

The McCarthys And Me

A VR Short Script

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INT. MCCARTHY'S DINING ROOM - EVENING

YOU sit at a table for eight, set for a grand feast. Food, candles, fine china and wine. Lots of wine.

A horn of plenty spills grapes and orange mini pumpkins around little Pilgrim and Native American figurines.

Your napkin ring has "Thankful" engraved across it.

UP POV: A grand chandelier hangs over the table. It's been there for at least a century. It looks too heavy for the old hook it hangs from.

There's no question that money's gone into this house and it's decor. The question is a matter of taste.

FORWARD POV: The dinner table is a solid, beautiful antique. They don't make tables like this anymore. Beyond the table is the main door to the room. It's open.

RIGHT POV: Beyond the table, the huge bay window has a cozy bench below it. But the lime green curtains... who the hell picked those hideous curtains?

And so this house goes.

LEFT POV: Seated at the table beside You is --

BILL MCCARTHY (40). He's in a constant state of mild amusement. A good-looking fella who waits for the world to hand him treats, which it does with regularity.

A swing-door to the kitchen is through the left wall.

Bill POPS the cork from a wine bottle and pours You a full glass of wine. To the top.

BILL

(to You)

Do not mention Dad's dead fish. God I wish he'd get out. I don't think he's stepped off this property in twenty years. If it weren't for "Game of Thrones" he'd disconnect all the cables coming into the house. Don't mention "Game of Thrones" either... he named his fish after --

A DOOR SLAMS.

Two people enter the room from the main door.

JUNIPER McCarthy (20) wears a beanie and a nose ring. She is utterly adorable wrapped in spoiled and rebellious.

DANTE FRASER (20) a handsome, good natured black man. He's all about peace, love and kindness.

BILL (CONT'D)

Hey June Bug.

JUNIPER

Mom said seven sharp. It's seven fifteen.

Juniper storms out of the room, exasperated.

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

(yelling)

Mom! Hey, Mom! We're here!

Dante's nervous, not sure where to sit.

BILL

Hi. This is Alex. I'm Bill, Juniper's brother. Half-brother... semantics. There's place cards.

Dante smiles at Bill, then You. He checks the place cards. Finds his seat. It's directly across from You.

DANTE

I'm Dante. Has Juniper told you about me? I hope she has.

BILL

(Nope, nothing at all)

Sure. Lots.

DANTE

To be honest, she doesn't talk about her family much. I'm kind of... nervous. Well, totally crapping my pants. See, I really love her.

BILL

Direct. That's refreshing.

(to You)

I like him.

Dante rubs his palms together, he can't stop smiling. Bill offers him some wine. He refuses.

DANTE

Got to keep my wits about me. Can I show you something? It's a surprise, but I have to say something or I'll --

Gestures his head exploding. POW.

Dante pulls a ring box from his pocket. He flips it open, shows You and Bill. It's a sweet diamond engagement ring.

DANTE (CONT'D)

I figured what better time than when I'm meeting her family for Thanksgiving, right? She's what I'm thankful for.

BILL

That's nice, Dante. Real nice. Mazel Tov.

Juniper stomps back into the room. Dante quickly slips the box back into his pocket.

Juniper finds her place card. She sits to Dante's left.

JUNIPER

(to You)

Hey Alex. Back for more. Respect. Where the hell is --

GRIFFIN MCCARTHY (75) enters through the main door. His wild grey hair compliments his purple tuxedo. He swings his arms, his walk takes up a lot of space.

He sits at the head of the table, scrapes his chair along the floor to sit.

MARIAN GOLDMAN-MCCARTHY (55) trots in after him. She's outrageously fit. As sexy as middle age gets. Happy in her shiny bubble. She waves to each guest, including You.

MARIAN

Happy Thanksgiving everyone! We're mixing things up this year. Before the night's out, I still want to hear why everyone's thankful... But in charades!

Juniper holds up two fingers.

BILL

Two words.

She nods enthusiastically. Then tucks in one finger, leaving her middle finger up. Bill chuckles.

MARIAN

And the winner of the Most Sarcastic Speech goes to --

JUNIPER

Are there prizes? I'll take mine in cash.

BILL

Does flipping the bird qualify as a speech?

Marian sits on Griffin's left, across from Bill, next to Dante. She refuses wine from Bill as she sips the water she carried in. She really enjoys that water.

DANTE

Charades. Cool. I can do that.

Marian smiles at Dante, happy he'll play her game. She's leans in to purr something in his ear as --

ESTHER GOLDMAN (80), aka Nana Goldie, bustles in from the kitchen door. She was a glamour-puss in the 60's and got stuck there. Sunglasses, a huge white feather tucked into an orange scarf around her head.

ESTHER

It's a beast fit for a queen! I'll tell you what I'm thankful for! Chef Luis!

She smacks into Marian's chair as she passes. Her glasses are pretty dark. She refuses to remove them and stumbles her way to the foot of the table. (Your right.)

Dante JUMPS. Marian's got hold of his hand. He squirms under her grip. She cozies up to him.

MARIAN

We're so pleased you could join us...
David?

(Juniper shakes her head)

Daniel...? Darren...?

Juniper looks at Dante... "See what I mean?" But she enjoys her mother's embarrassment too much to help.

ESTHER

Juniper's fella. Butcher, right? Blood and guts. But I'm no hypocrite. I eat anything, so go ahead and slaughter it, I say. As long as it's kosher.

JUNIPER

Dante's vegetarian.

ESTHER

A vegetarian butcher?

JUNIPER

Phil was the butcher, Nana Goldie. I'm with Dante now.

ESTHER

Oh, I see.
 (to Dante)
 Who are you?

Dante looks at You for help. Bill laughs.

BILL

Don't worry. She's not senile, she was
 just born that way.

ESTHER

If your brain was as smart as your mouth,
 you'd be a doctor.

JUNIPER

Dante was named after the Italian poet.

DANTE

My mother is a fan of The Divine Comedy.

He gets no reaction. Juniper sighs, exasperated.

JUNIPER

"The darkest places in hell are reserved
 for those who maintain their neutrality
 in times of moral crisis."

ESTHER

Doesn't sound like a comedy. Not funny.

Marian grabs a bell on the table. DING!

MARIAN

Everyone's here! Let's eat!

DANTE

Is there another person joining us?

He indicates --

RIGHT POV: the seat next to us is still empty.

JUNIPER

Unlikely.

ESTHER

Why do you even bother, that's what I
 want to know?

DANTE

If everyone's here, then I'd like to --

Griffin gets up, goes to an empty fish tank near the kitchen door. He picks up the fish food. Sniffs it. He puts down the food, sad.

DANTE (CONT'D)

What happened to your --

Marian, Esther and Bill all shake their heads at Dante to stop. Don't ask. For the love of --

DANTE (CONT'D)

Fish?

GRIFFIN

(turns... bitter and angry)
Poisoned! Murdered in their sleep.
Heinous crime. My little darlings didn't
see it coming and either did I.

He glares at his family of suspects. The swing-door from the kitchen opens, almost smacks him in the face.

SARAH (22), Puerto Rican, enters. The door creaks loudly back and forth. Swoosh... swoosh.. swoosh. She's dressed black tie. Griffin sees the fresh bread and sits back down to be served.

MARIAN

Sarah, honey, so glad you came.

JUNIPER

You paid her to come.

MARIAN

(ignoring Juniper)
How are you?

SARAH

Good thanks, Mrs. Goldman-McCarthy.

ESTHER

Such good English. Very impressive, Dear.

JUNIPER

(not impressed at all)
For the umpteenth time, Sarah's American.

DANTE

(to Sarah)
Do I know you? You look familiar.

SARAH

No, I don't think so.

Sarah flashes a perfect smile before going back into the kitchen. Juniper glares at Sarah's back.

Marian spoons food onto everyone's plate. Mashed potatoes, stuffing, carrots...

MARIAN

Chef Luis' does Passover, Chanukah... all the holidays and birthdays. I'm starving!

BILL

(to You)

And yet, she never eats. Just watch. Not a bite. I don't know where her food goes, but it doesn't go in her mouth.

ESTHER

(to Dante)

I went with an Italian once. He wasn't funny either, but he was quite Divine.

MARIAN

Mother. No.

ESTHER

She thinks she's the only one who has a past. Listen to me... David?
(Juniper shakes her head)
Daniel...? Darren...?

DANTE

Dante. Like the poet --

ESTHER

Get a checkered past, Dante. Everyone interesting has a past.

DANTE

I think Juniper's interesting.

ESTHER

My point exactly.

Dante looks at Juniper questioning, but she's bent over, reaching for something under her chair.

MARIAN

Griffin suggested we forgo the turkey this year.

GRIFFIN

I suggested we skip the whole dinner.

MARIAN

So I thought we'd try something new!

Juniper stands. She walks to Griffin and hands him a small wooden box adorned with Sea shells.

JUNIPER

Open it before things get weird.

GRIFFIN

This is Thanksgiving. No gifts!

He pushes the box back to her. She pushes it to him. They press on the box... it breaks --

Grey dust EXPLODES into the air.

JUNIPER

Ashes of Lord and Lady Stark and Arya.

Griffin instantly softens. He looks at his empty fish tank. He might cry. He carefully scoops whatever powder he can into his glass. Juniper tries to salvage the box.

ESTHER

No turkey? What's the main course?

MARIAN

Fish.

Griffin smashes his fist on the table. Dishes rattle.

ESTHER

He's having a stroke! Loosen his clip on!

GRIFFIN

Could you not pick some other creature to eat? Chicken. No one likes a living chicken. Vile creatures.

ESTHER

I was avoiding the bird family.

GRIFFIN

What else are they good for?

CHEF LUIS (55) enters with a large domed plate. He puts it in front of Griffin, lifts the cover. It's a single large fish on of a bed of orange and yellow autumn leaves. The dead eyes stare at Griffin.

Everyone's silent. Luis smiles, pleased with himself. It's a gorgeous dish which he gets no reaction to. Luis goes back into the kitchen, annoyed and disappointed.

Griffin sits with a plunk, hugs the glass of ashes and stares at the fish.

Dante reaches into his pocket... He's going to go for it.

DANTE

I'd like to say why I'm thank --

The front door SLAMS.

SADIE (O.S.)

Did I miss dinner?

SADIE MCCARTHY (35) swans into the room. Her thick, black makeup offset by her cherry-red lipstick. A former goth, now all grown up, she's still more black than cherry.

She sees the fish dish. Griffin's horrified face. Marian's oblivious one. Juniper, angry. She assesses the situation in under five seconds. She looks at You.

SADIE (CONT'D)

Bill force you to come again?

She checks her phone.

SADIE (CONT'D)

Can't stay long. Plane to catch.

ESTHER

(dripping sarcasm)

So kind of you to join us, Sadie.

SADIE

(indicates the fish)

Good for you, Dad. Embracing change.

Sadie gets up, chunks a piece of fish onto her plate, then potatoes, carrots, spinach. Griffin is horrified at the mangled fish.

He stabs a few potatoes with a fork. Takes his glass of cremated pet fish in his other hand.

GRIFFIN

"At grief so deep the tongue must wag in vain; the language of our sense and memory lacks the vocabulary of such pain." Good night, Dante.

He kisses the top of Juniper's head and storms out.

SADIE

Nice to see you, Dad. Pass the potatoes.

Chef Luis comes back into the dining room with a choice of sauce. He sees that Griffin's gone.

LUIS
It was the fish.

MARIAN
He just wasn't hungry.

LUIS
I should have made a turkey!

MARIAN
Dante is vegetarian. Fish is better.

Chef Luis returns to the kitchen, upset.

JUNIPER
Do you know what a vegetarian is, Mom?

Marian ignores her.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)
Do you know what a vegetable is?

Sadie digs in before anyone else has even started.

ESTHER
You going somewhere that's hosting a famine?

SADIE
Peru. A sacred Shamanic journey to engage the spirits and deepen consciousness. You should come. You could use some awakening.

ESTHER
If I were any more awake I'd be an insomniac. Pass the carrots.

Marian grabs the carrots and in her haste, knocks over a candle which in turn tips her glass of "water" onto the tablecloth, which in turn instantly ignites.

JUNIPER
Flaming vodka shots anyone?

Marian panics, covers her napkin over the fire. The napkin ignites! The red flames flick higher. Juniper snorts, she's enjoying this.

Dante dumps the water from a pitcher onto the fire. It sizzles out.

Sadie gets up. Her plate is miraculously empty. She wipes her mouth with her napkin delicately. In her bag, a Tupperware is filled with whatever she didn't eat.

SADIE

Thanks for the nosh. Gotta run. Juniper -- facials when I'm back.

JUNIPER

Aces. Don't eat too many shrooms.

SADIE

(to You)

You're doing well. Mouth shut, eyes open. That's how I survived the war.

(to Dante)

Juniper's told me all about you. Sounds like a match made in heaven. Then again, I'm an atheist.

And she's gone. The front door SLAMS.

ESTHER

The carrots?

Dante passes them to her. Marian looks a little lost without her "water". She reaches over Dante to pick up one of the singed Pilgrim figurines. She leans into Dante, too close for comfort.

MARIAN

I think this little pilgrim got a little singed.

Sarah enters through the swing-doors and clears Sadie's plate. Dante leans away from Marian. He studies Sarah.

DANTE

(to Sarah)

I remember you now. You're in my advanced calculus class. You're pre-med, right?

ESTHER

Pre-med? With English as a second language? Good for you, dear!

JUNIPER

For the love of --

SARAH

Thanks, Mrs. Goldman.

Sarah goes back into the kitchen. Juniper gives up.

BILL

I'd like to make a toast. To Thanksgiving dinners. And love that can outlast them.

Bill raises his glass. Dante pours himself a generous glass of wine and raises it along with everyone else.

Chef Luis comes back in from the kitchen. Marian stands. She bursts into enthusiastic APPLAUSE.

MARIAN

Splendid as always, Chef Luis. I'm stuffed like a turkey.

She hasn't touched anything on her plate.

MARIAN (CONT'D)

Good night everyone. Thanks for coming. Lovely to see you all.

JUNIPER

You're leaving? We haven't said what we're thankful for.

MARIAN

I thought we had. I'm sure it was lovely.

JUNIPER

I beg to differ.

MARIAN

(to You)

Don't give birth to a philosophy major. Everything is up for debate.

JUNIPER

(to Dante)

Don't worry, my mother's brand of crazy isn't hereditary, it's self inflicted.

Marian leaves. Esther tucks into her plate. She's mushed everything together... fish, carrots, potatoes, spinach. It forms a colorful heap.

Juniper gets up, drops the broken box into the empty fish tank. It splashes everywhere.

Sarah clears Marian's plate, returns to the kitchen. Juniper flicks fish water at her back.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)

(to You)

Wish I could say this was fun, but let's be real.

(MORE)

JUNIPER (CONT'D)

The only way tonight would have been fun is if we were eating with a different family. Let's go, Dante.

BILL

But... Dante has something to say.

Dante looks at Bill... shakes his head... no he doesn't.

BILL (CONT'D)

What you're thankful for...?

Juniper waits expectantly. Dante stands. He fumbles around in his pocket, stalling. He pulls out his hand -- empty.

DANTE

I'm thankful I got to meet your family. It was... eye opening.

JUNIPER

Is eye opening a metaphor for torture?

ESTHER

Come give me a kiss before you go.

Juniper obediently gives her grandmother a kiss.

ESTHER (CONT'D)

I meant the hot Italian butcher.

Esther lowers her glasses to wink at Dante. He practically runs out the door. Juniper sighs.

JUNIPER

"All hope abandon, ye who enter here."
Bye Billy Bob. Bye Alex.

BILL

Bye June Bug. Love you, little sis.

JUNIPER

Half-sis... Love you, too.

Juniper leaves.

The front door SLAMS.

Esther opens a compact mirror and reapplies her pink lipstick.

ESTHER

It was an accident, you know. Not even my fault.

(MORE)

ESTHER (CONT'D)

I thought they might enjoy a bit of my medical marijuana. I just sprinkled in a pinch. They went for it like piranhas. Who knew fish could OD?

Sarah enters, clears the plates of Juniper and Dante.

ESTHER (CONT'D)

Sarah, cut me a bit of your chocolate pumpkin pie, would you, dear? I'll take it upstairs. I might get peckish later. Tell me, are the coco beans from your neck of the world?

Nana Goldie gets up, a little wobbly on her feet. She blows you a kiss, her arm strikes her wine glass. It topples. Red wine seeps across the white table cloth.

She pretends like it never happened and swooshes out of the swing-door to the kitchen.

Sarah clears her plate and sweeps up the glass.

Chef Luis comes in with his coat on.

BILL

Thank you Chef Luis. It really was --

CHEF LUIS

Save it. Every time, the same crap.

BILL

It wouldn't be the same without you.

CHEF LUIS

It would be the same, just without food.

Chef Luis snorts.

Sarah returns with a dishy-tub. She whisks away all remaining dishes. She's incredibly efficient.

Chef Luis packs up the leftover food into containers. He slips them into a bag.

CHEF LUIS (CONT'D)

Sarah. Hurry up, it's going to get cold.

SARAH (O.S.)

Coming, Dad. Popping on the dishwasher.

CHEF LUIS

Good night.

He walks out with the left overs. Sarah follows him.

BILL

Night Sarah.

SARAH

Night Bill. Night Alex.

The front door SLAMS.

Bill collects the four unopened wine bottles on the table. He eyes the one that's half filled. What the hell. Takes that too.

He turns to You, pleased with his take. He looks pleased with the night in general. Not as bad as he'd expected.

BILL

Thanks for coming. I love you. You know what I'm thankful for? That I talked you into eloping before you met my family.

He leans in for a kiss...

The chandelier hook CRACKS.

Bill looks up...

UP POV: The plaster in the ceiling crumbles around the hook... it gives way!

The Chandelier CRASHES down to the table! The Pilgrims are smushed! Bill cracks up... delighted.

The lights fizzle to --

BLACK.

THE END.



Sarah (22)

Bill McCarthy (40)

Griffin McCarthy (75)

Goldman-McCarthy (55)

Chef Luis (55)

YOU!

Dante Fraser (20)

Esther Goldman
(Nana Goldie)

Sadie McCarthy (35)
(Arrives late)

Juniper McCarthy (20)