

MARLAFAYE. They say you never forget your first time, Dottie.
RANDA. Well, this is turning out to be quite a night. And we definitely have enough cheese for the three of us.

DOT. Oh, that reminds me. There are going to be four of us.
RANDA. *Four of us?*

DOT. Yes! I met this nice woman, the manager for this terrific makeup store, Beautiquity, and she is a fireball! Anyway, she's new in town, too, and she tried that hot yoga class and hated it as much as we did. Well, I told her we were getting together tonight and I think you're really going to like her.

RANDA. *(On the spot.)* Wait. You invited her *here?* *Tonight?*

MARLAFAYE. You *did* say the more the merrier.

RANDA. Well, I only hope ... we have enough hors d'oeuvres. I think there'll — *(Sniffs, alarmed.)* My cheese straws! *(Races into kitchen.)*

DOT. Oh, I hope Randa can save them. It's been years since I've had a good cheese straw.

MARLAFAYE. And it's been years since my cholesterol was under three hundred. Considerin' all we've got to eat around here is *cheese*, no chance those numbers will be goin' down tonight. *(Jinx Jenkins, energetic, self-confident, and gregarious, hurries in the side stairs. She wears a low-cut, off-the-shoulder top, short skirt, big jewelry, spike heels, and a purse.)*

JINX. *(Calls.)* Hey, girls! Everyone got your clothes on?

DOT. Jinx! You made it. Jinx Jenkins, this is Marlafaye Mosley.

MARLAFAYE. *Jinx?* That's one humdinger of a name.

JINX. Well, I'm a humdinger of a gal. So, is that Kentucky liquid gold I'm smelling, 'cause, just so you know, bourbon is my favorite color.

MARLAFAYE. I'm thinkin' you're my kind of people. *(Hurries to stage right bar, grabs a glass, pours.)*

DOT. Did you have trouble finding the place?

JINX. Not a bit. I had a late makeover that made me run behind, but it was worth it, my customer told me the cutest joke: An excited woman called her husband at work: "I won the lottery! Come home and pack your clothes!" Husband said, "Ooh! Summer or winter clothes?" Wife says: "All of 'em. I want you out of the house by six!" *(They all laugh.)*

MARLAFAYE. *(Hands Jinx the glass. To Dot.)* Yeah, she's gonna fit in just fine.

JINX. I wasn't sure what to bring, so I went out and got a big slab of Brie. Everyone loves Brie, right? *(Pulls a large chunk of cheese from*

her purse. Dot and Marlafaye exchange a look.)

DOT. How about that? Cheese. I'll get a plate. *(Takes Brie to the bar.)*

MARLAFAYE. And I'll get the Lipitor.

JINX. I ran to the market on my break and all I got was this and seven tangerines. When I got into the five-items-or-less line, the most pretentious, uptight gal I've met in years threw a frothing fit. She went ballistic! *(Marlafaye shoots Dot a worried look.)* I mean, what kind of person is so tightly wound she'd even *care* about that?! *(Laughs. Randa enters, wears two burned oven mitts, carries a cookie sheet, doesn't notice Jinx.)*

RANDA. Okay, it's not a complete disaster, I've saved about thirty percent of the cheese straws. *(Picks one up.)* See, they're just a little too dark, so I guess it will — *(Sees Jinx, stops, gasps. Flares.)* Five-items-or-less!

JINX. *(Bristles. Points.)* Fit thrower! *(They face off.)*

MARLAFAYE. *(Low, to Dot.)* I think the evenin' just got a little more excitin'.

DOT. *(Loosened up by bourbon.)* I'll put twenty bucks on the broad in the cheap jewelry. *(Re: her glass.)* Goodness, this is more potent than I thought.

RANDA. You're the "nice woman" Dot told us about?! There must be some mistake!

JINX. The *mistake* was me getting in the five-nut-jobs-or-less line!

MARLAFAYE. *(Steps in.)* Okay, okay. We've all acted the fool in public and regretted it but I refuse to let tonight turn into a waste of good bourbon. Y'all just admit you were both wrong and let's move on.

RANDA. I was not wrong! *(Shakes cheese straw in her face.)* This overly-mascaraed rule-breaker is the one who —

JINX. If you don't stop shaking that thing in my face, you're going to draw back a nub. *(Snaps off the cheese straw.)* I didn't come here to — *(Pops it in her mouth, stops cold.)* Oh, my god! This is absolutely divine! You made these yourself?

RANDA. *(Angry.)* Yes, I did! It's the one recipe Grandmother's cook taught me that I can — *(Dawns on her, instantly softens.)* You ... You like it?

JINX. Yeah, you could make a fortune selling these things.

RANDA. *(Flattered, loving it.)* Really? That's so nice of you to say. If you'd like, I can tell you how to make them.

JINX. Wow. You'd do that for me? That'd be great. And maybe you can explain how to — *(Randa and Jinx get closer as if in conversation, Dot sips her bourbon while lights dim on the verandah. Marlafaye steps*

downstage into a pin spotlight.)
MARLAFAYE. And *that* is the legendary power of Southern cookin' — it can calm nerves, soothe souls — hell, enough butter and love can fix just about anything. This could've been an uncomfortable evening — four strangers gettin' together on a whim, knowing next-to-nothin' about each other — but somethin' just clicked with those half-burnt cheese straws and bourbon and four lonely, middle-aged women who thought nobody wanted to hear what they had to say anymore. We couldn't stop talking — the hours flew by. *(Beat.)* Then somethin' happened I didn't see comin' ... *(As she turns, the pin spotlight goes dark and lights come up on the verandah. She joins the others who are repositioned as if time has passed. They laugh raucously.)*
JINX. ... Nah, I didn't make it to the gym today. That makes ... six years in a row! Woo! *(Throws her arms up in victory. More laughter.)*

RANDA. Well, I for one am very glad we've gotten together tonight. *(To Marlafaye and Dot.)* I mean, at first, when you invited yourselves over, I wasn't sure how it would work out. *(Beat.)* The four of us are it. No one else is coming, right?

DOT. *(Laughs.)* No, we're it. And I couldn't agree more. Being alone and new to a place is tough, no park in the park ... uh, walk in the park.

MARLAFAYE. The gal with the buzz-on makes a good point.

RANDA. I moved here from Augusta years ago and buried myself in work. So in a way, I'm as new to Savannah as you are and I have no clue how to make a life for myself outside my career.

MARLAFAYE. I swear, the older you get, the harder it is to jump-start a new life. How do you find stuff to do? How do you meet someone to go do it with? And how do you do it without running into maniacs, weirdos, and lunatics?

RANDA. Well, obviously —

RANDA/MARLAFAYE/DOT/JINX. *(Indicating the group.)* You can't! *(Everyone laughs, grabs a cheese straw.)*

MARLAFAYE. My point being, you get to a certain age, you are *on your own* and there's nobody around to say, "Here, I can tell you how to do that."

RANDA. Clearly you've never met my grandmother. *(Shivers.)*

JINX. My high school guidance counselor had me convinced a college degree was the answer to everything — success, friends, a good future. Turns out all college did for *me* was wreck my liver *and* my reputation. *(They laugh. Marlafaye gets the bourbon, refills glasses, puts the bottle in her purse.)* But I hung in there and somehow I got myself through Tulane.

MARLAFAYE. Tulane? Are you from the Big Easy?

JINX. I was. But after college, I'd had enough Étouffée to last a lifetime so I split and never went back.

DOT. When we met this afternoon I could've sworn you said you were from Memphis.

JINX. I was for a while. I followed a guy there, followed another guy to Seattle, then I followed the Grateful Dead to San Francisco — don't ask — after that I followed a job prospect to Detroit. I followed another guy to Santa Fe, but I left him because he said I never listened to him ... at least I think that's what he said.

RANDA. So who did you follow to Savannah?

JINX. My big sister. She practically raised me and was living here and I came to visit her every chance I got. Oh, we had a ball! And talk about a sense of humor. On her sixty-fifth birthday she said, "Jinx, if my memory gets much worse, I can throw my *own* surprise parties." (*Everyone laughs. Beat.*) But ... it did get worse, a lot worse. I moved here to take care of her but sometimes I wonder if she still knows who I am. (*Dot puts her hand on Jinx's shoulder. Jinx rallies.*) Hey, she's the one who taught me it's the happy in life that counts. And that's what I want — more of that. Bring on the happy!

MARLAFAYE. That's *exactly* what I said to my divorce lawyer! *That* and "don't tell me where you dump the body." (*Laughter. Beat.*)

RANDA. Well, I could certainly use some of that *happy*. It was a rare commodity in my family. As my grandmother, Cordelia Covington, the *great nurturer*, is fond of saying, "Life is hard ... and we were not put here to have a good time."

JINX. Oh, she sounds like a barrel of laughs. (*To Dot.*) You were right. I can absolutely help everyone in this room.

DOT. I knew it! I'm so glad you came.

RANDA. Excuse me, am I missing out on something?

DOT. When Jinx was helping me with under-eye cream today at Beautiquity, she mentioned she's also a life coach. I almost fell over! Randa, it's exactly what you said could help you.

JINX. That's right. I do beauty makeovers *and* life makeovers.

DOT. And it strikes me that's what we *all* need. *Life* makeovers. I knew this was meant to be, just like the three of us meeting at yoga.

RANDA. (*To Jinx.*) You're here on business?! We've talked about things we probably wouldn't have if we'd known you were here to try to sell us your services. Which, in all honesty, would be more suitable for people desperate for social interaction, who are lost and unsure of their next