



## **Faults: A Novel (Djuna Books)**

*Terri de la Pea*

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*Terri de la Pea*

## Faults: A Novel (Djuna Books) Terri de la Pea Chapter Three

December 31: Morning

*Toni*

A monotonous hum wakes me, but I'm afraid to open my eyes to verify my surroundings. I lie still. Am I on the train? Did I simply dream I came home? I am stationary, not rocking with the ceaseless motion of the railway car. I smell coffee and the down-home aroma of freshly made tortillas de harina. If Mama is here, she is being unnaturally quiet.

I wonder if the continuous mechanical sound is the echo of the Santa Monica Freeway a few blocks south. As if to test my speculation, the hum intensifies, falters, wheezes, grows monotonous again. It is much too close to be the freeway. Eyes closed, I reach one hand behind me to feel the rough plaster of the bedroom wall. It's warm to the touch, and it vibrates. The hum must be coming from Mama's ancient refrigerator on the other side of the wall. Her duplex is noisy, creaky, unlike the unyielding silence of Amanda's cabin.

I snuggle within the fragrant scent of pink flannel sheets. Mama has made the extra bedroom cozy, tempting me to stay. When I turned in last night, I found a bouquet of daisies beside the bed, before the framed picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Little sachet packets lay in the dresser drawers, and cedar blocks in the narrow closet. Mama has welcomed me into her home.

She has been lonely since my father's death. Realizing that, I try to understand why my sister Sylvia and her brute of a husband are living next door. No matter how much I rationalize Mama's circumstances, I still resent my sister's proximity. She must have manipulated Mama's emotions with a familiar tactic: a hard-luck story. At least I have heard nothing from Sylvia--yet.

Rolling my head on the pillow, I notice my hair is still damp. Last night, following Gabi's suggestion, I took a relaxing soak and shampooed and conditioned my hair, mostly to avoid arguing with Mama about Sylvia. Before I escaped to the bathroom, Gabi seemed eager to leave. She knew I was tired from the trip and promised to see me over the weekend. I half-hoped she would offer me an alternate place to stay, but I didn't want to impose on her and her father. Jeff doesn't need to be reminded of Sylvia anyway.

I reluctantly get up. The tedious

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