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The kid in the plane seat next to me - he said he was 18 - was a missionary. An arrogant little prick, full of the Americanized Jesus and how his fellow evangelicals were going to save the poor, stupid, misguided Guatemalans that were scrambling around some 25,000-feet or so below us. I told him I was meeting my son, or more he was coming in from Lake Atitlan to meet me; that it was my first trip to Guatemala and Central America; and that Cloud - my kid - had been traveling around down here for a year or so - until a month before with his girlfriend, who had broken up with him at Atitlan - and that he loved the Guatemala highlands, and especially Atitlan.

The Jesus-kid just snickered and said something about "the primitive people in the mountains."

"You mean the Mayans?" I asked him.

"Yeah," he said, snarling, "I guess that's what you call them."

God, I hated the little bastard.

When we landed at the Guatemala City airport - Guat City to the gringos - and started the process of being processed to enter the country, I quickly noticed that the light-skinned travelers - gringos and Guatemalans - were whisked through customs, especially if they had political or religious connections to the Guatemalan oligarchy that ran the country, while the Mayans and those like myself - suspected guerillas and terrorists - were sent to the other side of the terminal, where the exit line was long and endless. I had no idea how long the expected interrogation would take, so when I saw my young missionary in the fast lane I yelled over for him to look for my son outside and tell him to be patient, that I was inside facing the thumbscrews.

"What does he look like?" he asked.

"Can't miss him," I called out, "he looks like Jesus."

This was Cloud's breakthrough voyage, his grand epiphany, where he would make the transition from teenager to young man. And an adventurous man at that. He had just turned 21 and had been traveling constantly since he quit school at 16. It was his plan.

My part of this plan was to meet up with he and his girlfriend in Guatemala sometime in the Fall - the arrangement made before they split up at Atitlan. Their breakup only made me more anxious about his travels in Central America, as they were planning on making their way along the famed - and still largely unpopulated Mosquito (Moskita) Coast of Honduras and Nicaragua. It was a dangerous place the Meskita: hostile Indians, poisonous snakes, drug smugglers, the Sandanista Army and the fascist Contras, the CIA, DEA and various other agencies looking to make trouble, all mixed together like a bowl of tropical spices. Plus, there were also my own ideas of Latin America a kind-of end-of-

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the-world place, where guns, cheap drinks, drugs, plus the fabled hair-trigger Latin temper, could be lethal. Particularly for a righteous soul like Cloud. I had nightmares of him leaping to the defense of some down-trodden Indian at the mercy of some abusive drunk and getting killed, disappearing forever into the boiling cauldron that was then Central America.

A week before I flew out from Newark Airport, Cloud called me from San Pedro, a village on Atitlan, and told me that the guerillas that had been fighting a succession of US-backed right-wing governments the past 40-odd years had just blown up a TV/radio tower in nearby Chimultenango. "It's getting hot again down here," he said, chuckling, knowing all too well my fears for him in Latin America. "But don't worry, Pop, the guerillas and the government don't bother with Atitlan...at least not anymore." He then proceeded to regale me with stories of gun battles between the guerillas and the government that raged in the streets of San Francisco, just across the lake. "That was two years ago...there's a truce now...sort-of." And of course Mr. Fearless down in wild and woolly San Pedro laughed at his cowardly Father, who was safely ensconced on the other end of the line in upstate New York, where the great ongoing battle whether a new Wal-Mart could be built on the outskirts of town.

It had always been like that between Cloud and me...kind of.

We separated when he was six. For close to ten years I saw him every weekend and called him religiously every Thursday night. He went with me everywhere: work, friend's houses, ball games, and over that decade we developed certain personality traits that mirror the other. We are both easily frustrated by the externals of life. We are both pretty much self-sufficient. We are both friendly in the superficial sense, but are more-or-less loners in the deeper one. And we both look at travel as the true way to an education. A real education. And we both have the same absurdist view of life and laugh at the same things. But mostly we goof on one another. Always. I guess it's the best way to slice through the Father/Son angst that seems pervasive in modern man.

So, as I was released by the Guatemalan authorities, free to enter their country to carry out some nefarious plan or other, I walked out through a swinging frosted-glass door and there standing amid a swarm of pint-sized Indians stood the young Jesus...sans beard. Even though he is only 5'9", like me, Cloud stood a head taller than them, and his smile radiated toward me. It was incomparable joy to see him.

His hair was longer, past his shoulders and bleached blond by the sun, and hugging him I felt his bony rib-cage against me. As we hit the street outside the terminal it was all strange smells and frantic energy, like a hive buzzing with loud belching cars and buses, and smoke everywhere. And Indians everywhere. Nothing but Indios. We walked for awhile along the streets, with Cloud just looking at me and smiling as I took in the cacophony that is Central America.

When we went to find a bus out of Guate City, Cloud told me that the buses that say they're going to Lake Atitlan "aren't really buses that are going there. The guy who takes

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your ticket will tell you anything just to get your money...and they'll charge you double because we're gringos...it's fucked up, Pop." I could tell by his vehemence that he was getting a bit fed-up with third-world business transactions. We found a bus that said "Antigua-Atitlan" on its rotating marquee and Cloud asked the driver in perfectly fluent street-Spanish if it was going to Antigua, the little colonial city on the way to the lake. The driver deferred to the ticket-seller, who told Cloud that it truly was the bus to Antigua, pointing to the marquee - "ANTIGUA-ATITLAN" it said clearly. But Cloud was skeptical and asked a couple Indio passengers if this really was the bus to Antigua or Atitlan. They told him it was the bus to Flores, on the opposite side of the country, some 12 hours away. Cloud cursed out the driver and the ticket-seller and we set out to find the "real" bus to Antigua/Atitlan. He was fuming. Had lost his stored-up patience. Me? I was just digging the insanity of it all: the sounds and smells, the yelling and screaming, the music blaring on cheap radios...and my son acting the madman.

"Wasn't there a bus at the airport to Lake Atitlan?" I foolishly asked Cloud, thinking like the typical gringo of the easiest way to do things. But he just became more irritated and told me that this was the way to travel in Guatemala - local, Indio buses. He was proven right - of course - but the mini-bus from the airport would have made it a lot easier. Cloud wanted to hear none of it, he had been riding local buses for months through Latin America - that or hitch-hiking - and he didn't want to change a thing. He was going to show me not just Guatemala, but HIS Guatemala. I was honored, but also tired from the six-hour flight and looking at a two-hour ride to Antigua on a rickety old bus festooned with pom-poms, statues of Jesus and Mary in mini-altars on the dash-board, devotional candles, and with salsa music blaring from the driver's radio as seemingly hundreds of Indios jockeyed with me for standing room, wasn't my idea.

Two hours later we arrived in Antigua. It was absolutely silent. The old colonial city was beautiful in the moonlight. We were dropped at the main plaza, which was surrounded by elegant old colonial buildings with a large white stone Cathedral at its heart. But Cloud had rented us a room at the other side of town. A cardboard room. So after we dropped our stuff at the "hotel" we headed back to the plaza to get something to eat. Not much was open except a pizza parlor. We ordered a few slices and a couple beers. He was mortified at the bill.

"I could eat for a week on this." he told me, defiantly.

So I told him that I was treating for the week I was there. He still looked dismayed. Like that me spending five quetzales (the equivalent to a dollar) for four slices of pizza and two beers was just too much for his delicate psyche to deal with. He was wired. He ranted on over the pizza about how gringos were always charged more for everything. "Everything, Pop! Everything!" and he looked alarmed that I wasn't grasping the seriousness of it. And that he was tired of it. I knew he had waited around a month for me to show - altering his travel plans to La Meskita - but it was obvious that it was also time for him to leave Guatemala.

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"I rented a great little house for us overlooking the lake," he told me as we walked back to the cardboard hotel. "It's \$10 a month and has a kitchen, so I'll do some cooking for us."

Great, I thought, a little house. And I began to fantasize about some little charmer with white-washed walls, colored shutters and a flower garden. I should have known better. Especially when I laid down in my bed at the hotel. Cloud was in the next one and both were made, like the walls that separated us from the farting and belching guy in the next room, of cardboard. Real 100% cardboard. And with a musty sheet and greasy pillow that was provided, we settled in for the night.

The next morning was a revelation. Outside the door to the cardboard hotel, at the end of the street, loomed Guatemala's biggest volcano. It looked like the proverbial inverted ice-cream cone. Only this cone didn't dispense sweetness, but like just a couple years before, fire and ash that came close to destroying all of Antigua. Damage from that eruption was everywhere. The volcano was awe-inspiring, terrible, beautiful, other-worldly. Cloud told me as we walked to the street-corner nearby to catch the "real" bus to Atitlan, that unsavory Guatemalans would get naive gringos to pay them in advance to tour the rim of the volcano, then once up there rob them (gringo men) or rape them (gringo women) and then throw them into the caldera. "I heard it from some travelers, they swore it was true," he said with grave authority when I scoffed.

On the street-corner waiting for the bus Cloud and I had cups of coffee from an old Indio street vendor, who dispensed the murky brew from a big stew pot and served us in chipped china cups that had been festering in some dark, soupy water in a pot on the sidewalk. As I drank my coffee Cloud watched me with amused interest, then proffered a "Way to go Pop!" I felt as though I had just earned his seal of approval. The I-can-drink-out-of-a-filthy-cup-from-an-old-Indian-street-vendor award for gastrointestinal bravery. Something very dear to Cloud's heart. He who had to have his now-departed girlfriend pull a foot-long spaghetti-strand tape-worm out of his asshole one night in Chiapis. So it was a brave gesture on my part. Stupid, but brave. Anything to please my boy, I thought, as the coffee immediately started to cha-cha in my gut.

With the bus to Atitlan was a chance for some scenic redemption. Three-and-half jolting hours worth. Between Antigua and Atitlan lay Chimultenango - the scene of the recently bombed TV/radio tower. It was a rebel stronghold. In the hour-or-so layover for the connecting bus we toured the little town. It was a rough place that looked as if it was constructed just for the bus-line. It was a couple of run-down stores and a grimy little bank just waiting for Butch and Sundance to relieve it of its deposits. And it was just Indios. No Europeans anywhere, except Cloud and me. I went into the bank to cash some dollars for the week.

"Be careful, Pop," said Cloud, looking around nervously as I cashed in \$100 to quetzales.

"Of what?" I asked him as I counted the quetzales.

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"You shouldn't flash money around. It's dangerous."

"You mean somebody is going to rob me...here?"

"They might follow us," he said gravely, "it's not like America."

I couldn't tell if he had truly let all his third-world traveling get into his head, so that each and every transaction was fraught with danger - or at least hassles - or if this place, Chimaltenango, was really dangerous. I couldn't read it, but looking around at the Indios I sure didn't feel threatened. They were traditional Mayans wearing multi-colored blouses and skirts, pants and shirts, their red-hued skin the color of the earth beneath their bare feet. They didn't smile at us. They didn't acknowledge our presence at all. In fact I felt invisible counting out those 500 quetzales. But to allay Cloud's nervousness I quickly slipped the cash into my pocket. It seemed to make him feel better, but he stayed alert none-the-less, listening surreptitiously to the conversations that weren't in Ki'chua, the Indian language he didn't understand. His street-Spanish, though, was impeccable.

On the bus to Atitlan we passed through the heart of the Guatemala highlands. It was all Indian: plumaged in red, dark blue, green and yellow, mixing with the color of the rust-red earth. The army was everywhere, again all Indio except for the officers, and all looking like pre-pubescent teens. It was guns, guns and more guns. Then, coming out of a mountain switch-back, I spy Lake Atitlan through the trees. It was huge. Bigger than I expected. And then into Panajhal - Pana to the gringos - the gateway town to Atitlan, filled with tourists and hustlers, and of course, Indians. Indians selling colorful shirts, pants, dresses, bracelets and necklaces, and the ever-present rubber-tire-bottom sandals. It was like an American hippie bazaar...only 30 years later. Like the East Village in New York, or the Haight in San Francisco, only with Indians.

We went to the pier to catch the ferry across the Lake to San Pedro, where Cloud had rented the house. He went swimming while we waited and I just stared at Atitlan, the water reflecting the surrounding deep-green saw-tooth volcanic mountains. I could barely see to the other side of it. The boat arrived and Cloud immediately started haggling with the ticket-seller, insisting that we pay the "real" rate (for the natives) as opposed to the "gringo" rate (which was double). He refused to pay the gringo rate and the ticket guy cursed him out. "Fuck him!" was all Cloud could spit out, sitting on his haunches, immovable on the deck of the putt-putt ferry.

"You want me to pay it? The gringo rate? I don't care, it's so..."

But Cloud, annoyed, cut me off. "Fuck them, Pop...do what you want, but it's bullshit that we pay one price and all of them," and he waved his hand at the other passengers, who were Indians (we were the only gringos on the boat), "pay another. It doesn't say anything about different prices, but if you understand Spanish you know what's going on." The difference was something like \$1.25. "It's the principle of the thing," said Cloud, and he sat there muttering all the way to San Pedro. The Indians payed no attention to anyone, they just stared quietly out at the lake, or at the deep cloudless sky, or up at the

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mountains, where farmers were planting corn in their milpas. It was just Cloud and me and a bunch of Indios on a slow-boat in the Guatemala highlands.

Cloud finally settled down. As usual I thought maybe it was my presence that had rattled his cage. He was happy to see me, but I also knew that he wasn't into feeling responsible for my comfort. That became obvious when we disembarked at San Pedro and walked up a steep hill into the village to a back-street off the little main plaza and saw the house he had rented. It sat right next to the village dump. But it did overlook the lake.

The little hopuse had one window, was a crumbling shambles, but had recently been white-washed. It also had an indoor toilet sitting on a mound outside the front door. And it worked - a pull-chain was rigged up to a nearby pole that actually gave it a flush. But me, who always suffered from the "touristas" when traveling, using this toilet? I didn't think it possible. But I held back from telling Cloud. You know - the wimp factor. Inside was one small, unpainted, earthen-wall room with a concrete floor. Behind that was a small dirt-floored kitchen, empty save for a tub-like sink that got its water from a garden hose. Cloud turned it on to show me the possibilities.

"I can make us dinner, Pop," he said proudly - and with a straight face. There was no stove.

Not wanting to burst his balloon..."Look...it's my treat here...that's why I came...that and to save you money...so let me treat...all of it...OK?"

He grudgingly agreed. After all this was his world and I was just an interloper.

On the floor of the front room was a foam mattress that we had to share; our backpacks our pillows. Cloud had drawn some pictures with colored chalk on the moldy walls to brighten the place a bit, but no getting around it - other than the view of the Lake from the pallapa in front of the house - the place was in some serious need of decoration. Cloud had shared the place, after his girlfriend had split, with some International fellow travelers. They left for Honduras the day I landed in Guate City, probably freaked that his Poppa was coming for a visit.

So we moved a broken table from the "kitchen" into a corner of the front room; found some interesting rocks and flowers around the house, and voila! it became a combo living/dining room with a mattress in it. The back room we just forgot about.

Cloud seemed to be cheering up. That was until a few of the neighborhood urchins showed up and would just stand in the doorway and stare at us. For hours. Then he lost it completely, screaming and swearing at them in street-lingo and chasing them away. He told me, Captain Queeg-like, that that is what they do: "They just stand there, day-after-day, staring!" It was obviously driving him insane. One kid in particular, who kept trying to launch a fragile kite from the pallapa, seemed to drive Cloud more insane than the rest. With the kid's attempt-after-attempt-after-attempt, day-after-day-after-day, to get the kite airborne, I thought Cloud - who watched this with a crazed look on his face - was going to

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crack and hurl the kid and his kite into the lake below the pallapa. The kid never did get it flying.

Then there was Chepe, no more than five, who would stand in the doorway day-after-day, his nose running full snot and ask Cloud for things. Any things. He looked like a Save-the-Children kid, but Chepe had family right next door. Cloud wound up giving him everything he could spare - an old ripped book, an empty peanut butter jar, a used razor-blade, a torn t-shirt - anything to get rid of him. It was kind of like a cargo cult and Chepe was its high priest.

One day, like clockwork, as the three p.m. rainstorm swept across Atitlan, I awoke from a nap to find the urchins staring at me from the doorway. They were watching me sleep. Cloud was reading at the table and had his back to them. Who knew how long they were there. But when he noticed them he immediately started swearing at them and chased them away, throwing his book, which Chepe tried to procure for the cult. "I'm gonna kill the little bastard!" he screamed. "They're driving me fucking nuts, Pop!" I tried to act surprised by his outburst. As I said before, I think Cloud had had enough of Guatemala.

So, beside their staring followed by his screaming, our week was spent with a kind-of loose schedule: breakfast and dinner at "The Last Supper", a little hole-in-the-wall Indio restaurant on the main plaza run by a Mayan couple who seemed to get a kick out of Cloud. The wife, in her 40's, dressed traditionally, with a mouth full of gold teeth, and the husband, stocky like all the Mayans, and easy-going, told me - when Cloud introduced us: "He's here, always!" and smiled and patted him on the shoulder. They seemed genuinely pleased to meet me; where most of the Indios were completely oblivious to gringos. And of course our week of breakfasts and dinners at "The Last Supper" brought us into a few encounters with our fellow travelers.

One was a young woman from London who had just arrived after a 16-hour bus ride from Tikal, far to the East. She was all nervous energy and smarts, a poetry major at Cambridge University, short dark hair cut punk-style, grimy t-shirt and shorts, great legs sticking out underneath a nice ass. Over breakfast she told us about the protests that were going on all around Britain.

"Raves...the government is trying to stop our raves...so we took to the streets," she told us. Not having any idea what she was talking about, Cloud, recognizing my lack of knowledge in this area, leaned over to tell me that a rave was a sort-of all-night dance party. With lots of drugs available.

"That's what your protesting?" I asked her, incredulous. "Aren't there other things to take to the streets about? I mean there is a conservative government in power, right?"

She looked at me with a "oh, the poor old fool" look. "That's the movement right now...to take to the streets because they're infringing on our rights."

"To dance?"

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"It IS more than that, you!" she was obviously irritated.

I let it slide, but wondered how a Cambridge poetry student could have nothing more on her mind than a rave. The rest of the breakfast was spent talking about Tikal - which Cloud had gone to a couple months before - and the endurance test that was her bus trip to Atitlan. She was very bright. Friendly. And curious.

Kenny from Sacramento was also friendly, but not so bright. Or curious. We met later that same evening at The Last Supper. He was a stoner. Could hardly string two thoughts together in any coherent fashion and usually, when stuck in mid-thought, would just drift off... "I was drinking this can of beer, man, an open container, man, against the law, man, on this park bench in L.A., man, and the pigs, man, the pigs, the pigs they...the pigs, man, they came over and told me to stop, man, that it was against the law, man...so, I just looked at them and...I...and I...I..." That was as far as Kenny got. And of course who do we see together at dinner that night? Yes, it was the Cambridge poetry student and Kenny from Sacramento. They sat making google-eyes at each other.

I was dumbstruck. Well, nearly dumbstruck, asking Cloud: "What could they possibly have in common?"

"Dope," answered Cloud.

Another night at The Last Supper a group of international students - English, Scottish and an Israeli; six in all - were eating dinner at the next table. We got talking with them about how they came to be traveling together, where they were headed, what colleges they went to: traveler talk. They had recognized Cloud and I from swimming in the Lake that afternoon and noticed that we were "close". The Israeli guy asked how long Cloud and I had been "together", probably figuring I was some NAMBLA freak and Cloud was my concubine.

"Just a few days," I told him, which seemed to whet their interest even more.

"Where did you guys hook-up, anyway?" the lone woman in the group asked.

"Here...at Guatemala City...the airport." They looked at each other, again probably figuring that I was cruising the airport men's room and Cloud just happened by. "I'm his Father," I finally told them, as they all let out a sigh of relief. They were even more amazed by that revelation.

"You're his Father?" the young woman asked.

"Yeah...I haven't seen Cloud for a long time, so I came down here from New York...I'm staying for the week."

"WOW...I can't imagine my Dad coming down here to spend a week with me," the woman said, as the others smiled at us from across the table.

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Another night - or maybe it was the same night; they all seem to run together - an Italian guy came into The Last Supper and asked what was going on in San Pedro. Cloud answered him in Italian. A few minutes later a Swiss woman came in asking directions and Cloud answered her in Swiss Deutsch. He talked with both while also talking to the woman who owned the restaurant - in Spanish - and translated all three to me in English. It was impressive. All the languages - save English - were learned on the road.

Outside of our restaurant schedule and gringo social life that flowed around the Lake, Cloud and I would just talk. Walk from village to village at Atitlan and talk. There had always been ease with that for us. Even when he was a little kid it always seemed that we had lots to talk about. At Atitlan it wasn't any different.

And other than him regaling me with his Tales of the Trail - being lost in Mexico's Copper Canyons with no food and water; he and his girlfriend testing their water purifier by drinking out of a Ciudad Juarez toilet bowl; her pulling a foot-long tape worm out of his ass; he wrenching a three-inch bot-fly larvae out of her head; time in Morelia with their friend Beatrice; teaching English to peasants in Tenacatita; being threatened by the natives in the Guatemala highlands who thought they were there to steal their children; traveling with the Lacondon to the fabled Mayan ruins at Bonampak in Chiapas; and sleeping on top of the main pyramid/temple at Tikal and waking to the chattering of monkeys - Cloud wanted to talk about his lost lady-love. How it went wrong after two years of intense togetherness. How crushed he was by their breakup.

She had left him at Atitlan a month before, headed herself - like him, but two years younger at 19 - to the mysterious and elusive Meskita Coast.

"I really fucked up," he told me, holding back tears.

Their breakup was one of the reasons I had come. He had sounded so distraught over the phone. I was worried. So we talked and talked about how it was between them and what he thought he learned from it all. I was there mainly to hear him out. To console him, if I could. And as he talked I recognized that in many ways the problems with her were similar to one's I had with his Mother: a relationship with a woman who was not as forthcoming with her feelings as he was, resulting in anger toward her.

"I said terrible things to her. Called her names," he told me, shaking his head with wide-eyed remorse. "No wonder she left me."

I knew what he meant.

Our last day in Atitlan we took a long walk half-way around the Lake, past Mayan villages less convenient to Europeans. We talked about our futures and our pasts. That night I had a dream about me and him, from which I woke sobbing.

In it Cloud and I are walking in a blizzard. He is a little boy, four, maybe five years old, and I'm doing all I can to warm him as we trudge along. I lean down to rub his cold

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hands, blow on them, retying his scarf to keep his neck warm, pulling his knit cap down to cover his ears. "Are you OK?" I keep asking him. He doesn't say anything, he just shivers and keeps walking beside me. We're trying to get home, to the drafty old farmhouse in upstate New York, the last place the three of us lived together before we split up. It was a sad place. Always. Hard winters made it so. (And it was in that house he almost died. He was four - his age in the dream - and came down with bacterial meningitis, spending two touch-and-go weeks in the hospital) And as we make our way through the driving, blinding snow I'm feeling guilty: guilty about Cloud, my sweet, sweet little boy having to put up with our lack of money, our lack of material things, old cars breaking down constantly, no money for fuel oil so we had to cut trees from the nearby woods, the drafty leaky old house, the water pump in the basement freezing up every winter, the freezing snow biting into his face and hands - Where are his mittens? Watching him like a desolation angel, trying my best to protect him, but knowing that I was powerless and like with the meningitis he could be taken from me in an instant. Then, through the falling snow I see our house. The old house. We go around to the back door and it's locked. I knock and knock and then smash at it with my fists, then my shoulder, but it's no use. Despair overcomes me. It is my fault that Cloud is here, out in the cold without his mittens, freezing to death. If only I had brought his mittens. I start to panic. Will he die here? At the backdoor? Freeze to death? I try to warm him by holding him close, wrapping him in my coat, but he just shivers and shivers. How am I to help him? My little sweet boy? And then Cloud, seeing my fear, puts his hand into his pant's pocket and pulls out a key. The key to open the door.

The next morning I was sick. The shits. Sore throat. Swollen neck glands. A bad feeling all over. After a miserable bus ride to Antigua and another night at Hotel Cardboard, we make it to Guatemala City by 10 o'clock. My flight was at 11.

"You sure you don't want to come home with me?" You can live with us," I told him as we sat in the terminal.

He thought for awhile. There was nothing to prevent him from returning home except the Meskita Coast and his aching desire to see it, be in it, feel it between his toes. "Pop, I came down here to go to the coast and I think I should do that..." and he drifted off, then craned his neck to check out the terminal. He was looking for her. Was hoping to see her. Catch sight of her. Anything. Then maybe try to resurrect what they once had. Or maybe just to see her off back home. I think he sensed that she would know that he was there, waiting for her. They had been that close over the past two years. Maybe he was trying to will her to be there. I wasn't sure...it wasn't what we wanted to talk about then.

To take his mind off her memory and my impending departure we made up a little ditty to sing. It was to the Beach Boys "California Girls":

"Oh, Guatemala girls are oh so nice
And they stand about three-feet tall,
And if you can't see them here
You can't see them anywhere

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So you'll really never see them at all...
Oh, I really do love those
Guatemala giiiiiiiiirrrrrls."

After a few choruses we fell silent. I had a terrible foreboding that I would never see Cloud again.

"Thanks for coming down, Pop," was all he said. It was time to go. He put on his backpack, his waterman's hat, and shirtless and wearing raggedy cutoffs and old rubber sandals, my incredibly beautiful son walked out of the terminal and headed to Honduras and the Meskita Coast.

I watched him disappear into a swarm of buses, heading like him to who really knew where. I couldn't hold back the tears. A cop came over as I leaned against the window and cried. He saw my tears, put down his Uzi and asked, in Spanish, if I was OK.

I pointed to Cloud disappearing behind a yellow and green bus that said "Antigua/Atitlan" and told him..."Mi hijo...mi hijo...my son."

"Si-si," he said, patted me on the shoulder, picked up the Uzi, and walked away.

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