

WITNESSES

By Matt Buchanan

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CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

ROB	a stocky man in his thirties, in plain dark clothes.
ANTONIO	an elderly man in a dirty chef's uniform.
SHARON	a pretty teenager in a school uniform.
RAJ	a handsome teenager in a school uniform, his arm in a sling.
MARGE	an elderly woman in shabby clothing, with a bandage on her head.
STAN	a tall man in his thirties, in plain dark clothes.
ANGELA	a fit woman in her twenties, in a police uniform.

PRODUCTION NOTES

This piece contains a certain amount of what might be considered objectionable language. In addition to a couple of "damns" it contains a number of pejorative terms for various races or cultures-- "Towelhead," "Wop," "Paki," "Shaka Zulu," "Jungle Joe," "PR," etc. While it may be necessary in certain settings to excise some of these terms, it is important to remember that the whole point is that all of these characters harbor certain prejudices that are revealed through their word choices. Excessive "cleaning up" of the language will significantly lessen the impact of the play.

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(This play can be cast in a number of ways. Seven individual actors can be used, or all of the roles can be played by two actors—say, one doing the female roles and one the male—or even by a single actor doing all the characters. If multiple actors are used, they should be scattered about the stage, if possible each with his or her own light, and never physically interact.)

Costumes for the various roles are indicated above, but obviously if actors are playing multiple roles it will be impossible for them to make the necessary changes. In that case all characters should be dressed neutrally.

While the ethnic background of many of the characters will probably eventually become evident to most people, it is important not to indulge in stereotypical accents, nor is it necessary to cast according to ethnicity.)

ROB: Okay, yeah, I don't mind telling you what happened. You got us dead to rights anyway. But I'm telling you now—we would have gotten away clean if Stan could keep it in his pants.

ANTONIO: I'm too old for this, I don't mind telling you. This used to be a nice neighborhood, you know? This is the third time I've been robbed this year. So they didn't get away with it this time. Still took a couple years off my life.

SHARON: So Raj and I are in Centre Pizza having a slice. The crabby old guy behind the counter is looking at Raj like he always does—like he expects him to start tossing grenades any second. Racist scumbag. But he gets us our slices anyway. There's nobody else in there except this old homeless woman who must've come in to get out of the cold or something. I guess the old guy doesn't care.

RAJ: The old man doesn't like me much because I once asked him if there was any beef in his sausage pizza and he didn't know. I think he thought I was trying to make trouble. I just wanted to know. Sometimes I prefer to avoid beef. But I don't think he really has a problem with Indians. Old people just take longer to get used to things. I don't know why Sharon hates him so much.

ANTONIO: This used to be a nice neighborhood. You know what I'm saying? We never used to have robberies before *they* started moving

in. Damn foreigners and their damn kids—and they all have about a dozen, too. Taking up space decent Americans need. Like the kid that was in here that afternoon. Arab or something. He was with this nice Italian girl, too. Towelhead punk. Made me sick, but you can't say anything. For this I took a bullet in Korea?

MARGE: There was nobody in the shop but me and Tony, until these two nice—*ethnic* youngsters came in with their schoolbags. They ordered slices and sat down to eat them. The boy even nodded politely to me. I don't know why people have to be racists. Some of them are very nice—and they have beautiful babies.

STAN: Rob will tell you it was the Puerto Rican kid who fouled things up but if he wasn't so stupid we'd have gotten away clean. I mean, come on—two kids, a bag lady, and an old Wop with a limp? Should have been toast. Damn foreign punk brats spoil everything. This used to be a nice neighborhood.

ROB: We weren't really planning to hit the old guy at all. Since he can't sell beer all he usually gets in there is punk kids who buy one slice and just hang around. How much can he be making? We just wanted a slice. But then we saw how empty it was. Just the old bag and two kids. One of them was this stuck-up looking white girl—looks like money, you know—and one was like Paki or something.

SHARON: So anyway, we get our slices and our cokes and sit down by the window. These two men come in. Real grungy. Like they were bikers or something. One of them looks at me—you know what I mean. Creeped me right out. They didn't sit down—just ordered slices and took them outside.

STAN: There was this girl in there. Real looker. She seemed to be with the Puerto Rican kid, but I could see her looking me over. Giving me the eye, know what I mean? I can always tell.

RAJ: So about five minutes later the two men came back. Somehow they looked more purposeful this time. I saw the taller one lock the door behind him. Then the shorter one took out a gun. I don't know what kind it was—I hate guns. Big, anyway.

MARGE: One of the men was “Afro-American.” Isn't that the correct term? He took out what looked like a very large pistol and pointed it at Tony. I think it was a pistol.

ANTONIO: The black one had a sawed-off twelve-gauge shotgun. Pansy gun. Anybody can hit anything with that, but it's messy as hell. Give me my old combat rifle any day. The other one locks the door and then Shaka Zulu starts bellowing orders.

ROB: I told the old guy to get out from behind the counter and move over by the wall where Stan was herding the others. The rich girl and the Paki were already sitting on the floor. The old broad refused to move and Stan had to get a little rough.

SHARON: Stupid old woman! I don't know what she was trying to prove. Couldn't she see the gun? All she ended up doing was making him mad.

RAJ: There was no reason for him to be so rough with the old woman. No reason at all.

MARGE: I just looked at him and said, "Young man," I said, "You need to learn some manners." Well, I mean, I'm too old to let some young delinquent order me about in my own shop.

SKIP: The old bag lady decides to give me some lip. Who's she now, my Grandma? Old. I showed her who was boss all right.

ANTONIO: Of course it has to happen when Mrs. Marcus is in the store. She owns half the block, even if she doesn't look like it, but she mostly lets me run the place without sticking her nose in too much. I probably should of put up more of a fight but they took me by surprise. And you can't reason with those people. Half of 'em would as soon shoot you as look at you. Law of the jungle or some damn thing. This used to be a decent neighborhood.

ROB: So we had 'em all lined up sitting against the back wall. I covered them with the piece while Stan went through the register. Stupid gun. I don't know why we couldn't have used a sub or something. The old bag was bleeding a little from the head and the rich girl was sniffing.

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