

**A VERY FOWL  
THANKSGIVING**

by Rosemary FrisinoToohey

# A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

© 2024 Rosemary FrisinoToohey

CAUTION: Professionals and Amateurs are hereby warned that performance of **A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING** is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of The United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth) and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission of which must be obtained from the Author in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for **A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING** are controlled exclusively by Next Stage Press. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance written permission and paying the requisite fee. Inquiries concerning production rights should be addressed to [www.nextstagepress.com](http://www.nextstagepress.com)

## SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce **A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING** is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author.

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

*A Very Fowl Thanksgiving* was originally produced by the Maverick Players in Midland, Texas, under the title *Gravy Anxiety*, featuring the following cast:

MARY	Charlyne Dodge	DIANE	Janie Durham
NATALIE	Leanna Blackketter	ANDREW	Jim Huddleston
STEFFIE	Erica Reagan	BARB	Marion Kimberly
MIKE	Shea Sitz	CAROL	Evelyn Sitz
ROB	Doug Mee	AMANDA	Mary Lou Cassidy
JIM	Jesse Grimes		

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

### CAST

**MARY** female, 50s-60s, content, genial, generally happy.

**DIANE** female, 30s-40s, Mary's daughter, hyper-stressed, trying to sell her house.

**ROB** male, 30s-40s, Diane's husband, semi-stressed, father of a teenager.

**NATALIE/NATE** female/male, typical teen, Diane and Rob's kid, seriously vegan.

**MIKE** male, 30s, Mary's son, nonchalant, but inwardly bitter about his marriage.

**CAROL** female, 30s, Mike's wife, seemingly aloof about her marriage.

**ANDREW** male, 50s-60s, Carol's dad, reaching for his youth, planning his funeral.

**STEFFIE** female, 20s, attractive, Andrew's significant other, provocatively dressed.

**BARB** female, 50s-60s, Carol's mom, ladylike but bitter toward her ex, Andrew.

**AMANDA** female, 30s-50s, prospective home-buyer, pleasant, but hyper-critical.

**JIM** male, 30s-50s, Amanda's husband. Plays harmonica or banjo or guitar or...?

**TIME:** The present. Thanksgiving Day.

**SETTING:** The living room of a small apartment...and it gets very crowded.

A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**A VERY FOWL  
THANKSGIVING**

**ACT 1  
SCENE 1**

*Spotlight up on MARY, standing, with most of the cast frozen around the room: ANDREW & STEFFIE are together, DIANE, ROB & NATALIE together, MIKE & CAROL together. BARB stands holding a small plate. Mary addresses the audience.*

**MARY.** Oh, the fourth Thursday of November! A time for gathering with one's family, getting together with the people we hold dear and ushering in the most wonderful season of the year. Of all the holidays, Thanksgiving is my absolute favorite! We usually go to my daughter's but this year Diane and her husband are trying to sell their house, so I said I'd have dinner here. There's nothing wrong with a holiday buffet, right? But for some reason, everybody seemed...a little tense. *(Spotlights crossfade to Diane, Rob & Natalie).*

**DIANE.** I still say we should have gone to a restaurant.

**ROB.** Oh, restaurants are crazy on turkey day. It's all rush, rush, rush. Besides, it was nice that your mom volunteered her place when we couldn't do it.

**DIANE.** Did you remember the wine and the beer?

**ROB.** Of course. I left it in the car so it stays cold. Wasn't sure how much room she has in her little fridge.

**DIANE.** Heaven only knows how long the turkey's going to take in that tiny oven.

**NATALIE.** I don't know why we have to have turkey anyway. That poor bird...

**ROB.** Aw, here we go again. Don't start on that, Natalie.

**NATALIE.** But Dad, he's the victim of man's relentless pursuit of dumb animals, ever since the first caveman---

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**DIANE.** Not today. Your mother's a little on edge here. (*Spotlights crossfade to Mary, who addresses the audience.*)

**MARY.** Of course, one of the best parts of turkey day is dessert. All that yummy sweet goodness to finish things off. My daughter-in-law's parents always join us for Thanksgiving, even though they're divorced, and her dad always brings apple pie. But not this year. This year he brought his girlfriend instead. (*Spotlights crossfade to Andrew & Steffie.*)

**ANDREW.** I should have remembered the pie.

**STEFFIE.** Is that my fault, too?

**ANDREW.** Nobody said anything was your fault, Steffie.

**STEFFIE.** It's not my fault that it snowed and my flight got cancelled and I couldn't go to my mother's. Anyway, I could have gone to the movies.

**ANDREW.** You can't go to the movies on Thanksgiving. Movies are filled with perverts on turkey day.

**STEFFIE.** How do you know?

**ANDREW.** I was a policeman thirty-five years. Go to the movies on Thanksgiving and you'll end up sitting next to some jerk in a raincoat who'll invite you to share his greasy bag of popcorn and next thing you know---

**STEFFIE.** All right, already, Andrew. Can I ask a question about your former relationship?

**ANDREW.** I don't like questions.

**STEFFIE.** I know that, but a divorced man who refuses to answer questions is hiding things.

**ANDREW.** I'm not hiding anything. I just don't want to go there. Barb is a bitter, vicious woman.

**STEFFIE.** She looks okay to me.

**ANDREW.** You don't know her. I promise you, underneath that plastic smile she's seething because I've brought the current love of my life to dinner.

**STEFFIE.** Did you just say "current"? As in, next week, you'll have a new "love of your life"?

**ANDREW.** See? This is what comes from asking questions. (*Spotlights crossfade to Mary, addressing the audience.*)

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**MARY.** My daughter-in-law's mother brings hors d'oeuvres. Fancy hors d'oeuvres. Barb is one of those people who fills in the blanks for the rest of us. By that I mean, she asks a question and then she answers it. It makes conversation very easy. (*Spotlights crossfade to Barb.*)

**BARB.** Gracious me, Mary, you know what this apartment reminds me of? It's just like one of those little playpen apartments they have in Japan. It's so cute. And your tiny little kitchen? It's adorable. Now, do you have a holiday dinner bell? I wasn't sure you did so I brought mine along just in case. That way we can make it a really festive occasion. (*Sotto voce.*) And guess what? When I called Carol last night for a little chit-chat, she said she and Mike had some important news but they wanted to "tell us all together." What do you think that means? It can only be one thing, right? I bet they're expecting! Imagine, a grandchild for you and me! Oh, and isn't it fortunate I made an extra hors d'oeuvre since Andrew decided to bring a guest? I hear he met her at the mall last Christmas. What do you want to bet she was sitting on Santa Claus's lap? (*Spotlights crossfade to Mary, addressing the audience.*)

**MARY.** See what I mean? Of course, Thanksgiving is the day everybody gets excited about vegetables. It's amazing what people go through to disguise the fact that they're still just...vegetables. String beans end up with funny onions on top. Sweet potatoes get covered with marshmallows. My son and his wife always bring a broccoli dish with bacon. And you know what they say, bacon can fix anything. But this year, who knows why...they came without it. (*Spotlights crossfade to Mike & Carol.*)

**CAROL.** You should have told your mother we weren't bringing the broccoli-bacon dish.

**MIKE.** Until we got in the car, Carol, I assumed you *were* bringing it. You might have said something.

**CAROL.** We weren't talking, Mike. How could I say something?

**MIKE.** You could have stuck a note on the fridge. Or cut out words from the newspaper and stuck them to a paper towel.

**CAROL.** Like a ransom note?

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**MIKE.** I'm just pointing out that there were ways to communicate, if, you really wanted to let me know. Speaking of communicating, I am not, I repeat, not, in favor of sharing our "news" with everybody today.

**CAROL.** But they're all here together. We could get it out in the open. Honesty is a virtue.

**MIKE.** Not when you take it to extremes. (*Spotlights crossfade to Mary, addressing the audience.*)

**MARY.** So, we had one extra guest, but we were missing a vegetable and we didn't have dessert. Still, we had the turkey, Barb's hors d'oeuvres, cranberry sauce and my mashed potatoes. Now, I know a woman who adds butter, cream cheese, sour cream and an egg to her potatoes. Good gracious, you could eat cut-up Styrofoam if you're going to put all that in. My mashed potatoes are just...well, potatoes that are ...mashed. And I even cut corners on that. But so what? Thanksgiving isn't really about the food, is it? It's about getting together with the people you care about. How could anything possibly go wrong? (*Lights up full. Everybody un-freezes.*) I guess it's time for the appetizers, Barb. (*Barb ceremoniously RINGS a dinner bell and uncovers her small plate.*)

**BARB.** We're beginning with watercress-cream cheese-triangles, everybody. And I know you're going to love them. (*Barb passes the plate. Everyone takes an appetizer.*)

**VARIOUS.** Don't they look good? Yeah, great. Terrific. And they're so...cute.

**MIKE.** So, how's the house-selling going, Diane? Any nibbles yet?

**DIANE.** Not so far, but we had people looking at it today. Can you believe it? On Thanksgiving.

**ROB.** Not only that but I was showing them around in the dark. We lost power.

**DIANE.** The lights went out while I was tidying up. The vacuum stopped running, the heat shut off and of course, the aroma diffuser stopped working. I wanted to cry.

**CAROL.** What kind of aroma are you diffusing?

**ROB.** It depends. This is Diane's pet project.



## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**DIANE.** They've done studies on this, believe me. It's all about creating the right atmosphere. Back in the summer I used lemon verbena. Then in the fall, coriander and cloves. Today I was going with cinnamon apple. When we get a prospective buyer, I try and give a little thought as to which scent I want pervading the house.

**ROB.** A little thought? She spends hours on this, trying to psych people out.

**DIANE.** Well, I read that a fresh lemon scent puts people in a positive, upbeat mood.

**MIKE.** You mean, like they're pulling out their checkbook to make an offer?

**ROB.** Exactly.

**CAROL.** What do cloves and coriander do?

**DIANE.** That's supposed to make them feel adventurous and daring.

**ROB.** Like they'll love the stainless-steel fridge but overlook the fact that it's sitting in an old kitchen.

**BARB.** And cinnamon apple?

**DIANE.** Oh, just homey, toasty.

**ROB.** It's going for the gut. Because what you really want on a freezing cold day like this is a piece of apple pie.

**ANDREW.** Hey, everybody, I'm really sorry about that. The pie just slipped my mind.

**ROB.** Easy, Andrew. I didn't mean anything.

**DIANE.** Anyway, after we lost power and the diffuser shut down, I gave up. Natalie and I came over here and Rob stayed behind to show the house.

**ANDREW.** How do you show a house with no electricity?

**ROB.** We walked around with flashlights. It was kind of surreal. But they didn't seem to mind.

**CAROL.** Where are they from?

**ROB.** North Dakota\* somewhere. *\*(Director's choice: substitute any distant state.)*

**MIKE.** Maybe they're not used to electricity.

**DIANE.** I said to Rob they must be crazy people. I mean, who goes house-hunting on Thanksgiving?

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**MARY.** Maybe it's a good sign they came on a holiday, Diane. Maybe they're eager.

**ROB.** I don't care if they're eager, Mary. I don't even care if they're crazy. Just as long as a bank 'll give 'em a mortgage. Say, Barb, what we just ate, it was good. Any left?

**BARB.** Sorry, Rob, no. Appetizers are simply an amuse bouche. They're only meant to tease the palate. But thanks for the compliment. I've made them lots of times, even for funerals and they always go over well. And people are awfully picky about food at a funeral.

**STEFFIE.** Maybe I should put them on Andrew's list.

**BARB.** Oh, has he got a list?

**STEFFIE.** Oh, yes. All the things he wants for his funeral.

**CAROL.** Dad! Are you feeling all right?

**ANDREW.** I feel fine, hon.

**STEFFIE.** Well, it doesn't make me feel good when he keeps talking about all this stuff he wants after he---

**ANDREW.** That's enough, Steffie.

**BARB.** Oh, Andrew, let the girl have her say.

**STEFFIE.** Thank you, Miss Barbra.

**BARB.** You're welcome, dear. So, what exactly does he want?

**STEFFIE.** He's got his heart set on a Viking funeral.

**MARY.** What exactly is a Viking funeral?

**ANDREW.** It's the way they honored dead Viking heroes. It's a little elaborate, but---

**STEFFIE.** A little? For starters, I have to get him decked out in all this Viking gear.

**ANDREW.** I've already got the shield and the helmet.

**ROB.** What about the sword, Andrew? It's nothing without the sword.

**ANDREW.** That or a battle-axe. But I think I found a place online. And of course, the big deal is the boat. It's got to be a decent size.

**ROB.** I heard of a guy who built his own boat with a dragon on the prow.

**ANDREW.** You got his name?

**ROB.** I think I can get it for you.

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**ANDREW.** I thought I could get my police badge number stenciled on the sail.

**ROB.** That would be a nice touch.

**DIANE.** Don't tell me you want one of these funerals?

**ROB.** Well, naturally, a guy thinks about stuff like that.

**STEFFIE.** And after I dress him up like a dead Viking, and put him on this boat or barge or whatever it is and push it out into the harbor, he wants a bunch of his police buddies---

**ANDREW.** They promised me they'll do it.

**STEFFIE.** They're supposed to stand on the dock blowing some kind of bugle call on ram's horns, whatever they are.

**ROB.** Aw, Andrew, I'd love to be part of this.

**ANDREW.** You're in, buddy.

**STEFFIE.** And then the big finish is, another bunch of guys will shoot flaming arrows at the sail until the boat catches fire. Then, it goes down with him on it or what's left of him...on it, just so it's authentic.

**ANDREW.** Well, to be really authentic, my companion should be on the boat with me.

**BARB.** You're not signing up for that, dear, are you?

**STEFFIE.** No way.

**DIANE.** Sounds like quite a production. Maybe you need somebody to film the whole thing.

**ANDREW.** That's a good idea, Diane.

**STEFFIE.** Well, I'm not going to watch it. And I don't understand why you want to think about all this so much.

**ANDREW.** I'm not asking you to think about it. Just make it happen.

**STEFFIE.** He wants me to sign a paper saying I'll follow his wishes.

**ANDREW.** That's to protect you in case there are legal issues.

**MIKE.** What do you mean? Shooting flaming arrows, setting a barge on fire, sinking a dead body in the harbor, how could there be legal issues?

**ANDREW.** That's why I want her to sign the paper. If it's my final request and she's just following through, she can't get into trouble. And I'll be dead. What are they going to do to me?

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**STEFFIE.** It's just the whole thing. Setting him on fire as he floats away, how can I do that? How could anybody do that?

**BARB.** Well, there are some people who might want to give it a shot.

**MIKE.** Speaking of shots, Andrew, isn't there some special drink you need for a Viking funeral?

**ANDREW.** Right, Mike. It's a shot of Aquavit on fire, dropped into a glass of Stout.

**MIKE.** Wow. My mouth's watering.

**ROB.** Speaking of which, why don't I go and bring in the drinks? (*Rob stands, goes for his coat.*)

**STEFFIE.** Would you care to help me with all this stuff, Miss Barbra?

**BARB.** Oh, absolutely, honey. And just call me Barb.

**STEFFIE.** Because I read that if all this isn't done exactly right, he won't find peace in the afterlife and then he might come back as a revenant, you know, like in the movie? And he'll find me and haunt me and...

**BARB.** Oh, honey, we will make sure he doesn't come back. I will personally guarantee that. (*Andrew glares at Barb. Doorbell RINGS.*)

**MARY.** Goodness, who can that be?

**ROB.** Oh, maybe it's them. (*Rob moves to the door.*)

**DIANE.** Them who?

**ROB.** The people I showed the house to. I said if they decided, they could drop by and we'd shake hands on it.

**DIANE.** You invited them here?

**ROB.** It seemed like the thing to do, Di. They're real friendly. (*Doorbell RINGS.*)

**MARY.** Well, we can certainly open the door and say "Hi." And if you get an offer on the house, that'll be great.

**ROB.** That's what I thought, Mary. (*Rob opens the door.*) Hey. Come on in. (*AMANDA & JIM enter.*) This is my wife, Diane.

**DIANE.** Hello, good to meet you.

**ROB.** Everybody, I'd like you to meet Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby.

**VARIOUS.** Hi. Hello.

**AMANDA.** Oh, please now, we're just Amanda and Jim.

**ROB.** So, you've decided?

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**AMANDA.** In a manner of speaking, I suppose we have started to travel down that trail. Haven't we, Jim?

**JIM.** Yeah. Sort of.

**ROB.** That's great! You're going to love it.

**DIANE.** Yes, it's a wonderful neighborhood. The park is beautifully maintained and the community association is---

**AMANDA.** Oh, now hold onto your horses. I'm not sure we're all on the same choo-choo train here.

**DIANE.** You mean you're not---

**AMANDA.** Well, the house does look almost exactly like what we've been hunting for. And we are very favorably inclined. Isn't that right, Jim?

**JIM.** You could say that.

**AMANDA.** Now, I know you big city folks fly all over the place and do things in a hurry. But you see, that's not Jim and me. We're from the country. And we just don't like to rush into things. Do we, Jim?

**JIM.** No. We don't.

**AMANDA.** After all, it was a little hard to see into every corner.

**DIANE.** So sorry about the power outage.

**AMANDA.** Of course, but that was only an hour or so ago, wasn't it?

**JIM.** Hour and a half.

**AMANDA.** And we are talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars. Not that it isn't worth every single penny. It's just that that's an awful lot of money for a couple of kids from the country like Jim and me.

**JIM.** Sure is.

**ROB.** But I thought you said you decided...

**AMANDA.** What I meant was, we have decided...to decide.

**DIANE.** Oh. I see.

**ROB.** Well, it was awful nice of you to come all the way over here and tell us that.

**AMANDA.** We promised we'd let you know and a promise is a promise, even if it means going out of your way to keep it. Now we're just going to mosey on out of here and let you folks get back to your holiday celebration. We have to take the car back to that nice man at the rental place and then head on over to the bus station.

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**DIANE.** You're taking a bus all the way back to North Dakota?

**AMANDA.** Well, Jim says a bus is a whole lot closer to the ground than one of those airplanes.

**JIM.** That's how I see it.

**MIKE.** How long will that take?

**AMANDA.** Couple of days, more or less. The bus pulls out at ten to midnight and once we're on it we don't pay much attention to time. My goodness, that turkey sure does smell good.

**MARY.** Would you care for a cup of tea or something before you go?

**AMANDA.** No, no, we wouldn't want to trouble you. The bus station has those nice little vending machines. We'll get something to eat there.

**CAROL.** You mean you're not going somewhere for dinner?

**AMANDA.** Oh, Jim and I wouldn't know how to act sitting in some fancy restaurant on Thanksgiving! What would that be like? No, the machines at the bus station will suit us fine. You can get nice little cans of chicken noodle soup or macaroni and cheese or spaghetti and meatballs...

**MARY.** You sure you won't stay?

**AMANDA.** No indeed, we wouldn't want to put you to any trouble.

**MARY.** It wouldn't be any trouble---

**AMANDA.** Golly, Jim, listen to that! Inviting a couple of complete strangers for Thanksgiving dinner!

**MARY.** Well, I...

**AMANDA.** And they say city people are cold-hearted! Good gracious! That is the sweetest thing I ever heard.

**JIM.** That's real nice of you, ma'am.

**DIANE.** Mom, are you sure we can...?

**MARY.** Oh, we'll just...re-arrange a few things and everything 'll be...fine. Right, Rob?

**ROB.** Sure, Mary, if you say so. Now, Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby---

**AMANDA.** Now, now, none of that. It's Amanda and Jim. If we're going to break bread together, we certainly don't want to stand on ceremony.

And as a way of saying "thank you" for your hospitality, Jim will be happy to serenade everybody with his harmonica.

**CAROL.** His harmonica?

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**AMANDA.** Oh, he never goes anywhere without it. It's his way of adding to the festivities. Down on the farm we end every holiday by giving of ourselves. Cousin Annabel always recites the Song of the Chattahoochee.

**CAROL.** Does she really?

**AMANDA.** Oh, yes. It's not a real holiday unless family members entertain one another.

**DIANE.** Well, that sounds...fine. If you don't mind my asking, you do plan on deciding today? About the house, I mean?

**AMANDA.** Oh, I do believe we will. We definitely feel inclined in that direction. Jim just doesn't like to rush.

**JIM.** No, I don't.

**AMANDA.** And he does have the final say.

**JIM.** Yes, I do.

**ROB.** Okay then. I was just on my way out to get the wine and beer from my car.

**AMANDA.** Oh, you go right ahead. But we won't be having any of that. Jim and I don't use alcohol.

**JIM.** No, we don't.

**AMANDA.** As my daddy used to say, first the man takes a drink, then the drink takes the man. That's an old Japanese saying.

**STEFFIE.** Was your father Japanese?

**AMANDA.** No, he just felt strongly about such things. But, please, you all feel free to have whatever you think you...need.

**DIANE.** Rob, maybe we should...wait a bit on the drinks?

**ROB.** Oh yeah. Sure.

**AMANDA.** Now you folks just go ahead and enjoy your holiday. Forget about us completely. Jim and I 'll be quiet as a couple of titmice in a barn loft. You won't even know we're here. We are so grateful to be part of a warm, loving family on Thanksgiving. Who could ask for anything more?  
*(Lights slowly down.)*

## SCENE 2

*A short time later. Spotlight up on Mary, addressing the audience.*

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**MARY.** So, there we were. No vegetable, no dessert, wine and beer still in the car, and not one, not two, but three extra guests. Still, the turkey was roasting away in the oven and I felt certain that things would turn out fine. *(Pause.)* I was wrong. *(Lights up full.)*

**MIKE.** That turkey sure smells good, Mom.

**MARY.** It should be done soon. I turned the temperature all the way up. I guess my little oven is just not meant to handle anything that big.

**ANDREW.** But man, nothing beats the aroma of a turkey roasting in the oven.

**VARIOUS.** *(Except Natalie.)* Absolutely. So true. Can't top it.

**NATALIE.** *(Quietly.)* The poor thing.

**BARB.** Did you say something, dear?

**ROB.** Never mind, Barb.

**MARY.** I think Natalie said something about the turkey.

**ROB.** It's okay, everybody. Sometimes young people have ideas about things.

**AMANDA.** What kind of ideas, honey?

**DIANE.** Let's not go there, Amanda.

**AMANDA.** Oh, I didn't mean to intrude, but where I come from, we always pay attention when the young ones have something to say.

**MARY.** We do too. What is it, honey?

**NATALIE.** I was thinking about that poor bird, Grandmom.

**ROB.** Here we go.

**NATALIE.** How he ended up in that oven, his limbs and muscles roasting away, sinews ripped apart, joints severed, ready to be carved up. And then, the final injustice. Cannibalized by humans.

**DIANE.** We warned you.

**ANDREW.** Well, Natalie, strictly speaking, cannibalism means the eating of one animal by another animal of the same kind. Since we're not turkeys---

**BARB.** Most of us, anyway.

**ANDREW.** As I was saying, you can't call it cannibalism for people to eat a turkey.



## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**NATALIE.** All the same, Mr. Andrew, he'll end up a pile of bones by the end of the night.

**ANDREW.** Aw, we all end up a pile of bones sooner or later, kiddo.

**STEFFIE.** There you go again.

**MIKE.** And still, Nat, I don't think turkeys are any worse off than anybody else.

**NATALIE.** How can you say that, Uncle Mike? Clearly, the turkey doesn't get to choose his exit strategy. I mean, how would you like to be roasted and have your head chopped off?

**AMANDA.** Actually, dear, they chop the heads off first. I mean if they did it the other way around, it would be...oh, sorry.

**NATALIE.** The fact of the matter is, poultry breeders pen their charges up in crowded little houses, where there's hardly room to breathe, let alone walk. And that was this poor bird's life until he and thousands like him were slaughtered the other day.

**BARB.** Do we know for sure that it's really that bad?

**NATALIE.** A turkey's life is no picnic, Miss Barbra. Isn't that so, Mrs. Willoughby?

**AMANDA.** Can't say I ever gave it much thought. Where we come from, there's not a lot of fussing about whether the chicken or turkey had a good life. Right, Jim?

**JIM.** Nope. They're just good eatin'. That's all.

**BARB.** Anyway, dear, don't you think the Lord played a role in all this? Giving human beings dominion over the animals that roam the earth and the fish of the sea? You know, fish gotta swim, birds gotta fly, I gotta love that man 'till...whatever.

**MIKE.** The point is, there he was the other day, strutting around, cock-a-doodle-doing, and then---

**CAROL.** That's a rooster, Michael.

**MIKE.** Right, Carol. I forgot you were an expert in animal husbandry.

**CAROL.** I just think it's important to keep the facts straight.

**MIKE.** The point I was trying to make was, it's just a turkey.

**NATALIE.** Just a turkey!

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**MIKE.** And if what you say is true, Natalie, why are we supposed to feel bad? You said he had a lousy life. If we put him out of his misery, we ought to get a prize.

**NATALIE.** That's a horrible way to look at it, Uncle Mike. He's another living being with as much right to dwell on this earth as you or I, until he was herded into a chute, driven down a belt and then decapitated by---

**BARB.** Natalie, dear, maybe we don't need to know the details of how this particular bird met his end.

**MARY.** Anyway, honey, it's not as if we did him in. We wouldn't do that.

**NATALIE.** But, Grandmom, if it weren't for you and everybody like you, he'd still be alive. It's pure cause and effect. I say if you're not willing to kill him, you shouldn't be willing to eat him.

**AMANDA.** That reminds me of Jim's ma. She killed her own chickens. She was really good at it, too. Just thought I'd add that to the conversation.

**JIM.** Best god-fearin' woman that ever lived, my ma.

**CAROL.** And you mean, she actually...?

**JIM.** Sure enough. Didn't take her more than a minute.

**STEFFIE.** How did she do it?

**JIM.** You tell 'em, hon. I get all choked up just thinkin' about her.

**AMANDA.** Well, she'd go out in the yard, grab a chicken or a turkey by the neck, swing the bird around over her head once or twice and slam it down on the chopping block. Then, with her other hand, she'd grab her hatchet and chop off the head clean as a whistle. Of course, sometimes the turkey or the chicken would waddle around the yard for a while with no head on. That is the origin of the phrase, running around like a chicken with its head cut off.

**CAROL.** That certainly painted the picture.

**NATALIE.** Any way you look at it, that bird in there was murdered, just so people can stuff themselves.

**ROB.** That is enough, Natalie.

**NATALIE.** It's the truth, Dad.

**MARY.** When I was a little girl, we always had scalloped oysters at Thanksgiving. I remember they were quite a treat.

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**NATALIE.** I wonder how the oysters felt when they were yanked out of their shells?

**ROB.** Oh, god.

**ANDREW.** You really think bivalves have feelings?

**NATALIE.** How do you know they don't, Mr. Andrew?

**MIKE.** Why stop at oysters? What about potatoes? Maybe they don't want to be mashed. Maybe they just want to stay where they are in the field.

**STEFFIE.** Well, they do have something in common with human beings. After all, potatoes do have eyes. (*Andrew gives Steffie a look.*)

**MIKE.** Who knows? Maybe everything on the table has a heart and a soul.

**NATALIE.** I never said the turkey had a soul, Uncle Mike.

**MIKE.** Oh! You draw the line there, do you? I thought we were about to have a funeral for him. Sorry, Steffie. Didn't mean to bring up...you-know-what.

**MARY.** How about we change the topic?

**DIANE.** Good idea, Mom. Amanda, do you mind my asking if you two are any closer to making a decision? About the house, I mean?

**AMANDA.** I suppose you could say it's coming. What do you think, Jim?

**JIM.** Yeah. You could say that.

**DIANE.** Good.

**AMANDA.** Just a question. Does the power go out often in your neighborhood?

**DIANE.** No. I can't remember the last time we lost power. Rob, do you have any idea when that was?

**ROB.** Oh, it's been...years. Decades probably.

**DIANE.** Yes indeed. The lights went out for a few minutes that one time, remember?

**ROB.** Right. Just once. Until today. You'd love the place when all the lights are on.

**AMANDA.** Well, what we saw of it was very appealing. And I was so glad you didn't have one of those artificial smell machines. What are they called?

**DIANE.** Aroma diffusers?

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**AMANDA.** Yes, you know, like a pretend apple pie smell. Those things are so fake.

**DIANE.** I suppose they are.

**AMANDA.** But buying a house is such a big decision. My daddy always said putting down roots in a place is the one thing that really matters in life. Then you can raise your chicks in your own henhouse.

**CAROL.** Mrs. Willoughby, could we possibly leave the barnyard behind?

**AMANDA.** Sorry, dear. didn't mean to offend. You see, my daddy grew up on a farm. And where you grow up has so much to do with your outlook on life, don't you think?

**MARY.** Where was the farm?

**AMANDA.** Verdel, Nebraska.

**BARB.** What a pretty name. It almost sounds like a song.

**AMANDA.** It was a lovely spot just south of the Missouri, near the South Dakota border. Of course, when he and Mama got married, they moved because they wanted to be in the middle of everything.

**CAROL.** They went to New York?

**AMANDA.** No. Rugby, North Dakota.

**CAROL.** Oh. That was going to be my second guess.

**AMANDA.** Rugby, you see, is the geographic middle of North America and Daddy wanted to put down roots in the absolute center of the continent. From Rugby, it's fifteen hundred miles to the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Arctic, even the Gulf of Mexico.

**CAROL.** So, if you had a long weekend on your hands, you could pretty much go in any direction?

**AMANDA.** I guess you could look at it that way. Anyhow, growing up in a place like that colors your views. You see things in a different light.

**MIKE.** What kind of light?

**AMANDA.** Daddy always said problems are really not problems at all. It's the way people react to them that turns them into something awful.

**MIKE.** Interesting.

**AMANDA.** He said that when trouble rears its ugly head, instead of behaving as if it were the worst thing ever, you should take hold of it, put

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

your arms around it and make it your friend. Then it becomes a growing experience.

**CAROL.** How do you make a problem a friend?

**DIANE.** Exactly. Like losing power today---not that it happens often---but how was I supposed to embrace that?

**AMANDA.** Maybe you could think of all the good things that resulted from it.

**DIANE.** Such as?

**ROB.** Well, not having power means the utility bill will be that much smaller at the end of the month. Not that it's big to begin with.

**AMANDA.** There you go! See how easy that was? It's like a game when you get used to it.

**STEFFIE.** Oh, why don't we play a game? While we wait for the turkey, I mean.

**DIANE.** What kind of game?

**STEFFIE.** How about Honest Truth?

**NATALIE.** I know that one. We played it at the getting-to-know-you mixer. Each person turns to another person and says one completely honest statement.

**ROB.** You mean, like the highest town in the US is Climax, Colorado?

**DIANE.** Rob.

**STEFFIE.** Who wants to start?

**MARY.** Why don't we let our out-of-town guests begin?

**AMANDA.** Thank you, Mrs. Reilly. That's very kind. So, I'm supposed to say some absolutely honest thing. Can it be about anything?

**STEFFIE.** Anything at all.

**NATALIE.** The one rule is, your "Honest Truth" statement should be directed to the person sitting nearest to you.

**AMANDA.** Oh, okay. *(Smiling, to Diane.)* You know, that first floor bathroom is really ugly.

**DIANE.** Beg your pardon?

**AMANDA.** The powder room in your house. It's hideous.

**DIANE.** You can't mean that.

**AMANDA.** I'm sorry, but I do.

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**STEFFIE.** The other rule is you can't say you're sorry.

**AMANDA.** All right. I'm not sorry. Because to tell you the honest truth, I'm not.

**DIANE.** But...the powder room is not ugly.

**AMANDA.** Oh, let's be grown-up about it. It's painted the ugliest color I've ever seen in my life. Don't you think so, Jim?

**JIM.** It's pretty ugly.

**DIANE.** Does she have the right to ask him for support of her "honest truth"?

**NATALIE.** Not really.

**AMANDA.** I was just inquiring of an innocent observer---

**DIANE.** Innocent observer? He's your husband!

**AMANDA.** But he never pays a bit of attention to paint colors. Do you, Jim?

**JIM.** Not much.

**NATALIE.** Mrs. Willoughby, I don't think the question is whether or not Mr. Willoughby pays attention to colors. The point is, one's reaction to paint on a wall is subjective. It's not an actual fact. Therefore, I think we have to say that "the first-floor bathroom is ugly" is a statement that is not allowed.

**AMANDA.** My goodness, I'll bet you're a whiz at that high school you go to.

**NATALIE.** I'm sorry, but those are the rules.

**STEFFIE.** Are you really sorry or are you just saying you're sorry?

**MIKE.** Oh, you are good, Steffie.

**AMANDA.** Well, all right. (*Quietly.*) But it's the truth.

**DIANE.** (*Quietly.*) It's not the truth.

**AMANDA.** Is.

**DIANE.** Is not.

**ROB.** Diane, honey...

**MARY.** Maybe this game isn't the best idea right now. (*Mike moves his chair next to Amanda.*)

**MIKE.** How about if I take the next turn?

**NATALIE.** Alright, Uncle Mike.

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**MIKE.** How's this? When men drink, they are rich and successful and win lawsuits and are happy and help their friends.

**ANDREW.** Now, there's a true fact.

**AMANDA.** Who on earth said that?

**MIKE.** Aristophanes. Fourth century. B.C. E.

**AMANDA.** That's a bit before my time.

**MARY.** Barb, how would you like to take the next turn?

**BARB.** I'm not very good at games.

**CAROL.** It's not as if you have to stand up or anything, Mom.

**BARB.** What does that mean? I have no problem whatsoever standing up.

**NATALIE.** Okay, Ms. Barbra, you go, please.

**BARB.** All right, but can I pick with whom I'm going to be completely honest? Since I've never played this before...

**STEFFIE.** I guess we could make a one-time allowance in the rules.

**BARB.** Thank you, Steffie dear.

**CAROL.** Remembering, of course, Mother, that someone else has the right to be perfectly honest with you.

**STEFFIE.** Yes, that's the game.

**BARB.** Let me see, whom should it be? I choose...Andrew!

**ANDREW.** Wow, what a shock.

**CAROL.** Easy, Dad.

**BARB.** And my honest truth is, Andrew, if you insist on coloring your hair, you might want to try a lighter shade.

**STEFFIE.** You...color your hair?

**ANDREW.** Can we talk about this later, Steff? It's no big deal.

**BARB.** Apparently to her, it is a big deal.

**ANDREW.** Look, Barb, if you want to wage a personal vendetta against me---

**BARB.** It's not a vendetta, Andrew. I'm just seeing things in a new light. Maybe I'm ever-so-loving thankful that you are driving somebody else crazy these days, poor, innocent child that she is.

**STEFFIE.** You're very sweet to say that, Barb!

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**BARB.** And you're very sweet to tell me so, dear. Now Andrew, in the spirit of Thanksgiving, if I've somehow been offensive to you, I do apologize.

**ANDREW.** Yeah. Thanks.

**DIANE.** *(To Amanda.)* No need to apologize to me.

**AMANDA.** I hadn't planned on it.

**JIM.** *(Calmly.)* There's smoke in the kitchen. *(All except Jim jump to their feet. Diane & Mary rush to the kitchen.)*

**DIANE.** *(Offstage.)* There's a fire in the oven!

**MIKE.** Call the fire department! *(SOUND of chaos in kitchen. Andrew pulls out his cellphone.)*

**ANDREW.** I'll get 'em. *(Jim exits calmly to kitchen.)*

**DIANE.** *(Offstage.)* The turkey's on fire!

**JIM.** *(Offstage.)* Baking soda?

**ANDREW.** *(On his cell.)* Reporting a kitchen fire...nine-fourteen Doneger Avenue, apartment number...*(Jim enters. All is now quiet in the kitchen.)*

**JIM.** It's out. *(Jim takes his seat. Pause.)*

**ANDREW.** *(On his cell.)* False alarm, buddy...yeah, it's okay. *(Andrew pockets his cellphone. Mary & Diane enter.)*

**MARY.** Thank you, Mr. Willoughby.

**JIM.** Anytime, ma'am.

**MIKE.** Why didn't we hear the smoke detector, Mom?

**MARY.** Well, it doesn't go off if you take out the battery.

**MIKE.** What?

**MARY.** I swear, Michael, if I just look like I'm going to turn that stove on, the smoke detector squeals. It drives me bats. The other day I took the can opener out of the drawer and the alarm went off.

**MIKE.** But you've got to have a working smoke detector.

**MARY.** All right, take it easy, everything's fine now. Well, almost everything's fine. The turkey...I'm sorry, everybody, but...there's not going to be any turkey. *(Pause.)*

**ROB.** I think some of us could use a little something to drink. I'll go get the stuff. *(Rob goes for his coat.)*



## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**JIM.** I think you folks have enough problems on your hands. We ought to go. Amanda? (*Amanda nods & stands.*)

**ROB.** But really, we would like to know if you make a decision on the house.

**AMANDA.** Well, we're still thinking about it.

**ROB.** That's good. Great. (*Amanda gets her coat.*)

**MARY.** My apologies for all this, everybody. (*Andrew stands.*)

**ANDREW.** It's not your fault, Mary. But I think we ought to leave, too. Steffie?

**STEFFIE.** I'm not sure I want to go with you.

**ANDREW.** What?

**STEFFIE.** You could have told me you color your hair.

**ANDREW.** Aw, come on.

**STEFFIE.** It's about being honest with people who are important to you. Or who you say are important to you.

**BARB.** The girl is right.

**ANDREW.** Do you mind, Barb? We don't need you putting your two cents in.

**STEFFIE.** Maybe I want her two cents. Maybe I want her to put in whatever she wants to put in!

**ANDREW.** Aw, for crying out loud.

**BARB.** You are a very wise young woman.

**STEFFIE.** And you are a very wise...you're very wise, too.

**ANDREW.** Okay, okay, you want to stay, stay. I'm going. (*Andrew goes for his coat. Amanda, Jim & Rob are at the door. Phone RINGS.*)

**MARY.** Now who can that be? (*Mary picks up the phone.*)

Hello...what?...Yes, someone is about to---oh, the police officer says don't open the door.

**ANDREW.** What's the matter?

**MARY.** He says we have to "shelter in place." What does that mean?

**ANDREW.** Can I take it, Mary? (*Mary hands Andrew the phone.*) This is Captain Andrew Watson, Retired State police. What's up?...ah-huh...ah-huh...ah-huh...okay, thanks. Appreciate it. You be safe out there, hear?...yeah, bye. (*Andrew hangs up.*)

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**VARIOUS.** What is it? What's happened? What's going on?

**ANDREW.** There's a situation, folks.

**MARY.** What kind of situation?

**ANDREW.** That was a reverse nine-one-one call. They're contacting everybody in this building and every other one in the neighborhood. Like he said, we've got to shelter in place.

**VARIOUS.** But why? What's up? What does that mean? (*Andrew's now in full take-charge mode.*)

**ANDREW.** Easy, everybody, I'll explain. A train derailed at Dorfstetler's crossing about an hour ago. One of the cars was carrying anhydrous ammonia. At below-freezing temperatures that becomes a vapor. And it's dangerous.

**MIKE.** How dangerous?

**ANDREW.** It can burn the skin, it's been known to cause blindness. And large doses of it can shut down the respiratory system.

**CAROL.** You mean it's fatal?

**ANDREW.** Could be. If you inhale it.

**AMANDA.** Oh, my word.

**BARB.** How horrible.

**ANDREW.** In time it'll dissipate in the atmosphere and then everything 'll be fine. But for right now we have to stay put. He doesn't even want us out in the hall.

**CAROL.** But, Dad, how long?

**ANDREW.** Don't know. But we can't leave until we get the all clear. That's orders.

**ROB.** A couple of hours maybe?

**ANDREW.** Could be. Probably more than that.

**DIANE.** You mean we might be here...all night?

**ANDREW.** It's possible.

**MIKE.** Damn shame we didn't get the drinks in here.

**ROB.** Truer words were never spoken.

**BARB.** And we all have to stay cooped up in this tiny apartment? No offense, Mary.

**MARY.** None taken, Barb.

## A VERY FOWL THANKSGIVING

**ANDREW.** It is what is, folks. Let's all just settle down. And one other thing.

**CAROL.** There's more?

**ANDREW.** The train accident happened next to a power substation.

**MARY.** You mean we might lose power?

**ANDREW.** Don't know. But it's possible.

**MARY.** Oh, my. That would mean we'd lose my electric stove, plus the lights and the heat.

**MIKE.** Maybe it won't happen, Mom.

**AMANDA.** Good gracious. Dangerous chemicals floating around in the air. We don't have such things in the country.

**DIANE.** It's a train derailment. Accidents can happen anywhere.

**ROB.** Diane, maybe you should put some distance between you and...

**DIANE.** It's a nine by twelve room. How much distance can I put? (*Lights down.*)

### END OF ACT 1

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—  
ORDER A COPY AT [WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.COM](http://WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.COM)***