

## THAT'S WHEN YOU KNOW YOU HAVE FOUND HOME

There was once a country that had two lives. One was one of conquest and kings who travelled the seas and brought back trunks laden with gold and silver. These were turned into jewels and crowns and big mansions were built for the comfort of the conquering naval heroes. Every three months new riches were brought back and the city became one of splendour and wealth. The people began to get used to the new wealth and ladies fashions changed, manners changed and even the foods changed with new spices and legumes coming from the new world. People couldn't wait to go to the ports and welcome the returning ships just to see what new bounty had arrived. This went on for decades and a whole city was built on the riches from the new world but then a new king came along and showed them that the natives of faraway lands were just windmills to tilt at, that a true friend was just a loyal steed and that the true battles of daily life were right in front of their eyes. The mansions are still there though in disrepair and the tower of Belem still stands but they always leave room for a traveller and his steed wherever you go. That is why the coast along the Belem tower only has 2 restaurants when it could have 50. And that is why fried eggs and steak and French fries is the national dish. They almost got swept up in the tide of wealth until a true hero came along and taught them the true meaning of life.

Jose recognised his beloved Portugal in the story but he has a story of his own. He had a privileged existence. They told him to sit still and be graceful and all he wanted was to run and discover the next field beyond. One day he left his robes and fineries and disappeared leaving a trace of jasmine soap.

He missed the fine clothes but what drove him taught him he would find much better things if he kept travelling. He got to a beach and met a girl with the curves of the atlas

foothills and she talked of wanting a house with a garden and some shelter. He built her a castle in the sand and placed a pink flag at the top but her beauty was not enough to contain the drive of his legs. That night he stayed in a hostel. His own private hostel with privacy and comfort and he felt like the King he used to be. But he knew it was only temporary. Like this he travelled the world meeting many women and discovering the pleasures of life. With his travels came a wisdom he shared with only the worthy. Today he continues his travels and when he looks out onto a street or a parking lot all he sees is landscape after landscape. You often see him sitting by the window staring at the distance. There's something about his land that calls Jose and when he read the story it was as if I had understood the essence of his beautiful Portugal but sometimes there is no going back but only forward because going back would be like breaking the mechanics of time and that can create a kind of havoc similar to the show Lost and leave him shipwrecked on the shores of his former land.

Just like for me there are so many countries I have called home. The singsong of the Argentinian accent sends me to Calle Santa Fe and facturas over milky coffee with my grandparents. Beautiful beaches take me back to when Haiti was my home and the comforting arms of our housekeeper Marie Claire. America reminds me of my son's happy face as he grew to know the world there. Botswana is Mochudi and the lifelong friends I made during those years. Paraguay is the sound of adolescent games through the dining room window but going back would be just like Jose. Time would be shattered and the shards would be too painful to bear. They would dig deep and the bleeding would never cease. So what does one do except look for love and let that new love be the new soil to plant your tomato bushes in. You find a love that has a rich soil like the coun-

tries of your youth and you inhale deeply until your very being is filled with this new aroma that stirs you to your last heady breath. Then you know you have found your home and that nothing will separate you from it. The plants take on a brilliant colour, the cobblestones ring pleasantly as the cars traverse, the coffee tastes better, the people cease being strangers and the cigarettes taste like sugar on a stick, strangers cease being strange and the future takes on the shape of a little house next to a church where you can breathe easy and sleep soundly. That is when you know you have found home and your heart is once again at peace.



**Patty Braun**