

**The Disappearance of Maud
Crawford:
A Story Based on True Events,
Gossip, and Hearsay**
By
Jill Alison Bradley

THE DISAPPEANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

© 2024 by Jill Alison Bradley

CAUTION: Professionals and Amateurs are hereby warned that performance of **THE DISAPPEANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY** 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 **THE DISAPPEANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY** 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 www.nextstagepress.com

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce **THE DISAPPEANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY** 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.

THE DISAPPEANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

For Mom, Dad, Mike, and Douglas "Papa" Hoppock

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

The Disappearance of Maud Crawford: A Story Based on True Events was originally produced by Amanda Spangler and Samantha Greene at Tyler Civic Theatre in Tyler, TX. Directed by Hannah Johnson and featuring the following cast:

Neighbor 1.....	Katherine Clark
Neighbor 2.....	Marci Acheson
Neighbor 3.....	Rob Carter
Neighbor 4.....	Morgan Robbins
Child Chorus.....	Kennison Oyer
Child Chorus.....	Collin Oyer
Child Chorus.....	Delaney Mulley
Maud Crawford.....	Traci Smith
Clyde Crawford.....	Allan Higginbothom
Mike Berg.....	Justin Purser
Helen Berg.....	Erin Oyer
Mafia Man/Police Captain.....	John Bagget
Insurance Agent/Evelyn Henley.....	Sandy Junek
Odis. A. Henley.....	Jacob Gillard

THE DISAPPEANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

Cast of Characters: 5M, 5W, 5 NB (Flexible Casting, Doubling Possible)

Neighbors 1-4	Any age, Chorus of sorts who inform and speculate
Children Of the Chorus	Child, young teen, denotes the passage of time
Maud Crawford	50s and up, Narrator and victim
Clyde Crawford	50s and up, Maud's husband and murder suspect
Mike Berg	30s – 50s, Police commissioner and murder suspect
Helen Berg	30s – 50s, Mike Berg's sinister wife
Mafia Man	20s and up, Murder suspect
Insurance Agent	20s and up, Small town business owner
Police Captain	30s – 50s, Chief of Police, easily swayed by influence
Odis A. Henley	30s – 50s, Head Detective on the case
Evelyn Henley	30s – 50s, Odis's supportive wife

TIME: 1957

PLACE: Camden, Arkansas

(NOTE: The play's cast may be doubled as needed. The author suggests that the play be performed with continuous action and no complete blackouts, if possible)

THE DISAPPEANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

**THE DISAPPEANCE OF
MAUD CRAWFORD:
A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND
HEARSAY**

*A small town, office, and living room suggested by a simple set.
CHILDREN OF THE CHORUS are playing a game. MAUD looks on.*

CHILDREN OF THE CHORUS. *(Playing a game of jump rope.)* Old Maud Crawford was a lawyer. How many days since you saw her?
1.2.3.4.5... *(Continues underneath)*

MAUD. My name is Maud Crawford. I was the first female lawyer in Camden, Arkansas. I was married to a man named Clyde Crawford. I had no children, only a Dalmatian named Dal. On March 2nd, 1957, I disappeared without a trace. Only two people know what happened for sure. The person who killed me was never identified. And...If you're hoping for answers from me...Well, dead women tell no tales...The only things you'll get tonight are gossip, hearsay, and mostly creative fiction based on a real event...Perhaps the truth is in here somewhere. This is March 4th, 1957 – Two days after I was ever seen dead or alive. *(Lights up on empty living room in the 1950s. The TV is on. It displays either static or the old sign off screen. The room looks undisturbed. There is the sound of wind whooshing and perhaps a screen door slamming. Lights up on NEIGHBOR 1, NEIGHBOR 2, NEIGHBOR 3, AND NEIGHBOR 4.)*

NEIGHBOR 2. Did you hear about Maud?

NEIGHBOR 3. Did you hear about Maud?

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

NEIGHBOR 1. What happened to Maud??

NEIGHBOR 2. She's gone.

NEIGHBOR 3. Without a trace.

NEIGHBOR 2. Pan of beans on the stove.

NEIGHBOR 3. Purse on her chair.

NEIGHBOR 2. Stack of files on her desk.

NEIGHBOR 3. Car in the driveway.

NEIGHBOR 2. Keys in the ignition

NEIGHBOR 2, 3. Like always

NEIGHBOR 3. But no Maud

NEIGHBOR 2. No trace of her.

NEIGHBOR 3. Nobody's seen her.

NEIGHBOR 1. Do they know what happened???

NEIGHBOR 2. Had to be the husband. It's always the husband. (*CLYDE appears in a pool of light. He is smoking a cigarette*)

NEIGHBOR 3. Clyde? He's always been an odd duck...but... do you really think he would...?

NEIGHBOR 4. No, I don't think he would. I wouldn't say Maud and Clyde had a NORMAL marriage, but they seemed happy.

NEIGHBOR 2. True. They did SEEM happy. But who knows what goes on behind closed doors?? Maud made all the money. She ran the family. Suppose Clyde got tired of feeling like a second-class citizen in his own home. A man relies on a woman for support for too long and he's bound to start feelin' resentful. Start feelin' like less of a man.

NEIGHBOR 1. What about Maud? She was the one working, serving on committees. A pillar of the community! And Clyde seemed perfectly happy to reap the benefits of her success. Selling a bit of furniture here and there. But mostly drinking and going to the movies. What kind of a husband is that? Maybe Maud is the one who got sick of him. Maybe she threatened to cut him off. She'd be within her rights.

NEIGHBOR 4. I still say they seemed happy.

NEIGHBOR 2. It's like I said, sometimes people seem happy...but things ain't always what they seem. I could see where an arrangement like that could wear on a person – on either of them. And after 42 years of

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

marriage, well, everyone starts to go a little crazy with the same person after all those years. Little habits, small slights, they can add up over the years and turn a marriage sour. You can't leave after all that time. Not at their age. But you can't stand another minute – so what do you do? (*Lights down on Neighbors 1-4. Lights up on Clyde and Maud in the Crawford living room.*)

MAUD. I've had it, Clyde! You've got to get a job. A real job. Not an odd job, not building furniture. A 9 to 5, honest to goodness job. Wake up early in the morning and come home late in evening. Come home too tired for drinking and driving out to the movies. You make me sick! Where's your ambition? Aren't you ashamed???

CLYDE. What's the point, Maud? You've got enough ambition for the both us. You work all the time. Cases, committees, anything so that you can feel like the boss. A wife ought to make a man feel like a man. And you've always wanted to be the one in charge. Haven't you?

MAUD. I never made you feel like a man? Going down to the Malco watching trashy movies, spying on the kids kissing in the balcony. Does that make you feel like a man?!

CLYDE. Those movies give me a break from this life with you. And watching those kids...it reminds me of what could've been. What could've been if I'd gone after feminine girls. Affectionate girls. Girls who knew how to be a wife. I'd be a different man, if I'd made a different choice. Your ambition. Your career. Your success. All of it made me what I am. You made me less of a man. A job isn't going to fix that, Maud. Let's just drop it and continue the way we are.

MAUD. No! I will not drop it! I will not stand for this anymore. I will not sit here and watch you waste your life away.

CLYDE. At my age. It's already wasted. (*He pauses to look her up and down*). In more ways than one. What is this about? The neighbors? You think I don't hear them talk? You think that bothers me?

MAUD. No, I don't care what other people say about you. Or me for that matter. This is about 42 years of building myself into something and watching you drink your life away. Either you get a real job, or I cut you off. I'll kick you out. I'll take your truck. I'll cut off the money.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

CLYDE. Maud, settle down. You don't mean that. We're both just in a mood. Just in a bad mood today, that's all.

MAUD. No, I mean it this time, Clyde. I really, truly do. If you don't intend to work, go upstairs and pack a suitcase.

CLYDE. After 42 years...you'd...

MAUD. This has been a long time coming. What's it going to be?

CLYDE. I'm too old to change Maud.

MAUD. Then go upstairs.

CLYDE. Can I at least keep the truck for a while?

MAUD. You'll keep nothing. You've earned nothing. You're entitled to nothing.

CLYDE. And money?

MAUD. I'll let you keep whatever is in your wallet.

CLYDE. You're serious? You ain't gonna change your mind?

MAUD. No, Clyde, I won't change my mind.

CLYDE. It's, like, 42 years...All of sudden, it doesn't count for anything...? *(There is silence. Clyde starts to head upstairs, but he turns suddenly. We see him raise a frying pan high above Maud's head. There is a sickening thud, as the lights go dark. Beat of silence. Then lights up on The Children of the Chorus playing a game. Neighbors 1-4 look on. Clyde is on the outskirts of the scene.)*

CHILDREN OF THE CHORUS. *(Playing a game of jacks.)* Old Maud Crawford was a lawyer. How many Days since you saw her? 1.2.

NEIGHBOR 3. I don't know. All that seems pretty far-fetched to me. I never heard them raise their voices to one another. I don't think resentment builds after that long. I think the fire goes out, but you're left with a sort of comfortable, companionship. I just don't think he did it.

NEIGHBOR 4. I saw Detective Henley go into the Crawford's house a while ago, maybe he'll find something out. *(ODIS HENLEY appears in a pool of light and addresses the audience)*

ODIS. My name is Odis A. Henley. I was assigned to Maud's case. I tried to find out what happened to her. I really did. To this day, I can't say for sure what happened...but I have my theories. *(Odis approaches Clyde).*

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

Mr. Crawford, I need to know the series of events leading to your wife's disappearance. What can you tell me about that night?

CLYDE. I went downtown to see a movie at the Malco. Then I went by Carter Liquor Store for a few beers. Got home, oh, about 11:30 p.m. All the lights and the television were on. There was a pan of beans on the table. But no Maud. She was just gone. None of her clothes are missing. Her car was sitting in the driveway with the keys in the ignition – just like she always left it. Her purse was in the living room. The billfold still had \$142 in it. The dog seemed fine – he was napping on the floor. Not a thing gone, except her.

ODIS. Had you two had a disagreement? Is there any chance she went out of town?

CLYDE. Naw. We never fight. I just don't understand it, Odis. I don't know what could've happened to her.

ODIS. I'm going to try to get to the bottom of it, Clyde. *(Odis turns to go)*

CLYDE. Hey, Henley?

ODIS. Yeah?

CLYDE. You gonna be talking to people around town?

ODIS. I reckon so. I need to find out whatever I can, if we want to find Maud. Why?

CLYDE. Well, I'm just not real popular around town, you know? I wouldn't say people dislike me...but I reckon they really don't understand me. They don't understand how it is with me and Maud. She's more liked than I am, is what I'm trying to say, I guess. I just wanted to let you know that before you hear it around town.

ODIS. Clyde, that's not a secret. My job is to find the truth – not gossip. If you're innocent, you won't have anything to worry about.

CLYDE. Do you think I had anything to do with it, Odis?

ODIS. *(Pauses to study Clyde for a moment.)* No, Clyde, I don't think you did. But you're still a suspect for now and people in a town this size are bound to talk. Don't let it bother you too much. *(Maud appears in a pool of light.)*

MAUD. Oh, how people will talk! And of course, they all started talking about Clyde. And whether or not he had anything to do with what

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

happened to me. It's only been a week since I've been gone. And Clyde is about to stir up more trouble for himself. (*Lights up on The Children of the Chorus playing a game. Neighbors 1-4 look on.*)

CHILDREN OF THE CHORUS. (*tossing a ball and counting their catches*) Old Maud Crawford was a lawyer. How many days since you saw her? 1.2.3.4.5.6.7.

NEIGHBOR 1. I never understood what Maud saw in him. First and only female lawyer in Camden. A pillar of the community and Clyde...well, Clyde...

NEIGHBORS 2, 3, 4. Is strange!

NEIGHBOR 3. Well, I heard that night he did what he does every night.

NEIGHBOR 4. Liquor store

NEIGHBOR 1. Then the movies...

NEIGHBORS 3, 4. To watch the teenagers neck.

NEIGHBOR 2. That doesn't mean he couldn't have done it. Wouldn't you try to act as normal as possible? Wouldn't you stick to your routine?

NEIGHBORS 1, 3, 4. Hmmm....

NEIGHBOR 2. And...I heard something....

NEIGHBORS 1, 3, 4. What? What did you hear?

NEIGHBOR 2. I don't know if I should say...It's just gossip...

NEIGHBORS 1, 3, 4. We won't tell anyone.

NEIGHBOR 2. It's just gossip...

NEIGHBOR 1. What else have we got to do?

NEIGHBOR 3. This is a small town

NEIGHBOR 4. All we have is gossip.

NEIGHBOR 2. Well... You won't repeat it?

NEIGHBOR 1. No

NEIGHBOR 3. No

NEIGHBOR 4. No

NEIGHBOR 2. You won't tell a soul?

NEIGHBOR 3. Not me.

NEIGHBOR 4. Who would I tell?

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

NEIGHBOR 2. Well, a friend of my sister – in – law’s cousin works in the insurance office and Clyde’s already been down there... And he threw a fit...just a wall eyed fit ... (*Maud appears in a pool of light*)

MAUD. This part really paints Clyde in a poor light, that is, if it happened this way. Rumor has it, I was barely cold before he tried to collect on my insurance policy. And my policy would cover a lot of beer and movie tickets. (*The other side of the stage has become the suggestion of an office and lights begin to rise on INSURANCE OFFICE WORKER and Clyde*)

INSURANCE OFFICE WORKER. Mr. Crawford, I am afraid that you can’t collect this claim right now...

CLYDE. Why not?!?!?

INSURANCE OFFICE WORKER. Maud hasn’t been declared dead...as of yet...

CLYDE. Well, she’s gone! All her clothes are still in the closet. Her car is still in my driveway. No money is missing. Where else would she be with no clothes, no car, and no money?!?!? Huh? Nobody’s seen her!

INSURANCE OFFICE WORKER. Mr. Crawford...Without a body, we can’t...

CLYDE. What if she’s under cement? What if she’s at the bottom of a lake? What if they NEVER find the body?

INSURANCE OFFICE WORKER. Without a body, it takes seven years for a person to be declared dead. Until they find out for sure what happened to her you can’t collect the money.

CLYDE. I’m telling you she’s dead. I ain’t heard from her in days. Nobody has. She was working on cases. She had city council meetings. That ain’t like Maud. To up and leave. She was so dependable you could set your watch by her. She was my wife and I oughta know. She’s gone and you owe me that money!

INSURANCE OFFICE WORKER. I can’t give you the money, Mr. Crawford.

CLYDE. (*Grabbing the worker by the collar*) NOW LOOK HERE!!!! SHE’S DEAD AND I NEED THAT MONEY!!!!

INSURANCE OFFICE WORKER. Mr. Crawford, the fact of the matter is that we can’t LEGALLY give you the money until her body turns up or

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

seven years pass. Threatening me isn't going to change that. I suggest you leave my office before I call the law. *(Clyde grudgingly lets him go)*

CLYDE. This ain't over. This ain't over by a long shot!

INSURANCE OFFICE WORKER. Clyde, don't come back here drunk again. I really will call the law on you if I do. I always knew you liked to have a drink now and then, but this is the middle of the day. *(Lights fade on the office and come back up on Neighbors 1-4)*

NEIGHBOR 1. Under the cement? He said that?!?!?!?

NEIGHBOR 2. MmmmHmm. At least that's what my sister-in-law's cousin's friend says.

NEIGHBOR 3. And they just poured the foundation for the new Piggy Wiggly....

NEIGHBOR 4. They poured it just about the time she disappeared....

NEIGHBOR 1. And he said that she...

NEIGHBOR 3....Could be under the cement....

NEIGHBOR 4. Maybe it *was* Clyde.

NEIGHBOR 1. He's always been odd...*(Clyde enters the scene unnoticed)*

NEIGHBOR 2. He easily could've done it before he left for the liquor store. He could've loaded the body in that truck of his and stashed poor Maud somewhere then went about his merry way. And you know he's already sold that car of Maud's? After he couldn't get that insurance money, he sold off her car.

NEIGHBORS 1, 4. That doesn't sound good for Clyde...

NEIGHBOR 3. No, it doesn't. But I'm not sure....

NEIGHBOR 2. It had to be Clyde. I truly believe that.

NEIGHBORS 1, 4. It doesn't sound good...*(As they are talking, they have not noticed Clyde listening. He suddenly makes himself known)*

CLYDE. My wife is gone! I have to sit in that house with all her things. Her case files. Her clothes. Her glasses on a chain. Everywhere I turn in that house is a piece of Maud. All the things we built over 40 years of marriage. If you spent your life with a woman and she disappeared, wouldn't it be hard for you to look at all her things every day?! Live in a house filled with decades of memories? It seems like she could walk

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

through that door any minute. I sold her car, so I wouldn't have to look at it sitting in the driveway. I need the insurance money to get away from here. I've got to get away from the whispers and the ghost of my lost wife. Everybody grieves differently. Everybody loves differently. I loved Maud and this is what my grief looks like. Drunk in the morning and begging for money. I don't even have a body to bury. I didn't even get to say good-bye. You don't have a right to judge my grief. *(He leaves.)*

NEIGHBOR 2. I feel terrible. I should've kept that to myself. Maybe this just isn't our business. Maybe we oughta just keep our noses where they belong. I don't think he did it. I feel so ashamed of myself.

NEIGHBOR 3. That display of emotion could be just acting. But logically I don't think he did it. Maud was Clyde's meal ticket. Sure, he built some furniture and sold now it and then, but he never made much. She earned more money than he could ever dream of sellin' that furniture and doin' odd jobs. She bought him that truck. Let him go out drinking and to the movies. They never fought. Seemed to get along real well. He was weird, but they seemed as happy as any of us. She was worth more to him alive. Alive she could keep on earning money. That insurance claim is gonna run out. Maud was very successful. She could've kept on supporting him for the rest of his life...

NEIGHBOR 2. So, are we *still* going to sit here theorizing and analyzing that poor man??? After what just happened? After the way we hurt him? He's just covered up in grief...and I – we – were using it as entertainment.

NEIGHBOR 1. What else have we got for entertainment?

NEIGHBOR 3. There's nothing else to do.

NEIGHBOR 4. Everybody loves a murder mystery...

NEIGHBOR 1. The gossip is too good to resist. And you know it...You're no better than the rest of us.

NEIGHBOR 2. No. I suppose I'm not... *(Maud appears in a pool of light)*

MAUD. The general consensus became that Clyde was an odd duck, maybe a little greedy...but probably not bright enough to get away with murder. And he did seem to be grieving for me – in his way. As the time passed, the speculation continued to grow. Senator John McClellan was a great friend of mine. At the time of my disappearance, he was

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

investigating mafia relations in labor unions. In my day, Hot Springs, Arkansas was a hot bed for mafia activity. John had made some powerful enemies, and I was helping him with his case. It was a well-known fact we were friends. (*Lights up on The Children of the Chorus playing a simple game. Neighbors 1-4 look on.*)

CHILDREN OF THE CHORUS. (*Playing Blind man's bluff. They are counting as they spin the blind folded child.*) Old Maud Crawford was a lawyer. How many days since you saw her? 1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.10

NEIGHBOR 2. Still no word about Maud. Haven't heard a thing! And haven't arrested Clyde. I reckon maybe he wouldn't be any match for Maud anyway. He never was the sharpest tool in the shed. And he seems pretty broken up about it, in his way. I just can't imagine what happened to poor Maud.

NEIGHBOR 3. I've been thinking on it and... Maud was sort of a powerful woman, wasn't she?

NEIGHBORS 1,2,4. MmmHmmm

NEIGHBOR 3. And she never backed down from a fight...

NEIGHBORS, 1, 2, 4. Not Maud...

NEIGHBOR 3. Well, I hear Maud had some powerful enemies....

NEIGHBORS 1, 2, 4. What do you mean?

NEIGHBOR 3. Well, The Mafia!

NEIGHBORS 1, 2, 4. THE MAFIA!!!

NEIGHBOR 3. It's true...Maud used to work with Senator McClellan, right?

NEIGHBORS 1, 2, 4. Right....

NEIGHBOR 3. That's a powerful friend...and with powerful friends come powerful enemies.

NEIGHBORS 1, 2, 4. What is that supposed to mean?!?!?!?

NEIGHBOR 3. The senator is a chairman of a Senate committee that just so happens to be looking into Mafia ties to organized labor.

NEIGHBORS 1, 2, 4. SO?!?!?!?

NEIGHBOR 3. So...I hear Maud was helping him! She was helping him build a case. It wadn't no secret.

NEIGHBORS 1, 2, 4. Ohhhh!!!

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

NEIGHBOR 3. I think Maud might be under that cement...but I don't think Clyde put her there...He's no match for Maud...Can you imagine skinny little Clyde taking her out? She was a force of nature. but the Mafia...that's another story...*(Lights up on Maud's living room. She is sitting on the couch shelling beans. Suddenly THE MAFIA MAN wearing a suit and low brimmed hat bursts through the door)*

MAFIA MAN. Maud Crawford, you're coming with me.

MAUD. I most certainly am not! Who are you?

MAFIA MAN. A friend of the senator. He's sticking his nose where it don't belong.

MAUD. And what does that have to do with me?

MAFIA MAN. Plenty. You've been helping him build his case.

MAUD. And he'll continue to build his case. It doesn't matter what you do to me.

MAFIA MAN. *(Takes out a pistol and lifts Maud's chin with it)* You'll either be a message or collateral. If the senator learns to play nice, maybe we'll let you go. Or maybe we'll just start sending him pieces of you. One by one. Until he learns to stop flapping his tongue. That could be a good place to start – your tongue. But that ain't up to me, lady...Come on, get up. *(He grabs her by the arm).* We're going for a ride. *(He leads her out with the pistol sticking into her back.)*

MAUD. To be honest, that theory is my favorite. Piano wire. Cement shoes. Like a scene from a movie. One Clyde would've loved. *(Odis appears in a pool of light)*

ODIS. If the mafia was responsible, they would've been trying to get back at the senator. It would've been a warning. Or they would've expected payment in return for her safety. McClellan never received any threats or a ransom note. We could find no evidence to tie Maud's disappearance to the Mafia or her work with the senator. It was an interesting theory, but it only turned up a dead end. Time was passing and it seemed less and less likely, we'd ever find out what happened to Maud. *(Lights up on The Children of the Chorus playing a game. Neighbors 1-4 look on.)*

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

CHILDREN OF THE CHORUS. (*Playing hide-and-go-seek. One child is covering their eyes and counting*) Old Maud Crawford was a lawyer.

How many days since you saw her? 1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.10.11.12.13.14.

NEIGHBOR 4. Two weeks...still no word on Maud. It just gives me the willies. I'm really beginning to think it was someone right here in Camden.

NEIGHBOR 3. Who in Camden would want to hurt Maud?? Everyone liked her. Everyone respected her.

NEIGHBOR 4. Not everyone....

NEIGHBOR 2. Who had anything against Maud???

NEIGHBOR 4. (*Motions for the other neighbors to come closer*) I'm really almost afraid to say...After what happened to poor Maud...but I heard she had a pretty good case against Mike Berg.

NEIGHBORS 1, 2, 3. MIKE BERG!

NEIGHBOR 1. I'd be careful accusing a man like Mike Berg of anything like that. He's on the police commission.

NEIGHBOR 4. Keep your voice down. I don't know anything for sure I just know it had something to do with Mike's Aunt Rose. She was going a bit senile, and Maud was the executor of her will. Rose wanted to leave everything to the nieces and nothing to Mike. (*Maud appears in a pool of light*)

MAUD. Whether or not Mike Berg is responsible for my death, I can't tell you. What I can tell you is that Rose Berg was my friend and neighbor, and she was getting older. Over 50 years later, we would understand that she was suffering from Alzheimer's...back then, we just called it senile. I became her guardian and took over her legal affairs. I found out pretty quickly that Mike was swindling her. My partner in the law firm cautioned me against confronting him – it could lead to legal trouble. I was a headstrong woman, and I may not have been able to hold my tongue. If I had confronted Berg, I know exactly what I would have said. (*Lights up on MIKE BERG in the simple suggestion of an office*)

MIKE. Evening, Maud. What did you need to see me about?

MAUD. I just wanted to give you fair warning.

MIKE. Fair warning? About what?

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

MAUD. I've been declared Rose Berg's legal guardian. I'm her legal counsel and the executor of her will. She doesn't want you to have anything. The nieces get it all.

MIKE. Maud, you don't need to warn me about that. I've known that. I respect Rose's wishes. But I appreciate your concern.

MAUD. No appreciation necessary, Mr. Berg. That's not what I'm warning you about. *(Maud throws a folder down onto to the table)*

MIKE. I'm warning you about this.

MIKE. What's in here?

MAUD. Those are deeds, Mike. Fraudulent deeds. Rose's real estate holdings. Oil Royalties. They're fake and they all say that those things have been transferred to you. I know everything. I know what you've been up to and I've got proof. I know you're going to cheat your cousins out of their inheritance. I know everything and I'm not going to let it happen.

MIKE. You don't know anything. And it doesn't matter what you know or what you accuse me of. I'm on the Police Commission. I'm a powerful man with powerful connections. Problems that arise for me tend to disappear fairly quickly.

MAUD. You forget. I know the law. I practice law. I'm not a senile old woman. Or a helpless housewife. This problem may not be as easy to get rid of as you think.

MIKE. Leave it alone, Maud. You don't know the whole story. You'll just make trouble for yourself.

MAUD. I know enough. I know what's going on and I know it isn't right. I will always stand up for what is right. The consequences do not matter to me. I'm not afraid of you.

MIKE. You like to talk about right and wrong a lot, Maud. You see things as black and white. You're jumping to conclusions.

MAUD. I'm not a stupid woman, Mike. I have proof and I'm not going to let you do this to Rose.

MIKE. Drop it, Maud. Or you'll live to regret it.

MAUD. Is that a threat?

MIKE. No. That's a fact. *(Lights down on Mike and Maud and up on Odis)*

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

ODIS. Mike Berg. That would be a name that would haunt me until my death. People in town were afraid of him. His trouble with Maud was supposed to be a well-kept secret, but I suspect that those will always be few and far between in Camden.

NEIGHBOR 4. That's what I heard from one of Rose's nieces. That Maud had proof and she was going after Mike.

NEIGHBOR 3. I think Mike would go after Maud professionally before he'd go after her physically.

NEIGHBOR 2. I wonder what Helen had to say about that?

NEIGHBOR 1. Now, Helen is the one I wouldn't want to mess with.

NEIGHBOR 3. I'd be even more afraid of her than I would of Mike.

MAUD. I can't tell you much about Helen Berg. I can only tell you that thirty years after my death she threatened to sue over a series of articles accusing her late husband of being involved in my mysterious disappearance. The family name was everything to Helen Berg. (*Lights up on Mike and HELEN BERG*)

MIKE. Maud knows everything. She's going to blow the lid off Rose's inheritance. I think we should let it go, Helen.

HELEN. She can't know everything. I thought you put those deeds in Hugh Moseley's name.

MIKE. Some of them. Not all of them. Some of them I put in my name. It was a careless mistake. I'm caught. I think I should come clean and hope for the best.

HELEN. No. That money is just as much yours as it is the girls. You're her nephew. Fair is fair.

MIKE. What am I supposed to do? She's got proof. I think I should just come clean to Maud and ask her to destroy the fake deeds...and be done with it. Maybe she'll have a little mercy.

HELEN. Maud? Have a little mercy? If she thinks anyone's been doin' wrong, she's like a dog with a bone. She won't be stopped until you're punished. And you won't see a dime of that inheritance. And Rose is hanging on by a thread. That money is as good as ours.

MIKE. Maud will destroy me before she lets me see one red cent. Rose didn't want to leave me anything. Maud knows that. She has the fake

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAUD CRAWFORD: A STORY BASED ON TRUE
EVENTS, GOSSIP, AND HEARSAY

deeds. She has proof. There's no way out. The only thing to do is beg Maud for forgiveness.

HELEN. Maud is a woman in her sixties. Are you really afraid of a little old lady?

MIKE. Maud is no little old lady. She's smart. She's well liked in town. Everyone is going to take her word. We don't have much of a choice.

HELEN. There's always a choice. Suppose something happened to Maud?

MIKE. What are you suggesting?

HELEN. She's alone every night. That husband of hers goes to the liquor store and the movies. That Dalmatian of hers is mean as the devil, but he knows you.

MIKE. Helen, what are you saying?

HELEN. I'm saying Maud Crawford is a problem and you need to take care of her.

MIKE. Helen...Are you asking me to...?

HELEN. You promised to provide for me. If Maud Crawford comes forward with these deeds, you could end up in jail and we would definitely lose Rose's money. I'm suggesting you do everything possible to keep that promise, Mike. *(Lights down on Mike and Helen. Odis appears in a pool of light)*

ODIS. Mike Berg had something to do with Maud's death. I was sure of it. I had evidence...but sometimes that just isn't enough. And days were quickly turning to weeks. *(Lights up on The Children of the Chorus playing a simple game. Neighbors 1-4 look on.)*

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
ORDER A COPY AT WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.COM***