

**WHO**  
***KILLED***  
**JOAN CRAWFORD?**

By  
Michael Leeds

# WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

Copyright © 2022 By MICHAEL LEEDS

CAUTION: Professionals and Amateurs are hereby warned that performance of **WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?** is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of The United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth) and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission of which must be obtained from the Author in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for **WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?** are controlled exclusively by Next Stage Press. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance written permission and paying the requisite fee. Inquiries concerning production rights should be addressed to [genekato@nextstagepress.com](mailto:genekato@nextstagepress.com)

## **SPECIAL NOTE**

Anyone receiving permission to produce **WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?** is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author.

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

*Who Killed Joan Crawford?* was originally produced at Island City Stage in Wilton Manors, FL. It was directed by Michael Leeds. The Stage Manager was Jeff Ostrow.

Cast

(In Order of Appearance)

Gene.....Kevin Reilly  
**Harvey**.....Troy Stanley  
**Stewart**.....Andy Rogow  
Leo.....Barry Marcus  
David.....Christian Vandepas

TIME: 8:30 pm

June 1993

PLACE: A cabin in upstate NY

*Who Killed Joan Crawford?* is played without an intermission

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

Cast: 5 Men

**GENE HARLOW** 60s. Trick's oldest friend who years ago was briefly his lover. Gene is independently wealthy, used to getting what he wants and what he wants are men under 25.

**HARVEY GOLDBERG** 50s. Trick's press agent, a bit jaded, used to taking charge in tight situations, and doesn't suffer fools gladly.

**STEWART FRY** mid 40s-50s. Trick's therapist, he may not be as quick with a comeback, but he notices what the others might not.

**LEO LAWRENCE** 50s. Composer of Trick's new show, a bit theatrical, very self-involved. As **Harvey** says, his "shallowness runs deep."

**DAVID HOCH** early 20s. Leo's memoirist, good-looking, not intimidated by this crowd but smart enough to lay low when the verbal volleys fly.

\***TRICK ROGERS** Turns 50 today. a successful soap star.

\*Trick has no lines and is only glimpsed for a few moments. He can be played by the ASM or, if necessary, a mannequin or dummy (no disrespect to the ASM's acting abilities.) Either way, it is suggested an actor's name be listed in the program.

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

### Author's Note

These men are NOT drag queens. They're dressed as various film incarnations of Joan Crawford as a favor to Trick for this, his 50th birthday party. Some carry it off better than others, but it's apparent none are used to wearing dresses, wigs, or heels. No one is the epitome of grace, and indeed, some are the nadir of graceless. Though their attempts at make-up, highlighting Joan's memorable lips and eyebrows, are for the most part unsuccessful, they shouldn't come across as looking or acting like clowns.

And...

There are many references to the 1993 Presentation of the Tonys that are heard from the TV off-stage. The play can easily be done without them or you can get a copy of those audio clips from the author.

Also...

Ordinarily, I would never write stage directions, but while writing the play, I had to figure out where the characters would be in relation to the glasses so that they all could've conceivably committed the murders. I've included those stage directions as a guide.

# WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

## Character Looks for WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD



**GENE (Mildred Pierce)**



**HARVEY (Strait Jacket)**

# WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

## Character Looks for WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD



**STEWART (The Women)**



**LEO (Rain)**

# WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

## Character Looks for WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD



**DAVID (Mommie, Dearest)**



**TRICK (Whatever Happened To Baby Jane)**



WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

# WHO *KILLED* JOAN CRAWFORD?

*Lights up on the living room of a cabin in upstate NY, one of those convenient getaways just a few hours outside the city. The rustic living room is furnished “shabby chic.”*

*Center stage is an oval coffee table surrounded by an overstuffed couch (C), a wicker armchair (SR), and an ottoman (SL). DR is a closet, the door facing the audience. Slightly upstage of the closet is the front door. Bookshelves line the rest of the SR wall leading to a baby grand in the UR corner. Behind the piano on the back wall is a sheer curtained sliding glass door.*

*A few feet behind the couch UC is a free-standing bar fronted by three stools. On the wall behind the bar are artfully hung framed posters of Joan Crawford films. Completing the back wall on the left is a sheer curtained window, a small wooden desk, and a standing lamp.*

*A hallway UL leads to the off-stage master bedroom. On the SL wall, a large mirror hangs above a stone fireplace. DL is another hallway, this one leading to the off-stage kitchen and guest bedroom.*

*SOUND of a light drizzle. The only light comes from the end table lamp and a bit of moonlight streaming through the curtained window.*

*SOUND of a CAR pulling up. After a moment, there is a knock on the front door. Then another. The doorknob turns and **GENE HARLOW** bursts in.*

*Gene is in his 60s, well-preserved due to the pampered lifestyle of the very rich. He is made up as Joan in MILDRED PIERCE, dark brown wig, mink coat, mink hat, matching gloves, expensive dress, and tasteful jewelry (real, of course). He carries a birthday gift.*

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

**GENE.** (*Singing.*) Happy Birthday to you. Happy birthday to - (*Looks around.*) Where the fuck is everyone? (*Shaking out his umbrella.*) What's the point of arriving fashionably late if no one's here. (*Calls.*) Hello? Trick? Are you still getting ready? (*Goes off UL. His scream is matched by a higher pitched scream.*) PUT THAT DOWN! (*Gene backs in followed by HARVEY GOLDBERG, a short, slightly overweight man in his fifties, made up as Joan in STRAIT JACKET: tacky floral scoop-necked dress, jet black wig with bangs, and slight flip at the bottom. He carries an ax.*)

**HARVEY.** You scared the shit out of me!

**GENE.** Me? You're the one with the ax!

**HARVEY.** Joan used an ax in -

**GENE.** STRAIT JACKET, I know. I wasn't born yesterday.

**HARVEY.** (*Under his breath.*) Understatement.

**GENE.** Where's Trick?

**HARVEY.** Damned if I know. When I got here the front door was locked. I went round the back. That door was wide open. I unlocked the front door for everyone else and then I had to pee. Not easy in this. (*Adjusts his dress.*)

**GENE.** Next time try sitting down. You sure Trick isn't here?

**HARVEY.** Unless he's hiding in the closet, which is doubtful considering how long he stayed in it.

**GENE.** Maybe he's out getting last-minute goodies. (*Notices a gift on the piano.*) What'd you get him?

**HARVEY.** The gift! I left it in the bathroom. (*Harvey exits UL. Gene puts his gift next to the other one. He picks that one up.*)

**GENE.** Heavy. (*Sniffs the air.*) Harvey, something's burning. (*Gene exits through the DL hallway. SOUND of a CAR pulling up. After a moment, there's a knock on the door. STEWART FRY hesitantly enters. A pleasant-looking man in his 40s/early 50s, now made up as Joan from THE WOMEN, short red wig, gold lamé gown with (unfortunate choice) a bare midriff, and a gold choker around his neck.*)

**STEWART.** Hello?

**GENE.** (*Entering.*) It was Trick's lasagna. I guess he - (*Sees Stewart.*) Let me guess, Susan Hayward in DAVID AND BATHSHEBA.

**STEWART.** We were allowed to come as other film stars? I thought it had to be -

**GENE.** Joan Crawford. Yes, I was kidding.

**STEWART.** Oh, good. I came as China. (*No reaction.*) From THE WOMEN?

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

**GENE.** China? You mean, Crystal?

**STEWART.** Damn, I knew it was some sort of dinnerware. Where is everybody? I got stuck on the George Washington. Some truck broke down. Thought I'd be the last one.

**GENE.** Harvey's in the bathroom getting Trick's gift.

**STEWART.** Why is it in the bathroom?

**GENE.** It's a plunger.

**STEWART.** Really? That seems rather chintzy -

**GENE.** Your gullibility astounds. Your patients must get away with murder.

**STEWART.** I happen to be an excellent therapist.

**GENE.** Okay, okay. Don't get your panties in a bunch. (*Harvey enters carrying his ax and a gift.*) Are you going to carry that thing all night?

**HARVEY.** (*Putting his gift on the piano.*) It completes the look. Without it, I'm Anita from WEST SIDE STORY. (*Looks at Stewart.*) Well, well. (*Strides to the front door and flings it open.*) "This happens to be my room, Mrs. Haines!" (*Stewart stares at him.*) The dressing room scene? THE WOMEN? Joan and Norma Shearer?

**GENE.** Forget it, Harvey, China here is hopeless.

**HARVEY.** China?

**STEWART.** Where's Trick?

**HARVEY.** He was gone when I got here.

**GENE.** Lasagna's cooking. He can't have been gone that long.

**STEWART.** (*Gestures to the fireplace.*) Maybe he's out chopping wood.

**GENE.** A gay Paul Bunyon. (*Reminiscing.*) You know, when I was a boy -

**HARVEY.** Oh goody, Tales From The Crypt. (*Heading off.*) I've gotta use the john.

**GENE.** Again? You still have that STD?

**HARVEY.** It is not an STD, it's a UTI! I've been drinking cranberry juice till it's coming out of my ass. (*Stumbles.*) Fucking pumps. (*Exits UL.*)

**STEWART.** (*Notices Gene is staring at his feet.*) What?

**GENE.** I'm just trying to remember the scene in THE WOMEN where Joan wore loafers.

**STEWART.** I can't wear heels. I'll trip.

**GENE.** (*Crosses behind bar UC.*) So how's work? Any interesting crazies lately? Besides Trick, that is.

**STEWART.** (*Slightly uncomfortable.*) Trick's no longer my patient.

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

**GENE.** (*Opening a bottle of vodka.*) He dumped you?

**STEWART** No, he didn't "dump" me. As a matter of fact, it was my decision.

**GENE.** (*Pours the vodka into a pitcher.*) Really? His ego finally got too much for you?

**STEWART.** I just felt it was time he moved on. Perhaps see someone else. Get a different perspective.

**GENE.** I'm impressed.

**STEWART.** Why?

**GENE.** Well, there must be some caché to having a famous soap star for a patient.

**HARVEY.** (*Entering.*) Ex-soap star. They're killing him off next week.

**GENE.** That was quick.

**HARVEY.** And painful. There's a burning sensation right at the tip of -

**GENE.** Harvey, trust me when I tell you no one wants to hear the end of that sentence.

**STEWART.** Why are they killing him off?

**HARVEY.** Trick wants out of his contract. I can't publicize a soap star in a new musical. They're only hired after a year or two to boost sagging box office.

**GENE.** And an ex-soap star?

**HARVEY.** Is "moving on to try something new. Show a side of himself previously unseen" as I'm putting in the press kit. By the way, no one knows about this.

We'll make the announcement the same time we announce he's starring in the musical.

**STEWART.** (*Checking his watch.*) Weird he's not here. He wouldn't miss his own birthday party.

**GENE.** Maybe turning the big 5-0 was too much for him.

**STEWART.** The party was his idea.

**GENE.** That was last week when he was 49. You get wiser with age. 'Tini time. (*Gene has filled up three martini glasses. Harvey and Stewart take one. Gene raises his glass.*) To turning fifty.

**GENE./HARVEY.** Again. (*Suddenly, Harvey knocks the glass out of Gene's hand.*)

**HARVEY.** DON'T!

**GENE.** What the -

**HARVEY.** (*Goes over to the bar and examines the vodka bottle.*) I knew it. It's one of the bottles I brought.

**STEWART.** So?

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

**HARVEY.** (*Showing Gene the bottle.*) Finlandia's latest vodka. Cranberry.

**GENE.** Shit.

**STEWART.** You don't like cranberries?

**GENE.** I'm allergic.

**HARVEY.** His throat closes up.

**GENE.** (*To Harvey.*) I haven't seen you move that fast since you saw Jeff Stryker go into the steam room at St. Mark's.

**HARVEY.** You're welcome. (*Picks up another bottle.*) Stoli. Plain. (*Pours some into a shaker while Gene picks up the broken glass.*)

**STEWART.** I'll get a broom. (*Exits DL.*)

**HARVEY.** (*SOUND of a CAR pulling up.*) That must be Trick. Or Mozart.

**GENE.** You mean Leo?

**HARVEY.** I hope he didn't bring the twink.

**GENE.** The twink? (*The front door swings open and LEO LAWRENCE enters. He's in his fifties, dressed as the hard-bitten young Joan in RAIN: red wig, checkered red and white '30s dress with wide white belt, white cap, and white stole flung over one shoulder. A cigarette dangles from his mouth.*)

**LEO.** (*Posing in the door.*) "You men! You're all alike! Pigs! I wouldn't trust any of you!"

**HARVEY.** (*Delighted.*) Sadie Thompson in RAIN!

**LEO.** (*To Gene.*) Mildred Pierce! (*Quoting Mildred's daughter in MILDRED PIERCE.*) "I love you, mommy but -

**LEO./GENE.** "- let's not get sticky about it."

**GENE.** (*Smiles.*) Up yours, Veda. (*They air kiss both cheeks.*)

**LEO.** (*To Harvey.*) Who are you supposed to be, Anita from WEST SIDE STORY?

**HARVEY.** (*Annoyed, to Gene.*) Told you. (*Harvey picks up his ax.*)

**LEO.** Ahhhh. Keep the prop. Lose the weight. (*Heads UL.*) Where's Trick? Why isn't the TV on? It's almost time. (*Exits into UL hallway.*)

**HARVEY.** (*Hefting the ax.*) Off with her head.

**GENE.** So, who's this twink you were afraid he'd bring?

**DAVID.** That would be me. (*DAVID HOCH stands in the doorway, a handsome young man in his early twenties. He's dressed as Faye Dunaway in MOMMIE DEAREST in the birthday party scene: luxurious auburn wig, large white sun hat, flowery pink and white sun dress with big shoulders. He carries a birthday gift. He*

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

*walks over to Gene, extending his hand to shake.*) David Hotch. Pleased to meet you.

**GENE.** *(Holds the hand a beat too long.)* The pleasure's mine.

**DAVID.** And you must be Harvey. I've heard a lot about you.

**HARVEY.** Don't put it in the book. Nice hat.

**DAVID.** Thanks. She wore this in the party scene in -

**HARVEY.** MOMMIE DEAREST. Only that wasn't Joan Crawford. It was Faye Dunaway playing Joan Crawford.

**DAVID.** Oh, I'm sorry. It was the only Joan Crawford movie I knew. *(For a moment Gene and Harvey are too taken aback to speak.)*

**LEO.** *(Smoothly.)* Don't worry about it.

**DAVID.** *(Puts the gift with the others on the piano.)* I should find Leo.

**GENE.** *(Points.)* He's in Trick's bedroom turning on the TV.

**DAVID.** Thanks. *(He exits UL.)*

**HARVEY.** The only Joan Crawford movie he knows?!

**GENE.** He's in his twenties. What he doesn't know about classic films he makes up for in classic features.

**HARVEY.** He shaves. You're sure he's not too old for you?

**GENE.** It's strange, there's something about him that's -

**HARVEY.** Familiar. I know. *(Hands Gene a martini.)* Plain vodka. *(Gene drinks.)* I think.

**STEWART.** *(Enters from DL.)* Sorry, it took me a while to find the dustpan.

*(He holds out the broom to Harvey who ignores it. Stewart sighs and sweeps up the glass into the dustpan.)* I heard Leo. Where is he?

**HARVEY.** Fucking Shirley Temple in the bedroom.

**GENE.** Meow.

**HARVEY.** Something about that kid rubs me the wrong way.

**GENE.** There's absolutely no wrong way he could rub me.

**STEWART.** Shirley Temple?

**HARVEY.** Leo brought his ghost.

**STEWART.** His what?

**HARVEY.** His ghostwriter. He's helping Leo write his memoirs.

**GENE.** Leo's writing his memoirs?

**HARVEY.** He thinks when the musical opens everyone will be talking about his triumphant return to Broadway and it'll be the perfect time to publish

COMEBACK!

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

**STEWART.** What if the show bombs?

**HARVEY.** NOT BACK!

**GENE.** It better not bomb. It's going to cost me a fortune. Why anyone would want to invest in a musical is beyond me.

**STEWART.** (*Dumping the broken glass into a trash can by the desk.*) So why are you?

**HARVEY.** (*Pouring himself a refill.*) He's doing it for Trick.

(*Leo enters trailed by David who remains by the hallway entrance.*)

**LEO.** Why Stewart! I didn't expect to see you. Nice outfit. Love the loafers.

Always the fashion rebel. And the dustpan is a nice touch. Going for the poor little rich girl effect?

**STEWART.** Hello, Leo. (*Exits with the broom and dustpan.*)

**LEO.** (*To Harvey.*) It doesn't start for another ten minutes.

**GENE.** Thank God, I don't want to miss Best Scenic Design.

**LEO.** That doesn't come until after the first commercial. Oh, you were being dry.

(*Dry.*) I love dry.

**HARVEY.** (*Handing Leo a glass.*) Have a dry martini.

**LEO.** What, no olives?

**HARVEY.** It's cranberry vodka. You drink it with a lemon peel.

**LEO.** What, no lemon peel?

**GENE.** (*To David.*) What'll you have?

**HARVEY.** (*A la Bette Davis in ALL ABOUT EVE.*) "A milkshake?"

**DAVID.** A martini, very dry, please. (*Harvey seems about to say something but instead pours the martini. Stewart enters. David walks over to him. The following two conversations happen simultaneously.*)

**LEO.** (*To Harvey*) Are we the only ones Trick invited?

**DAVID.** (*To Stewart*) I'm David.

**HARVEY.** (*To Leo*) Just his nearest and dearest.

**STEWART.** (*Shaking hands with David.*) Nice to meet you.

**LEO.** I'm surprised there's this many. So where is Ms. Rogers?

**HARVEY.** M.I.A.

**STEWART.** We think he might be last-minute shopping.

**DAVID.** His car's out front.

**HARVEY.** You know Trick's car?

**DAVID.** No, there were four cars here when we drove up and there's just three of you so...

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

**GENE.** You're very observant.

**LEO.** So where is he? (*Singing from THE WIZARD OF OZ.*) "Come out, come out. Wherever you are..."

**GENE.** He better show up soon. This mink is hot as hell.

**STEWART.** Take it off.

**GENE.** And ruin the effect? I wore this for Trick and he's damned well going to see it!

**LEO.** (*Feeling the mink coat.*) When I grow up I want to be filthy rich like you.

**HARVEY.** Too late. Gene's got the toilet seat market covered.

**LEO.** (*Sees David's confused.*) Gene's company invented the Hygolet.

**DAVID.** The Hygolet?

**HARVEY.** Those plastic covers that are ejected over the toilet seats in public restrooms.

**DAVID.** Your company invented that?

**GENE.** Yes, I'm fabulously wealthy. And hung.

**LEO.** Personally, I find them annoying. The plastic always makes that wrinkly sound when you sit down.

**HARVEY.** You sure that's not you? (*A flash of LIGHTENING is seen through the curtained windows followed by a clap of THUNDER.*)

**STEWART.** Guys, I'm really getting worried. Where is he?

**HARVEY.** Knowing Trick he's just waiting to make his big entrance.

**LEO.** If he waits much longer there'll be no audience. (*Sits down at the piano.*)

You all want to hear the latest song I wrote for LAST MAN STANDING? It's for the comic foil when he realizes he has no friends.

**GENE.** Perhaps another -

**LEO.** (*playing and singing.*)

BEING WITH ME IS NO PICNIC.

I'VE TRIED IT, IT'S REALLY A DOWN.

THERE'S NO USE IGNORING THE FACT IS I'M BORING.

I HATE TO HAVE ME AROUND.

**HARVEY.** Well, they say write what you know. (*Another clap of THUNDER followed by the SOUND of heavy rain.*)

**DAVID.** It's really coming down out there. We arrived just in time.

**GENE.** (*Flirting.*) You certainly did.

**LEO.** In time for what? What kind of a birthday party can we have without the woman of honor?



## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

**HARVEY.** He'll show up. There's gifts. (*Mixing a fresh batch of martinis.*) I, for one, intend to party with or without Mr. Rogers. (*Loud THUNDER clap.*)

**LEO.** (*Playing and singing WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR.*) "It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood..."

**STEWART.** I'd better cover the lasagna. (*Exits DL.*)

**LEO.** Trick's homemade lasagna? All right, I'll stay.

(*Leo goes over to the bar. Harvey pours him a drink. David picks up one of the three Emmys sitting together on the bookshelves on the wall UR behind the piano.*)

**HARVEY.** Careful. Trick doesn't like anyone touching his 'triplets.'

**DAVID.** Three Emmys. Impressive.

**LEO.** Daytime Emmys. That one was between him and the host of Family Feud.

**HARVEY.** Cut it out, Leo. It was a big deal for Trick to win Outstanding Actor in a Daytime Series three years in a row.

**DAVID.** (*Examining the Joan Crawford posters.*) He must be a big fan. I take it that's why we're dressed up like this?

**LEO.** Didn't I tell you?

**DAVID.** You just said to dress up as Joan Crawford in my favorite film of hers.

**HARVEY.** (*To Gene.*) Which obviously limited his options.

**LEO.** Trick's more than a fan. When he was just starting out, he got a bit part on *The Secret Storm*. One of the producers had the hots for him but Trick wasn't interested. So, the producer told the writers to write him out. Joan's daughter was on the soap and that was the year Joan subbed for her when Christina got sick.

**DAVID.** That was in *MOMMIE DEAREST*.

**LEO.** It was Trick's last day but Joan took a liking to him and insisted he be in at least one scene with her in each episode. Consequently, he got a lot of attention, the fan letters started, and they moved him up to featured player.

**DAVID.** That was nice of her.

**HARVEY.** Well, she did get something out of it.

**GENE.** Trick was a favorite of Ms. Crawford's on camera and off.

**DAVID.** Wasn't he, I mean, isn't he gay?

**HARVEY.** Yes. And ambitious.

**DAVID.** I guess he'd have to be. I mean, in *MOMMIE DEAREST*, when she was on the soap, she was almost sixty. (*The three turn to look at him. David, realizing his faux pas, quickly adds.*) Not that a person can't be attractive when they're that old - I mean that age! I've slept with men over forty.

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

**GENE.** How nice for you. (*Heading off UL.*) Excuse me, I have to change my Depends. (*Gene exits.*)

**HARVEY.** ... Well, that was fun.

**DAVID.** (*To Leo.*) I'm sorry.

**LEO.** Don't worry about it. She's a little touchy about age.

**HARVEY.** As opposed to the rest of us who are thrilled to be middle-aged.

**STEWART.** (*Entering.*) I took it out of the oven and covered it. Still no sign? (*Harvey shakes his head.*) Maybe he left a note.

**HARVEY.** Saying what?

**LEO.** "Decided to make it a surprise party. I'm not coming. Surprise!"

**STEWART.** Maybe he went to a neighbor to get something for the party.

**HARVEY.** The nearest neighbor is over a mile away.

**DAVID.** (*Checking his watch.*) Leo, I think it might be starting.

**LEO.** You're right! (*Hurrying off UL.*) I don't want to miss Liza's opening number.

**STEWART.** Liza Minnelli?

**LEO.** No, Liza Birnbaum. Yes, Liza Minnelli. (*Exits.*)

**DAVID.** She's hosting the Tonys this year.

**STEWART.** I love Liza Minnelli. (*He exits UL.*)

**HARVEY.** A gay man who loves Liza Minnelli. How unexpected. (*We hear Liza Minelli singing "Celebrate Broadway," the opening number from the 1993 Tony Awards. Stewart calls off.*) Tell Leo to close the door or I'll come in there and turn on the Mets! (*SOUND of the bedroom door closing.*)

**DAVID.** You're a Mets fan?

**HARVEY.** Absolutely, I love the Mets: Metropolitan Opera, Metropolitan Museum...

**DAVID.** You're not going to watch the Tonys?

**HARVEY.** I'll catch the second half. Liza's doing a duet with her sister. I handle PR for Lorna.

**DAVID.** I thought Lorna Luft was touring in the Faith Prince role in GUYS & DOLLS?

**HARVEY.** They flew her in for the Tonys. You do know your musical theatre.

**DAVID.** I'd better if I'm writing the memoirs of Leo Lawrence.

**HARVEY.** Helping him write his memoirs.

**DAVID.** (*Pleasantly.*) Of course. That's what I meant.

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

*(Harvey pours himself another martini. David sits on a stool and puts his empty glass on the bar. Harvey looks at it, puts the pitcher down and walks around the bar over to the couch. David smiles, acknowledging the snub and pours it himself.)*

**HARVEY.** So how did that come about?

**DAVID.** We met at the Drama Book Shop. I was browsing through the plays and Leo was counting the number of books that mentioned his name. We got to talking. I told him I was a writer and a fan of his work. One thing led to another, and he asked me to help him with his book.

**HARVEY.** What was the one thing that led to another?

**DAVID.** Leo and I haven't slept together if that's what you're thinking.

**HARVEY.** Oh, I'm thinking so many things.

*(We hear the sound of Andrea Martin's Acceptance speech and then the bedroom door closing. Gene enters.)*

**GENE.** Well, Andrea Martin just won Best Supporting Actress In a Musical. Whoever she is.

**DAVID.** Andrea Martin is in MY FAVORITE YEAR.

**GENE.** And what year is that?

**HARVEY.** MY FAVORITE YEAR, the musical. Jesus, you really don't know a thing about Broadway.

**GENE.** I know they need investors.

**HARVEY.** *(Getting up.)* I'd better check on who's winning what. One of my clients, Marcia Gay Harden is up for ANGELS IN AMERICA.

**GENE.** Marcia Gay Hard On? Wasn't he the stud in that porn take-off of The Brady Bunch?

**DAVID.** A porn version of The Brady Bunch?

**GENE.** He's got a great sex scene with the guy playing Jan who keeps moaning, "Marcia Marcia Marcia!"

**HARVEY.** Marcia Gay Harden is a very talented actress.

**GENE.** With a very gay name.

**HARVEY.** You're one to talk.

**GENE.** The Harlows happen to be a very old and esteemed family.

**DAVID.** Your name is Gene Harlow?

**GENE.** Mother was a fan. But it's Gene with a 'G' so I only got beat up at school half as much.

**HARVEY.** Damn, I have to pee again. *(To Gene.)* You don't mind baby-sitting, do you? *(Harvey exits.)*

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

**DAVID.** I get the feeling he doesn't like me.

**GENE.** Don't mind Harvey. He doesn't like anyone under twenty-five.

**DAVID.** And you?

**GENE.** I only like them under twenty-five. *(Taking off the mink.)* Screw Trick, he can just imagine the full effect. *(He goes to the closet.)*

**DAVID.** Listen, about before -

**GENE.** Don't worry about it. I tend to come on a little strong. And not everyone is attracted to men who are as, shall we say, distinguished as myself. *(Gene opens the closet door and, without looking, reaches for a hangar. What he doesn't see, but we do, is a DEAD MAN hanging in the closet, a black scarf wrapped around his neck tied to the overhead rod. He wears the dark black wig that Joan wore in WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE, the hair gathered up in an unattractive bird's nest. His bulging eyes are made even more bizarre by the thick black Joan Crawford eyebrows penciled in above them. Like the character in the film, a gash of tape covers his mouth. The black period dress is bunched around his waist, his underwear down around his ankles. His left arm hangs limply by his side, his right hand holds his penis.)*

**GENE.** *(Continues to David as he puts the coat on the hangar.)* You look familiar. Have we met before?

**DAVID.** I doubt we travel in the same circles. Leo says you're the main backer of his next show but you've never invested in a Broadway show before.

**GENE.** *(Hanging up his coat without looking.)* Nope.

**DAVID.** Why this one?

**GENE.** *(Closes the closet door, never seeing the body.)* Trick's going through a bit of a mid-life crisis. The younger guys are getting most of the attention on his soap. He was looking for a way to jump-start his career so...

**DAVID.** That's quite a gesture of friendship.

**GENE.** We go back. When I first met Trick, he'd just moved to New York. He smiled, it would take your breath away. Two weeks later he moved in with me.

**DAVID.** You were lovers?

**GENE.** We called it roommates then. When Trick started getting work, he moved out. He was afraid people would find out he was gay. We stayed friends. Anyway, it wouldn't have lasted.

**DAVID.** Why not?

**GENE.** He got older. I like them -

**DAVID.** Under twenty-five.

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

**GENE.** How old are you?

**DAVID.** ... Twenty-four.

*(They hold a look. We hear the SOUND of applause then the bedroom door closing. The other three enter, Harvey and Leo arguing.)*

**HARVEY.** Leo, let it go.

**LEO.** But a tie?! That's ridiculous! Kander & Ebb are legends.

**HARVEY.** So is The Who.

**GENE.** What happened?

**LEO.** KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN just tied with TOMMY for Best Score. *(Back to Harvey.)* The Who! They're a rock band. TOMMY is an album not a musical!

**HARVEY.** SPIDER WOMAN was a movie.

**LEO.** There's a long tradition of adapting movies: 42<sup>nd</sup> STREET, HELLO DOLLY, GONE WITH THE WIND!

**STEWART.** Someone made Gone With The Wind into a musical? Even I know that's a bad idea. *(Dead silence.)*

**HARVEY.** Leo wrote it.

**LEO.** *(Glaring at Stewart.)* I'm getting a lemon. *(Leo exits.)*

**HARVEY.** He had a lemon. GONE WITH THE WIND closed after four performances. His third flop in a row.

**GENE.** No wonder he's so desperate to get LAST MAN STANDING to Broadway. When did he last win a Tony?

**DAVID.** 1983. HOUDINI. Eight nominations, five wins including Best Score. *(They look at him.)* Research.

**HARVEY.** So, what's Leo been saying in the book? Anything juicy?

**DAVID.** I'm sure it's nothing you all don't know already.

**HARVEY.** Yes, but is it more, "I got my inspiration for the atonal harmony from listening to ancient Druid folk songs" or more, "And then I slept with Rock Hudson"?

**DAVID.** Leo slept with Rock Hudson?

**HARVEY.** Druid folk songs it is.

**DAVID.** Did he really?

**HARVEY.** Rock had to do a little singing in PILLOW TALK and Leo was still on the coast working at Universal in their music department.

**LEO.** *(Entering with lemon and a small knife.)* It was a one-nighter. And no, that's not in the book. I don't fuck and tell.

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

**GENE.** Then how come we all know?

**LEO.** (*Noticing Gene's dress.*) Joan didn't wear that in MILDRED PIERCE.

**GENE.** No, but when I tried it on at Saks it looked so good on me, I had to buy it.

**STEWART.** You tried that on in Saks?

**GENE.** Yes, and the saleswoman thought I looked stunning.

**HARVEY.** I think she thought your credit card looked stunning.

**LEO.** I'm just saying if our little starlet ever does show up, he'll think you're Joan in HUMORESQUE.

**GENE.** All right, I'll put on the damn mink. (*Opens the closet door.*) CHRIST!!!!  
(*He stares at the body. The OTHERS crowd around.*)

**STEWART.** Oh, no!

**HARVEY.** Jesus! (*A beat.*)

**LEO.** ...Well, he's very well hung.

**GENE.** (*Upset.*) I can't look at that. (*Stunned, he sits in the armchair. Harvey and Leo sit on the couch. Stewart closes the closet door and sits on the ottoman and David sits on a bar stool.*) It wasn't suicide.

**HARVEY.** You think he was murdered?!

**GENE.** No. But you saw him, underwear around his ankles, hand on his dick. He was masturbating.

**HARVEY.** In the closet?

**STEWART.** Hypoxyphilia. (*They look at him.*) Autoerotic asphyxiation. It's a sub-category of sexual masochism that involves reducing the oxygen supply to the brain while masturbating to achieve a heightened orgasm.

**HARVEY.** Jesus.

**STEWART.** I've tried getting him to stop but... It's why I thought he should start seeing someone else. I thought maybe a specialist in this area.

**GENE.** I had no idea he was into this.

**STEWART.** It's not something he wanted anyone to know. There was a lot of shame.

**DAVID.** Why was his mouth taped?

**LEO.** That's part of the Baby Jane costume. Bette Davis tapes Joan's mouth shut.

**STEWART.** He must've thought it would heighten the sensation.

**HARVEY.** (*Quietly.*) Instead, it killed him.

**GENE.** We have to notify the police.

## WHO KILLED JOAN CRAWFORD?

**HARVEY.** No! (*The others look at him.*) It will get into the papers. They'll have a field day with this! It'll be like Rock Hudson, no one remembers his films but everyone remembers how he died.

**LEO.** I know all his films. But then, of course, Rock and I were very close.

**HARVEY.** We can't let Trick be found like this, dressed up like Joan Crawford with an erection!

**GENE.** So, what do you suggest we do?

**HARVEY.** We... take him down, carry him into his bedroom, change his clothes and... hang him up in that closet.

**LEO.** Are you crazy?!

**GENE.** It's still going to get out that he killed himself.

**HARVEY.** Stars kill themselves all the time.

**STEWART.** That's true. Remember a couple of months ago when the guy from that TV show committed suicide?

**HARVEY.** See?! He can't even remember his name.

**LEO.** This is insane! I'm not going to carry a dead body into the bedroom.

**HARVEY.** (*Looks at Gene.*) Gene? Trick wouldn't want to be found like that.

**GENE.** ... Okay. (*They get up. Harvey looks at Stewart. After a moment, he rises. They look down at Leo. A beat. Resigned, Leo gets up and they walk over to the closet. David moves to help them. Harvey gives him a look and he sits back down. Gene opens the door, with the others behind him. Gene bends over, pulling up Trick's underwear.*) Will one of you hold his body? He keeps swaying while I'm trying to pull up his underwear. (*They do.*) Why is it sticky? Oh.

**ALL.** Ewe.

**HARVEY.** We can clean him up in his bedroom. Let's just get him down.

**GENE.** (*Finishes pulling up the underwear.*) Okay, that's done. Harvey, we'll hold him while you untie the scarf. (*They hold the body while Harvey tries to untie the scarf.*)

**LEO.** I have to say, I'm really shocked.

**HARVEY.** I know.

**LEO.** I thought Trick would've opted for TORCHSONG. WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE is so obvious.

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—  
ORDER A COPY AT [WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.COM](http://WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.COM)***