The Table That Grew: A Friendly Ferns Thanksgiving

A gentle holiday tale of friendship, flexibility, and making room for everyone

Brought to you by the
XTERMIGATOR Kids Gang

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On the morning before Thanksgiving, Finn opened his Investigator Log to a clean page.

"One wonderful feast," he wrote. "Everyone together."

Beside the pond, Xtermigator unfolded a long table. Freddie bounced twice with excitement.

"A feast needs a song! And decorations! And perhaps a pumpkin taller than me!"

"Perhaps a pumpkin we can carry," said Xtermigator.



Ava the fox drew a bright invitation on a maple leaf.
a table, a bowl, and a circle of smiling friends.
Underneath, Finn wrote, “Come as you are. There is room for you.”
Tebow carried the leaf to the old meeting house. Romeo checked
that it was low enough for every friend to see.
“Best invitation in the swamp,” Tebow declared.



Shelly rested beneath the willow while the others gathered baskets.
“Put the table here,” she suggested. “We can watch the pond turn gold.”
Finn marked the spot. Freddie imagined lanterns swaying above it.
Ollie checked the path for roots and slippery stones.
By sunset, everything would be ready.
Or so Finn wrote in his log.



That night, wind hurried through Friendly Ferns.
It rattled the reeds. It shook the meeting-house shutters.
It pushed rain beneath the door.
In the morning, a branch lay across the willow path.
The long table stood in a puddle, one leg crooked beneath it.
Finn's beautiful plan had become a very wet plan.



"We could cancel," Ollie said softly.
Freddie stopped bouncing.
Ava held her leaf invitation close. Its colors had begun to run.
Shelly looked at the broken table, then at the dry meeting house across the clearing.
"We still have a place," she said.
"But not the place we planned," said Finn.
"No," Shelly agreed. "A different one."



Finn took out his pencil.
This time, he did not write what had gone wrong.
He wrote what they still had.
A dry room. Food in baskets. Willing friends.
“And seven perfectly useful ideas,” said Xtermigator.
“Eight,” said Finn, adding his own.
Freddie raised a hand. “Does an idea about pumpkin count?”
“Especially that one.”



Inside the meeting house were little tables, low benches,
a soft rug, and a window seat.
Nothing matched.
“We could push everything into one long line,” Finn said.
Ollie tried the narrow space between two benches. He stopped.
Shelly measured the walk from the door to the farthest chair.
“What if we don’t need one long line?” she asked.



Shelly settled on the window seat with Finn's notebook. She drew a wide path through the room. Then she added a table beside the window, another near the rug, and a quiet corner away from the clatter.

Finn leaned over her shoulder.

“A feast with more than one good place to sit.”

“And a clear way between them,” Shelly said.



Freddie wanted to carry every bowl at once.
Xtermigator handed him a small wooden tray.
“One trip, one tray. Then back for the next.”
Freddie tested the words like a rhythm.
“One trip, one tray. Make a clear way!”
Soon he had a carrying song, a steady pace, and the most carefully delivered carrots in Friendly Ferns.



At the meeting-house door, Ollie paused.
“What happens if the rain comes back?”
Finn checked the latch with him. They moved a basket
away from the doorway and laid a mat over the damp boards.
“We don’t have to guess,” Finn said. “We can check.”
Ollie tried the door once more.
Then he carried the bread inside.



Ava looked at the spoiled maple leaf.
Then she turned it over.
On the clean side she drew the meeting house, the wide path,
and all the different places to sit.
She added a little picture of a friend resting by the window.
The new invitation was clearer than the old one.
Tebow took it out to the clearing.



Romeo watched the friends arrive.
He noticed a visitor pausing at the noisy doorway. Another held a bowl but could not find a clear spot to put it down.
He offered the quiet corner to one and cleared a little table for the other.
“Here is a place,” he said.
Neither friend had to explain everything first.



Tebow returned with muddy paws and a marvelous discovery. “The little vole family is still by the reeds! They saw the old invitation and went to the willow.”

Finn shut his notebook.

“Then the plan isn’t finished.”

He found a dry cloth for the basket. Ollie checked the safe path. Tebow led them around the fallen branch.



At the reed bed, the smallest voles peered out from their snug shelter.
“We have nothing to bring,” their mother said.
“You can bring yourselves,” Finn answered.
Ollie carried their basket. Tebow walked ahead, pointing out puddles.
Back at the meeting house, Shelly moved a little bench beside a low table.
She had already thought of where the babies could sit.



At last, bowls steamed and lanterns glowed.
Freddie's carrots stood proudly beside the bread.
But Finn kept looking at the room.
Something was missing.
"The big table?" asked Xtermigator.
Finn shook his head.
"I keep trying to make it look like the picture in my log."
Xtermigator glanced around.
"What do you notice when you look up?"



Finn saw Shelly telling the vole children where to find
the best view of the pond.
He saw Ava showing a guest her drawings.
Ollie was laughing with Freddie. Romeo had saved
a cushion for Tebow's muddy return.
No one was sitting at the table Finn had planned.
Everyone had somewhere to belong.



“I thought Thanksgiving would be perfect if nothing changed,” Finn said.
“And now?” Shelly asked.
Finn put his pencil down.
“I’m thankful we changed things together.”
For a moment, the room grew quiet.
Then Freddie whispered, “I’m thankful the carrots survived.”
The whole room laughed, including Freddie.



Before they ate, Xtermigator bowed his head.
"Thank You, God, for this food, these friends, and the love we can share."
Some friends spoke their thanks. Some nodded. Ava held up her drawing of the room, with every place filled.
The littlest vole simply reached for her mother's paw.
There was more than one way to say thank you.



Bread passed from table to table.
Freddie served one tray at a time. Ollie made sure there was room to move.
Romeo kept a small bowl warm for a friend who was resting.
Shelly ate beside the window, exactly where she wanted to be.
Finn sat down long enough to taste the carrots.
“Worth saving,” he told Freddie.



Soon the table was full. Plates clinked.
Voices rose. Laughter bounced off every tree.
Shelly pulled her head close and covered her ears.
"It's so loud," she whispered. "And so many friends at once."



Finn opened his Investigator Log.
“Some things are hard to see,” he wrote.
“Like when noise feels too big inside you.”
Xtermigator nodded. “Not every challenge
shows on the outside.”



Romeo spread a soft blanket under the willow,
away from the crowd. “This is the Quiet Corner,” he said.
“Anyone can come here to rest their ears and breathe slow.”
Shelly smiled and sat down. In for four. Out for four.



Freddie's legs were bouncing again.
His Zoomies had come to the feast too!
"Sitting still for a long time is hard for me," he said.
So Tebow made him the official Pumpkin Runner,
carrying rolls up and down the table.



Ava painted little leaf cards: a green leaf for
“I’m okay,” a yellow leaf for “I need a break,”
and a red leaf for “Please help me.”
“Now nobody has to shout to be heard,” she said.



Back at the table, Shelly held up a green leaf.
Freddie hopped by with the last basket of rolls.
Finn wrote one more line: “A wonderful feast has room
for every kind of quiet, and every kind of hop.”



When a guest needed a quieter moment, nobody called after them to hurry back.

Tebow showed the way to the window seat. Ava set aside a drawing. Romeo saved a little bread.

The feast would still be there.
So would the welcome.
Beyond the glass, the rain had stopped.



There was food left when the bowls came around again.

"For tomorrow?" Freddie asked.

"Some," said Finn. "And some for friends who couldn't come today."

They packed little baskets, keeping each kind of food in its own wrapping. Shelly drew the delivery map. Ollie checked the paths. Ava made a welcome card for every basket.



Outside, the broken table still leaned beside the puddle.
Tebow eyed its crooked leg.
“It didn’t grow after all.”
Finn looked back through the bright window.
“I think it did.”
“How?” asked Freddie.
“Every time someone said, ‘There is room for you,’ our table got a little bigger.”



That evening, Finn opened his Investigator Log.
He drew a neat line under his old plan.

Beneath it he wrote:

"A wonderful feast isn't a perfect picture.
It's making room for the friends who are really here."

Shelly read the page beside him.
"Leave some room at the bottom," she said.
"For next year."



Under the willow, the pond shone gold at last.
Inside the meeting house, the friends shared the last warm pieces of bread.
Freddie hummed his carrying song. Ava tucked the new invitation into Finn's notebook.
Tomorrow they could fix the table.
Tonight, they had made something better.
A welcome big enough to grow.

A Note of Thanks

Before this story travels beyond these pages, the XTERMIGATOR Kids Gang has something to say.

Finn opened his Investigator Log to a clean page and wrote: "Thank you to every family that gathers close and reads together."

Ava the Fox drew a picture of a room with every place filled. "Thank you to every teacher, helper, and Sunday school friend who makes room for one more."

Freddie bounced twice. "Thank you for reading! And for singing! And for pumpkins of every size!"

Tebow held up the maple leaf. "Thank you to everyone who passes the invitation along."

Romeo made sure these words sat low enough for every friend to see. "Thank you to every child who heard 'there is room for you' and believed it."

Ollie and Shelly smiled and gave a little wave. Some friends say thank you without any words at all.

And Xtermigator bowed his head. "This story was never about one perfect plan or one perfect table. It's about gratitude, the kind that grows when we share what we have and welcome whoever arrives. Every time we do, the table grows a little bigger."

Come as you are. There is room for you.

From all of us in Friendly Ferns: we are thankful for you.

About the XTERMIGATOR Kids Gang

The Table That Grew is brought to you by the XTERMIGATOR Kids Gang: Finn, XTERMIGATOR, Ava the Fox, Freddie, Ollie, Shelly, Tebow, and Romeo. Together they star in a growing world of stories, songs, and Sunday school adventures that make learning, difference, disability, emotions, faith, and belonging approachable for young readers.

The Gang's stories celebrate a simple truth: the qualities that make us different can become sources of strength, and every child deserves a seat at the table.

XTERMIGATOR Kids is part of the Dr Disruptor Network, a community of educators, creators, and advocates working to remove barriers and reveal potential, so every child can join in and belong just as they are.

Find more adventures at xtermigatorkids.com.

The XTERMIGATOR Kids Adventure Toolbox

Big holiday gatherings can fill a house with people, sounds, and surprises. The Gang keeps a little toolbox for days like that. Pick your tools with a grown-up you trust, then use them whenever you need. You never have to push through feeling uncomfortable to belong.

Shelly's Slow Breaths: pretend you are smelling a warm mug of cocoa, then blow out slowly, like you are cooling it down. Slow breaths can help some bodies feel calmer. If breathing games are not your thing, it is okay to skip this one.

Tebow's Quiet Corner: before the party, pick a calm spot together with a grown-up you trust, so they always know where you are. That is where your ears and eyes can rest a while.

Ava the Fox's Ear Helpers: headphones or earmuffs can turn a loud room down. A grown-up can help you try a pair and see how they feel. If they do not feel good, you never have to wear them.

Freddie's Signal: pick a secret word or a hand signal with your grown-up that means 'I need a break.'

Joining In, Your Way

Finn's Watcher Pass: it is okay to watch first and take notes like an investigator. Join in when you feel ready - or just enjoy watching.

Romeo's Helper Job: ask a grown-up for a small job, like carrying napkins or helping choose the music. Helping is joining in, too.

Ollie's Pocket Buddy: a little toy or fidget from home can ride along in your pocket.

XTERMIGATOR's Polite No: you can say 'no thank you' to hugs and kisses. A wave or a high-five is fine if you feel like it - and it is okay not to wave or smile at all. Your hello belongs to you.

The Come-and-Go Rule: tell your grown-up when you need a break, then step out and come back as many times as you need. The table will still be there when you return.

One job is just for grown-ups: keep the walkways and the spaces between chairs and furniture clear, so friends who use wheelchairs, walkers, or crutches can join in, too.

Taking care of yourself is something to be thankful for, too. There is room for you - noise, wiggles, quiet, and all.

With gratitude,

Dr Disruptor

and the XTERMIGATOR Kids Gang

Friendly Ferns Publishing