



# The Wedding

*Mary Helen Ponce*

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Although Blanca Muñoz has known Sammy-the-Cricket all of her life, she never considered him boyfriend material until the summer she turned eighteen. He's not particularly good looking, he doesn't drive a fancy car, he doesn't dance well, and he doesn't have a good job. Worst of all he wears zoot suits and belongs to the Los Tacones gang. Blanca has always promised herself she would avoid guys like Cricket. But it's Cricket's meanness that attracts Blanca the most. And before she knows it he proposes: "You're my old lady ... and we're gonna get hitched."

The chicks and pachucos in Blanca's barrio of Taconos outside of Los Angeles compete to put on the best wedding, even if it means paying off the expenses in monthly installments for years to come. Blanca works overtime for months prior to her wedding so she can afford everything, especially since Cricket refuses to help financially. The bride-to-be and her girlfriends obsess over the elaborate arrangements required of a Mexican wedding: who will be the maid of honor, ring bearer, and junior bridesmaid? What about the dress, the shoes, and the cushions the couple will kneel on during mass? The list of things to do is endless, and Blanca is more exhausted every day. On top of everything, Blanca finds herself feeling hungry all the time. Her expanding waistline means that her wedding dress won't fit, but at least it's not a problem that a few safety pins won't solve.

Meanwhile, the guys are also interested in keeping up appearances. Cricket dreams of a wedding that outclasses all the others and raises his status with his buddies: a long line of souped-up, gleaming cars; guys decked out in the sharpest tuxedos; and most important of all, the best dance, where he and his friends plan to get high and rumble with Los Planchados, the rival gang in the neighborhood.

The wedding dance turns out to be the best party imaginable as the band plays on through a series of exciting moments: the maid of honor gets in a fight with a girl from "up north"; the leader of Los Pachuchos and his buddies show up, determined to "dance" at Cricket's wedding; and Blanca, after spending most of the evening in the bathroom, is unnoticed by most of the guests and finally taken away in an ambulance. It was "the best wedding in all of Taconos," she says right before passing out.

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