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Subject: Postcard

A cold wind blew through the seams of our clothes sending chills along our limbs and down our backs, and it splashed our faces with a rainy mist. Clouds were a contrast in grays, straddling the higher peaks and obscuring the sun. The peaks themselves were covered with last night's snow, as was our parking lot wet with last night's rain. We left for Ghost Ranch to hike Kitchen Mesa.



The folks at Ghost Ranch did not want us to hike the Kitchen Mesa Trail due to the mud. Actually Karen did not want us to hike the Kitchen Mesa Trail due to the mud. We assumed she represented the Ranch because she wore a metal nametag and was bossy. *Why don't you hike Rim Vista?* Already did that. *Why don't you hike Chimney Rock?* Did that twice. *Why don't you hike Plaza Blanca at the Mosque?* Mosque? In the New Mexican Desert? Huh? OK.

So we bought lots of stuff in the warm, dry gift shop and then departed Ghost Ranch.

Kitchen Mesa backup plan #1: Hike Plaza Blanca. At the Mosque.



We took Dirt Road 155 as instructed by the Presbyterians at Ghost Ranch and, 2.2 miles later, came to this gate. Dar Al Islam. In Spanish that translates to "Give To Islam". But it's probably not Spanish. It might be Arabic for Ponderosa. We half expected Ahmed Cartwright and his three sons to ride up. Well. We drove in.



Brown sign: Yep, it's Plaza Blanca.

White sign: This is how to behave here.

Orange sign: A TV pilot called "SCALPED" is being filmed here. Stay away from the set and no photos.

Okee Dokee.

Plaza Blanca comprises white rock formations from the mundane to the interesting. On a nice day, one presumes, they are simply brilliant in the sun. Today they are simply drab. But still ranging from mundane to interesting.



We soon passed a bizarre scene. A beat-up, rusty old house trailer had been raised 6 or 8 feet off the ground by a pair of forklifts. A rustic wooden platform sat on the roof of the trailer and it was separately supported by four unmachined logs. Trucks and ATV's were nearby as were several people

doing stuff. We supposed that was “the set”. We honored their request for no pictures, but it was tough.

The trail turned down a box canyon (up a box canyon?). The murmurs of the movie crew subsided as we hiked, eventually replaced by colossal raven croaks. A nesting pair had found a nifty hole in the rocks about 20 feet up near the end of the box. One of them perched across the canyon on a rock spire and his croaks reverberated off the walls. He seemed mighty proud.



Deep into the box we found this symbolic arrangement on a rock ledge.



It had been left there by the Anasazi. Another theory is the film crew. In any case, we continued on with a seriously uneasy feeling.

We followed the trail to the end where a couple of springs or runoffs fed some puddles. Unable to climb out, we turned around.



On the way back we revisited that rock ledge.



Ahhh. That's better.





We got back to Bogie in the parking area.



No Mosque in sight and the sign for it led to a locked gate. We suppose it is there, the Presbyterians said so. But there *were* these porta-johns labeled "Studio Equipment Rentals".

D&S

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