

ERIC

"Misgiving Dinner"

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INT. NELSON HOUSE - MATT AND RHONDA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

MATT JAMES and his wife, RHONDA NELSON-JAMES, start to awake from their bed.

MATT

Happy Turkey Day, honey.

RHONDA

(stretching)

You too, baby.

MATT

Well, time to get up and get ready for the game.

(sniffs)

Hey, isn't there supposed to be some Thanksgivingy smells from the kitchen, like turkey cooking, pies baking?

RHONDA

Now you know you're asking the wrong person.

MATT

When is Cynthia supposed to start cooking?

RHONDA

You gave her the day off, remember?

MATT

No, I gave her the 25th off, which was yesterday. And she said she'd come back the next day to cook.

RHONDA

Matt, isn't today the 25th?

MATT

(quickly gets out of bed)

Awww, shhh...

Matt darts out of bed and runs downstairs to the living room. ERIC NELSON, 14, and TIMMY ROBERTS, 40's, sit and watch TV.

MATT (CONT'D)

Crap, crap, crap, crap.

ERIC

Morning, Matt.

TIMMY

The game's about to start.

MATT

No time for that right now. What's today's date? Please say the 26th.

ERIC

It's the 25th.

MATT

That's not what I asked you to do, son!
Where's my planner?

He pulls out the planner from the coffee table and flips through it. Rhonda enters the living room.

MATT (CONT'D)

It says the 26th right here.

RHONDA

This is from last year! Didn't you buy one for this year?

TIMMY

Too late now.

ERIC

That's why I was late turning in my history project, guys!

RHONDA

(to Eric)

Then you would have been early. Nice try, you're still grounded.

ERIC

Dang.

RHONDA

How are we gonna have Thanksgiving dinner now? Billy's coming home this afternoon!

MATT

The stores are still open. Maybe you should run to it!

ERIC AND TIMMY

(sotto voce)

Wrong answer.

Rhonda looks and frowns at Matt.

MATT

Me? But I'm gonna miss the game!

ERIC

Don't worry, Matt. I'll record it. You can watch the Bears lose later.

MATT

(sighs)

But it's not the same.

RHONDA

It's what you get for giving Cynthia the whole Thanksgiving off!

MATT

But I didn't know the 25th was Thanksgiving!

ERIC

Did Cynthia ask you, or did you give it her?

MATT

Well, she knew not to ask me.

RHONDA

Yeah, because she asked me first, and I told her the morning of Thanksgiving, if anything.

MATT

Then she asked me about the 25th, and I pulled out my calendar.

(pauses)

Wow, well played.

TIMMY

Wait, so Cynthia Mom-and-Popped Mom and Pop?

Timmy breaks out laughing. Eric joins him.

MATT

(to Eric)

You know, just for that, son, you're coming with me.

ERIC

Aw, man! Well, what about Timmy?

MATT

Oh yeah, I forgot.

EXT. NELSON HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - SAME

The door opens. It is snowing out. Timmy is tossed out of the house.

TIMMY

AARRGH!

SFX: THUD into a snow bank off-screen.

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

MATT

Alright, Rhonda, we'll be back.

RHONDA

Do you want me to fix something until you guys come back?

MATT

No. We want it to be a happy Thanksgiving.

RHONDA

Right. Hey, be careful on the roads.

MATT

Why? This is Wisconsin. It's just a little...

INT. BILLY AND RON'S APARTMENT - SAME

BILLY NELSON, 18, looks out the window.

BILLY

...snow! Man, look at all of it!

RON TYSON, 18, walks with his luggage.

RON

I know. And it was just 45 degrees yesterday.

BILLY

"If you don't like the weather here, wait a day." They weren't lying.

RON

I was just on the phone. Our bus is delayed. I'll never make it to Chicago now.

BILLY

And my car's still down. Dang, I really wanted to get back home.

RON

There's still a chance, for you, anyway. Milwaukee ain't that far from here.

BILLY

I hope so. I can't miss that dinner.

RON

Your mother's cooking right now, huh?

BILLY

No, the only one who cooks in the house is...

INT. MCNAIR RESIDENCE - SAME

PETER MCNAIR, 30's, enters the apartment with his children, POLLY, 10, and PABLO, 7.

PETER

...Cynthia! The kids are back!

Peter's ex-wife, CYNTHIA MCNAIR, 30's, enters the living room.

CYNTHIA

Well, it's about time!

PETER

Look, I only get to have them a couple days a week.

CYNTHIA

Whatever.

PABLO

Guys, it's Thanksgiving. Please don't argue today.

POLLY

Yeah, save it for tomorrow.

PETER

(to Cynthia)

How were you able to get today off, anyway?

CYNTHIA

I asked Rhonda for the day off. She said no, but Matt said yes.

PETER

Ah, you Mom-and-Popped them. Very clever.
(to the kids)
Don't ever do that.

CYNTHIA

It wasn't really that hard to do. That fool still has last year's calendar.

PETER

Well, off I go back in the blistering cold and snowy roads to have Thanksgiving dinner by myself.

CYNTHIA

Oh, I'm sure you can call one of your many girlfriends.

PETER

I'm not dating anyone.

CYNTHIA

You got all of that out of your system when you were with me, right?

PETER

No, you numbed me from dating anyone else ever again.

POLLY

Guys...

PETER

Sorry.

CYNTHIA

(hesitating)

Peter, would you like to stay with us for dinner?

PETER

That's very nice of you! I will stay!

The kids cheer.

PETER (CONT'D)

As long as you serve up my favorite dish!
And that is...

INT. GROCERY STORE - SAME

Eric stands in the meat section and shows a package to Matt.

ERIC
Disposable underwear?

MATT
Some fool was too lazy to put it back.
Move it out the way and grab a Cornish
hen.

Eric grabs a Cornish hen and puts it in the shopping cart. He and Matt head to the checkout line.

MATT (CONT'D)
We're doing good on time. Maybe I can
still catch kickoff.

Matt accidentally bumps his cart into GRETCH JACKSON, 20's, a rough, thuggish, woman.

GRETCH
Hey!

MATT
Sorry. Oh no, Gretch! Look we don't want
any trouble. We're trying to get back
home.

ERIC
Yeah, so save your robbery for another
day.

GRETCH
Home? Hell, I'm trying to get away from
mine. That's why I'm here. Volunteered
for a store run.

MATT
Hmmp.

Gretch loads her items on the belt and approaches the cashier, KATHY HUGHES, a gothic-like African-American girl who wears black makeup. She holds up her hands.

KATHY
(in a lazy voice)
Take whatever you want, ma'am.

GRETCH
Will you stop it? I have cash!

Kathy puts her hands down and takes Gretch's money.

MATT

You pick one day out of the year to be a respectable woman.

GRETCH

After taking so much from everyone all year, I like to give back.

ERIC

By giving money to the store for buying one of their items.

GRETCH

Yeah, now shut up.

ERIC

And she's back.

A CITY WORKER enters the doors of the store. Behind him is a blizzard and a huge snow bank.

CITY WORKER

Everybody, I wouldn't make plans to go home yet. The roads are blocked, and it's a mess. You're gonna be here a while.

GRETCH

Good.

MATT

No, bad!

He and Eric run to the windows.

KATHY

Sir, you have to pay for these things.

MATT

We're not going anywhere!

KATHY

I have to say that. One more strike, and I'm fired. I don't really care.

Matt sighs.

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Rhonda watches TV. The family pets, Bony the dog, and Eddie the cat, sit next to her. The power then goes out in the house.

RHONDA

I can't believe it! The power AND the heat is out!

She turns on the flashlight on her phone, grabs a blanket, and sits back down.

RHONDA (CONT'D)

(to the pets)

No family, but at least we're all together, right?

Bony and Eddie look at each other, then run off of the couch.

RHONDA (CONT'D)

Great.

She dials on her phone.

INT. BILLY AND RON'S APARTMENT - SAME

Billy and Ron walk around the apartment.

RON

What are we gonna do? We can't be stranded here. We don't even have any food!

BILLY

What are you talking about? We have a few beers here.

RON

Well, that's true. But we still need some food for Thanksgiving!

SFX: Billy's phone RINGS.

BILLY

Hello? Yeah, Mom, I was just about to call you. We're stranded.

(pause)

The power's out? You better call it in.

(pause)

Yeah, call me back. I need to go and console Ron.

RON

(talking on his phone)

No, Mom, I don't think I'm gonna make it.

(pause)

(MORE)

RON (CONT'D)

Yeah, I know it's bright and sunny down there!

(pause)

No, I'm not lying. Just turn on the weather.

(pause)

Mom, I know the Bears are about to play. Just look on your app.

(pause)

The weather icon on your phone.

(pause)

No, we won't get disconnected! Just...yeah, that's it. Now...

(pause)

Hello? Mom? Hello?

Ron puts the phone down.

RON (CONT'D)

She trolls her exes all day on the 'Gram but still can't work a cell phone.

Ron stares out the window at the snow.

INT. MCNAIR RESIDENCE - LATER

Polly stares out the window at the snow. She then feels a sprinkle of snow on her head.

POLLY

Hmm. Must be standing too close to the window.

She feels some more sprinkles and turns her head around. Pablo stands behind her with a pail of snow.

PABLO

Snowball fight!

POLLY

I'm gonna get you!

Polly chases Pablo around. Polly stops to make a snowball. She throws it at Pablo.

SFX: The snowball SPLATS!

PABLO

Hey, there was a bottle cap in there!

POLLY

Oh well!

PABLO
 I'm telling!
 (calling out)
 Mom!

POLLY
 Oh no you don't!

They run up to Cynthia's door.

POLLY (CONT'D)
 I'm telling on you!

Polly opens the door and walks in.

POLLY, CYNTHIA, AND PETER
 (O.S.)
 AARGH!

Polly dashes out of her room.

PABLO
 What's wrong?

POLLY
 Let's just say we might have a baby
 sister next Thanksgiving.

Polly walks away.

PABLO
 (following her)
 I don't even like the one I have now.

Peter dashes out of the room wearing Cynthia's pink robe.

PETER
 Kids, wait, I can explain!

Cynthia walks out wearing a blanket wrapped around her.

CYNTHIA
 Can you really?

PETER
 No.

CYNTHIA
 Well, we have to think of a way.

PETER
 Can we finish while we do?

CYNTHIA

Okay, you think, I'll drive.

They both laugh amorously and dash back into Cynthia's room.

INT. GROCERY STORE - LATER

Matt and the other patrons sit on the floor. Eric walks away from the window.

ERIC

When are they gonna let us out of here?
It stopped snowing a while ago.

MATT

But they still need to clear the road,
son.

ERIC

(sitting down and pulling out
his phone)
This sucks. There's no internet connect
here, and even the Angry Birds are
getting bored.

MATT

I know.

ERIC

I'll take a little nap. That's what this
one's doing.

MATT

(rolling his eyes)
Who, Chaz Trepur?

ERIC

No, Gretch.

Eric points to Gretch, who is in a corner sleeping on bags of fertilizer.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Oh yeah, Chaz is sleeping, too.

He points to CHAZ TREPUR, who is laid out over an end cap of canned goods.

SFX: Chaz SNORES.

The city worker enters the store.

CITY WORKER

Okay, the roads are clear. You guys can go.

Everybody chatters in relief and gets up.

MATT

Finally! Maybe I can still catch the game.

Matt and Eric head for the exit. A MAN stops them in their tracks.

MAN

Nobody's goin' anywhere.

ERIC

Yeah, we are. Didn't you hear the guy?

MAN

Well, hear this.

(pulls out a gun)

Everybody stay where you are! This is a stick up!

Everyone gasps and holds up their hands.

MATT

Oh, I can't believe this!

Gretch approaches Matt and Eric.

ERIC

Gretch, did you bring your gun with you?

GRETCH

(patting herself down)

I don't think so.

MAN

You mean this? I stole it from you while you were sleeping.

GRETCH

Oh, that's right!

(to Eric and Matt)

Wow, that's thinking on your toes, huh?

Eric sighs.

INT. BILLY AND RON'S APARTMENT - LATER

Billy knocks on the bedroom door.

BILLY

Ron, come out and look at this!

Billy walks to the kitchen table. Ron follows him. On the table are bowls of cereal, a plate full of wrapped peppermint candies, containers of salad, a half-eaten box of pizza, a few bottles of water, and a couple of beers.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Here's our Thanksgiving feast!

RON

What in the Charlie Brown is this?!

BILLY

Look, we're snowed in, and I feel your pain. But we can make the most of it. It's all we have left in the house.

RON

You're making me miss Grandma's potato salad with raisins.

BILLY

Just sit.

They both sit at the table.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Now, I figure that since we can't be with our families, we can at least be with each other and talk about past Thanksgivings with our families.

RON

Alright, sure.

BILLY

But first, carve the leftover pizza.

RON

(sighs while cutting the
pizza)

Well, I remember how my dad would barbecue in 20-degree weather, while me and my uncles would play football in the backyard.

(chuckles while eating)

Meanwhile, one of my aunts would slave over some beans that would end up being untouched. Nobody had the guts to tell her she can't cook!

BILLY

Oh, we have no problems telling my mother she can't cook! That's why our maid fixes our meals. I do remember, though, that when my parents were married, my father was about to go on tour. But before he left, he had problems getting the caterers to come to our home, so we had to order from a steakhouse for Thanksgiving instead.

RON

(sarcastically)
Humble beginnings, huh?

BILLY

Hey, there's the last pepperoni. Make a wish!

They both pull on the pepperoni slice. The piece SNAPS, and they PLOP their seats to the floor off-screen.

BILLY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I got the bigger piece.

RON (O.S.)

Liar. I do!

INT. MCNAIR RESIDENCE - LATER

Cynthia and Peter sit with Polly on the couch.

CYNTHIA

Polly, we want to explain to you what you saw.

POLLY

I know what I saw.

PETER

You do?

POLLY

Yeah!

CYNTHIA

Oh, good. I thought we had to go over it with you.

POLLY

What's to go over? My parents are back together again!

She hugs both of them.

POLLY (CONT'D)
I'm gonna wash up for dinner.

Polly leaves.

PETER
We're back together?

CYNTHIA
I don't know!

PETER
Well, we need to tell her that!

CYNTHIA
How do we tell her?

PETER
I don't know. "We're not getting back together; we just like having sex with each other."

CYNTHIA
Oh, good, introduce our kid to the world of booty calls!

PETER
Better learning it here than on the streets!

CYNTHIA
We have to think.

PETER
Okay, back up to your room.

Peter stands up and grabs Cynthia arm, but Cynthia pulls back.

CYNTHIA
No!

PETER
Oh. I thought that was our thing now.

Peter sits back down.

INT. GROCERY STORE - LATER

The customers sit down while the robber walks with the gun in his hand.

MATT

Aw, dang!

ERIC

Thinking about getting home too late to eat?

MATT

No, I still got my leftover Veterans Day meals to hold me over. I'm mad because I'm missing the Bears game.

ROBBER

Oh, that's today? Damn! I should have scheduled this robbery for after the holiday.

GRETCH

It's because you're new to this! Take me. I robbed Timmy's Place right when they were closed.

(to Eric)

Your brother and his friend were in there.

ERIC

Oh yeah, Billy told me about that one.

GRETCH

(to the customers)

And I know you all remember when I came here for Easter and stole the money AND the Easter baskets! I even had on a bunny suit for the occasion.

A MALE CUSTOMER interjects.

MALE CUSTOMER

Oh, that was you!

The customers acknowledge her, nod, and talk in agreement.

ROBBER

I guess I have a lot to learn.

ERIC

Well, with more practice, you'll get there.

MATT

(rolls his eyes)

Oh, brother.

OFFICER TOWNSEND, a short, portly woman, makes an announcement from outside.

OFFICER TOWNSEND (O.S.)
Come out with your hands up!

The robber gasps and turns in Townsend's direction. He accidentally pulls the trigger, and water SQUIRTS out.

ROBBER
(looks at the gun)
Huh?

ERIC
Gretch, did you know you had a water gun all this time?

GRETCH
Oh, that's where my baby cousin hid it!

ROBBER
So, guys, at least we stayed off of those snowy roads, right?

He nervously chuckles.

MATT
(to the customers)
Get him!

The customers run to the robber and rough him up. Townsend enters the store.

OFFICER TOWNSEND
Alright, break it up!

The crowd stops. The robber runs out of the store.

ERIC
Officer Townsend, the robber's getting away!

OFFICER TOWNSEND
No, I got the robber right here!

She grabs Gretch by the arm and puts handcuffs on her.

GRETCH
What? No, I didn't rob them!

OFFICER TOWNSEND
Is that not your gun?

GRETCH

Yeah, but...

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Then that's all I need to know! Let's go!

MATT

No, the guy you want just ran out the store!

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Oh. Well, he'll be back. They always come back.

GRETCH

No, I always come back.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Oh. Oh well, let's go, Gretch. I'm sure you have some priors.

Townsend and Gretch leave the store.

MATT

(to Eric)

Come on, let's get outta here!

They both grab their shopping cart and exit.

INT. MCNAIR RESIDENCE - LATER

The McNair family sits around the table and finishes eating their dinner.

PABLO

Mmm, best Thanksgiving dinner ever.
Thanks, Mom!

CYNTHIA

I'm glad you guys liked it.

POLLY

So, Mom, Dad, we should start getting ready to hit the mall. Black Friday's starting soon!

PETER

Okay, that sounds fine.

POLLY

Then maybe we can take a Christmas photo together! We don't have a pic with the whole family!

Peter and Cynthia look at each other.

CYNTHIA

Yeah, kids, there's something we have to say.

POLLY

Okay...

CYNTHIA

Well, your father and I aren't really getting back together.

PABLO

It wasn't just a booty call, was it?

PETER

(gasps)

No! See, it's hard to explain. We got married kinda young. The ceremony was even rushed. Blink and you missed it.

CYNTHIA

The wedding and the marriage.

POLLY

Oh, I get it. You two are just smashing.

CYNTHIA

Polly!

(pause)

Well, yeah.

POLLY

Why didn't you just say so? We watch enough cable to know the difference. We're not surprised. The only thing that surprised me was how Dad was able to carry that towel with no hands.

CYNTHIA

(gazing into Peter's eyes,
speaking dreamily)

Yeah.

(coming back to Earth and
speaking to Polly)

But anyway, it confuses us, so we're gonna stop doing it. Literally.

PETER

It's for the best. In fact, I'll start right now. Thanks for having me. I'm going home.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)
 (to the kids)
 And cut down on the cable.

He gets up.

CYNTHIA
 Wait. Pablo, do you have any questions?

PABLO
 Yeah. Can I have some more pie?

CYNTHIA
 (sighs)
 No, you had enough. Why don't you guys go play?

POLLY
 Alright. See ya, Dad.

PABLO
 Yeah, bye, Dad.

PETER
 Later, kids.

The kids go to their rooms.

PETER (CONT'D)
 Come on, Cynthia, one more for the road.

CYNTHIA
 Are you serious? We just told our kids that we wouldn't be...
 (using air quotes)
 ..."smashing" anymore!

PETER
 That's the fun part about it! Now we can do it and try not to get caught!

CYNTHIA
 (pauses)
 Works for me. Come on.

They both hurry to Cynthia's room.

POLLY (O.S.)
 (sternly)
 Good night, Dad!!

PETER
 (turning back around)
 That's right.

Peter exits their apartment.

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Eric and Matt enter the dark house with groceries. Rhonda sits on the couch and talks with Billy on the phone.

MATT
We're back, honey.

ERIC
The lights are still off?

ON THE CELL PHONE SCREEN

BILLY
You're very observant, bro.

BACK TO LIVING ROOM

ERIC
Shut up.

RHONDA
What took you guys so long?

MATT
The snowstorm, an attempted robbery.
Typical Milwaukee stuff.

ERIC
We brought home some stuff for
Thanksgiving.

MATT
But it'll take a while to make it,
especially in the dark.

RHONDA
That's alright. Billy's been keeping me
company. He was in the same boat.

ON THE CELL PHONE SCREEN

BILLY
Yeah, but Sharon brought home some
leftover turkey sandwiches from her job,
so we're having that with our other food.

MATT
That's good, son.

The power comes back on.

RHONDA
Finally!

MATT
You know, I talked to Timmy. He said that we can come over for Thanksgiving with him.

RHONDA
Actually, this is pretty nice right here. Eric, turn off the lights.

ERIC
Okay.

Eric turns off all of the lights.

LONG PAUSE.

RHONDA
Matt?

MATT
Yeah?

RHONDA
I can be ready in ten minutes.

MATT
I hear that!

ERIC
Yeah!

RHONDA
(to Billy)
Talk to you later.

The three get up and move around.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Officer Townsend walks into the station with a handcuffed Gretch. They approach a table which has a turkey, yams, macaroni, potato salad, rolls, green beans, and other foods.

GRETCH

If you're expecting someone, I could come back.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

(unlocking the handcuffs)

Just grab a plate. I can't eat all of this myself.

Gretch fixes her lips to say something.

OFFICER TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

Don't even!

Gretch grabs a plate and fixes it.

GRETCH

What's the deal? Is there poison in this?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

I considered it. But I remember you saying that you'd rather be in here than spend Thanksgiving with your family. I feel the same way, so here we are.

GRETCH

Oh.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Now go to your usual spot.

Gretch walks into the holding cell with her food. Townsend shuts the door and returns to the table.

OFFICER TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

(fixing her plate)

Happy Turkey Day, Jackson.

GRETCH

(eating)

Same to you.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Thanks. Now shut up in there.

Gretch gives a fake smile, then frowns and continues to eat.

THE END