

THE MARITIME WAY OF LIFE
BY CHARLIE RHINDRESS

The Maritime Way of Life premiered at Live Bait Theatre in Sackville, New Brunswick on July 31, 1997 with the following cast and crew:

Director	Kenneth Wilson-Harrington
Stage Manager	Kirsti Bruce
Set and Costume Designer	Sheri Bennett
Lighting Designer	Paul Del Motte

CAST

(in speaking order)

Ma.....Charlie Rhindress
Grandma.....David McClelland
Maggie.....Pamela Halstead
Donnie.....André French
Pa.....Carroll Godsman

This version of the script, co-presented by Live Bait Theatre and Mulgrave Road Theatre, premiered in Guysborough, N.S. on March 30, 1999 with the same cast and production team except for:

Set and Costume Designer D'Arcy Poultney

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Act One

Scene One

Lights up on a Maritime kitchen. GRANDMA sits in a wheelchair in the corner, drooling. MA is sweeping the floor. She never stops cleaning.

MA: *(Singing)* “Farewell to Nova Scotia, your sea bound coast, let your mountains dark and dreary be.”

GRANDMA mumbles along with the song.

MA: “For when I’m far away on the briny ocean tossed will you ever leave *(sic)* a sigh and a wish for me? Will you ever leave a sigh and a wish for me?” *(Starts again.)* “Farewell to Nova Scotia, your sea bound coast --”

GRANDMA mumbles something.

MA: What’s that, mother?

She mumbles it again.

MA: *(Looks at her watch.)* Oh, you’re right. She’s late. Figures, doesn’t it? Big city people. No idea a showin’ up when they say they will. She’s been there too long I say. Too long. Too good to find a man and settle down here, she was. Had to go to college. Had to have a “career.”

There is a knock at the door.

MA: Well, it’s about time.

GRANDMA mumbles again.

MA: *(Going over to look at her.)* Oh, let me see. *(MA uses her apron to wipe GRANDMA’S chin.)* Get all the drool. Ah, you look fine.

MA opens the door. MAGGIE is there. She is trendy in an “artsy” kind of way. She carries a bag.

MA: Maggie!

MAGGIE: Mom.

They hug.

MA: It's been so long. Too long.

MAGGIE: Seven years.

MA: An' three months. How was the drive?

MAGGIE: I like the divided highways.

MA: *(Suspiciously.)* Yeah, we heard 'bout them. *(Beat.)* Ah, look at you.

MAGGIE: You look just the same.

MA: Well, you know. My back's not what it used to be. Excuse my hair. Bit of a mess.

MAGGIE: You look great.

GRANDMA mumbles.

MAGGIE: *(Noticing her.)* Grandma!

MAGGIE sets down her bag, goes to GRANDMA and hugs her.
GRANDMA mumbles.

MAGGIE: What?

GRANDMA mumbles again.

MA: She said you look beautiful.

MAGGIE: Thank you. *(To MA:)* What happened?

MA: She was never the same after you left.

MAGGIE: What? Why didn't you tell me?

MA: What could you do, all the way up in Trawna *(as in Toronto)*?

MAGGIE: I would have liked to know.

MA: We didn't want to bother you.

MAGGIE: Was it an accident?

MA: Don't know. Nobody knows. Her body just gave out.

MAGGIE: And she can't talk?

MA: Just the old language.

MAGGIE: What old language?

MA: You know how your grandmother always loved the old ways.

MAGGIE: Mom, she's mumbling.

MA: That's the problem with you young people. No respect for the old ways. You'd have all the old cultures die off and then y'up and move to the mainland.

MAGGIE: Mom, this is New Brunswick. Toronto is not the mainland.

MA: Might as well be; much as we ever see you. Running off to the big city. Not even interested in your grandmother's language.

MAGGIE: It's not like it's Gaelic; it's her own language.

MA: Well, imagine how much more it means to her then. If it was Gaelic anybody could speak it. Broke her heart when you refused to learn it.

MAGGIE: She didn't speak it when I left.

MA: Oh, you have to challenge everything I say, don't you?

MAGGIE: I didn't mean to --

MA: Let's not get off on the wrong foot, okay? Y'only been home twenty seconds.

MAGGIE: Fine.

MA: Fine.

Uncomfortable pause.

MA: That's an...interesting outfit. Dif'rent.

MAGGIE: Thanks.

Uncomfortable pause. MA starts doing dishes.

MA: Ya hungry?

MAGGIE: No, I did drive-thru just back --

MA: Ya want some lobster? There's lots in the freezer.

MAGGIE: No, thanks.

MA: How 'bout some maple syrup? We got lotsa maple syrup.

MAGGIE: No.

MA: Maple butter? Maple cream?

MAGGIE: No, really. I'm all right.

MA: I got some leftover fiddlehead soup.

MAGGIE: No.

MA: Tea?

MAGGIE: I said I'm fine!

MA: *(Insulted.)* Fine.

Pause.

MAGGIE: Things look pretty much the same around here.

MA: Guess you didn't notice the new table set.

MAGGIE: Oh, yeah, it's nice.

Beat.

MAGGIE: Where's the dish towel?

MA: Oh, no. I can do it.

MAGGIE: I don't mind.

MA: I'm sure you don't, but I can do it. I been doing dishes all by myself eight times a day for thirty-three years now, I think I can wash these few.

MAGGIE: *(Pause.)* Where's Dad?

MA: At work.

MAGGIE: But the mine closed.

MA: Oh, and I suppose you wanna be the one to tell him, do you?

MAGGIE: He doesn't know?

MA: Your father's a proud man. What would he do if he couldn't go to work every day?

GRANDMA mumbles.

MA: That's right. She says your pa's a hard worker.

MAGGIE: What does he do in a closed mine?

MA: I don't know. You think I follow him to work everyday?

MAGGIE: But with his lung, is he okay?

MA: He's fine. We're all fine. *(Beat.)* You still teachin' part-time?

MAGGIE: Actually, I just found out last week I'm going to be full-time in the fall.

MA: Did you get that clipping I sent you 'bout the job at the Junior High?

MAGGIE: It was for the cafeteria.

MA: Good pay though.

MAGGIE: I don't want to work in a cafeteria.

MA: I just thought if you wanted to come home...but I guess it's not good enough for you.

MAGGIE: Mom...

MA: Least ya got somethin' full time. That's good.

MAGGIE: Yeah, I feel really good about it. I mean it won't leave me much time for writing but...

MA: Oh, still trying to do that, are you? Your cousin Susie got a great job out the Industrial Park. Fourteen, forty-five an hour. They gave her a uniform, as many hairnets as she wants. She's so happy. She didn't want to go away to look for work. Her mom's not so good. *They're* really close. *(Beat.)* Susie's gettin' married late August. Baby's due in December. *(Beat.)* She's a lot younger than you, isn't she?

MAGGIE: Three or four years.

MA: Yeah, that's what I thought.

MAGGIE: *(Beat.)* Oh, I've been meaning to tell you, one of my plays is going to be done at the Fringe Festival in Toronto this summer.

MA: Ya get paid for it?

MAGGIE: Well, we split the box office. So whatever it makes...

MA: Your father saw on Live at Five where somebody down in Halifax got a ton a money to write a play. Think it was seven hundred fifty thousand dollars to do something about the Indians. An' I thought to myself, Maggie should move home and do somethin' like that. See, that's what I was thinking. You could work in the cafeteria and write at night... 'bout the Indians. Or 'bout the coal mines or fishin' or something. Maybe even write about a hardworking Maritime family too proud to go on welfare. Taking care of a sickly old woman. Something true to life. People like that.

GRANDMA mumbles.

MA: Your grandma says you could put some nice fiddle music into it.

MAGGIE: I don't write that sort of thing.

MA: Too hard, is it?

MAGGIE: No, I'm not interested in...the stuff I write...it's more...pop culture...commercial...

MA: Pop commercials? Like the ones with the polar bears?

MAGGIE: No. The plays are commercial. Popular.

MA: With who?

MAGGIE: Audiences.