

JINX. (*Snatches the blouse.*) Well, you can't go half-naked! (*Marlafaye lunges for the blouse. Jinx wads it up, runs it to Dot, calls.*) I'll block the kitchen door! (*Passes blouse to Dot, who grabs it, runs the other way. Marlafaye chases Dot.*) Here Dot! Here! (*Dot throws the blouse into the air. Marlafaye jumps up, snatches it.*)

MARLAFAYE. Ha, ha! Can't stop me now! (*Exits down side stairs. Dot starts to follow.*)

DOT. Hurry, Jinx! We've got to catch her!

JINX. Wait Dot, let her go! She's a hard-headed Texan and she's going to do what she's going to do.

DOT. (*Sighs.*) You're right, dear. I suppose there *are* worse things than spending Valentine's Day with your lying, cheating ex-husband who took all your money and ran off with a twenty-three-year-old. (*They look at each other a beat, then:*)

DOT/JINX. Naaaah!! (*Dot exits side stairs. Light crossfades to black as a slow, sexy love song plays. The downstage right pin spotlight comes up. Jinx takes a couple of dance steps into it.*)

JINX. I can truthfully say I'm a sucker for a lot of things — baby panda videos, drinks with tropical fruit and umbrellas in them, bobble-head dolls of former First Ladies ... and Valentine's Day. I take one look at the cut-out hearts and tubby little cupids and ads with lovers kissing on the beach, and in spite of myself, I fall for it hook, line, and sinker every single year. Maybe it's one of those hope-springs-eternal things. And yet, never *once* have I ever had a decent date on Valentine's Day. And as low as that bar is set, I think I achieved a new record with this one tonight. Turns out, Mr. God's-Gift-To-Spandex is a world-class narcissist! We'd just been seated at a great table, and I said, "What a gorgeous view, right?" He agreed with such gusto I whipped my head around and saw he was admiring his own reflection in the back of a spoon! And all the guy could talk about were *bicycles*. He spent the entire meal quoting stats on competition bicycle construction right down to the carbon-fiber disc wheels. By the time he extolled the virtues of shaving his legs to achieve more aerodynamic flow, I wanted to beat him to death with a tire pump. But now I realize the lesson I was supposed to learn from this — *never* date a guy whose calves are better-looking than *yours*! (*The pin spotlight fades to black as lights come up on the verandah, later that night. Dot is at the bar as Jinx walks into the light.*)

DOT. I'm pouring you some of this nice Madeira I brought.

JINX. Obviously I could use it. (*Checks her watch.*) Randa's not back yet?

DOT. Let's hope it means she's having a fabulous time. I'm so sorry you didn't.

JINX. Yeah. So am I. (*Pulls her compact out of her purse, checks out her mascara.*) It just knocks me out. How could anybody be that vain? (*Touches up her lipstick, puts compact away.*)

DOT. (*Covers a smile.*) You got me. (*Hands her a tiny cordial glass. Randa bursts in from the kitchen on an adrenaline rush.*)

RANDA. Oh, my God! This has to be the most wonderful night of my life!

JINX. What happened? Are you in love, getting married, what?

RANDA. It was magnificent! I'm still trying to process it. Well, I was poring over the menu and someone tapped me on my shoulder. I looked up and it was Douglas, my former boss.

DOT. (*Gasps.*) Oh, no! I hope you didn't make a scene.

RANDA. I would never do that at Arcadia. The *maitre d'* was always so generous to me when I entertained clients there. He never failed to send over this delicious herbed butter every time I —

JINX. Get back on track, Covington.

RANDA. Sorry. At first he said nothing, but Douglas had this *look* on his face. So I quickly — but firmly — reminded him the restraining order only applies to the office building and doesn't bar me from other public places.

JINX. Gee, makes you wonder how many times *that* romantic phrase was uttered on this special night.

RANDA. Anyway, he said he was just about to call me. Turns out, one of Douglas' biggest clients — for whom I designed two excellent commercial buildings in addition to his summer home, by the way — hired Douglas for his newest project contingent on *my* taking the lead. Douglas panicked and told him I was out for some personal time — which I suppose theoretically is true. But the client said if Doug can't deliver me, the deal's off.

DOT. I hope you told him you wouldn't do the job for any price. Serves him right.

RANDA. Are you kidding? I haven't even had a nibble from the job market in months. I said I absolutely *would* head up the project! But since I knew I had old Dougie over a barrel, I also told him I would do it only as an independent consultant *and* ... for double the money! (*They cheer as Randa does a victory dance.*)

JINX. That is fantastic! (*Stops her.*) But this time around you've got to remember that there's more to life than work.

RANDA. Oh, I know that — there's also *revenge!* (*Resumes the dance.*)

DOT. (*To Jinx.*) Well ... can't argue with that.

RANDA. I didn't budge, I held my own. When we'd finished working out the details of the deal nearly two hours later, I made darn sure Douglas ordered the most expensive cognac they had to celebrate.

DOT. All of this must've been very impressive to your date.

RANDA. (*Stunned silence. Then, explodes.*) Oh, my god! *My date!* (*Jumps to her feet.*) I left the coffee roaster alone at our table! (*Races into kitchen.*)

JINX. And we were *this close* to a happy ending for everyone in that story.

DOT. Well ... *C'est le vie et encore il est bon.*

JINX. You said a mouthful, sister. (*Sighs.*) Looks like her date didn't go any better than mine. Oh, well, maybe in the next place I move to, I'll finally find Mr. Almost-Good-Enough. (*Dot stares at her a beat.*)

DOT. I wanted to ask you about that. Why *do* you move around so much?

JINX. (*Baffled.*) *Why?* I just have. I don't know, Dad split when I was a baby and Mom died when we were teenagers. When I grew up I just kept moving. Who knows? Maybe I'm just looking for *that wonderful thing.*

DOT. (*Delicately.*) But will you know it when you find it? (*Stumped, Jinx stares at her a beat. Deflated, Randa enters from kitchen.*)

RANDA. He'd already left a message and never wants to see me again. If I ever *do* show my face my coffee beans will cost an extra six dollars a pound.

JINX. (*Tries for a silver lining.*) Ah, but *now* you can afford it!

RANDA. That's right. (*Brightens.*) Score! (*High-fives all around.*)

DOT. (*Takes ice tea glasses to the bar.*) Well, *my* night wasn't quite as thrilling as yours, Randa. But Captain Rusty is a lovely man. We laughed — I loved his stories — dinner was scrumptious, but later the evening took ... an odd turn.

RANDA. *How odd?* Dragging you to a karaoke bar *odd* or showing you pictures of his cats dressed in *Star Trek* costumes *odd?*

DOT. Actually, Captain Rusty ... took me to a cemetery.

JINX. No "My place or yours?" just "Let's hit the bone yard, baby." I don't know, Dot, that's kinda kinky.

DOT. At first I was a bit uneasy, but I *did* find out who *Pretty Eileen*

was — his late wife. They were very happily married, like Ross and I were. So in a peculiar but touching kind of way, it was almost as if he wanted me to “meet” her. (*Jinx and Randa share a look.*) It was very ... sweet.

RANDA. So, are you going to see him again?

DOT. I thought I might until he took me in his arms in the moonlight and said those magic words — “I’ll bet you were really good-looking when you were young.” And now he’s just as dead to me as pretty Eileen.

JINX. How come crazy people know exactly how to find us? (*Just then, Marlafaye bursts in the side stairs, storms over to the bar. Jinx indicates Marlafaye.*) You see what I mean?

MARLAFAYE. I know y’all are probably still ticked at me, but I need a drink and someone to talk to — in that order. Who’s up for it?

JINX. (*Frosty.*) Yeah? Well, what if none of us are?

MARLAFAYE. Y’all want to know what happened with me and Waylon or not?

JINX. (*Instant flip, pats sofa.*) Girl, sit right here and don’t spare the details.

RANDA. Oh, my God, your date was with your *ex*?! (*Hurries to bar.*) Save some of that for me. (*Marlafaye fills two tiny cordial glasses, Randa knocks back hers.*) Okay. Go for it. (*Randa quickly plops down on the sofa.*)

MARLAFAYE. (*Sips.*) When I got there Waylon was already seated which I thought was a good sign, but then I saw he was already workin’ his way through three fried eggs and a plateful of scattered, smothered, and covered. The man always eats like a hog when he’s nervous so I knew whatever he had on his mind was —

JINX. Wait! I’m still wrapping my head around the fact he’d *already* ordered and was *eating*, but are you telling us he invited you out for Valentine’s Day at a *Waffle House*?

MARLAFAYE. Hey, that’s high-end gourmet for Waylon. If food wasn’t shoved at him through a car window, he’d die of starvation.

RANDA. Obviously, I’m a little late to this party, but why on earth did you agree to see him?

MARLAFAYE. Look, I know it’s nuts, but layin’ in my bed all these nights since I moved here made me feel lonely and vulnerable. We all know how hard it is to start a new life from scratch, it feels kinda like a free fall, nothin’s *familiar*. And for a few seconds over the last couple months, I’m ashamed to admit that I was almost ... well ...