

THANKS-GIVING

by Joanna Jones

GENRE: Comedy

SYNOPSIS: A woman talks about her family at the holidays.

DIRECTOR'S TIP: The success of Thanks-Giving clearly depends on the manner in which the actress delivers the lines and carries herself about the stage. While performing a monologue, the actress can become lost in the moment and forget she is on stage, thus leading the scene quickly down an exceedingly boring path. It is important that she realizes she is entertaining, taking an audience into her world for a moment to teach them an undeniable truth—in this case, “to give thanks in ALL circumstances.”

TIME: Under 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 1

TOPIC: Family, Thankfulness

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 1 Thessalonians 5:18

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Any, Thanksgiving

SUGGESTED USE: Worship Service

CHARACTERS: WOMAN

PROPS: Table with chairs, plates, cups, knives

COSTUMES: Contemporary

SOUND: One wireless microphone

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: A dining room

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WOMAN is setting a table with different chairs and plates.

WOMAN: Have you ever seen those holiday commercials, showing a table garnished with candles, flowers, and sparkly ribbon? And the perfect family, in their matching Thanksgiving sweaters, is gathered lovingly around one side of the big table, hugging and laughing behind the steam of the food.

Do you ever want to just slap them?

Surely the people who wrote the commercial, act in it, and film it have actually BEEN to a family Thanksgiving? Give me a break. In my family, the table was never set so full as in those commercials, and forget the designer coordinating table runner, candleholders, and napkin rings. Don't get me wrong, we got by, but Dad worked at a clothing store and Mom stayed home. We knew it could be a stretch for them. The arguments over money were the longest and loudest. We all knew Dad got more stressed over the holidays.

And those commercials never show the real picture. Everyone together in a small space. And you're adults, so no one can send anyone to their room. The boys are glued to the football game. Mom's upset over the lumps in the gravy, and Dad tries to keep the grandkids from doing handsprings off the piano. My Aunt Ethel corners me, pats my hand, and says, "Don't worry about the divorce, dear, you're still young." But that reassurance doesn't make me feel any less like I'm a failure who is back at the kiddie table, when I should be at my own home with my own family, which I don't have.

Then my brother comes in, late, as always. He dropped out of college to be a rock star. All night we have to steer conversation away from the words "band," "school," and "scholarship," or Dad may blow. The best thing I can say about his girlfriend is that all her tattoos are spelled correctly. And her nose ring is tasteful, as nose rings go.

My nieces love my brother. He's great with kids. And my sister handles it pretty well when they say they want to be just like Uncle Billy. She handles everything well...she has a great job, a great husband, and she always brings a homemade pie. I brought the ice and napkins. She's wonderful, and I hardly get to see her now that she's moved across town.

And eventually we are all at the table, elbow to elbow: "Who's got milk?" "I had the coffee!" "Where's my spoon?" "Honey, get the high chair." Mom jumps up three or four times; the rolls are in the oven or the cranberry sauce is still in the fridge. After a few false starts, we join hands to pray. There is a moment of silence before Dad begins, and it hits me.