

Fesitval of the Racing Brides (120 second short for "50
Kisses")

By

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an original short story

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EXT. MONTECITO, A SMALL 1920'S MEXICAN VILLAGE, DAY

A large crowd gathers on either-side of a wide roped-off strip of dirt, doglegging from TOWN HALL to the steps of the CATHEDRAL. The Cathedral's lowest step is occupied by a handful of BRIDEGROOMS and a PRIEST. It is clear that it is a festive occasion, specifically, a large wedding.

At the TOWN HALL there are a large number of BRIDES standing behind a decorated rope. The town's MAYOR steps up to the edge of the STARTING LINE, holds up his six-shooter, calls the racers to their marks, & fires.

ALL follows in SLOW MOTION with INTERCUT images visually describing the details of the unfolding tradition:

NARRATOR

In 1920 I was fortunate enough to witness one of the strangest wedding traditions in all creation; the FESTIVAL OF THE RACING BRIDES.

On the morning of the Feast of St. Valentine, in the small Mexican town of MONTECITO, all the young maidens, just a year off their Quinceañera, are betrothed to the town's young men of twenty.

The peculiarity of this occasion, however, is that this betrothal is determined entirely by a footrace.

A towns-worth of maidens racing across a plaza toward their soon-to-be husbands certainly may seem charmingly odd but, let us consider the fact that none of the matches are made prior to the race. Matches are only determined when a bride rounds the corner, sees a groom she likes, and races towards him.

The marriage pair is set once a bride grabs her groom at the step of the Cathedral.

Furthermore, once a bride has clutched her instantly-betrothed, she may not change her mind and choose another, nor may another grab whom she has first chosen.

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NARRATOR (cont'd)

If two cling to the same man at the same time (sometimes while all other bachelors are claimed), the fight over the grabbed becomes an intense matter when you consider the further idiosyncrasies of the event.

For example, consider the town's main vocation of coal mining (and the brawling nature of the town's men) and is it any wonder that the instantly-dwindling number of available husbands is exacerbated by a usual lack of eligible bachelors in the first place?

What is a bride to do when there are 7 maidens & only 6 bachelors? Unfortunately, fight tooth-and-nail is often the answer.

There have been many a Montecitan bride receiving the final benediction of matrimony while nursing missing clumps of hair and ignoring newly-loosened teeth.

But, of all these complications added to the marriage rite, the cruelest is to follow: under no circumstances is any maiden who has not been able to claim a husband at the finish line, allowed to marry at any other time. The town's slow-footed maidens, therefore, are forever cursed to be town's "slow-witted" old maids, the *la flojas*, as they are known locally.

Despite all this, the Festival has received the local priests' blessing for almost a century now, and (like in most small towns through out the world), the marriage rite, which has such a bizarre beginning and such a unsettled, if not downright chaotic nature, always ends in a final benediction, and a kiss to seal the sanctification of a life lived together.