

SUZY'S SUNDAY CAFÉCITO Y CHISME CLUB

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CAFÉCITO CLUB

ISSUE
1

CLUB

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welco me

Bienvenida, mi amor.

If you're reading this, you did the thing. You signed up. You pulled up a chair. And now here we are – you, me, and whatever's in your cup right now, which I hope is cafecito but I'll accept tea if you're going through something.

I'm Rosy. I write books about a Cuban-American woman named Suzy García who is loud and messy and completely incapable of keeping things to herself. She comes by it honestly. So do I.

On the first Sunday of every month, I'm going to show up here the same way Suzy shows up everywhere – with something to say, something to share, and absolutely no filter.

Some Sundays, it'll be a peek behind the scenes of the writing life. Some Sundays, it'll be a Cuban dicho your abuela definitely said to you at least once. Some Sundays, it'll just be me, oversharing about something that happened this week that I couldn't keep to myself.

This month's chisme: I've been writing Book 2, and I just finished a scene involving a cake lady in Hialeah who had no patience for vague answers and absolutely no interest in being told okay.



She is my new favorite character, and she didn't even exist three weeks ago. That's the thing about writing – sometimes the best people show up uninvited and refuse to leave until they've said what they came to say.

I think about that a lot lately. The things that show up uninvited. The things that refuse to leave until they've said what they needed to say.

Anyway. That's enough chisme for one Sunday.

♥ Rosy xo

LA COCINA

This month in La Cocina: *Mami's croquetas.*

Not the ones from the store. Not the ones your cousin brings to every party, claiming they're homemade. The real ones. The ones that take two days and smell like every Sunday you've ever had.

Nobody in my family ever wrote the recipe down. That's how Cuban recipes work — they live in muscle memory and in the specific look your abuela gives you when you've added too much salt.

This is my best attempt at writing it down. Make them on a Saturday. Eat them on a Sunday. Thank me later.

Croquetas



INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups finely chopped ham (use a food processor)
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 small onion, grated
- 4 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup whole milk, warm
- Salt, pepper, and a pinch of nutmeg
- 2 eggs, beaten
- Breadcrumbs – the fine ones, not the chunky ones
- Oil, or better yet, lard for frying – enough to mean it



Melt the butter in a pan over medium heat. Add the grated onion and cook until soft and golden – about five minutes. Don't rush this part. Abuela says the onion tells you when it's ready. She's right.

Add the flour and stir constantly for two minutes until it smells nutty and looks like it means business. Slowly add the warm milk, stirring the whole time, until you have a thick, smooth béchamel. Add the ham. Season with salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Taste it. Adjust it. Trust yourself.

Transfer to a dish, cover with plastic wrap directly on the surface so it doesn't form a skin, and refrigerate overnight. This is the part nobody tells you about. The waiting is the recipe. The next day, shape the mixture into small logs – about the size of a wine cork, which is also what you'll need nearby for the waiting. Dip each one in beaten egg, roll in breadcrumbs, and fry in hot oil until deeply golden. Don't crowd the pan. Give them space. They'll reward you for it. Drain on paper towels. Eat immediately. Try not to eat all of them before anyone else arrives.

Mami's note: If they fall apart in the oil, the mixture wasn't cold enough. If they're pale, the oil wasn't hot enough. If someone says they're just okay, that's their problem, not yours.

Deleted SCENES

When I was four or five years old, my sister was sent from Boston to Miami for the summer. Not for a vacation. To become more Cuban. She had been born in Cuba. She spoke Spanish. She was, by any reasonable measure, Cuban. But apparently living in New England had introduced certain habits that my parents found concerning, and Miami — specifically, our family in Miami — was the prescribed remedy.

I was too young to fully understand what was happening. But I remember watching her leave and thinking: she was born there. How could she not be Cuban enough?

I have never stopped thinking about it. That question — what it means to be Cuban enough, American enough, enough of anything when you exist between two worlds — found its way into Suzy García. And this scene, which didn't make it into the final book, is the one where fourteen-year-old Suzy gets her own version of that summer.

La Flaca is fictional. The tweezers were not.

Remedio for When You Are Not Cuban Enough:

Submit. You cannot fix this with one conversation. You will need foundation, gold hoops, an azabache, and someone's aunt with tweezers. And never, under any circumstances, leave the house in a ponytail. Plan accordingly.

The summer I was fourteen, my parents sent me to Miami.

Not as a vacation.

As a correction.

I had been living in Boston long enough, apparently, to have developed certain habits that my mother found alarming. I said wicked instead of *ay*. I owned a Patriots sweatshirt. I had been observed, on at least one occasion, eating a sandwich for dinner without complaint.

The situation, my mother decided, required intervention.

Enter *La Flaca*.

My mother's sister had lived in Miami her entire adult life and considered herself the foremost authority on how a Cuban woman should present herself to the world. *La Flaca* was not, in fact, *flaca*. She was a large woman who had been called *La Flaca* since childhood for reasons no one could fully explain anymore, and she wore the nickname the way she wore everything else — with complete conviction and no apologies. She wore full makeup to the supermarket. She had opinions about eyebrows that she did not keep to herself.

She was, in other words, exactly what my mother had in mind.

I arrived in Miami on a Thursday in June with one suitcase, a Red Sox cap, and the absolute certainty that I was going to spend six weeks being mildly bored in the heat while my parents congratulated themselves on their cultural intervention.

La Flaca greeted me at the airport with a hug and a look.

The look took in the Red Sox cap, the ponytail, the sneakers, and the general presentation of a fourteen-year-old who had packed for Boston and not for Miami.

"Ay, *mi amor*," she said, with the tone of a doctor delivering a diagnosis. She said it the way you said it when someone had arrived needing more help than you had anticipated.

I didn't know yet how much help she had in mind.

The beach trip was announced on Saturday morning.

"*La playa*," *La Flaca* said, appearing in the doorway of the guest room where I was reading. "*Vámonos, arreglate*."

I put my book down.

The beach.

I knew what to do at the beach.

I had been to the beach. Plenty of beaches. Cape Cod. Revere Beach. That one in Maine where the water was so cold it felt like a personal attack.

I knew exactly what to do.

I pulled my hair back into a ponytail.

I put on my bikini.

I put on my oversized Red Sox t-shirt over the bikini because that was what you did — you wore the t-shirt to the car and took it off at the water.

I put on my flip flops.

I picked up my book.

I was ready in four minutes.

I came out of the bedroom feeling efficient.

La Flaca was standing in the hallway.

She looked at me.

She looked at me the way you looked at something that required a moment of silent processing before you could respond to it responsibly.

"¿*Qué es esto?*" she said finally.

"I'm ready," I said.

She closed her eyes briefly.

"No, no, no," she said. She said it three times, which I was learning was *La Flaca's* way of indicating that a situation was more serious than a single no could convey. "*Regresa*."

"I'm ready," I said again.

"You look," she said carefully, in the measured English she used when she wanted to make sure I understood every word, "like you are going to sleep on the beach. Not to go to the beach."

"It's a t-shirt," I said.

"It is a men's t-shirt," she said. "With a baseball team on it."

"It's comfortable," I said.

"Ay." She took a breath. "The beach is not about comfortable. The beach is about—" she gestured at herself, at the dress she was wearing, at the general concept of effort — "presenting yourself."

"To who?" I said. "The ocean?"

"To anyone," she said, with great significance. "You never know who you are going to run into when you go out. You must always be presentable." I looked around.

I was fifteen hundred miles from Boston. I was fourteen. I knew approximately no one in the state of Florida. The only people I was going to run into at this beach were strangers, seagulls, and whoever was selling *coco frío* from the cart by the water.

I did not say this.

I had been in Miami long enough to understand that some arguments were not arguments you were going to win.

"Regresa," she said again. "Come. I'll help you."

What followed was the most educational forty-five minutes of my life.

La Flaca sat me down at her vanity with the focused energy of a woman who had been waiting for this opportunity and intended to use it properly. Foundation first.

"But we're going to the beach," I said.

"Yes," she said.

"We're going to sweat," I said.

"Yes," she said, applying foundation.

"And go in the water," I said.

"Some of us," she said, with the tone of a woman who had not gone fully in the water since 1987 and did not intend to start now.

Mascara.

"Won't it run?" I asked.

"Not if you don't cry," she said.

"What if I get splashed?" I asked.

She looked at me in the mirror.

"Then you reapply," she said, as if this was obvious.

Lip gloss — a coral that she selected from a collection that occupied an entire drawer.

"This one," she said. "It says summer."

"It says Revlon," I said, reading the label.

She ignored this.

Then the jewelry.

Hoops — large gold ones that she produced from a box and fastened in my ears with great ceremony.

A bracelet.

A necklace with a small gold charm.

And then — from a separate box, handled differently, more carefully — a small black fist on a thin gold chain.

"Azabache," she said. "For *mal de ojo*."

"What's *mal de ojo*?" I said.

She looked at me with the specific sadness of a woman confronting the full extent of what Boston had done.

"Evil eye," she said. "People will look at you today."

"At the beach?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because you are young and you will look beautiful when I am finished," she said, without vanity or hesitation, as a simple statement of what was about to happen and what would result from it. "And when people look with envy, the azabache protects."

She fastened it around my neck.

I looked at myself in the mirror.

Foundation. Mascara. Coral lip gloss. Gold hoops. Bracelet. Charm necklace. *Azabache*.

"Now the hair," she said.

The ponytail came out.

She brushed it. She styled it with products from a shelf that occupied an entire wall — mousses and sprays and serums that each appeared to have a specific and non-negotiable purpose.

By the time she was finished, my hair was doing something I had not previously understood it was capable of.

"Better," she said.

I looked at myself.

I looked like a different person.

A more Cuban person, possibly.

A person who had been somewhere warmer than Boston for longer than two days.

"Now shoes," she said.

She produced sandals.

With a heel.

"We're going to the beach," I said.

"Yes," she said.

"There will be sand," I said.

"Yes," she said.

"You can't walk in heels in sand," I said.

"You walk to the sand," she said. "Then you sit. Beautifully."

She said beautifully the way other people said obviously.

I put on the sandals.
I stood up.
I was four inches taller and significantly more decorated than I had been forty-five minutes ago.
La Flaca studied me from head to toe.
She nodded once.
Almost satisfied.
And then she saw my eyebrows.

I won't describe the eyebrow moment in detail because some things are private and also because the memory still makes my eyes water. What I will say is that *La Flaca* had tweezers and a confidence in their application that suggested she had been doing this her entire adult life and saw no reason to slow down for a fourteen-year-old from Boston who kept saying ow and is this necessary and I can see stars.
"Quieta," she said, every time I moved. Still.
"It hurts," I said.
"Beauty requires," she said, which was not a complete sentence but communicated everything.
When it was over she held up a mirror.
I looked at my eyebrows.
They were, I had to admit, shaped in a way that my previous eyebrows had not been.
"Better," she said, with the satisfaction of a woman who had completed a project she'd been mentally planning since I arrived.

We went to the beach.
La Flaca walked through the sand in her heeled sandals with the practiced ease of a woman who had been doing this for forty years and considered it entirely reasonable.
I walked beside her in my heeled sandals feeling like an anthropological subject.
People looked.
Whether this was because we looked good or because I looked like a fourteen-year-old who had been styled by someone else's aunt, I couldn't fully determine.

The *azabache* sat at my collarbone, warm in the sun.
La Flaca set up her chair with great precision. Arranged her things.
Reapplied her lip gloss. Looked out at the ocean with the
expression of a woman enjoying herself correctly.
I sat beside her.
We watched the water.
"Ves?" she said after a while. You see?
"Yes," I said.
"This is how you go to the beach," she said.
I looked down at myself.
At the coral lip gloss.
At the gold hoops.
At the *azabache* catching the light.
At the heeled sandals sitting neatly beside my chair because I had,
in fact, taken them off.
La Flaca noticed.
She said nothing.
And I thought — sitting there in Miami in the heat with my new
eyebrows and my protection against evil eyes — that maybe being
Cuban enough wasn't about what you wore to the beach.
Maybe it was about showing up.
Fully.
Whatever that looked like.
Even if it took forty-five minutes and a pair of tweezers to get
there.

MONT HLY REME DIO

For anyone who has said okay when they meant something else entirely:

Brew your *cafecito* strong. Sit down – actually sit, not standing over the sink pretending that counts. Take one sip for the thing you wanted to say. Take another for the next time you'll say it.

Add *azúcar* if needed.

You'll get there.

BEFORE YOU GO

Suzy García: Remedies, Romance & *La Familia* is available now on Amazon. If you've already read it — thank you, from the bottom of my very Cuban heart. If you haven't yet, Suzy is waiting. She has opinions. She's ready to share them.

[\[GET THE BOOK\]](#)

Know someone who needs a Sunday *cafecito* and a little *chisme*? Forward this to them. They'll thank you later.

Con mucho cariño,
Rosy

You're receiving this because you signed up for the Suzy Sunday *Cafecito* Club. To unsubscribe, respond to this email. But I'll miss you.