

and all the indigenous languages he speaks. *Yawn*. Evie is bored out of her mind. She looks around the party. Everyone is overly “dressed to impress” but to impress who? When you’re all friends, Evie thinks, what’s the big deal about trying to impress one another? She feels her padded bra pinching her sides and Dee Dee’s platforms are digging into her feet. She feels suddenly out of place. She pulls herself away from Vivian’s cousin and goes to look for Dee Dee who she finds is lounging on the sofa and, of course, talking to her boyfriend on her cell phone.

As Evie approaches Dee Dee she notices that she is wearing a necklace she hasn’t seen before. As Dee Dee continues to talk on her phone, Evie looks closer and sees the necklace is a ribbon with an abalone shell hanging from it. It is the *same* shell Steve had found for Evie at the Bard Beach Party just weeks ago. He had promised to “polish it up real good” for Evie, but he never did. Evie can’t believe it! He gave the shell to Dee Dee and now here she is wearing it! Evie’s heart sinks. Okay, maybe Dee Dee *is* pining away for her “novio guapo” back in D.F., but it’s obvious Steve is *pinning* away for Dee Dee! As soon as Dee Dee hangs up with her boyfriend, she turns to Evie and asks, “Que Quieres, mujer?” Evie makes a catty comment about her **love** for her “so called boyfriend” and of course, Dee Dee is insulted. Dee Dee coolly walks off and Evie is all by herself. Then Vivian comes over and demands to know why Evie is ignoring her cousin. Evie is getting overwhelmed. She starts thinking about Raquel. Such drama, *this* kind of drama, didn’t happen in the old days when it was just the Flojos.

As Vivian goes on and on how rude Evie is acting, Evie looks outside to the deck and can’t believe who she sees. It’s Jose and Mondo! But of course, those crazy party crashers! They’ll crash anything, even if it is a little Sangro get together. Though it is dark outside on the deck, Evie squints her eyes and makes out a pair arms wrapped around Mondo’s shoulder. Raquel! Evie can’t believe it! She excuses herself from Vivian and goes over to them. Without hesitating she playfully taps Jose on his shoulder, but when he turns around to face Evie, she is shocked. The arms around Jose do not belong to Raquel. “Evie,” Alejandra De los Santos clicks her tongue, her arms still wrapped around Jose. “*This* party is private.” Jose shrugs his shoulders and throws Evie a boyish “Y Que?” look while Mondo laughs, “Dude, you are *so served*!”

Evie is horrified. She goes back inside and calls Steve from her cell phone. She begs him to pick her up. The last thing she remembers is Steve pulling up in his truck. She wants to tell him what happened, but as she starts to speak, she takes in big gulps of air and lets out long hard sobs.

It's the next morning. Evie wakes up to her cell phone is ringing and the caller ID shows Steve. She is reluctant to answer. How much did she cry last night? How much did she tell Steve? How much did she actually drink? She barely remembers him driving her home.

Steve is calling from Sea Street. He has been surfing for hours and wants to know if Evie wants to go for some breakfast. Evie looks at herself in her closet mirror. She looks horrible from crying, so she declines. "Oh, hey Cinderella," Steve teases. "Before I forget, you left your glass platform behind."

Evie feels horrible. Her head and stomach hurts. She needs to vent, but Steve is the last person she want to vent to. After the whole abalone necklace scenario, Evie is admitting to herself that she is falling for Steve. The call waiting on her phone beeps (such a saving grace!) and she quickly clicks over. It's Dee Dee who fortunately seems to have overlooked the tiff she had with Evie. Dee Dee talks excitedly about Villanova's Dia de los Muertos dance and how they should dress. Typical Sangro, Evie thinks. Life is always about the next fun event and what to wear. "We're supposed to dress up as our favorite dearly departed." Dee Dee goes on. "I was thinking that you, Esteban and I can go together. You can be Frida Kahlo, Steve can be Diego Rivera and I can be Cristina, Frida's sister. Won't they be fun?" Evie agrees, but after she hangs up, she remembers. Didn't Diego Rivera have an affair with Frida's sister? Hmmmm...

Evie spends the entire morning and much of the afternoon trying to recover from the night before. She calls her sister Sabrina to ask advice, but Sabrina, as always, is on her way out the door to study with her sorority sisters. She suggests that Evie should try talking to their mother. "When I was going through all *my* high school lows," Sabrina asserts, "She was actually great."

Evie hesitantly approaches 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. Evie talks about Dee Dee, Raquel, how she saw Jose with another girl, her jealousy of Dee Dee when it comes to Steve. It is one of the best talks they've had in a long time. Vicki Gomez offers ideas, not commands or overt instructions. She points out that friends, old friends, are precious and rare and that it is natural to start having romantic feeling for someone like Steve. "He is a wonderful boy," she agrees. Evie feels her mother has sure helped her make some decisions. Their heart felt discussion is not followed by a batch of homemade brownies, but rather Vicki Gomez's secret stash of La Perla...*pan dulce*. Evie is shocked as her mother pulls down a bag hidden in a top cupboard. "Why do we have La Perla in the house?" Evie asks. "They're dad's biggest competitor!" "I know, I know..." Vicki Gomez says sheepishly. "Do not tell her father. But sometimes, I *want* some good old fashioned lard in my pan!"

After the advice from her mother, Evie decides to phone Raquel. From the beeping sound she hears on her cell phone, she knows that Raquel is on the other line. Raquel must see that Evie is calling, but Raquel does not click over to take her call. It isn't *that* unusual, Evie reasons. Raquel is known to click over when she's damn good and ready, but considering the circumstances, Evie can't help but feel that Raquel does NOT want to talk to Evie. Evie, still feeling very emotional, leaves a message she hopes is articulate and sincere. For the rest of the day, Evie keeps her cell phone nearby, but Raquel does not phone her back.

It's Saturday night and Villanova's First annual Dia de los Muertos Dance is on. Evie is actually impressed as she walks in with Steve and Dee Dee. Colorful papeles picados, Evie's favorite, hang from the gym's ceiling and the tables are covered in dark orange cloth with candles glowing on every table. Bright gold marigolds are scattered about and everyone, with white powdery face make up and pink painted round cheeks, is dressed as their favorite deceased person. There are a few Selenas, some Kurt Cobains, more Che's than Evie can count and *so* many Fridas. Oh, well, Evie thinks, so much for originality. Here goes losing another costume contest! Steve goes to get Evie and Dee

Dee some canela and dead bread. Evie wishes Dee Dee would just go away and leave Steve and her alone. “Don’t you need to call your boyfriend?” Evie asks.

“Oh, no.” Dee Dee answers. “We talked earlier. I’m going to call him again when I get home.” Evie recognizes Jose (dressed as, of course, Che’) dancing slow and tightly holding sexy film star Maria Felix a.k.a. Alejandra. Ugh. Evie hopes that Jose knows just how lucky he is. Raquel never comes to school functions. As Evie leaves Dee Dee to look for Steve, she suddenly sees Alejandra. This confuses Evie. Didn’t she just *see* Alejandra a second ago? Evie looks back to the dance floor and realizes that Jose is actually with... *Raquel*. Evie looks back and sees Alejandra scanning the dance floor and Evie gets a sinking feeling. Before anyone knows it, Alejandra is charging across the gym towards Jose and Raquel. She throws a fit! Alejandra is screaming at Jose. She kicks Jose between the legs and everyone is yelling and laughing. Especially **Mondo (a perfect Joey Ramone with that hair of his!)** who says, “Dude! I knew this was gonna happen!” Raquel is confused, pissed, emotional and storms out. Evie follows her outside. She stresses to Raquel that she tried to tell her about Jose the moment she knew. Raquel admits to hearing Evie’s phone message, but did not want to call back. Before Evie knows it, Raquel is crying, full long wailing sobs. Evie has never seen Raquel like this. Dee Dee comes out of the gym as well and seeing Raquel’s tears she quickly works on comforting her old friend.

Then *Alejandra* comes out. She insists that Jose *told* her that he had broken up with Raquel. “I just wanna say I do *not* chase other women’s men.” Alejandra leaves and it’s back to just Evie, Raquel and Dee Dee. Las Tres, otra vez.

As they are about to leave the dance, Raquel says there is something they have to do. They go back into the gym, where the dance is in full swing and nobody, thank God, pays attention to Raquel’s return. Raquel buys a little sugar skull from a school club’s table and gives it to Dee Dee. “Don’t you want to make an offering?” She asks. “For your mom?”

Dee Dee is overwhelmed. She writes in her mother’s name on the slip that came with the skull She moistens the paper and adheres it to the skull. Then all three girls go the huge altar at the head of the gym and place the sugar skull at the foot of the altar.

It may be Dia de los Muertos, Evie exhales, but it’s definitely a night of new life.

Later that night Dee Dee and Raquel decide to crash at Evie's. It is just like old times as they fret around the kitchen, making late night quesadillas and root beer floats. 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 exclaims. After Raquel and Dee Dee owe up to their stubbornness, Evie admits to her own. "Oh-kay..." she slowly starts, "So, I might have a little crush on Steve."

"I knew it!" Dee and Raquel say at the same time. All three girls laugh. "We would give you advice," Raquel says, "But I am *so* anti-dude right now."

Dee Dee adds, "Yeah, and our advice would be just what we would do. You need to be just yourself." Evie tugs at her blonde hair under her braided Frida wig and realizes Dee Dee is right.

It is the following weekend and everyone is at Sea Street. Evie has her hair dyed back to dark brown. Raquel is on the hood of Dee Dee's car...with Alejandra De los Santos!

Alejandra holds up a little designer bag and brags, "Check it out. I don't know what your old ex what's-his-name used to score, but *this* mota is...how do you Flojos say? Gnarly?"

Dee Dee is nearby on her cell, cooing to her boyfriend. "Ay, mi love, Thanksgiving break is only three weeks away. We will be together soon!"

Evie and Steve head to the water. "Aren't you gonna be showing Dee Dee how to swim today?"

"Uh," Steve starts slowly, "I'd rather just hang out with you, now that the old Evie is back. I dunno," he continues. "To be honest, I wasn't into the blue or the blonde thing really. It just didn't seem you. Oh, I got a little something for you." Steve pulls out from his wetsuit's key pocket a rubber cord. Bits of abalone shell dangle from it.

"Is this from that night at Bard?" Evie asks. "But I thought you gave this to Dee Dee?"

"No," Steve says. "I didn't give it to Dee Dee. I did ask her opinion about it after I had dropped it and didn't know exactly what to do with all the little pieces. She totally wanted it, but I said it was for someone, um, special. So I did tell her she could go over on Main and find something similar and I guess she..."

"Someone *special*?" Evie repeats. Her stomach is making flip flops.

“Uh, yeah,” Steve’s neck turns pink. Bright pink. “I mean, *yes*. Will you wear it?

“Will I?” Evie exclaims. “Of course!”

He clasps the necklace around Evie’s neck and then he takes her hand as they walk out to the ocean, together.

Mansion -

Dean Miller

Evie Gomez lay back on her futon on Saturday morning with two things on her mind. The first was the realization that her supposed best friend, Raquel Diaz, was in fact ^{was no longer a} 100% pinche *beyachee*. Why? Because Evie ^{who} ~~had~~ just suffered through two weeks of house arrest, for being a piddly ass twenty minute past curfew, but as of last night, Evie was finally free. But was her girl Raquel around to help celebrate Evie's first night of freedom? *No*. Raquel hadn't even had the decency to return any of Evie's phone calls, pages, or the desperate IM's Evie had sent once she saw SexyMexy06, Raquel's screen name, pop up on her buddy list. Raquel was no Sexy Mexy, Evie decided, but she sure was a ~~Mexy~~Bitch.

The second thing on Evie's mind, was how light her head felt. She ran her hand up the back of her neck. Her long, dark brown hair was gone. ~~All~~ gone. She caught a glimpse of herself in her closet mirrors across her bedroom—her hair had been chopped short. And it was blue. *Very blue*. Cancun Blue Hue No. 38, to be exact. What had she done? Who the hell cuts their own hair? She yanked down at the sides. They barely reached the tops of her ears. Evie wondered if this is what happened to prisoners in solitary confinement, ~~if~~ after being isolated from their peers for long enough ^{do} they eventually ~~went~~ ^{go} crazy and committed horrible crimes against their own hair too? Evie looked hideous and she had no one to blame but...yes, *Raquel*. Why hadn't Raquel just called her back last night? By the time 9 PM had rolled around it was obvious that Evie was going to spend another night at home. And after clicking from one reality make over

to evening home in lockdown.

(1)

show to the other, she realized it was *she* who needed a change. She refused to spend the rest of her life being looked over. She wanted to do something bold *and daring*. *She demand* ~~wanted~~ attention! *Respect!* And . . . blue hair! So that's how the reinvention of Evie Gomez, Mex-treme Makeover came to be.

But now it was Saturday morning and it was sadly evident that she had truly lost her senses the night before.

Evie lay flat on her *under her bean mullet sheets* ~~futon~~ and sighed. Thank God no one was around to witness her *blue* state of disrepair. She could hear Lindsay, her family's housekeeper, listening to *El Mercadito* on the kitchen radio downstairs, but other than that the house was quiet. Her

owner? father must have already left hours ago for one of his several panaderias and her mother was probably in the pool doing her fifty laps. That's how the Gomez's were; ~~always~~

focused on their ambitious schedules. From Evie's sister *brenda* ~~Sabrina~~, who was president of the most prestigious sorority at Stanford while taking eighteen credits per semester, to

little Ernesto Molesto, their yappy Pomeranian who demanded a pre-poop walk around the perimeter of the Spanish Hills Country Club golf course *at the crack of dawn* ~~every~~ morning at exactly six-*am* thirty, the whole family spent every day *defining* ~~putting~~ the "go" in Gomez. Except *that is,* ~~for~~ Evie. She

didn't put in the "go" but she sure did love the lagging "Z" as in GomeZzzzzzzz.... She yawned, lifted her Roxy T and scratched her belly. 10:45 am. Yeah, she could sleep a little bit more and deal with *las dos* ~~her~~ dilemmas later.

Just then the beeping rendition of *Funky Town* blared from her cell phone. She leaned over, grabbed it off her nightstand and saw *face* Raquel flashing on the screen. ~~Raquel~~ *didn't* had totally blown her off the night before. Evie wasn't even sure *wasn't* ~~that~~ she should answer, but then she reluctantly flipped it open anyway.

call AOL-DSC 2

"Hello?"

"Heey" came Raquel's gravelly voice. Obviously Raquel had been out the night before. Out without Evie. What the ~~fuck?~~ *Fuh?*

"Oh hey." *Evie*

"So...", Raquel started. Evie could sense a smile on the other end. "You got your phone back."

~~"Uh,~~ yeah," Evie said.. "I actually got it back yesterday, as of five pm."

Remember?

"Oh, yeah." Raquel paused. "That's right."

"So what happened?" Evie tried to sound casual, but ~~her heart was beating fast.~~ "I ~~thought we~~ were gonna do something, go out. I left you like a ~~zillion~~ *ga-* million messages."

You said

"Yeah," Raquel let out one of her famous moose sized yawns. "Sorry 'bout that. I completely spaced. My parents went out and Jose came over with a six-pack. We ended up kicking it, watching Fuel all night. *Boring.*" She yawned again.

then

you know...

"Oh. That's cool. Did Aaron or Mondo ~~go out?~~ *go out?*"

"Nah," Raquel said. "Nobody did nothing."

*asked
call
themselves*

Need help

Evie let out a deep breath. At least she hadn't missed anything. The Flojos, Aaron, Mondo, Raquel's boyfriend Jose, Raquel and Evie ~~usually preferred to do~~ *man* nothing in front of a Plasma TV or near a swimming pool. Pools and Plasmas. What could Evie say? That combo was quite a seductive option for Flojos like them. (They were named Flojos after the brand of flip-flop ~~they~~ *did* they all wore, but the word Flojo also meant *lazy* *in Spanish*)

Evie and Raquel had been best friends since they were little girls growing up in Spanish Hills. The year before, when they were freshman, Raquel had hooked up with Jose, so his friends Mondo and Aaron were automatically included in the package. There

As high school

The legenday

Junior

3 AA

*They all
called Flojo
flip
scales*

weren't many other students like them at Villanova Preparatory High School— rich kids whose names contained the letters Z or X or Q (Read: Hispanic). That is, unless you counted the Sangron~~as~~^{five Mexican}, the tight clique of stuck ~~up girly girls~~^{up girly girls} who were resident students at Villanova. But the Flojos didn't like to count the Sangron~~as~~^{on} in anything. [The Flojos, No-uh!] were Mexican American, but the Sangron~~as~~ were born in Mexico, they were Mexican Mexican.] Sangros had Their fathers where all major power players south of the border, so in addition to their green cards, the Sangron~~as~~ flashed ~~gold ones~~^{crossed}, as well.

Evie didn't even have her own credit card, much less a gold one. Not like her ~~family~~^{parents} couldn't have afforded it though. Evie's father had a lucrative career ~~slinging pan dulce~~^{made}. Okay, so he didn't actually sell the sweet bread himself. As CEO of Gomez Inc., Ruben Gomez was in the very privileged position to just show up and oversee a company that he had created ~~years~~^{just} earlier. It had been his hard work (along with Evie's great Grandma Pia's pan dulce recipes) that had gotten the Gomez's into a big ol' Spanish style house with a swimming pool in the back and ~~two big shiny SUVs~~ in the front. Not quite ransom worthy rich, but it was safe to say that the Gomez's, like all the families in Spanish Hills, were pretty well off.

~~Okay~~^{check passed for drama} Evie said. "Whatever. So I chopped off my hair,"

"Huh?" Raquel sounded genuinely confused.

"My hair," Evie said again. "It's gone."

"What do you mean?"

~~I mean,~~
"I hacked it off. All of it and..." Evie paused for dramatic flair. "I dyed it blue."

Evie felt herself smiling. She liked the idea that she did something so radical, on her own and without consulting Raquel.

"Yeah," Raquel yawned. "I dyed my hair one time."

"Really?" Evie wasn't sure she even believed this, but it was just ~~so Raquel~~ ^{of}

Raquel to try and outdo Evie. "When?"

"One time when I was up in the Bay Area, like two summers ago. It totally ~~clashed~~ ^{clashed} w/ my ~~features~~ ^{features} washed out my face. Brownies can't be sporting blue. I changed it back the next day."

"You never told me that." Evie said, still suspicious.

"Cause it was really no big deal,"

Evie could feel her face getting ~~red~~ ^{hot}. "So," Evie said. "What's the plan for tonight?" At times like ~~that~~ ^{what?} changing the subject was the only option.

"Um," Raquel yawned again. "Jose knows of some party below the Hills. You in?"

"Definitely." Evie said. "As long as I'm home by 12:30. I mean, not even 12:32 ~~into~~ ^{and} the drive-way. My mom will freak if I'm late again."

"Yeah, ~~we~~ ^{and} don't wanna freak out your mom," Raquel said. "She must've crapped bricks when she saw your hair, huh?"

"Not really," Evie lied. "Like you said, it's no big deal."

But, Evie had begun to worry. What would her mother say about her hair? ~~Vicky~~ ^{Vicky} Diaz was known to have the legendary Gomez Fury, unleashed whenever something didn't go her way.

Just then someone knocked on Evie's bedroom door. Evie sunk back into her ~~feet~~ ^{head} and quickly grabbed a loose sheet and covered her head. - ~~Sheward~~ ^{It was} soon ~~find~~ ^{not}.
"Evelina?" Whew. Lindsay. "Are you awake?" she asked from the hallway
"Si, si. Lindsay. Come in," ~~she~~ ^{Evie} called out with her head still ~~under the covers~~ ^{covered}.

back
“Hey,” she said into the phone, “I gotta go.”

“Yeah, yeah. Oh, hey...” Raquel started, “One last thing.”

“Yeah?” Evie asked.

“Did you dye your pubes too? ‘Cause if you’d done your shrub now *that* would’ve been *real* crazy ass.”

“Good bye, Raquel.” Evie rolled her eyes and flipped her cell phone shut before tossing it onto her floor. Yup. No doubt about it. Raquel was a bitch.

mos def

“Oh.” Lindsay came into the room and saw Evie in bed. “You’re still sleeping,”

“No, I’m awake.” Evie answered peeking out from under the covers. “I’m just laying here.”

Lindsay looked around Evie’s room and sighed. “Ay, Evelina. This is not good. Let me clean in here today. It would make your mother so happy.”

“Lindsay, I really don’t *care* what makes my mother happy.”

Evie turned to look up at Lindsay and when she did, the sheet slipped downward, exposing her bright blue head.

“Ay!” Lindsay held one hand to her chest. “Evelina, what did you do? Your hair!”

“Oh, I cut it.” Evie tried to tug at her bangs, but they were no longer there.

“Yes, I see that.” Lindsay’s eyebrows were raised so high they were practically on top of her head. “But the color. It’s...does your mother know?”

“Well,” Evie tousled her hair nervously. “She’s always going on about money. So she should be happy that I saved her a hundred bucks to do my own hair.”

Lindsay’s jaw dropped. “You pay a *hundred* dollars to have your hair done?”

Evie immediately felt her face grow hot.

no "Well," Evie ~~started~~ *tried* to explain. "It's not just for a cut. I ~~mean~~ *I mean,* I get it washed, and they give it a blow dry, and style ~~it~~. Plus, I always get a one on one consultation, a lot of times with Viggo, he's the owner ~~of the salon~~ *salon*." But the more she spoke, the more Evie knew how shamelessly VH1 Diva it all sounded.

"Ay, dios." Lindsay went on. "I just can't imagine what your mother will think."

"Think about what?" Vicki Gomez asked as she entered Evie's bedroom. Even just out of the pool, Evie's mother looked effortlessly stylish in her black one piece, a plush white towel wrapped around her wet hair. There was no time to duck and cover.

"Oh my God!" Vicki Gomez covered her mouth. "Evie! What the hell did you do to your hair?" She towered over Evie with her hands on her hips. "You gotta be outta your friggin' mind! Did you forget that school photos are next week? Do you ~~expect~~ *a bundle* your father and me to fork over four hundred dollars to document *this*?"

Evie looked over at Lindsay. *Yes, Lindsay, we also drop* ~~a few~~ *a bundle* ~~for~~ some measly school photos. Oh, but that does include wallet- sized.

"What the hell were you thinking?" Vicki Gomez was furious. "I have a good mind to ground you a month for this stunt!" *Evie*

"What?! Why? Just because *I* wanted to do something different to *my* hair?"

Serros "No, because you ~~did this purposely to piss me off~~ *don't think*. That's just the problem, Evie. You don't think of other people and how your actions may affect them." She looked down at Evie's bed. "Oh, great. Look." She pulled the pillow out from under Evie. "You stained the pillow. Did you even think to rinse your hair out or put down a towel?" She looked down and around the bed. "Oh God ... look at this."

Evie looked down and sure enough there was a trail, from her bathroom to her

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bed, a small line of blue blotches on the cream colored carpet. Oops.

“Don’t worry, Senora Vicki,” Lindsay said as she looked over the stains. “I can get them out. They’re still fresh.”

“Your father is going to be pissed!” Vicki Gomez continued to rant. “Do *not* make any plans this evening until he gets home and we can discuss this.”

“You mean *tonight*?”

“Yes, *tonight*.” Evie’s mother knelt down and began frantically rubbing the stained carpet with her fingers.

“But Dad usually stays late on Saturdays and I told you I was going out with –”

“Evie, you are just going to have to wait.” She stood back up and gave Lindsay the pillow. “~~Hagalo en seguida por favor,~~” she said, and then huffed out of Evie’s room. Lindsay followed in silence.

Hell. No. There was no way that Evie was going to endure another night in the Gomez Penitentiary. She leaned over her bed, grabbed her cell and speed dialed her father.

Her dad would listen. He was a reasonable man, more reasonable than her mother, that was for sure. She would not survive through another night of lockdown. She *would* go crazy and who knows what she would do. Maybe she really would dye her shrub.

Three minutes later, Evie was on the phone with her father. According to Vicki Gomez, there were rules and regulations regarding Evie's recreational interests: ~~dating~~, parties, the number of hours viewing MTV, but there was nothing, as Evie pointed out, about cutting her hair and dying it blue. No rule, no violation, therefore no punishment. Her father agreed.

And so Evie Gomez was sprung. She waited in the front driveway to be picked up by her fellow Flojos. She was so excited to finally be out from under Warden Gomez's patrol and soon to be far, far away from the suffocating gates of Spanish Hills. But as time passed and eight turned to eight-thirty and eight-thirty turned into nine pm, Evie grew impatient and then angry. She paced back and forth across the gravel. Where the hell was that Mondo? At nine-thirty his black Marauder finally eased up into the Gomez's driveway. Evie was ready to blow a fuse.

CP time
"What's up with ~~this~~?" She snapped as she walked toward his car. "I've got a curfew, remember?"


"Oh, you know Mondo," Jose started to explain as he got out of the front seat and took over the back with Raquel and Aaron. "He ain't called Fed Mex for nothing."

"That's right," Mondo smiled unapologetically into the rearview mirror. "When you absolutely, positively gotta be there on time, don't be calling me. Besides, beggars can't be—" He finally noticed Evie's hair as she got into the front seat. "Whoa, what did you do with your hair?"

Jose looked up at Evie and laughed. "Hey, yeah. Blues Clues!"

"More like Blues Clueless." Mondo laughed as Evie got into the front seat. "So why'd you mangle your mane? It looked good before."

"You guys, shut up!" Raquel looked Evie over from the back seat. "Evie, don't even listen to them. You can't help it you screwed up your hair. Don't even worry. We'll take it to Viggo and he'll fix it. He'll fix it up real good."

Evie clicked on her seat belt and crossed her arms. She already knew her hair looked ridiculous, and felt pretty stupid about the whole thing. The last thing she needed was a car full of people agreeing with her. 

"Thanks for the warm welcome back, everybody," Evie said. These were the so called friends that she was just dying to be with? She looked back at Aaron and glared.

"Don't even say anything," she warned him.

"Evie," Aaron sighed. "I really don't care *what* you do ~~to~~ ^{with} your hair."

* * *

When they pulled up to the top of Bard Road, Mondo killed his Marauder's ignition, then he turned around in his seat and announced to everyone, "Okay, just 'cause I drove does *not* make me the designated driver. Fulby should already be here and you guys can get a lift back from him, if need be."

"Dude," said Aaron. "We all can't go back with Fulby. He's got a truck."

"Yeah, a truck with a nice wide flat bed." Mondo reached under his feet and lifted

the floor mat to retrieve a rolled up baggie.

The party was at Pacifica Abalone Farm, which was on Bard Beach. Bard Beach was a part of town known for its hard beach living, where the ^{near} constant exchange of dime bags and Hawaiian Tropic Sun Tan Oil was a way of life. This was not an area for a girl to be stuck without a ride, ^{but Evie didn't care.} ^{no not only a C but} ^{anxious to so what} ^{between} ^{some Spanish hills kids}

"Okay, okay," Evie said. She didn't want to be in that care anymore. "I'll take the friggin' bus back home if I have to." She opened her door and grabbed her corduroy jacket from under her. It was definitely time to blow off a little steam. "Let's just party already!"

"Whoa, slow down Blues Clues," Mondo said. "There ain't no rush. We got our own party supplies here." He dangled the baggie in front of her. "And this mota is *mean*."

^{yeah,} "Just kick back Evie," Raquel leaned into Jose and draped her arm over his shoulder. "We got all night to party."

"No, I don't have all night and you know I don't even smoke that crap." She opened her car door. "You know what? Forget it. I'll just meet up with you guys later."

"You're gonna go by yourself?" Raquel asked. It sounded like a challenge. ^{us of question and more}

^{And} "Yeah," Evie said. "What's the problem?" ^{is?}

The problem was that the last thing Evie wanted to do was enter some party all by herself, with blue hair. Of course she wasn't going to admit that. ^{Bard Beach} ^{she Even w/ blue hair} ^{path}

^{dark road by herself} "No," Aaron said reluctantly from the back seat. "You can't be walking around out here alone. It's so dark, you can't even see. I'll go with you." ^{she had Spanish hills} ^{Spanish hills written all over you...}

"You know what?" Raquel announced. "I'll go too. I gotta take a piss."

"What?" Jose asked. "But *you* were the one nagging for the new green."

"Well," Raquel said. "When you gotta go you gotta go,"

Evie, Raquel and Aaron headed down the ^{gravel} dirt road towards the party. It was a typical fall evening in California. The Santa Ana winds were already making their presence known but the relaxed residue of summer still in the air. Evie could hear the sound of a band playing somewhere not too far away. And Evie suddenly felt happy. Yes, tonight was going to be great.

"I think everyone's at the other end of the farm, past these tanks." Aaron said.

"What's in these things?" Evie stooped over one of the low concrete tanks. ^{In the} ~~dark~~, she could barely make out hundreds of rough, brown, quarter sized creatures, clinging to the tank's walls. ^{w/ the full moon}

"Abalone spawn!" Aaron deepened his voice. "Some very dangerous stuff."

Raquel put her hand into the tank. ^{damn,} ~~Hey~~, this water's cold – Oh, my God!"

Suddenly her whole arm was pulled into the bubbling seawater. Her expression changed from curiosity to one of sheer terror. "Oh, my God! My hand!"

"Raquel!" Evie shrieked. "Oh my God! Aaron help her!" Evie ran up behind Raquel to pull her arm out.

But Raquel started laughing and calmly pulled her own hand out. Both she and Aaron busted up.

^{what a} "You're such a sucker!" Raquel laughed and slapped her wet hands on Evie's ^{shoulder} ~~back~~. "Oh my God, That was a good one!"

^{off} "You guys are such jerks," Evie wiped her back. ^{sh}

"Oh, don't be all mad, Azules," Aaron told Evie. "It's just baby abalone. These tanks are like a little nursery for them." He looked into the tanks. "But check it out, it

takes like five years just to get one abalone, full sized.”

“Five years?” Raquel said looking over the tanks. “Damn, they must crank some bank here! We should get Mondo to cultivate *this* instead.”

stuff

*unlike Aaron radiation
As ~~was~~ suspected*

The party crowd was sketchy, but far from threatening. The girls definitely didn’t need an escort. (But that’s the way Aaron was, always living up to his *family* last name, Caballero: the overprotective gentleman) That’s really all you could say about Aaron. He wasn’t as fine as Mondo, who was tall and lanky with a mop of black ringlets on his head and he wasn’t as funny as Jose who somehow always managed to *keep* put Evie in a ~~better~~ mood. But between Mondo, Jose and Raquel, Evie guessed you needed someone like Aaron around.

The scene was typical Bard Boys beach crew, more *AA* than A-list. The Bard Boys were just a bunch of hard homeboys who’d definitely done their time: upstate, *Norcal, up north* in rehab or *Polsom* just too many unemployed days on the beach. Evie thought it was funny how people might think of a California beach party and picture a bunch of fit, golden tanned teenagers gathered around a bonfire. (*Such* Those people had never ~~spent time at Bard Beach.~~)

Evie, Raquel and Aaron filled up at the nearest keg and Evie quickly took a gulp. *It’s tasted bitter* She definitely had some catching up to do. *she wasn’t a beer drinker*

“Hey,” Raquel announced. “I still gotta take that piss.” She grabbed Evie’s arm.

“Come on, Evie, let’s go find the ladies room.”

When Evie and Raquel finally found the Port-o-Potty, Raquel rattled the plastic *locked*

door, ~~which was locked~~. "Dude!" she called out. "You got a line out here!"

After a couple seconds the door opened and when Evie looked up she couldn't believe who stepped out ^{streaked} ~~all~~ blonde layered hair, tight super-low rise jeans and a tiny strappy tank top []] it was Alejandra De los Santos, ~~the~~ head Sangron ~~at~~ Villanova High.

"What are *you* doing here?" Raquel was taken aback.

"What am *I* doing here?" Alejandra carefully stepped down from the elevated outhouse in her platform boots. "My second cousin Gabby owns this farm. He *is* Pacifica Abalone."

"So?" Raquel squinted at her. "Shouldn't you be home watching *Sabado Gigante* or something?"

"Raquel, I've been coming to his parties for years." Alejandra sounded bored as she took her last high heel step onto the sand. She ran her white tipped nails through her ~~layered blonde hair~~. "I've never seen *you* here before."

This was where Evie got nervous. Truth was none of the Flojos were invited, officially, to the party. ^{Bard} Jose had snagged a flyer via one of his Kinkos connection downtown and that flyer, like so many he got for pachangas below Spanish Hills, led them to Pacifica.

"Well. I gotta take a crap." Raquel said as pushed by Alejandra. "*Excuse* me."

She stepped up to the outhouse and shut the door behind her.

"So," Alejandra smacked her lips and looked straight into Evie's eyes. "How's the donut shop?"

^{Excuse me?}
"I have no idea ~~what you are talking about~~," Evie answered, trying to look as fearless as Alejandra seemed.

"Doesn't your dad sell donuts or something?" Alejandra pulled out a cigarette and tapped it on the carton.

"No, my dad *owns* a company." Evie said, surprised that she was actually bragging about her father's business. "His ~~bakery~~ *sweet hall* chain has twelve stores and all of them sell pan dulce, not donuts."

you mean, "Pan dulce?" Alejandra laughed. "You gotta be kidding."

"No, why would I be?" Evie asked. Evie hoped Raquel would hurry up and get out of the ~~bathroom~~ *outhouse*.

"Well, I wouldn't know anything about fast food." Alejandra lit her cigarette. "My family is more scholarly, I guess. We're more interested in intellectual ~~things~~ *issues* than we are ~~baked goods~~ *fast food*. See, my father is a professor at U.N.A.M. And this semester ~~he's~~ *he got me* doing an internship at CSUCI this semester."

"Good for you, Alejandra." *where what was taking Raquel*

"Yeah," Alejandra continued. "I'm going to be working with the new president, Dr. Frank de la Fuente. You remember—Dee Dee's father." *so say!*
she would not know Dee Dee

"Frank De la Fuente?" Evie asked.

"That's right." She blew smoke out upward. "Then I'm gonna apply for a internship at Yale next summer and —"

But Evie wasn't listening to Alejandra anymore. She felt her stomach drop, *hard*. Frank De la Fuente. Dee Dee's father. Dee Dee had been Evie's and Raquel's best friend since they were seven years old. Raquel was her official best friend now, but Dee Dee *claimed the title* was really the closest friend Evie had ever had. Evie spent practically everyday after school at her house and most weekend nights all through elementary school. Evie hated to

admit it, but Dee Dee's mother was like, *many* times, the mother Evie actually had at home. Dee Dee's mom didn't put on airs like Vicki Gomez so often did. Plus, Inez was always home, always around to talk. She wasn't running around chasing big sales on designer footwear. But then when Dee Dee was twelve, her mother died. And everything changed. Dee Dee and her father moved away and Evie hadn't heard from her since. In three years Dee Dee had never contacted Evie, not even once. She hadn't answered a single email or returned any of her calls. And Evie had still never figured out why. Just hearing her name now made Evie's chest feel tight.

The Port-o-Potty door opened and Raquel stepped out, zipping up her jeans.

"You're still here?" *she ^{glared at} demanded from Alejandra*

"You know what?" Alejandra put out her cigarette. "I think Gabby would just love to meet some gate crashers. Why don't you and your little Blueberry stick around here by the toilets and I'll go get him." She pushed by both of them.

As soon Alejandra took off, Evie snapped at Raquel. "Why did you do that?" Evie swallowed hard. "You're gonna get us kicked out!"

"Nah," Raquel drank her beer calmly. "If it's the Gabby I'm thinking of, which I'm sure it is, he ain't gonna kick us out. I ^{cut green} partied with a Gabby who said he had some kind of fish farm out this way. This must be the same guy. Besides, first rate dope *is def.* thicker than some second rate, second cousin."

"So did you hear what Alejandra said?" Evie asked Raquel as they started walking away from the Port-o-Potty. "About Dee Dee?"

"Yeah, I heard." Raquel "How come you didn't know?"

"I'm not sure," Evie felt foolish. "Doesn't your dad keep in touch with Dee Dee's

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"Yeah, I heard." Raquel "How come you didn't know?"

"I'm not sure," Evie felt foolish. "Doesn't your dad keep in touch with Dee Dee's

dad?"

"We get Christmas cards," Raquel said. "Some lame crap with a pre-printed signature that you just know was sent by some secretary." *assistant*

Evie's family had received the same type of card for the past few years. Every year Evie had torn the card open hoping for a handwritten note from Dee Dee. But there never was one. Evie tapped the last trail of foam from her cup into her mouth. This was not the evening she had expected.

"I thought you were, like, best friends," Raquel continued.

"We were," Evie said. "I mean all three of us were."

"No," Raquel shook her head. "You and Dee were always tighter. I would've have thought she'd call you right away."

"Yeah, I guess."

Raquel took a sip of beer. "So . . . You wanna go check out the band?"

"Nah, not really," Evie crossed her arms. She suddenly felt cold. "You wanna go get more beer?"

Raquel made a face. "Nah, typical keg quality. Not feeling it."

Evie looked around. She didn't know what to do. She didn't want to leave the party but she sure as hell didn't wanna stand around talking with Raquel, who was only making her feel worse. She looked at her watch. It was eleven pm.

"You know what? Let's go back to Mondo's car."

"Mondo's car?" Raquel raised one eyebrow. "*You* wanna go back with Mondo and Jose? You know they ain't just 'hanging out.'"

"Of course I know that," Evie snapped. "I'm not an idiot, Raquel."

"I'm not saying you are. It's just -"

"You know what Raquel?" Evie interrupted. "This night wouldn't be such a big deal if I hadn't been grounded for half a month. If I hadn't listened to you at the last so-called party you took me to, I would've been home on time and would never have been grounded. And then you didn't even have the decency to call the first night I get to go out.

Is there such problem that I wanna have a better time than I am having now?"

Evie couldn't believe how emotional.

"No, there's no problem at all," Raquel answered coolly. She raised her eyebrows. "I just didn't realize that you were having such a lousy time, that's all."

"Well, yeah, I am. It's my first night out in weeks and I was all looking forward to being with what I thought were my friends and then I gotta find out all this about Dee Dee from Alejandra -" Evie stopped herself. "You know what? Let's just go back to Mondo's car."

"I ain't stopping you." Raquel inhaled uncomfortably.

"Okay, then" Evie said. "Let's just go already."

And for once it was Evie who took the lead.

grabbed Raquel's arm

The next morning Evie awoke to her mother bursting into her room.

“E-vie! Get up. It’s late.” She opened Evie’s white wooden shutters. She flinched when her finger came up covered in black goop. “Eyeew!”

“Mom,” Evie rolled over to her side and covered her eyes. Her head was throbbing. “Why do you have to break out with the light and negativity so early?”

“Early?” She crossed Evie’s room “It’s already past eleven. Lindsay needs to come in here to clean.”

“Mom, no,” Evie said with as much energy as she could muster. “I can look after my own room.”

“No, you can’t.” She went into Evie’s bathroom and looked around. “Someone has to work on these carpet stains.” She came out of the bathroom. “Ugh!” She leaned over and pulled a ball of surf wax up embedded in the carpet. It had collected Ernesto Molesto’s stray hairs and God knows what else along the way. “What *is* this?”

But before Evie could answer, the intro of Funky Town started up.

“Evie,” her mother began as Evie leaned over to get her phone from her pile of last night’s clothes. “I told you I don’t want your friends calling your cell when you’re home. When you start paying-”

“Mom,” She found her phone and saw it was Raquel. “It’s free week-end minutes and --” She flipped it open. “Hello?”

"Hey, it's me."

"Okay, Evie," her mother said as she walked out of the room. "Get up and let Lindsay in here before we have a problem."

"So I asked my dad about Dee Dee this morning," Raquel said.

It took Evie a split second to remember what Raquel was talking about. And then her heart started pounding. "You did?"

"Uh huh. And he confirmed it. The De la Fuentes are definitely moving back to Spanish Hills."

"He knew? Why didn't he say anything? Why didn't he tell you?" (Evie was dying of thirst and her tongue felt too big inside her mouth.)

"Oh, you know how ol' Charlie Diaz is," Raquel yawned. "...*with his mind on his money and his money on...* nothing else. He isn't concerned with long lost family friends. It turns out he's known for weeks. He got an email from Dee Dee's dad. My mom wants to have a little welcome back party for them. She says it's the only proper thing to do, especially to introduce Dee Dee's new mom to everybody."

"*New mom?*" The Gomez's had received the announcement of Mr. De la Fuente's sudden marriage, but Evie hadn't thought of that person as Dee Dee's new mom.

New mom?
"Step-monster?" Raquel asked. "Does that sound better?"

"I'm really not in the mood for semantics right now," Evie turned to her side and hugged her denim covered Mogu.

"So," Raquel asked. "How you feeling?"

"Totally dissed." Evie said.

"No, I mean, after last night, with Mondo and Jose."

"Oh. Fine, I guess. I don't know," Evie told her. "I'm just really tired, like, exhausted. And my head is killing me."

"That'll wear off," Raquel said. "Just drink lots of water and sleep some more."

Sleep where?

"Yeah, maybe I'll go out in the pool house," Evie moaned. "My mom was like a Room Raider at the crack of dawn and now she's got Lindsay ready to take over my room."

"Oh yeah, that reminds me. My mom's gonna be calling your mom about the welcome back gig," Raquel said.

"When's it gonna be?" Evie asked.

"Next Saturday," she said.

"You mean, *this* Saturday?" Evie asked.

"I thought it was too early for semantics," Raquel said. "This coming Saturday."

"What kind of party?"

"Not really a party *party*," Raquel said. "It'll probably be just be my parents, your parents and some other ~~Big Bertha~~ swinging silverheads from the country club." She yawned again. "Just a little get-together."

Callaway

So Dee Dee was really coming back. And Evie had no idea what to expect. They were going to be neighbors, and classmates, all over again. And best of all, they'd probably go back to being friends. Right? And it would be just in time too -- between The Sangronas, her mother, and Raquel, Evie was dying for a new ally.

*in desperate
need of*

That Saturday evening Evie arrived at the Diaz's home with her parents, and it quickly became clear that the "little something" Kitty Diaz had scheduled was going to be a full-blown soiree. There were two valet parking attendants setting up a station near the Diaz's mailbox and there were several caterers in ~~shiny~~ ^{smocks} white blazers lugging in an oversized cast iron comal.

"Oh look, Ruben," Vicki Gomez excitedly nudged her husband. "They're going to have tortillas de maiz! Hand made."

"Kitty's going all out," Evie's father smiled. "Again." Then he frowned.

"Hmmm...I wonder why she didn't order any pan dulce."

Vicki Gomez looked Evie over as Ruben Gomez rang the front door bell. "Oh Evie," she said. "I wish you would take care of that hair. This is bad."

"Bad for who?" Evie asked. (Her stomach was twisting with nervousness and excitement) The last thing she needed to worry about was her choice of outfit.

"You could have at least put on a dress," her mother went on.

"A dress?" Evie asked. "When have you ever known me to wear a dress?"

"Well, you could have at least dressed up a little bit."

But Evie was dressed up considering that she practically lived in shorts and her ^Frojos. She was wearing a second hand blouse that she had found at a segunda downtown, cream colored and lacy. It looked perfect with her vintage straight legs and she even put on the pearl stud earrings that her [—]tia Isabel had given her for her eighth grade graduation.

[She knew Dee Dee would approve, especially of her blouse. As kids, they would often go

with Lindsay to the thrift stores downtown and loved to try all the lacy tops and fake furs.

“Vicki,” Evie’s father came to her rescue just as Kitty Diaz opened the front door.

“Evie looks fine. Let’s just drop it.”

“Ruben, Vicki!” Kitty welcomed Evie’s parents into the house with her arms outstretched. “How are you? Thank you so much for coming early.”

“Sure, Kitty,” Ruben Gomez said. “We are at your disposal.”

“Hello Evie,” Mrs. Diaz smiled at Evie. “Oh, look at you. Raquel mentioned you colored your hair. Very creative.”

“Thanks.” Evie looked up at her mother and gave her a smug little smile.

Kitty Diaz was similar to Evie’s mother in appearance and style. Both of them had minimal make up and no nonsense career-women haircuts, which was pretty funny since Vicki Gomez was very, very far from having a career. The only time she ever lifted a finger was to point to which Isabella Fiore bag or Via Spigas she wanted the salesclerk to ring up.

As soon as Evie and her parents entered the Diaz’s foyer Raquel called down from upstairs. “Hey Evie! Come on up. We can hang out before the serious alkies arrive.”

“Raquel!” Mrs. Diaz looked up from the foyer and threw her a stern look. “Act right! Remember, this isn’t some party just for you and your friends.”

“I know, I know,” Raquel said. “I was just messin’.”

Mrs. Diaz led the Gomez’s into the kitchen. “You are not going to believe how much this caterer is charging me for the last minute job,” she said as they all disappeared into the kitchen. “The cake cutting fee alone.”

Evie started up the stairs to Raquel’s room. “My mom said your mom might need

help. Maybe I should offer to cut the cake ^{at a discount} ~~for free~~?"

"Maybe you should offer her a fucking elephant tranquilizer and," Raquel spoke out of the side of her mouth. "I'm sure she has one somewhere in that panic drawer of hers. I don't know why my mother always insists on throwing these parties. They always make her so stressed out and bitchy." She turned around and looked Evie over. "By the way, 'scuse me, Miss Teen Vogue."

"What?" Evie asked.

"Nothing" Raquel quickly brushed at her own hair. "You actually look nice."

When they got to her room, Raquel shut the door and pulled a bottle of champagne from under her pillow. "Check it out. Veuve Cliquot. Kitty Diaz is sparing no expense on La Familia de la Fuente." She started to uncork it. "Oh, when I was sneaking it out, I forgot to get glasses. Looks like we'll have to take swigs. Not very lady like, huh?"

Evie took the first swig of the champagne. When, she thought, was Raquel *ever* ladylike? And what did she mean that she "actually" looked nice? As if there some doubt that she would?

"Whoa, slow down," Rachel said. "There's plenty more where this came from."

Evie took another smaller sip before giving Raquel back the bottle. "I just wanna loosen up." She flopped herself on Raquel's canopied bed. "It's so wrong that Dee Dee's back in Spanish Hills and still hasn't called."

"Have you called her?" Raquel asked.

"No. Have you?" Evie suddenly felt awkward. She found a loose cuticle that needed dire attention.

how did
he feel.
Evie
rarely
drank
so
much
as
around
Raquel

“I don’t have her number.”

“Well, mine hasn’t changed,” Evie said. “At least, my parents’ is the same. They haven’t changed their number in years. She has no excuse.”

“Aaah,” Raquel took a swig and looked up toward her ceiling. “And so the novela between the wayward friend and the forgotten woman left behind continues...”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing,,” Raquel said. “I just think you’re obsessing too much about Dee Dee.”

“*Obsessing?*”

“Well, maybe not obsessing.” Raquel took another swig from the bottle and passed it back to Evie. “But maybe you and me, we both need to just think forward. Get over the past.”

Evie took the bottle and rolled her eyes

“Don’t take this wrong, Evie,” Raquel said. “But I think you need a man. I was talking to Jose and—”

“You were talking to Jose about me?” Evie looked up from the bed at Raquel. “I can’t believe you discuss my love life with him!”

“Oh, I didn’t realize you had a love life,” Raquel smirked. “When did that start?”

Evie took a larger swig from the bottle. “Raquel, do not be talking about me to Jose. I know he’s, like, the ‘love of your life’ and everything, but there’s gotta be some boundaries.”

“He is the love of my life,” Raquel frowned.

“Well, you’d never know it. The way you two fight all the time.”

“We don’t fight,” Raquel snapped. “Sometimes we disagree on things, sometimes

our disagreements get heated, but we aren't fighting. ^{- very passionate} Besides, you sure aren't one to judge a relationship. You've never even been in one."

Evie felt a hot feeling in the pit of her stomach. ^{she felt his jaw tense} She clenched her fists and pressed her lips together. The last thing she needed that night was to get in a fight with Raquel. ~~She took another drink from the bottle.~~ Raquel stepped into her bathroom to switch on her flattening iron.

"So..." Evie said awkwardly. "I wonder what Dee Dee looks like now."

"Yeah, I wonder," Raquel said halfheartedly.

"Um," Evie started. "Remember when mom had that Aladdin birthday party and her mother demanded we all dress up."

"Oh, yeah."

"Yeah," Evie continued. "She had just seen Aladdin on Ice or something like that, right?"

"Something like that. That party was the worst."

"I actually thought it was fun," Evie said. "You were wearing those cute little flowy pants and that harem ~~girl shirt.~~" ^{halter}

"Yeah," Raquel started warming up. "I guess at the time it was okay."

"Dee's mom was so cool," Evie said. "She always threw the best parties."

"My mom throws good parties," Raquel frowned.

"Oh, yeah," Evie said quickly. "Definitely."

"Hey, Rocky!" It was Jose tapping on Raquel's door.

"Hey, come in," Raquel called out. "It's open."

Jose strutted into Raquel's room with an exaggerated pimp limp. Aaron was close

behind. "Hey, hey, hey," Jose said. "So this is where the pre-party action is, huh?" He saw the Veuve Cliquot. "Good thinking." *Agent 69*

"This is just the beginning." Raquel went over to her door and locked it. "And once everyone gets bombed we'll have the run of the place. Where's Mondo?"

"Mondo," Jose said slowly, "Had an *appointment* in the Valley. He might be by later." *a very imp. business to tend to*

Jose looked over Raquel. "Damn, Rocky," he whistled low, eyeing Raquel's super tight jeans and low cut camisole. "You sure know how to rock a fella!"

"You likes?" she twirled around and the sheerness of her tiered cami exposed more than maybe it should have.

"What do you think?" Jose gestured to below his belt. "Check out the Miracle Gro!"

"Jose!" Raquel snapped. "Why do you always have to ruin things?" She went to the bathroom and got her flattening iron. "~~Damn, I swear!~~" *still "Act right!"*

"What?" Jose looked after her, then at Aaron and Evie, perplexed. "That's a compliment. You want me to say you look ugly?" *Tango just who... taken out...*

"Just act right," Raquel said.

Jose cowered a bit before taking over the window seat in Raquel's room. He looked out across the Diaz's backyard and whistled again. "Check out the fancy spread downtown."

md go or what
"My mom just went crazy?" Raquel leaned against her bathroom doorway as she straightened her long wavy hair.

"Yeah," Aaron sat on the edge of the bed, near Evie. "We saw some dude laying

Will say.

26

out flowers and some of those floating candles in the pool.”

“Ooh,” Evie went over to the window. “Lemme see.”

The Diaz’s backyard looked amazing. Their pool was glowing in candle light and multicolored papeles picados hung across the yard from tree to tree.

“Are ~~those~~^{me} paper cut-outs custom ~~cut~~?” Evie asked.

“Oh, yeah,” Raquel said. “Each papel has like a little scene from when the De la Fuentes lived here. There’s some of their first house in Spanish Hills, from the summers we stayed in Cabo and, oh, remember that one Christmas we all spent at Lake Tahoe?”

“Hey,” Jose interrupted, sounding bored. “Can I smoke a little?”

“Jose,” Raquel gave him a look. “Quit acting stupid.”

“What?” He pulled out some rolling papers from his front pocket. “Just ‘cause I asked a question? ‘Member what Mr. Mercer said? There is no such thing as a stupid questions, only stupid-”

“Boyfriends? And don’t even get me busted by smoking out in here. If you wanna be high all night, you can just go home now. This is an important night and we don’t want any drama. Right, Evie?”

“Right,” Evie agreed as she got back on Raquel’s bed.

“Well,” Mondo opened window and looked out again. “Maybe I’ll get one of the bartenders to give me a lift home. Say, like maybe that sweet redhead setting up the mini bar?”

“What redhead?” Aaron went over to the window to look out.

“Ugh!” Raquel put her flattening iron on the bathroom counter and went over to Jose to position herself on his lap “Over my dead body.”

Jose wrapped his arms around her waist. "Hey, I got nothing against necrophilia if you don't!"

"My," Raquel dug her face into his neck, "such a big word for a little boy."

"Get a room, already." Aaron rolled his eyes.

Evie handed Aaron the bottle of champagne and he held it up to eye level.

"This is dwindling," he said. "We're gonna have to get more." He took a short swig and handed the bottle back to Evie. "How long did Dee Dee live in Mexico?"

"Almost four years." Evie took the last sip from the bottle and decided that she was done with alcohol for the night. She was already feeling touched and she definitely wanted to be focused when Dee Dee arrived. "She moved there when she was twelve."

"Man, I'd love to live in Mexico." Aaron said. "Like down south, Puerto Escondido."

"Well, Dee Dee didn't live in southern Mexico," Evie said. "She lived in the Polanco District, right in the Mexico City."

"Yeah, and you know she was hating it," Raquel added. "Dee Dee is a total country mouse."

"Raquel!" It was Kitty Diaz in the hallway. She jiggled the locked doorknob and spoke sternly. "Come out and join the rest of the party. We have guests. You are a host and you are being rude."

"Oh, *shit*." Raquel bolted up from Jose's lap and fanned all of Jose's tell tale smoke out the open window. "I better get out there." She called out to her mother, "Sorry, mom! Evie's just helping me pin my bra straps down. I'll be right out." Then she turned to Jose and Aaron. "You guys wait awhile and then come out and meet us. And you," she

remembered
the
night in
Mondo's
car

looked at Jose, "Stay away from that bar."

Raquel and Evie headed down stairs, and Evie suddenly felt nervous. Maybe she *should* have fixed her hair. As Raquel had said, Dee Dee was the country mouse: quiet and sweet. She wouldn't be put off by Evie's new look, would she?

Evie recognized many of the guests from the country club and from the Spanish Hills neighborhood block association. Evie also recognized some colleagues of Mr. Diaz's, fellow "Hi-tech Aztecs," ~~as Raquel called them~~, who had made their money in software. [A lot of them maintained primary residences in Spanish Hills but had side apartments in San Jose or other parts of Silicone Valley where they would go to meet their "side ^{salsas} sauces" as Raquel called them.]

After they'd made the rounds ^{obligatory} of the party, the Flojos pretty much stuck to ^{sneaking} themselves. Evie watched the front door, anxiously, Aaron worked on getting more booze and Jose tapped about every platter that came his way.

"What's with your mom serving all this Mexican food?" Jose asked Raquel as he took a quesadilla triangle off a passing tray.

"What do you mean?" Raquel asked. "What should she be serving?"

"I dunno, but didn't they just come in from Mexico? Don't you think they've had their fill?"

"You are *not* bagging on my mom," Raquel insisted.

"No, I'm bagging on her choice of food," Jose took a bite and immediately made a face. "Ugh. What is this?"

"Jose, don't be a jerk. It's a goat cheese quesadilla. Obviously, it's too refined for your Taco Bell palette."

“Hey,” he warned. “Don’t bag on the Bell.”

Evie couldn’t help but keep glancing at Aaron’s ^{Nixon} Watch. It was already 7:40. The De la Fuentes were over half an hour late. Hadn’t anyone else noticed? Evie was sure her mother had.

By eight o’clock, after all the appetizers were gone and everyone was toasty from an hour’s worth of free drinks, Charlie Diaz made an announcement to the crowd. “Okay, everybody, I just got a call from Frank,” He was pink faced from the heat and excitement. “They’re on their way. They just turned on Camino Coral and will be here any second.”

“Did ol’ Frank forgot how to get around his old neighborhood?” Someone called out and everyone laughed like that was the funniest joke in the world.

A few minutes later the De la Fuente’s car had pulled up into the Diaz’s circular drive-way. Everyone began to shout and cheer and Evie immediately felt even more nervous. She went to the downstairs bathroom and discovered that her anxiety was visible. There was a small sweat ring under each of her arms. *Crap*. That was the problem with vintage clothes, they were always made from some polyester blend that generated ^{↳ worse, stink} mad stink and sweat. Evie grabbed one of the guest towels hanging from the chrome towel bar and reached under her blouse, patting each armpit dry. She looked for deodorant in the Diaz’s bath cabinet and discovered that, just like Evie’s mother, Kitty bought that same natural Trader Joe’s crap never did jack. Evie heard more shouts and greets, so she rubbed on as much as she could and raced back to join the party.

When Evie returned, Frank De la Fuente, Dee Dee’s father, was already standing in the Diaz’s foyer. Next to him was a short, smartly dressed woman. Both were being cooed over by her parents and Raquel’s. Mr. De la Fuente looked just as Evie

remembered; the same broad smile and thick bushy eyebrows that were now a bit more gray, and it was nice to see him still looking good in his standard uniform of a classy suit and tie.

“Beinvenidos! Welcome! Welcome!” Evie’s father exclaimed. “Frank, it’s been too long!”

“Yes, yes!” Mr. De la Fuente agreed, excitedly. “Oh, it’s so wonderful to be back! To be home.”

“Look.” Evie’s father pushed her forward. “Here’s Evie!”

“Oh, Evie!” Mr. De la Fuente took her hands into his, stood back and beamed.

“Mi’ja, let me look at you! Such a beautiful young lady you’ve become!” He looked over at Raquel who was standing directly by her side. “Oh, and Raquel, tu tambien! Que bonita! Mira, I want you both to meet my wife, Graciela.”

Graciela was a stout, fair skinned woman with dark eyes and dark hair cut in a short bob. Two large ornate earrings swayed like ship lanterns from her ears.

What Mr. De la Fuente offered in warmth, Graciela definitely cooled with her icy greeting. Her Brrr Factor was cranked to high as she offered a lukewarm hello, surveyed the Diaz’s home and promptly asked, “Is our car going to be safe with those men outside?”

“Oh yes, of course,” Kitty Diaz put her arm around her shoulder. “It’s a company we’ve used for years.”

“Buenos Noches, Graciela,” Evie said in her best Spanish accent. “Soy Evie. Dee Dee and I have been best friends since we were little kids.”

“Yeah,” Raquel added. “We’ve all been friends since we were, like, seven years old.”

“Really?” Graciela looked them over. Evie suddenly felt like piece of cheap jewelry Graciela wouldn’t even bother to try on. “I don’t think Della’s ever mentioned you. What did you say your names were again?”

“Uh, I’m Evie,” Evie started awkwardly. “And this is —”

“Evie?” Graciela asked. “What kind of name is that?”

“Well, my real name is—”

“Where’s Dee Dee?” Raquel interrupted as she looked around Graciela.

“Oh, you know how you girls are,” Mr. De la Fuente said as he leaned over and took his wife’s wrap off. “We could not get her off her cell phone. She’s been on that thing since we arrived. She’s going to drive over herself. She’ll be here shortly.”

“Oh?” Evie’s mother looked over at Kitty Diaz disapprovingly. “Well, I do hope she arrives soon. Kitty ordered a cake especialy for —” *Plan*

“We’re just excited to see our little Dee Dee,” Evie’s father quickly said.
“Especially Evie.”

“Dee Dee has her own car?” Evie directed the question to Mr. De la Fuente, but looked over at her mother.

“Oh, of course.” Mr. De la Fuente put his arm around her. “But no worries, mi’ja. She’ll be here soon.”

Evie bit her bottom lip. Why hadn’t Dee Dee just come with her parents? Why didn’t Graciela know who she or Raquel was? And even more importantly, why hadn’t Evie put on more deodorant?

45

930?

By 10 PM, Dee Dee still hadn't arrived and the party was already dying down. The singer of the band, 'un trio' hired by Charlie Diaz, had shaken her maraca one last time and the caterers were gathering up the dessert dishes and what was left of the cake that Kitty Diaz had specially ordered in Dee Dee's favorite flavor—chocolate raspberry. Evie figured she should have been feeling good: in addition to the Veuve Cliquot that Evie had shared upstairs with Raquel, (she had sneaked a couple more beers from a careless bartender.) But instead she just felt more uptight than ever.

"Should we call Dee Dee?" Evie asked her mother.

"I asked Frank the same thing," she answered, sounding annoyed. "He promised me that she would be here soon."

Evie had a weird lonely feeling in the pit of her stomach and the distinct feeling that Dee Dee wasn't just blowing off the party, she was blowing off *Evie*. [She could feel pressure behind her eyes, like there were tears pressing on the backs of her eyeballs,] trying to get out. She walked past the Diaz's Great Room, and spotted Jose and Aaron chatting it up with some older female guest and a server. She walked over to them. Both women were were laughing and speaking Spanish.

As the server left to gather more glasses from other guests, the woman switched to ^{English} Spanish. "But ay, no," she insisted to Aaron. "Aren't you ever afraid? What about sharks? And those waves are so big. Tan grande!"

33

Her bangs were high and her neckline low. She had on a black (was that *lycra*?) mini dress and, now that Evie was closer, she realized the woman was wearing light blue colored contacts. She looked like the next fake famous girl-singer project in the making. Let's see, there was Mariah, J.Lo, Thalía... Evie wondered what silly name this one had.

"Well, I wouldn't say I'm a *big wave* surfer," Aaron said, not noticing Evie had just joined them. "I mean, I'm no Laird Hamilton but -"

"Quien?" The woman asked.

"Oh," Aaron waved his hand. "He's just some surfer."

Some surfer? What was Aaron saying? Laird Hamilton was, like, Aaron's idol.

"Yeah," Jose smiled. "We should take you out with us sometime."

"*We*?" Aaron said with a smirk. "Dude, you barely know how to ^{manage} ~~balance~~ a Boogie board." He turned his attention back to the woman. "I'll take you out and you'll be totally safe. I used to be a lifeguard."

Yeah, Evie thought, junior lifeguard duty at the country club's *kiddie* pool.

"But I don't even know how to swim." The woman gave a helpless giggle and tugged on her tight mini that was riding up her thighs.

"Oh, I can help you." Aaron shook the ice around in his glass. "I'll have you doing a few basics strokes in no time."

"Yeah," Jose grinned. "I'm *sure* he will."

"You," the woman playfully slapped Jose on his chest, "are gonna give me problems. I can see that already."

Evie was being blatantly ignored and her patience was wearing thin. She offered her hand to the woman. "Hello, I'm Evie."

“Evie?” The woman’s piercing blue, almost white, eyes penetrated hers. “Evie Gomez?”

“Uh, yeah...”

“Ay! Evie!” The woman pulled Evie to her and Evie was suddenly suffocated by flesh, hair, lots of hair, and, what seemed to be a padded bra, [~]very padded bra. “Evie!”

The woman exclaimed. “I’ve been asking everyone where you’ve been!”

“Excuse me? Have we met?”

“Evie! It’s me! Della!”

“Della?”

“Oh.” She threw an embarrassed sideways glance over at Jose and Aaron. “Okay, Dee Dee?”

“Dee Dee?” Evie looked at this woman from the tops of her fluffed up hair to the bottom of her black boots. *This woman was Dee Dee? How was that even possible?*

“Oh my God, Evie,” the woman went on. “Look at you! Oh my God. Your hair! You are so crazy with your pelo azul!”

She put her arm around Evie and turned to Aaron and Jose. “This little girl is the friend I was telling you about. Right here, little Evie Gomez. Ay, Evie, you are *so* cute. You never got any taller, did you?” She squeezed Evie tightly.

“Um,” Evie’s voice came out like a squeak. “Dee Dee, uh...”

“Oh mi’ja,” she said. “I’m so sorry I’m late. Don’t be mad. I just could *not* get off the phone with mi novio back in D.F. He hates that I am here and he gets so possessive. Ay, I mean, *possessive*. I hope American boys aren’t that way.” She gave Jose and Aaron a coy smile.

“Nah,” Aaron smirked “We let our women go as far as our leash lets them.”

“Ay!” Dee Dee gave him a side ways glance. “Now you too?”

“Um, Dee Dee...” Evie tried again.

“No, no,” she put one finger over Evie’s mouth. “*No one* calls me Dee Dee. *Por favor.*” She frowned at Jose and Aaron.

“So Della,” Aaron was still all smiles. “I bet you got some funny stories from when you two were kids.”

“Oh, yes, I – “ Della snapped her fingers to get a server’s attention. “Over here,” she called out holding up her glass. “I’m done here.” She turned her attention back to ~~us~~ ^{the tree}
“Let me tell you, she was my best, best friend. We did everything together and, oh wait, I want you to meet Graciela, my stepmother.”

“Ama!” she called out. “Ama, here is the friend that I was telling you about. This is Evie.”

“Oh, yes, yes,” Graciela looked Evie over again. “I met her earlier this evening. Nice, nice. Very nice.” She turned to Dee Dee. “Listen mi’ja. Your father and I are getting tired. We are ~~going~~ ^{going} home.”

“Already Ama?”

“Yes, yes. I’m still not used to this time change and the food.” She put a palm over her abdomen. “It’s not sitting too well with my stomach.”

“Ah,” Jose smiled. “The goat cheese quesadilla? Am I right?”

“Mande?” Graciela looked at him, confused.

“Oh, ‘Ama,” Dee Dee said. “These are my two new friends. This is, uh...” she looked at Aaron. “I’m sorry, what is your name again?”

Andy
"Uh, Aaron," he mumbled, looking embarrassed.

Andies
"Esteban?" Graciela asked.

Andy
"No, Aaron," he repeated.

"You mean, Aaronn?" Graciela asked again.

"No just, *Aaron*."

"Okay, 'Ama," Dee Dee interrupted as she gave her stepmother an air kiss. "I'll see you later tonight."

As Graciela De la Fuente started to leave Evie saw Raquel slowly swagger up to them. Where had she been the past hour? Obviously somewhere that granted her an all access pass to a steady flow of liquor. She looked trashed. *how?*

"Uh, Raquel," Evie started to warn her.

?
"Raquel!" Dee Dee smiled widely. "Ay, look at you!"

Raquel looked at her blankly.

Raquel
"It's Dee," Evie started to inform her. "I mean Della. Dee Dee..." What was she even saying?

"Dee Deeee?" Raquel looked directly into Dee Dee's eyes.

"Yes, it's me, Della!" Dee Dee exclaimed.

Raquel looked at her and squinted. "What the fuck happened to your eyes?"

"*What?*" Dee Dee asked.

"Your eyes," Raquel said again. "Oh, *shee-yat!*" She covered her mouth and tried to keep from laughing. "I feel like I'm talking to a wolf! No, no, one of those Huskys. A Siberian Husky! Are you part of the ~~Mexican Olympic dog sled~~ [~] team? Mush! Mush!"
Raquel motioned her arm as if she was cracking a whip.

"Excuse me?"

"Oh, God," Raquel suddenly put her hand on her forehead. "I feel sick. Whoa, whoa...I feel really sick."

"Raquel," Evie said. "Why don't you come with me to the bathroom?"

"It's okay," Jose put his arm around Raquel. "I'll take her."

"But I don't wanna go...we gotta wait for Dee Dee," Raquel whined. "Evie's dear little Dee Dee. Right Evie? Your best friend?"

"Oh, shit." Aaron looked away.

"What is her problem?" Dee Dee demanded to know.

"Nothing," Evie said, her face suddenly feeling hot. "She's just had too much to drink."

"Ooh, I'm gonna be sick..." Raquel covered her mouth and groaned. "Jose, don't let me get sick."

"Well, baby," Jose led her away towards the downstairs bathroom. "You're gonna have to be sick before you can get better."

"What, so she's like an alcoholic now?" Dee Dee asked.

"No, it's just been a long night," Aaron said

"Yeah," Evie came to Raquel's defense. "It's been a long night and we've all been waiting...all night."

"Oh, so it's my fault she's completely boracha?" Dee Dee asked.

"No, I'm just saying that we've all been excited to see you and it's been years and we hadn't even heard from you and now —"

"Wait, don't put it all on me that your friend has a drinking problem."

"My friend?" Evie raised her voice. "Dee Dee, I thought Raquel was *our* friend."

"You know Evie," Dee Dee spat. "It's obvious you're having a bad night and I'm not gonna let you ruin my party."

"Ruin it?" Evie bit back. "Dee Dee, this party's been over for hours."

Dee Dee looked over at Aaron. "Can you take me home?"

Evie also looked at Aaron. *No, no, no.*

"Uh, yeah," Aaron said hesitantly. "But I thought you drove here?"

"I did." Dee Dee dropped her drink down onto an end table. "But I just don't feel like driving right now. Isn't there somewhere we can go? Like for a drink or something?"

"It's not like Mexico," Aaron said. "You gotta be twenty-one to drink here."

"Let's just go somewhere. Take me to the beach. Show me those waves you were talking about."

"Now?" Aaron asked.

"Yes, now." Dee Dee pulled out a compact from her purse and flipped it open. She patted the corners of her eyes with powder as she checked herself in the mirror. "I'm gonna go say good bye to my ^{father} dad and then I'll wait for you in my car." She snapped her compact shut and turned to leave. She made sure her eyes did not meet Evie's.

"Well," Aaron said slowly. ^{to Evie} "I guess I better take her, huh?"

"What?" Evie balked. "You are *not* serious."

"Well, what am I supposed to do?" he asked.

Evie shook her head and felt her heart sink. She didn't want to have to tell him. He should know.

"So, Evie," Aaron asked again, awkwardly. "What do you *want* me to do? I feel

like my hands are tied.”

“Well, Aaron.” Evie sighed. “It’s not my job to untie them.”

And so Aaron the Caballero, did go. As Evie watched him go out to the parked cars to find Dee Dee, she felt so incredibly empty.

“Would you like the last one?” It was the same server that Evie had seen earlier with Dee Dee. She had a slice of Tres Leches on her platter.

dessert
dish
cleaned!!

“Uh, no. No thank you.” Evie said. “I’m not hungry.”

“Your friend,” the server smiled playfully. “Que mala, no?”

“Uh, which one?” Evie asked.

“La Sangrona,” she laughed lightly as she looked after Dee Dee and Aaron.

“The Sangrona,” Evie repeated. “No, she’s not *that* bad.” But Evie wasn’t so sure. Maybe Dee Dee had become a Sangrona. And according to Evie, that was mala. Muy, muy mala. “Oh, you know what?” Evie told the server. “I will have that last piece.”

Evie took a giant bite and swallowed it without chewing. And then she took another one and tallied up the score. Sangrona: one, Flojos: zero. And Evie? All of a sudden she felt kind of sorry to even be in the game.

he a team player

our disagreements get heated, but we aren't fighting. Besides, you sure aren't one to judge a relationship. You've never even been in one."

Evie felt a hot feeling in the pit of her stomach. She clenched her fists and pressed her lips together. The last thing she needed that night was to get in a fight with Raquel. She took another drink from the bottle. Raquel stepped into her bathroom to switch on her flattening iron.

"So..." Evie said awkwardly. "I wonder what Dee Dee looks like now."

"Yeah, I wonder," Raquel said halfheartedly.

"Um," Evie started. "Remember when mom had that Aladdin birthday party and her mother demanded we all dress up."

"Oh, yeah."

"Yeah," Evie continued. "She had just seen Aladdin on Ice or something like that, right?"

"Something like that. That party was the worst."

"I actually thought it was fun," Evie said. "You were wearing those cute little flowy pants and that harem girl shirt."

"Yeah," Raquel started warming up. "I guess at the time it was okay."

"Dee's mom was so cool," Evie said. "She always threw the best parties."

"My mom throws good parties," Raquel frowned.

"Oh, yeah," Evie said quickly. "Definitely."

"Hey, Rocky!" It was Jose tapping on Raquel's door.

"Hey, come in," Raquel called out. "It's open."

Jose strutted into Raquel's room with an exaggerated pimp limp. Aaron was close

Evie trying & trying w/ Raquel

HORRIBLE VERSION

Las Tres
2.4.05

It's Sunday morning, the day after the De la Fuentes welcome back party.

Evie's horrified when her mother announces she invited the Diaz family and the De La Fuente's for brunch. There's no way Evie's ready to face Dee Dee and Raquel just hours after last night's catastrophe. Evie's mother keeps talking about what a lovely and wonderful time they're going to have. Evie's father is bursting with excitement over the fact that everyone will have the chance to sample his newest line of "manteca free" pan dulce. Evie can't help but wonder if her parents are the most clueless people on the planet.

Unfortunately, brunch doesn't go very well. First of all, Dee Dee shows up with her parents lugging enough Noah's bagels to feed the entire neighborhood. "I just love these things!" Dee Dee exclaims pushing aside the pan dulce to make room on the serving tray.

During brunch the parents chat about old times and the future and of course, who can offer the De la Fuentes better floor seats for the Lakers. Evie sits next to Raquel, fronting a stiff smile as Dee Dee checks and rechecks her cell phone. The three girls don't speak to each other, that is, until Raquel grabs a bagel and asks Dee Dee to pass her some cream cheese without jalepenos. "What kind of Mexicana doesn't like jalepenos?" Dee Dee smirks.

Raquel bites back, "What kind of Mexicana brings bagels and cream cheese to a brunch?"

"Maybe I should have brought a muzzle...for you to give that drooling boyfriend of yours. Que un perro!"

Raquel looks to Evie for backup, but Evie doesn't know what to say. Yes, Dee Dee batted her plastic baby blues at Jose during the party, but how could she have known he had a girlfriend? Jose really was the one at fault. Besides, Evie's getting a bit tired of Raquel's drunken idiot routine. Raquel pushes away from the table.

"Well, I've had enough." Raquel then looks at Dee Dee. "I'm quite full." She storms out of the Gomez's dining room.

Dee Dee leans into Evie and whispers, "Yeah, I know exactly what she's full of."

Finally brunch ends and all the guests leave except Dee Dee who drove herself over to the Gomez's. She lingers around while wrapping up her fourth phone call of the morning. Dee Dee hangs up, sits for a minute playing with her antennae and then out of nowhere she exaggerates a stretch. She lets out a big yawn and then perfectly mimics Evie's father's sing-songy inflection, "Big fiesta..."

Evie's taken aback and she can't help but add, "...long Siesta!" Evie smiles. This is what Mr. and Mrs. Gomez always said after Evie and Dee Dee's playdates as kids. Evie is touched that Dee Dee remembers.

Dee Dee looks at Evie and smiles. "Okay, so I'm sorry if I came on strong last night. I was in, you know, *una* moda mala," Dee Dee claims. "I had just had a fight with mi novio."

"Yeah," Evie confesses, "Me too."

I guess

separately from her parents

Spanish kids Assoc.

new times ahead

sells Raquel policy out of her

cream cheese

aggressive la ggio

they just had a fight

another

prada cell covers

Dee Dee raises her eyebrows in surprise and asks, "Oh, *you* had a fight... with your boyfriend, *too*?"

"Uh, no," Evie quickly corrects herself. "I was just in a *weird* mood."

Both girls laugh. Evie wonders if she might have been wrong about the new Dee Dee.

The next day Dee Dee starts at Villanova Prep and Evie offers to show her around. This arrangement works out well, since Raquel is giving Evie the silent treatment. When Evie and Raquel walk by each other on their way to first period, Evie says, "Hey," but Raquel won't even look Evie in the eye. Following Flojo code, Jose and Mondo are ignoring Evie too.

Aaron rolls his eyes when he sees how Raquel is acting. "My satellite doesn't get Spanish soap operas," he says with a smirk. And then he looks directly at Raquel as she walks away. "But *grandma's TV* does."

Yes, Evie concludes, Aaron is really a great guy.

Dee Dee and Evie enter the school's cafeteria together and Evie accidentally bumps into Raquel in the food line. It is an awkward moment as neither of them says a word. The Sangros flutter around Dee Dee, interested in the new "fresita" on campus. Raquel looks at them and then looks back at Evie. Raquel shakes her head and walks away.

When the school day is finally over Dee Dee invites Evie to hang out, but Evie reluctantly declines. As much as she'd like to keep bonding with Dee Dee, she knows she should patch up things with Raquel, and quick. Raquel holds grudges, and Evie doesn't want to get permanently stuck on her bad side. Raquel is, after all, Evie's best friend.

Evie heads out to the student parking lot, hoping to catch the Flojos in their usual spot hanging out and smoking up on the roof of Mondo's Maurader. But as soon as they see Evie approaching, Raquel, Mondo and Jose hop off the roof and duck inside the ride. Evie taps on the glass on the shotgun seat where Raquel sits. Raquel begrudgingly rolls down the window.

"What?" Raquel snaps.

"Can't we please talk about this?" Evie pleads.

Raquel snickers. "Don't you have to go spend some time with that new *bitch* best friend of yours?"

Evie shakes her head. "Look Raquel, I don't know what went on between the two of you, but don't you think this is sort of . . . stupid?"

Raquel rolls her eyes. "Whatever." She signals for Mondo to start the engine.

Evie backs up. Raquel rolls up her window as the cars pull away. Evie watches the car crest up a steep hill and disappear over the peak.

On Friday, issues come to a head when Evie, Dee Dee and Raquel find themselves in the girl's restroom at the same time. Evie is in the stall and overhears Dee Dee and Raquel start talking. She stays in the stall hoping to give the old friends time to make up. Dee Dee is putting on eyeliner. Raquel is standing next to her at the sink. They ignore each other until Raquel, unable to keep her mouth shut any longer, says "slut,"

Raquel?

while smoothing her hair. Dee Dee turns to Raquel, gives her a mock-polite smile and says in a sickly-sweet voice, "Why don't you tell your boyfriend to keep his eyes in his head and his tongue in his mouth whenever I walk by. He's always drooling over my ass." There's a pause. "If he's looking at you," Raquel says, loudly. "It's probably only because you look like you're an Extreme Makeover reject." Dee Dee lets out a fake, high-pitched laugh. "Oh poor, Rocky, you never did get over that your jealousy problem, did you?" "Well Della it looks like you never got over your stupid bitch problem."

Full on conflict over Evie

Things escalate and voices rise until the girls are in a full-on screaming match. Alejandra De los Santos (whom Dee Dee has become friends with over the past five days) emerges from a bathroom stall and takes Raquel by complete surprise. (Evie sits on the toilet and picks her feet up hoping she'll be able to stay out of it.)

Yuck!!

"Della," she asks Dee Dee as she touches up her make up in front the bathroom mirror, not even looking at Raquel, "Is this Flo-Ho bothering you?"

Dee Dee clicks her tongue and says, "Ay, no mujer. This Flo just about to go." Then she looks at Raquel. "Right, Rocky?" Pam Sa?

Keep tone!

Dee Dee and Alejandra leave the bathroom. Raquel leans over the sink and, tries to regain her lost composure. Evie decides she can't come out of the stall, knowing Raquel would be hugely embarrassed to be caught at such a vulnerable moment and even more angry at Evie than before for not stepping in.

A few minutes later Raquel leaves the bathroom. Evie follows a minute after that but Raquel is hanging around in the hallway right outside the bathroom, obviously still upset. But as soon as she spots Evie, Raquel fronts her tough side instantly. "You know," she tells Evie as she starts to leave, "You oughts be careful with that new pally of yours. No one would wear fucking fake-ass contacts and cake on all that make up unless she wanna be hiding something." Evie's stomach drops to her feet. Why is her world splitting apart? And, more importantly, which side is she on?

It's Friday night. Dee Dee has invited Evie to go swimming at her house. Dee Dee's parents are going to the opening of the Hispanic Heritage Museum and will not be home for most of the evening. "And oh," Dee Dee drops casually, "I invited that surfer friend of yours, Aaron? He promised he was going to teach me how to be a better swimmer. Que chulo!" Rad

to swim

Evie declines the invitation, but feels a weird fluttering in her stomach at Dee Dee's last comment. Ever since the De la Fuentes welcome back party, Evie's been keeping an eye on the budding flirtation between Dee Dee and Aaron. It's making her a little uncomfortable. After all, Dee Dee has a boyfriend back in Mexico City. A guy that is, as Dee Dee so often puts it, "un guapo rico!") She starts thinking of Aaron being alone in the pool with Dee Dee, showing her those "basic strokes" he had talked about at the party. She pictures the two of them close together in the pool, maybe Aaron puts his hand on Dee Dee's back to help guide her. Evie feels oddly possessive, envious and ... jealous? She feels a little funny about this jealousy bit, after all Aaron is just her friend. But then again he's her friend. Evie quickly grabs a clean pair of board shorts off her bedroom floor, grabs a swim top that's hanging off the doorknob and heads over to Dee Dee's.

De la Fuentes

Evie pulls up in her mother's late model Saab and is surprised to find so many shiny and expensive cars lining the De la Fuente's drive way. Wasn't this just supposed

wraps his arms Friend Shimen

Conflict SHARP!

tab welcome back

to be Dee Dee and Aaron? Evie heads back to the pool where she finds the backyard full of Sangros!

Evie's first thought is that she should just get back in her mother's car and drive away, but she decides to peek through the cypress trees and scope out the scene first. *Damn! Where did the Sangros get such slutty bathing suits? Was that Christina, the Sangro with the obscenely large ass, in a teeny gold lame thong? And oh God, Dee Dee's hot pink bottoms revealed she too, has a "Tramp Stamp," a trendy tribal tattoo on her lower back. And oh my God? Heels by a swimming pool? These girls didn't look like they were getting ready to swim, they looked like they were ready to grind around a pole in the middle of a stage!*

Evie's instinctual reaction is that it's time for her to leave, but suddenly sees Aaron, shirtless in his faded red lifeguard trunks, chatting with a Sangro whose C-cups overfloweth. He has a smile on his face, but his neck is flushed bright pink. Evie knows that's how he gets when he is nervous or, she guesses, *enamorado*. All of the sudden Evie involuntarily clenches her fists and she feels a burning sensation in the pit of her stomach. Where is *this* coming from? She really has no idea. But is she going to go home now and leave Aaron to get sucked into the world of the Sangros? *Hell no.*

Evie enters the back yard, bracing herself for the onslaught of disses and bitchy comments that she expects to receive from the Sangros. Dee Dee, however, takes Evie under her wing and makes it clear to the party guests that Evie may be a Flojo but, just like Aaron, is "una buena persona."

Evie actually starts to loosen up after her first drink. Man, Sangros sure know how to work a mean margarita! As Evie lounges poolside with Aaron, nursing her second drink, her apprehensions practically evaporate. By the end of the night everyone's tanked, drunkenly singing their lame school song and, oddly, the Mexican national anthem. The Sangros laugh as Evie sings off key and struggles to follow the words. They find her "fun, in a funny way" and actually invite her to go shopping the next day. "And," one Sangro slurs looking over Evie, "the first thing after Jamba Juice... we going to find you a new bathing suit! You are far too cute for that one." They all laugh. And to her own surprise, Evie laughs with them. (Evie locks eyes with Aaron and he gives her a look she can't quite figure out. It gives her a funny feeling in the pit of her stomach.)

The girls hit a bunch of designer boutiques the next day and Evie is surprised how much fun she has. Okay, so the Sangros aren't anything like the people she's used to hanging out with. But maybe that's part of their appeal. They're loud and fun and unlike the Flojos who are always trying to fade into the background, the Sangros make a minor scene wherever they go. They sing along to Selena when they take a trip to the Virgin Records and flirt with the guys who work at Bebe. Everywhere they go people stare at them in a way that, to Evie, feels sort of thrilling. It's fun: It may be mindless or frivolous but it's a lot better than hanging out with Raquel and her old friends and "chilling" all the time. After the shopping excursion, Evie wonders if maybe she'd been wrong about the Sangros all along. And over the next few days, Evie decides that yes, she definitely had been. All of them have taken a real interest in her – invitations when plans are made, makeover tips, etc. Evie is feeling giddy, but she doesn't really have anyone to share her excitement with. So when Evie's mother compliments Evie on one of her new outfits, Evie finds herself telling her mother about her new "sorta friends." Evie's mother tells

Seem genuine

her that it's great that she's expanding her social circles and experimenting with some new looks. "But be careful not to lose the things you really love and care about Evie," her mother warns. Evie rolls her eyes, regretting her decision to talk to her mother at all. Evie hasn't felt this confident in a long time, or actually, ever.

She feels so good about herself that when she passes Raquel in the hall and Raquel calls her a "~~Syannabe~~ sangro" Evie doesn't even feel bad. Well, not that bad. She looks at Raquel, raises her eyebrows and tips her head down and sticks out her lips. Ruck Raquel. It's so obvious she's just mad that Evie doesn't need her so much as she used to, and jealous of all the fun Evie is having.

A few nights later Evie's hanging out over at Dee Dee's house, trying on Dee Dee's clothes and makeup. Dee Dee suggests that Evie do something about her hair. After all, it's been blue for a few weeks and Evie now sports a good amount of black roots. Before she knows it, Evie lets Dee Dee talk her into dying her hair to a totally different color... blonde. "You'll be un taco de ojo!" Dee Dee claims as she holds up a box of hair color. It's the same blonde color that a lot of the Sangros have. Just like the one girl that Aaron was talking to at the Sangro pool party. Hmmm.

"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 wrapped package. "You know, this won't be the first time you've been a blonde."

Evie unwraps the gift box. Inside Evie finds a metal frame containing a photo of her and Dee Dee when they were nine. They are dressed up for the Sea Street Bathing Beauty Contest, in identical fake blonde wigs and a light blue two-piece bathing suit.

"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!"

Something catches Evie's eye. The picture is cropped strangely. "Your mother and Raquel?" she asks Dee Dee, running her finger across the jagged edge.

Dee Dee's cheeks flush. She quickly nods and clears her throat. "So yeah, speaking of costumes. The Villanova's Dia de los Muertos party should be a good time. And this time one of us will win the costume contest."

The girls laugh and hug each other. Unlike their forced embrace at the welcome back party, this hug is real.

"Evie, I'm so glad we're friends again," says Dee Dee, squeezing tighter. "I wish we could have been close when everything happened."

Evie blinks back tears. She almost lost Dee Dee once. She's never going to make that mistake again. Especially now that Evie's realized her other "best friend" is a total bitch.

Evie returns to school with her new blonde hair and a slightly padded bra borrowed from Dee Dee. All of the sudden she feels less small-chested muchacha and more my muchacha. Unlike Raquel who, at least according to Evie, seems to want to keep Evie in her shadow Dee Dee is encouraging about Evie's new look. And the response she receives at school is amazing. Evie is used to being seen as either Raquel's shadow or, as of lately, the freaky Flojo with the blue hair. But now she is getting a kind of attention she's never felt before, admiring attention, male attention. So she can't help

but feel a bit smug when she notices Raquel smacking Jose, who is so obviously checking her out.

From shopping trips to Fred Segal to backstage parties at Roc en Espanol concerts, Evie is having a blast within the Sangros. ~~Cruising with her~~ new friends is much different than life in the slow Flo lane. Raquel, Jose and Mondo never did anything but smoke out, watch TV or, if she was lucky, come watch her and ~~Aaron~~ surf off Sea Street. Okay, so she has missed her weekly surfing trips with Aaron, a *lot* actually. But other than that, things are definitely better now. Definitely.

Although Evie is sporting a new, semi Sangro look, there's still a lot of the same old, awkward Flojo underneath. For instance, she spends an entire hour worrying over her outfit for another little Sangro ~~get together~~ at a local club. Should Evie, as Dee Dee has suggested, give up her flip-flops for a pair of platforms sandals? Dee Dee says there'll be few college guys at this party. "Maybe you'll want to look a little more, y'know, mature," Dee Dee had suggested with a ~~naughty~~ *encouraging* smile. *those*

Evie opts for the platforms and ends up meeting a college guy at the party, an older cousin of Vivian, one of the Sangro girls. He is visiting from U.N.A.M. (University Nacional Autonoma de Mexico) and is breathing his achievements down Evie's chest. She feels pressured to be polite as he goes on and on about his family's money, his worldly travels and all the indigenous languages he speaks. *Yawn*. Evie is bored out of her mind. She looks around the party. Everyone is overly "dressed to impress" but to impress who? When you're all friends, Evie wonders, what's the big deal about trying to impress one another? Her padded bra pinches her sides and Dee Dee's platforms dig into her feet. She feels suddenly out of place and reaches for another Smirnoff Ice. She pulls herself away from Vivian's cousin and goes to look for Dee Dee who she finds lounging on the sofa and, of course, talking to her boyfriend on her cell phone.

As Evie approaches, she notices that Dee Dee is wearing a necklace she hasn't seen before – a ribbon with an abalone shell hanging from it. It's the *same* shell Aaron had found for Evie at the Bard Beach Party just weeks ago. He'd promised to "polish it up real good" for Evie, but he never did. Evie can't believe that Aaron would give her shell to Dee Dee! Her heart sinks. Okay, maybe Dee Dee *is* pining away for her "novio guapo" back in D.F., but it's obvious Aaron is *pinning* away for Dee Dee! And the worst part is at this exact moment, Evie has suddenly realized something—Evie might be doing some pining of her own.

As soon as Dee Dee hangs up with her boyfriend, she turns to Evie and asks, “Que Quieres, mujer?” Evie makes a catty comment about her love for her “so called boyfriend.” Dee Dee is confused, and insulted. She ~~coolly walks off~~ and Evie is left all by herself. Then Vivian comes over and demands to know why Evie is ignoring her cousin. Evie is getting overwhelmed and drunker by the second. She starts thinking about Raquel (Such drama, ~~this kind of drama~~, didn’t happen in the old days when it was just one of the Flojos.) Evie almost wished Raquel was there at that moment.

As Vivian goes on ~~and on~~ how rude Evie is ~~acting~~, Evie's stomach churns and her eyes blur from the liquor she's been sucking down. She leaves Vivian mid-conversation and races to the bathroom. There's a line of people waiting, but Evie stumbles right past

it did happen.

Too much
Raquel isn't Raquel
type of thing

closet

the back of Jose

them and pulls open the first door she sees. Unfortunately, the stall of her choice is occupied – by Raquel and Jose! What are *they* doing there?

"I'm sorry!" Evie blurts. *Oh! Um. ...*

But before she closes the door the Raquel and Jose pull apart. And Evie realizes something. *Raquel isn't Raquel.* The girl standing with her arms casually draped around Jose's neck, her lips puffy from kissing, is Alejandra!

Jose shrugs his shoulders and throws Evie a boyish, "Y Que?"

Evie backs up in complete and total shock. *defiant*

Evie is so drunk, she can't make heads or tails of what she has just seen. What she does know is that she wants to get out of this club as soon as possible. She calls Aaron from her cell phone and begs him to pick her up. *house*

The last thing she remembers is Aaron pulling up in his truck. She wants to tell him what happened, but as she starts to speak, she takes in big gulps of air and lets out long hard sobs. She also has to make him pull over three times so that she can puke. *e*

It's the next morning. There's a knock on Evie's bedroom door. Evie groans and rolls over and mumbles a groggy, "Come in," assuming the person knocking is some member of her family. But the door opens and there standing in the doorway with his hands in the pocket of his surf shorts is Aaron. Evie is instantly *awake* and horribly embarrassed. How much did she cry last night? How much did she tell Aaron? How much did she actually drink? She barely remembers him driving her home. Aaron says he was on his way home from Sea Street. He was surfing for hour but wanted to check if Evie was OK. He's acting caring, but also stern and a little bit annoyed. He doesn't understand what's been going on with Evie lately – the new look, the new friends. It's like she's a different person altogether. *some*

"I don't want to sound like your big brother, Evie...but I think you better check yourself before you do something really stupid. I mean, puking, three times? Come on." Why is he being such an asshole? *acting like Raquel*

Evie's embarrassment quickly grows to anger. Why should she be lectured by Aaron? *Raquel? last night*

She bites back hard. "Forget it. I'm sorry I called you. I won't make that mistake again." Evie gets back under the covers and rolls over to face the wall. A few minutes later she hears her bedroom door close as Aaron let's himself out. A minute later she hears his car pulling out of the driveway. Evie feels horrible. Her head and stomach hurt. She needed to vent but Aaron was the last person she wanted to insult. Ever since Evie finally admitted her true feelings to herself, they've grown even stronger. Just letting herself entertain the possibility of Aaron is making her want to be with him even more. And she just royally screwed up any chance she might have had. *looks at herself in the mirror. Puke dried to lumps of*

Her phone rings. It's Dee Dee. She's pissed about what Evie said the night before, but forgives Evie because of how drunk she was. "Alejandra said you nearly puked on her in the bathroom."

Clearly Dee Dee knows nothing about what Alejandra was really doing. Evie's heart starts pounding. She decides not to tell Dee Dee what she knows about Jose and Alejandra.

Seems no concern about last night ...

Dee Dee
wouldn't
care!

her mother
Lindsay
coming
in
to
clean.

his
brother's

his

what he
here is
a
concern

The girl
isn't Raquel

Snap

Dee Dee thankfully changes topics and talks excitedly about Villanova's upcoming Dia de los Muertos dance and how they should dress. Typical Sangro, Evie thinks. *All that matters is talking about the next fun event, and planning an outfit for it.* "We're supposed to dress up as our favorite dearly departed." Dee Dee goes on. "I was thinking that you, Aaron and I can go together. You can be Frida Kahlo, Aaron can be Diego Rivera and I can be Cristina, Frida's sister. Won't they be fun?" Despite her bad mood, Evie can't help but agree. It's only after she hangs up that Evie remembers—Didn't Diego Rivera have an affair with Frida's sister? Hmm...

Evie spends the entire morning and much of the afternoon trying to recover from the night before and figuring out how to deal with the news of what she saw. She's standing in the kitchen getting a bottle of ginger ale when her mother approaches. And all it takes is one comforting, "Evie are you feeling okay, *chier?*" Evie's bottled up so much hurt and confusion for so long that when she opens up a little it all starts pouring out, she can't stop crying. Evie talks about Dee Dee, Raquel, how she saw Jose with another girl, her jealousy of Dee Dee when it comes to Aaron.

It's the best talk they've had in a long time. Vicki Gomez offers ideas, not commands or overt instructions. She tells Evie to try and live her life as honestly as possible. When acting from an honest place in your heart, all of your actions and motivations become pure. Vicki is sure that her daughter's heart won't lead her astray. She tells her daughter to trust her gut and to do what she knows is right.

After the advice from her mother, Evie calls Raquel to tell her about what happened with Jose and Alejandra. She doesn't to be the bearer of bad news, but she knows she has no choice. Raquel picks up and sounds more than a little cold. But before Evie can second guess herself, she pours out the whole story. Raquel is totally silent for a full five minutes. "Wow Evie, you've sunk pretty low, calling me just to try and hurt me with your lies. I never thought you'd be like this, but then again I never thought I'd see you parading around in a pair of low-rise hoochie hip-huggers. Goodbye Evie, or whoever you are. I hope you figure it out soon, because I really have no idea," she says. And then she hangs up. For the rest of the day, Evie keeps her cell phone nearby, but Raquel does not phone her back. Evie feels sick and sad. And very, very lonely. She wishes she could be angrier at Raquel, but somehow she just can't find it in her.

It's Saturday night and Villanova's annual Dia de los Muertos Dance is on. Evie walks in with Dee Dee and Aaron and is instantly impressed—Colorful papeles picados hang from the gym's ceiling and the tables are covered in dark orange cloth with candles glowing on every table. Bright gold marigolds are scattered about and everyone is dressed as their favorite deceased person. There are a few Selenas, some Kurt Cobains, more Che's than Evie can count and so many Fridas. Oh, well, Evie thinks, so much for originality. Here goes losing another costume contest! Aaron goes to get Evie and Dee Dee some canela and dead bread. Evie wishes Dee Dee would just go away and leave Aaron and her alone. They've barely spoken to each other and Evie is desperate to clear the air between them.

Across the gym, Evie recognizes Jose (dressed as, of course, Che) dancing slow holding sexy film star Maria Felix a.k.a. Alejandra. Ugh. Evie wonders if Jose knows just how lucky he is that Raquel never comes to school functions.

As Evie leaves Dee Dee to look for Aaron, she suddenly sees Alejandra. This confuses Evie. Didn't she just *see* Alejandra a second ago? Evie looks back to the dance floor and realizes that Jose is actually with... *Raquel*. Evie looks back and sees Alejandra scanning the dance floor and Evie gets a sinking feeling. Before anyone knows it, Alejandra is charging across the gym towards Jose and Raquel. Suddenly Alejandra is screaming at Jose. She kicks Jose between the legs and everyone is yelling and laughing.

Raquel turns to Jose and suddenly looks very, very calm. And says in a stony voice, "~~You stupid little dickhead~~." Then she storms out. Evie joins Dee at the scene of the crime. She grabs Dee Dee's arm. → *Evie was right!*

"Come on," Evie says, chasing after Raquel. Even though Raquel was a complete *bitch* to her, Evie doesn't care. She loves Raquel and knows this must be one of the worst moments of her life. And Evie wants to be there for her, *bitchy* or not. "Let's go get her."

Dee Dee hangs back for a beat.

Evie turns around, "You coming?"

Dee Dee looks at Alejandra. Alejandra adjusts her *hair*. Dee Dee shakes her head. "That was so not cool." She follows Evie outside. Aaron holds Jose back to keep him from following the girls.

Outside, Raquel apologizes. She was only such a *bitch to* Evie because she was so worried that what Evie said was true. "I'm so sorry, Evie. I'm so, so sorry." Raquel is crying, full long wailing sobs. Evie has never seen Raquel like this. Dee Dee comes out of the gym as well and, despite seeing Raquel's tears, she hesitates to comfort her old friend, not knowing if her presence is just making things worse.

Then *Alejandra* comes out. She insists that Jose *told* her that he had broken up with Raquel. "I just wanna say I do *not* chase other women's men." *make it clear*

Dee Dee snickers. "Alejandra, don't lie. You know that's not true. You asked me if they were dating and I told you YES."

"What are you talking about?" Alejandra asks, baffled by the betrayal of another *Sangro*.

Dee Dee continues without hesitation. "I may like the way you dress and do your hair. But you know what? I don't hang out with *lying whores*."

Alejandra is stunned and embarrassed. "*Fucking Flojos*," she snickers and walks back toward the dance. It's back to just Evie, Raquel and Dee Dee. Las Tres, otra vez.

"Why did you have my back like that?" Raquel asks Dee Dee, wiping away her tears.

Dee Dee looks squarely at Evie and gives her a tiny smile. Then Dee Dee shrugs. "I don't know. I guess I can just kind of relate. If some girl was messing with my man, I'd be pretty fucking pissed off too."

The girls on their way out of the dance. "Wait, there's one thing I still need to do," Raquel says. Her *jaw is set* and her eyes are narrowed. Dee Dee and Evie exchange a look. That *jaw*, those eyes, can only mean one thing—Raquel is going inside to beat ~~Alejandra's ass~~ or Jose's ass or ~~some random person's ass~~. "Raquel wait!" Dee Dee and Evie chase her. They arrive back into the gym, where the dance is still in full swing. But instead of making a bee-line to Jose, or Alejandra, Raquel buys a little sugar skull from a school club's table. She gives it to Dee Dee. "Don't you want to make an offering?" She asks. "For your mom?"

Raquel

big change!

Spend time w/ dialogue.

Dee Dee need to prove to Raquel she is a good friend. Make Alejandra a liar. What's she need to go up

Alejandra who wants Dee Dee to go...

hearing fa

Dee Dee is overwhelmed, but her two best friends are at her side, supporting her. She writes in her mother's name on the slip that came with the skull. She moistens the paper and adheres it to the skull. Then all three girls go the huge altar at the head of the gym and place the sugar skull at the foot of the altar. It may be Dia de los Muertos, Evie exhales, but it's definitely a night of new life for Las Tres.

Later that night Dee Dee and Raquel decide to crash at Evie's. It is just like old times as the girls fret around the kitchen, making late night quesadillas and root beer floats. Evie points out that Dee Dee and Raquel are more alike than they realize. After all, they're both crazy control freaks and try to mold Evie into a version of themselves. "I am not your 'mini mi'ja!" Evie exclaims. After Raquel and Dee Dee own up to their stubbornness, for the sake of being honest, Evie throws out a question to Dee Dee.

"Can I ask you where you got that shell necklace?" *timidly*

"Aaron was fiddling with this little shell he had found on the beach," Dee Dee said. "I saw it and thought it was gorgeous." *fab.*

Instantly, Evie's heart breaks into a million pieces. It was her shell that Aaron had given away.

But Dee Dee's story continues. "So he told me that there was a store on Main that sold things that looked like it. So I went and bought one. Cute, right?"

Evie's face lights up. Evie's two friends look confused, and then slowly something dawns on both of them at the same time. "Oh shit," Raquel says with a smile.

"You like Aaron," Dee Dee finishes. Evie feels herself blush. "Um, no?" she says. ~~But her face is so red that she doesn't even bother trying to convince them.~~

"I knew it!" Dee and Raquel say at the same time. All three girls laugh.

"So what do you think I should do?" Evie asks. "What would you do if you were me?"

"It doesn't matter what we would do," Dee Dee says.

Raquel nods. "You're gonna need to figure this one out on your own Evie. ~~And if Aaron hurts you I swear to God I'll kick his ass.~~"

Evie tugs at her blonde hair under her braided Frida wig. Her friends are right. It's time for Evie to do what Evie would do. Which means it's time for her to be honest with Aaron, *+ most important herself.*

It is the following weekend and everyone is at Sea Street. Evie ~~has~~ ^{is} her hair dyed back to dark brown. She's ditched the platform shoes and most of the makeup. She's wearing ~~a pink Billabong tee-shirt~~ a knee-length denim pleated skirt and her Flojos. Not Sangro, not quite Flojo. Just Evie. *- Flojo? Uh?*

Raquel is on the hood of Dee Dee's car. Dee Dee holds up a little designer bag and brags, "Check it out. I don't know about what your old ex what's-his-name used to score for you, but *this* mota is...how do you Flojos say? Gnarly?" Dee Dee then answers a call to her cell phone. She coos to her boyfriend. "Ay, mi love, Thanksgiving break is only three weeks away. We will be together soon!" *Flip flops*

Evie and Aaron head to the water. "Weren't you supposed to hang out with Dee Dee today or something?" *wake on*

"Uh," Aaron starts slowly, "I'd rather just hang out with you, now that the old Evie is back. I dunno," he continues. "To be honest, I wasn't into the blue or the blonde

swimming *VW bug little bag to go box: to hold Raquel's stuff* 10

she back