

PALO ALTO ODYSSEY

The place you go when your life falls apart

GUY finally made his move from New York, to live with Miranda in Palo Alto. She picked him up at SFO, and they had a long hug. It was wonderful to see him.



GUY

“Finally,” she said, “We are together again.”

“I can’t say for how long,” said Guy. “I’m on the run — getting over a heart-break.” He smiled.

“Don’t people come to California when their lives have fallen apart?”

“That’s how my family got here,” Miranda said.

She proceeded to tell Guy about her four grandparents, all born in different countries, and how they ended up in

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California. Her maternal grandfather ran away from Dublin at age 17, and came to San Francisco right after the 1906 earthquake.

Her maternal grandmother moved with 11 siblings from England to Los Angeles, where Miranda’s great grandfather opened a general store.

Her paternal grandmother, born in Norway, was a hat maker who came to California with her adventuresome sister, and then soon died of tuberculosis when her son — Miranda’s alcoholic father — was just 2 years old.

But the most eccentric of them all

was Miranda’s paternal grandfather — the only one of her four grandparents born in the United States. A traveling photographer with half a dozen wives and families scattered over the western United States, he had done time in prison for polygamy, after one of those angry spouses ran him into the ground.

“California sounds like a real rogue’s gallery,” said Guy. “I’ll fit right in.”

“Very few of our families have been here more than a century or so,” said Miranda. “We are all carpetbaggers.”

“Yes,” said Guy. “After the Europeans invaded 95% of the Native American population died through disease and war. Ninety-five percent!”

“I’ll take you to the Ohlone shell mounds on the other side of the Bay sometime,” said Miranda. “That’s where the locals used to live — a thousand years ago.”

“My New York Dutch ancestors farmed on Staten Island, and rowed boats into Manhattan,” said Guy. “Things were different 200 years ago.”

“Things were different 20 years ago,” said Miranda. They both laughed.

Because Miranda hated to cook, she took Guy to Evvia restaurant in downtown Palo Alto.

“Pretty good food,” he said. “During the three months I backpacked through Greece, I was on a student budget. Youth hostels, sleeping on the beach, eating bread and cheese. This is finer Greek food than I am used to.”

Miranda was so happy to see her friend. She knew it would be fun living with him in Palo Alto.

More tomorrow.