

Honey Blond Chica

Are we not keeping ***Grand Drama in Spanish Hills*** for the outline title?

It's the day after the party.

Evie is *not* pleased when her parents announce that the Gomezes and the De la Fuentes are coming over for brunch Sunday morning. Sunday is Evie's sacred time at Sea Street and she has been *aching* to try out the new longboard Alex helped her pick out just days before she was grounded. Surfing at Sea Street is the only time Evie abandons her warm bed so early in the morning, but now, thanks to her mother, she can't go.

Evie can think of **many** things she'd enjoy less than this brunch, but her parents are anticipating a wonderful morning. Mr. Gomez is anxious for everyone to sample his newest line of "manteca free" pan dulce and Mrs. Gomez is also excited, but her reasons are more complicated. Vicki Gomez is very aware that things are not quite right between Evie, Raquel and Dee Dee. She certainly wouldn't bring this up with Evie, but she's hoping that a brunch might clear the air. Old friends are precious and shouldn't be tossed away so carelessly.

Unfortunately, Vicki Gomez's plan backfires. **As** the parents **sip mimosas** and argue over who can offer the De la Fuentes better **floor** seats for The Lakers, Raquel and Evie eat in silence as Dee Dee constantly checks and rechecks her cell phone. When Dee Dee asks Raquel to pass her the last sweet roll **from** the basket, Raquel answers with a disgustingly **fake** smile: "Oh, sure, *Dee Dee*," she says, taking a humongous bite of the pan dulce and cramming the rest into her mouth. "Ooops," she says, with her mouth full. "I guess you'll have to order more on that little cell phone of yours," Dee Dee retorts, not quite under her breath, calling Raquel a pinche **glutona**. When Raquel calls Dee Dee a pinche punta, Dee Dee says that Raquel just doesn't know how to hold on to her man. Evie keeps her mouth shut during the exchange. After all, she reasons, Dee Dee was batting her plastic baby blues at Jose, but she can't be blamed for the fact that he was flirting back. How could Dee Dee know that Jose had a girlfriend? But Raquel doesn't know what Evie's thinking—to her, Evie looks like she's afraid to take sides. Raquel, who has never been good at controlling her temper, gets up. "Thanks a fucking lot, *Evie*, she says, storming out.

Lydia, I changed the bagels to pan dulce. It didn't seem right to have so much bread at one meal, also the pan dulce should be **THE** bread of the brunch.

So ends Mrs. Gomez's wonderful brunch. The Diazes apologize for Raquel's behavior, but things were already awkward after **Graciela**. de la Fuentes commented on Mr. Gomez's groundbreaking pan dulce "With all respect Senor Gomez," she sniffs, "but the heart of pan dulce--*true* pan dulce--*is* the manteca. Your pan dulce has no soul." **As both families start to leave the Gomez's home**, Dee Dee, who drove over in her VW Beetle, still lingers around the table where both she and Evie continue to sit in silence. Evie is incredibly uncomfortable. She's mad at Raquel for being mad at her, but at the same time feels guilty for not sticking up for her. She thinks Raquel was being just her drama mama

self, but then again, maybe she has reason to be? Dee Dee *had* been a bitch the night before. Evie isn't quite sure what she thinks about anything anymore, it's all so confusing. The brunch was a big mistake,, but it's finally coming to an end. That is, as soon as Dee Dee leaves. Evie looks over at Dee Dee and wonders, doesn't she have a precious long-distance call to make? Suddenly, to Evie's surprise, Dee Dee exaggerates a stretch, yawns, and then perfectly mimics Evie's father's singsongy inflection, "*Big fiesta . . .*"

Evie can't help but finish her sentence, ". . . *long siesta!*" with a smile. This is what Evie's parents used to say to each other after Dee Dee and Evie's play dates as kids when they wanted both girls to take their naps. Evie is surprised and touched that Dee Dee remembers her father's saying. Dee Dee looks at Evie and sheepishly says, "Okay, so I'm sorry if I came on strong last night. I was in, you know, *una moda mala*. I had just had a fight with *mi novio*." "Yeah," Evie confesses. "Me too." Dee Dee raises her eyebrows and asks, "Oh, *you* had a fight . . . with *your* boyfriend too?" "Uh, no," Evie quickly corrects herself. "I mean, I was in a weird, bad mood, too." Both girls laugh. And Evie wonders if she might have been wrong about the new Dee Dee.

Dee Dee starts Villanova High School. Evie offers to show Dee Dee around on her first day, which works out well since Raquel has made it clear she will not be talking to Evie. As always, the rest of the Flojos follow Raquel's lead. Dee Dee and Evie decide to sit together at lunch. It's the classic moment where everyone is waiting to see who lowers their standards to sit with an unknown newbie, but Dee Dee is a new girl who *shines*. She attracts a lot of attention, including double takes from the Sangros who flutter around, wanting to know who the new fresita is in the designer clothing is. As Evie gets in line to buy a Cali Roll, she bumps into Raquel. They have an awkward moment, but neither of them says a word. It is clear to Raquel that Evie has taken sides with Dee Dee, which drives them even farther apart.

When the school day is over, Dee Dee invites Evie over to see her new house, but Evie declines. Raquel is a card carrying grudgeholder and she doesn't want to be on her permanent shit list any longer than she needs to be. Evie heads to the student parking lot where she usually meets Raquel to get a ride back to Spanish Hills. When she sees Raquel--and Raquel definitely sees her--Raquel quickly gets into Mondo's Maurader with Jose and they drive away without her. Evie stands there with her mouth open, unable to move until Alex walks up behind her. He is the only Flojo who hasn't taken sides. He sees **them** and says, "I don't follow soap operas," rolling his eyes, "but my abuelita does." He looks at Evie and says, "So, it looks like you need a ride home." Alex's attitude calms Evie. But that's no surprise. She always feels safe with Alex. That's one of the reasons she was confident enough to let him teach her surf last summer. Even as she tumbled off her board and dealt with the Sea Street line up of aggro short boarders who don't appreciate girls getting in the way of their waves, she knew she'd be okay with Alex around. He doesn't let other people's issues get in the way of what he thinks is right.

Things come to a head on Friday afternoon when Dee Dee is transferred to Evie and

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

Tensions escalate until the girls are in a full-on screaming match and slamming water at one another. As the instructor breaks up their fight, Alejandra **de los** Santos emerges from the gym room and into the pool area. In the last few days, Alejandra and Dee Dee have become closer friends. "Dela" Alejandra hands Dee Dee a towel, looks down at Raquel, and says, "Is this Flo-*Ho* bothering you?" Dee Dee clicks her tongue looks at Raquel and laughs, "Ay, no chica. This Flo's just about to go. *Right*, Pansita?"

Dee Dee and Alejandra turn on their heels, leaving the pool area. Raquel climbs out of the pool and looks over at Evie. "You know, you oughta be careful with that new pally of yours. She not the same Dee Dee we knew as kids, Evie. It looks like she contracted some nasty habits in Mexico and is passing them on to you!"

The lines have been drawn. The Flojos and the Sangros on opposite sides and it seems that Evie, along with Dee Dee, is on the Sangro side. For Raquel, it's war. And for Evie, who doesn't have the stomach for **even minor scrimmages**, it's sickening.

Later that day Dee Dee invites Evie to come over and go swimming at her house. "I also asked that surfer friend of yours, Alejandro. I *have* to learn to swim," she insists. "I cannot bear another day sharing the kiddie end with that bitch." Ever since Diaz's welcome back party, Evie has had a funny feeling whenever Dee Dee mentions Alex. Something about the way she rolls her tongue when she says his name, *Alejandrerrrrro*, gives Evie a weird prickly feeling in the back of her neck. She decides to ask Dee Dee about it—big mistake. Dee Dee gets this surprised look on her face and says, "Evie, I *have* a boyfriend back in DF. Sounds like *someone* is a little posesiva, no?" Evie shakes her head quickly, "With *Alex*? Please!" So the topic is dropped, but Evie has a sneaking suspicion that Dee Dee isn't quite telling her the whole truth. And more importantly, Evie wants to know why it is that she even *cares*. Alex has always been her friend, just her *friend*, right?

Just to prove she isn't possessive, Evie says, no thanks, and stays home, catching up on her TiVo. As she's flipping mindlessly through her shows, she can't get the image of Dee Dee and Alex in the pool—alone—out of her head. At the last minute she decides to go to Dee Dee's. She doesn't know what to expect at the De La Fuentes's—what will Dee Dee and Alex be doing when she walks in—and is even more shocked and horrified to find Dee Dee's backyard infested with ...Sangros! Evie's first instinct is to get back in her mother's Saab and drive away. But then she sees Alex, shirtless in his old faded life guard trunks, chatting with a Sangro in a metallic gold bikini top whose C-cups

overfloweth, Evie clenches her fist and grits her teeth. She's not going to be scared off by this wild pack of skanky Sangros. She is *not* going home. But she just might be scared of by her own outfit: baggy board shorts, bathing top and flip flops that don't hide her chipped blue toenail polish. Fortunately, Dee Dee sees her, and waves her over. With a hug, she introduces her to the Sangro making it clear that even though Evie is a Flojo she is *una buena persona*, just like Alex.

At first Evie pretends to be completely **blasé about spending a Friday night with Sangros**, but after a while she actually *does* relax and starts to have fun. It doesn't hurt that every soda that Dee Dee's housekeeper brings out is soon spiked with expensive Patron tequila. The Sangros start talking about Raquel, and although Evie feels guilty about it, she engages in some "harmless" Raquel bashing. Alejandra is especially harsh. Evie has always kind of been scared of Alejandra, but as soon as Alejandra gets tipsy, she mellows out. In fact, she kinda reminds Evie of Raquel. After some coaxing, and a trip to the pool house, Evie tries on **the** gold bikini top. As soon as she steps out, she notices Alex staring at her. And not just staring, but looking right at her like he's never seen her before. Evie feels herself blush when their eyes lock. "You like, Alex?" Alejandra purrs. "Que guapa, no?" Alex doesn't like being the center of this kind of joking, especially since he was caught staring at Evie. "Yeah," he says, "but it's just not Evie. I mean, don't get me wrong, but..." Evie is crushed. What's wrong with her showing a little skin? Doesn't she look *guapa*? And why, exactly, can't she do anything right?

A few nights later at Dee Dee's house, Evie is still debating what Alex *does* **find attractive**. It's a new and strange sensation for her. The look they shared at Dee Dee's swim party is confusing. Then, as though Dee Dee is reading her mind, Dee Dee suggests that Evie **might look better if she fixed** her hair. After all, it's been blue for a few weeks and Evie has a good amount of black roots showing. Before she knows it, Evie even lets Dee Dee talk her into honey blond highlights—the bona fide mark of a Sangro. "You'll be *un taco de ojo*!" Dee Dee claims as she holds up a box of hair color. Evie wonders, maybe that's what Alex likes-- Sangro stripes? Hell, yeah, she'll try the highlights.

"Oh, before we get going with this," Dee Dee says, "I have something for you." Dee Dee goes into her closet and comes back with a small wrapped package. "You know, this won't be the first time you've had blond hair."

Evie wonders what Dee Dee's talking about until she unwraps the gift. It's a framed photo of her and Dee Dee when they were young girls. As soon as Evie sees it, she gets this weird tight feeling in her chest [how exactly does this feel? Is she nostalgic? Does she miss when they were so close?] She and Dee Dee are in costume for the Sea Street Beauty Contest, where just about every girl, including the two of them, are dressed as the Coppertone Girl. There they are in blond wigs and two-piece light blue bathing suits. "I *still* don't understand why *we* didn't win." Dee Dee clicks her tongue. "I mean, our tans are for real and they gave first place to a *gabacha*!"

Evie laughs. And then she notices that the photo is cropped. Oh, right, Raquel was also in the picture. Evie starts to remind Dee Dee about this, but Dee Dee won't have any of it,

and changes the subject. "Hey," she says quickly. "You know, we'll have another chance to win a costume contest, for Dia de los Muertos." With all that has been going on, Evie had forgotten about Villanova's Annual Day of the Dead Dance. "You, Alex and I should go together," Dee Dee insists. "You can be Frida Kahlo, Alex can be Diego Rivera and I could be Cristina, Frida's sister. **Que chiste, no?**" Evie agrees it might be funny, but then wonders, didn't Diego have an affair with Frida's sister, Cristina? But she looks up at Dee Dee and smiles. Dee Dee smiles back. The two girls hug, and unlike the false forced hug at the party that first night, Evie feels this one is for real.

Evie enters school the next day in semi Sangro mode, which makes her nervous. She's always been known as Raquel's little shadow or the freaky Flojo with the blue hair. But now with her highlights and the push-up bra and espadrilles she borrowed from Dee Dee, she's transformed from a mini muchacha to muy mucha mujer! She tries to act self-confident when she walks through the halls, hoping that she doesn't attract too much attention with her Sangro-ed self. Well, there's no hiding—she does attract attention, but thankfully, it's not what she was afraid of. Instead of laughing or ridiculing her, everyone is checking her out, including a lot of guys who never seemed to notice in the past, and she can't help but like it. Oh, who is she kidding? She loves it! Raquel walks by Evie, who looks her over head to toe, and then rolls her eyes. Evie tries her best to ignore her and keeps walking. Out of the corner of her eye, she sees Jose staring at her. Raquel notices too, and smacks him in the arm. Evie can't help but feel a bit smug.

As Evie gets closer with Dee Dee and the Sangros, she can't help but become a full-fledged Sangro. The Sangros do things the Flojos never did as a group: shopping on Robertson, going to live tapings of LaTV, even some roc en espanol concerts. Evie doesn't even miss Raquel. Raquel *who*? When Evie sees the Flojos around school, she avoids eye contact. She and Alex, however, exchange a look that somehow feels very meaningful, at least to her, even though Evie isn't quite sure what the meaning may be. "I can't believe you were once one of them," sniffs Alejandra. Evie just nods, and turns away.

But although Evie might look like a Sangro on the outside, deep down, there's still a lot of the same old Flojo in Evie. She can't help but feel torn when it takes her an entire hour getting ready for another little Sangro outing **at a local night club, Nicholby's**. Should she, as Dee Dee's suggests, surrender her Flojo flip-flops for a pair of platform boots? Dee Dee says there would be a few college guys at the club and suggests, with a sly smile, that Evie might want to appear a bit more "mature."

Evie opts for the boots and does end up meeting, make that getting cornered, by a college guy at the party, the older cousin of Vivian, one of the Sangros. He's visiting from U.N.A.M. (Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico) and breathes his achievements down Evie's chest. Once they are on the dance floor he gets very aggressive, pressing his body up against Evie's. She feels out of place and finds herself sneaking drinks more than she normally would. Even though she's surrounded by people having a good time, she suddenly feels very sad and empty. The Sangros are dancing and having fun, and Evie just can't get into it. She overhears some Sangro remark that Evie is being **muy**

frigida. As the college boy leaves to find more liquor, Evie sees Dee Dee and makes her way for her.

Evie's insecurity grows when she notices Dee Dee's necklace. It's a ribbon with a shell, an abalone just like the one Alex was going to give her. *Did Alex give Dee Dee the shell he found back at Bard Beach?* Evie hints again at the idea of Alex and Dee Dee hooking up, which comes across sounding a little accusatory, making Dee Dee defensive. "Evie what is your *problema*? If you don't like him yourself, then what do you care if someone else does?" But before Evie can answer, Dee Dee's cell rings and she goes outside to talk to her boyfriend. Evie's left by herself in the club. The college boy closes in on her again, and starts up with the dirty dancing and wandering hands, all of which makes Evie drink more and more. She starts thinking about Raquel. She'd be the perfect person to have around at a time like this. She would say to hell with everyone and they would just take off together for Sea Street or something.

And then suddenly, a miracle appears. **Under** the curtain of the club's retro photo booth. Evie sees two pair of.... flip flops. She *knows* those flip flops. They belong to Jose and Raquel. Evie can barely believe it. What would Raquel and Jose be doing at Nicholby's? Well, anywhere there might be access to easy booze, Evie guesses. By now, Evie is so drunk she can barely see straight. She goes up to the photo booth, opens the curtain, and all but trips right into the grinding, slobbery couple. The girl **chimes**, "Oh hi Evie!" It is Alejandra de los Santos! She giggles. "Take a picture with us!" Jose winks at Evie. The room is spinning. **Alejandra** lifts her feet up toward Evie. "Look, look what Josito bought me! **Muy chiste, no?**"

Evie is horrified. She stumbles out of **Nicholby's** and immediately calls Alex. She begs him to come and pick her up. She wants to tell him what she just saw but as soon as she starts to speak, she starts sobbing. Before she knows it, she pukes all over Alex's front seat.

It's the next morning. Evie has somehow managed to make it into her own bed. She has not, however, managed to get undressed, wash the puke out of her hair, or keep track of both of Dee Dee's **platform** boots. Sometime in the middle of the night someone has jumped into her brain through her ear and is pounding on the inside of her head with hammers. Big ones.

And she feels even worse when she remembers what happened the night before. Or rather, what she doesn't remember—it's all a blur after she got into Alex's truck. Her cell phone rings. It's Dee Dee, wanting to make sure Evie got home OK. Evie moans a semi audible yes and Dee Dee launches into somehow they need to work on their costumes for the Day of the Dead Dance. Evie groans that she is too sick to go, but Dee Dee insists. Evie turns off her cell and spends the entire morning trying to recover. Make that the entire morning and most of the afternoon. The whole Jose drama nags at her. Later that afternoon, Alex shows up at her house. He had been trying to reach her on her cell. He's really put off by her drunken display last night, but more than that, he says it's been building up for awhile. "What is going on with you?" he demands. "It didn't work out

trying to be Dee Dee so now you are trying to be a drunk like Raquel? Jeez, Evie, when's the last time you've even been out to Sea Street? Have you even tried out the new board we picked out together? What happened to the person I used to **carve** with?"

Evie's more embarrassed than anything, but she covers it up with anger. Why is Alex lecturing her? Who gave him the authority to issue reality checks? If Alex is acting like her big brother, what does that make her? His little sister? She snaps at him and he takes off, leaving her alone with her hangover and her wounded pride.

Evie feels so hurt and foolish. And stupid, most of all stupid. She can't believe she let herself throw up in front of Alex. How humiliating. And then she has to make it worse by yelling at him. She feels like a horrible person. Does everyone hate her? Or better yet, does she hate herself? The one saving grace of the horrible night is what she found out about Jose, and how much that piece of information will help Raquel. Evie will show what a good friend she is by telling Raquel about Jose, protecting her from such a stinking ratone. Yes, Evie owes it to Raquel to tell her about Jose.

Evie calls Raquel and after what seems an eternity of rings, Raquel finally answers with a demanding "*What?*" Evie shares what she witnessed at the club. Raquel lets out a long drawn out sigh. "Wow Evie, it's so clear to me now. It's obvious that you've always been jealous of me for having a man when you don't, but I never thought you would outright lie to me like this. Then again I never thought I'd see you as a **honey dummy blondie**. Later, Evie. Or whoever you are." With that, she hangs up.

Evie is stunned. She's too upset, and hung over, to even cry. How could they have been best friends until only a few weeks ago? How could everything have changed so fast? Raquel is acting like Evie is an entirely different person. Raquel thinks she is acting like Dee Dee and Alex thinks she is acting like Raquel. And the worst part? Evie isn't even convinced that either of them are wrong. In fact, they might be right... Who is she? **Where did the really Evie go?** Is there an 800 number for this sort of identity theft?

With nowhere else to go, and feeling that things really *can't* get any worse, Evie goes to the one person who is really her very, very last resort: her mother. They've never been very close, but Evie's mother is still, well, her mother. She has bottled up so much hurt and confusion for so long that when it all starts pouring out, she can't stop crying. Before she knows it Evie is telling her mother about Dee Dee, Raquel, how she saw Jose with another girl, and even her jealousy of Dee Dee and Alex. Surprisingly, Vicki Gomez actually listens. It's one of the best talks they've had in a long time. "Mi'ja", she tells Evie, don't feel rejected just because the boy you like has some constructive criticism." Evie rolls her eyes, "Please Mom, Alex and I are . . ." But Evie can't even finish her sentence. And in that one-more-intuitive-than-even-she-realizes sort of way, Evie's mother has helped Evie finally accept something that she's been denying for who even knows how long: Evie is falling for Alex.

It's later that Saturday night and Villanova's First annual Dia de los Muertos Dance is in full swing. As Evie walks in with Dee Dee, Evie is blown away by all the elaborate

decorations. Colorful papeles picados, Evie's favorite, hang from the gym's ceiling and skull candles glow on tables draped in dark orange cloth. Bright orange marigolds are scattered about and everyone is dressed as their favorite departed, which means that here are *so* many Fridas Kahlos. *Oh, well so much for originality*, Evie thinks. Evie looks around, hoping Alex will be there, but he's definitely going to be a no-show. Evie recognizes Jose (dressed as, of course, as a perfect Joey Ramone) dancing slow and tightly holding Carmen Miranda, a.k.a. Alejandra de los Santos. *Ugh*. Evie wonders if Jose knows just how lucky he is that Raquel never comes to school functions.

She looks around and to her surprise, she sees... Raquel!...coming in through the side gym door. "Alex told me what really happened, how you were telling the truth. So I came here so I could apologize to you. . . and, more importantly, so I could kick Jose's ass. Where is he?" She spots Jose on the dance floor, runs over to him and immediately starts screaming. She kicks him right between the legs. This, of course, gets the whole gym's attention. Everyone starts laughing and cheering along.

Raquel storms out of the gym with Evie in tow. Before Evie knows it, Raquel is crying, full long wailing sobs. Evie has never seen her like this. Dee Dee comes out of the gym, and joins Evie in comforting her old friend. Raquel can't understand how Jose could do something like this. Sure, she admits, she can be tough on him, but she really loves him. "I gave him the best semesters of my life!"

Then Alejandra de los Santos comes out of the gym and tries to break up the moment. She demands that Dee Dee go with her to a Sangro after party. But Dee Dee refuses to leave. Alejandra says if she doesn't leave *la llorona* asap, she is making a *big* mistake. But Dee Dee holds her ground, which infuriates Alejandra. "Desgraciada!" Dee Dee finally yells at Alejandra for messing around with someone else's boyfriend. Alejandra makes it very clear to Dee Dee that she will no longer be welcome in the "Sangro Circle" and storms off. Evie and Raquel can't believe what just happened..

Raquel calms down a bit and just as Evie thinks they are about to leave the dance, Raquel says there is one last thing she has to do. Evie hopes it's not something that will ruin their renewed friendship. She and Dee Dee follow Raquel back into the gym, where nobody, fortunately, seems to care about their re-entrance. Raquel walks over to a school club's table and buys a little sugar skull. She gives it to Dee Dee. "Don't you want to make an offering?" She asks, cautiously. "For your mom?"

Dee Dee is overwhelmed. **This is the first time Raquel has ever acknowledged her mother's death.** She takes the sugar skull from Raquel, writes her mother's name on the paper slip, and sticks it on the skull. All three girls go the huge altar at the head of the gym and place the sugar skull, along with hundreds of others, at the foot of the altar.

It may be Dia de los Muertos, Evie thinks, but it's definitely a night of new life for the three friends.

Later that night, Evie still has some unfinished business. Evie points out that Dee Dee

and Raquel are more alike than they realize. They both fight for control and try to mold Evie into a version of themselves. "I am not your "mini mi'ja!" Evie says. They get to talking, and some very important pieces of information are revealed: Dee Dee and Alex never messed around that first night of the welcome back party nor did he take her to Sea Street. All they did was drive to the **Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf** below The Hills and Alex drank **an ice blended** while Dee Dee talked on the phone to her boyfriend back home. Dee Dee admits that she did use Alex as a way to piss off Evie and Raquel at the party. "But," Dee Dee tells Evie, "he was so upset. He was so worried he truly hurt you. It's so obvious he's into you."

After Raquel and Dee Dee own up to their stubbornness, Evie admits to her own. "Okay..." she slowly starts, "So, I might have a little crush on Alex." "I knew it!" Dee and Raquel shout at the same time.

Evie asks her friends for a little Alex advice. "I mean, I don't even know if he wants to talk to me. He didn't even go to the dance." They roll their eyes, "If you want to be your own girl so much Evie. . ." says Raquel. "Go and be," says Dee Dee. "We've clocked out." All three girls laugh. "We would give you advice," Raquel says, "But I am *so* anti-dude right now." "Yeah," Dee Dee adds, "and our advice would be just what *we* would do.

Evie tugs at her **blond** striped hair under her braided Frida wig and realizes her friends are right. Everyone just needs to be who they are. Evie has to just be Evie, which means it is time for her to be honest with Alex.

It is the following weekend and everyone is at Sea Street. Evie has dyed her hair back to **it's natural color** of dark brown. She is out in the water with Alex. Both of them are sitting on their surfboards. Dee Dee and Raquel are on the beach.

"So, mira, chica," Dee Dee holds up a little designer bag. "I got this for you. It just came out from Prada and it will be perfect to hold all your..." "Stash!" Raquel laughs, taking the designer bag. "Thanks!"

Evie looks out toward the beach. "Aren't you gonna be showing Dee Dee how to swim today?" she asks. "Uh," Alex starts slowly, "I'd rather just hang out with you, now that the old Evie is back." Alex unzips his wetsuit's key pocket. "Hey, I got a little something for you." He pulls out rubber cord. Bits of abalone shell dangle from it. "Is this from that night at Bard?" Evie asks. Her heart is beating fast. "But I thought you gave this to Dee Dee?" Alex frowns. "Why would I give it to Dee Dee? I did ask her opinion about it after I had dropped it and didn't know what to do with all the little pieces. She totally wanted it, that is, before I broke it, but I told her it was for someone special and then she said --"

"Someone *special*?" Evie repeats. Alex leans over and clasps the necklace around Evie's neck. Evie suddenly **feels flip flops but these are not on her feet, but rather in her**

stomach. Evie can't help smiling so much it seems like her whole face is going to crack. She looks over at the beach, and sees her best friends, Raquel and Dee Dee, cheer her on.