

EXTRACT

FESTIVE SPIRIT

SALLY DAVIES

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NOTE ON THE SCRIPT

This is an unedited manuscript as provided to us by the playwright. We distribute it in good faith; however it may contain layout inconsistencies or typographic errors.

CAST:

Jenny: Wife of Bob, mother of Melissa and Belinda, daughter of Joyce, sister of Tom. 50+
Bob: Jenny's husband. 50+
Tom: Jenny's brother. 45+
Deborah: Tom's wife. 45+
Joyce: Jenny and Tom's mother. 75+
Melissa: Jenny and Bob's eldest daughter. Single. 31
Frank: Next door neighbour. Maud's husband. 65+
Maud: Next door neighbour. Frank's wife. 65+
Belinda: Bob and Jenny's youngest daughter. Late 20s
Jeremy: Belinda's partner. Late 20s
Andrew: Male, 25-35

SETTING: Lounge room decorated for Christmas. There's a door stage right which leads to the foyer, bathroom, garage, outside. A door stage left leads to the kitchen, and there's a window on the wall at the rear of the stage. There's a Christmas tree sitting in the middle of the room with presents wrapped underneath it. There are two double lounges and an armchair positioned in the middle of the stage around a coffee table which has a couple of magazines placed on it. There's a blanket draped over the back of one of the lounges. There's a sideboard at the rear of the stage with various knick-knacks on it, a telephone and a phone book. Other usual lounge room paraphernalia can be added at the director's discretion.

ACT 1

It's Christmas Eve evening. BOB is sitting in the lounge engrossed in his reading of a newspaper. JENNY enters from the kitchen, wearing an apron and looking frazzled. She walks to the other lounge and sits down, dejectedly.

JENNY: The turkey's stuffed.

BOB: [*Continues reading*] That's nice.

JENNY: Didn't you hear me? I said it's stuffed.

BOB: [*Continues reading*] Sounds great. Wonderful.

JENNY: What?

BOB: [*Looks up from his newspaper*] What do you want me to say? It's Christmas. You went into the kitchen to stuff a turkey. It's now stuffed. Terrific.

JENNY: You're unbelievable. No turkey for you. Actually, I doubt there'll be any turkey for anyone.

BOB: Claiming it all are you? [*Goes back to reading the newspaper*]

JENNY: Bob, listen to me. It's stuffed. Ruined.

BOB: Oh. [*Puts newspaper down*] What happened?

JENNY: I had everything all laid out, prepared. The stuffing was made...

BOB: I know all about that. There are crumbs all over the lounge room.

JENNY: Well, I wasn't going to sit in the kitchen and break bread into tiny pieces on my own was I? It makes sense to watch a bit of TV. Have some company. Although I'd hardly call you company. You fall asleep at the drop of a hat.

BOB: I do not.

JENNY: You wouldn't know. You're asleep.

BOB: I watched that show with you the other night. The one that ended with all those explosions and the car going over a bridge. What was it called?

JENNY: If you hadn't been asleep through the opening credits you'd know.

BOB: I was just resting my eyelids. They get tired.

JENNY: Really? So your eyelids are tired during every episode of Midsomer Murders?

BOB: You can hardly blame me for nodding off during that. Anyway, I've got it all worked out. If I watch the beginning, then snooze between the second murder and the fourth, then I'm awake in time to watch the end to find our whodunnit. It's strategic.

JENNY: It's pathetic.

BOB: Anyway, the breadcrumbs?

JENNY: Breadcrumbs? Oh, yes. Well, I'd finished making the stuffing and had it sitting in a massive bowl next to the turkey.

BOB: Why you insisted on making so much...

JENNY: It's a size 76 turkey! I didn't think the whole Tip Top bakery would have enough bread to fill that bird!

BOB: Why did you get one so big?

JENNY: Because it was cheaper than the 40. Your mean Scottish side should appreciate the value in that.

BOB: I'm not mean. I'm frugal.

JENNY: Frugal is Scottish for mean. Anyway, we have nine coming for Christmas dinner and I still don't know if there'll be enough with the pork and chicken...

BOB: There'll be plenty.

JENNY: Well maybe not now when I think of what state the turkey's in.

BOB: What state is it in?

JENNY: Intestate I suspect as I doubt it left a will.

BOB: That's a terrible joke.

JENNY: I'm sure you'll hear worse. Christmas has only just begun and you still have the bon-bons to look forward to.

BOB: God help me. Double the wine order.

JENNY: Anyway, I was stuffing the turkey, and it was quite, well, cavernous where I was having to stuff in the stuffing, and I just kept stuffing and stuffing and it didn't seem to be filling up and then I got a bit overzealous with ramming it all in.

BOB: What have you done?

JENNY: I buggered the turkey. Literally.

BOB: How?

JENNY: I gave an almighty push of a handful of stuffing and managed to ram the turkey's leg up its... cavern.

BOB: That's quite an achievement.

JENNY: I thought so. I can't find the tongs either. I'm a bit worried they're in there too.

BOB: With the turkey leg.

JENNY: Yes.

BOB: It's getting quite crowded up there.

JENNY: So it would seem.

BOB: Surely you can just pull the stuffing out again and retrieve the leg and any wayward kitchen implements?

JENNY: I could, but think of the mess! It's ridiculous! I mean, who manages to stuff a turkey with its own leg? I've heard of putting a duck or chicken up there, but this?

BOB: Not so much a turducken as a turfu...*[phone ringing cuts him off]*

JENNY: Who the hell is that.

BOB: You may have to answer it to find out.

[JENNY answers the phone. BOB returns to reading the paper]

JENNY: Hello? ... Oh Melissa! How are you?... Calm down. What's happened?... Oh. I see... I am sorry... Yes... I know you thought he was The One... Look, there are plenty more fish in the... Sorry, bad analogy... Melissa, you're breaking up... I'm sorry. Poor choice of words... Yes, I know all men are bastards... I'm sure your father would agree... Whatever you think is best, love. Okay, we'll talk more about it when you get here. See you tomorrow. Love you. Bye. *[hangs up]*

BOB: Trouble in paradise?

JENNY: Melissa and Olaf have broken up so he won't be coming to Christmas dinner.

BOB: Excellent news. Couldn't stand the guy.

JENNY: Bob, show some compassion, the poor girl's heartbroken.

BOB: They'd only been going out for a month.

JENNY: Three.

BOB: Three? How did she put up with him for that long? All he wanted to talk about was fish.

JENNY: He was a diving instructor.

BOB: And I'm an accountant, yet still manage to talk about things other than numbers.

JENNY: His English was rather limited.

BOB: Didn't seem to bother Melissa.

JENNY: Bob, Olaf looked like he'd been carved out of a single piece of marble and had hair so lustrous that poets couldn't find enough adjectives to describe it. I love Melissa, but one thing she will never be accused of is being particularly deep when it comes to her choice in men.

BOB: You don't need to tell me. Remember Floyd?

JENNY: I'd hardly forget him. He used to check his reflection in the cutlery.

BOB: I was more concerned about the fact he ripped off our doorframe trying to demonstrate his chin-ups.

JENNY: The quantity of steroids he was ingesting, you're lucky he didn't bring down the whole wall.

BOB: So what did Olaf do to make Mel realise his hair wasn't enough for her anymore?

JENNY: It seems he found another fish in the sea.

BOB: Oh dear

JENNY: Patrice or Petrov. She's from Greenland or Iceland or Disneyland or something. I couldn't quite make it out between Mel's wracking sobs and the savage exclamations of grievous bodily harm she was planning to inflict on him. She's declared she's over men and going to be a nun.

BOB: Again?

JENNY: Apparently it's her vocation.

BOB: It's her vocation every time she breaks up with someone.

JENNY: She's consistent, I'll grant her that.

BOB: Who was that one a couple of years ago that she broke up with? She was steadfast on the convent idea for about a fortnight afterwards. I started to worry she was going to go through with it. She was even searching eBay for habits and rosary beads.

JENNY: Aaron? Adam? Andy!

BOB: Andy! That was him.

JENNY: We never met that one. She broke up with him because he wanted to change careers or something.

BOB: Which is quite odd when you think about it. Mel's never exactly been a jobbist.

JENNY: You're right. It was a bit strange.

BOB: Speaking of strange, who have we got coming for Christmas dinner now?

JENNY: You and I. Mel. Belinda and Jeremy. Actually Mel's going to love being around her sister and boyfriend when she's going through a break up. You know how militant she can get.

BOB: It's alright, we have wine. If all else fails, I've got a cattle prod. We'll get her through it.

JENNY: Then there's Mum. And your favourite in-laws Tom and Deborah.

BOB: Why did you invite them?

JENNY: We have this discussion every year. Because Tom's my only brother and inviting him here was the sole way Mum would see him on Christmas Day. He'd never be allowed to have Mum at his place.

BOB: I have no objection to Tom coming.

JENNY: He and Deborah have been married for 20 years. They're a package deal.

BOB: As I said, I have no objection to Tom coming.

JENNY: I might carve the dinner tomorrow. It's probably not a good idea to let you anywhere near Deborah when wielding a knife.

BOB: Don't worry about the knife. I've got the cattle prod, remember?

JENNY: Talking of food, whatever you do, don't let Tom near anything if he's not wearing his glasses.

BOB: Why?

JENNY: Because he has an insatiable appetite when he's stressed.

BOB: How is that linked to his glasses?

JENNY: He's constantly hungry so incessantly looks for food. I lost 3 of our cork coasters the Christmas before last because he thought they were some form of whole wheat biscuit.

BOB: Knowing Deborah's cooking, it's probably the nicest tasting food he's eaten for a while.

JENNY: Healthiest as well. They were expensive coasters too, so at least it was quality cork he was nibbling on. The only reason he stopped was because he found them a bit dry and asked me for a drink of water.

BOB: How did he not notice?

JENNY: You've met Deborah. The poor man switched off years ago.

BOB: I wish someone would switch her off.

JENNY: I'm with you there. Anyway, I've finally replaced the coasters, but please just watch him like a hawk.

BOB: Promise. I'll be like an MI5 officer on surveillance.

JENNY: Well, while you're at it, keep an eye out on how much Deborah drinks. We don't want a repeat of Christmas last year.

BOB: On the upside, the fire brigade turning up gave the neighbours something to talk about.

JENNY: I hope they're all bored this year because our family is not entertaining them again!

BOB: We'll just have to make sure Deb's fed a bit earlier. Line her stomach.

JENNY: You're right. And on that note, I really need to get on with dinner. If I don't start cooking this turkey tonight, it will never be ready for tomorrow. [*Starts to leave. Props*] If I left the leg in the turkey, do you think it would make it self-basting?

BOB: There's only one way to find out.

JENNY: Hmm. [*Starts to leave again*] What are tongs made out of?

BOB: Stainless steel I think.

JENNY: Would they be toxic if left to roast in a turkey?

BOB: Could be risky. If you decide to leave them in, I hear that Debborah loves turkey so make sure she gets a bigger portion.

JENNY: Hmm.

[*JENNY exits to kitchen. BOB returns to his newspaper. Lights fade*]

ACT 2

Christmas Day

SETTING: Lounge room. Room is exactly the same as for Christmas Eve except there are more presents under the tree. BOB is back sitting in his chair reading a book. He's wearing a Christmas themed t-shirt, and a Santa hat. JENNY bustles in from the direction of the kitchen wearing an apron.

JENNY: Alright. The meat's in the oven finishing off. I'm half way through prepping the veggies, and I still have to make the custard for the plum pudding. [*BOB doesn't react*] I'm glad we talked.

[*Doorbell rings*]

JENNY: Oh my god. That'll be Tom and Debborah with Mum.

[*JENNY starts to fuss and tidy up*]



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