

Merry Christmas / Happy Thanksgiving

Susan Jarrett





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MERRY CHRISTMAS / HAPPY THANKSGIVING

By Susan Jarrett

CAST

NORA: Caring hostess.

NICK: Doubtful host. He is a little portly, and wears a red sweater. (White beard is optional)

GERTIE CROUCH: Guest #1 (Grumpy).

HARRIETT HUNGERMAN: Guest #2 (Hungry).

RACHEL: Guest #3 (Raunchy).

CHLOE: Guest #4 (Klepto).

TONYA PROKRASTINOVA: Guest #5, Sonya's sister.

SONYA PROKRASTINOVA: Guest #6, Tonya's sister.

Time:

The holiday season.

Place:

A family living room, suitably decorated for Christmas / Thanksgiving.

Note: This play can be used for Thanksgiving or for Christmas.

At Rise: NICK and NORA are in their living room. A fire is burning in the hearth. It is Christmas Day. NORA is busy setting out little dishes of party foods. NICK looks worried, while NORA looks happy.

NICK: I still think this is a hair-brained scheme. You have absolutely no idea who might show up. For all you know, we could soon be sharing mashed potatoes and gravy with Jack the Ripper and Lizzie Borden.

NORA: Oh honey, relax. It'll be just fine--and anyway, they're both dead.

NICK: Ha ha, very funny. But you know what I mean. Anyone could have answered your ad.

NORA: It wasn't an ad. It was just a nice little notice attached to the plum tree in the front yard, saying, "Don't be lonely on the holiday. Come on in for good company and turkey with all the trimmings. Just tear off a number and be here at 1 o'clock on Christmas Day." I hated to think of people spending the day all alone. It will be fine, you'll see, and we'll feel wonderful for having brought some happiness to all those lonely people--well, six of them anyway. I expect old Johnny Jones and Mrs. Svenson will be...

NICK: *(interrupting)* Oh my God! I clean forgot to tell you!

NORA: What?

NICK: They're getting married!

NORA: Who?

NICK: Old Johnny and Mrs. Svenson! When I was out walking Spanky this morning I saw a For Sale sign going up in Mrs. Svenson's front yard. I stopped to read the sign and Frank happened to come out from the house next door. When I asked him where she was moving to, he laughed and said "Old Johnny's place!" Apparently they left for Mexico yesterday and presumably are married by now.

NORA: How on earth could you forget to tell me that?

NICK: Well when I got back, the game was on and I kind of forgot. Sorry honey. *(just then the doorbell rings)* Hey, here's your first guest!

NORA: OK. I'll get it. This is so exciting! *(NORA goes to open the door. An elderly lady enters.)* Merry Christmas! Come on in! We're so glad you're here! I'm Nora, and this is Nick. What's your name?

GERTIE: Here, you want this? *(she hands NORA her number)*

NORA: Yes, thank you...er...?

GERTIE: Gertie Crouch. It's cold in here.

NICK: Gertie, come sit by the fire. There. Is that better? I don't think we've ever met. Where do you live, Gertie?

GERTIE: Harrison House.

NICK: The retirement community?

GERTIE: Yep.

NORA: So surely they put on a nice Christmas dinner there, don't they? What made you decide to come here instead?

GERTIE: Don't like people--especially old people. Too many of 'em there.

NICK: Well we're not so old Gertie, and there'll only be six of us, so you should have a lovely day.

NORA: Eight dear, but who's counting? Can I get you something to drink, Gertie? Wine, cider...?

GERTIE: Scotch.

NORA: Excuse me?

GERTIE: Scotch. Only thing I drink.

NORA: OK. Let's see what I can find. *(the doorbell rings again)* Honey, can you get that while I check out our bar? *(NORA exits SR)*

(NICK nods and heads for the door. HARRIETT walks in right past him and looks around.)

HARRIETT: Am I in time for the turkey?

NICK: And a merry Christmas to you too. I'm Nick. And you are?

HARRIETT: Harriett Hungerman. Where's the food?

NORA: *(returning with GERTIE's drink. GERTIE tosses it off in one gulp.)* There's all kinds of snacks around. Harriett, I'm Nora. And this is Gertie Grouch.

GERTIE: Crouch.

NORA: Yes, Crouch. Gertie lives in Harrison House and has excellent hearing. Where do you live?

HARRIETT: Across town. My sister lives a couple of houses down from here and she told me about your invitation. That was nice of you, by the way.

NICK: All Nora's idea. You are most welcome here, of course, but wouldn't you have preferred to be at your sister's?

HARRIETT: Sure I would, but she says she's sick of me eating them out of house and home, so I guess I'm not welcome there anymore. This will do just fine though. *(she starts helping herself to all the little bowls of snacks around the room, emptying them into her hand and eating a handful at a time)*

NORA: Can I get you something to wash those down with, Harriett?

HARRIETT: *(unintelligible, through a mouthful of food)* Tha wud be grt. Do yu have any shider?

(the doorbell rings)

NORA: Honey, could you refill the bowls for me and maybe get Harriett some shider? *(she grins at NICK)* I'll get the door. *(She goes to open the door. NICK exits SR)* Well hi! Merry Christmas! Come on in. I'm Nora.

RACHEL: Merry Christmas to you, too. I'm Rachel. This is so nice of you to open up your home like this. I feel like such a failure not having a date on a day like today, but this makes me feel so much better. Hi everyone, I'm Rachel. It's so wonderful to be here with all you nice friendly ladies.

GERTIE: Are you going to talk like that all day?

RACHEL: Oh, you just wait 'til I've had a couple of glasses of wine! You ain't heard nothing yet, sweetheart.

GERTIE: Saints preserve us.

HARRIETT: *(through a mouthful of food)* Hi, I'm Harrt. Harrt Hungmn.

RACHEL: Heart?

HARRIETT: No Harrt.

RACHEL: OK. (*NICK returns, carrying several bowls of snacks, which he puts down, and a glass of cider, which he gives to HARRIETT. Then he notices RACHEL.*)

NICK: Ah, a new guest. Hi, I'm...

RACHEL: (*in a sexy voice*) Well, I know who you are, Nick baby. I didn't expect to see you here today. Can I sit on your lap and tell you what a naughty girl I've been? (*She tries to edge him towards a chair. NICK looks totally confused, NORA looks at RACHEL quizzically.*)

NORA: I wasn't aware that you two already knew each other.

RACHEL: Oh, everyone knows Nick.

NICK: No they don't. We've never met before. Honestly, honey. I swear.

GERTIE: (*brightening up considerably*): Well this is turning out to be quite interesting after all.

NORA: So Rachel, how did you know my husband's name if you have apparently never met him?

(*GERTIE chuckles with delight. HARRIETT is watching, but continues to eat.*)

RACHEL: Your husband? I just know him as old St. Nick. We met down at the mall a couple of days ago. I didn't know he was your husband. To be honest, it never occurred to me that St. Nick could have a wife.

(*doorbell rings again*)

NORA: Ah! Saved by the bell. Nick will answer it, won't you sweetheart?

NICK: Yes dear. (*He goes to the door and a woman walks in. She is wearing a bulky raincoat and carries a large shopping bag.*) Hi. Merry Christmas and welcome to our humble abode. May I take your bag for you?

CHLOE: No thank you, I will be needing it. Merry Christmas to you too. I'm Chloe, by the way. Oh my, this is a lovely home. I've not been in this one before. *(she is checking out everything in the room)*

NICK: Thank you. I'm Nick. This is my lovely wife, Nora, and our other guests, Gertie, Harriet, and Rachel.

GERTIE: Whatever.

HARRIETT: Mry Csmas.

RACHEL: Well hi! I was kinda hoping one of the other numbers would be a man, but nice to meet you anyway. I guess any company is better than none on Christmas Day, though how I came to be all by my little old self I can't quite figure out.

GERTIE: I can.

(While RACHEL is talking, CHLOE wanders off into the next room. She comes back with two small pillows stuffed into the top of her raincoat and silverware protruding from the pockets.)

NORA: So, can I get anyone a drink? Gertie, you're still good? Rachel? Chloe? I have cider if anyone wants it.

RACHEL and CHLOE: Yes, please. Thanks.

(HARRIETT raises an empty glass for NORA to fill. NORA takes it and leaves the room. In the meantime, there is an awkward silence. GERTIE is staring at the fire, HARRIETT is eating, RACHEL is primping in front of a mirror, and CHLOE is slipping something into her bag. NICK looks up at NORA as she returns with a tray of glasses, raising his hands in a gesture of helplessness.)

NORA: *(brightly)* So, what would everyone like to do? We still have two more guests coming, 'cause all six numbers were taken, so we could play a game while we are waiting, or we could just go ahead and start eating now. What would you all like?

(CHLOE wanders off again. She is gone for quite a while.)

GERTIE: I don't play games.

NORA: *(sweetly)* No, of course you don't.

HARRIETT: Well, I vote for turkey and all the trimmings.

NICK: No surprise there.

RACHEL: Do we know if any of the others will be men? It seems a shame to start without them, but if Nick wants to eat now, then so do I.

NORA: Well, everything is just about ready. The turkey is out of the oven, the veggies are warming in chafing dishes, and I can have it all on the table in no time. (*CHLOE returns, dragging her bag which is now obviously quite heavy. She stays at the back of the room near the door.*) Honey, would you mind carving the turkey? Then we can all go in and serve ourselves.

NICK: Sure. (*he exits*)

NORA: So why don't we all tell each other...

(*NICK returns*)

NICK: (*grinning*) Ok, very funny. I know I'm just a dumb male, but I know a turkey when I see one, and I don't see one. Where have you hidden it?

NORA: What are you talking about? It's right in the middle of the counter. Excuse me everyone, I guess old St. Nick forgot his glasses, so I'll have to show him what a turkey looks like and how I have hidden it right under his nose!

(*Everyone laughs except for CHLOE, who slips quietly out the door, taking an umbrella from the umbrella stand as she leaves. NORA exits to the next room, with NICK reluctantly following her. There is a shriek from NORA, who walks slowly back into the room, looking crestfallen. The doorbell rings.*)

NICK: (*offstage*) I'll get it. (*enters and crosses to door*) Oh, hello. You must be Numbers 5 and 6.

SONYA: Yes. How did you know?

TONYA: We're the Prokrastinova sisters. I'm Tonya, this is Sonya.

SONYA: And we can't believe we made it!

TONYA: On time!

SONYA: For turkey!

TONYA: On Christmas Day!

(NICK has been standing dumbfounded, but he finally pulls himself together)

NICK: I'm so sorry. Where are my manners? Come on in. I'm Nick. That's my wife Nora. Everything OK, honey? And that's Gretchen, Harriett, Rachel, and...Oh where's Chloe? She's probably in the bathroom. And, yes, you're just in time for turkey.

SONYA: We are so proud of ourselves. This is the first time in...Well, we didn't get around to eating turkey last year until...August, was it?

TONYA: Yeah, but remember, they didn't have any turkeys at the market then so we never did...Have we ever?

SONYA: No, I guess we never have.

TONYA: And here we are...

SONYA: In time...

TONYA: To eat turkey!

NORA: Well, not exactly. *(everyone stops what they are doing and stare at NORA)*

EVERYONE: Not exactly? What do you mean? What, no turkey?

NORA: The turkey is gone, and so apparently is Chloe, along with the silverware, the salt and pepper shakers and who knows what else.

(an audible gasp from everyone)

End of FreeRead

**You can tell from this FreeRead, that the show is quite wonderful!
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