



**KILL
MOVE
PARADISE**

**BY
JAMES IJAMES**



**DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.**



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In loving memory of Sidiki Fofana

The world premiere of KILL MOVE PARADISE was produced by Dr. Barbara Ann Teer’s National Black Theatre, New York City, in June 2017. It was directed by Saheem Ali, the scenic design was by Maruti Evans, the costume design was by Ntokozo Fuzunina Kunene, the lighting design was by Alan C. Edwards, the sound design was by Palmer Hefferan, the movement coach was Darrell G. Moultrie, the musical director was Darius Smith, the technical director was Nabii Faison, and the production stage manager was Christina Franklin. The cast was as follows:

ISA Ryan Jamaal Swain
GRIF Donnell E. Smith
DAZ Clinton Lowe
TINY Sidiki Fofana

KILL MOVE PARADISE was developed by Victory Gardens Theater (Chay Yew, Artistic Director), Chicago, Illinois, as part of IGNITION Festival of New Plays 2016.

CHARACTERS

ISA—20–30 years old.

TINY—15–16 years old. Short.

DAZ—20–30 years old.

GRIF—20–30 years old.

NOTES

/ Indicates overlapping dialogue

words These words should be meant, felt and tonally inform the line but should not be spoken. Don't leave space, say the line as though the word wasn't there but allow the word, inside of that moment, to color its delivery.

[words] These are the only words the character can find but are not the right words. Spoken in a small way and almost to themselves. Almost like a stifled weeping sometimes. Not a whisper. More like you're trying to speak through tears.

Bold Words These should be spoken as a whisper. Sotto voce.

Underlined These are non-voiced sounds. Breathing. Light.

Please honor the extended vowels as scripted. Please do not shorten them. If they feel weird, GOOD!

MUSIC

Theaters are free to create their own music/melodies for the original “boy band” song, and the singing of the Bible verse, John 14:2, “In my Father’s house there are many mansions.”

“Sustained intensity equals ecstasy.”

—Wynton Marsalis

“At what age is a black boy when he learns he’s scary?”

—Jonathan Lethem,
The Fortress of Solitude

“Can there be a more empathetic contrast than the one between respect for the Other’s vulnerability and the reduction of the Other to mere ‘bare life’ regulated by administrative knowledge?”

—Slavoj Žižek,
Violence: Six Sideways Reflections

KILL MOVE PARADISE

A protean space. Atmospheric and expressionistic. The space should look pregnant with history and possibility. Upstage should feel very far away and very high up. Almost like a wave frozen in time that could continue on and crash down on us. Imagine the audience sitting in the bottom of a skate park. Downstage there is a square hole or trap that could lead to just about anywhere. It should be covered until needed. Somewhere onstage a printer occasionally spits out a name on an increasingly growing list. We used a dot matrix printer and that was fire.

However you choose to make this appear, the necessities of the space are as follows:

- The entrance is from above, below, and through the sides.*
- The players must have the ability to run up and slide down the upstage wall.*
- It should feel open.*
- There should be places to store and hide things.*
- This play is not realism and should not be performed as such.*

Lights rise on this massive and potential space. A violent earthquake shakes the space. An electrical storm darkens and illuminates the space. Isa is flung out into this space. He lands face down.

ISA. Here. Again.

The violent earthquake is replaced with celestial music of some kind. The music reminds Isa of something he had done before. The music stops. A paper airplane flies in and lands at Isa's legs.

I'm sick of this shit.

Thunder rumbles. Distance. Ominous.

Fine.

He opens it up. He reads it. He looks up at the audience, seeing us for the first time. Is deeply affected by our presence. He runs up the expanse to escape but cannot and slides down. He sits in a heap for a moment.

God help us...

He moves past the information he has been given and continues.

(To no one in particular and everyone.) Play that tune again.

The music begins again.

That's nice. Whew. Don't feel nothing but a breeze. Hear that?

Isa looks out at all of us. We meet eyes and have to confront each other somehow. We have to be willing to really see each other for a spell. Maybe a spell that feels longer and costs more than we are willing to spend. This will happen a lot in this play so get used to it. We have to witness what is happening. It has to cost.

Wasgood?

Come to see me?

Yeah? What for?

Heard about me?

Come to see for yourselves?

Yeah?

Yeeeeeah.

Think I can fix you?

Do I scare you?

I remember...the age I learned I was scary.

8...

And so this begins.

Silence. Isa looks at us for a while. At first he tries to entertain us.

(Tune of “The Old Gray Mare.”)

*Being black men just ain't what it used to be.
Ain't what it used to be.
Ain't what it used to be.
Being black men just ain't what it used to be.
Not many years to go.*

He fails.

What? Too old-timey?

Then he tries to scare us.

Booo. BOOOOOOOOOO. Boo. Boo. Boo.

He fails at this as well...but perhaps less so.

No? Nothing. [You so fragile.] Aight. Aight. Aight.

Finally he sits down in front of us.

Someone wrote about a war that would end all wars. Someone wrote about a rapture. Someone wrote about revolution. Someone wrote that we would all burn. Someone wrote that we would all be caught up in the air. Someone wrote about a false prophet. Another about a flaming devil. Another about blood on the moon.

But that shit don't never come.

Another earthquake shakes the space. Isa braces himself. The opening at the edge of the stage opens with a thunderous flip. Grif emerges from the opening. He lifts himself out of the opening and sits on the edge, feet dangling inside the opening. He is out of breath. Isa stands across from Grif. Isa studies the list finding Grif. He then studies Grif.

You made it here alright?

GRIF. Jus

Huff.

Barely

Puff.

ISA. Brotha?

GRIF. What?

ISA. I'm ya brother.

GRIF. Biologically?

ISA. Spiritually?

GRIF. Hmmmm.

ISA. Psychically.

GRIF. That makes sense to me.

ISA. I thought so too.

Isa extends his hand to Grif.

GRIF. Uh...yeah...can I catch my breath before we come up with the elaborate super soul brotha secret handshake.

ISA. This not a handshake.

GRIF. Your hand is shaking.

ISA. Nerves.

GRIF. You jumpy man?

ISA. I'm trying to help you up.

Beat.

GRIF. That seems right to me.

ISA. Well then grab hold.

Isa lifts Grif up.

GRIF. Who are you?

ISA. Isa.

GRIF. Good name. Arabic?

ISA. Yes.

GRIF. The holy one.

ISA. What?

GRIF. Your name is real big man. I like names.

ISA. You're Grif.

GRIF. Yeah...how did you—?

ISA. —There's a list.

GRIF. A list.

ISA. Long list.

GRIF. How many people on it?

ISA. Don't know. Keeps getting longer every time I look.

GRIF. Lemme see.

Isa shows him the list... The list grows.

Damn.

ISA. I know.

GRIF. How long you been here?

ISA. For a while.

Grif looks out at the audience.

GRIF. Hey... Uh...

ISA. It's okay.

GRIF. You know them?

ISA. Not exactly.

GRIF. Who are they?

ISA. They paid.

GRIF. What?

ISA. They like to watch.

GRIF. Kinky.

ISA. Their money. They can do what they want with it.

GRIF. Truth.

ISA. [Well.]

The following should be quick.

GRIF. Do I know you?/

ISA. /Probably not./

GRIF. /You seem familiar./

ISA. /You don't./

GRIF. /Feel like I know you./

ISA. /Don't think you do./

GRIF. /You sure about that?/

ISA. /I'm pretty sure./

GRIF. /You feel like family. You kin to the Himphills or the Jacksons?/

ISA. /Are you not hearing me?/

KILL MOVE PARADISE

by James Ijames

4 men

Four black men find themselves stuck in a waiting room for the afterlife. As they attempt to make sense of their new paradise, Isa, Daz, Grif, and Tiny are forced to confront the reality of their past, and how they arrived in this unearthly place. Inspired by the ever-growing list of slain black men and women, KILL MOVE PARADISE illustrates the potential for collective transformation and radical acts of joy.

"...urgent and hypnotic... [a] bleak and beautiful...drama by James Ijames... KILL MOVE PARADISE is a singularly affecting contribution to a niche genre of theater that often comes across as labored and contrived. I mean plays set in an afterlife where the deceased see their time on earth through the prism of eternity." —**The New York Times**

"Ijames has written a challenging and fine actor's play... KILL MOVE PARADISE is bold, conceptual, living theater, demanding to be heard. Ijames [is] a vital voice in [our] politically seditious and most perilous time. It is also profoundly poetic in its dialogue and characters."

—**CultureCulture.net**

"This haunting, elliptical play represents a breakthrough for [Ijames], and for art that considers the value of black lives in America..."

—**BroadStreetReview.com**

Also by James Ijames

MOON MAN WALK
THE MOST SPECTACULARLY
LAMENTABLE TRIAL OF MIZ
MARTHA WASHINGTON
WHITE

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