

# **A Thanksgiving Play**

by

**Adam Szymkowicz**

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# For Bonnie

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

GRAMPA

KID

HISTORIAN

SQUANTO

SAMOSET

MILES STANDISH

TURKEY

MASSASOIT

PILGRIM 1

PILGRIM 2

PILGRIM 3

PILGRIMS, INDIANS

(NOTE: This play is designed to be put on by a cast of children and works best that way. The Historian and Grampa can be but don't have to be played by adults.)

## A Thanksgiving Play

*(Curtain rises on GRAMPA sitting at a large table which is covered with the remains of a Thanksgiving dinner. The KID stands behind GRAMPA.)*

GRAMPA

That was a good dinner your grandmother made, wasn't it?

KID

Yeah, it was. Are you goin' ta come out and play with us now?

GRAMPA

Are you one of my grandkids?

KID

Of course I am.

GRAMPA

Are you sure?

KID

Yes. Are you gonna come out and play?

GRAMPA

Did I ever tell you about the first Thanksgiving in Plymouth?

KID

No.

GRAMPA

Well, it was a long time ago when I was a Pilgrim.

KID

You were a Pilgrim?

GRAMPA

Yup.

*(Enter MILES STANDISH and the PILGRIMS. They sit down at the table with GRAMPA. MILES waves to the audience upon hearing his name uttered.)*

GRAMPA

I was with my buddy Miles Standish and uh, some of the other pilgrims, Lucy and Derek and Big Al and Mitsy.

*(The PILGRIMS wave.)*

KID

When was that?

GRAMPA

Oh, quite a few years ago. It was after the Stone Age, that I'm sure of.

*(HISTORIAN crawls out from under the table.)*

HISTORIAN

It was in 1621.

GRAMPA

Who are you?

HISTORIAN

I'm a historian.

GRAMPA

What are you doing under the table?

HISTORIAN

Studying history.

GRAMPA

Are you one of my grandkids?

HISTORIAN

No, sir. I'm just here to keep the facts straight.

GRAMPA

As I was saying, we were having a feast out there in the woods on the big table. John had just caught a tiger and we were eating it.

HISTORIAN

It is improbable that John could have found a tiger in North America in 1621. Foods they may have eaten include but is not limited to: corn soup, fish, turkey, partridge, duck, watercress, beans, corn, squash, pumpkin . . .

GRAMPA

There was cotton candy, I remember.

KID

Was there a turkey?

GRAMPA

Oh, yes. A real big one.

*(Enter a child dressed as a TURKEY. He/she runs in gobbling and sits down at the table with the PILGRIMS.)*

HISTORIAN

It didn't happen like that.

GRAMPA

It could have.

HISTORIAN

The turkey did not eat at the table with the Pilgrims.

GRAMPA

Fine. Have it your way.

*(TURKEY exits looking sad.)*

HISTORIAN

While there exists no transcript of what was said at the first Thanksgiving, we will take a poetic license and create a play of sorts.

GRAMPA

What are you talking about?

HISTORIAN

Shh. They're going to speak.

MILES STANDISH

Well, here we are celebrating our survival in the new world. *(Raises his glass.)*

PILGRIMS

Here, here!

PILGRIM 1

Let us not forget those of us who did not live through the winter.

PILGRIM 2

Let us remember to be thankful for what we have.

GRAMPA

And while we were eating these Indians came along.

*(Enter SQUANTO, SAMOSET, MASSASOIT and the other INDIANS. They are wearing blankets, maybe a feather in their hair. No war paint. No headdresses.)*

HISTORIAN

The Wampanoags were invited to a feast by the Pilgrims.

GRAMPA

I remember the Indians because I was friends with many of them and we played basketball sometimes on the weekends. There was George and Martha and Larry, Moe and Curly. They were nice Indians.

HISTORIAN

Basketball had not yet been invented. Squanto and Samoset spoke English from prior run-ins with English settlers. Squanto had previously been befriended by an English gentleman named John Weymouth who had brought him to England and showed him around. Thinking of the settlers as friends of Weymouth, Squanto helped the Pilgrims build houses and taught them how to hunt and farm. While Squanto spoke English quite well, the other Native Americans at the so-called first Thanksgiving spoke Algonkian, but for the purpose of this play, the 90 or so Native Americans will be played by a handful of English-speaking American fourth graders. *(NOTE: the grade can be changed as needed.)*

GRAMPA

What are you blabbing about?

KID

Grampa, are you going to come outside and play with us?

GRAMPA

Let me finish my story. The king of the Indians . . .

HISTORIAN

Massasoit.

GRAMPA

Right. Massasoit. Uh, King Massa . . .

HISTORIAN

Massasoit.

GRAMPA

Yeah, he came with his family to eat the tiger that we had caught.

HISTORIAN

The settlers did not expect the Indian family to be so large and they did not have enough food so the clan chief . . .

GRAMPA

Massasoit.

HISTORIAN

Right. The chief sent some of his men . . .

GRAMPA

His name was Massasoit. He was a good king, always keeping the dwarves out of the gardens and making sure the trains ran on time.

HISTORIAN

Trains? Dwarves?

GRAMPA

Well, that's the way I remember it.

HISTORIAN

The chief sent some men out to get more food. The Indians and not the Pilgrims provided most of the food for the Thanksgiving feast.

*(Some of the INDIANS leave and come back with food.)*

HISTORIAN

Some of the items they are said to have brought include five deer, fish, turkey, berries, squash . . .

GRAMPA

Right. Course, *they* didn't catch any tigers.

HISTORIAN

There were no tigers!

PILGRIM 3

We would like to thank Squanto and some of the other Indians for their help. Many of us would not be alive today if it weren't for you.

SQUANTO

It was nothing. It is our belief that everyone should help those in need.

PILGRIM 2

What a feast!

PILGRIM 1

Pass the squash.

PILGRIM 3

Say there, could I have some more of that white stuff?

SAMOSET

Which white stuff?

GRAMPA

The feast lasted all that day and into that night. I remember because of the fireflies lighting the way for the Indians.

HISTORIAN

It was a three-day feast.

GRAMPA

Oh, was it three days? I must've been thinking about another Thanksgiving.

HISTORIAN

During that time they came to agreements and peace accords.

MASSASOIT

You may use this land for your village.

MILES STANDISH

Thank you, King Massasoit.

GRAMPA

I remember that. That was real nice of those Indians.

KID

Can we go outside now?

GRAMPA

Not now. We're talking about Thanksgiving. Don't you have any sense of history? You kids today with your baggy pants and your video games. Don't you know what Thanksgiving is all about? It's about being thankful for what you have. We all went around the table at the first Thanksgiving and said what we were thankful for. I remember Bob said he was thankful for his wooden teeth. Course I don't know why he was thankful for them when we was eating the popcorn.

KID

Grampa, you're just making stuff up.

GRAMPA

I am not.

KID

Can we go out and play now?

GRAMPA

Not until you tell me what you're thankful for.

KID

I'm thankful for you, Grampa. Now show me how you played basketball with the Indians.

GRAMPA

All right.

*(Exit KID and GRAMPA.)*

HISTORIAN

In later years there was war between the Pilgrims and the Native Americans. Most of the Native Americans were killed. But that first Thanksgiving the Pilgrims and Native Americans sat down at a table together and talked to one another over a meal. In history, there are periods of peace where agreements are banged out. There are times when people give thanks. Our American celebration recognizes these single events and yearly unites family members who don't always get along and puts them across the table from one another in hopes they can spend a meal in peace and be thankful for it. This holiday is a celebration of hope. A time of acceptance. I've said enough now. I'll

stop my lecturing. Let me just say this: May the peace you have at Thanksgiving stay with you when you get up from the table and go out into the world. For more information about Thanksgiving history or other historical events, read books. I know I do.

*(Curtain.)*