



Rabbit Hole

David Lindsay-Abaire

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“David Lindsay-Abaire has crafted a drama that’s not just a departure but a revelation—an intensely emotional examination of grief, laced with wit, insightfulness, compassion and searing honesty.” –David Rooney, *Variety*

“A beautifully observed new play blessed with David Lindsay-Abaire’s customary grace and wit.” –Ben Brantley, *New York Times*

“With *Rabbit Hole*, David Lindsay-Abaire has crafted the most serious, simply told work of his career—a painstakingly beautiful, dramatically resourceful, exquisitely human new play.” –*Backstage*

A story of loss, heartbreak and forgiveness—told through daily moments and emotional hurdles—as a family moves on after the accidental death of their 4-year-old. After a critically acclaimed Broadway premier and successful film adaptation (starring Nicole Kidman, Aaron Eckhart, and Diane West), *Rabbit Hole* has been hailed as an artistic breakthrough for the highly regarded Lindsay-Abaire. A drama of what comes after tragedy, it captures “the awkwardness and pain of thinking people faced with an unthinkable situation—and eventually, their capacity for survival.” -USA Today

David Lindsay-Abaire is the Pulitzer-winning author of *Rabbit Hole*, which was made into a feature film. He is the author of *Good People*, *Fuddy Meers*, *Wonder of the World*, *A Devil Inside* and *Kimberly Akimbo*, as well as the book and lyrics to *Shrek the Musical*. He has written the screenplays for *Rabbit Hole*, *Rise of the Guardians* and *Oz: The Great and Powerful*. Born in South Boston, he now lives in Brooklyn.

Rabbit Hole Details

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From Reader Review Rabbit Hole for online ebook

Malcolm Everett says

I didn't really mean to read this play. After noticing that it was going to be performed at a local theatre, I stumbled upon a PDF copy online and couldn't stop reading. The story blossoms gradually, petal by petal, giving the reader a clear understanding of the questions posed: Is there a "correct" way to grieve? How can we communicate with our loved ones if our methods of coping differ dramatically?

The scenes are amazingly easy to visualize and *hear*. Every line of dialogue is spoken by a real human voice and fizzles with tension. As in Tennessee Williams' plays, I felt constantly on edge, my blood pressure rising. That might be an uncomfortable experience for some, but I reveled in the authenticity of the characters' struggles and reactions. So much is said in what goes unsaid. *Rabbit Hole* presents no easy answers—only the hard questions we may someday face ourselves.

Mad Dog says

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And this play wa

Si Squires-Kasten says

I saw the Jason and Becca scene performed in a workshop during my freshman year of college. Lindsay-Abaire gives his actors a lot to do, and I understand the show's popularity and could even imagine being moved by the right actors. However, kitchen-sink naturalism is not something I'm generally interested in, and a lot of the dialogue and pacing seem purposefully boring in a way that turned me off.

Tung says

The 2007 Pulitzer-winner for Best Drama, this play is a marvelous meditation on grief and the different ways people can cope (or not cope) with their loss. Becca and Howie Corbett lose their four-year-old son in a tragic accident, and the play is a series of scenes in their life eight months later. Howie puts up a façade where he copes with his grief by regularly attending group therapy and trying to move on with his life. We see in one scene, however, when his wife is upstairs, he sneaks out a home video of their son and watches it silently by himself. Becca, on the other hand, lashes out at her husband, mother (Nat), and sister (Izzy) as they attempt to help her discuss her emotions. In one scene, Nat tries to relate to her by sharing how she felt when her son (Becca's brother) died, and Becca calls her out on the comparison, implying that no one understands her grief and no one grieves the same way. The basic premise of parents coping with the loss of a young child is covered in many movies and books, but few allow the emotions to simmer and fester and boil over without resolution as this play does. The author actually includes a note to future casts attempting to put on his play with directions "to avoid sentimentality", to "resist adding [tears:]" unless they are specifically called for, and to avoid "extra embracing, or holding of hands. Avoid resolution at all costs. It's

not that kind of play." And because it doesn't try to wrap things up tidily, or deal with everyone's emotions in a canned or ham-handed way, the rawness of the emotions of the characters feels real, and strikes a chord with anyone who has ever dealt with the loss of a loved one. The dialogue is sharp and quick, with no overly wordy monologues, and Lindsay-Abaire breaks up the sadness with seriously funny lines and incisive retorts throughout. It's simply a superb play, and one of my top books of the year.

Paul says

A fellow playwright suggested I read "Rabbit Hole" to learn how to write dialogue which avoids a certain subject. Good advice.

Kyle says

Read more reviews like this over at my blog, [Living Is Reading!](#)

Since I recently lost my grandfather a little over two months ago, I decided that *Rabbit Hole* would be an interesting read, and something that I wouldn't have too much difficulty connecting to. Apparently, I was right in that assumption, since even though this is a short read, it's still a worthwhile read, and has me interested enough in checking out the movie adaptation starring Nicole Kidman.

Now, plays aren't my natural reading selection. I generally stick with novels - no manga, no comic books (okay, I read the occasional graphic novel - occasional), just books. Still, I recently developed an interest in checking a play out from the library, see if it was something that I would continue reading, and I think that it's an experiment worth investing more time into. This is a short read, clocking in at only 61 pages, and basically all of it is dialogue with a line or two here and there giving you a brief description of movements the characters make to help you visualize the scenery around you.

The characters are pretty realistic here - we have Nan, Izzy, Jason, and our two main characters, the grieving parents, Becca and Howie. They all have emotional baggage, grief, and backstories, and they all seem to have layers of depth to them, particularly the main character of all, Becca. Pain, anger, sadness, and a simple need to move on and recover from a traumatic event in her life.

Honestly, this whole story was just so sad, yet so true, and I was able to connect with these people on so many levels. Perhaps if I hadn't lost my grandpa I might not be able to connect so much, but I was able to, and that just made this an even quicker, even more emotional read for me. I don't know if loss inspired David Lindsay-Abaire to write this (I imagine that it would), but whatever he did, he did right.

So, for anyone who has suffered a devastating loss, than this is the book (or play I suppose) for you. I know that it was a worthwhile experience for me.

Michael Lindy says

When I was first thinking of "Rabbit Hole"'s title, I felt that it wasn't really appropriate. But then I realized that when I was thinking about the phrase "down the rabbit hole", I was thinking of some fantastic adventure

like one that would be experienced in "Alice In Wonderland". When I thought about it more, I realized that David Lindsay-Abaire's play was probably even more deserving of the phrase than the adventures experienced by Alice. For starters, the rabbit hole in this play is sudden and shocking, as a rabbit hole should be (I should know because I've tripped in one before). In this case, the tragedy experienced by the Corbett family comes without warning and, much like that other famous rabbit hole, completely twists their logic inside out. The impact of the tragedy is made just as surprising for the audience as it is for the characters, as they are only given a slight warning before they find themselves steeped within the family's tragedy.

What makes this rabbit hole different from others is the effect it has on the characters of this play. Unlike Alice, the place where this rabbit hole leads the family is not the one these characters can wake up from. Even if the characters did have the option to wake up and forget the events that so changed their lives, they would not wish to. And indeed, the option to forget or cling to the tragedy is an important piece of this play, as the characters struggle to think of what they should keep and what they must let go. But in the end, what this play really shows is a family that must struggle to not necessarily overcome their differences, but rather try to ignore them for a moment so they can lift themselves out of the rabbit hole they fell into and move on. But unlike most simple encounters with rabbit holes, this family will never be able to fully heal from what they lost, and it is Lindsay-Abaire's ability to show this that really causes this play to shine.

Daniel says

So much anticipation when I started out to read this. So many glowing reviews, a Pulitzer Prize, a very good playwright... and I finished it with a sighed, "Eh."

The writing was crisp, clear. The characters seemed to be real people working through grief in their individual ways. And that, is what the play is about...how we work through grief, to keep living when a loved one isn't.

Of course the loved one had to be a child. The grief for a child is so much more different than the grief for a parent.

But as I read this, I couldn't help but wonder why I was reading it. Why would I want to see this? I don't think that it explored anything new, or even touched on anything old in a new way. It was, as many have labeled it, a slice of realism.

But why is that important? I can stop in at the local church during a funeral to see realism. I can walk through my home town the day after the flood and experience the realism of grief.

This play didn't do anything for me. Sorry.

Sylvia Valevicius says

This is a play I read with my play-reading group. The writing is brilliant, seemingly simplistic dialogue, but the undercurrents are strong, and the insight into the stages of grief and differing human behaviour is worthy of high praise. Given that the issue was the mourning of a loss of a child, I was nervous to 'go there', but it became almost a 'spiritual' satisfying experience. I read it once alone, and cried several times. It felt cathartic.

And when we read it in the group, it was exciting to see the manner of depth and understanding in the tones of our readers/(brilliant actors!)

Johnny says

When I was living in New York, the best thing about my time there was seeing great non-musical plays. Ever since college, I've been heading into the city and going on these whirlwind tours of Broadway musicals, easily packing five shows into one weekend. When I moved there and started working in the industry, I had the opportunity to see LOTS of non-musical shows both on Broadway and off, and I realized how truly fantastic these shows can be. I've always been a fan of theater in any form, but I never felt the compunction to go out and pay a huge amount of money for a non-musical show. Since I left New York, I'm better about seeing these shows in Boston and occasionally in New York when I have the chance, but now with kids my trips to the theater (especially in New York) are incredibly limited and I've lapsed again in my "straight play" adventures.

Reading Rabbit Hole though totally reminded me how great these plays can be. It's a really simple piece focusing on the aftermath of a family losing a young child to an hapless accident. The setting takes place actually in the time following the typical "grieving period" that immediately follows the death. I think I find myself so attracted to this setting because having lost my mother over a year ago, that period *after* everyone stops asking how you're doing and *after* you are "expected" to talk about your loss is really the most devastating as you consider what to do with yourself and how to cope with the vacancy inside of you. And then also, I'm going on two plus years as a father now, so the idea of losing a four-year-old is both incredibly unimaginable and entirely real. So for these reasons I think I was especially in tune with the subject.

Knowing the original cast of actors fairly well helped in imagining how great the original production likely was. Cynthia Nixon and John Slattery are two of my favorites, and imagining them as this bereaved couple struggling to reinvent their marriage when they suddenly find themselves childless helped to realize the intent of the piece.

I can't say that I've ever been a huge fan of David Lindsay-Abaire in what I've read and seen of his work, but this changed my perception of that. The other pieces I know by him are pretty light, and this carried such a sincere weight. There are moments of levity amidst this weight, and I think that holds so true to actual experience. Again, the setting focuses on the extended time period that follows that initial grieving process, and humor is such a necessary and appropriate coping mechanism. And with these humorous points are coupled some truly brilliant assertions about loss. At one point, the protagonist's mother (who has also lost a son in her lifetime, although an adult one) says, "At some point the [weight of loss:] becomes bearable. It turns into something you can crawl out from under. And carry around--like a brick in your pocket. And you forget every once in a while, but then you reach in for whatever reason there it is: 'Oh right. *That*.' Which can be awful. But not all the time. Sometimes it's kinda...Not that you *like* it exactly, but it's what you have instead of your son, so you don't wanna let go of it either. So you carry it around. And it doesn't go away, which is...fine...actually." So true.

I'm teaching this play this fall as part of a Pulitzer Prize-winning literature seminar for a select group of students, and I think this is going to make a brilliant addition to our slate!

Brian Murray says

It is a simple premise, but the playwright explores the emotions of losing a child in its full complexity. These are fascinating characters with honest and compelling dialogue.

Annie says

A sad play, consisting of sparsely written dialogue, manages to understatedly convey the range of emotions humans experience when grieving and how different people grieve in different ways. In this story, Howie and Becca are a married couple whose son was killed when he ran out into the street chasing their dog and was struck by a car. The play begins sometime after the accident and casts a lens on how Howie and Becca are coping with their drastically altered lives. There is a supporting cast of Liz, a "screwed-up" sister to Becca, and Becca's mother, Nat. Jason, the boy who was driving the car in the accident, also enters, wanting to meet with the parents to somehow make amends. It's realistic, humorous and ultimately deeply moving. The author calls for a restrained play in his postscript at end of the book, and ultimately it is a restrained and nuanced work, a study in grief true to real life. I felt my own range of emotions while reading, alternating between sympathy and anger and understanding at each person. We all know these types of people and the things that they say. The book takes place throughout several scenes and time periods but always in the same house and even though it is such a sad subject, it's moving to see how with time, people can heal and grow.

There is quite a bit of off-color language, particularly of the religious type with certain names being taken in vain, which really bothers me.

Favorite Quote:

"...The weight of it, I guess. At some point it becomes bearable. It turns into something you can crawl out from under. And carry it around-like a brick in your pocket. And you forget it every once in a while, but then you reach in for whatever reason and there it is: "Oh right, THAT." Which can be awful. But not all the time." -Nat talking about grief

Andreea says

I loved this play. It is so complex in such a simple way. I wrote my thoughts/analysis on it, but fair warning there are A LOT of spoilers. This is what I thought: [https://infinitetext.blog/2017/10/22/...](https://infinitetext.blog/2017/10/22/)

Erica says

meh.

Rebecca McNutt says

Rabbit Hole was unbelievably sad, but also unbelievably unforgettable, with emotional and vibrant writing and complex characters.

Anastasia says

hmmmm.... I'd have to see this produced well to really gauge its potential. I appreciate that the story handles a sad family without sentimentality but the plot's simplicity left me wanting more.

Sofia Brito says

Emotional. Heart-breaking! Every character stays with you become part of your world because it could be your friend, a family member or your next door neighbour. A fabulous play about loss, bereavement and new beginnings.

Kim says

The storyline is simple and there are no great eruptions to signal the climax of the couple's grief. But that's what I really liked about this play. It takes courage to deal with something as abstract as another person's grief, and certainly something as complicated as grief over the death of a child. I started to read the playwright's note to directors and actors but stopped because its tone seemed self-defensive. A simple plot in the theatre can be moving, and I found this one to be so, and is worthy of our attention as readers and as audience.

Yasamin Rezaei says

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Vincent Scarpa says

I picked this up because I'm such a fan of John Cameron Mitchell's film adaptation, and I guess this is one of those rare occasions wherein an adaptation is *infinitely* more affecting than the source text. That said, I was aware, while reading, that the prose is fairly simple and does entrust a lot of the emotional heavy lifting to the actors. I'm not an actor, but I suppose that might be liberating?

What baffles, though, is that the text itself won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. It simply isn't a powerful work as a text. As a live performance, quite possibly—I've never seen a rendition of it live, so I can't say for sure. Adapted into film? Absolutely. (Aaron Eckhart and Dianne Wiest are terrific, but it's Nicole Kidman's film, and I think one of the best performances she's given, in a career *replete* with magnificent performances. Kind

of bullshit that Natalie Portman won the Oscar over her for *Black Swan*, but I digress.)

One thing that I did find...interesting?...in the Author's Note is this from Lindsay-Abaire: "Tears: if the stage directions don't mention tears, please resist adding them."
