

"Sloppy José"

give you is the key to a door to a house than no longer exists."

She liked the key. "Someday I'll build a house, Momma, and I'll have a lock made that this key will open." It was a nice idea to play with. We talked about the kind of house she would like, where it would be, how many rooms it would have. She even drew pictures and floor plans and asked me all about the house where she had first lived.

In many ways it was hard to talk about that house. Joe and I had begun there with such hope, such joy in the arrival of Holly, so many plans for the future, and then had watched everything fall apart. Nor did I want to be reminded of how I had acted during that time, how much pain we had caused each other, intentionally as well as inadvertently. Still, Holly was persistent, and I guess I have learned pretty much to forgive that young woman I once was.

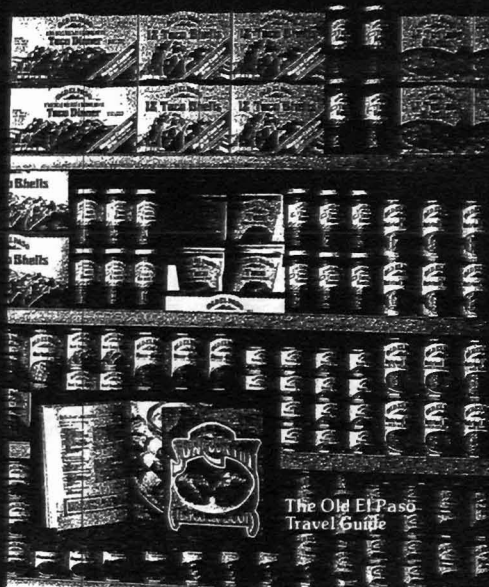
So I began to tell her stories about our life in that house. I told her about the September day we had moved in and how I had loved the window seat in the dining room, and the breakfast room looking out on the small but beautiful backyard, and about the tiny bedroom next to ours that we immediately named the nursery. I told her about the day we went out and bought the rocking chair and how, after it was delivered, we carried it into the nursery. Joe had sat in it for a half hour or more, rocking and rocking, and singing—"practicing my lullabies," he told me. I told her about her birth, how I had awakened in the middle of the night feeling rather strange but not sure I was really in labor, so I didn't bother to wake Joe. I had gone into the nursery and sat in the rocking chair, rocking and looking out at the November sky, which was clear and starry for a change, until I was sure. Then I woke Joe and we drove to the hospital. She had been born four hours later and, after the birth, I was so high I kept telling everyone I saw, "I love you."

Some evenings, after Holly and I had talked a long time and she had gone to bed and I was sure she was asleep, I would lie



The Old El Paso Taco Burger

"Mexican Tour"



The Old El Paso Travel Guide

be. The images of memory are stronger than the images of invention for most of us, so though I knew what had happened to all the other places in the world I had known, it still was a shock to find it had also happened here. The highway into town, which once had been lined with orchards and green fields, was now a long strip of signs and shops—places that wanted to sell us fast foods, used cars and shops for the night, undistinguishable from all those other long strips leading into countless other towns in the United States. The old buildings I had loved were still there, but they were now surrounded by other buildings, so that the entire context was changed. As I drove south I could still see the courthouse clock and the spire of the church in the distance, but instead of their being framed by the leafy greenness of maple trees, I now saw them through the distractions of a revolving bucket of fried chicken and the red neon cow of the dairy store.

For Holly, of course, the change in the town itself was invisible. She was used to the cluttered approaches to cities. She focused instead on the charm she saw—the beauty of the streets lined with flowering plum trees, the big old Victorian homes near the center of town, the beautiful green hills that surrounded it.

We drove down the street where we had once lived and I saw "our" corner but had to drive five blocks beyond before I could find a place to park. We walked back past the campus stores, and I looked for the ice cream shop where we had gone for cones and the shoe repair shop (where I had hoped to find Mr. Berini still at work), but those shops had been replaced by a pizza store and a place that sold pottery and macramé. I glanced up at the street sign to make sure we were in the right place. The name was the same. That was all.

I had expected and feared Holly's disappointment at seeing the place where she had first lived. I think I also had persuaded myself that having to face that reality might be a necessary experience for her, but I don't think I (continued)

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A Long Way From Home

continued

saying, or didn't believe what I was saying, or didn't find it relevant. Instead they wanted to help me understand my relationship with my father, or to prescribe a mood-elevating drug, or to set up a reinforcement schedule for me to reward myself, as a means of fighting depression.

Finally I found Dr. Haywood—Alex—who laughed and confessed he, too, hated the twentieth century.

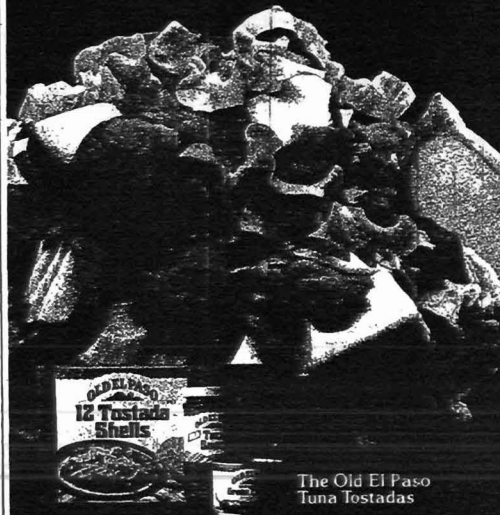
"Except for good blumbing, good medicine and ice-cold beer," he had added. "I'd have a hard time giving those up. Still, the death of the spirit is a high price to pay for flush toilets."

Alex helped me through a bad time. I saw him every week for about six months and then we said good-bye. Or rather I said good-bye. He said, "God be with ye, too, Jenny." He wanted to remind me of the origin of the word. That was one of the things he felt strongly about, that people should remember where things come from.

Anyway, to get back to Holly and her hunger for a home, I spent a lot of time thinking about it. Somewhere in there, I found the key to the house Joe and I had brought her home to after she was born. It had been a nice old house on the edge of the campus where Joe was studying pharmacy. The key was attractive in itself, a large brass key, so I bought a chain for it and gave it to Holly to wear as a pendant.

"The house isn't even there anymore, Holly," I told her. "It was torn down to make way for a new science building. But we might as well face it—in the olden days parents left their children acres of land and the sprawling manor house. All I can

"Si Food Tostada"



The Old El Paso Tuna Tostadas

on my own bed and cry and cry. Sometimes I had the feeling I had been saving up my tears for 31 years and now they were all pouring out at once. I found I was weeping not just for my own lost hopes but for those of everyone I knew—for my friend Amy, who had just had her second miscarriage; for my father, whose longing to be a lawyer had been thwarted first by a depression, then by a war, for my brother Jeff, who was not able to find a job teaching the history that he loved and instead had settled for a job with an insurance company—and so on and on and on.

After the second session of tears, I began to worry a little about myself and had the impulse to call Alex Haywood long distance and pour out my soul, but I had the feeling I knew us both well enough now to be able to write the script for that conversation without any help from him.

"I'm crying a lot, Alex."

"There's a lot to cry about, Jenny. Anything in particular?"

"Lost hopes, you might say. My own. Everyone else's."

"I have a few you could add to the list. Do you feel sick or just sad?"

"I feel awful. Isn't that sickness?"

But I didn't call him. I kept on telling Holly stories, sensing I was not only giving her the past I had for the last few years denied her, but at the same time I was reminding her there was a future there to be entered.

I suppose it was inevitable after all that talk that Holly decided she wanted to go visit her "hometown."

"But it's all changed," I kept insisting. "The house isn't there. Our friends have moved away. The population has tripled. I probably wouldn't even recognize the place."

But Holly was persistent, and when our spring vacations came, we packed our bags and found someone to feed the two cats and water the seven African violet plants, and we set off on our journey back to Holly's home.

It was even more changed than I had imagined it would

"Recipes Olé!"

THE OLD EL PASO TACO BURGER



- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 10 oz. can Old El Paso 16 Tomatoes and Green Chiles
- 1 can of Old El Paso Taco Seasoning Mix
- 4 cup water
- 1 tomato peeled and chopped
- 8 hamburger buns, split and toasts
- 2 cups shredded lettuce
- 1 cup of shredded carrots
- 1 can of Monterey Jack Cheese

Brown meat, drain fat. Stir in Old El Paso tomatoes and green chiles, add seasonings. Simmer uncovered 15 min. about 1 1/2 cups water. Add 1/2 cup of tomato. Heat. Divide, spoon onto buns, top with lettuce, cheese. Serves 8.



THE OLD EL PASO TUNA TOSTADAS

- 2 12 oz. cans tuna, drained
- 1 can Old El Paso 12 Tostada Shells
- 1 can Old El Paso 16 Tomatoes and Green Chiles (seeds), stirred and drained and chopped
- 1 10oz. can beef soup
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 can Old El Paso 16 Tomatoes and Green Chiles
- 2 cups shredded lettuce
- 1/2 cup shredded carrots
- 1 small can sweetish, seeded peas and cubed
- 1/2 cup cheddar
- Old El Paso 16oz. Swiss Cheese

Prep. layer chiles, lime juice, and pepper. Drain and drain tuna mixture on shells. Top with lettuce, tomato, avocado. Top line swiss, taco sauce. Serves 8.



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