

# Speedrunning Change (White Man to Latina Heroine TGRC)

By FoxFaceStories

## A Commission for LarGand

*Max Thompson is a Caucasian football lineman who's never had to think much about other people. His casual bigotry and sexism irks others, but he's never had to pay a price . . . until he's offered the chance for genuine superspeed powers. Ignoring the detail that it will bring 'necessary change,' Max leaps upon the opportunity, only to find himself transformed into a beautiful and busty latina woman named Mercedes. With her gender, race, and even her sexual orientation changed, Mercedes is already speedrunning changed: and that's before her superspeed really takes off!*

## Speedrunning Change

Max Thompson tore ahead on the field, forging the running lane on the offensive as any good lineman should. He was 6'4 and over 300 pounds in weight, and almost all of that was solid muscle. There was a reason people called him 'Freight Train Thompson,' because the young man was practically unstoppable on the field. He smirked as a Jade City Elite lineman entered his path, attempting to intercept him. He was having none of that; the man smashed into his opposite number, barrelling him over and continuing forward. He reached out to catch the ball as it soared his way, then outran the opposition on his mighty legs. Diego, his Captain, called out for him to pass the ball back, but Max was too obstinate. With a fierce grin upon his confident features, he forged a path ahead, smacking aside two more members of the Elites, and then crossed the threshold of the touchdown himself to the accompaniment of a wild cheer.

"Fuck yeah!" he shouted, tearing his helmet off and throwing it so that the roaring crowd could see his face. "Don't mess with the freight train! Especially not when your team are a bunch of total pussies!"

Another wild roar accompanied his outburst. He raised his fists up into the air; he'd basically helped secure the win. In the background, of course, was Diego, looking on in annoyance. Max just gave him a shit-eating grin.

"Sorry, *hermano*," he said, affecting a ridiculous Mexican accent rendered in stereotype. "But this face is made more for newspaper covers, *si?*"

Diego fumed, but Max just turned to the photo crew who were already taking shots of him. He gave them his most confident, dashing smile, and then blew a kiss into the crowd, where his girlfriend Lily was sitting, trying not to roll her eyes.

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“I’m just saying, if you really said that to Diego, I can see why he’s so pissed off at you.”

Max yawned and hit the accelerator, speeding his sports car down the road. His girlfriend Lily was in the passenger seat. She was a Sports Science major, which was where they’d met in class, and also a very lovely cheerleader. She had beautiful blonde hair and bright blue eyes, just the way he liked them, but while they were very much attracted to one another (she especially loved how tall and powerful he was), there were sometimes . . . tensions. Like the conversation she insisted on continuing right now.

“Look, it was just a joke between friends, alright?” he said. “Just some dumb jokes.”

“About the fact that he’s hispanic? You know he’s not Mexican, right?”

“Yeah, but he’s one of them, you know. You know what I mean! It’s just stirring the pot. All teammates do it. I just take it a little bit farther than some, that’s all. And it’s not the first crack I made. I joke a lot about how if it’s a good thing he’s a football captain, because he’d make one lousy fieldworker, am I right?”

Max looked to Lily to catch her impression, but her expression was just one of shock.

“Are you serious? You said that to him? Jesus Christ, Max. That’s racist as hell!”

“No, it’s not! It’s . . . look, it’s just joke racism. You know, it’s like . . . jokes about his funny food. The tacos and stuff. And it’s not like this isn’t on the news, you know about immigrants and-”

Lily put her hands up. “I can’t believe I’m hearing this. I’m honestly embarrassed to be in the car with you. Can you slow down?”

“Oh, don’t be such a pussy.”

“And that! You’re always using that word. Or calling me emotional whenever I express concern about such things.”

Max sped up further, grinding his teeth together. They were on the outskirts of town, taking the long way by the forest to avoid the inner city traffic so he could drop Lily off, and maybe even get some action at her place since her parents were out.

“Not this again!” he said. “It’s just a man vs woman thing, alright? Girls are more emotional and stuff. Men know what’s what. I just call it like it is. Besides, you love being all submissive and shit in the bedroom.”

“That’s got nothing to do with this! Don’t tell me you think men are above women?”

“Of course not! They’re just, you know, stronger and faster and generally better at leading. Women are the comforters and the like.”

Lily crossed her arms and raised one eyebrow. “So what about superheroines like Meteor Woman? The Jester? Dryad? Flame Dancer and Ice Shard?”

He made a dismissive gesture with one hand as he made quite a radical right turn on a sharp corner. "They don't count! Superheroes are superheroes. Besides, Blue Trident is still, like, the most powerful one anyway."

Lily fell silent, sitting back in her seat. About a minute passed of silence, during which Max continued to speed.

"I sometimes don't know why I'm with you, Max Thompson," she finally said.

"What!? Are we seriously having this chat now? Are you on your period or something?"

"Fucking really!? That!? This is exactly why I'm having second thoughts about us, Max. You can be so damn sweet, so considerate, and I won't lie, you are damn, damn good in the bedroom."

"Better than the big black dick on your old ex, even."

"But then you say shit like that!"

"Like what?"

*"Like that!* You throw out these comments about race or sex, you make me feel somedays like I'm the most special woman in the world and other days like I'm some blow-up doll pet. My best friend is Gabriella, Max. I'm closer to her family than my own. She's fucking Mexican. Her family are *immigrants*, and then you say offensive shit in earshot of them and *I have to explain it.*"

"Yeah, but they're, like, the good immigrants. Not like the lazy ones that steal jobs and stuff."

"That's it! Pull over."

Max frowned, eyes still on the road. "You've got to be kidding me."

"No, Max, I absolutely mean it."

"What I said was true! Look, you are seriously getting your panties in a twist over this babe, this has to be a period thing, right?"

"I SAID FUCKING PULL OVER, MAX!"

He hit the brakes and pulled over to the side of the road in response to her outburst.

"And turn this fucking heavy metal music off," she snapped, switching the channel.

*"In other news, Meteor Woman made a surprise appearance at the Ladies in Action Celebration today, along with various other heroines including Gaia, Lightning Lass, and Helldriver. Having just recently stopped an explosive volcano that erupted off the eastern coast of-*"

Lily cut the radio off entirely. Max watched her, as if seeing the woman for the first time. She was a very attractive woman, with a slim figure but a magnificent set of hips and a lovely C-cup bust that he loved to touch whenever he could. She looked like a beautiful Barbie doll come to life, but right now her expression could have crumbled stone.

"I am so close to dumping you right now," she spat.

"Babe—"

"No, Max, I mean it. I thought comments like these were just jokes when we started dating. Bad jokes, perhaps in poor taste, but still *jokes*. I don't know if it's all those stupid gymbro conspiracy podcasts you listen to, or that antihero and his dumb stream . . . what was his name?"

"Vigilance. And he's awesome. I know he can be controversial, but—"

"But he makes *dog whistles*. Little comments. Little things that have slowly warped you over time, Max. Two years ago you'd make these jokes occasionally, but you never meant them. Diego used to be your friend. Darren doesn't even speak to you anymore, and therefore *me*. Gabriella keeps telling me to dump you. And it's not just the race stuff! Now, you're talking about alpha males and how women are naturally submissive or some shit. I know how I *look*, okay? People think I'm just some blonde bimbo. They don't care that I'm getting good grades and want to be a chemist. Nope, it's just 'there goes the braindead blonde.' I know that's how they see me, but you never did. It's why I fell head over heels for you. You *liked* that I was headstrong and smart. Can you say that now?"

Max hesitated. It was just a brief hesitation, but it was long enough to count. Lily opened up the passenger-side door and exited the car.

"You know what," she said. "Forget it. We'll talk in the morning about us, if there even is an us."

Max got out of the car. "Lily! You're on a goddamn forest road! Don't be stupid!"

"Oh, but aren't all girls stupid, Max?"

"Just come back to the car!"

"No way! I'm calling a taxi. I'll walk if I have to."

"But there might be bears in the woods!"

She laughed, turning back to look at him "Haven't you heard, Max? Women always choose the bear over the man."

Lily continued to walk away, leaving Max alone.

"Jesus Christ," he said, putting the car into gear again. "I better get her flowers tomorrow or something."

Still, he felt uncomfortable at leaving her. The thought echoed in his mind that he'd really fucked up, and while he continued to drive it only gnawed at him further. They were just jokes, weren't they? And he wasn't a racist or anything. It was just that some stereotypes were true! And Diego *could* be lazy, and that accent didn't exactly help him, right? And it was so obvious that, as cool and calm and collected as Gabriella was, Lily's best friend was *clearly* holding in her fiery latina side. She had that spicy side, he just knew it. It was just a latina thing.

“Girls being girls,” he said in a guff. “Shouldn’t have gotten into an argument after a game. Too many emotions running high.”

After five minutes, he decided to turn back and get Lily. The sky was dark, but something strange and blue seemed to light up in the clouds, like a frozen arc of lightning . . . or perhaps a falling meteor. He watched it descend as he turned his car around. It was landing out in a field.

“Huh,” he said. “Maybe it’s a superhero battle. Oh, that reminds me!”

With a smirk, he checked his phone, despite the fact that he was driving. Vigilance had a new post. The dark-cloaked anti-hero had clashed once again with Blue Trident and a few other heroes over the way he’d dispatched several villains . . . lethally.

“Fuckin’ yeah,” Max said, looking up briefly to turn the corner, then checking his phone again. “You show ‘em, man.”

He clicked the video link, and heard the electronic warble of Vigilance’s baritone voice.

*“Don’t listen to the Hero Society. It takes a True Man to stand up to the decadence of society. We’ve lost our way. Our values. Our country is being polluted by dirtied masses, thugs, and criminal gangs. The floodgates are let open by bleeding heart academics. It’s time for proper God-fearing again! It’s time for those who belong in this country to stand up for our traditional family values, and all that we hold dear. Men, stand up, and follow my example! Your women will thank you. Your daughters will be protected. And the ones who don’t belong here, they’ll get what’s coming to them, just like these villains today.”*

“Fuck yeah,” Max said. “What a goddamn her-OHHHH!”

He swerved, losing control of the vehicle as a truck passed him, honking its horn in a last-second warning to get him off of the road. It worked in a very dramatic way: Max’s car flew off into the bushes. Big and powerful as he was, he screamed as his car collided with a tree, crumpling the front of it. The airbags deployed, smashing his face backwards.

It took minutes to get out, by which time everything was a bit of a blur. He was largely uninjured, but the car was toast. He was goddamned lucky, in fact. There was also no way he could go back and pick up Lily now.

“Shit!” he declared, kicking the car and actually causing the frame to rock thanks to his enormous strength. “Fuck! Just what I needed! A big football win all for everything to go up in flames! And for what? Some jokes about freeloading immigrants? Recognising that chicks can get pretty emotional? Jesus, you’d think I was a member of the League of Supervillains or something. Ugh!”

He punched the car door with such force that he buckled the metal a little and made his knuckles bleed. Annoyed, he wiped the excess blood on his trousers, then checked his phone.

“And something’s blocking my reception, great. Just frickin’ great.”

Maybe he *would* catch Lily, provided she hadn’t got a ride yet. At least then he could get her to stop being so teary and hysterical and see what he was saying. He wasn’t some racist or anything! He just didn’t like how *everything* these days had to be in a different language, how everything good and American was becoming hispanic and *forced*. The same for all the feminism stuff. It was all just . . . well, it was *woke*. And besides, you couldn’t look at him, with his 6’4 of height and his immense bulk, and *not* expect him to be the manly protector, the alpha male.

“I didn’t even mean that she was submissive or shit,” he mumbled to himself as he walked from the sight of the crash. “Just that, you know, a guy like me naturally leads the charge. I’m all-American here. The fucking Freight Train. I’m -”

He was pulled from his muttering, angry rant by the sight of a red glow between the trees. Max paused and peered through the curtain of forest on the side of the country road to the fields beyond. He could just make it out, but that weird thing that had fallen from the sky looked to have land.

“Huh,” he murmured. He almost kept on walking, but something about that red flare just looked kind of . . . intriguing. “Fuck it. What else could happen?”

Besides, maybe it was something mixed up with the Hero Society, or would require one of their heroes to come in. He fantasised about meeting Meteor Woman, the amazonian hottie with the sexy hourglass figure in her silver leotard costume, the long blonde hair, and a pair of tits that were three times bigger than his own girlfriend’s.

“Would love to get an up close look at those melons,” he said. “That would make totalling my ride easily worth it.”

He walked through the thin stretch of woods on the side of the road, then hopped the fence to enter a field. The closer he got, the more the red glare distilled itself into a series of shapes. It was indeed something hi-tech, like that big robot Hyperion attacked Star City with a few years back. Only this was much smaller, and looked kind of . . . alien. There was a sleekness to it, an ovoid shape with what looked like broken thrusters on the side. Where there might have been a cockpit or viewing screen, there was instead some shattered debris on the ground. And there, in that seeming cockpit, was something *alive*.

“The fuck,” Max said, more as a statement than as a question. He jogged closer, stepping around the burning fires. A humanoid being sat in the space vehicle. He had four arms instead of two, and his head was hairless, with a formation of skin and bone that swept back like a singular curving horn, behind which was a sort of mass of desaturated orange tentacle hair. His face was wrinkled and expressive, his skin an unnatural and alien red. And his eyes . . . were tiny. Like small black digits. Like shark’s eyes.

“Holy shit,” Max said, looking in closer at the figure, seemingly dead after the crash. “It’s an alien. A dead alien.”

He was just about to get his phone out and film the sight when the dead alien suddenly jerked upright, spluttering and coughing. Even as brave as Max was, this made him yell in surprise, though he didn’t back away.

“You’re alive! Uh, shit, I need to call someone. There’s no reception!”

The alien regarded him with those tiny eyes, then said something guttural and wrong that Max couldn’t make sense of.

“I - I can’t understand you, man.”

It spoke again, grabbing Max’s arm. He tried to pull away, but the creature was stronger than he looked.

“I told you, I don’t speak your language! Jesus, it’s like a damn immigrant from space scenario, here!”

But then the alien closed its eyes, and something strange passed between them. Max felt something akin to energy crossing over, and suddenly the alien spoke again, this time in English.

*“Now we m-may speak, native. What are you? Wh-who are you?”*

“I’m - I’m Max Thompson. Dude, this is Earth. Why the fuck did you land here?”

The alien coughed, and green liquid came up from its throat. Max was no intellectual powerhouse, but even he could tell this was blood.

*“Earth. Far from my destination. Alas, my last skirmish . . . victorious, but thrown off course. My time is short. Do you represent the best of your s-species?”*

Max blinked. “Uh, yeah, I guess. I’m tall and powerful as hell. I’m really popular. I play football. Folks think I’m a bit of a hero.”

The creature gave something like a smile in response to this. *“I am Surabin. I hold one of the ancient Speedlight Crystals, an artefact of immense power that can change the very nature of reality. I must give it to someone worthy quickly, that it may bond to them quickly. My time is nearly done.”*

“Dude, we have hospitals! I just need some fucking reception! We’ve got a Hero Society who can help you and stuff!”

But the four-armed alien kept hold of him. *“It is too late, Max Thompson. The crystal grants immense power to the one it bonds to. It is to be used as a force for good wherever it is in the universe, to bring justice to the downtrodden, to help the helpless. Do you understand? I ask you again, do you represent the best of your species?”*

Max’s jaw dropped. Immense power? Force for good and justice? This accidental alien immigrant was offering him goddamn *superpowers!* It was the one thing that would elevate him beyond even his already immense stature, power, and alpha maleness. God, he

would get to fraternise with Meteor Woman and Lightning Lass and all the other hotties. No way could Lily think of breaking up with him once he was elevated to *that* status, no way!

“Yes, I am,” he said with absolute certainty. “If you give me this power, I’ll use it for the best. I promise.”

Surabin made a headwobble, something like a nod, then he reached out with all of his hands to hold onto both of Max’s limbs.

*“If you are not, then the crystal must adapt. I warn you, the Speedlight Crystal existed before our universe. It has a will of its own. It will adapt to you, but it will also adapt you to it. If you fall short of what you must be in order to justly wield it, then it shall change your reality in turn so that you CAN become the hero you must be. The further you fall short of heroism at the time of taking on this power, the more you will consequently change. Do you understand?”*

Max didn’t entirely, but he got the gist. But given that he was a 6’4 freight train of a human being who had succeeded in everything in life and knew that he was in the right, he didn’t have much to fear.

“I understand, Surabin,” he said seriously. “Give me the power. I’ll use it to get you help, man.”

Surabin smirked slightly. *“Perhaps you arrived at the right place, at the right time.”*

He spluttered again, more green blood seeping down his chin. Then, with a more alien muttering that couldn’t be translated, his skin began to *glow*. A series of glass-like shards emerged from his chest without hurting it, as if phased into another dimension. They mingled and swirled, forming a singular crystalline prism, one that was a lightning blue in colour, ancient storms brewing inside it.

“Woah,” Max said, and then suddenly the crystal *flew* into his chest so quickly that he barely had time to flinch. It entered into him and his body was immediately hit with a wave of energy that coursed through him just like lightning. His body glowed a brilliant blue in contrast to the red lights of the crashed ship, but it was not painful. Far from it, it was *empowering*. It spread throughout his form, crackling with radiant brilliance. Max let loose a terrific laugh, amazed at what was happening. From a success on the field to humiliation on the road to the greatest rise in status he could possibly imagine! It was a wild night, and about to become his best ever!

But then something strange began to happen. As the energy coursed through his being, his very cells seemed to ignite and change. Before Surabin’s dying gaze, his form began to slim, his massive muscles thinning considerably.

“What the -!?”

He grunted, doubling over a little as the power of the Speedlight Crystal changed him more and more. Max’s waist pulled inwards, and his incredible eight-pack diminished,

leaving him with visible abs but not the same immensity he once possessed. His thighs swelled, gaining a softness to them that was not at all the shape a man's legs should be. Even the very bones of his body began to alter, the Speedlight Crystal changing them. His ribcage shrunk, as did his shoulders by a considerable margin, pulling in so quickly that he let loose a high wail. His voice rose in octave, and this was accompanied by a pressure in his throat.

"What - what are you d-doing to meeee!?" he cried, voice sounding increasingly feminine.

Surabin managed to take a steady breath, peering through the crackling blue light of Max's change. *"It would seem you were not truly worthy. The Speedlight Crystal is changing you. I told you of this. Perhaps you failed to listen."*

"Stop it! Stop it n-nowww!"

He grabbed his chest, feeling a powerful pressure there. It quickly erupted, and to Max's abject horror a pair of actual *breasts* began to rise from his diminished chest, growing larger and larger by the second and making his now-loose shirt tight in two particular areas. They grew and grew, becoming the kind of plump breasts that any man would stare at. They weren't Meteor Woman-sized - who had tits like that, after all? - but they were definitely *at least* Triple-D's, if not bigger. They seemed huge on him, pushing his male shirt out and showing some cleavage from the now-loose collar. There was as defined weight and heft to them, and as the changing man writhed, they jiggled and wobbled without any support to hold them in place.

"Tits!? I've got f-fucking tits!? Change me back, dude!"

*"I cannot. Once the crystal is bonded, it is yours for life. It would seem your reality is in need of changing. Do not fear. The Speedlight Crystal is attuned to all possibilities. It will guide you to make up for any shortcomings. This will prove a necessary change. I was not always the species I became, either."*

"N-no! I don't - OH GOD!"

His hands flew to between his thighs. His massive dick, a big source of pride and certainly enjoyment when it came to his sexual adventures with Lily, was shrinking rapidly. He groaned, his entire body still shrinking, his 6'4 frame collapsing until he wasn't even six feet in height anymore. But none of that mattered nearly so much as the humiliating, emasculating experience of his member pulling back inside his body. It was alien to the Nth degree, and when his balls pulled up with an audible *pop*, wrenching back into his body, tears of discomfort and shame formed in the corners of Max's eyes.

"NGHH! EEEUGGH! NOOOO!!!"

But it was too late. He now had breasts, an increasingly womanly figure, and a vagina. As if to add insult to injury, his clothes began to change, pulling tight against his

female body. They altered, turning a vivid blue, taking on the form yet form fitting material of a superhero costume. With another grunt, Max felt his hips spread even wider. They were now a real pair of delicious babymakers, and he even had a goddamn thigh gap! His ass swelled, taking on a real peachy shape, and it was only when the material of his trousers pulled up his legs that he realised he no longer had any body hair, except for above his new *pussy*.

“No! *Dios mio!* This is so fucked! *Mierda!*”

Max’s eyes went wide again. He looked to Surabin, who simply had an expression of curiosity, then back down over his changing body. Why had he just spoken *Spanish* in a *lady’s voice!*?

He got his answer pretty quickly. As the superhero uniform continued to pull tight on his body, the material of his shirt pulling back to expose his forearms and elbows, Max witnessed his skin *darkening*. A strange, almost itchy heat spread across his entire surface, and it was accompanied by a change in pigmentation. It browned, turning to a lovely bronzed colour, just like sun-scorched latina. To add to this, his hair began to flow from his scalp, descending down over his shoulder blades. It turned black, and he grabbed several of the tresses, finding them lush and curly.

“This can’t be happening! I’m not a woman! I’m not a latina or a Mexican or an immigrant or whatever!”

Except the new woman hadn’t said those words in English at all. No, *she* had said them in *Spanish*. She touched her mouth with a dainty hand as she realised the alteration in her language and in her mind, and was rewarded with said lips becoming plumper and thicker. Her entire face rearranged itself, even her jawline changing, and when it was done she could feel how much smoother the skin was, how feminine the formation.

“No! No! I’m not meant to be - NGHH!”

The power of the Speedlight Crystal faded, the final alterations to the new woman’s costume now completed. Max had barely paid attention to it, so swept up in her body’s changes, in the fact that even her mind - which was thinking mainly in Spanish - was now designating herself as a freaking *woman*. But now she looked down over herself and shuddered that she had, in fact, seemingly become a superhero. Just not one who looked at all like she’d imagined.

She was wearing a jogging outfit. Well, it was a superheroine outfit with a *jogging theme*. It was bright blue, and had a red lightning bolt right down the front, crossing between her breasts. Thankfully, the outfit didn’t cut low to reveal her boobs like Meteor Woman or Gaia’s outfits, but it was plenty tight enough to make her delectable new body clear, including her voluptuous form. She was even more well-endowed than she thought, and that was perhaps why the costume outlined her assets so well; by necessity, it needed to support

them. The sleeves of this top didn't even make it to her elbows, and once again emphasised that her figure was quite athletic . . . for a woman. Not bulky, but definitely athletic. The fact that said top showed off part of her athletic midriff, including her lovely bellybutton and slim stomach, only made things more humiliating.

But then there was her lower half. She was effectively wearing booty shorts of that same deep electric blue colour, one that was basically exposing all of her thighs. They didn't pull tight around her crotch, thank God, but they were frighteningly short. Max pushed in one of her new boobs just to take in the sight, and the only relief that came was that at least it wasn't a leotard or anything. She wouldn't be flashing anyone, at least, but she would be showing off a pair of very lovely, athletic legs and a very nice pair of hips, that was for certain. And her ass!

"My entire *culo*," she breathed. "They can see its shape. Goddamnit!"

On her feet were a pair of professional running shoes in that same blue colouration. It was perhaps the most casual superhero outfit she had ever seen, and somehow it was *hers*.

"Fuck! Surabin! You gotta change me back! Can you hear me, I'm talking English now, okay? You can hear me, *si*? I'm talking English?"

With an accent, no less. A very noticeable and quite thick hispanic accent.

Surabin looked up at the new woman, though not nearly as up as he once had. It was clear to Max that she was, at best, only 5'8 or so now. Tall for a woman . . . but not like she had been.

*"The change has occurred. You must become a hero of this world. A force for justice and righteousness. A voice for the voiceless. Do not lose your way. The crystal has given you a necessary change . . . and now . . . now you must go and embrace it . . . go, now . . ."*

The alien slowly closed his tiny black eyes, and his four arms went slack in his cockpit. Panic immediately hit Max. In part of the remaining glass of Surabin's shattered cockpit she could see her reflection in the blue and red light, and it horrified her. She had a domino mask on, in that same electric blue, and her black hair was pulled back into a ponytail with a blue scrunchie. This was *her*.

"No! No! Surabin, wake the fuck up, dude! This isn't fair! You can't do this to me! Take this goddamn crystal back, man! I'm meant to be the Freight Train! I want powers, but not like this, I-"

But she had to stop her rant in Spanish mid-sentence, because something was blinking on Surabin's console panel. It was a series of symbols in bright red, and they were making a rather threatening beeping sound as they counted down. Almost as if . . .

Go *now*, he'd said.

*"Mierda!"*

Max jumped back. In seeming slow-motion, the cockpit of the spacecraft began to explode in a great fireball. It expanded rapidly, the wall of incinerating heat stretching out to overcome the latina superhero. Something in her triggered, the spark of the Speedlight Crystal. Crackling blue bolts flickered around her, and then . . .

She ran.

She bolted.

She *blitzed*.

Max was moving faster than she had ever run on the field, even as the explosion grew to a gargantuan size. She outpaced it, moving like lightning, her feet a flurry beneath her, her senses heightened and able to keep up with every football.

“Woah!”

A tractor loomed into view and she literally darted over it, leaping thanks to her kinetic energy and then landing on the other side, continuing her stride. She must have been moving easily over 400 miles per hour, if not fast!

The explosive wall cascaded outwards, but she was actually *outpacing it*. Despite herself, the new latina hero actually cackled with laughter. She had *superspeed!* How appropriate for a lineman! For the Freight Train! She was a goddamn kinetic wall, lighting bolts in her trail as she ran and ran and ran, easily distancing herself from the huge explosion, which reached its zenith and then collapsed inwards.

The only problem was stopping. Max realised she was getting closer and closer to the country road she had departed from, but was entirely unsure of how to halt her momentum. She began to skid as if she were moving at regular speed, but instead this caused her to stumble and careen head over heel so that she burst through the treeline and bounced down the road. Lightning carved along the path behind her, and she cried out as she tumbled and fell, tumbled and fell until she was face down upon the road. There was a terrific ache in her chest, and for a moment the new woman thought she'd caused a serious internal injury, until she realised it was because her boobs were pressing uncomfortably against the bitumen.

“Fuck!” she cried, as it all tumbled down upon her. She pulled off her domino mask and squeezed it in her hands. “I’ve turned into a fucking latina superheroine! This is the worst day of my life!”

“Oh my God, are you okay?”

In a mere instant, Max was suddenly standing and looking behind her. She recognised that voice, and soon a running figure came around the bend. It was Lily, her gorgeous blonde girlfriend.

“Woah!” she said. “You’re - are you a superhero? Are you okay? I saw something crash through the trees back there.”

Max had no idea what to say. She shifted, awkwardly placing one hand on a hip, which ironically looked a bit like a rather feminine and heroic pose.

“Lily? You’ve got to listen to me! I met some crazy alien and he turned me into a Latina woman. I know this sounds insane but it’s me! It’s Max Thompson!”

Lily blinked. Beneath the light of the moon, Max could see her confusion.

“Do you know me? I’m sorry, I don’t speak Spanish.”

Max cursed - in Spanish - and said her words again, this time concentrating them into English and working around her thick accent. She told the full story, this time, and slowly Lily’s expression changed.

“Wait, Max!? I - what!? This is - this is impossible! Is this some crazy prank? No, you wouldn’t do that, would you? You’ve - holy shit, you’ve become a latina woman?”

“He said I’d have to take on ‘necessary change’ to be a force for justice or some *mierda*. I don’t understand it. But now I’m stuck like this! His fucking spacecraft exploded and I’ve got a pussy and big tits and a costume and I have superspeed and fucking long hair and a goddamn accent and I’m not even the same race and-”

Lily burst out laughing. Max was aghast.

“What the hell is so funny?”

“I’m sorry, it’s just that . . . how can you *not* see why you changed? *We just* talked about this, you idiot. You were being sexist and racist, and now here you are - your sex and your race are changed. Can’t you see this is where you needed to improve? God, it’s total karma, Max. Are you even Max anymore?”

Max wasn’t sure, but anger rose inside of the new woman.

“Fuck you! I don’t deserve this!”

“I mean, you do just a little. Not for life, but maybe this could teach you to-”

Max sneered. She placed her domino mask back on. “Whatever, you keep walking. I’m going home! And I will find a goddamn way to turn back. *Dios mio*, I’m not getting stuck like this, and I’m not listening to anyone that says I deserve it, *si?*”

“Wait, Max!”

But Max was already drawing on her power again. In a flash, the new superheroine was off, moving at an incredible pace and following the road, speeding past highway cars with ease. For now, she just needed to get home and take this all in.

But when she got home, it wasn’t the one she expected.

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Mercedes woke in her bed, and for a few wonderful moments, she truly thought she was still Max Thompson, and the events of last night had been just a terrible dream. She could even hear Vigilance still speaking on his anti-heroic podcast.

*“I need more superheroes. More alpha-men and alpha-women to support our cause. To right the wrongs of America. To make it great again, and bring back our traditional values! Who’s with me!?”*

“Eugh, what a weird dream. I almost feel like-”

She paused, realising several things at once as she rose. Like the fact that she was thinking of herself as *Mercedes*. Like the fact that there were two heavy weights upon her chest. Like the fact that her voice was female, and accented. Like the fact that *this was not her room*. She was so exhausted last night when she’d come home that she’d barely noticed.

*“Dios mio*, it was real. I’m still a woman!”

There was a sudden knock on the door. Mercedes pulled the covers up - she was still wearing her costume - and suddenly a rather lovely looking latina woman entered the room. Mercedes gasped; she recognised this woman immediately. It was Gabriella, Lily’s best friend. She was in her girlfriend’s best friend’s *apartment!*?

“Gabriella!” Mercedes yelled. “Wh-what am I doing here?”

The attractive latina smirked and placed her hands on her lovely hips. “I don’t know, Mercedes. Maybe because you *live* here, *hermana*. How much were you drinking last night? I had to disappear for an important call, but you were partying something *wild*.”

Mercedes tried to square this with all that was going through her head. She was still hiding her costume beneath the covers. Did Gabriella know? She suspected not, and didn’t want her to. Something was seriously wrong here.

“Did you just call me . . . *hermana*? Sister?”

Gabriella rolled her eyes. “Would you prefer I call you my demon twin? C’mon, Mercy. We put that sibling rivalry shit behind us a long time ago. Besides, you actually managed to pay your rent on time this month, so I’m in a generous mood.” She smirked and raised one eyebrow. “Mama and Papa would be so proud!”

A sudden nausea rose up in Mercedes’ throat as the entirety of her situation dawned upon her. It wasn’t just her body that had changed, nor her mind. Surabin had spoken true: it was her *entire reality*. For some reason, Lily could remember her original self, but . . . had things changed overnight?

“*Gracias, hermana*,” she said weakly, aware of how easily the words slipped from her mouth. “I’ll be up soon.”

“You better. You’ve got that sports-science class coming up today. And I *know* you’re looking forward to seeing sweet, sexy Diego there.”

Gabriella made some kissy faces and then fled from the room. Mercedes watched her go, filled with embarrassment and confusion. Diego!? Why the hell would she be looking forward to seeing that runt with his annoying accent and touchy-feelings when it came to ordinary jokes and his handsome face and nice jawline and beautiful muscles and-

“Fuck!” the new woman cried. She leapt from her bed, blue lightning crackling in her wake as she moved with her newly-endowed superspeed. She removed her costume with ease and stuffed it under her bed, then rifled through every single article of clothing she had in her wardrobe in what felt like less than five seconds. She blitzed through each item, becoming an almost literal whirlwind as she sorted through bras and dresses and tops, much of which had to be hand-me-downs due to how damn *tight* they were. It was obvious that Mercedes had a bigger bust than her ‘sister,’ so perhaps they were from her.

In the end she chose a set of athletic shorts that nearly went down to her knees, and an ordinary sports type that was a little tighter around her bust than she would have liked. With her superspeed, she experimented quickly with a bra - only out of damned necessity - and it took her a whole *ten seconds* of superspeed to get it even vaguely right. Her huge boobs filled the cups, and she saw her size.

“E cups. Fuck! No wonder these feel huge! Ugh, this is some real fucking mess that alien has gotten me into. Trust some crazy immigrant from out of space to screw things up for me.”

She continued to mutter and swear under her breath as she examined the room around her. Apparently, this was ‘Mercedes’ room. It was vibrant, with numerous posters, displayed photographs, and various trinkets and ornaments. Apparently her new self had a great love of animal plushies and thrown on pillows, and a *mad* love of food. There were numerous Mexican recipe books and even some posters of food on the wall. Mercedes could only recognise a few obvious ones like burritos and fajitas and the like. She’d never been big on what she called ‘ethnic food,’ but for some reason her mouth watered now.

“Who the fuck puts up posters of food on their walls?” she asked. “At least it’s not hot boys, I guess.”

She definitely didn’t want to think about how her new body reacted to the sight of handsome men, not after how she’d just thought about Diego . . . who was still lingering sexily in her female mind. She transferred her focus to the photographs of herself and her new life’s friends and families. Her stomach lurched with revulsion at the sight of what could only be her Mama and Papa in one picture, both hugging a younger version of herself as well as her non-identical twin sister. She could see where she got her bust from in this reality: Mama Mercedes was one fine-looking latina MILF, and her ‘Papa’ wasn’t bad either, even managing to pull off a thick moustache and glasses look and making it appear cool.

Other images showed herself with friends; one had her in a rather showy dress with lots of cleavage. Another had her in a bikini with a then-boyfriend at the beach.

“*Dios mio*,” she said in reply to that. Another had her at fifteen years old for what could only be her Quinceañera. She looked radiant and joyful in a gown and lots of makeup. Her gaze then turned to see the numerous sports medals on her wall. In this life, her latina self was at least still sporty, but it looked like she was more heavily into track runs and general athletics rather than something like football. She had numerous awards for the 100 and 200 meter dash.

“And now I’ve got superspeed,” she whispered to herself. “Ugh. This is way too much. I gotta get out of here.”

She put on her shoes - the track runners - and tried to ignore the heavy weight of gravity pulling on her chest as she bent down to do up the laces. The woman couldn’t ignore the look of herself in her dresser mirror: she was fucking *fine*, with those lovely wide latina hips and beautiful bronze-brown skin. Her hair was wild and lush and curly, and she put it in a quick ponytail to get it out of her eyes.

She stormed out into the living room, where Gabriella was eating lunch at the table and watching some Spanish soap opera.

“Finally!” she said in her native language. “I thought you’d fallen asleep again.”

“I’m getting out of here.”

“You’re late to class.”

“I’m not going to college. I need to breathe and . . . make a plan. Fuck, I don’t know.”

Gabriella shrugged, still watching the TV. “You do you, always disappearing. Mind, I guess I always do as well, huh? Sorry about last night, again.”

“I don’t remember - look, that’s not important. I’m heading.”

“Don’t forget your phone. It keeps buzzing.”

Mercedes paused at the doorway, then turned back. Her phone was on the table, and it had numerous missed calls and texts, all from Lily.

“Of course,” she whispered to herself. The new woman hesitated for just a moment, still humiliated that her own girlfriend knew her feminised predicament. But then she decided it was better to act. She grabbed a bag she assumed was hopefully hers, returned to her bedroom, and stuffed her superhero costume into the bottom of it, domino mask and all.

Then, waving goodbye to her own girlfriend’s BFF, the latina she’d always found just annoying for reasons she could never quantify, she headed out the door.

If anyone had the strength of mind to get Mercedes back to being Max, it was Lily.

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Gabriella's apartment was across town from the park where Lily wanted to meet. Gabbi had a car, but Mercedes didn't in this new reality. Thankfully, the one positive about this humiliating change was that she had superpowers. Making sure no one was watching, Mercedes decided to take them to the test again. She wore a hoodie and pulled it up over her head, then rocketed off down the street in the blink of an eye.

The sensations were exhilarating, there was no denying it. Locations blitzed past Mercedes in less than a second, the very world around her becoming a rapid blur. And yet she was somehow able to keep up with it all, her feet moving with such rapidity that it was staggering. Blue bolts of her speed lightning followed in her wake, as did the wind. She raced past people walking to work, causing them to clutch their hats and dresses as her freak gale passed them. People jolted and jumped, shocked at the bolt of living lightning streaking around the corner and up the highway. From Mercedes' perspective, it was like the world was in slow-mo, or perhaps just that her own reflexes had sped up exponentially.

"This is incredible!" she shouted, laughing.

Unfortunately, she soon realised why her superhero uniform was so necessary for such a body, because her chest was starting to hurt. She had damn *E-cups*, and with such impossible speed they were only bouncing faster, pulling on her chest and tugging on her shoulders, and generally causing more pain than she would have liked. Her hair was also catching a tangle of debris from her wake as well.

"Should've put in a ponytail!" she declared.

It was only as she reached the campus that she found an alley to slow down in. She skidded to a halt, nearly toppling over in her attempt to break; a skill she was still working on. The curvaceous and fit latina stood there panting, hands on her thighs as she regained her breath, her large boobs rising and falling with every breath.

"Wow," she said. "That was *asombrosa!* I've never felt anything that amazing. Talk about a real freight train! No, a fucking *bullet train*, more like."

Of course, she was still a woman. Her chest was still an alien thing to experience, and she was hyperaware of her curves as she walked out of the alley. Her hips swayed without her permission, a product of their impressive width, and while she'd tried to wear more modest clothing, her backside still presented a lovely view. This was made obvious as she made her way to the park, passing a construction site as she did so.

"Hello lovely *senorita!*" one man called out. "Why don't you come over here so we can get a better look at you?"

"Fuck off!" she yelled in her thick accent.

"Ohhh, spicy latina! Me likey!"

"I love a lady with a big rack!" another man called out. "And a nice pair of hips too! Shake those babymakers, honey!"

Mercedes scowled. These absolute fuckers! She was a guy! And yet they were looking at her like she was nothing more than meat. With a smirk, she rounded the corner, then used her powers while out of sight to blitz back. She pushed one of them into wet concrete, pulled down the pants of another right in front of his buddies, and then circled round and round a third so that a whirlwind of sand and grit ruined the morning coffees he was bringing in, not to mention coating his sandwich in debris.

“What the fuck!?” one of them called out, but by that point Mercedes had looped back to her original spot and giggled to herself. She didn’t love the way her bust kept flopping about, and vowed next time to put on the damn costume, but for now, at least, her day was just a little brightened.

“Once I’m turned back into Max, I think I’ll keep these powers,” she said.

The new woman just needed to figure out how to do that.

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Mercedes approached Lily slowly, her own cheeks turning a bright red upon her otherwise gorgeous bronze-brown skin. She tried to mitigate the sway of her hips and the bouncing of her chest, but it was very obvious that she was hunching over to hide her body. Lily, on the other hand, was as beautiful as ever, wearing a bright golden summer dress with a white-flower pattern on it. Her eyes were wide as she took in the sight of the latina walking towards her. To make matters even more exaggerated, there was suddenly a commotion in the skies: several Hero Society members were flying over the city, presumably rushing towards some kind of crisis or supervillain threat. Mercedes recognised Flame Dancer and Lightning Lass among them, as well as Silver Spear, whose bulky, muscular form had the kind of look she was *supposed* to have as a superhero.

“*Mierda*,” she muttered to herself, folding her arms beneath her considerable chest. The costume in her backpack seemed to weigh all the heavier.

“M-Max?” Lily asked. “Is it really you?”

“*Dios mio*,” Mercedes said. “Thank God you remember.” After a brief hesitation, she ran towards Lily and embraced her. She was still taller than her girlfriend, at least, but not by much at all. The feeling of their breasts pressing against one another was . . . odd, to say the least. As was the realisation that, as pretty as Lily was, Mercedes wasn’t feeling any particular attraction to her. “Lily, everything has changed! Reality has changed! I’m called Mercedes now, even my brain thinks so! Mercedes Diaz! I’m - I’m Gabriella’s sister!”

“What!?” Lily exclaimed. “But - oh God, I can almost remember . . . this is super weird, but it’s like I’ve got two sets of memories, sort of. I can kind of remember Gabriella having a . . . twin? A non-identical twin named *Mercedes*.”

Mercedes nodded. "That's me! I woke up in her apartment, and apparently I live there now! I looked up on my phone for anything about my old life, but it's like I don't even exist! Max Thompson just isn't around, it's super fucked up, babe!"

"Wait, you don't even exist anymore? So, why do I remember you?"

"How should I know? I'm not even supposed to be some hot latina bitch! I guess . . . we met after I first used my powers? Maybe this crystal thingy took some time to change reality, or something?"

"Beats me," Lily said. She stepped back and had a look at Mercedes, checking her out from head to toe. "Hey, so, you're pretty dang hot now, babe."

"I'm fucking aware, Lily."

"I don't know if you are. I mean, you need better clothes, and definitely a better bra for those big puppies, but damn, girl! I kind of wish I was bi right now, because I'd be the luckiest girlfriend, seriously."

"This isn't funny, Lily!"

But her blonde girlfriend just giggled. "I'm sorry, but . . . it kinda is, Max! Mercedes now, I guess."

"You can't be serious!"

But Lily just laughed again, before holding up a hand in a placating gesture. "I'm sorry, I'm really sorry, but see it from my point of view, here! You mocked women and immigrants - especially Mexicans - and now you're both of those things! Last night, I gave you so many opportunities to backtrack and apologise, babe. Then a literal alien offers you a power that will change you if you have shortcomings in justice, and you didn't even think to connect the dots on what I'd just left you for?"

Mercedes frowned, her blush only deepening. She pushed back some of her dark curls - she was still getting used to having so much hair - and scratched her left arm nervously.

"I - *mierda!* A lot was happening, okay? I didn't think . . . fuck! What do I do, Lily? I need you to help me turn back?"

Lily blinked. "What? I don't know anything about aliens! How can I possibly turn you back? Teach you to not be low-key bigoted and sexist?"

"*Si!* Yes, that's exactly it! You can teach me, you know, appreciate being latina and a woman or whatever. Maybe if I improve on these things, and be a proper hero, the Speedlight Crystal inside me will change back?"

"You can't, like, eject it like a CD, then?"

Mercedes pouted her full lips. "No," she said. "I've tried. I just ended up sticking out my chest and a guy ran into a pole while checking me out. Ugh."

Lily reached out and cupped Mercedes tits, squeezing them lightly and making the latina lightspeed backwards - literally. Blue bolts jumped out and made Lily gasp.

"I'll bet he di-woah! Wow, you really do have superpowers, huh? Just your luck, babe."

"Except not like this, with this accent and this changed reality!"

Lily sighed. She looked around. There was no one still present. "Okay, fine. I'll help improve you. It's only what I've been trying to do for the two years we've been dating, I guess. I thought things had ended between us last night, but if this is the thing that finally, *finally* makes you a better man, then I guess thank God for superheroes. We'll need to get you familiar with the female experience. Gabriella can help with the latino culture stuff a bit more, though I have some ideas there. And as for heroing . . ."

She opened up her smartphone, scrolled quickly on it, and then held it up for Mercedes to see. It was a live report from central Circuit City; *their* city. Several villains were attacking the Second State Bank, and various heroes were moving to intercept them.

"Holy shit, an actual superhero fight," Mercedes said, her accent still thick, her voice lovely to hear despite her best efforts to make it more gravelly. "I could join in. *Dios mio*, Lily, I could be a superhero in a superbattle!"

"Duh."

"But . . . it's over ten blocks away and . . . oh."

Lily rolled her eyes. "A lot of this is new to you. I don't suppose you've got a cos-"

Mercedes moved like a whirlwind, activating her powers and throwing her backpack into the air. A flurry of blue sparks jolted around her as she tore it open, got out her costume, and quite literally changed into her new superhero outfit so quickly that Lily barely even saw a flash of her bare skin. She halted, catching the bag again and revealing her new self.

"-tume," Lily finished, then gasped. "Holy shit. There you are."

There Mercedes was indeed, standing in a superheroic pose, hands on her wide hips, her very bust chest thrust out.

The tight electric blue top with the red lightning bolt and short sleeves.

The bare midriff, showing her sexy girl abs.

Her domino mask, obscuring her facial features just barely enough to make her difficult to identify.

Her blue shorts and runners, the material tight against her hips and derriere.

She was undeniably a superhero, and very obviously had a running theme to boot. Her shoes even had little red lightning bolts on the sides of them.

"Damn, girl!" Lily said. "You seriously rock that outfit!"

"It feels more like jogging clothes."

"Nah, these are way more formfitting, and hot! Nice girl abs!"

“Don’t even start with this. It’s so fucking humiliating. I’m meant to be a goddamn freight train.”

“Then hurry up and show that you still are, babe! Go take out those supervillains and prove yourself. That’s what you gotta do, right? Or are you just a ‘lazy immigrant’, like you always accused others of being?”

Mercedes narrowed her eyes. “Low fucking blow.”

“If the cute jogging shoes fit. Go on! Go have a blast and then we can talk about changing you back. Doing something right with your powers has gotta be a first step, right?”

Mercedes knew she was right, but it didn’t make her feel any better about wearing such a tight costume that showed off so much skin and so many curves.

“Fine, I’ll do it,” she said. “And watch me *not* get all emotional about it.”

“Jesus, Max, you don’t have to be such sexi-”

But Mercedes was already running, a wake of blue bolts in her wake, and smaller red ones forming an outline of her figure where she’d just run. She blitzed through the ten blocks all the way to the bank, arriving there in what felt like an instant. She skidded across the bitumen, nearly colliding with a car, but just managed to make herself stop.

“*Carajo!* I’ve got to get better at this.”

A car alarm had even gone off, and she was pretty sure she had shattered a store window back there. But what was in front of her was more concerning: a full on battle between superpowered individuals on both sides: the Hero Society and what *had* to be the Omega Force, judging from their red-and-white aesthetic and that stupid Greek logo they all wore. World-enders, so they claimed. In reality, far more likely to rob banks and blow the cash on upgraded gear so they could rob even more banks.

“Wow, where to even start!?” she said in her ‘native’ Spanish. “Um, fuck. Uh, that guy!”

Flame Dancer was sending trails of fire at an ice-based villain, and Silver Spear was using his liquid metal weapons to hold off against a mechanical suit that belonged to either Mecha Lord or Carapace. Lightning Lass was on evacuation duty, but it meant that two other villains were in the free and clear. One had a bug-themed costume with a ridiculous looking antenna, and he was throwing grenades that exploded into green plumes of smoke that choked people in the vicinity. The other was an even more dangerous figure: a villain in black combat clothing with a blood ‘X’ over his tactical gear. He was firing bullets at Lightning Lass and endangering several civilians.

“Fucking hell,” she breathed. She had to think quickly, something she was not used to. Several people in the panicked crowds were already shouting at her, either begging her to help or fearing that she was a villain.

“Okay, time to be fucking awesome. You pay attention, Speedlight Crystal.”

She summoned her kinetic energy and launched forward, aiming for the bug guy. He'd hurled two more canisters, and the fumes of one was choking Silver Spear and crippling his efforts to take down Mecha Lord/Carapace. With a grimace, Mercedes changed course, letting the gust of wind she'd sent forth with her momentum to throw the bug-themed villain backwards. She dashed around, then circled around and around and around one cylinder and another in a lightning-quick figure eight movement. Soon the gases were swirling like cyclones, their gas dispersing far higher up and mixing more harmlessly with the air above the city. Silver Spear shouted out as soon as she'd paused.

"I've got no idea who the back up is, but thanks!"

*"No hay problema!"* she shouted. "Fuck. I mean, no problem!"

She sped towards the bug guy and smacked him over. He ignited something that caused another gaseous outburst, but she dragged him speedily over the concrete away from it. The man was surprisingly quick, lancing out with a sawtooth dagger, but she was so much quicker, and easily batted it aside. She removed his belt with one simple movement and looped it around his wrists. With a brilliant flash of speed, she tied it around a nearby lamp post behind his back, then patted him twice on the cheek.

"Too slow!"

"What the heck!?"

She ran off again, this time with the civilian crowd cheering her on.

*"It's a new superhero!"*

*"She looks Mexican! Sounds it, too!"*

*"Who cares? She's awesome! And hot!"*

The last made her cringe a little. Her outfit did well to cup her breasts and stop them from jostling apart from minor expected jiggles, but she was *very* aware of the pleasing profile she was putting on. It only incentivised her to move even faster to keep out of sight. She knocked the Mecha Lord/Carapace figure off of his stance, allowing Silver Spear to summon three spears and stab them into vital circuitry. Another blast from Flame Dancer showed that she was overwhelming her own 'dance partner.'

But more bullets flew, and Mercedes actually *screamed*. Lightning coalesced around her as the crazed maniac with the guns fired at all three heroes, the spray going out to the crowd. Summoning her footballer's will, she tackled Flame Dancer and Lightning Lass, and then pulled an elderly man out of the way just in time. It allowed Mecha Lord to get back into the fight, as well as the ice-villain to freeze part of Flame Dancer's leg. The leader of the Hero Society looked at Mercedes with a determined expression.

"Nice going, kid!" she said. "Appreciate the save. What's your name?"

"I'm Me-"

"Your superhero name, I mean."

“Um, I’m . . . the Blur Blur. No! The Blue Blitz.”

“The Blue Blitz. Bit of a tongue-tie, isn’t it?”

Mercedes cringed. “Maybe just . . . Blitz?”

“Much better. You think you can keep helping us out?”

“*Si*, I can take him. The one that got away.”

Flame Dancer dodged another attack from a foe, and Mercedes moved in a split-second to safety.

“Bulletspray?” Flame Dancer said. “I wouldn’t. He’s dangerous, and I don’t know you, kid. Leave him to us.”

“I can take him, trust me! I’ll get him behind bars in no time!”

“Wait, he has-”

But Mercedes - The Blitz - was already moving in a flash, taking off after the retreating villain and heading down side alleys and streets like a bullet, leaping over fences and closing in on the maniac.

“Bastard doesn’t even know I’m co-OOHH!!”

Suddenly she was sent skidding, bouncing head over heels as she tripped over a wire that he must have placed down. Pain shot through her ankles, and she lost control over her body, still not used to her lower centre of gravity. She crashed onto her chest, and it caused further agony from the pressure upon her boobs. Thankfully, something about her superpowers made kinetic force less painful, but she still ended up with some scrapes.

“Ugh,” she groaned. “Why the fuck doesn’t this outfit come with padding?”

But any further self-deprecations were cut short by the sensation of a gun being pressed against her forehead. For the first time in her life, Mercedes felt actual, terrible *danger*. Not horror of being changed against her will, or changing culture of race or sex. But actual *dread*. *Doom*, even. She moved to slowly raise her head.

“Uh-uh, I wouldn’t,” came a gravelly voice behind the full face mask. “This is a tight alley. Not much space to manoeuvre with much speed. So make one more move and I blow your head off, hot stuff.”

Mercedes tried to control her breathing, but it was hard. Her stomach growled loudly. God, she was so hungry. She was suddenly ravenous for food, now of all times!

“What was that sound? Is that another power?”

“No, *it’s - it’s my stomach!*”

“Speak fucking English! I can’t understand Mexican.”

“*I’m trying! I’m - it’s hard to concentrate with a gun on me!*”

She tried to think of the words in English, but her stomach growled again, even louder than before. The villain was in a panicky mood and she could sense it.

“Screw it. What’s one more dead hero on my resume?”

Mercedes gasped, and a flood of emotion hit her; tears forming in the corners of her domino mask.

“N-no! Please, don’t-”

A shot rang out, and she squeezed her eyes shut, waiting for everything to turn black.

But then her stomach growled, loudly.

And her heart beat.

And she opened her mouth to take in a deep breath of air.

Bulletspray had a hole where his left eye used to be. His form quivered, then slumped right over, dead. Mercedes jumped back, not as quickly as she would have liked; her stomach was seriously killing her.

“Who? What!? Who did that?”

“I did, kid.”

She turned in a literal flash to confront a tall and muscularly-built figure standing behind her. He wore a dark cloak that was parted in the middle, and his bodysuit was made of tough segmented armour of that same black material. His face was covered by a gas mask, the lenses a sort of ethereal reflective green. He had blonde hair but most of it was covered by an old-fashioned fedora that he managed to pull off. Blitz recognised this man immediately. He was the hero she had come to worship over the last few months, and enjoyed following his streams and podcasts where he dared to be antiheroic, to do and say the things that everyone else was too woke and weak to say.

This was *Vigilance*.

“*Dios mio*,” she said.

The imposing figure folded his arms. “You’re Mexican?”

“*Si!* I mean, sort of. I’m American. First and foremost.”

He seemed to consider something behind that mask. “I like to hear that,” he finally said. “America first. Heh. That’s what I’m all about, little lady.”

She didn’t like being called ‘little lady,’ but being approved of by Vigilance was an honour in her book. He extended an arm and she took it. Her stomach growled again.

“Are you hurt?”

“No. He almost killed me.”

“Well, he won’t be killing anyone, now, will he?”

She looked back to the bleeding body of Bulletspray, now just a corpse in an alley. It made her feel a little disgusted, but she chalked that up to her stupid female feelings in this new body. “No, he won’t,” she said. “Good job with that, by the way.”

“You approve?” Vigilance asked, clearly curious. “I thought you hero types frown on us more grey anti-hero types. You know, ‘no killing’ and all that weak-willed garbage.”

“Not me! I agree with you. I listen to your podcast and watched one of your anti-hero streams. You put Slasher down for good! She fucking deserved it. You’re practically my hero.”

Something in his body language shifted further. Mercedes was pointedly *not* looking at Bulletspray’s dead body.

“He won’t harm you,” Vigilance said. “Keep your eyes on me. You’re American, and you’re on the right side, then? You earned your powers, right? You’re not some DEI hire or something?”

Mercedes shook her head. “No, I . . . I’m worthy of them.”

“What do they call you?”

“Blitz.”

The figure nodded. “Blitz. I like that. Well, you follow my stuff. You know I’m looking to expand. The superhero community is corrupt to all hell. It’s a goddamn *swamp*. They take on just about *anyone* these days. They’ve got no class. Half of them are thugs, if you ask me. The only hope of changing things is by getting serious and tough, but some people like Flame Dancer throw around terms like ‘bigot’ and ‘racist’ and ‘sexist’ just because I’m living the hard truths. Do you know what I mean?”

Mercedes nodded again. “I do. I really do. I - I hate that kind of shit! It’s not racist or sexist to want to protect your country! And some things are biological, like women are more emotional than men and stuff.”

“Exactly!” he exclaimed behind his mask. “Good to hear an actual woman admit it.”

Mercedes blushed, realising what she’d stepped in. But she couldn’t really reveal the truth of her nature to this guy, even if he was her hero.

“Look, cards on the table,” he continued. “I’m looking to expand. I’ve got some antiheroes joining my crew, and you’d be a perfect fit. You’ve got skill, you’ve got a neat power. You’re attractive, too, and that can’t hurt.”

“I’m . . . okay.”

“And you’re also latina, right? And a woman, obviously. A real woman, right?”

It was a hard question to answer, but Mercedes realised what was actually being asked here. “Of course.”

“Good. Not like that Sundancer freak. Yeah, this could work. I need the PR; they can’t exactly accuse me of being racist and sexist when I’ve got a smart girl like you on my side, right?”

Mercedes found herself smiling. Obviously, this was not ideal, and yet, here was a purpose. A way she could help.

“*Si*, I’d love to join, man! I’m a huge fucking fan, and anything I can do to help would be amazing.”

Vigilance nodded, then reached into his utility belt and passed her a small spherical device. "Hold onto this. I'll be in touch."

"How will you-"

"Not now. Heroes are coming. Gotta scram, Blitz. They don't like me too much."

He threw down a smoke bomb and disappeared in a flash, just as Silver Spear arrived in the alley.

"Goddamnit!" he shouted as he saw Bulletspray's body. "You didn't do this, did you?"

"No, I would never! It was-"

"Vigilance," he said, slapping his forehead. "Damn it all. That crazy bastard needs to be stopped. Except he gets more popular by the day."

Mercedes turned away, facing the body for the first time since it had happened. She found herself smirking, despite the dread of Bulletspray's death pose.

"I can see why," she said.

Her stomach groaned, and not just from the slight nausea of the sight. She was so damn hungry she could eat *two* horses.

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"This is ridiculous."

"Nonsense! I saw you on television. You helped out at the bank, even held your own! You were a regular superhero. Superheroine, in fact! The Hero Society Forums online are going nuts over you. You've already got a fanbase dedicated to 'Blitz.' The guys are simping hard."

Mercedes looked at Lily and groaned. "I hate this. I fucking hate this."

"You looked like you were having fun out there."

"Because I was using awesome superpowers! Not because I'm a busty latina!"

"Not just busty. There's a lot of online dialogue about 'dem hips,' girl."

Mercedes frowned. "They're too much. And this *culo*, too! And you are loving this all way, way too much."

"What can I say? You're a much better girlfriend than you were a boyfriend. Now stop complaining. You said you were gonna try embracing being a woman, remember? In order to turn back, I know, but you need a wardrobe overhaul. Some stylish, eye-catching things, perhaps?"

"Ugh, whatever. I need new bras anyway. Mine are . . . not comfortable."

"Welcome to the world of being a woman, babe."

The pair were at a women's clothing store, and Lily was practically grabbing everything in sight, much to the new latina's despair. She'd only been Mercedes for five days

now, and had finally given in to Lily's demands. In truth, she just wanted to be around the one person who actually *knew* her secret and her original self. Living with Gabriella wasn't as bad as she'd thought it would be, and her sister could cook some amazing meals, even if things like tamales weren't her usual food foray: as Max, she'd never given much thought to 'ethnic food.' Now, she was starting to change her mind . . . just a little. But living with someone who thought you were her twin was just such a weird experience, and she was starting to get messages from her 'Mama' asking for a good time to call.

College life was just as bad. Her courses, thankfully, weren't all that different from her original Max self, but the dynamic in everything had changed considerably. The guys who used to be her buddies, or acolytes, or simply dudes she wouldn't have given the time of day, were now bugging her or staring at her or chatting about her. It was obvious she was attractive, but even covered up in modest clothing she couldn't exactly hide her devastatingly beautiful face and lovely black curls, and there was no disguising her hips or the obvious sight of her chest.

"Hey, do you mind if I sit here?" had become a common refrain from guys looking to sit next to her. First Tommy Harper, one of her original teammates, and then Ian Macklin and even freakin' Peter Hodges, who was *definitely* not her type.

And yes, she had a *type* now, she had despairingly realised. For as much as men looked her way and commented on what a 'spicy latina bod' she now had, she found herself occasionally gazing back. It was still humiliating to realise that she felt no true attraction to Lily, or to any girls, in fact. She'd even privately scrolled through her favourite porn sites in the privacy of her room, until Gabriella had burst in unexpectedly.

"Are you seriously watching porn right now!? You realise your headphones are unplugged, *hermana!*?"

Mercedes had just about died then and there. When Gabriella had laughed enough over the situation and left, she pulled the cover up over her body and shut the laptop. To her disgust, her mind wandered to things that actually *would* turn her on. Namely, *men*. Hot, hunky, powerfully built men with a passion for athletics and some lovely wide shoulders. She conjured up images of some of the boys she'd seen around campus, their sleeves rolled up to expose their forearms. Part of her even imagined the way they looked at her, checking out her perfect, round boobs or her swaying ass. It made her breath speed up, and her nipples stiffen. She'd held off on exploring this body, wanting nothing to do with it apart from the superpowers the Speedlight Crystal had given her. But now she couldn't help herself. She began to fondle her breasts, imagining a man's hands upon them. She even imagined Diego, but only because Gabriella had brought him up so much. He really was kind of cute. Really cute, in fact. Not overly bulky, but still fit as hell and with a great smile.

“Mhmmm,” she moaned as she touched herself, cupping her tits together. She lowered a hand down to explore her nether regions, and found them already damp. It was an alien experience, to feel your own pussy juices. To know that you were *female*. It only added to the intoxication of the imagery in her head. She imagined what it would be like for a big, hard cock to slip inside of her, to thrust into her needy passage.

“Ohhhhh, Dios mio . . . mhhhm! Si, Si, yesss!”

Soon she was rubbing her clitoris, slipping her fingers inside of her. Her imagination only grew, and it was quickly clear that her body was damn *lustful*. She moaned and writhed, shifting her body and enjoying the way her heavy breasts heaved. Mercedes couldn't stop: her body was on fire, and she needed to feel what it was like to experience a female orgasm.

“F-fuck me, Diego!” she groaned, trying to keep her voice quiet. She knew it was all wrong to imagine the team mate she often joked around with and bullied to be the one fucking her, but she'd seen the way he'd gazed at her in their sports science lectures and during their tutor meetings. He hadn't approached her like the others, but she had *felt* his gaze on her ass. Now, she wanted him inside of her. She wanted to be fucked by him.

“Yesssss!” she cried, before cupping her mouth and crying out into it, muffling any further noise. The series of orgasms that hit her were far more powerful than she'd ever expected. They weren't like male orgasms at all, which came in one big explosion. These were continuous, like overlapping waves upon the ocean. *Tidal* waves. Waves that were far better than the male equivalent, or at least it felt so to her.

“Dios mio,” she said in the aftermath. “I'm thinking about fucking boys. What is wrong with me!?”

She ended up going for a night run in her costume just to rid herself of those thoughts. The former male was getting better at braking, as well as using other elements of her superspeed powers. She could bring herself to a sudden halt and send a wind wall straight at a store robber, which she did, and quickly disarm an assailant with a gun (same robbery incident). She also had fun quickly tying a perp's shoes together to make them trip up, and when there was a particular mess after an attempted hold up, she returned every item in the store to its shelf in mere seconds.

Which was a good thing, because she'd discovered her Achilles heel, one that always made itself known when her stomach grumbled.

It did so now, in the clothing store, as she reflected on the past four days of her new and strange life.

“Woah, Nellie!” Lily exclaimed with a giggle. “You already ate five cheeseburgers and downed, like, four large fries and two shakes. How can you still be hungry? You're so much smaller now.”

Mercedens cringed. “Fast powers, fast metabolism. I use up almost everything I eat, I swear. I’m eating way more than I ever did as a footballer. It was how Bulletspray got the jump on me and, uh, knocked me out. Good thing that Vigilance was there to save me.”

Lily snorted. “Yeah, by murdering him. I don’t care what you say, that guy is a reactionary asshole.”

“You just don’t get him.”

“Pray his little group doesn’t get you. You’d be right in their crosshairs.”

“I think we’d get along, actually. More than you’d think.”

“Gabriella hates him. You can’t listen to your twin?”

“She’s *not* my twin, I’m just stuck in a new reality with her as my sister. Look, can we just focus on buying some things? And no, I’m *not* looking at frickin’ bikinis right now.”

Lily pouted, but pulled one down to add to the pile anyway. “I might just pick up one for you anyway. That lovely *culo* of yours, as you put it, would look amazing in that.”

“Yeah, and my *tetas* would be right out. And if I used my superspeed I might fall right out.”

“Diego would love that!”

Mercedes groaned. “Gabriella tells you this, doesn’t she? I haven’t even talked to him!”

But, even as they continued to shop, part of her imagined it. Would she see a different side to him? It stayed in her mind as she tried on new clothing, and perhaps led to her consenting to some more *daring* outfits, albeit always ones she could, at least, maintain a good superspeed in.

“But you *did* masturbate to him, right? Right!?”

Now Mercedes truly wanted to die. “*Madre di Dios*. She *heard* me, didn’t she? Fuuuuuuck. This whole situation is so humiliating!”

Lily put an arm around her former boyfriend, reminding her just how much shorter she was now, even if just slightly bigger than the blonde beauty.

“Honestly, I’m surprised you held out this long. If I got turned into a hunky latino guy I’d be rubbing my snake first thing! So, how did you find it?”

“We are not having this discussion.”

“I *could* bully you into trying on that lovely black bikini?”

Mercedes exhaled. “It was . . . good. Very good.”

“Details, woman!”

“*Mierda*. It was fucking amazing, alright? But this stupid body and brain kept thinking about guys while I was feeling my tits and pussy, instead of girls. This body is gay as hell!”

“Um, I think that makes you straight, honey. Really straight. Welcome to the club, I guess.”

Mercedes fumed. "Let's just try on the next thing, shall we? If I'm gonna be a tough as hell white guy again, like I'm supposed to be, then I'd like to get all the annoying girly bits out of the way."

Lily shrugged. "Bad attitude. I think you've got to embrace it."

"*Si, si*, fine, fine. Just . . . no bikinis."

"I'll buy one anyway. Just in case *Diego* would like to go on a beach trip sometime."

"He hasn't even spoken to me!"

The following hour, at least, allowed Mercedes some time to not think about the tempestuous last four days. It was amazing that it took a whole hour, because as soon as she was in the change room she instantly used her superspeed powers to rapidly put on new outfits and check them in the mirror, opening up the door every few seconds just to show Lily, who was more than happy to judge them. Too happy, really.

"Oh my God, that one would put you right on the cheerleading team! Seriously, your bust looks incredible in that crop top. We're getting it!"

"I'd rather not have the skirt."

"Oh, trust me, you're going to love skirts over time. They free up your thighs, and you've got some thick latina thighs, alright."

More clothes were modelled, and modelled quickly. Mercedes wanted to be out there as Blitz again, fighting crime and dashing through the city. It was more exhilarating than any football game, even as a woman. Hell, her outfit may have been more revealing than she'd like but it at least kept her boobs under control. When she achieved a certain speed, she barely even thought about being a woman. It was only when she stopped that she had to grapple with it. She replicated such a feeling in the booth, and especially so when it came to trying on bras. It turned out she was a Double-E cup and that her bands had been too tight. The storewoman even measured her.

"You're a very lucky woman, to be so amply-blessed!" she exclaimed, which only made Lily cackle again.

"*Gracias*," Mercedes said, too embarrassed to even use English.

By the time they left, they had a veritable truckload of clothing, most bought at Lily's expense.

"I don't care," she said. "I can easily afford it. Mom always sends me too much money for the semester."

"I *used* to have parent money," Mercedes whined.

"I thought you hated your parents?"

"Yeah, because they're absolute abusive, controlling dicks. Glad to be free of them. *Estúpido*. But I *liked* their money, *tú me entiendes*? Now, I'm poor."

"You're not poor. Gabriella wears fine clothes all the time."

“Fine, I’m *not as rich*.”

“Well, go home and model some of these outfits privately, and maybe you can meet your new parents. Marcia and Juan are lovely, you know. You might like them.”

“Doubt it,” Mercedes said. “Now can we leave?”

“Soon,” Lily said with a smile. “But first we have to get you some new *makeup*.”

Mercedes’ jaw dropped. She swore she could feel the Speedlight Crystal vibrate within her, as if mocking her.

“You’ve got to be kidding me.”

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Mercedes had started wearing Lily’s clothes, though not the racier stuff. She wasn’t wrong about skirts, at least, and basic makeup wasn’t too hard, at least. She still preferred to put her hair into a ponytail. She was currently enjoying her weekend at ‘home’ while Gabriella was away. Her twin sister had stocked the fridge and left on some mysterious ‘errand’ - she was always off doing stuff, probably with boys, though Lily was never in the loop either. It gave time for Mercedes to just relax, masturbate secretly, test her powers, and just chill.

She was currently reading comments about herself on the Hero Society Forums online. Quite a few users were taken with her, trying to get shots of her that weren’t blurry. There weren’t loads of latina heroes in Circuit City, so many locals were hyping her up and wanting to see more of her, particularly after she’d sped through town and cleaned up a major petroleum spill from a crashed tanker. The flames had evaporated from her hyper-spinning alone, which was a cool new technique for her. Of course, quite a few others - almost entirely men but also a few women - were happily posting about what a fine *chica* she was. There were lots of comments on her ‘fit figure’, not to mention her fantastic hips and rear.

*‘This is why we need more latina superheroines!’* one poster proclaimed. *‘Those hips don’t lie, guys!’*

*‘She’s no Meteor Woman.’*

*‘Please, a busty blonde gal is a dime a dozen. Give me a hippy hispanic honey, hell yeah!’*

To her own surprise, she’d blushed and smiled at that. She’d always been the subject of attention as a man, but for some her height at 6’4 had been *too much*. Max Thompson had been naturally huge and bulky, and while he was good looking, he was no supermodel either. Now, however, people were fawning just at the *sight* of him. Were people really that much into latina chicks? She’s always thought white blonde girls were the pinnacle, but clearly her perspective had been rather closed off.

*'I'm just so glad there's someone who represents me now,'* someone else commented. *'I know, I know, she's super hot like all heroes tend to be, but we don't have enough latina or latino heroes! And she speaks Spanish! I love knowing that there's a hero out there that understands the hispanic experience.'*

"But I don't, moron," Mercedes said dismissively. Then, to her own surprise, she felt bad about what she'd said. "Fuck, I guess it's a good thing. For her, obviously."

More comments said the same thing.

*'Fuck yeah, represent!'*

*'Can we get some latino heroes as well? I'm a guy and I feel like there's no cool Circuit City heroes like me.'*

*'I hope she punches Vigilance's lights out. That guy is such a fucking racist sexist scumbag. I bet Blitz would show him a thing or two. Maybe turn back time until he doesn't exist, lol.'*

She frowned at that, and clicked on the username of the poster. Sure enough, she was a black lady, or perhaps Afro-Latina, or whatever they called themselves.

"He's not racist or sexist," she murmured to herself. "He's just telling it like it is."

Still, she got a funny feeling in her chest, and it wasn't the weight of her boobs in her wonderfully new supportive bra. She understood now why girls went gaga over good bras. She'd always thought they were just being emotional and all that. No, this bra *breathed*, and it distributed the weight of her EE-cups so damn well. She cupped them and sighed.

"Not a bad pair of *tetas*, really," she murmured. "Ha. Superpowered tits."

Gabriella knocked on the door and opened it mere seconds after said knocking. "Not fingering yourself this time, *hermana*?"

"Ewww, no! I was just doing research."

Mercedes closed her laptop quickly to hide the images of Blitz upon it, but Gabriella dashed forwards as only an annoying sibling could. Not that Mercedes had ever had siblings until a bit over a week ago.

"Hang on!" she cried out. "Who is *that*? Wait, that's the new Blitz hero, right? Dumb name, but she looks kinda cool. Why are you looking at her?"

Mercedes thought quickly, and landed on those comments about her.

"I just think, you know, she's really cool. She's hispanic and latina and female and whatever, just like us."

"Huh, never figured you for actually caring about representation, *hermana*. I dig it. She has superspeed, right?"

"The best. Travels like lightning."

"She encounter Vibe yet?"

Mercedes tilted her head. "Who?"

“Oh, you hadn’t heard? There’s another new superheroine on the block. Also a latina. I think she’ll make some big splashes soon.”

“And you know this how?”

She got out her phone and scrolled, then brought out a photo for Mercedes to see. It was, surprisingly, quite accurate. Another latina hero, albeit one much more covered up, and posing on the edge of a rooftop. She had a kind of padded sportsmaster aesthetic, with hockey pads over a combat-practical costume that seemed to glow a neon pink. Her pink mask covered her whole face. It had large white eyes, shaped as inverted semi-circles, like *Spider-Man* before *actual* heroes turned out to be real. Her costume also had many glowing strips, and in her hands were a pair of baton sticks that likewise looked neon; blue and pink, respectively.

“Woah,” Mercedes said. “She looks badass, except for all the pink.”

“Fuck off! Pink looks great!”

“Hey, don’t take it personal. How did you even get this photo?”

“She posted it. She took down some robbers just the other day, and was out on patrol as well. I’m thinking she’s some new badass on the scene, learning the ropes like this Blitz. They should totally do a team up.”

Mercedes chuckled. “Who knows? Maybe. I’d rather see Blitz team up with Vigilance, though. He’s a badass.”

Gabriella smacked her upside the ear, light enough to be just a sibling joke, but harsh enough to show the real indignation lurking beneath.

“*Madre di Dios!* What the hell, *hermana?*” Mercedes said. It was the first time she’d instinctively thought of this woman as her sister. Perhaps it was because she was so annoying, like siblings were apparently meant to be.

“Vigilance is an asshole and everyone can see it.”

“Cooler than some neon chick.”

“You know what? Forget it. And just . . . call Mama. She misses you and I’m sick of trying to pass the phone to you only for you to disappear off somewhere.”

She walked away, clearly irritated. Mercedes gave her the middle finger so fast that the woman never even noticed it.

“What’s got into her?” she asked herself in Spanish. “Probably on her period. Oh, fuck. If I stay too long as a woman I’ll get *my* period! Damn it!” She slumped her shoulders. “I can’t get used to this. It’s only been a week. I’ll turn back and keep my powers. I’ll find a way to be a hero and prove myself-”

As if answering her very plea, the little sphere that Vigilance had given her started to buzz in her pocket. She removed it, and clicked the little button. A small hologram appeared in the air. It had an address across town. Way across town. The former man grinned and

immediately blasted into power, moving like a hurricane so that she was in her Blitz costume in less than two seconds. She placed her hands on her considerable hips and grinned.

“Across town, huh? Super easy.”

Her stomach growled, causing her a brief hunger pain. The amused woman patted it.

“Maybe grab some burgers on the way. Need to make sure I’m the *bullet train*.”

She slapped her forehead before zooming off.

“Fuck, why didn’t I take *that name!*?”

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The location was, appropriately enough, an empty warehouse in the industrial district. Blitz was initially unsure of how to approach the situation, but decided a straightforward knock on the roller door would be appropriate. She waved to the security camera above the door.

“*Hola!* It’s me! Blitz!”

The door engaged and rolled up. On the other side was Vigilance and two costumed figures she didn’t recognise flanking him, both in dark cloaks just like their leader, and both with their own stylised gasmasks. One was female, and her gas mask was red, her body armour with fake blood splatters painted on it. At least, Mercy hoped it was fake. The other was a massive bulk of a man, nearly seven feet tall. He had numerous tubes on his costume that fed into some kind of backpack he was wearing. His breathing was harsh, and reminded her of Darth Vader.

“You came, and came quickly,” Vigilance said. “Were you nearby?”

“No,” Blitz said, grinning.

At this, Vigilance laughed. “Come on in, kiddo. I’ll introduce you to our little crusading crew. This here is Red Wave. She’s got blood-themed powers. Real nasty, too nasty for the Hero Society.”

“Fuckers don’t know what they were missing out on,” Red Wave said. She adjusted her blonde hair behind her ears. “Blood is everything. It determines everything. It’s got its own power, and they obviously can’t see that, judging from who they hire.”

Vigilance coughed, and Red Wave made a ‘what?’ gesture with her arms.

“Don’t freak out the newbie. Now, Blitz, this is Goliath. Goliath, meet Blitz.”

“Hey,” the enormous titan said. His voice was surprisingly high, like a squeaky-voiced teen, but he didn’t say anymore.

“Um, *hola*.”

“We just say ‘hey’ here,” Goliath said.

“Easy, big guy,” Vigilance replied. “We talked about this. No hostility.”

“We don’t need her type here,” Goliath responded. “We want people who stand for what we stand for.”

“I do stand for that, dickhead!” Blitz said, stepping forward quickly with a little aid from her powers. “I’ve been following Vigilance for a while now. I’m sick of people talking like they’re walking on egg shells. I’m sick of people denying basic reality. People want to hear straightshooters, and they need real heroes who actually defend our country and what it *really* stands for.”

Red Wave chuckled. “Well, she’s got that spicy latina mode, that’s for sure.”

Blitz frowned. The woman wasn’t wrong, but something about the way she phrased it . . .

“Fine, fine,” Goliath said. “I can see you believe. You’re not some DEI hire or anything, then.”

“Fuck off, I am! I earned these powers!”

It seemed like a lie, but she wasn’t about to back down. In the end, Vigilance interceded between them.

“Okay, everyone, calm down. We’re a small unit, and we want to grow. And we need someone who can show the world that we’re truth-tellers. Patriots. Real patriots. Not racist and sexist bigots like the liberals try to portray us as. They get pride, why can’t we? Real pride, in our country.”

“Amen, brother,” Goliath said.

“Fuck yeah,” Blitz added.

Red Wave chuckled. “I’m starting to like this girl. Who would have thought?”

Vigilance, apparently satisfied, motioned for Blitz to walk with them.

“This is just one place of operation for us. We move around, keeping to different safehouses. That way the Hero Society can’t get in our way or monitor us. I’m good with tech like that. You don’t always need superpowers to do what’s right.”

“They sure help though,” Blitz added.

“They do indeed. It’s why we’re big on . . . augments. Goliath here is pretty juiced up, and I’ve done what I can to extend Red Wave’s range of powers as well.”

The blonde with the blood-themed powers crossed her arms. “You could say my powers are getting more *pure*.”

Vigilance coughed again. “Okay, enough jokes, *Red Wave*. Time for the actual reason you’re here, Blitz. For once, we’re ahead of the Hero Society. The Destined - a group of low-class jackasses and thugs with superpowers - they’re holed up at a ramshackle motel called the Jaywalk. Heh. They’ve been terrorising their neighbourhood lately, and the Hero Society keeps letting them off. Not us. We’re gonna send a message and put an end to their thuggery. We want you there to prevent any of them from escaping, and to help with PR.”

“PR?” she asked.

Red Wave snorted. “You didn’t think you were just here on merit, did you?”

“I . . . you want me visible.”

“Exactly. Put a counter to those accusations about us. You know how it is.”

She nodded, even if she didn’t like it. She understood publicity. She’d been a footballer up until recently, and was still a track runner, even if it felt like cheating.

“Okay, when do we go?”

Vigilance’s expression didn’t change behind his mask, but she detected a smirk.

“Right now. You’re used to fast, right?”

At this, she grinned again. “Damn right I am.”

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Vigilance was right: the Destined *were* at the Jaywalk Motel, and it was a real dive. The moment the four of them showed up, one of the neighbourhood kids they must have put up to watch called out, and suddenly chaos erupted as numerous members of their gang, blue tags and colours and all, erupted from the building. Some were heading to escape, others were brandishing weapons, and others still were in street-themed costumes, revealing their powers. Goliath and Red Wave were approaching from the street, but Vigilance kept Blitz on the actual roof of the building: he’d teleported them up there with the aid of his homegrown cloaking tech.

“Don’t act yet,” he told her, even as more of the Destined emerged. “We need you to make a big entrance. I’ve got people filming this.”

Blitz understood, and strangely it made her more confident. She was used to a crowd watching, and this would be a livestream, knowing Vigilance. He stood upon the roof, even as the tense standoff became clear. Up on the second floor railing, five members of the Destined in costume had gathered. One brandished ice powers - quite common, apparently - while another had voids of darkness in his fists. A third was already changing, gaining spikes like a porcupine. The fourth and fifth were holding their powers in reserve. All of them appeared to have dark-skin, a mix of latino and black men. It made sense, this was a minority neighbourhood.

“You’ve got one chance to surrender,” Vigilance called out, a pair of floating speakers enhancing his message for his audience. “You’ve terrorised this neighbourhood long enough, Destined. You’ve burned down neighbourhoods, intimidated good Americans, and taken advantage of a country *you* chose to illegally cross into.”

“We’re from here, you racist asshole!”

Vigilance laughed. "If you are, I'm sure you won't have a problem being vetted. Just like I'm sure you won't have a problem paying for your crimes."

"We ain't doing nothing wrong! We're just standing here."

Vigilance cocked his head. "I don't know. That looks like intimidating posture to me."

"This is white supremacist shit!"

The dark-cloaked antihero laughed. "We'll see. Blitz, want to set the record straight?"

That was her cue. Blitz rocketed into action, moving like lightning to zap along the roof and then jump with her incredible momentum to the second floor railing. She knocked aside the ice guy before he could act, then swiftly punched the void-themed villain as well. Unfortunately, she nearly smacked right into the porcupine-themed man, but was saved at the last second by Red Wave. She was floating in the air, dodging telekinetically-charged rocks, using her blood powers to induce the porcupine man into what looked like an epileptic fit.

"*Gracias!*" Blitz called out.

"We say *thanks* here!" Goliath yelled in his squeaky voice, right as he barrelled through several Destined members trying to escape. A number had improvised weapons, but he was seemingly unstoppable, sending them each flying.

"Behold, everyone! Our numbers are growing!" Vigilance called, even as he sent forth a number of drones to taser escaping members. "Welcome to our ranks, *Blitz*. Our newest superspeed member, a proud young latina woman who has joined our cause! America First!"

With that, he dove into battle, brandishing his weapons. Laser blasts and bullets flew, and Blitz had to move fast to swerve around them. She was used to a game plan, however, and quickly intercepted those who were trying to make a run for it, as well as keeping the dark void guy off balance. He was trying to cloak the field of battle, but she was having none of it. She zoomed around him like a hurricane, spinning him about and sending him sprawling down the stairs. Blitz even found herself winking at the camera as she zoomed past, eager to make her proper debut.

It was mopwork, in the end. Between Vigilance's leadership and tech, Goliath's brute strength, Red Wave's control of her enemy's blood, and Blitz's own ability to, well, *blitz* the opposition, the Destined didn't stand a chance. Only a few stragglers had gotten away, and the rest were moaning and bleeding around the motel, any civilians having long since fled. Vigilance sent out several more drones which attached themselves to the five superpowers individuals, and they operated like magnets, pulling them all together so they were stuck in a circle on their asses, totally apprehended as if in a police sting.

"That's what I call a successful strike," he said. "Any injuries?"

"All good."

"No blood of mine," Red Wave quipped.

“Didn’t even roll an ankle,” Blitz added.

Vigilance clasped his hands together. “Very well. Only one thing left to do then.”

Then, to Blitz’s shock, he pulled out a pistol and levelled it at the apparent leader’s head; the one with void powers. The man flinched.

“Dude, you won! What the fuck is this intimidation bullshit?”

“Not intimidation,” Vigilance said. “Just cleaning house.” He turned his mask to face one of his drone cameras, as well as some of the people he’d hired to film this. “The Hero Society is too weak to do what must be done! These thugs are destroying America! They’re destroying our way of life! They’ll be out in a couple of months, ready to burn our neighbourhoods to the ground again! We need to protect our women and children! And the only way to do that is by showing them that there are consequences for crime! Real consequences!”

Blitz’s heart pounded. She could almost feel the Speedlight Crystal protesting from within her chest.

“Hey, Vigilance. I’m okay with killing if the fight’s going on or someone’s in danger, but isn’t this a bit much, dude?”

“Don’t interrupt,” Goliath hissed.

“No, I understand the complaint,” Vigilance said. “Don’t worry, Blitz. The first time is hard. You don’t have to pull the trigger. But these guys need to go.”

“Their blood is impure,” Red Wave added. Her tone was chilling.

Vigilance levelled the pistol at the young man’s head. He was black, and there were tears forming in the corners of his eyes. “Listen man, you don’t have to-”

Vigilance pushed it against his temple. “Yeah, I have to.”

Something raged within Blitz. She needed to act. “Look, I can’t let you just-”

And then the air seemed to warble around them. A deep, powerful base *boomed* everywhere, and all four of Vigilance’s crew, his Patriots, were thrown nearly thirty feet. Goliath crashed against a car with a groan. Red Wave had to take to the sky using her blood powers, but Vigilance took a nasty brunt force against a wall. Blitz’s powers reacted in split-seconds, blue and red lightning charging around her so that she landed on her feet and was instantly speeding towards the new interloper. It wasn’t a member of the Destined like she’d assumed, though.

It was Vibe.

The hero Gabriella had shown her pictures of. She had that pink-neon outfit on with the various glowing panels, and her face mask was surprisingly expressive, unlike Vigilance’s crew. She showed surprise right as Blitz rocketed towards her. Then her costume lit up with neon and a crackling surged through the air, followed by another sonic boom. It

sounded like . . . *music*. Like a blasting punk rock note emanating through the air. It knocked Blitz back and caused her to finally hit the pavement.

“You!?” the other woman said in a thick hispanic accent. “You’re joining up with *them!*?”

“They’re making America safe!”

“They were just about to execute those guys! Without trial! Didn’t you even hear what Red Wave just said?”

But Blitz was already rocketing to her feet again and zapping around Vibe. She dodged the next wave of sonic booms and then grabbed the room, hurtling her away from the battlefield. Unfortunately, Vibe then screamed, and the sound was filled with more punk rock blasts of power all around her in a powerful sphere. Blitz was knocked wide, and with another blast Vibe shot forward. Goliath was already steadying himself, Red Wave orienting to each out with her power. With a single blast, Vibe shot Red Wave back. Drones were coming her way, and there was no way she could win.

But then Blitz saw her true goal. The sonic wave hero blasted towards the group of Destined and then, with a concentrated blast from one of her batons that sounded like an electronic dance music sample, she shattered the magnets holding them in place.

“Run!” she yelled.

“Fucking cockroach!” Red Wave screamed. She caused Vibe to lose control of her left arm, allowing Goliath to knock the hero dozens of feet across the parking lot. Blitz ran back into action, easily tripping up the other latina hero.

“*Mierda!* The fuck is wrong with you! We should be fighting these guys together!”

“I’m on Vigilance’s side! You should be too?”

“And sign my own death warrant? You’re a fucking traitor, Blitz!”

“You don’t even know me!”

They clashed, their powers continually countering one another; speed preventing Vibe from getting away, but Vibe’s own spherical booms preventing Blitz from keeping a good hold. In the corner of her eye, she could see Vigilance lining up a shot, however.

“Get clear, Blitz!” he yelled. “I’m taking her out!”

“Don’t! She’s just misguided!”

“She’s in our way!”

And with that, he fired. Everything passed in slow motion from that point. The bullet soared through the air, the world turning to a series of advancing still images. It was going straight for Vibe’s heart, and there was no time to stop it. No time to even think. Blitz’s old football instincts kicked in. This was an intercept. She’d jumped in front of Vibe without a second thought, as if she were catching a ball against her chest.

Instead, a bullet passed into it.

Blitz suddenly seized up. Her body vibrated. With a panic, she looked down and saw that the bullet was *still* there, piercing her skin, causing terrific pain. But it wasn't advancing. It was like it was kept at bay by-

"C'mon! I can't hold it for long!" Vibe cried.

Blitz shifted backwards and collapsed. Her front was becoming drenched in blood, but the bullet had not pierced much. It was a surface level wound.

"*Madre de dios*. You saved me."

"Would they have?" Vibe said.

But then a series of drones raced towards her. She backed up, and touched her hand against a telegraph pole.

"Think about that, *hermana*."

Blitz's eyes went wide. That cadence. The way she said that word.

"*Gabriella?*" she gasped.

The other woman didn't hear her. She crackled, turning a vibrant, electronic pink, and then she zapped along the electricity line and off into the distance.

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The fight had gone viral, of course. Everyone on campus was talking about it. Things were getting polarised, and it didn't help that the media left and right were making it out to be some wider culture war. Perhaps, Mercedes had to consider, it actually was. She just kept her head and tried to focus on her studies, which was definitely a first for her. The wound in her chest had not been too deep, but could leave a very minor scar. Still, she felt it knotting, as if the bullet was still there. She'd come so close to death, and Vibe had saved her.

Gabriella had saved her.

Her sister. Her *hermana*.

"You don't even know her," she muttered to herself in Spanish as she sat under the shade near the campus green, focusing on an upcoming assignment. Her phone buzzed again. It was, predictably, Lily. She wanted to talk again. But the messages had spoken for themselves.

*'What the hell did you think you were doing, signing up with that Vigilance asshole? People nearly died!'*

*'I'd hoped this change would make you better, but you're still chasing the same old bigotry. Call me. We NEED to talk about this.'*

Mercedes sighed. She felt this strange mix of defiance and guilt in her belly. So much was happening in such a short time frame. Vigilance had given her some time off from his group, The Patriots, just to grapple with it all. But he'd made it very clear that he'd done

nothing wrong, and that she needed to lock-in next time. Red Wave clearly didn't like her, and Goliath hated whenever she reverted to Spanish. They weren't the most welcoming bunch, which had surprised her, and the only love between them seemed to be that Red Wave was apparently in some kind of relationship with Vigilance. She'd learned that by accident when they were back at the warehouse after the strike on the Destined had gone wrong: Red Wave was way too close to the leader, checking his suit in a rather daring manner. At least Mercedes didn't find him attractive, but then she'd never seen his face anyway. She also didn't plan on being so submissive: Red Wave had asked Blitz to come 'prepare food for the boys.'

That had been when she'd ducked out, making apologies.

And *that* had been five days ago.

Five days of noticing every time her new sister was busy. Every time she had to cancel lunch or leave something in the fridge. Every time something was going on downtown with the Hero Society, and suddenly there would be Vibe on the evening news, now much, *much* more popular than Blitz due to where her loyalties lied.

"I'm so sorry, *hermana*," Gabriella said when she got home late one night. "I know we planned to watch a movie and eat my delicious empanadas together, but something in my studies came up!"

"*Sí*, I understand," Mercedes said. "I didn't really feel like a romance anyway."

Though, to her private embarrassment, she had actually been looking forward to it. Something about her new feminine emotions seemed drawn to romance more often. Plus, it turned out Mexican food was amazing.

"Have you eaten?"

"No. I didn't feel like eating."

"How about I teach you how to make empanadas, then? Your cooking is shit, so it's high time you learned."

"I . . . don't know."

"C'mon, at least let me teach you by way of apology! Mama always tried to get you to learn! Have you called her yet?"

Mercedes winced. "I'll do it sometime."

"I'm sorry I haven't been here much. We used to be so close. Having this extra job and studies . . . it's hard. Like your job."

"Uh-huh," Mercedes said, the only one that knew the truth. "Okay, teach me how to make them. I . . . I'm really liking Mexican food lately."

Gabriella snorted. "You should! You grew up with it. Oh, by the way, Lily wants to talk. She says you two aren't hanging out as much. I know she's usually more *my* friend, but we used to be close, us three. Talk to her, would you?"

That was the question in Mercedes' mind in the present: should she respond? She sighed. Everything was just a mess right now. She had been so sure of everything in the world as Max, and now her gender had been changed, her race, her language, her mind, her sexual orientation, even her power level! And with it, the world in her mind had become unstable. So many new ideas and experiences she had discounted before. God, it didn't help that she'd just gone through her very first period. *That* had not been fun, especially without Lily's help.

And Lily *had* helped her greatly. For one, Mercedes was actually starting to feel comfortable in her body, even if its curvaceous form still made her a bit sheepish. She was getting more daring in wearing the clothes Lily had purchased her, and more happy to show off her 'assets.' Hell, she'd loved showing off her height and muscle as a man, so why not her delicious curves and awesome girl-muscles as a woman? It didn't hurt that she got a lot of attention. Sure, some of it was from sex-starved losers, and she *hated* the way some sexist assholes made her feel like a piece of meat. But looking respectfully? A little gaze at her, like she was a goddess? Yeah, she could get used to that. Right now she was wearing a cute black crop top over a pushup bra that did wonders for her chest. She even had a dark red skirt, and Lily had been right; they *were* very comfortable, and she *had* gotten used to it. Of course, she just had to remember to cross her legs and not leave them open, giving everyone a flash of her underwear.

"Just need to figure out what the hell I'm doing," she muttered to herself. "Do I confront Gabriella? Do I catch up with Lily? Do I talk to Mama? Hell, do I talk to my actual parents and try to get them to remember me?"

It wasn't that she loved her original parents, but . . . they were a connection. They had raised her with some values, or at least, that's what she had assumed. Lately, stuff was challenging that vision. She'd seen some of the online rhetoric about her and Vibe. She was American, damn it, and people were acting as if she'd hopped a goddamn border wall. Others were praising her, or acting like she'd betrayed them. She'd had no idea that issues of race and sex were so complicated. God, she was even getting critiqued for her costume, or praised, and some comments were just plain *mean*. Lily had once said that 'a woman can't win, and take it from me, I've got the privilege of being blonde and blue-eyes and white and I still can't win.' Max had thought she was just blathering, but now she understood it. Some people *really, really* hated the idea of a latina woman with powers. It also meant that quite a few others were celebrating that she was 'recognising Vigilance's alpha dominance.'

The phrase made her sick, and she couldn't quite quantify *why*.

"You look deep in thought."

She turned her head, almost reaching for her superpowers she was so startled. Standing behind her was Diego. He was wearing a smart casual button white shirt with the

sleeves rolled up and the top buttons undone, exposing not just his amazing forearms but hinting at a powerful chest. He wore simple dark blue shorts, and this showed off his calm muscles as well. The shirt was *tight*. How had she never noticed how fucking *hot* this guy was before?

“You’re Mercedes, right? From sport science and sociology?”

It amazed her that she’d ever mocked him or called attention to his accent. His accent was *smooth*, and it was doing things for her.

“Th-that’s me,” she said. She was aware that she automatically shifted her body language, thrusting out her chest a little and moving her hair to reveal more of her face. “And you’re Diego, aren’t you?”

He smiled. “Looks like we both know one another. I’m sorry, I should have introduced myself earlier to you, but I didn’t want to, er, swamp you. You had a bit of an entourage for a while there.”

This actually made her laugh. “An *unwanted* entourage, dude. They were all over me. You’re not about to be all over me too, are you?”

She realised she was presenting a fantastic view of her cleavage. To his credit, his gaze didn’t linger, though it was appreciative. Instead, he sat down beside her on the bench.

“I promise to be a total gentleman. Look, I just saw you across the campus green and you were looking like you were either about to explode or burst into tears.”

“And you had to come over and help a gal, did you?” she asked. Her male mind screamed at her to stop acting so coy and borderline flirty, but . . . part of her really wanted this. Especially after imagining Diego so many times during her sessions of self-pleasure.

“What can I say? I’m a heroic guy.”

That made her laugh. “Really?”

“Well, I’m not bad on the field. You much into football?”

“I love it. I haven’t seen a game recently, though.”

“You should come and watch us play. I’ve been watching you on track. You’re pretty amazing.”

“I’ve got superspeed,” she teased.

“No doubt. But I’m going off-topic. I was just gonna ask if you were okay? I can leave you alone if you want.”

Mercedes bit her lip. She was on a dangerous precipice here. “I’ve learned something about someone close to me that makes me worried. I don’t even know her all that well, we’ve only, er, recently connected, but I don’t know whether to tell her I know what she knows. Also, I’ve pissed off my other friend and she wants us to talk about it. I’m trying to be more social and get used to being this new me, and also I really miss being in a relationship, to be honest. Fuck, this is humiliating. Look, I’ve just got a whole host of problems, and it

turns out a, uh, mentor I really liked might not be as alpha as I thought they were. It's all a fucking mess. So, if you're here to flirt with the busty latina chick and hope she'll be your girlfriend, you've just waded into a nuclear fucking situation, here."

Diego seemed to consider this for a moment.

"Well, have you tried having a drink over it? I know a great club."

She looked at him and blinked. "Are you asking me out?"

He shrugged. "I'd really like to, to be honest."

"Despite all that shit I mentioned. Crazy girl shit."

"Maybe I like crazy girl shit. And it wouldn't be a date. It wouldn't have to be. I'm just inviting you out for a night on the town. I find it energises me. Might work for you. We can have a great night where nothing happens. I promise I won't take advantage."

"So this *is* you shooting your shot?"

Diego smiled. Fuck, if anyone else was saying this stuff, she'd call him a creep. But he was so genuine and charming. The warmth just radiated off of him.

"I guess I am," he said. "And you can vent all night long about everything you feel comfortable talking about. I promise I'll listen and not judge."

But Mercedes just frowned. "I don't know if that's a good idea . . ."

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Mercedes whooped and cheered as she danced on the dance floor.

"This was a great fucking idea, Diego!"

He laughed, dancing beside her, respectfully not getting too close.

"You know, you look like a dynamite gal in that dress, but you dance like a man!"

She just cheered and laughed, not caring. The alcohol had seen to that. She'd even drunk just a little before for courage. She didn't want to be Blitz tonight. She just wanted to be Mercedes, a hot hispanic girl in a really tight pink cocktail dress. She didn't even mind her boobs bouncing and her hips swaying. Hell, she *liked* how they felt, the alcohol drowning out her Max-thoughts.

"I've never been good at dancing!" she exclaimed over the loud beat of the music.

"Lily always said so! Gabriella once told me that I danced like a total white guy!"

They laughed together at this. Of course, she *had* been a white guy at the time, but she wasn't sharing that. Her comments had annoyed Max at the time, but now, shaking her hips and feeling her body bounce in time with the music, she was finding a rhythm. She normally hated hip hop and hip 'pop,' but her perspective was changing. The mix of Spanish and English in the lyrics felt so much more natural to her, like it was speaking *to* her, and the same feeling happened as Diego spoke to her.

“Well, you’ve got the enthusiasm! You feel better?”

She danced closer to him, enjoying the smell of him. “Much better! You know, you’re a pretty good footballer.”

“I like to think so!”

“I know, but I’m sorry, I used to make fun of you!”

He frowned, but just for a moment. “Why was that?”

“I - I don’t know! I feel like such an idiot! You’re actually really cool! And kinda hot! Oh, *mierda*, did I just say that out loud?”

He grinned wider. “You did. I’ll let you in on a little secret; you look really hot too.”

“A mega hot latina, huh?”

“Are you anything else?”

She giggled. If only he knew! But she didn’t desire to tell him. Instead, she used her superpowers to help her dance moves, just subtly, just a little. She moved and bounced and swayed on the dance floor, and soon she was singing with the lyrics. She’d never felt like such a - a *woman* before! It was strangely freeing, and she didn’t even mind that other guys were looking her way. No doubt they were looking at her ass in her tight pink dress, and frankly she couldn’t blame them! Besides, she could use superspeed to kick their asses if need be. Such as the big, burly blonde guy coming up to dance all over her at that very moment.

“I love a hot latina,” he said, his voice slurred from too much alcohol.

Mercedes winced. This guy was good looking, but again, that feeling of being meat. Something she was getting used to confronting as a woman.

“I’m already with someone!” she shouted, pointing to Diego, who had suddenly started standing a little taller.

“He your boyfriend?”

The words slipped out. “He might be.”

“Doesn’t sound like he is. You should try a real man, hot stuff.”

“*Gracias*, but no. You can fuck off now.”

He grinned, and went to cop a feel of her ample chest. But her Blitz powers activated. With all the strobing lights in the club, her small lightning bolts were barely noticeable. She moved rapidly, tying his shoelaces together and then tripping him over, all in the blink of an eye.

“Hey, buddy, back off!” Diego shouted, ready to throw a fist, until the bully went falling backwards with a yell and collapsed on his back.

“Relax,” Mercedes said with a wink. “I can take care of myself, handsome.”

The man was fuming on the ground, but she was already pulling Diego away.

“How did you - you’re incredible!”

“Well, I feel much better now, thanks to you. I don’t feel like I have to think about any of this.”

They moved to a spare space against the wall. Diego had his back to it, and she drew herself closer. Her breasts heaved with each breath, and she found it hard not to smile in his presence. She needed to pull up her top, but . . . she wanted him to see her cleavage up close.

“Thank you, Diego. You played this real smart. Come at me after the others had their shot.”

He blushed a little. It was a cute look. “I promise, I didn’t intend for that. I just wanted to meet you and cheer you up. And yeah, you’re incredibly beautiful and funny and amazing, but-”

She kissed him. God, she couldn’t resist it anymore. Her loins were tingling, her nipples stiff against her dress, and her body lustful as it had been as a man. She was tired of fighting her new body’s feelings, and the alcohol she’d imbibed had sent her over the edge and annihilated her male pride, her male shame, at doing this. At least for the moment. She just wanted to be free of all her anger and frustration and confusion and just *feel good*.

She finally pulled back, long after they had kissed long and passionately.

“Wow,” she said.

“Yeah,” he said. “Wow.”

Mercedes bit her lip. She was on the damn cliff edge. Everything was so close to falling apart. She knew she just had to call Lily to pick her up. Hell, just go to the bathroom as an excuse and then used her powers to blitz home. But she didn’t want to be Blitz at the moment, or to be Max Thompson.

With Diego holding her, his powerful arms around her and her big, sensitive breasts against his body, she just wanted to be *Mercedes*. She knew in that moment that she was damned. Her male self would revolt in the morning. She’d never forgive herself. And yet . . .

“Let’s get out of here,” she whispered in his ear.

Diego smiled, and took her hand.

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Mercedes moaned as Diego kissed her neck and felt along the curves of her body. He groped her ass, and she in turn felt his muscles, admiring their appearance now that he was shirtless. She could barely even remember getting to this point. She wasn’t even drunk, just tipsy at best, but everything was happening so quickly. Diego kissed her, and she found herself putting her arms over his neck and holding him closely, the very image of feminine repose. She hadn’t even realised that she had raised one leg until he commented on it.

"I fucking love it when girls do that," he said in that sexy accent of his.

"I - I didn't realise I was doing it. You . . . made me."

He smiled and kissed her forehead. It was surprisingly intimate, and made her exhale a little. Her breasts rose and fell, almost straining to escape her dress. They were back in her room, and Gabriella was thankfully out on another errand, likely a superheroic one. She knew she needed to confront her 'sister' about being Vibe, but for now all she could think about was what her hungry pussy wanted. How her breasts *ached* to feel his touch.

"Can I?" he asked, turning his gaze downwards.

She bit her lip and nodded. "Be gentle."

"Of course," he said. He cupped her magnificent EE-cups, lifting them and squeezing them together. She gasped anyway, shocked at how sensitive they were to his touch, and how responsive her nipples were; far more than during her frequent bouts of masturbation. "Jesus, you've got the most amazing tits, if you don't mind me saying."

"Ohhhh, feels like they j-just grew in recently!"

"All natural, wow."

"As natural as - ahh - they can b-be. F-fuck!"

She stepped back and began pulling her dress off. She needed less separation. She wanted to feel him. The bulge in his pants was only becoming more prominent, and it was setting a fire off within the hot latina. Immediately she grabbed him, pressing her perfect body against his, only her bra concealing her chest. She made out with him again, and this time he was more aggressive - no, *dominating*. He picked her up with surprising ease and lifted her to the bed, then made his way on top of her and continued to make love. Somewhere along the way Mercedes removed her bra entirely, allowing her large breasts to flop free. Diego wasted no time shifting downwards to press his face against her boobs.

"S-so big!" she groaned. "They're t-too big!"

"They're perfect. Let me show you."

He licked her nipples, causing further gasps of joy. Then he placed his mouth over her right nipple and began to suck, flickering his tongue upon the erogenous zone. She began to squirm, and all the more when he shifted one hand to squeeze her ass again. Her entire body was wanton with desire, and the more he did things to her, the more her male pride was silenced. How could she resist something this good and pure? It was just sex in a different role, wasn't it? She was still a total alpha - just an alpha *woman*. It was a new concept to her, but she embraced it instantly, lowering her hand towards his hard, long member. For just a few seconds, she hesitated. Diego was still sending her into fits of ecstasy as he played with her breasts and sucked on her large nipples, but could she really do this? Could she really stroke another man's cock and even have it *inside of her*?

“Ohhhhhh, f-fuck it!” she cried, and then she took it in her hand and began to pump his dick, playing with it, enjoying its girth and rigidity. Diego took this as permission, and adjusted himself. Instinctively, Mercedes spread her legs wide, allowing him access to her pussy.

“I c-can’t believe I’m doing this, so just do it f-for me!” she moaned.

“You tell me to stop any time if you don’t want-”

“I do want, that’s the freaking problem! Now hurry up and fuck my hot girl body before I regret it! I want you in me!”

Diego was quick. He grabbed his wallet and took out a condom, and had it rolled over his huge dick before she could even think twice about what she was begging for. It was a big relief to her; what if she had gotten *pregnant*?

With a smile, Diego kissed her again. “There, now let’s take you places.”

She took his cock again, parted her legs again, but this time his penishead pressed against her wet outer lips. She gasped as he rubbed against her slit, and then again when he pushed himself inside of her. There was a momentary discomfort, a brief sting of pain, and then . . . *delirium*.

“H-holy shit!” she cried in Spanish. “That f-feels - ohhhh, you’re s-so big!”

“Is this your first time? Really?”

She nodded meekly, trying not to squeak and squeal. Her whole body had gone ramrod straight as he slowly entered her.

“Then I’ll make sure it’s a good one,” Diego said. “I’ll take it slow, then speed up, okay?”

She nodded, still biting her lip. It was so much. She was being fucked. She was being *penetrated*. It was all wrong, all *right*. Her pussy hugged him, milking his dick as he began to pull back and then into her again. His hands felt over her warm body, grasping her hips and squeezing her rear. With each thrust, her boobs jiggled up and down, and he took the time to play with them again, stirring up even more pleasure. Soon Mercedes was in the agony of bliss, gripping his muscular body and wrapping her legs around Diego. She was holding onto him for dear life, like a sailor at sea clinging to some floating remnants of their sunken boat. And yet . . . she wanted to drown in this. To let go and *embrace it*.

“This. Feels. Sooooo. Amazing! Ohhhhhh, keep going! I can f-feel I’m n-nearly there!”

“Me too! You’re so fucking beautiful, Mercedes. You’re so fucking - Nghh!”

He came within her, continuing to thrust even as his member twitched within her. She was right on the precipice, and this taboo moment only sent her hurtling over the edge. The orgasms hit her body more fiercely than ever before, no longer like waves but like *wildfire*. She vibrated, and then immediately had to clamp down, because she had come so very damn close to using her superpowers, and she definitely didn’t want to rush *this*.

“Yesss! Yessss . . . oh God, yessss! You’re incredible! You’re - ohhhh!”

It took a long time for her body to calm down. Her bliss was almost overwhelming, her euphoria so great it felt like being drugged. Only when Diego slipped out of her - another strange experience for the former man - and quickly moved to tie and get rid of the condom did she manage to get some post-coital awareness back. She rolled to her side, her breasts wobbling heavily and reminding her of their existence, and lay there, panting.

“*Dios mio* . . . I just had sex with a man,” she whispered to herself.

Diego returned, and got in bed with her. He wrapped an arm around her, positioning his hand to cup her bountiful chest and play idly with her left boob, which was pressing down on her right one while on her side. It was soothing as much as it was embarrassing.

“For someone who’d never had sex before, you sure knew all the right moves,” Diego said, kissing her between the shoulder blades. “You know, we could go another round in a bit, if you want?”

But Mercedes’ mind was already panicking. The fog was gone, and everything was clear. She’d just had sex with a *man*. She’d let a man fuck her. She’d had a goddamn *dick* deep inside her, and she’d wailed in female ecstasy as it made her cum. She’d been *penetrated*, and she’d *wanted* it.

“You’re such a perfect woman,” he whispered in her ear.

It was the most emasculating moment of her life, and only *now*, after the fact, was it crashing down upon her. She *felt* like a true woman. Perfectly female. It was all so wrong.

“You better go,” she whispered.

“Are you sure? I’m sorry if-”

“My sister will be back soon. Look, just go. I’ll . . . I need some time to myself.”

Diego was clearly disappointed, but he got up and began to change.

“Can I at least shower here quickly?”

“No. Sorry. You need to go.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t realise . . . clearly I don’t know some things. Look, I’ll be around if you want to talk again. I had a great time tonight. I hope, regardless of what I did or said, that you did too.”

She just nodded, and watched him leave not long after. When Gabriella arrived not long after, Mercedes cursed herself for failing to close the door. Her stickybeaking ‘sister’ - not that she was truly her sister - put her head through the door.

“Someone’s had a visitor. I can smell male deodorant *and* the scent of excitement. Did you finally get with Diego?”

Tears formed in Mercedes’ eyes. She wasn’t going to cry, damn it! She wasn’t going to give in to female emotions!

But she did anyway. The tears came. “I don’t want to talk about it!”

Gabriella's expression immediately changed to one of shock and sympathy. She moved swiftly to the bed, grabbed Mercedes, and hugged her closely.

"*Hermana*," she said. "Oh, my little sister."

"We're twins," Mercedes said through the twins.

"I'm ten minutes older. That makes you my little sister. Did . . . did he hurt you?"

Mercedes quickly shook her head. "No, it wasn't like that. It's . . . there's so much going on. I can't handle it. I can't handle all the fucking lies and things changing and people are angry with me and I can't keep track of any of it! Not one fucking thing! I feel like I don't have a firm foot on anything. Especially not *you*."

Gabriella pulled back a little. She was often so teasing in a caring big sister kind of way that Mercedes hadn't seen this side of her. A side that was contemplative.

"Is that why you aren't talking to Lily?"

"Maybe. Yes. I don't know? I'm ignoring her. I don't know where I stand on anything."

"Is it her boyfriend?"

Something in Mercedes' heart seemed to stop. "Boy . . . friend?"

"I know she's been spending less time with me, lately. She and him are always going up to Adelaide's Peak to spend time together. Very romantic, sure, but I can imagine you feel like you're losing your net. I'm sorry I haven't been around."

Mercedes was still grappling with this. Why hadn't Lily told her? She probably had, actually. The former man hadn't read much of her former girlfriend's messages.

"She has a boyfriend . . ."

"*Mierda*. I shouldn't have told you, Mercy." She stroked her sister's hair. "Look, I'm just saying that I'm here for you."

"You're not. You're out there, *vibing*."

For a moment, Gabriella froze. Mercedes looked her in the eye, leaving the other woman unsure how deliberate that word choice was.

"I'll make more time," she said. "I should have made more time long ago. Balance is hard when everything is changing."

"You're fucking right. But things shouldn't change. I liked the way things were before." Mercedes pulled away from her sister. "And I'm sick of letting myself get used to how fucked up everything is now. I'm sick of being this woman. I'm sick of being seen this way. I'm going."

Gabriella stood. "Mercy, I don't know what's going on, but I want to understand. Where - where are you going?"

"To see Mom and Dad," she said. "Just like you asked."

"They live interstate, *hermana*, you can't just expect-

But Mercedes was already keen on blowing up this fake life. She spun on the spot, instantly summoning her powers. Blue and red electricity arced around her form, and in a whiz and a flash the former male was in her feminine superhero costume; bright electric blue top and running shorts with a red lightning bolt theme, and a domino mask over her forehead. Even her hair was back in its ponytail.

“-to run . . . there,” Gabby finished weakly, before gasping. “You - *you’re Blitz. Madre di Dios.* Mercy, I need to talk to you about something. Why I’ve been away. I didn’t realise that you too were - look, this is important -”

“I already know,” Blitz said. “And it’s too late. I’m not the woman you think I am.”

And with that, she streaked like lightning out of the apartment and beyond the city limits, faster than she’d ever moved before in her life.

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By the time she arrived at her destination twenty minutes later, Mercedes had missed calls from Lily, Gabriella, and also a summons on that little metallic ball Vigilance had given her. Even Diego had left a message. So many people trying to get into contact, all trying to determine who she should be.

“I’m Max Thompson,” she growled to herself, changing in an instant back into a tight grey tank top and blue jeans. She put a jacket on for the night cold, and marched up towards the very large house before her. “And they’ll see. They’ll know.”

*Thompson Residence*, the sign said. Her old house. Max Thompson’s house, back when he’d lived with his rather distant parents with their never-ending expectations. But they’d moulded him. They’d made him. And now, they would recognise *Mercedes*.

“I know you’re inside me,” she said to the Speedlight Crystal within her as she marched to the gate. She used her superspeed to easily vault over it and dash out of sight of the security cam. “So it’s go-time. Surabin said you were sort of, like, a living thing. You changed me into this freakin’ *chica*, okay? Made me gay for boys, or straight, or whatever, and everything. Taught me Spanish over English. You’re *intelligent*, and you’re part of me. So you better damn well change reality back. My folks better goddamn *recognise* me, got it?”

Something buzzed within her. It wasn’t English, or Spanish, but she got something from it. An affirmation that it would go along.

“Oh, you do understand? We can end with you changing me back right away, them?”

Another series of vibrations that she also understood: *you’re not ready yet.*

“Fuck you. Fine, I’ll take what I can get.”

She sped up to the front door and knocked upon it. Inside, classical music was playing. Of course it was. How would she even look to her folks? They didn’t even hire latina

housekeepers. Hell, she couldn't remember any non-white people growing up in this household, at least not after her Dad had gotten too close to that one black maid.

The door opened, and on the other side was her mother. The woman blinked, surprised.

"I'm sorry, I must have left the gate open. We aren't taking . . . whatever it is that you're selling."

"I'm not selling anything, *Mom*," Mercedes said. "It's me. It's Max. Your son."

Lisa Thompson, paused for a moment, clearly viewing this young latina as some kind of insane person. She had always had deep frown lines on her fake-tanned face, but now they were even more prominent.

"I have no idea what you're talking about, young woman. You better get off my front door before I get my husband. I don't have a son, I—"

Suddenly, the Speedlight Crystal vibrated in Mercedes' chest. She gritted her teeth, feeling segments of reality colliding more clearly than she had the first time. Before her, Lisa clutched her head, messing up her short dyed blonde hair as she grappled with the strange mix of memories now hitting her.

"What are you - oh my God. Oh, no. It can't be. It just doesn't - Rex! REX!"

Mercedes' father appeared at the door. He was a giant of a man, 6'4 just like his son had been in another life. He had more of a belly in his late forties, and his hair and thick moustache were turning grey, his nose red - perhaps from the alcohol.

"Lisa, I keep telling you to close that damn gate!"

"Rex, we had a son! We had Max, remember? This strange Columbian woman—"

"Mexican," Mercedes said.

"Whatever! She says she knows him!"

"I *am* him, mother. You have two sets of memories - I got superpowers and reality changed. *Mierda*, it's all fucked up. Dad, you remember me, don't you? Max Thompson. You always rode me so hard, told me that a man gets into football, and a pussy does track. You said that, remember?"

His father's jaw fell. He jutted his head out from the doorframe and looked around, then forcefully grabbed Mercedes' hand.

"Get in before anyone sees you. Now!"

Mercedes allowed herself to be pulled in, stilling the instinct to use her powers. Her father slammed the door shut and stomped to their expansive living room. The large and expensive fireplace was lit up, providing warmth but no true comfort. Or perhaps that was just Mercedes' feelings on the matter. She was well aware of her new body, the way her mother and father were occasionally looking at her very well-developed chest and curvaceous hips, not to mention her obvious bronze-brown skin and curly dark hair.

“Explain this,” her father said. “Explain it now! Or I swear I’ll have the police show up and our private security firm. If this is some criminal scam for immigrant money-”

“I’m not a fucking immigrant! I’m American. *Madre di Dios*, now I see where I get it from. Fuck!”

“Watch your tone! This is a civilised household,” Lisa said, “unlike wherever *you* came from.”

Another dogwhistle, Mercedes realised. Where had she heard those words before? They were almost like . . . what Vigilance and his crew said, even in her presence. A nasty knot developed in her stomach.

“Just listen, and I’ll explain!” she said. “I can prove it. I can tell you things only your son would know in that other reality. I’ve got this crystal. *Mierda*, I’ll explain-”

“And no foreign words!” Lisa added. “I want to understand everything. This is an English-speaking country.”

“Damn right,” her father said.

She gritted her teeth. “I’ll try my best.”

“See that you do,” Rex replied. He held up his smartphone. “Cause I’ve got some weird memories in my head right now, and a finger ready to call for help.”

Mercedes did her best with it. Her confidence had always evaporated in the presence of her family, especially her father. She only realised now how much her former self had turned out so much like him, especially those little biting comments he made. His mother added them too, even as she told them the story from start to finish, even mentioning the Speedlight Crystal and the like. Little jabs and jibes about her accent, about needing to pronounce things better, about becoming, well, some words that she *really* didn’t appreciate being called now.

When she was done, Lisa had sat back in one of the plush leather sofa chairs, and her father was visibly shaking, his face turning entirely red, not just his nose. He hadn’t put down the phone; his thumb was still primed to call the police and security both.

“That’s the whole story, I swear,” Mercedes said. “You only remember because I’m getting a hang of this crystal thing. It changed me to make me understand more. To understand . . . being a woman. How unfair it can be, but also how empowering. And the same for being latina, too! Speaking in Spanish and having different foods and music and movies and even dance moves.” She blushed a little at that, remembering her time with Diego just earlier that very night. The alcohol was out of her system, and her stomach was starting to growl after her trip, but she *needed* to say this.

“I think it’s made me a better person, Papa. I mean, Father. The person I needed to be, and . . . I’m only just freaking realising this as I say it. Wow.”

She had hoped for some flicker of understanding from her father. Instead, he could barely look at her.

“My son turned into a woman. A *Mexican* woman, no less.”

“I’m still me, Dad. Just different. And I might be able to turn back someday. I’m getting better at these powers. It’s just like you told me, you have to power on through and-”

“That’s about sports and succeeding in *life*, damn it! Not about becoming some fucking immigrant-looking woman with a trashy accent and trashier clothing!”

Mercedes was taken aback. “Dad, this is just a tank top. I can zip up the jacket if you-”

“That won’t hide what you’re showing off,” Lisa snapped. “What are you, some kind of homosexual now? Some kind of pervert, showing off a body like that? It makes me want to die of shame.”

Tears formed, and she had to blink them away. “I know we haven’t always gotten along. I know I cut you off, and maybe I shouldn’t have, but I came here to see you! I came here because I thought you were my fucking parents.”

Rex narrowed his eyes. “We’re not your parents. Look at us, and look at you. You really think we’ve got the same blood now? As far as I’m concerned, I never had a son, and I certainly wouldn’t have some *spic* daughter who-”

The powers ignited immediately, so angry was the welt in Mercedes’ heart. She let loose an enormous scream, furious and angry and tearful. With her superspeed she bolted around the room in an instant, right up to her father’s face. Her mother squealed, backing away. She’d moved so fast that her father no longer even had a phone in his hand; she’d taken it all the way to the garden and thrown it into the biggest pile of dirt she could find and dashed back without the detour even being noticed.

“*Never* call me that again,” she intoned, her breathing heavy, but her tone icy through her accent. “You always told me to be a winner. You always called me a pussy when I failed. I followed your example, and then I got better for a time with a woman I fucking *cared about*, unlike whatever you and Mom had. And then I lost my way *again* because of a guy *just like the pair of you*. Never fucking again. I won’t bother you anymore, but you can keep the memories of how much you two *idiotas* fucked up. *Adios, Papa.*”

She tore out of the room at superspeed, still wiping tears from her eyes as she fled. The new woman had no idea what to do from now on, but two things were for certain.

One: she was never going to see her original parents ever again.

And Two: she was going to eat a whole boatload of burgers to make herself feel better, and do it in record time at that.

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Blitz turned up to Lily's apartment feeling absolutely wrecked. She'd pushed herself to the limit running here, and still had two shopping bags full of burgers to eat. She knocked on the door several times, blushing a little due to the late time: it was now technically morning. Eventually, the door opened, and on the other side of it was a very, very weary Lily, bags under her eyes, her blonde hair a mess from the pillow. She even had a little drool stain on her shoulder which made Mercedes smile just a little; she had loved that little sleeping habit of hers back when they were together.

"M-Mercedes? What's going on? I've been trying to reach you? Jesus, what time is it?"

"I - I can't stay with Gabriella tonight. I need . . . I need a place to sleep, Lily. I saw my parents and it was all wrong and I just need to turn it all off right now. Mercedes removed the mask and immediately burst into tears. Lily woke up immediately in response to that.

"Oh God. Come on in, babe. Come on in. Let's get you a bed. I've got a fold out mattress and the most comfortable pyjamas you can imagine."

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They were the most comfortable pyjamas that Mercedes could imagine, because the next thing she remembered was waking up in Lily's bed. She got up, wearing Lily's silk pyjamas that stretched just a little too tightly around her rear and bust, and slowly walked into the main room. Lily had slept on the fold out couch, not her, and she was already making breakfast; pancakes.

"Wake up, sleepy head!" Lily announced.

"Lily, I can't believe you-"

"No talking until you eat. You need to eat a lot, right? I've made many pancakes and got extra syrup."

Mercedes managed to stem the tears this time. She sat down, aware of how . . . girly she currently felt. The pyjamas were pink, after all, and dipped in the front, showing off some cleavage simply due to her figure.

"They look nice on you, by the way. Now eat, drink some orange juice, then tell me everything."

"I'm so sorry, Lily. I shouldn't have ignored you, ba - well, I shouldn't have ignored you. I should have replied and told you-"

Lily sat down and pointed at the pancakes already on the table. "I said *EAT*."

With a small smirk, Mercedes did exactly that. She started slowly, but her hunger consumed her; apparently running hundreds of miles in a single day at the speeds she'd

gone required more calories than she'd thought. As such, she began eating the stack of pancakes with superspeed, then ate some of Lily's, then scooped up the ones just finished cooking and ate them too. When she was finished, she belched loudly. Lily actually laughed.

"Well, that's one way to do it. You're still definitely Max deep down, with a belch like that."

"I don't feel much like Max anymore," Mercedes said, aware of her accent. She gestured to her body. "I mean, look at me."

"But you can turn back, right? Once you learn some lessons."

"Like not falling for racist and sexist bullshit from people like my parents, right? Or from . . . Vigilance."

Lily paused, then folded her hands on the table. "Yeah, something like that. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have come off so strongly about the subject."

"You were right to. I was such a fucking moron, Lily. About everything. You were right from the start. And I was a total asshole. *Idiota*."

Lily took her hand. "We're both adjusting to this."

It reminded her of a sting in her heart. "Like your new boyfriend?"

Lily cringed. "I should have told you that, too. It's just . . . we were through, and in this new reality I'm with Malcolm Hayes, and-"

"Malcom Hayes! The footballer!? The guy from my team!?"

Lily blushed and tried not to look sheepish. "Seems I have a type; big, tall guys."

"He's black!"

She arched an eyebrow. "And?"

Mercedes rested her head in her hands. "And nothing. *Idiota*, Mercedes. *Idiota*. Sorry, I keep going back to old thoughts. This has been a big learning experience for me, Lily. So big. I . . . I hope you're happy with him."

She shrugged. "It's early days. But he treats me well. Sex is good, too."

Mercedes nearly spit out her orange juice. "Hey! I don't want to hear that shit!"

"You could always try having sex with a man yourself, since your body likes them. See what it's like?"

At this, Mercedes looked away. Her cheeks were on fire. Alas, she couldn't apply superspeed to the function that made her rosy complexion leave her bronze skin.

"Oh. My. God."

"Don't."

"You did have sex!"

"I said don't!"

"Who was it with!?"

“Nobody! It was just . . . one time. Last night.”

“Oh my God, was it Diego? Gabbie told me you were acting funny around him.”

Mercedes groaned. “How did I ever date you? *Si*, fine, it was Diego! We went on a date because I was stupid and listening to this girl body, and I ended up . . . I was on my back . . . it’s humiliating.”

“Hey, it’s sex! It’s good! It’s empowering. Did you enjoy it?”

Mercedes couldn’t keep the smile from her lips. “It was . . . *si*, it was *asombrosa*. Amazing. It was just the one time.”

“Does he know you’re a superhero?”

“Of course not! Gabbie knows now, though. I . . . I left in a hurry. A real hurry. Afterwards, I mean. The sex scrambled my brain and made me panic. That’s when I saw my parents. My old parents.”

“Oh, shit. You hate them.”

“I hate them even more, now. They fucked me up big time.”

“Hey, you’re a hero now, though.”

At this Mercedes sighed and leaned back. A button stretched, about to give away. Her boobs were way too big for these pyjamas. She kind of wanted her own set.

“More like a shitty anti-hero. I was with Vigilance. *Dios mio*, I’m pretty sure Red Wave is a fucking white supremacist. She was talking about pure blood, and I didn’t even hear it!”

“That’s a dogwhistle for you.” Lily patted Mercedes on the hand again. “What are you going to do about it?”

Mercedes thought about it. With her stomach filled and her emotion poured out (God, women really were onto something about simply venting, weren’t they?), she finally felt as if her head was clear. The shame she had felt the day before had started to evaporate.

“I think I’m going to be . . . better,” she said. The words tasted right to her. “Better than I was before. Better than I was yesterday. Each day a little better.”

“So you can turn back?”

Mercedes shook her head. “No. If I turn back, I turn back. But I should be better, because that’s what we should all be.”

At this, Lily gave her a brilliant smile and hugged her former boyfriend-turned-friend.

“Those are the words of a true hero, alright.”

“I should tell them to Gabriella. My *hermana*, now. She deserves to know.”

“About your powers?”

“*Si*. And my change of heart.”

Mercedes called Gabriella, but after several tries the other woman wasn’t answering.

“She might be busy,” she said. “I’ll go have a shower and see if she’s at the apartment.”

“Of course, babe. And . . . I’m proud of you.”

Mercedes blushed. “You know, I think I’m a little proud of me, too.”

“I’ll be even more proud if you call Diego and go out on a second date with him.”

The blush turned deeper.

“Oh my God! You’re considering it! Yes!”

“I’m not! I’m just . . . not *not* considering it.”

Lily pumped her fist in the air. Clearly this was a major victory. “Fuck yeah, girl! Go wash off that drunken sex stank and get prepped for love and heroism and hot latino boys!”

Mercedes marched to the shower. “I’m not listening!” she announced, blocking her ears dramatically. Though in truth, she was very much considering reaching out to Diego again. Yes, she had gotten flustered and ashamed and panicked, and probably left a bad impression, but she couldn’t stop thinking about the sex itself. It had been *marvellous*, and her body wanted it again. More than that, she’d actually *liked* him. Once, she’d mocked his accent and playstyle, but he had listened to her, heard out her frustrations, taken her out dancing and cheered her up. At no point had he taken advantage of her, and she had been the one to kiss him first. He had been a gentleman, and his very presence had been comforting. In a way, it was what Lily had brought to Max, before the change, only now Mercedes was a much better person, able to recognise what a *true* boyfriend should act like.

And besides, as she showered, she couldn’t help but touch herself, imagining his hands on her. She cupped her breasts, examining their size. He really did love her tits; who wouldn’t, round and bouncy and perky as they were? So strange to think she was getting used to not only feeling their constant weight and jiggle, but also enjoying showing them off a little. That wasn’t even getting to her hips and *culo*. She shook them a little, caressing her body as the hot water flowed down her naked form.

“Jesus, I have lovely hips,” she said with a giggle. “These are fucking fire. And this ass. I need to wear more tight things.”

The thought of that made her giggle again, especially imagining Diego watching her saunter away, her hips sashaying, her impressive backside prominent against a tight, short little dress. Even her hair felt lovely to her as she soaked it, the curls disappearing as the water straightened them temporarily. Mercedes cleaned herself, including between her thighs, and each touch, each caress, even cupping her breasts seemed like an act of discovery. This was her. This was who she was, now. Lily had Malcolm, and he was probably much more compatible for her.

“Is this more compatible for me? This body?”

The Speedlight Crystal vibrated within her. It seemed to agree with her.

“Does this mean I have to stay as Mercedes to keep this power?”

Another vibration, and the meaning came across: *No. We can change again, if you feel the need to.*

Strangely, there was disappointment for her in that response. She had come to accept that this might be permanent, and that this lovely latina body with all its curves, with its more passionate emotions and its pleasures and, yes, its struggles too, was simply hers now. That she had a sister, a *hermana*, and a better relationship with Lily, even now as a friend. But she could change back? What would she even do with that information?

“Not . . . yet,” she told herself as she finally left the warmth of the shower. She turned on her superspeed and span on the spot, whirring about until every droplet was gone, including from her hair. Then she began to fix her wild hairdo. She gazed at her reflection in the mirror, admiring the beauty of her face, its blemish-free bronze-brown skin, her full lips and hypnotic dark eyes, her longer, quite dignified nose.

“I’ll be you a little longer, at least until I’ve talked to Gabriella.”

With that assurance in her mind, she left the shower and got dressed in some clothes Lily had left her. She had to wear her original bra, of course, same for the underwear, but the pale blue skirt was stretchy and the top baggy, so it simply conformed to Mercedes’ dimensions.

“I could totally rock this look,” she said with a grin, admiring her reflection in Lily’s tall mirror. She decided that would be a good way to talk things over with Gabriella: go shopping together. It would be nice and feminine, and give her a chance to indulge in her womanly interests while they had a heart to heart. Before Mercedes turned back.

But when she entered the living room space to happily tell Lily her plans, she was confronted with the sight of her girlfriend-turned-bestie sitting on the couch, a horrified look on her face. The television was on, announcing some kind of new superhero/supervillain conflict, and for a moment Mercedes wasn’t sure why the tone had changed so dramatically in just twenty minutes.

“Lily, what’s up?”

“Babe, look at the screen. I just saw it on my phone, and it’s all over the news as well. I - I think they’ve got her!”

Mercedes frowned, then looked to the television, where a news anchor for Circuit City Daily was giving a report.

*“-Hero Society has indicated that they will be joining the search. Their official statement is that the hero known as Vibe is not an official member of their ranks and has not entered their vetting process, but that they are aware of her heroic status and intend to place all available efforts they can spare into rescuing her.”*

Footage played onscreen beside the anchor, showing Vibe in her neon costume battling a number of superpowered foes. The camera was shaky and taken from the street,

but the latina hero fell to the ground, shaking as something hit her. The footage cut out as several dark figures raced to collect her, shooing away the cameraman. No, not dark figures.

*Drones.*

“Oh my God,” Lily said.

*“Dios mio. It’s him.”*

The anchorman touched his earpiece and his eyes widened. *“I’m just getting a live update, folks. The group responsible for Vibe’s disappearance have claimed credit and provided proof. This video has been sent and verified.”*

The screen switched, and now it showed a dark room. Vibe was tied to a chair, and thankfully her mask remained on. She struggled against the restraints, but then the camera lifted up to reveal Vigilance standing behind her, one hand on her shoulder.

*“We are making a statement,” he said. “One that our entire country needs to hear. I am Vigilance, and these are my Patriots.”* The camera swivelled to show off Red Wave and Goliath, along with two other members that Mercedes didn’t recognise. *“For too long, this country has been going down the toilet. We have watched diversity programs and unqualified, unAmerican trash ruin our once-great nation. We have seen crimewave after crimewave flooding the streets, thugs and gang leaders burning down neighbourhoods and ruining the lives of good, traditional men and women and children.*

*“Recently, myself and my Patriots attempted to end the threat of a gang group of thugs and illegal immigrants known as The Destined. We were stopped by a do-gooding crying liberal calling herself Vibe. A hero from ‘the streets’; you can tell just by looking at her, with so-called ‘music’ as her powers that plays the same kind of gangsta rap and hip hop that is a sign of our moral degradation as a society. No more. America needs a firmer hand. It needs the right people at the top, the kind of people who understand who really belongs. And so, we Patriots are finally taking a stand. We’re going to expose Vibe live on our stream, revealing her identity to the world so every good citizen knows WHO TO BLAME.”*

Mercedes’ jaw was wide open, as was Lily’s.

“He can’t be serious,” Lily said. “Even for that jackass.”

“He kills people. Villains. I’ve seen it up close. And . . . I supported it. *Dios mio*, Lily, I helped him! I fought against Vibe! If I hadn’t, maybe he wouldn’t know how her powers work and-”

Lily hushed her instantly. “What matters now is that you have a chance to do the right thing. If she’s unmasked, every villain in the city will be able to come after her and everyone she loves.”

Mercedes gulped. Lily clearly didn’t know Gabriella’s secret yet, and so had no idea that *she* might directly be a target. Her words were even truer than she may think they were.

“I’ll save her,” she said, clenching her fists. “It’s time to put right to a wrong.”

“You’ll need to be careful, babe. You said it yourself; Vigilance and his Patriots kill people who they think don’t belong.”

At this, Mercy remembered the little techno-sphere given to her by Vigilance. She zapped across the room and grabbed it. It was still pulsing.

“I might have a way in,” she said to Lily.

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Another warehouse, naturally. Vigilance clearly loved the burnt out industrial aesthetic, perhaps so he could wax philosophical over how fallen America was. Blitz was suited up and ready to play her part, but she checked her phone one last time just to make sure everything was in place. Then, her heart beating nervously in her chest, she walked briskly to the entrance of the warehouse and rapped her knuckles against it. Just as before, a security camera turned her way and focused upon her. She gave it a light wave.

“*You’re late,*” came Vigilance’s voice.

“Had some personal shit to work out. I’m here now, aren’t I?”

There was a pause, one that seemed to stretch time out into infinity, and then the roller door opened, just as it had the first time she’d come to one of their safehouses. As she stepped inside, though, she could see this one had a far more elaborate setup. There were numerous tools, gadgets, and dozens of Vigilance’s high-tech drones presence, some of them hooked up for maintenance or upgrades, others floating through the space above rather menacingly. Goliath was at the door waiting for her, but Red Wave was nowhere to be seen. The other two Patriot members were garbed in dark blue and appeared, perhaps, to be twins. They had a very Aryan aesthetic: their gas masks were smaller and their blonde hair was slicked back, their uniforms consisting of double-breasted jackets and military pants. It gave Mercedes the chills: she wasn’t sure what their powers were, but their appearance reminded her of just how many obvious dogwhistles and signs she’d missed as to Vigilance’s true nature.

“Next time, get here when you’re called,” Goliath said. “We need you for a good appearance. Vigilance wants you on the stream. We can’t legitimise this movement if we don’t have our only ethnic member running away.”

Mercedes cringed. “Hispanic. Latina. Not *ethnic.*”

“Whatever.”

“No, not *whatever.* These terms have meaning. I’ve been ignoring that for way too fucking long so it’s time for it to start cuonting.”

Goliath made a scoffing sound, but directed her onwards. Mercedes moved, trying to ignore the way one of the blue twins elbowed the other and pointed in her direction,

whispering something. From the way they were both staring at her swaying ass, she could guess.

“Eyes up here,” she said to them, but it only made them laugh. “Fucking pigs,” she muttered. Yet another illustration of what it was like to be a woman. So much of what Lily had tried to tell her was true, and it took becoming a woman to finally realise she was right.

Still, she couldn’t think on such matters now, not while her *hermana* was in danger. Goliath escorted her to a sort of fake room they had constructed in the middle of the warehouse. The walls were fake and welded together, and a makeshift door had been added to the side. She waited, anxious, until finally the door opened and Vigilance stepped out.

“Red Wave has got her blood pinned down,” he said. “Vibe won’t be going anywhere. Oh, look at what the cat dragged in. We were starting to second guess where your loyalties lie, Blitz. What took you so long?”

“I had some personal shit, like I told the big guy here.”

“Business comes first. We need to know how dedicated you are to this cause.”

“I *am* dedicated,” she lied. But she had never been a good actor: her voice cracked, her accent grew thicker with her nervousness.

Vigilance cocked his head. “I wonder. Vibe technically saved your life, though you should have moved out of the way. I’m sorry how things went down, but we can reset it all, now. The heroes will eventually close in. We’ve got a nasty surprise ready for them if they do, so we’re bumping up the timeline. It’s time to unmask Vibe, and let the city reject yet another bleeding heart diversity hire hero who gets in the way of true justice. And *you’re* going to be the one to unmask her.”

Mercedes blinked behind her domino mask. “M-me?”

“Don’t worry, we’ll be there to ensure you play your part. After that, you’re a true Patriot member, dedicated to making America the country it should be, with the people who *belong* here.”

Mercedes swallowed. She tried to pretend this was just another game plan on the football field. Another play to deceive the other team. It helped, if only a little.

“Fine. Let’s get this shit over with.”

She moved for the door, and her confidence seemed to surprise the others. Vigilance gestured for Goliath to wait outside, and stepped into the room behind her. Just like in the recording, the interior walls were plastered with old newspapers in order to discuss the location and make the place foreboding. Vibe - Gabriella - was tied to a chair and writhing a little, almost as if she were dreaming. She was very much awake, however: just offscreen from the camera’s view, which was placed on a tripod before her, was Red Wave. She was holding out her arms like a witch, wriggling her fingers as she moved the passage of blood

within Vibe, keeping her in place. It was one of the most unsettling sights Blitz had ever witnessed.

“It’s time,” Vigilance said. “To all those watching at home, to all those who judge me and my Patriots, who castigate us as bigots and reactionaries, I’d like you to meet one of our prominent members, and a true Patriot herself. Blitz here is a loyal citizen, a homegrown American through and through. And she *should* dispel any notions that we are some white supremacist, racist organisation like the enemies of America, like the *liberals* try to portray us as. As you can see, she is a proud latina woman who recognises the truth of what this country needs. She’s no DEI hire, no fake hero. She’s on the side of righteousness.”

“You’re goddamn right,” Mercedes said, putting her hands on her hips and posing heroically.

Vibe turned her head just a little, looking her way. Her face, magnified by the expressive white eyes of her mask, broke Mercedes’ heart. She had to choke back a moment of emotion.

“*Hermana*,” she managed to stammer. “H-how could you?”

“She’s not your *hermana*,” Red Wave said. “She’s one of us.”

Blitz crossed the room to stand beside Vibe. Vigilance stood behind them, still mugging the camera.

“Blitz here will be the one to reveal this fake hero, Vibe. Everyone watching online or at home will be able to see the truth. To my loyal followers, you know what to do in the aftermath of this moment. You’ve hounded these fake heroes before, chased them out of the streets where they can never hurt America’s dreams again. Keep up the effort. I expect we’ll have a name for this ‘hero’ within just minutes at the rate our keyboard warriors work. Any final words before the world sees your identity, Vibe?”

“*Si, si*,” she panted. “Fuck you, and your fascist friends! I won’t stop fighting you, even with my last breath.”

“We’ll see. It may just come to that. Blitz?”

Heart still thudding, Blitz strode forward. She knelt down beside Vibe and looked her right in the face.

“Why are you doing this?” Vibe said to her.

“Because you deserve it,” Blitz replied. She lowered her voice, turning her face away from Vigilance and Red Wave. “*And because no one hurts my hermana.*”

For a moment, Vibe looked to be extremely confused. Realisation suddenly dawned upon her face. Blitz stood up, and placed her fingers at the folds of Vibe’s mask.

“Time for everyone to see the truth,” she said.

For a moment, a sense of satisfaction hung in the air, a smugness radiating from Vigilance, Red Wave, and the rest of their buddies watching the stream outside.

And then Blitz activated her powers, the Speedlight Crystal within her chest vibrating perfectly in tune to her movements. She struck her hand down upon the ropes holding Vibe, her fingers vibrated even faster than the rest of her so that they literally sliced between the atoms of her bindings. The merest flicker of surprise had begun to show in Red Wave's body language, but by then Blitz had already leaped over to smash her against the wall, using all of her momentum to knock the woman down and probably break a rib or two. Unfortunately, it also damn well hurt Blitz as well.

"You bitch!" Vigilance yelled. "What are you doing!?"

"I'm taking you down, you sexist, racist, fascist *hijo de puta*," Blitz said. "I can't believe I ever fell for any of your bullshit. And I'm going to make every one of your followers and haters and everyone else watch as I take you down."

She launched at Vigilance, but an electric field expanded from his suit, sending her flying backwards against the wall again, and knocking Red Wave over a second time. Vigilance grabbed a gun from his belt, only to be sent flying himself, a massive sonic boom of punk music crashing against him and blowing open half of the fake interrogation room his Patriots had constructed. Blitz looked over to see Vibe in full combat pose. She was clearly still injured and struggling on one leg, but she was smiling.

"Got your back, *hermana*."

"And I've got yours. I'm sorry I took so long."

"You can pay me back later. Let's kick asses first!"

Blitz activated her powers. "Hell yes."

She launched ahead, ignoring Vigilance and going for his drones. She managed to smash through five of them before the others pulled up from their housing and rose into the air. Lasers shot around the room, each of them following her, and so she now had to outrun them instead. She skated across the ground, diving between Goliath's legs as he tried to grab her. Vibe's sonic booms were taking the drones out, but the blue Aryan twins were holding hands, and their powers were immediately clear: they were making *copies* of themselves all across the room. An entire army of blonde-haired, blue-eyed Nazi-looking mooks were filling up the space, making it hard to manoeuvre.

"Meet Multi-Man!" Vigilance proclaimed. "Our other newest member! It seems we'll have two unmaskings today!"

Blitz was knocked over, got up, and then only made it another hundred feet around the warehouse before a Multi-Man tripped her up. They were damn well everywhere, and between them and the drone lasers and Goliath barrelling to intercept her, there was no manoeuvring space. Vibe was holding her own against Vigilance, but her injuries and his tech was making it an even match.

"*Dios mio*," she said as more Multi-Men appeared. "They're everywhere!"

“And you’re just two!” Goliath yelled.

He slammed into her as she turned a corner, funneled by a tunnel of Multi-Men. The enormous man gripped her, just as a series of drones began to taser Vibe, knocking her back a second time. Blitz was pressed against the ground beside her sister, the two latina women overwhelmed by the Patriot numbers.

“And to think, the camera is still working,” Vigilance proclaimed. “Is the stream still running?”

A Multi-Man checked the stream. “Still up! Viewership count is off the charts.”

Vigilance chuckled, the dark-suited figure looming over the two women.

“I should have guessed one of *you* people wouldn’t be loyal. Too bad, you would have been a great PR coup.”

“I forgot to tell you why I was late,” Blitz said, noticing shadows on the ceiling of the warehouse, where some figures were gathering outside its upper windows.

“Personal shit, I’m told,” Vigilance said. She could detect the smugness behind the mask.

“Yeah, that. And also because I had to call in with the Hero Society and tell them where you are.”

*CRASH!*

Glass smashed everywhere as numerous Hero Society members descended into the field of battle. Flame Dancer, Signet Lance, Lightning Lass, even Silver Spear were all present, and like a well-oiled machine they were already battling the enemies around them with expert precision, knocking aside the Multi-Men and clearing a path for themselves.

“NO!” Vigilance cried. “You fucking BITCH! I’ll kill you!”

But Vibe was already unleashing her power, sending a surprised Goliath into the air, across the warehouse, and crashing into the wall with a blast of hip hop energy. It freed up Blitz to move, and she grabbed Vibe’s hand, pulling her up.

“Use your power, *hermana!*”

The Multi-Men surged towards them, Vigilance’s drones activating above. But now they were working in perfect sync: Blitz evaded each of their attacks, carrying her sister in her arms and moving faster than she ever had. She knocked aside enemies, evaded laser strikes, and let her sister be the true offensive power: her musical blasts sent enemies sprawling, and one by one Vigilance’s drones were knocked from the air. The tech-based fascist growled in frustration, drawing more weapons from his belt. But Blitz was ahead of him, and the chaos erupting around him made it hard for him to get the upper hand. She ducked under a shot just in time for Red Wave to rise up and try to use her blood powers. For a moment, Blitz stumbled on her legs, but Vibe was just as fast this time.

“This is for using my blood!” Vibe screamed, and with another blast the woman crashed against a wall yet again, this time getting knocked out for good.

The Hero Society were winning against the Multi-Men. The originals, still holding hands to activate their power, were forming a dome of their replicas around themselves to protect their bond, but they were having to divert more and more forces to do so. That left Goliath and Vigilance, and the former was getting knocked around with ease. When Vibe struck out with another sonic blast, his helmet came off, and the result was comical.

The man beneath looked like some turkey-faced teenager, all spots and pimples and with a chin that was weaker than half-melted butter. If this was a member of the master race, then he should give up then and there.

“You fucker!” he yelled, voice squeaking audibly.

“I knew it!” Blitz yelled back. “You’re just wearing some kind of suit! Vibe?”

“Already on it!”

They zoomed round and round him, dismantling it piece by piece. Goliath screeched, the pathetic kid flailing to grab them and failing at every turn. Tears erupted from his eyes as he began to cry, his suit crumpled around him, his power gone.

“You can’t do this to me! I don’t deserve this! I don’t deserve this!”

But Blitz couldn’t give a shit about his tears, not after all he’d done. She moved straight for Vigilance. He had a gun in his hand, but as she advanced towards him, still carrying Vibe, he held it up in a surrendering gesture. The camera was positioned to take in the scene perfectly.

“I surrender,” he said, dropping the gun. He even removed his cloak with its many gadgets, followed by his utility belt, hurling them all aside. “I admit, you calling in your fake hero buddies, your bleeding heart traitors, was unexpected. I should have been more suspicious of you. You just didn’t . . . smell right. But I surrender. If you try to beat me up now, everyone will know who you really are. Just a pair of thugs bringing down this country.”

Blitz went to move, but Vibe touched her shoulder.

“Don’t,” she said. She got out of Blitz’s arms and stood on her own, still favouring one leg. “We’re better than him. And we’re not taking your racist-ass bait, asshole. You can make more streams and speeches once you’re out of a cell.”

“Please, this country doesn’t put people like me in a cell. I won’t lose a single follower from what I’ve done today. My cause just gets stronger every day. I’ll be back, with more backing, with more sponsors, with more of America behind me. Vigilance is more than a man, it’s an idea, and-”

Blitz shot forward faster than she had ever gone. She moved so fast that the world was frozen. She moved so fast that no one, not even the freeze-framers at home, would notice what she was about to do. She gripped Vigilance’s mask and unclasped it at the back.

Then, taking advantage of the step he was taking, she crossed his legs, just a little, to throw him off balance. Finally, to really add insult to injury, she pulled up his underwear and undid his trousers, just a little. With a satisfied smirk, she ran back to Vibe's side, assumed her exact position from before, and then stood there, arm around her hermana. She deactivated her powers, and the results were immediate.

"-I'll always be - agh!"

Vigilance screeched in an embarrassingly high voice as his mask fell from his face. He tripped over mid-villainous monologue, pants falling around his ankles and himself falling head over heels and crashing to the ground in a highly embarrassing pratfall that left him sprawled upon the ground. To the amusement and shock of everyone watching the stream, which news stations were carrying across the whole country as well, Vigilance's underwear was plainly visible and hiked up way, way too high.

Vibe's jaw fell. Blitz just giggled. Even as the battle finished in the background, one could hear Lightning Lass cackle like a mad woman.

"Oh my God! Vigilance's pants just fell down!"

Vigilance, or rather, the man beneath, rose up on his elbows. He looked like just an average man, all mythic image dispelled from his embarrassing pratfall. Hate and humiliation radiated on his face, and clear tears formed in the corners of his eyes that he battled not to let loose. With horror, his face turned to look at the camera, still recording his ultimate defeat, and his eyes went wide.

"You - you did this!"

"I didn't take off your belt," Blitz said. "That was you. But hey, now the whole world knows you like Calvin Klein. And they can see you for what a pathetic loser you really are."

She could see it in the pure hatred in his eyes; he knew she was right. There was no coming back from this, not ever. He would be a joke now, and forever. No one would want to sponsor him, propagandise for him, or come to his aid after this memetic moment. Any trial he was now going to have would rely entirely on the facts. And facts, those he was short on.

"Best of luck," Blitz said, winking.

He roared in rage, but before he could get up again, Lightning Lass and Signet Lance were already grabbing the villain and dragging him away, his pants still around his ankles, his underwear now clearly giving him one tight wedge for the viewers.

"Good work, kid," Flame Dancer said. "Real heroic stuff."

Blitz held her sister, helping her walk. "I've got a good role model to look up to."

"I can see that. You two work well together. Do you need help? Medical attention?"

Vibe nodded. "That would be nice. And then . . . I just want to lie back and watch a really cheesy telenovella."

"I might join you," Blitz said, hugging her. "And maybe eat a whole batch of empanadas at the same time."

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Vigilance's defeat was now a terrific set of memes, and Mercedes couldn't get enough of it, nor could Gabriella. They did indeed watch a telenovella that night, and the two fell fast asleep on the couch, the pair of sisters well over the events of the day. When Mercedes woke up the following morning, the smell of pancakes drifted through the house. She activated her powers and was immediately at the table as her sister prepared a whole stack of them. The two began to speak in Spanish.

"Thought you might want some more food after all that superspeeding."

"You thought right! *Dios*, I'm still hungry. How are you feeling?"

"Sore, but better. I was scared. Real scared, actually. I'm pretty new to this heroing thing. I didn't even know I had a supergene in my blood, and then that accident at the campus lab happened. I guess that's what you got, too."

"Nah, I got a Speedlight Crystal in my chest."

Gabriella paused, then laughed. "What a weird world we live in!"

"Super weird."

"Let's compare origin stories sometime."

"Absolutely."

They began to eat, but a strange silence settled in. It was Gabriella who broke it.

"Thank you for saving me, sis."

"You saved *me*, Gabby. You and Lily. I was . . . lost. I mean, I was also a real asshole."

"No. I should have been there for you. We're sisters. You and I."

"I was going through a lot of changes."

"So was I."

"Trust me, mine were bigger," Mercedes said, grinning. "I'm just sorry it all happened the way it did. I'll never let you down again."

"And I promise I'll be there for you, whatever changes you go through. But, since I'm your big sis, I'll also tease you a lot about everything. Especially that sexy hunk Diego."

"Ugh!"

"Call him."

"I will," Mercedes admitted. "But first . . . I was thinking I'll call Mama and Papa."

"Oh, really? Finally reconnecting?"

Mercedes nodded, blushing a little. "I think I'd like to get to know my family better. Speaking of, you need to tell Lily about Vibe. She's your best friend."

"I don't know . . . I don't want her to be at risk."

"Well, she already knows I'm Blitz, so . . ."

Gabby gasped. "My little sister, ten minutes behind me and always leaping ahead. No wonder you got superspeed."

The two laughed. Mercedes realised that, for the first time ever, she actually felt like part of a family. It made her all the more excited to call her new parents. To meet them. After all, they were only a short interstate run away.

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When Mercedes answered the door, there was a giddy excitement inside of her. To her surprise, it wasn't the person she expected, but Lily instead.

"Oh!" she said. "Lily!"

"Am I interrupting something?" Lily asked, folding her arms and smirking. "Looks like someone has a hot date coming."

Mercedes blushed. She was wearing a cute and rather small black dress, one with more of a plunging neckline than usual. It had an in-built bra that supported her ample breasts, making them look even bigger and emphasising a deep line of cleavage. Sleeveless, it also showed off her gorgeously athletic arms. The former man had even worked hard on her hair and lipstick, just as Lily had taught her.

"I'm meeting Diego again, tonight. It's our second date. I'm hoping to make up for the first."

"Didn't you literally have sex on the first date?"

Another, even deeper blush. "Well, I'll make it up to him even more, I guess."

Lily sighed and slapped her forehead. "Okay, this is hilarious, then. I was coming around to, well, ugh, this is embarrassing to admit . . ."

"Do you want to come in?"

"No, no. I was . . . I was coming over since I knew Gabriella was out, and I was going to try and convince you to stay as Mercedes."

Mercedes was surprised by this. "Really? Why?"

"Well, frankly, because you're a better person now. I mean, you'd still be a better person, but you seem much happier now, as Mercedes. You told me that you have the power to potentially change back with that crystal thingy inside of you, but you and Gabby are getting along like a house on fire, and I feel closer to you now as one of my best friends than I ever did with you as a man. You've got a nice fashion style, you're rocking being a hot

latina, you're expressing your emotions, you're a superheroine that kids look up to. You're embracing new cultures . . . just everything, I guess. And I guess I feel kinda stupid now." She paused, making a realisation. "Wait, this is one last hurrah, isn't it? Going out with Diego, giving a good apology date, and then turning back?"

Mercedes laughed. "Oh no. I'm staying like this. No convincing needed, *babe*."

"Oh, thank God. I mean, I know why I want you to stay like this. But why do you?"

Mercedes shrugged, then pulled her purse strap up over her shoulder and adjusted her dress. "Because this is me. I'm Mercedes Diaz. Why would I ever want to be someone else?"

Lily smiled wide as the ocean, and leapt forward to hug her friend. Mercedes hugged her back, and found this feminine bonding exactly what she wanted.

"I'm glad you crashed that car," Lily said.

"I'm glad you got out of it," Mercedes replied. "You're the best friend a guy-turned-latina-girl could ask for."

"An oddly specific yet endearing statement."

Suddenly, Mercedes' phone rang. It was Diego, so she answered it with apologies from Lily.

"Uh-huh. Oh, of course. No, I understand. Well, as luck would have it, I can come right to you. I'm closer than you think."

She put the phone down and winked at Lily. "Diego's car broke down. He can't leave his apartment."

"Oh, shit. Do you want me to give you a ride? I know he's across town, but-"

Mercedes just laughed. "No need! I wanted to go for a light run anyway."

She kissed her friend on the cheek, checked that the in-built bra on her dress wouldn't make her bounce too much, and then, with one last wink and smile at Lily, she activated her power and blitzed down the street and across town. She'd be at Diego's place in just under a minute.

A good thing too. This much speed was going to make her hungry.

And not just for food, either.

**The End**