



# born bad

by debbie tucker green



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BORN BAD  
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BORN BAD was first performed on April 29, 2003  
at the Hampstead Theatre, London.

BORN BAD received its world premiere at the Hampstead Theatre, London, opening on April 29, 2003. It was directed by Kathy Burke; the set and costume design were by Jonathan Fensom; the lighting design was by Paul Keogan; the sound design was by John Leonard for Aura; the and the production manager was John Titcombe. The cast was as follows:

SISTER #1 ..... Sharlene Whyte  
SISTER #2 ..... Nadine Marshall  
MUM ..... Alibe Parsons  
BROTHER ..... Nicholas Pinnock  
DAD ..... Ewart James Walters  
DAWTA ..... Jenny Jules

BORN BAD received its U.S. premiere at SoHo Rep in New York City, opening on April 7, 2011. It was directed by Leah C. Gardiner; the set design was by Mimi Lien; the costume design was by Paul Tazewell; the lighting design was by Michael Chybowski; the sound design and original music were by Matt Sherwin; the dramaturg was Raphael Martin; and the production stage manager was Beth Stegman. The cast was as follows:

SISTER #1 ..... Quincy Tyler Bernstine  
SISTER #2 ..... Crystal A. Dickinson  
MUM ..... Elain Graham  
BROTHER ..... LeRoy James McClain  
DAD ..... Michael Rogers  
DAWTA ..... Heather Alicia Simms

## **CHARACTERS**

DAD

MUM

DAWTA

SISTER 1

SISTER 2

BROTHER

A blood-related Black family.

## **TIME**

The action takes place within a day.

## **NOTES**

Dawta is also sister to the Sisters and Brother who are also son and dawtas of Mum and Dad.

Once onstage, the characters never leave.

Names appearing without dialogue indicate active silences between characters listed.

“/” denotes where dialogue starts to overlap.

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## Preset

*A solitary chair is onstage.*

*A female solo gospel rendition of “What A Friend We Have In Jesus” starts through one verse ...*

*The hymn becomes part hummed and less formed.*

*Fade to black.*

*The hymn blends, half-sung, half-hummed familiarly by Mum (unseen) who quietly takes over the tune.*

## Scene 1

*One chair onstage.*

*The hymn continues by Mum (unseen).*

*Dad is sitting in the chair, confidently.*

*Dawta is not.*

*Silently she demands eye contact.*

*He finds it difficult.*

DAWTA. Say it.

Say it.

Daddy ...

Say it.

*They make eye contact.*

*She gains his lost confidence.*

*The hymn draws to an end.*

*Blackout.*

## Scene 2

*Three chairs onstage.*

*Dawta and Mum.*

DAWTA. If yu actin like a bitch

I'm a call yu it

if yu lookin like a bitch

I'm a call yu it.

If yu lookin like a bitch as you lookin on me – I see yu and yu bitch ways – mi a go call yu it again mi noh business.

Watchin yu watchin me like the bitch bitch yu is.

I'll letcha

and I'll say it two times.

Then two times that.

Then two times that again – for yu – yu mudda, and yu mudda's mudda – those bitches that bred yu off before and before that – and from before that again.

From whenever your bitch bloodline started.

From whatever bitch beginnings y'had.

*Bitch.*

MUM. Don't say that.

DAWTA. And I'll call it like iss nuthin, and I'll say it like iss nuthin like the nuthin it is like the nuthin you are like the nuthin you took a try at to mek me.

Bitch.

Cap fit.

Bitch.

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2M, 4W

*"... the bits don't make the bulk and the bulk don't mek the whole  
and the all a your bits together don't make your versions true."*

Dawta wants the family to talk. But they have never talked like this before. Once this conversation starts, nobody leaves. BORN BAD dives headlong into the powerful heart of this family, unleashing wit and verbal dexterity along the way.

*"Remarkable ... This intense, stylized drama about poisonous family secrets hits you like a triple shot of espresso. You leave feeling slightly shaken: excited by the play's formal invention, moved by its coiled emotional power."* —**The New York Times**

*"Tucker Green's verbally stylized, physically concentrated, psychologically stripped-to-the bone approach results in a thoroughly disquieting, relentlessly penetrating work of art. It's essential and stunning theater."* —**BackStage**

*"[Tucker Green's] fast and furious storytelling and blazing verbal free-for-all hits like blunt-force trauma. The work is exhilarating and disturbing all at once."* —**New York Daily News**

*"A barreling dramatic poem in six-part dissonance, Debbie Tucker Green's BORN BAD is a deeply unsettling, upsettingly funny family portrait, slashed with box cutters and stuck back together with guilt, hurt, and blood ... For a play that is, in essence, a long and punishing argument, with the leverage sloshing from one character to the next, BORN BAD is a remarkably smooth sixty-minute ride ... a series of short scenes, webs of alliance, jealousy, and betrayal that suggest a tragedy of almost Grecian size without once having to declare it."* —**New York Magazine**

**Also by debbie tucker green**  
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

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