Water Foul

A political satire for our times

By Lori Marra

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CHARACTERS

Kingfisher	A loud waterfowl who wants to rule all the waters of the world. He's on full Thrusters with "survival of the fittest".
Goose	A waterfowl true believer in Kingfisher because he is not even close to being the fittest.
Gulls	A Greek chorus of birds who just want to eat freedom fries. Note: All GULL lines are to be sung like a Greek Chorus. They start together but break up into a cacophony, yet the audience must be able to understand the lines. Have fun with these birds.
Ms. Mallard	A free-thinking feminist duck who is done letting the guy-ducks run this river. They have mucked it up enough.
Swan	A powerful waterfowl from another world altogether. He has come here because there's lots of natural resources—lots more than his homeland, and he's going to take them.
Heron	An old waterfowl who just wants to crack open a bass and watch the Sun set. He's been here a millennium and doesn't tolerate ignorance.
Loon	An ancient, wise waterfowl who knows the bipeds and their ways are the root cause of all their problems. He desperately wants them all to get along and understand who the real enemy is.

TIME

Any time

PLACE

A small bay in a big river where waterfowl gather.

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KINGFISHER and GOOSE fly in downstage center.
KINGFISHER looks around at the audience.

KINGFISHER

(Loudly) And we will drain this swamp/

GOOSE

(Aside to KINGFISHER) /Sir, no one is here yet, and, uhm, it's not a swamp.

(KINGFISHER looks at the water.)

KINGFISHER

And we will drain this water of its swamp scum/

GOOSE

(Aside to KINGFISHER)

/It's a bay, uhm, sir. A small bay in a river. A very big river, sir. Some call it an inlet/

KINGFISHER

/Shut up. And make it flow freely again! This is one big swamp.

GOOSE

Yes it is, sir.

(GOOSE spins around, then back to audience. The Gulls fly in.)

GULLS

Kingfisher has come to our bay. He is a KING! He fishes. Thus his literal name. He will drain this swamp! He will drain this swamp! HE WILL DRAIN THIS SWAMP!

KINGFISHER

(To GOOSE) Ya hear that?! These birds, they love me. So loud. The loudest birds ever, cheering for me.

(The GULLS continue and get louder and louder.)

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KINGFISHER (CONT.)

Alright already. Shut up!

GOOSE

You heard the man!

(The GULLS' chorus goes into mayhem.)

Shut up! You sound like a bunch of mucked up Mallards!

(The GULLS whisper in mayhem. MS. MALLARD storms in from some reeds.)

MS. MALLARD

(Quack-like) Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey!

GOOSE

I didn't see you over there.

MS. MALLARD

You guys never do.

KINGFISHER

Who's the broad?

GOOSE

That's the Mallard, sir.

MS. MALLARD

MS. Mallard buddy.

GOOSE

Ms. Mallard.

KINGFISHER

What a bitchy bird.

GOOSE

Technically, she's a duck.

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GULLS

Ms. Mallard is a duck, whose totally f-ed up. The males are so bright, but she just shows her might. All she does is bitch—that loud and brown old witch. Ms. Mallard, oh, right. Take to flight. You're so wrong. Just be gone/

KINGFISHER

(To GOOSE) /They love me. But can you shut them up.

GOOSE

Shut the hell up!

(ALL quiet)

KINGFISHER

Thanks.

(To ALL)

This water is infested with birds that/

GOOSE

(Aside to KINGFISHER)

/Waterfowl sir.

KINGFISHER

With waterfowl that are invaders to this great big thing of water.

GULLS

Waterfowl on a flowing river, not a pond, not a lake. But he does not know this. No, he does not know this. And we are birds, not waterfowl, not ducks. No, no, we are birds and all doomed. Doomed! DOOMED. Our borders are sullied from the muck of other water foul. Water. Foul. Water. Most foul!

MS. MALLARD

Can you guys shorten the chorus?

GULLS

No no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no!

MS. MALLARD

Just, wow.

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GOOSE

(To Gulls) Ducks, birds, you're splitting hairs.

GULLS

We do not have hairs. We have wings. We have feathers. There are no hairs. But there is a split among us and not what you would think.

KINGFISHER

Get them out of here!

GOOSE

Out, out, out, OUT!

(HE chases off the GULLS.)

MS. MALLARD

Let's knock off the small talk about knocking off the waterfowl. We all depend on this river.

KINGFISHER

Who are you?

MS. MALLARD

The duck you just hit on then called a bitch.

KINGFISHER

Hey sweetie, if I were you, I'd be lobbying to get those sorry-ass, dull as dirt wings of yours brightened up. Sad that you can't turn any heads in this pond.

GOOSE

Not a pond, sir.

MS. MALLARD

We can clean up this *RIVER* by drowning you first!

(GULLS begin to sneak back in. Several have giant French fries in their beaks.)

KINGFISHER

(Grabbing a fry that a gull has dropped, HE devours it. Then, to MS. MALLARD--)

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Dull colors and a big mouth.

(MS. MALLARD heads for KINGFISHER. GOOSE blocks HER.)

KINGFISHER (CONT.)

See?! Ducks—totally viscous. You're a bad species. Very VERY bad.

MS. MALLARD

Ya know, I shit green and I'm about to point my ass in your/

GULLS

/He called Ms. Mallard a bad species. He sayeth ducks are dull. He sayeth ducks are dull. Discrimination. Humiliation. We want emancipa--

(GOOSE chases off GULLS off stage. Maybe as they exit, they steal a French fry from under an audience member's seat.)

KINGFISHER

Listen up my feathered fowls. Sacred water deserves sacred birds. We must purge the waters of these abominations, so I've brought a buddy---ah, guest to speak with all of us about how we can make this pond flow freely again.

GOOSE

Sir, ponds, I mean, bays, don't flow.

KINGFISHER

Sure they do.

(Kicking water up)

See.

MS. MALLARD

Nobody told us there'd be guests.

KINGFISHER

If I told you, they wouldn't be guests.

(A SWAN flies in like a storm trooper. This is a VERY BIG, militant entrance.)

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KINGFISHER (CONT)

Our friend the Swan is here. Great birds. Aren't they a great bird?

GOOSE

Waterfowl, sir.

KINGFISHER

They look so great. Don't they look great? And they're smart. So smart.

(The SWAN begins flapping its wings in an expansive gesture. The wings smack MS. MALLARD.)

MS. MALLARD

Hey! Watch it you invasive piece of white swan trash. That's my feathers you're rufflin' there.

KINGFISHER

Now you want *them* out. Fake bird!

MS. MALLARD

Until they stop killing the other waterfowl, hell yeah.

SWAN

I got this boss—ahh, Mr. Kingfisher. (To MS. MALLARD) Can you prove you're a waterfowl?

MS. MALLARD

Look at me you idiot.

SWAN

I'm looking. I see brown feathers and a beak. You could be a Sparrow.

(SHE sticks her webbed foot into his face. The HERON swoops in with a fish, which oddly resembles a can of beer. The GULLS swarm him but he gulps it—as Herons do. From backstage, some garbage is thrown on stage and they flock to it.)

HERON

She was born on this river, two seasons ago. A biped killed her mate.

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MS. MALLARD

Off Wackinonna Edge, that's what our friends, the beautiful, brown native bipeds of these waters, called it. They loved the land and its creatures, all of us. Then, the pale, loud bipeds came. They drove away the brown bipeds and claimed everything, including my mother's nesting spot. They call it Rock Island now. How ridiculously blasé.

SWAN

That only proves to me you know the names of some rocks.

HERON

Believe what you will.

SWAN

I will.

HERON

Will you?

SWAN

Will you what?

HERON

(To audience) Not the brightest invasive species in the bay.

KINGFISHER

(Aside to GOOSE)

Who's this crazy bird?

GOOSE

It's a Heron sir. Another waterfowl.

KINGFISHER

Friend or foe?

GOOSE

Don't know.

KINGFISHER

Does he live around here?

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GOOSE

You mean “nest” sir?

SWAN

I’ve seen this whack job sneaking around these shores.

HERON

Begging your pardon. My fowl have been here since the ice age.

(SWAN puffs up to attack. GOOSE steps between them.)

GOOSE

Now, now, now, let’s unruffle our feathers here.

(SWAN tries to take him out. GOOSE awkwardly dodges HIM. GULLS swoop back in and disrupt SWAN.)

GULLS

Peace. Peace. PEACE! We are birds of peace. Peace be with us all!

HERON

Doves bring peace, not gulls.

(Long pause as Gulls confer.)

GULLS

(Singing like a beautiful, Dove-like choir) Sorry.

MS. MALLARD

(To Swan) Heron has a lot of friends, with contacts all up and down these waters.

KINGFISHER

Hold it! What kind of friends?

HERON

I know all the creatures on this river.

KINGFISHER

Ok. He stays. Now, let’s get back to business. The swans have expanded their nests here. They can teach us a thing or two, unlike you losers.

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MS. MALLARD

There's a way to win friends and influence waterfowl.

SWAN

We're expanding our nesting rights, so you all gotta fish somewhere else.

MS. MALLARD

We don't fish.

SWAN

And that's why you're suspect. All ducks should fish. Your kind are eating up our algae and greenery, and that's an abomination, and our food source.

MS. MALLARD

It's the other way around, clown! And BTW, you eat the same thing we do. (To HERON) Are you hearing this?

(HERON nods, defeated.)

KINGFISHER

She's such a bitch.

SWAN

Which is exactly why we need you out of here.

GOOSE

Yeah.

MS. MALLARD

Idiot, you don't fish either. The swans are pushing us out! INVASIVE!!!!!

GOOSE

They're pushing *you* out.

MS. MALLARD

For now. You're next, you algae-eating bozo.

GOOSE

(To KINGFISHER) Is that true?

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HERON

Stop. Please. There is room for us all. We are not the enemy. The pale bipeds have polluted our waters, taken away the plentiful shores and overfished our waters. We are all suffering. We must work together, or we will all die.

(More garbage is thrown on the stage. The GULLS rush to it.)

KINGFISHER

Look, there's plenty to eat. More fake news from an ancient washed-up bird.

GOOSE

Sir, he's a/

KINGFISHER

/Zip it.

HERON

Yes, I am old. And no, we have not expanded our nesting areas. That's why there's room for all. (To SWAN) You come along and have seen to it that our nests are depleted by chasing us out of the quiet inlets we've fished and lived in for centuries.

KINGFISHER

Wait, you know this guy?

HERON

(Ignoring KINGFISHER) You're as bad as the bipeds.

SWAN

You were nowhere to be found old bird. Move aside.

GOOSE

Uhm sir, he's a waterfowl.

SWAN

(To GOOSE) Didn't I see you with Heron yesterday?

GOOSE

Comparing fishing is all. We were just talking a little fishing. Like you said, all of us should fish. Geese are gonna start fishing. That's what I was doing. Learning how to fish.

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HERON

You were talking fishing *and* squawking about the potential problem with the Swans. Something about wolves in white plumage.

SWAN

Is this true?

GOOSE

I deny that.

KINGFISHER

Hmph. You'd better.

SWAN

(To ALL, grandstanding) We offer protection against other enemies.

MS. MALLARD

But you are the enemy! And a murderer! You killed a Goose!

(GOOSE tries to back away. SWAN grabs HIM.)

SWAN

Did I?

HERON

Goose, you saw it.

GOOSE

I uhm. I heard something. It was late.

HERON

Gulls, you saw it.

(GULLS sneak upstage out of way, maybe grabbing another French fry.)

KINGFISHER

Ya can't prove he killed that bird.

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GOOSE

Waterfowl, sir.

KINGFISHER

I knew that.

GOOSE

I know you did.

KINGFISHER

I know you know I did.

HERON

Gentlefoul, please. (TO SWAN) It was found near your nest, with its beak torn off.

MS. MALLARD

(To KINGFISHER) You're an idiot, but that doesn't mean we should peck off your beak. (Aside to audience) But I'd pay to see that.

GULLS

Is it true you have a plan to rid the river of Geese? No! Here we all live in peace. How many nesting areas will you capture? Is this our ageless, untold rapture? Did you kill the Goose? DID YOU KILL THE Goose? Are all our waterfowl heads in your noose?

KINGFISHER

Get those sky rats out of here-and make it so they can't come back!

(GOOSE tries to take out the GULLs. But THEY start pecking at GOOSE. LOON appears and waves a fish. The GULLS go crazy for the fish.)

GULLS

The crazy Loon! Cries at the Moon. Lunatic. Wings so slick. Black and white. Rarely in flight. Fishes like a pro. He's our bro!

LOON

(Laughing) Ok, that's fine. Really. Thanks guys. Simmer down.

(HE swallows the fish. The GULLS are sad.)

I see some nice, golden, crispy fries out there.

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(Freedom fries fall from the sky and into the audience.)

KINGFISHER

Freedom fries!

(The GULLS swoop into the audience and grab fries then exit singing joyful songs.)

HERON

Clever.

LOON

Just helpin' out. What's goin' on?

MS. MALLARD

This swan guy is denying he killed a Goose.

(LOON thinks carefully.)

LOON

It's all supposed to be survival of the fittest, isn't it?

SWAN

Yes it is! What about you?

LOON

What about me?

SWAN

Are you a native of these waters because rumor has it, you illegally dove across the border from the enemy nation of Canada?

LOON

Rumor is all it is. I assure you, I am.

SWAN

Am what?

LOON

A native.

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SWAN

Prove it.

LOON

My kind have fished these waters for many many years. Heron knows this, as he and his kind have fished even longer than us.

KINGFISHER

Heron-shmeron. What's he know?

GOOSE

They call you a Canadian Loon.

LOON

They call you a Canadian Goose.

GOOSE

Oh.

MS. MALLARD

(In KINGFISHER'S FACE) He and his kind have lived on this river for millennia.

KINGFISHER

Fake news! (To LOON) By the way, I love those feathers. Are they real?

LOON

Very real. Like I was saying, we're all here, so we're all fit. Maybe we should work together.

HERON

You're wailing up the wrong river Loon.

LOON

That was actually a tremolo. But that doesn't matter. What does matter is that the pale bipeds are accelerating climate change, invading our waters, and causing havoc in this small bay, the likes of which none of us have ever seen.

SWAN

That's exactly why we are moving in here. We're offering these birds protection against the bipeds.

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LOON

I see.

KINGFISHER

These swans are tough hombres.

GOOSE

The scientific name is aves acuáticas, sir.

KINGFISHER

Shut up.

SWAN

We're goin' one stroke bigger: We're takin' on the bipeds.

(All gasp except LOON. The GULLS start to gather.)

GOOSE

That's probably not a good idea.

MS. MALLARD

You're a loonatic.

LOON

Easy there.

MS. MALLARD

No offense.

LOON

None taken.

HERON

No one challenges the bipeds.

SWAN

Until now.

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GULLS

The bipeds are the evil gods. Their displaced digits make it so. Oh no. OH NO! They even kill their own. Oh no. OH NO. Leave the bipeds alone.

SWAN

Listen up. We're gonna take on these bipeds and all of you are going to/

(A loud roar of a boat motor)

MS. MALLARD

/BIPEDS!!!!!!!!!!!!

GOOSE

With a motor!!!!!!

HERON

Loon, what do we have?

HERON

One boat, a big motor, three total bipeds headed this way.

GOOSE

Up. Up everyone! FLY!

(MS. MALLARD starts to flap. SWAN grabs HER and GOOSE.)

SWAN

Ha. A puny 50CC, 8-horse power Mercury and some wimpy bipeds. We will take them! Spread out. Spread your wings! Look BIG!

GOOSE

(To KINGFISHER) I don't think that will work Sir.

LOON

I've spotted rifles. Hunting season. They've come for Ms. Mallard, but they'll take us all out. We all need to dive or fly!

HERON

Agreed. Dive! Fly!

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KINGFISHER

(To GOOSE) Can Swans take them?

(GOOSE shakes his head ‘no’.)

GULLS

The bipeds on motors approach. They glide, they roar, they encroach. First one, now two, now three, raging, raging through our bay. We fly and fly until the end. Our wings so weak, they cannot bend. Nothing matters. Bipeds rage and we are tossed. Water, River, all is lost.

LOON

(Loudly over the motor and GULLS) Listen to me. We must avoid the bipeds!

SWAN

Don’t listen to that Loonatic. Fight. Fight! FIGHT ON ALL!

LOON

We can survive. We can thrive. Heron and I, our species have outlived the ice age and thousands of years of bipeds. We can all survive now.

(MS. MALLARD breaks away.)

MS. MALLARD

Yes we can!

GULLS

We are not going back!

HERON

Dive or fly. Dive or fly! NOW!

KINGFISHER

Only losers run, you loser!

GOOSE

You heard Heron! Fly. FLY!

(SWAN is puffed up and waving, trying to get the bipeds to come toward HIM.)

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SWAN

Come on you punks.

KINGFISHER

(To GOOSE) These swans are bad birds—he can take them. Let's get out of here.

(KINGFISHER exits)

GULLS

Dive and fly. The bipeds soar on land, by sea, in the sky and we will all die. Dive and fly. Dive and Fly. When will this river freeze, dark and dead and take away the biped? When oh great one, when? Alas, it has frozen before, and--

(All dive or fly except SWAN. Another thunderous roar and gunshots. SWAN goes down. The GOOSE runs on stage and drags SWAN aside. As HE does, another shot and GOOSE goes down. Blackout. Beat. Lights up slowly.)

(The HERON and LOON resurface.)

HERON

We tried.

LOON

Not hard enough. (Beat) More bipeds every year—

HERON

Ahhh, the old "this is all because of the bipeds" line? Come on.

LOON

Are you blind?

HERON

Are you crazy?

LOON

Hey hey. Watch your language!

HERON

Forgive me. (Looking at the dead SWAN and GOOSE) I know it hurts, but we've been here before.

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LOON

And that's supposed to make it easier?

HERON

I didn't say that.

LOON

Then what exactly are you saying, old friend?

HERON

I'm saying, it's so easy for us to blame this all on the bipeds. But when an entire genius of animals starts hating each other based on species, we are doomed. (Beat) May I remind you- that Swan was trying to wipe out all of us. You should thank the bipeds.

LOON

Because I get to live?

HERON

For another millennia or so, yes!

LOON

They just needed to fly.

HERON

That survival of the fittest nonsense—pure bullshit. I'm a novelty. And you are too. Oh sure, diving helps, so does flying but let's not get too arrogant. You have a crazy call. And look at those wacky, beautify stripes. And that red eye! You're a novelty to the bipeds, my friend. And so am I. Look at my nutty head with a blue stripe. And my crazy legs. I'm a dinosaur—bipeds love this stuff. We get to live because *they* like looking at us.

LOON

Swan and Goose are pretty common waterfowl. They're not weird enough, so they had to die because of that? Is that what you're saying?

HERON

I'm saying…I don't know what I'm say. Listen to yourself. The bipeds don't kill you, but Swan and Kingfisher would have.

LOON

Your point?

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HERON

There is no point. If the bipeds don't get us, our own kind will. Is might right? I don't know but I've laid low and kept quiet. And I'm still here. You make lots of noise but dive and hide like a ghost. And you're still here.

LOON

Birds of a feather…

HERON

That's bullshit.

LOON

Maybe so, but I kind of like the sound of it. So, again. What is your point?

HERON

That's just it. I don't really have one. I just know how to survive.

LOON

Why can't we all just float here together?

HERON

That, my feathered friend, is the million-dollar question.

(LOON waddles to the dead waterfowl and bows HIS head. A long silence.)

Hey, I know a great little fishing hole. Shallow on the edge for me. Nice and deep for you. Whatta ya say?

LOON

I'm not hungry.

HERON

Who said I was hungry?

LOON

You go on.

(HERON goes to LOON.)

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HERON

We've both got to keep *going on*. What other species is going explain all of this after the bipeds are gone? (Beat) Come on. (Beat) Come on.

LOON

(Half smiling) You're a slow flyer.

HERON

(Smiling back) And you're a deep diver.

LOON

Where to then?

HERON

About two nautical miles South East. Three as the crow flies.

LOON

Ahh, the crow. Now there's an old bird for ya.

HERON

Oh please…

(THEY exit. KINGFISHER sneaks on stage and addresses the audience.)

KINGFISHER

Crows. Just big, black birds. Nasty and loud. You don't like them either. Am I right? See me later so we can talk about clearing these bad birds out of the weeds. Right now, I got a little fishing to do.

(The Gulls enter and swarm him. Blackout. End of Play.)

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