
[chapter]

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The cafeteria was empty. Tia Ramirez ran her hand through her long, brown hair. She looked around again. Tia couldn't be wrong, could she?

The sign in the main school hallway had said:

Yearbook Club Meeting—
Join Today! Make Memories
and Friends for a Lifetime!
Meet in the Cafeteria Monday
after School. Let's Make This
the BEST Yearbook Ever!

It seemed clear. Tia read the sign three times. She was in the right place for sure.

She really wanted to join yearbook club. Before her family left Mexico, she had read about the clubs American schools had. This one sounded like the most fun.

But no one was there. Tia headed back toward the cafeteria doors. She must have read something wrong. Tia still had to work hard to understand English. She wasn't going to let it stop her from getting what she wanted, though. She'd even joined the debate team as a way to improve her English. Practicing speeches for debate might not be the easiest way to get better, but Tia was up for the challenge. Yearbook would be another challenge that Tia wasn't going to give up on. If she had to read that yearbook club sign one hundred times to get it right, she'd do it.

Tia reached for the door, but it flew open in her face. Her eyes opened wide. A group of chattering students passed

her. Everyone was coming for yearbook club! A few said hi to Tia or gave her a wave. She'd got it right after all.

Tia watched about a dozen people spread out at the lunch tables. She knew who most of them were. Kiki Butler, the tomboy of her class, sat at a table with Misha and Tara. Tia also knew Kiki's twin sister, girlie-girl Sherise, and her sort of obnoxious sidekick, Marnyke. Sometimes Sherise and Marnyke could be nice. But often they were downright cruel.

Everyone was talking and messing around, waiting for the meeting to begin. Tia noticed there was no one else like her, no one else who spoke Spanish. She sighed. Almost a quarter of South Central High struggled with English. Not one other immigrant student wanted to be in the yearbook club? She didn't understand why. Tia thought everyone

should be in at least one club. That was the way to get ahead.

Marnyke and Sherise sat down near where Tia was still standing. Tia could feel Sherise's eyes look her up and down. "Yo, Marnyke. Looks like someone is lost."

"Probably can't read the signs. Think she's lookin' for an English tutor or somethin'?" Marnyke smirked.

Sherise laughed. "Yeah, *someone* can't speak English very good. Did you hear her in class today? She didn't seem to know what class she was in. She didn't even know the word *chemistry*."

Tia couldn't listen any more. Sherise was being mean because Tia had pointed out all the wrong answers on Sherise's history assignment last week. Before that, they'd hung out a lot. Now Sherise was making fun of Tia every chance she got.

Tia sat down at a table in the back by herself. She pulled out a notebook. "If I