



November Surprise

Laurel Osterkamp

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Twenty years

Six presidential elections

Two brothers

One consuming love affair

For Lucy Jones, the distinction between love and politics is hazy at best. Both can be all-consuming, and either can lead to a heart-breaking loss or an exhilarating win. Whatever the case, if you're seen as a loser, you probably are one. Lucy first learns this lesson in 1988, when she's a shy girl, battling a high school bully and rooting for Dukakis. Through the years Lucy will experience stunning victories and agonizing defeats as she makes the choices that define her. Meanwhile, she also struggles to define her relationship with Monty, who comes in and out of her life like the changes in public opinion. Is Monty simply a one-night stand, a kindred spirit, or the love of her life? And by 2008, can he offer her a change to believe in?

Over the course of twenty years and six presidential elections, Lucy grows and adjusts with the times. Filled with snarky political and pop-culture references, *November Surprise* is about the journey we take to believe in a candidate, in love, and in ourselves.

November Surprise is a companion piece to *Campaign Promises*, which is free on Amazon. They can be read in either order. Both have a liberal slant.

November Surprise Details

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Author : Laurel Osterkamp

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From Reader Review November Surprise for online ebook

Janice says

I almost put it down because the story started with high school. But it does take you through the character's adult life. Pretty good read. Just when I was getting tired it ended happily

Kathleen says

November Surprise is a story that follows the life of Lucy Jones in a span of twenty years from her senior year in high school in 1988 to her twentieth high school reunion in 2008. Author Laurel Osterkamp weaves an intriguing tale that expands upon the novel's companion novella, Campaign Promises, where the reader is first introduced to Lucy via five vignettes that touch upon the milestones in her life in connection with each time period's corresponding political landscape. Told in the first person narrative, Lucy invites the reader into her life story, and shares her fascination for politics along with her evolvment and growth of her views on life, love and politics over the twenty years. Filled with idealism, realism and humor that shines a spotlight on Lucy's life and the political landscape between 1988-2008, November Surprise is a story about a girl who is trying to find her way and make the right choices in her private and public life.

While the story revolves around Lucy and her two relationships with brothers Jack and Monty Bricker, this is so much more than the typical boy-girl romance story. It is a realistic story of a girl coming of age, who learned to define and voice her political and relationship beliefs that ultimately shaped her life within a twenty year span. Lucy takes the reader on a nostalgic walk down the political memory lane covering five elections from Bush-Dukakis through Obama-McCain in rich detail and vivid descriptions seen through her passionate eyes. With each election that Lucy describes, the reader can see the evolved connection between the political commentary, Lucy's life situation, life lesson learned, and her level of growth and maturity at each time period.

I loved the relationships that Lucy had with Jack and Monty, the growth and strength of their bond that grew over the years was poignant and made their relationships special. I especially loved how Lucy and Monty's relationship evolved and developed, it provided the right kind of romantic scenario that everyone looks for and enjoys when they read a Chick Lit and Contemporary Romance novel. Lucy is one feisty, opinionated and intelligent lady. I thoroughly enjoyed her passion, outlook, and perspectives on life and politics. I loved both Jack and Monty's personalities, while they are total opposites, they are both endearing and wonderful men. I loved how they shared a powerful bond of friendship and family.

As a college graduate with a BA Degree in Political Science and a longtime history/politics buff, I loved how the author interwove the political time period and pop culture references of 1988-2008 into the story. I enjoyed taking the stroll down memory lane, and found myself laughing as I reminisced and thought that the author's take on that time period was filled with humor, sarcasm and was mildly sardonic. If you are looking for a wonderful romantic story with a political theme, one that parallels and encompasses politics with relationships, then November Surprise is the one for you!

Disclaimer: I received a copy of the book from the author in exchange for my honest review and participation in a virtual book tour event hosted by Chick Lit Plus Blog Tours.

Theresa Braun says

Laurel Osterkamp's *November Surprise* is a book I literally could not put down. The story sucked me in and I fell in love with Lucy's character, identifying with her immensely. Lucy is witty, honest, well-meaning, and adorably flawed. Osterkamp's craft in writing description and dialogue is outstanding. Her dialogue is so realistic, it's like looking in on living and breathing people you swear you know. Also, Osterkamp's gift of drawing in other pop culture details, really makes the novel come alive. I'm going to have to get my hands on other books she has written and I imagine anyone who reads Osterkamp will feel that way too.

The story follows the pattern of presidential elections and what Lucy is up to when each rolls around, since she is practically obsessed with politics. I found myself laughing out loud at some of the aspects of the presidential campaigns I had forgotten about. Osterkamp humorously reminds us of things like the hanging chads in Florida. The political discussions the characters have in the book are extremely well-argued and represented. I will go so far as to say that Osterkamp manages to make political discussion sexy.

The plight of the modern woman and her efforts to find herself in the world and in relationships is wonderfully portrayed—her obstacle sometimes is something outside of herself, like her arch nemesis from high school, and sometimes is herself, her own worst enemy. We care what happens to Lucy as she goes to school, and eventually work, and vacillates between falling in love and being content as a single woman. She wants to have a happily-ever-after, but not at the price of losing herself.

As we follow Lucy through her relationships, we want her to find happiness, especially since she is able to forge strong, yet complicated connections with men in her life. The emotion in this book is palpable. Lucy describes one of her kisses with a possible love of her life: "His mouth was achingly familiar, like oxygen."

Brothers Jack and Monty are strong presences in her life, even if Monty is often off living elsewhere. When Monty finally gets a job near Lucy, we want to know if something permanent will develop. Is there hope for a happily-ever-after? And, does it have to happen in the order in which we would like it to? Lucy says at one point, "When we began dating it was like a fairy tale. Now, instead, we're living a Lifetime movie." Life is never how we plan, but sometimes it has a few wonderful surprises.

jackie frye says

I did not like this book. When I read the description it sounded good. After the first chapter I thought it was bound to get better so I read on . . . it did not get better. I finished the book only because I hate to start something and not finish it.

Do not make my mistake just don't start in the first place.

Susan says

A fast read, "November Surprise" is a well written political novel, that will not bore you with the politics, with a touch of romance. Laurel pens her characters and dialogue realistic where the story will pull you right in from the start.

This review is based on a complimentary copy which was provided for an honest review.

Laura Chapman says

Quick points:

- I cannot express how much I get and love this book. I'm beyond ecstatic to follow her blog update.
- What a frigging well-created story?
- I love how she shows people coming in and out of the MC's life. That's how reality is. It's not always neat with a person being present and important for more than a chapter.
- This is a beautiful, beyond complicated and ultimately adorable love story. More than a story about boy meets girl, it's about the girl's love, disillusionment and eventual hope in America and democracy. We've all been there, no matter our politics.
- My big takeaway from this book came from that dick, Reggie. He said apathy blows. Love and hate are better. Doing or feeling nothing ruins life. Being passionate is what it's all about. What a powerful message from a book?

So with that, I'll leave with you saying this was a super fast and worthwhile read -- especially in election season. Whether or not you agree with Lucy's politics, I hope you'll appreciate her passion and desire to believe in people.

I also really liked the character of Monty. Their relationship complications seemed reasonable to me, and ultimately I found him adorable. I also liked the friendship she had with his brother, Jack. The final scene with all three of them together is so sweet, and ultimately shows the power of friendship and family.

Told unconventionally, it had a big impact. I liked the format, I liked the voice and I liked the takeaways. All were approachable while making for a thought-evoking and entertaining read.

This book is a bargain buy for all of the entertainment it provides. If I were one of the TV personalities referenced in this book, I would list it under, "BUY, BUY, BUY."

Long version of the review posted at change-the-word.blogspot.com.

Samantha March says

I am reviewing November Surprise by Laurel Osterkamp for CLP Blog Tours. Clearly, this blog tour comes at the perfect time – election fever! The story talks a lot of presidential elections over the course of twenty years, each section given its own headline from that time on which election is happening. I was just a touched worried that the book was simply going to focus on politics, because while I follow the elections

every four years, I don't have a lot of knowledge in politics, and I know that it's not always polite to talk politics (or post 8 million Facebook status on the subject!). But I quickly realized I had no need to worry – I was so focused on the love story/triangle that MC Lucy Jones has found herself in. I loved the angle between brothers Jack and Monty, one that Lucy dated back in the day, and one that Lucy thinks she could fall in love with in present time. There is also a companion book to *November Surprise* which is *Campaign Promises*, which is free on Amazon and can be read in any order.

I thought the concept and execution of this novel was spot-on. I loved the headlines of each section and how it moved from this year to that year to this year flawlessly. I think it had the danger of feeling jumpy since it was skipping four years at a time, but I have to give major kudos to Osterkamp for making me barley blink from section to section. The last few chapters had me a bit miffed with Lucy and her indecisiveness and almost self-inflicted pain, but she redeemed herself for me! I would say even if you aren't into politics don't be afraid to grab this book, as it's a lovely romance read. Lucy is a democrat and her views are clearly shown, but I didn't feel at any point I was trying to be swayed any which way politic-wise. Fab book!

Berls says

My Initial Reaction...

November Surprise was so much fun! In so many ways it was like a walk through memory lane, vis-a-vis the major political moment of the last 20 years and some great culture references I couldn't help but smile at as I remembered them. Lots of fun!

The Characters...

November Surprise is one of the few books I really enjoyed that I didn't love the main character. I liked Lucy, most of the time. She's this incredibly driven, politically obsessive, nerd. I'm able to relate to her on all three of those levels. She's also very insecure, in a way that really bothered me. Sometimes it was so believable and I felt for her. Early on the book she has these encounters with a bully, Reggie, and the way he teased her and bullied her was both believable and sometimes a little heartbreaking. At other times, her reactions to the bully just did not fit. And Lucy holds on to this bullied, insecure girl persona throughout her entire life. Again sometimes this was good, at other times it was bad. There's something to love about flawed characters, but sometimes Lucy just went a little too far and it was the difference of me liking her and loving her. I often ask myself if I would like to know my main characters and be friends with them. Lucy would be an ok person to know, but I don't think we'd be good friends. Probably just acquaintances.

November Surprises involves a lot of little flashes of time and one of the things I felt that helped accomplish really well is showing you the changing nature of friendships over the long durée. Lucy has boyfriends come and go and come again. She also friends come and go. And then there's those friends that you'll never lose. No matter how stupid you or they act, you can't get rid of them. And you don't want to, because it would be like losing your right arm. That's Jack and Sharon. I loved these two. They were great friends, even if they had fights and even if they went through periods where they weren't talking that much. Sometimes life gets in the way, but when it's time, you can just pick up where you left off with these kinds of friends.

The Story...

I think I had lots of really nerdy excited moments while reading *November Surprise*. I used to be a bit of political junkie, not quite to the extent that Lucy is, but I still could remember 90% of these moments and my reactions to them. A few of them were a bit before I started caring, but I certainly remember Bush breaking his "No New Taxes" promises and rejoicing about what it meant for Clinton. And the Clinton scandal isn't one we'll ever forget is it? And the Florida disaster that got Bush elected? *oops, I was seriously going to try getting political, but I guess that last statement shows where I stand.* I guess it's probably a good thing to get out there though - Lucy is a Democrat and she has a seriously democratic view of events. That totally worked for me, because that's pretty much the view I have of them too. I'm not sure what it would feel like to read the book if you had a Republican mindset. Maybe you'd just hate Lucy? Maybe not. She has Republican friends and it works, so maybe you'd get past that in her too.

I do not, however, think it's essential to have a political mindset to enjoy *November Surprise*. Yet, the political moments make up a huge part of the book. But they really have more to do with how Lucy feels and responds to them, than your own personal feelings. Not to mention all the other cultural references. I got excited seeing bands I'd forgotten about mentioned, like U2. Or mentions to things like VHS tapes, Dunkaroos, and scrunchies. Those references made *November Surprise* so much fun.

November Surprise is kind of a hard book for me to put a label on in terms of genre. I want to call it a Romance, because a big part of her life moving forward has to do with her trying to fall in love. But in the scope of the book, the romance was light. I felt like *November Surprise* was more about just growing up and the things we do and the decisions we make and the things that are important to us as we go, shaping who we become. And you get pretty invested in who Lucy will become, with her romantic life being part of that. Shaping her as a person, was much more important.

Concluding Sentiments...

Anyone late 20s or older will have a lot of fun with *November Surprise*, as it takes you down a culturally and politically shaped memory lane. A book about friendship and growing up, sure to bring a smile to your face.

Nancye says

I love the way Osterkamp combines the life of Lucy with different presidential campaigns. Lucy is very much into the political scene and follows along starting in high school. Each chapter of her life connects to and draws parallels to a campaign. It's an interesting way to look at things. or that could just be the political science nerd in me. I loved the books.

Indie Kindle Blitz says

Laurel Osterkamp's *November Surprise* is a novel with a unique premise: follow young Lucy Jones through her life by stepping into it during presidential elections. The confluence of politics and romance provide the

backdrop of an enjoyable and often humorous story. This is why novels are called novels – because they expose us to new ideas. Osterkamp's creativity has been put to very good use here.

November Surprise chronicles the life — both romantic and political – of the main character, Lucy. We begin with the election of George Herbert Walker Bush, in which Lucy supports Dukakis. Osterkamp's well researched political details really took me back to that election and I felt like I was living in the late '80s again. Osterkamp also brings in the cultural aspects of each decade to enhance that feeling.

Lucy's relationships to the brothers Monty and Jack are interwoven with the political theme. Lucy is a three-dimensional character with the ability to fascinate the reader, speaking realistic dialogue and overcoming difficult obstacles. Lucy's growth over six elections form a well-defined character arc that keeps us reading to the end.

I'd recommend this for readers looking for entertainment, but who are not offended by progressive politics.

Andrea Guy says

November Surprise was really a unique read. Its super short but it spans a long period of time, from the Bush/Dukakis election through Obama/McCain. It is all told through the eyes of Lucy Jones, a die-hard democrat.

I'll say this, if you are a conservative/republican, step away from the book because you probably won't like the liberal slant. I'm a bleeding heart liberal, so I had fun with it, for the most part. A political romance isn't something that you see often and the characters were very real.

I worked for one presidential campaign, and I can say, I've met a few Lucy's. She wasn't always my cup of tea, especially in the last chapter. (Can't help it, 4 years ago, I was a Hillary girl. I'm still a Hillary girl, even though I like Obama).

What I liked best about Lucy was her intelligence and really how much she cared. Those are the same reasons I liked Monty. I really couldn't understand why it took those two so long to really get together. Even though she claimed she didn't have them, I think she did have some unresolved issues with Jack.

It was interesting to see how she had grown as a person and where she was in her life at each presidential election.

Her political arguments were real and the bullying she faced from Reggie felt real. Lucy was definitely a character any politically minded democrat could identify with. I would have loved to know more about how politics really became such an important part of her life. Lucy was a girl at 16 who was already passionate about who is in power. The only other fictional character that passionate about politics that young was Alex P. Keaton from Family Ties, and damn it, he represented the other side!

Henry Simpson says

This is a funny and sometimes sad novel about the life, adventures, and misadventures of Lucy Jones, a

bright and well intentioned young woman of strong convictions. Lucy tells the story in her own words from the ages of seventeen through thirty-seven, maturing considerably during the two decades. One constant is her sustaining interest--actually a fixation--on the American political scene and how it relates to her own sense of right and wrong, truth and justice, and how life should be. The author weaves political events into personal events in Lucy's life as the story unfolds from 1988 through 2008 and Lucy grows from insecure high school girl to independent, self-confident adult. Judgmental to a fault as a young person, she learns that life is messy and complicated and preconceptions often handicap. Accidents happen. People are kind and cruel, get sick and sometimes die, have love affairs, are often rejected; elections are lost, sometimes unfairly, and won. Politicians and people may show promise, raising hopes, but often disappoint in the end.

Lucy finds love along the way, but not quite as she had envisioned it at the start. Monty is the high school heartthrob and hero with "big green eyes framed by long lashes . . . warm smile . . . easy confidence" who rescues her from a bully. They connect and disconnect over the years. Meanwhile, both have other relationships--some serious. Still single in her early thirties, Lucy is in a new relationship, verging on marriage, but, dissatisfied with the trajectory of her life, leaves it and quits her job to attend graduate school. This is a brave move, risking everything, with an uncertain outcome.

Where does it all go?

You'll have to read the book to find out. It would not be a spoiler to reveal that Monty--having survived his own trials, including a bout of malaria in Africa--reenters the picture and eventually helps Lucy deal with a surprise other than the November Surprise of the book's title.

Lucy's voice is always compelling, never boring. I was also impressed by the author's fine sense of the feelings, concerns, styles, and other details of each generation--music, clothing, TV shows and commercials, prevailing tastes, and so forth.

Marty Essen says

I picked up November Surprise looking forward to a fiercely liberal read. Instead, it was more of a Chic Lit book, whose main characters just happened to be Democrats. While other reviewers disagree with me, I don't see this as an overtly controversial book that only liberals should read. I can't imagine conservatives getting upset by this book--unless, of course, just the mention of Clinton or Obama sends them over the edge. But then, I'm not a conservative.

That being said, I enjoyed this book. Chic Lit books aren't my thing, but this one sucked me right in. For me, the love story provided a nice framework for a trip down memory lane. Having spent much of my life in Minneapolis, the Twin Cities chapters made me feel like I was living there again. And then there were the elections!

Laurel Osterkamp did a wonderful job of picking out key pieces of the presidential races from 1988 to 2008. She didn't go into great detail--just enough to remind readers what each election was about and let individual memories fill in from there. I was especially moved by Laurel's handling of the Bush-Gore election. Like the main character, Lucy, I too couldn't turn off the election coverage until the Supreme Court smashed our hopes. I got a knot in my stomach, all over again, just reading that section.

Finally, I've been reading a lot of independently published books lately--many that were filled with editing

errors and weak writing. Being a writer myself, typos and missing words jump out at me (unless, of course, I make the errors myself!). I didn't find a single error in this book. Bravo to Laurel for not only writing a first-rate novel, but for also taking the time to make sure it was properly edited before release!

If you follow current events, or just enjoy a unique love story, you'll be glad you read *November Surprise*.

Marty Essen, author of *Cool Creatures*, *Hot Planet: Exploring the Seven Continents*

Ruth Hill says

This is possibly one of the quickest, easiest political romances you will ever read. I am not really big on politics, but I always enjoy the presidential election seasons. And it is nice that I have actually lived through every one of them that the author has chosen to cover. And it is quite unique to see it through the lens of one Lucy Jones, a liberal who seems to struggle with getting what she wants from life.

I am glad that there were no bedroom scenes. The profanity was there but not as bad as some books. The liberal mindset did not bother me too much (even though I am a conservative). I was pleased that the protagonist never discussed the more controversial topics of liberalism--gay rights and abortion. I fully expected that to be there, and I even thought she might make a decision that would be in keeping with that. Actually, all she did was point out things about each president and candidate that I truly already knew. Or had heard. And I basically agreed with her view on the presidential candidates and campaigns.

The story itself was nothing shocking or overly intriguing. It was just an easy-to-read story that spanned a few decades. I enjoyed some of the author's references to things I remember from certain eras. This is an interesting book to read--especially during a campaign year. Nice review of recent American history!

I was sent a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review. I was not financially compensated, and all opinions are 100 percent mine.

Jennifer Jennings says

I don't usually choose to read books with a political theme, but I'm glad I gave this one a try. The main character is very likable, the author's writing style striking a satisfying balance between humor and intensity. If you enjoy political novels with a touch of romance, you'll certainly enjoy this one. Recommend.
