

WINNER: BEST COMEDY, 1998, Christians in Theatre Arts sketch contest

To Thank ... Or Not to Thank

By Teri Kistler

CAST: 1 male, 1 female

Abby: A single mom. Dressed in traditional Puritan garb, including apron and bonnet. Wears bright red nail polish.

Jim: Dressed in traditional Puritan costume. Imitation buckle of his shoe is obviously askew.

RUN TIME: 13 minutes

PROPS

- Small table with a tablecloth in autumn hues
- Platter with plastic turkey
- Journal
- Two stools (optional)

STORY

Abby and Jim are thrown together when they take on an acting gig for a Chamber of Commerce Thanksgiving display. Abby has a cynical reaction to Jim's seemingly picture-perfect family celebration. For her, the holiday is a reminder of unpleasant memories of her family. Jim helps her see that no matter what the circumstances are, we all make the choice to be thankful – or not.

THEMES

Thanksgiving. Connecting. Family. Hope. Evangelism.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

For the tableau scene, consider a lighting change if you have the ability.

To Thank ... Or Not to Thank

(MUSIC begins with a song like "'Tis the Gift to be Simple" or "We Gather Together." A pilgrim couple, both dressed in traditional Puritan garb, stand one on either side of a small table with a turkey and other Thanksgiving-type delicacies. JIM is caught at the end of a freeze; he stretches and relaxes in a very non-Puritan manner. ABBY adjusts her apron and, smoothing it over her stomach, grimaces)

ABBY

This dress definitely makes me look fat. Tell me I'm not this fat.

JIM

You look –

ABBY

(Holding up a hand in warning)

-- We just met ten minutes before we started this gig. I'd advise you not to respond to that. By the way, your shoes are falling apart.

(JIM looks at the silver cardboard buckle that is peeling away from his shoe)

ABBY (cont'd)

Need any help?

JIM

(Seeing the state of his shoe for the first time)

No.

(Awkwardly)

I've got it under control.

(JIM takes off the shoe and attempts to adjust the cardboard)

You've got to admit the Chamber of Commerce had a unique idea with this one.

ABBY

(Sarcastically)

Like every Huey, Duey and Luey wouldn't be out shopping the day after Thanksgiving anyway. But my agent told me:

(Mimicking)

"You've got to start somewhere, doll-face."

(Smooths apron)

Now does this qualify as "costume work"?

JIM

Not totally. As I understand it, you wouldn't have a memorized script, and you'd probably be wearing something furry and blue and suffocating. ... This is some costume though.

(JIM awkwardly puts his shoe back on and pulls down his vest)

I would never have made it as a Puritan.

ABBY

I think you're safe. I don't think Puritans were quite so tall. I'll tell you one thing. I don't know of any woman who could be thankful wearing a bonnet like this.

(ABBY takes off her bonnet, itches her head and fluffs her hair a bit)

JIM

Just make sure you put that back on before the next scene.

ABBY

(Strikes a pose with her hands folded in prayer)

Isn't this like some Christmas nativity scene? Me playing Mary to your Joseph?

JIM

Not with that nail polish.

ABBY

Oh, my gosh. I didn't even think.

JIM

(Laughs)

Maybe they'll dock your pay.

ABBY

Don't even say that. Maybe they won't notice.

(ABBY starts chipping away at nail polish)

JIM

They might notice it more now that you're chipping red polish onto their perfect plastic turkey.

(Looking down at the turkey platter)

Now that's truly disgusting.

ABBY

Oh, give it a rest will you? None of this is realistic anyway, what with the script, and the ideal turkey dinner here. The turkey I had was in a black, plastic, microwaveable tray. Two slices, with a teaspoon of stuffing and a tablespoon of gravy on the side.

JIM

You had a TV dinner on Thanksgiving?

ABBY

You bet. But my little girl had a chicken patty. Anything that doesn't appear to be fried food she won't touch.

JIM

No family in town?

ABBY

Pennsylvania. East side of the state. Wasn't worth the drive.

JIM

I guess I should be thankful my family lives in town.

ABBY

Depends on what kind of family you're talking about.

JIM

Picture-perfect. Mom, Dad, me and sis. Aunts, uncles, cousins, the works. The biggest snag we faced yesterday was running out of linen napkins.

(ABBY stops chipping away at her polish in reaction to this. JIM is shaking his head sadly at the memory, melodramatically)

JIM (cont'd)

Mom had to resort to paper dinner napkins.

ABBY

(Perches herself on a stool. Relaxes)

Okay, I'm game. While we wait for our next victims, why don't you tell me about the spread at your mom's? Sweet potatoes, right?

(Sarcastically)

Does the "Upper Crust" use marshmallows, or do you call them something else?

JIM

(Not liking her attitude)

I'm not "Upper Crust."

ABBY

Who else uses linen napkins?

JIM

I suppose people who'd like other people to think they live that way all the time. ... All right, here goes. Sweet potatoes, with this crunchy, cinnamon-y, nutty topping.

(As if telling a family secret)

We make a small dish with marshmallow topping for Grandpa. The nuts get stuck in his false teeth.

(Continues the list)

About seventeen varieties of vegetables and casseroles so the gals will have more dishes to wash. The usual: turkey, stuffing, cranberries. And ... pea salad. Always pea salad because someone in the family, no one can remember who, said they loved it one year. I don't think anyone eats it though. They just politely move it around on their plates.

ABBY

Actually, it doesn't sound bad. There was a pumpkin pie involved?

JIM

Of course, but as usual Uncle Raymond was snoring before it was even sliced, and growled when he woke up because we'd run out of whipped cream.

ABBY

Don't tell me. Fresh whipped cream?

JIM

Oh, no. Cool Whip—it's got to be Cool Whip—after all, we are a product of the sixties.

ABBY

Sounds nice. At least better than watching the Macy's parade and polishing our nails every color of the rainbow. We both settled on red. "It looks daring, Mommy." Where she got that line I don't want to know.

JIM

How old is she?

ABBY

Her name is Katie, and she's four.

JIM

And you're raising her by yourself?

ABBY

Never got married. It didn't work out.

JIM

Sorry.

END OF SAMPLE

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