

A GROUP OF TODDLERS PLAYING WITH BLOCKS.

One can barely pick up a block, another has miraculously managed to teeter one atop another.

EVA (V.O.)

Ever since I can remember, people have said I was meant for big things...

We find an 18-MONTH OLD GIRL with dark hair and sparkling eyes who's built a huge wall of blocks. She laughs in delight, then knocks them over.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LUNCH ROOM. DAY.

9-year old Eva and friends sit with arms folded, ignoring the trays of food in front of them.

EVA (V.O.)

Maybe it was the hunger-strike I organized in fourth grade over the fact that although the school burgers contained many ingredients, none of them was meat.

A TEACHER across the way tries to sneak a fry. Eva glares at her and she puts it down.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD. DAY.

16-year old Eva argues with a BURLY MALE REF.

EVA (V.O.)

Or maybe because once after a bad call, I called a soccer ref so many dirty names...

The man starts crying and walks away.

EVA (V.O.)

Who knew he spoke Spanish? Whatever it was, people said I was going places.

INT. CORPORATE BOARDROOM. DAY.

EVA RAMIREZ, now in her late 20's, beautiful, intelligent, confidently gives a presentation to power-suited execs.

EVA (V.O.)
A high-powered exec...

INT. COURTROOM. DAY.

Eva makes an impassioned plea to a riveted jury.

EVA (V.O.)
Take-no-prisoners attorney...

EXT. U.S. CAPITOL STEPS. DAY.

Eva's sworn in by a Supreme Court Justice.

EVA (V.O.)
Okay, so maybe the Oval Office is a bit over-the-top for a 26-year old Latina from Santa Maria, California, but I always say if you're gonna dream, suena con corazon-- why be half-assed? See, in my heart, I believed any of these things were possible --no-- inevitable. Which made my current situation all the more depressing.

CLOSE. A GUY SNORING LOUD ENOUGH TO CAUSE EAR DAMAGE.

EVA.

In sleeping t-shirt and bare legs, stands in her apartment LIVING ROOM. Her husband JOE and his buddy, both in grass-stained "Joe's Glass" softball uniforms, are passed out in a pair of Barcaloungers, surrounded by empty beer bottles and fast food bags, game controllers in their laps.

An X-BOX BASEBALL GAME is on the TV, in auto-pilot with an ANNOUNCER calling the action.

EVA (V.O.)
Sometimes in the night, a little voice pays you a visit. The one that tells you despite your attempts to see the glass as half-full, everything in your life is wrong. Sometimes the voice is barely audible. Other times--

Eva walks over. Joe's wet beer bottle soaks into the cover of her book "Emily Dickinson: The Art of Faith". She looks around. The mess, the pile of bills by the phone.

X-BOX ANNOUNCER
You're outta there!

INT. EVA'S COROLLA. MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

Eva drives through a business section of Santa Maria, suitcases piled in the backseat.

EVA (V.O.)
A wise man once said home is that
place where you're always accepted,
no matter who or what you are.

She turns onto a residential street in a working-class neighborhood and stops in front of a modest bungalow.

EVA
He wasn't Latin.

A WILD-EYED RITA CONTRERAS.

Eva's Mom, 50-ish, a handsome ball-buster of a woman.

RITA
Que tonta!! You left your
husband?! Because you're not
happy?! What kind of crazy reason
is that?!

EVA (V.O.)
Told you I was a dreamer.

WIDER.

We're in Rita's comfortably cluttered kitchen.

EVA
Mom, I'm losing track of who I am.
I'm losing my mind. If I don't
start following my dreams--

RITA
Dreams?! Do you think that's what
this world is about, Eva?
(MORE)

RITA(cont'd)

Look at me -- my husband is dead,
my heart is broken by two daughters
who bedevil me, my employees at the
restaurant rob me blind. My life
is nothing but constant pain and
aggravation, but do I complain?

(beat)

And in case you've forgotten,
divorce is a sin!

EVA

The Pope modified his stance on
that.

RITA

The Pope needs to grow pelotas!

Eva joins Rita at the table.

RITA

My poor Eva, God is the one whose
judgment matters. Anger Him, who
knows what form His wrath will
take? Jesus, the Blessed Virgin,
all the saints and apostles--they
will not view this with pleasure!
Be careful or they will rain
vengeance upon you.

EVA

Do you worship God or the Mexican
Mafia?

Sleepy NELLY CONTRERAS, Eva's 13-year old sister, wanders in.

NELLY

(with a yawn, to Eva)

You left Joe again, huh?

She crosses to get a snack out of the cupboard.

RITA

What about your baby sister? Have
you considered what this nonsense
is showing her? Nelly idolizes
you!

NELLY

I do?

EVA

I'm showing her she needs to be her
own person. That her dreams
matter.

(MORE)

EVA(cont'd)

That she should never allow herself
to be diminished or defined by a
man or society.

NELLY

That's definitely a no on the
"idolizing" thing.

From outside they hear the CRASH of trash cans and a car
engine dieseling off.

NELLY

Grandpa's home.

The back door bursts open and GIL CONTRERAS, a relentlessly
cheery barrel-chested man of 70, blows in. As usual, he's
half in the bag.

GIL

Aye Dios, what a night! There I
was, drunk as a priest during
Semana Santa-- in the parking lot
of the Indian casino--

RITA

Crazy old man! You don't see your
granddaughters standing behind you?

GIL

Sorry.

He turns so he's addressing everyone.

GIL

When this guy, who I owned at the
poker table shows up with a tire
iron--

RITA

Papi!

GIL

What? After 42 years in
construction I'm not entitled to a
night of fun?

He squints at Eva.

GIL

Eva, my love. Did you leave Joe
again?

EVA

Yes, yes. I left Joe. To become
the person I was meant to be.

(to Gil)

To not have to wait 42 years to
live the life I want.

Gil nods with understanding and pulls her close.

GIL

Just make sure nobody wants to
split your skull with a tire iron.

NELLY

Wise words indeed.

RITA

Leaving your husband, wrecking your
marriage. You can stay here one
week until you come to your senses.

(shaking her head)

Next thing it'll be quitting your
paralegal job, moving in here and
coming back to work at the
restaurant.

EVA

(beat)

Only part-time while I'm taking
classes at Cal Poly.

Rita is nearly overcome.

EXT. CESAR CHAVEZ MIDDLE SCHOOL. NEXT DAY.

Morning drop-off time. As Eva and Nelly approach, Eva's cell
rings. Eva looks at the display.

EVA

Joe, it's your fiftieth call this
morning.

(yelling at her phone)

I'm not answering!

NELLY

Surprisingly, that's even more
effective if you press "talk".

OTHER MOMS brighten as they see Eva and ad-lib "Eva!", "Where
you been hiding?", "Good to see you again, girl!" Nelly
exchanges a flirty smile with a HOT GUY in a car at the curb.

EVA
And who might that be?

NELLY
Who might who be?

The guy lays rubber as he squeals off.

EVA
The guy driving like he doesn't know your big sister once kicked her tae-bo instructor so hard his reproductive future was put into question.

NELLY
Sean Draper. Sophomore at the high school. Drops his sister off here in the morning. Pretty hot, huh?

EVA
Yeah. In a worst nightmare in human form kinda way.

GABBY (O.S.)
Eva!

GABBY SOLIS, a stocky woman Eva's age, runs up, her son trudging after, peering in his sack lunch. Gabby gives Eva a big hug.

GABBY
Wo. Smearred mascara, slept-in clothes -- if you smelled like Jager shots and had your bra on backwards it'd be like old times!

EVA
I spent the night on my Mom's sofa.

Eva's cell rings. She ignores it.

GABBY
Wait. Night on the sofa, cell ringing off the hook-- you and Joe--

She starts laughing.

GABBY'S SON
Hey, the cheese in my sandwich's got blue mold all over it!

GABBY

Suck it up, it'll fight off
infections.

The morning bell rings, the kids say goodbye and head off.

EVA

I'm glad everybody finds me and Joe
breaking up so damn amusing.

GABBY

Honey, it's not news. You leave
him, he calls a million times, you
give in. You're a Dr. Phil segment.

Suddenly they're buffeted by wind-wash as an enormous CITIGRO
PRODUCE SEMI-TRUCK barrels past doing at least fifty.

EVA

It's a school zone, cabron!

MOM #1

These trucks started coming through
last week. Day, night, it's a
miracle none of the kids have been
hurt.

EVA

This is insane. We gotta organize a
group complaint.

GABBY

Yeah! And you can lead it! And
nobody else has to go!

Other moms ad-lib agreement.

MOM #1

You don't need us, Eva. Nobody
kicks butt like you.

GABBY

The school bully you shouted down
in third grade is still in therapy.
I think you turned him gay.

EVA

Okay, I'll see what I can do.

(to Gabby)

And by the way, you can't "turn"
somebody gay.

GABBY
 (with a shrug)
 True, he was probably bi to begin
 with.

Eva's cell rings, she stuffs it in her purse.

INT. SANTA MARIA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE. LATER.

Eva talks to the desk officer.

SHERIFF
 Citigro's got a lot of friends
 around here. We've been told to
 look the other way if they're a
 coupla miles an hour over the
 limit.

EVA
 A couple of miles? Street racers
 cranked on fatch are more safety
 conscious.

SHERIFF
 You could apply for speed-bumps.

EVA
 Fine.

He reaches down and slaps a mountain of forms before her. She
 just looks at him.

SHERIFF
 And that's the short form.

INT. CROWDED CITY HALL HALLWAY.

Packed with people. Eva angrily enters carrying the forms.
 She's jostled hard into a GREAT-LOOKING GUY in an expensive
 suit, the man we will know as HEATH.

EVA
 (still fuming)
 Sorry.

Heath gives Eva an appraising look.

HEATH
 No worries. First day of filing
 for the fall municipal election.
 Gets pretty crazy around here.

EVA

Tell me about it. I've got a major traffic safety issue and I'm being treated like I'm the problem.

HEATH

Hey, you can't fight City Hall.

EVA

The hell you can't.

She chucks the forms into the trash.

EVA

Do you know which way the Mayor's office is?

HEATH

End of the hall. But he's in Seattle. Anything I can help with?

EVA

Not unless you can do something about the Citigro trucks driving past my sister's school like it's the Talladega 500 because it's a lower-middle class Hispanic neighborhood and we all know if it were a white subdivision, the dickless bureaucrats around here would have cops writing tickets like Carlos Fuentes and there'd be so many speed bumps the road would be lumpier than my ass after the Feast Day of San Antonio de Abad.

Heath is totally taken with her.

HEATH

Maybe I can.
(offering his hand)
Heath Breuer, city council. Or should I say, dickless bureaucrat?

A strategic ally. Suddenly Eva is all charm. She takes his hand.

EVA

Eva Ramirez. Or should I say, chick with foot in mouth?

INT. NELLY'S BEDROOM. THAT NIGHT.

Clothes strewn everywhere, walls covered with posters. Eva makes up a mattress on the floor as Nelly sits at her computer popping back and forth between Facebook and 10 simultaneous IMs.

NELLY

So you're having lunch with a guy on the City Council?

EVA

Tomorrow, right after I enroll at Cal Poly.

NELLY

I still can't believe you're going back to school of your own free will. If it weren't for the whole repeating grades thing, I'd be gone now.

EVA

And spend your days sleeping 'til noon, working in a fast food joint and Facebook-ing until dawn?

NELLY

Are you purposely trying to torture me?

EVA

Nelly, school's about the future. Look at me. I'm finally gonna get my English Lit degree. Then maybe on to law school or a Master's or even a PhD. School can take you anywhere-- all it takes is focus and work and study.

NELLY

If this is a pep-talk, it really sucks.

EVA

(looking around)

This is so crazy. My bed was over there. Your crib was on that wall.

NELLY

It's gonna be cool having you here. Finally the sisters we never got the chance to be.

(MORE)

NELLY(cont'd)

(beat)

So can you score me some rubbers?

Eva is speechless.

NELLY

Sean invited me to this high school party Friday night and I want to be ready.

EVA

You're 13. Getting ready for a party is supposed to be trying mascara and buying new shoes. No. Absolutely no way am I helping you get condoms.

NELLY

Come on. Mom said at my age you were so loose the only thing you didn't do was the dishes.

EVA

That's a total lie.

(off Nelly's look)

Okay, but it was only Joe, I was brain dead, I got pregnant, I ended up marrying a man who was a boy, three weeks later I miscarried and there I was-- stuck.

NELLY

Right, which is why I want rubbers.

EVA

Does Mom know you're thinking about this kind of stuff?

NELLY

Please. I never tell her anything. She's so old school, when a guy comes over, she expects him to bring a goat and chickens.

EVA

You'd be better off. Honey, trust me--you're too young to be thinking about this. It's way too soon.

NELLY

(beat)

So maybe over the summer?

INT. NELLY'S BEDROOM. MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

Eva tosses and turns, then opens her eyes. Joe is squatted next to her mattress.

JOE

Hey.

EVA

(an angry whisper)

Joe?!!

JOE

Yo, I remember this room.

(nods to an open window)

Sneaking in after your parents were asleep. Your Ricky Martin poster, your books everywhere--

(looking at her)

--how hot you looked in that old football jersey you slept in. Just like old times.

EVA

Yeah Joe, except now it's called breaking and entering. What do you want?

JOE

I'm messed up without you, bonita.

I know I'm not perfect. But you

know how much I love you. C'mon.

We can fix this. Come home and

let's work this out... like we

always do.

He reaches over and softly touches her hair. He kisses her neck. Despite her resolve, there's still an attraction.

EVA

Joe. Don't. It's over.

JOE

I know you love me.

(nuzzling her)

I need you, Eva.

NELLY

(from the darkness)

You're not really trying to get busy with me five feet away?

JOE
No. Maybe a little.

Long beat.

NELLY
Did you bring condoms?

EVA
Joe, we gotta face the truth. We never should have gotten married in the first place. We're two different people. Your life is fishing, playing ball, poker. Mine is working a dead-end job, cooking your food, doing your laundry. I'm like a mother you get to have sex with.

JOE
Okay, that's a major wood killer.

INT. CITY HALL DINING ROOM. NEXT DAY.

A large room of marble and oak. Eva, looking classy and hot, sits across a table from Heath, both eat Caesar salads.

HEATH
I filed yesterday. After five years on the council, I figure why not take a run at Mayor?

EVA
Take care of my problem with these Citigro trucks, you got my vote.

HEATH
Thanks. Now convince 75,000 of your closest friends and I'm in.

EVA
I might be able to. I want the trucks re-routed, but in the meantime I need speed-bumps, now.

She leans forward, casually touching his arm, working him like a pro. It's just a tactic, but she's very convincing.

EVA
Take care of it, I'll make sure people know Heath Breuer is the one to thank.

HEATH
You're a hard woman to say "no" to.

EVA
So don't.

She holds his gaze for an extra beat.

HEATH
Ordinarily I don't make these kind
of promises.
(he leans closer)
But for you-- consider it done.

Eva tries to mask her triumphant smile.

INT. RITA'S KITCHEN. SAME TIME.

Gil's making an omelet, chopping vegetables on the counter.
Joe enters.

JOE
Is Eva around?

GIL
Lower your voice bro, I got a huge
hangover. Makin' my famous morning-
after omelet.

He delicately adds some chopped onions, tomato-- then opens a
cabinet, pulls out a bottle of tequila and pours in a shot.

GIL
Works every time.

Joe crosses to the table and sits.

JOE
Eva leaving's got me messed up. I
can't sleep, I can't work, I can't
keep my mind on anything for more
than twenty seconds.

GIL
Throw in irritable bowels and the
need to pee every 25 minutes and
welcome to my world, hermano.

JOE
I gotta figure out a way to get her
back before it's too late.

Gil puts a hand on his shoulder.

GIL
This just may be your lucky day.

INT. GIL'S BEDROOM.

Gil fishes a book out of his dresser. He rummages around the drawer for something else.

GIL
Strange. Oh well.

He hands Joe the book.

GIL
I give you the secret to a woman's heart. Love poems by Octavio Paz.

JOE
You have a book of love poems?

GIL
In my day I was quite the lover. But I'm sure that comes as no surprise.

JOE
O-kay.

GIL
Rita's mother was mi vida, my whole world. Once we had a big fight, these lines fixed everything:
(with great drama)
"If man is a metaphor of the universe, the human couple is the seed of all forms. Time recaptured, the return to the time before time..." Memorize that, then give her the book.
(with a wink)
And get ready for amor.

JOE
Ya think?

GIL
Better than a pitcher of pina coladas and Julio Iglesias on the turntable.

Joe admires the book as Gil returns to rummaging through his dresser drawer.

INT. CITY HALL HALLWAY/GABBY'S KITCHEN. SAME TIME.

Eva finds a quiet alcove in the crowded City Hall hallway and triumphantly dials her cell. INTERCUT with Gabby in a messy kitchen filled with noisy kids.

GABBY

Eat it all or Santa ain't coming
this year. And I'll tell the elves
to come take back the stuff they
brought last year!

(into phone)

Yeah?

EVA

Our Citigro problem is fixed!
Speed-bumps are going in. Hell, he
would've posted armed guards at
checkpoints by the time I was done.

GABBY

Ooh, girl you are good!

EVA

Okay, I am.

Heath and an AIDE appear in the hallway, near Eva.

EVA

Gotta go.
(hangs up)
Heath--

But before they see her,

AIDE

So how do you want to handle this
Citigro thing? Speed bumps, re-
routing?

HEATH

And piss off the largest employer
in the county? It's not their
fault some school lies between the
warehouse and the new onramp.

AIDE

But what about that chick?

HEATH

Like I'm gonna shoot down a member
of the Hispanic community on day
one of my mayoral campaign?

(MORE)

HEATH(cont'd)

Besides she's not after speed bumps, she wants power. Schedule more meetings with her, let her think she's getting somewhere. I'll co-opt her soon enough.

They continue on. Eva steams. Her cell rings.

EVA

(into phone)

What, Papi?

INTERCUT with Gil in his bedroom.

GIL

Have you seen the rubbers I keep in my dresser? They're blue and kinda look like octopus tentacles on the end. I think somebody took them.

As Eva realizes who that may be,

END OF ACT ONE

INT. EL TECOLOTE RESTAURANT. THAT NIGHT.

Small but packed, as befitting the best Mexican joint in town. Rita chats with CUSTOMERS at the register. Eva enters.

EVA

Ma, we need to talk, now.

The BARTENDER sees Eva and smiles.

BARTENDER

Eva, long time! Chica, don't do anything rash with this Joe thing.

The customers Rita's been talking to turn to leave.

CUSTOMER

A marriage is hills and valleys.
Listen to your mother.

They exit. Eva watches them go, incredulous.

EVA

What, did you put inserts in the menus?

RITA

Excuse me. My daughter has broken my heart again, so I mentioned it to a friend or two.

A PLUMBER enters from the restroom, wiping his hands.

PLUMBER

Just paper towels in the drain.
(to Eva)
Would it kill you to cut the guy some slack?

He exits. Before Eva can object,

RITA

So what's going on that we need to talk so badly?

EVA

It's Nelly.
(making sure they can't be over-heard)
She asked me to get her condoms.

RITA
 (shocked)
 What for?

EVA
 To make balloon animals.

RITA
 Oh. What a sweet nina.

EVA
 She's thinking about having sex!

RITA
 Ae mios Dio!
 (collapsing in a chair)
 I knew letting you move back in was
 a mistake. All this crazy talk of
 leaving marriages and freedom--

EVA
 This is my fault?

RITA
 Nelly's never asked me for condoms.
 Popsicles, Barbies, yes -- a
 condom, never!

EVA
 That's because she knows your
 preferred method of birth control
 is joining a convent!

RITA
 This is silliness. Nelly's a baby.

EVA
 Ma, Nelly's growing up, it's not my
 fault and if you don't get involved
 in her life, you're gonna wind up
 with a second daughter pregnant
 before she graduates. Lucky those
 robes make great maternity dresses.

Fuming, Eva picks up a rag and starts cleaning a table.

RITA
 My Eva. Always emotional. When
 you were little, I'd try to punish
 you by making you stand with your
 nose in the corner--you'd heckle me
 like a Juarez street vendor.

(MORE)

RITA(cont'd)

I'd send you to your room, you'd come out with a twenty page essay on how I was being unfair. With index and footnotes!

(softening a little)

Someday, God willing, maybe you'll have a daughter exactly like you. I hope so, I'd love the revenge.

Despite her frustration, Eva gives a small smile.

EVA

Where do you think I get my spirit? Look at you. When Dad died, you could have given up, but you kept going. Now this place is doing better than ever.

RITA

Your father always was an *imbecil* with money. No common sense whatsoever. A fool, really.

EVA

He was only human.

RITA

Bite your tongue, the man was a saint! The bottom line is, I did what I had to do. Para mi familia.

Eva just looks at her.

RITA

Fine. I'll talk to Nelly. The same way I talked to you.

EVA

You mean that if I let a boy even touch me, my cueva would rot and fall off?

RITA

It can happen, but do they teach such things in school? No, they can't be bothered.

EVA

Mom--

RITA

I'll talk to her.
(re: the table)
You missed a spot.

INT. NELLY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Eva lies on her mattress, watching Nelly sleep, more child than woman. Eva rolls over to find Joe kneeling there.

JOE
Five minutes, bonita.

EXT. FRONT YARD. NIGHT.

Eva and Joe clamber out the bedroom window.

EVA
Two minutes, Joe. And counting.

Joe solemnly takes her by the hand.

JOE
Eva...
(then, with great emotion)
If we are a metaphor of the
universe, people are the seed and
time is time before time... time.
And seeds. Yes, seeds. Many, many
seeds. Amen.

Off Eva's lost look.

JOE
It's Octavio Paz.

He hands her the book. Eva looks at the cover, touched.

EVA
I know. He was my abuela's
favorite. She used to read his
poems to me. They were the reason I
fell in love with literature.

JOE
We both know I'm no good with
words.
(sincere)
I need you. I'm not gonna let you
out of my life. These poems, I hope
they're able to express the love I
have in my heart for you.

Eva looks at him. She can't help but be softened... and then they're soaked by an ICY STREAM OF WATER. They look to see Gil in his bathrobe standing by the house with a garden hose. Crooked in his arm is a shotgun. Gil shuts off the hose.

GIL
Sorry. Thought it was those damn
neighborhood punks sneaking around
again.

JOE
(seeing the gun)
Dude, you'd shoot kids with a
shotgun?

GIL
Not to worry.
(conspiratorially, tapping
the gun)
Thumbtacks.

EXT. CESAR CHAVEZ MIDDLE SCHOOL. NEXT DAY.

Eva and Nelly walk toward school.

NELLY
She told me my cueva would turn
black and fall off!

EVA
With me I think it was purple.

Nelly sees Sean parked at the curb and gives him a smile.

NELLY
I cannot wait until that party
tonight.

EVA
Papi's condoms are missing.

NELLY
So. You think I took them?

EVA
Let's just say he doesn't know
where they are, I didn't steal
them, and I doubt Mom's somewhere
getting it on with fluorescent blue
French Ticklers.

NELLY
Please, that's more disgusting than
the image of my business falling
off.

EVA

Nelly. I know it's tempting. I know what your body is telling you.

NELLY

My body's still queasy from the mom/condom thing. Will you chill? You're as bad as she is.

EVA

Baby, I know the message the world gives us. But don't let the videos and music and commercials make you believe that all you are is a boy toy. It's just people trying to sell stuff, and the worst part is we all start to think it's real. It's not. You're more, Nelly.

The bell rings. Nelly gives a half-hearted nod, then joins other kids as they flow into school. Gabby hustles up.

GABBY

(on pins and needles)

Well? What was Joe's big gift that's got you reconsidering and all? I don't see no diamonds. What was it, a car, a cruise?

Eva proudly pulls the book out of her jacket pocket and hands it to Gabby.

GABBY

That settles it, you're divorcing the payaso.

EVA

Gabby, it's my favorite book in the world. Sometime I must've told him about it, and he remembered. It's so... thoughtful.

Gabby hands the book back to Eva, skeptical.

GABBY

Honey, "thoughtful" and "Joe" go together like "my old man" and "female orgasm".

EVA

Joe's a smart guy, you know that.

GABBY

Even so, it don't smell like him.

Eva stuffs the book back in her pocket. They walk.

EVA

I don't know. All these ideas I have, everybody thinks I know what I'm doing. I'm just making it up as I go like everyone else. Maybe I should give Joe another shot. Maybe my Mom's right.

GABBY

Shut up or I will hurt you.

Gabby takes Eva by the shoulders.

GABBY

All our lives, our grandmothers and moms and aunts have done nothing but bitch about their terrible lives and their screw-up kids and their good-for-nothin' husbands. If it weren't for that and growing hair in places they don't want, they'd have nothing to talk about. You're meant for more, Eva. You always have been. I swear, if ten years from now you're married to a guy you don't love, wearing sweat pants to make room for the extra 40 pounds on your waffle-iron ass with a bunch of screaming kids running around making your life hell--

(she thinks for a beat)

Okay, I have to kill myself.

A Citigro produce truck roars through.

GABBY

Ae mios Dio!! We gotta take care of this. Nails in the road, M-80s in the asphalt!

EVA

Babe, I draw the line at IEDs. But we gotta do something.

(thinking)

And generations of our women bitching about husbands and chin hair may just be the way.

Gabby's lost. Eva pulls out her cell.

EVA
 (into cell)
 The number for Eyewitness News,
 please.
 (then, to the other moms)
 Attention, ladies! Whatever you
 got going the rest of the morning--
 cancel it!!

EXT. CESAR CHAVEZ MIDDLE SCHOOL. A SHORT WHILE LATER.

A mob scene. Traffic, including a Citigro Produce semi, is gridlocked. The sidewalks are packed with on-lookers. A couple of sheriff squad cars try to untangle the snarled knot of cars.

EYEWITNESS NEWS REPORTER.

REPORTER
 Elena Perez live from Cesar Chavez
 Middle School where a group of
 concerned mothers have formed a
 human chain to protest Citigro
 produce trucks speeding in front of
 their children's school.

EVA, GABBY AND OTHER MOMS.

Linked arm-in-arm, blocking the street. Eva paces back and forth, orchestrating it all.

EVA AND MOMS
 Citigro must go, Citigro must go!!

NELLY AND A GROUP OF FRIENDS.

Watch from the sidewalk. Nelly's not sure whether to be embarrassed or inspired.

EVA.

A Sheriff approaches her.

SHERIFF
 Ma'am, I gotta have you break this
 up. I can't have you blocking--

EVA
 Fill out a form, pal.
 (louder)
 Citigro must go! Citigro must go!

Nearby a K-9 DOG strains at this leash, trying to get closer to Eva. The reporter elbows her way in.

REPORTER
 We're told the leader of this protest is Eva Ramirez. Ms. Ramirez, why?

EVA
 Because we got Citigro trucks endangering our kids and nobody'll listen because we're women and poor and Latina. Apparently some people think we don't count, that our problems and wishes and dreams don't matter...

INT. EL TECOLOTE.

Rita and Joe and Gil watch Eva on a TV above the bar, in shock.

RITA
 She's making a fool of herself!

JOE
 But damn, she looks hot doing it.

INT. CITY HALL.

Heath watches a TV in his office.

EVA
 (on the screen)
 Councilman Heath Breuer thinks we can be "handled". Mr. Breuer, I'll tell you who we support-- politicians who take us for real, 365 days a year, not just empty suits who develop a taste for tacos when the Mayor's job's at stake!
 (into camera)
 You don't handle us, we handle you!

Heath is pissed, but this woman is a force of nature.

EXT. CESAR CHAVEZ MIDDLE SCHOOL.

EVA

It's time to stand up and take
control of things, to not be
defined by what other people want
us to be--

Eva realizes she's talking not only about Citigro but about the situation with Nelly, with Joe. The K-9 dog can barely control itself.

EVA

Today we're here about speed-bumps.
But speed-bumps come in all forms.
What people tell us we can't do,
families who don't understand --
(she finds Nelly in the
crowd and holds her gaze)
Those who pressure you to do things
that could define who you are for
the rest of your life.

Nelly realizes Eva's talking to her. Then the K-9 dog leaps free and charges toward Eva. Before anyone can react, the dog jumps up and tears the pocket out of Eva's jacket. Gil's Octavio Paz book falls to the pavement. The dog angrily rips it open... exposing a baggie of brownish-green leaves. He happily sits, panting. The Sheriff looks to Eva.

SHERIFF

Ma'am, is that--

Eva is speechless. Sheriffs step forward to frisk her.

REPORTER

(into camera)

A sudden and shocking twist, as
activist Eva Ramirez is apparently
busted for possession of marijuana.

INT. EL TECOLOTE.

GIL

So that's where it went.
(thinks)
Hey, maybe I left my rubbers in
there too!

INT. RITA'S LIVING ROOM. LATER.

Eva, Joe, Rita and Gil yell at each other a mile a minute.
Nelly watches.

EVA
(throwing the chewed-up
book at Joe)
I can't believe you gave me a book
filled with mota!

RITA
My own daughter, arrested on TV!

EVA
If I didn't have a clean record, I
would have been booked!

JOE
Baby, the book wasn't mine, it was
Gil's!

Eva turns her angry gaze at Gil.

GIL
Just tryin' to help, mija.

RITA
(praying)
La Bienaventurada Virgen Maria--

EVA
(to Joe)
Don't you see, today was us in a
nutshell. I was there, about to
accomplish something, maybe make a
difference...

JOE
And I brought you down.

Eva can only give a sad nod.

EVA
I can't come back, Joe. It's over.

He sadly exits. Rita continues praying.

RITA
... destroying her personal life,
embarrassing her neighborhood, her
people.

(MORE)

RITA(cont'd)

Oh Sacred Mother, giver of life,
She who nurtures and understands,
please beat some sense into my
daughter's head!

INT. NELLY'S BEDROOM. LATER.

Eva enters to find Nelly doing her final check-over for the party. She looks great.

NELLY

Well, how do I look?

EVA

Like I should barricade the door to
keep you from going.

Nelly thinks for a beat.

NELLY

I know a lot of what you said today
was meant for me. And I just
wanted you to know, well-- it was
kinda inspiring. Y'know up until
the part where you were busted for
possession.

EVA

You know it was Papi's.

NELLY

Duh. Until two years ago, I
thought he rolled up towels under
his door because he didn't like
Cristina Aguilera. So are you sad
about Joe?

EVA

Yes and no. But it's good. A new
chapter's beginning. Don't think
for a minute I'm done going after
Citigro. It takes more than
excruciating public humiliation to
keep me down.

NELLY

You're pretty cool for a big
sister, even if I'm not sure what
you're saying half the time.

Eva smiles and turns back to her mattress. Sitting on her
pillow is the box of Gil's condoms, unopened.

NELLY

But every now and then I do. Maybe thirteen is young. I mean, why rush? Fourteen ain't exactly ancient.

(before Eva can speak)

I'm just messin' with you, sis. The last thing I need is another one of your speeches.

Eva kisses her on the forehead.

EVA

Have fun.

NELLY

Lookin' like this? Oh, yeah.

Nelly exits. Eva bends over and picks up the box.

EVA (V.O.)

I remember once when I was young, I was lying on the grass, at sunset--

EXT. PARK. SUMMER EVENING.

13-YEAR OLD EVA lays on a lawn, looking up at the sky.

EVA (V.O.)

I was dreaming I was Princess Leia or a Fly Girl -- when suddenly...

A BRIGHT METEOR arcs across the pastel sky. Eva is mesmerized.

EVA (V.O.)

I just knew that shooting star was an omen, sent from heaven especially for me. And then--

She turns her head to see a younger Gil nearby, getting ready to light up another bottle rocket.

EVA (V.O.)

I was crushed to find out it was just Papi sending up bottle rockets because he won fifty bucks on the Dodger game. Isn't that the way? So often we find ourselves living less than what we imagined.

She turns her eyes back to the sky.

EVA (V.O.)
But I decided then and there to
never accept that.

INT. NELLY'S BEDROOM.

Eva stands with the box of condoms.

EVA (V.O.)
Sometimes all it takes is a small
victory to build the bridge between
what is and what could be. That
the little voice is right when it
says--

GIL (O.S.)
Eva?

Eva turns to see Gil standing at Nelly's door.

GIL
(with a sly wink, re: the
condoms)
Mija, all you had to do was ask.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW