

GET READY FOR **GABI!**

A Crazy Mixed-Up Spanglish Day



by Marisa Montes

Illustrated by Joe Cepeda



UNO
CHAPTER I
BOOT TROUBLE!

“Expecting trouble?” Mr. Fine’s bushy eyebrows knitted into one long, fuzzy caterpillar.

He eyed my red cowgirl boots.

Red. My favorite color.

Papi says red is bold and sassy, like me.

Mami says I’m *un ají picante* — a hot chili pepper — which is also red.

And in case you were wondering, I’m Maritza Gabriela Morales Mercado.

At home, I’m Gabi. At school, I’m Maritza Morales. Mercado is Mami’s last name, so I don’t use it in school.

“Maritza? The boots?” Mr. Fine waited for an answer.

“Well . . .” I sat up straight. “I thought there may be some . . . problems today.”

I craned my neck to glare at Johnny Wiley. He sits a couple of rows to my left and one row back.

Johnny was spiking up his hair.

Today is Crazy-hair Day. Once a year, we get to wear our hair in weird, wacky ways. It’s fun. Somehow Mami had gotten my wavy brown hair into two high ponytail braids — one over each ear.

You could tell Johnny thought he was soooo cool. His dark blond hair was all spiked and sprayed blue and red on the ends. Boys LOVE Crazy-hair Day. Most of them looked like wacko space monsters.

Johnny mouthed something. I knew what it was.

My eyes scrunched up.

He mouthed the words again. I made an I'll-get-you-later face.

“Maritza?”

My eyes snapped back to Mr. F. I flashed him my best good-girl smile.

Mr. F's long caterpillar eyebrow split back into two. They bounced high above his glasses.

“We've talked about this before, Maritza. There are better ways to solve . . . problems . . . than with one's feet.”

My shoulders slumped. I nodded. “Yes, Mr. Fine.”

Mr. F is the nicest teacher I've ever had. But sometimes, I don't think he remembers being a kid.

I looked up at Mr. Fine. He's tall and thin so he had to bend down to look at me eye to eye. “Don't make me have to tell you again, Maritza.”

“But —”



WATCH OUT, WORLD!

¡GABÍ ESTÁ AQUÍ! (THAT MEANS: GABÍ IS HERE!)

With her friends and *familia* by her side, Gabi* is ready for anything . . . sort of. Her worst enemy, Johnny Wiley, is driving her crazy. He makes fun of her name. He picks on her friends. And now Gabi has to spend a whole entire month working with him on a school project!

Gabi's so mad she can hardly even talk. Her English words keep getting jumbled up with her Spanish words. Now she's speaking a mix of both, and no one knows *what* she's saying! Will Gabi ever make sense again? Or will she be tongue-tied forever?

**That's Gabi. Not Gabi. As in Ga-BEE. With an accent. 'Cause that's the way she likes it. Oh, and it does NOT rhyme with blabby! And she does NOT talk too much!*



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