



# RIPCORD

BY  
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PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



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RIPCORDER was originally commissioned by the Manhattan Theater Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer), New York City, with funds provided by the U.S. Trust, and received its world premiere there on October 1, 2015. It was directed by David Hyde Pierce; the set design was by Alexander Dodge; the lighting design was by Peter Kaczorovski; the costume design was by Jennifer Von Mayrhauser; the original music and sound design were by John Gromada; the fight direction was by Thomas Schall; and the production stage manager was Denise Yaney. The cast was as follows:

ABBY BINDER ..... Holland Taylor  
MARILYN DUNNE ..... Marylouise Burke  
SCOTTY ..... Nate Miller  
BENJAMIN/LEWIS/CLOWN ..... Glenn Fitzgerald  
COLLEEN/WOMAN IN WHITE ..... Rachel Dratch  
DEREK/ZOMBIE BUTLER/MASKED MAN ..... Daoud Heidami

RIPCORDER was commissioned by MTC through the Bank of America New Play Commissioning Program.

## **CHARACTERS**

ABBY BINDER, a resident, 70s–80s

MARILYN DUNNE, a resident, 70s–80s

SCOTTY, a resident aide, 20s–30s

BENJAMIN, LEWIS and CLOWN, played by the same actor, 40s

COLLEEN and WOMAN IN WHITE, played by the same actress, 30s–40s

DEREK, ZOMBIE BUTLER, and MASKED MAN, played by the same actor, 30s–40s

## **PLACE**

The play is mostly set in a double room at the Bristol Place Senior Living Facility in suburban New Jersey. Though there are a few other locations.

## **NOTE**

A slash ( / ) in the dialogue indicates the start of the next spoken line.

# RIPCORD

## ACT ONE

### Scene 1

*A double room in the Bristol Place Senior Living Facility. It's fairly homey, as far as these places go. There are two beds, a couple end tables, two sitting chairs, and two identical dressers. There's a door to the room stage right that leads out into the hall. A wide set of windows line the stage left wall. It's a very sunny day. A door upstage right leads into the bathroom.*

*As the lights rise, we discover Abby Binder in the chair closest to the windows, reading on an iPad. Her side of the room, stage left, has a few plants on the windowsill and some knickknacks. Her bed is made, while the stage right bed is not. The stage right dresser has several framed family photos atop it, while Abby's dresser has a small stack of books.*

*There's a tap at the door. Scotty, a resident aide, enters carrying a tray with a couple covered plates on it.*

SCOTTY. Hey, Abby. You didn't want to come down to the dining room?

ABBY. *(Doesn't look up from her iPad.)* Am I there?

SCOTTY. That's alright, I brought some lunch up for you. *(Places the tray near her.)*

ABBY. Why bother? I can't taste anything.

SCOTTY. I know, I'm sorry.

ABBY. Going on two months now. Which may be a blessing given

what they serve down there.

SCOTTY. It's very common. Losing your sense of taste.

ABBY. No, it isn't.

SCOTTY. I've seen it with a lot of our residents. It's usually the medications. Certain combinations do funny things.

ABBY. Oh, are you a doctor now?

SCOTTY. No. The plate's right there when you get hungry. It's shrimp marinara.

ABBY. It doesn't matter what it is. It all tastes like sand to me.

SCOTTY. Okay. (*He makes the unmade bed over the following.*)

ABBY. How long is that woman here?

SCOTTY. What do you mean?

ABBY. It's been three weeks. And she never stops talking. How long is this supposed to go on?

SCOTTY. This is where she lives, Abby.

ABBY. Well yes, for *now*, but I / meant —

SCOTTY. Not just for now. Indefinitely. This is Marilyn's room. Same as you.

ABBY. But I thought she was being moved as soon as a bed opened up. And from what I hear, that fat woman on the first floor died last night.

SCOTTY. Mrs. Moore. Her name was Mrs. Moore.

ABBY. Well I can't keep track of everyone's name. You knew who I meant. She's dead isn't she?

SCOTTY. She passed away, yes.

ABBY. Then there's an open bed.

SCOTTY. I think Marilyn prefers this room. She said she likes the view of the park. She's very happy in here.

ABBY. But everyone wants the first floor. It's closer to everything. And I've *always* had my own room, Scotty.

SCOTTY. That's not true.

ABBY. *Most* of the time. That Spanish lady was here for a few months, but after / her —

SCOTTY. If there's space, we try to accommodate you, but there's not always space. And you don't have a private room.

ABBY. Not officially maybe.

SCOTTY. If you and your family want to *pay* for a private room —

ABBY. If I *have* to have someone in here, why can't it be someone quiet? What about that woman without the voicebox? She seems nice.

SCOTTY. So is Marilyn. You just need to give her a / chance.

ABBY. That woman is troubled, Scotty. I think there's something wrong with her. She's always trying to make little *bets* with me.

SCOTTY. What do you mean, bets? What kind of bets?

ABBY. Just the stupidest things. Guessing games and quizzes. This morning she wanted to race me to the elevator. Last night she bet me she could balance a slipper on her head.

SCOTTY. Could she?

ABBY. I don't know, I rolled over. You have to get her out of here.

SCOTTY. I can't *force* her to leave, Abby.

ABBY. Management could. Charlie Hastings would've done it. He always made sure I had my own room.

SCOTTY. Well, Charlie doesn't work here anymore.

ABBY. Which is a shame. Charlie liked me.

SCOTTY. I like you too. But, I'm not in charge of room assignments. Miss Larusso is.

ABBY. Well you're friends with her, aren't you? I see you in her office all the time watching those cat videos or whatever they are. They must be very funny the way you two carry on.

SCOTTY. They aren't cat videos.

ABBY. No?

SCOTTY. Not all of them.

ABBY. Can't you talk to her?

SCOTTY. *You* talk to her. Be your own advocate.

ABBY. Oh that never works. Besides, Miss Larusso doesn't like me.

SCOTTY. Because you're mean to her.

ABBY. Her problem is, she has no sense of humor. Charlie Hastings thought I was hilarious.

SCOTTY. Because he was drunk.

ABBY. You leave that man alone.

SCOTTY. He had a terrible drinking problem, which is why he was fired.

ABBY. All I know is, he did whatever I asked him to. If he were here, that woman would've been gone by now. (*Marilyn enters. She's warm and pleasant.*)

SCOTTY. *There* she is.

MARILYN. *Here* I am.

SCOTTY. How you feeling, Marilyn?

MARILYN. I feel *great*, thank you. Just back from my walk.

SCOTTY. Oh, are you doing that now?

MARILYN. Every day after lunch. Twice around the park. Me and

Alice and Sally. Mr. Hantz comes along sometimes. I've invited Abby but she doesn't like the exercise.

ABBY. It's not the exercise I don't like.

MARILYN. Did you make my bed, Scotty? I've told you that you don't have to do that. I'm only gonna mess it up again. I'm a restless sleeper.

ABBY. Also she snores.

MARILYN. It's true!

ABBY. I had to get earplugs.

MARILYN. My Oliver used to boot me out of bed. Usually it's the husband on the couch, but with us it was *me*. Poor man.

ABBY. My very thought.

MARILYN. (*Chuckles at that.*) Isn't she awful, Scotty?

SCOTTY. She is, yes. She's awful. (*As he exits.*) I'll be back.

MARILYN. We missed you in the dining room. You should see it down there. They have it all done up for Halloween now. Pumpkins up on the walls, skeletons, black cats. You'd love it.

ABBY. Why would you think that?

MARILYN. They're like classroom decorations. And Mr. Hantz said you used to be a teacher. Grade school, he said. I don't know how he got it outta ya, you won't tell *me* anything.

ABBY. (*Looks to the windowsill.*) My plants are droopy.

MARILYN. But teacher makes sense. I can picture it. I bet you were very stern with the children. (*Abby grabs the watering can and heads into the bathroom. We hear the water running.*) I was an office manager. In my husband's business. Did I mention he was a skydiving instructor?

ABBY. Several times.

MARILYN. We were based down at Alexandria Field. I could tell you some stories, boy. My children run the business now. They're good kids. And they'd do *anything* for me. (*Abby comes out of the bathroom with the watering can filled. She waters her plants over the following.*) Did you hear that Mrs. Moore died? Poor thing. Went in her sleep. Such a nice woman.

ABBY. Such a nice *room*.

MARILYN. Room?

ABBY. It's too bad she's dead, but silver linings, right?

MARILYN. How do you mean?

ABBY. That room is prime real estate in this place. First floor — between the mailboxes and the day room. Less walking, more space.

MARILYN. Are you thinking of changing rooms?

ABBY. What? No, I'm not thinking of changing rooms.



MARILYN. Oh, you sound so enamored of it.

ABBY. I'm not. I only mentioned it because I thought *you* might want it.

MARILYN. Oh no, I'm perfectly happy where I am. There's much more sunlight up here.

ABBY. No there isn't.

MARILYN. (*Moves to the windows.*) Sure there is, we don't have that building blocking our view like they do downstairs. And I can see the park from up here. There's your bench where you like to sit and read. It's a lovely view.

ABBY. I guess I've never noticed.

MARILYN. Well that's a waste, with you so close to the window. Maybe you'd like to swap beds?

ABBY. I would not.

MARILYN. No, I don't blame you. It's the nicest spot in the room. (*Abby, annoyed, may go back to reading. Marilyn smiles, then takes a child's painting from her dresser.*) Did I show you this? My grandson made it for me. Caleb. So sweet. Do you know what it is?

ABBY. A Pap smear?

MARILYN. It's a fire truck.

ABBY. I don't see it.

MARILYN. He loves fire trucks. Ambulances too. Anything with a siren. He can hear one from blocks away. He gets this big grin, and flies to the window to see them pass by. They make him so happy.

ABBY. That's creepy.

MARILYN. Creepy?

ABBY. Those sirens are blaring because people are dying.

MARILYN. (*Chuckles.*) Now come / on.

ABBY. They *are*. Or their homes are going up in flames. Or there's a car accident, or some old man has fallen down some stairs. That's what those sirens mean. People in pain.

MARILYN. Caleb doesn't know any of that. It's just a fire truck to him.

ABBY. Well, when you've heard as many sirens as I have ... They're nothing to be happy about. Is he alright? In the head I mean, or is he a little ...

MARILYN. What kind of question is that?

ABBY. Well if he's chasing after fire trucks, you have to wonder. *My* son never did that. Normal boys don't do that.

MARILYN. Of course they do. You're just trying to get a rise out of me. (*Pause.*) So you have a son, huh? What's his name?

# RIPCORD

by David Lindsay-Abaire

3M, 3W

A sunny room on an upper floor is prime real estate in the Bristol Place Senior Living Facility, so when the cantankerous Abby is forced to share her quarters with new-arrival Marilyn, she has no choice but to get rid of the infuriatingly chipper woman by any means necessary. A seemingly harmless bet between the old women quickly escalates into a dangerous game of one-upmanship that reveals not just the tenacity of these worthy opponents, but also deeper truths that each would rather remain hidden.

*"A show to treasure. David Lindsay-Abaire's ripping Ripcord is a deeply satisfying and vastly entertaining story of two elderly women thrown together by a comic cosmic force possessed of a wicked sense of humor ... With Lindsay-Abaire — a shape-shifting writer of always humanist works — nothing ever happens merely for its own sake. There are deeper issues lurking below the comedic surface ... that gradually build from belly laughs to something more emotionally nutritious."*

—Deadline

*"David Lindsay-Abaire's tastily sweet-and-sour RIPCORD is great fun! ... Solidly crafted, the play is larded with moments of surprise, both wacky and more substantial. When the play gets serious, it's genuinely moving. Beyond the high jinks, RIPCORD offers a compelling look at the pleasure of a challenge and the challenge of finding pleasure."*

—Time Out (New York)

*"David Lindsay-Abaire took a serious turn with his shattering 2007 Pulitzer Prize winner, Rabbit Hole ... But the plays that first put him on the map were bittersweet comedies from the Christopher Durang school of the absurd ... [RIPCORD] signals a detour back to the territory of his earlier work. ... there's no shortage of funny lines and inspired moments of physical comedy ..."*

—The Hollywood Reporter

*"The author of comedy-dramas that toy with sitcom expectations but then veer elsewhere, [David Lindsay-Abaire] is obviously riffing, in RIPCORD, on television templates like The Golden Girls. ... [It's a] play that flirts with surrealism ... but because he writes such good scenes it's nevertheless heartbreaking and hopeful, suggesting the possibility that, even in old age, people can make choices that may produce a gentler landing."*

—New York Magazine

**Also by David Lindsay-Abaire**

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