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Ever in the Glades

By

Laura Schellhardt

Dramatic Publishing Company

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(EVER IN THE GLADES)

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Ever in the Glades received its premier production at Northwestern University in 2018 and was subsequently produced at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts on June 8, 2018, with the following cast and crew.

CAST:

ZKori Alston
DELIA.....Mariah Copeland
ELIJAHRobert Cunningham
JUNKER G Bryan Eng
AMES Ryan Foreman
SO-CALLED ADULT WOMANAmira Danan
SO-CALLED ADULT MAN Alex Quiñones

PRODUCTION:

Directors..... Rives Collins, Allie Woodson
Scenic Designer Andrew Boyce
Costume Designer..... Amanda Rabito
Lighting Designer Jessica Neill
Sound Designer..... Stephen Ptacek
Composer Noah LaPook
Fight and Intimacy Choreographer Britain Willcock
Asst. Scenic Designer Axel Mark
Asst. Lighting Designer Benji Solomon
Dramaturg Madeleine Rostami
Company Manager..... Will Wermerskirchen
Stage Manager Emma Franklin
Assistant Stage Manager.....Rafael Zhang

Ever in the Glades

CHARACTERS

The So-Called Kids:

AMES JOHNSON: 16. Nobody's son really.

ZERO "Z" JOHNSON: 17. Ames' brother, nobody's son.

DELAND "DELIA" SIMMS: 16. Daughter of a floozy,
granddaughter of a seer.

JUNKER G: 17. Son of a pawnshop pioneer.

ELIJAH BROWN: 16. Son of a preacher-man

The So-Called Adults:

MR. STICKS: Boatman from mainland to island and back.

THIS GUY: Charity Simms's boyfriend.

Male Chorus: one man in the following roles:

MR. G: Junker's father.

REVEREND BROWN: Elijah's father.

Female Chorus: one woman in the following roles:

MERCY JOHNSON: Ames and Z's aunt.

OLD LADY SIMMS: Delia's grandmother.

CHARITY SIMMS: Delia's mother.

MAMA BROWN: Elijah's mother.

PLACE

The Everglades, Florida.

A small community on a small island surrounded by gators,
small and otherwise.

PRODUCTION NOTES

A Word About Casting: In conception, Ames, Z and Elijah are black. Delia is white. Junker G is Latino. In practice, these kids can be of any ethnicity, but their ethnicities should not all be the same.

A Word About Gators: Most of the adults in this play behave like gators: they hiss, they gnash their teeth, they circle their prey, they flex their claws, they shiver, they grunt, they whip their “tails,” they puff up when threatened, they emit the general sense that they could eat you alive. This behavior may be stylized or realistically rendered, but it should not be ignored.

“See now, here’s a space for a quote.
Somethin’ some adult at some point said.
’Cept the problem bein’, insomuch as I can tell,
ain’t no adults worth quotin’ anymore.”

—Junker G, age 17

Ever in the Glades

1.

*(In the darkness, the sounds of physical exertion—
of feet hitting the ground,
of someone running and running and ...*

*Lights find ELIJAH, running and running ...
He's running in place, but he doesn't know it.
He thinks he's going places, this boy here.)*

ELIJAH. It's a dream, is what it is.

(And running and running.)

ELIJAH. It's a dream and I'm running.

(And running and running.)

ELIJAH. Running from what? Couldn't tell ya—
Running to what? Don't hardly know—
But there I am. In my dream. And I'm running.

*(And running and running—
and suddenly there's another kid behind him—
it's JUNKER G, and he's running—
and then it's DELIA, and she's running—
and then it's AMES, and then it's Z, and they're running
too—)*

ELIJAH. And from around me, I hear the footfall of a future generation—

ELIJAH (*cont'd*). Running behind me, beside me, ahead a me too—

Like the devil himself was up insida our sneakers—

Like this sinkhole of a world was gonna swallow us whole—

ELIJAH & THE OTHER KIDS. With its thick
sticky
teeth—

In its dead
wide
smile—

ELIJAH. And its promises—

OTHER KIDS. And its promises—

ELIJAH. Which are the worst—

OTHER KIDS. WHICH ARE THE WORST!

ELIJAH. So we're running—

OTHER KIDS. We're running—

ELIJAH. From what, I couldn't tell ya, but we're running—

OTHER KIDS. We're running—

ELIJAH. *To* what, don't hardly know—

What matters is somewhere else

What matters is somewhere new

What matters is somewhere NOT THIS GODDAMN NOW!

*(ELIJAH wakes up, like a drowning child to sunlight.
The dream and its generation disappear.)*

2.

(Three kids on a dock in the noonday sun.

DELIA and JUNKER G stretch out beneath it.

JUNKER G holds an old guitar, picking out a tune of his own creation. AMES sits turned away from them, engrossed in a paper of some sort.)

JUNKER G. I'll tell you what ... it's hotter than a handpicked jalapeño up in here.

DELIA. It's so hot a jalapeño might just cool your mouth OFF.

(And just like that, a game is born.)

JUNKER G. It's so hot they renamed the four seasons: hot, hellahot, sweating my balls off hot, and are you outta your mad-ass mind?

DELIA. Boy, I'm so hot I could iron clothes with the palm of my hand—

JUNKER G. Girl, I'm so hot I could wilt cities with my breath—

DELIA. Yeah, but I'm hot like the tarmac after the rocket done launched—

JUNKER G. Well I'm hot like the fat when it first hits the pan—

DELIA. I'm hot like a torch in a burnin' man's hand—

JUNKER G. I'm hot like your mother in a black lace bra—

DELIA. Hey—

JUNKER G. A red lace bra—

DELIA. HEY—

JUNKER G. In no bra at all—

DELIA. HEY! I'm lit up like your ego—

JUNKER G. I'm fried like your hair—

DELIA. I'm baked like your brain *before* the drugs set in—

JUNKER G. Girl I'm so hot that my air conditioner needs an air conditioner—

DELIA. Your sweat is starting to sweat—

JUNKER G. And the weatherman's gone and stuck me on his weatherman report cuz it's ME melted the icebergs—it's ME turned the tide—it's Junker G warmed the ever-lovin' globe!

(They break into laughter of the side-splitting variety.)

JUNKER G *(cont'd)*. I told you, Ames, didn't I tell you? I said there's a new girl at school and she's smart, just like you—I told you, Ames, didn't I tell you—

AMES *(without looking up)*. You told me—

JUNKER G. There you go! ... So, you maybe wanna participate in this conversation?

AMES. I'm reading your paper.

JUNKER G. I know, but you don't gotta read it all day—

AMES. Except I do, Junker G, and maybe tomorrow too, cuz damned if I know *what* you're tryin' to say!

(AMES turns around, waving the paper in his hand. He's sporting a fat lip and one whopper of a black eye.)

JUNKER G. Yo, Ames, no disrespect, but you might want to put something on that eye.

AMES. It's fine—which is more than I can say for your punctuation.

JUNKER G. Whatever, it ain't that bad—

AMES. And your SPELLING?

JUNKER. See now that's how we *say* those words, that's how they *sound*, so that's how I'm gonna put 'em on the page—

AMES. And you're supposed to start with a quote.

JUNKER. Nah, no way, you wanna correct my spelling, go ahead—you wanna toss in a semi-comma or an apostro-dash—be my guest, but I thought about that quote, I said—see now here's a space for a quote, somethin' some adult at some point said. 'Cept the problem bein', insomuch as I can tell, ain't no adults worth quotin' anymore.

AMES. So you thought you'd quote yourself.

JUNKER G. I mean I have a lot to say. The wisdom of Junker G is voluminous and vast—

AMES. Two words that mean the exact same thing.

JUNKER G. OK, *professor*, who'd you quote then—don't say / *Shakespeare*.

AMES. Shakespeare. What's wrong with Shakespeare? He's a writer.

JUNKER G. He's a dead man's what he is. (*To DELIA.*)
Who'd you quote, Delia?

DELIA. Pythagoras. He's a mathematician—

JUNKER G. And his name's Pythagoras, so he's dead too!

AMES. Who cares, Junker G? If they're dead or not—

JUNKER G. Man, I care.

I mean, what use is that to us, the words of some dead writers? What're they gonna do, take up a pen and write us a raft? Write us a giant bridge stretchin' from this island to the world? Write us some wings so we can pull our own selves out?

AMES. All right, you've made your point—

JUNKER G. My POINT is we're gonna have to start quotin' ourselves from now on. Cuz every adult who ever said anything worth sayin' up and died a long time ago.

(A grunt from the water makes all the kids jump, but DELIA in particular.)

DELIA. What was that?

JUNKER G. That, my friend, was a gator. What, they don't have gators where you're from?

DELIA. I'm from Nashville. They maybe got gator-skin boots—

JUNKER G. Well this here's The Glades. And that noise you just heard? Means one gator's caught wind of us and he's gliding in this direction—

DELIA. *No*—

JUNKER G. Just two eyes atop the water and twenty feet of him below—

DELIA. NO—

JUNKER G. Twenty long and five wide, like an angry torpedo, and hungry, so hungry—for the likes of YOU!

(JUNKER G pushes DELIA, who screams and slaps him away, yelling—)

DELIA. Don't touch me—Don't you *touch* me—

JUNKER G. Hey, woah, I was just playin'—I was just—

AMES. Being an idiot, as usual, is what he was just.

DELIA. Sorry ... I don't like things snappin' at me. I get enough of that at home.

AMES. Rule one—you can't take seriously anything Junker says.

Rule two—you can't take seriously anything Junker says.

Rule three—gators don't smell, they sense vibrations—they move on instinct, not anger—that one's ten foot not twenty—and he feeds at night not midday, so most likely he grunted cuz he's *hot*.

JUNKER G. I mean, you can disregard rule one and rule two, but you should listen when it comes to rule three. Ames knows everything about gators on accounta his dad—

AMES. Junker G!

DELIA. What about your dad?

AMES. Nothin' about my dad, my dad's dead.

JUNKER G. On accounta the gators—

AMES. On accounta he fell—

JUNKER G. Into the gators—

AMES. He just fell, Junker G, my dad fell!

ELIJAH *(voice, from close)*. Yoo-hoo!

JUNKER G *(to DELIA, hushed but not that hushed)*. I mean we don't talk about it, but Ames and these gators ... they share blood.

ELIJAH (*from real close*). Yoo-hoo! Guys! I said hey guys!

(*ELIJAH bounds onto the dock with all the energy of optimistic youth.*)

ELIJAH. I've been callin', did you hear me callin'? Beautiful day, am I right? Someone knew what He was doing creating this day, that's for sure.

JUNKER G. Well if it isn't the swamp prophet himself—

(*ELIJAH holds a hand out to DELIA.*)

ELIJAH. Elijah Brown, son of Reverend Brown, son of the Reverend Brown before that—

(*AMES and JUNKER G mouth the words with him: "Elijah Brown, son of Reverend Brown, son of the Reverend Brown before that."*)

ELIJAH. You're Old Lady Simms's granddaughter, is that right?

DELIA. That's right. How'd you know that?

AMES. Elijah knows everyone.

ELIJAH (*pleased*). Oh, not everyone. OK, maybe everyone.

JUNKER G (*to DELIA*). Wait wait, Old Lady Simms is your grandma? Like Old Lady Simms with the glass ball—

DELIA (*uncomfortable*). Crystal ball—

JUNKER G. And the chicken feet hanging / from—

DELIA. It's a talisman—

JUNKER G. The lady who charges five dollars to read your hand?

DELIA. Palm, yeah, that's Gram. She's harmless. Well, not harmless, maybe, but she took me and Mama in when no one else would, you know?

ELIJAH (*switching gears*). Uh-huh, so two things worth telling: One—Ames, you're invited to supper tomorrow after church.

JUNKER G. Why just Ames? Why not me?

ELIJAH. Will you be going to church, Junker G?

JUNKER G. Hell no.

ELIJAH. Uh-huh, so that's one, and TWO—which is the big one, which is the reason I raced down—

TWO is this morning I took the Lord's name in vain.

(JUNKER G gasps. AMES gasps. Taking their cue, DELIA gasps too.)

ELIJAH. Not outright, mind you, I was having this dream— we were all of us in it—and we were running, and there were other kids running too, kids I didn't even know, and then all at once, as if on signal, we all started yelling, I don't remember what and for the life of me I don't know why, but in the middle of all if all I called out—

JUNKER G *(mock-screaming)*. THE LORD'S NAME! IN ALL SORTS OF VAIN!

ELIJAH. Uh-huh. *(He shudders to recall it.)* And then I woke up. What do you think it means, Ames?

JUNKER G. Why're you askin' him?

ELIJAH *(to AMES)*. I thought he might be able to decipher it. And also ... well Z was in the dream too.

AMES. My *brother Z*?

JUNKER G. You know *another Z*?

ELIJAH. I thought that was strange, seein' as he's been gone, but Z was there with us—

AMES. I don't want to talk about my brother—

ELIJAH. Sure but maybe you know what it means—or why I'd be dreamin' about him / now—

AMES. I said I don't want to talk about my brother, or my father, or the gators, I MEAN I SWEAR ... you're all of you up and down my nerves today!

(A brief moment. JUNKER G considers his hand.)

JUNKER G *(to DELIA)*. How's she do it—your Gram—that hand-palm thing?

DELIA. It's your lines. She reads the lines on your palms.

Like this line here? That's your luck line.

JUNKER G. No way—and this one?

DELIA. Your love line—

JUNKER G. Yo that one's *deep*, as one might *expect*—

DELIA. And that's your lifeline.

JUNKER G. My lifeline—*(Considering it.)* well damn. It's kinda short.

DELIA. It doesn't mean anything really—

JUNKER G. I'm serious though, what's y'all's look like?

(AMES and ELIJAH hold up their hands.)

JUNKER G. Damn, man, yours like wrap around your hands and mine's like—zip—like “here's your life—zip!”

ELIJAH *(quietly)*. I'm sorry, Ames. I just thought you mighta heard something about Z ... and that maybe I sensed it ... and that maybe we were ... linked in some dream sorta way—

(ELIJAH puts a hand on AMES's shoulder; but AMES shrugs him off. JUNKER G watches this exchange.)

AMES. Don't worry about it ... Sorry I yelled ...

(From the water, the sound of a motorboat. The four kids snap to attention.)

JUNKER G. Who is that—Sticks?

AMES. Who else would it be?

JUNKER G. What's he got, the mail?

ELIJAH. No mail on weekends.

DELIA. He's got someone with him.

ELIJAH. She's right, there's Sticks driving, and behind him ...

JUNKER G. Oh no—

ELIJAH. I can't hardly make it out, but behind him—

JUNKER G. Oh no, Ames ... It's Z.

ELIJAH. His *brother Z*?

JUNKER G. People, there ain't no *other Z*!

DELIA. So is that bad? What's wrong with *Z*?

JUNKER G. Nothin' really ... 'Cept rumor has it *Z*'s the one who killed their dad.

(ELIJAH puts a hand on AMES' shoulder, and AMES does not shrug it off.)