

Riviera de America

(love poem for a city)

Love at first sight
Low clouds adorning high mountain peaks
Tidy brick streets of color and culture and life
Glaring sun on glistening palm fronds, light dancing on fountains
Clean salt breeze brings the ocean's soul kiss

I was a tentative lover
Far from home and afraid to trust
But you knew I would succumb to your magic
My heart was already yours, without words
You melted me with your warmth and your silent beauty

Alive, with you I am *alive*
I walk for miles down your beaches and flower-covered cliffs
Along your harbor, past a field of white crosses
As blissful as your arcing dolphins
As radiant as the glowing white buildings and Spanish tile

With you, creativity flourishes
Over steaming dark coffee in the cup with an angular cat design
Soft breezes rush through the window and gently lift my hair
Courthouse bells ring out across the street, but I am not marking time
Lively conversations weave a tapestry around me, from they who also share your passion

You ravish my body
Every muscle hums from the vigorous climb
Intoxicated by altitude, high up on vistas, gazing down on a glittering bay
Baking on sandstone monoliths, watching mountains cascade into the horizon
Deep pools in fragrant eucalyptus woods swallow me whole, I emerge reborn...purified

You watch over me
Above every rooftop, around every corner, behind scenic tree-lined streets
Deep blue and purple peaks stare down, encircling arms around me, nestling me close
Contours stand sharply lit by sunrise and sunset, while crevasses fall in dramatic shadow
Covered in mist, covered in snow, covered in sunny green chaparral...always constant

You charm me with exotic gifts
Flowers, shrubs, succulents, and orange blossoms filled with hummingbirds
Deluge of fragrant air, free to all who live and breathe, lifting the spirit higher
Exploding colors like an artist's palette, heralding the changing seasons one by one
Lining paths through the park, public gardens, ponds and sidewalks

You gave me extraordinary friends
Partners in this western paradise
Walking along State Street, talking in bustling cafés, skating through Cabrillo palms
Concerts under the full moon, music in old theatres, singing along and smiling
Drinks by the seaside, warm beach blankets, wild Fiesta dancing

I've loved you like no other
You have claimed me, body and soul
Two thousand miles away, and I still feel your heartbeat
The ebb and flow of your tides, pulsating within me
Images of every part of you flashing through my mind like an endless slide show

You have changed me
Caught between the power of the mountains and the sea
Doubt and fear melted away, leaving only certainty
You awakened Muses that will usher me through the rest of the journey
You have given me love and happiness unparalleled...and I still languish for you

You will always be with me
In my self-imposed exile, you brighten my soul
You are in the stories and the memories and the pictures
Lighting me up from the inside out when there is endless gray and cold
You are stitched into the very fabric I am made of, never to be separated

Alexandra Lander, 2008