

WE GATHER TOGETHER

Written by  
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### CHARACTERS

Jordan Warner: woman, late 20s  
Marge Warner: woman, early 60s, Jordan's mother  
Vern Warner: man, early 60s, Jordan's father  
Jennifer Warner: woman, early 30s, Jordan's sister

### SETTING

Thanksgiving Eve, 2016. All action takes place in the kitchen of the Warner family home in suburban Cleveland.

ACT ISCENE 1

*(MARGE bustles around her modern kitchen with a spring in her step. Every surface area is covered with evidence that a large Thanksgiving dinner is being prepared.*

*Christmas music plays softly in the background, Marge occasionally chimes in.*

*After several moments of chopping, sifting, and slicing, the sound of the front door opens--Marge pauses her perpetual motion.)*

MARGE

Jordan is that you?

JORDAN enters, dressed in a light winter coat, gloves and scarf. She's carrying an overnight bag and she looks exhausted.

Marge pulls her into a tight embrace.

MARGE

Sweetheart! I thought you were going to call from the airport. Let me have a look at you.

Hold's a reluctant Jordan at arm's length.

MARGE

Have you been taking those vitamins I sent?

JORDAN

What's the point?

MARGE

For heaven's sake, you know how easily you catch cold. Sit down and relax--I'll get you some hot tea.

Jordan takes off coat, etc. Marge, humming along to the music, gathers the makings of a cup of tea.

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CONTINUED:

MARGE

I made you peanut butter thumbprints. I've been hiding them from your dad but I'm not sure how much longer I can keep him at bay.

JORDAN

I didn't expect you to be in such a good mood.

MARGE

I love the holidays!

JORDAN

But with the election and everything...

MARGE

We had a rough patch. Now we're on the uptick.

JORDAN

I couldn't take off my Nasty Woman t-shirt for a week. I'm still not sleeping.

MARGE

You can't wallow, Sweet Pea. Life goes on. You have to pick yourself up and keep moving forward.

Marge pours hot water into a holiday mug, steepes the tea bag.

JORDAN

It's still so hard to believe, though. To think people actually voted for that fascist, bigoted--

MARGE

Do you want honey in your tea?

JORDAN

What?

MARGE

Honey and lemon? I made you chamomile.

JORDAN

(beat)

Sure.

Marge doctors the tea with a flourish and brings the mug and a plate of cookies over to Jordan and sits across from her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARGE

We cried and re-watched the Democratic National Convention on the DVR. But your dad, bless his heart, said we'd feel better if we stopped moping and did something.

JORDAN

What did you do?

MARGE

Oh, this and that...

VERN enters carrying a shovel. He's got a smear of dirt on his cheek and he's dressed in overalls. When he sees Jordan, he hurries to embrace her.

MARGE

Vern Warner, what did I tell you about tracking mud into my clean house?

VERN

Jordo! I thought I was picking you up.

JORDAN

It's a little late in the year for gardening, isn't it?

VERN

Oh, I'm not gardening. I'm building a bunker.

JORDAN

What?

MARGE

Dear, go wash up for pete's sake.

VERN

(reaches around Jordan to snatch a cookie, winks, exits)

JORDAN

He's building a bunker?

MARGE

Yep. How's your tea?

Sound of front door opening and closing. Moments later, JENNIFER enters. She and Jordan embrace.

JENNIFER

You look awful, Twerp.

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CONTINUED:

JORDAN

Dad's building a bunker.

JENNIFER

Duh. Where do you think we're going to live? I see Mom broke out the thumbprints--yummy.

MARGE

You'd better have one before Vern the Vacuum polishes them off.

JENNIFER

I saw Mrs. Reynolds at the Stop and Shop. She asked if you were going to weapons training Sunday after church.

MARGE

Oh, gosh, I'm glad you reminded me! I wonder if Gus's Guns is having any sales for Small Business Saturday.

JORDAN

Okay--wait.

MARGE

Jennifer, aren't you going to tell your sister the good news? I've been biting my tongue since she got here.

JENNIFER

I'm pregnant!

JORDAN

(beat)

On purpose?

MARGE

Jordan Elizabeth!

JORDAN

You and Tom never wanted kids.

JENNIFER

Somebody's got to repopulate the world after the apocalypse.

MARGE

I'm hoping for twins.

Vern enters, cleaned up, reaches for another cookie, Marge playfully swats his hand away.

JORDAN

(to Vern)

What's going on?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN

Same old. The Browns are having another rotten season. I put snow tires on the Buick last weekend.

MARGE

He joined a ska band. You should see his pork pie hat.

Kitchen timer goes off and Marge hurries to the oven, removes a tray of hors d'oeuvres.

MARGE

Cheese puffs!

JENNIFER

That's not brie, is it?

MARGE

It's Colby. Hon, could you get the Gobble, Gobble! plates?

Vern joins Marge in the kitchen and takes down a stack of small plates from a top shelf. Vern and Marge plate the cheese puffs.

JORDAN

Is this some kind of prank?

JENNIFER

What?

JORDAN

Everything. It's... you're...I'm...

JENNIFER

Drink your tea. It'll settle your nerves.

JORDAN

I don't want any tea!

Marge and Vern return, pass out the plates of hors d'oeuvres, sit down at the table.

MARGE

How about mulled wine? Nothing says "holidays" like a cup of cheer.

VERN

Maybe you should lie down. Traveling can take it out of you.

JORDAN

You joined a ska band?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERN

Right after I quit my job. Might as well live life to the fullest before martial law kicks in.

JENNIFER

Besides, no one's going to need a tax attorney after January 20.

MARGE

Who'll be paying taxes?

Marge, Vern, and Jennifer laugh loudly, sharing the joke.

JORDAN

Maybe mulled wine would be good. Or a big glass of vodka.

MARGE

Great choice--it'll be our national beverage soon, eh comrades?

Marge returns to the kitchen, pours a glass of vodka, brings it in for Jordan.

JENNIFER

Is Dirk coming for Thanksgiving dinner?

MARGE

Only dessert.

JORDAN

Who's Dirk?

VERN

Your mom's lover.

Jordan chokes on a cheese puff, coughs, takes a long drink of vodka, coughs some more.

MARGE

In through the nose, out through the mouth.

JORDAN

Your...lover?

VERN

You might know him--he works at the skate park on Highland.

JORDAN

(beat)

Have you lost your fucking minds?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

VERN

Language, Jordan.

JORDAN

We're in the middle of a national crisis and you're--

MARGE

Pulling together and making the best of it.

JORDAN

You're having an affair! With someone who works at a skate park!

MARGE

Don't be elitist Sweet Pea.

JORDAN

(to Vern)

You can't be okay with that.

VERN

We're straddling the brink of nuclear holocaust--who am I to deny your mother as many orgasms as she can handle?

JENNIFER

Hope for the best, and prepare for the worst.

MARGE

Praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition.

VERN

Keep your chin up, and your head down.

Jordan stands up, knocking over her chair.

JORDAN

Stop it! Stop talking in cross stitch patterns!

Jennifer rights the chair and tugs Jordan back down into it.

JENNIFER

Drink that vodka.

JORDAN

I don't want--

JENNIFER

Drink the goddamn Stoli.

VERN

Language, Jennifer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jordan takes a huge gulp of vodka  
while her family watches.

JENNIFER

Better?

JORDAN

No, I'm not better. I'm sad. And furious. And afraid.

JENNIFER

Which is why you need to do something.

JORDAN

What?

VERN

Plant a tree. Mentor a child.

MARGE

Learn how to start a fire with a battery and a gum wrapper.

JENNIFER

You'll feel less helpless.

VERN

The worst possible thing we could imagine has happened. But  
who knows--it might turn out better than we think.

MARGE

Remember what Grandma Helen used to say--sometimes God  
speaks through jackasses.

JORDAN

What does any of that have to do with Dirk?

MARGE

Dopamine boosts the immune system.

JENNIFER

Have another cheese puff.

VERN

The important thing is, we're all together.

MARGE

To family!

Vern, Marge, and Jennifer all lift  
their various beverages in a toast.  
Grudgingly, Jordan raises her  
glass.

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CONTINUED:

JORDAN

(beat)

Maybe I can help you with that bunker, Dad.

VERN

That's the spirit!

MARGE

By the by, there's a fella named Jeff in your Dad's wilderness survival group. Perhaps an introduction could be arranged.

JENNIFER

He's cute, too.

(touches her non-existent baby bump)

Good gene pool.

MARGE

Oh, shoot! I forgot about Uncle Frank!

Marge heads to the kitchen, puts together a plate of food.

JORDAN

Is he coming over tonight?

JENNIFER

He's in the basement.

JORDAN

What's he doing down there?

VERN

I have him chained to the sub-zero fridge.

JENNIFER

He voted for Gary Johnson.

Marge comes in with a plate and hands it to Vern, who stands up to accept it.

MARGE

I gave him extra macaroni salad.

VERN

We're keeping him fattened up in case we run out of provisions.

After a beat, Vern, Marge, and Jennifer burst into laughter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNIFER

The look on your face Twerp!

MARGE

Honestly! You think we're capable of cannibalism?

JORDAN

That's crazy, right? Must be the sleep deprivation.

Vern exits with the plate.

JORDAN

(beat)

So... why are you keeping Uncle Frank chained in the basement?

JENNIFER

Dad says he's not letting him out until he can correctly label a world map.

MARGE

*I say it's going to be a long winter! More vodka?*

END PLAY

Pittsburgh playwright Carol Mullen has had her work produced by theaters and festivals including the Kick It! Festival (NYC); the Los Angeles Women's Theatre Project (CA); the NativeAliens Theater Collective (NYC); the Pittsburgh New Works Festival; Shelterbelt Theater (Omaha, NE); Stage Q (Madison, WI); 10 x 10 in the Triangle (Carrboro, NC); and, Off-Off Broadway at the Emerging Artists Theater. She is currently an MFA student in playwriting at Point Park University's Conservatory of Performing Arts.