

# Que Random

my flojos.”

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

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

→ but didn't think too much of it

↑ could be a little snappier.....

Are they driving?  
Show Dee Dee telling Evie about Fabby's party?

As they approached Rio Estate’s downtown area, Evie was still surprised to learn that Fabby was actually serious about celebrating her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday at La Pantera Negra, a Mexican restaurant and lounge on the main boulevard. It was in the heart of the “historic” downtown district, so named, her father joked, because the city didn’t want to pay for an architectural or ~~beautification~~ upgrade. La Pantera boasted a bar with a kidney shaped counter, a mirrored splash back and red leather tuck and roll booths with red velvet tables topped with ancient Mexican coins and protective glass. On every wall hung ornate gold framed black velvet paintings of sleek looking panthers, lounging on leafy tree limbs or perching on ledges, poised and ready to pounce at any moment. It had been years since Evie had even set foot in La Pantera and, according to her father and mother, it wasn’t the place it used to be. It was now just a dive where cholos hung out (gasp!) and the cheese was no longer the white crumbling fresca from Mexico, but rather the standard orange

kind from Cost Co. (double gasp!). Evie thought it was ironic that the Sangros, like the Flojos, found intrigue in all places off limits. *is this ironic?*

When she and Dee Dee finally arrived to La Pantera, it was already close to 10 PM. *g* and as Evie got out of the Beetle, she braced herself for *g* another long painful journey from the car to the front entrance of the restaurant. Damn, she should have brought her flojos as back up. *awk*

“God, when’s the last time you been here?” Dee Dee asked, as they walked up to the front doors.

“Not since I was a kid.” Evie wasn’t really in the mood to talk, especially to Dee Dee.

“When I was younger,” Dee Dee said. “I couldn’t think of a place more glamorous in than La Pantera Negra. I even fantasized about someday having her wedding reception there.” *was the most glamorous place I could think of.*

But Evie said nothing. She just wanted the night to be over with as soon as possible. She pulled out her cell phone. No new message from Alex.

When they walked in the lounge area of La Pantera, it was already packed and Evie and Dee immediately found Fabby at the head of long table. She was surrounded by fellow Sangros, *who?* friends, and a mountain of wrapped gifts.

“Feliz Cumpleanos,” Evie kissed Fabby on the cheek.

“Thank you, chica!” Fabby was high from all the attention. She wore a pearl studded tiara, a smashed purple bow was taped to the side of her head and her face was covered in red and pink lipstick kiss prints. *She was obviously the adored girl of the*

awle  
evening. “You know I’m having my real birthday party in Mexico. A big bash at my parent’s ranch!”

“Oh, really?” Evie smiled.

“Yeah, we’re all flying back for the three day weekend. You should come!”

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

Soon after Evie and Dee Dee was introduced to some of guests near Fabby, Dee Dee asked, “So *que quieres tomar?*”

“Uh,” Evie looked at the bar sign. “What do they have?”

“Oh, anything!” Dee Dee started swaying to **the music** that instantly came on. *what kind of music?*

“You know how La Pantera is with their drinking policy.”

~~And it was true. Pantera did have a tax ID check.~~

Dee Dee disappeared into the thick of the party, towards the bar and Evie suddenly found herself feeling uncomfortably alone. *good detail but a little awkward, please!*

Within a short time, the crowd got deeper and with the extra body heat, it felt to Evie as if all the oxygen from La Pantera had been sucked out. The guests were soon fanning themselves with the plastic menus or wiping their foreheads with the thin cocktail napkins. Everyone was talking quickly over one another and there were so many people Evie didn’t know. No one made attempts to get to know her and she soon began to feel even more out of place. Just about every Sangro -- Fabby, Denise, Charlene -- seemed to be engaged in an exclusive conversation. Even Alejandra, ~~Evie noticed~~, was no where to be seen.

Evie finally saw Dee Dee again, wedged tight between two unknown revelers in a small booth, laughing and looking like she was having a grand old time. Even from the distance, Evie could make out the abalone shell, dangling precariously from the thin cord around Dee Dee's neck. It upset her all over again. She would definitely rather be alone than be with Dee Dee, that's for sure.

That was something, Evie wistfully remembered, that Raquel never did -- just take off and not come back. Whenever she went out with Raquel, it was always the two of them, side by side, meeting, or rather listening to Raquel make fun of, people. But at least they did it *together*. ~~And, Evie thought, Raquel would never wear a necklace that she knew Evie wanted.~~

↑  
Dee Dee didn't know Evie wanted it.

Evie walked around the dark lounge, trying to not look so aimless. She focused on her slice of Fabby's birthday cake; meticulously picking from the sides with her fork. **As long as she <sup>was eating</sup> made the one slice of chocolate cake last, she rationalized, she was doing something.** However, when she was finally scraping the side of her fork across the desert plate for crumbs, she knew it was time to find a new focus for the evening. Fortunately, that's when she saw it - the old jukebox in the far back corner of the lounge. ~~To her,~~ it looked like the same grand gaudy jukebox she remembered as a kid. A bit smaller, of course, but that's what happens when you grow up.

↑  
and didn't have to force herself to socialize?

↑  
great!  
there was

Evie went over to the jukebox and flipped through the choices ~~that covered~~ everything from Vicente Fernandez to Green Day. The old juke had been updated with CDs rather than the vinyl 45s that once slid out onto a turntable. She finally found

something she wanted to hear. She put in two coins and pressed down on two separate buttons, G and 4.

“What did you pick?”

Evie looked up and found a boy looking over her shoulder. He looked down at the selections with her.

Oh,” She glanced at him, making sure she didn’t appear to be looking him over. He looked <sup>?, STET</sup>appealing enough. Short dark hair, dark eyes, yellow tennis shirt, a small mole on the left side of his chin. Okay, maybe she was looking him over. “G 4,” she said. SHE FLIRTS WITH HIM THE WAY A SANGRO WOULD.

“Oh, right,” The guy said dryly. “G 4. I just downloaded them.”

“No,” Evie laughed. He was funny. She had to speak louder as **another song**, definitely not her choice, started to blare through the ~~stereo~~ speakers overhead. “No, I mean, Audio Slave. But it’s not gonna play for a while. You know how these things work.”

Evie got a better look at him. His dark eyes were nice, approachable

Her asked her something, but Evie could not hear over the music.

“What?!” Evie raised her voice. “I can’t hear you!”

“Are. You. From. D. F.?!” This time the boy spoke slower, <sup>louder.</sup> but still yelled.

“No, I’m *not* deaf!” She shouted back. “The music. It’s too loud!”

The boy motioned they go to the other side of the lounge, away from the bar and the jukeboxes crackling speakers. Evie followed him as heavy techno beat, *definitely* a Sangro choice, took over La Pantera’s lounge. At one point he took hold of her arm to lead her through the thick of the party. It was nice to finally have some attention. Was

anyone noticing? Hello? Dee Dee?

"I said!" Evie started to shout again, "Oops." She lowered her voice as soon as she realized she didn't need to. "Sorry," she laughed, embarrassed. "Oh yeah, I can hear so much better."

"Yeah," the guy pulled out a cigarette. She could detect a slight accent. "So, what's your name?" He asked.

"My name?"

Uh, yeah, he smiled. "I don't see anyone else around."

Ev," she started. Evelina.

"That's pretty.

"Thanks." She looked at his cigarette. Oh well. No one is perfect.

"I couldn't imagine living here," The guy looked around. "It's Hicksville. What do you do for fun?"

"Oh, there's lot's to do." She looked at him. His warm eyes suddenly felt cool.

"Like what?" He asked.

"Oh, me and friends-" Evie started.

"My friends and I..."

"What?"

"My friends and I," he corrected her English.

"Oh," She caught on. "Yeah," Why is it that many new language speakers always feel the need to correct others with their newly discovered text book knowledge? "We go to the beach."

"And?" He asked.

↓  
What kind?  
Mexican?

Really?

"To Sea Street. To surf and ... stuff.

He didn't seem impressed. →

*How does she know? what does he do to show this...*

"Have you been there?" she asked.

"I think so," He blew his smoke from the side of his mouth. "Is it near a Holiday Inn?"

"Yeah," Evie said. "Exactly."

"Yeah, people always talk about the beautiful beaches in California, but I don't get it." He rubbed his temple.

"Where are you from?" Evie asked.

"Not around here."

She only felt worse and more out of place. The arrogance of this guy! Was she or her life that boring?

"You know," He looked over at the main table. "I'm gonna go talk to Charlene, do you mind?"

"Not at all. Go ahead. I see someone I have to talk to anyway."

**She felt rejected. MORE She pulled out her cell phone. No messages.**

Evie made her way back through the crowd as the slinky slinks pinched the top of her feet more. Even through the dim lighting of the lounge she could see a large blister beginning to form on her right foot. She remembered the Band-Aids that Dee Dee had brought, but now she was nowhere to be seen. Evie decided to head to the restroom where she could at least get some toilet paper to cushion the throbbing. But on her way, when she passed by La Pantera's retro photo booth, she caught a look of herself in the outside mirror. *Ugh*. No wonder that guy could care less about her and **no wonder Alex**

**had lost interest in her.** Blonde or not, she looked horrible. She'd definitely have to go to the restroom to freshen up.

But as she was about to head towards the ladies room, the pain on her right foot worsened. She bent down to loosen the strap and when she did, she couldn't believe what she saw. There, on the other side of the photo booth's curtain, were two pairs of flojos. A pair of faded suede Sanuks and a pair of brand new red Roxys. She *knew* those flojos. At least, the ones on the male. They belonged to Jose. Evie could barely believe it. What was he doing at La Pantera? Anywhere, she guessed, ~~there might be~~ <sup>Bed go</sup> access to <sup>where the reds</sup> easy booze. But still? She looked closer and yep, the feet were definitely Jose's. Who else had a beaver's tail tattooed on the outside his ankle? And whom else would he be with other than Raquel?

**At that moment, Evie felt it was almost like a sign that they were both at La Pantera. Evie ~~craved attention and upon~~ <sup>9</sup> seeing their flojos, she felt an immediate pull of familiarity. After all, hadn't Jose thrown a wink the other day to say that everything was possibly okay, cool? And Raquel? She would never insist that Evie wear shoes that hurt and Raquel wouldn't allow some snot ass boy to talk to Evie that way, either. And more importantly, Raquel wouldn't accept an abalone necklace that she knew rightfully belonged to Evie. Yes, under her rough exterior, Raquel was a friend.**

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

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

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

"Evie!" Alejandra exclaimed. "Take a photo with us!" She moved over on Jose's lap to allow more room and started to pull Evie in the photo booth.

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

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

Evie tried to remain in the doorway of the photo booth. She looked at Alejandra's flojos. "Yeah, cool." Was all she could say.

Both of them looked disheveled, Alejandra's always perfect hair was tousled and the top buttons of her blouse were unbuttoned. Jose's shirt was also rearranged.

Evie looked behind her at the crowd. Were people oblivious that Jose and Alejandra were practically having sex in the photo booth? Didn't any of the other Sangros see that Jose, who they all knew was Raquel's boyfriend, was with Alejandra? Is this how guys <sup>are</sup> can be? This is how friends <sup>are</sup> can be? Jose was with Alejandra and Dee Dee must have known. MORE FEELINGS.

She stepped into the booth.

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

She positioned herself on his thigh the best she could. Alejandra took over his

↑ why does she do this? to keep Alejandra & Jose from making out more? Because she feels awkward & doesn't know what else to do?  
knee again  
Daddy? to make it even grosser? or is that too much