

# Stalled Thanksgiving

Who spends a holiday at a highway rest stop?

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from a story written by  
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## Cast of Characters

**Narrators 1, 2, 3**

**Mom**—Kyle's mother

**Kyle**—age 15

**Kyle's Inner Voice**

**Evy**—Kyle's sister, age 12

**Dad**—Kyle's father

**Man**

**Big Pete**—rest stop worker

## Scene 1

**Narrator 1:** Kyle and his family are driving to Aunt Cora's house for Thanksgiving dinner. Kyle is bored in the backseat. He runs his finger down through the mist on the window.

**Narrator 2:** Kyle mumbles something angry under his breath.

**Mom:** What did you say, dear?

**Kyle:** Nothing.

**Kyle's Inner Voice:** I said, "This is bogus," if you must know. What a waste of a perfectly good vacation. I'm getting too old for this. And the drive seems to get longer every year!

**Mom:** Aunt Cora will have the table set already.

**Kyle's Inner Voice:** I can hear her now. "You've gotten so tall! You look just like your granddad! What grade are you in now?" So predictable. She'll fix the same old cranberry salad. She'll insist that the turkey is too dry. But Mom will say it's perfect, and everyone will agree.

**Mom:** Aunt Cora always cooks such a perfect bird!

**Narrator 3:** Kyle sighs. He wipes off his window drawings with one big swipe of his hand.

**Narrator 1:** Kyle notices that his sister Evy's CD player is on his side of the van. He throws it over to her side.

**Evy:** Stop throwing things, Kyle.

## Scene 2

**Narrator 1:** Dad pulls in to a rest stop.

**Dad:** Does anyone else have to go?

**Evy:** Finally!

**Narrator 2:** Evy jumps out of the van.

**Mom:** Don't wake up Kyle; just let him sleep.

**Narrator 3:** Mom, Dad, and Evy head for the restrooms.

**Narrator 1:** Under the blankets, Kyle wakes up. He sees where they are and decides to get out of the van. He stretches his legs and then wanders over to a vending machine.

**Narrator 2:** Mom, Dad, and Evy return to the van. They see the pile of blankets and assume that Kyle is underneath.

**Dad:** Only a couple more hours, and we'll be at Aunt Cora's!

**Narrator 3:** Dad starts the van and pulls out onto the highway.

**Mom:** She'll have the food waiting for us when we get there. I'm getting hungry.

**Narrator 1:** Kyle comes back to the parking lot and watches as his family drives away. He is stunned.

**Kyle:** Unbelievable! Don't they know I'm not in there?

**Narrator 2:** Kyle kicks a trash can. It doesn't solve anything. He pulls out his cell phone and dials Evy's number. It rings in his ear. No answer. Two rings. No answer. Four rings.

**Kyle's Inner Voice:** Doesn't she ever charge the stupid thing?

**Narrator 3:** It is snowing and cold. The snow blows all around Kyle. He pulls up the collar on his jacket.

**Narrator 1:** Something moving behind him catches Kyle's eye.

**Kyle's Inner Voice:** Could be a worker. They have workers at these rest stops, don't they?

**Narrator 2:** Kyle turns around, and a man's voice catches him by surprise.

**Man:** Did they go off without you?

**Narrator 3:** Kyle squints into the darkness to try to make out the figure.

**Kyle:** Yeah, yeah, they did.

**Man:** That happens every once in a while.

**Kyle:** Do you work here?

**Narrator 1:** The man appears out of the shadows.

**Man:** No, but Big Pete's inside. Knock on that door marked "private." Tell him to call the cops. They'll chase 'em down.

**Narrator 2:** The man gets closer. He has an uneven gray beard.

**Kyle:** Uh, thanks.

### Scene 3

**Narrator 3:** Kyle goes to the door and knocks. Big Pete opens it roughly.

**Big Pete:** Yeah? What do you want?

**Kyle:** My folks left me here. Can you call the cops?

**Big Pete:** Just a minute.

**Narrator 1:** The door shuts. It opens again. Big Pete is now holding a pad and pencil.

**Big Pete:** What's the make and color of the car? What direction were they heading?

**Narrator 2:** Kyle tells Big Pete everything. Big Pete then goes inside to call the cops.

**Narrator 3:** Kyle walks back to the parking lot. The bearded man is still there.

**Man:** Nice guy, that Pete, huh?

**Kyle:** Yeah, real friendly.

**Narrator 1:** The man starts to laugh. His laugh turns to a cough. He bends over and

struggles to catch his breath. He wipes his mouth with his grimy shirtsleeve.

**Kyle:** You live near here?

**Man:** Just over that way. I ran out of wood and walked over here. I just like to watch the people come and go.

**Kyle:** Kinda cold out.

**Man:** Yeah, I'll go inside in about an hour, when Mike's shift starts.

**Kyle:** Can't you go in now?

**Man:** Our friend, Big Pete, won't allow me in. But Mike will let me sleep inside ... in the last stall.

**Kyle:** The restroom stall?

**Man:** Yeah, it's the one that has a corner. Good place to rest your head.

**Narrator 2:** Kyle lets out a chuckle. He thinks the man is joking. Kyle looks at him and understands that it was not a joke.

**Narrator 3:** In the light, Kyle sees the man's soiled coat. It is open at the neck, and he is wearing a thin T-shirt. It is very cold, but the man is not wearing a hat.

**Man:** You going to your grandma's?

**Kyle:** Aunt Cora's.

**Man:** Bet you don't want to go.

**Kyle:** How'd you know?

**Man:** I see kids your age traveling. They aren't a happy bunch.

**Narrator 1:** The man stares down at the sidewalk. He doesn't talk for a long while.

**Narrator 2:** The snow swirls around them. Kyle wants to put on his hat and gloves that are in his pocket. But he doesn't.

**Kyle:** Next year, I'll be driving, and I'll go where I want.

**Man:** I hear ya.

**Kyle:** Will you have Thanksgiving dinner?

**Man:** Yeah, I'll have something. You know, people throw away perfectly good food.

**Narrator 3:** The man sits on a bench and crosses his legs. Kyle notices silver duct tape wrapped around his shoes.

**Narrator 1:** Big Pete walks out and yells to Kyle.

**Big Pete:** I just talked to the highway patrol, and they're on it.

**Kyle:** Hey, thanks.

**Narrator 2:** Kyle watches Big Pete walk back into the building. When he turns back to the man, he is gone.

**Narrator 3:** Kyle follows Big Pete back inside.

**Kyle:** Excuse me. Did you see that man out there?

**Big Pete:** Yeah, he always shows up.

**Kyle:** Why here?

**Big Pete:** Some people say that about 35 years ago, his mother just left him here. Don't think it was an accident, though. She never came back for him.

**Kyle:** You mean ... she just left him here?

**Big Pete:** Don't know if he thinks she'll be back or what.

**Kyle:** Can't you let him inside?

**Big Pete:** Not allowed to. He has a place not far from here.

**Kyle:** But he ran out of wood. What is he supposed to do about the cold?

**Narrator 1:** Big Pete sees a van entering the rest stop.

**Big Pete:** I think that's your folks coming now.

**Narrator 2:** Big Pete goes back into his office. Kyle's parents pull up next to him.

**Mom:** Kyle, are you OK? I was so worried.

**Kyle:** Yeah, fine.

**Dad:** Thank goodness. Let's go.

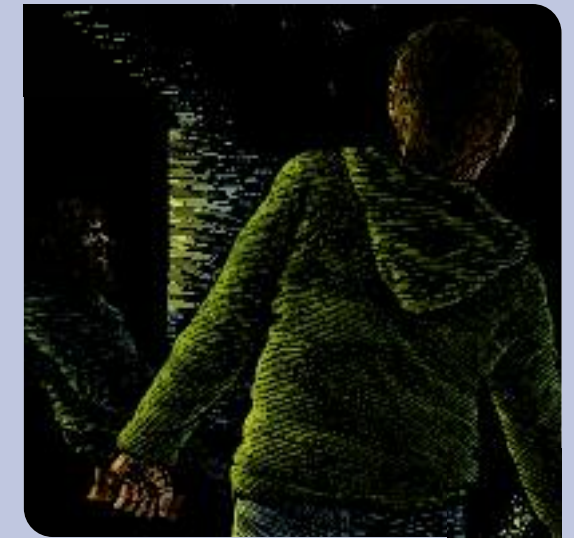
**Kyle:** I'll meet you in the van in a minute.

### Scene 4

**Narrator 3:** Kyle walks to the men's room. Inside, he looks down the row of doors.

**Narrator 1:** He walks down to the last stall and pushes it open.

**Kyle's Inner Voice:** I can't imagine anyone sleeping in here. There's not even enough



● 'You mean ... she just left him here?'

room for me to stretch my legs out!

**Narrator 2:** Kyle takes his hat and gloves from his pocket. He bends down and places them in the corner.

**Narrator 3:** Digging deeper in his pockets, Kyle finds a cough drop and half of his Snickers bar. He leaves them on top of the hat and gloves. Then he turns to leave.

### Scene 5

**Narrator 1:** Back at the van, Kyle's family is waiting for him.

**Evy:** Come on, dweeb.

**Dad:** Sorry, son. I thought you were sleeping.

**Kyle:** Yeah, I figured.

**Narrator 2:** Kyle hops in the back of the van.

**Mom:** I'm just so thankful they caught us a few miles up the road. It would have been awful if you had to stay in that lonely place on Thanksgiving.

**Kyle:** Yeah ... awful.

**Narrator 3:** As they pull out of the rest stop, the snow and the wind begin to pick up.

**Kyle's Inner Voice:** I'm just thankful that Mike is working later tonight. ●

#### Discuss it.

Not everyone can celebrate holidays in comfort. How do people help those in need have a happy Thanksgiving?