

"She's hanging out with Alex," Evie said as she finally ~~clued in~~ to P. Kitty. He was not interested in jumping up over some average gym sock.

"Oh, on a date?"

"No," Evie said. "They're just hanging out."

"But it's a Friday evening," Lindsay pressed.

Maybe it was better to leave her alone, engrossed in her soap?

"Lindsay," Evie was getting irritated. "Just because a guy and girl spend time together, doesn't mean they're on a date. It's not like that here. Nowadays."

"Hmmpf." Lindsay said before turning the volume up. *La Tormenta* was back on "Oh-kay."

But Evie suddenly felt it wasn't simply okay. Even Lindsay saw how it was so seemingly important to have a man. Was Evie such the loser? Was there something she didn't see ~~and~~ Lindsay did? ~~And~~ what did she care if Alex and Dee Dee were becoming more than friends? She should be happy for them. She was happy for Raquel when she hooked up with Jose, right? Even if she did feel like the third wheel at times.

Evie gave up on P. Kitty's finicky mood and before she knew it, she, herself, was caught up in the torrent of *La Tormenta*. She welcomed the distraction.

The night's episode involved a beautiful, big breasted, small waisted brunette who had consistently ignored the advances of a dapper banker. He was the owner of pin striped suits and a thick moustache. He had offered her his unconditional love, sparkling jewels and even a house by the sea, but the beautiful, big breasted, small waisted brunette wasn't interest in any of it or him. One night the dapper banker was alone, drinking sherry in front of the grand fireplace of his mansion. He was distraught that he would

brandy

Swirly

never win the love from the beautiful, big breasted, small waisted brunette but then, all of a sudden there was a tap at his door. What was this? Was it she, the beautiful big breasted small waisted brunette? No, it was a new neighbor who has just moved in down the road. She was a beautiful, big boobied, thick waisted blonde and she needed help. His help. She couldn't light her pilot light. '*Puedes ayudar con mi fuego?*' she asked him to help her light her fire in husky espanol. By the end of the episode, the dapper banker with the moustache and the pin striped suits had fallen head over heels in love with the beautiful, big breasted, thick waisted blonde. And the beautiful, big breasted, small waisted brunette? She was forever alone...to lead the life of an old maid, with her sick, aging cat.

"Ay," Lindsay sobbed. "*La tormenta...*"

Evie looked up at Lindsay, then down at P. Kitty

"Mom!" she cried out in a panic. "Can you drop me off at Dee Dee's?"

\* \* \*

*Back in the day*

When they were all kids, the de LaFuentes's house was on the end of Camino del Rio, right between the Gomezes and the Diazes. But now four years later, the de LaFuente's new home was on Calle Cortez, a somewhat posher street in Rio Estates. The home addresses were actually hand painted on oval ceramic plates and two large Royal Palms, at the entrance of the street, made for a grand introduction to the tree lined cul de sac..

Evie's mother pulled up to the de LaFuentes house and noticed a number of shiny late model cars parked in the driveway right away.

"Well," Her mother looked up in surprised envy. "I know Frank had done well in D.F., but *this* well?"

She was right. The de LaFuentes new home <sup>was</sup> large, with two columns on both sides of a <sup>intricately</sup> custom carved front door. In the middle of their circular brick drive way, spotlights showcased flowing water, bubbling from a three tiered stone fountain,. Their former <sup>house</sup> home, as well as the Diazes and Gomezes, was painted adobe beige, but now the de LaFuentes new home was a light peach stucco, fresh and different with enough foliage on the front lawn to re-create an entire native Mexican desert. From full sized Agave plants to over sized O cacti still in wooden crates, the plans for a future landscaping extravaganza were definitely in the works.

"This must all be Graciela's doing," Evie's mother assumed with a slight air of disapproval. "Margaret was never so show offy with appearances. All this desert stuff... didn't Frank say she was from the North?"

"I dunno," Evie answered. She could really care less. Her mother was <sup>getting wound over</sup> uptight over some plants? <sup>greenery?</sup>

<sup>so</sup> Because there wasn't any room in the driveway to park her Saab, Evie's mother parked down the slope on Calle Cortez. She looked up at the de LaFuente's home again. "Maybe I should go in a say hello," she thought out loud. "I haven't really talked to Frank since my brunch."

"Mom, *no*." Evie pleaded. She knew her mother just wanted to check out their new digs. Besides, she didn't want her to know that Dee Dee's parents were out for the

evening. "I'm already late. Please, can't I just have some time to Dee Dee? By myself?"

"Okay, Evie, Okay." Her mother put her Saab in park.

Evie grabbed her overnight bag and sprinted up to the house, quickly, before her mother could change her mind.

The de LaFuentes doorbell announced Evie's arrival with **heavy sounding** chimes. Finally, a young woman in jeans and a sweatshirt opened the door. She was in her mid twenties and ~~Evie assumed she was the de LaFuentes housekeeper.~~

"Hi," Evie greeted. "I'm here to see Dee Dee?"

"Quien?" The woman's eyes creased. *at the sides.*

"Oh," Evie corrected herself. "Dela."

"Oh, si," the young woman nodded *as she* let Evie in. "Soy Marcela."

Evie soon learned that Marcela didn't speak much English. But she didn't really

need to vocalize her feelings. Her face conveyed annoyance as she led Evie through the de

LaFuente's home, which was still pretty much vacant from their move. Hundreds of

cardboard boxes of every size **covered** floor *the as well as* and the stairway and the only piece of

furniture in the Great Room was an oversized white leather sofa still covered in plastic. A

large framed portrait of a younger Graciela, with heavy lined eyelids, a' la the 60s, had

yet to be hung and was propped against a wall, which, like all the other walls, *in the house* were dotted

with spackle, ready for a *fresh coat of* paint job. Evie also noticed a lot of terra cotta planters, large and

expensive looking. Graciela *must* have a green thumb, Evie thought, or at least a thumb

green from counting out all the bills to pay *dishwashing* *dish* ~~someone else~~ *for interior plant* *for a*

**maintenance**

As Evie followed Marcela through the kitchen, she noticed puddles of water on the beige tile floor, evidence that Dee Dee and Alex must have been rough housing it earlier in the evening. No wonder Marcela seemed aggravated. What housekeeper wants to work a Friday night, mopping up after some careless kids?

But when they reached the back door, they both heard a scream. Evie jumped back, a bit startled, Marcela, however, just looked up in more annoyance. The scream was quickly followed by loud, filtered laughter and Evie realized that there were other people, not just Dee Dee and Alex, out in the backyard. Perhaps Dee Dee's parents decided to stay in? But when Marcela pulled the <sup>wooden</sup> blinds to one side and slid the sliding glass door open, Evie found the shock of her life. The backyard was full of tall, busty, striped haired... <sup>Each & every</sup> ~~Sangros~~. <sup>less than a few feet away.</sup> All four of them. **Larger than life**, there, in Dee Dee's backyard. Fabby, Charlene, Denise and Alejandra *there* – in Dee Dee's back yard. There was Fabby, on the edge of the pool with one leg dangling in, Charlene kicking it on the top step of the pool, Denise floating on a purple plastic float with a red plastic cup in her hand and Alejandra entering the pool house. Evie felt her mouth drop to the concrete. Her first instinct was to sneak back into the house, call her mother and make her drive back and pick her up as fast as <sup>Saab's</sup> **her speedometer allowed**.

But it was too late. Dee Dee had already seen her and waved her outside.

"Evie!" She called out. "You came! Come join the party!"

"Well, I just came by to—" Evie started. But it was no use. She couldn't think of a reasonable excuse quick enough. And to her surprise, Marcela had already shut the sliding door closed and pulled the blinds back in place. Wait, was that a click? Did Marcela actually lock the door? *Yeah, I know how you feel...*

Dee Dee sauntered over and like all the other Sangros, she was wearing a micro bikini (hers, hot pink) <sup>& platforms</sup> and large gold hoop earrings. The <sup>bikini</sup> suit was so small, practically child size, and for a minute Evie thought that maybe it was the same **Garanimals** bathing suit that Dee Dee had worn as a kid. <sup>was it?</sup>

“Mira,” Dee Dee held up a bottle in a paper bag and smiled slyly. “Denise brought some Silver Patron. You want a shot?”

“Uh, not really.” Evie could detect a tinge of liquor on Dee Dee’s breath. “I really can’t stay long.”

Dee Dee looked over at Evie’s <sup>weekender</sup> overnight bag and tugged on the <sup>fabric</sup> strap. “But what’s all this for? Aren’t you staying over?”

Well...” What could she say? Her mother had already left.

“I thought Alex was here? Evie scratched the side of her neck nervously and looked around. Another familiar face might <sup>lessen</sup> ease the blow.

“He is. There, with Charlene,” Dee Dee motioned with her chin. “She can’t swim either.” Alex was in the shallow end of the pool with Charlene who wore a metallic gold bikini, Metallic gold? It looked like it belonged more in a Mystikal video than in a suburban backyard pool party. Maybe that was the same thing? Charlene flailed about as Alex desperately tried to balance her with his arms under her back. Evie did a double take. Wow, Katie’s C-cups overfloweth. And Alex? Evie noticed how pink his neck was. <sup>she could help but laugh to herself</sup> That was one thing she knew about Alex, When he got nervous, his neck turned a bright <sup>spotty</sup> pink.

“Nice suit. Flojo,” Alejandra approached Evie and Dee Dee. She swirled the ice in <sup>a</sup> her Styrofoam cup.

Evie **instantly** felt dwarfed between the towering Dee Dee and Alejandra. ~~She~~ <sup>& there</sup> didn't know people actually wore platform heels with bathing suits. Wasn't that just a <sup>this</sup> segment of a beauty pageant? Evie looked down and <sup>saw</sup> noticed that the blue nail polish on her toes hadn't been touched up in weeks. Maybe she was truly a Flojo -- too lazy to even touch up her toes. Flojo. Sigh. **She suddenly thought of Raquel. Raquel would never let Alejandra talk to her that way.**

"Now you be nice," Dee Dee reprimanded Alejandra with a sideways glance. "This is my house, and my friend." She threw her arm around Evie. The half dozen or so gold thin bracelets on her wrist clinked. "I told you that Evie's been my best friend since we were little kids. My very, *werry* best friend." Dee Dee ~~said~~ <sup>d/ in a</sup> in a cooing, babyish voice, almost Elmer Fuddish. She ~~actually~~ pressed her cheek against Evie's. Was it the Patron that made Dee Dee lay it on so thick? All Evie could do was smile uncomfortably. Okay, so Dee Dee *did* have Evie's back, but it wasn't quite in the manner she was used to.

"Yeah, yeah," Alejandra clicked her tongue. "You know I was only teasing." <sup>sp.</sup>

"Ay," Dee Dee <sup>at</sup> peered into the bottle of Patron and saw that it was empty. "No *mas*, Evie," She made an exaggerated sad face. "*Lo siento, mi'ja*." She then turned to Alejandra. "Ally, be a chula and go get Evie some Patron."

Alejandra gave Dee Dee a look.

"Oh, it's okay," Evie reassured Dee Dee. "It's no problem," She didn't need no Sangro doing her any favors.

"Al-leeee," Dee Dee cried. "Just goooo. Be nice."

"Okay, okay." Alejandra grabbed Evie's arm. "Come on, chica."

She took Evie to the pool house where another bottle of Patron was stashed, out of

the tattle tale eyes of Marcela. If they only knew, Evie thought, Marcela does not care.

As Alejandra started to twist off the cap she looked sharply at Evie. "No offense, Flojo but..." she started.

Uh oh. Evie thought. Here it comes. Whenever someone started with "No offense"... it was usually an offense, a very offensive comment.

"But just out of curiosity," Alejandra continued. "But why do you always dress like a boy?"

"A boy?" Evie was offended. "You think I dress like a boy?"

"I told you not to take offense," Alejandra said. "It's not like you're ugly or anything." She took a swig from the bottle and winced. "Between Raquel and you, you are definitely the prettier one and I don't know why-" you -

"Alejandra, Raquel is my friend."

"Oh, really?" She raised her high brows. "I don't see you two hang out as much anymore." eye

"Well, she *is* my friend." Evie held up her cup for the tequila. *Can I just get what what you dragged me here for?* "If anything, I'm just a board girl."

"Que?" Alejandra poured a small amount soda into Evie's cup before adding the Patron. "Aburrido? With what?"

"No, not *bored*," Evie half smiled. "Board, b-o-a-r-d, as in surfboard, skateboard, snow..."

Was she really explaining herself to Alejandra de los Santos?

"Aaah," Alejandra laughed. "Si I know. You like all that stuff." She poured more Patron into her own cup. "Have you ever been to Puerto Escondido?"

Like my mother, back in Mexico.

"Nuh, uh." Evie admitted. "My family, we usually go to Cabo."

"Cabo?" Alejandra laughed "Are you serious? *Que naco!* My family has a house in Puerto. It's supposed to be the best place for surfers."

"So I've heard." Yeah, someday she would acutally ride a board and go. Maybe a surf trip with Alex. ~~She had mentioned Puerto Escondido.~~ Evie took a sip of her drink.

Yikes. No wonder Dee Dee was loopy. The Sangros were concocting a lethal syrup. Evie took another <sup>sip</sup> drink. It was ~~warm and~~ made her feel warm. "So," she slightly hesitated, "You really think I'm prettier than Raquel?"

*Her chest, her head  
her legs felt lax.*

"Ay!" Alejandra put the cap back on the Patron and laughed. "Dee Dee is right!"

"Right about what?"

"You're okay."

"Oh, thanks." It was all Evie could say. She was "okay" and "pretty" at the same time, in one night. That was sometimes more than she ever heard over the course of one year from Raquel, who had supposedly been her best friend. **(And here the compliments were flowing easily from the mouth of a Sangro, the head Sangro at that.)**

Hey," Dee Dee come over with Alex to Evie and Alejandra. <sup>Alexandro's</sup> "Alex's leaving."

"What? ~~Aleady?~~" Evie hadn't even said as much as hello to Alex.

"Already?" Alex said. "What are you talking about? I've been here since, like, seven."

"Yeah, but I just got here," Evie took <sup>another</sup> a sip of her Patron. She didn't like the idea of spending the rest of evening with the whole Sangro posse and not one fellow Flojo around.

"Yeah, well, I wanna get up early, to head out to Sea Street." Alex looked at Evie.

"You wanna go Eves? You can finally try out that board of yours."

"Tomorrow?" Evie got excited. There was no way Raquel would be at Sea Street so early on a weekend morning. "Uh, yeah, should I leave with you now?"

"Evie!" Dee Dee cried. "No. You promised. You said you were staying over. I have everything planned."

"Everything planned?" Evie looked at her. "You didn't even know I was coming over until I showed up." *just now*

"Yeah, but *you're here*, now, and now you are going to leave because you have better plans? That is *so* rude."

"Yeah, but Dela," Evie tried to explain. "I really wanna go to Sea Street, I haven't been in, like, forever." *Alex is gonna teach me to surf. — Alejandra-*

"Evie," Dee Dee insisted. "You can go to the beach anytime. This is my first slumber party in my new house and now you are just going to just leave?" *"You don't surf!"*

"Slumber party?" Evie asked. "You didn't say you were having a slumber party."

"Yes I did. All the girls are staying. Right Alejandra?"

"Claro," Alejandra agreed. She took a drink from her cup. *and leaned close to me Dee.*

"Oh," Alex smiled suggestively at all three girls. "Maybe I should stay too."

Dee Dee smirked. *No.* "Sorry Alejandro. Girls only. You're already being bad enough, trying to lure away my best friend."

There Dee Dee went, using the best friend angle again. But Evie had to admit, it sorta made her feel wanted and special.

She took a large gulp of her Patron. "Yeah, okay." Evie said slowly, "I guess there will be plenty of other times to get to Sea Street."

“Good!” Dee Dee smiled. “It will be just like the old days.”

“So, your not coming?” Alex asked.

“No, I guess not.” Evie said reluctantly.

*Alex "May Evie whenever you're ready"*

Dee Dee was right, Evie thought, as they all said good bye to Alex. It was her first slumber party in her new home and she should be there. She should lay ground for the future parties, and, more importantly, make sure that the Sangros **didn't try to steal the spotlight or the important of "the old days" away from her.**

\* \* \*

At first Evie couldn't believe that she was spending an entire Friday night with Sangros. Solita. Alex had already left

Friday night was usually the Flojo night to chill. Just to kick back in front of Raquel's plasma screen or even by Evie's pool.

But after a while Evie started to actually have fun. **Soon enough everyone's guards were dropped and judgements were tossed aside.** Girls, no matter what kind of bathing suits they wore, were girls. Soon enough they were all yelling and laughing, filling up Zip Loc baggies with water from the kitchen sink or the garden hose and slamming them at one another. () started dunking heads in the pool and () showed off her pathetic athleticism with a belly flops from the diving board.

They compared tattoos, navel rings and, as two of the Sangros peeled off their bikini tops, fearlessness. Yes, just typical girls, as a topless Alejandra and Denise grabbed hands, screamed and jumped into the pool together. **SHOW THIS**

They drove to LA

**Separate Scene. It could be Alex calling Dee Dee's house the next day.**

By midnight, Evie found herself sluggishly reclining with Dee Dee and Alex on a single chaise lounge. The night was winding down and now they supporting each other physically and emotionally as their unified buzz slowly wore off.

"So Alejandro," Dee Dee lazily leaned into Alex as Evie fell more onto her. "If you had to choose," She looked over at the Sangros. "Who would you want to be with?"

Alex looked over at the Sangros lounging on the other end of the pool. "Huh? Is this a trick question?"

"No," Dee Dee said sleepily. "It's a *very* serious question."

"Oh, man," Alex yawned. His eyelids were half closed. "I dunno. Everyone's pretty cool."

"Just *cool*?"

"No, I mean," Alex sounded as though he was going to nod off any minute. "Look at Charlene. She's just beautiful."

Evie opened her eyes and looked over at Charlene. Long legs, long nails and long hair, but *beautiful*? Beautiful blonde chicas you may be talking Shakira, Jessica Alba or even Jessica Simpson, as long as she didn't sing or talk. How could Charlene garner similar props from Alex?

"And then Denise," Alex went on. "She cute too, but in a different way. More petite. I usually go for small girls."

*Go for?* As long as Evie has known Alex she's never heard or seen Alex *going*

for anyone. How is it, Evie wondered, that Dee Dee, who barely knows Alex, can get so much information out of him? Where was this coming from?

“But then, Alejandra,” Alex’s voice was drifting off. “She’s cool too. But more aggressive. That can be attractive. It’s like she knows exactly what she wants.”

*Okay*, Alex. Evie could feel herself getting irritated. What, are we gonna have to hear you ramble all night about girls and what makes for desire or retire? Who cares?

“Okay,” Dee Dee asked. “So what do you think of me and Evie?”

Evie’s ears immediately pricked up. Oh, this she *had* to hear. Or did she want to? It was not that she was into Alex, just merely interested in what he had to say, about her that is. She kept her eyes closed, but opened her ears to hear every attribute her friend, a guy, would sing about her. She was just as good as any other Sangros, choppy blue hair, chipped blue nail polish and all.

She waited and waited, patiently, but Alex said nothing.

Evie finally sneaked a peak over at him. His hands were folded on his chest and his eyes were closed. For the first time, Evie noticed how long and dark his lashes were. She also thought it was cute how his lips, slightly parted, exposed his two front teeth. Has his teeth always been so white?

She felt Dee Dee lightly nudge him with her leg. “Alex?” She asked again. “So, what do you think?”

But he was already in a deep asleep.

The next afternoon in Dee Dee's room, Evie and Dee Dee and the Sangros were still lounging in their pajamas, baby doll style for Dee Dee and the girls and a oversized () T-shirt for Evie.

Maldita (iPod) and Laguna Beach (TiVo) The last of the Elephant Eye's DeVour) had been eaten (e

⊙ "I can't believe I ate three Eyes," Evie let out a long belch, less out of necessity but more to shock Dee Dee.

Dee Dee crinkled her nose and waved her hand in front of her face. "Evie, gross! How can I work under these conditions?" She was sprawled out across her bed, which was covered with spiral notebooks, loose papers and a few textbooks, <sup>she was</sup> re-doing Evie's homework. That was one of the perks of having Dee Dee back from Mexico. Not only did Evie get another best friend, but a best friend who had similar enough handwriting and superior conjugation skills to whip through her Spanish III homework.

<sup>challenge</sup> "Hey, Denise," Dee Dee asked Charlene who was <sup>sitting</sup> on the carpet painting her toe nails,. "What is the conjugate for ()?"

() Charlene answered off the top of her head, no pause, no nada. Okay, a bestfriend who go<sup>+</sup> a little help from her Sangro friends.

⊙ "Evie was looked at all the framed photos of Dee Dee and Rocio back in Mexico. <sup>on mesita down. They were of her</sup>

There was one in particular that interested Evie. Dee Dee was wearing a black knee length skirt and heels and Rocio was in a slacks and a sport coat. They both looked very <sup>native</sup> grown up in the picture and were psoing were in front of a fancy building.

"Where was this taken at?" she asked Dee Dee.

"Which one?" Dee Dee looked up. "Oh, that was at Bellas Artes. We had just seen a ballet. I can't remember the name of it."

"If it was Bellas Artes," Alejandra said. "It was Probably (). That's always playing there."

"So," Evie asked, still looking at the photo. "How did you and Rocio hook up?"

**It was still on Evie's mind, all the topics that had been brought up from the day and night before, about being pretty enough, feminine enough, not having a boyfriend. These were issues Evie hadn't really thought about and it was a new and strange sensation for her. It has always been Raquel who made boys and male attention a priority, but now with Dee Dee back, and spending the evening with the Sangros, she was feeling a bit out of the loop. A bit bothersome, to be truthful.**

"What do you mean by hook up?" Dee Dee didn't bother to look up from the homework (*Best friend and yes, a diligent cheater, too!*)

"She means, when did you first fuck him," Charlene said..

"Oh, that." Dee Dee smiled coyly and looked over at the same photo. "It was right away. I think we even did it that night. In the balcony.

"If I know you, it was in the bathroom. The men's bathroom.

If I know you? How well did Alejandra know Dee Dee?

"No, but really, it was love, right away." Dee Dee got up from her bed, stretched her shoulders and went over to Evie. "That's how you know it's real. We practically finish each other's sentences. Also, he comes from a great family."

"That seems really important, huh? In Mexico, I mean," Evie asked. "Family."

"It is to me," Fabby interrupted. ~~She took the photo from Evie and looked at it.~~ "I

don't want to be dating <sup>rancheros notes</sup> someone from a SPANISH."

<sup>thought</sup> "Wow," Evie said. "I don't even think Raquel's even met Jose's parents."

"Are you serious?" Dee Dee asked. "How long have they been going out?"

"Over a year. Yeah, it seems like whenever she's over at his house, it's when his parents are out."

"Yeah, I'd keep her hidden, too." Alejandra smirked. "Jose's too good for her. I don't know why he's so into her."

She suddenly felt awkward. **She didn't want to start capping on Raquel, or even on Jose, for that matter, especially in front to the Sangros.**

"Raquel can be hard to get along with," Dee Dee started. "I remember when we were kids. (I mean, she always had <sup>that</sup> a permanent scowl on her face.)"

"Yeah, but she's really fun too, Evie said. "She has some good qualities."

"Like what?" Dee Dee ~~tilted her head and~~ challenged Evie.

**"No, I mean, for one, she's really funny and she's really into being loyal and stuff." Remember that time..."**

**Alejandra says something mean about Raquel.**

Evie wanted to change the subject. "What was this anyway? *Mean Girls, Mexicana Style?*

"So, Evie," Dee Dee had turned over to her back. Her tone suggested she had something on her mind. <sup>+ Evie welcomed it.</sup> "Have you thought about a touch up?"

Evie looked down at her toes. She was hoping no one had noticed. The chips of blue paint from last night were now specks. God, what ~~chips~~ did she leave floating in Dee

Dee's pool? "Yeah, I guess I am in need of a paint job."

"No," Denise laughed when she saw Evie looking at her feet. "She means your hair."

"My hair?" Evie touched her head and looked at herself in Dee Dee's vanity mirror. Her hair had been blue for a few weeks and she had a good amount of black roots showing, but with all the Raquel and Flojo drama she hadn't really thought about her appearance. She turned her head from side to side. "I hadn't really noticed."

"Well, it's very noticeable," Alejandra got up from the bed and went over to Evie. She looked at her through the mirror. "How about not just a touch up but something completely cool and *en la moda*?"

"*En la moda*?" Evie asked. "I can tell you right off I am *not* getting braid extensions."

"No," Alejandra **laughed**. "We're are not talking Acapulco tourist *trenzas*" She fluffed the top of Evie's hair. "But what if you went with a different color, right Dela?"

"Like *what*?" Evie was suspicious.

"Some highlights?" Dee Dee offered cheerfully.

"No." Evie pulled her head away from both Alejandra and Dee Dee. "No way," At Villanova, highlights were the bona fide mark of a Sangro. It was one thing getting to know them, getting to accept them, but to look like one of them. No way. "I'm *not* going blonde. You gotta be kidding."

"Not really blonde," Dee Dee assured her. "We could dye your hair back to brown, a light brown and give you some highlights, just like a half crown and overall, it would look -- "

“Blonde,” Evie said matter of factly.

“But just not blonde,” Alejandra tried to persuade her. Like those bland blanquitas at the Pacific View mall, <sup>but</sup> mas exciting. You’re <sup>say your</sup> a surfer, right? Don’t you want to be blonde?”

“Like blonde supposedly defines a surfer?” Evie said. “Alejandra, OG wave riders were brunettes. Besides, blonde stands for everything I am against.”

“Oh?” Dee Dee raised an eyebrow. “And blue stands for everything you are for?”

Just then, Graciela tapped at the side of Dee Dee’s bedroom doorway. “Dela,” she asked. “*Estas ocupadas?*”

“No, ‘ama,” Dee Dee called out. “*Entre.*”

Graciela walked in, <sup>she was wearing</sup> looking through her purse. All the Sangros looked up and said hello in Spanish. Evie <sup>continued searching</sup> joined in.

“I’m leaving on errands,” Graciela said. “*Necesitas algo?*”

“Are you going to Longs?” Dee Dee asked.

“Longs?” <sup>looked up</sup> Graciela asked. “What do you need from Longs?”

“Just a **One Day Response**,” Dee Dee said nonchalantly patted her stomach. “Un pregnancy kit,”

“*Mande?!*” Graciela ~~looked up from her purse~~, her eyes and mouth stretched wide in horror.

“Ha, just messing!” Dee Dee laughed.

“Ay,” Graciela playfully slapped Dee Dee’s arm. “Que mala!”

**The whole room giggled and again, Evie joined in.**

"No," Dee Dee continued. "We just need hair color." She looked at Evie defiantly.

"Dela..." Evie started.

"Come on, Evie," Alejandra joined in. "You'll look great...*un taco de ojo!*"

"A taco de *what?*"

"Ay," Graciela clicked her tongue and looked over Evie's blue mop. "*Porque, no?*"

"See," Dee Dee chimed in. "Gracie knows. She used to own a beauty shop in D.F., Right, Gracie?"

"Graciela," she corrected Dee Dee said as if she's had to a million times.

"You are *not* coloring my hair," Evie said as if *she* had to correct Dee Dee a million times.

"Yeah," Dee Dee moved away from the mirror. "I guess Raquel wouldn't like it."

"It has nothing to do with Raquel," Evie turned to Dee Dee. "This is *my* hair."

"Okay, okay," Dee Dee said. "I'll drop it. Never mind '*ama*,' " she told Graciela.

"We don't need anything."

She looked at Evie one more time as Graciela left the room. "I really wish you'd rethink it."

"Well, I won't, thank you," Evie was adamant. She joined Charlene on the carpet and started to go through Dee Dee's supply of nail polish. There were at least twelve shades of pink. The least she could do is cover up her tacky toes.

Dee Dee went back to her bed and reached down under it. "Hey, I have something for you."

“For me?” Evie asked.

“Yeah.”

“Dela,” Evie said. She decided on Peyton Pink for her nails. “You ain’t gonna bribe me.”

“No, silly,” Dee Dee said. “I was gonna give this to you next month, for your birthday, but I want you to have it now.” She pulled out a small flat wrapped package.

“Hey,” Charlene teased. “What about me? I’m the one with the birthday next week.”

“Oooh,” Evie eyed the package. “Seriously, I can open it now?”

“Yeah,” Dee Dee handed it to her. “You know it’s not like you haven’t been blonde before.”

“Huh?” Evie was confused.

The Sangros huddled around Evie as she started to unwrap the foil paper from the gift. It was a picture frame. Another photo of Dee Dee and Rocio? But when she flipped the frame over, it was actually a photo of Dee Dee and her, when they were young girls.

“Is that you?” Denise asked.

Evie immediately covered her mouth. “Oh my God!” She laughed. “This is so funny. I totally remember this day!”

The photo is of her and Dee Dee, two nine year olds in costume for the **Marina Park** Beauty Contest. Just about every girl, including the two of them, <sup>had</sup> dressed as the Coppertone Girl. They all sported blonde wigs, done into pigtails and tied with blue ribbons. Dee Dee and Evie each wore a two-piece blue bathing suit and one of the girls, Evie remembered, even had a little stuffed animal, a small black dog, attached to the back

of her bathing bottoms to reveal a “tan line”.

“I still don’t understand why we didn’t win.” Dee Dee smirked as she looked at the picture. “I mean, our tans were for real and they gave first place to a *gabacha!*”

Everyone laughed. *“It’s always like that”*

Evie looked at the photo. She actually looked cute in the blonde wig ~~she wore~~ at the contest. Then she looked at Dee Dee who had gone back to doing her homework. Dee Dee *was* a really good friend, she thought. A very good friend. She then looked her own hair in Dee Dee’s vanity mirror. Blonde? Nah. Then she looked at herself again. Oh, what’s a few highlights really gonna do anyway? Raquel would *freak*, that’s for sure.

(MORE RAQUEL and Alex think?)

Besides, Evie thought, isn’t it every girl’s dream in life to be un taco de ojo?

11

The next morning, Monday, when Evie got up, she startled herself in the bathroom mirror. She had forgotten about the night before. Her hair. She leaned over the bathroom sink and squinted. Was that Charo looking back at her? **She was... blonde. But not just any ol’ blonde as Dee Dee pointed out, *Honey Blonde*.**

“Oooh,” Alejandra had raved when Dee Dee and Charlene were done blow drying Evie’s hair the night before. “I wish I done my *pelo* this shade. Que cool!”

But now, the morning after, neither Dee Dee, Charlene or Alejandra was around to **boost her confidence**. Evie looked herself over and wondered if she looked so *que cool*. She tilted her head from side to side and grimaced. **Never mind Sangro stripes,**