

THANKSGIVING SURPRISE

By Betsy Zaubler

CHARACTERS

DAVID, 17, kind, slightly awkward, anxious.

JANINE, 45, David's mother, loving, sweet, terrible cook, forgetful.

EMILY, 43, David's Aunt and Janine's sister, witty, thoughtful, caring.

JOE, 43, David's Uncle and Emily's husband, funny, sarcastic, loving, kid at heart.

GRAMS, 74, David's grandmother, Janine and Emily's mother, extremely slow, alert.

GRAMPS, 75, David's grandfather, Janine and Emily's father, pot-belly, loud, still thinks he is young.

MICHAEL, 48, David's dad, Janine's husband, kind, helps keep Janine in check.

TIME

Thanksgiving, the present.

PLACE

A kitchen.

(As the lights come up, JANINE is seen preparing food for Thanksgiving. DAVID sits at the kitchen table.)

DAVID: Do you need any help?

JANINE: No David, I'm fine.

DAVID: Okay, just don't burn the turkey like last year.

JANINE: *(Jokingly.)* David, your lack of faith in my cooking is upsetting.

DAVID: It's not just me Mom. Even Aunt Emily told you to wait for her before you put the turkey in.

JANINE: *(Jokingly.)* Oh Em's just jealous because I'm the better cook.

DAVID: *(Laughingly.)* Well she wasn't the one who burnt the turkey. *(Beat)* Where is everyone anyway?

JANINE: Uncle Joe and Aunt Emily are stuck in traffic, Dad's at the bakery getting the pumpkin pie, and who knows where your Grams and Gramps are? They are slugs, my god, I don't know how they function just the two of them.

DAVID: Can Grams even walk up the stairs? She's so slow it completely throws off her balance.

JANINE: Oh yeah, remember when Gramps tried to install one of those chairs that gives you a lift up the stairs, but he didn't do a good job, so the first time Grams sat in it, it broke. And she was screaming –

DAVID: *(Imitating Grams.)* Damn it Mason! I should have married the boy from medical school!

JANINE: *(Chuckles.)* You've gotten so good at that impression. *(DAVID is distracted and does not respond to JANINE.)* Are you sure you want to tell them?

DAVID: Yeah. *(Beat.)* I mean what's the worst that could happen, other than them hating me for the rest of my life?

JANINE: You know that would never happen. *(Beat. David is fidgety.)* You don't need to do it all at once.

DAVID: I just want to get it over with.

JANINE: Okay. You know Dad and I support you.

DAVID: Yeah I know, Mom

JANINE: *(Hears cars pull into driveway.)* Oh, that's them.

DAVID: *(Sees two cars pull up in driveway.)* Good, everyone but Dad's here. *(Looks at watch, impressed.)* Grams and Gramps are only 20 minutes late. That must be a record.

JANINE: Are you ready?

DAVID: I guess.

(JOE, EMILY, GRAMS, and GRAMPS enter, loudly. Hugs and kisses are exchanged.)

JOE: David, how are you? What's that smell? Janine, I think the turkey's burning.

JANINE: Oh shut up. *(JOE chuckles and hugs JANINE.)*

EMILY: *(Jokingly.)* Now Janine, we don't want another burnt turkey!

GRAMS: Where's Michael?

GRAMPS: Janine, did you forget to pick up the pumpkin pie again this year?

JANINE: *(Frustrated.)* Yes. *(Beat. Gestures to table.)* Go sit. I made some gourmet butternut squash puffs.

DAVID: Yeah, gourmet, straight from Costco.

(JOE, EMILY, GRAMS, and GRAMPS sit at the table as JANINE takes the butternut squash puffs out of the oven. DAVID walks around the kitchen, staring out the window, very antsy.)

GRAMPS: David, are you all right?

GRAMS: Why are you so antsy?

EMILY: David, come sit.

JOE: I wanna hear all about soccer season.

DAVID: Oh yeah, soccer season was great. The bench and I became real close.

JOE: Ah, David, it's all right. Why'd you wanna play in the first place?

DAVID: *(Uncomfortable.)* I well, um—

JANINE: *(Brings over tray of butternut squash puffs.)* Don't these look delicious?

(GRAMS takes a bite of a butternut squash puff, and has a disgusted look on her face.)

GRAMS: Janine! These are freezing. All you had to do was put them in the oven, how did you manage to mess that up?

GRAMPS: Janine, what happened to you? Your mother and Em are both great cooks.

EMILY: *(To JANINE, jokingly.)* It's a good thing you're pretty.

JANINE: *(Sarcastic but still joking.)* Now there's no need to be rude. We'll just do Thanksgiving at your and Joe's place next year.

JOE: Oh no, that's all right. You're turkey isn't *that* bad. *(JANINE smirks as if to say "told you so.")*

(MICHAEL enters with pumpkin pie.)

MICHAEL: Behold! I come bearing pumpkin pie.

DAVID: Oh good. Dad's home.

JOE: *(Does a drum roll on the table.)* Now Thanksgiving can really begin.

MICHAEL: (*Gives Janine a kiss when he enters. Places pie on table. Speaking to JANINE.*) Honey, get me the knife. David, why don't you cut the pie this year?

DAVID: All right. (*DAVID cuts 7 slices of the pie. Everyone takes a slice.*) Gramps, you start.

GRAMPS: Sure. We'll let's see. I have lots to be thankful for, but since I'm 75 and I've exhausted all the clichés, I guess I'm thankful that Grams didn't kill me when that chair lift broke.

(Everyone laughs, and takes a bite of the pie.)

GRAMS: Well I'm certainly thankful the boy from medical school never got married. I still have a chance!

(Everyone laughs, and takes a bite of the pie.)

EMILY: Okay, okay my turn. (*Beat.*) I'm thankful that Janine hasn't burnt the turkey yet.

(Everyone takes a bite of the pie.)

JANINE: (*Snidely.*) Well I'm thankful that Em and Joe will host Thanksgiving next year.

(Everyone takes a bite of the pie.)

JOE: Come on ladies. Play nice. (*Beat.*) Okay, I'm thankful Em is a better cook than Janine.

(Everyone laughs, and takes a bite of pie.)

MICHAEL: Okay, my turn. I'm thankful that the bakery called to remind us to pick up the pie. Thanksgiving wouldn't be the same if we didn't eat the pie first!

(Everyone takes a bite of pie.)

GRAMS: Oh you're right Michael. You've always been so thoughtful—

GRAMPS: (*Jokingly.*) At least Janine picked the right husband. May be the only smart thing she's ever done, but at least she made one good decision.

MICHAEL: (*To JANINE, laughing.*) I'm definitely the best thing that's ever happened to you.

GRAMPS: Very true. (*Beat. DAVID is completely zoned out, staring into space.*) David, you didn't go yet.

(JANINE looks soothingly at DAVID.)

DAVID: Oh yeah, right. Um... *(Long pause.)* I'm thankful to have such an accepting family.

GRAMPS: What do you mean?

DAVID: Well, you guys will always support me no matter what. *(Beat.)* Right?

GRAMS: Of course David, what's this about?

GRAMPS: Are you trying to tell us you got another D on your math test?

JOE: Do you wanna join the cheer squad so you can still go to soccer games? I'd totally support that!

(Everyone laughs except for DAVID, who looks very uncomfortable.)

MICHAEL: Come on guys. *(To DAVID, encouraging.)* Keep going!

DAVID: Well there's something I've been meaning to tell you guys, and I'm not sure how you'll feel about it. *(Beat.)* There was a reason I joined the soccer team, and it wasn't to play bench.

JOE: Of course not! Only an idiot would want to play bench.

GRAMPS: Joe, let the boy speak!

DAVID: Okay well, um, I mean I can wait to tell you guys. It's really not that important.

(JANINE and MICHAEL both give DAVID a nod of encouragement.)

EMILY: Come on David. You can't leave us hanging like that.

DAVID: All right, well, so... *(Beat.)* I joined the team because, well, there was a guy on the team I liked. *(Long pause.)* I think I'm gay.

(Long pause, JANINE and MICHAEL look proudly at DAVID.)

JOE: You think or you know?

DAVID: I know. *(Long pause, uncomfortable silence.)*

GRAMPS: *(Frustrated, slaps the table.)* Damn it, David.

JOE: *(Hugs DAVID, lifting him into the air.)* Yes! Good boy!

GRAMPS: Why, David, why? Couldn't you have waited until I died to come out?

DAVID: *(More to himself than to anyone else.)* This was a mistake.

GRAMS: *(Angrily.)* Mason! I told you not to bet so much money!

(DAVID is very confused.)

GRAMPS: You were the one who said I'd die before he'd come out.

GRAMS: Well why'd you have to listen to me this time?

JOE: Hand it over old man! One hundred bucks.

JANINE: What's going on here?

(Everyone ignores JANINE.)

GRAMPS: Emily, you shouldn't have married him. *(Slowly takes out wallet and hands cash to JOE.)* This hurts, Joe, it really does.

(JOE dances around the kitchen, saying, "I told you so," waving the money around. DAVID sits awkwardly playing with his fingers at the table.)

JOE: *(Waving money in GRAMPS' face.)* Sucks to lose, doesn't it?

MICHAEL: *(To GRAMPS, confused.)* What did you lose?

(Everyone ignores MICHAEL.)

EMILY: Are you guys forgetting that I was a part of this bet too?

JOE: No, but I won.

EMILY: No you didn't. I said he'd come out before Christmas. You said he'd come out within the next year. So I win!

GRAMPS: Oh good. I'll take my hundred back, Joe. *(GRAMPS snatches the money out of JOE'S hand.)*

EMILY: And I'll take one hundred from each of you. *(GRAMPS and JOE begrudgingly give EMILY money.)*

DAVID: *(Angrily.)* Did you guys seriously bet on when I would come out?

(Beat.)

GRAMPS: *(Shamelessly.)* Yes.

JANINE: *(Slightly serious but still jokingly.)* You're all so insensitive.

JOE: It's okay, David doesn't mind.

MICHAEL: You don't know how David feels. This was really hard for him to do.

JANINE: You can't just bet money on things like this.

GRAMPS: *(To JANINE and MICHAEL.)* Did he tell you two he was gay first?

JANINE: Of course, we're his parents.

JOE: David, how could you tell your parents first? What about me? We're soccer bros.

EMILY: You've never even played soccer with him.

JOE: Yes I have.

GRAMS: When?

JOE: When he was seven.

GRAMPS: That doesn't count.

(Everyone starts speaking over each other. DAVID tries to pipe into the conversation but is not given an opportunity to speak.)

JANINE: Well, David, I'm proud of you.

GRAMPS: We're all proud of you, but your timing could've been better.

DAVID: *(Sarcastically.)* Oh you're right. Next time I have something important to tell you guys, I'll make sure it's an appropriate time, just for you Gramps.

JOE: *(Defensively.)* What about me?

EMILY: *(To JOE.)* You're such an idiot sometimes.

DAVID: How long have guys known?

JOE: Forever.

DAVID: How?

EMILY: Well in middle school you absolutely loved James Franco. We always saw you looking at pictures of his abs on your computer. Plus, we just sort of had a feeling, you know?

DAVID: Oh. *(Beat.)* So you aren't mad?

JOE: Of course not.

GRAMS: How could we be mad at you?

DAVID: *(Hesitantly.)* I don't know. *(Beat.)* It's sort of weird.

EMILY: What's weird?

DAVID: *(Nervously.)* Being gay.

MICHAEL: Who told you being gay is weird?

DAVID: Nobody. It's just, I always thought guys were supposed to like girls and girls were supposed to like guys.

EMILY: Well some guys are supposed to like guys, and some girls are supposed to like girls.

JANINE: David, being gay is not weird. Your sexuality doesn't define who you are.

MICHAEL: It's just a part of your identity.

DAVID: But everyone's just gonna think of me as that gay boy now.

GRAMS: Then that's their problem. You are never just a gay boy.

EMILY: You like guys. So what?

DAVID: But what about prom or homecoming? I don't think two guys have ever gone together.

EMILY: So you'll go with a guy and you'll change things.

MICHAEL: *(Jokingly, but sincere.)* Plus, who says you need a date to the prom or homecoming?

DAVID: *(Sarcastically.)* Says the guy who never had one.

GRAMS: *(Laughingly, but sincere.)* Oh good, he's just as sarcastic as ever. Clearly coming out didn't change you at all.

EMILY: *(Jokingly.)* What a relief!

DAVID: *(Questioningly but still affirmative.)* So you guys really aren't mad.

GRAMPS: Well I'm mad; I just lost a hundred bucks cause of you.

JOE: Me too!

GRAMPS: But if I'm gonna lose a hundred dollars, I'm glad I lost it on you.

JOE: *(Jokingly.)* I'm not. Guess your Christmas present is gonna be a hundred dollars cheaper this year.

DAVID: *(Sarcastically.)* Thanks, Joe. I'm so lucky to have such a great uncle.

JOE: I'm just messing with you. I really am proud of you, David.

MICHAEL: We all are.

EMILY: You truly are a great kid. *(Beat.)* If I were a boy, I'd definitely date you.

DAVID: *(Awkwardly.)* Okay... *(Beat.)* Can we eat already? I'm starving.

(Everyone sits at the table as JANINE brings over the food. MICHAEL fills everyone's glasses with wine, except for DAVID, who gets sparkling cider.)

JANINE: Look how delicious this *non-burnt* turkey looks.

EMILY: *(Sarcastically.)* I'm really proud of you, Janine, really proud.

GRAMS: This turkey looks delightful, Janine!

(Everyone is about to dig in.)

GRAMPS: Wait, before we dig in, I'd like to make a toast. *(Lifting up his glass.)* To David. *(Everyone clinks glasses.)* Now David, we have this little bet on when Grams' med school boy will come out. Want in?

DAVID: All right, put me down for twenty.

(Black out.)