

# on a wave and a prayer

With El Niño in town, I would have  
been happy just not to drown. But  
thanks to Surf Diva, I learned to  
stand up and shred. By Jenna McCarthy

There's just something about a chick who can surf," my friend Robbie always says. While he probably won't be mobbed by she-powered novelists for book jacket quotes any time soon, he has a point. Like wielding a mean pool cue or knowing your way around a car engine's innards, mastering any typically male skill carries an undeniable cachet. The word babe comes to mind. I admit it: I want in.

I decide to call the Surf Divas, the world's first all-women's surf school. Apparently, I sound a little skeptical. "This isn't like when your boyfriend offers to teach you how to surf, then spends the entire day showing off," assures Isabelle "Izzy" Tihanyi, the head Diva. "We're out there with you. Trust me, you'll be surfing the first day." With class size limited to 12 and an instructor for every two students, she

says I'll get lots of personalized attention. Pumped by this promise, I enlist my intrepid friend Pam and reserve two spots. I'm thinking a little sun, cute board shorts, cheap highlights, instant babedom.

As we suit up for the first morning of the weekend clinic, I spot the front page of the local paper and realize

maybe it's not going to be quite as easy as all that. "Surf's Up," the page-spanning headline roars. The article goes on to explain how notorious El Niño, the tropical storm system responsible for some of the worst weather in Southern California history, is churning up dangerous, monster-size surf. Houses are being toppled, windows shattered, roads flooded. Bolt the doors! Lock up your children! And whatever you do, don't go *near* the water.

I'm not feeling good about this. I decide to call Izzy, who tells me not to worry, we'll be surfing in a protected cove. "But it's raining," I tell her. "You're going to be wet anyway, princess," she reminds me. Oh, yeah. OK then.

There's just something about a chick who can surf. Check out Keala Kennelly, a pro.

