a broken mirror from behind the rough-hewn bar, and gracefully applies the lipstick.)*

CHRISTIAN. You don't have to say it. I know you want a husband.

MAMA. Like a hole in my head.

CHRISTIAN. *(Reciting.)*

What, is this love?

An unexpected wind,

A fluctuation,

Fronting the coming of a storm.

Resolve, a thorny bush  
Blown asunder and swept away  
There, *Chérie*. I give you a poem in lieu of the kiss you won't allow me. (*Christian laughs, warmly. Mama puts out a bowl of peanuts.*)  
MAMA. Here. I saved you some groundnuts, *Professor*.  
CHRISTIAN. That's all you saved for me?  
MAMA. Be smart, and I'll show you the door in one second. (*Mama scolds him with her eyes.*)  
CHRISTIAN. Ach, ach ... why are you wearing my Grandmama's face? (*Christian mocks her expression. Mama laughs and downs her beer.*)  
MAMA. You sure you don't want a beer?  
CHRISTIAN. You know me better than that, *Chérie*, I haven't had a drop of liquor in four years.  
MAMA. (*Teasing.*) It's cold.  
CHRISTIAN. Tst! (*Christian cracks open a few peanuts, and playfully pops them into his mouth. The parrot squawks.*) What's there? In the cage?  
MAMA. Oh, that, a grey parrot. Old Papa Batunga passed.  
CHRISTIAN. When?  
MAMA. Last Thursday. No one wanted the damn bird. It complains too much.  
CHRISTIAN. (*Amused.*) Yeah, what does it say? (*Christian walks to the birdcage, and peers under the covering.*)  
MAMA. Who the hell knows? It speaks pygmy. He ... Old Papa was the last of his tribe. That stupid bird was the only thing he had left to talk to.  
CHRISTIAN. (*To bird.*) Hello?  
MAMA. He believed as long as the words of the forest people were spoken the spirits would stay alive.  
CHRISTIAN. For true? (*Christian pokes his finger into the cage. To Mama.*) What are you going to do with him?  
MAMA. Sell it. I don't want it. It stinks. (*Christian pokes at the birdcage.*)  
CHRISTIAN. (*To bird.*) Hello.  
MAMA. Hey, hey don't put your fingers in there.  
CHRISTIAN. Look. He likes me. So Mama, you haven't asked me what else I've brought for you? Go see. (*Christian quickly withdraws his finger.*) Ow. Shit. He bit me.  
MAMA. Well, you shouldn't be messing with it. (*Mama laughs.*)

CHRISTIAN. Ow, damn it.

MAMA. (*Impatiently.*) Don't be a crybaby, what did you bring me? Well? ... Are you going to keep me guessing?

CHRISTIAN. Go on. Take a peek in the truck. And don't say I don't think about you. (*Mama smiles.*)

MAMA. How many?

CHRISTIAN. Three.

MAMA. Three? But, I can't use three right now. You know that.

CHRISTIAN. Of course you can. And I'll give you a good price if you take all of them. (*Mama goes to the doorway, and peers out at the offerings, unimpressed.*)

MAMA. I don't know. They look used. Worn.

CHRISTIAN. C'mon, Mama. Take another look. A full look. You've said it yourself business is good. (*Mama considers, then finally.*)

MAMA. Okay, one. That one in front. (*Points into the distance.*)

CHRISTIAN. Three. C'mon, don't make me travel back with them.

MAMA. Just one. How much?

CHRISTIAN. Do you know how difficult it was getting here? The road was completely washed out —

MAMA. All right, all right. I don't need the whole damn saga. Just tell me, how much for the one?

CHRISTIAN. The same as usual plus twenty-five, because ... because ... You understand it wasn't easy to get here with the —

MAMA. I'll give you fifteen.

CHRISTIAN. Ahh! Fifteen? No. That's nothing. Twenty-two. C'mon.

MAMA. Twenty. My best offer. (*Christian mulls it over. He's reluctant.*)

CHRISTIAN. Aye. Okay. Okay. Damn it. Yes. Yes. But I expect another cold Fanta. One from the bottom this time. (*Christian, defeated, exits. Mama smiles victoriously, and retrieves another soda from the refrigerator. She reapplies lipstick for good measure, then counts out her money. Christian reenters proudly bearing two cartons of Ugandan cigarettes. A moment later two women in ragged clothing step tentatively into the bar: Sophie, a luminous beauty with an air of defiance, and Salima, a sturdy peasant woman whose face betrays a world weariness. They hold hands. Mama studies the women, then —*)

MAMA. I said one. That one. (*She points to Sophie.*)

CHRISTIAN. It's been a good week, and I'll tell you what, I'll give you two for the price of one. Why not?

MAMA. Are you deaf? No. Tst! I don't need two more mouths to



feed and pester me. (*Mama continues to examine each woman.*)

CHRISTIAN. Take both. Feed them as one. Please, Mama, I'll throw in the cigarettes for cost.

MAMA. But, I'll only pay for one.

CHRISTIAN. Of course. We agree, why are we arguing?

MAMA. (*Yelling.*) Josephine! Josephine! Where is that stupid woman? (*Josephine, a sexy woman in a short Western-style miniskirt and high heels, appears in the beaded doorway. She surveys the new women with obvious contempt.*) Take them out back. Get them washed and some proper clothing.

JOSEPHINE. *Njoo.* [Come.] (*Beat.*) *Sasa.* [Quick.] (*Josephine beckons to the women. They reluctantly follow.*)

MAMA. Wait. (*Mama gestures to Salima, who clings to Sophie.*) You. Come here. (*Salima doesn't move.*) Come. (*Salima clings to Sophie, then slowly walks toward Mama.*) What's your name?

SALIMA. (*Whispers.*) Salima.

MAMA. What?

SALIMA. Salima. (*Mama examines Salima's rough hands.*)

MAMA. Rough. (*With disdain.*) A digger. We'll have to do something about that. (*Salima yanks her hand away. Mama registers the bold gesture.*) And you, come. You're a pretty thing, what's your name?

SOPHIE. (*Gently.*) Sophie.

MAMA. Do you have a smile?

SOPHIE. Yes.

MAMA. Then let me see it. (*Sophie struggles to find a defiant smile.*)

Good. Go get washed up. (*A moment.*)

JOSEPHINE. (*Snaps.*) C'mon, now! (*Salima looks to Sophie. She follows. The women follow behind Josephine. Sophie walks with some pain.*)

MAMA. Did you at least tell them this time?

CHRISTIAN. Yes. They know and they came willingly.

MAMA. And — ?

CHRISTIAN. Salima is from a tiny village. No place really. She was captured by rebel soldiers, Mayi-mayi; the poor thing spent nearly five months in the bush as their concubine.

MAMA. And what of her people?

CHRISTIAN. She says her husband is a farmer, and from what I understand, her village won't have her back. Because ... But she's a simple girl, she doesn't have much learning, I wouldn't worry about her.

MAMA. And the other?

# RUINED

by Lynn Nottage

WINNER OF THE 2009 PULITZER PRIZE

8M, 4W (doubling)

From Lynn Nottage, the Pulitzer Prize–winning author of such plays as *Fabulation* and *Intimate Apparel*, comes this haunting, probing work about the resilience of the human spirit during times of war. Set in a small mining town in Democratic Republic of the Congo, this powerful play follows Mama Nadi, a shrewd businesswoman in a land torn apart by civil war. But is she protecting or profiting by the women she shelters? How far will she go to survive? Can a price be placed on a human life?

*“RUINED takes us inside an unthinkable reality and into the heads of victims and perpetrators to create a full-immersion drama of shocking complexity and moral ambiguity. What’s more surprising is the exquisite balance the playwright brings — of brutality and poetry, hope and even humor.”* —**Variety**

*“Strong and absorbing ... a raw and genuine agony pulses within ... a clear-eyed celebration of endurance.”* —**The New York Times**

*“Sincere, passionate, courageous and acutely argued, RUINED is a remarkable theatrical accomplishment ...”* —**The Chicago Tribune**

*“In the hands of this talented playwright, what might have been a predictable political polemic instead emerges as a richly stirring and complex drama that even includes generous doses of humor.”* —**The New York Post**

## Also by Lynn Nottage

FABULATION OR,  
THE RE-EDUCATION OF UNDINE  
INTIMATE APPAREL  
LAS MENINAS  
and others

DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

ISBN 978-0-8222-2390-0



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