

Coming to Dinner

Stageplay

by
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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
JUDITH	Long hair, long sweater Big Glasses. And boots	20's	Female
ROBERT	Short hair, tight sweater Slim jeans and loafers'	30's	Male
MRS. ABERNATHY	Tight bun, shirtdress Pearls, High Heels	50's	Female
MR. ABERNATHY	Salt and pepper Hair Suspenders, Black socks Dress shoes	60's	Male
HAIRY ENTITY	Covered in fur, Red eyes retractable claws and fangs	N/A	Masculine

ACT 1

The ABERNATHY FAMILY living room with a couch. There is a front door to the living room and a side door to the kitchen which contains a table and chairs. JUDITH AND ROBERT are sitting next to each other on the couch looking at their phones.

A LONG SILENCE.

JUDITH

Where is Mom and Dad? Are we all that's coming? No cousins or neighbors?

ROBERT

Yeah, we are all that's coming, but...

JUDITH

But what? How come we are the only ones here?

ROBERT

Judith. You know what ... you're the one who told everyone.

ROBERT takes a breath to speak but
JUDITH stops him.

JUDITH

Oh, what? Are we going to bring THAT up again?

ROBERT

Come on, now. Don't get upset. But I should warn you. Since you told, they treat it like it's a person.

JUDITH

I can't help telling it like I see it, how can you ignore it? Especially after the last time we were all together. (Stands with hands clenched) It was just sitting there like a time bomb, but did anyone say anything but me? NO. You all just sat there like pumpkins with big grins on your face.

ROBERT

Judith, I love you, but you are a royal pain in the ass. You know we never say anything like that. I froze. I was actually kind of scared of what dad would do.

She looks at him her mouth open a little. For a moment she is lost.

A SILENCE.

Then she allows ROBERT to help her back onto the chair. She smooths her clothes down. ROBERT returns to his chair.

JUDITH

I-I can't believe it. I'M the pain in the ass? I'm the only one who tells the truth in this family.

ROBERT

That is true.

The lost look is on JUDITH's face again.

ROBERT

(speaks very gently.)

Anyway, now that it's out in the open, it'll be all behind us now. We're grown and we're ok. Just for tonight let's just let all that go and pretend to be happy.

A PAUSE.

And JUDITH is near tears.

FADE TO BLACK.

ACT 2

Four people around a table. There is also a big hairy entity that breathes heavily and makes rude noises. There is a turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and several pies.

MRS. ABERNATHY

Oh, I hope the turkey isn't too dry. Does anyone need a drink, water? Ok. Oh, dear. Everything is getting cold. Let's have our Guest say the blessing.
(gestures to the HAIRY ENTITY)

HAIRY ENTITY Snorts smoke, farts, burps and growls.

MR. & MRS. ABERNATHY

Amen.

Robert and Judith look sideways at each other with expressions of alarm and a touch of humor. JUDITH looks at ROBERT inquiringly. ROBERT shrugs and mouths "OH MY GOD!"

ROBERT

Ahem. So, Mom. How are your classes going?

MRS. ABERNATHY

I quit. Our Guest talked some sense into me and said it wasn't worth it. The commute is too dangerous, we weren't eating well and getting "ideas."

HAIRY ENTITY blinks his red eyes in Mrs. Abernathy's direction and growls menacingly.

MRS. ABERNATHY

(nervously)

It really was a silly idea, going back to school at my age.

MR. ABERNATHY

And expensive.

MRS. ABERNATHY

(flinches)

Oh, lets not talk about boring old me. Hows your new exciting job going, Judy?

JUDITH

I got fired for insubordination.

Everyone at the table, including the HAIRY ENTITY drop their cutlery on their plates noisily and makes sounds of incredulity and despair.

MR. ABERNATHY

AGAIN? What was it this time? Was the boss micro-aggressive? Did someone dare flirt with you at work? JESUS! No wonder you never had a boyfriend.

JUDITH

Not one I'd take HERE! You'd insult him and the Hairy Entity will show him all our crazy shit and that'd be the end of it. Anyway, I don't want a man attached to me, telling me what to do all day. I don't want a job that makes me feel horrible everyday anyway.

MRS. ABERNATHY

Well, little missy. Pray tell what DO you want? All you seem to do anymore is complain and talk about what is wrong and who did what to who. It's so annoying and unattractive to men. Can't we just enjoy today and be pretty? Just have one meal without you ruining it?

JUDITH

How can I eat when that THING is here? I get sick just smelling him. How can you stand it living here with you. Never mind all the gross noises and odors. He bosses you both around!

HAIRY ENTITY

(growls menacingly)

Blurgardiablalagrrrr

ROBERT

Don't stir the pot, Jude! Let's stay focused for once.

MRS. ABERNATHY

Sop that right now you tow. We're not going to be distracted from the subject of Judith getting fired.

MR ABERNATHY

It's a holiday tradition, bringing up all that crap, just to get us to feel guilty. It's a dirty move, missy. I will NOT have you insult our Guest!

Looks apologetically and fearfully at the
ENTITY

JUDITH

Your GUEST! That's not your GUEST, Dad. That's a MONSTER and you're FEEDING it!

MRS. ABERNATHY

(Sucks in her breath)

We inherited the sacred responsibility to feed and care for our Guest and we are going to pass him down to you no matter if you want him or not.

HAIRY ENTITY Breathes heavily like
Darth Vader in an extended silence.

JUDITH

What? No way. That mess is yours to keep. I've spent thousands on therapy to get his stink off me. This is a YOU problem. Not a ME problem. Did you know about this, Robert?

ROBERT

I was going to tell you earlier but I knew you'd get all dramatic. It's our turn to take him.

JUDITH

(In horror)

NO!

JUDITH looks at the HAIRY ENTITY up
and down

I WON'T!

MRS. ABERNATHY

(blithely)

You really have no choice. It's just the way we do it in our family. It gets passed from parents to children from children to the world. How else would HAIRY ENTITIES do their important work?

JUDITH

Work! That thing just sits there and criticizes you. All it does is stop you and keep you stopped and stupid.

MR. ABERNATHY

Oh, here we go. (Mincing voice) Oh, family trauma. Boo hoo. I'm a little weakling waaa waaa. Here comes the waambulance weoooo weooo weooo

MR and MRS Abernathy start jibber
jabbering and making hand gestures

HAIRY ENTITY ROARS. Bangs table
loudly. Shows his teeth and claws

ROBERT and MR AND MRS
ABERNATHY cower and make themselves
small. JUDITH stands taller.

JUDITH

Oh, go ahead and roar. I am not afraid of you. I know you're full of shit. You kept me afraid my whole life for WHAT? To keep me SAFE?! From WHAT?! You're a liar and I don't believe in you anymore.

MRS. ABERNATHY

(Begins to cry softly)

Why can't we have one nice holiday meal. Why can't it be like it used to be? Everyone behaved and smiled.

JUDITH

Because back then I didn't know how messed up it is to live in fear of a monster. I thought it was normal. But it's NOT normal. You should be able to have your own ideas, Mom. YOU don't have to be so unhappy, Dad. And Robert, you don't have to be such a dick to your kids. Just let's throw the monster out right now and clean up the house.

MRS. ABERNATHY

Oh, so now I'm stupid and have a dirty house and an unhappy husband. That's just wonderful.

ROBERT

And who are you callin' a dick? You're the one who won't get along and go along so you're the dick in the family.

HAIRY ENTITY Smiles and sits back as the
family argues more and more loudly BARKS
sharply everyone stops talking and turns to
look. Eyes squint and nostrils flare.

A SILENCE

MRS. ABERNATHY

(brightly)

Time for dessert!

ROBERT
(relieved)

Mmm. I love your pies, Ma.

JUDITH
(incredulous)

So, that's it? One growl from that THING over there and everything is swept under the rug?

MRS. ABERNATHY
(patronizing)

What are you talking about? You're acting very strangely, darling. Are you taking medication and if so are you off your medication?

HAIRY ENTITY
(derisively)

Ah hahahaha ah haha haha

MR. ABERNATHY
(angry)

We will not listen to any your nonsense Judith Marie. (Bangs table) You are in my home and will show respect! My father passed what you call THAT THING down to me and I was happy to have it! It's helped me survive! It's where I learned the family motto!

MR. & MRS. ABERNATHY AND
ROBERT
(intone with him in a sing song fashion)

HAIRY ENTITY
Grunts along

"Everyday and in every way, I am getting safer and safer."

HAIRY ENTITY starts handling all the pies, making a mess. Everyone pretends not to notice.

ACT 3

ROBERT, MR AND MRS ABERNATHY THE ENTITY AND JUDITH ARE ON THE COUCH WATCHING SPORTS ON TELEVISION. HAIRY ENTITY HAS IT'S FEET UP ON THE COFFEE TABLE.

MR. ABERNATHY
(to ROBERT)

What time are you leaving?

ROBERT

At halftime. What can I take home with me for the kids?

MRS. ABERNATHY

You can have all the leftover pies.

ROBERT and JUDITH look at the ruined
pies and sideways at each other

And our, ahem, now YOUR Guest has a lot of baggage. It's very nice if you behave and will eat anything that's bad in your fridge. He loves fuzzy raspberries, limp carrots and yogurt with the green coating.

JUDITH

Disgusting. I think I'm going to throw up. Don't take it, Robert. You can leave it here and save your own family.

ROBERT

You think you know everything, Judith. Well, you don't. We already have entities from my wife's family. This will make us even. My trauma plus her trauma and we'll let them fight it out.

HAIRY ENTITY makes a face that says
"Huh?" Makes a whimper.

ROBERT

Oh, yeah. Both her parents were a Freudian and Jungian analysts and their hairy family entities just pick on me. Sis, you showed me that it's not me, but it's my problem now. Don't worry. Our entities are named Sigmund and Carl and they have nothing better to do than helping me dismantle our Guest limb from limb.

HAIRY ENTITY worriedly snuffles,
slouches gathers suitcases.

MR. & MRS. ABERNATHY

Whatever it takes -- it's good to have traditions to pass along down generations.

JUDITH

You're all insane. I can't stay here another minute.

MRS. ABERNATHY

Hands Judith her coat and Tupperware
Bye-bye, then! Don't forget to write!

JUDITH

You're kicking me out then? Oh real nice, Mom and Dad.

MR. & MRS. ABERNATHY

And here the rest of the Guests baggage, Robert.

Drags out a few more suitcases suitcases.

ROBERT

Oh, I will unpack everything and throw away the trash. We have a lot to talk about on our long drive homw. Don't we Fuzzy?

HAIRY ENTITY is visibly scared and nervous whimpering about leaving

ROBERT talks to Hairy Entity like it's a small child

ROBERT

We're going to have a GOOD time with your new roommates Carl and Sigmund. I called ahead and they are setting up the couch to play head games with you. Won't that be FUN?

ROBERT winks at JUDITH

JUDITH

Hey, big brother. Wait a sec. Are you taking this on so I don't have to?

ROBERT

I'm taking it on because you already did. Before today I didn't even see it or want to deal with it, this dinner opened my eyes. Thanks for being such a big pain in the ass. I'm sorry I'm such a dick

HAIRY ENTITY

DICK

ROBERT

Oh, you can talk, eh? We have a lot to discuss. Remember when you didn't let me try out for the swim team?

HAIRY ENTITY

TEAM

ROBERT

And the time you wouldn't let me get a paper route or try out for the play?

HAIRY ENTITY

PLAY

ROBERT

I want you to say you're sorry for stopping me and that you're sorry to JUDITH for making her so crazy.

HAIRY ENTITY

SORRY

JUDITH

(surprised and amused)

You think that's the end of this, bro? No way! I'm coming over for Christmas and see you and the kids. It'll be fun to see how far THE HAIRY ENTITY has fallen.

ROBERT AND HAIRY ENTITY leave.

MR ABERNATHY sits down. JUDITH
turns to MRS. ABERNATHY

JUDITH

Mom, I'm sorry I can't be nicer. I just wanted to get things out in the open before it's too late.

MRS. ABERNATHY

Oh, this is all well and good. I love you dear, but I'm getting cold and your father is tired and have to shut the door. Call me when you get home.

(Slams door shut puts her back to the door in relief, goes to her desk to read. Mr. A puts his feet up and sighs.

The HAIRY ENTITY comes back in the room through the kitchen and ROARS. MR. ABERNATHY shakes his paper. MRS. ABERNATHY weeps softly.)

THE END