A Baking Connection

Juanita groaned in frustration. She had been trying to bake a Mexican dessert she had made. She called it Juanas. The Juanas is a chewy brownie with cinnamon on top wrapped in a soft tortilla. She had written down the recipe on a sheet of paper, and clipped it to a magnet that stuck on the kitchen light right above her. " It's just like baking a brownie!" She told herself. After the third burnt cinnamon brownie, she went upstairs to take a break.

Her room was painted a mellow orange, with a white comforter on her bed. Her mother had died when Juanita was seven, and she had taught her all the baking knowledge in the world. Juanita pulled a small diary out of her bookshelf. The diary had no words in it, Juanita knew, but only pictures. Her mother liked to explain everything in pictures. LUCIANA, it said in bold letters at the top. Luciana was her mother's name. Then Juanita took another diary out of her bookshelf. This diary was bigger and purple. It also said LUCIANA at the top. Both diaries were Juanita's mother's. Juanita opened the first. It had a photo of Juanita as a baby in it. No words were to be said. Only feelings to be felt. Juanita's eyes welled up with tears. She flipped the page. On the next page, a picture of a big table with all of her relatives was taped. Juanita remembered the family reunion in 2011. She skimmed the pages until she found the picture she liked most. Her mother sat in a rocking chair with Juanita's father next to her. Juanita sat in Luciana's lap. She had braids running down her shoulders, and she was smiling. Juanita gently peeled the photo off the page and pinned it to her bulletin board. When she paused to open the next diary, she realized she was crying.

Luciana never wrote that much, but when she did, it was mostly all recipes. Inside the second diary, words overflowed the pages. Everything was recipes. Juanita wanted to prove she could bake just like her mother. She

wanted to show that she had a connection with her mother. Baking had to be the way. She flipped and read, flipped and read, flipped and read. It went on and on. Juanita rapidly blinked as she saw her mother's loopy handwriting. Luciana must have just let the words flow out of her. Right before the last page, something caught Juanita's eye. *Cinnamon brownies.*
She almost read past it. But the recipe was the same one as Juanita had created. Her heart skipped a beat. They had made the same recipe! Was it a sign? She stopped and traced her finger over the ingredients. She had all of them. Juanita ran down the stairs to the kitchen. She gathered everything she needed. She followed the instructions carefully. It was almost as if her mother was guiding her. When she was little, Luciana would place her hands over Juanita's little hands, and they would crack the eggs together. When Juanita started to crack one now, she could practically feel her mother's warm touch on top of her hands.

When the brownies were finally in the oven, Juanita sat on a stool, twiddling her fingers and reading more recipes.
" Juanita!" Someone shouted. It was her father.
" Papa!" Juanita cried. She ran over to hug him.
" Work was hard today... are you cooking something?" He asked. Juanita smiled shyly.
" One of mama's recipes." She whispered. Her father got a far away look on his face.
" Smells good." He said softly. The oven rang, and Juanita ran to open it. Her father sat at the table and waited. Juanita's eyes burn slightly as the heat from the oven wafted up, but she couldn't close her eyes. A caramel colored brownie was on the tray. Juanita could hear her mother saying,
"No words are to be said,
only feelings to be felt."