

# BWW Interview: The First Female Magician Judy Carter Reveals Her DEATH-DEFYING ESCAPE

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## Judy Carter presents her semi-biographical, part-stand-up, part-magic show *A Death-Defying Escape!* live at the Hudson Guild Theatre beginning April 2nd

Author/ stand-up comedian/ magician Judy Carter presents her semi-biographical, part-stand-up, part-magic show *A Death-Defying Escape!* live at the Hudson Guild Theatre beginning April 2, 2022, with online streaming available starting April 9th. Lee Costello directs Judy alongside Kevin Scott Allen and Lyndsi LaRose. Judy made some time for me to magically transform my queries into amusing bon mots.



**Thank you for taking the time for this interview, Judy!  
Was it a no-brainer to offer your show both live on stage and streaming?**

Yes, because I know we in L.A. think we are the only people who count. But I've noticed that there are people not in L.A. who would LOVE this play like - New York and even Tuscaloosa Alabama. Yes, there are gay bars in Tuscaloosa, and I've played them as a comic - both of them.

**Has the pandemic made you a streaming and Zoom expert?**

I don't mean to brag, but I do have some eye-catching virtual backgrounds of really exotic places. Some people like to use the moon, but I like to keep it real, and I Zoom in front of the Fresno DMV.

**When did you first sit down to write this show, your autobiography?**

It's not really an autobiography. It's just a real coincidence that the main character happens to have my exact name and last four of my social. My play is stories loosely based on moments in my life, but in the play, they are funnier and with better lighting.

It's not a one-person show as it has two other actors in it. Both are way more attractive than the people that they are based on.

And, as far as "sitting down and writing," I never write sitting down. I've put in over one million steps, talking into my iPhone while walking around Venice, often passing a homeless encampment shouting lines from the play, "Mom, I'm gay! I'm gay!" Thank God I don't live in Florida where it's illegal to say that.

**What would your three-line pitch of *A Death-Defying Escape!* be?**

Like Houdini, we all have to escape from something whether it be a Verizon contract or escaping from the closet - in the '80s! In this play, Judy Carter, America's first Jewish-Lesbian-Magician, reveals how to use magical techniques to escape from past trauma and find love. It is a story told with a lot of laughs, hot kissing, and jaw-dropping magic illusions.

**You started performing magic at the ripe young age of ten. Who taught you your initial tricks?**

I learned from books in a long-forgotten place called a library. As my girlfriend is a much younger millennial, I'm often having to stop and explain things, such as what a library and books are.

I wanted to become a magician, but not to saw women in half. I wanted to put my mother back together, make my alcoholic father vanish, and levitate my disabled sister out of her wheelchair.

### **What magicians did you look up to when you first started?**

I wish I could say, there was a female magician to emulate. But there were no female magicians, now or ever. Try. Try to name one? You can't. I think it's because the idea that a woman can manipulate one's sense of reality is terrifying to many. So, when I became the first woman to play the Magic Castle Closeup Gallery, I studied with master magician Dai Vernon. He suggested I play dumb so as not to intimidate others. Still, after one of my performances, I was picked up and carried out, thrown into the parking lot with this Italian magician telling me, "Women don't belong there. Cards are for men." Why? Because they are so heavy?

### **You had to overcome your speech impediment to perform at birthday parties. What techniques or processes do you suggest to a youngster with a speech impediment?**

My Jewish-Russian grandmother had to learn English, and so she took the time to teach me words by saying them repeatedly. That was the secret for me. Standing in front of grandma, repeating the magic patter along with the physical movement of the tricks. The only problem is that I ended up speaking like a Jewish butcher.

### **As the first female close-up magician to perform at the Magic Castle, tell us the hurdles you had to jump through for the opportunity to dazzle the crowds there.**

Women in magic were always the assistant. That never appealed to me, as the assistant was the one who had to jump into boxes and get sawed in half. She was the one cleaning up all the rabbit shit, and then at the end she takes a step back, points to a man, and HE takes the bow. Why the hell would anyone want to do that? So, it was very controversial when I got a hairy male assistant and put him in a skimpy gold lamé bikini and sawed him in half. This trick was a staple of male magicians, but when I did, I was told I was "hostile to men." But you will see it in my play.

### **You became a stand-up comedian out of necessity when your luggage packed with your magic equipment was lost. How did you come up with your first comedy set?**

I write about this in my book, "The New Comedy Bible." Comedy is based on things that go wrong. Happy people who have never been rejected aren't that funny. So it was at a Playboy Club in Chicago, where a beefy mafia guy told me that "Curtain was at 8." He didn't care that United Airlines made my tricks vanish. So, after crying my eyes out in the bunny locker room, into the breasts of a woman dressed as a rabbit, I went on and just told the truth about what happened, and people started to laugh. Matter of fact, Hef was there and invited me to stay overnight at the Chicago mansion in the leather room. I was disappointed to discover that it was really vinyl. And he was disappointed to find out that I didn't want him, but that woman from the bunny locker room.

### **How did your appearance on The Mike Douglas Show come about?**



I did over 100 TV shows in the '80s/'90s. Everyone wanted to see a funny female magician. And since I was the ONLY funny female magician, I was working constantly.

**Tell us about your experience as the opening act for Prince.**

A fellow comic told me, don't do it! Not only will you be the only white person in the room, but he is so much more attractive than you are. But it went great and after that I traveled with him and he was a gracious and charming man.

**Was Prince off-stage the same or completely different from his onstage persona?**

Completely different. Onstage he was a confident dynamo. Off stage, he was the shyest person I've ever met.

**You are a magician, stand-up comedian, author, international keynote speaker and TED talker. Which of those occupations gives you the most gratification?**

They each give me something different. The magic is something I'm doing in the play, and it makes me the most nervous because if one thing goes wrong, you don't vanish. You are just still sitting there with people staring at you. I do love making people laugh and corporate speaking is so great because they don't realize that we comics will perform for just a sandwich, and the pay is so great that I was able to buy my home in Venice Beach. It cost me over 1 million jokes.

**Financial compensation aside, which of those occupations would you choose if you had to choose only one?**

Being an author is the best. My book, "The New Comedy Bible" has been optioned for China, Brazil, France and even Mongolia. That means that on social media I get to meet funny people from all over the world. And it also means that no matter where I go in the world, I have a couch to sleep on. Besides it's the only job I can do naked.

**What's in the near future for Judy Carter?**

It is my hope to bring A Death-Defying Escape! to NYC. That's my dream.

**Thank you again, Judy! I look forward to laughing and being mystified by you.**

For tickets for the live show of A Death-Defying Escape! through May 8th, or virtual stream beginning April 9th, log onto [www.deathdefyingescape.com](http://www.deathdefyingescape.com)

