

THE RIVERA GIRLS

Written by

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INT. ROOM OF HOUSE IN THE BARRIO - MORNING

Music "El Rey" by Jose Alfredo Jimenez is playing. Eight-year-old RICARDO RIVERA is laying in bed only wearing underwear briefs, his legs are crossed and upper body propped up by a few pillows. Reading a comic book. He is clumsily puffing on a Prince Albert cigarette.

RICARDO (V.O.)

My first impressions of Latina women occurred in the summers I spent with *mi tia* Maria. I was eight and streetwise. Every year, my mother went to Salinas to pick up the crops. She dropped me off at my *tia's* two-room tenement in the barrio. I was the undisputed king there. My aunt never married so I became her only child. I adored the old lady. But she had her faults. Pearl Beer and Prince Albert cigarettes were two. I'd watch her roll cigarettes. She made it into an art form. Once in a while, she'd let me take a couple of puffs. She refused to let me sip the beer. But I got all the black Folgers coffee I wanted. That was nice.

Old Hispanic woman shuffles into the room and takes the cigarette from Ricardo's mouth. She puts it between her lips.

MARIA

Un cafecito, mijo?

RICARDO

Si. Cafe con azucar. Are there gingerbread pigs?

Maria nods and goes into the kitchen to get coffee and the gingerbread pig.

RICARDO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This was all before Dr. Spock and the gringo Ph.Ds and his books on how to raise kids came along and fucked things up. My aunt wasn't a good example, I thought all women made caldo de res, tamales on Christmas and posole. Back then, I thought all Latina women were like my *Tia*.

(MORE)

RICARDO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I was so fucking wrong.

Maria shuffles back in from the kitchen.

MARIA
I'm going to Don Felix's and get
you a *maranito*. Azucar.

RICARDO
Buy a can of spinach too, tia.

Maria nods and walks out the door.

RICARDO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Oh, yeah, I was a Popeye fan back
then. Big time. I believed spinach
could give me strength to beat back
the barrio bullies and thugs. I
believed in a lot of things.
Overall, life was sweet in those
summers of my life.

Ricardo reaches for his coffee, stirs coffee with a spoon and
takes sips.

Decades later, something happened.
Hispanic females gradually turned
into brown versions of gringo
bitches.

I swore it was the Latina goddess.
She came down from who knows where
and pulled the plug on the old
Hispanic prototypes. They no longer
fetched, and always had the last
word. And, out of spite, the
goddess paid me a special visit one
day.

Ricardo goes to the kitchen and pours himself some coffee. He
puts a donut in his mouth and chews.

RICARDO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It was payback. For the pampered
days. Days when I ruled the roost
at my Tia's house. The goddess
laughed and wham. Grabbed my huevos
and put a *chingon* curse on them.
I'd never have a son.

(MORE)

RICARDO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 A boy who might play at Dodger
 Stadium or lace up and step into a
 boxing ring to fight on an HBO
 card. *Nunca.*

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DINNER TABLE AT HOUSE - THIRTY-FOUR YEARS LATER - DAY
 CLOSE SHOT - 44-YEAR-OLD Richardo's Bowed Head

ALEX (O.S.)
 Dad! Dad!

OLIVIA (O.S.)
 Dad!

DIANE (O.S.)
 Ricardo.

Ricardo jerks his head up back into reality.

Ricardo's POV of his four daughters, OLIVIA, 20, VANESSA, 18,
 NIKKI, 15 and ALEX, 12, and Ricardo's wife, DIANE. All
 sitting at dinner table looking at him with looks of concern.

RICARDO
 What?

DIANE
 You okay?

Ricardo nods

DIANE (CONT'D)
 Are you going to say grace so we
 can eat?

RICARDO
 Grace...Yeah...Sure.

VANESSA
 You alright dad?

ALEX
 He looks pale.

OLIVIA
 Something wrong?

RICARDO
 I'm alright. I'm fine, okay?

Ricardo bows his head and the others follow suit.

RICARDO (CONT'D)

Lord, we thank you for this food to
nourish our bodies. We ask for your
blessing in our lives and in the
lives of those we love.

Chorus of amens.

DIANE

Why are you wearing a cap? Take it
off. What did I tell you about
wearing caps to the dinner table?

ALEX

Mom, the Dodgers won. Beat the
Orioles. And, guess what? they
broke a season record for most
wins. One-hundred and six wins.

DIANE

I don't care if they won the Super
Bowl. Take the cap off.

ALEX

(Taking cap off)
The Super Bowl is football.

DIANE

Whatever. No caps at the dinner
table.

Family begins eating.

RICARDO

(To Alex)
Did you record the game like I
asked you?

Alex winks, smiles and gives Ricardo a thumbs up.

RICARDO (CONT'D)

Thanks, sweetheart.
(To Diane)
I definitely need a man cave with
all the sports channels. A cave
with a huge screen. Wow.

ALEX

(Enthusiastic)
Yesss.

VANESSA

Hijack mom's sewing room, Dad?

DIANE

(To Vanessa)

What about your bedroom? And, we move your things into the garage. Put your Dad's cave in that room.

ALEX

I vote yes.

DIANE

No caves. No caps.

ALEX

What about cell phones. Mom, I need my cell phone when I go back to school.

DIANE

Denied. When you're texting friends when you were supposed to be doing homework, there are consequences.

ALEX

Okay but if I'm robbed or taken hostage or something like that happens at school, I won't be able to call 911.

DIANE

Borrow Sarah's phone.

ALEX

What if she loses her phone?

DIANE

Then if you are taken hostage, she'll keep you company.

ALEX

Mom...

DIANE

End of conversation. No phone for a week.

Ricardo's other daughters are unusually quiet. Ricardo is suspicious.

RICARDO

So, uh, how's school, Olivia?

OLIVIA

Good. Daddy, can you check my engine light. It's on.

RICARDO

Sure. Vanessa. What's the plan?

VANESSA

Narrowed it down to Stanford or Berkley.

RICARDO

Nikki, you're real quiet, *mija*. Something going on?

Nikki looks at her mother.

DIANE

She has something to tell you.

ALEX

(Jittery)
Uh, can I be excused. ESPN highlights of the Dodger game are on?

DIANE

(to Alex)
Stay put.

RICARDO

This sounds serious.

DIANE

Let's just discuss this after dinner. This is a bad idea.

RICARDO

No, we can all calmly deal with this right now. So, Nikki, on a scale from one to ten. Ten being a homicide. What are we talking about?

ALEX

I'm curious. What's one. Ditching school?

VANESSA

I'd say this is definitely a six-point five.

OLIVIA

I'd say seven point five.

ALEX

No way, an easy eight.

DIANE

Quiet. All of you. Nikki tell your father what you did?

RICHARDO

Nikki.

NIKKI

What? I didn't kill anybody, okay. I got my nose pierced. See.

She turns her head to show Ricardo.

RICARDO

Cabron! You put a hole in your nose!

DIANE

Ricardo, lower your voice.

RICARDO

(Lower voice)
You put a hole in your nose, and you didn't bother to tell us you were going to do this?

NIKKI

What? You would have said, no.

RICARDO

You're dam right we would have said, no.

DIANE

Calm down, Ricardo.

RICARDO

Calm down!? Take the nose ring off and don't wear it again.

DIANE

Not now. Wait until we finish eating.

ALEX

What about the tattoo?

RICARDO

What!?

DIANE

Alex, you open your mouth one more time, and you're going to be grounded for a week.

RICARDO

What tattoo?

DIANE

Our daughter made some wrong choices. She got a tattoo. a tiny one.

RICARDO

What the...

DIANE

Ricardo!

NIKKI

It's my body, okay. It's just an artistic expression. Body art.

RICARDO

It's bullshit.

DIANE

Did you just say grace with that mouth?

RICARDO

(Tight jaw)
Nikki, as long as you and your sisters live in this house, your souls belong to your mother and I. Do all of you understand that?

OLIVIA

(Above a whisper)
Talk about gangster government.

RICARDO

Did you say something, Olivia?

OLIVIA

Naw. Just thinking out loud about an exam.

RICARDO

Do I make myself clear? Well?

Four reluctant nods from the Rivera girls.

RICARDO (CONT'D)

Good. No drawings on bodies! Or, piercings, tattoos, long nails, shaved heads or purple hair, period.

(To Nikki)

What were you thinking?

ALEX

Dad. This gringa Ph.d on Doctor Phil said teen-aged hormones can go wild. Shut down the brain.

(clicks finger)

Just like that.

NIKKI

(to Alex)

Shut up.

Diane gives Nikki and Alex dirty looks.

VANESSA

You should put her on Ritalin. She doesn't get it. She obviously has ADD.

OLIVIA

Big time. This girl is out of control.

NIKKI

(To Sisters)

Shut up, all of you!

RICARDO

Hey!

DIANE

All of you be quiet, now!

(to Nikki)

You're restricted. Two weeks.

RICARDO

Three. And, no cell phone.

NIKKI

Why!? I didn't kill anybody. That's buuuull.

The other girls are shocked.

OLIVIA

(Above a whisper)

Wow.

DIANE

(Nikki)

You ever talk back to your father and me like that and I will put your little ass in the basement until you're thirty. *Entiendes?* Body art is garbage, and not our values. Do you understand?

Nikki nods.

NIKKI

(Low voice/pleading)

Mom. Antonio asked me to go with him to his sister's *Quinceanera* which is in three weeks.

DIANE

Tell Antonio to get another date. You're not going. You'll still be on restriction.

RICARDO

Who the hell is Antonio?

NIKKI

A boy in my English class.

ALEX

A dork. Big time.

OLIVIA

Match made in heaven. I'd say.

NIKKI

Shut up!

Diane glares at Olivia and Alex.

OLIVIA

Sorry, mom.

RICARDO

The rule. Okay. The rule is nobody in his house dates until they turn sixteen.

NIKKI

I'll be sixteen in two months.

RICARDO

So wait after you're sixteen and off restriction. Bring the boy here so we can meet him.

VANESSA
(Whispers to Olivia)
More like an enhanced
interrogation. Techniques the CIA
uses.

Olivia and Vanessa giggle.

DIANE
(To Vanessa)
The CIA what?

VANESSA
Oh, nothing.

Ricardo's stare shuts it down.

ALEX
All the boys I know are geeks.
Except Derek. He plays shortstop.

RICARDO
Let's see the tattoo. Roll up your
sleeve.

ALEX
It's on her cheek, dad.

RICARDO
Turn your head.

ALEX
The big cheek

RICARDO
What?
(To Nikki)
Where is it?

VANESSA
The one south of the border.

RICARDO
Where?

OLIVIA
The left *nalga*, dad. The big cheek.

RICARDO
(To Diane)
You knew and didn't say a word?

DIANE

I found out about it yesterday. So calm down. We were at the mall trying on some dresses. I was livid. We had a long talk. That's when she told me about the piercing.

RICARDO

I can't believe this. I'm the last one to know anything in this family.

DIANE

The tattoo is of Betty Boop.

RICARDO

Betty who?

ALEX

Boop. The cartoon character. She's on Youtube. She always says, bop, bo bedo. Talks like my friend Amy.

RICARDO

God. I can't believe this *desmadre*. Puts a hole in her ear and a tattoo of Betty Boop on her butt. Like some biker *vieja*.

NIKKI

My friends' parents don't think it's a big deal. Megan has one. Her parents are cool about it.

RICARDO

No mi importa how other people raise their kids. As long as we are alive, *no nos van a faltar el respecto*. Do you understand that?

Nikki wipes away tears. She nods.

RICARDO (CONT'D)

What about the rest of you?

Alex, Vannesa and Olivia nod.

DIANE

Quiet. Everyone eat and nobody say a word.

ALEX

What about Dad? Can he speak?

Diane glares at Alex who nervously smiles and starts eating.

INT. RICARDO'S OFFICE IN THE RIVERA HOUSE – NIGHT

Ricardo is using his computer and going through some work notes on a notebook. There is a KNOCK on the door.

RICARDO

Come in.

Vanesa enters the room.

VANESSA

(Cheerfully)

Hi, Dad.

RICARDO

Hi. What's up?

VANESSA

Dad. About Nikki.

RICARDO

What about Nikki?

VANESSA

Keeping her from going to the Quinceanera with this boy, Antonio, is rather harsh. Don't you think?

RICARDO

No. Anything else.

VANESSA

Dad. Be reasonable. It'll be a special day for Nikki.

RICARDO

We have rules. Break the rules suffer the consequences.

VANESSA

Nikki should be punished. But the Quinceanera date with Antonio? Seriously?

RICARDO

Your mother and I have made our decision. End of conversation.

VANESSA

(Flabbergasted)

Right. What's the use? At least you can reason with mom.

RICARDO

Your mother and I aren't happy about any of this. You are the oldest and knows the rules.

VANESSA

Oh, yeah. I was the first born and I got the tablets when you and mom came down from the mountain top.

RICARDO

I'm busy. So go tell your sisters emissary mission failed.

VANESSA

(Huffs)
Whatever

Vanessa leaves.

INT. RIVERA HOUSE HALLWAY – MORNING

Ricardo is sitting in the hallway near to the restroom with a towel on his shoulder. He is waiting for Alex to come out of the bathroom

RICARDO (V.O.)

The Latina goddess could have thrown one lousy male DNA my way. Instead, I got four talkative, opinionated, beautiful daughters. And soon I'll have boyfriends come knocking at the door. With the yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir. Totalbullshit. Wolves in sheeps clothing wanting to hit home runs with my daughters. And, I'm out vetoed, out voted and now this, Betty Boop and a nose ring. Not even the Marine Corps prepared me for any of this.

Olivia walks out toweling her wet hair.

ALEX

(To Ricardo)
You're up, dad.

RICARDO

Thanks.

ALEX

Please lift the lid, Dad.

Ricardo nods and gets up to go into the bathroom, starts peeing.

RICARDO (V.O.)

One son, just one. Instead, I share a hallway bathroom in the morning with a twelve-year-old. All the other bathrooms are taken. I'm out hustled. Out maneuvered. A son and a man cave would have been nice to share beers, watch an NFL game and bond with rounds of high-fives and slices of pizza. I know the Latina goddess just fell off her bar stool, laughing.

CUT TO:

INT. RICARDO'S REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY

Ricardo, wearing a suit and tie, is on the telephone talking to another businessman.

RICARDO

Send the plumbing work to Lorenzo. Yeah, and have Rudy Garcia do the electrical...They both do good work.

The door opens and Diane pops her head in and smiles. She waves at him. He motions for her to come in. She does.

RICARDO (CONT'D)

(PHONE)

Jesse Crownley did the cement work on the last project...Yeah..I agree...Crownley, it is...Hey, I got to go. My wife is here...Yeah, pencil me for lunch. Call my secretary. She'll check my calendar...okay. Bye.

Ricardo hangs up.

RICARDO (CONT'D)

Hi sweetheart. You look beautiful. So, how's my main squeeze?

DIANE

Exhausted. Mentally drained.

RICARDO

Really? Work that bad?

DIANE

Work? Home. Young female hormones are running amuck.

RICARDO

We need to be firm. Put up a united front. Stand by our decision.

DIANE

I know. Well, they've launched a charm offensive. It's frightening. They've been using and sneaking words to snuggle up to me. Oh mom, if you are going to dinner with dad wear that blue dress. We love it. Yeah, you look like Princess Diana when you wear it, mom.

RICARDO

I'll go out on a limb. Alex made the Princess Diana remark.

DIANE

(Laughs)
Yep.

RICARDO

They go from one *pendejada* to another. But you get the charm offense. I get the silent treatment. Obviously, the wolf pack sees you as the weak link here.

DIANE

(Chuckles)
Yeah. You know my experience prosecuting gangsters and thugs didn't prepare me for this. Gawd. The onslaught of adolescent BS, whines and drama sucks up all the oxygen. I feel I'm going to suffocate sometimes.

RICARDO

I still think our wills should include a clause that in case we get murdered or sudden disappear, PETA gets our money.

DIANE

Well, perhaps, we were a little too harsh.

RICARDO

No way. She needs to learn. What are we going to do if one of them walks in one day with green hair, tats all over her arms and a bone through her nose?

DIANE

That's a bit of an exaggeration. Give your daughter some credit. Nikki is creative and intelligent. Came with a big heart. Sweet smile.

RICARDO

And, the female hormones kicked in one day, and she pierced her body and put a tattoo on her butt without telling us. And, she thought she'd never get caught. But, hey, she'll have a sweet smile when she is sliding up and down a pole.

DIANE

Oh, stop. They're good girls. It's tough growing up in the Age of Social Media with all the drugs and peer pressure twenty-four-seven.

RICARDO

(Kisses Diane)
None of them are as beautiful as their mom.

DIANE

You are starting to sound like Alex.

RICARDO

(Glances at watch)
Well, we'll finish this conversation at dinner. The Friday rush-hour is about to start.

They both leave the office.

CUT TO:

INT. RIVAS HOUSE LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Olivia and her boyfriend, Michael, are watching the football game. Alex comes in with a cell phone in her hand.

OLIVIA
Did you call?

ALEX
Yeah. Two large pepperoni and
mushroom pizzas.

MICHAEL
What about anchovies?

OLIVIA
No! Gross.

ALEX
Yuk.

OLIVIA
Was Eric there?

ALEX
Yeah. And, *papi chulo* is the
delivery guy tonight.

OLIVIA
(Smirk)
Good.

MICHAEL
What's with this *bufo* delivery
dude?

ALEX
His name is Eric. Eric the pizza
guy.

OLIVIA
Esta tan chulo.

ALEX
A hunk. And, when he wears a tight
shirt, his muscles pop out. I bet
he has a six-pack.

MICHAEL
Anybody can get pumped up.

ALEX

Yeah. But not everybody can get *chulo*.

MICHAEL

(Points to his head)
I've got smarts. And, brawn.

ALEX

Yeah. Right. A jock with a high IQ.
That's an oxymoron.

MICHAEL

I'm not a moron.

OLIVIA

Oxymoron. That means...

MICHAEL

(Curt)
I know what it means.

OLIVIA

You're interesting, Babe. Kind of
cute. Athletic and a great sense of
humor. But Eric. He is sooo
gorgeous.

Olivia kisses Michael who GRUMBLES.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

What's Nikki doing? She's been more
quiet than usual.

ALEX

She's in her room painting a
portrait of her goldfish, Cisco.

OLIVIA

That's so weird. All this has to be
from Dad's side of the family. You
ever see our Aunt Carmelita? The
engine light is still on, and
nobody's ever bothered to check
under the hood.

ALEX

Think mom will work on Dad?

OLIVIA

(Shrugs shoulder)
So, we'll have to continue working
on mom.

(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

The Latina sisterhood spawned in hell is in full battle array.

MICHAEL

I kind of feel sorry for your Dad. You guys ganging up on him and everything.

ALEX

Men are always sticking up for each other. Covering up and sticking up for each other. No matter how stupid or wrong they are.

Vanesa enters the room.

VANESSA

Where's Nikki?

ALEX

Upstairs painting a portray of Cisco.

VANESSA

Seriously? Didn't she just paint a friend's turtle? Weird.

ALEX

Yep.

OLIVIA

Her poems are so spacey. The songs, she writes, well, are pretty good though. The guitar playing is annoying sometimes.

ALEX

Dad was pissed when he caught her playing at two in the morning, the other night.

OLIVIA

My biggest fear is that she's going to turn us all into vegans.

VANESSA

What's wrong with that?

OLIVIA

No more pepperoni on the pizza.

ALEX

Or, deliveries by Eric.

VANESSA

What's with you guys and this Eric guy?

ALEX

He's so hot.

OLIVIA

Male-model hot.

MICHAEL

He's probably gay.

ALEX

You wish.

VANESSA

(To Olivia and Alex)

You two are acting ridiculous over some good-looking screwball who tosses pizzas and probably fixes flat tires on his days off.

ALEX

You're soooo picky.

OLIVIA

And, I can't figure out why.

VANESSA

Let me help out. Brains? Beauty?

ALEX

But no boyfriend.

VANESSA

Priorities. Look it up. Good grades. Working towards a masters. And, not chasing after pizza guys or football players.

MICHAEL

Heeeey, is that a cheap shot?

ALEX

I'd say yes.

OLIVIA

(To Michael)

Ignore her. She is just jealous.

VANESSA
(Sarcastically)
Oooh, yeah.

A car pulls up to the driveway. Alex goes and peeks out the window.

ALEX
Papi Chulo is here.

OLIVIA
How do I look?

ALEX
Good, and me?

OLIVIA
Okay, I guess, for a twelve-year-old.

ALEX
What's that suppose to mean?

MICHAEL
It means that you should have a crush on a prepubescent kid in a boy band? Someone like that?

ALEX
Shut up.

There is a knock on the door. Alex opens the door. It is ERIC, a tall Latino with soft, dark eyes.

ERIC
You ordered two pepperoni pizzas with mushrooms?

ALEX
Yes, thank you. Can you put the pizzas on the table please?

Eric goes and puts the pizzas on the table.

ERIC
There you go.

OLIVIA
I can't reach it.

Eric goes and puts the pizzas closer to Olivia. Michael frowns. Olivia checks out Eric's butt.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
(Mouths to Vanessa and Alex)
Wow.

Disinterested, Vanessa does an eye-roll. Eric looks at the TV.

ERIC
(To Michael)
What's the score?

MICHAEL
Raiders by a field goal. Who's your team?

ERIC
Niners. Yours?

MICHAEL
Hardcore Raider fan here. You played football?

ERIC
Football? Yeah. On a scholarship from Vanderbilt. Wide receiver.

MICHAEL
I play defense end for Cal Poly. I was All-City at Santa Barbara High. I love the explosive action on the line.

ERIC
Stretching out to catch a pass in the end zone. An adrenaline high.

MICHAEL
Try chasing down a quarterback and getting a sack.

ERIC
Try laying out a guy after an interception. Ears ringing after that hit.

Looking bored, Vanessa does an eye-roll.

VANESSA
Wow. We are witnessing two primates thumping their chests to impress the female chimps. A National Geographic moment.

Eric laughs.

ERIC

That's funny. Sorry. I didn't mean to sound machismo or like some brute...I haven't seen you here before. Are you a friend of the family?

VANESSA

(Disinterested)
No.

OLIVIA

She's the ugly step sister slash nerd slash wet blanket.

ALEX

She's our older sister. Sadly, a biological sister.

ERIC

Nerd, huh?

VANESSA

Working towards a Master's Degree in economics.

OLIVIA

Do you work at The Tire Monkey on State Street, Eric?

ERIC

No, why?

OLIVIA

Your face looks familiar. I went to buy a tire there. What do you do?

ERIC

I'm a first year med student at USC. My brother owns Max's Pizza. I help him out when I can.

MICHAEL

Vanessa hates football. Baseball. Basketball Loves hanging out at museums and going to wine tastings. She watches PBS. Need I say more?

VANESSA

And, Michael is an avid pro wrestling fan. Need I say more?

MICHAEL

I know it's fake. Blue-collar theater. So what?

VANESSA

Theater? More like the Marx Brothers on steroids at Muscle Beach.

OLIVIA

Yes, it's entertainment. But I'm still crazy about my guy. Warts and all.

ERIC

Well, that's Twenty-two dollars and ninety cents.

Alex gives him cash.

ALEX

Here you go. Keep the change.

ERIC

Thanks.

Eric who is about to leave.

ERIC (CONT'D)

(To Vanessa)

Oh,uh, can I give you my business card? Just in case you need some extra bread sticks or toppings. Or if you have any questions about the pizza or delivery problems. I'll be glad to help.

VANESSA

(Bored. Lame smile)
Sure. Why not.

Eric gives her his card.

ERIC

Well, you folks enjoy the pizza.

(To Vanessa)

Nice talking to you.

Eric leaves. Alex and Olivia go peek out the window.

OLIVIA

Check out that frame. The mozzarella. Wow.

ALEX
What a package.

VANESSA
You guys are disgusting. Just like
Dad says, *viejas locas*.

Eric drives away. Alex and Olivia sit down.

MICHAEL
(Teasing)
As a Latino dude, I resent those
comments. We are more than sex
objects. You don't respect men. Our
needs and emotions.

ALEX
Oh, pleeeeezzz.

MICHAEL
You know if I did that with a hot
girl delivering pizzas, you three
would be all squawking women's
liberation, civil rights and
misogynistic, male-pig behavior

OLIVIA
(To Michael)
It's different with women. We love
to shop. It's like going to Rome,
looking up and seeing
Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel.
You're in awe. But does that mean
that we're going to take the
Sistine Chapel home with us?

ALEX
Nooo. But guys will try to rip it
off the ceiling, steal it and take
it home. Impulsive creatures.

OLIVIA
And, they'll brag about it to other
Neanderthals when they all
congregate at the man caves.

ALEX
Right.
(To Vanessa)
Are you going to call him?

She looks at Eric's business card.

VANESSA
 (Dismissive)
 No. This guy is a player.

She tears it up.

ALEX
 (To Vanessa)
 I'd call. Just to get extra
 toppings.

VANESSA
 I'm sure you would. Let's eat. I'm
 getting a headache.

Everyone grabs a slice of pizza.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
 Save a couple of slices for Nikki.

Car drives into the driveway. Alex peeks out the window.

ALEX
 Mom and Dad.

VANESSA
 Ditch the pizza. Ditch it or Dad
 will think we aren't angry anymore.

MICHAEL
 (Puzzled)
 What? That doesn't make sense.

OLIVIA
 Just ditch the pizza, Michael. Now.

MICHAEL
 Hey, I'm not upset at Mr.
 Rodriguez.

OLIVIA
 Ditch it!

Pizza slices go back into a box. The two boxes are put under
 couch.

VANESSA
 Frowns. Sad faces. Everybody. War
 faces.

MICHAEL
 Why do I have to be sad?

OLIVIA
Frown! Now.

Michel instantly frowns. Ricardo and Diane walk into the house.

VANESSA
Hi mom.

OLIVIA
Mom! Glad your home.

ALEX
Mom. You look sooo nice.

DIANE
Hi, everybody.

MICHAEL
(Smiling)
Hi, Mrs.Rodriguez. Mr..

Olivia elbows Michael. He GROANS. Ricardo is sniffing the air.

RICARDO
Smells like cheese. With a hint of pepperoni.

More sniffing before he spots the pizza boxes.

RICARDO (CONT'D)
Wow. Look what I found.

He opens a box and looks inside.

RICARDO (CONT'D (CONT'D)
Yep, I was right. Pepperoni.
Mushrooms. But no, anchovies.

MICHAEL
That's what I said.

He takes out a slice and bites it.

RICARDO
(To Diana)
Want a slice, honey?

DIANE
No, I'm stuffed.

RICARDO
Anyone want a slice? Anyone?

MICHAEL

Sure.

OLIVIA

(Whispers to Michael)
Stick your hand out there, and I'll
break it.

MICHAEL

On second thought, no. I'm not
hungry.

Michael, Olivia, Alex and Vanessa shake their heads.

DIANE

I'm going to bed. I'm exhausted.
Where is Nikki?

ALEX

Upstairs, painting a pet.

DIANE

Another turtle for a friend?

ALEX

No, a portrait of Cisco.

DIANE

Her goldfish?

ALEX

Yeah.

DIANE

Aw, that's sweet.

VANESSA

Have a good time, mom?

DIANE

Oh, it was great. Your father asked
the pianist to play *Paloma Querida*
just for me. The beach was calm. A
full moon. Just beautiful,
everything. Just right.

RICARDO

Tell them about the view from our
table.

DIANE

Breathtaking. Silhouettes of
fishing boats.

(MORE)

DIANE (CONT'D)

The moonlight shimmering on the water...Well, good night, everyone.

Everybody says good night. Diane goes upstairs. Ricardo is eating pizza and watching the game.

RICARDO

(To Michael)
Who's ahead?

MICHAEL

Oakland by two field goals.

Olivia gets up and snatches up one pizza box.

OLIVIA

We are going upstairs, Michael, to watch a movie. Care to join us?

MICHAEL

(Agonizing)
What movie? The game is almost over.

OLIVIA

Runaway Bride. Julia Roberts is in it. A classic.

MICHAEL

(Frustrated)
Oh. Wow. The game is close. I can catch up after the game.

OLIVIA

(Sternly)
Michael.

MICHAEL

Nice talking to you, Mr. Rivera.

Everybody, except Ricardo, get up.

RICARDO

Yessss. Oakland is about to score.
(To Michael)
Hey.

MICHAEL

What? Woow. Yesss, go Raiders!

RICARDO

(Patting couch)
Sit.What is it? Runaway Bride Chick flick or Oakland Raiders? Sit.

(MORE)

RICARDO (CONT'D)

Julia Roberts or Monday Night Football? Seriously, isn't it obvious? You? An All-City linebacker. Raider Nation resident. Oakland's inside the red zone about to score. Four minutes left?

OLIVIA

Michael, we are moving upstairs. Are you going to join us?

RICARDO

(Shouts watching the TV set)
Yes! Go, Raiders? Did you see that catch.

ALEX

Dad, you're not a Raider fan.

RICARDO

Rams. But I'm for the underdog. For underdogs all over the world.

MICHAEL

I'm staying here with your Dad and watching the game.

OLIVIA

Okay. This is our quality time. Monday nights. So you think about it. Think about it real hard.

MICHAEL

(Nods)
Okay. Raider Nation. See you after the game.

OLIVIA

Fat chance.

Olivia, Vanessa and Alex go upstairs with the pizza box.

MICHAEL

(To Ricardo)
A man's got to do what a man's got to do. Right, Mr. Rivas?

RICARDO

You bet. But you are in deep shit, buddy.

MICHAEL

Naw. She'll get over it.

RICARDO
That's my daughter, boy. Spoiler
alert. Monday nights are toast from
now on.

MICHAEL
Seriously.

Ricardo nods.

RICARDO
Ohhh, yeah.

INT. VANESSA'S BEDROOM - THREE DAYS LATER

Vanessa wearing glasses is using a computer on top of her desk. She is reading from her notes and occasionally stopping to write something down on a notebook. Cell phone RINGS.

VANESSA
Hello.

ERIC
Hi, did you order a pizza?

VANESSA
No.

ERIC
Vanessa Rivas, right?

VANESSA
Yes. But I didn't order a pizza.
You've got the wrong number. I
don't eat pizza for breakfast.

ERIC
What about eggs? Coffee and toast?

VANESSA
Who is this?

ERIC
What about pancakes?

VANESSA
What?..Listen, dumb ass, my
father's got a gun. He's crazy, and
is a trained killer. Learned
everything in the Marine Corps. So
get lost, creep.

Eric laughs. She hangs up. He calls her again. She picks up.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
I'm calling the...

ERIC
Wait, wait, wait. This is Eric.
Eric the pizza delivery guy. I
delivered a pizza a week ago.

VANESSA
Yeah, what can I do for you?

ERIC
I uh, called because I'd like to
buy you a cup of coffee. Breakfast,
maybe?

VANESSA
What?

ERIC
Look, I'm shy, seriously. I thought
I'd have fun and...

VANESSA
Play a silly, little mind game?

ERIC
Yeah. I thought that maybe I could
get you to laugh a little. Guess it
didn't work. But give me an E for
effort.

VANESSA
E minus.

ERIC
I'll take it.

VANESSA
Why would I go have coffee with
you?

ERIC
Because I am thoughtful. Have a
sense of humor. Love museums and
wine tasting. Bright and beautiful
women. And I have good credit.
And, I just bought four new tires on
my Prius. So that's not bad.

VANESSA
(Giggles)
What about popcorn and chick
flicks?

ERIC
Absolutely. I'm in.

VANESSA
A cup of coffee won't hurt.

ERIC
Great. Tomorrow morning at the
Pancake Heaven. Toast, coffee and
eggs? Eight thirty?

VANESSA
Okay. But I come with a strong
warning.

ERIC
Okay. What?

VANESSA
If I'm not impressed or if I find
out that you are just a player,
there are absolutely no second
chances. Zero. I'm merciless.

ERIC
No problem. See you at eight
thirty.

VANESSA
Okay.

INT. RICARDO'S OFFICE IN THE RIVERA HOUSE – LATE EVENING

Ricardo is typing on the computer. There is a knock on the door.

RICARDO
Come in.

NIKKI
Dad.

RICARDO
Come in, *mija*.

Nikki enters room and sits down.

NIKKI
I'm sorry, daddy.

RICARDO
Your mom and I feel two weeks is
enough punishment.

NIKKI

(Big Smile)
Thank you, daddy.

RICARDO

And, you can go to this
Quinceanera. But we want to meet
this boy. What's his name?

NIKKI

Antonio. You'll like him. He wants
to be a dancer and writes books.
He's also learning how to play the
guitar.

RICARDO

I'm sure he's a nice boy.

NIKKI

Thanks, Daddy.

RICARDO

Yeah...Oh, *mija*, you don't need
tattoos or to poke your body to
attract boys or impress anyone.
Just be yourself. Eventually,
people will fall in love with your
smile. And, see a creative heart
and beautiful mind.

NIKKI

Oh, the tattoo.

RICARDO

Yeah, what about it?

NIKKI

It's gone.

RICARDO

(Frustration huff)
What? You went to a tattoo removal
place. Nikki, what did you do?

NIKKI

No, no, no. It was never permanent.
It's one of these tattoo's that
comes off after a few days.

RICARDO

Thank, God. Oh, your mom said she
wants to talk to you when she gets
home. A looong talk.

NIKKI

Promise not to tell her.
But I hate those looong talks.

RICARDO

So do your sisters. Unfortunately,
for you guys, mom loves it. Said it
gives her a chance to catch up on a
lot of things.

NIKKI

What does she want to talk about?

RICARDO

I don't know. Lady talk. Tattoos.
Boys. Maybe, female plumbing,
boys, books. Who knows?

NIKKI

Okay. Mom is so smart.

RICARDO

That's why I married her.

Nikki starts to leave and stops.

NIKKI

Dad.

RICARDO

Yeah.

NIKKI

Did the silent treatment work?

RICARDO

Naw. To be honest about it, I liked
the quiet. Without four Chatty
Cathys in my ear twenty-four,
seven. Dad, I need a ride. Lift the
lid, Dad, please. Can you check my
car? The light went on. My car
needs tires. Well, I missed all
that a little bit. Well, a lot.

She goes and kisses him on the cheek.

NIKKI

Love you daddy.

RICARDO

Love you too.

INT. RIVERA'S KITCHEN — A FEW DAYS LATER — DAY

Ricardo and Diane are in the kitchen cooking and sipping wine. The doorbell RINGS.

RICARDO
I'll get it.

He goes and opens the door. ANTONIO is on the front porch.

ANTONIO
Hi.

RICARDO
Hi. Can I help you?

ANTONIO
Yeah. I'm Antonio. Nikki's friend.
You must be Nikki's Dad, Mr. Rivas.

RICARDO
That's right.

ANTONIO
Well, I'm returning her math book.
She left it at my house. She might
need it this weekend.

RICARDO
Your house?

Antonio nods.

RICARDO (CONT'D)
You're the boy whose sister is
having a *quinceañera*?

ANTONIO
Yes, sir. My sister, Lucy. I
invited Nikki. Your daughter is
gifted. She painted a portrait of
my pet turtle, Herman. Have you
seen it?

RICARDO
No.

ANTONIO
It's beautiful. She even hung it up
on my wall. She liked where I put
it up.

RICARDO
At your house? Your room?

ANTONIO
Yes.

Long pause.

RICARDO
(Upset)
Nikki!!!

THE END