

prologue

isle of palms, south carolina, 2016

The conversation that launched my need to tell you this whole crazy story actually came from our son Luke, who, like his twin, is practically an adult. Okay, they *are* adults. But only because of their age, which is still completely astonishing to me. How dare they grow up and make us, God help us, almost sixty? Some nerve.

They asked us to come along with the Landers family, to spend New Year's Eve 2016 on the Isle of Palms. Adam and I and our boys have vacationed with Eve and Carl Landers, their daughter, Daphne, and Eve's mother, Cookie, for decades. We all love Wild Dunes and being together so much that we bought condos near each other and watched our children grow up to the music of the Atlantic Ocean's changing tides and the squawking of thousands of generations of seagulls. In the early days, we drank enough white wine and various trending cocktails to float a container ship. Mai Tais. Stormy Weathers. Salty Dogs. Moscow Mules. And we cooked dinner together more times than I could count. We were better than best friends, which may have complicated

things. Okay, it made things complicated in the extreme. But why wouldn't you love who you love loves? It's sort of like you are what you eat eats.

Adam and I rarely, if ever, go to the beach in the winter. Well, maybe my husband takes a drive there occasionally to do repairs or to assess the havoc a renter has caused on the plumbing or to fix a leak. But generally, we stay away because the weather is freezing cold and I can feel the dampness in every one of my bones. I hate winter. But New Year's was such an unusual request that we all agreed to go. And needless to say, Eve, Carl, Adam, and I were as thrilled as we always were to see each other. Honestly, any excuse to see each other would work, and maybe we are finally all old enough to admit it. Before I go any further I want you to know this wasn't like that old movie *Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice*, the one where two perfectly nice married couples swap spouses. But boy, there was a moment when it could've been. And I'll get to that steamy business later on.

But for now, we have to begin at the beginning. Even though it's New Year's Eve and I'm on my way to a freezing beach. Save your fireworks for a little while and relax while I tell you how the saga of our epic friendships all began. And how we learned what matters. It might matter to you.