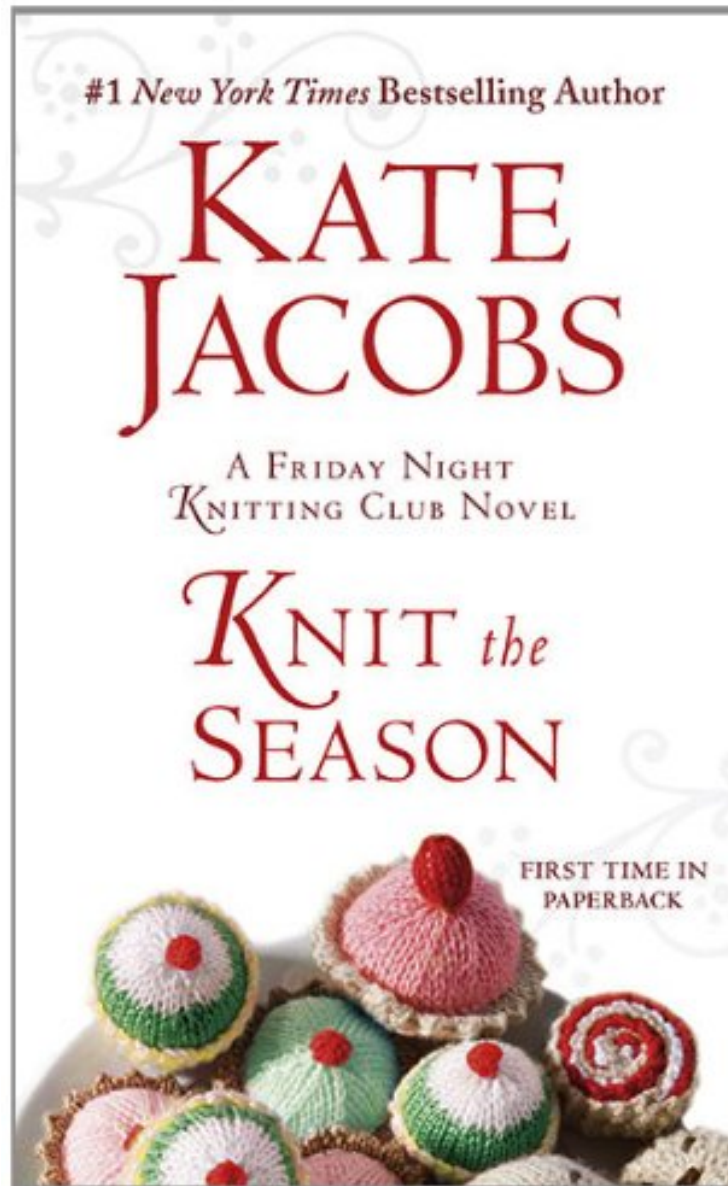


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Knit the Season: A Friday Night Knitting Club Novel (Friday Night Knitting Club Novels (Paperback))

Kate Jacobs

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Kate Jacobs : Knit the Season: A Friday Night Knitting Club Novel (Friday Night Knitting Club Novels (Paperback)) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Knit the

Season: A Friday Night Knitting Club Novel (Friday Night Knitting Club Novels (Paperback)):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I like it as much as the first two but I ...By CustomerI know some people didn't like it as much as the first two but I did . I was happy to be able to visit with my old friends again. It felt like coming home. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Warm family feelingsBy J. CastroThis is the last of the Friday Night Knit Club series. Having read the first two books I have grown to feel that these characters have become part of my family as well. Once strangers who have all been drawn together through the venue of the knit shop, this group of people have shared their trials and tribulations, their dreams and aspirations, their innermost desires and fears, even the death of a cherished member, the reader begins to bond with them, even takes up her or his own knitting needles. We can relate to the real life challenges, the relative no one likes, the romance that is fleeting. It was just a nice book to read that was not too sentimental or soppy. It is my Kindle and I will probably read it again... kind of a feel good series. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Great Read!By Judith L. WilliamsIt's a great book, third in the series and I was very pleased to get it so quickly and in better shape than listed.

The ladies of the #1 New York Times bestselling *The Friday Night Knitting Club* celebrate special times with family and friends. Not only are the holidays just around the corner, the women who knit at Manhattan's Walker Daughter have an extra reason to celebrate: there's a wedding planned for New Year's Day. In the meantime, college-age Dakota Walker is working to finish a sweater her mother started before Dakota was born. As she takes on her mother's pattern, she learns from her family and friends that there was much more history in these stitches than she had anticipated, and that to build on her mother's legacy, Dakota must allow herself to become the woman she truly desires to be...

The spirit of the season permeates every page. USA Today Readers who anticipate comforting, heartwarming stories from Jacob's series will not be disappointed: curling up with a *Friday Night Knitting Club* novel is like visiting with old friends. This holiday entry is sure to please fans and leave them hungry for the next installment. Booklist The newest addition to Kate Jacob's immensely popular *Friday Night Knitting Club* series [gives readers a] warm, fuzzy feeling. Family Circle About the Author Kate Jacobs is the author of the #1 New York Times bestseller *The Friday Night Knitting Club*, *Knit Two*, *Knit the Season*, and *Comfort Food*. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Thanksgiving How essential to stop, reflect, be grateful. For food. For family. For subtle joys, such as the feel of soft yarn on fingertips, for the sense of ease that comes, stitch upon stitch, from following the rhythm of the pattern. Honoring the spirit of the holidays can also be a celebration of the experience of crafting. Chapter 1 New York seemed to be a city made for celebrations, and Dakota Walker loved every moment of the holidays: from the shoulder-to-shoulder crowds breathlessly waiting for the lighting of the gigantic Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center, to the winter-themed department store windows displaying postmodern Santas, to her favorite the kickoff to a month of fun with that ruckus of a parade on Thanksgiving morning. Dakota's grandmotherly friend Anita Lowenstein who, nearing eighty, could text almost as well as some of her college classmates had escorted Dakota to the parade when she was small. Last Thanksgiving morning, in a fit of nostalgia, the two of them bundled up in layers, chunky handmade cable-knits over cotton turtlenecks, and staked out a spot near Macy's just after sunrise to watch the river of floating cartoon characters and lip-synching pop stars and freezing but-giddy high-school marching bands flowing down Broadway. Just as it should be. But what Dakota most enjoyed about the beginning of winter was the crispness of the air (that practically demanded the wearing of knits) and the way that tough New Yorker on the street, in elevators, in subways were suddenly willing to risk a smile. To make a connection with a stranger. To finally see one another after strenuously avoiding eye contact all year. The excuse the expectation to bake also played a large part in her personal delight. Crumbly, melty shortbread cookies and iced chocolate-orange scones and whipped French vanilla cream cakes and sugary butter tarts: November through December was about whipping and folding and blending and sampling. Though she'd spent only one semester at pastry school so far, Dakota was eager to try out the new techniques she'd learned. Still, she hadn't stopped to consider how it might feel to roll out crust, to pare fruit, to make a meal, back in what was her childhood home, as she adjusted her bulging backpack, groceries in each hand, and climbed the steep stairs two floors up to Peri's efficient little apartment situated one floor above the yarn shop her mother had started long ago, the tiny shop the shelves packed to bursting with yarns fuzzy, nubby, itchy, and angel-soft, its walls a kaleidoscope of cocooning pastels and luxurious jewel shades that Georgia Walker had willed to her only child and that Dakota had, finally, come to truly appreciate. The white-painted cupboard door creaked loudly as she opened it, surprising not because of the unpleasant volume but because Dakota realized, in that moment, she had forgotten the quirks of this particular kitchen. At the same time, overflowing bundles of yarn spilled burgundies and cobalts, wools and acrylics, lightweight and doubleknits from the shelves, tumbled to the grocery bags she'd just set on the counter, and then bounced to the linoleum tile floor below. Almost as an afterthought, a tidy pile of plush plum cashmere dropped noiselessly through the air, just missing her head, and landed directly into the small stainless sink. "This isn't a kitchen!" cried Dakota, reaching out her arms as widely as was possible in her heavyweight white winter coat, trying to hug yarn and food and prevent all of it from rolling off the edge. "It's a storage facility!" She hesitated. What she'd

wanted was simply to find a bowl, something in which to pile up the apples she'd purchased, and she'd approached Peri's compact galley kitchen in the apartment above the Walker and Daughter yarn shop as if on automatic pilot. Distractedly running through a to-do list in her mind, Dakota lapsed into an old pattern and went directly to where her mother stored the dishes once upon a memory, back when the two Walkers lived in this same walk-up. And what did she find? Knitting needles of all sizes and woods stacked in the flatware drawer and oodles of yarn where the dishes ought to be, raining down from the cupboards. She wasn't sure she ought to risk a peek in the oven now that Peri lived here. It had been a long time since she'd cooked in this location, making oatmeal, orange and blueberry muffins for her mother's friends, the founding members of the Friday Night Knitting Club. "Seven years," marveled Dakota, her voice quiet though no one else was around. Seven years since she'd pattered around this kitchen after homework, smashing soft butter and sugar together as she contemplated what tidbits would go inside the week's cookies. "Careful now," murmured Georgia, the shop ledger in front of her on the cramped kitchen table. "Maybe don't put in everything that's on the shelf. We went through two bags of coconut last week." "Uh, those muffins were my best ever, Mom," said Dakota, prancing around in a victory dance on the worn linoleum. "The supreme moistness I've been searching for! You can't stand in the way of a chef." "As long as this chef remembers that we're on a budget," Georgia said mildly, brushing away some bits of eraser from the page before her. "I think I created a monster the afternoon I taught you how to measure flour." "Okay, Mom," said Dakota, sliding into a chair at the table. "Should I not make so much?" Georgia's eyes crinkled as she regarded her lively daughter, whose ponytailed hair was falling loose from the neon-pink scrunchie she'd knitted herself. "Never stop," she said, gently tugging her daughter's hair. "Don't give up something you love just because there's an obstacle. Find a way to work around it. Be open to something unexpected. Make changes." "Like what?" "Like if you run out of sugar," she said. "Use honey." "I did that last week!" "I know," said Georgia. "I was proud of you. We Walker girls are creative. We knit. You bake. But above all, we never, ever give in." Dakota surveyed the room. The kitchen was almost a relic, one of the few places in the apartment undamaged by last year's flooding, the bathroom down the hall being the source of the water that ruined the yarn shop in its previous incarnation but reminded all of them and especially Dakota of the importance of a mother's legacy. The store reopened soon after with a clean-and-simple style, with basic shelves for the merchandise, though she and Peri planned a massive remodel to begin in the not-too-distant future. That was all they'd talked about for months. The idea was to devote the shop space to a boutique for Peri's couture knitted and felted Peri Pocketbook handbags, and to adapt the first floor from a deli to a knitting caf. Dakota's father, James Foster, was in charge of the new architecture but due to frequent changes from his, ahem, difficult clients hadn't finalized the drawings. It was a grand plan, a vision that required Dakota to hurry up and graduate from culinary school. Peri had been keeping everything under control for a long while, and the strain was showing. "I don't want to miss my moment, Dakota," Peri reminded her, though she admitted she wasn't sure what that moment might be. Indeed, as Dakota grew older and struggled to keep her schedule in check, it had gradually begun to dawn on her how much Anita and Peri and even her father had worked tirelessly to fulfill her mother's dream of passing the store to Dakota. And even though Peri had a small ownership stake, even though Anita had helped out financially eons ago when Georgia bootstrapped her shop into being, even though James was her dad, everyone's sacrifices of time and energy belied self-interest as motivation. Amazing, truly, to know that one woman her mother, who always seemed just so regular and everyday with her reminders to zip up jackets and sleep tight had the grace of spirit to inspire such devotion. Still, changes were coming all over, it seemed. Since leaving the V hotel chain, James's focus had been on his own architectural firm. Unfortunately, business wasn't exactly booming. The knit shop was also facing smaller revenues this quarter. Dakota didn't see the adventure in uncertainty. Too much change, she knew, could come to bad ends. She eyed the clock, assessing the tidying she still needed to complete in the apartment. Dakota knew Peri was downstairs in the shop, finishing up the day's sales and awaiting the arrival of the club for their regular get-together. Those same women who were now Dakota's very own friends and mentors. The big sisters and, on some days, the surrogate mothers who were around whenever she needed to talk. The group would be gathering in the shop in a few hours to knit a little and talk a lot, catching up on one another's lives and prepping for the upcoming holidays. To be fair, Peri had warned her, when the two of them struck their deal last week as they went over the bookkeeping for the week, that she had nothing in the kitchen. Absolutely nothing. Dakota was accustomed to that style of New York living, had other friends whose refrigerators held only milk and bottled water, a selection of cereal at the ready for every possible meal or snack. She had shopped for staples today, even salt and pepper, knowing full well to expect very little. The turkey and produce would come Wednesday, when she planned to make all the dishes and leave them for day-of reheating. Tonight her goal was merely to organize the space and stock the shelves. Although these shelves were already overstocked with surplus inventory from the knit shop. Clearly. Gingerly, Dakota stepped over the yarn and away from the green canvas totes covering the tiny strip of countertop between fridge and stove, their long handles flopped over every which way, as the onions and spices and celery threatened to spill right out of the bags with just a nudge in any direction. She glared at the groceries, hoping the power of her stare would keep them still, as she figured out where to unload the yarn. She listened for movement, in case the bags began to topple, as she pulled the door to the fridge just enough for the light to come on inside. Mercifully, it was empty not a yarn ball in sight and held only a dozen bottles of handcrafted root beer and a door filled with nail polish. Hastily,

Dakota shoved most of the groceries into the fridge, even the five-pound bag of organic sugar. But the relief at crossing something off her mental to-do list passed quickly. The truth was, her mind was bursting. There was just too much swirling around her. The past year had been the busiest of her life. Convincing everyone she was all grown-up led to a hard-won realization: She had to act like an adult. She had to handle new responsibilities. And it was a lot. Life, just the day-today, was a lot. She worried. Often. Her mother had been a worrier as well. Everyone said so. But she'd been a smiler, too, witty and generous and seemingly able to make things fit together. Right now Dakota spread her worries around, allowing time for concerns large and small. She worried about finding time to make two turkey dinners in the next week, mastering a perfect chocolate truffle cake before Monday's class, reading Catherine's latest installment in her mea-culpa novel about two former best friends who reconnect, and finishing the tidying of her room so her grandparents, Joe and Lillian Foster, would be comfortable staying at her father's apartment during Thanksgiving next week. That had been a task put off for too long, and Dakota spent several weekends earlier in November pulling boxes from her closet and underneath her bed, chuckling over sixth-grade book reports and old report cards and printouts of endless photos from the summer in Italy, waiting for frames or albums. She'd also spent a quiet, lonely day sifting through some of the odds and ends that had belonged to Georgia. Admiring the pencil drawings that accompanied the original pattern designs for the hand-knit suits and tunics and dresses her mother had outlined in a binder, the simpler sweaters destined for the charity pattern book she'd been assembling with Anita. And she read again the notes on knitting that her mother had kept in a small red journal that was passed on to Dakota after her death. It was soothing to see Georgia's handwriting again, to imagine her mother curled up in a chair and scribbling. "Get Christmas list from Dakota" was what her mother had scrawled in the margins of one of the pages. That comforted her, somehow. The proof of being on her mother's mind. To confirm what she already knew. Dakota had taken to carrying that red journal with her, tucked in the bottom of her knitting bagan original by Perialong with an oversized unfinished camel-and-pastel-turquoise striped sweater she'd found. She'd kept all of her mother's UFOs, all the fun projects her mother never had a second to complete because she was too busy knitting her commissioned pieces, and just tucked them away for a later time. Every fall, Georgia's habit was to choose one of those on-the-go creations and finish it by the end of the year. A little gift of satisfaction to herself. That particular sweater was Georgia's UFO of choice the fall that she died, Dakota recalled vaguely, and Anita had bundled together all the knitting that hadn't been completed and placed it safely away. Too painful to look at, too precious to throw away: The unfinished objects had simply lain in wait until Dakota was ready. This she knew. It struck her, as she was sorting and organizing, just how close she was getting to the age her mother was when she had arrived in New York. During the great cleanup, she uncovered an old Polaroid that was fading and loose at the bottom of a box, of Georgia standing at the top of the Empire State Building, a knitted cap pulled down low on her unruly corkscrew curls and her mittened hands resting on her pink cheeks as she affected a look of surprise. She wondered if her father had been the photographer, if the two of them enjoyed their bird's-eye view of the skyscrapers all around. Dakota liked how the snap captured Georgia's goofy side, and she liked this concrete evidence that she had her mother's wide eyes, proof that the two of them were the same, just with different shades of skin. She tucked the photo into the red journal after scanning it onto her laptop, to the folder that held her story, with its images of Gran and the shop, and a picture of Ginger and Dakota standing in front of the Roman Forum. She felt guilty that she hadn't spent as much time with Lucie Brennan's daughter, Ginger, since she started culinary school, and that she'd broken four lunch dates with KC Silverman in as many weeks. She had planned to finish a pair of matching fisherman's sweaters for Darwin Chiu's twins, Cady and Stanton, when they turned one; of course, they were already over eighteen months and the sweaters were now too small. She'd have to save them for a decade until someone else she knew had a baby. Not to mention that she fretted whether Anita and Marty Popper would finally say "I do" at the wedding they rescheduled for New Year's Day instead of submitting to yet another manufactured delay caused by Anita's son Nathan Lowenstein. (How many almost heart attacks could one very fit fiftysomething man invent, she wondered? And when would Anita stop getting suckered?) And as much as she wanted the wedding to be a go, she felt surprisingly nervous about seeing her friend Roberto Toscano since their summer romance in Italy more than a year ago. His grandmother, Sarah, was Anita's sister, and he was definitely coming to the wedding with his entire family: He'd already e-mailed to plan some time together, in fact. She felt awkward about seeing him again. About the we-almost-did-but-didn't-so-have-you-done-it-with-someone-else-ness of things. Plus she suspected half hoping and half dreading that her father was getting serious with a new, not-yet-introduced-to-Dakota secret lady friend. Not that she spent too much energy reflecting on that aspect of his life, and not that she relished the idea of having to share his affections. But she knew enough to recognize that like Anita her dad deserved another shot at love. The holidays, it seemed, were all about celebrating love. Dakota wasn't sure how she felt about that emotion these days. And all her worries came back to the immediate moment in this kitchen, because Dakota was responsible for prepping a turkey dinner that Peri could use to impress her boyfriend's parents. It was her part of the bargain. In exchange, Peri would watch the shop during the week of Christmas so Dakota could do the thing she was truly looking forward to: a full-time internship at the V hotel kitchen over Christmas break. Sure, she'd miss out on a holiday dinner or two, but she was confident her dad would actually be relieved not to have to truck out to Pennsylvania as they did every year and eat a quiet holiday meal. Although her

mother's younger brother, Uncle Donny, was congenial enough, her mother's parents were not big talkers. They were pleasant but taciturn. And her mother's absence at the holiday meal was palpable. Christmas had been a challenging holiday for everyone to get through since Georgia died. So Dakota was quite delighted by her own initiative, having set up the internship on her own, even though it wasn't required at school. But she wanted to squeeze out every opportunity she could in order to reach success. She could hardly wait to tell her father about the internship, her gift to him this low-maintenance Christmas. She was even going to cook extra at Thanksgiving and freeze him a perfect holiday plate, with a generous helping of cranberry and mashed potatoes, an option if he chose not to go either to Pennsylvania or to see his parents on December 25. Dakota would, of course, delightedly be at the chef's beck and call in the V kitchen. Truly, she reflected with pride, she'd thought of everything. Dakota stretched her arms, tired from carrying the groceries up the stairs, and then reused the tote bags to gather up the yarn, careful to sort by manufacturer. She scrubbed the counters and cupboards with a mix of warm water and white vinegar, and started a list of what else she might need for Peri's "home-cooked" Thanksgiving. Dishes, she thought, peeking back into the now-empty cupboard, hearing anew the same old creak she heard whenever her mom had rummaged around to find supper for the two of them. Dakota opened and shut the door several times in a row, mesmerized by the sound, before picking up her backpack and her handbag and readying to pop down one flight of stairs to the yarn shop. She pulled out a compact for a quick look, peering intensely at the same self she met in her bathroom mirror every morning, her brown eyes, her café-au-lait skin, her hair in long curls. Did she half expect to see something else? Her younger self, her mother somewhere behind her? Dakota's body tingled whenever she entered the old apartment that had been her home until she was a teen, feeling the past and present rub against each other. And yet her thoughts didn't feel as raw as they once did. She saw more in her mind's eye than her mother lying tired on the sofa, than the moving men carrying her bed and boxes to her father's apartment after Georgia's death. Instead, she heard in the creaky old cupboard the sound of her mother, needles click-clacking as she knitted in the living room, pretending not to hear Dakota sneaking cookies. Or the two of them, exhausted after a tickle-and-laugh session, rolling in to grab snacks and watch TV movies, lying together under an old afghan Dakota's great-grandmother had sent in the mail from Scotland. Or surprising Dakota with a bowl of popcorn to turn into a garland as the pair set about decorating a very small Christmas tree with multicolored strands of leftover yarn. She heard all these things in the screech and whine of the old cupboard. The noise was loud, insistent. But then such is the sound of memory. "Turn around," ordered Catherine, motioning with her hands. "Let's see the back." Obliging, Anita moved in a slow circle, her arms held out. She modeled the latest incarnation of her hand-knit wedding coat, an ankle-length ivory affair with a shawl collar that was as fine as lace. "What is this? The third version?" asked KC. "I want you to know I bought one darn dress for your wedding and I plan on wearing it next month. You hear me?" Anita cracked a tiny smile. She and her fiancé, Marty, had postponed their nuptials repeatedly and each time she felt it bad luck to simply put her wedding outfit back in the closet. Instead, she took Catherine on a shopping expedition for a new dress and meticulously pulled out the stitches of the coat to start again with an updated pattern. Her sister, Sarah, who was doing part of the knitting, had gone along with the changes the first time. But this new coat was simpler and all of her own making. After all, Catherine had pushed her toward a dress that was dramatically more sparkly, and her coat which she wanted for modesty and simply to express a bit of personal style had a certain clean elegance to the drape of the open-closure front. No bulk. Just light, beautiful stitches. "I adore the sheer effect," commented Lucie, fingering the sleeve. "This coat is your best one yet," added Darwin, breaking into a wide grin upon seeing Dakota enter the shop from upstairs. "It's beautiful," said Dakota, suspecting that Darwin's enthusiasm for her arrival hinged on a hope of treats. She closed the door of the shop behind her, subtly catching Peri's attention and letting her know with a raise of her eyebrow what she thought of the kitchen upstairs. Peri motioned toward the shop she had sweetly decorated for the holidays, with baskets and cornucopias of yarn on the table and at the register. Skein after skein in harvest colors of amber and chocolate and rust were threaded on strong cord to make garlands that swooped across the tops of the windows facing onto Broadway. Soon enough, Peri would replace the skeins with deep blue and brightest white, and then rich red and dark evergreen, the decor as lively and bright and interfaith as the members of the club itself. As many Fridays as they could manage, this group of seven women pulled up chairs at the heavy oak table in the center of the room, a loan of furniture from Catherine's upstate antiques shop. The post-flood, pre-reno transitional knitting store was all about simplicity wire shelves that were easy to put together and move around, a small desk (also from Catherine) for the cash register, and painted taupe walls to warm up the place. The business was lucky to have a loyal clientele, and the club responded by offering more classes during the week. Anita taught some days, and even Lucie offered to teach in the spring. But Friday night remained sacred, and the shop was open only by invitation to the women who had banded around the late Georgia Walker, the shop's original owner. It was the place where each one of the women knew it was safe to share struggles and dreams. There were always questions; they tried to avoid judgments. After all, they'd all made mistakes. And, of course, there was always time to knit. Especially with the holidays closing in, having a time-out for a little creativity and relaxation was a necessity. Dakota tugged her new wool find from her knitting bag and onto the table. It was not her usual type of project, and she paused to see if anyone would pay attention, or comment that she'd somehow managed to finish half a sweater since the week before. KC sidled up to the table, leaving the rest of the women to covet Anita's wedding coat.

"Hey, kiddo," she said, picking up the half-sweater and examining it closely. She brought the yarn near her face. "What do ya think?" asked Dakota, grinning, gleeful at the idea of finishing her mother's project. It made her feel as though she was doing important business, a private task she was finally mature enough to complete. "I haven't seen this for a long time," said KC. "I might not have recognized it except for that terrible turquoise. A remnant from the 1980s, no doubt. From a sale bin." "You know this sweater?" Dakota was excited. "My mom was working it. I just found it again, and I've done several rows. There's not enough yarn left, though. I'll need to try and locate a match, guess the manufacturer." Anita came over, her antenna ever alert to new and interesting knitting projects. "My goodness," she exclaimed, looking to Dakota every inch the fairy godmother she always seemed to be, practically glowing in a cream coatdress and her ivory wedding coat. Silver hair framed her face, and her bangs stopped just above her eyes, which were narrowed with concern. "Your mother was doing up this sweater. That very fall." "I know," Dakota said triumphantly, gesturing in the air with a rosewood needle. "And I'm going to finish it for her! I can handle it." Anita nodded, relief flooding her face. "Good," she said. "I think that's very good." "Even I know this sweater," said KC. "It's from before you were born. Your mother used to knit this at the office." Dakota well knew that KC worked at the publishing house where Georgia had started her career, that Georgia had initially turned to KC as a mentor, and that the two had remained friends after Georgia left her job, became a mother, and transitioned to her career as a knitting mompreneur. Dakota remembered all these facts and yet was shocked that KC could find a connection to the piece. To get an inkling that the sweater was a UFO from before Dakota was born. Why would her mother pick it up again the summer before she died? "You saw her making it?" "Oh, hon, she loved to work it at lunch, always going on about her boyfriend. Blah, blah, blah." KC leaned forward so both elbows rested on the table and flashed a wicked grin. "You know. Your father?" Dakota instinctively dropped the sweater as though singed. Even though she loved her dad. Lived with him part-time. Even still. This sweater was from . . . before. Before he left her mom pregnant and alone, before he came back and was forgiven, reunited with his family. She wasn't so sure that she wanted to finish it anymore. There was much more history in these stitches than Dakota had anticipated. "Let's get this meeting under way officially, ladies," shouted Lucie, breaking Dakota's thoughts. "Dialing Miss Ginger . . . now." She hit the speakerphone function on her cell phone and winked at Dakota. Once, what seemed like not too long ago, it had been up to tweenage Dakota to call the evening to order. Now Georgia's daughter was a gorgeous woman of twenty, and Lucie's spirited seven-year-old daughter, Ginger, stayed up a little bit late to do the honors via telephone. "Mommy!" bellowed Ginger, before launching into an up-to-the-minute description of her evening. "Uncle Dan made ice-cream cones, and Stanton spilled his on Grandma and then the cat tried to eat it off her sleeve and Cady farted into her diaper." "So, it's a good night, Ging?" "Oh, yes," exclaimed Ginger. The sounds of Velcro could be heard. "Are you ready for attendance? I have my pencils out." "Shoot," said Dakota. "Okay," said Ginger, shuffling a paper. She cleared her throat dramatically. "Attention, please. Dakota Walker?" "Here," said Dakota, still close enough in age to remember the excitement of being allowed that special privilege of spending time with the ladies. From her earliest days, she'd been at home in Walker and Daughter, her namesake shop. The long evenings spent hanging out, learning to knit or doing her homework, while her mother totaled up the day's sales. Georgia had been a single mother focused solely on her daughter and her business, until she finally connected with the women who now sat around the table. Since her death, they formed a tight unit around Dakota, overseeing her through her challenges with her father, James, her summer looking after Ginger while Lucie worked in Italy, her two years at NYU, and her recent switch to pursue her passion for baking at pastry school. "Anita Lowenstein," chimed Ginger. "Are you there?" "I am indeed," said Anita. "And delighted to be here." Uncharacteristically preoccupied with her wedding plans, Anita who looked a good twenty years younger than her close to eight decades was accustomed to the club members coming to her for advice. Although she still had trouble with her own three sons, who couldn't bear the idea of their widowed mother marrying again, she made no secret of her maternal feelings for Georgia and, therefore, for Dakota. Her recent reunion with her estranged younger sister, Sarah, had renewed her energy. Combined with her invigorating romance with Marty, who owned the building and ran the deli below the shop, Anita was more content than she'd been since the loss of her surrogate daughter Georgia. "Pretty Catherine Anderson," called out Ginger, her mouth so close to the phone that her every breath could be heard. "I'm drawing a picture of you in your gold dress right now. Say hello!" "Hello," said Catherine. She liked Lucie's daughter, had offered to babysit now and again in preparation for her upcoming visit with her friend Marco, who was bringing along his grown son, Roberto, and his twelve-year-old daughter, Allegra. In her forties and still learning to be happily single after a tumultuous divorce years before, Catherine often fell into relationships that didn't quite satisfy emotionally including a secretive heady fling last year with Anita's almost-but-not-quite-separated son Nathan (who promptly returned to his wife post-consummation, naturally). These days, she focused primarily on her antiques shop and wine bar business in Cold Spring, while also making herself indispensable as Anita's ersatz wedding planner. Late at night, she tapped out pages of a novel loosely based on her teenage years in rural Pennsylvania, when she and her best friend, Georgia Walker, had worked part-time gigs at the Dairy Queen. "Peri Gayle is next on my list. I'm copying from last week's," Ginger explained. "I'm putting you down in green pencil today, plus a butterfly." "Good choice," said Peri. "My new bags are all about being green." What was supposed to be a temporary spot at the shop before heading to law school developed, over time, into joint ownership with Georgia

(and now Dakota). Plus, she devoted herself to the creation of a line of knitted purses, backpacks, and messenger bags, which, thanks to an Italian Vogue photo shoot, had transformed her business from a homegrown concern within the last year into a phenomenon. Peri Pocketbook, the company, was enormously popular though Peri had trouble keeping up with demand. And Peri Pocketbook, the person, was still taking baby steps as she remembered to leave time for a personal life; her yearlong online-dating experiment had yielded many dates and one very witty lawyer who might really have potential. Who knows what could happen if she managed to pull off this Thanksgiving-dinner thing? Which was why she'd let Dakota into the kitchen in the first place! And even though her best friend KC would be no help in the cooking department, she was relieved that she wouldn't have to face her boyfriend's parents on her own. "KC Sliverman," said Ginger, tapping her pencil into the phone. "Please report in." "Silverman, Sil-ver-man," cried out KC in mock astonishment. "I'm always telling you, kiddo, it's Silverman." Ginger giggled. She liked KC. She found her kooky. KC, a petite fiftysomething, had turned an unexpected layoff in her past into a successful exploration of a second act. While Peri gave up the idea of a law career for herself, she tutored KC, and the two women become close pals as KC completed law school in her late forties and, ultimately, ended up working back at the same publishing company where she'd once been an editor. She'd tried marriage twice, in fact but announced (loudly and regularly) that she just wasn't the committed kind. Brash, child-free, and bursting with energy, KC always shared whatever was on her mind. Though she'd promised Peri she would go easy with her boyfriend's family on Turkey Day. "Auntie Darwin Chiu, whose name is different than Uncle Dan Leung," singsonged Ginger. Darwin was the mother of twins Cady and Stanton, who lived next door to Ginger (and her mother, Lucie), all under the care of her physician husband tonight. ("It's not babysitting," Dan often said. "I'm parenting.") Once a grad student who ambled into Walker and Daughter to do a research project about the dangers posed to feminism by knitting, Darwin was now a champion of the power of craft and a full-time professor of women's studies though, much to her frustration, still without tenure. She juggled research, writing, mothering, and following through on a concept she and Lucie had about creating intelligent, appropriate television for girls. Though the change in the world around them had resulted in some problems gathering funding. Not everything had gone as fluidly as they'd hoped, though Lucie had scaled back on her outside work in the hopes of making progress. "And are you there, Mommy?" yawned Ginger, clearly exhausted from the hard work of taking attendance with colored pencils and drawing pictures. "Yes, and Lucie Brennan says it is to bed with you, young lady," said Lucie. She never anticipated nearing fifty and being a parent to a seven-year-old as well as caring for an elderly mother fighting dementia. But that's what every day meant for Lucie, a video and film director who made everything from documentaries to music videos to commercials. An avid knitter, she poked into the yarn shop one long-ago day to pick up a skein of beige merino (during her fisherman-sweater phase) and ended up sitting down at a table much like the one they all sat at now, to work on her stitches. And she, like all of the women, just kept coming back. Friday after Friday. What she discovered here, in this small shop one floor above Broadway and Seventy-seventh, was the true and absolute friendship she needed to make sense of who she was. Her life had lacked a certain something, but she hadn't understood what was missing until she found it: community. Smart, strong women who backed her up when she needed support and called her out when required. Lucie tucked in her daughter over the phone as the members of the Friday Night Knitting Club Anita, Catherine, Dakota, Lucie, Peri, Darwin, and KC assembled around the table and began, as they so often did, to talk all at once. Everybody listened, but nobody heard a word. No matter. They'd start over again, one at a time, in a few minutes. But for now, it was enough just to relish this safe haven.