

Giving Thanks

By Gregory T. Burns

NOTES

Family gatherings are often filled with high-spirited anxiety, especially during the holidays. In this one-act comedy, *Giving Thanks*, we meet a young newlywed, Shelby, as she meets her husband's family for the very first time at Thanksgiving. This play may be performed by either a female or male and should be entered in Humorous Interpretation. It is important that the two protagonists, Shelby and Donald, be portrayed with honesty; however, Donald's family should contrast the normal qualities found in the newlywed couple and be as off-the-wall, stereotypical, or as dysfunctional as the performer desires. Much of the humor found within this play stems from the reactions of one character to another. The performer should use that comic timing to his/her advantage. Remember, it's hard to put one's best foot forward when dealing with a backwards-type family. After all, sometimes, even during a special holiday such as Thanksgiving, the thing we are most thankful for—is that it only comes once a year!

Characters:

Shelby Erickson, a newlywed

Donald Erickson, a newlywed

Mrs. Erickson, Donald's mother

Grandpa, Donald's grandfather

Mr. Erickson, Donald's father

Bubba, Donald's older brother

Corndog, the Erickson's pet

Scene One: Donald and Shelby Erickson's home

Shelby: Are you sure your family is okay with us coming to dinner?

Donald: Of course, they are dying to meet you. After all, we're married now.

Shelby: They aren't mad that we eloped?

Donald: No. At least, I don't think they're mad.

Shelby: I just can't help but think about your mother's wedding gift.

Donald: It was very thoughtful of her.

Shelby: She sent us used dish towels!

Donald: We're using them, aren't we?

Shelby: Who sends *used* dish towels for a wedding present?

Donald: She's getting older. She probably just got confused.

Shelby: The note said, "These are to wipe up the mess of a life you've made for my son."

Donald: (*Pause*) She has a weird sense of humor.

Shelby: That's not funny.

Donald: It's hysterical. Listen, don't worry about it. We've got a nine hour drive ahead of us. We can talk about it in the car.

Shelby: Donald, would you do me a favor?

Donald: Of course, Sweetie, what is it?

Shelby: Would you lead me out to the garage and help me get into the car?

Donald: (*Teasing*) Why? Have you forgotten where it is?

Shelby: (*Afraid to tell him the truth*) No, I'm just feeling a little dizzy, that's all.

Donald: Sure. Here, take my hand. Remember, no matter what happens today—I love you, Shelby. It's you and me against them.

Shelby: (*Giggling*) You make it sound like a battleground.

Donald: (*Smiling, trying not to alarm her*) No, it's just another Thanksgiving holiday with an atypical family of corn farmers.

Scene Two: Inside Donald's car

Donald: (*Driving*) Are you still thinking about that wedding gift?

Shelby: I can't get it out of my head. Donald, the dish towels had stains.

Donald: They were probably just my mom's tears. She's a nut. She might even be bipolar. It's just like the time she gave one of my old girlfriends a gift card to Macy's.

Shelby: Now, see. I would have appreciated a gift like that.

Donald: There was nothing on the card. She just took one of the gift cards near the register, stuck it in her purse and gave it to Jennifer for her birthday.

Shelby: That's awful.

Donald: No, what's awful is she wrote \$300 on the inside sleeve of the gift card. Jennifer picked out all of these items from the store. She was so excited. She spent nearly half a day trying to get the most out of that gift card.

Shelby: What happened?

Donald: She got to the register. The salesgirl rang up her purchases. Jennifer handed her the gift card, and she found out it had never been activated. Jennifer called my mother and wanted to know if she still had the receipt for the gift card. Mom told her there was nothing on the card.

Shelby: Just like that?

Donald: Mom told her that the \$300 was what she *would* have put on the card, if she had had the money.

Shelby: Well, I guess the *thought* was sweet.

Donald: Sweet? Are you kidding me? No way. Mom just wanted to see how Jennifer would react. My mother's mean. Most of my family

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is crazy. They're corn farmers from Iowa! Why do you think I've never introduced you? Why do you think I was adamant we elope? I've got a confession to make. I never introduced you to my family, because I knew if I did you would never go out with me again—let alone consider marrying me.

Shelby: Well, I've got a confession to make, too. I can't see.

Donald: What do you mean you can't see?

Shelby: I can't see. Remember when we were dating, and I told you that I have a nervous condition that sometimes poses a problem?

Donald: Yes, but I thought it was just a feminine thing.

Shelby: Well, when I get *extremely* nervous, I lose my eyesight. It's a temporary thing.

Donald: When did you lose your sight?

Shelby: I woke up this morning, and bingo. I was blind as a bat.

Donald: Sweetheart, why didn't you say anything? We could have cancelled. We could have sent our regrets and...

Shelby: I didn't want to ruin our trip. You haven't seen your family in over a year. I've never met any of them, and it's Thanksgiving and...

Donald: Wait a minute. If you can't see, that explains the outfit.

Shelby: What do you mean? I thought this might happen, so I laid out all of my clothes last night.

Donald: You *really* can't see, can you? *(Pause)* I thought you were just being...funny.

Shelby: What are you talking about?

Donald: I switched your shirt.

Shelby: What do you mean you switched my shirt?

Donald: When I got up this morning, I thought it would be funny to look through the closet and pick out a shirt that was similar in style to the one you had laid out.

Shelby: My long-sleeved, pink Anne Klein, cotton blend...

Donald: Yeah, I switched it with the fried egg, rugby t-shirt.

Shelby: Do you mean the one with two strategically-placed eggs?

Donald: Yes. When I saw you were wearing it, I thought you were being—casually eclectic.

Shelby: *(Visibly upset)* Pull over!

Donald: Honey, we're on the highway in the middle of nowhere.

Shelby: When we get to the next town, I want you to pull over and find me the nearest Walgreens!

Donald: *(After a long pause)* This is going to be one memorable Thanksgiving.

Scene Three: Donald's parents' home

Donald: *(Opening the door to his parents' home)* Mom? We're here!