

# The Real Story of the Thanksgiving Turkey

From: *The Treasure Cave: sea tales of Tiptoes Lightly*

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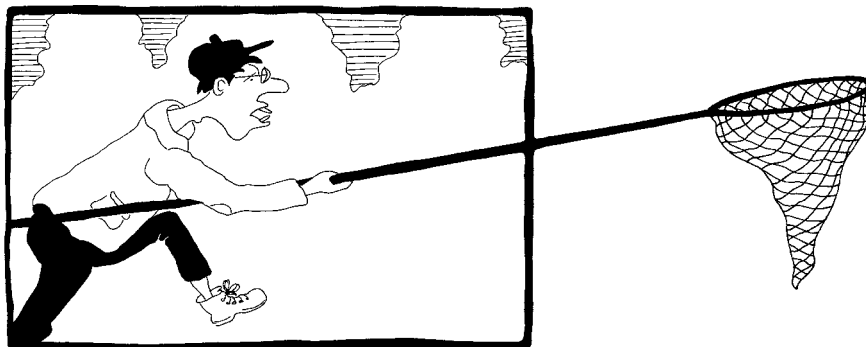
Once upon a time, on the fourth Thursday in November, there was a turkey. He was a big turkey, a plump turkey, a wild American turkey with spreading-out tail feathers. When he spread his tail feathers and did a turkey dance everyone was impressed.

Now this turkey lived in the woods and said 'thanks'. In those long-ago times that's what turkeys said, that was their call; there was nothing unusual about it at all—in fact, it was normal. And this is what this particular turkey said, especially when looking for food. He said 'thanks' as he ate nuts, 'thanks' when eating seeds, 'thanks' for worms or grubs, even 'thanks' for the fresh green leaves he nibbled as a side salad.

One day—like I said, it was the fourth Thursday in November—this turkey (his name was Tom) was out in the woods. The colorful autumn leaves had fallen from the trees, the air was crisp and clear, and the slanted sun pitter-patterned on the forest floor.

'Thanks,' said Tom, scratching the leaf litter and finding three wiggly worms. 'Thanks, thanks, thanks.'

He was so busy looking for tender morsels that he didn't notice Doctor Natterly-Ustor-Terrywerri-Sitt sneaking through the trees. Doctor Natterly-Ustor-Terrywerri-Sitt (everyone called him Dr. NUTS) was a lepidopterist—which is the horrible name for people who collect butterflies. People who collect butterflies have to chase butterflies to catch them, and Dr. NUTS loved to chase butterflies and catch them in a net on the end of a long pole. The



problem was that Dr. NUTS was shortsighted and only saw things properly if they were really close. I mean REALLY, REALLY close. Which was why Dr. NUTS was not a very good lepidopterist, for he caught all sorts of things in his net which could have been butterflies (if you saw badly), but weren't. He caught flowers (hundreds and hundreds of flowers); he caught cats (at least two dozen), squirrels (ten), poodles (seven), tiny children (three), goldfish (two) and turkeys (one) and that one was Tom.

'Aha! Got you!' cried Dr. NUTS, jumping up and down.

'Thanks! Thanks!' squawked Tom in fright, flapping and fluttering inside the net.

'O, how magnificent! How thrilling!' gushed Dr. NUTS. 'A giant, brown-winged Flapncursus,' and he stuffed the struggling Tom into his backpack, pulled the drawstring tight and headed for home.

Dr. NUTS lived with his mother, the lovely Mrs Natterly-Ustor-Terrywerri-Sitt, and when he arrived home she was about to serve a meal to the whole family: her husband, her sons and daughters, her sisters and brothers, their husbands and wives and children and the various and sundry folk who always manage to wangle their way into a free meal. Dr. NUTS had been invited, of course, but he was shy and awkward in company and had, as his excuse, gone hunting for butterflies late in November, an excuse no one believed. However, due to the excitement of his capture, he'd forgotten about the gathering and bumped noisily into the house. He was so busy taking out his catch that he didn't notice the crowd seated at the long dining room table. They, however, stared in alarmed silence as he fumbled with the drawstring on his pack and undid the knot.

An instant later out flew Tom Turkey in all his feathered glory, frantically screeching 'Thanks! Thanks! Thanks!' at the top of his lungs. He immediately flapped and blustered his way down the dinner table, destroying plates, shattering glasses, ruining roasted vegetables and causing all sorts of mayhem. The ladies screamed, the children yelled, the men leaped

to their feet. Round and round the room flew Tom, whacking heads, messing up hairdos, and knocking wine bottles off the sideboard.

'Thanks! Thanks! Thanks!' screeched Tom, landing on the table with a long slide-n-glide that broke more fine china.

Dr. NUTS was embarrassed and flustered. He dove for the bird, but missed (I already told you he was shortsighted). He slid off the table, still holding the tablecloth and pulled the whole meal onto the floor.



Tom Turkey, meanwhile, feeling his feet being whisked away from under him, again took to the air. Someone, I think it was Mrs NUTS, lunged at him. Tom swerved to the right and with a mighty crash flew through the large window next to the fireplace.

That was the last they saw of Tom Turkey as he flew in haste back to the distant woods, crying 'Thanks! Thanks! Thanks!' in alarm.

And that's how it all started – this Thanksgiving thing, I mean. The next year, the NUTS family again gathered on the fourth Thursday of November, had a huge meal, and gave thanks that there was NO turkey in the house. The tradition continued every year and they called it Thanksgiving. Soon others were copying them, and also telling the story of Dr. NUTS and Tom Turkey. But after a while, like most gossip, the story got changed and turned upside down and people began to eat turkey *and give thanks for it* and everything else! This is so strange if you know the truth.

The turkeys, meanwhile, noticed that they were increasingly being hunted just shy of the fourth Thursday in November, and then, to add insult to injury, were thanked while being eaten! That's when they gave up saying 'thanks' altogether. Instead, because they saw people eating so much food, they decided to protest and forever change their call to 'gobble-gobble-gobble'.