

WENDY BROWN-BÁEZ

A GOOD DAY

This is the beginning. It all starts here. The *cocinera* serves us cold salted cucumber slices, then brings a dish of dried red peppers instead of chili powder. Careful to add a few seeds at a time, the crisp explosion of salt and chili in my mouth is the best way I can describe our relationship. Not sweet, like you might expect with a gay guy. And not tender, like you might think a marriage should be. But salty and spicy. I like it that way, and not because I don't yearn for the sweet and tender as well. But I need the provocation.

I have returned to Mexico after four years of being a widow and on the first anniversary of my son's death. Mexico is also salty and spicy. Sweetness comes from a song drifting through the sultry air or a smile caught between me and a *señorita* on the bus or the lilting accents of the Spanish language. But all of the "*quiero*"s and "*mi corazón*"s won't change the past and I bite my tongue on the tears I am afraid could drown me.

Alejandro is a gorgeous macho Mexican male who would rather go to the dentist than caress me. He is the husband destiny has now chosen for me, and I will spend the rest of my life trying to figure out why.

Nevertheless, today it begins. No matter that the idea of *Sol y Luna* came to us on my birthday when Alejandro gave me a gold moon on a neckband to match his gold sun. No matter that we have searched for a place, drawn up budgets and made numerous phone calls. And no matter that we won't sign the lease until we return to town on Monday. Here in this small *pueblito* in the mountains, sleeping in a hotel room with a barrier between us as thick as steel bars, the taste of red pepper is wild in my mouth, and I finally know it will come true. *Sol y Luna*, a contemporary art gallery. More than that, despite my hesitation about staying in Mexico with Alejandro, I know I

