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THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO VERSIONS OF EDITS IN THIS FOLDER. WE LEAVE IT TO THE RESEARCHER TO DETERMINE THE CORRECT SETS.

head was going to explode. Raquel, Alex. Dee Dee... She turned to her side and petted P. Kitty, but even his affectionate purring didn't make her feel better. She couldn't believe she let herself get so out of control in front of Alex and then ^{guy} ~~she~~ ^{had gone and made} ~~had to make~~ it worse by yelling at him. The one saving ^{we} ~~grace~~ ^{of anything}, from last night was what she found out about Jose. That piece of information will help Raquel and Evie will show what a good friend she is by telling Raquel about him, protecting her from such a stinking *ratone*. The signs had all been there, but now Evie had the proof. Evie definitely owed it to Raquel to tell her about Jose.

Evie got her bedroom cordless and started to phone Raquel. It seemed strange. Had it been that long since she had dialed Raquel's number? Unlike her cell, ^{Evie's} ~~the~~ home phone didn't have Raquel's number on speed dial. She actually had to pause and remember the digits. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity of rings, Raquel answered

"What?" It was clear she knew it was Evie. Raquel had Caller ID for both of Evie's lines.

"Hey," Evie said hesitantly. "It's me."

"What do you want?" Raquel asked.

Evie took a deep breath. "So, I went out last night,"

"Did you call to share that with me?"

"No, I'm trying to say that I went out last night and I..." Evie ^{suddenly} ~~got to a point where~~ she didn't want to continue but knew she had to. "...I saw Jose."

Raquel was silent.

"Raquel," Evie's left leg was ~~nervously~~ twitching like crazy. "I don't wanna be

Should this be the reason? Or does she realize she really loves Raquel & doesn't want her to get hurt?

She should be doing this ONLY for Raquel's benefit

the bearer of bad news, but you gotta listen. Jose was with Alejandra.”

“Alejandra who?” Raquel’s harsh tone dropped slightly

“De los Santos. They were at La Pantera Negra, in the old photo booth.”

Raquel let out a long drawn out sigh. “God, Evie, is this what it has come to? You making up stories just to get back at me?”

“Back at you? Why would I wanna get back at you? You’re the one who’s been mean to me.”

“Me? Evie, I have loyalty to my friends. Dee Dee was a bitch to me from day one.

And what do you do? Nothing. Not the next day at your mother’s brunch and then you show up Monday at school with her? What the hell is that?”

“Raquel,” Evie started. “Yeah, I agree. Dee Dee was a bitch that first night, but really, she’s been our friend since we were kids and everything just started off wrong. I mean, listen to me.”

“You know what, Evie? I don’t have to listen to you and you know what? I was with Jose last night.”

“What, when?” Evie asked.

“Evie, it doesn’t even matter.”

“But Raquel,” Evie said. “That doesn’t make sense. I saw him, last night. I talked to him and he was all grabby, even to me. Raquel he is no good.”

“You know what, Evie? Raquel was not buying it. “I got another call.”

“Wait, Raquel.” Evie didn’t hear any call waiting on the phone line.

“Bye, Evie.” With that, Raquel hung up.

Raquel dropped
her harsh tone?
Has to be true?
Raquel then
in order to
work
But isn't that
when people get back
at each other?
When someone
has
done something
to them?

we already know she's
lying

Evie was stunned. She was too shocked to even get upset. Raquel didn't believe her. She thought she was lying! How could she think that? Raquel was acting as if Evie was an entirely different person. She looked over at herself in the closet mirrors. Maybe she really needed to take a good look at herself?

The phone rang again, and it startled Evie. She quickly picked it up, but it wasn't Raquel as she had hoped.

"Evelina?" The voice on the other end asked.

"Oh. Hi." Evie was taken off guard. It was her sister, Sabrina

"Oh. Hi," Sabrina mimicked Evie's disappointed tone. "Sorry to let you down."

"No, I just thought you were someone else."

Sabrina sighed. "Yeah, this morning, I wish I was someone else." She sighed again. This time heavier. "Did mom tell you I called?"

"Uh, yeah," Evie suddenly felt badly. Her sister sounded uncharacteristically deflated. "I've just been busy. Did you know that Dee Dee is back? Did mom mention that?"

"Yeah, she did. That must be nice for you. So, is she around?"

"Who?" For a minute she thought she meant Dee Dee.

"Mom." Sabrina said.

"Oh, sorry. Um, I don't know. I just woke up. Let me check." Evie held the phone to her side and called out and sure enough her mother was outside, on the deck. She waited until her mother picked up the cordless and just as Evie was hanging up, she could hear her mother soothed through the receiver. "Ay, que quires mi'ja?" Her mother said softly. "What's wrong, precious?"

← goal! but explain more please!
Instead of this line,
could we just show Evie looking at herself and seeing how she does look different? maybe she has make up smoothen her face or something?

Even after she had hung up the upstairs line, Evie could hear, through her opened bedroom window, the compassion of her mother's voice from the deck outside. Her mother and Sabrina talked for what seemed a long time and Evie wondered was wrong.

Why hadn't her sister just told her? Finally, after what sounded like her mother was off the phone, Evie went outside to join her on the deck.

"How's Sabrina?" Evie slid onto a canvas chair. The fabric felt hot on her legs.

"Oh, she's not doing too good." Her mother was gluing plastic yellow daisies to a terra cotta planter that she had painted orange. It had been her latest interest, buying inexpensive pots from Green Thumb, painting them in bold, vivid colors and then lining the rim with plastic do-dads from Michael's Arts and Crafts.

"What happened?" Evie hoped her sister wasn't sick or anything.

"She just had a break up. Remember Robert?"

"Nuh uh." Her sister spoke of so many boys that Evie lost count.

"She had been dating him for the last year." Her mother finally looked up from her gluing. MORE

The last year? How could Evie's sister have been hanging out with someone for a whole year and Evie not even know? God, was Alex right? Was she that self-absorbed?

"Anyway, he broke up with her and Sabrina's pretty upset about it. She's coming home for the weekend."

"She's coming home?" This was really unlike her sister who claimed to be so involved with so many projects and school activities that she could never leave the Bay Area.

"Yeah," Her mother looked at her. "But how are you doing this morning, Evelina. Feeling any better?"

"I'm okay," Evie picked at her toe polish. She wasn't ready to have all the attention put on her. "But Sabrina's all pretty and popular," she said matter of factly. "She'll be over him soon enough. And what's the use? Boyfriends cheat on you anyway."

"Evie," her mother frowned. "How could can you be so callous? She just lost a really good friend."

"I thought you said he was her boyfriend."

"A boyfriend is a friend."

"No, a friend is a friend," she asserted. "I'm not gonna be making out with my friends."

"Evie, there's more to a romantic relationship than just 'making out'."

Oh, no. Her mother wasn't gonna start talking about her own relationship with her father was she? *Eyeew.*

"Okay," Evie said abruptly. "Is that today's paper?" She looked at the newspaper her mother used to work on, "I wanna look up movie times."

Her mother looked at her for a moment. "No, it's yesterday's."

Evie knew it was rude to cut off her mother like that. She watched her mother measure out the plastic daises, making sure each one had a similar distance between each other round the rim of the planter. Why couldn't she just talk to her mother like Sabrina?

Or how Dee Dee did? Was she such a horrible person?

"So," Evie tried slowly. "You and dad were friends before you started dating?"

Please, just the facts. No details.

they were evenly spaced around the rim of the planter

she never said you have to be friends first, just boyfriend is a friend

Expand on this a bit please

"Oh, yeah," Her mother said. "We were good friends.

"Yeah," Evie started. "It seems like all my so called good friends are mad at me or vice a versa."

"What happened?" Her mother asked.

Before she knew it Evie was telling her mother all that had been going on for the past month. Her own version, of course. **She left out the liquor, the pot, the four letter words and topless Sangros.**

"...And then, last night," Evie continued, not taking a breath. "I was just with Alex last night. I mean, at first I was with Dee Dee. Remember we were going to the birthday party? But then Dee Dee really did something uncool and then I saw Jose, at the birthday party, with another girl and he's supposed to be all loyal to Raquel and everything. Then I got all mad at Alex and ...I dunno. You know what I mean?"

BETTER CONVERSTATION WITH MOTHER.

Evie's mother looked like her head was spinning. Was it TMI?

"I think so. So why did you get upset with Alex?" Her mother asked.

"He made a promise to me and he broke it."

"Did he have a good reason for breaking it?"

"I dunno," Evie said.

"He didn't explain?" Her mother seemed confused.

"I never asked him, but he never said anything. He sorta doesn't know that I know. I'm not talking to him."

"Evie," her mother started. "That's the first thing about being a good friend.

Communication. Only a coward hides behind a veil of silence. You have to give someone

another
line
from mom
to
connect
these
parts.
Something
about
how
friends
are
very
important?

maybe include
something
about how
Evie doesn't
know who
she is
anymore?
Since Evie
figuring
herself out
is such
an important
theme.

a chance to explain. Besides, sometimes we put our friends on pedestals and we expect so much from them. We have to remember that they're just people. We have to allow them space to make mistakes."

← Something about how we make our own mistakes and want them to forgive us too?
"Yeah, I guess." Evie felt sorta foolish. ~~Had she been too harsh on some of her friends?~~ Show Evie doing something that conveys shame? Looking down, etc.

"Well, guess all you want," her mother said. "But let me tell you. I know. I've had so many fights, arguments with your father, and your tias and my sisters. They would have all lasted so much longer if one of us hadn't had the courage to take the first step. Like just like last weekend I had an argument with your aunt Connie."

"And you apologized? You took the first step?"

"Uh, not, yet." Her mother looked sheepish and went to gluing the plastic daises on the planter. "But who do you think I'm making this planter for?"

Evie was surprised by the talk she had with her mother. It was one of the best discussions they'd ever had in a long time. In a way, she felt she had taken a chance, if only with her mother, to communicate.

She got to thinking about Alex. It took the threat of Dee Dee just to make her realize how important he was to her. She started thinking of all the sweet little things he did for her, walking with her into the Bard party, finding the shell and (at first) wanting to give it to her. He was always so nice to her parents and when her grandma Sally came to visit last summer, he tried so hard to impress her with his Spanish. She really liked the way he never let other people's issues get in the way of what he thought was right. That's one of the reasons she was confident enough to let him teach her surf last summer. Even

as she tumbled off her soft fop and dealt with the Sea Street lineup of aggro short boarders who don't appreciate girls getting in the way of their waves, she knew she'd be okay with Alex around.

more than a bit please!
Evie felt a bit panicky. She did not want to lose Alex. She had to call him right away. What had she done, but only push him away, over and over again, someone who was really important to her? awk

lately
She grabbed her cell, but then stopped. Oh, God, what would she say? So many times they talked on the phone, in his truck, during lunch near Juniper's tree, but now she wanted to make sure she said the absolute right thing. It was harder than she thought. Maybe she could paint him a terra cotta planter?

Finally she just did it. She sped dialed his number, but unfortunately her call immediately went to voice mail.

"Hey, you've reached Alex. You know what to do at the sound of the beep."

Evie's confidence dropped. She hoped he was really at Sea Street and not just ignoring her call. Should she just hang up or leave a message? She hung up.

Coward.

She called him again.

His line was busy. Most likely his message center processing her hang up. Argh!
She waited a few seconds and redialed.

"Uh, hi Alex it's me," she started as soon as she heard the beep. "Uh, I guess I didn't know what to do at the sound of the beep, he, he." *Stupid!* "Anyway, that was me who just called a second ago. *Stupid, again. Of course, he would know it was her. She had only programmed her number in his cell!* *herself* "Um I'm sorry about last night," she

continued. "Really, that I woke you up and everything. It was so nice of you to pick me up".

Nice? Guys don't like to be called nice. What should she have said? That was so muscular and strong of you to pick me up? "Well, anyway, I'm just calling because I'm sorry about last night. *Duh! She already said that!* "And I'm hoping you'll call me back and I --." Beep.

She was cut off! Too much and too long. Should she call again?

No, she didn't wanna come off as a stalker. She'd just have to wait until he called her back.

Sigh. Why hadn't she noticed how great Alex was before? She went over to her bookshelf and got her yearbook from last year. She looked up Alex's photo. He *was* cute, she concluded. Not that she ever thought he was ugly. Then she went to the back cover and found his dedication to her.

what he'd written
To the coolest girl I know,

Looking forward to spending the summer with you.

He thought she was cool! How had she over looked that? And he had even said that again last night.

God, Evie thought, Alex *would* make for a really great boyfriend, but now he wasn't even talking to her. Wasn't there a thin line between love and hate? But she didn't *hate* Alex and, please, she certainly didn't *love* him.

The cordless rang back. Yes! She picked it up, right away.

But it was Dee Dee.

"Hey," she asked. "Is your dad finished on the phone?"

"Yeah, Dee Dee," Evie felt defeated. "He's all done." It was no use hiding, or even getting a temporary break, from her. She was on a roll.

"Good. Okay, now about tonight..."

And before Evie knew it, she agreed to go to the Day of the Dead Dance. She was going to take the first step and be direct with Dee Dee. She would give her the chance to explain about the shell necklace and about Alejandra de los Santos. Because that's what she learned from her mother, what true friendship was all about – **communication and a hand painted terra cotta planter.**

Later that night as Evie walked in the school's gym with Dee Dee, she was blown away by all the elaborate decorations for Dia de los Muertos. Colorful papeles picados hung from the ceiling, sugar skulls were on tables and bright orange cempazulti (Correct Evie pronunciation: marigolds) were scattered about the floor. CONVEY THAT SHE IS STILL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH DEE DEE.

The senior class had done an excellent job with the gym and Evie hoped Dee Dee noticed.

"Wow, I'm impressed." Dee Dee looked the gym over. She noticed all right. "Oh, look," She nudged Evie. "They even have an altar!"

Sure enough, at the head of the gym, where basketball scores where usually displayed and the school mascot, a Badger, sadly tried to invoke team spirit, was a

This is a little muddled

Love this

This sentence doesn't quite work because ① is a moment in time and ② is a state of being...

yes

give Dee Dee the shell he found back at Bard Beach? Evie's heart dropped. How could he have given her shell to Dee Dee? What *was* going on between them?

"What's wrong?" Dee Dee held the pendant out and looked down at it. "You don't like it?"

"Oh, no," Evie looked away. She wasn't about to admit jealousy and she definitely couldn't go into feelings she hadn't even sorted out yet. "It's just these sandals," She brought her foot up. "They really hurt and I don't wanna get blisters. I think I'm gonna change back into my flojos." *Samuks*

"Evie, *no*," Dee Dee looked down at Evie's feet. "They look so sexy on you. Here," She opened up the bathroom cabinet and pulled out some Band-Aids. "I'll bring supplies, just in case."

As Evie wobbled what seemed the long journey from Dee Dee's bedroom to her car in the driveway, she still couldn't take her mind off the necklace. When Alex had found the shell at Bard beach, he had promised, *promised* to "polish it up real good" for Evie and, at the time, she thought it was a sweet gesture. She didn't even wear necklaces, but now, more than anything she wanted to be the wearing the shell. How, how could Alex have given the shell to Dee Dee? *I long night could get worse.*

As they approached Rio Estate's downtown area in Dee Dee car, Evie was still surprised to learn that Fabby was actually serious about celebrating her 16th birthday at La Pantera Negra, a Mexican restaurant and lounge on the main boulevard. It was in the heart of the "historic" downtown district, so named, her father joked, because the city didn't want to pay for an architectural or beautification upgrade. La Pantera boasted a bar

with a kidney shaped counter, a mirrored splash back and red leather tuck and roll booths with red velvet tables topped with ancient Mexican coins and protective glass. On every wall hung ornate gold framed black velvet paintings of sleek looking panthers, ~~lounge~~^{od} on leafy tree limbs or perching on ledges, poised and ready to pounce at any moment. It had been years since Evie had even set foot in La Pantera and, according to her father and mother, it wasn't the place it used to be. It was now just a dive where cholos (gasp!) hung out and the cheese was no longer the white crumbling fresca from Mexico, but rather the standard orange kind from Cost Co. (double gasp!).

When she and Dee Dee finally arrived at La Pantera, it was already close to 10 PM. ~~As~~^{and} Evie got out of the Beetle, she braced herself for a long painful journey from the car to the front entrance of the restaurant. Is this what it takes to get Alex's attention? Some glittery shoes? Obviously it had worked for Dee Dee.

"God, when's the last time you been here?" Dee Dee asked, as they walked up to La Pantera.

"Not since I was a kid." ~~But~~ Evie wasn't in the mood to chit chat with Dee Dee. As soon as they got in the restaurant, she planned to bail on her.

"When I was younger," Dee Dee started as she opened opened the door and let Evie go in ahead of her. "I couldn't think of a place more glamorous than La Pantera Negra. I even fantasized about someday having my wedding reception there. Que chiste, huh?"

~~But~~ Evie said nothing. She just wanted the night to be over with as soon as possible. As she followed Dee Dee to the back area, she pulled out her cell phone. No new message from Alex.

The lounge of La Pantera was already packed with people but Evie and Dee immediately found Fabby at the head of long banquet table. She was surrounded by all the Sangros, some other friends Evie didn't recognize, and a mountain of wrapped gifts. Everyone was dressed to the nuevas, silky camisoles and short skirts on the girls, sport coats and polo shirts for the guys. Maybe it was a good thing that Evie wore the slinky slinks.

"Feliz Cumpleanos," Evie kissed Fabby on the cheek.

"Thank you, chica!" Fabby seemed high from all the attention. She wore a pearl studded tiara, a smashed purple bow was ^{stuck} taped to the side of her head and her face was covered in red and pink lipstick kissy marks. "You know I'm having my real birthday party in Mexico. A big bash at my parent's ranch, near Lake Chapala!"

"Oh, really?" Evie smiled.

"Yeah, we're all flying back for the three day weekend. You should come!"

"When?" Evie asked. But Fabby was pulled in another direction before she could answer.

Seconds after, Dee Dee asked Evie if she wanted anything to drink.

"Uh," Evie looked at the drink menu above bar. "What do they have?"

Her feet and her heart were aching. What, was she gonna drown her misery in a diet coke?

"Oh, we can get anything!" Dee Dee started swaying to **the music**. "You know how La Pantera is with their drinking policy."

And it was true. Pantera did have a lax ID check. Evie remembered, even as a kid, overhearing Sabrina talk about getting drunk at La Pantera while still a student in high school.

w/out getting
ID from her

Dee Dee headed towards the bar, soon disappearing into the thick of the party and Evie suddenly found herself feeling uncomfortably alone. She looked after Dee Dee, but soon lost sight of her. Hey, wasn't *she* the one who was going to skip out on Dee Dee?

Within a short time more fancy dressed people who Evie didn't know arrived and with all their additional body heat, it soon felt as if the entire oxygen supply from La Pantera was being sucked out. Soon, everyone was fanning themselves with the plastic dinner menus and wiping their foreheads with the thin cream colored cocktail napkins.

Evie soon began to feel even more out of place. None of the guests made attempts to meet her, and all Sangors -- Fabby, Natalia, Charlene -- appeared to be engaged in an exclusive conversation. Alejandra was ^{now} nowhere to be seen.

Evie finally saw Dee Dee again, wedged tight between two unknown revelers in a small red leather booth, laughing and looking like she was having a grand old time. Evie was about to make her way towards her when she suddenly noticed the abalone shell, dangling precariously from the thin cord around her neck. It upset Evie all over again. She would definitely rather be alone than be with Dee Dee, that's for sure. What was that saying that Lindsay had told her? Vale mas sola que mal a companado? It's better to be alone than with bad company? Yeah, something like that.

Evie continued to walk around the dimly lit lounge, trying to not look so aimless.

"Hey, Evie!" It was Fabby calling out to her.

"Yeah?" Evie asked eagerly.

"Have some pastel!" Fabby handed her a small plate with a slice of chocolate cake on it, but didn't ask her to join her in eating the cake together. "And please," Fabby looked at her. "Try not to look *tan seriosa*. This *is* a celebration, chica!"

Evie took her slice of Fabby's birthday cake and walked away, trying hard to look less *seriosa*. She figured, as long as she looked like she was enjoying the birthday cake, she *was* part of the celebration, whether or not anyone talked to her. However, when she was finally scraping the side of her desert plate with her fork, she knew it was time to find a new focus for the evening. Fortunately, that's when she saw it - the old jukebox in the far back corner of the lounge. It looked like the same grand gaudy jukebox she remembered as a kid. A bit smaller, of course, but that's what happens when you grow up, things shrink up on you.

Evie went over to the jukebox and flipped through the choices that ranged from Los Tigres del Norte to Green Day. The old juke had been updated with CDs rather than the vinyl 45s that once slid out onto a turntable. She finally found something she wanted to hear. She put in two coins and pressed down on two separate buttons, G and 4.

"What did you pick?"

Evie looked up and found a guy looking over her shoulder. He looked down at the selections with her. st She glanced over at him. He was tall with ^{a rick} short dark hair, dark eyes, ^{one} a small mole ^{more} on the left side of his chin. Okay, maybe she was looking him over.

"G 4." ^{She told him.}

"Ah yes," He smiled. "G 4. I just downloaded them."

"No," she laughed. "I mean Audioslave."

"What's your name?"

^{He} smiled

"Ev...Evelina"

"Do you want anything to drink?"

"Me? oh..." She then noticed that he was wearing a black quayabera and a pair of Ben Davis work pants. "Oh," she laughed to herself ~~when she knew what he wanted.~~

"I'm sorry. I totally thought you were a guest."

"What?" The boy seemed confused.

"Yeah, can I get , um, some champagne?"

"What do you mean, you thought I was a guest?"

"Wait, what do you mean?"

"I don't work here," he said.

Oh," Evie covered her mouth. "I'm sorry, I just thought—"

"You just thought what?"

"I dunno know, that—"

"The way that I'm dressed, that I look like I work in the kitchen or something?"

*He was
def.
offended*

"No, it's just..."

"What, I'm too rasquache for your Chilanga taste?"

"Chilanga? I'm not from Mexico City," *he said* *his from here R. E.*

"You could have fooled me. I guess you like all my cousin Fabby's friends."

*your
Fabby's
Cousin.*

"Yeah, I'm from DF too, La Zona Rosa to be honest, but I don't go around flaunting it like all these fools."

He looked around.

"No, I mean, yeah, I totally know what you mean."

"Oh, really?"

"No really, I'm the same way. My parents, they also have money—"

but

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“No, nothing.”

He looked around. “I need to get going anyway. Nunca problema. See you around
Evelina...”

“No, wait...”

But it was too late...He already went back into the crowd. Her eyes followed him and saw him hug Fabby tightly before heading for the front exit.

Evie felt horrible. This guy was misjudging her for misjudging him! She didn’t care how he dressed. She was alone again. Could this Sangro party get any worse?

Evie made her way back through the crowd as the slinky slinks pinched the top of her feet more. She had thought that she and Dee Dee wore the same size, but it didn’t feel that way. Does a size 7 Mexican narrow translate to a size 7 American wide? Yes, wide. That’s the problem with wearing flojos all the time. The feet, they expand mucho.

Even through the dim lighting of the lounge she could see a large blister beginning to form on her right foot. She remembered the Band-Aids that Dee Dee had brought, but now she was nowhere to be seen. Evie decided to head to the restroom where she could at least get some toilet paper to cushion the throbbing. But on her way, when she passed by La Pantera’s retro photo booth. She was surprised it was still there, in seemingly working condition. When they were kids, she and Rockell used to beg their fathers for quarters so they could take their picture in it.

Thoughts of Rockell.

The pain on her right foot worsened and Evie bent down to loosen her sandal

strap and when she did, she couldn't believe what she saw. There, on the other side of the photo booth's curtain, were two pairs of flojos. A pair of faded suede Sanuks and a pair of brand new red Roxys. She *knew* those flojos. At least, the Sanuks. They belonged to Jose. Evie could barely believe it. What was *he* doing at La Pantera? Anywhere, she guessed, there might be access to easy booze. She looked closer and yep, the feet were definitely Jose's. Who else had a beaver's tail tattooed on the outside his ankle? And Rockell's feet? Evie couldn't help but notice how uncharacteristically pale they looked.

Evie felt an immediate bond of familiarity. Jose and Rockell were her friends, really. If anything, they were outnumbered this evening and probably feeling it. After all, why were they holed up in a photo booth. Waiting to make a clear escape? after everything that has happened, Evie was ready to join them. After all, hadn't Jose thrown a wink to her the other day to say that everything was possibly okay, cool?

Before she could even *think about it*, Evie pulled the curtain open, and all, but toppled right into Jose. Damn those slinky slinks!

"Whoa, whoa, Blondie," Jose looked up in surprise. He leaned over from the booth's stool and helped Evie up. "Someone's had a little too much to drink?"

Evie helped herself up, "No, no, I just..." She tried to recover from her embarrassment. But to her horror, she discovered that the girl enveloped around Jose was not Rockell. It was Alejandra de los Santos.

"Evie!" Alejandra exclaimed. "Ay! You scared me! Hey, Take a photo with us!" She moved over from Jose's lap to allow more room.

"Yeah," Jose patted his free knee, indicating Evie should sit on it. "I'm down for a ménage trois."

Both of them looked disheveled, Alejandra's ^{standard} always straightened hair was tousled and the top buttons of her () blouse were undone. Jose's Trunk Limited T-shirt was pulled up and out of his cords. He pulled it down.

"Evie!" Alejandra contined to gush. "Come on, let's take a photo together!"

Evie looked behind her at the crowd. Were people oblivious that Jose and Alejandra were practically having sex in the photo booth? Didn't any of the other Sangros see that Jose, who they all knew was Rockell's boyfriend, was with Alejandra? Is this how guys were? How the Sangros were? She looked over at the booth where Dee Dee was sitting, still laughing with two strangers she had yet to introduce Evie to. Did she even notice that Evie was gone? It seemed as though everyone went after what they each wanted. Maybe it was time, she did too.

Sangro Rule number One, Don't Get Carried Away Over Some Boy and Two, Get It Where You Can.. That was good enough for her.

Evie stepped back into the booth.

"Yeah," Jose smiled and patted his left knee again. "Sit down and tell Santy what you want for Christmas."

Evie positioned herself on his ^{thigh} lap the best she could and Alejandra took over the right side of his lap. It was a tight fit for all three of them crammed in the small, narrow booth.

Alejandra lifted her feet up to show off her flojos. "Look, look what Josito bought me! *Muy chiste, no?* And it's not even *my* birthday!"

"Yeah, cool," Evie ooked down at Alejandra's feet.

"Let's take the picture!" Alejandra pulled out her wallet from her handbag.

"Yeah," Jose looked over at Evie. "Let's capture the moment, right Blondie?"

"Right." Evie smiled back at Jose. If Alex wasn't gonna own up to his text messaging or give her the attention she deserved, well, why not have some harmless cutesy time with Jose? She tapped the Le Bret on his chin. "So, does this ever hurt?"

"Depends on how much pain your inner thighs can take."

Evie laughed and squeezed his arm. "You are *so* bad!"

Jose wanted at her. He was cute!

"Okay," Alejandra was not paying attention to them. She positioned a quarter near the machine's slot. "I gonna put the money in and then it's gonna be fast, so get ready."

Jose had his arm around Evie, She could feel his hand inch under her arm and closer to the outer wire of her bra. She moved, a little, away.

but just a little

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Nothing."

The timer for the first photo started flashing.

"Okay," Alejandra squealed as she tilted her head down and brushed her hair forward. "Smile, sexy like!"

The camera flash went off quickly, before Evie could even think.

or pose.

"Here comes the next one!" Alejandra announced.

"Let's do something goofy," Evie suggested.

quickly

"Yeah, let's." Alejandra laughed and pulled out the inside of her cheeks with her fingers.

Evie crossed her eyes and stuck out her tongue.

"My," Jose looked over at Evie. "What a long tongue you have, grandma."