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Dear Michele,

Thanks for this great outline! We are all very excited for the next fantastic HBC book!!!
Going forward we should work towards dividing this up into three solid acts. Also see
other comments embedded throughout. After you've had a chance to look this over, let's
discuss!

Book 2 Outline

Evie Gomez is still a sophomore at Villanueva High and faced with the reality that if she wants to graduate to the next grade, she will have to enroll in (gasp!) summer school. Her only option is to volunteer for a community service as an elective course. Nunca problema! Evie chooses to work at the California Coastal Horse Rescue. The CCHR is a perfect choice for her. It is only a few blocks away from Villanueva High and she'll be caring after "sweet horses in the sunny outdoors." Evie needs to be really upset about being forced to do this, at first. The menial duties, however, of shoveling manure and sorting smelly horse blankets irritate Evie, to say the least. At first she is resentful, but Evie slowly actually looks forward to the work and, most of all, seeing the many horses she takes care of. Evie soon fantasizes about becoming a spectacular horsewoman, Why? Seems like the real reason she likes this, at least to start, is because she likes Guillermo. And maybe a few other guys who work there. Eventually Evie develops a relationship with one broken horse. Maybe at the end her parents buy her a horse instead of a car? complete with matching braided manes for *both* her and Johnny Apples, her favorite Appaloosa.

This is confusing for Evie. Her whole life, well, her whole last semester anyway, she fantasized about being a pro surfer and now, is she actually thinking of trading in her flip flops for cowboy boots? It doesn't help that Guillermo, the soft spoken ranch hand from Central California, has caught her eye. *How* can that be? She is supposedly in utter deep smit with Alex, but feels intrigued by Guillermo and the exciting world of Mexican style rodeos and sunset horseback rides in the hills

Conflict - another
horse girl -
private
owners

Evie is unsure what it means to be a relationship and possibly in love. According to Dee Dee, her *amiga mejor*, being in a relationship means being *dedicada totalmente* – totally dedicated. Dee Dee has been with her boyfriend, Rocio, for over a year and insists that true love means you don't have an ojo flojo (lazy eye). "Your vision is straight and focused on only one person," she says. Poor Evie! Will she always wear the badge of flojoism?

Meanwhile Evie's *otra amiga mejor*, Raquel Diaz, is on the mend after breaking up with Jose. Raquel is still hurt and angry about how Jose cheated on her behind her back, but she is not one to show it. She projects a façade that she is, as always, "Mexcellent" and immediately shifts into mack mode. She focuses on Jose's bestfriend, Mondo, and once she hooks up with him, she has regained status. Mondo, after all, has his own wheels and party connections that Jose never had. Would it be better if we introduce a new character and Raquel dates him instead? Maybe someone we haven't met yet who's even "higher up" on the coolness food-chain than either Jose or Mondo. Unlike Dee Dee, Raquel maintains that men can't be trusted and insists to Evie that should she definitely not focus on one boy and should keep Guillermo on the side. "Just in case."

Evie isn't clear how her self-induced love triangle will pan out, but there is *one* thing she *is* sure about -- she is finally going to turn sixteen and a big party for her is in the works. Her mother is ecstatic to finally plan her sweet sixteen party ("You and your sister both denied me the privilege of throwing either of you quinceaneras!") and she will get the opportunity to show off her hostess skills to "party planning rival" Kitty Diaz, Raquel's mother. Evie is excited about her birthday, namely because she will finally get her driver's license and, maybe, her own car. "I love horses," she asserts, "but I don't want to ride one to school!"

On the flip side, Evie wonders how can she possibly invite Guillermo, who she has been increasingly close with, to her birthday bash while Alex is her date, not to mention her boyfriend. If Dee Dee is right, she only focus on Alex the whole night, but then again....Guillermo, sigh.

Meanwhile, a change of gears shifts in the Gomez household. For one, Sabrina, Evie's older and only sister, arrives home from Stanford University. She is depressed after the break up from her long term boyfriend, Robert, and takes a quarter off from

school to be with family. The usual cheerful and enthusiastic Sabrina is low in spirits and her depression makes Evie wonder why anyone would ever want to be in a relationship in the first place. They only break your heart. Maybe Raquel is right.

Another arrival to Rio Estates is Rocio, Dee Dee's long distance boyfriend from Mexico City. He travels to California in honor of Evie's birthday party Seems hard to believe that he'd come just for Evie's birthday, since he's never met Evie. and comes a few weeks early to spend time with Dee Dee and her family. Frank De la Fuente and Graciela are more than delighted. Rocio comes from one of the most upstanding families of the Polanco District and would be a fine catch for any young lady, someday. Dee Dee is only 16 years old and, of course, much too young to marry anyone, but her father and Graciela feel it's never too early to nurture a promising relationship. What if Rocio comes and does propose marriage. At first Dee Dee says yes, but then at the end of the book she realizes she's really not ready to be engaged (even a long engagement) at the end Rocio replaces the engagement ring with a promise ring?

Evie's two *amiga mejors* have two different attitudes towards the opposite sex and it doesn't help that the uncharacteristically sad Sabrina is around. It scares Evie to see her sister in such a state. She would never want to experience similar pain down the road (You either get married or you break up," Sabrina predicts grimly. "Are you really going to marry Alex?"). This advice should probably come from Raquel, not Sabrina. What purpose does Sabrina serve in this story? We need her to add dramatic conflict to the book in some way, not just give Evie advice. Also, the best advice should come from Evie's friends, since they're who the story is really about. Evie thinks maybe it would be a good thing to Guillermo on the side, so she won't ever be hurt by Alex.

But it's Evie who has the capacity to hurt people, in this case, Alex. As she works more hours than necessary at the CCHR, she is spending less time with Alex and this becomes a sore subject between them. One evening she stays late to brush down the horses and Guillermo stays to help her. Alex shows up to surprise her and is shocked to find her in the stall, laughing it up with a strange boy he has heard nothing about. At one point, he huffs that maybe she doesn't have time for a boyfriend and maybe he shouldn't be her date at her big birthday party. His accusation and suggestion crushes Evie. Is Alex, keeping her from the one thing she supposedly loves -- the equestrian life? Or is it her

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own guilt over her attraction to Guillermo that bothers her? Maybe the truth really does hurt?

Finally, Evie has a heart to heart talk with her older sister, Sabrina. She learns that there are many levels of commitment within a relationships and it's best not to compare one with another. Yes, one should compromise, but to make sacrifices is totally another thing. Sabrina confesses Why is this a confession at the end? Evie should know all this upfront. to Evie that her ex-boyfriend had wanted her transfer to the Midwest with him, so he could attend grad school. When Sabrina told him she couldn't do it, he broke up with her. "I felt I was being selfish. That I loved myself more than him." she tells Evie. "But honestly, Evie. I could never imagine being so far from California, the ocean. I'm a cali chica, to the core."

Prior to Evie's birthday party, many issues get resolved. Raquel learns it isn't right to be using Mondo to get back at Jose and both she and Mondo come to a surprisingly cordial break up. Evie confesses to her Alex her feelings towards Guillermo and they work it out. Not sure this is what readers want. Maybe Evie *doesn't* need to end up with Alex. Also, what actually happens between Evie and Guillermo. Does she cheat on Alex? Sort of seems like she should, since this is the basis for the dramatic conflict of her story. Dee Dee continues to maintain a dedicated focus on Rocio. (Need suggestion to "spice" Dee Dee up a bit) See above suggestion about Rocio proposing. Maybe Dee Dee gets all into the idea of getting married and then at the end changes her mind? Not sure if this will work or if readers would like this...let's discuss!

Finally, the night of Evie's birthday, Evie is heartbroken that her parents don't get her own car. How could they?! Her parents remind her they had repeatedly told her that her GPA needed to be higher than C average. They do, however, present her with her very own vanity plates, a incentive to work harder.

The vanity plates say RioChic and Evie is, again, slightly disappointed. "We wanted to have RioChica, like you wanted," her mother explains. "But the DMV said it was too many letters, so we had to compromise."

Raquel points out that RioChic is much, much cooler. "We are Rio Girls, and we have our own kind of chic – *Rio Chic*." Dee Dee agrees and because they are her *amigas*



mejors, with *ideas mejors*, Evie couldn't agree more. Besides, in some relationships, you have to learn how to compromise.

Question: More about Evie's mother, father? Dee Dee needs something more!