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Norman Maine Publishing

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HALLOWEEN 2050 A.D.

Finalist, Love Creek's Perspectives on the Environment,
One-Act Mini-Festival, Nat Home Theatre, New York City, 1992

SCI FI/HORROR. In this post-apocalyptic world, all the birds have died, foul-smelling foam bubbles up from water adorned with strange jewel-like rocks, and more and more people have to conceal their faces with masks, especially the children, as their horrific faces have the "look of the future." It's Halloween and a mother and her two children arrive on the doorstep of an old woman's home. Until now, the old woman has survived by hiding inside her home with the curtains drawn and never touching anything or anyone outside her home. But with it being Halloween, the old woman opens her door to the trick-or-treaters and offers them a few pieces of stale candy and a couple of pennies she has saved in a jar. Once inside, the mother and her children discover the old woman's comfortable, spacious home and can't believe their eyes. In this new world, the government has seized private property, and families are forced to share cramped quarters with strangers in public housing. Spying an opportunity to improve their lives, the family threatens the old woman: either let them live there or they will take off their masks and report her to the government. Audiences will be captivated by this suspenseful, spell-binding play.

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

CHARACTERS

(1 M, 4 F, 1 flexible)
(With doubling: 1 M, 3 F)

OLD WOMAN: Elderly women but energetic for her age; female.

MOTHER: Middle-aged mother but looks much older; has just moved to town with her children and unemployed husband; female.

BOY: 12, but very large for his age and slightly deformed; wears a frightening mask; can be played by an adult; male.

JENNIFER: 10, but large for her age; wears a frightening mask; can be played by an adult; female.

MOTHER 2: Mother who is taking her child trick-or-treating; female.

CHILD: Trick-or-treater; flexible.

OPTIONS FOR DOUBLING

Voiceovers may be used for Mother 2 and Child, if desired.

COSTUMES

The characters wear threadbare clothing of any year, past or future.

SETTING

Halloween, 2050 AD.

SET

Hallway and room of Old Woman's home. There is a front door with an iron-barred security screen door. An umbrella stand is near the front door. Old dilapidated furniture including a couch are located in the adjoining room, which is adorned with assorted vases and statues. There are two interior doors. One door leads to the basement (unseen) and the another door leads to a closet. There are steps that lead to the upstairs (unseen).

PROPS

Jar
A few pieces of candy
Pennies
2 Whistles
Key

SOUND EFFECTS

Doorbell
Loud banging on a door by several people
Sound of running
Whistles
Screaming
Banging on the door by a child
Coughing
Mother voiceover (or an extra may be used)
Child voiceover (or an extra may be used)

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"AFTER THAT,
WE NEVER SAW,
NOR HEARD,
ANOTHER BIRD."

-OLD WOMAN

HALLOWEEN 2050 A.D.

(AT RISE: 2050 A.D., Halloween, late afternoon. It is still daylight. An Old Woman is lying on a couch, sleeping. Doorbell. She awakens, startled.)

OLD WOMAN: *(Calls.)* All right, all right! I'm coming! *(To herself.)* Oh, no...Halloween. And the drapes...I forgot to close them, and I don't have a blessed thing in the house. Well, here's some candy I kept in this jar because the paper was so pretty. *(Takes some candy from a jar. Indicating candy.)* Hard as a rock...who knows from what Christmas. *(Takes some pennies from the jar.)* Well, that and a few pennies. I hope they're nice children. The ones several years ago...kind of frightening, desperate little things...shut the door just in time. Candy, like everything else, so darn expensive, and scarce. It's a treat, that's for sure...a twice-a-year treat. *(Doorbell rings several times and then continues to ring. Irritated, shouts.)* All right! All right!

(Old Woman opens the front door but not the iron-barred security screen door. A Mother, Boy, and Jennifer are standing outside, holding onto the security door's metal bars and looking in.)

BOY/JENNIFER: *(Sing-song.)* Trick or treat. Trick or treat.

OLD WOMAN: Well, it's not much, but I forgot all about it being Halloween. Now, hold out your hands, and I'll drop the treats into them. Just don't touch me. That's it... *(Boy and Jennifer hold out their hands and Old Woman doesn't give them anything.)* Oh, I think that is so nice. It's little things...Halloween...and July Fourth Armistice Day. Of course, July Fourth is now just an excuse for all of them to set off their machines. The reason, like that of Christmas, no longer exists. And as for Armistice Day, well, all those boys...hated now...hated with a purple passion for their

patriotism. Hard to remember what an American was...or is— (*Giggling, the Boy has reached in and lifted an umbrella stand near the door. To Boy, scolding.*) Oh, little boy, no. Now, just leave that alone. It's one of my favorite things.

JENNIFER: Can I use the can, Mommy? Please, I have to take a piss.

MOTHER: I told you to go before we left. Well, I don't think this very nice lady—with this big house and all, her memories of children on holidays no longer celebrated—would mind. (*To Old Woman.*) Would you?

OLD WOMAN: (*Hesitant.*) Why, no...of course not. Come on in. (*Jennifer enters slowly.*) It's the third door on the left...at the top of the stairs.

(Jennifer runs up the steps. Boy and the Mother push their way into the hall.)

MOTHER: I hope you don't mind our waiting inside. The air goes right through one these days. (*Glancing about. Impressed.*) Huh, three doors...imagine. And at the top of the stairs. I can't even picture such a thing. I mean, not in my generation. You see, the small town I came from "disappeared" one giant farm, you see. They bought up all the farms...even the town. Did I say, "bought up"? *Took over* is more like it. Of course, we never saw them. Didn't know who they were, not even their names. And they couldn't give a fuck about where or how we lived, could they?

OLD WOMAN: Please, your language. That is one thing I expect—respect, I mean. It is awful, though, isn't it?

(Mother and the Boy are looking all about, slowly inching their way farther into the house.)

MOTHER: "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words—" (*Slight pause.*) No, it wasn't words, was it? Greed. Yes, greed.

OLD WOMAN: Here...one day, the birds fell from the sky. It rained birds. I had to go up on the roof to sweep them off. They were rotting in the sun...their poor little bloated bodies swelled to bursting, like your son here. (*Laughs.*) I'm sorry. After that, we never saw, nor heard, another bird.

MOTHER: I heard they used to fly in the air...singing these happy songs.

OLD WOMAN: (*Nostalgic.*) Oh, yes, they did. I guess I was lucky, having seen them at all. (*Changes tone.*) The children today...if you want to call them *that*. (*Looks the Boy up and down.*) Well, barely a pretty thing in sight, except for those strange, jewel-like rocks and the foam that bubbles up every so often...smells awful. But the colors are pretty and so unusual. Yes, they left us nothing for the soul.

MOTHER: Soul? Did I hear you say "soul"?

OLD WOMAN: I'm sorry. Hard being old when there's something new to learn...or forget: everyday words and rules, new contaminations. Hard to remember at my age all the things one's supposed to not touch, or do.

MOTHER: (*Looking around, impressed.*) I can't believe this place. The number of windows alone—

OLD WOMAN: They're so useless, though...since all the curtains have to be drawn all the time.

BOY: She must be rich, huh, Momma?

OLD WOMAN: Rich? Oh, no. Is there anyone who's rich these days, I mean outside of foreigners, giant corporations, government officials? This house...it's all I have.

MOTHER: All you have? We should only be so lucky. You see, I also have two teenagers at home. They've never had a room of their own, wouldn't know what it was. Times... (*Sighs.*) Well, you see, we share with two other families. Oh, yes, two families in this tiny apartment. And it's disgusting what they have to see—everything right out in the open.

I'm so ashamed for them. Still, we all have our needs met. But I remember the beauty of it all, years ago, just my husband and I. (*Realizes.*) Oh, but you were there when there were still some conveniences, little luxuries. Yes...this and your memories may be all you have. But you are rich...room after room all to yourself. (*Spies something, excited.*) Do I see a television set?

OLD WOMAN: Yes, but I haven't used it in years. Well, you never know what will happen when you turn it on. Once, all these rays, fiery bits of light...I jumped back just in the time.

MOTHER: And the rooms?

OLD WOMAN: Oh, I still use them. Oh, yes, clean them every day...like my library, for instance.

BOY: Momma, what's a library?

MOTHER: It's a big building with lots of books.

OLD WOMAN: The books kept me going during those...especially bad times. I would look at the pretty pictures. I use all my rooms every day. (*Smiles.*) Actually, this is a very small house. Would you believe I used to envy the people up the street? Those houses...they were called "mansions" then. Of course, all gone now...*public housing*.

MOTHER: (*Insulted.*) The way you say "public," like it's a dirty word.

BOY: (*To Old Woman.*) We live in public housing.

OLD WOMAN: Oh, well, no offense. It's just public housing— (*Stops herself.*) Yes, a blessing. Oh, yes, I say it's a blessing.

MOTHER: We had a flat once, all to ourselves. Of course, we knew the consequences. I mean, that's why it was empty. You see, town was right near a nuclear plant. It was either that or— (*Stops.*) Well, we stuck it out until our little Jennifer— (*Realizes.*) Speaking of Jennifer... (*Calls up the stairs.*) Jennifer! Jennifer, did you fall in?!

JENNIFER: (*Shouts.*) No, Momma! It's just so nice up here...all these pretty bottles...and mirrors. (*Slowly descends*

the stairs and joins the others.) One mirror goes all the way from the floor to the ceiling!

MOTHER: (*Worried.*) You didn't look at yourself, did you? You didn't take off the mask? I told you about looking at yourself...

[END OF FREEVIEW]