

Turkey Day

by Kevin Myrick

Over the river and through the woods to grandmother's house they went, Will and his new girlfriend Emma from Atlanta for the annual family dinner and drunken disaster in Allendale. Emma wanted to go to her parents place for Thanksgiving, where they planned to grill steaks and watch the Detroit Lions lose to whoever they were playing this year, but Will insisted. He wanted her to meet the family, to see where he came from.

Every person has a desire for the one they love over all other to meet those who helped them become the person they are. Will had learned from experience the best way to find out if someone really loved him was to introduce him to the family. And Thanksgiving was the only time he really felt his family was on their best behavior, but only for a short amount of time. He had in between when his grandmother finally removed the turkey and told everyone to gather in the kitchen to hold hands for prayer and when the pies came out after supper. After that, all bets were off on when his Uncle Frank and Uncle Mark would begin their annual drunken wrestling match over college football, and the inevitable emptying of a bottle of bourbon after between the two as they continuously apologized to one another.

He also knew to steer prospective future fiances away from his Aunt Mary, who told them all of his embarrassing secrets; somehow naked photos of him in the bathtub or in his flight suit he wore all through Space Camp would suddenly appear, photographs he'd thought to have confiscated before college.

Will's grandmother would likely take the poor girl aside, if she survived watching the wrestling match between the crazy brothers, and ask her what she thought of the food. A positive answer meant she loved the girl, while a "oh, it was nice" meant Will's girlfriend was nothing but a low-down, lying harlot who isn't deserving of her grandson's affections.

The only sane one among them then was his father, himself a little tipsy from the bottle of bourbon passed to him by Uncle Frank or Uncle Mark, who insisted he drank with them. His father would make the time to ask of the girl about her life, her dreams and would finally ask what the hell she was doing with a lout like Will? Some of the girls he brought to Thanksgiving didn't understand what his father asked, and his opinion of them was formed immediately. If they laughed, he knew they were good for his son.

Will and Emma were greeted at the door by his grandmother, who demanded hugs and Will even allowed her to give him a kiss on the cheek as he leaned down to her. She hung coats in closets and asked if the couple wanted something to drink, all the while trying to keep the circus from taking over the holiday. Will introduced Emma to everyone at once, who sat in front of the television and watched one of the games.

Politeness was kept up until dinner, when the conversation turned toward football and the inevitable finally came to pass. Emma, a little shocked by the sudden turn of anger, of brother fighting brother, could not help but laugh at the sight before her and suddenly Will knew he had a keeper on his hands.

If she can survive Turkey Day in this house, Will thought, she can survive anything that might come their way.

