

Hurricane Kate

By Scott Golden

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DEDICATION

For Susan, my mom.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Hurricane Kate is set along the Gulf Coast in 1994. The show explores generational trauma, suicide, and the constant search for belonging, with the most dysfunctional kind of family. Tinka doesn't want to be here. After the fight she and her mother Kate had a couple Christmases ago, she swore that she would only come back to her family home to haunt the place. However, one of the many hurricanes to hit the Gulf Coast every year has come and taken her mother with it. Her three estranged siblings are here too. Ellen, the eldest, is struggling to stay calm and rational as she assumes her new role as parent and peacemaker. The itinerate Stuart has gotten by on charm, good looks and the occasional musical gig all of his adult life but is now trying to reform himself by the grace of God... again. Youngest Grace is fighting to live up to her name. She had the closest connection to their mother and saw the signs of the end approaching. Then there is Cowboy Bob, Kate's fifth (and final) husband who is a ball of emotion which he is surprisingly in touch with. As a whirlwind of grief and generational trauma blows around them, this fractured family must figure out the future and reconcile the past. NOTE: The script has adult language.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Hurricane Kate was originally workshopped and had its first public reading in April of 2024 at the Sacred Fools Theater Company in Los Angeles, CA. *Hurricane Kate* was produced for the first time in February of 2025 at the world-famous Stella Adler Theater in Hollywood, CA. It was funded by an angel donor and proceeds when to support A Light in Dark Places, an advocacy organization dedicated to breaking down the stigma surrounding the topic of suicide. Under the direction of Katierose Enriquez, original cast included:

Tinka: Laura Berner Taylor
Ellen: Betsy Moore
Grace: Dorian Stokes
Stuart: Daniel Robbins
Cowboy Bob: William Salyers

A huge "Thank You" to Drew Thaler whose support made this production possible.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 m, 3 w)

TINKA: 37. The middle child. Bitingly sarcastic and does not suffer fools.

ELLEN: 42. The eldest. Calm and rational. A bit of a second parent role to her younger sisters and brother.

GRACE: 20. Youngest child but wise beyond her years.

STUART: 36. The (other) middle child and full brother to Tinka. Self-sabotaging, not very bright but kind.

COWBOY BOB: 60s. Kate's fifth husband. A biker who is surprisingly in touch with his emotions. Often referred to CBB. (pronounced cee-bee-bee)

Please consider diversity and inclusion when casting!

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(AT RISE: In the dark, before the lights rise, a storm rages. Harsh winds and rain pummel the house. Lightning flashes and the creaking and splitting of a tree is heard. In the distance, an electric transformer explodes, surging light and sinking the stage further into darkness. The rain and wind subside. There is quiet.

LIGHTS up on a modest, Southern home on the Gulf Coast in late October of 1994. The house is quaint with large paintings of lighthouses and beach scenes. An empty gun rack decorated with seashells sits over a faded couch and a messy coffee table which frame the large living space. An ominous sky threatening rain can be seen through a window. Half empty packing boxes are stacked throughout the room as well as the adjoining kitchen. A real estate listing of this home would soon proudly describe the place as "Redneck Tropical." SFX: Crashing waves can be faintly heard in the distance. We hear a jangling of keys and the scrape of a lock. After a few moments of incorrect keys, we hear cursing. Finally, TINKA enters with a jolt from the front door.)

TINKA: Goddamn humidity! *(SHE yells out the door to the car idling in the driveway.)* I'm in! No, go back to the hotel or go play golf or something. I'll call you when I'm done. And feed those monsters. I don't want a truckload of hollerin' kids when I get back there.

(SFX: The sound of a truck pulling away. TINKA tries to close the door, but it sticks.)

TINKA: *(Cont'd.)* Goddamn humidity! *(SHE rams the door with her shoulder and lets out a yelp of shoulder pain as it slams shut.)* Sonofa—

(TINKA cradles her shoulder as she sinks to the floor. A primal, frustrated scream. She takes a decorated flask out of her purse and drinks a long pull.)

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(A sliding glass door opens from the kitchen and ELLEN enters. Tinka is startled by the sound and spills the liquid on the front of her blouse.)

TINKA: *(Cont'd.)* Stop! I've got a gun!

ELLEN: Yeah, but it looks like you're almost out of shots.

TINKA: Ellen? Dammit, you scared the hell outta me!

ELLEN: Sorry. Who did you think would be here?

TINKA: I don't know. Looters?

ELLEN: Looters?

TINKA: Yes, dammit. Remember what they did to my daddy's store after that storm in '78?

ELLEN: No.

TINKA: Well, they robbed the shit outta us! Donnie and his dumbass brother.

ELLEN: The Strickland boys? You talkin' about when they took that mullet out the bait cooler when the power went out? Hell, that ain't looting. All that fish was going bad anyhow. Wait, didn't you use to date Donnie's dumbass brother?

TINKA: Yeah, Lonnie. Too hot for even the devil... dumb as bag of hammers though— Whatever! You shouldn't sneak up on folks!

ELLEN: Sorry.

TINKA: I really do have a gun, you know.

ELLEN: Do you?

TINKA: Yeah, Gerald got it for me for Christmas last year.

ELLEN: Loaded?

TINKA: Hell no! You think I'm crazy?

ELLEN: Well, then you shouldn't brag about having it then if you ain't gonna use it.

TINKA: It's only for protection.

ELLEN: A gun only for protection is like a chicken with teeth.

TINKA: Chickens don't have...

ELLEN: It's good to see you, Tink.

TINKA: *(Softening.)* Yeah. You too. You want some of this Beam? *(SHE holds out the flask.)*

ELLEN: No, thanks. I don't drink anything before noon that ain't clear. I thought you were off that stuff anyway.

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TINKA: I am--was--am. I just didn't think I could get through today without... Hey, don't mention this to Gerald, okay. I don't want him to freak out. You know how he gets.

ELLEN: Not really.

TINKA: It's just my nerves. Y'know how my nerves are. I was watching John Hope on the Weather Channel before we left Memphis, but I just had to turn it off. Everything with that man is always so menacing, like every storm is gonna be another Andrew. Also, he just looks like a big ol' bug and you know how much I hate bugs. (*TINKA begins rummaging through the boxes.*) This place doesn't look so bad. I mean, it does but you know... that's just how she was. She hung on to everything, never threw anything away. Just messy. But not like it was hit by... Anyway, I saw a couple trees downed on the drive in but for the most part-- I guess the county is getting better at putting stuff back together. Weird, huh?... A storm that big this late in the season. When did y'all get power back at your place?

ELLEN: Never lost it.

TINKA: Seriously? That's lucky, I guess. I heard there was still seventy mile-an-hour winds up in Montgomery.

ELLEN: I don't live in Montgomery anymore.

TINKA: Shit, that's right. I forgot you went over to Marietta.

ELLEN: Macon.

TINKA: Macon, Macon, right. (*TINKA goes to a mirror to adjust her hair and makeup.*) Yeah, this place looks like it was barely hit. Least on the outside anyway.

ELLEN: Pascagoula got the worst of it. Like 50,000 without electricity or water.

TINKA: I know. A girl I went to dental hygienist school with who lives over in Gautier says her boat flipped over and was pushed all the way up to her front porch. I mean, it's insured but you know how slow insurance is. Storm surge comes and they get flooded with claims.

ELLEN: No pun intended, I'm sure.

TINKA: Hopefully they'll have it fixed up by the spring. They were going to sail us over to Carabelle to do some scalloping in May. I know she'd be devastated to miss that trip.

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ELLEN: Bless her heart.

(Beat.)

TINKA: So. How you doing?

ELLEN: Better now. Now that the shock has worn off.

TINKA: Shock. Yeah. Is it weird that that's all that's there? I mean, I don't even feel like crying. Maybe I should but I don't. Did you? When you heard?

ELLEN: Everyone grieves in their own way.

TINKA: 'Course you did. I figured you would.

ELLEN: Not as much as Gracie, poor kid.

TINKA: She was always a weepy child. She's gonna have to learn to grow up.

ELLEN: She just lost her mother—

TINKA: So did you. So did I, but you don't see me whining like a teenager.

ELLEN: She's 20.

TINKA: Since when?

ELLEN: Since she had her birthday last month. We invited you.

TINKA: Oh right, I remember. We couldn't get away. Doesn't matter. People can get older with or without me.

ELLEN: Try to be nice to her.

TINKA: I suppose I will when she gets here.

ELLEN: She's already here. Out in back. That's where I was when you busted in. She's been staring off into the water all morning. They were really close you know. Try to take it easy on her today, would ya?

TINKA: What's that supposed to—

ELLEN: Just try not to be *you* for a couple hours, okay? For me?

TINKA: Whatever. *(Beat.)* How'd y'all get in here anyway? I had to pick up these keys from the coroner.

ELLEN: Cowboy Bob let me in.

TINKA: That fucker.

ELLEN: Come on—

TINKA: No, he is a fucker. And a weirdo. I bet *he* got out of here in time.

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ELLEN: He and Mom split up a month ago. Did you think he was going to evacuate with her?

TINKA: Well, he should have! How else is she gonna get out. You know she can't see to drive at night.

ELLEN: If she had left at one o'clock, she could have gotten to me in Macon by dark.

TINKA: In her Electra? Not a chance.

ELLEN: She could have taken a bus.

TINKA: Kate McLellan on public transportation? Now you're funny...

ELLEN: Maybe a friend could have taken her.

TINKA: Mom doesn't have any friends. *(Beat.)* Cowboy fucking Bob...

(The air in the room has gone stale. And then...)

ELLEN: He went west, ya know.

TINKA: No!

ELLEN: Straight down I-10. Said he was going to ride out the storm gambling at Caprice. Even took the Harley.

TINKA: *(Giggling.)* No, he didn't! Oh man, you *never* go west!

ELLEN: Yep. Drove right into it.

TINKA: What a dumbass. Did he even get inside the casino?

ELLEN: No way! Got stuck at a junior high school near Biloxi for two days. Said the eye went right over him. Probably pooped himself.

TINKA: Ha! That's Yankees for ya.

ELLEN: He's from Oklahoma.

TINKA: Close enough. I bet this was his first hurricane too. Not even a big one. Only a Cat 2.

ELLEN: Big enough.

TINKA: Yeah. Big enough.

(Beat.)

TINKA: *(Cont'd.)* Is he the one that found her?

ELLEN: What?

TINKA: Cowboy Bob. Is he the one that found... the body?

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ELLEN: No.

TINKA: That's good, I guess. He's such a weepy motherfucker. I don't know if I could have listened to him sobbing through a story like that over and over again. 'Course, it might actually be good for him to have something else to talk about. If I have to hear about that damn redfish, he *almost* caught five years ago again I swear I'm gonna—

ELLEN: I found her.

TINKA: Oh... shit. Damn Elle, that... sucks.

ELLEN: Yeah. I tried calling after the weather had cleared out, but she wasn't answering. I left a couple messages but, I don't know, I just had a feeling. So, I drove down...

TINKA: Where'd you...? I mean... was she -- was it bad? They asked me if I wanted to see the body when I picked up her stuff but no way... I can't see her like that. Fuck! You found her? Do you know how she...? They didn't really tell me anything when I was up there.

ELLEN: She was in her chair. On the porch.

TINKA: What?

ELLEN: Her rocking chair.

TINKA: Her chair? I don't -- I thought the storm... a tree or something...

ELLEN: The storm pretty much missed this place.

TINKA: It was a hurricane! They said she died... from the hurricane.

ELLEN: She died *in* a hurricane. They're still trying to figure out *how*.

TINKA: What the fuck.

ELLEN: They want to run an autopsy. The sheriff said it would be done in a day or two.

TINKA: An autopsy?

ELLEN: That's when they try to determine—

TINKA: I know what an autopsy is! I do watch *Murder She Wrote*, ya know. That doesn't make any sense. People don't just die.

ELLEN: People die all the time.

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TINKA: Not her. I mean, a hurricane makes sense. She is always so dramatic all the time, of course she'd -- well she wouldn't just die... in a chair.

ELLEN: It was probably a heart attack or something.

TINKA: You know, Granny died of that heart attack; maybe runs in the family. No, wait, that was my dad's mom. Oh, could that happen when you marry in?

ELLEN: Could what happ—

TINKA: —*Heart disease*. Does it spread?

ELLEN: That's not how that—

TINKA: Oh my god! I don't even know the last time I got a physical—

(The sliding door opens, and GRACE enters breaking up the scene. She has the disheveled appearance of someone who has been crying for a couple days.)

GRACE: I heard voices. Oh, Tinka? I haven't seen you in... I don't even... *(SHE hugs TINKA.)*

TINKA: This hug for you or for me?

GRACE: Both, I guess? Sorry, I'm such a mess. I'm really glad you came. I know you and Mom were... well, she would have been glad too, you know.

TINKA: Well, she didn't leave me much of a choice, did she?

(ELLEN flashes TINKA a glance.)

TINKA: *(Cont'd.)* Yeah, it's good to see you. Happy birthday by the way.

GRACE: What? Oh. Thanks.

ELLEN: You feeling better?

GRACE: Not really. I got a headache. Probably from crying so much. I'm sorry, Elle, I just can't stop. I don't know what's wrong with me.

ELLEN: Don't apologize. You don't have nothing to apologize for.

TINKA: Yeah. Everyone grieves in their own way. Or so I've heard.

End of Freeview

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