

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CONTENTS IN THIS FOLDER HAVE BEEN HANDLED BY VARIOUS INDIVIDUALS, BEFORE REACHING THE ARCHIVES. AS SUCH, WE CANNOT PROMISE ORIGINAL ORDER AND HAVE ATTEMPTED TO PROVIDE SOME MANUFACTURED ORDER BY SEPARATE PAGES INTO UNITS OF TEN, DUE TO THE LARGE NUMBER OF PAGES INVOLVED.

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

Evie Gomez woke up on Saturday morning with two things on her mind. The first was that her best friend, Raquel Diaz, was definitely no longer just that, a best friend. Raquel had proven herself to be, as of 10:32 a.m. that October morning, a 100 percent *pinche beyachee*. And why? Because after half a month of no phone, no friends, basically no life, Evie wasn't under her mother's house arrest anymore for coming home a pithy ass twenty (okay, maybe it *was* thirty) minutes past her curfew. But did her girl Raquel even bother to call so they could celebrate Evie's first night of freedom? *No*. Raquel hadn't even had the decency to return any of Evie's phone calls, pages, or the desperate IMs Evie had sent to SexyMexy06. Raquel was no Sexy Mexy, Evie confirmed, but she was *definitely* a bitch.

The second thing on Evie's mind was how light her head felt. She ran her hand from the back of her neck. Her long, dark brown hair was gone. All of it. She caught a look at herself her closet mirrors -- her hair was now short, chopped in a haphazard fashion, and blue. Very blue. **Cancún Blue No. 32**, to be exact. What had she done? Who the hell cuts their own hair? She yanked down at the sides but they barely covered the tops of her ears. Evie wondered if this was what happened to prisoners in solitary confinement. After being isolated from their peers for too long, did they eventually go crazy and commit self-inflicted acts of **hair abuse** too? Evie looked hideous and she had no one to blame but . . . yes, Raquel. Why hadn't Raquel just called her back last night? By the time 9 p.m. had rolled around, it was obvious that Evie was going to spend another long night at home alone. And after clicking from one reality makeover show to the next, she realized it was she, not another midwestern housewife, who needed a

change. She wanted something that demanded attention, respect. She wanted blue hair! And that's how *the reinvention of Evie Gomez, Mex-treme Makeover, Friday Night Home Edition* came to be.

But now it was Saturday morning and it was sadly evident that she had truly lost her senses the night before.

Evie lay under her Dean Miller sheets and **sighed**. Thank God no one was around to witness her **state of blue disrepair**. She could hear Lindsay, the Gomez's housekeeper, listening to her morning dose of *El Mercadito* on the kitchen radio downstairs, but other than that the house was quiet. Her father, Ruben Gomez, must have left hours ago for one of his several *panaderías* and her mother, Vicki, was probably in the pool doing her () fifty laps. From her sister, Brenda, who carried eighteen units a semester **while maintaining presidency** of the most prestigious Latina sorority at Stanford University to even big ol' dopey Ernesto Molesto, the Gomez's black lab who **scheduled** his pre-poop walk around the perimeter of the block every morning at 6 am, **the Gomezes were a very focused Ambitious family**. Yes, the whole family **put** the "go" in Gomez. That is, except for Evie, who felt more of a personal connection to the lagging z as in Gomezzzzzzzz. . . . She yawned, lifted her Roxy Tee, and scratched her belly. It was now 10:45 a.m. Yeah, she could sleep a little bit more and deal with *las dos* dilemmas later.

Just then the beeping rendition of "**Man in the Box**" blared from her cell phone. Evie leaned over, grabbed the phone off her nightstand, and saw Raquel's face on the screen. She reluctantly flipped it open.

"Hello?"

“*Heeey*,” drawled Raquel’s gravelly voice. Apparently Raquel had gone out the night before. Without Evie. What the fuh?

“Oh, hey.” Evie said trying to sound just as casual.

“So . . .” Raquel started. Evie could sense Raquel starting to smile on the other end. “You got your phone back.”

“Uh, yeah,” Evie said. “I actually got it back yesterday, as of five p.m.”

“Oh, yeah.” Raquel paused. “That’s right.”

“So what happened?” Evie asked. “You said we were gonna do something, go out. I left you like a gazillion messages.”

“Yeah.” Raquel let out a moose-sized yawn. “Sorry about that. I completely spaced. My parents went out and then Jose came over with a six-pack. We ended up kicking it, watching Fuel all night. *Boring*.” The moose yawned again.

“Oh.” Evie tried to sound calm, but she was burning up inside. “That’s cool. Did Alex or Mondo go out?”

“Nah,” Raquel said. “Nobody did nothing.”

Evie relaxed. At least she hadn’t missed anything, but that really didn’t surprise her. The five Flojos— herself, Alex, Mondo, Raquel and her boy Jose – shared one thing in common and that was the **ultimate** pursuit to . . . *chill*. Not lazy, like their name in Spanish implies, just to kick back, really. Odd, when hen you think about how much money the Flojo’s families had, they could all be doing something actually interesting, fun. Was it just mere contentment knowing they have the *privilege* to be so laid back? The cliché rebellion towards workaholic fathers? To many spins (and lyric interpretation) of Fugazi on Mondo’s Technics turn table? Whatever the reason, they all **shared** chill

time together, either poolside or plasma TV side. Pools and plasmas. What could **Evie** say? **The** combo of was an irresistibly seductive option in **Hacienda Heights** -- twenty minutes north of Malibu, twenty minutes south of Santa Barbara, but always twenty minutes too far for any of them to drive to either place and actually *do* something..

Flojo (correct pronouncation: Flow-joe is also what you call flip-flops which, as everybody knows, is a pretty lazy excuse for a shoe. All the Flojos wore flip flops – all the time. From high end Sanuks (forty five bucks a pair, Alex’s and Mondo’s favorite) to mid end metallic Havianas, (Raquel and Evie’s choice) to low end plastic bin specials from Sa-von (two for a dollar, this is what Jose liked). But attitude or shoe sense isn’t what brought the Flojos together. Evie and Raquel had been best friends since they were growing up in **Spanish Hills** and last year when they were freshman, Raquel hooked up with Jose. His friends Mondo and Alex were automatically included in the package and **then** they all started hanging out. **Besides, few** students at Villanova Preparatory High School were like them—rich kids whose family’s name, as well as the businesses they owned, contained *z* or *x* or *q* (read: *Latino*).

There was another group at Villanova, however, who had similar sounding last names as the Flojos. But the similarities stopped there. This group was the Sangros. **A Sangro, (short for sangrona, Spanish for full blown bitch) is a type of person a Flojo wouldn’t dream of sharing precious private chill time with— ever. The** Sangros were, in order of hierarchy, Alejandra de los Santos, Katie Luna, Yvette Ramos, Charlene Bautista and Eileen Garcia. Super, show offy money clips who **stood for everything the Flojos were so against.** Unlike the Flojos, who were Mexican American, the Sangros were born in Mexico, meaning they were *Mexican* Mexican and this, according to the Sangros,

made them much **more sophisticated**. The Sangros spoke Spanish equal to Castillian, while the Flojos **slurred** Cali Spanglish whenever they felt like it. The Flojos jet-setted between D.F and L.A. on every possible three day weekend, unlike the Flojos whose last trip south of the border was to Baja only to buy firecrackers for July 4th. As Mexican natives, the Sangros were resident students at Villanova, **while all the Flojos lived in or around Spanish Hills**. It took some hearty bank to be a resident student at Villanova, but the Sangros had fathers who pulled power punches in Mexico City. So in addition to their green cards, the Sangros flashed gold ones.

Evie didn't even have her own credit card, much less a gold one, though her parents definitely could afford it. **Years ago her** father started a successful family business, Conchita's Bread. His hard work (along with Evie's great-grandma **Conchitas's** *pan dulce* recipes) had gotten the Gomezes where they were now: in a big ol' Spanish-style house with a swimming pool in the back and a Cadillac Escalade in the front. Not quite ransom-worthy rich, but the Gomezes, like all the families in **Spanish Hills**, were pretty well off.

"So." Evie continued with Raquel. She took a deep breath. "I chopped off my hair."

"Huh?" Raquel said.

"My hair," Evie repeated. "It's gone."

"What do you mean?"

"I hacked it off. All of it and . . ." Evie paused for dramatic flair. "I dyed it blue."

Evie felt proud and a bit smug. She liked the idea that she did something so radical, on her own and without consulting Raquel. It was so unlike her.

“Yeah.” Raquel yawned. “I dyed my hair one time.”

“Really?” Evie wasn’t sure she believed this—it was *so Raquel* of Raquel to try and outdo Evie. “When?”

“One time when I was up in the Bay Area, like two summers ago. It totally clashed with my complexion. Brownies can’t be sporting blue. I changed it back the next day.”

“You never told me that,” Evie said, still suspicious.

“Cause it was really no big deal.”

Evie felt herself getting angrier. “So,” she said, changing the subject. “What’s the plan for tonight?”

“Um.” Raquel yawned again. “Jose heard about some party out **near Bard**. You in?”

“Definitely,” Evie said. **Actually, she was hoping they would drive down to L.A., do something covert, crazy. Spanish Hills was just sixty miles north of Los, but it was still suburbia and, of course, painfully uneventful. But Raquel did say the party was “out near Bard ” so that could mean anything.** “As long as I’m home by twelve thirty.” Evie added. “I mean, not even twelve thirty-two in the driveway. My mom will freak if I’m late again.”

“Yeah, and we don’t wanna freak out Vicki,” Raquel said. “She must have crapped bricks when she saw your hair, huh?”

“Not really,” Evie lied. “Like you said, it’s really no big deal.”

But Evie started to worry. What would her mother say about her hair? Vicki Gomez was known for possessing the legendary Gomez fury, unleashed when something didn't go her way.

Just then someone knocked on Evie's bedroom door. She sank into her bed and quickly pulled the sheet over her head. She would soon find out just how her mother felt about having a Smurf for a daughter.

"Evelina?"

Whew. It was only Lindsay, the housekeeper. "Are you awake?" Lindsay asked from the hallway.

"*Sì, sì,* Lindsay," Evie called out with her head still covered. "Come in." She said back into her cell, "I gotta go."

"Yeah, yeah. Oh, hey . . ." Raquel started. "One last thing."

"Yeah?" Evie asked.

"Did you dye your pubes too? 'Cause if you'd done your shrub, now, that woulda been *real* crazy ass."

"*Goodbye,* Raquel." Evie rolled her eyes and flipped her cell phone shut before tossing it onto the floor. Yup. No doubt about it. Raquel was definitely a bitch.

"Oh," Lindsay said as she came into Evie's room and saw Evie in bed. "You're still sleeping."

"No, I'm awake," Evie answered, peeking out from under the covers. "I'm just lying here."

Lindsay looked around Evie's room and sighed. "*Ay,* Evelina. This is not good. Let me clean in here today. It would make your mother so happy."

“Lindsay, I really don’t *care* what makes my mother happy.”

Lindsay looked above Evie’s bed. “Evie, **what did you do to that girl?**” she asked.

Lindsay was referring to Sanoe Lake. Evie had Sharpied an elaborate red heart around Sanoe’s image, making her the center of attention in her *Blue Crush* poster. **Yeah**, Michelle Rodriguez had a z in her name, but Sanoe was the only true surfer in the movie and, as a girl who **had just learned to surf**, Evie felt you just had to give props for that.

Evie turned to look up at the poster. When she did, the sheet slipped down, exposing her bright blue head.

“*Ay!*” Lindsay held one hand to her chest. “Evelina, what did you do? Your hair!”

“Oh, I cut it.” Evie nervously pulled at the sides.

“Yes, I see that.” Lindsay’s face remained shocked. “But the color. It’s . . . Does your mother know?”

“Well.” Evie tousled her hair nervously. “She’s always going on about money. So she should be happy that I saved her a hundred bucks to do my own hair.”

Lindsay’s eyes widened. “You pay a *hundred dollars* to have your hair done?”

Evie immediately felt embarrassed and tried to explain. “It’s not just for a cut. I mean, I get it washed, and they give it a blow-dry and style. Plus I sometimes get a one-on-one consultation, a lot of times with Viggo—he’s the salon owner.” But the more she said, the more Evie knew how shamelessly VH1 diva it all sounded.

“*Ay, Dios.*” Lindsay shook her head. “I just can’t imagine what your mother will think.”

“Think about what?” Vicki Gomez asked as she entered Evie’s bedroom. Even just out of the pool, Evie’s mother looked effortlessly stylish in her black one-piece and a plush white towel wrapped around her wet hair. There was no time to duck and cover.

“Oh my God!” Vicki Gomez slapped her hand over her mouth. “Evie! What the hell did you do to your hair?” She towered over Evie with her hands on her hips. “You’ve got to be out of your mind! Did you forget that school photos are next week? Do you expect your father and me to fork over four hundred dollars to document *this*?”

Evie looked over at Lindsay. *Yes, Lindsay, we also drop a few hundred for some measly school photos. Oh, but that does include wallet size!*

“What the *hell* were you thinking?” Vicki Gomez was furious. “I have a good mind to ground you for a month for this stunt!”

“*What?*” Evie pulled away from her mother. “Why? Just because *I* wanted to do something different to *my* hair?”

“No, because you don’t think. That’s the problem, Evie. You don’t think about how your actions affect other people.” She looked at Evie’s bed and pulled the pillow out from under her. “Great. You stained the pillow. Did you even think to rinse out your hair or put down a towel?” Vicki Gomez walked around the bed. “Oh God . . . look at this.”

Evie looked beside her bed. Sure enough, a trail of small blue blotches stretched across the cream-colored carpet from her bathroom to her bed. There was even **dye** on her precious Dean Miller plastic grass bed skirt she had begged her mother to buy **her for her last birthday**.

“Don’t worry, Senora Vicki,” Lindsay said, touching the spotted sheet. “I can get the stains out. They’re still fresh.”

“Your father is going to be pissed!” Vicki Gomez continued to rant. “Do *not* make any plans this evening until he gets home and we can discuss this.”

“You mean *tonight*?” Evie was horrified.

“Yes, *tonight*.” Evie’s mother knelt down and rubbed the stained carpet with her fingers.

“But Dad usually stays late on Saturdays and I told you I was going out with—”

“You’ll just have to wait.” Vicki Gomez stood back up and gave Lindsay the pillow. After telling her in Spanish to work on it immediately, she stalked out of Evie’s room. Lindsay followed silently.

No. There was no *way* that Evie was going to endure another night in the Gomez Penitentiary. She leaned over her bed, grabbed her cell, and speed dialed her father.

He’ll listen, she thought. Her father was a reasonable man, definitely much more reasonable than her mother. Evie knew she wouldn’t survive another night of lockdown. *I’ll go crazy, and who knows what I’ll do?* she thought. *Maybe I really will dye my pubes blue.*

2

In seconds, Evie was on the phone with her father. She pointed out that there were house rules and regulations for her recreational interests—how much time she could spend at Sea Street, no drinking **at parties**, **the** number of hours viewing **MTV2**—but no mention of cutting her hair and dyeing it blue. No rule, no violation, so no punishment, right? Surprisingly, her father agreed.

“Ay, Vicki.” Evie handed her mother back the phone, but she could hear her father talking to her mother through the phone. “The color’s not permanent and the hair will grow back. What teenager doesn’t experiment with change? Remember when we were dating and you wanted to look like Teena Marie?”

And so Evie was sprung.

She waited in the front driveway, finally out of Warden Vicki’s tight-fisted control and soon to be far, far away from the suffocating security gates of **Rio Hills**.

But eight turned to eight thirty, and eight thirty turned into 9 p.m. Evie grew impatient and then angry as she paced back and forth across the circular driveway. Where the hell was **that** Mondo? Finally, by nine thirty, his black Mercury Marauder slowly eased up the Gomez’s’ driveway. Evie was ready to **pop** a fuse.

“What’s **is deal?**” she snapped as she walked toward his car. “I’ve got a curfew, remember?”

“Oh, you know Mondo,” Jose started to explain as he got out of the front seat and took over the back with Raquel and Alex. “He ain’t called Fed Mex for nothing.”

“That’s right.” Mondo smiled into the rearview mirror. “When you absolutely, positively gotta be there on time, don’t be calling me. Besides, beggars can’t be—” He noticed Evie’s hair as she got into the front seat. “Whoa, what did you do to your hair?”

Jose snorted. “Hey, yeah. Blues Clues!”

“More like Blues Clueless.” Mondo laughed. “So why’d you mangle your mane? It looked good before.”

“You guys, shut up already,” Raquel said from the backseat. “Evie, don’t even listen to them. You can’t help it you screwed up your hair. Don’t even worry. We’ll take it to Viggo and he’ll fix it.”

Evie fastened her seat belt and crossed her arms. These were the so-called friends she was just dying to be with? She looked back at Alex and glared. “Don’t even say anything,” she warned him.

“Evie.” Alex **sighed**. “I really don’t care *what* you do with your hair.”

* * *

When they pulled up to Bard Road, Mondo killed his Marauder’s ignition and announced, “Okay, just ’cause I drove does *not* make me the designated driver. Fulby should already be here and you guys can get a lift back from him if you need to.”

“Dude, we can’t all go with Fulby,” Alex complained from the backseat. “He’s got a truck.”

“Yeah, a truck with a nice wide, flat bed.” Mondo reached under his feet and lifted the floor mat to retrieve a rolled-up baggie.

The party was at Pacifica Abalone Farm, out at Bard Beach. Bard Beach was a part of town known for hard living, where the constant exchange between dime bags and Hawaiian Tropic was a way of life. This was perfect for Evie. **Not quite L.A. but she felt even more scandalous spending her first night at Bard.**

“Okay, okay, already.” Evie was getting more impatient. “I’ll take the friggin’ bus back home if I have to.” She pulled her corduroy jacket from under her. “Let’s just go!”

“Whoa, slow down, Blues Clues,” Mondo said. “There’s no rush. We got our own party supplies here.” He dangled the baggie in front of her. “And this mota is *mean*.”

“Yeah, just kick back, Evie.” Raquel leaned into Jose and draped her arm over his shoulders. “We got all night to party.”

“No.” Evie opened the car door. “I *don’t* have all night, and you know I don’t smoke that shit. Just forget it. I’ll just meet up with you guys later.”

“You’re gonna go by yourself?” Raquel’s question sounded more like a challenge.

“Yeah,” Evie said. “What’s the problem?”

The problem was that the last thing Evie wanted to do was enter some Bard Beach party by herself, blue hair and all. But of course she wasn’t going to admit it.

“No,” Alex said reluctantly from the backseat. “You can’t be walking around alone, especially out here. You’ve got **Spanish Hills** written all over you. I’ll go with you.”

“You know what?” Raquel suddenly announced. “I’ll go too. I gotta take a piss.”

“*What?*” Jose asked. “But *you* were the one nagging for the new green.”

“Well,” Raquel said matter-of-factly. “When you gotta go, you gotta go.”

Evie followed Raquel and Alex headed down the **sandy path** toward the party. It was a typical fall evening in **South Cali**. The Santa Ana winds were already making their presence felt, but the residue of summer was still in the air. Evie suddenly felt less irritated and more excited. *Yes!* she thought. *Tonight, the switch is ON.*

“I think everyone’s at the other end of the farm, past these tanks,” Alex guessed.

“I can hear the band.”

Evie stooped over one of the low concrete tanks. “What’s in these things?” In the moonlight, she could barely make out what seemed to be thousands of brown, rough-looking, quarter-sized **organisms** clinging to the tank’s walls.

“Abalone spawn!” Alex deepened his voice. “Very dangerous stuff.”

Raquel put her hand into the tank. “Man, this water’s cold—oh my God!”

Suddenly her whole arm was pulled into the bubbling seawater. Her expression changed from curiosity to sheer terror. “Oh my God! My hand!”

“Raquel!” Evie shrieked. “Alex! **Oh my God!** Help her!” She went up behind Raquel to pull her arm out.

Raquel started laughing, then calmly pulled her hand out. Both she and Alex busted up.

“**Man,** you’re such a sucker!” Raquel laughed harder and slapped her wet **fingers** on Evie’s shoulder. “That was a good one!”

“You guys are such jerks.” Evie tried to wipe her shoulder.

“It’s just baby abalone,” Alex said. “Look.” He stooped over and picked something off the sand. It was a shell, iridescent and perfectly intact. “Isn’t this pretty?”

Evie took the shell in her hand and nodded.

“Let me polish it up for you,” Alex offered. “It’ll look nice on a cord or something.” He took the shell back from Evie. “Yeah, these tanks are like a little nursery for the abalone,” he went on. “Check it out—it takes like five years just to get one abalone full size.”

“Five years?” Raquel said, looking over the tanks. “Damn, they must crank some bank here! If we got Mondo to cultivate this instead, we’d all be kickin’ it, pimp style.”

* * *

Alex was overreacting about Raquel and Evie needing an escort at the party. The party crowd was sketchy but far from threatening. But that was Alex, always the overprotective gentleman. Alex wasn't as fine as tall, lanky Mondo, with his mop of black ringlets, and he wasn't as funny as Jose. But between Mondo, Jose, and Raquel, Evie guessed you needed someone like Alex around.

The scene was typical Bard Boys crew, more AA than A-list. The Bard Boys were just a bunch of tanned homeboys who **had** claimed Bard Beach **generations ago** and **they had all** definitely done their time in **either** Folsom, rehab, or endless days **hustling on** the beach. People might picture a California beach party as a bunch of fit, golden-tanned teenagers gathered around a bonfire, but no such **postcard exists from Bard**.

Evie, Raquel, and Alex filled up at the nearest keg, and Evie quickly took a gulp from her cup. Evie didn't really like beer, and keg beer was the worst. Still, she felt she had some catching up to do.

"Hey," Raquel said. "I still gotta pee." She grabbed Evie's arm. "Come on, let's go find the little girls' room."

When Evie and Raquel finally found the Porta Potti, Raquel rattled the locked plastic door. "Dude!" she called out. "Come on! There's a line!"

After a few moments the door opened. When Evie looked up, she couldn't believe who stepped out: Alejandra **de** los Santos, *the* head Sangro of Villanova High. Even in the doorway of an outhouse, Alejandra looked like a **lighter shade of** Beyonce, ready to give a Grammy acceptance speech. She sported the typical Sangro look—knee-high

boots, and **layered** hair with highlights. Evie suddenly felt intimidated in her flimsy flip-flops and a tank top that she didn't quite fill out.

"What are *you* doing here?" Raquel was taken aback.

"What am *I* doing here?" Alejandra carefully stepped down from the outhouse. "My second cousin Gabriel owns this farm. He *is* Pacifica Abalone."

"So?" Raquel squinted at her. "Shouldn't you be home watching *Sabado Gigante* or something?"

"Shouldn't you be reading *Let's Go Mexico* and actually *go*?" Alejandra sounded bored as she took her last high heel step onto the sand. "Raquel, I've been coming to his parties for years" She ran her white-tipped nails through her **highlighted** hair. "I've never seen *you* here before."

Suddenly Evie felt nervous. Truth was, none of the Flojos were officially invited to the Bard party. Jose had snagged a flyer from a friend who worked at **the** Kinko's downtown and that flyer, like so many he got for *pachangas* **below Spanish Hills**, led the Flojos to Bard Beach.

"Well. I gotta take a crap," Raquel said as she pushed by Alejandra. "*Excuse* me."

She stepped up to the outhouse and shut the door behind her. Evie was now stuck alone with Alejandra. This was a first.

"So." Alejandra smacked her lips and looked straight into Evie's eyes. "How's the doughnut shop?"

"Excuse me?" Evie answered, trying to look as fearless as Alejandra seemed.

"Doesn't your dad sell doughnuts or something?" Alejandra pulled out a cigarette and tapped it on the carton.

“No, my dad *owns* a company,” Evie said, surprised that she was actually bragging about her father’s business. “His chain, all **four** stores, sell *pan dulce*, not doughnuts.”

“*Pan dulce?*” Alejandra laughed as she took a drag on her cigarette. “You gotta be kidding.”

“No,” Evie said. “Why would I be?”

“Well, I wouldn’t know anything about fast food,” Alejandra said. “My family’s more scholarly, I guess. My father is the president at U.N.A.M. in Mexico, and I’m going to be doing an internship at **Cal State Channel Islands** this semester.”

“Good for you, Alejandra,” Evie answered, looking up at the outhouse. What was taking Raquel so long?

“Yeah,” Alejandra continued. “They’re getting a new Chancellor soon, Dr. Frank **de la Fuente**.”

“*Frank de la Fuente?*” Evie asked.

“That’s right.” She blew smoke upward. “I’ll be working with him directly. Then I’m gonna apply for a internship at Yale next summer and—”

But Evie wasn’t listening anymore. When she heard the name Frank **de la Fuente**, she felt her stomach drop *hard*. Frank **de la Fuente** was Dee Dee’s father. Dee Dee had been Evie and Raquel’s best friend when they were little girls growing up in Spanish Hills. Raquel was Evie’s official best friend now, but Dee Dee was actually the closest friend Evie ever had. Evie had practically lived at the **de la Fuentes**’. Evie hated to admit it, but Dee Dee’s mother was the mother Evie’d wished she had. Margaret **de la Fuente** didn’t put on airs like Evie’s mom, and Margaret was always home, always around to talk

instead of chasing **department store sales**. But when Dee Dee was twelve, Margaret got **sick and** suddenly died. Dee Dee and her father moved **out of California**, and Evie hadn't heard from her in the last four years. Dee Dee never answered Evie's e-mails or returned her calls. To this day, Evie still didn't understand exactly what happened. Just hearing Dee Dee's name gave Evie a sunken feeling.

Suddenly the Porta Potti door opened and Raquel stepped out, zipping up her jeans.

"What, you're still here?" she said to Alejandra.

"You know what?" Alejandra put out her cigarette. "I think Gabriel would just love to meet some gate-crashers. Why don't you and your little blue *baya* stay put, here by the toilets and I'll go get him?" She pushed by both of them.

As soon Alejandra took off, Evie snapped at Raquel, "Why did you do that? You're gonna get us kicked out!"

"Nah." Raquel drank her beer calmly. "If it's the Gabriel I'm thinking of, which I'm sure it is, he won't kick us out. I've partied before **with some older dude named** Gabriel who said he had a fish farm out this way—it must be the same guy. Besides, a first-rate dope buddy is definitely more important than some second-rate second cousin."

"So did you hear what Alejandra said?" Evie asked as they walked away from the Porta Potti. "About Dee Dee's dad being at **Channel Islands**?"

"Yeah, I heard," Raquel said. "How come you didn't know?"

Evie shrugged. She felt foolish. "Doesn't your dad keep in touch with Dee Dee's?"

“We get Christmas cards,” Raquel said. “Some family photo with a pre-printed signature that you just know was sent by some assistant.”

Evie’s heart sank. Her family had received the same type of card for the past few years. She always looked for a handwritten note from Dee Dee but never found one. She brought her cup to her mouth and tapped the last trail of foam into her mouth. This was not the kind of evening she had expected.

“Yeah, and I thought you were, like, best friends,” Raquel continued.

“We were,” Evie said. “I mean, all three of us were.”

“No.” Raquel shook her head. “You and Dee were always tighter. I would’ve thought she’d call you right away.”

“Yeah, I guess.”

“So . . .” Raquel drank more beer. “You wanna go check out the band?”

Evie threw her cup on the ground. “Nah, not really.” She crossed her arms. She suddenly felt cold. “You wanna go get more beer?”

Raquel made a face. “Nah, not feeling it.”

Evie looked around. She didn’t know what to do. She didn’t want to leave the party, but she sure as hell didn’t want to stand around talking with Raquel. She was making her feel worse. Evie looked at her watch: 11 p.m.

“You know what? Let’s go back to Mondo’s car.”

“Mondo’s *car*?” Raquel raised one eyebrow. “*You* wanna go back with Mondo and Jose? You know, they aren’t just ‘hanging out.’”

“Of course I know that,” Evie snapped. “I’m not an idiot, Raquel.”

“I’m not saying you are. It’s just—”

“You know what?” Evie interrupted. “This night wouldn’t be such a big deal if I hadn’t just been grounded for two weeks. And that’s your fault. If I hadn’t listened to you at the last so-called party you took me to, I would’ve been home on time. And *then* you didn’t even have the decency to call the first night I get to go out. Why is it such a problem that I want to have a really good time tonight?” Evie couldn’t believe how emotional she was getting in front of Raquel.

Now both of Raquel’s eyebrows were raised. “There’s no problem,” she answered coolly. “I just didn’t realize you were having such a lousy time, that’s all.”

“Well, I am. It’s my first night out in weeks and I was all looking forward to being out with my friends and then I gotta find out all this about Dee Dee from Alejandra—” Evie stopped herself. She felt on the verge of tears. “So let’s just go back to the damn car.”

“I’m not stopping you.” Raquel inhaled uncomfortably.

“Okay,” Evie said. “Let’s just go already.”

And for once, it was Evie who grabbed Raquel by the arm and took the lead.

3

The next morning Evie awoke to her mother bursting into her bedroom.

“E-*vie!*” she said. “Get up. It’s late.” She opened Evie’s white wooden shutters, flinching when her hands came up covered in dust. “Ewww! **This is disgusting.**”

“*Mom.*” Evie rolled over on her side and covered her eyes with **her** sheet. Her head was throbbing, and her mother’s loud voice was making it worse. “Why do you have to break out the negativity so early?”

“Early?” Evie’s mother crossed the room. “It’s already past eleven, and Lindsay’s coming in here to clean.”

“Mom, *no*,” Evie whined. “I don’t want Lindsay rummaging through all my stuff. I can clean my own room.”

“No, you can’t.” Evie’s mother stalked into the bathroom and looked around. “Lindsay needs to work on these carpet stains.” She came out of the bathroom, leaned over, and pulled up a ball of surf wax embedded in the carpet. The wax had collected Molesto’s thick long black hairs and God knew what else. “Evie this is disgusting.” Fortunately for Evie, the intro of “**Funky Town**” started up from her cell phone.

“Evie,” her mother began as Evie leaned over to get her phone from the pile of last night’s clothes. “I told you I don’t want your friends calling your cell when you’re home. When you start paying—”

“Mom.” Evie found her phone and saw Raquel was calling. “I have free weekend minutes and—” She flipped open the phone. “Hello?”

“Hey, it’s me.”

“Evie,” her mother said one last time as she finally headed out of the room. “Get up so Lindsay can clean in here.”

“So I asked my dad about Dee Dee this morning,” Raquel said.

It took Evie a split second to remember what Raquel was talking about. “You did?”

“Uh-huh,” she said. “And he confirmed it.”

“Confirmed what, exactly?” Evie asked.

“That the **De la Fuentes** are definitely moving back to **Spanish Hills**.”

“And he knew?” Evie asked. “Why didn’t he say anything? Why didn’t he tell you?” Evie had cotton mouth and her head was pounding like a mofo.

“Oh, you know how ol’ Charlie Diaz is.” Raquel yawned. “With his mind on his money and his money on his mind. He isn’t concerned with long-lost family friends. In fact, he’s actually known for weeks—he got an e-mail from Dee Dee’s dad. My mom wants to have a little welcome-back party for them. She says it’s the proper thing to do, especially to introduce Dee Dee’s new mom to everybody.”

“*New mom?*” Evie repeated. The Gomezes had received an announcement of Mr. De la Fuente’s sudden second marriage but knew nothing about his second wife.

“*New madre?*” Raquel asked. “Does that sound better?”

“I’m really not in the mood for semantics right now.” Evie turned to her other side and hugged her Hawaiian-print Mogu.

“So,” Raquel said. “How are you feeling?”

“Totally dissed,” Evie said.

“No, I mean after last night, with Mondo and Jose.”

“Oh. Uh, okay, I guess,” Evie told her. “I’m just really tired. Like exhausted, and my head is killing me.”

“That’ll wear off,” Raquel said. “Just drink lots of water and sleep some more.”

“Yeah, like maybe out in the pool house.” Evie moaned. “My mom was like a Room Raider (From the MTV show, should this be capitalized?) at the crack of dawn and now she’s got Lindsay preparing to invade.”

“Oh, yeah, that reminds me. My mom’s gonna be calling your mom about the welcome-back gig,” Raquel said.

“When’s it gonna be?” Evie asked.

“Next Saturday,” she said.

“You mean *this* Saturday?” Evie asked.

“I thought it was too early for semantics,” Raquel said. “But yeah, this coming Saturday.”

“What kind of party?”

“Not really a party *party*,” Raquel said. “It’ll probably be just my parents, your parents, and some other Callaway-swinging golf goons from the SCC.” She yawned again. “Just a little something.”

When Evie finally hung up, she actually began to feel excited. Dee Dee was coming back. They were going to be neighbors and classmates but best of all friends again. And just in time, because between the Sangros, her mother, and Raquel, Evie was jonesing for a new ally.

4

The following Saturday evening, when Evie arrived with her parents at the Diazes’ home, it was clear that the “little something” Kitty Diaz had scheduled was going to be a full-blown soiree. Evie saw two valet parking attendants setting up a station near the Diazes’ mailbox, and several caterers in crisp white *guayaberas* were lugging in an oversized cast iron *comal*.

“Oh, look, Ruben.” Vicki Gomez excitedly nudged her husband. “They’re going to have *tortillas de maiz!* Handmade.”

“Kitty’s going all out.” Evie’s father smiled. “Again.” Then he frowned. “I wonder why she didn’t order any of my **pan dulce**.”

Vicki Gomez looked Evie over as Ruben Gomez rang the front doorbell. “Oh, Evie,” she said. “I wish you would take care of that hair. This is bad.”

“Bad for who?” Evie asked. **And actually, she had taken care of her Viggo even out the sides and gave her some bangs, but still, she felt nervous. The last thing she needed was her mother dissing a costly, last minute fix -up that Raquel had so graciously charged on her own credit card.**

“You could at least have put on some dress shoes,” her mother went on.

“Dress shoes?” Evie asked. Did anyone even use that term anymore? “When have I ever worn *dress* shoes?”

“Well, you could have least *dressed* appropriately.”

Evie felt she was definitely dressed appropriately, considering that she practically lived in shorts and ^{Hawaiianas} **Havianas**. Tonight she wore **fancy corduroy Beverly flojos** and a secondhand blouse that she had found at a *segunda* downtown, cream colored and lacy. It looked perfect with her vintage straight legs, and she had even put on the pearl stud earrings that her *tía* Isabel gave her for her eighth-grade graduation. She knew Dee Dee would approve, especially of the blouse. As kids, they often went with Lindsay to the thrift stores downtown and loved trying on all the used bridal veils and *quinceañera* gloves.

“Vicki.” Evie’s father came to her rescue just as Kitty Diaz opened the front door. “Evie looks fine. Just drop it.”

Vicki Gomez started to scowl, but rearranged her face as soon as Kitty opened the door.

“Ruben, Vicki!” Kitty welcomed Evie’s parents into her house. “How are you? Thank you so much for coming early.”

“Sure, Kitty,” Ruben Gomez said. “We are at your disposal.”

“Hello, Evie.” Mrs. Diaz smiled at Evie. “Oh, look at you. Raquel mentioned you colored your hair. Very creative.”

“Thanks.” Evie looked up at her mother and gave her a smug little smile.

Kitty Diaz resembled Evie’s mother in appearance and style. They both wore minimal makeup and had no-nonsense intended to convey a career woman image, but the similarities ended there. **Kitty Diaz was chapter president of Madrinas, the Latina Leadership Network and she had also co-founded Hi Tech Aztecs, her and Mr. Diaz’s software company.** Vicki Gomez, on the other hand, rarely lifted a finger except to point to which Isabella Fiore bag or Via Spigas she wanted the salesclerk to ring up.

As soon as Evie and her parents entered the Diazes’ foyer, Raquel called from upstairs, “Hey, Evie! Come on up. We can hang out before the serious alkies arrive.”

“Raquel!” Mrs. Diaz looked up from the foyer and threw her a stern look. “Act right! Remember, this isn’t just a party for you and your friends.”

“I know, I know,” Raquel said. “I was just messin’.”

Mrs. Diaz led the Gomezes into the kitchen. “You are *not* going to believe how much this caterer is charging me for the last-minute job,” she said. “The cake-cutting fee *alone*. . .”

Evie started up the stairs to Raquel’s room. “My mom said your mom might need help. Maybe I should offer to cut the cake at a discount?”

“What you could offer is to give her an elephant tranquilizer and . . .” Raquel spoke from the side of her mouth. “I’m sure she has one somewhere in that panic drawer of hers.” Raquel let out an exaggerated sigh. “I don’t know why my mother always insists on throwing these parties. They always make her so stressed out and bitchy.” She looked Evie over. “By the way, ’scuse me, Miss Teen Vogue.”

“What?” Evie asked.

“Nothing.” Raquel brushed it off. “You actually look nice.”

Actually?

When they got to her room, Raquel shut the door and held up a bottle of champagne. “Check it out. Veuve Clicquot. Kitty Diaz is sparing no expense on *La familia* De la Fuente.” Raquel started to uncork the bottle. “Oh, when I was sneaking it out, I forgot to get glasses. Looks like we’ll have to take swigs. Not very sophisticated, huh?”

Evie took the first swig of champagne. “Whoa, slow down,” Rachel said. “There’s plenty more where this came from.”

Evie took a smaller sip before giving Raquel back the bottle. She realized she only really ever drank when she was around Raquel. MORE ABOUT HER

RELATIONSHIP WITH RAQUEL

Nonetheless, Evie welcomed the champagne. “I just wanna loosen up,” Evie said as she flopped on Raquel’s canopied bed. “It’s so *wrong* that Dee Dee’s back in Spanish Hills and still hasn’t called.”

“Have you called her?” Raquel asked.

“No. Have you?” Evie suddenly felt awkward and found a loose cuticle that needed attention.

“I don’t have her number,” Raquel answered.

“Well, she has mine,” Evie said. “I mean, at least my parents’. They haven’t changed their number in years. She has no excuse for not calling.”

“Ahhh.” Raquel took a swig of champagne and looked dreamily at the ceiling. “And so the novella between the wayward friend and the forgotten woman left behind continues. *Dos mujeres, dos caminos* . . .”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing, really,” Raquel said. “I just think you’re obsessing too much about Dee Dee.”

“*Obsessing?*”

“Well, maybe not obsessing.” Raquel took another swig from the bottle and passed it back to Evie. “But I mean, come on. What’s the big deal about Dee Dee? Even when we were little kids, you always had to be around *Dee Dee*. It was Dee Dee this, Dee Dee that. Nothing was ever fun unless *Dee Dee* was around.. Dear little Dee Dee...”

Evie said nothing. Raquel was always odd when when it came to Evie’s friendship with Dee Dee.. Celososa, Evie’s father would call Raquel, but Evie wasn’t sure if it was jealousy. But whatever you called it now, nearly four years later, the celososa in Raquel was flaring up again.

“Don’t take this wrong, Evie,” Raquel said. “But maybe you just need a man. I was talking to Jose and—”

“You were talking about *me* to Jose?” Evie glared at Raquel. “I can’t believe you discussed my love life with him!”

“Oh, I didn’t realize you *had* a love life.” Raquel smirked. “When did that start?”

Evie took a larger swig from the bottle. “Raquel, do not talk about me to Jose. I know he’s, like, the ‘love of your life’ and everything, but there’s gotta be some boundaries.”

“He *is* the love of my life.” Raquel frowned.

“Well, you’d never know it,” Evie said. “The way you two fight all the time.”

“We don’t fight,” Raquel snapped. “Sometimes we disagree on things, sometimes our disagreements get heated, but we aren’t fighting. That’s what you call passion, Evie. Besides, you sure aren’t one to judge a relationship. You’ve never **even** had one.”

The room grew quiet, and Evie felt uncomfortable. The last thing she wanted was to fight with Raquel, but Evie hated it when Raquel acted like such a know-it-all.

Raquel stepped into the bathroom to switch on her flattening iron.

“So . . .” Evie tried to change the subject. That seemed the only way to keep the peace between her and Raquel. “I wonder what Dee Dee looks like now.”

“Yeah, I wonder,” Raquel answered halfheartedly.

“Um,” Evie started. “Remember when her mother had that Aladdin birthday party and insisted we all dress up?”

“Oh, yeah.”

“Yeah,” Evie continued. “She had just seen *Aladdin on Ice* or something like that, right?”

“Something like that.” Raquel came back into the bedroom. “That party was the worst.”

“I thought it was fun,” Evie said. “You had on that really cute outfit, the harem pants and that halter.”

“**Hmm..**” Raquel started warming up. “I guess at the time it was okay.”

“Dee Dee’s mom was so cool,” Evie said. “She always threw the best parties.”

“My mom throws good parties.” Raquel frowned.

“Hey, Raq!” Jose was tapping on Raquel’s bedroom door.

“Come in,” Raquel called. “It’s open.”

Jose strutted into the room with an exaggerated pimp limp. Alex was close behind. “Hey, hey, hey,” he said. “So this is where the pre-party action is, huh?” He saw the Veuve Clicquot and nodded. “Good thinking, **Agent 69.**”

“This is just the beginning,” Raquel gloated as she went **over to lock her** bedroom door. “Once everyone gets bombed, we’ll have the run of the place. Where’s Mondo?”

“Mondo,” Jose said slyly, “had a very important *drop off* in the valley. He might be by later.”

Jose looked Raquel up and down. “Damn, Rocky.” He whistled low, eyeing Raquel’s super-tight jeans and low-cut camisole. “You sure know how to rock a fella!”

“You like?” She twirled around, the sheerness of her tiered cami exposing a bit too much skin.

“What do you think?” Jose gestured below his belt. “Check out the Miracle-Gro!”

“Jose!” Raquel snapped. “Why do you always have to ruin it?” She went to the bathroom and got her flattening iron. “I swear!”

“What?” Jose looked at her, then at Alex and Evie, perplexed. “That’s a compliment. You want me to say you look ugly?”

“Just act right,” Raquel **reprimanded**.

Jose cowered a bit before taking over the window seat in Raquel’s room. He looked out across the Diazes’ backyard and whistled again. “Check out the fancy spread downtown.”

“Didn’t my mother just go crazy?” Raquel leaned against the bathroom doorway while she straightened her long, wavy hair.

“Yeah.” Alex sat on the edge of the bed, near Evie. “We saw some dude laying out flowers and some of those floating candles in the pool.”

“Ooh.” Evie went over to the window. “Lemme see.”

Jose was right. The Diazes’ backyard was pure swank. Their pool was glowing in candlelight, and multicolored *papeles picados* hung across the yard from tree to tree.

“Are the paper cutouts custom?” Evie asked.

“Oh, yeah,” Raquel said. “Each **papel** has like a little scene from when the De la Fuentes lived here. There’s some of their first house here in Spanish Hills, some from the summers we all stayed in Cabo, and oh, that one of the Christmas we spent at Lake Tahoe. ’Member?”

“Hey, can I smoke **out** a little?” Jose interrupted, sounding bored.

“Jose.” Raquel gave him a look. “Quit acting stupid.”

“What?” He pulled out some rolling papers from his front pocket. **“I’m stupid** just ’cause I asked a question? Remember what Mr. Mercer said? There is no such thing as a stupid question, only stupid—”

“Boyfriends?” Raquel finished his sentence. “And don’t even get me busted by smoking in here. If you wanna be high all night, you can just go home now. This is an important night—we don’t want any drama. Right, Evie?”

“Right,” Evie agreed as she got back on Raquel’s bed.

“Well.” Jose opened the window and looked out again. “Maybe I’ll get one of the bartenders to give me a lift home. Say, like maybe that sweet redhead setting up the bar?”

“What redhead?” Alex walked to the window and looked out.

“Ugh!” Raquel put her flattening iron on the bathroom counter, went over to Jose, and dropped onto his lap. “Over my dead body.”

Jose wrapped his arms around her waist. “Hey, I got nothing against necrophilia if you don’t.”

“My,” Raquel dug her face into his neck. “Such a big word for a little boy.”

“Get a room already.” Alex rolled his eyes. “Oh, wait, we *are* in a room already.”

Evie handed Alex the Veuve and he held it up to eye level. “This is dwindling,” he said. “We’re gonna have to get more.” He took a short swig and handed the bottle to Evie. “But don’t drink to much. Don’t’ forget we’re on Dawn Patrol tomorrow.”

Weeks ago, actually just a day before Evie was grounded, Alex not only helped her pick out a new long board, (a step up from the beginner soft top she practiced on all summer) but he had promised to take her on dawn patrol. Dawn patrol, as Alex claimed, was the time of day any serious surfer got to the beach, in

this case, Sea Street. You staked out your territory long before the Sea Street break got flooded with locals (which they, living in Spanish Hills, were definitely not— locals that is) and you got hours of free parking, way before the meters enforced inflated weekend rates. To Evie, getting up so early on a non-school day was entirely out of the question. But with Alex’s persistence, followed with a promise of breakfast burritos at Johnny’s on the Avenue, Evie finally gave in. Besides, as she served out her mother’s sentence, she and her new Hanson longboard had been subjected to dry land two weeks too long. Evie had actually began to look forward to dawn patrol.

“Oh, no worries.” Evie insisted. “I’m down for the dawn.”

“So how long did Dee Dee live in Mexico?” Alex asked.

“Almost four years.” Evie took one last sip from the bottle. **She was already feeling buzzed, and the memory of last weekend’s hangover reminded her she didn’t want to go *there* again.** “Dee Dee moved there when we were all twelve.”

“Man, I’d love to live in Mexico,” Alex said. “Like down south, Puerto Escondido.”

“Well, Dee Dee didn’t live in southern Mexico,” Evie said. “She lived in the Polanco District, right in the Mexico City.”

“Yeah, and you know she had to hate it,” Raquel added. “Dee Dee’s a total country mouse.”

“Raquel!” It was Kitty Diaz in the hallway. She jiggled the locked doorknob and spoke sternly. “Come out and join the rest of the party. We have guests. You are a hostess, and you are being rude.”

“Oh, *shit*.” Raquel bolted up from Jose’s lap and fanned the telltale smoke through the open window. “I better get out there.” She called to her mother, “Sorry, Mom! Evie’s just helping me pin my bra straps down. I’ll be right out.” Then she told Jose and Alex, “You guys wait awhile and then come out and meet us. **And remember, be as tolerant of Dee Dee as possible. She can be freaky shy.** And you”—she looked at Jose—“stay away from **that redhead**.”

* * *

Evie recognized many of party guests from the SCC, the Saticoy Country Club. Others were colleagues of the Diaz’s, fellow Hi Tech Aztecs, who’d **also** made their money through computers or some kind of **software** technology. A lot of them had families and homes in **Spanish Hills** but **held positions, apartments** and, as Raquel claimed, *sanchas* stashed up north, in Silicon Valley.

After they made the obligatory rounds of the party, the Flojos pretty much stayed to themselves. Evie anxiously watched the front door, Alex worked on sneaking more booze, and Jose tapped about every platter that came his way.

“What’s with your mom serving all this Mexican food?” Jose asked Raquel as he took a quesadilla triangle off a passing tray.

“What do you mean?” Raquel asked. “What should she be serving?”

“I dunno, but didn’t the De la Fuentes just come in from Mexico? Don’t you think they’ve had their fill?”

“You are *not* bagging on my mom,” Raquel insisted.

“No, I’m bagging on her choice of food.” Jose took a bite and immediately made a face. “Ugh. What is this?”

“Jose, don’t be a jerk. It’s a goat cheese quesadilla. Obviously too refined for your Taco Bell palate.”

“Hey,” he warned. “Don’t *you* bag on the Bell.”

Evie couldn’t stop glancing at Alex’s Nixon watch. It was already seven forty. The De la Fuentes were over half an hour late. Didn’t anyone notice? Evie was sure her mother did.

By eight o’clock, after the appetizers were almost gone and everyone was toasty from an hour’s worth of free booze, Charlie Diaz made an announcement to the crowd. “Okay, everybody, I just got a call from Frank.” He was pink faced from the heat and excitement. “They’re on their way. They just turned on Camino Coral. They’ll be here any second.”

“What, did Frank forgot how to get around his old neighborhood?” someone called out, and everyone laughed as if it was the funniest joke in the world.

A few minutes later to cheers and shouts, the De la Fuentes’ car finally pulled into the Diazes’ circular driveway. Evie immediately felt even more nervous. She went to the downstairs bathroom and discovered that her anxiety was visible—there was two small sweat rings under each of her arms. *Shit*. That was the problem with vintage clothes—they were always made from some polyester blend that generated sweat and, worse, a mad stink. Evie grabbed one of the monogrammed guest towels hanging from the chrome towel bar and reached under her blouse, patting each armpit dry. She looked for deodorant in the Diazes’ bath cabinet and discovered that Kitty, just like Evie’s mother,

bought **the** Trader Joe's natural **stuff**, which, **naturally**, didn't work. Evie heard more shouts and greetings. She quickly rubbed on the deodorant anyway and raced back to join the party.

When Evie returned, Frank De la Fuente, Dee Dee's father, was already standing in the Diazes' foyer. Next to him was a short, smartly dressed woman. Evie's and Raquel's parents were cooing over both of them. Mr. De la Fuente looked a lot like Evie remembered: the same **broad** smile and thick, bushy eyebrows that were now a bit grayer. He still wore a three-piece suit and silk tie, his standard uniform.

"*Bienvenidos!* Welcome!" Evie's father exclaimed. "Frank, it's been too long!"

"Yes, yes!" Mr. De la Fuente agreed excitedly. "It's so wonderful to be back! To be home."

"Look." Evie's father pushed her forward as if she was a prop or something. "Here's Evie!"

"Oh, Evie!" Mr. De la Fuente took her hands in his, stood back, and beamed. "*Mi'ja*, let me look at you! Such a beautiful young lady you've become!" He looked over at Raquel, who was standing next to her. "And Raquel, *tú también! Qué bonita! Mira*, I want you both to meet my wife, Graciela."

Graciela was a stout, **fair-skinned** woman with dark eyes and dark hair cut in a short bob. Two large, ornate earrings swayed like ship lanterns from her ears.

What Mr. De la Fuente offered in warmth, Graciela definitely cooled down with **ice of her own**. Her brrr factor was cranked to high as she offered a lukewarm hello, surveyed the Diazes' home, and asked **Kitty Diaz**, "**Is our Lexus** going to be safe with those men outside?"

"Oh, yes, of course." Kitty put her arm around **Graciela's** shoulders. "We've used **this company** for years."

“*Buenas noches*, Graciela,” Evie said with her best Spanish accent. “*Soy* Evie. Dee Dee and I have been best friends since we were little kids.”

“Yeah,” Raquel added. “We’ve all been friends since we were, like, seven years old.”

“Really?” Graciela looked them over. Evie suddenly felt like a piece of cheap jewelry Graciela wouldn’t even bother to try on. “What did you say your names were again?”

“Uh, I’m Evie,” Evie started awkwardly. “And this is—”

“Evie?” Graciela asked. “What kind of name is that?”

“Well, my real name is—”

“Where’s Dee Dee?” Raquel interrupted, looking around Graciela.

“You know how you girls are,” Mr. De la Fuente said as he leaned over and took off his wife’s wrap. “We couldn’t get her off her cell phone—she has been on that thing since we arrived. She’s going to drive over herself in a little while.”

“Oh?” Evie’s mother looked over at Kitty Diaz disapprovingly. “Well, I do hope she arrives soon. Kitty ordered a *tres leches* especially for—”

“We’re just excited to see our little Dee Dee,” Evie’s father said quickly.

“Especially Evie.”

“Dee Dee has her own car?” Evie directed the question to Mr. De la Fuente but looked at her mother.

“Of course.” Mr. De la Fuente put his arm around her. “But no worries, *mi’ja*. She’ll be here soon.”

Evie felt confused. Why hadn't Dee Dee just come with her parents? Why didn't Graciela know who Evie or Raquel was? But most importantly, she thought as she discreetly sniffed to the left and then to the right, why hadn't she put on more deodorant?

* * *

By 9:30 p.m., Dee Dee still hadn't arrived and the party was already dying down. The singer of the band, "*un trio*" that Charlie Diaz hired, had **shaken her maraca** one last time and the caterers were gathering up the dessert dishes and what was left over from the *tres leches* cake. Evie was feeling as uptight as her mother looked.

"This is very rude of Dee Dee," she overheard her mother say to Evie's father. "Very inconsiderate."

Evie was surprised to find herself in full agreement with her mother. She couldn't believe that Dee Dee was being so uncool on this night of all nights. Evie felt Dee Dee wasn't just blowing off the party, she was blowing off **her**. Evie's eyes started to well up. Oh God. The last thing she wanted to do was to get **all teary Omorosa**.

She walked around the party again and was relieved to finally spot Jose and Alex in the Diazes' great room. They'd get her mind **off Dee Dee's absence and she immediately went over to join them**. They were chatting it up with some older female guest and a server. Both the women were laughing and speaking Spanish.

As the server left to gather more plates from other guests, the guest switched to Spanglish. "But *ay*, no," she insisted to Alex. "Aren't you ever afraid? What about sharks? And those waves are so big. *Tan grande!*"

Her bangs were blown out high and her neckline was low. She had on a black (was that Lycra?) minidress and, in bold contrast, wore light blue, almost white, contacts.

“Well, I wouldn’t say I’m a *big wave* surfer,” Alex said, not noticing Evie had just joined them. “I mean, I’m no Laird Hamilton, but—”

“*Quién?*” the woman asked.

“Oh.” Alex waved a hand dismissively. “He’s just some surfer.”

Some surfer? What was Alex saying? Laird Hamilton was, like, Alex’s idol.

“Yeah.” Jose smiled. “We should take you out with us sometime.”

“*We?*” Alex ribbed Jose. “Dude, you can’t even **manage** a boogie board.” He turned his attention back to the woman. “I’ll take you out and you’ll be totally safe. I used to be a lifeguard.”

Yeah, Evie thought, *a junior lifeguard duty at the country club’s kiddie pool.*

“But I don’t even know how to swim.” The woman gave a helpless giggle and tugged on her tight mini, which was riding up her thighs.

“Oh, I can help you.” Alex shook the ice around in his glass. “I’ll have you doing a few basics strokes in no time.”

“Yeah.” Jose grinned. “I’m *sure* he will.”

“You”—the woman playfully slapped Jose on his chest—“are gonna give me problems. I can see that already.”

Evie was being blatantly ignored and her patience was wearing thin. She finally offered her hand to the woman. “Hello, I’m Evie.”

“Evie?” The woman’s piercing **white** eyes penetrated hers. “Evie Gomez?”

“Uh, yeah . . .”

“*Ay!* Evie!” The woman set her dessert plate on a chair and wrapped her arms around Evie. She was suffocated by flesh, lots of hair, and what seemed to be a padded bra, a very padded bra. “Evie!” the woman exclaimed. “I’ve been asking everyone where you’ve been!”

“Excuse me.” Evie felt lost. “But have we met?”

“Evie! It’s me! **Dela!**”

“**Dela?**”

“Oh.” The woman threw an embarrassed sideways glance over at Jose and Alex.

“Okay, Dee Dee?”

“Dee Dee?” Evie couldn’t believe what she was seeing. This . . . this **super-torta** was Dee Dee?

“Oh my God, Evie,” the woman went on. “Look at you! Oh my God. Your hair! You are so crazy with your *pelo azul!*”

She put her arm around Evie and turned to Jose and Alex. “This little girl is the friend I was telling you about. Right here, little Evie Gomez. *Ay*, Evie, you are *so* cute. You never got any taller, did you?” She squeezed Evie tightly.

“Um.” Evie voice came out like a squeak. “Dee Dee, uh . . .”

“Oh, *mi ja*,” she said. “I’m so sorry I’m late. Don’t be mad. I just could *not* get off the phone with *mi novio* back in D.F. He hates that I am here and he gets so possessive. *Ay*, I mean, *posesivo*. I hope American boys aren’t that way.” She gave Jose and Alex a coy smile.

“Nah.” Alex smirked. “We let our women go as far as our leash lets them.”

“Ay!” Dee Dee gave him a sideways glance. “Now you too?”

“Um, Dee Dee . . .” Evie tried again.

“No, no.” She put one finger over Evie’s mouth. “*No one* calls me Dee Dee. *Por favor.*” She frowned knowingly at Jose and Alex.

“So **Dela.**” Alex was still all smiles. “I bet you’ve got some funny stories from when you and Evie were kids.”

“Oh, yes, I—” Della snapped her fingers to get a server’s attention. “Over here,” she called, holding up her glass. “I’m done here.” She turned her attention back to Alex. “Let me tell you, she was my best, best friend. We did everything together and—oh, wait, I want you to meet Graciela, my stepmother. ‘*Ama!*’ (This is short for *mama* in Spanish. **Should it be italicized?**) she called. “‘Ama, here’s the friend I was telling you about. This is Evie.”

“Oh, yes.” Graciela looked Evie over again. “I met her earlier this evening. Very nice.” She turned to Dee Dee. “Listen, *mi’ja*. Your father and I are getting tired. We are going to head home.”

“Already, ‘Ama?”

“Yes, yes. I’m still not used to the time change and the food.” She put a palm over her abdomen. “It’s not sitting too well with my stomach.”

“Ah.” Jose smiled. “The goat cheese quesadilla? Am I right?”

“*Mande?*” Graciela looked at him, confused.

“Oh, ‘Ama,” Dee Dee said. “These are my two new friends. This is . . .” She looked at Alex. “I’m sorry, what is your name again?”

“Uh, Alex,” he said, looking embarrassed.

“Alejandro?” Graciela asked.

“No, Alex,” he repeated.

“You mean Alexander?” Graciela asked again.

“No, Alex. *Just* Alex.”

“Okay, 'Ama,” Dee Dee interrupted as she gave her stepmother an air kiss. “I’ll see you later tonight.”

As Graciela de la Fuente started to leave, Evie saw Raquel slowly swagger up to them. *Oh*, man, where had she been this last hour or so? Somewhere, obviously, that granted her an all-access pass to a steady flow of liquor. She looked trashed.

“Uh, Raquel,” Evie started to warn her.

“Raquel?” Dee Dee smiled widely. “*Ay, Pansita!* Look at you!”

“Pansita?” Jose laughed. “Oh, my God. You used to be called Pansita?” He looked her over. “Yeah, I can see that!”

Raquel looked pissed. She looked hard at Dee Dee. “Who the hell are you?”

“It’s Dee,” Evie started to inform her. “I mean **Dela**. Dee Dee . . .” “*Dee Deee?*” Raquel looked directly into Dee Dee’s eyes.

“Yes, it’s me, **Dela!**” Dee Dee exclaimed.

Raquel squinted. “Wait, what the fuck happened to your eyes?”

“What?” Dee Dee asked.

“Your eyes,” Raquel said again. “Oh, shee-yat!” She covered her mouth and tried to keep from laughing. “I feel like I’m talking to a wolf! No, no, one of those huskies. A Siberian husky! Are you part of a sled team? Mush! Mush!” Raquel waved her arm as if she was cracking a whip.

“Excuse me?” Dee Dee fumed.

“Oh God.” Raquel suddenly put her hand on her forehead. “I feel sick. Whoa, whoa . . . I feel really sick.”

“Raquel,” Evie said. “Why don’t you come with me to the bathroom?”

“It’s okay.” Jose put his arm around Raquel. “I’ll take her.”

“But I don’t wanna go. . . . We gotta wait for Dee Dee,” Raquel whined. “Evie’s dear little Dee Dee. Right, Evie? Your best friend?”

“Oh, shit.” Alex looked away. “Here it comes.”

“*Que es su problema?*” Dee Dee demanded.

“Nothing,” Jose said. “She’s just had too much to drink. Sorry ‘bout this...”

“*Sorry?*” Raquel pulled away from Jose. “Why you telling *her* sorry?”

“Well,” Dee Dee started. “We *were* having a nice conversation before you -”

“Oh,” Raquel said slowly. “Did *I* interrupt you? You macking on *my* boy?”

Raquel covered her mouth and groaned **again**. “Ooh, I’m **really** gonna be sick. Oh, Jose, don’t let me get sick.”

“Well, baby, you’re gonna have to be sick before you can get better.” Jose led her toward the downstairs bathroom.

“What, so she’s like an alcoholic now?” Dee Dee asked.

“No, it’s just been a long night,” Alex said.

“Yeah.” Evie came to Raquel’s defense. “It’s been a long night and we’ve been waiting . . . all night.”

“Oh, so it’s my fault she’s all *boracha?*” Dee Dee asked.

“No, I’m just saying that we’ve all been excited to see you, and it’s been years, and we hadn’t even heard from you and now—”

“Wait, don’t put it all on me that your friend has a drinking problem.”

“*My friend?*” Evie raised her voice. “Dee Dee, I thought Raquel was *our* friend.”

“You know, Evie,” Dee Dee said angrily. “It’s obvious you’re having a bad night, and I’m not gonna let you ruin my party.”

“Ruin it?” Evie snapped. “Dee Dee, this party’s been over for hours.”

Dee Dee looked over at Alex. “Alejandro, can you take me home?”

Evie also looked at Alex. *No, no, no.*

“Uh, yeah,” Alex said hesitantly. “But I thought you drove here.”

“I did,” Dee Dee said. “But I just don’t feel like driving right now. Isn’t there somewhere we can go? Like for a drink or something?”

“Well, it’s not like Mexico,” Alex said. “You gotta be twenty-one to drink here.”

“So, let’s just go somewhere. Take me to that beach you were talking about.”

“Sea Street?” Alex asked.

“Yes, Sea Street.” Dee Dee pulled out a compact from her purse and flipped it open, checking herself in the mirror. She patted the corners of her eyes with powder. “I’m going to say goodbye to my father, and then I’ll be waiting . . . **outside.**” She snapped her compact shut and turned to leave. She made sure her eyes didn’t meet Evie’s.

“Well,” Alex said slowly. “I guess I better take her, huh?”

“What?” Evie balked. “Are you out of your mind?! You are *not* taking her to Sea Street.”

“Well, where should I take her?” he asked

Where should he take her? Evie thought. *God, Alex, are you completely clueless?*

“I mean,” Alex said awkwardly. “I feel like it’s sorta my obligation. She is a guest.”

“So then just go, Alejandro.” Evie waved her hand away. “I didn’t realize you were the Goodwill Ambassador for Mexico .”

As Evie watched Alex go out the front door to meet Dee Dee, she felt so incredibly **abandoned and betrayed**. (sad and empty is already used in the outline, big deal?)

“Would you like the last one?” It was the same server that Evie had seen earlier with Dee Dee. She had a piece of *tres leches* on her platter.

“Uh, no. No, thank you,” Evie said. “I’m not hungry.”

“Your friend.” The server smiled playfully. “*Qué mala, no?*”

“**Uh**, which one?” Evie asked.

“La Sangrona.” She laughed lightly as she looked after Dee Dee and Alex.

“The Sangrona?” Evie repeated. “No, she’s not *that* bad.” *But who am I kidding?* she thought. Dee Dee *had* become a Sangro, which according to Evie was *mala*. *Muy, muy mala*.

“You know what?” Evie told the server. “I will take that last piece.”

After the server gave Evie the cake, she took a **deep** bite. The sweet, milky moistness flooded her mouth, but she still couldn’t shake off the bitterness that seared her whole body. She took another bite and tallied up the score. Sangros: one, Flojos: zero. And Evie? More than anything, she didn’t want to be in the game.

In California, there is norcal, socal and state is practically divided by a fault line, which means you never know when an earthquake can hit. Quake statistics **reveal** rumbles in the early in the day. So the next morning when Evie's nightstand rattled, she woke up in a slight panic, only to discover it was her cell phone. She had left it on high vibrate. She reached over, flipped it over and saw Alex's face on the screen. This was big of him, she **smirked**, to actually call after being such the dick **the night before**.

On the screen, she saw that it was already 11 am. The operative word here is *already*. She knew that after last night's fiasco, dawn patrol was definitely off. Besides, dawn had broke nearly over five hours ago. She glared at Alex on her phone. So why was he even calling? The only reason he was calling so late, she figured, was because he *must* have had a long night ...with *Dee Dee*. Evie's chest burned with anger. Dee Dee de LaFuente...definitely her ex-bestfriend. Some old best friend she turned out to be. Grrrr. Would Evie ever *want* to go to Sea Street so soon after Alex had taken Dee Dee? Sea Street would definitely need to be *Dee*-contaminated, that's for sure.

But as soon as her cell stopped vibrating Evie couldn't help but feel a pang of regret. Maybe she should've answered it. Maybe Alex wanted to apologize, *profusely* -- beg for her forgiveness, admit he was such a lousy friend at the party last night. Maybe -- but then Evie stopped herself. It was *already* 11 am.

twiddling her thumbs Just then she heard the linen closet doors in the hallway open, followed by that familiar heavy sigh she only knew so well.

Evie got up from her bed and crept over to her bedroom door. "Hey Lindsay," she peered out, feeling oddly modest in her cami and boy bottoms. Lindsay had seen her

in various states of undress hundreds of times. Maybe she felt out of place because it was Sunday, Lindsay's day off? "What are *you* doing here?"

"Oh," Lindsay turned away from the closet. "*Good morning, Lindsay. How are you this morning, Lindsay.*"

Evie one upped her playful challenge and said, as quickly and confidently as she could, "*Buenas dias, Lindsay. Como estas? Porque estas aqui?*"

Lindsay smiled, but turned back to the linen. "Your mother asked me to come in, for the brunch"

"The brunch?" Evie asked. "What brunch?"

"The one for the De la Fuentes," She looked at her watch.

"In about an hour."

"What?" All the times her face went into shock over this one weekend she'd need some hearty botox by her 18th birthday. "The De la Fuentes are coming *here*?"

"Uh huh," Lindsay answered. "You should go ask and see if you mother needs anything. She still has a lot to do."

"Is Dee Dee coming too?"

"I don't know, Evie." Lindsay answered half-heartedly. Her only concern was to choose the right **towels** for the downstairs bathroom.

Wasn't the welcome back party for the De la Fuentes last night enough? Was Evie's mother back to her old habit of competing with Raquel's mother over who had more sophisticated social skills? Even as a kid, Evie saw how her mother wanted to keep up with, well not the Jones, but in this case the Diazes and the De la Fuentes. Sure Vicki Gomez's husband owned a few bakeries, but she could host a get together just as good as

the wife of a scholar (eg. Frank De la Fuente) or the CEO/owner of a software company (eg. Charlie Diaz) and she needed to prove it.

Evie slipped on her flojos and headed down stairs. She had no choice but to ask her mother what this brunch was all about. The first thing she noticed different in the dining area was their dining table. Vicki Gomez usually **demanded** their Californian mission style table remain simple and bare to showcase it's **four digit** worth. However, in actuality it was always littered with catalogs for **Bloomies** or Paw Prints, the *only* South Cali guide for high-end dog accessories. But this morning, positioned in **direct** center was an oversized clay **vase** filled with Eucalyptus leaves and Birds of Paradise. A definite sign of impending company, or as Evie feared, an oncoming **collision**.

Evie went into the kitchen and found her mother in the kitchen, slicing and juicing oranges. "What's going on?" she asked.

Vicki Gomez turned around. "Maybe I should be asking you that."

"What do you mean?" Evie immediately felt defensive.

"I mean, what went on last night? With Raquel?"

"What do mean, Raquel?" Evie asked again.

"Evie, *quit* answering my question with a question." Vicki Gomez wiped her forehead to wipe away non-existent perspiration. *Oh, please*, Evie rolled her eyes, *the AC had gone FF, fucking freezing, and how hard is it to place half an orange on a juicer?*

"Raquel was throwing up all night," her mother continued. "Kitty was worried sick she had alcohol poisoning and —"

"Alcohol poisoning? Mom, come on..."

“Do *not* interrupt me, Evie. How did Raquel even get the alcohol? I better now find out that you were drinking.”

“Me? No. And who even says it was alcohol?” She struggled to protect Raquel and, more importantly, herself. “Maybe the milk in the Tres Leches was bad and-“

“Evie! Stop it. When your father gets back I’m gonna have him talk to you.” She went back to juicing, shaking her head. “I dunno, Evie,” her tone softened. “Your best friend is back and I would think you would have wanted to make a better impression. Granted she was rude, late to her own party, but we could be the more gracious ones. Dee Dee has gone through a lot, Evie. Losing her mother, moving to a new country and that Graciela’s no consolation.”

Evie took over a stool at the kitchen counter. She knew her mother was right, but she wasn’t about to admit it. Yeah, she and Dee Dee, as well as Raquel, had once been the golden trio of **Camino del Rio**. The proximity of their three homes, sides by side at the end of the cul de sac, made for obvious reasoning that the three girls would not only become neighbors, but perhaps best friends. But once Dee Dee moved away, only Raquel and Evie continued to **remain close**.

After last night, however, Dee Dee’s display it was now so obvious that she had changed for the worse. **She** had become the type of girl Raquel and Evie -- the helpless giggling blonde, the too tight “hot” clothing. And those colored contact lenses! Was last night’s reunion a retro ‘80s party and no one told Evie?

Lindsay came in from the backyard through the French doors. She had a bowl of more oranges. “Okay, Senora,” she told Evie’s mother. “I got the last of them. I even checked around the trees, on the ground.”

“Oh, thank you, Lindsay. I think this’ll be enough,” Vicki took the bowl and placed it in the sink. “Kitty doesn’t really drink Mimosas anyway.”

As soon as Evie heard Raquel’s mother’s name mentioned, she stiffened..

“*The Diaz’s* are coming too?” she asked. “You said just the De LaFuentes.”

“I didn’t say that,” her mother said calmly. “Everyone is coming. Maybe not Raquel...”

Before Evie could get into it with her mother, her father came in from the front room. *Great*. Now, she was gonna get an earful from him about teenage sobriety **blood alcohol level**.

But Ruben Gomz had other things on his mind.

“I got ‘em!” he announced excitedly as he threw his car keys on the counter and placed the large flat box on the dining table. “I was beginning to worry this whole morning was gonna be a bust.”

The box was from one of the Gomez’s panaderias. Evie grew up with the white bakery boxes, each one stamped with a small blue tinted shell on top, in honor of Great Grandma Conchita. Evie went over to the table and lifted the box’s lid. To her the *pan* looked no different from the sweet bread her father brought home practically every night.

“You got what?” she asked. “More pan?”

“No lard.” Her father corrected.

“Huh?”

“None of these,” He took a crispy oreja from the box and broke a piece off, “have manteca. Taste it.”

Evie took a bite. But the ordinarily sweetness tasted bland, like the dietary

"Uh, no. No, thank you," Evie said. "I'm not hungry."

"Your friend." The server smiled playfully. "*Qué mala, no?*"

"Uh, which one?" Evie asked.

"La sangrona." She laughed lightly as she looked after Dee Dee and Alex.

"The sangrona?" Evie repeated. "No, she's not *that* bad." *But who am I kidding?*

she thought. Dee Dee *had* become a Sangro, which according to Evie was *mala. Muy, muy mala.*

"You know what?" Evie told the server. "I will take that piece."

After the server gave Evie the cake, she took a deep bite. The sweet, milky moistness flooded her mouth, but she still couldn't shake off the bitterness that seared her whole body. What had happened to Dee Dee? She took another bite and tallied up the score. Sangros: one, Flojos: zero. And Evie? More than anything, she didn't want to be in the game.

For as long as Evie can remember, shake and bakes (Ca-lingo for earthquakes erupting during hotter weather) have always happened early in the day. So the next morning when her glass top nightstand rattled, she woke up in a slight panic, only to discover it was her cell phone. She had left it on vibrate.

But when she reached over and saw Alex's face on the screen, she was surprised.

This was big of him, she smirked, to actually call after being such the a-hole the night before.

awk

vt

read out loud please

Evie woke up to help ing she started to panice

Do we need this?

This is the only mention of earthquakes in the entire book...

why but?

why actually?

This implies that it was the time she was waiting for

Did she know this last night? awkward

How about 11:14? we

when he'd shed gotten home last night, she'd assumed dawn patrol was off

She saw also saw on her cell that it was already 11 am. The operative word here was already. She knew that after last night's fiasco, dawn patrol was definitely off.

Besides, dawn had cracked almost five hours ago. So why was he even calling? But as she looked at her vibrating cell, not answering, but as soon as her cell stopped vibrating Evie couldn't help but feel a pang of regret. Maybe she should've answered it. Maybe Alex wanted to apologize, beg for her forgiveness and admit he was a lousy friend at the party last night. Maybe - but then Evie stopped herself

- who was she kidding? It was already after 11 am.

What does this mean? That if he was really sorry he would have called earlier?

She tossed her phone on the covers and curled to her side.

How could Alex have taken Dee Dee to Sea Street? What even happened to Dee

Dee anyway? Evie wondered. The whole build up of seeing her after so many years

crumbled into one tremendous Malibu landslide. For one thing, Dee Dee didn't even look

remotely like the best friend Evie remembered. No more long brown hair, freckles or the

skinny chicken legs that had gotten her the nickname, **Pollo Piedras**. But no matter how

she looked now, Dee Dee was back in Rio Estates and, most likely, would be going to

Villanova. How was Evie, as well as Raquel, going to deal with this, this...Dee-lemma?

She looked at her cell. It was much too early to call Raquel, who was most likely snoring off a hang over.

Just then Evie heard the linen closet doors in the hallway swing open, followed by that familiar heavy sigh she knew so well. She got up from her computer and went over to the bedroom doorway.

"Hey, Linds," Evie said. "What are you doing here?" She peered out from behind her door, feeling oddly modest in her cami and cheeky hipsters. Lindsay had seen her in various states of undress hundreds of times. Maybe because it was a Sunday, her day off?

It isn't the BUILDUP that crumbled, it was Evie's hopes and excitement

whosh of the ~~bedroom~~ doors to the hallway linen closet would undoubtedly be

new Sangro appearance or not

ha!

“Oh,” Lindsay turned away from the closet. “*Good morning, Lindsay. How are you this morning, Lindsay.*”

Evie one upped her playful challenge and said, as quickly and confidently as she could, “*Buenas dias, Lindsay. Como estas? Porque estas aqui?*”

Lindsay smiled, but turned back to the closet. “Your mother called me early this morning and asked me to come in, for the brunch”

“The brunch?” Evie asked. “What brunch?”

“The one for the de LaFuentes.” She looked at her watch. “In about an hour.”

“What?” Evie felt creases form across her forehead. For all the times her face went into shock over the last 48 hours, she figured she’d need some major botox by her 18th birthday. “The de LaFuentes are coming *here?*”

“Uh huh,” Lindsay answered. “You should go ask and see if you mother needs anything. She still has a lot to do.”

“Is Dee Dee coming too?”

“I don’t know, Evie.” Lindsay answered half-heartedly. Her only concern was choosing the right color of soap for the guest bathroom.

She slipped on some sweat shorts, a pair of flojos and headed down stairs. She had no choice but to ask her mother herself what the deal was about this brunch. Wasn’t the welcome back party for the de LaFuentes last night enough? As a kid, Evie witnessed her mother trying to keep up with, well not the Joneses, but in this case, the Diazes and the de LaFuentes. Sure Vicki Gomez’s husband owned a few bakeries, but she could host a get together just as good as the wife of a scholar (e.g. Frank de La Fuente) or the CEO/owner of a software company (e.g. Charlie Diaz) but yet she always needed to

awk you one-up a person not a challenge

SET

whose POV is this remember we are close 3rd to Evie.

and she always felt like she

prove it. ~~Was her mother back to her old habit of competing with Raquel's mother over who displayed more sophisticated social skills?~~

But when Evie entered the dining room, she had her answer. For one, the dining table was free from clutter. ~~Vicki Gomez demanded that their Californian mission style table remained bare, all the better to showcase its classic style. But truth be told, it was always littered with bills and paperwork; Spa Ojai bills, Santa Clara Church donation requests or catalogues from PawPrints, the only guide for high-end pet accessories. But~~

this morning, everything had been cleared away, and positioned dead center was an oversized clay vase filled with Eucalyptus leaves and Birds of Paradise. A definite sign of impending company, or as Evie feared, an oncoming collision. What would she say to Dee Dee when she showed up?

Evie went into the kitchen and found her mother slicing and juicing oranges. She had on small hot rollers and a strip of Jolene cream was applied above her top lip. Just how intimate was this brunch gonna be?

"What's going on?" Evie asked.

Vicki Gomez turned around. "Maybe I should be asking you that."

"What do you mean?" Evie immediately felt defensive.

"I mean, what went on last night? With Raquel?"

"What do mean, Raquel?" Evie asked again.

"Evie, quit answering my question with a question." Vicki Gomez wiped her forehead to wipe away non-existent perspiration.

Oh, please, Evie rolled her eyes, the AC was more FF - friggin' freezing-- and how hard is it to place half an orange on a juicer?

Was that what this was about?

They

it's usual clutter of

awk

ha! funny

longing

more than what

"Raquel was throwing up all night," her mother continued. "Kitty was worried sick she had alcohol poisoning and —

"Alcohol poisoning? Mom, come on..."

"Do not interrupt me, Evie. How did Raquel even get the liquor? I better not find out that you were drinking."

"Me? No. And who even says it was alcohol?" She struggled to protect Raquel and, more importantly, herself. "Maybe the milk in the Tres Leches was bad and—") hahaha

"Evie! Stop it. When your father gets back I'm going to have him talk to you."

She went back to juicing, shaking her head. "I don't know, Evie," her tone softened.

"Your best friend is back and I would think you would have wanted to make a better impression. Granted she was rude, late to her own party, but we could be the more gracious ones. Dee Dee has gone through a lot, Evie. Losing her mother, moving to another country and that Graciela's no consolation."

Evie took over a stool at the kitchen counter. She knew her mother was partially right, but she wasn't about to admit it so soon. Yeah, she and Dee Dee, as well as Raquel, had once been the golden trio of Camino del Rio. The proximity of their three homes, side by side at the end of the cul de sac, made for obvious reasoning that the three girls would not only become neighbors, but friends. But once Dee Dee moved away, only Raquel and Evie continued to remain close and after last night, Dee Dee's had made it so obvious that she had changed for the worse. She had become the type of girl Raquel and Evie despised -- the helpless giggling blonde, the too tight "hot" clothing. And those colored contact lenses! Was last night's reunion a retro '80s party and no one told Evie?

makes her sound unsympathetic

you don't become neighbors you ARE neighbors

and the girls would never be close again,

awk
awk
need to put in a line about partially agreeing

by her mother as above

Like "It would have been nice to give Dee Dee a warmer welcome"

Lindsay came in from the backyard through the French doors, carrying a plastic bowl filled with more oranges. "Okay, Senora," she told Evie's mother. "I got the last of them. I even checked around the trees, on the ground."

"Oh, thank you, Lindsay. I think this'll be enough," Vicki took the bowl and placed it in the sink. "Kitty doesn't really drink Mimosas anyway."

As soon as Evie heard Raquel's mother's name mentioned, she stiffened.

"*The Diaz's* are coming too?" she asked. "You said just the De LaFuentes."

"I didn't say that," her mother said calmly. "Everyone is coming... maybe not Raquel. We all didn't get much time at the party last night and I just thought a more intimate brunch would be nice. I didn't think of it until this morning ^{but} and fortunately, everyone can make it."

"Except," Evie tilted her head and mimicked her mother "...^{anything} for Raquel,"

But before her mother could say ~~something~~, Evie's father came in from the front room. *Great*. Now, here comes the lecture: The Virtues of Teen Sobriety 101.

But Ruben Gomez had other things on his mind.

"I got 'em!" he announced excitedly as he threw his car keys on the kitchen counter and placed the large flat box on the dining table. "I was beginning to worry this whole morning was gonna be a bust."

The box was from one of the Gomez's *panaderias*. Evie grew up with the white bakery boxes, each one stamped with the small shell on top. Evie went over to the table and lifted the box's lid. She inhaled the **sweet** smell of fresh bread, but to her the *pan* looked no different from the sweet bread her father brought home practically every night.

"You got what?" she asked. "More *pan*?"

maybe not
but
anything
make this more like the title of a lecture, classes and lectures are not titled w/ 101's

"No lard." Her father corrected.

"Huh?"

He took a crispy *oreja* from the box and broke a piece off. "None of these have *manteca*. Taste it."

Evie took a bite. The pan was still warm, but the ordinarily sweetness tasted bland, like the Jenny Craig dietary loaves the whole family had to tolerate when her mother's "no carb" phase was on again.

"What do you think?" her father asked eagerly.

"I think it's good... for someone who needs to lose weight."

"What's that suppose to mean?" He frowned.

"I dunno," Evie confessed. "It tastes weird,"

"Ah, you *don't* know," Her father waved her aside. "Lindsay will tell me. She'll be honest."

Yeah, as honest as her bonus depends on it.

"Come here, Linds," he called over to Lindsay. Evie noticed that her father had even a sudden burst of more energy. "Try this."

Lindsay stopped slicing oranges and took a bite into the same flat, flaky *oreja*. She immediately smiled. "Ay, Senor Gomez," she gushed. "This is good. Really. I can't even tell the difference."

And of course, Ruben Gomez just beamed, which made Evie wonder. When was the last time *she* did or said something that made her father proud? It was always someone else in the Gomez household, never her, who made her father glow. There was Sabrina, with all her achievements at Stanford, Molesto, chewing up all the Gomez's

Handwritten notes in blue ink on the right side of the page. At the top, "ordinarily sweetness" is circled. A line connects it to "it's not the Sweetness that tastes bland" written vertically. Below that, "it's the BREAD that tastes bland" is written. To the left of the main text, "phases aren't on again" is written with an arrow pointing to "phase was on again". Below that, "I guess I'm a phase" is written. At the bottom right, "this is very awkward" is written with an arrow pointing to the underlined sentence about Evie's father's energy.

Handwritten note "awk" in blue ink on the left side of the page, with an arrow pointing to the underlined sentence about Evie's father's energy.

Handwritten note at the bottom right: "but this is pride in himself evie wants him to be proud of her".

unwanted junk mail, P. Kitty who purred on command, and now Lindsay, with her little *cumplimiento insincero*. Blah, Evie ruffled her lips. Parental pride, it's so overrated anyway, right?

↳ But her father isn't proud of Lindsay

"Hey, Vicki, "Evie's father carried the box over to the counter. "Do we have a nice plate or something to put these on?"

"I am already one step ahead of you," Evie's mother pulled down a wicker basket from the top cabinet.

"Oh, that's nice. Real traditional. Hey, Linds," Evie's father started to ask, "You need some coffee with your *pan*? I'll get it for you."

"Oh, thank you," Lindsay, pulled up the left side of her skirt and apron and took a seat at the counter. She looked over at Evie and smiled.

"Can I do anything?" Evie found herself asking meekly.

~~Good idea. Be the good, helpful daughter.~~

"Actually yes," Vicki said, her voice no longer in a sing songy inflection. "Go out and look over the lawn. Make sure Molesto didn't leave anything behind."

↳ wouldn't Arnie have done that yesterday?"

"Isn't ~~that something Arnie would have looked over yesterday?~~" Evie asked, referring to the Gomez's gardener. He was meticulous about maintaining their Marathon sod lawn and, besides, the last thing she wanted was to go outside and scoop Molesto's torpedo sized turds.

improper usage

"Evie," Vicki raised an eyebrow and motioned Evie to the backyard. "Just do it."

"Come on, Evie," her father chimed. "Just do the doo!"

"Yeah," her mother added, laughing. "It's the call of doodie!"

this is great

awk
vt
And of course they both laughed even more. As they do every time they repeat their corny catch phrases at the cost of Molesto's overly productive intestinal tract. It was times like this Evie wished they had gotten that aquarium like her mother had wanted

So while the comedic duo collaborated over how to showcase an array of sweet bread while a housekeeper got a mandatory impromptu coffee break on her day off, Evie, pulled the pooper scooper out from the kitchen utility closet and headed for the backyard. Little did any of them know that no matter how much she cleaned up after Molesto, it wouldn't matter. Now with the Diazes coming, a real shit storm was on its way.

* * *

vt
By noon, the Gomez's foyer was taken over by Spanish, Spanglish and what Evie calls Ay Que - that's when adult Mexicans get childlike and elongate the exclamation of "Que" in regard to a simple observation.

"Ay, quuuu guapo!" Evie's mother exclaimed when she saw Frank de Lafuente in a stylish white Cuenca Panama hat. Seconds later Kitty Diaz followed up with a reprimand to her own husband. "Ay, quuuu malo!" she playfully slapped his back when he said that the only reason Frank de Lafuente wore such a hat was to cover his bald spot.

A slightly jaundiced looking Raquel was in tow of her parents, but Dee Dee was not. This was a relief to Evie, but made her wonder, just how pissed off could Dee Dee be? As kids they had their share of arguments - from who got to be cashier whenever they played "Tienda" to whose rightful turn it was to use the boogie board at the beach -- but their fights never lasted long. Would this fight be any different? Last night was

great
awk
Evie felt relieved but also a little concerned... just how pissed off and Be?

pretty harsh, but enough to officially break off all ties? And why did Evie care so much?

If anything, she felt it Dee Dee who owed her an apology, or at the very least, an explanation. It was Dee Dee who hadn't kept in touch while she lived in Mexico. It was Dee Dee who hadn't even bothered to call when she arrived to Rio Estates and it was Dee Dee, again, who took her sweet ass time arriving to her own party and when she finally showed up, took the evil pleasure of humiliating both Evie and Raquel. Yeah, it was Dee Dee alright who needed to do right by both Raquel and Evie. Definitely.

Evie's mother led the adults outside to the Gomez's deck. Everyone, Evie noticed moved in a slower, relaxed kind of way and had that after the party residue: slightly hoarser voices, tired eyes.

Evie pulled Raquel aside

"So, did you know about this?" she asked.

"Nuh-uh," Raquel said. "My mom just yanked me out of bed and insisted that I come. Like I had to 'make up' for my so-called inappropriate behavior from last night."

She rubbed her temples in annoyance. "I am so *not* in the mood for idle chit chat and spicy food."

"We're actually having eggs benedict," Evie told her.

"Did your mom or Lindsay make them?" Raquel asked.

"My mom."

Like I said," Raquel half smiled. "Over salted."

"Hey."

While the parents sipped mimosas on the deck and argued over who could offer the de LaFuentes better floor seats to the Lakers, Evie hung back in the kitchen with a

dough the whole family had to tolerate when her mother's "no carb" phase was on-again,.

"What do you think?" her father asked eagerly.

"I think it's good... for someone who needs to lose weight."

"What does that mean?" He frowned.

"I dunno, Evie confessed "it tastes weird,".

"Ah, you *don't* know," Her father waved her aside. "Lindsay will tell me. She'll be honest."

Yeah, as honest as her bonus depends on it.

"Come here, Linds," he called over to Lindsay. "Try this."

Lindsay stopped slicing oranges and took a bite into a flaky elephant sized oreja. She immediately smiled. "Ay, Senor Gomez," she gushed. "This is good. Really. I can't even tell the difference."

Of course, Ruben Gomez just beamed.

Evie rolled her eyes. It was always someone else, never her, in the Gomez household that made her father glow? There was Sabrina, with all her achievements at Stanford, Molesto, chewing up all the Gomez's unwanted junk mail, including the **latest** IRS tax audit notice and now Lindsay, with her little fake compliment. When was the last time *Evie* did or said something that made her father proud? Blah. Parental pride, it's so overrated anyway, right?

"Hey, Vicki, " Ruben Gomez asked, carrying the box over to the counter. "Do we have a nice plate or something to put these on?"

"I am already one step ahead of you," Evie's mother actually sang as she pulled down a serving tray from the top cabinet.

“Linds,” Ruben Gomez started to ask, “You need some coffee with your *pan*? Just stay there, I’ll get it for you.”

“Can I do anything?” Evie found herself asking meekly.

Good idea. Be the good, helpful daughter.

“Actually yes,” Vicki said, she no longer singing. “Go out and look over the lawn. Make sure Moleto didn’t leave anything on it.”

“Isn’t this something Arnie would have looked over yesterday?” Evie asked, referring to the Gomez’s gardener. He was meticulous about maintaining their Marathon sod lawn to its fullest perfection and the last thing she wanted was to go outside and scoop Molesto’s torpedo sized turds.

“Evie, Vicki raised an eyebrow and motioned Evie to the backyard. “Just do it.”

“Yeah, Evie,” her father chimed. “Just do the do!”

And of course they both laughed. Like they do *every time* Evie’s father says that. It was times like this Evie wishes they had gotten that **aquarium** like her mother had wanted

And so the happy couple collaborated over how to showcase the **fat free pan dulce while** an even-happier housekeeper got an mandatory impromptu coffee break. Evie, on the other hand, pulled the pooper scooper out from the kitchen utility closet and headed for the backyard. Little did any of them know, she predicted, that no matter how much she cleaned up after Molesto, it wouldn’t matter. Now with the Diazes coming, a real shit storm was on it’s way.

* * *

By noon, the Gomez's foyer was taken over by **sounds of Spanish, Spanglish and, what Evie calls Que Play**. That's when adults elongate the exclamation of "*Que*, in regards to how pretty, funny or "bad" someone or something is.

"Ay, *que* guapo!" Evie's mother exclaimed when she saw Frank De Lafuente in his stylish white straw fedora. Kitty Diaz followed with a "Ay, *que* Malo!" by playfully slapping her husband's shoulder when he joked that Frank had to wear such a hat in order to cover his bald spot.

To Evie's relief, Dee Dee was not with her parents (Que afortunado!) but a slightly jaundice Raquel was in tow of hers. Que triste!

The parents sipped mimosas (The fresh squeezed orange juice was noticed for which Vicki Gomez was thankful) on the patio and argued over who can offer the De la Fuentes better floor seats for the Lakers. Evie decided to hang back in the Gomez's kitchen with recuperating Raquel until it was actually time to eat.

"Ugh..." Raquel groaned as she pulled her Aviators over her eyes and placed her head on her folded arms **on the counter**. "What's with your mother's opposition to some **simple** kitchen blinds?"

"So," Evie started. "ould you even **comprehend** last night? I mean, what the fuck happened to Dee Dee?"

"Yeah," Raquel agreed. "She was quite **the number**. I don't know how many times she had call me 'Pansita.'" Raquel tugged down on her T-shirt. "I haven't been called Pansita in years. She's such a fucking FOTB Sangro."

"I dunno know if she actually came fresh off any boat."

“Well, she’s got another thing coming if she thinks she can come back here and talk that way to us.”

“Totally,” Evie agreed. “Do you know that Alex took her to Sea Street?”

“Sea Street? When?”

“Last night, after the party.

“Why would he take her to Sea Street?”

“Because she *ordered* him,” Evie threw Raquel a sideways glance. “And...he followed orders.”

“Fucking Alex. Well, dudes don’t know better. It’s a good thing she didn’t tekk Jose to do anything. I would have kicked her ass. Not he would have done anything she asked.” Raquel put her head back onto her folded arms. “She’s pure puta,”

“Pure,” Evie agreed, reluctantly. What was the use, **she figured**, to point out that it was actually Jose who was coming on strong to Dee Dee? Raquel saw **life** through **green** colored lenses and got all Texas Ranger when anyone stepped onto her property without an official invite and, dare anyone forget, Jose was her property.

“So, we gotta steer clear from Dee Dee,” Raquel summed it up. “I mean it, Evie. She’s not the same best friend we thought we knew.”

“I know....”

“No, but do you *really* know? We gotta have each other’s backs.”

“I know, Raquel.” What? Did Raquel not think she had eyes of her own? Dee Dee was nice as a memory, childhood nostalgia, but for sure, Raquel was her true friend.

THUGHTS

Soon enough Vicki Gomez announced that it was time eat and Evie and Raquel joined their parents outside for **chorizo, eggs, fruit salad**, and of course, the pan dulce debut. However, this rising star had some harsh critics.

. “Ay, no,” Graciela De la Fuente winced after her first bite into a () banderilla.
“With all respect, Senor Gomez –”

“Grace, please,” Evie’s father interrupted. “Call me Ruben. We’re like family.”

“Oh, well,” Graciela looked at her husband uncomfortably. “My family calls me Graciela. Anyhow, as I was trying to say, I understand your intent, but there are some things that just can’t be **mettled spanish** with.”

“Mande?” Evie’s father looked genuinely confused.

“Let me say it this way,” Graciela continued. “The heart, *la corazon* of pan dulce *is* the manteca. It’s what holds the pan together, literally and figuratively. In Mexico, a panadero would never dream of playing around with tradition.”

Evie sat up nervously in her patio chair. Her father would *definitely* have something to say about this.

But before Ruben Gomez could defend his beloved bread, a voice called out from the Gomez’s kitchen.

“Dad? Graciela?” It was Dee Dee. Now it was Raquel who sat up in her **rattan** chair.

“Ay, mi’ja!” Frank De la Fuente directed his attention, and thankfully everyone else’s, away from the pan dulce to Dee Dee who was coming out from the kitchen.

“Aqui!” He called out. “We’re out here!”

Dee Dee, in huge **orange** tinted sunglasses and her blonde hair pulled into a pony tail, came out onto the Gomez's patio,. She carried a large bag.

"Oh, Vicki," She went over to Evie's mother and gave her a hug. "I am *so* sorry I'm late. I overslept... again. It was such a long night last night."

Raquel **looked over** at Evie and whispered, "And an even earlier morning... with Alex, I'm sure."

"Plus," she gathered together a fake yawn. "I'm still so jet lagged. It always takes me so long to get over it when I travel. But look, look." She held up her bag of Noah's Bagels. "I bought some bagels."

"Oh, how thoughtful." Vicki Gomez stood up and took the bag. "You didn't have to do that." She passed them to Lindsay without saying anything. Lindsay, as well as Evie, knew such lack of instruction meant the bagels would remain in the kitchen. There was definitely enough bread for one brunch.

"So," Dee Dee sat down and looked over the table excitedly, "What did I miss?"

"...the boat," Raquel smirked. Surprisingly this got a chuckle from the parents. A mere playful jab, they thought. None of them knew exactly what had went on the night before, but Dee Dee knew better. She threw Raquel a pointed look and sat in the empty **rattan** chair directly across from Evie and Raquel.

"We were just enjoying, or what I thought was enjoying, some pan from my bakery," Ruben Gomez said. "Try some. No manteca. Not that you have anything to worry about."

"Oh, thank you! !" Dee Dee quickly went back to being the bubbly interested guest. "I wanna try some!" She eyed the last piece on the tray, but Raquel, seeing her

interest, grabbed the remaining **oreja** and crammed the whole thing into her mouth. *Not* an attractive sight.

“Que glutona,” Dee Dee put her hand on her chest. “It’s a good thing it’s fat free, Pansita ‘cause the last thing you need is any more fat.”

More laughter from the parents. Do they not get it? This not Que Play.

Raquel didn’t respond. Actually, how could she? Her mouth was filled with soggy, half chewed bread.

“I’d rather... be... a gloton,” Raquel finally responded while finishing the last of the pan in her mouth, “than some... pinche puta... right Evie?”

Evie could not speak. She was beginning to feel uncomfortable and, oddly, a little bit protective of her mother’s brunch. Sure, Raquel could get all aggro in her own home, at her own mother’s party, but, jeez, give it a rest, already. **And after all, Evie figured, Dee Dee was batting her plastic baby blues at Jose, but how could she have known that Jose had a girlfriend?**

“Yeah,” Raquel continued. “Evie and I were just talking about it...right Evie?”

“Oh really?” Dee Dee asked Evie wide eyed. “What were you saying?”

The way she asked so innocently, almost with earnest, made Evie feel guilty. It’s one thing to talk smack, but another to be confronted on it.

“Well,” Evie started. “Last night was bad, I mean, it was late and everyone was tired. And you were saying you were jet lagged and-”

“*What?*” Raquel flipped`. I knew what was going on. How can you say this?” She pushed her chair back and announced, “ I’m heading back home.” Then looking at Dee Dee. “I’m *quite* full.”

“Raquel,” Kitty Diaz exclaimed. “Sit down. You are being rude. We came together, we are leaving together.”

“Oh, Kitty,” Evie’s mother put her hand on Kitty’s shoulder. “If Raquel still isn’t feeling well, she’s more than welcome to leave. I won’t be offended.” Evie knew her mother just didn’t want a Raquel around in the first place. God forbid she barfed on her teak patio **table**.

“You heard her, mom,” Raquel said. “Vicki doesn’t mind.” She threw her napkin on her plate and pushed her chair in. “I’m going home.” Before leaving, she leaned over and whispered into Evie’s ear, “Thanks a fucking lot, *bestfriend*.”

Oh, I am so sorry,” Kitty Diaz started. “She is so moody.”

“Oh,” Frank de Lafuente winked, “But who isn’t a little cranky the morning after some celebratory spirits?”

Evie, didn’t know how to respond. She felt, somewhat, like a traitor, a backstabber...like Alex? Why didn’t she speak up? The first hour of the brunch she had been in agreement with Raquel in regards to the new Dee Dee, but once Dee Dee showed up, she just couldn’t find her voice. **Also, for one thing, Dee Dee wasn’t wearing her blue contact lenses. With her eyes back to brown and her hair pulled back, she looked like the old Dee Dee, she and Raquel had been bestfriends with, not the alien outsider from the night before.**

“Maybe we should get going too.” Charlie Diaz started to get up from his chair. “We have the rental company coming over to pick up all the tables and chairs from last night.”

“But it’s still early.” Vicki struggled to keep her brunch alive, or at least, to have it end on a more memorable, positive note. “Why don’t we take our drinks out by the pool? It’s so nice out.”

“Oh, Charlie’s right. Kitty said We should get going.” “. ”

“We’ll walk out with you,” Frank De la Fuente got up as well. “Actually, Graciela wanted to see that talavera in the bathroom. It’s similar to the tile we want for ours.”

“Oh, really?” Kitty smiled broadly. “Of course, come on over then.”

As the party left for the Diazes, Evie could see the disappointment in her mother and father’s face. Their only consolation seemed to be Dee Dee who, oddly enough, stayed behind.

“I’m not leaving Vicki,” she said sweetly. “Do you need my help?”

“Oh, Dee Dee,” Vicki smiled. “That is so nice of you. But it’s not necessary. I’ve got Lindsay today.”

“And I really want to try the pan dulce Dee Dee said. “I used to love going to the bakery, the original one on Colonia Road. Your pan is even better than what I had in Mexico.

Great, add one more to the list of

.

“A kid? Dee Dee...” Vicki laughed. “You’ve been gone four years, not forty.:

“Well, it seems like a long time.” And then Dee Dee **leaned over to hug Vicki.** “I miss La Familia Gomez.”

“Oh, Dee Dee,” Vicki Gomez patted Dee Dee’s arms. “That is so sweet of you to say. And you know, you’ve been on our minds, in our hearts nearly every day, right Evie?”

Who was she trying to fool? Evie thought. Was her mother actually going to fall for this blatant snow job? But what could Evie do but squeeze out a mild agreement?

“Remember when I’d sleep over and you’d make Evie and me breakfast just like this?” Dee Dee continued. “And then later in the afternoon, you and Mr. Gomez always had that little saying when you wanted Evie and I to take our naps after our lunch?”

“Saying? What little saying?”

“Big Fiesta... now long Siesta

“Oh, that’s right! I can’t believe you remember that!”

Well, in Mexico,” Dee Dee referenced her former residence for the umpteenth time, “Siesta are the real thing and I must have had a sleep debt from all the naps I didn’t take as a kid because I slept every afternoon after school while I was living there!”.

“Oh, Dee Dee,” Evie’s mother started. “Was it hard for you honey? I can’t image...”

As they talked, it took Evie back, way back. Evie’s mother was always in a good mood when Dee Dee was around. She looked at Dee Dee and saw past the blonde hair and mascara heavy lashes and remembered the Dee Dee she had as a childhood friend. The De la Fuentes, like her father said, *were* like family. Dee Dee *was*, in a way, like her sister. Sure Evie had Sabrina, but Sabrina was a good four years older than her and during some years, it made a big difference.

recuperating Raquel. If she knew her mother, she'd have at least half an hour before Lindsay served brunch. That gave Evie, who had gotten used to Raquel's "morning afters, time play caretaker for Raquel.

there'd be

ask

Evie filled one of her mother's red and white kitchen towel with ice cubes and poured a can of warm ginger ale into a glass. She placed them on the counter.

"Do you need any more aspirin?" Evie asked.

"Nah," Raquel held the towel to her forehead. "I'll see how I feel in the next hour. I don't like overdoing it."

"Yeah," Evie smirked. "You proved that last night."

She pulled up a stool to sit next to Raquel at the counter. The morning marine layer that often plagued coastal towns like Rio Estates had burned off making the afternoon, and kitchen, sunny, warm and, to Raquel's dismay, bright.

it wasn't the burn off that made it sunny, it was the fact that it wasn't there at black the sun

"Ugh..." Raquel groaned as she pulled her Aviators over her eyes and placed her head over her arms on the kitchen counter as the sun rays bounced off the counter's white tile. "What's with your mother's opposition to some simple kitchen blinds?"

"It's more like an opposition to, like, discretion or something," Evie said referring to the large ornate bay-like windows that overlooked the Gomez's lush lawn, bountiful citrus trees, and swimming pool. "My mother likes to see what she's thought up and put together."

this implies that she wants people to take W not that she wants to look OUT

"Look at them," Raquel looked out onto the deck. "Just like the old days, minus the OG Sangro," referring to Graciela.

"Speaking of Sangros," Evie lowered her voice. She had been dying to bring it up as soon as the parents were out of ear shot. "What did you make of Dee Dee?"

“What do I make of her?” Raquel face **quelched**. “She’s such a fucking FOTB Sangro, that’s what I make of her.”

Evie knew very well, of course, that the de LaFuentes, fresh or not, hadn’t taken a boat to travel back to California, but did Raquel really think Dee Dee was a Sangro?

Well, Evie guessed, if giggles like a Sangro, squeals like a Sangro, **wears tight lycra across the ass like a Sangro**... it was, ^{probably} ~~sadly~~, a Sangro.

“Do you know that Alex took her to Sea Street?” Evie asked.

“Sea Street?” Raquel looked up. “When?”

“Last night,” Evie said. “After the party. She practically ordered him.”

“Fucking Alex,” Raquel shook her head in disgust. “That dude be dense. It’s a good thing she didn’t tell Jose to do anything. I’d have beat her ass.” Raquel put her head back on her folded arms. “We gotta steer clear ^{of} from her. I mean it, Evie. She’s not the same friend we thought we knew.”

“It seems that way,” Evie reluctantly agreed.

“Seems?” Raquel lifted her head up again. “As if there was any suspicion there wasn’t? Evie, you have to realize that she *was* a friend, *used* to be a friend, but times, obviously, have changed. We gotta have each other’s backs.”

“I know, Raquel.” ~~What, did Raquel think that Evie couldn’t judge for herself?~~

Fortunately ^{just then} Evie’s mother announced that brunch was ready. Evie welcomed the interruption and got up to go outside with Raquel. They both took seats at the smaller patio table that was pushed up against the end of the main table, where all the parents sat.

Evie saw that there had been an additional place setting for Dee Dee.

very awkward

As much as Evie didn't want to acknowledge it

This is good... we really said

huh?

a sexy

of R/S character

“Evie,” Raquel noticing Evie looking over. “Forget about it. Just think of the memories we had as kids. Some people don’t even have that.”

“Yeah, I guess.”

“What do you even need ol’ Dee Dee for?” Raquel asked. “You got me.” She flashed a goony larger than life smile. Evie knew, in Raquel’s condition, it must have just

killed on the face muscles. “Look,” Raquel continued. “I’ll even remove all this little nasty avo from your salsa.” She started to pick out the cubes of avocado from Evie’s plate.

“Hey,” Evie playfully pushed her fingers away. “Get your grubby paws outta my food!”

As soon as Lindsay placed individual Eggs Benedict in front of everyone the brunch had, finally, officially started. Evie’s father welcomed the de LaFuentes back to Rio Estates for the umpteenth time before Evie’s mother said a few things.

“I’ll have you know,” Vicki Gomez proudly pointed out with a champagne glass in her hand, “That just about everything on the table came from our own backyard –the tomatoes, the *augacate*, and oh, even the orange juice. We squeezed it this morning.”

“Ay!” Charlie Diaz feigned pain and pretended to spit an orange seed into a napkin. “And these semillas, tambien? I think I broke a crown!”

Everyone laughed, **except for Graciela, who just smiled.**

“So,” Frank de LaFuente asked as he passed the carafe of orange juice. “How’s Sabrina? How is she doing at Stanford?”

“Oh, just great,” Evie’s father said, cutting into his eggs benedict. “She made the dean’s list and was just elected president of her sorority.”

what is this supposed to mean?

very cute

since when do they have food?

awk

great

“See,” Frank de LaFuente knowingly said to the whole table, using his fork as a pointer. “That girl was always a go getter. She did things right, stayed on a path. There are Mexi-can’ts and Mexi-cans. And she’s definitely a Mexi-can.”

The adults laughed.

“What,” Charlie Diaz asked. “You writing for George Lopez now?”

ha!

Raquel nudged Evie and rolled her eyes. “**This** Mexi-can’t take this corn ball crap”

While everyone was impressed with Sabrina’s accomplishments, it was the debut of Ruben Gomez’s *pan dulce* that garnered the most attention.

“Ay, no,” Graciela de LaFuente winced after her first bite into a fluffy *banderilla*. “With all respect, Senor Gomez –”

“Grace, please,” Evie’s father interrupted. “We’re like family. Call me Ruben.”

“Oh, well...” Graciela looked at her husband uncomfortably. “My family calls me Graciela. Anyhow, as I was trying to say, I understand your intent, but ... I don’t know how to say this, but no lo *mete*.”

“*Mande?*” Evie’s father looked genuinely confused.

“Let me say it this way,” Graciela continued. “The heart, *la corazon* of pan dulce is the *manteca*. It’s what holds the pan together, literally and figuratively. In Mexico, a *panadero* would never dream of playing with tradition.”

“Can you believe she’s calling out your dad in his own house?” Raquel whispered over to Evie. “*Nerve*.”

Evie sat up in her patio chair. Raquel was right. Her father would *definitely* have something to say about this.

But before Ruben Gomez could defend his beloved bread, a voice called out from the Gomez's kitchen.

"Dad? Graciela?"

~~It was Dee Dee.~~ Evie noticed it was now Raquel who sat up in her chair. Not nervously, but aggressively. Ready for combat.

"Ay, mi'ja!" Frank de LaFuente directed his attention, and thankfully everyone else's, away from the *pan dulce* to Dee Dee who was coming out from the kitchen.

"Aqui!" He called out. "We're out here!"

Dee Dee, in huge green tinted sunglasses and her blouse tied above to expose navel came out onto the Gomez's deck. Her blonde hair was pulled into a pony tail and she carried a large paper bag.

"Oh, Vicki," She went over to Evie's mother and gave her a hug. "I am *so* sorry I'm late. I overslept. It was *such* a long night last night."

Raquel nudged Evie, "And an even earlier morning... with Alex, I'm sure."

"Plus," Dee Dee gathered a fake yawn together. "I'm still so jet lagged. It always takes me so long to get over it when I travel. But look, look." She held up her bag of Noah's Bagels. "I bought some bagels."

"Oh, Dee Dee," Vicki Gomez stood up and took the bag. "How thoughtful. You didn't have to do that." She passed them on to Lindsay without saying anything which ~~told Evie, as well as Lindsay,~~ that the bagels would remain in the kitchen for the rest of

the morning. There was definitely enough bread for one brunch. Besides, after Graciela's sour comment, Ruben's *pan dulce* didn't need any competition.

"Um," Dee Dee looked over the two tables uncomfortably. "Where should I sit?"

"Sit wherever you want, *mi'ja*," Evie mother said. "But I think Lindsay already made a place for you." She gestured to the only available seat that was across from Evie and Raquel. Dee Dee pulled out **the strapped** patio chair and reluctantly sat down.

"So, what did I miss?" She kept her sunglasses on and focused on the adults, making sure she didn't look at Evie and Raquel.

"Here," Ruben Gomez passed the basket of pan over to her side of the table. "Try some of my new bread from the *panaderia*. It's fat free."

"Fat free?" Dee Dee looked surprised. "Are you serious? Wow." She eyed the last *hornito* in the basket.

But Raquel, seeing Dee Dee's interest and waiting until the parents went back to discussing the Ruben Gomez's new business venture, grabbed the remaining pan and tore a bite off with her mouth. She crossed her arms and looked defiantly at Dee Dee. *Not* an attractive sight.

"Ay, que *glutona*," Dee Dee put her hand on her chest. "It's a good thing it's fat free, Pansita, 'cause the last thing you need is any more fat." *Dyikes! good*

Evie looked over at her parents but they were **clueless** to what was starting up, or actually, what was continuing from last night. She sunk into her chair and said nothing, and neither did Raquel. Actually, how could she? Her mouth was filled with soggy, semi devoured mush.

"I'd rather... be... a glutton," Raquel finally responded, chewing the last bits of the pan in her mouth, "than some... *pinche puta*... right, Evie?"

Evie could still not speak. She picked at her fruit salsa. ~~No, Raquel. Please, don't~~
~~start.~~ *awk*

"Yeah," Raquel continued, keeping her eyes on the parents, making sure they didn't hear. "Evie and I were just talking about it, before you showed up late, *again*. Ordering Alex to take you to Sea Street, being all up on Jose at the party, Right Evie?"

"Oh, really?" Dee Dee looked at Evie wide eyed. "Is that what you were you saying, Evelina?"

awk The earnest way Dee Dee asked Evie made her feel guilty. It was one thing to agree to Raquel's earlier smack, but another to be called on it. Besides, Dee Dee seemed so defenseless. Was it the lack of her alien colored contacts that made her seem more vulnerable, human? Dee Dee's brown eyes waited for Evie's answer.

"Well," Evie tried to find her voice. "Last night was bad, I mean, it was late and everyone was tired. And you were just saying yourself that you get jet lagged and—"

"*What?*" Raquel spat under her breath. "Evie, how can you fucking say that?"

"I'm not saying anything," Evie tried to explain. "I'm just agreeing that last night was craziness and that—"

But Raquel wasn't listening ~~any longer~~. She pushed her chair back and stood up. "Mom, I gotta get home." She looked down, towards Dee Dee. "I feel nauseous."

"Nauseous?" Ruben Gomez was immediately concerned. "From what?" The last thing he wanted was a connection of nausea linked to his forward thinking, progressive *pan*.

“Raquel,” Kitty Diaz looked at Raquel firmly. “Sit down. You are being rude. We came together, we are leaving together.”

“Oh, Kitty,” Evie’s mother said. “If Raquel still isn’t feeling well, she’s more than welcome to leave. I won’t be offended.” But Evie knew that her mother didn’t want Raquel, who was notorious for being so moody, around in the first place. God forbid she got all *asco* on the teak furniture.

“You heard her, mom,” Raquel said. “Vicki doesn’t mind.” She got up and threw her crumpled napkin on her plate. But before she left she made sure to lean over and give Evie a minor earful, “I knew you’d be weak. Thanks a fucking lot, *Evelina*.”

“Oh, I am so sorry,” Kitty Diaz started to apologize as Raquel left. “She’s never been a morning person.”

“Or afternoon or evening...” Charlie Diaz looked upward in slight exasperation. Frank de LaFuente tried to soothe the situation. “And who isn’t a little tired the morning after such a wonderful celebration?” He looked at Kitty and winked. “Que una fiesta! We can’t thank you enough.”

“Oh, you are so welcome,” Kitty’s mood lifted. She looked at her watch. “Oh, but you know, that reminds me. I hate to do this to you, Vicki, but we should get going. We have the rental company coming over to pick up all the tables and chairs from last night.”

“On a Sunday?” Vicki Gomez seemed suspicious.

“Well, if they don’t come today, we’ll be charged an extra day.”

“We should get going, too.” Frank de LaFuente pushed away from the table. “We still have a lot of unpacking to do.”

“But it’s still early.” Vicki struggled to keep her brunch alive, or at the very least, end on a more **memorable**, positive note. “Why don’t we at least take our drinks down by the pool? It’s so nice out.”

“It is,” Charlie Diaz said, “But ay Vicki, it’s gonna have to be another time. Kitty’s right. We should get home to meet Party Rents.”

“Actually,” Frank de LaFuente started. “Graciela wanted to see that talavera in your bathroom. It’s similar to the tile we want for ours. Could we take a look at it?”

“Oh yes, Kitty Diaz smiled. “Come on over.”.

“And we still have some *Tres Leches*.” Charlied looked over at Ruben Gomez playfully. “Some nice, sweet, *fattening* Tres Leches. No more pan *dull-ce*, eh, Ruben?”

As the four parents left the Gomezes to ~~crossed~~ **Camino del Rio** to go over to the Diazes, Evie actually felt sorry for her mother. She could see the dejected look in her ~~as~~ well as her father’s, face. Their only consolation seemed to be that Dee Dee, strangely enough, stayed behind.

“I’m not leaving Vicki,” Dee Dee said sweetly. She was still seated at the patio table scooping up fruit salsa with hollandaise sauce. “Do you need any help? Cleaning up?”

“Oh, no, Dee Dee,” Vicki smiled weakly. “That’s so nice of you. But it’s not necessary. I’ve got Lindsay today.”

“And I really want to try the pan dulce,” Dee Dee assured Evie’s father. “I used to love going to the bakery, especially the original one on Colonia Road. Your pan is even better than what I had in Mexico.”

Great. Evie thought. Add one more to the list of Ruben Gomez’s culo kissers.

Evie's father
snore
wisheed
“Nah...” Evie’s father didn’t quite believe Dee Dee, but then, “Really?”

“Yes, really,” Dee Dee assured him.

And with that, Ruben Gomez practically tripped over himself as he rushed to the kitchen phone. He wanted make to arrangements for someone from his bakery to deliver more pan dulce.

“That is so sweet of you to say,” Evie’s mother told Dee Dee as her husband was on the phone. “Ruben really needed to hear that.”

“But I didn’t just say it,” Dee Dee insisted. “I meant it. I guess growing up in California, in Rio Estates, I just thought that’s all Mexican things should be. Does that make sense? Even if it’s not considered *authentica*?”

“It makes perfect sense” Vicki Gomez laughed. “Whose to say what is authentic or not? Even in Mexico, you not gonna find a fish taco in Oaxaca that tastes like one in Ensenada, right?”

Dee Dee wrinkled her nose. “Uh, I don’t really know. I don’t like fish tacos.”

“So, you must have had some fun experiences, adventures in Mexico City,” Evie’s mother continued. “I’ve always wanted to go there.”

“Oh, you have to! People always talk about Paris or some other European place being so **great** and cultured and all, but D.F., nothing compares. You’ve never been?”

“No, before we had the girls, Ruben and I would always take trips down to Baja and then, as you know, we all went to Cabo...when you’re mother was alive,” Evie mother suddenly got a soft look in her eyes. “That was so much fun.”

“Yeah, “ Dee Dee said quickly.

“Remember when your mother and dressed you, Evie and Raquel like that was just so cute...”

As her mother and Dee Dee reminisced, Evie started to see Dee Dee differently. She began to sees past the blonde hair and mascara leaden lashes. She saw the Dee Dee she remembered as a childhood friend, her best friend. The de LaFuentes, like her father said, *were* like family and Dee Dee *had* been like a sister to her. Dee Dee made for a better Sunday morning sweetheart than the Saturday night chica from the night before. Also, the way her mother was talking to Dee Dee reminded how her mother can be – calm, caring and attentive. Why is, Evie wondered, that it was always other people who brought out the best in her parents?

Well,” Vicki Gomez patted Dee Dee’s arm. “I better go help Lindsay in the kitchen. It’s her day off and I know she’ll want to get out of here as soon as possible.”

“Are you sure you don’t need my help?” Dee Dee asked.

“Oh, no, mi’ja. It was just so nice to catch up with you. I knew it would be good to have this brunch.”

When her mother left to join Lindsay in the kitchen, Evie realized she no longer had a buffer and she’d have to deal with Dee Dee alone, **one on one**.

“So,” Dee Dee pulled out her cell phone and checked to see if she had messages.

“It’s nice to see Lindsay. Remember we used to have a crush on her son, Alfredo? He must be, like, in his 30s by now, huh?”

awk,
show
this
the
narration
is a
bit off

Mother leaves.

Evie and Dee Dee start talking.

“So, it’s too bad last night was what is was.”

Was this some sort of apology?

“Ay, but that Pansita,” Dee Dee continued. “She has changed so much. A regular sangrona.”

“A regular *what?*” Evie asked. It was funny to hear Raquel being compared to a sangrona. If Dee Dee only know how *they* defined sangrona..

“She’s always been so bossy and aggressive, especially to you, Evie. but I don’t know why she attacked me the way she did last night. It was so uncalled for.”

“Well, for one thing, you were flirting with her boyfriend.”

“Her boyfriend? Who?”

“Jose. You know, he was with Alex.”

“I didn’t know that was her boyfriend” She paused for a beat.. “Is...is Alejandro *your* boyfriend?”

“Alex? No. We’re just friends. All of us, me, Raquel...there’s another guy, too. Mondo.”

“Well, Alejandro is one cool guy. I can’t wait to get to know him better. Jose, too. He was pretty funny.”

Evie couldn’t help but feel possessive. The Flojos were *her* pals, not just some fast food friends that anyone, including Dee Dee, could drive up and order.

“And she doesn’t like being called Pansita.”

“Oh, but I was only teasing. You know, in Mexico-”

“I am so tired of hearing about Mexico! Damn, Dee Dee, the whole universe doesn’t evolve around Mexico. Do I have to remind you, some people consider it a third world country? Some people will think it’s fine to party and barf in Baja, but that doesn’t mean they *care* about it. Who even cares about Mexico? You never did when we were growing up.”

“Well,” Dee Dee voice softened. “I care now. I’ve had to live there. I had no choice.”

Evie immediately felt horrible. “Dee Dee I didn’t mean it that way...”

“Yeah, maybe I did come on too strong last night. But I was excited to see you,. And those two guys, your friends, they came up to *me*. They started saying things first. What was I supposed to do? Ignore them and then be called a snuck up bitch? Plus I had just gotten into a major fight with my novio and, to be honest, the attention from them was sorta nice.

“Novio?” Evie asked. “You’re engaged?”

“Huh? Oh no. In Mexico,” She stopped herself. “uh, I mean, novio can also mean boyfriend. She suddenly laughed. “I couldn’t be engaged!“My father would kill me. Remember that time I had a slumber party and Ricky Garcia and all his little pals came over to crash it? My dad was ready to after them with his golf clubs.

Evie laughed. It had been so long since she thought of that slumber party.

That slumber was fun. More memories.

Maybe Evie was wrong about the new and overdone Dee Dee after all.

Monday morning Evie drove to school with Dee Dee. After the Saturday night, she never thought that she would be the one to show Dee Dee around Villanova. But Sunday's brunch she learned just how much Dee Dee, was just the same ol' sweet and silly Dee Dee she used to be. Evie was sure it would be only a matter of time before Raquel realized they had all started on the wrong foot and they'd all be friends, best friends, again. Yes, Evie thought, as they made a quick stop for a White Forest at Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf, it would be just a matter of time.

But after Dee Dee's VW Beetle exited off the 101 and onto Highway 33, the reality hit Evie. She was going to school with Dee Dee. What had she been thinking? There was no way this was gonna fly with Raquel. What was she thinking? She started to panic. Could she claim sick and ask Dee Dee to drive her back home? Maybe suggest they both ditch and head out for a day at Sea Street? That was something she could do with Raquel, but with Dee Dee? She wasn't so sure. Could she possibly ask Dee Dee to drop her off a block before Villanova? **Oh, that's so old school, middle school. Back when Gomez's had their car in the shop and Lindsay had to drive her to school in her own car. She made Lindsay drop her off far enough away from Mesa Union Middle School, so none of her classmates would see her in Lindsay's battered Corrolla**

"Dia de los Muertos!" Dee Dee Exclaimed.

What are you talking about?"

This brought Evie out of her thoughts. when she saw Villanova's front lawn marquee. "You celebrate it here?"

Evie looked over and saw the marquee announcing the Villanova's annual Day of the Dead Dance. "What do you mean, *here*? Dee Dee, we're in California, not Missouri."

"No, I'm just saying that in Mexico," Dee Dee stopped herself. "I mean, we had festivals, processions, By November 2nd, the streets were flooded with zempazulchis.

"Zempla- what?"

"Marigolds," Dee Dee smiled.

They pulled into the student parking lot. The Flojos were already there anything better than getting to first period. Raquel was in the front seat of Mondo's Maurader. She pulled down her Avaitors and watch Dee Dee pull up as though she was witnessing a murder.

"Hey, Evie, Mondo gave a sideways glance. "Who's the new Crème fresa?"

"Oh, Mondo please," She looked at Alex for support, but he offered nothing outside of a casual hey to both her and Dee Dee. What didn she expect? She didn't return his calls and the last time they did talk she was angry with him. "This is my old friend, Dee Dee," she continued she told Mondo.. "Raquel's friend too."

Raquel got out of the car. "She's old, but she ain't my friend."

"Of course," Dee Dee played the (). " I'm your friend Raquel.

"Oooh, " Mondo smiled. "How (name of movie)"

"Yeah," Jose said. "Maybe they'll kiss when they make up!"

Dee Dee didn't react.

Don't you have a nail to file?"

Bye, *Evie*.

Lunch time

It's the classic moment where everyone is waiting to see who lowers their standards to sit with an unknown newbie, but Dee Dee is a new girl who attracts attention. It's not every day you see someone like her, sitting with a Flojo.

As she and Dee Dee pull chop stick out to, the Sangro's enter the garden. WHAT do they look like?

"Oh, God," Evie lowers her voice to Dee Dee. "You have to watch these bitches. They –"

Dee Dee looks up. "Oh, my God! Alejandra!"

"Huh?"

"Ay, chica!" Alejandra leaned over and gave Dee Dee an air kiss. "Que tal, mujer? Why didn't you tell me you were already started here? I though you said you didn't know what school you'd be going to." She punched her arm.

I didn't at the time." Dee Dee put her arm around Alejandra and explained to Evie. "I met Alejandra in Mexico. Her father is the President of UNAM. That's how my dad got the gig at Channel Islands. Oh, you must know Evie"

Evie sunk into the bench.

"Yeah," Alejandra looked over Evie. "We all know Evie." She leaned over and ran her hand through Evie's hair. "La Loca with the blue hair. Where your friends, Loca? Donde estan los otros Flojos?"

"The who?" Dee Dee asked.

"Las Flojos," Alejandra smirked.

"The Lazies?" Dee Dee asked again. "What is she talking about?"

“Oh, she just means me and Raquel and you know, Jose and-”

“But why are you called Lazy?” She looked at Alejandra.

“No,” Evie tried to explain. “Flojos ‘cause we wear flip flops, all the time.” She lifted her foot to show Dee Dee. “See?” As talked it suddenly sounded all so juvenile to her.

“Oh, how funny. Anyway, “She looked up at Alejandra. “, sit with us.

Describe who is who

As Evie gets in line to buy a Cali Roll, she bumps into Raquel. They have an awkward moment, but neither of them says a word. It is clear to Raquel that Evie has taken sides with Dee Dee, which drives them even farther apart.

When the school day is over, Dee Dee invites Evie over to see her new house, but Evie declines. Raquel is a card carrying grudge holder and Evie doesn't want to be on her permanent shit list any longer than need be.

Well how are you going to get home?”

Oh, I'm not going home. We usually go to Sea Street.

Who, the Lazies?”

Evie heads to the student parking lot where she usually meets Raquel to get a ride back to Spanish Hills. When she sees Raquel—and Raquel definitely sees her—Raquel quickly gets into Mondo's Maurader with Jose and they drive away without her.

Evie stands there with her mouth open, unable to move until Alex walks up behind her. He's the only Flojo who hasn't taken sides. He sees them driving away and says, “I don't follow soap operas,” rolling his eyes, “but my *abuelita* does.” He looks at

Evie and says, “So, it looks like you need a ride home.” Alex’s attitude calms Evie. But that’s no surprise. She always feels safe with Alex. That’s one of the reasons she was confident enough to let him teach her surf last summer. Even as she tumbled off her board 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. He’s never let other people’s issues get in the way of what he thinks is right.

Things come to a head on Friday afternoon when Dee Dee is transferred to Evie and Raquel’s swim class. Evie slowly swims her obligatory laps, while Raquel takes her usual seat in the shallow end of the pool, pretending to have semester-long cramps. In walks Dee Dee. Since she can’t swim, she’s lead straight to the shallow end—and to Raquel. Both Raquel and Dee Dee ignore each other until Raquel, unable to keep her mouth shut any longer, stares straight ahead and says “Nice bathing suit. Did it come with it’s own pole and plastic heels?” Dee Dee gives her a mock-polite smile and says in a sickly-sweet voice, “You only wish you could wear a bikini like this.” She leans over and pats Raquel’s stomach. “Poor, Pansita, Americans have such a problem with their weight. Maybe that’s why your man is always eyeing me.”

Tensions escalate until the girls are in a full-on screaming match and slamming water at one another. As the instructor breaks up their fight, Alejandra de los Santos emerges from the gym room and into the pool area. In the last few days, Alejandra and Dee Dee have become closer friends. “Dela” Alejandra hands Dee Dee a towel, looks down at Raquel, and says, “Is this Flo-Ho bothering you?” Dee Dee clicks her tongue looks at

Raquel and laughs, “Ay, no chica. This Flo’s just about to go. Right, Pansita?”

Dee Dee and Alejandra turn on their heels, leaving the pool area. Raquel climbs out of the pool and looks over at Evie. “You know, you oughta be careful with that new pally of yours. Looks like she contracted some nasty little habits in Mexico and you don’t want to catch any of that **third world crap.**”

The lines have been drawn. The Flojos and the Sangros on opposite sides and it seems that Evie, along with Dee Dee, is on the Sangro side. For Raquel, it’s war. And for Evie, who doesn’t have the stomach for even minor scimmages, it’s sickening.

Later that day Dee Dee invites Evie to come over and go swimming at her house. “I also asked that surfer friend of yours, Alejandro. I *have* to learn to swim,” Dee Dee says. “I cannot bear another day sharing the kiddie end with that bitch.” Ever since Diaz’s welcome back party, Evie has had a funny feeling whenever Dee Dee mentions Alex. Something about the way she rolls her tongue when she says his name, Alejandrrrrro, gives Evie a weird prickly feeling in the back of her neck. She decides to ask Dee Dee about it—big mistake. Dee Dee gets this surprised look on her face and says, “Evie, I have a boyfriend back in DF. Sounds like someone is a little posesiva, no?” Evie shakes her head quickly, “With Alex? Please!” So the topic is dropped, but Evie has a sneaking suspicion that Dee Dee isn’t quite telling her the whole truth. And more importantly, Evie

wants to know why it is that she even cares. Alex has always been her friend, just her friend, right?

Just to prove she isn't possessive, Evie says, no thanks, and stays home, catching up on her TiVo. As she's flipping mindlessly through her shows, she can't get the image of Dee Dee and Alex in the pool—alone—out of her head. At the last minute she decides to go to Dee Dee's. She doesn't know what to expect at the De La Fuentes's—what will Dee Dee and Alex be doing when she walks in—and is even more shocked and horrified to find Dee Dee's backyard crawling with ...Sangros! Evie's first instinct is to get back in her mother's Saab and drive away. But then she sees Alex, shirtless in his old faded lifeguard trunks, chatting with a Sangro in a metallic gold bikini top whose C-cups overfloweth. Evie clenches her fist and grits her teeth. She's not going to be scared off by this wild pack of skanky Sangros. And although she's a little embarrassed by her baggy board shorts, bathing top, and flip-flops that reveal her chipped blue toenail polish, she is not going home. Fortunately, Dee Dee sees her, and waves her over. With a hug, she introduces her to the gold bikini-clad Sangro making it clear that even though Evie is a Flojo she is *una buena persona*, just like Alex.

At first Evie pretends to be completely blasé about spending a Friday night with Sangros, but after a while she actually does relax and starts to have fun. It doesn't hurt that every soda that Dee Dee's housekeeper brings out is soon spiked with expensive Patron tequila. The Sangros start talking about Raquel, and although Evie feels guilty about it, she engages in some "harmless" Raquel bashing. Alejandra is especially harsh. Evie has

always kind of been scared of Alejandra, but as soon as Alejandra gets tipsy, she mellows out. In fact, she kinda reminds Evie of Raquel. After some coaxing, and a trip to the pool house, Evie tries on the gold bikini top. As soon as she steps out, she notices Alex staring at her. And not just staring, but looking right at her like he's never seen her before. Evie feels herself blush when their eyes lock. "You like, Alex?" Alejandra purrs. "*Que guapa*, no?" Alex doesn't like being the center of this kind of joking, especially since he was caught staring at Evie. "Yeah," he says, "but it's just not Evie. I mean, don't get me wrong, but it's just not her style." Evie is crushed. What's wrong with her showing a little skin? Doesn't she look *guapa*? And why, exactly, can't she do anything right?

A few nights later at Dee Dee's house, Evie is still debating what Alex does find attractive. It's a new and strange sensation for her. The look they shared at Dee Dee's swim party is confusing. Then, as though Dee Dee is reading her mind, Dee Dee suggests that Evie might look better if she fixed her hair. After all, it's been blue for a few weeks and Evie has a good amount of black roots showing. Before she knows it, Evie even lets Dee Dee talk her into honey blonde highlights—the bona fide mark of a Sangro. "You'll be un taco de ojo!" Dee Dee claims as she holds up a box of hair color. Evie wonders, maybe that's what Alex likes—Sangro stripes? Hell, yeah, she'll try the highlights.

"Oh, before we get going with this," Dee Dee says, "I have something for you." Dee Dee goes into her closet and comes back with a small wrapped package. "You know, this won't be the first time you've had blonde hair."

Who was Dee Dee trying to fool? Did she think Evie was just gonna forget about last night?

“So,” Evie crossed her arms firmly. “What happened at Raquel’s? At the party?”

“Yeah,” Dee Dee still didn’t bother to look at Evie. She was now text messaging someone. “That Pansita has always been so bossy and aggressive, especially to you, Evie. I don’t know why she attacked me the way she did.”

“Well, for one thing, you were **macking on** her boy.”

“I was what?”

“You were flirting with her boyfriend.”

“Her boyfriend?” Dee Dee looked up from her cell phone. Her eyes widened.

“Quien?”

“Jose,” Evie said matter of factly. “You know, the guy with Alex.”

“I didn’t know that was her boyfriend. He actually came up to me and started saying all those silly things first.” Dee Dee paused for a beat. “Is...is Alejandro *your* boyfriend?”

“Alex? No. We’re just friends. All of us, me, Raquel...there’s another guy, too. Mondo. And,” Evie added. “Raquel doesn’t like being called Pansita.”

True, Raquel had been chubby as a child, but now four years later, well, what could you say? *Real Women Have... Third Helpings?*

“Oh,” Dee Dee waved her hand aside. “I was only teasing. In Mexico it would be taken as an endearment.”

“Dee,” Evie stopped herself. “Dela, we’re not in Mexico. And you know what? I’m tired of hearing about Mexico. Was Mexico so great that’s the reason you never

called? Or answered my emails? I mean, the whole universe doesn't evolve around Mexico. You never cared about Mexico when we were kids, growing up. Now it's all "Mexico this" and "Mexico that."

"Well," Dee Dee went back to fidgeting with her phone. "I've *had* to care. I had no choice. And you know, it was actually nice to get away."

"Get away?" ~~This offended and hurt Evie more than she could bear.~~

"Evie," Dee Dee continued. "I hate Rio Estates. When my dad told me we were coming back, you don't know how horrible I felt. To leave my school, my friends..."

"Well," Evie could feel herself getting more defensive. "I am so *sorry* Rio Estates doesn't compare with the cosmopolitan life you had in D.F."

"Evie, no," Dee Dee voice softened and she finally put down her phone. "It's just being back here, in Rio Estates, in this neighborhood. It's hard. It reminds me of...my mom."

Evie immediately felt horrible. "Oh, Dee Dee, I'm sorry. I wasn't even thinking. I didn't mean it that way..."

"I know you didn't it, it's just..." Dee Dee's voice started to crack. Evie knew if Dee Dee turned on the water works, she would be sure to follow suit in tears. "You know," Dee Dee tried to regain her composure. "I don't want to get into it, but maybe I did come on too strong last night. But I *was* excited to see you, Evie. Really. When I heard about the party I was thinking of all the ways I was going to surprise you and Raquel. I didn't know that right before the party I was going to get into a big fight with Rocio, my novio, and—"

"You're engaged?" Evie interrupted.

“Huh? Oh, no. In Mexico,” Dee Dee stopped herself, realizing she referenced Mexico again. “I mean, novio can also mean boyfriend.” She suddenly laughed. “I couldn’t be engaged! My father would kill me. Remember that time I had a slumber party and **Pete Galindo** and all his friends came over to crash it? My dad was ready to pound them with a golf iron!”

Evie laughed. It had been so long since she had thought of that party. As she had told Raquel, Dee Dee’s mother always threw the best parties, especially for Dee Dee. It was something Evie always envied and missed about Margaret de LaFuente.

“Oh, Evie,” Dee Dee said. “I’m sorry we got off on the bad foot. You will always be my best friend. Even in Mexico, I always, always, talked about *mi amiga mejor* in California. Really.”

“Really?” ~~Evie was still a bit hesitant.~~ “You’re not just saying that to get Gomez points?”

“Really,” Dee Dee laughed. “You are *not* your father.”

Evie laughed again and then both she and Dee Dee got up from their chairs and hugged. Unlike the hug from last night’s party, this was one *authentic*.

awake Monday morning, after a whole day of catching up with Dee Dee, Evie took her up on her offer to ride to school together. Besides, Raquel didn’t answer any of Evie’s phone calls or text messages later that evening and Evie wasn’t feeling exactly thrilled to

What about Evie's relationship with DeeDee's mom?

good ending

Sue's girlfriend

Sunday night

what

share a ride to school with her in Mondo's car. Villanova was a good thirty minutes north east of Rio Estates and Raquel's silent treatment would be long and excruciating

But as soon as Dee Dee beeped the horn of her VW Beetle and Evie ran out of the house to meet her, she immediately regretted her decision. Dee Dee's iTrip blasted *roc en espanol* from the speakers which, according to Evie, might as well have been *American Idol Presents* or that wretched **Reggatron that suddenly seemed to be flooding Villanova's hall ways**. If that wasn't bad enough, when she sat down in the light green leather seats, the overwhelming stink of a highly fragrant rose sachet, hanging from the rearview mirror, took over the front seat. What was this? An FDS commercial?

"Hey, chica!" Dee Dee gave Evie's shoulder a squeeze. "Que cute you look! Your skirt matches your hair."

"Oh, thanks," Evie said. She didn't think what she was wearing anything especially cute, just her silver metallic Havaianas and a jean skirt she found at Tilly's in the Esplanade, but she'll take an early morning compliment just as quick as the next sophomore girl who questioned her cute quotient.

"I was so worried," Dee Dee held her left hand upright and out the partially closed window. Evie saw she held a lit cigarette. "When my dad and Graciela told me I'd be going to Villanova I thought that I'd have to wear a uniform or something. In Mexico, you have to wear one if you go to a private school. But we can wear anything at Villanova, huh?"

"Yeah," Evie looked over Dee Dee disapprovingly. "Anything."

Could Dee Dee be anymore Sangro? she thought. Was it her too tight designer denim that appeared to envelope her lower half or the super sized hoops that pulled her

This implies that the smell only appeared when she sat. It was always not, she just couldn't smell it. Why is she always ahead?

What does this mean? bid it envelope her or not? If it appears to be then it is was what

“Yeah, it was pretty easy for me. I mean, I cried and cried about leaving Rocio and about moving, so what could my father really do?”

Evie notice that the little flower vase, attached to the dashboard that all the new Beetles had, held unlit incense sticks.

Evie ran her finger over the tips. “You’ve always liked the girly scented things.”

“Yeah, I guess,” Dee Dee said nonchalantly as she brought in her hand and took a drag from her cigarette. But it’s also so my parents don’t suspect “They would kill me if they knew I smoked. So would Rocio.”

“When did you start?”

“Oh, not to long ago. I don’t smoke too much. Really, just socially.”

Raquel

As Dee Dee’s VW Beetle exited the 101 Freeway and entered onto Highway 33, reality finally bit Evie hard...right in the ass. She was going to school with Dee Dee.

What could she be thinking? There was no way it was gonna fly with Raquel. Raquel was card carrying grudge holder. Right between her fake ID and JambaCard, you could actually see a laminate that recorded long, hard residual resentment. The last thing Evie wanted was Raquel on her bad side.

What do you think of Raquel?

Evie looked out towards the lemon groves that lined Highway 33. She definitely was not ready to make a grand entrance at Villanova with Dee Dee. Maybe she could suddenly claim sick and ask Dee Dee to drive her back home? Suggest they both ditch and head out for a day at Sea Street? Hmmm. That was something Raquel would be down with, but with Dee Dee? She wasn’t so sure. Could she possibly ask Dee Dee to

awk

awk

slow progression
sudden

why all of the sudden?

this

a laminate

we the card doesn't record... it just shows the record

pre find to be sick?

Evie wonders what Dee Dee's talking about until she unwraps the gift. It's a framed photo of her and Dee Dee when they were young girls. As soon as Evie sees it, she gets this weird tight feeling in her chest. She and Dee Dee are in costume for the Sea Street Beauty Contest, where just about every girl, including the two of them, is dressed as the Coppertone Girl. There they are in blonde wigs and two-piece light blue bathing suits. "I still don't understand why we didn't win." Dee Dee clicks her tongue. "I mean, our tans are for real and they gave first place to a *gabacha!*"

Evie laughs. And then she notices that the photo is cropped. Oh, right. Raquel was also in the picture. Evie starts to remind Dee Dee about this, but Dee Dee won't have any of it, and changes the subject. "Hey," she says quickly. "You know, we'll have another chance to win a costume contest, for Dia de los Muertos." With all that has been going on, Evie had forgotten about Villanova's Annual Day of the Dead Dance. "You, Alex and I should go together," Dee Dee insists. "You can be Frida Kahlo, Alex can be Diego Rivera and I could be Cristina, Frida's sister. *Que chiste, no?*" Evie agrees it might be funny, but then wonders, didn't Diego have an affair with Frida's sister, Cristina? But she looks up at Dee Dee and smiles. Dee Dee smiles back. The two girls hug, and unlike the false forced hug at the party that first night, Evie feels this one is for real.

Evie enters school the next day in semi Sangro mode, which makes her nervous. She's always been known as Raquel's little shadow or the freaky Flojo with the blue hair. But now with her highlights and the push-up bra and espadrilles she borrowed from Dee Dee, she's transformed from a mini *muchacha* to *muy mucha mujer!* She tries to act self-

confident when she walks through the halls, hoping that she doesn't attract too much attention with her Sangro-ed self. Well, there's no hiding—she does attract attention, but thankfully, it's not what she was afraid of. Instead of laughing or ridiculing her, everyone is checking her out, including a lot of guys who never seemed to notice in the past, and she can't help but like it. Oh, who is she kidding? She loves it! Raquel walks by Evie, who looks her over, head to toe, and then rolls her eyes. Evie tries her best to ignore her and keeps walking. Out of the corner of her eye, she sees Jose staring at her. Raquel notices too, and smacks him in the arm. Evie can't help but feel a bit smug.

As Evie gets closer with Dee Dee and the Sangros, she can't help but become a full-fledged Sangro. The Sangros do things the Flojos never did as a group: shopping on Robertson, going to live tapings of LaTV, even some *roc en espanol* concerts. Evie doesn't even miss Raquel. Raquel who? When Evie sees the Flojos around school, she avoids eye contact. She and Alex, however, exchange a look that somehow feels very meaningful, at least to her, even though Evie isn't quite sure what the meaning may be. "I can't believe you were once one of them," sniffs Alejandra. Evie just nods, and turns away.

But although Evie might look like a Sangro on the outside, deep down, there's still a lot of the same old Flojo in Evie. She can't help but feel torn when it takes her an entire hour getting ready for another little Sangro outing at a local nightclub, Nicholby's. Should she, as Dee Dee's suggests, surrender her Flojo flip-flops for a pair of platform boots?

Dee Dee says there would a few college guys at the club and suggests, with a sly smile, that Evie might want to appear a bit more “mature.”

Evie opts for the boots and does ends up getting cornered by a college guy at the party, the older cousin of Vivian, one of the Sangros. He’s visiting from U.N.A.M. (Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico) and breathes every one of his achievements down Evie’s chest. Once they’re on the dance floor he gets very aggressive, pressing his body up against Evie’s. She feels out of place and finds herself sneaking drinks more than she normally would. Even though people having a good time surround her, she suddenly feels very sad and empty. The Sangros are dancing and having fun, and Evie just can’t get into it. She overhears some Sangro remark that Evie is being *muy santurona*. As the college boy leaves to find more liquor, Evie sees Dee Dee and makes her way for her.

Evie’s insecurity grows when she notices Dee Dee’s necklace. It’s a ribbon with a shell; an abalone just like the one Alex was going to give her. Did Alex give Dee Dee the shell he found back at Bard Beach? Evie hints again at the idea of Alex and Dee Dee hooking up, which comes across sounding a little accusatory, making Dee Dee defensive. “Evie what is your *problema*? If you don’t like him yourself, then what do you care if someone else does?” But before Evie can answer, Dee Dee’s cell rings and she goes outside to talk to her boyfriend. Evie’s left by herself in the club. The college boy closes in on her again, and starts up with the dirty dancing and wandering hands, all of which makes Evie drink more and more. She starts thinking about Raquel. She’d be the perfect person to have

around at a time like this. She would say to hell with everyone and they would just take off together for Sea Street or something.

And then suddenly, a miracle appears. Under the curtain of the club's retro photo booth Evie sees two pairs of flip-flops. She knows those flip-flops. They belong to Jose and Raquel. Evie can barely believe it. What would Raquel and Jose be doing at Nicholby's? Well, anywhere there might be access to easy booze, Evie guesses. By now, Evie is so drunk she can barely see straight. She goes up to the photo booth, opens the curtain, and all but trips right into the grinding, slobbery couple. The girl chimes, "Oh hi Evie!" It's Alejandra de los Santos! She giggles. "Take a picture with us!" Jose winks at Evie. The room is spinning. Alejandra lifts her feet up toward Evie. "Look, look what Josito bought me! *Muy chiste, no?*"

Evie is horrified. She stumbles out of Nicholby's and immediately calls Alex. She begs him to come and pick her up. She wants to tell him what she just saw but as soon as she starts to speak, she starts sobbing. Before she knows it, she pukes all over Alex's front seat.

It's the next morning. Evie has somehow managed to make it into her own bed. She has not, however, managed to get undressed, wash the puke out of her hair, or keep track of both of Dee Dee's platform boots. Sometime in the middle of the night someone has jumped into her brain through her ear and is pounding on the inside of her head with hammers. Big ones.

And she feels even worse when she remembers what happened the night before. Or rather, what she doesn't remember—it's all a blur after she got into Alex's truck. Her cell phone rings. It's Dee Dee, wanting to make sure Evie got home OK. Evie moans a semi audible yes and Dee Dee launches into somehow they need to work on their costumes for the Day of the Dead Dance. Evie groans that she is too sick to go, but Dee Dee insists. Evie turns off her cell and spends the entire morning trying to recover. Make that the entire morning and most of the afternoon. The whole Jose drama nags at her. Later that afternoon, Alex shows up at her house. He had been trying to reach her on her cell. He's really put off by her drunken display last night, but more than that, he says it's been building up for awhile. "What is going on with you?" he demands. "It didn't work out trying to be Dee Dee so now you are trying to be a drunk like Raquel? Jeez, Evie, when's the last time you've even been out to Sea Street? Have you even tried out the new board we picked out together? What happened to the person I used to carve with?"

Evie's more embarrassed than anything, but she covers it up with anger. Why is Alex lecturing her? Who gave him the authority to issue reality checks? If Alex is acting like her big brother, what does that make her? His little sister? She snaps at him and he takes off, leaving her alone with her hangover and her wounded pride.

Evie feels so hurt and foolish. And stupid, most of all stupid. She can't believe she let herself throw up in front of Alex. How humiliating. And then she has to make it worse by yelling at him. She feels like a horrible person. Does everyone hate her? Or better yet, does she hate herself? The one saving grace of the horrible night is what she found out about Jose, and how much that piece of information will help Raquel. Evie will show

what a good friend she is by telling Raquel about Jose, protecting her from such a stinking *ratone*. Yes, Evie owes it to Raquel to tell her about Jose.

Evie calls Raquel and after what seems an eternity of rings, Raquel finally answers with a demanding “What?” Evie shares what she witnessed at the club. Raquel lets out a long drawn out sigh. “Wow Evie, it’s so clear to me now. It’s obvious that you’ve always been jealous of me for having a man when you don’t, but I never thought you would outright lie to me like this. Then again I never thought I’d see you as a honey dummy blonde. Later, Evie. Or whoever you are.” With that, she hangs up.

Evie is stunned. She’s too upset, and hung over, to even cry. How could they have been best friends until only a few weeks ago? How could everything have changed so fast? Raquel is acting like Evie is an entirely different person. Raquel thinks she is acting like Dee Dee and Alex thinks she is acting like Raquel. And the worst part? Evie isn’t even convinced that either of them is wrong. In fact, they might be right. Who is she? Where did the real Evie go? Is there an 800 number for this sort of identity theft?

With nowhere else to go, and feeling that things really can’t get any worse, Evie goes to the one person who is really her very, very last resort: her mother. They’ve never been very close, but Evie’s mother is still, well, her mother. She has bottled up so much hurt and confusion for so long that when it all starts pouring out, she can’t stop crying. Before she knows it Evie is telling her mother about Dee Dee, Raquel, how she saw Jose with another girl, and even her jealousy of Dee Dee and Alex. Surprisingly, Vicki Gomez

actually listens. It's one of the best talks they've had in a long time. "Mi'ja", she tells Evie, don't feel rejected just because the boy you like has some constructive criticism." Evie rolls her eyes, "Please Mom, Alex and I are . . ." But Evie can't even finish her sentence. And in that one-more-intuitive-than-even-she-realizes sort of way, Evie's mother has helped Evie finally accept something that she's been denying for who even knows how long: Evie is falling for Alex.

It's later that Saturday night and Villanova's First annual Dia de los Muertos Dance is in full swing. As Evie walks in with Dee Dee, Evie is blown away by all the elaborate decorations. Colorful papeles picados, Evie's favorite, hang from the gym's ceiling and skull candles glow on tables draped in dark orange cloth. Bright orange marigolds are scattered about and everyone is dressed as their favorite departed, which means that here are so many Fridas Kahlos. Oh well, so much for originality, Evie thinks. Evie looks around, hoping Alex will be there, but he's definitely going to be a no-show. Evie recognizes Jose (dressed as, of course, as a perfect Joey Ramone) dancing slow and tightly holding Carmen Miranda, a.k.a. Alejandra de los Santos. Ugh. Evie wonders if Jose knows just how lucky he is that Raquel never comes to school functions.

She looks around and to her surprise, she sees... Raquel! She's coming in through the side gym door. "Alex told me what really happened, how you were telling the truth. So I came here so I could apologize to you . . . and, more importantly, so I could kick Jose's ass. Where is he?" She spots Jose on the dance floor, runs over to him and immediately

starts screaming. She kicks him right between the legs. This, of course, gets the whole gym's attention. Everyone starts laughing and cheering along.

Raquel storms out of the gym with Evie in tow. Before Evie knows it, Raquel is crying, full long wailing sobs. Evie has never seen her like this. Dee Dee comes out of the gym, and joins Evie in comforting her old friend. Raquel can't understand how Jose could do something like this. Sure, she admits, she can be tough on him, but she really loves him. "I gave him the best semesters of my life!"

Then Alejandra de los Santos comes out of the gym and tries to break up the moment. She demands that Dee Dee go with her to a Sangro after party. But Dee Dee refuses to leave. Alejandra says if she doesn't leave *la llorona* ASAP, she is making a big mistake. But Dee Dee holds her ground, which infuriates Alejandra. "*Desgraciada!*" Dee Dee finally yells at Alejandra for messing around with someone else's boyfriend. Alejandra makes it very clear to Dee Dee that she will no longer be welcome in the "Sangro Circle" and storms off. Evie and Raquel can't believe what just happened.

Raquel calms down a bit and just as Evie thinks they are about to leave the dance, Raquel says there is one last thing she has to do. Evie hopes it's not something that will ruin their renewed friendship. She and Dee Dee follow Raquel back into the gym, where nobody, fortunately, seems to care about their re-entrance. Raquel walks over to a school club's table and buys a little sugar skull. She gives it to Dee Dee. "Don't you want to make an offering?" She asks, cautiously. "For your mom?"

Dee Dee is overwhelmed. This is the first time Raquel has ever acknowledged Dee Dee's mother's death. She takes the sugar skull from Raquel, writes her mother's name on the paper slip, and sticks it on the skull. All three girls go to the huge altar at the head of the gym and place the sugar skull, along with hundreds of others, at the foot of the altar.

It may be Dia de los Muertos, Evie thinks, but it's definitely a night of new life for the three friends.

Later that night, Evie still has some unfinished business. Evie points out that Dee Dee and Raquel are more alike than they realize. They both fight for control and try to mold Evie into a version of themselves. "I am not your "mini *mi'ja!*" Evie says. They get to talking, and some very important pieces of information are revealed: Dee Dee and Alex never messed around that first night of the welcome back party nor did he take her to Sea Street. All they did was drive to the Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf below The Hills and Alex drank an ice blended while Dee Dee talked on the phone to her boyfriend back home. Dee Dee admits that she did use Alex as a way to piss off Evie and Raquel at the party. "But," Dee Dee tells Evie, "he was so upset. He was so worried he truly hurt you. It's so obvious he's into you."

After Raquel and Dee Dee own up to their stubbornness, Evie admits to her own.

"Okay..." she slowly starts, "So, I might have a little crush on Alex."

"I knew it!" Dee and Raquel shout at the same time.

Evie asks her friends for a little Alex advice. “I mean, I don’t even know if he wants to talk to me. He didn’t even go to the dance.” They roll their eyes, “If you want to be your own girl so much Evie . . .” says Raquel. “Go and be,” says Dee Dee. “We’ve clocked out.” All three girls laugh.

Evie tugs at her blonde striped hair under her braided Frida wig and realizes her friends are right. Everyone just needs to be who they are. Evie has to just be Evie, which means it is time for her to be honest with Alex.

It is the following weekend and everyone is at Sea Street. Evie has dyed her hair back to its natural color of dark brown. She is out in the water with Alex. Both of them are sitting on their surfboards. Dee Dee and Raquel are on the beach.

Evie looks out toward the beach. “Aren’t you gonna be showing Dee Dee how to swim today?” she asks.

“Uh,” Alex starts slowly, “I’d rather just hang out with you, now that the old Evie is back.” Alex unzips his wetsuit’s key pocket. “Hey, I got a little something for you.”

He pulls out rubber cord. Bits of abalone shell dangle from it. “Is this from that night at Bard?” Evie asks. Her heart is beating fast. “But I thought you gave this to Dee Dee?” Alex frowns.

poor ear lobes to her shoulders? Evie caught a look of herself in the side mirror. *Could you be anymore judgmental?* What if all the students at Villanova had to wear uniforms as Dee Dee incorrectly thought? They'd be sporting the school colors of garter belt black and red and with a school dress code, even the Flojos would have to wear shoes (Eew) and how long would it take for any of them to figure out who was worth each other's time or not? Would someone like, say, Mondo, truly be Evie's friend?

*Awk
Please
read out
loud*

"So, what are the people like at Villy?" Dee Dee asked. "Lot's of cute boys, like Alejandro?"

"Uh, not really." *Alex cute?* Evie guessed some girls might think he was. No, Evie took that back. Alex *was* a cute boy, but then again, he *was* Alex. *It was difficult (and weird) to think of a friend in crush context.*

"He was never your boyfriend?" Dee Dee asked. "He seems to really like you."

"Oh, that's just how Alex is. Besides, he's not my type. He's just a friend."

Dee Dee laughed and took a drag from her cigarette. "In Mexico, I didn't have any male friends. As soon as I met Rocio he didn't want me hanging around other boys."

"Are you serious?" Evie asked. "I wouldn't stand for that."

"Well, you don't have to worry about it."

"Why?"

"Cause, Evelina, you don't even have a man!"

Evie punched her. *No doubt about it, she had made the right choice to ride with Dee Dee. She was just as silly and fun as she used to be.*

*show
don't
tell
PR*

"Man, She looked over the dashboard and the back seat. "You're so lucky you got your own car. I'm really hoping when I turn sixteen and get my license that I get a car."

drop her off on the edge of Ventura Road so she could walk up Villanova Road by herself? (Nah.)

"Wow," Dee Dee said as they drove through Highway 33, which turned into Ventura Road, a two lane highway lined with homemade painted signs bragging of local produce and apple cider for sale by Oakview locals. "Nothing here has changed. It's like the same when we came up here as little kids. Remember, when my mom brought us horseback riding?"

"Oh yeah," Evie said. "That was always so fun. Oh, my God, remember that horse, the white one you always got? What was his name?"

"Her name was White, Lil White."

"Oh, she was so sweet," Evie said. "Ooh, except when she kicked Raquel in the face. Ew, remember that?"

"Ooh," Dee Dee scrunched her face in agreement. "Yeah, that was bad."

"Yeah, Evie said. "She's hated horses or anything active like that since then. You know, I think that was the only time I remember I ever saw Raquel cry."

Really?" Dee Dee looked over at Evie. "That was the only time?"

"Yeah," Evie said. "I think it was."

"Hmmm..."

"What?"

"Nothing," Dee Dee said as she took another drag from her cigarette.

Evie realized they were already driving up the main road to Villanova

"Wow," Dee Dee marveled. "I almost forgot how beautiful Villanova was."

"Beautiful?"

incorrect tone

they were driving

nice detail but awkward

we advertise apples and local produce used to bring

getting kicked in the face by a horse

is a really big deal in knucksoot teeth & stuff

... can something less dramatic have happened

"Yeah," Dee looked over at Evie. "In D.F. you don't get all this scenery, the fields, the oak trees y mas. Everything is so cramped and top of each other. When my mom used to bring us up here to the stables, we'd always pass Villanova. Who knew we'd actually be going to school here, together."

"Not me," Evie said. "With my GPA, I'd have been lucky to get into Independent Study. Bu my father insisted I go to Villy. Sabrina went here and now she's at Stanford and he's hoping the same from me."

"Really?" Dee Dee put out her cigarette in the ash tray. "You're gonna go to Stanford?"

"Well, my mom wants me at an East Coast school. Any excuse so she can visit and go shopping. But at this point, my dad might have to donate a wing or something"

"Or *pan dulce*," Dee Dee teased.

"Oh, excuse me," Evie said. "Not all off us have the right social connections."

"Ay!" Dee Dee suddenly cried out. "Dia de los Muertos!"

"Huh? What are you talking about?"

"There." Dee Dee's chin ~~pointed~~ ^{pointed her chin} towards the front of the school.

Evie looked up and recognized two seniors from Student Council. Shelley Graves and Laura Simon. They there were on the ledge of the school's main marquee, straightening out large black block letters that announced Villanova's annual Day of the Dead celebration and dance.

"Oh, yeah," Evie said, casually. "It's actually not until the beginning of next month, the first weekend of November."

I don't understand if she had such a low GPA how did she get into Villanova?

↑ wouldn't the sign say first weekend of next month?

"I can't believe you're going to have a dance for Dia de los Muertos," Dee Dee said. "Que chiste!"

"Why is that so funny?" Evie asked. "~~We always have a Day of the Dead Dance. I mean, as long as I've been going here.~~" Okay, she had only attended Villanova for one full year, but still.

"~~No, I mean,~~ in Mexico we wouldn't have a school *dance* for Dia de los Muertos. It's sorta weird."

"Why is it weird?" Evie felt defensive. Villanova had its own spin of Dia de los Muertos and, like always, the senior class was in charge of ~~this year's~~ ^{the} dance. Students were encouraged to dress as their favorite dearly departed, ~~which may be your beloved~~ ^{anyone from their} **Great Grand Uncle Gilberto who died from heartbreak or a famous playwright who committed suicide after a career killing review. But nobody at Villanova was ever that romantic.** Everyone just went as either ~~Kurt Cobain or Marilyn Monroe.~~ ^{Do kids now care about them?} "We have fun," Evie added. "but that doesn't mean we don't know tradition."

"Of course," Dee Dee said. "It's just in Mexico, we had church ceremonies, processions...to *really* reflect on the holiday. By November 2nd, the streets were flooded with compasuchitl."

"Zempa- what?" Evie asked.

"Marigolds," Dee Dee smiled as she pulled into the student parking lot.

Only a small percentage of Villanova's student body had resident status, the rest were day students, ~~like Evie and Dee Dee,~~ and only a few practiced car pool. Nearly

“Why would I give it to Dee Dee? I did ask her opinion about it after I had dropped it and didn’t know what do to with all the little pieces. She totally wanted it, that is, before I broke it, but I told her it was for someone special and then she said...”

“Someone special?” Evie repeats. Alex leans over and clasps the necklace around Evie’s neck. Evie suddenly feels flip flops but these are not on her feet, but rather in her stomach. Evie can’t help smiling so much it seems like her whole face is going to crack. She looks over at the beach, and sees her best friends, Raquel and Dee Dee, cheering her on.

every student who owned a car wanted the opportunity to flaunt their own version of West Coast pimping.

"Ay dios," Dee Dee said as she drove around the rows and rows of parked cars. "We are never going to find a space."

"Welcome to California," Evie smirked. "Or should I say, welcome back."

Dee Dee finally found an empty spot and pulled into it. She turned off her ignition. But when Evie looked over, she saw that Dee Dee had parked her Beetle terribly close, just four cars away, from where the Mondo and Alex had parked.

As usual, Mondo's Maurader was hogging up two spaces, and was parked right next to Alex's truck. He and Jose were lazily leaning against the truck's flatbed talking to Alex. Evie immediately regretted that she hadn't returned Alex's calls. She could use an ally right about then. He had called two more times on Sunday, and he sounded so concerned, almost sad, that he had hurt her feelings, but her pride wouldn't allow her to phone him back. What could he possibly have said to her to make her feel better? He had really let her down both her and Raquel at the welcome back party, and, in a way, she wanted him to know that was not cool. She hated fighting with anyone, but now that Alex was added along with Raquel, to her roster, she felt anxious. Saturday night was the first official argument they ever had and she wondered if it had bothered him as much as it did her.

Evie also saw Raquel, She hadn't noticed Dee Dee's Beetle pull up and she was stretched out in the front seat of Mondo's car, casually twirling her long hair with her fingers and seemed absorbed in reading something, possibly Ker-ang!, her favorite

Evie got out of the car and noticed Raquel

though

A

is truly

in his messages

awk

Fighting w/ Raquel was bad enough

but how Alex too?

music magazine. But who knew? It could have been a DIY manual on how to snuff out a former friend, for all Evie knew.

Evie kept her head down as she grabbed her backpack from the back seat. She'd have to pull Dee Dee the opposite way, around the other row of cars, to avoid meeting up with Raquel and the other Flojos. But as soon Dee Dee got out of her Beetle, she excitedly started to walk towards campus, *right* towards Mondo's car.

Evie quickly tugged at her arm. "Hey, let me take you the scenic route."

But it was too late. Dee Dee had already seen Alex.

"Alejandro!" She called out and started to walk over to his truck ~~where Mondo and Jose were.~~ "Hey!"

What could Evie do, but follow? Alex looked over and seemed genuinely confused to see ^{Evie} her so chummy with Dee Dee. *Yeah, I know, Evie felt sheepish. I gave you hell at the welcome back party and now look who called the tortilla flat?*

"Hey, Alex." Evie said, apprehensively.

"Hey, Blues" Alex smiled. So maybe Saturday night's **war of the words** had not been on his mind.

"Heeey," Mondo gave Dee Dee the once over. "Who's the new Crème fresa?"

"Oh, Mondo, *please,*" Evie struggled to get her backpack actually on her back.

"This is my old friend, Dee, I mean, Dela. She just moved back from Mexico City." She then looked over at Raquel and lowered her voice again. "She's Raquel's friend too."

~~But~~ Raquel heard her name and popped her head up from the Mondo's car. She immediately got out of the Marauder ~~to make sure she was heard, loud and clear.~~

“Yeah,” Raquel slammed the car door with her hip. “She’s old, but she ain’t my friend.”

“Raquel,” Dee Dee tilted her head innocently. “What have I ever done to you?”

“Oh,” Raquel said slowly. “So now my name is Raquel?”

“Oh, yeah,” Jose laughed. “Mondo, check it out. Raquel used to be called Pansita!” He pinched Raquel’s side.

“Yeah,” Mondo looked ~~over Raquel~~ with a half smile. “I can see that,”

“Dude,” Jose laughed even harder. “That exactly what *I* said!”

“Shut up you two.” Raquel’s anger was igniting all over again. “You’re such idiots.” She turned her attention back to Dee Dee. “Dee Dee, don’t you have a nail to file?”

“Raquel –” Evie started.

“Don’t you have one to pull out of your ass?” Dee Dee shot back.

“Oooh,” Mondo said. “These kitties have claws.”

“Yeah,” Jose said. “Maybe they’ll kiss when they make up!”

“That must have been some party Saturday night,” Mondo looked over Dee Dee. “Sorry I missed it.”

“You didn’t miss nothing,” Raquel put her arm around Jose protectively. “And there’s nothing to see here. Just another sloppy Sang-*ho*.”

“A *what*?” Dee Dee asked.

“Raquel,” Evie finally stepped in. “Come on. We all used to all be friends.”

“Used to’ is the key word,” Raquel bit back..

“That’s actually two words,” Jose piped.

“How about these two words?” Dee Dee looked at Raquel. “Fuck you!”

“Fuck *me?* Hey, you’re the one waltzing in with your blondie locks and fake lenses pretending to take up where you left off. But you know where you left off? ^{WC} Nowhere. We didn’t miss you, Dee Dee and you don’t need you.”

“Well, thanks for the welcome wagon hospitality,” Dee looked Evie. “I can’t say you didn’t try.” She huffed away.

“Dela,” Alex called after her. “Wait!”

“Oh, don’t try and be all Mr. Boy Scout,” Raquel said. “What, you got a complimentary BJ when you took her out to Sea Street after the party?”

Mondo looked at Alex with a wide grin on his face. “Dude, you took *her* to Sea Street? After the party?” He held up his hand for a high five, but Alex didn’t recipitate.

“Can you be any uncooler?” Alex glared at Raquel.

“Actually, yeah. I can,” Raquel smiled. “Do you want to time me?”

You guys, stop it!” Evie yelled. “God.” She glared at Raquel and then looked after Dee Dee. “Dela,” She also called out. “Wait up!”

“Yeah, Evie,” Raquel smirked. “Go after your little best friend.”

Evie looked at her. Says something

not a sentence
Then held to the straps of her backpack and sprinted after Dee Dee, past the final three rows of parked cars and then finally up the **stone** steps of Del Norte Hall. By the time she had pushed by all the other students and reached the top where Dee Dee was, she was out of breath. “Dela, Wait, Please!”

Dee Dee turned around. Her face was flushed pink and streaked with stress. The same way it looked at the ~~Gomez~~ welcome back party, *after* Raquel appeared.

Bunny, but doesn't make sense, since being uncool isn't really a kind sensitive thing

see see a t

flushed

“What?” Dee Dee snapped.

“Well, for one thing,” Evie was breathing hard. “You’re going the wrong way. Unless your first class is Boys P.E..”

*great!!! boy
What is
Evie
feeling*

“What?” Dee Dee looked around Del Norte Hall, confused.

“Dee Dee, Look, try not to trip. Raquel’s just being a bitch. You know it, I know it, everybody knows it. It’s just, look, let me just take you the ad building. It’s way on the other side, but I can help you get set up and we’ll get you an official class schedule.”

“Is there anyway I can officially not have Pansita in any of my classes?” Dee Dee exhaled. “In my life?”

“Dela, you gotta stop calling her that. You are only making it worse.”

They walked down Del Norte Hall, the main hall, among all the other Villanova students. It was already October, the second month of a new school year, but everyone’s clothing still exuded that freshly cut tag smell, **Describe clothes. A few boys looked over at Dee Dee.**

make more relevant to their world

The first bell rang and everyone scattered like mice. Soon it was just Dee Dee and Evie walking down the empty hall. Neither of them said anything to each other.

great, but please clean up

Maybe it would be good if Villanova had a dress code, Evie thought. ~~Something like a two set of steel armor. That would be suitable, because it was obvious that Raquel had already declared war. (WORK ON ENDING)~~

Maybe something

looked more like

If anything, Villanova resembled more of a Spanish style five star resort hotel than a high school. Classes were small and held in charming stucco bungalows with brick

red tiled roofs where just about every window had a panoramic view of the Topa Topa mountain range. Villanova also boasted an Olympic sized swimming (a one million dollar renovation since the last earthquake of 1972) and beautiful, beautiful guests (er, students) checked in from all over the world. Headmaster Covarrubias took pride in a school that he felt was well rounded and diverse and didn't tolerate intolerance.

Intolerance? **Hmmm**

During lunch time students were free to come and go as they please, but since Villanova was tucked so deep in the hills with only one road that led to one town that led to one Wendy's Hamburgers, most students just remained on campus. The 30 minute trip took too long for a 40 minute lunch period. And really, how many squared shaped burgers can you eat in a school year?

Evie calculated, between her first class, Spanish II and fifth period lunch, that she had roughly 238 minutes to organize, strategize, and basically freak out. How could she, continue to be friendly with Dee Dee while not causing more of a riff with Raquel? Dee Dee, her past, has caught up with Raquel, her present. Could they all have a future together? She looked up at the classroom's clock. She now had roughly 236 minutes.

Evie yanked at her blue locks

"Hey," It was Tracy Milne who sat next to her. "You fixed your hair."

"Oh, yeah," Evie said. But Tracy didn't it looked good. Just that it was fixed.

"Who was the girl I saw you with this morning?" She asked. "Is she new?"

"Oh, her name's Dee-" Evie stopped herself. "I mean, Dela."

"Oh, is she like an exchange student or something? She looks like she's from Sweden or something."

second

3 million

Maybe a photo from the years ago? schools brochure?

30

Maybe a photo from the years ago? schools brochure?

roughly

funny line goes here? "would Raquel..."

describe?

Does she? huh?

“Sweden?” Evie frowned. “No, she’s from Mexico. I mean, she’s from here. She used to be my neighbor, but she’s been living in Mexico City for the last four years. We used to be best friends.”

“Oh, she’s really pretty.”

“Uh huh.” That’s what everyone thinks.

What is the point of this scene? to show proper reaction to delia.

Evie kept an eye on Mr. Galvan as she pulled out her cell phone. **She texted**

Mondo

U r a perv. B Nce, she typed.

is something missing here

huh?

By lunch time Evie **didn’t have any big ideas or a well thought out plans.** She

slowly trudged down to Veranda Hall where most of the other sophomores had their lockers. This fall semester, Evie didn’t have any classes with Raquel but they always met the other Flojos for lunch under Juniper’s Tree. Juniper’s Tree was a humongous oak with a commemorative plaque that claimed that Father Juniper Serra himself, along with local Chumash Indians, had actually planted the tree back in 1782, right around the time he was building Mission San Buenaventura. It was same plaque that Jose put out his cigarette butts on and what Mondo used to crack open a Snapple, even though it was a twist off. So much for historical preservation and respeto.

original they're

But after the morning’s parking lot incident, Evie was sure she wouldn’t be so welcome at Juniper’s Tree. Besides, would she even want to go?

She found Dee Dee ^{and} along with Alex, waiting for her at her locker. She was relieved to see that Dee Dee didn’t seem as jolted as she ~~did~~ in the parking lot that

we need

morning. She was chatting in her trademark enthusiasm while Alex was propped against the lockers. He had one thumb hanging from the inside of his front side pocket and held books in the other hand. He was listening intently to Dee Dee, his body leaned towards her and had a big, lazy smile on his face. **The first thing Evie thought was, Wow, he is into her. Of course, he liked girls, and, especially when he was with Mondo and Jose, he flirted like crazy and that was evident from the Diazes welcome back party. But as long as she has known Alex, well, all of last school year and over the summer, he had never had a girlfriend. But now, Evie, seeing the way, his body language was with Dee Dee, maybe that was going to change. She really didn't know how she felt about that. Maybe a little, and just a little, envious? DEFINE BETTER**

can't be trademark yet

yes please! great start but shows more!

"Hey Blues," Alex stood straightened up when Evie appeared. "We were just waiting for you. I still gotta drop my books off but I'll see you two at the tree, yeah?"

"Claro, porque no?" Dee Dee who answered, as she squeezed his arm. "Thank you again, Alejandro, for all your help."

As Alex had walked away, Evie thought, *at the tree?* Was he kidding? ~~Had he not witnessed what went down in the parking lot?~~ God, Raquel was right. Dudes can be dense.

said as she the locker locker

"So," Evie turned her locker's combination. "How's everything working out?"

"Everything is going great!" Dee Dee held her spiral notebook to her chest. Evie could see it already had the names and numbers of a few students scrawled across it.

felt invaded

the back

When Evie first started Villanova she was lucky when Raquel teamed up with Jose. **It gave the access to three more numbers on her Blackberry.**

we never see her having a blackberry

Something like: It doubled the number of people in her cell contact list? good detail but ask

"I have Alejandro in two of my classes," Dee Dee continued. "He is *so* sweet, really helpful and one of my teachers," she looked over her course sheet, "Mr. Guereca, actually lived in the Polenco District, my old neighborhood. *Que chido, no?*"

Show physical manifestation of anxiety in Evie?

"Yeah, cool," But Evie couldn't really pay attention. She was more concerned how lunch was going to pan out. "Since it's so nice out," she started. "I was thinking we could grab some grub and head out to the Art Den." It was the ^{the most} only secluded area of campus ^{a view of me} she could think of, occupied ^{by} only with horrible student renditions of Che Gueverra and the Ventura coastline.

"The Art Den?" Dee Dee asked. "We're not going to meet Alex at the tree?"

"Nah, the tree is so played out." Evie ~~lied~~. She crammed her books in her locker.

It was only the first month of school, but already it was cluttered with issues of SG and useless accessories from her former long hair days. "It'll be basically him and Mondo gabbing gears."

"Gabbing what?"

"Talking cars," Evie said. "The Art Den's our student art garden. It's really peaceful. You'll love it."

"Yeah," Dee Dee put her forearm next to Evie's as they walked towards the cafeteria together. "I want to work on my tan. That's one thing I missed in D.F., going to the beach. Remember we went so much as kids?"

"Oh, yeah," Evie remembered. "And Raquel had that amazing beach umbrella? The orange one that her father got in Rosarito Beach?" Was that too pushy?

Maybe it was. Dee Dee didn't respond, but rather, looked around the quad at the other students, taking it all in. **More than a handful of interested guys looked** Dee Dee

was looking around campus not saying anything? Evie wouldnt if she seems obvious anything? were checking out

over while, **Evie noticed**, more than a handful of annoyed girlfriends tapped the back of their heads for realignment.

"Hey Evie," Mark de la Torre came up?

"Is this your old friend from Mexico?"

"Yeah, Dee, Dela," Evie started. "This is Mark Torres. He runs the student radio show."

"Oh, you have a show?"

"Just a small one. Local. You should come on some time," Mark said. "So, your name's Deedela?"

"No, my name's Dela," Dee Dee looked over at Evie. "Evie just gets sloppy."

"Yeah, well let me know if you need any help with anything, like a tour guide or something."

Evie didn't remember anyone being so willing and helpful when she was a freshman, navigating the campus, which at the time, appeared overwhelmingly

large.

As soon as they walked in the cafeteria, they were hit with the **fakery** of central air and G rated hip hop. She surveyed the scene. She didn't see any of the other Flojos around and because it was a nice day (duh, California), most of the students were outside.

That is except for one group -- the Sangros. They were at their usual table, at the far end of cafeteria, in the corner. Last year, Raquel had coined their table a "stable" namely

because she felt the Sangros did things that horses actually did in a stable: Having their manes fawned over, baring teeth (to show off colored rubber bands on braces),

and sucking on salt licks. Okay, so maybe not the last part.

what does he look like? One unique detail is all we need about him

Show him snarking at Dee Dee

first started Rullanda

decided to start referring to their table as "the stables"

like horses grooming their manes

Do Sangros have braces?

“Oh, God,” Evie lowered her voice to Dee Dee as they started to pass the Sangro Stable. “You have to watch these bitches. They –”

sounds kind of on-Evie

“Ay dios mio!” Dee Dee suddenly cried out. “Alejandra!”

Huh?

“Ay, chica!” Alejandra looked over and actually squealed. Then all six feet, or what seemed six feet, of her, rose from the stable. “Que onda, mujer?!”

She gave Dee Dee a double air kiss as she hugged her. “I thought you said you didn’t know to which school you’d be going?” She punched Dee Dee’s arm. “Why didn’t you shoot me a thread, puta?”

“Don’t be mad,” Dee Dee playfully pleaded. “I didn’t even know what was going on. Seriously. But I’m here now. Right? Mira.” Dee Dee put her arm around Evie. “You must know Evie.”

[scribble]

Was it possible, Evie wondered, to morph herself into cafeteria’s linoleum?

if there was anyway she could
Sa linoleum on the

“Yeah,” Alejandra looked over Evie and then back to the other Sangros, who smirked in unison, tilted heads and all. “We know Evie.” Alejandra leaned over and ran her hand quickly through Evie’s hair. “La Loca with the blue hair. Where your friends, Loca? Donde estan los otros Flojos?”

anything to avoid

“The who?” Dee Dee asked as Evie jerked away from Alejandra.

“Los Flojos,” Alejandra repeated.

“The Lazies?” Dee Dee asked Evie. “What is she talking about?”

“Oh,” Evie started slowly. “She just means me and Raquel and you know, Jose and-”

the embarrassment of that moment...

"But why are you called lazy?" Dee Dee covered her mouth and laughed. "Are you, like, a gang?"

these questions don't logically follow.....

"No," Evie tried to explain. "Flojos 'cause of our flip flops. Remember when we were kids, we called them flowjoes?" She lifted her foot and jiggled it in front of Dee Dee. "Remember?" But as she explained, it suddenly seemed all so juvenile to her.

and its..... what does Evie's

"Ay, que naco!" Dee Dee laughed. "That's right!"

"So," Evie grappled with her composure. "How do you know Alejandra?"

Flojos look like?

Dee Dee moved from Evie and linked arms with Alejandra. "From Mexico. Her father is V.P. of U.N.A.M." She looked up at Alejandra and gleamed. "He helped my dad

let's hear more about her

get the position at Channel Islands. She's the reason I'm here!" Dee Dee playfully punched her. "Thank you, Alejandra!"

Shoes throughout phase!

Of course. Evie remembered. Alejandra did say she might be interning with Dee Dee's dad at Channel Islands. How could she be so tonta?

EWIC

"So, Dela," Alejandra focused all her full attention back to Dee Dee. "You must sit with us." She patted the bench. "You have to meet my friends. *Otras chicas de D.F.*"

"Claro que si!" Dee Dee quickly sat down at the table. "You don't mind, do you Evie?"

"But I thought you wanted to work on your tan?" Evie asked.

"Blah!" She waved her hand in the air. "Ay, no quiero trabajar hoy. Ni si quiera en mi bronciado."

will our readers get this?

throwing their heads back together perfectly synchronized?

The Stepford Sangros all laughed outloud, practically in synchronized precision.

Evie didn't understand the joke or the translation. Dee Dee didn't want to work today?

Not even on her tan? What was so enormously funny about that? And since when did she

~~decide to breakout with the Spanish?~~ Evie thought it was the perfect time to bail on El Stable. *STRET*

“Hey,” she looked around and placed her hand flat on her belly. “So, I’m gonna go get something to eat. I’m starving.” *distractedly*

“Yeah, yeah,” Dee Dee answered ~~inattentively~~. “Go get some comida. I’ll be there in a bit.”

As Evie left, ~~er~~ ^h face burned with embarrassment and resentment. Who did they think they were? Making fun of her? And how could be Dee Dee be so flippant and naïve? She couldn’t see they were making jokes at her expense? *Evies?*

But Evie’s so called perfect timing to leave them proved to be in vain. She bumped right into Raquel at the school’s salad bar. *awk, please rephrase!*

“Nice friends,” Raquel said ~~sarcastically~~. She picked at croutons directly from the salad bar as she glared over at the Stable. *was picking croutons out of the salad bar w/ her fingers*

“Raquel-” Evie started. ~~Now this?~~

“I’ve been watching the whole thing,” Raquel spoke slowly. Her voice was low and controlled. “It’s so obvious you used me just as a filler for Dee Dee. As soon as she moved away, I was suddenly your new best friend.” She used her fingers to mimic quotes when she said “suddenly.” *I should be around “Best Friend” instead!*

“What?” Evie couldn’t believe Raquel would think such a thing. “That’s so not true.” *what she was hearing*

“Even Jose agreed with me.”

“Raquel,” Evie was losing her patience. “Why do you always have to have Jose validate things about me? About us? ~~It’s not like he’s such an expert on human~~ *some*

good point, but would

what like

behavior.”

“What are you saying?” Raquel finally looked at Evie. “That he’s stupid?”

“No, I’m just saying--”

“You know what, Evie?” Raquel clutched the strap of her shoulder bag tightly. “It doesn’t even matter what you say because you’ve been *showing* what a lousy friend you really are...at the party, at your mother’s little brunch and now, today. You show up to school with *her*? How do you think that makes me feel?”

“Raquel, she asked me if I needed a ride. It’s her first day and the way you took off yesterday, I wasn’t about to ride with you with Mondo’s. You never called me back. I called you twice last night.”

“Why should I have called you back? You know Evie, yesterday we agreed that we would have each other’s back. You *agreed* that she was not the friend we used to know. But as soon as she showed up at your house, batting her plastic blues, you fell for it. Just like always.”

“Fell for exactly what?”

“Evie, she’s been this way since we were little kids. She always had to get her way, she always had to have your attention. I was always the odd one out and you never cared.”

“Oh my God, Raquel, that was years ago. We were just little kids. And if you wanna talk about the odd man out, I mean, what am I? It’s also you and Mondo, or you and Mondo and Jose and I’m just tagging along. Besides, you haven’t even gotten to know Dee Dee.”

“Why should I?” Raquel clenched her bag strap tighter. Evie could actually see

describe bag, detail

great

*good detail!
but awkward*

the tension strain in her fingers. "Evie, people don't change. But you know what? I don't know why I even care if you prefer Dee Dee over me."

"Who said I prefer Dee Dee over you? Jose?"

But Raquel wasn't listening. She turned her body sharply away from Evie, shouldering Alex who coming up to both of them.

and stormed off

"Man," Alex looked after Raquel as she pushed by him to leave. He rubbed his shoulder. "Looks like you're up to your elbows in suds."

← will readers know what this means?

"Yeah," Evie said, **feeling defeated**. "I guess." She was tempted to call out after Raquel, but what was the use?

"You know how Raquel can be," Alex tried to soften the blow. He saw that Evie hadn't gotten any lunch yet. "You want me to wait for you?" He had already gotten a **soda and a small basket of curly fries**.

← is this all he's eating?

"Nah," Evie half smiled. "I'm not that hungry." She looked around, nervously. "I gotta study for a test anyway. I'm gonna hit the library."

"The library?" Alex looked out the cafeteria's windows. "On a day like this?"

Evie looked up at him. "Alex, I have more whole life to work, even on my tan."

"Huh?"

"Nothing." Evie patted him on his shoulder. "Just go out to the tree. I'll meet up with you later." Of course, she had no intention of doing so.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"Totally." She tried to **brush** it off. "No problema,"

But it was a problema, Evie thought as Alex reluctantly left the cafeteria. It was her big problema. She could tell Raquel was hurt, but that didn't give her an excuse to be

so outright bitchy. I mean, what was Raquel thinking? She and Evie have been best friends for years, just because Dee Dee was in picture didn't take away from that.

Evie looked over at Dee Dee, who was now laughing it up with Alejandra and the other Sangros, as if *they* were the ~~ones who were the long time friends~~. She definitely didn't want to go back and intrude on that little *comadreanda*. She looked around the cafeteria once more. *Nada*. Nobody she could really wanted to hang with for the remaining thirty minutes. Maybe she really would go to the library, she thought, and maybe she would get a book on Mexico and see for herself just what was so great about all things south of the border. But then again, she looked over at the Sangros, maybe she wouldn't.

great ending
but this line
could be a little
snappier

9

Evie tried to remember how the battle between the Sangros and Flojos even started. As a freshman, Raquel had heard that Alejandra had been with Jose at some Sangro party, just a month before she, herself, hooked up with him. Jose had completely denied the whole thing, claiming it was just stupid rumor that Alejandra had started. But according to Jose, Alejandra was hot for him; throwing looks his way, leaning her body over his desk to ask a simple question in class, seductively nibbling the end of her pencil in class while her eyes burned **a hole** into him. These reports from Jose, of course, drove Raquel crazy. She immediately issued a threat to Jose, Evie and all the Flojos; If any of them even associated with Alejandra, as well as any of her fellow slutty Sangros, there would consequences to be paid. And Evie, being the wide eyed Freshman, but more importantly, a best friend to Raquel, agreed to abide by such rules.

giving him the eye?

Dowe
want
the
Fued to
be mostly
the
~~Sangros~~
Flojos
fault?

awk

After their spat in cafeteria, Raquel didn't return any of Evie's calls or texts that night and over the next few days. On Wednesday, Evie even called Raquel at home, on the land line, but was told by Vanessa, the Diazes housekeeper, that Raquel was "occupada."

But Evie didn't believe her. She could hear Hidden Hand blasting in the background. Since when did Vanessa do her housecleaning to political heavy metal?

also realized most have you're

Evie also soon discovered that Raquel had even enforced a temporary talk block on Jose and Mondo for the rest of the week. Whenever Evie text messaged either, C St 2day?, her messages went unanswered. It was clear, so it seemed, that Evie was not welcome at Sea Street. Alex, however, was not fazed by the drama, but he was concerned that Evie was losing her initial interest in surfing.

July 13
OK
watching

"How are you ever gonna learn?" he asked on the phone one night. "You gonna be like everyone else in California, with the clothes and flojos and that texturing surf paste in your hair."

great

"I don't wear surf paste!"
"You might as well."

why is she doing this? How does she feel? What does she miss about the flojos?

"Why can't we go somewhere else?" Evie asked. Sea Street was the Flojo hang out. And after a few hours of being in the water she'd only have paddle ashore to deal with Raquel and her velvet rope henchmen. "You can glance at Ms. Diaz, but do not speak, touch, or look her directly in the eyes. Keep her eyes drawn down at all times." Mucho bummer.

WC
hat.

"We can try somewhere else if you want," Alex suggested. "But Sea Street has the best break and baby sets for beginners like you. But if you are so afraid of Raquel..."

we already know she's lying I think...

"I'm not afraid of Raquel," Evie insisted.

Was she afraid of Raquel? Yes, Evie was, in a way, but she didn't want to admit it. And as it turned out, the opportunity to go elsewhere for a surf lesson fell to the wayside.

And that ended the conversation?

only 17's
not enough
to make
it sand
like it's
a Regatta
thing
for me...

The rest of the week, Evie waited for Dee Dee to get a ride back to Rio Estates and as they walked out to the student parking lot, she pretended to be engaged in super heavy conversation with Dee Dee. But she couldn't help but notice the Flojos prepping for Sea Street. Alex would remove his longboard from Mondo's car, where he had it locked up during the day, and place it in the back of his truck. Raquel would already be tying up her long hair and applying Hawaiian Tropic to her face and arms. And then, the worst, they would all drive away as if they were forgetting nothing or no one. This dampened Evie's spirits more than ever. Not only did she feel she was losing Raquel and her fellow Flojos, but she was losing access to the one thing she actually beginning to feel motivated about. would she ever step into liquido?

they will

This is thus.

As she and her new orange and white Hanson 8 footer gathered more dust she wondered,

17th
15
Friday

But as Evie soon found out, she wasn't the only one jonesing to get up all in water,

"I have to learn to swim," Dee Dee insisted as they were leaving Villanova after school on Friday. "You won't believe what happened today in swim class."

"I didn't know you were taking swimming," Evie said.

"I didn't know either." Dee Dee pointed her car's remote to her Beetle and clicked the alarm off. Both she and Evie got into the car. "I got transferred in and guess who was there? In my class?"

"Who?" Evie asked, but already had a sinking feeling she already knew.

"Pansita."

"Oh, yeah?" Evie replied nonchalantly. She remembered what Alex had said about her being in the middle of a soap opera and she didn't want to be any part of an additional one. She already had to deal with Raquel on her own. "Hey," she tried to change the subject. "You mind if I hook up my iTrip?"

"You don't like Maldita?" Dee Dee frowned.

"No, it's just I'm sorta in the mood for something else."

"Okay. I guess." But Dee Dee didn't sound too happy as she unplugged her iTrip from her radio deck. "So, yeah," Dee Dee continued. "Miss Riley brings me in and tells me to stay on the steps, in the four feet end, until she can work with me and there's Pansita, *also* on the shallow end."

"Yeah," Evie smiled. "I'm sure she was crying cramps." She knew Raquel's gym excuses all too well. The memory of her antics made Evie miss her, a little.

"Exactly," Dee Dee nodded down firmly. "All whining of crampas y mas and then when I come in, she suddenly feels better. Enough to tell me, in front of everyone, that I look like a prostitute in my bathing suit!"

"A prostitute?" Evie questioned this. "She actually called you that?"

"Well, She said, 'So where's your pole and plastic heels?' In front of *everyone*."

Evie couldn't help but laugh, but immediately stopped when Dee Dee threw her a

wouldn't
the
same
one,

Funny like
a book
Paprika
excuses
to get
out of gym?
And instead
of
saying Evie
missed
her
just
have
Evie
smile?

I love this
part

look.

“It wasn’t funny, Evie,” Dee Dee said. “Everyone laughed at me. Then I told her that she could only dream of wearing a bikini like mine and then –”

“You wore a *bikini* to swim class?”

“Well, it was more of just a two piece. Why? Miss Riley said our suits only had to be a solid color. She didn’t say one piece or two.”

“Nothing,” Evie looked out the window so Dee Dee wouldn’t see her smirking.

“Go on,”

“So, I told her ‘Poor Pansita, Americans have such a problem with their weight. Maybe that’s why your man is always eyeing me.’”

“You said that?”

“Yeah, ‘cause it’s true, Evie. That Jose is a dog, Mondo too.” Dee Dee pulled out onto Ventura Road. “Did you know that they are both always hitting on me?”

“Who, Jose?”

“Yes, Jose. He’s always saying things to me in the hall. “Que cochino.”

“Oh, he’s just stupid,” Evie said. “You gotta just ignore him.”

“Well, Pansita’s gonna find out sooner or later,” Dee Dee said. “So anyway, before I know it, she just starts slamming water at me. I mean, not just squirting, like when we were kids, like Marco Polo or something, she’s totally out of control. Thank God Miss Riley came over and made her get out of the pool. That Pansita esta loca.”

“Slamming water into you? Are you sure you aren’t exaggerating.

No, ask anyone. She totally freaked out.

I dunno, Dee Dee. Even for Raqual that sounds a little bit out of control.”

"Totally." She tried to **brush** it off. "No **problema**,"

But it was a **problema**. It was her big **problema**. She could tell Raquel was hurt, but that didn't give her an excuse to be so such an **outright c-bag** toward her. What was Raquel thinking? She and Evie have been best friends for years, just because Dee Dee was **in picture** didn't take away from that.

Evie looked over at Dee Dee, who was now laughing it up with Alejandra and the other Sangros, as if *they* were the old bestfriends **catching up on old times**. She definitely didn't want to go back and intrude on that little **comadreanda**. She looked around the cafeteria once more. *Nada*. Nobody she could **really** wanted to hang with for the remaining thirty minutes.

Maybe she really would go to the library, she thought, and maybe she would get a book on Mexico and see for herself just what was so great about all things south of the border. But then again, she looked over at the Sangros, maybe she wouldn't. NEW

ENDING

9

Evie tried to remember how the battle between the Sangros and Flojos even started. As a freshman, Raquel had heard that Alejandra had been with Jose at some Sangro party, just a month before she, herself, hooked up with him. Jose had **completed** denied the whole thing, claiming it was **just** stupid rumor that Alejandra had started. But according to Jose, Alejandra was hot for him; throwing looks his way, leaning her body over his desk to ask a simple question in class, seductively nibbling the end of her pencil while her eyes burned **a hole** into his pants. These candid reports from Jose, of course,

She gave Dee Dee a double air kiss as she hugged her. "I thought you said you didn't know to which school you'd be attending?" She punched Dee Dee's arm. "Why didn't you shoot me a thread, puta?"

huh?

"Don't be mad," Dee Dee pleaded playfully. "I didn't even know what was going on. Seriously. But I'm here now. Right? Mira." Dee Dee put her arm around Evie. "You must know Evie."

Evie wondered if there was any way she could morph herself into the cafeteria's linoleum? Anything so she wouldn't have to be a part of this chica reunion.

"Yeah," Alejandra looked over Evie and then back to the other Sangros, who smirked in unison, tilted heads and all. "We know Evie." Alejandra leaned over and ran her hand quickly through the top of Evie's hair. "La Loca with the blue hair. Where your friends, Loca? *Donde estan los otros Flojos?*"

"The who?" Dee Dee asked as Evie jerked away from Alejandra.

"Los Flojos," Alejandra repeated.

"The Lazies?" Dee Dee asked Evie. "What is she talking about?"

"Oh," Evie started slowly. "She just means me and Raquel and you know, Jose and-

Dee Dee she is talking in the Flojos in

"But why are you called the Lazies?" Dee Dee covered her mouth and laughed.

"What are you, like, a gang?"

"No," Evie tried to explain. "Flojos 'cause of our flip flops. Remember when we were kids, we called them flow-joes?" She lifted her foot and jiggled her silver metallic flojos in front of Dee Dee. "Remember?" But as she explained, it suddenly seemed all so juvenile to her.

but they're still only 16/17?

transfer play park

"Ay, *que naco!*" Dee Dee clapped her hands and laughed. "That's right!"

"So," Evie grappled with her composure. "How do you know Alejandra?"

Dee Dee linked arms with Alejandra. "From Mexico. Her father is V.P. of U.N.A.M." She looked up at Alejandra and gleamed. "He helped my dad get the position at Channel Islands. She's the reason I'm here!" Dee Dee playfully squeezed her arm. "Thank you, Alejandra!"

Of course. Alejandra did say she might be interning with Dee Dee's dad at Channel Islands. How could Evie be so *tbnta?*

"So, Dela," Alejandra focused her full attention back to Dee Dee. "You must sit with us." She patted the cafeteria bench. "You have to meet my friends. *Otras chicas de D.F.*"

"Claro que si!" Dee Dee looked at the girls and quickly sat down at the table. "You don't mind, do you Evie?"

"But I thought you wanted to work on your tan?" Evie asked.

"Blah!" She waved her hand in the air. "*Ay, no quiero trabajar hoy. Ni si quiera en mi bronciado.*"

The Sangros all laughed outloud, throwing their heads back in synchronized precision and then immediately straightening their hair, almost like robots, back in place. Evie didn't understand the joke or the translation. Dee Dee didn't want to work today? Not even on her tan? What was so enormously funny about that? And since when did she decide to breakout with the Spanish Five? Yes, it was the perfect time to bail on El Stable, or should she say, **The Stable (Spanish)**

"Hey," Evie didn't take a seat, but rather looked around and placed her hand flat

on her belly. "So, I'm gonna go get something to eat. I'm starving."

"Yeah, yeah," Dee Dee answered distractedly. "Go get some comida. I'll be there in a bit."

Sangro comment, Fabby, the Sangro with the ()

More laughter.

As Evie left, her face burned with embarrassment. Who did the Sangros think they were, making fun of her? And how could be Dee Dee be so flippant and naïve? Raquel would *never* allow them to talk to her that way.

Evie went to the salad bar. At least a meal of mini meatballs and nachos would be comforting.

"Nice friends,"

Evie looked up and saw Raquel. She was on the other side of the salad bar, picking croutons directly from the bar with her fingers and popping them into her mouth. She did not look at Evie, but glared over at the Stable

"Raquel-" Evie started.

"I've been watching the whole thing." Raquel spoke slowly between her bites. "It's so obvious that you used me just as a filler for Dee Dee. As soon as she moved away, I was "suddenly" your new best friend." She used her fingers to mimic quotes when she said "suddenly."

"What?" Evie couldn't believe what she was hearing. "That's so not true."

"Even Jose agreed with me."

"Raquel," Evie was losing her patience. "Why do you always have to have Jose validate things about me? About us? What, like he's some expert on, like, human