

## **Five Alarm Side 1 – Ava and Ellen**

Time: The present. Early afternoon.

Place: The fairgrounds of a small town.

*(Lights up. We see two stations set up for cooking. The tables are dressed in cheerful plastic tablecloths. Each holds a large camp stove, a large cutting board, pots, pans, knives, spoons, etc. One station is labelled “21” and the other “22”. There is a large garbage can - the outdoor variety - somewhere on the stage. Ava Rose and Ellen Pellham enter. They’re both trying to catch their breath, having just climbed a big hill. Ellen is struggling considerably more than Ava. They have cooking supplies and coolers with them. Ava wears a “17th Annual Wayne Rose Chili Cook Off” t-shirt.)*

Ava: Here we go. This is us.

Ellen: That was quite a climb.

Ava: Just a little hill. *(Beat. She looks at Ellen.)* Are you okay?

Ellen: Just a touch of asthma. *(She takes a puffer from her pocket and takes a puff.)* There we go. Oh! Ava! We’re table twenty-one! That’s good luck.

Ava: It is?

Ellen: Twenty-one is my lucky number.

Ava: Well, great! I hope it comes through for us. Oh. Here’s your shirt.

*(Ava gives Ellen a “17th Annual Wayne Rose Chili Cook Off” t-shirt.)*

Ellen: I get a shirt?! See? I told you twenty-one is lucky.

Ava: Well, everyone who enters the competition gets a shirt. Okay, now let’s see. We should set up. Get organized.

*(She takes the box around to the front of the table and starts taking things out of it. Bottles of spice, cooking implements, etc.)*

We'll put that there. We'll need that later. And these. And these. And those.

*(She stops to fan herself.)*

Holy moly. It's hotter than the surface of the sun today, isn't it? It is hot!

Are you hot? I'm hot. I'm sweltering hot.

Ellen: I'm comfortable.

Ava: I'm hot.

Ellen: Yeah. You said. Can I get you something?

Ava: Maybe I need some water. Or a Zoloft.

Ellen: Oh. You're nervous.

Ava: I'm nervous.

Ellen: Hey, you don't need to worry. You've got this in the bag. You're a great cook! Probably. I don't know because I met you this morning, but I'm willing to bet you are. And, I told you, twenty-one is my lucky number. I grew up at twenty-one Blue Jay Road. Beautiful little house. Really happy childhood.

Ava: Aw, that's nice.

Ellen: I loved that house. *(Beat.)* It burned down.

Ava: Oh.

Ellen: I also have twenty-one moles on my back. And only one of them is suspicious. Also, when I was twenty-one, I got a dog. And that was the best thing to ever happen to me. He was this big dog with really scruffy fur.

Ava: He sounds adorable.

Ellen: Well, as it turns out, he had rabies so we ended up euthanizing him.

Ava: Twenty-one doesn't actually sound like a very lucky number for you.

Ellen: It is, because I choose to believe it is. And what you believe, you can conceive. Just like you believe you can win this chili competition. Right?

Ava: I've lost sixteen years in a row.

Ellen: Hey. Seventeenth time is the charm. That's what everyone says.

Ava: Thank you, Ellen. Thanks for all of this. I know it was last minute.

Gretchen dropping out really threw me for a loop.

Ellen: Are you kidding me? This is a dream come true. Chili is my all time favourite food

Ava: Well, good, because you're going to see a lot of it today. You might like it less tomorrow.

Ellen: Doubt that.

Ava: So, when you answered my ad, you said you had cooking experience?

Ellen: Yes...Well, food prep.

Ava: Same thing.