

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?

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

Hi Michele,

October 4, 2006

Thanks for the first draft of HBC2. There's a lot to love in here! These are interesting and believable characters doing fun fresh feeling things. Readers are really going to love having a look inside this rich and detailed world. You really do a great job of making us feeling a part of it. I especially love all the dialogue, which is funny and completely realistic. I had a ton of fun reading this.

Here are my suggestions going forward!

Writing

While you've done a great job bringing these characters and this world to life, the writing can be awkward on a sentence-by-sentence basis. Some word choices don't make sense, and some sentences seem patched together. I hope this doesn't sound too harsh, but this is an area that really needs your attention. Putting in the extra effort in this area will definitely be time well spent.

Also, please pay extra special attention to tone. Occasionally narration shifts from So-Cal casual to strangely formal. For example, on 159 "Evie could not believe her mother was comparing Margaret, Dee Dee's dear belated mother, to Frank de LaFuentes new wife, Graciela. The cattiness belonged more in the hallway at school or in the dorm rooms where the Sangros resided." This is a great observation, but the entire book is in close third, pov Evie, so this should be phrased accordingly.

Chapter/Scenes

Please make sure something specific happens in each chapter that moves the plot forward. Also, please make sure our chapter outs have bite. Occasionally chapters end and begin because page-wise it seems they should, even if the scene is not over yet.

Intros/HBC

Please keep in mind that many of our readers might not have read HBC and therefore will be confused by what's going on! While we don't need a recap of the entire plot of HBC, we should still have a basic recap (woven into the text so it doesn't *feel* like a recap). Also important – please introduce all the characters as though we've never met them before. Please make sure you tell us what each character looks like and who they are in the context of the story.

And to this end, we need to see something in Evie's interaction with Alejandra to remind us that Evie and Alejandra *were* friends in the last book. We need to make it clear that both of them are aware of their history.

Friendship

At the heart of this book is the friendship between Las Tres. Evie, Dee Dee and Raquel are all hugely different, but the love they have for each other is what holds this book together at its core. And to this end, let's play up their friendship a little bit more. We need to know how much these girls love each other, whether or not they agree with what the other one is doing. In the last book, one of your revision notes was to go in and add more nice moments between Evie and Raquel (in order to make it more clear that/why these girls are friends). Please do that here as well—add more nice moments between all three of the girls. We need to get more of a sense of the cozy connection these three best friends have. One good way to do this would be to add a few more references to things the girls did together in the past, before Dee Dee moved to Mexico. Give us a sense of the history these girls have together and their relationship in the present will make that much more sense. When they're fighting ~~they're fighting~~ their fights should have more of the feeling of a fight between sisters than simply a fight between friends.

Also, we need to see more instances of these girls having *fun* together. (Please see “fun” note below).

At the end of HBC, Evie, Dee Dee and Raquel had finally rejoined forces after a long time. The girls get their tattoos together as a symbol of their bond. You do mention Evie's tattoo when her mother barges in her room, but let's mention this tattoo at least one more time throughout. Should the girls discuss it? Should Evie notice it on Raquel/Dee Dee? This would be a good way to segue into giving the readers a quick recap of book 1.

Plot

There's a lot of interesting stuff going on here, however the book feels like it cuts off before it's done, leaving some of our stories unfinished. While we don't need to tie everything up with a perfect bow, we do want to feel satisfied by where we are left with each plotline.

Driving – What is the conclusion to this story? Evie never really suffers any consequences for hitting the other car. The story starts the book with a bang, but then for the most part disappears. Evie says she's been practicing driving with her dad, but we never actually see this. Why does Evie skip her drivers test? Just because she's tired? This doesn't seem to make a lot of sense. Seems like it would be more satisfying if she actually took the test and either passed or failed.

Alex – What is the resolution to the Alex story? What does Evie actually want? What has she learned about herself from this relationship? As is, the Alex plotline is interesting and totally relatable, but without Evie's reflection on it, it feels like a bunch of stuff that happens, as opposed to part of a cohesive plot. We need to get more of a sense that Evie has been affected by/learned from her experiences.

Sabrina – More than any other, the Sabrina story feels unfinished. We need to hear the end of her story. What was in the original outline seemed to work well, can we go back to this? We never find out a lot of answers to this story. Why did Sabrina and her boyfriend break up? Why is she so depressed? What can Evie learn from her situation? And why does Evie decide to be nicer at the end of the book? In the original outline, Evie and Sabrina have a heart to heart when they're home alone, let's see this scene. What can Sabrina teach Evie? What happens that convinces Evie to be nicer to her sister?

Dee Dee -- Why *does* she decide to stay in CA? In the original outline, Dee Dee benefited from Sabrina's story, no? Can we put some of this back in? As is, it feels like she's planning, planning, planning to go and then all of the sudden changes her mind.

Sixteenera – Although Evie's parents threaten to take away her party, it seems pretty clear from the get-go that this isn't going to happen. This removes a lot of the tension from the story. We need to make it *really* seem like there's a chance Evie won't get to have her party, especially since her desire to keep the party is what's driving much of the plot. What can ~~Evie's mother~~/father do to really convince her she might not get to have it? What if Evie's assuming her mother wouldn't cancel, since she's so concerned about appearances, and then her other does something to show that she's *more* concerned with Evie's grades, then about how it would look to not have the party . . .

Fun

Let's try to infuse this book with a bit more fun! There are a lot of real issues in this book, and the issues are great, but we need to balance out some of the heaviness with some lighter scenes.

Evie's Sixteenera - The scene where the guys at school talk to Evie about her party is really fun. Can we see more like this? Also, can we hear more stuff about Evie's party that makes it sound amazing/deserving of all the attention it's getting? As is, it sounds like fun, but it doesn't sound like the type of party that *everyone* would be talking about. Let's make the party a little bit more outrageous and let's see more examples of how Evie is benefiting from her mother's desire to impress everyone. Also, can we see more fun scenes of the friends doing stuff to prepare for the party? For example, we just find out that Evie went dress shopping with her mother, instead, can we see this? What if Dee Dee comes along? What if Sabrina comes along and they all have a nice bonding moment? What we have about the Sixteenera is a lot of fun, but it feels like there are some missed opportunities here for even *more* fun. Also, the more amazing the party sounds, the more Evie will have to lose if the party doesn't happen. This will help infuse the story with some added drive.

Raquel – While surely we don't want to give readers the idea that f-ing up is awesome, there also should be *some* fun to Raquel's story. Since this is all from Evie's pov, we can make things *look* fun at first, at least to Evie. Raquel is newly single and going out and partying it up with a bunch of guys. This should, at least at first, seem exciting to Evie.

Can we make Davey a little bit more appealing? If he is ultimately not a good romantic choice for Raquel, can there at least be *something* great about him? At least at first?

HoHo
jungle

Eventually we will, of course, find out that Raquel has a problem and isn't having such a great time after all. Evie's excuse for noticing this all right away is, at first, the fact that she has a new boyfriend and, later, the fact that she's volunteering and trying to keep her Sixteenera. Evie should slowly figure out that Raquel has a problem, her suspicions finally being confirmed the night Evie goes to Raquel's house and watches Raquel eat the tamales. As is, Evie's opinion about Raquel and her situation remains pretty much static. It would be more interesting and more dramatic to have Evie's vision of Raquel slowly shift from newly-single-girl-having-fun to messed-up-girl-having-a-problem.

Oh, and a small note, *either* we need to *see* Raquel sink lower than she already does *or* we need to find out some additional information about Raquel (from either her mother, or Evie's mother) to explain why it is that Raquel is getting sent away. Has stuff been going on that Evie had no idea about? As is, what she's doing seems silly, but not necessarily worthy getting sent to a hospital for. We need to believe she's less a stoner kid, and more someone who truly needs to be sent to rehab.

Horses – We need to have a better understanding of why Evie learns to love the horses. Let's use some descriptive language to let the reader really *feel* why the horses are special. As is, the horse rescue place doesn't seem like so much fun. Let's play up the charreada moment more, the readers should read that section and wish THEY were at/in one. What's here is good/fun, but we just need some more.

Arturo – As is, Arturo seems like a smart, interesting guy, but we need to see more examples of how different he is from Alex. This is coming through, somewhat, but not enough at this point. Evie should learn things about herself based on how she feels about Arturo vs how she feels about Alex.)

Below please find a few smaller notes. I'll have more small notes for you in the next round. At this point it would make sense for you to focus on the bigger issues (but these are things that popped out at me so I thought I'd include them).

13 – Please put in more physical description of Evie driving, especially before this. We forget she is driving!

7 42 - If Evie doesn't know if her party is the talk of Villy, then the reader can't either since the book is in her close third.

49 - Vasquez, on the other hand, was a bit harder to convince than Evie... ← I understand your intention but the sentence is delivering the opposite message.

117 – Evie's sudden love of horses doesn't make sense. We need to really get inside her head in the rodeo scene.

118 - Evie sounds a little bratty here...

119 - Seems weird that all of the sudden she feels uncomfortable driving when she was totally fine doing it before

121 - Evie sounds a little *too* silly when she's talking about changing her name

124 - This conversation feels a bit forced

128 - This section feels a little hard to believe. It's weird that Josephina would be telling Evie this as though she agrees with Arturo, since she's supposed to be so stuck up. ALSO, the only reason Evie's families money would matter in this situation is if somehow she or the school were donating to the horse reserve for her getting to work there...but then he wouldn't be *against* that sine he'd probably be happy that the reserve was getting more money.

191 - Arturo's big confession seems a little out of place here.

195 - It feels too coincidental that Alex appears *exactly* at the moment she and Arturo are having her first kiss

195 - Alex shouldn't call her a SLUT. It's too mean.

212 - Is his necklace comment true? I think I actually know a lot of girls who wear the same necklace every day...also surfer-girl Evie probably *would* wear a homemade looking necklace, no? Can he have figured this out another way?

Thanks very much for all your hard work so far! I'll need to get this revision back from you on 10/31. After you've had a chance to look this over, let's discuss! Very excited to see your next draft!

All Best,

Lynn

he came to the
accident, the
horse got
back on.