

The family who never
said "thank you:" fate,
divinity, and gratitude
in "a very o...



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BUSTER**

"...the exasperated and unhinged Elisenda shouted that it was awful living in that hell full of angels," is a line that occurs toward the ending of "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" by Gabriel Garcia Màrquez. It accurately depicts how humans can only experience divine power for so long before they begin to take it for granted and not realize all of the good things that come from it. Also, in various points of this story, the family that keeps an angel in their chicken coop is blessed in a large number of ways: their son was almost dead but was miraculously healed, they collected a large sum of money from the people that paid to see the old man and ask him questions, and they were able to use the money to buy nice things for themselves. Although these things are great and their standard of living is greatly increased, the family never traces their fortune and wellbeing back to the angel that gave it to them. The message that Garcia Màrquez is trying to convey to the reader is to be thankful for things that come to you or your family through ways other than your own means, even when it may come from a divine power and you're not sure who to thank.

The first way that Garcia Màrquez conveys this message is through the healing of the child towards the beginning of the story. Soon after the angel appears, interrupting the lives of one family, their son is suddenly healed without explanation after being terribly ill. Elisenda, the mother of the son who had been healed, had been taking care of this child as any mother would, but residing in a rural village without access to medicine or other medical supplies, she wasn't able to do a whole lot. The arrival of the angel is so shocking and unexpected for everyone that it just seems like a coincidence that the son is healed at the same time the angel lands; "A

short time afterward [the appearance of the angel] the child woke up without a fever and with a desire to eat." Although it wouldn't be the first thought to most people to thank the angel, this family could have attributed the fact that he's still alive to the major change that happened when he got better: the angel's arrival and the fact that divine beings have the power to heal people. Garcia Màrquez uses this incident to set the mood for the rest of this story, showing that the family will never be truly grateful for what what they are blessed with and view the angel as less of a bringer of good fortune and more of an inconvenience to their daily lives.

The next way Garcia Màrquez shows that being thankful is important is by showing the family hoarding the money that they received. " Pelayo and Elisenda were happy with fatigue, for in less than a week they had crammed their rooms with money and the line of pilgrims waiting their turn to enter still reached beyond the horizon;" this quote shows just how much the family profited off the angel being in their backyard. Although having riches and being happy that you have them isn't inherently being ungrateful, the fact that this family just piled up the money and didn't even attribute it to the divine being that they had stuffed in their chicken coop is ungrateful. If the family had connected their newfound prosperity to the thing that happened that caused it (the arrival of the angel), they may have been able to appreciate it more and would have housed him somewhere a little nicer than a chicken coop. Also, if the family had realized that they had nearly nothing to do with the money that they had received other than charging people to see the angel, they would have been more humble and treated the angel with the reverence it deserved.

The last way that Garcia M àrquez shows that being thankful for things that happen by ways other than hard work is at the end of the story when he describes the many things the family is able to acquire with their newfound riches. " The owners of the house had no reason to lament. With the money they saved they built a two-story mansion..." comes directly from the story and shows that the family was only able to get these things from showing off the angel to the people that travelled to their village. Instead of holing themselves up in their new mansion and leaving the angel in the chicken coop, they should have let him inside and been more gracious hosts to the angel that had given them every good thing they had been able to acquire. Towards the end of the story, " Pelayo threw a blanket over him and extended him the charity of letting him sleep in the shed, and only then did they notice that he had a temperature at night." Only when the family moves the man that had given them nearly every good thing that happened did they notice that he was sick, which is another way that Garcia M àrquez shows that being grateful mean taking care of the things that caused good fortune in the first place. This statement shows that the family had hit rock bottom with their generosity shortly before this, when people had stopped coming to see the angel, so he hadn't been bringing in money for the family to store up. If they had been grateful for what they had been given, they would have given the angel much better accommodations and he might have even given them more than what they already had.

The message Garcia M àrquez is trying to convey to the readers of " A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" is to be thankful for things that come to you by means that are not your own. The family in this story received healing for

their son, fame, a large sum of money, and many other things from a divine creature that had landed in their backyard, and never once in the story did they thank him for all of the things that he had brought them. Although they ended up well off in life, being grateful for things has repercussions that extend far beyond this life. If everyone was more thankful for things that they are blessed with, the world would be a much better place, according to Garcia Mårquez.