

The First Thanksgiving According to Dwayne

A Comedy in One Act

by Pat Cook

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STORY OF THE PLAY

“Four score and seven years ago, Christopher Columbus drove his Plymouth on a rock.” This is just one of the tidbits of American history according to Dwayne. When asked in class to explain how America celebrated its first Thanksgiving, he launches into the most lopsided account imaginable. Father and Mother of this Pilgrim family get talked into hosting the event – “You have the table,” the Preacher explains.

And we finally find out how such Thanksgiving staples came about. “I can’t believe we’re having turkey,” Mother groans. “Hey, I ran over it with the mule, no sense letting it go to waste,” he explains. “I just hope the others don’t find out they’re eating road kill.”

The other guests show up, bringing such delicacies as popcorn, cranberry sauce, yams and tobacco. “Wait, this isn’t habit-forming, is it?” Father asked Chief. “Nooo,” assures the Chief and then turns to his wife, “this’ll get them back for Manhattan!” And what guests! Betsy Ross, still working on the flag; Clara Barton, wondering what to do with her Red Cross flag; and Hester Prynne, sporting a large “A” on her blouse, along with her sister, Dandeline, who has an “A+” on hers.

Then, when space aliens show up, the teacher knows this has gone on too long. However, she asked for it. And she got it: **The First Thanksgiving According to Dwayne.**

CHARACTERS (4 m, 6 f)

DWAYNE: Outgoing but not too bright.

FATHER: Pilgrim father, a bit cocky.

MOTHER: Father's wife, the "brains" of the outfit.

PREACHER: The guiding light of the community.

CHIEF: Wise-cracking Native American.

MRS. CHIEF: Chief's wife, long suffering.

HESTER PRYNNE: A "party girl."

DANDELIN PRYNNE: Hester's sister.

BETSY ROSS: Flag-making lady, late to the party.

CLARA BARTON: Another late arrival.

TEACHER: An offstage voice.

TIME: The present.

SETTINGS: Schoolroom and wilderness.

SETTING

In what seems to be a clearing near a pilgrim's house there is a long, roughhewn table with benches, located almost CS. There is also Dwayne's school desk, located DSR.

PROPS

History book for Dwayne

Wooden bowl and spoon and covered metal pot for Mother

Plates for Father

Large bottle of water and small pouch for Chief

Larger leather pouch for Mrs. Chief

Bottle of juice for Preacher

Bag for Hester

Covered dish for Mother

Flags for Betsy and Clara

THE FIRST THANKSGIVING ACCORDING TO DWAYNE

(Before the LIGHTS come up, we hear the sound of students talking and, over this, the teacher's VOICE.)

TEACHER: Okay, everyone, let's settle down now. May I have your attention? *(LIGHTS come up on DWAYNE at his desk with his history book. He is obviously carrying on a lively conversation with his neighbor and laughing.)* Everybody? May I have your attention? Let's all settle down. *(The STUDENTS get quiet.)* Now, I hope you all read chapter eight last night. *(DWAYNE sinks in his desk and hides behind his book.)* Now. Who wants to tell us about the first Thanksgiving? Anybody? Okay, let's get a volunteer. *(ECHO effect.)* Dwayne—ayne-ayne-anyne-ayne. *(DWAYNE peeks over his book.)* Please stand and tell us about the first Thanksgiving in America. *(DWAYNE slowly rises to his feet.)*

DWAYNE: Right. The first Thanksgiving. Well, so much happened about this time ... uh, this time in history, this period, this era in ... *(HE looks at his book jacket.)* in American history. *(HE flips to the front page.)* Which has been told to us in great detail by Dr. Matthew Oglethorpe and his great book, which told us about the first Thanksgiving, was published by the good people at Humphreys-McGregor publishing. Their publishing company is located –

TEACHER: Close your book, Dwayne. *(DWAYNE smiles sheepishly and shuts his book.)* Just tell us ... in your own words ... about the first Thanksgiving.

DWAYNE: Right. Well, if I have to tell it in my own words, you know, it, like, may lose something in the transgression. Okay. The first Thanksgiving ... this was the first one, now! They hadn't had one before so nobody knew what they were doing. We've all been there. Well, there was this gang of pilgrims – pilgrims? Pilgrims! Right, pilgrims.

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DWAYNE: *(Cont'd.)* Anywho, they all lived in log cabins which were built out of trees, which if you cut them up they become logs! And, like, the father was the head of the house in those days.

(LIGHTS come up on the area of the table. FATHER is sitting on a bench, twiddling his thumbs.)

DWAYNE: And he didn't have nothing much to do because there weren't any jobs.

FATHER: Oh, I wish I had something to do. I cannot wait until the Industrial Revolution comes along and then, like, we'll all have work, you know?

(MOTHER enters from SR and crosses to FATHER. She is stirring something in a large wooden bowl.)

DWAYNE: And the mother always did the cooking. This was very hard on her since all her spoons and forks and stuff was made of iron. This was also known as the Iron Age. Yet they were happy.

MOTHER: *(Looks out.)* I am, like, so happy. Happy that I can do the cooking and cleaning and sewing and raising of the children.

FATHER: Yes, we have much to be thankful for.

MOTHER: Well, one of us does. *(SHE drops the bowl on the table with a loud thud. This causes FATHER to jump.)*

DWAYNE: The father would, like, go out and hunt for food. He would go out every day and find game.

(LIGHT fades out on DWAYNE.)

FATHER: Hey? I think I'm gonna go out and find game.

MOTHER: Anything to get away from the house.

FATHER: And when I do I'll shoot it.

MOTHER: *(Sits at the table.)* Okay, but try to make sure it's an animal this time. Last time the only game you found was with dice.

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FATHER: (*Looking out.*) Uh huh, and I was shooting dice for many hours.

MOTHER: (*Stirring again.*) Not the kind of shooting I was thinking of. Go and bring in food for your family.

(*FATHER waves at someone.*) Who you waving at?

FATHER: Over there. It's that Hester Prynne. Hi, Hes!

MOTHER: You leave her alone.

FATHER: What a healthy chick! (*HE squints.*) What's that on her blouse? It's a scarlet letter of some kind.

MOTHER: (*Rises and looks.*) That's a big A.

FATHER: A? What does that stand for?

MOTHER: It stands for ... ah ... (*SHE looks up at FATHER.*) asthma!

FATHER: Wow, bummer.

MOTHER: So you stay away from her.

FATHER: And she looks so (*Deep sigh.*) healthy. Ooh, look over there. It's John Smith and Pocahontas.

MOTHER: (*Aside to FATHER.*) As if she believes that's his real name.

FATHER: (*Waving.*) Hi John! Hi Poke!

MOTHER: Don't be late in coming home. And don't hang out with that Miles Standish character either.

FATHER: Here we go! You don't like any of my friends.

MOTHER: He's always so snooty.

FATHER: You mean he's Standish offish? Hey! Where's our son? He should be learning how to do stuff.

MOTHER: What kinda stuff?

FATHER: You know, stuff! Like hunting and foraging and tracking and stuff. Like my father and his father and your father and me.

MOTHER: You mean his four fathers?

FATHER: Hey, it's in the history books.

MOTHER: Here comes the preacher.

FATHER: Great! Now we have to start talking using all them "thee's" and "thou's."

MOTHER: Be nice. (*PREACHER enters from SR.*) Hey, Preacher man. How ist thou today?

PREACHER: Good day, thee.

FATHER: Right back at'cha ... thou.

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MOTHER: 'Tis pleasant to see thee. What hast brought you to our crib?

FATHER: And keep it short.

PREACHER: Yea, verily, I hast come on a mission.

FATHER: Wait. I thought you lived in a mission. That's why you're called a mission-ary.

MOTHER: Father?

FATHER: Sorry. (*Back to PREACHER.*) Why thou ist called a mission-ary.

PREACHER: That's a different kind of mission, thou idiot. So, brother, are you off hunting and foraging and tracking and stuff?

FATHER: Naw, I'm just hanging about the house.

PREACHER: And thou calls this pilgrim's progress?

MOTHER: (*"Give it to him."*) Tell him. I want to hear this.

PREACHER: There is much to do for us in this land of plenty.

FATHER: Right. Plenty of planting and plenty of digging and plenty of chopping wood. You know, if you chop up a tree it becomes logs?

PREACHER: We all have our tasks here in the New World. That is why we all came over on the Nina and the Pinta and –

(Both PREACHER and FATHER face out, fall to one knee and throw out their hands as if finishing a song.)

PREACHER and FATHER: – the Santa Fe!

MOTHER: Get up. This ain't a musical.

(The MEN get up.)

FATHER: What is it brought you here today, Preacher? If thou ist taking up a collection again, I am strapped.

PREACHER: It has come to me this morning that we have so much to be thankful for. We have so much bounty we should share it.

FATHER: Aah, I don't think so. I'm keeping what I got.

PREACHER: What's this? A mutiny on the bounty?

End of Freeview

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