

THE KIDS' TABLE

Written by

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Logline: When a teenager finally gets to sit at the adults' table on Thanksgiving, she realizes it's not what she always hoped.

CASTING BREAKDOWN:

PEPPER: An 18 year old high school senior. Spunky and curious.

CATHY: 53, Pepper's mom. Irritable, on a fine tether.

ANGIE: 32, Pepper's aunt. New to the family. Thoughtful, observational.

UNCLE JIM: 55, Pepper's uncle and Angie's new husband. Brash, quick to anger.

UNCLE MATT: 45, Pepper's other uncle. Newly divorced, likes to stir the pot.

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FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

PEPPER (18), all smiles, loads her plate with the Thanksgiving classics as she makes her way down a buffet-style setup on the counter. A horde of KIDS CHATTER from the other room -- their table is in full swing.

CATHY (53), Pepper's mom, joins her daughter. Cathy eyes Pepper as she heads toward the chaotic kids' table.

CATHY

Hey, Pepper?

Pepper turns, bread roll already in her mouth.

PEPPER

Hm?

CATHY

I was hoping that maybe this year you'd, um, want to sit with all of us. At the adults' table.

Pepper sets the roll on her plate with her mouth, smiles.

PEPPER

Really?

CATHY

Don't sound so surprised. It's not like you've ever been banned.

PEPPER

Uh, yes, I definitely have been. Last year, I literally begged for a seat, and then I was sat between two of the toddlers all night.

CATHY

I thought you loved the littles!

PEPPER

I do. They're precious angels. But I was the only cousin there in the double digits.

(thinks)

Wait. Is this, like, a gift? For my last Thanksgiving before college? Aw!

CATHY

Sure.

PEPPER

Sweet! Should be worth the
eighteen year wait.

Pepper grins, then heads off toward the dining room.
Cathy grabs her arm before she can walk in.

CATHY

You should know, sweetie, that
your uncles can be... difficult.
Just know that at that table,
we're a team.

Pepper gives Cathy a questioning look, confused.

CATHY (CONT'D)

It's -- basically, if anyone
brings up Dad, you're my wing man.

PEPPER

Ah. There it is. And here I
thought this whole shindig was a
parting gift.

CATHY

Oh, stop. Everyone's excited to
have you there, really. We just
also need to keep your father out
of the conversation tonight. Deal?

Cathy stares down Pepper. Pepper rolls her eyes and nods.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Pepper, Cathy, and UNCLE MATT (45), baby of the family,
sit on one side of the table. UNCLE JIM (55), big
presence, and his new wife ANGIE (32), crystal hippie,
sit on the other. A pumpkin pie rests on the table.
Everyone shovels in food.

ANGIE

The turkey is delicious, Jim.

Jim nods and takes a giant swig of beer.

UNCLE JIM

Family recipe. It's just intuition
at this point.

Cathy scoffs.

UNCLE JIM (CONT'D)

Pardon, Catherine?

CATHY

Angie's right. It's wonderful,
especially for your first year
ever making it.

Uncle Matt laughs, slapping his knee in delight. Pepper fails to hide a smile. Jim's face twists.

UNCLE JIM

Right, okay. Remind me who usually
makes the turkey?

Silence. Cathy sips her wine, sharing a knowing look with Jim.

PEPPER

Well, Linda used to --

UNCLE JIM

Yes! Thank you, Pepper.

Jim gives Pepper an intense nod of approval.

UNCLE JIM (CONT'D)

So, Matt, why isn't your girl here
to make the ancestral turkey?

Matt sighs dramatically.

UNCLE MATT

Because of the breakup, Jim.

UNCLE JIM

Of course, yes. It was only a
matter of time once she found out
about the Sims addiction.

Uncle Matt runs his hands over his face. The rest of the table explodes with laughter.

UNCLE MATT

A little help here, Cath? Pepper?

Cathy only pats Matt's shoulder. Pepper grins.

PEPPER

Sorry, but the cousins say you
have more than fifteen hundred
hours logged.

Laughing ensues. Pepper clocks Angie chuckling across the table and smiles. Matt zeroes in on Cathy.

UNCLE MATT

Alright. Sure. Now, I think it's only fair that we discuss your recent marital implosion.

CATHY

And here we go.

UNCLE MATT

Did you even think about me or Jim during the split? Dave was our guy. The only one who could bring a decent hazy IPA to a function.

ANGIE

Sorry, who was Dave?

The brothers stare at Cathy, who glowers. Pepper sighs.

PEPPER

Dave's my dad. He and my mom just got a divorce.

ANGIE

Oh, I'm so sorry.

PEPPER

It's all good. We've been doing fine, really.

Cathy looks at Pepper sharply. Pepper shrinks.

CATHY

Pepper's giving the situation a lot of grace. It was really quite a difficult road, but. I just couldn't be with a man who didn't take being a dad seriously.

Cathy puts her hand on Pepper's back. Pepper turns, brows furrowed.

UNCLE MATT

God, Cath, it's not that deep. Dave was just such a chill guy.

UNCLE JIM

You sure you weren't the problem?

Cathy slams her hands on the table and scowls at Jim.

CATHY

Remind me why I should take marriage advice from you and your freshly-eloped, twenty-something Etsy witch wife?

Pepper stares at her mom in horror, then looks to Angie. She and Pepper lock eyes. Pepper mouths, "sorry." Angie smiles, shakes her head.

UNCLE JIM

Angie does virtual tarot and is thirty-two.

Uncle Matt cackles as Jim glares at their sister. Cathy whips around to face Matt.

CATHY

I'm sure that you, with a dozen exes and no wife and all of your goddamn Sims, are qualified to pass judgment on this.

UNCLE MATT

Hypocrite, much? Pretty sure ending a twenty-year marriage over an "unserious dad" is objectively worse than the Sims.

CATHY

There was more to it than that! Ask Pepper, for the love of god.

Everyone stares at Pepper, save for Angie, who continues eating.

UNCLE JIM

Yeah, we need a fact-check here. Peps, was Dave really a bad dad? Or was the stick up your mom's ass just too big for the two of them?

CATHY

Oh, FUCK you --

UNCLE MATT

Let her speak, goddammit!

The staring continues. Cathy puts her hand over her daughter's reassuringly. Pepper pulls it away, giving her mom a stern look. Cathy looks back, betrayed.

PEPPER

My dad is fine, Jesus. He moved, like, a block away. You guys can still hang out. And he didn't do anything wrong! He and my mom just don't click. Never really have.

Cathy looks at Pepper, aghast. Matt and Jim high-five, their smiles smug. Cathy wilts. Pepper frowns at her uncles' glee.

PEPPER (CONT'D)

Uncle Matt? You should start calling your ex when the kids are at school or something. They don't like it when you call her a bitch.

Matt's face pales. Pepper stands, snatching her fork and the pumpkin pie. Jim holds out his hand to stop her.

UNCLE JIM

Don't take the pie over this.

(to Angie)

Sorry, hun, she's just like my daughter. Always getting pissy over nothing.

PEPPER

I don't think she felt like you objecting to her wedding was "nothing."

The table goes silent. SQUEALS from the KIDS' TABLE float into the room. Angie stares down Jim.

UNCLE JIM

It was funny, god! Sue me!

Pepper stares at Jim, then glances at Cathy. Cathy avoids her gaze. Pepper strides out.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Pepper eats the pie straight from the dish. She turns as the door behind her opens. CHATTER from the KIDS' TABLE floats through. Angie slips out, sits down beside her.

ANGIE

Nice exit.

Pepper laughs, then snuffles.

PEPPER

Sorry my mom called you an Etsy witch.

ANGIE

I don't mind. And that's not your thing to be sorry about.

PEPPER

Okay. I'm sorry my family kinda sucks, though. Especially since you're a part of it now.

ANGIE

No, this is the best Thanksgiving I've been to in years. Very entertaining.

PEPPER

Sure, but -- they're just all so much meaner than I thought. Than I remembered.

Pepper groans and takes another bite of pie.

PEPPER (CONT'D)

I didn't think we were one of those families where we hate each other and won't shut up about it.

ANGIE

At least you're outta here soon, right? Senior year and all?

PEPPER

But I want my memories here to be good. I want something to go back to.

KIDS' CHATTER surges from inside. Pepper looks up, smiling on reflex.

PEPPER (CONT'D)

Thanks. For talking. Wanna go check on the cousins with me?

Angie smiles, nods. Pepper and Angie head in. A beat.

Pepper opens the door again, grabs the pie -- couldn't forget her trophy. She shuts the door behind her.

CUT TO BLACK.