

HAGGIS & HUMMUS by Jill Gittleman

(JEAN, in her forties, and her daughter LISA, 19, are eating at a picnic table at the outdoor equivalent to a food court during a local Celtic festival.)

LISA

I can't believe we're eating chips and salsa at a Celtic festival.

JEAN

It's the only vegetarian option.

LISA

But chips and salsa are Mexican. Couldn't we have found something more authentic?

JEAN

You know I won't eat pasties made with meat.

LISA

What about that stuff over there? Freshly cooked haggis. What's haggis?

JEAN

Believe me, you don't want to know.

LISA

Would I ask you if I didn't want to know?

JEAN

OK. It's offal.

LISA

Awful?

JEAN

That, too. It's offal and it's awful.

LISA

What's offal?

JEAN

Guts. Haggis is stewed guts.

LISA

That's disgusting!

JEAN

You wanted to know.

LISA

So...why did you want me to come here with you if you can't even eat the food?

JEAN

I thought you might be interested in experiencing your Celtic roots.

LISA

But Mom, our last name is Shapiro.

JEAN

That's your father's name.

LISA

And you kept it after you got divorced. After he cheated on you.

JEAN

You were so young. I thought it would be easier if you and I had the same last name.

LISA

But now you want me to identify with the MacQueens.

JEAN

You're half MacQueen. We're Scottish.

LISA

Grandma and Grandpa are Scottish.

JEAN

Actually, Grandma's side of the family was French/English.

LISA

I thought she was Scottish.

JEAN

No, she just used that as an excuse for being thrifty.

LISA

Thrifty? That's an understatement! Both she and Grandma Trudy won't even eat in a restaurant unless they have two-for-one coupons.

JEAN

It's a Jewish thing with Grandma Trudy.

LISA

I always thought of it as a *Grandma* thing, that passion for nickels and dimes.

JEAN

Well, maybe it's a Jewish thing *and* a Scottish thing.

LISA

But you just said that Grandma isn't Scottish.

JEAN

Wouldn't you like to take a look at some of the booths? They're selling tartans, berets, books, jewelry –

LISA

You brought me here to shop?

JEAN

Doesn't it feel like we're on vacation?

LISA

No. My roommate is spending her spring break in Paris. *She's* on vacation.

JEAN

I'll buy you a souvenir today. From Scotland.

LISA

From a country I've never visited?

JEAN

But this is like a tiny trip abroad.

LISA

Mom, we're in a community baseball park with chain link fences.

JEAN

Use your imagination, sweetie. Each booth is like a little village.

LISA

Not from where I sit. It looks more like a flea market.

(BRUCE, in his fifties, ENTERS. He is wearing a kilt.)

BRUCE

And how are you lovely ladies doing today? Enjoying the festival?

JEAN

Oh, yes! It's such a nice day!

LISA
(suspiciously)

We're fine.

BRUCE
May I make a suggestion? The MacDonald of the Isles tartan. *(To JEAN.)* It goes so well with your beautiful green eyes.

LISA
Why don't you just go back to your booth? If we want to buy something, we'll come to you.

JEAN
Lisa! Be polite.

BRUCE
It's OK, Jean. Don't get upset.

LISA
Do you know him?

JEAN
(To LISA) Can't you think of anything nice to say?

LISA
Sure I can. *(To BRUCE)* For an older man, you look good in a skirt.

(BRUCE laughs.)

JEAN
It's a kilt.

LISA
I know that.

BRUCE
(To JEAN) You haven't told her anything yet, have you?

JEAN
I was getting around to it.

LISA
So you *do* know each other.

BRUCE
(Extending his hand) Lisa, I'm glad to finally meet you.

LISA

Finally?

(LISA reluctantly shakes hands with BRUCE.)

JEAN

Bruce and I have been seeing each other for several months.

LISA

So that's why you brought me here! To meet your boyfriend.

JEAN

Well, yes, but I was also hoping that you might like the festival.

LISA

I think that liking your boyfriend is more important than my liking the festival.

JEAN

Does that mean – you like him?

LISA

I don't know yet, Mom. All I can say so far is – he has nice knees.

(JEAN looks down at her lap.)

JEAN

Oh, no!

BRUCE

You don't like my knees?

JEAN

No, I mean, yes, I like your knees, but oh no, I spilled a big blob of salsa on my new blouse. If I don't go wash it off, the stain will set and the blouse will be ruined!

(JEAN stands up.)

Where is the ladies' restroom?

BRUCE

Over there, across the field and through the gate.

JEAN

Damn! I'll be back in a jiffy.

(JEAN looks helplessly at BRUCE, then at LISA, then back at BRUCE.)

Sorry!

(JEAN EXITS.)

BRUCE

You should know that I love your mother.

LISA

And you should know that I spent every summer from seventh to twelfth grade with my dad in Venice Beach, and every summer he had a new girlfriend auditioning to be my California mom. But my dad was never serious about any of them. He just liked pretty girls. So I can smell phony love a mile away – even if my mom can't.

BRUCE

There's nothing phony about the way I feel. I don't believe in nuclear bombs. But I believe in nuclear families.

LISA

Then why aren't you married?

BRUCE

I have two adult sons. My wife, their mother, died three years ago of cancer. We were very much in love.

LISA

Oh God, I'm sorry.

BRUCE

Why? You didn't kill her.

LISA

I'm sorry for acting like a bitch.

BRUCE

It's OK. I'm tougher than I look.

LISA

Just be honest, Mr. Tough Guy. How did you and my mom meet?

BRUCE

In Ventura – at a Celtic Festival.

LISA

My aunt lives in Ventura.

BRUCE

Right. She and your mom were visiting a booth at the festival where you can trace your family heritage by looking up your last name on a chart. I happened to be

standing next to them because I was tracing my roots, too. Your mom is Clan Donald and I'm Clan Stewart. We struck up a conversation, and the rest is history.

LISA

Do *you* live in Ventura?

BRUCE

No, I live here.

LISA

Seriously. You and my mom both live here, but you met in Ventura?

BRUCE

That's right.

LISA

I find that hard to believe.

BRUCE

Trust me, Lisa. I took it as a sign. Sooner or later we had to meet. And after more than two years of grieving, meeting her was like feeling the warmth of the sun at the end of a long, cold winter. Jean helps me feel alive again.

LISA

Come to think of it, she's been a little livelier than usual.

BRUCE

Now you know why.

LISA

Now I know why. I go off to college, and bingo, Mom falls in love.

BRUCE

I hope you'll come over to the big tent to hear me play in the band.

LISA

You play in a band?

BRUCE

Yes. We're on in 45 minutes.

LISA

What kind of band?

BRUCE

Traditional Celtic with a bit of flair. Drums, bass, bagpipes, fiddle and a tin whistle.

LISA
What do you play?

BRUCE
Bagpipes.

LISA
The kilt. I should have known. My boyfriend is a musician, too.

BRUCE
What does he play?

LISA
The oud.

BRUCE
That's Middle Eastern, isn't it?

LISA
Yes. So is he. He's Lebanese. Like from Lebanon Lebanese.

BRUCE
Jean didn't mention that you have a boyfriend.

LISA
That's because she doesn't know. And I can't believe I just told *you*.

BRUCE
Really? You haven't told her?

LISA
I was getting around to it. He's not exactly from Northern Europe. He's not even an American. His name is more extreme than Shapiro. And he's ten years older than I am.

BRUCE
But if you love him, what does that matter?

LISA
Spoken like a true ally.

BRUCE
What do you like about him?

LISA

He doesn't say something unless he really means it. And he's a great chef – especially Middle Eastern dishes.

BRUCE

How did you meet?

LISA

At my belly dancing class. We were learning how to dance to live music.

BRUCE

So you're a dancer? Can you do a jig?

LISA

Anyone can do a jig. It's like aerobics. You just jump up and down.

(LISA demonstrates.)

Like a puppet on a string.

BRUCE

That's great!

LISA

But boring! Belly dancing lets me express my true self.

(LISA dances in a seductive circle around BRUCE. JEAN ENTERS and watches with surprise as LISA completes her circle.)

BRUCE

Whatever makes you happy....

JEAN

Did I miss something?

BRUCE

Just a wonderful conversation with your daughter.

JEAN

(relieved)

That's nice!

BRUCE

Sorry, ladies, but I have to go warm up with the band.

LISA

I can't wait to hear you play.

JEAN
Really?

LISA
We'll come over in a few minutes.

JEAN
We could go over now.

(BRUCE blows a kiss to JEAN. He salutes LISA, then EXITS.)

LISA
I think we'd better sit down here first. There's something that I really need to tell you.

(JEAN and LISA sit down – the same position as in the beginning of our story.)

JEAN
Is something wrong?

LISA
No, Mom. Something's right. I want to invite you and Bruce to a special dinner. A Middle Eastern dinner. You like hummus, don't you? It's vegetarian.

JEAN
Of course I do. I love hummus.

(As the stage lights dim, we hear a lively Celtic tune...)

END