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PALM BEACH GOES SHOPPING

by Larry Freeman

"Let's drive around San Miguel de Allende for a few minutes," Eva said. "So much is changing. Look at all the shops! It's become an art center of the world, you know. Tourists, artists and retirees are buying homes here. It's only an hour from Mexico City. Just look at the condos going up along the ridge lines." Dead ahead, jutting upward along the ragged 6,000-foot elevations of the surrounding hilltops, dark silhouettes rose in interesting rectangles against the light blue sky. "Do you think we should buy one?" Eva asked, tossing a sly look toward the driver's seat.

Palm Beach felt the steering wheel twitch. The bait had been tossed. One of Eva's looks could easily mean the start of a whole new day's adventure. Palm Beach knew her battle cry well. "We don't really have to buy, you know, but wouldn't it be fun just to look?" Her manner could be enticing. And that worried Palm Beach. He wondered if condo shopping could jeopardize the VISA card?

The credit card was handy. It was the source of travel funds. Just stop at the bank, and transfer dollars. Palm Beach liked that. He noted there were two cards. That was good. But now, one of them was full, at least until the end of the month. But, Eva still had shopping ideas. And so did Palm Beach. He wanted a silver tea set from Taxco to go with black pottery from Oaxaca, and perhaps a spare tire. But last night, he'd heard Eva talking about the budget. Now he was afraid we might run short.

Suddenly, Palm Beach leaned into an unexpected sharp turn, performing the surprise maneuver like a natural athlete. "Oh!" cried Eva. "What are you doing?" "Thought I saw a new art shop," I replied, turning away from the condos. Palm Beach smiled. He knew I was on top of the situation. There would be no condo shopping this afternoon. Real estate salesmen had been granted a stay of sentence. That was comforting to Palm Beach. It would be best not to risk condo shopping with the VISA card!

"Oh-Oh! You'll never make it! The calle's too

narrow! Even the sidewalks are missing," Eva said. "That's luck! We need the space!" I replied as I looked at the narrowing corridor. The side view mirrors were less than two inches from dragging the walls of the buildings on either side.

"Oh! Look at the other end of the block. Is that truck stuck?" Eva asked. A dusty, gray-green basura (trash) vehicle was slowly bumping over the cobblestones. "If he can make it so can we," I grunted. "Thank goodness you aren't driving one of those basement-model dinosaurs from Texas that we've been seeing!" Eva added.

Dinosaurs? Palm Beach turned on the CD-ROM encyclopedia. Dinosaurs...extinct reptiles...ruled the earth sixty million years ago. Oh well, at times both of them go bonkers, Palm Beach thought. Obviously, nobody was driving a dinosaur! They were using the wrong words again. They needed to stop studying Spanish!

"That new breed of motorhomes with basement storage and slide-out rooms seems too big to me," I replied. "Still, we've seen a lot of them here in Mexico. Can you picture that caravan at the local campground trying to drive up to the silver mine or to the pueblo in the park at the top of Guanajuato where James Michener set his book, *Mexico*? They'll have to hire taxis!"

So, dinosaurs were also big motorhomes, Palm Beach thought. He agreed, because he could certainly run circles around the "Big Ones!"

Palm Beach also knew about Guanajuato, the sister city of San Miguel de Allende. He was anxious to go there. The annual Cervantes performing arts festival was becoming famous. He'd read about it on the Internet. He was even quite a bit excited. The idea of watching a man dressed in a steel suit sitting on a horse and tilting a windmill with a wooden lance was stirring his imagination.

"Oh!" Eva quickly pulled in her hand from adjusting the side mirror. "Better go slower!" She had almost scraped her wrist trying to read a

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