

# Surprise!

by Penny Black, 2021

*The play takes place in semi-darkness, with occasional flashes of light from a singing Father Christmas. Maybe a light from outside is shining in.*

Cast: Simon

*The rest of the party (as many as possible, but two, Izzy, his wife, and Luke, his son, would do).*

*It is dark. A taxi drives up the driveway and deposits its occupant. The door opens. Enter SIMON wearing a Santa hat. He has been drinking steadily all day and night at the office Christmas party. Simon turns on the light switch, but the lights don't come on. He flicks the switch up and down several times. Nothing.*

SIMON:

Shit! Shit shit shit shit shit! I loathe the country. Generators, cess pits, farmyards and loads of bloody animals shitting everywhere. What is wrong with the national grid and a decent sewage system, can I ask?

Izzy? Izzy! *He does some more flicking.*

Bloody marvellous, 23<sup>rd</sup> December and no electricity.

Izzy! Izzy! The train was late, the lane was icy, so I expect some LIGHT when I come home.

The smell of something decent coming out of the oven. It is my birthday you know, even if I did spend it at the bloody office party.

Izzy! Luke? Huh. Luke?! Izzy? Where the bloody hell are you?!

*He starts to feel his way around the kitchen. He knocks into a 2-foot Father Christmas which sets it off singing. He trips over something.*

Out of the way, Henry! I know you're old, but for God's sake, move. MOVE! *He pushes the dog.* Whoever breeds Basset hounds should be shot. Bloody breeders. ...How very nice to meet you Mr West, that will be one thousand quid for a dog that looks like a mottled sausage, has useless legs, can't exercise because of its ears and goes by the fragrant pedigree name of Huffington Mr Fucking Poncey Waddle! ...

*He trips over the dog again. It groans. Or is that an ouch?*

Sorry, Henry, sorry. It's just that you're ... sorry ... just lying there, sorry. *Pause.*

I can't believe I just kicked the dog. But Henry, you really should move. It's not as if you've been chasing foxes all day. I mean, we all know that foxhunting is illegal now, but as no politician ever ventures outside London .... Gove. Can you imagine smarmy-cheeked Gove outside the Westminster bubble? And look what happened when Boris and Carrie went into that yurt – they should have had a caravan – Carrievan. Carrievan! That's what I call a photo opportunity. The pair of them peeping out from behind net curtains.

*He laughs at his own joke. There is a smothered snort.*

Oh well, lie there then.

*He climbs over the dog and feels his way around the kitchen to the fusebox.*

Izzy! I suppose she could be picking up Luke from some friend. Maybe that nice boy in the next village, but oh no, he won't be there. If only Luke was friends with someone whose parents we liked, as opposed to the son of the local Farage sympathiser. 'Keep Britain for the Brits, get the poor Romanians and Bulgarians out'. Followed by, 'Oh Whoops, there's no one to pick fruit on Johnny's farm!'

*There is a stifled sigh and a moving sound.*

What's that? Christ, I can't see a thing. Henry? Now he decides to move. *Pause.* Bigots ... that's another thing I hate about the country, people who have never seen a foreigner in their local village terrified of immigrants. Henry, oh Henry!

*He drops to the floor and feels around. When he gets up, he bangs his head on the table.*

Bloody hell! Ow. Where's the torch?

*There is a muffled groan, a sliding sound, and a hiss.*

This is ridiculous, I'm crawling around on the floor in the dark trying to find a comatose dog. Din-din, oh din-dins Henry.

*He starts feeling his way around the kitchen. The shuffling sounds start again, a slight hiss.*

Maybe I kicked Henry in the teeth? I'd never do that. Am not the sort of man that kicks dogs. No. No. I'm a nice man. A really nice man. Henry? Oh, Henry. Come here. Daddy's so sorry.

*He finds the dog, sits down and cuddles him on his lap.*

Daddy loves 'u. Yes he does, yes he does. I'm a nice man really. *Pause* Henry. I think I've been sacked. We were all so drunk, and Jack from Regional persuades me to take a picture of myself pissing, he said the whole team were going to do it. We stand in a line and I'm

wobbling about ... the photo blurry ... but I'm the only one who presses the button. And it ends up with Sheila, Head of Sales, she was beside herself, said she didn't think I was like that, that there would be repercussions, serious repercussions. I am such an idiot. Fired on my birthday ...

*Suddenly the lights come Simon is blinded. We can't see a thing. Just hear many voices:*

**SURPRISE! HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**