



September 29, 2005

Dear Michele,

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Thanks so much for this great first draft of HONEY BLONDE CHICA. This is a really relatable, sweet, fun story that readers are going to love. There are lots of funny and touching moments here. You have a great ear for dialogue and as a result there are many times when these characters truly come alive. In the spots where your writing is fully fleshed out, it is a pleasure to read and the characters come across as charming, real and relatable.

The overall plot we have here is good, and doesn't need a huge amount of tweaking. The book will grow when we add more depth and flesh to the stories we already have. There's a lot of work to do at this point, but the end result is going to be a truly wonderful book.

All about Evie:

At its core, this is a story about a girl, Evie, who learns that she can't let others define who she is. She learns this lesson by making the mistake of *trying* to let others define her, and then realizing that this isn't something she wants to do.

We need to see more concrete examples of Evie's metamorphosis from Flojo-Evie, to Sangro-Evie, to Evie-Evie (the Evie that is being true to herself). Her hair color is a great way to illustrate her transformation, but we need to feel a shift in other areas of her life too. As it is now, despite her new Sangro status, she manages to remain remarkably true to herself for the entire story. If she's true to herself from the start then she doesn't have enough room to grow as a character. We need her to reach rock bottom before she can learn any real lessons. Or to put it another way, she has to make some huge Sangro-style mistakes before she learns that being a Sangro isn't for her. As she becomes more and more involved in the Sangro world she should start relating to all areas of her life in her new Sangro way. Is she mean to her parents? Does she start making fun of people? The Sangro party (during which she finds Jose and Alejandra in the photo booth) would be a great opportunity to have Evie do something drastically *un-* Evie. I understand your reasoning for not wanting her to slut-it- up with a strange guy (as was suggested in the proposal), but we definitely do need to see a moment, of some sort, that carries the same weight. Let's discuss what some possible options might be.

What does Evie love?

We know who Evie is when she's being defined by others, but who is Evie when she's just Evie? This is where surfing can come into play. Although we don't want this to be a surf novel, we need surfing to play a bigger role. What does surfing mean to Evie? Is this something that she shares only with Alex? Does Raquel like surfing? Why does Evie

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want to surf? The reader needs to feel that Evie truly loves surfing and feels a deep passion for it.

Evie's relationships:

We need to see more of a progression of Evie's concept of herself. How cute/un-cute does she think she is? Has she had any experience with boys prior to now? Why or why not? Evie should be cuter than she realizes.

Also, we need to keep better track of all of Evie's different relationships with the other characters in the book. Each of Evie's relationships is linked to, and has a direct effect on, each of her other relationships. As Evie feels more and more distant from Raquel and the Flojos she feels more connected to Dee Dee and the Sangronas. How do her changing relationships influence her perception of herself? What does it mean that she's suddenly spending all her time with a group of girls who she thought she hated? While we don't want to book to become too internal, we should get a deeper look inside Evie's head (see specific suggestions about this below)

Characters (and their relationships to Evie):

Raquel:

Raquel is funny and smart but at this point she's hard to like, and she doesn't seem like a very good friend to Evie. Because of this, it's really hard to understand or believe that Evie really misses Raquel. Raquel didn't give her much to miss. Evie mentions that Raquel is loyal, but we don't see examples of this in the text. Let's see/hear about some times when Raquel *was* a good friend to Evie. Let's put a physical object in Evie's room that represents her and Raquel's friendship. A birthday present? A funny card Raquel made for her? Let's give Evie, and the reader, something to feel a little wistful about. When friends spend a lot of time together they usually develop a lot of little friendship "rituals". What is a special snack they like to eat together, or their favorite song to sing along to on the radio? What's something they do together that Evie can miss? Do they watch a certain TV show together over the phone every Wednesday night? Let's hear about some of their shared memories or private jokes.

We need to get a better idea of who Raquel is as a person to explain why Evie's stayed friends with her for so long in the first place. What does Raquel like, aside from spending time with her boyfriend? What does she stand for? What does she care about? A good way to increase a reader's sympathy for a character is to give that character something they really love. This humanizes and softens even the harshest character. What does *Raquel* really love? Surfing? Her friends? Puppies? It doesn't matter what it is, just so long as we know that she's passionate about something.

Another way to let us know Raquel a little better as a character would be to vary her speech a bit more. At this point she says the word "fucking" a lot. It's fine for her to curse, but what if we gave her something to say that was very particular to her? What

other slang can she use that readers might not feel familiar with (and thusly will associate just with Raquel).

What does Raquel like about Evie? As the book is now, one gets the feeling that Raquel's interest in Evie might have more to do with her wanting a sidekick than anything else. We should get the sense that, although she's upset with her, Raquel really *loves* Evie. We need some of their interactions to be adjusted as such. Please see specific suggestions below.

Also, we need to hear a little something more about Raquel and Dee Dee's problems in the past. Calling Raquel a fat nickname isn't enough to explain their war.

Dee Dee:

Dee Dee is sweet, but as a character she feels somewhat flat. We need to hear more about her and her boyfriend back in D.F. Her interactions with her boyfriend need to be better threaded throughout. Also, we need to learn about her insecurity and her feelings about Graciela. What was it like for her when her mother died?

The Flojos:

We need to hear need to hear more about the Flojos too. How do they function as a group. What is their dynamic? Is Evie really part of it, or does she just feel like she's tagging along. Where's Mondo during all this? What is Jose like as a friend? Why is Alex friends with them?

The Sangronas:

The Sangronas need to function more as the Flojos opposites. Although way deep-down they might not be that different, on the surface they certainly are. Let's see a little more of what makes the Sangronas appealing. Once Evie starts hanging out with the Sangronas, the story feels very rushed. While the Flojos spend all their time lazing around, the Sangronas are into *doing* things, big things, exciting things, fun things!

Sabrina:

We need to hear more about Sabrina throughout the story. Although she's not a major character, we forget Evie has a sister. Even though she's away at college, Evie's mother would certainly mention her more than she does.

Evie's Mom:

We need to see a little bit more of Evie's interaction with her mom. At the brunch Evie mentions how seeing her mom interact with Dee Dee reminded her that her mom could be great sometimes. Let's hear more about this. At the beginning of the story Evie is really distant from her mother. But by the end we, and Evie, realize that Evie *needs* her. Let's put her mother more into the story to better highlight this point.

Alex:

We need to see a lot more of Alex throughout this book. We don't see enough interactions between him and Evie to really be rooting for them to get together. How close are they as friends? How long have they known each other? What did Evie think about him before they became friends? He seems to jet in and out of this story too quickly for us to really understand the flavor of their relationship. Has Alex had a crush on her since they first became friends? What does he like about Evie? What does he see in Evie that she has trouble seeing in herself?

Alex/Dee Dee:

Evie's concern about Alex and Dee Dee's relationship needs to be built up more gradually. The reader should feel a mounting concern along with Evie. This can be threaded in through small details. For example, on 71, "[Evie] slowly trudged down to Veranda Hall where most of the sophomores had their lockers, and found Dee Dee, along with Alex, waiting for her." This would be a good opportunity to thread in Evie's questions about their relationship. For example, how are they standing? What is their body language like? Are they laughing about something when Evie approaches? In order to build the threat of their relationship slowly, at first we should simply be shown situations without any judgment of them, and then as Evie's concern grows, we'll see more of her reaction to what she sees. Maybe when she sees them laughing she feels her heart start beating a little faster, maybe she looks down at the floor, maybe her stomach tightens. What does it feel like when you see the guy you like flirting with someone else? Tell us.

Students at Villanova:

As is, Villanova seems like a very lonely place because we see no interaction between any of our main characters and any other students. We need to include a few more characters in the school scenes to give the readers an "outside" perspective on the whole situation. For example, on 108, "[Evie]'s always been known around Villanova as Raquel's little shadow or, as of late, the freaky Flojo with the blue hair." But since we haven't seen any interactions between Evie and the other students, we didn't realize this until more than halfway through the book. We should know this earlier. Also, we don't know if the Flojos are a real "group" to anyone other than themselves. Do the other students think of them as a group? Do they care either way? Do the other students think of the Sangros as a group? How many other students are there exactly? Is the Sangro/Flojo war something everyone knows about? We should be shown this based on how the other students treat them. We need a lot more details to really make it feel like the Sangros and the Flojos are part of a larger world, instead of just floating around in an empty school. Further, we need to get more of a sense that some of the students, the Sangronas, actually *live* here.

Writing:

Overall your writing is a great pleasure to read, but there are a number of spots where the prose is rushed. This is to be expected in a first draft, but going forward it'd be good to clean this stuff up. One good way to do this is to read everything you write out loud. Or

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have someone read it out loud to you. It feels a little silly, but it is the best way to catch awkwardness.

Showing vs. Telling:

Telling often times seems more “efficient” but it’s almost always better to show a reader what is going on, than to simply tell them how they are “supposed to” interpret a situation. Readers feel much more emotionally connected to a story when they are given the information in a way that mimics real life, and then left to interpret the emotions and situations for themselves. In real life, you approach your friend Raquel and before she even says anything you get the feeling she is mad. You know this not because there’s a bubble over her head that says, “Raquel is angry”, you know that she’s angry based on things that you see and experience. Maybe her face is red or her jaw muscles are twitching a little or her hands are clenched into fists and then you give them their emotional weight. So the sentence, “Raquel’s face was bright red and her jaw muscles were twitching. Her hands were clenched into tight fists,” is going to do a lot better job of connecting the reader to the story than the sentence “Raquel was angry.” There are a number of places in the text when events/situations are told instead of show. I look forward to seeing the different ways you’ll convey the emotion in the next draft.

Description:

In this same vein, sensory description is one of the most important ways of making a world feel real. Tell the reader what they would be experiencing if they were standing next to a character in a scene. Does Jose wear a special cologne that smells really bad? Does Mr. Gomez like to keep the air conditioning up high so their house is always very cold? What does it sound like inside Alex’s car? Is it quiet? Loud? Is there music playing?

We need to hear more about these characters, especially what they look like. What do their faces look like? How do they carry themselves?

World:

We need a lot more description of the world that these kids live in. We need more description of their houses, their cars, and the physical realities of their world in general. We need more description of what the school looks like. Is it public or private? Where do the Sangronas live exactly? They live in some sort of dorm entirely without parental supervision? Let’s let Evie visit one of their dorm/apartments and feel jealous/excited about how much freedom they have?

Tracking:

Aside from the larger issues of relationships, there are a number of smaller issues which we need to work on keeping track of. There are a lot of threads to keep track of, and keeping a hold on all of them throughout the entire story takes work, however it is important when we’re trying to grow a smooth arc and not a story that happens in jolts and leaps. For instance, Sabrina is mentioned at the very start of the book, and then not mentioned again until much, much later when Mrs. Gomez says that Sabrina and her boyfriend have broken up. We need to hear a bit more about her spread out throughout

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the story, otherwise we forget about her entirely. Maybe we see Evie's mother telling Evie that her sister called for her a couple more times? Maybe Evie borrows an item of clothing from her old room? As is, Evie does not seem, or act, like a girl who has a sister.

Some other story lines to keep track of:

- Sabrina and her storyline
- Evie's relationship with her mother (how they grow closer)
- The abalone necklace (as a metaphor)
- Evie's love of surfing (that she puts it away and then revisits it)
- Dee Dee's relationship with her boyfriend

Pacing:

It's often hard to tell how much time has passed between different events. It might help to have a calendar out while you're revising and figure out how long all of this is taking, and then make it clear throughout the story. It seems as though this story naturally lends itself to taking place over about a month.

Length:

We'll need to add about sixty more pages before publication. Fleshing out the existing scenes will add significant length. Also, a good twenty to thirty pages can be added in during/after Dee Dees party at her house. There's a whole Sangro world in the Villanova dorms that Evie never gets to be a part of. Let's introduce her to this world and really show her what goes on here. Evie should, in her entrance to this world, do a lot of things she's not comfortable with. (See more on this below).

Slang:

The unique slang of this world is part of what makes this so much fun. More slang should be added wherever possible. Also, we'll need some sort of device to clarify some of this to readers. Do we want to do a glossary? Footnotes? We should discuss.

Specific Notes:

5: "[she] was hoping they would drive down to L.A., do something covert, crazy. Rio Estates was just sixty miles north of Los, but it was still suburbia and, of course, painfully uneventful." Here is a great opportunity to give us further insight into Evie's character and how some of her needs are not being met hanging out with the Flojos. Hit this a little harder here please.

7: Little bit of logistics here: mention that Evie bleached her hair before dyeing it. If her hair is dark brown, it wouldn't have ended up bright blue unless she bleached it first.

19: Good opportunity here to show a little more of Raquel and Evie's relationship. Does Raquel look uncharacteristically concerned at the prospect of Dee Dee arriving? Let's have Raquel say something a little nicer here. Maybe she should mention how much Dee Dee *loved* Evie? Or something about whatever happened between them in the past? This

is the perfect chance to give us more information about the dynamic between the three of them.

22,23: Again, another opportunity to make Raquel a little more likable. Can she be sweet to Evie about something?

24: It's nice that Raquel paid for Evie's haircut. Explain please. This is a good opportunity to show some real love between the two girls.

27: This seems a little harsh. Which is fine, but let's make it a little bit more clear that Raquel is jealous. As it is she just sounds mean.

28: "Yes, they were old friends, but Evie hated it when Raquel acted like such a know-it-all." Explain this more please. What is their friendship like? A few sentences here about the progression of their friendship in all the years they've known each other would be good.

41: ~~Raquel's~~ drunkenness is funny, but the "Mush! Mush!" part seems a little *too* over the top, even for Raquel.

49: ~~Can we~~ add an extra line about the brunch somewhere in here? Something about how Mrs. Gomez didn't think they all got to spend enough time together at the party and so decided to invite them for an impromptu brunch? Otherwise it seems weird that her mother wouldn't have mentioned it to Evie before.

44-50: Good opportunity to give us a lot of descriptive details. Tell us more about the house, Evie's parents, Lindsay, etc. What does everything look like? What does it feel like to be there?

53: FOTB is great. More stuff like this please!!!

54: Can we see a moment of real friendship between Evie and Raquel here? This is the last time they're nice to each other until the end of the book. Can Raquel say something about how Evie's hair looks nice? Or can we see her do something sweet for Evie at the brunch table? Maybe she picks out the avocados in her fruit salsa and deposits them on Evie's plate because she knows that Evie love avocados? It wouldn't hurt to add a little bit of "old married couple" to Evie and Raquel's relationship. The two girls should really be friend-ing it up before Dee Dee arrives (rolling their eyes at their parents, exchanging private jokes, etc).

56: Let's see a little bit of Dee Dee having a close relationship with Evie's parents. They've known Dee Dee since she was a little girl, and we should be able to sense this from their interactions.

61-62 — 59: Do the Gomez's and the Diaz's live across the street? I know this was mentioned earlier (that this is how the girls all met in the first place), but if they really live so close

Alex needs to be more on her mind?
That's my shit right there.

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to each other, their closeness needs to play a bigger role in the story. How far away are they exactly? When Raquel calls Evie right after the party, can she say something that will remind us that they are neighbors? (Perhaps something about one of their mutual neighbors being outside in his bathrobe? Etc).

60: Dee Dee's "reference point" line is great. But not sure if it's realistic that someone her age would phrase it like this. This is touching and gives us some really nice insight into her character, but we need to make sure it's realistic as well.

60 (bottom), 61: Starting with the line "[Evie] 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." Here's a good example of an important moment that feels "told." Even though what Evie is talking about are events that happened in the past, it would still be nice if this could somehow be illustrated in what's happening in the present. One possible way to show this: Dee Dee and Mrs. Gomez can talk about old times, maybe Mrs. Gomez can bring up a nice memory of something their two families did together. Dee Dee can laugh and suddenly Evie can see a glimpse of what Dee Dee looked like, to her, when they were kids. Instead of just telling the reader that Evie is being reminded of old times, *show* them what exactly is making her remember.

Start 68 - 65: This section feels very internal and summary. We want to get inside Evie's head, but long sections like this don't usually work very well. This needs to be broken up with related action and dialogue. Maybe Dee Dee asks Evie what the cliques are like at school? Maybe she talks some about her friends back in Mexico and Evie thinks that they sound like the Sangros?

66: We need more description here. Dee Dee and Evie are walking into Villa Nova together for the first time. Show us what it looks like.

67: Evie's decision not to call back Alex doesn't make sense. Can part of the explanation be something that hints to the readers that Evie likes him (even if this isn't clear to Evie herself)? Maybe something about how talking to Alex always makes her a little giddy/nervous? Or some such. Also, we need more description of what this scene looks like. Show us how the Flojos look while they're leaning against the car. Even a simple detail about the way they're leaning will give the reader more of an idea of what type of people they are.

68: A lot more visual description here please.

75 69: This fight is great! But we need to hear something even *meaner* from Raquel and Dee Dee. Maybe even a little bit more personal. They are in a fight after this for almost the entire rest of the book, so it should be a bit worse.

70: Good example of awkward phrasing that would be caught by reading out loud, "And really, how many squared shaped burger patties can one eat in a four year academic tenure?"

71: Another example of "telling". The last paragraph on 71 would be a good opportunity to give us a lot of great visual details so readers can interpret this for themselves.

73: More visual description of the school please. Let's add a few extra characters here. At times the school feels lonely, like the Flojos and the Sangros are the only students. We need some more students put in here to fill in the gaps. There's some messy writing here once Evie starts describing the Sangros as horses. This could be cleaned up a bit.

81 74: Occasionally the narration takes on a strangely formal voice. For example, "Is it possible, Evie wondered, to metamorph one's self into the tile of a private prep school's cafeteria linoleum?" This is a fun idea, but the wording make the line somewhat awkward and confusing.

75: A good opportunity to explain even more about the Flojo/Sangro difference. Why does Evie hate the Sangros so much? Is it because she really does or because she thinks she's supposed to?

OK 76: Evie's fight with Raquel happens *much* too quickly. This scene should last a lot longer. Also, perhaps it would be good to add another scene of run-in between the girls before this. The fight seems a little too intense to logically follow what has happened so far. Raquel's accusation that Evie has been a lousy friend "lately" doesn't seem to be based on very much. Evie didn't take sides at the barbecue and then the girls gave each other the cold shoulder for one day in school. And now Raquel's telling Evie she's a lousy friend? This seems a bit quick.

85 78: The first paragraph of chapter nine is awkward. And the first few pages feel too much like a summary. A lot of time passes here way too quickly. For example, "However Alex, being Alex, always asked if she wanted to go with him, but Evie didn't feel comfortable to take him up on his offer and would always decline." The use of "always" makes it feel like this is weeks and weeks of action condensed into a few sentences. Instead, make this into a full scene showing a specific time all of this happened sometime during the week. End the scene with Evie thinking about how she's sad that she doesn't get to surf anymore. Start a new scene at the top of page 80 When Evie and Dee Dee are talking about Dee Dee's swimming lessons.

79: "[Evie] was losing access to the one thing she was actually beginning to feel motivated about – and that was to surf." This is great, but we need to thread in some more mentions of surfing earlier. Does she try and go on her own when she's in a fight with Alex and misses him? Can we see her go once at the beginning? A scene with her actually in the water would do a lot towards building this.

82: "It was then that Evie first wondered if something was going on between Dee Dee and Alex." This feels like part of an outline, not part of a book. Also, it's not quite true because Evie already wondered about Dee Dee and Alex many times before, at the party, during the first day of school, etc. Also, not sure if we even knew Rocio's name up until this point.

84: The paragraph at the bottom of the page is way too "shown". Also, Evie's thought that Raquel and Dee Dee might be too much alike, doesn't really seem justified. And her mirrored line, "You know I was talking with Alex," seems a little too coincidental. It'd be great if this conversation could be slowed down.

85: This IM stuff is great. Really fun and funny. But it seems like we're being led somewhere that we don't actually end up going. Is ShaggyMA actually Alex? It'd be fun to include a few more convos between Evie and ShaggyMA.

91: How does Dee Dee know who Marcela is? Let's see some more description of the de LaFuentes house please.

93: We need to see *a lot* more of Evie's connecting with the Sangros. This scene should be divided up into a few scenes. This would be a great way to add some extra length to the book. Instead of just staying at Dee Dee's pool, can the girls all go somewhere? (Since they're drunk, maybe they take a car or something?) What if they go back to Alejandra's dorm room? This would be a great opportunity to show us a completely different side of Villa Nova. (Alex should probably excuse himself at this point so that Evie's attention is on the experience, not Alex). It will be fun to see Evie's reaction to this "forbidden world." Maybe Evie and Raquel had always had a pact that they'd never go into the dorms because that's where Sangros live. And now Evie breaks it. The fun times they have at the party should be the exact opposite of all her boring nights with the Flojos. This is Evie's "transformation" night. After this she's now friends with the Sangros, so let's see more of this.

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98: It seems weird to be in Evie's head before we're actually in the scene. Let's have Evie and Dee Dee talk a little bit *before* Evie starts to think about Raquel.

100: It's great that "Alejandra and everyone really likes [Evie]" but if the previous scene is stretched out and divided up, Evie will already *know* this.

No!

103: It should take a little less convincing on Dee Dee's part for Evie to agree to this. We want to see her jumping head first into her new image, not dragged along unwillingly.

one night
wouldn't
do it.

[Michele, the paging after this point might be a little bit off in my version. My copy of the manuscript has 105 as a blank page. If you've kept this blank page in your version we'll have the same page numbers, but if this is only a result of my receiving the manuscript in two pieces, then all my page numbers will be one number higher than yours.]

Marie Duran -

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(805)
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Olivia Gardner

"Hurricane King"

floor to
ceiling
out door

replace
roller
Custom

212'-
645'-
9758

Applix in Melon
Scrub
Pixie tangerine

to Christopher
Street

123: This moment should be a real eye opener for Evie. Something much "worse" needs to happen here. This shouldn't just be a bad party, it should be one of the worst nights of Evie's entire life.

126: This whole section, where Evie finds Jose and Alejandra, needs to feel more *worse?* upsetting. In fact, the entire party needs to feel more upsetting. At this point it just seems kind of lame and awkward, but this has to have more impact on Evie. She should find herself missing Raquel almost *painfully*.

Alex -
in
car

130: This is good, but more details here please. Lots more details. Despite how upset Evie is, we have to feel a real sense of her excitement at seeing him at this moment.

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132: "We don't even finish each other sentences!" This line seems to come totally out of no where and doesn't really make sense. Can she instead say something in reference to Dee Dee's comment that she and her boyfriend "knew" at first site? Maybe Evie can say something that will mean, "I've known you for so long, why am I suddenly feeling this now. If it's real, shouldn't I have felt it all along. Maybe I did." Of course, this will have to be worded in a way that doesn't sound so silly and on-the-nose.

135: Evie's level of discomfort only really makes sense if we increase the unpleasantness of the party. *Alex isn't going?* ✓

136: How long HAS it been since she's called Raquel?

139: We need more/better specifics here about Sabrina and her boyfriend.

152: We need to work on the logic here. Seems kind of crazy of Jose that he thinks he could spend all night dancing with Alejandra at the school dance and that Raquel wouldn't somehow find out about this. Instead of dancing so publicly, can they be somehow hidden? Is there a better way we can tweak/explain what's going on? Let's brainstorm about this together.

153: Jose and Raquel's confrontation is a big deal and deserves to have its own scene. Add more description and slow down the events just a bit, so we have enough time to really feel this.

What we have here so far is great, but with some more work and fleshing out, this will be a truly relatable and sweet story that our readers will really love. Thanks so much for all your hard work thus far. After you've had a chance to look this over, let's discuss any questions or comments you may have. We'll need to get this revision back from you by 10/25. We're all looking forward to reading the next draft!

All Best,

108: "[Evie]'s always been known around Villanova as Raquel's little shadow or, as of late, the freaky Flojo with the blue hair." This is good and interesting, but we really don't get a sense of this. We should. Let's stretch out some of the previous scenes at school to include Evie's interactions with other non-Flojo, non-Sangro students.

109: Interesting that Mondo is treating Evie this way, but since we've really only seen them interact one time before this (in the car on the way to Bard Beach) it's hard to put this in the appropriate context. Can we see him flirting with Dee Dee at some point early on? Or can Dee Dee tell Evie that he did?

111: "Evie had tried, many times, to talk to Raquel, but a person is only going to try so hard." When did this happen? Every time Evie tries to talk to Raquel, we should see it. We shouldn't find out about these things after, we should find out about them during.

112: Instead of doing "fun" things, Evie should be doing a combination of fun things and things that go against what she stands for. Otherwise, there's no real tension. We don't get the feeling that Evie is pretending to be someone she's not, she's just hanging out with some new people, but for the most part she's acting exactly the same.

122 113: Charelene's bragging that her uncle owns coffee and tea stores is very sweet, but seems much too innocent for the Sangros. They're rich and dangerous, so it seems far fetched that they'd care so much about getting free coffee and tea at the mall.

pg 123/124 115: Evie's discussion with her father about the pan dulce is distracting and takes us out of scene. It's fun to read, but probably not necessary.

125 116: "Evie hadn't been so crazy on Alex lately. Ever since he had been so hard about her blonde hair . . ." We should see this before we're told about it. Add another interaction between the two of them where we can see Evie acting/feeling hurt.

126 117: We need to hear a lot more about this, please slow down this scene. Also, please show Evie losing herself here a little bit more. *The dance was a week away.*

127 119: It's hard to feel Evie's pain when she sees Dee Dee wearing the necklace because we haven't seen any interaction between Evie and Alex in quite a long while. This will have more meaning if we see more build up. Can we have them bump into each other while Evie is out with the Sangros? We should see a moment of Evie blowing him off in an attempt to impress the Sangros with her coolness.

128 120: This description is perfect. It's interesting, unique, funny and detailed. This is the level of description we should see throughout the book. ✓

129 121: This feels like it happens really fast. Slow this down please. We need to actually see all of this happening and feel like we're there. *Dee Dee takes off at Fibby's party* ✓

130 122: Little detail, but lots of jukeboxes are digital now. 132

Dear Michele,

November 10, 2005

Thank you so much for all your hard work on HONEY BLONDE CHICA! You have made some really significant improvements in this revision. There are tons of funny, real moments. The dialogue is wonderful. Evie is a fun, likeable character and her relationship with Raquel is much more understandable. Alex is very sweet and we really understand why Evie has a crush on him. As you know, there's still some revising to do, but this is really shaping up to be an excellent book!

At this point we need to take care of three separate things:

- 1) Evie's arc. Evie's arc is the story, so in every scene we need to keep in mind where Evie is, how she's feeling, and what this scene is doing for her progression as a character.
- 2) Awkward sentences – I've made notes throughout of sentences that need to be tweaked.
- 3) Missing scenes – please fill these in :o).

Evie's arc

What we have here is good, but we need to turn this up another notch so that Evie's highs are higher and her lows are lower. In this draft we definitely get more of a sense of Evie losing and then finding herself again. We just need her to lose herself a little more so that finding herself will be that much more meaningful.

When you're working on the Sangro scene in the hotel, let's show Evie really trying to be someone she's not. This is her "high point" as a Sangro, this is when she's acting most not herself. Can we see her do something extra un-Evie that she feels bad about later? Can we see her act bitchy to a hotel worker? Can we see Evie lying to her mom when her mom calls? We need to really get a sense that she's been negatively influenced by hanging out with the Sangros.

If this is her Sangro "high-point" then the night of Fabby's party is when she realizes that she doesn't really want to be a Sangro, after all. At this point, Fabby's party doesn't sound all that awful, or rather, the Sangro part of her party doesn't sound so bad. Sure, it's not fun to be at a party where you don't have anyone to talk to, but by far the worst part of the night has more to do with Jose than any of the Sangros. Can we have Marcus be a little bit more of a jerk? Can he say something really mean? Either he can imply that she doesn't fit in, or he can say something mean about "surfers" in general and assume she'd agree with him (since she is at a Sangro party). Can the Sangros be flirting with guys in a way that Evie finds gross?

-Mother?
to a
Sangro

Page 170-180 – This has to be a real low point for Evie. We need to see more of her pain, more loneliness and more self-reflection. We need to really get a sense that Evie is realizing that the choices she's made haven't brought her what she wanted. Also, on 180, Evie decides to call Raquel and tell her about Jose. At this point, part of Evie's reason for

doing this is because she thinks it'll make her look good in Raquel's eyes. Instead, let's give Evie a different motivation for calling. Evie is much more sympathetic if she's doing this to *help* Raquel, not to help herself. This will be more of a turning point if Evie realizes that no matter what, she truly cares about Raquel and that even if they're not speaking, Evie still wants her to be happy. She should, in fact, be dreading calling Raquel about Jose. She wishes she didn't have to. She's only doing it because she couldn't live with herself if she didn't.

186 – The talk with Mom is good, but could be expanded a bit. Throughout the book, Evie feels like her parents aren't really proud of her. After their big talk, it might be nice to see a vote of confidence from Mom. While I'm certainly not pushing for some corny line, it would be nice to see a little, "I know you'll do the right thing and I'm proud of you" type sentiment from Mom. Also, Evie's reflection after the talk feels very summary and told. We want to see Evie experiencing these emotions instead of just being told that she is.

186/187 – Did we already know that Evie had been surfing before? I'd sort of gotten the impression (and perhaps I just missed something) that Evie had *never* been surfing before and Alex was going to teach her *now*. Evie's feelings/relationship to surfing plays an important role in her character development. Let's hear a little more about it.

202 – In this scene, Evie is comforting Raquel after Raquel finds out that Jose has been cheating on her. This might be a nice moment to show that Evie has grown a little since the beginning of the book. Evie had a pretty serious relationship conversation with her mom a few scenes ago. Can we bring some of that back for this conversation? What was something that Evie's mom said about relationships that Raquel could benefit from hearing? Perhaps Evie can bring up what her mom said about friendship and how a boyfriend is also a friend. Evie can say that Jose's lies and betrayals show that he's not a good boyfriend *or* a good friend. This is also a good time for Evie and Raquel to talk about *their* friendship. Evie can mention that even though she and Raquel were still in a fight, Evie knew Raquel deserved to know the truth. Despite their fight, this is one-way Raquel, and the reader, know that Evie is a true and loyal friend to her.

If all these things are taken care of, this book will be in really good shape for the galley. Enclosed please find a printout of your most recent draft marked up with my line edits. Please note, in any place where I've suggested a line, it'd be great if you'd beat my suggestion with one of your own. Also, here is a key, in case any of the marks are confusing.

vt – verb tense

wc – word choice, another word might work better

awk – awkward sentence, would flow better if reworked. Try reading these outloud.

We'll need to get this round back from you first thing on the morning of 11/28 (or even better, the end of the day 11/27). This will be the final round of revision before the galley is printed. Just to let you know the schedule going forwards: I will be giving you a

copyedited line-edited version of this12/5. At that point you will have a few more weeks to do any additional revisions, before we have to give the publisher a final disk for publication. I will have an exact date for you tomorrow, but just to give you a general idea, we will need your final revision delivered by the end of December.

After you've had a chance to look this over, let's discuss!

Best,

Lynn