



GOOD GRIEF

A BEST FRIEND PLAY

BY
NGOZI ANYANWU



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



GOOD GRIEF
Copyright © 2020, Ngozi Anyanwu

All Rights Reserved

GOOD GRIEF is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), or stored in any retrieval system in any way (electronic or mechanical) without written permission of the publisher.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for GOOD GRIEF are controlled exclusively by Dramatists Play Service, 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. **No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of Dramatists Play Service and paying the requisite fee.**

All other rights, including without limitation motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to Creative Artists Agency, 405 Lexington Avenue, 19th Floor, New York, NY 10174. Attn: Olivier Sultan.

NOTE ON BILLING

Anyone receiving permission to produce GOOD GRIEF is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears, including printed or digital materials for advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. Please see your production license for font size and typeface requirements.

Be advised that there may be additional credits required in all programs and promotional material. Such language will be listed under the “Additional Billing” section of production licenses. It is the licensee’s responsibility to ensure any and all required billing is included in the requisite places, per the terms of the license.

SPECIAL NOTE ON SONGS/RECORDINGS

Dramatists Play Service neither holds the rights to nor grants permission to use any songs or recordings mentioned in the Play. Permission for performances of copyrighted songs, arrangements or recordings mentioned in this Play is not included in our license agreement. The permission of the copyright owner(s) must be obtained for any such use. For any songs and/or recordings mentioned in the Play, other songs, arrangements, or recordings may be substituted provided permission from the copyright owner(s) of such songs, arrangements or recordings is obtained; or songs, arrangements or recordings in the public domain may be substituted.

*In loving memory of
Matthew Jason Galeone
Owiso Odera
Theresa Iheoma*

GOOD GRIEF was produced by the Vineyard Theatre (Douglas Aibel, Artistic Director; Sarah Stern, Artistic Director; Suzanne Appel, Managing Director) in New York City, opening on October 28, 2018. It was directed by Awoye Timpo, the scenic design was by Jason Ardizzone-West, the costume design was by Andy Jean, the lighting design was by Oona Curley, the sound design was by Daniel Kluger, the original music was by Joy Ike, and the production stage manager was Alyssa K. Howard. The cast was as follows:

NKECHI Ngozi Anyanwu
 MJG Ian Quinlan
 BRO Nnamdi Asomugha
 PAPA Oberon K.A. Adjepong
 NENE Patrice Johnson Chevannes
 JD Hunter Parrish
 MJ'S MOM/NEIGHBOR'S MOM Lisa Ramirez

Center Theatre Group/Kirk Douglas Theatre (Michael Ritchie, Artistic Director) produced the world premiere of GOOD GRIEF in Los Angeles, California, in 2017. It was directed by Patricia McGregor, the scenic design was by Stephanie Kerley Schwartz, the costume design was by Karen Perry, the lighting design was by Pablo Santiago, the sound design was by Adam Phalen, the original music was by Kathryn Bostic, and the production stage manager was Anne L. Hitt. The cast was as follows:

NKECHI Ngozi Anyanwu
 MJG Wade Allain-Marcus
 BRO Marcus Henderson
 PAPA Dayo Ade
 NENE Omozé Idehenre
 JD Mark Jude Sullivan
 MJ'S MOM/NEIGHBOR'S MOM Carla Renata

A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO

Chinyere Anyanwu
Clinton Lowe
Ryan Guess
Ebbe Bassey
Anthony Wills Jr.
Lou Moreno and INTAR Theatre
Filipe Valle Costa
Russell G. Jones
Susan Heyward
Herb Newsome
Matt MacNelly
Kerry Warren
Shantez Tolbut
The Humanitas Foundation
The good people at Rising Circle
Chioma Okoro
Chaz Hodges

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This was a play written because I missed someone and I missed myself when I was this young. I conjured him. I thought of him. Conjured my past and wrote the things I might have said or did had I a second chance to walk in this world. So for all intents and purposes, though it feels autobiographical...this is still very much a work of fiction. But for thinking these words, for saying these words, for directing these words, I thank you. Through you these people live.

That's all I got... now the play.

THE STARS...

The Heroes

N or NKECHI is our heroine. She is a first generation Nigerian girl/woman/goddess. She is city born but raised in the suburbs of Bucks County and is very much a product of that in the way she speaks. She is a pre-med dropout because in her heart she knows she has the lonely heart of an artist. A spunky force of nature. (*Also Artemis.*)

MATTHEW JASON GEORGE, aka MJG but always referred to as MJ, is our tragic hero. He's a slacker, a thinker, and a dreamer. A James Dean of the millennium. He very well may also have the heart of an artist but will not live long enough to fully realize his potential. The bad boy who's not all that bad. The kind of guy that your parents wanted you nowhere near. (*Also Orion.*)

The Family

BRO is N's big brother, a wannabe hood philosopher, like N he is suburb raised but if you didn't know any better, you'd think he was raised in a completely different household. Their hearts are the same but their approaches are different. (*Also Apollo.*)

PAPA is N's father, a pragmatic Nigerian/Igbo man. He moved to America to raise his kids here to become doctors, lawyers, and nurses. They have not done what he's said. (*Also Zeus.*)

NENE is a psych student, a nurse, and N's mother...in that order. She is also a Nigerian/Igbo woman. She desperately wants to understand her children. (*Also Leto.*)

The Ones Left Behind

JD, he's the boy from up the street, very realistic. The boy that every parent wants for their kids. He's a little Zach Morris and a little Dawson. That great mix of being privileged and popular, but also a really good guy. (*Also Eros.*)

MJ'S MOM, in mourning. She also plays A NEIGHBOR'S MOM that is the bearer of bad news. (*Also Neptune.*)

TIME

The play takes place between 1992 and 2005
Also the beginning of time...
And the future.

PLACE

The play takes place in Bucks County, Pennsylvania
Bensalem to be exact.
We are either in MJ's or N's bedroom
Or outside on a porch
But it is always night
Somewhere between something concrete and metaphorical
The space between memory and something else entirely

STRUCTURE

If there is any then this is how it goes:

- / This means someone will be interrupting you in the next line
- ... This means someone is trying to figure out how to say something or that someone is drifting in their own thought
- This means someone will be finishing your thought for you

CAPITAL LETTERS MEANS THERE IS A HARD EMPHASIS.
INTENSE STRESSING OF THE POINT

Oh that glimmer it's anything from a shooting star to a candle to a meteor to fireworks, it's just a moment

GOOD GRIEF

THE BEGINNING OF TIME or THE PROLOGUE

*Lights up on the ensemble
That burn like the brightest of stars.
It is the darkest of nights.*

N. There was...

There was a star

ZEUS. Nope that's not it

N. No, there was a moon

LETO. Don't forget about the sun

N. But it was dark

Always dark

ALL. Right.

N. He shined in the darkness

It was the weirdest thing

ZEUS. That's not how it goes

APOLLO. How does it go then

N. He was the handsomest—

NEPTUNE. —most handsome

APOLLO. No the strongest

N. And an untiring dancer

ZEUS. Who cares about that

EROS. I do

N. The men loved him for his strength

And the women loved him for his beauty

EROS. And she loved him too but not for that

N. She loved him the most
EROS. And he loved her the most
N. They would love others
EROS. But not as much
APOLLO. You're skipping the best part—
N. Maybe—
LETO. There you go
N. Maybe if I—
ALL. Just listen.

*They listen
For the sound of joy
The sound of sorrow
The sound of youth
The sound of experience
The sound of life
The sound of death.
They are overwhelmed by the sound.
All we can hear is their reaction to it.*

FIRST SCENE

N and MJ. They are in MJ's bedroom in the dark with that awesome/cheesy decoration with stars on the ceiling and, for all intents and purposes, they feel as though there are stars in the sky.

MJG. If I could be anything in the world—
N. Anything in the world
MJG. I think I would be...
King.
Yeah...
If I could be anything I would be a king
They live forever—
N. Kings die, MJ

Kings definitely die—
MJG. Nonononono
People...
Remember kings.
They mourn kings. People fight over who loved you the most.
(*Imitating a church lady.*) “NOOO I LOOOVED HIM!”
“LAWWWWD!”
“JESSUUSSS”
“WHHHYYYYY”
No one’s going to remember me
Not like that.
But if I was a king...
Motherfuckers would be searching for my final resting spot.
I would be buried on sacred ground ’cause wherever kings are buried...
That shit is sacred.
King Arthur, James, Midas, / Ramses
N. King Midas wasn’t real—
MJG. Shhhh killer of dreams!
I would be Immortalized...
Remembered for...
My killer smile and my love...
Of stars.
Epicness!
I would look down on my minions
N. Minions / Really?
MJG. Yes, minions, to watch them carry out these days.
These...
These...end of days
He came from royalty
They came from kings,
Those kings came from kings,
They know where they come from.
.....
When did you become pretty?
N. I have no idea how to answer that question. Does Martin Luther King Jr. count?

MJG. Yup
Seriously though
I don't remember you being this...
this... Shiny.
You seem lighter—
N. Like anatomically—
MJG. Like spiritually.
You seem kinda different.
What is that?
N. Oh...
I don't know...
I guess life seems lighter
I don't know...
MJG. How'd you do that?
Is it your fancy school?
N. Drexel is not fancy—
MJG. Six year
Fast track
Pre-med program
Equals fancy.
N. It's not a big deal
MJG. What do you mean
It's a huge deal
N. Maybe it's not what I want—
MJG. Woo plot twist
what do you want then
SERIOUSLY
Something's changed—
N. Nothing's changed—
MJG. C'mon you can tell me
What is it?
What is it?
N. Okay you're getting a little too close
MJG. I'm always too close—
C'mon what do you want

And then the inevitable...

A kiss.

A faint light glimmers.

N. Maybe I want to quit my fancy school—

MJG. Why would you do that?

N. Med school did not suit me like I thought it would—

MJG. I meant the kiss—

N. Oh that.

I don't know—

'Cause I missed you?

MJG. What do you mean

I haven't gone anywhere

N. I know but sometimes

I miss you even when you're here.

That sounds weird—

MJG. No I get it—

N. Fuck it

I take it back—

MJG. No take backs—

N. Also you kissed me too—

MJG. I know—

He kisses her back.

Light grows brighter.

N and MJG. Soo...

MJG. Your dad is gonna fucking kill you—

N. I KNOW!!—

MJG. Like mail you in a box, ship you back to Nigeria kill you—

N. I know!

MJG. Can I come with?

N. You have school

MJG. Ahh yes, BCCC, the Yale of community colleges

Where my focus is

You've guessed it

GOOD GRIEF

by Ngozi Anyanwu

4 men, 3 women

GOOD GRIEF follows Nkechi, or N—a med-school dropout, a first-generation Nigerian, a would-be goddess—as she navigates first loves and losses, and tries to find answers in her parents, the boy next door, and the stars.

"[GOOD GRIEF] dares to be as fanciful, histrionic, awkward and downright terrified as young people are in that period when the hormones kick in and emotions seesaw between extremes. ...Ms. Anyanwu's language...reaches for the stars within the darkness. ...[a] sweet and sorrowful play."

—The New York Times

"With theatrical agility and emotional intelligence, [GOOD GRIEF] explor[es] not what grief actually looks like but what it feels like from the inside, the weird internal labyrinth that we're forced to navigate in the wake of a great loss."

—New York Magazine

"...Anyanwu has a specific talent: She can craft an exchange in which two people reveal how much they care about each other. In GOOD GRIEF, her satisfyingly unsad tragedy...the playwright indulges that gift to its utmost. ...we see family members, friends or lovers express their deep attachments in light, speakable little moments."

—Time Out New York

Also by Ngozi Anyanwu
THE HOMECOMING QUEEN

ISBN 978-0-8222-4023-5



DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

9 780822 40235