



The Guaymas Chronicles: La Mandadera

David E. Stuart

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This memoir of a young gringo's assimilation into the exotic street life of a bustling port on Mexico's Sea of Cortez is an eye-opening account of the area's working-class life. After months of anthropological field work in late 1960s Ecuador, David Stuart returns to Guaymas with broken bones and a broken heart, finding comfort in the cafés and nightspots along the waterfront. There he reveals his failings to people whose *lingua franca* is the simple wisdom of listening and understanding. The loyal barmen and taxi drivers adopt him into their tight-knit circle, helping him ride out the devastation of betrayal by a woman who is carrying another man's child.

Dubbed El Güero ("Whitey") on the street, Stuart drifts into *la movida*, the Mexican world of hustlers, politicians, police officials, businessmen, and street urchins. In a 1970 Mexico where a \$500 bribe and a two-year wait *might* get you a telephone, he needs help. A headstrong shoeshine girl, Lupita, becomes his *mandadera* (messenger) and then his confidante and junior business partner, working her magic by bribing customs officials and making deals for tires, fans, blenders, and other *fayuca* (contraband). A scrawny eleven-year-old, she is not just street-brilliant but complicated and utterly fascinating.

This vivid, haunting portrait of a world many Americans have visited but few understand, is a unique examination of what Mexico means to one American and what America means to the everyday Mexican people who surround and protect him.

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