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The Glory of Living

“Plays don’t come
much tougher,
or more compassionate,
than... Rebecca Gilman’s
The Glory of Living”
(The Guardian, London)



Rebecca
Gilman

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Winner of

The American Theatre
Critics Association
Osborn Award

"Best New Play"
London Evening
Standard Award

Joseph Jefferson Citation
"Best New Work"

Pulitzer Prize Nominee
and Runner-Up

After Dark Award
"Best New Work"

Cover photo:
MCC Theatre's
New York off-Broadway
production, featuring
Anna Paquin and
Jeffrey Donovan.

Photo: Joan Marcus.

The Glory of Living

Cast: 5m., 5w. with doubling. The Glory of Living tells the story of Lisa, a 15-year-old girl, and her marriage to Clint, an ex-con twice her age.

Systematically abused by her husband, Lisa is coerced into helping him commit crimes of varying magnitude, including murder. "...intelligent and provoking...Gilman has created a couple whose degeneracy is the vehicle for a searing analysis of moral codes, sexual abuse, fear, love, poverty and the value of a life." (The Sunday Times) "...plays don't come much tougher, or more compassionate... It's a viscerally powerful piece that, not unlike Bond's Saved, makes you look closely at a violent subculture from which you would normally shrink." (The Guardian) "psychological shrewdness and on-target language..." (New York Magazine) Three int. sets. Two acts. Approximate running time: 90 minutes.



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THE GLORY OF LIVING

A Play

by

REBECCA GILMAN



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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THE GLORY OF LIVING

A Full-length Play
For 5 Men and 5 Women

CHARACTERS

LISA	15-18
CLINT	early 30s
JEANETTE / TRANSCRIBER	late 30s
JIM / POLICEMAN #1 / DETECTIVE BURROWS ..	early 30s
CAROL	19
HUGH / POLICEMAN #2 / GUARD	mid-30s
GIRL	early teens
ANGIE	early 20s
STEVE	early 20s
CARL	mid- to late 30s

THE PLACE: Various locations in Tennessee, Alabama
and Georgia.

THE TIME: The present.

*All persons and events depicted in this story are fictitious. Any
resemblance to real events or person is strictly coincidental.*

SCENE 4

Same room. LISA sits, fidgeting with her hair. CARL is pacing.

CARL. You've got to help me out here, Lisa.

LISA. I already told 'em I did it.

CARL. I know. But maybe you didn't understand, that you didn't have to tell the police anything. That you probably really needed a lawyer.

LISA. I told 'em I didn't want a lawyer.

CARL. I know. There's not a lot we can do about that. But we do have something we can work with.

LISA. I don't mind bein' in jail.

CARL. Lisa, we're not talking about jail. I don't think you understand. The state is going to ask for the death penalty. They want to give you the electric chair. They don't care how old you are.

LISA. Oh.

CARL. Right, "Oh." "Oh" is right. *(Pause.)*

LISA. But I already told 'em I did it.

CARL. I know. But the thing we can work on is why you did it.

LISA. I told 'em that too.

CARL. Yes, Lisa. Just...just listen for a minute. Okay?

LISA. Are you mad at me?

CARL. No.

LISA. Them other people askin' questions was real mad at me.

CARL. Well, you killed some people, Lisa. That doesn't really make you popular.

LISA. I guess you're right.

CARL. They think you killed those girls out of mean-spirit-
edness. Out of being mean. But I don't think that's why
you did it.

LISA. You don't?

CARL. No.

LISA (*looks at him*). You ain't gonna yell at me?

CARL. I rarely yell. Let's just work this out together. Now,
total honesty here, why did you kill them?

LISA. I had to.

CARL. Because of Clint?

LISA. Clint said I had to.

CARL. You were afraid of him.

LISA (*quietly*). Yeah.

CARL. Did he hit you?

LISA (*long pause*). Sometimes.

CARL. He's a big guy.

LISA. He's mean.

CARL. And you were scared of him. (*LISA nods.*) But
there are some difficult questions.

LISA. Like what?

CARL. Like why, when Clint was miles away, you still had
to kill the girl. Why didn't you let her go?

LISA. I said already.

CARL. You said you're a bad liar.

LISA. I suck.

CARL. Then why didn't you just leave him? You could
have driven anywhere.

LISA (*shakes her head*). I couldn't.

CARL. Why not?

LISA. I don't know.

CARL. That's not good enough.

LISA. Well I don't know.

CARL (*exasperated*). Lisa!

LISA. Look—Clint found me. He found me at my mama's. He found me when they took me off to the group home. He found me when I was in the hospital, and didn't nobody tell him where I was. He just found me. He knows how.

CARL. The Department of Social Services told him where you were. You're his wife. (*Long pause.*)

LISA. That's not what he said.

CARL. So you never thought to yourself, just to let the girl go?

LISA. No. Sorry.

CARL. And the same thing, with Steve Culverhouse?

LISA. Clint was right behind me. He woulda seen.

CARL. He says he had already driven off with the girl. That he didn't know what you were doing.

LISA. He did?

CARL. Yes.

LISA. That ain't so.

CARL. Lisa, the woman that was in your hotel when the police came didn't press charges. She was on her way to Florida. Didn't want to be bothered. He'll probably plead guilty to lesser charges in exchange for his testimony and be out in a couple of years.

LISA. I don't get it.

CARL. He didn't pull the trigger. (*Long pause.*)

LISA. Well. He was there when I shot that guy, but I guess I don't got no way to prove it.

CARL. And Carol? He wasn't anywhere near you and Carol.

LISA. No. Me and Carol was alone.

CARL (*slowly*). Then why?

LISA (*quietly*). You don't understand.

CARL. No, Lisa. I think I do understand. But I'm not on the jury. And those are the people we have to make understand. You see?

LISA. I guess.

CARL. Lisa, whether or not they believe your story is going to depend on whether or not they believe you. And you are not a convincing witness. *(LISA laughs.)* See? Like that Lisa. Like that. Why is that funny?

LISA *(shrugs, grinning)*. I dunno.

CARL. You smile at all the wrong times.

LISA *(puts her hand over her mouth)*. Sorry.

CARL *(reaches over gently and lowers her hand)*. Are you sorry you killed those girls?

LISA. Yes.

CARL. Really?

LISA. I guess.

CARL. Lisa!

LISA. They was gonna die anyway.

CARL. I don't know what you mean.

LISA. There's just people as are gonna die. Just people as are gonna get killed. It's the way it is.

CARL. Fate?

LISA *(trying to explain)*. No. They got in the car with me.

CARL. That's why you killed them?

LISA. No. That's why they died. *(Beat. She tries a new tact.)* Now you, would you of ever got in the car with me?

CARL. No.

LISA. See? They did. Because they're of that type. It's just a thing that happens to a type. And it woulda kept happenin' forever. *(Long pause.)*

CARL. That's why you called the police.

LISA. No.

CARL. Yes, Lisa. Yes it is.

LISA. I don't know why I called the police.

CARL. Don't tell the jury that. Tell the jury that you called to stop it. You were frightened to death and you would rather be in jail than out there again with Clint.

LISA. But I wadn't thinkin' that.

CARL. I don't care. You say it.

LISA. It won't work.

CARL. It won't work if you don't make it work.

LISA. You tell 'em what you want but they ain't gonna believe it. They'll know just by lookin' at me. They'll know that it never even occurred to me that I didn't hafta do it.

CARL. It really didn't?

LISA. No. (*Pause.*)

CARL. Where's your little piano?

LISA. Who told you that?

CARL. Detective Burrows. He said you held on to it like crazy.

LISA. So.

CARL. He said your daddy gave it to you.

LISA. So.

CARL. That it was all you took with you when you left home. At fifteen.

LISA. I took all my clothes.

CARL. That's not the point.

LISA (*shakes her head*). Go on then, say what you want.

CARL. It's not just me, though, Lisa. It's what you say too.

LISA. I ain't gonna say that crap.

CARL. Do you want to die? Is that it?

LISA. It doesn't matter.

CARL. It does!

LISA. It doesn't! You tell me one way that it matters.

CARL. It matters a lot.

LISA. No it don't. That girl I killed, and them two other people, if I hadn't called the police, if that guy hadn't of lived, wouldn't anybody even know they was gone.

CARL. I'm sure somebody—

LISA. No you ain't. You ain't sure. *(Beat.)*

CARL. Well, I suppose it's possible...

LISA. It's more than "possible." It's the goddamn truth.
(Pause.)

CARL. Now that's precisely the sort of thing you should not say in the courtroom. *(LISA stares at him. Lights fade out.)*

End of Scene 4