

SINDICATION

By

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Characters

Old Man.....	80s
Middle-Aged Woman.....	50s
Middle-Aged Man.....	50s
Young Woman.....	20s
Voice of Old Woman.....	70s
Voice of Small Girl.....	3-5
Voice of News Reporter.....	open*

Setting

A den with couch, recliner, and rocking chair. Dressed as any typical, southern, middle-class household might appear. Though we do not see an actual TV, the lighting should have the effect of a flashing TV screen of any nondescript channels across their faces.

Time

Any given Sunday afternoon.

NOTE: In keeping with **the intended timeliness** of this play, it is the playwright’s wish that, if necessary and common sense dictates it, that specific political and national disasters or culturally contemporary news references may be substituted for certain lines through the discretion of the director and cast, so long as such updates do not work against the structure and context of the play as a whole (i.e., this is not a farce anymore than it is a serious drama – in fact, it’s a study of that stereotypical sad humor of inherited pathos that infects many small town families) so it is strongly recommended that the humor present in the script is consistent and reflected in any such substitutions. Case in point, at the time this was completed, Trump had just been declared the Mississippi Republican 2016 primary winner; Sanders took the Democratic primary in Michigan. Though these are not fully reflected in this version, several generalized references and controversies have been left in for the sake of establishing the “formula.” Again, feel free to add any current or news-relevant reference you wish as long as it keeps the intent of the play’s purpose intact..

Further, **an important physical effect** of the action, as intended by the playwright, of this piece should take the form of people who are either puppet-like (or perhaps a blend of puppet-actor: puppets when watching TV; actors when discussing familiar/family news items) OR to the effect of children playing dress-up, aping the behavior of stereotypical adults in their families, stripped away towards the end to reveal young people, the “next generation.” The sky is the limit, there, but to the title’s end, each one on stage should affect the mimicking behavior of a dipping (or drinking) bird nodding in growing ferocity as the news stirs their respective characters, except when they break from the generic dialogue and speak about their personal lives, or when that rare moment occurs where they start to think for themselves...to no avail.

FX: A blinking TV filter over the stage indicating channel changes and content—the fourth wall is the frame of the TV; a TV voice* that may be prerecorded or live (offstage: Young Woman).

At rise, OLD MAN is sitting in the rocking chair; MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN is on couch. They are watching the news. In general, all will have the effect of nodding in their consensus of how “bad the world’s become” as they address random news items except for items related to the “world they live in” (marked by “sipping” in the stage directions). When discussing those items, they will sip their drinks, speaking more familiarly if as distant or disconnected. In the background, inaudible hums of a newscaster as they flip through channels just beneath their conversation is suggested, unless otherwise noted. It is assumed that the fourth wall is the television screen and they will react accordingly, pointing at people in the audience as they would the television, especially during the start of the play.

Shame.	OLD MAN
A shame.	MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
Terrorist, that one.	OLD MAN
No.	MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
Yes.	OLD MAN
Yes. No.	MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
Muslim. How many now’s that make.	OLD MAN
Another Muslim. Where this time.	MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
They all Muslim. DC or Paris or New York. Shame. But, shame on them, too. These Sleeper Cells. Everything Must Go!	OLD MAN
	MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Not here! Not here!

(A flash from the screen)

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Oh. There. The President.

OLD MAN

The President. A real President.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

They don't listen to what he's meaning. Say he's full of blame. Look at that face. Those wrinkles are honest.

OLD MAN

Shame.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Fat off it! They call him a fool!

OLD MAN

He's the President! Not a fool. They don't listen. They won't, not possible.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

This world, today, possible's possible. He's the President! Not gonna be another 9-11.

OLD MAN

Korea! That's another 9-11.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

On the way. It is!

OLD MAN

Of course it is. Trust nothing but suspicion. Everything could be something. Him. Her. Every day is 9-10. Tomorrow—

TOGETHER

9-11.

(A flash from the TV screen)

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Then that one, her, they say.

OLD MAN

Head case. She ought to go away.

(sips)

You hear what happened to Margaret Alice, last Sunday, coming out of the church, huh. Those brick steps, she caught her shoe and fell, she bled on the Russian cypress we just planted.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

(sips)

She shouldn't wear kitten heels at that age, not enough height, too much weight. Mama hates kitten heels, she should have told her.

OLD MAN

(sips)

She hit her head. Lot of blood for her age, came out. Dried up on the brick.

(A flash of the screen again)

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Look at them. Look.

OLD MAN

(sips)

Gotta watch your step.

(A flash from the screen)

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Senator This and That with Old So and So. I could spit.

OLD MAN

And What's Her Face, with all the Blah Blah Blah. Hmph.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

They should all be shot. Shoot 'em!

OLD MAN

All the wrong people get shot. This one, that one. Every channel. Headline news: Age of Anxiety! One Long Birthday!

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Age of Suspicion! Be Black. Eyes Open. Act White. Mouth Shut. And look What's Next.

OLD MAN

Nothing's American.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Ain't we all American now. Come on in, everybody! America to the Rescue. Cause they sure don't stay home!

(Another flash from the screen)

OLD MAN

Guns, guns, guns, I'm sick of these guns.

Those guns! MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Their guns! OLD MAN

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
Have a gun, shoot a gun, they say.

OLD MAN
They say: Guns are people. People are bullets. Bullets are triggers.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
And for what. Save America.

OLD MAN
Same America. Paying for it.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
Me too. Paid for it.

OLD MAN
Praying for it.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
Me too. Prayed for it.

OLD MAN
Me too. Me too!

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
Give up. On them. That side of America. They don't listen...unless you get loud.

OLD GUN
Loud as a bullet! Everybody hears that!

(Another flash from screen)

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN
Here comes another war.

OLD MAN
War is raw, I heard them say on the news. Raw.
(to the TV)
Say it again.

(The volume has gradually increased by this time. We hear the NEWS REPORTER say, “War is raw”).

They said it!
MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Told you.
OLD MAN

(This time we hear the NEWS REPORTER say, “The President said today that the situation continues to get worse...”).

It’s getting bad.
MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

It was already bad.
OLD MAN

It was already bad.
MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

(MIDDLE-AGED MAN enters. The volume returns to an inaudible hum but of shouting)

Fools.
MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Bombs. Bombing.
OLD MAN

Idiots. Too loud. Listen at them. You're too loud! Where is that?
MIDDLE-AGED MAN

If it’s on the TV. Might as well be here. Might as well be the front yard. Or in this room.
OLD MAN

You get too loud you become an animal.
MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

(This time we hear the NEWS REPORTER say, “The President said

today, It's a mating call for another 9-11...").

OLD MAN

It's a mating call for 9-11.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Another one. It's coming.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Around the corner, no doubt.

(sips)

They just put the rolls in. Gonna be another minute before we eat. But it's meatloaf. And zipper peas. And a plate of sliced tomato.

OLD MAN

Around the corner. Any corner! We all live in a corner now.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Everything's a corner!

OLD MAN

They chasing us around in square circles.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Corner after corner after corner. I'm sick of it.

OLD MAN

Four of them in this room.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Get ready to run!

OLD MAN

To where?

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

No room is safe!

OLD MAN

Not even the bathrooms!

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Not the bedrooms!

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Nothing's good.

It was already bad.

OLD MAN

It was already bad.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

I gotta go pee.

(sips)
OLD MAN

(OLD MAN gets up, slowly, with effort, but no one moves to help him)

Make sure you lock the door.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN