

The Best Thing Ever

My husband, Peter, and I spent Thanksgiving with my parents in Florida. This is not my parents' "real" home. Their real home is in the Midwest and, as a result, they are missing a lot of things in the Florida home normally associated with civilized life.

"You don't have a cheese grater? How do you get along without a cheese grater, mom?"

"We buy grated cheese."

"They don't sell grated Swiss cheese."

So, we bought a cheese grater and a meat thermometer, as this was the first turkey ever cooked in their little Florida home, and a few other odds and ends. Meanwhile my father and Peter went off to the Waffle House—alone. I am sure there are plenty of women who like the Waffle House, but in my family, affection for the establishment seems to fall along strict gender lines. As there is not a Waffle House anywhere near our home, Peter was delighted to drive my father to the nearest Waffle House for lunch. It was fantastic, to hear them tell it. It was, in fact, The Best Thing Ever. My mom and I stayed home and ate leftover frittata made with grated Swiss cheese. We think we made the better decision.

Then my mother and I went on our own gender exclusive mission. We went to buy fabric to make tablecloths for the two rather mismatched tables conscripted into use for Thanksgiving celebrations. As we weren't particularly interested in hemming two tablecloths and seven napkins, we were delighted to find fabric that appeared to make fringes effortlessly. At the fabric counter we were waited on by a very skeptical young woman named Jessica.

"This is not ordinary fabric, you know," Jessica informed us. We waited for further explanation. None came.

“We aren’t going to sew anything with it,” I offered, hoping to allay her concerns.

“We’re just going to make tablecloths.”

“It won’t work,” Jessica insisted. “It will unravel.”

“We actually want it to fray,” I reassured Jessica, wondering if every purchase in the fabric department was so severely vetted.

“This is fabric for embroidery,” Jessica continued.

“Oh!” my mother said, in an attempt to appear interested. “What do they make with it?” I was dubious this line of inquiry was going to win Jessica over, but I admired my mother for trying.

“I don’t know...” I could see Jessica was worried my mother might know more about this than she thought. “Old women use it for some kind of embroidery.”

“Oh! My mother said cheerfully, “women my age.”

“No,” Jessica said. “Not that old.”

My fit and energetic eighty-something-year-old mother looked a little taken aback.

My mother asked what sorts of things these women (these old women who were much younger than she was) made with the fabric, but this seemed to be more information that Jessica was willing to divulge. She struggled for a few moments, trying to describe what was done with the unusual fabric.

“They make blankets,” she finally concluded.

I tried to imagine embroidered blankets and failed. “Well, that’s okay,” I persisted.

“We’re just going to make a couple of tablecloths!”

Only after considerably more reassurance did Jessica relent and begin cutting our fabric.

We brought the fabric home and made two tablecloths without incident.

“Old women!” my mother said.

“But not as old as you!” I reminded her.

My mother laughed so hard she started to cry. Then we admired our tablecloths. They made the little Florida porch look quite classy. It was a wonderful Thanksgiving, I thought. It was, in fact, The Best Thing Ever.

Till next time,

Carrie