

THE WAYLAND NOCTURNE

A Ten-Minute Play

Donald Loftus

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THE WAYLAND NOCTURNE

Cast of Characters

JOHNNY CREWS: AGE: 33: One of a pair of twin brothers born in a small town called Johnston Hollow. As a kid, he was "besties" with Donny May. He is now in NYC and has not seen nor heard from his twin brother nor his childhood buddy in years.

DONNY MAY: AGE: 33: Another guy who grew up in Johnston Hollow. As a kid, he was best pals with Johnny Crews, but he has no contact with his old friend in years and almost never thinks about his early days back in the old neighborhood. He is now in Los Angeles.

TIME & PLACE: **August 12, 2020.** The middle of the night. Two dark, empty spaces... one in New York City, one in Los Angeles.

AT RISE: **JOHNNY CREWS and DONNY MAY** enter and move into their respective light at the opposite ends of the dark empty stage. They do not make eye contact, nor do they speak to each other. They are all alone on opposite coasts of the U.S. in the middle of the night. They have each been awakened by a nightmare.

THE WAYLAND NOCTURNE

JOHNNY CREWS

I had the strangest dream. No, not strange. Terrifying.

DONNY MAY

Terrifying.

JOHNNY CREWS

Terrifying... and yet, I can't remember exactly what made it so scary. I just know I woke up shaking... and my sleep shirt was soaked through from the sweat...

DONNY MAY

And my heart was pounding like a triphammer...

JOHNNY CREWS

My heart is still pounding.

DONNY MAY

It was the dream again.

JOHNNY CREWS

I dreamed I was back in Johnston Hollow... back on Wayland Avenue. And my twin brother, Ronny... and my best pal, Donny May... and that tubby bitch, Jimmy McIntyre...

DONNY MAY

And my best pal, Johnny Crews... and that sick shit... Leonard Welling...

JOHNNY CREWS

They were all there.

DONNY MAY

I wasn't surprised. Of course, I had the dream...the nightmare... as I always do on the night of my birthday. As I always do on the anniversary of "Toe Day".

JOHNNY CREWS

"Toe Day"! That was a lifetime ago. I haven't thought about the at day "Toe Day" in ages.

DONNY MAY

A day better left forgotten.

JOHNNY CREWS

We were about seven or eight I think...my brother Ronny and me. I can't remember exactly. It was so long ago. A lot of water under the bridge. Who could remember exactly?

DONNY MAY

It was exactly twenty-six years ago. August 12th, 1994. My eighth birthday. It was also the day after the last Major League Baseball games of that season. The season ended early on account of a strike that not only ended the season, but also prevented a World Series from happening for the first time since 1904.

JOHNNY CREWS

I remember it was hot as hell...

DONNY MAY

The night before Milwaukee played Cleveland. The Brewers kicked the shit out of the Indians. It was brutal. I was there. My Dad took me for my birthday, as he did every year. But that year he took me the day before my birthday, on account of the threat of a strike.

JOHNNY CREWS

It was definitely in the summer...

DONNY MAY

And the... the what? The incident. The incident happened on my birthday...the very next day after that last game.

JOHNNY CREWS

I haven't thought about Johnston Hollow in years. I barely remember those days. I was only seven or so.

DONNY MAY

Johnny and Ronny were just about to move away.

JOHNNY CREWS

Our dad got transferred and we moved right after the incident. We were still in Johnston Hollow...but on the other side of town.

DONNY MAY

I never liked Johnston Hollow. None of us did.

JOHNNY CREWS

Even as a kid I knew that I had to get out. I'd leave just as soon as I could. I didn't care where.

DONNY MAY

I just wanted to move away...and the sooner the better.

JOHNNY CREWS

I hoped to get out right after high school... and I did.

DONNY MAY

We all did.

JOHNNY CREWS

I ended up here...in New York City.

DONNY MAY

Johnny's twin brother Ronny moved to New Orleans. Jimmy McIntyre to Boston...

JOHNNY CREWS

And my best pal Donny May ended up out in L.A.

DONNY MAY

I've been in L.A. for over twenty-five years and I have never regretted leaving Johnston Hollow.

JOHNNY CREWS

I almost never think about Johnston Hollow... and certainly not the "Toe Day"... and yet for some reason... it all came racing through me tonight...in this dream.

DONNY MAY

In this nightmare.

JOHNNY CREWS

I have no idea why. I was sure I had suppressed that day... that event... deeply...adequately enough.

DONNY MAY

I've never forgotten it. Maybe because every year since, it has come rushing back to me...blazing through my brain in a birthday nightmare...almost as if to haunt me.

JOHNNY CREWS

The memories the dream has conjured up, has upset me... much more than I would have expected. It's made me feel... I don't know... guilty?

DONNY MAY

As it has every year on the night of my birthday.

JOHNNY CREWS

His name was Kensick. Old Man Kensick, as we called him. He was creepy. We never actually saw him...but we knew he was creepy. And his house was creepy. Scary and creepy.

DONNY MAY

He'd yell at us... "Git away from my property! Go on now, git ya punks!" We heard him, but we never actually saw him.

JOHNNY CREWS

Just an angry, old voice emanating from behind the hedges.

DONNY MAY

The hedges which concealed Old Man Kensick from the rest of the world, grew immensely high...and they were incredibly well-groomed.

JOHNNY CREWS

It was always a mystery as to how or when this towering vegetation got its expert primping. We never once saw him or anyone else working on the hedge...and yet, well-barbered this greenery was.

DONNY MAY

Twice a week, we'd hear the whirring of the power mower he used to cut the lawn. Same time each week, like clockwork.

JOHNNY CREWS

We heard it that day...

DONNY MAY

And we could smell the strong bouquet of cheap gasoline he used to run the mower... we could smell the potent exhaust fumes even through the otherwise impenetrable shrubbery.

JOHNNY CREWS

We smelled it that day.

DONNY MAY

And on that hot August day...

JOHNNY CREWS

The gang was, as we usually were on such days... in the middle of our red bricked street known as Wayland Avenue, playing "Three Bucks".

DONNY MAY

One dollar for catching it on a fly ball... seventy-five cents for catching it on one bounce... and so on.

JOHNNY CREWS

Tubby Jimmy McIntyre was the worst player. He wasn't much for any sports, because he wasn't any good at any sports.

DONNY MAY

His own father said he threw the ball like a girl and ran like a clumsy bungler as a result of his weight.

JOHNNY CREWS

Nonetheless, Jimmy McIntyre did love to play "Three Bucks" because he could really hit the ball and he didn't have to run or throw much.

DONNY MAY

My best pal, Johnny Crews, was by far the best at the game, and usually racked up his three bucks while I was still collecting only pocket change. But his twin brother, Ronny didn't get to play because he was a "bleeder".

JOHNNY CREWS

"Too risky", mom said. Mom thought every endeavor was too risky for Ronny. Even sitting in a comfy seat at a Saturday matinee down at the Variety Theatre was too risky.

DONNY MAY

As a result, Ronny was a sad kid. He watched life from the curb...from the sidelines.

JOHNNY CREWS

Another kid, a real sick shit named Leonard Welling, was always trying to get into the game, but normally we wouldn't let him, unless we really needed another player.

DONNY MAY

We never could forgive him for trying to set fire to Mrs. Blair's cat, Muffin.

JOHNNY CREWS

Leonard Welling's opportunity to play would usually come on Fridays when Marvin had to leave us early, on account of being Jewish. Then and only then would we let Lenny play.

DONNY MAY

He was a wacko!

JOHNNY CREWS

Anyway, on this particular Friday, a blistering afternoon in August, the steam rose off the red bricks of Wayland Avenue as we played our third round of "Three Bucks".

DONNY MAY

Old Man Kensick's mower made its whirring moans from behind the shrubbery fence. It made such a racket we were forced to yell in order to hear each other. It seemed even louder on this day, for some reason.

JOHNNY CREWS

We could again smell the toxic mix of gasoline, wet grass and chopped dandelions...but this odor was also more distinctive this day. By the time I stepped up to bat, Donny May had already acquired two-seventy-five.

DONNY MAY

When the terrifying screams came...through the shrubbery... the game stopped. We all stood frozen in our spots as we listened to the unseen, but very audible horror.

JOHNNY CREWS

It was a wailing, squealing sound.

DONNY MAY

A heart-wrenching, ear-splitting howling...

JOHNNY CREWS

Followed by a painful violent, blood-curdling groaning...

DONNY MAY

And then nothing. Silence.

JOHNNY CREWS

And we just stood there silently...staring at each other.

DONNY MAY

We were terrified...

JOHNNY CREWS

And then... without discussing it...we just ran.

DONNY MAY

We ran as fast as we could.

JOHNNY CREWS

We ran to the woods at the end of Westerland Road.

DONNY MAY

Down past the Benton Creek...

JOHNNY CREWS

Straight to our hideout...

DONNY MAY

The cave that we often used to smoke a cigarette...

JOHNNY CREWS

Or share a beer that we had stolen off of our neighbor, Mr. Power's, back porch.

DONNY MAY

We stayed there for hours.

JOHNNY CREWS

I remember I was shaking.

DONNY MAY

We all knew we should have told someone. Some adult...

JOHNNY CREWS

A week later, I heard my mom discussing Old Man Kensick's demise with Mrs. Hartman, who lived two doors down. It turned out, Old Man Kensick was a bleeder too...like Ronny.

DONNY MAY

The mower had apparently chopped off his left big toe. Then he apparently passed out, hitting his head on a stone bench ...knocking himself out even more. And then... being a bleeder and all, he apparently bled to death. The mailman had found the body. Three days later.

JOHNNY CREWS

Mom said rigor mortis had set in. I had no idea what that meant at the time, but I knew it wasn't a good thing.

DONNY MAY

We never told anyone that we heard the screaming.

JOHNNY CREWS

We knew we were responsible for the old man's death.

DONNY MAY

We knew...if we had told someone...when it happened... some adult... the old, creepy man probably would have lived.

JOHNNY CREWS

So, we made a secret pact to tell no one. A secret pact to remain silent. And we stuck to that pack. We told no one.

DONNY MAY

Well...I actually did tell my older stepbrother, Nathan. He was not quite an adult. He was like sixteen at the time and he was nasty as shit. Nathan told me that Old Man Kensick would come back to get even with us some day. Retribution!

JOHNNY CREWS

"It might be a day...it might be a year...it might be a decade...but he will be back, and he will get his revenge".

DONNY MAY

Nathan made me give him the two-seventy-five I'd earned in the game so's that he wouldn't tell anyone else.

JOHNNY CREWS

The ambulance men took it...the body...they took the body away. The body that was missing a toe. A big toe.

DONNY MAY

Then came three days of heavy rain. We all stayed inside.

JOHNNY CREWS

It was probably just as well. No one was feeling like playing "Three Bucks" anyway.

DONNY MAY

Apparently...we would later find out... the rains had picked up the toe from the old man's lawn. The water had apparently carried it in its stream... out from behind the bushes, past the sidewalk...the toe floated along the curb.

JOHNNY CREWS

It eventually reached the sewer.

DONNY MAY

The water let go of it and it dropped down in the sewer.

JOHNNY CREWS

It landed on a pile of dried leaves... leaves that Mrs. Randall raked into the sewer the previous fall.

DONNY MAY

But none of us knew this. None of us knew the whereabouts of the old man's big severed toe.

JOHNNY CREWS

The next time we played Three Bucks, the ball got away. It rolled down the sidewalk...it rolled along the curb..

DONNY MAY

It rolled into the sewer. That's when we saw it. That's when we saw the big, dead, severed toe. It was a clear white. The rain had washed away the blood. Its yellow toenail touched the baseball.

JOHNNY CREWS

It stared at us.

DONNY MAY

Ronny threw up and we all went home.

JOHNNY CREWS

I've never discussed this with anyone...and I haven't thought about it in years. Not until tonight..

DONNY MAY

Nathan said, "It might be a day... it might be a decade..."

JOHNNY CREWS

When for some reason...in this nightmare...it all came racing back into my mind.

DONNY MAY

And as I laid there, only half awake in my sweat soaked nightshirt...

JOHNNY CREWS

I wondered if any of the others ever thought of the Toe Day. Donny May? Tubby Ritchie McIntyre? Or that sick shit, Leonard Welling? Did any of them even remember it? Did any of them ever dream of it?

DONNY MAY

But then I remembered of course that Ronny Crews was killed years ago...in a boating accident down South...right at the start of Hurricane Katrina. He was just eighteen-years old.

JOHNNY CREWS

Jimmy McIntyre died running the Boston Marathon... dropped dead on Kenmore Square. Apparently, he had a heart attack. Fat guys shouldn't run marathons.

DONNY MAY

And years earlier, my one-time best pal, Johnny Crews, was on a school trip to New York City with his 9th grade class.

JOHNNY CREWS

I was so excited. I'd never been anyway before that New York trip...

DONNY MAY

He died when Flight 11 crashed into the north face of the North Tower between the 93rd and 99th floors. He was on his way to the observation deck. He was just 15 years old.

JOHNNY CREWS

Donny May went missing. One day...he was gone. No note. No nothing. He had gone to LA to get into films.

DONNY MAY

I wanted to be the next Pacino...

JOHNNY CREWS

He wasn't there but a month. There was a search...but they found nothing.

DONNY MAY

And somehow...as I lay here in my uncomfortably troubled state...I have this feeling deep in the pit of my stomach...

JOHNNY CREWS

Deep down into my soul...

DONNY MAY

An almost certain feeling that this thing isn't over. There are still things for me to know. Things I don't yet realize. No, this isn't over yet...

JOHNNY CREWS

In fact, it may just be the beginning.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF PLAY)